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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Ramsey Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 204 E. Broadway Avenue

N/A not for publication

city or town Keota

N/A vicinity

state Iowa code IA county Keokuk code 107 zip code 52248

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

8 MARCH 2017
Date

State Historical Society of Iowa
State Historic Preservation Office

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain) _____

[Signature: Ver Edson H. Beall]
Signature of the Keeper

4.24.17
Date of Action

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE / specialty store

FUNERARY / mortuary

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN / Romanesque

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: SYNTHETIC

other:

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Ramsey Building is located on the south side of the west-central portion of Broadway Avenue in downtown Keota in Keokuk County, Iowa (Figure 1). Keota was platted in 1872 with the arrival of the railroad through Keokuk County, with commercial lots along Broadway running parallel to the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad located along the south side of the block. The two-story brick building was constructed in fall 1895 for the furniture and undertaking business of Eben J. Ramsey on lot 12 in block 18, a parcel that was owned by his father John L. Ramsey. It sits on a stone foundation, and the roof slopes gently to the rear. A fire struck the building in October 1897, gutting the interior but leaving the brick walls standing. The interior was then rebuilt and exterior restored following the fire, and a one-story brick addition was constructed that extends south to the railroad tracks. The two-story brick building was one of the larger buildings constructed in the growing town of Keota in the 1890s, reflecting elements of the Romanesque Revival style. The buffed pressed brick façade and corner entry were highlighted as features of this building “of modern make, design, and finish.”¹ The building retains its historic design elements on the brick façade, including segmental arch paired double-hung windows, brick stringcourse over the windows, frieze with crosses, cornice with brick corbels, and brick pilasters framing the building. While the storefront has been remodeled, as often typical for a commercial building, the overall design configuration remains intact. Additionally, the corner recessed entry vestibule retains historic double wood doors with transom window and a historic large plate glass storefront window with transom and paneled wood bulkhead. The interior of the building, historically open space to display furniture, remains as open space, retaining wood floors, wood staircase, and wood trim. While the plaster ceilings have been removed, plaster remains generally intact on walls throughout the main two-story building. Thus, the overall integrity of the building is good, and it clearly continues to reflect its original design as a two-story commercial building constructed in a small town in the 1890s.

Narrative Description

The Ramsey Building sits on the south side of Broadway Avenue, which runs east-west historically parallel to the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad, on a block bordered by Broadway Avenue on the north and the railroad on the south. This block was platted with 25-foot wide commercial lots, with most buildings occupying one lot as a single storefront building (Figure 2). The north side of Broadway was likewise platted with 25-foot lots for commercial development along this planned downtown corridor. The siding for the railroad is depicted on historic maps as extending along the immediate south side of this block and this building, providing ease of access for delivery of goods to buildings on the south side of Broadway. While the railroad tracks were removed in the 1970s, an alley roughly extends in its place behind the building. The building is located on the portion of Broadway known as “west” Broadway historically, despite the later assignment of addresses (Figure 3). Fulton Street was historically the dividing line between “east” and “west” Broadway, with the railroad depot sitting along Fulton Street to the south of the Broadway block. While the south side of Broadway had double blocks, the north side blocks further delineated historic references in the 1890s and early 1900s to locations on Broadway as “east” Broadway on the block east of Fulton, “center” Broadway on the block from Ellis to Fulton, and “west” Broadway on the block from Ellis to Davis. These three blocks formed the core of the historic development of downtown Keota, with the “center” block as the core of the commercial-retail development that spilled onto the blocks to the west and east as well. The Ramsey Building sits on Lot 12 in Block 18 at the west end of the center block, in the middle of the “west” double-block of the south side of Broadway.

¹ “A New Store Room,” *Keota Eagle*, September 20, 1895.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

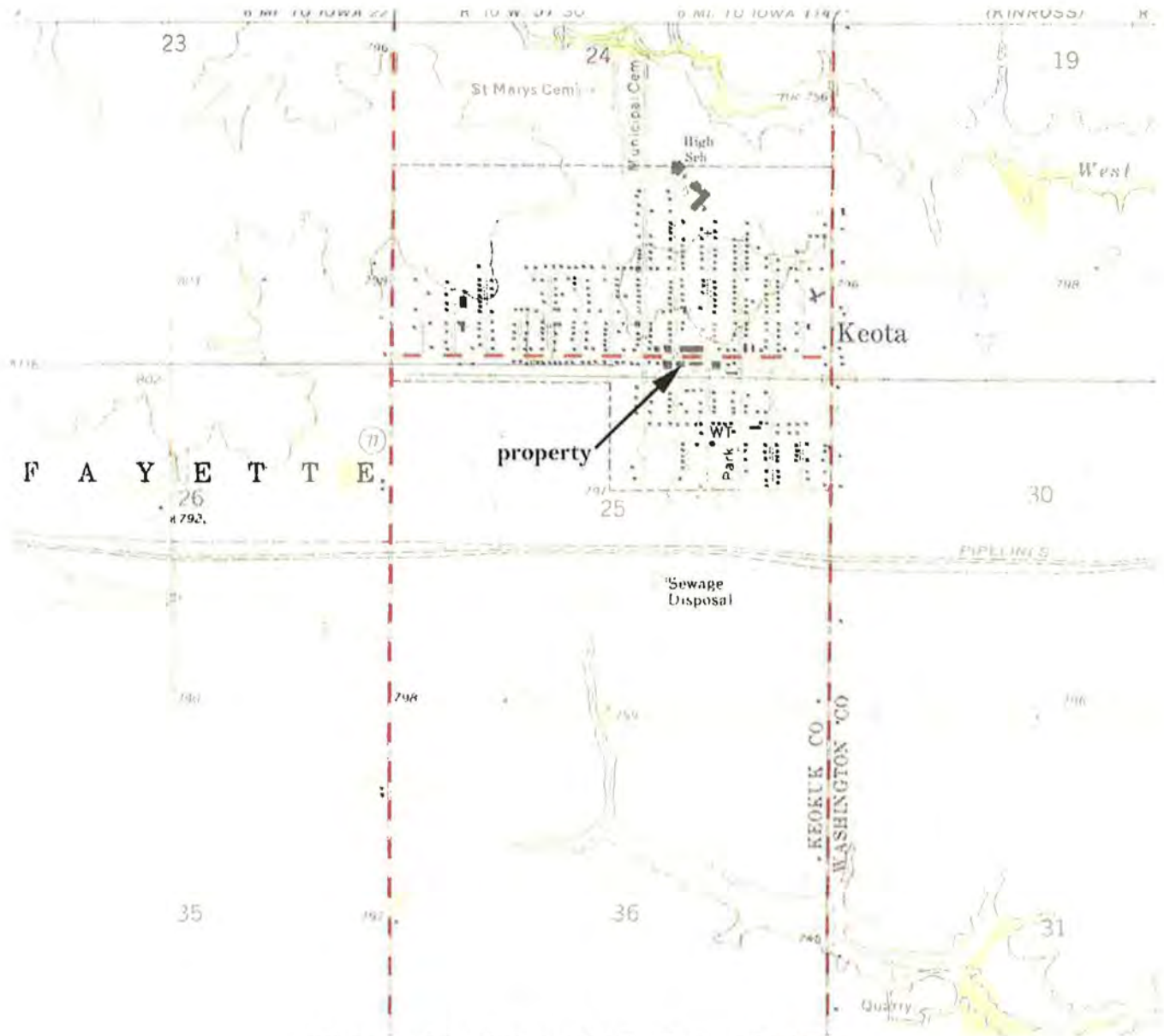


Figure 1. Location map for the Ramsey Building.
(Keota, USGS topographic quadrangle map, 1973)

Ramsey Building
 Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
 County and State

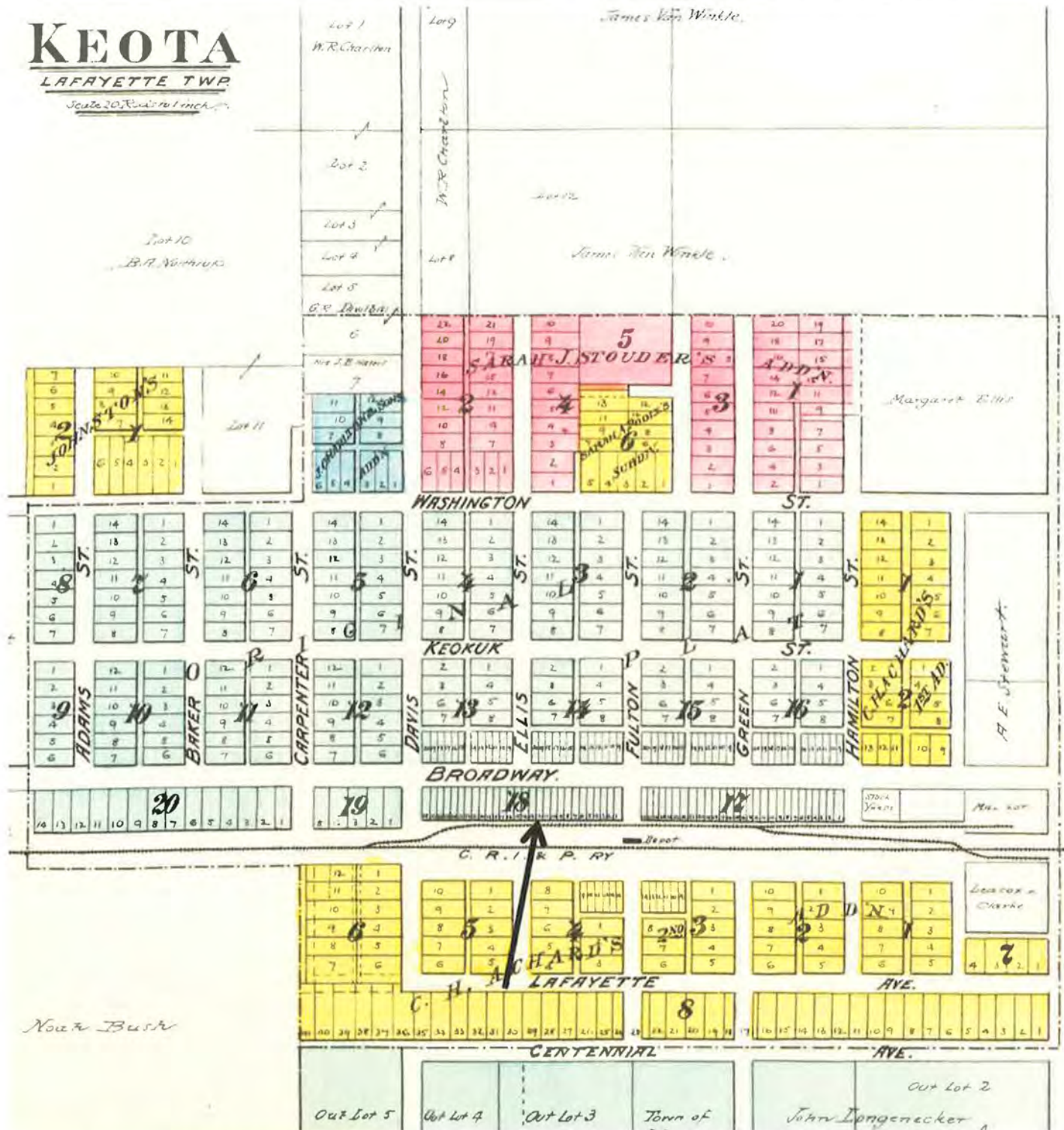


Figure 2. Platted blocks in Keota in 1895, with Lot 12 in Block 18 indicated (Bishop 1895: 28).

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 3. Location of Ramsey Building in downtown Keota, with property line indicated (National Register boundary) (McCarley 2016).
(2013 base aerial photography, beacon.schneidercorp.com)

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 4. Site plan for the Ramsey Building, with property line indicated (National Register boundary) (McCarley 2016).
(2013 base aerial photography, beacon.schneidercorp.com)

This “center” block of Broadway from Fulton to Ellis remains largely intact with historic commercial buildings, and the Ramsey Building sits at the west end of the historic commercial buildings on the south side. The south side has four two-story and three one-story brick buildings, and the north side has one two-story and seven one-story brick buildings, as well as a 1970 one-story bank at the east end. A fire in 2010 to the west of the Ramsey Building destroyed the remaining historic buildings to the west, and the majority of the historic buildings along the north side of Broadway from Ellis west to Davis have also been demolished. The west end of the “east” block along Broadway east of Fulton retains several historic buildings, including a two-story double-lot bank building on the northeast corner. The older buildings along the east half of the north side of the block have been demolished, and the south side of the east half of the block was historically associated with the grain elevator, which has been rebuilt/replaced but remains in this location. Thus, the Ramsey Building is currently located at the west end of the historic commercial downtown that spans approximately one and one-half blocks along Broadway Avenue.

The Ramsey Building thus faces Broadway Avenue to the north. While the majority of the building is constructed of typical red bricks, the façade was built with pressed buff bricks, noted as part of the modern design of the building in September 1895. The detailing of the façade reflects elements of the Romanesque Revival style, as interpreted for a two-story building in a small town. The segmental arch windows, brick

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

pilasters, and brick corbels along the cornice evoke elements of this style. The brick pilasters frame either side of the façade, remaining intact from foundation to cornice, with the later storefront design sitting within this brick framework. The storefront retains its historic configuration with the double-door entry at the west end. While the original storefront was remodeled in 1937, the current design reflects remodeling in 1991. An ashlar stone watertable remains intact across the base of the storefront, with a later brick bulkhead above it. The current storefront design has two large windows on the right/west half, with paneling on the left/east half and across the transom area. Historic photographs show an iron column at the corner of the storefront, which appears to be boxed-in with the later storefront paneling. A concrete step is located within the recessed entry at the west/right end. The west end of the storefront window section remains intact, with large plate glass window framed with wood, paneled wood bulkhead, and transom window. As noted, historic double wood doors remain as the entry into the building, with a transom window spanning the doors. "Marsh" has been painted on paneling in the transom, indicating the funeral and furniture business of F.F. Marsh located here from 1922 to 1937. The upper section of the façade remains intact, with the "neat trimming of red and white pressed brick" noted in 1897 remaining intact.² Two pairs of one-over-one-light double-hung wood windows are spaced evenly on the second story, and they retain segmental arch brick lintels and stone sills. The wood frames for the windows remain intact as well, with inset lines on the mullion and carved triangular detail within the segmental arch top. A red brick beltcourse extends across the building at the level of the sills and across the top of the windows. The frieze is delineated by two slightly projected red brick courses and a series of red crosses between these courses. The cornice has simple brick corbeling that tapers down to points across the width of the building, which distinguishes the top of the building. This detailing is reflect at the top of the pilasters on either side of the building, with brick corbels on the edges and a cross detail in the center. This simple brick detailing provides stylistic elements for this 1890s brick building.

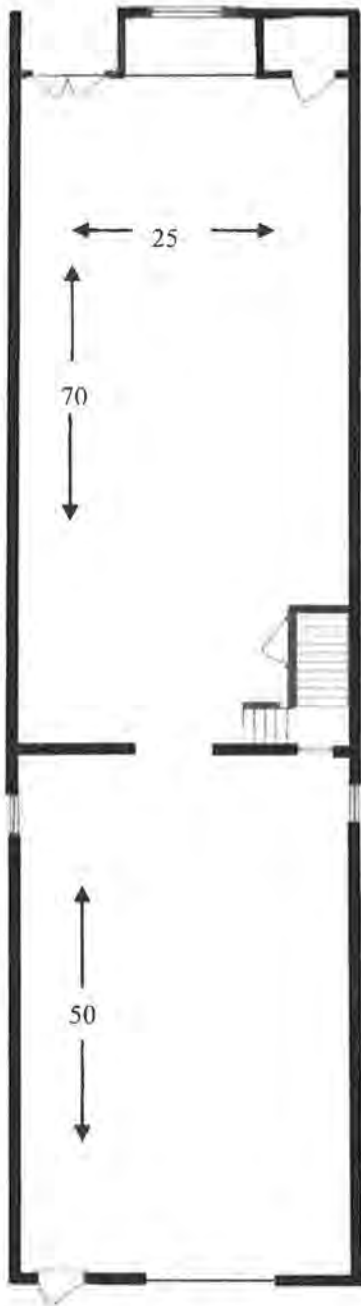
At the time of its construction and through the end of the 1890s, the Ramsey Building was a free standing building, without a building on either side. Over the next decades, two-story buildings were constructed on either side of the building. The 1912 two-story building to the east remains extant, covering the east elevation of the building. The 1904 two-story building to the west was demolished following the 2010 fire that extended to this building, leaving plaster and joist pockets exposed along the west elevation of the building that served as a party wall for the later building. The partially removed plaster reveals some painted signage on the front/north portion of the west elevation of the Ramsey Building. Though the words have not been determined, this sign would date to likely after the 1897 fire and prior to the 1904 construction of the adjacent building to the west, the period that Eben J. Ramsey operated his furniture and funeral business in the building. A second story entry is located near the center of the front portion of the second story, which was accessed by stairs on the interior of the building to the west after it was constructed. A metal building was constructed on this lot to the west in 2016, approximately six feet from the side of the building and again mostly obscuring the visibility of this side from Broadway.

The rear of the Ramsey Building consists of the rear elevation of the two-story section and the one-story rear addition. The two-story 1895 section of the brick building is obscured on the first story by the 1897 one-story brick addition. The south elevation of the second story has been clad in stucco. The segmental arch window opening remains intact, though the window has been covered with plywood. The one-story rear addition retains exposed brick on the west side, which appears to be a softer brick. A segmental arch window opening is located at the north end of the west and east sides of the addition. A two-light wood top sash remains in place on the west window, with both windows covered with plywood on the interior. The east side of the rear addition is clad in stucco, as is the south/rear side of the addition. The south/rear side of the addition extends to the rear of the lot, near the removed siding for the railroad. A large loading door spans the east/center portion of the elevation, which appears to have a historic metal lintel, though later overhead garage door. The

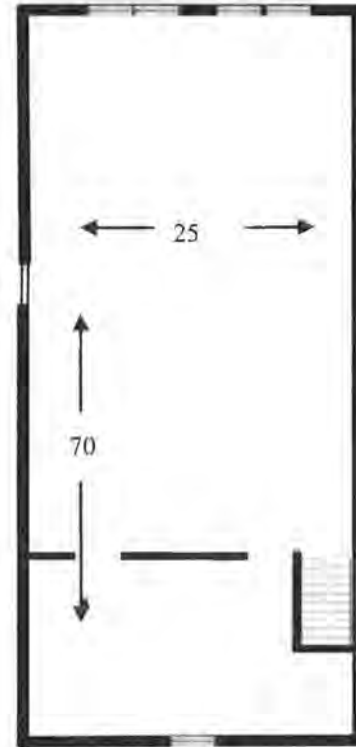
² Keota Eagle, November 26, 1897

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



First story plan



Second story plan

Ramsey Building
204 E. Broadway
Keota, Keokuk Co, IA
September 2016



Figure 5. Floor plans of the Ramsey Building.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

pedestrian door on the west/left appears to be a later addition, as it lacks the segmental arch lintel found on the historic brick openings on the building. This door, as well as the garage door, appears to date to the remodeling in the early 1990s.

The first story of the Ramsey Building consists of the 70-foot two-story section and the 50-foot rear section. The interior of the building appears to date to the reconstruction after the October 1897 fire that gutted the building. Historically, the floor plan of the building was largely open for furniture display and sales, and the building retains its open floor plan. Wood posts have been added down the center of the building for recent merchandise display, clearly an addition and simple to remove. The storefront remodel resulted in a smaller front/north display window and a dressing room to the east/right. The first story of the main/front section of the building retains some historic wood molding around the front entry, as well as wood baseboard along the walls. The wood floor remains intact, and plaster remains on the brick side walls. The lath/plaster on the ceiling was removed in the 1980s, when the building was used as a haunted house for the local Jaycees. The plaster on the rear/south brick wall is also believed to have been removed at this time. A historic set of wood stairs remain in the southeast corner of the building, ascending to the east and then turning on a landing to ascend north to the second story. A four-panel wood door under the stairs leads to a small bathroom and the basement stairs. Evidence of cut lines in the floor boards on the first and second stories near the stairs reflect the earlier elevator that was located in the building, with a bracing beam remaining in the basement as well. The "old elevator" was noted as removed during the August 1912 remodel for the Hoskin Brothers furniture store. The south/rear wall was the original exterior wall at the time of the 1895 construction. A large entry with a segmental arch lintel was centered on the rear elevation, with later brick added within the segmental arch to create a square interior doorway. This doorway retains historic wood trim. A stair window was also located to the east/left of the rear entry. The opening remains intact, with a segmental arch lintel visible on the south/ exterior side and square opening with wood trim. The first story of the rear addition historically had a floor built-up to the level of the main section of the building, about three feet above grade in the rear of the building. This height difference may have been utilized for ease of unloading railroad cars behind the building as well. The wood floor and joists were removed in the early 1990s remodeling, which converted this rear section for use as a furniture restoration business. The rear garage door and entry were then likely installed at this time, with a set of wood stairs also added to access the first story of the main section of the building.

The second story is accessed by the historic set of wood stairs in the southeast corner. The railing for the stairs remains intact to the second story. The second story consists of a large display/storage room in the front three-quarters of the building and an office area across the rear/south portion of the building. Historic wood molding remains intact on the second story windows on the front/north wall. The second story likewise retains historic wood floors and wood baseboard. Plaster remains intact on the walls, but the lath and plaster has been removed from the ceiling, similar to the first story. The dividing wall retains plaster on both sides, and several layers of historic wallpaper are currently exposed on this wall. The west door remains intact, with historic wood trim and a four-panel wood door. The east door has been removed, including any trim. The lath/plaster on the east frame wall along the stairs has also been removed, but the plaster on the west brick wall remains general intact. The removed plaster on the west/rear wall has exposed the original size/configuration of the rear window, a larger segmental arch double-hung window with the later wood double-hung window in this opening. The lath and plaster has been removed from the ceiling, similar to the remainder of the building. Framework for a skylight remains in the ceiling, with significant damage to the wood members around this opening.

The basement stairs extend to the south/rear under the main set of stairs on the first story. The basement is only full height in the west quarter of the two-story building, with crawl space under the remainder of this portion of the building. Two brick columns support the center of the beams. Evidence of the base of the historic elevator remains with the wood support piers and wood cross members. This west half of the basement has a tile block floor, with the later concrete on the floor on the east half of the basement (likely

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

originally dirt). The outline of the original rear/south basement window on the east portion of the south wall remains, with this window then covered by the 1897 rear addition. Likewise, the outline and base brick corbeling of the coal chute on the east wall under the stairs remains intact, covered by the 1912 building on the east side on the exterior. The base of the brick chimneys are found near the center of this rear basement section on the east and west walls.

The Ramsey Building retains overall good historic integrity. The building remains on its original site and located on a commercial block in downtown Keota. The overall integrity of design, workmanship, and materials is good on the exterior, with the brick details on the façade and wood windows intact. The integrity of design, workmanship, and materials is fair on the interior, with some loss of historic materials but retaining its overall open design, historic stairs, and some historic features and materials. The building retains its association to the commercial history of Keota, and it retains the overall feeling of a downtown commercial building. Specific aspects of the integrity of the property include:

Location: The building remains on its original site on Lot 12 in Block 18 on Broadway in downtown Keota.

Setting: The setting of the Ramsey Building remains in the west-central portion of downtown Keota. The downtown was historically a mix of one and two-story brick commercial buildings, with a number of historic commercial buildings remaining in the block to the east of this building. While a fire in 2010 resulted in the demolition of several historic buildings to the west of this building, the block remains commercial in nature, with some newer buildings constructed on the north and south sides. Thus, commercial buildings in downtown Keota remain the setting of the Ramsey Building.

Design: The overall design of the Ramsey Building remains intact, clearly reflecting a two-story brick commercial building. The historic façade design of a storefront with entry at the west end and an upper brick section with double-hung windows remains intact. The brick pilasters continue to frame the building, and the brick details including stringcourses, frieze with brick crosses, and brick corbel brackets on the cornice remain intact. The building continues to extend the length of the lot, with the rear 1897 addition extending near the south parcel line and historic location of the railroad. The open design of the interior remains intact. The first story had no known historic interior partitions, and the historic stairs remain at the southeast corner. The second story likewise retains its historic layout of a large front display/storage room and a partition for a rear office space.

Materials: The Ramsey Building retains a number of historic materials, with the loss of plaster on some interior surfaces as the primary loss of any material integrity. On the exterior, the buff brick façade, side red brick walls, second story double-hung wood windows, wood window frames with decorative details, and brick façade details remain intact. The building continues to sit on a stone foundation, and the ashlar stone water table remains intact along the base of the storefront windows. While the front/north windows of the storefront have been remodeled, the west wood window within the entry vestibule remains intact, along with the paneled wood bulkhead. The wood double-door entry likewise remains intact. On the interior, the wood floors, wood baseboard, and plaster on the brick side walls remains intact. The paneled wood doors and trim remain for the basement door and one second story office door, and interior wood trim remains on the second story windows. The plaster on the ceiling, rear walls, and one-story rear addition has been removed, exposing brick walls and wood ceiling joists. The wide wood stairs with wood newel post and wood balustrade to the second story remain intact in the southeast corner. The plaster within the rear addition has been completely removed, exposing brick walls. Likewise, the raised wood floor in the rear addition was removed and replaced with a concrete floor.

Workmanship: The historic workmanship of the building continues to be reflected in the overall historic design elements and materials, as noted above.

Feeling: The overall feeling of the Ramsey Building is that of commercial building constructed in the 1890s, with its exterior design clearly reflecting this purpose and the interior reflecting use as a retail establishment.

Association: The Ramsey Building retains good association with the commercial history of Keota throughout its period of significance from 1895 to 1957, with the storefront remodel and removal of interior plaster not affecting its association with the commercial history.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

Period of Significance

1895-1957

Significant Dates

1895
1897

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

unknown

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Ramsey Building is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places at a local level of significance under Criterion A for the significance of the building in the commercial history of Keota. The building was originally constructed by the Ramsey family in 1895, and Eben J. Ramsey moved his successful furniture and undertaking business into the building, operating it here through 1907. The building was constructed during a period of development of Keota in the 1890s when first generation frame buildings were replaced with more substantial second generation brick commercial buildings. The Ramsey Building is the oldest extant two-story commercial building in Keota, strongly connected to and reflecting this significant period of commercial development in the community. The business history of this commercial building is likewise significant, serving as the primary location for a furniture store in Keota. A furniture store continuously operated in the building from 1895 through 1957, reflecting the evolution of the industry from operating initially in conjunction with an undertaking business to operating in connection with appliance sales and service. The business history of the building is also significant within the funeral industry in town from 1895 to 1937, a key service for a small community that evolved from a mercantile business to service industry throughout this period. The period of significance spans throughout the history of the building as related to these businesses from 1895 to 1957.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Ramsey Building is significant under Criterion A within the commercial history of Keota for its long association with the furniture business in Keota and connection with the evolution and rise of the funeral home business in Keota. Eben J. Ramsey constructed the original building in 1895 as new commercial space for his furniture and undertaking business during the start of a period of second generation development in Keota. The building was then partially rebuilt with current interior completed and rear addition constructed for E.J. Ramsey after the fire in October 1897. As such, the building remains as the oldest extant two-story commercial building in town. E.J. Ramsey's furniture business endured beyond the other furniture store in Keota, and a new furniture business that initially started as a competitor then bought his business and moved into this building. The furniture store in this building passed through six subsequent owner-operators over the next decades through 1957, operating for the majority of these years as the only furniture store in Keota. The Ramsey Building is clearly the building best associated with the furniture business in Keota, providing the latest styles of furniture, home furnishings, and floor coverings for residents of Keota and the surrounding region. An undertaking establishment initially operated in conjunction with Ramsey's business, with the subsequent four owners-operators also advertising services as a licensed embalmer and funeral director in connection with the sale of furniture and undertaking goods. The business evolved from an undertaking establishment offering goods for sale along with embalming services to a business providing the professional services of a funeral director through this period. This transition is reflected nationally in the evolution of undertaking parlors to funeral homes across the country in the first decades of the 20th century, and this cultural trend is strongly reflected in the history of this building. With the increasing role and professional recognition of the funeral director, F.F Marsh sold the furniture business in 1937, and he moved his funeral home into a remodeled house in Keota, reflecting the separation of businesses marketing goods as opposed to providing services. The Ramsey Building is thus best associated with the evolution and rise of the funeral home business in Keota. The merger of the furniture store with the new appliance store in Keota in 1937 reflects the evolution and endurance of the retail furniture business through this period, as the industry adapted nationally to incorporate technological advances and sell modern conveniences for the home along with traditional home furnishings. As noted, the furniture store in the Ramsey Building retained its significant role in furnishing homes and providing the latest styles for homes in Keota and the surrounding area through the end of 1957.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

Settlement and development of Keota, 1870-1890

Similar to a number of towns in Iowa, Keota developed in response to the construction of a railroad. In the 1850s, railroads were building routes across Iowa, connecting the new state with points to the east, as well as opening up new points to the west. Earlier town sites along rivers were bypassed for straight connections, and new town sites were developed around depots and shipping points. Towns that found themselves at a terminal point for a railroad experienced a significant boom, developing as a shipping center for manufacturing and agricultural goods as well as a launching point for settlers that then continued to points further to the west. The number of miles of railroads in Iowa increased significantly in the decades following the Civil War, growing from 130 miles in 1857 to more than 2,000 miles by 1870. New towns were laid out by land owners along the routes as well as directly by the railroad companies. These new towns encouraged the growth of the surrounding rural countryside and helped subsidize the railroad construction through sale of town lots. Towns were typically platted with Main Streets either running parallel or perpendicular to the railroad tracks, regardless of whether the tracks ran strictly along compass points or the typical section lines of the rural land. Main Streets in these towns, as well as other towns in Iowa, were typically linear, ranging from one or two blocks to several blocks in larger cities. Lots were narrow and deep, extending to a rear alley for access for unloading goods.³

The development of Keota reflects this pattern of development of a town along a new railroad line. Lafayette Township was created from part of Clear Creek Township in 1855 along the east edge of Keokuk County. In 1858, the railroad reached Washington, about 14 miles to the east-southeast. Washington grew significantly through the late 1850s and 1860s as the terminus for the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad, serving as the nearest shipping point for Keokuk County as well as other areas in a 50 mile radius from the community.⁴ The Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad then extended their line southwest to Fairfield in 1870, on a route towards Leavenworth, Kansas. In fall 1870, the railroad then proposed building a branch west towards Oskaloosa from Washington to Sigourney, the county seat of Keokuk County, provided residents would raise \$50,000, secure right-of-way, and provide depot grounds. An election was held in favor of the proposition, and construction started on the railroad in 1871. In January 1872, the town of Keota was laid out by J.P. Yerger and C.H. Achard in Section 24 at the east edge of Keokuk County along the route. The town extended for three-quarters miles east-west along the railroad line and one-half mile to the north. J.S. Kulp opened the first business, a drug store, on February 14, 1872, and the general store of Henkle, Littler & Co soon opened as well. The first lumber arrived via train in Keota on March 1, 1872, and the railroad depot was officially opened in Keota on April 21, 1872. The 22 by 24-foot depot was located in the middle of the end of Fulton Street, just north of the railroad tracks. Stations were also located further west in Keokuk County at Harper, Sigourney, and Delta. A post office was officially established in Keota in March 1872, with Hon. J.F. Wilson as postmaster. By May 1872, the *Washington Gazette* reported that Keota had 25 buildings completed and more under construction, with a number of businesses open and residents living in town. By June 1872, Jerome Palmer had opened the first furniture store in Keota.⁵

The 1874 map of Keota depicts the original town configuration and relationship to the railroad (Figure 6). The town was laid out with Broadway envisioned as the commercial strip parallel to the railroad lines, with the railroad directly servicing the lots along the south side of the street. Blocks 17 and 18 were laid out as double blocks with narrow 25 by 120 foot lots, anticipating commercial rather than residential development along this corridor. Fulton Street divided these long blocks, with the depot positioned at the foot of the street. The south ends of Blocks 13-14-15-16 along the north side of Broadway were laid out similarly, with mid-block alleys

³ Nash 2002: E5, E7, E12.

⁴ Daniels 2001: 31; *History of Washington County* 1880: 543.

⁵ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 401, 403, 596-597; Bohrofen 1973: 18, 25, 64.

Ramsey Building
 Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
 County and State

...serving the rear of these buildings. The remainder of town was laid out generally perpendicular to the railroad and Broadway, with 14 regular blocks and four half blocks. The map also shows the growth of Keota over the first two years of its existence. A total of 35 buildings had been constructed on the narrow commercial lots along Broadway, and around 60 houses had been constructed in town. The development focused on Broadway from Green to Davis, leading to the later references to "east" Broadway noted from Green to Fulton, "center" Broadway from Fulton to Ellis, and "west" Broadway from Ellis to Davis. The independent school district of Keota organized in August 1873, with a school completed in December 1873 that is depicted at the north end of Block 4 on the map.⁶ Four churches were noted as organized by 1874, including the Presbyterian Church, Methodist Episcopal Church, Baptist Church, United Presbyterian Church.⁷ The map depicts buildings for both the Baptist and Methodist Episcopal churches. The town of Keota had also been officially incorporated in December 1873.⁸

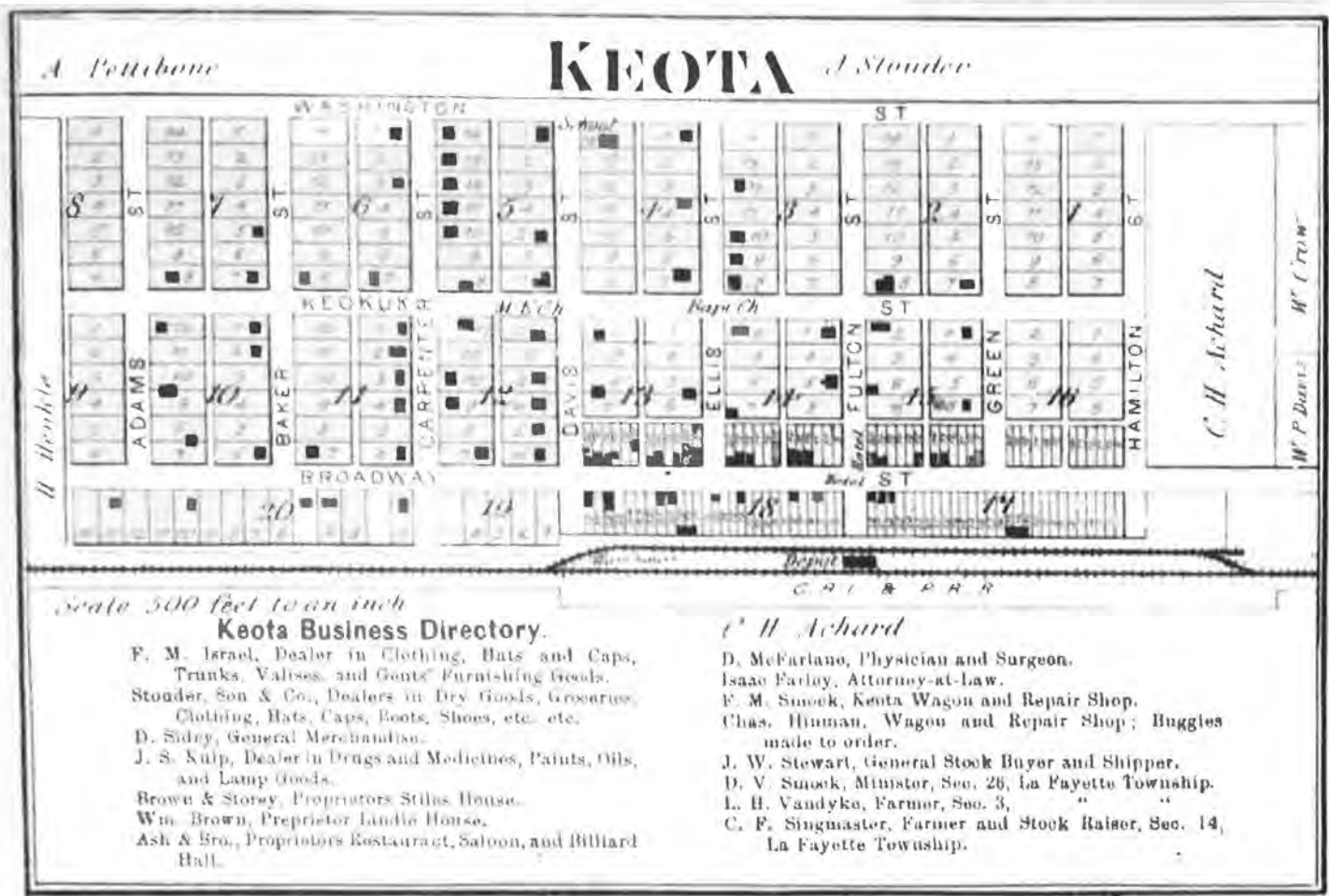


Figure 6. 1874 map of Keota.⁹

Keota continued to grow significantly over the next few years, with fraternal organizations and civic improvements as well as business growth and development. The Enterprise Lodge of I.O.O.F. moved to Keota from Tallyrand in 1872, and the Adelphi Lodge No. 353 of the Masons organized in Keota in July 1875.¹⁰ The

⁶ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 597; Bohrofen 1973: 18

⁷ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 599-600

⁸ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 597; Bohrofen 1973: 14

⁹ Bishop 1874: 23

¹⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 18

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Keota Lodge No. 103 of the A.O.U.W. was then organized in February 1876.¹¹ In June 21, 1876, postmaster J.F. Wilson offered Block 9 in Smock's Addition south of the railroad to the town council as a public park. It was originally named Centennial Park by Wilson, but it became known as Wilson Park by the early 20th century, officially designated as such in 1930.¹² While earlier newspapers had existed, the *Keota Eagle* was established in June 1876, and it covered the history of Keota to date for its centennial edition on July 4, 1876. The town was described as a "thriving living business center, with a population of over 1000 souls, a handsome well-built city, with fine schools, four beautiful and commodious churches, with five miles of good sidewalks, and a city government, which has never taxed the property of Keota one cent to support it; a town of 95 business firms doing an aggregate business of 2 ¼ million dollars per annum."¹³ The 95 businesses in Keota included two banks, four general merchandise stores, four grocery stores, one auction house, three drug stores, two hardware stores, two furniture stores, two lumber yards, six milliners, one book store, one jewelry store, two hotels, two boarding houses, three restaurants, one stove and tin shop, five saloons, one tailor, two photograph galleries, one foundry, one planing and turning mill and organ factory, three blacksmiths, two shoe stores, two meat markets, three livery stables, five carpenter shops, one cooper shop, two nurserymen, one bakery, and several professionals including physicians and lawyers. Keota was also noted for its large amount of shipping on the railroad, and its role as a shipping and supply center for the surrounding countryside is also noted by four stock dealers, two grain buyers and shippers, one general produce and shipping emporium, and two agricultural implement stores.¹⁴ A count of residents of Keota was then completed in September 1876 by W.P. Davis, with a total population of 1,027 tabulated.¹⁵ The official population in 1880 would stand at 710.

The two furniture stores that operated in this period were run by Palmer & Tallman and Henkle & Green. Jerome Palmer had started the first furniture store in Keota in 1872, later adding Jared W. Tallman as a partner in his business. In September 1876, Palmer & Tallman advertised as providing the largest and best selected stock of furniture in this section of the country of the latest styles at the very lowest prices, as well as a good stock of hardware.¹⁶ The firm of Henkle & Green was established in fall 1875, with a site bought and building constructed on the south side of "center" Broadway by December.¹⁷ The *Washington Gazette* noted on December 15, 1875 that Henkle & Green had put up a large furniture establishment and stocked it nicely.¹⁸ The business advertised as Henkle, Green & Co in 1876, selling staple and fancy furniture of the latest and best styles. They also offered a choice stock of undertaker goods and coffins, which could be trimmed in good style on short notice.¹⁹ Palmer & Tallman continued to maintain their combination of furniture and hardware through 1877 and 1878, running the same newspaper ad through these years. The firm of Henkle & Green evolved to Henkle & Ritchey by 1878, with E.M. Ritchey added as a partner. The business continued to advertise a wide variety of furniture in the latest styles at low prices and a stock of coffins and caskets, as well as sewing machines, carpets, and paints.²⁰ Henkle & Ritchey continued to offer the same selection of goods into the 1880s from their store on the south side of Broadway.²¹

The majority of buildings constructed in Keota through the 1870s were frame structures. First generation buildings in communities throughout Iowa were typically frame, reflecting simple construction and often a combination of a commercial and residential purpose. Towns that developed earlier than Keota started

¹¹ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 600

¹² Bohrofen 1973: 26

¹³ Bohrofen 1973: 21

¹⁴ Bohrofen 1973: 20

¹⁵ Bohrofen 1973: 23

¹⁶ *Keota Eagle*, September 30, 1876)

¹⁷ A furniture store would operate here into early 1897 (Henkle & Ritchey, Crawford & Purdun, M.A. Crawford, R.F. Campbell), and this two-story frame building was then destroyed in the March 1899 fire.

¹⁸ "Keota Items," *Washington Gazette*, December 17, 1875

¹⁹ *Keota Eagle*, October 14, 1876, 3

²⁰ *Keota Eagle*, September 21, 1878, 3

²¹ *Keota Eagle*, January 10, 1880, 3

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

building more substantial second generation brick buildings by the 1850s, reflecting Eastern commercial buildings and the popular Italianate style. Cast iron storefronts and columns began to be utilized by the 1870s. Railroad communities that developed in the 1860s and 1870s followed a similar pattern of development. As the town grew, earlier buildings were replaced by more substantial brick buildings, and earlier frame buildings were demolished over a period of time.²² A few exceptions have been identified in Keota, as early wealthier residents constructed more substantial buildings in this early period. On July 29, 1876, Charles Singmaster let the contract for a three-story brick building at the northwest corner of Broadway and Ellis to Hulse & Patterson (demolished). The building relied on brick shipped into Keota by railroad, causing a delay in the construction due to lack of brick in September 1876. When completed later in the year, the first story was occupied by a dry goods store, the second story was offices, and the third story was a hall used by the Masonic Lodge. The iron work for the storefront was completed by Wilde & Co of Washington.²³ The stature of the building reflected the early desire for Keota to develop as a significant town, and it remained as the only three story building in Keota into the 20th century.²⁴ The Keota Loan and Savings Association reorganized as The Bank of Keota in September 1876 with Charles Singmaster as president, and they completed the two-story brick bank building on the northwest corner of Broadway and Fulton in spring 1877 (demolished).²⁵ These buildings were the exception to the rule, however, as the majority of the buildings constructed in this period were frame buildings and typically only one story in height.

The 1880 *History of Keokuk County* sketched the development of Keota over a short eight years to its official population of 710 residents in 1880. A number of business firms are outlined, with Henkle & Ritchey as the only listing under furniture and undertaking. Palmer & Tallman are listed under hardware at this time, though they continued to offer furniture as well. J.W. Tallman was also mayor in 1880. The 1880 history notes: "These firms all carry a good stock and are among the most enterprising in the State. The location of the town is a good one, but, the great secret of its success is to be found in in the character of its men of business. Instead of discouraging competition, every inducement is held out for new firms to locate in the town, and to manufactories especially have they held out special inducements. . As an example of the amount of business which one man can successfully engage in, E.M. Ritchey, of this place, affords a good illustration. He is a member of the firm of Henkle & Ritchey, which carries a large stock of furniture of every description, also of the firm of Littler, Ashby & Co., the leading dry goods house, and besides this deals in sewing machines and musical instruments, and is secretary of the glass company. There are others who have more capital and transact fully as much business, but we refer to him as a fair example of what a Keota business man is."²⁶ The Glass Works was briefly an early industry in Keota, but only remained in operations from 1879 to 1881.²⁷

While Keota had certainly grown significantly through the 1870s and formed as a complete community, development did not continue at the same pace over the next decade. The population of Keota only grew to 777 by 1890, less than 10% growth over the decade. The 1887 map of Keota shows the commercial buildings along Broadway by this period, with development continuing to be focused on the three blocks from Green to Davis. Significant new residents did settle in town in this period, as others moved to new developing areas further to the west. One such resident was John L. Ramsey, who retired as an engineer with the Rock Island Railroad Company in 1880 and chose to settle in Keota. He built the first grain elevator in town, located on "east" Broadway along the railroad tracks. This addition further developed Keota as an agricultural center for the surrounding countryside. He then served as mayor of Keota from 1882 to 1887, the first multi-term mayor in the town. John Ramsey then again served as mayor from 1890 to 1892, noted as the longest serving mayor

²² Nash 2002: E29-31.

²³ *Keota Eagle*, July 29, 1876, 3; *Keota Eagle*, September 2, 1876, 3.

²⁴ The third story was removed by 1940, and it was demolished in the 1980s. No other three story commercial buildings have been identified as built in Keota.

²⁵ A new building for Farmers Savings Bank was completed in 1970 on this parcel; Bohrofen 1973: 58.

²⁶ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 597-598, 600.

²⁷ *History of Keokuk County* 1880: 598; Bohrofen 1973: 76-77.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

in town yet in 1973. He was noted in 1903 as a practical and progressive mayor for Keota through this period, with high respect and esteem of the town residents.²⁸ John L. and Mary Elizabeth (Nelson) Ramsey had six children, including Eben J. Ramsey who was 14 when the family moved to Keota. He was one of two scholars in the first graduating class of Keota High School in 1883. He then entered business with his father at the grain elevator.²⁹ John L. Ramsey was involved in the conversion of the old Glass Works building for use as an opera hall and skating rink in summer 1883, which was used as such and owned by him until it was demolished in 1903.³⁰ Other new residents and businesses are also noteworthy in this period, such as the Keota Tile Factory. In 1883, E.A. Kennel had the clay near Keota tested in Illinois and found it to be superior for making tile bricks, and he constructed the Keota Tile Factory in spring 1884 on the southeast side of town. A tile mill and crusher were added in June 1885, and it was noted as second largest tile factory in Iowa in June 1886. The factory included a 32 by 64 foot main building, 18 by 60 foot two-story west wing, and an 18 by 80 foot east wing, with a capacity 10,000 three-inch tile, or 8,000 four-inch, or 6,000 five-inch per day. The company operated well into the 20th century, serving as the main industry in Keota.³¹

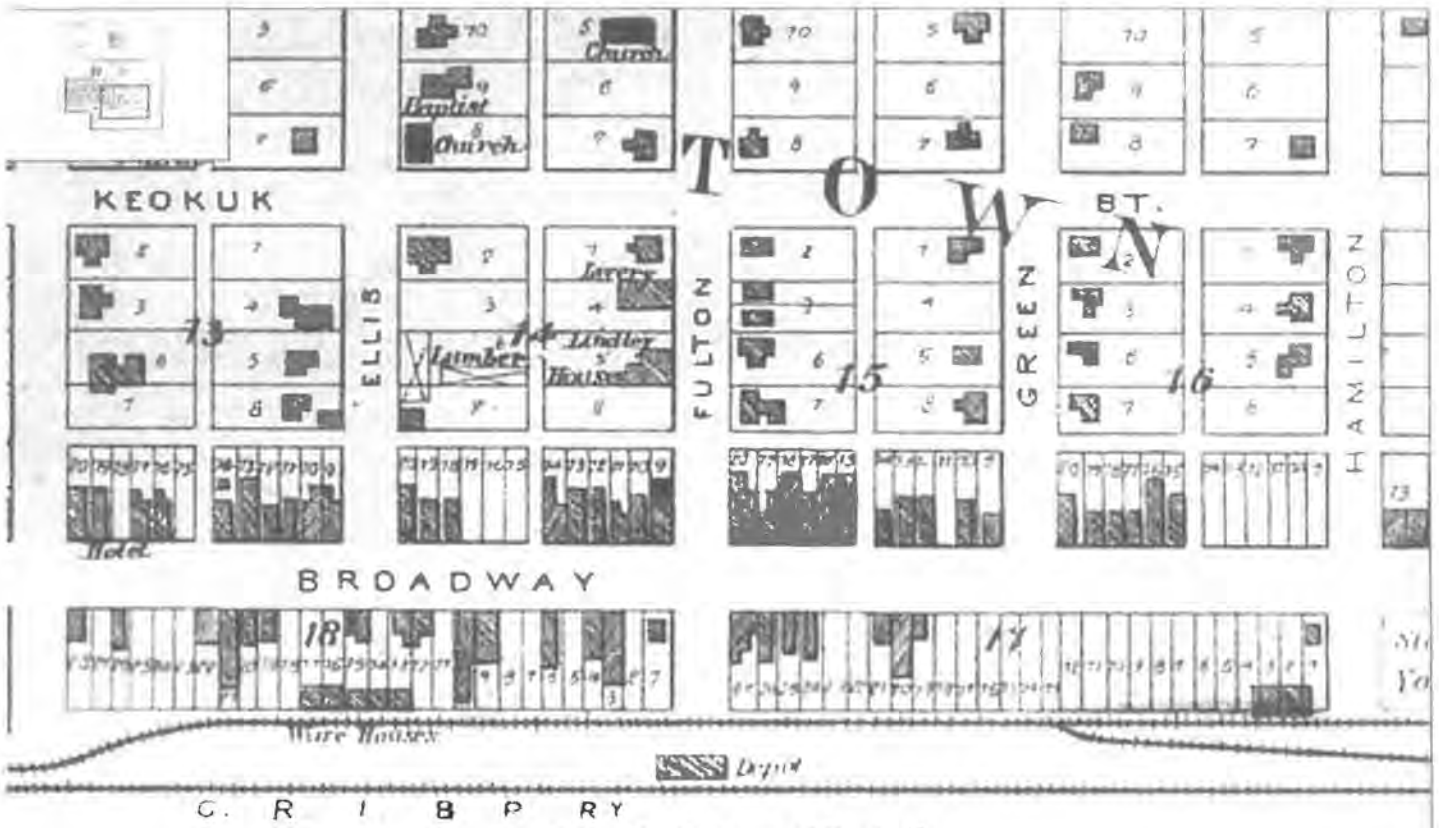


Figure 7. 1887 map of Keota.³²

Retail businesses continued to serve the local needs of Keota residents as well as the surrounding rural residents in eastern Keokuk County and western Washington County. Though Henkle & Ritchey advertised that they were looking to sell out their stock of furniture, they remained in business in 1884 after all. By May, they noted that they had replenished their stock, with one of the finest stocks of furniture and choicest variety

²⁸ *A Genealogical and Biographical History of Keokuk County, Iowa* 1903: 230, 234; Bohrofen 1973: 77

²⁹ "E.J. Ramsey, 72, Claimed by Death," *Keota Eagle*, April 20, 1939, 1; "Funeral of E.J. Ramsey at Keota," *Washington Evening Journal*, April 17, 1939.

³⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 33

³¹ Bohrofen 1973: 69-70.

³² Bishop 1874: 23

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

ever seen in Keokuk County.³³ Palmer & Tallman also remained in business through this period. J.A.Y. Ashby brought on M.A. Hulse as a partner in May 1884, creating the general store of Ashby & Hulse in a new location on West Broadway. They advertised a complete line of furniture in connection with general merchandise through the middle of the 1880s.³⁴ By January 1886, Henkle & Tallman bought the Keota Roller Mills, with Mr. Schrader replacing George Henkle as manager of Henkle & Ritchey's furniture store. A number of other business changes were noted in town at the time, and the post office had moved to the rear of The Bank of Keota building.³⁵ In February 1886, the furniture business of Henkle & Ritchey was traded to E.E. Graham for land near Nira, and J.F. Graham took over management of this furniture store on the south side of Broadway. He advertised as having a nice line of furniture and coffins, as well as burial robes and other undertaking goods.³⁶ The business was then sold to William F. Pardun and M.A. Crawford in spring 1887. Pardun & Crawford advertised a full line of furniture and carpets, as well as undertaking goods. They also offered use of a good hearse, embalming services, and air tight boxes for shipping.³⁷ The nature of the business of Palmer & Tallman also appears to have shifted by April 1887 to including more undertaking services, with a note that they offered use of a fine hearse, embalming services, and bodies to be kept for any length of time. They also sold undertaking goods, such as caskets, coffins, robes, etc., from their location on west Broadway, one door west of the three story brick building.³⁸ By November 1887, Jerome Palmer retired, with the business continued by J.W. Tallman. He continued to advertise the same undertaking goods and services from the same location.³⁹ In October 1887, the partnership of Pardun & Crawford dissolved, with M.A. Crawford continued the furniture business on the south side of Broadway in the two-story Henkle & Ritchey building. He advertised his business as the place to buy furniture, with a full line of all goods, carpets, and undertakers' goods. He continued to offer a good hearse, embalming services, and air tight boxes for shipping.⁴⁰ At the same time, the "furniture emporium" of Ashby & Hulse sold everything in the furniture line from baby chair to fine parlor suite.⁴¹ These businesses and services continued through the end of the 1880s.

The evolving nature of these furniture and undertaking businesses in Keota in this period reflect national trends in these industries, setting the stage for Eben J. Ramsey to open his business and construct a building for it in 1895. Throughout the middle of the 19th century, furniture stores typically offered caskets for sale along with other undertaking goods, either made locally by the furniture manufacturer or shipped to the store from other points along with furniture. Funerals were primarily private affairs handled by families, held within the home. Through the last quarter of the 19th century, the role of the undertaker began to expand from simply a provider of caskets and other funeral items to more involvement in the burial and funeral process. The increased popularity of embalming through this period required the use of a skilled professional and contributed to the start of a service industry related to undertaking and funerals. The increased use of hospitals by middle and upper class residents in this period in larger cities resulted in a larger percentage of Americans dying in hospitals than in homes by the 1880s, requiring transferring and care of the body after death. While the parlor in the home remained the primary location of funerals in this period, the undertaker began to handle the formalities of death and burial. This transition trickled down to rural areas through the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century.⁴²

³³ *Keota Eagle*, February 16, 1884, 1; *Keota Eagle*, May 3, 1884, 1; *Keota Eagle*, December 20, 1884, 1.

³⁴ *Keota Eagle*, March 29, 1884, 1; *Keota Eagle*, April 12, 1884, 1; *Keota Eagle*, March 7, 1885; *Keota Eagle*, August 29, 1885, 4; *Keota Eagle*, January 2, 1886;

³⁵ *Keota Eagle*, January 30, 1886, 1

³⁶ "New Furniture Store!" *Keota Eagle*, February 27, 1886, 1; *Keota Eagle*, May 22, 1886, 4; *Keota Eagle*, January 21, 1887.

³⁷ *Keota Eagle*, April 29, 1887, 4.

³⁸ *Keota Eagle*, April 29, 1887, 4.

³⁹ *Keota Eagle*, October 14, 1887

⁴⁰ *Keota Eagle*, November 4, 1887, 4

⁴¹ *Keota Eagle*, November 4, 1887, 4

⁴² Sloane 1991: 119-120; Laderman 2003: 1-4.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Commercial development in Keota and the business of Eben J. Ramsey, 1890-1907

While the 1887 map of Keota shows significant development along Main Street, the majority of these buildings were first generation frame buildings, constructed in the 1870s with the initial growth of Keota. By the early 1890s, Keota entered a period of additional growth and development, with the second generation of commercial buildings beginning to be constructed along Broadway. The population increased more significantly in this period, growing from 777 in 1890 to 996 by 1900. Buildings constructed in this period were primarily brick, typical of second generation development.⁴³ The majority of the buildings in Keota, however, appear to have been one story, with only a few two-story buildings noted. The *Keota Eagle* reported on a number of new buildings in Keota in the early 1890s. For example, the Moritz Clothing Store moved into its new building in July 1892, after spring construction was delayed due to mud (one-story brick, north side of "center" Broadway) (extant, clad in metal). The boot and shoe store of M. Daiber was relocated for the construction, as well as remodeled.⁴⁴ Ed Coffman bought the livery building in August 1892, proceeding to move it to the rear of the lot and construct a new 40 by 90 foot building (one-story brick, south side of "center" Broadway) (demolished).⁴⁵ A new one-story brick building for the Farmers Savings Bank was built in summer 1893 on the north side of "center" Broadway (extant, 1910s terra cotta façade).⁴⁶ J.K. Bryson & Son built perhaps the most substantial building in this period, the two-story brick Columbian Hotel at the southwest corner of Fulton and Broadway. The large building included 21 rooms, hotel office and lobby, dining room, and two storefront spaces (City Drug Store, barber/billiard parlor) (demolished).⁴⁷ Arch Stewert also constructed his new brick building on center Broadway, moving his hardware store into the new space in October 1894 (one-story brick) (extant, buff brick facade).⁴⁸ The town leaders also improved the water supply in Keota in August 1894 as Arch Stewart drilled a 100 foot well on West Broadway, with a tower and pump. Water mains were then laid to commercial buildings.⁴⁹ Rather than being rebuilt, the depot was moved out of the center of Fulton Street in October 1895, with rebuilt platforms, a new hardwood floor, and square bay window (demolished).⁵⁰

The furniture businesses in Keota also underwent changes in the early 1890s. M.A. Crawford sold the furniture business on the south side of Broadway in the two-story Henkle & Ritchey building to R.F. Campbell in March 1892 (demolished). He advertised stocking everything belonging to a first class furniture store, as well as undertaking goods.⁵¹ In late September 1894, the *Keota Eagle* noted a new furniture opening next week by E.J. Ramsey in the Tallman building on West Broadway (one door west of the three story brick at Ellis and Broadway) (demolished). His father John L. Ramsey had retired from the family grain business in 1893, with the business then sold to Smith, Lewis, & Co. Eben J. Ramsey's advertisement slated opening day for October 3 and publicized that he would carry the finest furniture along with a fine assortment of undertaker's goods, operating a carriage in connection with the business.⁵² He continued to stock the furniture store through early October, with the same advertisement through November.⁵³ His advertisement in the *Keota Eagle* in December noted the lowest furniture prices in the country, with all new goods in the latest styles, along with a full line of undertaking goods. R.F. Campbell touted himself as the "Furniture Man," with

⁴³ Nash 2002: 41

⁴⁴ *Keota Eagle*, April 8, 1892; *Keota Eagle*, April 22, 1892; *Keota Eagle*, July 29, 1892.

⁴⁵ *Keota Eagle*, August 19, 1892, 1; *Keota Eagle*, September 16, 1892, 1

⁴⁶ Bohrofen 1973: 58

⁴⁷ George T. Williams, "Keota and Keokuk Co.," *Keota Eagle*, August 21, 1896, 1; Bohrofen 1973: 107

⁴⁸ *Keota Eagle*, October 19, 1894, 4

⁴⁹ Bohrofen 1973: 119

⁵⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 65

⁵¹ *Keota Eagle*, March 11, 1892, 1; *Keota Eagle*, March 18, 1892, 1

⁵² *Keota Eagle*, September 28, 1894

⁵³ *Keota Eagle*, October 5, 1894; *Keota Eagle*, November 2, 1894, 1

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

household furniture of every description and children's toys.⁵⁴ He continued the focus on his furniture store in January 1895 advertisements, noted as the dealer in household furniture with a complete assortment of goods. E.J. Ramsey advertised a wide variety of furniture on clearance, with a small tagline referencing him as funeral director and furniture dealer.⁵⁵ Furniture at his store arrived by railroad and was delivered by sled in February 1895.⁵⁶ His new goods in new styles at low prices in April included tables, cupboards, kitchen chairs, and mattresses, and he offered a full line of undertaking goods in connection.⁵⁷ These advertisements noted the start of a subtle shift in the business in Keota, which would become more apparent over the next few years.

The overall growth of Keota by 1895 is illustrated on the plat map in the *Atlas of Keokuk County* (Figure 2), and the actual development of Keota through September 1895 is depicted on the Sanborn fire insurance maps (Figures 8-9). These maps provide an interesting glimpse of the streetscape in downtown Keota. The commercial development remained concentrated in the three blocks of Broadway from Green to Davis, with more buildings on the "sunnier" north side of the street than the south side along the railroad line. The majority of the buildings are frame construction, particularly on the "west" and "east" blocks. The three-story brick building (1876) at the northwest corner of Ellis and Fulton and the two-story city hall / lodge building on the south side of "west" Broadway are the only brick buildings in this block. The frame buildings are a mix of one story and two story buildings. The water well and tower are noted at the east end of this block. Only one brick building is noted on "east" Broadway on the north side, with the remainder of the frame building primarily one story in height as well. The block of "center" Broadway is the most fully developed with brick buildings, with the 1894 Columbian hotel and livery stables on the south side and the two-story brick bank building (1877) and seven one-story brick buildings on the north side. Several of these one-story buildings relate to the construction thus far in the 1890s, including Moritz, Stewart, and the new bank. Several frame buildings are located on the south side, with a large section of vacant land at the west end. The railroad siding is depicted along the south edge of these lots, but only the two-story furniture store of R.F. Campbell has a one-story rear section extending towards the track to utilize this convenience. None of the two or three story buildings on this map remain extant, many demolished and replaced by a later building during this second generation of development in Keota. Only six of the one-story buildings on the map appear to be extant in some form (with later cladding in several cases), all brick buildings on the north side of the "center" block of Broadway. In the vacant section at the west end of "center" Broadway, a dotted outline indicates "two story brick building to be put up here this season," the new site of E.J. Ramsey's furniture store.

The construction of this new building was significant in Keota, representing an investment of \$2,500-\$3,000 for a two-story brick building. Lot 12 continued to be owned by John L. Ramsey, but newspaper articles note Eben J. Ramsey as the one making this investment and constructing this new building for his business. The lot was located on the west end of "center" Broadway, the core of the downtown and recent focus of development. The building was "to be of modern make, design and finish in every detail." The article on September 20, 1895 further noted: "The building will measure 25 ½ x 70 feet, two stories high, lower ceiling 13 feet, upper ceiling 9 feet. It will be of buffed pressed brick front, full plate glass, with corner entrance. An elevator will play from cellar to upper floor and a broad 5-foot winding stairway will also connect the two floors. The room will be heated by furnace. Upper floor will be divided into three apartments, for caskets, upholstered goods, and general store, and lower floor will contain a rear workshop for cabinet workman." The building was

⁵⁴ *Keota Eagle*, December 14, 1894

⁵⁵ *Keota Eagle*, January 25, 1895, 1

⁵⁶ *Keota Eagle*, February 22, 1945

⁵⁷ *Keota Eagle*, April 19, 1895

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

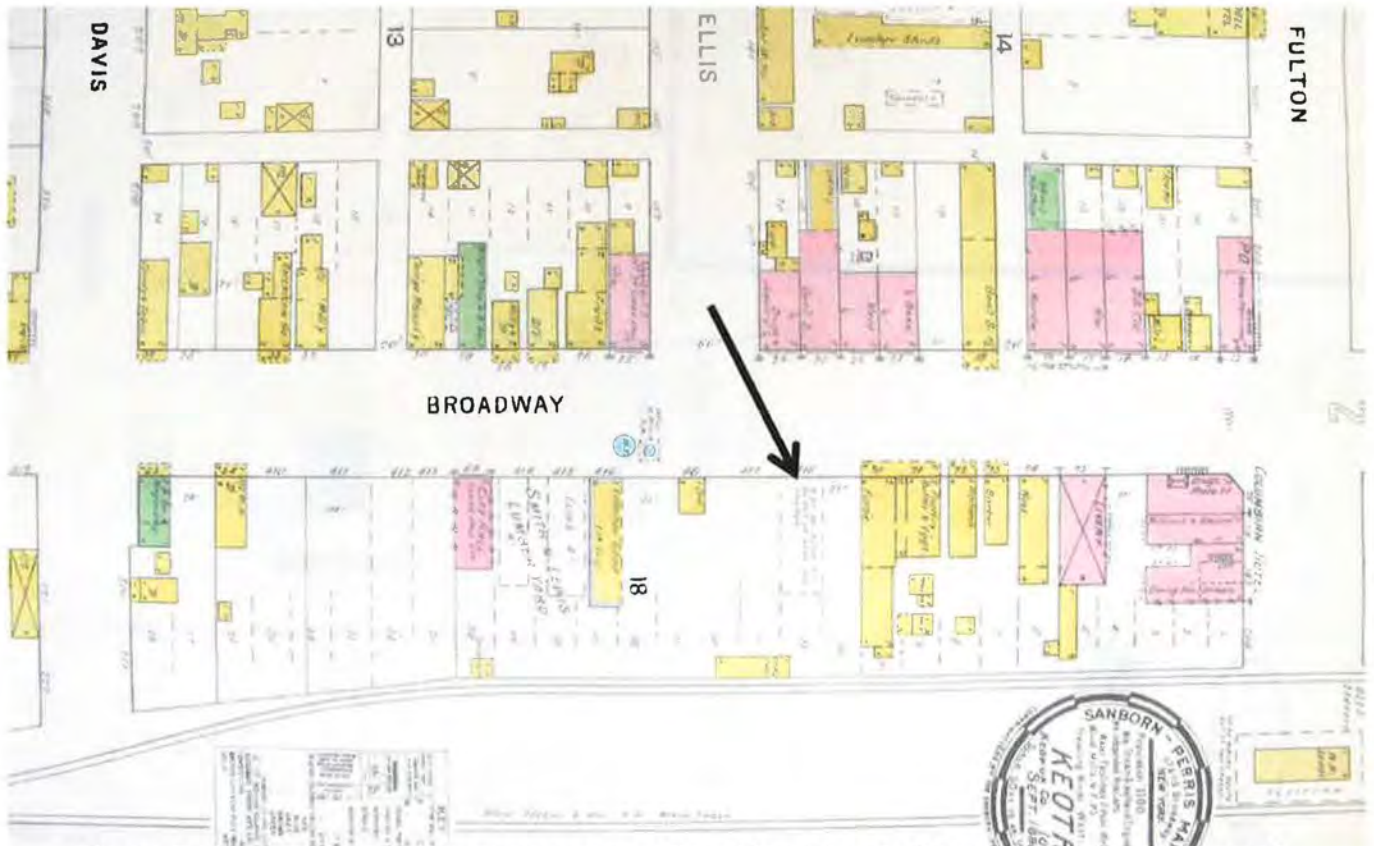


Figure 8. 1895 Sanborn fire insurance map of “west” and “center” Broadway in Keota (page 1).
yellow = frame, pink = brick, blue= stone, green = special fire risk



Figure 9. 1895 Sanborn fire insurance map of “east” Broadway in Keota (page 2).

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

expected to be completed by late October, as Ramsey was "showing commendable zeal and enterprise in pushing the work along."⁵⁸ The 1895 Sanborn map shows the building was originally constructed as a free standing building, with buildings later constructed on either side over the next decades. The building apparently was not fully completed by this deadline as it was not until January 1896 that E.J. Ramsey advertised: "I have moved my stock of furniture to my new brick building on South Broadway, where I have a fine line of Furniture and Undertaking Goods. Prices are the lowest, Goods the newest and latest styles."⁵⁹ The newspaper called attention to his advertisement opening his business to public in his new brick building, noting the substantial and fine architecture and construction: "That store room ranks among Keota's best. Its two stories afford him ample accommodations to handle a full and complete stock of furniture and the workmanship and material entering into its composition are superlatively fine and are flawless. Without and within its beauty attracts the eye and commands admiration." While the recent commercial buildings had been one story, the two story height and additional space was noted at this time. The editor also notes: "Mr. Ramsey has been numbered among Keota retail business men but a comparatively short time but the length and strength of the preparations to which he has gone to fit himself with commodious quarters indicates that he takes his place among them as a permanent member of their rank. All welcome him as a young man of brains, energy, and business ability and wish him great success."⁶⁰

In addition to standing out in Keota at the time of construction, the Ramsey Building is an excellent example of a second generation building in the overall commercial development of Keota. As noted, after the initial wave of construction, second generation buildings were constructed, replacing earlier frame buildings and developing vacant lots increasing the density of the town. These buildings were typically brick construction, reflecting both more substantial construction and success of the businessman in the community. The early examples of these buildings typically had simple stylistic details, with brick corbeling or brick patternwork along the top of the building. More stylistic buildings or buildings in larger communities reflected the Italianate style with a heavy bracketed cornice and arch windows from the 1850s to 1880s. By the 1880s and 1890s, the similar but simpler Romanesque Revival style was utilized, with arched openings, arch and contrasting details, and richly profiled cornices. Cast iron storefronts and columns were utilized by the 1870s, continuing into the 20th century.⁶¹ The Ramsey Building reflects this type of construction, evoking aspects of an early second generation building and of the Romanesque Revival style. The stylistic elements of the building are restricted to the brick detailing, which provide differentiation and qualities of the "modern" style of this building. The brick pilasters, brick corbels on the cornice, and belt courses add elements that distinguish this building in this period of commercial development. The use of the buff (tan) façade brick further differentiates this building from other buildings constructed in this period. The storefront remodel is a typical aspect of change for a Main Street building, as the business sought to attract customers through an updated and modern storefront along with window displays. Thus, the integrity of the storefront is not an overall significant aspect of the integrity of a commercial building.⁶² However, while the front portion of the storefront on the Ramsey Building has been remodeled, the recessed "corner" entry with double wood doors and the end storefront window with wood bulkhead and transom remain intact. With demolitions of earlier buildings in Keota and other buildings constructed in this period, the Ramsey Building remains as the oldest two-story commercial building in town. In October 1897, the Ramsey Building continued to be noted as "one of the handsomest and best made business blocks in the town of Keota."⁶³

The construction of the Ramsey Building also appears to be somewhat tied to the evolution of the business of Eben J. Ramsey. By November 1895, as this building was being completed, the advertisement for E.J.

⁵⁸ "A New Store Room," *Keota Eagle*, September 20, 1895

⁵⁹ *Keota Eagle*, January 31, 1896, 1

⁶⁰ *Keota Eagle*, January 31, 1896

⁶¹ Nash 2002: 29, 31, 41

⁶² Nash 2002: 38

⁶³ "By a Hair's Breadth," *Keota Eagle*, October 15, 1897

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Ramsey shifted, and his business became further distinguished from the furniture store of R.F. Campbell. The businesses ran side-by-side advertisements in the *Keota Eagle* through the end of 1895 and into 1896, providing an interesting glimpse of the focus and marketing of each business (Figure 10). R.F. Campbell continued to advertise a wide variety of furniture, with the greatest variety at the lowest prices. While his tagline notes that he is the leader in furniture and undertaking goods, the latter was not emphasized and restricted to the traditional role of a furniture dealer as also supplying undertaking goods. In contrast, the advertisement of E.J. Ramsey has taken on the appearance of a more professional listing, with a significant though subtle difference in the wording. E.J. Ramsey promoted himself as "Funeral Director and Furniture Dealer," providing more of a service-oriented business than simply a retailer of goods. This shift is reflective of national trends related to the evolving and increasing role of the undertaker in the funeral and burial process, as well as a shift in the services offered and provided in the growing yet small town of Keota. While his advertisements into 1896 would continue to also include a "fine line of Furniture and Undertaking Goods," this distinction between goods and services that originated at this point would continue to play a significant role in the development of his business, and the natures of the subsequent businesses in the building throughout the next decades.

➤ E. J. RAMSEY, ◀

Funeral Director
and
Furniture Dealer.

CALL AND SEE MY
GOODS

PRICES LOWEST IN COUNTY.

IF YOU WANT
TO BUY A
SIDEBOARD
LOUNGE. TABLE.
Parlor Suit,
BEDROOM - SUIT.

Or anything to be found in a Furniture
Store, you will find them in the Great-
est Variety and at the extremely

LOWEST - PRICES
-AT-

R. F. Campbell's,
Leader in Furniture & Undertaking goods

Figure 10. Advertisements for E.J. Ramsey and R.F. Campbell (December 27, 1895, 1).

Across the country, the number of funeral directors rose significantly at the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century. In 1900, 8,000 undertakers were noted in the United States, increasing to 26,000 funeral directors by 1946. The funeral director or mortician used the shift in terminology to further distance themselves from 19th century undertakers, reflecting the professional nature of their business and the services offered.⁶⁴ By the late 19th century, more people were dying in hospitals than homes, further separating the process of death from home life. The need for a provider of services following the death then rose, and funeral directors

⁶⁴ Sloane 1991: 120, 201-202.

Ramsey Building

Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa

County and State

took charge of the deceased, performing all tasks needed after death.⁶⁵ By the end of the 19th century, undertakers would then also visit homes of the deceased to take care of the responsibilities associated with the death, including providing the coffin, notifying friends and relatives, organizing the funeral service in the parlor or at a church, coordinating the burial with cemetery and any services there, and actually preparing the body itself. The rise in popularity and standardization of embalming in the 19th century resulted in the need for training, helping undertakers to establish their credibility as offering professional services as funeral directors. Embalming quickly became part of the claim of professional status, and it was presented as both a modern practice and part of the tradition of funeral rites. It permitted public viewing with the body looking peaceful and sleeping, addressed sanitary concerns, and allowed a delay before the funeral itself. The procedures of embalming were initially taught by a master to an apprentice, but it then evolved to a more formal education process. In the first decades of the 20th century, the number of schools offering training for embalmers grew, and the requirements shifted from a six week class to a professional licensing process with review by state boards. Traveling instructors educated residents of rural areas, and colleges of mortuary sciences began to emerge. While the practice of embalming was completed in the home in the 19th century, it began to shift to a funeral home by the early 20th century. The standard inclusion of a parlor in the 19th century home began to disappear in early 20th century house designs, and the funeral parlor began to appear.⁶⁶ At the same time, the undertaker strove to create a feeling of the home for the funeral parlor, later the funeral home. Thus, the business establishment of the undertaker evolved to require physical space for the treatment of the body, viewing, and funeral service, as well as continuing to serve as a retail outlet for goods and services.⁶⁷ These trends are reflected in the businesses in Keota, best associated with the Ramsey Building from 1895 to 1937.

George T. Williams, long-time editor of the *Ida County Pioneer* in northwest Iowa, visited Keota and provided a lengthy article to the *Keota Eagle* on his observations and assessment of the community on August 21, 1896. He noted that Keota was an "enterprising and growing city of 1000 population" on the eastern edge of Keokuk County surrounded by a prosperous farm, fruit, and stock region. The prosperity of the community was reflected in the lack of a vacant building in town, and it was the "home of solid banking institutions, large general stores, and the very best of religious and education facilities." The local editor of the *Keota Eagle* did include a disclaimer that not all businesses in town were included in the overview of the community, so please excuse him for the oversights. Overall, "Keota certainly has just reason to feel proud of her numerous and well stocked general merchandise stores, for they would be a credit to a city many times her size. The buildings occupied by this particular line of business are all large and commodious, and have been erected with a view of carrying on this class of business."⁶⁸ While the business of E.J. Ramsey was one that was not addressed, the business of R.F. Campbell was included. He operated in a two-story building, carrying everything in the furniture line. This was the focus of his business, though he also operated an undertaking business and was a member of the Embalmers Association.⁶⁹ Interestingly, E.C. Coffman, who operated the livery in the new brick building in town, was noted as have a feeding capacity of 100 horses, 12-15 good rigs, and the only hearse in town.⁷⁰ Advertisements for R.F. Campbell through 1896 included only his furniture stock available, located in his old reliable stand, without any reference to undertaking goods and services.⁷¹ Though he advertised as Keota's Leading Furniture Man through 1896, he decided to close his business by February 1897, calling for all to visit him at home to close out their account.⁷² The *Keota Eagle* noted that this closure ended the long association with Henkle's building on the south side of Broadway with a furniture store, dating back to his

⁶⁵ Laderman 2003: 3-4

⁶⁶ Laderman 2003: 5-9.

⁶⁷ Laderman 2003: 16-19.

⁶⁸ George T. Williams, "Keota and Keokuk Co.," *Keota Eagle*, August 21, 1896, 1.

⁶⁹ George T. Williams, "Keota and Keokuk Co.," *Keota Eagle*, August 21, 1896, 2.

⁷⁰ George T. Williams, "Keota and Keokuk Co.," *Keota Eagle*, August 21, 1896, 2.

⁷¹ *Keota Eagle*, September 18, 1896, 1

⁷² *Keota Eagle*, December 25, 1896, *Keota Eagle*, February 19, 1897

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

original store in 1875. Martin Reinert of Sigourney then opened The Hub, a clothing store, in the building in March 1897.⁷³

With a lack of competition in town and an established place in the community, E.J. Ramsey apparently did not feel the need to advertise in the *Keota Eagle* over the next few years. The presence and events associated with his business and building are noted in other articles through this period. In March 1897, the newspaper noted that Jerome Wilcox was leasing Smith, Lewis & Co's lot next to Ramsey's furniture store and having a small building constructed for a barber shop, that route being cheaper than renting.⁷⁴ The barber shop escaped the fire that then struck Ramsey's building in October 1897 by being pulled out on to the street by a strong rope and 100 hands. The *Keota Eagle* noted that the beautiful building constructed and occupied by E.J. Ramsey, "one of the handsomest and best made business blocks in the town of Keota," was perhaps the last one expected for such a disastrous fire. The fire started in the rear end of the building, and it ended with the interior gutted and all joists falling, but the walls still standing. The fire raged for two hours, and fortitude of the wind and effort of citizens prevented it from spreading to other buildings throughout downtown Keota, other than a coal shed of Smith, Lewis, & Co lumber yard to the west. Total loss was valued at \$6,000 for furniture stock, with an additional \$1,000 rescued, and at \$3,350 for the building, with insurance on both combined carried at \$6,000. The article noted that a 2-inch stream of water for fire protection could have prevented much of the loss, and the following article was an editorial from the editor on the need for waterworks in Keota.⁷⁵ The *Washington Evening Journal* reported on the Ramsey fire as well, preparing to send their engine, hose cart, and company to battle the fire and protect the rest of the business district when they received word the fire was under control and back-up was not needed.⁷⁶ Work to rebuild started immediately, and the *Keota Eagle* reported in November that "The fire warped walls of the main building have been rebuilt and strongly braced and the front, in its neat trimming of red and white pressed brick, presents a much handsomer appearance than it did before the fire, so everyone says." The editor commended the Ramseys for sensibly building their rear ware room extension to the railroad of brick instead of corrugated iron, reducing both yearly expense and fire danger.⁷⁷ The *Washington Gazette* noted that "Roy Davis and Frank Edworthy are now busy rebuilding the Ramsey block and adding to it a one story addition." By November 27, "Roy Davis and his workmen returned home last evening from Keota, where they have just completed the Evans (sic) Ramsey building."⁷⁸ The brick one-story rear section extended near the railroad tracks, taking full advantage of its site selection on the south side of Broadway along the railroad tracks. This design permitted ease of unloading of goods shipped to the store in Keota via railroad, as well as the ease of the loading of goods or other items on to a train.

Similar to prior to the fire, E.J. Ramsey apparently felt no need to advertise his services as funeral director or furniture dealer over the next few years, with references to the business found in other articles. His services as an undertaker and funeral procedures followed in this period are highlighted in the March 1898 article of the sensational murder of "Dutch George" Sultzberger, who stored his money in his house rather than at a bank. The *Keota Eagle* noted that once the body was discovered by neighbors, it was moved to E.J. Ramsey's undertaking establishment. Here, it was examined by the coroner's jury and prepared for burial. "Throngs of people" from miles around Keota were then permitted to view the remains, with a constant stream of people in and out of the furniture store of E.J. Ramsey. The body was then taken by train to Letts, with the funeral service held there at the United Presbyterian Church.⁷⁹ The furniture aspect of his business was highlighted in a fictional article in April 1898 on "Jolly Uncle Josh," who took a newly married couple around the real town of Keota to set them up in a new home. The trio visited the furniture store of E.J. Ramsey, with the young bride

⁷³ *Keota Eagle*, March 12, 1897; Building later destroyed by the March 1899 fire.

⁷⁴ *Keota Eagle*, March 19, 1897, 8

⁷⁵ "By a Hair's Breadth," *Keota Eagle*, October 15, 1897

⁷⁶ "Keota Burning," *Washington Evening Journal*, October 9, 1897, 1

⁷⁷ *Keota Eagle*, November 26, 1897

⁷⁸ "Pick Ups," *Washington Evening Journal*, November 27, 1897, 4

⁷⁹ "The Crime in Detail," *Washington Evening Journal*, March 11, 1898, 2

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

excited to see the large display of furniture that he offered that she had heard much about. They bought a magnificent parlor suite, bedroom set, dining room set, complete kitchen outfit, and writing desk for the husband. After visiting a dozen other businesses for other items, "Uncle Josh" noted that he would later revisit Ramsey's store when needed to purchase a baby wagon, as E.J. Ramsey also carried a fine line of them, prompting the young bride to then faint.⁸⁰ As the 1896 article noted that E.C. Coffman owned the only hearse in town, he apparently worked in partnership with E.J. Ramsey through this period. The *Keota Eagle* reported on December 29, 1898 that liveryman Coffman and undertaker Ramsey had each bought a fine fur coat for \$45 each, which was elegant, comfortable, and serviceable, and "just right for their hard work together during the bitter winter weather."⁸¹ No advertisements for E.J. Ramsey, nor any other furniture or undertaking establishment in Keota, have been identified through the end of the 1890s.

Keota continued to grow through the end of the 1890s, with new services and further construction in the community. Prompted by the fire at the Ramsey Building and narrow escape of the remainder of the business district, discussion on the water works issue increased through 1897 and into 1898 with a special election held on May 31, 1898 that approved the municipal water works issue. A new well was drilled in the corner of the city park, with a bond issue then passed in fall for a water tower. Additional water mains were also laid throughout Keota. Completion of the water works lingered into 1899.⁸² Thomas Dupuis, Sr., who previously started the telephone company in Washington, sold the company in Washington and moved to Keota in 1898, starting the Keota Telephone Company with sons Thomas and Fred Dupuis. The telephone exchange was initially located in Eaton and Holmes Drug Store in the Columbian Block.⁸³ In January 1897, The Bank of Keota renewed its charter, with C.F. Singmaster, president; H. Henkle, vice president; E.G. Wilson, cashier. They then reorganized as The State Bank of Keota in 1899.⁸⁴ Construction in Keota in 1898 totaled \$36,300 including \$8,500 invested in the waterworks – noted as a new record for any year in the history of Keota. Houses were primarily listed among the construction projects, with a brick business house and dwelling combined for Mrs. Bray, a two-story brick business house for A.A. Shrader, and a barber shop for Sherman & Carris also noted.⁸⁵

With the completion of the waterworks extending into 1899, the commercial buildings in Keota continued to lack fire protection when fire struck again on the south side of Broadway in March 1899. The fire started in the haymow of the brick livery barn owned by George Bell on center Broadway, west of the Columbian Hotel at the corner of Fulton and Broadway. Over the next three hours, it spread to the five frame buildings to the west, contained before reaching E.J. Ramsey's brick building at the west end. The six destroyed buildings included the livery barn, E.B. Brown's one-story workshop, A.A. Pape's one-story building, E.J. Ramsey's one-story frame building occupied by the harness shop of George Osborn, P.H. Tallman's two-story frame building, and Henkle & Ritchey's two-story frame building (former furniture store). Thus the entire south side of center Broadway was destroyed, with the exception of the two-story brick Columbian Block at the east end (later demolished) and E.J. Ramsey's two-story brick building at the west end (extant).⁸⁶ Construction on these vacant lots spanned over the next few years, with four new buildings present by 1902. Eben Ramsey was the among the first to rebuild, contracting with Frank Epworth of Washington to construct a one-story brick building on his second lot on this block for George Osborn's harness business (extant). The building was completed for Osborn to move into his new store on center Broadway in September.⁸⁷ Work on the Charlton Block at the east end also started in 1899, a two-story, double-storefront, brick building (extant). The Bowers &

⁸⁰ "Jolly Uncle Josh," *Keota Eagle*, April 29, 1898

⁸¹ *Keota Eagle*, December 29, 1898

⁸² Bohrofen 1973: 119; "36,300 During A Year," *Keota Eagle*, December 29, 1898

⁸³ Bohrofen 1973: 117

⁸⁴ Bohrofen 1973: 58

⁸⁵ "36,300 During A Year," *Keota Eagle*, December 29, 1898

⁸⁶ "A Great Fire," *Keota Eagle*, March 30, 1899, 9; "Big Fire at Keota," *Washington Gazette*, March 31, 1899, 1

⁸⁷ *Keota Eagle*, June 15, 1899, 4; *Washington Evening Journal*, July 31, 1899; *Keota Eagle*, September 21, 1899, 1

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Sanders then moved their successful general store into the double-storefront space in March 1900, and the Keota Telephone Exchange moved from the drug store to the east into the second story of the building.⁸⁸ Following the fire, the town of Keota bought 600 feet of hose in May 1899 to provide fire protection for every building in Keota, as was the primary object of the waterworks. The first run for new hose cart was the fire at the house of Mayor O.B. Jones on July 29, 1899. The waterworks were officially completed on July 6, 1899, including a brick pump house, 21 hydrants, 1762 feet of 6-inch mains, and 5476 feet of 4-inch mains.⁸⁹ A franchise for an electric light plant was also granted in 1899, with the plant complete and open in September.⁹⁰ By 1900, the population of Keota had grown officially to 996 residents.

The prosperity of the community, and the potential demand for additional undertaker services and furniture store, attracted the attention of embalmers Mr. and Mrs. C.L. Starr and former resident Robert L. Richardson (who had married Elizabeth Starr). The *Keota Eagle* reported in March 1901 that they had formed a partnership, with the business to be opened as soon as the furniture was stocked. The furniture and undertaking business would occupy the first story and one room on the second story of the Gray block on west Broadway (three story brick). The newspaper noted that Mr. and Mrs. C.L. Starr were among the oldest licensed embalmers in the state of Iowa, with 20 years of experience. By April, they had sufficient furniture stock to open, which was good as the *Keota Eagle* reported that there was such high demand for furniture this spring that it was near impossible to get an order filled. Advertisements for Richardson & Starr throughout 1901 marketed the business as the New Furniture Store with bedrooms, couches, side boards, cupboards, wardrobes, book cases, iron beds, springs and mattresses, dining chairs, and tables, as well as picture framing and upholstering. They also had a full line of undertaking goods and called attention their unique offering of a lady embalmer in Keota.⁹¹ The partnership split in 1902, with C.L. Starr opening a similar business in Sigourney and R.L. Richardson maintaining the business in Keota.⁹² In February 1903, R.L. Richardson was granted a state license as undertaker and embalmer by the State Board of Health after taking the exam several weeks prior in Des Moines – one of only 26 of 85 that passed the exam for licensure. As a licensed embalmer, he could then legally take care of any phase of undertaking work, as requirements of the law governing the work were becoming more stringent year by year.⁹³ Advertisements for R.L. Richardson promoted his furniture store for its style, reliability, and value, located in the three-story brick on W. Broadway (demolished). With competition in town, E.J. Ramsey ran advertisements for Ramsey's Furniture and Undertaking Store from late 1902 through early 1903, with furniture noted in the latest fashions at low prices.⁹⁴ Both Eben J. Ramsey and Robert L. Richardson were noted as furniture dealers in the *A Genealogical and Biographical History of Keokuk County, Iowa* in 1903, and both were sons of prominent earlier Keota residents.⁹⁵

The 1902 Sanborn map depicts E.J. Ramsey's furniture and undertaking store at the west end of the "center" block of Broadway (Figures 11-12). The building is depicted as a free-standing two-story building with a one-story rear addition, stretching to the railroad siding behind the building. There are only three other two-story brick buildings to the east or west on the south side, the two-story city hall / lodge building in the middle of the west block (demolished), the Charlton Block toward the east end of the center block (extant), and the two-story Columbian Block at the east end (demolished). The "center" block of Broadway from Ellis to Fulton continues to stand out for its high percentage of brick buildings, including five buildings on the south side (three two-story, two one-story) and nine buildings on the north side (one two-story and eight one-story). The "west" block of

⁸⁸ *Keota Eagle*, March 1, 1900, 1; "A Fine Store," *Keota Eagle*, March 8, 1900, 1; *Keota Eagle*, December 27, 1900, 4; Bohrofen 1973: 117

⁸⁹ Bohrofen 1973: 119, 122;

⁹⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 105, 119

⁹¹ *Keota Eagle*, March 14, 1901, 1; *Keota Eagle*, April 18, 1901, 7; *Keota Eagle*, May 2, 1901, 6; *Keota Eagle*, August 1, 1901, 5; *Keota Eagle*, August 8, 1901; "Funeral Here for R.L. Richardson, 80," *Keota Eagle*, June 20, 1946

⁹² *Keokuk County News*, November 6, 1902; *Keota Eagle*, May 21, 1903

⁹³ *Keota Eagle*, February 26, 1903

⁹⁴ *Keota Eagle*, November 13, 1902, 5;

⁹⁵ *A Genealogical and Biographical History of Keokuk County, Iowa* 1903: 191, 203.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 11. 1902 Sanborn fire insurance map of "west" and part of "center" Broadway in Keota (page 1).
yellow = frame, pink = brick, blue = stone, gray = iron cladding, green = special fire risk



Figure 12. 1902 Sanborn fire insurance map of part of "center" Broadway and "east" Broadway in Keota (page 2).

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Broadway has the three-story brick building at the corner with Ellis occupied by Richardson's furniture and undertaking business (demolished) and three two-story brick buildings to the west (all demolished). Other frame buildings on the west, center, and east blocks are primarily one-story, with a few two-story buildings present. Thus, E.J. Ramsey brick furniture store continues to stand out in 1902 as one of the larger and more significant buildings within the commercial development of downtown Keota, and the oldest among the handful of extant two-story buildings representing the second generation development of Keota from the 1890s into the early 1900s.

This wave of commercial development of Keota continued for the next few years with the construction of three additional key two-story brick buildings. Harmon Henkle demolished his building in the center of the north side of "center" Broadway, noted as vacant on the 1902 map and vacated by Bowers & Sanders when they moved their general store into the new Charlton Block on the south side in 1900. He constructed the two-story double-storefront Henkle Block in 1903, renting the two stores (extant). The improvements on this half of the north side of the center block included concrete sidewalks constructed by Henkle, Leinen & Son, and Hulse & Co to the west, with Farmers Savings Bank and Mrs. D. McFarlane reported as soon to follow in October 1903 to complete concrete sidewalks from Henkle's new block to Star Drug Store at the west corner. Concrete sidewalks followed on other properties over the next ten years, with the last board sidewalk removed in downtown Keota in May 1912.⁹⁶ The Union State Bank was organized in April 1903 with A.E. Stewart, president; R.M. Thomson, vice president; and John Randolph, cashier. They constructed a two-story, double-storefront bank building in 1903 on the northeast corner of Broadway and Fulton, at the west end of "east" Broadway (extant). The building was completed and opened for business on February 23, 1904, though final interior work continued through July.⁹⁷ The partnership of C.F. Singmaster, Thomas Singmaster, and H. Henkle then built the two-story brick building to the immediate west of E.J. Ramsey's building in 1904 as a new post office, leasing the building for \$300 annually for ten years to the government (Figure 13). The post office moved here on November 1, 1904, and the second story was used as a hall.⁹⁸ The two-story brick building on two lots with three narrow storefronts to the immediate east of E.J. Ramsey's building was later constructed in 1912, with lodge rooms on the second story.

E.J. Ramsey continued to operate his furniture and undertaking business through the end of 1907, a total of 12 years in this building and through a period of prosperity for Keota. He married his second wife Lydia Teuscher on June 1, 1904, moving to a new home on west Broadway.⁹⁹ Few advertisements for Ramsey or Richardson have been identified through these years, with both businesses apparently successfully operating in a compatible manner. The Richardson Furniture advertisements included furniture stock and sales, as well as noting that R.L. Richardson was a licensed embalmer. Though not publicized in his advertisements, E.J. Ramsey did become a licensed embalmer in this period, noted as license #852 in the *Iowa Health Bulletin*.¹⁰⁰ In fall 1907, his wife Lydia T. Ramsey fell seriously ill, with a note that her sister Cora Teuscher, who worked in the George H. Paul land office in Washington, was called home on this account.¹⁰¹ Due to the continued ill health of his wife and need for more time to care for her, E.J. Ramsey sold his furniture stock to R.L. Richardson in early January 1908. Richardson combined the furniture stock, moving into the Ramsey Building with the finest stock of furniture in a commodious and convenient place of business.¹⁰² Thus, Keota returned to only one furniture and undertaking business, and it continued to be located in this building. In December 1908, John L. Ramsey died, and the ownership of the building eventually transferred to E.J. and Lydia T. Ramsey.

⁹⁶ Bohrofen 1973: 27, 37

⁹⁷ Bohrofen 1973: 58

⁹⁸ "New P.O. Room," *Keota Eagle*, July 28, 1904; *Keota Eagle*, November 10, 1904

⁹⁹ *Keota Eagle*, June 2, 1904, 1

¹⁰⁰ *Keota Eagle*, February 25, 1904, 8; *Keota Eagle*, October 27, 1904; *Keota Eagle*, December 29, 1904, 8; R.L. Richardson was license #580, thus licensed earlier than Ramsey. *Iowa Health Bulletin*, July/August 1909, 86-87.

¹⁰¹ *Washington Evening Journal*, November 22, 1907

¹⁰² *Washington Evening Journal*, January 8, 1908

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

They owned and leased it for several years, with R.L. Richardson remaining in business at this location. By January 1909, E.J. Ramsey is noted as one of the traveling representatives for the George H. Paul Company, a real estate and land company based in Washington, and the only one from Keota.¹⁰³ He traveled extensively for the next few years for the company. He then operated a bakery and restaurant for a few years, starting in 1912. In October 1915, E.J. Ramsey bought the City Drug Store, with his brother John N. Ramsey, a long-time pharmacist in Cedar Rapids, joining him in the business in 1919. The brothers operated the Ramsey Drug Company into the 1930s, with John N. Ramsey dying on December 15, 1937 and E.J. Ramsey dying on April 15, 1939. In tribute to his memory as one of the leading businessmen of Keota, the businesses in town were closed during the funeral service of Eben J. Ramsey.¹⁰⁴



Figure 13. Ramsey Building (at left) in late 1900s.¹⁰⁵
after 1904 construction of post office building to west (at right) and before 1912 construction of building to east

¹⁰³ "The Geo. H. Paul Company," *Washington Evening Journal*, January 30, 1909, 2;

¹⁰⁴ *Keota Eagle*, October 28, 1915; "Keota Couple Observes Fiftieth Wedding Event," *Muscatine Journal*, January 1, 1937, 2; "John N. Ramsey, 76, Died on Birth Date," *Keota Eagle*, December 16, 1937; "E.J. Ramsey, 72, Claimed by Death," *Keota Eagle*, April 20, 1939, 1

¹⁰⁵ Flynn collection.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Continuity of the furniture and undertaking business in the Ramsey Building, 1908-1921

Though E.J. Ramsey sold his business in the two-story brick building at 204 E. Broadway, the building would continue to be strongly associated with the furniture and undertaking business in Keota for the next several decades. The business in the building would pass through three owners over the next 12 years, but it remained as the only furniture store or undertaker in Keota through this period. Both aspects of the business played a significant role in Keota. The furniture store provided a wide range of goods locally for residents of Keota and the surrounding area. The undertaker goods and service filled a key need for the community at the time of a death of a member. The businesses through this period provide a similar level and combination of these services. The population of Keota did not change significantly through this period, declining slightly from 996 in 1900 to 988 in 1910 before growing slightly more to 1,025 in 1920. Thus, one business satisfied the needs of the community through these years.

In early January 1908, E.J. Ramsey sold his furniture stock to R.L. Richardson, retaining ownership of the two-story brick building. The initial announcement for Richardson noted that he would move into Ramsey's room, which was a commodious and convenient place of business. Advertisements by January 16 noted that he was located one door east of the post office (this building), with the phone of 80 and 80 ½. Thus, he appears to have utilized both stories of the building for his business. He had a large surplus of furniture on hand over the next couple of months, with the combined stock of both of the local furniture businesses.¹⁰⁶ Similar to Ramsey previously, Richardson did not frequently advertise, as the only business offering these goods and services in Keota. A car load of new furniture for R.L. Richardson in November 1909 included go carts (baby carriages), couches, rockers, metal beds, and several parlor suites. He also had an "undertaking department" with his business.¹⁰⁷ The 1910 census interestingly lists Robert L. Richardson (age 44) as an undertaker at a furniture store, combining both aspects of his business and professions. Ed C. (Shorty) Coffman apparently continued to provide funeral-related services, perhaps in conjunction with Richardson, as he advertised in May 1909 that he had a fine hearse and rubber tired cabs for funerals at reasonable prices.¹⁰⁸ R.L. Richardson continued to advertise "furniture and undertaking" as his business through 1911, providing articles of furniture for every room in the house.¹⁰⁹ He urged people in spring 1912 to replace old worn furniture with new furniture during their annual house cleaning.¹¹⁰ In July 1912, he sold the furniture and undertaking business, preparing to move to Minnesota. The editor of the *Keota Eagle*, who was his brother, noted that they were sorry to see him leave and that his record of successful business enterprise spoke for itself.¹¹¹

The furniture and undertaking business was sold to Mark and Frank Hoskins in 1912. Mark Hoskins became a licensed embalmer in Des Moines in 1908, initially entering a partnership with William O'Donoghue. The partnership lasted for two years, and then Mark Hoskins opened up a business with his brother Frank Hoskins in Ollie, Iowa (about 12 miles southwest of Keota in southern Keokuk County). They remained there until 1912 when they sold the business in Ollie and bought the business in the significantly larger town of Keota.¹¹² August and September were spent in transition between the two businesses, with work completed on the Ramsey Building during this period. The *Keota Eagle* reported on August 22, 1912: "E.J. Ramsey is having some alterations made at the Hoskins furniture store. He has had the old elevator taken out and will paint and paper wherever needed. A fuel room has also been excavated at the rear."¹¹³ The grand opening was then

¹⁰⁶ *Washington Evening Journal*, January 8, 1908; *Keota Eagle*, January 16, 1908, 4; *Keota Eagle*, January 30, 1908

¹⁰⁷ *Keota Eagle*, November 11, 1909

¹⁰⁸ Bohrofen 1973: 136

¹⁰⁹ *Keota Eagle*, February 23, 1911, 8

¹¹⁰ *Keota Eagle*, March 21, 1912, 5

¹¹¹ *Keota Eagle*, July 4, 1912, 7; *Keota Eagle*, August 1, 1912; "Funeral Here for R.L. Richardson, 80," *Keota Eagle*, June 20, 1946

¹¹² Halstead, nd: 22; "Mark Hoskins Buys Davies Funeral Home at Fairfield," *Keota Eagle*, May 18, 1922; *Keota Eagle*, September 26, 1912.

¹¹³ *Keota Eagle*, August 22, 1912

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

held on Saturday, September 21, 1912, including a pumpkin seed guessing contest with the prize of a \$25 leather rocker and evening concert in the store by the Victoria Orchestra. The Hoskins Brothers business promoted itself in three-fold – pianos, furniture, and undertaking. They emphasized that in addition to furniture and pianos, they also offered a full line of popular sheet music.¹¹⁴ The *Keota Eagle* reported the following week that the grand opening attracted a large crowd and contributed to making Keota a lively place on Saturday evening, and a photograph from the day shows a large crowd as well (Figure 14)¹¹⁵. The photograph shows the original configuration of the storefront, with two large display windows with transoms, end storefront window in the recessed entry vestibule, and the double wood door entry with transom. The brick banding on the building and paired two-over-two-light double-hung windows are also clearly visible. The new Charlton Building immediately to the east, a two-story brick building on two lots with three storefronts, was completed in August 1912, with a grand opening for the new drug store of W.T. Shearer held on the same day.¹¹⁶



Figure 14. Ramsey Building (in middle) on Sept 21, 1912 for opening of Hoskins Brothers.¹¹⁷

Hoskins Bros advertised a wide variety of household furniture and other goods to fully furnish a modern home over the next few years. Advertisements noted that patrons were welcome in the store, whether they were ready to buy or not. They offered furniture, high grade pianos, and rugs, as well as sheet music and window glass.¹¹⁸ With a successful first six months, Mark E. Hoskins and Frank A. Hoskins bought this building on lot 12 from E.J. and L.T. Ramsey on April 1, 1913.¹¹⁹ By May, they promoted that they were agents for Steger &

¹¹⁴ *Keota Eagle*, September 19, 1912.

¹¹⁵ *Keota Eagle*, September 26, 1912; Bohrofen 1973: 54.

¹¹⁶ *Keota Eagle*, April 25, 1912; *Keota Eagle*, July 11, 1912; *Keota Eagle*, August 31, 1912; *Keota Eagle*, Sept. 26, 1912.

¹¹⁷ Flynn collection; Bohrofen 1973: 54.

¹¹⁸ *Keota Eagle*, October 10, 1912

¹¹⁹ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 9, page 280

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Sons High Grade Pianos, available in any style and finish. They also had a large line of library tables and a complete line of rugs in all sizes, grades, and prices.¹²⁰ With warmer weather, porch furniture was promoted, in hickory and other styles. They also had full suites of dining room furniture and a complete line of rockers.¹²¹ Their tag line under "Hoskins Bros" through this period read "Furniture, Rugs, Pianos, Undertaking." The second annual opening was held at the store on September 13, 1913, again with a pumpkin seed guessing contest and rug giveaways, and the orchestra once again provided an evening concert in the store. The advertisement included photographs of Mark E. Hoskins (licensed embalmer 1146) and Frank A. Hoskins (licensed embalmer 1508).¹²² Thus, both brothers were officially licensed by this time, with Frank appearing to have a later license number than Mark, who had been licensed in 1908.

While the population of the town of Keota did not grow substantially through the 1910s, the community benefited from increased connections with the surrounding area. The first automobiles appeared across the country and in Keota in the early 1900s, significantly changing transportation and connectivity. Keota was noted to have 15 vehicles in town by 1908. The first state vehicular tax went into effect on July 1, 1911, associated with licensed plates for vehicles and utilized by counties for road and bridge work. The best routes for automobile travel across Iowa were identified, designated, and marked over the next few years. Routes from the Mississippi River to Missouri River were selected, including the I.O.A. Short Line through Keota in 1911 (now Highway 92). This route competed with a route about 25 miles to the north (now I-80) for a test of the quickest way across Iowa in December 1912, with the southern route through Keota noted as the fastest. More formal designation of routes in 1913 resulted in the route from Davenport to Council Bluffs through Keota being renamed the Great White Way, with a slight change in the western section to travel through Des Moines rather than straight west from Oskaloosa. At 330 miles, it was 20 miles shorter than any other route across the state through Des Moines. White poles were added along the road to mark the route.¹²³ A large advertisement in the *Des Moines Register* on August 13, 1914 depicted the route of the Great White Way (or White Pole Road), as well as towns and businesses along the way. Keota was noted as a busy shopping center of over 1,000 residents on the route, as well as the shipping point of a large stock raising district. A number of fine draft and carriage horses were raised and shipped from here, and travelers on the road were encouraged to visit Keota and its surrounding horse ranches. All of the modern improvements known to a little city were found here, with a number of businesses listed along with the three banks. The Iowa Auto Company and Hoover & Niccum Auto Company provided services for automobiles and travelers.¹²⁴ By April 1915, Keota had agents selling six different automobiles – Cadillac, Ford, Overland, Dodge, Studebaker, and Velie.¹²⁵ With the road improvements through the 1910s and into the 1920s, shoppers could more easily visit businesses in other communities to shop for goods, as well as drive further to larger communities to shop among a better selection of goods¹²⁶.

With increased automobile traffic, businesses in Keota catered to travelers as well as the surrounding area. Hoskins Bros continued to offer "pianos, furniture, undertaking, rugs" to patrons of their store through 1914 and 1915. Advertisements promoted furniture as the ideal Christmas gift and encouraged people to get their pictures framed early for the holidays. A stock reduction sale in August 1914 included rugs, library tables, leather couches and davenports, twin pedestal tables, Sturgis go carts, Sellers Kitchen Cabinets, and brass and iron beds. They also reminded people that they continued to carry pianos. In February 1915, Hoskins

¹²⁰ *Keota Eagle*, May 29, 1913

¹²¹ *Keota Eagle*, June 19, 1913

¹²² *Keota Eagle*, September 11, 1913

¹²³ Bohrofen 1973: 138, 140

¹²⁴ *Des Moines Register*, August 13, 1914, 14

¹²⁵ Bohrofen 1973: 140

¹²⁶ Nash 2002: E9

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Bros imported a line of sea grass furniture from Hong Kong, offered in limited supply.¹²⁷ The 1915 Iowa census perhaps distinguishes the partnership of the brothers, as Mark Hoskins (age 32) is listed as a furniture and undertaker while his brother Frank Hoskins (age 24) is listed as a merchant.¹²⁸ The increased popularity of the automobile also affected the funeral industry by the 1910s. The *Keota Eagle* reported a trip to Des Moines by Mark Hoskins and Gus Hochstadler in June 1915, followed by Gus Hochstadler buying an automobile hearse in August 1915. It was used for the first time in early September 1915 for the funeral procession of R.F. Moore that went to Washington.¹²⁹ E.C. Coffman, traditionally associated with this role in Keota, then purchased "the Keota funeral motor car" in early January 1916, and he advertised as prepared to answer calls day or night.¹³⁰ The Hoskins Bros were also active in community affairs in this period, with Frank Hoskins serving on the committee for "National Pay Up Week" in January 1916 for the Keota Commercial Club and the business participating in the event.¹³¹

The 1916 Sanborn fire insurance maps shows the results of the community development through this period, as well as the additional business types in town serving the automobile (Figures 15-16). The Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad continued to stretch along the south side of the south blocks of Broadway. Hoskins Bros is the only furniture store depicted in Keota, serving the needs of residents to furnish their homes. The two-story building is noted with furniture in the main two-story section, upholstery in the north part of the rear section, and a warehouse in the remainder of the rear one-story section extending south to the railroad. The building continues to sit at the west end of "center" Broadway, which stands out as the core block in the commercial district of Keota. One and two story brick buildings line both sides of the street, with only a frame barber shop that was iron clad on the south side and a frame millinery on the north side filling out the block. The vast majority of these buildings remain extant in Keota, though several one-story building have later façade cladding. The Keota Hospital is noted in the second story of the 1903 Henkle Block in the center of the north side, which operated here from 1913 to 1917.¹³² The block of "west" Broadway reflects a similar mix of buildings on the north side as in 1902, with the four brick buildings at the east end and frame buildings further to the west. The two-story brick building west of the corner three-story brick building was extensively remodeled in 1915 for the Princess Theater, installing new seats for a capacity of 250 people, electric lights, ventilating fans, and a steel ceiling.¹³³ The south side of the block continues to have the earlier two-story brick city hall / fire department building, between the buildings now associated with the Keota Lumber Company and the new building clad in concrete for C.F. Singmaster & Sons, the largest importer and breeder of horses in the Keota vicinity. The lumber business and south side of the "center" block of Broadway are also depicted in a postcard from this period (Figure 17). The retail businesses of Keota continue on the west half of the "east" block of Broadway, east of Fulton. The north side has the two-story corner bank block, with a hardware store in the east storefront, and then one-story buildings to the east. The south side has a large new one-story brick combination restaurant and garage with a capacity of 35 cars (likely catering to travelers), with a small frame building and the brick one-story newspaper / printing office. This half block also remains mostly intact, with the later post office at the east end of the north side. The east half of the "east" block and block further east on Broadway has less dense construction, with more agriculturally related businesses. Two brick garages, a brick tin shop, and a brick blacksmith building are found on this section of Broadway, along with two implement stores, a feed yard, sales building, feed mill, elevator, and buildings for J.O. Singmaster's branch of the family horse business.

¹²⁷ *Keota Eagle*, December 4, 1913; *Keota Eagle*, January 1, 1914, 5; *Keota Eagle*, August 20, 1914; *Keota Eagle*, August 27, 1914, 5; *Keota Eagle*, February 18, 1915, 4

¹²⁸ Census records accessed on Ancestry.com, September 2016.

¹²⁹ *Keota Eagle*, June 24, 1915, 5; *Keota Eagle*, September 9, 1915, 5; Bohrofen 1973: 140

¹³⁰ *Keota Eagle*, January 6, 1916, 2

¹³¹ *Ottumwa Tri-Weekly Courier*, January 18, 1916, 8; *Keota Eagle*, January 27, 1916, 6

¹³² Bohrofen 1973: 137

¹³³ Bohrofen 1973: 143

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 15. 1916 Sanborn fire insurance map of "west," "center," and part of "east" Broadway in Keota (page 3).
yellow = frame, pink = brick, blue = concrete block, gray = iron clad

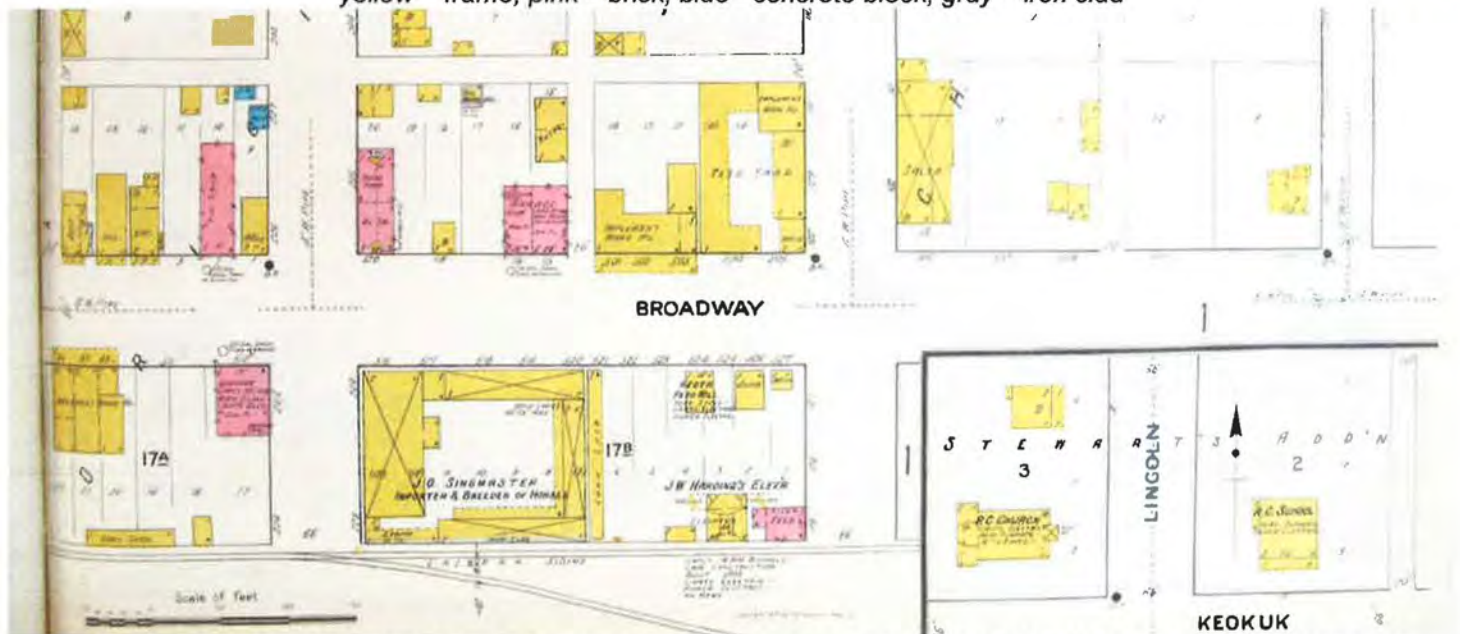


Figure 16. 1916 Sanborn fire insurance map of part of "east" Broadway and further east in Keota (page 4).

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 17. South side of Broadway around 1916, with Ramsey Building near center (shorter two-story building).¹³⁴

In late March 1917, the Hoskins Bros sold the two-story brick building, as well as furniture and undertaking business to Harley (Harly) A. Scott of Milton, Iowa. The building transferred to this new owner on March 24, 1917, and the Hoskins Bros ran one last advertisement in the *Keota Eagle* on April 5, 1917 to thank the kind people of Keota and vicinity for their liberal patronage over the last five years. They noted that H.A. Scott came highly recommended to them, an undertaker with many years of experience.¹³⁵ The next week, the *Keota Eagle* reported that Mark Hoskins was jubilant about getting out of the furniture business, as it tied up significant money in stock at all times, but thought he might continue elsewhere as an undertaker.¹³⁶ The notes are interesting in the push and pull between the two aspects of the business – furniture and undertaking. While the early furniture stores had included undertaking goods and expanded into undertaking services, by the 1910s, the development of the profession of the undertaker, or funeral director, resulted in an emphasis and pull in that direction as opposed to the traditional furniture business. At the same time, the two remained intertwined for the next several years in Keota. However, Mark Hoskins did make the shift away from the furniture aspect of the traditionally combined business. He traveled as a salesman for the National Casket Company for a few years, and then he bought the Davies undertaking business in Fairfield in May 1922, located near the home of his parents. He ran the Hoskins Funeral Home in Fairfield then until 1954.¹³⁷

The overall nature of the business of H.A. Scott appears to be a similar combination of furniture and undertaking as the previous four businesses in the building. His initial advertisement on April 5, 1917 noted that he had bought the furniture and undertaking business of the Hoskins Brothers and extended a hearty

¹³⁴ Flynn collection; Bohrofen 1973: 43.

¹³⁵ *Keota Eagle*, April 5, 1917

¹³⁶ *Keota Eagle*, April 12, 1917, 6

¹³⁷ Halstead, nd: 22; "Mark Hoskins Buys Davies Funeral Home at Fairfield," *Keota Eagle*, May 18, 1922

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

invitation to come in and get acquainted whether looking to buy or not.¹³⁸ The advertisements through 1919 include "furniture of quality" and a line of floor coverings, with undertaking as a specialty. Floor coverings included rugs and linoleums, a relatively new product in this period. Furniture continued to be promoted as an excellent gift for Christmas. Window shades were also added to his line by July 1919.¹³⁹ He included an advertisement for his business on a 1919 calendar promoting Keota businesses, which also included a series of panoramic photographs of the business district along Broadway (Figures 18-23). The exterior photograph shows the same storefront and upper story detail as previous, and the interior photograph shows an open floor



Figure 18. c.1918 image of south Broadway, cropped with Ramsey Building at center.¹⁴⁰



Figure 19. c.1918 image of inside of interior of building with business of H.A. Scott.

¹³⁸ *Keota Eagle*, April 5, 1917

¹³⁹ *Keota Eagle*, April 19, 1917, 3; *Keota Eagle*, August 30, 1917, 5; *Keota Eagle*, November 15, 1917, 7; *Keota Eagle*, December 13, 1917, 7; *Keota Eagle*, Feb. 14, 1918, 2; *Keota Eagle*, July 3, 1919, 2; *Keota Eagle*, August 14, 1919, 2

¹⁴⁰ 1919 wall calendar and "Boost Your Town" poster both in collection of the Keota Historical Museum, Keota, IA.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 20. c.1918 image of "east" Broadway, looking east from Fulton.



Figure 21. c.1918 image of "center" Broadway, looking west from east end from Fulton.



Figure 22. c.1918 image of "center" Broadway, looking east from west end from Ellis (Ramsey Building at right).



Figure 23. c.1918 image of "west" Broadway, looking west from Ellis.

Ramsey Building

Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa

County and State

plan for display space for furniture. The entry to the rear section and staircase to second story are visible in the background. The streetscape panoramic photographs display downtown Keota visually along Broadway, as interpreted from the Sanborn fire insurance maps. The block of "center" Broadway from Fulton to Ellis is the focus of the commercial district, with additional buildings spanning the half block to the east from Fulton and the half block to the west from Ellis. The majority of the commercial buildings are one story in height, with a number of two story brick buildings also present and the one three-story brick building at the northwest corner of Broadway and Ellis from 1876 during the initial wave of construction in Keota.

While his earlier advertisements focused on the retail furniture aspect of his business, the advertisements shifted and expanded by 1920. With increased connectivity with Washington to the east, the McNamara Undertaking Company advertised in the *Keota Eagle* in 1919 and 1920, extending their services to residents of Keota, Harper, Clear Creek, and the surrounding vicinity. They had an experienced licensed embalmer, as well as a modern ambulance. No additional charges were incurred for the distance to town.¹⁴¹ It was perhaps this competition that spurred H.A. Scott to further stress his own experience. By March 1920, his advertisements included "H.A. Scott - furniture and funeral director," again marking the shift and distinction in undertaking services and the further expanded services of a funeral director.¹⁴² In October 1920, H.A. Scott further called attention to his professional credentials and services, noting that he had 15 years of experience. His licensed embalmer number of 700 also indicates his long-standing licensure, earlier than that of Mark Hoskins. He also noted that he had a lady assistant, and he was ready to serve day or night. His office number was 80, the same number earlier associated with this building.¹⁴³ The 1920 census, however, lists Harley (Harly) Scott as a 50-year-old furniture merchant.¹⁴⁴ Furniture advertisements for H.A. Scott note "furniture and undertaking" or "undertaking a specialty" through 1921. A wide variety of floor coverings and furniture continued to be offered, including davenport, library tables, book shelves, rockers, and kitchen cabinets.¹⁴⁵ Advertisements for his expert services as a "funeral director and embalmer" focus more attention on this aspect of his business, along with offering the services of a lady assistant as well. By September 1921, he also noted that he had a "funeral home" at your service, listed with the office phone number of 80 for the store.¹⁴⁶ This trend towards a separation of the two primary aspects of the business would continue to a greater degree over the next several years.

Evolution of the funeral and furniture industries, 1921-1937

By the 1920s, the funeral home became the primary location for carrying out responsibilities related to death and burial. With the increase in "funeral directors" in the 1910s, the old "undertaking parlor" was replaced by the "funeral home." The funeral home included an embalming room, as well as office and stock room. Larger funeral homes by the 1920s and 1930s also included chapels, viewing rooms, and guest rooms, offering a full set of services in house for the bereaved family. These funeral homes resulted in a separation of the traditional pairing with the furniture store and the rise of a specialized building type. The funeral home strove to create a domestic atmosphere, providing the comfort of home for the family. The "parlor" became the "viewing room" or "slumber room," evoking images of peaceful sleep for the deceased. The inclusion of a chapel introduced religious qualities into the funeral home, often completed with a pipe organ. Open houses were held for the public, increasing interaction with residences and providing a degree of comfort with the space. The family of the funeral director often lived in the funeral home by the 1930s, increasing the role of his wife in the operations as well as further emphasizing the home atmosphere. This domestic imagery and

¹⁴¹ *Keota Eagle*, August 7, 1919, 8; *Keota Eagle*, May 6, 1920, 3; *Keota Eagle*, October 7, 1920, 7

¹⁴² *Keota Eagle*, March 18, 1920

¹⁴³ *Keota Eagle*, October 14, 1920;

¹⁴⁴ Census records accessed on Ancestry.com in September 2016

¹⁴⁵ *Keota Eagle*, January 13, 1921, 5; *Keota Eagle*, January 27, 1921, 4; *Keota Eagle*, August 4, 1921, 8)

¹⁴⁶ *Keota Eagle*, September 22, 1921, 5

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

religious connection with inclusion of a chapel was tied to the success of the funeral home in this period. Funeral homes also often provide communities and hospitals with ambulance services in this period, with a hearse easily adapted for use as an ambulance. These services brought the funeral director into a wider range of services and interactions with the residents than just services related to death.¹⁴⁷ These national trends would play out in the small town of Keota over the next two decades, strongly associated with and reflected by the Ramsey Building.

As noted, the rise of the automobile and the road improvements that began in the 1910s marked a shift in the culture of the country and impacted businesses in large and small towns. Improved road conditions and new automobile routes brought more people into towns more frequently. Businesses in a community could market to a broader area, both attracting a wider population and losing patrons to businesses in other communities. Communities that were bypassed by new routes began to enter decline by the 1920s and 1930s, with rural residents moving into larger urban areas.¹⁴⁸ Though previously cited as having a population of over 1,000, Keota benefited from increased connectivity in the 1910s that stimulated economic growth for the community to actually grow to an official population of 1,025 in 1920. The community was the largest town in eastern Keokuk County and western Washington County, sitting along the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad and Great White Way between the county seat of Washington in Washington County to the east and the county seat of Sigourney in Keokuk County. In 1920, the population of Sigourney was 2,210, and the population of Washington stood at 4,697. Thus, Keota retained a set of local businesses that marketed to the surrounding agricultural region but also competed with these larger communities. Through the 1920s, the population of Keota would decline to 955 by 1930, while the population of Sigourney rose to 2,262 and Washington grew to 4,814 in this same period. With the declining rural population in the 1930s, the population of Keota again grew to 1,032 by 1940, with the populations of Sigourney and Washington also increasing by 1940 to 2,355 and 5,227 respectively. Local businessmen in Keota strove through this period to sustain their economic prosperity and provide goods and services locally for residents of the town and surrounding region.

The advertisements of H.A. Scott in 1920 and 1921 marked a further emphasis on his professional credentials as a licensed embalmer and funeral director that indicated a sputtering start to the separation of furniture and funeral aspects of the business that would play out through the 1920s and become fully realized by the 1930s. His advertisements through 1921 noted "furniture and undertaking," but, with increased competition from the McNamara Undertaking Company, he then began to focus further on his training and professional services offered.¹⁴⁹ By September 22, 1921, he advertised a "funeral home at your service," marking a new emphasis on these services.¹⁵⁰ Advertisements in October 1921 cited H.A. Scott as a funeral director and embalmer, with expert service, a funeral home, and a lady assistant.¹⁵¹ The rise in the number of funeral directors in this period then brought a new resident to Keota in 1921. Frank Fay Marsh grew up in Kalona, noted as a 32-year-old barber in the 1920 census. He graduated from Worsham College of Mortuary Science in Chicago in 1921, and he moved to Keota on September 27, 1921.¹⁵² On October 6, 1921, the *Keota Eagle* reported that F.F. Marsh, a licensed embalmer and funeral director, had moved to Keota from Kalona, and he had opened an undertaker parlor in the Charlton building near to the drug store (phone 22). He offered the services of a skilled and considerate undertaker, with hands that could be trusted with all the details in connection with funerals and with which the bereaved are too often burdened.¹⁵³ He began to run an advertisement in the *Keota Eagle* that would be consistently repeated for several years emphasizing the important role of the funeral director. He noted the scientific training, technical skills, modern equipment, and sanitary facilities

¹⁴⁷ Laderman 2003: 19-20, 23-27.

¹⁴⁸ Nash 2002: E9

¹⁴⁹ *Keota Eagle*, January 13, 1921, 5; *Keota Eagle*, January 27, 1921, 4; *Keota Eagle*, August 4, 1921, 8

¹⁵⁰ *Keota Eagle*, September 22, 1921, 5

¹⁵¹ *Keota Eagle*, October 27, 1921

¹⁵² "Frank Marsh Died at Washington, Monday, October 8," *Keota Eagle*, October 11, 1956.

¹⁵³ *Keota Eagle*, October 6, 1921, 6

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

offered by the funeral director, as well as the unobtrusive ways that the funeral director handles all aspects of the preparation and planning of the funeral to create a beautiful and perfect tribute to the deceased.¹⁵⁴

The businesses of H.A. Scott and F.F. Marsh underwent a distinct transition in 1922 that set the stage for the type and success of the business of F.F. Marsh for the next 15 years. From January to June 1922, advertisements of H.A. Scott focus largely on furniture items for sale, with an included bottom line of "undertaking a specialty." Through the same period, F.F. Marsh continued to run his series of paragraphs on the importance of the funeral director, as noted. In May 1922, F.F. Marsh also noted that he offered potted plants, ferns, cut flowers, and floral decorations at attractive prices.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps with this competition, in June 1922, H.A. Scott made plans to move out of Keota, selling the Ramsey Building and the furniture business to Fred Neuhart and closing out outstanding accounts.¹⁵⁶ Fred Neuhart then advertised as having bought the H.A. Scott Furniture Store, noting an unusually complete line of furniture at very reasonable prices. With inventory completed, the Neuhart Furniture Store advertised that they found that they had one of the finest and most complete stocks of furniture that they know of in a town the size of Keota. They also offered the services of a capable licensed embalmer and undertaker, listing the phone number 80 traditionally associated with this building as well.¹⁵⁷ Advertisements from July to September 1922 emphasize the furniture offered for sale, with the bottom line on the licensed embalmer and undertaker.¹⁵⁸ Through the same period, F.F. Marsh continued to advertise his services as a "funeral director," which included the obvious duties of the undertaker as well as another 60-70 details that required time and were performed unobtrusively so that the family scarcely realized that they were done without any of the burden.¹⁵⁹ However, these professional services alone were apparently not yet sufficient to sustain the business of F.F. Marsh.

On October 12, 1922, the *Keota Eagle* announced that the Neuhart Furniture Store, formerly owned by H.A. Scott, had been sold to F.F. Marsh of Keota and L.W. Durst of Kalona. F.F. Marsh had resided in Keota for the last year and half, firmly establishing himself in business in Keota and gaining the respect of the businessmen and residents of the community. L.W. Durst was a good businessman formerly in the lumber and hardware business in Kalona.¹⁶⁰ The furniture store then opened in the next week as Marsh & Durst. They had invoiced the stock and planned to further build it up, making it a store that one would be glad to patronize even if they had to come miles out of their way to visit.¹⁶¹ Dual advertisements then ran in the *Keota Eagle* on November 2, 1922. Marsh & Durst advertised bargains in furniture, clearing out old styles and odd furniture to replace with complete suites. F.F. Marsh also included a professional card as a funeral director, with cut flowers for all occasions, under his old phone of 22.¹⁶² Thus, his funeral home appears to have initially remained at its earlier location, with Marsh & Durst furniture in the Ramsey Building. Through the end of 1922 and into 1923, Marsh & Durst promoted "Better Furniture for Better Homes" and furniture of style, quality, and economy in their building (phone 80).¹⁶³ The Marsh Funeral Parlor was utilized for other events as well, such as a food sale for the Girls' Circle of the Christian church and display space for a coupon promotion by the Community Club.¹⁶⁴ The F.F. Marsh moved his funeral business in May 1923, with the vacated room then occupied by the free public library started by the Culture Club.¹⁶⁵ The building continued to be owned by Fred Neuhart through this period. At the end of August, Fred Neuhart traded the building occupied by Marsh & Durst to Frank Vincent in

¹⁵⁴ *Keota Eagle*, various dates, including March 2, 1922, April 6, 1922, April 27, 1922, June 8, 1922.

¹⁵⁵ *Keota Eagle*, various dates, including May 11, 1922, May 18, 1922

¹⁵⁶ *Keota Eagle*, June 22, 1922; Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 15, page 87

¹⁵⁷ *Keota Eagle*, June 29, 1922; *Keota Eagle*, July 6, 1922

¹⁵⁸ *Keota Eagle*, various dates, including July 13, 1922, September 7, 1922, September 14, 1922

¹⁵⁹ *Keota Eagle*, July 27, 1922

¹⁶⁰ *Keota Eagle*, October 12, 1922

¹⁶¹ "Marsh & Durst," *Keota Eagle*, October 19, 1922

¹⁶² *Keota Eagle*, November 2, 1922

¹⁶³ *Keota Eagle*, April 19, 1923

¹⁶⁴ *Keota Eagle*, February 15, 1923, 8; *Keota Eagle*, April 12, 1923, 7

¹⁶⁵ Bohrofen 1973: 102

Ramsey Building

Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa

County and State

exchange for a 20-acre improved tract south of the City Park and several lots in the Gilbert addition, with possession given on October 1.¹⁶⁶

Business changes and consolidation were then made in 1924 for Frank F. Marsh and L.W. Durst. The Marsh Funeral Parlor appears to have remained related though separate from the Marsh & Durst Furniture Store through the first half of 1924. While funerals were held locally in churches, some were held in the Marsh Funeral Parlor in this period, such as the funeral of Merritt S. Russell in February 1924.¹⁶⁷ A windstorm broke the plate glass display window in the Marsh funeral parlor in early May 1924, located in the building owned by the Association of Fraternal Orders.¹⁶⁸ However, an article on the marriage of Frank F. Marsh to Maena Dunlap of Kalona on June 14, 1924 noted that he was a member of Marsh & Durst, dealers in furniture and funeral directors. He was a graduate of the Worsham Training School for Embalmers of Chicago and had lived in Keota for over three years. F.F. Marsh was noted as "one of the community's most successful and popular young business men."¹⁶⁹ His popularity and leading role in the community of Keota is reflected in his involvement in the Chamber of Commerce through this period as well. The Chamber of Commerce of Keota was organized on July 31, 1924 for better cooperation among businessmen and for the betterment of the entire community. The initial officers were W.C. Richardson, president; George W. Holmes, vice president; F.F. Marsh, secretary; and G.N. Wales, treasurer.¹⁷⁰ The chamber met every other week, with both F.F. Marsh and L.W. Durst appearing in minutes serving on various committees and in various capacities. Meetings initially rotated among various locations, including the Marsh & Durst furniture store.¹⁷¹ F.F. Marsh then served as president of the organization in 1925, continuing to serve periodically in various offices through the 1930s.¹⁷² By September 1924, the professional card advertisement under "funeral directors" was that of Marsh & Durst, funeral directors and florists, with no extra charge for hospital calls. The phone was then listed as 80, the number of the Ramsey Building and furniture store.¹⁷³ This professional card, the only listing under funeral directors, then continued to run in the *Keota Eagle* through 1926.¹⁷⁴ Through this period, Marsh & Durst also ran regular furniture advertisements, with various sales and promotions. They marketed not only to Keota but the broader region, with some success noted. The "bucket for a penny" promotion sold several thousands of dollars of merchandise in September 1924 and drew customers from Rose Hill, Ollie, Sigourney, What Cheer, and Kalona, as well as a telephone order from Winfield in Henry County and mail orders from Wellman and Brighton in Washington County.¹⁷⁵

The partnership of Marsh & Durst then ended in fall 1926, with Frank F. Marsh continuing both the funeral home and furniture store business in the Ramsey Building through 1937. The *Keota Eagle* announced on September 23 that F.F. Marsh had been offered a job as undertaker and embalmer with a Chicago firm, and he intended to sell his interest in the furniture store to partner L.W. Durst effective on October 4.¹⁷⁶ However, the deal reversed by October 4, with the *Keota Eagle* then reporting on October 7 that F.F. Marsh had instead bought out the interests of L.W. Durst, who had no immediate other plans.¹⁷⁷ Durst later opened a furniture

¹⁶⁶ *Keota Eagle*, August 30, 1923, 1

¹⁶⁷ "Many Funerals are Held in Past Week," *Keota Eagle*, February 24, 1921, 1

¹⁶⁸ *Keota Eagle*, May 8, 1924, 8

¹⁶⁹ "Wedding Bells Ring Often the Past Week," *Keota Eagle*, June 19, 1924, 1; "Frank Marsh Died at Washington, Monday, October 8," *Keota Eagle*, October 11, 1926

¹⁷⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 216

¹⁷¹ "Chamber of Commerce gets behind Keota Band," *Keota Eagle*, August 7, 1924, 1

¹⁷² *Keota Eagle*, January 14, 1926, 5

¹⁷³ *Keota Eagle*, September 25, 1924, 3

¹⁷⁴ *Keota Eagle*, various dates, including November 6, 1924, 3; March 12, 1925, 5; August 20, 1925, 5; January 14, 1926, 5; August 26, 1926, 6)

¹⁷⁵ "Marsh & Durst Sale of Furniture Ends Saturday," *Keota Eagle*, September 4, 1924

¹⁷⁶ "Marsh Sells Interest to Partner, L.W. Durst," *Keota Eagle*, September 23, 1926, 1

¹⁷⁷ "Furniture Store Sells Again - Durst Retires," *Keota Eagle*, October 7, 1926

Ramsey Building

Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa

County and State

store in Wellman, which he continued to operate in 1937.¹⁷⁸ F.F. Marsh continued to operate the business in the Ramsey Building (still owned by Frank Vincent), advertising as "furniture, floor coverings, flowers, funeral director." He was the only listing under "funeral directors" in the professional card advertisements, continuing to list the phone of 80 and no extra charge for hospital calls.¹⁷⁹ F.F. Marsh continued the tag line of "Better Furniture for Better Homes" in a promotional advertisement in October 1926 for local businesses to encourage local residents to spend money locally. Patronizing local businesses was noted to keep local dollars in Keota, creating an endless circle of the money around town while sustaining the prosperity of other businesses, entering the tax base for improvements, and supporting churches.¹⁸⁰ Business competition and changes in Keota in this period included the merger of the Union State Bank and State Bank of Keota in October 1926 into the Security State Bank, located in the remodeled Union State Bank building on the northeast corner of Fulton and Broadway.¹⁸¹ Farmers Savings Bank also continued to operate in town. The Commercial Hotel became the Hotel Keota in 1927, with 15 rooms and a large dining room under the management of G. Simmerman.¹⁸²

The business of Frank F. Marsh remained that of a combination of funeral director, florist, and furniture store merchant through the end of the 1920s and into the 1930s, all key services for a small community to be locally viable and sustainable. The current "Marsh" signage in the transom above the door likely dates to this period. F.F. Marsh advertised in January 1927 that he had just bought the latest furniture from Chittenden & Eastman Company of Burlington, one of the largest furniture manufacturers in the Midwest.¹⁸³ He noted several new living rooms suites arriving in August 1927, with a tagline of "Your Home Should Come First."¹⁸⁴ In 1928, he started a series of newsletter advertisements that continued into 1929 entitled "Home Chats" that included a discussion on good furniture, the place of furniture in the home, and other items of interest in Keota in general.¹⁸⁵ These newspaper advertisements focused on the furniture store aspect of his business, marketed separately from his services as funeral director (Figure 24). His professional card listing under funeral directors remained the same through this period, also remaining as the only one in Keota. He continued to regularly advertise services as a funeral director and florist, with no extra charge for hospital calls (phone 80).¹⁸⁶ The Keota Chamber of Commerce partnered with the *Keota Eagle* in May 1929 to provide a comprehensive list of businesses in Keota through a one-page advertisement to again promote local businesses. The town supported a number of businesses, including two dry goods stores, two drug stores, two shoe stores, two men's furnishing stores, two millinery stores, two jewelry stores, two hardware stores, four grocery stores, three produce companies, five dairies, two meat markets, one bakery, three barber shops, three beauty parlors, five lumber companies, four coal dealers, two hotels, five restaurants, one billiard parlor, four service stations, three bulk oil stations, seven garages, two blacksmiths, two doctors, one chiropractor, two veterinarians, two dentists, one lawyer, one movie theater, and the Keota Telephone Company. F.F. Marsh was the only business listed in three categories – florist, furniture, and undertaker.¹⁸⁷ Thus, he continued to serve the role in Keota as the only provider of these goods and services, filling a niche that was solely met by his business in the Ramsey Building.

¹⁷⁸ "Marsh Furniture Sold to Chambers," *Keota Eagle*, May 13, 1937

¹⁷⁹ *Keota Eagle*, October 14, 1926; *Keota Eagle*, October 21, 1926; F.F. Marsh was later listed as an agent in Keota for the Wolf Floral Company of Washington, but it is unknown when that association started. "Wolf Floral Company," *Washington Evening Journal*, Centennial Celebration, August 1939, 13.

¹⁸⁰ *Keota Eagle*, October 14, 1926

¹⁸¹ Bohrofen 1973: 60

¹⁸² Bohrofen 1973: 107

¹⁸³ *Keota Eagle*, January 20, 1927, 7

¹⁸⁴ *Keota Eagle*, August 4, 1927, 5

¹⁸⁵ *Keota Eagle*, June 28, 1928, 5; *Keota Eagle*, March 7, 1929, 5; various other dates through 1928 and 1929

¹⁸⁶ *Keota Eagle*, January 27, 1927; *Keota Eagle*, June 28, 1928; *Keota Eagle*, April 4, 1929, 6

¹⁸⁷ "Businesses, Professions, and Occupations Represented in Keota," *Keota Eagle*, May 30, 1929, 2

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

no short notice. JOHN WESTPHAL,
Washington, Ia., Successor to F. F. M.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS

F. F. MARSH

FUNERAL DIRECTOR

FLORIST

No extra charge for hospital calls

Phone 88

Keota - Iowa

PHYSICIANS

LYMAN E. HINSBILL, M. D.
Physician and Surgeon

HARPE

VETERI

H. B. MORE

Treatment of Dis
And

Telephone
Calls answered

Keota,

INSUR

SERVICE TR

THE FOUNT
GENERAL

INSURANCE T

H. P. N
Insurance

the ave on th onc the to no rd
...and Mrs. ... at large were pass-
engers to Muscatine Saturday even-
ing to consult with a doctor about her
health.

The Eagle orders all magazines.

Know any news? Send it in.

HOME CHATS

Vol. II Thursday, June 28, 1928 No. 27

Weddings and anniversaries demand the gift of character and lasting tribute. For these special occasions furniture is the gift supreme.

In the matter of making a life as well as a living, we all know that home setting should be a sweetener and strengthener towards whatever high goal we have made and are making our chief concern.

Good furniture is warmly cherished. As a gift it is richer in meaning and dwells longest in the lanes of memory. Great pleasure and much satisfaction are derived from its daily practical usefulness.

This store is a positive delight to folks who love furniture and who seek the best in furniture or furnishings for gifts. Our stock is characterized by a wide variety and of quality pieces.

If you are trying to solve a wedding or anniversary gift problem just now, please come in and let us show you the answer.

Special for Saturday only—Ruffled curtains, blue, rose and gold ruffles, tie-backs to match—49c per pair.

We always have something new for you.

F. F. MARSH
"Your Home Should Come First"

Figure 24. Advertisements for F.F. Ramsey in Keota Eagle on June 28, 1928 (pages 5-6).

The combination business of Frank F. Marsh continued to operate in the Ramsey Building through the middle of the 1930s. Advertisements for the Marsh Furniture Store promoted living room suites, dining room suites, bedroom suites, Simmons beds, and a wide variety of other furniture items traditionally offered. Parlor furnaces and kitchen ranges from Glow Boy and Ray Boy were sold by September 1930, indicating an evolution of the stock to include new technology.¹⁸⁸ With economic conditions worsening in 1931, advertisements promoted superior merchandise at low prices. By September, F.F. Marsh noted lower prices on furniture items than in 20 years, including living room suites, dining room suites, and bedroom suites.¹⁸⁹ Prices in February 1932 were guaranteed not to go any lower, with a refund offered if they did fall again. The Marsh Furniture Store promoted Davenport suites, dining room suites, bedroom suites, rugs, linoleums, and floor and table lamps in stock and ready to be sold.¹⁹⁰ Through this period, F.F. Marsh continued to offer services as funeral director and florist as well. He also provided some ambulance services in this period, similar to other funeral homes in the country that utilized their hearse for this purpose. In November 1931, the Keota Eagle noted that Charles Hammen of the Harper/Keota community had been taken to St. Joseph's

¹⁸⁸ Keota Eagle, October 31, 1929, 7; Keota Eagle, April 3, 1930, 5; Keota Eagle, September 4, 1930, 12; Keota Eagle, December 4, 1930, 5

¹⁸⁹ Keota Eagle, April 23, 1931, 4; Keota Eagle, September 24, 1931, 5

¹⁹⁰ Keota Eagle, February 25, 1932, 5

Ramsey Building

Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa

County and State

hospital in Ottumwa in the Marsh ambulance due to a serious illness.¹⁹¹ The same professional card that appeared through the end of the 1920s continued to run in the *Keota Eagle* through the middle of the 1930s.¹⁹² The Marsh Furniture Store was promoted as the place to buy gifts for the home in December 1932, including writing desk, lamps, easy chairs, rockers, magazine racks, what nots, pictures, mirrors, smokers, walnut chests, end tables, coffee tables, card tables, living room suites, bedroom suites, dining room suites, Spring Beauty mattresses, and rugs.¹⁹³ The Marsh Furniture Store appears to have undergone a transition and reorganization in April 1933, with stock auctioned off.¹⁹⁴ However, it continued to operate in Keota, listed among businesses in July 1933 and returning to larger advertisements by November 1933.¹⁹⁵

Perhaps funeral director services and ambulance services helped bolster the dip in furniture sales for F.F. Marsh through this period, expanding his funeral home to a more prominent role in a balance between the aspects of his businesses. He continued to provide the only funeral director and embalming services for Keota during the 1930s, with funeral services conducted primarily in churches, at cemeteries, or at his establishment. For example, the funeral services for Keota postmaster J.G. Raneue were held on April 9, 1934 at the Marsh Funeral Home, conducted by Rev. O.B. Rogers of Keota and Rev. Father B.J. Decker of Ottumwa.¹⁹⁶ When Ernest Johnson was injured in a car accident in July 1934 and doctors wished to send him to Iowa City, the Wellman ambulance brought him by way of Keota to achieve a route with better roads, with him transferred in Keota to the ambulance of Frank Marsh who took him the rest of the way to Iowa City along with the Wellman doctor.¹⁹⁷ The furniture business was not as heavily promoted in this period, likely reducing the cost of advertising. In December 1934, the Marsh Furniture Store again promoted "gift for the home," such as chairs, tables, stands, smokers, davenports, etc. The phone number was listed as 80, the same as in the funeral director listing for F.F. Marsh.¹⁹⁸ Still the community advocate, F.F. Marsh participated in a business promotion in January 1935 with 37 Keota businesses to get certificates through purchases to use at a community auction of donated merchandise, with the grand prize of furniture donated by Marsh Furniture Store and cooperating merchants.¹⁹⁹ Several funerals in 1935 were noted as held at the Marsh Funeral Home, typically with a minister conducting the service, marking a rise in funerals being held at the funeral home rather than a church.²⁰⁰ F.F. Marsh continued to be called on for ambulance services as well, such as for Charles L. Stoutner who was reported as rushed in the Marsh ambulance to the Washington County hospital in November 1935.²⁰¹

A new business type started in Keota in 1935 that would prove over the next several years to provide a new partnership for the furniture store and continued similar use for the Ramsey Building. Earl Chambers had worked for Scott Furniture in Washington as a Maytag salesman for seven years, and he obtained a franchise for the sales of Maytag washers in Keota in February 1935. He started with machines on display at Ryan's Store and Mound's Produce in Keota, as well as offering free home demonstrations.²⁰² By November 1935, Earl Chambers had sufficient success to occupy his own space in the Williams building, selling Maytag washers as well as expanding to other products such as Grunow refrigerators and Fairbanks-Morse radios. He also offered New and Used Furniture in his show rooms, intending to maintain a large stock of new and old

¹⁹¹ *Keota Eagle*, November 5, 1931, 7

¹⁹² *Keota Eagle*, March 2, 1933; *Keota Eagle*, March 2, 1933; *Keota Eagle*, May 18, 1933, 6; *Keota Eagle*, July 20, 1933, 6; *Keota Eagle*, April 19, 1934

¹⁹³ *Keota Eagle*, December 15, 1932, 4

¹⁹⁴ *Keota Eagle*, April 27, 1933, 7

¹⁹⁵ "Merchants and Theatre Present Coupon Plan," *Keota Eagle*, July 13, 1933, 1; *Keota Eagle*, November 9, 1933, 5

¹⁹⁶ *Muscatine Journal*, April 11, 1934, 2

¹⁹⁷ "Ernest Johnson of North English Hurt in Wreck," *Keota Eagle*, July 19, 1934, 1

¹⁹⁸ *Keota Eagle*, December 13, 1934, 5

¹⁹⁹ *Keota Eagle*, January 31, 1935, 1

²⁰⁰ "Rites Conducted for Two Keotans," *Keota Eagle*, August 20, 1935, 3; "Mrs. John H. Flory Funeral Held Today," *Keota Eagle*, November 21, 1935, 1

²⁰¹ *Keota Eagle*, November 21, 1935, 1

²⁰² "Will Move to Keota," *Keota Eagle*, February 7, 1935, 1; *Keota Eagle*, February 21, 1935, 4

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

furniture and other home furnishings at all times. The *Keota Eagle* reported that he had trucked in from Des Moines a considerable amount of used home furnishings in his Maytag display room in the Williams building by November 28.²⁰³ The Marsh Furniture Store continued to advertise their new furniture, noting that "First in Gifts Comes the Home" in December 1935.²⁰⁴ By March 1936, Earl Chambers expanded his store to carry Kerogas stoves and ranges, located the second door east of Security State Bank.²⁰⁵ He began to advertise Kelvinators refrigerators by April 1936, as the local dealer for this appliance line as well.²⁰⁶

The opening of the new business of Earl Chambers in 1935 occurred in a period that began to see new business growth and better economic conditions in Keota. In addition to the Chambers business in the Williams building, five other vacant stores were noted as recently occupied or leased in fall 1935, leaving only one room vacant.²⁰⁷ The Town of Keota took over the Hotel Keota (Columbian Block) in spring 1936, moving the fire station and town hall to this location. The lower part of the hotel became town hall, with hotel rooms continuing to be operated by Mr. and Mrs. George Simmerman on the second story. A public ladies restroom was also established in the building.²⁰⁸ The Keota Produce Company required an expansion, with a new room built for their hatchery with a capacity of 12,000 chicks. George Haberman also bought the Statler brick building on Broadway and remodeled it thoroughly to open Keota Creamery, which made Keota butter to sell locally and ship to New York.²⁰⁹ Earl Chambers advertised specials on Kelvinators, Maytags, and furniture for the creamery opening day in June 1936.²¹⁰ In August 1936, Chambers Furniture, the Home of the Maytag, carried modern bed room and dining room suites, a full line of rugs, Maytag washers, Crosley radios, Kelvinator refrigerators, Quaker oil heaters, and Inner Spring Mattresses.²¹¹ Both the Marsh Furniture Store and Chambers Furniture Store advertised in September 1936 for Watermelon Days. F.F. Marsh offered discounts on living room suites and springs and mattresses, while Earl Chambers offered studio couches, Maytag washers, Quaker oil burning stoves, Congoleum rugs, and Emerson mantel radios.²¹² The Marsh Furniture Store offered a cooking school in October 1936, demonstrating their linoleum-top table and kitchen cabinet that worked for either a new or old table.²¹³

It was perhaps a combination of the growth of his funeral home and the expansion of Chambers Furniture that led Frank F. Marsh to return to his roots solely as a funeral director in 1937. By December 1936, Chambers Furniture had expanded to a full furniture store, with living room suites, dining room suites, bed room suites, occasional chairs, magazine racks, and smoking stands offered during Christmas sales, as well as his lines of appliances. The Marsh Furniture Store continued to also offer living room suites, dining room suites, bedroom suites, lounge chairs, rockers, pull ups, end tables, lamp tables, coffee tables, floor lamps, bridge lamps, table lamps, walnut chests, vanity dressers, knee hole desks, card tables, mirrors, pictures, smokers, high chairs, and kiddie rockers.²¹⁴ Chambers Furniture continued to run advertisements through spring 1937 outlining their wide variety of goods offered at "The Home of the Maytag."²¹⁵ In early May 1937, the *Keota Eagle* announced that Earl Chambers had bought the F.F. Marsh Furniture Store, with the stock to be consolidated at the Marsh location. Chambers had been in business in Keota for about two years, operating as the local Maytag and

²⁰³ *Keota Eagle*, November 7, 1935, 4; "Used Furniture Store," *Keota Eagle*, November 28, 1935, 1; "Only One Vacant Room," *Keota Eagle*, November 28, 1935, 1; *Keota Eagle*, November 28, 1935, 5

²⁰⁴ *Keota Eagle*, December 5, 1935, 4

²⁰⁵ *Keota Eagle*, March 26, 1936

²⁰⁶ *Keota Eagle*, April 16, 1936

²⁰⁷ "Only One Vacant Room," *Keota Eagle*, November 28, 1935, 1

²⁰⁸ Bohrofen 1973: 107, 123

²⁰⁹ Bohrofen 1973: 69

²¹⁰ *Keota Eagle*, June 16, 1936

²¹¹ *Keota Eagle*, August 13, 1936

²¹² *Keota Eagle*, September 17, 1936

²¹³ *Keota Eagle*, October 1, 1936

²¹⁴ *Keota Eagle*, December 3, 1936; *Keota Eagle*, December 10, 1936

²¹⁵ *Keota Eagle*, March 11, 1937; *Keota Eagle*, March 18, 1937

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Kelvinator dealer. The success of his business was noted as evident by the purchase and expansion. Frank F. Marsh would continue in business in Keota as a funeral director, operating the Marsh Funeral Home in another location. He had purchased the former Mrs. Inez Martin property on the south of town, which was "being redecorated and refurnished to make it not only their own home but a completely modern funeral home."²¹⁶ Thus, this move reflected national trends towards further creation of a domestic environment for the funeral home, moving it out of a storefront location, with the family of the funeral director living under the same roof to provide more complete and family-like services for the family of the deceased.

With the sale of the Marsh Furniture Store to Earl Chambers, the separation between the undertaking business and the furniture business was complete in Keota. The separation of these two business types was nearly universal across the country by the 1930s, with the rise of funeral homes. As noted, by the 1930s, funeral homes typically included a modern embalming room, office, chapel, viewing rooms, and guest rooms, offering a full set of services in house for the bereaved family. The need for additional rooms and desire to create domestic imagery often led to the relocation of a funeral parlor into a large home that could serve the needs of a modern funeral home. Nearby in Washington, Roger Sherman had bought the Scofield mansion in 1930, opening the Sherman Funeral Home in this residential setting rather than a storefront location.²¹⁷ The announcement of F.F. Marsh of his move to the former home of Mrs. Inez Martin emphasized that he had now established a "modern funeral home" in Keota. His traditional "professional card" listing in the *Keota Eagle* as "F.F. Marsh, funeral director" was ended, with a new larger listing appearing for the "Marsh Funeral Home" by July 1937. The further emphasis on professional services for the family is noted with the new tagline of "Our Mission is to Service." F.F. Marsh continued to provide ambulance service, day or night, with a new phone of 49.²¹⁸ F.F. Marsh would continue to operate the Marsh Funeral Home in Keota until retiring in May 1955 due to ill health. He then died on October 8, 1956.²¹⁹ Lewis Powell Sr., a licensed embalmer and funeral director in South English since 1922, then bought the funeral home in Keota in 1944. His son Lewis Powell Jr. and wife Rachel moved to Keota to operate this branch of the Powell Funeral Home. The Powell Funeral Home continues to operate in this location in Keota, still owned by the Powell family and managed by Lyle Donald. Powell Funeral Homes currently operate locations in six towns in three counties in southeast Iowa – North English, Keota, Sigourney, Kalona, Wellman, and Williamsburg.²²⁰

Endurance of the furniture business, 1937-1957

Since the construction of the Ramsey Building in 1895, a furniture store had continuously occupied the space, and a furniture store would continue to operate here until the end of 1957. Even with the separation of the funeral home from the traditional furniture store, there remained a demand and a need for a furniture store in Keota. Residents looked to the furniture store to furnish their home with the latest styles and fashions, and the store in this building continued to fill that significant role in the community. At the same time, with technological advances, new home appliances were bringing new conveniences to the home. Kitchen ranges, washing machines, refrigerators, and many other modern conveniences were marketed to the consumer, finding a natural partnership with the traditional furniture store. The formation of this partnership marked the evolution of the furniture store in modern 20th century life. This transition and endurance of the furniture store in Keota is thus reflected in the Ramsey Building.

²¹⁶ "Marsh Furniture Sold to Chambers," *Keota Eagle*, May 13, 1937

²¹⁷ "Funeral Homes Combine Dignity, Comfort, Service," *Washington Evening Journal*, February 22, 1940; "Sherman-Eden Funeral Home," Bicentennial Edition, *Evening Journal*, July 1, 1976, 85

²¹⁸ *Keota Eagle*, May 13, 1937; *Keota Eagle*, July 15, 1937; *Muscatine Journal*, May 11, 1937

²¹⁹ "Frank Marsh Died at Washington, Monday, October 8," *Keota Eagle*, October 11, 1956

²²⁰ Daniels 2001: 98; "Our History," Powell Funeral Homes. Accessed online in October 2016 at <http://www.powellfuneralhomes.com/Our-Story.html>.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Upon the purchase of Marsh Furniture, Chambers Furniture moved into the Ramsey Building, the traditional location of the furniture store in Keota since 1895. Earl Chambers operated in both stores temporary while consolidating stock into this two-story brick building.²²¹ The move was completed by May 20, 1936, when he advertised a "get acquainted sale" in his new location, the former Marsh store. Items for sale included a wide range of furniture, floor coverings, and appliances, such as living room suites, dining room suites, bed room suites, wool rugs, iron beds, mirrors, high chairs, studio couches, mattresses, electric lamps, window shades, White sewing machines, Kelvinator refrigerators, enamel coal ranges, Maytag washers, lawn chairs, baby beds, Congoleum rugs, kerosene ranges, used furniture, curtain rods, linoleum mats, and odds and ends.²²² The move permitted H.F. Freshwaters of the Keota Produce Company to purchase the now vacant Williams brick building and move his hatchery from the Stewart building to a location adjacent to his building.²²³ With the move into the Ramsey Building, Earl Chambers strove to update the building with a modern storefront to draw customers into his new store with modern furniture and appliances. Frank Vincent, still owner of the building, hired Earl Simpson of Washington to rebuild the storefront similar to the original with some modern touches added. The weakened old framework was replaced, reducing a safety risk for the large glass windows. He also had repapered and painted the interior of the store for Chambers.²²⁴ In December 1937, Chambers Furniture advertised as the best furniture store in southeastern Iowa for a town of 1,000 or larger. Earl Chambers remained the local dealer for Maytag washing machines and Kelvinator refrigerators, as well as stocking a full line of new furniture.²²⁵

In January 1938, Chambers Furniture Store added the local franchise for SkelGas, with new service then offered directly in Keota, rather than customers needing to go through the dealer in Wellman. Earl Chambers advertised new Skel-Gas stoves on display, which offered a new faster and easier way to cook. The stove used gas rather than old cooking fuels, which prepared meals, baked, and broiled tastier foods as well as saving money on fuel. With a SkelGas stove, a meal could be prepared for only three cents.²²⁶ The store promoted furniture as a gift for Christmas in December 1938, suggesting living room suites, platform rockers, studio couches, bedroom furniture, occasional tables, end tables, magazine racks, rugs, smokers, and new indirect lighting floor and table lamps.²²⁷ The Skelgas range continued to be promoted through 1939, with free cooking demonstrations offered at the store without any obligation to purchase.²²⁸ The Skelgas line was expanded to include the new Skelgas-Electrolux refrigerator and the new Skelgas water heater in July 1939. If Skelgas was already used in the home for cooking, these new appliances could easily be added to enjoy the modern gas convenience at a cost lower than ever before. Skelgas service was offered on all appliances through Chambers Furniture Store.²²⁹ Thus, Chambers Furniture Store was significant in the commercial history of Keota and residential development of the community as the proponent and source of these modern home appliances. They continued to advertise the largest stock of home furnishings in southeastern Iowa in any town up to twice the size of Keota in October 1939, with a new shipment of living room suites and studio couches. By June 1940, Chambers Furniture Store advertised with the tagline of "Fine Quality Furniture and Rugs," offering Innerspring mattresses and vacuum sweepers among their other items.²³⁰

The 1940 Sanborn map depicts the Chambers Furniture Store in the Ramsey Building still in the heart of downtown Keota (Figures 25-26). No changes are noted to the building, continuing to be depicted as a two-story furniture store with a one-story warehouse rear section. The connection to the second story of the 1904

²²¹ *Keota Eagle*, May 13, 1937

²²² *Keota Eagle*, May 20, 1937; "Furniture Sale," *Keota Eagle*, May 20, 1937

²²³ "Keota," *Muscatine Journal*, May 22, 1937, 12; *Keota Eagle*, May 20, 1937

²²⁴ *Keota Eagle*, June 3, 1937

²²⁵ *Keota Eagle*, December 2, 1937

²²⁶ *Keota Eagle*, January 13, 1938; *Keota Eagle*, March 31, 1938

²²⁷ *Keota Eagle*, December 1, 1938

²²⁸ *Keota Eagle*, July 6, 1939

²²⁹ *Keota Eagle*, July 20, 1939

²³⁰ *Keota Eagle*, June 27, 1940

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



Figure 25. 1940 Sanborn fire insurance map of "west" and part of "center" Broadway in Keota (page 2).
yellow = frame, pink = brick, blue = concrete block, gray = iron clad



Figure 26. 1940 Sanborn fire insurance map part of "center" and "east" Broadway in Keota (page 2).

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Singmaster building to the west is noted, with a variety store in the first story of the brick building. No other furniture stores operated in Keota. Other than business changes, few other changes are depicted in the "center" block of Broadway from Ellis to Fulton. Nearly all the buildings had the same footprint as depicted in 1916, with some new outbuildings on the rear of the lots. The move of the town hall and fire station into the Columbian Block is noted, with a corner store and hotel rooms remaining on the second story. With the merging of two of the banks, the post office moved into the main space of the former 1877 Bank of Keota on the northwest corner of Fulton and Broadway. Security State Bank remained in the building across the street, and Farmers Savings Bank remained further west on center Broadway. Only a handful of building changes were also noted on "east" Broadway, with a service station replacing the old implement store on the south side and a new one-story building on the north side. The Keota Produce Company operated in two buildings on the north side, with the lot between them also utilized for the business. The Singmaster family horse operations further east on Broadway and at the west end of Broadway had been significantly reduced, with only a sale barn remaining on the east block and new produce buildings constructed at the west end. The produce company also utilized the former town hall as cold storage lockers, with a hatchery on the second story. The Keota Lumber and Fuel Company was also depicted with a new larger building on the south side of "west" Broadway. Fewer changes were noted on the north side of "west" Broadway, with no new construction and demolition of an older frame building. The three-story brick building at the northwest corner, built in 1876, had also been reduced to two stories by 1940. The theater continued to operate in the building to the west, though it was remodeled and opened as the Avon Theater in July 1937.²³¹ The nature of the businesses operating in Keota reinforce its position as the agricultural processing center of the surrounding region, providing goods and services to residents of Keota as well as the rural residents of the countryside.

Chambers Furniture Store continued to operate in the Ramsey Building in downtown Keota through 1946, providing generally the same goods and services through this period to local and nearby residents. The Chambers Furniture Store advertised as "Your Maytag-Kelvinator-Skelgas dealer" through this period, recognizing the importance of these lines within the overall furniture business.²³² In December 1941, possible gifts for Christmas for purchase at the Chambers Furniture Store included Skelgas stoves, Maytag washers, Bissel sweepers, Kelvinator refrigerators, Magic-Aire vacuum sweepers, end tables, card tables, radio tables, coffee tables, Aladdin floor and table lamps, studio lounges, Davenport sets, framed pictures, magazine racks, occasional chairs, rugs, mirrors, smokers, rockers, hassocks, and cedar chests.²³³ Chambers advertised Quaker, Armstrong, and Gold Seal congoleum rugs in July 1942.²³⁴ With World War II in full swing, Chambers Furniture Store advertised good used furniture in May 1943, along with studio couches, rockers, platform rockers, pull-up chairs, kitchen cabinets, Sealy tuftless mattresses, inlaid linoleums, a few wool rugs, and new and used ice boxes.²³⁵ Used dining room suites in oak and walnut were offered in November 1943, along with other furniture and appliances. Chambers Furniture Store also sold glass for windows and doors, providing expert installation along with the product.²³⁶ While their Christmas advertisement offered a continued array of possibilities, the tagline read "Buy Furniture – but Buy War Bonds First" in support of the war efforts.²³⁷ In 1944, Chambers Furniture Store advertised as offering "A Complete Line of Home Furnishings" from solid walnut furniture to stoves and ranges.²³⁸ After renting it for several years, Earl N. and Dorothy Chambers finally bought the Ramsey Building from Frank W. Vincent on May 17, 1945.²³⁹ With the end of World War II, Chambers Furniture Store advertised a new shipment of furniture in November 1945, including living room

²³¹ Bohrofen 1973: 143

²³² *Keota Eagle*, November 20, 1941; *Keota Eagle*, September 6, 1945; *Keota Eagle*, January 24, 1946

²³³ *Keota Eagle*, December 18, 1941

²³⁴ *Keota Eagle*, July 2, 1942

²³⁵ *Keota Eagle*, May 20, 1943

²³⁶ *Keota Eagle*, November 4, 1943; *Keota Eagle*, November 11, 1943

²³⁷ *Keota Eagle*, December 2, 1943

²³⁸ *Keota Eagle*, September 14, 1944

²³⁹ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 22, page 550.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

suites, rockers, rugs, bedroom suites, studio couches, table and floor lamps, hassocks, mirrors, desks, lamp and end tables, and what-nots.²⁴⁰ While they continued to offer appliances as the local Maytag, Kelvinator, Skelgas dealer, they also continued to sell coal and wood ranges.²⁴¹ They also offered a full line of Sealy mattresses and Sealy sofa beds.²⁴²

By June 1946, Earl Chambers decided to retire and sold the furniture business to C.M. Stroup of Des Moines, who owned it only for a few weeks in July 1946 before selling it to local resident Gale Denton. C.M. Stroup had been the district distributor for the Skelgas company for 15 years, regularly visiting Keota and the Chambers Furniture Store for the last three years.²⁴³ Earl and Dorothy Chambers sold the building with the business to Clarence M. and Evelyn P. Stroup on June 29, 1946.²⁴⁴ An advertisement for Stroup Furniture and Appliance Store appeared on July 11, and then the *Keota Eagle* reported on July 18 that C.M. Stroup had sold the business to Gale Denton and returned to his prior position. Gale Denton had operated a tavern in Keota for seven years, and he was thus acquainted with most of the store's patrons.²⁴⁵ Denton's Billiard and Beer Parlor was noted in town in December 1939, and he had moved to the former bakery location in 1945.²⁴⁶ An advertisement for Denton Furniture Store then appeared in the *Keota Eagle* on July 18, with Hy Bower remaining as his employee to handle service calls. Gale Denton noted: "We will continue to handle the same standard lines of furniture, linoleum, Aladdin Electric Lamps, Maytag Washers and Dutch Oven Stoves, Skelgas Stoves, Admiral Refrigerators and Radios, R.C.A. and Emerson Radios, and other merchandise with which you are familiar and in which you have justifiable confidence."²⁴⁷ The local franchises also transferred with the business, with Denton Furniture Store noted as "Your Maytag-Skelgas-Admiral Dealer."²⁴⁸ The store also continued to provide glass for customers, along with installation services.²⁴⁹ Clarence M. and Evelyn P. Stroup then sold the Ramsey Building, the location of the business, to Gale Denton on November 27, 1946.²⁵⁰

Denton Furniture Store continued to operate in the Ramsey Building through 1949 as the combination furniture and appliance business. Gale Denton advertised various furniture for sale, including living room suites, chairs, rockers, Sealy Seal Crest mattresses, tables, book cases, juvenile furniture, tables, and radios.²⁵¹ He also offered several name-brand items and appliances, such as Philco and Admiral refrigerators, Skelgas electric farm freezers, Skelgas gas ranges, Skelgas water heaters, Universal vacuum cleaners, and Maytag washing machines.²⁵² Venetian blinds, several makes and patterns of linoleum, and glass also continued to be sold at Denton Furniture Store. Picture framing also continued to be offered.²⁵³ Through this period, he had some competition on the appliance aspect from Frank P. Lillig, who operated Lillig Feed and Appliance Store. The types and brands of appliances continued to grow through this period, becoming a self-sustaining specialized business in many communities. Due to poor health in spring 1949, Frank P. Lillig sold his appliance, bottle gas, and plumbing business to Gale Denton, retaining his feed business and building. Gale Denton then consolidated both appliance businesses in the Lillig appliance store room, moving this aspect from the Ramsey Building.²⁵⁴ He then sold Denton Furniture Store to Mr. and Mrs. Eddie Rains of Washington in April 1949,

²⁴⁰ *Keota Eagle*, November 22, 1945

²⁴¹ *Keota Eagle*, September 6, 1945

²⁴² *Keota Eagle*, December 13, 1945

²⁴³ "Chambers Sells Furniture Store to C.M. Stroup," *Keota Eagle*, July 4, 1946; *Keota Eagle*, July 4, 1946

²⁴⁴ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 24, page 24

²⁴⁵ *Keota Eagle*, July 11, 1946; "Several Businesses Change Hands Here," *Keota Eagle*, July 18, 1946

²⁴⁶ *Keota Eagle*, December 14, 1939; "19 Bought Homes in Keota in 1945," *Keota Eagle*, January 17, 1946

²⁴⁷ *Keota Eagle*, July 18, 1946

²⁴⁸ *Keota Eagle*, August 1, 1946

²⁴⁹ *Keota Eagle*, October 17, 1946

²⁵⁰ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 24, page 60

²⁵¹ *Keota Eagle*, February 20, 1947

²⁵² *Keota Eagle*, March 4, 1948

²⁵³ *Keota Eagle*, March 25, 1948; *Keota Eagle*, July 1, 1948; *Keota Eagle*, January 27, 1949

²⁵⁴ "Lillig Appliances Bought by Denton," *Keota Eagle*, April 7, 1949, 1)

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

retaining his appliance lines. H. Singleton also moved his radio workshop and stock from furniture store to appliance store. Gale Denton operated Denton Appliance Store in Keota through his death in September 1959, a result of a gas explosion during a service call at a farm in Keokuk County.²⁵⁵

The Rains Furniture Store would then be the last furniture store to operate in the Ramsey Building, closing at this location at the end of 1957. Eddie Rains had worked for Scott Furniture in Washington for several years as a specialist in floor coverings as well as other lines of home furnishings.²⁵⁶ Rains Furniture Store opened in early May 1949, with Eddie and Virginia Rains as the proprietors. They held a "get acquainted sale" from Friday May 6 to Saturday May 14, focusing on their lines of linoleums and carpets as well as new furniture.²⁵⁷ Through the early 1950s, they advertised with the tagline of "Complete Home Furnishers." They continued to carry a line of Sealy mattresses and Philco refrigerators among other products.²⁵⁸ In 1953, they advertised a new shipment of fatigue mats, which eased strain on feet while standing and ironing, cooking, or washing dishes.²⁵⁹ They continued to carry living room sets, dining room sets, bedroom sets, mattresses, cribs, bassinets, high chairs, strollers, rockers, floor and table lamps, drapes and shades, and floor coverings through this period.²⁶⁰ Rains Furniture Store supplied the full array of home furnishing needs for Keota residents through the end of 1957. They advertised specials on table and floor lamps, pictures, dinettes, dining room suites, rockers, bedroom suites, Sealy bed, felt-base rugs, mattress, card tables, cedar chest, Hallmark chrome fixtures, carpet, wall covering, chaise lounge, lawn chair, living room suites, and juvenile furniture in June 1957.²⁶¹ On December 12, they advertised their closing out sale, including floor lamps, table lamps, coffee tables, step-end tables, carpet rugs, linoleum rugs, hobby horses, folding chairs, bookcases, pictures, smokers, wardrobes, living room suites, sectionals, sleep lounges, sofa beds, rockers, occasional chairs, dining room suites, card tables, unfinished furniture, picture window table, magazine racks, utility cabinets, hassocks, hampers, cribs, mattresses, box springs, bedroom suites, play pens, desks, chrome dinettes, mirrors, cedar chests, and lamp shades.²⁶² A public auction on remaining goods was held on December 21, 1957, with all items to be removed from the store by January 1.²⁶³ The end date appears to have coincided with the end of their lease on the Ramsey Building, as they thanked customers and friends for their past patronage in the *Keota Eagle* on January 2 but had no definite future plans. They retained a few items left from the sale and continued to handle orders for floor coverings and window blinds. By late January 1958, they decided to reopen at another location.²⁶⁴ By February 1958, Rains Furniture Store was operating on the north side of Broadway, where they continued until December 1961 when they moved to Marion, Iowa.²⁶⁵

Several other community and business changes also occurred in Keota in the 1950s, as the town moved solidly into the middle of the 20th century. The Dupuis family, after operating the People's Telephone Company for nearly 50 years, sold the company to the Central Iowa Telephone Company. Service was then upgraded to a dial system in 1956.²⁶⁶ Plans for a public library began in October 1949 with a bequest from R.O. Wilson, with H.B. Sowden of Washington hired on June 16, 1952 to draw plans. Construction spanned throughout

²⁵⁵ "Set Funeral Services for Gale Denton, 51," *Washington Evening Journal*, September 9, 1959, 1

²⁵⁶ "Furniture Store is Sold by Denton," *Keota Eagle*, April 21, 1949

²⁵⁷ "Rains' Plan Opening of Store at Keota," *Washington Evening Journal*, May 4, 1949, 1; "Rains Furniture Store," *Keota Eagle*, May 5, 1949

²⁵⁸ *Keota Eagle*, June 5, 1952; *Keota Eagle*, September 4, 1952; *Keota Eagle*, November 13, 1952

²⁵⁹ *Keota Eagle*, January 15, 1953

²⁶⁰ *Keota Eagle*, March 5, 1953; *Keota Eagle*, March 19, 1953; *Keota Eagle*, June 4, 1953

²⁶¹ *Keota Eagle*, June 6, 1957

²⁶² *Keota Eagle*, December 12, 1957

²⁶³ *Keota Eagle*, December 19, 1957; *Washington Evening Journal*, December 18, 1957, 3

²⁶⁴ *Keota Eagle*, January 2, 1958; *Keota Eagle*, January 16, 1958; *Keota Eagle*, January 23, 1958;

²⁶⁵ *Keota Eagle*, February 13, 1958; *Washington Evening Journal*, November 22, 1961, 7; "Eddie Rains Takes Position at Marion," *Washington Evening Journal*, December 8, 1961, 4

²⁶⁶ Bohrofen 1973: 117

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

1953, and the first dedicated building for a library in Keota opened on June 29, 1954.²⁶⁷ At the same time, new state laws on size of school districts resulted in consolidations of smaller districts across the state in this period. The Keota Community School District was created on July 1, 1956, including Keota, 12 districts in Keokuk County, and 13 districts in Washington County. A bond issue for a new elementary school building on the north side of Keota passed on May 1, 1958, and the new building was dedicated on November 13, 1960. The older school was then converted for use as the junior and senior high school. A new Keota Community Junior-Senior High School was later built in 1972.²⁶⁸ Other public construction projects in this period included a new post office on the north side of "east" Broadway, replacing two earlier buildings on the site.²⁶⁹ At the same time, increasing competition and ease of access to businesses in other communities impacted local businesses. In November 1958, Security State Bank was dissolved, with accounts and deposits transferred to the Farmers Savings Bank, the last bank remaining in Keota, which had supported three banks at one time.²⁷⁰ The population of the community remained nearly stable overall through this period, growing from 1,032 in 1940 to 1,145 in 1950 before falling back to 1,096 in 1960. The migration of rural and small town residents to larger communities continued through this period, with nearby larger towns such as Washington showing distinct growth through these years.

Later history of the Ramsey Building, 1958-2016

Over the last 60 years, the Ramsey Building has continued to serve a role in downtown Keota. On Saturday March 31, 1958, Clarence (Clancy) and Audry Smith opened the Keota 5c & 10c Store in the Denton building, formerly occupied by Rains Furniture. They sold a wide variety of general merchandise, with the store renamed Smith's Variety Store in the 1960s.²⁷¹ The store was noted as one of the best-stocked variety stores in southeast Iowa by 1968. Smith's Variety Store was then sold to Leland and Darlene Funston on January 1, 1969. Darlene Funston operated Funston Variety and Fashion here for the next three years.²⁷² The store was then sold to David and Lois Holland on June 15, 1971, renaming it Holland Variety Store. Anita Denton then sold the Ramsey Building to the Hollands as well on August 2, 1971.²⁷³ Mrs. Dale Holland operated the Holland Variety Store here through early 1978.²⁷⁴ The Ramsey Building was then sold to the Keota Junior Chamber of Commerce in September 1979.²⁷⁵ They primarily used the building for meetings and social events, operating a haunted house here for several years. It was during this period that the plaster from the ceilings was removed, as well as from the walls in the rear addition. On August 6, 1991, Keota Junior Chamber of Commerce sold the building to Roger and Jane Westendorf.²⁷⁶ They remodeled the building for the Westendorf Costume Emporium, creating and marketing costumes that were sold from and stored in this building. The storefront was remodeled at this time, with the smaller window and dressing room. The walls were painted, but no work was done to the exposed joists on the ceilings. The roof was replaced a few years later. The costume business was primarily run by Jane Westendorf, later renamed Curtain Up Costumes. A concrete floor was added in the rear addition for use of this portion of the building by Roger Westendorf for a furniture restoration business. Roger died in 2013, and Jane moved the business to Sigourney in 2014.²⁷⁷ On March 29, 2015, Jane Westendorf sold the Ramsey Building to Scott D. Flynn, an attorney in Keota. He is working on plans to rehabilitate the building for his law office and an apartment, utilizing historic tax credits.

²⁶⁷ Bohrofen 1973: 102

²⁶⁸ Bohrofen 1973: 164

²⁶⁹ Bohrofen 1973: 132

²⁷⁰ Bohrofen 1973: 60

²⁷¹ "Keota 5 & 10 to Hold Grand Opening on Saturday, March 29," *Keota Eagle*, March 27, 1958

²⁷² "Smith's Variety; Effective Jan. 1," *Keota Eagle*, January 2, 1969, 1

²⁷³ "Hollands Buy Funston Variety," *Keota Eagle*, June 10, 1971; Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 35, page 422

²⁷⁴ "Holland Variety to Hold Closing Out Sale," *Keota Eagle*, January 5, 1978

²⁷⁵ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 138, page 257

²⁷⁶ Keokuk County, Keota, Lot Book 165, page 241

²⁷⁷ Telephone interview with Jane Westendorf, Sigourney, Iowa, October 17, 2016.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): Iowa Inventory # _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 _____
Latitude Longitude

3 _____
Latitude Longitude

2 _____
Latitude Longitude

4 _____
Latitude Longitude

or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map): _____ NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1 15 587535 4579665
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The National Register of Historic Places boundary follows the parcel lines for Lot 12 in Block 18, as depicted on the map below. The boundary contains an area about 128 feet by 25 feet, or 3,200 square feet.



National Register boundary for the Ramsey Building (McCarley 2016).
(2013 base aerial photography, beacon.schneidercorp.com)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for the property follows the parcel boundary for the property historically and currently associated with the Ramsey Building.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Lawin McCarley, Architectural Historian
organization SPARK Consulting date March 2, 2017
street & number 17 Oak Lane telephone 563-324-9767
city or town Davenport state Iowa zip code 52803
e-mail sparkconsulting@octaspark.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property owner info (as requested to be completed by SHPO):

name Scott D. Flynn, SDF Properties LLC
street & number PO Box 47, 306 E. Broadway telephone n/a
city or town Keota state IA zip code 52248

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo log:

Name of Property: Ramsey Building

City or Vicinity: Keota

County: Keokuk State: Iowa

Photographer: Rebecca Lawin McCarley

Date Photographed: September 20, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photograph 1. Setting of Ramsey Building, looking east on Broadway.

Photograph 2. Façade (north elevation) of Ramsey Building, looking south.

Photograph 3. Detail of upper portion of façade, looking south.

Photograph 4. Detail of storefront, looking southeast.

Photograph 5. West elevation, looking southeast (September 2014).

new building constructed to west in 2016 reducing visibility of side of building, no changes to side of building

Photograph 6. South elevation and rear addition, looking northeast.

Photograph 7. South elevation and rear addition, looking northwest.

Photograph 8. First story, looking north.

Photograph 9. First story, looking south.

Photograph 10. Stairs in southeast corner of first story, looking east.

Photograph 11. Rear addition, looking south.

Photograph 12. Rear addition, looking north.

Photograph 13. Second story, looking northwest.

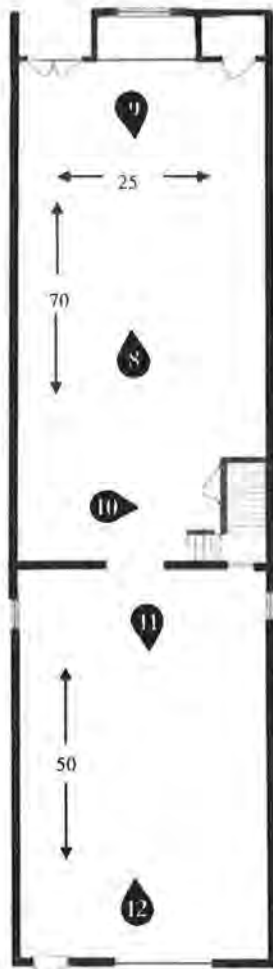
Photograph 14. Second story windows in north wall, looking northeast.

Photograph 15. Second story, looking south.

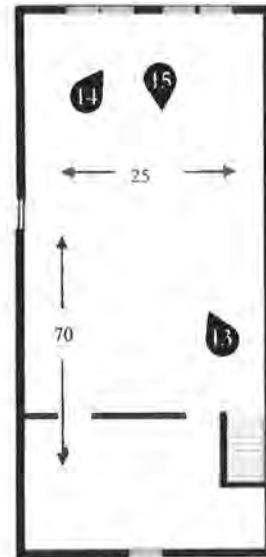
Photograph 16. Basement, looking northwest.

Ramsey Building
Name of Property

Keokuk County, Iowa
County and State



First story plan



Second story plan

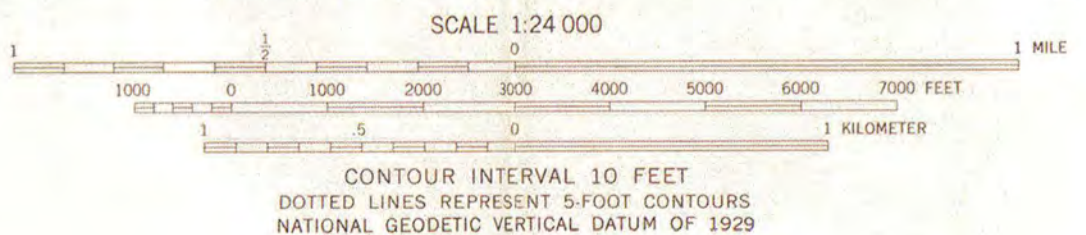
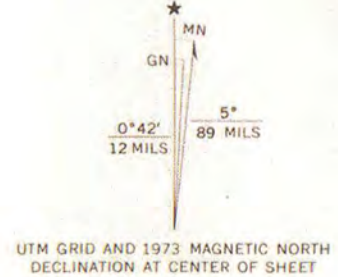
Ramsey Building
204 E. Broadway
Keota, Keokuk Co, IA
September 2016



Photograph Key



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1973
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Iowa coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
100-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND BY THE IOWA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, IOWA CITY, IOWA 52240
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

USGS
HISTORICAL FILE
TOPOGRAPHIC DIVISION

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N4115-W9152.5/7.5
1973
AMS 7666 IV SW-SERIES V876

2600
JUN 9 1975



Keota
&
123
319

Welcome
to
Keota
Please Park Responsibly

SPEED
LIMIT
20



KEOTA
HISTORY
IOWA FLAGS
SOLD HERE

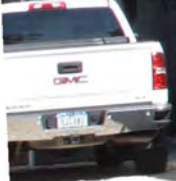








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Instruction Manual For Residential Electric Water Heaters

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

MARY COWNIE, DIRECTOR
CHRIS KRAMER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR

TERRY E. BRANSTAD, GOVERNOR
KIM REYNOLDS, LT. GOVERNOR



IOWA
ARTS
COUNCIL

March 8, 2017

PRODUCE
IOWA

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief
National Register and National Historic Landmarks
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.
Washington D.C. 20005

STATE HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following National Register nomination(s) from Iowa are enclosed for your review and listing if acceptable.

STATE HISTORICAL
MUSEUM OF IOWA

- **Ramsey Building, 204 ED. Broadway Ave., Keota, Keokuk County, Iowa**

STATE HISTORICAL
LIBRARY & ARCHIVES

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Foster
National Register Coordinator
State Historical Society of Iowa

STATE
HISTORIC
SITES

STATE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
OFFICE OF IOWA

IOWA
HISTORICAL
FOUNDATION