

## **W. Water Street 440-444 Businesses**

1850/1885      American House Hotel  
                    Johnny Crows  
                    The Kissin Frogs  
                    Princeton Beauty Salon  
                    Hartman Jewelry  
                    Fox River Publishing Company

### **1850    American House Hotel**

The American House site, at the corner of Water and Washington Streets (location in 1982 of Fox River Publishing) dates to the early 1850's. G.E. Lamont is the man noted as interested in building what was to be known as the American House. The original house burned and was rebuilt in 1885.

Other proprietors included David H. Waite, John Horey, John Thompson, W.J. Frank, August Shiele, F.W. Cooke, J.P. Snyder and the 1890 proprietor H.K. Priest.

This hostelry was recognized as "one of the most popular hotels in Green Lake County." At one time it advertised steam heat, baths and electric lights for two dollars a day.

## **1885 American House Hotel**

Two well-preserved hotel ledgers discovered in the walls of the American House during a rejuvenation project reveal a way of life at the turn of the century.

The house, which is in the main business district, is being converted into assisted-living apartments for people 62 and older according to Preston Hiestand, board chairman for Handcraft Co. Inc. The facility will open in June.

Hiestand said his parents, who came to Iowa from Princeton in 1926, purchased the American House in 1941 after three years of working out of the family's house where they made mukluks-Eskimo boots.

The largest ledger found during the renovation covers Nov. 16, 1891, to Oct. 25, 1892, and lists names and addresses of guests, room numbers and services requested.

The American Hotel Guide in the back of the 1892 book lists Princeton with a population of 986. The majority of the rates across the county were the same as those at American House.

The Spenserian Script, the distinctive handwriting of that period, is very legible. H.K. Priest was the proprietor in 1891 and rooms cost \$1 and \$2 a night.

The American House was a popular hotel, with as many as 35 registered guests on a page for a specified day and date. It offered lights, heat and baths at the \$2 rate.

In the smaller ledger, dating from May 16, 1902, to August 20, 1903, the proprietor was George Holliday.

Those were the bustling years in Princeton. The Chicago and North Western Railroad, which had traveled only as far as Princeton from Fond du Lac, was in 1901 extended on newly-laid tracks through Neshkoro and Wautoma.

Large groups were registered in the American House ledger, among them the Berlin Bowling Team, the Amalgamated Association of Anglers from Portage and Hal's Big Tent Show.

Hiestand said his daughter and son-in-law, Nancy and Larry Trotter, are also interested in the history of the old building. Trotter, who found the books in a wall and recognized their importance is supervising the renovation.

We suspect they were placed during former remodeling, for just such a surprise as they caused. Hiestand said. "These books will be carefully preserved by our family, for we are all interested in the history of Princeton and this area."

The American House Hotel policy is printed at the top of the ledger book. "All money, jewels, coats, valises and other valuables must be left in the office, and checks received for them, otherwise the proprietor will not be responsible for any losses." Guests without baggage were requested to pay in advance.

Usually, the names registered in the ledgers were names of men. But Monday, Jan. 4, 1892, A.H. Sexton and wife, Neshkoro, visited the hotel. Sexton built Sexton Block on Neshkoro's Main Street.

A woman guest, Miss Ruth Pierce, Germania, registered Dec. 30, 1891. Her father, Senator C.E. Pierce, was known in Madison as well as in Marquette County.

