PRESERVATION RACINE, INC.

NEWSLETTER
Spring 2010
Special Issue

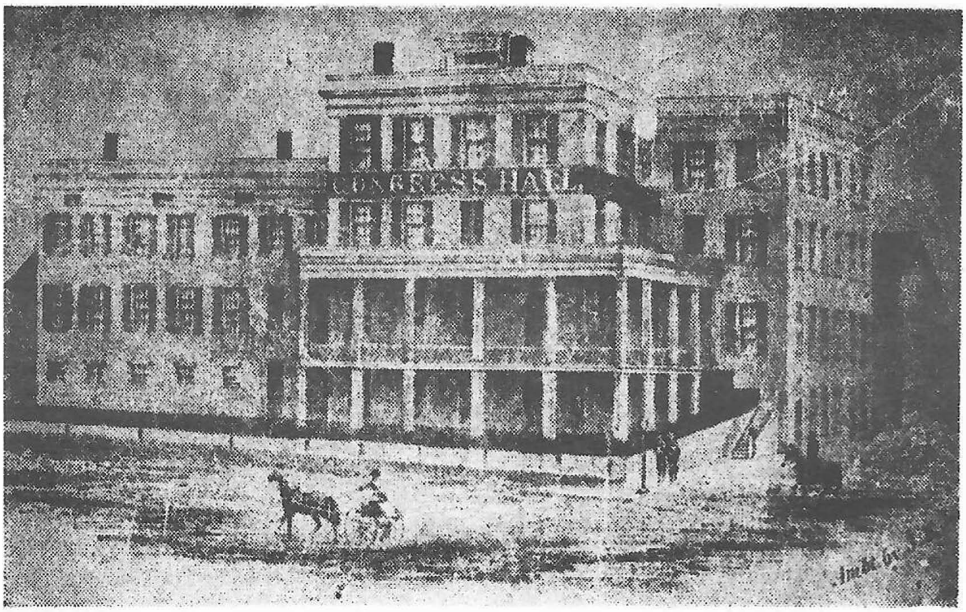
"I find the house where I am stopping very neat, clean and everyone anxious to please...."

A History of Congress Hall

by Steven K. Rogstad

On the morning of Tuesday, June 16, 1873, Lorenzo Janes was riding in his horse-drawn buggy through downtown Racine with the city's former sheriff as his traveling companion. They had just reached Fourth Street on Main when the front axle of the vehicle broke, causing the front of the carriage to fall down onto the ground and its occupants to lurch forward into the street. Sheriff Schneider was thrown from the buggy, but was lucky enough to land on an elbow, roll out of the way, and escape injury. The 72-year-old Janes was not as fortunate. Toppling over head first from the driver seat, his skull struck the street, knocking him unconscious, as his body became entangled in one of the front wheels and probably the reins. The small horse that had been trotting nicely along only moments before now became frightened at the unexpected activity and bolted down the street, dragging Janes' limp body down Main Street in the dust and dirt as astonished spectators looked on in horror. [1]

Witnesses to the event were able to subdue the animal and Janes' battered body was lifted onto the sidewalk by stunned onlookers. He was still senseless from the head injury, and concerned citizens made several attempts to restore him to consciousness. A local doctor was called, who treated the old man's injuries on the sidewalk amid the crowd of people. The unconscious man was eventually hoisted into a conveyance and transported to his residence just a few blocks away at Main and Seventh streets. Inside, the doctor made a thorough examination of his patient and regrettably informed family members that the elderly gentleman was suffering from a contusion of the scalp, concussion



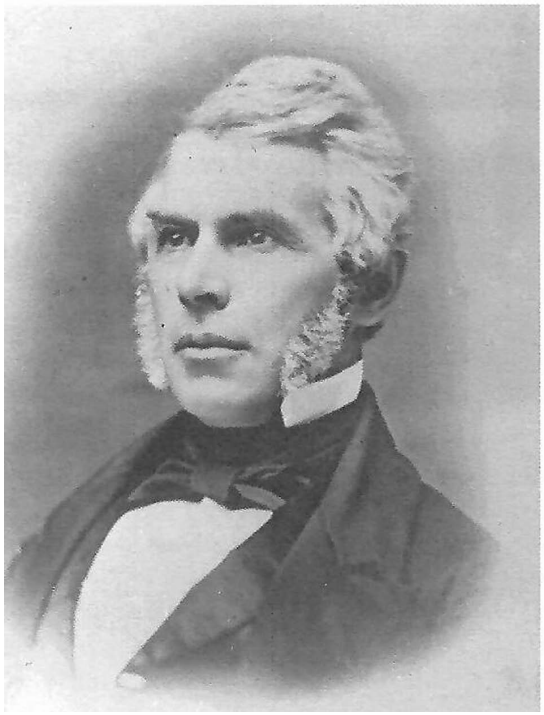
Congress Hall in 1858. This sketch is the earliest illustration of the hotel. Courtesy of Gerald Karwowski.

of the brain, a dislocated collar bone, and internal bleeding. His prognosis for a successful recovery was slim. Lorenzo Janes died nine days later without ever having regained consciousness. It was a tragic end for a man who had been one of the most influential and benevolent citizens in the community's brief history. Among the facts of his life listed in his obituary, it was noted that Janes "was one of the proprietors of the present city of Racine, and built the Congress Hall." [2] Ironically, the accident occurred just behind the hotel he built and owned for thirteen years.

The very first settlers came to Racine from Chicago on foot during the fall and winter of 1834-1835. By the following spring, steamboats were periodically transporting eastern immigrants to the banks of Lake Michigan just south of Root River. As there was no navigable harbor or even a pier for unloading persons or freight, passengers and cargo were transferred to small scows and rafts called "lighters" which were then rowed and poled to the sandy beaches that adorned Racine's waterfront. Deep trenches had been dug out in the sand, so that the "lighters" could reach dry land and have travelers unload with minimal effort.

Racine's founding fathers realized that water traffic was directly connected to the financial success of the community. Several long piers extending five or six hundred feet into the lake were constructed at regular intervals along the lakefront. Warehouses were built near where the piers met the land to house freight that had been delivered. To ease the delivery of cargo, band rail tracks were laid onto the piers so that cars could transport freight directly from boats to warehouses. Janes boasted to a friend: "We built last season two piers seventy-five feet long each so that the mouth of our river is now open at all times and the water is deep enough at the mouth to run out large scows loaded with wood." [3]

As the volume of water traffic increased, the community recognized the need for a usable harbor. The first primitive and rudimentary harbor was completed in 1844 without any financial assistance from the government. It was the harbor which necessitated the very first bond for the new village. Henry Whitney of Boston loaned the village $5,000 "for harbor improvements and for nothing else." Security for the loan was a bond for $5,000, at 10% interest, payable in five years. Racine historian Eugene Leach noted that there were two remarkable things about this loan: "one of them was the evidence of the extreme readiness of the people to tax themselves for harbor improvements...The other was the fact that 77 of the business men of the village signed a guaranty, each for a certain amount, from $300 down to $15, for himself alone and not jointly, that the bond would be paid at maturity: the sum of the guaranties was little more than $5000. It is evidence of a public spirit at the beginning of the city's building...." In 1844, a year before Congress Hall opened, an election was held to determine whether the people favored a tax of $5,000 for the harbor. Forty persons voted in favor of being taxed. Only two citizens objected to the proposal. [4]



Lorenzo Janes, influential Racine settler and builder of Congress Hall. Courtesy of Racine Heritage Museum.

When Lorenzo Janes arrived in Racine in 1836, he held the distinction of being only the second lawyer to come to the village, and one of perhaps 1,300 white settlers in the area. That year saw a significant jump in population and like numerous speculators who were coming in by land and water to stake property claims and make fortunes, Janes came to Racine from Albany, New York, to make his. He could trace his lineage back to William Janes, who was born in Essex, England, in 1610. His ancestor immigrated to America in 1637 and had sixteen children. Lorenzo was born in Vermont on September 18, 1801, but moved to Albany where he married Elvenah Cooper, fathered ten children, and excelled in the legal profession. Not satisfied with simply having a successful law practice, he served as a Judge on the Justice Court for the City of Albany for four years.[5] The lure of greater prospects out west, however, proved too strong of a pull for Janes to shrug off. He left his family in Albany and came to Wisconsin to purchase land. He initially filed a claim for property at Gardiners Prairie in Walworth County, but decided to make Racine his home when he met men

like Gilbert A. Knapp, Gordon S. Hubbard, and Jacob A. Barker, who were leaving places like Chicago and Buffalo to establish a settlement at the mouth of Root River by Lake Michigan. In the eyes of Janes and other early settlers, Racine could prove to be a successful lake port community if a satisfactory harbor could be established for trade and commerce.

Once he made permanent residency in 1837, he relied on his legal prowess to make a living. However, he soon realized that a small settlement with very few litigants produced very little income. He wisely set his sights on real estate and combined both occupations to make investments, buy and sell land, file claims, write deeds, assist persons with legal matters, and settle grievances. Within two years, Janes established thriving businesses, owned large parcels of land, but added to his income still more by selling insurance.

Soon after he settled and established his businesses, Janes began lobbying his friends back east to come to Wisconsin Territory and invest in land. On February 7, 1838, he wrote a letter to his brother back in Waterbury, Vermont, saying how much he loved living in Racine. "I am much pleased with the country and shall probably make this my personal home… The land here is nice and productive and the climate as healthy and the water as good as in any part of the U.S." Janes expected additional land to be on the market the following summer and urged his brother to send money. "If you have a surplus send it on here and I will invest it for you," he wrote. He was elated that the new settlement had become so prosperous. He prophesied that the village "bids fair to be one of the best places in the country," and announced that the state legislature appropriated $200,000 for a bank in Racine. He was hopeful that Congress would supply additional funding for a harbor, and happy that "our Light House will be commenced…early in the Spring." [6]

Three years later, he was still rhapsodizing about his new home. In 1841 he wrote to a friend in Vermont, who had visited Racine and bought some property, that business was booming. "There are about 20 buildings now going up here," he beamed, "and the prospect for business is better than it has ever been here…The house I have engaged for you, you will probably recollect has two pretty good size rooms finished off and comfortable. If the house does not suit, you will be able to hire a new house in a few months as there are now several being erected to rent." [7]

Lorenzo Janes proved to be a very community-minded individual, who contributed greatly to the building and culture of the early village. He was involved in the ownership of the original plat of Racine with Knapp and Hubbard. In 1838 he was one of numerous Racine citizens to petition for a bank and later that year became one of the owners of the *Racine Argus*, the first newspaper in the village. He helped incorporate the Rock River Railroad. In 1859 he was elected to the Wisconsin Territorial Council and subsequently served as a colonel on the staffs for Governors Henry Dodge and James D. Doty. He promoted religious and public education by helping to establish the First Baptist Church of Racine in 1842, establishing the first library society, and serving as a trustee for Racine Seminary.[8] He donated a large parcel of land north of Root River on which the original Fourth Ward School was built in 1856. For a visionary like Janes, no challenge was insurmountable, no project was too large, no goal unreachable.[9]

His predisposition to see things in a big way carried over to the houses he built. He originally had a square, four-story home erected on the corner of Third and Chatham streets to house his family and business practices.[10] Family tradition says his wife found it too large to manage after she arrived with their numerous children the following year, so they rented out several of the rooms to boarders until he built a smaller residence for his family one block farther south on Chatham Street around 1840.[11] He continued to use the original house for his business and boarders. As Chatham Street and the downtown area developed into a bustling business district, Janes eventually constructed a third home on the southeast corner of Seventh and Main streets, so he could raise his family in a residential neighborhood. This third residence has been described as "an attractive large rambling house." [12]

Over the next sixteen years, Racine residents witnessed an expansion and completion of the city's harbor. Most of the citizenry understood the importance it would have on the city's commerce and commercial success. Mayor George C. Northrup summed up its significance: "Our harbor has contributed largely to our prosperity and it is the only cause of our having a city at this point. Fill up the harbor and our place would be deserted. It is the main outlet of our productions, and cannot be neglected without serious detriment to every other interest. The value of all real estate depends chiefly upon the safety and convenience of our harbor…."[13]

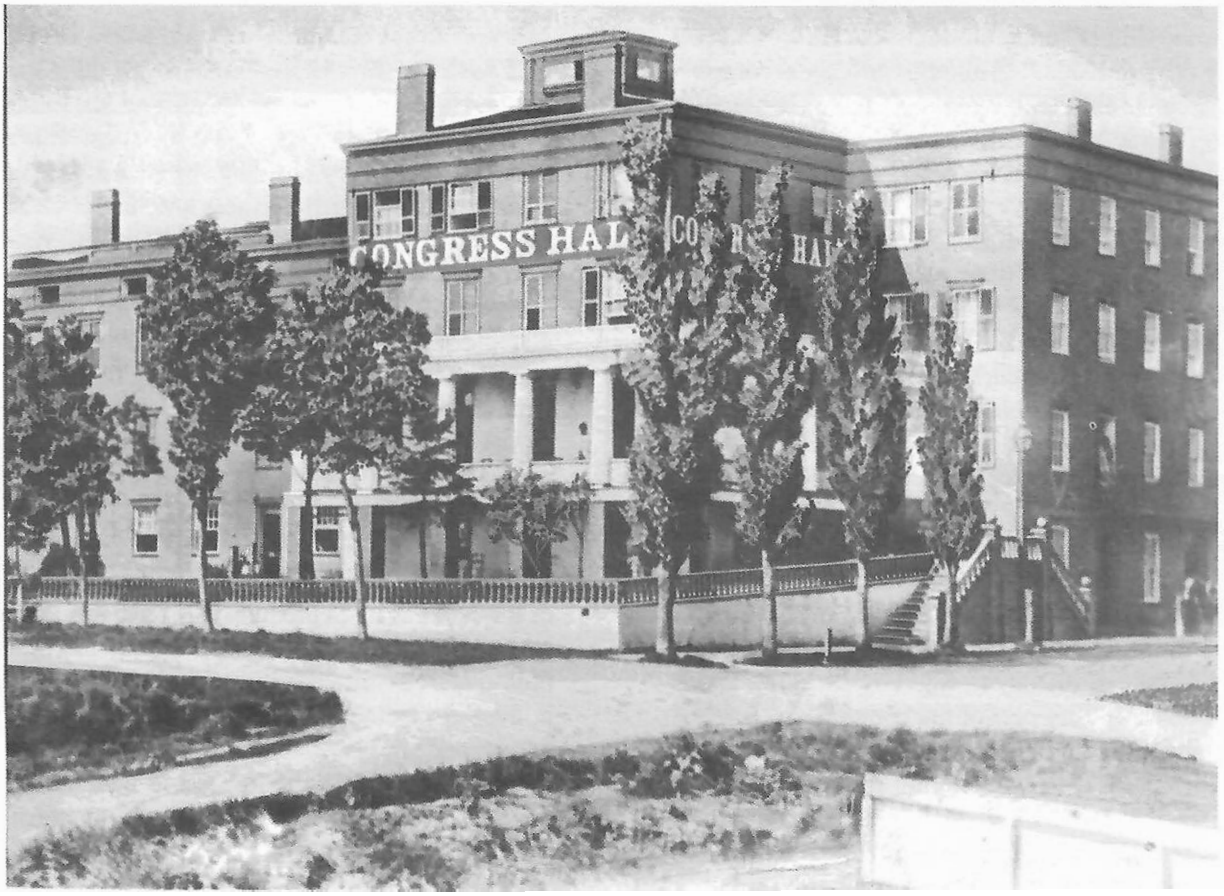
The words of Mayor Northrup were music to Lorenzo's ears. He also saw corporate and personal profitability in the harbor project. While Janes the civic-minded leader understood how a harbor would bring financial success to his community, Janes the businessman realized that a first class hotel prominently placed near

the steamboat landings and the harbor would add to his already-diversified business enterprises. The community suffered from a shortage of public housing to accommodate all of the visitors who were now traveling to Racine by boat and stagecoach for business and pleasure. While the city already had three hotels, Janes saw the opportunity to open a large resort hotel that would attract travelers from all over the Midwest, not just from Chicago and Milwaukee.[14] He decided to enlarge his first four-story house on Third and Chatham streets by constructing an additional four-story section to the west behind the original home and another three-story section that jutted out to the south along Chatham.

When construction had been completed and the three separate buildings were attached, the enormous and oddly-shaped hotel faced Lake Michigan approximately six hundred feet from the shoreline. Four stories high and solidly built of brick, it was set on a bluff at an elevation of forty feet. Only one photograph and one sketch exist of the hotel, which clearly show that the two sections which were added to the original Janes homestead formed an unusual "L" shaped structure and took up one-third of a city block along Chatham and extended up Third Street toward Main Street for almost half a block.[15] Janes used so much brick in the manufacture of his hotel that they were piled up on surrounding sidewalks and streets until the masons needed them. One citizen complained, "Is it necessary whenever a brick building is erected in the village, that the sidewalk and three-fourths of the street should be obstructed for months?"[16]

Eighteen white columns supported a second-story railed balcony which covered a portion of the front and north side, and also formed a large, shady veranda around the front entrance. On three sides of the building's front extension, just a few feet beneath the roof, *Congress Hall* was painted in large, bright letters – letting visitors know they had arrived at their destination. This sign would have been plainly visible to travelers arriving by boat, indicating they had reached their destination. Two sets of elaborate wooden stairs permitted guests to ascend to the veranda from Third Street, while a few smaller steps provided easier access to the hotel for persons arriving at the Chatham Street entrance. Brick sidewalks led up to Main Street from the hotel's Third Street doors. At the edges of the veranda a brick

Congress Hall in 1869. The hotel covered over 6000 square feet of ground and contained over 100 rooms. Notice the children on the roof and the bright spot of light on the right side of the photograph. Courtesy of Racine Heritage Museum.



An artist's retouched version of the previous photograph. Notice that the children have been removed, the trees have been filled out and softened, and the bright light has been covered up by artist-drawn foliage. Courtesy of Racine Heritage Museum.

retaining wall accented with an ornate railing surrounded the building. Shade trees lined the dirt road between the hotel and the banks which led to the sandy beaches along Lake Michigan. Those who wished to have an aerial view of the Lake Michigan shoreline and the greater Racine environs could climb stairs up into a small square enclosure on the roof, which became known as the "Observatory in the Dome." [17]

The first advertisements for Congress Hall were published in February 1845. Although maintaining ownership, Janes hired a Captain A.P. Mapes to supervise the daily operations of the establishment.[18] It is unknown how Janes knew Mapes, but the owner entrusted the Captain with all management decisions and marketing strategies. The new proprietor was genuinely impressed with the hotel and was confident that all persons who stayed there would find it "a comfortable and well-conducted establishment."[19] Mapes stressed that the establishment was "pleasantly located in the business part of town, near the Steamboat Landing, and contains many pleasant rooms."[20] Simply saying it had "many pleasant rooms" was a gross understatement; in fact, Congress Hall contained over *one hundred* spacious rooms for rent and had been built on over *6,000* square feet of land! Mapes monitored construction, hired personnel, furnished the hotel, and announced that rooms would be available on April 1.[21] On March 25, Mapes was struggling to make the April 1 deadline, but still hoped the hotel would be ready. Whatever the delays were, the new proprietor was forced to move the date back. He had new advertisements published, announcing that the hotel would open sometime "in the month of April," but that deadline, too, was not met.[22] Congress Hall officially opened on May 1, 1845.

A week after Congress Hall opened its doors for business, the *Racine Advocate* was quick to boast that Lorenzo's new hotel was "the most extensive and splendid brick structures in the territory, and has been erected…on a site the most commanding in the village, convenient to the harbor, with the broad expanse of Lake Michigan in full and unobstructed view, and a most delightful perspective of Racine from the observatory in the dome."[23] Mapes hosted a reception on the Hall's first day of business for boarders, visitors, and travelers. That evening he served up a lavish

"inauguration dinner" and entertainment for a "respectable party of gentlemen." Although nobody recorded what the meal or entertainment consisted of, the *Advocate* bragged that "the entertainment was a sumptuous one for the region, and was served up in a style of neatness and order that we have never seen excelled in the Territory. Indeed, Racine can now boast of a Hotel surpassing all others in Wisconsin."[24]

The opening of Congress Hall compelled the other local hotels to upgrade accommodations and services in order to compete for business. Only a week after Mapes' inaugural dinner, the owner of the Racine Exchange, Elisha Raymond, announced that he had made "extensive repairs, and great additions to its furniture." Raymond promised to patrons that he would "furnish the best entertainment the country affords, for both man and beast, at prices to suit the time." Visitors staying at his establishment would be taken at any time of the day or night by carriages and teams of horses to "any part of the country" upon request. Not to be outdone by the hospitality Janes was offering to visitors at Congress Hall, Raymond wanted his boarders to know in advance that "persons wishing to take boats for the east, will be put on board with their baggage, FREE OF CHARGE, and without fail."[25]

By June the local press noticed that the hotel business was a lucrative one in Racine, when it listed nine hotels that were in operation. "Yes, NINE HOTELS, we said – and nine, we repeat, there are in Racine; so take your finger away from the side of your nose. Let us enumerate: Congress Hall, Racine Exchange, Cottage Inn, Traveller's Rest, Harbor Hotel, Racine House, Fulton House, American, Lake House. These houses, we understand, are doing a good business. In addition, there are several large and respectable Boarding Houses in our place. So, 'the smart little *village* of Racine' looms larger in this particular than her ambitious neighbor just south of us."[26] While the other boarding establishments continued to thrive, some businessmen were gradually giving up their rooms at the older hotels and gravitating to the new hotel that offered spacious rooms, a wonderful view of the lake from its waterfront windows, new furniture, and short distances to the centers of transportation. Doctor E. Webb, who had formerly seen patients in his rooms at the Racine House, saw an opportunity to improve his status in the community by moving his practice to the new prestigious Congress Hall.[27]

Within only a few months, the hotel Janes built was receiving praise from virtually everybody who stayed there. The editor of a rival newspaper to the *Racine Advocte* was compelled to write a glowing review after just one brief visit. "We have more than half a mind to make out a PERMIT, in due form, to the *Racine Advocate* and all the Raciners, to brag, boast, expatiate and EXPAND, to their hearts' content, on their spacious Public House Congress Hall, without let, hindrance, detraction or SUBTRACTION, from us. It is really a spacious and showy building, well furnished and arranged, delightfully located, and, under charge of Mr. Mapes, is such a Public House as few Western towns or cities can boast of." Without wanting to outright concede that fact, the *Racine Advocate* told its detractors: "Well, we told you that if you would only come, and take a dispassionate view of Racine, Racine Hotels, the Racine Harbor and Racine advantages in all things – big scales would fall from your eyes, and you would see our place 'as others see it' – one of the most delightfully located villages in Wisconsin…."[28]

The *Racine Advocate* reprinted yet another fine review of the hotel in its September 30, 1845, issue, when it told readers that Congress Hall was "winning golden opinions from all whose good fortune it is to sojourn in it, even for a day." The editor of the *Southport Telegraph* had simply taken a meal in the hotel's lavish dining room, but was so impressed with the experience that he showered Captain Mapes and the hotel with accolades:

> Congress Hall, Racine – This House opened with the year past; we had heard much of it in the public prints and otherwise. We had occasion to visit Racine a few days since, and on stopping at the House found that in reality the half had not been told us. Certainly it would take a man of very great inventive genius to plan a house more excellently, and none could fit it up or keep it more admirably than the present proprietor CAPT. MAPES. It is a credit and a very great interest to the place, for a man would not go away if he could help it after stopping there, or if he did go, would be very apt to come back again. If first impressions of a town or country are obtained from the first impressions of the house where stopping, those who stop at Congress Hall will have a most favorable impression of Racine and Wisconsin. In all our travels we have never found a house so admirably planned, furnished and kept; and we shall go to Racine twice hereafter 'to once before for the sake of stopping there."[29]

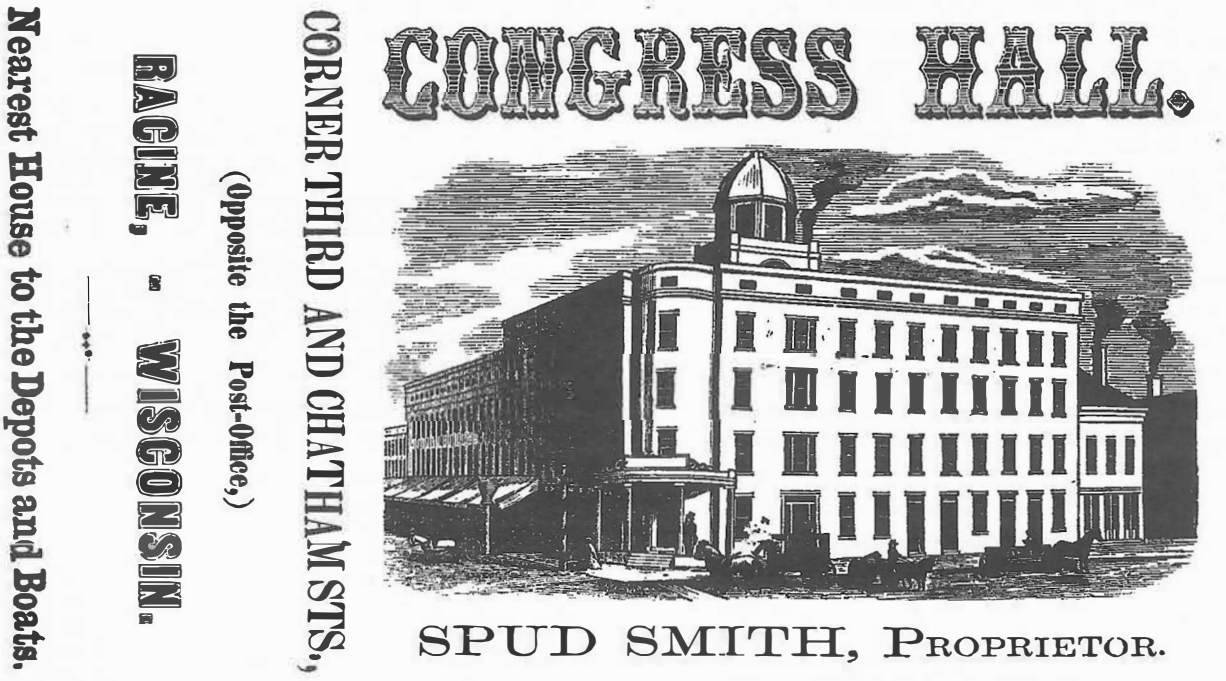
Just four months after he opened the hotel for business, Captain Mapes evidently realized he needed assistance managing Lorenzo Janes' huge establishment. Perhaps supervising the daily operations was too much for one person to handle. Maybe Janes noticed that Mapes was not paying attention to all of the details that a success-

ful resort hotel required. Possibly Mapes asked Janes for help. Whatever the reason, Mapes had another person to co-manage Congress Hall with him by the beginning of October.[30] That person lasted only five months, however, and the Captain returned to being sole proprietor in March 1846.[31] By September of that year, Janes had decided that he needed an individual who was a seasoned hotel manager to run his large enterprise. Rather than hiring someone local, he persuaded a Mrs. Louisa Crosby from his old hometown in Albany, New York, to come to Racine and take over the daily operations. For many years Mrs. Crosby operated a hotel in Albany and was very familiar to the Janes family and the Albany business community.[32] Mrs. Crosby lasted four years before Congress Hall was under the direction of Marcus Weed, a local merchant and former owner of a local dry goods business.[33]

In 1853 a new proprietor T. Stevens, announced: "This splendid and beautifully located House, recently enlarged and furnished with new and fashionable Furniture, will be kept as a FIRST CLASS HOTEL. Polite and attentive Porters will be found at the Pier on the landing of Steamers from the North and South."[34] It is not known in what way the hotel had been "enlarged," for the building had already reached the size it would remain for the rest of its history. After only eight years of business, Janes already saw the need to refurnish the entire hotel in order to maintain his high standards of excellence.

Only a few photographs and sketches have survived of the hotel during its thirty-seven year history. The earliest known photograph of Congress Hall was an ambrotype taken by J.E. Joslyn around 1858. An engraving of it appears on *Redding and Watson's Map of Racine County, Wisconsin* for that year. Two other photographs show the hotel in 1869, and an illustration based on them appears in Racine city directories for 1879 and 1881. One of them shows two children sitting up against the observatory on the roof; the other does *not* show the children. A comparison of the two photographs clearly shows that they are the *same* photograph, but that an artist was employed to retouch details, remove the children from the roof, and improve the overall quality of the picture.

An inexplicable error occurred, however, in the 1858 *Racine City Directory*, when an advertisement for Congress Hall clearly showed an illustration of a building that was *not* the prestigious Racine hotel. By this time, Spud Smith was managing the establishment. Either he could not obtain a copy of the photograph of his own hotel that was used in his own city's map that year, or he did not like the recent image of the Hall, or he could not obtain rights to use the image from Redding and Watson. Whatever the reason for the deception, Spud Smith chose to use an illustration that showed a huge, four-story corner building, with a small circular dome on the roof in his promotion of Congress Hall. What makes it all the more remarkable and unbelievable is that the advertisement appeared in a city directory that would mainly be used by local residents, who would instantly know the difference![35]



A bogus illustration of Congress Hall that was mysteriously used to advertise the hotel in the 1858 Racine city directory.

A significant event occurred in 1858, when Lorenzo Janes sold Congress Hall to local businessman Elisha Raymond. After thirteen years of ownership, Janes had made his fortune and probably no longer needed the headaches associated with running a first-class hotel, especially finding, training, and retaining managers to keep the establishment functioning to his exacting standards. Whether Janes sought potential buyers or whether they sought him is unclear, but he undoubtedly would not have entertained the idea of selling to any person who was not committed to maintaining Congress Hall as the jewel of the Racine lakefront. When Elisha Raymond expressed interest in purchasing the hotel, Janes knew he had found the right buyer.

Elisha Raymond, like Lorenzo Janes, could trace his ancestry to England. The name of Raymond was introduced into England around 1066, the first known family members settling at a place called Raymond in the Hundred of Wye, in Kent. The first ancestor came to America in 1651 and settled in Massachusetts. Elisha Raymond's father was born in Stamford, Vermont, on September 22, 1783. He married Martha Upham in Lenox, New York, and sired possibly thirteen children. The elder Raymond traveled to Chicago in late 1835 onboard the vessel *Agnes Barton*, and then up to Racine settlement on a small boat operated by a Frenchman and two Indians.

Elisha Raymond was born in the State of New York on January 17, 1808. He married Esther Bentley, who bore him three daughters. Like Janes, Raymond also saw prospects for a very bright financial future in the new lakefront community. His father and his father's two brothers came to Racine at about the same time Lorenzo Janes arrived, and all three had found the new village both prosperous and friendly. His father had distinguished himself by being elected a Highway Commissioner in 1837 and Trustee for the village in 1846. That same year the elder Raymond was elected to the Territorial Legislature. Elisha's uncle Seneca was elected Assessor for the young village in 1837, became Treasurer for the County in 1846, Trustee for the Village in 1848, and was one of the members for the first Board of Education when it was organized in 1852. Another uncle, Alvin Raymond, also demonstrated his commitment to Racine's growth by serving as Coroner in 1837, a City Council member in 1859, and Mayor in 1862. He served as Justice of the Peace in 1873 and again in 1875. The Raymonds were a family committed to the building and expansion of their community.

When he came to Racine in 1841, Elisha Raymond "at once engaged in hotel keeping, - becoming the proprietor of the hotel, known as the 'Racine Exchange.'"[36] In 1850 he expanded his financial horizons by dabbling in the produce and commission business. When Lorenzo Janes decided to sell Congress Hall in 1858, the 50-year-old Raymond saw an excellent opportunity to return to his former occupation and carry on the tradition of excellence that Janes had established for the hotel. He had managed large hotels in the past and saw an opportunity to invest in an enterprise that had been extremely profitable for Janes. The hotel was very well known and Janes had spared no expense building it. After a decade of being in business, however, Congress Hall required significant renovation and its reputation had become somewhat tarnished as a first ranking hotel. It looked dated and worn. The wallpaper had become faded and chipped. The carpets had been walked on by thousands of travelers and now showed signs of being soiled and threadbare. Even though proprietor Stevens had purchased new furniture a mere five years earlier, Raymond determined it all had to go, and that the entire hotel needed a dramatic facelift.

Maybe the thought of financing and overseeing a major renovation project was enough to prompt the 57-year old Janes to find a buyer. Money was certainly not a problem for Janes, but maybe the periodic updates and the seemingly continual search for a competent manager had taken their toll on the aging owner. Whatever the reason, he could not have been happier than when he turned the building over to Elisha Raymond for safekeeping. Both men were from New York State; both were lawyers; both were influential pillars of the community; both were seasoned veterans of managing large hotels; both enacted exacting standards of excellence for their business ventures. It was Elisha who became Lorenzo's chief rival and competitor for business in 1845, when he made extensive repairs to the Racine Exchange and supplied it with new furniture to attract visitors away from Congress Hall. The competition had not injured either their friendship or their professional relationship. If anything, Janes must have felt tremendous relief that his hotel was safe in the capable hands of someone who was as passionate about the hotel as he was. Raymond was just the man to own and manage one of the most notable public houses in the State of Wisconsin.

Once Elisha Raymond determined what was needed to restore the building to its former glory, he spared no expense. By early November, the *Racine Daily News* announced that Congress Hall had been "refitted and furnished and is now under the supervision of ELISHA RAYMOND, Esq. His long experience, and extensive acquaintance with almost every body, cannot fail to make him a popular landlord. Those who shall see fit to call at the Hall will be well pleased with the fare and attention that they will receive."[37] The changes were

everywhere. The entire interior of the hotel had received new paint and new wallpaper. New carpets adorned all the floors and every curtain had been replaced.

A local group of citizens were stunned by the obvious cost Raymond paid for the improvements. "In looking through this establishment, as recently fitted up by Mr. Raymond," they recalled, "we were surprised at the expense which he had laid out upon it, and the air of neatness and luxury which every-where pervades." The visitors concluded that "the private apartments are as comfortable and tasty as any one could wish. We can assure the wayfarer that he will be pleased with the care, comfort and attention he will always get at Congress Hall."[38] Raymond himself took out advertisements, telling readers that "this well-known public house has recently been refitted and refurnished, and will be kept as heretofore, as a first class public house." He assured all those who would stay at his hotel "that they shall find an agreeable and pleasant home at the Hall."[39]

The year 1859 saw two interesting events occur at the hotel. Late into the night of January 4, a man named John Kief broke into the hotel through a window and collected a basket of clothes which he set upon the window sill for either himself or an accomplice outside to take away. Unfortunately for Kief, Elisha Raymond was awakened in his room by the noise and confronted the burglar on the stairs near his room. By some method or threat, Raymond was able to "detain him until morning," when a policeman took him to jail. An investigation into the matter uncovered a pile of women's clothes on a nearby sidewalk, indicating to the authorities that Kief and a confederate entered other residences, boarding houses, or businesses that same night before deciding to burglarize the Hall. A trunk was later found in the rear of Union Hall, which contained a considerable amount of clothing belonging to the boarders at Congress Hall. To the dismay of both Raymond and the victims of the thefts, the *Racine Daily News* reported that "there is no law to punish men for breaking into houses."[40] It wouldn't be the only occasion when theft occurred at the hotel. Years later it was reported that "a man who put up at Congress Hall 'vamoosed' ....with a lot of valuables that he got hold of."[41]

On April 25, a small fire was discovered to have started as the result of a shirt having been thrown against a stove pipe by one of the servants. The shirt caught fire and the flames quickly ignited the wall all the way up to the roof. People walking on the street sounded the alarm when they saw smoke pouring from on top of the building. The fire was quickly extinguished by only a few buckets of water and damages did not exceed thirty or forty dollars.[42]

The following August, Raymond proudly announced that he had installed "a set of 'Bath Rooms,' in which cold, tepid or hot baths could be had at all hours of the day. Our citizens will find these rooms a delightful retreat in this hot weather, contributing alike to their comfort and health." The local press was soon boasting once more that "Congress Hall, under the management of Mr. RAYMOND, is fast regaining the name it used to have, of being the leading hotel in Racine. The rooms have been completely furnished from basement to garret, and every thing arranged with the view to the comfort and gratification of the guests of the house."[43]

The early 1860s saw Elisha Raymond still making large financial investments in the hotel. Not satisfied with just making improvements to the building itself, he decided to enhance the exterior appearance and make walking easier for his patrons by having brick sidewalks laid on Third Street, between the hotel and downtown. It was such a noticeable improvement that the *Racine Weekly Advocate* complimented him by saying, "The new brick pavement from Main Street to Congress Hall is quite an improvement, friend Raymond."[44] The following year he planted a row of shade trees on Third Street to enhance the appearance of the side of the house. Sometime before, he had planted trees along the front of the building, between Third and Fourth Streets, which placed the hotel in a very tranquil and picturesque setting, especially to travelers just disembarking from the steamboat landings adjacent to the front of the building. "This model hotel," a person glowingly wrote, "will always be the favorite with travelers so long as mine host Raymond presides over its destinies."[45] In 1863 Elisha was once more repairing the house. This time he had the entire building raised four inches to accommodate a new foundation that had been constructed beneath it. "Raymond," a newspaper gushed, "is a 'prince' of a landlord."[46] The following year he added another suite of rooms where visitors could enjoy hot and cold *medicated* baths.[47]

In early 1866, fire once again threatened. The large stables on the east side of Chatham Street belonging to Congress Hall caught on fire late in the morning on January 28. The fire quickly spread throughout the building, which was assisted by an eight-ton supply of dry hay that was stored inside for food. The doors to the stables were locked, but several men attempted to cut a hole in the side of the barn to save the frightened animals inside. They had almost succeeded, but were driven away by the growing flames and intense heat. Through the hole that had been cut, however, the men could see "one of the cows, writhing and plunging amid

the flames, and making desperate efforts to escape from the fire that was crisping and scorching the flesh from her body." It was later determined that several animals were consumed in the fire, including one horse, four cows, and several hogs. Elisha Raymond lost a buggy, while a Captain Tillsley lost valuable household furnishings that had been in storage. Tools belonging to a Mr. Albert Stebbins were also destroyed in the blaze. Raymond did not carry any insurance on the stables, which were a total loss at between $2,500 and $3,000.[48]

Raymond immediately suspected that the fire had been intentionally set by a former Congress Hall cook, Oliver Williams, whom he had discharged only a few days before. Williams was quickly located and both he and his wife were arrested on suspicion. Once behind bars, it didn't take long for Mrs. Williams to implicate her husband as the author of the arson. She told Marshal Barker that she and her husband's marriage had been an unhappy one for years and that they fought "incessantly." Their quarrels and battles became such an annoyance to Elisha Raymond that he was compelled to discharge his cook in order to keep the unpleasantness out of the hotel and beyond the ears of visitors and other staff members. Williams left the hotel, but not before he was heard to say that Raymond "would suffer for it." On the day of the fire, Williams left his residence at about six-thirty in the morning, but returned about eight o'clock. He soon left again, but returned a second time "very much excited," telling his wife "that the Congress Hall barn was burning, and that they must leave town." When she refused to go, he asked his wife for a razor so he could cut his throat. After several failed attempts to find one, he sat down and exclaimed, "Well, we will both be arrested, and go to Hell together!"[49]

After nine years of ownership, Raymond had re-established Congress Hall's reputation as being one of the finest resort hotels in the region. In new advertisements he took out in newspapers in 1867, he bragged that "this LARGE, FIRST CLASS HOTEL IS BEAUTIFULLY situated upon the banks of Lake Michigan, commanding the most picturesque view of the lake and surrounding scenery. Guests at the [Racine] College, and the traveling public generally will find the best of accommodations. The rooms are large, airy, and well furnished. *Table always supplied with the Delicacies of the Season.*"[50]

In 1860 Raymond was bragging in local newspapers that the hotel had been completely refitted and refurbished, including new carpets, wallpaper, curtains, and furniture.[51] After renovation, Congress Hall's reputation as the premier hotel in the state had been restored.[52] Located in the downtown business section, just a short distance from two steamboat landings, aristocrats from St. Louis and other southern cities made Congress Hall in Racine their summer residence for many years.[53]

Guests could observe lake traffic and the arrival of the latest travelers at steamboat landings which extended into the water almost a half a mile offshore at the ends of Third and Fourth streets. The observation room on the roof provided persons with an excellent view of the village and lakeshore.[54] The *Racine Daily Advocate* reported in 1863 that the hotel had been renovated, "and is now thoroughly first class. The entire building has been raised some 4 inches and a new foundation put under it. Raymond is a 'prince' of a landlord."[55]

By 1867 Congress Hall had a reputation for attracting vacationers from all parts of the Midwest. The hotel was noted for offering "one hundred pleasant and airy apartments, including Parlors, Reading Rooms, Dining Hall, together with suites of rooms for families or parties." Horses and carriages were furnished upon short notice from stables adjacent to the hotel, and stage coaches departing for all regions of Wisconsin left the house regularly. Patrons who arrived by boat had their freight brought ashore by "lighters" or "scows," and porters helped bring the luggage from the piers to the hotel. Advertisements boasted that the dinner tables were always stocked with the best delicacies of the season.[56]

The most notable event in the hotel's history occurred in the summer of 1867, when the widow of Abraham Lincoln took up residency within its walls for nearly two months. Mary Lincoln had moved to Chicago in 1865 after the President's assassination and soon realized that her youngest son Thomas – nicknamed Tad – required substantial improvement in his education. At age fourteen, the boy could barely read and could not even sign his name. Several attempts to teach Tad the basics of reading and writing by private tutors were unsuccessful and Mary was now anxious to place her son in a learning environment that would possibly make up for lost time and bring Tad up to the academic levels for boys his age.

It is not known how Mary Lincoln learned about Racine College, but by early 1867 she had made up her mind to visit the city and tour the campus. As a former First Lady, Mrs. Lincoln preferred staying at exquisite hotels and Congress Hall was the natural choice. The 1867 catalog for the college strongly recommended Congress Hall for accommodations to families visiting Racine to inspect the school. It is also possible that Republican Senator James R. Doolittle, or his wife

Mary, contacted Mrs. Lincoln about the Racine College. The Doolittles lived in Racine and the Senator had been a staunch supporter of the Lincoln administration. He very possibly could have been aware of Mary Lincoln's concerns for Tad and suggested a visit to the school.[57]

Mary Lincoln, 1862. Mary wore expensive black mourning clothing the final twenty years of her life, in memory of her assassinated husband. She would have appeared in similar clothes during the fifty days she visited Racine in 1867.

Mary Lincoln arrived in Racine by train from Chicago on June 25 and immediately checked into Congress Hall and found its spacious rooms a delight. "I find the house where I am stopping very neat, clean and every one anxious to please. I have a parlor & bedroom – fronting the lake & I find the air very refreshing. I may probably remain here some weeks – I am finding the rest very beneficial to me."[58] She penned at least four letters from her rooms at the Hall and stayed relatively secluded in her rooms. Since her husband's assassination, Mary Lincoln had established a lifestyle of self-imposed isolation from friends and family which, while she actively nurtured it, she also often complained about it in her letters in a way that called attention to herself as a pitiable creature. She often used aliases when registering at hotels during her travels and cultivated a habit of staying indoors as much as possible.

Virtually nothing is known about her brief residency at the Hall, her daily activities, or whom she may have conversed with. The only glimpses we get come from the letters she wrote from Racine that have surfaced. In one of them, she explained to a friend: "I have surrounded myself with books & propose a great deal of reading, whilst I remain here. Indeed, this is the only resource that is left me. I occasionally see persons who call, and have made a few desirable acquaintances, yet to be candid, I would prefer, that my present solitude, should be unbroken."[59]

One of the few persons who did call upon Mrs. Lincoln was Mary Doolittle, wife of Wisconsin Republican Senator James R. Doolittle. The Doolittles lived close to Racine College and Mrs. Doolittle would have been honored to meet the former First Lady and widow of the President. Mary Lincoln found the Senator's wife to be "a very sweet & unpretending woman with great good sense & a very sympathetic heart – she has been twice to see me & last evening she called for me in her carriage to visit the College."[60] Mary Lincoln found Mrs. Doolittle charming, but she was colder in her rhetoric about the Senator. Politics in Washington after the Civil War rapidly and dramatically changed, and President Andrew Johnson soon fell out of favor. Those senators who continued to support Johnson in his battles with the radical faction of the Republican party were soon unpopular as well. Doolittle fit into this category. " I have found some friends residing here – Senator Doolittle's family. *He* has stooped very low politically…..," she wrote a correspondent.[61]

While a resident at the Hall, Mary began a daily ritual of walking south along Main Street one mile to East Park, a heavily wooded area overlooking the lake. "The walks here are shady & very pleasant," she told a friend. "Each morning I have walked two miles…."[62] After nearly three weeks of enjoying lakefront scenery and relaxation, Mary Lincoln was reluctant to return to Chicago, explaining "the pure air of this place still pleases me…."[63] She had been in the city nine days before word leaked out that the former wife of Abraham Lincoln was lodging at the city's preeminent hotel. Most probably the local reporters checked the sign-in register at the hotel to see if anybody of noteworthiness had checked in. Whether reporters discovered her name, or whether Elisha Raymond leaked her name to the press to enhance the social standing of his establishment is unknown. On July 3, the *Racine Journal* mentioned almost as an aside: "PERSONAL. – We are

happy to be able to chronicle that Mrs. Lincoln has taken up her residence in this city, and is now at Congress Hall."[64]

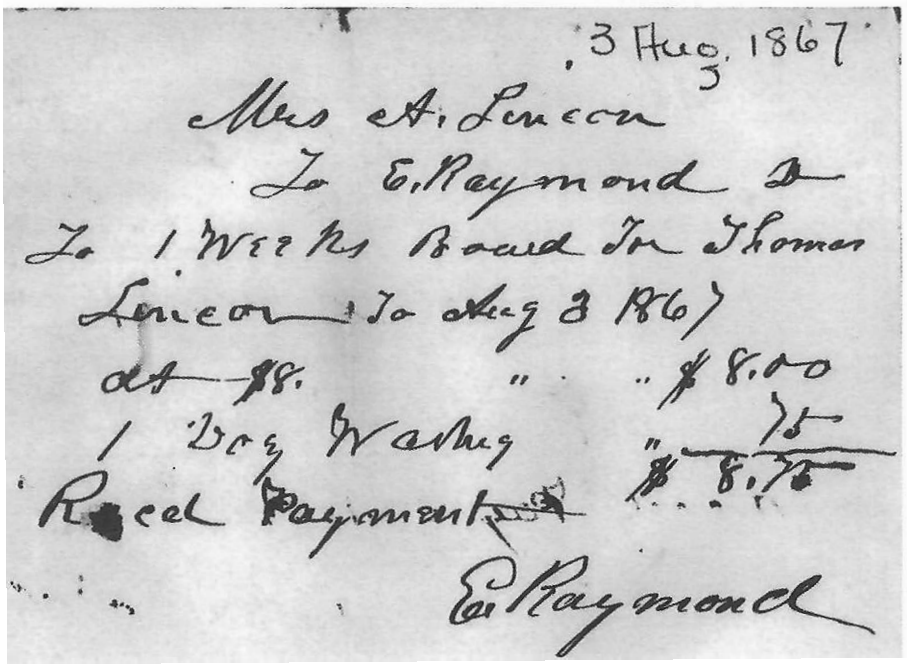
Thomas "Tad" Lincoln, 1866. Notice the mourning band around his hat in memory of his father. Courtesy of Steven K. Rogstad

There was one other reason why Mary traveled to Racine that summer. Although she was deeply interested in inspecting Racine College as a possible school for Tad, she was using the trip as an excuse to avoid going to Washington, D.C., to testify in the trial of John Surratt, the last of the Lincoln conspirators to be tried for complicity in the President's death. Surratt had escaped to Europe and was eventually apprehended in Italy while serving as a guard at the Vatican. He was returned to America for trial two years later and the Federal Government was attempting to make the same legal case against Surratt that it had made against the original conspirators in 1865. Mary and Tad were both asked to go to Washington to testify as Government witnesses against Surratt, but Mary could not bring herself to be near the city where her husband was murdered. The very thought of it made her physically ill, so Tad proceeded to Washington with his elder brother Robert, while Mary traveled to Racine. She followed the Surratt trial in the newspapers and anxiously waited for Tad to join her there after he delivered his testimony.

Tad eventually joined his mother in Racine, but not until the latter part of July. A local resident Charles Buckingham told Racine historian Eugene W. Leach in 1926 that he owned a shoe store on Main Street, between Fourth and Fifth streets, in the 1860s, and that he saw Mary and Tad walking around the downtown area. According to Leach, Buckingham "saw Mrs. Lincoln and the boy almost every day. They lived at Congress Hall, Racine's best hotel, located at the southwest corner of Lake avenue and Third street, and it was their practice to walk up Main street, to about Fourteenth, and back every pleasant day, presumably for exercise, and he saw them very frequently. I have had the same story, in its essentials, from the lips of others also…."[65]

A second recollection describes a mournful Mary Lincoln sojourning around the streets of Racine, but it must have occurred prior to Tad's arrival. On June 4, 1957, Mrs. William C. Hood spoke about her mother's meetings with Mrs. Lincoln in a tape recorded interview she gave for an oral history project sponsored by the Racine County Historical Society.

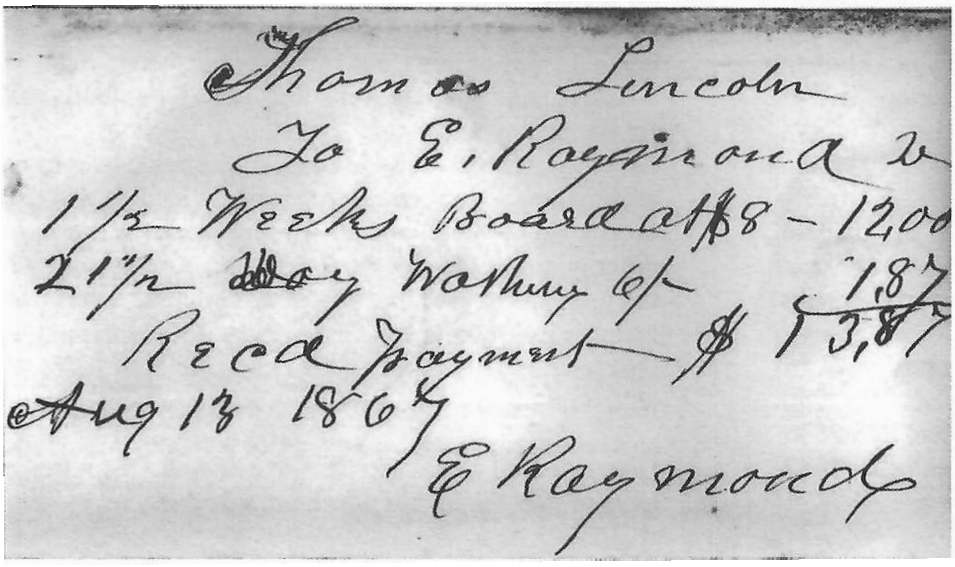
> Well, mother used to speak of it [Mary Lincoln's visit to Racine] in old days like the President's birthday or such. It would come up and she would say: 'I have met Mrs. Lincoln. In fact, she stopped at our home when her son was attending Racine College and she was staying at Congress Hall.' And she used to walk. It was in the warm weather and mother always said that she was very pleasant, but a very pathetic person. She felt sorry for her because she seemed so dragged down with heavy mourning clothes. A heavy veil she always wore. She was a rather short and plump woman. They'd ask her in to sit on the porch and she did frequently stop there. Probably, she never said, but I imagine, they gave her a glass of lemonade and then she would go down the street to East Park and stay there for a while. And then walk to Congress Hall. We've often thought of it [the walk] and it must be just about two miles from the college to Congress Hall. Of course, I don't know how long Mrs. Lincoln was up here, but she was very sad and very much upset about the tragic death of the President and also she had lost a son just before that. And the son was an older boy, I think, than the one that was attending college. I think this was her youngest up here. That's really all I know.[66]


3 Aug. 1867
Mrs A. Lincoln
To E. Raymond Dr
To 1 Weeks Board for Thomas
Lincoln To Aug 3 1867
at $8. " " $8.00
1 Day Washing " 75
Recd Payment $8.75
E. Raymond

A receipt from Congress Hall for one week of board and one day of laundry for Thomas Lincoln. Receipt signed by Elisha Raymond, the second owner of the hotel. Courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Mary had been in Racine for fifty days when she and Tad checked out of Congress Hall on August 13, 1867. Two receipts for board and room for Tad were written out by Elisha Raymond himself, and show conclusively that Tad did not meet his mother in Racine until Wednesday, July 24. The first receipt, dated August 3, 1867, was for one week's board and one day of washing for Tad, totaling $8.75. Ten days later, a second receipt in the amount of $13.87 was issued for 1 ½ weeks of board for the young Lincoln and 2 ½ days for cleaning his laundry. Both of these receipts were forwarded by Mrs. Lincoln to the executor for Abraham Lincoln's estate for payment, and ended up in the Guardianship Papers for Thomas Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois.[67]

By late 1868, the hotel was once again in need of attention. Elisha Raymond, in the tradition of Lorenzo Janes, decided after ten years of ownership that the hotel required repairs and new décor. It appears he closed the hotel for a brief period of time in order that all of the work could be performed at once, rather than in phases. All of the restoration was complete by December and the proud owner took out new advertisements, announcing that the first class hotel, "having been thoroughly refitted and repaired is now open for the reception of guests."[68] As with all of the refurbishments that took place over the years, it can only be surmised what "refitted" actually meant, but Raymond did not do projects in a small way, and it must have been a major restoration project if he was willing to close the hotel – even temporarily – and lose valuable revenue. Another set of new advertisements was published in June 1869, announcing that the "large and first class hotel is beautifully situated on the bank of Lake Michigan, commanding one of the most picturesque scenes of any hotel in the North West. This renders it very convenient and pleasant for the traveling public,


Thomas Lincoln
To E. Raymond Dr
1 ½ Weeks Board at $8 - 12,00
2 ½ Day Washing 6/ 1,87
Recd Payment — $ 13,87
Aug 13 1867
E. Raymond

Receipt signed by Elisha Raymond for 1 ½ weeks board and 2 ½ days of laundry for Thomas Lincoln. Courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Photograph by Cook Ely c. 1869. Courtesy of Racine Public Library.

while visiting Racine on business or pleasure. The rooms are airy and well furnished; table always supplied with the delicacies of the season."[69]

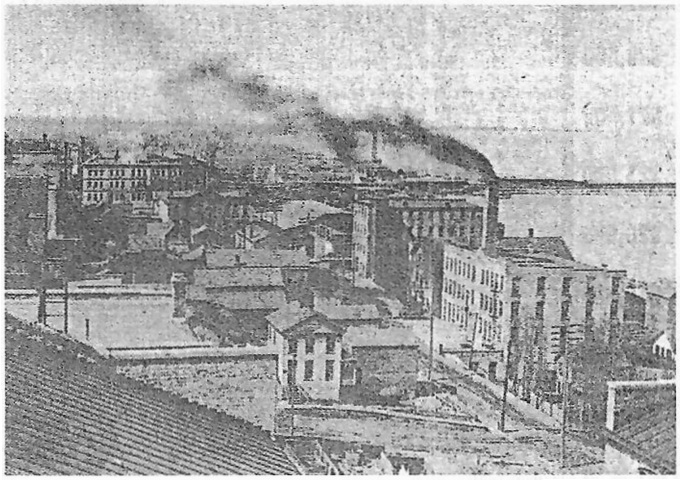
In 1869 ownership of Congress Hall again changed hands, but not voluntarily. Elisha Raymond was in his eleventh year of ownership when he died at age 61 on September 18, nine months after his renovation project. The *Racine Journal*, which had been so lavish in its praise of Raymond during his life, especially of his improvements to Congress Hall, now lamented the loss of another fine citizen. "...one after one are passing away," the newspaper stated, "those men whose names and whose works are associated with the early history of Racine. How fast they are going, how many now sleep beneath the turf, how few walk the streets today. And now, another one is added to the list, one whose life was honorable and against whom no reproach can be said...During the long years Mr. Raymond resided in this city, he has always maintained a character above reproach, and leaves behind him the noble legacy of all that of an honest name."[70] It would be Elisha's brother Seneca, who would own Congress Hall during the last period of the hotel's existence.

Like his brother, Seneca was a hotel keeper and widely respected businessman in his community. He came to Racine on June 15, 1836, the same year Lorenzo Janes arrived from New York. He settled down on 640 acres in the town of Raymond. He served as County Treasurer for four years and in numerous other positions, including trustee of the early village and later as a three -term city alderman. In 1852 he was elected to the County Board of Supervisors. In the years 1853, 1855, 1856, and 1864, he served as School Commissioner.

While Lorenzo Janes built and owned Congress Hall, he owned Racine Exchange, which he hired Elisha to manage. In 1850 he went into a commission business with A.P. Dutton, a partnership that lasted until 1859. In 1870 he purchased Congress Hall from the estate of his brother.

Since the establishment had just been refurbished, Seneca was fortunate to have inherited a building that was repaired and redecorated. However, he did not prove to be as energetic or enthusiastic a landlord as Lorenzo or his brother Elisha. He continued to use an 1869 advertisement in the *College Mercury* until 1873 that still listed his deceased brother as the Proprietor! He was still using the same dated ad in the 1875-1876 city directory, but had finally decided to insert his own name as Proprietor after being the owner for six years.[71] He finally started using a new full-page ad in 1879, which appeared in city directories until 1882.[72] However, the statements Seneca chose to use were bland and uninspiring. He simply stated that the "Hotel appointments of this House are superior to any in the country" and that there were "first class Sample Rooms for the accommodation of Travelers." That was it. Absent were the days when the owner lauded over the advantages of being near the steamboat landing and the downtown business district. Missing were the flowery descriptions of the airy rooms, the picturesque views of the lake, and the accommodations. Gone were the enticing little boasts that Congress Hall was serving the best food of the season and providing the most fashionable furniture for its guests.

Congress Hall would soon be gone as well. In an ironic twist of fate, the harbor which brought the hotel to life



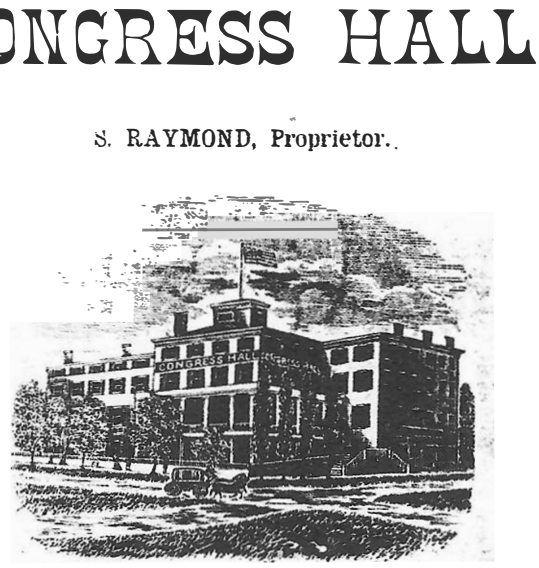
Congress Hall is the three-story building just to the left of the sailboats in this photograph of Racine's downtown area. Courtesy of Racine Heritage Museum.

in 1845 was directly connected to its demise. Late in the evening of May 5, 1882, sparks from a tugboat anchored near the west end of the south pier blew into an open window of a warehouse fully loaded with 500 bales of hay, five or six hundred baskets, 10,000 strawberry crates, and other dry materials. By 10:45 p.m., fire had erupted in the warehouse and quickly spread. Fueled by strong northeast winds, the flames were fanned into two lumberyards that had as inventory no less than ten million board feet of lumber. Next to explode into flames was an abandoned grain elevator. The size of the fire was soon too much for the local fire department to handle and companies from Milwaukee and Chicago were called in to assist. When the Milwaukee crews arrived at about 2:45 a.m. on May 6, everything north of Third Street was ablaze.

As the flames approached the outside north walls of Congress Hall, firemen were facing two insurmountable problems. The water supply was running low, as the city's cisterns had been pumped dry. The other obstacle was the feature that made the hotel distinguishable. The Hall was situated on a bluff of forty feet, but that high elevation prevented firefighters from pumping water uphill from the lake. With no water to combat the inferno, firefighters could do little more than alert guests to the inevitable and make sure everyone escaped safely. One firefighter, Henry Blake, found himself trapped on the fourth floor of the hotel, surrounded by flames. Blake quickly decided that his only means of escape was to slide down the water spout with singed hands, hair, and beard. "The guests had barely time to pack their personal effects and make their escape," a newspaper described Congress Hall's destruction, "when this, too, was attacked by the insatiable element, and this popular caravansary was added to the disaster."[73]

By the time the fire was stopped and extinguished on the morning of May 6, the worst calamity in the city's history had taken place. The fire claimed forty-four buildings at a cost of approximately $1,000,000. Congress Hall alone suffered $20,950 in damage, although it was noted that the building was a total loss and could reach as high as $26,000.[74] By July the scorched brick from the ruins of Congress Hall had been purchased by a Nick Miller.[75] In 1903 a Racine resident described several of the early hotels that had operated in Racine. "I remember that upon the burning of one of these hotels (I'll not say which one) the story ran through the town that hundreds of lives had been lost in the fire, and the terror-stricken hearers of the tale were only comforted by the subsequent assurance that they were the lives of bed bugs."[76]

The fire completely consumed the building and all of its contents. All of its brief thirty-seven-year history went up in flames with it that night in May. Not a



Based on the photographs on pages 4 and 5, an artist's conception of Congress Hall that was used to promote the hotel in 1881. Courtesy of Gerald Karwowski.

Key tag for Room 25 at Congress Hall. It is the only relic that is known to exist from the famous Racine hotel. Courtesy of Gerald Karwowski.

single guest registry was saved and all of its records were consumed. Not a spoon or a dish was spared the destruction. The only item which has come to light is the brass key tag to Room 25.[77] Seneca Raymond never rebuilt Congress Hall, and he died four years later.[78] Soon, the land was sold and re-developed. By the turn of the century, only older residents could recall that one of the state's most prestigious resort hotels graced the Lake Michigan shoreline in downtown Racine.

Today, a municipal parking ramp stands on the ground where Congress Hall once majestically stood in all of its splendor. The scenic view of the lake is no longer there. Few people even know a hotel once stood there. The harbor is no longer the life blood for the community and no hotel has ever been built in Racine that can rival the claims of style and class that made Congress Hall unique and exquisite. Built by a visionary and nurtured by a businessman who was passionate about its first class reputation, Congress Hall should be remembered as one of the most influential and successful buildings that was ever built in the history of Racine.

A public parking ramp stands today on the ground where Congress Hall stood. This photograph is looking north on Lake Avenue, between Third and Fourth streets. Photograph taken by, and courtesy of, Steven K. Rogstad.

Biographical Statement: Steven K. Rogstad is a Racine native who specializes in the study of Abraham Lincoln. He has served as Secretary and Editor for the Lincoln Fellowship of Wisconsin, and as Review Editor for the *Lincoln Herald.* He was chairman of the Lincoln Monument Restoration Project, which restored the statue of Abraham Lincoln on State Street in Racine in 1999. In 2008 he was appointed by Governor Jim Doyle to the Wisconsin Lincoln Bicentennial Commission. He is currently writing a book about Mary Lincoln's 1867 visit to Racine.

Endnotes

[1] *Racine Journal* 2 Jy. 1873: 3. For details of the carriage accident, see *Racine County Argus* 10 July 1873: 3 and *Racine Journal* 18 Je. 1873: 3.

[2] Lorenzo Janes, September 18, 1801 – June 25, 1873. For general biographical information on Janes, see Eugene W. Leach, *History of the First Methodist Church, Racine, Wisconsin, With a Preliminary Chapter Devoted to the City of Racine, 1836-1912* (Racine, Wisconsin, 1912) 14; Fanny Stone, *Racine, Belle City of the Lakes and Racine County, Wisconsin: A Record of Settlement, Organization, Process and Achievement.* 2 vols. (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1916) 2: 604; Racine County Historical Society, Inc. *The Grassroots History of Racine County* (Racine, Wisconsin, 1978) 450; *Racine Daily Advocate* 2 Jan. 1844: 3. Janes is buried in Block 17, Lot 14, Grave 1 in Mound Cemetery, Racine, Wisconsin. The author wishes to thank Steve Bedard, Cemetery Supervisor of Mound and Graceland Cemeteries, for providing cemetery records. At the time of his death, Janes was the oldest member of the Racine County Bar Association.

[3] Ralph M. Colburn, *Rendezvous at Racine: The Life and Times of the Janes and Taylor Family* (Decatur: Privately Published, 1980) 52.

[4] Eugene W. Leach, *Racine: An Historical Narrative* (Racine: United Commercial Travelers of America, 1920) 27.

[5] "Lorenzo Janes," typescript, Folder 820, Racine Heritage Museum, Racine, Wisconsin. The folder is entitled, "Janes," and houses numerous typescripts and newspaper articles about the Janes family.

[6] "Letter Joins Archives," *Racine Journal Times* 20 Jan. 1984: 3A.

[7] Colburn, *Rendezvous in Racine*, 52.

[8] See Colburn, *Rendezvous in Racine*, 52. Colburn states that Lorenzo and Elvenah Janes were good friends with Gilbert Knapp and his third wife, Almira Meach Knapp. Mrs Knapp opened a school for young girls and served as principal of Racine Seminary. Undoubtedly, it was this connection between the families that prompted Janes to serve as a trustee for Racine Seminary.

[9] The original Fourth Ward School was erected in 1856 on land donated by Lorenzo Janes. The school was renamed The Janes School in honor of its benefactor. The school still has portions of the original brick from the 1856 structure. See "Recall Life of Early Settler," *Racine Journal Times* 20 Jy. 1971: 10A.

[10] Stone, *Racine, Belle City of the Lakes and Racine County*, 604; Colburn, *Rendezvous at Racine,* 50-1.

[11] Colburn, *Rendezvous at Racine*, 50-1; interview with Elvera Belden, Racine, Wisconsin, 1 My. 1994. Lorenzo Janes and his wife Elvenah had ten children. Chatham Street was renamed Lake Avenue after the "Big Fire of 1882," which destroyed a third of the downtown.

[12] Colburn, *Rendezvous at Racine*, 51. The house stood on the southeast corner of Main and Seventh streets, where the current Racine Heritage Museum building (formerly the Public Library) is located. When the land was selected as the site for a public library in 1904, Janes was faced with a dilemma. He had hoped to have his homestead moved to another location and spare its being demolished, but had built such a large, sprawling house that it was too wide to move through the streets. He compromised by having the house cut in half, using the center hall as a dividing line. One half of the residence was moved to 1441 Park Avenue. The remainder of the structure was torn down. See "Janes Home Cut in Half to be Moved in 1904," *Racine Times-Call* 2 Aug. 1926: 9, and "Bank Merger Crowns Career of Financier," newspaper clipping, date unknown, in "Janes" Folder 820, Racine Heritage Museum, Racine, Wisconsin.

[13] Quoted in Leach, *Racine: An Historical Narrative*, 26.

[14] The three hotels were the *Racine House* on Main Street, operated by Killip & Dutton; the *Fulton House* on Main Street, operated by Socrates Hopkins; the *Racine Exchange* on Main Street, operated by Elisha Raymond. See *Racine Advocate* 2 Jan. 1844: 1.

[15] Measurements are based on *Sanborn Insurance Map of Racine, Wisconsin. Sept. 1874.* New York: D.A. Sanborn, Sheet No. 3. This map is framed and displayed in the conference room at Knight-Berry Title, Inc., 835 Wisconsin Ave., Racine, Wisconsin. Also see Inset on *New Sectional and Township Map of the State of Wisconsin from United States Surveys and Other Authentic Sources.* Compiled by G.A. Randall. Chicago: Edward Mendel, 1865, Case No. GX902 1865R, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. A map of Racine, "showing every street and every building in the city," was published in August 1867, but no copy of it is known to survive. It was published by B.H. and C.P. Packard of Battle Creek, Michigan and lithographed by Charles Shober and Co., Chicago, Illinois. It was advertised in the *Racine Journal* 21 Aug. 1867: 2. Although Congress Hall was a good distance from the lakefront, another early map shows that water flowing from Root River into Lake Michigan flooded a portion of the downtown area each spring to within one block of the hotel due to the narrow and inade-

quate harbor entrance. See *"Original Plat Map of Racine,"* Engineering Department, City Hall, Racine, Wisconsin.

[16] *Racine Advocate* 3 Sept. 1844: 2.

[17] For general information about the hotel, see Folder 250C, entitled "Congress Hall," Racine Heritage Museum, Racine, Wisconsin.

[18] Interestingly, the proprietor is listed as "A.P. Mapes" and also as "D.P. Mapes" in the advertisements for Congress Hall in the *Racine Advocate.* "A.P. Mapes" is used the majority of the time, so the author has adopted that usage.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] *Racine Advocate* 25 Feb. 1845: 3.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Racine Advocate* 29 Ap. 1845: 3.

[23] "Congress Hall," *Racine Advocate* 6 My. 1845: 2.

[24] *Ibid.*

[25] *Racine Advocate* 6 My. 1845: 3.

[26] *Racine Advocate* 10 Je. 1845: 2.

[27] *Racine Advocate* 6 My. 1845: 3.

[28] "'Congress Hall,' Racine," *Racine Advocate* 22 Jy. 1845: 2.

[29] "Congress Hall, Racine," *Racine Advocate,* 30 Sept. 1845: 2.

[30] *Racine Advocate* 7 Oct. 1845: 3.

[31] *Racine Advocate* 3 Mr. 1846: 3.

[32] *Racine Advocate* 9 Sept. 1846.

[33] *Racine Advocate* 21 Jan. 1844: 1; *Racine Advocate* 25 Mr. 1845: 1; *Racine Advocate* 1 Ap. 1845: 1; *Racine Advocate* 13 My. 1845: 3.

[34] *Racine Advocate* 10 My. 1853: 5; *Racine Advocate* 13 My. 1853: 3.

[35] *1858 Racine City Directory* (Milwaukee: Smith, DuMoulin & Co.) 40.

[36] Obituary for Elisha Raymond, *Racine Journal* 22 Sept. 1869: 3. Also see death notice for Elisha Raymond, *Racine County Argus* 23 Sept. 1869: 3.

[37] "Congress Hall," *Racine Daily News* 11 Nov. 1858: 3.

[38] *Racine Daily News* 30 November 1858: 3.

[39] "Congress Hall," *Racine Daily Journal* 5 Ap. 1859: 4.

[40] *Racine Daily News* 6 Jan. 1859: 3.

[41] *Racine County Argus* 24 Jy. 1873: 3.

[42] *Racine Daily Journal* 26 Ap. 1859: 3.

[43] *Racine Weekly Advocate* 3 Aug. 1859: 3.

[44] *Racine Weekly Advocate* 28 My. 1862: 3.

[45] *Racine Daily Advocate* 13 My. 1863: 3.

[46] *Racine Daily Advocate* 19 Aug. 1863: 3.

[47] *Racine Weekly Advocate* 6 Jan. 1864: 2.

[48] *Racine Journal* 31 Jan. 1866: 3.

[49] "Incendiary Fire," *Racine Weekly Advocate* 31 Jan. 1866: 3; *Racine Journal* 31 Jan. 1866: 3.

[50] *College Mercury* 15 Je. 1867: 4.

[51] Stanley Raymond Belden and Elvera Belden, *The Family History of Judge Ellsworth B. Belden and Collateral Families* (Racine: Privately published, 1969) 128-9; *Racine Daily News* 11 Nov. 1858: 3; *Racine Daily News* 30 Nov. 1858: 3.

[52] Advertisement. "Congress Hall," *College Mercury* 8 Dec. 1868: 4; *Racine Daily News* 11 Nov. 1858: 3; *Racine Daily News* 30 Nov. 1858: 3.

[53] Eugene W. Leach, *The Methodist Church and Early Racine: History of the First Methodist Episcopal Church* (Racine: Western Printing, 1912) 19.

[54] *Map showing the Position and Character of the Reef Near Racine Harbor, Wisconsin*, surveyed and drawn under the direction of Brevet Colonel J.B. Wheeler, Major of Engineers, by William T. Cosgrain in May, 1867. Milwaukee: Siefert, Lawton & Co., 1867, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. Also see *The*

History of Racine and Kenosha Counties, Wisconsin (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1879) 455; *Racine Weekly Advocate* 28 My. 1862: 3 and *Racine Daily Advocate* 13 My 1863: 20.

[55] *Racine Daily Advocate* 19 My. 1863: 3.

[56] *Racine Advocate* 10 My. 1853: 5; *The Racine Register, Business Directory and Advertiser, 1850* (Racine: Mark Miller, 1850) n.p.

[57] There is no known evidence to indicate how Mary Lincoln learned of Racine College or Congress Hall. The Doolittle connection is mere speculation. Mary Lincoln is not known to have ever corresponded with James or Mary Doolittle, and no letters between her and the Doolittles are known to exist.

[58] Mary Lincoln, letter to David Davis, [Racine], 30 June 1867, in Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972) 424.

[59] Mary Lincoln, Letter to Elizabeth Emerson Atwater, [Racine], 13 July 1867, in *Ibid.*, 429.

[60] Mary Lincoln, Letter to Elizabeth Emerson Atwater, [Racine], 30 June 1867, in *Ibid.*, 426. In another letter she stated that "Mrs. Senator Doolittle (who resides here drove to the college on yesterday with me." See Mary Lincoln, Letter to David Davis, [Racine], 30 June 1867, in *Ibid.*, 424.

[61] Mary Lincoln, Letter to Elizabeth Emerson Atwater, [Racine], 30 June 1867, in *Ibid.*, 426.

[62] *Ibid.*

[63] Mary Lincoln, Letter to Elizabeth Emerson Atwater, [Racine], 13 July 1867, in *Ibid.*, 428.

[64] *Racine Journal* 3 Jy. 1867: 3.

[65] Eugene W. Leach, "Pioneer Facts and Folks," *Racine Journal-News* 16 Jan. 1926: 5.

[66] Racine Oral History: Interviews of William C. Hood and Ida B. Schroeder. Tape recorded interviews. Interviewed by Racine County Historical Society, 4 June 1957, cassette tape #Ca 1917-S, Racine Public Library, Racine, Wisconsin.

[67] See Steven K. Rogstad, "Two Receipts Disprove Local Legend That Tad Lincoln Attended Racine College," *The Outlook*, (March, 2006) 3-8.

[68] *College Mercury* 8 Dec. 1868: 4.

[69] Front cover of *Edward's Racine Directory, City and County Record, 1868-1869.* The same advertisement was published in *College Mercury* 15 Je. 1869: 7. Interestingly, Elisha's brother Seneca continued to use the ads, with his deceased brother listed as Proprietor, in the *College Mercury* until 1873!

[70] *Racine Journal* 22 Sept. 1869: 3. Also see death notice of Elisha Raymond in *Racine County Argus* 23 Sept. 1869: 3.

[71] *Racine City Directory 1875-1876* (Milwaukee: Murphy & Co., 1875) front cover. Also see *Racine City Directory 1879* (Milwaukee: William Hogg, 1879).

[72] *Racine City Directory 1881* (Milwaukee: Hogg, Wright & Co., 1881).

[73] *Racine Daily Journal* 6 My. 1881: 4. Information about the "Big Fire of 1882" can be found in "Racine's Big Fire of May 5, 1882," *Racine Journal-News* 12 Nov. 1921: 3-4; "Fire Destroyed 44 Buildings on Main Street, May 5, 1882," *Racine Journal Times Sunday Bulletin* 14 Oct. 1956: 22; "1882 Fire Wiped Out 44 Downtown Buildings," *Racine Sunday Bulletin* 12 Je. 1960: 15; John Van Thiel, "100 Years Ago: The Big Fire of 1882," *Racine Journal Times* 4 Ap. 1982: 57JT; Rod French, "The Big Fire: Blaze of 1882 Burned Into City's History," *Racine Journal Times* 20 Ap. 1984: Section 2, 14.

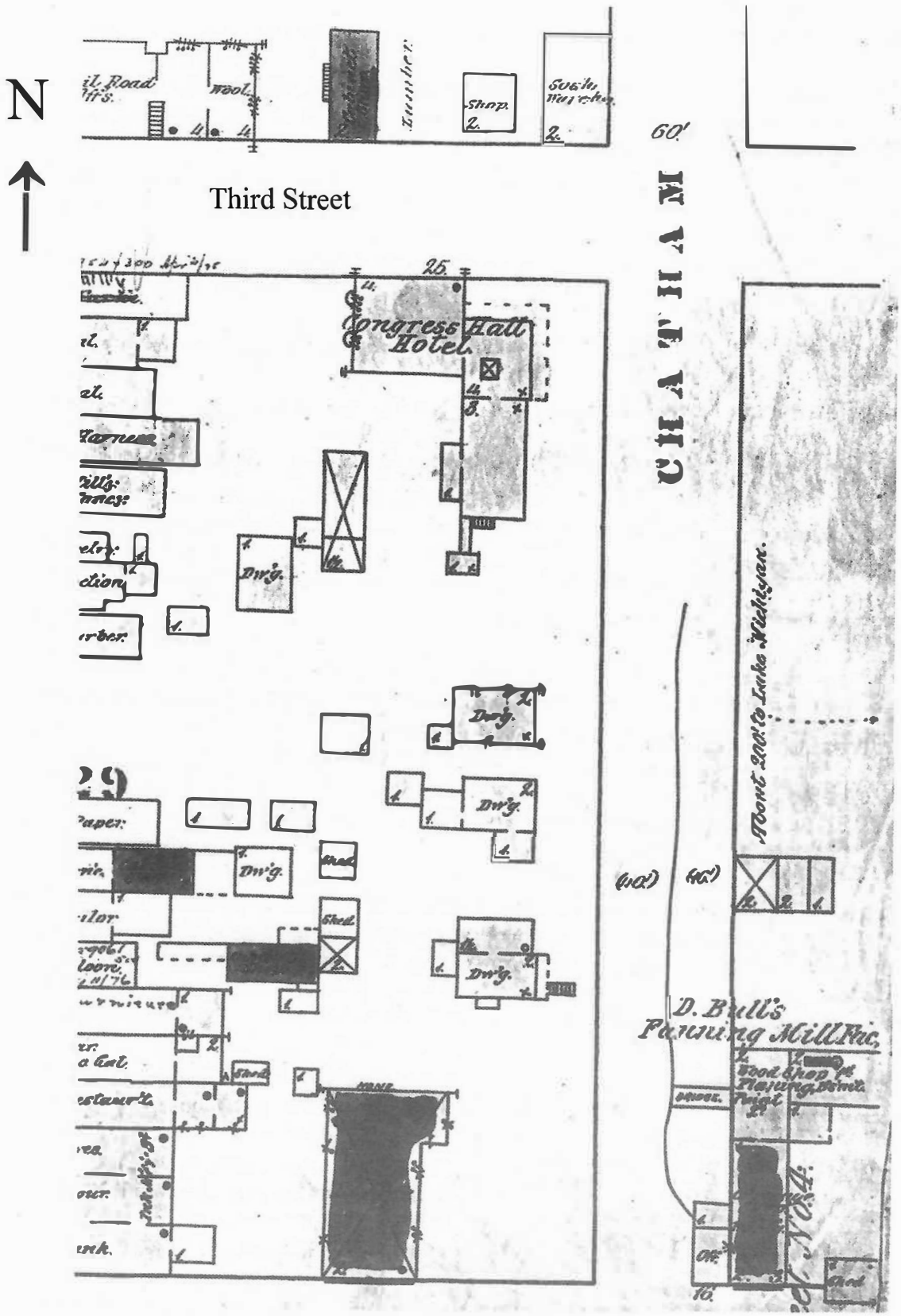
[74] *Racine Daily Journal* 6 My. 1882: 4.

[75] *Racine Daily Journal* 18 Je. 1882: 2.

[76] Stone, Racine, *Belle City of the Lakes*, 491-2.

[77] The brass key tag was manufactured by William W. Wilcox & Company in Chicago, Illinois. It is unknown if this tag was found on the property after the fire or if a visitor of Congress Hall had accidently retained the key after checking out of the hotel. The tag is owned by Gerald Karwowski of Union Grove, Wisconsin, who purchased it from a collect or years ago.

[78] Seneca Raymond, May 9, 1811-January 20, 1886. For details about his death, see *Racine Daily Journal* 20 Jan. 1886: 3; *Racine Daily Journal* 21 Jan. 1886: 3; *Racine Advocate* 23 Jan. 1886: 1; *Racine Advocate* 23 Jan. 1886: 4; *Racine Daily Journal* 23 Jan. 1886: 3; *Racine Daily Journal* 25 Jan. 1886: 3; *Racine Daily Journal* 27 Jan. 1886: 3; *Racine Advocate* 30 Jan. 1886: 4. He is buried in Block 19, Lot 51, Grave 3 at Mound Cemetery in Racine, Wisconsin.



1874 Sanborn insurance map (sheet three). Congress Hall is shown at the southwest corner of Chatham (Lake Avenue) and Third Street. Note Lorenzo Janes' first house, shown with its cupola, to which he added wings to the west and south to create Congress Hall. Courtesy of Knight-Barry Title, Inc.,