

Historic Preservation Commission

2013 Spring Property of the Season

69-71 S. Main Street

The Oswego Historic Preservation Commission is proud to present the Knapp Building, 69-71 S. Main Street, as the spring Property of the Season. The Knapp building has been owned by the Raven Lodge A.F. & A.M. since 1924. It currently houses both the Lodge and the Oswego Family Restaurant.

Construction began in the fall of 1897 and was completed in the spring of 1898. Since that time, the building has undergone minor updating and alterations. The brick commercial building has a corbeled cornice along the top of the front façade with soldier course of brick lintels on the second story. The owners had quite a scare in March of 1900 when a fire broke out in the building across the alley from the Knapp building. The windows facing the alley were burned out from the heat and flames.



The businesses, Malcolm Meat Market and Croushorn Furniture Store, were able to evacuate their goods.

The structure originally included six large narrow windows across the second floor, which had been filled in during a renovation in 1958, leaving only three small window openings. At that time, the wood shingled canopy was added along the front façade. When the Raven Lodge began renovations on the building in 1958, the Kendall County Record wrote about the changes in the August 30, 1958 paper: "The latest local business house to undergo a facelifting is the Oswego Coffee Shop, which is closed this week for alterations, both inside and out. A new brick front is being put on the building, which also houses the Masonic Temple. Both sections of the building are being faced with light-colored brick and modernization of window and door openings. The coffee shop will also be redecorated on the inside."

The building has recently had another 'facelift' with tuck pointing of the brick on the front and side alley façades.

The earliest records for the property show Charles Freeman, of Boston Massachusetts, and wife Sarah selling the parcel to Walter Loukes. Charles Freeman was born in Missouri in 1821 and was living with his young bride, Sarah, in Boston, Massachusetts, as a merchant and trader when he sold the property. Mr. Loukes, one of Oswego's earliest residents, sold the parcel along with other lands, to Lewis B. Judson on August 12, 1845. This parcel,

like many others on Main Street changed hands numerous times between 1845 and the 1880s. Owner's included the Coffin, Van Sickle and Sutherland families.



In 1878 the parcel was purchased by John Knapp and his wife, Elizabeth Spies, from Charles Sutherland. It remained in the possession of the Knapp family until the early 1920s. John Knapp and his brother, Charles, were born in Bayern, Germany, and immigrated to Will and Kendall counties respectively. During the Civil War, John moved to Oswego to join his brother as a hog merchant and butcher. John and his wife moved to Rockford for a time, and then moved to Hastings, Nebraska just before 1900, where John died in 1908. Charles took over responsibility for the building upon his brother's departure. Charles and his wife, Caroline Shoger Knapp, remained in Oswego and were well known, respected citizens. In 1897, he and Rudolph Knapp demolished the old structure and built a new brick building for their meat market.



The Raven lodge purchased this building April 7, 1924, but they have a much longer history in Oswego. The Raven Lodge began in Oswego in 1859, and according to the Kendall County Free Press, in May 1863, Raven Lodge, A.F. & A.M., met over Hall's Store on the 1st and 3d Wednesday evenings of each month. After moving to new quarters, they suffered a setback in January 1872. The Kendall County Record wrote, "There was a commotion the other morning among the occupants of the brick block caused by the rain during the night on the snow laying on the flat roof of said buildings. The halls of both the Masons and Odd Fellows fared badly." The Lodge moved once again, in January 1883, back to their original location, then known as the Coffin Building. For 150 years, the Raven Lodge has been an active and respected member of the community. For generations they have hosted community events and gatherings, and continue to do so today.