

First Midway Hotel

Furnishings & Construction

Started in 1886. Completed in 1887. Informal opening Feb. 15, 1888, Official opening Feb. 24

(Immigrant family hired to clean the new hotel before opening)

Cost including furnishings - \$50,000 and \$60,000 of which Kearney citizens put up \$15,000

Four Stories high

Lobby paved with tile in variegated colors.

Large **billiard room and bar** extended the length of the building east to west.

Main staircase lit by plate glass skylight.

Second floor - dining room - seat 100, next door was an “ordinary” room for late diners.

Steam heated, gas lighting but wiring in place for electric lights and bell pulls.

Each room on the first three floors had **bathroom** and closet.

80 rooms in all.

Addition

Summer 1889 – 4 story 40' x 80' addition built

20,000 guests registered in year before the fire.

Bachelor's Protective Union and the **Owls** for singles held social activities there.

Businesses in the hotel at time of fire:

hatter

tailor

attorney

9 real estate offices

insurance agent

George W Frank Improvement Co

Electric Light Co

barber shop

Kearney Land and Improvement Co

saloon

physician

Fire – March 24, 1890 – Windy day

One fatality of 125 guests & employees in the building when fire broke out.

Worden Dramatic Co. Deming was property and baggage man. Jumped feet first but hit a wire which turned him. An awning was held to catch him but he fell through landing on his head and side of face. Lived until 11 p.m. Mother, widowed, lived in South Omaha.

Coroner's Jury verdict:

On March 24th in the morning Harry Deming died by jumping from his room when the Midway Hotel burned. “,,in our opinion, the said Harry Deming having his clothes on and shoes upon his feet, and from the evidence of Edgar Glenn, it is our opinion that he was sufficiently notified, but owing to the smoke and confusion did not heed the notice.”

Coroner's Jury verdict:

On March 24th after 2:30 p.m. William Schreve fell off a pile of lumber, death was accidental, the lumber was blown over by a severe wind.

April 17, 1890

Debris from the Midway Hotel was put on South Railroad between Central and A

Second Midway Hotel

Construction & Furnishings

Started in **1891**, completed in 1893 – Four stories again

Activity centered around the **long mahogany bar**

billiard room

Rose Room on north side of building with the Rose Room being in the northeast corner.

With **prohibition** the long bar went to the college shop students and the Rose Room became an ice cream parlor, later a private dining room.

Addition

1921 - a two-story annex was added to the west side of the hotel.

Boiler Explosion

1915 - the boiler blew up on a cold winter night. A steam threshing machine was moved up to the north side of the building and then Denison brought the boiler from the Cottonmill to replace it.

KGFW moved from Ravenna to Kearney. First broadcast studio at Midway Hotel till 1941.

Tales of Buffalo County

Vol. I

p. 58 – June 20, 1889 - Maude Marston Burrows column describes a festive reception for two couples.

p. 59 – Mr. & Mrs. Keck, owners of hotel gave a series of parties which Maude wrote up.

Vol. III

p. 125 – Kearney Women's Club first met in homes but as it increased in membership they met at the Opera House top floor large meeting room or the Midway or Ft. Kearney Hotels

Vol. IV

P. 4 - picture of first building – 4 story on nw corner of Grand Avenue & Wyoming Avenue. Started in 1886.

p. 49 – Completed in 1887

p.109 – Informal opening Feb. 15, 1888. “Largest, most complete and best furnished hotel between Omaha and Denver.” Gothic style. Cost including furnishings between \$50,000 and \$60,000 of which Kearney citizens put up \$15,000. J. L. Keck, builder from Cincinnati. Dr. Orison Marden was proprietor

Livery barn located on southwest corner of the block. Two story. Lower part was for storage of buggies, harness rooms and horse stalls. Front half upstairs had offices, rest a loft.

Hotels of Kearney, Part I & II – pp 35-44

Midway – first floor red Colorado sandstone, three upper floors brick, shingled gables.

Owner – J. L. Keck, manager – Dr. O. S. Marden, architect – E. Des Jardins, in charge of construction – George W. Frank, Jr.

New Era description of informal opening Feb. 18, 1888 (formal opening on the 22nd, leap year party on the 24th, the first of many elaborate social functions.) – lobby paved with tile in variegated colors. Large billiard room and bar extended the length of the building east to west. Main staircase lit by plate glass skylight. Second floor had dining room which could seat 100, next door was an “ordinary” room for late diners. Steam heated, gas lighting but wiring in place for electric lights and bell pulls. Each room on the first three floors had bathroom and closet. 80 rooms in all.

Fire – March 24, 1890. Fire alarm sounded at 7:40 a.m. 125 employees and guests escaped, one killed. By 9 a.m. whole town threatened because of strong north wind. Fire department & citizens, hoses and bucket brigade to protect nearby buildings. 10:30 GI fire dept. arrived to assist with 75 men and fire carts. Kecks lived there and lost all personal belongings. They and guests were housed at Green Terrace.

Next day Mayor Finch called a meeting and C of C pledged \$6,000 toward construction of new hotel. Construction began in fall 1891, completed in 1893. Same owner and manager.

Boom fizzled, Marden sold his interest to Keck and moved to Chicago where he started a magazine called *Success*. H D Watson met Lincoln Arthur Denison in Chicago and convinced him to come to Kearney as the new manager. The family moved here in 1903.

Social center again. Activity centered around the long mahogany bar, billiard room and Rose Room on north side of building with the Rose Room being in the northeast corner. With prohibition the long bar went to the college shop students and the Rose Room became an ice cream parlor, later a private dining room.

Livery barn had a corral on the east side of it. The barn became a garage and a building built in the corral space housed the Jewett-Paige Automobile show room.

1921 a two-story annex was added to the west side of the hotel.

1915 the boiler blew up on a cold winter night. A steam threshing machine was moved up to the north side of the building and then Denison brought the boiler from the Cottonmill to replace it.

1930 leased by Arthur L Roberts company of Minneapolis

1934 leased by John Henry.Associates, managed by brother Don

1951 managed by Mr. Gleason who later went to the Ft. Kearney Hotel

1956 managed by Ed, Jim and Art Denison

1967 sold and razed for a Safeway store.

Vol. V

Midway – 2, 37, 53, 54, 109, 134; 52, 105, 105, 109

Summer 1889 – 4 story 40' x 80' addition built.

20,000 guests registered in year before the fire. Bachelor's Protective Union and the Owls for singles held social activities there.

400,000 bricks for the first hotel came from Mannix brick yard

Vol. VI

Midway_– 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 45, 6 - 1937 – KGFV moved from Ravenna to Kearney. First broadcast studio at Midway Hotel till 1941.

The Kearney Weekly Hub

March 27. 1890

Coroner's Jury verdicts:

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Hotel fire started on roof caused by sparks from the smoke stack.

Businesses in the hotel:

hatter

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9 real estate offices

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