

Dan Senftner

INVOICE

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TO:
Rapid City Historic Preservation Commission

FOR:
Historic Preservation Month 2009

DESCRIPTION			AMOUNT
Copies/Rapid City history/Robert Flormann	350	.08	28.00
		TOTAL	28.00

ROBERT FLORMANN

Gold brought Robert Flormann, to Dakota Territory in the spring of 1875, and its allure established his place in South Dakota's history forever. Like many men in those days, he lived on the edge and, according to some stories from our history, that edge was razor sharp. He was a businessman, a developer and, some say, a swindler.

Stopping in Hill City long enough to help plat it, he quickly moved on to mine in the northern Black Hills. Wherever Flormann mined, people gathered, hoping to cash in on his knack for finding gold. The mine he would be most remembered for was the Florence Mine. Eastern investors and accusations of mine salting surround its history, but the stories were as cloudy as mine dust and were never proved.

In 1880, he brought his wife, Ernestine, son Louis and daughters, Frances and Florence, to Rapid City. At that time, he owned a quarter section of land south of the original town site, a timber claim in Rapid Valley, numerous lots on Columbus, Kansas City and St. Joseph Streets and a home on Fourth Street. He significantly contributed to our present-day downtown with the Flormann Block, the west section of the Italianate trio, the Windsor block and the Lakota block. Flormann was also responsible for making the deal that brought the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad to Rapid City, something the new town needed to ensure its position as the center of commerce in the Black Hills.

Bits and pieces of Flormann's life, found in the "Annals of Early Rapid City," speculate on when and if his latest structure would be built as well as social events given or attended by Ernestine and her daughters. The children were sent back east to be educated, their comings and goings reported with great interest in the newspaper. They entertained lavishly, with guests often treated to piano recitals or plays performed in French, by the talented Flormann girls.

The city was eight years old when, in 1884, Flormann built the first of his four buildings. The Flormann Block, later referred to as the Pioneer Block, Unity Syndicate Block or Syndicate Block was a three-story high style Victorian Italianate building. An impressive undertaking, that took the commercial district south to St. Joseph Street. Built with the proceeds from the questionable Florence Mine, it stood at the corner of Sixth and St. Joe. Upper floors contained rented rooms with the street level home to various commercial enterprises, a bank and, for a time, the Rapid City Journal. Henry Behrens designed the building amid much speculation to when and if it would be completed. Fire and renovations eventually reduced it to one level and its former grandeur was lost forever. It is now the home of Audra's Bridal and Career Wear.

A joint venture with Abe Boland and John Brennan, in 1886, created what is known as the Italianate Trio. Flormann's building, home to Rudolph's Uniforms today, stands at 618 St. Joe.

The old Boland corner, Seventh and St. Joe, is the site of the Windsor Block. Built in 1886 and named for an unknown investor, the planned three-story hotel became two-stories, with Reeves Department Store on the street level and rented rooms on the upper. According to local lore, the basement served as a livery for horses while their owners did their shopping -- Rapid City's first and only underground parking structure! Restoration has returned the upper level to living space in the form of residential lofts.

Ernestine Flormann, Herbert S. Hall and the Lakota Bank and Investment Company would joint venture the last of the Flormann buildings, the Lakota Block. One of Rapid City's most recognized and photographed buildings, it is located directly across the street from the Windsor Block, has changed little over the years and is known today as the Buell Building.

The Alaska Gold Rush would take Flormann on to the Klondike and his death in 1900. Flormann Street, Flormann Addition, the downtown buildings and the sound of the train whistle are tangible reminders of the vision Robert Flormann had for a place called "Hay Camp."