



Kate Martin and Lincoln's Historic St. Charles Hotel

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Article Summary: Located in what is now known as Lincoln's Haymarket District, the St. Charles Hotel served city residents and the traveling public from the 1860's until 1918, during which time Lincoln grew from a frontier settlement to a mature capital city. The hotel's story is intertwined with that of Catherine "Kate" Martin, an Irish immigrant whose career spanned four decades, three husbands, and two fires.

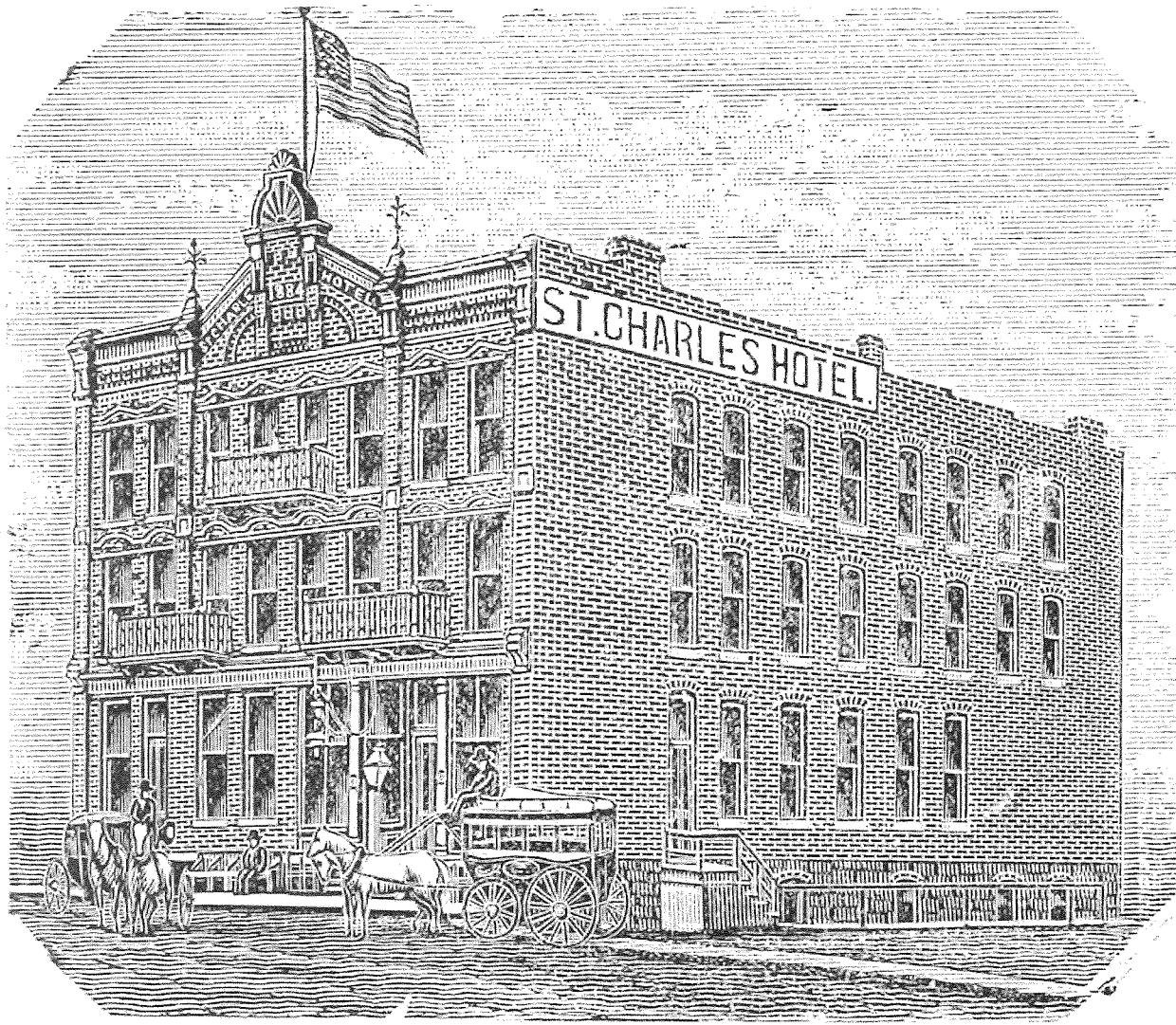
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Photographs / Images: the St. Charles Hotel rebuilt after an 1884 fire; 1868 photograph of Lincoln; Kate Martin, view north from O Street along the west side of North Ninth Street, 1880; the Hargreaves Brothers' building and the St. Charles Hotel; the St. Charles Hotel, the Occidental Saloon, and the Hargreaves Brothers' building; city directory listings for the Occidental Saloon, the St. Charles Hotel, the Boyd, and the Western Hotel



Kate Martin and Lincoln's Historic **ST. CHARLES HOTEL**

By PATRICIA C. GASTER



This 1868 photograph of early Lincoln depicts the Dunbar & Bailey Livery Stable (center), R. Culver's two-story boardinghouse, and a small white house (far right), which is Jacob Dawson's log cabin, later the site of the St. Charles Hotel. NSHS RG2158-38b

Although never one of Lincoln's most luxurious hostellries, the St. Charles Hotel served city residents and the traveling public from the late 1860s until 1894, and under the names of first the Boyd and then the Western Hotel, lived on until 1918. Located on the south side of O Street between Seventh and Eighth streets, near the center of the city's life in early statehood days, it outlived Catherine "Kate" Martin, the Irish immigrant who owned or was closely associated with it for most of its years of operation.

Kate Martin was one of Lincoln's pioneer settlers and one of the city's earliest female hotelkeepers. Throughout her long career with the St. Charles she had a wide acquaintance in Lincoln, especially among the Irish. Born in Ireland about 1840 as Kate Curran, she came to the U.S. as a young adult with her parents. They settled first in Omaha, where on July 27, 1867, she married Robert W. Charters. Charters, also a native of Ireland, had known the Currans before they left the country and may have followed them to Omaha. The couple soon moved to Lincoln and established themselves in the state's newly declared state capital.¹

In later years Kate Martin loved to recall herself as a participant in Lincoln's early social life, composed of a comparatively small group of recent arrivals. At the time of its designation as the state capital in July of 1867, the village of Lancaster had about thirty inhabitants and "did not contain more than six or seven buildings, 'shacks,' log-houses, stone buildings, and all." The future site of the St. Charles Hotel, between Seventh and Eighth streets on the south side of O, was occupied by Jacob Dawson's double-walled log cabin, which also hosted Lincoln's first post office and first term of district court in November 1864. Lot sales in September of 1867 had given the struggling village a foundation, and Lincoln grew to 500 inhabitants by the close of 1868, with 143 houses and more being built every day. By 1870 the population was 2,500, and in 1872, according to the Rev. O. T. Conger of Lincoln, it was "not less than 5,000 inhabitants, besides many comers and goers." Conger also noted with satisfaction that the town was already home to thirteen churches.²

Just when the St. Charles was built is unknown, but Kate must have begun her long association

Kate Martin, longtime owner of the St. Charles and Boyd hotels. *Sunday State Journal*, June 23, 1912, B5.



The St. Charles Hotel was rebuilt after an 1884 fire as a three-story brick structure that could accommodate up to 160 guests. Lloyd Shaw, *The City of Lincoln and State of Nebraska* (Lincoln: State Journal Company, n.d.), 85.

with it soon after its beginning. The hotel was said at the time of her death in 1912 to date to territorial days, but it's probable that it was first conducted as a boardinghouse, dignified as a hotel, sometime after Nebraska became a state on March 1, 1867. Kate's first husband, Robert Charters, a printer, has been credited both with establishing the hotel, and with purchasing an existing business that he carried on as the St. Charles.³ Federal census records indicate that by 1870 Charters headed a Lincoln household of thirty-two people (including Kate), most of whom were boarders. Several were family members, including Kate's mother and seventeen-year-old sister, Bridget, along with Fred W. Krone, Bridget's future husband.⁴

Kate and her husband were popular in the small community. Charters became a naturalized citizen in 1872 and was active in the early 1870s in local politics. He ran unsuccessfully for the Lincoln city council in 1871 and successfully for city clerk in 1875, about the time a son named for him was born to the couple.⁵ The earliest extant Lincoln city directory, from 1873-74, listed John M. Sullivan, the husband of Kate's sister Ellen, as proprietor of the St. Charles, but Robert W. Charters is again listed as the proprietor in 1876-77.⁶

Although the St. Charles dated from early statehood, it wasn't the first Lincoln hotel. L. A. Scoggan established the Pioneer House about 1867 at Ninth and Q streets, and a second hotel was opened by John Cadman later that year. In 1868, Nathan S. Atwood acquired the Cadman House, built a new brick addition on the south and opened it as the Atwood House. With the arrival of the Burlington & Missouri River Railroad in Lincoln in 1870, quickly followed by the Midland Pacific from Nebraska City in 1871, and the Atchison & Nebraska from Atchison, Kansas, in 1872, numerous hotels and boardinghouses appeared in the area east of the tracks and west of downtown Lincoln to serve the traveling public.⁷

Accommodations at these early hotels were often spartan in the days when "everybody had to look out for himself, when no one got anything to eat unless he made a savage rush for 'the first table,' and where everybody washed in the same tin basin and dried his face and hands on the same towel." Early Lincoln settler Milton L. Trester complained that during a June 1869 stay at the Pioneer House, "I almost found it necessary to lock my door and lash myself to the bedstead to keep the bugs from carrying me away."⁸

The St. Charles during its first years bore a less than sterling reputation. The Lincoln city directory in 1873-74 listed the establishment as a boardinghouse, rather than a hotel. Contemporary newspapers indicate that it was sometimes the scene of rough behavior. A brief report on September 18, 1877, in the *Daily State Journal* indicated that a tailor boarding at the hotel had fallen from the roof of the shed kitchen adjoining the frame establishment after imbibing "too much clam chowder."⁹

Charters died suddenly in June of 1879 at the age of only thirty-six, leaving Kate a widow and the proprietress of the St. Charles. The funeral was held at the hotel. Managing the establishment—and the boarders—must have been difficult for a widow, and in May 1880 she married thirty-four-year-old Thomas Cokely (spelled variously), a tinsmith from Boston and a roomer at the St. Charles. He must have abandoned the tinsmithing trade shortly after his marriage, for the 1880 federal census lists his occupation as "hotelkeeper." The census also reveals that the thirty-seven boarders in the Cokely establishment included the hotel's clerk and its two waitresses, as well as carpenters, day laborers, stonemasons, grocery and liquor store clerks, and a bartender and saloonkeeper. Twenty-

Looking north from O Street along the west side of North Ninth Street, 1880. The Fitzgerald Building is second from left.
NSHS RG2158-49



eight of the thirty-seven were born abroad, eleven of them in Ireland.¹⁰ Not listed was Kate's thirty-two-year-old sister, Ellen Curran Sullivan, then Mrs. Thomas Carr, who died at the St. Charles on August 23, 1880, "from the dread disease consumption and a complication of others." Kate probably cared for her during her final days.¹¹

The year 1880 saw the construction of the Fitzgerald Building north of Ninth and O streets, less than two blocks from the St. Charles, by Irish-born entrepreneur John Fitzgerald. The structure housed Fitzgerald's office, from which he ran his various enterprises, a wholesale grocery, and a chapter of the Irish Land League of America. The organization also kept a public event hall which Fitzgerald had built. In the next several years Lincoln became a center of Irish Home Rule activity. In 1883 at Philadelphia the Land League merged with the Irish National League of America. Patrick Egan, soon after his arrival in Lincoln, was elected head of the Irish National League and transferred its headquarters there in 1884.¹²

Thomas Cokely managed the St. Charles for little more than a year before he was stabbed by one Frank Denman, a boarder at the hotel, on the Fourth of July in 1881. According to court records: "Denman, while at dinner, made some disturbance, which resulted in Cokely ordering him to leave, and finally in putting him out of the house; that while on the sidewalk, whether at the door or a few steps from it, is not entirely clear, . . . [Denman] struck Cokely with a knife on the arm making a wound which extended to the bone." Cokely died two days later.¹³

His funeral was attended by most of Lincoln's Irish community, including members of the Land League, of which Cokely had been a member. Kate, pregnant at the time of this tragedy, gave birth in August to a daughter, who lived less than a year. Denman was subsequently convicted of manslaughter in Lancaster County District Court and sentenced to nine years in the state penitentiary, a conviction which was upheld by the Nebraska Supreme Court on appeal.¹⁴

Widowed a second time, Kate again assumed management of the St. Charles and was serving in that capacity when on February 27, 1884, another tragedy struck. The hotel burned, sharing the fate of the Pioneer House, the Atwood House, and many other early hotels in an era when building construction and firefighting equipment and techniques were inadequate. The fire started in the building of J. L. Osborne & Company, a butter and egg packing plant on the corner of Eighth



and O streets, and quickly spread to nearby buildings, including the two-story, frame hotel. The *State Journal* reported that most of the building's furniture was saved, "hundreds of willing hands laboring till driven out by flames and smoke." Most of the residents of the St. Charles displaced by the fire found temporary refuge at the nearby Metropolitan Hotel.¹⁵

The fire was a particularly difficult one for Lincoln firemen to fight. Equipment failures and freezing temperatures made it impossible to save the Osborne property and the St. Charles, but flames were prevented from spreading to other businesses. Kate, in the office of the St. Charles when the fire broke out, was publicly credited with the rescue of the Osbornes' young daughter from the stairway to the family living quarters on the second floor of the butter and egg packing plant. The child's parents escaped through a second-story window, with Mrs. Osborne being carried down a ladder.¹⁶

Kate's loss was estimated at about \$7,000, only \$4,000 of which was covered by insurance. A "hard-working, shrewd, and enterprising woman," she quickly enlisted the aid of her friends, "and she numbers them by the hundreds," said the *Journal*, to help her rebuild. The new St. Charles was ready for occupancy and formally opened on August 22, 1884, as a three-story brick structure, 55 by 95 feet, with 60 rooms that could accommodate up to 150 guests. It featured two large parlors, a dining room that could seat 100, gas lighting, and water on every floor. It was advertised as "fresh and new from roof to cellar. Every piece of furniture and every yard of

This view of the Hargreaves Brothers' building and the St. Charles hotel (right) does not show the Occidental Saloon between the commercial building and the hotel.
NSHS RG2158-701



The St. Charles Hotel (right) was adjacent to the smaller Occidental Saloon (with a sign advertising "Cool Fresh Beer") and the Hargreaves Brothers' building, decorated with flags, at the corner of Eighth and O streets.
NSHS RG2158-204

carpet; the hangings, the bedding, the table ware and table linen, are all perfectly new and sweet and clean, making it really the most desirable place in Lincoln to stop." Advertisements in the *Omaha Daily Bee* noted "good sample rooms [where liquor was available] on first floor," and listed room prices as \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day, with special rates given members of the Legislature.¹⁷

Kate was probably at the height of her reputation after the opening of the new St. Charles in 1884. Her "indomitable energy and fine business talents" had enabled her to rise above her loss from the fire and amass "a very handsome property," and "a large and profitable income from the hotel business, which she has so long and so ably conducted." She was not averse to defending her rights in court and in 1884 carried a dispute

8
DENNIS DUGGAN,
Occidental Saloon,

733 O STREET,
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.



The Finest of Imported Wines, Liquors, and Cigars.

The Occidental Saloon at 733 O Street was acquired by Dennis Duggan in September 1891. Hoye's City Directory of Lincoln for 1892 (Lincoln: State Journal Co.), 3.

about the purchase of a piano, probably for the St. Charles, all the way to the Nebraska Supreme Court. In December 1886, she married again, this time to thirty-eight-year-old George Martin, who like his predecessor, Thomas Cokely, assumed the occupation of hotelkeeper shortly after his marriage.¹⁸

With a newly built hotel and a husband to manage it, things should have gone smoothly for Kate Martin—but they didn't. George Martin operated a saloon in the basement of the St. Charles and lost his thousand-dollar liquor license in June 1887 for selling liquor on Sunday in violation of local ordinance and state statute.¹⁹

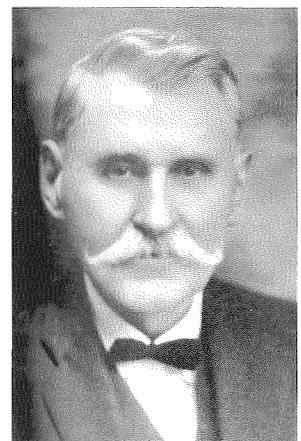
The new St. Charles had run into problems with the onsite sale of liquor before. The standing ad for the hotel in the *Omaha Daily Bee* from December 1884 through May 1885 advertised its sample rooms, and the *Bee's* Lincoln correspondent noted in June 1885: "The question is being asked: 'Why it is that only one saloon [in Lincoln] is allowed to be open and run full blast on Sunday?' The question is referred to his honor, Mayor Burr, who can learn fuller particulars by inquiring at the St. Charles hotel."²⁰

Carlos Burr, mayor of Lincoln in 1885 and 1886, was suspected by reformers of ignoring liquor and gambling violations by businesses concentrated along O and P streets west of the post office and

near the rail yards. In April 1887 Lincoln voters elected a reform-minded city council and a new mayor, Andrew J. Sawyer, who increased efforts to enforce Lincoln's liquor, vice, and gambling ordinances. Martin was first cited for an incident alleged to have taken place on Sunday, June 12, 1887, when "intoxicating liquors, to-wit, several glasses of beer and whisky" were unlawfully sold or given away in his establishment. Martin was out of the state when Kate and bartender Fred Chapman were charged with the same offense on Sunday, October 9, 1887.²¹

The case against Martin was first tried in police court, which resulted in a guilty verdict and the Lincoln City Council's revocation of his liquor license.²² While the police court verdict was on appeal to the district court, Martin continued to operate the saloon and was then further cited for selling liquor without a license. The guilty verdict and subsequent license revocation were upheld in district court and finally by the Nebraska Supreme Court in 1888 in what the *Daily Bee* called "something of a test case on the license issue." A related Supreme Court decision in 1890 regarding the October 9, 1887, citation, held Martin legally responsible for the actions of Kate and employee Fred Chapman in the unlawful sale of liquor on Sunday.²³

Perhaps because of his ongoing license and legal problems, George Martin advertised to sell



Christian Rocke, manager of the St. Charles from 1889 to 1894, and owner of the Western Hotel from about 1906 until it closed in 1918. *Midwest Hotel Reporter*, April 25, 1930, 7.



This photograph from 1904 depicts the viaduct on O Street, looking east. Kate Martin and other owners of nearby property were compensated for damages suffered during its construction. NSHS RG2158-1270

LAST NIGHT'S COSTLY FIRE



A fire on March 1, 1905, damaged the Hargreaves Brothers' wholesale grocery business at Eighth and O streets and the nearby Boyd Hotel. *Lincoln Daily Star*, March 2, 1905, 1.

or lease the St. Charles in July of 1888. In May of 1889 the hotel was leased to Christian "Chris" Rocke, a veteran Lincoln hotel man, who managed the Washington House at 200 South Ninth Street. Other hotels then operating in Lincoln included the Capital Hotel at Eleventh and P, Opelt's Hotel at Ninth and Q, the Windsor at Eleventh and Q, and the Lindell at Thirteenth and M. Smaller hostleries included the Tremont House, the Transit, the Peoria House, and the Ideal, a "hotel and select boarding-house."²⁴

A cryptic notation after George Martin's name in the 1890 Lincoln city directory indicated

that he had "removed to California." Kate meanwhile had reentered the business world in 1890 as proprietress of the Occidental Saloon at 733 O, adjacent to the St. Charles, with Daniel McCarty as manager. In September of 1891 the establishment was operated by Dennis J. Duggan, "an excellent representative of the enterprising Irishman," who doubtless attracted many of the next-door hotel's male guests to his place of business.²⁵ Kate retained a financial interest in the saloon, even after Duggan moved on in 1894.²⁶

Kate was active in the social as well as the business world. At a ball given by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in October of 1890, the *Capital City Courier*, Lincoln's newspaper covering society and the arts, reported that a "feature of the evening was the dancing of the Irish jig by the Hon. John Fitzgerald and Mrs. Kate Martin." Fitzgerald was then secretary of the organization.²⁷

Kate and her son, Robert W. Charters, Jr., visited New York in 1892, leaving Rocke to manage the St. Charles, which maintained its "old time reputation and popularity," with rates of \$1.00 and \$1.25 per day. It was advertised as one of the best and most popular medium-priced hotels in Lincoln, with a staff of from twelve to fourteen "competent servants" and excellent cuisine. Dr. Lloyd Shaw, in his 1890s history of Lincoln and Nebraska, noted, "It is a popular comment that the table of this hotel is equal to that of the higher-priced and more pretentious concerns of the city." The St. Charles advertised its central location on the electric car line, "one minute's walk from the B & M, two from the U.P. and four from the Missouri Pacific depots and only two from the post office."²⁸

In January of 1893 the city of Lincoln passed an ordinance providing for construction of a viaduct, a joint project of the city and the Burlington Railroad, to run from the west side of Eighth Street on O to the west side of Fourth Street to facilitate vehicular traffic across the train tracks. The ordinance also provided for vacating the land under the viaduct, completed in 1894, and reimbursing holders of nearby property for damages suffered during the construction. Kate Martin, as the owner of the St. Charles, was awarded \$7,500 although she had earlier claimed damages of \$25,000 in an unsuccessful injunction suit brought by the affected property owners.²⁹

Kate, now widowed for a third time, in early 1894 again took active control of the hotel and rechristened it "The Boyd," holding an open house on the evening of March 22 to show off the remod-

eled and newly furnished hotel. Robert left his job with the Sherman Lee Dramatic Company to manage it for his mother. Room rates were raised slightly. An ad in the *Lincoln Evening News* on May 19, 1894, advertised it as "The Best \$1.50 per day Hotel in the West," with special rates by the week.³⁰

Charters for the next several years was undoubtedly responsible for much of the day-to-day management of the hotel. Kate was suffering from health problems and went to Denver in October 1895 to "test the curative powers of healer Francis Slattery [Schlatter]." Apparently Schlatter was unable to help her, for several months later she underwent an operation in Chicago to cure neuralgia, which involved the "un-jointing of the jaw-bone, cutting through the skull and removing an enlargement of the neck tissue." A reception and dance at the Boyd in February 1896 celebrated her recovery.³¹

The traveling public that patronized the Boyd continued to enjoy eating at the hotel, with an 1899 ad in the *Omaha Daily Bee* inviting experienced dining room girls to apply for jobs. Guests could also take advantage of the hotel's saloon, tended by Charters, who in 1898 became an agent for the Val Blatz Brewing Company of Milwaukee, whose products were sold at the Boyd. Although the hotel was located on the west edge of Lincoln's business district, Kate still pastured a horse nearby on land owned by the Union Pacific Railroad.³²

Guests at the Boyd included family members and boarders by the week as well as travelers. Kate's sister, Bridget, and husband Fred Krone were living at the hotel when Krone died suddenly in December 1896. The funeral for Krone, one of Lincoln's first building contractors, was held at the Boyd and was attended by more than three hundred persons. The *Nebraska State Journal* noted, "The deceased was not a Catholic but as the rest of the family are, Father Nugent conducted the services, which were brief. A long procession then followed the remains to St. Teresa's cemetery." Kate's mother, Mrs. Mary Curran, who had been living at the hotel, died there at the age of ninety on May 30, 1899, and her funeral was also held from the Boyd. The census of 1900 indicated that Kate Martin headed a household of sixty-one, including Robert, Jr.; Bridget Krone, her widowed sister-in-law; and other members of the Krone family.³³

Kate Martin continued to operate the Boyd Hotel into the early years of the 1910s, confronting growing problems.³⁴ In October 1902 her hiring of George Wilson, recently paroled from the Nebraska penitentiary, to work in the hotel kitchen, earned

her temporary notoriety. A young woman who eloped in February 1903 was tracked by police and irate relatives to Kate's doorstep, but "no trace of her has been found since she left the Boyd hotel." A few hotel guests chose to end their lives there. In October of 1903 a traveler from Greenleaf, Kansas, "went into his room at the Boyd hotel . . . and turned on the gas. He was found by the hotel clerk, almost dead, and died two hours later at an undertaking establishment."³⁵

Other problems involved the availability of liquor for the hotel's guests, with Lincoln Chief of Police H. V. Hoagland complaining that hotel saloons were harder to control than independent establishments—with unfavorable reference made to the Boyd. The Boyd's saloon was closed about 1901, and when William S. Myers, intending to reopen it, applied for a liquor license in 1902, he encountered stiff resistance from Hoagland, who testified before the Lincoln excise board that the "Boyd Hotel had been a hard place to control." Kate favored Myers's application, "very anxious that a license be granted, as her hotel has lost trade she says, since the saloon was closed."³⁶

Kate Martin was also experiencing other legal and health problems, advertising in early 1901 in the *Omaha Daily Bee* to sell the Boyd "on account of age and poor health." In February 1902 she asked for a continuance of a suit against her and Charters because "she is sick and not able to attend to the matter. . . . [and] can neither write or keep books of her own and hence she is hopelessly at a disadvantage." After the plaintiff in the suit was awarded \$950 in May, Charters declared bankruptcy in June. He continued as manager at the Boyd through 1903.³⁷

The year 1905 was an unfortunate one for Kate Martin and the Boyd Hotel. Charters was seeking a guardian for his mother, citing her "old age and general physical debility" as the reason for such a step.³⁸ To add to her difficulties, a fire on March 1, 1905, gutted the entire third floor and destroyed the roof of the Hargreaves Brothers' wholesale grocery business at Eighth and O streets and threatened the nearby Boyd, little more than twenty-one years after the disastrous fire that destroyed the first St. Charles Hotel on February 28, 1884. The spectacular blaze in 1905 was viewed by thousands of spectators "[m]assed from the corner of the postoffice square on Ninth and O streets, . . . down the hill and out upon the viaduct to half its length." Lincoln firemen fought the blaze from the roof of the saloon between the Hargreaves building and the Boyd, and then from the roof of the Boyd itself,

ST. CHARLES HOTEL

NEWLY BUILT AND ELEGANTLY FURNISHED.

HEATED WITH STEAM.

George Martin in 1889
advertised himself as
the proprietor of the St.
Charles Hotel. *Cherrier's
Lincoln City Directory 1889*
(Lincoln: The State Journal
Company), x.

RATES: \$1.00 AND \$1.50 PER DAY.

729 & 731 O STREET

GEO. MARTIN, Proprietor.

LINCOLN, NEB.

—x—

in an attempt to keep the fire from spreading to the hotel. The *Nebraska State Journal* reported: "The people in the hotel early made preparations for moving out rapidly. Much of the furniture was carried down into the office ready to be taken out of the building at a moment's notice."³⁹

Although the hotel survived the fire structurally intact, the probable smoke and water damage could not have enhanced its value. Newspaper accounts of the fire indicate that much of the Hargreaves' business loss was covered by insurance (the building was soon repaired with the addition of a fourth floor), but no mention is made of coverage for damage sustained by the Boyd. By the time a guardian, Fannie M. Geeting of Clark and Leonard Investment Company, was appointed for Kate Martin in June of 1905, Kate was identified in a newspaper notice of the guardianship as "formerly proprietress of the Boyd hotel."⁴⁰

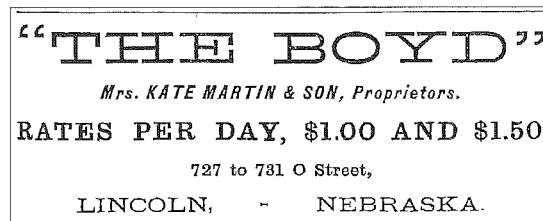
With Kate's retirement from the Boyd, Chris Rocke returned as proprietor of the hotel he had managed as the St. Charles from 1889 to early 1894. Rocke was operating Lincoln's Grand Hotel and the Windsor Hotel when he took over the Boyd.

Probably hoping that another change in name would spark renewed interest among the traveling public, he advertised the former St. Charles/Boyd in 1906 as the Western Hotel, under "new management and newly refitted and refurbished throughout," with "Steam Heat, Electric Light and all modern conveniences." Travelers were promised "Excellent Cuisine and service," with rates of \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day.⁴¹

Kate boarded for a time at the Western Hotel and then for the last several years of her life, at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, then at Eleventh and South streets. She still spent time at the Western, and was there in 1912 when, conversing with a friend in the kitchen of the hotel that had claimed so much of her life, she suffered a stroke and collapsed. Carried to a room in the hotel, she died there several days later.⁴²

Kate Martin's passing was noted as that of one of Lincoln's oldest settlers who loved to reminisce about the days when she and the St. Charles Hotel had been in the center of the young capital city's political and social life. She felt a maternal pride in observing Lincoln's growth from a small town to a city of over fifty thousand people at the time of her death. Her funeral was largely attended by the city's Irish community. The *Lincoln Daily News* said, "She possessed, like many of her race a gift of humor and wit and was a very lively and entertaining conversationalist."⁴³

The hotel which had been such a large part of Kate Martin's life outlived her by a scant half dozen years. As the city of Lincoln grew and matured, it acquired new hotels that left the Western Hotel, the successor to the St. Charles/Boyd, outmoded. Chris Rocke advertised to rent the Western on June 17,



Mrs. Kate Martin and son Robert Charters were
advertised as proprietors of the Boyd in 1895.
Hoyle's City Directory of Lincoln for 1895 (Lincoln:
State Journal Company, 461)

The Western Hotel, the former St. Charles/Boyd, in 1906 advertised new management and new furnishings along with the change in name. *Lincoln City Directory* 1906 (Polk-McAvoy Directory Co., Publishers), 532.

...The...

WESTERN HOTEL

CHRIS ROCKE, Propr.

Under new management and newly refitted and refurnished throughout
Steam Heat, Electric Light and all modern conveniences
Excellent Cuisine and service

Special attention paid to Commercial Trade. Headquarters for
Stockmen.

Rates \$1.50 to \$2.00 per day

731 O Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

1912, just days after Kate's death. In 1914 he offered the hotel for sale, citing poor health as the reason.⁴⁴

Rocke sometimes employed others to manage the Western during its last years: George W. Landis in 1908; J. H. Hensley in 1913; Harry J. Greenlieff and George N. Lenthart in 1916; and M. J. Springer in 1917 and early 1918. The hotel was still advertised as having a "café in connection" in March 1918. On the Fourth of July, however, Rocke advertised a public auction at the Western of "all kinds of furniture, consisting of bedsteads, dressers, mattresses, springs, chairs, tables, carpets, [and] stoves. . . . Right here is where you will get your money's worth." Many of the furnishings probably dated to the renovation of the old Boyd Hotel after the fire in 1905.⁴⁵

Except for the public auction of its furnishings held on July 6, the dissolution of the St. Charles/Boyd/Western Hotel went largely unnoticed. Six years before, Kate Martin's death had attracted some attention to the old hotel that dated to Nebraska's early statehood, but in 1918 the urgent news of World War I crowded the columns of Lincoln's newspapers, pushing local stories from their pages. Chris Rocke returned to the two hotels with which he had been associated before he acquired the Western. He ran the Windsor,

with its Dutch Mill Café, for several years, beginning in 1917, and the Grand, which he purchased and operated until his death in 1930.⁴⁶

The first floor of the St. Charles, dating to 1884, is still extant as a part of Lincoln's Haymarket Landmark District, bounded by Seventh, Ninth, O, and R streets, where revitalization efforts have produced a vibrant mix of commercial spaces utilizing the district's late nineteenth and early twentieth century brick buildings. In 1981 the top two floors of the old hotel were removed and extensive remodeling took place. Little remains of the original structure, but the Seaton & Lea Ironworks emblem from the cast iron storefront survives as testament to an 1880s building.⁴⁷

On May 11, 2010, Lincoln voters approved a plan that will radically alter the district. The railyard west of the Haymarket will be transformed into roads and bridges leading to a 16,000-seat city arena and private shops, offices, condos and hotel facilities. The project is expected to be completed by 2013, putting the area once occupied by the historic St. Charles Hotel again in the center of Lincoln's social life as a new generation makes it the hub of downtown Lincoln.⁴⁸ ■

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NOTES

¹ "At Rest," *Daily Nebraska State Journal* (DNSJ) (Lincoln), June 11, 1879, 1; "Robert W. Charters," *Daily State Democrat* (Lincoln), June 11, 1879, 4; Greater Omaha Genealogical Society, comp., *Douglas County, Nebraska Marriages, 1854-1881* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 2002), 141.

Kate's birth year is uncertain. The 1870 census lists it as 1841; the 1880 census, as 1842; but at the time of her death in 1912, the *Nebraska State Journal* (NSJ) noted on June 19 that she was born March 17, 1840. See also "Passing of the Pioneer," *Sunday State Journal*, June 23, 1912, Editorial Section, 5; "Death Comes to Mrs. Kate Martin," *Lincoln Daily News*, June 18, 1912, 1; "Death of Lincoln Pioneer Tuesday," *Lincoln Daily Star*, June 18, 1912, 1; Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *Family Search* [hereafter *Family Search*]: "United States Census, 1870 for Kate Charters," https://familysearch.org/pal/MM9.1.2/MWR8-M8D/p_204232275, and "United States Census, 1880 for Catherine Cokely," https://familysearch.org/pal/MM9.1.2/MHMT-T2X/p_289581539, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

² A. B. Hayes and Sam D. Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1889), 77, 145, 148, 150, 150-51; Rev. O. T. Conger, "Lincoln: Past, Present, and Prospective," *Nebraska Intelligencer* (Lincoln), January 1872, 1; Neale Copple, *Tower on the Plains: Lincoln's Centennial History, 1859-1959* (Lincoln: Jacob North, Inc., 1959), 36-38, 41-42.

³ "At Rest"; "Robert W. Charters"; *Douglas County, Nebraska Marriages*, 141.

⁴ *Family Search*, "United States Census, 1870 for Robert W. Charters," https://familysearch.org/pal/MM9.1.2/MWR8-M8D/p_204232274, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

⁵ "At Rest"; Ruth T. Dodge, "A History of the Municipal Organization of Lincoln, 1867-1887" (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1934), n.p.; *Index to the Naturalization Records of the Lancaster County District Court, 1872-1929* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1976), n.p.

⁶ Wolfe's *Lincoln City Directory for 1873-74* (Lincoln: J. M. Wolfe, Publishers), 84; John H. Zorn, comp., *John H. Zorn's Annual City Directory of Lincoln, Nebraska, for 1876-77* (Lincoln: J. Dan Lauer, Commercial Book and Job Printer), 52, 130; *Douglas County, Nebraska Marriages*, 151.

⁷ Copple, *Tower on the Plains*, 43; Jim McKee, "Lincoln's Earliest Hotels Once Peppered Downtown Area," *Sunday Journal Star*, Feb. 11, 2007, D2; Andrew J. Sawyer, *Lincoln, The Capital City and Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1916), 1: 79, 113; Hayes and Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln*, 144, 155, 201, 227.

⁸ Milton L. Trester, "Life and Experiences of Milton L. Trester," 9-10, typescript in Milton L. Trester Collection, RG1468, Nebraska State Historical Society; J. S. Reilly, *Lincoln, Past, Present and Future* (Lincoln: n.p., 1885?), 76.

⁹ Wolfe's *Lincoln City Directory for 1873-74*, 84; "Lincoln Laconics," *Daily State Journal*, September 18, 1877, 4.

¹⁰ "At Rest"; "Robert W. Charters"; *Kent's Directory to the City of Lincoln, 1880-1881* (Lincoln: Journal Co., State Printers), 35; *An Index to the Early Marriage Records of Lancaster County, Nebraska 1866-1901* (Lincoln: Lincoln-Lancaster County Genealogical Society, 1987), 1: 37; *Family Search*, "United States Census, 1880 for Thomas Cokely," https://familysearch.org/pal/MM9.1.2/MHMT-T2X/p_289581538, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

The spelling of Cokely's name in this article is that found in the 1880 census, his obituary ("The Last of Earth," *NSJ*, July 10, 1881, 4), and the records of Lincoln's Calvary Cemetery, where he is interred. Other contemporary legal, newspaper, and directory references to Kate as his widow often use the spelling "Coakley."

¹¹ "A Good Woman Gone," *NSJ*, Aug. 24, 1880, 4. Ellen Curran Sullivan married Thomas Carr in November of 1875. *Early Marriage Records of Lancaster County*, 20.

¹² Hayes and Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln*, 300-301; "John Fitzgerald," in *Gilded Age Plains City* at <http://gilded-age.unl.edu/narrative/topics.php?q=johnfitzgerald>, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

¹³ "Frank Denman, Plaintiff in Error, V. The State of Nebraska, Defendant in Error," *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Nebraska, 1883-1884* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., Law Publishers, 1884), 15: 138-42. A newspaper account of the stabbing in the *Omaha Daily Bee* (ODB), "Died of His Wounds," July 8, 1881, 1, identified Cokely's assailant as "James Denham."

¹⁴ "The Last of Earth"; *Kent's Directory to the City of Lincoln, 1880-1881* (Lincoln: Journal Co., State Printers), 35; *NSJ*, Aug. 30, 1881, 4, Aug. 15, 1882, 4; "Frank Denman, Plaintiff in Error, V. The State of Nebraska, Defendant in Error,"

¹⁵ "A Disastrous Fire," *NSJ*, Feb. 28, 1884, 5; Sawyer, *Lincoln, The Capital City*, 1: 79, 113. The Metropolitan also burned in 1887. See "Lincoln's Midnight Blaze," *ODB*, Oct. 23, 1887, 5.

¹⁶ "A Disastrous Fire"; "Sparks from the Fire," *NSJ*, Feb. 29, 1884, 7; "Incidents of the Fire," *Daily Evening News* (Lincoln), Feb. 29, 1884, 3.

¹⁷ "A Disastrous Fire"; Reilly, *Lincoln, Past, Present and Future*, 76. See ads, *ODB*, from December 11, 1884, 5, through May 20, 1885, 7.

¹⁸ Reilly, *Lincoln, Past, Present and Future*, 76; "Kate Coakley, Plaintiff in Error, V. Christie & Son, Defendants in Error," *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Nebraska, July Term, 1886* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., Law Publishers, 1891), 20: 509-11; *Early Marriage Records of Lancaster County*, 83.

¹⁹ "The Council Sustained," *ODB*, Nov. 22, 1887, 5; "George Martin v. State of Nebraska," *Reports of Cases in the Supreme Court of Nebraska, January and September Terms, 1890* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., Law Publishers, 1891), 30: 421-23, 507-12.

²⁰ See, for example, ad for St. Charles Hotel, *ODB*, May 20, 1885, 7; "Lincoln. Incidents of the Day at the Capital of the State," *ODB*, June 23, 1885, 5.

²¹ Timothy R Mahoney, "The Great Sheedy Murder Trial and the Booster Ethos of the Gilded Age in Lincoln," *Nebraska History* 82 (2001): 172, 173; "George Martin v. State of Nebraska."

²² "The Big Fire at Lincoln: Brief Items," *ODB*, July 28, 1887, 5; "The Council Sustained."

²³ "George Martin v. State of Nebraska"; "The Council Sustained"; "The Council is Sustained," *ODB*, Feb. 10, 1888, 5; "From the State Capitol," *ODB*, Oct. 3, 1890, 4.

²⁴ The actual lessee of the St. Charles in 1889 may have been Rocke's brother, Jacob Rocke, with Chris Rocke as the manager, according to Hayes and Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln, 186-91*; Lloyd Shaw, *The City of Lincoln and State of Nebraska* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., 1892?), 85; *Cherrier's Lincoln City Directory 1889* (Lincoln: Cherrier Directory Publishing Co.), 423, 483.

²⁵ Cherrier's *Lincoln City Directory 1890* (Lincoln: The State Journal Co.), 210, 212, 224; *Historical and Descriptive Review of Nebraska* (Omaha: Jno. Lethem, 1892), 2: 235; *Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1890-91* (Omaha: J. M. Wolfe & Co.), 271.

²⁶ "Picked Packages," *Lincoln Evening News*, Feb. 3, 1894, 5; "Board Investigates," *NSJ*, May 18, 1898, 6.

²⁷ "Local and Personal," *Capital City Courier* (Lincoln), Oct. 4, 1890, 2; "Hibernian Election," *ODB*, June 26, 1890, 5.

²⁸ "Personal Paragraphs," *ODB*, Nov. 19, 1892, 2; *Historical and Descriptive Review*, 235; Shaw, *City of Lincoln*, 85; *Pen and Sunlight Sketches of Lincoln* (Chicago: Phoenix Publishing Co., 1893?), 95.

²⁹ Jim McKee, "Responsibility for Viaducts Switched," *Sunday Journal Star*, May 10, 1998, J2; "They're After Them," *Lincoln Evening News*, May 22, 1893, 1; "Gave Goodly Sums," *Lincoln Evening News*, July 18, 1893, 1.

³⁰ W. C. Hoye, *Hoye's Directory of Lincoln City for 1891* (Lincoln: Hoye Directory Co.), 297; "City in Brief," *Lincoln Evening News*, Mar. 22, 1894, 8; Boyd Hotel ads: *Lincoln Evening News*, Mar. 23, 1894, 5, May 19, 1894, 4; "World Players," *The New York Clipper*, November 7, [1894?], 568.

³¹ For a brief period in 1895, thousands of persons flooded into Denver to consult faith healer Francis Schlatter. Schlatter, a former cobbler, disappeared from Denver in November 1895. "Personal Mention," *Lincoln Evening News*, Oct. 25, 1895, 5; "City in Brief," *Lincoln Evening News*, Jan. 4, 1896, 4, Feb. 19, 1896, 5.

³² *ODB*, Apr. 25, 1899, 9; "Board Investigates," *NSJ*, May 18, 1898, 6; "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, Dec. 11, 1898, 6. The horse was the subject of a dispute between Kate and a Mrs. M. J. Sherman in 1901 in which Kate charged Mrs. Sherman with horse stealing for trying to remove the animal to the city pound. "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, May 9, 1901, 6.

³³ "Fred Krone's Sudden Death," *NSJ*, Dec. 29, 1896, 8; "People You Know," *NSJ*, Dec. 31, 1896, 6, June 1, 1899, 6; *Family Search*, "United States Census, 1900 for Kate Martin," <https://familysearch.org/pal/MMp.1.2/IYQZPBV/p 95883473>, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

³⁴ For information on Kate's legal struggles with foreclosure proceedings against the Boyd Hotel, see: "All Are Afraid of Walker," *ODB*, February 13, 1896, 6; "National Life Ins. Co. of Montpelier, Vt., V. Martin et al.," *The Northwestern Reporter*, December 3, 1898-February 11, 1899 (St. Paul: West Publishing Co., 1899), 77: 769; "Execution Against Barr," *NSJ*, July 21, 1899, 5.

³⁵ "Governor Paroles Wilson," *Morning World-Herald*, Oct. 14, 1902, 3; "Nebraska Notes," *Valentine Democrat*, Feb. 26, 1903, 3; "Traveler Turns on the Gas," *Columbus Journal*, Oct. 14, 1903, 1.

³⁶ "Revoke Druggist's Permit," *NSJ*, Nov. 17, 1900, 3; "Board Turns Myers Down," *NSJ*, Apr. 18, 1902, 8; "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, Apr. 25, 1902, 6.

³⁷ "For Sale," *ODB*, Jan. 31, 1901, 11; "City Must Pay Up," *NSJ*, Feb. 12, 1902, 6; "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, May 15, 1902, 8; "Notice," *NSJ*, June 4, 1902, 7; W. C. Hoye's *City Directory of Lincoln 1903* (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Co.), 121.

³⁸ W. C. Hoye, *Hoye's Lincoln Lancaster County Directory for 1904* (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Co.), 493; W. C. Hoye, *Hoye's Lincoln Lancaster County Directory 1905* (Kansas City: Hoye Directory Co.), 576; "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, June 15, 1905, 8.

³⁹ "Big Loss by Fire," *NSJ*, Mar. 2, 1905, 1; "Heavy Loss for a Grocery House," *Lincoln Daily Star*, Mar. 2, 1905, 5; Jim

McKee, "Haymarket Building is More than 125 Years Old, Doing Well," *Sunday Journal Star*, Oct. 23, 2011, D6; Downtown Lincoln Association, "Business Directory: Hargreaves Bros./Schwarz Paper Building" at <http://downtownlincoln.org/find/business/view/hargreaves-bros.-schwarz-paper-building/>, accessed Oct. 31, 2011.

⁴⁰ Ibid.; "Mere Mention," *NSJ*, June 15, 1905, 8.

⁴¹ W. C. Hoye, *Hoye's Lincoln Lancaster County Directory 1905*, 608; *Polk-McAvoy Directory Co.'s Lincoln City Directory 1906* (Lincoln: Polk-McAvoy Directory Co., Publishers), 392, 481, 532.

⁴² *Polk-McAvoy Directory Co.'s Lincoln City Directory 1906*, 313; *Lincoln Nebraska Directory 1909* (Lincoln: Jacob North & Co.), 364; *Lincoln City Directory 1910* (Lincoln: Lincoln City Directory Co.), 403; *Lincoln City Directory 1911* (Lincoln: Lincoln City Directory Co.), 348; "Death of Lincoln Pioneer Tuesday."

⁴³ "Death Comes to Mrs. Kate Martin."

⁴⁴ *Lincoln Daily News*, June 17, 1912, B7; "Christian Rocke Dies of Injury," *Lincoln Star*, Apr. 22, 1930, 1, 11; *Lincoln Daily Star*, Mar. 25, 1914, 9, May 3, 1914, B7.

⁴⁵ *Lincoln Nebraska Directory 1908* (Lincoln: Jacob North & Co.), 578; *Lincoln City Directory 1913* (Lincoln: Lincoln City Directory Co.), 707; *Lincoln City Directory 1917* (Lincoln: Lincoln City Directory Co.), 476, 528; *Lincoln City Directory 1918* (Lincoln: Lincoln City Directory Co.), 466, 518; ad for Western Hotel, *Red Cloud Chief*, Mar. 7, 1918, 7; "Auction," *Lincoln Daily Star*, July 4, 1918, 8, July 5, 1918, 10.

⁴⁶ "Christian Rocke Dies of Injury"; ads for Windsor and Western hotels, *Red Cloud Chief*, Dec. 20, 1917, 7; ad for Windsor Hotel Café, *Lincoln Sunday Star*, Aug. 12, 1919, State Fair Section, 3; *Lincoln City Directory 1918*, 421.

⁴⁷ Downtown Lincoln Association, "Business Directory: St. Charles Hotel," <http://downtownlincoln.org/find/business/view/st-charles-hotel/>, accessed Oct. 31, 2011; City of Lincoln Planning, "Haymarket Landmark District" at <http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan hist/tour/haymarket.htm>, accessed Oct. 31, 2011. For information on the Seaton & Lea foundry in Lincoln, see Jim McKee, "Haymarket's Oldest Building Has Had Many Uses since 1881," *Sunday Journal Star*, Apr. 24, 2011, C7.

⁴⁸ Deena Winter, "Voters OK Arena," *Lincoln Journal Star*, May 12, 2010, A1-2; "Commission Says Building Should Stay," *Sunday Journal Star*, Jan. 22, 2012, B1.

