Two views: The 1894 picture above, looking west up Main Street from the Fifth Street intersection, shows the International Hotel (arrow) at the southeast corner of Sixth and Main streets, where the Elks Building is now. The photo at right, taken in the 1940s, shows a rundown hotel building—the International Hotel sign barely visible—on the northeast corner of Fifth and Main. Aby's Feed & Seed elevator is visible behind it.

International Hotel had 2 locations

The mystery over the location of the International Hotel has been solved.

A caption under a photo of the old Rapid City hotel in Saturday's Journal noted that some photos place the hotel at Sixth and Main streets, where the Elks Building is now located.

Also, David Strain's book, "Black Hills Hay Camp," places the hotel at the southeast corner of Sixth and Main. And several streetscape photos in the book, including the one above from the Ben P.R. Roese collection, show the International Hotel and its Victorian balcony, perched on that street corner.

But another photo shows an old, rundown International Hotel building in the 1950s, with the Aby's Feed & Seed elevator in the background, which would place it at Fifth and Main, where Furniture Mart is now.

A couple of sources, including Edith Range of Rapid City, helped clear up the puzzle.

Range said the International Hotel was originally at Sixth and Main, where the Elks Building is now. It was there as late as 1909 when she stayed there with her family when they visited Rapid City.

Then, when the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks Lodge 1187 bought the lot at Sixth and Main for its new structure, constructed in 1911, the hotel was moved to the northeast corner of Fifth and Main.

The hotel had been moved by the time Range and her family moved to Rapid City in 1915. Range also noted that there was a big cottonwood tree on that corner for many years.

Marjorie Westfall, a Rapid City resident since 1933, remembers the building and the big cottonwood tree that grew on the sidewalk out front. At various times it was the Lone Tree Apartments, the Lone Tree Nightclub and National T Grocery Co., she recalled.

Gambles eventually bought the building and constructed the brick building that is now the Furniture Mart.

Also, Range offered an explanation for another mystery: the reason for the sticks carried by the group of men pictured in the historical photo in Monday's Journal. "I could almost bet they were going rattle snake fighting," she said.

Meanwhile, Opal Newhank, 91, of Colorado, who is visiting her daughter, Carol Oakley of Rapid City, said those sticks look like the kind that people used to hunt rabbits with. They skinned the rabbits and sold the hides. She also said they hunted snakes with those kind of sticks, too.