

constructed in late 1890 - 1891

## The Ramsdell Building · 399 Street

### **Builder - T. J. Ramsdell**

The stylish masonry structure was Manistee's tallest building at that time. The Manistee County Savings Bank leased the second, or main, floor immediately upon completion. This surprised the community because Mr. Ramsdell was president of the City's other major bank, the first National Bank, located across the street. The new bank's offices were described as being up to date in every respect, secure from burglars, and nearly fireproof. Mr. Ramsdell and two other attorneys occupied the upper floors and, and like all the other tenants, took occupancy on January 1, 1892. The ground floor was the location of the City Drug Store that remained there until 1975 when it relocated across the street. The bank remained in the Ramsdell Building until 1907 when it relocated to the present Manistee County Savings Bank Building at 375 River Street. The building currently houses a retail store at the ground floor level, while the balance of the building has been converted to luxury Victorian Style Hotel Rooms.



The Ramsdell building represents a small city's rendition of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. All of the elements of that style are present in an awkward but exuberant composition. The building is four stories high at the River Street entry and three stories high at the Maple Street entry. The lower stories are built of randomly coursed rock face granite with rounded-arch window and door openings along Maple and trabeated openings along River Street. A large circular arch shelters a recessed doorway at the main Maple Street entry. The main River Street door to the second floor is framed by a massive stone, pediment two stories high. The third story of a dark red brick is accented by lighter brick and stone trim. The River Street elevation features a group of four double hung one over one windows capped by a spandrel of floral relief terra cotta over a continuous red sandstone bandcourse. Similar sash on the Maple Street façade are capped with trabeated arches of brick; red sandstone drip rails rest above the windows and lug sills stand below. The fourth floor is built of a lighter red brick. Double hung rounded arch windows with arched red sandstone drip rails are grouped in twos and threes. The Maple Street façade features a false gable flanked by a parapet; the gable end displays three rounded arch windows separated by colonnettes. Bandcourses, trim of red sandstone, and a brick parapet above a simple cornice further ornament the building.

The most unique architectural feature of the Ramsdell Building is its corner turret. Rising from the second or main floor up to the fourth floor, the turret rests on a single massive column, which bisects the stairway leading to the ground floor interior. Each level of the turret continues the materials and decoration of the adjoining floor level described above.

The Ramsdell Building is in its original condition. Its recent owners have carefully restored the exterior including the turret conical roof and it stands as the single most impressive architectural reminder of downtown Manistee's most prosperous era.

**Manistee Commercial Historic District – listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places**