



# MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

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## A Message From Our President

The Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance (M/RCPA) hosted Kansas Statehouse lobbyist Terry Humphrey of the Terry Humphrey Public Affairs Group at our annual meeting on Sept. 26, 2019. Ms. Humphrey gave a program, detailing her work on behalf of the Friends of Historic Preservation (FOHP) along with her perspective on the upcoming legislative session.

The M/RCPA is a long-time financial contributor to the FOHP, a coalition that allows us to have an active presence at the Capitol. Ms. Humphrey provides up-to-date information on legislative affairs that pertain to historic preservation. In turn, she shares our perspective on historic preservation with Kansas legislators, including the newly-minted ones who might not be familiar with preservation issues.

At our annual meeting, Ms. Humphrey suggested that the M/RCPA might wish to hold an advocacy day in Topeka where our members and other historic preservation supporters could gain perspective on current issues in preservation and share their thoughts with legislators. After some consideration, the M/RCPA board decided this was an idea worth pursuing.

Rep. Sydney Carlin secured a Statehouse 30-person classroom for "FOHP Day at the Capitol" for March 4th. Ms. Humphrey and her assistant, Rachel Willis, then did the lion's share of event planning. Eleven Manhattanites, most of them M/RCPA members, participated in the event, making up roughly one-

third of the participants.

The day began with Rep. Carlin's welcoming remarks.

Scott Sewell, the newly appointed Kansas Mainstreet program director, shared information about his professional background and previous career experiences, some of which took place in Manhattan. He went on to explain Mainstreet program goals for downtown districts in dual partner areas of economic development and historic preservation.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Patrick Zollner spoke on the relationship between the Dept. of the Interior's framework for historic preservation and the benefits that accrue from compliance with those guidelines. Federal tax credits and state tax credits provide two powerful financial incentives that encourage owners to strive for and maintain register status.

Ms. Humphrey provided a legislative update on this year's session and then took us back to the basics by reviewing how a bill becomes a law and how to talk with legislators. Each participant was then handed a personalized meeting schedule for catching up with his or her representative and senator.

TreanorHL Architects, whose Topeka office specializes in historic preservation, is located half a block north of the Statehouse. Lunch was waiting there. We thank TreanorHL for sharing their space with us. While we ate, Jane Huesemann and Steve Clark of the Clark Huesemann LC architectural firm presented their research and recommendations for the Docking Building. The award-

winning Mid-Century Modern building has been in the news for the last few years: will it be restored, extensively modified, or almost completely razed?

After lunch, the group walked the short distance to tour the building. It is located immediately west of the Statehouse. Basement levels house the power plant that services the Capitol and other nearby state buildings. The ground floor houses the Capitol police. Various state offices that used to be housed there have been disbursed into long-term rental spaces throughout Topeka. A representative of the state facilities office stated that there will soon be a need for more office space, the structure is sound, and the site is ideal.

With our own eyes, we could see that finishes (flooring, ceilings, windows, and restrooms) have been neglected. Because of a change in Topeka's building codes, some of the upper floors exceed the current height limit for active use unless sprinklers are added. Despite this, we were offered a tour of the topmost floor, which is accessed by two flights of stairs above the highest floor serviced by elevators. FOHP Day at the Capitol happened to land on a day with mild temperatures, bright sunshine, and cloudless blue skies. The views were spectacular, especially from the eastward-facing windows overlooking Kansas' magnificent Statehouse. I wasn't alone in advocating for a complete restoration of the iconic Docking Building.

*Linda Glasgow*

## The Union National Bank Building

The building located at 401 Poyntz Avenue has been undergoing extensive renovations, which began several months ago. The building, which was erected in 1905, has been a downtown fixture for more than a century.

Prior to the current building, a two-story bank was located at 401 Poyntz. The building, occupied by the Blue Valley Bank whose president was William Higinbotham, dated to at least 1885. The Union National Bank organized in 1889 and then became the occupant of the building at 401 Poyntz (National). In those early days, the bank was referred to as “the bank out in the country” because Manhattan’s main business district was a block farther east (“Bank’s first”).

By 1904, the Union National Bank was thinking about expanding and was considering constructing a large stone building that would have room for other professional offices (“Union”). The new bank would be built on the bank’s existing lot, and the old bank building as well as the adjacent building to the west would be torn down to make way for the new building. Stingley Brothers was awarded the contract of \$17,055 to erect the building, and construction began in early 1905. The building was described as being a large, two-story stone structure. (“New”).

By April 1905, the construction of the new Union National Bank was progressing quickly, “as if by magic” (“Rapid”). The original building had arched entrances on the corner of Fourth Street and Poyntz Avenue. The newspaper noted, “Handsome stones have been placed over the arches of the

new Union National Bank building. The two at the corner bear this inscription: ‘Union National Bank.’ The one on the side on Third Street [which is now Fourth Street] (says) ‘Union National Bank Building 1905.’” The stone carving was done by Paddock Granite Works of Manhattan (“Handsome”). The arched entrances were squared off at some point, and the stones with the inscriptions on the Fourth Street side are still there, although the carved stones on the Poyntz Avenue side are gone.

As work on the new building progressed, its appearance was described as “stately” and as a favorable complement to the Carnegie Library at Fifth Street and Poyntz Avenue, which had been completed in 1904 (“The broken”). The interior of the bank featured counters made of steel and two kinds of marble, marble wainscoting, two vaults provided by the Mosler Safe Company, woodwork of oak and mahogany, and a private telephone room. The bank president was J. B. Floersch, and his office was described as having comfortable chairs, a large desk, and a grate with an ornamental mantel (“Union National Bank moved”).

As construction neared completion, numerous notices began to appear in local newspapers to announce the various professionals and businesses who planned to move into the building, including a shoe store, piano store, barber shop, physicians, attorneys, the office of a milling company, and the office of *Western Poultry*, which was a state poultry news-



Top, 401 Poyntz Ave., circa 1905-1909. Middle, 401 Poyntz Ave. in the 1940s. Bottom, the former Union National Bank building circa 1897-1904, which was demolished when the current building was constructed in 1905. All three photos are courtesy of the Riley Co. Historical Society and Museum.

paper. The building was completed in August 1905, and the operations of the Union National Bank moved into their new surroundings as did the occupants of the other retail and office spaces.

In 1911 when the bank building was only a few years old, Manhattan embarked on a year-long  
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project to install a sanitary sewer system. While the work was taking place, the sewer project was blamed for several downtown buildings' basements filling with water during spring rains.

Described as worse yet, the south wall of the Union National Bank building, which was adjacent to a sewer line being laid in the alley, had settled two inches. Rainwater was rushing into the excavation trench and washing loose sand away from the building's foundation. It was feared that the building's south wall might collapse into the alley ("Bank building"). Based on finding no news accounts that the south wall collapsed, the bank building apparently survived the settling and carried on, which perhaps is proof of the building's solid construction.

After almost 80 years as a fixture at Fourth and Poyntz, the Union National Bank desired to expand again and planned to build a new "dramatically styled contemporary building" ("Union National first"). The new building was constructed at 727 Poyntz Avenue, which today, is the Commerce Bank Building.

The old bank building at 401 Poyntz Avenue was sold to Sam Samarra in 1971. The price he paid for the building was not disclosed, but *The Manhattan Mercury* described it as "one of the largest business area transactions in recent years." The new owner planned to convert the building to retail shops on the first floor and to create residential apartments on the second floor. The apartments would be "semi-luxury," with each apartment having a fireplace ("Old bank").

In addition to the interior changes, the new owner also



Top, 401 Poyntz Ave. during the 1951 flood. The photo is courtesy of the Riley Co. Historical Society and Museum. Middle, the building in March 2020 as it undergoes renovations. Bottom, one of the original inscription plaques.

completely renovated the exterior. All of the windows were replaced. The exterior was significantly altered and was covered with a combination of stone and aluminum. An anodized aluminum slipcover in a light blue color covered the entire second floor for many years ("Old bank").

Today's standards for the treatment of a historic building would not recommend the application of an aluminum slipcover, but at the time, it was viewed as an attractive way to update a historic building. In 1971, the General Federation of Women's Clubs sponsored a national contest called the "Business for Beauty Project," which was looking for businesses to recognize for their attractive appearance. The

Wamego Junior Federated Club selected 401 Poyntz with its new aluminum slipcover as their nominee to submit to the contest ("Federated").

The roof edge originally had a stepped parapet, which was probably removed when the aluminum slipcover was added. The slipcover was removed in the 1980s, and this is likely when additional exterior changes occurred. The storefronts on the ground level were altered to create large display windows and awnings were added (National).

Over the years, the building has had many tenants. In addition to the ones previously mentioned, the building served as the headquarters for the Selective Service and the Ration Board during World War II. In more recent years, some of the occupants included Dustin's, Seifert's, and Celebrations of the Heart.

At present, the building is owned by SMLM Properties, which in turn is owned by Mary Fischer. The former bank building is receiving extensive renovations with plans developed by BBN Architects and Orazem and Scalora Engineering.

With BHS Construction performing the renovations, the north end of the first floor will be converted to serve as the future home of Gaia Salon Spa. All modern storefront windows will be replaced, and the first floor suspended ceiling will be removed to reveal the original intact trim and moldings above it. Several interior walls on both the first and second floors, which were likely added in the 1970s, will be removed. When completed, there will be six offices on the second floor, and four retail spaces on the ground floor. The north end of the second floor will (continued on pg. 4)

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be converted to a two-bedroom apartment for the building's owner to live in. The project is anticipated to be completed by June 2020.

The Union National Bank Building is a contributing structure to the Downtown Manhattan Historic District. The building's historic register status means a qualified project is eligible for rehabilitation tax credits, which were sought and could be used to help with renovation expenses.

In an interview with *The Manhattan Mercury*, Mary Fischer said, "My idea is I

really want it to be a building of wellness. I kind of think of wellness, strength, beauty, and balance." She went on to say, "I'll own the building and work in the building and live in the building; you can't get any more committed than that" (Dixon).

"Bank building settling." *The Manhattan Republic*. 23 February 1911: 6.

"Bank's first cashier is here for firm's 50th anniversary." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 18 May 1939: 1.

Dixon, Hailey. "401 Poyntz undergoing complete renovation, to open in June." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 27 November 2019: A1.

"Federated club adopts beautification project."

*The Manhattan Mercury*. 28 April 1971: A8.

"Handsome stones have been placed." *The Evening Republic*. 24 May 1905: 4.

National Register of Historic Places, Downtown Manhattan Historic District, Manhattan, Riley County, Kansas, National Register #06001240.

"New bank building." *The Evening Republic*. 14 February 1905: 1.

"Old bank to have a new look." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 1 March 1971: 1.

"Rapid construction and lots of it." *The Evening Republic*. 4 April 1905: 1.

"Union National Bank will build." *The Evening Republic*. 23 April 1904: 1.

"Union National first in Midwest." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 16 June 1968: 4.

## Social Distancing & the 1918 Influenza Pandemic

As the world deals with the COVID-19 pandemic, certain aspects are reminiscent of the influenza pandemic that swept the globe in 1918. Today, social distancing is urged to combat COVID-19's spread, and similar strategies and policies helped Manhattan face the 1918 pandemic.

By October 1918, influenza at Camp Funston at Ft. Riley was rapidly spreading at a rate of 300 new cases per day, and a strict quarantine had been established ("Strict"). The Students' Army Training Corps (SATC) on the Kansas State campus had 72 cases, and the men were quarantined and not allowed to leave campus ("72"). Manhattan averaged approximately eight new cases a day at the beginning of October, but by the end of the month, 20 new cases were reported each day ("Influenza"). At the height of the pandemic, six fraternity houses and the YMCA building were converted to hospitals to care for the sick (*Royal Purple*).

In an attempt to reduce the spread, Gov. Arthur Capper issued a proclamation on Oct. 9th that "all schools, churches, theatres, will be closed and all public gatherings will be prohibited" ("Proclamation"). News-

paper notices repeatedly urged "conscientious cooperation" from the public to follow orders ("Schools").

Kansas State was closed from Oct. 12 to Nov. 10. Pres. William Jardine's inauguration had been scheduled for Nov. 6, 1918, but it was indefinitely postponed (*Royal Purple*).

When the initial month-long ban on public gatherings ended, a short notice in *The Manhattan Mercury* stated, "The flu epidemic is a thing of the past in Manhattan" ("Epidemic"). Schools, churches, and theaters re-opened in early November, and public gatherings resumed. But, as people returned to their daily routines, the number of new influenza cases increased again, and by the end of November, the number of new cases was described as alarming.

The local school board decided to close schools for the month of December, and many parents had already been keeping their children home rather than risk exposure at school ("Schools"). Manhattan's Board of Health ordered the closure of all theaters, dance halls, schools, and churches until further notice, and the order also closed Kansas State ("Board").

After being shuttered for a month,

schools and other public places re-opened Jan. 1, 1919. New influenza cases still occurred, but the number had dropped to single digits, which was a manageable number for medical services to handle.

A January 1919 report on influenza indicated during a three-month span, 981 Manhattan residents and 534 SATC students had contracted the flu, bringing the total to 1,515, and there were 38 deaths ("38"). By April, a report from the Kansas health department indicated that the number of cases had decreased statewide, possibly indicating that strategies to reduce the spread had worked.

"38 deaths from influenza." *The Manhattan Republic*. 2 January 1919: 1.

"72 cases of 'flu' are reported in S.A.T.C." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 7 October 1918: 1.

"Board of Health shuts lid down tight on flu." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 6 December 1918: 1.

"Epidemic a thing of past." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 12 November 1918: 2.

"Influenza situation worse." *The Manhattan Daily Nationalist*. 30 October 1918: 1.

"Proclamation." *The Riley County Chronicle*. 11 October 1918: 1.

*The Royal Purple*. Ed. Vera Olmstead. Manhattan, KS: Kansas State Agricultural College, 1919. Web. 19 September 1918.

"Schools to close." *The Manhattan Daily Nationalist*. 5 December 1918: 1.

"Strict quarantine is placed on Funston." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 1 October 1918: 1.

NOTE: The M/RCPA Board of Directors had been working on plans to hold a spring social event in April and the Historic Summit in May. Quite likely, neither of these events will be able to take place as planned, but the board wanted members to be aware of them so you'll be on the look-out for when they're rescheduled. Your patience is appreciated.

## Spring Social

*Date:* To be determined

*Time:* 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

The M/RCPA invites all members to enjoy an evening of great food and conversation along with a walking tour of three historic downtown churches, which have undergone renovations in recent years.

*Location and details:* The event will kick off with appetizers and beverages at the Strecker Nelson

West Gallery, 406 ½ Poyntz Ave. Attendees will be divided into two groups and will walk to nearby churches for tours. The churches included in the tour are Seven Dolores Catholic Church, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and First United Methodist Church.\*

Following the tours, attendees will return to the gallery for more food and conversation.

\*Seven Dolores and St. Paul's were honored in 2019 with Historic Preservation Building Awards, and First United was honored in 1999.



Above, the interior of Seven Dolores.

*Cost:* Suggested donation of \$10/person to help cover the cost of appetizers. Donations will be collected at the door.

## Historic Summit

The Historic Summit is a cooperative effort between the M/RCPA, the Riley County Historical Society and Museum, and the Historic Resources Board. The Historic Summit is free and open to the public.

*Date:* To be determined

*Time:* 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

*Location:* Tentatively scheduled to be held at the Manhattan Public Library, 629 Poyntz Ave.

*Theme:* Historic Farmsteads of Riley County

*Details:* The M/RCPA, the Riley County Historical Society and Museum, and Manhattan's Historic Resources Board invite the community to participate in a program about Riley County's historic farmsteads.

*Featured speaker:*

Garric Baker will provide the featured presentation and will share information about a few of the historic farmsteads found in Riley County. Garric is a past president of the Kansas Barn Alliance. He is an architect with Bruce McMillan AIA Architects, PA, and he was chosen as the Young Architect of the Year by AIA Kansas in 2019.

*Presentations:*

Renee Erickson will present the program "History of Farmsteads on Ft. Riley Land." Renee is an

archaeologist who works at Ft. Riley, and she currently serves on the Historic Resources Board.

Allana Parker will present the program "History of Bluemont Farm and the Remarkable Marlatt Family." Allana is the curator of design at the Riley County Historical Museum, she is the current treasurer of the Kansas Museums Association, and she serves on the Board of Directors of the M/RCPA.



Above, the barn on the Ebenezer Huse farmstead in the Ashland Bottoms area.

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second Thursday of the month.

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## *2019-20 M/RCPA Membership Roster*

### **\$15 Student Level**

Lacy Fisher, Jamie Koeppe

### **\$35 Historic Level**

Mary Anne Andrews, Richard & Sylvia Beeman, Steven Brewer, Dede Brokesh, Charlene Brownson, Cheryl Collins, Margaret Conrow, Melvin & Randi Dale, Mike & Jan Danenberg, Renee Erickson, David & Jana Fallin, Sara Fisher, Richard Harris, Debby Hiett, Jean Bigbee Hill, Corina Hugo, Melissa Janulis, Claudia Jones, Kent Kellams, Lowell & Stacy Kohlmeier, Phillip & Camille Korenek, Marianne Korten, Nancy Raleigh & Steve Lee, Judith Major, Dawn Munger, Felisa Osburn, Bill Pallet, Allana Parker, Jerry & Martha Powell, Gloria Juhl Raney, Roger & Virginia Reitz, Linda Rice, Lauren W. Ritterbush, Tom & Karen Roberts, Catherine Roy-Tremblay, Sharlin Sargent, Richard & Kimberly Smith, Alicia Stott, Ken & Nina Warren, Ron & Dixie West, Judith Willingham

### **\$100 Preservation Level**

Barbara G. Anderson, Phil & Dawn Anderson, Mimi Balderson, Brent Bowman, Preston & Diana Chapel, Nancy Danner, Dwight & Marla Day, Gary & Paula Ellis, Calvin & Genie Emig, Wanda Fateley, Debbie Nuss & Brad Fenwick, Joe & Janette Gelroth, Ann Kosch, Robert D. Linder, Karen McCulloh, Dori Milldyke, Larry & Sandy Murphy, Karin Westman & Phil Nel, Marina Pecar-Krstic, John & Mary Beth Reese, George & Julie Strecker, Ronald E. Wells, Nancy B. Williams

### **\$125 Corporate Preservation**

Bria Taddiken-Williams/Coldwell Banker Real Estate Advisors, Rick & Judy Glowiak, Strecker Nelson West Gallery/Kevin West & Alyn Pennington West

### **\$250 Landmark Level**

David & Kathy Dzewaltowski, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Mark & Ann Knackendoffel, Barbara Poresky

### **Honorary Lifetime Members**

Mel Borst, Enell Foerster (in memory of Bernd Foerster), Edna L. Williams