



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

August 2011

A Message From Our President Kathy Dzewaltowski

This summer, my family and I spent several days visiting my mother, staying in the house where I grew up, and enjoying meals prepared on my mom's original 1957 Westinghouse Electric Range. My parents purchased the stove when they were newlyweds, and it's the only stove that my mom has had ever since.

Over the years, many other appliances and fixtures have been replaced. Refrigerators have come and gone, and so have toasters, washers and dryers, microwaves, lamps, and even faucets have worn out and needed to be replaced, but the stove just kept on going. My mom says she never intended to necessarily hang onto the stove to the point that it's now vintage chic, it just simply never wore out. I recently showed her a web site that featured refurbished vintage appliances, and she was flabbergasted to see a restored 1957 Westinghouse just like hers being offered for several thousand dollars.

My mom does not consider herself a preservationist necessarily and describes herself as a practical person who doesn't believe in replacing functioning items, i.e. "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." This philosophy runs counter to the current "everything's disposable" way of thinking in America. Once something gets old, throw it out because newer is better.

Hanging onto a 1957 stove is not quite the same as advocating for protecting historic structures, but the concept of not disposing of a functional appliance or a building

just because they've reached an arbitrary age that makes them "old" is the same. Preservationists know that "old" construction is usually high quality, features craftsmanship and materials not typically seen anymore, and isn't easily replicated.

"It would be cheaper to build new" is another argument heard regularly for replacing historic structures with new. A local example that demonstrated that this argument shouldn't be generalized to all situations, including large projects, is the renovations that were planned and that are now ongoing for the West Campus of Manhattan High School. Voters approved spending \$40 million to renovate, update, and make the building into a quality facility "as good as new." Estimates for constructing a new high school were in the range of \$75-100 million. Reinvesting can be an economically wise decision.

In July, my mom's town experienced a severe storm that downed trees and power lines. When power was restored, several of my mom's electrical devices no longer worked probably due to lightning, including the 1957 stove. She spent a few days debating whether she should investigate trying to have it repaired or whether it was time to let it go. After 54 years of meals, she had certainly gotten more out of her newlywed investment than she ever would have expected. In the end, my mom was able to determine that only the timer had been damaged and had caused the stove to think it was continually in "shut off" mode. And so, the 1957 Westinghouse Electric Range carries on, as do many perfectly functional historic structures whose owners continue to preserve and reinvest in them rather than replace them with new.

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Meeting of the
Manhattan/Riley County
Preservation Alliance
Thursday, Sept. 8, 2011
Union Pacific Depot
7:00 p.m.

All M/RCPA members are invited to attend.

City Park Pool's Impact on Pioneer Log Cabin

The Pioneer Log Cabin was built on site in City Park in 1915 to educate the public about the kinds of structures early settlers had lived in. It contains exhibits that feature agricultural tools, medicinal tools, and ordinary household appliances of the period. The cabin is owned by the Riley County Historical Society and served as Riley County's first historical museum.

The Pioneer Log Cabin was located near the old City Park Pool, which experienced serious structural problems in 2008 and was closed as a result. Following the pool's closure, the Parks and Recreation Department and the City Commission began the process of determining the best way to address the pool's problems, finally settling on a plan to build a new pool in City Park.

From the beginning of the design process for the new pool, concerns were expressed regarding how close the new pool would be to the cabin (see the May 2009 newsletter). Early designs placed the new pool virtually on top of the cabin. The design was reconfigured, moving the pool farther away from the cabin, although still within a few feet of it, and called for a protective green space that would separate the pool



from the cabin.

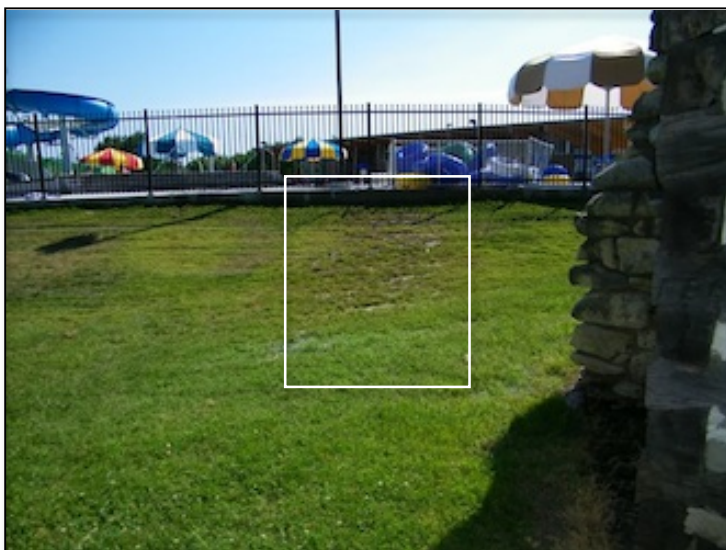
For the two summers that the new pool has been in operation, a continuous flow of water splashed from the nearby water slides has tracked down the slope from the pool and collected at the base of the cabin, making the ground surrounding the cabin perpetually soggy. The potential danger is the continual moisture produced during the summer months could lead to rot, encourage infestation by damaging insects, and cause the south chimney to shift or collapse. Currently, there is a gap between the south chimney and the exterior wall.

Both the M/RCPA and the

Pioneer Log Cabin in City Park, courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society

Riley County Historical Society expressed their concerns to the Parks and Recreation

Department about the effects of the pool's water on the cabin. To protect the cabin, Parks and Recreation recently installed a gutter next to the pool to redirect the water. The situation will continue to be monitored, and Parks and Recreation plans to follow up with the Riley County Historical Society to make sure the problem has been solved.



At left, water from the pool flows down the slope to the cabin. Top right, water splashed from the pool collects at the base of the chimney. Bottom right, a gap has formed between the cabin's chimney & the exterior wall.



The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation

By Steven W. Semes (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 272 pp.

Reviewed by Elizabeth Moore

In *The Future of the Past: A Conservation Ethic for Architecture, Urbanism, and Historic Preservation*, Steven W. Semes addresses one of the leading issues in contemporary historic preservation theory, the debate between traditionalists and modernists over the appropriate approach to building within historic contexts. As the field of preservation continues to move away from a focus on individual buildings or structures to a broader concept that centers on a collective building culture, a greater dialogue between preservationists, architects, and urban planners must occur. Semes's work contributes to that dialogue and provides a clear and comprehensive argument that emphasizes respect for existing historic places through "new traditional" design, an approach that creates new structures or urban places built in traditional or historic styles.

Semes begins with an evaluation of the appropriateness of new construction within historic contexts, stressing the idea of a collective identity rather than a single-building focus. He then deals with the theory behind both traditional and modern architecture, analyzing them in terms of space, structure, elements, composition, proportion, ornament and decoration, and character. He uses these principles to discuss the philosophies of preservation and how they have evolved over time. He praises the more contextual approach of the recent preservation movement, but criticizes what has

been allowed as new construction within these historic contexts.

The second half of the book takes this theory and applies it to four different options for building within historic settings: Literal Replication, Invention Within a Style, Abstract Reference, and Intentional Opposition. Each of these methods seeks to define the proper balance between differentiation and compatibility for new construction within historic contexts. Literal Replication maximizes compatibility at the expense of differentiation, while Intentional Opposition makes little or no attempt to blend with the existing urban fabric. Semes's view falls somewhere in between Literal Replication and Invention Within a Style. While he clearly recognizes the importance of a distinction between old and new, he believes that this should be evident only through subtle differences that may only be apparent to professionals. He argues for "new traditional" design that strongly resembles the style and character of historic buildings without creating a false sense of history.

Once a practicing architect, Semes is currently an associate professor at the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture where he serves as the academic director of its Rome Studies Program, a program that focuses on traditional and classical architecture and urbanism. Semes's work disperses that curriculum to a broader audience of professionals, educators, and students.

Semes's work provides a well-organized and compelling argument for "new traditional" design, but his viewpoint offers only one side of the debate. Problems arise when defining the architecture of our time as "new traditional," thus restricting creativity and innovation within the contemporary design field. Urban areas are ever-evolving places, and although Semes does not suggest freezing a place in time, he promotes limiting contrasts that could instead be assets to the character of an area. Modern buildings, although stylistically different, can be built in a way that addresses, synthesizes with, and is compatible to the existing historic fabric. *The Future of the Past* adds significantly to the discussion, one that should continue as an important topic within the historic preservation, urban planning, and architecture professions.

Elizabeth Moore is the Architectural Historian at the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University. She may be reached by email at emoore@mtsu.edu.

Reprinted by Permission of the American Association for State and Local History, 2011. The book review was originally published in the summer 2010 edition of History News.

Historic House Lost to Demolition

Only a few short weeks have passed since the historic house located at 831 Leavenworth was demolished, and already another historic house has been demolished. The white two-story house located at 1604 Poyntz Avenue was recently demolished.

The house, which was built in 1910, was owned by the Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen Funeral Home. The funeral home had planned to demolish the house and build a crematory on the lot. The June 24, 2011 edition of *The Manhattan Mercury* reported that the plans for the crematory are on hold for now due to neighborhood concerns, but the owners still moved forward with the house's demolition.

Prior to demolition, the M/RCPA contacted Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen to encourage the owners to make the house available for

relocation. The owners believed the house exceeded city height restrictions for moving structures. The house's height is unknown, but a creative and motivated mover could have reduced the house's height by removing the roof, if indeed the height would have been an issue.

The house located at 1604 Poyntz Avenue had no historic protections that could have prevented its demolition or that could have provided the M/RCPA with the means to formally protest its demolition.

At top, 1604 Poyntz Ave. as it appeared earlier this summer. The photo below shows the same lot following demolition.



Rental Inspection Ordinance Repealed

Manhattan's City Commission voted 3-2 on July 19th to turn back the clock and repeal the mandatory Rental Inspection Program that was adopted in 2009 by a previous Commission and that went into effect a few months later.

In September 2008, the City Commission created a committee charged with the task of developing a rental inspection ordinance. Dixie West represented the M/RCPA on the committee. The committee met several times over the course of a few months to craft an ordinance and

to make a recommendation to the City Commission.

The M/RCPA supported the adoption of a rental inspection program, believing that rental inspections are an issue of public safety and would also provide another level of protection for historic properties and neighborhoods.

The commissioners and landlords who favored repeal at the July meeting expressed concerns about problems with how the program had been implemented.

The M/RCPA is disappointed that a majority of the City Commissioners voted to completely rescind the Rental Inspection Program rather than address implementation problems through modifications to the ordinance.

The M/RCPA will continue to advocate for a rental inspection ordinance that is fair to renters and landlords, enhances public safety, and is sensitive to issues related to the preservation of historic properties.

Under Construction

Three of USD 383's historic stone schools are currently in various stages of construction as part of the school improvement bond approved by voters. M/RCPA is pleased that the school board chose to reinvest in these historic buildings as well as the district's other facilities.

If you haven't driven by any of these schools lately, you might be surprised by the transformations in progress.



Top right, Bluemont's 1950s wing is undergoing demolition work. Bottom right, Roosevelt is getting a new link between the 1923 & 1983 portions of the school. At left, Wilson's nearly completed classroom addition is shown in the foreground.



M/RCPA Membership Roster 2010-11

\$15 Student Level

Joanne Goldstein.

\$35 Historic Level

Barbara Anderson, Marolyn Caldwell, Wayne M. (Mick) Charney, Cheryl Collins, Kenneth & Margaret Conrow, Michael & Janet Danenberg, Nancy Danner, Kerry Davis, Michael & Ann Dudek, Rev. H. Wayne & Beverly Fink, Sara Fisher, Mary Ann Fleming, Deanna & Dan Hall, Charles & Charlotte Herr, Marjorie Heyne, Robin Higham, Jean Bigbee Hill, Corina & Cornelius Hugo, Lance & Melanie Klein, Phillip & Camille Korenek, Marianne Korten, Professor Robert D. Linder, Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, Jan McIntosh, Bruce McMillan, Elaine & Robert Mohr, Kevin G. W. Olson, Bill Pallett, Mary H. & Lawrence Pollack, Jerry & Martha Powell, Roger & Virginia Reitz, Lauren W. Ritterbush, Mike & Karen Sheffield, Geri & Todd Simon, Richard & Kimberly Smith, Brenda Spencer, Stephen Stover, Joan Strickler, Erma Verhage, Ray & Patricia Weisenburger, Alvin & Edna Williams.

\$100 Preservation Level

John & Sheri Adams, Mimi Balderson, Bowman Bowman Novick, Frances Ellis, Gary & Paula Ellis, Tom Giller-Commerce Bank, Bert & Val Harrop, Nancy Holmes, Roger & Linda Johnson, Mark & Ann Knackendoffel, John & Cindy LaBarge, Eugene J. Laughlin, Karen & John McCulloh, Michael & Judine Mecseri, Dori Milldyke, Jayme Morris-Hardeman & Brain Hardeman, Marina Pecar-Krstic, Barbara & Ernie Peck, Virginia Quiring, John & Barbara Rees, Dan & Mitzi Richards, Tom & Karen Roberts, Le Juan Shrimplin, Bob & Mary Stamey, Chuck & Marsha Tannehill, Barbara Withee.

\$250 Landmark Level

Mary Dean Apel, Burke & Margery Bayer, David & Kathy Dzewaltowski, Ralph Fontenot, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Hittle Landscape Architects, Master Landscape, Inc., Debbie Nuss & Brad Fenwick, Pat O'Brien, Perry Peine, Barbara Poresky, Gwyn & Gina Riffel, Steve & Debbie Saroff, Steve & Whitney Short, Kevin West & Alyn Pennington West.

Honorary Lifetime Members

Rose M. Bissey (in memory of Charles Bissey), Enell Foerster (in memory of Bernd Foerster), Pat O'Brien.

M/RCPA
P.O. Box 1893
MANHATTAN, KS
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Letter Sent to the City of Manhattan

Dear Mr. Ron Fehr:

It has come to the attention of the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance (M/RCPA) that the City of Manhattan is currently accepting applications for a Long Range Planner position in the Department of Community Development. The M/RCPA would like to strongly suggest that applicants with experience in preservation issues should be sought to fill the position.

As you know, as a Certified Local Government, Manhattan has adopted a local preservation ordinance, which means our community has made a commitment to preserving our cultural resources for future generations. Having a planner with preservation experience would aid the city in fulfilling its commitment and would be beneficial in accessing grants and other funding

opportunities to advance and promote historic preservation. Manhattan has 26 properties on the local, state, or national registers and two historic districts. A planner knowledgeable in preservation would be a valuable asset for providing direction when dealing with environs issues related to these historic properties. This person would be the critical link between property owners who are unaware or insensitive to historic preservation issues and preservationists who work diligently to preserve our community's historic fabric. With a trained historic preservation planner on staff, controversy wouldn't necessarily be eliminated, but it most certainly could be mitigated sooner.

Manhattan's preservation community has held a number of "Historic Summits" in recent years where interested individuals and

groups participated in a mini-conference to discuss issues in preservation. Participating organizations included the M/RCPA, the Riley County Historical Society, Downtown Manhattan, Inc., and the Historic Resources Board. The most important "need" identified at every summit has been the need for a preservation planner. Manhattan's preservation community would strongly support the hiring of a planner who was knowledgeable in preservation issues.

The M/RCPA hopes that you will seriously consider filling the planner position with a person who has experience in historic preservation.

Sincerely,
Kathy Dzewaltowski, President

Note: The above letter was sent on behalf of the M/RCPA to Ron Fehr, City Manager, Karen Davis, Dir. of Community Development, & to City Commissioners.