



# MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER 1994 – 2014

CELEBRATING **YEARS** OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

August 2014

## A Message From Our President

When the M/RCPA hosted the Historic Summit back in May, I learned something I hadn't heard before during the panel discussion on downtown: I live in the "SoPo Neighborhood District," with "SoPo" being short for "South of Poyntz."

Manhattan has numerous neighborhood and homeowners' associations, as well as two historic districts, so the concept of a neighborhood district is not entirely new and is part of our local vernacular. If someone says they live in "Northview" or "Candlewood," we all know what that means.

The south of Poyntz area already has a neighborhood association, known as the South Manhattan Neighborhood Association, so the SoPo term is more of a geographical reference for where something is located, along the same lines as the term "Northview." I haven't yet

encountered numerous people using the term SoPo, so it will be interesting to see if SoPo catches on as the common term for the area.

One of the reasons that I was intrigued by the recent creation of the SoPo Neighborhood District is because in many instances, the benefits of neighborhood districts mirror those of historic preservation. Both create a feeling of community, a sense of place, improved neighborhood stability, and a connection to neighbors, so establishing a neighborhood district, particularly one that encompasses an older area of Manhattan, may be beneficial to historic preservation.

Residents who are actively engaged in their neighborhood may be motivated to protect and improve where they live through a variety of means, including crime prevention activities, zoning regulations,

design regulations, code enforcement, and through participation in public processes.

This type of activity frequently benefits historic preservation because residents become more aware of their surroundings, including taking pride in the historic features of the neighborhood that help to define it, make it unique, and create a neighborhood identity. As a result, if a historic structure were threatened with demolition or insensitive development, concerned neighbors may step forward to defend it out of a desire to preserve their neighborhood's identity.

At the very least, the "SoPo" term is providing a name for the area, which has been missing from our local conversations. Instead of vaguely saying, "I live near the high school," now I can say I live in SoPo, and maybe before long, everyone will know what that means.

*Kathy Dzewaltowski*





Kansas Preservation Alliance, Inc.  
preserving the past to enrich the future since 1979

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# Historic Preservation & Manhattan Area Archaeology

by Lauren W. Ritterbush

Historic preservation often brings to mind efforts to protect and preserve standing historic structures. These resources inform us about the people and cultures of our region over the past 150 years. Yet, human “history” extends back many more centuries and millennia. More than 700 generations of native peoples have made this continent their home over at least 14,000 years; however, much of their past is unrecorded in written and visual documents or standing structures. Instead, the remains of their lives lie hidden beneath our feet and in the landscapes that surround us. Their seeming invisibility does not diminish their significance. Historic preservation extends from above to below as clues of all kinds, historic and architectural to ancient and archaeological. In the Manhattan area, we are privileged to have a strong record of many of these different cultural resources.

As documented through the 2009 Manhattan Archaeological Survey, more than 120 archaeological sites (places of past human activity) have been formally identified in the Manhattan area. Nearly 1,300 have been recorded in Riley County. Some are foundations and other remnants of farm buildings, stone fences, or historic artifacts that fall within the period of Euro-American settlement, but others mark the lives of earlier native peoples. Their sites are often less visible, sometimes discerned as scatters of stone shaped by humans into points for spears, darts, or arrows; knives, hide scrapers, and other tools; or simply the debris produced while making these. Shards from broken ceramic pots, pieces of grinding stones, bone

tools, a discarded pipe, and other objects also belie those places where people prepared food, made clothing, relaxed, and carried out a host of activities. Other remnants of past events consist of charcoal, ash, or reddened soil indicating a fireplace; soft, hard-packed, or discolored sediments showing where people built their homes or stored their food; or piled or aligned stones and earth that served as trail markers or burials. These clues suggest the location of native villages, prehistoric camps, cemeteries, quarries, hunting and butchering sites, and other places where ancient people carried out daily and special activities.



Above, probable burial mound (estimated age 1,000-2,000 years old) south of Manhattan, June 2011. Photo courtesy of Brad Logan.

The large number and variety of archaeological sites in and around Manhattan make this place unique. So, too, do some of the specific sites. For example, Blue Earth village was located in nearby Pottawatomie County. This was the primary home of the Kansa Indian tribe in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Here, they congregated for much of the year between far-ranging excursions to the east to trade with European and American merchants and westward for annual bison hunts, which provided food and hides for daily survival. This earthlodge village

was the Kansa home while they planted and harvested essential produce from their gardens. As the only known Kansa village for the period between about A.D. 1790 and 1825, this archaeological site is extremely important to the Kansa and those interested in their history. Unfortunately, much of this site has been destroyed through natural erosion and extensive disturbance associated with the “progress” and expansion of our own community.

Other archaeological remains in the Manhattan area provide clues to who lived here before written accounts. Among these are a series of sites occupied 400 to 800 years

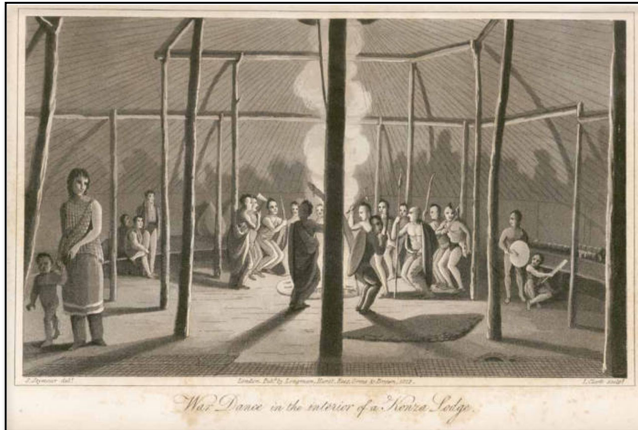
before the Kansa arrived (approximately A.D. 1000-1400). Study of several has shown that early farmers and hunters lived here in scattered farmsteads. They made intensive use of the rich local resources including clay (for pots and house plaster) and arable land along the streams, stone from the adjacent hills, and a wide variety of wild plants and animals. One of the earliest professional archaeological investigations of these early peoples’ lives was carried out at the Griffing site by Waldo Wedel of the Smithsonian Institution in 1937. Today, we drive over the location of this former site as we travel along Seth Child Road.

These two examples demonstrate the value and importance of the archaeological resources of the Manhattan area. Unfortunately, they also represent the extensive damage that the fragile and finite vestiges of the past in this area have suffered. Other cultural resources in this historically rich region have disappeared largely unnoticed as our *(continued on pg. 3)*



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modern community expands. Losses such as these need not be inevitable if survey and evaluation are conducted in advance of modern expansion, and planning efforts are directed towards their preservation



Earliest sketch of the interior of a Kansa earthlodge, drawn by Samuel Seymour during an August 1819 visit to Blue Earth Village. (From *Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains, Performed in the Years 1819, 1820*, Vol. 1, compiled by Edwin James, 1823, p. 126a, [www.americanjourneys.org/aj-144a/](http://www.americanjourneys.org/aj-144a/))

or mitigation.

Are these remnants worth preserving and how do we do so?

Although many archaeological sites are not readily visible and have experienced much degradation over the centuries, they are vital to understanding our predecessors. In many cases, archaeological remains provide the *only* information about the many women, men, and children who once lived and died in this region. These humble remnants of the past are important resources that help us discover the diverse ways of living in this place we call home. This is only possible through the documentation, evaluation, study, and preservation of significant archaeological resources.

Documentation and collection of data from archaeological sites includes survey and excavation. Archaeological data are often in the form of material remains, but, context, that is, the position and

importantly, details about their association of artifacts with human-made and natural features, as well as the sediments or matrix in which they are buried, are vital to interpretation. The context of archaeological finds is essential for evaluating a site. In the

United States, significance is commonly measured in terms of the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places ([http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15\\_2.htm](http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm)). Criterion D, whether historic or archaeological remains might yield important information about the human past, is

most useful. In some archaeological cases, this can be measured through study of remains visible on the surface, but in many cases, relatively small-scale (test) excavations are necessary to evaluate a site's potential, especially to determine if the context of artifacts and features is sufficiently intact to allow accurate interpretation.

The means of protecting and preserving significant archaeological sites vary but generally focus on prevention of disturbance to intact cultural deposits and curation of collected data. In our modern world where we so thoroughly modify the land, archaeological remains are frequently endangered. Many vestiges of our ancient past have already succumbed to cultural and natural alterations of the earth. For those that retain integrity, we must take measures to prevent their disturbance. We can do this through establishment of protective easements, parks, and greenways. In cases where this may not be possible, mitigation measures may be necessary. This typically involves

There are many ways you can advocate for understanding and preservation of our region's historic/archaeological resources. Most immediate is to provide input for the Manhattan Area 2035 comprehensive planning process presently underway. You can learn more about this ongoing project at <http://manhattanarea2035.com/>. Read feedback already provided and add yours through the website, Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mhk2035>), and the last public forum scheduled for Wednesday, September 10, 2014.

foresightful data recovery generally involving large-scale excavation and specialized analyses.

Just as we archive historic documents that provide insights to our history and the visible structures or features that remain, we must also properly curate archaeological data, the primary "documents" or direct evidence of the distant past, for future generations. This is especially important given the continual advancement in techniques that enhance interpretation of past (continued on pg. 4)



Test excavations at a prehistoric archaeological site (estimated age 600-1,000 years old), Manhattan, Nov. 2013. Photo courtesy of Brad Logan.

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cultures and the settings in which they existed. Historic preservation of archaeological resources includes not only sites and districts (cultural landscapes), but assemblages of previously recovered artifacts and, importantly, the many records (e.g., field notes, maps, photographs, datasets) that reveal their significance.

Historic preservation, whether of the built environment or more subtle

archaeological finds, enriches our lives and those of future generations. We are fortunate to live in an area rich in historic and prehistoric sites that help us understand the past, admire the people who preceded us, and develop our own sense of identity through knowledge and recognition of the past. It is our responsibility to provide a legacy for those who follow by pursuing effective protective and preservation measures not only with regard to

historic structures and features of our immediate forefathers, but of the archaeological traces of the more distant past.

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Sample of Central Plains tradition artifacts (ca. A.D. 1000-1400) that inform the Winds of the Past gallery of the Flint Hills Discovery Center. Photo courtesy of Lauren W. Ritterbush.

To learn more about this area's Euro-American, African American, and Native American history and cultures, including what has been learned from archaeological sites in the Manhattan and surrounding area, visit the Flint Hills Discovery Center, 315 South Third Street.

## Docking Building in Jeopardy

The fate of the Robert B. Docking State Office Building, located in Topeka and adjacent to the Capitol Building, has been under discussion for the past several months, with state administrators suggesting the building should be demolished. Years of deferred maintenance have led to its needing an estimated \$75-100 million in renovations. As a result, Jim Clark, Secretary of the Department of Administration, suggested that state offices currently housed in Docking could be relocated to privately owned space that the state would lease, and then Docking would be demolished for an estimated cost of \$17 million.

Mr. Clark also recommended that the state sell the Landon Building and the Eisenhower Building to private owners who would then lease them back to the state for its use (Marso). The governor signed legislation,

which will allow Mr. Clark to sell the buildings and use some of the proceeds to cover demolition costs. Since the Docking Building is state owned, its fate affects all Kansans.

The Capitol Building and Docking are connected by a tunnel, which provides convenient access for legislators and state employees. The mechanical systems for both Docking and the Capitol Building are located in the lower levels of Docking and are connected to the Capitol via the tunnel. If Docking were demolished, the plan to provide mechanical systems for the Capitol would be to  
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Robert B. Docking State Office Building



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establish them in a new, smaller utility building.

Construction of the Docking Building began in October 1954 and was completed in 1957 for a cost of \$9 million (Griffin). The state architect was John A. Brown, and the project architect was Robert Slemmons (Griffin).

Early designs for the building reflected a neoclassical style similar to the Capitol Building (Griffin). But, the post-World War II era saw a rise in the popularity of the Modern Movement in architecture, fueled in part by construction innovations developed during the war, such as the ability to use aluminum for architectural purposes. The Modern Movement was characterized by simplicity in design and the elimination of unnecessary details, a visual emphasis on horizontal and vertical lines, use of new types of materials, and materials arranged at 90-degree angles to one another. The neoclassical designs for Docking were eventually scrapped in favor of designs that reflected the Modern Movement (Griffin).

The Docking Building exemplifies many of the characteristics of the Modern Movement. The building is a cross shape, consisting of two sections constructed at 90-degree angles to one another. Its construction includes architectural aluminum and a glass wall system known as a "curtain wall." The building's design reflects a grid system, emphasizing horizontal and vertical lines.

The Docking Building may possibly be the first public building constructed in Kansas in the Modern Movement style (Griffin), making it a significant Kansas cultural resource. The curtain wall and its aluminum frame were cutting-edge at the time. It was the architect's opinion that "it was one of the best curtain wall systems in existence"

(Griffin).

In addition to the innovative materials used to construct Docking, the exterior and the interior feature marble columns, and the elevator lobbies are lined with marble. Portions of the exterior are cut limestone, and integrated within the limestone panels are high-relief carvings that were carved in place by the sculptor (Griffin).

Earlier this year, preservationists were provided with a tour of the Docking Building, and members of the M/RCPA were part of the group. The general opinion of those on the tour was that the building showed signs of deferred maintenance, but it did not appear to be in such poor condition to justify demolition. Why, then, is demolition the only option being considered by state administrators for the Docking Building?

One possibility is that the Docking Building is 57 years old, which non-preservationists tend to deem as not "old enough" to make the building "historic" or culturally significant. Buildings constructed in the more recent past struggle to be recognized as culturally important.

Another factor working against the Docking Building is its modern style of architecture. Many people don't appreciate the simple lines of the Modern Movement and have an easier time appreciating a grand Victorian structure. According to the National Trust for Historic Preservation, "The significant buildings, landscapes, and sites of the Modern Movement and the important architectural, social, and cultural resources of the past 50 years are among the most under-

appreciated and vulnerable aspects of our nation's heritage" ("Modernism"). Buildings in the modern style are no less worthy of preservation simply because the casual viewer doesn't regard them as "beautiful." Structures in the modern style are part of our architectural history, and their preservation helps us understand and appreciate that period of our architectural and cultural heritage, just as Victorians do for their time period.

The \$75-100 million estimated price tag to renovate the building is also daunting. The Docking Building is eligible for listing on the (continued on pg. 6)

At top, one of the carved sculptures on the exterior. Bottom, the interior of a vacated floor.



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state and national historic registers, which would mean a renovation project would be eligible for state and federal tax credits as well as grant opportunities, which would help defray costs. Mel Borst, co-chair of the Kansas Preservation Alliance's Endangered Properties Committee, suggested to legislators that the building could be sold to a private investor who could take advantage of rehabilitation tax credits totaling 45% of the project costs. According to Mr. Borst, the \$17 million needed for demolition could be invested instead in state tax credits, which would lead to over 1,000 jobs generated, \$2 million in state taxes, and \$45 million in gross state product.

State Senator Laura Kelly recently requested that the state's auditing division conduct an audit of the plan to lease office space for state employees (Baumgardner). Citing Arizona, which sold buildings

in its capital complex in 2009, Sen. Kelly said, "When they were in a budget crisis, much like we are right now, Arizona sold off essentially their capital complex. The same governor in 2014 was proposing to buy those buildings back because it was a huge mistake" (Baumgardner). Sen. Kelly's audit request was not approved, but she plans to try again in October (Baumgardner).

The Docking Building is not scheduled to be demolished until two years from now in order to allow time to vacate the building and find rental space for state offices. Perhaps, in the next two years an alternative to demolition will emerge. The Kansas Preservation Alliance has been working with state officials in an attempt to develop other options, including selling the building and making preservation developers aware of the project. Thus far, the Department of Administration has resisted considering selling the building, as

well as requests to put out a nationwide Request for Proposals to attract potential developers. In the meanwhile, even though the Landon and Eisenhower Buildings have not yet been sold to finance demolition costs as specified in the legislation, workers have already started gutting floors that have been vacated.

Baumgardner, Gwen. "Questions raised about state moving to leased office space." *Kansasfirstnews.com*. Kansas First News, 22 July 2014. Web. 23 July 2014. <[www.kansasfirstnews.com/2014/07/22/state-audit-meeting/](http://www.kansasfirstnews.com/2014/07/22/state-audit-meeting/)>

Griffin, David. "Docking State Office Building." *Kansas Preservation* 33.1 (2011): 5-9. Web. July 23, 2013. <[www.kshs.org/resource/ks\\_preservation/2011v33n1.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/resource/ks_preservation/2011v33n1.pdf)>

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"Modernism and the Recent Past." 23 July 2014. [www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/modernism-recent-past/](http://www.preservationnation.org/information-center/saving-a-place/modernism-recent-past/).