



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

August 2019

Vol. 25, Issue IV

A Message From Our President

The National Trust for Historic Preservation reminds us, "This place matters." If someone were to question what this means, one answer I would give is that place embodies who we are and how we got to be who we are. This was really driven home to me last April, seeing images of Notre-Dame de Paris burn.

The cathedral is a fixture, an institution, a symbol of a country's and a people's centuries-long history. I imagine that the majority of those outside of France were not affected by this tragedy as I was – I felt an ache, a huge sense of loss, watching the smoke billowing through the sky.

To me, Notre Dame matters. I have almost no French ancestry,

and I only spent three weeks there before starting my junior year of college in a small university town in the southeastern part of France. But, that year had a profound impact on me. France is a part of me and who I am. Notre Dame is part of France, and part of that country's identity. And, it's part of my identity. As I watched Notre Dame burn, I grieved.

There was a fire here in Manhattan just over two years ago that had a similar effect on many of us. I remember how the morning of March 2, 2017, unfolded after I learned the Dusty Bookshelf was on fire. I was tuned to the radio on my way to the gallery, anxiously awaiting news of the cat, Oliver, but I thought the fire would be controlled and the shop rebuilt. Only later on did I realize the extent of the damage. Manhattan lost something that was part of our identity that day.

Too often, we don't appreciate what we have until it is no more. Fortunately, we will know what we have in Aggierville, thanks to a grant from the State Historic Preservation Office to fully fund the Aggierville Intensive Historic Resources Survey. Despite the fact that this was not going to cost the City of Manhattan anything, nor place any limits on owners of properties or businesses, the process to get the city to accept the funds was far



Above, the Dusty Bookshelf was extensively renovated after a devastating fire in 2017.

more difficult than it should have been. Had it not been for the repeated efforts of concerned citizens, the project might have gone nowhere. Now, we will know just how much this place we call Aggierville matters.

And today, Aggierville once again has a Dusty Bookshelf. My thanks to those who worked to resurrect this Manhattan institution from the ashes; I know it was an uphill struggle. There were those who thought such a prime piece of land could be turned more profitable, but there were others who recognized that if we focus solely on the bottom line, we ignore those around us. We ignore that which makes us who we are. When we look around us and care for these places that matter, we're really caring for our past, our present, and our future. We're caring for our community and everything that represents.

Alyn Pennington West

Manhattan/Riley County
Preservation Alliance
Alyn Pennington West, President
P. O. Box 1893
Manhattan, KS 66505

E-mail: mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com
Website: www.preservemanhattan.org

The Board of Directors meets the second Thursday of the month at either the Union Pacific Depot or the Strecker Nelson West Gallery. Visit the "About us" tab on the M/RCPA's website to find the schedule of meeting locations. Members are welcome to attend board meetings.

Newsletter editor: Kathy Dziewaltowski

When Gloria Came to Town

Gloria Vanderbilt -- socialite, artist, fashion designer, and heiress -- passed away on June 17, 2019, at the age of 95. Gloria was the great-great granddaughter of Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had built his fortune in the railroad and shipping industries. Much of her life was lived in the spotlight, but not many people know that Gloria spent a few months of her life in Kansas.

At the young age of 17, Gloria Vanderbilt married Pasquale "Pat" DiCicco in December 1941. They met in Hollywood, where Pat worked as an actor's agent, and he was also rumored to have connections to the mob. At the time of their wedding, only a few weeks had passed since the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and the U.S. had entered World War II. Many men and women were motivated to do their part to help the war effort, and Pat was no exception, as he decided to enlist in the Army. He had an interest in the cavalry and was expected to be stationed at Ft. Riley during his training.

As the news circulated that Pat DiCicco would likely train at Ft. Riley, many wondered whether the newlywed Gloria would join her husband in Kansas, and if so, where would she make her home. W. F. Farrell, who was the president of Manhattan's Chamber of Commerce, sent a telegram to the couple to invite Gloria to live in Manhattan while her husband was training. The telegram stated, "Newspapers announce you contemplate coming to Kansas where Mr. DiCicco will be stationed at Fort Riley. If true, we invite you to make your home in Manhattan only eight miles east of

the reservation, a community whose surroundings and accommodations we believe you both will enjoy . . ." ("Glamour"). Gloria was a painter, and the telegram highlighted the painters and art students associated with Kansas State whose company she might enjoy. The telegram also pointed out that if Gloria moved to Manhattan, she "would just be transferring her home from one Manhattan to another" ("Glamour").

Manhattan was not the only community to try to woo Gloria. The couple had said they were looking for a home that was within easy driving distance of Ft. Riley and one that would have adequate facilities for her painting. In addition to Manhattan, Topeka and Salina also sent invitations, encouraging Gloria to make her home in their cities ("DiCicco").

In April 1942, Pat DiCicco arrived in Kansas with the plan to find a home for Gloria. In Manhattan, he was met by a delegation from the Chamber of Commerce and provided with a tour of the city ("DiCicco"). He stayed in the Wareham Hotel while he made arrangements for his enlistment in the Army and considered where Gloria should live. While he was staying at the Wareham, the rumor circulated that Pat had made arrangements to rent Riley County's former poor farm for Gloria's residence ("DiCicco hasn't"), which had originally been the home of Joseph Denison, who was one of the founders of Manhattan and Bluemont College. The owners of the home quickly debunked the rumor, saying no one had contacted them about leasing it.

Gloria flew to Kansas City on May 1, 1942, where she was



Above, Gloria Vanderbilt-DiCicco examines the art in her Manhattan home. The photo is from the May 9, 1942 edition of *The Manhattan Mercury*.

greeted by her husband. The next day, it was announced that the couple had decided Gloria would live in Manhattan; specifically, she would rent the home of Arthur Peine, located at 409 North 17th Street. Arthur Peine was a former history professor and active member of the Chamber of Commerce. He reported the DiCiccos' decision to rent his home had been made within a few minutes of Gloria's arrival in Manhattan, and the eight-room home would be rented fully furnished ("DiCiccos rent"). The Peine family relocated for the duration of Gloria's stay to 1648 Leavenworth Street, which was a "practice" home, belonging to the College of Home Economics ("Ogden").

Gloria brought her housekeeper and her former governess with her to run the household. She hired a former housekeeper of the Peine family ("Ogden"), and the DiCiccos also hired a local person to serve as their chauffeur. Their driver was Charles Hawkins, who had been working as a custodian at City Hall and had chauffeuring experience. City officials granted (*continued on pg. 3*)

(continued from pg. 2)
him a leave of absence to drive for the DiCiccos (“Charles”).

Gloria moved into the home on North 17th on May 7, 1942. *The Morning Chronicle* said Gloria selected Manhattan as her home because she wanted to live the life of a typical American in a quiet way. She granted the *Chronicle* a brief interview and commented, “It is silly to have so much ado over one man’s joining the army and his wife going to live near him when there are several million men joining the army” (“In Manhattan”). She went on to say that she hoped people would call on her and stay for tea, and she hoped to become involved with the Red Cross because she had experience rolling bandages. Soon after, Gloria received her first social invitation, as reportedly the women of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority invited her to a picnic (“In Manhattan”).

Despite Gloria’s desire to live quietly, Manhattan’s residents were star struck. Several fender-benders occurred in front of her house, resulting from drivers slowing down on North 17th Street, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. The police department arranged for additional presence in the neighborhood to help the situation, and if the sightseeing traffic remained heavy, there were plans to station an officer at the intersection to direct traffic (“In Manhattan”). Also, a short news item noted some residents had an “extra special strut” and an “unusual tilt of the head” as a result of having celebrity neighbors (“Miscellaneous”).

Oleg Cassini, who was a well-known fashion designer and friend of the DiCiccos, was also stationed at Ft. Riley during the same time period, and his wife,

film actress Gene Tierney, lived in Junction City. Mr. Cassini commented in his memoir that Gloria never asked for special treatment, and he described her as always very sweet and kind. In contrast, according to Mr. Cassini, Pat faked a lower back problem, which enabled him to be driven around the post much of the time and which did not endear him to the other men because they thought he was taking advantage of his celebrity (Cassini, 147).

During the months that Gloria lived in Manhattan, she apparently lived a quiet life, based on the fact that her activities weren’t newsworthy enough to be mentioned in the local newspapers. The only mention of Gloria was in regards to her losing a pearl necklace, valued at \$4,000, and the associated \$250 reward offered for the necklace’s return (“Has”). The only mention of Pat was in regards to a claim that he crowded another driver off the road on Highway 40, and the two drivers subsequently had an argument (“From police”). The Riley County sheriff had also pulled Pat over for speeding a couple of times (“Sheriff”).

By October 1942, the DiCiccos were packing up and headed to Texas where Pat would be stationed at Ft. Bliss (“Gloria will leave”). They left behind a vehicle, furniture, and a number of unpaid bills. Multiple claims of non-payment were made against the DiCiccos, including bills from a shoe store, hardware store, clothing store, grocery store, plumber, laundry service, a claim of unpaid wages made by their chauffeur, and unpaid bills for automobile service. Arthur Peine also made a claim of \$241 for “loss and damage of articles” in his home that the DiCiccos had rented (“Gloria DiCicco”). The DiCiccos paid the



Above, 409 North 17th Street in Manhattan, where Gloria Vanderbilt-DiCicco lived for a few months in 1942.

automobile service bill and reclaimed their vehicle (“The DiCiccos’ lien”). The sheriff seized their furniture, valued at \$7,800, and an auction of the furniture was scheduled for December 1942 to pay the bills (“Sheriff”). In total, the claims against the DiCiccos added up to \$541.32 (“The DiCiccos’ lien”).

In an interview with the *World-Telegram* regarding the unpaid bills, Gloria said shopkeepers had been instructed to forward bills to them, but they didn’t do that, and instead, seized her furniture. She was quoted as saying, “I had hoped the people of Manhattan would treat me as a human being who wanted to live as other people did. Instead, they looked upon me as a freak – something to be exploited, to stare at, to capitalize, to make money out of” (“Gloria DiCicco”).

The DiCiccos hired an attorney in Kansas City to manage the situation, and all of the outstanding bills were paid prior to the furniture auction, with the exception of Mr. Peine’s claim, and a tentative arrangement had been made to satisfy his claim. The auction was canceled, and *The Manhattan Mercury* reported that local women were disappointed that they were denied an opportunity to purchase some of Gloria’s furniture (“Many”).

Based on comments Gloria
(continued on pg. 4)

(continued from pg. 3) made in an interview with *Vogue* magazine, she didn't seem to enjoy her months in Manhattan all that much. She commented that Manhattan had provided a "certain amount of small entertainment such as dinner followed by bridge or games" and the Saturday night dances at Ft. Riley were the only occasions for which one would wear an evening dress. She also described Kansas' climate as "very, very extreme" with "bitter cold winters" and "blazing hot summers" ("Gloria comments"). Her description of Kansas' harsh winters is somewhat puzzling, considering Gloria lived in Manhattan from May until October 1942 and didn't experience a Kansas winter.

As quickly as the excitement of rubbing elbows with celebrities had bubbled up in 1942, it faded away. The DiCiccos moved on after five

months, settled their bills, and life returned to normal on North 17th Street.

Cassini, Oleg. *In My Own Fashion*. New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1987.

"Charles Hawkins is new chauffeur for the DiCiccos." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 11 May 1942: 1.

"DiCicco in city today; will enlist tomorrow." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 28 1942: 1.

"DiCicco hasn't rented poor farm, as rumor has it." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 29 April 1942: 1.

"The DiCiccos' liens pile up." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 15 December 1942: 1.

"DiCiccos rent Peine home; will move in next Wednesday." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 2 May 1942: 1.

"From police department." *The Morning Chronicle*. 23 July 1942: 1.

"Glamour girl invited to city to make her home." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 25 April 1942: 1.

"Gloria comments on strange customs here." *The Morning Chronicle*. 4 December 1942: 1.

"Gloria DiCicco is hurt, not bitter at Manhattan for claims of creditors." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 17 December 1942: 1.

"Gloria will leave for Texas today." *The Morning Chronicle*. 4 October 1942: 1.

"Gloria views local artist's work." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 9 May 1942: 2.

"Has anyone Mrs. DiCicco's \$4,000 pearl necklace?" *The Manhattan Republic*. 29 October 1942: 1.

"In Manhattan, now her home, Gloria wants to live quietly, to paint, and to be neighborly." *The Morning Chronicle*. 8 May 1942: 1, 8.

"Many women disappointed as sheriff rings up 'No Sale' on Gloria's furniture here." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 21 December 1942: 1.

"Miscellaneous." *The Manhattan Republic*. 7 May 1942: 2.

"Ogden marshal gives up maid for DiCicco." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 6 May 1942: 5.

"Sheriff attaches Gloria's furniture here for \$7,800." *The Morning Chronicle*. 11 December 1942: 1.

Genealogy & History Fair

Hosted by the:

- RILEY COUNTY
GENERAL
SOCIETY
- MANHATTAN, KS
PRESERVATION ALLIANCE
- RILEY COUNTY
HISTORICAL MUSEUM

History Author Interviews

Information Tables
Genealogy & Historical Societies,
Museums, Personal History
Projects, & more!
(Tables are free, register by Aug. 5th)

Live Entertainment
Ron Wilson, Cowboy Poet and
Roy Bird, Kansas Music

Saturday,
August 24, 2019
10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Pottorf Hall, CICO Park, Manhattan
at Kimball & Wreath

Programs

10:30 - 11:15 a.m.

Jim Sherow - *The Chisholm Trail: Joseph McCoy's Great Gamble*

11:30 - 12:15 p.m.

Patricia Wadick & Vicki Holverson - *Creating Your Family Books:
The Write Time*

12:30 - 1:15 p.m.

Sara Fisher - *Researching Your House*

1:30 - 2:30 p.m.

Nolan Sump, Historical Reenactor - *Gov. Nehemiah Green, 1881*

Admission is FREE ~ Open to the Public

For more information go to www.rileycgs.com

M/RCPA's Annual Meeting



The M/RCPA's Annual Meeting of the membership will be coming up this fall, and all members are invited to attend. The meeting will include the election of the Board of Directors and officers. Watch for more details to follow.

Would you like to be more involved with the M/RCPA? If you are interested in serving on the Board of Directors or on a committee, contact Alyn Pennington West at mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com or 785-539-8601.

Update on Community House

Several months ago, an unnamed party approached the city and expressed interest in purchasing the Community House, which is owned by the city. Anticipating that there might be others interested in the building, city commissioners approved advertising a Request for Proposals (RFP) as a means to evaluate interest in redeveloping the Community House.

The Community House, located at 120 North 4th Street, was built 1917-18 through a partnership with the City of Manhattan and the Rotary Clubs of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma to provide space for recreation and relaxation for soldiers training at Ft. Riley for service in World War I. The building is listed on both the state register and the National Register, and the RFP indicated that a proposal should maintain the building's historic registry status. The building's sale would be contingent on a restrictive covenant, which would be enforceable by the city, would require the building to remain on the state and national registers, and would require its historic registry status to be maintained into the future.

The city received one proposal, which was submitted by the team of Ben Burton, local developer; Tyler Holloman, founder and manager of a local property management company; and Gavin Schmidt, local commercial lender and finance professional. The proposal called for converting the Community House to offices and residential apartments, purchasing the building from the city for \$1, and receiving grant funds from the city in the amount of \$500,000.

Prior to the closing of a real estate transfer of ownership, the developers must complete the preliminary design, determine the use of the building, and determine the

renovation costs. All of these items are required to be approved by the City Commission in order to finalize the sale of the building. After the transfer of ownership, the developers have 90 days to complete the final design and cost estimates, which also must be approved by the City Commission. The developers are required to invest 90% of the estimated costs approved by commissioners and won't receive the \$500,000 in grant funds until a minimum of \$2 million has been invested in the project.

On May 20th, the proposal was presented to the Historic Resources Board for discussion. Board members were concerned about the building's maintaining its historic registry status, the proposed \$1 purchase price, and the \$500,000 grant. Originally, the proposal had called for releasing \$250,000 of the grant when the sale closed, and board members had asked what assurances did the city have that the developers had the money to complete the project. The terms have since been renegotiated, and the \$500,000 won't be released until the developers have invested \$2 million.

The developers plan to seek state and federal rehabilitation tax credits, which are available to properties on the state or national registers. If an application to receive tax credits were approved, the renovation would be required to follow the Sec. of the Interior's standards for rehabilitating a property, which should mean the building would maintain its historic registry status.

On June 3rd, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board discussed the proposal. Board members were concerned about the loss of indoor programming space if the building were sold. Parks and Rec. staff were comfortable with losing the space because they felt the programs



currently using the Community House could be relocated to existing buildings or to the new facilities, which are in progress. Board members also asked about parking. The building is located in commercial zoning where there is no parking requirement, and residents of the proposed apartments would be able to purchase a permit for overnight parking.

The City Commission discussed the proposal on June 18th and was generally supportive of it. Commissioner Jerred McKee asked what would happen if the building's historic registry status were jeopardized. The response was the city would have to sue the developers to enjoin them from doing something that would negatively impact the historic registry status. The Historic Resources Board had suggested including something in the project that would honor the building's history, and during the City Commission meeting, Commissioner Linda Morse asked the developers if they were amenable to working with historic preservation groups to develop accurate historic references. Mr. Burton said yes and said he would like to add something to that effect.

Commissioners took no formal action because the Community House item was for discussion only. The next step will be to establish a development agreement to bring to the City Commission for approval.

M/RCPA
P.O. Box 1893
MANHATTAN, KS
66505-1893



2018-19 M/RCPA Membership Roster

\$35 Historic Level

Dede Brokesh, Charlene Brownson, Sandra Chandler, Carole Chelz, Cheryl Collins, Margaret Conrow, Melvin & Randi Dale, Mike & Jan Danenberg, Marla Day, Wanda Fateley, Beverly Fink, David & Kay Fiser, Troy & Sara Fisher, John & Jill Frese, Katharine Hensler, Kent Kellams, Debra Mercer, Dawn Munger, Larry & Sandy Murphy, Felisa Osburn, Bill Pallet, Allana Parker, Jerry & Martha Powell, Gloria Juhl Raney, Lauren W. Ritterbush, Tom & Karen Roberts, Catherine Roy-Tremblay, Sharlin Sargent, Ken & Nina Warren, Ron & Dixie West, Judith Willingham

\$100 Preservation Level

Phil & Dawn Anderson, Mimi Balderson, Brent Bowman, Preston & Diana Chapel, Nancy Danner, Jed Dunham, Gary & Paula Ellis, Calvin & Genie Emig, Debbie Nuss & Brad Fenwick, Joe & Janette Gelroth, Charles & Kate Gillum, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Kail & Becky Katzenmeier, Mark & Ann Knackendoffel, Ann Kosch, Bonnie Lynn-Sherow, Blade Mages, Karen McCulloh, Michael & Judine Mecseri, Dori Milldyke, Jan Miller, Linda Morse, Karin Westman & Phil Nel, Marina Pecar-Krstic, Barbara Peck, Mary Pollack, John & Mary Beth Reese, Richard & Kimberly Smith, Brenda Spencer, George & Julie Strecker, Joan C. Strickler, Barbara Withee, Nancy B. Williams

\$125 Corporate Preservation

Bria Taddiken-Williams/Coldwell Banker Real Estate Advisors, Bruce McMillan AIA Architects PA, GJL Real Estate/Gwyn & Gina Riffel, Rick & Judy Glowik, Griffith Lumber Co. Inc., Master Landscape, Riffel Property/Gwyn & Gina Riffel, Strecker Nelson West Gallery/Kevin West & Alyn Pennington West, Timber & Stone Architecture and Design

\$250 Landmark Level

David & Kathy Dzewaltowski, Barbara Poresky

Honorary Lifetime Members

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