



# MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

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## Jewel on Juliette Nominated to Register

The Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review is scheduled to meet on Aug. 7, and board members will review and recommend nominations for listing on the state or national register. One of the nominations board members will consider is the home located at 410 North Juliette Avenue.

The one-and-a-half story Craftsman style bungalow was built in 1916, and the original owners of the house were Forrest B. and Blanche Forrester. A short notice in a July 1916 newspaper stated, “The dwelling is to be of lumber, and to cost about \$3,500. The garage is to cost about \$150.” Construction was expected to take a few months (“F. B. Forrester to build”), and the Forresters moved in by the end of the year (“Harry Miller has moved”).

The Forresters purchased the lot for their home from A. J. Limbocker (“Real estate transfers”) and chose to construct their home on Juliette Avenue, which in Manhattan’s early years was considered one of the town’s most attractive streets. Brick paving had been installed a few years prior in 1912, and the avenue was known for its double row of trees. An 1884 news account noted, “Unless we are greatly mistaken Juliette Avenue is destined to become the ‘Daisy’ street of Manhattan . . .” (“Unless”).

Located on a beautiful thoroughfare, the Forresters’ home employs rough cut limestone for



Above, 410 North Juliette Avenue.

the foundation, and the front porch also uses rough cut stone for the porch piers, which are topped by wood columns that support a sloping roof. One of the distinctive features of the front façade are the three sets of original double casement windows. The windows each have 12 panes with a companion single-pane window on the interior for insulation. The interior single-pane windows open inward, and the exterior multi-pane windows open outward for fresh air (Chmiel).

The second level includes twin, front-facing gabled dormers above a small balcony. In the center is a smaller window. Robert Sitterley, whose parents owned the home from 1945 to 1966, confirmed the center window was originally a door and provided access to the balcony (Chmiel).

The interior contains many original features characteristic of the Craftsman style, including hardwood floors, a brick fireplace flanked by built-ins, French doors, and coffered ceilings. The living

and dining rooms are separated by squat wood columns that sit atop a partial wall with built-ins. The central staircase is a prominent feature of the first floor. The landing is encased by wood paneling topped by Craftsman style spindles (Chmiel).

Forrest B. Forrester was born in 1887 in WaKeeny, KS, in Trego County. His father was originally from Pennsylvania

and settled in western Kansas in 1874. Forrest’s father farmed and had an anchor cable business for securing buildings against strong winds (“Obituaries,” “Robert Forrester”).

Forrest grew up in WaKeeny in a family of seven children. He attended school in WaKeeny and then studied pharmacy at the University of Kansas (“Forrest Forrester”). After completion of his pharmacy studies, Forrest came to Manhattan in 1906 to work for H. S. Willard and Company, which was a downtown drugstore.

Blanche Evans Forrester was born in 1887 in Summerfield, KS, in Marshall County (“Blanche Forrester”). The Evans family moved to Manhattan in approximately 1904, and soon after, social notices in local newspapers show Blanche was attending gatherings and entertaining guests with recitations and other performances

Forrest and Blanche married in 1907, and the newlyweds resided in rented rooms above a downtown business at 313 Poyntz Avenue in the early days of their marriage (“Mr. *(continued on pg. 2)*

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and Mrs. Forrester”).

In 1913, Forrest began working for the Palace Drug Company in the Fourth Street location, which was in the Gillett Hotel annex, formerly located at Fourth and Houston Streets. Within a few months, he became a partner in the business when he took over the interest of a partner who’d left (“A member of the firm”). Shortly after, a news article indicated Forrest would be managing the drug-store’s business (“Dr. Hepler to leave”).

The Palace had two locations: one in downtown Manhattan on south Fourth Street and the second in Aggieville, which at the time was located at 1224 Moro Street (“The Palace is an up-to-date store”).

Forrest’s brother, Harold, also studied pharmacy at the University of Kansas, and he joined Forrest in working at the Palace in 1914. By 1915, the brothers were running both the downtown and Aggieville locations of the Palace (“The Palace serves”).

The ambitious Forrester brothers developed plans in 1923 to construct three new buildings in Aggieville, including the building at 704 North Manhattan Avenue, although construction didn’t begin until July 1929. The building on North Manhattan Avenue was described as constructed of steel, brick, and terra cotta, which would make it fireproof, and it would have a tile floor. Once completed, the building would become the new home of the Aggieville Palace (“A new building”). In January 1930, the Aggieville Palace formally opened in its new location on North Manhattan Avenue (“Palace holds open house”). The Palace was an Aggieville fixture and operated in this location for decades. The intricate, exquisite tile floor is still

there and remains a distinctive feature of the building.

Blanche organized the Camp Fire Girls in Manhattan, enjoyed acting in local productions, supervised high school dramatics, and she was an accomplished writer. Her writing was featured extensively in home magazines and periodicals (“Story by Forrester”).

Blanche wrote many articles for *Household Magazine*, and her articles frequently featured Manhattan homes, including one about her own home. Blanche’s article about her home was featured in the February 1936 issue and was entitled “Parents’ Play Rooms.”

The article showcased three homes in Manhattan that contained rooms described as a “little out of the ordinary” and “in which [adults] can do exactly as they like.” In the Forresters’ home, Blanche’s study was the highlighted room, and it was described as being a fairly plain room with tan walls, walnut finished woodwork, and possessing the perfect atmosphere for Blanche to do her writing (“Parents’ play rooms”). Based on the photograph of the study in *Household Magazine*, the study is largely unchanged from when Blanche used it to write articles.

The Palace Drug Store and Blanche’s writing and community involvement helped to make the Forresters well-known and prominent citizens. Social notices indicate the Forresters were very



Top to bottom, the dining room, central staircase, and Blanche Forrester’s study.

involved in the community and regularly entertained in their North Juliette Avenue home.

The Forresters had one child, daughter Virginia. Virginia married Joseph Mansfield Jr., and after living in Chicago for a time, the Mansfields returned to Manhattan and lived at 508 North Juliette Avenue, which was a block away from where Virginia had grown up. The Mansfields’ home is also a significant cultural resource. The historic stone home was built in 1868 and is a contributing structure to the Wolf House Historic District (Chmiel).

The Forresters owned the home at 410 North Juliette Avenue until (continued on pg. 3)

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approximately 1935 when they moved to a house seven miles north of Manhattan. Twenty years later, they moved back to town and lived in a home on Valley Drive (Chmiel). Forrest died in 1966, and Blanche passed away in 1970.

The house has seen few changes since its construction in 1916. A separate apartment was created in the basement in 1958. Additions to the rear of the house include a sunroom and a breakfast nook, and the kitchen and bathrooms have been updated over the years (Chmiel). The bulk of the home is unaltered and retains its Craftsman features and has a high degree of historic integrity.

In 2021, Ben and Judith Chmiel purchased the home. Ben says, “We had walked by it in the early days of the pandemic and thought ‘That’s a cool looking house,’ but we were not in the market at the time.” The months passed, and the Chmiels had forgotten about the house until a wrong turn during a Sunday stroll took them past the house again. The house was still

for sale, and the Chmiels saw the house’s potential. According to Ben, “We immediately fell in love with the interior as soon as we walked in – a lot of beautiful woodwork throughout, built-in cabinetry, and just a classic Craftsman bungalow with a lot of integrity.”

The Chmiels were confident the house would be eligible for registry listing and began to research its history. They were delighted to discover the original owners were the Forresters, who had owned the Palace, an Aggieville icon. The Chmiels have been in touch with previous occupants of the house and say it’s been a pleasure to listen to them share stories and unlock memories they had long forgotten.

Ben and Judith have plans to restore the house and want to honor past owners and occupants by elevating the house to its full potential. Ben says, “We’re excited to own a piece of history in Manhattan.”

The Chmiels’ home has been nominated for registry listing for its architecture.

“Blanche Forrester.” The Manhattan Mercury. 5 January 1970: 2.

Chmiel, Benjamin. National Register of Historic Places, F. B. Forrester House, Manhattan, Riley County, KS.

“Dr. Hepler to leave.” The Manhattan Republic. 4 September 1913: 1.

“F. B. Forrester to build.” The Manhattan Daily Nationalist. 8 July 1916: 1.

“Forrest Forrester.” Western Kansas World. 9 June 1906: 1.

“Harry Miller has moved.” The Manhattan Mercury. 4 December 1916: 6.

“A member of the firm.” The Daily Nationalist. 7 August 1913: 3.

“Mr. and Mrs. Forrester have taken rooms.” The Manhattan Nationalist. 10 October 1907: 9.

“A new building for Aggieville.” The Manhattan Mercury. 11 June 1929: 1.

“Obituaries.” Trego County Report. 6 October 1910: 1.

“Palace holds open house.” The Morning Chronicle. 8 January 1930: 1.

“The Palace is an up-to-date store.” The Daily Mercury. 30 August 1913: 54.

“The Palace serves as a college rendezvous.” The Morning Chronicle. 16 December 1923: 15.

“Parents’ play rooms.” The Manhattan Mercury. 10 October 1936: 6.

“Real estate transfers.” The Manhattan Mercury. 8 June 1916: 4.

“Robert Forrester.” Western Kansas World. 24 September 1887: 7.

“Story by Forrester.” The Morning Chronicle. 24 August 1929: 51.

“Unless we are greatly mistaken.” The Nationalist. 19 December 1884: 1.

## Historic Station to Become Neighborhood Restaurant

The former gas and service station at Eleventh Street and Poyntz Avenue will soon be re-invented as a full-service restaurant, featuring bakery items from the Little Batch Company. The classic service station has also been nominated for historic registry listing.

For many years, U. S. Highway 40 traveled down Poyntz Avenue, and filling stations once dotted the length of the roadway (Spencer), including in Manhattan’s downtown. The current service station was built 1966-67 and was a Conoco station, and there has been a filling station at this location for

almost a century, beginning with the station the Continental Oil Company, a.k.a. Conoco, erected in 1925 (Spencer).

By the early 1960s, Manhattan had 36 filling stations competing for customers, which created a need to make one’s station as attractive as possible (Spencer). Conoco began taking steps to make improvements at Eleventh and Poyntz, beginning with acquiring an adjacent lot in 1965 in order to build a new expanded service station (“Notice”). In the last few months of 1966, classified ads announced the 1925 building was to be “wrecked” to make way for the

new building, and materials and equipment salvaged from the old building were available for purchase (“Wrecking station”).

The new station built by Conoco was based on the corporate plan known as “Service Station Building Type 9A,” although the actual building is a mirror image of the plans. The new building was estimated to cost \$42,000 and was designed with two distinct areas: one for customers and the other for servicing vehicles (Spencer).

The main salesroom featured glass and painted concrete block walls, vinyl tile flooring, and rest-  
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(continued from pg. 3) rooms, which were accessed from outside. Corporate-designed shelving, displays, and signage were included, as well as amenities such as a water cooler, bottled drinks, and a candy display (Spencer).

The service area featured three glass-paneled overhead doors as well as three skylights, which provided excellent natural light. Workbenches lined the perimeter with tire storage above. The original driveway bell, which alerted employees to the presence of customers, is still there (Spencer).

The building's exterior reflects the Modern style, which was the dominant style of architecture at the time of its construction. Characteristic of the Modern style, the building features an emphasis on glass and natural light, concrete as a construction material, a largely open interior, and strong horizontal lines. Metal exterior trim was painted in Conoco's signature red (Spencer).

The corporate plan wasn't limited to the building's design and interior finishes, but rather, it also dictated the site's layout and placement of protective canopies and exterior lighting. Though the gas pumps have been removed, the rectangular canopies that sheltered the pumps remain, and along with the arc pole lights, they are two of the most distinctive features of the property and help to convey the building's original function as a filling station. The canopies extend from the south and west sides of the building, angle slightly upward, and are framed by a red border. Original arc pole lights are located on the southeast and northwest corners of the property. Their streamlined design provided ample lighting for the fueling area, helping to make the service station



Above, both photos are the former service station at 1026 Poyntz Avenue.

attractive to customers (Spencer).

At the time of the Conoco station's construction, Warren Dawson owned and operated the franchise, and the business was known as "Dawson's Conoco Service Station" (Spencer). Today, the building is owned by Phyllis Pease, who along with her daughter, operates the Little Batch Company next door at 1018 Poyntz Avenue.

The Little Batch Company launched in 2018 as an online kitchen with plans to grow the business through online sales and at the Farmer's Market. The opportunity to purchase the former gas station and the adjacent building came along in 2019. Phyllis says, "The property owners were former Manhattanites that liked our concept. We felt that the structures could be renovated and would be a perfect place for a neighborhood restaurant and bakery. We love that our businesses are so close to the park, plus they will be a great

connector to both Aggieville and downtown Manhattan."

Phase one of the project was to renovate the adjacent former office building to be the new home of the bakery. This phase has been completed, and the bakery has been operating from the building since January, as well as continuing to offer online sales and at the bakery's Saturday morning market.

Phase two will involve renovating the former service station. Phyllis says, "We are excited for phase two and hope to get started this fall on the gas station, which will be a full-service restaurant with a pastry counter with baked items from Little Batch. The exterior of the gas station, the awnings, and all will remain, providing shade for outside dining. We have had such wonderful community support from our fans and the city. Thanks, Manhattan!"

The former Conoco station serves as a reminder of the days when U. S. Highway 40 traversed the center of town and travelers stopped for a fill-up, a cold beverage, and maybe posed for a photo with Johnny Kaw across the street. After the renovations are completed, residents will once again be able to do the same minus the fill-up: stop for a bite, a beverage, and a selfie with Johnny Kaw.

The station has been nominated for registry listing under the Roadside Kansas Multiple Property Document Form for its contributions to commerce and architecture.

*The renovation project at 1018 (continued on pg. 5)*

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*Poyntz Ave. was recently recognized with a 2021 Historic Preservation Building Award. Visit the M/RCPA's website to learn more about the project.*

"Notice of public hearing." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 30 July 1965: 11.

Spencer, Brenda and Michelle. National Register of Historic Places, Dawson's Conoco Service Station, Manhattan, Riley County, KS.

"Wrecking station." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 23 September 1966: 6.

## New Historic District

During the City Commission meeting on July 20, commissioners approved on first reading an ordinance to establish a local historic district in the 2000 block of Hunting Avenue, which will be known as the Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District.

The majority of the properties in the historic district were constructed post-World War II and reflect the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture.

Manhattan has three historic districts listed on the National Register, and the Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District is the first local historic district.

To learn more about the historic district, see the M/RCPA's February 2021 newsletter, which is available on our website.

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The Board of Directors meets the second Thursday of the month via Zoom.

Newsletter editor: Kathy Dzewaltowski

All of the articles in the August 2021 newsletter were written by Kathy Dzewaltowski.

## First Christian Church Nominated to Register

The M/RCPA sponsored a register nomination for the former First Christian Church, located at 115 Courthouse Plaza. The Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review will consider the nomination during its Aug. 7 meeting, which will be virtual. Riley County purchased the building in May 2020, and any member of the public may nominate a publicly owned property.

The original section of the church was built in two phases in 1908 and 1909. The architect was J. C. Holland, who had also designed the Riley County Courthouse, and the building was intentionally designed to be harmonious with the Carnegie Library and the Courthouse. The stone building was described as being more like a fraternal organization's club room, which was in keeping with a movement in the Christian Church at the time.

Additions and renovations occurred in 1938 and 1962. The 1960s renovations reflect a desire to modernize and attract a new generation of church-goers. Local architect Ray Lippenberger, who along with partners designed Northview Elementary School and the former Wharton Manor, was hired to design the renovations. His design juxtaposed traditional and contemporary materials, utilized architectural trends, such as a folded roofline and curtain wall, and complemented nearby buildings.

In the early 1980s, the 100 block of North Fifth Street was vacated to create the Courthouse Plaza. The First Christian Church serves as the anchor on the western edge of the plaza, which is one of the most attractive areas in downtown Manhattan.

In May 2020, Commissioners John Ford and Greg McKinley voted to seek bids to demolish the former church, and these same commissioners voted to draft a letter to be sent to the Historic Sites Board of Review to express their objection



Above, the former First Christian Church.

to the register nomination. Commissioner Kathryn Focke voted against both actions.

Manhattan's Historic Resources Board (HRB) reviewed the church's pending nomination during the June 28 meeting. City staff recommended that the board support the nomination, and the board members in attendance voted unanimously to send a letter of support of the nomination.

Buildings listed on the state or national register are not protected from demolition. According to state statute, the State Historic Preservation Officer must be provided with the opportunity to investigate and comment on a proposed project, which includes demolition, for any historic property listed on the state or national register, and the State Historic Preservation Officer may direct that a public hearing be held. If a finding is made that the proposed project would damage or destroy the historic property, then the project can't proceed until a "determination [is made], based on a consideration of all relevant factors, that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the proposal and that the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm." In other words, demolition of a registered property can occur if the owner has demonstrated there are no feasible and prudent alternatives.

An advantage to registry listing is properties on the state or national register are potentially eligible for financial benefits, such as rehabilitation tax credits and granting *(continued on pg. 6)*

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opportunities that could help with renovation expenses. Property owners, such as governmental entities who can't use tax credits, may transfer (i.e. sell) the entirety of the tax credits to another taxpayer and may transfer the tax credits in exchange for cash.

BBN Architects developed a space needs study for the County, which was last updated in 2012. Brent Bowman with BBN spoke to commissioners in May and said he would like to revisit the church with a more holistic view and to look at it for adaptive use. He also indicated the study could be updated quickly and at a minimal cost. Commissioners Ford and McKinley were not interested in updating the study, making it unknown how the building could aid the County's space needs,

what would be involved to renovate the former church, or how rehabilitation tax credits could help with renovation costs if the building were listed on the state or national register.

The former First Christian Church has been an important part of the downtown landscape for more than a century. The building was nominated for registry listing for its architecture and for its association with community planning and development.

*Historical information is from the First Christian Church's register nomination. For more about the First Christian Church, see the M/RCPA's February 2020 and June 2021 newsletters. Past newsletters are available on our website, [www.preservemanhattan.org](http://www.preservemanhattan.org).*

## M/RCPA's Annual Meeting

The M/RCPA's Annual Meeting of the membership was not held in 2020 due to the pandemic. The Board of Directors is currently planning to hold the Annual Meeting this fall. Watch for 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 Linda Glasgow at [mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com).