



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

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A Message From Our President

Rental inspections are on the City Commission agenda – again. This will be the second time I will be speaking in support of rental inspections. Perhaps you remember the less than two years between 2009 and 2011 when landlords were asked to register rental property and have it inspected. Back then, rental properties were assessed a fee per unit to be licensed and registered. Properties were also subject to an interior inspection based on the International Building Maintenance Code. The current iteration includes a per building registration fee of \$20 and an exterior only “sidewalk inspection.” Neighborhood and preservation advocates liked the 2009 ordinance better than the current proposal. We appreciated the effort to enforce occupancy limits according to zoning and off-street parking requirements (1.5 off-street spots per bedroom). It was also nice not to have to report sofas on the porch or insufficient trash receptacles. Alas, rental inspections were short-lived, and we returned to complaint-based inspections.

To be sure, the condition of rental property in Manhattan is a

community issue, **but** it does not affect the day-to-day lives of all Manhattanites equally. Given the concentration of converted homes to rental properties in the Ward districts, *rental inspections are an older neighborhood issue*. Here in the Ward districts, it is not always clear how many living units have been carved out of a single house. It’s not clear if the basement is an apartment or if the back door leads to a different unit than the front door. (*Where are you supposed to leave the holiday cookies?*) It is not uncommon to find no place to park in front of your own home or for the house next door to have a sofa on the porch or the alley to be littered with trash.

Let me be clear, the issue is not that the neighbors are renters. The issue is the *condition and maintenance* of the homes the neighbors live in. Of course maintenance of any old building is a challenge, but consider the unique challenges of 100-year-old single-family homes that have been cut up into four separate living spaces. Clearly a challenge for any homeowner, but when that owner is absent (living out of town, the state, or the country) and has left maintenance chores to others, keeping their property maintained is an ever greater challenge. Consider the financial incentive to not spend money on property that you don’t see because you live elsewhere, or the limited motivation to update and maintain a rental

property so long as someone is willing to pay the rent.

Opponents of rental inspections contend that it is the tenants’ responsibility to report needed fixes to their property manager or landlord. They contend that tenants should be knowledgeable consumers when choosing housing. Landlords claim they *do not retaliate* if a tenant files a complaint against them. If neighbors are displeased with the condition of rentals in their neighborhood, they should report it to the city code office.

Proponents of rental inspections disagree. They contend that enforcement of building maintenance is not the responsibility of the tenants or the neighbors. Property owners and/or their surrogates should be obligated to comply with building maintenance code without requiring a citizen complaint. Indeed, city code officials respond diligently to citizen complaints.

While the current iteration of rental inspections does not address issues of density as the 2009 version did, it will go a long way to capture other common nuisances, including sofas on the porch, insufficient trash receptacles, broken windows, doors off the hinges, and needed paint jobs. Please consider learning more at the City Commission work session on December 13th at 5:30 p.m.

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Historic Home Tour

In every membership year, the M/RCPA offers a special tour of a historic property as a benefit for providing financial support to our organization. This year's special event was held at the historic Grimes House, which is the home of Mel and Jan Borst.

The house was built in 1916 for L. E. Downs, who was an eye, ear, nose, and throat doctor. It cost \$5,000 to build, making it the second most expensive house built in Manhattan in 1916. Dr. Downs sold the house to E. H. Fielding, who was the son of Manhattan mayor George T. Fielding, and then W. E. and Mary Ethel Grimes purchased the house in 1924 (National).

W. E. Grimes was a professor in agricultural economics at Kansas State Agricultural College and became head of the department in 1921. Prof. Grimes' extensive involvement in agriculture at the state and national level led Gov. Alfred Landon to ask Prof. Grimes to serve as an economic and agricultural advisor to him for federal aid programs offered to

farmers during the Depression. The two men became friends, and Gov. Landon visited Prof. Grimes at his Manhattan home (National).

In later years, David and Jean Dallas lived in the house. Jean was a past director of the Riley County Historical Museum, and David was a judge, who married many couples in the living room of the house. Special guests of the event were Clay and Esther Umscheid, who had been married in front of the fireplace by Judge Dallas in 1963. Mel Borst said he has encountered many couples over the years who have told him that they were married in the house.

The Grimes House was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997. The Arts and Crafts

style house retains many of its original features. The living and dining rooms have oak-beamed ceilings, and the dining room has quarter-sawn oak paneling. The windows are original to the house as are the light fixtures and doors. The front lawn is terraced and features a 55-step stairway to the front porch. M/RCPA members who attended the event were also treated to the spectacular view the house offers from its location atop Sunset Hill.

The M/RCPA would like to thank the Borsts for their willingness to host the event and to share their century-old historic home.

National Register of Historic Places, Grimes House, Manhattan, Riley County, Kansas.



Left, guests chatting in the living room. Center, the dining room. Right, Clay Umscheid (standing left) and Mel Borst (standing center) shared stories about the house and about David and Jean Dallas.



Johnny Kaw at 50

Manhattan was founded in 1855 when free-staters with the New England Emigrant Aid Society settled in the area, and it was also the year that the steamship Hartford ran aground and its passengers were invited to join the free-staters' settlement. One hundred years later in 1955, residents were extremely excited to celebrate the centennial anniversary of the town's founding.

In honor of those first settlers, KMAN sponsored a beard-growing contest. Women modeled long pioneer dresses and bonnets for all manner of occasions. A log cabin was erected on the grounds of the Riley County Courthouse, which served as the centennial headquarters and was also the place where pioneers registered in an effort to determine who was the oldest living pioneer ("Oldtimers").



Above, a five-foot concrete version of Johnny Kaw created for Manhattan's centennial. The photo is from *The Manhattan Mercury*, March 24, 1955, and used with the *Mercury's* permission.

A two-hour parade depicting Manhattan's 100-year history was held, and a three-day pageant, featuring 200 performers, took place in Ahearn Fieldhouse ("Parade").

Manhattan's residents participated whole-heartedly in all of the centennial activities and celebrations, but in the beginning, the centennial planning committee struggled to come up with an idea that would grab attention and help to publicize the centennial, until along came Johnny Kaw ("Johnny Kaw"). George Filinger, who was a horticulture professor at Kansas State College (KSC) (the precursor to KSU), suggested the idea of Johnny Kaw because he'd noted that other parts of the country had legendary heroes, such as Paul Bunyan, but there weren't any in the Manhattan area. He was inspired to invent a legendary hero who would represent the pioneer spirit ("To unveil"). The other committee members weren't so sure, but the stories about Johnny written by Prof. Filinger were featured on the front page of *The Manhattan Mercury*, and residents quickly became fans of the Johnny Kaw legend and of the centennial ("Johnny Kaw").

As the story goes, Johnny Kaw came to Kansas with his parents, one brother, and one sister, and Kansas' fresh air caused the boys to grow extra big and strong ("Johnny Kaw"). Johnny was credited with digging the Grand Canyon and depositing the canyon's soil on western Kansas. He controlled the weather by wringing out clouds when his crops needed water (Filinger, "Johney" [sic]). The legend of



Above, one of Prof. Tomasch's sketches of Johnny Kaw. The photo is from *The Manhattan Mercury*, May 8, 1966, and used with the *Mercury's* permission.

Johnny Kaw also says he invented catfish. He caught several kinds of ordinary fish, dipped them in a lye solution, scrubbed their scales off until they were slick, and then returned them to the Kansas River, thereby creating a new species of fish. Because Johnny regularly took his cat fishing with him and the cat would catch only the new species of fish, the species became known as "catfish" (Filinger, "Johnny"). Other similar stories of Johnny Kaw's legendary exploits appeared in *The Manhattan Mercury* in the weeks leading up to the centennial parade and pageant.

As Johnny Kaw's story began to (continued on pg. 4)

Winter Social

The M/RCPA Board of Directors is planning a relaxing, stress-free post-holiday social event for all members in early 2017. Details to follow.

Nominations Wanted for Pres. Awards

The M/RCPA will be hosting the Historic Preservation Building Awards in the spring of 2017. The awards program honors outstanding buildings, architects, contractors, and owners who have enhanced preservation and our community with their projects. There are several categories of recognition, and properties may be commercial, private, or publicly owned, and may include interior or exterior improvements or both. The M/RCPA also recognizes new infill construction that is compatible and sensitive to its surrounding neighborhood.

If you would like to nominate a project to be considered for an award, contact the M/RCPA at mrpanewsletter@gmail.com, or Kathy Dzewaltowski at 785-539-8937. The awards committee particularly needs help with identifying interior projects and projects outside Manhattan in Riley County.



Left, Johnny Kaw in City Park in 2016.

(continued from pg. 3)

take shape, the question remained as to what he looked like. Elmer J. Tomasch, a professor in KSC's art department, was enlisted to bring Johnny to life by creating sketches of him. The next step was to make him three-dimensional, and Mrs. Walter O'Neill built a five-foot concrete model of Johnny Kaw based on Prof. Tomasch's sketches ("To unveil").

The five-foot model of Johnny Kaw was installed and dedicated during the official opening of the log cabin centennial headquarters. *The Manhattan Mercury* reported that more than 50 "oldtimers" attended the dedication ceremony ("Oldtimers"). Later, the sculpture was placed in City Park during the centennial celebrations until vandals knocked the head off ("Johnny Kaw").

Following the demise of the five-foot sculpture, Prof. Filinger worked tirelessly to promote the construction of a full-sized and permanent statue. He worked to raise the funds to build it, donating much of the money himself. Other prominent citizens, such as Dr. E. J. Frick, who founded Sunset Zoo, were also involved with the effort to construct a full-sized sculpture. A Johnny Kaw booster club was formed, and citizens could join the Johnny Kaw Club for \$1.00. The steel and concrete needed to construct the statue were donated, and many other citizens and businesses donated to the effort (Filinger, *Story*). The Johnny Kaw statue cost \$7,000 to build, which was at no cost to the city ("Statue").

Construction of the Johnny Kaw statue began in the fall of 1965. Bill Stewart, who was a graduate student at KSC, oversaw the construction. The statue is made of concrete over a steel and

wire frame with top layers of colored plaster ("Taking"). The plaster and finishing work were done by Glenn C. Klimek and Paul Klimek ("Statue").

The 29-foot statue was completed and dedicated on May 15, 1966. (Some accounts say Johnny Kaw is 30 feet tall and others say 25 feet.) *The Manhattan Mercury* reported that approximately 150 people attended the dedication ceremony. Prof. Filinger spoke at the dedication and said, "The friends of Johnny Kaw have erected this statue hoping that it may always represent the spirit of the pioneers, the ambition to get things done and a willingness to put forth effort" ("Dedications"). Fifty years later, Johnny Kaw still stands in City Park, representing pioneer spirit and the hardy people who first settled in the Manhattan area.

"Dedications in City Park." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 16 May 1966: 1.

Filinger, George. "Johnney [sic] protected land with stones." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 3 April 1955: 1.

Filinger, George. "Johnny Kaw Makes Own Brand of Fish." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 27 March 1955: 1.

Filinger, George. *The Story of Johnny Kaw: The Kansas Pioneer Wheat Farmer*. Manhattan, Kansas: Ag Press, 1955 and 1969.

"Johnny Kaw gaining stature." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 8 May 1966: 1.

"Oldtimers gather to see Johnny Kaw." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 24 March 1955: 1.

"Parade, pageant open 3-day festival for city's centennial; other events." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 27 April 1955: 1.

"The Statue of Johnny Kaw -- The Pioneer Wheat Farmer." Ravenstone Press. Web 21 November 2016. www.ravenstonepress.com/johnnystatue.html.

"Taking shape." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 29 April 1966: 1.

"To Unveil Statue of Johnny Kaw." *The Manhattan Mercury*. 22 March 1955: 1.

Riley Co.'s Registered Properties

The National Historic Preservation Act was signed into law in 1966, and the M/RCPA has featured locally registered properties in the newsletter in honor of the 50th anniversary. This issue concludes the series.

Coons House

1922 Leavenworth St., built 1930
Manhattan Register of Historic Places, 2001

The house is located near the KSU campus in an area once known as "Dean's Row" because a large number of deans and department heads lived in the area. The house was designed by Paul Weigel, head of the Dept. of Architecture at Kansas State, for Mattie Coons. Mrs. Coons wrote "Pioneer Days in Kansas," which she dedicated to her parents who had come to Kansas as part of the Free State abolitionist movement in the 1850s.

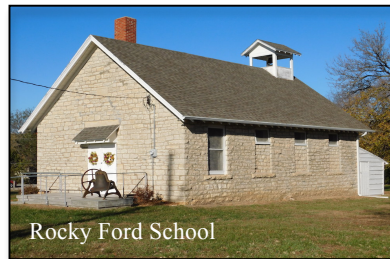


school. The building consists of one large schoolroom with two alcoves and features a belfry. Additional contributing structures to the property include a merry-go-round, a water pump, and an outhouse.

Bluemont Youth Cabin

Located in Goodnow Park, built 1938
National Register, 2014

The cabin is a two-story limestone structure built in 1938 by youth employed by the National Youth Administration (NYA), which was a Pres. Franklin Roosevelt New Deal program that employed older teens and young adults. Stone for the cabin was quarried on Bluemont Hill, and 115 youths were involved in the construction. Once completed, the cabin was used by the Boy Scouts and by youth of the NYA.



Francis Byron (Barney) Kimble House
720 Poyntz Avenue, built 1912
National Register, 2015

The two-story limestone Queen Anne style house is a rare example of a residential property that has retained its secondary buildings, which helps residents appreciate and interpret life in early Manhattan. The house retains its original hardwood flooring, interior woodwork, interior doors and pocket doors, door hardware, plaster walls, and main floor fireplace. Barney and Mary Ann Kimble lived in the house in their later years.



Union Pacific Depot

Ft. Riley Blvd. and K-177 interchange,
built 1901

Register of Historic Kansas Places, 1978
The 1901 Union Pacific Depot is a characteristic example of Mission Revival architecture, featuring three bay windows, a red tile roof, and a brick tower. The depot is an important remnant of Manhattan's quest for economic progress in the early 20th century. Pres. Theodore Roosevelt gave a 15-min. speech from the back of a train at the depot on May 2, 1903.



Persons Barn and Granary

2103 Highway 18, built 1860s
National Register, 2009

Enoch Persons established a farmstead along Zeandale Road in 1855, and the barn and granary were built in the 1860s. The ground floor of the barn is constructed of limestone quarried nearby, and the upper level is board-and-batten siding. The granary is a one-and-a-half story frame structure with a limestone foundation. The barn and granary are a significant example of a barnyard grouping, established by immigrants who homesteaded in Riley County in the 1850s.

Rocky Ford School

1969 Barnes Road, built 1903 & rebuilt after fire in 1927

National Register, 2012

Originally built in 1903, the one-room stone schoolhouse educated the students in District 70 until consolidation with another district occurred in 1938. After a fire destroyed the school in 1927 leaving only the stone shell, the school was rebuilt. The school is a characteristic example of a Kansas rural



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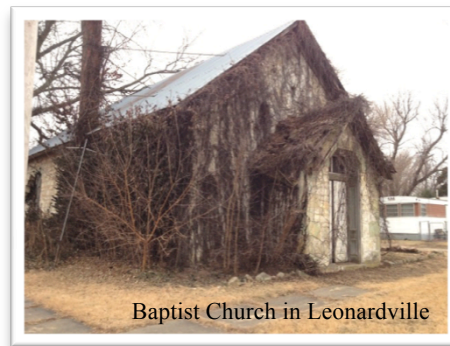
Platt House Update

The Board of Riley County Commissioners recently approved to extend the Riley County Genealogical Society's (RCGS) lease agreement for the Jeremiah Platt House to 2060. Commissioner Ron Wells also paid \$43 to cover the lease costs (Riley County leases the house to the RCGS for \$1.00/year).

The Platt House, which is on the National Register, had been one of four county-owned properties that county commissioners had considered selling, creating an uncertain future for the house and the RCGS. The decision to extend the RCGS's lease agreement provides a more secure future for both the house and the RCGS.



Jeremiah Platt House



Baptist Church in Leonardville

Lost

The historic Baptist Church in Leonardville was lost to structure failure and demolition in October. The one-room stone church, which was built in 1884, had several visible cracks and gaping holes. More of the structure failed in October, and it was then knocked down the rest of the way.

The Baptist Church was the oldest remaining church building in Leonardville and served as an important connection to Leonardville's early years and to its early settlers.

To learn more about the Baptist Church, see the M/RCPA's April 2015 newsletter.