



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

December 2019
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A Message From Our President

Back in 2007, the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance offered a special event, prepared by a committee of members, for the membership: “Manhattan’s Eleven Most Endangered Tour.” The program began at the Riley County Historical Museum with a welcome by Dixie West and a slide presentation by Barbara Anderson that illustrated eleven categories in which Manhattan’s built environment was thought to be endangered.

After the slide show, the group traveled a short distance to the former Marlatt Farmstead on College Avenue (just south of K-State’s then football practice field and today’s soccer stadium). In 2007, the house provided office space, and the barn housed maintenance equipment for K-State. Bonnie Lynn-Sherow provided information on the history and possible future plans for the historic former farmstead. Today, K-State retains ownership of the buildings, but the space in each is currently vacant.

The group next traveled to Goodnow Park at the base of Bluemont Hill. Barbara Anderson discussed the work that had been done on the interior and exterior of the Depression era Boy Scout Youth Cabin. The building was not/is not being used because of ADA access issues. However, the building’s exterior remains an important visual artifact of Goodnow Park’s history.

Refreshments awaited at Edesia’s Café & Bakery on the ground floor of the Smith Building in the north 400 block of Poyntz Avenue. Although the café and bakery are

long gone, the space will soon be remade into a brewpub. The building’s second floor continues to house the Strecker Nelson West Gallery, a particularly important asset to Manhattan’s historic downtown National Register district.

The last stop was a pre-restoration visit to the house at 617 Colorado Street, guided by Bonnie Lynn-Sherow. The long-neglected house has since been placed on the National Register, restored, operated as a bed and breakfast, and now serves as a private residence.

Each tour-goer received a 26-page illustrated pamphlet, detailing the eleven endangered categories. A copy of that pamphlet is available for viewing (by appointment) at the Riley County Historical Museum, where I work. Contact me by calling 785-565-6490 or emailing me at lglasgow@rileycountyks.gov.

It is surprising how often I turn to that little pamphlet in the course of my job as the museum’s archivist. I have page 17 open in front of me now: “Loss of Scale in Streetscapes.”

On Nov. 18th, I attended the November meeting of Manhattan’s Historic Resources Board (HRB). The seven unpaid citizen-board members reviewed current plans for proposed changes in Aggieville--our historic, iconic, and beloved college town village of small shops, restaurants, and bars that is nestled right next to the campus of Kansas State University.

The HRB was being asked to provide input and endorsement of the city’s proposed plans. There were various degrees of endorsement

that ran in a generally positive direction on all issues, except one: the parking garage. The proposed structure would be built with ten feet separating it from Rally House. Although more parking is definitely needed, the multi-story parking garage’s height and mass would dominate. It would not complement Aggieville’s village scale. The garage’s blank wall presentation is also not appealing.

HRB member comments ranged from (paraphrasing) “it’s simply out of scale and should be downsized” to “we have to accept it or we’ll get nothing” to the extremely disheartening “it doesn’t matter what we say, no one will listen.”

Selective snippets from the Eleven Most Endangered pamphlet offer me guidance: “Humans respond best to architecture with a human scale, to details that convey that a space is designed for human use.” “Generic functionality does not produce an environment that humans find pleasing, nor do blank building’s walls...” “Our goal should be to promote neighborhoods with interesting streetscapes that are safe, comfortable, and that nurture sociability.”

The nuance of opinions that were expressed can be easily lost in this cursory recap. A video of the staff presentation and HRB response is available on the city’s website under “Watch a Meeting.” See what you think about the proposed changes to Aggieville. Judge for yourself if the stakes are high enough for you to contact your city commissioners and express your opinion on this topic.

Linda Glasgow

Historic Avalon Apartments Transformed

Nestled in a downtown neighborhood known as one of Manhattan's "First Neighborhoods" is a historic apartment building known as the Avalon. Located at 417 Fremont Street, the building was previously listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places and was recently added to the National Register.

Built in approximately 1890, the structure originally was a nine-room brick private residence. The exact construction date is unclear, as the property changed owners a number of times between 1885 and 1895. James W. McDonald purchased the house in 1907, and the McDonald family resided there for the next 14 years. The McDonalds sold the house to Landrine Sheriff in 1921 (National), and a short newspaper notice stated, "Mr. Sheriff . . . is now having the house remodeled and will have it made into apartments" ("Mr. Sheriff").

It's possible that the house's conversion to apartments wasn't completed because a notice in a 1923 newspaper indicates the house was purchased by Morley P. Robinson. Mr. Robinson operated the Robinson Motor Company, which sold automobiles as well as tractors, threshers, and other farm machinery ("New"). Morley sold the building to his son Harold Robinson in 1931, and Morley and his wife continued to live in one of the apartments, which is a possible indicator that the conversion to apartments was completed around 1925 (National).

Morley's daughter Ethyl Robinson married in 1926, and the



Top, the Avalon Apartments, located at 417 Fremont St., following renovations. Bottom, the front exterior in 2018 prior to renovation work. Both photos are courtesy of Tyler Holloman.

description of the wedding indicated the ceremony took place at "the Avalon" and stated the newlyweds would reside at the Avalon ("Robinson"). This appears to be the first time the building was referred to as the Avalon Apartments (National).

The west portion of the building is the section that was originally the nine-room private residence, and its design was replicated to create the eastern half when the building was expanded and converted to apartments. Stucco was applied to the entire structure, and its overall design reflects the Prairie School style of architecture (National).

Following World War I, the nation experienced a housing crunch as people migrated to towns and cities in search of more

opportunities. Many people lacked the resources to purchase their own homes, and apartments provided an affordable alternative for many families (National). The Robinsons likely saw the financial value in converting the building to apartments to help address the housing demands.

Over the years, a number of prominent Manhattan residents have owned the Avalon, including Joseph Floersch, who would go on to be the president of the Union National Bank; Mollie Goldstein, who was a member of the Goldstein family that owned Kansas Wool and Hide, which was a precursor to Steel and Pipe Supply Company; and Herbert Gaede, who managed Duckwall's (National). Today, the Avalon is owned by FHP Properties LLC, which is owned by Tyler and Morgan Holloman.

Tyler and Morgan purchased the building in 2018, and Tyler says the building's unique features and distinctive architecture attracted them to the property, especially the front façade with its two-story stacked porches. When they purchased the nearly 130-year-old building, it was not in topnotch condition and was in need of extensive renovations in order to make it code compliant as well as safe for tenants.

The owners pursued historic registry listing for the Avalon, working with Spencer Preservation to develop the register nomination. Tyler says they wanted to ensure that the building would be historically maintained for future *(continued on pg. 3)*

(continued from pg. 2)

generations, and registry listing would help to accomplish that. They also sought rehabilitation tax credits, which are available for properties on the historic register. The Avalon was eligible for both state and federal tax credits, and both were used to help with the renovation expenses.

Tyler and Morgan wanted to maintain the distinctive arched front porches, but the porches' footings were failing. In order to save the porches, the footings had to be rebuilt. Interior arched doorways were also maintained and repaired as needed. All of the hardwood flooring in the Avalon was retained and restored. Interior millwork and casings were saved whenever possible, and all of the original interior doors were retained.

In the more than 90 years since the building was converted to apartments, the building's footprint hadn't changed, and there have been few alterations to the exterior. One of the exterior changes involved the rear porches. Originally, the building had rear one-story porches, and many years ago, the porches were expanded to two stories. At some point in the past, the porches were converted to kitchen space to enlarge the kitchens (National). The apartments' kitchens were completely remodeled during the current renovation. Rear exterior stairs were also completely rebuilt.

Since Spencer Preservation had researched the property, Tyler and Morgan were aware that the Avalon had originally been a nine-room brick private residence. During renovation, however, they were surprised to discover that the original brick section of the structure was not wood-framed with a brick veneer. Instead, the

brick walls were 16 inches thick in order to provide adequate structural support for a two-story home. A portion of the rear wall of the brick section had begun to fail due to water damage. A structural engineer was consulted, and extensive repairs took place in order to shore up the wall and keep it intact. Other renovations included new electrical and plumbing, and an old boiler was removed. In total, the renovation project took approximately one year to complete, plus another six months devoted to the purchase process and the development of renovation plans.

In addition to Spencer Preservation, others who worked on the project included Frontier Construction as the contractor, and Heather Peterson provided design services for the project. Tyler says Frontier Construction was instrumental in ensuring that the renovation project complied with historic regulations and also with city requirements.

Tyler says his favorite thing about the renovation project is the positive comments he's received from the community since its completion. Many people noticed the work going on and the dramatic improvements, and they have expressed their pleasure in seeing the historic Avalon Apartments restored.

In the future, there are plans to provide additional landscaping in the spring, which will complete the transformation of the historic Avalon Apartments.

"Mr. Sheriff." [The Manhattan Nationalist](#). 6 April 1921: 3.



Top to bottom, the rear of the Avalon Apartments after renovation, featuring new exterior stairs; the building's rear exterior prior to renovations; one of the apartment's kitchens after remodeling; and one of the kitchens prior to renovations. All four photos are courtesy of Tyler Holloman.

National Register of Historic Places, The Avalon, Manhattan, Riley County, KS.

"New motor car firm here." [The Manhattan Republic](#). 14 June 1923: 8.

"Robinson-Berry wedding." [The Morning Chronicle](#). 30 October 1926: 3.

Aggieville Improvements & Historic Survey

Back in 2005, the Aggieville-Campus Edge Plan was adopted as part of the city's Comprehensive Plan to guide redevelopment along the Bluemont Avenue corridor and the residential area to the north. The plan recommended highway-oriented development along Bluemont, pedestrian-oriented development in Aggieville's core, and in general, development that would be taller and more dense. Since then, a lot of changes have taken place, leading to a need to re-examine Aggieville's needs and leading to the development of the updated Aggieville Community Vision Plan.

The Aggieville Community Vision Plan established short- and long-term goals for both redevelopment and for the preservation of historic Aggieville, including preserving design characteristics and iconic buildings. The plan envisions a more urban feel to the borders along Laramie Street and Bluemont Avenue while maintaining the historic core. The City Commission adopted the plan and added it as an amendment to the Manhattan Urban Area Comprehensive Plan in April 2017.

Two priorities identified for Aggieville were a parking structure and updating the streetscape, which was last updated in 1989. Proposed concepts for streetscape improvements include benches, plantings, shade structures, outdoor café seating, path lighting, and overhead string lights. Twelfth Street is envisioned to be a pedestrian thoroughfare. In one concept, Twelfth Street would have amenities on both sides of the



Above, Moro Street in Aggieville.

street, parking removed from both sides, and traffic would continue to travel in two directions. A second concept would place amenities only on one side of Twelfth Street and would limit traffic to one direction headed south.

To increase the amount of available parking, a parking garage is proposed for the space immediately south of Rally House, which is currently a surface parking lot. The parking garage would have five decks with approximately 500 spaces and would be 53 ft. tall. The proposed design includes two tall vertical glass sections where stairs and an elevator would be housed. The vertical glass sections on the northeast and southwest corners of the garage would be 65 ft. tall, and the Rally House building is approximately 30 ft. tall for comparison.

The design for the parking garage incorporates commercial spaces on the ground floor along the sides that would face North Manhattan Avenue and Laramie Street. The second floor would use a window system as screening to create the appearance of additional active uses on the second level. Estimated to cost \$12 million, the parking garage would be paid for

by the Aggieville Tax Increment Finance district. In November 2019, the City Commission approved to negotiate an agreement with the firm McCown Gordon for services as the Construction Manager At-Risk to construct the parking garage and also for improvements to Laramie Street.

The city also recently moved forward with plans to conduct a historic survey of Aggieville, which was specifically mentioned in the Aggieville Community Vision Plan. The State Historic Preservation Office awarded the city a Historic Preservation Fund grant in the amount of \$29,500 to pay for the survey. The city contracted with Spencer Preservation to conduct the survey to identify significant cultural resources, to research and better document resources, and to make a recommendation in regards to a potential historic district. The information gathered will help to inform potential future redevelopment in the Aggieville area and could also help property owners pursue historic registry listing for their individual properties independent of or in addition to the creation of a historic district. After researching Aggieville's properties and developing preliminary findings and recommendations, Spencer Preservation will hold a public meeting with Aggieville property and business owners to present the information.

The consultant is currently in the process of conducting research, and the final product is anticipated to be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Office in the summer of 2020.

Winter Social

The M/RCPA’s Board of Directors is planning a relaxing, stress-free post-holiday social event for all members in early 2020. Watch for details in the new year.

Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance
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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 Dzewaltowski

Annual Meeting & Advocacy Day

On Sept. 26th, the M/RCPA held its annual meeting of the membership and kicked off a new membership year. Terry Humphrey, who is the owner of Terry Humphrey Public Affairs Group, provided the program. Ms. Humphrey works with the Friends of Historic Preservation (FOHP), which is a coalition that wanted to have an active presence in the Kansas Legislature. Ms. Humphrey and FOHP educate legislators about historic preservation, advocate, and lobby when needed. As a result, Ms. Humphrey said historic preservation supporters have a voice in Topeka and are respected.

As an example of what she does, Ms. Humphrey said she works to ensure legislators are aware of the state’s rehabilitation tax credit, which is available to properties listed on the state or national registers. She makes sure legislators understand the tax credit is an important tool that helps to protect historic buildings and aids in their renovation. Since there are always new legislators, it’s a never-



Above, Terry Humphrey provided the program for the M/RCPA’s annual meeting.

ending task to educate legislators about historic preservation.

When the Kansas Legislature is in session, Ms. Humphrey keeps the M/RCPA informed about bills that might impact historic preservation, and she helps our organization stay on top of what’s happening in Topeka.

Ms. Humphrey suggested that the M/RCPA could have an “advocacy day” in Topeka, where members and other historic preservation supporters could meet with legislators. The Board of Directors is working on the details with Ms. Humphrey and hopes to have something planned for February 2020.

M/RCPA’s Notecards

The M/RCPA has printed preservation-themed notecards available for purchase. The notecards come in packs of eight with envelopes and feature prints of original watercolors by local artist Ralph Fontenot. Mr. Fontenot generously donated the use of his artwork to the M/RCPA.

The notecard packs contain two cards each of four different designs, including the Wolf House, the Pillsbury Viaduct bridge piers, the Goodnow House, and

Manhattan High School East Campus.

With the holiday season approaching, the notecards are a great local gift idea for teacher gifts, stocking stuffers, etc. The notecards are \$15 per pack and can be found at the Strecker Nelson West Gallery and the Riley County Historical Museum, or contact the M/RCPA at mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com.

Proceeds benefit the M/RCPA.



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

\$15 Student Level

Lacy Fisher

\$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, Sara Fisher, John & Jill Frese, Katharine Hensler, Melissa Janulis, 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, 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 Glowiak, 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, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Barbara Poresky

Honorary Lifetime Members

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