



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

December 2020, Vol. 26, Issue VI

The One-of-Kind Aluminum House

*Written by Kathy
Dzewaltowski*

Nestled in a row of modest family homes on Houston Street is a rare example of a post-war housing innovation: an aluminum prefabricated house. What's unique about this house is the aluminum isn't limited to only the exterior siding, which many people are familiar with, but rather, the structural materials are also aluminum. In addition to the exterior siding, the framing, roof rafters, interior walls, and windows are all made of aluminum, and the house was a prefabricated kit, allowing it to be rapidly assembled.

Aluminum has a varied history, having once been exceedingly rare and highly valued, and today, it is fairly economical and can be found in most households. Aluminum occurs as part of a compound and is not known to occur in its metallic state anywhere on the planet. Two centuries ago, scientists theorized aluminum could exist as a solid metal if it could be separated from strongly bound oxygen atoms in compounds, but the technology didn't exist to cause the separation. In 1825, a Danish chemist and physicist was able to create small flecks of aluminum in a laboratory setting, but it would take many more years before any significant amounts of aluminum were created. Several small aluminum ingots were displayed at the Exposition Universelle in France in 1855, and the metal's shininess and lightness captured the



Above, 1418 Houston St. in 1948. Note the front porch isn't completed, and building materials are piled on the ground on the right. The photo is courtesy of Jerri Garretson.

public's attention. Though still rare, demand for aluminum skyrocketed. The wealthy had jewelry and buttons made of aluminum, and Emperor Napoleon III reportedly dined on plates made of the metal (Smallwood).

Discoveries in the late 19th century, including that aluminum could be refined in larger quantities through electrolysis and from bauxite ore, caused the price of aluminum to drop dramatically (Smallwood). Electrolysis involved large amounts of electricity. Works Progress Administration projects during the Depression, which put Americans to work building hydroelectric plants among other things, helped to boost the production capacity of aluminum, setting the stage for aluminum to be an important metal during World War II. During the war, aluminum was used to make planes, infrastructure of ships, millions of mess kits, and for radar chaff, which was used to confuse enemy radar ("History of Aluminum").

In the years prior to World War II, home-ownership in the U.S. had declined, largely due to the Depression. In addition, construction of new housing declined during the Depression and also during World War II due to the dedication of construction materials to the war effort. After the war, a housing

crunch was anticipated as millions of service members returned from overseas and desired to buy homes. A 1946 article in *Popular Science* estimated that 1.2 million homes would need to be built each year, and even then, it would take 10 years to satisfy the demand for housing. War-surplus Quonset huts were made available for residential housing as one means to aid the housing crisis. The utility of aluminum had been established during the war, and the manufacture of prefabricated aluminum and steel homes was touted as another solution to housing needs because they could be produced rapidly and cheaply (Lobner).

Manhattan was not immune to the post-war housing crisis. Following the war, thousands of veterans descended on Manhattan to attend Kansas State through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, commonly known as the "G. I. Bill," and many veteran students struggled to find a place to live.

Built in 1947, the house located at 1418 Houston Street was constructed during the height of the housing crisis. Constructed of aluminum, *(continued on pg. 2)*

(continued from pg. 1)

which was regarded as a cutting-edge, war-proven material, the prefabricated house was intended to alleviate housing shortages in Manhattan because it could be built rapidly and fairly economically.

The home was owned by Roy Marker and built by Roy and his sons Loren and Homer, and all three were in the construction business. The aluminum house, which was manufactured by the Butler Manufacturing Company of Kansas City, MO, was referred to as a “package unit” and was approved by the Federal Housing Administration (“Aluminum”). The Butler Manufacturing Company got its start in Clay Center, KS, making stock tanks in the early 1900s, and over the decades, the business expanded to offer a variety of pre-engineered structures (“100+”). Roy Marker was a contractor for the Butler Manufacturing Company in the Manhattan area, and the house at 1418 Houston Street was the first aluminum house he’d constructed. He reportedly built the house for his own use.

To construct an aluminum prefabricated house, the contractor provided the foundation, heating, plumbing, and electrical. The framing, walls, window frames, and roof rafters were aluminum. Roof and flooring materials were options left to the homeowner to select, and the Marker home had an asphalt shingle roof and hardwood floors. The house had two inches of insulation and two inches of air space between each wall panel and featured corner windows, which were considered modern at the time. The interior walls were aluminum panels, and some rooms were painted and others were wall-papered. The main floor of the interior included a living room, two bedrooms, kitchen, dinette, bathroom, and a utility room, and in the basement, there were three rooms, a second bath, and a laundry room (“Aluminum”).

After a March 1947 edition of the *Manhattan Mercury-Chronicle* featured an article about the aluminum house, hundreds of people flocked to the 1400 block of Houston Street to watch its construction and to ask questions. According to the newspaper, there was a continual stream of visitors to the construction site, and cars were parked for blocks around, as people were curious about the aluminum prefabricated house (“Manhattan’s first”).

It’s unclear whether the Markers actually lived in the house. Roy Marker sold 1418 Houston Street to Donald and Marion Kundiger in 1948. Jerri Kundiger Garretson grew up in the house and says that according to her mother, the house was built as a model in hopes it would inspire more sales. Jerri recalls that her parents did some work to complete the house after purchasing it, such as adding railings to the front porch, adding a gabled overhang above the front door, and doing some work to the basement so it could be rented. Photographs of the house from 1948 confirm exterior aspects weren’t completed and show a pile of construction materials laying on the ground near the house. Jerri also remembers her parents had several loads of topsoil brought in to level the backyard. She speculates her family was the first to actually live in the house.

Jerri says she knew there was something different about her childhood home because her parents regularly talked about its aluminum construction. She was aware that the exterior aluminum sheeting, which had a white coating, looked different than other homes. According to Jerri, the interior walls were aluminum panels, and she discovered the walls were different because if she banged on them, they made a metallic sound, and being a kid, she knew how to bang on them and make a lot of noise if she wanted to. She doesn’t remember many pictures hanging on



Top, 1418 Houston St. in 1951. Middle, the Kundiger family in front of their home in 1951. Both photos are courtesy of Jerri Garretson. Bottom, 1418 Houston St. in Nov. 2020.

the walls and imagines her mother would have been reluctant to make holes in the aluminum wall paneling to hang art.

Jerri recalls that her parents rented the basement, which provided extra income and helped with Manhattan’s post-war housing shortage. The basement apartment didn’t have a separate entrance, so to access the apartment, tenants entered the side door and then had to cross the area between the living room and the kitchen to reach the stairs to the basement. As a result, Jerri says her family always became well (continued on pg. 3)

(continued from pg. 2)

acquainted with the tenants, who were typically military couples, and they essentially became extended family members. Jerri's father used the basement as an office when it wasn't being rented.

A memory Jerri has of the house involves a kitchen drawer that wouldn't open, which almost cost Jerri her life. The cabinet had been installed incorrectly such that the refrigerator blocked the drawer. Jerri's father removed the drawer and had the idea to cut the drawer smaller so the family could use a portion of it, but it took him a while to complete the project, and in the meanwhile, there was an open slot in the cabinet. On one occasion when Jerri's grandparents were visiting, she became curious about the hole left by the missing drawer, stuck her head through the gap to get a better look inside but then couldn't pull herself back out and was choking. Luckily, her mother heard noises like a squawking chicken coming from the kitchen and discovered Jerri with her head trapped in the hole. Jerri's mother with help from her grandparents was able to extract Jerri from the drawer slot. A tragedy was averted, but it was a momentous event that Jerri has never forgotten and is a memory she will forever associate with the aluminum house.

The Kundiger family moved to a house on Fairchild Avenue in the 1950s but continued to own the

aluminum house and rented it. Jerri's father passed away, and the remaining members of the family moved to Wisconsin, leaving a real estate agent in charge of renting 1418 Houston Street.

After Jerri had married and was living at Fort Riley where her husband served in the Army, her mother came for a visit and decided to check on the aluminum house, which was still being rented. Her mother was shocked by the conditions of the interior of the house, finding the kitchen counters were damaged, doors had been kicked in, ceiling light fixtures had been removed, and the basement flooring had been ruined. After making repairs, Jerri's mother decided to sell the house, which was in 1974. The Kundiger family had owned 1418 Houston Street for 26 years.

At some point after the Kundiger family no longer owned the house, the exterior was altered. The aluminum siding was covered with a different material, and the front porch was enclosed. The result is the house looks very different today than when it was built in 1947, and there are no visible exterior clues that the house is a prefabricated aluminum house.

The predicted prefabricated aluminum house craze as a solution to the nation's housing crisis never materialized in the U.S., and only a few thousand homes were constructed nationwide in the decade following World War II. Americans may not have been keen on the idea of a house

made of aluminum, but aluminum siding was a common choice for homes for many years until the introduction of other siding materials caused it to drop out of favor. Prefabricated homes post war were popular, but the majority of the homes constructed were made of traditional building materials rather than aluminum (Lobner).

In Manhattan, trailers and temporary barracks were employed to cope with the post-war housing crisis, and there was no housing boom of prefabricated aluminum houses. A search of Manhattan's newspapers during the post-war years reveals no other mention of aluminum houses, which likely means the house at 1418 Houston Street is one of a kind. The house serves as a reminder of the nation's post-war housing shortage and a time when aluminum houses were expected to be the innovative solution to the problem.

"100+ years of building better metal solutions." *Butler*, <https://www.butlermfg.com/about/>.

"Aluminum house springs up here almost overnight." *Manhattan Mercury-Chronicle*. 9 March 1947: 1.

"History of aluminum." *The Aluminum Association*, <https://www.aluminum.org/aluminum-advantage/history-aluminum>.

Lobner, Peter. "Post-World War II prefabricated aluminum and steel houses and their relevance today." *The Lyncean Group of San Diego*, 15 June 2020, <https://lynceans.org/all-posts/post-world-war-ii-prefabricated-aluminum-and-steel-houses-and-their-relevance-today-2/>.

"Manhattan's first aluminum house." *The Manhattan Republic*. 12 March 1947: 6.
Smallwood, Karl. "When aluminum cost more than gold." *Gizmodo*, 13 May 2014, <https://gizmodo.com/how-aluminum-cost-more-than-gold-1575564897>.

Significant Locations to Suffrage Movement in Riley County

Written by Allana Parker

October's M/RCPA newsletter highlighted some of the unique stories and women in Riley County involved with the local suffrage movement to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The homes and buildings in which these events took

place and where these individuals resided are also worthy of discussion.

Houses and buildings are far more than simple enclosed spaces with walls and a roof. They are places where ideas are developed and important conversations held. It was within these spaces that Riley County women and men helped

pave the way for full voting rights for Kansas women in 1912. Although many of these buildings and homes still stand today, some significant locations have been lost to demolition.

In this article, a few noteworthy locations where suffrage activity took place or where those involved (continued on pg. 4)

(continued from pg. 3)

in the movement resided will be addressed. This is by no means a comprehensive list, as many locations throughout the county are part of the suffrage movement story.

Gove's Hall, Second Street & Poyntz Avenue

One of Manhattan's earliest locations of suffrage activity was Gove's Hall, built in 1866, and located on the northwest corner of Second Street and Poyntz Avenue. In 1867, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton made their way through Kansas, stopping in Manhattan to speak on voting rights. On Sept. 7, 1867, Anthony addressed a small audience in Gove's Hall. In attendance were 45 men and 12 women. It was during this speech that Anthony stated that any man who voted against female suffrage was a "blockhead." She later modified her remark to exclude farmers.

Congregational Church, 700 Poyntz Avenue

The Congregational Church also served as an active location for local suffrage meetings. Following Anthony's speech in 1867, Elizabeth Cady Stanton addressed a full house at the church. The *Kansas Radical* newspaper reported that her address was "interesting and eloquently delivered" and "as the ablest advocate for the cause in the country, the sophistry of her address evidently had some effect upon the audience."

Another significant event occurred on March 20, 1912, when a suffrage luncheon was held in the dining room of the Congregational Church. Over 200 invitations were mailed for the occasion. Guests of honor at the occasion included Stella Stubbs, vice president of the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association and wife of Walter Roscoe Stubbs, 18th Governor of Kansas; Lucy Browne Johnston, president of the Kansas Women's Equal Suffrage

Association; and Catherine Hoffman, state press superintendent. The *Manhattan Republic* reported that organizers "took great pleasure and pride in the fact that the very unfavorable weather did not keep the women at home" and that "every seat was taken at the luncheon." Following the luncheon, a suffrage convention open to all interested in suffrage work was held in the parlors of the church.

The original portion of the Congregational Church, known as Pioneer Hall, where Elizabeth Cady Stanton spoke in 1867, is still in use today.

Grange Hall, 431 Poyntz Avenue

The *Manhattan Mercury* reported on May 23, 1894, that a "mass woman suffrage meeting" would be held at the Grange Hall, located at 431 Poyntz Avenue. The program included an address of welcome by Judge Robert B. Spilman and a lecture by Carrie Chapman-Catt, director of the National American Woman Suffrage Association from 1900 to 1904, and again from 1915-1920. She also served as founder of the League of Women Voters in 1920. The building, originally constructed in 1883, initially included three stories, but the top two floors were demolished in 1936. Today, 431 Poyntz is occupied by YeeHaw Outfitters.

Riley County Courthouse

In September of 1912, Laura Clay, co-founder and president of the Kentucky Equal Rights Association, spoke on the Riley County Courthouse lawn to several hundreds of attendees. Clay's primary remarks centered on the vast changes in the economic conditions for women in the last century, and that the fundamental American principles of freedom and liberty that had been refused to women were vital to their welfare. The *Manhattan Morning Chronicle* stated that "many who heard her remarked that it was a great speech . . . one of the greatest" and that "the fact, history, and logic" presented in Clay's address were "irresistible." In



Above, Gove's Hall, courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society and Museum.

the following week, Laura Clay also made her way by automobile to speak at Keats, Riley, and Leonardville. The Riley County Courthouse, constructed in 1906, still stands today.

Marshall Theatre, 121 S. Fourth Street

Built in 1909, the Marshall Theatre was originally constructed as a 1,100-seat auditorium designed by Carl Boller. In October 1912, Dr. Anna Howard Shaw, president of the National Equal Suffrage Association, spoke to more than 1,000 citizens at the Marshall Theatre, located on the northeast corner of Fourth and Houston Streets. As stated in *The Manhattan Mercury*, "for over two hours, Dr. Shaw held the attention of this audience while no one left the hall, and the interest manifested by every listener was apparent to all. While the meeting was a woman's suffrage meeting, nearly one-half of the audience were men, and much of the applause when the speaker made a good point, came from the men." The following day, Dr. Shaw also spoke to students at Kansas State Agricultural College (K.S.A.C.).

In September 1912, the Marshall Theatre gave a showing of a popular motion picture film, "The Suffragette Sheriff." In this film, the husband and his industrious wife switch their prescribed duties; while the husband takes on the housework, the wife is elected sheriff.

(continued on pg. 5)

(continued from pg. 4)

The Marshall Theatre stands today, and is listed on the National Votes for Women Trail, a nationally collaborative project documenting sites of women's history.

Many Riley Countians also held suffrage meetings within their homes.

Rice Residence, 917 Osage Street

On Nov. 30, 1904, the Equal Suffrage Association met at Charles and Mary E. Boucher Rice's residence located at 917 Osage Street. *The Manhattan Mercury* advertised, "Come out all ye suffragists and hear the report of the annual convention." The house at 917 Osage still stands today.

Elliot Residence, 601 Humboldt

In August 1904, Emeline Bowen Elliot, chairman of finance for the Riley County Equal Suffrage Association, hosted a meeting of the organization at her home, located at 601 Humboldt Street in Manhattan. Those in attendance commemorated the birthday of national notable suffragist Lucy Stone. In February 1905, the Elliots hosted a Women's Christian Temperance Union suffrage meeting. Roll call responses of those in attendance were answers to the question "Why Women Should Vote." A presentation of a paper entitled, "The Progress of Woman Suffrage" was followed by a symposium on how to best advance the cause. The First Methodist Church Education Center stands at the location of the Elliot home today.

Coleman Residence, 1808 Alabama (1803 Browning)

On June 22, 1911, the *Manhattan Republic* reported that the College Hill women organized a local suffrage club during a "Suffrage Tea" given by Mary Ovanda Derrick Coleman at her home. The organization started off with fifty members, which was "a remarkable showing in a country precinct with a total vote of less than a hundred." At the meeting,

Matie Toothaker Kimball, president of the 5th District Suffrage Association, announced her intentions of establishing a suffrage club in every voting precinct in Riley County. The *Manhattan Republic* stated on the occasion that "The association is composed entirely of women to show the attitude of Kansas women toward the suffrage question."

Punch was served on the veranda, which had been decorated for the occasion with the suffrage colors (yellow, white, and purple) intermingled with the national colors. Of the 55 women present, 50 enrolled as members of the suffrage association and organized a local association under Mary Coleman's leadership.

The newspaper reported, "As an indication of interest taken in forming this organization, it should be mentioned that though there were four automobiles that brought their loads, there were also a number of women that walked as far as two miles to attend . . . interest extended from very elderly women with only a few years before them, to the sorority girls behind the punch bowl."

Until 1909, the Coleman's owned two homes: one located at 1803 Browning (1808 Alabama today), and another located on the north side of Dickens Avenue and Baltimore Terrace. Unfortunately, the home that the suffrage tea took place in, located at Dickens Ave. and Baltimore Terr., no longer stands today.

McKeever Residence, 337 N. 14th

Married local leaders in the women's suffrage movement included Professor William A. and Edith Shattock McKeever, who lived at 337 N. 14th Street. Edith McKeever served on the advisory board for the Kansas Equal Suffrage Association, while Prof. McKeever used his influence as an instructor on



Top, the Kinsey residence at 1126 Kearney in 1932, courtesy of the Willard Album, KSU Special Collections. Middle, the Elliot residence at 601 Humboldt, courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society and Museum. Bottom, the Kimball residence at 1730 Houston St.

the K.S.A.C. campus to support the movement. In October 1912, Prof. McKeever secured a number of K.S.A.C. faculty to sign a statement pledging to vote for women's suffrage. Additionally, in 1914, Prof. McKeever wrote a book entitled "Training the Girl." In a chapter titled "The Woman in Politics," McKeever claims that as the author of the volume, he "glories in the rapidly approaching day when all the women of America will stand equal with men in the exercise of the franchise." The McKeever home still stands today and is owned and (continued on pg. 6)

(continued from pg. 5)
occupied by members of the
M/RCPA.

Kinsey Residence, 1126 Kearney

On April 4, 1887, former Kansas State Agricultural College student Susanna Madora “Dora” Kinsey Salter was elected mayor in Argonia, KS, becoming the first female mayor in the nation. Born in 1860, Susanna moved with her parents to Silver Lake, KS, in 1872. In 1876, she entered K.S.A.C. Her father, Oliver Kinsey, had difficulty finding a suitable place for Susanna to live while attending college. He determined that the sensible and economical decision would be to construct a home for Susanna himself. Oliver Kinsey, who worked as a lumber dealer, and the father of one of Susanna’s friends, purchased a lot just east of the K.S.A.C. campus and built a home that stood at 1126 Kearney Street. The college home of the first female mayor in the nation stood at this location until it was demolished in the 1960s.

Otto-Aubel Residence, 1320 Fremont St., 777 Midland Dr.

The house located at 777 Midland Drive, originally built by William E. Goodnow in 1872, was occupied by Clifford and Dora Otto Aubel for over thirty years. Dora, born in 1892, was originally from Riley, KS, and moved to Manhattan to attend K.S.A.C. After graduating from college in 1911, Dora attended Columbia University to continue her studies in nutrition science. While attending Columbia in 1915, she marched in the mass women’s suffrage parade in New York City. On Oct. 23, 1915, over 25,000 women marched up Fifth Avenue in New York City to advocate for women’s suffrage. New York granted women the right to vote in 1917.

Upon her return to Manhattan, Dora married Clifford Aubel in 1920, who taught in the K.S.A.C. Division of Agriculture. The couple resided at 1320 Fremont Street, while Dora taught domestic science

in the Division of Home Economics at K-State. In the 1940s the couple moved to 777 Midland Drive, where they would spend the next thirty years. Throughout her life, Dora was involved in a number of women’s clubs, such as the College Hill Women’s Club and the American Association of University Women. Both houses occupied by Dora Otto Aubel in Manhattan still stand today.

Kimball Residence, 1026 Poyntz Ave. & 1730 Houston Street

One of Riley County’s most notable suffragists, Matie Toothaker Kimball, born in 1871, served as Kansas’ first female presidential elector in 1920. Her active involvement in the women’s suffrage movement made her home a center for meetings and events for the Riley County community. The Kimballs resided in the house located at 1026 Poyntz Avenue from around 1907 to 1913. During this time, Matie traveled widely throughout the state, advocating for women’s rights. Leading up to the 1912 election, Matie participated in a 10-day long motor parade of suffragists driving across the state. The speakers in their decorated automobiles made stops at the Union National Bank corner at Fourth Street and Poyntz Avenue and on the main street in Leonardville. Matie also made her way to Ogden, Zeandale, and Randolph in 1911 and 1912 to help women organize local suffrage clubs.

During Dr. Anna Howard Shaw’s visit to Manhattan in October 1912, Matie hosted a large suffrage dinner in Shaw’s honor at her home at 1026 Poyntz Avenue. The *Morning Chronicle* reported, “a profusion of beautifully tinted leaves transformed the rooms into an autumn bower. The hall was in scarlet and gold, the living room in red, the library in yellow, and the dining room in purple and green.” The 40 guests in attendance enjoyed an evening of literary performances between meal courses, including “The Flame of Liberty” presented by Dr. Shaw.

From late 1913 to 1915, the

Kimballs lived in Columbia, MO, where Charles held a position with the *Columbia Daily Times*. The couple returned to Manhattan, and in 1919, lived at 1101 Fremont Street, and then in 1923, purchased the home at 1730 Houston Street, where they spent the remainder of their lives together. The home at 1026 Poyntz, where Matie made her home during the height of her push for suffrage, no longer stands, though the house at 1730 Houston is still used as a residence today.

Wetzig Residence, 512 Bluemont

Hannah was born to Heinrich and Mary Vogelsang Wetzig in Winkler, KS (just north of Randolph), on Nov. 22, 1875, and attended Winkler Dist. #25 school. As reported in the *Randolph Enterprise* on May 15, 1890, the graduation exercises took place at the Zion Evangelical Church in Leonardville. The top twelve graduating students were called to speak at the occasion. Hannah, then 14 years old, held some of the highest grades in the class, and presented her composition entitled, “The Future of Woman.”

Hannah attended K.S.A.C., starting in 1891, and then continued her education at the Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia. She returned to Riley County to teach at Winkler and was elected assistant principal of city schools and treasurer of the County Teachers’ Library Association. Hannah was also actively involved in the women’s suffrage movement, becoming the Secretary of the Manhattan Equal Suffrage Association. She worked closely with Matie Toothaker Kimball, traveling to other Riley County communities to help establish suffrage clubs.

In 1905, Hannah was elected Riley County Superintendent of Public Instruction, becoming the first female Riley County elected official. During her time of public service, Hannah resided in the home located at 512 Bluemont Avenue. She served in the role as Super-
(continued on pg. 7)

(continued from pg. 6)

intendent of Public Instruction until 1915 when she married Dr. Henry Droll and moved to Alta Vista, KS. This house Hannah lived in during her time as a public official still stands.

The Riley County community boasts a number of buildings that are historically significant to the women's suffrage movement. Though we have lost many to time, the first step to preserving others for the future is to inform and advocate on the rich heritage and history

found within their walls.

"Dr. Shaw Tonight." Manhattan Mercury, 28 October 1912.

"Equal Suffrage Association Celebrates Birthday of Lucy Stone at Mrs. L.R. Elliot's." Manhattan Mercury, 17 August 1904.

"Equal Suffrage Association Meet with Mrs. M. E. Rice." Manhattan Mercury, 29 Nov. 1904.

"The Female Speakers." Kansas Radical, 14 September 1867.

"Kansas Suffragettes Organize." Riley County Democrat, 30 June 1911.

"Made a Good Argument: Several Hundred Heard Miss Clay Talk for Suffrage." Morning Chronicle, 14 September 1912.

"Over 1,000 There: Dr. Anna Howard Shaw Had Large Audience." Manhattan Mercury, 29 October 1912.

"Prof. W. A. McKeever Secured Faculty Signers." Morning Chronicle, 29 Oct. 1912.

"Suffragist in Session: Big Meeting Planned at Congregational Church." Morning Chronicle, 20 March 1912.

"Suffrage Tea." Riley County Democrat, 23 June 1911.

"W.C.T.U. at Mrs. L.R. Elliot's." Manhattan Mercury, 2 March 1905.

"Woman Mass Suffrage Meeting." Manhattan Mercury, 23 May 1894.

"Women Finished Business." Manhattan Republic, 23 March 1912.

"Women Making Medicine: First Local Suffrage Club Organized." Manhattan Republic, 22 June 1911.

"Women for Women: First Local Suffrage Club Organized Yesterday." Morning Chronicle, 21 June 1911.

Proposed Revision to Community House's Rehab Project

Written by Kathy Dzewaltowski

During the Historic Resources Board's (HRB) meeting on Nov. 16th, board members were presented with a revision to the final plan of the Community House's renovation project. The proposed revision involves building a 1,500 sq. ft. apartment inside the Community House's open gym space, and HRB members discussed whether the revision met the U.S. Sec. of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

The Community House, located at 120 North 4th Street, was built in 1917-18 to provide recreation and relaxation space for soldiers who were training at Ft. Riley for service in World War I. The building was also designed to be used by the community. The building is dedicated to those who served in World War I and is listed on both the state and national registers.

The Community House was owned by the City of Manhattan for many years until it was recently sold for \$1 to a private developer. The terms of the sale included a \$500,000 grant to the developer from the city's Economic Development Fund, which won't be released until the developer has invested \$2 million in the project. The terms required that the Community House

maintain its historic registry status. The developer has also sought state and federal rehabilitation tax credits. The building's registry status and the use of tax credits mean the renovation project has to meet the U.S. Sec. of the Interior's Standards.

The previously approved plans for the building involved creating office space in the basement level's large open area and creating residential units in the west end and also on the stage, which had been enclosed in the 1980s. The large open space on the main floor, which originally had been furnished as a lounge for soldiers and community members to use and which most recently had functioned as a gym, was slated to remain open and be event space.

In 2013, representatives of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) made a site visit to identify the characteristics of the Community House that shouldn't be altered in order to maintain its historic registry status. For the main floor, SHPO noted, "This level features the gymnasium which should be retained as a large open space . . ."

More recently, the developer had sought an opinion from SHPO in Dec. 2018 about the possibility of making modifications to the Community House's large open space on the main floor. After making a site visit, Kristen

Johnston, SHPO Historic Tax Credit Reviewer, commented that dividing the open space is not generally recommended and if done, has to be done in a sensitive and appropriate manner. Ms. Johnston went on to note that the space has been altered over time and thus, "Our office does not feel as strongly about the importance of this particular open space . . ." and she wrote, "[An] option discussed during the site visit was to divide only half of the gym space . . ."

The proposed apartment would be located in the east end of the large open space, it would be a single level, and it would be approximately 1,500 sq. ft. in size. The walls would be 12 feet high, and the apartment would have a hard surface ceiling, creating what amounts to a 1,500 sq. ft. platform, 12 feet above the floor. Three of the building's lower windows on the north side would be incorporated in the apartment. The upper windows would still be visible. Access to the apartment would be via an open hallway on the south side of the space. The new construction would consume 41% of the square footage of the large open space.

The National Park Service (NPS) provides guidance on how to interpret the standards when (continued on pg. 8)

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

(continued from pg. 7)

rehabilitating a historic building with a large assembly space. The NPS notes it can be hard to divide a large assembly space when the building is largely defined by the space, such as with a church or theater. The large assembly space embodies the reason the building was constructed – which is the case with the Community House -- making the space essential in conveying the historic function and character of the building. Some buildings, such as schools, may have more than one large assembly space, and secondary spaces may be divided. In 2013, SHPO determined the basement was of lesser significance and could be subdivided, and a plan was approved to divide the basement into offices.

The guidelines mention that it may be possible to identify secondary areas within the primary assembly space, which could be altered with minimal impact. In the case of the Community House, secondary spaces, such as the stage and the balcony, were previously enclosed.

The NPS’s guidelines also note that if a large assembly space were subdivided, it recommends using lower-height partition walls, such as open office-height partitions. The proposed apartment would have lower-height walls, but it would also have a hard surface ceiling, which would essentially create a box in the space and interrupt the openness of the character-defining space.

It would seem, then, that the possible changes described by the NPS’s guidelines have already occurred in the Community House, leaving the question of whether additional alterations may occur without impacting the building’s historic integrity. City staff recommended approval of the proposed revision.

During board discussion, it was noted that the gym is the one character-defining space left in the interior, and the proposed apartment amounts to a significant change that would destroy the building’s spatial relationships. Board members expressed concerns about filling in

half the space and noted what is meant by “half” is not articulated. The board was also concerned about the change in use for the space. The plan originally called for using the gym for event space open to the community, which had tipped the board toward initially approving the rehabilitation project. With the revision, the space would become a private apartment with the remainder of the gym leased by a business.

The board found that the proposed revision did not meet four of the U.S. Sec. of the Interior’s Standards, which means it can’t move forward. The developer has filed an appeal, which is tentatively scheduled for discussion by the City Commission on Dec. 15, 2020.

Manhattan/Riley County
 Preservation Alliance
 Linda Glasgow, President
 P. O. Box 1893, Manhattan, KS 66505
 E-mail: mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com
 Website: www.preservemanhattan.org
 Newsletter editor: Kathy Dzewaltowski