



# MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

February 2012

## A Message From Our President Kathy Dzewaltowski

Historic preservation is under attack this legislative session. The Kansas historic rehabilitation tax credit is in jeopardy once again. During the 2009 session of the Kansas Legislature, lawmakers imposed a cap on the amount of tax credits that could be redeemed in a given year. That decision was later reversed, and the tax credit program was restored. This time around a bill has been introduced that would eliminate the historic rehabilitation tax credit for individual tax filers and would make the tax credit available only to corporations. Many users of the historic rehabilitation tax credit program are individual tax filers, so the proposed change would have a significant impact on the tax credit program.

Kansas's historic rehabilitation tax credit program began in 2001. Since then, tax credits have proven to be a valuable tool for rehabilitating structures that are listed on a historic register or that are contributing structures in a historic district. Tax credits have also generated jobs.

In 2009, Rutgers University's Center for Urban Policy Research conducted an economic impact study on the Kansas historic rehabilitation tax credit program for the Kansas Preservation Alliance, which is a statewide organization dedicated to historic preservation. The study concluded that Kansas receives substantial benefits as the result of projects aided by the historic rehabilitation tax credit program. During the years 2002-2009 examined by the study, a

\$69 million investment in the form of historic rehabilitation tax credits resulted in a return of \$271 million spent on renovation projects and over 4,400 jobs.

In addition, prior to Kansas's adoption of the historic rehabilitation tax credit program, very few historic properties were rehabilitated--an average of only 2.4 per year. In the years since the adoption of the historic rehabilitation tax credit program, an average of 68 projects are completed per year. The significant increase in the number of completed projects means not only have many of Kansas's historic properties been preserved, but it also means millions more dollars have been invested in the economy and thousands of jobs have been generated.

In Manhattan, historic rehabilitation tax credits have aided the renovations of many historic properties. The Union Pacific Depot and several buildings in the Downtown Manhattan Historic District are just a few examples. Many thousands of dollars of historic rehabilitation tax credits have been invested in Manhattan, not only in the downtown area but also in other neighborhoods.

For many years, our community has worked to redevelop the downtown area utilizing STAR bonds. The revitalization of Manhattan's existing historic structures in the downtown area is an important piece of the overall project, and historic rehabilitation tax credits are a necessary complement to our community's

redevelopment efforts. Maintaining the historic rehabilitation tax credit program could potentially stimulate additional renovations of historic buildings in Manhattan's core downtown, which would help to protect the STAR bond investment by ensuring that our downtown continues to be vibrant.

Another bill that was recently introduced would allow a municipality to "adopt an ordinance exempting itself from review according to the provisions" established by the state preservation statute because the provisions "will have a detrimental effect on economic development of the city . . . [and the city may] adopt its own standards to ensure the integrity of historic property . . ." Essentially, a city may choose to opt-out of the review process for projects in the environs of a historic registered property and to develop its own standards. City governments already have the ability to overrule findings made by the State Historic Preservation Office, as evidenced by the appeal process for 831 Leavenworth Street. The M/RCPA will keep an eye on this bill's progress.

Events may unfold quickly in Topeka, and the M/RCPA will try to keep members up-to-date with e-mails and postings on our web site under the "News" tab on the home page. If you would like to do more to advocate for historic preservation, see page 4 of the newsletter for more ideas. The M/RCPA's web site may be found at [www.preservemanhattan.org](http://www.preservemanhattan.org).

# Ideas Needed for Community House

The Community House, located at 120 North Fourth Street, is owned by the City of Manhattan and used by the Parks and Recreation Department for programming. Parks and Recreation has reduced the Community House's custodial staff's hours, and the building no longer has an on-site custodian. The change in staffing has motivated Parks and Recreation to examine the building's use, to consider what the best use may be, and to ask for ideas for the building.

Curt Loupe, Director of Parks and Recreation, attended the November meeting of the Historic Resources Board (HRB) to ask for input from board members about how best to use the historic building. HRB members felt they needed to tour the building to become familiar with the building's current condition and available space. HRB members toured the building on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup> and noted deferred maintenance, serious issues with the building's mechanical systems, ongoing issues with the roof, and a lack of complete handicapped accessibility.

The Community House was built in 1917-18 during World War I, with the plan that the building would be a place where soldiers could sleep and be entertained. Rotarians of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma partnered with the City of Manhattan to construct the building, which was designed by local architect Henry Winter (National). It was the first community building constructed in the U.S., and it inspired the U.S. government to budget



Community House

\$4 million for other communities to construct similar buildings (National). General Leonard Wood, who was the commander of Camp Funston at the time, attended the Community House's grand opening in 1918 (National).

During World War I, the Community House was used for community and military functions. Dances and concerts were held in the building several times each week,



A plaque on the side of the building reads as follows.

1917  
Manhattan Camp Funston  
Community Building  
A Tribute From The Citizens of  
Manhattan And the Rotarians  
Of Kansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma  
To Our Soldiers  
"He Profits Most Who Serves Best"

and soldiers used the facility to socialize and relax (National).

Between World War I and World War II, the city owned the building, and it was used by the American Legion and the Chamber of Commerce. The U.S. government resumed ownership of the building during World War II, and it was used as a U.S.O. (National), which many area residents fondly

remember.

The main space in the Community House is a large gymnasium or auditorium space, which originally included a performance stage at one end. The basement also includes a large central space, which was where soldiers relaxed and ate meals. The last time the building experienced significant renovations was in 1986-87 when the performance stage was enclosed and a second floor observation balcony was enclosed and divided into smaller rooms (National).

Parks and Recreation needs the Community House's space for the programs it offers, so if the building ceased to be used for programs, Parks and Recreation would need to find an equivalent amount of space to replace it. One idea being considered is for the city to construct a new facility, divest itself of ownership of the Community House, and to allow it to become privately owned and possibly converted to office or residential space.

The Community House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2006, having met the requirements of the criterion that states the "property is associated (continued on page 3)

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with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.” The Community House’s National Register status means it would be eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits in the event that the city or a new owner wanted to renovate the building to accommodate a new purpose. HRB members directed city staff to contact the State Historic Preservation Office for more information regarding the extent of renovations that would be allowed without jeopardizing the Community House’s National Register status.

The discussions surrounding the Community House highlight several potential concerns. At a minimum, the building needs a financial investment to provide for proper maintenance, improvements to its mechanical systems, and for full handicapped accessibility. Whether the city budget would allow for such a financial investment is unknown.

If the city should sell the building, the potential exists that a new owner could alter it to such an

extent that it could lose its listing on the National Register. A property can be removed from the National Register if the qualities that caused it to be listed are destroyed. Even worse, a new owner could demolish the building and construct something new on the lot. National Register listing provides many protections, but it does not prevent a motivated owner from seeking demolition. If the Community House were to be significantly altered and lose its National Register listing, become vacant and fall into decline, or if it were demolished, Manhattan would lose an important and well-loved cultural resource.

There are at least two possible tools that could help the situation. One would be the use of historic rehabilitation tax credits, which would provide significant help with the costs of renovations. The Community House would be eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits regardless of who owned it.

The other tool is the creation of a preservation easement. A preservation easement provides for the continued conservation of a historic property through

the owner’s donation of a portion of his or her rights to a preservation organization or government agency, and the easement becomes part of the property’s real estate record. A preservation easement is intended to protect against inappropriate alterations, neglect, demolition, and any other actions that could be considered harmful to the historic property. A preservation easement is binding, not only for the current property owner, but also for all future property owners. If continued ownership of the building by the city is determined to not be the best use for the structure, a preservation easement could protect the Community House from insensitive alterations or demolition by future owners.

For now, Parks and Recreation needs the Community House’s space for its programs. If you have suggestions for different uses for the Community House, contact Parks and Recreation at 785-587-2757.

National Register of Historic Places,  
Community House, Manhattan, Riley  
County, Kansas, National Register  
#06001051.



Historic photos of the Community House through the years. Take note of the structures peeking out on the right side of the building that aren’t there today. Photos are courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society.



## How You Can Help

Contact our area legislators, let them know you support maintaining the historic tax credit for both individual tax filers and for corporations, and let them know why the historic tax credit program has been important to our community.

Roger Reitz  
Kansas Senate District 22  
1332 Sharingbrook  
Manhattan, KS 66503  
Topeka Ph: 785-296-7360  
[reitz@senate.state.ks.us](mailto:reitz@senate.state.ks.us)

Sydney Carlin  
Kansas House District 66  
1650 Sunny Slope Ln.  
Manhattan, KS 66502  
Topeka Ph: 785-296-7657  
[carlin@house.state.ks.us](mailto:carlin@house.state.ks.us)

Tom Phillips  
Kansas House District 67  
1530 Barrington Dr.  
Manhattan, KS 66503  
Topeka Ph: 785-296-7690  
[tom.phillips@house.ks.gov](mailto:tom.phillips@house.ks.gov)

Contribute to lobbying efforts. The M/RCPA is not currently positioned to be able to officially lobby. The Friends of Historic Preservation is a coalition of preservation advocates and has a paid lobbyist. Christy Davis has been active in the preservation community for many years and was the speaker at the 2009 M/RCPA's annual meeting.

Friends of Historic Preservation, contact person Christy Davis

909 ½ Kansas Ave., Ste 7, Topeka, KS 66612  
Ph: 785-234-5053

Donate by mailing check to address above or visit [www.friendsofhistoricpreservation.com](http://www.friendsofhistoricpreservation.com).

You might also be interested in joining the Kansas Preservation Alliance.

P.O. Box 2506, Topeka, KS 66601  
[www.kpalliance.org](http://www.kpalliance.org)

Be informed. Visit the M/RCPA's web site, [www.preservemanhattan.org](http://www.preservemanhattan.org), and read the latest information about what's going on concerning historic preservation in Topeka under the "News" tab on the home page.

## Winter Social

On Friday January 13<sup>th</sup>, approximately 40 M/RCPA members took advantage of the mild winter weather and cast aside any superstitions they may have had to attend the Winter Social. The event was held at the Strecker-Nelson Art Gallery, which is located in the historic Smith Building in the Downtown Manhattan Historic District. Members enjoyed great

conversation, beautiful artwork, and delicious appetizers prepared by the Friendship House.

Built in 1909 and designed by local architects Henry Winter and Dan Walters, the Smith Building in its day was described as "one of the handsomest buildings on the avenue, having brick with terra cotta trim and Kawneer system windows" (O'Brien 109). Owner Jay Nelson treated M/RCPA members to an impromptu tour of the building, including the

basement, the mezzanine level, the Nelsons' private residence, and the second floor gallery. The Nelsons renovated the building in 2003 and utilized rehabilitation tax credits to accomplish the renovation.

O'Brien, Dr. Patricia J. [The Architects and Buildings of Manhattan, Kansas](#).  
Manhattan, Kansas: Riley County Historical Society, 2008.

All three photos show M/RCPA members enjoying the Winter Social. Far right, M/RCPA members toured all levels of the Smith Building.



# Rocky Ford School Placed on Kansas Register

The Rocky Ford School, which is located near the intersection of Tuttle Creek Boulevard and Barnes Road and is owned by the Riley County Historical Society (RCHS), was recently placed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places, and its nomination has been forwarded for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places.

The limestone one-room school, which housed grades 1-8, was originally built in 1903, and was later rebuilt following a fire in 1927. According to the RCHS's web site, the school housed 17 students in 1929, and the teacher was paid \$100 per month for a school year that was eight months long (Riley).

One-room schools were common in rural areas. In Kansas, there were approximately 8,500 one-room schools in 1920 ("Sunflower"). The advent of school buses, which allowed students to be easily

transported to a larger school, was one of the reasons that contributed to the decline of one-room rural schools. By 1965, most of Kansas's one-room schools had closed, with the last one closing in 1990 ("Sunflower").

Rocky Ford School educated



Rocky Ford School, courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society

students until 1938 when the district consolidated with a neighboring district (Martin). Many area teachers continue to bring their

students to visit the schoolhouse so they can experience what it was like to have been educated in a one-room school, to use slates instead of notebooks or computer tablets, and to get a drink of water from the dipper hanging from the pump outside instead of the drinking

fountain. Providing Kansas students with this tangible connection to their educational past is an invaluable teaching tool that Rocky Ford School offers.

Martin, Sarah. "Site of 1958 Dockum Drug Store Sit-In Among National Register Nominations." *Kansas Preservation*. 33.3 (2011): 1-7. Web. Jan. 20, 2012.

Riley County Historical Society. Rocky Ford School. [Online] Available [http://www.rileychs.com/rocky\\_ford\\_school.cfm](http://www.rileychs.com/rocky_ford_school.cfm), Jan. 20, 2012.

"Sunflower Journeys: Rural Schools and Changing Times." KTWU. 7 February 2002. Web. 20 January 2012. Transcript.

## Historic Summit

Thursday, March 1<sup>st</sup>

7:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Check-in begins at 6:45 p.m.

City Commission meeting room at City Hall

1101 Poyntz Avenue

The Riley County Historical Society & Museum, the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance, and Manhattan's Historic Resources Board invite the community to participate in a program & discussion of the issues concerning historic preservation in Manhattan & Riley County. The Historic Summit is open to the public.

M/RCPA P.O. Box 1893 MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1893
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*M/RCPA Membership Roster 2011-12*

**\$35 Historic Level**

Mary Elizabeth & Tom Atwood, Diana Chapel, Wayne M. Charney, D. Cheryl Collins, Kenneth & Margaret Conrow, Michael & Janet Danenberg, Nancy & Clark Danner, Glee Eggers, Rev. H. Wayne & Beverly A. Fink, Sara Fisher, Mary Ann Fleming, Ron Fowles Construction, Linda Glasgow, Charles S. & Charlotte B. Herr, Angie Hickel, Robin D. S. Higham, Jean Bigbee Hill, Corina Hugo, Jean Hulbert, Camille & Phillip Korenek, Marianne Korten, Robert D. Linder, Judith K. Major, Robert & Elaine Mohr, Fred Newton, Janet & Tony Nichols, Ed & Kay Olson, Kevin G. W. Olson, Bill Pallett, Jerry & Martha Powell, Virginia Quiring, Dr. M. C. Reay, Lauren Ritterbush, Rachelle Routh/The Strong House, Marcia Rozell, Sharlin Sargent, Todd & Geri Simon, Connie Sink, Kimberly & Richard Smith, Maurice & Carolee Stark, Gary Stowe (Stowe Property LLC), Joan & John Strickler, Walter Remodeling Inc., Weis Realty Executives, Patricia & Ray Weisenburger, Alvin & Edna Williams, Judith M. Willingham.

**\$100 Preservation Level**

Barbara G. Anderson, Mimi Balderson, Bowman Bowman Novick Inc., Commerce Bank, Danker Roofing, The Ebert Mayo Design Group Architects, Frances Ellis, Gary & Paula Ellis, Bert & Val Harrop, Marjorie Heyne, Nancy Holmes, Claudia Jones, Master Landscape Inc., Richard & Marge McKittrick, Bruce McMillan Architects P.A., Michael & Judine Mecseri, Dori Milldyke, Marina Pecar-Krstic, Barbara & Ernie Peck, Dan & Mitzi Richards, Riley Construction Co. Inc., Tom & Karen Roberts, Stephen & Deborah Saroff, Kirk & Noel Schulz, Mike & Karen Sheffield, Le Juan Shrimplin, Bob & Mary Stamey, George & Julie Strecker, Charles & Marsha Tannehill, Ron & Dixie West, Barbara Withee.

**\$250 Landmark Level**

Mary Dean Apel, David & Kathy Dzewaltowski, Debbie Nuss & Brad Fenwick, GJL Real Estate, Dr. Patricia J. O'Brien, Perry C. Peine, Barbara Poresky, Gwyn & Gina Riffel, Kevin S. & Alyn Pennington West.

**Honorary Lifetime Members**

Rose M. Bissey (in memory of Charles Bissey), Enell Foerster (in memory of Bernd Foerster), Dr. Patricia J. O'Brien.