



# MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

February 2019  
Vol. 25, Issue I

## A Message From Our President

The Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance was founded in the spring of 1994 by a dedicated group of individuals with heart and vision who recognized that we cannot just throw away our community treasures when they get a little tired. The M/RCPA's first president, Dixie West, wrote in 1995 that they "had been drawn together in a common cause. [They] were increasingly frustrated that the community of Manhattan was bent on a relentless pursuit of modernization in the name of 'progress'" (M/RCPA's Feb. 2014 newsletter).

In preparing to write the president's message for this newsletter, I scrolled back through all the past newsletters posted on the M/RCPA's website, [PreserveManhattan.org](http://PreserveManhattan.org). What an amazing resource available to all! I was reminded of articles I had forgotten about and read ones from before my time as a member. I joined in 2008, according to the membership often listed on the back page. On those back pages, the same names appeared again and again. Thank you to all who have been such stalwart supporters of our local preservation movement.

I'm sure my family heard, "Really?" and "You've got to be kidding me!" muttered under my

breath as I scanned these back newsletters. The same issues seemed to occur repeatedly. We're still without a strong rental inspection program, and demolition by neglect is an ongoing problem. The Mary Butterfield House at 831 Leavenworth Street is gone, as is the Kansas Environs Law. And, many of our "first" and "oldest" are still threatened: the Community House, the first such in the nation; the conservatory at KSU, the oldest in Kansas, possibly in the Midwest; and the Marlatt Homestead, the oldest still standing stone house in Riley County and home of Washington and Julia Marlatt, two of the first faculty members of Bluemont Central College, a precursor to KSU.

But, there were many bright spots, too, ones for which the M/RCPA deserves a pat on the back. We have our radar on the Community House, the conservatory, and the Marlatt Homestead, which was one of the stops on the Founders' Tour in October 2013. The tour was organized in conjunction with the Riley County Historical Society and Museum, the Goodnow House State Historic Site, Kansas State University, and Gwyn and Gina Riffel.

The Founders' Tour is a prime example of what the M/RCPA does

so well: we work with other groups for the benefit of all. On the state level, along with other groups dedicated to preservation, we support an advocate charged with educating our legislators on critical issues. But, more often our efforts are focused right here at home, keeping on top of the Fourth Street Corridor Plan; the North End Redevelopment; code, zoning, and density issues; and community design standards and Traditional Neighborhood Overlays. The Strasser House, the Hulse-Daughters House, the Jarbeaux House, and the Landmark Water Tower still stand as testimonies to our efforts. With the Historic Resources Board and the Riley County Historical Society and Museum, we hold the Historic Summit. We give out grants for preservation and awards for projects well done. And, we don't shy away from the daunting projects: both the Union Pacific Depot and Peace Memorial Auditorium are saved and thriving thanks in part to the efforts of the M/RCPA. Any ideas on how to preserve the Community House?

It has been a busy and accomplishment-filled 25 years for the M/RCPA, and I imagine the next quarter-century will be just as eventful. Thanks for your continued support.

*Alyn Pennington West*

# The Orville Huntress Building

## Upper Floor Gets a New Look

This past November, M/RCPA members were treated to a tour of the upper level of the historic Orville Huntress Building in downtown Manhattan. The upper floor had recently been renovated to become the new home of a local marketing business, and members checked out the updated space in the 130+-year-old building.

The historic Orville Huntress Building, located at 300 Poyntz Avenue in the Downtown Manhattan Historic District, is a two-story limestone building constructed in the early 1880s by Orville Huntress. Orville Huntress was born in Maine in 1846 and while still a child, he came to Manhattan with his family in 1857 (Griffin). When his family arrived in Manhattan, the town had only 17 buildings, the majority of which were on the primitive side. His father, Amasa Huntress, chose to settle the family in a house in town. A few years later, Amasa was elected county clerk, and over the years, he also served as county treasurer, register of deeds, and served as a county commissioner during Kansas' territorial years ([Portrait](#)).

Orville attended Manhattan schools, and then learned to be a printer. He worked as a printer for a Manhattan newspaper for approximately five years. He then worked as a clerk for the Higinbotham brothers, who owned a general store. William Higinbotham was in the banking business, and Orville began working for him as a bookkeeper (Griffin).

In 1867, Orville entered into a partnership with Ashford Stingley

and George Higinbotham to open a general store, which operated under the name "Geo. W. Higinbotham and Co." In 1875, George Higinbotham sold his shares to his partners to focus on grain and real estate endeavors, and the business was renamed "Stingley and Huntress" (Griffin).

The business was thriving, generating \$125,000 in sales per year (Griffin), and a new two-story limestone building was constructed to house the business. "Blue Ribbon County," which features sketches of early area settlers and businesses, indicates the stone building was erected in 1881, but an account in the newspaper *The Nationalist* indicates the building's construction date was 1883. It's possible that construction had begun in 1881 and wasn't completed until later.

The building's stone work was contracted to Ulrich Brothers, the carpentry was done by Hulse and Moses, and the building is Italianate in style. The first floor, facing Poyntz Avenue, was used for the general store, and there was a second storefront in the rear, facing Third Street. The second floor was used by the Manhattan Independent Order of Odd Fellows and featured a raised platform for the organization's officers ("Mr. Huntress' Building").

A few years later, the building was expanded, and the post office occupied a portion of the space. Over the years, the storefronts have been remodeled and updated, but the main components and the building's proportions are intact. The second floor façade is close to its original condition (National),



The Orville Huntress building, as viewed from Poyntz Ave. (top) and Third Street (bottom).

including arched, three-panel windows with stained glass accents. In the 1950s when the Firestone Tire Company used the building, it was combined with the building to the west (National).

Today, the Orville Huntress building is owned by Miller Place LLC, which in turn is owned by Jan Miller. Jan, who owns Steve's Floral, purchased the building in 2010 because she liked the downtown location and wanted to own rather than be a tenant. Jan and her father also had the vision of renovating the historic building, bringing it back to life, and making it a prosperous business site.

The building's first floor on the south, which is occupied by the Winged Lion, and the attached building to the west, which is (*continued on pg. 3*)

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occupied by Steve's Floral, were previously renovated. The upper floor still needed attention. 502, which is a local marketing firm, was interested in locating their offices in the upper floor, and the timing was right to complete renovations in a manner that would suit the new tenant.

Blade Mages, principal and founder of 502, coordinated with Jan to determine what the firm wanted in the space. Timber and Stone provided architecture and design services, BHS Construction brought the ideas to life, and Landmark National Bank helped with the financing.

Jan says that almost nothing was left untouched during the renovations. The upper level received new electrical and plumbing, new HVAC, and the restrooms were updated for handicapped accessibility. Brenda Spencer with Spencer Preservation served as a preservation consultant on the project, and the goal was to maintain historic components when possible. Existing plaster was maintained throughout the space, as was the tin ceiling in the south end of the building. Jan says when layers of wallpaper were uncovered, they passed them along to the historical society and contacted the historical society whenever advice was needed.

The arched, three-panel windows with stained glass were in need of repairs to the wood, and the work was completed and the windows maintained. During the renovation work, a few of the stained glass panes were accidentally broken. A vendor, who manufactures reproductions and uses techniques to replicate the look of historic glass, was located, and the broken panes were replaced with compatible

reproductions.

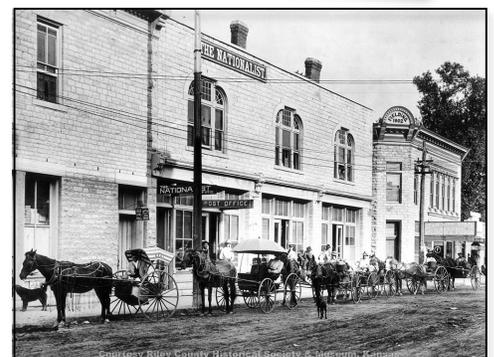
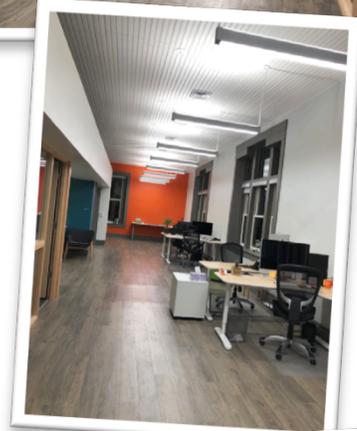
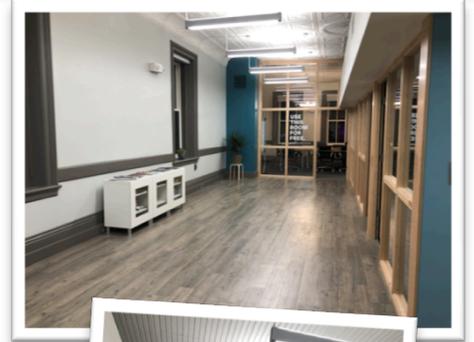
The renovated upper level includes offices for 502, a conference room, and a kitchen/bar area that functions as a break room for 502's employees. The entry off Third Street and the stairwell leading to the second floor were also updated. In addition, the south end features a meeting room, which is available to local non-profits to use at no cost.

Tucked in one corner is an old freight elevator, which was handy to have for transporting construction materials to the second floor during the renovation. Jan hopes the elevator can be converted to passenger use at some point, and a contractor with knowledge and experience working on old elevator systems was consulted. Converting the freight elevator to passenger use turned out to be a complicated endeavor, so for now, the elevator will continue to be used for hauling materials.

Because the Orville Huntress Building is a contributing structure in the Downtown Manhattan Historic District, it was eligible for financial help with renovation expenses. Both state and federal rehabilitation tax credits were sought and approved to help complete the project.

In the future, Jan would like to refurbish the building's cornice, complete masonry repairs, and (continued on pg. 4)

Top to bottom, two views of 502's newly renovated office space, the employee break room, and a close-up of one of the upper floor windows with stained glass accents. The bottom photo is the Third Street side of the building, dating from the early 1900s. The newspaper *The Nationalist* and the post office were located in the north end of the building. The line of horses and buggies is the rural mail carriers getting ready to head out on their rural routes. The photo is courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society and Museum.



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hopes to convert the freight elevator. She would also like to create a rooftop garden above Steve's Floral.

When asked what was her favorite part of the renovation, Jan says she loved everything from the beginning to its completion. She

said, "It became like a member of my family. Not only would I do this again, I would encourage anyone who is in the position to renovate a historic piece of our downtown to do so. Not only was it an amazing experience, but it simply enhances our downtown beyond measure."

Albert Griffin, ed. An Illustrated Sketch Book of Riley County, Kansas, "The Blue Ribbon County." Manhattan, KS: The Nationalist, 1881.

"Mr. Huntress' Building." The Nationalist. 29 June 1883: 1.

National Register of Historic Places, Downtown Manhattan Historic District, Manhattan, Riley County, Kansas, National Register #06001240.

Portrait and Biographical Album of Washington, Clay and Riley Counties, Kansas. Chicago: Chapman Bros., 1890.

## Update on Community House

During the Jan. 8th City Commission meeting, commissioners discussed advertising a Request for Proposals (RFP) for redevelopment of the Community House, which is located at 120 North 4th Street. The Community House was built in 1917-18 and is listed on the National Register and the Register of Historic Kansas Places. It was built by the Rotarians of Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma and the City of Manhattan to provide recreation and relaxation space for soldiers who were training at Ft. Riley for service in World War I. The building was later dedicated to those who served in World War I. The Community House was the first community building constructed in the U.S. and is currently owned by the City of Manhattan.

Several weeks ago, an unnamed party expressed interest in buying the Community House from the city. Since the building is located in the downtown area, it was anticipated there might be additional interested parties if it were known the city was considering selling or leasing the property, and the RFP process is a way for the city to evaluate the interest and find out if someone



has an acceptable idea for redeveloping the Community House.

During the January meeting, several commissioners had concerns about preserving the building's historic registry status into the future, and they also expressed a desire to ensure it would not be demolished. Commissioner Jerred McKee described his concern as, "What happens ten years from now if that developer decides to sell or change direction?" Commissioner Wynn Butler agreed and said that the RFP could include legal language to make sure the building doesn't just disappear. Commissioner Butler said he was open to the city's investing the estimated \$2.5 million needed to renovate the building if that was the way the community wanted to go, and he was also open to a commercial redevelopment project that would benefit everyone.

Commissioner Usha Reddi said of the Community House, "It adds character to Manhattan, and it is a part of Manhattan and part of our history." Commissioner Reddi suggested including 2-3 preservation experts on the selection committee who would evaluate the impact a proposal might have on the building's historic status.

Commissioner Linda Morse volunteered to serve on the selection committee along with Commissioner Butler. Commissioner Morse expressed concern that the language in the RFP wasn't strong enough in regards to keeping the building's historic registry status. She wanted the building's historic designation to be maintained beyond the person who buys it now, and she recommended strengthening the language in the RFP.

Mayor Mike Dodson commented that probably only a handful of people know the building's history and significance, but that didn't diminish the city's obligation to make sure future generations know about it.

Because the Community House is listed on the state and national registers, a renovation project is (continued on pg. 5)

## 2019 Preservation Awards

The M/RCPA will be hosting the Historic Preservation Building Awards later this spring. 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.

Eligible projects need to have been completed in the past two years and must be located in Riley County or Manhattan's city limits (i.e. a project may be in the Pott Co. portion of Manhattan's city limits). If you would like to nominate a project to be considered for a Historic Preservation Building Award, contact the M/RCPA at [mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com), or Kathy Dzewaltowski at 785-539-8937. The deadline for nominations is March 1, 2019.

To learn more about the M/RCPA's founding in 1994, see the Feb. 2014 newsletter at [www.preservemanhattan.org](http://www.preservemanhattan.org).

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potentially eligible for state and federal rehabilitation tax credits. Some commissioners felt a redevelopment project wouldn't be financially feasible without the help of tax credits. Jason Hilgers, Deputy City Manager, said after the preferred proposal is identified, the final selection of the proposal could be contingent upon approval of tax credits. He also said an agreement could be crafted such that the building couldn't be sold or leased in the future without permission from the City Commission.

Commissioner McKee suggested having all of the submitted proposals included in information provided to commissioners, as opposed to only providing information about the selected proposal. He also suggested having the Historic Resources Board and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board review the selected proposal and provide input before it's discussed by the City Commission. Review by these two boards would also provide additional opportunities for public input.

Commissioners approved moving forward with the RFP, and the city began advertising the RFP on Jan. 13th. Proposals are due March 8, 2019. The

eight criteria the city will consider in selecting a proposal are as follows:  
1) the proposed use, renovation, and/or re-purposing of the Community House;  
2) the financial ability of the Proposer;  
3) the experience of the Proposer in renovating and/or re-purposing similar properties;  
4) the impact of the Proposal on the Community House, it's historic status, and nearby properties;  
5) the compatibility of the Proposal with the City's zoning regulations; the historic nature of the Community House as a state and nationally registered historic site and its contributing status to the Downtown Historic District;  
6) the architectural quality of any proposed renovations;  
7) anticipated financial benefits to the taxing jurisdictions by way of future property and sales tax generated from the renovation, along with an acquisition price or long term land lease payment; and  
8) any anticipated tax credit(s), grant(s) or other revenues proposed in the redevelopment of the Community House.

The RFP is available on the city's website.

## The M/RCPA Turns 25!

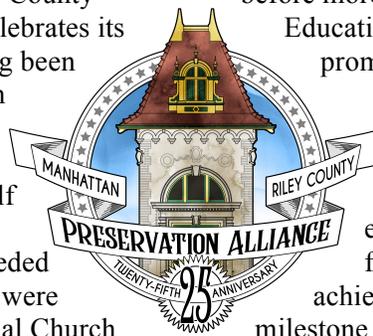
The Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance celebrates its 25th year in 2019, having been officially incorporated in 1994. The founding members originally met in the kitchen of the Wolf House, and as the group grew in numbers and needed a larger space, meetings were held at the Congregational Church.

The original members of the M/RCPA were concerned about the number of buildings Manhattan was losing to the wrecking ball. They felt it was time to educate the community and to become advocates for Manhattan's and Riley County's historic structures

before more buildings were lost.

Education, advocacy, and the promotion of historic preservation continue to be our organization's focus today.

The M/RCPA is excited that our once fledgling organization has achieved this significant milestone, which was made possible because of the support and dedication of our members through the years. The M/RCPA would like to thank Timber and Stone Architecture and Design for our 25th anniversary logo and for their continued efforts to preserve historic resources in and around Manhattan.



M/RCPA P.O. Box 1893 MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1893
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## *2018-19 M/RCPA Membership Roster*

### **\$35 Historic Level**

Dede Brokesh, Charlene Brownson, Sandra Chandler, Carole Chelz, Cheryl Collins, Melvin & Randi Dale, Mike & Jan Danenberg, Marla Day, Wanda Fateley, Beverly Fink, Troy & Sara Fisher, Katharine Hensler, 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, Nancy Danner, Jed Dunham, Gary & Paula Ellis, Calvin & Genie Emig, Debbie Nuss & Brad Fenwick, Joe & Janette Gelroth, Charles & Kate Gillum, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Kail & Becky Katzenmeier, Mark & Ann Knackendoffel, Ann Kosch, Blade Mages, Karen McCulloh, Michael & Judine Meeseri, 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, Dr. Patricia J. O'Brien, Barbara Poresky

### **Honorary Lifetime Members**

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