

THE JACKSON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOURNAL

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MYSTERY PHOTO CONTEST

In years past, the JOURNAL occasionally published a photograph from our collections, and the first reader to respond won a magnificent prize. Unlike before, *this photograph has no further positive identification other than what's mentioned below*. So, if you can provide additional details about this specific image or the topic mentioned in the caption, we'd like to hear from you!

Again, we kindly remind you to identify all of your photographs right now so your heirs don't have to inherit unfortunate boxes or albums of unidentified images.

BTW, a great prize is still up for grabs!



We know from the 1932 book, *Results of County Planning*, that this photograph (PHX 9435) "is an artistic view of a bit of Bryant Farm beauty on 87th Street, between Hillcrest Road and Blue Ridge Boulevard, where a bird sanctuary is an unusual feature." If you have information about this area's development or additional images or materials relating to the Bryant farm or family, we'd like to reward you for coming forward.



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AN EDITOR'S EPISTLE BY DAVID W. JACKSON

Do you have the feeling that time is fleeting? For me, the days and months are ticking past! Speaking (writing) of the past, we invite you to take a little time from your busy schedule to enjoy yet another issue of the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society JOURNAL.

The JOURNAL is a benefit that all Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society members receive as part of their annual dues. If you enjoy this issue, we encourage you to share it with your family, friends and others with whom you come in contact. In turn, we hope they will contact us and support our important work. There are many ways to support us in pursuing our Mission Statement (see below). Membership is first on the list. So, if you are a member, we sincerely thank you for your membership . . . and for any and all the ways you are taking action to protect the past for the future!

Later this year, we will be introducing a promotional booklet that we have been working on the last few months. While conveying all that the Society HAS and DOES for the public good, it is focused on encouraging membership in our nonprofit organization. If you'd like, we'd be happy to share a copy with you should you desire to use it as a "tool" when promoting us to others? We will mail this booklet directly to those requesting information about the Society or local history and its preservation so they may help us build a stronger future.

Well, your time is ticking. Join with us as we wind back the clock and take *Before Electric Park: A Promenade of Early Kansas City Area Amusement Parks* with Craig Brian, who has prepared a fabulous study of what types of amusement parks predated Electric Park. Ah. The lights are coming up, as this article is a prelude to an upcoming feature about the famed Electric Park! If you have items about Electric Park you want to donate for posterity, NOW IS THE TIME.

A short article touching on the life of a local woman in the days surrounding the Civil War is presented in, *Josephine (Russell) Erwin Clay: Her Passage through Jackson County Unfurled*. Author Henry Clay Simpson, Jr., provides an extract from his book, *Josephine Clay: Pioneer Horsewoman of the Bluegrass* (see *Book Notes* in the Autumn 2005 JOURNAL), about a famous American woman who descended from the noted Russell family of early Jackson County history, and who married twice into statesman Henry Clay's Kentucky pedigree.

Time was literally captured for hundreds of thousands of subjects who had their photographs taken by one prolific local photographer. Take a gander at *Snapping Up Images and History of Kansas City Photographers: Developing a Sketch of David Presly "D. P." Thomson (1849-1933)* by James A. Tharp. Maybe after reading this sketch, you may find some old photos of Jackson County ancestors you'd like to add to our growing photographic collections?

Time has been good to local developer Ron Jury who brought back to life the President Hotel. We took notes at one of Jury's presentations recently and have the verdict in *The Jury is In: Kansas City's Hotel President Restoration, a Presidential Success*.

Before you close this issue please pay tribute *In Memoriam: Farewell to Historic Preservationists Who Dedicated Their Lives To The Future Of The Past*. Jane Fifield Flynn and Tim Cox were two staunch supporters of local history and its preservation, who are watching over us as time continues ticking for the rest of us.

MISSION STATEMENT: *The Jackson County Historical Society is dedicated to the preservation and understanding of its county's heritage and will promote the study, appreciation and interpretation of local and regional history.*

BEFORE ELECTRIC PARK: A PROMENADE OF EARLY KANSAS CITY AREA AMUSEMENT PARKS

BY CRAIG M. BRYAN UE



Rustic bridge in Mount Washington Park, from a cancelled litho-chrome postcard in the Historical Society's collections.

Before there was Worlds of Fun, before there was Fairyland Park, and even before there was Heim's Electric Park in the East Bottoms, nor its successor at 46th and The Paseo, Kansas City offered other amusement parks.

Then, too, by the 1880s were other parks where Kansas Citians went to enjoy picnics, dancing, family gatherings, and to hear bands and watch fireworks on days of celebration, like the Fourth of July. Most of these early parks were merely "picnic parks;" that is, they did not have amusement rides. Some were created as "trolley parks" sponsored by companies of the cable cars and trolley lines that came into existence during this time.

The era of grandstand "amusement parks" was just ahead, though. The author's article about Electric Park and other sensational amusement parks is scheduled to appear in a future issue of the Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL.

Other similar parks included Merriam Park, in Johnson County, Kansas, which was the first recreational ground of any consequence to serve the Kansas City area, General Ulysses S. Grant having addressed a crowd there in 1880;¹ Exposition Park;² and Hooker's Grove, on the Electric Line to Shawnee, Kansas, which boasted fine springs of water, good music, a skating rink, a kinetoscope, and a lunch stand as its main attractions.³

Even after the opening of general amusement parks,

some later parks were primarily picnic parks. These included Kansas City's flagship Swope Park, donated to the people of Kansas City by Colonel Thomas Swope in 1896; and, even Winnwood Park, which opened in rural Clay County in 1913 by developer Frank Winn.

This article provides a look at Washington Park and Fairmount Park in Independence, Missouri; Troost Park and Forest Park in Kansas City, Missouri; and Chelsea Park and Carnival Park in Kansas City, Kansas.

WASHINGTON PARK

Washington Park was located east of Kansas City, in what is now Independence, Missouri. It opened on 4 July 1887 when Willard Winner ran a steam dummy railroad line to the park. The Kansas City Star's announcement of the Opening of Washington Park, listed not amusements, but instead the opportunity "to see that elegant Residence Suburb, North Evanston, which adjoins Washington Park on the east."⁴

For recreation, Winner dammed Rock Creek to create a 20-acre lake, which was used for swimming and boating. There was also a dancing pavilion, and a covered bandstand.

In 1888, the main July 4th activities included Hulett's Band of twenty pieces and some fireworks known as "Japanese day shells." An evening fireworks display was witnessed by 3,000 people.⁵

Washington Park offered a Grand Balloon Ascension

in 1891, and a parachute leap of five thousand feet by Miss Squires. By 1894, the activities included boating, bowling, a merry-go-round, and swings, as well as concerts and acrobats. For 1895, the entertainment at Washington Park included fireworks, acrobats and tumblers, and an address by Kansas City Mayor Davis.

Liberati, the great living cornetist and the Washington Park Military Band were the main attractions in 1897, over and above fishing, boating and bathing.⁶

In 1900, Washington Park closed and its lake was drained. Mrs. Sam Ray remarked that the park closed due to the competition from nearby Fairmount Park.⁷

A group of Kansas City philanthropists founded a nonprofit cemetery association, and converted the former Washington Park into Mount Washington Cemetery, which is the final resting place of many notable Kansas Citians (a topic worthy of its own JOURNAL article). Mt. Washington has become a cultural landmark, home of some of the most elaborate private family mausoleums in the state.

Today, Mount Washington Forever continues to be a desirable burial ground because of the serene, rolling, wooded hills, pillowy meadows, and landscaped 200-acre park-like grounds.

FAIRMOUNT PARK

Fairmount Park was located north of what is now U. S. Highway 24, eight miles east of Kansas City, in the Fairmount area of Independence, Missouri. Arthur Stillwell, a well-known Kansas City railway magnate, developed the park in the 1890s. The 50-acre park, with an eight-acre man-made lake, was open by 1893. Neal S. Doran was named manager. The following year Speedy's Great Dive (a 100-foot dive into a 36-inch tank of water) was advertised as the main attraction of Fairmount Park.⁸ Other attractions included the Bath House; Bathing Beach; the Toboggan Slide; and, Chiko, the Brazilian Flying Monkey Man.

Newspaper advertisements from the late 1890s list fireworks, balloon ascensions, and vaudeville as the main attractions.

By the early 1900s, Fairmount Park had developed into a more general amusement park. In 1906, several amusement rides were added, including: Hunter's Mountain Coaster, 75 feet high; Rader's English jumping horses; the Mystic Cave; a Ferris wheel; Blue Beard's Castle; and, the Circle Swing. A

miniature railway was already in operation, and the park also featured vaudeville.

By 1907, there was a dancing pavilion, zoo and figure eight ride. In 1908, the Angora goat farm was added along with a new roller rink. For 1909, new concessions included "Darkness and Dawn," a new scenic idea. The park later featured the second golf course in the Kansas City area, with nine holes.

A series of fires destroyed Fairmount Park. The first fire was in the winter of 1931 destroying the fun house, the ice cream pavilion and several concessions along the midway. In March 1933, the woman's bathhouse burned. Then in the spring of 1935, the men's bathhouse was destroyed by fire. In the spring of 1936, the office building and picnic pavilion burned. The fifth fire occurred in July 1936 and wiped out six of the nine remaining summer cottages.⁹

By 1939, only the lake remained, and it was badly polluted. County health authorities wanted to drain the lake, but owner Charles D. Carlisle resisted such action, and "No Swimming" signs were posted. The lake was eventually drained, and today, a subdivision occupies the area.¹⁰

TROOST PARK

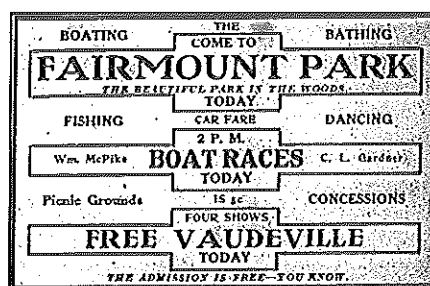
In the 1880s, Kansas City was booming. As a part of that growth, cable car lines were laid to several parts of the city. The first cable line built ran from Union Depot in the West Bottoms to 8th Street and Woodland. It opened in July 1886.

The system soon expanded, and on 18 November 1887, the Kansas City Cable Railway opened its Troost Avenue line. This line ran from 8th Street and Troost Avenue, south to Springfield Avenue (now 31st Street), in what was then the outlying suburbs of Kansas City. One of the owners, William J. Smith, a West Bottoms implement dealer, lived in a big red

sandstone house on

the southwest corner of 30th Street and Troost Avenue.

To develop traffic for the Troost line, the Kansas City Cable Railway decided to create Troost Park. Many similar "trolley parks" came into existence across the country to



Kansas City (Mo.) Star 6 June 1909, courtesy the author.

increase patronage for newly built street rail lines.

The Kansas City Cable Railway owned six acres at the site, and leased twenty-five more acres from Mrs. Lucy A. Porter, a widow, and her two sons, James B. Porter and J. Lee Porter. The tract was part of the original Porter Farm, which the Reverend James Porter, a Methodist minister, acquired in 1834.

On April 19th 1886, the Porters sold a 15-acre strip extending from the alley between Holmes and Charlotte

The Opening of
Washington Park
ON THE FOURTH

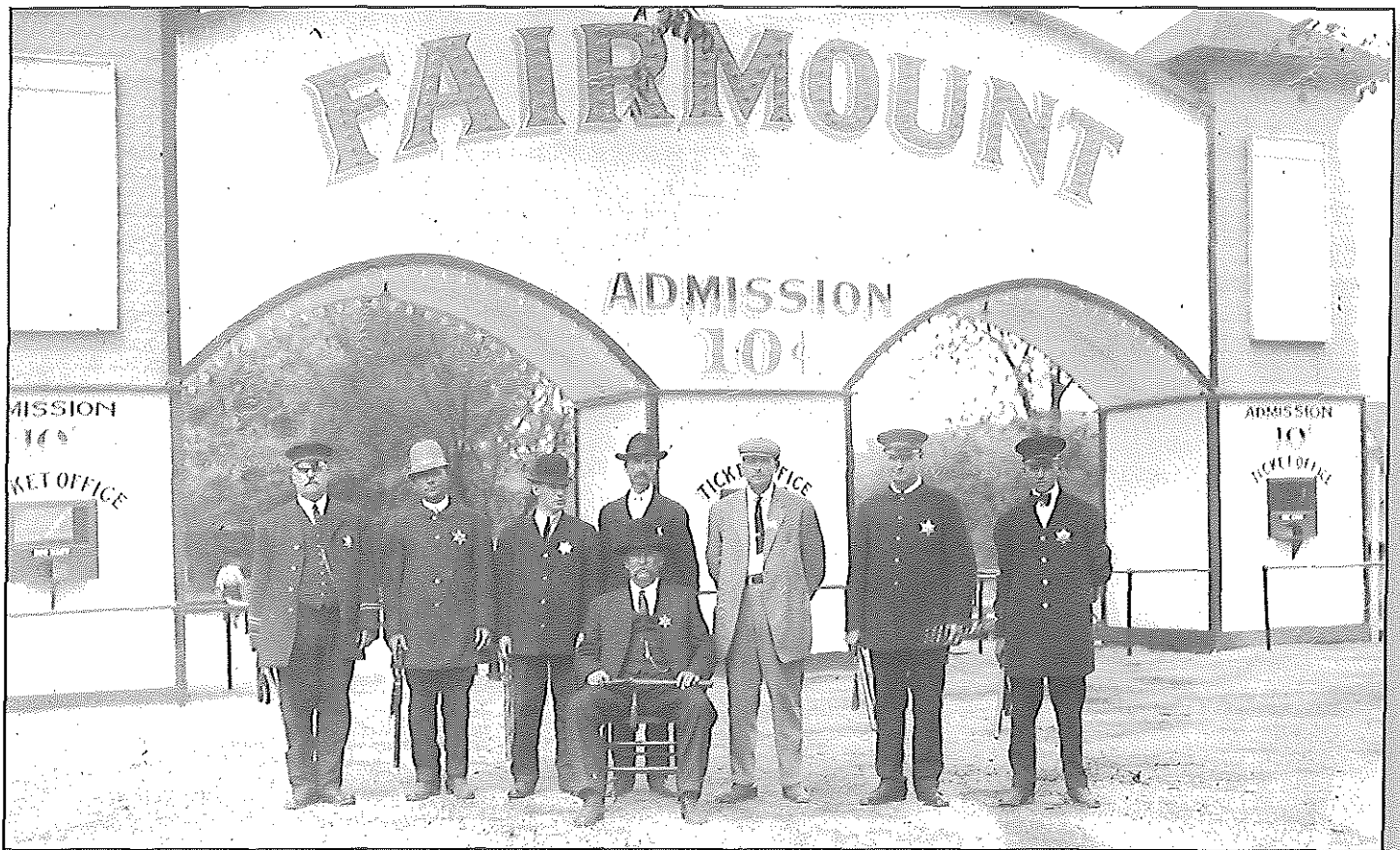
Will give you a chance to see that elegant Residence Suburb
NORTH EVANSTON

Which adjoins Washington Park on the east. Lots selling at \$3.50 to \$10 per foot; worth double. Don't neglect to go over the ground if you want to make a neat little investment. We will furnish carriages to parties desiring to see the property, without charge.

Drake, Parlett & Co.
100 West Ninth St.

AMUSEMENT
Kansas City, Independence & Park Railway Trains
FOR WASHINGTON PARK
Sundays and Mondays, July 3, 4, 5
WILL LEAVE GRAND AVE. & TWENTH ST. AT 10 A. M.
And every hour thereafter, to and including 10 P. M. Stops at Union Depot, Midland street, Brooklyn street, Prospect avenue, Astor street, Wyandotte, Twelfth street, Washington Park, and at Washington Park at 8 P. M. Tickets, 50¢ each, good for round trip.
Single Fare 20¢
Round Trip 35¢
CHILDREN UNDER 10 YEARS
Single Fare 10¢
Round Trip 15¢
Go out to-day and see what the Park Railway has to offer. It is the best place to see the city and its place of rest.

Kansas City (Mo.) Star, 3 July 1887, courtesy the author.



Officers with billy clubs "welcoming" guests at the admission gate to Fairmount Park, or at least "reminding" them to behave. (PHL 5140)

Streets east along 29th Street to Tracy Avenue for \$67,500.

In 1888, Troost Park opened. The entrance was at 29th Street and Tracy, one block from the Troost Avenue cable line. (There was also a private gate at the northeast corner of 28th Street and Tracy; it was the entrance from the Porter Farm.) The park occupied an irregular tract running from 27th Street to Springfield Avenue (31st Street). It ran from Tracy Avenue on the west to Grove and Vine Street on the east.

The cable railway also built a refreshment booth at the southeast corner of 29th Street and Troost Avenue, where sandwiches, popcorn and soda pop were sold. A high, white-picket fence enclosed the park. And, a bell hung over the entrance gate which rang at 11 o'clock in the evening to signify the park's closing. A man-made lake was created between 27th and 29th Streets from Vine Street to Grove Street.

The first mention of the new Troost Park surrounded the 1888 Fourth of July celebrations: *"The Kansas City Cable Railway Company's park on South Troost Avenue received a full quota of pleasure-seekers. The labor picnic was held there and hundreds of working men, with their wives and families, ate their noon meal under the shade of the beautiful trees. All during the afternoon, a constant stream of people, anxious to escape the noise, poured*

in at the gates. The only amusement at the park was dancing. An impromptu-dancing pavilion had been erected and three fiddlers and a cornet player sawed away while the younger ones danced and perspired and perspired and danced. The most of the crowd, however, seemed content to remain under the trees and enjoy the shade, with an occasional trip to the spring for cool draughts. The



1888 Fairmount Park family reunion of the Smart, Sheley, Hughes, Cunningham, Bryant, and Gregg families. (PHL790)

*Troost Avenue cars were crowded nearly all day, and the company reaped a big harvest from the exodus from the city. Dozens went out to the park in carriages and spent the day there.*¹¹

In 1889, more attractions were added, including dancing, music, boat races, and a grand Fourth of July Celebration at Troost Park.¹²

The park's third season, 1890, saw the addition of swimming races, in addition to boat races, dancing and music. Fireworks displays were also added.

In 1891, Troost Park offered free admission for the Fourth of July holiday. In just three years, the new park had added several attractions: a shooting gallery, bowling alley, merry-go-round, fountains, and animal cages.

In 1892, the Switchback Railway was added, the first in Kansas City. The Switchback Railway, forerunner of today's roller coaster, was invented in 1884 by LaMarcus Thompson and first installed at Coney Island, near New York City. It was an immediate sensation and he started grossing \$700 a day. Two years later, Thompson built the first fully developed roller coaster at Atlantic City. Although the **Switchback Railway was the first amusement ride in Kansas City**, the only mention found of the Switchback Railway at Troost Park, save for an undated brochure in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's archival collections, is in newspaper advertisements in 1892, 1893 and 1894.

1896 saw the addition of the Shoot the Chutes ride at Troost Park. The Shoot the Chutes was a water ride consisting of a flat bottom boat that slid down an incline and landed in what was then called Echo Lake (Troost Lake today).

The end of Troost Park as an amusement park also saw the farewell to The Banda Rosa directed by Eugenio Sorrentino.¹³ Admission to the park was ten cents.

After the 1902 season, the City of Kansas City purchased Troost Park and turned it into a city park. The new Paseo Boulevard was extended through the park. Today, Troost Park remains a Kansas City park. Troost Lake recently gained notoriety as a possible crime scene necessitating it being drugged and drained for investigation. Sadly, little else remains today to remotely suggest that Troost Park was Kansas City's first true amusement park.

FOREST PARK, on the southwest corner of Independence Avenue and Hardesty Avenue, was developed by Colonel John Hopkins, manager of Forest Park Highlands in St. Louis. The beautifully wooded land was leased for ten years from Miss Mattie Collins, who owned her family's homestead, the Collins Farm.

Opposition developed to the opening of Forest Park in that part of Kansas City because of the plan to sell liquor. A committee appeared before the council and sought to have a street opened through the park, thus making the location undesirable for a park. However, the plan was abandoned. Work on the park started 1 February 1903.

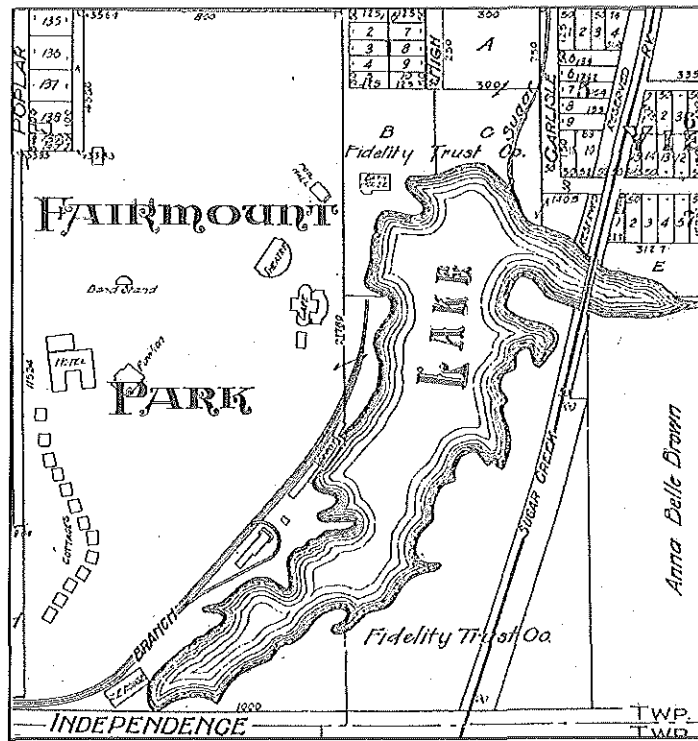
Citizens of Kansas City worried about the worst element of society getting into the park, since no admission would be charged, but Forest Park had strict rules: "... regulations and rules were adopted and then an efficient corps of peace officers were employed to see that the rules were enforced. The result has been all that the

most fastidious could wish for. Frequently during the hot summer visitors to the park have appeared without coats or collars. To permit such a visitor to enter the grounds is a violation of these rules. No one who was not properly attired could get inside the park. This rule is cited merely to show the strictness which Colonel Hopkins has managed his amusement park."¹⁴

Forest Park featured several amusements, including: the Gypsy Camp; Cave of the Winds; Laughing Gallery; Mutoscope Parlor; Photo Gallery; Glass Blowers; Shooting Gallery; Phantom Swing; Cafe and Ice Cream Parlor; Hopkins' Theater; the Pavilion; Pony Track; Merry-Go-Round; Scenic Railway; and, Aquarama. Each one of these attractions occupied a building of its own, all of which were connected by a promenade which encircled the north and west sides of the park.¹⁵

The park planned to open 7 June 1903, according to this *Kansas City Star* article, The Forest Park Opening," the previous day:

"Forest Park will have its formal opening tomorrow and the street car service will be ample to handle the crowds. The Metropolitan Street Railway Company has arranged to have seventeen cars on the Independence electric line to connect with the Ninth, Twelfth and Fifteenth street cable lines. The electric cars will run directly to the main entrance of the park at Independence



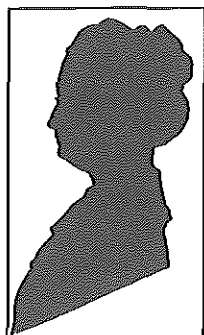
Fairmount Park from the 1907 Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri.



1907 view of the Figure 8 Roller Coaster. (PHL 22)

and Hardesty Avenues. The Independence cable lines also runs to a point within a few blocks of Forest Park. Everything is in readiness for the opening tomorrow, and the Hopkins vaudeville theater will give performances both afternoon and night."

The opening, however, was postponed one week because of the famous 1903 Missouri River flood. On 14 June 1903, a reported 20,000 people attended the opening day. The 10-acre park offered the following features: a scenic railway; Merry-Go-Round; and, little theater (for vaudeville). A "beerless German Village," sold only lemonade, ginger ale and such soft drinks. Colonel Hopkins said, "I don't care if I don't get a permit to sell beer. We have a nice class of people here and we'll do a big business anyway."¹⁶



Mrs. Arnold (Anna) Bishopberger had her silhouette painted at Fairmount Park in 1909. Courtesy the editor.

The 1904 season opened on Sunday, May 8. And, for the second season there was an admission fee. Adults were charged ten cents, children five cents. But, admission was free weekday afternoons. New attractions for 1904 included a

Miniature Railway that was nearly a mile long; the Helter-Skelter Slide (similar to one built the previous year at Coney Island in New York); the Katzenjammer Castle; Back To The Mines, an "exact reproduction of a visit to a coal mine;" and, Tug of War on Wheels.

The 1905 Forest Park season opened Sunday, May 7. Admission was free, but the Hopkins Theater cost 10, 20 or 50 cents depending on the seat location. Old favorites

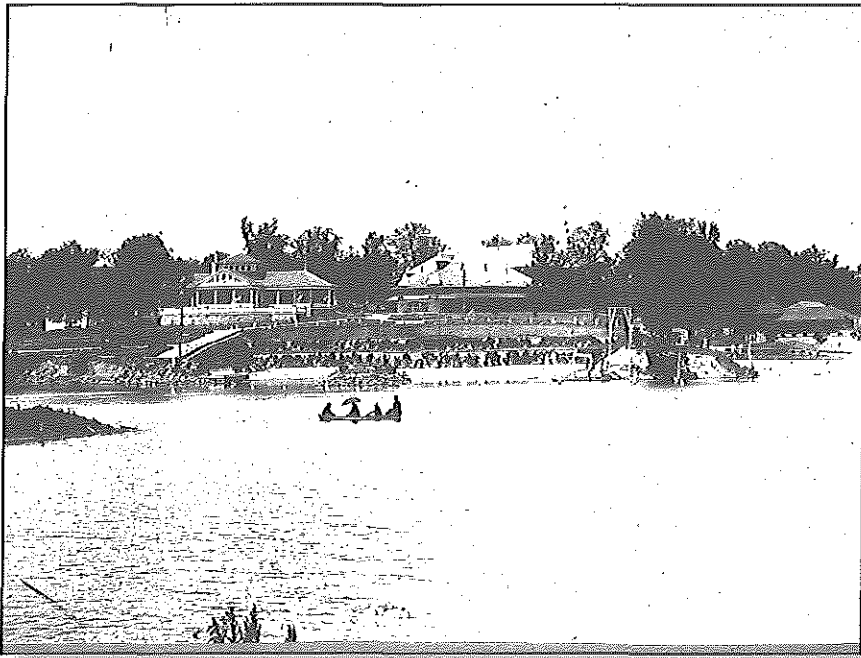
included the Scenic Railway, the Back to the Mines ride (described as the most popular feature at the park); Helter-Skelter Slide; Katzenjammer Castle; and, the Scenic Waterway.

The Aquarama ride (which was an original ride) was described in an advertisement in the 2 July 1905 *Kansas City Star* as, "a tiny river which winds its serpentine course through cool subterranean caves and grottos for more than a mile. Visitors glide along the current in safe, roomy boats, and in great recesses on either side view beautiful and wonderful scenes from every country on the globe."

Free attractions for 1905 included the "King and Queen" (two high diving Arabian horses); a Ladies Orchestra and Hungarian Band in the Japanese Gardens; and, Lenge's Military Band. Also for the 1905 season was an "exact reproduction" of the World's Fair Cascades, in honor of the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition at St. Louis.

The 1906 season opened Sunday, April 22, but an article the following month in the *Kansas City Star* noted, "the real season opens today at Forest Park. Manager Lloyd Brown has gathered together a particularly interesting lot of attractions. The featured one is Kyril's Bohemian Band."¹⁷ 1906 also saw the start of a 10-cent admission fee to the park, although persons who purchased a reserve seat at Hopkins Theater got free admission to the grounds.

April 28 marked the opening of Forest Park for the 1907 season, which also saw the opening of the new Electric Park at 46th and The Paseo. The new park apparently did not hurt attendance at Forest Park. D. F. Russell, manager of Forest Park, said he had two surprises on opening day, "First one was the weather. I thought early this morning it would certainly



Fairmount Lake and Pavilions. (PHL567)

rain. Then with two other parks opening to-day, I never expected such a crowd at Forest."¹⁸

The 1907 season saw several new attractions, including: the Kansas City Cyclone (a "mechanical and scenic production . . . It occupies a building especially equipped with stage appliances and effects used to imitate realistically a tornado.")¹⁹ Other new attractions in 1907 included the Flea Circus, which featured 300 large fleas taught to jump at command, to march, dance and to juggle balls. The Indian Heaven was an attraction from the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair, and represented a forest in which imitation animals and birds moved. 1907 also saw the addition of moving pictures at Forest Park. Pathe from Paris was described as featuring imported colored films. The Hopkins Theater became the Casino, and featured light opera such as "Fra Diavolo," "The Mascot," and the "Mikado."

The 1908 season at Forest Park opened on May 3. New attractions included a balloon ascension; Luken's Living Teddy Bears; the Casino Theater; Saint Nicholas roller skating rink; Kennedy's Wild West Show featuring Chief Dove Feather, war chief of the Cheyenne's; and, the Seneganbians (apparently a vaudeville show).

Saturday, May 1, was opening day for the 1909 season at Forest Park. Admission to the park this year was only five cents. An advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* of Sunday, 25 April 1909 noted that \$30,000 was spent on improvements to the park. New features included the swimming pool; Humble Peter ride; the Panama Canal ride; the Human Roulette Wheel; and, the Squaler ride. A 6 June 1909 advertisement in the *Kansas City Star* noted, "Everything new but the trees."

Opening day for the 1910 season at Forest was Sunday, April 24, and admission was still five cents; rides were five cents each. Admission was free every afternoon except

Sundays and holidays. Since some \$30,000 was spent the previous year on new attractions, only a few were added in 1910: Dare Devil Ahern, diving 100 feet into the water; free vaudeville; and, Koffler's Dancing Pavilion.

Forest Park opened for the 1911 season on Sunday, April 23, with an article in the *Kansas City Post* noting:

"Today inaugurates the summer season at Forest Park. The resort has been greatly improved during the winter months and is now very attractive. The latest devices for amusement have been secured and patrons will find many surprises, which will enhance their pleasure throughout the entire season. The best featured attractions, however, will be the free vaudeville and band concerts which will be given twice daily in the new village. The headliner on the vaudeville bill will be the Page Sisters in an eccentric singing and dancing number while the Three Silers in a sensational and aerial act and the Dixie Montague, monologist, will complete the bill. Stanard's Band, a local organization that needs no introduction, will furnish the concert music. It is composed of excellent musicians and carries a number of soloists."

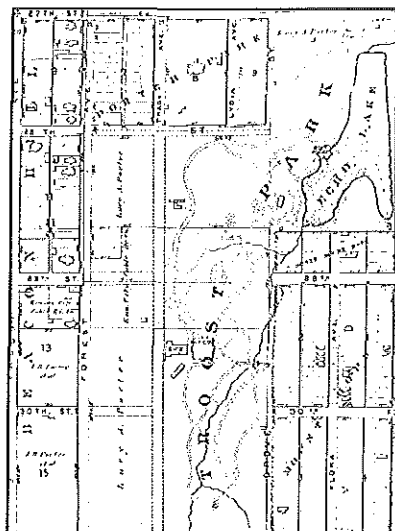
1912 marked the last year for Kansas City's Forest Park.

The season opened on Sunday, April 21. Admission was still five cents and all rides were still five cents. New features included: "the Sham Battle! Reproduction of the United States Troops of the attack on the walls of Pekin, China, during the Boxer Uprising by Company E, 3rd Regiment;" Asthol, the Human Alligator; and, Corti's Italian Band.

The real fireworks, however, came at the end of the 1912 season, when, at the end of August, Forest Park was the home to the "Jackson County Negro Fair." *The Kansas City Post* on 29 August 1912 reported that more than 100 women attended the session of the Circuit Court that morning to

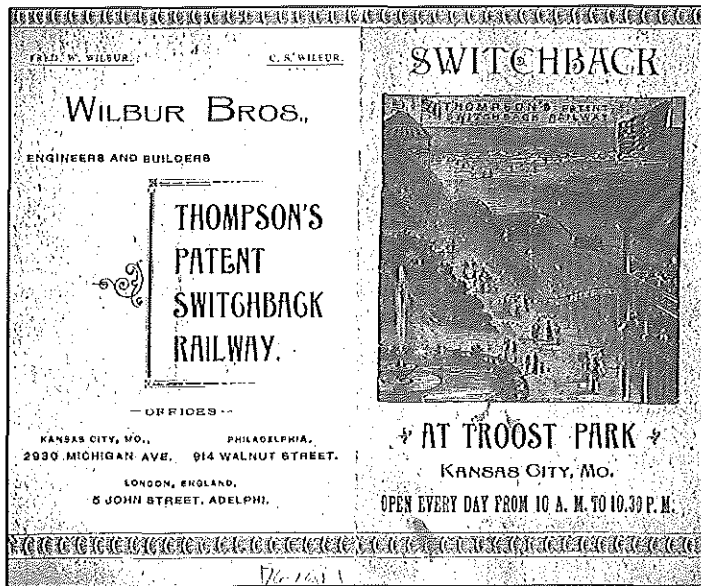
lend their support to the effort to exclude negroes from Forest Park.

Circuit Court Judge T. J. Seehorn, a Democrat, disqualified himself to act alone. He called in Judge J. E. Goodrich, a Republican, to sit with him. At the conclusion of the hearing Judge Seehorn decided the negroes should not be granted a city license, and the Republican judge decided they should. At noon, Judge J. A. Guthrie, a Democrat,



Troost Park from the 1891 Atlas of Kansas City, Missouri.

was called to hear the arguments and to cast the deciding vote. Adjournment was taken to the law library in the Scarritt Building. When they met there Judge Guthrie was called. Then, it was decided to call in Judges Slover and Pemmell.



Undated promotional brochure for the FIRST amusement ride in Kansas City, The Switchback at Troost Park, from the Society's collections.

James Garner, assistant city counselor, fought the issuance of the license on the grounds of race prejudice. Threats are alleged to have been made that, if the negro fair is allowed to run, the park will be dynamited. Glen Sherman, for the park lessees, said race prejudice was the only objection made. He thought the race trouble anticipated had been magnified.

The Negro Fair apparently opened without a license on Thursday, 29 August 1912. For operating Forest park without a license, Judge Clarence A. Burney of the North Side Municipal Court fined J. H. Koffler, manager of the grounds, \$100. Mr. Koffler notified the court that he would take an appeal to the criminal court. An officer from police station 7 re-arrested (sic) J. H. Koffler who was released upon furnishing an \$11 bond to appear in the North Side Municipal Court.²⁰

The Jackson County Negro Fair and carnival drew big crowds. The celebration had been orderly and a large number of white people attended. The Negro Fair apparently continued until 24 September 1912.

(That was the date of the last advertisement in the *Kansas City Post*.)

By 4 October 1912 all the buildings, machinery and

appurtenances of Forest Park, said to represent an original cost of \$195,000, were reported having been sold by J. H. Koffler for \$5,000. Everything in the park was included in the sale. The purchasers were to dispose of the property to owners of amusement places, and the heirs of the Collins estate, who still owned the land and intended to plat it into a subdivision. The park fixtures were sacrificed because the lease on the park grounds expired January 1.²¹ The work of dismantling commenced October 15, and everything was removed by January 1, 1913.

Today, nothing suggests that the site was once Forest Park. Commercial businesses line Independence Avenue, and homes occupy the rest of the area.

CHELSEA PARK

Chelsea Park, in Kansas City, Kansas, was developed as a trolley park by the Inter-State Consolidated Rapid Transit Railway, a cable and steam dummy railroad line that ran from 8th and Delaware west through a tunnel to the West Bottoms via cable, and then converted to a steam dummy elevated railroad at St. Louis Avenue. It ran west across the Kansas River, turned north at 6th Street, west at Stewart Avenue, and south at Glendale to Chelsea Park. Another cable line ran west from 5th out Riverview Boulevard (now Central Avenue.)

The Railroad was owned by Colonel David W. Edgerton. The 25-acre Chelsea Park was opened on 4 July 1887 to a reported crowd of 10,000 people.²² Chelsea Park started with attractions that would eventually lead to the real amusement park: a "Cane Fakir," a bowling alley; and, a merry-go-round. There was also bow and target shooting as well as a man-made volcano, called Mount Vesuvius, after the famous volcano in Italy. The erupting "volcano" was simulated by fireworks that were ignited twice a week during the summer.

Chelsea Park also contained the first and only zoological garden in Kansas City, Kansas. The Zoological Garden contained eight cages of rare animals and monkeys.²³

Margaret Landis, in her brief history, "Carnival Park, Kansas City's White City," Chelsea Park, "slipped into history" soon after 1900. A part of the Kansas City, Kansas, park remains today as West Height Park, from 20th to 22nd Streets, and from New Jersey to Wood.

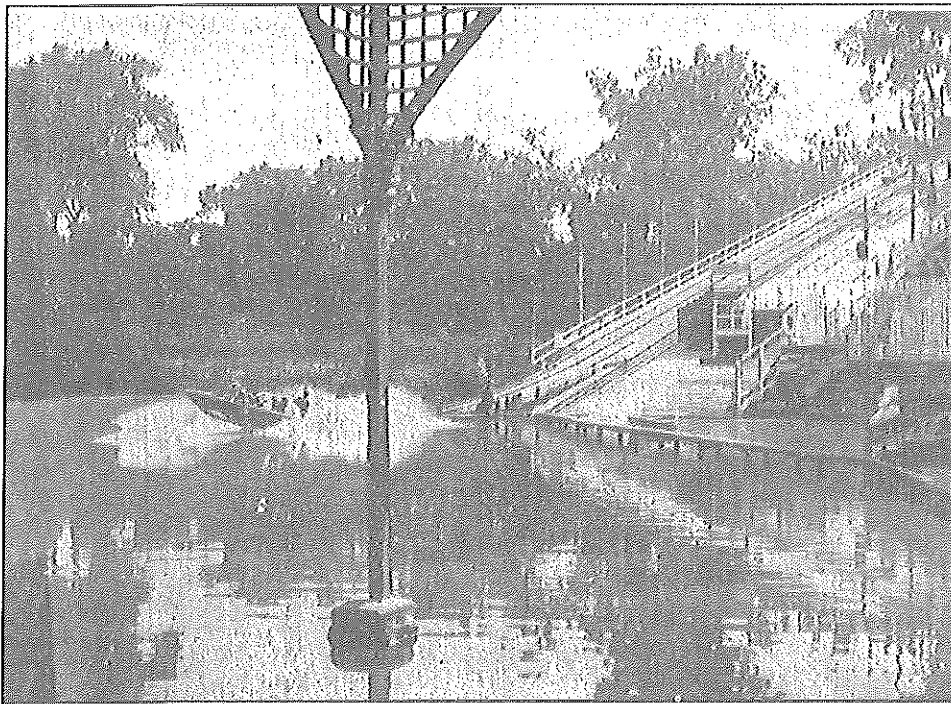
CARNIVAL PARK

The 13½-acre Carnival Park opened 25 May 1907 in Kansas City, Kansas. IT was developed at 14th and Armstrong by the Carnival Park Amusement Association, a group of local businessmen. The company planned to use the Indian style of architecture to honor the many Wyandotte Indian legends. The color scheme was the earth colors of chrome yellow, red and black. The boardwalk was called the trail and the restaurant was the Wigwam. Several tribes of Indians were planned to be in the Indian Village.²⁴

Some 20,000 people attended the dedication ceremonies for Carnival Park on 24 May 1907, the day before opening



1896 saw the addition of the "Shoot the Chutes" ride at Troost Park. This advertisement from the *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 July 1896, courtesy the author.



Shoot the Chutes ride from the *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 23 July 1946, courtesy the author.

day. The *Star* said the opening ceremony was delayed when it was discovered the Leavenworth trolley car crossing the Kaw Avenue Bridge at Central Avenue short-circuited the trunk lines carrying electrical power to the park. The problem was soon corrected and some 40,000 lights were turned on.²⁵

Carnival Park also opened the same year as the new

Carnival Park opened the 1908 season on Sunday, May 10. The Banda Bianca di Milano was the featured band, and the *Kansas City Star* noted "each night's programme will end with moving pictures, which will be accompanied by specially arranged music."²⁶ Vaudeville was made a feature for 1908, with five different acts scheduled. Other changes included enlarging the picnic grounds.

The park apparently was in financial trouble by 1909, as no advertisements were found in the *Kansas City Star* for the 1909 season.

In a series for the Kansas City, Kansas Bicentennial Commission, a story on Carnival Park says the park was leased to a carnival for the 1910 and 1911 seasons.

For the 1910 season, an "Annual Souvenir" in the Kansas City, Kansas, Public Library shows the, "Fair and Carnival, September 4-11," was under the direction of the Merchants' and Manufacturers' Fair Association. Max Hoizmark is listed as President. He had also been the second vice-president of the Carnival Park Association in 1908.

No amusement rides are mentioned in the 1910 Annual

BEAUTIFUL FOREST PARK OPENS TO-DAY.
Clothed in Freshness of Spring—Long List of New Attractions to Please the Masses.
HOPKINS THEATER BIGGER, BETTER AND GRANDER VAUDEVILLE
SUPERB SCENIC SINGING SENSATION FREDERICK V. BOWERS
\$5,000.00 NOVELTY—THE MOST BEAUTIFUL ACT IN VAUDEVILLE
DIXON BROS. MEEHAN'S DOGS
CORDUA and MAUD LEO and CHAPMAN
VALHUND and MILE TENNA
 2 Shows Daily, Rain or Shine—Admission: 10c, 25c, and 50c.
 Admission to Grounds, Nights and Sundays, Adults, 10c; Children, 5c. Week Afternoons Free to All.
 Purchasers of Reserved Seats for Theater at Main Entrance Will Be Presented With Free Admission to Grounds, Nights and Sundays.

From the *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 18 May 1904, courtesy the author.

Electric Park at 46th and The Paseo in Kansas City, Missouri. As mentioned earlier, Forest Park was also a competitor. Landis' "Carnival Park, Kansas City's White City," notes that the park association borrowed \$35,000 a month after the park opened. The next year, \$10,000 was borrowed.

Carnival Park opened with a dazzling array of amusements, including: Shoot the Chutes; a Scenic Railway; a ballroom with a 75 by 100 foot dancing pavilion; Double Whirl; Ferris Wheel; Figure 8; and, a Carousel.

ADMISSION RIDES GAMES REFRESHMENTS 5c FOREST PARK
ALL NEW—25 SHOWS—ALL OPEN
 PANAMA CANAL.....(NEW) KOFFLER'S BALLROOM.....(NEW)
 HUMAN ROULETTE WHEEL.....(NEW) OBERITA, SHE'S GREAT.....(NEW)
 THE SQUEEZER.....(NEW) HUMAN NIAGARA.....(NEW)
 SOUP BOWL.....(NEW) HUMBLE PETER.....(NEW)
 THE MARATHON RACE.....(NEW) REITER SISTERS.....(NEW)
 PLATON BUILDING.....(NEW) INTERNATIONAL THEATER.....(NEW)
 PARADISE ALLEY.....(NEW) CAKE WALK.....(NEW)
 SWIMMING POOL.....(NEW) CUPID'S BOWER.....(NEW)
 TREES.....(OLD)
HIGH DIVE TODAY, 4 AND 8 P. M.
EVERYTHING NEW BUT THE TREES | SOME FIVE CENTS MOSTLY ALL FREE

From the *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 16 June 1909, courtesy the author.

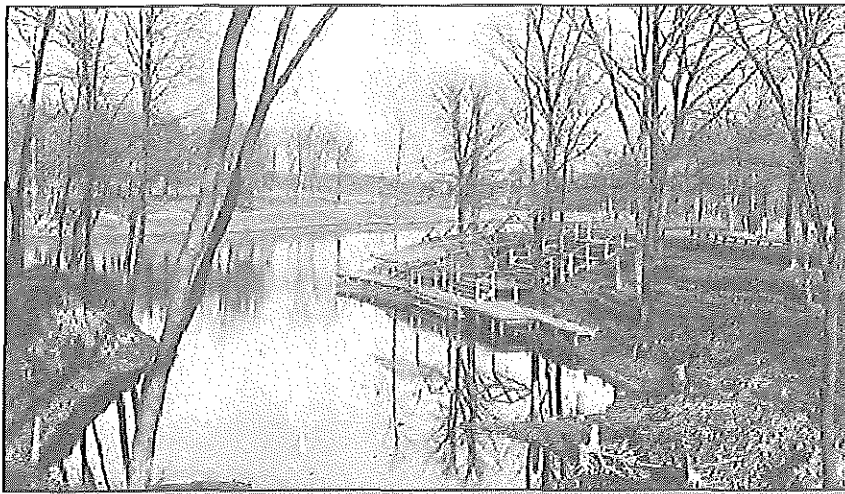
Souvenir, only musical programs and athletic events such as horse shoe pitching, the 100 yard dash, and sack race. There were also contests for the prettiest baby and ugliest man.

According to the *Kansas City (Ks.) Gazette-Globe*, the last scheduled event at Carnival Park was 9 October 1911, an event for the Knights of Columbus.

On 9 February 1912, The *Gazette-Globe* reported: "Carnival Park was a beautiful hope . . . but it couldn't pay its board. So after a precarious existence of five years in which all sorts of offers for its

FOREST PARK
Jackson County Negro
Fair Now Open
Swimming and Dancing
ADMISSION 10c ALL RIDES 10c

From the *Kansas City (Mo.) Post*, 1 September 1912, courtesy the author. The *Post* was the only newspaper to run the advertisement.



Chelsea Park from the Kansas City (Ks.) Kansan, 12 January 1886, courtesy the author.

adoption were considered and discussed, it was bundled up door, lock and lavel and bartered to the Bargain Lumber and Salvage Company of 10th and State Streets, where it will be given a good home until such time as upon such terms as will be advantageous to both buyer and seller it will be parceled out to a less vivid, but more substantial existence."

What caused the demise of Carnival Park? Landis notes several reasons, including a wind storm that caused the tower

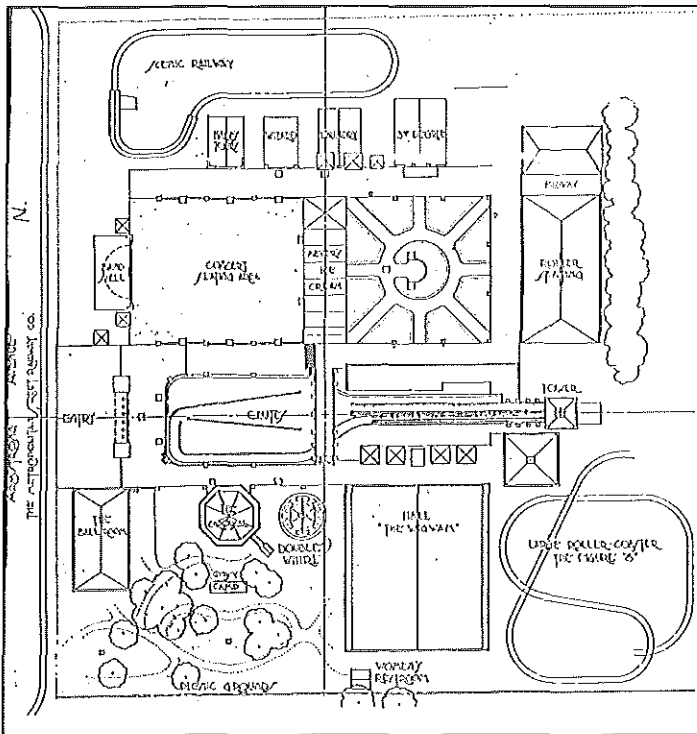
School Board on 27 October 1915.

Later, the property was sold to the Hoel family, which deeded the land to the Catholic Diocese on 27 June 1932. Today, the site of Carnival Park is the athletic field for Bishop Ward Catholic High School.

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG.

Craig M. Bryan UE, is author of several unpublished local history manuscripts. He has kindly donated copies of these histories to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives and Research Library, and has allowed us to publish a version of this manuscript for your enjoyment. A completely illustrated manuscript is available for research in the Society's Archives. Watch future issues of the JOURNAL for representations of Mr. Bryan's other compilations.

The Society welcomes donations of photographic or post card images and documents relating to our areas picnic and amusement parks. Call our Archives for more information at 816.252.7454.



Carnival Park as built from Margaret Landis, "Carnival Park, Kansas City's White City."

to fall, and a fire that damaged the Roller Skating Rink. She also notes the park was a "family park," with no liquor sold.

Landis reports the two mortgages were repaid in September 1912. The property was sold to Elizabeth Lysaught and then was sold to the Kansas City, Kansas,

- ¹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 27 July 1937.
- ² *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 21 July 1897.
- ³ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 9 June 1909.
- ⁴ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 July 1887.
- ⁵ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal*, 5 July 1888.
- ⁶ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 July 1896.
- ⁷ *Kansas City (Mo.) Times*, 3 June 1973.
- ⁸ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 July 1894.
- ⁹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 18 July 1936.
- ¹⁰ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 Sept. 1939.
- ¹¹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal*, 5 July 1888.
- ¹² *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 3 July 1889.
- ¹³ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 31 August 1902. The advertisement noted it was the Band's third season in Kansas City.
- ¹⁴ *The Kansas City (Mo.) World*, 13 June 1903.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ *Kansas City (Mo.) Times* 15 June 1903.
- ¹⁷ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 20 May 1906.
- ¹⁸ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 20 May 1907.
- ¹⁹ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 28 April 1907.
- ²⁰ *Kansas City (Mo.) Post*, 1 Sept. 1912.
- ²¹ *The Kansas City (Mo.) Times*, 4 Oct 1912.
- ²² *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal*, 5 July 1887.
- ²³ *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal*, 10 July 1887.
- ²⁴ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 8 Dec 1906. This themed park apparently did not develop.
- ²⁵ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 24 May 1907.
- ²⁶ *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 10 May 1908.

JOSEPHINE (RUSSELL) ERWIN CLAY: HER PASSAGE THROUGH JACKSON COUNTY UNFURLED

BY HENRY CLAY SIMPSON, JR.

The Sixth Missouri Infantry CSA, a regiment of volunteers from Jackson County, Missouri, commanded by Colonel Eugene Erwin suffered heavy losses in the Civil War campaign in Mississippi. Erwin, a grandson of statesman Henry Clay, was killed leading a counter charge attempting to break General Ulysses S. Grant's six-week siege of Vicksburg.

Erwin's widow, Josephine (a daughter of William Henry and Zaenett Freeland Russell), who had joined her husband in Vicksburg, met Union General Grant after the surrender. In spite of her southern sympathies, and undoubtedly because of her connections to prominent families known to Grant, he aided her return home to Independence in Jackson County, Missouri.

Before the War, the Erwins had been enumerated in the 1860 U.S. Census as living in the Jones Hotel on Independence Square, where they sought refuge from raging border warfare. Martial law was instituted just after Josephine's return to Independence; but, she obtained an order of protection from the Federal Commander in St. Louis that exempted her from General Order No. 11.

After the War she married a famous Kentuckian, became successful in her own right, and is honored in a museum exhibition, a book, and a documentary film in Kentucky.

ROUND-TRIP INDEPENDENCE TO VICKSBURG

The surrender of the Confederate forces at Vicksburg took place on July 4, 1863. The terms called for a single Federal division to take possession of the city: "as soon as paroles can be signed by the officers and men . . . the rank and file will

and needed help. A few days later, Hickman saw Colonel Thomas L. Fletcher, a Union Missouri infantry officer and former prisoner of war whom Hickman had guarded. Hickman told Fletcher that Mrs. Erwin would soon deliver into the world the great-grandchild famed statesman Henry Clay. At 10 a.m. on July 18, Fletcher, who would later become governor of Missouri, led Josephine and Hickman to Lum House, a mansion on Main Street in Vicksburg, where General Grant made his headquarters.

Grant was with his adjutant and a major general, but as soon as he recognized Fletcher, he dismissed them, saying "You must excuse me now, gentlemen, I have an appointment with Colonel Fletcher and his friends." Fletcher spoke to Grant about Josephine and her family. He noted President Lincoln's admiration for Henry Clay and his long-standing support for the Union.

Acting out of respect for Josephine, her nine-year-old daughter who accompanied her, and the unborn child, Grant wrote out two travel passes including free Federal transport. One pass allowed Josephine and her daughter to proceed to St. Louis. Another authorized Hickman to accompany them as far as Cairo, Illinois, requiring that he return to Vicksburg on the first steamship to await parole.

Turning to Hickman, Grant asked: "Has Mrs. Erwin any money?" "None that will pass in the North," was the reply. "Then give her this," he said, handing Hickman a \$50 greenback. When Grant extended his hand to Josephine as she was leaving, she refused to shake it. She could not shake the hand of the man she felt was responsible for her husband's death.

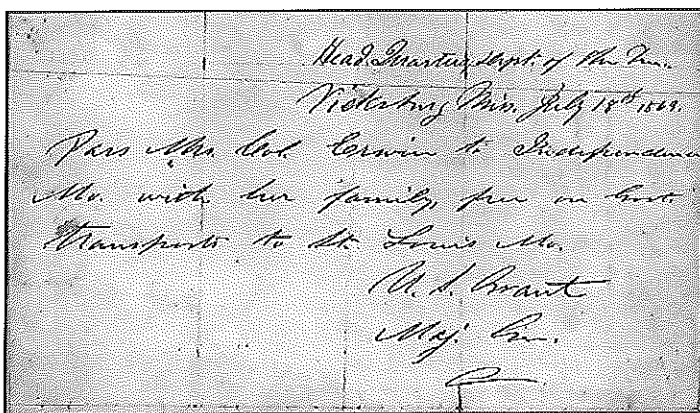
The following morning, Josephine, Lula, and Hickman left Vicksburg by steamer for St. Louis. Although subject to Grant's limitation on carrying possessions, Josephine had sewn the Sixth Missouri battle flag inside her petticoat.

When Josephine arrived in Independence in the summer of 1863, she found that her mother and two daughters had moved to another residence in the city. The Jones Hotel had been converted to a hospital for soldiers wounded in numerous battles near Independence. Josephine soon gave birth to her fourth daughter, named Eugenia in honor of her late husband. The child lived only a few days. This was the low point in her life. Her husband's death and the loss of her baby daughter transformed a bright personality into a serious and single-minded young woman dedicated to the survival of her family in wartime Missouri.

Josephine's terrible experiences during the Civil War changed her life, her outlook upon life, her station and



Josephine Deborah (Russell) Erwin (later Mrs. John M. Clay), images courtesy the author.



Pass to Independence, Missouri, for, "Mrs. Colonel Erwin," signed by General U.S. Grant; one of many family documents donated by the author to the University of Kentucky Libraries.

be allowed their clothing, but no other property." Lieutenant Edwin H. Hickman, a company commander of the Sixth Missouri who had lost an arm in battle, met with Josephine, who had joined her husband in Vicksburg, and asked about her plans for returning to Missouri.

She revealed to Hickman that she was "in the family way,"

circumstances. The War ultimately changed in the role of women in American society as Josephine, like many in similar situations, was empowered to live a more independent life. She later wrote that she was determined to "paddle my own canoe; and if the craft went down, to sink with her."⁴

I have documented the story of Josephine Clay's life in a biography published in 2005 titled, *Josephine Clay: Pioneer Horsewoman of the Bluegrass*. [Copies of the first and expanded second editions have been donated to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's non-circulating Research Library.] The book describes her travels through Jackson County, her life in Independence, and how Josephine moved her family to Lexington, Kentucky, after the Civil War in 1865 to work in the household of her husband's uncle, John M. Clay, the youngest son of Henry Clay.

Josephine married John the following year. Following a genealogy outlined in the book, you can see that Josephine married Henry Clay's grandson first, and then later married one of his sons. Josephine began a close involvement in the operation of John Clay's thoroughbred horse-breeding establishment, Ashland Stock Farm. After he died in 1887, Josephine inherited the farm and became the first woman to own and operate a large horse farm in the United States. She was famous throughout the country for her success in breeding with blood lines traced today to twenty standing stallions in eight countries including Derby winner Smarty Jones.

Josephine was also the author of popular novels and newspaper articles about women overcoming adversity and achieving success in competition with professional men, a revolutionary idea during her time.

UNFURLING AN HISTORIC FLAG

The Sixth Missouri battle flag was Josephine's most cherished and valuable possession. It was hand sewn from imported crimson merino from England in Richmond, Virginia. It has a buff fringe on its border and a field of thirteen yellow stars with a new moon in the upper-left corner.

Ensign William Huff carried the flag in the assault in Corinth Mississippi and was shot nine times before he fell on the flag, drenching the stars with his blood. Over 70 percent of the Sixth Missouri unit was killed or wounded at Corinth, and to the survivors, the flag became a symbol of their fallen comrades.

Over the years, Josephine sent the flag to reunions of the regiment in Missouri. The meetings opened with the unfurling of the flag and the reading of a letter from Josephine Erwin Clay by a surviving officer. In 1885, Major Hickman, who had accompanied Josephine on her return from Vicksburg years before, read her letter "asking the survivors to show it to their children, a relic made sacred by its baptism in the fire and smoke of battle. I feel happy in being instrumental in its preservation .

... "Twenty-three out of the one hundred living survivors of the unit, which had once numbered six hundred men, attended.

When the flag was sent back to Lexington, it arrived in the evening at the Lexington Express office. During the night, a fire broke out in the building, and a man ran into the building to save as many letters as he could, but he emerged with only one package—it proved to be the flag.⁵

On June 13, 1913, Josephine Clay, the widow of Colonel Eugene Erwin, the commander of the Six Missouri Regiment, Colonel Eugene Erwin, sent the flag to a reunion of over 15,000

Federal and Confederate survivors at Higginsville, Missouri. The program began with a moment of silence to honor the dead, and the crowd let out a mighty roar as the flag was unfurled.⁶ It had become a symbol of the sacrifices of both sides in the conflict.

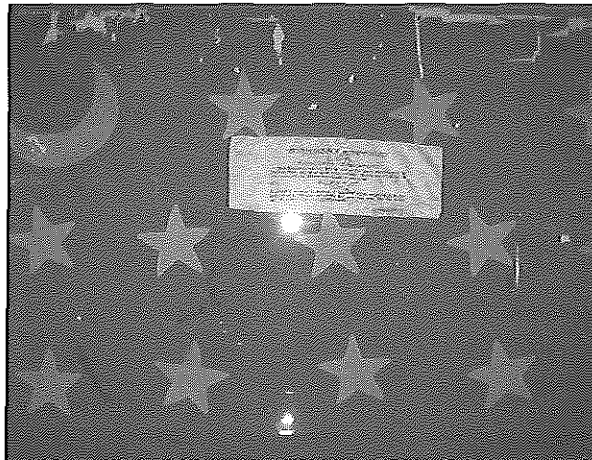
After Josephine Clay's death in 1920, the flag remained in its package for over eighty years until removed from an attic a few years ago. The flag and uniform, which are owned by Josephine's descendent were featured last year at the Horse Park of Kentucky near Lexington.

A biography of Josephine Clay, by author Kent Masterson Brown is being shown on Kentucky educational television.

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG.

Henry Clay Simpson, Jr., is a native of Lexington, Kentucky. Simpson was awarded the Order of Merit, the highest state honor in history by the Kentucky Historical Society in Frankfort, Kentucky, for originating the Henry Clay exhibit at the Horse Park of Kentucky in 2005. Simpson, along with Kent Masterson Brown, are writing the biography of Colonel Eugene Erwin. Their Filson Historical Society sponsored seminar next spring in Vicksburg will follow the footsteps of Erwin, and Jackson County's 6th Missouri Infantry, CSA. Contact Simpson at hcsimpson@comcast.net to contribute to this valuable research.

- ¹ See the article about the Jones Hotel in the Autumn 2005 Jackson County Historical Society JOURNAL.
- ² Thomas L. Fletcher was a Democrat and strong supporter of President Lincoln. He was elected governor of Missouri, 1865-1869 and was the leader of the state during the Reconstruction period.
- ³ Paine, Capt. James E., Sixth Missouri Infantry CSA. "Henry Clay and the Eventful Life of His Grandson, Eugene Erwin," *Independence (Mo.) Sentinel*, 1883.
- ⁴ Clay, Mrs. John M. "Women in the Professions." *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 15 June 1903.
- ⁵ "Colonel Erwin," *Lexington (Mo.) Leader*, 25 June 1913.
- ⁶ Ibid.



Battle Flag of the Sixth Missouri Infantry CSA. Courtesy Wood Simpson.

SNAPPING UP IMAGES AND HISTORY OF KANSAS CITY PHOTOGRAPHERS: DEVELOPING A SKETCH OF DAVID PRESLY "D. P." THOMSON (1849-1933) BY JAMES A. THARP AND DAVID W. JACKSON

For a number of years James A. Tharp collected portraits taken by Kansas City area photographers. He frequented antique shops and flea market booths, rummaged through boxes and bins of "instant ancestors," and assembled a collection of photographs taken by Kansas City photographers.

Tharp's interest stemmed from not only the art and composition, but the identifying marks and logos of the photographers that seemed to change frequently. He then researched in city directories and abstracted annual listings for local photographers, organizing the entries by the last name of the photographer or their business name. From there, he investigated other historical resources to make his chronology more complete. The result of Tharp's personal interest is a compilation titled, *City Directory Classified Entries for Photographers, Metropolitan Kansas City, 1859 to 1925: A Consolidated Listing*. A copy of this several hundred-page document is available for research at the Historical Society's Archives, and at the Mid-Continent Public Library's Genealogy and Local History Branch.

In 2003, Tharp donated his personal collection of historical photographs to the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society. His collection consists of 295 photographs (53 carte de visites; 191 cabinet card photographs; and 51 in other formats) representing 75 photographers. This collection is unique, and we hope other similar collections will be donated, in the future, to further expand this historical resource.

Kansas City's most prolific photographer was David Presly Thomson, who went by "D.P." Below is a rough sketch and timeline of Thomson and his associates, compiled from various historical resources.

David Presly Thomson was born 17 September 1849 near Knoxville, Ray County, Missouri.¹ He was the eldest son of William Thomson, a farmer and a native of Kentucky, and Sarah Ann (Holman) Thomson, who had married in Ray County on 11 March 1848. Sarah had died by 1855 when William married Mary Brody on 13 February.²

Thomson spent his early years in Ray County and in Jefferson City. In 1864, at age fifteen, he attended school in St. Louis and then worked for a commission house from 1866-1868. For the next five years, Thomson worked as a bookkeeper for the well-known St. Louis photographer, Professor A. J. Fox.³

Thomson married Sophia "Sophie" Lange of St. Louis in January 1871.⁴ Sophia had been born in June 1850 in Ohio.⁵ David and Sophia had no children. From the time of their marriage in 1871 until they left St. Louis in 1873, the couple lived near the northwest corner of Lynch and Seventh Streets.⁶

In 1873, the Union Pacific Railroad hired Thomson to join a party they were sending to the Rocky Mountains to take promotional photographs. Shortly before Thanksgiving, the party reached Kansas City, but had to wait a week while a special railroad car was outfitted for them. While waiting, Thomson explored Kansas City and met William I. Williams of the Merine & Williams Photograph Gallery, located above the T. M. James Store at 6th and Main. (Merine was Williams' uncle.)

Nearly 30 years Thomson's senior, portrait painter John Cox Merine was born in Richmond, Indiana, in 1821, and received his early training in Cincinnati. He worked briefly in Louisville, Kentucky; Jacksonville, Illinois; and, Madison, Wisconsin. He and his wife, Mary A. (Clampit) Merine, came to Kansas City in 1869.

He painted over 2,500 life size portraits during his lengthy career, 1,000 of which were painted since his residence in Kansas City.

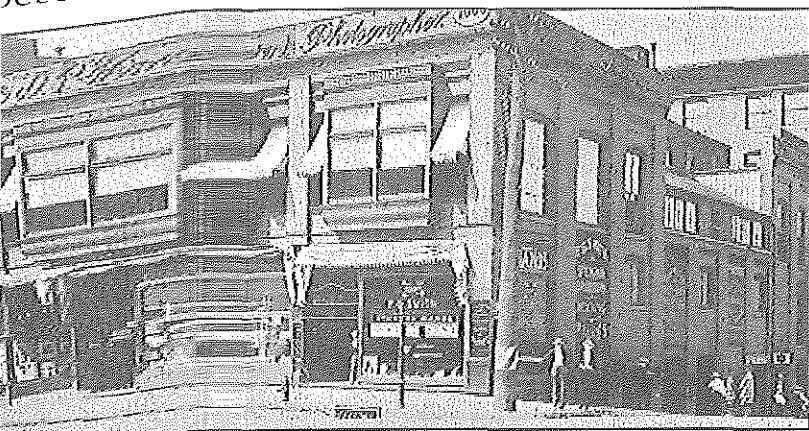
Merine painted many famous Kentuckians, including Henry Clay; Rev. Alexander Campbell, the founder of the Christian Church; Attorney General Harlan, father of justice Harlan of the Supreme Court; and George O. Prentice, the distinguished editor of the Louisville Journal. While in Illinois, Merine painted portraits of Governors Yates and Oglesby.

Some of Merine's notable portraits of Kansas Citians included: Colonel Kersey Coates; Major William Warner; one-time mayor Milton McGee; Rev. Nathan Scarritt; Colonel R. H. Hunt; John J. Mastin and Dr. J. M. Wood. He was also noted for his still life, landscape and marine masterpieces. The celebrated and acclaimed artist moved from his residence, "Tanglewood," at 2305 Troost Avenue, to Hyde Park, but died while living in Westport at 23 East Long Meadow Avenue in 1896 and was buried in Union Cemetery.

Mrs. Merine later lived at 2913 East 29th Street, where she exhibited many of her husband's paintings. Under the direction of Merine's daughter, the Nelson Gallery of Art exhibited some of her father's portraits in 1936. His daughter died in 1939, and though she had requested a number of paintings be presented to the Missouri Historical Society, they have no artwork cataloged of Merine's work.

While many of Merine's portraits of Statesmen may still be hanging in the public buildings for which they were painted, the only existing catalogued painting we could find today is a portrait of William Worth Belknap, Secretary of War in Ulysses S. Grant's cabinet, in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Thomson was so impressed with "the gangling town" giving evidence of its potential might" that he immediately settled in Kansas City, obtained his obligation to Union Pacific, and became a partner with John Cox Merine and William I. Williams in a photographic business, "Merine, Williams and Thomson." Eight months later Thomson bought out Merine's interests in the company and it became "Williams & Thomson." Thomson also purchased Williams's interests in the company and it became known as "D. P. Thomson & Company." The studio was located at 612 Main Street from the time Thomson first became a partner in 1873 until January 1882, when it moved south to grander and more spacious quarters at the southwest corner of 10th and Walnut Streets (1006-1002 Walnut Street). Occupying two floors, the gallery was filled with other niceties and fineries, "light, and plenty" (Thomson photographed using only natural daylight).¹⁰ In October 1907, Thomson moved his studio still further



P. Thomson photo studios at 10th and Walnut, courtesy Mrs. Sam (Mildred) Ray Postcard Collection, Kansas City Public Library.

south, following the trend of business "up the street" to 1118 Walnut Street.¹¹

Thomson trained many photographers. He also brought a 13-year-old George D. Wolfrom from St. Louis to work for him as an office boy. By 1923, Wolfrom had worked for Thomson 43 years and was Thomson's office manager.¹² Thomson retired from active work in 1925 "shortly after celebrating his fiftieth anniversary as a photographer."¹³ He gave his business to Wolfrom.¹⁴ The business continued under the name "D. P. Thomson," and moved to 1110 Grand Avenue in 1929.¹⁵

Thomson reportedly took more than 175,000 photographs during his career. He related around 1911 that, "I am sorry that I have been unable to keep all of my plates. I destroyed about one hundred thousand when I moved to my present quarters because of lack of space."¹⁶ His first subject in Kansas City in 1873 was J. E. Miller.¹⁷

The process of photography evolved dramatically during

Thomson's career. At the time Thomson came to the little town of Kansas City in 1873, a dozen photographs, cabinet size, cost a small fortune--\$8. It was a serious matter to have pictures taken then and Kansas Citians didn't indulge in the luxury often. Sitting for a picture was difficult, too. It took a half minute or even longer, forty to fifty seconds, of strain to complete an exposure. In other words, the subject had to keep perfect control of his/her features for almost a minute.

When Thomson started, he estimated three to four people would enter his studio daily to have their likenesses captured. By 1892 as many as 140 sittings were taken in a day, and he remembered taking as many as 142.¹⁸ While many employees assisted in the work, Thomson, himself, took practically all the pictures for his gallery until about 1913, when he divided the work with several assistants.¹⁹

A variety of newspaper articles about Thomson relate details about: changes in the nature of his work over the years; trends in popular clothing styles and image composition; his diverse clientele, including the many famous portraits he



While 99% of Thomson's photographs were portraits, this scene shows the demolition (or destruction?) of an as yet unidentified Kansas City building. The address of the building on the left reads "112." PHL11851a

took.²⁰ Being in business for so many years, he developed a regular patronage. Generations of Kansas City families had their photographs taken by Thomson, and he kept his plates for so long that comparisons between the old and new likenesses were often noted.²¹ Thomson photographed five successive generations of the John W. Merrill family.²² Thompson also took pictures of all the mayors of Kansas City from 1873 to 1911.²³ He presented to the Missouri Valley Historical Society a great collection of photographs of Kansas City pioneers.²⁴

During David and Sophie Thomson's first five years in Kansas City (1873-1878), they lived near the northwest corner of 5th and Washington Streets. In 1879, they moved a block south to 1006/1012/1014 Washington Street, where they remained until at least 1900. From about 1910 until the end of their lives, David and Sophie lived at 3712 Summit Street, in "a handsome home in Roanoke, one of the most fashionable residence districts of Kansas City."²⁵



David Presly Thomson, an engraving from a photograph as printed in the *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 2 December 1923.

Thomson belonged to many local organizations and associations, including, but not limited to: the first "House of Twenty" in 1886 (i.e., the first City Council); the first upper house (when the council was succeeded by the two-house council in 1899); the Kansas City Club, where he served as President in 1903; the Commercial Club, where he served as President and was a member for more than 20 years; a Board of Director of the Convention Hall for seven years (including the year of the fire in 1900); a member of the original Board of Directors for the Priests of Pallas; and, honorary member of the Elks Club and of the Cooperative Club.²⁶

Thomson died 31 January 1933. Both he and Sophie were interred at Forest Hill Cemetery.

It is ironic that we do not have an original photograph of Kansas City's most prolific photographer. Thomson disliked public attention, and seeing his own picture, "although his bread and butter and pie comes that way." Representations here are from newspaper clippings.²⁷

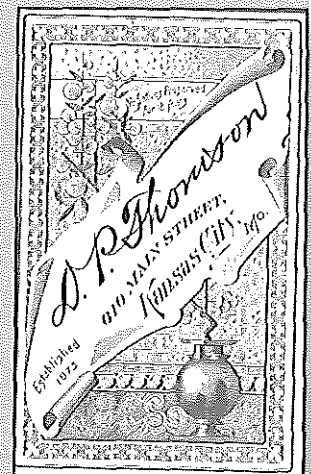
TIMELINE OF KANSAS CITY'S MOST PROLIFIC PHOTOGRAPHER & HIS ASSOCIATES

In St. Louis:

- 1865: Thomson David F., r. 124 s. 5th.
- 1866: Thompson David, r. ws. 7th, bet. Cass av. and O'Fallon.
- 1869: Thomson David P. bookkeeper A. J. Fox, r. 406 Olive
- 1869: Fox A. J. photograph gallery, 406 Olive, r. 2828 Olive
- 1870: Thomson D. P. conductor, St. Louis Railway Co.
- 1871: Thomson D. P. clk. A. J. Fox, r. 7th, nw. cor. Lynch
- 1871: Fox A. J. photographer, 406 Olive and 408 Locust, r. 2828 Olive
- 1872: Thomson David P. bookkeeper A. J. Fox, r. Lynch, nw. cor. 7th
- 1872: Fox Andrew J. photographer, 205 N. 5th, r. 2828 Olive
- 1873: Thomson D. P. bkpr. A. J. Fox, r. Lynch nw. cor. 7th
- 1873: Fox A. J. photographer, 205 N. 5th, r. 2828 Olive

In Kansas City:

- 1870: Merine J. C. portrait painter, 526 Main
- 1871: Merine, J. C., artist, r. 741 High.
- 1872: Merine, J. C., portrait painter, 715 Main, r. Kane, s. of 20th.
- 1873: Merine, J. C. (Merine & Williams), r. Troost av., cor. 22d.
- 1873: Williams, W. I. (Merine & Williams), r. 1007 Oak.
- 1874: Merine, J. C. (Merine, Williams and Thomson), r. 908 Washington. Also listed was Merine, Williams & Thomson (J. C. Merine, W. I. Williams and D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1874: Thomson, D. P. (Merine, Williams and Thomson), r. 719 Penn.
- 1874: Williams, W. I. (Williams & Thomson), r. 1018 Oak.
- 1875: Merine, John C., photographer, 726 Main.
- 1875: Thomson, D. P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 12th, se. cor. Washington.
- 1875: Williams, W. I. (Williams & Thomson), r. 410 w. 13th. Also listed was: Williams & Thomson (W. I. Williams and D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1876: [no entry for John C. Merine]
- 1876: Thomson, D. P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 9th, nw. cor. Washington.
- 1876: Williams, W. I. (Williams & Thomson), r. Charlotte, se. cor. 5th. Also listed was: Williams & Thomson (W. I. Williams and D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1877: [no entry for John C. Merine]
- 1877: Thomson, David P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 500 w. 9th.
- 1877: Williams, William I. (Williams & Thomson), r. 5th, se. cor. Charlotte. Also listed was: Williams & Thomson (William I. Williams and David P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main, up stairs.
- 1878: [no entry for John C.



One of the more elaborate nameplates identifying a Thomson photograph. PHL118510



The Thomson home at 3712 Summit (now Southwest Trafficway) in Roanoke. Photo courtesy David W. Jackson.

- Merine]
- 1878: Thomson, David P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 500 w. 9th
- 1878: Williams, William I. (Williams & Thomson), r. 1 mile south of limits.
- 1878: Williams & Thomson (William I. Williams and David P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1879: [no entry for John C. Merine]
- 1879: Thomson, David P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 1006 Washington.
- 1879: Williams, William I. (Williams & Thomson), r. southeast of Limits. Also listed was: Williams & Thomson (William I. Williams and David P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1880: Merine, J. C. artist, r. 316 w. 6th
- 1880: Thomson, David P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 1010 Washington.
- 1880: Williams, William I (Williams & Thomson), r. Linwood, se. of city limits.
- 1880: Williams & Thomson (William I. Williams and David P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1881: Merine, J. C., portrait painter, r. 516 w. 16th
- 1881: Thomson, David P. (Williams & Thomson), r. 1012 Washington.
- 1881: Williams, William I. (Williams & Thomson), r. Linwood. Also listed was Williams & Thomson (W. I. Williams and D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1882: Merine John C., portrait painter, r. e.s. Troost av. bet. 23d and 24th
- 1882: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co.), r. 1012 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main.
- 1882: [no entry for William I. Williams]
- 1883: Merine, John C. portrait painter Humboldt Bld'g, res Tracy av. bet 22d and 23d.
- 1883: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co.), r. 1012

- Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson), photographers, 612 Main
- 1883: [no entry for William I. Williams]
- 1884: [no entry for John C. Merine]
- 1884: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co.), r. 1012 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson), photographers 612 Main and 613 Delaware.
- 1885: Merine, John C. artist Walnut, nw. cor. 9th, r. 2325 Troost av
- 1885: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co.) r. 1012 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson) photographers 612 Main & 613 Delaware, tel. 267 (See adv.)
- 1886: Merine John C. artist, r. 2305 Troost av
- 1886: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co. 610 Main) r. 1014 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (David P. Thomson) photographers 610 Main and 613 Delaware, tel. 267. See adv
- 1887: Merine John C. artist, r. 2305 Troost av
- 1887: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co. 610 Main) r. 1014 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (David P. Thomson) photographers 610 Main, tel. 267 (See adv. opp. page 455)
- 1888: Merine John C. artist 507 Rialto bldg. r. 2305 Troost
- 1888: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co. 610 Main) r. 1014 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson) photogs. 610 Main, tel. 267. (See adv. Opp. page 472)
- 1889: Merine John C. artists r 2305 Troost
- 1889: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co.) r 1014 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson) photog 610 Main See adv opp 472
- 1890: Merine John C. artist w 2305 Troost
- 1890: Thomson David P. (D. P. Thomson & Co. r 1014 Washington. Also listed was: Thomson D. P. & Co. (D. P. Thomson) photog 610 Main See page 479
- 1891: Merine John C. portrait painter 557 Sheidley bldg r 2305 Troost
- 1891: Thomson David P. photog 610 Main r 1014 Washington See page 424. [no Thomson ad on page 424]
- 1892: Merine John C. artist 557 Sheidley bldg r 2305 Troost
- 1892: Thomson David P. photog 1000-1002 Walnut and 610 Main r 1014 Washington See page opp 403

[Thomson listed at the same address through 1906.]

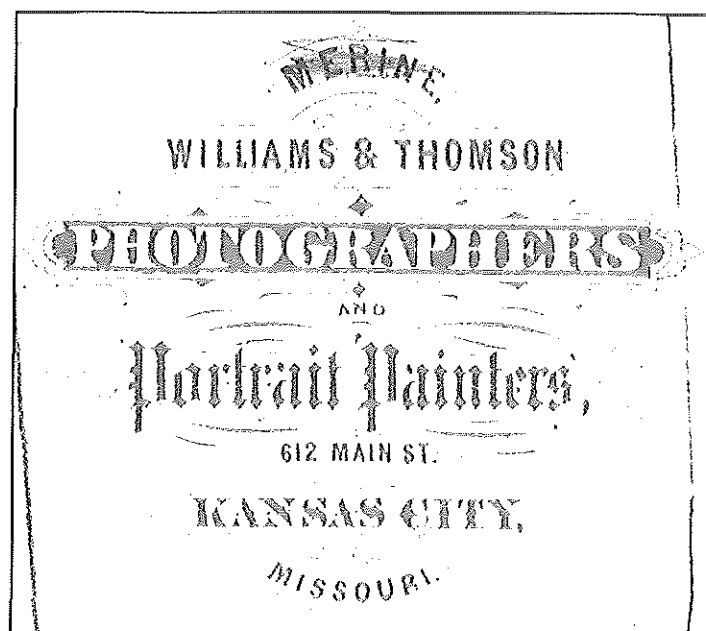
[His studio was listed at 1118 Walnut beginning in 1907.]

- 1926: Thomson David P photo 1118 Walnut h 3712 Summit
- 1927: Thomson David P photo 1118 Walnut h 3712 Summit
- 1928: Thomson David P photo 1118 Walnut h 3712 Summit
- 1929: Thomson David P (D P Thomson Studio) h 3712 Summit
- 1930: Thomson David P photog 3d fl 1110 Grand av h 3712 Summit. Also listed was: Thomson D P Studio (Geo Wolfrom) photogs 3d fl 1110 Grand av
- 1931: Thomson David P office 3d fl 1110 Grand av h 3712 Summit. Also listed was: Thomson D P Studio (Geo D. Wolfrom) photog 3d fl 1110 Grand av
- 1932: Thomson David P office 3d fl 1110 Grand av h 3712 Summit. Also listed was: Thomson D P Studio (Geo D Wolfrom) photog 3d fl 1110 Grand av
- 1933: Thomson David P h 3712 Summit. Also listed was: Thomson D P Studio (Geo D Wolfrom) photog 3d fl 1110 Grand av

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG.

James A. Tharp, Assistant Branch Manager, Mid-Continent Public Library's Genealogy and Local History Branch, has previously contributed to the JOURNAL. Other areas of personal study and research include Jackson County churches and clergymen; pipe organs and organists in Kansas City; Kansas City street names (overviewed in the Spring 2005 issue of the JOURNAL); and, Kansas City schools. Maybe we will see future JOURNAL articles resulting from his extensive work in these areas?

- ¹ Case, Theodore S. ed., *History of Kansas City, Missouri, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Syracuse, N. Y.: D. Mason, 1888), 607-608.
- ² Entry for William Thompson [sic] family, 1850 U. S. census, population schedule, Ray County, Missouri, page 363, dwelling and family numbers 1099, line 14, National Archives microfilm M432, roll 412; Elizabeth Prather Ellsberry, *Marriage Records, 1820-1850, and Will Records, 1824-1849, of Ray County, Missouri* (Chillicothe, Mo.: the author, n.d.), 66; 1850-1868 *Marriages, Book 3, Ray Co., Missouri*. ([Chillicothe, Mo.: the Author, 1959]), 20.
- ³ Case, 607-608. Also, "Death of D.P. Thomson," *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 29 January 1933, 12A.
- ⁴ Case, 608.
- ⁵ Entry for Sophia Thompson [sic], 1900 U. S. census, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, enumeration district 25, page 17, dwelling 84, family 106, line 71, National Archives microfilm M623, roll 861.
- ⁶ City directory for Saint Louis, 1871-1873.
- ⁷ "Death of D. P. Thomson." Merine data from information compiled by the author and on file in the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives.
- ⁸ "The Man Who Has Spent Fifty Years behind the Camera," *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 02 December 1923, page 6C.
- ⁹ "Time's Changes: They Are Aptly Shown by Improvement in the Photographer's Art," *Kansas City (Mo.) Times*, 01 January 1892, page 7.
- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ "D. P. Thompson" [sic], *Kansas City (Mo.) Post*, 03 November 1907, page 10.



The reverse of an early cabinet card of Thomson's work in Kansas City showing "Merine" crossed out with pencil. Clues such as this, when compared with city directories, can help date a photograph. (PHL11850a)

- ¹⁴ "Death of D.P. Thomson."
- ¹⁵ "D. P. Thomson is Dead at 83 After 2-Year Illness: Pioneer Photographer Was Known to Hundreds in Kansas City," *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*, 29 January 1933, 7B.
- ¹⁶ Undated, un-attributed newspaper article (ca. 1911) about Thomson on file at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.
- ¹⁷ "The Man Who Has Spent Fifty Years behind the Camera."
- ¹⁸ "Time's Changes."
- ¹⁹ "The Man Who Has Spent Fifty Years behind the Camera."
- ²⁰ Articles and associated research about Thomson dating from 1873-1933 is deposited at Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society's Archives, which is compiling information about and representative photographs taken by Kansas City's commercial photographers. Also included in these files are the author's research compiled to date about other photographers.
- ²¹ Undated, un-attributed newspaper article (ca. 1911) about Thomson on file at the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society Archives.
- ²² "Death of D.P. Thomson." First was Mrs. Foster, mother-in-law of J. W. Merrill. Then in order, Mrs. John W. Merrill, Foster's daughter; J. Will Merrill, grandson; Will E. Merrill, great grandson; and Lauren Merrill, great great grandson.
- ²³ Ibid. Also, the 1887 Kansas City city directory has a full page advertisement with a reproduction of the "Mayors of Kansas City, Mo., 1853-1886," opposite p. 454 (reproduced for this article).
- ²⁴ "D. P. Thomson is Dead at 83 After 2-Year Illness.... Local historians and preservationists are still seeking the location of the collections that were once part of the now defunct Missouri Valley Historical Society. If you know the whereabouts of these images, or other Missouri Valley Historical Society collections, please contact the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society.
- ²⁵ Whitney, Carrie Westlake. *Kansas City, Missouri: Its History and Its People, 1800-1908*. Vol. III. (Chicago, IL: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1908), 480.
- ²⁶ According to Forest Hill Cemetery records, David and Sophia Thomson are buried in Block 38, Lot 3-20, Spaces 6-2 and 5-1 respectively. According to Thomson's death certificate (a copy of which is on file in the Historical Society's Archives), Stine and McClure at 3232 Gillham Plaza was the undertaker. His probate case file, K131688, has not yet been reviewed.
- ²⁷ "D. P. Thompson" [sic].



Kansas City's Mayors, as assembled by D. P. Thomson for an ad in the 1887 Kansas City city directory.

- ¹² "The Man Who Has Spent Fifty Years behind the Camera," *Kansas City (Mo.) Star*, 02 December 1923, page 6C. According to the *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*'s 18 September 1932 article referenced above, "Mr. Thomson trained many of the photographers in the Middle West, and was regarded as one of the leaders of his profession." George Wolfrom and his wife, Ellen, lived at 2541 Park Avenue from at least 1920 to 1935. In the 1920 U. S. Census he was 50 years old (1920 U. S. census, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, enumeration district 156, page 4B, dwelling 100, line 65, National Archives microfilm T625, roll 926. Wolfrom was one of Thomson's pallbearers.

¹³ "Photographer of Many Early Day Kansas Cityans is 83 Years Old," *Kansas City (Mo.) Journal Post*, 18 September 1932, 5B.

THE JURY IS IN: KANSAS CITY'S HOTEL PRESIDENT RESTORATION, A PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESS

BY DAVID W. JACKSON

THE HOTEL PRESIDENT'S HALF CENTURY COMMAND

Kansas City, Missouri's, west-facing Hotel President (today the Hilton President Hotel), a 12-story building at 1329-1335 Baltimore, was constructed in 1925, according to building plans and permits. The doors opened in February 1926. The hotel typifies the qualities and associations present during the grand hotel era. It was literally at the center of the City's social hub through the 1940s, and was widely known for its beautifully decorated dining facilities, cocktail lounges, public spaces, and an elegant roof garden that could accommodate 650 people.

Architects Shepard & Wisner incorporated sumptuous artistic decoration and the most modern guest accommodations for 453 guest rooms and 19 private rooms. The owners of the Hotel, the Westport Hotel Operating Company, employed an art decorator, a sculptor, and a master decorator to provide the Hotel's interior decoration. The Hotel boasted a public address system called a "radiocasting" system and an ice manufacturing plant that could produce nearly 8,000 pounds of ice each day. The total cost of the initial construction: \$2.5 to 3 million.

Hotel President's elaborate architectural elements testify to an opulent period in Kansas City's history. Jacobethan elements dominate the design, particularly its rectangular windows with rectangular lights created by stone mullions, the segmental curved gables which rise above the roofline at the four corners, and the strap work ornamentation found in great quantity over the facade of terra cotta molding. Windows are further embellished with decorative wrought iron railings and spiral colonnettes that flank them. The 1983 National Register of Historic Places nomination application describes the physical of the appearance of the building in greater detail.

The Hotel President was altered in 1941, 1951 and 1970.

Interior "upgrades" included a 1941 cocktail lounge named the "Drum Room," complete with a 280-square foot South Sea Island motif mural by New York artist Winold Reiss (the mural was removed after the hotel closed, and is currently in a lounge in New York City).

Exterior changes included a light court with a bridge at the upper floors that altered the original rectangular footprint of the building.

Major world events including the Stock Market crash, the Great Depression and World War II caused financial difficulties for the Hotel's changing ownership, but it remained a fashionable social center for both a transient overnight population and native Kansas Citians. But, with the decline of the downtown sector of Kansas City, the Hotel officially closed its doors in 1980.

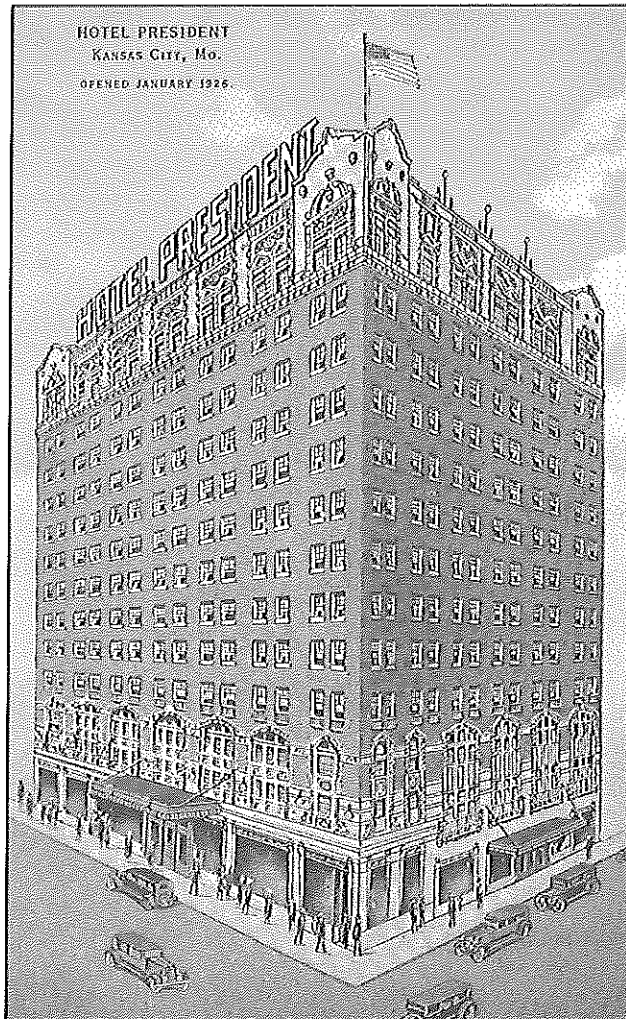
Although it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, that did not prevent its near demolition in the mid 1990s. The Historic Kansas City Foundation (HKCF) had placed the Hotel President on its Endangered Building List in the early 1990s, and asked the Kansas City chapter of the American Institute of Architects to consider conducting an endangered building feasibility study program. From that point

until 2004, when the City Council approved funding for the rehabilitation of the Hotel, HKCF's staff and board members participated in over 40 meetings urging decision-makers to preserve the building.

PRESIDENT'S NEW TERM, NO LIMITS

Ron Jury purchased the Hotel President in 2001. The buildings Jury has purchased and renovated over the years are those that date from 1927 to 1950s, and the President may be one of his most prized accomplishments.

Fortunately for Kansas Citians, Jury's work as a developer includes a passion for what historic preservation *really* is.



Hotel President from a postcard in the Jackson County Historical Society's collections.

As he puts it, "*Historic Preservation is restoring dreams, not just buildings.*" Jury is intensely interested in recording and documenting individual's recollections and connections to the Hotel President. One story he's discovered is that baseball Hall of Fame inductee Lou Gehrig spent his last days in baseball at exhibition games here in Kansas City, and he stayed at the Hotel President. The next day he went to the Mayo Clinic and never played baseball again. Jury has met former elevator operators and bellman. In San Diego, California, he happened to meet someone who, just by chance mentioned that he and his father had been barbers at the Hotel the entire time it had been in operation.

Another patron also showed Jury a photograph of the front lobby when Gene Autry brought his famous horse into the Hotel.

And, the Jackson County (Mo.) Historical Society desires to ensure that those memories and associated memorabilia are properly preserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy. We hope that Jury may establish a collection (i.e. "The Ron Jury Collection of Hotel President Materials") in the Society's archives, where he may deposit original materials that others share with him. The Society may then install these on a rotating exhibit at the President Hotel.

It's hard to imagine the deterioration Jury and his colleagues faced when walking through the President Hotel six years ago. Today, Kansas City's Hilton President Hotel represents a restoration taking the President Hotel back to its 1941 appearances, both inside and out.

Some minor modifications required concessions, but the Hilton President Hotel is a shining tribute to Kansas City's past. Let's walk through with Ron Jury and his lead

architects, Brian Ball and Kevin Harden from Gastinger, Walker, Harden Architects. They have kindly provided some highlights of what they found, and how they spent six years and \$45 million to meticulously renovate each and every 195,250 square feet of the Hotel President:

BELL HOP AT THE MAIN ENTRANCE

The Hotel's main entrance off of Baltimore Street suffered through "urban renewal" of the 1970s with aluminum framing on exterior doors and windows that either replaced or covered original terra cotta. Graffiti adorned nearly every reachable ground floor inch of the facade. The elegant canopy covering the entrance was also long gone.

This is one's first impression of the Hilton President Hotel, and all of this

exterior terra cotta has been repaired or re-cast. The massive canopy once again shelters arriving and departing guests.

MAIN LOBBY & MEZZANINE

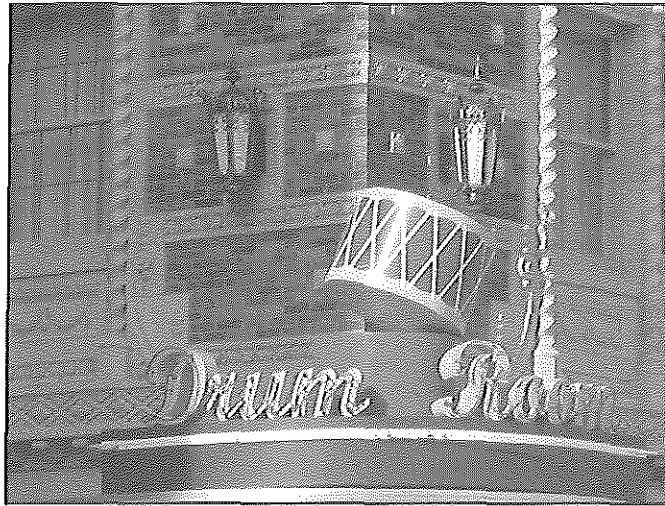
When Jury first entered the lobby in 2000, he had to walk over boards covering the floor and the entirety of the grand

room was covered in black soot. Homeless indigents trespassed into the building during its vacancy, and would light fires to keep warm or cook food. Obviously, one fire got out of hand.

Another factor contributing to the lack of architectural detail is when the building was slated for demolition, the former owner allowed the building to be gutted of much of its architectural features and fixtures (chandeliers and light fixtures). There was no plaster or stonework.

It didn't seem like

anything was left. Four of the eight Corinthian columns dominating the lobby were either completely destroyed, or were stripped down to the substrate.



The Drum Room, corner of 14th and Baltimore. Unless specified, all photos courtesy David W. Jackson.



One of eight Corinthian columns in the lobby and mezzanine.

Only remnants remained from which molds and patterns were made from scratch to re-create and infill missing ornamentation, the plaster restoration being conducted by Evergreene Painting Studios, Inc. Historical photographs maintained by Wilborn and Associates provided details needed to restore the lobby (and other areas of the building) to its 1941 appearance. And, Ball studied layers of paint to determine the appropriate color schemes for the lobby and other areas of the Hotel.

DRUM ROOM

Again, Jury found this area totally destroyed when he first visited the dilapidated building he was interested in buying. The original round bar of the drum room was missing. When re-installed, the new bar was configured into a convex form rather than a concave one, so that the appearance and feel of being inside of a drum remained, but usable space of the magnificent room was greatly enhanced. Live music has returned to this cocktail lounge on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. It will be strictly a nighttime venue . . . no breakfast or lunch.

WALNUT ROOM

Another room stripped of its fixtures, moldings, and furnishings, was the once elegant dining room, The Walnut Room, named for the original walnut paneling that made for an intimate dining experience. The paneling was salvaged after the Hotel closed and re-installed in the Bank Midwest building in Brookside (in case you want to go and see it).

When remodeling, the architects and designers chose to restore the walnut paneled columns, but forewent replacing paneling on all the walls in order to create a brighter atmosphere.

AZTEC ROOM

One of a kind in the Midwest, the Aztec Room featured ornate pilaster and a stunning ceiling that connotes being inside of an Aztec temple. Unfortunately, like most of the features downstairs, all but one

pilaster was stripped of its ornate Central American-inspired plaster and stonework. Luckily, the incredible terrazzo and stone floor remained, although it was covered with pigeon droppings when first discovered.

During the restoration, Jury and his team of designers found out that in restoring interior architectural features, "if it isn't here, you don't *have* to replace or restore it." Still, they tried to return the Aztec Room to its 1941 appearance, and through extensive research found the owner of the original pilasters who had purchased them as architectural salvage years ago at auction! However, because of the insurmountable conciliatory demands the owner placed on their re-installation, Jury and his team finally decided that it was too much to concede.

Therefore, they re-plastered the pilasters and painted them in a different hue so that it was clear that they were not original. Everything above the capitol of each pilaster, including the ornate ceiling, was faithfully restored to its original 1941 appearance.



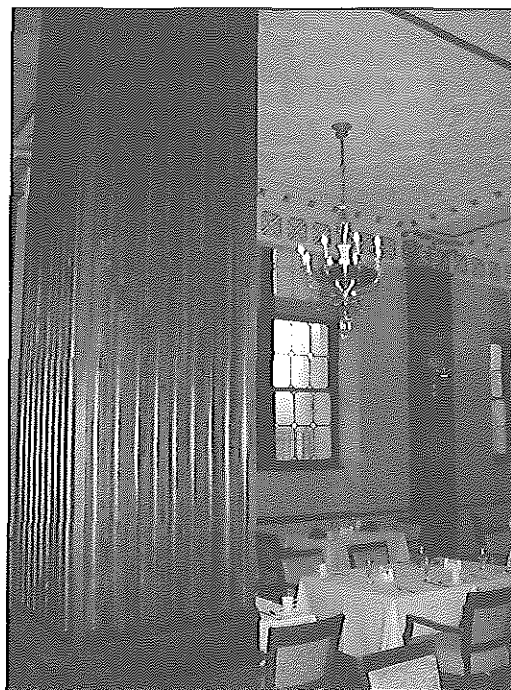
Chandeliers reflecting onto the shiny ballroom floor.

TYPICAL GUEST ROOM

You might imagine that the original 453 guest rooms were not as commodious as what today's hotel guests demand. Therefore, in the renovation, walls were removed to combine rooms and make suites larger, so that today, there are 213 rooms available for guests.

In combining rooms, an interesting predicament surfaced . . . what to do with the extra hallway doors? Well, in order to keep with the historic nature of the interiors, the feeling was that all the doors needed to remain intact, but that not all of them had to be operational. Therefore, when you walk down a hallway in the Hilton President Hotel today, some doors are working, while others are faux (that's "fake" if you don't speak French).

Many people have approached Jury to tell them that either they or someone they know spent their honeymoon at the Hotel President. Today, the Charlie Wheeler Honeymoon Suite is a sweet place for newlyweds to enjoy a romantic overnight.



The renovated Walnut Room.



The Aztec Room hosted the Trans World Airlines 10-Year Club Banquet, June 24, 1944. Photo courtesy Ona Gieschen, from the album of Elise Murphy.

BALLROOM

Noticeable cracks in the ballroom's floor appear in ca. 1940 photographs. And, although there were all kinds of debris in the ballroom when Jury stepped in, once cleaned, the crack that once "danced" the length of the ballroom was not visible. Contractors did have to repair and epoxy loose portions of the stunning floor, which is ready for action and is already welcoming weddings and other large events.

When fixtures were auctioned, the ballroom's five chandeliers were taken down and prepared for transport. The cartage service tore a hole in the back of the building for their removal, and when they hoisted the first one out, it swung out and went tumbling to the ground so the new owner only got four chandeliers for the price of five.

Doors and windows were restored, but some of the original, single-hung windows that swung wide open onto the roof garden, were sealed shut for safety concerns. Paint analysis was also a difficult process in this elegant room, but after looking at 12 layers of paint under a microscope, designers feel confident that they appearance is what it was in 1941.

ROOFTOP SIGN

"Iron"ically, the rooftop sign was in good shape. Besides a few minor repairs it just needed a whole lot of new bulbs installed so that "PRESIDENT" could once again signal south that Kansas City Hilton's President Hotel is open for business. The hotel manager would also like you to know that there is "VACANCY."

Join the Society at its annual meeting at the Hilton's President Hotel, Friday, January 26, 2007. Call 816-461-1897 for reservations.

ADDITIONAL RELATED INFORMATION IS POSTED ON OUR ONLINE JOURNAL AT JCHS.ORG.



IN MEMORIAM: FAREWELL TO HISTORIC PRESERVATIONISTS WHO DEDICATED THEIR LIVES TO *THE FUTURE OF THE PAST*

JANE FIFIELD FLYNN (1924-2006)

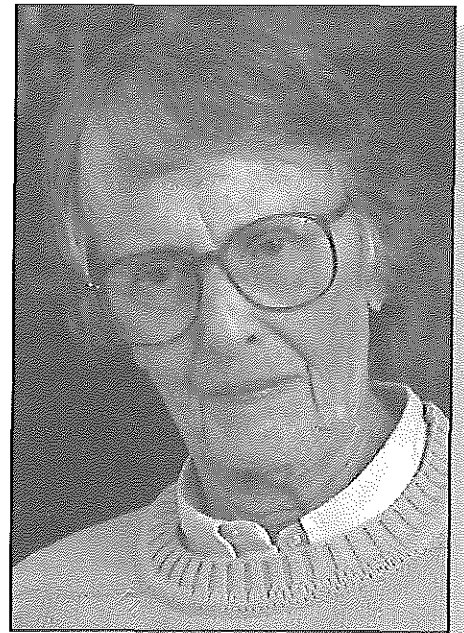
Until recently, if you were to enjoy a gathering where “history” was remotely tied to its theme, or toured an historic building or district, or attended a planning meeting to save a piece of our past, or listened to the Walt Bodine radio show once a month, there you would have met Jane Flynn. It seemed as if Jane were omnipresent—if not in person, then in voice or in spirit—whenever and wherever local history and the importance of its preservation were an agenda item.

During her tenure as President of the Jackson County Historical Society, Jane remarked that, *“in history, there is a timeliness, an ongoingness, but most importantly, there is a livingness. Musty and dusty, history is not. It’s alive because we keep it alive because of its constant use. It can reveal secrets. It can tell us who we are, where we came from, as recently as last week or a century ago. It lives in our minds.”* Without the benefits of history, *“nothing would be familiar, nor would there be that wonderful sense of comfort that memories can provide—wonders of discovery, of shared discovery.”* In sharing comes *“a kind of excitement and energy and vitality that provides the sustenance for the Jackson County Historical Society.”*

Jane’s staunch advocacy for history and its preservation went beyond historic structures and places to include a voice

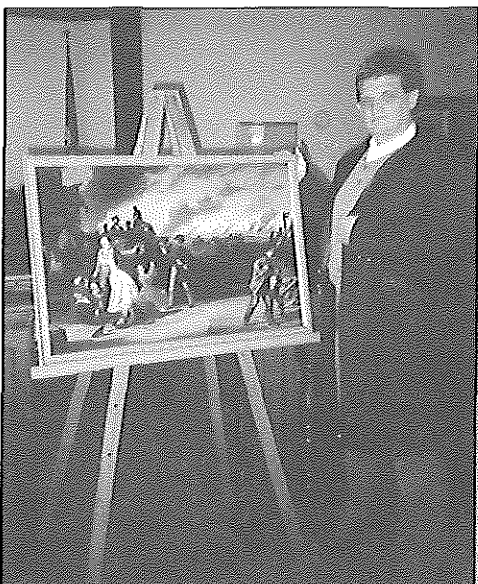
to preserve the history and heritage of underserved populations. Her ambassadorship for the Society’s womens’ herstory collections is a legacy that lives and breathes today, just as the many buildings and monuments she valiantly fought to save.

We remember and perpetuate the life and legacy of Jane Fifield Flynn, who’s “ongoingness” and determination will remain with us in spirit at functions, gatherings, meetings, and events for as long as we keep the fires she stoked aflame.



TIM COX (1956-2006)

It’s heartwarming to meet someone like Tim Cox, and those who knew Tim were privileged, for he was a kind,



gentle and generous teacher. Fortunate for the local history community, Tim inspired others to learn more about the past, and to protect it as a precious resource.

Tim worked hard at his “day job;” but, beyond his career came a passion for history with a special emphasis on local Border War and Civil

and politician George Caleb Bingham, and when invited, Tim could “become” Mr. Bingham. This portrayal was just part of his “second career” as a local history educator...volunteer... and respected President of the Civil War Round Table of Western Missouri.

One of Tim’s last, and perhaps most lasting projects, is the nomination of the Little Blue Battlefield to the National Register of Historic Places, in collaboration with the American Battlefield Protection Program and Partners in Parks.

His most ambitious vision was to try to secure for future Jackson Countians (and tourists from afar) an area of land in present-day eastern Independence that once served as the stage for the Civil War Battle of the Little Blue—a precursor to the famed Battle of Westport. The beautiful area and its preservation is a potential reality if more people join the front line and hold their bayonets firm. It is a rare opportunity we have to keep an area pristine and free from encroaching development.

Only those with forward vision will secure this historic area for Jackson Countians of the future. Tim Cox is assuredly standing at attention, cocked and loaded.

War history. He diligently researched the life of local artist

BOOK NOTES

What else can we say? *Nelly Don: A Stitch in Time* by Terence Michael O'Malley is an elegantly assembled textile...err...textual history of Kansas City's premier fashion icon. More than that, this 90-page book is totally loaded with images that *stitches* together for readers a fascinating *pattern* of the life and times of Nell (Quinlan) Donnelly Reed, affectionately known as Nelly Don.

It all started with a relatively simple, pink gingham frock, or housedress, that she put together in 1916, and presented for sale at Peck's department store in downtown Kansas City. Nell Donnelly, under the label of *Nelly Don*, had just launched a fashion empire!

Nell became one of the most wealthy and celebrated American women in business. She lived a fabled life and were her incredible story not true, it would be hard to believe.

Get a copy of *Nelly Don: A Stitch in Time* (Kansas City, Mo.: The Covington Group, 2006) (Retail \$24.95 at the Society's Bookshop) and enjoy the visual representation of the Nelly Don fashion collage through the decades. Glimpse the glamour that Nelly Don created in Kansas City, and disseminated to women across the world. Find out how she became engaged to a prominent Missouri politician after abduction by an amateur gangster at the outset of the Great

Depression. March with her when, during World War II, she re-configured her fashion dress and coat manufacturing plant into producing action clothes for American service women and those who replaced men in heavy industries. Peer through the vision and foresight of this remarkable Kansas Citian who pioneered sectionalized method of garment production, and designed her manufacturing plant for utmost efficiency. Last but not least, applaud Nell's kind-hearted support of her garment industry workers, and life long dedication to philanthropy.

O'Malley, great grand nephew of Nelly Don, started out researching and compiling images for a documentary that he wrote, directed, and narrated. The recent production by the same title is currently only available through exclusive screenings

while O'Malley submits his work of art to film critics like Sundance.

A Stitch in Time has also increased public interest in the Historical Society's material collections. Our Nelly Don Collection includes a growing selection of Donnelly Garment Company photographs, publications, business records, and dresses, including an authentic reproduction of the first 1916 pink, gingham dress. We always welcome additions, should you or anyone you know desire to make a donation.



THE JACKSON COUNTY
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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