

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

New Submission  Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Colonnade Apartment Buildings of Kansas City, Missouri

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

The Evolution of the Apartment Building in Kansas City: 1880-1930  
The Rise of the Middle-Class Multi-Family Residential Unit in Kansas City: 1885-1930  
The Colonnade Apartment in Kansas City: c.1900-1930

C. Form Prepared by

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D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Mark A. Miles*  
Signature and title of certifying official Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

*08/28/03*  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

*Oct 17, 2003*  
Date

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**MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING NAME: Historic Colonnade Apartment Buildings of Kansas City, Missouri**

**PREFACE**

Kansas City's historic colonnade apartment buildings – their size, setting, design, plan, and materials – reflect important aspects of the City's cultural history and development. This Multiple Property Documentation Form focuses on the colonnaded “purpose-built” apartment building — a building designed in the Neoclassical style or in simple vernacular variations referencing classical design and constructed to serve as a multiple family dwelling for the middle and upper-middle classes. The Kansas City Colonnade Apartment Building Property Type is typically a multi-story, masonry apartment building with one or more prominent multi-story colonnaded porches.<sup>1</sup> Today there are over five hundred surviving colonnade apartment buildings built in Kansas City, Missouri between c.1900<sup>2</sup> and 1930.

**ASSOCIATED HISTORIC CONTEXTS**

**The Evolution of the Apartment Building in Kansas City: 1880-1930**

**The Rise of the Middle-Class Multi-Family Residential Unit in Kansas City 1885-1930**

**The Colonnade Apartment in Kansas City: 1900-1930**

**INTRODUCTION: PRECEDENTS AND PROTOTYPES**

As noted by architectural historians Emily Hotaling Eig and Laura Harris Hughes in their study of Washington D.C. apartment houses,

*The clustering of several families under one roof is often the result of economic or political necessity. Under many circumstances the question of how to house these families is moot; the families make do, working together as an extended family, or perhaps accommodating each family unit on separate floors. But to plan for the housing of separate families as independent units who*

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda R. Spencer, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Form” Colonnaded Apartments on the north end of The Paseo Boulevard in Kansas City, Missouri, ca. 1896-1945,” 20 May, 2000. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>2</sup> A review of previous surveys reveals only a handful of colonnade apartments assigned dates of construction predating 1900. The one example listed in Spencer’s study had columns added a decade later. In a review of the other survey forms with pre-1900 dates, it appears that they are circa dates and are not based on building permit dates. This, combined with the documentation of McKecknie’s 1900 design for the Pergola Apartment building as a forerunner of the colonnade prototype, led to the assignment of a c.1900 date.

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*choose to be lodged within the confines of a single building is a different issue, and one that has resulted in the formation of a specific building type — the 'Purpose-built' apartment building.<sup>3</sup>*

**EARLY MULTI-FAMILY PRECEDENTS**

American multi-family dwellings are cultural descendents of traditional European housing dating as early as the fourth century B.C., where apartment buildings were a popular solution to urban living in Rome. (The noun "appartimenta" is from the Latin verb *partier* — to divide or to share.) As it did throughout history, multi-family housing occurred in ancient Rome in response to economic and physical conditions associated with the growth of cities. The multi-family housing unit allowed not only the wealthy, but also the lower and middle classes to live near urban centers by providing different families with separate residential space in a building that did not require much land. Roman city planners erected thousands of three- to eight-story multi-family buildings called "insulae" (islands) that housed both patricians and plebeians.<sup>4</sup>

During the Renaissance, the growth of cities resulting from the increase of trade, wealth, and population built upon the tradition of communal living, established the multi-family building as an important residential component in large cities.<sup>5</sup> Over the ensuing centuries, European cities exhibited variations of the apartment building that evolved into specific forms and floor plans, in part due to the establishment of building codes requiring setbacks, fireproof materials, and height limits. Complexes of small to large buildings, often housing retail shops on the ground floor, housed different classes in close proximity to one another.<sup>6</sup>

The French example became the primary influence on apartment design in the United States. Paris was a major center of apartment building beginning in the 1600s. The city's development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as one of Europe's primary cities established the apartment building as economically viable housing for its increasing population. It was, however, in the late nineteenth-century that the French apartment dwelling became the prototype for the building type in American cities. Beginning in the 1870s, American architects who studied in Paris at the *Ecole Des Beaux Arts* brought the French style of exterior massing and architectural treatment as well as their floor plans to Boston, New York City, and Chicago.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Emily Hotaling Eig and Laura Harris Hughes, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Form "Apartment Buildings in Washington D.C. 1880-1945," 1 July 1993, E1. District of Columbia Planning Department, Washington D.C.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Hawes, *New York, New York How the Apartment House Transformed the Life of the City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Eig and Hughes, E2

<sup>6</sup> Hawes, 19-20

<sup>7</sup> Eig and Hughes, E2-3.

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**American Prototypes**

The growing popularity of the apartment house in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries corresponds to the era between the Civil War and the Great Depression, a time when towns became cities and the majority of the nation's citizens became an urban people. Despite the European tradition of communal living, in antebellum America the idea of sharing a roof, front door, and a staircase with other families was distasteful. Initially, traditional values held that multi-family dwellings were the purview of the lower classes. As communities grew after the end of the Civil War, the establishment of the apartment house as a significant part of a city's housing reflects a number of factors, the foremost of which was a rapidly growing population and limited land mass near centers of economic activity and transit systems. In particular, the growing numbers of working-class and middle-class bachelors and single women arriving in cities to take jobs as clerks, salesmen, ministers, teachers, librarians, middle managers, secretaries, and stenographers created a demand for affordable housing, without the responsibilities and costs of home ownership. Among certain groups of the upper classes, the popularity of apartment dwelling during this period occurred at a time of spiraling cost of servants and, after 1913, the impact of income tax. For the bachelor physician, banker, or attorney and the well-to-do widow or spinster, "apartment hotel" living, with its attendant food and maid services, became an accepted alternative to living in a single-family dwelling.<sup>8</sup>

According to James Goode in *Best Addresses*, an authoritative study of the luxury apartment buildings of Washington, D.C., the Hotel Pelham in Boston was "... the first authentic apartment house in the United States."<sup>9</sup> Dating to 1857, the Pelham's design follows the Parisian apartment model with one apartment unit per floor. Called a "hotel" from the French word for private mansion, the building's apartments did not have private kitchens or bathrooms.<sup>10</sup> Boston's Hotel St. Cloud, constructed twelve years later, more closely follows the modern-day definition of an apartment building in its inclusion of kitchens and bathrooms in each apartment.

Over the ensuing years, Boston's middle- and upper-class apartment house design acquired its own distinct characteristics. Large apartment buildings featured commercial space on the ground floor, kitchens on the top, and servants' quarters in the basement. The more modest "triple-decker" style apartment building plan consisted of three units, one per floor. Its larger counterpart, the "double triple-decker" building plan consisted of six units, two per floor, and three per side connected by a central stair hall. Both building types appeared as a detached house.<sup>11</sup> These plans became a model for the "walk-up" apartment flats that continued in popularity throughout the twentieth century in the United States and in Kansas City's apartment building property types.

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<sup>8</sup> Hawes, xiii.

<sup>9</sup> Eig and Hughes, E3 citing James Goode, *Best Addresses*, 536.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, E3.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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Richard Morris Hunt's "Stuyvesant Flats," constructed in 1869, set the mode for the New York luxury apartment building. Hunt was the first American to be educated in architecture at the *Ecole des Beaux Arts* and his career reflects the influence of this experience. He designed Stuyvesant Flats to complement and utilize the New York residential streetscape. His design like that of the Hotel St. Cloud, also constructed in 1869, included kitchens and bathrooms in each apartment.<sup>12</sup>

The French flat, with one apartment per floor, became established in New York in the mid-1870s. This form adapted easily to the city's long narrow lots that previously accommodated row houses. In the 1880s, larger apartment buildings appeared, often filling entire city blocks. These taller and larger buildings reflected changes in building technology, in particular the development of the elevator and steel framing. Developer Juan de Navarro's "Central Park," erected in 1883, was the first of these massive buildings. Its spacious floor plans used the French model of one apartment per floor and offered large seven-room units complete with kitchens, baths, and servants' quarters.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1880s, the apartment building reached Chicago. C. W. Westfall's study of Chicago apartment buildings found that "From the beginning, Chicago had resisted multifamily residences of any kind."<sup>14</sup> Chicago's first apartment buildings include the Waltone built in 1879, followed in 1880 by the seven-story Ontario Flats. These buildings incorporated the popular French one-unit-per-floor format with floor plans based on the prevailing style of Chicago's better residences. The individual apartment suites featured public parlors and dining rooms, but did not include private kitchens. Despite the communal kitchens clearly associated with hotels, these buildings, located in residential sections of the city, established the apartment building as a residential property type in Chicago.<sup>15</sup>

In Kansas City, variations of the East Coast apartment building prototypes appeared in the mid-1880s, almost concurrently with those in Chicago. Although not every idea formulated in New York or Boston was appropriate for Kansas City, many of the medium-size plans for apartment hotels and apartments<sup>16</sup> proved to be adaptable to the City's environment. From these prototypes, developers and architects developed their own unique apartment

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., E4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., citing C. W. Westfall's "From Homes to Towers; A Century of Chicago's Best Hotels and Tall Apartment Buildings" in *Chicago Architecture: 1872-1922*, 269.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> The distinction between the apartment hotel and the apartment house is often blurry and application of the appropriate nomenclature often varied during different time periods and locales. In general, apartment hotels at this time were primarily residential buildings servicing permanent or seasonal renters rather than transients. These buildings offered many of the same amenities as hotels — concierge services, maid and valet service, communal kitchens, and private and public dining rooms. Many of the larger buildings featured ground floor retail services as well. Apartment houses catered to permanent year-round lessees and often included private kitchens as well as communal kitchens with delivered meals to living quarters. Some also included a private communal dining room with a fixed price daily special.

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variants. Kansas City, like other growing metropolises in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, saw the apartment building evolve in response to specific conditions of local needs, tastes, and restrictions.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE APARTMENT BUILDING IN  
KANSAS CITY: 1880-1930**

As in other American cities of the period, the earliest form of multi-family housing in Kansas City, Missouri included the makeshift conversion of large buildings, usually single-family residences, into small self-sufficient living units. Some of these conversions included kitchens and/or baths, while others did not. However, unlike their predecessor, the boarding house, or their corresponding form, the hotel, apartment buildings were designed and built specifically to accommodate numerous family units. The earliest of this property type was the tenement building, erected to house working-class families. In Kansas City, Missouri, they took the form of simple frame or brick structures incorporating separate living quarters that might or might not include shared bathing and kitchen facilities. These buildings were within walking distance of the City's industrial and freight centers. Beginning in the 1880s, during the region's population and real estate boom, the purpose-built apartment building erected for the middle and upper-middle classes first appeared in the City's residential neighborhoods. To understand the property type's evolution in Kansas City, it is important first to understand the City's residential development.

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

**Settlement Period: 1830-1860**

The nucleus of present-day Kansas City, Missouri evolved from two early nineteenth century trading centers linked by primitive narrow "roads" that followed the river levee and the deep ravines in the hilly terrain. In 1830, a town company platted the "Town of Kansas" on the south side of the Missouri River near the confluence of the Kaw (Kansas or Kanza) River, near the river landing site selected in 1826 by Francois Chouteau, a French fur trader. Later, in 1835, a group of traders and merchants platted the "Town of Westport" approximately four miles<sup>17</sup> to the south near the Missouri-Kansas border. By 1847, a paved wagon road, which cut through the bluffs at Main Street in the Town of Kansas, connected Westport directly with the river landing. Other north-south access roads soon followed.

Neither Westport nor the Town of Kansas had a large settled population prior to the Civil War. The community's physical development spread south and southeast over the hilly terrain from the original river settlement. The first additions to the original Town of Kansas plat were rectangular plats that extended twelve blocks south from the Missouri River levee and three blocks from west to east. By mid-century, the town's boundaries reached south to 20<sup>th</sup> Street and east twelve blocks to Lydia Avenue. Within this area, clustered around a grid of platted lots, was a

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<sup>17</sup> At approximately 40<sup>th</sup> Street today.

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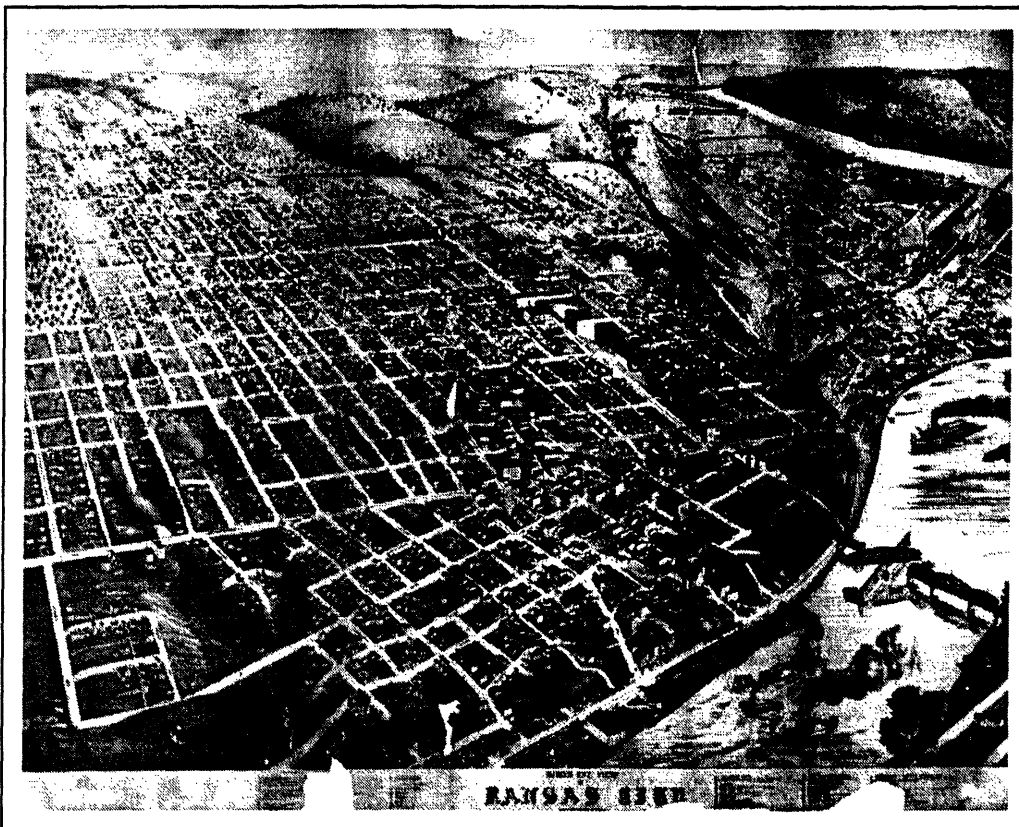
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scattering of small, plain buildings — residences, commercial structures, and other facilities that were common to small towns in Western Missouri. Although new residences and businesses located in established or recently platted areas, the agrarian nature of the period resulted in scattered farmsteads that grew at a faster rate than the urban population. As a result, neither the Town of Kansas nor the Town of Westport had high residential density prior to the arrival of the railroad in the region.

The buildings and structures of the period were generally simple, utilitarian, vernacular designs, usually of log or frame construction. Residential buildings favored the styles that evolved in the Middle South and "Little Dixie" areas of Missouri. Classical and Gothic Revival styles prevailed as the design choice for finer residences. Brick construction was common for many of these buildings as well as others that were more formal in design and decorative treatment.

**Kansas City: 1870-1910**



**"Birdseye View" of Kansas City, Missouri, c.1870**  
Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections

After the end of the Civil War and almost immediately after the completion, in 1869, of the Hannibal Railroad Bridge, the City of Kansas became a national shipping hub. As a result, the City doubled its physical size.

The growth in rail connections and the commercial trade in grain, livestock, and agriculture processing industries greatly altered the appearance of the City. Manufacturing and related commercial businesses became more clustered and grew in density near the growing network of rail lines. Distinct residential

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neighborhoods and retail commercial centers began to emerge in the developed parts of the City. Residential areas differed in their physical relation to the City's core and in their ethnic, racial, and socio-economic composition. At the same time, the City's hilly topography promoted scattered neighborhoods and sprawl.

By the early 1870s, the river landing lost its role as the focal point of commercial activity and Main Street became the principal nucleus of retail, commercial, and governmental activity, as well as the central axis for development. The City's businessmen moved their establishments the half-mile inland from the banks of the river. Here, they erected new houses of business around the Market Square at the corner of Main and Fifth streets. This mixture of frame and brick buildings, which were seldom more than three stories high, incorporated architectural design features that emphasized the more permanent nature of the City.

In the mid-1850s, the Town of Kansas boasted a population of 478 and, by 1860, counted 4,414 residents.<sup>18</sup> Successful businessmen located their homes on the bluffs a short distance to the west of the business center in an area known as Quality Hill. Another elite residential enclave, "Knob Hill," located north and east of the Old Town Market Square between Walnut and Grand avenues, rivaled Quality Hill in the wealth and status of its inhabitants. In this small, downtown residential section for upper-income residents, lots were 50 feet by 125 feet, laid out in a rectangular grid. To the south of the central business district, across 10<sup>th</sup> Street and east of Main Street, was McGee's Addition which, beginning in the late 1850s, housed the majority of the City's middle- and upper-middle-class citizens. The area also included residential pockets of the rich as well as the poor and was an integrated neighborhood where German and Irish emigrants, whites, and blacks of varying degrees of wealth and poverty lived. Here, the rectangular grid continued, resulting in 25-foot frontage lots.

With the establishment and growth of rail lines and the ensuing commercial development, Kansas City acquired the economic base and population to support a booming real estate market. The 1880s was the most active and prosperous decade of this era. A series of land annexations kept pace with this growth and, by 1885, the City boundaries expanded south to 31st Street and east to Cleveland, with the state line and the river remaining the other boundaries. The City continued its tendency to urban sprawl, with residences and businesses scattered over the terrain. By 1890, the population stood at 132,716.<sup>19</sup>

Much of this growth resulted from improved transportation networks and public improvements. In 1880, Kansas City leaders boasted of ninety miles of streets, fifteen of which were paved. Private development and public works projects leveled the hills and filled ravines. Massive cuts through the river bluffs allowed greater access to waterfront rail lines. The City's retail center moved southward toward 11th and Main streets where large office

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<sup>18</sup> A. Theodore Brown and Lyle Dorsett, *K. C., A History of Kansas City, Missouri* (Boulder: Pruett Publishing Company, 1978,) 23.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*30.

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buildings were under construction. The bluffs still isolated the rail yards from the retail and commercial heart of the City and new industrial and warehouse construction remained visually separate from the downtown areas of expansion. By 1886, cable car and electric trolley lines replaced the horse-drawn car lines that operated in the commercial areas between the river levee and the Town of Westport. The extensive cable system promoted outward expansion through twenty-five miles of cable that reached all corners of the City, as well as outside the city limits. One effect of this cross-hatching of cable lines, with the best level of streetcar service running east and west, was that the highest degree of land speculation took place east of downtown and extending from the river to 18<sup>th</sup> Street on the south.

The new residential development that followed the City's expanding transportation network reflected informal social, economic, and ethnic stratifications. Existing residential neighborhoods, such as those in McGee's Addition, grew and expanded. Others, such as Quality Hill and Knob Hill, which were adjacent to growing industrial districts, lacked space to expand and many of their residents built new homes further east and south.

Initially residential expansion concentrated in the eastern part of the City. In the area southeast of Knob Hill – along Independence Boulevard and Woodland, Forest and 10th streets – well-built apartments and spacious single-family houses began to rise to house the City's upper-middle class and newly wealthy cattle barons. Soon, small, middle-class houses surrounded these islands of privilege. Another northeast neighborhood, Pendleton Heights, reflected the impact of the rapid extension of cable car lines toward the eastern edge of the city in the mid-1880s. A wave of cheaper houses and three-story, multi-family residential blocks quickly followed the erection of high style homes for the wealthy in this neighborhood.

Development also occurred to a lesser extent to the south, along the Broadway residential corridor. Affluent families, many of whom were former residents of Quality Hill, erected large "suburban" style homes in the Hyde Park and Roanoke neighborhoods, located in today's "Mid-town" area south of 36th Street. Meanwhile, apartment hotels replaced the large residences original to the Quality Hill neighborhood.

It was during this period of expansion and growth that professionalism in architecture became firmly established in the City. The construction boom of the 1880s attracted major architectural firms from Chicago and New York to open branch offices in the City. The number of architects practicing in Kansas City tripled between 1884 and 1888, and peaked again during the building boom of 1904-1906. Ranging in skill and education from carpenter-builders to academically trained professionals, these "architects" erected buildings reflecting competent and innovative designs in the Second Empire, Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, and Romanesque styles.

By 1887, the real estate boom was over. Platted land for several miles around the City's core lay vacant. Large parcels of undeveloped land dotted with farm buildings separated clusters of suburban residential areas. During the

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next decade, expansion of both residential and commercial neighborhoods moved generally southward at an orderly rate along the Main Street and Broadway corridors. The City's population growth steadily increasing from 132,716 in 1890 to 163,752 in 1900 and to 248,381 in 1910.<sup>20</sup> A formalized social structure emerged with an elite social and professional class at the top; an upper-middle class of businessmen and entrepreneurs; a larger number of clerks and small entrepreneurs of various kinds forming a middle class; and a large number of poor laborers at the bottom of the social structure.

As the physical size of the City and population steadily grew and expanded, a considerable change in the City's infrastructure and appearance occurred. By 1897, the City limits formed a rough rectangle stretching ten miles from the Missouri River south along the State line to 79th Street and stretching east eight miles encompassing the Town of Westport and other pre-existing communities. By 1909, the City limits encompassed approximately sixty square miles, extending east to the Blue River, where they remained until after World War II.

The City's patterns of growth at this time provided stark contrasts. As the center core and expanding rim of development showed different levels of growth and density, the intervening undeveloped areas showed signs of blight typical of the develop-and-abandon phenomenon as the population spread into a wider radius. Recently completed twelve-story skyscrapers towered over the "Downtown" area centered along 10th and 11th streets while the Old Town area around 5<sup>th</sup> and Main streets became a disheveled civic center, more and more isolated from retail and professional services. Displaced by the City's growing industrial base, slum dwellers in the West Bottoms and the Old Town moved eastward into what had been prosperous middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. The City's first elite residential areas began to decline. Knob Hill became known as Hobo Hill. In Quality Hill, commercial buildings and new and converted multi-family, middle-class housing units steadily replaced the mansions and town houses.

Further south along the Broadway corridor, Hyde Park continued to accommodate well-to-do families, as did the Roanoke area to the west. However, these enclaves were too small for the City's growing white-collar and leisure-class inhabitants. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the selection of a location for the grand new Union Station at 23rd and Main streets, the progress on a comprehensive system of parks and boulevards, and the suburban real estate developments of J. C. Nichols further emphasized and encouraged development in the newly annexed areas to the south and southeast.

Expanding growth stimulated a sustained campaign to improve the City's transportation system. Beginning in the early 1870s and continuing in the following decades, support grew for improving the main thoroughfares that linked Kansas City to communities to the east and west. Civic leaders, many of whom were well traveled, decried the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 53, 99.

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blight and sprawl brought by rapid growth and advocated comprehensive planning that incorporated the City's natural beauty with commercial development. Out of this concern grew the City's initial effort at city planning using a new parks and boulevard system.

The park and boulevard system designed and implemented by landscape architect George Kessler was the most significant factor in determining Kansas City's twentieth-century development, building patterns, land usage and, to a lesser extent, design. In philosophy, Kessler's plan was part of a larger movement. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a spirit of progressive reform occurred in the United States in response to the rapid urbanization of the country. Based on the concept of planned development that focused on the relationship between the physical environment and urban ills, the mission of the City Beautiful Movement was to make life in cities convenient, safe, and pleasant. The roots of the movement were in the emerging field of landscape architecture and the impact of Frederick Law Olmsted's design for Central Park in the 1860s and his design and layout of the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.<sup>21</sup>

Kessler's plan to address Kansas City's urban ills utilized designed landscapes, traffic ways, open green spaces, and high style architecture. Under Kessler's direction, a comprehensive park and boulevard system initiated the City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City in 1895 and continued for the next twenty-five years. Kessler's design converted blighted bluffs and ravines into parks linked by an extensive boulevard system. The plan affected the placement and design of buildings based on the premise that each boulevard would serve as the hub of more desirable and expensive residential neighborhoods with ". . . the influence radiating downwards to adjoining districts."<sup>22</sup> Small groups of retail stores and services concentrated at the edge of neighborhoods near the boulevards. Closer in and adjacent to single-family enclaves were buffer streets for multiple-family housing. At certain points along the boulevard were lots designated for large apartment buildings of high style design. This controlled mix of land use coupled with the exiting transit system provided easy access to parks for the working classes. At the same time, the boulevards fixed and classified residential sections assuring high residential property values for the middle- and upper-income residents. Thus, the system was the City's first attempt at defacto zoning prior to the City's approval of formal zoning classifications in 1923. The plan proved to be effective; by 1917, Kessler reported that the park and boulevard system had stabilized patterns of land use. It continued to affect the residential patterns of Kansas City until the close of World War II.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> James Marston Fitch, *American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966), 239-245; and Jane Mobley and Nancy Whitehead Harris, *A City Within A Park – One Hundred years of Parks and Boulevards in Kansas City, MO* (Kansas City: Lowell Press, 1991), 23.

<sup>22</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 160-166.

<sup>23</sup> William Worley, J. C. Nichols and the Shaping of Kansas City (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990), 56-67.

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In the northeast section of the City, Kessler usually placed the boulevards along what were already high-value residential streets. Here, new construction closely followed the grid system and the preexisting narrow, deep lots. In the southern part of the City, the boulevard plan bisected the traditional grid system of streets and avenues and followed natural topographical features. The undeveloped, open space along the boulevards encouraged architecture with monumental massing and horizontal emphasis achieved by sets of buildings erected in the contemporaneous Beaux Arts style.

**Kansas City 1910-1930**

During the first decade of the new century, the City's population grew by 54 percent. Between 1910 and 1930, the population increased by 150,000 to 399,746 — a rate of growth mirroring that of other urban centers in the country.<sup>24</sup> The City's economic base continued to be in sales, production, and processing related to agriculture and real estate, with manufacturing and warehousing increasing. At this time, the City's newly initiated parks and boulevard plan began correcting the blight resulting from the City's rapid development, growing congestion, sprawl, and fluctuating land values. In the older residential areas near the commercial centers and rail yards, the growth of manufacturing concerns and the influx of poor, unskilled immigrants led to the decline of the most desirable nineteenth century neighborhoods. By 1910, the effect of the new park and boulevard system began to be felt. Throughout the City, the new system stimulated new housing, schools, hospitals, and retail commercial centers. As intended, the new system both defined and stimulated development patterns. In 1914, famous Kansas City developer, J. C. Nichols noted that, “. . . the most attractive headline you can run for an advertisement is ‘on a boulevard’ or ‘near a boulevard.’”<sup>25</sup>

During this period, architecture shifted from the aesthetic abstractions of the Victorian period to styles that reflected the demands of rapid growth on construction, new technology, and economic realities of a new era. Architectural treatments reflected either a return to classical or simpler historic architectural forms or to more functional new styles. In Kansas City, this transition occurred slowly, in pace with the need for more housing and an increasing number of commercial structures. Typically, stylistic ornamentation — English Gothic, Renaissance, Baroque, Neoclassical, and Italian Renaissance — began to appear on functional, "modern" building plans. As time passed, even this historically derived ornamentation became flatter, crisper, and more mechanical.

The period also ushered in a change in the traditional housing types. Although developers erected a number of both large and small row houses, French flats, courts, apartment houses, and apartment hotels during the second half of the nineteenth century, Kansas City's residents demonstrated a decided preference for the single-family detached house. After the turn of the century, housing shortages, a rapidly growing middle class, and the emergence of speculative developers ushered in an era of small- to medium-sized four- to twelve-unit apartment buildings. As

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<sup>24</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 99, 183.

<sup>25</sup> Spencer, E5.

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the City's population accelerated, so did the market for even larger apartment houses. Between the end of World War I and 1925, when the construction market peaked in Kansas City, both the number of smaller units and large apartment buildings (eighteen to twenty-four units) appeared in clusters in different neighborhoods, establishing apartment housing as a significant part of the City's residential patterns.

By the 1930s, Kansas City's nineteenth century residential neighborhoods had completely changed in character. Gone were the elite single-family residential enclaves, such as Quality Hill and Knob Hill, once found adjacent to the City's business core. A system of boulevards and streetcar routes connected the central city with residential neighborhoods and small corner retail centers to the south. The most easily identifiable white upper-class neighborhood in Kansas City was the Country Club District established by J. C. Nichols in 1907 and located some fifty blocks to the south of the river. McGee's Addition, once an identifiable commercial and residential area with a mixed ethnic and social population, could no longer be characterized as a neighborhood. In various sections to the east and southeast of the Central Business District, middle- and working-class neighborhoods developed. And, while integrated neighborhoods continued to exist in the poorer sections of town, African-American ghettos and segregated neighborhoods were firmly established as early as 1912 between Troost and Woodland on the east and west and between 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> streets on the north and south; between State Line and Bell and West 9<sup>th</sup> in the West Bottoms; and between Harrison and Highland on the east and west and 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> streets on the north and south.

**THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE-CLASS MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL UNIT  
IN KANSAS CITY: 1885-1930**

As noted earlier, during the construction boom of the 1880s and continuing throughout the following two decades, Kansas City's middle-class residents demonstrated a clear preference for detached houses. However, as the population and ensuing housing shortages increased, particularly after World War I, apartment houses became a more attractive housing option for all strata of society.

The established forms of multiple family residential units in Kansas City in 1870s included boarding houses converted from large single-family houses, tenements<sup>26</sup> erected or converted from larger buildings, small detached living quarters such as duplexes and living quarters over commercial shop. These multi-family units housed the City's lower classes. It was not until the population increase and the resulting building boom of the early 1880s that the apartment building designed for the middle and upper-middle classes appeared.

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<sup>26</sup> The term tenement in the mid- to late-nineteenth century generally applied to any multiple family rental building. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was also used to refer to any residential building in a slum. However, this latter reference occurred at a time when prize-winning tenement designs were developed for housing the lower, working classes. Thus, the term also applied to large, new, multi-family buildings erected in the first decades of the twentieth century for the working

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**THE MIDDLE-CLASS APARTMENT BUILDING MARKET**

Two factors established a market for middle-class apartment buildings. The first was sufficient population density of middle- and upper-middle-class residents who preferred or required multi-family rental units as opposed to the detached residence. The second was the cost of the owner-occupied single-family house.

It was not until the late 1880s that population growth (due in large part to the movement of rural dwellers to the City) and the increase in demand by single workers and professionals established an economic foundation for the purpose-built, middle-class, multi-family building. It was not until the second decade of the twentieth century that the middle-class flats and apartment houses became established as a prevalent form of housing in the City.

As Kansas City evolved into an urban center and its population grew to approximately 100,000 in 1885 and to 132,000 in 1890, Kansas City's land values escalated. During the real estate boom in the early 1880s, the City's residential neighborhoods expanded outward. Accompanying this extension was a wave of cheap residential building. Evidence of the growing numbers of middle-class workers were the rows of expensive, quickly-built houses and the three-story residential multi-family blocks called "flats" that began to appear at this time near residential neighborhoods.<sup>27</sup> The boom reached its highest point during 1887, but by year's end, poor crops and a sagging cattle market created a regional depression. Within a few years, the City resumed its rapid growth, increasing in population from 132,716 in 1890 to 163,752 in 1900 and to 248,381 in 1910.<sup>28</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century, the City's population growth steadied and, by the time of the First World War, growth no longer served as a defining element of the City's status. During this period, the occupational and age demographics did not change significantly. The largest employer continued to be manufacturing industries, followed by those engaged in trade and transportation. Professional occupations remained at about the same level. The only remarkable change in occupations was the increasing percentage of those employed in clerical jobs.<sup>29</sup> It was this group that could not afford single-family houses and that provided an important segment of the base market for apartments built for the middle-class in the early twentieth century.

Most of Kansas City's middle- and upper-middle-class residential neighborhoods that appeared in the last decades of the nineteenth century through the onset of World War I were the result of subdividers who sold individual lots to small builders, who in turn rented or sold their completed houses and flats to occupants or investors.<sup>30</sup> Because

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poor. As used here, it references simple functional and often hastily built multi-family buildings erected for the working classes, usually near industrial and manufacturing areas.

<sup>27</sup> Brown and Dorsett, 53-54.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 55, 99.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 183-84

<sup>30</sup> Worley, 5, 17.

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of the costs associated with this system, construction for owner occupancy was financially difficult and single-family housing for many of the new city dwellers was an expensive proposition, particularly during real estate booms. The cost of a lot was more than the average middle-class worker's annual income. This and the cost of the house itself rendered a new house in a recently platted subdivision beyond the means of most of the City's workers. Thus, speculators purchased the majority of vacant lots and quickly erected cheap frame dwellings as rental property and most of the City's residents rented their living quarters.<sup>31</sup>

The cost of living did not change in the ensuing decades. In 1900, the annual average income was still \$400-\$500. In 1912, social workers estimated that a family of four needed an annual income of at least \$600 to maintain an adequate standard of living.<sup>32</sup> At the low end of the middle-class spectrum was the cook, shop girl, or laborer who earned around \$260 a year. Among the upper-middle class, a college professor with a salary of \$2,000 to \$3,000 ". . . had to watch every penny and forego many satisfactions which he felt were the natural right of well-educated people." But he could afford a fair-sized house and at least one maid.<sup>33</sup>

As a result, to the majority of Kansas City's growing middle class, the apartment house offered affordable, decent housing for those wishing to become established in a career before marrying or having children, for the retired and for the spinster, widow, bachelor or widower. The largest of these groups renting apartments were bachelors, reflecting the emergence of the single workman as the dominant element in the workforce. By the onset of World War I, wage-earning single women also began to rent apartments. In the early years of apartment popularity, single women residents tended to be widows who were far outnumbered by couples and bachelors. In 1900, investigators of working conditions estimated that the City's population of over 160,000 included approximately 16,000 wage-earning women. Seventy-five percent earned more than \$6.00 a week, at a time when the cost of living in a modest boarding house was around \$8.50 a week.<sup>34</sup> Thus, working women with salaries that firmly established them in the middle class could afford to live in apartment houses.

A certain segment of the upper-middle class also emerged as apartment dwellers in the late 1880s. The residential patterns of the affluent were changing at this time in Kansas City. Most of the privileged who could choose where they wanted to live already demonstrated a proclivity to move east and south. And the old elite neighborhoods close to the business centers declined. Apartment houses or apartment hotels that offered amenities provided by hotels located on major thoroughfares with streetcar lines near the City's business centers attracted bachelors of the

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 55

<sup>32</sup> Sherry Lamb Shirmer and Richard McKinzie, *At the River's Bend An Illustrated History of Kansas City Independence and Jackson County* (Woodland Hills, California: Windsor Publications, Inc., in association with the Jackson County Historical Society, 1982), 65.

<sup>33</sup> Frederick Lewis Allen, *The Big Change America Transforms Itself 1900-1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1952), 49-43, 51-52.

<sup>34</sup> Shirmer and McKinzie, 56.

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professional and business classes, as well as wealthy widows. These new residential buildings featured an array of facilities and services for those without the time or inclination to manage a large home — kitchen, laundry and maid services, well-appointed public rooms, and private suites that included parlors, dining rooms, bedrooms, baths, and maid quarters. Social registers from the first decades of the twentieth century reveal that these apartments appealed to the upper-middle classes, including professionals, businessmen, and entrepreneurs. For example, the 1907-1908 Kansas City *Blue Book* lists Kansas City's Mayor, Henry M. Beardsley, and prominent businessman James M. Kemper, as residents of the Colonnade Apartments. Erected in 1905 at 201-219 Armour Boulevard, the thirty-unit apartment building extending between Wyandotte to Central featured one of the more ornate and high style exterior designs of the decade.<sup>35</sup> Many of the residents in the Knickerbocker Apartments appeared in the Kansas City social register and included attorneys, physicians, real estate investors, stockyard owners and other professionals. Erected in 1908-1909 at a cost of \$250,000 on a fashionable private street in the area of Broadway and 36<sup>th</sup> Street, The Knickerbocker featured suites of up to nine rooms and such amenities as hot water heat, a central vacuum cleaning system, laundry facilities, private garages and a horse drawn taxi.<sup>36</sup>

**EARLY MIDDLE- AND UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

The advent of the apartment dwelling designed specifically for the middle classes occurred at a time when “. . . Kansas City was just beginning to take definite form and tangible indications of the coming size and importance were appearing at every hand.”<sup>37</sup> Among the earliest of these apartment house real estate ventures was the Donnelly Block at the southeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Locust Avenue. Considered at the time of its construction to be one of the show places of Kansas City, the Queen Anne style masonry building represented “. . . a new phase of building activity.”<sup>38</sup> Real estate developer Bernard Donnelly decided to “. . . build something of a novelty for Kansas City and the Donnelly flats<sup>39</sup> were put up: the forerunner of the modern apartments of Kansas City.”<sup>40</sup> Erected in the early winter of 1887 at a cost of \$30,000, the block of apartments featured ten units, each consisting of a separate three-story house with a separate entrance sharing common walls. The dining room and kitchen were

<sup>35</sup> Linda F. Becker and Cydney E. Millstein, “Colonnaded Kansas City Apartment Buildings (Phase 1) A Study” prepared for the Kansas City Landmarks Commission and City Development Department, Kansas City, Missouri, May 1990, 30. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>36</sup> Cydney E. Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, “Knickerbocker Apartments,” 25 November 2002, 8. City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places 13 June 2003.

<sup>37</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 30 April 1916. *Kansas City Star* Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections. Microfilm.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> The apartment building was not a “flat” as described in the newspaper article. A discussion of definition of nomenclature is in a subsequent elaboration in this section.

<sup>40</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 30 April 1916. *Kansas City Star* Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections. Microfilm.

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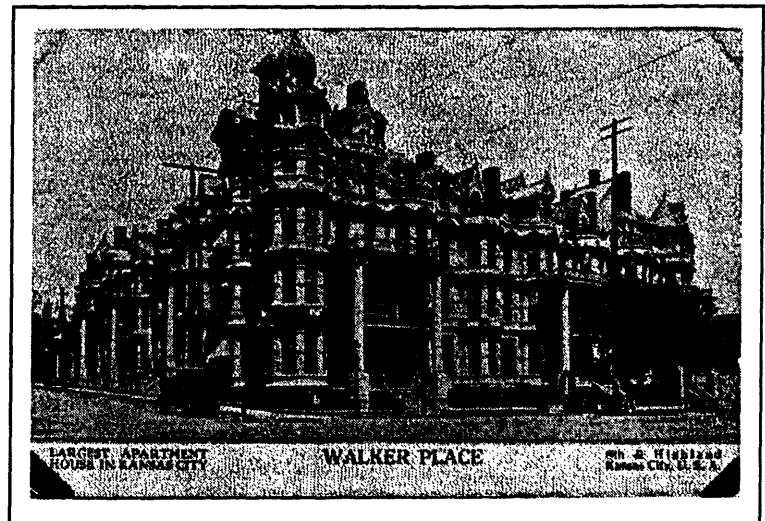
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in the half basements. At that time the neighborhood was considered part of the fashionable East Side and the Donnelly Block drew "the best class of tenants' attracted by the ornate architecture which was considered ". . . somewhere near the last word in design."<sup>41</sup> The *Kansas City Star* article noted that ". . . the set that gathered around the old place represented a great deal of smartness and something of the artistic side of the city's life at the time. A number of musicians found quarters and congenial associates in the neighborhood and life was rather fascinating, everything considered."<sup>42</sup>

A number of similar apartment buildings appeared at this time in the northeast portion of the City. The *Kansas City Star* identifies the Landis Court, erected c.1886, as ". . . the first venture here in apartment construction."<sup>43</sup> Considered one of the City's fashionable apartment dwellings, Landis Court consisted of facing blocks of forty-two connected three-story houses separated by a private roadway. The property had a 157-foot frontage on Broadway and a 167-foot frontage on Washington, between 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> streets.<sup>44</sup> Contemporary counterparts to the Donnelly Block and Landis Court included the Tullis Place at 8th and Jefferson; Hasbrook Court off 12th Street near Washington; Aldine Place a little further west of Washington; Munford Court on the southeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Highland; Garland Place (a.k.a. Garland Block) at 7<sup>th</sup> and Woodland; and the Highland Apartments, also at 8<sup>th</sup> and Highland. The largest of the apartment houses erected at this time was the Quinlan Block at the northeast corner of 8<sup>th</sup> and Highland. Erected in the late 1880s, the four-story, Queen Anne Style building featured an onion dome atop a corner tower and a porch for every apartment.<sup>45</sup>

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, developers reconceived the apartment building prototype to meet the demands of truly self-sufficient living required by the growing middle class. At this time, developers began to



**Quinlan Block, a.k.a. Walker Place**  
Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections

<sup>41</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 30 April 1916.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 6 January 1924. *Kansas City Star* Newspaper Clipping File. Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections. Microfilm.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> "Postcards from Old Kansas City," *Kansas City (MO) Star*, 15 May 1976. Mrs. Sam Ray Post Card Collection. Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections. Kansas City, Missouri. Later known as the Walker Place, the apartment building appears on Kansas City plat books in 1891.

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erect “self-sufficient” accommodations equal to those of a small house and at a rental rate equal to or less than such a house could command in a similar locality. These two- to four-story buildings met a need for moderate rentals and appeared throughout the then central portion of the City near public transit systems. This new class of “walk-up” apartment buildings, never more than three or four stories tall, negated the need for and expense of an elevator. To further reduce costs, the developer dropped hotel-type personal services and the “kitchenette” apartment house replaced the apartment hotel with its communal kitchen and public dining room.<sup>46</sup>

As early as 1900, the City’s multi-family dwellings included a sizeable number of “flats,” “blocks,” “apartments,” and “courts,” as well as the large “apartment hotels.” Two- to four-story flats replaced the attached row houses that were so popular in the 1880s. This decline in popularity was due, in part, to the lack of exposure to light available in small detached houses and/or the compactness of the apartment flat with all rooms on a single floor level. Although there is some ambiguity in word usage found in early descriptions of these multi-family buildings, the term “flat” generally referred to modest two-story duplex and four-plex units as well as to three- and four-story “walk-up” flats that featured all the rooms of an apartment on one floor. The term “blocks” referenced attached row houses aligned along a block. The term “court” initially referenced two rows of facing attached houses; later, it often referred to a grouping of multi-family buildings (usually flats) in a courtyard configuration. The term “apartments” referenced larger apartment complexes, often apartment hotels.

The 1900 city directory lists less than 100 flats, apartments, courts, and blocks. Five years later, the city directory lists over 250 such multi-family buildings. Most of these multi-family buildings appear in the northeast and northwest portions of the City and along the City’s main transit corridors. The City’s apartment construction continued to expand in the next two decades. The most active period for construction between 1900 and the U.S. entry into World War I was 1916, with 226 buildings under construction.<sup>47</sup>

As noted, the middle-class apartment building floor plans erected at this time reflected the French Flat — an all-on-one-floor plan based on the late nineteenth century Boston prototypes. Large apartment buildings, such as the 1902 Circle at 1200 The Paseo<sup>48</sup> often featured commercial space on the ground floor. The more self-sufficient, “double triple-decker” walk-up plan consisted of six (and some times eight) units, two per floor, three or four per side, connected by a central stair hall. Both building types appeared as a detached house or as detached conjoined buildings.<sup>49</sup> The more modest four-family flat utilized the same central stair hall plan with flanking units on each

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<sup>46</sup> Eig and Hughes, E21.

<sup>47</sup> Worley, 245. This was also the second most active year for apartment construction in Kansas City between 1910 and 1941.

<sup>48</sup> Listed in the National Register of Historic Places 22 October 2002.

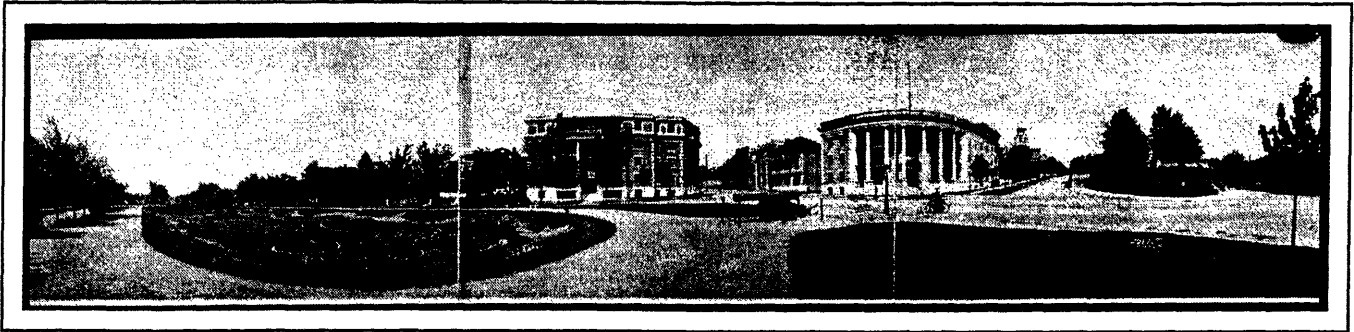
<sup>49</sup> Eig and Hughes, E3

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**The Circle Apartments, 1200 The Paseo, c. 1902**  
Kansas City, Missouri Public Library, Special Collections

floor. All provided the latest in self-sufficient living quarters, a central heating and plumbing system, kitchen, private baths, rear porches for laundry, and other features.

This plan adapted easily to apartment dwellings of the well-to-do upper-middle class as well as to buildings designed to attract hourly workers. The turn-of-the-century, four-story Renaissance Revival style Sloan-Sharp Apartments, designed by the prominent Kansas City architectural firm of Wight and Wight, at 3800 Baltimore featured two flats flanking a central stair hall on four stories. The marble clad central stair hall featured filigreed wrought iron stair railings and incorporated a small elevator and spacious landings. The suite of rooms for each flat included an entry hall, parlor with a wood burning fireplace, corner solarium, dining room, two bedroom suites with baths, a guest room, kitchen, pantry, and maid's room and bath. A large carriage house stood at the rear of the lot. City directories document early tenants were from the professional classes, including physicians, attorneys, widows, middle managers, and manufacturers' representatives.

The more modest Classical Revival style, three-story Carpathia apartment building, erected a block away during the same decade, had a "shot gun" floor plan of a balcony porch, parlor, dining room, and long rear hallway flanked by a galley kitchen on one side and two bedrooms and a bath on the other. Another version of this size unit was a four square plan of parlor-dining room with a bedroom and bath off the dining room. A galley kitchen was behind the central stair hall and off the dining room. A larger version of the Carpathia model was the three-story, twelve-unit central stair hall conjoined walk-up Majestic apartment building at 701-707 South Benton Boulevard. Each moderately priced unit followed the Boston prototype developed in the 1890s. A parlor (and adjoining chamber) took the front space, followed by bedrooms and bath off a long hall with a kitchen and dining room at the end. The dining room featured a beamed ceiling and the parlor had a decorative fireplace mantel.<sup>50</sup> Early residents of these

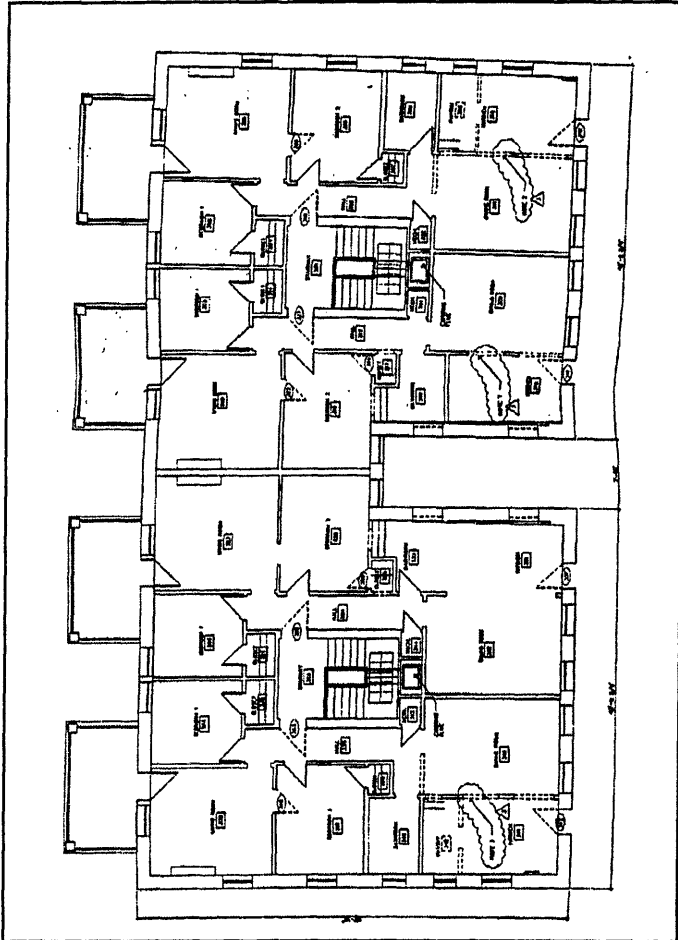
<sup>50</sup> Eig and Hughes, E22.

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**Majestic Apartment Building Floor Plan**  
701-707 Benton Boulevard  
Western Historical Manuscript Collection,  
Kansas City, Missouri

two buildings worked as bookkeepers, production line mangers, department store buyers, stenographers, salesmen, and clerks.

Although the size of the building and the number of units varied, the usually unpretentious two-story, four-family flat, whether a simple brick structure or executed in a popular period architectural style, usually incorporated the same basic floor plan. Replacing the working-class row house and tenement house, developers erected these buildings to accommodate moderate or lower incomes by reducing design and construction costs. A review of city directories and apartment survey information documents that the simpler of these buildings typically housed both blue-collar and white-collar workers. For example, small simple, brick buildings housed carpenters, plumbers, cable splicers, newspaper employees, stenographers, secretaries, and clerks. Middle-class, white-collar, salaried workers, such as district sales managers, clerks, accountants, sales representatives, private secretaries, and stenographers, occupied the larger counterparts that often referenced popular architectural styles of the era.

**POST-WORLD WAR I APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

Apartment construction boomed after the end of World War I. During 1920-1929, 15,152 new apartment units and 1,092 new duplex housing units came on the market. The biggest year in apartment construction was 1924, when developers received permits for 2,239 units. The second best year in that decade was 1927 with 2,135 new units.



































































































