

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Kansas City Athenaeum

AND/OR COMMON Athenaeum Club

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 900 E. Linwood Blvd.

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

#5

NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Hon. Richard Bolling

STATE

Missouri

CODE

29

COUNTY

Jackson

CODE

095

3 CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY

DISTRICT

X BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

X PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

X OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

X YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

X EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

X ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Athenaeum Club House Company

STREET & NUMBER 900 E. Linwood Blvd.

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

VICINITY OF

STATE
Missouri 64109

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of Recorder of Deeds
Jackson County Courthouse, Kansas City Annex

STREET & NUMBER

415 East 12th Street

CITY, TOWN

Kansas City

STATE
Missouri 64106

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Missouri State Historical Survey

DATE

1979

FEDERAL X STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Department of Natural Resources P.O. Box 176

CITY, TOWN

Jefferson City

STATE

Missouri 65102

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

__EXCELLENT

__DETERIORATED

__GOOD

__RUINS

X FAIR

__UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

X UNALTERED

__ALTERED

CHECK ONE

X ORIGINAL SITE

__MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Kansas City Athenaeum, 900 East Linwood Boulevard, is located in Kansas City's Westport District. The three-story rectangular building sits on a corner lot, with its main facade facing south. The building has a frontage of approximately eighty-one feet on East Linwood Boulevard and eighty-nine feet on Campbell Street.

Construction Materials and Colors

Cut limestone is employed as a foundation for the structure and forms the raised ground story. Buff colored brick, laid in common bond, is utilized for the first and second floors. Cast concrete and stone is used for decorative trim. Below the parapet is a galvanized steel cornice. Wood, painted beige, is used for doors and window elements.

South (principal) facade

The facade is symmetrically arranged into seven bays and is highlighted by a four columned pedimented portico. The portico is of the Roman Doric order and features smooth column shafts resting on brick and stone plinths.¹ The frieze of the entablature consists of triglyphs and metopes. Guttae are noted under each triglyph. Extending on each side of the portico is a denticulated cornice. Above this is a parapet wall with stone coping. A string course is located between the upper windows and the cornice. The portico is approached by a wide flight of stone steps. The steps are framed on the east and west by a rusticated stone stair wall, a continuation of the foundation in design and material. Three centrally placed entrance doors are located within the portico, framed between two pilasters. All three doors feature decorative transoms. The center door is topped by a segmental pediment while the flanking doors feature cornice door heads. Cornice window heads are used on the paired first floor windows on each side of the portico. Articulating the second floor are seven symmetrically placed square windows with crosset framing.

West facade

The southern two bays of the west facade continue the treatment of the main facade. A canopied double, wood entrance door is located at the basement level, near the southwest corner of the building. The northern portion of the west facade, four bays in width, feature a continuation of the string course, window treatment, and denticulated cornice of the south facade. A string course runs beneath the second floor windows. The northern portion of this facade features three tall rectangular double hung sash windows, with arched transoms, set within brick vouissoirs. The brick arches are broken at the top by stone keystones. Colored art glass is used in these windows. Three rectangular windows are located below these windows on the raised ground story. A second wood entrance door is located at the north end of this facade.

East facade

This facade is similar to the west facade. However, this facade contains no entrance doors; the cornice and string course do not extend beyond the first two bays of this facade; and a projecting brick chimney stack is located at the northern portion of the facade.

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North facade

The north facade features a row of rectangular windows on each floor level. The second and third floor windows feature stone sills. Centrally placed, are paired projecting chimney stacks. Tile coping is used along the low gable roof line. A basement entrance door is located on this facade, down a flight of concrete steps.

Interior

The interior consists primarily of club rooms, an auditorium with stage, and a large dining area. The dining area was considerably remodeled in 1964 with installation of a drop ceiling.²

Alterations

The exterior of the building is essentially unaltered. In 1964, new mahogany doors, flanked by carriage lamps were placed on the west facade.³

Condition

Both the exterior and interior of the structure are in fair to good condition.

Site

The building sits back approximately 10 feet from East Linwood Boulevard. To the east, west, and south are multi-family residential structures. To the north is a vacant lot and a residential structure.

Present Status

The building is still in use as the Kansas City Athenaeum Club.

FOOTNOTES

1. Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1969), pp. 31-35; John Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977), pp. 22-23.
2. "Athenaeum's Face is Lifted," Kansas City Times, 16 September 1964, p. 8.
3. Ibid.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1914-15 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel Tarbet

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kansas City Athenaeum, 900 East Linwood Boulevard, Kansas City, Missouri, is the oldest women's club in Kansas City, dating from 1894. Two of its early presidents, Mrs. E.R. Weeks and Mrs. Henry Ess, were prominent figures in state and local history. The building was originally built to be the clubhouse for the organization, a use that continues today. The classical revival style architecture reflects the name of the organization. The building was designed by Kansas City architect, Samuel Tarbet. The general contractor was Harvey Stiver.¹

HISTORY OF THE KANSAS CITY ATHENAEUM

During the nineteenth century, when women were basically limited to the roles of wife, mother and homemaker, women's clubs proliferated as a means for women to keep in touch with the world, to continue educational pursuits, to alleviate the isolation of their lives, and to become involved in political and social projects. In her excellent chapter chronicling the history of women's clubs in Kansas City, Whitney lists over twenty active clubs in 1908.² In today's world, with expanded opportunities for women, clubs no longer have the popularity they once had, but nevertheless, still survive and form an important social outlet for many women.

The Kansas City Athenaeum is the oldest surviving women's club in Kansas City. In the fall of 1893, Mrs. Laura Everingham Scammon was President of the Social Science Club of Missouri and Kansas, which was disbanding. She conceived the idea of having a larger women's club in Kansas City to take its place. She invited six other women, including Dr. Martha Dibble and Mrs. E.R. Weeks to discuss such an organization. Mrs. Weeks wrote a proposal, or "call," for the new club and Dr. Dibble wrote a constitution. The stated purpose of the club was "...to promote mutual sympathy and united effort for intellectual development, the improvement of social conditions and the higher civilization of humanity."³

In Chicago and St. Louis, women had recognized the advantage of small clubs bannng together to increase their strength and usefulness. The club in its formative period was aware of this innovation. As Weeks' proposal for the club stated, "Have we not in our isolated groups fallen into a most delightful literary dissipation?"⁴

On May 9, 1894, a mass meeting was held to consider the feasibility of organizing a general women's club, an outgrowth of the ground work laid by Scammon, Dibble and Weeks. Seventy women were present. At a meeting the following week, 105 women were present and elected Mrs. Weeks President of the group. The name, Kansas City Athenaeum, was adopted for the organization.⁵ Membership in the Kansas City Athenaeum has fluctuated over the years. By 1915 the club was the fifth largest in the United States and in 1919

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boasted a membership of 800.⁶ Today there are 325 members.⁷

The club is organized into various study groups (such as art, music, literature, and science). Whitney described the club as functioning as the Women's University of Kansas City ". . . a university in the sense of a center, a forum for the assembly of sincere searches for the truth, the devotees of culture and human progress."⁸ The club also engaged in numerous social and political projects, including:

- 1) formation of a Gold Star Scholarship fund to aid in the education of worthy high school students,⁹
- 2) maintenance of a public playground at Shelley Park to show the need for playgrounds,¹⁰
- 3) investigation of the County Poor Farm in 1914, which resulted in a report of the deplorable conditions that lead to the building of a new facility,¹¹
- 4) encouragement of the appointment of a physician to inspect milk,¹²
- 5) participation in an anti-litter campaign,¹³
- 6) active in creating a demand for a manual training in high school,¹⁴
- 7) preparation of surgical dressings, contributions to the Liberty Memorial Fund, and entertainment of soldiers with dances and musicals during the First World War,¹⁵
- 8) active in formulating the Juvenile Court.¹⁶

Following its inception, the club met in rented quarters. The construction of the Athenaeum Club house was a result of the 1907 fire that destroyed the Pepper Building, which the club was then using as a meeting place. The fire ". . . marked the awakening of the fast dying club house spirit and forced upon the members a realization of the necessity of establishing a permanent home for Kansas City's biggest women's club.¹⁷ In 1909 a stock company was formed for the purpose of securing a permanent structure. At \$5 a share, the company incorporated with a capital stock of \$10,000. By 1913, \$35,000 had been acquired. A loan of \$20,000 was then obtained to purchase ground. One lot was purchased and later resold for a \$2,000 profit. In 1913 the lot at 900 East Linwood Boulevard was purchased. At that time, the location was centrally located to the membership. The cornerstone of the building was placed in 1914 and the club opened in May, 1915.¹⁸ Many prominent Kansas City women have served as President of the Kansas City Athenaeum. Two of the early presidents, Mary Harmon Weeks and Pheobe Jane Ess, with their wide ranging activities, are especially noteworthy.

MARY HARMON WEEKS

First President of the Athenaeum Club, serving from 1894-1896, was Mary Harmon Weeks. Weeks was a teacher, a pioneer in education, and author of a number of books dealing with the relationship between parent and child. In 1867, while still a child, she moved to Missouri from Ohio. She received her teaching certificate at age 17

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and then taught high school English and mathematics for 17 years. In 1882 she married Edwin R. Weeks, the founder of Kansas City's first electric light company. In 1899 she organized the Mother's Union, which introduced the kindergarten system into the Kansas City public school system. In the 1890's Weeks helped organize the National Congress of Mothers and Parent-Teacher Organizations. The Parent-Teacher association she organized in Kansas City was the first in Missouri. Weeks assisted in the organization of hundreds of Parent-Teacher groups in Missouri. She was the first Corresponding Secretary of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. In 1918 she was instrumental in organizing the Kansas City Children's Bureau, an organization involved with child health. She served that organization as President until 1936. She also participated in the organization of the Missouri Federation of Women's Clubs.¹⁹

PHOEBE JANE ESS

Mrs. Ess was one of the charter members of the Athenaeum Club and was its fourth president serving from 1899-1900. She came to Missouri from Kentucky with her parents in the early 1850's. After attending the Clay County Seminary, she taught in Kansas City's Washington School. In 1875, she married Henry N. Ess, a lawyer. Ess was a pioneer worker for women's suffrage as a member of the Susan B. Anthony Club and also worked in behalf of prohibition. In 1931 the Missouri League of Women Voters placed a plaque at the State Capital to honor "those women in Missouri whose courageous work opened the opportunities of complete citizenship to all women in the state." The name of Phoebe Ess was among those on the bronze tablet. She served two terms as President of the Missouri Federation of Women's Clubs.²⁰ At her death in 1934 it was noted that she had become a symbol of "...an age in which women rose to powers and responsibilities that were unbelievable a short half century ago."²¹

SAMUEL B. TARBET

Samuel B. Tarbet (c. 1871-1945) began his career in Kansas City as a contractor and builder around 1903. He formed a brief partnership with his brother, Addison, called the Tarbet Construction Company. By 1906 Tarbet was working alone, as an architect. He formed an architectural partnership with Robert Gornall that lasted from 1920-1922. The remainder of his career, until his retirement around 1930, Tarbet practiced alone. He designed a wide variety of buildings, including residences, churches, apartments, and commercial structures. He designed the Olathe, Kansas, City Hall in 1910; the Robert Sutherland residence at 410 Gladstone in 1913; and the Graphic Arts Building at 934 Wyandotte in 1917.

The survey of Missouri's historic sites is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in "Missouri's State Historic Preservation Plan." The Kansas City Athenaeum, therefore, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as an example of the themes of "architecture" and "society."

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FOOTNOTES

1. Western Contractor, 22 November 1916, p. 17; Water Permit No. 52903, Water Department, 5th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
2. Carrie Westlake Whitney, Kansas City, Missouri, Its History and Its People, 1808-1908, 3 vols, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1908), 1:616-641.
3. Ibid., pp. 627-630
4. [Daisy E. Cayot], A Brief History of the Kansas City Athenaeum, n.p., n.d., p. 7.
5. Whitney, Kansas City, p. 627.
6. "25th Anniversary of the Athenaeum," Kansas City Post, 17 May 1919, p. 7; "A Busy Winter Ahead for Club Women," Kansas City Star, 10 October 1915, sec. C, p. 1.
7. Carolyn Gunter, interview, 27 October 1978.
8. Whitney, Kansas City, p. 628.
9. "Club in 46th Year," Kansas City Star, 1 October 1939, sec. C, p. 8.
10. "New Athenaeum Club House to Open with Dickens Pageant," Kansas City Star, 12 April 1914, sec. C, p. 11.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. "Drive to End Litter," Kansas City Star, 18 January 1960, p. 8.
14. Whitney, Kansas City, p. 628.
15. "History of the Kansas City Athenaeum," Kansas City Journal, 15 November 1920, sec. B, p. 1.
16. "New Athenaeum Club House," Kansas City Star, 12 April 1914, sec. C, p. 11.
17. "New Club's Corner Stone," Kansas City Times, 20 November 1913, p. 7.

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18. Cayot, A Brief History, pp. 24 and 26.
19. Madeleine Johnston, "Mary Harmon Weeks, Educator," Kansas City Star, 30 September 1928, sec. D, p. 10; "Mary H. Weeks Dies," Kansas City Times, 25 May 1940, p. 4.
20. "Mrs. H. N. Ess is Dead at 84," Kansas City Journal Post, 10 April 1934, p. 1.
21. "Mrs. Henry N. Ess, a Great Woman," Kansas City Times, 11 April 1934, p. D.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"A Busy Winter Ahead for Club Women." Kansas City Star, 10 October 1915, sec. C, p.1.

"Athenaeum's Face is Lifted." Kansas City Times, 16 September 1964, p. 8.

Blumenson, John. Identifying American Architecture. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1977.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME "Kansas City, Mo.-Kans."

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,5 3,6,3 8,4,0 4,3 2,5 4,1,0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

TROOST AVE PARK W 120 FT LOTS 25 26 & 27 & N 36 FT OF W 120 FT LOT 28 BLK 2

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

1. Sherry Piland, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Landmarks Commission of Kansas City, Missouri

DATE

April 2, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

414 East 12th Street

TELEPHONE

(816) 274-2555

CITY OR TOWN

Kansas City

STATE

Missouri 64106

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Director, Department of Natural Resources and
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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- [Cayot, Daisy E.] A Brief History of the Kansas City Athenaeum, n.p., n.d.
- "Club in 46th Year." Kansas City Star, 1 October 1939, sec. C, p. 8.
- "Drive to End Litter." Kansas City Star, 18 January 1960, p. 8.
- Gunter, Carolyn. Interview. 27 October 1978.
- "History of the Kansas City Athenaeum." Kansas City Journal, 15 November 1920, sec. B, p. 1.
- Johnston, Madeleine. "Mary Harmon Weeks, Educator " Kansas City Star, 30 September 1928, sec. D, p. 10.
- "Mary H. Weeks Dies." Kansas City Times, 25 May 1940, p. 4.
- "Mrs. Henry N. Ess, a Great Woman." Kansas City Times, 11 April 1934, p. D.
- "Mrs. H. N. Ess is Dead at 84." Kansas City Journal Post, 10 April 1934, p. 1.
- "New Athenaeum Club House." Kansas City Star, 12 April 1914, sec. C, p. 11.
- "New Club's Corner Stone." Kansas City Times, 20 November 1913, p. 7.
- "25th Anniversary of the Athenaeum." Kansas City Post, 17 May 1919, p. 7.
- Water Permit, Water Department, 5th Floor, City Hall, Kansas City, Missouri.
Western Contractor, 22 November 1916.
- Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles.
Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1969.
- Whitney, Carrie Westlake. Kansas City, Missouri, Its History and Its People, 1808-1908.
Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1908.

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HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey
and State Contact Person
Department of Natural Resources
Office of Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 176
Jefferson City

May 17, 1979

314/751-4096

Missouri 65102



Kansas City Athenaeum
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle
"Kansas City" (1975)
Scale 1:24,000

UTM Reference
15/363840/4325410

KANSAS CITY

K A W

Photo Log:

Name of Property: **Kansas City Athenaeum**

City or Vicinity: **Kansas City**

County: **Jackson County** State: **MO**

Photographer: **Sherry Piland**

Date

Photographed: **Oct. 1978**

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 5. N façade. View looking SE.

2 of 5. W façade. View looking SE.

3 of 5. S façade, portico. View looking N.

4 of 5. S façade. View looking NE.

5 of 5. S façade on left, E façade on right. View looking NW. – Photo is missing.







