

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

1. Name of Property

historic name Knickerbocker Apartments

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 501-535 Knickerbocker Place [N/A] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [N/A] vicinity

state MO code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64111

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[x] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National
Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the
property [x] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally
[] statewide [x] locally.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [x].)

Mark A. Miles
Signature of certifying official/Title Mark A. Miles/Deputy SHPO

04/29/03
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

[] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].

[] determined not eligible for the
National Register.

[] removed from the
National Register

[] other, explain

See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
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<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
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<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
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<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
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<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
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<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total
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Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

DOMESTIC: secondary structure

Current Functions

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY

REVIVALS

Materials

foundation stone

walls brick

roof synthetic

other stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Knickerbocker Apartments
Kansas City, Jackson County, MO

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Summary

The Knickerbocker Apartments, located at 501-535 Knickerbocker Place, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is a three-story, twenty-eight unit, load-bearing masonry apartment building constructed of brick with stone embellishments. Designed by Kansas City architect Leon Grant Middaugh with elements of Tudor Revival and constructed in 1909-1910 by J. A. Rose, the Knickerbocker Apartments are located on what was originally a private street. Screened front porches and enclosed rear porches dominate the north and south facades, respectively. Twenty-one apartments feature three bedrooms, two baths, dining room, and a living room with fireplace and built-in bookshelves. Six of the units have one bedroom.

To the east of the Knickerbocker Apartments is the Ambassador Hotel Historic District (listed 2/17/83), consisting of Ambassador A and B Apartments, the Ambassador Hotel and the Congress Building. To the north is the Kansas City Life Insurance Company Building. To the west and south is the Valentine Neighborhood, consisting of early 20th century residential buildings.

It is important to note that, although three of the eight original porches are no longer extant, the building retains the majority of its integrity, including location, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling and association, to convey its significance. Furthermore, the interiors of this multi-family housing property have remained virtually unaltered since the completion of the building in 1910. The essential physical features are present. The current owner/developer plans to renovate the Knickerbocker Apartments and reintroduce the porches as originally designed.

Elaboration

The primary façade faces north. Features of the main façade include four entrances (501, 509, 517, 525, 531) with contrasting brick, modified Tudor surrounds; doors recently have been boarded up for safety reasons. Directly above the main entrances bays are paired, 3/3, fixed windows; the second story units have wide stone lintels and all units have stone lugsills. Double-hung, sash, 6/1 fenestration with cut stone lugsills and lintels are placed throughout the remainder of the main façade. First story and basement window units have been boarded-up. Three-story projecting porches, with multipaned French access doors and double-hung window units, are placed at 501, 517 and 525 Knickerbocker; three original porches have been razed due to safety issues (see above).

Each floor of the west façade features wooden porches with carved, decorative brackets and a one-bay overhead garage door at the far south bay. Double-hung, sash, 6/1 fenestration is identical to that of the main façade. First story and basement units have also been boarded up.

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The rear or south façade features enclosed utility porches. The original wood has been replaced by treated lumber. Segmental arched fenestration is also double-hung, sash, 6/1 with stone lugsills. Prominent exterior brick chimneys are placed at the center bay and at the far east bay.

A screened-in porch marks the entrance of the east façade. Fenestration, boarded up at the first story, is double-hung, sash-type, 6/1 with wide stone lintels at the first and second stories and stone lugsills throughout. Small, 4/1 single-hung units are placed at the second bay (moving north to south).

Additional features include cut stone coping and band coursing at the north, east and west facades, stepped parapets at the east and west facades.

A one-story brick, four-bay garage, originally used as a coachman's house, features tile coping and a flat roof. The non-original overhead metal garage doors are boarded-up at all bays except for the second (moving west to east). A portion of the original cast-iron fencing is extant at the west end of the property. The identical apartment building to the north (500-530 Knickerbocker Place) was razed in 1982.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1909-1910

Significant Dates

1909-1910

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Middaugh, Leon Grant, architect

Rose, J. A., builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government City Hall

☐ University

☒ Other:

Name of repository: Kansas City Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.2 Acres

UTM References

A. Zone Easting Northing
15 362260 4324950

B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing

D. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cydney E. Millstein and Mary Ann Warfield

organization Architectural and Historical Research, LLC date November 25, 2002

street & number P.O. Box 22551 telephone 816.363.0567

city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64113

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Lioness Realty Company

street & number 3100 Broadway telephone 816.531.6161

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111

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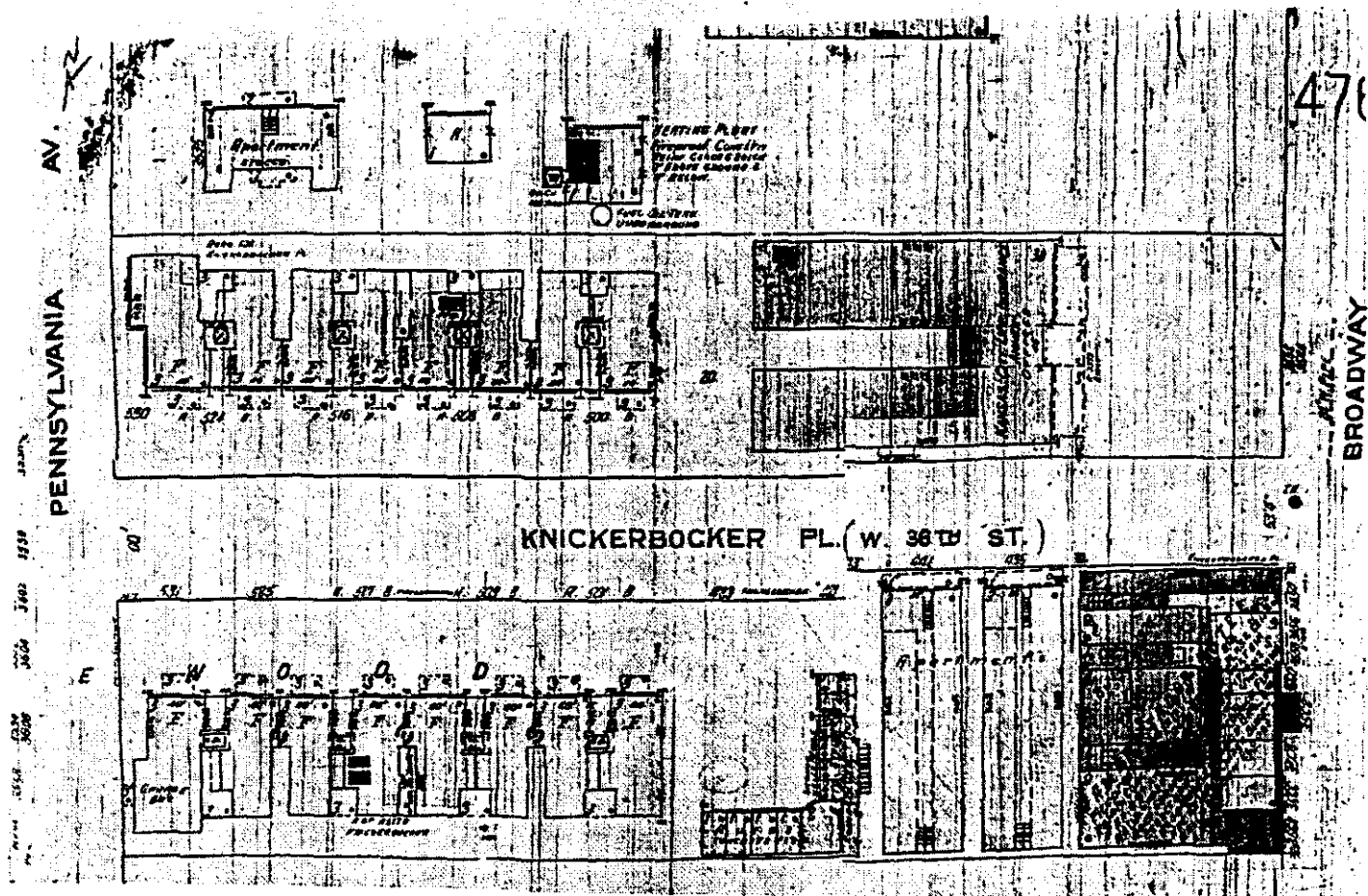
Knickerbocker Apartments, 1989
Source: Special Collections,
Kansas City Public Library,
Kansas City, Missouri

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Nominated Property

Knickerbocker Apartments
Source: Sanborn Map Co., 1951

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Summary

The Knickerbocker Apartments, located at 501-535 Knickerbocker Place, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C and is locally significant in the following areas: ARCHITECTURE: Designed by Kansas City architect Leon Grant Middaugh in 1909, the Knickerbocker Apartments represent an important subtype of the Kansas City Colonnaded apartment, a departure from the typical apartment complex of the period. The Knickerbocker Apartments, with their prominent porches and wide expanse of front lawn, remained the largest apartment group in Kansas City until around 1921. Furthermore the building is a representative and rare surviving example of the work of L. G. Middaugh. Built for developer James A. Rose, the Knickerbocker Apartments are located on what remained as one of Kansas City's few private streets until it was deeded to the city in 1958. The period of significance for the building is 1909-1910, the date of construction.

Elaboration

Throughout the United States, in the early years of the development of our cities, there was a strong need to house the ever-increasing population. To build a home in the heart of the city was becoming expensive, so those with moderate incomes or those that just did not want to have the responsibility of owning a home were deserting the cities whether they wanted to or not. The concerns of those promoting the city were then quite the same as they are today.¹

The answer to this housing shortage in our cities was the apartment house. Those that promoted the apartment did so because "they believed that a compact type of residence was necessary if American Cities were to become great centers of commerce and culture." In 1872, O. B. Bunce, the editor of *Appleton's Monthly* wrote that the pleasure of a city "had to be spontaneous and immediate" and argued that "a city's important commercial and cultural facilities would not flourish unless a large number of people lived nearby."²

In New York City, where the first apartment in America appeared, apartment design was greatly influenced by the works of such architects as Henry J. Hardenbergh, Philip G. Huberts and J. P. Putnam. As early as the 1880s, New Yorkers could live in high-rise apartment buildings that featured large interior courts and roof gardens. The development of the high rise in general came quickly because of the density in population to be housed and because of the layout of streets that had been established in 1807. From Houston Street, north, each block was divided into building lots 25 x 100 feet.³

¹ Linda F. Becker and Cydney E. Millstein, "Colonnaded Kansas City Apartment Buildings." May 1990, 6. Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

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Kansas City, like New York, experienced a drastic increase in population beginning in 1870. After the Civil War, Kansas City's population rose from 25,000 in 1870 to 55,000 in 1880. Then in just five years from 1880 to 1885, the population increased to 100,000. Thus housing, especially in the city, was of immediate concern.⁴

Many families in Kansas City that could not afford to purchase a residence in the city lived in boarding houses, or rented large homes and then sub-let rooms. Although Kansas Citians "had demonstrated a clear preference for the detached house," apartment construction slowly became a popular trend. In contrast to New York City, the apartment high-rise did not develop in Kansas City until the 1920s. Instead, two and three-story apartments with some form of porch at the primary elevation became the norm.⁵

A transition from the detached, single-family residence to the apartment building in Kansas City was the row house, although this type of apartment construction never really flourished here as it did in the northeastern U. S. The few extant row houses in Kansas City, 522-528 Elmwood and 1-7 E. 34th Street, all feature ample porches to accommodate the hot summer climate. The porches of these row houses, in addition to the exterior galleries found on antebellum homes in the Kansas City environs, certainly influenced the future design of apartment development.

The typical apartment house found in Kansas City from the late 1880s through the first decade of the 20th century was generally narrow in scale (to fit existing lots) and unadorned. Porches, such as those found on 513-519 Harrison and 517 Gillis, were often added to the structure at a later date, yet there were many apartments that featured prominent, multi-decked verandas as part of their original design. Some were modest in scale, while others such as the three-story New York Apartments (1902-1903; demolished), featured a prominent, curved primary elevation embellished with multiple colossal columns that supported twelve porches.⁶

Although William H. Collins must be credited for developing the original colonnaded porch style apartment in Kansas City, John W. McKecknie, a prominent local architect is certainly responsible for contributing to the architectural style so prevalent in Kansas City. His ideas about the benefits of the exterior porch were expressed in an article that appeared in *The Kansas City Star*, 26 May 1900. McKecknie said of his design that "the porches which of a

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid. The Circle Apartments, 12th and The Paseo Boulevard, were constructed in 1905 and featured deep porches at the main façade. These apartments were later demolished.

⁶ It should be mentioned that in 1886, Bernard Donnelly, active in Kansas City's real estate, constructed the European-inspired Donnelly Flats at 8th and Oak Streets. The elaborately embellished flats are considered to be the forerunner of the modern apartment in Kansas City.

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necessity are a dominating feature of the modern flat in this climate, are adapted from an old palace at B[ru]ges." This design philosophy was clearly illustrated in McKecknie's 1902-1903 Pergola Apartment, 1000 The Paseo, now demolished. Each apartment had its own deep porch supported by Doric style columns that ran the height of the individual porch.

In the first decade of the 20th century, Collins pioneered a new style of apartment building that eliminated the "long hall type of suites" that were characteristic of the early flats that existed in Kansas City. With the design of the Colonnade (201-219 W. Armour Boulevard) and the Collinwood (2501-2519 Linwood Boulevard), the "Collins Plan" became a standard. Every apartment in these two buildings featured five rooms including two bedrooms and a maid's room with a rear entrance. Both apartment buildings were a full block in length and were most noted for their richly embellished, colossal columns which flanked deep, multi-decked verandas. Unfortunately, the Colonnade and the Collinwood were demolished in 1963 and 1967, respectively.

The visibility, prominence and unequalled quality of Collins' landmark apartment design, more than likely heralded a trend in apartment design that had just begun to surface in the early 1900s. At the turn-of-the-century when Kansas City gained a foothold on mass transportation and the parks and boulevard system, inspired by the City Beautiful Movement, became a reality, more and more people were drawn to the city as an appealing place to live. To satisfy the needs of this oncoming trend, developers and other speculators took advantage of the market climate and provided more livable apartments within the city.

Shortly after the completion of Collins apartments, a boom in apartment house construction began in Kansas City in 1909. This was the same year that James A. Rose, a prominent Kansas City builder and contractor, started the construction of the Knickerbocker Apartments, designed by L. Grant Middaugh. Located between Broadway and Pennsylvania Avenue at 36th Street, the Knickerbocker Apartments originally consisted of two, separate but identical, three-story apartment buildings and contained twenty-eight apartments each. Forty-two walk-up apartments featured three bedrooms, two baths, a living room, dining room and kitchen with breakfast room. These apartments also featured a fireplace and front porch. The remaining twelve apartments were two bedroom.

With its extensive living quarters, projecting front porches supported by prominent brick piers, and frame utility porches with back stairways at the rear of the building, the Knickerbocker is clearly connected to the colonnaded apartment, pioneered by William Collins. The Knickerbocker Apartments were the largest apartment group in Kansas City until c. 1921. It is

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representative of a sub-type of the Colonnade and Collinwood Apartments, in its use of the supporting porch pier, instead of a true column.⁷

J. A. Rose built the Knickerbocker at a cost of \$250,000. At the time, the area of Broadway and 36th Street was considered to be one of the most fashionable residential areas. It was removed from the noise of the business district, yet close enough for convenient commuting. Two streetcar lines were less than a block away for a fifteen-minute trolley ride or ten-minute automobile ride to the heart of the downtown business district.⁸ During the first decade after it was built, the Knickerbocker included a "horse drawn taxi and a coachman's house at the east-end of the apartment complex."⁹

Many of the residents of Knickerbocker Place appeared in the *Kansas City Social Register*. J. A. Rose was a resident until his death around 1914. Attorneys, doctors, real estate investors, and stockyard owners were among the occupants.¹⁰ Joseph H. Tedrow, 517 Knickerbocker, served on the Chamber of Commerce as the director of transportation beginning in 1920.¹¹ John Berg, a civil engineer and salesman for Inland-Ryerson Steel Company lived at 500 Knickerbocker Place.¹² In 1926 Harlean Carpenter (1911-1937), who would go on to become the actress Jean Harlow, resided with her mother Jean Carpenter at 516 Knickerbocker Place.¹³

The elegance and prestige of the Knickerbocker was highly expressed in its design features and its private street status. In 1942 it was still showcased in *the Kansas City Social Register* as a "country house in the heart of the Broadway District." Many of those that resided at the Knickerbocker were waiting for the completion of a private home. The size of the apartments and the park-like setting gave the Knickerbocker a feeling of home that the typical apartment could not offer. The Knickerbocker was described as follows:

⁷ Many sub-types of the Colonnade were constructed in Kansas City between 1905 and 1924. These variations can be seen in the use of orders of columns, placement of the porches on the façades, the number of stories, the placement of columns on piers and the various types of porch roofs. Although the continuous brick pier was not a sub-type mentioned in the "Colonnaded Kansas City Apartment Study," this sub-type is most definitely linked to the prototype.

⁸ Katherine Baxter, ed., "The Success of a Perfect Apartment," *The Independent*, 21 August 1915, 10.

⁹ Patricia B. Glenn, "Historic Inventory Survey," Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri, 1980.

¹⁰ Lenore Bradley, "A Street That Time Passed By," *Kansas City Star*, 24 May 1981, 19-25.

¹¹ "Joseph H. Tedrow Dies," *Kansas City Times*, 2 August 1951, 1, 6. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri.

¹² "Deaths: John W. Berg," *Kansas City Times*, 23 February 1971, 1, 6. Microfilm, Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri.

¹³ *Kansas City, 1926 City Directory*, (Kansas City: Gates Publishing, 1926), 2169. Microfilm. Parents of Jean Harlow were Montgomery C. Carpenter, a Kansas City dentist who practiced at 708 Waldheim Building and Jean Harlow Carpenter. In 1927 Harlean's mother remarried and moved to Chicago.

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From the outer hall one enters a long living room, from which opens a large veranda. Another front room opening out of this may be used either for a small drawing room or a bedroom. A very large marble bathroom, with the most approved plumbing, connects two bedrooms. The dining room and the kitchen are attractively planned as to detail, with the proper butler's pantry and appointments. From off the dining room is another attractive bedroom, and across the hall is another bathroom.¹⁴

In addition, each apartment was supplied with hot water heat, vacuum cleaners, laundry facilities and private garages. One of the more appealing features of Knickerbocker Place was its site plan. Knickerbocker Place was sited on approximately two acres and divided by a narrow one-way street that remained private until 1944. The grounds featured a highly manicured lawn with rows of elm trees that arched over Knickerbocker Place and formed a canopy.¹⁵ During the 1930s Hare and Hare completed a landscaping project along the 500 block of Knickerbocker.

In 1966 Knickerbocker Place was purchased from the Charles F. Curry family by Kansas City Life Insurance for the purpose of future expansion of their facilities. In 1981 an attempt to protect Knickerbocker Place from demolition was made by the Valentine Neighborhood Association and the Landmarks Commission of Kansas City. The owner stated that the cost of saving the buildings would place undue hardship on Kansas City Life and that the addition of a new Computer Center to the company's facilities at Broadway and 36th Street outweighed the issue of preserving the Knickerbocker apartments. In 1982, the north building (500-530 Knickerbocker Place) was demolished. One-half of the complex, originally referred to as Building B, still remains and is the subject of this nomination.¹⁶

L. Grant Middaugh (1841-1930)

Leon Grant Middaugh (1841-1930) was born in Scio, New York. He began his career as a contractor in New York State, later moving to Cleveland Ohio. Subsequently, he was trained as an architect. Among his designs in Cleveland was Dean's Music Hall, which at the time was one of the few structures that carried a seating capacity of 5,000.¹⁷

As an architect in Kansas City, from 1888 until his death in 1930, Middaugh's designs include the Corrigan Home, Seventeenth and Summit, the William H. Wallace Residence at Scarritt Point (1902), the Eastminster Presbyterian Church (1907), the Woodleaf Hotel, George

¹⁴ Baxter, *The Success of a Perfect Apartment*, 10.

¹⁵ Bradley, 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ "L. G. Middaugh is Dead," *Kansas City Star*, 10 June 1930. Special Collections, Vertical File, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City Missouri. His name was listed as Loren Grant Middaugh in the obituary.

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B. Peck Dry Goods Company, as well as the Westport Library constructed in 1889.¹⁸ He also designed the Caldwell County Missouri Courthouse (1898), listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.¹⁹ Both the Westport Library and the Caldwell County Courthouse are designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque where twin towers mark the primary façade.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ National Register of Historic Places. Online: Listed by state and accessed October 18, 2002. Caldwell County MO.

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Bibliography

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- Becker, Linda and Cydney E. Millstein. "Colonnaded Kansas City Apartment Buildings (Phase I), A Study," Landmarks Commission, Kansas City, Missouri. May 1990.
- Bradley, Lenore. "A Street That Time Passed By." *Kansas City Star*, 24 May 1981.
- "Deaths: John W. Berg," *Kansas City Times*, 23 February 1971.
- Glenn, Patricia B. "Historic Inventory Survey," Landmarks Commission, City of Kansas City, Missouri, 1980.
- "Joseph H. Tedrow Dies." *Kansas City Times*, 2 August 1951.
- Kansas City: 1926 City Directory*. Gates Publishing: Kansas City, 1926.
- "L. G. Middaugh is Dead." *Kansas City Star*, 10 June 1930.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Vinewood Pt of Lots 18 and 19 DAF. Beginning SW Corner Lot 18 then North along East line of Pennsylvania Avenue 139.75 feet, then East 382.5 feet, then South 139.75 feet, then West 382.5 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Knickerbocker Building, Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

Key to Photographs

(Dave Everson and Len Fohn, Photographers; all negatives are the property of Architectural and Historical Research, LLC, Kansas City, Missouri.)

1. The main or north façade; view facing southeast
2. The east and north façades; view facing southwest
3. Detail of the east bays of the north façade; view facing south
4. The west and the rear or south façades; view facing northeast
5. The south and east façades; view facing north, northwest
6. The south façade; view facing northwest
7. The north façade of the garage; view facing south
8. Typical living room; view facing northwest
9. Typical hallway and dining area; view facing southeast

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