Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

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The New England Building, constructed 1886-1887, is an unusual example of late nineteenth century Renaissance Revival commercial architecture in Kansas City, Missouri. It is located at the northeast corner of 9th and Wyandotte streets in downtown Kansas City on a site that slopes downward approximately five feet from the west to the east.

EXTERIOR

Over-all Dimensions

The original, "U"-plan, seven-story plus basement building is 118 feet east-west, and 60 feet north-south. A recent, rectangular-plan, one-story addition extends 90 feet northward from the western two-thirds of the original building.

Foundations

The foundations are constructed of rubble stone and brick masonry three feet thick. On the primary (south and west) exterior walls they are faced with smooth-cut, rose-colored stone which is battered slightly.

Wall Construction, Finish and Color

Primary walls are constructed of rose-colored, rock-faced, Springfield sandstone from Massachusetts¹ laid in broken courses. Drip moldings divide the foundation from the upper walls and the second and third stories. Ornamented spandrels below the fourth and fifth story windows create divisionary bands between these stories. A bracketed cornice divides the fifth and sixth stories. Spandrels below the seventh story windows are plain. A major, bracketed cornice topped by a parapet wall with balustrade-like insets rims the primary facades. The secondary (north and east) walls are constructed of red brick laid in common bond with a slightly corbeled band edging part of the upper wall.

Openings

Doorways and doors. Two major entrances give interior access. One occupies the easternmost bay on the south wall. The second occupies the central bay on the west wall. Both entrances are framed by classic pilasters, on bases, and entablatures. Immediately inside the round-arched west entrance is a flight of stairs leading to the recessed doorway on the second story. The south entrance frame includes a semi-circular window on the second story. A stone balcony divides the doorway and the window.

<u>Windows</u>. Double-hung sash with one pane of glass per sash predominate throughout. On the second story, primary facade windows have transoms. Primary facade windows are framed with stone lintels, sills, and side pieces. These windows are paired, except in the westernmost bay on the south wall. The ground floor windows are protected by iron grills. Secondary facade windows also have stone lintels and sills, but they do not

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old New England Life Mutual Insurance Company's building in Kansas City, Missouri, constructed 1886-1887, is significant as a tangible remain of the substantial investments of eastern capital made in Kansas City's late nineteenth-century boom. In Kansas City the building is a rare, surviving example of commercial architecture adapted from the Renaissance Revival style. Its architectural design ties the building to the roots of tradition, exhibiting an appropriate image for the financial institution which constructed it. The building is possibly the earliest example of fire-proof construction in Kansas City. 2

The Boston architectural firm, Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherlee, designed the building which cost \$450,000 on a plot of ground costing \$100,000.4

Dr. George Ehrlich, Professor of Art History and Chairman of the Department of Art History, University of Missouri-Kansas City, has made the following statement concerning the building:

The shift of the civic and commercial center of Kansas City toward the south, and subsequent freeway and renewal construction, has removed from downtown Kansas City most of the major office and store buildings of the late nineteenth century. However, the Old New England Building lies within the Downtown loop and thus has the advantage of a central location. Stylistically it has no real equivalent in Kansas City as an example of the Free Classic, and it makes an interesting complement as well as a contrast to the nearby New York Life Building [listed on the National Register of Historic Places] by McKim, Mead and White. The removal of some nearby buildings (underway) [frees] the lines of view and will allow the Old New England Building to anchor a corner of an area that has a general stylistic unity.5

HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Throughout the 1880's and 1890's Kansas City underwent a substantial development boom with Eastern companies investing heavily in buildings and business expansion there. Real estate transactions more than tripled in value between June 30, 1885 (\$11,261,781) and June 30, 1886 (\$39,181,732); and they continued to rise steeply the following year (\$88,302,637)6

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

The pressure for new buildings was great. One source states, "The buildings erected in 1887, represent a frontage of over twelve miles." During 1887, 5,455 buildings, representing an aggregate expenditure of approximately \$15,000,000, were constructed in Kansas City. Kansas City became the tenth largest city in the United States at that time. The Old New England Building was part of this building boom.

Original and Subsequent Owners

The building was built to house the Kansas City office of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company of Boston, Massachusetts. Other New England based companies, the New England Safe Deposit and Trust Company and the New England National Bank, rented space in the building.

In 1944 the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company sold the building to Scott Wilson, Vice-President of the H. T. Poindexter & Sons Merchandise Company, to be leased. 12 During the late 1940's the building was rented to Trans World Airlines for a training school and offices. 13

Architects

The architectural firm, Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherell of Boston, a prominent Boston firm, had been heavily involved in the rebuilding of Boston, Massachusetts, after a devastating fire of the early 1870's. Nathaniel J. Bradlee designed the home office building for the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company in Post Office Square, Boston (razed, 1946).14

Nathaniel J. Bradlee (1829-1888), principal and senior partner of the firm, was a highly esteemed Bostonian, responsible for the designs of numerous buildings there. Not only an architect, he was also a civic-minded person who served for three years as president of the Boston Water-Board, was twice nominated Mayor of Boston, and was president or director of numerous Boston corporations. 15

Walter T. Winslow (1843-1909) was a Bostonian who apprenticed in Bradlee's office prior to completing formal schooling in Paris. He later returned to Bradlee's office and became his partner.16

George H. Wetherell (1854-1930) was also a Bostonian who received training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.17

Bradlee's design for the Boston office of the New England Mutual Life Insurance Company was also a variant of the late nineteenth century Renaissance Revival style.

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4. #1

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

The members of the partnership of owners are:

- 1. Gordon T. Beaham, Jr.
- 2. Gordon T. Beaham, III
- 3. Neil Ball
- 4. William B. Kessinger

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6. #1

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

2. Missouri State Historical Survey (State)
1973

Missouri State Park Board

P.O. Box #176

1204 Jefferson Building

Jefferson City, Missouri 65101 Code: 29

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7. #1

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

have the refinements of molding and ornamentation which occur on the primary facades. The secondary facade windows have shutter hardware in place and several windows have metal wire shutters.

A two-story oriel window at the southwest corner of the building is a major ornamental feature. Carved stone panels at the base of this window bear the seals of the five New England States.2

Roof

The roof is flat. This area was not available for inspection.

Chimneys

The positions of brick flues servicing the building correspond to the interior locations of fireplaces. A large, furnace flue is on the east wall.

<u>Ornament</u>

The building is richly ornamented with carved stone moldings, brackets, balustrades, pilaster capitals, and panels used as spandrels and door frames. Renaissance motifs such as swags, wreaths, rope molds, urns, cherubs and formalized plant forms predominate.

Stairways

The western, straight-run, entrance stair is made of stone. An exterior, iron fire escape is attached to the north wall.

INTERIOR

Structural System, Framing

Exterior walls and interior partition walls bear the structural load. The partitions are constructed of brick and terra cotta.³ The floors are carried on iron beams interfilled with brick arches,⁴ a fireproof construction method.

Floor Plans

<u>Basement</u>. A partial basement under the eastern two-thirds of the building houses a furnace and service areas. To the north the basement connects with a subgrade parking lot under the north addition.

<u>First floor</u>. This ground level floor is at street level on the 9th Street side, and below grade on the Wyandotte Street side. It originally housed the offices of the New England Safe Deposit Trust Company.⁵ The 31 x 26

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7. #2

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

feet centrally located vault with ornamental, etched bronze doors is still there.

The walls are finished with paneled wood wainscotting and plaster cornices. There are several plaster ceiling medallions.

Second through seventh floors. These floors share a similar room arrangement. A central, east-west corridor serves offices opening onto it from the north and south. Several rooms have vaults and toilets. One corridor toilet on each floor occupies a round-cornered room near the stairwell. Interior finish varies on these floors—there is marble wainscotting on the lower stories and vertical tongue-and-groove wainscotting on the stories above.

Stairway

A monumental, "U"-plan stairway is located opposite the 9th Street entrance in the northeast corner of the building. It has iron supports and marble treads. The balustrade is cast-iron with ornamental insets, a cherry wood railing and brass finials at the bannister turns.

Two elevators are located at the east end of the central corridor. The original elevators have been replaced.

Flooring

The floors are white marble tile laid on the diagonal, with a black Tennessee marble border.6

Walls and Ceiling Finish

Walls and ceilings are finished in painted plaster with wainscotting as noted. Several ceilings have been lowered and surfaced in acoustical tile.

Doors and Doorways

Most of the original, cherry doorways and multi-paneled doors survive in place. Others were noted in storage in the basement.

<u>Lighting</u>

Originally the building had gas and incandescent lights. 7 Incandescent and fluorescent lights are now used.

Heating

Fifty-six coal-burning fireplaces were used in the original 65 rooms. Most of these fireplaces remain. Each has a different ornamental design in the

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7. #3

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

cast-iron mantel, and the color of the facing tiles varies from room to room. These fireplaces were manufactured by Smith and Anthony Stove Company, Boston, Massachusetts. An early furnace is still in the basement. The building is presently heated by the city steam heat system.

ALTERATIONS, ADDITIONS AND REPAIRS

The building has a high degree of surviving original fabric. The exterior is unchanged except for:

- 1. Removal of four stone pinnacles punctuating the termini of the balustrade insets in the parapet wall.
- Boarding up the west entrance, leaving only a small wood emergency door, and removal of an original, ornamental iron gate which protected ed this entrance.
- Construction of the modern, northwest addition the street aspect of which is a plain, windowless brick wall with a doorway at the north end of the west wall.
- 4. Repairs to the upper, north wall.

On the interior air conditioners have been installed on each floor in the central corridor. Installation of additional wiring, plumbing, and drinking fountains and lowering the ceilings has detracted from the purity of the original interior design concept.

CONDITION

The building is in good structural condition⁹ and is well maintained. Some spalling of window sills on the north wall was noted and there is a crack in the lintel over the south entrance. Lack of renters presents the major obstacle to putting the building into first-class condition.

FOOTNOTES

- 1. [Views and Historical Sketch, 1888], pp. 16-18.
- 2. Giles Carroll Mitchell, There Is No Limit: Architecture and Sculpture in Kansas City (Kansas City, Missouri: Brown-White Company, 1934), p. 130.
- 3. American Architect and Building News, Vol. 21, April 9, 1887, p. 176.

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OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

- 4. Ibid.
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. [Views and Historical Sketch, 1888], pp. 16-18.
- 7. Mitchell, p. 130.
- 8. Edward J. Wimmer, A. I. A., and Mrs. Whitney Kerr, Kansas City Chapter, American Institute of Architects, Committee on Historic Resources, Information on the Old New England Building prepared for the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, 1971.
- 9. Ibid.

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8. #2

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

PRESENT STATUS

The building is presently owned by an investment partnership which desires to make it an attractive rental property. The building is not fully rented at present. It is in need of moderate interior refurbishing. One problem in attracting renters is presented by the bearing partition walls which inhibit customized partitioning or opening of the interior space. 18

The immediate environment of the building to the east is included in a land acquisition project described in the Kansas City Downtown Plan. The buildings to be acquired are located immediately to the east of the Old New England Building, between it and the New York Life Building. The proposed physical development plan, phase 2, 1975-1980, shows the two easternmost buildings of this group of three, smaller, commercial buildings removed and space provided for a "transportation related" purpose. 19

This site is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places because of its importance as an example of late, nineteenth century, fire-proof, commercial architecture in the Renaissance Revival style, representing the post-Civil War building boom in Kansas City, Missouri.

FOOTNOTES

- The Commerce of Kansas City in 1886, "New England Mutual Life Insurance Co." (Kansas City, Missouri: S. Ferd. Howe, Publisher, 1886), pp. 236-239. William Griffith, History of Kansas City (Kansas City, Missouri: Hudson, Kimberly Publishing Co., 1900), p. 71. The Industries of Kansas City (Kansas City, Missouri: J. M. Elstner and Co., Publishers, 1888) p. 62. Imperial Kansas City 1900 (Kansas City, Missouri: Mercantile Illustrating Company, 1900), p. 48.
- Ibid. and William B. Kessinger, President, John A. Moore & Kessinger Realtors & Co. Inc., part-owner, personal interview, March 6, 1973.
 Cf. also The Architectural Record, Vol. XV, No. 2, February, 1904, p. 142.
- 3. American Architect and Building News, Vol. 21, April 9, 1887, p. 176.
- 4. [Views and Historical Sketch, 1888], pp. 16-18.

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8. #3

OLD NEW ENGLAND BUILDING

- 5. Dr. George Ehrlich, Professor of Art History and Chairman of the Department of Art History, University of Missouri-Kansas City, statement in a letter to the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, September 9, 1971.
- 6. Griffith, 1900, p. 71.
- 7. The Industries of Kansas City, 1888, p. 62.
- 8. Ibid., p. 60.
- 9. Griffith, 1900, p. 71.
- 10. The Commerce of Kansas City in 1886, 1886, pp. 236-239.
- 11. Mitchell, 1934, p. 131. The Architectural Record, February, 1904, p. 142. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, February 1, 1951, p. 5.
- 12. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, October 15, 1944, p. 4D.
- 13. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, October 24, 1961, p. 27.
- 14. Walter H. Kilham, <u>Boston After Bullfinch</u> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), pp. 73-74.
- 15. Obituary, The American Architect and Building News, Vol. XXIV, No. 678, December 22, 1888, p. 286.
- 16. Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey, <u>Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)</u> (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 666-667.
- 17. <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 646-647.
- 18. Kessinger, interview, March 6, 1973.
- 19. "Kansas City Missouri Downtown Plan," January, 1971, p. 101.

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The American Architect and Building News, Vol. 21, April 9, 1887, p.176.
The American Architect and Building News, Vol. XXIV, No. 678, December 22, 1888, p. 286.

3. The Architectural Record, Vol. XV, No. 2, February, 1904, p. 142.

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	4. The Commerce of Kansas City in 1886. Kansas City, Missouri: S. Ferd				erd.						
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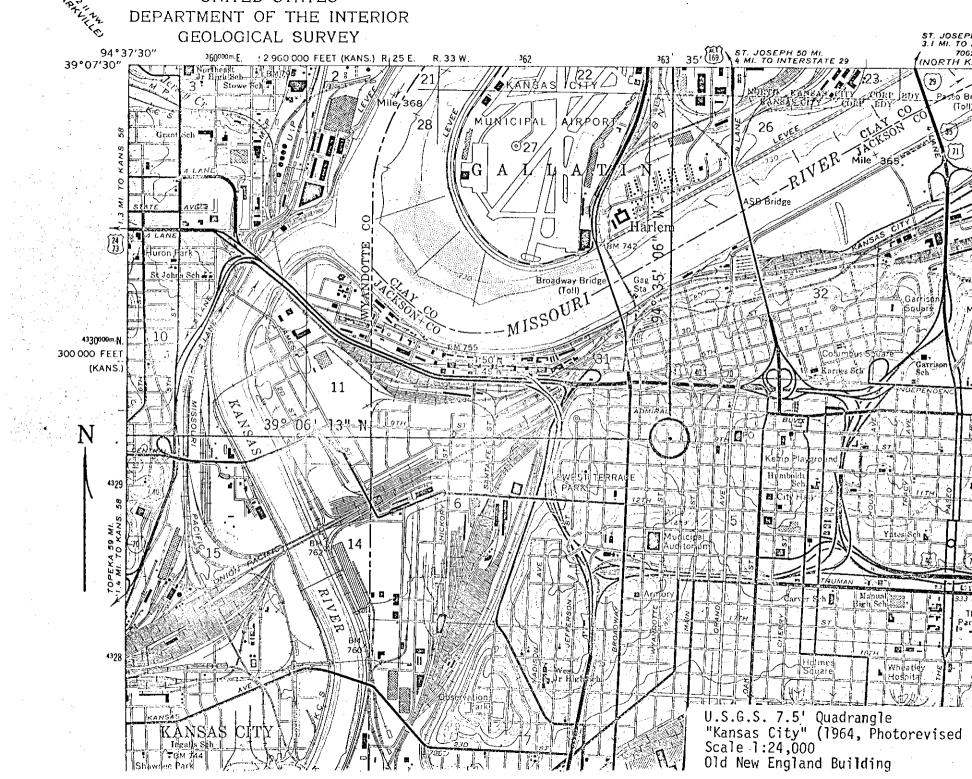
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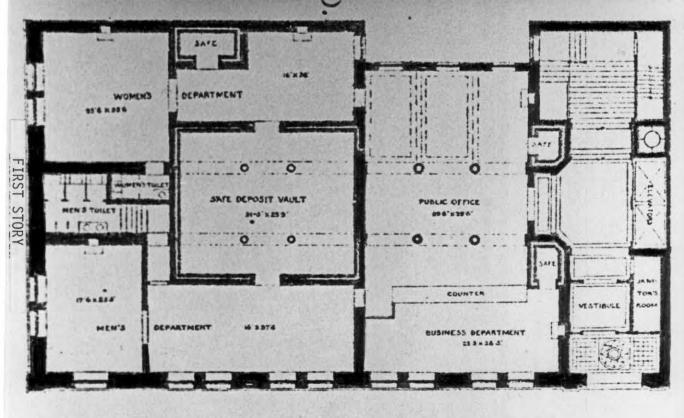
- 5. Ehrlich, George, Ph. D. Letter to the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, September 9, 1971.
- 6. Griffith, William. <u>History of Kansas City</u>. Kansas City, Missouri: Hudson, Kimberly Publishing Co., 1900.
- 7. <u>Imperial Kansas City 1900</u>. Kansas City, Missouri: Mercantile Illustrating Company, 1900.
- 8. The Industries of Kansas City. Kansas City, Missouri: J.M. Elstner and Co., Publishers, 1888.
- 9. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, October 15, 1944.
- 10. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, February 1, 1951.
- 11. Kansas City [Missouri] Star, October 24, 1961.
- 12. "Kansas City Missouri Downtown Plan." Prepared for the Land Clearance for Redevelopment Authority of Kansas City, Missouri, January, 1971.
- 13. Kessinger, William B. Personal interview. March 6, 1973.
- 14. Kilham, Walter H. Boston After Bullfinch. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946.
- 15. Mitchell Giles Carroll. There Is No Limit: Architecture and Sculpture in Kansas City. Kansas City, Missouri: Brown-White Company, 1934.
- 16. [Views and Historical Sketch, 1888]. [Kansas City, Missouri].
- 17. Wimmer, Edward J., A.I.A. and Mrs. Whitney Kerr. Information on the Old New England Building prepared for the State Historical Survey and Planning Office, 1971.
- 18. Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. <u>Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)</u>. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956.

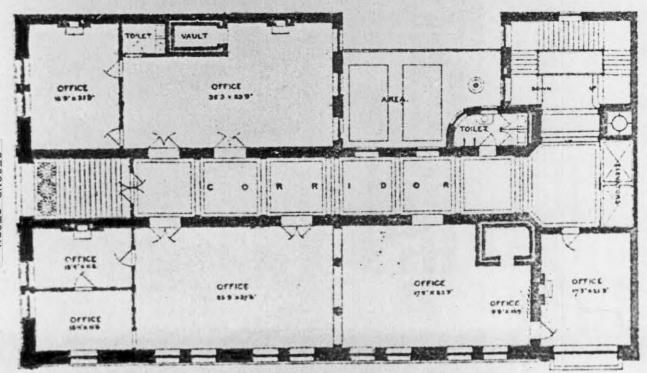






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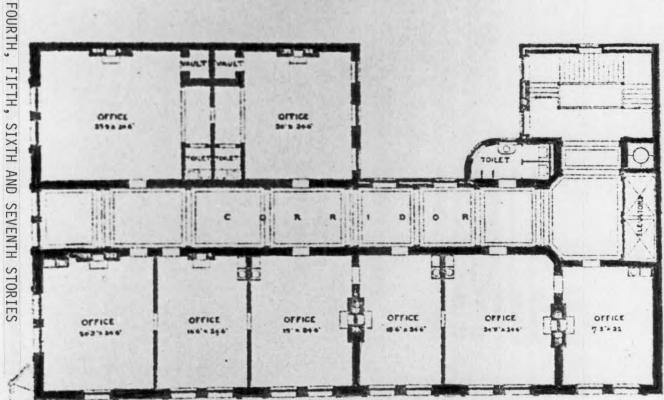


Photo Log:

Name of Property:	Old New England Bu	ilding	
City or Vicinity: Kansas City			
County: Jackson	County	State: MO	
Photographer:	MP Holmes		
Date Photographed:	Jan. 1971		

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

- 1 of 4. SW to NE. W façade (left) and S façade (right) are the primary facades. Stone pinnacles formerly accentuated the balustrade-like insets on the parapet wall rimming the roof. The New York Life Building is at right with three smaller late nineteenth century commercial buildings between it and the Old New England Building.
- 2 of 4. NW to SE. N façade of building and W façade.
- 3 of 4. Detail of W door on Wyandotte Street.
- 4 of 4. Interior Stairway has iron supports and marble heads. The balustrade is cast iron with ornamental insets, a cherry wood railing and brass finials at the bannister turns.







