

COLLYER

Downtown Survey

Collyer, Kansas

Survey Report

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In coordination with

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Survey Report Downtown Collyer Survey

Background

The Downtown Collyer Survey was sponsored by the Collyer Community Alliance with assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program, a National Park Service program administered by the Kansas Historical Society. The mission statement of the Collyer Community Alliance, organized in 2004, is stated below:

Collyer Community Alliance is a group of hard-working individuals who want to preserve and restore the existing structures, as well as promote our community to new businesses. We will do that by enhancing, stabilizing, and increasing the economy and population of the City of Collyer and its surrounding area while celebrating humanities, area history, education, and the arts.

In the past five years, the Collyer Community Alliance has worked to preserve the community's heritage and character through a variety of projects. Among them was a Kansas Humanities Council funded local-history initiative titled "Honoring Our Immigrant Heritage." The alliance has also recently acquired and nominated the St. Michael School and Convent, which it has converted into a guest house, restaurant, gift shop, and office. To date, the St. Michael School and Convent is the community's only National Register listed property.

In early 2008, Collyer received a Historic Preservation Fund grant to survey its commercial properties and identify the potential for a commercial historic district. Davis Preservation was awarded the contract for this project in late 2008 and conducted sitework in early February 2009. The findings of this project are outlined in this report.

Survey Boundaries

Davis Preservation surveyed a total of twenty (20) commercial properties in Collyer. Nineteen (19) of these were surveyed on February 3, 2009. A twentieth property, the Union Pacific Blacksmith Shop (#20), was added in March, 2009. The survey documented all of Collyer's known commercial buildings, stretching from US Highway 40 on the south to 2nd Street on the north. The survey area includes one property that faces US Highway 40, two properties (grain elevators) that fall within the Union Pacific right-of-way, one property that faces 4th Street, and one property that faces 3rd Street. The rest of the surveyed properties face Ainslie Avenue, Collyer's principal north-south thoroughfare. Also included were two structures, the city water tower north of the city building and a masonry water tower west of the Zeman Dance Hall (#6).

The dance hall is included in a concentration of buildings on the west side of Ainslie Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets. Six of these seven (#1-#6) buildings were constructed as a group in 1926-27. This block historically represented the core of Collyer's commercial district. By the early Twentieth Century, the east side of Ainslie between 3rd and 4th Streets was filled with false-front wood buildings. These impermanent buildings were extant in 1925 – but had been removed by mid-Twentieth Century. Today, the east side of this block houses a concrete-block building and the Union Pacific depot, which was moved from its original location in the railroad right-of-way. Four buildings and a structure, four of which date to the 1920s, are located north of 3rd Street on the east side of Ainslie Avenue.

List of Surveyed Properties

The following is a list of surveyed properties with recommendations as to their potential to contribute to a potential downtown historic district. The survey property number, inventory number, historic name, address, function, style, construction date, and potential contributing status are identified in the chart below. The attached maps identify the property numbers and potential contributing status.

#	Inven.#	Historic Name	Address	Historic Function	Style	Date	Status
01	<u>195-134</u>	John Ziegler Creamery/Meat Mkt	319 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Commercial	1926	C
02	<u>195-135</u>	Neuburger Grocery/Palkowsky IHC	317 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Commercial	1926	C
03	<u>195-136</u>	Collyer/Bailey Drug Store	315 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Commercial	1926	C
04	<u>195-137</u>	Hickman/Razak Dry Goods Store	313 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Commercial	1926	C
05	<u>195-138</u>	Hickman/Razak Grocery	311 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Commercial	1926	C
06	<u>195-1080-00006</u>	Zeman Dance Hall	309 Ainslie AVE	Recreation/Culture	Commercial	1927	Yes
07	<u>195-139</u>	Badger Lumber/Coal Co.	301 Ainslie AVE	Commerce/Trade	Other	1917	No
08	<u>195-140</u>	Zeman Water Tower	309a Ainslie AVE	Other	Other	1927	C
09	<u>195-141</u>	Collyer Water Tower	Ainslie	Other	Other	1931	C
10	<u>195-142</u>	City Hall, Jail and Firehouse	204 Ainslie AVE	Government	Commercial	1923	C
11	<u>195-154</u>	Bob Dinkel's Shed	206 Ainslie AVE	Other	Commercial	1923	C
12	<u>195-143</u>	Price Garage	210 Ainslie AVE	Transportation	Commercial	1925	C
13	<u>195-144</u>	Rural Telephone	104 E 3rd ST	Commerce/Trade	Other	1965	No
14	<u>195-145</u>	Union Pacific Depot	300 Ainslie AVE	Transportation	Other	1880	No
15	<u>195-146</u>	Paul Glenn's Garage	333 Ainslie AVE	Transportation	Commercial	1930	No
16	<u>195-148</u>	Wheatland Grain Elevator	300 Railroad RD	Agriculture/Subsistence	Other	1910	Yes
17	<u>195-150</u>	Coop Grain Elevator	310 Railraod RD	Agriculture/Subsistence	Other	1920	Yes
18	<u>195-151</u>	Paul Glenn Garage	400 Ainslie AVE	Transportation	Other	1930	No
19	<u>195-152</u>	Weisberber/Dinkel Service Station	701 Ainslie AVE	Transportation	Art Moderne	1941	No
20	<u>195-155</u>	Union Pacific Blacksmith Shop	110 W 4th ST	Transportation	Other	1935	C

Note on Historic Status

These properties have been added to the Kansas SHPO's online survey database. The database divides properties into three categories: 1)eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places (Yes), 2)not eligible for listing (No), or 3)would contribute to a potential national register historic district (Contributing). In order to be designated as a potential contributor to a potential historic district, a property must be at least 50 years old and possess historic integrity.

Davis Preservation has determined that twelve (11) of the surveyed properties would contribute to a historic district. One property, the Zeman Dance Hall (#6) was determined eligible for listing in a prior survey. Two additional properties, the two grain elevators, would be eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places as examples of the "Grain Elevator" Property Type under the *Historic Agriculture-Related Resources of Kansas* MPS. Five (6) of the surveyed properties are classified as non-contributors. Two of the properties (#13 and #18) were identified as non-contributors because they were not yet 50 years old. The depot (#14) was identified as a non-contributor because although it was built in 1880, it was moved to its present location in the 1970s. Although the registration requirements in the *Historic Rail-Related Resources of Kansas* MPS allow for moved depots, the depot does not retain its historic relationship to the rail line. Three of the properties (#7, #15 and #19) are identified as non-contributors because significant modifications have affected their historic integrity.

A building's potential to contribute to a national register district does not necessarily mean that it is located in a geographic area that qualifies as a historic district. The recommendations related to contributing/non-contributing status of properties are the professional opinions of Davis Preservation.

Please note that only the State Historic Preservation Office and National Park Service can make final recommendations as to historic status and the existence of potential historic districts.

Historical Summary

Collyer (pop. 133) is a small community in northwest Kansas, 14 miles west of county seat WaKeeney in Trego County (pop. 3050). After a short boom and bust cycle in the late Nineteenth Century, the town had a period of growth during the Golden Age of Agriculture, thanks in part to successive waves of immigration and the establishment of the Victory Highway. Many of the community's buildings are now vacant. However, the Collyer Community Alliance is working to preserve the community's character and promote its heritage.

Like many western Kansas communities, Trego County was touted by the Union Pacific Railroad in its aim to sell trust land to finance railroad development. The Union Pacific followed the path of the Smoky Hill Trail, established in 1857 as a route to Denver during the Colorado gold rush. Coyote Point, the precursor to Collyer, was a stop along the way. Union Pacific crews reached Trego County in 1867. When they reached Coyote Point, their progress was halted by winter and up to 500 workers and soldiers were forced to camp there in dugouts.

Given the area's strong ties to the railroad, it is fitting that the region's first permanent settler, Ben O. Richards, came to Coyote in 1870 to run a UP pumphouse and boarding house for railroad workers. Although the region was arid, a handful of farmers had settled nearby by 1877. There was no established town, however, until 1878, when a colony of Civil War veterans from Chicago arrived. The colonists, which included 80 families, paid a membership fee of \$5.00 to help pay for the construction of a settlement house, where they would live until they could establish homes and farms of their own. The Chicagoans arrived at Coyote in March 1878 and named their new town "Collyer" after Reverend Robert Collyer, a Unitarian minister. They filed the town plat in 1879. After the crops failed in 1879 and 1880, many disillusioned settlers fled the arid region. From the time of peak migration in 1878 and 1883, the county's population plummeted from over 3000 to only 1500. More left during the depression in the late 1880s.

The population did not begin to recover until a group of Bohemian settlers arrived in 1889, followed by a group of German-Russian Catholics in 1901. Another group of German Russians arrived in 1902. In 1900, the town's population was 531. Many of Collyer's early settlers were Irish Catholics, who had

begun construction of St. Michael's Church in 1883. These new Catholic immigrants boosted the size of the parish – and population of Collyer. By 1910, the population had ballooned to 1316. This number included 113 Russian-born immigrants, 20 German-born immigrants, and, likely, hundreds of first-generation Americans. By 1907, the town had a hardware store, real estate office, G. A. R. Hall, drug store, post office, barber shop, grocery, garage, hotel, meat market, shoe store, school, church, furniture store, dry goods store, and livery.

Like many Kansas farm communities, Collyer reaped the rewards of record-high crop prices during World War I. In 1917, Collyer was incorporated for the first time - as a third-class city. The town's residents built rows of neat bungalows. The population grew to 1366 by 1920. Some who lived in town were labors and agents working of the Union Pacific Railroad. Most, however, were carpenters, horsetraders, merchants, butchers, barbers who provided goods and services not just to each other, but principally to the surrounding farmers and ranchers. The decline after the War did not immediately stifle Collyer's development. The town saw an infusion with the dedication of the Victory Highway, now Highway 40, in 1923. The Collyer State Bank, organized in 1906, became the First National Bank in 1920.

It was in the post-World War I years that Collyer took on much of its present character. Within a year of electricity's arriving in Collyer in 1925, H. A. Lacerte, H. M. Thomas and V. J. Razak, commissioned the row of tile and brick buildings that would replace the impermanent wood false-fronts on the west side of Ainslie Avenue. Although the majority of these buildings housed retail outlets, the best-known of them was the Razak/Zeman Dance Hall. Collyer had long been known for its dances – but the new hall provided a venue that became the stuff of legend. IN 1931, just as the city's wood false-fronts were making way for fireproof masonry buildings, Collyer adopted a new waterworks and fire protection system. The population continued to grow, reaching 1419 by 1930.

Western Kansas was especially hard hit during and after the Great Depression. In September 1935, northwest Kansas had 10 straight days of temperatures in excess of 100 degrees. Dust storms carried an estimated 5 million tons of dust across the state, leaving un-farmable fields in their wake. Many abandoned their farms. Others left to serve in World War II and settled elsewhere. After the war, as improving highways created a more mobile citizenry, the declining population of Trego County could not support two principal cities. Much of the county's trade shifted to WaKeeney, the county seat that was closer to I-70. In 1963, Collyer's First National Bank moved to county seat WaKeeney. One of the longest-running businesses, the Mack-Welling Lumber Company, closed in 1966.

Today, many of Collyer's downtown buildings have been vacant for decades. The Collyer Community Alliance is working diligently to preserve the community's character and promote its heritage. The organization has purchased buildings and hosted events which bring the community together and raise funds for the organization's preservation projects.

Architectural Analysis

Whereas the architecture in many downtowns is reflective of various periods of community development, the remaining commercial buildings in Collyer date almost exclusively to the town's third major period of development. The majority of the surveyed properties were constructed in the Roaring 1920s, when the majority of the state's commercial buildings were designed in the Commercial Style, a simple style that suited the town's resourceful German-Russian stock. Ten of the 20 surveyed properties are classified as "Commercial Style." Nine are classified as "Other," and one, the Dinkel Service Station (#19) is classified as Art Moderne. Below is a brief summary of the Commercial Style:

Commercial Style

The Commercial Style was the predominant commercial architectural style in the early Twentieth Century (1910s to 1930s). Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, these buildings featured simple lines, without applied or projecting decorative elements such as elaborate cornices. Their design placed an emphasis on fire-resistance with fire-proof materials such as reinforced concrete, brick and steel. Hollow clay tile was often used as a substitute for more expensive brick. In addition to their clean lines, Commercial-Style buildings are defined by a number of exterior features such as parapets capped with squared-off stone or concrete, rough brick with raked mortar joints, and double-hung windows with square upper and lower sashes – in contrast to the tall, narrow windows seen in late-nineteenth-century commercial buildings. These windows can be 1/1 double-hung sash, or a multiple-pane upper sash over a single-pane lower sash. Stylistic elements were limited to brick corbelling or the incorporation of integrated decorative masonry elements such as geometric stone patterns or applied terra cotta.

Note on Sources

Davis Preservation conducted research at the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), Collyer Community Alliance files, Trego County Courthouse, and online. Because there were no city directories or Sanborn Maps, research relied heavily on accounts summarized in Collyer's local history project "Honoring Our Immigrant Heritage," "Scrapbook of Collyer History," and secondary sources on Collyer History. Primary sources included Fire Insurance records from the Kansas Inspection Bureau, located at the Kansas State Historical Society research room.

Recommendations

Attached to this report are two maps showing the area surveyed as part of this project. Properties that have the potential to be contributors to a historic district are shaded in red. Properties that would be non-contributors to a historic district are shaded in green. There is a concentration of potential contributors on the west side of Ainslie Avenue between 3rd and 4th Streets and on the east side of Ainslie Avenue between 3rd and 2nd Streets. All of the properties within the proposed district boundary, identified in the attached map would contribute to a historic district.

Historic District

It is the opinion of Davis Preservation that the geographic area identified on the attached map would be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a commercial historic district. There is a clear gap between the concentration of potential contributors and potential non-contributors – enough to justify Ainslie Avenue as an eastern boundary. The proposed district would include thirteen contributing properties, including eleven buildings and two structures.

Individually Eligible Properties

Three of the properties within the survey boundaries are eligible for individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places. These include the Zeman Dance Hall (#6), Wheatland Elevator (#16) and Coop Elevator (#17).