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Hotel was built as monument



"It is the finest built and equipped hotel in Kansas, although perhaps not the largest. The furnishings are second to none in this part of the country."

-- Perl Morgan

With furnishings "second to none," in this part of the country, the Grund Hotel was opened June 15, 1907. It was razed Oct. 29, 1969. The lot has remained vacant since then.

(Editor's note: This is the 21st in a series of "then and now" articles on places and things of interest in Kansas City, Kan., compiled by area historian Margaret Landis in observance of the 100th birthday of KCK in 1986. Much of the information has appeared in past editions of The Kansan.)

(Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.)

How did the Grund Hotel in downtown Kansas City, Kan., come about and what caused its demise?

It sat on the southeast corner of Huron Place, across from old City Hall.

The four corners of Huron Place - as stipulated in the original plat filed by the Wyandotte City Town Company were to be used for church lands.

The 150-square-foot "church lot" on the southeast corner of Huron Place was deeded to St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church. The church was built in 1882, but because of financial difficulties lost the property. The church was moved to the northwest corner of 7th Street and State Avenue. In time the property gave way to business interests.

George A. Grund, one of the oldest German citizens in KCK, came here June 21, 1855. He ran a bakery 12 years and farmed 18 years. He made most of his money through real estate investments.

Grund's ambition at the age of 76 was to give something back to KCK where he has made his fortune. He converted his real estate holdings and built the \$100,000 hotel. His wife, Wihelmina Christine Klinsick and their four children had died. Without family, and being alone, the hotel would serve as his monument and fill a need of the city.

The Grund Hotel, 6th and Ann Avenue, was opened June 15, 1907. It was three stories and absolutely fire-proof, with every modern convenience. The brilliantly lighted lobby

had columns of Italian marble. A life-sized painting of Grund, by the Artist Aaron Blum, hung in the lobby.

The dining room, elaborately decorated, was 30 by 48 feet, with a marble stairway from the lobby. It had a double telephone system, both Bell and Home Phones, with a switchboard. There was a telephone in every room.

The hotel had 65 rooms, many equipped with bath. In his History of Wyandotte County, Perl Morgan wrote, "It is the finest built and equipped hotel in Kansas, although perhaps not the largest." The furnishings were "second to none in this part of the country."

Advertisements at that time gave rates of \$1 a day and up. "Exclusively European. 10 minutes from any Union by Quindaro or Chelsea Park Cars. No transfers."

Grund died Dec. 22, 1915 at the age of 86 and was buried at Oak Grove Cemetery here. At his death, the hotel became the property of the city.

In 1923, plans were made to add three additional stories and a roof garden to the Grund Hotel at a cost of \$375,000. The plans never materialized.

Through the years, the Grund declined and a new hotel - the Town House - was built on the southeast corner of 7th Street and State Avenue. Motels were becoming more popular with the traveling public.

After 62 years, the Grund Hotel - a part of the Center City Urban Renewal Project - was razed Oct. 29, 1969.

The site of the hotel, according to the urban renewal plan, was to be used for a fountain plaza or high-rise apartments. A part of Huron Park, it has remained an empty lot since the demise of the hotel.

Today, the only monument to George A. Grund is a grave marker in Oak Grove Cemetery.