

The Kansas City, Kansan, September 8, 1985

Church lots remembered

(Editor's note: This is the 22nd 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.)

In the continuing series on Huron Place, it should be remembered that the Wyandotte City Town Company dedicated the four 150-square-foot corner lots of Huron Place as "church lots."

Huron Place is bounded by Minnesota and Ann avenues, from 6th Street to 7th Street.

A history of the southeast corner of Huron Place appeared in last weeks Kansan, telling how the plot was deeded to St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church, but because of financial difficulties the church was forced to move, making way for the Grund Hotel, which has since been torn down.

This week we move to the southwest corner, which was deeded to the German Methodist Episcopal Church. References differ as to whether the German Methodists may or may not have built a church but by 1863 the Town Company issued another deed to the Saint James AME Church - later the first African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The First AME Church built a costly edifice that was heavily mortgaged. By 1900 the city had grown and the corner of 7th and Ann was a central location, with the land increasing in value. Eventually, AME lost the building. The property was sold to Henry F. Wulf. The first AME Church congregation then moved in 1902 to a new building at 8th and Nebraska where it still worships.

The church building at 7th and Ann was remodeled at considerable expense and became the home for Masonic organizations. They included: Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite; Victory Chapter, Rose Croix; John H. Brown Council Knights of Kadosh, Caswell Consistory; Wyandotte Lodge No.3 and Kaw Lodge No. 272, AF&AM; Wyandotte Chapter No. 6, RAM; and Mendias Chapter, OES.



The cornerstone of the Scottish Rite Temple, 7th and Ann, was laid Nov. 19, 1908, with a host of dignitaries present (top photo courtesy of the Kansas City, Kan., Public Library). A post card dated Jan. 15, 1910 shows the temple (bottom photo courtesy of Joseph Firestone) much as it appears today.

Fire - 1906

During the week of The Merchant's and Business Men's Exposition and Carnival, long rows of wooden booths decorated to exhibit their products lined 7th Street from Minnesota Avenue south to Ann Avenue and east on Ann to 6th Street.

On Oct. 18, 1906, a fire started by a gasoline explosion in one of the booths spread to other booths and buildings. The Scottish Rite Temple was destroyed. The loss was set at \$50,000. Also, destroyed were the regalia, paraphernalia, scenery furniture and uniforms of the lodge using the building, valued at several thousand dollars.

New Masonic Temple

Soon after the fire, plans were made for a new Masonic Temple.

William W. Rose of the Rose and Peterson architectural firm designed the new three-story building of "Hebrew Design." It contained an auditorium, stage, banquet room, kitchen and parlors. The cost was \$100,000.

The cornerstone was laid Nov. 19, 1908. The ceremonies were conducted by Henry F. Mason, a member of the State Supreme Court and grand master of Kansas. The building was finished by June 1, 1909.

Prior to 1924, when the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall was built, the Scottish Rite Temple was the largest meeting place for professional and business people and state Masonic and other fraternal organizations.

In 1951, the Red Cross and Salvation Army used the building as a flood relief center.

Fire - 1951

Fire again damaged the Scottish Rite Temple on Sept. 25, 1951. It started in the large auditorium and stage area, causing an estimated damage of \$250,000. Repairs were started as soon as the insurance adjusters could determine the loss and bids were received for the work.

Historic Block

Basically, the exterior appearance of the Scottish Rite Temple, 803 N. 7th, has not been changed.

Huron Block has been designated as a KCK Historic Block - including the old City Hall and the firestation.