

The Kansas City, Kansan, November 3, 1985: p 7A

Kansan history retold in its old papers



The design of *The Kansan* building, utilizing the Gothic style, was described as "dignified" when it was built in 1926. First publication of *The Kansas City Kansan* in the new plant was Jan. 30, 1927.

(Editor's note: This is the 30th 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.)

It was Jan 30, 1927.

Employees of *The Kansan* were settled in their new building at 8th Street and Armstrong.

A *Kansan* article that day said, "Between 10 o'clock last night and breakfast time this morning *The Kansan* 'pulled up stakes' from its old location, 545 Minnesota Avenue, where it published for six years, worked its heavy machinery on numerous trucks, transported them to the new location and became fairly settled -- a gigantic task."

The new *Kansan* building gave Kansas City, Kan., its first newspaper plant -- one that was up to date in every detail. In constructing *The Kansan's* new home, convenience, efficiency and comfort were the principal considerations of planners and builders.

Dignified Design

The exterior of the building was designed appropriately in a dignified manner, utilizing the Gothic style with restraint and understanding. It is somewhat plain, but with sufficient detail and ornamentation to be architecturally interesting.

The Kansan building is composed of three stories and a basement, housing the presses. There is a frontage of 65 feet on 8th Street and 160 feet on Armstrong Avenue. Entrance to the first story, or main floor, is slightly above the level of 8th Street.

Finish throughout the building at that time was of the plainest with dark oak woodwork and fireproof floors except in the public office where a plan of decoration was worked out in keeping with the "atmosphere" of a newspaper plant. A U-shaped 60-foot counter

in this office provides abundant space for persons having business with the classified and want-ad departments.

Face brick across the 8th Street and Armstrong Avenue walls and a part of the north side of the building is of variegated colors with principally 70 per cent a buff shade.

A cut stone ledge encircles entirely the first and top stories.

"Across the front or the Eighth street side of the building, and also on the south wall, the words "*The Kansas City Kansan*" in bronze letters appear. The letters follow the same type as that appearing on the title page of the paper," it was reported.

Kansan Unique

No other paper in the world has a history similar to *The Kansan's*. It is the only paper ever launched purely by community effort. KCK is the only city that ever put on and put over a newspaper drive and, prior to the establishing of *The Kansan*, KC was the only town in the world with a population of 100,000 that had no daily paper of its own.

It had little exchange of community news, no medium of civic development and for years its merchant had struggled against the almost insurmountable obstacle of building up retail establishments with no means of advertising. Papers printed outside the city carried little news of KCK and that little usually was of a sensational character and frequently of a variety that gave undesirable publicity, an article in the Jan. 30, 1927 issue of *The Kansan* recalled.

In 1920 the KCK Chamber of Commerce set for itself the task of securing a newspaper for KCK. After months of negotiation, Sen. Arthur Capper, a Topeka newspaper and magazine publisher, was induced to make the Chamber of Commerce a proposition upon which he would be willing to undertake the task of establishing a newspaper in the city in which every previous attempt had failed.

The first issue of *The Kansan* was published Jan 31, 1921.

Four Owners

In 1955 *The Kansan* changed hands. It was purchased by another Topeka-based interest, Stauffer Publications. In 1976 *The Kansan* was purchased by Lee Enterprises, a Davenport, Iowa-based company.

In 1979 Inland Industries, headquartered in Lenexa, became the fourth owner of *The Kansan*. In August 1984 Inland named William Epperheimer to succeed Russell Cannon as publisher.

Kansan offices are at 901 N. 8th. The home-delivered newspaper is published daily except Saturday. Weekday editions are afternoon and the Sunday edition is morning.