

# Town's specialties examined

By IFAN PAYNE  
Contributing Critic

Gloria Vanderbilt lived for awhile in the handsome house at 409 N. 17th. She stayed during 1942 while her husband was training at Fort Riley.

This, and many other fascinating tidbits of information were picked up during Linda Glasgow's talk presented as part of the Riley County Historical Society series, Riley County: Looking Backward Toward the Future. In her presentation, Manhattan Historical Survey: Some Results of the Research, Ms. Glasgow, who is the project director for the series, showed slides of a selection of the more interesting historic buildings in Manhattan.

Though Manhattan had none of the gods to whom Virgil referred, in this supposedly wild landscape, the early settlers constructed buildings of great beauty that might have been suited to the deities of the prairie.

The built environment, as Linda Glasgow said, constitutes "our town's special identity". The first symbol of that identity that was shown was the Union Pacific Depot. Built in 1901 at a cost of \$10,000, it was result of a concerted campaign by the community, led by the *Manhattan Nationalist*, to have Union Pacific do something to upgrade its amenities in the town.

The depot was built on land, owned by Union Pacific, that was kept as a small park called Battery Park.

Another industrial building of interest is the main structure for the Manhattan Flour Mill. A graceful, well proportioned limestone structure, it was built in 1879 by Jacob Winne. Winne was a stonemason who also built several buildings on the college campus. In fact, in 1900 a large picture of the main college building, now Anderson Hall, was used to decorate the flour sacks used by the mill. That picture is now blazoned across the Riley County Museum T-shirts. A not unfitting end to the picture, since at one time many of the

flour sacks were made into petticoats and worn under many a long skirt on Poyntz.

While discussing industrial buildings, the Perry Building, now Baily Moving and Storage, was for many years an important part of the economic health of the city. Constructed in 1888, that chicken house became the first building in town to be wired for a 440-volt electrical system. The wood columns, festooned like coat stands with diagonal bracing, are just one of many interesting construction features necessitated by the need to build a structure heavily insulated for freezing chickens.

Where did all the feathers go? The were packed into sacks and sent east to a mattress company. There was also the commerce in eggs. Fresh eggs, we were told, were only available in season, and April eggs were the most desirable.

An inventory of the structures contained within the area of the original plat of the city is now 90 percent complete. Every building has been recorded and its exterior, described and photographed. It was from this inventory that Ms. Glasgow drew her material, fleshing out the bones of the descriptions with extracts from contemporary newspaper accounts.

Perhaps the most fascinating item that she showed was not a building at all, but the gorgeously crafted vault of the First National Bank in its former building at Fourth and Poyntz. Glowing in bronze and steel, the vault still remains a testament to former craftsmanship.

Following the illustrated talk, discussion centered on the making of bricks and on brick paving. Bricks were originally made here in town, apparently the depression in the southeast corner of City Park is the result of a clay pit for the bricks, but the clay did not produce a brick of a high quality. Consequently, bricks

had to be brought in from Humbolt and Buffalo, Kansas.

And then there were the street numbers. East to west, streets were originally named Wyandott, First, Second, etc. Juliette was between Fifth and Sixth and the numbers along Poyntz clearly did not correspond to the blocks. Then the federal government stepped in around 1900 with an offer of free mail delivery on the condition that the house and street numbers be systematized.

The audience was also treated to a discussion of the trees on Juliette, the cemetery wall and a dozen other topics, not to mention the Progressive hammock and moonlight party held in 1894 in City Park—sort of a Plato's Retreat in the Little Apple. We should have been there.