

# PROTECTING OUR HERITAGE

BY SUSIE HANNA

East Lawrence may become the city's second official historic district. A survey is now under way in East Lawrence to determine the historical significance of the area.

Old West Lawrence, with its grand 19th century houses, was recognized as a historic district several years ago. Though most of the houses in East Lawrence aren't as big and stately, the area does boast many frame, brick and stone houses, simpler in their beauty, built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

They were the homes of the working people who helped establish this community.

At the request of the East Lawrence Improvement Association, Ed Boles and Dale Nimz, local

architects, along with Arthur Townsend, local historian and former director of the Watkins Community Museum, will be snapping pictures, studying maps and talking to long-time residents to compile the survey.

The ELIA will examine the results of the survey in a couple of months before deciding whether to apply for official recognition as a historic district on the National Register of Historic Places.

Official recognition as a historic district would place the area under the Historic Preservation Act and would help protect East Lawrence. For example, any governmental project using federal funds planned in or near a historic district receives a critical eye during the environmental impact statement review process. Its still possible for a governmental project, such as a roadway or public housing, to be built despite this review requirement. But its less likely a project that threatened a historic district would be approved.

The Preservation Act also discourages commercial intrusion and destruction of designated historical buildings by eliminating the standard tax provision which normally allows 'accelerated depreciation' for construction of new commercial buildings.

Richard Pankratz, director of the Kansas Historic Site Survey of Topeka, told ELIA members that generally, real estate values go up and more restoration occurs after an area becomes a historic district.

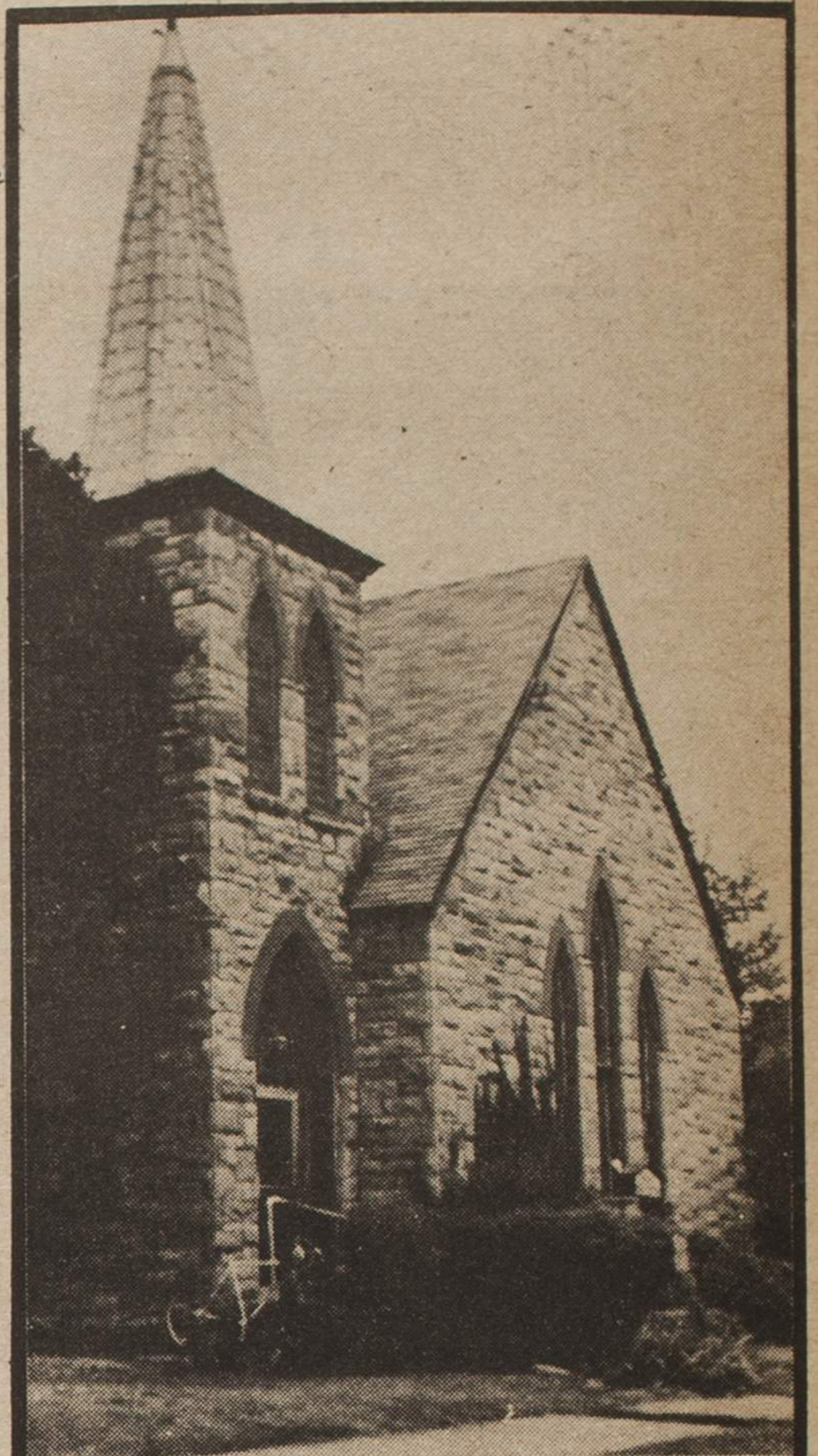
Although owners of houses officially designated as historic will be eligible for grants for renovation, Pankratz said, the grants are very hard to get. Unless a property owner accepts a grant, there are virtually no restrictions in an historic district about what can be done with the property. The owner can be remodel the property, sell it, even tear it down.



Thus, preservation of a historic district isn't by force, but through incentives. As one East Lawrence resident put it, "Maybe people will just think twice before allowing a house to deteriorate so badly that it has to be torn down."

The survey was originally suggested by the ELIA executive board. ELIA members voted at the August meeting 27 to 8 to appropriate \$2,950 of their Community Development funds for the survey.

If the ELIA decides to seek official recognition, an application will first go to Topeka, and if approved there, will to Washington, D.C., where the National Park Service will make a final decision.



The former Grace Baptist Church, at the corner of 11th and New Hampshire, was built in 1870, and is now the oldest church building in town. The fact that it's owners plan to demolish it illustrates the immediate need for active protection of our historical heritage.

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## Shocking Stimulating Searching



Douglas County just missed its big chance to become the infamous city at the end of the Yellow Brick Road. As a boon to the sagging Kansas tourist industry, developers suggested building an Emerald City amusement park, based on the Wizard of Oz story, near I-70 and Lake Perry.

Developers had reasoned it would be a sure-fire tourist-getter since most outsiders know little more about Kansas than its the home of Dorothy and her little dog, "what's-its-name."

A spokesman for the Kansas Dept. of Economic Development told about the plans recently in response to a letter from a Californian who suggested the state investigate the idea of an Emerald City amusement park.

The spokesman said such a facility had been proposed, but the plan was scrapped when Worlds of Fun was built in Kansas City.

Douglas County could've boasted the Munchkin Capital of the World. Imagine, where corn and milo now stand along I-70, the magical

Emerald City would glimmer against Kansas sunsets. Local tourism would boom as never before. Thousands of vacationers would drive cross country in their RVs just to see Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Straw Man, Lion, and of course, the magnificent Wizard.

Under the scorching July sun, families would stand in line for hours just to ride in moving houses that would take off atop simulated tornadoes for the Land of Oz. Realtors would make a killing. Hotels, motels, fast-food drive-ins, KOA campgrounds, and souvenir shops selling plastic wheat straw and miniature Dorothy dolls, would line the highways. What would Aunty Em think!

Until there's a break in the amusement park market, the local tourism speculators will have to get by on boaters, skiers, fishermen and other water lovers who'll zoom into the area once Clinton Reservoir opens. Maybe the Chamber of Commerce can interest a developer in building the Emerald City just west of Lawrence next to Clinton. Think of the Jobs!!

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