

# Downtown Humboldt, Kansas Historic Resources Survey

September 2015

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**HISTORIC RESOURCES INTENSIVE SURVEY  
OF  
DOWNTOWN HUMBOLDT, KANSAS  
SUMMARY REPORT**

September 2015

**INTRODUCTION**

**PURPOSE**

A historic preservation survey is the process of identifying and gathering data on a community's historic resources such as buildings, sites, structures, and objects. It consists of two basic components – the field survey, and a project report which describes the process, inventories, and results of the survey.

By producing an inventory of historic resources, surveys provide a valuable community service. Information discovered often provides additional insight into the community's history and the results can be incorporated into their historic preservation plan. Ultimately, the preservation of these cultural resources can improve the quality of life for people in an area by conserving their history for future generations to see, study, and understand. The specific purpose of this intensive level survey is to gather more information about specific properties, and to verify, where possible, findings of previous research.

**METHODOLOGY**

The Humboldt Downtown Action Team (HDAT) initiated this survey with assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) at the Kansas Historical Society (KSHS). The recommendations, at the end of the report, will aid in monitoring and preserving some of the cultural resources of Downtown Humboldt. Primary funding was provided by a Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant, administered by the SHPO. Cole Herder, City Administrator of Humboldt, supervised the project.

The survey of Downtown Humboldt was conducted in two parts. The first part was undertaken by the City of Humboldt with assistance of the SHPO. Photographs of each property within the downtown were taken by John Works in October 2014. In March 2015, SHPO staff created entries in the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory (KHRI) for each property, uploading the photographs and adding information gleaned from Sanborn maps and historic images. This reconnaissance survey enabled the SHPO to make preliminary eligibility assessments for each property and to determine recommendations to focus an intensive level survey on the 800 Block of Bridge Street and six individual buildings not within the block for a total of 19 properties. Stan Hernly of Hernly Associates, Inc. conducted the second part of the downtown survey. This Intensive Survey builds on preliminary survey work conducted by HDAT. Properties included in this survey were identified in the previous survey work as:

1. Within an area that could define a historic district, or
2. In the downtown area and potentially eligible to be individually listed in the State or National Register of Historic Places

Research and primary field work, including site visits, photography, and owner interviews occurred in August 2015. All of the properties in the survey were already included in the *Kansas Historic Resources Inventory* (KHRI) data base, which is maintained by the KSHS. Updates were made to existing survey entries in September 2015, and the project report was completed in September 2015.

The timeframe for completion of the intensive level portion of the survey was very short. The completion deadline of September 30, 2015 was set as part of the HPF grant, and the reconnaissance level survey used a good portion of the time available. Hernly Associates was contacted in early July, 2015, by Cole Herder, the City Manager of Humboldt, KS, to determine the consultant's ability to complete the intensive level portion of the survey. The scope of the intensive survey was set through discussions with SHPO, and an agreement was executed on August 14, 2015. This left approximately six weeks to complete the intensive level survey work.

Research included reference to previously completed survey work and new research specific to the properties and people associated with the properties. Sources primarily included news stories from the *Humboldt Union* and the *Iola Register* (accessed through [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com)). Due to the short timeframe of the intensive level survey, research materials were limited to those sources most easily accessible and searchable. Refer to the Bibliography at the end of this report for a complete list of sources. If historic listing is sought for any of the properties, additional research information may be found in other sources including:

- 1901-1902 Iola and Allen County directory (Chittenden Directory Company); Kansas State Archives, Call Number MF 684
- 1903-1904 Iola and Allen County directory (Chittenden Directory Company); Kansas State Archives, Call Number MF 5568
- Humboldt telephone directories 1937-1964 (Southwestern Bell); Kansas State Archives, Call Number K/384/-H881/So89/"year".

A search of Allen County property tax records could potentially reveal and /or verify dates of construction or improvements for specific properties. Building permit records from the City of Humboldt are available beginning in 1999.

Site visits were initiated through direct contact of property owners, with much assistance from John Works, a member of the HDAT. Interior access was obtained to all of the buildings potentially eligible for individual historic listing. Interior access was obtained to a few of the buildings potentially eligible for listing as part of a historic district. Site visits were conducted on August 20, 2015 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and on August 29, 2015 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Photography was completed using a Canon "Rebel XTi" with an 18-55mm zoom lens. Selected photos were renamed for each property and uploaded into the KHRI database. All photos were provided to the SHPO in original JPG format, reduced JPG format, and TIFF format.

Owner interviews were primarily completed during site visits, with some follow-up phone calls. The questions asked were condensed versions of the questions found on the Preliminary Site Information Questionnaire (PSIQ) provided by the KSHS. Most owners were not knowledgeable of their property's history and were not able to provide answers to the questions; in these cases not all of the questions were asked of them. Only a few Owners had any information regarding previous owners or property development; if information provided was able to be verified through other sources, the information was uploaded into the KHRI data base, if the information could not be verified, it was not uploaded into KHRI.

## SURVEY AREA

The survey area includes a portion of downtown Humboldt potentially eligible to be considered for a National Register historic district, and six other buildings in the downtown area potentially eligible to be individually listed in the National Register. The potential historic district is a 1-1/2 block area bounded on the west by 8<sup>th</sup> Street, on the east 9<sup>th</sup> Street, on the south by New York Street, and on the north by the alley between Bridge Street and Osage Street. It contains 13 buildings and resources, including 10

buildings on the north side of Bridge Street, the City Square Park, and the Bandstand and Water Tower in the Park. The map below shows all of the properties/resources in the survey area.



## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

### HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Humboldt was founded in 1857, three years after the opening of Kansas Territory for settlement. The downtown area developed initially with wood framed commercial structures, and then mostly with one and

two story brick and stone masonry commercial buildings. Humboldt was raided twice during the Civil War, in September and October of 1861, with much of the town being sacked and burned.

Numerous accidental structure fires occurred throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century and most of the buildings in the downtown area are of 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> generation construction. The City Square Park is the oldest resource in the survey, dating to the original plat of the town. The oldest building in the survey is 118 S 8<sup>th</sup> Street (Neosho Valley Woodworks, 2015), which dates to 1866 and originally housed a hardware store on the first story and the U.S. Land Office on the second story. The oldest building in the potential historic district is at 820 Bridge Street (Reb's Place, 2015); it dates to 1876 and was built by Dr. William Wakefield, a Civil War surgeon and later a Representative to the Kansas legislature.

Natural gas in commercial quantities was discovered in 1893 near Iola, and oil was subsequently discovered near Humboldt. The discovery of natural gas allowed the building of large smelters for zinc smelting and the operation of cement plants. Both industries used the natural gas in their processing. A decline in the supply of gas and oil beginning in the 1920s caused a decline in the county's economy, and removal of most of the smelting and cement plants. ("Allen County, Kansas", Kansas Historical Society, <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/allen-county-kansas/15257> )

Until 1900 the population of Humboldt was in the 1,200 to 1,500 range, and then grew to 2,500+ after the discovery of gas and oil nearby. Population peaked in 1930 at 2,558, and currently stands at approximately 1,886 (U.S. Decennial Census).

## **ANALYSIS**

### **PROPERTY TYPES**

A total of 19 resources are in the survey. These include 14 commercial buildings, two churches, two park structures (Bandstand and Water Tower), and the City Park Square.

### **LIST OF INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

The six individual resources in the survey include the buildings in the table below. Refer to building/resource specific information later in the report for additional details.

<b>ADDRESS</b>	<b>HISTORIC NAME</b>	<b>KHRI #</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Eligible for historic listing</b>
707 Bridge Street	Elite Theater	001-149	1906	Y (with 709 Bridge Street, not individually)
709 Bridge Street	E.H. Leitzbach Building	001-2620-00005	1912	Y
908 Bridge Street	Wesenick Building	001-101	1908	Y
118 S 8 <sup>th</sup> Street	Redfield & Signor Hardware	001-2620-00015	1866	Y
102 S 10 <sup>th</sup> Street	First Presbyterian Church	001-131	1917	Y
118 N 9 <sup>th</sup> Street	First Christian Church	001-127	1910	Y (State Register only)

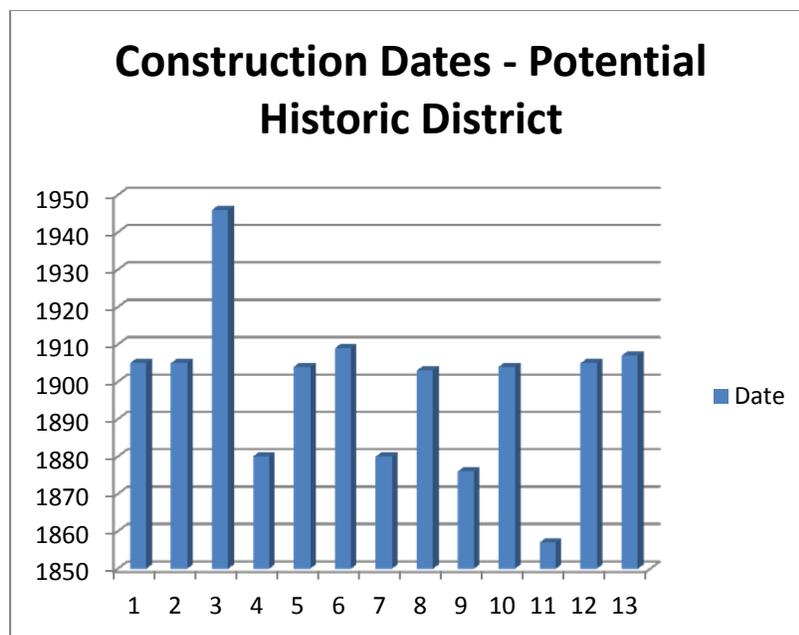
### **BUILDINGS/RESOURCES IN THE POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The thirteen buildings/resources in the potential historic district are included in the following table. Refer to building/resource specific information later in the report for additional details.

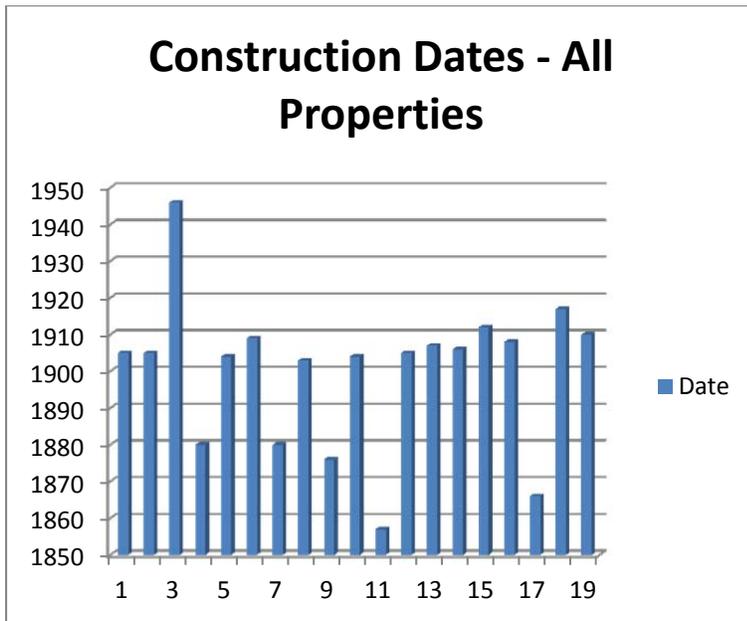
ADDRESS	HISTORIC NAME	KHRI #	Date	Potentially Contribute to Hist. Dist.
802 Bridge Street		001-118	1905	NC
804-806 Bridge Street	Fussman Building	001-2620-00003	1905	C
808 Bridge Street		001-119	1946	NC
810 Bridge Street	Lehman Building	001-120	1880	NC (can be re-evaluated if facade slipcover is removed)
812 Bridge Street	Braucher Building	001-121	1904	C
814 Bridge Street	B.S. Smith Building	001-122	1909	C
816 Bridge Street	Dr. Wilson Building	001-123	1880	NC
818 Bridge Street	Hess Drug Building	001-124	1903	C
820 Bridge Street	Dr. William Wakefield Building	001-125	1876	NC
822-824 Bridge Street	L. Perrenoud Building	001-2620-00002	1904	C
(801-825 Bridge St.)	City Park	001-155	1857	C
(825 Bridge Street)	Water Tower	001-154	1905	C
(813 Bridge Street)	Bandstand (NR listed, 2014)	001-97	1907	C

### CONSTRUCTION DATES

61.5% of the buildings/resources (eight of thirteen) in the potential historic district were built between 1900 & 1910. 30.8% (four of thirteen) were built before 1880, and 7.7% (one of thirteen) were built after 1940.



68.4% of all the buildings/resources in the survey (13 of 19) were built between 1900 and 1920. 26.3% (5 of 19) were built before 1880. 5.2% (1 of 19) were built after 1940.



### PROPERTY CONDITIONS

The condition of the buildings and resources in the survey vary from excellent to deteriorated. Only three buildings, 822-824 Bridge Street, 102 S. 10<sup>th</sup>, and the City Park Bandstand could be considered fully rehabilitated. The first story of 709 Bridge Street is also fully rehabilitated, but the second story is vacant and unfinished. 707 Bridge Street is in good condition, but the interior is mostly modern finishes covering over historic finishes. The condition of the Water Tower appears to be good. Six properties, 804-806, 818, 820, and 908 Bridge, 118 N 9<sup>th</sup>, and 118 S 8<sup>th</sup> are for the most part being fully utilized, and can be described as being in various states of needed of rehabilitation. There are six buildings, 802, 808, 810, 812, 814, and 816 Bridge Street which are currently vacant and in need of major rehabilitation before being ready for occupancy again.

### ARCHITECTURAL STYLES & SIGNIFICANT HISTORIC ELEMENTS

Of the 14 commercial buildings, four are classified as Italianate, four as Commercial Style, two as Eclectic, two as "No Style", one as Richardsonian Romanesque, one as Modern, and one as Minimal Commercial. Stylistically these are similar to buildings typically found throughout small towns in Kansas, with the following exceptions. The four most striking and unique architectural features in the survey are:

1. The Humboldt Water Tower, primarily because of its prominent location at the corner of the City Square Park. Typically these were located in a less prominent spot and had a less significant impact on the visual character of a town. This is a feature that truly defines a significant aspect of historic character of downtown Humboldt and should be preserved.
2. The Romanesque facade of the Fussman Building, 804-806 Bridge Street, is highly ornate and represents a less common commercial style in the area.
3. The onion dome on the southeast corner of the Perrenoud Building, 822-824 Bridge Street, is also a less common design feature that helps to define a unique quality for downtown Humboldt.
4. The hipped roof and front façade of seven narrow bays on the Refield & Signor Hardware building, 118 S 8<sup>th</sup> Street, is less typically of commercial buildings of the era and provides a distinctive quality to the City Square Park.

There are other significant features, like the City Park Bandstand and the First Presbyterian Church stained glass windows, but these are less historically and visually unique than those identified above.

## HISTORIC INTEGRITY

The historic integrity of the buildings/resources is the primary determinant of their potential eligibility for historic listing, either individually or as part of a district. All of the buildings/resources have had some modifications to them over time. Five of them in the potential historic district have had modifications to their front facades which make them ineligible for historic listing; these are **802, 808, 810, 816, and 820 Bridge Street**. If the metal slipcover is removed from the front facade of **810 Bridge Street**, the building can be re-evaluated for potential eligibility to be contributing to the historic district.

There is a non-historic aluminum canopy that projects approximately 6' over the public sidewalk in front of the buildings from 802 to 814 Bridge Street. This canopy has suspension rods that tie back at an angle from the front edge to the building's façades. Replacement of this canopy with more historically appropriate canopies is recommended.

**707 Bridge Street** has a modern aluminum-framed storefront (ca. 1965) with non-historic transom, and new interior finishes (gypsum wallboard partitions and acoustical tile ceilings) (ca. 2002) that conceal original interior finishes (plaster-on-masonry exterior walls and painted tin ceiling). These finishes make the building ineligible to be listed individually, but it is eligible as a group listing with 709 Bridge Street.

**709 Bridge Street** has a modern aluminum-framed storefront (ca. 1965) and the transom is covered with painted plywood siding (original transom may be concealed behind siding). The interior finishes are mostly restored original finishes, and a platform area has been added for use of the 1<sup>st</sup> story space as a church worship space (platform is wood-framed removable construction).

**804-806 Bridge Street** has non-historic storefront, but retain original historic windows at the front façade 2<sup>nd</sup> story. Interior finishes include some original historic finishes (tin ceiling) and other non-historic finishes.

**812 Bridge Street** has a non-historic storefront and the transom is covered with painted plywood siding; the original pressed-tin upper façade and cornice are still intact. Interior finishes are mostly non-historic, and the original tin ceiling is concealed above an acoustical tile ceiling.

**814 Bridge Street** has a non-historic aluminum storefront (ca. 1960) and the transom is covered with metal siding. The 2<sup>nd</sup> story retains original windows. Interior first story finishes are mostly non-historic; 2<sup>nd</sup> story finishes include mostly original finishes, with some new finishes.

**818 Bridge Street** retains most of the original wood-framed storefront, with a pair of aluminum non-historic doors. Interior finishes are mostly non-historic (historic finishes may be concealed behind new finishes).

**822-824 Bridge Street** retains the main historic wood framed components of the storefront, with new (ca. 1998) aluminum-framed windows with insulated glass infilled within the wood components. The 2<sup>nd</sup> story windows are non-historic (ca. 1998) aluminum-framed double-hung with insulated glass. Interior finishes are mostly non-historic (ca. 1998).

**908 Bridge Street** retains its original storefront, and it has modern 1<sup>st</sup> story interior finishes (ca. 1972) covering interior finishes.

**118 S 8<sup>th</sup> Streets** has non-historic wood storefront at 1<sup>st</sup> story, and retains original wood double-hung windows at the 2<sup>nd</sup> story. Most of the interior finishes that are still in place are historic. There is no ceiling in the 1<sup>st</sup> story north half and a non-historic plywood & wood-batten ceiling in the 1<sup>st</sup> story south half. The second story is currently used as a residence, and has a modern bathroom and kitchen in the northern

quarter of the space. The south three-quarters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> story was the IOOF Hall, and it retains many of the historic finishes and features.

**First Christian Church (118 N 9<sup>th</sup> Street)**, has a non-historic flat acoustical tile ceiling installed in the sanctuary. The ceiling conceals the original vaulted tin ceiling over the sanctuary and separates the original balcony area from the sanctuary. This building is eligible to be listed in the Kansas Register of Historic Places, and if the original vaulted tin ceiling was restored and the balcony opened back up to the sanctuary, it could be re-evaluated for potential listing in the National Register.

**First Presbyterian Church (102 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street)** retains most of its original finishes both inside and outside. Modifications for handicap accessibility were made ca. 2012 and include: men's & women's bathroom remodel, exterior wood ramp to main entrance, and interior ramp at main entrance. A Reuter pipe organ is still in the sanctuary but is not currently functional. Other original historic features include: stained glass windows, pews, interior trim, and balcony "theater seats".

The **Humboldt City Square Park** was platted as part of the Original Townsite in 1857. The 1884 Sanborn, the first to cover Humboldt, notes this entire block as the "Public Square." This block continues to function as a city park with a bandstand (listed in the NR), water tower (northeast corner), and other park-support structures, including a Civil War memorial at the northwest corner and a Veteran's Memorial at the southeast corner. It occupies an entire city block and has concrete sidewalks making a cross in plan form that meet at the historic bandstand in the center of the park. A secondary concrete sidewalk spans the north part of the park; an L-shaped concrete walkway is at the SE corner. A brick sidewalk appears on the NW corner. The park has a number of deciduous trees and the open space is mowed grass. There is a historic painted cast-iron watering trough in the southwest corner.

The **Bandstand** at the center of the City Park Square is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The **Water Tower** is a "Tin-can" type with riveted metal panel construction and concrete foundation. The design engineer was Burns & McDonald from Kansas City. It was built in 1905, and the 1906 Sanborn, notes it as, "Elevated W.T. [water tower] & fire bell. Tank 20' diam & 30' high. Top of tank 130' [above ground]. Capy 70,000 galls. Gravity press. 57 lbs." It has had some modifications, including removal of the fire bell, and installation of wood framing members to keep people from climbing the legs of the tower.

#### PROPERTY OWNERSHIP & INTEREST IN HISTORIC LISTING

The 19 properties in the survey are owned by 10 different people/entities. The 13 properties in the potential historic district are owned by six different people/entities. Of these, five properties are owned by one entity, three by another, 2 by another and three by individual people/entities. All of the owners expressed some level of interest in potential historic listing of their properties, and none ruled it out completely.

#### INCENTIVES TO PARTICIPATE IN PRESERVATION

One of the strongest incentives for historic listing of a property is the potential for the owner to rehabilitate the property and earn State and Federal historic preservation income tax credits. For an income producing property, the State tax credit is 25% of eligible rehabilitation expenses and the Federal tax credit is 20%. For non-income producing properties (residential and municipal owned) the State tax credit is 25%, and for non-profits (501c3) it is 30% of eligible rehabilitation expenses. Non-income producing properties are not eligible for Federal tax credits. The State tax credits can either be used by the property owner, or be transferred to an entity that can utilize them and earn approximately 90% of their value in cash. Currently neither the State or Federal historic tax credits are competitive; any owner of a historic listed property can apply and be approved to earn the tax credits.

In order to earn Federal historic tax credits a rehabilitation project must be “substantial”, which means that the cost of the rehabilitation must exceed the adjusted basis of the building.. However, to earn State tax credits a rehabilitation project only has to be \$5,000 or more. Eligible expenses include things like roofing and heating/cooling systems, which are common maintenance items for properties that are in otherwise excellent condition and don’t need major rehabilitation.

Another financial incentive for historic listed properties is the ability to apply for historic preservation grants through the Kansas Historical Society, and other organizations. Grants are competitive, and, on average, about 1/3 of the applicants for Heritage Trust Fund (HTF) grants from the Kansas Historical Society are funded each year. The maximum limit of an HTF grant is \$90,000, and the required match is 20% of the total grant-funded project cost.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this survey, it is recommended that the Humboldt Downtown Action Team undertake a plan that will lead to:

1. Nomination and listing of as many of the six individually eligible buildings as possible in the State and National Register of Historic Places.
2. Nomination and listing of a Downtown Humboldt Historic District in the State and National Register of Historic Places.

This report will not attempt to outline detailed steps needed to complete these two actions, but in general the following aspects will need to be considered.

- Undertake discussions with the Kansas SHPO to determine an action plan for creating the historic district and listing of individual properties.
- Determine what, if any, assistance may be needed by individual property owners for historic listing of their properties.
- Initiate discussions with the ten owners of the nineteen properties in the survey area regarding historic listing of their properties.
- Highlight financial incentives available for listed historic properties.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Online Articles**

"History". <http://www.humboldtks.net/content/history>. Humboldt, Kansas, Chamber of Commerce web page.

"Humboldt, Kansas". [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humboldt,\\_Kansas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humboldt,_Kansas). Wikipedia web page.

### **Online Images**

Kansas Memory. [www.kansasmemory.org/item/227596](http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/227596), "Two photographs of Bridge Street in Humboldt, Kansas, with local business buildings lining one side of the street." Between 1870 and 1930.

Kansas Memory. [www.kansasmemory.org/item/227595](http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/227595), "A photograph showing businesses in Humboldt, Kansas". Between 1968 and 1971.

### **Newspapers**

The Humboldt Union, Humboldt, KS, various dates and pages as cited in clipped articles accessed online through [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

The Iola Register, Iola, KS, various dates and pages as cited in clipped articles accessed online through [www.newspapers.com](http://www.newspapers.com).

### **Maps**

Sanborn Insurance Company. "Map of Humboldt, Kansas," (1884, 1888, 1893, 1899, 1906, 1913).

Google Earth for current satellite images used as background images for site plan maps.