

Register of Historic Kansas Places
Continuation Sheet

Miller Block

Section Number Add'l Documentation Page 1

Fort Scott, Bourbon County, KS

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Compiled July 2009

The Miller Block was listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places on May 21, 2005 for its association with local commercial history. The property's period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1863 and ends in 1955.

The building sustained heavy fire damage in March 2005 and was quickly listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places in an attempt to make the property eligible for historic rehabilitation funding. The building, however, could not be saved and was torn down in June 2005. The City of Fort Scott now owns the empty parcel.

The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office is requesting the property be removed from the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

PHOTGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Property: Miller Block
Location: 1-5 S Main Street, Fort Scott, KS
Photographer: Kim Smith
Date: May 18, 2009

The digital negatives are on file at the Kansas Historical Society's Cultural Resources Division.

Photo 1: Empty lot where Miller Block once stood, facing NE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
State
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Architectural Description

The Miller Block, constructed 1863, is located on the West 41' of Lot 1 (northwest corner), Block 88 in Downtown Fort Scott. The building faces west on Main Street. It is a symmetrical vernacular three-story two-part commercial block with subdued classical revival details, including a classical cornice, pediment and pointed lintels. The principal material is painted coursed limestone. It is accentuated with a decorative stamped-metal cornice. The first floor of the building consists of two storefronts, which have been modified over time. Windows accentuate each of the five evenly spaced bays on the front elevation. The side (north) elevation was three bays wide. Historic photographs identify the original windows as 2/2 double-hung wood sash. The original windows on the front elevation may have been 2/1 double-hung sash. Although the upper stories of the building retained a high degree of integrity prior to a recent fire (see below), the storefronts had been modified over time.

Current Condition

On March 11, 2005 a fire started in a bar in downtown Fort Scott. The fire spread to surrounding buildings. Although none of the damaged or destroyed buildings were listed on the National Register of Historic Places, many were architecturally and historically significant. Among the destroyed buildings was the 1888 Drake Building, an imposing three-story structure located at 9-11 South Main. Buildings damaged in the fire included the three-story Miller Block at 1-5 South Main. Built in 1863, it is the oldest building on Main Street. Cotter's Tavern, at 110-112 East Wall Street, was also damaged. This 1890 building, with its advanced pressed-metal storefront, was unique in that it served its original purpose as a tavern throughout its century-long history. The fire also damaged the Fort Scott Transfer Building. This 1870s Italianate structure once housed Fort Scott's Odd Fellows Hall.

The walls and cornice of the Miller Block's front (west) elevation survived relatively intact. Still, there is significant bowing toward the west on the building's southwest corner. The metal cornice is relatively intact. The fire destroyed the third-floor windows. The second-floor windows appear to be relatively unscathed. The third level of the south elevation was completely destroyed in the fire. The damage to the north elevation is comparable to that on the south elevation. However, the cornice on the north elevation appears to be more seriously damaged than that on the west elevation. The roof was completely destroyed in the fire.

Great efforts are being made to stabilize what remains of the Miller Block. Although the historic engineer determined other buildings salvageable, without the incentives available to listed buildings the city determined that stabilizing these buildings would be cost-prohibitive. (Currently there are no emergency funding sources for historic preservation in Kansas.) With the encouragement of the State Historic Preservation Office, the city, which recently obtained ownership of the Miller Block, has decided to proceed with state register listing for the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
state
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The Miller Block, constructed 1863, is being nominated for the Register of Historic Kansas Places for its association with the growth and development of Fort Scott, Kansas (pop. 8,000). The building is located on 1-5 South Main in downtown Fort Scott.

The History and Early Construction of Fort Scott

Fort Scott was established in 1842 as a western military post whose main missions were to maintain peace among relocated Indian tribes and guard the military road between Missouri and land of the Osage Indians, whom the government had relocated to Southeast Kansas in 1825. In the fort's early days, soldiers also served as escorts to parties traveling along the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. The Army abandoned the fort in 1853. The following year, under the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Kansas became a U.S. Territory.

Between 1854 and the start of the Civil War in 1861, Fort Scott evolved from a military outpost into a full-fledged city. Residents converted abandoned Army buildings into houses and businesses. In the late 1850s, when Miller Block builder C.W. Goodlander came to town, the majority of residents lived and worked in former military buildings.

Territorial status enticed permanent white settlement. At the same time, however, the Kansas-Nebraska Act's promise of popular sovereignty on the slavery issue turned border settlements like Fort Scott into battlegrounds for the warring pro- and anti-slavery causes. To illustrate, the former military post was home to two hotels, the Free State Hotel and Pro-Slavery Hotel. During this tumultuous period in Kansas history, known as Bleeding Kansas, the new city was dominated by pro-slavery interests. Like many border towns, Fort Scott was a target of guerrilla activities. Free-state advocates led by James Montgomery, ~~known for carrying out the Marais des Cygnes massacre,~~ twice struck the town.

Ironically, the town known for its sympathy toward the pro-slavery cause became the center of Union army activity with the advent of the Civil War. As former military buildings had been put to private use, the military constructed new buildings. The Fort served as a supply depot for the area within a 40-mile radius. Approximately 3000 troops were stationed at Fort Scott. Throughout the war, Fort Scott was a refuge for freedmen, Indians and escaped slaves.

Although the community continued to put Army buildings to good use, boosters, businessmen and speculators began an earnest effort to construct other buildings during the early 1860s. Builders like Goodlander constructed these early buildings of wood shipped from Leavenworth and Arkansas, with finish wood milled at the first saw mill (1858) or salvaged from fort buildings. Early

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

^{State}
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

permanent buildings included the Wilder House Hotel, constructed of locally manufactured brick in 1863 and the Miller Block Building, constructed in 1863 of rough-cut native stone laid in a running bond pattern. In 1865, following the Civil War, the Army sold off its remaining holdings at the fort.

The Miller Building

This building, designed by Fort Scott architect C.W. Goodlander, served as the family home and office of Dr. Jonathan Miller. Although information on Dr. Miller is scarce, much information regarding the life and work of Goodlander has survived. This is due in part to the fact Goodlander published a book on the early settlement of Fort Scott (see citation below).

Constructed in 1863, the building is the earliest remaining structure in downtown Fort Scott and one of the earliest extant buildings in the state. It was also one of the first masonry commercial buildings constructed in Fort Scott. The building is a rare surviving example of pre-Victorian commercial design and is interpretive of the early growth and development of Fort Scott.

Dr. Jonathan Miller (1826-unknown)– The Developer

Dr. Miller was born in 1826 in Morgantown, West Virginia. Miller traveled with the US Army troops, even after moving his family from Newcastle, Indiana to Fort Scott in 1859. Miller was elected to the Kansas House of Representatives in 1864. Dr. Miller does not appear in the 1860 or 1870 US Censuses as living in Bourbon County.

Charles Wesley Goodlander (1834-1902) – The Builder

The Miller Block was designed by architect and builder C. W. Goodlander, who, according to his accounts, arrived in Fort Scott in 1858 with his “carpenter’s tools and a quarter in his pocket” (*Memoirs and Recollections of the Early Days of Fort Scott. From April 29, 1858, to January 1, 1870*). Miller designed and built a number of Fort Scott buildings, residential, commercial, civic and religious. Among his best-known buildings were the Presbyterian Church and City Hall. After 1870, he also dabbled in the lumber, furniture, brick and milling industries. He joined with John Perry in 1884 to organize the Citizens’ National Bank. In 1895, he purchased the failing Inter-State Hotel, renaming it “The Goodlander.” Goodlander took great business risks, which, despite setbacks during the recessions in the 1870s and 1890s, paid off. Goodlander was noted as “one who gained fortune against odds in the field of adversity.” Miller served three terms as mayor of Fort Scott and sat on the Board of County Commissioners. (*Kansas: a cyclopedia of state history, embracing events, institutions, industries, counties, cities, towns, prominent persons, etc. ... / with a supplementary volume devoted to selected personal history and reminiscence. Standard Pub. Co. Chicago : 1912. 3 v. in 4. : front., ill., ports.; 28 cm. Vols. I-II edited by Frank W. Blackmar*)