

PART 1 - DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section, "Historical Background and Context", is an edited version of the draft "Historical Context" statement written by Pat Kedhe that will be incorporated into the nomination of the Santa Fe Station to the National Register of Historic Places. The bibliography for this narrative is provided in the appendix.

Introduction

The current Santa Fe Station was built in 1955 on the site of the original Lawrence depot, which was built in 1883 by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company. It is adjacent to the Santa Fe tracks, four blocks east of Massachusetts Street (the main downtown street), and was designed to serve as a passenger and freight station. The building reflects the trends of mid-twentieth century modern architecture in its exterior design, use of materials, and allocation of interior space. There have been no major alterations to the building and it continues to serve as a passenger rail station twice a day for travelers on the AMTRAK Southwest Chief headed both eastbound and westbound. The station also serves BNSF freight lines, providing office space and storage area for train personnel servicing the line.

Railroad History

Railroads were crucial to the development of the American West. In the early part of the 19th century, trails, dirt roads, and rivers moved people and goods throughout the states and territories, but by the 1830's it was obvious that rivers west of the Mississippi River were too difficult to navigate. The new technology of steam-driven locomotives on rails offered quicker, surer means of moving products and people. Between 1835 and 1860 the length of railroad track in use grew from 1000 miles to 30,626 miles. (Wolfenburger MPS, Section E, 2)

Hundreds of railroad companies in the Midwest and West formed, proposing to lay the track and operate the trains and presumably make a lot of money. The early days of railroad development from the 1830's through 1880's was a wild, often chaotic business, frequently referred to as "railroad fever". (Quastler, *Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas*, p. 97)

Lawrence sought a role in the early era of rail fever. In the 1850's Lawrence was about the same size as Kansas City, Missouri and Topeka, Kansas, and the town leaders thought rail lines would boost Lawrence into becoming the interchange for all east-west rail traffic. (Quastler, *Embattled Lawrence*, p. 102) By the early 1860's, Kansas City had almost three times the population of Lawrence, and as a rail hub it had geographic advantages. (Quastler, *Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas*, p. 174) Nonetheless, Lawrence strove to attract railroads, and during the decades of the 1860's, 70's, and 80's, its citizens voted for over \$900,000 to finance various roads. (Nimz, *Embattled Lawrence*, p. 113) Lawrence never became the hub for major long distance rail lines, but by 1880 it was served many times a day by the Union Pacific and the Santa Fe Railroad Companies. (Middleton, p. 30)

From 1864-1874, the "widespread building of railroads in all directions from Lawrence contributed to the prosperity of the times" (Middleton, p.32) The economic development Lawrence derived from the new railroads came from employment on rail-related activity, increased taxable property, and establishing a quick and efficient outlet for produce and materials. (Quastler,

Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas p. 259 and Nimz, *Embattled Lawrence* p. 113) Of all the rail lines in and around Lawrence, the Santa Fe Railroad Company grew to be the largest and most successful. (Andreas, p. 244)

The Santa Fe Railroad Company began with a charter written by Cyrus K. Holliday in 1859 in Topeka, who proposed to build a railroad from Atchison, Kansas to Topeka. He envisioned railroads following the old Santa Fe Trail taking goods and settlers westward and bringing back cattle, grain, coal, and minerals. (Marshall, p. 33) In 1863, President Lincoln signed a land grant to Santa Fe Railroad Company of 10 sections of land on each side of the track, all the way across Kansas to the Colorado border, (Bryant, p. 10) a total of 2,928,982 acres (Wolfenberger, MPS p. E 4).

Because of the sparse population west of Emporia, Kansas, the Santa Fe Railroad Company began selling some of its land at very low cost to settlers, and offering low rates on passenger fares and freight rates. A more dense population meant more passengers and more farm freight using the railroad. They sent agents to New York to entice newly arrived immigrants to come to Kansas, and in one year, 1874, between 3,000 and 4,000 immigrants from Russia settled in central Kansas. (Saul, *passim*) Santa Fe identified itself closely with the growth and prosperity of the state of Kansas and its "management had attempted to make it emphatically a Kansas road". (Quastler, *Railroads of Lawrence, Kansas* p, 306) Thus, the Santa Fe Railroad prospered and by 1912 became the largest railroad in Kansas. (*Polk Directory Kansas State Gazeteer*, p. 87)

Though a very important asset to Kansas, the Santa Fe's presence in Lawrence was at first minimal. Lawrence was a stop on the east-west line, but the main trunk line went through Ottawa. In 1879-80 Santa Fe purchased the Kansas City, Lawrence and Southern Kansas Railroad (KCLS), thus increasing its lines in eastern Kansas specifically centered in Lawrence. In 1882, Santa Fe announced plans to build a large two-story depot in Lawrence housing the head offices of KCLS, now a subsidiary of Santa Fe, in 10 rooms on the second floor. (Bryant, p.124).

The First Santa Fe Depot In Lawrence

The new depot, "the finest depot in Kansas" (*Lawrence Daily Journal*, May 27, 1883) was built and occupied by Santa Fe and KCSL in 1883. It was a large, elaborately decorated brick building, in keeping with the importance of the railroad depot as a gateway that linked the local community to the outside world. (Bohi and Grant p. 39) Situated along the east-west Santa Fe tracks on the south side of the Kansas River, and near the "Y" intersection for tracks leading south to Baldwin City, Pleasant Hill, and Ottawa, it was four blocks east of the main street of Lawrence. Though most depots of this era were built right on the main street of town (Bohi and Grant, p. 44), in Lawrence all the established railroad services, repair shops, storage, houses for workers had from 1865 grown up to the east of the main street, in an area known as East Lawrence. (Ambler, p. 15, 18) The new two-story depot was an elegant addition to the neighborhood of ethnically diverse middle and lower-class houses and businesses.

In July 1951, the Kansas River flooded throughout Eastern Kansas. Lawrence was inundated by water on both sides of the river. Indeed some of the low lying areas of Lawrence south of the river had two to three feet of water, including the Santa Fe tracks and the 1883 depot. (*Lawrence Journal World*, July 13, 1951) All train travel into and out of Lawrence was stopped between July 11 and July 25, 1951 (*Lawrence Journal World*, July 12, 1951 and July 25, 1951) This devastating flood so damaged the old 1883 depot that extensive repairs were necessary.

The New Santa Fe Station

By 1955, the Santa Fe Railroad Company decided to replace the 1883 depot with a new station on the same site and demolition of the old depot began on Friday, April 15, 1955. (*Lawrence Journal World*, April 16, 1955) The 1950's mark the start of the dominance of automobile transportation, with a vast network of interstate highways planned to span America, but the war years had been very busy and profitable for passenger and freight rail business. In the years, 1942-1945, trains carried 90 percent of all Army and Navy freight and 97 percent of military personnel ("The Railroad", Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Rail Company brochure, p. 23). In 1944, 70 percent of all of America's freight was carried by rail with all other forms of transportation (ships, trucks, pipelines, and planes) carrying the remainder. In the late 1940's and early 1950's other innovations in rail transportation developed, including new diesel-electric locomotives, dome cars/observation cars, air-conditioning, and new streamlined trains. ("*Quiz on Railroads and Railroad*" no pagination). In 1954, the Santa Fe Railroad had its "best year since 1950 and best peacetime year ever." (*New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1955) This success was due in part to the population and industrial growth boom in the American Southwest after the war, where Santa Fe dominated rail service, and partly was due to Santa Fe's management. They updated operations and schedules, and adopted new switching methods to manage track usage, spending 500 million dollars on new plant and equipment. (*New York Times*, Oct 30, 1955) Even the names of the passenger trains in this era seem full of energy: The Super Chief, the Oil Flyer, the Antelope, Grand Canyon, and the Lone Star Express.

In Lawrence, the University of Kansas received a huge increase in student enrollment as veterans came back from the war. The Santa Fe Railroad Company likely hoped this increase in population would result in more rail passengers using the trains and the new Lawrence station.

The building of the new Santa Fe Station was a big event for Lawrence. When it was dedicated on February 7, 1956, the *Lawrence Journal World* carried a front page story with the headline "Gratitude shown to Santa Fe for Local Progress." At the dedication luncheon the Mayor, the Chamber of Commerce President, and various other business leaders and Santa Fe Railroad personnel were among the 175 people who attended. At the time of the dedication, Santa Fe Railroad Company was the second largest taxpaying agency in Douglas County, so their renewed investment in Lawrence was very important to the city and county. Santa Fe not only built a "plush, ultra-modern" \$140,000 new station, they also purchased 160 acres of land, northwest of the downtown to use for further industrial development, which exhibited the railroad's belief in Lawrence as a progressive and growing city. (*Lawrence Journal World* Feb 7, 1956, p. 1) Obviously hopes among both the Lawrence leaders and the Santa Fe officials were high that the new station and the new industrial site would spawn growth in the future. Unfortunately for railroad companies, both air travel and automobile travel blossomed in the 1950's. No amount of advertising or new equipment could stem the tide of Americans turning toward the speedier airplane and the more expeditious automobile.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION, CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT, AND EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

The Santa Fe Station remains today very close to its original design and construction with few changes or modifications. Examination of construction drawings and historic photographs compared to existing building features provides a clear picture of original construction and alterations. (Refer to Condition Assessment and Work Recommendations for detailed information about specific features.)

Architectural Style

The following are excerpts from the beginning paragraphs of the draft of the architectural context statement written by Dennis Domer, which is intended to be used as part of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Santa Fe Station. The complete draft is included in the appendix and entitled "The Santa Fe Station in Lawrence, KS: Its Cultural Context, Modern Design, and Significance".

The Santa Fe Station, located at 413 E 7th Street in Lawrence, Kansas was built in 1955. It was designed by Warren Corman and the late Warren Jones, both graduates from the University of Kansas. The Station is an excellent example of "Midwestern Modern" architecture that captured the American imagination in the 1950s. It is a splendid representation of the great cultural change that transformed American life after World War II. As a passenger station, it is one of the best of its type in the Midwest, because it carries out the principles of modernism so thoroughly. It has changed very little on the exterior, and retains almost of all its original interior appointments, furniture, and materials as well.

The idea and meaning of Midwestern Modern architecture is largely unexamined. It was just one of many strands of modern culture that make up the complex architectural history of mid-20th century America. In that period of robust confidence that engulfed the United States after World War II, to be "modern" was to be sleek, fast, efficient, technologically advanced, scientifically-driven, and released from the strictures of history. In cars and trains, modern meant fins, dual colors, dramatic lines in chrome, and powerful engines. In architecture, modern meant a straight-forward, utilitarian elegance created by honest expression of structure and materials without obvious historical references to encumber the facades or interiors. It was not so much a style originally as a set of principles that together had highly recognizable stylistic qualities. Modernism meant a building designed largely from the inside out with a clear, flowing, functional plan expressed clearly by the exterior massing and composition. It meant a building easy to maintain, rid of all bric-a-brac. Eventually it came to mean steel and glass boxes, but overall, modern meant an architecture that expressed a sense of the new.

Massing and General Construction

The Santa Fe Station is a single story building with a total area of 4,670 s.f. It has a low pitched (.25":12" or less) roof with internal roof drains and large overhanging eaves. The massing, roof lines, and architectural detailing emphasize the horizontality of the building. The west third of the building is the public area and it is identified by extensive glazing, a canopy which wraps around three sides, and it is the tallest part of the building. The canopy provides coverage on the south

side at the main public entrance and the expansive windows of the Waiting Room, along the west side for passenger drop-off, and along the north side for the passenger loading platform.

The primary structural system for the building is load bearing masonry walls and steel bar-joists with metal roof decking. The substructure is concrete footings and foundation walls with a concrete on-grade floor slab. (see Structural Report in appendix for additional information on the structural system).

Exterior

The exterior of the building is nearly unchanged from its original construction. The primary exterior materials are masonry (blond/tan/brown face brick and limestone), glazing (aluminum windows), metal wall panel, and aluminum roof edge fascia. All of the exterior materials are original, except for one overhead door and one planter box, and all of the original exterior materials are significant features that should be preserved, except for the low-sloped roofing material which is not visible from ground-level line-of-sight.

The original metal and neon "Santa fe" sign on the roof over the main south entrance door was removed sometime in the past. The roof-top mounting angle is still in place for this sign and the original construction drawings have detailed information on the size and construction of the sign. That sign was replaced with a larger "SANTA FE" sign placed on the taller adjacent Waiting Room roof and it is this larger sign people remember as the "beacon" of the station. It was aligned and sized to be readable from Massachusetts Street along the sight-line of 7th Street and its blue neon outlined metal letters created an attention grabbing glow. Both of these signs can be seen in appendix "G" Historic Photos. Signage more in character with the original smaller sign is a significant feature which should be recreated, and a well designed metal-letter "Amtrak" sign with neon outline could be an appropriate adaptation.

Interior

The interior has only minor modifications, mostly from remodeling in 1982. Interior finishes are durable and typical of a high quality institutional building from the 1950's. They are of highest quality and durability in public areas and reduce in quality in office areas and support spaces. All original interior finishes are significant and should be preserved.

Flooring in public areas (Waiting Room, Vestibules, and Passage) is terrazzo and in bathrooms is quarry tile. In office areas the original 9"x9" vinyl asbestos tile (VAT) has been replaced with 12"x12" vinyl composition tile (VCT), most likely in 1982.

Wall finishes in the Waiting Room and Vestibules are masonry (brick or stone), in the bathrooms are ceramic glazed-faced concrete masonry units, in the Passage is wood paneling, in the office areas is painted plaster, and in the storage and support spaces is painted concrete masonry units. These are all significant features.

Wall base in the public areas and office areas is 3" tall painted metal base. The current color is tan and the original color appears to have been a light green. The metal wall base is a very significant feature that should be preserved and repainted to its original color.

Ceiling finishes are a combination of plaster on metal lathe and acoustical tile. All of the original acoustical tile was 12"x12" concealed grid type and in several areas this has been replaced with 2'x4' exposed grid type, most likely in 1982.

Custom casework in the Ticket Office, Freight Office, and Baggage Room is significant and should be preserved. Interior doors and hardware are original and several of these need to be replaced and/or modified in order for the building to meet accessibility requirements.

Furnishings

There are many pieces of original furniture remaining in the building, including lounge/lobby chairs and footstools, office desks, and office chairs. These are highly significant and should remain with the building.

Original louver blinds are in the office areas and these are significant features that should be preserved. Original curtains in the Waiting Room have recently been removed; the curtain tracks are still in place and new curtains similar in style and design to the original should be installed.

Mechanical Systems

The heating and cooling systems in the building are a combination of original components, upgrades from 1982, and repair/maintenance features from various dates. Heating is provided with a boiler that circulates heated water through original in-floor piping in some areas and through original and added fan-coil units in some areas. Cooling is provided with an exterior cooling tower and interior air-handling units. These systems have reached or passed their useful life expectancy and should be replaced with new systems that are energy efficient and meet current codes.

Plumbing systems and fixtures are mostly original and bathroom layouts do not meet accessibility requirements. Original fixtures should be preserved where possible and replaced or modified where necessary to meet accessibility requirements.

Electrical systems in the building are almost entirely original. Most light fixtures are significant features and should be preserved, but upgraded with new sockets and lamps that provide more illumination and have higher energy efficiency. Electrical distribution panels are original, but repair parts are not available. Panels should be replaced with new equipment, but in public areas original panel boxes and covers should be preserved.