

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Tromanhauser, Norman, House

other names/site number n/a

2. Location

street & number 3603 West Roanoke Drive [n/a] not for publication

city or town Kansas City [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Jackson code 095 zip code 64111

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
 nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my  
opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered  
significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ] )

Signature of certifying official/Title *Claire F. Blackwell*  
Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

*6 Dec 00*  
Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ] )

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
		<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
Domestic/single dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
Domestic/single dwelling  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
Prairie Style  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
 foundation stone  
 walls stucco  
           wood  
 roof terra cotta  
 other brick  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Periods of Significance**

1915  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1915  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person(s)**

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Curtiss, Louis S.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository: University of Kansas, Lawrence  
\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	361720	4324830			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Cydney E. Millstein  
organization Architectural and Historical Research date August 18, 2000  
street & number P.O. 22551 telephone 816/363-0567  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64113

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name David and helen Widner  
street & number 3603 West Roanoke Drive telephone 816/931-0582  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64111

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Jackson County, Missouri

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## **Summary**

The Norman Tromanhauser House, located at 3603 West Roanoke Drive, Kansas City, Missouri, was designed by the noted Kansas City architect Louis S. Curtiss in 1914-1915, with additions constructed in 1986 and 1999. The one-story stucco and wood bungalow is nestled on a somewhat wooded, triangular tract of land in the West Roanoke subdivision at the junction of East and West Roanoke drives. Costing \$5,000 to construct, the Tromanhauser Residence blends the architecture of the Prairie School in its overall massing and form with elements of the Spanish Colonial and Arts and Crafts. This home is located just north of a bungalow-filled residential neighborhood and southwest of Roanoke Park. In excellent condition, the Tromanhauser residence has maintained the majority of its historic features to convey its significance. Although this historic home has been modified in 1986 and 1999, its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association has been retained in both the exterior and interior.

## **Elaboration**

### *Exterior*

In general, the irregularly shaped, Tromanhauser Residence is characterized by stucco walls, wood framed fenestration, wood treillage, leaded glass geometric designed trim, and a red tile roof. The main façade, which features heavy, stepped wooden brackets at the cornice line, faces west. The walkway to the main entrance is part of the volume of space that includes a series of fixed, wood framed bay windows screened with Arts and Crafts styled wood treillage. The fenestration configuration wraps to the north and south of this entry bay. A wide ledge lines the base of the bay windows. Prominent stucco piers, each with wood trellis and topped by a tiled gable with tile cresting, flank the west façade of the entry bay. A deeply recessed off-centered main entrance is accessed through a wide canopied walkway featuring carved wood beams with exposed rafter tails. Wood trellises line the south side of the walkway, which is constructed of herringbone-patterned brick. A solid wood and leaded glass entry door with decorative wrought-iron hinges is protected by a single-leaf wood framed, glass and wood storm door. The entry is flanked at the north by tripartite wood framed casement windows and on the south by a fountain with concrete basin and tile backsplash, replete with a cast mascarón and a single decorative block.

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A one-bay wide unit placed to the south of the main entry, features a prominent floor-to-ceiling, wood framed casement window with sidelights and wide transom embellished with leaded geometric trim.

Fenestration of the north and east façades includes double-hung, sash-type, one-over-one, non-original aluminum framed windows. There are three double-hung windows at the north façade, while the east façade features four double-hung units. A non-original, projecting, single-bay addition placed at the east end of the north façade, features fixed fenestration and treillage to match that of the main or west façade. The addition also features a sliding glass door, which faces west, providing access to the backyard patio. A stepped wooden awning-like unit crowns the north façade of the addition. A wooden arbor, sheltering the patio and lap-pool, extends between the addition and the north façade of the main unit.

The south façade is marked by a one-story, one-bay bedroom addition constructed in 1986 of painted weatherboard and featuring two fixed windows at the north end. French doors, located at the west façade of this addition, open to another patio area that is adjacent to a single-bay, two-stall garage. The garage, extended in 1986 to accommodate an additional vehicle, features exposed rafter tails and brackets to match the historic. Paired stucco piers mark the west or main façade of the garage. French doors from the living room also reach the patio area. The doors are placed beneath a modified wood canopy which, in turn, is crowned by a peaked art glass clerestory. Wood-framed casement windows flank the doors.

Additional features of the Norman Tromanhauser include multiple stucco and clay tile chimneys, a flat roof, and stone foundation. A non-original stucco privacy wall and wooden gate, matching the historic materials and scale of the residence, was constructed in 1999 at the west and north grounds of the property. An art glass skylight, in keeping with the historic vocabulary of the home, was installed in the master bedroom that same year.

### *Interior*

Much of the historic interior space has been retained and recently renovated. These areas include the living and dining rooms and study area, all part of the principal unit of the home. Additionally, the bedroom and bath to the east of the living area are original. The living room features a brick fireplace with decorative tile, built-in bookcases, exposed

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beams and rafters, and Arts and Crafts styled hanging light fixtures crafted of glass and wrought iron. A recessed sitting nook is placed to the north of the living room. The dining room and study area, like the living area, features oak trim.

*Rehabilitation of the Tromanhauser Residence*

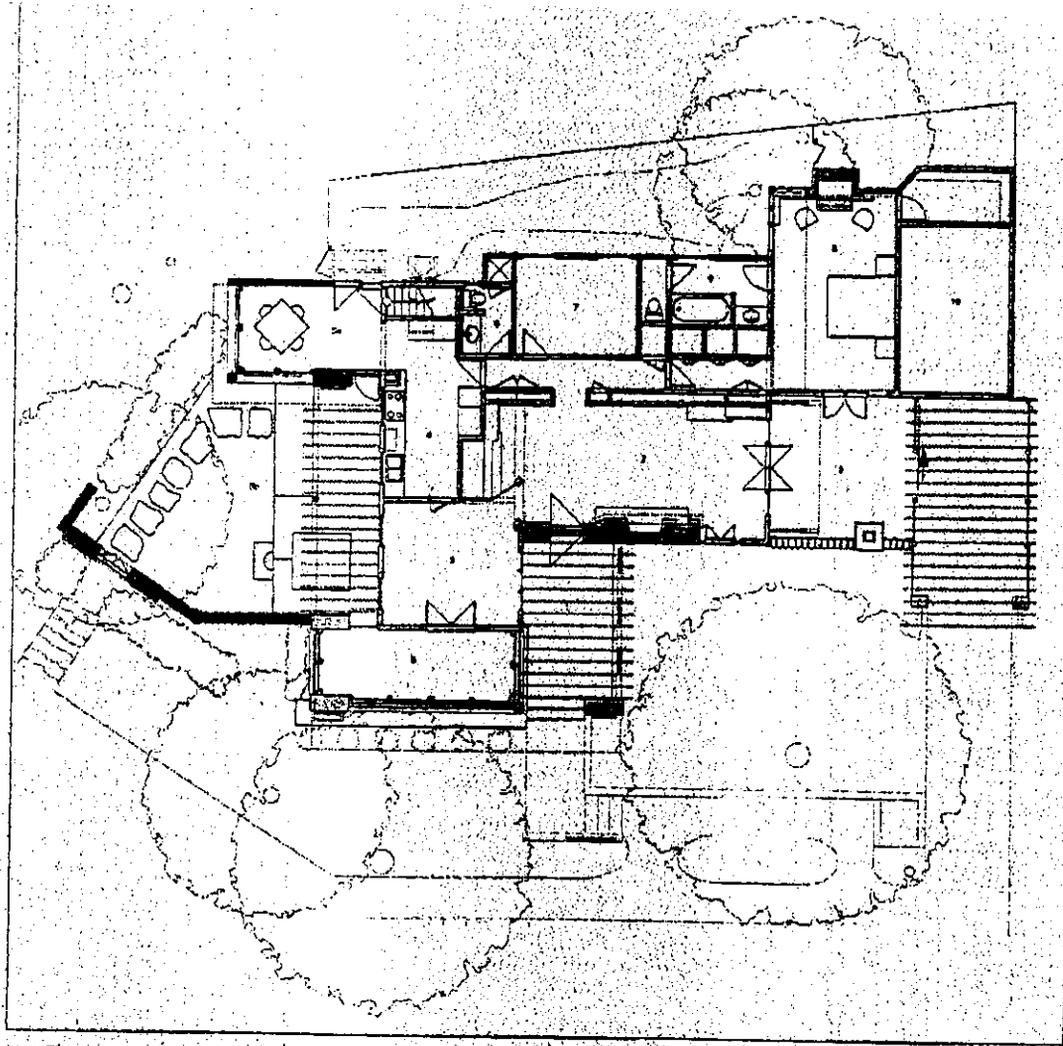
The Tromanhauser Residence has recently undergone extensive rehabilitation, including exterior repair and painting, roof repair, kitchen, master bedroom and sun porch remodeling, and site improvements. Designed by Junk Architects, Kansas City, Missouri, the sun porch remodeling, as well as the privacy wall, was sensitively executed using like historic materials and matching the historic form and scale of the original house. All work was executed in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The current owner has applied for Missouri State historic tax credits through the Missouri Department of Economic Development.

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New Plan

Legend:

- 1. Entry
- 2. Living Room
- 3. Dining Room
- 4. Kitchen
- 5. Porch
- 6a. Sun Porch
- 6b. Screened Courtyard
- 8. Bathroom
- 7. Study
- 9. Master Bedroom
- 10. Pkwy
- 11. Garage

**WIDNER RESIDENCE**  
3603 West Roanoke Drive  
Kansas City, Missouri

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## Summary

The Norman Tromanhauser House, 3603 West Roanoke Drive, Kansas City, Missouri, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C and is locally significant in the following area: ARCHITECTURE. Designed by Louis S. Curtiss in 1914-1915 with additions in 1986, 1999, the Norman Tromanhauser Residence represents the archetype bungalow that set the standard for Curtiss' subsequent residential architecture in his later years of practice and the work of a master. With the Tromanhauser House, the only one of its kind in Kansas City, the various features of Curtiss' later dwellings all found expression. This extraordinarily designed and crafted home in the Prairie School style was originally built for Curtiss' friend, Norman Tromanhauser, an auditor for Burnam-Munger-Root Dry Goods Company, who later became a certified public accountant. The period of significance is 1915, the date of the completion of construction.

## Elaboration

### *Louis S. Curtiss: The Early Years*

Louis Singleton Curtiss was born in Belleville, Ontario, on July 1, 1865, the second son of Don Carlos and Frances Elvira Curtiss. He was the fourth of six children, including twin girls. His father was a dry goods merchant in Belleville; his mother, of French descent, had moved to Canada from Norwalk, Ohio, after being left widowed with an infant daughter. In later years, Curtiss kept in touch with his family, including his elder half-sister, but was non-communicative about his personal life with his friends and associates in Kansas City. So much so that when he died, his obituaries uniformly gave his middle initial as "A." rather than "S." One stated that he was born in Erie, Pennsylvania, and another stated that he had no known relatives.

Perhaps one cause of his reticence was that he had been on his own for many years. His father died in 1883, and Frances Curtiss died just fifteen months later in June 1884. The remaining family members were scattered, while Louis reportedly enrolled at the University of Toronto to study engineering. He also supposedly studied architecture at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, but no record of his presence at the Ecole has been found.

By 1887, the twenty-two-year-old Curtiss had arrived in Kansas City, one of many young architects who relocated in order to take advantage of the building boom

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then underway. The following year he was employed as a draftsman in the office of Adriance Van Brunt, a local architect of some prominence who would later play a major role on the city's first Park Board.

Curtiss left Van Brunt in 1890 to form a partnership with Frederick C. Gunn as the firm of Gunn and Curtiss. At the same time, he began a two-year appointment as assistant to the Superintendent of Buildings for Kansas City. While serving in this capacity he designed the pioneering caisson footings for the old Kansas City, Missouri, City Hall at 4<sup>th</sup> and Main Streets (1891-92, demolished 1938), apparent evidence of his background in engineering.

Several of the architects who worked with Curtiss over the years are of some repute. James C. Sunderland worked for Gunn and Curtiss for eight years before starting his own firm in 1899. Nineteen-year-old Frederick McIlvain joined Gunn and Curtiss as a draftsman in 1892, and remained with Curtiss as his principal assistant for 17 years. Curtiss' influence on McIlvain was particularly strong, to the point where several of McIlvain's later, independent commissions have occasionally been misattributed to his former employer.

The practice of Gunn and Curtiss was successful from the beginning. Perhaps surprising for a relatively young firm, they received the commission to design the Missouri State Building for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. Other large public projects followed, including the Tarrant County Courthouse in Fort Worth, Texas (1893-95), and the very similar Cabell County Courthouse in Huntington, West Virginia (1895). Both courthouses were in the French Renaissance style, featuring a central block with end pavilions and a domed central tower, on a scale approaching that of some state capitol buildings.

Additional projects from the early 1890s included the Progress Club and Virginia Hotel, both on Washington Street in the Quality Hill neighborhood. Of particular interest as an example of the extremely imaginative design of which Curtiss was capable was the Immanuel Church, erected in 1893 on the grounds of the Western Branch of the National Home for Disabled Soldiers in Leavenworth, Kansas. Here Romanesque and Gothic elements were freely mixed in a building dominated by its great gable roof, almost a forerunner of the A-frames of the 1960s.

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In 1895-96, Curtiss presumably spent six to seven months again studying at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, where he reportedly had his design for a "Palais de Justice" accepted by the official jury for salon exhibition. He returned to Kansas City in April 1896, where an unbuilt design for a Wayside Inn was soon published in the *Kansas City Star*. This project signaled the beginning of the patronage of William Rockhill Nelson, publisher of the *Star*, a relationship that would apparently last until Nelson's death in 1915. Over the years Curtiss designed a variety of alterations and additions to Nelson's home, Oak Hall, as well as houses in the nearby Rockhill development and additions to the *Star* building.

As a result of the panic of 1893 and the ensuing depression, opportunities for architects were limited in the latter part of the decade. Nevertheless, in 1898 Curtiss was once again in Europe for three months, doing research on the Baltimore Hotel project in Kansas City for the Thomas Corrigan estate. The initial phase of the hotel was built in 1898-1899 at the southeast corner of 11<sup>th</sup> and Baltimore. From that point on Curtiss was repeatedly called back to do alterations and additions in 1901, 1904, 1907-1909, and 1914, until the hotel covered half of a city block. The commission also provided Curtiss with two future patrons: Bernard Corrigan, trustee for the estate, and Allen J. Dean, secretary and general manager of the Baltimore Hotel Company.

There is some question as to whether or not the initial Baltimore Hotel commission was a Gunn and Curtiss project or belonged to Curtiss alone. In any event, the firm was dissolved in 1899 and Curtiss began his independent practice. At this time Curtiss made a will in which his books, household good and furniture were left to Frederick McIlvanin, who continued in the new office as Curtiss' associate. Despite the increasing volume of business, the office apparently never consisted of much more than Curtiss, an assistant (McIlvain), one or two draftsmen, and an office boy.

#### *An Independent Practice and the Beginning of A New Architecture*

One of the first commissions to be completed after the split with Gunn was the Standard (Folly) Theatre of 1900 at 300 West 12<sup>th</sup> Street, which may have begun as a Gunn and Curtiss design. This was followed by a series of notable works, including the Willis Wood Theater of 1901-1902, a flamboyant Beaux-Arts building that stood across from the Baltimore Hotel and sadly burned in 1917. Although most have been demolished or altered past all recognition, Curtiss also did a large number of commercial and office buildings in or near the central business district of Kansas City. Perhaps the

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most impressive was the first building for the Jones Store Company (1902). A Chicago Style commercial building, its steel frame was clad in white terra cotta, with at least a superficial resemblance to Louis Sullivan's Carson-Pirie-Scott store in Chicago.

Most of Curtiss' designs up to this point had been rather witty, eclectic variations on the historical styles, with even the Jones Store following an accepted, if rather new, precedent. He was well educated, well traveled, and well read, with an amazingly wide range of interests. He was also a rather flamboyant individualist, with white suits, a flowing tie (similar to Wright and Hubbard), one of the fastest cars in town (he had owned one of the first automobiles in Kansas City), personally monogrammed Turkish cigarettes which he smoked incessantly, and a habit of paying his bills in gold coin. It is therefore not too surprising that like other architects of his generation, he began to question the appropriateness of slavish adherence to historical precedent, and instead began to consider the development of a new architecture, appropriate to its time and place.

Perhaps the first indication of the direction that he would eventually take came with the R. E. Bruner house of 1903-1904. The rough limestone and red tile roof were common enough in Kansas City, but the entry door of wood and leaded glass, set within a Syrian arch covered with mosaic tiles, was one of the purest examples of Art Nouveau design to be found within the United States.

The Bruner house was not immediately followed by similar examples, however. The Rule house of 1904 was designed in the Colonial Revival, while the Benjamin Schnierle house at 6<sup>th</sup> and Oakland in Kansas City, Kansas, was just a bit out of the ordinary, with wide-eaved hip roofs derived from the Prairie School and unusual dormers which extended the lower wall plane. Curtiss' commercial buildings of this period, such as the Argyle Building at 306 East 12<sup>th</sup> Street, also continued to follow historic precedent, although like his houses they show a certain austerity in their flat walls with crisply punched openings, quite different from the Beaux-Arts exuberance that might be expected from someone with Curtiss' background.

In 1905, Curtiss was reportedly exposed to smallpox while viewing a fire in the West Bottoms. He was required to remain isolated for several months, which may have given him an opportunity to carefully consider the direction and content of his work. In any event, it was from this point that he became increasingly involved in the development of a highly personal architectural style. The elements of that style were not entirely his

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own, but were blended in such a way as to produce something surprisingly coherent. His commercial projects from this point would combine the explicit approach to structure of the Chicago School with a treatment of surface and ornament derived in large part from the Vienna Secession, with its geometric abstraction of Baroque and Neoclassical sources.

His residential work was initially strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement, but other elements eventually came into play such as tile roofs, flat stucco wall surfaces, and blocky forms borrowed from the Spanish Colonial Revival, together with a horizontal line and the use of multiple casements common to both the Prairie Style and the work of the Greene brothers in California. The link between the two aspects of his work could be found in his largest residential commissions, the Corrigan house and the Casa Ricardo tourist hotel. Here the elements of his commercial work and smaller residences are blended with Prairie Style lines, Secessionist ornament, and touches of the Arts and Craft movement. Taken individually these buildings can seem rather idiosyncratic, but when viewed together they form a very consistent and highly attractive body of work.

It was shortly after his illness that a whole new field of work opened up for Curtiss. He began to design railroad stations and related hotel facilities for the Santa Fe Railroad and the Fred Harvey chain, to the point of becoming virtually the resident architect for the Santa Fe system. One of the first such projects was the El Bisonte Hotel in Hutchinson, Kansas, completed in 1907. Here the Arts and Crafts interiors would set the pattern for much of his future work. Similar projects soon followed, with depots and hotels in Emporia, Syracuse and Wellington, Kansas; the El Ortiz Hotel of 1909 in Lamy, New Mexico, and additions to the El Tovar Hotel at Grand Canyon, Arizona.

A number of these works drew on the Southwestern, Indian, and Spanish colonial motifs long associated with the Santa Fe, and are the first such instances of these elements in Curtiss' developing style. With his reputation established as a railroad architect by his work for the Santa Fe, other railroad projects followed, particularly in Texas and the Southwest. Among his patrons, in addition to the Santa Fe, were the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway (the Frisco line), the Rock Island, and the short-lived St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railway.

It was during this period of change and innovation that Curtiss lost his long-time assistant, Frederick McIlvain. In 1908, McIlvain formed a partnership with Frank

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Jackson, a former draftsman with Frederick Hill and Van Brunt and Howe. By 1910 Curtiss had another assistant, Clarence K. Birdsall, but Birdsall only remained with the office for a relatively short time.

As Curtiss' new style developed through his railroad commissions, so to with his various commercial projects. The common design program tended to be an enframing at the sides (or corners) and top of terra cotta, with a wall area of glass and metal hung from the frame as a screen. The pattern was set with a small commercial building for Dean Bros. Realty Company, 1114-1116 McGee Street in 1904, a similar building for the same client at 1105 McGee in 1906, and soon fully developed with the famous Boley Clothing Company Building of 1908-1909. In the last instance the screen wall was literally hung from the edges of the floor slabs, which were cantilevered for several feet beyond the structural columns, making the Boley the first true glass and metal curtain-wall building in the world. Other buildings of similar design were Curtiss' own three-story Studio Building at 1118-1120 McGee, completed soon after the Boley, and the Ideal Clothing Company Building erected in St. Louis in 1910. The Studio Building was built as an investment on the advice of Bernard Corrigan, given the substantial income that Curtiss was now receiving.

Curtiss continued to receive railroad projects, including two Union Terminals, one for Wichita and one in Joplin, Missouri, both begun in 1910. The Joplin Union Terminal was similar to several of this more adventurous depots for the Santa Fe, albeit on a larger scale, and had elements of the Boley Building as well, with its large glass areas framed with terra cotta and set off by over-scaled Secessionist ornament. The Wichita station was another project for the Santa Fe. Its main entry façade was at one end, and reflected the Beaux-Arts Classicism of Curtis' earlier career. Renderings of three other depot projects from this period are known, all unidentified and only one dated (August 30, 1913), and all continue in the pattern set by the Joplin and Wichita depots.

In 1911-1912, Curtiss undertook a number of projects for the St. Louis, Brownsville and Mexico Railroad in the new town of Kingsville, Texas. One of these was for a tourist hotel called the Casa Ricardo, to be operated under Fred Harvey management. An L-shaped structure with broad eaves and continuous balconies along the interior of the L, the design was one of Curtiss' finest and set the pattern for the Bernard Corrigan residence on Ward Parkway in Kansas City, built the following year. Corrigan was, like Curtiss, originally from Canada, and had played a significant role in Curtiss'

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career. Unfortunately, he died before the house was completed (at a cost of over \$110,000), and it eventually passed into the hands of the Sutherland family.

As these projects were underway, Curtiss acquired a new assistant. Fred S. Wilson joined Curtiss as a draftsman in 1912, and would remain in the office until the beginning of World War I. Although he established his own practice after the war, he would continue to do job supervision for his former employer through the last of Curtiss' active projects.

The volume of Curtiss' practice dropped markedly after 1912. In part this was probably related to a general shift in public taste, as the various academic revival styles won out over attempts to develop a specifically American architecture. Similar declines occurred in the practices of other "Progressive" architects of the period such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles and Henry Greene. Those who could not, or would not, adapt themselves to the demand for a polite historicism soon found themselves without clients or commissions.

#### *The Norman Tromanhauser House: Curtiss' Standard Design for Residential Architecture*

From this point on, Curtiss' work was largely confined to small and medium size houses. Fortunately in this area there was still some demand for his talents. The house that set the pattern for those that followed was built in 1914-1915 for his friends the Norman Tromanhausers, at 3603 West Roanoke Drive. Here the various features of the later houses all found expression: plain stucco wall surfaces accented by carefully placed flat tiles, large glass areas partially framed or screened by geometrical wooden trellis work, panels of stained glass illuminated by concealed lighting, repeated use of casement windows and French doors, and Arts and Crafts interiors with beamed ceilings, brick fireplaces, and built-in seat and shelving. There was also a tendency toward volumetric expression with each major interior space or group of related spaces expressed as a distinct volume or form on the exterior.

With this shift in vocabulary, it was clear that the Tromanhauser House was a drastic change from Curtiss' former residential designs. In overall vocabulary, development of volume and space, wall surfaces and sheer size, the Tromanhauser home marked a drastic change for Curtiss. Examples of this new expression can be found in neighboring Kansas City, Kansas, specifically in the Westheight Manor neighborhood

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where Curtiss' was involved for over six years.

In 1915 and early 1916, the subdivision of Westheight Manor was developed in Kansas City, Kansas, by Jesse A. Hoel from designs prepared by Kansas City landscape architects Hare and Hare. Hoel was obviously an enthusiast where Curtiss was concerned, as the first house to be built in the new subdivision, Hoel's own, was one of Curtiss' finest. Here the stucco was replaced by rough-faced stonework, but in other ways the pattern set by the Tromanhauser design was adhered to. The sprawling Hoel House (1915-1916), located at 2108 Washington Boulevard, parallels the Tromanhauser design with its form, massing, wide overhanging eaves, and display of wood treillage throughout the exterior.

Additional designs, based on the scheme for the Tromanhauser residence, for Westheight followed, with the William C. Rickel house of 1919 and the Harry G. Miller, Sr., house in 1920-1921. Both of these houses, with their stucco exteriors, red tile roofs, casement windows, multiple terraces and use of the wooden treillage, echo the Tromanhauser residence. Yet another house for Westheight, built prior to 1921, is known only from a blurred photograph in a Hoel Realty company advertisement. The Harry M. Winkler residence of 1921, at 1915 Washington Avenue, may also be a Curtiss design, although it is conceivable that it was the work of Fred S. Wilson. A single Curtiss project in Kansas City, Missouri, the James G. Rowell residence of 1920-1921, is contemporary with the Westheight work, but unfortunately has been modified beyond its original design.

One other house from this period deserves mention. The Wookey residence in Toronto is known from a photograph that is labeled "last design" on the back in pencil. Fred Comee assumed that this meant the house was built c. 1915, but he was unaware of the Westheight projects or the Rowell house. It is a striking design, with elements of the Tromanhauser and Hoel residences set off by an apparent return to formal symmetry and great plating urns of cast stone similar to those found on some Prairie School designs.

### *The Final Years*

In his last years, Curtiss seemed to retreat into isolation. In 1917 he developed the top floor of the Studio Building into an apartment for himself, with features reminiscent of his residential interiors of the time but many unusual personal touches as well. As commissions declined in size and number, he spent increasing hours on structural studies

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and the development of architectural theory. By the time the Moler house was under construction, he left supervision entirely in the hands of Fred Wilson and visited the site only once.

Louis S. Curtiss, unquestionably one of Kansas City's most important architects, died on June 24, 1924, at about 9:00 in the evening while at his drawing board in his apartment. He was not quite 59 years old. His rather inaccurate obituaries noted that he had complained of bronchial problems to his friends. His death followed a coughing spell, and was officially ascribed to a hemorrhage of the lungs. Some have stated that it was in actuality a ruptured aortic aneurysm, the result of syphilis contracted many years before. He was buried, at his own request, in an unmarked grave in Mount Washington Cemetery.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cydney E. Millstein and Larry K. Hancks, "Westheight Manor." Grant No. 20-88-30110-006. Historic Inventory, Phase 3 Survey prepared for the City of Kansas City, Kansas. 1990. This extensive survey includes a biography of Curtiss. Material from this survey was used in the writing of *the Stalking Louis Curtiss*, written by Wilda Sandy and Larry Hancks (Kansas City: Ward Parkway Press, 1991). The 1990 survey is acknowledged on pages 81-82.

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Louis Curtiss documents on file at the Kansas Collection, Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence. This collection includes photographs, letters and student reports.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Lot U, replat of Block 2, West Roanoke, A subdivision of Record in Kansas City, Jackson County, Missouri.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Norman Tromanhauser Residence.

**Key to Photographs**

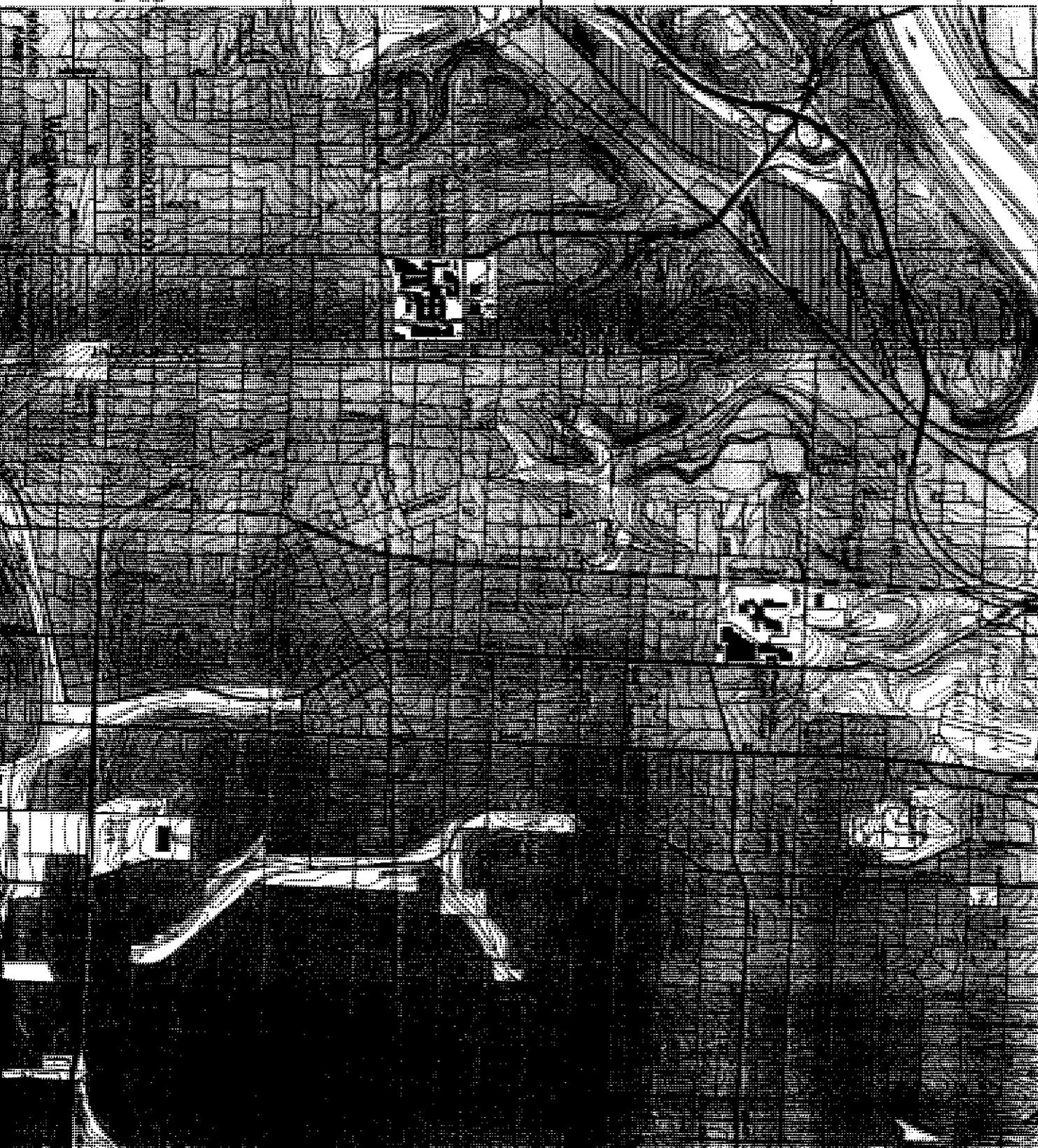
All photographs taken in August 2000. Cydney E. Millstein, photographer.  
Negatives housed at Architectural and Historical Research, LLC, Kansas City, MO

1. Main or west façade and garage; view facing northeast.
2. Detail of main or west façade; view facing northeast.
3. Main entrance; view facing east.
4. Rear or north façade; view facing southeast.
5. Detail of rear or north façade; view facing southwest.
6. Detail of rear or north façade; view facing south.
7. Detail of rear or north façade; view facing southeast.
8. East façade; view facing south, southwest.
9. Living room; view facing north.
10. Living room; view facing south.
11. Living room window; view facing west.
12. Dining room and sitting area; view facing northwest.

Thomas House, Norman, Harlan

Jackson County, MO

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