

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Casson Building
 Other names/site number KHRI #177-2428
 Name of related Multiple Property Listing NA

2. Location

Street & number 603 SW Topeka Boulevard (includes 601 Topeka Boulevard) not for publication
 City or town Topeka vicinity
 State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66846

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

See File

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date _____

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Casson Building
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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: business and professional

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/WORK IN PROGRESS

New use will be:
DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt

other: Stone

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Narrative Description

Summary

The Casson Building at 603 SW Topeka Boulevard in Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas, is a four-story brick building constructed in two phases. The first two floors of the concrete frame building were constructed in 1927 while the upper two floors were added in 1947. The prominent corner building has ground-floor storefronts that face Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue while single windows pierce the upper floors at regular intervals. Simple limestone detailing on the street facades distinguishes the 1927 and 1947 construction. A variation in the color of the red brick facade also differentiates the two sections of the building. A concrete cornice caps the building. The interior reflects primarily the 1947 alteration, which included the construction of the main lobby and circulation core. The storefronts and upper floors have been reconfigured as offices, although the corridor and core remain intact. A small penthouse apartment was constructed on the roof of the four-story building in 1956. The apartment retains its historic mid-century residential configuration and finishes.

Elaboration¹

Setting

The Casson Building occupies the southwest corner of the intersection of Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue, approximately four blocks west of the primary commercial thoroughfare of South Kansas Avenue and two blocks north of the Kansas State Capitol. Free-standing small commercial and residential apartment buildings line Southwest Sixth Avenue while Southwest Topeka Boulevard has more single-family residential resources interspersed with commercial, religious, and governmental resources. Both streets have five lanes of traffic and wide tree-lined lawns creating deep setbacks for the buildings.

Public concrete sidewalks abut the Casson Building on the north and east sides. An asphalt parking lot and a single house occupy the remainder of the block to the west. Single-family dwellings and a small mid-century commercial building occupy the remainder of the block to the south. The house immediately south of the Casson Building is approximately five feet from the south facade of the building.

Exterior

The symmetrical front (east) facade facing Topeka Boulevard has five bays at the first floor and seven bays on each of the three upper floors. The dark red brick lower facade features stone quoins and rusticated brick piers. Flat limestone panels frame the four storefronts and the primary center entrance. Low-relief carved stone panels with ogee-shaped edges frame the slightly recessed entrance. "Casson Building" is engraved in the nameplate above the entrance, which contains a pair of non-historic aluminum glazed doors. A small curved balcony with a stone corbel and a wrought iron railing is centrally located on the second floor above the entry.

Pilasters with concrete bases and limestone cladding define the four storefronts. The southernmost storefront is slightly recessed from the facade and has a historic aluminum storefront and non-historic door. The adjacent storefront to the north has a historic aluminum frame and concrete bulkhead; the door is boarded with plywood. The two storefronts on the north side of the primary entrance have historic aluminum storefront frames and concrete bulkheads. The entrance at the north end of the northernmost storefront is slightly recessed with a single-light wood door.

The limestone storefront surround extends to the second floor framing brick panels and forming a continuous sill of the second-floor windows. The windows in the two outer bays are slightly wider than the five inner bays.

¹ Much of the description was taken from the Preliminary Site Information Questionnaire (PSIQ) prepared by Rachel Nugent, Rosin Preservation in August 2017 and supplied by KSHS. It has been fact-checked, revised and expanded by Spencer Preservation.

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Each window has a stone surround with a shaped sill and a segmental arched stone lintel with ogee-shaped panels at the upper corners. The arched openings have historic panels to infill above the historic rectangular windows. The two outer bays each have three steel single-light casement windows while the inner five bays each have a pair of steel casement windows.

A stone beltcourse separates the second and third floors separating the original 1927 building from the 1947 addition of the upper floors. The third and fourth floors have little ornament. The seven punched rectangular window openings at each floor have concrete sills and steel lintels. Historic two-over-two steel windows are extant on the third floor while non-historic one-over-one aluminum windows fill the historic masonry openings on the fourth floor. A concrete beltcourse forms a continuous lintel above the fourth-floor windows that encircles the building and the parapet is capped by a concrete cornice that features a band of small rounded arches.

The north facade fronting Sixth Avenue is nearly identical to the east. The first floor has five storefront openings with a narrow center bay and four wider outer bays. The westernmost bay has a slightly recessed center entrance. The storefronts have concrete bulkheads and non-historic aluminum frames. The bay at the northwest corner has a transom with simulated prism glass with operable insets for ventilation. The fenestration at the upper floors is identical to the east facade.

The west/rear facade fronts a paved parking lot west of the building. The first floor has eight irregular bays. The northernmost bay has a storefront with a stone sill over brick bulkhead and non-historic aluminum frame. The four center bays have pairs of historic steel casement windows with steel multi-light transoms (one of which is a replacement aluminum window). The three bays at the south end of the facade include a single fixed window, a pair of non-historic steel doors, and a pair of historic wood doors. Concrete steps access each of these pairs of doors.

The upper three floors each have six bays. The second floor has one set of three steel casement windows in the north bay and four pairs of steel casement windows in the center bays. These windows have stone sills and steel lintels. A historic steel fire escape accessed from historic wood doors (single-light over three panel) in the southernmost bays is attached to the building and accesses all floors. The third floor has historic two-over-two steel windows while the fourth floor has non-historic aluminum windows. These windows have concrete sills and steel lintels. The concrete beltcourse above the fourth-floor windows continues on this elevation. Louvered vents pierce the wall above the windows in the center bay.

The south facade has limited visibility due to the proximity of the adjacent building. The fourth-floor concrete beltcourse is the only ornament on this elevation. The fenestration is similar to the other facades. The second floor has steel casement windows with stone sills while the third and fourth floors have double-hung steel windows. A tall square brick chimney rises above the roofline and is visible on the south facade. The south and west facades have tile coping on the brick parapet versus the concrete cap on the street facades.

A small one-story penthouse occupies the center of the fourth-floor roof. Constructed as an apartment in 1956, the rectangular penthouse has a flat/tapered roof and replacement corrugated metal siding with single and pairs of historic two-over-two aluminum windows.

Interior

The main entrance on the east opens to a narrow vestibule with a terrazzo floor. The vestibule features marble wall panels with curved returns and contrasting marble baseboard. A pair of historic wood doors with large glazed panels accesses the main lobby that retains the same historic finishes as the vestibule. The lobby provides access to the adjacent commercial spaces on the first floor and to the circulation core at the center of the building. The circulation core includes a single passenger elevator and a concrete stairwell that accesses all floors, including the basement.

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The first floor retains the divisions of the historic storefronts, although openings have been created to connect these spaces and non-historic drywall partitions have been added. Most of the finishes are not historic with carpeting, wood veneer paneling, and suspended acoustical tile ceilings. The northwest retail space retains a historic concrete stair with an iron railing.

The upper three floors house office space around the perimeter surrounding a central service core. A U-shaped corridor accesses the circulation core and the restrooms. The offices surrounding the central core have been reconfigured and have experienced multiple remodelings as was expected with speculative office space. Office suites vary in size and configuration and generally have non-historic finishes including carpet, wood wall paneling, drywall partitions, and suspended acoustical tile ceilings. Some extant historic elements include marble window sills and wood doors with glazed panels and historic hardware. The historically open office at the west end of the first floor retains its historic composite tile floors, applied acoustic tile ceiling and plaster walls. The central bathrooms retain historic terrazzo floors.

The fifth-floor penthouse contains a single apartment, constructed in 1956. Accessible from the main stairwell, the penthouse retains its historic configuration and some historic finishes. The apartment has a living room with access to the roof. The rest of the apartment has a kitchen, a bathroom, and two bedrooms, each with built-in cabinetry.

Integrity

The Casson Building retains excellent integrity of location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship to communicate feelings about and associations with its area of significance and the period in which it was constructed (1927 – 1956). The building retains the features that communicate its property type as a Corner Neighborhood Store with the historic ground-floor commercial retail and upper-floor speculative office functions for which the building was designed. The primary building entrance and the separate storefronts are extant while the upper floors retain their office function with center core that was designed to be adjustable to tenant needs. The clear distinction between the 1927 building and the 1947 addition with the variation in brick color, concrete belt course, and varied window types portrays the architectural significance of the Casson Building in its evolution from corner neighborhood store to an office building. As a speculative office building, remodeling and reconfiguring of interior offices is common and does not impact the integrity of the building. The interior retains the clear distinction of commercial spaces on the first floor and offices on the upper floors. The historic corridor surrounding the circulation and restroom core is intact on all floors despite minor changes to the configuration and finishes of the offices behind the corridors.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1927-1956

Significant Dates

1927, 1947, 1956

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Raymond Albert Coolidge (1947 addition)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Casson Building is 1927 – 1956. This period begins with the building's date of construction, includes the 1947 addition of the upper two floors, and ends in 1956 with the addition of the penthouse.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

NA

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Casson Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for ARCHITECTURE as an excellent example of the Corner Neighborhood Store property type that evolved into a speculative office building. Constructed initially with two floors in 1927, the Casson Building was designed to provide residential apartments and commercial services for residents in the surrounding neighborhood. The building was expanded and modified in 1947 to provide office space to multiple tenants while still providing retail space on the first floor. The brick colors, ornament, and fenestration differentiate the 1947 addition from the 1927 portion. The Casson Building is located approximately four blocks from Topeka's downtown commercial core along S. Kansas Avenue; it dominates the small commercial center at the intersection of Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue. The period of significance begins in 1927 with construction of the first two floors of the building, includes the 1947 remodeling and addition of the upper floors, and ends with the addition of the penthouse in 1956.

Elaboration ²

The Casson Building

William Bass formed a plumbing and heating business in Topeka in the early part of the twentieth century, partnering first with Jay L. Headlee in 1912, with R. D. Johnson in 1916, and finally with M. E. Linton by October 1917.³ Bass' plumbing and heating business operated from the retail space in a two-story frame building at 601 Topeka Boulevard. In 1927, Bass and Linton obtained a permit to construct a two-story mixed-use building for businesses and apartments.⁴ This square building, measuring seventy-five feet on each side, replaced the earlier frame building and two adjacent dwellings.

The new two-story concrete building completed in 1927, housed offices for the Bass & Linton plumbing and heating company, as well as a new joint venture - a corner service station.⁵ The building also housed a drug store and a tire shop. Likely due to the Depression, Bass and Linton soon moved their plumbing endeavors to their respective homes and leased out the apartments and commercial space in the corner building.⁶ The second floor contained eight apartments, identified in city directories as Bass & Linton Apartments. Tenants were white-collar workers with jobs in sales, nursing, retail, engineering, and state departments. Throughout the next twenty years, the building remained at or near capacity for both the retail and residential spaces, including during the Depression when the downtown commercial center was experiencing a high number of vacancies in commercial properties.

By the late 1940s, Bass and Linton sold the building. In 1947, Charles H. Casson, president of Casson Construction Company, obtained a permit to construct a two-story addition to the building at 603 Topeka Boulevard. Work included remodeling the interior to create a formal lobby with an elevator and stair core, and to convert the second-floor apartments and some of the first-floor retail space to office space. The building was renamed the "Casson Building" and a new inscription was installed over the door to the main lobby.

² Portions of the Statement of Significance (specifically the property type description and parts of the property history) were taken from the Preliminary Site Information Questionnaire prepared by Rachel Nugent, Rosin Preservation in August 2017 and supplied by KSHS.

³ *Polk's Topeka (Shawnee County, Kans.) City Directory 1912, 1916, 1921*. Kansas City, MO: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers: 1912-2015, various years. Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library; and Bass & Linton advertisement in *Topeka Daily Capital*, 14 Oct 1917. 13.

⁴ Shawnee County, City Clerk, "Fire Department – Record of Building Permits Issued," A10427, 28 Apr 1927. 43. Vol. 1926-1928. Kansas State Archives.

⁵ *Polk's Topeka (Shawnee County, Kans.) City Directory 1929* Kansas City, MO: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1929. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

⁶ The service station is not listed after 1931 and the plumbers' home addresses are used for their businesses. The Bass and Linton Apartments remain in the city directories through 1946. *Polk's Topeka City Directories 1927-1948*. Ancestry.com.

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Despite the loss of apartments, the mixed-use building continued to provide services to local residents. A laundry and dry cleaning business occupied the storefront at 603 Topeka Boulevard and a café or restaurant occupied the storefront at 605 Topeka Boulevard from 1948 through the late 1960s. The first tenant of the newly renovated office space at 601 Topeka Boulevard was the district offices of International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) in 1948. IBM offices occupied the northeast corner storefront, formerly the service station, for the next ten years. Douglass Electric Company was among the early upper-floor tenants, occupying an office in the building from 1948 until 1955.

As early as 1946 prior to the renovation, one of the first floor retail spaces was occupied by Crum and Foster Insurance, the first known insurance companies to call the building home.⁷ Blue Cross-Blue Shield (BCBS) moved into the Casson Building in 1948 with 114 employees. Blue Cross Blue Shield experienced tremendous growth increasing their workforce by 50% in less than ten years. By 1954 they had outgrown the Casson Building with 182 employees occupying the upper three floors of the building.⁸ BCBS built their own building a few blocks south on Topeka Boulevard and vacated the Casson Building in 1954.

A variety of insurance companies had offices in the Casson Building over the years. Fifteen different insurance companies or agents were listed in 1957 alone.⁹ At least one insurance company occupied an office in the Casson Building through 2000. Other tenants included attorneys, engineers and accountants, even the headquarters for the local Girl Scouts organization and the U.S. Brewers Foundation.¹⁰

In 1956, a small penthouse apartment was constructed on the roof of the building. Accessible from the stair that originally provided roof access, the penthouse contained five rooms, including a full kitchen and bathroom. James V. and Doris E. Pratt were the sole tenants of the penthouse from 1956 to 1985.¹¹ James Pratt was the manager at Pratt Printers (923 S. Kansas Avenue) until he retired in 1964. After the Pratts vacated the penthouse in 1985, it remained vacant until 2005 when Casson Building Management offices and Casson Construction Company offices moved to that space. The penthouse retains the configuration and some of the finishes of the 1956 apartment.

The Casson Building has a long history of association with companies in the building trades. Bass & Linton, a plumbing and heating contractor, constructed the first two floors. Not only did the new building include space for the Bass & Linton Company, but it was a speculative investment that included leasable retail space and eight second-floor apartments. Casson Construction Company, a prominent Topeka contractor that had been in business since at least 1909, renovated the office for IBM and constructed the two upper floors.¹² Casson Construction Company maintained its headquarters in the building from 1950 until 2005.¹³ Architect Raymond A. Coolidge designed the renovation and addition.¹⁴ In 1955, Coolidge moved his firm to the Casson Building, as did Finney & Turnipseed Consulting Engineers. Coolidge's firm occupied offices in the building through 2000 while Finney & Turnipseed occupied the fourth floor through 2014. Government and service agencies including the Kansas Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, the Social Security Administration and Breakthrough House occupied the building in recent years. The building was vacant in 2017.

⁷ Howard S. Searle, insurance agent for Crum and Foster operated from 603 Topeka Blvd by 1946. *77th and 79th Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Insurance, State of Kansas*. Topeka, KS: Ferd Voiland Jr., (State Printer), 1946 & 1948, accessed at <https://books.google.com/books?id=ep0ZAQAIAAJ> on 15 Dec 2017.

⁸ "New Building about Ready." *Topeka Daily Capital*, 19 Sep 1954.

⁹ *Cross-Reference Directory, Topeka, 1957*. Ancestry.com. U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁰ Ibid, and Advertisement for the Brewers Foundation in the *Council Grove Republican*, 25 Feb 1948. 4.

¹¹ *Polk's Topeka (Shawnee County, Kans.) City Directory 1956-1985*. Kansas City, MO: R. L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1912-2015, various years. Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

¹² Shawnee County, City Clerk, "Fire Department – Record of Building Permits Issued," B6073, 4 Jan 1947. 22; B6712, 2 Aug 1947. 37. Vol. 1946-1951. Kansas State Archives. Alta Huff, "Construction Company Expands Operations," *Topeka Capitol Journal*, 8 Jan 1977. 29. Vertical File: Casson Construction Company, Topeka Room, Topeka Public Library.

¹³ *Polk's Topeka City Directory 1948-2015*, Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

¹⁴ Raymond A. Coolidge, "Alterations to Office Building," Architectural Drawings, Sheets 2 and 3, 1947. Copies obtained from Ed Eller, Kansas Commercial Real Estate Services, Inc.

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The Designers and Builders

The architect of the original two-story Bass & Linton Apartment Building is unknown. Architectural plans from 1947 indicate that Raymond Albert Coolidge designed the renovation and addition to the building, renamed the Casson Building at that time. Coolidge was born in Dodge City, Kansas in 1901.¹⁵ He graduated from the University of Kansas with a B.S. in Architecture in 1924. Coolidge took a job in a private architecture firm in Kansas City, Missouri for one year and then Hendersonville, North Carolina for five years, after which he returned to Kansas. Coolidge served as the Assistant State Architect from 1930 to 1933 and was then appointed as the Kansas State Architect from 1933 to 1937. As State Architect, Coolidge designed Watkins Home and the chancellor's residence at the University of Kansas in Lawrence.¹⁶ Following his public service, Coolidge started his own firm. His works included Topeka's Municipal Auditorium (1939), five residential scholarship halls at the University of Kansas (1945-1955), the Shawnee County Courthouse, reconstruction of Benton Hall at Washburn University following the 1966 tornado, the Educational Building and Cloister at Grace Episcopal Cathedral and the Washburn University School of Law.¹⁷

Bass & Linton (1927)

William A. Bass (1884-1969) was born in Topeka, Kansas, on September 20, 1885, to George and Jane Bass. The January 9, 1912 *Topeka Daily Capital* announced the opening of his first plumbing business with J.L. Headlee at 601 Topeka Blvd.¹⁸ Bass was in business at the same location from 1912 until 1932, when he began operating his plumbing business from his home. He died in August 1969.

Melvin Everett (M.E.) Linton (1880-1953) was born on April 8, 1880 in rural Jackson County, Kansas. At age nineteen Linton moved to Topeka and worked with the engineers at the Topeka State Hospital. His plumbing career began when he served as an apprentice with Mood Plumbing and Heating, which he followed with a twelve year job with Johnson and Beck Plumbing. From 1917 until 1932 M.E. Linton and W. A. Bass operated their heating and plumbing partnership at 601 Topeka Blvd.¹⁹ Bass and Linton had many contracts for heating and plumbing in the city's public buildings and schools including the 1927 Curtis Junior High School (NR, 2001) and the Washburn University Men's Dormitory (1922); several local businesses, as well as Topeka's Masonic Temple (1920).²⁰ They also installed the city's first "comfort station" (1917) – presumably a public restroom.²¹ Linton was elected water and light commissioner in 1929, 1931 and 1933.²² He died on May 15, 1953.

Casson Construction (1947)

Casson Construction Company was a multi-generational firm founded by John Hendry Casson (1878-1960) circa 1909.²³ Casson, born on February 23, 1878 in Illinois, moved to Topeka at a young age. In the early career Casson focused on masonry and brick work.²⁴ By the early 1920s Casson had expanded to general

¹⁵ Biographical information on Raymond A. Coolidge was taken from: "Coolidge, Raymond A." American Architects Directory, 3rd Edition. New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1970. 177. This information was also included in Elizabeth Rosin and Rachel Nugent. *University of Kansas East Historic District, Lawrence, Kansas, National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2014.

¹⁶ Watkins Home is a contributing building in the University of Kansas Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on 16 Apr 2013.

¹⁷ Philip W. Coolidge Obituary. Legacy.com. 6 Dec 2017, accessed on 13 Dec 2017 at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/cjonline/obituary.aspx?pid=187442307>.

¹⁸ *Topeka Daily Capital*. 9 Jan 1912. 8.

¹⁹ After they constructed the new building Bass and Linton operated out of one of the building's first floor retail spaces addressed at 505 6th Street. Walt Markley. "M. Everett Linton." *Builders of Topeka*. Topeka, KS: The Capper Printing Co. 1934.

²⁰ *Domestic Engineering and the Journal of Mechanical Contracting* 90 (Feb 1920) 417 and Brenda R. Spencer. *Curtis Junior High School National Register Nomination*. Washington, DC: National Parks Service, 2001.

²¹ *Domestic Engineering*, Volumes 81-82 (1917) No. 5, 182.

²² *Builders of Topeka*. 1934.

²³ The earliest advertisement found for Casson's contracting business was in the 5 Jun 1909 edition of the *Topeka State Journal*.

²⁴ Casson advertisement in *The Topeka State Journal*. 10 Jul 1909. 11.

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contracting.²⁵ During this time J.H. Casson partnered with Joe R. Morris.²⁶ By the mid-1930s Charles Joe Casson (1905-1953) had joined his father's firm as the only partner. John H. returned to the helm of the company when his son Charles died suddenly in 1953. John's grandsons Daniel and John took over the company after their grandfather retired. The firm is credited with building the Abundance of Life Church in 1938-39 (a Contributing Resource in the Holiday Park Historic District, Topeka, KS, NR, 2002), the Kansas Supreme Court Building, Grace Episcopal Cathedral (after a devastating fire in 1975), Drury and Fleming Place and the First Christian Church.²⁷ Casson Construction remains in business in Topeka today (2017).

There was a family connection between architect Coolidge and builder Casson. John Casson married Raymond Coolidge's niece.²⁸ Additionally Casson and Bass and Linton worked together on some projects including the 1922 school in Maple Hill and a two-story retail and apartment building at 17th and Kansas Avenue in Topeka.²⁹

Development at Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue

When the nine members of the Town Company formed the Topeka Association in 1854, they laid out one-and-a-half square miles of land on the south side of the Kansas River for the site of a town in the newly established Kansas Territory.³⁰ Topeka Boulevard formed the center line of the roughly eighty-block plat, filed in 1859. However, the commercial center of Topeka developed along Kansas Avenue almost immediately. Within a decade of the founding, commercial buildings lined the unpaved Kansas Avenue from the Kansas River south to Sixth Avenue, while Topeka Boulevard remained primarily residential. Topeka Boulevard, as the centerline of the plat, and Sixth Avenue were laid out as exceptionally wide streets, each 130 feet across.³¹ While the commercial corridor extended southward, the city initially began expanding westward. Residential subdivisions were platted and neighborhoods constructed west of the original town site. Sixth Avenue developed with a mix of residential resources and commercial nodes in response to the expansion of the city and the establishment of first a horse car line and then a streetcar line in the late 1880s.³²

Initially, small concentrations of commercial resources developed between residential areas. Commercial entities established at the substantial intersection of Topeka and Sixth avenues included drug stores, dry goods, and grocers, as well as restaurants, beauty shops, and dry cleaners.³³ These stores served the surrounding residential community rather than serving as a commercial center for the city as a whole. Late twentieth century commercial resources and parking lots filled in the lots between S. Kansas Avenue and Topeka Boulevard, emphasizing the separation from the downtown commercial center. An analysis of the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps illustrates the growth of the intersection of Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue. The 1889 maps, the first to cover this area, show one- and two-story commercial buildings

²⁵ *The American Contractor* 43. (Aug 1922). 54D.

²⁶ *The Topeka Daily Capital*. 13 Nov 1921. 6.

²⁷ John Logan Casson Obituary. *Legacy.com*. 29 Apr 2017, accessed on 12 Dec 2017 at <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/cjonline/obituary.aspx?pid=185134945> and "Topeka Builder John Casson Dies after Long Illness." *Kansas Construction Magazine* 13. No. 6 (Sept 1960) 65.

²⁸ Ancestry.com. *1910 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006. Census Place: Dodge Ward 2, Ford, Kansas; Roll: T624_439; Page: 14B; Enumeration District: 0045; FHL microfilm: 1374452.

²⁹ *The American Contractor* 43 (1922). 56, 58.

³⁰ Frye W. Giles. *Thirty Years in Topeka: A Historical Sketch*. Topeka, KS: Geo. W Crane & Co Publishers, 1886. 21. Google Books, available at: http://books.google.com/books?id=TxcVAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=frye+giles+thirty+years+in+topeka&hl=en&ei=ftmgTtrdJL_sQLy6TyDg&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=twopage&q&f=true (accessed 15 Dec 2017).

³¹ Elizabeth Rosin and Rachel Nugent. *South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District, Topeka, Kansas, National Register of Historic Places Nomination*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2012.

39.

³² *The Street Railway Journal Vol III (Aug 1887)*. No. 10. New York & Chicago, 688. Google Books:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=r4hNAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP803&dq=topeka+sixth+avenue+streetcar+line+horse+688&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjPhrCh8bVAhUn0YMKHZ6CuYQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=topeka%20sixth%20avenue%20streetcar%20line%20horse%20688&f=false> (accessed 15 Dec 2017).

³³ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and Polk's Topeka City Directories*.

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occupying three of the four corners of the intersection. The corner buildings are narrow and have two floors. A series of small one-story commercial buildings extend northward along the west side of Topeka Boulevard. Single-family dwellings along with several churches occupy the lots that fill the surrounding blocks. Large dwellings front Topeka Boulevard while modest dwellings front surrounding streets. The dense commercial blocks associated with the city's commercial center end at the east side of Van Buren Street, two blocks east. The 1896 and 1913 maps show little change from the late 1880s. As the popularity of the automobile increased in the 1920s, businesses related to vehicle servicing also sprang up along Sixth Avenue, including filling stations, repair shops, and auto parts stores. Purpose-built apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings with apartments, such as the nominated resource (in its original two-story mixed-use function) were constructed among the commercial establishments to provide a convenient residential alternative to the single-family dwelling. Many of the existing single-family dwellings that lined Sixth Avenue were subdivided into flats. By 1950, one- and two-story commercial buildings also defined the intersection of Tyler and Sixth avenues, one block west of the nominated property. By this time, the Casson Building had been expanded from two to four floors.

The intersection of Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue has remained a small commercial cluster. The construction of two additional floors and conversion of the second-floor apartments introduced a professional office function to this area. The surrounding commercial buildings retained their strictly retail functions oriented towards the needs of local residents. In the 1950s, a two-story modern office building was constructed at 627 Topeka Boulevard, designed to house professional offices, specifically insurance companies, similar to the Casson Building.³⁴ The blocks surrounding this intersection remain a mix of residential and commercial resources, particularly along Sixth Avenue.

The Corner Neighborhood Store Property Type

The Corner Neighborhood Store property type developed in response to the rapid expansion of a city or town.³⁵ Such expansion created a physical barrier between newly developed residential neighborhoods and established commercial centers. Enterprising business owners and developers capitalized on the demand for everyday goods and services by local residents. New mixed-use buildings were constructed in small concentrated areas to provide convenient access to groceries, beauty salons, and restaurants without traveling to the larger commercial center.

The Corner Neighborhood Store property type was defined by its location and function. Characteristics of the property type included occupying a corner lot, often on a street accessible from one or more street car lines. The building form was the one- or two-part commercial block with applied ornament typical of the period of construction. The scale of the Corner Neighborhood Store was typically small, between one and four stories in height. Retail or service functions occupied the first floor within one or more well-defined storefronts while residential apartments or offices occupied the upper floors.³⁶ Typical of two-part commercial blocks, architectural ornament on the exterior differentiated the functional areas of the building.

The tremendous growth Topeka experienced during the nineteenth century had slowed by 1900 when the population reached 33,608, up from 759 when the first census was taken in 1860.³⁷ Population expansion occurred again, with population rates rising thirty percent in the 1920s and in the post-World War II era. These two periods of population expansion align with physical growth of the city, and the construction and expansion of the Casson Building.

³⁴ *Polk's Topeka (Shawnee County, Kans.) City Directory 1955*. Topeka Room, Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library.

³⁵ The Corner Neighborhood Store property type was identified in Kansas City, Missouri as part of the "Historic Resources Survey Plan of Kansas City," prepared by City Planning and Development Department, Historic Preservation Management Division of Kansas City, Missouri, Thomason and Associates Preservation Planners, and Three Gables Preservation for the City of Kansas City, Missouri Landmarks Commission in 1982. The characteristics of this property type apply to resources in Topeka, Kansas as well.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Decennial Census, 1860-2010.

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The Casson Building exemplifies the Corner Neighborhood Store property type. Located outside the downtown commercial center along S. Kansas Avenue, the Casson Building occupies a prominent corner four blocks to the west at Topeka Boulevard and Sixth Avenue. When the first two floors of the building were built in 1927, a streetcar line connected residential subdivisions with downtown Topeka along Sixth Avenue. The Casson Building has a two-part commercial block form with minimal ornament that does not reflect the strong influence of a particular architectural style. The symmetrical front (east) facade facing Topeka Boulevard has four storefronts organized around the primary entrance to the upper floors. The secondary north facade facing Sixth Avenue has five storefronts for two retail spaces. While the four-story height of the building is unique to this property type, the first two floors clearly retain the architectural character and ornament that date to the 1927 construction date. Stone panels frame the storefronts and provide visual separation between the ground floor and upper floors. Stone beltcourses differentiate the second floor built in 1927, and the upper two floors that were added in 1947. The different color facade brick and window types also provide a visual distinction between the two construction campaigns. The Casson Building is significant for its size and for how it evolved in its mixed-use functions as a corner neighborhood store. The addition of the upper floors exhibits the evolution of the Casson Building from the small scale of the corner neighborhood store to the larger scale of an office building. The large size of the building, both in footprint and in height, reflected the prominence of the intersection. What began as a mixed-use retail and residential building was converted to retail and office space when the top two floors were added in 1947. The owners added a penthouse apartment in 1956 which brought the building to its current footprint and form.

Conclusion

The Casson Building reflects the commercial trends in the area, even leading the trends of the mid-twentieth century. The streetcar line on Sixth Avenue, initiated in the late nineteenth century, prompted the construction of the earliest commercial resources at the intersection with Topeka Boulevard. The lower two floors of the nominated building, constructed in 1927, replaced a narrow frame commercial building and a modest frame dwelling to dominate the southwest corner of the prominent intersection. The ground floor was designed to have multiple storefronts while the upper floor contained apartments. When the third and fourth floors were added in 1947, the building provided three floors of speculative office space. The building remained at or near capacity for much of its history, including periods of economic decline. The first floor retained its retail and service function with an appliance store, an auto service station, a restaurant, and a dry-cleaning business. Professional businesses, such as insurance agents and companies, architects, engineers, and attorneys occupied offices on the second, third, and fourth floors. The Casson Building retains the configuration, features, and finishes that convey its function and property type as a Corner Neighborhood Store that evolved into a speculative office building.

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<https://books.google.com/books?id=r4hNAAAAYAAJ&pg=PP803&dq=topeka+sixth+avenue+streetcar+line+horse+688&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjPhlrCh8bVAhUn0YMKHZ6CuYQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=topeka%20sixth%20avenue%20streetcar%20line%20horse%20688&f=false>.

"Topeka Builder John Casson Dies after Long Illness." *Kansas Construction Magazine* 13. No. 6 (Sept 1960) 65.

The Topeka Daily Capital. 9 Jan 1912, 14 Oct 1917 and 13 Nov 1921.

The Topeka State Journal. 5 Jun and 10 Jul 1909.

U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Decennial Census, 1860-2010.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): NA

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

1	<u>39.053414</u>	<u>-95.678724</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description

ORIGINAL TOWN: TOPEKA AVE LOTS 181-183-185
SECTION 31 TOWNSHIP 11 RANGE 16

Boundary Justification

The above description reflects the parcel on which the building is, and has historically been, located

11. Form Prepared By

An August 2017 PSIQ by Rachel Nugent, Rosin Preservation was the source of parts of the nomination.

name/title Brenda & Michelle Spencer

organization Spencer Preservation date December 20, 2017

street & number 10150 Onaga Road telephone 785-456-9857

city or town Wamego State KS Zip 66547

e-mail Brenda@SpencerPreservation.com

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Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Richard D. Kready, Pioneer Group, Inc.
street & number 404 SW 9th Street telephone 785-783-3385
city or town Topeka state KS zip 66612

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Photographs

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Casson Building

City or Vicinity: Topeka

County: Shawnee State: Kansas

Photographer: Brenda R. Spencer unless otherwise noted

Date

Photographed: 10 October 2017 unless otherwise noted

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 SW Casson Building from 6th Street east of Topeka Boulevard with full view of penthouse, 4-30-2018
- 2 NW Front and south facades from Topeka Boulevard
- 3 W Front/east facade
- 4 W Detail over central entry on east facade (dating to 1947 remodel by Casson)
- 5 S Detail of stone cornice band dating to 1947 addition of upper floors
- 6 S North and west facades from 6th Street looking south
- 7 S Detail of ground floor storefronts and upper windows on north facade
- 8 SE Storefront at northwest corner of ground floor fronting 6th Street and rear parking
- 9 E Rear/west facade
- 10 E Foyer at front/east entry
- 11 W Looking west from front entry to elevator in central lobby first floor
- 12 N Storefront commercial space fronting 6th Street on north
- 13 W Original casement windows with 9-light transom extant on rear/west facade of ground floor
- 14 N Looking up main stair from 1st floor
- 15 N Original wood doors and trim extant in some 2nd floor offices
- 16 W Interior windows extant in 2nd floor corridor at some offices
- 17 S Terrazzo floors extant in restrooms located in center core on each floor
- 18 W Original 1927 casement window extant on 2nd floor rear/west facade in offices
- 19 N Looking N in 3rd floor corridor with corridor windows extant (02-13-2018, Treanor HL Architects)
- 20 N Looking N in open office on 4th floor with original aluminum windows in place (2-13-2018, Treanor HL Architects)
- 21 E Looking east in penthouse
- 22 SW Original 1956 aluminum windows extant in penthouse

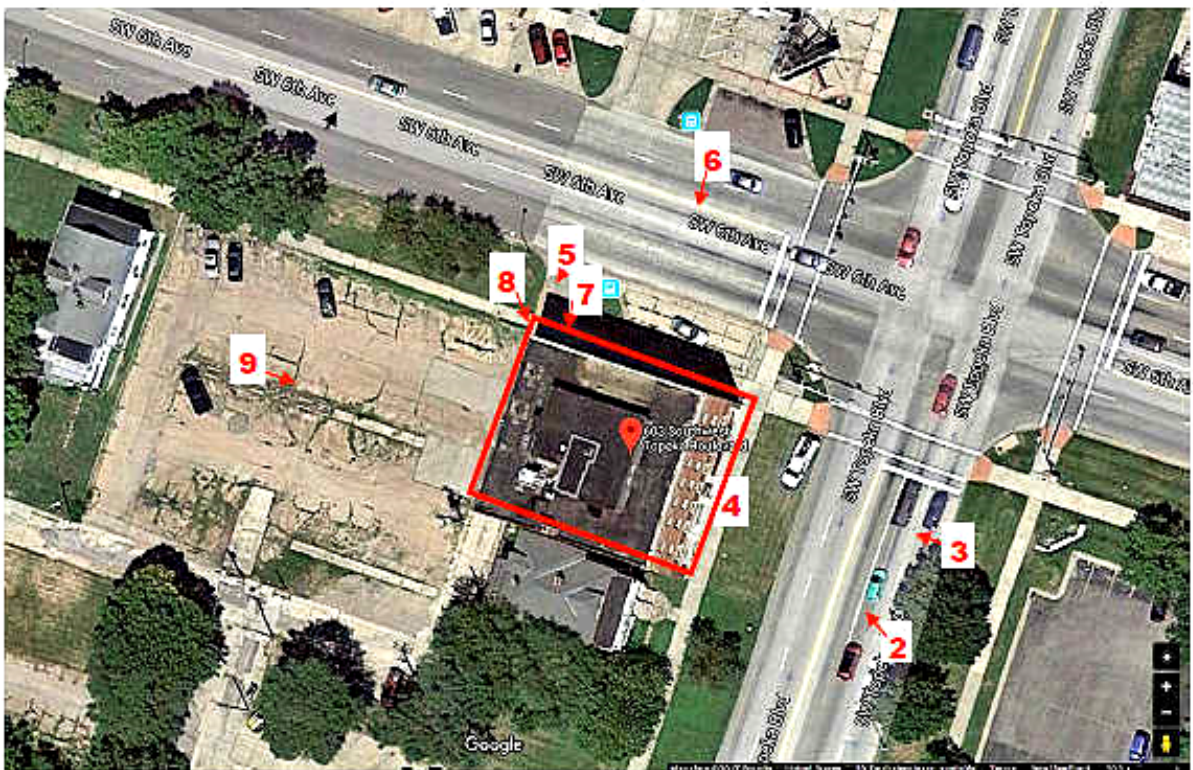
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Figures

- Figure 1. Context Map. Source: Google Maps 2017. Not to scale.
- Figure 2. Site Map. Source: Google Maps, 2017. Not to scale.
- Figure 3. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913 with 1934 and 1941 updates, Sheet 47
- Figure 4. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913 – Corrected to 1950, Volume 1, Sheet 34.
- Figure 5 – 1928 Advertisement for Bass and Linton Plumbing
- Figure 6 – ca. 1950 view of Casson Building with Blue Cross Blue Shield occupying upper floors

Photo Key



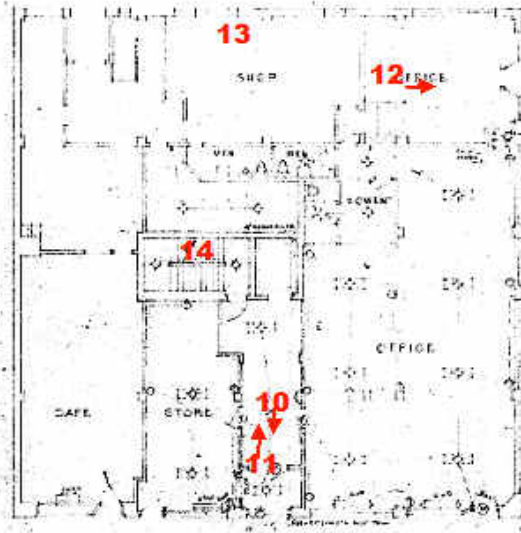
SITE

Baseplan downloaded at Google.com 2017
Aerial Image 2017

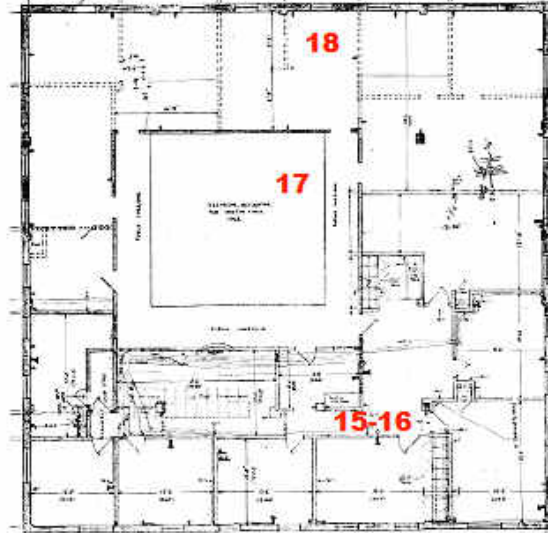
CASSON BUILDING
603 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS
PHOTO KEY—SHEET 1
Exterior Views

Casson Building
Name of Property

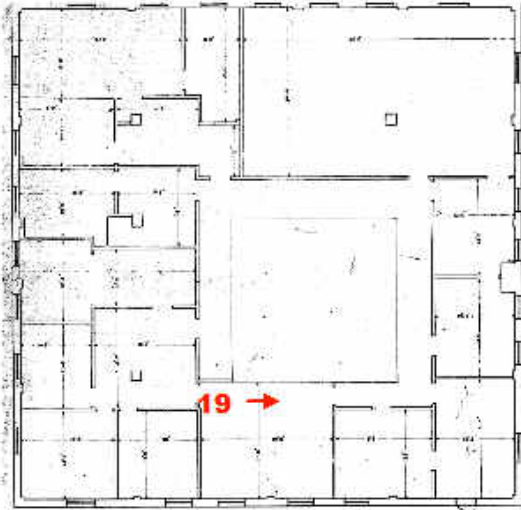
Shawnee County, KS
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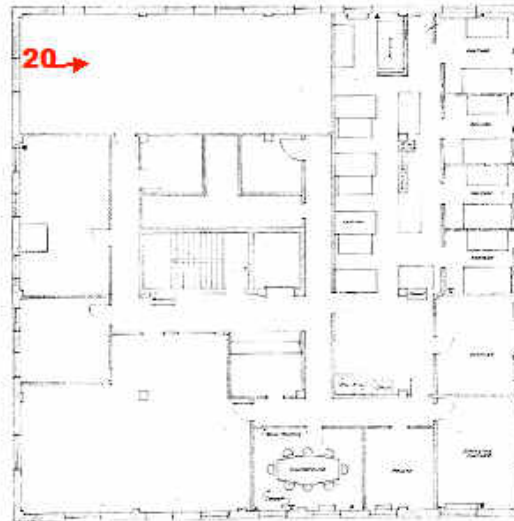
FIRST FLOOR



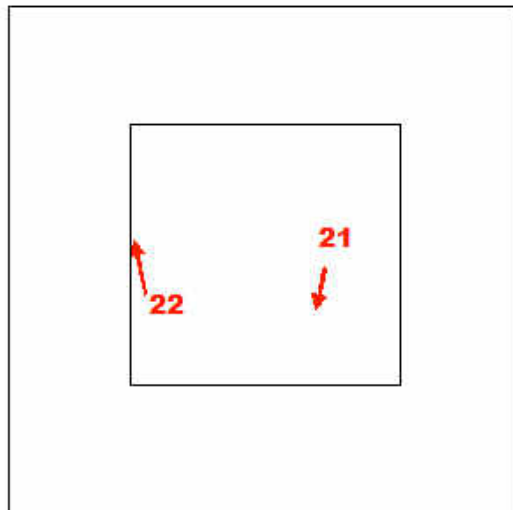
SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



FOURTH FLOOR



PENTHOUSE LEVEL

CASSON BUILDING
603 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, KS
PHOTO KEY—SHEET 2
Interior Views

Base plans compiled from available historic drawings for diagram only. The above plans do not accurately reflect existing conditions

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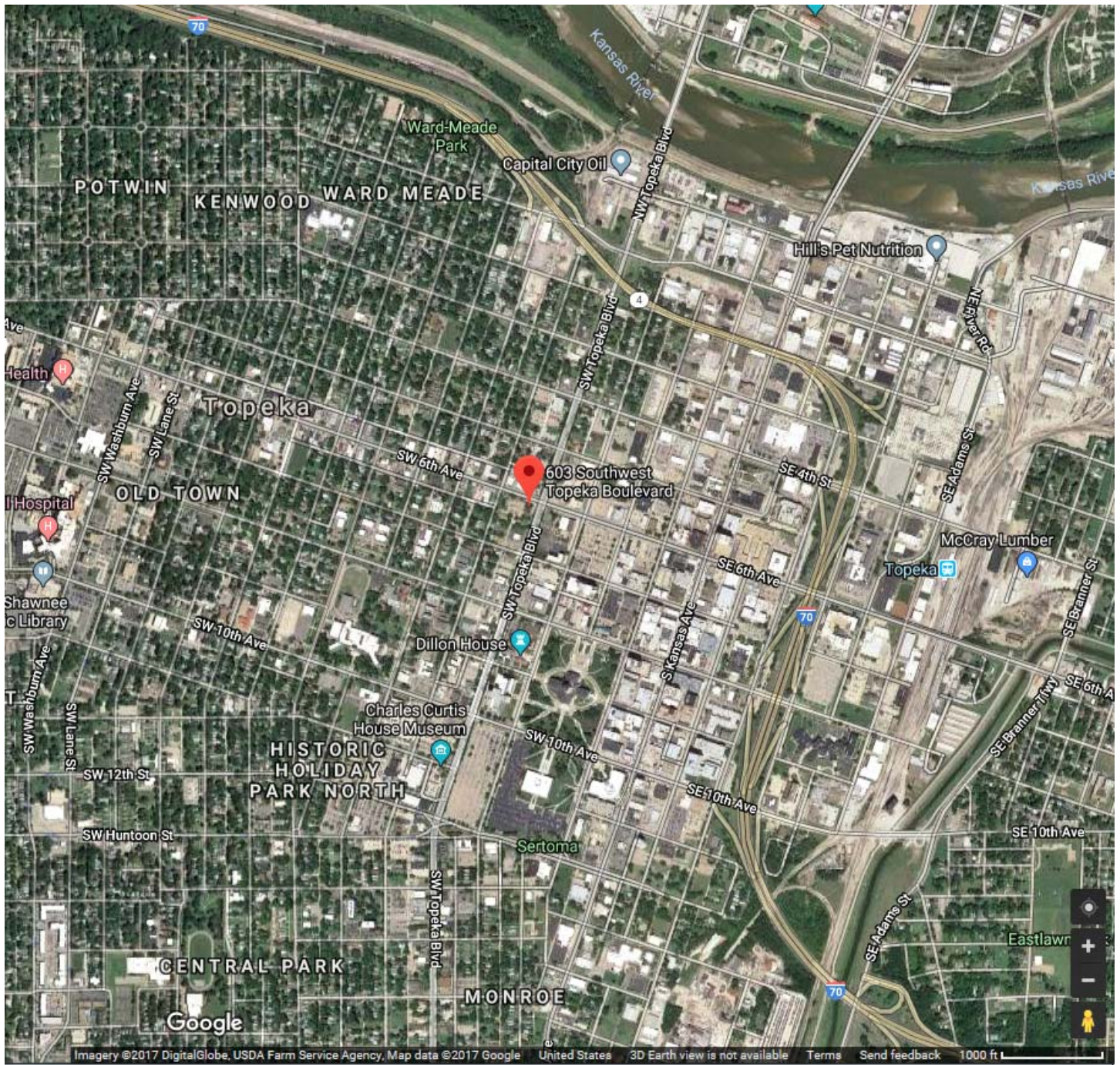


Figure 1 – Context – Downtown Topeka (Google Maps, 2017)
Casson Building
603 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, Shawnee County KS
WGS 84 Latitude 39.053414 Longitude -95.678724

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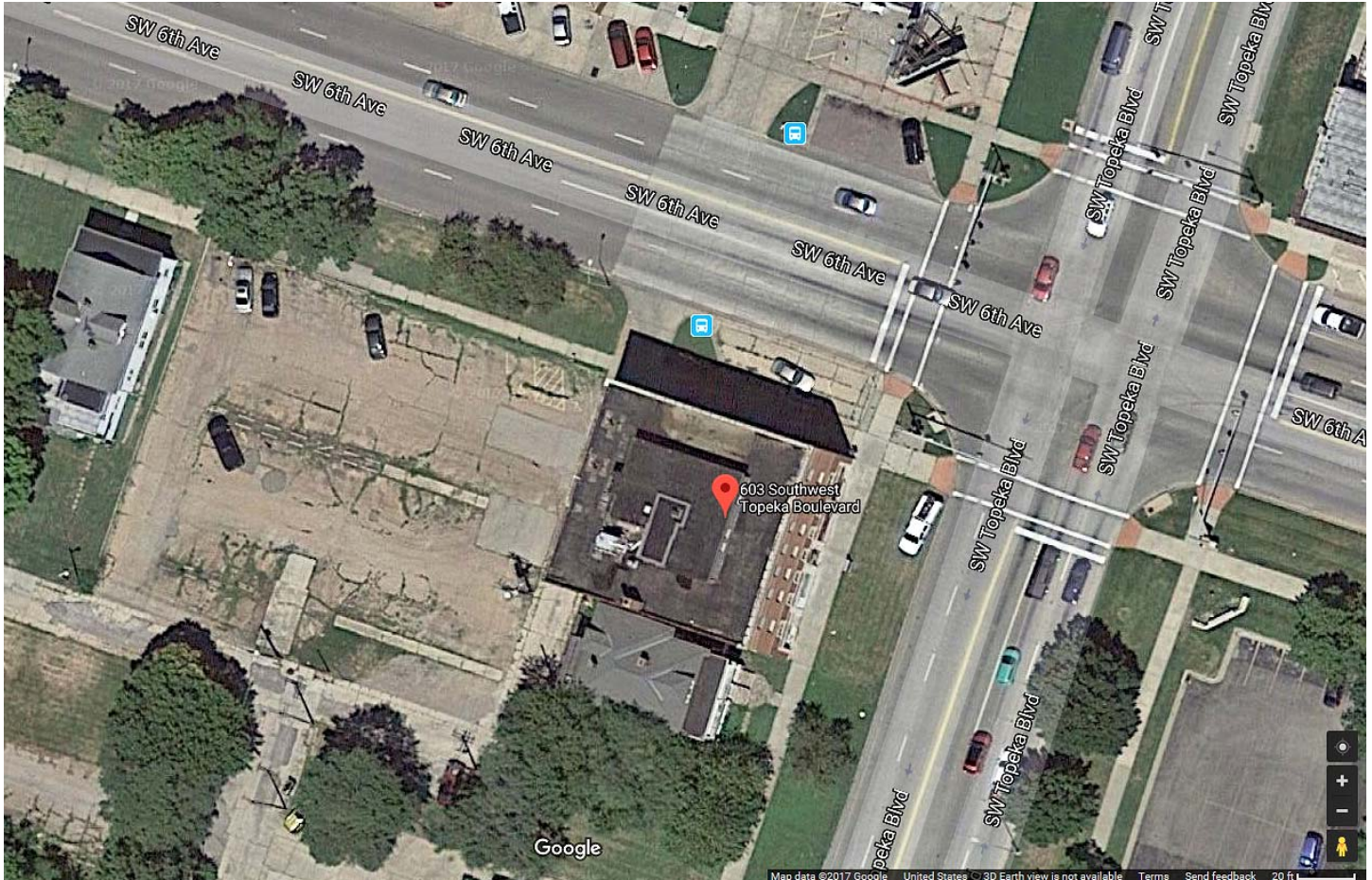


Figure 2 – Site (Google Maps, 2017)
Casson Building
603 SW Topeka Boulevard, Topeka, Shawnee County KS
WGS 84 Latitude 39.053414 Longitude -95.678724

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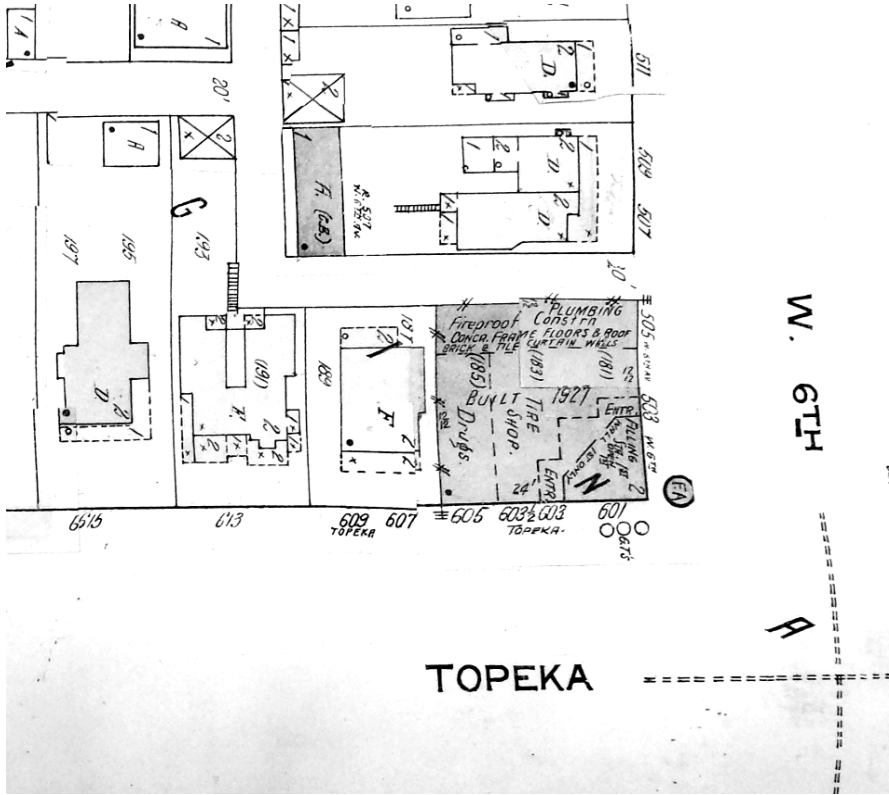


Figure 3 – Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913 with 1934 and 1941 Updates – Excerpt from Sheet 47 showing 1927 building extant in use as Filling Station, Tire Shop, Plumbing and Drug Store (Topeka Public Library)

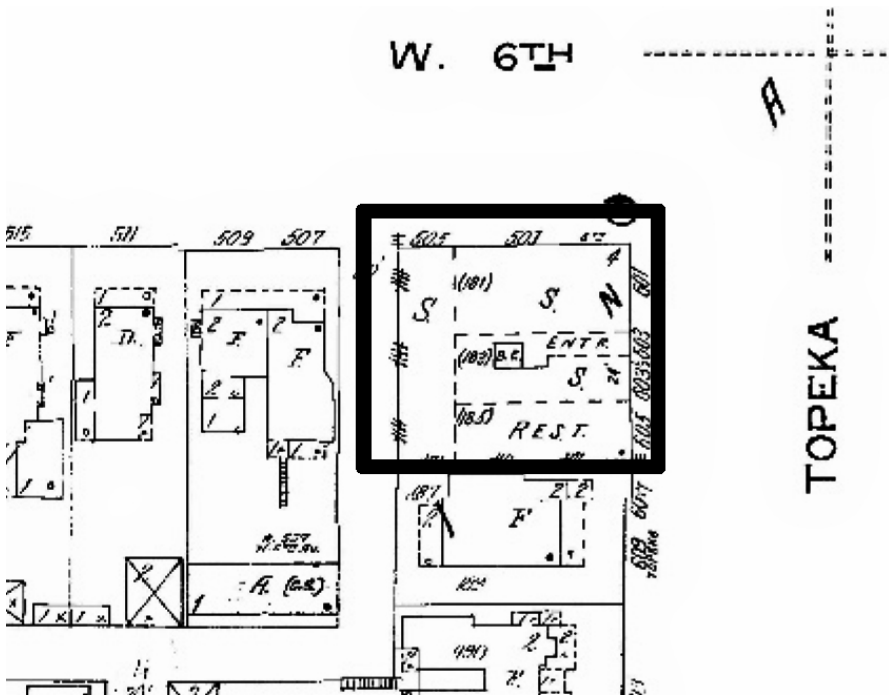


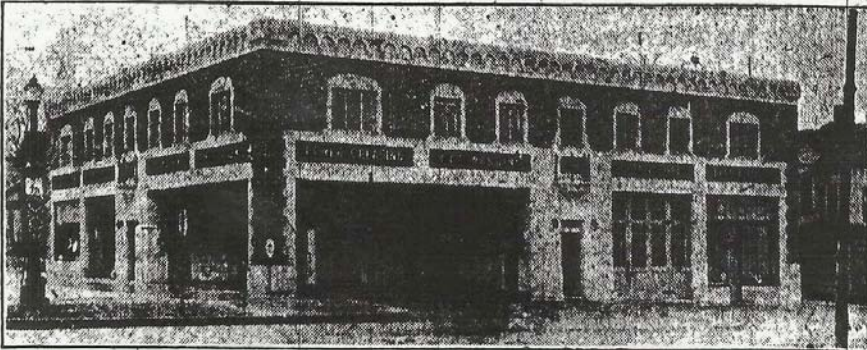

Figure 4 - Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1913 – Corrected to 1950, Volume 1, Excerpt from Sheet 34 showing 1947 building with 4 floors and 4 “stores” on ground floor with entry and center core matching current configuration (Kansas City Public Library).

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Tuesday, December 25, 1928.

A Merry Christmas
and
**A Happy
New Year**
to
Everyone



As we close our books on 1928 it is our hope that our service to the community during the last year has made for happier homes, healthier children and warm friends. Such has been and will continue to be our aim in life.

**BASS AND LINTON
PLUMBING CO.**
Plumbing—Heating—Ventilating
Bass & Linton Building
505 W. 6th St.

Figure 5 – Bass and Linton Plumbing 1928 Advertisement illustrating original two-story building

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Figure 6 – ca. 1950 view of Casson Building following 1947 expansion; upper floors occupied by Blue Cross Blue Shield but prior to addition of penthouse level in 1956 (Photo provided by realtor, original source unknown)