

**McPherson County Courthouse and Clock Tower** – 100 block of N. Maple. The cornerstone for this magnificent city landmark was laid on May 1, 1894, after the residents of McPherson County voted to build a new courthouse. Over the years, the courthouse has housed many activities in addition to the regular county offices, including, in early days of its organization, the local American Legion Post. The 105-foot tower housed a “dumb clock” for several years until the tower clock was added in 1908. The clock used to strike every half hour loudly enough to be heard over the entire city. In March of 1924, the cable broke and the weights dropped several floors. The clock was converted to electricity in 1948.

The McPherson County Courthouse is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

## Statue of General McPherson

– Memorial Park. The city and county of McPherson bear the name of the highest ranking Union officer to die on the battlefield during the Civil War, General James Birdseye McPherson. The equestrian statue that overlooks



Memorial Park was dedicated on July 4, 1917 in a ceremony that attracted an estimated 40,000 people. The statue was cast in standard government monument bronze and the base is formed of granite. A similar statue is located in McPherson Square, Washington, D.C., within sight of the White House. It was cast from a Confederate cannon captured at the battlefield.

## B.A. Allison Residence

– 220 S. Walnut. Considered one of the finest residences in the city in its day, this home was bought by B.A. Allison in 1892. Mr. Allison, when he came to McPherson in 1879, opened his own firm, the Allison Bros, and controlled a large share of the abstract business of the county. The company later merged into the McPherson County Abstract Company. He served in several positions during his years in McPherson, including four years as the president of the school board and several terms as a member of the city council. The Allison home was located in what was considered the elite area of town, which was the first to get electricity, sewers, and streetlights. The Allison home was always alive with activity. With a wife and six daughters, Mr. Allison referred to his home as the “ladies seminary.” Later, he called it the Union Depot because of all the people coming and going.



## Kuns-Collier House

– 302 S. Walnut. This magnificent Tudor Revival residence was built by Daniel F. Kuns in 1909. In 1891, at

the age of 21, Mr. Kuns and his brother, Noah, organized the Farmers and Merchants Bank in McPherson. Mr. Kuns served as president of the bank until it failed during the Depression. Dr. and Mrs. William J. Collier have owned the house since 1958. The house possesses large rooms, dark oak and mahogany woodwork, wainscoating, beamed ceilings, leaded glass windows, and original fabric wall coverings in the downstairs rooms. There are two living rooms, a library, a dining room, a breakfast room, and a kitchen on the ground floor. There are six bedrooms upstairs. The house is currently on the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

## Residence of Mrs. Alice Champlin

– 422 S. Walnut. The home dates back to 1886. Known as the Champlin home for many years, this house was designed in classic Victorian style. The two-story dwelling is constructed of wood siding with a limestone foundation. Rock for the foundation was quarried on the banks of a rock creek within the state. As was the trend with homes during this period, this one originally had three porches. Two still remain on the present structure.

## Charles Wheeler House

– 507 S. Walnut. Known as the Wheeler Mansion, this property was acquired by Charles Wheeler in 1889 and is thought to have been built by the Wheeler family.

Mr. Wheeler, one of the wealthiest men in the county, was recognized as an energetic, hard working member of the community. His brother's innovation led to a patent in the invention of the paper sack. He established a general hardware business at the corner of Main and Kansas. His store carried the usual farm and hardware implements, including a display of the finest stock of vehicles in the county – buggies, carriages and surreys. The home currently has two fireplaces. It was extensively remodeled in 2000. All windows and doors were replaced at that time, including antique glass.

## John D. Milliken Residence

– 517 S. Walnut. John D. Milliken, one of the most prominent attorneys and counselors of law in the state during the late 1800s, lived in this home. Mr. Milliken began his practice in McPherson in 1880. He was one of only nine lawyers in the state of Kansas during this period that belonged to the American Bar Association, and was also a member of the Kansas Bar Association. Mr. Milliken was also very prominent in the development of railroads in Kansas and Colorado. The town of Milliken, Colorado, near Greeley, was named after him and involved in his railroad development of the Denver, Laramie and Northwestern Railroad.



**The Bixby House** – 321 S. Maple. Built in 1879 by Dr. J.W. Charles, on block 103 of the Original Town Site of McPherson, the home was purchased by Henry H. Bixby in May of 1883.

Mr. Bixby, traveling by wagon through central Kansas selling Baker's Patent Medicines, arrived in McPherson in the late 1870s. With his brother, Dr. A.W. Bixby, he opened a drugstore, which was located in the 200 block of North Main. The home is built of soft brick painted red to keep out moisture. The white stone cross and crown insignia over the front door is a Knight templar Emblem of the Masonic Lodge, built into the house by Dr. Charles. The Bixby House is on the State Register of Historic Places.

## Congregational Church

– 224 S. Maple. The Congregational Church was one of three denominations deeded a lot when the town was first platted in 1872. The first church house, built in 1880, burned in 1924 and the current structure was dedicated a year later. Although the interior of the church has been updated over the years, very little of its exterior has been changed.

## McPherson Opera House – 223 S. Main.

This three-story architectural showpiece was built in 1888 at a cost of \$42,000. The Opera House attracted opera companies, vaudeville shows, lectures, symphonies, and plays. Important leaders of worldwide fame appeared at the McPherson Opera House, including William Jennings Bryan, William Allen White, and performers such as opera singer Jussi Björling and the Trapp Family Singers. A great cultural center, this structure was hailed as the finest opera house between Kansas City and Denver. The Opera House stage was one McPherson location where “orphan train” children found new families.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the McPherson Opera House re-opened in 2010, giving the community a new center for arts and culture.



Jim Griggs

## Linnea Square Park – 301 E. Kansas.

When the Original Town site plat was determined, this block was originally known as McPherson Park. The park was renamed Linnea Square Park in 1942 in honor of Carl Linnaeus, a Swedish physician, botanist, and father of the present system of tree classification used universally. Over 123 trees of 18 different kinds graced the park in the 1960s. A flyer that identifies the various types of trees can be picked up at the McPherson Convention & Visitors Bureau or the Municipal Center.

## McPherson's 1st Opera House –

SW Corner of Main and Marlin. The first Opera House in McPherson, opened in 1880, was located on the second floor of the McPherson Bank, built on this site in 1878. This 600-seat opera house had its own stage, scenery, and dressing rooms. It was used for local meetings, speakers, local plays, and traveling theatre companies in the 1880s. Local performances usually cost 10 to 30 cents, and traveling companies usually charged 50 cents to \$1 for admission. In 1887, it hosted a visit from the Kansas House of Representatives in the town's bid to become the capital of Kansas. The brick building that housed the bank and opera house, along with a change in the direction of the wind, was also attributed with helping stop a fire in 1883 from wiping out the entire town. The fire only destroyed one block, taking down more than a dozen businesses and costing the city an estimated \$60,000. With remodeling, few remnants, such as the dome in the ceiling, remain as a reminder of what was once the Opera House. The building currently houses a business and private residence.

## The Plaza – Corner of Main and Marlin.

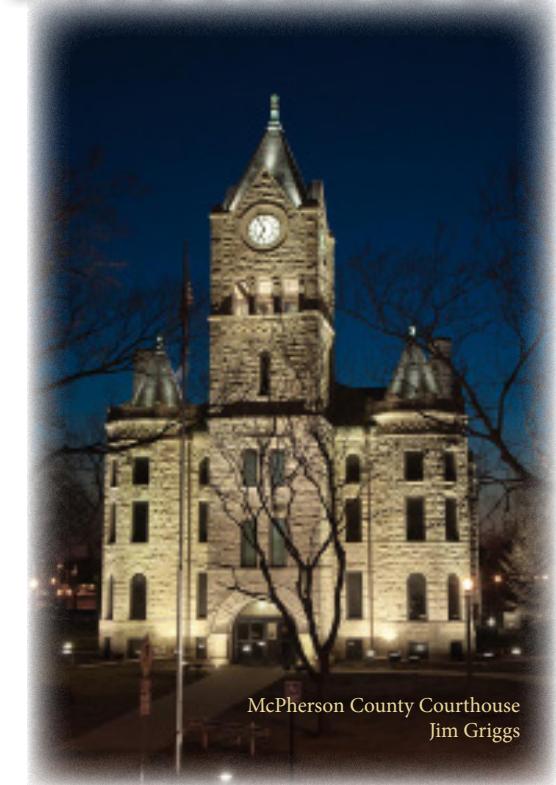
The Marlin Street side of the Plaza area is the site of what was once the McPherson Town Company House. This frame building housed the Town Company Office, the courthouse, the City Hall, the first school, and the first church, as well as a printing office. After all of the buildings on this block were destroyed in the fire of 1883, a large three-story brick hotel, named the Union Hotel, was built in this site. The hotel was later renamed the McCourt. This hotel was known for its Persian Room with its baby grand piano and crystal chandelier.

## John R. Wright House – 322 W. Marlin.

This Queen Anne Revival residence was built by John R. Wright in 1887. Mr. Wright, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio, was a Civil War veteran who lost his left arm in the war. In 1871, Mr. Wright and his wife homesteaded in McPherson County, where he engaged in raising wheat and livestock. In 1873, he was elected county clerk. He also served as postmaster and then became a partner in a firm that engaged in the sale of real estate, insurance, loans, and the practice of law. The appearance of the house is primarily as it was when built, except for the addition of glass panels on the small east porch. The interior of the house maintains its original floor plan and architectural features. There have been few alterations, including modernizing the kitchen and updating bathrooms with antique fixtures. The woodwork on the ground floor includes walnut, cherry, gum and oak. Three parlors, a dining room, and a kitchen grace the ground floor. There are five bedrooms upstairs. In 2002, the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places because of its historical significance with John R. Wright and its architectural significance as a Queen Anne Revival residence.



# McPHERSON



McPherson County Courthouse  
Jim Griggs

## HISTORICAL WALKING OR DRIVING TOUR



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