

MARTIN CITY, MO

Past, Present and Future

MARTIN CITY - THE PAST:

- **The town of Martin City, MO, at what is today 135th and Holmes Street, in Kansas City, MO was originally called Tilden.** It was platted Jan. 4, 1887 by E.L. Martin and John H. Lipscomb. The name was changed in 1895, probably because there was another town of Tilden in Dallas County, MO. Tilden was named for Samuel Jones Tilden, a presidential candidate who was defeated by Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876. (He lost by one electoral vote.)

- **The name Martin City came from Edward L. Martin.** Born in Kentucky. Martin came to Missouri in 1868 at the age of 26. He organized the Kansas City Distilling Company, and E. L. Martin & Co. wholesale liquor. He was Mayor of Kansas City in 1873 and served on the Board of Education from 1875 to 1896. He was a partner with Arthur Stilwell in the Kansas City, Pittsburgh & Gulf railroad, known today as Kansas City Southern.



- **In 1896 Dr. B. F. Brainard came from Wisconsin to be the first resident physician of Martin City.** He and his wife lived in a store front until they built a brick home and office just north of 135th Street. Their daughter Ada was born in that house in 1900. After completing her education, Ada joined her father's medical practice. Her father died in 1953, and she served as the physician of Martin City until her retirement. She died in 1996. The house still stands.

- **In the early 1900s, Martin City had a train depot, a hotel, a blacksmith shop and a general store to serve local residents.** In 1911 a bank was built to accommodate townspeople--by 1926 bank assets were over \$59,000. Like many banking services that declined because of the Depression, the Martin City bank (Right) closed in 1933. Since 1992 the building has been used by local businesses. David Belzer currently owns the building at 510 E. 135th St. which retains its charming front-porch entrance.



- **Martin City was full of activity in the roaring 20s.** During Prohibition, one resident recalled, there was drugstore in Martin City where customers could “get a little nip” at a window in back of the store. The dry goods store had a dance hall upstairs where children and adults could roller-skate. And during the 1920s, Martin City men organized a gun club and a basketball team.

There were about 250 inhabitants of the town in 1926. The ratio of instructors to children was much less than today: there were 80 students in the local school, but only two teachers.



- **The Methodist Church in Martin City was organized in 1888.** A church building was dedicated in 1890 on land donated by Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Martin. In 1929 the church basement was completed



and was used as a community gathering place for town meetings. Another addition was built in 1954. **During the tornado of 1957, 30 people survived during a church supper in the basement as the sanctuary was blowing away above.** The sanctuary was re-built and consecrated in 1959. When the congregation disbanded and the church was de-consecrated, Martin City Melodrama took over the building. They were there 16 years before moving to a shopping center.

• **In the early days, children from the Martin City area attended Mount Pleasant school, located about 128th and Wornall Road.** In 1910 Martin City built its own school. In 1955 the Martin City School was dismantled and a new construction was completed--built well enough to withstand the tornado of '57. Through the years the school grew to include 25 classrooms and 280 students. In 1999 a cafeteria, gymnasium and more classrooms were added to accommodate grades six through eight.

MARTIN CITY - THE PRESENT:

• **Today Martin City schools are part of the Grandview School District** with two large modern buildings and the latest in technology. At the beginning of the fall school year, 2009, there were over 300 children both in the elementary classrooms, and in the middle grades.



• **Today's modern Martin City Post Office, at 135th and Wornall Road, not only serves as the resource for postage and packages, it is an informal historical museum.**

A mural over the stamp counter depicts many of the buildings that stood in the town in days past. Throughout the rest of the post office are interesting photographs of people and places in early Martin City.



• **Martin City was annexed into the Kansas City, MO city limits in 1963 along with much of south Jackson County.** However, the residents and businesses of the community have continued to enjoy the small-town feeling. In addition to small, family-owned businesses, the residential district maintains its charm. Between 135th and Blue Ridge Boulevard there are farmhouses built in the early 1900s, post World War II bungalows and ranch-style homes from the 1980s. Most houses are on large lots with neatly maintained gardens and handsome old trees.

• **Retail ventures are quite diverse at the center of Martin City.** Although primarily known for its restaurants Martin City has antiques; beads and findings, florists, landscaping and gardening supplies; home improvement, golf, volleyball, baseball, and gymnastics, interior designers and fine furniture. Discount stores, supermarkets and home improvement stores are available nearby.



• **In January, 2005 over 70 of the business in the Martin City area joined together as a Community Improvement District (CID), levying a special sales taxes and property taxes to improve economic development.** Established by the Missouri General Assembly, approved by the City Council and administered by a Board of Directors, the CID encourages the owners of real property to coordinate their efforts for the benefit of the whole. There are over 28 CIDs in the metropolitan area including downtown Kansas City, Westport, 39th Street, Brookside, Waldo Area,

Red Bridge Shopping Center, Ward Parkway Center, Kansas City International Airport and at Bannister & I-435 to name a few.

- **The Martin City Community Improvement District was made possible by the support of Chuck Eddy, City Councilman for the Sixth District from 1999 - 2007;** and the hard work of Martin City business owners, Judy Thompson of Potter's Obsession, and Joyce Reichman of the former Country Liquors.

- **The South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce initially provided operational services.** Barbara Engel, then Executive Director of the South Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, served as the District Manager for the Martin City CID. She continues to serve as Manager since retiring from the Chamber in 2006. Debbie Van Noy serves as chair of the Board of Directors.

- **Jerry Smith Park is a well-kept secret near 139th and Holmes.** The former farm has 320 acres of woodlands and wildflowers; it contains the only remaining remnant prairie in the Metro area. A wood-chipped trail leads visitors through 40 acres of natural prairie growth that contains the largest population of eared false foxglove in Missouri. Nearby Saeger Woods and Smith Lake are also open to the public for hiking or fishing. Kansas City Parks & Recreation owns the property; Kansas City Power and Light Company employees help maintain the land.

- **Ozanam started as a home for boys in 1948.** Today, it is a treatment center serving adolescent boys and girls and their families. Counseling and therapeutic activities are held both on and off the campus at 421 East 137th Street, west of Holmes. Programs include therapies using horticulture, recreation and art to help children combat emotional disorders and substance abuse.

Ozanam was not named for the Ozarks like some people think: it was named in honor of Frederic Ozanam, a 17th century Frenchman known for his charitable deeds.

MARTIN CITY - THE FUTURE:

- **With funding from the CID and additional financial support and grants from Federal, State and City partnerships, Martin City has high hopes for the future.** Business owners are looking for new ways to enhance their historic community and surrounding area. The CID has participated in funding a 6th Council District Trails study with the intent of creating many more walking trails throughout the district and connected west to Kansas. BWR Engineers completed a Martin City Strategic Plan and the City of Kansas City Missouri completed an update of the Martin City Area Plan in 2008. Both documents are the plan of record on file with the city. These plans dictate land use and types of development for the area for decades to come.



- **An Urban Renewal Area Plan (URA) was established in 2009 allowing both residential and commercial property owners within the area district boundaries to be eligible for property tax abatement on qualified external rehabilitation and new construction on the property.** MC-CID is working through the Economic Development Corporation of Kansas City and the Land Clearance Redevelopment Authority to work with area property owners to improve appearances, attract new development and jobs to the area.

- **MC-CID is working with the City of Kansas City Missouri to utilize the New Market Tax Credit (NMTC) federal program.** The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC) Program was designed by Congress in December 2000 to attract private-sector capital investment into the nation's low-income areas to help stimulate economic growth and create jobs by financing community development projects and business expansion.

The program provides credit against federal income taxes for making qualified equity investments in investment vehicles known as Community Development Entities (CDE). The credit provided to the investor (either corporate or individual) totals 39 percent of the cost of the investment and is claimed over a seven-year period. The CDE's are charged with making investments into qualified projects or businesses in low-income communities.

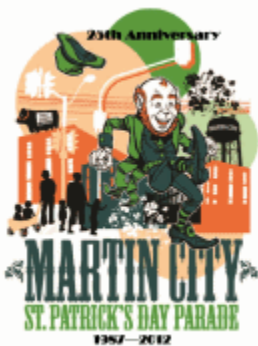
New Market Tax Credit details can be found on the web site under BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT.

- **Future Martin City improvements** will include landscaping many parts of the area, widening portions of 135th street, adding curbs, sidewalks, attractive streetscape, 55 parallel parking spaces and other amenities. Design work through the County Urban Road System (CURS) will be completed in 2012 with construction bids possible later in the year. Signature signage has been added to the CID at Holmes & Blue Ridge Blvd. and at the intersection of 135th Street and Highway 150 welcomes visitors as they enter the district from the east or the west. Trails are planned to wind through the area as part of the greater Metro Trail Plan.



- **The development of an inland port and inter-modal gateway along the NAFTA Highway is underway with the purchase of 800 acres at the former Richards-Gebaur airbase in summer of 2007 by CenterPoint Commercial Real Estate Properties.** Martin City keeps a watchful eye for the potential of new businesses and residents to the area. Martin City would become the amenity center for such a development.

- **In addition, Honeywell FM&T headquarters are in the process of relocating from the Bannister Federal Complex to a new location at Botts Road and Highway 150.** The 2000+ workforce would begin relocating to the new facility in 2013 and will occupy a 185-acre campus that include three to four buildings totaling more than 1 million-square feet. It would replace the current plant, which is in a sprawling facility on Bannister Road built in World War II to manufacture aircraft engines. The move is slated to be complete by 2015. Again there is the great possibility of that workforce also needing an amenity center such as Martin City and near-by housing creating a live/work community.



- **The Martin City Business & Community Association is planning special events in the area as a way of keeping the area alive and well, and in the hopes of attracting new business and new customers.** Plans include continued growth of the annual St. Patrick's Day Parade. The first parade was held in 1987 with five vehicles. In 2012 will be the 25th Anniversary celebration. We are known as "The biggest little fun parade in Kansas City" and had grown to include over 80 groups of horseback riders, bag pipers, cloggers, Shriners and local businesses. The parade is held in "downtown" Martin City the weekend before St. Patrick's Day. The area sees 20,000+ visitors annually.

- **Holiday Business after Hours are held around district at various businesses.** In time, Christmas in Martin City, recreational events around local sports businesses: golf, gymnastics, baseball and volleyball could be a reality.

- **The sky is definitely the limit with the new Community Improvement District, a political subdivision of Kansas City, Missouri, in place. Dedicated leaders, a consistent revenue stream, master planning for a new Corridor Plan, numerous partnerships, vision and determination will make this area a must-see destination for years to come.**



Written by:

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