

Mia Waters

Fabric: Downtown Lawrence

Unfamiliar Agent: Colonel Edridge

<https://unmistakablylawrence.com/explore/itineraries/history/block-block/>

I am Colonel Shalor Eldridge, arriving in Kansas City on January 3rd, 1855. I left New England with the New England Emigrant Aid Society to establish Lawrence, Kansas to have a stronghold to have Kansas come into the union as a free state. With this goal in mind, we have suffered many battles with the bushwackers from the Missouri side. From our settlement of Lawrence, it marks the beginning of Bleeding Kansas. These political foundations of Lawrence, Kansas are still seen strongly in 2021 through the history and the architecture.(Synchronic)

Soon after arriving and after the Kansas - Nebraska act, which reestablished the boundaries of slave trade, I established the American House as the headquarters for the Free-State. And in early 1856 I founded the Free State Hotel (later known as the Eldridge Hotel) as a first class hotel seated in the heart of Lawrence. Massachusetts Street was established as the central axis of Lawrence with many stores being built to flank the road.(Texture) Many of those buildings were rebuilt to still stand in 2021, keeping Mass St as the representative center of Lawrence though it is not the actual geographic center anymore. For times in 1855, the stores that drew people in were meat markets, print shops, and tack shops. Horses and carriages can work their way up Mass (Connected) and complete their daily errands, posting their horses on the sides along the way. (Rhythmic) Storefronts evolved with the times into places like the Kansas University bookstore (KU being founded in 1865), hardware stores, banks, and pizza joints. In 2021, some stores like the Freestate Brewery, and the Newspaper headquarters have not changed for the past 20 years but some places are having turnovers every year.(Diachronic / Synchronic) The locations with the stronger historical ties to Lawrence's history have remained more steadfast, especially the Eldridge Hotel.

I love the Eldridge hotel, and that persisting love can be seen through the architecture today even after the many renditions the hotel has been through after several renovations and three complete rebuilds. The hotel was first built in 1855, opening in 1856. The doors were not open for long because on May 21, 1856 Sheriff Samuel J. Jones led pro-slavery forces from Missouri, raiding Lawrence. Jones aimed his cannons at the Free State Hotel, and burned it to the ground. I rebuilt the hotel in 1857, filled with

vengeance. After the first rebuild costing \$80,000 I vowed to not only to continue to rebuild the Free State Hotel, but to add a story with every rebuild. (Synchronic) The Free State Hotel stands proud at four stories instead of the original three.

In 1861, Jim Lane led our Unionist forces of the Kansas Brigade to raid Osceola, Missouri destroying the city of 20,077 residences down to just a few houses. In retaliation, William Quantrill, razed Lawrence with the battle cry “never forget Osceola.” From Quantrill’s Raid, they killed 180 men and boys, and demolished the Free State Hotel yet again. I rebuilt the hotel yet again (Synchronic), and followed my vow to add a story every time I have to rebuild this hotel after being burned down by bushwackers. This is also the birth of the motto “from ashes to immortality” following the image of a phoenix rising from the ashes. I also established a daily stage line (connected) from Kansas City to Topeka, Lawrence to Leavenworth, and Independence, Missouri, to Weston, Missouri.

I was very busy after 1867 and built other historical landmarks (Connected): in 1857 I built the old Broadway Hotel in Kansas City (now the Coates House) in 1871 the Eldridge House in Coffeyville, and in 1872 the Otis House at Atchison. I was politically active with the efforts of keeping Kansas a free state. In 1868 I was appointed quartermaster-general by the Kansas Legislature. In 1869 I was elected county commissioner of Douglas County, and in the same year I was elected city marshal of Lawrence. I also served as the second Lieutenant for the Second Kansas Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War for six months. Then, in 1863, President Abraham Lincoln appointed me as a paymaster in the United States army which I did for a year. I dedicated most of my life to these efforts and after having two wives and seven children, I died on January 16, 1899 at the age of 82. However, my spirit still lives on in the Eldridge Hotel, on the 5th floor, in room 506 (Synchronic).

Similar to the residence of Downtown, Lawrence I overlook the bustling Mass street from above (common). Back in my days, the main point of congregation was just the main north-south axis of Mass street. The street was wide and open for the multitude of horses and carriages (Texture). Now, Mass street is filled with foot traffic. Though cars can drive down Mass street, everyone knows to avoid it because the space is accommodating for the pedestrians with a slow speed limit and many stops. With the evolution of Lawrence, the horizontal axes, defining the blocks, running east-west, became more important with the (mainly westward) expansion of the city. (synchronic)

The streets flanking Mass street, Vermont to the west and New Hampshire to the right, became more important because of the parking lot access (Texture). Our horses never needed to be tied up for long periods of time, nor did we even walk away from them for long. The ties out front on Mass were just fine. With the rising use of cars, the incorporation of the connecting back parking lots were essential to keeping up with the congregation of mass street.

Buildings accommodate these changes too, creating some openings in the wall-like facade of buildings on Mass to allow more flow into Mass street.(Texture) Some buildings also utilize their old architectural features like bank vaults as unique attractions, and avoiding doing expensive renovations, as well as tarnishing the historical value of the buildings.(Diachronic) Though the Eldridge hotel was torn down in 1985 and completely rebuilt because it was dilapidating, the first floor window facade still airs to the original and the overall style still has that boxy, old style. (Diachronic)

Like the Eldridge Hotel, South Park was established in 1854 when the first American settlers came. It originally spanned eight blocks, and was then separated into Lafayette Park, Hamilton Park, Washington Park and Franklin Park. August 31, 1910 the Roosevelt fountain was erected at the intersection of New Hampshire and 9th, next to a lively stable.(Explicit) But, as the use of automobiles rose, the fountain became a hazard, causing many accidents (Uncommon), and was moved to Robinson Park, and the people vowed to protect it. The fountain was later moved to where it sits today, next to the South Park gazebo.

Mass street has been the center of Lawrence since its founding. It continues to be a central hub while retaining its rich history by subtly evolving the architecture to fit the needs of the people (synchronic). Traditional facades have been retained while necessary additions of breaks in the buildings and paths to the back parkings lots were added.

I worked hard to make Kansas a free state, upholding abolitionist values, and the retention of our bloody history is remembered through the people and the architecture. My vengeance lives in the 5th floor of the Eldridge Hotel, sometimes referred to as the portal to the underworld. (Synchronic) I proudly observe Kansan's fighting spirit, peacefully protesting downtown. I get to look out my window of room 506 to a street filled with flyers on the buildings and spray paint on the street saying Black Lives Matter. (synchronic) And I get to see drunk Kansas University students stumbling around at night. Occasionally, I

interact with ghost hunters trying to communicate with me after I accidentally knock over a plant, or shut a window too loudly.