

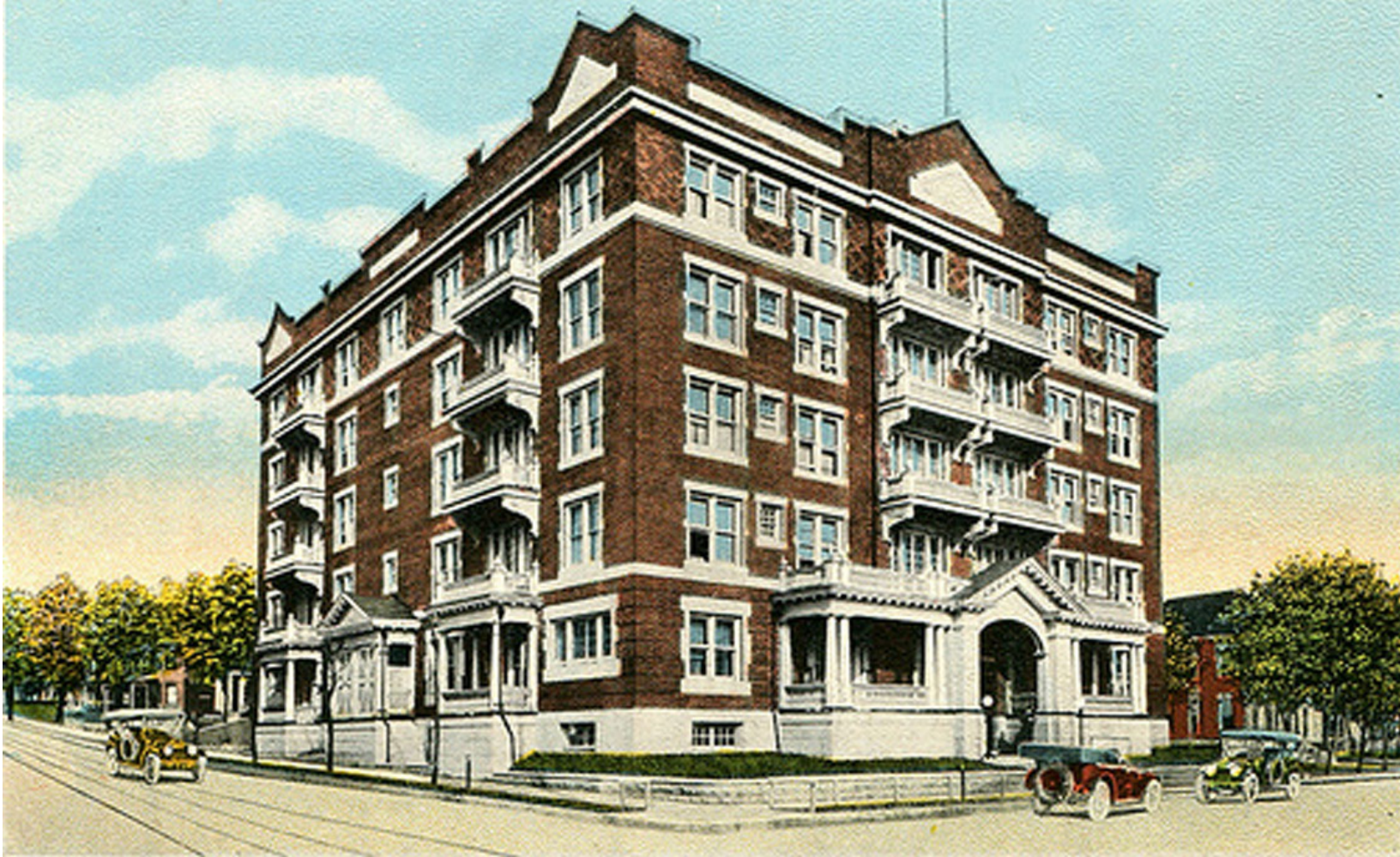
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THE



OLIVIA





The Olivia had a well-deserved reputation as the “handsomest apartment house in the West.” Arthur E. Bendelari, a civil and mining engineer from Canada, moved to Joplin during the mining boom. He commissioned architect Austin Allen and the contracting firm Dieter and Wenzel to construct this 5-story, \$150,000 masterpiece. The structure, begun in February of 1906, opened in October that same year. The Joplin Globe lauded it as Bendelari’s “monumental testimonial to the universal confidence in Joplin’s future.” The newspaper reporter could not find enough superlatives to



Arthur E. Bendelari

adequately describe the Olivia, boldly claiming that “nothing more elegant, more stylish, more convenient has ever been erected in Joplin.” Arthur E. Bendelari had a reputation for being a well-liked charmer. He owned one of the town’s first automobiles, and he would race anyone anytime, especially if it involved wagering. He named the Olivia after his mother who was never able to see the beautiful building that carries her name. Decorated in “Pompeian fashion” the public spaces of the Olivia sparkled with solid Italian marble. The lobby decor impressed all who crossed the threshold where mosaic tiles spelled



***You Know She Has Prepared
Your Thanksgiving Dinner
For Years.***

The pleasure has been all your own. Why not entertain her this year with one prepared by the skilled culinary workmen at

The Olivia Restaurant
4th and Moffet Ave.

We direct your especial attention to our service.

A La Carte .

Each article prepared as you may order it, and served by versed colored waiters.

Dinner at noon Thanksgiving day.

W. G. NICKELS, Mgr.



out “Olivia.” Passing through the elaborate rotunda, visitors entered the reception room, finished in old ivory and lit by skylights and a large leaded glass window with the name “Olivia “ expertly crafted in multi-colored glass. A highly polished oak staircase spiraled up from the lobby, connecting all five floors. Electric elevators, both passenger and freight, also provided easy access to all parts of the building. A uniformed attendant provided 24-hour elevator service. The red brick Olivia comprised 34 one and two-bedroom apartments, for a total of 110 rooms. Some of the larger apartments had almost 2,000

The East Room
At the Olivia Restaurant is
Open for Service

The fellows who do not wish to take meals in the main dining room are invited to use our East Room. You can smoke here. Those who have service in the main dining room can, on request to the waiter, have their coffee served in our East Rooms and enjoy their smoke with it.

Open from 9 a. m. to midnight service. Table d'hôte and à la carte, 6:30 to 9 a. m., 12 to 1:30 p. m., 6 to 8 p. m. Service between regular meal hours à la carte.

Olivia Apartments
FOURTH AND MOFFET.



square feet of living space. All of them featured built-ins, fireplaces, marble bathrooms with claw-foot tubs, and every labor-saving device known at the time. Tenants enjoyed bright airy rooms with French doors opening onto private balconies. A roof garden overlooked the city, affording spectacular views in all directions. On clear days, one could even see Webb City. Trolley lines ran down 4th Street, right next to the building, taking residents wherever they wanted to go. A prominent feature of the Olivia was its 5th floor eateries. The Olivia employed a world-class chef, who affirmed that the kitchen's arrangement and equipment was unrivaled by any hotel in the West. The attractive dining room, with its dark oak floor and 6-foot high quarter-sawn oak paneling, was flooded with light from massive windows on three sides. Above the oak wainscot, hand painted murals decorated the 12-foot high walls and ceiling surfaces.

Large oak tables and leather-upholstered oak chairs furnished the area, which totaled 5,000 square feet, including the kitchen. For those who preferred less formal dining, the “grill room” also on the 5th floor, offered broiled meats and prompt service. It, too, was decked out with 6-foot high oak paneling, marble baseboards, and decorative painting on the ceiling. The eateries were open to the public as well as to tenants of the building. The Olivia’s basement housed further amenities for its occupants. Tenants could play billiards or pool in the game room, get groomed in the barber and manicure shops, or grab a quick bite to eat in a smaller grill room. Unfortunately, the basement was also the scene of a horrific tragedy on January 12, 1908, when a gas explosion killed Marvin Reynolds, the building’s 20-year old night clerk. The mighty blast, which occurred just after midnight on a snowy night, seriously injured Mr. and Mrs. John F. Stevens who were asleep in their first floor apartment on the northeast side. The explosion pulverized heavy oak furniture, stripped plaster from the walls, reduced the floor to toothpicks, and blew out windows of the





Olivia and nearby houses. The railing of the front veranda was blown into the street. Since inspectors found no serious structural damage to the Olivia, Bendelari rebuilt as soon as possible.

From shadow creatures to full body apparitions; nearly every room of this sleeping giant has some history of paranormal happenings. By the late nineteen sixties The Olivia Apartments had changed from first class housing to a dilapidated building in need of major repairs to avoid the fate of so many other Joplin landmarks. The grand apartments that were once occupied by the who's who of Joplin were now home to people from

all walks of life. When the Methodist church across the street built a new expansion they put a giant cross on the wall outside The Olivia as a way to minister to their wayward neighbors. The Olivia operated as an apartment building for 100 years; from its grand opening in 1906 until it was closed for renovation in 2006. Visitors to the building report feelings of dread on the fifth floor in the grand hall and in the basement near where the explosion happened. Digital recorders can be used to capture the spirits voices in every room throughout the building and remnants of an argument that happened long ago can be heard in the hallways on the third floor. Unexplained footprints that seem to appear



out of nowhere can be seen in the settled dust on the second floor. Former tenants tell stories of Ouija Boards, Séances, Witchcraft, gangsters, drugs, and homosexual behavior happening in the building at different times since the sixties.

Whether it was the cast iron pipes of the buildings radiator system creaking or the cabana doors rattling as wind blew in through the balcony, people have been hearing unexplained sounds in the night at The Olivia for a long time.

