

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JAN 23 1980
DATE ENTERED	JAN 23 1980

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Dr. A. O. Thomas House

(BF05-136)

AND/OR COMMON

Thomas-Swan House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2222 9th Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Kearney

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Third

STATE

Nebraska

CODE

31

COUNTY

Buffalo

CODE

019

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Kearney State College

STREET & NUMBER

905 West 25th

CITY, TOWN

Kearney

VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Buffalo County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Kearney

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey

DATE

On-going

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The A. O. Thomas house is situated in a residential neighborhood in Kearney (1970 pop. 19,350), one block south of Kearney State College. Constructed of concrete blocks, the house depicts the Neo-Classical style of architecture which gained popularity in Nebraska after 1900. Notable features of the house, which was originally unpainted, are the two-story Corinthian columns supporting the pedimented porch roof and the brackets which provide simple ornamentation under the eaves. The hipped roof, covered with wooden shingles, features flared eaves and is truncated on the main portion of the house. A gabled roof extends over the frontal porch. Dormer windows penetrate the roof on three sides. The full frontal porch (east facade) extends around the house along the north facade to a side door which originally was protected by a one story porch. The interior floor plan of the house is a modified four over four room situation with a two story rear wing.

A one story, two stall, modern garage is situated behind the house.

About 1915, the house was sold to Laura Elliot who began to rent out portions of the residence. The Harold W. Swan family purchased the property in 1932 and in 1954 restored the house to a single family dwelling. The building is presently being sold to the Kearney State College Alumni Association who wish to preserve the house and use it for office space, meetings and receptions.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES     1906

BUILDER/ARCHITECT     G. A. Berlinghof

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Dr. A. O. Thomas was a very significant figure in the development of educational institutions in Nebraska. This house serves as a tangible reminder of Thomas, who did much to promote and encourage academic advancement in the State.

August O. Thomas (1863-1935), an Illinois native, received his undergraduate education in western Iowa. After earning his Doctor of Philosophy degree, he migrated to Nebraska in 1891 to serve as principal of the Cambridge Public School in Furnas County. Thomas served 10 years in various public school systems in the State and then in 1901, he became Superintendent of the Kearney City Schools. While serving in this position, Thomas was elected the first president of the Kearney State Normal School, now Kearney State College.

The college was established in 1903 by an act of the Nebraska legislature. The city of Kearney then presented the school with 25 acres of land and construction soon began on an academic building. Classes commenced with a summer term in 1905.

Kearney State College was given excellent guidance in its formative years by Dr. A. O. Thomas. In 1906, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction reported that during Kearney College's first year, enrollment broke all records of previously established Normal Schools in the United States.

The Nebraska State Senate and House committees visited the school in 1911 and praised Thomas and his administration. The Senate committee reported that "the management and superintendency of this school is of such a high order and so much superior to many other places we visited that we feel it is our duty to compliment the officials in charge" the House Committee stated that "Mr. Thomas could well be set up as an example to some other state Superintendents." During Dr. Thomas' administration enrollment increased from 892 to 1430 students.

Thomas served as president of the college until 1914 when he became Nebraska's Superintendent of Public Instruction. In 1917, Dr. Thomas accepted a similar position in Maine. In 1923, Thomas was one of the founders of the World Federation of Education, now the World Confederation of the Teaching Profession.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

UTM NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Quadrangle Name: Kearney

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 4	4, 9, 2, 0, 4, 5	4, 5, 0, 5, 1, 0, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property is situated on lot 1 and the north 1/2 of lot 2 in block 2 Crawford's Add. to Kearney

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Janet Jeffries Spencer, Cultural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

January, 1980

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

402/471-3270

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Marian W. Knott*

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*W. Ray Luce*

DATE

*2/28/80*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *William H. Brashaw*

DATE

*2-26-80*

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The Kearney State College campus now includes a total of 28 buildings and the enrollment stands at over 5,000 students.

George A. Berlinghof (1862-1944), designer of the A. O. Thomas house, was a very prominent Nebraska architect of German nativity. He was educated at the Polytechnic School of Darmstadt in the 1870's. In 1881, he established his residence at Omaha and worked as a member of the prestigious architectural firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie. From 1898-1906, Berlinghof practiced architecture (see NRHP Beatrice City Library, Gage County) successfully on his own in Beatrice and then moved to Lincoln where in 1907 he was named State Architect. Berlinghof is responsible for the design of many state building projects, several academic structures throughout the State, including the original building at Kearney State College, courthouses in several states and numerous residences.

The A. O. Thomas house in Kearney was built in 1906 immediately after Berlinghof completed the first building on the Kearney State College campus. The house is an excellent and significant example of the Neo-Classical Revival Style of architecture.

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Holmgren, Philip S., A. O. Thomas Biography, unpublished mss., 1979.

Jenkins, Charles, Fifty Years of Progress, A History of Kearney State Teachers College, unpublished mss., 1955.

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McBrien, J. L. Nineteenth Biennial Report of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nebraska. Hammond Printing Co., Fremont, Nebraska, 1906.

Nebraska Legislative Council, Nebraska Blue Book, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1978-79.