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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name St. John the Divine Catholic Church

other names/site number Metropolitan Avenue United Methodist Church; KHRI: 209-2190

2. Location

street & number 2511 Metropolitan Avenue not for publication

city or town Kansas City vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Wyandotte code 209 zip code 66106

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Patrick J. Pether
Signature of certifying official

8-20-13
Date

DSHPO
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

Van Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

10-9-13
Date of Action



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240

October 17, 2013

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically entered in the National Register of Historic Places
on: October 9, 2013

This is due to the fact that there was a lapse in appropriations by Congress and our offices were closed from October 1-16, 2013. "Nominations will be included in the National Register within 45 days of receipt by the Keeper or designee unless the Keeper disapproves a nomination" (30CFR60.(r). If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day.

The documentation is technically sufficient, professionally correct and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation. Thus, this property is automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL/
Late Gothic Revival

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: ASPHALT

other:

Narrative Description

Summary

The St. John the Divine Catholic Church building is a gable-front Gothic Revival structure, two stories in height, located at 2511 Metropolitan Avenue in the Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, Kansas. The building, oriented to the north, consists of a gabled sanctuary on the east, a northwest three-story stair tower and a southwest addition built to house an office, parish hall and residence. The 1887 building is of frame construction veneered with red brick. The foundation is painted stone and the roof is clad with asphalt shingles.

The building began in 1887 as the Metropolitan Methodist Church, a frame chapel. The building was severely damaged in a 1903 flood. Restoration and renovation took place from 1903 to 1909. The church achieved much of its current appearance between 1909 and 1913, when it was substantially remodeled, raised to add a basement and veneered with red brick. The building was sold to the Catholic Diocese in 1937 and became St. John the Divine, a significant presence in the Mexican-American community of Argentine. The building retains a high degree of integrity in form, placement and materials, despite later additions and its current condition. It is easily recognizable as a Late-Gothic Revival church, prominently located on Argentine's main thoroughfare.

Elaboration

St. John's primary **north façade** consists of an east gable, a central stair tower and a west office building added in 1951. The east gable has a central stained glass window set within a brick Gothic arch. The window has a stone keystone, springer stones and a stone sill. The prominent central portion of the window from Mexico contains an image of the Virgin of Guadalupe topped by individual vertical stained glass windows and bordered by double-hung stained glass memorial windows.¹ Double-hung Gothic sidelight memorial windows surround the large window. The upper portion of the west sidelight is boarded over. A set of three small Gothic arches is located in the peak of the gable. The center arch contains louvers and the outer arches are boarded over. An angled brick and stone buttress is located in the building's northeast corner. The building's foundation has three basement windows with flat stone lintels under the gable.

A set of concrete steps leads to the church's entrance in the base of the stair tower added around 1913. The tower's north corners have angled brick buttresses with stone caps—three caps on the east corner and two on the west. The first story entrance is located within a Gothic arch with stone key and springer stones. A stained glass window tops a pair of wood doors. The second story of the tower has two rectangular double-hung stained glass windows with stone lintels and stone sills. The upper portion of the east window contains a window air conditioner. The tower's third story has a pair of Roman arches with a common stone sill and stone springer and keystones. The arches contain louvers. The north wall of the tower's parapet holds a central ornament of a circle with a central cross, matched on the tower's east and west parapets. The stepped parapet has stone coping.

The church's 1951 office addition protrudes north of the façade on the building's west side. The boxy red brick addition is one story with a flat roof. The parapet wall copings and windowsills are concrete. The addition's east wall meets the west side of the entrance steps. The addition's east wall contains a single door in the juncture and a glass block window. The north wall has a large window opening that is boarded over. Letters attached to the wall above the window read, "ST. JOHN THE DIVINE".

The north portion of the **east elevation** contains five Gothic memorial windows within a brick wall. Each window opening is framed by a pieced brick arch with a stone sill. The three north windows are boarded over. The two south windows are double-hung stained glass. Basement windows are located under the three north windows. A concrete block and glass block extension in the south portion of the east wall covers stairs to the basement. A one-story flat-roofed concrete rear addition contains a glass block window in the east wall.

The church's **west elevation** shows the building's full 1951 addition. The west wall of the one-story north office is a solid concrete block wall. The south wall of the office addition contains a central wood door surrounded on either side by five horizontal windows, with the east windows partially filled by a window air conditioning unit. Most of the west elevation is filled with a two-story gabled frame extension built in 1951 to house the rectory, additional sanctuary space and a parish hall. The stair tower's west wall contains a second-story door with a stone lintel and third-story Roman arches matching those on the façade. A broken gable clad in vinyl siding fills the second story containing two pairs of downsized double-hung windows surrounded by two window air conditioning units. The peak of the gable holds a vent within a small Gothic

¹ The names on the memorial windows reflect members of the Mexican community. They were likely installed during a 1909-1913 expansion. The large Virgin of Guadalupe window was installed before 1960, possibly during the 1951 expansion.

arch. The church's original west brick wall and an angled parapet comprise the lower portion of the central west wall.² The wall contains three memorial windows matching those on the east wall. A concrete pad with a set of concrete steps is located under the windows. A single doorway is located south of the windows. South of the doorway is a concrete block and glass block extension to shelter stairs to the basement matching the stairway on the north elevation. The rear portion of the west elevation consists of a one-story solid concrete wall with a downsized pair of double-hung six-over-six windows and a concrete block screened porch on the southwest corner.

The west portion of the building's **south rear elevation** has a one-story, flat-roofed concrete block extension. This addition has a west entrance within a covered porch and two central metal casement windows with brick sills. The east wall of this extension also contains a matching casement window. The east portion of the rear wall is concrete. It holds a glass block window and an east door fronted by concrete steps. A shallow brick gable rises above the east portion of the rear wall behind the church's original peaked gable, now clad with asphalt shingles and containing a modern set of louvered vents. The west portion of the rear roof reveals the collapse of the 1951 roof addition—the rear extension has fallen into the building's interior.

The building's **interior** includes the historic nave with a west addition, an entrance under the tower, the parish hall and a previous two-story office and living space, now collapsed.

The historic nave space has a vaulted ceiling. Walls are covered with wallpaper and the floor is a combination of carpet and linoleum. The vaulted ceiling has modern tile with decorative beams. Five chandeliers hang within this space. Finishes in the west worship space match those in the east portion. A central aisle between wood pews leads to a south raised altar. A central wood altar has faux finishes resembling marble and plaster. Recessed walls behind and to the sides of the altar are paneled in contrasting wood designs and laminate. The north rear of the nave contains three small confessionals under a non-original wood choir loft. The loft and confessionals partially block the façade's main windows.

A small sacristy is located between the altar and the large south parish hall. The west side of the parish hall was once connected to a kitchen, guest room, the church office and stairs to the upper living quarters. Under the building's tower, the entrance room is one-story tall with plaster walls and a linoleum floor. Double wood exterior doors are topped with a triangular stained glass window. South and east doors within the space lead to the nave.

St. John the Divine is located in the mixed-use neighborhood of Argentine in Kansas City, Kansas. A wall of concrete blocks, chain link fence, or a combination of both surrounds most of the site. Most of the building, including the original nave and the entrance tower, is in fair condition. Stabilization of the collapsed west portion is currently being pursued.

Integrity

The St. John the Divine building retains its historic integrity of location, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and most of its integrity of design and setting. The church remains on the same site as the original Methodist chapel constructed in 1887, although the building was enlarged and expanded from 1909-1913, and again after the 1951 Flood. The principal changes in the church's design and materials occurred after the 1903 Flood, when the frame chapel was veneered in brick, raised to create a foundation and basement, and expanded by the addition of a bell tower and rear additions. These changes, however, endowed the church with the late-Gothic Revival features that define its historically significant design and feeling. Further historic changes reflect the community's use of the building and adaptations to meet the needs of the congregation. The frame second-story rectory and expanded nave are consistent with the style and design of the church as it existed before the 1951 Flood. During the 1951 expansion, the gothic-arched, stained glass windows along the west elevation were removed from the original masonry wall and relocated to a frame wall faced with brick. The brick buttress on the southwest corner was similarly relocated along this elevation. A bedroom and kitchen were added to the west elevation, and a laundry room was added to the south elevation. These additions were constructed in a design and with workmanship consistent with other vernacular improvements to the grounds of the church and school campus. Although its construction is distinctly modern, the office addition along Metropolitan Avenue is constructed of brick similar in texture and color to the brick cladding on the principal elevations and the bell tower, and as such it defers to these character-defining features. Despite a partial collapse of the second-story dwelling, the west elevation remains largely intact, as does the majority of the interior space and finishes within the expanded nave. The workmanship of the church's post-1951 Flood repair and expansion is also consistent and evocative of vernacular construction reflecting the involvement of local contractors and perhaps parishioners. The stained glass windows and interior furnishings that include the pews, altar, and chandeliers clearly evoke the building's association with the Mexican-American community in Argentine.

As noted in the historical narrative below, St. John has lost much of its integrity of setting, largely as a consequence of the broader patterns of economic decline and social change confronting the Argentine neighborhood. Many of these changes

² The wall, windows and buttress were relocated during the 1951 expansion.

can be traced directly to the urban renewal program of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which removed non-conforming commercial and industrial uses from the neighborhood, simplified the local street grid, and changed the number, character and style of dwellings in the immediate vicinity of the church. As documented in a recent historic resources survey of Hispanic-American Historic Places in Kansas City, Kansas,³ few historically significant structures associated with the local Mexican-American community survive. The 1951 Flood and urban renewal program largely obliterated the segregated Mexican schools, churches, social clubs, and other communal gathering places that defined the physical environs of the highly-segregated Hispanic community during the 1950s and 1960s. As a result, the church possesses a sense of feeling and association with this historical community and period that are distinctive and unique. St. John the Divine thus serves as an important reminder of the history of the settlement, growth and assimilation of the Mexican-American population in Kansas City, Kansas.

³ Daniel Serda, "Finding Latin Roots: Hispanic Heritage in Kansas City," *Kansas Preservation* 33, 3 (February 2011): 8-15.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Ethnic Heritage: Hispanic

Period of Significance

1937-1962

Significant Dates

1937, 1951

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Undetermined

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the property is 1937 to 1962, reflecting the historical period of the building's association with the Mexican-American community.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

St. John the Divine Catholic Church meets the registration requirements for Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties because it derives its primary significance from its ethnic heritage. The property does not derive its primary significance from associations with religious doctrine.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

St. John the Divine Catholic Church, 2511 Metropolitan Avenue in the Argentine neighborhood of Kansas City, Wyandotte County, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, significant at the local level in the area Ethnic History. For more than 50 years, St. John the Divine has served as the centerpiece of religious life for the Mexican-American Catholic community of the Argentine. The building was built in 1887 as a frame Methodist church. A 1903 flood damaged the building, which led to a major renovation from 1909 to 1913, expanding the building, adding a brick veneer and constructing a façade bell tower. The Catholic Diocese acquired the building in 1937 as a mission. The parishes of St. John the Divine and Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Armourdale were consolidated following the collapse of the Mount Carmel church after the 1951 flood. St. John was again expanded to add office and residential space. The building was maintained and adorned by its parishioners, reflecting vernacular Mexican and Spanish art and culture. The property played a significant role in the religious and social community of Argentine.

Elaboration

St. John the Divine's history is rooted in the larger story of early 20th century Hispanic immigration to the Midwest. Mexican laborers first arrived to Kansas in significant numbers during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In 1909, regional railroads began to recruit workers from the southern Mexican states of Jalisco, Juarez and Michoacán, leading to the establishment of a large Mexican barrio in the midst of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe yards in Argentine, Kansas, an independent municipality later annexed to Kansas City. Recruitment of Mexican workers to the Midwest expanded greatly after World War I, when Congress passed the 1918 Foreign Exclusion Act limiting European immigration for the first time in U.S. history. In 1910, 55 percent of all track laborers in Kansas City, Kansas were Mexicans; by 1915, this number had increased to 85 percent, and to more than 90 percent by the late 1920s. Similarly, meatpacking plants in Kansas City, which had heavily relied on Slavic immigrants in the late 19th century, also turned their attention to workers from Mexico.⁴

Hundreds of these laborers, who worked primarily as section hands responsible for maintaining tracks, switches, and rolling stock in the rail yards, were sheltered around Kansas City in "campos," or camps, where they were housed in railroad box cars. The manuscript schedules of the 1920 U.S. Census identify the largest of these camps as being located immediately north of the Santa Fe freight yards in Argentine, just behind a levee at a bend of the Kansas River.⁵ In 1919, the Santa Fe donated two railway cars to be used in the yards for religious instruction for fifty Mexican Catholic families. In March 1921, the Kansas Conference of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of The Methodist Episcopal Church established an outreach mission in the W. Jones Building, a three-story, rustic storefront located in the midst of the railroad campo in Argentine. The Methodist Mexican Mission provided Americanization classes and social services to Mexican workers and their families, including medical and dental care, childcare and general welfare assistance.⁶

The Methodist ministry to Mexican families in Argentine may have contributed indirectly to the establishment of St. John the Divine, as Mexican-Americans held longstanding, albeit informal, affiliations with both denominations. In 1937, Bishop Francis Johannes of the Catholic diocese arranged to purchase the building housing the Metropolitan Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church of Kansas City, Kansas, as the Methodist Church was in the process of establishing a new campus a mile to the west. Acquisition of the building was made possible by a donation to the Catholic Extension Society of America from Lee M. Sedwick, a convert to the Catholic faith, who asked that the donation be used to erect a chapel dedicated to

⁴ Michael M. Smith, "Mexicans in Kansas City: The First Generation, 1900-1920", in Juan R. García, ed., *Mexicans in the Midwest, 1900-1932* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), pp.30, 37; Judith A.F. Laird, "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican American Community, 1905- 1940." Ph.D. Dissertation, History, University of Kansas (Lawrence: 1975), p.110; Robert Oppenheimer, "Acculturation or Assimilation: Mexican Immigrants in Kansas, 1900 to World War II." *Western Historical Quarterly* 16, 4 (Oct. 1985): 429-448.

⁵ Daniel Serda, "Finding Latin Roots: Hispanic Heritage in Kansas City," *Kansas Preservation* 33, 3 (February 2011): 8-15, p.10.

⁶ David A. Badillo, "Midwestern Catholicism and the Early Mexican Parishes, 1910-1930." In Jay P. Dolan and Gilberto M. Hinojosa, eds., *Mexican Americans and the Catholic Church* (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), pp.247, 250; Ruth Esther Meeker, *Six Decades of Service, 1880-1940; A History of the Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (Cincinnati: Women's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1969), p. 328.

St. John the Divine. Bishop Johannes wanted the new Catholic facility to serve as a unifying force for the largely Spanish-speaking, Mexican-American population in Argentine. St. John the Divine was designated a mission of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, a segregated Mexican-American parish established in 1923 in Armourdale, a working-class neighborhood on the opposite side of the Kansas River. Mexican-American residents of Argentine were among the 85 Mexican families who had lobbied the Archdiocese for their own parish. The Spanish Revival-style Mount Carmel church was completed with the able assistance of track laborers from the Santa Fe Railroad. Nonetheless, the need to travel more than three miles across the Kansas River posed a hardship for many, leading to the Diocese's eventual decision to support the creation of a separate facility in Argentine nearly 15 years later.⁷

Built in 1887 as the first home of the Methodist Church of Argentine, the modest clapboard structure at 25th and Metropolitan originally served a few dozen Methodist congregants. By 1889, membership had grown to 150, and the Reverend Edward Hislop, the pastor, became known as an influential community leader.⁸ The original wood frame chapel was severely damaged in the June 1903 Kansas River Flood, but was restored for services by August of that year.⁹ From 1909 to 1913, a national appeal in the *Central Christian Advocate*, a Methodist newsletter published in St. Louis, raised funds to remodel and re-face the building with brick. The revamped structure was enlarged slightly by rear additions, and a bell tower was added to the north elevation facing Metropolitan Avenue. Expansion was constrained, however, by an adjacent boarding house and residence, as well as a public alley immediately east of the church.¹⁰ In 1924, the Methodists acquired a residence at 3730 Metropolitan Avenue to use as a parsonage, which was razed and replaced in 1937 by a new parsonage at 3801 Metropolitan.

Mount Carmel and St. John the Divine were both ministered by Augustinian Recollects from the Monastery of St. Augustine, established in 1935 on the former grounds of Kansas City University at 33rd and Parallel in Kansas City, Kansas.¹¹ The Augustinians were first assigned to minister to the local Mexican-American community in 1923 by John Ward, Bishop of the See of Leavenworth.¹²

Bishop Paul C. Schulte dedicated the building and the first mass was celebrated at St. John the Divine on December 12, 1937, the day of a traditional Mexican religious feast honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe. The first sermon was led by Fr. Gabriel Perez, a Spanish priest and prior of St. Augustine's Monastery who had transferred a year earlier from a parish in San Bernadino, California. Fr. Gabriel, as his congregants affectionately came to know him, was assigned as administrator of the church in 1944 and became its pastor in 1946. Doctrinally, St. John the Divine was considered one of the most religiously conservative Catholic parishes in metropolitan Kansas City, reflecting both the liturgy of the Augustinians and the conservative religious background of the congregants, most of whom hailed from Tanguancicuario, a small, tightly-knit village in Michoacán.¹³

Fr. Gabriel was instrumental in the growth of St. John the Divine's congregation and in the eventual expansion of the building and its supporting functions. In 1944, the Archdiocese acquired the Gregory laundry building, a three-story commercial structure at the southwest corner of 25th and Metropolitan, for use as a parish school through the assistance of Argentine area merchants and parishioners. From 1949 to 1965 the building served as the parish's grade school, with instruction provided by the Sisters of St. Joseph to an average of 100 pupils per year.¹⁴

The 1951 Flood on Black Friday, July 13, left much of Armourdale and Argentine in ruins. Floodwaters rose to a height over 25 feet above street level. During the flood, Our Lady of Mount Carmel suffered a structural collapse. As a result, the diocese demolished that building and consolidated the two parishes, restoring and expanding the St. John the Divine building, which had also suffered moderate but less significant damage during the flood. Fr. Gabriel celebrated the first

⁷ Fr. Joachim J. Goni, O.A.R., "St. John the Divine Church." In Donald H. Simmons, ed., *Centennial History of Argentine, Kansas City, Kansas, 1880-1980* (Kansas City, KS: Simmons Funeral Home, 1980), p. 51; Laird, p.154; Foss Farrar, "Priest Church's Pillar," *Kansas City Kansan* (April 27, 1979), p.4B.

⁸ N.a., "Metropolitan Avenue United Methodist Church." In Simmons, ed., p.50.

⁹ *Argentine Republic* (August 27, 1903), p.4.

¹⁰ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Kansas City* (1931), vol.4, sheet 415.

¹¹ Larry Hancks, "Mather Hall (St. Augustine Hall), 1896 and 1937-38." Historic Resources Survey, City of Kansas City, Kansas, n.d. This arrangement was not unique; some 50 years earlier, St. John the Evangelist had likewise been established as a mission of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Shawnee, Kansas, some 6 miles to the southwest.

¹² Rev. Joseph Urrutia, "Kansas City, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel." Pp. 290-291; William E. Connelley; "John Ward". In *A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), vol. 4, p.1830.

¹³ Edwin D. Shutt, "Father Gabriel Perez", in Simmons, pp.171-172; Farrar, *op.cit.*; Laird, p.156.

¹⁴ Goni, *op.cit.*; Farrar, *op.cit.*

mass in the renovated parish on August 15, barely a month after the disaster. The flood left one “scar” on the building: a bow in the brick masonry of the east elevation. Beyond repairing the damage from the flood, the Archdiocese made significant additions to the building. Consolidating the two facilities required the construction of a rectory and office to house Fr. Gabriel. The rectory was constructed by significantly altering the west elevation. The original west wall and its Gothic stained glass windows were rebuilt approximately twenty feet to the west. Supporting iron beams were installed to bear the weight of the original gable. The buttress at the building’s southwest corner was shifted approximately twenty feet. The sanctuary of the church was thus expanded by approximately 1,000 square feet, creating ample additional seating immediately south of the bell tower. A modern office was added to the northwest corner of the building, adjacent to the bell tower. A second-story residence was built for Fr. Gabriel above the expanded seating area.¹⁵

From modest beginnings, St. John the Divine was gradually adorned with sacred objects and furnishings, including chandeliers and religious statues imported from Spain. A stained glass image of La Virgen de Guadalupe was imported from Mexico and installed in the Gothic nave window. Around 1960, according to interior photographs documenting first communions, the plaster apse wall was covered in inlaid wood paneling resembling the interior of the Augustinian Recollect Monastery. An electric bell that imitated the bells of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome was donated and installed in the church tower.

The 1960s brought dramatic change to Argentine. Beginning with the construction of the 18th Street Expressway in 1959, the neighborhoods and commercial districts surrounding St. John the Divine were drastically transformed.¹⁶ The Expressway displaced hundreds of residents, many of them African-American, and the ensuing urban renewal program and other planned roadways similarly brought uncertainty and change to the surrounding community.¹⁷ After the St. John the Divine parish school closed in 1965, the former laundry building was used for a variety of religious and educational purposes, including a Catholic Instruction Center for both adults and children and eventually as a satellite campus for classes from Donnelly College, a small Diocesan institution established to serve the immigrant community, through the 1980s.¹⁸

The property of St. John the Divine itself was transformed and expanded by the urban renewal program. The site was replatted, and three adjacent structures were condemned and torn down to create a large parking lot west of the church. A public alley was platted immediately west of the parking lot to separate the church from new residences constructed by the urban renewal program and to provide access to the parking lot.¹⁹

Urban renewal also impacted the broader neighborhood. During the Great Depression, Mexican workers and their families began leaving the “campo” and moving across the Santa Fe tracks, settling in modest homes within a segregated, four-block area immediately north of the church, between 25th and 27th Streets, Metropolitan and Strong Avenues.²⁰ In 1972, residences of Mexican-American families immediately north of the church were re-platted and redeveloped on a one-to-one replacement basis for a new subdivision called Villa Argentina. Unlike the modest frame bungalows, boarding houses and workers’ cottages they replaced, Villa Argentina now consists primarily of split-level ranch houses. While the urban renewal program displaced residents in other parts of Argentine, the Villa Argentina development gave priority and offered low-cost mortgage loans to original residents who wished to purchase a new home in the old barrio.²¹ The urban renewal program also eliminated many of the commercial establishments along Metropolitan Avenue near St. John the Divine,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas, *Annual Report* (March 1959), n.p.; *Id.*, 1974 *Annual Report*, p.9; Sherry Lamb and Dr. Theodore A. Wilson, *Milestones: A History of the Kansas Highway Commission and the Department of Transportation* (Topeka: Kansas Department of Transportation, December 1986), pp. 4-19 to 4-20.

¹⁷ Susan Keim Rohrer, *Unintended consequences: the Argentine neighborhood that refused to die* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 1986.)

¹⁸ Goni, *op.cit.*; Farrar, *op.cit.*

¹⁹ Goni, *op.cit.*; “Gabriel Place, Replat of portions of Block 31, Kansas Town Company’s Third Addition to Argentine; Block 28, Argentine Subdivision and all of Block 1, Meyer’s Addition to Argentine.” Wyandotte County Register of Deeds, Book 32, page 67, filed for record, July 24, 1975, Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas.

²⁰ Laird, pp.160-165; Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930*, “Population Schedule: Kansas, Kansas City, Wyandotte County, Ward 7, Block 7, Enumeration District 105-58”, Manuscript Schedule, Sheet No. 15A.

²¹ Urban Renewal Agency of Kansas City, Kansas, “Project Relocation Plan, Villa Argentina.” ND-507, n.d. mss., Box CD 77, Unified Government of Wyandotte County-Kansas City, Kansas Municipal Archives (copy in author’s possession).

including a lumberyard that had stood across the street from the church parking lot for several decades.²² In the early 1980s, the nearby Kansas City Structural Steel Plant closed, hastening the slow erosion of many of the industrial structures that had defined the environs of the small church and its campus.

Fr. Gabriel retired due to failing health in 1971, but remained in the parish as its "pastor emeritus."²³ He was succeeded by Fr. Etelvino Iglesias, O.A.R., who in 1973 was replaced by Fr. Maximum Bortiri, O.A.R. In 1978, Fr. Joachim J. Goni, O.A.R., arrived from Omaha to replace Fr. Max, who was transferred to a parish in California. Due to declining membership in the parish, around 1992, St. John the Divine, then under the tutelage of Fr. Harry Schneider, was closed and consolidated with St. John the Evangelist, Argentine's original Catholic parish. In 2003, the former school building was converted into its current use as apartments. The church building is currently vacant.

²² Edwin D. Shutt II, "Mack Lumber Company", in Simmons, p.35.

²³ Goni, *op.cit.*; Jeannette Lohr, "Priest marks 50 years," *Kansas City Star* (May 10, 1975), p.3.

St. John the Divine Catholic Church
Name of Property

Wyandotte County, Kansas
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
 previously listed in the National Register
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: **Kansas Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>39.073014</u>	<u>-94.658725</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The property is bounded by Metropolitan Avenue on the north, an alley on the south and property lines on the east and west. The property is described in Unified Government property records as: GABRIEL PLACE, S29, T11, R25, ACRES 0.550000, ALL L4, W 80.64FT L5

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries reflect the historic perimeters of the St. John the Divine Catholic Church building in place since the 1951 expansion.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Jezak Ford/ Daniel Serda
organization Citysearch Preservation date 8/23/2012
street & number 3628 Holmes Street telephone 816-531-2489
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64109
e-mail citysusan@gmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Historic images, maps, etc.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: St. John the Divine Catholic Church

City or Vicinity: Argentine

County/State: Wyandotte County, Kansas

Photographer: Susan Jezak Ford

Date of Photos: August 7, 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 12: Main façade, south view
- 2 of 12: North façade and west elevation, southeast view
- 3 of 12: North façade and east elevation, southwest view
- 4 of 12: West elevation, east view
- 5 of 12: South and west elevation, northeast view
- 6 of 12: South elevation, northwest view
- 7 of 12: Interior nave, north view
- 8 of 12: Interior altar, south view
- 9 of 12: Bell tower entrance, northwest view
- 10 of 12: Interior west nave addition, northwest view
- 11 of 12: Historic photograph, circa 1890
- 12 of 12: Historic photograph, n.d.

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name St. John the Divine Community Art & Education Center, Inc.

street & number PO Box 6415 telephone _____

city or town Kansas City state KS zip code 66106

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Figure 1: Contextual Aerial Image. Google.com, 2013.

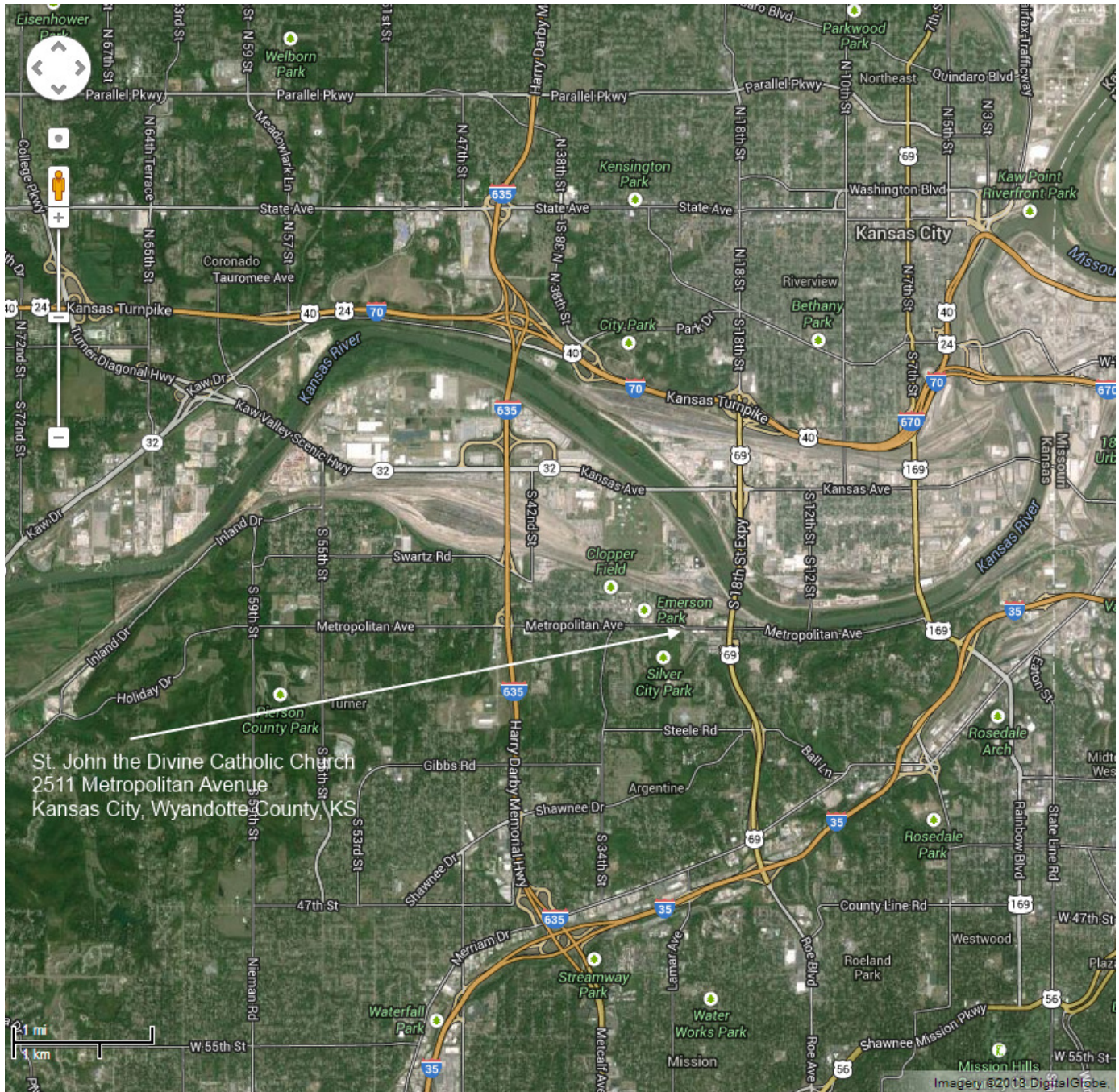
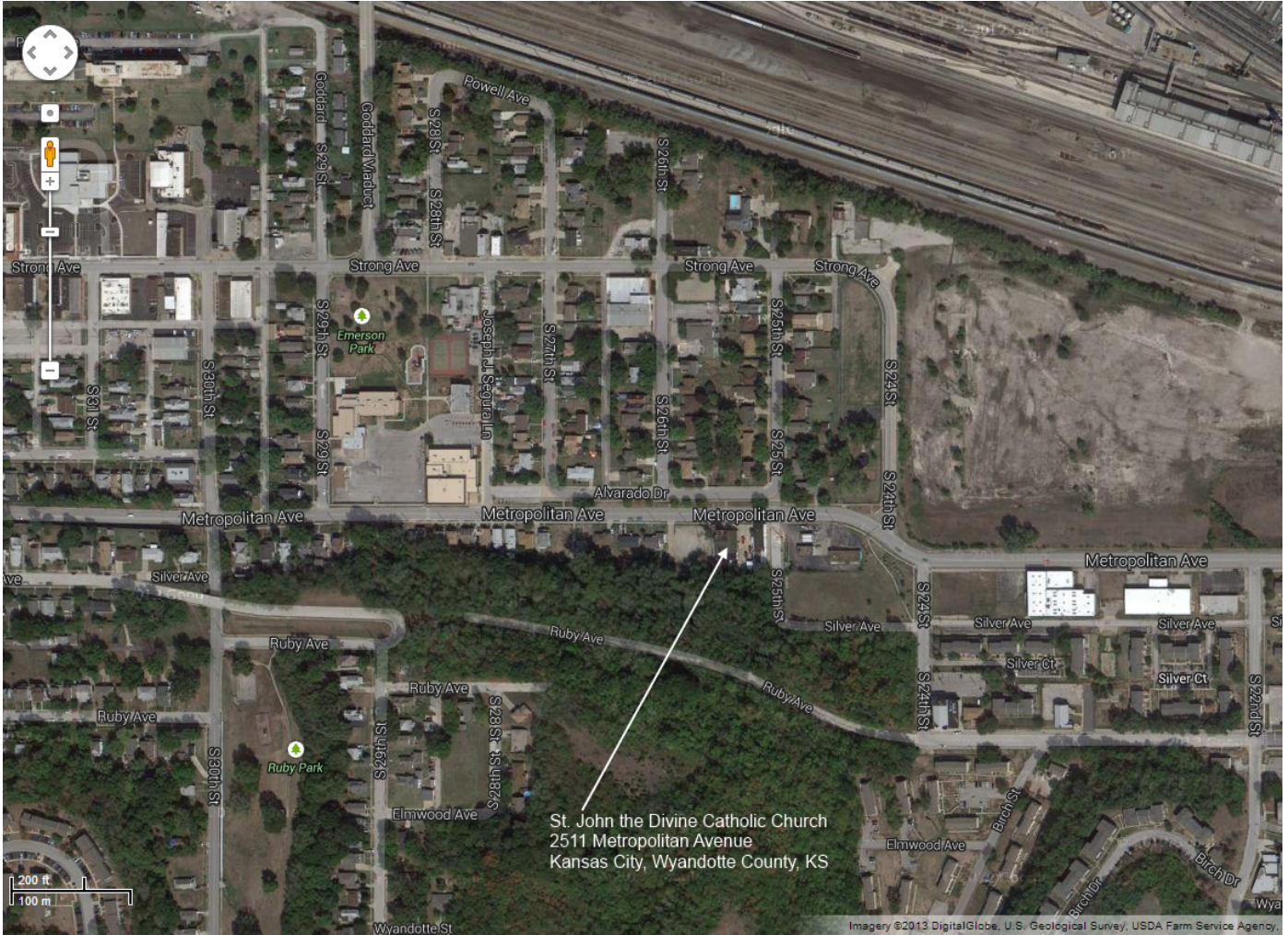


Figure 2: Aerial Image. Google.com, 2013.





ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CHURCH



ST. JOHN THE DIVINE CHURCH









HAZARD
NO ENTRY

WARNING
NO ENTRY

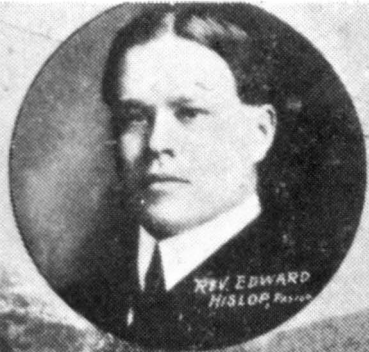


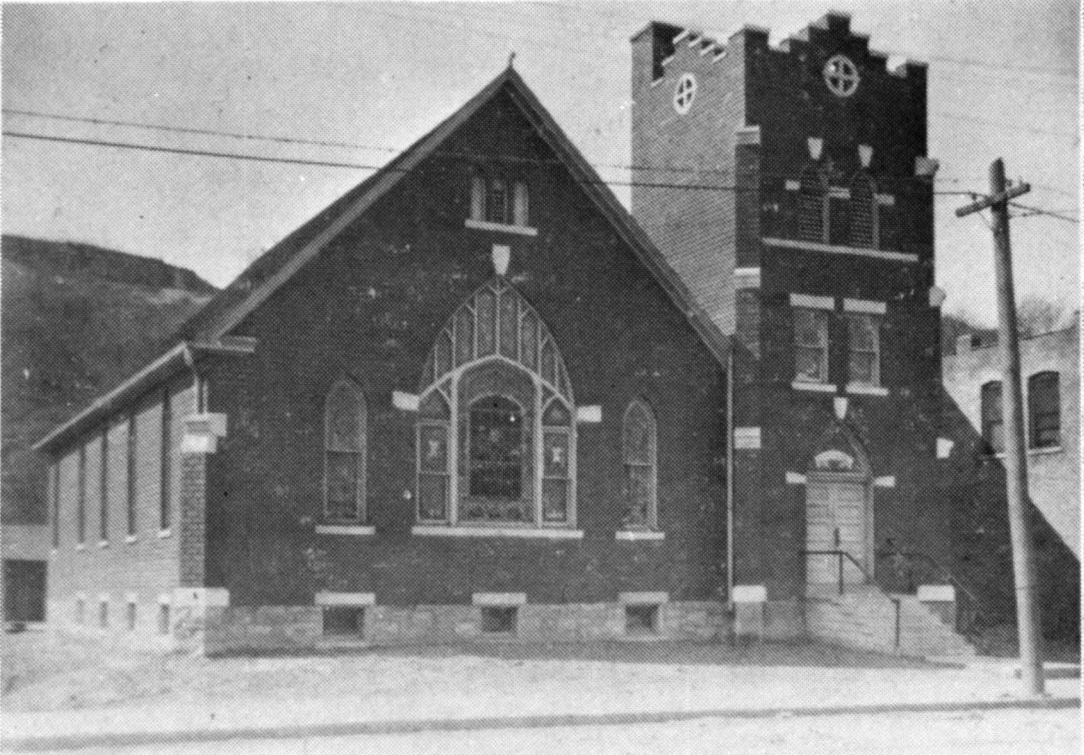












UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY St. John the Divine Catholic Church
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: KANSAS, Wyandotte

DATE RECEIVED: 8/23/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/19/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/04/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/09/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000820

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10.9.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Kansas Historical Society

Sam Brownback, Governor

Jennie Chinn, Executive Director

August 20, 2013

Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, N. W.
8th Floor (MS 2280)
Washington, DC 20005



Dear Ms. Shull:

We are pleased to submit for your consideration the following National Register documents:

- Westwood Hills Historic District – Johnson County (new nomination)
- New Lancaster General Store – Miami County (new nomination)
- New Lancaster Grange Hall, No. 223 – Miami County (new nomination)
- St. John the Divine Catholic Church – Wyandotte County (new nomination)
- Cordell D. Meeks, Sr. House – Wyandotte County (new nomination)
- Gustave Kubach House – Dickinson County (new nomination)
- Lawrence's Downtown Historic District – Douglas County (NR Amendment)

Enclosed are copies of each signed document and two disks per nomination with photograph, nomination, and mapping files. The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copies of the nominations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. I may be reached at 785-272-8681 ext. 216 or smartin@kshs.org.

Sincerely yours,



Sarah J. Martin
National Register Coordinator

Enclosures