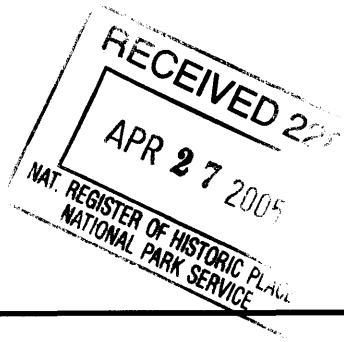


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**



1. Name of Property

historic name Memorial Hall

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and East Locust Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Independence [N/A] vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Montgomery code 125 zip code 67301

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 [] nationally [] statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Richard Pankratz Signature of certifying official/Title Richard Pankratz/Director 4/25/05 Date

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].
- determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].
- determined not eligible for the
National Register.
- removed from the
National Register
- other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Robert H. Beall Signature of the Keeper 6/10/05 Date

Memorial Hall
 Montgomery County, Kansas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		1	_____ Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Monument
 RECREATION AND CULTURE: Auditorium

Current Functions

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Monument
 RECREATION AND CULTURE: Auditorium

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:
 Classical Revival

Materials

Foundation: CONCRETE
 Walls: BRICK
 LIMESTONE
 Roof: ASPHALT
 Other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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.

Criteria Considerations

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Entertainment/Recreation
Architecture

Periods of Significance

1923-1955

Significant Dates

1923

Significant Person(s)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Meier Brothers (Rudolph and Eugene Meier, architects)
Todd, A. E. (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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: Independence (Kansas) Public Library
Kansas State Historical Society

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	259890E	4123530			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Partner and Kristen Ottesen, Associate

organization Historic Preservation Services, LLC date October 2004

street & number 323 West 8th Street, Suite 112 telephone 816-221-5133

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64105

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black-and-white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Independence, Kansas

street & number 120 North 6th Street telephone 620-332-2506

city or town Independence state KS zip code 67301

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION STATEMENT

The Memorial Hall Building, located on a large lot on the southeast corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and East Locust Street, is a three-story brick Classical Revival building. The rectangular plan is approximately 165 feet deep and 120 feet wide. Each elevation has seven bays. The flat roof has a brick parapet with stone coping. A concrete foundation and steel columns, beams, and trusses support the concrete floors and brick walls. The Memorial Hall Building's restrained Classical Revival style gives it a stately, refined



**Independence Memorial Hall
Southeast corner Pennsylvania Avenue and East Locust Street**

appearance befitting a memorial hall.

The building retains integrity of location and setting, a high degree of its character-defining stylistic ornamentation, and exterior and interior materials dating from the period of historic significance. These elements reflect a high degree of workmanship. As a result, the building conveys feelings about its period of construction and associations with important historic

contexts relating to its period of significance.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

SETTING

The Memorial Hall Building is located one block north of historic downtown Independence, Kansas on Pennsylvania Avenue, which is also U.S. Highway 75. Situated on the east side of Pennsylvania Avenue, the building occupies the north half of the block between East Locust and East Chestnut Streets. With the exception of a mature tree on the northwest corner of the lot, a row of shrubs at the southeast corner of the building, and an evergreen tree in the middle of the east lawn, the lot is clear of trees and other plantings. A low concrete retaining wall located along the public sidewalk borders the lawn to the east, north, and west. The retaining walls sweep inward to meet the building at the middle of the north (secondary) elevation, providing a paved area level with the street that accesses the basement doors.

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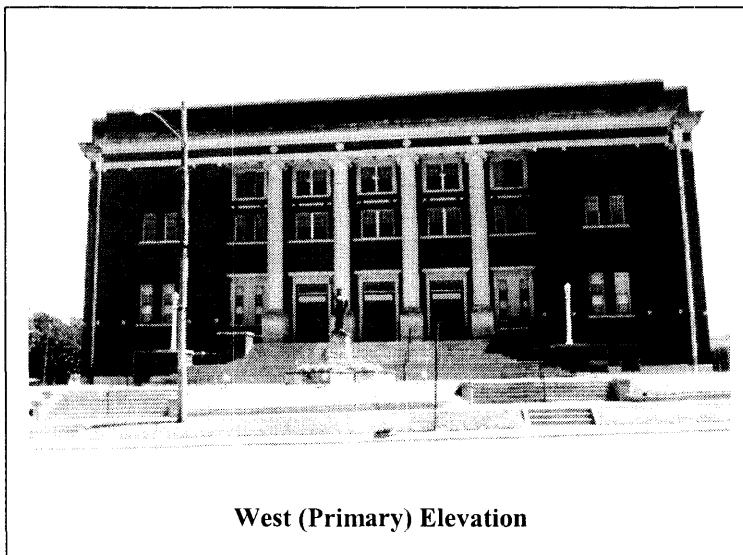
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 2

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

EXTERIOR

The Memorial Hall has three stories, including basement, the first story, and the second story. The basement is partially above grade, creating a raised first story. In order to accommodate the auditorium balcony and stage operations, the second story is an exceptionally tall level, and it appears as two levels of windows on the west (primary) elevation. The building has red brick walls with limestone trim. The water table is a single soldier course of brick that wraps around the building. A brick fly loft rises above the roof on the east end of the south elevation. Seven regular bays articulate each elevation. Fenestration throughout the building generally features paired double-hung sash windows with multi-light upper sashes and single-pane lower sashes. The west (primary) elevation and the north (secondary) elevation present the public façades. The colonnaded west (primary) elevation faces onto Pennsylvania Avenue and serves as the main entrance. Full-height engaged pilasters and a raised terrace define the north (secondary) elevation. Brick parapets rises above a wide limestone cornice and thinner limestone belt course on the west (primary) and north (secondary) elevations. The east and south elevations are relatively plain and are devoid of limestone trim with the exception of copings and windowsills. Characteristics that convey the building's Classical Revival style include symmetrical façades with regular bays; a simple projecting cornice; multi-light double-hung windows; limestone door surrounds; full-height columns on the west (primary) elevation; and full-height engaged pilasters on the remaining elevations.



West (Primary) Elevation

West (Primary) Elevation

The west (primary) elevation features two single end bays flanking five slightly recessed central bays. Architectural features are concentrated in the central bays. Flanking the three central bays, four columns rise from square bases at the raised first story and terminate with modified ionic capitals just below the belt course. Between the columns, the three central bays each contain a pair of double-leaf wood doors set in limestone surrounds. The first, second, fifth, and sixth bays contain pairs of tall, narrow windows

set in limestone panels that match the door surrounds. On this elevation two levels of windows illuminate

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

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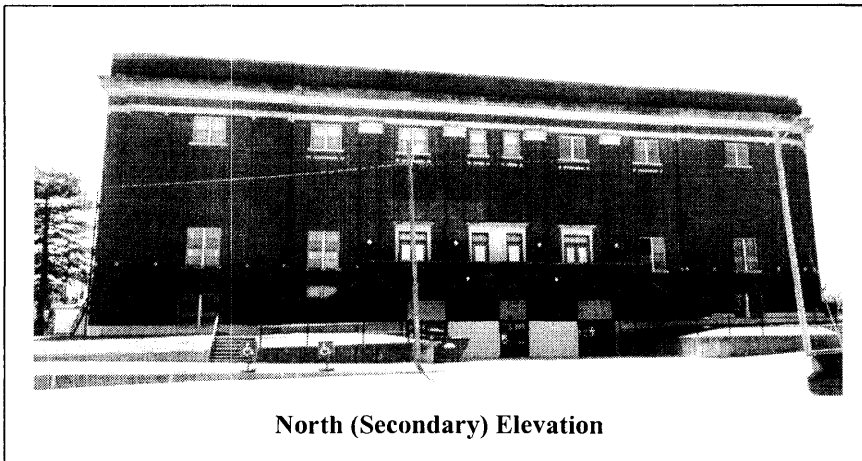
**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

the second story, maintaining the building's three story appearance. The uppermost row of windows also has limestone surrounds. The flanking bays are more simply detailed and feature paired windows on all three levels.

Several sets of stairs provide access to and from the main doors to the street level. A set of broad limestone stairs descends from the raised first-story entrance to a broad concrete terrace. Brick cheek walls flank these stairs. The concrete terrace spans the width of the building from the base of the stairs to the west where it meets two single runs of stairs at the north and south ends of the terrace. Limestone cheek walls flank these stairs as they descend to the public sidewalk. Across the sidewalk are two more sets of stairs that descend to the street.

Two statues ornament the concrete terrace in front of the building. In the middle of the concrete terrace, is a miniature bronze replica of the Statue of Liberty that sits atop a stone base. It was presented in 1923, during the ceremony celebrating the opening of the Memorial Hall Building, while Chicago chanteuse

Gwendolyn Griffith sang the Star Spangled Banner.¹ A small statue of a boy holding a folded flag is near the flagpole at the southwest corner of the building.



North (Secondary) Elevation

North (Secondary)

Elevation

The slightly longer north (secondary) elevation features the same symmetrical

arrangement as the west (primary) elevation and has two end bays flanking five central bays. The end bays project slightly in front of the wall. This elevation is longer than the west elevation, so the bays are correspondingly wider. Five full-height engaged brick pilasters with limestone capitals flank the five central bays. Further emphasizing the central bays is a walled terrace that projects from the wall. Its north wall is approximately one-story tall. Stairs at the east and west ends of the terrace rise from ground level to the walled terrace.

¹ "Legion Play a Fitting Opening of Memorial Hall," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 9 October 1923, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

At the ground level, three pairs of double-leaf doors topped by transoms set into the projecting north wall of the terrace provide access to the basement hall. At the raised first story, three sets of double-leaf wood doors set in limestone surrounds provide direct access from the terrace into the back of the auditorium. The fenestration just below the belt course is comprised of a single row of windows and includes two windows with one-over-one lights in the fourth (center) bay and paired windows in each of the remaining bays. On all three levels, the first, second, sixth, and seventh bays contain paired windows.

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National Park Service

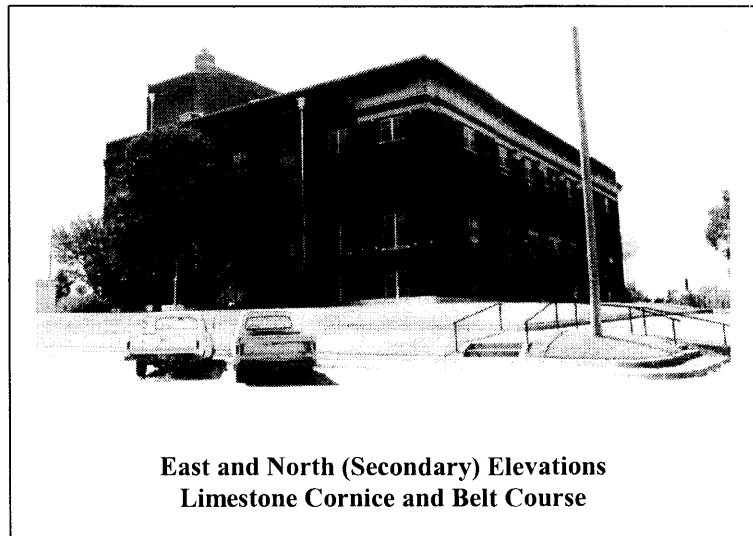
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 7 Page 5

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

East Elevation

The limestone cornice and belt course that span the north (secondary) elevation wrap around to the seventh (northernmost) bay of the east elevation at which point a small brick cornice continues across the remaining bays of the east elevation. Engaged brick pilasters define the bays. The basement windows appear at ground level on this side of the building. At the south bay at the first story, metal stairs lead to paired doors that provide access to the stage inside. At the fifth bay (third bay from the north) at the first and second stories, metal stairs lead to paired doors that provide access to the auditorium.

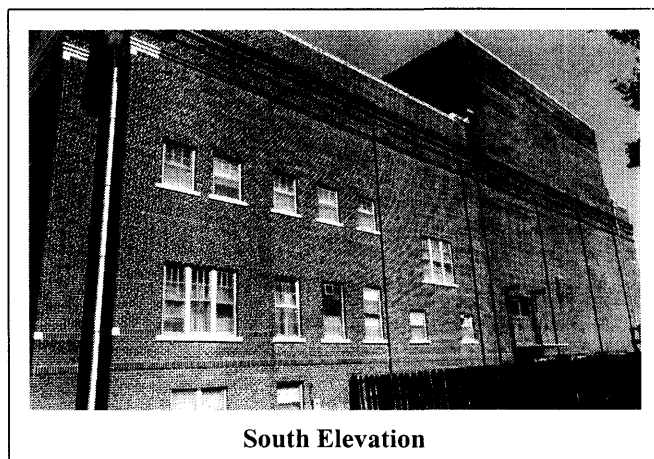


**East and North (Secondary) Elevations
Limestone Cornice and Belt Course**

South Elevation

The brick cornice continues from the east elevation to the south elevation. Engaged brick pilasters define the bays. The first (westernmost) bay projects from the north wall.

While fenestration is present at the basement, first, and second stories of the first three (westernmost) bays of the south elevation, the fenestration in the fourth through seventh bays is limited to basement windows and two sets of doors. In the first three bays, all the window openings have stone windowsills and primarily contain double-hung sashes with six-over-one lights. In the third bay, a large square window opening filled with triple double-hung sashes illuminates the stairwell between the first and second stories. The east half of the south elevation is essentially a blank brick wall. At the fourth (center) bay, projecting door supports in the wall above a large pair of doors raise and lower a platform from the ground to facilitate moving large props to and from the stage area. At the seventh (easternmost) bay, metal stairs ascend to a pair of first-story doors that also provide access to the stage.



South Elevation

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National Park Service

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**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

INTERIOR

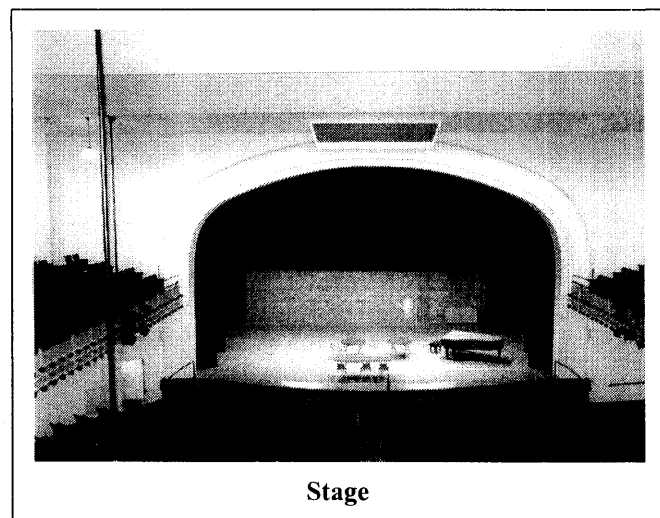
The raised first floor comprises the primary space within the Memorial Hall Building. The lower portion of the auditorium and the stage occupy the east end of the building. The central lobby is in the west end of the first floor. Flanking the lobby are two rooms that now serve as a meeting room and a veteran's museum. To the east of the meeting room, the north side of the building contains a "Hall of Honor" and a men's restroom. Another meeting room and a women's restroom occupy the south side of the first floor. Staircases located just outside the auditorium provide access to the second floor from each side of the lobby. A wide, single flight of stairs provides access to the basement on the south side of the first floor.

The lobby is the most ornate space in the Memorial Hall Building. The three main entrance doors on the west lobby wall mirror three double-leaf doors on the east wall of the lobby that lead into the auditorium. Two pairs of square columns and two square single columns flanking the auditorium doors visually separate the main lobby space from the area in front of the auditorium doors and from the stairwells that lead to the second floor. The black-and-white tile floor is one of the most striking features in the lobby. The hexagonal tiles create diamond patterns in the main field, while square tiles create rectilinear borders. The plaster coffered ceiling is painted white, red, and coral. Nine original hanging pendant lights illuminate the lobby.

The 2,500-seat auditorium is the most prominent space in the Memorial Hall Building, occupying the first and second floors. At the south wall, the stage features a wide proscenium arch and a curved front edge. Spanning the north (rear) end of the auditorium is a wall installed during the 1979 renovation. This wall separates the seating area from the three sets of double-leaf doors in the north (rear) wall that provide access to the



Main Lobby, First Floor



Stage

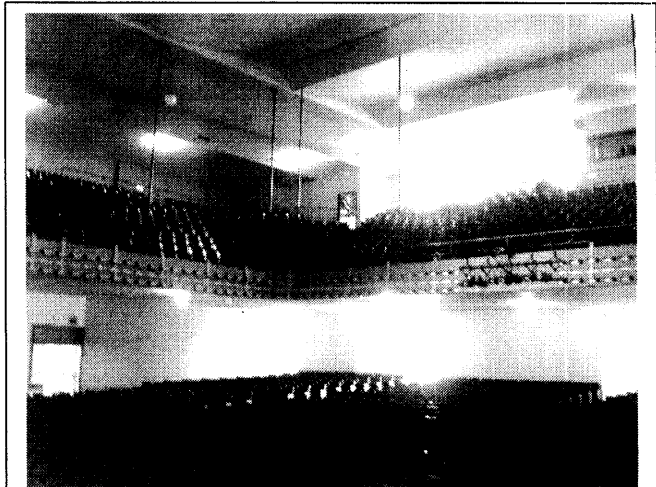
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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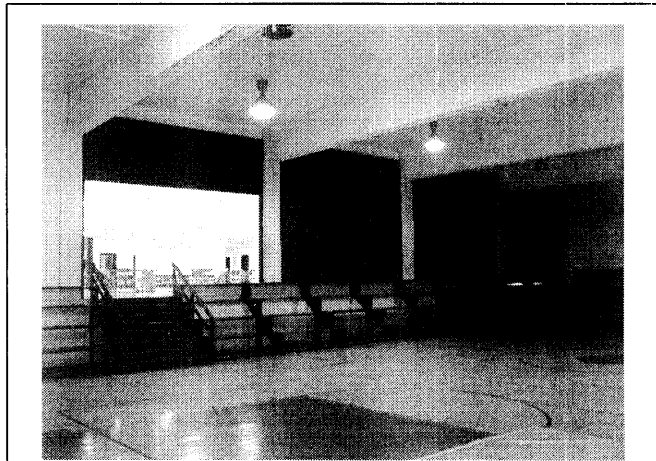
**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

exterior terrace on the north side of the building. The first-floor seating is comprised of red upholstered seats installed during the 1979 renovation. Seating on the auditorium ground floor is divided by three aisles, creating four banks of seating. The banks of seats are intersected by one transverse aisle that runs east/west. The balcony, suspended from the ceiling by steel rods, curves around the east, north, and west sides of the auditorium, leaving the first floor column-free. The balcony retains its original seating, which is comprised of red upholstered seats with wooden backs and cast iron ends. Original pendant light fixtures hang from the ceiling and the original ceiling-mounted light fixtures illuminate the areas under the balcony. The auditorium floors are concrete with carpeted aisles. The large stage has a wood floor and a fly loft that accommodates lighting, curtains, and scenery.



Auditorium and Balcony

The west end of the second floor contains a large multi-purpose room, a series of smaller rooms, and a restroom.



Basement Gymnasium

The civic center hall is centrally located in the basement of the Memorial Hall building. On the west side of the civic center hall, five overhead wood doors provide access to the gymnasium. The gymnasium has a sunken floor that is lower than that of the civic center hall. In the northwest corner of the civic center hall is an elevator installed during the 1979 renovation. An office, a kitchen, and boiler and mechanical rooms are located on the east side of the civic center hall. To the south of the civic center hall are dressing rooms, a sauna, a restroom, and storage rooms. The southwest corner of the basement contains men's and women's restrooms as well as a stairwell providing access to and from the basement to the first-floor lobby.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 5

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

The civic center hall provides space for large meetings, banquets, and ceremonies. The finishes reflect renovations completed in 1979. These alterations included the addition of vinyl composition floor tile, a dropped acoustical paneled ceiling that hangs below the original ceiling, and fluorescent lighting. The gymnasium has a maple floor, wooden bleachers lining the east side wall, and metal halide lighting.

INTEGRITY

The Memorial Hall Building retains its original location and the building's setting continues to reflect its original siting and recreation/entertainment function. The building retains its original form, plan, proportion, scale, massing, design, and materials and conveys its historic function. In particular, all of the historic character-defining elements of the building remain intact, including both the exterior decorative elements and the interior arrangement of spaces. All of the building's original exterior materials, including the brick and limestone and its wood windows, are in good condition.

The interior retains its original configuration of spaces with the civic center hall and gymnasium in the basement; the lobby and auditorium on the first floor; and the multi-purpose room and auditorium balcony on the second floor. While the building retains most of its original interior finishes on the first and second floors, renovations completed in 1979 resulted in the addition of new auditorium seats on the first floor, refurbished restrooms, and alterations to the basement civic center. The 1979 renovation also included updating the heating and cooling system.

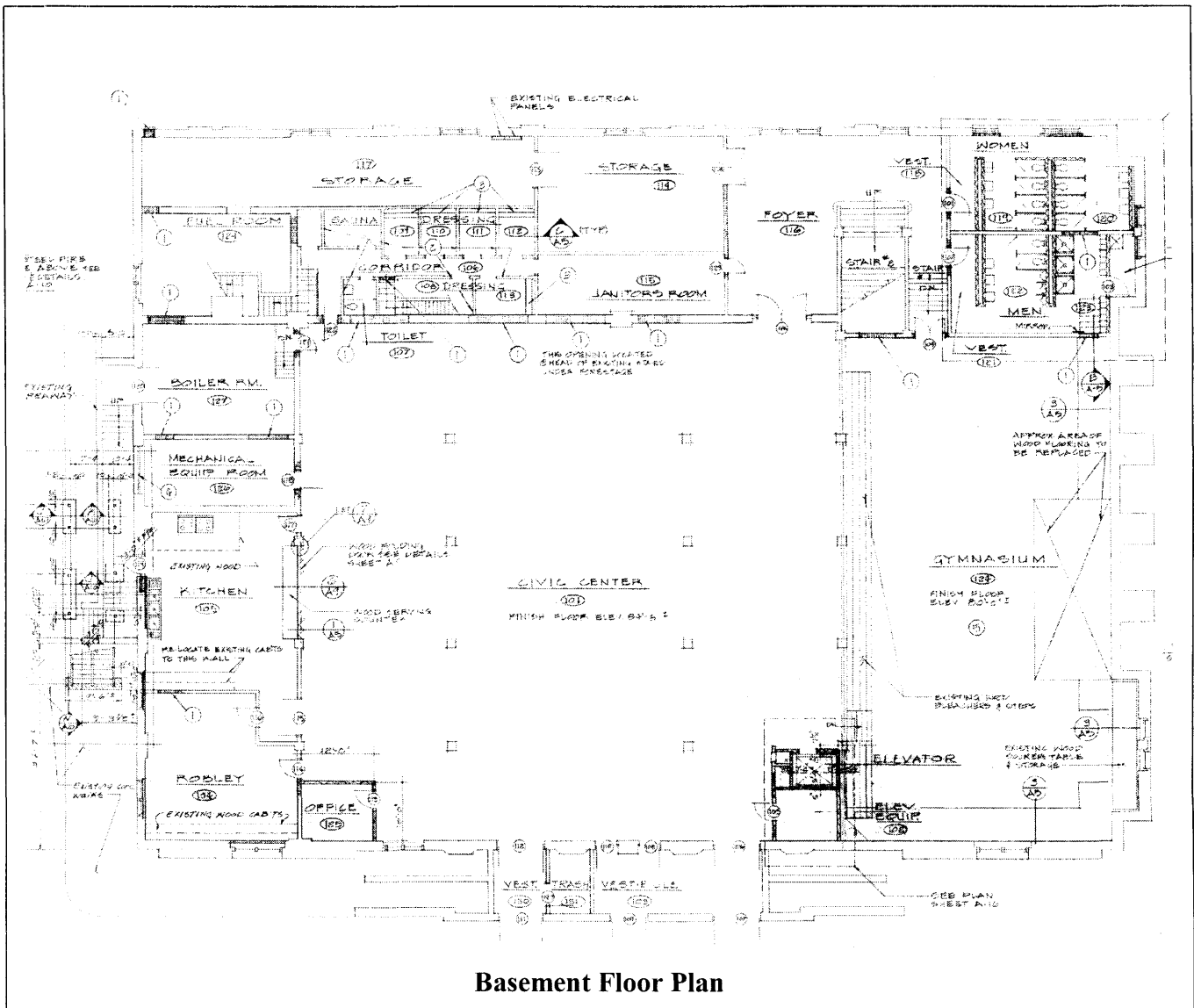
Overall, the building retains a high degree of integrity and clearly conveys its original design and commercial function.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 8

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**



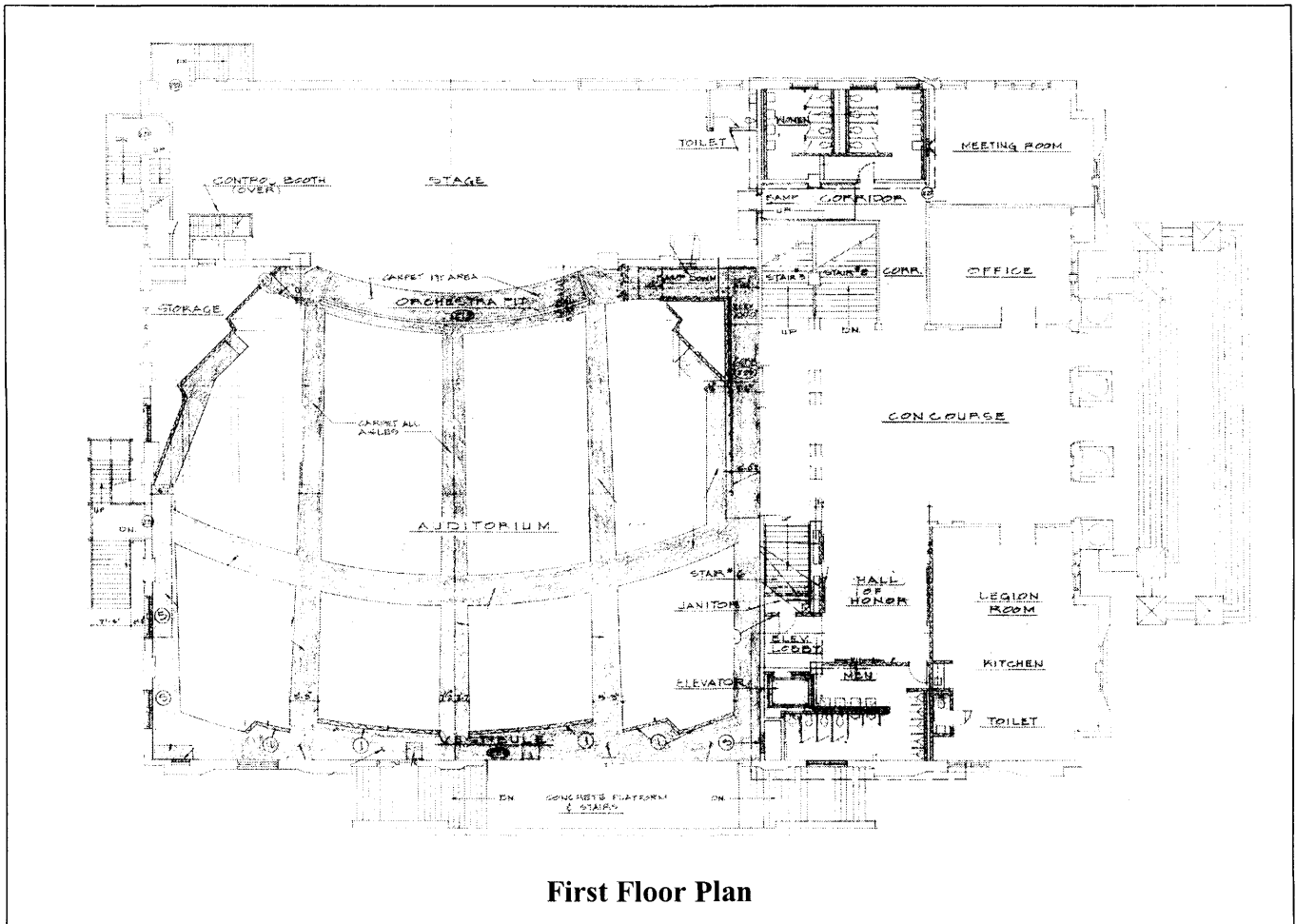
Basement Floor Plan

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**

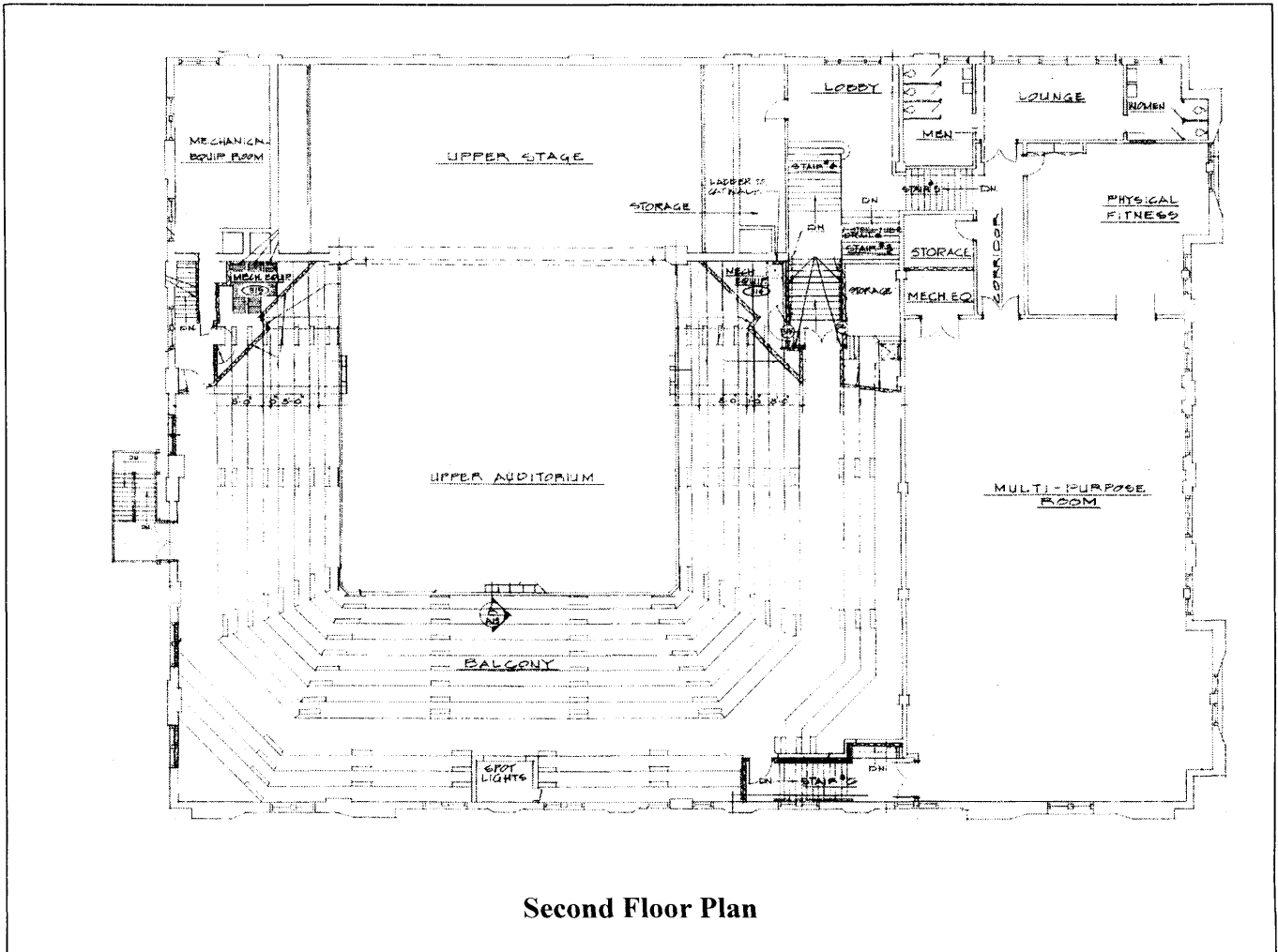


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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section 7 Page 10

**Memorial Hall
Montgomery County, Kansas**



Second Floor Plan

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**Memorial Hall Building
Montgomery County, Kansas**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Memorial Hall Building in Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas is significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. Erected in 1922-1923, it is an excellent example of the memorial hall property type constructed in communities throughout America during the 1920s. Memorial halls served a dual role, commemorating the casualties of World War I and providing locations for civic gatherings. The design by the Meier Brothers, a St. Joseph, Missouri architectural firm, expresses the Classical Revival style popular throughout the country during the 1920s for public buildings in general and memorial buildings in particular. The building's interior retains its original spaces, including the distinctive lobby, which features the original decorative tile floor, coffered plaster ceiling, and hanging pendant light fixtures. The auditorium retains its original design, spatial relationships, stage and proscenium arch, balcony seats, and light fixtures. The period of significance for the Memorial Hall Building begins in 1923 with the completion of its construction and ends in 1955, the fifty-year threshold established by the National Park Service as a reasonable date from which to evaluate the significance of resources

ELABORATION

THE EVOLUTION OF THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY MEMORIAL BUILDING PROPERTY TYPE

Throughout history, communities around the world have erected memorial structures to commemorate important individuals, historic events, and the casualties of wars and disasters. American memorials, especially large memorial buildings, have their origins in ancient Greek, Roman, and, later, European architecture.² In Europe and America, the ancient forms of pyramids, tombs, temples, and mausoleums inspired the design of funerary memorial architecture. Columns, obelisks, statues, tablets, and arches commemorated heroes and military victories or battle sites.

The construction of public memorial structures and buildings became popular in America during the nineteenth century after the War of 1812. Early American monuments were typically constructed in the form of a column or obelisk. One of the earliest American monuments, erected in Baltimore, Maryland in 1815, commemorated the American battle against the British that took place during the defense of

² Robert W. Blythe, Maureen Carroll, and Steven Moffson, *Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site: Historic Resource Study 2001*, rev. and updated by Brian F. Coffey, "Chapter Three: The Design and Construction of the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial, 1906-1911"[report online] (Atlanta, Georgia: National Park Service, Southeast Regional Office, Cultural Resources Stewardship, 2001; rev. and updated 22 January 03); available at <http://www.nps.gov/abli/hrs/hrs3.htm>; Internet; accessed 05 October 2004.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**Memorial Hall Building
Montgomery County, Kansas**

Baltimore during the War of 1812. Designed and executed by Italian sculptor Antonio Capellano, the Battle of North Point Monument incorporates a temple-like base topped by a stout column and sculpture. Baltimore is also the site of the first monument dedicated to President George Washington. Construction of the columnar Washington Monument began in 1815 and continued until its dedication ceremony on November 25, 1829. One of the best-known nineteenth century memorials in the United States is the Washington Monument in Washington, DC. Designed by Robert Mills, construction of this 555-foot-tall obelisk began in 1848 and ended on December 6, 1884 with the setting of the capstone.

After the Civil War, statues or shafts (columns, obelisks, and other similar forms) became popular memorial designs,³ and by the end of the nineteenth century, triumphal arches were gaining popularity. One of the most well-known examples of the triumphal arch in the United States is the 77-foot-tall Washington Arch in New York City's Washington Square. Designed by Stanford White of the noted architectural firm McKim, Mead and White, the final version of the marble stone arch was inaugurated in 1895.

After World War I, in reaction to the tremendous loss of life, communities funded war memorials throughout the United States and Europe. They occurred at a time when public memorials in general, especially those with patriotic themes, were believed to improve national moral standards and to underscore the principles of nationalism itself.⁴ *The American City Magazine* proclaimed that an adequate and artistic memorial would commemorate the American ideal of the hope for "a just and lasting peace between the nations of the world" rather than the theme of victory over the foe.⁵

In 1923, *The American City Magazine* surveyed communities in the United States and Canada to monitor memorial building activities. While the results of this survey do not encompass every public commemorative memorial building or structure erected, it offers a one-year snapshot of the memorial building movement. Nearly 500 cities responded to the survey. These included 389 American cities with populations over ten thousand; 98 American cities with populations of less than ten thousand; and 10 Canadian cities. In these communities, 144 memorial projects were either completed or under construction. There were 150 proposed projects under consideration and 203 communities had taken no action to build a war memorial. Of the 294 active and proposed projects, 37 percent were memorial buildings; 42 percent were other types of memorials, including trees, tablets, monuments, statues, parks, bridges, and miscellaneous structures; and 21 percent were undetermined. Memorial buildings were the

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Art and Ideals in War Memorials," *The American City Magazine*, February 1923, 107; Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

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National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 8 Page 13

**Memorial Hall Building
Montgomery County, Kansas**

single most popular type of commemorative monument. One hundred nine memorial buildings were either planned or completed, compared with 34 tablets, 33 monuments and statues, 21 parks, 20 miscellaneous structures, 8 bridges, and 8 trees. These commemorative buildings included memorial halls, municipal auditoriums, city halls, convention halls, American Legion buildings, hospitals, schools, lodge buildings, Y.M.C.A. structures, libraries, and community buildings.

Memorial buildings were popular because they offered physical facilities for the living to promote community and national values as well as a tribute to the sacrifices of the dead. In 1919, former Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane wrote in a letter to American mayors:

The war has shown, in the camps and camp cities, the great value of adequate facilities for fellowship and public recreation. Now that the men are returning home, they should have the opportunity through the coming years to perpetuate the democracy of the camps and to share with their fellow townsmen, in a suitable building, facilities for discussion of local and national problems and for community singing, drama, indoor athletics and other forms of wholesome recreation.⁶

World War I memorial buildings were generally constructed in the decade prior to the Great Depression. Of the memorial building projects listed in *The American City Magazine*, fourteen were publicly funded; twenty were funded with private subscriptions; and seven used a combination of the two funding sources. In addition to the Memorial Hall in Independence, Kansas, memorial buildings completed or under construction in Kansas in 1923 included a convention hall in Atchison; an auditorium and Legion quarters in El Dorado; an auditorium in Kansas City; a community house in Manhattan; and an auditorium in Salina. The magazine described the Memorial Hall in Independence as a convention hall.⁷ The magazine noted that Coffeyville, Kansas was preparing to build a memorial building and that Leavenworth, Kansas had completed a memorial park.⁸

THE ARCHITECTURE OF EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY MEMORIAL BUILDINGS

War memorials are significant buildings and structures constructed with the expectation that they would endure throughout the ages. The predominant architectural style chosen for memorial halls erected after World War I and before the Great Depression in the United States was the Classical Revival style. The memorial building was first seen in the ancient cultures of Egypt, Rome, and Greece. Different cultural

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 108.

United States Department of the Interior
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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groups erected obelisks and victory columns, which celebrated and honored the dead, and funerary structures such as mausoleums, throughout these ancient lands. Over the centuries, funerary architecture became less prominent as cemeteries and churches became burial places, and the size of commemorative structures and objects became limited to sculptural forms.⁹ The tomb and mausoleum returned to popular usage in eighteenth century England where they became incorporated into the landscape architecture of the informal English gardens. These structures adhered to the ancient forms of the pyramid, square, rectangle, circle, octagon, and obelisk and constituted a revival of the classical style.¹⁰ At the same time, Europeans, especially the English and French, rejected the Rococo and Baroque styles and embraced the simple purer forms of Roman and Greek architecture.¹¹ As a result, public mausolea erected throughout Europe in the early nineteenth century featured interpretations of classical architecture.¹²

The exposure of the American public to the Neoclassical and Beaux Arts styles provided by the popular 1893 Columbian Exposition profoundly changed the nature of public architecture and landscape design in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1890, organizers of the exposition selected a classical theme and hired landscape architect Frederic Law Olmstead, the Chicago architecture firm of Daniel Burnham and John Root, and prominent New York architects Richard Morris Hunt and Charles McKim, both graduates of the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, to plan and design the exposition. Designed in the Beaux Arts tradition, the much photographed, reported, and attended "Great White City" featured dramatic, colonnaded buildings arranged around a central court that captured the imagination of the American public. For the next quarter-century, classicism dominated public architecture and city planning. Both civic monuments and commercial buildings adopted this architectural vocabulary almost without exception, and its funerary origins made it the logical choice for designs to commemorate the nation's sacrifices following World War I.

Many trade journals of the era addressed the issues of design, construction, and placement of memorial buildings, offering advice on financing, structural systems, site placement and selection of materials, the importance of artistic and intellectual qualities in the building and even appropriate lettering types for

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Blythe, Carrol, and Moffson, "Chapter Three: The Design and Construction of the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial, 1906-1911"; available from <http://www.nps.gov/abli/hrs/hrs3.htm>; Internet; accessed 05 October 2004.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cyril M. Harris, ed., *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), 119.

¹² Blythe, Carrol, and Moffson, "Chapter Three: The Design and Construction of the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial, 1906-1911"; available from <http://www.nps.gov/abli/hrs/hrs3.htm>; Internet; accessed 05 October 2004.

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inscriptions.¹³ The functionality of a memorial/civic building combination seemed very efficient. Many communities considered memorial buildings a refreshing departure from traditional memorials, such as sculptures, tables, and shafts.

While some articles praised the dual-purpose memorial building, others held that a memorial should be more sacred than a building, favoring arches, statues, fountains, and shafts for memorials. Memorial building critic Egerton Swartwout condemned the use of public funds to build memorial buildings and accused city fathers who proposed erecting civic structures as “memorial” buildings of manipulating the taxpayers into approving municipal projects by appealing to their patriotism. Worse, with the passage of time, he proclaimed, the intended memorial function of these buildings (city halls, schools, libraries, auditoriums) would be forgotten and they would become simply utilitarian structures.¹⁴ He argued that a real memorial should serve no other purpose but to honor the dead or persons for whom it was built. Another critic, Paul P. Cret, doubted the value of non-permanent memorials, such as trees or groves in public squares and memorial parks.¹⁵ He joined Swartwout in his criticism of memorial buildings, stating that “many of the auditoriums, libraries and convention halls which fill the land fall short both in point of permanence and in the expression of the commemorative idea.”¹⁶ Regardless of this debate, countless communities, large and small, erected memorial halls during the 1920s.

Though many communities struggled to operate these facilities during their early years; today, most memorial halls have a long history as community centers and appear to continue to serve their communities as the venue for a variety of activities, including civic meetings, private rental functions, concerts, theatrical productions, sporting events, and other community activities. In addition to their civic functions, most memorial halls prominently feature special spaces such as a Hall of Honor that commemorates the sacrifices made by local soldiers who served their country in World War I and subsequent conflicts.

PROPERTY HISTORY

In July 1921, after much debate, Independence voters approved a bond issue for \$280,000 to build a memorial building. Initially proposed as an American Legion headquarters, the public became divided over funding the project. The *Independence Daily Reporter* reported that some wanted the hall to be paid

¹³ “Suggestions Regarding Treatment of War Memorials,” *Architectural Record*, February 1919, 191-192; Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

¹⁴ Egerton Swartwout, “Memorial Buildings,” *The Architectural Forum*, December 1926, 325-326; Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

¹⁵ Paul P. Cret, “Memorials — Columns, Shafts, Cenotaphs and Tablets,” *The Architectural Forum*, December 1926, 331; Miller Nichols Library, University of Missouri-Kansas City.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

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for by donations.¹⁷ Others didn't believe bonds should be passed for any purpose. On Election Day, the majority voted to build the Memorial Hall Building using the public bonds.

After the election, the city solicited plans and specifications for the new building. By December 1921, architects submitting plans included Arthur Beck of Independence, Kansas; Boller Brothers of Kansas City, Missouri; Elston, Axon & Russell of Springfield, Missouri; Thomas Wilkerson of Topeka, Kansas; a Mr. James of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Rudolph Meier of St. Joseph, Missouri; and W. B. Sweet of Wichita, Kansas.¹⁸ In January, the city awarded a conditional contract to the Meier Brothers firm. The city charged Rudolph and Eugene Meier with designing a building that would not cost more than \$246,000 to build. If their plan exceeded that amount, they risked not being paid and losing the contract.¹⁹ Meier Brothers succeeded and the design of the Memorial Hall Building reflected their specifications. In June 1922, the city granted general contractor A. E. Todd the contract to build Memorial Hall for \$193,349.

With great ceremony, the cornerstone ceremony for Memorial Hall occurred on Armistice Day, November 11, 1922. The American Legion and the Masonic Lodge coordinated the festivities. The event began with a parade from the Masonic building to the Memorial Hall Building site in which members of the American Legion, the Mid-Continent Band, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), Knights Templar, Blue Lodge, and Spanish American War veterans participated. At the site, C. W. Randolph of the C. W. Randolph Stone Company in Cherryvale presented the cornerstone of Montello granite. Engraved on the front (west side) of the stone was "Harold R. Andrews Post, 1922. No. 139, Department of Kansas" along with the American Legion insignia. The north face of the stone read, "Laid by Grand Lodge of Kansas, A.F. & A.M., Nov. 11, 1922. John McCullagh, Grand Master" along with the Masonic insignia. They placed an airtight copper box of memorabilia inside the stone, where it remains today. The box contained brochures and photos from a variety of Independence businesses; a history of Independence schools; lists of local Ancient Free and Accepted Masons (AF and AM) and GAR members; a list of Independence men who enlisted in World War I; copies of newspapers; and a photograph of Harold R. Andrews for whom the American Legion post was named.

The pending completion of the Memorial Hall Building in 1923 fostered optimism about bringing conventions to town. At their meeting in 1922, the Commercial Club set a goal to "bag" a number of

¹⁷ "Vote for Memorial Hall," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 13 July 1921, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

¹⁸ "Memorial Hall Plans: Architects Submitting Drawings and Plans Today," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 20 December 1921, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

¹⁹ "St. Joe Architects to Draw Plans for New Memorial Hall; Buildings Complete Not to Cost Over \$246,000," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 11 January 1922, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

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prominent conventions for the following year, including the conventions of the American Legion, the state music teachers, the state teachers, the state dental association, the federated clubs, the auto trade association, and the state bottlers association.²⁰

By October 1923, the Memorial Hall Building was completed. The city appointed a city commission serving as a board of trustees to manage the Memorial Hall Building beginning on October 20, 1923. The first trustees were R. R. Bittmann, chairman of the trustees, and L. R. Spradling and Charles A. Smith.

The American Legion opened the hall with a production of the Gilbert & Sullivan operetta *The Pirates of Penzance* as a fundraiser for purchasing furnishings. Opening night attendance was a disappointing five hundred, although the auditorium could seat nearly twenty-five hundred. The *Independence Daily Reporter* speculated that perhaps a lack of publicity and the public's expectation of an amateur production resulted in low attendance.²¹ The production, however, was not entirely an amateur affair. The show opened with a song by Chicago singer Gwendolyn Griffith. A professional actor, Mr. Ray Catney, played the role of Frederick and local talent performed the other roles.

Memorial Hall's October opening occurred just in time for Independence's annual Neewollah festival, a week-long event at the end of October that culminated in a beauty pageant and ball. The 1923 pageant and ball were held in the brand new Memorial Hall and included the first coronation of a pageant queen.

Memorial Hall operated at a deficit in its first two years — a problem that appears to be common to many of the nation's memorial buildings. Some evidence exists that almost immediately after opening communities struggled to meet operating costs. The onset of the Great Depression did not improve the situation. The experience of Independence's Memorial Hall Building reflects this dilemma. Just a few years after it opened, the Board of Trustees attempted to turn a profit by regularly showing movies in the hall, beginning in September 1926. Other Kansas towns struggling with similar economic conditions followed the ensuing court battle closely.²²

At this time, three private movie theaters operated in Independence and another theater for vaudeville was under construction. The theater operators and the mayor were unhappy with the decision by the board of

²⁰ "Commercial Club Lays Plans to Build Up City; A Big, Bright Year Ahead with Many Fine Prospects," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 11 January 1922, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

²¹ "Legion Play a Fitting Opening of Memorial Hall," *Independence (KS) Daily Reporter*, 9 October 1923, Independence (KS) Public Library, Microfilm.

²² "NIP Memorial Hall Show — Laws on the Use of its Building, A Need for Independence, Kansas," *Kansas City Times*, 12; Scrapbook, City of Independence, Kansas

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trustees to show movies at the Memorial Hall Building, declaring that the public building should not compete with the other privately owned theaters in town. The city attorney and county prosecutor filed suit on behalf of the State of Kansas against the City of Independence and the trustees in Montgomery County District Court, requesting a permanent injunction against the trustees operating movies in the building. In October 1926, District Court Judge J. W. Holdren handed down a temporary injunction stating that the government should not enter into private business where it competes with other private business. He also added that there were no laws in Kansas governing the use of memorial buildings.

In the meantime, the trustees, unable to operate a movie theater within the Memorial Hall Building, leased the hall to Elon Robley, the building's caretaker, so that he could show movies as a private enterprise. The city refused to issue a license to Robley for fear that it would be in contempt of court. Another suit resulted in a temporary injunction. Robley continued to show movies at Memorial Hall and offered other live performances until the court decided the issue. Robley named his theater "Memorial Theatre" and it was known as "The Good Theatre." In December 1926, Judge J. W. Holdren ruled in favor of the board of trustees and Robley by denying the request for a permanent injunction. Kansas Attorney General C. B. Griffith promised to appeal the decision to the Kansas State Supreme Court, arguing that leasing public buildings to private interests gave the leaseholder unfair advantage over competitors. He further stated that the case hinged largely on the interpretation of a statute defining the powers of the trustees.

While the court battles were waged, the Memorial Theatre showed approximately seventy movies and hosted twenty-three live performances from September 1926 through April 1927. These included Will Rogers, Jiggs, Maggie & Dinty, Schintz Seymour's Midnight Follies, and various other vaudeville, musical, and theatrical shows.²³

In April 1927, Robley announced that the theater would close for the summer due to hot weather and the lack of good stock companies and road shows during the summer season. On June 11, 1927, the *Independence Daily Reporter* reported that the State Supreme Court reversed the Montgomery County District Court's decision and decided that the memorial building's owners had no power to lease the building.²⁴ The era of showing motion pictures at Memorial Hall came to an end.

²³ This era of Memorial Hall's history is documented in a scrapbook now in the possession of the City of Independence. The scrapbook contains newspaper articles and advertisements for movies and live performances held at Memorial Hall from about 1926 through 1927.

²⁴ "Memorial Hall Not Movie, Says Court," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 11 June 1927, Microfilm, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

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Live performances continued in the building. In November 1927, the Ziegfeld Follies appeared at Memorial Hall on their way from Omaha to Dallas. The company heard that Independence was good for a one-night performance and stopped; perhaps making Independence the smallest town it ever played. The Follies drew one of the largest crowds in Memorial Hall's history, outselling even Will Rogers.

Memorial Hall was the largest performance venue between Oklahoma City and Kansas City. It was said that not even Tulsa, Joplin, or Wichita had facilities to handle the crowds that Memorial Hall could accommodate.²⁵ Appearances by famous performers included John Philip Sousa, Stan Kenton, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Elsie Janis, Madame Ernestine Schumann-Heink, and others. In addition to live entertainment, the hall also accommodated conventions, food shows, automobile shows, and even ice shows. During World War II, the United Service Organizations, Inc. (USO) installed a snack bar and office to service soldiers stationed at the Independence Army Air Field.²⁶

Television diminished the popularity of live performance after World War II and Memorial Hall no longer booked stock companies and musicals that provided entertainment to the community during the previous twenty-five years. By the late 1950s, the hall hosted fewer large conventions.²⁷ Service organizations, including the American Legion and its auxiliary, the Father's Club, the Women's Relief Corps, Spanish-American War Veterans, the Mother Barkley Auxiliary, and the Veterans of Foreign War (VFW) and its auxiliary continued to house their operations in the hall. In 1957, Elon Robley, manager of the Independence Memorial Hall, summed up the role of the building in the community at this time, "Memorial Hall has never been a burden. Nominal fees are charged for the accommodations. This building is a source of activity and service to the entire community. It's a big asset from every standpoint."²⁸

Renovations to the Memorial Hall Building in 1979 modernized the civic center hall space in the basement and installed comfortable seating on the first floor of the auditorium. Today, the Memorial Hall Building continues to host public and private events. Neewollah remains the largest single event utilizing the facility.

²⁵ Wilma Schweitzer, "Memorial Hall Has Been a Crossroads for the Stars of Entertainment World," *Independence (KS) Reporter*, 7 April 1957, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

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ARCHITECTS

Little is known about architects Eugene and Rudolph Meier. The St. Joseph-based architects practiced together until the 1960s. They designed several buildings in St. Joseph, Missouri, including the Noyes Hospital, the Lincoln Building, North High School, and Everett School.²⁹

CONCLUSION

The Memorial Hall in Independence, Kansas embodies the distinctive building type and Classical Revival style architecture associated with memorial halls constructed in large and small towns throughout the United States following the conclusion of World War I. Its function as a civic entertainment/recreation facility and its Classical Revival style are typical of these buildings constructed with public funds. Because of its high degree of integrity, it continues today to communicate feelings and associations with memorial structures of the era and with its role as a community center and memorial.

²⁹ Shelly White, Draft National Register of Historic Places National Register Nomination *Everett School, Buchanan County, Historic Resources of St. Joseph, Buchanan County, Missouri, Multiple Property Listing*; Presented to the Missouri Advisory Council on Historic Preservation 12 November 2004. Listing of this property in the National Register of Historic Places is pending at this time.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 9 thru 18, inclusive, Block 16, Original Plat, City of Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This nomination includes the parcel of land historically associated with the resource.

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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Photographer: Kristen Ottesen
Historic Preservation Services, LLC

Date of Photographs: September 2004

Location of Negatives: City of Independence
120 North 6th Street
Independence, Kansas 67301

**Photograph
Number**

Description and Camera View

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Northwest Corner |
| 2 | West Elevation |
| 3 | Terrace and Statue of Liberty sculpture on west elevation |
| 4 | South Elevation |
| 5 | East Elevation |
| 6 | Northeast Corner |
| 7 | North Elevation |
| 8 | North Elevation, entry into auditorium from veranda |
| 9 | Cornerstone |
| 10 | First Floor Window, west elevation |
| 11 | West Entry Doors |
| 12 | Lobby, view toward west |
| 13 | Lobby, view toward east |
| 14 | Stage |
| 15 | Auditorium and balcony |
| 16 | Basement Hall, view toward southwest |
| 17 | Basement Gymnasium, view toward north |
| 18 | Second Floor Multi-purpose room, west end of building |
| 19 | Original auditorium seats in balcony |