

56-1947



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 William Inge Boyhood Home
Other names/site number KHRI #125-2670-00179
Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 514 N. 4th Street not for publication
City or town Independence 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 at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D
Patrick Zollner 11-21-17
Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date
Kansas State Historical Society
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:)
Olivia Abernathy 1-5-18
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County KS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

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

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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single-dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Queen Anne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone: Sandstone
walls: Wood
roof: Asphalt shingles
other: Brick

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County KS
County and State

Narrative Description

Summary

William Inge's Boyhood Home is located at 514 N. 4th St., Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas. Built in 1895, the house is a two-story Queen Anne. The clapboard house features a prominent wraparound front porch with stone piers and a hipped roof with lower cross gables. Although some minor changes have taken place at the house since Inge lived here, the house's overall appearance and integrity, especially on the interior, resemble the house in which William Inge resided from 1914 to 1930. The building today houses visiting theatre professionals at the William Inge Center for the Arts at Independence Community College, as well as acts as the stage for Inge's plays during the annual Inge Festival.

Elaboration



Figure 1: Inge House circa 1950, showing the historic screened-in porch.

Setting

The Inge House is located in eastern Independence, a few blocks west of the Verdigris River (*Figure 2*). When constructed in 1895 this was the only house on the block, but now it is surrounded by early 20th century styled dwellings. The surrounding neighborhood is still primarily residential with historic brick streets. Newer concrete sidewalks with curbs separate the street from the yards.

The Inge House faces west onto 4th Street, and a concrete sidewalk connects the house's porch with the sidewalk. The landscape around the house is minimal with some shrubs lining the porch on the west and a few trees along the north and south lot lines. To the south of the house is a concrete ribbon driveway, leading to a two-car garage at the southeast corner of the parcel (*Boundary Map*). Historic Sanborn maps from 1923 and 1931 show a garage at this location.¹

The current iteration is not historic and therefore is considered non-contributing to the nomination.

Inge House

The prosperity of a booming city of Independence in the late 19th century, which is elaborated in Section 8, offers context for the architectural details of the Inge House. Fortunately, different owners over the years did not make significant alterations that mar its stately, turn-of-the-century sense of place and historic integrity. The biggest changes came with the enclosure of the back porch (*Figure 1*), the replacement of an upstairs front window, the installation of steel siding, and a recent addition of an ADA ramp.² The steel siding was removed at the beginning of 2017.

The two-story (plus basement) Queen Anne is 2,290 square feet and has details typical of its style: an irregular footprint, a hipped roof with lower cross-gables that is composition-shingled, clapboard siding with patterned shingles in the gable ends; a large wrap-around porch. Two red brick chimneys pierce the roof and formerly served five interior fireplaces.³ Most of the patterned gable shingles are laid in a fish-scale design, but other shapes form triangles and scallops that surprise the eye expecting sameness and conformity in the pattern.

¹ Sanborn Map Company, "Kansas Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Independence [Kansas]" (Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1923), 29 & (1931), 22 [digitized online] ProQuest "Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970" <http://ezproxy.lawrence.lib.ks.us:2051/> (accessed September 12, 2017).

² The ramp was built some four years ago to provide access to visitors under the Americans with Disabilities Act, especially when play performances are staged for the public within the house.

³ Four fireplaces still exist; three are empty except for the gas line, and the one in the dining room has gas logs. Most likely all were originally gas since they have shallow fireboxes, and when the house was constructed - with the "unlimited" supply of natural gas - nearly all the fireplaces in town were gas rather than wood burning.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County KS
County and State

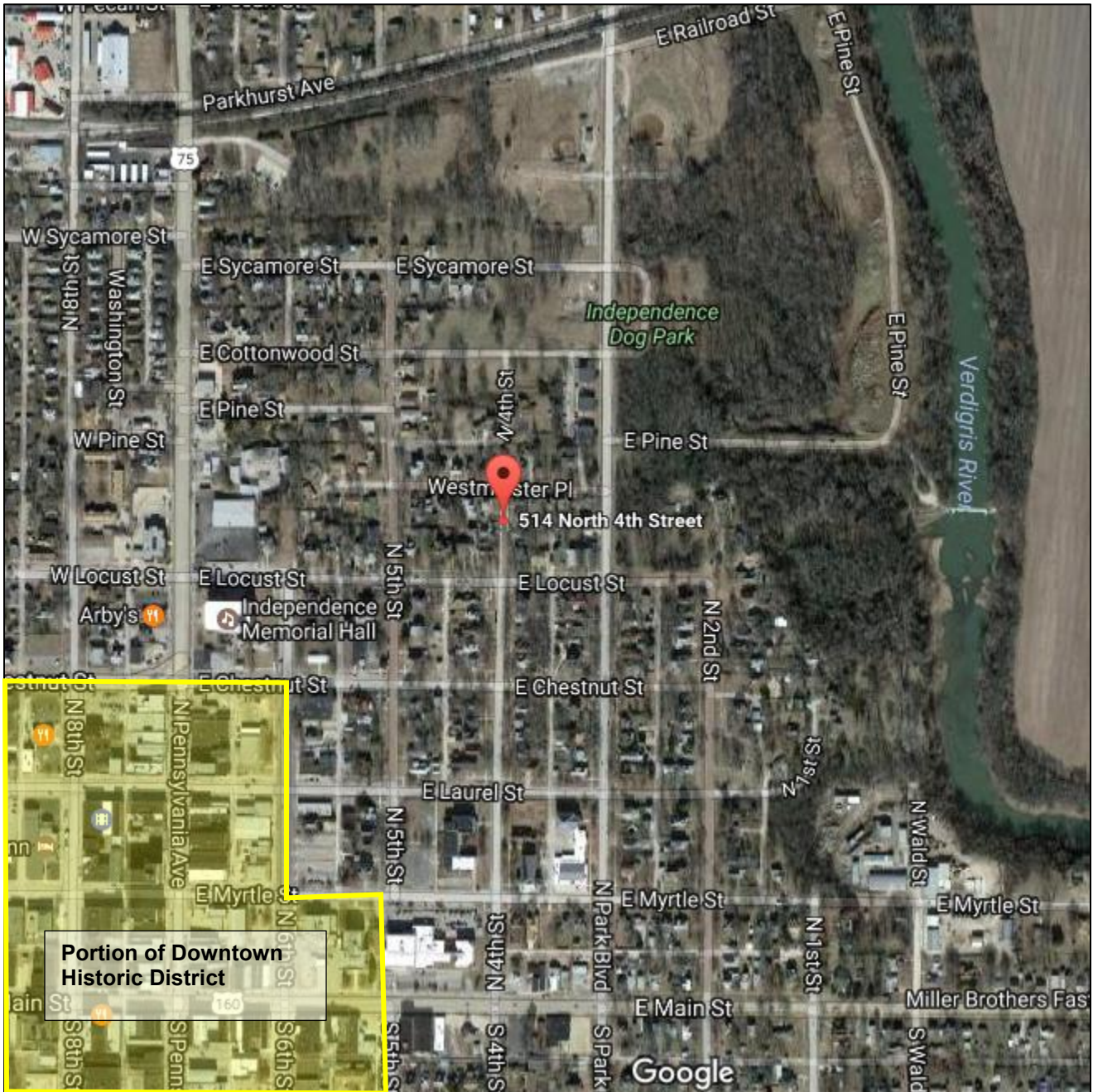


Figure 2: Contextual view of the Inge House within the city of Independence (Google, 2017). North is up.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County KS

County and State

West (Front) Elevation

The house's main façade faces west onto 4th Street. The entire lower level is covered by the house's dominant porch. Measuring 572 square feet, the one-story porch runs the full width of the front and along approximately one-third of the south side of the house. Seven round wooden columns support the roof and rest on rusticated sandstone piers that extend approximately three-and-a-half feet from ground level. The columns have simple Doric capitals. Between each of the stone piers is a wooden balustrade except where a set of stone steps accesses the porch from the west and south. The porch floor is wood; the ceiling is wooden bead-board; and the low-slope hipped roof is composition shingle like the house.

The main level's western wall steps back twice. The northern bay contains two openings. The north opening is a wide double-sash window that lights the living room. The stained glass fixed top sash is approximately 12 inches high; below this is a single light pane that opens approximately 12 inches. This window retains a historic screen (other windows have aluminum screens). To the south of this window is the house's original front door, opening into the foyer. This door contains a divided light upper section with decorated insets in the bottom. Above the door is a stained-glass transom. To the south of the front door, the house footprint steps back. This step back is accentuated by a prominent corner bay (on the south) with historic one-over-one double-sash windows that light the family room; this is a typical window unless otherwise noted. The building steps back a third time. This south bay is filled with a three-window unit that lights the den.

The upper level's western wall steps back twice. The northern bay's wall plane is flush with the lower level. This gable-front bay has two windows evenly spaced in the wall and centered on the gable peak, which light the west bedroom. In the gable end are patterned shingles with a small centered attic vent. To the south of this bay is a gable-fronted former porch accessed from the south bedroom. The gable is flush with the gable to the north; the southwestern corner of the roof is supported by a square post with simple capital. This capital vertically aligns with the corner of the north bay on the first level. Formerly this porch contained a rounded railing similar to the railing on the main level porch (*Figure 1*). The wall beneath this porch is set back and is vertically aligned with the center bay on the main level, extending south beyond the porch roof. Formerly a single pedestrian door was located in this wall under the porch roof. At some point after 1950 this door was removed and a non-historic, horizontal, three-pane window unit installed. This likely occurred when the steel siding was added because plywood covers the opening where the door and clapboard was historically located.

South Elevation

The main level of the south façade steps back three times. The western bay is the furthest recessed and contains no openings. The middle bay contains the three-windowed unit described above at the southwest corner. To the east of this corner unit is a single door leading from the porch into the family room. This door contains 12 panes, and a transom is above the door. The easternmost section of the lower level extends to the eave line of the porch roof, which extends east to cover the main level rooms at this location. The western half of this bay contains its historic four-window unit, lighting the den. The eastern half formerly was the house's screened in porch, which was enclosed around the time the steel siding was installed; this space now contains the laundry room. A non-historic door and one-over-one window are located in this wall; the door is in the approximate location of a former screen door. The walls of this enclosed porch are currently exposed backerboards where the steel siding was attached.⁴ The recent wooden ADA ramp covers the entirety of the easternmost bay of the main level.

The upper level south façade also is stepped. The westernmost bay is located under the porch roof and contains no openings. The center bay is vertically aligned with the center bay of the main level. The western portion of this bay has a front gable roof with patterned shingles in the gable. A historic window that lights the south bedroom is centered in the gable with a small historic attic vent centered in the gable end. The eastern portion of this bay has a side gable roof and contains no openings. To the east of this center bay the wall is recessed again. This east bay contains a set of four windows, lighting the east bedroom.

East (Rear) Elevation

The easternmost portion of the rear elevation is a backwards vertical L. The southern half of this elevation is one-story; the northern half is two stories with a flat roof. The one-story portion contains the enclosed porch at the south with a single non-historic window is located within this wall and lights the laundry. To the north of the enclosed porch is a blank wall. Within the first level of the two-story portion of the house is a six-pane metal casement window that lights the kitchen. The upper

⁴ Current restoration plans call for this section to be covered with clapboard.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County KS
County and State

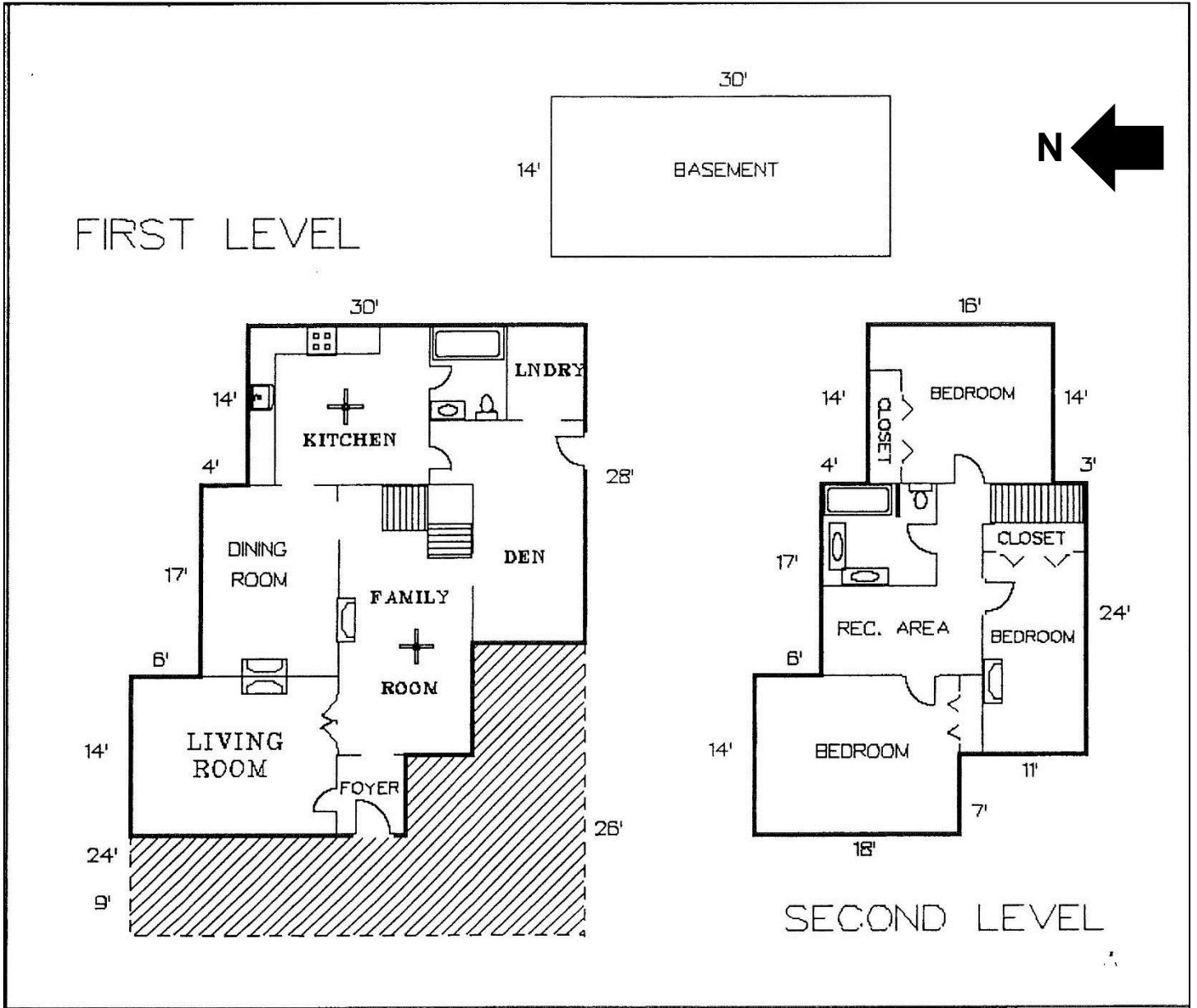


Figure 3: Floor plans

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County KS

County and State

level contains two two-window units, lighting the east bedroom. Beneath the kitchen window, in the foundation, is a masonry opening into the basement. This opening used to be a window into the cellar. This opening now contains the exhaust for the furnace unit.

The house's easternmost portion extends from the main block of the house, leaving about four feet of the main block's walls on either side. No opening is in the south portion of this wall; a small one-over-one window is located in the upper level of the north portion of the main block's wall and lights the upstairs bathroom. There are no openings in the main level of this wall. To the north of the main block and further recessed to the west is the west wall of the living room (main level) and west bedroom. A single window is located on each level of this wall.

North Elevation

Similar to the house's other three sides, the north elevation is stepped. The easternmost portion is recessed furthest south. A six-pane casement is located at the east end of the main level, lighting the kitchen. The upper story of this wall contains a three-window unit (the west window is currently boarded). These windows light the east bedroom. The north elevation's center bay contains a centered shallow box window with three units and a hipped roof. This window unit lights the dining room. In the upper story is a single window slightly offset to the west of center; this window lights the upstairs bathroom. Finally, in the west bay of the elevation are two centered windows, one at each story, lighting the living room and west bedroom. This bay is gable-fronted with patterned shingles in the gable end and a historic attic vent centered in the gable.

Interior - Main Level

The house's interior remains highly intact from the years William Inge resided here. Floors are wood; walls and ceilings are plaster, and historic trim and fixtures remain throughout the house. Several interior doors are also historic and contain transoms. The rooms, especially in the main level, are all interconnected instead of being connected through a series of hallways. This maximizes each room's space and light/air flow between rooms; every room in the house has an exterior wall, with a majority of these exterior walls containing a historic window. The main level is the largest, containing 1346 square feet.

A small *foyer* is encountered upon entering the house from the west. In the foyer's north wall is a French door into the living room; a French door with transom in the east wall leads into the family room. The *living room* occupies the house's northwest corner. The wood floor in this room is laid in a concentric rectangle pattern. A fireplace is in the east wall. In the east half of the south wall is a pair of 12-light doors (with two-light transom) that open inward and lead into the family room. A door in the west half of the south wall leads into the foyer.

The *family room* is located east of the foyer and south of the living and dining rooms. The wood floor in this room is laid in a concentric rectangle pattern. A fireplace is centered in the north wall between the doors into the living room on the west and a doorway into the dining room to the east. The main ell-shaped staircase is located in the room's southeast corner, and a built-in bookcase is located to the north of the stair along the east wall. The house's prominent bay window unit is located in the room's southwest corner; to the east of this is a door leading to the porch. Between the stairs and the porch door is another opening that leads into the den.

The north of the family room and east of the living room is the *dining room*. This room features a fireplace centered in the west wall and a boxed window bay centered in the north wall. A cased opening in the east wall leads into the kitchen, and a cased opening with transom at the east end of the south wall leads into the family room. The *kitchen* is located in the northeast corner of the house. The kitchen has been updated since the Inges' time. A full ADA bath is located through a door in the east end of the kitchen's south wall. Through a door at the west end of the kitchen's south wall is the den. Historically, the kitchen would have opened into the screened porch.

The *den* is an ell-shaped room that wraps around the staircase's east and south walls. Historically, the den's east wall aligned with the family room's east wall. To the east of the stair is the door into the kitchen; to the west of the stair is the cased opening into the family room. A doorway in the south end of the east wall leads into the laundry, which was installed after the screened-in porch was enclosed. The door in the den's south wall was historically the location of the porch's screen door. Today this door provides access to the ADA ramp.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County KS

County and State

Interior - Upper Level

The upper level contains the private spaces, namely three bedrooms, a “pass-through” room (rec. area on floor plan), and a bathroom, all within 944 square feet. The main stair’s ell runs north-to-south to access a short hallway. To the east of the stairs is the *east bedroom* with a closet along the north wall; this closet contains at least two windows in its north wall. Directly to the north and across the hall from the stair is the *bathroom*. One can easily imagine this space at the top of the stairs being the darkest location in the house—a reference to Inge’s play *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*—as this is the only space in the house without a window. The hallway opens into the *rec area* to the east of the bathroom. The rec area is lighted by a single window in its north wall, and it shares its south wall with the hallway.⁵ A door in the center of the south wall leads into the *south bedroom*. This room has a fireplace on the north wall to the east of the door, and a closet fully occupies the room’s east end. Formerly, this room contained a door in its east wall that led to the upstairs “smoking porch.” A door in the rec area’s east wall leads into the *northwest bedroom*, the largest of the three bedrooms. A closet is located at the east end of the south wall.

Basement

The 420 square feet unfinished basement is accessed via a steep staircase through a door in the kitchen. This space is located only under the kitchen/main level bathroom/laundry area. The basement could better be described as a cellar as it has a concrete floor and stone foundation walls. The hot water tank and the downstairs furnace are located here.

Integrity

The William Inge Boyhood Home retains a high degree of architectural integrity from its period of significance associated with Inge himself. The primary spaces of the house—including the family room, staircase, and main porch—appear as they did when Inge resided here. Their materials, design, and workmanship clearly communicate their association with Inge, and many of the house’s spaces can be easily identified in Inge’s works.

⁵ According to Ken Brown, “I had always heard that this was, in fact, Billy’s room. Not sure where the word ‘recreation’ came from. I think at one time there was a kitchen sink in that room - perhaps so the school teachers who rented rooms there would have a place to do some cooking/dishwashing.”

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County KS
County and State

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.

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.

Areas of Significance

Performing Arts

Period of Significance

1914-1930

Significant Dates

1914

1930

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Inge, William Motter

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

Although constructed in 1895, the house at 514 N. 4th Street is significant for its association with William Inge, who resided here from 1914, the year after his birth, until 1930 when he moved to Lawrence to attend the University of Kansas.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

As is discussed further in the following narrative, this house is the most significant resource associated with William Inge. While he wrote his award-winning works elsewhere in the country, no other place in Inge's life influenced him as much as the house—and town—in which he was raised. Therefore, this property meets Criteria Consideration C.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The 1895 Queen Anne house at 514 N. 4th Street in Independence sheltered William Motter Inge (1913-1973) from the time he was a year old until he left Independence in 1930 to attend the University of Kansas. Inge is an acclaimed mid-20th century playwright whose dramas continue to be produced by theatres across the nation, including Broadway. Inge's major awards include a 1953 Pulitzer Prize in Drama (*Picnic*) and a 1961 Academy Award for Best Screenplay (*Splendor in the Grass*). The home he occupied from infancy to young adulthood, and which scholars cite as influential in his dramatic works, is nominated to the National Register under Criterion B for its association with William Inge, as the best extant resource associated with the playwright. While a writer, the area of significance selected for this house is Performing Arts, as Inge's significance is most closely associated with the creation of dramas in the form of plays.⁶

Elaboration



Figure 4: Inge House, 1946.

The house at 514 N. 4th St. was built in 1895, 25 years after the founding of Independence. By then, oil had been discovered, creating unprecedented wealth in the area and spawning beautiful homes for such oil industry tycoons as Harry Sinclair, the founder of Sinclair Oil, and the executives of Kansas Gas & Electric and Kansas Natural Gas, both headquartered in Independence. Independence Gas Company employed many citizens, and its owners built and renovated some of the largest, most striking homes in Independence.⁷

The two-story Queen Anne was built for an entrepreneur of a different sort: Clark Milligan made a living raising and selling mules to the Army.⁸ Originally the lone house on its block, it was sold by Milligan to the Inge family in 1914. Afterward, Milligan split and sold other land parcels separately, soon resulting in more house construction in the 500 block because of desirability of the neighborhood. The Inge house is one

of the oldest in the vicinity and is the second oldest of the Queen Anne style in Independence. Its large wraparound porch may have inspired other builders of the time to include one in their designs.

Luther and Maude Inge were not into oil or exceedingly wealthy, but William's grandfather did own the dry goods store in town, and his father worked for the store's supplier. With many of the residents experiencing great economic success, business was good for the store and Inge's father.⁹ While not as grand as the houses of some of the newly-oil-rich, the Inge house contributes beauty and statelyness to the neighborhood's variety of types and sizes. Within one block of the house sits Dutch Colonial, Colonial Revival and Prairie-style houses. Two were built for oil entrepreneurs, one in 1907 and one in 1915. In addition, a large bungalow-style house was built for Cam Bloom, an oil executive, just down the street in 1918. According to one account, Independence in the years before the Great Depression had the highest per capita bank deposits in the nation.¹⁰

⁶ The NPS defines Performing Arts as "the creation of drama, dance, and music." Kansas SHPO interprets this as allowing for the writing creation of drama, which SHPO believes more accurately reflects Inge than does the area of literature.

⁷ Ken D. Brown, "A Guide to Historic Homes in Independence, Kansas," rev. ed. (Independence, Kans.: Self-published, 1993), 107. Brown calls this a Princess Anne, which he defines as a "scaled down version of the Queen Anne . . . that has less ornamentation [to cut] construction costs, minimize repairs, avoid unnecessary labor and provide the greatest amount of display at the least possible expense."

⁸ Ken D. Brown, "A Guide to Historic Homes in Independence, Kansas," (Independence: Self-published, 1978), 94, fig. 80.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Bennett F. Waxse, "Kansas Youth of William Inge," *Kansas City Star* (November 19, 1955): n.p., courtesy *Kansas Collection*.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Montgomery County Kansas

Name of Property

County and State



Figure 5: William Inge, circa 1960.

William Motter Inge was born to Luther and Maude Inge on May 3, 1913, in Independence, Kansas. At that time, the family lived on 9th Street, but when Inge was a year old, the family moved to 514 N. 4th Street in a neighborhood of similar houses shaded by towering elms along a red brick street. Inge attended nearby Washington Grade School through the sixth grade,¹¹ and he graduated from Montgomery County High School in 1930. Throughout those years of youth, the stately Victorian was Bill Inge's home until he went off to college at the University of Kansas in the fall of 1930.¹²

Clearly, the house and the town of Independence served as an incubator for Inge's professional interest in theater, as well as deeply-felt stories about the human condition, particularly the universal experiences of loneliness, yearnings for love, family conflict and lost youth. Like a theatrical performance, family life in the 4th Street house moved through events happy and sad, comic and dark. This is known not only through biographical works but in the stories and characteristics of the plays that would make Inge famous. Every student of his work acknowledges that most of his works are autobiographical to some degree.¹³

While Inge's famous works were created in dwellings of his adulthood, including in St. Louis and New York City, the Kansas influences of home life and community dominate those works. From the set design of the play and film of *Picnic*, to family tension in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, middle-of-the-country themes reflect occurrences in the boyhood of Inge, who was a quiet observer taking it all in.¹⁴ The Midwestern forces of young Inge's observations rarely would be displaced as story themes by flashier times of his adult life in cities, which also included Nashville, Tennessee, and Los Angeles, California.

In a 1970 recording created for the centennial celebration of the founding of Independence, Inge said:

I've always been glad that I grew up in Independence, because I feel it gave me a knowledge of people and love of people. I've often wondered how people raised in cities ever develop any knowledge of humankind. People who grow up in small towns get to know each other so much more clearly than they do in cities...Independence lies in the very heart of our country, and so maybe its people have more heart in human affairs. Big people come out of small towns.¹⁵

As a youngster, Bill Inge wanted to act and would put on plays for the neighborhood, incorporating other kids from the neighborhood into his productions.¹⁶ In later years, his neighbor, Nora Steinberger, recalled, "Bill loved giving plays...in the barn behind the house. We all had to pay a penny apiece to see the plays and when we found out Bill was making a little money off us kids, we got a little mad at him."¹⁷ Of course, "Billy" of North 4th Street probably could not imagine his future of mighty prizes for writing, including a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award.

Influences: Independence & Tennessee Williams

From 1908 to 1946, the Independence school system had a beloved English and drama teacher named Anna Ingleman. Even today, plaques listing recipients of "Anna Awards," an annual play competition named after her, hang in the theater of the William Inge Center for the Arts at Independence Community College. In addition to Inge, Ingleman taught Vivian Vance,

¹¹ Independence's current National Register-listed Washington Elementary School was constructed in 1939. Inge attended its predecessor.

¹² Ralph F. Voss, *A Life of William Inge: The Strains of Triumph* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1989), 11.

¹³ Joseph Kaye, "Lessons in Family Life in New Play by Former Kansan," *The Kansas City Star* (January 2, 1958): n.p.

¹⁴ Arthur F. McClure, *Memories of Splendor: The Midwestern World of William Inge* (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1989),

13.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁶ Waxse, n.p.

¹⁷ McClure, 14.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State



Figure 6: William Inge & Tennessee Williams.

who played Ethel Mertz in television's *I Love Lucy* show. But Ingleman, who taught Inge in the late 1920s, recalled that he in particular was "a genius in some ways and I knew it."¹⁸ Under her influence, Inge plunged into school dramatic productions and opportunities to entertain at social events of community organizations such as the Kiwanis Club.¹⁹ When not entertaining, Inge attended live performances and movies in town. Three blocks west of his house is the 2,000-seat Memorial Hall where performances stoked Inge's interest in the theatre.²⁰ Internationally famous artists performed here, including humorist Will Rogers. In addition, no fewer than four movie theaters delivered daily doses of Hollywood.²¹ He later recalled that he "sort of based my life upon the theatre."²²

Inge's collegiate years converged with the Great Depression. After going off to the University of Kansas (KU) in the fall of 1930, he had to return home to the 4th Street house at the end of that first year. He took courses at Independence Community College in the 1931-32 academic year, then returned to KU to be a speech and drama major and graduate in 1935 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. At KU, speech and drama professor Allen Crafton described the student Inge as "a good fellow...shy" and "not at all interested in writing while he was a student of mine." However, Inge also told Crafton that he enjoyed standing backstage during plays and hearing other actors deliver their lines. Inge told him he thought listening to the play taught him something about it.²³

Throughout the 1930s, Inge performed in plays at the colleges he attended and acted in summer stock and tent shows to help pay for his education.²⁴ Ultimately, some three years after graduating from KU in 1935, Inge gave up his ambition to be an actor after an experience with stage fright in an amateur production of *Our Town*.²⁵ It was at this point that Inge's interest in theatre moved from acting to writing.

The need to make a living led Inge to teaching. His sister Helene was a teacher, and she improved her qualifications by entering George Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Bill Inge decided to follow suit, also going to Nashville but developing bouts of depression and insomnia. While successful in course work, he was unenthusiastic about the prospect of teaching. He really wanted to go to New York but lacked the nerve and was therefore full of self-reproach.²⁶

At age 24, Inge landed his first teaching job in Columbus, Kansas. The job lasted a year before he returned to Peabody to complete his master's degree in 1938. He accepted a teaching position at Stephens College, an exclusive two-year women's college in Columbia, Missouri. There he had the opportunity to work with Maude Adams, a celebrated actress. Inge biographer Ralph Voss writes that the Columbia years finally moved him from teaching into regular writing. "For whatever reason, Inge began to write with some regularity," Voss says, and that proved to be a turning point in Inge's career.²⁷

In 1944 at the age of 31, kismet happened for Inge. He was living in St. Louis and finally writing professionally and happily for the *Star-Times* newspaper as the drama critic. He also met Thomas Lanier ("Tennessee") Williams, a fledgling playwright whose mother was living in the St. Louis suburb of Clayton. Williams lived in New York and was visiting his mother before traveling on to Chicago to attend rehearsals of his new play, *The Glass Menagerie*. Williams agreed to an interview, launching a friendship that would continue to the end of Inge's life.²⁸

¹⁸ McClure, 14.

¹⁹ Thomas Averill, ed., *Six Kansas Writers in Place* (Dodge City, Kans.: Cultural Heritage and Arts Center, 1980), n.p.

²⁰ Memorial Hall was listed in the National Register in 2005.

²¹ McClure, 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 51.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Montgomery County Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

Of their first meeting, biographer Voss writes, "That Inge might have found Williams admirable is hardly surprising. Williams was more than handsome, graceful, and possessed of a southern elegance; he was a kindred spirit in many significant ways."²⁹ As contemporaries, the two playwrights offered support and respect for each other, especially Inge toward Williams; however, Williams' fondness for Inge was often tempered with jealousy, especially during Inge's success in the 1950s. As Williams wrote to a friend in 1955, "[This fear of failing as a playwright] 'takes such ugly, odious tangential forms, such as my invidious resentment of Inge's great success despite my friendly attitude toward Bill and his toward me. I was consumed with envy of his play's success.... Hideous competitiveness which I never had in me before!'"³⁰ Voss emphasizes that the two were incredibly important to each other; more than any other individual, Williams helped Inge find his voice.³¹

One of the commonalities that influenced both Inge and Williams is that "both men came from father-absent, mother-dominated homes...."³² Of the Inge home on 4th Street, it is commonly stated that females dominated. Luther Inge was a traveling salesman who was often absent from the home. Maude doted on her son, the youngest child of five, especially after the death of Bill's only brother around 1920.³³ With the marriage of an older sister, two extra bedrooms opened up in the house, and Maude decided to take in female teachers as roomers. Inge recalled, "There were three women school teachers living in the house. I was four years old, and they were nice to me. I liked them. I saw their attempts, and, even as a child, I sensed every woman's failure. I began to sense the sorrow and the emptiness in their lives, and it touched me."³⁴ They also paid lots of attention to Billy, and when he wrote his famous plays, the female teacher-roomers became some of the most significant characters he ever created.³⁵

Inge as American Playwright

In the 1950s and early 1960s William Inge established himself as one of America's great 20th century playwrights. In this decade, he "had more success than either Arthur Miller or [Tennessee] Williams, with four huge Broadway hits," *Come Back*, *Little Sheba* (1950), *Picnic* (1953), *Bus Stop* (1955), and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957) and one major film screenplay, *Splendor in the Grass* (1961).³⁶ Each play drew heavily from Inge's early influences of his life in Independence, Kansas, and the house on 4th Street. Inge also in an interview in the late 1950s, when asked why he set so many plays in Midwestern small towns, Inge replied, "It's where my roots happen to be. It's as though I were giving something of the life I know...We give ourselves in our writing, you know. My roots here are part of me. I feel I can write more individually by holding to this background." He also wrote that Midwesterners "talk so freely—they talk about themselves so easily when you're dealing with these people."³⁷

Come Back, Little Sheba

Set squarely in "a Midwestern city" is Inge's 1949 play, *Come Back, Little Sheba*. Beginning February 15, 1950, it ran for 190 performances on Broadway and "established Inge as a brilliant new playwright in the American theatre."³⁸ The storyline concerns Doc Delaney, who wanted to be a physician but "settled" for being a chiropractor, and his wife, Lola, who must contend with Doc's alcoholism as well as his infatuation with a pretty girl who is a boarder at the Delaneys' home.

Lost youth is a theme of this play, and alcoholism touched Inge personally as he struggled to find his footing in the world of writing. Combatting disappointment and depression, Inge began to drink during his college teaching years in Columbia. He also turned to psychiatry, and while psychoanalysis is said to have expanded his writer's understanding of human nature, it did not save him from ending his own life in 1973.³⁹

Inge's direction on set design references his boyhood home and community:

²⁹ Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 82.

³⁰ As read by John S. Bak, "Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference Panels: Williams and His Contemporaries: William Inge," transcription in *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review Journal* 9 (2007): n.p. [published online]; available from <http://www.tennesseewilliamsstudies.org/journal/work.php?ID=84> (accessed September 7, 2017).

³¹ Voss, "Conference Panels," n.p.

³² Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 82.

³³ *Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴ William Inge Theatre Festival & Conference program, "A Playwright's Reunion" (Independence Community College 2006): 8.

³⁵ Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 15.

³⁶ Annette J. Saddik, "Conference Panels," n.p.

³⁷ McClure, 58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁹ Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 68.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas

County and State

It is the downstairs of an old house in one of those semi-respectable neighborhoods in a midwestern city. The stage is divided into two rooms, the living room at right and the kitchen at left, with a stairway and a door between. At the foot of the stairway is a small table with a telephone on it.... The living room somehow manages to convey the atmosphere of the 1920s, decorated with cheap pretense at niceness and respectability.⁴⁰

Ever drawing from his Kansas experience, Inge wrote of the characters and their actions:

I feel that the audience, when Doc makes his drunken attack on Lola, should be shocked into incredibility, and then after a second's pause come to the realization it had to be.

I remember once being in a tornado. It came like a blast after a morning of unnatural quiet in the atmosphere. It wasn't a dull or monotonous quiet; it somehow had intensity and meaning, and there would be just an occasional breath of a breeze to suggest a hidden restlessness that had to break. No one could interpret this atmosphere, but people in the community felt that something was going to happen. That is the atmosphere I wanted to create in my play; a slow, slightly suspenseful prelude to the eruption of a man's despair.⁴¹



Figure 7: Sidney Blackmer & Shirley Booth in *Come Back, Little Sheba*, Broadway 1950.

After the success of *Sheba*, Inge moved into one of New York City's most famous apartment buildings, The Dakota, an ornate stone fortress that still stands on West 72nd Street at Central Park West. It was a good location and housed other successful and well-to-do residents. The great park was across the street, and the theatre and entertainment district was a moderate walk to the south. Inge, in the throes of writing to match the success of *Sheba*, enjoyed the tension-relieving exercise, and during this time, he was not drinking most of the time.⁴²

However, he was not comfortable in New York, and he stated later in life:

I never liked New York. I lose my feeling of identification there. It's too big. I was born in Kansas and grew up with the natural world around me. I feel tense in New York. There are a few moments of excitement I'll miss, and the art galleries and foreign films. But that's about all...New York is a hostile place.⁴³

Come Back, Little Sheba became a movie produced by Paramount Pictures in 1952. Like the Broadway play, the movie starred Shirley Booth, who won the 1952 Academy Award for Best Actress; Burt Lancaster also starred in the film. Several exteriors in the movie were shot in Pasadena, California, where director Daniel Mann found what he wanted in "the Middlewest look." The interiors were shot on a soundstage at Paramount Studios.⁴⁴ One poll ranked *Sheba* as the "12th Top Moneymaking Film for 1953," and it was an entry at the Cannes Film Festival that year. The movie continued on the annual ten best list for both the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine.⁴⁵ Today, like several other Inge movies, *Come Back, Little Sheba* regularly turns up on television's "Turner Classic Movies."

⁴⁰ Inge, "Come Back, Little Sheba," Act One, Scene One, *Four Plays*, 5.

⁴¹ McClure, 27.

⁴² Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 121.

⁴³ McClure, 63.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas

County and State

Picnic

Arguably Inge's best-known work, *Picnic* was developed from an earlier play entitled *Front Porch*. The play was first produced on Broadway in 1953 and ran for one year and two months. This work won Inge a Pulitzer Prize in Drama in 1953, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play, the Outer Circle Award, and the Theatre Club Award.⁴⁶

Picnic is one of the most vivid examples of the influence of both Inge's Independence house and community. His script's set description recalls both the physical characteristics and social life of his boyhood home:

The action of the play is laid on the porches and in the yards of two small houses that sit close beside each other in a small Kansas town. The house at the right belongs to Mrs. Flora Owens, a widow lady of about 40 who lives there with her two young daughters, Madge and Millie. The audience sees only a section of the house, from the doorstep and the front door extending to the back door, a porch lining all of the house that we see.⁴⁷



Figure 8: Broadway set of *Picnic* in 1954.

Of course, Madge and Millie are key protagonists. Another important character is Rosemary, an unmarried schoolteacher at a crossroads in her life, gripped by a now-or-never desperation to marry her boyfriend, Howard. Rosemary and several other teacher-characters in the film echo the presence of the teachers who roomed at the Inge house. Echoing the physical house Inge grew up in is the front porch. In his Independence house, the porch also lines all of the house that can be seen from the streets.

Trains and train travel figure prominently in *Picnic* as did the freight and passenger trains that wound around and through Independence in the early 1900s. The leading character of Hal arrives in town by train and leaves by train. When the play was made into a movie in 1955—starring Kim Novak and William Holden—Inge wanted Independence used as a backdrop, but the film's director, Joshua Logan, who also directed the original Broadway production, decided that Independence did not have the "broad canvas" needed by the picture.⁴⁸ However, the Kansas landscape featured prominently in the film, including Hutchinson, Halstead, Nickerson, Salina, and Sterling.⁴⁹

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs

A family's father who loses his salesman job is the subject of Inge's play *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. This play is a rewrite of one titled *Farther Off From Heaven*, completed in 1945 while he lived in St. Louis. *Farther* was Inge's first play, and he had been encouraged to accomplish the project by Tennessee Williams, who read the play and sent it to Margo Jones, the director of a regional theatre in Dallas. She produced it in 1947.⁵⁰

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs has an Oklahoma setting, a 1920s town, experiencing an oil boom. Independence's oil boom during the 1920s resulted in the presence of more millionaires per capita than any other city in the country.⁵¹ In this play, Inge draws heavily on memories of family life and dynamics, and the play is considered among his most autobiographical works.⁵² The difficulties between lead characters Rubin and Cora Flood, parents to two children, reflect the nature of events in Luther and Maude's marriage, including Luther's restlessness in his work life and Maude's early unease with moving to Independence from a town she liked and felt more secure in, Garden City, Kansas.⁵³

⁴⁶ "A Playwright's Reunion," 3.

⁴⁷ William Inge, "Picnic," *Four Plays* (New York: Grove Press, 1953), 75.

⁴⁸ Keith Noll, "Home Town Looks Very Good to Playwright William Inge," *Independence Reporter* (April 15, 1955): n.p.

⁴⁹ Hutchinson, where a majority of the movie was shot, is about 170 miles northwest of Independence; Halstead, Sterling, and Nickerson are towns in the Hutchinson area. Salina is about 200 miles northwest of Independence.

⁵⁰ McClure, 20-21.

⁵¹ "A Playwright's Reunion," 7.

⁵² Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 6.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State



Figure 9: William Inge sits on the stairway on the Broadway set of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. The stairs were modeled after the living room of his boyhood home.

In addition to the wide front porch, an interior hand-carved staircase at 514 N. 4th inevitably attracts comment referencing the playwright's work (*Figure 9*). When the upstairs lights are off, a person facing the staircase sees stairs ascending to darkness. At the April 22, 2017, gala dinner of the 36th Annual William Inge Theatre Festival, a former guest who stayed in the house was a speaker. Alice Tuan told the audience that she had been inspired as a playwright, teacher and performer by the opportunity "to sleep in the room to the right of the 'dark at the top of the stairs.'" The play was nominated for several Tony awards and produced as a movie in 1960.

Bus Stop

In the play *Bus Stop*, Inge detoured from house interiors and front porches but kept the small-town feel. This fourth Broadway hit, much more of a light-hearted story about stranded bus passengers during a blizzard, ran from March 2, 1955, until April 21, 1956, and also became a film starring Marilyn Monroe in 1956. In his set notes, Inge described the play's setting as "inside a street-corner restaurant in a small Kansas town about 30 miles west of Kansas City."⁵⁴ This town-outside-of-Kansas City was also the setting for his first Broadway failure, *A Loss of Roses*. The play closed after only three weeks in December 1959. Inge expressed great pain over the work that he'd spent two years crafting, and he blamed the director, casting and others' cuts in the script.⁵⁵

Splendor in the Grass

Inge wrote both the play, *Splendor in the Grass*, and the screenplay for the 1961 film starring Natalie Wood and featuring the debut of actor Warren Beatty. William Inge also appeared in this film, uncredited, as Reverend Whitman. In its day, the movie was considered steamy, and generations of Independence girls and boys then and now relate to the story of love and lust between the girl sternly warned by her parents to be "good," and the boy athlete held to a different standard by a wealthy, bull-headed father driving his son to achieve in his image.

Although the movie was shot in New York locations due to illness in Director Elia Kazan's family, Kansas locales were first considered.⁵⁶ An Independence native feels rooted "at home" when watching the film. The wood-framed house interiors and porch scenes are back, along with the wealthy "manor"-like rooms of character Bud Stamper's family. Bud's father is an oil tycoon, of which 1920s Independence had several because of the oil boom. Local lore has it that the Stamper home was modeled after either the 1912 Harry Sinclair-built mansion at 217 S. 5th St. or Glenclyff Farms, an English Tudor-style estate that still stands at the northeast edge of Independence.

While the old Montgomery County High School is long gone, the school scenes are uncanny in their resemblance to the Independence Middle School. Located at 300 W. Locust, the school was built in 1928 in the Collegiate Gothic style commonly found in the architecture of high schools and universities constructed in the late 1800s and early 20th century.⁵⁷ Even the actors who played teachers have a sturdy, old-fashioned, no-nonsense look as did Independence teachers of the 1920s and for a few decades after.

⁵⁴ Inge, "Bus Stop," *Four Plays*, 153.

⁵⁵ McClure, 57-58.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁵⁷ John Koschin, *Independence, Kansas: Then and Now* (Parsons, Kans: Self-published, 2008), 166.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas

County and State



Figure 10: William Inge as Reverend Whitman in the 1961 film *Splendor in the Grass*.

There are several other parallels in *Splendor*. A love scene takes place at a low waterfall that looks very much like an Independence spot on the Verdigris River: a low-water dam, built in 1913,⁵⁸ flanked by rocky banks and lush vegetation. Another scene takes place in a small church reminiscent of the Church of the Epiphany Episcopal in Independence. Inge played Reverend Whitman in his only acting role in any of the movies of his works. And finally, when Deanie is sent away to a mental hospital, Wichita was the location in the movie; in real life, it would probably have been the Menninger Clinic in Topeka.

Biographer Ralph Voss confirms the sense of Independence-as-setting for *Splendor in the Grass*, “The setting is an oil-boom Kansas town, again, unmistakably Independence,” he wrote in *A Life of William Inge*.⁵⁹ *Splendor* played in theaters across

America, and audiences loved it. It also netted Inge his final big prize, an Academy Award as best original screenplay of 1961 (*Figure 9*).⁶⁰

Inge struggled after that and had a series of failures with both critics and audiences. He wrote two novels, *Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff* (1970) and *My Son Is a Splendid Driver* (1971), which also failed to deliver the kind of success that Inge had known. Since 1964 Inge had lived in Los Angeles at 1440 Oriole Drive. In California, he continued some writing and theatre involvement as he lived out his life there. Ultimately overtaken by depression, sedatives and alcohol, Inge committed suicide via carbon monoxide poisoning in the garage of his home on June 10, 1973.⁶¹ As Voss explains, “He had no one but his work, and when his work was no longer popular, I just don’t think he was up to it.”⁶² Inge’s body was brought home to Independence where he is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery with a simple inscription on his grave stone: “Playwright.”

Inge’s legacy

A contemporary to such well-known playwrights as Tennessee Williams, Eugene O’Neil, and Arthur Miller, today these men often overshadow William Inge’s legacy. Tennessee Williams scholar John S. Bak offers the following observation as to why, “I think it’s because while Inge tugged at America’s heartstrings, Williams touched the nation’s nerve, and I think it’s the ‘nerve-writers’ that have a longer-lasting status among scholars, at least, than those who play up to the more traditional views.”⁶³ In the 1950s, however, Inge was the right kind of playwright for New York and Hollywood.⁶⁴ Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, Inge’s work represented the heart—the ethos—of America in the 1950s. What Inge wrote about was his views of life growing up in small-town America during the 1930s; in a very real way his plays were his way of processing his earliest experiences in Independence, Kansas while living at the house on 4th Street. Biographer Ralph Voss hints at this, “I think his plays are very much of a time and place, maybe not so much the 1950s as really the 1930s, which is when Inge forged his sensibility.”⁶⁵

Fortunately, theatres worldwide continue to see the greatness of Inge’s works. His plays continue to be re-staged. *Picnic*, in particular, seems to be his most frequently produced play. According to Voss, “part of the staying power of *Picnic*, quite frankly, is because it’s a clean play. And by that I mean it’s been produced probably in every little town in America that’s got a local theatre group, and the most outrageous thing that happens in it is that Hal takes his shirt off. Everything is under the surface.”⁶⁶ Small-town America, however, is not the only place where this play runs. As recently as March 2017, New York City-based Transport Group produced *Come Back, Little Sheba* and *Picnic* Off-Broadway. Of the productions, Reviewer

⁵⁸ Ibid., 314.

⁵⁹ Voss, *A Life of William Inge*, 194.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 157. Technically, his Oscar is for Writing (Story and Screenplay-written directly for the screen).

⁶¹ Ibid., 270.

⁶² Voss, “Conference Panels,” n.p.

⁶³ Bak, “Conference Panels,” n.p.

⁶⁴ Voss, “Conference Panels,” n.p.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Voss, “Conference Panels,” n.p.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State



Figure 11: Abby Mann, Lee Remick, William Inge, and Jack Lemmon at the 34th Academy Awards in 1962.

Terry Teachout wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "William Inge's artistic stature is no longer as widely acknowledged as it ought to be. Fortunately, his plays have started to be revived with increasing frequency in New York and throughout America..." Teachout went on to cite Inge as "one of America's half-dozen greatest playwrights."⁶⁷

In the years immediately following Inge's death, in Independence there was not a lot of talk or discussion of the playwright beyond the people who actually knew him. School kids continued to gossip about who was the actual teacher, "the REAL 'whore school teacher' of *Picnic*" or the REAL Deanie and Bud. Because the writer's homosexuality either was not known or not acknowledged in "polite conversation," there was a sense of shame among some adults. The suicide was not just tragic, it was taboo, un-Christian. An Independence woman who grew up in the time of

Inge's professional accomplishments remembers, as a young adult, an argument with her mother in about 1975. The younger woman was distressed that Inge seemed dismissed and forgotten in Independence, and she was passionate that somebody "should do something" to honor him. Her mother, who followed Inge by three years as a high school classmate, shrugged and seemed to not feel the same way. Paraphrasing the Bible, she pointed out, "A man has no honor in his own country."

Within the decade after Inge's death, an Independence citizen did take on the cause of celebrating him. Margaret Goheen was an instructor of radio, speech and drama at Independence Community College. With support from Jerome Lawrence, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer of the plays *Inherit the Wind*, *Mame* and others, the first incarnation of the William Inge Theatre Festival, a small conference, was produced in 1981.⁶⁸

Lawrence was the first recipient of the festival's annual Distinguished Achievement in American Theater Award. Since then, virtually every great American playwright has made the trip to Independence to be honored at the festival. The honorees since Lawrence include:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| William Gibson (1984) | Terrence McNally (1994) | Sheldon Harnick & Jerry Bock (2007) |
| Robert Anderson (1985) | Arthur Miller (1995) | Christopher Durang (2008) |
| John Patrick (1986) | August Wilson (1996) | Tom Jones & Harvey Schmidt (2009) |
| Garson Kanin (1987) | Neil Simon (1997) | Paula Vogel (2010) |
| Sidney Kingsley (1988) | Stephen Sondheim (1998) | Marsha Norman (2011) |
| Robert E. Lee (1988) | John Guare (1999) | David Henry Hwang (2012) |
| Horton Foote (1989) | A.R. Gurney (2000) | Arthur Kopit (2014) |
| Betty Comden & Adolph Green (1990) | Lanford Wilson (2001) | Donald Margulies (2015) |
| Edward Albee (1991) | John Kander & Fred Ebb (2002) | Beth Henley (2017) |
| Sir Peter Shaffer (1992) | Romulus Linney (2003) | |
| Wendy Wasserstein (1993) | Arthur Laurents (2004) | |
| | Tina Howe (2005) | |

Occasionally a major news organization features the festival, rolling together the story of the playwright, his works and the town of Independence. The Public Broadcasting System's *PBS News Hour* featured the William Inge Theatre Festival and the context of Independence in a feature that aired June 6, 2006. On August 5, 2009, *The New York Times* published a feature story, "Out of Kansas Into the World: A Trove of Inge Plays." *American Theatre Magazine* ran an article April 28,

⁶⁷ Terry Teachout, "'Come Back, Little Sheba,' 'Picnic' and 'Sweat' Reviews: Striking Strangers and the Drama They Bring," *The Wall Street Journal* (March 31, 2017): n.p. [digital copy]; available from *The Wall Street Journal* online, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/come-back-little-sheba-picnic-and-sweat-reviews-striking-strangers-and-the-drama-they-bring-1490905919> (accessed September 6, 2017).

⁶⁸ William Inge Theatre Festival & Conference program, "Honoring Donald Margulies," (Independence Community College 2015), 24.

William Inge Boyhood Home

Montgomery County Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

2015, titled, "Inge Festival Brings the Theatre World to Independence." The playwright and his hometown have remained forever linked.

There are two college theatres in Kansas that immortalize Inge's name. When the new 68-acre campus of Independence Community College (ICC) opened on a former country club site in September 1970, the name unveiled on the fine arts building was "William Inge Center for the Arts." At the University of Kansas in Lawrence, the William Inge Memorial Theatre is a small performance space within the college of fine arts.

The Inge boyhood home has an ongoing role in supporting the William Inge Theatre Festival, which in 2014 was declared the Official Theatre Festival of the State of Kansas by the Kansas Legislature.⁶⁹ The annual festival (typically scheduled in April) and associated programs are important to ICC's Inge year-round. Visiting theater professionals are housed there, sometimes for weeks at a time as they work on projects. "Scenes at the Inge" are play segments performed in front of the staircase during every festival. Signage at the house tells visitors and tourists that it is a proud landmark and icon of Independence history.

Forty-four years after Inge's suicide in 1973, when the writer appeared despondent over reversals in career success, the theater world continues to recognize his genius and the timelessness of his writings about the human condition. Since the Inge family left 514 N. 4th in the early 1950s, there have been other owners, but the spirit of William Inge and the stories he was inspired to write by life in the house continue to have a vivid and inspirational presence and an impact on artists' creativity found in American theater.

William Inge Chronology (highlights)⁷⁰

May 3, 1913	William Motter Inge born in Independence, Kansas.
1914	Inge family moves to 514 N. 4th St. in Independence.
1926 to 1930	Inge attends Montgomery County High School
1930	Enrolled at the University of Kansas as a freshman
1931	Returned home for one year at Independence Community College
1935	Graduated from KU; started Master's program at George Peabody College in Nashville
1936, fall	Radio announcer at KFH in Wichita
1937	Teacher at Columbus (Kansas) High School
1938, summer	Returned to Peabody to finish degree
1938, fall	Started teaching English at Stephens College in Columbia, Mo.
1943	Arts critic for St. Louis <i>Star-Tribune</i>
1944	Meets Tennessee Williams
1945	English teacher at Washington University in St. Louis
1947	First play, <i>Farther Off From Heaven</i> , is staged at the Margo Jones Theater in Dallas, Texas
February 15 to July 29, 1950	Play <i>Come Back, Little Sheba</i> first staged on Broadway
1952	<i>Come Back, Little Sheba</i> produced as a film, starring Burt Lancaster and Shirley Booth
1953	Wins Pulitzer Prize in Drama for <i>Picnic</i> ; wins New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play for <i>Picnic</i>
February 19, 1953 to April 10, 1954	Play <i>Picnic</i> first staged on Broadway; Paul Newman makes his Broadway debut as Alan
March 2, 1955 to April 21, 1956	Play <i>Bus Stop</i> first staged on Broadway
1955	<i>Picnic</i> produced as a film starring, Kim Novak and William Holden
1956	<i>Bus Stop</i> produced as a film starring, Marilyn Monroe
December 5, 1957 to January 17, 1959	Play <i>The Dark at the Top of the Stairs</i> first staged on Broadway
November 28, 1959 to December 19, 1959	Play <i>A Loss of Roses</i> first staged on Broadway, starring Warren Beatty

⁶⁹ 2014 Statute, Chapter 73, Article 29, Section 1.

http://www.kslegislature.org/li_2014/b2013_14/statute/073_000_0000_chapter/073_029_0000_article/073_029_0001_section/073_029_0001_k/ (accessed September 11, 2017).

⁷⁰ "Honoring Donald Margulies," 7.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

1960	<i>The Dark at the Top of the Stairs</i> produced as a film, starring Robert Preston and Dorothy McGuire
1961	Original screenplay for <i>Splendor in the Grass</i> produced, starring Natalie Wood and Warren Beatty.
1962	Adapted screenplay for <i>All Fall Down</i> produced, starring Eva Marie Saint and Warren Beatty
1962	Wins the Academy Award for Best Screenplay for <i>Splendor in the Grass</i>
1963	Play <i>A Loss of Roses</i> adapted into film <i>The Stripper</i> , starring Joanne Woodward
January 31 to March 2, 1963	Play <i>Natural Affection</i> first produced on Broadway
November 6, 1964 & June 25, 1965	Original screenplay <i>Out on the Outskirts of Town</i> runs on the "Bob Hope Chrysler Theater" (TV Series), starring Anne Bancroft and William Inge
1965	Original screenplay <i>Bus Riley's Back in Town</i> produced as a film, starring Ann-Margret
March 2 to 19, 1966	Play <i>Where's Daddy?</i> first staged on Broadway
1970	Novel <i>Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff</i> first published
1971	Novel <i>My Son Is a Splendid Driver</i> first published
1972	Play <i>The Last Pad</i> is staged in Phoenix, Ariz.
June 10, 1973	William Inge dies at his Hollywood home at age 60.

Posthumously	
October 26 to November 9, 1975	<i>Summer Brave</i> , Inge's revision of <i>Picnic</i> , first staged on Broadway
1979	<i>Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff</i> produced as a film, starring Anne Heywood and Robert Vaughn
April 21 to May 29, 1994	<i>Picnic</i> revival on Broadway
February 22 to March 17, 1996	<i>Bus Stop</i> revival on Broadway
January 24 to March 16, 2006	<i>Come Back, Little Sheba</i> revival on Broadway
January 13 to February 24, 2013	<i>Picnic</i> revival on Broadway
September 26 to October 26, 2013	<i>Natural Affection</i> staged Off-Broadway
February 23 to April 23, 2017	<i>Picnic</i> and <i>Come Back, Little Sheba</i> , Off-Broadway productions of The Transport Group, are <i>New York Times</i> "Critics' Picks"
Ongoing	Productions and revivals of Inge plays continue in theatres across the country

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

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Noll, Keith. "Home Town Looks Very Good to Playwright William Inge." *Independence Daily Reporter* (April 15, 1955): n.p.

Sanborn Map Company. "Kansas Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: Independence [Kansas]." Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1923 & 1931 [digitized online] ProQuest "Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970" <http://ezproxy.lawrence.lib.ks.us:2051/> (accessed September 12, 2017).

Shuman, R. Baird. *William Inge*. New York: Twayne, 1965.

Teachout, Terry. "'Come Back, Little Sheba,' 'Picnic' and 'Sweat' Reviews: Striking Strangers and the Drama They Bring." *The Wall Street Journal* (March 31, 2017): n.p. [digital copy]; available from *The Wall Street Journal* online, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/come-back-little-sheba-picnic-and-sweat-reviews-striking-strangers-and-the-drama-they-bring-1490905919> (accessed September 6, 2017).

Voss, Ralph. *A Life of William Inge: The Strains of Triumph*. Lawrence, Kans.: University of Kansas Press, 1989.

Waxse, Bennett F. "Kansas Youth of William Inge," *The Kansas City Star* (November 19, 1955): n.p.

William Inge Theatre Festival & Conference program. "A Playwright's Reunion." Independence Community College, 2006.

William Inge Theatre Festival & Conference program. "Honoring Donald Margulies." Independence Community College, 2015.

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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: William Inge Center for the Arts

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.26

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 37.228268 -95.702258 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated boundary includes the following parcel: County Clerk's Subdivision Lots 8-19 of Out Limit 2, Section 30, Township 32 South, Range 16 East, Lot 6

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The selected boundary includes the entire property historically associated with the Inge House.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Liz Moore (edited by Amanda Loughlin)
organization William Inge Festival Foundation date September 2017
street & number P.O. Box 1214 telephone 620-577-2252
city or town Independence state Kansas zip code 67301
e-mail LizSmithMoore@aol.com

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

name William Inge Festival Foundation
street & number P.O. Box 1214 telephone _____
city or town Independence state KS zip code 67301

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 100 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.

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: William Inge Boyhood Home

City or Vicinity: Independence

County: Montgomery State: Kansas

Photographer: Marcus Wright

Date Photographed: August 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:
(Photos being sent separately.)

- 01 of 13:** Drone footage, looking ENE
- 02 of 13:** West (front) façade
- 03 of 13:** Looking SE at partial north and west facades
- 04 of 13:** North façade, looking SW
- 05 of 13:** Main level porch, looking south from north end of porch
- 06 of 13:** Main level porch, looking SE from near front door and showing family room's bay window
- 07 of 13:** Living room, looking NW from double French doors in south wall
- 08 of 13:** Family room, looking NW from stair landing
- 09 of 13:** Family room, looking east from foyer entry
- 10 of 13:** Den, looking west from near exterior door
- 11 of 13:** East bedroom, looking SE
- 12 of 13:** West bedroom, looking NW
- 13 of 13:** South bedroom, looking NW

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

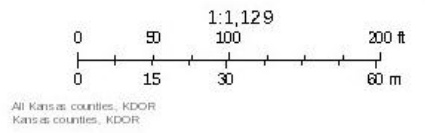
- Figure 1:** Inge House. Between 1945 and 1955. *Kansas Memory* <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/384> (accessed September 7, 2017).
- Figure 2:** Google aerial of Inge House context within Independence (accessed 2017).
- Figure 3:** Floor plans provided by the author.
- Figure 4:** Inge House, 1946. William Inge Center for the Arts.
- Figure 5:** William Inge, circa 1960. University [of Kansas] Archives Photos. Call Number: P/ Inge, William (Photos). Available from *Inside Spencer: The KSRL Blog* https://blogs.lib.ku.edu/spencer/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/P_William-Inge_photographs.jpg (accessed September 7, 2017).
- Figure 6:** William Inge & Tennessee Williams. Undated. Attributed to Lahr, John. *Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015. Available from Pinterest <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/3e/e2/ae/3ee2aedf820ec23894ddc117678a57d1--tennessee-williams-playwright.jpg> (accessed September 7, 2017).
- Figure 7:** Actors Shirley Booth & Sidney Blackmer in scene fr. Broadway play *Come Back, Little Sheba*. 1950. Alfred Eisenstaedt, photographer, *LIFE*, The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images, available from <http://www.gettyimages.com/license/50528560> (accessed September 8, 2017).
- Figure 8:** Broadway set of *Picnic*. 1954. From Snetiker, Marc. "Summer Lovin': How the Pulitzer Prize-Winning *Picnic* Turned Up the Heat on Broadway 60 Years Ago." *Broadway Buzz Online* (2013); available from <http://www.broadway.com/buzz/166633/summer-lovin-how-the-pulitzer-prize-winning-picnic-turned-up-the-heat-on-broadway-60-years-ago/> (accessed September 7, 2017).
- Figure 9:** William Inge on the Broadway set of *Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. Undated. Attributed to Lahr, John. *Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2015. Available from Pinterest <https://i.pinimg.com/736x/3e/e2/ae/3ee2aedf820ec23894ddc117678a57d1--tennessee-williams-playwright.jpg> (accessed September 7, 2017).
- Figure 10:** William Inge as Reverend Whitman in the 1961 film, *Splendor in the Grass*. 1961. Movie still. Available from Anderson, Ken. "Splendor in the Grass 1961." *Dreams Are What Le Cinema Is For*. Blogpost. April 24, 2013. <http://lecinemadreams.blogspot.com/2013/04/splendor-in-grass-1961.html> (accessed September 11, 2017).
- Figure 11:** Abby Mann, Lee Remick, William Inge, and Jack Lemmon. Still from the 34th Academy Awards in 1962. Available from <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/Oxy8qfaNNyA/hqdefault.jpg> (accessed September 11, 2017).

William Inge Boyhood Home
Name of Property

Montgomery County Kansas
County and State



Boundary Map. Boundary of parcel is within solid line. Map from Montgomery County, Kansas GIS.







514



514





















PLAYBILL
A world happens in 30 minutes

THE DARK
AT THE TOP
OF THE STAIRS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 11/21/2017 Date of Pending List: 12/15/2017 Date of 16th Day: 1/2/2018 Date of 45th Day: 1/5/2018 Date of Weekly List: 1/11/2018

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 1/5/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



NOV 21 2017

6425 SW 6th Avenue
Topeka KS 66615

phone: 785-272-8681
fax: 785-272-8682
kshs.shpo@ks.gov

Sam Brownback, Governor
Jennie Chinn, Executive Director

November 21, 2017

Paul Loether, National Register Chief
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Re: National Register documents for Kansas

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the following National Register documents:

NEW NOMINATIONS from Certified Local Governments (2)

- **William Inge Boyhood Home; Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas** (new nomination)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination and letter of support;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.
- **Santa Fe Depot; Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas** (new nomination under "Historic Resources of Lawrence" MPS)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

NEW NOMINATIONS from non-CLG communities (4)

- **German Evangelical Church; Westmoreland, Pottawatomie County, Kansas** (new nomination)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.
- **Pottawatomie County Courthouse & Jail; Westmoreland, Pottawatomie County, Kansas** (new nomination under "Historic County Courthouses of Kansas" MPS)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination, PDF with 44 letters of support, and PDF with 4 letters in opposition, including from the county commissioners (owner);
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

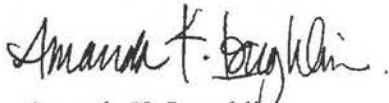
- **Big Brutus; West Mineral, Cherokee County, Kansas** (new nomination)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination and .kmz file;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.
- **A.S. Allen Buildings; Great Bend, Barton County, Kansas** (new nomination)
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

RELOCATION APPROVAL REQUEST (1)

- **Sand Creek Truss Leg Bedstead Bridge; Lenora vicinity, Norton County, Kansas – REDACTED NOMINATION**
(NRIS #03000365) (additional documentation)
 - Physical, signed copy of the documentation;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the documentation and PDF of REDACTED copy of documentation;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photograph.

If you have any questions about these enclosed items, please contact me at ext. 216 or Amanda.Loughlin@ks.gov.

Sincerely,



Amanda K. Loughlin
National Register Coordinator
Kansas State Historic Preservation Office

Enclosures

Loughlin, Amanda [KSHS]

From: Ken Brown <KBROWN@indycc.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2017 6:50 PM
To: Loughlin, Amanda [KSHS]
Cc: Kelly Passauer; Sean Work
Subject: William Inge Home

The Independence Historic Preservation and Resource Commission wholeheartedly supports placing the William Inge home on the State and National Register of Historic Places. On June 27 of this year our Commission placed it on our Local Register. It became only the fourth structure in Independence to have such designation.

The Inge home is not only an important historic resource for the City of Independence, but also a valuable asset to the Inge Festival hosted each year by Independence Community College. Plus, many times during the year writers, playwrights, actors, etc. stay in the home - some for an extended period of time. In fact, just today I was visiting with a young writer from New York who has been living in the home since September. We believe that the home should be recognized by the State and National Register of Historic Places. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Ken Brown - chair of IHPRC

MISSION STATEMENT: Re-approved March 9, 2015: Independence Community College serves the best interests of students and the community by providing academic excellence while promoting cultural enrichment and economic development.