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NATIONAL REGISTER, HISTORY
& EDUCATION

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 519 NORTH BUCKEYE AVENUE

not for publication

city or town ABILENE

vicinity

state KANSAS

code KS

county DICKINSON

code 041

zip code 67410

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 D. Lambert
Signature of certifying official/Title

DSHPO 3-21-01
Date

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

State of 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 commenting official/Title

Date

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:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

5/25/01
Date of Action

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: RELIGIOUS FACILITY

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: RELIGIOUS FACILITY

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOTHIC REVIVAL

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

LATE GOTHIC REVIVAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: LIMESTONE

walls STONE: LIMESTONE

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

ARCHITECT - FRANK CAYTON - 1939

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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:

ABILENE HERITAGE COMMISSION

ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property LESS THAN ONE ACRE

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	4	6	5	4	9	1	0	4	3	0	9	2	2	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

3

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 NANC SCHOLL

organization ABILENE HERITAGE COMMISSION date AUGUST 25, 1999

street & number 813 NORTH OLIVE STREET telephone 785-263-7012

city or town ABILENE state KANSAS zip code 67410

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 VESTRY OF ST. JOHN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

street & number 518 NORTH BUCKEYE AVENUE telephone 785-263-7410

city or town ABILENE state KANSAS zip code 67410

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

St. John's Episcopal Church (c. 1939) at 519 N. Buckeye Street in Abilene, Kansas is a modest yet nicely articulated example of the Gothic Revival style. North Buckeye (State Route 15) is a principal thoroughfare dividing the community east and west. The street is characterized by a mixture of commercial and residential pockets with spotty architectural cohesion and integrity.

Though the limestone building acquired its present form and architectural significance in the 1930s, it actually began as a very simple Gothic Revival wood structure in the 1880s. The sanctuary today incorporates the original structure in its entirety. The original rectangular plan was expanded in each direction in the 1930s in a comprehensive make-over to achieve the present cruciform plan so characteristic of Gothic Revival churches. The entire exterior is of uncoursed, square-cut ashlar limestone with a rock-faced finish. The roof is steeply pitched and gabled. Other details characteristic of the style include fenestration with pointed, arched tops (both lancet and Tudor); leaded glass casements; buttresses; parapeted gable walls and the absence of eaves on side walls; tabbed masonry interior window surrounds; "hammered" finish door hardware and lighting fixtures; and interior wood finishes including board and batten walls and a bracketed vaulted ceiling.

The west (principal) facade presents a parapeted gable end of symmetrical composition to the street. A short and wide flight of steps flanked by low capped walls rises to a pair of batten doors centered in the facade. These doors are elaborated with highly decorative iron strap hinges, studding, and pulls. Along with the flanking Gothic-styled iron light fixtures this hardware is an integral part of the character of the building. Although hung within a large Gothic arched opening, the pair of doors itself is not full height. The arched area over the doors is infilled with a large and smooth piece of limestone in which the church's name is inscribed. All exterior doors and windows are cased with smooth-faced limestone surrounds. These are tapered inward and help to visually emphasize a strong sense of depth within the masonry walls.

Flanking this entry are lancet windows of stained glass. A larger example is centered over the doors and illuminates the choir loft within. A smooth-faced and angular water table wraps the base perimeter of the entire church. The north and south ends of the west elevation terminate in flush 2-tiered buttresses; the upper tier of each is uniquely elaborated with three weatherings. A large cornerstone is located just above the water table within the northwest buttress. West-facing transept walls at each side of the nave feature tripartite casement windows of diamond-paned stained glass centered within the wall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The north facade is dominated by the projecting gabled transept. Centered within it is a transomed tripartite casement window of diamond-paned stained glass. Below this and incorporated into the masonry is a dated stone commemorating the original wood structure.

Buttresses flank the sanctuary's lancet windows along the remainder of the north facade; an impressive copper gutter runs between the tops of the buttresses and the edge of the roof. Copper downspouts are equally hefty; both gutters and downspouts are integral parts of the building's architecture. The roof has no overhang and is clad in asphalt shingles. The south facade mirrors this elevation (excepting the dated stone).

The east (rear) facade is symmetrically composed though significantly less elaborate than the west facade. Glazed wood doors are at each side of the dominant projecting parapeted and gabled apse; these doors have a Tudor arched shape. The shape is echoed in their limestone surrounds which feature subtly carved Gothic tracery. Exterior wall-mounted lights appear to be original but are more Arts and Crafts in spirit than Gothic. At each side of the gabled apse is a transept wall; within each is centered a tripartite casement window of diamond-paned stained glass.

The interior's entry vestibule is low-ceilinged, asymmetrical and cozy; it is a drastic departure from the more formal and imposing scale of the exterior. A wood ceiling composed of oak tongue-and-grove planks and rough-hewn chamfered joists creates a strong sense of warmth. Flooring here and throughout is oak; oak steps to the south lead to a choir loft above. The entry's north and west walls are plastered; the south and east are of oak board and batten. The sole window is dramatically cased in a deep and flared smooth-faced limestone surround. The surround is decoratively "keyed" into the plaster wall. A pair of eight-paneled oak doors within the east wall open into the sanctuary. The door hardware (typical throughout) is a decorative cast metal with a silvery finish and a "hammered" texture. The door casing is 2 3/8" wide, oak, and has a curved and beaded profile. This profile is typical of door casings throughout.

The sanctuary's most notable attribute is a vaulted tongue-and-grove beaded board ceiling which remains from the original 1880s church. Stained a dark brown, the ceiling is accented by large scroll-sawn brackets with chamfered corners at the ceiling/wall junction. Large amber glass pendant lamps of Gothic inspiration hang from the ceiling. Walls are plaster painted white. Stained glass lancet windows are cased in deep and flared smooth-faced limestone surrounds decoratively "keyed" flush into the plaster wall. Their sills are incorporated into a continuous oak wainscot cap which runs along the north and south walls of the sanctuary. The wainscot itself is of pine tongue-and-grove construction.

*United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service*

*National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet*

Section number 7 *Page* 3

Walnut pews, also from the original 1880s interior, have a distinctly 19th century character yet are an integral element of the 1930s design. The apse, part of the 1930s addition, has walls clad in regularly coursed blocks of thin-set travertine marble. This material successfully conveys the character of the exterior's Gothic masonry to the interior. The ceiling in this area is a close approximation of the tongue-and-groove ceiling in the main sanctuary. The apse addition is separated from the main sanctuary by an enormous and soaring Gothic arched opening in what had once been the original church's east wall. This opening has been plastered and features chamfered corners.

Surrounding the apse are the two transept wings; each is finished with plaster walls and pine woodwork though there are some slight variations in finish as each wing was built at a separate time. These rooms contain office space. The south office opens into both the sanctuary and a strictly utilitarian stair hall. This hall leads to the exterior and the finished basement.

The basement is simply finished with plaster and painted woodwork. Kitchen, social, and maintenance facilities are located here. The building is in a good state of repair and retains intact virtually all of its 1930s character.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

St. John's Episcopal Church (1939) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural significance as a Gothic Revival structure.

Though the limestone building acquired its present form and architectural significance in the 1930s, it actually began as a very simple Gothic Revival wood structure in the 1880s. The sanctuary today incorporates the original structure in its entirety. The original rectangular plan was expanded in each direction in the 1930s in a comprehensive make-over to achieve the present cruciform plan so characteristic of Gothic Revival churches. The entire exterior is of uncoursed, square-cut ashlar limestone with a rock-faced finish. The roof is steeply pitched and gabled. Other details characteristic of the style include fenestration with pointed, arched tops (both lancet and tudor); leaded glass casements; buttresses; parapeted gable walls and the absence of eaves on side walls; tabbed masonry interior window surrounds; "hammered" finish door hardware and lighting fixtures; and interior wood finishes including board and batten walls and a bracketed vaulted ceiling.

The Gothic Revival was frequently employed by churches of all denominations during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The style is noted for its universal feature, the pointed arch, along with other characteristic features including pinnacles, battlements, vaulting patterns, buttresses, crockets, finial, window tracery and lancet windows. The St. John's Episcopal Church incorporates many of these elements into its structure, making it a good example of the Gothic Revival style.

On June 6, 1878 St. John's church was admitted as a Parish. The first minister was The Rev. John W. Birchmore who held Sunday School and Bible Class in his home. Services were held in the Public Hall at this time while the church struggled to grow and secure funds to build a permanent structure. On April 16th, 1879, a building lot was secured (Lots 9 and 10, Block 25) for the sum of \$375.00

In May of 1881 the Bishop redeemed these lots in a tax sale for \$6.00 due to financial difficulties. It was suggested that Abilene and Salina be made pastorate under one man. The congregation continued to meet in a room in the Courthouse.

Andreas' History of Kansas records that on January 17, 1882, the Courthouse, situated at the corner of Second Street and Broadway Avenue, burned in a devastating fire which consumed two entire blocks. The church lost all of its property including hymnals, prayer books, lamps, and an organ.

*United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service*

*National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet*

Section number 8 *Page* 2

With neither land nor a meeting place, the church members set out to raise about \$900.00 for the construction of a worship hall. This effort was led by the Ladies Aid Society consisting of Mrs. Herbert J. Hodge and Mrs. Theo Keiser. The donor's list contains many impressive names in Abilene's history including T. C. Henry, G. W. C. Rohrer, C. H. Lebold, The Berry Brothers, and others that were to become communicants of St. John's Church. The zealous committee must have contacted everyone in Abilene, as the list contains almost 100 names. Contributions ranged from \$1.00 to the generous sums of \$50.00 each by both T. C. Henry and William H. Hendricks.

Soon a modest frame structure was begun in the Gothic Revival style. It was built upon a limestone foundation with no basement. The exterior was sheathed in narrow clapboards and featured a steeply pitched front-gabled roof. The symmetrical composition included 4 double-hung lancet windows on both the north and south sides. The entry doors were paired within a lancet shaped opening centered in the west end.

By 1883 the total amount spend for the construction of the church was \$1700.00. The contributions were not enough to cover the cost and the building was left unfinished with the Church in debt once more.

In September, 1883, the Rev. Peter Wager re-opened the mission of St. John's Church. Under his leadership the Church building was completed, the indebtedness was paid off, and the Church was re-admitted into union with the Convention as a Parish.

At the time Abilene had a population of 4000 people. The Church building was valued at \$1600.00; the property at \$600.00.

The church was first occupied in 1884 and consecrated on May 29, 1885. The one-room interior was distinguished by a vaulted ceiling of beaded board. Simply detailed Gothic trusses added architectural interest. Walnut pews also helped to give the otherwise modest interior a more substantial feel.

In 1902 the women of the Church were asked to donate a window in the East end of the Church. The ladies were successful in their efforts and in 1903 a new window was put in the chancel. Also in 1902, the women's organization purchased a stepping stone which was placed in front of the building. Made of limestone, it carries

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

the inscription: "1883-St. John's Church-1902." This stone was incorporated into the foundation of the north side during the 1930's expansion.

By 1905 the church secured electricity and was charged the minimum amount of \$1.00 per month. Hard times fell upon the St. John's parish and the church was vacant most of 1907. By 1909 the situation had improved such that the congregation was asked to build a rectory. The vestry was informed that Bishop Millspaugh had pledged \$500.00 for that purpose. There were two conditions to his offer: one was that the \$500.00 be the last payment; the other condition was that the church lots be titled to 'Trustees of Church Property of the Episcopal Church for the diocese of Kansas'.

St. John's Guild made a pledge of \$300 and a building committee was appointed. The committee was also instructed to raise and handle the donations toward the construction. The contract for the rectory, and additions to the church, were approved at the vestry meeting on September 24, 1909. The motion was also made to secure a boy's choir and the Guild was asked to furnish vestments for this choir.

By 1934 the church was doing better financially. A committee was formed to contract for an architect to draft plans for a vesting room and Church School room to be built on the south-east corner of the Church Building. On January 20, 1935 the Bishop blessed the newly enlarged Church building, which was completely repainted that year. New sidewalks were also added around the church.

Through the generosity of Herbert J. Hodge, a former church warden, a massive reconstruction gave the building its present appearance in the 1939. Herbert J. Hodge came to Abilene in 1871, and for 67 years was a resident of Abilene. He and his brother, C. A. Hodge, owned and operated a hardware store, conducting business for 45 years. He was a charter member of the Western Retail Hardware and Implement Association and served as its secretary until his death.

Other positions he served in include Secretary-Treasurer of the National Federation of Implement Associations, 38 years; Editor of the Bulletin, a monthly magazine, 43 years; and Senior Warden, St. John's Episcopal Church, 40 years. He gave freely of his time, support and money.

Mrs. Mildred Hendricks Hodge, wife of Herbert J. Hodge, also gave freely of her time and talents. She was a member of the St. John's choir and held a leading role in the development of Abilene's cultural growth. She was

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

among the founders of the Columbian Club and for a time served as its president. She was the last of its charter members to pass away. Other social organizations in which she was active include the Kansas Chapter of the Daughters of the King, the D. A. R., the Eastern Star and the City Federation of Women's clubs.

Upon Mr. Hodge's death in 1938 he left money and instructions in his will regarding his beloved St. John's Church. The portion of the will that specifically mentions St. John's Church is quoted below:

"I give and bequeath to M. H. Malott, Will Green, Oscar A. Sterl and J. A. Patterson, all of Abilene, Kansas, in trust for the purposes herein designated, the sum of \$30,000.00 or such portion thereof as shall be deemed necessary in rebuilding and remodeling the stone as a facing or veneer, the Church building of St. John's Parish of the Episcopal Church at its present location in Abilene, Kansas. It is my desire that the present interior of the church be preserved so far as possible and that space be provided for a pipe organ. It is my further desire that a cornerstone be laid at the Northwest corner of the structure bearing the following inscription, in raised letters, 'Erected in loving memory of Mildred Hendricks Hodge by her husband, Herbert J. Hodge' adding thereto the proper date. The letters used in the name 'Mildred Hendricks Hodge' should be larger than all others in the inscription. In the performance of this trust, I request that my Trustees give consideration to any suggestions offered by my residuary legatees.

In the event that the full sum of \$30,000.00 shall not be expended as provided, I request that the residue be created into a fund which may be used to meet the future needs of St. John's Parish of Abilene, Kansas and the same may be expended by the proper officers of said Parish."

Hodge's wishes were materialized in the remodeling project which gave the building its present form. The trustees secured the services of architect Frank Cayton. Mr. Cayton was to meet with the trustees and the Bishop for approval of his plans. Mont Green of Manhattan was the general contractor in charge of remodeling the church. The church was closed on May 21, 1939 and re-opened October 22, 1939. In less than 6 months, the church was completely transformed. Work included excavation of a full basement, the addition to the west of a new entry (with choir loft above), and additions to the east.

With the original structure as a guide, additions of compatible size and scale were built to create the present cruciform plan and further enhance the Gothic Revival style already established. A new veneer of limestone was installed to unify the entire exterior. To facilitate this installation, the original structure's clapboard siding was

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

removed. Uncoursed and rock-faced, the new facade retained the lancet fenestration and incorporated tiered buttresses with unusually elaborate weatherings. Gable ends were parapeted and the roof eaves were omitted. The new stone construction made it possible to remove metal tie rods, which had previously marred the interior. The new form and finishes created a Gothic character far more refined than that of the original structure. The remodeling captured the attention of Robert Ripley who's nationally syndicated newspaper feature "Ripley's Believe it or Not" billed the project as the "Church Inside a Church".

Through all the changes, the original church interior was preserved and remains largely intact today. A beaded tongue and groove wainscot was added to the walls. It is capped with a continuous moulding integral with the window sills. The original church pews had been refurbished in 1938 and still remain.

The eight lancet windows in the sanctuary were retained and were reglazed with stained glass memorials. All windows in the new construction are of leaded glass; office space features rectangular diamond-paned casement sash while public spaces feature pictorials in traditional lancet forms. The largest of these depicts St. John and is located above the front entry.

Sanctuary memorial windows are dedicated to Peter Bachman Witmer (presented by Mrs. G. D. Hampton); Louis Rugo Sterl Witmer (presented by Mrs. G. D. Hampton); Herbert J. Hodge (presented by the parish); Dr. Edward E. Hazlett (a Junior Warden); Margaret Robinson Nelson (an early fundraiser for the original church); and Mildred Hendricks Hodge.

On July 19, 1939 the Abilene Daily Reflector reported that "The Cornerstone of St. John's Episcopal Church, dedicated to the Memory of Mildred Hendricks Hodge by her husband, Herbert James Hodge, was laid in solemn rites at the Church Tuesday evening. A large attendance of parishioners and friends were present for the occasion at which the Rev. Hewitt B. Vinnedge of Salina gave the address. The Church is being enlarged and faced in native stone at the bequest of the late Mr. Hodge.

The Rev. Harold E. Cooper, rector, officiated at the service, which opened with the processional. H. P. McCosh bugled the Church call and the Church Wardens, M. H. Malott and J. A. Patterson reported the stone duly set. Candle sticks, with lighted tapers, were placed on the stone for the remainder of the ceremony. The Rev. J. W. Brettman also assisted."

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 6

Placed in the cornerstone (inscribed "1883 - in Memoriam - Mildred Hendricks Hodge by her husband Herbert James Hodge - 1939") are the following articles: Holy Bible (printed in 1892 by the America Bible Society), a book of Common Prayer, a history of St. John's Church from 1877 to 1909, five photographs (an exterior view, an interior view, the choir, one of both Bishop Wise and Herbert J. Hodge and one of both Bishop Wise and J. H. Chillington), a copy of the will of the late H. J. Hodge, the plans and proceedings of the building committee, the approval of the vestry, a list of the communicants, a statement of the death of Bishop Wise, a copy of the cornerstone laying service, the original Processional Cross of the Church and, finally, a list containing the names of the architect, the contractors, stone masons, carpenters and laborers involved in the remodeling.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abilene City Directories, 1884 – 1940, Dickinson County Historical Society.

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Census Records, Dickinson County, Kansas, Dickinson County Historical Society.

Dickinson County Obituary files, Dickinson County Historical Society, May 14, 1919, December 28, 1938, April 19, 1940.

The Abilene Daily Reflector, October 20, 1939, October 21, 1939, June 22, 1957, December 23, 1957.

The Abilene Daily Chronicle, October 1, 1939.

The Chronicle (newspaper), May 29, 1885.

The Gazette (newspaper), Abilene, Kansas December 26, 1884.

Verckler, Stewart P. St. John's Church. An Informal History, 1878 to 1962. Abilene Daily Reflector, Dickinson County Historical Society.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property stands on Lots 9 and 10, Block 25, Kuney & Hodges Addition, Abilene, Kansas. The property is bounded to the north by North East 7th Street, to the west by North Buckeye Avenue and to the east and south by adjacent property lines.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the entire parcel that is historically associated with the property.