

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

MAY 21 2008  
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

Historic name Hamlin Block  
Other name/site number 155-2660-006

#### 2. Location

Street & number 304-306 S. Main  not for publication  
City or town Hutchinson  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Reno Code 155 Zip code 67501

#### 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.)

Patrick Gilmer DSHPO 5/16/08  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of 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. 7.2.08  
 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

Hamlin Block  
Name of Property

Reno County, Kansas  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- 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.)

Commercial and Industrial Resources of Hutchinson, KS

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter Categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Multiple Dwelling

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

**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.)

Hamlin Block  
Name of Property

Reno County, Kansas  
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)

- 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 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

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

#### Period of Significance

1888-1957

#### Significant Dates

1888

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

unknown

### 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

#### Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Hamlin Block  
Name of Property

Reno County, Kansas  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	4	5	9	3	7	2	5	4	2	1	1	6	8	2
Zone		Easting					Northing							

2

Zone		Easting					Northing							

3

Zone		Easting					Northing							

4

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 Christy Davis

Organization Davis Preservation Date 12/1/2007

Street & number 909 1/2 Kansas Ave, Suite 7 Telephone 785-234-5053

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66612

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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name David and Archer Jarrett

Street & number 3207 N. Walnut Telephone 620-669-9793

City or town Hutchinson State KS Zip code 67502

**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

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*Hamlin Block*  
*Reno County, Kansas*

### Narrative Description

#### Setting

The Hamlin Block (1888) is located at 304-306 South Main in downtown Hutchinson, Kansas (population 40,000). The 300 Block of South Main is sandwiched between the east-west rail lines of the Missouri Pacific (formerly Hutchinson and Southern) on the north and the Rock Island on the south. This block is located south of Hutchinson's dense commercial district, in an area traditionally dominated by industrial activities, from salt production, milling, meat packing and manufacturing. Across the Rock Island tracks to the south, for instance, is the complex of buildings that made up the Kelly Milling Company. The two-story adjacent building to the north was constructed in 1915. The adjacent building to the south was constructed as a two-story building between 1899 and 1905, and was reduced to a one-story building between 1950 and 1970. Although the area continues to retain an industrial character, a number of the surrounding buildings are vacant or no longer occupied by industrial enterprises.

#### Exterior

##### Overall

The Hamlin Block is a two-story symmetrical stone building whose footprint generally measures 50' X 80'. The building is a full fifty feet wide for its first forty feet from west to east. The eastern half of the building is forty-six feet wide. This design allows the building to adjoin adjacent buildings on the north and south lot lines, yet step back from adjacent buildings on the east half to take full advantage of natural lighting toward the rear of the building. The building is divided into three principal spaces – two storefronts on the first floor and boarding house/flat space on the second floor. The exterior reflects the building's interior uses. Coursed rusticated limestone and tooled/carved limestone face the front elevation. The side elevations have exposed rubble limestone. The rear elevation is rubble limestone coated with stucco.

##### Front (West) Elevation

First Floor - The front elevation is symmetrical – divided into five bays. The center bay houses a center stair entrance. This bay is flanked by stone pilasters, which rise from the ground through the second floor and meet up with projecting elements in the cornice. The center stair entrance is flanked by a 25' storefront on each side. The stair entrance retains its original double doors and multi-pane transom. The northern storefront has the address 304 S. Main. The southern storefront has the address of 306 S. Main. The storefronts are framed on the north and south by stone pilasters, and on their tops by a decorative horizontal stone band. The storefront openings are supported by cast-iron columns, which flank their recessed entrance bays. Some elements of the northern storefront, which was missing after an irreversible pre-1970 alteration, have been recently replaced with a compatible new storefront to match the overall dimensions of the extant southern

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*Hamlin Block  
Reno County, Kansas*

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storefront. Both storefronts have kickplates, plate glass windows, and transoms. The southern storefront retains its original double entry doors.

**Second Floor** – A decorative horizontal band separates the first and second floors. The second floor is divided into five bays. The first two and last two bays top the two storefronts. Each of these pairs of bays has two original 1/1 double-hung arch-topped wood windows with stone hood molds. The center entrance bay has a single original window that matches the design and size of the other four second-floor windows. The building is topped by a decorative pressed-metal cornice atop a tooled limestone frieze. The cornice has projecting elements that correspond with the projecting pilasters on the building's north and south perimeters and at the center stair entrance.

### Rear (East) Elevation

The rear elevation, which faces the alley, provides utilitarian access to the building. There are three openings on the first story – a pedestrian entrance, an overhead door, and a single window opening. Two closed-in window openings flank the pedestrian door. These windows have been closed in since 1970. The pedestrian door, which historically had a transom window, has also been partially closed in. There are five openings on the second floor – a 1/1 double-hung window, smaller 1/1 double-hung window, a large plate-glass window with non-historic art glass transom, a pedestrian door with enclosed transom, and another 1/1 double-hung window. The second-floor pedestrian door opens onto a steel landing that opens to a steel exit stair that runs from north to south and returns at a second landing from south to north.

### North Elevation

An adjacent two-story building obscures the north elevation of the Hamlin Block. The north elevation is rubble limestone.

### South Elevation

An adjacent one-story building obscures the first story of the Hamlin Block's south elevation. Like the north elevation, this elevation is exposed rubble limestone. Because the first forty feet were built at the plane of the property line and meant to be shared with an adjacent building, there are no openings in the first forty feet. In fact, the second floor of this elevation was historically obscured by the second story of the adjacent building, which was historically two stories high. There are three 1/1 double-hung windows on the east forty feet of the second floor. Several chimneys that pierce the roof and parapets are visible from this elevation.

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Reno County, Kansas*

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### Interior

#### Overall

The Hamlin Block is a two-story building. The first floor is divided into two 25-foot commercial storefronts. In the recent past, the storefronts have been divided into two spaces. The second floor was designed to accommodate a boarding house or hotel. Because the use of the second floor changed little from the time of the building's first construction, it retains a higher degree of integrity than the first floor. Interior character-defining features include hardwood floors, baseboards, doors, and door and window trim.

#### First Floor

The front of the northern half of the first floor has been modified somewhat into a "modern" retail space. Alterations include the removal of plaster on the north wall to expose rubble limestone, installation of suspended acoustical tile ceiling, and addition of a curved wall on the west end of the space. The rear of the northern half of the first floor is an open space, with the exception of a small walled-in mechanical closet and small toilet on the southeast corner. There is a large overhead door on the east wall that provides access from the alley. The southern half of the first floor is also divided into two spaces, a retail space on the west end and a second, larger, space on the east end. The east end of the southern half retains a high degree of historic integrity, with features including wainscoting and a cased arched opening that opens into the northern half of the first floor. There is a small toilet in the northeast corner of the southern half.

#### Second Floor

The second floor is accessed via a central stair that opens onto a double-loaded corridor. There is a secondary rear exit on the east end. The twelve doors that open onto the corridor provide access to living spaces laid out in a symmetrical floor plan. There is a small room centered on the west end of the second floor. It is flanked by two larger rooms, whose eastern walls open onto adjacent rooms via pocket doors. In all, there are five large spaces on each side of the corridor. In some cases, the corridor doors open into smaller corridors that provide access to larger spaces. The easternmost spaces, on both the north and south, each house a kitchen and restroom. The rooms were designed for flexible use of the space. To this end, all rooms were accessible from all adjacent rooms. This presumably allowed proprietors to lease spaces of various sizes. Most recently, it appears that the second floor was divided into two flats – one on the north and a second on the south.

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*Hamlin Block*  
*Reno County, Kansas*

### Statement of Significance

#### Summary

The Hamlin Block (1888) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of Italianate Commercial Architecture and under Criterion A for its association with the growth and development of Hutchinson, Kansas (pop. 40,000), particularly its association with the 1880s building boom.

#### Building Uses

As a downtown commercial building, the Hamlin Block was designed to accommodate changing uses over time. The occupants of the two first-floor commercial spaces changed often. The first floor's use was first documented in the 1892 Sanborn Map, which identified the use of the building's northernmost (304 S. Main) storefront as a confectionary and the southernmost (306 S. Main) storefront as a restaurant. Because of the building's vicinity to the Rock Island passenger depot, the restaurant likely hoped to market to rail passengers. In 1892, the building was the only commercial building on either side of the 300 Block of South Main Street, the block on which the Rock Island depot had been built in 1888. Although speculators laid plans and, in some cases, even foundations, for other nearby commercial buildings during the 1880s boom, none besides the Hamlin Building, had been completed. The only other commercial building near the new Rock Island Depot was a 6-bay commercial block on the northwest corner of Avenue E and South Main.

Despite the building's vicinity to the Rock Island depot, the first restaurant did not last. By 1899, the storefronts housed a wholesale grocery and produce shop.<sup>1</sup> In 1905, the Hamlin Block had come to be surrounded by Jesse Sickman's Coal Company, which also occupied the block's northern storefront.<sup>2</sup> Jesse Sickman purchased the building in 1904, and continued to operate his Sickman Coal Company in the building until he left Hutchinson for Galveston, Texas in about 1909.<sup>3</sup> Although Sickman occupied the building for less than a decade, the City Directories referred to the building as the "Sickman Block" until at least 1924.<sup>4</sup> It is likely that Sickman, whose mother lived in Hutchinson until her death in 1921, continued to own the building.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1899 Sanborn Map.

<sup>2</sup> 1905 Sanborn Map.

<sup>3</sup> Deed Records, City Directories, 1910 US Census.

<sup>4</sup> 1924 City Directory.

<sup>5</sup> *Hutchinson News*, 3 December 1921.



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In 1909, after Sickman closed his coal business, there was a pawn shop at 304 S. Main and a billiards hall at 306 S. Main.<sup>6</sup> During the 1910s and most of the 1920s, the northern storefront was a restaurant.<sup>7</sup> For many years, this restaurant, then known as the Railroad Café, was operated by William A. Bruce. In 1923, when Bruce opened a new hotel, other proprietors operated restaurants in the northern storefront.<sup>8</sup> Through the years, the southern storefront was occupied by various pool halls, barber shops, book stores and antique stores. Among the long-term businesses were the Edwards and MacFarland Barbers and Billiards (late 1910s and 1920s), Conrad Reeves Books (1930s and 1940s), and Williams Books (1950s).<sup>9</sup>

Although the uses of the building's first-floor spaces changed often, the use of the second floor remained relatively constant. The second floor was configured for residential use and was, therefore, well-suited for a boarding house, hotel, and residence. The first documented use of the building's second floor was as a boarding house in 1899.<sup>10</sup> In 1900, the address was listed as the location of the "Rock Island Hotel" (not to be confused with the ill-fated boom-time hotel below).<sup>11</sup> The hotel was no longer in business by 1904, when Jesse Sickman purchased the building 1904 and converted the second floor to his personal residence. Sickman moved out of the building after his ca. 1908 marriage.<sup>12</sup> During the 1910s and the early 1920s, William A. Bruce and his wife Laura Bruce rented the building, presumably from the Sickmans. As noted above, William operated the Railroad Café. The Bruces lived upstairs, where Laura Bruce operated a boarding house. In 1910, the household included Laura Bruce, her three children, and two boarders.<sup>13</sup> By 1920, there were 12 persons living on the second floor, including the Bruce family, a cook, her two children, and three boarders.<sup>14</sup>

In the late 1930s, Stella Kelley took over the boarding house.<sup>15</sup> Kelley continued to run the business after her 1940s marriage to Ernest Prunty. The Pruntys operated the boarding house through the 1960s. After Ernest Prunty's death in 1972, the second floor remained vacant for decades.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 1909 Sanborn Map.

<sup>7</sup> City Directories.

<sup>8</sup> *Hutchinson News-Herald*, 23 March 1954; City Directories.

<sup>9</sup> City Directories.

<sup>10</sup> 1899 Sanborn Map.

<sup>11</sup> 1900 City Directory.

<sup>12</sup> 1910 City Directory.

<sup>13</sup> 1910 US Census.

<sup>14</sup> 1920 US Census.

<sup>15</sup> 1937 City Directory; 1939 City Directory.

<sup>16</sup> City Directories.

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*Hamlin Block  
Reno County, Kansas*

### Owners and Occupants

#### L. A. Bigger

The Hamlin Block has changed hands many times over the years, particularly during its turbulent early history. Before 1888, the property was owned by Leander A. Bigger. Bigger, an Ohio-born attorney, real estate investor, and adventurer, was living in Hutchinson with his young family by 1880.<sup>17</sup> During the 1880s real estate boom, Bigger served as Hutchinson's mayor.<sup>18</sup>

#### Martimer Hamlin

In 1888, Bigger transferred the property to Martimer Hamlin, a Connecticut-born carriage maker.<sup>19</sup> Like Bigger, Hamlin was living in Hutchinson by 1880, when the census listed him as a single wagon maker.<sup>20</sup> Hamlin quickly made a name for himself, being listed as among the city's "Business Men" in an 1883 newspaper article.<sup>21</sup> By 1885, Hamlin, who had graduated from "wagon maker" to "carriage maker" was married with two small children.<sup>22</sup>

Hamlin likely chose the property for its vicinity to the Rock Island Depot and to the proposed Rock Island Hotel. In the fall of 1887, the 300 Block of South Main was prominently featured in a newspaper-published bird's eye view of the booming city. Incidentally, the bird's eye view was embellished to show the massive and elaborate 4-story Rock Island Hotel fully completed, despite the fact that the foundation of the doomed building had not yet been completed.<sup>23</sup> Soon after acquiring the property at 304-306 S. Main from L. A. Bigger, Hamlin commenced with the construction of a two-story stone business block. According to a news account of buildings constructed in 1888, the fifty-foot front cost \$10,000 to build.<sup>24</sup>

Hamlin did not own the building long. During the turbulent late 1880s and early 1890s, the property changed hands many times. For reasons lost to history, Hamlin transferred the property to someone named Noble in 1891.<sup>25</sup> It is possible that Hamlin built the building as an investment and sold it for profit. In late 1889, the owner of the recently completed Passmore Block sold the building for three times what the building cost to build.<sup>26</sup> It is likely, however, that like many who invested their fortunes during the boom, Hamlin was forced to sell the property when the economy slowed. By 1893, the property was in

<sup>17</sup> 1880 US Census.

<sup>18</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 1 July 1887, col. 2; *Hutchinson Daily News*, 19 April 1887, col. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Deed Records.

<sup>20</sup> 1880 Census

<sup>21</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 11 January 1883, p. 1, col. 5.

<sup>22</sup> 1885 Kansas Census.

<sup>23</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 22 September 1887.

<sup>24</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 11 April 1889.

<sup>25</sup> Deed Records.

<sup>26</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 5 December 1889.

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the hands of Reno County, which likely acquired it for back taxes. The county sold the building to S. G. Bailey in 1893. In 1894, it was in the hands of the National Life Insurance Company.<sup>27</sup>

### Jesse Sickman

When the economy finally stabilized in the early twentieth century, the building's lot improved. It became part of the Sickman Coal Company, owned and managed by Jesse A. Sickman (1867-1931). The Sickman Coal Company was founded by Jesse's father Daniel Sickman (1842-1909), a Civil War veteran and entrepreneur who dabbled in farming, ranching, meat trading, real estate, sewing machines, and various other fields before founding the coal company.<sup>28</sup> When the elder Sickman entered the poultry business in the late 1890s, he passed the coal company on to his son. Jesse was born in Ohio in 1867 and came to Hutchinson with his parents in 1884. By the time Jesse took over his father's coal company, he had been widowed.<sup>29</sup> The coal company occupied the northern storefront of the Hamlin Block, as well as a smattering of buildings to the north. Jesse Sickman lived on the second floor.<sup>30</sup> In about 1908, Jesse was remarried to a woman named Maud.<sup>31</sup> By 1910, he was no longer in the coal business, listing his profession as "Real Estate Dealer" in the 1910 Census. Jesse and Maud moved to Galveston, Texas in about 1910.<sup>32</sup> In the 1910s, Jesse moved to Kansas City, where he lived until his death in 1931.<sup>33</sup>

### William A. Bruce and Laura Bruce

Throughout much of the 1910s and 1920s, the building was occupied by William A. Bruce (1868-1954) and his wife Laura Emma Bruce (1868-1934), who rented the building for their restaurant and boarding house. William A. Bruce was born in Kentucky in 1868. He came to Hutchinson in 1877 with his mother and father, a grocer in Albion Township.<sup>34</sup> As a teenager, Bruce became a mail carrier, delivering mail to communities that lacked rail access. On January 11, 1888, William married his wife Laura in Dighton, Kansas.<sup>35</sup> Soon thereafter, the couple moved to Hutchinson, where William took a job in one of the city's growing number of salt plants in 1888.<sup>36</sup>

Laura Bruce was born in Hoopetown, Illinois. Like her husband, Laura moved to Reno County with her family, settling in Albion Township in 1880. Although they were married in Dighton, the couple likely met

<sup>27</sup> Deed Records.

<sup>28</sup> "Daniel Sickman," *Biographical History of Central Kansas* (Chicago and New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1902), 1628-1630.

<sup>29</sup> 1900 US Census.

<sup>30</sup> 1904, 1906, 1907 City Directories.

<sup>31</sup> 1909 City Directory.

<sup>32</sup> 1910 US Census.

<sup>33</sup> 1910 Census (Galveston, Texas and Hutchinson); *Hutchinson News*, 12 December 1931.

<sup>34</sup> 1880 US Census.

<sup>35</sup> *Hutchinson News*, 5 November 1934.

<sup>36</sup> *Hutchinson News-Herald*, 23 March 1954.

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in Reno County. By 1900, the Bruces had three sons, Bert, Etha and Wallace.<sup>37</sup> Their youngest son Wallace and his wife Ruby, both of whom lived at the Hamlin Block in 1920, were actors on the Vaudeville circuit with the Wallace Bruce Players. In 1920, the household also included William's father William W. Bruce, a 70-year-old widower who was then working as a waiter in the restaurant.<sup>38</sup> William and Laura Bruce rented the Hamlin Building for the boarding house and the Railroad Café from ca. 1910 until 1923 when they opened the Bruce Hotel at 4 ½ S. Main. Although he moved to San Diego after Laura's death in 1934, William died in Hutchinson in 1954.<sup>39</sup>

### Stella Kelley and Ernest Prunty

Stella Kelley operated a boarding house in the Hamlin Block from the 1930s to the 1960s. Ms. Kelley was born January 9, 1901. In ca. 1940, Kelley married Ernest Prunty. Ernest Prunty was born July 17, 1881 and died in Hutchinson in January 24, 1972 (90 yrs old). Stella Kelley Prunty died in November 1984.

### **A Brief History of Hutchinson**

Hutchinson was founded in 1871 by Indian Agent and Baptist Preacher CC Hutchinson, who sited the new town at the junction of the proposed Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe's (ATSF) bridge over the Little Arkansas River. From the beginning, the city was a trading center for the surrounding agricultural counties which in the 1870s were populated by farmers who purchased rich farmland from the railroad. Success in wheat farming created a market for a local milling industry. By 1880, the fledgling city's population had grown to 1540.<sup>40</sup>

The Hamlin Block was built during a period of rapid population growth and unprecedented construction. By 1888, the city boasted three main railroads, the ATSF, Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, and Missouri Pacific. Town boosters attracted the railroads, which in turn attracted new industries, including milling, salt, coal and meat packing. After the first grain mill opened in 1874, the city's milling industry took off. (Rexroad, 2) Among the many grain-related interests in downtown was the Kansas Grain Company, founded 1883. Hutchinson was home to a number of grain magnates, like George Gano, who owned a good number of grain elevators throughout Kansas and eastern Colorado.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1880s, Hutchinson earned its reputation as the "Salt City." Although the extraction of salt began in 1875, the salt industry exploded after 1887 when Ben Blanchard first discovered an underground salt

<sup>37</sup> 1910 US Census.

<sup>38</sup> 1920 US Census.

<sup>39</sup> *Hutchinson News-Herald*, 23 March 1954.

<sup>40</sup> 1880 US Census.

<sup>41</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger, *Historic Railroad Resources of Kansas*, Multiple Property Submission.

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deposit. In 1889, the city's ten salt plants shipped 2 million barrels of salt.<sup>42</sup> The Carey Salt Company, whose plant was just north of the Hamlin Block, was founded in 1900.

A nationwide recession followed the 1880s building boom. In 1890, at the beginning of the boom's end, Hutchinson's population stood at 8682. However, in 1893, after two of the city's banks failed, over 1000 disheartened residents left Reno County to seek a new start in Oklahoma.<sup>43</sup> The community's economy rebounded in the first decade of the Twentieth Century. Between 1900 and 1910, the city built a library, courthouse, electric streetcar system, and paved streets. Despite periods of population loss, the number of Hutchinson residents doubled from 1890 to 1910, when it stood at 16,364.<sup>44</sup>

During World War II, Kansas farmers saw record-high crop prices – and this had a positive impact on businesses in county seats like Hutchinson. During the 1920s, Hutchinson experienced a second boom, driven in part by the discovery of oil in the region. In 1934, Reno County was the state's largest oil producer.<sup>45</sup> Although the oil business road out the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl and low crop prices took a serious toll on the local economy. In Hutchinson, the dust storms, which formed drifts of fine dirt, were followed by rainstorms, which turned the dirt into mud piles.<sup>46</sup>

Despite these obstacles, Hutchinson continued to grow and expand. Today, Hutchinson continues to be a regional trading center for central and western Kansas.

### Building Boom in the Queen City

The construction of the Hamlin Block coincided with a robust, albeit short-lived, real estate boom that rained on many Central and Western Kansas communities, including Newton, Wichita, Hutchinson, and Garden City in the 1880s. The boom was a tied to railroad expansion, county-seat designation, and propoganda-powered speculation. Delighted Hutchinson town boosters dubbed their town the "Queen City."

Hutchinson's boom was precipitated in part by the announcement that the Rock Island Railroad would stop in Hutchinson on its southern route between Herington and Liberal. Like many railroads, the Rock Island expanded extensively during the 1880s, increasing its Kansas mileage from 40.7 in 1886 to 1000 in 1888.<sup>47</sup> When the Rock Island chose an alignment that would intersect Hutchinson's Main Street at

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<sup>42</sup> William D. Rexroad, *A Time Line of Events in Reno County, Kansas: From Its Beginning Through 2001* (Hutchinson: Dolphin Publications, 2002), 5-6.

<sup>43</sup> Rexroad, 7.

<sup>44</sup> 1910 US Census.

<sup>45</sup> Rexroad, 16-17.

<sup>46</sup> Rexroad, 17.

<sup>47</sup> Wolfenbarger.

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Avenue D, a relatively undeveloped area south of the main commercial district, and laid plans for a depot there, the demand for properties on South Main precipitated feverish speculation. Many of Hutchinson's fathers announced plans for the "immediate construction" of new buildings, including an elaborate four-story Rock Island Hotel, proposed for the west side of the 300 Block of South Main. Plans for the Rock Island Hotel spurred more plans on South Main: "There were a number of other transfers on south Main yesterday which taken in connection with the Rock Island hotel being pushed as fast as possible and the Forsha-Wisler-Hegwer block, six rooms two stories, to commence going up immediately, makes things have a 'boom' tendency on the south side."<sup>48</sup>

Town boosters used proposed projects to attract new investment and help drive the boom: "... the new railway depots, machine shops and foundries, the finest hotels in the state, and the manufacturing interests all bound to come, combine to make Hutchinson the most progressive city in the state. Let her boom."<sup>49</sup> And boom she did. Between 1886 and 1887, first-quarter construction increased from \$247,800 to \$1,979,409.<sup>50</sup> By the end of 1888, the paper announced that developers had invested \$3,800,000 in buildings, including \$100,000 on the new State Reformatory and \$10,000 on the Hamlin Block.<sup>51</sup>

Some lucky investors, like Reno County farmer W. H. Passmore, reaped the rewards of auspicious timing. Passmore commissioned the Passmore Block in 1889. Like the Hamlin Block, the Passmore Block was a two-story 50' X 80' stone building that cost \$10,000 to build. Like the Hamlin Block, it had two commercial storefronts and "family flats" on the second floor. Contractor John Jack constructed the "Fine Block" in fewer than 60 days. In July, the *Hutchinson Weekly News* exclaimed that "there [were] few men in this city who think more of Hutchinson than does W. H. Passmore."<sup>52</sup> Despite his commitment to Hutchinson, the enterprising Passmore was motivated by the hope of economic gain. Passmore realized a return on his investment less than three months after the building's completion, when he sold the building to Illinois clothing merchant R. Herriman for \$30,000, a 300% return on his initial investment.<sup>53</sup> Passmore continued to farm, moving his young family across the county line to Rice County by 1900.<sup>54</sup>

If the Passmore Block offers a boom-time success story, the Rock Island Hotel provides a cautionary tale. Illinois-based Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (Rock Island) incorporated a new division in 1885 to facilitate development in Nebraska and Kansas. The Rock Island built only 40 miles of track

<sup>48</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 1 June 1887, p. 4, col. 2.

<sup>49</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 21 April 1887.

<sup>50</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 3 July 1887.

<sup>51</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 1 January 1889, p. 5, col. 2.

<sup>52</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 4 July 1889.

<sup>53</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 5 December 1889, p. 7, col. 1; *Hutchinson Daily News*, 10 February 1889;

*Hutchinson Weekly News*, 5 September 1889; *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 27 June 1889, col. 2.

<sup>54</sup> 1900 US Census.

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in 1886. However, when plans showed that Hutchinson would fall on the southern route connecting Herrington and Liberal, boosters filed a charter for the Rock Island Hotel Company. Investors in this endeavor included A. L. Forsha, who founded the Hutchinson Street Railway and later engaged in ranching; his son Fred Forsha; real estate developers John F. Smith, John Puterbaugh, T. J. Anderson, and Henry Hegwer.<sup>55</sup> The Rock Island Hotel Company hired Kansas City architect E. P. Brink, known for his design of a hotel in Denver, to design the elaborate four-story 150' X 100' building with "stone arches and polished granite columns at the two main entrances, and having an artistic roof."<sup>56</sup>

In April 2007, after gaining assurances that the Rock Island railroad would "feed six passenger trains daily at the hotel," the company finally began excavating for the building's stone foundation. The day after excavation began on the long-awaited hotel, Hutchinson real estate transfers peaked, reaching \$100,000 on April 17, 1887 alone.<sup>57</sup> Properties that were near the Rock Island Hotel, like the lots across the street where Hamlin Block would later be built, skyrocketed in value. Work on the hotel foundation coincided with the construction of the Rock Island depot, which began in late June 1887.<sup>58</sup> On the day contractors began to build the massive limestone foundation the *Hutchinson Daily News* announced that the community's "faith is builded on a rock."<sup>59</sup> Per this statement's subtle intimation, the community had placed its faith on the success of both the Rock Island depot and the Rock Island Hotel.

Subsequent events proved that the community's faith had been misplaced. After the completion of the hotel's stone foundation, construction stalled. When the foundation had lain exposed for two years, the Hutchinson, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad made a second attempt to develop the site as a depot, offices, hotel and eating house for the Rock Island and Union Pacific Railroads.<sup>60</sup> This plan also fell through, leaving the property to lie undeveloped for decades. This second failure marked the end of Hutchinson's boom. Railroad overexpansion and lax lending practices caused the financial markets to crumble, precipitating the Panic of 1893. In Hutchinson, citizens ran on banks. Two banks, the Hutchinson National Bank and Valley State Bank, closed.<sup>61</sup> The local economy was further damaged when 1000 Reno County residents left for the Cherokee Strip.<sup>62</sup>

When the boom ended, the Hamlin Block was the only commercial building in the 300 Block of South Main that had been successfully completed.

<sup>55</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 24 March 1886; *Hutchinson Daily News*, 17 November 1903.

<sup>56</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 26 April 1887.

<sup>57</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 17 April 1887.

<sup>58</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 8 July 1887.

<sup>59</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 8 July 1887.

<sup>60</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 11 July 1889.

<sup>61</sup> *Hutchinson Daily News*, 20 July 1893; 30 January 1893; 13 February 1893.

<sup>62</sup> Rexroad, 7.

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### Italianate Architecture

The Italianate Style was popular nationwide from 1840 through the boom years of the mid-1880s, spurred on by popular pattern books such as those published by Andrew Jackson Downing. The style was applied to both residential and commercial architecture. Most residential examples in Kansas pre-date 1885, by which time Queen Anne had come to predominate. Commercial examples, such as the Hamlin Block, were built in Kansas through the boom years of the 1880s. Character-defining features of commercial examples include the following features found on the façade of the Hamlin Block: symmetrical massing; narrow window openings with arched tops surrounded by hood molds; cornices; 2/2 windows; and narrow supports and columns.<sup>63</sup>

### Boarding Houses

For much of the Hamlin Block's history, there was a boarding house on its second floor. Boarding houses were essential in growing industrial cities for two reasons. First, the rate of population growth made it impossible for builders and developers to keep pace with the demand for new homes. Second, growing industries attracted single male laborers, without wives to cook and clean for them. Because running a boarding house or small hotel was similar to managing a nineteenth-century household, 85% of the nation's boarding houses in 1900 were owned and operated by women.<sup>64</sup> Many boarding house proprietors, like Stella Kelley, were widows.

The market for boarding houses in early Hutchinson is born out by both statistics and anecdotal accounts. In 1889, the *Hutchinson Weekly News* reported that "The boarding houses are filled with boarders and are continually besieged with applicants for room."<sup>65</sup> Between 1900 and 1910, Hutchinson's population nearly doubled, from 9605 to 16,362. In 1900, 4.4% of the city's residents were boarders or lodgers. In 1910, 5.7% were boarders or lodgers. By 1920, the population growth had slowed and the percentage of boarders returned to 4.4%.<sup>66</sup> By then, real estate developers had begun to build multi-story apartment buildings that housed single workers and young couples. Still, housing was scarce, as illustrated by an article in the *Hutchinson Daily News*: "Finding an empty house in Hutchinson now is just about an impossibility. They're not to be had." The article, entitled "A Fight for Homes," reported that many newcomers were living in basements and more than 100 families were doubling up in single-family homes. B. F. Macklin converted his barn into a house.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>63</sup> See McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* and Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street*.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, 75, 125.

<sup>65</sup> *Hutchinson Weekly News*, 21 March 1889.

<sup>66</sup> 1910 US Census; 1920 US Census.

<sup>67</sup> "A Fight for Homes," *Hutchinson Daily News*, 20 January 1920.



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The Bruce's boarding house benefited from its location near the city's prominent industries, including the Carey Salt Company, and catered to single and widowed men. In 1920, Hamlin Block boarders included John Campbell, a widowed 42-year-old salt-plant laborer; Edward Stevens, widowed 62-year-old waiter; and Roy Damay (or Dawsy), a single 25-year-old street laborer.

### Summary

The Hamlin Block is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an example of Commercial Italianate Architecture, and under Criterion A for its association with the history of Hutchinson, as outlined in the *Commercial and Industrial Resources of Hutchinson* Multiple Property Submission.

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### Verbal Boundary Description

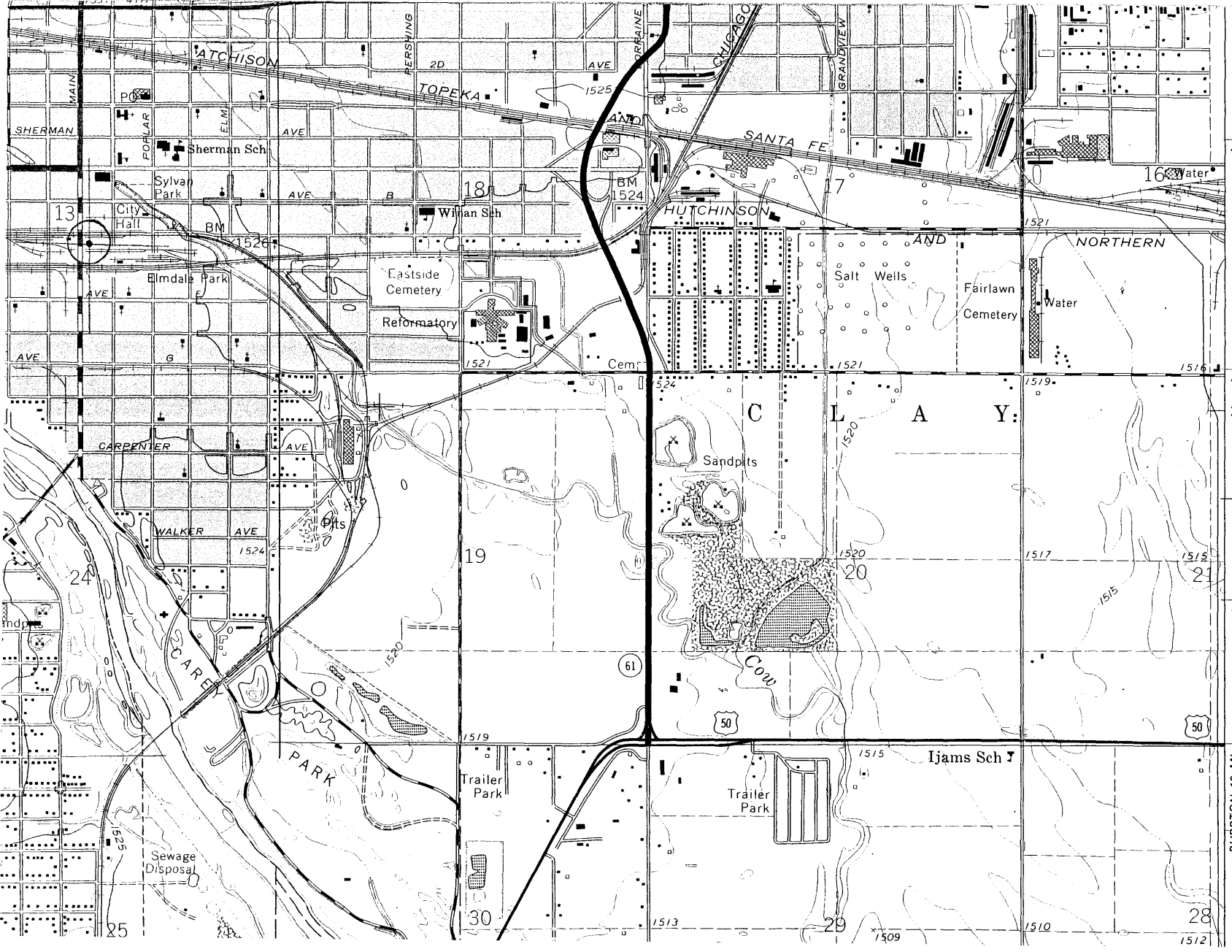
The nominated property is located in Section 13, Township 23, Range 6W, in the South Main Original Town Plat of Hutchinson Plat. The property sits on the tract meeting the following description: All of Lots 90 and 92 Except the north 2 feet of the east 112 feet of Lot 90, South Main.

### Boundary Justification

The above description is the legal description for the property on which the Hamlin Block at 304-306 S. Main lies. This is the boundary of the lots owned by the property owners.

### Photo Log

1. Exterior, Front (West) Elevation Looking Southeast.
2. Exterior, Close-up of Northern Storefront.
3. Exterior, South Elevation.
4. Exterior, Rear (East) Elevation Looking West.
5. Exterior, Close-up of Southern Storefront Doors.
6. Interior, Stairs to Second Floor.
7. Interior, Second Floor, Main Hall, Looking West toward Stair Rail, Corridor and Stair.
8. Interior, Second Floor, Main Hall, Looking East from Stair Rail.
9. Interior, Second Floor, Window and Door, showing original finish and room number.
10. Interior, First Floor, Arched Opening Between Storefronts.
11. Interior, First Floor, Close-up of Baseboard.



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