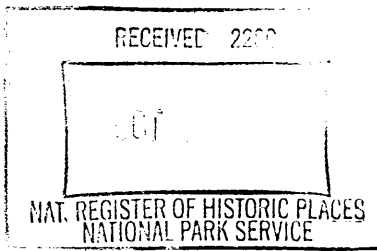


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



OMB No. 1024-0018  
1056

# 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 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 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 Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District

Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

Street & number Five blocks in downtown Broken Bow centered around public square Not for publication

City or town Broken Bow Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Custer Code 041 Zip code 68822

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official

Sept 27, 2006  
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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 11-21-06

[Signature]  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**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	
29	5	Buildings
1		Sites
3		Structures
		Objects
33	5	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**

2

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution
- COMMERCE/TRADE/professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility
- TRANSPORTATION/road-related
- LANDSCAPE/park

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- COMMERCE/TRADE/business
- COMMERCE/TRADE/professional
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility
- TRANSPORTATION/road-related
- LANDSCAPE/park

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate
- LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CEN. REVIVALS: Classical Revival
- LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> & 20<sup>TH</sup> CEN. AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Prairie School, Commercial Style
- MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco
- OTHER

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Foundation CONCRETE
- Walls BRICK, STUCCO, WOOD,
- CERAMIC TILE
- Roof ASPHALT
- Other STONE, TERRA COTTA, METAL

**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.)

- X 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 a 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.)

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1882-1956

Significant Dates

1882, 1887, c.1925, 1928

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Latenser, John and Sons

Atwater, C.E.

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
X 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 for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
X Other
Name of repository: Custer Co. Historical Society

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 11

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	446383	4583450	3.	14	446582	4583290
2.	14	446583	4583494	4.	14	446386	4583291

[ ] 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 Andrea Kampinen & Chad Moffett  
organization Mead & Hunt, Inc. date June 2006  
street & number 7900 West 78<sup>th</sup> Street, Ste. 370 telephone 952-941-5619  
city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55439

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Various  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

### Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District

Name of Property

### Custer County, Nebraska

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### Narrative Description

Broken Bow is located in Custer County, Nebraska, and serves as the county seat. Broken Bow is situated in the center of the county in central Nebraska. Broad valleys and rolling prairie plains characterize this area of the state that was settled during the late nineteenth century. The agricultural economy of the county consists of livestock, corn, wheat, soybeans, and alfalfa. Broken Bow developed as a regional center to serve these agricultural markets and prospered due to its position along the route of the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad (B&MR). Commerce in Broken Bow developed to provide goods and services to county and community residents.

Broken Bow is laid out in a grid pattern with late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century commercial development centered on the public square and the route of the railroad. The buildings facing the public square represent the historic core of commercial development in Broken Bow. The district includes brick streets (CU05-098) and a segment of the historic Potash Highway (CU00-091), which follows the current Nebraska State Highway 2/South E Street in the city of Broken Bow. Together with these commercial buildings, transportation-related properties, and the square, the district made a significant contribution to the commercial development of Broken Bow during the period of significance.

The Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District contains thirty-four commercial buildings, three structures, and one site, with construction dates that range from 1882 to 1960. Buildings are positioned on lots one-half block deep with alleys located at the rear. Twenty-three buildings face the square and share adjacent exterior walls forming continuous blocks. The district extends one-half block west of the square to include buildings along South E Street and the south side of South D Street between South Ninth and South Tenth Avenues, and the east side of South Tenth Avenue between South D and E Streets. These buildings display both freestanding and shared exterior walls. The public square encompasses one full block in the center of the district. It continues to serve as a park and is the focal point of the surrounding commercial development.

The buildings within the district are constructed of brick and display a combination of exterior materials, which include brick, pressed metal, wood, stucco, tile-block, permastone, and concrete, with the exception of the Security State Bank (CU05-066), which displays a terra cotta exterior. Twenty-eight buildings are one story in height. One-story buildings are generally brick commercial vernacular structures with minimal architectural detail that date from the early-to-mid twentieth century. Several one-story buildings within the district retain simple brick cornices, name and/or date plates, and decorative brickwork panels above recessed storefronts.

Seven buildings are two stories in height and one building is three stories in height. Generally, multi-story buildings exhibit details of a specific architectural style and occupy corner lots or comprise entire blocks. Multi-story buildings within the district generally retain their form, massing, and many decorative features, but many upper-story window openings are enclosed.

Brief descriptions of individual buildings are provided below. These descriptions are organized by block, beginning at the northwest corner of South Ninth Avenue and South E Street. Descriptions continue clockwise around the public square, then follow South E Street west to include the buildings along South Tenth Avenue and South D Street within the district. The description concludes with a discussion of the public square, the brick streets, and the segment of the Potash Highway. Construction dates and the historic name of properties are provided when known; otherwise, the historic function of the building is used in place of the historic name with an estimated date of construction.

#### *400 Block South Ninth Avenue*

The west side of the 400 block of South Ninth Avenue includes nine buildings. The commercial building (CU05-134, 1946) at 445 South Ninth Avenue is a one-story building with a brick and cream-colored tile facade, a suspended metal awning covering a recessed brick entryway, and glassblock windows on the side elevation. The Gishpert Building (CU05-

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Name of Property

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133, 1948) at 437 South Ninth Avenue is one-story building featuring a simple brick cornice with a nameplate, which displays "Gishpert 1948," that is flanked by square-shaped vents and a suspended metal awning. The commercial building (CU05-132, c.1955) at 429 South Ninth Avenue is a one-story building with a suspended metal awning, a recessed double storefront, and window transoms. The commercial building (CU05-131, c.1925) at 423 South Ninth Avenue is small, one story in height, with a variegated brick exterior. It displays a basket weave panel at the cornice and a c.1950 suspended metal awning with a neon sign positioned above that reads "City Cafe." The commercial building (CU05-130, c.1955) at 421 South Ninth Avenue is one-story with a suspended metal awning surmounted by a projecting metal sign that reads "Holcomb Pharmacy." The two-story building (CU05-129, c.1890) at 415 South Ninth Avenue displays a painted brick exterior with segmental arched windows, a corbelled brick cornice on the second story, a recessed entryway, and enclosed transom windows. The one-story building (CU05-128, c.1940) at 411 South Ninth Avenue displays elements of the Art Deco style. Constructed of brick, it features a recessed brick storefront, a smooth concrete block facade, and is accented by octagonal vents. The one-story building (CU05-097, c.1945) at 407 South Ninth Avenue displays a recessed tile storefront with few architectural details. The Security State Bank (CU05-066, 1915, NRHP listed 1987) at 403 South Ninth Avenue is a one-story, reinforced-steel concrete building constructed in the Neoclassical Revival style. The building displays an ornate architectural terra cotta exterior with original plate glass windows and stained glass transoms.

*800 Block South D Street*

The north side of the 800 block of South D Street includes eight buildings. The two-story George W. Smith Building (CU05-063, 1893), located on the corner at 845 South D Street, was built in the Italianate style. The building has elaborate details, which include a decorative three-bay second story with paired Tuscan columns that support a entablature comprised of a frieze with medallions, pressed metal cornice with brackets, and name plate that reads "Geo. W. Smith." The first story features decorative lintels separating the display windows and transoms. PermaStone covers the side elevation of the building.

The Carothers Building (CU05-096, 1936) at 841 South D Street is a contributing one-story brick building. While the building displays slightly diminished historic integrity due to applied nonhistoric stucco, its form and massing are consistent with the form and massing of two adjacent buildings and it still conveys sufficient historic character to be counted contributing. The building contains a nameplate that reads "Carothers 1936." The Tooley Building (CU05-095, 1929) at 837 South D Street is a one-story building with a simple corbelled cornice, recessed entrance, suspended awning, and name plate that reads "Tooley 1929." The T.T. Varney Building (CU05-094, 1934) at 833 South D Street is a one-story building with elements of the Art Deco style, including decorative stone trim, a recessed brick panel, corbels, and a raised panel adorned with a polychromatic terra cotta diamond. The one-story commercial building (CU05-093, c.1930) at 827 South D Street has a recessed entrance and lacks architectural detail. The one-story variegated brick building (CU05-092, c.1955) at 821 South D Street has two bays, a recessed entryway with plate glass display windows, and a suspended metal awning. The Lefler Building (CU05-091, 1946) at 817 South D Street is a one-story building with a raised central parapet containing a nameplate that reads "Lefler 1946." Simple brick corbelling surmounts the twin recessed entrances. The corner building (CU05-090, c.1920) at 803-809 South D Street displays two altered storefronts and is considered noncontributing. The eastern half of the building features modern permaStone and a metal awning. The western half displays painted brick and enclosed transom windows with applied nonhistoric stucco.

*400 Block South Eighth Avenue*

The east side of the 400 block of South Eighth Avenue includes five buildings. The one-story J.C. Penney Building (CU05-148, 1960) at 400-410 South Eighth Avenue is considered noncontributing due to age. It has two bays and displays smooth concrete coping, a recessed entrance, and a canvas awning. The one-story building (CU05-147, c.1930) at 416 South Eighth Avenue displays a yellow brick exterior and red brick pilaster at the northwestern corner. The building features a painted tile roof parapet, recessed entrance, and nonhistoric metal awning that extends to the curb. The one-story building (CU05-146, 1931) at 420-424 South Eighth Avenue has matching double recessed entryways and

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**Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District**

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is clad in square ceramic tiles that were added c.1955, after the building suffered fire damage. The building (CU05-145, 1941) at 428 South Eighth Avenue is a noncontributing one-story building that displays a large nonhistoric frame awning with wood shingles that obscures much of the building.

The two-story Union Block Building (CU05-068, 1887) at 430-444 South Eighth Avenue is the oldest building in the district. The building is defined by nearly identical elevations on the front and side due to its corner location. It is built in the Italianate style and displays four storefronts with stone trim, decorative pilasters, multi-pane transoms, decorative stone window hoods, an ornate pressed metal cornice, brick corbelling, and medallions. The first story on the south elevation is clad in stucco, and the first story on the west elevation has three modern storefronts and one historic storefront. An arched parapet on each elevation reads "Union Block 1887."

### *800 Block South E Street*

The south side of the 800 block of South E Street contains one building and one vacant lot. The Dierks Block (CU05-067, 1889) at 810-846 South E Street is the largest building on the square and occupies nine of the ten lots on the block. The two-story building displays multiple bays separated by brick pilasters, an angled entryway on the northwest corner, and multiple storefronts clad in stucco or wood paneling. The second story features paired arched windows with stone sills, with a mixture of one-over-one double hung, boarded, and modern fixed windows. The cornice features brick corbelling and small decorative arches. The stone drip cap has been removed and replaced with concrete; several of the brick caps on the pilasters are missing. The Dierks Block historically occupied all ten lots on the block; however, the eastern portion of the building was demolished in 1973 due to damage. As a result, the side elevations have been clad with stucco and a modern brick monument was constructed on the remaining vacant lot. The lot and the monument do not contribute to the historic significance of the district.

### *900 Block South E Street*

The south side of the 900 block of South E Street contains four buildings. The Arrow Hotel (CU05-054, 1928, NRHP listed 1985) at 509 South Ninth Avenue is a three-story building with an L-plan that displays stone trim. Designed by John Latenser and Sons in the Prairie School style, built by the general contractor C.E. Atwater, and financed by the community, the building occupies one-half of the block. The building features intact display windows, transoms, and multiple entrances with a decorative metal canopy over the main entryway on the east elevation. The second and third stories contain replaced six-over-one double hung windows and stone accents with polychromatic brickwork. The building (CU05-135, c.1930) at 930 South E Street is one-story with concrete trim similar to the Arrow Hotel, covered transoms, and replacement storefront windows. The one-story Bates Service Station (CU05-136, 1930) at 932 South E Street has been converted into a commercial mall with three modern storefronts sheltered by shingled pent awnings. The building displays three bays separated by brick piers and polychromatic and decorative brickwork. A name plate is obscured by the modern pent roof overhang. The building (CU05-137, c.1910) at 940 South E Street is one-story building displaying a cream and red tile storefront with a suspended metal awning. The building features large, square glassblock windows, and segmental arch windows and doors on the side elevation, some of which have been filled in with glass block.

The north side of the 900 block of South E Street includes two buildings that face south. The service station (CU05-138, c.1922) at 929-933 South E Street is considered noncontributing due to diminished historic integrity. The brick building has been covered with nonhistoric stucco and displays replacement casement windows. The corner service station (CU05-072, c.1925) at 943 South E Street is set at an angle and faces southwest. The Neoclassical Revival one-story building features a pediment entrance with pilasters, original overhead service and pedestrian doors, and decorative brickwork.

### *400 Block South Tenth Avenue*

The east side of South Tenth Avenue includes one building that faces the street. The freestanding, one-story building (CU05-139, 1949) at 426 South Tenth Avenue is situated in the middle of the block with glazed brick tile on the side

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### Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District

Name of Property

### Custer County, Nebraska

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elevations and a flat roof. It has horizontal-pane and glassblock windows with concrete sills. The other buildings visible on this side of the street face South E and South D Streets.

#### *900 Block South D Street*

The south side of the 900 block of South D Street includes seven buildings. The Holcomb Darnell Building (CU05-059, 1920) at 946 South D Street is a two-story building with a corbelled brick cornice and a stone nameplate that reads "Holcomb Darnell 1920." The front elevation contains a modern storefront with a shingled pent awning. The west elevation contains five bays separated by brick pilasters, two entrances, and enclosed windows on the second story. The Edwin F. Myers Building (CU05-140, 1937) at 940 South D Street is a two-story building with ceramic coping, a nameplate that reads "Edwin F. Myers," and a brick and wood shingle clad storefront. The commercial building (CU05-141, c.1940) at 934 South D Street is noncontributing due to diminished historic integrity. It has been altered with the application of lavastone and stucco thereby obscuring the original building materials. The commercial building (CU05-142, c.1940) at 930 South D Street is a one-story building with few architectural details, and a replacement storefront and transom windows. The one-story building (CU05-143, 1941) at 926 South D Street retains a simple brick cornice and a recessed entrance with display windows, intact transom openings, and a neon sign. The building (CU05-144, 1937) at 920 South D Street is two stories in height and displays elements of the Art Deco style. The first story displays a black tile watertable and an entryway with a suspended elliptical metal canopy above multi-pane transoms. The second story displays three-over-one windows and a patterned concrete cornice. The side elevation of the Security State Bank (CU05-066) occupies the remaining quarter of the block.

#### *Public Square*

The public square (CU05-064, 1882) occupies one entire block and serves as a community park and the focal point of the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District. Elements within the square include the bandstand, constructed in 1916, which is located in the center of the square. The building is hexagonal with both wood-frame and masonry members, and a shingled conical roof. The frame columns are adorned with large globe-shaped lights. Systems of criss-crossed walkways in the park connect the bandstand to the sidewalk that encircles the block. A modern playground is located at the southwest corner of the square. The park includes modern benches and picnic tables, mature trees, and plantings at the base of the bandstand.

#### *Streets*

Brick streets (CU05-098, 1921) surround the square and extend along South Eighth Avenue and South Ninth Avenue north of South E Street, and along South D Street. The brick streets contain numerous white stone squares incorporated among the brick to delineate centerlines, walkways, and diagonal parking stalls. Within the district, South E Street and South Tenth Avenue are paved in concrete and asphalt. A segment of the route of the Potash Highway (CU00-091, c.1925) extends from South Eighth Avenue to South Tenth Avenue. The highway is a two-lane paved road with diagonal parking stalls.

Twenty-nine buildings, three structures, and one site retain historic integrity and are considered contributing resources. Collectively, the properties of the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association. The buildings represent a collection of late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth century commercial buildings that display visual continuity and unity of form, scale, and functions. As such, the district retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its association with commercial development in Broken Bow. Five properties within this district are considered noncontributing. One of these, the former J.C. Penney building, retains sufficient physical integrity but is not yet 50 years old. Therefore, this building is not considered contributing. The remaining four noncontributing properties within the historic district have lost integrity. These noncontributing buildings do not retain sufficient integrity of design, materials, or feeling to convey the essential physical features that make up the character of commercial development and are common to other associated properties within the district. The table below indicates the status of each individual property within the district listed by their Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey



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Name of Property

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(NeHBS) site number, building address, name, and construction date. Two properties located within this historic district are already listed in the National Register.

Table of Properties within the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District

NeHBS Site No.	Building Address	Building name	Construction date	District status
CU05-134	445 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	1946	Contributing
CU05-133	437 South Ninth Avenue	Gishpert Building	1948	Contributing
CU05-132	429 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1955	Contributing
CU05-131	423 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1925	Contributing
CU05-130	421 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1955	Contributing
CU05-129	415 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1890	Contributing
CU05-128	411 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1940	Contributing
CU05-097	407 South Ninth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1945	Contributing
CU05-066	403 South Ninth Avenue	Security State Bank	1915	Listed
CU05-063	845 South D Street	George W. Smith Building	1893	Contributing
CU05-096	841 South D Street	Carothers Building	1936	Contributing
CU05-095	837 South D Street	Tooley Building	1929	Contributing
CU05-094	833 South D Street	T.T. Varney Building	1934	Contributing
CU05-093	827 South D Street	Commercial building	c.1930	Contributing
CU05-092	821 South D Street	Commercial building	c.1955	Contributing
CU05-091	817 South D Street	Lefler Building	1946	Contributing
CU05-090	803-809 South D Street	Commercial building	c.1920	Noncontributing
CU05-148	400-410 South Eighth Avenue	J.C. Penney Building	1960	Noncontributing
CU05-147	416 South Eighth Avenue	Commercial building	c.1930	Contributing
CU05-146	420-424 South Eighth Avenue	Commercial building	1931	Contributing
CU05-145	428 South Eighth Avenue	Commercial building	1941	Noncontributing
CU05-068	430-444 South Eighth Avenue	Union Block	1887	Contributing
CU05-067	810-846 South E Street	Dierks Block	1889	Contributing
CU05-054	509 South Ninth Avenue	Arrow Hotel	1928	Listed
CU05-135	930 South E Street	Commercial building	c.1930	Contributing
CU05-136	932 South E Street	Bates Service Station	1930	Contributing
CU05-137	940 South E Street	Commercial building	c.1910	Contributing
CU05-138	929-933 South E Street	Service Station	c.1922	Noncontributing
CU05-072	943 South E Street	Service Station	c.1925	Contributing
CU05-139	426 South Tenth Avenue	Commercial building	1949	Contributing
CU05-059	946 South D Street	Holcomb Darnell Building	1920	Contributing
CU05-140	940 South D Street	Edwin F. Myers Building	1937	Contributing
CU05-141	934 South D Street	Commercial building	c.1940	Noncontributing
CU05-142	930 South D Street	Commercial building	c.1940	Contributing
CU05-143	926 South D Street	Commercial building	1941	Contributing
CU05-144	920 South D Street	Commercial building	1937	Contributing
CU05-064	Public Square	Public Square and Bandstand	1882, 1916	Contributing
CU05-098	Surrounding square	Brick streets	1921	Contributing
CU00-091	South E Street	Potash Highway	c.1925	Contributing

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**Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District**

Name of Property

**Custer County, Nebraska**

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

The Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A: Commerce for its association with commercial development in Broken Bow. The district includes the public square and the area immediately surrounding the square that developed on the original plat of Broken Bow as a commercial area for local residents. The square serves as the focal point for the surrounding businesses that developed to provide essential goods and services. Since its development, the district has remained the core of commercial activities in Broken Bow. The district contains a collection of intact late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth century commercial buildings that reflect this important trend in the development of Broken Bow. The period of significance of the historic district begins with the platting of the square in 1882 and ends in 1956 with the current 50-year guideline to qualify for inclusion in the National Register. Significant dates within the district include the construction dates for those properties and events that individually had an impact on the character of the district as a whole. Significant dates include the platting of the public square (1882), the construction of the Union Block (1887) thereby establishing the commercial importance of Broken Bow, the establishment of the route of the Potash Highway (c.1925) thereby signaling the important role of commercial development derived from transportation, and the construction of the Arrow Hotel (1928) which represents an important community-sponsored events marking the importance of the role of commerce.

Collectively, the buildings of the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District display visual continuity and unity of form, scale, and functions. The district retains sufficient historic integrity to convey its association with commercial development in Broken Bow. As such, the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District is eligible locally under Criterion A: Commerce.

#### *Commercial Development in Broken Bow*

Custer County was established in 1877 and experienced rapid settlement due to its abundant ranching and farming opportunities and its subsequent location along the B&MR. Broken Bow is located in the center of Custer County and was first established as a post office in 1879. After opening a dry goods and grocery store, Jess P. Gandy purchased a quarter-section of land in April of 1882 and platted the town. Gandy donated one hundred lots to the community in an effort to influence voters to designate the new town as the county seat. His donation stipulated that one block serve as the site for the county courthouse and a second block nearby serve as a public square.<sup>1</sup>

Commercial development in Broken Bow centered on the public square shortly after the town was platted. Gandy encouraged trade by offering free lots to anyone who would establish a business or build a house. Since the site of Broken Bow was located near the center of a county with rich agricultural resources, the town developed as a regional commercial trading center for agricultural and cattle interests in the west and attracted merchants. By June of 1882, fourteen residences and commercial buildings had been erected, primarily in the area surrounding the square. Commercial buildings included wagon and repair shops, a blacksmith, drug store, printing office, and hotel.<sup>2</sup> In November residents of Custer County voted Broken Bow as the county seat.

The town was enlarged in 1883 by additions from Jess P. Gandy and A.W. Gandy. Before the coming of the railroad, all lumber, building materials, and commercial goods were freighted from Kearney by horse. Buildings surrounding the square at this time were characterized as one-story frame and sod commercial buildings. As development continued to increase, a lumber yard and two brick yards operated in Broken Bow by 1884, to provide important building materials for commercial construction.<sup>3</sup> By 1884 Broken Bow's population reached 200 residents.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Broken Bow Beginnings" available at the Custer County Historical Society clippings files.

<sup>2</sup> "The First Write-Up of Custer County," *Broken Bow Chief*, 22 December 1938, n.p.

<sup>3</sup> William L. Gaston and A. L. Humphrey, *History of Custer County, Nebraska* (Lincoln, Nebr.: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1919), 194-195.

<sup>4</sup> Phillip K. Gardner, *How Our Hundred Happened* ([Broken Bow, Nebr.]: N.p., 1980), n.p.

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In 1885 the B&MR began to survey northwest from Grand Island through Custer County. When surveyors reached Broken Bow in 1886, the Lincoln Land Company purchased large tracts of land in the town and subdivided 320 acres into residential and commercial lots. At this same time, homesteaders quickly filed claims on land in the vicinity of Broken Bow, which prompted additional merchants to secure property in the new additions platted by the railroad. The tracks were constructed three blocks to the north of the public square, which prompted commercial development closer to the new railroad line.

Before the first train arrived in August of 1886, Broken Bow was reported as a thriving metropolis in a June issue of the *Chicago Times*. The issue described the town as previously undesirable for commercial interests of wholesale, jobbing, and manufacturing enterprises. With the construction of the B&MR, however, it proposed that trade would flourish as the rich agricultural territory of the region was discovered by distant markets. The article boasted that cereals, fruits, and vegetables filled the cribs and granaries of Custer County as the valleys and farms showed the promise of agricultural wealth.<sup>5</sup>

As crops, merchandise, and freight were shipped via the railroad, Broken Bow developed and served as a regional center of commerce along the B&MR between Grand Island and Alliance. In addition to the core commercial district surrounding the public square, a commercial and industrial area developed north of the B&MR tracks on the land platted by the Lincoln Land Company. This area was comprised of grain elevators, a depot, grist mill, flour mill, and livery barns, as well as a bank, hotel, opera house, and grocery stores.<sup>6</sup>

Due to its close proximity to the railroad tracks, this area north of the square developed businesses primarily associated with industry and the transport of products along the railroad. However, the public square and its immediate environs remained the commercial core of Broken Bow, providing essential consumer goods and services for area residents. Shortly after the railroad was established, the commercial district surrounding the square was characterized by one- and two-story frame and brick buildings that housed hotels, barber shops, cafes, clothing stores, drug stores, banks, bakeries, and printing offices.

The public square (CU05-064), established in 1882, served as the focal point of the district. The square's location in the center of downtown provided an important area for residents to rest and socialize while conducting business in town. The prairie sod within the square was first plowed and seeded in 1885 to provide an aesthetic park landscape. In 1886 trees were planted, walkways were established in a circular pattern, and a frame bandstand was erected to serve as the center of community events.<sup>7</sup>

The district further benefited from the influx of materials and passengers from the railroad and development to the north. Development between 1882 and 1899 is reflected in Broken Bow's population growth and construction of four buildings. The two-story Italianate style Union Block (CU05-068) was built in 1887. The elaborate building housed four businesses and second-story apartments. Completed in 1889, the Dierks Block (CU05-067), formerly the Custer Realty Company Building, spanned an entire block of South E Street. The two-story building was home to eleven businesses, forty-two apartment units, the Masonic Lodge, and offices.<sup>8</sup> In 1890 the population of Broken Bow reached 1,600. A two-story brick building (CU05-129) was constructed c.1890 as a millinery shop. The George W. Smith Building (CU05-063) was built in 1893 as a clothing store. By 1894 Broken Bow contained three flour mills, three banks, one daily newspaper, three weekly newspapers, five hotels, seven boarding houses, six livery and feed stables, and seven churches.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>5</sup> "Glowing Account of County in 1886" available at the Custer County Historical Society clippings files.

<sup>6</sup> Gaston and Humphrey, *History of Custer County, Nebraska*, 193.

<sup>7</sup> "Broken Bow Beginnings" available at the Custer County Historical Society clippings files.

<sup>8</sup> Phillip K. Gardner, "Silent Sentinel on the Square Marks its 100th Year," Broken Bow, Nebr., Custer County Historical Society, 1990, n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Gardner, *How Our Hundred Happened*, n.p.

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depression during the mid-to-late 1890s curtailed development in the town until conditions improved at the turn of the century.

Broken Bow established itself as a regional center for commercial trade between 1900 and 1919. Many established commercial and industrial firms survived the depression of the 1890s and continued to develop after the turn of the century. In 1907 Custer County led the state in the number of horses and mules and was first in the production of hogs and second in the production of cattle.<sup>10</sup> Since Broken Bow was the largest town and the county seat, it developed as a regional destination for farmers trading their stock. This influx of visiting farmers stimulated a need for increased goods and services.

The area north of the railroad tracks gradually evolved from a mix of commercial and industrial activities to primarily an industrial focus, containing feed yards, roller mills, creameries, bottling plants, and agricultural implement storage facilities. Meanwhile, the businesses surrounding the square continued to provide goods and services. Two buildings, constructed between 1900 and 1919, remain within the district. The Security State Bank (CU05-066) was built in 1915 in the Neoclassical Revival style, popular among bank designs of the period. A one-story building constructed c.1910 (CU05-137) developed as a blacksmith shop and paint store. This building later operated along the Potash Highway as an automobile repair shop. During this period other commercial buildings located around the public square frequently changed ownership as businesses were sold or moved to different locations within the area. As use of the square increased, the 1886 frame bandstand was replaced in 1916 with the present larger bandstand. It was built in a hexagonal shape similar to the one it replaced. Local history states that in 1919 Broken Bow was the largest commercial trade center along the railroad between Alliance and Grand Island.<sup>11</sup>

Broken Bow and the commercial area surrounding the square experienced significant changes between 1920 and 1939. A 1920 report of the Department of Agriculture shows that Custer County, compared to other central Nebraska counties, was first in the production of horses and dairy cattle and second in beef cattle and hogs. Additionally, the county was first in the production of alfalfa and second in the production of corn.<sup>12</sup> Based on construction patterns within the district, this was a period of renewed commercial development as many of the earlier frame buildings surrounding the square were replaced with one- and two-story brick buildings. The Holcomb Darnell Building (CU05-059) was built in 1920. This two-story commercial vernacular brick building was constructed by Judge Holcomb and local contractor William Darnell to house professional offices. Other simple one-story brick buildings were constructed, such as grocery and variety stores, and include the c.1920 commercial building (CU05-090) north of the square. During the 1920s, transportation – and in particular the increased use of the automobile – had a visible effect on the development of Broken Bow and stimulated commercial development around the square. With the rise of automobiles, horses were banned from the streets surrounding the square. Between 1921 and 1922, eight-and-one-half miles of streets in the town were paved with asphalt or bricks, replacing earlier dirt streets and wood-plank sidewalks. At this time, the streets (CU05-098) surrounding the square were paved with bricks and stone markers were inlaid to delineate parking stalls.<sup>13</sup>

The development of the Potash Highway (CU00-091) through Broken Bow in the mid-1920s resulted in the addition of auto-related buildings and a greater volume of tourists traveling through town, which increased commercial development. Established as one of the first highways connecting central Nebraska to the southeastern part of the state, the Potash Highway followed South E Street through the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District, to the south of the public square. The traffic along the highway resulted in increased tourism and trade. Between c.1925 and 1930, concentrations of commercial and transportation-related properties (CU05-072, CU05-136, CU05-138) were constructed within the district

<sup>10</sup> Gardner, *How Our Hundred Happened*, n.p.

<sup>11</sup> Gaston and Humphrey, *History of Custer County, Nebraska*, 197.

<sup>12</sup> "Untitled," *The Custer County Chief*, 2 June 1921, 1.

<sup>13</sup> "Wet Weather is Not Conducive to Street Work," *The Custer County Chief*, 2 June 1921, 1.

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to service the influx of automobiles along the route of the Potash Highway. Also during this period the Arrow Hotel (CU05-054) was constructed, replacing the former Commercial Hotel on the southwest corner of the square.<sup>14</sup> The three-story building, erected with funding raised by the community in 1928, accommodated tourists traveling along the Potash Highway.

Broken Bow continued to develop during the Great Depression. The general trend during this period resulted in a decrease of population in rural areas of Custer County as residents moved to larger towns, such as Broken Bow. Despite the significant losses in crop and livestock production and the financial crisis that closed many banks, Broken Bow continued to subsist and commercial activity continued in the district.

Sixteen buildings within the district were constructed from 1920 to 1939 to house commercial and auto related businesses. T.T. Varney built a one-story building (CU05-094) with elements of the Art Deco style in 1934. In 1937 the Edwin F. Myers Building (CU05-140) was constructed as a law office. That same year, a two-story building (CU05-144) with elements of the Art Deco style was constructed as a ladies dress shop.

After surviving the Depression, the district continued to prosper as building construction continued between 1940 and 1960 and the economy improved. World War II created a new demand for farm products. Farmers in Custer County increased beef cattle production and produced larger quantities of corn, oats, wheat, and alfalfa. The advent of machinery and modern farming methods in the 1950s made agriculture more efficient and further decreased the need for labor on farms. This trend caused many rural residents to move to larger communities, and the population of Broken Bow increased from 2,968 in 1940 to 3,462 in 1960.<sup>15</sup>

Since Broken Bow remained the center of commerce and trade in the county, the town and its commercial square experienced sustained growth between 1940 and 1960 as construction continued within the district. During World War II, building materials were rationed, but commercial activity around the square continued. The end of the war brought returning veterans home, resulting in a robust economy that fostered commercial development. Buildings that date to this period are characterized by one-story brick construction. Fourteen buildings were constructed within the district between 1940 and 1960. Berl Blair erected a one-story building (CU05-143) in 1941 as a bakery. That same year, another one-story building (CU05-145) was constructed as a clothing store. The Lefler Building (CU05-091) was built in 1946 as a shoe and barber shop. A variety store (CU05-134) was constructed that same year. Two years later the Gisphert Building (CU05-133) was built as a hardware store. Two adjacent one-story buildings (CU05-130, CU05-132) on the west side of the square were constructed c.1955. The J.C. Penney Building (CU05-148) was the last building constructed on the square. The department store, built in 1960, replaced the Burlington Hotel and a cafe.

Construction within the district ceased after 1960, but the area continues to serve the community as its core commercial district. Commercial development suffered a decrease in the 1980s as a result of the recession that devastated the agricultural economy of the county. Many businesses vacated during this period; however, the district has experienced a resurgence and today serves the residents of Broken Bow and Custer County with commercial and service businesses, including a drug store, bakery, barber shop, restaurants, hardware stores, and a bank.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas G. Powers, "The Arrow Hotel," National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1985, 1.

<sup>15</sup> "Data on Early Broken Bow" available at the Custer County Historical Society clippings files.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

(See continuation sheet with map and district boundary)

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District encompass the core historic commercial district of Broken Bow that developed to serve the goods and services of area residents. The boundaries are based upon the visual continuity of buildings that are adjacent to the public square and historically significant, relate to the commercial development of Broken Bow, date to the period of significance, and retain historic integrity. The boundaries include buildings facing the public square and extend to include the entire block west of the square and the buildings facing Nebraska State Highway 2/South E Street from Ninth Avenue to Tenth Avenue. On the north side of South D Street the boundaries are extended to the curb to include the brick street. The centerline delineates the boundary along South Tenth Avenue since the street is concrete.

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The following information applies to all photographs:

Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District  
Broken Bow, Nebraska  
Broken Bow Township, Custer County  
Location of original negative at the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office  
Photographs by Mead & Hunt  
October 2005

*Photograph No. 1 of 17*  
West side of the 400 block of South Ninth Avenue  
View facing northwest

*Photograph No. 2 of 17*  
West side of the 400 block of South Ninth Avenue  
View facing southwest

*Photograph No. 3 of 17*  
North side of the 800 block of South D Street  
View facing northeast

*Photograph No. 4 of 17*  
North side of the 800 block of South D Street  
View facing northwest

*Photograph No. 5 of 17*  
East side of the 400 block of South Eighth Avenue  
View facing southeast

*Photograph No. 6 of 17*  
East side of the 400 block of South Eighth Avenue  
View facing northeast

*Photograph No. 7 of 17*  
Union Block  
View facing northeast

*Photograph No. 8 of 17*  
South side of the 800 block of South E Street  
View facing southeast

*Photograph No. 9 of 17*  
South side of the 800 block of South E Street  
View facing southwest

*Photograph No. 10 of 17*  
South side of the 900 block of South E Street  
View facing southwest

*Photograph No. 11 of 17*  
South side of the 900 block of South E Street  
View facing southeast

*Photograph No. 12 of 17*  
North side of the 900 block of South E Street and the  
east side of the 400 block South Tenth Avenue  
View facing northeast

*Photograph No. 13 of 17*  
South side of the 900 block of South D Street  
View facing southeast

*Photograph No. 14 of 17*  
South side of the 900 block of South D Street  
View facing southwest

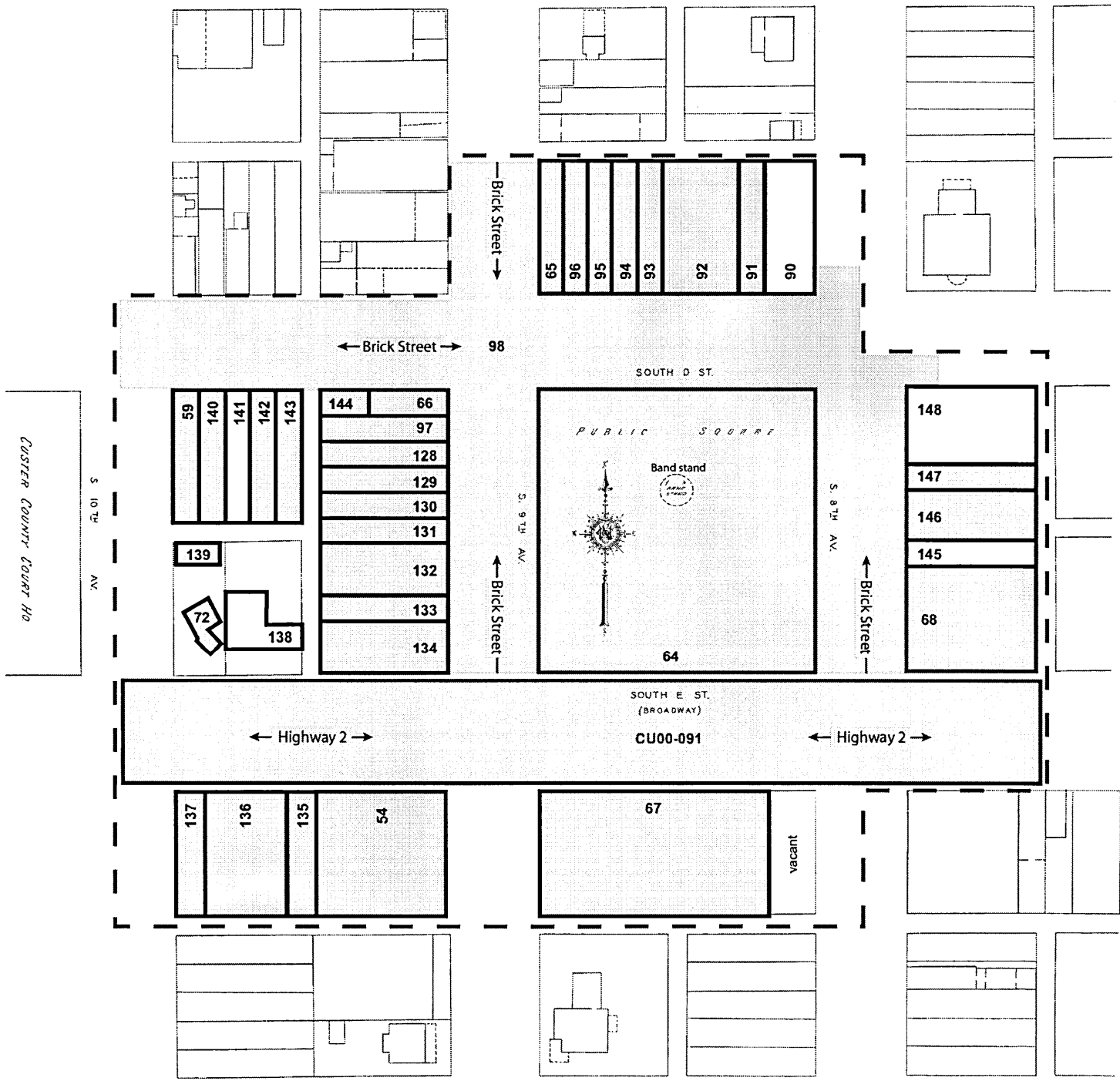
*Photograph No. 15 of 17*  
Public Square  
View facing northwest

*Photograph No. 16 of 17*  
Bandstand on Public Square  
View facing northwest

*Photograph No. 17 of 17*  
Brick Streets  
View facing northwest



# Historic Boundary Map

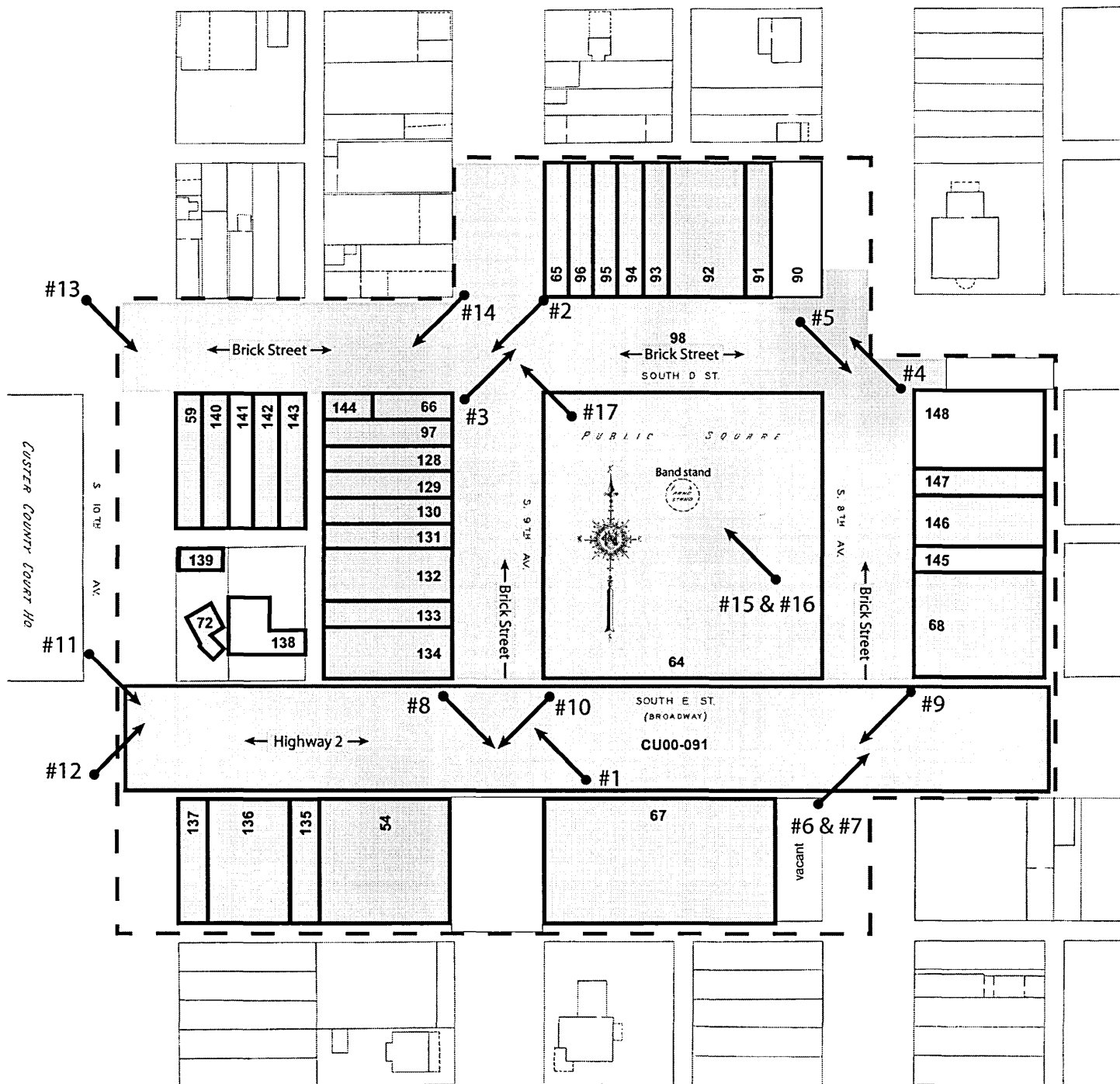


(Numbers indicated on map are Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey inventory numbers with the prefix CU05.)

Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District  
 Broken Bow, Broken Bow Township, Custer County, Nebraska

- Historic boundary
- Contributing property
- Noncontributing property

# Historic Boundary Map Showing Photograph Locations



(Numbers indicated on map within parcels are Nebraska State Historic Buildings Survey inventory numbers with the prefix CU05.  
Numbers adjacent to arrows indicate frame number and direction of photograph listed on continuation sheet.)

Broken Bow Commercial Square Historic District  
Broken Bow, Broken Bow Township, Custer County, Nebraska

- Historic boundary
- Contributing property
- Noncontributing property