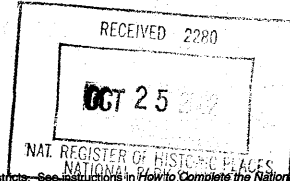


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



1480

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 Nelson Cemetery Walk
Other names/site number NeHBS #NU07-241

2. Location

Street & number _____ Not for publication
City or town Nelson Vicinity
State Nebraska Code NE County Nuckolls Code 129 Zip code 68961

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.)

Lawrence Samuels
Signature of certifying official

10/21/02
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 12.5.02

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Nelson Cemetery Walk

Name of Property

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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	
_____	_____	Buildings
_____	_____	Sites
_____ 1 _____	_____	Structures
_____ 1 _____	_____	Objects
_____	_____	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: pedestrian-related walkway

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: pedestrian-related walkway

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation _____

Walls _____

Roof _____

Other concrete

Narrative Description

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

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** Removed from its original location.
- C** A birthplace or 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.)

Transportation

Social History

Period of Significance

1912-1952

Significant Dates

1912

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

A.W. McReynolds/engineer

J.B. Goodrich/builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- Previously listed in the National Register
- Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- Designated a National Historic Landmark
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	578772	4450762	3.			
2.	14	578500	4450762	4.			

[] 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 Melissa A. Dirr, Architectural Historian
organization Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office date August 2002
street & number 1500 R Street, Box 82554 telephone 402-471-4408
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501

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 City of Nelson/Nuckolls County
street & number P.O. Box 327, 580 Main Street telephone _____
city or town Nelson state NE zip code 68961

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.

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Nelson Cemetery Walk

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DESCRIPTION

The Nelson Cemetery Walkway is located in the northeast edge of the town of Nelson. Nelson is the county seat of Nuckolls County Nebraska in the south central portion of the state. This is an area of rolling plains and excellent farming and grazing land. The small community of Nelson with a current population of 563 is home to the elevated cemetery walkway, the subject of this nomination. The Nelson Cemetery Walkway is being nominated to the National Register under criterion A for its contribution to the pedestrian transportation efforts of the citizens, a result of the social activism of the local P.E.O. Sisterhood.

The walkway spans a ravine that divides the city cemetery from the residents. The need for the walkway was evident early in Nelson's history and work on its completion commenced in 1909 when the ladies of the P.E.O. Sisterhood involved themselves with the maintenance and care of the cemetery. Designed by Mr. A. W. McReynolds, the walkway was built by J.B. Goodrich who emblazoned his name and the date 1912 at the head of the walkway near the cemetery entrance. The walk was completed in November of 1912 and is constructed of poured concrete supports and decking with a simple pipe rail running the distance of the walk on both sides. The walk is 1235 feet long and four feet wide with a grade of eight-tenths of an inch to the foot making it easy to travel. Viewing the walkway from one end to the other the slope is evident. It is at its highest point at its beginning and end with a significant dip in the middle to reduce the height from the bottom of the ravine. The historic survey revealed that the ravine to be crossed was nearly 50 feet below the air-line at its deepest point, providing a significantly high aerial view in some places.

Currently the walk is showing some age with some pipe rail members rusting and some rust jacking causing the concrete to spall in places. Currently, a funding effort is underway through transportation enhancement funds to maintain and restore the walkway back to its original condition. The walk retains a high degree of historic integrity. The setting still reflects the historic surroundings with minimal modern intrusions, except for the road that is now paved and was historically dirt. Trees have grown up around the ravine providing the feeling of lush greenery surrounding the walkway. The walkway was a significant transportation effort in 1912 and throughout the history of Nelson bringing people to the cemetery over the ravine which was difficult to traverse.

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The Nelson Cemetery Walkway and Viaduct is eligible for the National Register under criterion A for its significant contribution to the pedestrian transportation patterns in the city of Nelson, as well as the social consciousness of the ladies of the local P.E.O. Sisterhood. The walkway was constructed as a result of the ladies of the local P.E.O. Sisterhood who took upon themselves the responsibility to raise the money, survey the land, and hire the construction of the walkway. Completed in 1912, the structure was designed by the surveyor Mr. A. W. McReynolds, and built by local contractor J.B. Goodrich. The period of significance of the walkway begins in 1912 and extends to 1952 the established fifty year cut-off date. This period of significance was chosen because of the continued use of the walkway as a pathway from the community to the cemetery.

Nelson, Nebraska is located in Nuckolls County in the south central area of the state and borders the state of Kansas. Geographically this area consists of rolling and dissected plains that manifest themselves through sharp cuts with small gulleys. The rolling plains and wide-open spaces provide an especially scenic area. Nuckolls County was organized in 1871 just three years after Nebraska's statehood. Platted on an early grid the county is 24 miles square and contains an area of 576 square miles. The earliest government survey of this area was in 1858-59 when the territory was first opened for settlement. The County takes its name from Stephen F. Nuckolls an early and successful merchant in neighboring Nebraska City. This rolling prairie was ideal for farming and grazing and attracted permanent settlers immediately after the government survey.

The city of Nelson was chosen as the county seat in 1873 two years after the county's organization. The population of the city peaked at 1500 souls in the early 1900s with a significant decline in population after World War I, reaching its current population of about 563 people. Nelson's history reflects that of many early towns in Nebraska and across the region. In the summer of 1886 the first Burlington train arrived in Nelson as part of a north-south route with an east-west route following the next year, the resiliency of the community came alive and continued to grow. A significant fire in the downtown business district stunted the initial growth spurt and prosperity of the early settlement in the late 1880s. In fact throughout Nelson's history there have been fires and natural disasters destroying nearly all of Nelson's business district, with two separate fires consuming their Main Street in 1888. After these fires the community passed a law requiring all new construction in downtown to be of brick or stone. A cyclone also demolished 20 houses, the church and the school during this era of growth. Given the importance to the growing community of enhanced transportation needs, Nelson passed its first paving district in 1920 to modernize their roads. Rural electrification first came to Nuckolls County in 1949. The population of Nuckolls County peaked in 1920 at 13,236 people reflecting the World War I era peak of the city of Nelson, its county seat. Throughout its settlement from the 1880s through the 1920s the population of the county increased from approximately 4235 people to its 1920 peak. Today the county has a population of 5366 people.

During this early thriving atmosphere of the city of Nelson many civic groups were organized and became quite popular. From the earliest days in the 1880s the ladies P.E.O. Sisterhood group was thriving. P.E.O. is a women's religious organization with many civic-minded goals. To this day the meaning of the initials P.E.O. are known only by members of the organization. This women's organization remains active in the community today. In the early 1900s as the community was nearing its peak and prior to its paving district to modernize city roads, citizens of Nelson had a difficult time navigating popular areas in town. One of these locations was the city cemetery at the northeast edge of town. An inadequate dirt path that dipped through a gully and regularly flooded and washed out was the only access to the cemetery. Access to the cemetery was thus limited and difficult to attain. In February of 1909 the P.E.O. ladies appointed a committee to confer with the cemetery association regarding their many needed improvements. After taking a survey of

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cemetery lot owners and creating a cemetery list book, the ladies decided to raise money through a box social to fund a walk to the cemetery. This was reported at the P.E.O. meeting in April of 1912 and the following meeting reveals that \$37.25 was raised for the cemetery walk and the committee was encouraged to continue their work. Following this initial success, planning was in full swing for a cemetery walk. A location was chosen on the north side of the existing dirt path and the area was surveyed, while all the ladies of the P.E.O. committed to solicit funds to pay for the construction of the walk. The survey was completed by Mr. A.W. McReynolds and revealed that the walk desired be elevated to span the necessary 1200 feet of the ravine. The survey also revealed that the ravine to be crossed was approximately fifty feet below the air line at its deepest point. Some doubt was raised about the ability to complete such an engineering feat. The surveyor created the blue prints and plans for a structural concept, and the ladies continued with their fundraising. By June of 1912 more than 300 letters had been sent out and the ladies organized an aggressive fund raising campaign dividing their soliciting into four divisions and committing \$225 from their organization alone. By November of 1912 the walk was finished and fully paid.

On July 11, 1912 the Nelson Gazette, which closely chronicled the fundraising progress of the cemetery walkway reported that, "When it comes to charitable work you can always depend on the ladies and we feel safe in predicting that the fund will be adequate when on the 19th of this month the contract is to be let for the greatest piece of public improvement ever undertaken by our women folk." The paper goes on to list on a weekly basis all donors and the status of the fund. Donations came in one dollar increments to \$25 increments. The contract was let in late July to Mr. Joe B. Goodrich a local engineer from Nelson. Mr. Goodrich immediately began construction on the walkway even though all the money had not yet been raised. The ladies busied themselves collecting their pledges and conducting additional fundraising activities such as a local play and boxed dinners. Upon its completion the local paper again reported that "their dream of a short time since, is today realized, and the whole community has much to be grateful for." The ladies of the P.E.O. continued their involvement with cemetery maintenance after the walkway was completed and funded other smaller projects which elicited a "deeper interest in our little city of the dead."

The cemetery walkway continues its use to this day, although deferred maintenance in the 1970s allowed some to wonder if the walkway was abandoned. Throughout its history the walk way has been used by marching bands making celebratory walks to the cemetery and homeowners along the way connected their sidewalks to the walkway. During the lifespan of the cemetery, people celebrated holidays differently and the large parades to the cemetery diminished. However, the excellent construction methods of the early sidewalk accommodated its deferred maintenance and it stands today as a testament to the physical manifestation of the community minded determination of the ladies of the P.E.O. group in Nelson.

The Nelson Cemetery Walk is significant on the local level under criterion A for its contribution to the improved pedestrian traffic patterns, and social history of Nelson. There is no doubt the construction of this walk changed the physical landscape of the city and contributed to the ability of the local citizens to access the cemetery, celebrate holidays and honor their dead. It is an excellent example to the contribution of the ladies of the P.E.O. to their community. Though they did not leave behind a building much like the International Order of Oddfellows or the Masons may have left, this civic organization took its commitment to the betterment of their community to heart and left the city a valuable landmark and usable resource to this day.

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Minutes of the P.E.O. Sisterhood, Nelson, Nebraska. February 22, 1909; April 11, 1910; April 11, 1911; April 26, 1912; May 13, 1912; May 16, 1912; May 27, 1912; June 10, 1912; June 24, 1912; November 11, 1912; November 9, 1912.

The Nelson Gazette. "The Cemetery Walk", May 30, 1912.

The Nelson Gazette. "Notice of Bids", July 4, 1912

The Nelson Gazette. "The Cemetery Walk Fund", July 11, 1912

The Nelson Gazette. "Contract Goes to Goodrich", July 25, 1912

Nelson Gazette. "The New Cemetery Walk and Viaduct," December 12, 1912

The Nelson Gazette. Nelson Cemetery walkway deserted, but old-timers recall heyday", 1977

Specifications for Cemetery Sidewalk and Viaduct, Nelson, Nebraska, P.E.O. Sisterhood minutes.

The Wonderful Years. A History of Nuckolls County, Nebraska 1871-1971. Nuckolls County Centennial, Incorporated, The Superior Express, 1971

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Boundary Description

The Nelson Cemetery Walkway is 1285 feet long and four feet wide. The boundaries include only the walkway and the land on which it directly resides. This nomination does not include any land within the cemetery. The boundaries extend from the beginning of the walkway at the edge of the only adjacent driveway to the opening of the cemetery gate where the concrete ends. These boundaries include only the walkway and no associated land.

Boundary Justification

The above boundaries were selected to be as concise as possible. The significant historic resource is the elevated walkway only. The boundaries were chosen to include only the 1285 feet of the existing concrete walk and no additional land in the cemetery or neighboring property.