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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If 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 Captain John O'Rourke House

Other names/site number Dugan House / CC14-098

### 2. Location

Street & number 424 N 6<sup>th</sup> ST

Not for publication

City or town Plattsmouth

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Cass

Code 025

Zip code 68048

### 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 of certifying official

1/17/06  
Date

Deputy SHPO, 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.

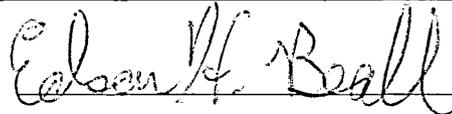
determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_



3/2/06

  
Signature of Keeper

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

Captain John O'Rourke House

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Enter as many boxes as apply)

- X Private
Public-local
Public-state
Public-federal

Category of Property
(Enter only one box)

- X Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
Object

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

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: Buildings, Sites, Structures, Objects, Total. Values: 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN / Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation BRICK

Walls WOOD

Roof ASPHALT

Other n/a

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X 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.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1881

Significant Dates

1881

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

n/a

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:

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

Captain John O'Rourke House

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	257318	4544227	3.			
2.				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 Stacy Stupka-Burda / National Register Coordinator  
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date 11/28/05  
street & number 1500 R ST, PO Box 82554 telephone 402-471-4770  
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501-2554

**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 Patrick M. and Heather R. Dugan  
street & number 424 N 6<sup>th</sup> ST telephone 402-212-5935  
city or town Plattsmouth state NE zip code 68048

**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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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Captain John O'Rourke House

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

County and State

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Located in Plattsmouth, Nebraska, the Captain John O'Rourke House is a two-story Italianate house constructed in 1881. The county seat of Cass County, Plattsmouth is situated in the northeast corner of the county approximately 60 miles northeast of Lincoln, the state capital of Nebraska. As the name suggests, Plattsmouth is located near the mouth of the Platte River at this river's confluence with the larger Missouri River. Considered part of the Omaha metropolitan area, the city of Plattsmouth is experiencing population growth, and the 2000 census indicated a population of 6,887.

The Captain John O'Rourke House is a two-story Italianate house with a full height basement that is exposed on three sides. The O'Rourke house has a hipped asphalt roof that displays a deck with decorative iron cresting at the top of the roof.

This frame house was constructed on a foundation made of red clay bricks that were locally produced. The full width single story front porch on the primary or east façade is a major focal point and features square porch supports with bracketed tops and a turned post balustrade. On the primary façade of this house, the first floor features a paired set of two over two double hung windows and a set of double-leaved entrance doors. The second floor has a paired set of windows positioned directly over the first floor windows, and a third window positioned above the entrance. The windows are framed by wide flat, scrolled trim and four of these windows form a bay of windows on the first and second stories. The lower half of the wooden double doors is paneled, and two large paned etched glass windows grace the upper half of each door. A glass transom crowns the front entrance.

The south facing façade features a two story rectangular bay window and gives the first indication of the full height basement. The story high brick foundation meets the height of the porch decking located on the primary façade and wide wooden clapboard creates a visual break between the brick of the lowest floor and the wood frame construction of the first and second floors. The basement level of the rectangular bay is constructed of brick and has four, narrow double hung windows with arched lintels. Two of these windows face south, and one faces east and west respectively. The first floor bay is constructed of wood and also has four double hung windows arranged in the same manner as the lower level windows. These windows are wider however, and are framed by scrolled brackets underneath the wide eave of the bay. A doorway immediately to the west of the bay window provides outside access to the basement level of the house. The remaining windows on this façade include one small casement window with a brick lintel near the southeast corner of the house; a two over two double hung window immediately above this window on the first floor; and two evenly spaced two over two double hung windows on the second floor. These double hung windows are decorated in the manner of the windows on the primary façade and are framed by wide, flat scrolled trim. Scrolled brackets under the eaves provide an Italianate design feature.

The west and north facades are quite simple; the wooden clapboards are broken up by evenly spaced windows on each floor framed again by wide, flat scrolled trim. A one-story addition has been constructed on the west façade.

The exterior of this house is well maintained. Mature and immature trees, and a red brick sidewalk contribute to the overall setting and feeling of this historic property. Sited on two and ½ city lots, a garage facing Avenue "D" has been constructed northwest of the O'Rourke house. This garage is modern and is considered as a non-contributing building for the purposes of this nomination.

On the interior of the house, the main entrance opens into a small foyer; the staircase leading up to the second floor and down to the basement is located in this foyer, as is a doorway leading into one of three parlors located on this floor. These three rooms are all nearly the same size, and flow quite naturally into one another. Wooden pocket doors between

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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**Captain John O'Rourke House**

Name of Property

**Cass County, Nebraska**

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Section 7 Page 2

each of these rooms allow this space to be modified according to the homeowner's entertainment needs. The paneled wooden pocket doors are still operational and are impressive.

The parlors each feature wood floors, painted wooden moldings and ceiling medallions which accompany each overhead light fixture. These large medallions measure 4 feet in diameter and each consists of concentric circles. The central parlor features the bay window, a faux painted granite fireplace with a slate hearth. A small portion of one of these parlors has been altered to create a modern bathroom. Single doors on this floor feature glass transoms.

The second floor of the O'Rourke house consists of two bedrooms on the south side and a third bedroom and two bathrooms separated by a long hallway on the north side. The two modern bathrooms were created out of what was originally a fourth bedroom. As is typical, the builder of this home chose finishes that were less expensive than those of the rooms that would be visible to visitors. However, there are two concentric circle ceiling medallions on this floor as well, one in the hallway, and one in the largest bedroom. Glass transoms are in place at the top of each door on this floor.

The basement level contains the kitchen, a butler's pantry, a formal dining room, a coal room turned utility room, and storage rooms. An exterior door on this level provides convenient access to this portion of the house. The dining room is the most striking room on this level. This room enjoys the advantage of the rectangular bay window, however, the floor captures immediate attention. The wooden dining room floor is constructed of both pine and mahogany creating a rich striped pattern.

The overall integrity of the Captain John O'Rourke house is excellent. The scrolled eave brackets present on three facades are absent on the primary façade. While the current homeowner intends to replicate and replace these brackets, they are not present at the writing of this nomination. The one-story addition on the west façade and the construction of a modern garage are additive changes. The interior of this home is largely intact, with the exception of the installation of a modern bathroom on the first floor and the creation of two bathrooms out of one bedroom on the second floor. These changes to the O'Rourke house occurred over a long period of time, and do not hinder the identification of this house as an Italianate house. The seven aspects of integrity, location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association are all represented by this historic property.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Captain John O'Rourke House

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

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Section 8 Page 1

The Captain John O'Rourke House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion C for significance in architecture. Constructed in 1881, this house is a fine example of an Italianate house in Plattsmouth, Nebraska.

John O'Rourke was born in Ireland in 1834 and emigrated to the United States in 1857<sup>1</sup>. He worked for three years as a bookkeeper before enlisting in the "old Montgomery Guards" at Milwaukee in April of 1861. The "old Montgomery Guards" was attached to the Sixth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, and very quickly, John O'Rourke was commissioned Captain of Company D and held this position until December 1861. Captain O'Rourke re-enlisted and received his commission of Captain of Battery L, First Illinois Light Artillery in February 1862. Captain O'Rourke's shoulder was broken during a battle in February 1864 and he was taken prisoner during a battle in June of that year. He was held in various places throughout Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina. Finally "after five unsuccessful attempts to escape, made at various times, he at last, and all alone, succeeded in eluding his guards at Columbia, S.C., in March 1865, after thirteen months of imprisonment, reaching the Union lines at Charleston four weeks thereafter." Captain O'Rourke served as a paymaster's clerk until the end of hostilities when he returned to Wisconsin.

Captain O'Rourke relocated to Plattsmouth, Nebraska in 1874 and was appointed Assistant Cashier of the First National Bank. He was elected Treasurer of the Plattsmouth Board of Trade in 1881, and was reelected in 1882. He was elected mayor of Plattsmouth in 1881.

On June 16, 1881, the Nebraska Herald reported "Mayor O'Rourke is preparing to build on his lots on west side of 6<sup>th</sup> Street<sup>2</sup>. By the end of that same month, the newspaper noted, "work has commenced on Mayor O'Rourke's \$2000 residence."<sup>3</sup> About nine months later, and \$2000 more than O'Rourke expected, the News-Herald printed an article regarding O'Rourke's new house. The article begins by stating "...great satisfaction can be derived from a contemplation of the modern improvements which are being introduced, showing as they do the substantial growth of the town, and the intention of its citizens to make permanent and beautiful homes."<sup>4</sup> This same article describes the interior of the house and mentions that the interior of the mansion "corroborates the appearance of substantial comfort from an outside view."<sup>5</sup> The author concludes this story by stating, "taken all in all this is one of the most convenient and well arranged houses in the city, and we trust Mayor and Mrs. O'Rourke and family may pass many happy years in it."<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, this kind sentiment went unrealized by Captain O'Rourke, as he died in May of that year.<sup>7</sup>

### Italianate: 1840 - 1885

Houses designed in the Italianate style are two or more stories and are usually substantial. They feature wide overhanging eaves with decorative brackets.<sup>8</sup> The windows of an Italianate house are tall and narrow and can be hooded, bracketed, or framed. Italianate houses were constructed of stone, brick and wood. Through massing and architectural detailing both on the exterior and interior, Italianate houses usually convey a comfortable sense of success.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, information regarding the life of Captain O'Rourke is taken from Andreas, A.T. ed. *History of the State of Nebraska*. The Western Historical Company, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> Nebraska Herald, June 16, 1881.

<sup>3</sup> Nebraska Herald June 30, 1881.

<sup>4</sup> News-Herald February 9, 1882.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Wisconsin Necrology*, Volume 3.

<sup>8</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*. 2000.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Captain John O'Rourke House**

Name of Property

**Cass County, Nebraska**

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

During the time period that the Italianate style became popular in the United States, industrialization was increasing, building materials were readily available and the mass production of building elements was becoming standardized.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these factors, the public enjoyed increased access to publications such as trade catalogs, pattern books and architectural periodicals.<sup>10</sup> Italianate architecture could be as detailed or as simple as the homeowner desired, while still conveying a sense of style and success. The financial panic of 1873 and ensuing depression slowed construction nationwide. After this depression, Italianate designs were no longer as fashionable throughout the United States. As building trends picked back up, a new style, the Queen Anne, edged out the Italianate in popularity, beginning in approximately 1880.<sup>11</sup>

In Nebraska, Italianate houses continue to be constructed up to the turn of the century<sup>12</sup>. Building styles in Nebraska do not fit neatly into nationwide architectural trends, with stylistic trends tending to reach Nebraska approximately ten years late and persisting about a decade after they had fallen out of fashion nationally. Nebraska itself was still a very young state in 1880, only thirteen years old, and her pioneers could rightly describe themselves as successes if they managed to eke a sufficient living to stay. In these early years, those who were extremely successful, and they were comparatively few, might construct a substantially built and designed house of a recognizable style, such as an Italianate. The Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey indicates that when true Italianate houses were built in Nebraska at all, they were most often constructed in towns along the Missouri River, such as Omaha, Peru, and most predominantly in Plattsmouth.

The Burlington & Missouri Railroad decided to locate their Nebraska headquarters in Plattsmouth in 1869 and though they later moved the headquarters to Omaha, Plattsmouth benefited from the presence of the associated railroad shops complex.<sup>13</sup> From the 1880s through the 1890's, Plattsmouth continued to grow and prosper. It was during this decade that the historic commercial district visible today was constructed. This National Register listed district is comprised largely of commercial Italianate buildings.

It was during this time period in 1881, that Captain John O'Rourke began building his Italianate house on Sixth Street. As mayor of Plattsmouth, Captain O'Rourke was undoubtedly aware of the need to build a substantial home. The newspaper of the day was compelled to mention the construction of this house in those terms "...showing as they do the substantial growth of the town, and the intention of its citizens to make permanent and beautiful homes."<sup>14</sup> Italianate architecture, the popular style of the day was the perfect expression of O'Rourke's feeling for the successful future of Plattsmouth.

The Captain John O'Rourke house is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level for its significance under Criterion C for architecture. This Italianate house exhibits classic features associated with this important architectural style. The overall physical integrity of this historic property is intact. Italianate houses in Nebraska are relatively rare and those with sufficient physical integrity are certainly good candidates for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

<sup>9</sup> Calloway, Stephen, *The Elements of Style*, 1991.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Nebraska Historic Building Survey database, Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>13</sup> Cass County Nebraska Historic Building Survey, Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office.

<sup>14</sup> News-Herald February 9, 1882.

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Continuation Sheet

Captain John O'Rourke House

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

**Bibliography**

Andreas, A.T.

1882 *History of the State of Nebraska*. Volume 1. The Western Historical Company, Chicago.

Calloway, Stephen and Elizabeth Cromley

1991 *The Elements of Style A Practical Encyclopedia of Interior Architectural Details From 1485 to the Present*.  
Simon and Schuster, New York.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee,

2000 *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office

2004 Cass County, Nebraska State Historic Building Survey. On file, Nebraska State Historic Preservation  
Office.

Nebraska Herald, June 16, 1881.

Nebraska Herald, June 33, 1881.

News-Herald, February 9, 1882.

Wisconsin Necrology, Volume 3, p. 125. On file, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

**Captain John O'Rourke House**

Name of Property

**Cass County, Nebraska**

County and State

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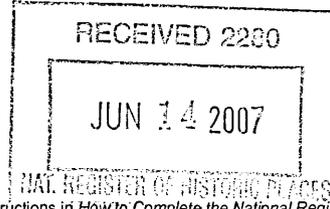
**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The north 87 feet of Lots 1 and 2, and the north 87 feet of the east 18' of Lot 3, Block 4, City of Plattsmouth, Cass County, Nebraska.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary includes all of the land originally associated with the property.

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National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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1. Name of Property

Historic name Captain John O'Rourke House - Amendment (addition of Criterion B)  
Other names/site number Dugan House / CC14-098

2. Location

Street & number 424 N 6<sup>th</sup> ST Not for publication   
City or town Plattsmouth Vicinity   
State Nebraska Code NE County Cass Code 025 Zip code 68048

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.)

Michael J. Ball  
Signature of certifying official

May 31, 2007  
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):  
Additional Documentation Accepted

Robert H. Beall  
Signature of Keeper

7-20-07  
Date of Action

Captain John O'Rourke House – Amendment

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

Captain John O'Rourke House – Amendment to Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

X B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Areas of Significance - amended

POLITICS / GOVERNMENT

Significant Person - amended

Captain John O'Rourke

Narrative Statement of Significance - amended

See Continuation Sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Captain John O'Rourke House – Amended Bibliography

See Continuation Sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Pat Dugan / Owner

organization \_\_\_\_\_

date 2/25/07

street & number 424 N 6<sup>th</sup> ST

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Plattsmouth

state NE

zip code 68048

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Captain John O'Rourke House – Amendment

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

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Section 8 Page 1

Originally listed in 2006 for significance in architecture, the property owner discovered new information indicating that the Captain John O'Rourke House is also significant under Criterion B for an association with Captain John O'Rourke.

### Statement of Significance - Amended

The Captain John O'Rourke House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "B" in the area of politics and government. Upon his arrival in Plattsmouth in 1874 O'Rourke was a tireless community booster and was intimately involved with decisions that insured Plattsmouth would grow into a modern city. His roles within the community are numerous and varied, including the Cass County, Nebraska Democrat Convention delegate (1875), Plattsmouth Board of Trade (1880 – 1882), G.A.R. post 45 Senior Vice Commander (1880), Plattsmouth Mayor (1881-1882). It was as mayor, that O'Rourke would begin the building of his family's permanent home with construction beginning in earnest during June of 1881. The home exemplifies the culmination of his career in politics and government. The Captain resided in this home until his untimely death in 1882. While O'Rourke lived in this house for a relatively short amount of time, the house itself conveys O'Rourke's significance as a community leader: a leader intent on bringing Plattsmouth into a modern era thereby insuring the long term survival of the city.

### Criterion B

Captain John O'Rourke was born in Limerick, Ireland in 1834. He immigrated to the United States in 1854 and immediately took up residence in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In Ireland was employed as a practical milner but in his adopted country he became a bookkeeper. At first he worked for a man named John Furlong but after a short period of time he changed employers and began working as the clerk and paymaster of John Fitzgerald a successful railroad contractor. It was during this early employment that he met and befriended a Chicago lawyer named James A. Mulligan.

When the call came in 1861 for volunteers to support the Union cause, O'Rourke immediately answered the call of his adopted home and during April he enlisted in the 6<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry. Immediately promoted to Captain, O'Rourke was given command of Company D. In June of 1861 O'Rourke is credited for his conspicuous part in the quelling of the Bankers riots that occurred in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He remained with Company D until November of 1861 when he resigned his commission and return to Milwaukee.

At the request of the Wisconsin Governor Lowell P. Harvey, O'Rourke traveled to Chicago, Illinois where he again enlisted in the military. This time he utilized the name of Rourke rather than O'Rourke on his enlistment papers. Offered command of the 17<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Regiment by the Governor, Rourke turned down the offer. After traveling to St. Louis with the Governor he accepted the position of Captain of the 11<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Light Artillery Battery. At the request of Colonel James A. Mulligan of the newly formed Irish Brigade, and with the blessings of both the Illinois and Wisconsin Governors, Rourke's command was commissioned the 1<sup>st</sup> Illinois Light Artillery Battery B.

After the untimely death of Governor Harvey during his visit to the battlefield of Shiloh in 1862, Rourke is credited with providing a "solemn and imposing" funeral escort for the Governor's body as it was carried through Chicago on its way home. Rourke had seen fit to utilize his Artillery Battery in this manner to honor his fallen friend, the Governor.

Rourke then took his battery to the area around Petersburg, West Virginia where they participated in multiple skirmishes with the enemy. During this time Rourke is noted within the Congressional record as helping recover several hundred cattle and taking multiple prisoners after having "positioned and fired" a section of his cannons personally. This event, it was noted, occurred after the battery had chased the enemy some 25 miles by night with the skirmish taking place within 5 miles of a heavily fortified enemy position. On a different occasion, Rourke was credited with capturing 3,000 lbs of

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Captain John O'Rourke House – Amendment

Name of Property

Cass County, Nebraska

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tobacco after mounting 40 men of his unit as cavalry and patrolling for smugglers. More than once the Wisconsin state records show Rourke and his battery were significantly outnumbered and yet during the duration of the war the Captain lost only 3 men through illness and never lost a cannon to the enemy.

On January 31, 1864, Captain Rourke was captured by the enemy as his unit retreated through the Cumberland Gap. The sworn testimony of Captain William Robb, captured at the same time as Rourke, stated that the Captain had been thrown from his horse and his shoulder broken. Robb stated that Rourke was captured while two corporals tended to his injured shoulder. Rourke spent the next 14 months in Confederate prison camps. It was during this time that Rourke became one of the "Immortal 600." These men were Union officers utilized by the Confederacy as human shields in the city of Charleston, South Carolina to protect against the shelling of the city by the Union Army. Rourke escaped from the prison camp known as "Libby" in Columbia, South Carolina during March of 1865. Returning to the Union Army he would muster out of service in April of 1865. Rourke was immediately reemployed by the military as a paymaster, a position he would remain in until the fall of that year.

After the war he returned to Wisconsin and returned to his employment with John Fitzgerald. He also returned to the pre-war spelling of his name O'Rourke. In 1867, O'Rourke ran for and won a seat in the Wisconsin Assembly representing Juneau County. While in the assembly he is noted for having forwarded legislation that resulted in a dam and water powered mill in the village of Lyndon. He is also credited with initiating the repeal of a bill that had established a fraudulent land improvement company. Another bill of interest during this period was the passage of legislation allowing for the licensing of dogs within Wisconsin.

As a man concerned with his community O'Rourke was not just involved in government politics. An example of this occurs in 1868 when he helped raise money for the Catholic Church in Kildare, Wisconsin.

Upon completion of his term in the Wisconsin Assembly O'Rourke was elected to the post of Juneau County Treasurer in 1869. He followed up this term in office by becoming the Justice of the Peace for Kildare, Wisconsin in 1873. Throughout this time he continued his employment for the firm of John Fitzgerald & Company.

John Fitzgerald's company built railroad beds throughout the Midwest and eventually built a road into Plattsmouth, Nebraska. After arriving in Nebraska, Fitzgerald began to transition out of the contracting business and began to buy banks. One bank purchased by Mr. Fitzgerald was the First National Bank of Plattsmouth. It was to work in this bank for his friend Fitzgerald that John O'Rourke immigrated to Nebraska in 1874.

O'Rourke was elected to and assumed the position of Assistant Cashier of the First National Bank of Plattsmouth in 1874. In 1875 he returned to Milwaukee, Wisconsin to marry his longtime girlfriend, Annie Maria Gilmore. Gilmore is noted as being the sister of the New York Band Director Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore. When O'Rourke returned to Plattsmouth after the wedding, he brought his new wife and her mother, Mrs. Mary Gilmore with him. Once settled in Plattsmouth, the couple began their family in 1876 with the birth of their first child. Over the course of the next six years the couple had three additional children.

In Plattsmouth, the Captain found a city that was prosperous and growing. Founded in 1854, the city had, by the mid-1860's, earned a good reputation as a wagon train outfitting station. Outfitters, supplied mainly by steamboats had helped equip and move the wagons ferried across the Missouri river into Nebraska. In the month of May 1865 alone, the city helped equip and move more than 2,360 wagons for their journeys west. In 1867, with the help of John Fitzgerald's company, the Burlington & Missouri Railroad entered Nebraska through Plattsmouth. With the railroad came people and the city expanded from 1,500 people in 1870 to more than 5,483 in 1880.

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It is true that the city was growing, but the growth was that of a boomtown and as such was without the leadership, guidance or support necessary to build a city that would continue to grow and prosper. John O'Rourke recognized this and dedicated himself to the improvement, promotion and longevity of his adopted city and community. O'Rourke worked in the Fitzgerald building which still stands in Plattsmouth and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Plattsmouth Main Street Historic District. Here O'Rourke was exposed to many of the local residents of the city as well as those travelers passing through the city. In his capacity of Assistant Cashier O'Rourke is noted for having a genuine interest in the well being of his customers and for his honesty in handling their financial affairs.

The Captain helped organize a Valentine's Day dance to help finance a new Catholic Church in 1876. Along with his friend John Fitzgerald, he acted as a manager of the event as funds were raised to build a new Catholic Church on the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and B in Plattsmouth. This church survived to see its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday prior to its destruction in the early 1980's.

During this period, the Captain became involved in a wide variety of government, business and local club activities. In 1880 O'Rourke was a founding member of the Plattsmouth Grand Army of the Republic post #45. At the initial meeting Dr. R. R. Livingston, a former General in the Union Army, was elected Senior Commander. O'Rourke was elected next in command as Senior Vice-Commander. This veterans club, chartered by Congress, was open to all men who had served in the Union Army. The Plattsmouth post boasted a large contingent of members and held meetings on a regular basis to discuss veteran affairs. O'Rourke remained the post vice commander until his death.

In 1880, when the current Plattsmouth Volunteer Fire Department was founded, O'Rourke was elected its first president. This position was "permanent" meaning that the occupant would hold the position until either they resigned or were unable to perform the duties assigned to the position. O'Rourke's intimate knowledge of the Fire Department served them well when, as Mayor, he would press for and receive funding from the city for a state of the art Babcock Chemical Fire Engine for the department's use.

When the "Board of Trade", an early form of a "Chamber of Commerce" was created to help promote the city in 1880, O'Rourke was elected the body's secretary, a post he held until his death. It is this group that is credited with raising a \$2,500 bounty to be given to any person willing to build and operate a hotel in Plattsmouth. This offer resulted in the building of \$30,000 hotel containing 50 rooms. This hotel was named the Perkins House honoring C. E. Perkins a high-ranking Burlington & Missouri Railroad official. During this time, this group is also credited with arranging for the Burlington & Missouri Railroad to procure property to construct repair yards. Upon completion, the yards employed more than 5,000 persons and continued operations into the 1960's. Today the Plattsmouth City Park, known as Rhylander Park, occupies this space.

As a member of the Plattsmouth Sportsman's Club, O'Rourke participated with other members of the Plattsmouth community on a purely social basis. Together they sponsored and participated in annual competitive hunts after which all game procured was prepared and eaten at a group dinner.

In 1881, John was elected Mayor of the City of Plattsmouth. He ran on a platform promoting improved city sanitation, better streets, safer sidewalks, licensing of dogs and city beautification through the planting of trees and shrubbery. Beginning with his first meeting as Mayor, he began to pursue the implementation of this platform.

His agenda was placed on hold though when he was called upon in April to deal with a natural disaster. The spring of 1881 had seen an extended period of heavy rainfall and the Missouri River flooded out of its banks. The water levels were high enough that lives and livestock were very much in danger on the Iowa side of the river. As mayor, Captain

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O'Rourke secured the services of Captain Simpson and the "New Ella" ferryboat to survey the situation. O'Rourke, along with several men from the city accompanied the "New Ella" in heavy rains and raising waters on this mission of mercy. For two days the men made trips to the Iowa side of the river and attempted to rescue people and animals many of which were stranded on the roofs of now flooded buildings. These efforts succeeded in rescuing several people, 40 to 50 head of cattle and a number of horses.

After the flooding crisis passed, O'Rourke returned to the more normal duties associated with being a mayor. He was successful in upgrading the condition of many of the city's streets by encouraging the usage of stone over dirt. He was also successful in upgrading the downtown city sidewalks that were made of wood and in disrepair. In his words, he wanted to see sidewalks that would "challenge the citizen to find fault rather than ambushing the unsuspecting visitor to our city". He installed a sanitary commission made up of local doctors and pharmacists and received regular updates on the condition of the city and recommendations for improvement from this group. He worked on behalf of the city with the Burlington & Missouri Railroad to ensure that the railroad received the land it needed to expand its operations and to remain a viable concern operating in Plattsmouth.

During this period of time, O'Rourke began construction on his stately Italianate home in Plattsmouth. The home is designed for entertaining his important guests and to show off his status as the leader of the community. The Captain John O'Rourke house was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2006 for significance in the area of architecture.

In 1880 O'Rourke suffered the first of a series of personal physical setbacks of undiagnosed origin, which may have been strokes. The first such incident occurred in September of that year with a recurrence in January of the next year. Later in 1882 he suffered a similar event. In these events O'Rourke was left without vision in his left eye but this did not stop him from continuing his duties as mayor. He would in fact, continue his duties and his involvement with all of the positions and clubs of which he was a member. In April of 1882, he swore in the new Mayor of Plattsmouth and then traveled to the Hot Springs in Arkansas to seek relief from his ailment. On the trip back Arkansas, O'Rourke suffered a final, fatal stroke and passed away on May 5<sup>th</sup>, less than three weeks after passing the torch to the new mayor.

The new Mayor, upon learning of O'Rourke's death, made a motion that the Mayor and City Council, as one body, attend the late Captain's funeral in order to show the gratitude of a thankful Plattsmouth for the efforts and devotion shown to the city by the late Captain John O'Rourke.

O'Rourke was noted throughout his lifetime as a social and genial gentleman, a good, loyal and patriotic soldier and as being pre-eminently a man who worked for the good of the people. As a soldier he was an accomplished swordsman, a fine pistol shot and an excellent artilleryman. As a servant of the people, he was a tireless advocate of progressive growth through future planning and responsible change. His experience living in older, more established states than Nebraska allowed O'Rourke a perspective on what Plattsmouth could be. From taxes to dog licenses he was full of ideas on how to improve his city. It was his leadership abilities though that set O'Rourke apart and allowed him to implement many changes. As a leader, O'Rourke had the ability to motivate and energize into action those around him. This allowed him to implement the changes he understood the city would need to ensure its survival. That he fully understood his unique position can clearly be seen in the roles and responsibilities that he undertook while living in Plattsmouth. His efforts as President of the Volunteer Fire Department resulted in successful modern fire department that is still active and viable today. His efforts with the Burlington and Missouri railroad resulted in more than 5,000 jobs coming to Plattsmouth. Many of these jobs remained in Plattsmouth for several generations prior to the closure of the Burlington and Missouri railroad shops in the 1960's. His fundraising activities helped build Saint John's Catholic Church that graced Plattsmouth for more than a hundred years. O'Rourke was successful in replacing the city's aging wooden sidewalks with brick and dirt roads

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with rock. An advocate for proper health O'Rourke implemented a sanitation committee that would report directly to the mayor. Desiring a beautiful city he advocated the planting trees and shrubbery purely for esthetic purposes.

As mayor, O'Rourke piloted the growth of one of Nebraska's fastest growing cities. He understood that continued growth and prosperity required families to make Plattsmouth their permanent homes. He set the example for others by building his home in Plattsmouth near the central business district. In doing so he made the home a showpiece for his personal success and for the possibilities available to all people from Plattsmouth. That he was proud of the home there is no doubt. When interviewed for the "History of Nebraska", a book published during O'Rourke's lifetime by Andrea's during 1882, O'Rourke provided an image of his new home rather than one of himself for inclusion in the book. A close inspection of this image shows O'Rourke himself in the front yard admiring the home. The house represented in a very concrete fashion what families could achieve in Plattsmouth. It also conveyed the message that the man who owned the home was successful. The unique layout of the home's interior, designed for hosting visitors, remains today as a reflection of O'Rourke's forward thinking views. The Captain John O'Rourke house today is the only identified building that carries the O'Rourke name or that is so closely associated with the Captain.

On June 10<sup>th</sup> of 2006 the City of Plattsmouth held the first annual "Captain John O'Rourke day". This day was sanctioned by the current mayor and city council of the City of Plattsmouth. The location chosen for the event was the "Captain John O'Rourke House". As part of the event speeches were given by the mayor R. Paul Lambert, Doctor John Gilmore O'Rourke IV and Patrick Dugan. These speeches outlined multiple aspects of O'Rourke's life, early life in Plattsmouth and a relaying of family stories by the decedents. In all more than 500 individuals attended the event.

It is the belief of the living decedents of Captain John O'Rourke that he is the "John" immortalized in the song penned by Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore. Patrick Sarsfield Gilmore is noted as a brother to Annie Maria Gilmore (O'Rourke's wife) in several obituaries dating to the time of O'Rourke's death. Within the family, the story of how the song came into being has been passed down through multiple generations. Today there are three living great – great grandchildren of O'Rourke all of whom are in their 70's. These individuals include a retired physician named John Gilmore O'Rourke (IV), Milly Everroad, (the wife of the deceased Nebraska Lieutenant Governor John Everroad), and Sally Schmid. Each of these individuals has stated that the Captain's oldest daughter Nellie passed along the story of the song being written about John to them when they were small children. Each of these individuals has signed a letter attesting that they are relating the event as they learned it from their Great Aunt Nellie (O'Rourke) Parmele. In the family story, the song was written for Annie while her boyfriend (John O'Rourke) was off serving in the Union Army. In 1863, knowing that is was hard to wait for her boyfriend's return, Patrick wishing to cheer up his sister, penned the now famous song "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" as a gift for his sister.

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