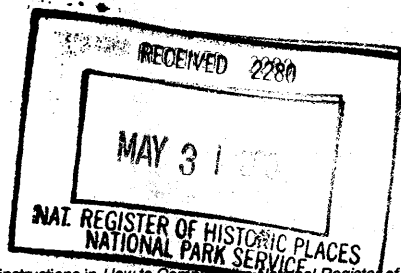


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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 Wheat Growers Hotel

Other names/site number Nebraska Historic Building Survey Site No. KM04-068

2. Location

Street & number 102 South Oak Street

Not for publication [N/A]

City or town Kimball

Vicinity [N/A]

State Nebraska Code NE County Kimball Code 105 Zip code 69145

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.)

Laurance Sommer  
Signature of certifying official

5/24/02  
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 7/11/02

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

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

**Wheat Growers Hotel**

Name of Property

**Kimball County, Nebraska**

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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	
1	1	Buildings
0	0	Sites
0	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
1	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Hotel

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH

CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS/

Commercial Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation CONCRETE

Walls BRICK

Roof ASPHALT

Other

**Narrative Description**

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

**Wheat Growers Hotel**  
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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of property** Less than 1 acre

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

	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>		<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
1.	1/3	6/1/2/3/0/0	4/5/6/5/8/6/0	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 Matthew T. Becker and Chad D. Moffett, Architectural Historians  
organization Mead & Hunt, Inc. date 25 March 2002  
street & number 6501 Watts Road telephone (608) 273-6380  
city or town Madison state Wisconsin zip code 53719-2700

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### Additional Documentation

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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 J. Edward Avila  
street & number 414 South Webster Street telephone (308) 235-3120  
city or town Kimball state Nebraska zip code 69145

**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.

**Wheat Growers Hotel**

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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.)

**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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1918 – c. 1923 and 1925 – 1952

**Significant Dates**

1918, c.1923, and 1925

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Wheat Growers Hotel**

Name of Property

**Kimball County, Nebraska**

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Section 7 Page 1

### Introduction

The Wheat Growers Hotel is located at 102 South Oak Street in the city of Kimball, Kimball County, Nebraska. It is situated one block south of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks within the downtown business district that surrounds South Chestnut Street. The business district consists of commercial buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The front elevation of the hotel faces east onto Oak Street. An asphalt parking lot sits just to the north of the hotel. An alley separates the Wheat Growers Hotel from other buildings to the west, and an open lot lies to the south of the hotel.

### Description

The two-story brick hotel was built in 1918 by Frank H. Cunningham.<sup>1</sup> The 20,000-square-foot rectangular building has a concrete foundation and a flat asphalt roof with a parapet. Decorative features include polychromatic brickwork in the hotel's window and door surrounds, a cornice with corbelled modillions, and a dropped cross-hatch motif on the corner ends. The hotel's exterior displays the words "Wheat Growers Hotel" in white brick relief in a frieze below the cornice on the east and north elevations.

The entryway and windows on the north, south, and east elevations feature white brick surrounds with the windows presently boarded-over. The east elevation features two large second-story window openings that historically contained leaded stained-glass windows with wheat shocks and the words "Wheat Growers." The leaded stained-glass windows were damaged by a hail storm sometime after 1948 and were replaced.<sup>2</sup> The openings are currently boarded-over. The west elevation, or rear, of the building has a fire escape, a service entrance, and windows with no ornamental details.

The interior of the Wheat Growers Hotel features an open, two-story lobby located between two staircases that lead to the second story. The lobby floor has red, black, and green tile with decorative diamond patterns and an inlaid shock of wheat. A mural by local artist Andy Borjeson, Sr., is located on the second-floor wall above the entryway and features a wheat threshing scene.<sup>3</sup>

The hotel was constructed with 86 guest rooms accessed by two hallways on each floor. The rooms were arranged in a straight line along each hallway with interior and exterior rooms. The rooms were steam-heated and featured sinks with hot and cold running water. Exterior rooms had window views with bathrooms shared by two adjacent rooms. Interior rooms were ventilated by four air shafts. Guests staying in interior rooms shared a common bathroom on each floor.

The hotel closed c. 1923 and all of the hotel's original interior furnishings were repossessed. The hotel reopened to the public in 1925 and rooms were gradually renovated and furnished as money became available. In 1926, the hotel offered 17 guest rooms, and by 1948 the number had grown to 82. A living area for the hotel's proprietors, additional bathrooms, and showers were added sometime after 1948, reducing the number of guest rooms to 73.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar . . . it is a Monument to an Era," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 1 March 1979, n.p.

<sup>2</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.

<sup>3</sup> Wheat Growers Hotel site file. Located at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>4</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.; and *The Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* (New York: American Hotel Association Directory Company, 1948), 550.

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A third staircase along the far north wall of the lobby leads downstairs to the ballroom, kitchen, and laundry facilities in the basement of the hotel. The ballroom features arched-ceiling supports and small rectangular basement windows. Separate rooms in the western third of the basement housed the kitchen and laundry areas.

A small, c. 1975 concrete-block addition on the north elevation was used to store packages when the building offered Greyhound Bus service. A ticket counter and small office located at the south end of the lobby were also added at this time. A non-contributing c. 1945 gabled-roof frame garage sits to the southwest of the hotel.

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Statement of Significance

The Wheat Growers Hotel is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under *Criterion A: Commerce* as an important resource in the commercial and economic development in the city of Kimball. The wheat theme of the hotel celebrates an important facet of the commercial and economic development of the city and county. The hotel was constructed in 1918 near the city's business district shortly after the Union Pacific expanded their line and the Lincoln Highway passed through the city of Kimball. The Wheat Growers Hotel is one of two extant buildings known to have been hotels in the early twentieth-century and represents the largest known hotel constructed in the city of Kimball and in Kimball County. The Wheat Growers Hotel is also eligible for the National Register under *Criterion C: Architecture*, as a good example of early twentieth-century commercial hotel design with good integrity. As such, this free-standing hotel offered travelers separate rooms and a range of amenities such as a ballroom, restaurant, laundry, and lounge areas – typical of hotel design following World War I and during the 1920s. The architectural detail and form of the hotel are intact and reflect the modern form and modest details popular for commercial design following World War I.

*History of Kimball*

The community of Kimball is located in Kimball County, which was historically a part of Cheyenne County. Established in 1870, Cheyenne County included present-day Kimball, Banner, Cheyenne, Scottsbluff, Morrill, Garden, and Deuel Counties.<sup>5</sup> The community of Kimball was established as a stop along the Union Pacific Railway, which laid track across Nebraska to the Nebraska-Wyoming border by June 1867.<sup>6</sup> Originally named Antelopeville, Kimball began as just a few scattered buildings, and later changed its name in honor of Thomas Lord Kimball, a manager and later vice president of the Union Pacific Railway.<sup>7</sup> The westward migration of settlers seeking land during the mid-1880s initially helped the settlement grow in size and population. Kimball County was established on January 22, 1889, and, shortly thereafter, the village of Kimball was officially incorporated.<sup>8</sup> By 1890, Kimball had a population of 250 people involved in cattle ranching, farming, and other business interests.<sup>9</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, the business district of Kimball consisted of four dry goods and grocery stores, a confectionary and bakery, a drug store, two hotels, a bank, a printing office, a blacksmith shop, two lumberyards, a barber shop, and a saloon. Hotels located in Kimball included the two-story Hotel Martha, built in 1885, and the Kimball Hotel, built in 1887. The Kimball Hotel was reportedly constructed for around \$2,000. Lodging was also available at the German House at this time.<sup>10</sup>

During the early part of the twentieth century, the community benefitted from its location along the railroad and from wheat and corn production in the surrounding countryside.<sup>11</sup> In 1900, 758 people lived in Kimball County with 378 people

<sup>5</sup> Nebraska State Historical Society, "A History and Historic Sites Survey of Kimball, Cheyenne, and Deuel Counties." Located at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup> Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., *Kimball County, Nebraska, 100 Years, 1888-1988* (Dallas, Tex.: Curtis Media Corporation, 1988), 6 and 86.

<sup>7</sup> "History of Kimball," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 4-6; and Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., 6.

<sup>8</sup> Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., 4 and 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Nebraska State Gazetteer, Business and Farmers List for 1890-91* (Omaha, Nebr.: J. M. Wolfe & Co., 1890), 253.

<sup>10</sup> "History of Kimball," p. 5-7 and 9; and "Travel Difficult so Early Hotels a Must," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 110 and 112

<sup>11</sup> Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., 14.

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Wheat Growers Hotel

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residing in the village of Kimball.<sup>12</sup> Kimball developed a busy business district surrounding South Chestnut Street to provide services to area residents. Lodging in Kimball in the early twentieth century could be found at the Central Hotel and the Whitman House. F. M. Whitman purchased the Hotel Martha in 1906 and changed the name to the Whitman House. Lodging was also available at the Sherman House and the Marshall Hotel, which were two-story buildings located along Front Street.<sup>13</sup> The Maginnis Building was erected in 1917 and featured the Maginnis Hotel on the second floor with commercial space located on the first floor.

During the 1910s, with a rise in ownership and use of the automobile, the Lincoln Highway was established from New York to California, passing through Nebraska. The Lincoln Highway route was established through the village of Kimball c. 1913, providing travelers with a needed stop between Ogallala and Cheyenne. In 1913 the Union Pacific Railroad expanded their line through Kimball, which increased the volume of commerce, trade, and travelers. The Wheat Growers Hotel was constructed 5 years later in order to accommodate the increase of travelers through Kimball from both the railroad and the Lincoln Highway, and developed as an important resource in the commercial development of Kimball during the early twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

The wheat boom, a period of high wheat prices during and shortly after World War I, benefitted wheat farmers throughout Kimball County. Wheat farmer and area businessman Frank H. Cunningham constructed the Wheat Growers Hotel in 1918 with profits made from the wheat boom. The hotel stood only blocks away from the early routes of the Lincoln Highway. The hotel also catered to people traveling by rail, such as salesmen, developers, investors, and tourists, with its position directly across from the Union Pacific Depot.<sup>15</sup>

The 1920s brought increased prosperity and growth to Kimball and Kimball County. By 1920, the population of Kimball County was 4,498 and the population of Kimball was 1,620.<sup>16</sup> Having between 800 and 5,000 people, Kimball became a city in 1922, thereby disbanding the village government and electing the first mayor.<sup>17</sup> Seed potatoes, sugar beets, and wheat were important and profitable crops in the 1920s. Despite the "black rust," which destroyed much of the wheat crop in 1923, the three grain elevators in Kimball shipped three million dollars of wheat in 1927. Lumber companies reported record sales due to increased construction in the late 1920s and many automotive related businesses opened, including at least six service stations.<sup>18</sup>

The Great Depression of the 1930s limited growth and caused unemployment in Kimball and Kimball County. The population of Kimball County fell from 4,675 in 1930 to 3,913 in 1940, while the population of Kimball remained relatively

<sup>12</sup> Grant L. Schumway, *History of Western Nebraska and its People* (Lincoln, Nebr.: The Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1921), 303.

<sup>13</sup> "Kimball Moves into the Twentieth Century," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 20; and "Travel Difficult so Early Hotels a Must," p. 110 and 112.

<sup>14</sup> Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., 60.

<sup>15</sup> Wheat Growers Hotel site file.

<sup>16</sup> "'15 to '24: Growth was slow, but steady" *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 54.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Graff, *Nebraska, Our Towns . . . The Panhandle* (Dallas, Tex.: Taylor Publishing Co., 1988), 65; and "Nebraska Laws Pertaining to Libraries & Library Operations," *Nebraska Statutes: Cities of the Second Class and Villages*, n.d., <<http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/libdev/liblaws/17-100s.html>> (28 January 2002).

<sup>18</sup> "'25 to '34: From Prosperity to the Great Depression," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 74.



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unchanged with 1,711 in 1930 and 1,725 in 1940.<sup>19</sup> As of January 1938, there were 141 unemployed in Kimball County, 356 partly employed, and 336 employed through the Works Progress Administration.<sup>20</sup> Despite the tough economic times, in 1937 Kimball's economy was able to support four hotels: the Brown Hotel, the Maginnis Hotel, the Murray Hotel and the Wheat Growers Hotel.<sup>21</sup> The Maginnis Hotel was located in the upper floor of the Maginnis Building in Kimball's downtown business area on the east side of South Chestnut Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. The Maginnis Hotel and the Wheat Growers Hotel are the only known extant early twentieth-century hotel buildings in Kimball County.

The city of Kimball expanded during the 1950s and 1960s due to the installation of nuclear missiles by the United States government and the discovery of oil. Oil was successfully drilled in Kimball County in 1951, and as many as 28 oil producers operated in Kimball during the ensuing oil boom. Nuclear intercontinental ballistic missiles were first installed in the county in 1960, with a total of 90 Minute Man launch sites constructed by 1963.<sup>22</sup> Both oil and missiles brought new residents, and the population of the city of Kimball grew from 2,048 in 1950 to 4,348 in 1960.<sup>23</sup>

*Early Twentieth Century Hotel Architecture and Development*

The American hotel industry had its beginnings in the East in 1829 with the construction of the Tremont House in Boston. Prior to this time, travelers stayed at inns, commonly containing one or two rooms with multiple beds. The Tremont House, however, had private rooms, a specially trained hotel staff, French cuisine, bellboys, and other amenities to make travelers more comfortable. Hotels similar to the Tremont House flourished in the eastern United States between 1830 and 1850 and spread to the western states along with settlement.<sup>24</sup>

Hotels located in the downtown business areas became the most prevalent type of lodging in cities and small towns by the early 1900s. These hotels catered to salesmen and other travelers arriving in town via the railway.<sup>25</sup> In 1908 the Statler Hotel in Buffalo, New York, exemplified new services offered by commercial hotels with the introduction of private baths, full-length mirrors, fire doors, running water, and free newspapers.<sup>26</sup>

World War I caused a decline in construction of modern commercial hotels, and lodging built during the previous railroad era continued to serve visitors to most small towns.<sup>27</sup> The 1918 Wheat Growers Hotel, however, was a modern commercial hotel constructed in a small town during World War I. Its construction was made possible by high wheat prices during the war. As the nation prospered after the war and during the 1920s, so did the hotel industry. Construction

<sup>19</sup> "Population of Nebraska Counties: 1860 to 1990," n.d., <<http://www.nrc.state.ne.us/data/state/cencity.txt>> (16 February 2001).

<sup>20</sup> "35 to '44: A Changing World," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 103.

<sup>21</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.; and *The Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* (New York: Official Hotel Red Book and Directory Co., 1937), 420.

<sup>22</sup> Graff, 66.

<sup>23</sup> "Population of Nebraska Counties: 1860 to 1990."

<sup>24</sup> Dana L. Pratt, National Register Nomination for the Hotel Norfolk, 12/1/88, Section 8, Page 1. Located at the Nebraska State Historical Society.

<sup>25</sup> John A. Jakle, Keith A. Sculle, and Jefferson S. Rogers, *The Motel in America* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 23.

<sup>26</sup> Pratt, Section 8, Page 2.

<sup>27</sup> Jakle and others, 26; and Pratt, Section 8, Page 2.

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of commercial hotels and dollars spent on commercial hotels reached record highs in the 1920s. Traveling nationwide increased following World War I, and room occupancy rose from 72 percent in 1919 to 86 percent in 1920.<sup>28</sup>

Typical hotel construction around the 1920s involved a freestanding, two-story building with numerous individual rooms. Common elements of hotel design at this time included a lobby, a dining room or restaurant, a bar, and commercial storefronts on the ground floor. Many hotels also had ballrooms, usually on the second floor, along with guest rooms.<sup>29</sup> In small towns hotels were a matter of civic-pride and oftentimes served as gathering places for community activities.<sup>30</sup> As described by John A. Jakle and others in *The Motel in America*, "[t]he full range of hotel facilities such as dining rooms and coffee shops were important adjuncts to private business dealing and public entertainment. Hotels were intended to stand as landmarks symbolic of economic and social vigor. The amenities they provided signified decorum and civility."<sup>31</sup>

The Wheat Growers Hotel represents a good and intact example of 1920s hotel construction and architecture. The hotel exhibits the typical two-story, freestanding form, included numerous individual guest rooms, and provided in-house amenities to guests. The hotel had a lobby, restaurant, and a ballroom. In the Wheat Growers Hotel the restaurant and ballroom were located in the basement not the second floor. As such, in Kimball County, the Wheat Growers Hotel, represents the largest intact example of early twentieth century commercial hotel architecture.

Hotel construction rates declined rapidly after the onset of the Great Depression beginning in 1929 and during the 1930s. During the 1930s, more than 85 percent of hotels nationwide experienced financial difficulty, and hotel construction declined.<sup>32</sup> In Kimball, the Brown Hotel, the Maginnis Hotel, the Murray Hotel and the Wheat Growers Hotel were operating in the 1930s.<sup>33</sup>

After World War II, the motel grew in popularity and became the dominant lodging establishment in many small towns throughout the country. Motels were usually located along major roads and highways and catered specifically to people traveling by automobile. Motels typically featured small cabins or adjacent individual rooms arranged in a U- or L-shape plan around a central courtyard. Besides the courtyard area, motels did not generally feature the same common, or public areas, found in hotels, such as restaurants, ballrooms, and lobbies. A café and gas station were oftentimes part of early motel complexes.<sup>34</sup>

*History of the Wheat Growers Hotel*

Frank Cunningham built the Wheat Growers Hotel in 1918 at an estimated cost of \$100,000.<sup>35</sup> Construction began in the spring of that year and was completed in December.<sup>36</sup> The dedication ceremony for the hotel reportedly drew 200

<sup>28</sup> Pratt, Section 8, Page 2.

<sup>29</sup> Pratt, Section 8, Page 3.

<sup>30</sup> Jakle and others, 25; and Pratt, Section 8, Page 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Jakle and others, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Pratt, Section 8, Page 3.

<sup>33</sup> *The Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* (1937), 420.

<sup>34</sup> Jakle and others, 57-89.

<sup>35</sup> Wheat Growers Hotel site file.

<sup>36</sup> "'15 to '24: Growth was slow, but steady," p. 53.

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guests.<sup>37</sup> The *Western Nebraska Observer* noted that the hotel was "the show place of western Nebraska at the time and reputedly the finest hotel between Omaha and Denver. The basement was one huge ballroom that saw some of Kimball's most elaborate parties during the period of prosperity after the first World War."<sup>38</sup> The hotel advertised and catered to people traveling to Kimball by rail, such as salesmen, developers, investors, and tourists, by noting its position directly across from the Union Pacific Depot.<sup>39</sup> When it was built, the Wheat Growers Hotel was the largest hotel in Kimball and the largest hotel in western Nebraska, except for the Lincoln Hotel in Scottsbluff.<sup>40</sup>

Cunningham was a Kimball County wheat farmer and businessman involved in local real estate. By 1907, Cunningham operated the Cunningham Realty Company out of the city of Kimball.<sup>41</sup> In 1914 Cunningham was president of the Kimball and Banner Farm Loan Association.<sup>42</sup> Cunningham made his fortune in wheat production, benefitting from high wheat prices during World War I, and was reportedly one of the greatest wheat raisers in the west. Presumably, his wheat-growing operations helped finance the building of the Wheat Growers Hotel. However, in 1923 a disease called the "black rust" infected wheat in Kimball County and destroyed most of the wheat crops, leading to a decline in wheat production. As a result, Cunningham shifted pursuits and started a large-scale potato operation, farming approximately 650 acres and running two tractors 24 hours a day.<sup>43</sup>

In 1923 Cunningham was charged with obtaining money under false pretenses. The case against Cunningham was dismissed after 2 months, but subsequently filed for bankruptcy. The Building and Loan Association of Beatrice foreclosed on the hotel, and the interior furnishings were repossessed by the Denver Dry Goods Company. The laundry, dining room, and some of the plumbing were also removed at this time.<sup>44</sup>

The hotel closed c. 1923 as a result of the foreclosure. Between c. 1923 and 1925, a few renovated rooms were used by Mr. Tate and Mr. Johnson, two real estate men, to house prospective land buyers. Beginning in 1925 Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Moore became proprietors and resident managers of the hotel and slowly opened more rooms of the hotel to the general public. By 1926 the hotel offered 17 rooms for occupancy. The Moores gradually renovated other rooms of the hotel as money became available.<sup>45</sup> By 1937, the Wheat Growers Hotel offered 70 guest rooms, the most in Kimball, on the European plan for \$1 to \$2 a day.<sup>46</sup> During the 1930s, the Moores served lunch for 35 cents and dinner for 65 cents on tables set up in the ballroom. On Friday nights the ballroom was used for dances.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Wheat Growers Hotel site file.

<sup>38</sup> "Hotel Like Community in Itself Says Manager of Wheat Growers," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 7 October 1948, n.p.

<sup>39</sup> Wheat Growers Hotel site file.

<sup>40</sup> "Wheat Growers Hotel Now Open to Public," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 9 January 1919, n.p.

<sup>41</sup> "The Twentieth Century," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 2 May 1985, p. 20.

<sup>42</sup> Schumway, 317.

<sup>43</sup> "'15 to '24: Growth was slow, but steady," p. 56; and Plains Genealogical Society of Kimball County, ed., 16.

<sup>44</sup> "'15 to '24: Growth was slow, but steady," p. 57; and "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.

<sup>45</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.; and Wheat Growers Hotel site file.

<sup>46</sup> *The Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* (1937), 420.

<sup>47</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.

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In July 1946 Chuck Halsted and his father-in-law, Tom Dutch, bought the hotel. At this time, typical guests included businessmen, railroaders, truckers, and tourists traveling on the Lincoln Highway (Highway 30), and permanent guests and providing an important commercial service for Kimball.<sup>48</sup> By 1948, the Wheat Growers Hotel was the only hotel advertised in the city of Kimball, and offered 82 rooms on the European plan for \$1.50 a day and up.<sup>49</sup> However, after 1948, the Halsteds remodeled a portion of the hotel to include a living area, additional bathrooms, and showers for themselves. These renovations reduced the number of rooms to 73. A. Blaine Jackson operated the hotel from 1964 until it closed in c. 1983.<sup>50</sup> The hotel has been owned since 1999 by J. Edward Avila.

The only other early twentieth-century hotel building extant in Kimball and Kimball County today is the Maginnis Hotel, constructed in 1917, which was located on the second floor of the Maginnis building (KM04-123). The Maginnis building is a two-story brick building located in Kimball's business district on the east side of South Chestnut Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets. The Maginnis building no longer functions as a hotel.

**Conclusion**

The Wheat Growers Hotel is eligible for the National Register at the local level under *Criterion A: Commerce* as a significant commercial resource in the history and economic development of the city of Kimball. The Wheat Growers Hotel was historically the largest hotel in the city of Kimball and in Kimball County, and it is one of two early twentieth-century hotel buildings extant in Kimball today. The hotel serviced travelers coming into Kimball on the Union Pacific Railway and the Lincoln Highway.

The hotel is also eligible under *Criterion C: Architecture* as an example of early twentieth-century hotel design. Kimball's other remaining early twentieth-century hotel is the Maginnis Hotel. The Maginnis Hotel was located on the second story of the Maginnis Building, which had commercial space on the first floor. The hotel is located along South Chestnut Street built among other commercial buildings in a row. The Wheat Growers Hotel, with its freestanding modern form, multi-story plan, numerous guest rooms, ballroom, and restaurant, exemplifies hotel design and construction during the 1920s. Additionally, many of the distinctive architectural features of the hotel, such as the shock of wheat in the tile floor and the words "Wheat Growers Hotel" on the north and east facades, remain intact. The period of significance spans from 1918 to c. 1923 and from 1925 to 1952. The hotel was constructed in 1918 and closed to the public in c. 1923. The hotel reopened to the public in 1925 under new management and remained in operation until c. 1983. Due to the National Register 50-year guideline, 1952 is given as the closing for the period of significance.

<sup>48</sup> "Hotel Like Community in Itself," n.p.

<sup>49</sup> *The Official Hotel Red Book and Directory* (1948), 550.

<sup>50</sup> "Hotel is more than Brick and Mortar," n.p.; and "Relic Remains Vacant," *Western Nebraska Observer* (Kimball), 8 September 1994, n.p.

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**Geographical Data**

*Verbal Boundary Description*

The Wheat Growers Hotel is located on Lots 8, 9, and 10, Block 3, of the Antelopeville Addition to the city of Kimball, Nebraska.

*Boundary Justification*

The boundary of the nominated property includes the three lots historically associated with the Wheat Growers Hotel.

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The following information pertains to all photographs:

*Wheat Growers Hotel*  
102 South Oak Street  
City of Kimball  
Kimball County, Nebraska  
Photographer: Mead & Hunt, Inc.  
Negatives: Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office, Lincoln, Nebraska

*Photograph 1 of 15*  
East facade  
View looking west

*Photograph 2 of 15*  
East and south facades  
View looking northwest

*Photograph 3 of 15*  
East and south facades  
View looking northwest

*Photograph 4 of 15*  
East and north facades  
View looking southwest

*Photograph 5 of 15*  
East and north facades  
View looking southwest

*Photograph 6 of 15*  
North facade  
View looking south

*Photograph 7 of 15*  
West facade  
View looking east

*Photograph 8 of 15*  
West and south facades  
View looking northwest

*Photograph 9 of 15*  
Garage  
View looking east

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*Photograph 10 of 15*

Detail of brickwork on east facade  
View looking west

*Photograph 11 of 15*

Lobby  
View looking west

*Photograph 12 of 15*

Lobby  
View looking southwest

*Photograph 13 of 15*

Detail of tile wheat shock on lobby floor  
View looking west

*Photograph 14 of 15*

Detail of tile wheat shock on lobby floor  
View looking west

*Photograph 15 of 15*

Basement ballroom  
View looking northwest