



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 an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Versteeg-Swisher House  
Other name/site number 041-0020-0227

2. Location

Street & number 506 South Campbell  not for publication  
City or town Abilene  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Dickinson Code 041 Zip code 67410

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Christy Davis Deputy SHPO February 2, 2005

Signature of certifying official/Title  
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

- entered in the National Register.  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 Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 3/23/05

Versteeg-Swisher House  
Name of property

Dickinson County, KS  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

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

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

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

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

Domestic: single dwelling

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

Domestic: single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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

Late Victorian: Gothic

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone  
walls Brick

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roof Asphalt

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other

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

Name of Property Versteeg-Swisher House

County and State Dickinson County, KS

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

#### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

##### Architecture

##### Period of Significance

1888

##### Significant Dates

1888

##### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

##### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

##### Architect/Builder

Unknown

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

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

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_



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### Versteeg-Swisher House Abilene, Kansas

#### Description

The Versteeg-Swisher House (c. 1888), located at 506 South Campbell Street in Abilene, Kansas, is a two-story brick Gothic Revival house with an asphalt-shingled center gable roof and a native limestone foundation. The spindle work on the entrance and side porches displays a Queen Anne influence. The wide cornice brackets and bay window reflect Italianate influences. The house stands on a rectangular, north-south footprint with a centered ell extending east. Clapboard-clad, shed-roofed additions project from the north and south elevations of the ell.

The house is made of a soft red brick which is believed to have been made on the property. The brick is sealed with paint and seems to always have been so to protect it from erosion. The house is now painted in the bold, intense earth colors of the period in which the house was built. The facade is painted with a satin terra cotta which is close in color to the actual brick that lies beneath it. The ornate trims, windows and doors are painted amber, deep green, and dark cranberry. A 1900 photograph, although in black-and-white, suggests several shades of color used on the porch and windows. Paint scrapings indicate that at one time the house may also have been painted white with a black trim. The roof was resingled in 2000 in shades of reddish-brown.

The front, west-facing facade features a center gable over a spindle work, front-gabled entrance porch. This porch is flanked on either side by a double-hung window topped by a brick hood mold and underscored by a native limestone sill. A similar window beneath the center gable provides illumination to the second floor; square panels of decorative brickwork are located on either side of this window, and a ziggurat of recessed brick surmounts the hood mold of this window. The center gable is further augmented by gingerbread gable ornament and brackets and trefoils at the cornice line.

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The south-facing elevation is characterized on the west end by a bay window with brackets at the cornice line. Each of the three windows that make up the bay is surmounted by a brick hood mold, and all three are underscored by a continuous native limestone sill. Above the bay window, a pair of windows shares a brick hood mold and a native limestone sill. These windows are flanked on either side by small square panels of decorative brickwork, and above them is a zigurat of recessed brick. Brackets with trefoils mark the bottom of the gable verge. A clapboard-clad, shed-roofed addition dominates the east end of the south-facing elevation. This addition is pierced on the west end by a door and on the east end by a single double-hung window.

The east-facing elevation features two double-hung windows topped by brick hood molds and underscored by native limestone sills on the first story, and a similar single window on the second story. Brackets and trefoils ornament the bottom of the gable verge. The brick, shed-roofed addition which has been appended to the ell's north elevation juts forward from the wall plane of the east elevation.

The north-facing elevation features a gable end pierced on the first floor by two double-hung windows and on the second floor by a single double-hung window. A one story, shed-roofed spindle work porch, recreated by the current owners from a circa 1900 photograph, extends from this elevation.

A door through the west-facing wall of the brick addition that has been appended to the north-facing elevation provides access to the house's interior; this wall is also pierced by a single double-hung window. The addition's north elevation features two double-hung windows. The east elevation receives illumination through a single double-hung window. Clapboard cladding has been affixed to the addition's southeast corner. Siding on the east elevation of the addition also extends from the roof-wall junction to just above the lintel of the window.

The house is an example of a center-hall plan. A walnut staircase fills the narrow entrance hall, a square newel post accentuates the unit. Much of the original woodwork has been painted white. Four rooms feature original doors and window surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks.

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The house has been moderately altered by its succession of owners. A double-doored closet was added to the northwest bedroom at some point prior to 1980. Oak hardwood floors salvaged from another Abilene residence were installed in the kitchen, dining room, and hallway in 1980. Also in 1980, the ceiling in the upstairs master bedroom was vaulted. The kitchen, which suffered significant water damage in 1998, was gutted and completely remodeled in a style sympathetic to the house's Victorian origins. The porch on the northwest side of the house, which had deteriorated, was restored to its original appearance using a circa 1900 photograph of the house as a guide. A door providing access to the parlor from the south porch was removed and the opening was covered with drywall. Despite these changes, the Versteeg-Swisher house retains the integrity of its design, and continues to clearly illustrate the Gothic Revival style.

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### Statement of Significance

The Versteeg-Swisher House (c. 1888) is significant under Criterion C. Constructed in the late 1880s by Dutch brickmaker Nicholas Versteeg, this house is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style. The house integrates stylistic influences from both the Queen Anne and Italianate, representing a vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style.

Nicholas Versteeg and his wife Gertrude purchased the property on which the Versteeg-Swisher House stands in 1887. The February 9, 1888, edition of the *Abilene Reflector* announced that

Verstegg [sic] and Koopman will erect the necessary buildings, etc., for opening up a brickyard a half mile east of the Rock Island Depot. Verstegg [sic] and Koopman thoroughly understand their business, and claim they have found superior quality clay at that point.

Nicholas Versteeg and C.C. Koopman, both natives of Holland, had previously operated a brickyard in north Abilene. Two of Versteeg's sons, John and Jacob, were also brick makers in Abilene and were likely involved in both brickyards. The Versteeg-Swisher House, while also providing a residence for the family, was a means of advertising the high quality brick being created at the new brickyard.

By February 23, 1888, the *Abilene Daily Gazette* was reporting that the Abilene pottery works "are now in running order and trying the clay deposited near the works, which has been found to answer all requirements." Businesses such as the Versteeg and Company brickyard were important to frontier Kansas towns such as Abilene, showing prospective citizens in the East that the community was permanent, respectable, and growing. By 1888, Abilene had grown to a population of 3,500, and was looking to attract an even larger population.

Speculation was driving up land values in Abilene, and houses were being built in anticipation of an influx of new immigrants to the city. On April 25, 1888, the Abilene Commercial Club hosted a capital removal convention. Town boosters, who argued that the state capital in Topeka was too far east to be truly representative of Kansas, brought in prominent speakers, local bands, and held a parade in support of moving the state capital to Abilene. The movement was effectively



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shut down when the Associated Press editor in Topeka failed to publish any mention of the convention. By the fall of 1888, the bottom had fallen out of land values, and a number of industrial concerns, including the pottery works, had gone out of business. The Versteeg family, out of business and in debt, left Abilene for Iowa.

Although the Versteeg and Company brick-making venture was short-lived, and tell-tale brick rubble on the property is all that remains of the business, the house that Nicholas Versteeg built has stood the test of time. The house combines the Gothic Revival style with elements of Dutch building traditions, such as a central chimney with a stove rather than a fireplace. The Gothic Revival style, which originated in England, was made popular in America by a series of plan books promoting the style. Although *Rural Residences*, published in 1837 by Alexander Jackson Davis, was the first American plan book to feature Gothic Revival architecture, it was Andrew Jackson Downing who brought the style into fashionable prominence. Downing's 1842 and 1850 pattern books, paired with his extensive lecture circuit, promoted the style as eminently suitable for rural and suburban homes.

The style, which drew its inspiration from a romanticized medieval architecture, was one of a number of "Picturesque" styles, including the Italianate and Swiss styles, designed to harmonize with the natural landscape. Popularized in the 1830s, the Gothic Revival style remained prominent until the 1880s. The Versteeg-Swisher House's centered gable, steeply pitched roof, second-story windows that extend into the gables, one-story entry porch, and trefoil details mark the house as clearly within the Gothic Revival style. The house also exhibits the brackets and segmented arch window crowns which are hallmarks of the Italianate style. Built late in the style's period of prominence, however, the spindle work on the porches reflect the influence of the Queen Anne style which succeeded the Gothic Revival. The brackets and bay windows show the influence of the Italianate style.

Several other families made their home at the Versteeg-Swisher House after it passed out of the Versteegs' ownership. In 1899, Isaiah and Sarah Swisher and their children purchased the property. Isaiah, a broom maker, raised broom corn and alfalfa and kept an orchard. Isaiah died in 1909, and his daughter Annie inherited the house. In 1916, Annie Swisher was found to be of unsound mind, and was committed to the State Hospital for the Insane. The house, referred to as "A brick residence which is in need of many repairs and is depreciating in value," was sold in

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1923 to pay for Annie's care and maintenance. In 1925, Reverend John A. Dessenberger and his wife Anna purchased the home. A number of later owners used the house as a rental property. Present owners Ed and Velda Becker bought the house in 1999 and have restored the home to its present condition.

**Bibliography**

1885 Kansas State Census.

1880 United States Census.

1890 United States Census.

1900 United States Census.

1909 Swisher family photograph.

*Abilene Reflector*. 5 January 1888, 9 February 1888, 23 February 1888,

Becker, Ed and Velda. Draft nomination, 2003.

Goodwin, Judy. Oral interview with Ed and Velda Becker.

*Kansas City Star*, 12 June 1947.

Lacey, Pat. Oral interview with Ed and Velda Becker.

*Plat Book of Dickinson County*. 1909.

Property abstract.

Whitworth, Robert C. "Industrial and Business History of Abilene," *Dickinson County Historical Sketches, Volume 4*. 1962.

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### Verbal Boundary Description

The property stands on the S. 12' Lot 3 and the N. 77.7' Lot 4 in Abilene, Dickinson County, Kansas. The property is bounded to the west by S. Campbell, to the north and east by adjacent property lines, and to the south by Sixth Street.

### Boundary Justification

The nomination property contains all land historically associated with it.

### Photographs

The following information is common to all photographs:

1. Versteeg-Swisher House
2. Abilene, Dickinson County, Kansas
3. Melissa Fisher Isaacs, photographer
4. 22 March 2004
5. Original negatives located at the Kansas State Historical Society

The following information is specific to individual photographs:

6. View of west elevation.  
7. #1
6. Detail of entry porch, camera facing east.  
7. #2
6. View of south elevation.  
7. #3

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6. Detail of south elevation—bay window. Camera facing north.

7. #4

6. View of north elevation, camera facing southeast.

7. #5

6. Detail of north porch, camera facing east.

7. #6

6. View of east elevation.

7. #7

6. View of interior—parlor. Camera facing south.

7. #8

6. View of interior—staircase. Camera facing north.

7. #9

6. View of interior—dining room. Camera facing northwest.

7. #10

6. View of interior—second floor hallway. Camera facing west.

7. #11

6. View of interior—kitchen. Camera facing east.

7. #12