

56-773

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 National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store

Other names/site number KHRI #021-493

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 313 Fleming St. not for publication

City or town West Mineral vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Cherokee Code 021 Zip code 66782

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Patrick Zollner
Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date 2-6-17

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

Alexis Albrecht
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 3/27/17

Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

Cherokee County, Kansas
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5. Classification

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

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	1	buildings
1		sites
2		structures
		objects
5	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE: Specialty Store

DOMESTIC: Single-dwelling

DOMESTIC: Secondary Structure

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vacant/Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commercial Style

Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Metal

Wood

roof: Metal

other: Brick

Soffiitti-Boccia Grocery Store
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Narrative Description

Summary

The Soffiitti-Boccia Grocery Store is an early 20th century commercial building located at the southwest corner of Fleming and Lowery streets in West Mineral, Cherokee County, Southeast Kansas (*Figures 1 & 2*). Constructed in circa 1900 in downtown West Mineral, the building was purchased by Michael Soffiitti, an Italian immigrant, and relocated to its current location sometime after 1915.¹ The building faces east and has a gable roof with a stepped parapet at the front. A small addition to the south also has a stepped parapet with a shed roof sloping to the south. The east elevation is comprised of both brick and glazed concrete block while most of the remainder of the cladding is corrugated metal installed in the 1920s. The roof of the entire building is standing seam metal. The nominated property includes the store building, outhouse, cistern, minnow "house, small vineyard, and shed all on two city lots totaling approximately ½ acre. Only the shed is considered non-contributing.

Elaboration

Setting

The Soffiitti-Boccia Grocery Store is a one-story, wood frame building with a rectangular footprint positioned on a corner lot and facing east onto Fleming Street. The store is located in what was historically a residential neighborhood about five blocks west of the main commercial district of West Mineral. Most of the houses in the surrounding blocks are now gone. However, across Lowery Street to the north is a house and garage belonging to the Boccia family. Vacant lots where houses were to the east across Fleming Street still contain pecan trees that were part of the landscape known to the Soffiitti and Boccia families. Trees cover most of lot 2 to the south property boundary; vacant lots with minimal tree coverage are to the immediate west of the nominated property.

Within the ½-acre parcel are a few remaining ancillary structures related to the Soffiitti-Boccia Grocery Store (*Figure 2*). To the southwest of the store and on the north side of the trees is the minnow house. Directly south of the store is the small vineyard and cistern. To the southwest of this is a non-historic shed along the west property line. An outhouse is due north of the minnow house.

1. Store Building (circa 1900 with additions in circa 1925 & 1937) Primary Contributing Building

The entire store building measures 24' wide and 60' long and is the result of at least three additions (*Figures 3 through 5*). The 1900 wood-frame building was extended to the west sometime between 1915 and 1928. Soon afterwards, or perhaps at the same time, a shed-roof addition was built to the south and a wood-framed addition with gabled roof was built to the west of the main building. The final addition was accomplished in 1937 when a wood-framed addition with shed roof was constructed at the west end of the south elevation. The building's entire roof is metal (a 2015 replacement of the original wood shingled roof due to deterioration). With the exception of the kitchen addition, the building is clad in corrugated metal, which has been the siding since the 1920s, as is evidenced by several family photos. The foundation is comprised of both poured concrete and rusticated concrete block, and a crawl space is located underneath the main building.

The east (main) elevation is comprised of two storefronts. The north storefront leads into the main store building. This façade dates to the late 1950s when the elevation was rebuilt of glazed ceramic structural tiles due to deteriorating conditions. The façade is symmetrical with a wide central screened door between two three-vertical-fixed-pane metal window units. A rectangular concrete stoop leads to the door. The upper façade is stepped and covered with metal clapboard. The south storefront is composed of brick, added in the late 1940s.² A single screened pedestrian door (accessed by a rectangular concrete stoop) is at the north end of this façade and a large square wooden, four-pane window to the south of this door. Part of the original lettering is extant on the bottom right pane, originally reading Retail

¹ Recollection of Carmen Boccia, son of Emma (Soffiitti) Boccia. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps are available for West Mineral for 1909, 1915, and 1928. The block in which the building is currently located is not shown in 1909. The 1915 map shows a similar building at the corner, but a comparison to the 1928 map indicates the 1915 building may not be the current one.

² The brick façade was installed after the Boccias received a liquor license. Although Prohibition ended in the US in 1933, Kansas did not vote to end Prohibition in the state until 1948. Henry Burkle to John Boccia, email regarding the Boccia Store history, 01/28/2016. Burkle, a long-time West Mineral resident, worked for the Boccias during high school.

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Liquor Store. The upper brick façade steps down to the south. A metal awning extends across the building's full east elevation, covering a concrete patio.

The north elevation of the main store building contains two historic triple-pane windows and one single-pane window at an eight-foot level; each contains a metal shed awning. A non-historic one-over-one window unit is located at the west end of the main building. To the west of the main building is an addition. Its north elevation, which is inset from the main building, contains a single sash window with metal awning located on the east end of the elevation. There are no openings in the west elevations.

The south elevation contains the most openings. At the west end of the building (the west addition) is a double window unit with one-over-one windows. The 1937 addition covers the eastern half of the west addition and is clad in wooden Dutch lap clapboard. This addition has a rusticated block foundation. Two wooden three-over-one windows are evenly spaced in the elevation. The south elevation of the main store building is set back under a metal shed roof that extends east from the 1937 addition. The porch roof covers a six-over-one window and a single pedestrian door. Along the same wall plane to the east of the door are two windows at an eight-foot level, similar to the north elevation. The eastern one is a three-over-one sash while the west window is a single-pane sash. The 1920s south addition covers the remainder of the main building's south elevation to the east. The south elevation of this addition contains a modern (1990s) garage door in a historic opening at the west end of the elevation. A single pedestrian door (accessed by a tall concrete stoop) is to the east of the garage door, and two historic windows occupy the wall east of this pedestrian door. These windows have two-over-two sashes with horizontal panes.

The interior of the main grocery building is mostly an open commercial space with the western ¼ of the building being part of the residential quarters. At the west end of the commercial area is the meat counter, deep porcelain sink, and wooden butcher block. All furnishings in this space are historic to the store's operation throughout the years. The floors are historic 3½" tongue-and-groove hardwood. The walls and ceiling show evidence of the building's west extension, as the majority of the walls are original shiplap. However, to the immediate west of the north wall's center (three-pane) window and the south wall's three-pane window, the wall material changes to horizontally applied bead-board, which continues along the west wall. The ceiling, which in its entirety is pressed metal, also shows a joint at this location where the pressed metal panel design changes. There is an area where the pot-belly stove stood on the northwest side of the store where the floorboards lift out for access to the crawlspace beneath the building.

The living quarters behind the west wall of the store originally contained a feed store. It was converted to a residence in 1937. In the commercial space's west wall is a wood-frame door with eight small panes of glass that leads into the residence's kitchen. A staircase on the north wall of the kitchen leads to an unfinished attic used for storage; a full bathroom is also located on the north wall under the stair. A door in the south wall of the kitchen leads to the covered porch on the building's south elevation.

A door in the kitchen's west wall accesses both the circa 1925 and the 1937 additions. A bedroom and living room create one large space adjacent to the kitchen. A door in the east wall of the 1937 addition leads onto the south elevation's covered porch. A separate bedroom is at the west end of the circa 1925 addition, accessed through a door in the living room's west wall.

The south addition was formerly one open room accessed through a door in the main building's west wall. In the 1940s, after acquiring their liquor license, the east half of this addition was enclosed to become a liquor store. A door was installed in the east end of the wall between the addition and the main store (it is now covered). The liquor store has faux wood paneling, while the west half of the addition contains horizontally applied bead-board on the east, west, and south walls, while the north wall retains its historic lap siding, presumably from before the addition. A painted Greek key datum runs the perimeter of the room about four feet above the floor.

2. Outhouse (unknown construction date, possibly circa 1937) Contributing Building

A wood-frame two-seater outhouse sits at the west side of the property. The east elevation contains the doorway; there are no openings in the other walls. The gable roof is covered in wood shingles; the walls are Dutch-lap siding (matching the store's 1937 addition) covered in rolled asphalt. The outhouse is in deteriorated condition.

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**3. Cistern (circa 1915)
Contributing Structure**

To the south of the store building is the property's cistern, said to date to the early 1900s. Previous to 1915 a wood-framed house was covered the location of the cistern, which could have fed the house's kitchen (*Figure 3*). During the Soffiettis and Boccias tenure, this cistern served as a source of drinking water and as a water source for the neighboring vineyard and garden into the 1960s. The structure consists of a square concrete pad with a square concrete structure rising to a height of about three feet. A steel lid covers the top.

**4. Grape Vineyard (1930s)
Contributing Site**

To the immediate west of the cistern is the remnant of a small vineyard added in the 1930s by Francesco "Frank" Boccia, who attributed it to his Italian heritage.

**5. Minnow "House" (late 1950s-early 1960s)
Contributing Structure**

To the south of the store building and abutting the parcel's trees at the south edge is a rectangular structure used for minnow storage. The structure consists of a 32" high concrete block base that contained three compartments. A metal frame supports a corrugated metal gable roof that shelters the compartments.

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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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

Commerce

Social History

Period of Significance

Circa 1915 to 1967

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

Although active until 1982, the Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store's period of significance begins in circa 1915 when Michael Soffietti began operating his business out of this building and ends in 1967, representing part of the time period in which large scale strip mining continued to support the region and the store continued to support the miners.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The story of the Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store is one that represents the wider history of the Cherokee-Crawford coal field. In this store, which was active between circa 1915 and 1982, the Soffietti and Boccia families not only provided groceries, hardware, cloth, and feed, they provided a welcome contrast to the “company stores” owned by the various coal companies dominating the region. Where company stores exploited the miner, the owners of the Soffietti-Boccia Store went out of their way to support their customers and neighbors. This customer base was comprised mostly of Eastern and Mediterranean European immigrants who arrived in Cherokee County seeking a better life than the ones they left in Europe. Because of its significant role in the social history and commerce of the Southeastern Kansas coal region, this store is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A.

Elaboration

The first iteration of Cherokee County was created by the first Kansas territorial legislature in 1855; however, not until 1867 were the current county boundaries established by the state legislature. In 1855 the county, which contained part of what is now Crawford County to the north, was within the boundaries of the Cherokee Neutral Lands. As Kansas historian William Cutler noted in 1883, this area “remained the property of the Cherokees until 1866, when, on account of the encroachments upon them of white people many of whom had settled upon the land, they became desirous of selling it.”³ Between the 1850s and 1870s most “settlers consisted overwhelmingly of native-born Caucasians usually with strong agrarian backgrounds” who were drawn to the area “chiefly because of the availability of land for agricultural settlement.”⁴ At the time of the Cherokee lands’ sale in August 1866, over 5,000 individuals had settled there.⁵

Coal mining was instrumental in the historical and cultural development of Cherokee County after 1866. Although early methods of commercial strip mining were prevalent with the earliest pioneers, the first underground shaft mine was constructed in 1874, which significantly impacted the region.⁶ Geography professor William Powell extensively studied the cultural landscape of the Cherokee-Crawford coal field during the 1970s. Writing in 1972 he explains, “The completion of this form of underground mine signaled the beginning of an important phase of coal mining in Cherokee county and adjacent Crawford county. In the following years, other shaft mines were opened in the coal-bearing areas of the two counties. Underground mining continued as the dominant method until 1931, when mechanized strip-mining surpassed it in output and supplanted it as the dominant mode of mining.”⁷ The ability to reach deeper coal seams through shaft mining increased the coal output, which naturally led to an increase of mining jobs. These jobs became “an economic magnet to a different ethnic wave” than those who came to the region in the mid-1800s.⁸

The county’s settlement patterns were directly associated with the mines. The two decades between 1890 and 1910 saw the largest establishment of settlements within the Cherokee-Crawford coal field.⁹ During the peak years of mining, the early 1910s, an estimated 10,000 miners lived in the various settlements scattered throughout the coal field.¹⁰ Powell illuminates the reasons for this population trend:

The paramount factor was the urgent need for quick and ready housing to accommodate the large numbers of native- and foreign-born miners and their families. A second factor was the degree of permanence of the shaft; a large shaft mine, operating for several years, had frequently a camp established near it. A third factor must have been the lack of speedy and cheap transportation during the early days of underground mining; the poorly salaried miner usually wanted to live near his place of employment; the mining camp, located in close proximity to the underground mine, served this need. A final factor was that many coal companies fostered the creation of

³ Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History* Vol. I (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 318 & William Cutler, “Cherokee County,” *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), n.p. [transcription on-line] available from Kansas Collection Books <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/cherokee/cherokee-co-p1.html> (accessed 12/14/2016).

⁴ William E. Powell, “European Settlement in the Cherokee-Crawford Coal Field of Southeastern Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 41 (Summer 1975): 150-151.

⁵ Cutler, “Cherokee County,” n.p.

⁶ Powell, “European Settlement,” 151 & William E. Powell, “Former Mining Communities of the Cherokee-Crawford Coal Field of Southeastern Kansas,” *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1972): 187-188.

⁷ Powell, “Former Mining Communities,” 187.

⁸ Powell, “European Settlement,” 151.

⁹ Powell, “Former Mining Communities,” 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 193.

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camp by building "company houses" and other structures, such as the "company store" and community hall. The major coal companies, usually owning the coal-bearing land and the structures of the camps, were better able to direct and control the operations of the mines if their employees were quartered in nearby camps.¹¹

Two types of settlements occurred as a result of the coal industry: those established and owned by companies and those independently settled; although, "company camps were much more numerous in the coal field than were noncompany camps."¹² Those settlements owned by companies were often named for the owners (e.g., Scammonville, now known as Scammon) while independent settlements tended to be named "for natural features or characteristics."¹³ One of these latter settlements was Mineral City, located in Ross Township in north-central Cherokee County.

Early Cherokee County settler, Leslie Patterson, platted Mineral City on April 16, 1895 in the southeastern quarter of his farm (*Figures 6 & 7*).¹⁴ Patterson, a native of Pennsylvania, had purchased the southeast quarter of Section 6, Township 23 South, Range 32 East in the fall of 1866; although, he did not permanently settle on his land until 1871.¹⁵ He retained ownership of the remaining 120 acres of his quarter section, which he successfully farmed until his death in 1905.¹⁶ The original plat encompassed six-and-a-half blocks from Lyle to Patterson streets (east to west) and Lowery to Richardson avenues (north to south).¹⁷ In May 1901 Patterson platted the city's first addition, expanding the town west one-and-a-half blocks to George Street.¹⁸ The second addition, in which the Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store is located, was platted by Patterson in June 1903; a third plat was added in May 1904.¹⁹

According to historian Nathaniel Allison, Mineral City's establishment was a direct result of coal mining in the area.²⁰ The Missouri, Kansas & Texas (Katy) Railway established a branch from Parsons, Kansas to just south of Section 6 in the mid-1890s.²¹ "The road was built through and under the management of The Southwestern Development Company, the purpose being to secure shipping facilities for the coal which the company designed taking out" of 2,200 acres in the surrounding landscape.²² Although adjacent to coal mines, Mineral City was not under the control of any one company – an irritation to the Southwestern Development Company, who could not control its workers as easily.²³ The company had established a store from which employees could purchase supplies; competition was unwelcome. In response to Mineral City's platting, the Southwestern Development Company erected housing "on a tract of land one mile east of the surveyed and platted town of Mineral City" and convinced the United States Postal Service to establish a post office at this location, which was named "Mineral," in May 1895.²⁴ Not to be intimidated, the residents of Mineral City finally succeeded in having a post office also established in their town in 1899; it was named "West Mineral."²⁵ This name came to represent the independent town of Mineral City while East Mineral came to represent the company land one mile to the east.²⁶ West Mineral was incorporated as a town of the third class in 1901, and boasted a population of nearly 1,200 in 1904.²⁷ Together with the surrounding area and East Mineral, the estimated population neared 3,000 in 1904.²⁸

The majority of the population of the Mineral Cities (as the towns were collectively known) were immigrants from Eastern and Mediterranean Europe. This was a representation of the "greater ethnic wave of Europeans" comprising at least half

¹¹ Powell, "Former Mining Communities," 189.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 191-192.

¹⁴ Nathaniel Thompson Allison, *History of Cherokee County, Kansas and Representative Citizens* (Chicago: Biographical Publishing Co., 1904), 170 & 568.

¹⁵ Ibid., 567.

¹⁶ Allison, *History of Cherokee County*, 170, 567 & *Plat Book of Cherokee County, Kansas* (No place: Missouri Publishing Co., 1902), 23.

¹⁷ The east-west streets appear to have been named for Patterson's family: Lyle (son), Olive (wife), Patterson, Janett (daughter), George (son). These names are found in the 1900 US Federal Census.

¹⁸ *Plat Book of Cherokee County*, 14.

¹⁹ Allison, *History of Cherokee County*, 568.

²⁰ Ibid., 172.

²¹ Ibid., 170.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 171.

²⁴ Allison, *History of Cherokee County*, 171 & Robert W. Baughman, *Kansas Post Offices* (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1977), 84. The Mineral post office was discontinued in 1925.

²⁵ Baughman, *Kansas Post Offices*, 137.

²⁶ Allison, *History of Cherokee County*, 171-172.

²⁷ Ibid., 172.

²⁸ Ibid.

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of the mining labor between 1900 and 1920.²⁹ A combination of factors resulted in this influx of European immigrants, "Prior to the outbreak of the First World War in Europe, poverty, unemployment, heavy taxation, oppressive political administration, discontent, foreign domination by other European nations, and underdeveloped industry created an adverse social environment that led to an exodus to the United States."³⁰ Italians, Austrians, Yugoslavians, and Germans, among others, came "directly from Europe to the Cherokee-Crawford coal field" often being recruited by friends and relatives already in the region.³¹ The region's multicultural character was described by local May Wood-Simons in 1911:

Black-faced workmen, just out of the mine, stretch in the shade of the green leaves at the edge of some mammoth corn field waiting for an electric [railroad] car. They speak in the soft accents of the Latin races, in the gutterals of Teuton or related with breezy abandon incidents at Telluride and Cripple Creek [Colorado]. Dark-eyed Italian lads dangle their bare feet from the wagon of some farmer of New England descent or generously teach their yankee [sic] school teacher how to read the Italian language.³²

In January 1903 26-year-old Michael Soffietti (1876-1934) left his home in Fiano, Italy for Le Havre, France, where he boarded the *SS La Savoie* and arrived in New York on January 18, 1903. The ship's immigration manifest indicated that Soffietti, a laborer, had never been to the United States, was bound for Cherokee County, Kansas, and was not going to meet family.³³ Soffietti may have been recruited by an acquaintance already living in West Mineral.

Soffietti went to work in the shaft mines upon his arrival in West Mineral. His wife, Teresa (1875-1940) and their son, Maurizio, arrived in West Mineral in December 1904.³⁴ By 1910 the U.S Federal Census notes Michael is a self-employed grocer.³⁵ According to the family, Michael developed consumption, now known as Black Lung, while working in the mines. His doctor told him that if he wanted to live to see his grandchildren, he needed to find another line of work; thus, Soffietti started his grocery.

Presumably Soffietti's first store was located elsewhere than at the southwest corner of Fleming and Lowery streets. In 1915 the Soffiettis purchased the old wood-framed IOOF building that once stood in downtown West Mineral and relocated it to 313 Fleming Street.³⁶ From its opening in circa 1915, the neighborhood store became a staple for the community. Recalling his childhood in West Mineral, Henry Burkle recently wrote:

I was born in 1921 in a house two blocks from the store. I lived there until 1941. During my childhood days I recall the store being a hub of activity. It contained not only groceries but hardware, feed for cattle, horses and chickens, and when liquor became legal in Kansas it also had a liquor store. The meat department was also famous for the homemade sausage which was known throughout Southeastern KS. The Dry Goods department contained a variety of prints that was used for making women's clothing. The store also had the only phone in the neighborhood. Customers could make use of the phone providing it was for business or medical purposes. The store was also a source of local news; today it would be considered gossip.³⁷

The store was a prosperous endeavor for Michael and Teresa. The Soffiettis were able to afford one of town's first automobiles, a Model T, and to put two daughters, Katie and Emma, through what is now known as Pittsburg State University.

The Soffiettis lived and worked in a town dominated by coal miners from Italy, Austria (Slovenia), and Belgium.³⁸ One of Emma Soffietti's childhood friends, Mary (Jug) Molek, was the daughter of Slovenian immigrants. Molek had a successful career in education and counseling, and in her later life became an active member of the Society for Slovene Studies. She described her book, *Immigrant Woman*, "as a fictionalized biography of her mother."³⁹ In this biography, Molek provides a

²⁹ Powell, "European Settlement," 150.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 151-152. According to Powell, the Italian government encouraged emigration because of an explosive increase in population which occurred during the last quarter of the 19th century.

³¹ Powell, "European Settlement," 152-153. Powell notes that 13% of Italians arriving in 1907 were miners.

³² As quoted in Powell, "European Settlement," 155.

³³ "List of Manifest of Alien Immigrants for the Commissioner of Immigration," 1903, *New York, Passenger Lists 1820-1957* [database on-line] Ancestry.com (accessed 12/15/2016).

³⁴ "List of Manifest of Alien Immigrants for the Commissioner of Immigration," 1904, *New York, Passenger Lists 1820-1957* [database on-line] Ancestry.com (accessed 12/15/2016). Maurizio (Maurice) was two when he arrived; he died at the age of 10 and is buried in Star Cemetery in West Mineral.

³⁵ 1910 US Federal Census. Michael was the only male within his block employed in a business besides coal mining.

³⁶ Boccia family recollections.

³⁷ Henry Burkle to John Boccia, email (01/27/2016).

³⁸ 1910 & 1920 US Federal Censuses. Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the time; these families indicated that they spoke Slovenian while they were born in Austria.

³⁹ Toussaint Hočevar, "Mary Molek: Author, Editor, Curator," *Slovene Studies: Journal of the Society for Slovene Studies* 8, no. 2 (1986): 5-6.

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sample of conversation between her mother, Lucija (Lucy) and Michael Soffietti, illustrating what William Powell calls the "polyglottal nature of the coal field."⁴⁰

[Lucy] You gotta da col-oil? [Michael] Ya, is gotta. [Lucy] Bring me flour. [Michael] You wanna da 10 pound sack, odder da 25 pound sack? [Lucy] M-m-m. Twenty-five. [Michael] You like-it da banan? [Lucy] Ya, is like, but no can buy. [Michael] Is gotta nice-a fresh-a peanuts-a-borr. [Lucy] Peanuts? [Michael] Ya, borr. Peanuts-a-borr. Is go on bread. [Lucy] Oh! 'Borr'. No-o-o; no peanuts-a-borr. [Michael] You gotta plenty the lard? [Lucy] Lard, ya. Oh. Bring it the Mazola. [Michael] Ken or-a da bott? [Lucy] Ya. Von beeg ken. – Das be all, I dink. [Michael] You gotta the beel? [Lucy] Da beel? [Michael] Ya. Is was frum da-last-a-time eight dollair, dirty-two cents. Today is bring you tree dollair nine-a-teen cents; is make eleven dollair, fifty-von cents. [Lucy] "Eleven dollair, feety-von? – Is give you five. [Michael] Five dollair. M-m-; is-a-von; is-a-five; is-a-seex. You owe it me seex dollair, feety-von cents next-a-time."⁴¹

Lucy had given her weekly order to the Italian grocer, who delivered groceries by horse and delivery wagon. They had developed a language of their own and understood one another more than passing well. The order over, he would relate the news from a mile-wide radius of neighbors, to which she was mainly an interested audience.⁴²

The Soffiettis operated the store in direct contrast to the many company stores in the coal field. Miners were "hampered by low salaries on which it was difficult to support a large number of dependents. As one example of the low compensation, the average daily salary made by an underground miner in Cherokee or Crawford county in 1916, near the peak of mining in the coal field, was approximately three dollars."⁴³ Adding to the low pay, miners living in company towns were often compensated by "scrip" that could only be used at the company's store. "Frequently, prices for items in company stores in camps were higher than those in nearby communities. Thus numerous miners and their dependents were at the mercy of the all-powerful mining companies for employment, housing, and even provisions in some instances."⁴⁴ The Soffiettis allowed customers to pay what they could, knowing the bill would eventually be settled.

This practice continued during the Boccias' tenure. After graduating from college, Emma Soffietti (1907-2001) moved to Chicago for work. There she met Italian immigrant Francesco (Frank) Boccia (1898-1982). The two were married in 1932 and returned to West Mineral to take over the grocery store due to Michael's ill health. The Boccias ran the store during some of the worst economic times. As Powell notes:

During the late 1920's and 1930's, a series of debilitating factors, acting in combination, caused the steady decline of underground mining in the coal field. The main causative factors were the economic impact of the depression, the rise of mechanized surface mining, competition from oil and gas, labor problems in the coal field (strikes), and competition from Eastern coals.⁴⁵

During this time several mines shut down, causing many of the company towns to dissolve (e.g., East Mineral) and many miners to lose jobs. Noncompany towns or those company towns located near reliable transportation were able to survive; however, the residents of these towns were especially hard hit.⁴⁶ Many moved away, looking for other work.

Life as a miner was difficult enough in the decades before the Depression, for along with the low pay, the mines themselves "operated sporadically or completely ceased operations for indefinite periods."⁴⁷ Accepting other full-time work to cover the periods of nonoperation was nearly impossible as a mine could reopen at any time.⁴⁸ To offset these time periods European miners "grew staples in gardens on the properties on which they resided and on other land they rented or leased."⁴⁹ Crops were most often preserved and canned for consumption by the family. Italians were well known in the region for their large gardens and for their cultivation of grapes both for eating and for wine-making.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ Powell, "European Settlement," 155.

⁴¹ Mary Molek, *Immigrant Woman* (Milford, Delaware: Shawnee Printing, 1976), 36-37

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Powell, "European Settlement," 160. In 2016 this equals just over \$66.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁵ Powell, "Former Mining Communities," 197.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴⁷ Powell, "European Settlement," 161.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 162-163. During Prohibition, Michael Soffietti used to make wine for his family from grapes grown on his property. The September 14, 1922 *Columbus Weekly Advocate* reported on a raid at the Soffietti store where the sheriff and his party destroyed a 50-gallon barrel and over 100 quarts of wine – a heartbreaking incident still to this day to the family.

Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store

Name of Property

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During the Depression the Boccias accepted a variety of forms of payment for grocery bills. Potatoes, eggs, or labor could go to paying down the bill owed to the store. Henry Burkle recalls, "The store became a life saver during the Great Depression for many of the local families. The contribution by Boccia's Store at least carried many families through the crisis until the Works Project Administration (WPA) was initiated."⁵¹ He continues with the following:

During this period the coal mines that were the only industry in West Mineral began to shut down. This meant that all the immigrants – Italian, Austrian, Belgium, French, etc., who came to work in the coal mines were without jobs. Since most of them could neither read or write, they had to take lesser paying jobs working part-time for farmers or try to find cheap labor jobs. Boccia's Grocery stepped in and offered to help by allowing those that were in need to charge their groceries and pay whenever they could.

The miners took pride in home ownership so they would make sure they had enough money put aside to pay their property taxes. Next, was the monthly water bill and then hope they had some money to pay on their mounting grocery bill. Very few had electricity in their homes at that time.

My dad was one of the miners that had to run up quite a large grocery bill. He worked for an area farmer for \$1 per day. At times the town construction contractor, Joe Bond, would call on him to help on a job. When the Store obtained a liquor license he did the brick facing on the addition to the store and the pay was applied to his grocery bill. Also my sister, Lena, while in high school did housework on week-ends for the Boccias and that pay too was applied to the grocery bill. We always had chickens so we would save the eggs until we had a dozen then take them to the store to apply on the grocery bill.⁵²

Burkle also worked for the Boccias throughout his grade school and high school years. He earned a dime every Friday for accompanying Frank on the sale bill delivery rounds, and while in high school he made the deliveries himself.⁵³

The Boccias continued to run their store on the same principles throughout the following decades, while the town population steadily declined. The coal industry evolved from shaft mining back to strip mining, albeit on a much larger scale, especially during World War Two.⁵⁴ Emma and Frank's son, Carmen, recalls that the last deep mine in the county was a few miles north and east of West Mineral, and that between 1948 and 1951, Frank worked there.⁵⁵ Although the mining industry was not near as prevalent as in the years leading up to the Great Depression, new technology in strip mining continued to keep area residents employed. In the 1960s the Pittsburg-Midway (P&M) Company operated a mine just a half of a mile south of the Soffietti-Boccia store. Until 1974 the electric coal shovel known as Big Brutus kept several local residents employed. The store finally closed in 1982 upon the death of Frank Boccia, ending almost 70 years of service to the small mining community.

⁵¹ Henry Burkle to John Boccia, email (01/27/2016).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Burkle recalls in his email to John Boccia, "When I was in high school the store delivery man quit to take a better job out-of-town and Frank asked me if I could drive a stick shift and carry a 100 lb. sack of feed, neither of which I could. After I figured out there was a 1st, 2nd and 3rd gear and one reverse I would drive as near the barn as possible and drag the feed the rest of the way."

⁵⁴ Carmen Boccia to John Boccia, email (08/31/2016).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

Cherokee County, Kansas
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Allison, Nathaniel Thompson, editor. *History of Cherokee County, Kansas and Representative Citizens*. Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1904 [digitized online] available from the Internet Archive <http://www.archive.org/details/historyofcheroke00alli> (accessed 11/28/2016).

Baughman, Robert W. *Kansas Post Offices*. Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1977.

Blackmar, Frank. *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*. Vol. I. Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912.

Boccia, Carmen. Email correspondence with John Boccia. August 2016.

Burkle, Henry. Email correspondence with John Boccia. January 2016.

Cutler, William. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883.

Hočevar, Toussaint. "Mary Molek: Author, Editor, Curator." *Slovene Studies: Journal of the Society for Slovene Studies* 8, no. 2 (1986): 4-8.

Molek, Mary. *Immigrant Woman*. Milford, Delaware: Shawnee Printing, 1976.

New York, Passenger Lists 1820-1957.

Plat Book of Cherokee County, Kansas. No place: Missouri Publishing Co., 1902.

Powell, William E. "Former Mining Communities of the Cherokee-Crawford Coal Field of Southeastern Kansas." *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1972): 187-199.

Powell, William E. "European Settlement in the Cherokee-Crawford Coal Field of Southeastern Kansas." *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 41 (Summer 1975): 150-165.

US Federal Censuses.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: **Kansas Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____ n/a

Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>37.285120</u>	<u>-94.929440</u>	3	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated boundary includes all of lots 1 & 2 of Block 2 in the Second Addition to West Mineral, Kansas. The east and north boundaries front Fleming (east) Street and Lowery Street (north), while the west and south boundaries are comprised of the adjacent property lines.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundaries include all extant resources historically associated with the Soffietti-Boccia Store.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathy Boccia & Amanda K. Loughlin (KSHS)

organization _____ date December 2016

street & number On file with SHPO. telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

e-mail _____

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Carmen & Norvella Boccia

street & number On file with SHPO. telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store

City or Vicinity: West Mineral

County: Cherokee State: Kansas

Photographer: Amanda K. Loughlin (KSHS)

Date
Photographed: September 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 11:** Looking SW at east and north elevations
- 02 of 11:** Looking NW at partial south and east elevations of liquor store
- 03 of 11:** Looking NE at west and south elevations
- 04 of 11:** Main store space, looking west from east wall
- 05 of 11:** Main store space, looking SE from near meat counter at west end
- 06 of 11:** Main store space, north wall, showing material joints
- 07 of 11:** Main store space, west end, showing historic fixtures, looking north
- 08 of 11:** South circa 1925 addition, west room, looking SE
- 09 of 11:** Outhouse, looking NW at south and east elevations
- 10 of 11:** Cistern and part of grape vineyard, looking WNW
- 11 of 11:** Minnow house, looking SW at east and north elevations

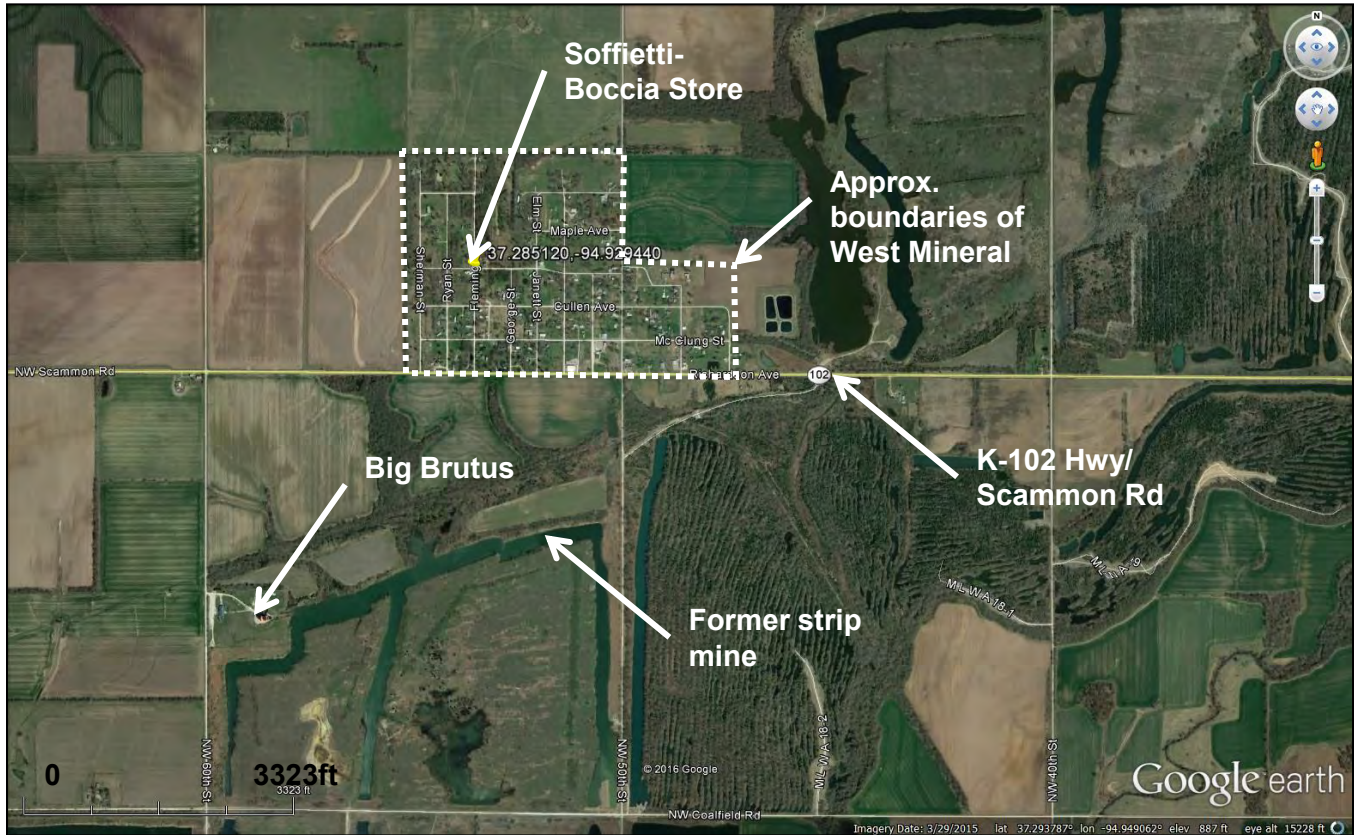
Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Soffiitti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

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Figure 1. 2015 Google aerial image of Soffiitti-Boccia Store in context.



Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
Name of Property

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County and State

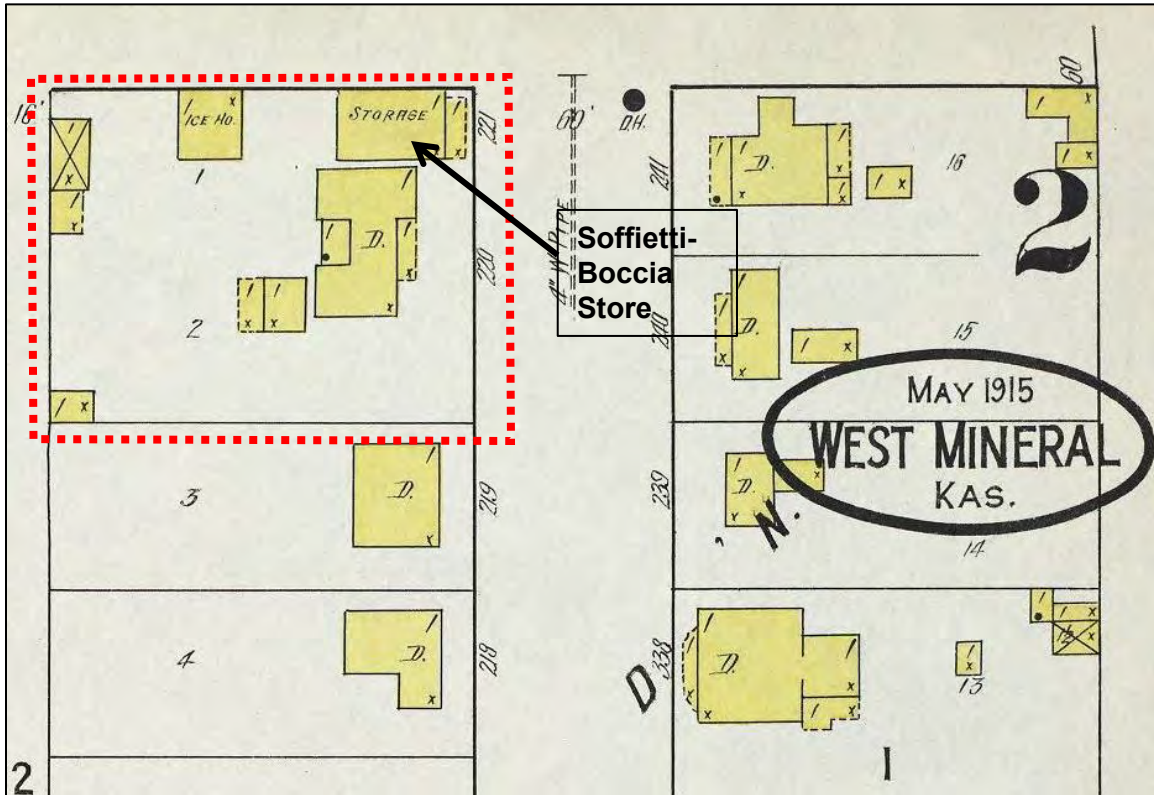
Figure 2 (Boundary Map). 2015 Google aerial image of Soffietti-Boccia Store boundary.



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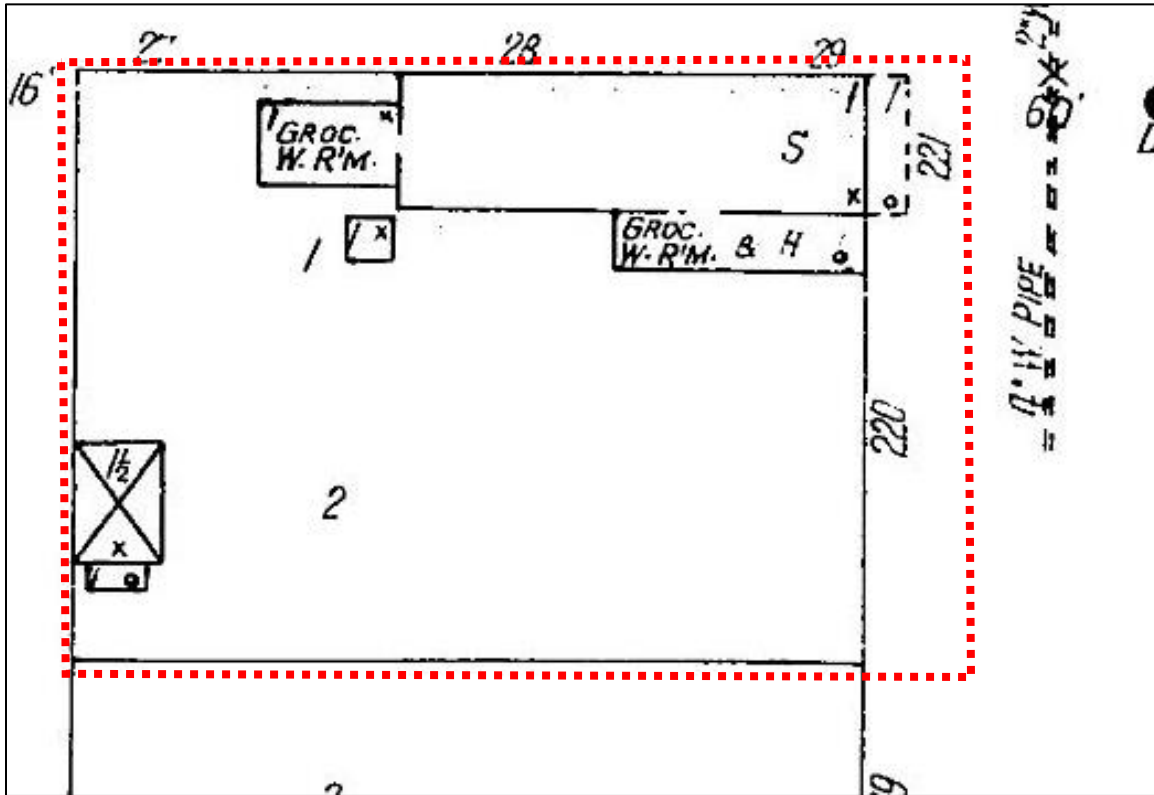
Figure 3. Snippet of 1915 Sanborn map, showing part of the store in place. North is up.



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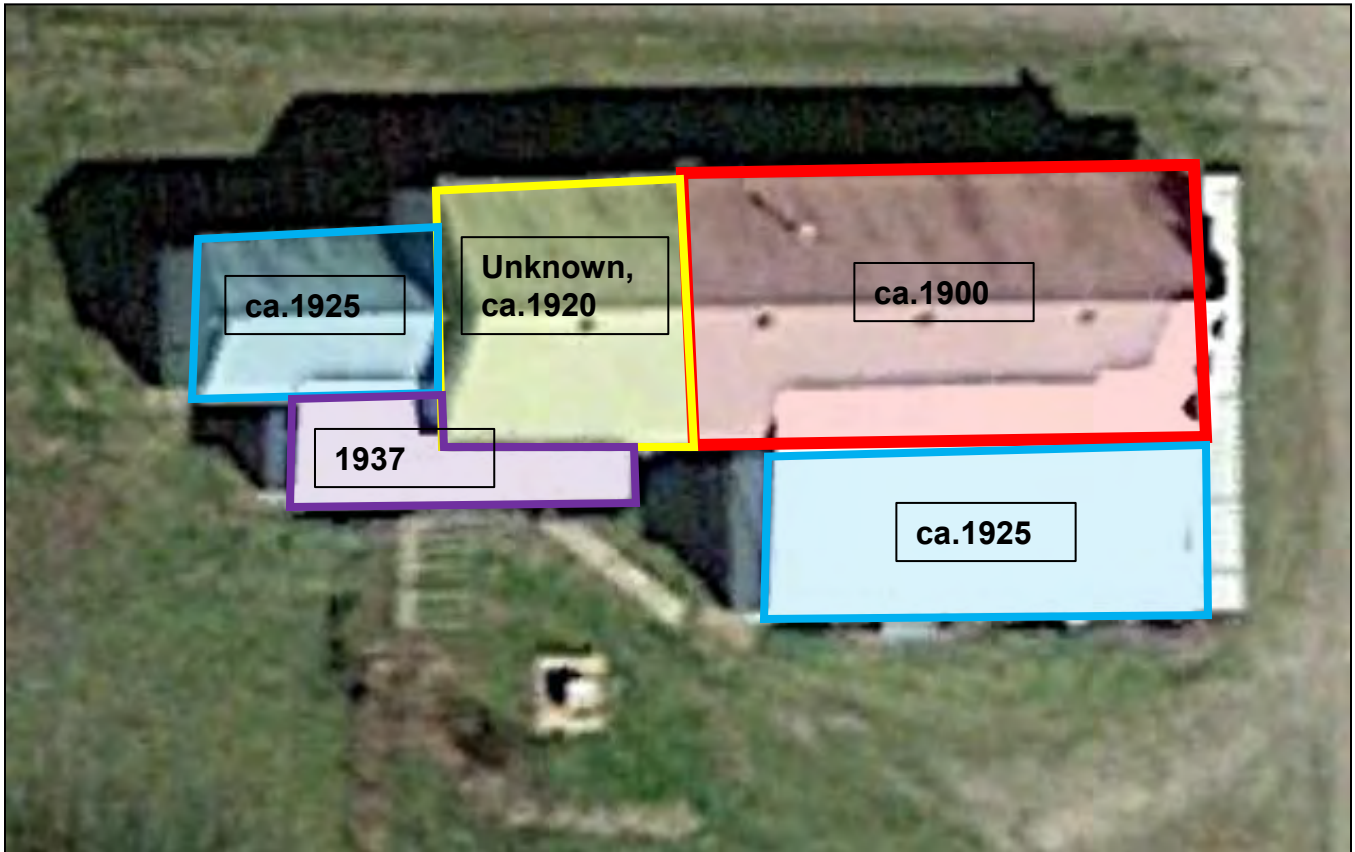
Figure 4. Snippet of 1928 Sanborn map, store. North is up.



Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
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Figure 5. Approximate dates of additions. North is up.



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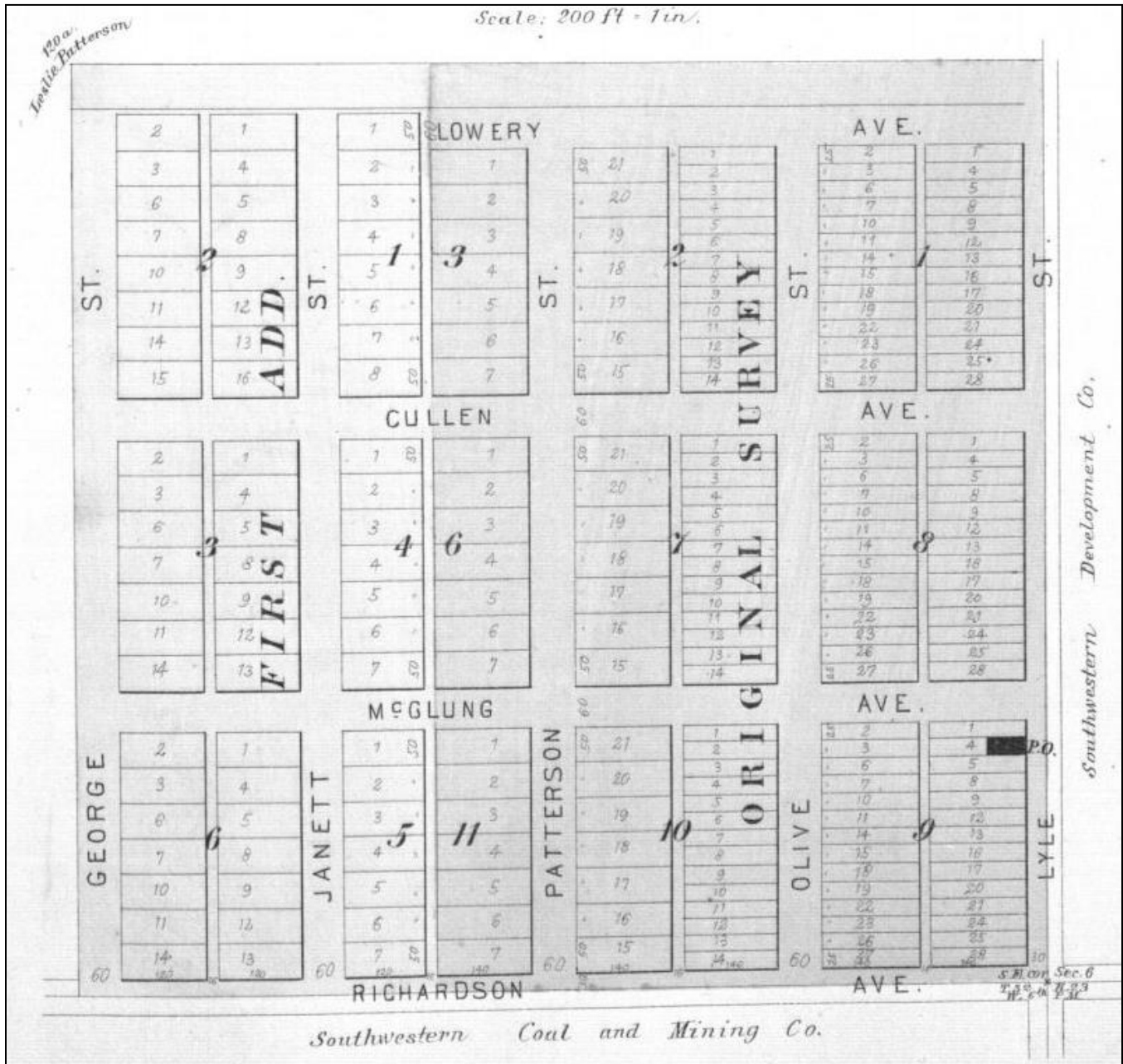
Figure 6. Snippet of 1902 Cherokee County Atlas, showing Ross Township (Township 23 South, Range 32 East) and Mineral City.



Soffietti-Boccia Grocery Store
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Figure 7. Snippet of 1902 Cherokee County Atlas, showing the plat of Mineral City. The town's second addition, where the Soffietti-Boccia store is located, had not yet been platted when the atlas was published.













Fluorescent light fixture

Fluorescent light fixture

Fluorescent light fixture

White display case

Coca-Cola
ICE COLD

Bakery display case

BUNNY BREAD

Wooden shelving unit

SUCRE

LITTLE HUT
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60647

Cardboard box

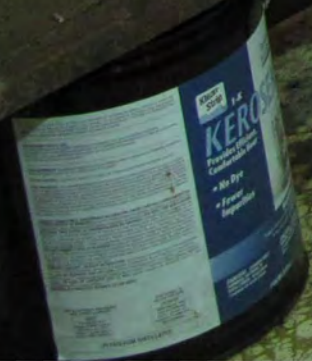
Long wooden counter with green top

Dark brown counter with red cup and black tray



Threads...
Zippers...

The Boccias
Frank Emma











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 3/27/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



6425 SW 6th Avenue
Topeka KS 66615

Sam Brownback, Governor
Jennie Chinn, Executive Director

February 6, 2017

Paul Loether, National Register Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280)
Washington, DC 20005

Re: National Register documents

Dear Mr. Loether:

Please find enclosed the following National Register documents:

NEW NOMINATIONS (4)

- **Soffietti-Boccia Store, West Mineral, Cherokee County, Kansas (new nomination)**
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination and .kmz file;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

- **R.W. Hocker Subdivision, Lot K Spec House; Merriam, Johnson County, Kansas (new nomination)**
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

- **Mugan-Olmsted House, Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas (new nomination) (nominated under the "Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas" MPS)**
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

- **Ness County Bridge FS-450, Bazine vicinity, Ness County, Kansas (new nomination) (nominated under the "Masonry Arch Bridges of Kansas" MPS)**
 - Physical, signed copy of the nomination's first page;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the nomination;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photographs.

REMOVAL REQUEST (1)

- **Rooks County Record Building, Stockton, Rooks County, Kansas** (removal request)
 - Physical, signed copy of the removal request;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the removal request;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photograph

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION (2)

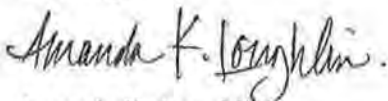
- **Topeka-Emporia Historic District, Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas (04000779)** (additional documentation)
 - Physical, signed copy of the documentation;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the documentation;
 - 1 CD (disk #2) with photograph
- **Brown, Samuel A., House, Newton, Harvey County, Kansas (88001904)** (additional documentation)
 - Physical, signed copy of the documentation;
 - 1 CD (disk #1) with a PDF of the true and correct copy of the documentation and a PDF of boundary map;

PHOTOGRAPH RESUBMITTAL (2)

- **Hoffman & Lamb Buildings, Enterprise, Dickinson County, Kansas (SG100000510)** (photograph resubmittal)
 - 1 CD with photographs 5 through 11 of National Register property SG100000510, as re-requested by Alexis Abernathy due to corrupted files previously received
- **Engle, Jacob S., House, Abilene, Dickinson County, Kansas (SG100000506)** (photograph resubmittal)
 - 1 CD with photograph 1 of National Register property SG100000506, as re-requested by Alexis Abernathy due to corrupted files previously received

If you have any questions about these enclosed items, please contact me at ext. 216 or aloughlin@kshs.org.

Sincerely,



Amanda K. Loughlin
National Register Coordinator
Kansas State Historic Preservation Office

Enclosures