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NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORY  
& EDUCATION

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

539

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 this form 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 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name HOTEL SUNFLOWER

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 409 NW 3RD STREET  not for publication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.)

Richard Kankratz DSHPO 3-21-01  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
State of 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:)

Olson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action  
5/25/01

HOTEL SUNFLOWER  
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS  
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	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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)

DOMESTIC: MULTIPLE DWELLING

**7. Description**

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

MODERN MOVEMENT: ART DECO

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof TAR

other

**Narrative Description**

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

HOTEL SUNFLOWER  
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS  
County and State

### 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 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

#### Period of Significance

1931

#### Significant Dates

1931

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

ARCHITECTS ALONZO H. GENTRY & J.W. MURRAY  
CONSTRUCTION SUPERINTENDENT - JOE FARGO

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

HOTEL SUNFLOWER  
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** LESS THAN ONE ACRE

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 4	6 5 4 6 0 0	4 3 0 8 8 0 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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 NANC SCHOLL

organization ABILENE HERITAGE COMMISSION date JULY 3, 2000

street & number 813 N. OLIVE STREET telephone 785-263-7012

city or town ABILENE state KANSAS zip code 67410

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name RICHARD & VIRGINIA NEAR

street & number 409 NW 3RD STREET telephone 785-263-4433

city or town ABILENE state KANSAS zip code 67410

**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. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

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The Hotel Sunflower (May 1931) is located at 409 N. W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Abilene, Dickinson County, Kansas (pop. 6,700). The eight-story, flat roofed, concrete and red brick Modern Movement – Art Deco structure stands at the center of the south side of the block, being the tallest building in Abilene's commercial area. The 8-story high portion of the building, constructed in 1931, is rectangle with a northern façade, which measures 54.5 feet from north to south, and 101 feet from east to west. The three story portion of the building, which is on the south side of the 8-story structure measures 42.5 feet from north to south and spans the entire 8-story structure, measuring 101 feet from east to west.

The concrete, reinforced by steel beams and girders interwoven with strands of steel wire create the foundation, 16 feet deep and continuing to the top of the structure which is masked by a red brick veneer on all elevations. The east, south, and west elevations of the building are nondescript, having no identifiable decorative treatments.

The north elevation of the building, which is the street front, has a stepped frontispiece. The building's first story facade employs typical storefront single light rectangular windows of very large proportion. The most eastern storefront has been change from original and now has the door, which is recessed, to the east of the single light window. The second storefront from the east is as original with a single light window flanking each side of the 15 light door, which swings inward from the left and is recessed. The main entrance to the structure is centered at this level with a smaller single hung, single light window which is flanked by a wood surround, to the east (or left) and was the location of the doorman's room enabling him to look out. There is no window to the west (or right) of the main entrance door with this room being used originally for storage. It has the same wood insert as is to the left of this door. The fourth storefront from the east is as original with the door swinging from the right and is otherwise identical to the second storefront. The most western storefront (the fifth from the east) is original with the exception that the windows are not original, these windows have been replaced with two large rectangle single lights. Originally there were four sections. This door, like all of the others on this elevation, is recessed.

The second floor has 10 windows across the front façade of the structure. The center six rectangular windows are double hung with 12/12 lights. The two rectangular windows, to the east and the two rectangular windows to the west, which flank each side of the center windows, are double hung. A grouping of 8/8 lights with a non-descript terra cotta panel insert stands at the base of each window opening. Ribbioned garland is on each side of a Hathor-head, which is centered above each of the six center windows, each resting on a zigzag molding or dancette. Tucked above the garland is a single large sunflower with leaves. Rising from the center of the hathor-head crown is a decorate shaft with rope molding on each side upon which rests a palm capital capped with fruit forming a crown. This ornamentation reaches to the bottom of the third floor windows.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   2  

---

On each side of the shafts, the brick is angled to emphasize the chevron pattern theme. The two windows to the far east and the two windows to the far west on the second floor are double hung 8/8 lights. Below these four windows is a decorative insert created by using the ends of the brick to create a diamond-like design. Each of these rectangular ornaments are centered between the second and third floors. A solid terra cotta band emphasizes the base of the third story windows between each window.

The building's upper six-story facade employs one size of rectangle windows with the window units themselves being double hung 2/2 lights.

At the top of the eighth story windows, two bands of brick crest the center six windows. Each portion of the dancette is two bricks in length. At the end of each dancette is a single griffin wing with the feathers pointing toward the ground and facing toward the center of the structure. This "wing" element is again repeated at the extreme outside top corner of the structure to the east and to the west with the wing facing away from the center of the structure. At the bottom of each, along the edge is concave tile creating a rounded edge, extending the length of the eighth story windows. Above and between each "set" of wings, at the top of the structure, is a row of elongated cavetto cornice. At the top of the band, centered above each of the six center windows are six blind windows of rectangle shape. The cornice of the structure features a dentil ornamentation. Capping the structure is a band of brick topped by another dancette with a fleur-de-lis inserted at the wide portion, or bottom, of the zigzag. This is crowned by two more bands of brick which are surmounted by ionic fluting that is topped by a solid terra cotta band.

The west, south and east elevations of the building are non-descript. There is a two-story structure build adjacent to the Hotel Sunflower which does not allow for windows at this level. The remaining six stories have three 2/2 double hung windows at each level. They appear to be clear with "chicken wire" imbedded into the glass. Above the eighth story windows is the word HOTEL in bold white letters that have faded. Between the seventh and eighth story windows is the word SUNFLOWER, again in bold white letters that have faded. These windows have a brick head created by setting the bricks on the side and only the end showing. The windowsill is sloped and is created again by placing the brick on its long edge with the end facing outward. These windows are metal sash type windows.

On the south (or back) façade of the structure the fenestration found on fourth through eighth floors mirrors that used on the the west side of the structure. There are eight windows on each of the fourth through seventh floors and seven windows on the eighth floor. The column of windows second from the east is where the fire escape is located, constructed of metal. There are no windows on the third floor. On the second floor are six windows. There are three tall elongated windows on the left (or west) of the row. The top two-thirds of the two far west windows are solid with three single lights in a row on the bottom one-third

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number   7   Page   3  

---

with center light opening. The third of these elongated windows is 1/1 double hung. The three windows to the east on this level are 16-light metal casement type windows.

On the first floor there are to windows, the first four are 16-light metal casement type windows, the next two windows have been removed and the opening enclosed. The four remaining windows, which are to the east, are 8-light metal casement type windows.

The east façade, which is adjacent to the alley has two levels. The most northern part of the structure is eight stories tall with the protrusion to the back. The protrusion houses the utility areas as well as the ballroom, which is only three stories tall. The windows on the back most part of the east façade, on the first level has five 8-light metal casement type windows which are frosted and appear to have "chicken-wire" imbedded into the glass. There is a service entrance to the north of these windows (basically in the center of the entire first floor façade, at ground level) with a metal door. The second story windows are 6-light metal casement type windows, and the third story has three openings which are located to the far south portion at the level. The first and third openings have a grate covering the opening which does not allow for a view of what is behind the grate. The center window is a repeat of the second floor windows – 6-light metal casement type window.

The most northern portion of the east façade has windows on the first level that are 6-light metal casement type windows which are frosted and have the "chicken-wire" imbedded into the glass. They are metal casement type windows and are covered with what appears to be plywood which is very deteriorated. The second through eighth levels repeat the windows on the west side being 2/2 double hung windows at each level and appear to be clear with "chicken wire" imbedded into the glass. These windows have a brick head created by setting the bricks on the side and only the end showing. The windowsill is sloped and is created again by placing the brick on its long edge with the end facing outward. These windows are metal sash type windows. Also as on the west façade, above the eighth story windows is the word HOTEL in bold white letters, and between the seventh and eighth story windows is the word SUNFLOWER, again in bold white letters that have all faded.

On the southeast portion of the roof projects the top of the elevator mechanism as well as the staircase. This projection is non-descript with 16-light metal casement-type windows, one each on the east and west sides and two on the south side.

The building's most significant interior architectural features exist in the public spaces on the lower and upper mezzanine floors as well as the ballroom. Three of the original art deco chandeliers remain in the ballroom with the fourth chandelier placed in storage for safekeeping. All of the ballroom frieze, which carries out the sunflower theme, has been restored. The sunflower theme is again repeated at the top of the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page   4  

---

pillars on the upper mezzanine, which are well preserved. The original stair railing is visible and in use today, as are the four Art Deco wall light fixtures located throughout the upper mezzanine area. One of the original wall light fixtures remains in the elevator area. There are two elevators in the structure, the northern elevator was used for passengers and one was used for freight as well as passengers. The northern elevator was replaced in 1996-1997, but the original freight/passenger elevator is still in use today.

The Hotel Sunflower maintains a high degree of external integrity and retains many architecturally significant feature on the upper and lower mezzanine levels. The upper six floors have been converted into apartments.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

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The Hotel Sunflower (1931) is being nominated to the National Register under circa A and C for its historical association with the City of Abilene, and for its architectural significance. The eight-story, brick, Art Deco structure stands on the original site of wooden structures that were razed for the construction of the hotel. Touted as Abilene's "new and modern hotel", the Hotel Sunflower symbolized the booster spirit promoted by the Abilene Chamber of Commerce in the late 1920s and early 1930s and marks the only major construction to occur in the city's downtown during this period. The hotel was owned by the Abilene Hotel Company, which consisted of many very prominent citizens of Abilene to include: C. L. Brown (President), Fred Coulson (Vice-President and General Manager), T. L. Welsh (Vice-President), E. H. Forney (Vice-President), H. W. Rohrer (Treasurer), M. C. Gugler and Sam R. Heller (Directors), M. C. Beamer (Secretary), O. B. Small and H. A. Nelson (Assistant Treasurers), and Ella Horner (Assistant Secretary).

Art Deco - or Modern, as it is variously called - was the first widely popular style in the United States to break from the revivalist tradition represented by the Beaux-Arts and period houses. Emphasis on the future rather than the past was one of the style's principal characteristics. Art Deco ornamentation consists largely of low-relief geometrical designs, often in the form of parallel straight lines, zigzags, chevrons and stylized floral motifs. This is very well illustrated on the front façade of the Hotel Sunflower. At its best, the Art Deco style produced a harmonious collaboration of effort by architects, painters, sculptors and designers. This harmony is illustrated throughout The Hotel Sunflower with the sunflower being the predominant theme in the public areas of the building as well as very subtly, again on the front façade.

Fred I. Boone, president of the Boone Hotel Company of Manhattan, Kansas, operated the Hotel Sunflower. His reputation preceded him as one of the finest hotel managers in the middle west, having operated hotels along the Union Pacific Railway since 1890, and, in 1931, operated the Wareham and the Gillett hotels in Manhattan, Kansas, and The Vinita, at Vinita, Oklahoma.

Alonzo H. Gentry, A.I.A., Incorporated of Kansas City received much of the credit for the architectural excellence in the structure. Mr. Gentry had constructed some of the outstanding buildings in the mid-west, such as the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, NE; the Warrior Hotel in Sioux City, IA; Conner Hotel in Joplin, MO; the Tiger Hotel at Columbia, MO; and great McCandles Apartment Development at Nicholas Plaza; and the Allis Hotel at Wichita to name of few. The financial backing came from the strong drive of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce and the local citizens who purchased stock in the hotel. The Hotel Sunflower maintains a high degree of external integrity and a high degree of internal integrity on its upper mezzanine and basement floors; with a lower degree of integrity on the upper floors, which have been converted into apartments.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   2  

---

The Abilene Chamber of Commerce began actively promoting the concept of a "new and modern hotel" in Abilene in the summer of 1929. (Abilene Daily Reflector, July 29, 1929) Proposed by C. L. Brown, the \$250,000 project, with upwards of \$78,000 from 225 local investors raised (Abilene Daily Reflector, June 3, 1931), the balance (\$175,000) was financed through the United Companies of which C. L. Brown was president. (The Voice, October 1929) It was cited that by building a hotel of this size and magnitude in Abilene it would place Abilene in the forefront with tourists as they traveled through Kansas. It was also noted that "Brown companies are worth 100 cents on the dollar and believed that the record would stand."

Construction of the new Hotel Sunflower began in September 1930. And on May 1, 1931, just eight months later, the Hotel Sunflower company, headed by Fred I. Boone, took charge of the facility which offered 100 guest rooms, exceptional meeting facilities, a banquet hall and ballroom that would accommodate 350 people, along with several auxiliary meeting rooms, spacious lobby and mezzanine floor with lounges, writing rooms and accommodations for guests to transact business. (Abilene Daily Reflector, June 3, 1931 and The Voice, May 1931)

When bids were first opened for construction contracts on August 18, 1930, they were all too high and rejected. Selected bidders were asked to refigure the job in order to bring it within the approved estimate and in less than a month construction was under way. No detail of the original plans were omitted and several new modern features were added. With a relatively open winter construction continued on schedule even though there were some "vexatious delays" in the shipment of supplies.

The policy of employing local workmen to the greatest extent possible was consistently followed. The same policy applied to the purchase of materials, which were, in most instances, ordered through Abilene business houses. Because of the large number of local investors and the direct effect of the hotel on real estate values and general business volume, construction work from the beginning caught, and held, the public interest. Being the only building in Abilene in the skyscraper class, the construction system was unique and everybody watched the structure rise steadily from the foundation to the penthouse above the eighth story.

There was much speculation during the time proceeding the construction of the Hotel Sunflower. Almost every citizen could remember that in less than 10 years prior to the construction of the Hotel Sunflower, Abilene saw huge improvements: an adequate water system, approximately twenty-five miles of the city streets were paved; a public library building, a fine high school building, natatorium, athletic field, post office building, a new \$125,000 city auditorium was constructed and the new \$120,000 Dickinson County Memorial Hospital, the new Union Pacific and Santa Fe railroad stations, and the Abilene Country Club became a community social center. With the completion of Highway 40, which was a principal east to west thoroughfare, traffic engineers predicted travel over this route would double within two years.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   3  

---

Foundation excavation began on September 12, 1930, and because of the proposed structure, it was necessary to go down more than 16 feet to solid foundation. The building foundation was completed by the first week in October 1930. Being a completely fireproof construction, concrete reinforced by steel beams and girders interwoven with strands of steel wire were used for the framework. Every proven engineering requirement was the guide in erecting the building. When the concrete work had risen to the seventh floor, twenty bricklayers began to ply their trowels. They started work on December 6 and every effort was made to have the building enclosed before the extremely cold weather came to prevent a general shutdown. Only a delay in the shipment of terra cotta endangered this accomplishment, but the walls were completed and the building enclosed before the end of January 1931.

Even before the enclosure was completed, preparations were under way for the big interior operations. The first units of the heating plant were installed, and as rapidly as partitions could be set up and lathed, the plasterer's set to work. Heat radiators were connected in different parts of the building and work progressed just as steadily as it would have in summer. Plasterers started on the ground floor and worked toward the top. By March 1 a large part of the rough work was in.

It was during this stage of the building operations that the largest number of men were at work. Plumbers were in all parts of the building working on bathtubs, heating plant, water system and Turkish baths. Electricians were running the wiring system inside the walls on every floor level. The ventilating system was being built in and plasterers, carpenters and other general construction men were literally swarming in all parts of the building. Over the heads of all these workmen, was being laid the twenty-year guarantee roof. It was during this period that, in self-defense, the construction management was compelled to bar the public from the building. The "no admittance" order was necessary both to prevent interference with the workmen and to protect the public from injury.

The choreography of the construction of this building was amazing. Workmen in each of the trades followed each other in succession at each building level. The concrete men were followed by the bricklayers, who were followed by the plasterers, who were followed by the carpenters, who were followed by the decorators. The plasterers' gang was a large one as they had to apply several coats of plaster ending with a smooth, white outside layer, with each layer having to set before the next could be applied. In several of the large rooms, special sound absorbing plaster had to be used to give the perfect acoustic quality to the room.

From the middle of March to the completion of the building, decorating became the chief concern. This work included all of the papering and painting. One of the most interesting operations in connection with this phase of the work was the decorative molding in the lobby and public rooms. A crew of skilled artisans in this special trade came from Kansas City for the job. At the same time, the ventilating apparatus and the heavy elevator machinery were set in place to complete the penthouse equipment.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

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By the close of April the end was in sight. Paperhangers were at work on the guestrooms. Bathroom tiles and fixtures were being completed. The heating system units were all being properly placed and connected. The terrazzo floors on the ground level were being ground down and polished. Doors & windows were getting their final finish and the marble workers from Carthage, Missouri, were giving the lobby its rich cut stone finish.

On April 17 the construction shed was removed from the sidewalk in front of the Sunflower. For the first time Abilene was able to see the hotel clearly in pretty much its finished form. By May 1, the hotel was practically completed in all of its major operations and the operating company was ready to take charge. Rich and beautiful furniture was purchased in keeping with the quality of the building and during the first half of May, the rooms were fitted up. The hotel was opened for business on May 18, 1931. The Hotel Sunflower stood as a splendid monument to one city in Kansas that got things going.

The Sunflower was equipped with enough telephone lines to accommodate a small city. The switchboard had a capacity of 100 telephone lines. It was reported the telephone number for the Hotel Sunflower was 1600. (Abilene Daily Reflector, June 3, 1931) With the most modern equipment the switchboard was the largest product of the Stromberg-Carlson laboratories and the individual telephones were the new "attractive hand set style".

Businesses located in the Hotel Sunflower included the Sunflower Coffee Shop (opposite the elevator and down five steps), Sunflower Tailor Shop (to your left in the basement), Sunflower Beauty Shoppe (on the mezzanine), Sunflower Barber Shop (in the basement straight ahead), Sunflower Health Parlor (Turkish Bath and Massage in basement), Postal Telegraph Co. (at the left of the main hotel entrance), Sunflower Recreations Parlor (billiard and bowling in the basement), Sunflower Taxicab (in front of the hotel), Chamber of Commerce (at the right of the main entrance), Sunflower Pharmacy (down five steps beside the elevator). And the Golden Belt Cleaners, which was located at the first door west.

There was a modern Coffee Shop as well as a beautiful banquet room and ballroom also located in the Hotel. The lights in the banquet hall had a new feature, they were arranged to give lighting in three colors, red, white or blue, with each of these colors turned on alone or they could be mixed. The ornamental work in all of the light fixtures carried out the sunflower theme, which prevailed throughout the building in the decorative scheme. The colors, sunflower yellow and browns predominate. The heads of the lobby columns and much of the mural work shows "conventionalized" sunflowers. (Abilene Daily Reflector, May 6, 1931)

Guestrooms cooled by refrigeration was the ultimate modern luxury offered by the Hotel Sunflower. Only two other hotels in the United States, or the world offered this innovation, so far as could be learned, in 1931. Harry O. Betz, the inventor and president of the manufacturing company, personally supervised the installation. The Hotel

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

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Sunflower however adopted the Unicool system for cooling the guestrooms and dining rooms. The Hotel Sunflower was the first hotel in the country to have room cooling that was controlled by the guests just as they controlled the heat by radiators. The Unicool system had a cooling unit in each room, which was supplied with ice water from a central storage tank. The operation of the system was controlled by a thermostat, which the guest set at whatever temperature suited him, from 70 degrees up to the outside temperature, and the machine did the rest.

The cold water dehumidifies the air and a noiseless fan blowing above the heat line of the room's occupant kept the air in circulation without a draft. Both of these conditions were necessary for perfect comfort. In dehumidifying, the system would remove as much as three gallons of water from the air in a guest room in a single day. The moisture would be condensed out of the air by any method of cooling and unless removed, would be deposited on surfaces in the room and create a damp, clammy condition more unbearable than the heat.

It was hard for most people to comprehend the size of the system used. The Unicool engineer stated that approximately ½ mile of piping was used, over seven tons of steel and two freight car loads of equipment. The controlling and operating equipment included automatic switches on windows and doors which shut off the system when the windows were opened or doors were locked from the outside, and a refrigerating compressor capable of delivering cooling equivalent to the melting of twenty tons of ice.

The Hotel Sunflower was the only hotel between Kansas City and Denver which provided each room with a private telephone and a radio for the guest's ultimate comfort, although all of the newer and finer hotels in the larger cities throughout the United States provided it.

Those who furnished material for the Hotel Sunflower construction were:

- Electricians - Gunzelman Brothers
- Plumbing - Theo. McBride
- Furniture - Shockey & Landes and Vickers Company
- Dishes, Etc. - Duckwall Stores Company
- Ventilating - Abilene Sheet Metal Works.
- Linen, Etc. - Case's
- Hardware - Shockey & Landes and Strowig's
- Lumber, Cement, Etc., United-Kruger, Central and Badger Lumber companies
- Wallpaper - Richards Paint and Paper Company

Outside firms that furnished material, mostly through Abilene dealers were:

- Silverware - Bangs & Company, Salina
- Millwork - American Sash and Door Co., Kansas City

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

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Structural Steel - Capital Iron Works, Topeka  
Ornamental Iron Work - Southwestern Ornamental Iron Co., Kansas City, MO  
Architectural Terra Cotta - Western Terra Cotta Co., Kansas City, KS  
Face Brick - Buffalo Brick So, Buffalo, KS  
Terrazzo Floors - International Terrazzo & Mosaic Floor Co., Kansas City, KS  
Reinforcing Steel and Metal Lath - E. C. Marqua, Kansas City, MO  
Hardware - H. D. Lee Hardware Co., Salina  
Elevators - Westinghouse Electric & Mfg. Co., Kansas City, MO  
Sound Deading Macaustic Ceilings - Smith-Wood Eng. Co., Kansas City, MO  
Marble - Carthage Marble Co., Carthage, MO.  
Tile - S. E. Beggs, Kansas City, MO  
Lighting Fixtures - Balley-Reynolds Chandelier Co., Kansas City, MO  
Bath Room Cabinets - Welded Products Co., Kansas City, MO  
Weather Stripping - Chamberlin Metal Weather Strip Co., Kansas City, MO  
Painting - Richards Paint & Paper Co.  
Metal Windows - Voigtman Metal Window Corp., Kansas City  
Bathroom Accessories - Day K. Smith, Kansas City, MO  
Ice Water insulation - Armstrong Cork and Insulation Co., Kansas City, MO  
Sand and Gravel - Superior Sand and Gravel Co., Superior, Nebraska

All of the lighting fixtures from the large chandeliers in the ballroom and lobby to the bed lamps in the guestrooms were carefully selected for harmony and utility. The wiring, switchboards and outlets are so placed that complete control of the whole system was a simple matter. The two elevator cars, silent, sure and rapid, were the latest type of Westinghouse, and operated in adjacent shafts, one primarily for passengers and one mainly for baggage, merchandise and supplies and for servicing the rooms. The installation of the burner equipment for the boilers was provided by The Kansas Pipe Line & Gas Company. (The south elevator, which was originally mainly used as the service elevator, is still in operation today.)

For the lobby and public areas the lounging pieces of overstuffed furniture was purchased from Levin of Minneapolis.

To celebrate the opening of the Hotel Sunflower a public opening was held on Friday and Saturday, June 5 and 6, 1931, with most of Abilene and the surrounding community residents in attendance to see the structure. Boy Scout guides assisted the hotel management in handling the crowds who for the first time were seeing the beautiful interior. They came from early morning until six o'clock in the evening, when guests began to assemble for the

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   7  

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banquet and dance with more than 200 Abilene friends in attendance. (Abilene Daily Reflector, June 6, 1931) The music was provided by the June Layton's orchestra.

The Lahmer Hotel Company owned the hotel from 1940 - 1950 managed by R. R. (Mike) Biggs. In 1950 Mr. Biggs purchased the hotel and continued to operate and manage the structure as a motel until 1960 when Tom W. Welsh purchased it. At the time Ross Biggs (son of R. R. "Mike" Biggs) took over management of the property, and it was during this time (1960 - 1962) that the property was converted into all apartments. Upon completion of the apartment conversion in 1962 Mr. Welsh took over the management of the property. (Ross Biggs oral history) It was during R. R. (Mike) Biggs management that the Hotel Sunflower was known as "Little White House" for the frequent visits of former President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Biggs created the "presidential suite" on the east end of the sixth floor and had it redecorated and furnished prior to each Eisenhower visit. (Abilene Reflector, Oct. 1, 1962)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9, 10 Page 1,1

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on Lots 36 and 38 and E. 18.5' Lot 40 in Abilene, Dickinson County, Kansas. The property is bounded on the north by NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, on the east by an alley, on the south by an alley and on the west by another structure.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the property historically associated with the Hotel Sunflower of Abilene, Kansas.