

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0681105

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RECEIVED	AUG 3 1978
DATE ENTERED	NOV 16 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Nebraska Telephone Company Building

LC13:C8-5

AND/OR COMMON

Old Telephone Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

128-130 South 13th Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First

STATE

Nebraska

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

31

COUNTY

Lancaster

CODE

109

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

\_\_ DISTRICT

\_\_ PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_ MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

\_\_ PARK

\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_ BOTH

\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_ SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_ OBJECT

\_\_ IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_ NO

\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Martin J. Dempsey, Jr. c/o Donald Dibbern

STREET & NUMBER

2945 S. 27th

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska 68502

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deed, City-County Building

STREET & NUMBER

555-South 10th Street

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Nebraska Telephone Company Building in Lincoln is a three story (over basement) commercial building designed in 1894 by Thomas R. Kimball of the architectural firm of Walker & Kimball (Boston and Omaha). Designed as a free interpretation of Italian Renaissance architecture, Kimball's compositional abilities are most apparent on the west (front) facade. The building was occupied in 1896.

Executed with St. Louis pressed brick above, the ground story of the front facade is of cast iron construction in a simple classical motif. The iron spans the width of the building, providing for the completely open front of the ground floor. The facade itself is composed of a kind of layering of elements, the major portion of which (including the cast iron pilasters, brick-quoined wall and terra-cotta entablature and wall cornice) projects slightly from the front wall which surrounds it. A free-standing copper anthemion motif is featured above the wall cornice. The emphasis of the facade is the slightly projecting two-story terra-cotta frontispiece at the center of the composition. Attention is drawn to the bell (in bas-relief) flanked by the Adamesque floral motif and to the finely detailed Palladian window above.

Another notable feature of the original construction is the glazed, cast iron stairway which runs up to the second floor along the north (alley) facade. The words "Telephone Exchange" are cast into the lintel above the entrance. This stairway was the entrance to the Nebraska Telephone Company which occupied the upper two floors of the structure. The second floor housed the company's business offices as well as two rental offices and the long distance telephone booths. The third floor, with internal access, housed the "Multiple bridging system" switch board, the main distributing frame, the power board and the storage battery plant. The front of the building on this floor provided space for the operators lunch room, lounge and etc.

The ground floor of the building was designated for use as rental space. The basement housed the buildings mechanical plant and the telephone company's receiving station and auxiliary power plant.

The building was designed and constructed to sustain the loads of the telephone equipment and to provide a modern, fire-resistant structure. The brick and tile walls support 15 inch steel beams which carry 10 inch shallow tile arches; the whole covered with concrete. The roof construction is the same, but lighter, and slopes to the rear as a built-up roof.

While the storefront has been altered substantially and a marquis added to the building, it is believed that all of the original cast iron work is still extant behind the aluminum front. The original glass storefront has been removed. The exterior cast iron stairway is still extant though it has suffered damage through the years. It has been modified at the top to accept an open fire escape from the third floor. Other modifications include the removal of the sliding iron shutters, modifications of window openings and the removal of the iron railing around the basement window well; all along the north (alley) facade.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1894-96

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Walker & Kimball

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Nebraska Telephone Company Building was probably the first building erected for use as a telephone exchange in Lincoln. The city had telephone service since 1879, the second exchange in the state. The Nebraska Telephone Company was incorporated in Omaha in 1882 and acquired the right to use telephones in the state from the American Bell Telephone Company. Within a few years, it had purchased all the exchanges in the state. In 1896 the Lincoln exchange moved into its new building designed by Thomas R. Kimball, prominent young Omaha architect and son of one of the incorporators of the company.

The building was sold in 1912 to the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company as part of a major agreement with the Nebraska Telephone Company which established L. T. & T. as the sole telephone company for southeast Nebraska. Alexander Graham Bell's patents expired in 1893 and competition with Bell-sanctioned companies became legal. A number of independent companies were organized and the Lincoln Independent Company, later the Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company, was founded in 1903. Competition was partly responsible for the great increase in telephone usage in the first decade of the century but it also created customer confusion and was not a financially-sound operation to continue. After many attempts to solve the problems, Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company and the Nebraska Telephone Company, now almost wholly owned by the Bell system, reached an agreement in 1912.

The 1912 agreement provided for the transfer of all L. T. & T. property north of the Platte River to the Nebraska Telephone Company, who transferred their property south of the river to L. T. & T. Each company maintained a monopoly on telephone usage for their respective parts of the state. The Nebraska Telephone Company Building at Lincoln was part of this 1912 transfer. The Lincoln Telephone and Telegraph Company, which already had a building at 231 South 14th Street, used the transferred property for their commercial department. In 1927 the company disposed of the building. It has been used as rental space by a variety of firms and individuals since 1914.

The significance of the telephone to the communications industry is readily apparent. This building stands as a reminder and early manifestation of that industry in eastern Nebraska and as precursor to the present day corporate arrangement of the industry, locally.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Lincoln

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,4 69,38,1,0 4,52,03,1,0

B         

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

D. Murphy, Architect; Penelope Chatfield, Preservation Historian

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

July, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

(402) 432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE X

LOCAL   

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Marvin D. Knott 7/25/78

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

for Charles Abney  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11.16.78

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

William H. Abraham 11.15.78

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance . ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

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Architecturally the building exists as an excellent example of a building type, both structurally and aesthetically. The uniqueness of the building and its free use of renaissance motifs speaks to architect Kimball's ability to handle the small commercial structure with the same finesse as the larger, more important structure (see for example the Hall County Courthouse and Omaha Public library buildings, Hall and Douglas counties, respectively, NRHP). The structure's association with its designer, the prominent Omaha architect Thomas R. Kimball, enhances the significance locally. The Nebraska Telephone Company building stands as the only one of two confirmed Kimball designed structures in Lincoln. The other, the University of Nebraska Administration Building (1903) was demolished to make way for Phillip Johnson's Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery in the early 1960's.

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Kimball, Thomas R., Collection. Archives of the Nebraska State Historical Society.

Torrence, William D. "Great Independent: The Lincoln Telephone Company, 1903-1908" Nebraska History, Volume 51, Number 2 (Summer 1970) pages 339-358.

Van den Berge, Peter Nicholas. The History of the Telephone in Nebraska 1877-1912. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Nebraska, 1938.

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A guide to the Styles. Cambridge, Mass. and London, England: M.I.T. Press, 1969.

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE NEBRASKA

Date Entered NOV 16 1978

Name

Location

**Nebraska Telephone Company Building**

**Lincoln  
Lancaster County**

Also Notified

**Honorable Carl T. Curtis  
Honorable Edward Zorinsky  
Honorable Charles Thone**

**State Historic Preservation Officer  
Mr. Marvin F. Kivett  
Director, The Nebraska State  
Historical Society  
1500 R Street  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508**

NR

Byers/yls

11/24/78