

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

MAR 15 2007

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Memorial City Hall
Other name/site number The Ellis Railroad Museum 051-1600-0018

2. Location

Street & number 911 Washington Street ☐ not for publication
City or town Ellis ☐ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Ellis Code 051 Zip code 67637

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.)

Patrick Selmer DSHPO 1/25/07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ 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:) _____

Memorial City Hall
Name of Property

Ellis 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	
	buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
1	total

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

N/A

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall; Correctional facility

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Auditorium

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: Museum

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:

CLASSICAL REVIVAL

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE; STONE

Walls: METAL: Steel

BRICK

Roof: ASPHALT

Other:

Narrative Description

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

Memorial City Hall
Name of Property

Ellis 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)

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926-1956

Significant Dates

1926

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Howard, Thomas S.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Fort Hays State University and Ellis Library

Memorial City Hall
Name of Property

Ellis 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	4	4	5	1	5	0	0	4	3	0	9	8	7	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 Leonard Schoenberger, Design Committee; KSHS edits
Organization Ellis Main Street Date September 2006
Street & number 911 Washington Street Telephone (785) 726-2425
City or town Ellis State Kansas Zip code 67637

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 SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name City of Ellis
Street & number 911 Washington Street Telephone _____
City or town Ellis State Kansas Zip code 67637

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 Reduction 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

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Memorial City Hall (c. 1926) is located in downtown Ellis at 911 Washington Street just one block north of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks, which run adjacent to US Highway 40. The west-facing two-story brick building features a flat roof with a brick parapet and stone coping. The rectangular plan is approximately 114 feet deep by 50 feet wide. The building's restrained Classical Revival appearance is typical of the period and befitting of a memorial hall. It retains its integrity of location and setting and has a high degree of its architectural integrity.

Setting

Ellis (pop. 1,873) is located along the south side of Interstate 70 in west central Kansas. Exit number 145 off of Interstate 70 leads to the main north/south thoroughfare – Washington Street. The Memorial City Hall is located approximately 10 blocks south of the Interstate at the southern edge of downtown on the east side of Washington Street. The building sits several feet off the wide historic brick street. A large (historic) lighted sign that reads “ELLIS” sits atop the Memorial City Hall facing southwest toward the railroad tracks and old U.S. Highway 40.

West (Front) Elevation

The front elevation is three bays wide and features a set of concrete steps that lead to the central 4-door entrance. A modern yellow awning covers the transom above the entrance. Smooth-cut stone trim accentuates the entrance and central bay second story windows. Additional stone trim defines the partial basement from the first level and there are stone quoins at the corners of the basement level. The central bay is stepped out from the flanking bays. There is a single horizontal group of three steel windows above the entrance. A stone entablature above these second story windows reads “Memorial City Hall.” The two flanking bays each feature three steel windows – a small basement window near ground level, a tall rectangular window on the main level, and a smaller square window on the second level. Each window contains a subtle smooth-cut stone sill. A band of raised brick outlines the windows.

South (Side) Elevation

The south elevation is seven bays wide. The western-most bay is stepped out from the remainder of the elevation and is somewhat different than the other 6 bays. This bay features smooth-cut stone accents and quoins at the base. Much like the front elevation, this bay features a small steel basement window, a tall rectangular window on the main level, and a smaller square window on the second level. The remaining bays feature evenly spaced square steel windows each with stone sills and circled by a band of raised brick. Two rows of vertically laid brick define the basement from the main level. There are two doors on this elevation at the rear – a second story fire exit and a main floor exit with exterior concrete steps. The doors appear to be historic.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

East (Rear) Elevation

The rear elevation is faced with buff colored brick. There are five basement level steel windows and one main level steel window all with stone sills. There are two exterior brick chimneys on this elevation.

North (Side) Elevation

The north elevation was originally constructed to mirror the south elevation. It is seven bays wide. The western-most bay is stepped out from the remainder of the elevation and is somewhat different than the other 6 bays. The remaining bays feature evenly spaced square steel windows each with stone sills and circled by a band of raised brick. Two rows of vertically laid brick define the basement from the main level. There is a second story fire exit (the door appears historic). A small one-story concrete block vestibule has been added to the side of the building at the center of this elevation. It leads to a basement entrance. At the west end of the north elevation is a small one-story brick vestibule that was added to provide access from the sidewalk.

Interior

With its steel frame, brick exterior walls, and interior tile walls, the Memorial City Hall was built to resist fire. The interior has undergone changes in recent decades to accommodate the various uses. The original interior layout was arranged around a large two-story auditorium with a stage at the east end of the building. Today, a ceiling has been added to close off the auditorium so that the first floor may house the collections and displays of a railroad museum. Interior walls have also been added in this first floor space. These changes are reversible should the owners decide to restore the building back to an auditorium.

One enters the building through the main doors on the west elevation into a vestibule where there are two sets of double doors that leads into the former auditorium space. The railroad museum occupies the first floor area that was originally the auditorium. The dropped ceiling blocks the view of the balcony seating and walls divide the area into smaller rooms. There is a staircase on the north end of the vestibule that leads to the second level (balcony area). There is an office on the south end of the vestibule that housed the American Legion office for many years and later the City Clerk's office. It now serves as the museum's ticket office. These areas contain the original wood trim, doors, transom windows, floor, stairs, and plaster walls.

The second story contains a few small rooms at the west end above the vestibule area that currently house the collections of a doll museum. There is a doorway off the hall leading to the balcony area where spectators could sit to see performances below. The original seating is also stored here. There is small room at the east end of the building on either side of the stage. These lead to the fire exits that are visible on both the north and south elevations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

The basement houses offices, meeting rooms, and displays of Ellis High School memorabilia. This area is accessible from the entrance at the building's northwest corner. At one time, the basement housed all of the city offices and library.

Integrity

The Memorial City Hall retains its original location and the building's setting continues to reflect its original recreation/entertainment function. With the exception of two small non-historic exterior vestibules added to the north elevation, the building maintains its original footprint, scale, massing, design, and materials. In particular, the historic character-defining exterior elements remain intact. The interior has undergone changes that include partitioning the auditorium. These changes, however, are reversible and the space could be returned to its historic function as an open auditorium. Many of the original features including wood trim, doors, hardware, windows, flooring, and plaster are intact. The building's materials are in good condition.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Memorial City Hall (c. 1926) in Ellis, Kansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT and SOCIAL HISTORY, and Criterion C for its significance in the area of ARCHITECTURE as an architect-designed community memorial building typical of the period. This building served three important functions: it stood as a monument to fallen and returning military personnel; it provided a place for local entertainment and gatherings; and it housed the city offices and jail.

Memorial Halls¹

Erecting memorials to fallen and returning military personnel gained popularity in the United States after the War of 1812. Columns, obelisks, statues, and markers of all sorts recognize military heroes and battle sites. Erecting memorial buildings became popular after World War I – in part in reaction to the many lives lost during the conflict. Elizabeth Rosin notes:

Memorial buildings were popular because they offered physical facilities for the living to promote community and national values as well as a tribute to the sacrifices of the dead. In 1919, former Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane wrote in a letter to American mayors: *The war has shown...the great value of adequate facilities for fellowship and public recreation. Now that the men are returning home, they should have the opportunity through the coming years to perpetuate the democracy of the camps and to share with their fellow townsmen, in a suitable building, facilities for discussion of local and national problems and for community singing, drama, indoor athletics and other forms of wholesome recreation.*² World War I memorial buildings were generally constructed in the decade prior to the Great Depression.

Many Kansas communities, including Independence, Manhattan, El Dorado, Atchison, and Salina were erecting memorial buildings by 1923. Public architecture of the period was dominated by classical styles. Although quite subdued, Ellis' Memorial City Hall reflects the Classical Revival trend of crisp lines and symmetry common among memorial buildings.

¹ Much of this historical context concerning memorial buildings comes from Elizabeth Rosin's findings presented in the National Register nomination of the Memorial Hall Building in Independence, Kansas. The nomination is filed at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

² "Art and Ideals in War Memorials," *The American City Magazine*, February 1923, 107, as quoted in Elizabeth Rosin's National Register of Historic Places nomination of Memorial Hall in Independence, Kansas. On file at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

Community History

Ellis, Kansas, was established as a watering station along the Union Pacific Railroad in 1867. A post office was established in 1870, and the town was officially incorporated in 1888. The cattle town organized and operated around the railroad, which runs through town east-to-west, and served as a stop for many settlers who homesteaded in western Kansas. The railroad machine shops and roundhouse employed many area residents.

In the town's earliest years, businesses located along the north side of the track while residences generally clustered on the south side. One of the town's most famous citizens, Walter P. Chrysler, began his employment with the Union Pacific Railroad, learning many of the engineering tasks and skills used later in establishing the Chrysler Corporation. His boyhood home (National Register of Historic Places) is located on the south side of the tracks near the corner of 10th and Washington Streets.

The county seat is Hays (pop. 20,013) – located approximately 15 miles east of Ellis. Since the late nineteenth century, the county's population has steadily increased to a current total of approximately 27,500.³

Property History

In 1924, the Aaron A. Platner post of the American Legion set in motion the plans to erect a memorial building in Ellis. According to the *Ellis Review-Headlight*,

...the idea of a Memorial Hall became a generally discussed topic in club circles, civic meetings and evolved from mere figure of speech to a reality late in 1924 when A. L. Heflin, then-president of the Community Club took active steps to determine the possibilities of the Memorial Hall scheme through the appointment of a select group of club men known as the 'Goal Committee'." ⁴

A special city election was held on January 26, 1925, during which citizens voted in favor of \$42,000 in bonds to erect the memorial building. The Goal Committee met with railroad officials about available land and was offered the parcel near the tracks for \$2,000.

The City hired architect Thomas S. Howard to oversee the construction of the building, which was officially dedicated to the community during a ceremony on May 31, 1926 – Memorial Day. The

³ William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*, Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883. Available online at www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/index.html; County Data available at the Kansas State Historical Society website, www.kshs.org.

⁴ *Ellis Review-Headlight*, 14 May 1926.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

ceremony began at 2:00 p.m. outside the building where Mayor A. Kastner presented the building to the citizens of Ellis. The *Ellis Review-Headlight* documented the occasion:

The dedication proper, the presentation of the building by the construction company to city officials, the response and delivery to the people and the presentation of two rooms to the American Legion, occurred on the steps before a sea of upturned faces.

Those appearing in dedicatory roles were: Thos. S. Hord, contractor; President of the Community Club, J.C. Kippes; Arnold Mulheim and A. W. Meserve, councilmen; and Adolph Geyer, Post Commander of the Aaron A. Platner post of the American Legion. Other speakers that day were G.O. Brophy, U.P. Official; and Frank McFarland, Past State and Past National Vice Commander of the American Legion.⁵

Even from its infancy, the Memorial City Hall has been used for various functions by a variety of organizations – in addition to housing the Ellis city offices. The office of the City Clerk was originally situated at the right of the main lobby as one passed through the main entrance. The council chamber, police office, headquarters of the Ellis Trade Extension Association, and a kitchen facility were originally located in the basement. The American Legion also used two rooms for many years.

The following is a list of activities that have taken place within the Memorial City Hall:

- Monthly meetings of the Business & Professional Women's Association
- Alumni Banquets with dances and banquets
- High school graduation and baccalaureate exercises
- American Legion Auxiliary sponsored "Chataqua Circus" (fundraising vaudeville type home talent shows)
- Centennial celebration, which included home talent show, antique show, silent movie "The Great Train Robbery"
- Community Club meetings
- Well-known band performances – including Lawrence Welk
- Roller Skating rink upstairs in the 1940s and 1950s
- Elementary school classes during construction of another school
- Girl/Boy Scout Club meetings
- Public Library housed in the basement
- Town meetings
- Public Auctions
- Wedding dances, School dances

⁵ *Ellis Review-Headlight*, 4 June 1926.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

-
- Headquarters for Bureau of Reclamation during Cedar Bluff Reservoir construction
 - Polling Place
 - Fair Exhibits
 - Municipal Court, Jail
 - Goodwill drop site

The town's YMCA building and Memorial City Hall were involved in a historic local election in 1975. Prior to 1975, bonds were approved to build a community building on the lot of the YMCA and to remodel the Memorial City Hall. However, widespread dissatisfaction with the designs and cost resulted in the 1975 recall of four city officials. The YMCA building was razed in 1975, while the memorial building remains a part of downtown Ellis.

Summary

Like memorial buildings built throughout Kansas after World War I, the Ellis memorial building was erected to serve three functions: to stand as a monument to fallen and returning military personnel; to provide a place for local gatherings and entertainment; and to house city government offices. It continues to serve Ellis as a meeting place and community museum. The building retains its integrity of location and setting and maintains a high degree of its architectural integrity. It is therefore eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in the areas of RECREATION & ENTERTAINMENT and SOCIAL HISTORY, and Criterion C for its significance in the area of ARCHITECTURE as an architect-designed community memorial building typical of the period.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 8

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883. Available online at www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/index.html.

Ellis Review-Headlight, 14 May 1926; 4 June 1926.

"Dedication Program – Memorial Hall" 31 May 1926.

Kansas State Historical Society website. "County Data". Available at www.kshs.org.

Rosin, Elizabeth. National Register of Historic Places nomination "Memorial Hall", Independence, Kansas. On file at the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

Unknown author. "History of Memorial Hall." Pamphlet. No date.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number PHOTOS Page 9

Memorial City Hall
Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is located at 911 Washington Street in Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas. It is situated in the Ellis Tracts Subdivision – Section 08, Township 13, Range 20. Tract Description: PT NE4 BEG 140 S OF INTER S/L 9TH ST & W/L WASHINGTON ST TH E 175 TH S 60 (S) TH W 175 TH N 60 (S) to POB.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Memorial City Hall.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The following information is consistent for all photographs:

Property: Memorial City Hall

Location: Ellis, Ellis County, KS

Photographer: Patrick Zollner

Date: 14 July 2006

Digital photographs on file at the Kansas State Historical Society

- Photo #1: West (front) elevation, facing east
- Photo #2: South (side) elevation, facing northeast
- Photo #3: Southeast corner, facing north
- Photo #4: East (rear) elevation, facing west
- Photo #5: Northeast corner, facing south
- Photo #6: Northwest corner, facing southeast
- Photo #7: Interior, main entryway, ticket booth office, facing south
- Photo #8: Interior, main floor, museum room
- Photo #9: Interior, main entryway, staircase leading to second floor
- Photo #10: Interior, second floor balcony area, showing suspended ceiling, facing southeast

14:45/500 E
4309870 N

