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  Reuter Organ Company Buildings

Other names/site number  Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory; KHRI #045-3010-00106, 045-6867

Name of related Multiple Property Listing  Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas

2. Location

Street & number  612-616 New Hampshire Street

City or town  Lawrence

State  Kansas  Code  KS  County  Douglas  Code  045  Zip code  66044

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

Signature of certifying official/Title  Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO  Date

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:)

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
OMB No. 1024-0018

Reuter Organ Company Buildings
Douglas County, Kansas

Name of Property
County and State

5. Classification

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

- x private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box.)

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

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

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Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- INDUSTRY/Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Other-Industrial

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

- foundation: Stone, Concrete
- walls: Stone, Brick
- CMU
- roof: Metal, Concrete
- other: 
The Reuter Organ Company Buildings are located at 612 and 614-616 New Hampshire Street at the northeast corner of downtown Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas (Figures 1 & 2). The nominated property at the southeast corner of 6th and New Hampshire streets includes two contributing buildings and one contributing structure, the covered walkway between the two buildings. The main building on this parcel is the stone three-and-a-half story Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory, constructed in 1882, and remodeled in 1919 for the Reuter Organ Company. To the south of this across a former alley is the two-story brick Reuter administration building constructed in 1927. A metal walkway over the alley connects the two buildings at the second stories (Photo 1). The remainder of the parcel is hardscape. The buildings retain a high level of integrity from its period of significance associated with the Reuter Organ Company.

Elaboration

Setting and Site

The Reuter buildings are located at the southeast corner of 6th and New Hampshire streets in the center of industrial buildings, downtown Lawrence, and an early residential neighborhood. The Kansas River is approximately three hundred feet to the north. Both the Bowersock Powerhouse and Dam and the state register-listed Consolidated Barb Wire Company Building line the south bank of the river just to the north of the Reuter property. The northeast boundary of the National Register-listed downtown Lawrence historic district includes the United States Post Office at 645 New Hampshire, about three hundred feet southwest of the Reuter property. To the east of the nominated property is a residential neighborhood; the North Rhode Island Street Historic Residential District begins in the 700 block of North Rhode Island one block to the southeast.

The nominated property boundaries correspond with the current parcel lines, which in part align with the historic parcel. The north boundary is the property line, and the west boundary is the right-of-way along New Hampshire Street; both of these are historic boundaries. Historically, the south boundary corresponded with the south wall of the 1927 building; today the south property line is approximately twenty feet south of the 1927 building. The east property line jogs at the south end where it follows the center line of the former mid-block alley then turns east along the north side of a former east-west running alley before turning north; a grassy strip defines most of the east boundary. The two buildings on the parcel align with the west boundary line. The majority of the site is paved with concrete. Parking spaces are demarcated to the immediate east of the 1927 building and along the east edge of the property. A former alley between the two buildings connects to a concrete drive from New Hampshire that circles from the north end of the 1882 building to the south end of the 1927 building. A concrete public sidewalk runs along west building façades, and a landscape strip separates the sidewalk from the street; two mature deciduous trees occupy the landscape strip in front of the stone building while a small deciduous tree and a streetlamp occupy the strip in front of the brick building; small shrubs line the west foundation wall of the brick building.

1 The parking lot is not counted as either a contributing or non-contributing resource, as the paved area replaced an open area to the east of the 1927 building. The historic south property line corresponded to the south wall of the 1927 building while an alley historically wrapped around the north and east sides of the lot (Figure 3).

2 The Reuter buildings were not included within the district because of the lack of integrity of the intervening space.
The main Reuter Organ Company Building occupies the north end of the property. The south mass was built in 1882 for the Wilder Brother Shirt Factory. Today the three-and-a-half story stone building with offset T-shaped plan features additions and alterations mostly undertaken by the Reuter Organ Company during their acquisition and utilization of the building. The oldest block of the stone building is a rectangular portion slightly setback from the sidewalk. The upper mansard half-story was added in 1890. That year, a small one-story rectangular mass was added to the northwest corner of the building and a two-story engine room added to the northeast corner. When the Reuter Organ Company acquired the property in 1919, they removed these additions and built a new wing. The company also increased the size of the window openings within the 1882 portion. In 1956, a concrete block addition was built atop and around the one-story stone kiln at the northeast corner of the building (Figures 4 & 5). The roof level contains a penthouse.

**West (Primary) Façade (Photos 1, 2, 5)**

The west façade of the building is broken into two planes. The south half of the façade is the oldest part of the building and is setback about six feet from the north half of the building. The south half is three-and-a-half stories tall and has a symmetrical façade. The first, second, and third stories are three bays wide. The center bay is a small masonry opening with fixed window.³ The end bays are large rectangular masonry openings with steel beam lintels and stone sills. Most window units are a series of three historic steel sash windows. The first story, south bay has a non-historic metal window; the third story south bay is infilled with glass block that appears in a circa 1956 photograph of the building (Figure 6). The upper half story is a metal-clad mansard roof; five gabled dormers with two-over-two sash windows pierce the mansard. A series of three stone bands ornaments the upper façade between the third story windows and the half story; this feature wraps the west and south façades. At ground level two masonry openings pierce the foundation wall.

The north half of the façade is three stories tall and has a flat roof with short parapet. Each story is two bays wide comprised of wide rectangular masonry openings with concrete lintels. The first and second story windows are non-historic aluminum sashes; the third story masonry openings were covered with stucco panels at an unknown date; no windows remain in the openings. A square masonry opening pierces the center of the wall at the ground level.

**North Façade (Photos 2, 5, 6, 7)**

The north façade is three stories tall, seven bays wide, and a single wall plane. The three eastern bays are within the 1956 concrete block addition. This portion of the façade is painted and has no parapet wall. At ground level, the east two bays are large square masonry openings with concrete lintels and sills; steel sash windows exist behind temporary plywood panels. The western bay in the 1956 addition contains a pair of non-historic doors. The upper two stories of the 1956 addition contain three square masonry openings per story; each has concrete sills and lintels. Glass block fills the openings with a single fixed clear pane centered in the glass block. This glass block most likely dates to the addition construction. To the west of the 1956 addition is the 1919 stone wing of the building. The first and second stories are four bays wide; the third story does not have any openings, and there is no parapet. The masonry openings in this portion of the wall mimic the west ³ This opening is from the initial 1882 construction. When built, the west façade had five evenly spaced bays of this size at each story (Figure 7). The north two and south two bays were combined to form the masonry openings seen today.
façade openings. With two exceptions, openings have non-historic aluminum window units. The second bay from the east on the first story has a loading dock addition with metal cladding; the garage door is angled to the street for easier truck access. A set of wooden stairs supplies access to the loading dock from the east side. The easternmost bay of the second story has glass block infill like that on the west façade. Three uneven masonry openings pierce the wall at ground level.

**East (Rear) Façade (Photos 7, 8, 9)**

Like the west side of the building, the east façade is broken into two planes. The south half of the façade is the 1882 building and is set back approximately ten feet from the north half of the façade. The lower three stories are symmetrical and three bays wide, matching the spacing and materials of the west façade. All windows are steel sash units. The half-story at the roof level is flush with the wall below but is covered with metal shingles. Four window openings pierce the wall at this level; the windows themselves are in various states of repair and exposure. A brick and concrete structure is at ground level below the first story windows; this is the roof of the basement shavings area below. The north half of the east façade is comprised of several years of alterations. A brick chimney rises at the south end of the wall; to the north of the chimney, the wall is three stories tall and four bays wide. The 1956 concrete block addition creates the upper two stories and the northernmost bay. The southern three bays of the first story are within a stone wall, dating to 1919. Three former openings with stone lintels are infilled with stone that matches the surrounding wall. There is no opening in the north bay at the first story. The upper two stories have four masonry openings with concrete sills and lintels; like the north façade, glass block with a center fixed window fill the openings. A steel fire escape descends from the third story to ground level at the second bay from the north.

**South Façade (Photos 9, 10, 11)**

The south façade of the 1882 building is similar in design to the west façade. The wall is three-and-a-half stories tall and five bays wide; the center bay is a small rectangular window with stone lintel and sill. The westernmost and two east bays of the first story are wide rectangular masonry openings with steel beam lintels and steel sash windows. The second bay from the left contains an 1882 window opening (covered) and a masonry opening for the main entrance; this is the historic location of the entrance, but the door system is non-historic. The upper story bays each contain the steel sash windows found on the first story and west façade. The one exception is the westernmost bay of the third story, which contains glass block. The center bay of the second story is covered by the non-historic connector between the two buildings. Five gabled dormers with two-over-two windows pierce the mansard at the roof level. A wide masonry opening pierces the foundation wall under the westernmost bay and the second bay in from the east. A concrete ramp and steps provide access from ground level to the raised first story door, and a steel fire escape descends from the dormer of the second bay from the east to the second story.

**Interior**

The interior of the Reuter Organ Factory retains its late nineteenth to early twentieth century industrial character. Perimeter stone walls are either exposed or plastered, depending on the space. Internal floor and ceiling structure are timber frame with wood joists and floors. Historic non-structural partition walls are bead board or wood slats. Ceilings are exposed. Each of the five floors (basement through upper story) have mostly open floor plans. Vertical circulation for the entire building includes a historic freight elevator and one straight-run stair; both are within the southern portion of the factory. The freight elevator occupies the northwest corner and features a wooden gate on its east side; a bathroom occupies the space between the west wall of the elevator shaft and the west wall of the building on all floors except the uppermost. The wooden stair is oriented...
north-south just west of center on the south wall. Both the elevator and stair provide access to each floor. Radiators are located along perimeter walls, and electrical conduit and sprinkler lines run across ceilings.

First (Main) Floor
The main entrance into the building is within the south wall just west of center. The stair is to the immediate west of the entry. Four pairs of timber columns span the length of this open room. The ceiling is exposed, and the floor is wood (Photos 20 & 21). The exterior perimeter walls are plastered; however, the plaster is damaged or missing in several locations (typical). Beadboard encloses most of the stair up to the second story and down to the basement, but a carved newel post accents both flights of stairs.

A double-wide masonry opening within the center of the north wall leads into the north half of the factory building (Photos 22 & 23). A historic sliding fire door covers this opening from the south side. This doorway leads into the building's triple-height factory space that occupies the majority of this half of the building. Walls are plastered, and the floor is wooden. There are no internal columns. The ceiling structure is exposed. Steel I-beams run north-south and support wooden roof joists that in turn support wooden decking. A double-width garage door in the north wall leads onto the covered dock area. A partial height wooden partition with mesh above at the east end of the room separates the three-story volume from a narrow one-story room. Above this wood-and-mesh wall is wood-slat wall with a balcony at the second and third floors. The east wall of the narrow east room is concrete; a single opening with the center of this wall leads into the building's northeast corner addition (Photo 24). The perimeter walls of this open room are exposed stone except at the north end of the east wall and the north wall which are both concrete block. Former masonry openings are visible within the east wall. This room has no interior columns; the ceiling is exposed, and the floor is wood. Doubled wooden beams span east-west across the ceiling and support the wooden floor joists and decking of the second story.

Second Floor
Access to the second floor is from the main stair and elevator in the south half of the building. Like the first floor, the second floor is open with four pairs of timber columns spanning the width of the space (Photos 25 & 26). Ceilings and wood structure are exposed; flooring is wood, and the walls are plaster. Acoustical ceiling tiles have been applied to a portion of the ceiling; although, they are in poor condition. To the south of the bathroom is a plaster-walled room about the same size as the bathroom. Centered in the south wall is a single pedestrian door leading into the walkway between the buildings. Two masonry openings within the north wall lead into the north half of the building; both openings have historic sliding fire doors.

The west doorway leads into the balcony area above the east end of the three-story factory room (Photo 27). The balcony features square wooden columns supporting the third floor above; steel tubing between the columns provides a barrier to the balcony edge. A short hallway leads to an enclosed double-height room at the north end of the balcony. The west and south walls are wood slat while the north and west walls are exterior masonry with plaster. An opening in the masonry of the east wall contains glass block. This opening was infilled in the 1950s with brick and glass block. Acoustical ceiling tile is adhered to a portion of the south wall; the floors are wood. To the south of this enclosed room is a later stud-and-gypsum board enclosed room. The door to this room is at the west end of the south wall. An open area is to the south of this room.

The east doorway leads into the 1956 addition (Photo 28). The south and east walls are stone (painted). The east and north walls are concrete block. Former masonry openings within the west wall are infilled with concrete block except a portion of the north opening that contains also contains glass block. The floors are
wood. Heavy wood beams span the ceiling from east to west, and in between these beams the ceiling is covered with acoustical ceiling tiles.

**Third Floor**
The third floor is similar to the first and second floors. The south half of the building is a mostly open space with interior timber columns, wood floors, and exposed wood ceiling structure (*Photos 29 & 30*). Perimeter walls are stone with plaster (missing and damaged in parts). To the south of the stair is an enclosed room; the south half of this room has a double-height ceiling. Acoustical ceiling tiles cover the walls and ceiling, and the floors are wood. A small enclosed closet is located along the west wall between the bathroom and the enclosed south room.

Two masonry openings with the north wall access the north half of the building. Both openings have hinged fire doors. The west doorway leads into a small balcony area in the southeast corner of the factory room. The balcony walls are wood slat with a small steel tubing rail; the balcony has a canted north wall. This small balcony leads into an enclosed area above the second floor balcony. A sliding wood slat door separates the balcony from this room. The room is wood stud construction with gypsum board; acoustical ceiling tiles cover most walls, and the floor is sheet flooring.

The east doorway leads into the 1956 addition (*Photo 31*). This open room has masonry walls at the west and south and concrete block walls at the north and east. The floor is wood. The ceiling is exposed steel roof trusses supporting exposed wood decking of the roof above.

**Fourth Floor**
Only the south half of the building has a fourth floor. While the floor is mostly open, wood stud partitions divide a portion of the floor (*Photos 32, 33, 34*). The area features timber interior columns and wood floor. Pressed fiberboard panels hide the ceiling structure.

**Basement**
The building has a full basement. Under the south half of the building, the open area features timber interior columns supporting the upper floors, masonry walls, and a poured concrete floor; the ceiling structure is exposed (*Photo 35*). A masonry opening within the south wall leads into a concrete tunnel that accesses the basement of the 1927 building. A masonry opening within the east wall leads into the shavings storage area. The north, east, and south walls of this storage are brick; the west wall is stone, and the ceiling is poured concrete.

Two masonry openings within the north wall of the south room lead into the north half of the building. Both openings have hinged fire doors. The west opening leads into the basement area beneath the factory space above (*Photo 36*). Seven pairs of timber columns running east-west support the floor above. The ceiling is exposed wood joists and decking; the floor is poured concrete; perimeter walls are stone. An opening at the north end of the east wall leads into the basement area beneath the 1956 addition, as does a door at the east end of the north wall of the south part of the basement (*Photo 37*). This room has a concrete floor and exposed wood structure ceiling; metal columns support wood beams supporting the floor above.
The Administration Building (Contributing), 1927
KHRI #045-6867

The administration building is a two-story brick structure with flat roof and concrete foundation. The building features few ornamental details except in the brickwork. The building is sited to the south of the main Reuter building across the former alley; the two buildings share the same setbacks from New Hampshire. A square penthouse pierces the center of the roof. Clay tile covers the parapet wall.

West (Primary) Façade (Photos 1, 4, 12, 13, 19)
The west façade is symmetrical and three bays wide. Brick pilasters define the bays that each contain two historic steel sash casement windows at the first and second stories. The masonry openings have continuous soldier brick lintels and sills. Centered in façade at the first story is the main entrance, accessed by a set of four concrete steps up from the sidewalk. The door system is within the historic opening but is a replacement. On either side of the door is a narrow steel sash window. The concrete foundation wall is partially visible, as the first story is raised; two masonry openings with windows pierce the foundation at the north end of the façade.

North Façade (Photos 13, 14, 15)
The north façade is three bays wide with brick pilasters defining each bay. Masonry openings within the brick walls have steel lintels and individual brick sills. The east bay has two openings within the concrete foundation. Two steel sash windows pierce the first story. At the second story, the connector to the 1882 building covers a door at the east end. To the west of this connector is a large steel sash window. The center bay contains a historic wood door at ground level with a small opening in the foundation wall to the west. At the first story above this opening is a steel sash window. The second story contains a single steel sash window filling most of the bay. The west bay has two masonry openings in the foundation, two steel sash windows at the first story, and a single window spanning most of the bay at the second story.

East Façade (Photos 3, 15, 16, 17)
The east façade has no brick pilasters separating bays and no parapet at the roof level. A square brick chimney rises at the north end of the elevation. The ground slopes down to the north, so the foundation wall only contains four masonry openings at the north and center. The first story has five steel sash windows; the second story has four.

South Façade (Photos 3, 4, 17, 18, 19)
The south façade is three bays wide, and like the north and west façades, brick pilasters separate the bays. No masonry openings pierce the foundation wall. The west bay has two narrow steel sash windows at the first story and two wider windows at the second story. The center bay has two unequally sized steel windows at the first and second stories. The east bay has two windows at the first story, and a single wide steel window at the second story.

Interior
The interior of the 1927 building features open spaces, exposed concrete structure and ceilings, and wood trim (baseboards, windows, doors). The building has two stories and a full basement. Carpet (non-historic) covers the concrete floors. Historic doors, stairs, and built-ins remain throughout the first and second floors. The open
Reuter Organ Company Buildings

Douglas County, Kansas

stair is centered in the building footprint; at the basement and first floor the stair is straight run (Photo 41) while it doglegs at the second floor.

First (Main) Floor
The building has two access points. The main entrance is centered in the west wall and up a flight of concrete exterior stairs. The small entry vestibule has tile floor with a pair of divided light wood doors in the east wall, allowing access into a hall (Photo 40). Within the south wall of the hall, a pair of doors leads into a conference room occupying the southwest corner of the floor (Photo 42). The north wall opens into an open office area in the northwest corner of the floor (Photo 39). A door within the north wall of the building leads into a narrow vestibule with a set of stairs up to the main floor (Photo 38). The door at the top of these steps opens into a hallway at the east end of the open office area. Four offices line the east side of this hallway along the east part of the building. The hall turns east at the south end and leads into the conference room. Two restrooms line the south side of this hallway.

Second Floor
The second floor is mostly open floor area (Photos 43 & 44). A square skylight is centered within the ceiling over the stairs. Four offices line the south end of the building on this floor (Photo 46). In the northeast corner of the floor is a small vestibule leading into the connector between the two Reuter buildings (Photo 45).

Basement
The basement is an open area (Photo 47). The stair down into the basement is metal. The walls, ceiling, floor, and structure are concrete. In the northeast corner of the basement are storage rooms. A masonry opening within the center of the north wall leads into a concrete tunnel into the basement of the main Reuter building.

Connector (Contributing), 1927, unknown date of alterations
The 1882 and 1927 buildings have been connected by an elevated walkway since 1927 (Figure 8). When constructed, the walk was open with metal railings and steel I-beam supporting the walkway. Today, the connector is enclosed and has a flat roof; the walls are standing seam metal and three windows pierce the east and west sides. The interior of the connector has wooden plank flooring and metal walls and ceiling. Although altered, the connector is considered contributing due to its historic presence; the structure of the walkway remains although enclosed.4

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4 Like bridges, the significant portion of this structure is the walkway itself and its substructure, both of which remain. The enclosure was added for safety from weather at an unknown date.
Reuter Organ Company Building
Douglas County, Kansas

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.)

X 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.

Areas of Significance
COMMERCE

Period of Significance
1919-1971

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 initially constructed in 1882, the property today physically reflects its long association with the Reuter Organ Company; thus, the period of significance, 1919-1971, spans from the year that company established their business at this location to the year the company moved a portion of their operations out of the buildings.

Criteria Considerations (justification)
N/A
### Narrative Statement of Significance

**Summary**

The Reuter Organ Company Buildings at 612 and 614-616 New Hampshire Street in Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas, are locally significant as examples of the Commercial Building property type described in the *Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas*. Together, the two buildings are significant under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for their association with the Reuter Organ Company, who headquartered here from 1919 to 2001. The buildings, constructed in 1882 (612 New Hampshire) and 1927 (614-616 New Hampshire), were occupied by only two local businesses. From 1882 to 1912, the Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory operated out of the stone building. The Reuter company purchased the building in 1919 and remodeled it for use as an organ manufacturing facility; the company constructed the brick building in 1927. These two buildings are functionally related and illustrate the history and growth of the Reuter Organ Company during the twentieth century. Although initially constructed in 1882, the property today physically reflects its long association with the Reuter Organ Company; thus, the period of significance, 1919-1971, spans from the year that company established their business at this location to the year the company moved a portion of their operations out of the buildings.

**Elaboration**

**Wilder Brothers Company History**

J. Frank and Charles E. Wilder founded the Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory in 1870. The brothers moved to Lawrence from Troy, New York, in 1870, where both worked for the Clapp & Wilder Company, a shirt manufacturer. The brothers specialized in made-to-order shirts, as well as men’s underwear. In addition to manufacturing clothing, the company ran its own laundry facilities. The Wilder Brother’s business quickly expanded, and by 1882, they had outgrown their manufacturing facilities and were one of the largest manufacturers in Lawrence. That same year, the company built a three-story stone building at 612 New Hampshire, and had sixty-five employees. The building used water from the nearby Kansas River to power the sewing machines in the factory. The company added a fourth story to the factory building in 1890 to keep up with production demands. By 1906, the Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory produced twenty-thousand shirts annually and had seventy factory employees as well as twenty travelling salesmen. The factory was closed in 1916, and J. Frank Wilder sold the building in 1917.

**Reuter Organ Company History**

Earl Schwarz, Henry Jost, Adolph C. Reuter, and Albert G. Sabol, Sr. founded the Reuter Organ Company in 1917. The company began in Trenton, Illinois as the Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company. Reuter and Sabol had prior organ building experience and were chosen by Schwarz and Jost to run the organ-building operations. Reuter began his career at the Barckhoff Organ Company in Pomeroy, Ohio, where he learned the organ trade

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10 “Buy Wilder Property,” *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, January 26, 1917. It is unclear as to why the business was sold.
from 1901-1908. From 1908-1912, Reuter was the shop superintendent for the Wicks Organ Company in Highland, Illinois. He then moved to South Haven, Michigan and worked for Casavant Frères, a well-known and respected organ company. In 1913, the Pilcher Organ Company, based in Kentucky, hired Reuter as the shop superintendent. Reuter worked for Pilcher until the founding of the Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company in 1917. Sabol was Reuter's nephew and worked with him at various organ companies from 1908 on, including Casavant Frères. Sabol joined the Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company in 1917 as the head of engineering and design.

The Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company began operations in a small building in Trenton. At the time of its founding, the company had six employees, some of whom had previously worked with Sabol. Jake Schaeffer, a former Casavant Frères employee, was hired as the voicer\(^\text{11}\); and E.J. “Pat” Netzer, a former Wicks employee, was hired as a woodworker. The company also hired William Zweifle as a pipe maker and Frank Jost as a console builder. In their first year of business, the Reuter-Schwarz Organ Company built one organ. The company expanded their operations in the following years, building ten organs in 1918 and fourteen in 1919.

Trinity Episcopal Church in Mattoon, Illinois, became the first client of Reuter-Schwarz. The church hired the company in 1917 to construct and install a new organ. As part of the construction process, completed organs were assembled in the factory for sound checks. A tornado hit Trenton during the Trinity organ sound check, destroying a factory wall and damaging the organ. Fortunately, the organ was insured, and the damage was repaired without additional cost.

By 1919, the company had outgrown the factory in Trenton and began the search for a new location to which to relocate the business. With two other organ companies nearby (Wicks in Highland, Illinois and Kilgen in St. Louis), the Board of Directors decided to move the company west to Kansas. The Board narrowed down the location of the new factory to three locations: Lawrence, Lindsborg, and Winfield. That same year, the Masonic Temple in Lawrence, under the guidance of Carl Preyer, commissioned an organ from Reuter-Schwarz. Preyer was the head of the piano department at the University of Kansas and convinced the company to relocate to Lawrence.

Reuter-Schwarz purchased the former Wilder Brothers shirt factory at 6th and New Hampshire Streets in an industrial district at the northeast corner of downtown Lawrence. The location of the building next to a rail spur allowed for easily shipping the company's organs throughout the United States. Reuter-Schwarz renovated the stone building, constructing additions on the north side of the building for an organ assembly room and a lumber kiln (Figure 5). Shortly after moving to Lawrence, Earl Schwarz left the company, which then became the Reuter Organ Company.

The Reuter Organ Company was incorporated in Kansas on September 15, 1919, and the offices opened to the public on January 1, 1920. The company delivered the first organ completed in the new factory to the Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, on May 24, 1920. Business grew rapidly in the 1920s; the company produced fourteen organs in 1920, increasing production to fifty organs in 1926, forty-five organs in

\(^{11}\) Organ voicers fine tune the pipes of an organ in order to produce the desired note from each pipe.
1927, fifty-one in 1928, and forty-five in 1929. Organs designed for theaters accounted for 25 percent of Reuter’s business in the 1920s. In 1927, the company built a two-story concrete and brick building just south of the existing factory. The new building, completed in 1928, housed the design and engineering departments as well as the administration and officers. That year, Reuter had fifty to sixty full-time employees.

As the economy slowed due to the Great Depression, Reuter produced fewer organs than previous years. In 1930, the company built twenty-eight organs. From 1932 to 1934, production slowed so much that the factory was only open three days a week; eventually the factory opened only when an order was contracted. Reuter built eleven organs in 1933 and nine organs in 1934. Many of the organs commissioned during this time were smaller, built for private residences or funeral homes. However, the factory never permanently closed, and by 1935, production increased to sixteen organs. Production continued to increase through the late 1930s. By 1941, Reuter fully recovered from the Depression and built forty-two organs in that year alone.

Reuter’s production stalled again in 1942 with United States’ involvement in World War II. The company produced twenty-three organs that year, and the restriction and eventual ban of materials for organ making forced the factory to close in October of 1942. Many Reuter employees went to work making ammunition at the Sunflower Army Ammunition Plant in nearby DeSoto, Kansas. Near the end of the war, Reuter won a contract to build shipping boxes for munitions materials, and the factory reopened with a skeleton crew.¹²

In July 1945, the company resumed normal organ making operations, constructing an organ for the University of Nebraska. Like most of the United States, Reuter experienced an economic boom following the end of World War II. The company’s history bolstered their reputation, and a December 1948 article by the Kansas City Star noted that Reuter was the only organ company between St. Louis and California.¹³ By 1949, Reuter had a three-year backlog of orders. Factory employees worked fifty hours per week to complete the orders, and Reuter continued to hire new workers. By 1953, fifty-five people worked in the factory, and ten worked in the office; Reuter’s annual sales totaled $635,000.¹⁴ Production continued at a rapid pace; the company had a two-year backlog of orders throughout the 1950s. Reuter had their first international order in 1954, constructing and installing an organ for Saint Peter’s Lutheran Church in Edmonton, Canada. During this time, many of Reuter’s Board of Directors and employees held college degrees in music or were trained organists, which helped in the design and engineering of new organs and in creating sales relationships with colleges and universities.

Reuter expanded their factory again in 1956, constructing a three-story addition in the northeast corner of the 1919 wing. By 1958, the company employed seventy-five factory workers and fifteen officers and administrative staff with annual sales totaling $800,000.¹⁵ Three years later in 1961, annual sales totaled over $1 million. The number of employees remained the same until 1966 when the number increased to a total of 125, including four voicers with degrees in music. Throughout the late 1960s, Reuter had a twelve- to fourteen-month backlog of orders, producing between forty-five and fifty organs with annual sales totaling $1 million.

¹² There is no specific date for this contract, but it must be sometime between 1942 and 1945. “Life Begins at 40: The History of the Reuter Organ Company,” Organ Expressions (Reuter Company Newsletter), April 5, 1957.
¹³ “Factory in Lawrence, Kansas, Makes Church Pipe Organs,” The Kansas City Star, December 12, 1948.
The company hired an additional voicer in 1968. That same year, Reuter became the United States sales and installation representative for the Hammer Organ Company in Hannover, Germany; the company held the position until 1972.

By the end of the 1960s, Reuter had outgrown their production facilities at 612 New Hampshire. In 1971, the company leased a building in north Lawrence and moved the pipe department to the new location; all other departments remained at the New Hampshire location. The recession in the early 1970s necessitated rounds of layoffs to prevent bankruptcy, but sales stabilized by the mid-1970s and the company maintained a sixteen- to eighteen-month backlog of orders and had sixty-two employees.

Reuter continued to prosper over the next twenty years. When the company was founded in 1917, approximately twenty organ companies existed in the United States. By the early 1990s, Reuter was one of six remaining organ companies operating in the country. By 1999, Reuter was the second largest organ maker in the country. The company moved to a new purpose-built facility located in north Lawrence in 2001, closing the factory and offices at 612 and 614-616 New Hampshire. In 2017, Reuter celebrated its hundred-year anniversary. The company is still in business with over 2,240 organs created and installed in the United States, Canada, Taiwan, and Korea.

Building History
The building at 612 New Hampshire was constructed in 1882 with additions in 1890, 1919, 1927, and 1956. Originally the Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory, the stone building, completed in 1882, was three stories tall with a basement and a two-story wing in the northeast corner. The Wilder Brothers expanded their operations in 1890, adding a fourth story and mansard roof. Various small additions of one- to two-stories were added to the north side of the building between 1890 and 1918.

On April 11, 1911, a tornado struck Lawrence, destroying many of the buildings in the downtown business district. The tornado lifted the roof and fourth story off the Wilder building and caused structural damage of approximately $5,000 to the northeast corner of the building. The damage was repaired, and the shirt factory resumed operation by the next year.

In 1919, the Reuter Organ Company purchased the building, renovating the existing four-story structure and constructing an addition on the north side. The additions built for Wilder were removed, and a large three-story

17 This location is currently unknown.
20 The Reuter Organ Company is extant; they are located at 1220 Timberedge Road in Lawrence, Kansas.
23 Map Company, Insurance Maps of Lawrence, Kansas, 1905, Sheet 3; Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Lawrence, Kansas, 1912, Sheet 3; Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Lawrence, Kansas, 1918, Sheet 3.
24 Sanborn Map Company, 1912, Sheet 3.
assembly room and a one-story lumber kiln were constructed in the northwest and northeast corners of the building, respectively. Construction engineer R.T. Wilson designed the addition. Wilson primarily designed churches, but a specialist was needed to design the assembly room, which was a single 50- by 80-foot room three stories tall. In the 1882 wing, Wilson added a freight elevator and enlarged the window openings, replacing the small, double-hung sash windows with large industrial steel sash windows to match those in the new wing. The exterior of the building was stuccoed, and construction completed in early 1920.25

By 1927, Reuter had outgrown the building at 612 New Hampshire. The company built a two-story concrete and brick building at 614-616 New Hampshire, just south of the existing factory. A metal walkway connected the second story of 614-616 New Hampshire with the second story of 612 New Hampshire (Figure 8).26 Sometime between 1927 and 1949, the southeast corner of the basement was expanded to house wood shavings.27 In 1956, a three-story addition was constructed in the northeast corner of the building. The concrete block addition encompassed the existing one-story stone lumber kiln.28 The historic steel windows in the 1919 wing were replaced with aluminum sashes and a small loading bay added to the north elevation sometime in the 1980s-1990s.29

**Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas**

The Reuter Organ Company buildings at 612-616 New Hampshire are locally significant as examples of the Commercial Building property type described in the *Historic Resources of Lawrence* cover document.30 The initial construction in 1882 of the stone building relates to the “Agriculture and Manufacturing, Foundations of Stability, 1874-1899” historic context. The 1879 Lawrence dam provided water to power the Wilder Brothers Shirt Factory and the 1892 Consolidated Barb Wire Factory; according to *Historic Resources of Lawrence*, “These three surviving structures still represent the late nineteenth-century period of industrial development” in Lawrence.31 The building is best associated with the historic context “A Quiet University Town, 1900-45.” The renovation of this building in 1919 for the Reuter Organ Company corresponds to the prosperity and growth seen especially in downtown Lawrence where during the first two decades of the twentieth century, almost twice as many downtown buildings were constructed during this time period as during the period between 1920 and 1940.32 The Reuter Organ Company Buildings in the eastern part of downtown Lawrence retain a strong association with the commercial growth and development of the city; these buildings also retain a high degree of physical integrity of location, setting, and feeling necessary to be listed as under the *Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas* cover document.

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26 The walkway is extant but was enclosed at some point.
27 Sanborn Map Company, 1927, Sheet 3; Sanborn Map Company, *Insurance Maps of Lawrence, Kansas*, 1927 revised 1949, Sheet 3. The addition is not visible from the exterior.
32 Wolfenbarger, *Historic Resources of Lawrence*, E-23.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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


Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [x] 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 #

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A
Reuter Organ Company Buildings

Name of Property

Douglas County, Kansas

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  Less than one

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)

Stone Building:
1 38.972741 -95.234461
Latitude: Longitude:

Admin. Building:
2 38.972412 -95.234534
Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
The irregularly shaped parcel is bounded on the west by New Hampshire Street, on the south by a parking lot, on the east by the former alley, and on the north by the diagonal property line. The parcel is described as: The World Company Addition no. 1 replat of odd numbered lots 1-19 & even numbered lots 6-20 on New Hampshire Street, Levee lots 16, 17, 18 & all that portion of the vacated alley lying north & east of said lot 6 on New Hampshire Street & together with all appropriate portions of vacated alleys lying adjacent to said lots as noted Block 2, lot 1 & N 50 ft lot 2.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
This boundary encompasses most of the property historically associated with the Reuter Organ Company when it occupied this site.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  Alison Dunleavy/Historic Preservation Specialist with Amanda K. Loughlin/National Register Coordinator
organization  Rosin Preservation LLC  date  March 2020
street & number  1712 Holmes  telephone  816.472.4950

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e-mail  alison@rosinpreservation.com; amanda@rosinpreservation

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.
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: Reuter Organ Company Buildings
City or Vicinity: Lawrence
County: Douglas County State: Kansas
Photographer: Brad Finch, f-stop photography
Date Photographed: February 2020

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

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Reuter Organ Company Buildings

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Reuter Organ Company Buildings

Name of Property: Reuter Organ Company Buildings

County and State: Douglas County, Kansas

**Figure 1.** Contextual map of the Reuter buildings within Lawrence. Source: Base map from the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory ([www.kshs.org/khri](http://www.kshs.org/khri)).
Figure 2. Site map of the nominated property. Dashed line represents the current parcel and nominated boundary. Source: Base map from the Douglas County, Kansas Assessor (gis.douglascountyks.org).
Figure 3. The August 1949 update to the January 1927 Sanborn map, sheet 3. Dashed line represents the current property boundary.
Figure 4. Diagrammatic plan, showing dates of construction.
**Figure 5.** East and north elevations, looking SW with dates of construction added.
Figure 6. Circa 1956, showing glass block window unit.
Figure 7. Undated (post-1890) image showing window configuration prior to Reuter company occupation.
Figure 8. Circa 1927 photo of the Admin building with walkway shown.
Figure 9. Site photo plan.
Figure 10. Factory Building, first floor photo plan.
Figure 11. Factory Building, second floor photo plan.
**Figure 12.** Factory Building, third floor photo plan.
Figure 13. Factory Building, fourth floor photo plan.
Figure 14. Factory Building, basement photo plan.
Reuter Organ Company Buildings

Douglas County, Kansas

Figure 15. Administration Building, first floor photo plan.
Figure 16. Administration Building, second floor photo plan.
Figure 17. Administration Building, basement photo plan.