# 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic name</th>
<th>McCormick-Armstrong Press Building</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names/site number</td>
<td>KHRI #173-11097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of related Multiple Property Listing</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street &amp; number</th>
<th>1501 East Douglas Avenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City or town</td>
<td>Wichita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Kansas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Sedgwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip code</td>
<td>67202</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this **X** nomination **X** 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 **X** meets **X** does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: **X** national **X** statewide **X** local Applicable National Register Criteria: **X** A **X** B **X** C **X** D

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kansas State Historical Society</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my opinion, the property <strong>X</strong> meets <strong>X</strong> does not meet the National Register criteria.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Signature of commenting official Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is: **X** entered in the National Register **X** determined eligible for the National Register **X** determined not eligible for the National Register **X** removed from the National Register **X** other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

### 5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>X private</td>
<td>X building(s)</td>
<td>1 buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Local</td>
<td>district</td>
<td>1 sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - State</td>
<td>site</td>
<td>1 structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Federal</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>0 objects</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

### 6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions</th>
<th>Current Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDUSTRY/Communications Facility</td>
<td>VACANT/WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**

- **LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS:**
- Spanish Eclectic details

**Materials**

- foundation: CONCRETE
- walls: STUCCO
- roof: EPDM/CLAY TILE
- other:
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Sedgwick County, Kansas

Narrative Description

Summary

The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building is located at 1501 East Douglas Avenue within the Central Business District of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas (Figures 1 & 2). In its current form, the building represents at least three construction phases (Figure 3). The most visible portion is the Spanish Eclectic style 1923 two-story stucco-clad brick building that fronts East Douglas Avenue to the north (Figure 4). In 1946, the company constructed two additions. A two-story stucco-clad brick addition filled the former alley between the 1923 building and the J. Arch Butts Packard Building (1930) to the east, and a one-story brick addition was built to the south of the 1923 building (Figure 5).\footnote{City permits specify the east addition was constructed in 1946. The exact date of construction for the south brick addition is unknown, as no known permits indicate its construction. The addition was built between 1935 and 1950, according to the Sanborn maps from those years, so the date is estimated as 1946.} Between 1951 and 1952, the company constructed a one-story concrete addition to fill the remainder of the parcel (Figure 6).\footnote{The map lists 1951; city permits indicate an addition was approved on 26 September 1952.} The entire building has a flat roof with a parapet unless otherwise noted. Non-historic alterations to the building have mostly been cosmetic. The windows within the 1923 building were replaced; although, the replacements generally follow the historic window configuration and fill the historic masonry openings. The historic first-story storefront windows had divided-light transoms; the second-story masonry openings historically contained twelve-over-twelve operable sash windows (Figure 7). The replacement windows have simulated divided lights in the first-story transoms and at the second story on the north elevation. On the east elevation, all windows contain simulated divided lights. Clay tile, formerly covering the parapet walls of the north elevation, has been replaced with similarly colored asphalt shingles; clay roof tiles are extant on the west elevation parapet. The office areas have updated finishes while the manufacturing areas retain most historic finishes. The building retains its historic integrity, continuing to communicate its historic associations with one of Wichita’s oldest and most prolific printing presses.

Elaboration

Site and Setting

The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building occupies the southeast corner of East Douglas Avenue and South Ellis Street in a primarily commercial corridor of one- and two-story buildings. Adjacent to the east is the National Register-listed J. Arch Butts Packard Building (1930). The McCormick-Armstrong building is bounded by East Douglas Avenue on the north, South Ellis Street on the west, a mid-block alley to the south, and a mid-block alley and the J. Arch Butts Building to the east (Figure 2). A concrete sidewalk lines the north and west elevations. A narrow planting strip separates the west sidewalk from Ellis Street. Sycamores and grass cover this planting strip.

North (Primary) Elevation (Photo 1)

The north elevation is two stories tall and eight bays wide. The easternmost bay, Bay 1, dates to 1946; bays 2 through 8 date to 1923. Bays 2 and 8 each have hipped roofs that rise slightly above the pent roof parapet. The hipped roofs have clay tiles while the pent roofs above bays 1 and 3 through 7 have asphalt shingles. The walls are stucco.

The first story of Bay 1 contains a central storefront window with a narrow storefront window on either side. One-story pilasters bookend this window system, and a pair of horizontal stucco bands separate the first and second stories. Two segmental-arched window openings pierce the second story of Bay 1. The first story of Bay 2
formerly contained a door into the printing floor. The segmental-arched masonry opening today contains a storefront window with a stuccoed bulkhead. A segmental-arched masonry opening at the second story contains a wide three-part window, a stucco volute keystone, and a historic metal balconette.

Bays 3 through 5 are identical. Each features a storefront window at the first story (with a view into the north printing room) with a single segmental-arched masonry opening at the second story. Single stucco pilasters separate the first-story bays; two horizontal stucco bands separate the first and second stories. At the eave above each pilaster is a decorative bracket. Bays 6 and 7 are nearly identical to bays 3 through 5; the one difference is the bulkhead for each storefront is taller; this is a historic condition, as these two bays correspond with the first-story office area.

Bay 8 is the westernmost bay and contains the main entrance to the building. This bay is almost identical to Bay 2. The notable exception is at the first story. The entrance is recessed and contains a single door set within an arched storefront. Single pilasters flank the door opening. Historically, the opening contained two round columns, which were removed in the 1950s-early 1960s when the entrance was redesigned (Figures 8 & 9).\(^3\)

**West Elevation (1923 Building and 1952 Addition)**

The stuccoed west elevation faces Ellis Street. The two-story north half dates to 1923 and is seven bays wide (Photos 2 & 3). The continuous bulkhead height matches bays 7 and 8 on the north elevation. The northernmost bay has a hipped clay tile roof; the rest of the elevation has a pent roof parapet with clay tile. At the roof of the south bay is a decorative stucco chimney that vents the basement boiler. The one-story south half dates to 1952 and is nine bays wide (Photo 4). All of the windows in the 1923 portion of the elevation are non-historic replacements, while the windows in the 1952 portion are historic steel sashes.

Bay 1 is the northernmost bay of the 1923 building. It is nearly identical to bays 2 and 8 of the north elevation. The one difference is at the first story; a single fixed window with simulated divided-light transom is centered in the wall in a historic masonry opening. Single one-story stucco pilasters separate each of bays 2 through 7; two horizontal stucco bands separate the first and second stories. At the eave above each pilaster is a decorative bracket. Bays 2 and 4 through 7 have a storefront window at the first story and a wide rectangular fixed window in the second story; the storefront of Bay 6 includes a single door that accesses the building’s main staircase. Bay 3 is the narrowest bay. An arched masonry opening at the first story contains a single door into the main office area; in the second story is a single fixed window.

The west wall of the one-story 1952 addition is flush with the west wall of the 1923 building. A single pilaster separates each of bays 1 through 8, and the two horizontal stucco bands on the 1923 building are continued on the 1952 portion of the wall. Each of these bays contains a single steel sash window with a non-historic awning. Bay 6 also contains a single door; its window is narrower than the others along this wall. Bay 2 formerly also contained a door which has since been infilled; its window is also narrow. Bay 9, the southernmost bay, is inset from the west elevation; this bay contains a single overhead garage door (Photo 4).

\(^3\) City permits indicate the building underwent a remodel in 1953. Although it is currently unknown what the extent of the remodel was, the mid-century entrance may date to this remodel.
West Elevation (1946 Addition)
In 1946, a two-story brick addition filled in the mid-block alley between the 1923 building and the building to the east. The second story of the south half of this brick addition’s west wall contains five masonry openings with historic steel sash windows. These windows are visible from the exterior but have been covered on the interior (Photo 25).

South Elevation (1923 Building)
The south elevation of the 1923 building is only visible at the second story of the building’s west end. The remainder of this wall, at the first story, is incorporated into the later additions. The brick wall has three masonry openings with a continuous concrete lintel. The west window is identical to the upper story windows of the west elevation. The east two openings each contain a single window.

South Elevation (1952 Addition)
The south elevation of the 1952 addition is adjacent to the alley (Photos 5 & 6). It is eight bays wide. The poured concrete wall is scored to imitate pilasters that separate bays 1 through 6. The westernmost bay is Bay 1, and it is inset from the rest of the south wall. It contains a single window. Bays 2 and 6 each contain a single overhead garage door. Bay 3 contains a single pedestrian door and a window; Bays 4 and 5 have a single window each. Bays 7 and 8 each contain a single steel sash window within a concrete block wall; a concrete column separates the bays.

South Elevation (1946 Addition)
The south elevation of the 1946 two-story brick addition is flush with the south elevation of the adjacent east building (Photo 7). The utilitarian wall contains four masonry openings, two each on the first and second stories. The first story west opening and the second-story openings contain historic steel sash windows with concrete sills. The first-story east opening contains a single overhead garage door.

East Elevation (1923 Building)
The second story of the west end of the 1923 building contains four masonry openings with windows. This wall is brick; each opening has a concrete lintel and is a different width.

East Elevation (circa 1946 and 1952 Additions)
The east elevation of the one-story 1946 and 1952 additions is adjacent to the former north-south mid-block alley (Photo 6). The wall is flush with the 1923 building. The south 1952 concrete portion is five bays wide; the north 1946 brick portion is five bays wide. The southernmost bay, Bay 1, is inset slightly from the rest of the wall; this wall is concrete block and contains no openings. Bays 2 through 5 each contain a single masonry opening within a poured concrete wall. Concrete block fills the opening in Bay 2. Bays 3 through 5 contain a single steel sash window; Bay 5 may have formerly contained a garage door, as a portion of the wall is concrete block. Bays 6 through 10 are within a brick wall. Bay 7 is now infilled with concrete block; the other bays are masonry openings each containing a single steel sash window.

General Interior
The building’s first floor is an L-shaped plan that fills the entire parcel. The north half is the 1923 building; the south half is the 1946 and 1952 additions, and the 1946 addition forms the east ell (Figure 10). The second story is a U-shaped plan over the 1923 building and the east 1946 addition (Figure 11). The partial basement is in the southwest corner of the 1923 building. Finishes within the office areas have been updated with carpet and floor
tile, drop ceilings, and partial height partition walls (Photos 8 & 23); however, the spaces, which were historically office areas, continue to read as office space. In the production areas, which are the majority of the building, historic materials remain intact. Floors are concrete, and the building structure is exposed. Pressed metal ceilings and skylight remain extant in the 1923 building’s pressroom. Acoustical ceiling tile is found in other areas.

First Floor (Figure 10)
The west half of the 1923 building contains office space, maintenance shop, and restrooms. The north entrance leads directly into the office area. The north door of the east wall leads into the building’s main stair hall to the second story; this stair is a switchback design. Doors in the north and south walls of this stair hall lead into the office areas. A short corridor to the east of the south office area leads to the maintenance shop (west) and restrooms (east) (Photos 9 & 10). A historic stair, which accesses the basement and second floor, is at the east wall of the maintenance shop; a door in the shop’s west wall leads to the exterior.

The east half of the 1923 building contains historic production areas, accessible from a door in the east wall of the north office area (Photos 11 through 15). The north production area has concrete columns and exposed concrete beams; the south production area contains a sawtooth skylight, wood posts, and pressed metal ceilings (Photo 15). The south brick wall was the former exterior wall. Masonry openings in the east wall of the 1923 building contain historic steel sash windows or have been modified to allow access into the east 1946 addition. This is one large rectangular room with no interior columns; a series of concrete columns line the west wall (Photos 16 & 17). Within the west wall is a historic freight elevator and a straight-run stair to the second floor. To the south of the 1923 building’s production areas is the one-story 1946 addition (Photo 18). This open area has brick perimeter walls, iron-interior columns, steel beams, and concrete floors. A door in the south wall accesses the 1952 production area (Photo 19). This open space has concrete interior columns and beams, steel joists, and concrete floors. A door in the south wall leads to the loading dock along the south alley. Openings within the west walls of the south 1946 and 1952 production areas lead to the 1952 west portion (Photos 20 & 21).

Second Floor (Figure 11)
The building’s three stairs lead to the second story. A door in the main (east) stair landing’s south wall leads into the upper office area (Photos 22 & 23). An east-west corridor is to the north of the stair. Restrooms are south of the corridor; offices are north of the corridor. The corridor leads east into another production area. A pair of double doors in the east wall of this production room leads into an office; a door at the south end of the wall leads into a small hallway that accesses the stair from the east 1946 addition (Photo 24). At the east end of this hallway is a door into the second story of the 1946 addition (Photo 25). This area is open with concrete walls, floors, and ceiling. The freight elevator accesses this room.

Basement (Figure 11)
The three-story historic east stair adjacent to the maintenance shop provides access to the basement. This small room houses the building’s boiler. Walls, ceiling, columns, and floor are concrete (Photo 26). The stair has concrete steps and metal tube handrails.

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4 Where ceilings were dropped, the ceiling was built around existing masonry openings to prevent the infill of windows.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Sedgwick County, Kansas

Integrity
The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building retains historic integrity. The building has not been relocated, and it remains within a commercial setting as it did historically. The historic design remains legible with an office area located in the northwest corner of the building and the remainder dedicated to production areas. No major structural alterations have occurred that obscure the historic building and its historic additions. Material integrity is intact with the building retaining its historic stucco exterior, clay tile roof (in part), several historic windows, and finishes within the production area. Finishes within the office areas have been updated, but the historic function of the spaces remains intact. Where historic windows have been replaced, the new units mimic the historic in design and fill the historic masonry openings. The building continues to clearly communicate its historic association and feeling as one of Wichita’s largest printers.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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.

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

Property is:

A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1923-1970

Significant Dates

1923

1946, 1952

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lorentz Schmidt & Co. (architects, 1923)

Eberhardt Construction Co. (builders, 1923)

Period of Significance (justification)
The building’s period of significance begins in 1923 with its opening and extends to 1970, the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance, but no more specific date can be determined.

Criteria Considerations (justification)
N/A
The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building is locally significant under Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with Wichita-based McCormick-Armstrong Press Company (McACO). McACO was one of the largest printing and binding companies in the city from its founding in 1912 until 2019 when EP Graphics acquired it. The company consistently competed with the largest printers in the city and state; by 1960, their net sales equaled $6.24 million, the highest in the company’s history, and they were one of four printers in the state employing over one hundred people. Beginning in 1923, McACO operated from the building at 1501 East Douglas Avenue. The ground floor housed offices, warehouse space, composing room, with the printing plant occupying most of the floor; the second floor housed the art and photostatting departments. As the company grew, the building expanded to be able to house new equipment and employees that broadened McACO’s offerings. The first addition occurred in 1946 followed by one in 1952. McACO also purchased additional buildings around the city out of which to operate. When acquired in 2019, McACO was operating out of four buildings and retained the building on East Douglas Avenue as its administrative headquarters and main production center. Due to the importance of the McCormick-Armstrong Press Company, the building’s period of significance begins in 1923 with its opening and extends to 1970, the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance but no more specific date can be determined.

Elaboration

At the turn of the twentieth century, the printing profession was in the midst of transitioning from a trade to an art industry. The Industrial Revolution was largely responsible for the shift. Historian Philip Meggs explains in his *History of Graphic Design*:

> It was no longer enough for the twenty-six letters of the alphabet to function only as phonetic symbols. The industrial age transformed these signs into abstract visual forms projecting powerful concrete shapes of strong contrast and large size. At the same time, letterpress printers faced increasing competitive pressure from lithographic printers, whose skilled craftsmen rendered plates directly from an artist’s sketch and produced images and letterforms limited only by the artist’s imagination. The letterpress printers turned to the typefounders to expand their design capabilities, and the founders were only too happy to comply.

Technological advancements throughout the nineteenth century eventually led to the mechanization of typesetting. In 1886, German inventor Ottmar Mergenthaler developed a machine that automatically set type by way of a keyboard. Mergenthaler’s Linotype removed the need for a person to hand-set type within a press, thus exponentially increasing the volume of work printed and decreasing the amount of time required to prepare the presses. Inexpensive mass communication was suddenly possible. The nineteenth century also saw the advancement of lithography, where an image to be printed is neither raised nor incised but rather formed on a

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flat surface. Images could be multicolored by using a separate plate for each color. When American designer Richard H. Hoe developed the rotary lithographic press in the mid-1800s, it was quickly nicknamed the “lightning press” for its ability to print six times the number of lithographs printed with a flat plate system. Offset printing evolved out of this process, where the inked image is transferred from plate to rubber to printed surface. Throughout most of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, type-based printers and lithographers competed with each other. Larger printing firms came to embrace both forms of mass production in order to appeal to a greater number of clients. Thus, the graphic arts profession emerged from the age-old printing tradition as a way to add structural order and visual form to printed communications. The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company—McACO as it came to be known—positioned itself to be at the forefront of the graphic arts printing industry, adapting the business to offer state-of-the-art services and products to meet their clients’ diverse needs. Established in 1912, McCormick-Armstrong entered an already robust printing industry in Wichita. The town, which incorporated in 1870 with just under seven hundred people, quickly became one of the largest metropolitan areas in the state; the estimated population in 1912 neared 64,000. The Wichita printing industry dates to the founding of the town. The first letterpress belonged to Fred Sowers, editor and publisher of the newspaper The Vidette. Sowers used his press to also produce handbills, the chief form of advertisement at the time; with the help of an assistant, they produced two hundred fifty bills in an hour. Soon, Sowers also was printing blank land entry forms, cattle brand record slips, and other papers necessary for the cattle industry. The 1878 city directory, the first available in Wichita, listed one job printer and three newspapers, indicating the number of presses in the city at the time. By 1900, eight job printing companies competed for business; Wichita had twenty-two printers in 1912.

McACO traces its roots to 1901 when Augustus Guy (A.G.) McCormick opened the McCormick Press and printed his first job: an order of one hundred business cards. When founded, McCormick Press was one of approximately ten printers in town. In 1908, Charles H. Armstrong settled in Wichita and opened the Armstrong Press Company, joining twenty other printing companies, two linotypers, and one lithographer by that time. McCormick approached Armstrong a few years later about merging their two companies, and the McCormick-Armstrong Press Company formally incorporated with the state of Kansas in 1912 with a capital stock of $30,000. According to the articles of incorporation, the company formed, “To do and carry on a general printing, publishing, binding, and engraving business and in connection with said business to secure, buy, own, sell and lease copyrights and patents.” Among the company’s earliest products were the Wichita City Directories. When

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8 The image is drawn on a flat stone with an oil-based medium then water is spread over the image, moistening all non-oiled surfaces. An oil-based ink is then applied that adheres only to the image and not the water-moistened areas. A printing press then is used to transfer the image to paper. See Meggs, History of Graphic Design, 173.
9 Meggs and Purvis, Meggs’ History of Graphic Design, 173.
10 Designer William Addison Dwiggins first coined the term “graphic design” in 1922, but not until after World War II was the term commonly used. Graphic artists prior to 1945 were known as commercial artists. Meggs and Purvis, Meggs’ History of Graphic Design, vi, viii.
12 Wichita City Directory, 1912.
14 The Vidette was not one of the papers, but Sowers was listed as editor and printer of the Wichita Beacon.
16 According to available city directories, there were eight printers in 1900 and eleven in 1903.
17 1908 Wichita City Directory. Western Lithographers was also listed under the printers.
18 This amount is equal to nearly $790,000 today. Articles of Incorporation with the State of Kansas, 6 June 1912; McACO “Our History,” Wichita Beacon (29 May 1912): 6; and Wichita Eagle (14 March 1946): 5, as described in the Tihen Notes.
not printed by McACO, the Wichita Eagle Press took on the job, indicating McACO’s production capability and the level of competition in which the company participated even from its beginnings. At the time of the 1912 merger, McACO and the Wichita Eagle Press the largest job printing firms.19

Although printing and binding were their initial core services, McACO embraced the graphic design aspect of the printing business. From the beginning, McCormick and Armstrong sought to be a one-stop shop where all aspects of the printing job would be carried out by their staff. McACO staff designed the layouts of books, directories, catalogs, stationery, special publications, and products such as maps, but much of the artwork was outsourced. In 1919, Armstrong wrote to artist Robert T. Aitchison, offering him a position as head of the company’s art department. McACO had frequently commissioned Aitchison to produce work for their publications, which allowed for a seamless transition when he arrived in Wichita in 1920.20 The hiring of Aitchison also was anticipated to bring in more work for McACO, as the company was now better positioned to produce, in-house, more high quality artwork for their clients (Figure 12). Aitchison became company treasurer and third partner in 1920 when the capital stock was valued at $90,000.21

By 1923, when McACO moved into their new headquarters on East Douglas, the company was one of thirty-five printers in Wichita and, next to the Wichita Eagle Press, the largest. The company employed thirty-six people in seven departments. McCormick remained company president and general manager. Armstrong oversaw the four-man sales department. Three men comprised the art department headed by Aitchison. The production areas included monotyping (two men), composing (seven men and two women), printing press (eight men), and bindery (two men and four women). Three women staffed the administrative offices.22 By 1940, McACO employed over one hundred men and women.23

To advertise their services, McACO published and printed its own catalog, distributing their first issue of Impressions in 1937. This catalog “graphically and artistically” showcased the company’s history, services, and production quality. Kansas Business, a journal of industry in the state, praised the catalog in a July 1937 review, exclaiming that the images were “striking in their clearness and detail” and calling Impressions “one of the most glamourous books ever created and published by a Kansas printer.”24 The name of their catalog referred to the company’s tagline as “The House of Impressions.” This slogan adorned their letterhead and their headquarters building on East Douglas. Impressions won several awards over the years, including first place in the Printing Industry of America—Miller Printing Machinery Company national contest in 1957.25 McACO published their catalog into the late 1960s (Figure 13).

The company continued to grow and adapt to customers’ needs. McACO offered fully integrated services to cover all aspects of a job: planning, art, copy, typesetting, photography, platemaking, presswork, binding, and

19 McCormick Press began printing the directories in 1909. After 1916, the printer was not listed, but by then the Polk Company was producing the directories. Lithographers were not listed under separate headings in the 1912 city directory.

20 Letter from C.H. Armstrong to Mr. R.T. Aitchison, 18 October 1919; Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections & University Archives, MS98-05 Aitchison (Box 1, File Folder 1); letter from C.H. Armstrong to Mr. R.T. Aitchison, 28 October 1919, Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections & University Archives, MS2010-01 Bibliophiles (Box 4, File Folder 6).

21 Secretary of State records. This is equivalent to nearly $1.1 million today.

22 “Thirty-Six are on Pay Roll of Print Company,” Wichita Beacon (5 December 1923): Special Section, 4. Women were strongly represented in the company throughout its history. McACO even offered maternity benefits as early as 1945, according to their employee handbook from that year.

23 McACO, full page advertisement in Wichita Magazine (21 March 1940): 2.


mailing. Within its first twenty-five years McACO offered almost one hundred specific services, ranging from die cutting to imprinting, and products from advertising pieces to greeting cards to signs. The variety of work exemplified the company’s mantra that “a job is a job no matter the size.” By 1943, McCormick-Armstrong Press Company was one of forty-five printers in Wichita but was the only commercial lithographer; the capital stock was valued at $270,000. Five years later, McCormick-Armstrong, Inc. was valued at $540,000 and was still the only lithographer in town out of the forty-six commercial printers. In 1956, the company was valued at $1.6 million and made $4.85 million in net sales.

The year 1960 was one of the strongest for McACO. Writing in the 1960 annual report, company president, A.G. McCormick, Jr., emphasized that McACO “receives orders and fulfills contracts for creative printing and lithography in an area bounded by New York City to Seattle, and Chicago to Houston.” Their net sales that year reached $6.24 million, the highest in the company's history up to that point. Shares in the company were valued at $7.49, also the highest in company history. McACO had sold shares to employees throughout their existence, and in 1957 they first became a publicly held company. The 1960-61 edition of the Kansas Manufacturers and Products Directory lists hundreds of the state’s commercial printers. Of the large number, only four employed over one hundred people: Western Lithographers (Topeka), Western Stationery (Topeka), Wichita Eagle Publishing Company, and McCormick-Armstrong. Of the forty-six commercial lithographers, only McACO and Myers & Company (Topeka) had over one hundred employees.

The growth of McACO necessitated the expansion of the building at Douglas and the acquisition of other property to support their business. Annual reports throughout the 1950s and 1960s describe sites and buildings selected, primarily for warehouse space. Buildings to the west of the McACO headquarters were utilized, as was the former J. Butts Packard Building adjacent to the east. When EP Graphics acquired McACO in early 2019, the company still owned the buildings on Ellis Avenue, as well as the building at 1501 East Douglas; however, all of the buildings were all discontinued for printing use by the new parent company, ending almost one hundred years of continuous operation out of the headquarters building.

McCormick-Armstrong Subsidiaries & Acquisitions

McCormick-Armstrong occasionally branched out to establish or acquire subsidiary businesses. The first such subsidiary was the McCormick-Mathers Publishing Company. J.E. Mathers, a former school superintendent, formed a school supply company in 1911, selling goods to districts in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri. Mathers approached A.G. McCormick in 1912 to acquire a one-half interest in the company, which McCormick did. The McCormick-Mathers Publishing Company formally incorporated with the state of Kansas in 1924 and had their headquarters within the McACO building at 1501 East Douglas for several years. During the Great Depression, the company expanded to the publishing and printing of school text- and workbooks. By 1940, McCormick-Mathers produced forty-three publications, employed forty-five salesmen and twenty-five administrative

28 City directories and Secretary of State records. Today, this is equivalent to nearly $4 million, $5.7 million, and $15.5 million, respectively; McACO, Annual Report: 1957, 4, $46.47 million today.
employees, and established branch offices in Atlanta, Georgia and Columbus, Ohio; their books were sold in every state.32 McCormick-Mathers became a wholly owned subsidiary of the New York-based schoolbook publisher American Book Company in circa 1960, with McACO, holding a majority interest in the company; the books continued to be created in Wichita.33

Although they had offered advertising services since 1912, McCormick-Armstrong formally created a specific advertising agency in 1920 that, according to one newspaper, “handled some of the largest advertising campaigns in the Southwest.”34 Aitchison oversaw the advertising agency. In the summer of 1922, the McACO sold the advertising branch to the newly created Central Advertisers’ Agency. This sale caused some confusion within the Wichita business community. In an August 18, 1922 article, the Wichita Beacon reported that the McCormick-Armstrong Agency ceased to exist without clarifying that only the advertising side was sold. Charles Armstrong soon corrected the record, emphasizing that the printing plant had not been sold, nor did the company intend to sell because business was the best it had been since it began. Explaining why they sold the advertising agency, Armstrong said, “We felt that the agency had little chance to grow so long as we used it as a branch, so we divorced it entirely from the printing business.” McCormick, Armstrong, and Aitchison continued to own stock in the new advertising company, and the personnel and accounts remained the same.35

In 1960, McACO acquired Grit Printing Company as a subsidiary. Grit first incorporated with the state of Kansas in 1907, and competed, on a smaller scale, with McACO for commercial printing and lithographic jobs. The subsidiary reincorporated as Grit Printing, Inc.

Sometime between 1960 and 1964, McACO also acquired a 75 percent interest in High Plains Publishing Company. High Plains incorporated in Dodge City in 1957 and produced farm-related publications for Kansas and Colorado, most notably the High Plains Journal. The black-and-white publication was fully printed in Dodge City until 1964 when new equipment installed at the McACO headquarters in Wichita allowed colorized sections to supplement the Journal.36

The Three Partners: McCormick, Armstrong, and Aitchison

McCormick-Armstrong Press Company had three primary foundational leaders: A.G. McCormick, Charles H. Armstrong, and Robert T. “Aitch” Aitchison. McCormick was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1873. His family relocated to Kansas City, Kansas shortly afterward, and by 1884 they were settled in Wichita. In 1901, at the age of 28, McCormick started his printing company, the McCormick Press. Along with being a partner and general manager of McACO, A.G. was involved in the community. As an example, he served on the Wichita Planning Commission in the early 1920s. McCormick unexpectedly died in 1927 at the age of 54; his son A.G., Jr., succeeded him as company president.37

34 “New Advertising Agency Formed,” Wichita Beacon (18 August 1922): 2. The advertising branch officially was incorporated in 1921, according to the Secretary of State records.
35 “Printery Was Not Sold,” Wichita Daily Eagle (26 August 1922): 5. The 1964 annual report briefly discusses an advertising agency being operated as a McACO division. It is currently unknown whether the ad agency was reincorporated into McACO’s main company or a new division was started at some point.
36 McACO, Annual Report: 1964, 6; Secretary of State records.
Charles H. Armstrong was born in Terre Haute, Indiana in 1880. His family relocated to Kansas in 1885, and he settled in Wichita in 1908, the same year he opened the Armstrong Press Company. Armstrong grew up around the printing profession, as his father ran a weekly paper in Anthony, Kansas. As head of McCormick-Armstrong’s sales department, he promoted the company’s work and designed many of the pieces the company produced.

Like McCormick, Armstrong was involved in the greater Wichita community. He was a part of the Wichita Advertising Club and the Chamber of Commerce, of which he was president in 1941. Armstrong died in 1946 at the age of 65.

When Armstrong offered Robert T. “Aitch” Aitchison the art department at McACO, Aitch worked as an artist for an advertising company in Denver. He was born in Columbus, Kansas in 1887 and studied art in Chicago at both the Reed-Stone Academy and the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. One of his first professional jobs was with the Chicago Tribune art department where he drew political cartoons. He also worked at the San Antonio Express and then as a freelance artist in Oklahoma City before moving to Denver. His work had been featured in Collier’s, as well as several newspapers in the Midwest and Southwest even before coming to work for McACO. Later, Aitchison became well-known for the creation of detailed maps, which garnered him international recognition. Aitchison accepted the position of art director at McACO, and in early 1920 became the company’s third partner. Aitchison directed the art department and held the office of company treasurer until his death in 1964 at the age of 77. Aitchison was also active in social organizations. He served as president of the Kansas Historical Society, secretary-treasurer of the Wichita Art Association for over thirty years, president of the Wichita City Library Board, and vice-president of the American Institute of Graphic Arts.

The McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building

From 1914 to 1923, the McCormick-Armstrong Press Company occupied the Cone-Cornell Building at 122-124 South Market Street (Figure 14). In 1922 they decided to construct their own purpose-built production facility. In March of that year, McACO purchased eleven lots at the southeast corner of East Douglas Avenue and South Ellis Street for $17,500. The acquisition of so large a parcel was intentional. McCormick proposed to have a building constructed to meet the company’s current spatial needs but allow for additions as the company grew.

In April 1922, the Wichita Beacon Sunday Magazine dedicated its front page to the potential of a new building for McCormick-Armstrong. The featured image was a rendering by Robert Aitchison, showing a Mission-inspired design for the building (Figure 15). The local firm of Lorentz Schmidt & Company was selected as the building’s

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38 Wichita Eagle (14 March 1946): 5, as described in the Tihen Notes.
39 Wichita Beacon (5 December 1923): Special Section, 4.
41 “Aitchison Directs Art Department,” Wichita Beacon (5 December 1923): Special Section, n.p.; Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections & University Archives, MS98-05 Aitchison (Box 1, File Folders 1, 29-31).
42 This building is no longer extant; the parcel is currently home to the Innes Department Store Annex, constructed in 1947. McCormick started his press company in this building in 1901 and relocated back into the building in 1913 as the McCormick-Armstrong Press Company (“Printing Plant Moves into Its $100,000 Home,” Wichita Beacon (16 September 1923): 2).
architect in September of 1922, and the realized design of the building incorporated the feel and style of Aitchison’s sketch (Figure 16).

Construction of the building began in the spring of 1923 when Eberhardt Construction was awarded the contract to build the reinforced concrete structure. In September 1923, McACO began its relocation into the new building on East Douglas Avenue. McCormick claimed that the new $100,000 building increased the company’s usable space by 100 percent.

McACO opened their doors to the public in early December 1923. Over two thousand people attended the open house. The opening was detailed in a special section of the Wichita Beacon of December 5, complete with photographs of the new facility (Figures 17 & 18), which was heralded by the paper:

A new era in business buildings is ushered in with the opening of the new McCormick-Armstrong Press home, at Douglas and Ellis—an era in which structures dedicated to commercial work will no longer be designed with an eye strictly to the economic side, but will also carry in their architecture an appeal to every man’s inborn sense of beauty.

The authors of the article continued by stating that the exterior design appeared to indicate that the interior is as richly appointed. Upon closer inspection, they noted that the exterior hides “one of the best arranged printing plants in the United States.” Offices occupied the northwest corner of the first floor; warehouse space occupied the northeast portion of the first floor. South of the offices was the composing room, and the printing plant occupied most of the south and east portion of the building. The second floor housed the art and photostatting departments. While the Wichita Beacon likely expressed hyperbolic praise, the 1923 McCormick-Armstrong Press Company Building was the first of its kind built—and certainly the largest—in Wichita. One of the noted features of the building was the extensive utilization of daylight. The art department, located on the north side of the building, had consistent light throughout the day; further, the use of skylights in the pressroom allowed the printers to get a concise look at the colors used in their printing process.

Although McCormick died before the need for expansion occurred, his foresight came to fruition in 1946 and again in 1952. Additional printing areas were added to the east and south in 1946, along with a metal paper storage building at the southeast corner of the property (Figure 5), and in 1952, additional space for binding, folding, and shipping was constructed within the remaining parcels. The expanded plant footprint was a direct result of the expanded services and production capacity of this large local firm.

Aesthetically, the exterior design of both the 1946 and 1952 additions purposefully blend with the 1923 building. The north façade of the 1946 east addition features stucco cladding, clay tiled parapet wall, arched upper story

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45 “Printing Plant Moves into Its $100,000 Home,” 2.
47 “New Era…,” 2.
48 “New Era…,” 2.
49 “New Era…,” 2.
50 Building permits A37663 (March 25, 1946), A38506 (May 17, 1946), B32409 (September 29, 1952). The paper warehouse is no longer standing.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

windows, and multi-light windows. The one-story 1952 west elevation also has stucco cladding over concrete and features pilasters and banding seen on the 1923 building.

As one of the largest and oldest printing companies in Wichita, McCormick-Armstrong operated out of the Mission-styled building on Douglas Avenue for most of its existence. This building retains its historic integrity from its 1923, 1946, and 1952 constructions and is significant to Wichita’s industrial history.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Wichita City Directories. Various years.


Kansas Historical Society. State Archives.
Kansas Business (July 1937). 605 K13b v.5 no.7.


"Printing Plant Moves into Its $100,000 Home." (16 September 1923): 2.
"Thirty-Six are on Pay Roll of Print Company." (5 December 1923): Special Section.

Wichita City Building Permits. Available with the Metropolitan Area Planning Department.

*Wichita Daily Eagle.*
(12 April 1922): 2.
"Printery Was Not Sold." (26 August 1922): 5.

(18 April 1927): 3.
"Large Plant Well Equipped for Printing." (6 December 1923): 20, 22.

*Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Society. McCormick-Armstrong Collection.*
Annual reports, 1957 to 1964.
The *House of Impressions,* 1937.
*Impressions.* Various years.
Historic photographs.

*Wichita State University Libraries, Special Collections & University Archives.*
MS98-05 Aitchison; Box 1, File Folders 1, 29-31
MS98-07 Jackson; Box 3, File Folder 10
MS2010-01 Bibliophiles; Box 4, File Folder 6
Dr. Edward N. Tihen’s Notes from Wichita Newspapers, http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tihen/
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
Datum if other than WGS84: ______________
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 37.685622  -97.319376  3
Latitude: Longitude:  

2 Latitude: Longitude:  4

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property) (Figure 2)
The nominated property includes the entire building and the land on which it sits. The boundaries are defined by East Douglas Avenue (north), South Ellis Street (west), public alleys (south and part of east), and the party wall between 1501 and the building to the east. The McCormick-Armstrong property occupies two separate parcels defined as: Knight's Addition, Douglas Avenue, lot 195, excluding the west 8.4 feet, all lots 197-199-201-203-205-207, and the west 2.27 feet of lot 209; and Knight's Addition, Ellis Avenue, lot 2 excluding the west 8.4 feet, and all lots 4-6-8-10.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the McCormick-Armstrong building during its period of significance at 1501 East Douglas Avenue.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda K. Loughlin
organization Rosin Preservation, LLC
street & number 1712 Holmes
city or town Kansas City
state MO
zip code 64109
e-mail amanda@rosinpreservation.com

date 27 November 2019
telephone 816.472.4950

city or town Wichita
state KS
zip code 67206

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property: McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
County: Sedgwick
State: Kansas

Photographer: Brad Finch, f-stop Photography
Date Photographed: September 2019

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

01 of 26: North elevation, looking south
02 of 26: North and partial west elevation, looking SE
03 of 26: South end of 1923 building’s west elevation, looking east
04 of 26: West elevation of 1952 addition, looking NE
05 of 26: South elevation of 1952 addition, looking NNE
06 of 26: South elevation of 1952 addition and east elevation of 1952 and 1946 additions, looking NNW
07 of 26: South elevation of 1946 east addition, looking north (photo: Amanda Loughlin, July 2019)
08 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, view north along west corridor of north office area
09 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, main corridor, looking south from near stair to basement
10 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, maintenance room in southwest corner, looking NW from SE corner
11 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, northeast production room, looking SE from NW corner
12 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, northeast production room, looking SW from NE corner
13 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, southeast production room, looking SE from NW corner
14 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, southeast production room, looking south from center of room
15 of 26: First floor, 1923 building, southeast production room, detail of skylight
16 of 26: First floor, 1946 east addition, looking SW from NE corner
17 of 26: First floor, 1946 east addition, looking NW from SE corner
18 of 26: First floor, 1946 south addition, looking NW from SE corner
19 of 26: First floor, 1952 south addition, looking SW from NE corner
20 of 26: First floor, 1952 southwest addition, looking NW from SE corner
21 of 26: First floor, 1952 southwest addition, looking SW from NE corner
22 of 26: Second floor, 1923 building, east-west corridor, looking SE from west end
23 of 26: Second floor, 1923 building, office area, looking SW from east side
24 of 26: Second floor, 1923 building, east stair corridor, looking west
25 of 26: Second floor, 1946 east addition, looking NW from SE corner
26 of 26: Basement, 1923 building, looking NW from stair

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.
Figure 1. Contextual map, showing location of McCormick-Armstrong Press Building with X. Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory (www.kshs.org/khri).
Figure 2. Boundary map with McCormick-Armstrong Press Building outline with bold dashed line. Base map (2017) from Sedgwick County, Kansas GIS (https://gismaps.sedgwickcounty.org/mlr/).
Figure 3. 2006 aerial with the dates of construction labeled for clarity.
Figure 4. Snippet of 1935 Sanborn, showing extent of the 1923 building. Sheet 50.
Figure 5. Snippet of the 1950 update to the 1923 Sanborn Map Sheet 50, showing additions.
Figure 6. Factory Insurance Association map of McCormick-Armstrong Press Building in 1964.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building

Figure 7. Undated (1930s) photograph of McCormick-Armstrong Press Building, looking southeast. The 1946 addition to the east is not yet in place. Source: McCormick-Armstrong Pamphlet, Kansas Historical Society Archives, *K 655 M136 Impressions collection
Figure 8. Illustration of the building in a 1962 pamphlet produced by McACO, showing the redesigned entrance and the east and south additions. Source: Kansas Historical Society Archives, *K 655 M136 Impressions collection.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Figure 9. Left: Original entrance design (Source: KSHS Archives); Right: Mid-century redesigned entrance (Source: McACO building).
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Sedgwick County, Kansas

Figure 10. Exterior & First Floor Photo Map.

Figure 11. Second Floor & Basement Photo Plans.
Figure 12. Examples of artwork produced by McACO. Top: Four-color offset lithography from a watercolor by one of McACO artists, Zona Wheeler, for Sunray Oil, 1960s; printed in Impressions. Bottom: Colored letterpress announcement of their new building in 1923. Both examples housed at Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Society.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Sedgwick County, Kansas

**Figure 13.** Cover of an undated (1960s) *Impressions*. Source: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Society.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building  
Sedgwick County, Kansas

**Figure 14.** The two-story former home of the McCormick-Armstrong Building at 122-124 South Market Street. Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory for 120 South Market Street.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building

Figure 17. Composing Room in 1923, looking southwest. Source: *Wichita Beacon* (5 December 1923): Special Section 8.
McCormick-Armstrong Press Building
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 18. Pressroom in 1923, looking west. Source: *Wichita Beacon* (5 December 1923): Special Section 10.