**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>Star Block</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other names/site number</td>
<td>KHRI # 139-4210-00019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of related Multiple Property Listing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Location

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Street &amp; number</th>
<th>520 and 522 Market Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City or town</td>
<td>Osage City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Code</td>
<td>KS 139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zip code</td>
<td>66523</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:

___ national  ___ 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

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property _x_ meets _x_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official  Date

Title  Date

### 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
**5. Classification**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x private</td>
<td>x building(s)</td>
<td>1 contributing buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Local</td>
<td>district</td>
<td>1 noncontributing buildings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - State</td>
<td>site</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Federal</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6. Function or Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions</th>
<th>Current Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, professional, , Restaurant, department store, specialty store</td>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEALTH CARE: Medical business/office</td>
<td>COMMERCE/TRADE: Restaurant, business, professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECREATION AND CULTURE: Theater</td>
<td>DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMESTIC: Multiple dwelling, hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**7. Description**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Classification</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY</td>
<td>foundation: CONCRETE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style</td>
<td>walls: BRICK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>STUCCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>roof: ASPHALT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>other: METAL: Cast iron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a summary paragraph that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

The Star Block is a two-story commercial building in a row of retail storefronts at the heart of downtown Osage City, Kansas. It reflects the late 19th-century Commercial Style, as a two-part commercial block with a brick façade, a flat roof, and tall, narrow windows with cast iron curvilinear pediments. Its lower floor is divided into two equally sized storefronts, with a staircase that ascends to the second floor between them on the building's front. A central hall proceeding from the staircase bisects the upper floor, with the remaining space originally divided into offices, some of which quickly became used as living quarters and have since been fully converted into apartments. The elaborate cornices have been removed, and the first-floor storefronts have been altered, the second-floor façade and its intricate brick designs remain largely preserved, as do many of the interior spaces. Osage City is a small town of around 2,800 people, and the Star Block is in a prominent location on the main thoroughfare. Not only is it one of the largest buildings on the block, but it also retains a good amount of historic integrity and features. In contrast, most of the thoroughfare was updated post-1960s and no longer reflect their historic character. The Star Block retains integrity important to portraying its historic significance as a good example of the two-part commercial block structure of the Later 19th Century Commercial Style at the local level in Osage City through its two-part storefront system with a central stair, retail and business space on the first floor, and historically subdivided office and living quarters on the second floor that are largely still intact and maintain their historic configuration and character features.

Elaboration

Setting & Site

Located roughly halfway between Topeka and Emporia in east-central Kansas in Osage City, Osage County. Market Street doubles as Kansas Highway 31 and is the primary artery in Osage City, which, with a population of 2,809, is the largest town in the county. The Star Block faces south and sits roughly in the middle of the central block of the three-block downtown strip along Market Street (Figure 1), and is part of a row of storefronts, sharing party walls on the east and west sides. It remains on the same site, and it was built in 1883. The building occupies most of its lot, which is little changed over the years, with a small dirt and gravel area in the back. The building stands two stories tall and 50 feet wide and 80 feet deep, with approximately 8,000 square feet, making it one of the largest buildings downtown.

The downtown generally consists of one- and two-story brick storefronts. The surrounding area's density and overall commercial character have changed little from the Star Block's early years because the Star Block was part of the last major wave of building in downtown Osage City. However, most of the historic facades have been clad in metal or otherwise substantially altered and a few buildings have collapsed, burned, been demolished or been replaced. The Star Block's row remains the most intact of any in the city, with no buildings having been replaced or removed since the early 1900s, though the facades of most have been substantially altered. The property is four doors down from (and adjoins in the rear) the Osage City Santa Fe Depot (Figure 2), which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is now a museum and event center, and its adjacent Sante Fe Park. The property backs up to an alley and the Flint Hills Trail's designated path, a rails-to-trails project that runs between Osawatomie and Herington and recently became a state park. The trail's permanent path through Osage City is projected to be constructed in 2021, and the Gilday White Eagle gas station, a 1928 structure restored by the Osage City Area Historical Preservation Society about a half-block northwest of the Star Block, is set to become a waystation.

Exterior

The building exemplifies the Commercial architectural style that was common in the latter half of the 19th century. It includes most of the design elements distinctive to the style: two stories, made of brick, with curvilinear iron-pediments over tall, narrow windows on the upper story. It has distinctive brick designs and patterns at the second story, including an inlaid cross with the year of its construction, 1883, at the center under a brick arch.

The ground level is divided in half, with two retail storefronts and a staircase from the front of the building that goes up to the second floor in the center between them (Figure 3). The storefronts, modified sometime in the mid- to late 20th century, are a combination of brick, wood, and windows. The western storefront has a door on the far western end, while on the eastern storefront’s door is only slightly off-center. The windows on the western storefront feature tall, narrow
panes, while on the eastern storefront, they are larger and nearly square. The upper portion of the ground-level storefront on the western side is clad in wood shingles, while the upper portion of the eastern storefront is simple painted wood. A door in the center between them leads to the staircase to the second floor. Originally, the two ground-level facades were nearly identical and made the building symmetrical, with plate glass framed by cast-iron columns and a slightly recessed double door in the center of each. The central staircase was originally open to the street.

The second-floor exterior largely retains its original features. It features a row of 10 windows, intermixed with designs in the brick. The windows, which were originally tall and narrow, were shrunken in height in the latter 20th century, with the original windows removed and roughly the upper third bricked in. Still, the bricked-in portion is easily identifiable as it was not made flush with the surrounding the brick on the exterior wall, and the iron curvilinear pediments at the top of the original opening were left intact at the original height, as were the iron aprons below the frame. The brick designs include recessed rectangular areas above the windows, protruding pilasters between sets of windows, and staggered bricks that give the appearance of brackets holding up a shelf of the wall that protrudes along the top.

The rear of the building has a less ornamented design, with a wall of stucco over brick. The stucco appears not to original because it covers windows and doors that were later filled in, but it shows abundant signs of age and is not a recent addition. Both the eastern and western storefronts on the lower level have one door and one window on each side. The windows appear to be original double-hung wooden two-over-two in their original openings. The entries are more recent, with the door on the eastern side framed into a space that appears to have been a larger industrial door in the past, and the western one accompanied by a small lean-to that was added to the building in the late 20th century.

A wooden staircase in the rear ascends to a door on the second floor that leads to the central hallway. Early fire maps show the staircase, which now extends straight out from the building, originally was configured differently, extending straight out perpendicular to the building before reaching a landing about halfway down and then splitting off in both directions parallel to the building to finish its descent. At the top is a single wooden door with a transom above, which appears to be the original configuration. On either side of the door is a row of windows: four on the eastern side and three on the western. Three of the four eastern windows are tall and narrow, appearing to be the original double-hung two-over-two wooden windows. The height of the fourth eastern window and the three on the western side has been shrunk, similar to the windows on the front, but the outline of the original frame remains.

**Interior**

The ground floor is divided into two storefronts of equal size, a western one (520 Market Street) and an eastern one (522 Market Street), with a staircase to the second floor running between them at the front of the building. Each storefront runs from the front to the back of the building, roughly 25 feet wide and 80 feet deep, totaling 2,000 square feet.

The storefront on the west side has the best-preserved interior of the building, with plaster walls, baseboards, and a pressed metal ceiling in near-original condition, though in some places, corkboard and paneling covers the plaster. Originally the space was all one large room, and the vast majority of it remains so; in the back, a wall that runs the width of the room separates a small apartment in the rear. The floors are carpeted, but underneath are primarily concrete, with some wood. It is unclear from historical records if the concrete is original, although there is reason to believe that it dates back to at the latest the 1910s when this part of the building was an auto showroom and service center.

The back apartment, built circa the 1980s, mostly has lowered ceilings and laminate flooring. In the spots where new finishes were not added, it is clear it retains the same pressed metal ceilings and concrete floors as the front space. Otherwise, it feels less finished and more industrial, perhaps reflecting its role for several decades in the 20th century as a newspaper press room, with bare concrete floors, simpler window frames, and walls that clearly have not been painted in decades.

The eastern storefront was also originally an open space, but was subdivided – judging by the building materials, in the latter half of the 20th century – into a warren of smaller rooms in the southern two-thirds of the space, the front few acting as offices and the few in the middle as an apartment. Drop ceilings have been installed in this section, though the original ceilings remain above, and the secondary walls that section of the rooms are not full height. The floors are carpeted, but a combination of hardwood and concrete is underneath. The rear third or so of the storefront remains an open space with original height ceilings. Historic wallpaper covers the plaster on the walls and ceiling in this area. Still, much of the plaster in this area is missing or damaged by significant cracking in the northeast corner of the building and water damage from a leak in that same corner.
The upstairs is divided into four primary spaces—two are apartments, one is storage, and one is an apartment, storage, and laundry area—with one anchored in each of the building’s four corners. Separating those spaces are a central double-loaded corridor that bisects the second floor from north to south and a smaller, secondary corridor that runs east to west. The layout of the primary spaces—the two hallways and four major blocks of space—remains as originally configured. Early newspaper accounts indicate that all the spaces were used for offices at the building’s opening, though some people began living there as well within the building’s first decade. Over time, some secondary walls have been added or removed to adapt them to their most recent use as apartments and storage areas. The secondary corridor has been shortened to incorporate the extraneous ends of it into the apartments. It is not clear when all these changes were made, and they may have been made gradually over some time, but fixtures and building materials would indicate that at least some of them were done in the early to the mid-20th century.

The wide front staircase that ascends to the second floor from the street is flanked on both sides by beadboard that appears original and extends a few feet up the wall, and although the stairs are carpeted, the wood underneath also appears original. At the top, it opens into the intersection of the second floor’s two corridors. A much more basic wooden exterior staircase at the back of the building connects to the other end of the central hall.

The apartment in the southeastern corner and the apartment in the southwestern corner are very similar to each other. These retain the original walls, baseboards, doors, and transoms that marked them in their earlier incarnations as offices, as well as a small corridor between the two blocks of offices. The third block of offices in the northwestern corner was partly converted into an apartment and partly into a storage and laundry area. The final block of offices in the northeast corner became a storage area. The northeastern storage area is plagued by the same water leaking and cracking in the walls that are apparent in the storefront below it. It is unclear when all the conversions away from offices took place: Although some of the fixtures clearly date from the 1990s, some appear to be from much earlier in the 20th century, and there are newspaper accounts of people in living in some of the upstairs office spaces as early as the 1890s. The floors on the second story are mostly original oak, though carpet currently covers much of them.

Among the Star Block’s most notable features are three large, octagonal skylights on the second floor (shown on the roof in Figure 7). These were much remarked-on at the time of the building’s opening. Noting the skylights on a diagram, the Osage City Republican called the building upon its opening “the best lighted of any in the city.” One is in the central hall, and the others flank it in the former office spaces converted into storage on either side. The westernmost one remains in largely original condition, though the glass panes were at some point replaced by plexiglass. The other two have been capped, apparently to deter leaks, and no longer allow in light, though the octagonal interior structure of them remains intact. Supplementing the skylights are original transoms atop nearly all the doors on the second floor, as well as windows from some of the former offices out onto the hallways. However, the glass panes have been removed and replaced with wood to preserve privacy in the apartments.

Although some modifications have been made over time and other elements have been lost to deterioration, the Star Block retains much of its integrity and many original features from when it was built in 1883. It remains in the location it was built, and retains its original footprint, except for the addition of a small lean-to. The setting is largely unchanged from the 1880s, with the building hugging the sidewalk and Market Street just as it did, part of the same row of buildings it was part of in its earliest days (and the only one in the town from that time that remains unbroken). Although the building’s lower storefronts have been altered and some secondary walls have been added or removed, the building maintains its recognizable design emblematic of the 19th-century Commercial Style. Its primary spaces of two storefronts on the lower floor and four blocks of rooms upstairs are all still defined. Though, of the changes that did occur, the original construction is largely intact behind an added wall or lowered ceiling. The decorative brick of the façade and the cast iron curvilinear pediments and aprons around the windows, which remain almost entirely intact, coupled with the large, octagonal skylights, convey some of the best remaining exterior details of a period of commercial prosperity in Osage City, and a few of the original double-hung wooden windows remain in back. Both the workmanship and materials remain apparent, too, not only in those features but in surviving internal original details created by the building’s craftsmen: a 2,000-square-foot pressed-metal ceiling, much of the original plaster, and many of the wooden floors, baseboards, doorframes, doors, transoms, and interior windows. These may add up to the best set of surviving examples of workmanship from a prominent builder, James McNames, who created many of the major early buildings in Osage City but little of whose work remains. Overall, these remaining period elements and the survival of the primary spaces provide a direct association with the building’s period of historic significance, when it was a busy hub of commerce in early Osage City, and still offer observers a feeling of that period that, while not uniform throughout the structure, remains prevalent.
Star Block
Osage 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.)

- 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

COMMERCIAL

Period of Significance

1883-1923

Significant Dates

1883

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

James McNames (builder)
George Todd (builder)
Isaac Platt (builder)

Period of Significance (justification)

The era of 1883 to 1923 represented the peak of commercial activity in the building, and of its centrality to overall commerce in Osage City, with at least 74 businesses and office tenants -- roughly 90 percent of the total number of businesses known to have ever existed in the building -- occupying the building during that time. By 1920, Osage City had lost about one-third of its population from 1890, and nearly half from what unofficial estimates put it at during the peak boom years when the building was built. By 1923, after an aborted attempt by the owners to turn the entire first floor into a large movie theater, no records could be found of any businesses remaining. The Star Block would go on to house additional businesses over time, including as the longtime home to the Osage City Journal-Free Press, but with the town's shrunken commercial base, it never again had remotely the density of businesses it did during its earlier years.

Criteria Considerations (justification) n/a
Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary
The Star Block is significant for its connection to and prominent role in the commercial history of Osage City. It opened as a centerpiece of commerce in the community and remained so for much of its history. It is one of the best remaining examples of the period when money from the coal boom of the late 1800s washed through Osage City and the surrounding area, fueling a surge in population and a rush to erect buildings with architecture to match the city’s newfound prosperity. Over its history, it has housed at least 80 businesses, and as many as 13 at a time in its early years, including both general and specialized stores, newspapers, medical clinics, restaurants, a vaudeville theater, and offices for many of the town’s most important industries and prominent citizens. The building immediately became a major hub of commercial activity in Osage City when it opened in 1883 and serves as a significant example of the prosperity during the town’s early coal mining boom.

Elaboration

History of Commerce in Osage County and Osage City
The Osage County coal-mining boom of the late 1800s is perhaps best known for fueling the westward expansion of railroad lines, particularly the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, and the rapid development across Kansas and into Colorado that followed their expansion. The AT&SF rerouted its primary westward artery from its original plans to dip into Osage County and help satisfy the railroad’s ever-growing need for coal as it expanded. Osage City was surveyed and platted in 1869 after the route had been determined but before it was built. “Osage county remained the principal supplier of fuel to the Santa Fe from 1869 until the line opened its mines in Crawford county in 1886,” according to a history of railroads and mining in the county.1

By 1880, the railroad’s ravenous demand for coal was threatening to outstrip even the steadily growing Osage County supply, and the AT&SF took more direct control, pumping its own capital into the Osage County coalfield to purchase 30,000 acres and increase supply. Coal production mushroomed, nearly tripling by 1883 to 371,885 tons.2 The surge in production propelled not only the railroad but also Osage City, as mining jobs swelled, with a town history published in 1883 pegging employment in the mines at more than 1,200. Businesses sprung up to meet the mining rush, and a boomtown was born. The town’s population ballooned from 2,098 in the 1880 census to 3,469 in the 1890 census, a peak it would never again attain. But that probably understates the boom, which began fading before 1890. Newspaper estimates mid-decade put the total within city limits at about 4,000, with perhaps 5,000 including the areas immediately outside town. At their peak, coal miners’ wages had injected as much as $95,000 a month – almost $2.4 million in today’s dollars – into the town’s economy.3

The infusion of that much money into the economy led to a burgeoning commercial scene, and in the 1880s, the burgeoning commercial scene led to demand for more, larger, and better business houses. “My business is good,” Gus Burklund, the primary jeweler in the county, said in the spring of 1883, an assessment shared by many other merchants and other businessmen interviewed at the time by the Osage City Free Press.4 “In January it was the best I have ever experienced since I have been connected to the jewelry business in this city.” Mr. Burklund, whose store would go on to anchor the Star Block’s western storefront for nearly two decades, was waiting for the completion of construction on his new space. “There never was so much building going on in this city before,” he said. “I am going to spread out big as soon as I can get into my room.”

The 1880s would prove to be the peak for commerce in Osage City, though the decline was largely gradual over several decades. Mining in the area that continued into the 1960s, a surrounding agricultural base that provided for a fallback industry and the town’s status as the largest city and commercial hub in the county allowed for a softer landing than some mining towns experienced.

1 Hartsock, D. Lane. “The Impact of the Railroads on Coal Mining in Osage County, 1869-1910,” Kansas Historical Quarterly, Winter 1971 (Vol. 37, No. 4), pages 429 to 440
2 Hartsock, “The Impact of the Railroads on Coal Mining”
3 “In the Coal Fields,” Topeka Capital, June 13, 1888
4 “Osage City’s Boom,” Osage City Free Press, March 15, 1883
Building the Star Block at 520-522 Market Street

The Star Block building was built in 1883, roughly the peak of prosperity, intended to be the centerpiece of a new commercial row on the central block of the central street in downtown Osage City, replacing a wooden row of stores that had burned the previous November with a larger, more ornate brick row more befitting the town’s prosperity and burgeoning business scene. The Star Block was, the Osage City Free Press declared when it was nearly complete, “unquestionably the best and the most attractive block of buildings in the city.” The article then added, “It is probably a little wicked to say so, but the fire on the 2d of November, 1882, was a blessing to this city and not much disguised either.”

Construction took about five months and was estimated to cost $10,000 or less by one newspaper, and $10,000 to $12,000 by another, sums that would be the equivalent of roughly $250,000 to $300,000 today. When it was complete, the Osage City Republican called the building “a monument of beauty,” with work “done in first-class style.”

The men who had the building constructed and originally co-owned it were Marshall K. Howe and Capt. James A. Drake, both pillars of the community. Mr. Howe also co-owned one of the city’s opera houses as well as, off and on, other businesses in the fledgling town. But his primary wealth was built with real estate, including a section of the town that he developed, Howe’s Addition. He appears to have made a princely sum off the Star Block alone, selling his half for $8,000 months after the building’s completion, as much as double what it was estimated to have cost. By 1886, he had turned his holdings of houses, land, commercial real estate, and business interests in Osage City into what a St. Louis newspaper estimated to be a $40,000 fortune, making him one of the wealthiest men in the city, and he expanded his development work into Topeka and eventually Chicago. He then, after having met Charles W. Post in Osage City, became the major outside investor in what became the Post cereal empire, serving as its treasurer and running the company as part of its “cabinet” after Mr. Post’s death. Capt. Drake, a Civil War veteran who was one of the earliest Osage City settlers, owned various buildings downtown along with his wife. He himself had a small coal-mining operation in the county and went on to help found two other major industries in the town, the brickworks and the creamery. He was a consistent community booster, helping lead the efforts to lure railroads, businesses, and the county seat to Osage City (the last one unsuccessful), and he later became City Council president.

The builders were James McNames, George Todd, and Isaac Platt. Mr. McNames, a Canadian native who was born in 1840 and moved to the Osage City area in 1859, was perhaps the most prominent builder in the young city. He oversaw the construction of “many of our largest business houses,” as the Osage City Free Press noted in 1902, including most of the landmark structures during the boom, such as the Everest Hotel, and the Union Hall Opera House and its accompanying Union Block. Unfortunately, his output fell as the boom faded, and he spent his later years shuttling in and out of jail, which the Osage City Free Press blamed on a “bad temper, superinduced when opportunity afforded, by bad whisky.” Now, only a shell of his once-formidable imprint on the town is left; the Everest Hotel, Union Hall Opera House, and Union Block have all been torn down. Mr. Todd sometimes partnered with Mr. McNames and built more several more modest structures in Osage City on his own. Mr. Platt oversaw the masonry and stonework, as he did for the Union Block. Kansas City Iron Works provided the iron.

Star Block History and Commerce

From the beginning, the Star Block bore the marks of the coal-fueled boom that enabled its construction. Not only was one of the owners himself a mine owner, but the city’s second-largest mining company, the Western Coal and Mining Company, which employed 200 people, located its general manager’s office there. The agent for the Osage Union Coal Company soon moved there as well. The relative ambition of the building also marks it as of its uniquely flush era:

5 “The Burnt District Rehabilitated,” Osage City Free Press, May 17, 1883
6 “The Burnt District Rehabilitated”
7 “Star Block,” Osage City Republican, May 24, 1883
8 “Star Block”
9 Untitled article, Osage City Free Press, Oct. 18, 1883
10 “Six Rich Men,” Osage City Free Press, May 6, 1886
11 Carson, Gerald, Conflake Crusade: From the Pulpit to the Breakfast Table (Rinehart & Company: 1957); “Cabinet carried on the business,” Battle Creek (Mich.) Enquirer, Jan. 11, 1970
13 “An Old Timer”
14 Cutler, William G. History of the State of Kansas, 1883
Outside of the few peak boom years, Osage City commercial buildings both before and since have not featured such elaborate and ornate designs, or such expensive materials.

It featured a business roster to match. Thirteen businesses opened with the building in May 1883, including a dry goods store, a jeweler, a music store, a newspaper, a millinery, and the first several of what were to be a long line of doctors and dentists. Soon to follow would be bookstores, drugstores, dressmakers, insurance and real estate agencies, loan brokers, and a telephone company office that in the late 1880s had the only public phone in the city. In 1887, the newspaper Kansas People, which by then had itself taken up residence in the building, called the Star Block “the most busy mart of the town.”

It also was a staple of community life. Before Osage City built a library, the building had a public reading room. Before the construction of City Hall, at least one City Council meeting took place at the Star Block, where the mayor at the time (one of several building occupants who would serve in that post over time) had his business office. Many of the building’s tenants served on the City Council, school board, and Board of Industry, as well as in other offices such as city assessor, county coroner, and president of the state medical board. The city’s waterworks were planned from an office there. The building hosted classes in business and dressmaking. It was a headquarters for charity drives and relief funds. Parts of the building were also used as living quarters from the late 1800s until 2019.

But the building’s greatest legacy in town was as a commercial hub. With two major retail showrooms downstairs and space for up to nearly a dozen offices upstairs, depending on the configuration, the businesses there over time included a vaudeville and movie theater; an architect; the office of one of the town’s major industrial employers outside the coal mines, the Osage City Canning Factory Co.; a candy store and confectionary; a hotel; an auto sales showroom; a painting studio; a photography studio; an antiques store; a computer store; two restaurants; a shooting gallery; six dry goods and variety stores; and eight businesses that dealt in some combination of real estate, lending, and insurance.

The building had particular importance as a medical and media center. Its tenants’ overtime included at least nine physician’s offices, four dentists, three chiropractors, and, notably, a female homeopathist in the 1880s. Four pharmacies were anchor tenants on the lower floor. “There are six doctors located in the Star block,” the Osage City Republican noted shortly after the building opened, “and one side of the west room filled with pure drugs. We are safe either way.” The Star Block was also home to four newspapers: the Osage City Republican, Kansas People (which was, for a time, Daily Kansas People), the Osage County Times, and, for several decades during the mid-20th century, the Journal-Free Press. And it stood in for the famed Emporia Gazette in ABC’s 1977 Emmy-winning film “Mary White,” about journalist William Allen White’s daughter, serving as the setter for scenes at the newspaper, as noted in the Kansas Historical Society’s Kansapedia entry on Osage County. Finally, it served as the studio for the KZ-93 radio station (KZOC-FM) in the 1980s and 1990s.

As Osage City’s fortunes and commercial activity declined, so too did the Star Block’s. In the first half of the 20th century, the number of businesses in the building dwindled into the single digits, and some of the upstairs offices appear to have been used as living quarters. By the 1970s, the second floor was empty. By the mid-1990s, the entire building was empty. Although a few more businesses would subsequently inhabit the retail areas downstairs and residents would live in spaces that had been turned into apartments, by 2019, the building was empty again, deteriorating and up for tax auction. It is now in preparation for rehabilitation.

Changes to the Star Block Over Time
No permits or other building records apparently exist documenting changes to the Star Block, but photographs, newspaper accounts, and personal accounts from people associated with the building provide some clues. On the exterior, some elements of the façade have been removed or redesigned over time. The building originally featured cornices supported on decorative brackets and three gables above the roofline that are no longer present (Figures 4-6), having been removed sometime around 1950. The center gable appears to have been removed before the outer two, suggesting that their removal was likely because of gradual deterioration rather than as part of a redesign. A brick area above the center arch that once had the embossed words “STAR BLOCK” (Figure 5) appears in historic images at the base of the center gable. Historically, the ground floor included cast-iron pilasters with stylized capitals (Figure 5).
framing storefronts that consisted mostly of glass. When the storefronts were changed to their current configuration is not known, though photographs, design and building materials would suggest the latter half of the 20th century. It is possible that some of the cast-iron pilasters survive, but determining this will require stripping back the modern storefront that now clads the first floor.

On the rear of the building, at least one door has been moved and one window filled in on the ground floor. These changes appear to be quite old, as they were made before the back was stuccoed, and the stucco itself shows signs of significant age. A much more recent addition, likely post-1980s, is the small lean-to added on to the rear on the western side.

Inside, most of the changes have consisted of adding secondary walls to existing spaces, and the original walls and ceilings defining the primary spaces have been left intact. An early diagram of the building shows that originally the entire western storefront space was open, and a secondary staircase to the second floor was in the back, but the staircase was removed, and a wall and kitchen had been created in the backspace where the apartment now is by 1900 when the first of two restaurants in the space opened. This backspace later became the press room for the Osage City Journal-Free Press when it occupied the storefront through the middle decades of the 20th century. The front and midsection of the eastern retail space, originally open, have been subdivided into several rooms for offices and apartments, and secondary walls have similarly been added in the northwestern block of offices. Judging by materials and style, all these changes appear to have been made in the postwar 20th century. In all these cases, the walls defining the original primary spaces remain.

The Star Block is locally significant for its connection to and prominent role in the commercial history of Osage City. The large building functioned as a centerpiece of commerce in the communication and continued serving this function through most of its history. The Star Block is one of the best examples of the coal boom period of the late 1800s that spurred growth and prosperity in the small town of Osage City. The building houses at least 80 businesses over its history, including many general and specialized stores, newspapers, medical clinics, restaurants, a vaudeville theater, and office for many of the town's most important industries. The building retains good historic integrity and materials and is a good representation of the commercial development in the area.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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

*Battle Creek (Mich.) Enquirer*, news item (Page 4, no headline), Aug. 20, 1939

Clopton, Douglas. Interviewed by Nathan Willis and Rodney Willis. Clopton was a former owner of the building.

Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas*, 1883


*Kansapedia*, “Osage County, Kansas,” Kansas Historical Society website

*Kansas People*, news item (Page 3, no headline), May 18, 1887


*Osage City Republican*, news item (Page 3, no headline), Jan. 26, 1883; “Star Block,” May 24, 1883; news item (Page 3, no headline), May 31, 1883

*Osage County Herald-Chronicle*, “A history of Osage County newspapers” by Rosie Blacketer, 2009

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from Osage City, Kansas. Sanborn Map Company, 1885, 1891, 1897, 1912, 1923

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.16

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Longitude</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>38.634931</td>
<td>-95.826483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: ____________
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
The property is located on Lots 16 and 18, Block 14, Wetherell's 1st Addition, Osage City, Kansas. The property is bounded to the south by Market Street, and to the east, west, and north by adjacent property lines.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The boundary includes the entire parcel historically associated with the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nathan Willis, owner
organization __________________________ date __________________________
street & number 1643 Sixth St. NW, Unit 3 telephone 202-640-0816
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20001
e-mail nathanswillis@gmail.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Nathan Willis
street & number 1643 Sixth St. NW, Unit 3 telephone 202-640-0816
city or town Washington state DC zip code 20001

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: Star Block
City or Vicinity: Osage City
County: Osage State: Kansas
Photographer: Rodney Willis and Nathan Willis
Date Photographed: October/December 2019
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include a description of view indicating the direction of
### Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo Number</th>
<th>View</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Southern elevation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Detail on central arch on upper floor, southern elevation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Detail on brickwork and windows on upper floor, southern elevation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Northern elevation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Interior of western storefront on first floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Detail of pressed tin ceiling in western storefront on first floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Rear of western storefront on first floor showing wall separating back apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Offices and apartment space in eastern storefront on first floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Storage area in rear of eastern storefront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Storage area in rear of eastern storefront</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Front staircase to second floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Central hallway on second floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Southeastern apartment on second floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Southwestern apartment on second floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Detail of door and transom on southwest apartment passageway to southeast apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Detail of westernmost skylight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Northwestern apartment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td>NE</td>
<td>Northeastern storage room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 1. The Star Block’s location in the context of Osage City. (Google Maps)
Figure 2. Boundary map. (Google Maps)
Figure 3: Topographic Map
Figure 3. The Star Block’s current floor plan. (Owner’s sketch)
Figure 4. The Star Block, viewed from the south, circa 1890. (Osage City Journal-Free Press, via Osage County Historical Society)
Figure 5. The Star Block at the center of its row of retail buildings, viewed from the southwest, at the Market Street railroad crossing, 1910. (Osage County Historical Society)
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 6. The Star Block, viewed from the southeast, circa 1911. (City of Osage City)
Figure 7. Photo key. (Google Maps)
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 1

Photo 2
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 3

Photo 4
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 5

Photo 6
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 13
Photo 14
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 15

Photo 16
Star Block
Name of Property

Osage County, Kansas
County and State

Photo 17

Photo 18