

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Ellis Congregational Church

other names/site number 051-1600-0004

### 2. Location

street & number Eighth and Washington Streets  not for publication

city or town Ellis  vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Ellis code 051 zip code 67637

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



D-SHPO

January 25, 2000

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Kansas State Historical Society

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Ellis Congregational Church  
Name of Property

Ellis County, KS  
County and State

**5. Classification**

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

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Religion: Religious Facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture: Museum

Social: Meeting Hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian: Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Limestone

walls Stone: Limestone

roof Wood: Shingle

other

**Narrative Description**

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

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1907 - 1908

Significant Dates

1907 - 1908

1952, Bell Tower Lowered

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wise and Jacobs

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Ellis Congregational Church  
Name of Property

Ellis County, KS  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	4	4	5	1	4	4	0	4	3	1	0	1	1	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

  
2 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

3 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

  
4 

Zone			Easting					Northing						

  
 See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christy Davis, Consultant

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date October 20, 1998

street & number 118 East Tenth Street telephone (316) 282-0424

city or town Newton, KS state KS zip code 67114

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ellis Arts and Historical Society

street & number 308 W. 14th Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Ellis state KS zip code 67637

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Narrative Description**

**Exterior:** The Ellis Congregational Church (1907-08), a 1 and ½ story structural limestone, Gothic Revival building with a simple hipped roof and lower gabled projections from its simple I-plan mass. The building dominates the southeast corner of Block Three, Original Town Plat of Ellis, Ellis County, Kansas (pop. 1814) and is fewer than two blocks from downtown Ellis on Washington Street, Ellis's main thoroughfare. It is first substantial structure one sees when entering town from the north.

The church's main construction material is native limestone. The rough blocks, whose sizes vary, give the structure a rustic quality. Beaded mortar joints cement the rusticated blocks. Each block bears the mark of the drill holes used to break the stone into pieces.

The roof of the building is wood framed. It is steep hipped in shape with lower cross gables which have stone parapets. The roof has always been shingled with wood. Originally, however, the roof had a metal crest.

The facade of the building faces east toward Washington Street. Its most prominent features are two large crenelated towers, one on the southeast corner of the building, the other on the north end of the facade, which break through the hipped roof and protrude from the facade plane. Originally the tower on the southeast corner of the building was a taller bell tower. The congregation removed the bell and shortened the tower in 1952, making the towers nearly equal in height. Ten steps lead to a pointed entrance opening on each tower. Set into each entrance opening is a white painted wood frame which houses a double wood door topped with a triangular floral pattern stained glass window. Above the entrance on each tower is a small circular window with floral pattern. Aesthetic buttresses angle from three of the south tower's corners and two front corners of the north tower.

Another main feature of the facade are its windows. Like the pointed-arch entrances, the white wooden frames of each of these windows support the stone arches that surround them. The building's main window, located on the low front gable which emerges from the hipped roof and breaks the plane of the facade, features a three-light, stained glass window design. In the case of this window, the wood frame not only supports the structural stone, but also separates the window into its three parts. The center piece of the window features an elaborate organic floral pattern. The pattern of each of the flanking windows is geometric, with diamond shapes. This geometric pattern is repeated in the building's smaller pointed-arched windows, three of which are located on the facade – one between each tower and the front gable and one on the north side of the facade. Below each of these windows is a small, rectangular window with pane glass. All of the windows are double hung.

The south elevation which faces Eighth Street is also quite elaborate. It too features a lower cross gable with window identical to the one on the facade. The massive stone on the south tower is interrupted by one of the small

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Gothic windows at the same level and of the same design as those on the front. Above the window, at the same level as the circular window on the front of the tower, is another circular window. Two other small Gothic windows -- one between the tower and the gable and one west of the gable are also similar to those on the front. As on the main facade, each window, including that on the tower, has a small rectangular pane glass window below it, the gable having two. A small addition, which extends the wall westward, has been added to this elevation to make the building A. D. A. accessible. It is made of limestone blocks and has a set of double doors which open to a ramp that leads to the basement.

A large hipped gable protrudes from the roof on the west elevation. This wing, which in the interior serves as the platform level of the sanctuary. It has two small Gothic windows and three regular pane windows on its west-facing wall. Another small Gothic window on the wing faces south. The ramp addition is flush on the west side with the wing and is less than one-story high.

The north elevation is similar to the south. A three-light window, flanked by two smaller windows fenestrates the gable. The gable is flush with the north wall.

**Interior;** first floor; Sanctuary: The building's interior has maintained its original appearance. One enters the sanctuary at an angle through a wood door with transom in the small foyer inside the southeast tower. The Akron-plan sanctuary is basically square in shape, the exceptions being the angled entrance and angled altar opposite it. In the Akron-plan, the pulpit is moved to a corner of the sanctuary and the pews are arranged in a semi-circle around it. Two of the building's three large windows light the sanctuary. On the interior, the wooden window frames are stained rather than painted. The center aisle is carpeted and is perpendicular to the entrance and altar. The wooden pews sit atop an exposed wood floor. The pulpit, chairs and altar are made of stained wood.

The interior plaster walls are painted. The basic shape of the pressed tin ceiling is decked; it angles from the top of the walls in each corner to a flat deck in the center. From each of the deck's four corners hangs to a historic light fixture. The ceiling shape near the tall large windows conforms to the shape of their gabled roofs, allowing them to break the room's standard wall height.

The north wall of the sanctuary contains two large retracting vertical doors which allows the sanctuary to be opened up into the Sunday school room when special events require additional space.

**Interior;** first floor; Sunday School: The north tower entrance leads to the formal entrance of the Sunday School room, which today houses the headquarters of the Bukovina Society. The main room is large and rectangular. As in the sanctuary, the hardwood floors are exposed in the room. To the east of the main room is the entrance to a smaller room which provides office/storage space.

**Interior;** basement level. The north tower entrance also provides access to the original stair to the basement. As

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mentioned above, persons may also enter the basement using a ramp on the southeast corner of the building's exterior. Light from the rectangular pane glass provides lighting for the basement's two kitchens, recreational room, and large meeting room. Restrooms are located on this level and have been recently remodeled. Most of the architectural details in the basement, however, remain unchanged. The ceilings, for instance, still expose the original pressed tin. Rather than lowering the ceilings for the heating system, contractors have simply left the ventilation system exposed. Although the kitchens are modern, cabinets throughout the basement are historic – some tall and white with wainscoting. The recreation room was remodeled in the 1950s or 1960s when storage cabinets and a new fireplace mantel was added.

Every room in the Ellis Congregational Church, except for the sanctuary, is currently being used on a regular basis. Senior groups and community organizations meet in the basement. Bukovina Society has its headquarters upstairs. Consequently, the building has been adequately maintained during the twenty-five years since the congregation disbanded. It is the goal of these groups and former members of the congregation to continue to maintain the building's historic features for future generations, upholding the building's outstanding architectural integrity.

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**Statement of Significance**

Ellis Congregational Church (1907-1908) is being nominated to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural significance as an example of a Gothic Revival religious structure. The oldest of the town's extant churches is significant in that it not only contributes to the town's character but also because it represents a bygone era of structural native limestone construction in the post-rock region of Kansas. The design is eclectic, its most distinctive features owing to Late Gothic Revival architecture (1890s-1930). The building, now ninety years old, still has all of its original woodwork, exposed hardwood floors, beautifully-crafted stained glass windows, pews and pressed tin ceilings. After serving its congregation for sixty-five years (the congregation disbanded in 1973), it was converted into a community center, today occupied at various times during the week by the Ellis Arts and Historical Society, AARP, Rotary Club, Ellis Nutrition Center and Bukovina Society.

Historical Background and Significance

By 1903, Ellis County, Kansas residents had endured thirty years of instability on the Kansas plains, surviving drought, grasshopper plagues and economic depression. In 1906, the members of the Ellis Congregation Church, then meeting in a wooden meeting place, constructed in 1873, chose to build a more permanent building. The new century, in which the Kansas economy prospered as it had not since the booming 1880s, brought promise to all Kansans, allowing them for the first time in decades to fund buildings whose aesthetic qualities met or exceeded necessity of function. "At the beginning of the twentieth century," notes Daniel Holt in his study unit of on Kansas architecture from 1900-1940, "Kansas towns ... experienced their greatest period of commercial and business construction prior to World War II."

Not only did the good times inspire a boom in commercial construction, but they also allowed congregations throughout the state to fund the construction of churches, whose architecture was often eclectic with features of the popular English Gothic Revival Style.<sup>1</sup> Examples of churches in this genre include Council Grove's First Baptist Church (c. 1909-13) and Wichita's First Presbyterian Church (1910).

Ellis county has a high concentration of Gothic/eclectic churches. There, impressive limestone churches during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth-centuries, such as Saint Catherine's Church in Catherine (1890), and later Victoria's St. Fidelis Church (Cathedral of the Plains, 1908-11) raised the architectural standard.<sup>2</sup> The contractors for each of these churches used native limestone, prevalent in the area of central Kansas known as the post-rock region. The post rocks were broken by drilling and the use of metal "feathers" that were tapped alternately to break the stone. The rock was called "post rock" because wood was scarce and ranchers used it for fence posts. Also, post rocks would not burn in prairie fires.



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Members of the Ellis Congregational Church decided in 1906 to build their new church of limestone in the Gothic Revival Style. The proposed design boasted a number of Late Gothic Revival features including the use of stone as the principal construction material, pointed "Gothic" openings and crenelated towers.<sup>3</sup> The native limestone construction, to which Daniel Holt refers as Kansas' true vernacular architecture, would give the design a Kansas and "post-rock-country" quality, since the design called for rough blocks of varying sizes.<sup>4</sup>

The church was constructed on property the church acquired in 1906. On 11 December of that year, church trustee, general store owner and banker J. S. Nicholson (1846-1920) and his wife Annie E. Nicholson donated lots 8, 9 and 10 in Block 3 of Ellis Original Plat, on the northwest corner of Washington and Grant (now Eighth) Streets, to the congregation.

Soon after the trustees secured a site for the new building, contractors began to build. For the construction, the church hired stonemasons Tony Jacobs and Chris Wise. Jacobs was born near Hays, Kansas (ten miles east of Ellis) in 1881. At the turn of the century he began his construction career mixing cement for Wise construction company in Hays. The two collaborated under the name Wise and Jacobs prior to the construction of Ellis Congregational Church and are credited with building a number of local buildings during their careers, including Saint Anthony's hospital, the Lamar Hotel and Saint Joseph College (now Thomas Moore Prep), all in Hays.<sup>5</sup>

Tony Jacobs was only twenty six when he, Wise and their assistants arrived in Ellis on Tuesday, 30 April 1907.<sup>6</sup> By 10 May, notes the *Ellis Review-Headlight*, "The stone masons [were] making good progress on the foundation ...."<sup>7</sup> By August the frames which would encapsulate the large stained glass windows were in place and the masons were closing the gaps between them with large blocks of post-rock limestone hauled to the site in horse-drawn wagons.

Church members anxiously looked on as workmen in overalls carefully hoisted the cornerstone onto a temporary platform during a ceremony at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, 3 August 1907. The contents of a box placed within the cornerstone represented each member of the congregation. They included "a bible, history of the church society, names of the official members, names of the choir, Ladies Aid Society, Senior and Junior Endeavor, officers of Sunday school," a copy of the flood edition of the *Ellis Review-Headlight* and a "sketch of the early history of Ellis by Mother Smith."<sup>8</sup> Following an address by master of ceremonies "Attorney Flood," "Dr. Thayer of Topeka, and Rev. Breck of Russell," contractors Wise and Jacobs "spread the mortar and placed the stone in position." "[T]he beauty of the architectural design," noted the *Review-Headlight* in its coverage of the ceremony, "is becoming more apparent each day."<sup>9</sup>

After the cornerstone ceremony, the contractors continued at a steady pace, inserting the many stained glass windows into their places and a 700 pound bell into the large tower on the church's southeast corner. By 1908, the

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contractors had completed all interior work as well; and in that year the church was dedicated.

Fortunately, the beauty of the architectural design and craftsmanship of the masters who built the Ellis Congregational Church is still apparent today. Other than the removal of the top of the bell tower in 1952 the building's exterior and interior remain virtually unchanged ninety years after its construction.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the building maintains a high level of architectural integrity.

**Endnotes**

1. Daniel Holt, *Kansas Preservation Plan, Study Unit on a Time of Contrasts: Progress, Prosperity and the Great Depression, 1900-1940*. (Topeka: Kansas Preservation Department, 1990), 22-23.
2. David Sachs and George Ehrlich, *Guide to Kansas Architecture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996).
3. Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M. I. T. Press, 1969), 173.
5. Holt, *Time of Contrasts*, 5.
6. History Book Committee, eds., "Congregational Church, Ellis," *At Home in Ellis County, 1867-1992* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), 167.
7. *Ellis Review-Headlight*, Friday, 3 May 1907, 1. No information about the stonemasons is available. They may have come to Ellis from Hays. Hays city directories, however, are unavailable prior to the 1930s.
8. *Ibid.*, Friday, 10 May 1907, 1.
9. *Ibid.*, Friday, 9 August 1907, 1.
10. *Ibid.*, Friday, 2 August 1907, 3.
11. History Book Committee, *At Home*, 167.

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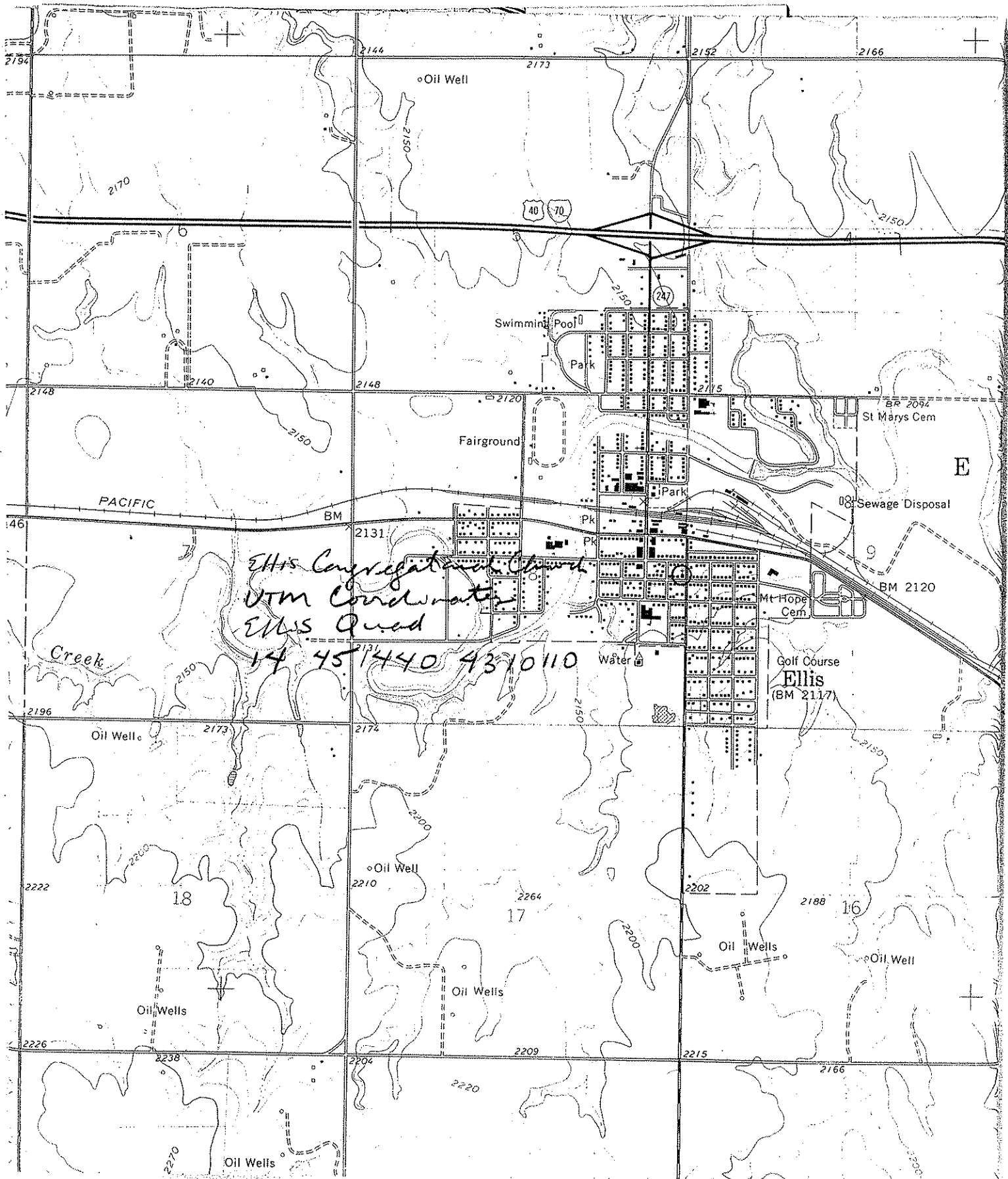
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#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is located on Block 3, Lots 8, 9, and 10 in Ellis, Kansas. The property is bounded to the east by Washington Street, to the south by 8th Street and to the north and west by adjacent property lines.

#### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nomination contains all property historically associated with the church.



Ellis Congregational Church  
UTM Coordinates  
Ellis Quad  
14 45 1440 4310110

PACIFIC

Fairground

Swimming Pool

Park

Park

St Marys Cem

Sewage Disposal

Mt Hope Cem

Golf Course  
Ellis  
(BM 2117)

Creek

Oil Well

Oil Well

Oil Wells

Oil Well

Oil Wells

Oil Wells

Oil Wells