1. Name of Property

Historic name  Kansas Power Company Plant

Other names/site number  Midland Water, Light & Ice Company; Sgt. Pyle’s Auto Repair (current); KHRI # 057-1394

Name of related Multiple Property Listing  N/A

2. Location

street & number  709 W Trail St

city or town  Dodge City

state  Kansas  code  KS  county  Ford  code  057  zip code  67801

3-4. Certification

I hereby certify that this property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Applicable State Register Criteria:  X  A  B  C  D

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

Kansas State Historical Society  State agency

Listed in the state register 8/13/2016
## 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>(Check as many boxes as apply)</td>
<td>(Check only one box)</td>
<td>(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x private</td>
<td>x building(s)</td>
<td>Contributing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Local</td>
<td>district</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - State</td>
<td>site</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public - Federal</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the State Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- INDUSTRY / Energy Facility

### Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE / Specialty Store

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- OTHER: Industrial

### Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Concrete
- walls: Brick
- Stucco
- roof: Concrete (Tar Repairs)
- other: 

The Kansas Power Company Plant has undergone significant alterations since the first construction on this property in 1886. The extant complex was in its current form by 1932, according to the Sanborn map from that year. The extent of alterations (specifically the loss of parts of the plant) makes this building ineligible for the National Register of Historic Places; however, the building's association with the development of Dodge City supports its listing in the Register of Historic Kansas Places. Because of the complexity of the remaining plant, each section of the building is described below, using available Sanborn Fire Insurance maps (Figure 2) and current aerial images as reference.

Figure 1: 2014 Aerial image, showing the Kansas Power Company Plant in context. The plant is marked by an X. North is up.

The building that housed the plant’s engine room is located at the northeast corner of the parcel (“A” on Figure 3). It is constructed entirely of brick with an applied stucco material (dating to at least 1936) on all elevations except the exposed portion of the west wall. An applied stucco plinth accentuates the juncture between the wall and ground on the north and east elevations. The cornice consists of built-up brick in an arched machicolated pattern capped with a built-up brick parapet, running the length of the north and east elevations. The roof is flat concrete behind the parapet; the concrete roof is supported by a steel truss and beam system. The two-story building contains an open interior space with mezzanine on the east and south.

The north elevation faces Trail Street, measures approximately 86 feet, and is flush with the north wall of the Warehouse Building to the west, making the total width of the complex’s north elevation approximately 125 feet (Photos 1 & 2). Six bays fill the north elevation of the Engine Room: five window bays and one solid bay.
Figure 2: From top to bottom, 1918, 1926, and 1932 Sanborn maps.
From east to west, Bays 1, 3, 5, & 6 are identical, two-story window units with soldier-brick surrounds and an arched top. The ground levels of the bays contain historic steel windows that are eight panes wide by five panes high. Above this window is a stuccoed panel. Another historic window is above this panel. It is six panes wide by five panes high with operable awning sashes. A stuccoed panel with semi-circular top caps the bay. Centered in the panels are brick diamond motifs. The windows on both levels have brick sills. Bay 4 is identical to Bay 1 except that the ground floor window is replaced by a double pedestrian door. Bay 2 is blank, though there is enough space between Bays 1 & 3 for a similar window system to exist.  

A sign for “Sgt. Pyle’s Auto Repair” is located in the space between the east corner and Bay 1.

The east elevation of the Engine Room Building measures approximately 37 feet and is divided into three almost evenly-spaced bays (Photos 1 & 3). These bays are of a similar, though narrower, design than the window units on the north elevation; the ground level steel windows are six panes wide by four panes high; the upper windows are five panes wide by five panes high. The center bay contains a pair of pedestrian doors at ground level.

Only the upper portion of the west elevation is exposed above the roof of the Warehouse Building (Photos 6, 7, & 8). It has no window openings, nor is it covered in stucco. The remainder of the elevation is the east interior wall of the Warehouse Building. Only a portion of the south elevation is visible above a later addition; it is painted or stuccoed to match the north and east elevations but does not contain the parapet and cornice decoration (Photo 5). Two historic steel clerestory windows (six panes wide by four panes high) with operable center awning sash puncture this wall, lighting the two-story interior space of the Engine Room Building.

B. Warehouse Building

Dates: ca. 1911-1918

Photos: 1-2 & 6-8

The plant’s warehouse/store room is located to the immediate west of the engine room (“B” on Figure 3). The one-story brick building has a stucco finish on the north, west, and part of the south elevations applied sometime after 1936. Like the Engine Room Building, there is an applied stucco plinth that accentuates the juncture between the wall and ground on the north and west elevations. The cornice consists of built-up brick in a rectangular machicolated pattern capped with a built-up brick parapet. This detail is evident on all exterior elevations (north, west, and south), though the north and west elevations are painted to appear arch-topped like the cornice of the Engine Room Building. The east elevation historically also contained this cornice detail; however, it was mostly removed when the roof of the Engine Room Building was raised sometime between 1926 and 1932. The east exterior elevation of the Warehouse Building now partially makes up the west interior wall of the Engine Room Building, and the cornice is visible at the southernmost end of this wall (Photo 14). The generally flat roof appears to be built-up over a wood joist system.

The north elevation faces Trail Street and measures approximately 40 feet wide. The wall plane is flush with the Engine Room Building, making the total width of the whole building’s north elevation approximately 125 feet (Photos 1, 2, & 8). Three evenly-spaced steel window units with operable awning sashes comprise the warehouse’s north elevation. Each window unit is eight panes wide by five panes tall. A stuccoed surround on each unit imitates the brick surrounds on the Engine Room Building, and there is a painted red diamond in the center of the transom area to imitate the brick detail on Engine Room Building, as well.

1 A circa 1925 photograph of this building shows a single pedestrian door in Bay 2 (Figure 4).
The west elevation is approximately 50 feet long and contains two openings (Photos 7 & 8). The northernmost opening is a tall non-historic garage door. A double pedestrian door is the southernmost opening. It contains a concrete lintel above two historic doors with six-lights-over-panel design. A rectangular painted stucco surround highlights this entrance. Both openings have concrete stoops.

The south elevation is partially covered with stucco at its western edge (Photo 6). There are currently no openings in this elevation; however, there is evidence of at least three openings that have been infilled with brick. Also evident is the roof line of a previous addition.

C. Boiler House
Date: 1922 (documented on 1926 Sanborn Map)
Photos: 1-7

The Boiler House (“C” on Figure 3) is attached to the south side of the Engine Room Building. The two-story tall building is constructed of a reinforced concrete frame infilled with brick; the structure is expressed on the building’s exterior, as the brick infill is slightly inset from the concrete columns. The flat concrete roof is supported by concrete beams (running east-to-west) that tie into the concrete columns on the east and west elevations. All windows in this building are steel and have concrete lintels (flush with the brick) and soldier-brick sills, unless otherwise noted. There is no decorative cornice or parapet on this building. Like the Engine Room Building, this building houses an open two-story space but has no mezzanine.

The east elevation protrudes approximately six feet from the east face of the Engine Room Building and measures approximately 57 feet long (Photos 2 & 3). The elevation is divided into five evenly-spaced bays defined by the building’s concrete structural system. From the south, Bays 1, 3, & 4 are identical. Each contains a vertical three-window metal sash unit with the top and bottom units containing operable awning sashes. Each window is five panes wide by four panes tall. Bays 2 & 5 are identical. Each contains a single steel window eight panes wide and five panes tall with two operable awning sashes. The sills for each window on this elevation are even, beginning 4.5 feet above grade.

The south elevation measures approximately 48 feet and is divided into three unevenly-spaced bays (Photos 4 & 5). Like the east elevation, the bays are defined by the structural system. From the west, Bay 1 contains a garage door opening. The masonry opening is not historic, though its concrete lintel appears in an early 1920s image of this elevation (Figure 5). A smaller pedestrian door was located in this opening, which has since been enlarged. Adjacent to this garage door is a four-by-four steel sash window that was added at an unknown date. Historic images indicate a masonry opening was located where this window is now that allowed coal to be loaded into the building from railcars via a monorail system. There is no concrete lintel for this opening, and brick infill around the window indicates the extent of the historic coal access opening. Bay 2 contains a vertical three-window metal sash unit with the top and bottom units containing operable awning sashes. Bay 3 historically contained a vertical window unit identical to Bay 2; however, the lower portion of the window has been removed and a garage door opening installed in its place.

The west elevation is similar to the east elevation (Photos 6 & 7). The four exposed bays are identical and each contain a vertical three-window metal sash unit with the top and bottom units containing operable awning sashes.
D.  Engine Room Building Addition  
Date: circa 1930  
Photos: 4-7

Between 1926 and 1932 three additions were constructed to connect the engine room and warehouse buildings to the ice storage building to the south (no longer extant). The most intact addition was a two-story brick appendage on the south side of the Engine Room Building ("D" on Figure 3) that acts as the Engine Room Building’s south mezzanine. This addition also obscures the northernmost bay on the Boiler House’s west elevation. No masonry openings are extant on the south elevation, having been infilled at some point. The west half of this elevation contains full-height perpendicular brick walls that appear to be the remnants of another addition that connected to the ice storage building. Evidence of roof joists is found at the top of the addition’s south wall in this area. A shed-roof, one-story Masonite-sided room was built within the two wing walls and contains a single pedestrian door on the east side of the elevation.

INTERIOR  
Photos: 9-21

The complex’s interior is a series of mostly open spaces. The Engine Room Building contains a few contemporary one-story free-standing rooms that act as office and restroom space, but the industrial feeling of the space is expressed in the historically exposed brick walls, concrete ceilings and floors, and structural systems, as well as the retention of features extant when the complex served as a power plant.

The eastern two bays of the Engine Room Building contain a one-story entry space at ground level with rooms to the south (Photo 9) and an open mezzanine above the entry area (Photos 11 through 13). A simple wall with two pedestrian doors (one on the north and one on the south) separates the entry space from the rest of the Engine Room Building (Photo 11). The east mezzanine is accessed by an open stair on the south end of this wall. The south portion of the Engine Room Building contains electrical panels from when this complex functioned as the city’s power plant (Photo 10). Above these panels is the south mezzanine, accessed by a metal stair (Photos 10 & 15). A portion of the Warehouse’s west exterior wall acts as the mezzanine’s west wall; the cornice detail is evident only on this portion of the wall between the Warehouse and Engine Room Building (Photo 14). The ceiling of the Engine Room Building still contains an operable crane formerly used to transport coal into the building (Photo 12).

Access into the Boiler House from the Engine Room Building is under the stair to the south mezzanine through a historic iron door (Photo 16). This opening is located in the west side of the Boiler House’s north wall (Photo 18). The first level of this north wall was formerly part of the Engine Room Building’s exterior south wall, evidenced by the exposed cornice detail. The remainder of Boiler House’s north wall was built on top of and adjacent to this existing wall. The Boiler House is a two-story tall open space used for vehicle maintenance (Photo 17).

The Warehouse Building is accessed through a historic sliding iron door in the west wall of the Engine Room Building (Photo 19). The pulley system that operates the door still functions. The warehouse area is completely open with a wooden mezzanine running along the north, east, and south walls (Photos 20 & 21). A restroom is located at the west end of the north wall. The ceiling joists are exposed, as are two skylights noted on the 1926 Sanborn. No evidence of a dividing wall (seen in pre-1926 Sanborns) exists in the floor or on the north or south walls.
Although a basement is present in this building, its extent is not currently known. A basement is not described on any of the available Sanborns, so the date of such is also unknown. The current owners accessed a floor hole in the Engine Room Building, but the area was filled with dirt up to old hanging ceiling fixtures. Two reasons for this are possible. The first is that the current Engine Room Building was constructed on top of an existing foundation from a previous building on the parcel and the basement area filled with dirt during construction. A second reason for the dirt is related to a severe Arkansas River flood in 1965. Up to five feet of the first floor was covered in water and dirt, which may have also filled up the basement area. Rather than removing the debris, the then-owners chose to leave the dirt and seal all access to the basement.

**BRICK GARAGE**

Date: circa 1940 (post-1932-pre-1950, according to Sanborns)

Non-contributing Building

A one-story brick four-stall garage sits to the southwest of the power plant. The four stalls exit onto Park Street and retain their wooden double doors. The east, west, and north elevations have no openings; the roof is a sloped flat roof with stepped parapet visible on the east and west. Because this was constructed outside the period of significance, it is considered non-contributing.

---

Figure 6: Snippet of 1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Criteria
(Mark “x” in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for State 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
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance
ca. 1907 to 1932

Significant Dates
ca. 1907 – oldest portion of existing building
1932 – year new power plant constructed

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

Period of Significance (justification)
Though a structure has been on the nominated property since 1885, the period of significance begins in circa 1907 when the oldest portion of the existing building was constructed. Electricity was supplied to Dodge City from this building through the 1990s, but the period of significance ends in 1932 as after this date, the plant was longer the primary electricity supplier to the city.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A
Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that notes under what criteria the property is nominated.)

Electricity was first introduced to Dodge City in 1886 after the organization of the Dodge City Electric Light Company. The energy plant was first located in a two-story building on West Trail Street built between 1885-1886 for the Dodge City Planing Mill. Also occurring in 1886, the city’s first waterworks facility was constructed as a two-story brick building to the immediate southeast of the planing mill. The electricity facility moved downtown in 1887, and beginning in 1890, the city’s electric service and waterworks were combined and operated out of a single brick building on what is now Gunsmoke Street (formerly Walnut). In 1897, both services relocated to the old waterworks building on West Trail Street. Over the next several decades, the physical plant evolved in name, function, and form, especially after the city erected a separate building in 1910 when they took over operation of the waterworks. In 1927 the electricity plant became known as the Kansas Power Company, and by 1932 it gained its current form. It was also in 1932 that a new electricity plant was constructed to the east of Dodge City. The “old plant on Trail Street” was then used as a reserve facility through the 1990s. The Kansas Power Company Plant at 709 West Trail Street is nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places under Criterion A for its association with the beginnings of Dodge City’s public works and energy development from circa 1907 to circa 1932.

Elaboration (Provide a brief history of the property and justify why this property is locally significant.)

Although Kansas became a state in January 1861, most of its western half was unorganized territory at that time. Southwestern Kansas – where Dodge City is located – was far from unknown territory, however. This area was home to several nomadic American Indian tribes, including Comanche, Kiowa, and Apache, who relied on the abundant bison for livelihood. Further, since 1821, the Santa Fe Trail had brought countless traders through the region both to and from Santa Fe and points east.

After statehood and the subsequent Civil War, Euro-Americans began settling in western Kansas. As a result tensions quickly rose between the established Indian tribes and these new settlers. In 1865 the US Army established Fort Dodge (five miles southeast of present-day Dodge City) to protect traders and travels along the Santa Fe Trail, as well as the region’s Euro-American settlers.2 Two years later in 1867, the Kansas legislature established the land area encompassing Ford County, but the county itself was not formally organized until April 1873 with Dodge City as the county seat.3

Dodge City was formed in 1872 – the year before the county was formally organized. Three significant reasons for this were the presence of Fort Dodge, the beginning of the cattle trade and trails in this part of Kansas in the early 1870s, and perhaps most significantly the arrival of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway also in 1872.4 As Kansas historian William Cutler noted in 1883:

In August, 1872, buffalo hunters and business men in various branches of industry, were attracted to this place. Buffalo hides were extensively shipped from here, and the hunters here obtained their supplies. In some three years this became the objective point for the Texas cattle trade; the cowboys from the Plains driving in here large quantities for shipment.5

By 1880 most of the state’s native bison were dead from Euro-American hunters; its indigenous peoples had been forcibly removed, and the new regional settlers had transformed the area into ranchland with Dodge City as a major shipping point. In 1880 alone over 300,000 head of cattle were shipped out of the city to ranches in the south and west.6

Along with prosperity and growth from the cattle industry, Dodge City’s earliest years were marked by contempt for law and order. While drovers gathered needed supplies for their cattle drives, an abundance of saloons supplied them with less necessary items. Writing in 1912, Kansas historian Frank Blackmar explained:

…conditions became so bad that on May 13, 1874, the commissioners of Ford county adopted a resolution to the effect ‘That any person who is not engaged in any legitimate business, and any person under the influence of intoxicating drinks, and any person who has ever borne arms against the government of the

---


4 The arrival of the ATSF in Dodge City also ended the Santa Fe Trail’s use as a long-distance trade route east of this town.


6 Ibid.
United States, who shall be found within the limits of the town of Dodge City, bearing on his person a pistol, bowie knife, dirk, or other deadly weapon, shall be subject to arrest upon charge of misdemeanor, and upon conviction shall be fined in a sum not exceeding $100, or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding three months, or both, at the discretion of the court, and same to take effect from date.\(^7\)

Saloons were still popular into the mid-1880s when cattle shipping peaked, but by the end of the city’s first decade, its residents enjoyed, as Cutler opined, “more humane symbols of civilization”, including a courthouse, a school, churches, newspapers, “and a courteous, earnest, and progressive element in its society.”\(^8\) In March 1886 Dodge City’s population reached over 2000, and Governor John A. Martin declared it a city of the second class.\(^9\)

The year 1886 was big year for the city. Two fires the previous year destroyed over a block’s worth of wooden buildings in the commercial district. In response, the Santa Fe Railroad, which had a division point in Dodge City, invested in the construction of new downtown buildings made of brick, and “the city built a new waterworks, installed electric power downtown, and established a system for street improvements.”\(^10\) The electric power was to be generated in the Dodge City Planing Mill on West Trail Street. William H. LyBrand, et al., formed the mill in September 1885 and began construction the same month. The two-story wooden mill building measured 55’ x 77’ and was located just east of the Sunset Roller Mills (Figure 7).\(^11\) By December LyBrand was arranging the mill’s machinery; the mill commenced operation in February 1886.\(^12\)

The formation of the Dodge City Electric Light Company and the proposal of a city waterworks also occurred in February 1886.\(^13\) A number of city fathers, including A. B. Webster, Robert M. Wright, and F. C. Zimmerman, organized the light company with an authorized capital of $10,000 and contracted with the Thompson-Houston Electric Company to arrange the plant.\(^14\) The April 15, 1886 Dodge City Times reported:

---

11 *Dodge City Times* (17 September 1885): 4; 1887 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. The Sanborn map indicated that LyBrand lived in the upper story of this building, where newspaper articles reported parties and balls occurring in the winter of 1885.
12 *Dodge City Times* (3 December 1885): 1; (25 February 1886): 4; & (15 April 1886): 4
13 The February 25, 1886 *Dodge City Times* first reported on the proposal of a water works system in Dodge City (page 4).
A. B. Webster and R. M. Wright have contracted for the electric light plant, engaging the engine in W. H. LyBrand’s planing mill for the motive power. The electric lights will be established about the middle of May. Mr. LyBrand has one of the best engines in the west. It is a twenty-five horse power engine and a thirty horse power boiler. It makes 300 strokes a minute. In a test of coal burning it consumed 464 pounds from 6 a. m. to 2 p. m., with a steam pressure of 75 pounds. Ordinarily the mill consumes but little coal, the offal of the mill being used for fuel. The engine will be used during day time for the business of the mill, and at night to give motive power to the electric light system. The mill is doing considerable fine work, and will prove one of the solid institutions of the city. The service of the engine will be called to considerable account. Mr. LyBrand intends in the winter time to use a feed grinder, and thus make a profit and avoid idle time.¹⁵

Though electricity was not yet available in May 1886, the city council did pass an ordinance that month, granting franchise and exclusive right to the Dodge City Electric Light Company for 21 years to light the city streets with incandescent electric lights.¹⁶ In May the council and Mayor A. B. Webster also visited other Kansas towns to “inspect the operation of water works, with a view of introducing a system of water works in Dodge City.”¹⁷

Throughout the summer months, the Dodge City Times provided small updates on the progress of the city’s electric service. Wires and light fixtures were installed in June and July, but the lights were not switched on until the evening of Saturday, August 21, 1886.¹⁸ Dodge City’s Globe Live Stock Journal reported the reason for the continued delay of service was “on account of the Thompson Houston electric company having so many other contracts on hand that it was impossible to get out the necessary machinery for the Dodge City plant any sooner.”¹⁹ Throughout the fall of 1886, the electrical supply from this machine was sporadic, often shutting off lights. By November the electric company ordered a new 70 horsepower engine, capable of supplying an additional 200-250 lights, to be delivered in January because “the engine which has been used heretofore is broken.”²⁰

Plans for the city’s waterworks were also formalized during the summer of 1886 when the city council signed a 21-year contract with Wichita builder J. A. Jones “for the erection, maintenance and operation of water works” at the end of June. Jones informed the mayor in July that he had purchased the materials for the brick building to be constructed near the Arkansas River (Figure 8). By the beginning of August, Jones had also purchased a 217’ x 140’ lot near the Sunset Roller Mills and electricity plant, and work commenced.²¹ Construction of the waterworks system took longer to complete than the electrical system, most likely due to the construction of the new building; however, the December 9, 1886 Dodge City Times reported, “The Dodge City water works are in operation, the large stand-pipe being filled on Monday [December 6]. Everything worked well, the tank being filled in about one hour. … The water works is owned by J. A. Jones, of Wichita, F. A. Heinecke is superintendent. … The engine is one of the best in use, and all machinery moved in good shape on Monday and Tuesday.”²² Dodge City ended 1886 with solid foundations on which to expand water and electrical services as the city grew.

¹⁵ Dodge City Times (15 April 1886): 4.
¹⁶ Dodge City Times (20 May 1886): 1, 4.
¹⁷ Dodge City Times (27 May 1886): 4.
¹⁸ Dodge City Times (26 August 1886): 4.
²⁰ Dodge City Times (18 November 1886): 4.
²¹ Information in this paragraph pulled from the June 24, July 8, and August 5 issues of the Dodge City Times (pages 1 & 4).
²² Dodge City Times (9 December 1886): 4
Early in February 1887 the Dodge City Electric Company was reincorporated as the Electric Light and Steam Heating Company with a capital stock of $30,000. The company planned for a purpose-built plant in downtown where both electricity and steam heat would be generated. The new plant was complete by early August, shifting electrical generation from LyBrand’s mill to downtown.

Also in February 1887 local real estate agents, J. W. and G. G. Gilbert purchased the Dodge City Water Works, calling their new investment the Western Kansas Water Works, Irrigation & Land Company. At the time of purchase, the works were valued at $75,000. The Gilbert Brothers were heavily involved in irrigation development, teaming with Asa Soule in the creation of the Eureka Irrigating Canal Company, also known as the Soule Canal.

Sometime between 1887 and mid-1890, the Gilbert Brothers appear to have purchased the electric company. Both the Dodge City Times and The Globe-republican mention the brothers and the electric light company refitting the second floor of the downtown plant for their offices at the end of August 1890. In September 1890, the Gilbert Brothers decided to join the waterworks and the electric plant. The Globe-republican reported in October, "The Gilbert Brothers are driving wells in the rear of the electric light plant, preparatory to removing the waterworks plant from its present location [on West Trail Street]. By thus combining the two plants they will be enabled to give better service, and at the same time materially lessen their expenses." The brick building on West Trail Street was used as pumping station part of the year, as described on the 1892 Sanborn map.

Likely owing to the failure of the Soule Canal, the real estate belonging to the Western Kansas Waterworks, Irrigation & Land Company entered foreclosure in 1893. The brick building downtown, which housed the waterworks and electric plant, was finally sold in January 1896 for a sum of $13,500 to a gentleman from New York. By September 1897, the building was under the ownership of George M. Meyers of Kansas City. Meyers was responsible for relocating the Dodge City Water & Light Company back to the brick building on West Trail Street in November 1897. At that time a new 80 kw generator was installed that powered 1600 lights; the following January 1898, the plant increased its voltage from 110 to 220. By 1900, there were 46 street lights in the city.

---

23 Dodge City Times (3 February 1887): 4. The Dodge City Electric Light and Steam Heating Co. appears on the September 1887 Sanborn map as a two-story brick building at 210 Walnut St. Though refaced in the early 1900s, the building is extant, currently addressed 209 W Gunsmoke St.

24 Dodge City Times (4 August 1887): 3. Newspaper accounts are quiet about whether LyBrand’s mill was continued to be used for electrical generation.

25 Dodge City Times (17 February 1887): 2.

26 See Christy Davis, Historic Resources of the Soule Canal MPS (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 2013) for more context on the canal and the Gilbert Brothers involvement.

27 The Times called out the Gilbert Brothers; the Republican reported the electric light company, August 22 & August 20 issues respectively.

28 Dodge City Times (26 September 1890): 3.

29 The Globe-republican (01 October 1890): 5.


Being located just outside of downtown, the parcel on which the plant is located was large enough for expansion – the first occurring in 1902 when Meyers expanded his holdings to include an ice plant. While ice companies existed in Dodge City as early as 1887 (even the Gilbert Brothers were involved in the ice business), the construction of the $20,000 ice plant to the south of power plant was a significant improvement to the city’s ice industry (Figure 9). Meyers’ plant had a ten-ton daily capacity. In 1904 the Dodge City Water & Light Company became the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company with little fanfare; although, the editors of The Globe-republican joked about the name change on July 28:

A deed was recorded at the courthouse today transferring all of the property of the Dodge City Water & Light Company to the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company. No one here seems to know anything about the deal. It may mean that a new company will in future shut off [sic] the water when you need it the most, but it is [sic] more probably means that the ice plant has been combined with the rest of the business under one company name. As George Meyers was one of the incorporators of the new company, the newspaper was likely correct about the reason for the name change. With an authorized capital of $15,000, George Theis, Jr. became the president and general manager of the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company. By 1905 an east-west running spur from the Santa Fe Railroad was located between the brick building and the wooden ice plant. Trains were filled with ice to keep their refrigerated items cold; the trains also unloaded coal through a chute in the south side of the power plant to keep the plant’s machinery operational.

The first expansion of the power and water plant occurred between 1907 & 1911. In September 1907, The Globe-republican reported, “The Midland Water, Light & Ice Company has purchased from G. M. Hoover a lot adjoining the ice plant. … The Midland Water, Light & Ice Company are expecting to build an addition to the electric light plant in the near future, to make room for new machinery.” The one-story brick addition was in place by 1911, as shown in the Sanborn map from that year (Figures 6 & 10).

The Midland Water, Light & Ice Company changed function in 1911. Following a special election in 1910, the city took over control of the waterworks, erecting its own brick plant to the immediate east of the power and ice plant on West Trail Street. The Midland Company was then able to expand their capacity for power and ice production. In 1911 the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company’s plant contained two five-ton ice machines, two dynamo engines (one 225 kw

---

35 The Kansas Power Company, “1886-1936: 50th Anniversary Booklet,” 5. The incorporators of the Midland company were George Theis, Jr. of Clark County, Kansas; George Meyers and Harry Orr of Kansas City, Missouri; and W.E. Barnhart and John Eaton of Kansas City, Kansas.
36 No records of when this occurred have yet been located, but the tracks first appear on the 1905 Sanborn map of the plant. Based upon available Sanborns from 1899 & 1905, the tracks were likely installed close to 1902 when the ice plant was erected.
37 Dodge City Daily Globe (21 February 1955): n.p. Citation covers paragraph. The ice plant stood until 1955 when it was torn down. The concrete freezing tank structure still exists, but has been capped.
39 The March 17, 1910 edition of The Globe-republican posted the following notice to call an election of whether the city should take over the waterworks, “Bonds in the sum of twenty-nine thousand dollars to purchase all existing water-works plant or system in said City, of the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company, except the power, power house, machinery and wells, for the purpose of supplying said City and its inhabitants with water (Dodge City Globe-republican): 14. The one-story brick Dodge City Waterworks building was in place in the 1911 Sanborn.
and one 125 kw) that operated at 300 and 150 horsepower respectively, and three steam boilers. The wooden building to the south of the brick plant was then used mostly for storage.\(^{40}\)

Between 1911 & 1918 the Midland Water, Light & Ice Company underwent several alterations, including a name change in 1918 to the Midland Light & Ice Company. Although the physical changes to the plant are not well documented in available written sources, the 1918 Sanborn map (Figure 2), along with a photo supplied in the 1936 “1886-1936: 50th Anniversary Booklet” (Figure 11) show the original 1880s portion of the plant was most likely replaced and the circa 1907 brick addition incorporated into a new building. Several reasons for this conclusion are evidenced by the following: the roof changed from a cross-gable to flat with parapet; the plant’s north wall became one plane instead of being broken; the existing brick corbeling seen on the exterior walls of the Warehouse Building match that seen in Figure 11, not the previous brick building; and the three extant masonry openings at the east end of the north elevation appear to have been created by retaining the existing pedestrian door and combining the two windows on either side of this door into one opening. The machinery in the Warehouse Building remained consistent between the 1911 & 1918 maps, which could indicate that the walls and roof were rebuilt around these boilers. The plant also acquired a new 250 kw turbine during this time period. In 1914, the average weekly power generation was 5000 kwh.\(^{41}\)

The biggest changes to the power and ice plant occurred in the 1920s. The city’s population rose to just over 5000 in 1920 while the county boasted almost 14,300 persons. With a greater number of people came an increase in need for electricity. As a result in June 1920, the Electric Service Company, as the plant was then known, underwent one of the largest expansions to date. The improvements to the plant cost $80,000, and appear to have taken place between 1920 and 1922. The plant’s rebuilding included the construction of a new addition to the south of the engine room where the three boilers were relocated (Figure 6). Offices were remodeled; the old boiler room was turned into storage; and a new 1150 kw generator was installed.\(^{42}\) Between 1922 and 1923, the power generated at this plant increased from 7000 kwh/day in 1922 to a total of 1,435,892 kwh in the first six months of 1923.\(^{43}\) Significantly, it was at this time that the power plant also began supplying electricity to other communities as far away as Montezuma, Gray County, Kansas, approximately 30 miles west of Dodge City.\(^{44}\) Montezuma’s population in 1920 was just over 160.

\(^{40}\) All information from notations on 1911 Sanborn.
By 1925 the authorized capital of the Electric Service Company totaled $500,000 when it was sold to the A. E. Fitkin Company out of New York. This company merged with a number of other companies in May 1927 to form the Kansas Power Company. By that year the plant supplied power to Dodge City and 13 smaller towns with a 50-mile radius. The city’s Chamber of Commerce noted in 1927 that 441.5 miles of power lines supplied “one service unit for each three of the population of the territory. The power plant is equipped to produce 1800 kilowatts which is approximately twice the normal demand.”

The Kansas Power Company continued to manufacture ice at this plant, as well, with a daily capacity of 30 tons and a storage capacity of 2550 tons. After becoming the Kansas Power Company in 1927, the physical plant underwent its final alteration when the roof of the engine room was raised to create the two-story volume seen at the building today (Figures 2 & 12).

The population of both Dodge City and Ford County jumped in 1930 to 10,059 and 20,647 respectively. The increase in people again increased the demand for electricity. As a result, a new power plant was erected four miles east of town, which formally opened for operation in May 1932. By this year, the plant on West Trail Street was capable of producing 3640 kw of power, which was used for reserve after the new plant was put in use. The total amount of power produced by the two plants in 1935 was almost 12,000,000 kwh, powering 3582 electric meters and 400 lights in Dodge City alone. In 1936 the Kansas Power Company served 21 towns in eight counties in southwest Kansas, employing approximately 70 people.

Ice production peaked in the 1930s with 5,334 tons created in 1935 alone. By 1954, the Kansas Power Company had sold the equipment from the ice plant, and the following year began dismantling the 1902 plant. The building was sold to Central Telephone and Utilities Corporation in 1969, who sold it to the Centel Corporation in 1979. Centel owned the plant until 1991 when its holdings were sold to Utilicorp in 1991. By 1996, the original power plant was sold and was no longer used to produce electricity. In 2007, the Pyle family bought the plant and currently runs an auto repair business out of the old building.

---

46 Dodge City Chamber of Commerce, Promotional pamphlet for Dodge City (1927): 2.
47 Ibid.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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


Dodge City Historical Society. Vertical file on the Kansas Power Company.

Newspapers:
- *Dodge City Democrat*
- *Dodge City Globe-republican*
- *Dodge City Daily Globe*
- *Dodge City Times*
- *Dodge City, Kansas, Globe Livestock Journal*


Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.8

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 37.751653 -100.024651 3
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 __________ __________ 4
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
EVANS ADDITION SUPP, S26, T26, R25, ACRES 1.8, PT LTS 42-49; PT LT C; BEG SW COR LT C; TH ELY 193.20'; NLY 104.8'; ELY 230'; TH SWLY ALG CURVE 234.08'(S); TH S 152.16' TO POB.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The nominated parcel includes the building, a non-contributing brick garage, and the majority of the area where portions of the complex were once built.
Kansas Power Company Plant

Dodge City, Ford County

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda Loughlin with research help from Rick Anderson (KSHS) & Erika Pyle (owner)
organization Kansas Historical Society date June 2016
street & number 6425 SW 6th Ave telephone (785) 272-8681
city or town Topeka state KS zip code 66615
e-mail cultural_resources@kshs.org

Property Owner:

name Thomas L. Pyle (Sgt. Pyle)
street & number 709 W Trail telephone

city or town Dodge City state KS zip code 67801
Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Photograph Log

Name of Property:  Kansas Power Company Plant
City or Vicinity:  Dodge City
County:  Ford
Photographer:  Katrina Ringler, KSHS
Date:  June 2015

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

Exterior
01 of 21:  North elevation, showing Engine Room Building to left and Warehouse Building to right.
02 of 21:  Looking SW. Boiler House is visible to the left.
03 of 21:  East elevation, showing Boiler House at left and Engine Room Building to right.
04 of 21:  Looking NW at south elevation of Boiler House.
05 of 21:  South elevation of Addition (at left) and Boiler House (at right).
06 of 21:  Looking NE, showing Warehouse Building to left, addition in center, and Boiler House to right.
07 of 21:  Looking east at west elevation of Warehouse building (left) and Boiler House (right).
08 of 21:  Looking SE at north and west elevations.

Interior
09 of 21:  Entry area, main level of Engine Room Building, looking SE.
10 of 21:  Engine Room Building, looking SW from doorway from entry into engine room. South mezzanine is visible as is the extant electrical panels from the power plant.
11 of 21:  Engine Room Building, looking east at wall between entry and engine room and at east mezzanine.
12 of 21:  Operable crane above mezzanine in Engine Room Building.
13 of 21:  Looking WNW into Engine Room Building from east mezzanine.
14 of 21:  Looking west on south mezzanine (Addition). Note cornice on wall.
15 of 21:  Metal stair from main level to south mezzanine. West wall of Boiler House is visible at left; south wall of Addition in background.
16 of 21:  Looking north from Boiler House into Engine Room Building through historic door.
17 of 21:  Boiler House, looking SE from north wall.
19 of 21:  Engine Room Building, looking west at historic door into Warehouse Building.
20 of 21:  Warehouse Building, looking NW.
21 of 21:  Warehouse Building, looking SE.

Figures
Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.
Boundary Map.
2013 Google aerial image, showing Kansas Power Company. The dashed line represents the nominated boundary.