

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register Listed  
7-5-2011

# 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 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name J. Arch Butts Packard Building  
Other name/site number Hobbs Chevrolet; KSHS 173-11089

## 2. Location

Street & number 1525 E. Douglas Avenue  not for publication  
City or town Wichita  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Sedgwick Code 173 Zip code 67211

## 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.)

See File

Signature of certifying official/Title Kansas State Historical Society Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or 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 \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

- 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

J. Arch Butts Packard Building  
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas  
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	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	total

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**  
0

**6. Function or Use**

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

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

VACANT/NOT IN USE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

MODERN MOVEMENT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Enframed Window Wall  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation - Concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Walls – Terra Cotta and Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Roof - Synthetic  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

J. Arch Butts Packard Building  
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas  
County and State

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- 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 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

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

1930 – 1960

#### Significant Dates

1930-construction

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

#### Cultural Affiliation

NA

#### Architect/Builder

Schmidt Boucher Overend, Architects;  
Blasner-Vollmer Construction Co., Builders

### 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): Primary location of additional data:

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name of repository:

Wichita-Sedgwick County Library



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## **7. Narrative Description**

J. Arch Butts commissioned a new building for his Packard Auto Dealership in 1930, to be located at 1525 East Douglas Avenue on Wichita's rapidly developing "Auto Row." The two-story concrete structure features a terra cotta facade on the front half and a brick facade on the rear/south half of the building. The building is rectangular in form with twin barrel vaulted roofs. The dealership building is a classic example of a 1930s car dealership, with Modern style and detailing. The front facade features contrasting terra cotta banding and a band of operable steel windows. Vertical piers define the corners of the building and frame the central entry bay. A distinguishing feature of the building was a lighted auto display window over the ground-floor entrance. Built as an auto dealership, the building is an excellent representative of a stylized Modern Movement building, clearly reflecting its original design and function.

### Site

The Packard Building is located at the southwest corner of E. Douglas and Greenwood Avenue facing north on Douglas Avenue. The location is in a nine-block automotive cluster that developed from 1920-1950 east of downtown Wichita and retains some auto-related uses today. Although the area has numerous car lots and free-standing dealerships, the Packard Building maintains a traditional commercial street setting with no setback. It is bordered by a public sidewalk and Douglas Avenue on the north/front and a sidewalk along Greenwood Avenue on the east. A paved parking lot abuts the rear of the building and McCormick Armstrong, a local printing company, abuts the building on the west.

All of the lots along the south side of the 1500 block of East Douglas had been cleared in 1914 (Sanborn Map). The 1935 Sanborn Map illustrates that Butts Packard Dealership was extant on the northeast quarter of the block and McCormick Armstrong Printing was extant in the northwest quarter of the block. Both buildings were freestanding and the Packard Dealership used the lot between the two buildings for displaying their used cars. McCormick Armstrong later expanded with the construction of a two-story bay on the east side of their building, abutting the Packard Dealership Building. An oversized door opening is extant on the west wall of the Packard Building, originally providing access to the used car lot on the west.

The block was configured with an E/W alley at mid-block behind the dealership and printing buildings. The south half of the block is divided by a mid-block north/south alley. In 1935, three dwellings were in place on southeast quarter of the block, fronting Greenwood Avenue. Additionally, the existing garage was extant in the southwest corner of the southeast quarter, accessed off the alley. By 1950, the dwellings were gone but the garage remained (Sanborn Map). The mid-block alley intersects the neighboring printing company building west of the auto dealership. The property with the Packard Building includes the parking lot south of the building; the west property line extends from the southwest corner of the building. The rear garage actually straddles the western property line between the dealership and adjacent printing company, at the southwest corner. The garage is a one-story block building. It has been modified including the addition of a contemporary metal shed bay. Currently used by the printing company, the garage is considered a non-contributing resource.

### Exterior

The J. Arch Butts Packard Building is rectangular in form comprised of two sections (front and back) as defined by terra cotta versus brick facade treatments, and twin vaulted roofs. Given its corner location,

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the materials and detailing on the front facade, were extended around the corner to the north half of the east facade.

Although clearly reflective of the Modern Movement in architecture, the building defies traditional classifications mixing Art Deco, Streamlined, and Art Moderne influences. The building is characterized by its linear form with horizontal banding on the facade, broken by vertical pilasters. With its eclectic mix of stylistic influences, the Packard building is classified under "Modern Movement" rather than a specific architectural style.

The two-story commercial building is classified as an "Enframed Window Wall" as defined by Richard Longstreth in his *The Buildings of Main Street – A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. The white terra cotta, on the upper facade and pilasters, frame the facade. Longstreth notes that spandrels often demarcate each floor level in multi-story versions of this style but the enframed section reads as an insert, remaining subordinate to the surround.<sup>1</sup> The band of upper windows, storefront, and band of gray terra cotta, read as an insert in the white terra cotta frame, clearly consistent with the "enframed window wall" defined characteristics.

The front facade of the Packard Building is three bays wide, defined by pilasters at the corners and framing the center bay. The pilasters are ribbed with an eagle on a raised bas-relief panel capping each. The pilasters do not extend above the roofline, reinforcing the horizontal orientation of the facade. The entry bay is, however, raised slightly above the roofline defining the central entry bay but barely breaking the horizontal roof line. The first floor "storefront" has been infilled with wood panels at the center entry bay and west end bay. While the pilasters, in glazed white terra cotta, frame the center bay, the first-floor entrance was framed by a stepped surround in black terra cotta that resembles the appearance of granite. Brass lantern-style light fixtures are in place on each side of the original entry. On the upper level, over the entry, is a large display window that is one of the distinguishing features of the building. This display window was a highlight of the new dealership when it opened in 1931. It was lit 24 hours a day and showcased a car, clearly visible up and down Douglas Avenue.

The upper facade is characterized by a horizontal band of metal windows with white glazed terra cotta above and a band of contrasting dark gray terra cotta below. The steel windows are unique with four horizontal lights featuring vertical muntins around the operable hopper sashes. The lintel is a band of ribbed terra cotta tiles, matching the pilasters. The band between the upper windows and the storefront are gray terra cotta tiles almost resembling concrete blocks, or upon close inspection, granite. The tiles are set with subtle relief among the blocks comprising the horizontal band. The window muntin grid and relief pattern in the terra cotta are reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's work of the period.

The storefronts, a common alteration on historic commercial buildings, have formerly been modified on the Packard Building. A contemporary aluminum-framed storefront has been installed at the corner with wood infill filling the remainder of the east bay of the north facade. The original transom is extant although glass has been replaced or painted. The storefront at the south bay has been infilled with painted wood panels but a black terra cotta base remains in place around the storefront.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street – A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2000) 68-69.

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The rear of the building, including the south half of the east facade and the south facade, is brick – blond brick on the street-facing east facade and red brick on the south/rear facade. The concrete structure is exposed on the rear facade, creating a grid on the lower level of the facade. Traditional multi-light steel windows with operable hopper panels are generally paired on the lower level and single windows on the upper level of the rear facade. An overhead door, with a contemporary replacement door, is centrally located. Parapet walls on the east and west extend above the vaulted roof and a square brick chimney rises at the southwest corner of the parapet. The south half of the east facade reflects a simplified design treatment compared to the primary facades but is clearly distinguished from the rear facade. This secondary street facade has blond brick with a white glazed-terra cotta cap on the parapet and a matching surround at an oversized opening in the center of the first floor. This opening has a replacement overhead garage door and flanking pedestrian doors are replacement slab doors. The central garage bay divides this portion of the facade into three bays. The upper facade and the ground floor on the south end bay, retain the original multi-lite steel windows. Originally double-hung units, fixed, single-lite replacement windows have been installed at the ground level on the north end bay and there has been some modification of door openings. This secondary street facade provided exterior entrance into the rear of the building, clearly secondary to the new car showroom at the front of the building.

Despite the infilled and replacement storefront and the modifications at the south half of the east facade, the building retains a high level of historic integrity. Character-defining features, including the original windows and contrasting terra cotta, clearly portray the original design.

Interior

The plan configuration reflects former alterations that likely include remodeling by Butts in 1943 for the U.S. Employment Agency, remodeling in 1944 by Hobbs Chevrolet and contemporary remodeling for the existing corner retail business.

According to the description in the January 11, 1931 *Wichita Eagle* feature on the opening of the J. Arch Butts Packard Building, the auto showroom spanned the entire width of the building, separated from the rear by a wall with regularly-spaced arched openings. Two arched openings remain but the wall does not span the width of the building, only the east half, partitioning the corner retail space. Remnants of the original showroom include the tile floor and display lights built-in between the concrete beams at the ceiling of the first floor. Although the precise location and configuration are not clear, the original offices were likely located south of the showroom on the east side of the building. Some plaster partition walls remain in this area and a shop bay with bead board partitions is extant south of the offices; the latter thought to date to Hobbs Chevrolet in the mid-1940s. Near the center of the building, behind the original wall with arched openings, stand a small metal staircase and a dumbwaiter, originally used for access between the two floors. Two small rooms and an enclosed storage area with a mezzanine above now separate the original showroom into two areas on the east and west ends of the building. The partitions, including the mezzanine, also likely date to the Hobbs Chevrolet period between the mid-1940s and early-1960s. The northeast corner of the building is in use as a retail establishment. The northwest corner is used as storage by the adjacent printing company. The central entrance on the north facade was formerly abandoned as an entrance; the entry and the west storefront have been infilled with wood.

The rear of the building was originally used for storage of automobiles and the used car sales area. As noted under "Site" above, the used car department was located in the west half of the building with an oversized opening on the west facade originally providing access to the used car lot west of the building.

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A distinguishing feature of the dealership was the massive concrete ramp in the southwest corner of the building. Although the lower section of the ramp has formerly been removed, the ramp is distinguishable and remains a prominent feature. Restrooms/locker rooms are located around the ramp on each floor level; the ground floor facility is below grade accessed by steps down into the bathroom. The restrooms retain glazed tile toilet partitions and historic plumbing fixtures. A secondary stair is located in the southeast corner of the building. Finishes in the rear area of the building are exposed concrete structure at the ceiling, and on the floor in most areas, although the tile flooring extends beyond the front showroom, likely reflecting the original used car sales area and offices. Except in the showroom and offices where walls were plastered, walls are generally exposed masonry, some with a painted finish.

The upper level was used for the service and parts departments, including a washing bay and built-in tool chests under the windows along the front of the building. The second floor was generally a large open space with exposed arched steel trusses and roof decking above. The floors are concrete and walls are painted masonry. There are some non-historic partition walls on the second floor but the area generally retains its open plan configuration. The front facade retains the original display window over the central entrance. This window, with large glass lites, was the location of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor car display, an area enclosed by draperies and lit 24 hours a day, to showcase a single car to passersby.

The primary interior character-defining features are the open plan of the service area on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, with exposed structure and utilitarian finishes, and the ramp on the ground level. The historic front showroom is not reflected by the existing configuration although a portion of the rear wall with arched openings is extant in the existing corner retail space and tile flooring, although worn and formerly repaired, is extant denoting original finished spaces. The existing partitions, on the east side of the building behind the original showroom reflect former modifications and additions and are not deemed a primary character-defining feature.

Summary

The J. Arch Butts Packard Building retains a significant degree of historic integrity and is an excellent example of a Modern Auto Dealership/Showroom. The building retains its original footprint. The only exterior alterations are the storefront and entry infill on the north/front facade and the modification of openings on the east facade of the rear half of the building. Character-defining features include the historic steel windows, and terra cotta facade. The interior retains some key features of the building's original and early function as an auto dealership, namely the corner ramp, as well as the open plan configuration on the upper floor, and the exposed, utilitarian finishes throughout most of the building.



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## **8. Statement of Significance**

The J. Arch Butts Packard Building in downtown Wichita is being nominated to the National Register as part of the *Roadside Kansas* Multiple Property Nomination under Criteria A and C. The building is significant on a local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce, demonstrating the influence of the automobile on the commercial development in Wichita, Kansas. The building is also an excellent representative of a Modern Auto Dealership/Showroom, significant in the area of Architecture under Criterion C.

Constructed in 1930 by J. Arch Butts to house his Packard Dealership, the building served as home to the Butts Auto Company until the early 1940s and later to Hobbs Chevrolet until the early 1960s. Its period of significance spans from the building's construction in 1930 to 1960, reflecting its original function and long-term history as an auto dealership (through the fifty-year threshold for eligibility). The J. Arch Butts Packard Building is a good example of the *Auto Showrooms and Dealerships* property type (Streamline/Moderne Dealership subtype) and meets the registration requirements set forth in the multiple property submission, *Roadside Kansas*.

### "Auto Row:" on East Douglas in Downtown Wichita

With initial settlement following the Civil War, Wichita was incorporated and became the county seat in 1870. Numerous books and existing National Register nominations document the city's early commercial development, including Craig Miner's *Wichita: The Magic City*, Deon Wolfenbarger's NR Nomination for the East Douglas Avenue Historic District and Dr. Pamela Kingsbury's nomination for Wichita's Historic Warehouse and Jobbers District (Old Town). The intersection of Douglas Avenue and Main Street was the focus of early commercial development and East Douglas was selected as the location for city's rail center in the 1880s, cementing its future as a commercial thoroughfare. Wichita experienced major development booms in the 1880s and again in the 1910s and 1920s. East Douglas was fully developed through the 800 block by 1914.<sup>2</sup> The warehouse and jobbers district, now known as Old Town, followed the Santa Fe, Frisco, and Rock Island tracks south from Central Avenue, across Douglas to their passenger and freight depots, and from there farther south to Kellogg Avenue. The new Union Station was constructed in 1914 and the tracks were elevated eliminating the need to have rail traffic crossing Douglas Avenue.<sup>3</sup> By the second decade of the twentieth century, rapid growth, prosperity, and the National City Beautiful Movement focused local efforts on beautification. Harland Bartholomew's 1923 City Plan for Wichita reaffirmed Douglas Avenue, one of the widest streets in town, as one of the city's major thoroughfares.<sup>4</sup> Washington Avenue serves as the eastern border of the central business district. It was along East Douglas Avenue, east of the downtown area, that Wichita's "Auto Row" developed, concurrent with the rising popularity of the automobile. The grand opening feature in the January 11, 1931 *Wichita Eagle* announced that the Packard Building was located on Wichita's New Auto Row at 1525 East Douglas.

Motor cars were being manufactured and sold by a variety of companies by the first decade of the twentieth-century but the cars were not widely available or affordable to the masses. "Henry Ford's introduction of the mass-produced Model T in 1913 signaled the transformation of the automobile from a

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<sup>2</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger, *East Douglas Avenue Historic District*, nomination to the National Register, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Pamela Kingsbury, *Wichita Historic Warehouse and Jobbers District*, nomination to the National Register, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Wolfenbarger, 36.

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rich person's toy into a dominant form of transportation that would shape American society. With a price tag of \$528, the Model T was a vehicle built for 'Everyman'.<sup>5</sup>

The *Roadside Kansas MPS* discusses the emergence of the automobile and its impact on cities and the state. The period 1900-1917 is deemed the pioneering automobile period, during which Kansas roads remained primitive (mostly dirt) and not conducive to motor vehicle transportation. During this time, car ownership in Kansas grew at a rapid pace. After a brief delay during World War I, road improvements, auto transportation, and tourism took off in Kansas during the period from 1918 to 1929. The Depression slowed but did not stop Kansas from adopting the automobile as the primary mode of individual transportation.<sup>6</sup>

The rising popularity of the automobile impacted not only the economy, but the physical appearance of our cities and towns. Although initially, autos were sold and serviced by existing businesses such as livery stables and carriage shops, the popularity of the automobile resulted in a new trend of purpose-built auto dealerships.<sup>7</sup> The first auto showrooms and dealerships were generally constructed in downtown commercial districts and reflected the style and character of traditional commercial buildings. However, by 1930, car dealerships evolved as a property type distinguished from traditional commercial buildings by functional requirements for display and selling of cars.<sup>8</sup>

According to the *Roadside Kansas MPS*, the most significant advance in the business of automotive sales was defined by function the development of the independent car dealership. By offering franchise opportunities to local businessmen, automobile manufacturers soon developed vast retail networks. In exchange for selling rights, the franchise contract required the dealer to provide an appropriate sales and service facility with proper signage, a stock of spare parts, and repair service for the cars sold.<sup>9</sup>

As motor vehicles became more common, traffic congestion became a local concern within business districts. Downtowns became a less than ideal location for dealerships and a new type of commercial district – "automobile row" gained favor in cities in the late 1920s and 1930s. Following setbacks due to the Great Depression and World War II, auto production resumed after the war and prospered as they responded to a great surge in demand from American consumers. As the volume of sales and the number of auto dealers increased, dealerships moved even further out from downtown to areas along newly-constructed highways.<sup>10</sup>

The development trends resulting from the rise of the automobile did not escape Wichita. Wolfenbarger notes, that like the rest of the country, Wichita tried to accommodate the automobile. Between 1910 and 1912, the city spent over one million dollars on street paving, and this expense increased annually. Due to its width, Douglas Avenue was better able to handle the traffic and parking problems associated with

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<sup>5</sup> James J. Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1970), 50. Ford Motor Company, "The Model T Put the World on Wheels," as cited in *Roadside Kansas Multiple Property Nomination*.

<sup>6</sup> *Roadside Kansas*, 12-13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>8</sup> Chester H. Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1985), 75-76 cited in *Roadside Kansas* p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Genat, *The American Car Dealership* (Osceola: WI: MBI Publishing, Company, 1999) 17-19 cited in *Roadside Kansas* p.21.

<sup>10</sup> *Roadside Kansas*, 21-22.

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the increase automobile usage.<sup>11</sup> By the early to mid-1920s, auto-related businesses were established on the outskirts of the core business district, including Douglas Avenue east of Washington Avenue. By the 1930s, the area of East Douglas from the 1000 to 1900 blocks, was locally known as “Auto Row” and maintained a concentration of auto dealerships and related businesses into the 1970s. Some secondary auto-related businesses remain in this area today.

Auto-related businesses flourished with the rising popularity of the automobile. In the 1920s, public garages were located at 1210, 1217, 1312, 1409, 1811, 1816, and 1819 East Douglas. By the 1930s, four filling stations were located in this same area and multiple auto-related businesses including auto service, tire, and battery shops filled areas between car dealerships and garages. Automotive dealerships were abundant in this nine-block area beginning in the late 1920s. The local dealerships on E. Douglas included:<sup>12</sup>

<u>Address on E. Douglas</u>	<u>Dealership(s)</u>
1021	Brown Motor Co. in 1930; Ed White Motors in 1947, Used cars in 1950
1210	J.S. Brown Motor Co. in 1935
1224-26	Ferguson Olander Ford since 1930s
1325	Nash Stretch Motor Co. in 1927; McCay Motors in 1934 there 30+ years
1400	Smith Motor Co. 1928–32; later Pierce Arrow Sale and Salon; now Poorman's Auto Supply
1500	Wilson Claude Auto in 1951; Jim Earpe Motors in 1956
1520-1530 1956-62;	Hull-Butler Motor Co. 1930; Butt's Motor Co, Buick 1935-50s; Ben Robinson Buick-Buick  Quality Chevrolet built new building at 1520 – and car lot at 1600 opening in 1963
1525	Butts Packard Agency 1930-42; Hobbs Chevrolet 1944-1963
1611	Clarks Motor Co.in 1937; Hobbs-Skinner Chevrolet Truck in 1940s-50s
1700	Etchen Studebaker built the building in 1930; later Western Auto 1941
1716	Watson Motor Co. sold lots to Luling to build laundry in 1919
1824	Cushman Motor Scooter Sales and Service in 1951
1900	Butts Cadillac and Oldsmobile in the early 1950s

Many of the small independent dealerships were short-lived with the Great Depression following less than a decade after the auto gained wide favor among local residents.

The Packard Automobile<sup>13</sup>

James Ward Packard, and his brother William, began building cars in 1899 in Warren, Ohio. The company moved to Detroit four years later and changed its name to Packard Motor Company. Packard flourished in the post-World War I luxury car market, building expensive quality cars that competed with General Motor's Cadillac brand. The recession hit Packard hard and by 1934, production fell to less than 7,000 cars per year compared to a high of 50,000 in 1928 with annual sales exceeding \$21 million. Like most car companies, Packard built airplane engines during World War II. Dabbling in the mid-size, affordable car market proved less than successful for Packard and actually alienated their loyal luxury consumers by watering down the brand. The company was forced to merge with Studebaker in the 1950s and by the end of the decade; the Packard name had been dropped. The first Packard automobile was produced in 1899; the last in 1958.

<sup>11</sup> Wolfenbarger, 41.

<sup>12</sup> Sanborn Maps and Wichita Historic Resources Inventory of individual buildings in area, completed by Brenda Spencer in 2008.

<sup>13</sup> History of Packard Motor Company on-line at packardmotorco.com and James M. Flammang, 100 Years of the American Auto: Millennium Edition, (Lincolnwood, IL: Publications International, Ltd., 1999).

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J. Arch Butts carried the Packard line during their peak in popularity, from the early 1920s into the late 1930s; constructing the building at 1525 E. Douglas specifically to house his Packard dealership. The date that Butts discontinued the Packard line at his 1525 E. Douglas location has not been found, but with his purchase of Cadillac and LaSalle in 1940, he had clearly ceased his affiliation with Packard. Butts Oldsmobile, Cadillac and LaSalle were listed at 1525 E. Douglas in the 1940-42 City Directories.

Butts Motor Company<sup>14</sup>

J. H. Butts was born in Casey County, Kentucky in 1852 and came to Kansas in 1869. He settled in Butler County and started in the lumber business in Leon. He and his wife had a son, J. Arch Butts in Leon in 1879, the first of six children. The family moved to Augusta in 1890. Butts founded the J. H. Implement Company in Augusta in 1899 and in 1906, moved the family and business to Wichita. J. Arch Butts, age 27, and his father built a six-story brick office building on the southwest corner of 1<sup>st</sup> and Lawrence (later renamed Broadway) in 1910. The building was home to J.H. Butts Implement Company and J. Arch Butts became the local Buick dealer, selling cars on the first floor of the building. Butts Sr. retired in 1911 and in 1921, J. Arch Butts gave up selling farm machinery and implements to devote his efforts entirely to automobiles. J. H. Butts died in Wichita in 1922 at the age of 69.

As one of the early auto dealerships in Wichita, Butts got into the auto business at the perfect time. He expanded his auto empire early and often over the next thirty years. In 1918, Butts purchased additional lots on North Lawrence and announced plans to build a new 2-story dealership. The building at 205-213 N. Lawrence was completed in 1919 and became home to Butts Buick Dealership. In 1922, Butts took over the Packard Dealership and in 1925; he constructed a new one-story building at 218-220 N. Lawrence to house the Packard agency. During this time, Butts also maintained a car dealership on the ground floor of the Butts Building at First and Lawrence; he had at least three separate buildings on N. Lawrence in the 1920s.

Packard prospered in the luxury auto market and in 1930, Butts announced plans to build a new showroom on E. Douglas for his Packard dealership. Also in 1930, Butts sold his Buick dealership to Jack Beatty and Butts purchased the Reo Dealership. In January 1931, Butts celebrated the formal opening of the J. Arch Butts Packard Building at 1525 E. Douglas, the second facility he had constructed to house his Packard Agency. Later that year, Butts took over the Cadillac and LaSalle distributorship in Wichita and also acquired the rights to Nash autos. In 1932, he took over the Oldsmobile dealership, handled with Reo, at his 205 N. Broadway location and in 1934, purchased the Jack Beatty Motor Corporation which carried the Buick line (sold to Beatty by Butts three years prior). J. Arch Butts and his son, John Butts, took over the Buick agency, naming it Butts Auto Company at 1520 E. Douglas, across the street from Butts Packard Agency at 1525 E. Douglas.

Throughout the Depression, Butts continued to expand. He leased the former Arnold Auto Company at 300 S. Broadway in 1936 for additional display area for his used cars. In 1940, Butts purchased the Ridings Motor Company, taking over their distributorship for Cadillac and LaSalle autos.<sup>15</sup> The City

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<sup>14</sup> *Wichita Eagle* and *Wichita Beacon* articles on Butts auto businesses indexed and accessed on-line through Tiehen Notes.

<sup>15</sup> Although Butts had purchased the Cadillac and LaSalle dealership in 1931, he gave it up when he acquired the local Oldsmobile franchise the following year, re-acquiring Cadillac and LaSalle in 1940 through acquisition of Ridings Motor Company. Articles and advertisements in the 1931 *Wichita Eagle* document that Butts sold Cadillac and LaSalle at the 1525 E. Douglas location.

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Directories listed Butts Oldsmobile, Cadillac and LaSalle at 1525 E. Douglas from 1940-42, and Butts Motor Company at 1520 E. Douglas during the same period.

A 1942 building permit documents Butts plans to construct interior partitions at the former Packard Building. By 1943, the building had been leased to the United States Employment Service.<sup>16</sup> The following year, Butts sold the Packard Building at 1525 E. Douglas to Lee J. Hobbs for his Chevrolet Dealership. Butts Motor Company expanded their operation at the 1520 E. Douglas location across the street purchasing five additional lots in the 1500 block of E. Douglas spanning to the corner of E. Douglas and Minneapolis. J. Arch Butts died in Wichita in 1951 at the age of 72. His son John maintained Butts Motor Company, the local Buick Dealership, at the 1520 E. Douglas location for a few years and sold to Ben Robinson Buick in 1956. Robinson Buick moved in 1962 and sold the 1520 E. Douglas property to Quality Chevrolet Co., the successor to Hobbs Chevrolet. Introduced to the auto industry by selling buggies in his father's implement business, J. Arch Butts sold automobiles in Wichita from 1906 until his death in 1951. His son John joined his father in the family business in the early 1930s and continued the business for five years following his father's death. The sale of Butts Auto Company to Ben Robinson in 1956 brought to a close fifty years of the family's automotive businesses in Wichita.

Hobbs Chevrolet<sup>17</sup>

Lee J. Hobbs of Blackwell, Oklahoma opened his Chevrolet Dealership in Wichita in 1928, located at 554 W. Douglas, the former home to Sheer-Bell Motor Company, an Oldsmobile dealer. Hobbs Chevrolet was listed at 521-535 W. Douglas still in the 1942 City Directory, with Paul A. Skinner as manager. Hobbs purchased the Packard Building at 1525 E. Douglas, from J. Arch Butts in 1944. A full-page ad in the *Wichita Eagle* December 31, 1944 announced the new location of Lee J. Hobbs Chevrolet at the E. Douglas location. Hobbs Chevrolet remained at the 1525 E. Douglas location into the late 1950s, re-named Hobbs-Skinner Chevrolet in the 1949 City Directory. In addition to their primary location at 1525 E. Douglas, Hobbs Chevrolet Truck Department was listed at 1611 E. Douglas, east of the building, by 1946. A c.1950s photo also illustrates Hobbs Truck Department occupying the one-story garage at the southwest corner of the lot behind the 1525 building. Hobbs maintained his Chevrolet business in Wichita for 30 years. He sold the business to Quality Chevrolet in 1958 and the new owners continued operation at the 1525 location until 1963. Quality Chevrolet purchased the Ben Robinson Buick Company, located across the street at 1520 E. Douglas, in 1962 and announced plans for construction of a new building. Quality also purchased the frontage in the 1600 block of E. Douglas and cleared the land for use as their used car lot. An advertisement in the April 19, 1963 *Wichita Eagle* announced the grand opening of the new Quality Chevrolet Company at 1520 E. Douglas. Quality Chevrolet was still in business in this location in the late 1970s. Lee J. Hobbs died in Wichita in 1975.

J. Arch Butts Packard, Cadillac, Oldsmobile and Buick dealerships and Lee Hobbs Chevrolet dealership share a history at the 1525 and 1520 E. Douglas locations. Both men were prominent in Wichita's auto industry throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

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<sup>16</sup> Historic Photo and 1943 City Directory.

<sup>17</sup> Except where noted, information on Hobbs Chevrolet is from the *Wichita Eagle* and *Wichita Beacon* articles on Hobbs Chevrolet accessed on-line through Tiehen Notes.

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The J. Butts Packard Building

The J. Arch Butts Packard Building celebrated its grand opening at 1525 E. Douglas in January of 1931. Several local businesses contributed to the building's construction. Schmidt, Boucher, and Overend Architects designed the building and Blasmer-Vollmer Construction Co. built it. Construction products were supplied by the Rock Island Lumber Co., Construction Products Co., and Wilson Hardware Co. Teter, the Painter and Decorator was responsible for the painting; Fortney Tile and Mantel Co. did the tile flooring, and Claude Neon Federal Co. did the neon signs.

Architect Lorentz Schmidt (Schmidt, Boucher & Overend)<sup>18</sup>

The Wichita architectural firm of Schmidt, Boucher & Overend designed the Packard Dealership in 1930, as well as the Studebaker Dealership across the street on the north side of Douglas Avenue (also extant).

Lorentz Schmidt was born in Clyde, Kansas in 1884. Following a farming accident that resulted in the loss of his leg, Schmidt learned the barber trade to earn money for school. He completed high school and attended one year of normal training in Emporia. At the age of 24, he decided he wanted to be an architect. Schmidt graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of Illinois in 1913 and worked in Chicago for two years. In 1915, he moved to Wichita and opened his own architectural firm. It was in his third year of practice that he designed his first building for the Wichita school system. In 1923 Schmidt designed Wichita East High School, referred to as "the million dollar high school." His reputation was established locally by this school and he designed numerous other Wichita schools throughout his career including Woodlawn, Stanley, Gardiner, Fabrique and W.H. Isley Grade Schools and Roosevelt, Horace Mann, Alexander Hamilton, and James Allison Junior High Schools.

C.F. Boucher joined Schmidt in 1917 and H. G. Overend joined the firm in 1919. The firm was reorganized in 1925 under the name Schmidt, Boucher & Overend (all graduates of University of Illinois School of Architecture). Throughout his career, Schmidt and his subsequent firms designed a number of Wichita landmarks, specializing in schools, churches and hospitals. He designed the Allis Hotel, the Brown Building, Hillcrest Apartments, the First Christian and St. James Episcopal Churches in Wichita.

Lorentz Schmidt died in 1952 in Wichita. His obituary in *Kansas Construction Magazine* stated that Schmidt was one of the best known and respected architects in Kansas. Schmidt was the first practicing architect in Kansas elected to a fellowship in the American Institute of Architects in 1951. He was active in professional organizations on a local, state, and national level, leading the effort to raise professional standards

Auto Showrooms and Dealerships Property Type

*Roadside Kansas* MPS notes that the first-generation of purpose-built dealerships mimicked the designs of traditional Main Street commercial blocks and that by the 1920s, dealerships began moving to the outskirts of commercial districts where land for used car lots was more plentiful and affordable.<sup>19</sup> The issue of traffic and parking congestion around dealerships influenced the design of dealerships as well as their location. In addition to showcasing/displaying vehicles for sale, service was an important factor, particularly in challenging economic times of the 1930s. New dealerships typically included at least one

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<sup>18</sup> Biographical information on Lorentz Schmidt was excerpted from *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* National Register Multiple Property Nomination by Spencer, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> *Roadside Kansas*, 60.

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garage bay for servicing vehicles, and were often configured to allow cars to be driven through the building, in one side and out the other. New automotive sales and service buildings were designed to address the specific requirements of the products they sold and the needs of their customers. Oversized-display windows showcased their oversized products and most of the buildings had enhanced structural systems to accommodate the heavy loads.<sup>20</sup>

By the 1930s, auto dealers used Streamlined Moderne and Modern Movement architecture to attract buyers, using the architecture to express the inherent thrill of movement associated with riding in an automobile.<sup>21</sup>

The Butts Packard Building falls between these two styles. While the architectural style is clearly Modern, the building does not have the curved corners and wrapped banding inherent in the Streamlined style.

The *Roadside Kansas MPS* describes the Auto Showrooms and Dealerships Property type and provides registration requirements. "...Auto dealerships typically featured large plate glass windows at the showroom and vehicular bays on one or more elevations. Primary building materials were fireproof, including brick, hollow clay tile, concrete, and steel and the design often featured a unique structural system, such as barrel vaulted trusses that accommodated a wide, column-free expanse. Abundant windows, typically multi-light industrial metal sashes, brought light into service areas and featured operable pivot sashes to expel fumes. Multi-story auto dealerships were equipped with freight elevators or ramps that carried vehicles between floors. A significantly higher level of finishes in the showrooms distinguished them from the utilitarian service areas."<sup>22</sup>

The J. Arch Butts Packard Building at 1525 E. Douglas Avenue in Wichita is consistent with the parameters of the property type outlined above. Constructed in 1930, the building is a Modern auto dealership reflecting the second generation of purpose-built auto dealerships and showrooms, designed and built to feature their product and effectively service the cars sold. The Packard Building retains its storefront configuration, although the storefront itself has been modified, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor display window – a distinguishing characteristic of the original design. The building also retains its original steel windows with pivoting sashes and garage bays for vehicular access in and out of the building. The interior of the Packard Building retains character-defining features including the massive ramp designed to transport cars to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor service area, the exposed, utilitarian finishes, and some features from the original 1<sup>st</sup> floor showroom.

### Summary

Constructed in 1930, the Packard Building at 1525 E. Douglas was among the early auto-related business on Wichita's new "Auto Row," reflecting a shift from their traditional downtown locations. Home to two prominent local automotive firms, Butts and Hobbs, the building at 1525 E. Douglas served its original function as an auto dealership for more than thirty years, until 1963. An excellent representative of a Modern auto dealership and showroom, The J. Arch Butts Packard Building meets the registration

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>22</sup> *Roadside Kansas*, 58.

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requirements outlined in the *Roadside Kansas* Multiple Property Submission. The building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling, reflecting its original design and character. The J. Arch Butts Packard Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property documentation submission *Roadside Kansas* as a representative of the *Auto Showrooms and Dealerships* property type (Streamline Moderne Dealership subtype). The building is locally significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of Commerce and Architecture.



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**10. Geographic Data**

*Verbal Boundary Description*

The property has the following legal description:

Lots 211, 213, 215, 217; and Lot 209 EXCEPT the west 2.27 feet of said Lot 209, on Douglas Avenue, all in Knight's Addition to the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas, AND Lots 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 on Fannie Avenue now Greenwood Avenue, all in Knights Addition to the City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas: EXCEPT the west 17.37 feet thereof, AND

Lots 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and the north 12 feet of Lot 18, Fannie Avenue (Greenwood Street), Hyde's Addition, Sedgwick County Kansas across the street to the east.

*Boundary Justification*

The boundary reflects the site on which the building is located and the rear parking lot described by the legal description above.

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Photographs

Photographer: Brenda R. Spencer (except where noted)  
Date: September 14, 2010 (unless otherwise noted)  
Original Files: Original digital image files provided on disc with nomination.

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Camera Direction</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	SW	J. Arch Butts Packard Building from Douglas Avenue
2	SW	East facade
3	NW	Building from southeast, on Fannie Avenue
4	N	Rear/south facade
5	N	Detail of upper windows on rear/south facade
6	SE	Front/north facade
7	S	Entry bay and original display window in center of front/north facade
8	N	Detail of upper windows and spandrel band on front facade
9	W	Detail of eagle panel capping pilaster on east facade (typical)
10	S	Original auto showroom, now retail space at northeast corner of 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
11	N	Detail of lights above display window, north facade
12	S	Metal stairway near center of building
13	S	Dumbwaiter, near center of building
14	E	View of south half of grist-floor (rear shop area), looking east (Photo by GLMV Architecture, November 3, 2010)
15	W	Rear shop area, looking west toward sliding door to adjacent building
16	S	Bathroom, below grade beneath ramp on 1 <sup>st</sup> floor, SW corner
17	N	Ramp, looking N from 1 <sup>st</sup> floor
18	SW	Bathroom located over ramp on 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor (Photo by GLMV Architecture, November 3, 2010)
19	E	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor, looking east along north side of floor
20	NE	Detail of upper windows on north facade, from interior
21	W	2 <sup>nd</sup> floor, looking west along south side of floor (Photo by GLMV Architecture, November 3, 2010)
22	W	Detail of vaulted roof truss and wood deck with light fixture, 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor