



KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CENTER FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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KANSAS MUSEUM OF HISTORY

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Certification of State Register Listing

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: Park House Gallery

Address: 501 E. Harvey Avenue, Wellington, Kansas 67152

Legal: C.R. Godfrey's Addition, O.L.F. S120' of O.L.Z to Wellington City

County: Sumner County

Owner: City of Wellington

Address: Wellington City Hall, Wellington, Kansas 67152

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible X

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on June 22, 1991.

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

Ramon Powers
State Historic Preservation Officer

July 10, 1991
Date

The Park House Gallery (c. 1886) is being nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places for its historical association with the growth and development of Wellington. Built for the Wellington Power and Light Company, the building served the community until 1890, when the company went bankrupt. The building sat vacant and deteriorating for twenty-six years, when it was rehabilitated by the Cary Circle as the Park House for the newly created Sellars Park. Since 1916 the Park House Gallery has served as community meeting space, currently it serves the senior citizens of Wellington and the Wellington Art Guild.

The gas works was originally part of the claim of C. R. Godfrey, who was a member of the Wellington Town Company. It had been acquired in 1885 as the site for an artificial gas works to provide lights for the city.

A man who played quite a prominent part in the public works project in Wellington was Mr. C. W. Hill who arrived in the city in 1883. His business was the erection of water works, gas works, electric light works, etc. in towns and cities. He had built these in various places in Kansas including Parsons. In 1884 he built the water works for the city, and then proposed to furnish illumination by means of the erection of a gas works.

Erection of the gas works by the Hill company was commenced in late February or early March of 1886. The main building, 35' x 65', was of Winfield stone furnished by Joe Conklin of Winfield, and this hammered stone laid in ashlar made a substantial building. The structure was divided into four rooms, with the engine, boiler rooms, and coal rooms in the basement which extending under the entire building. Charles Cooper was supervisor of the stone work; and H. H. Hines had the contract for the woodwork.

The building was practically completed by the last of August, 1886; and by October about twenty-five street lamps were ready for use. These were lighted for the first time on Sunday night October 11, 1886. By 1888 there were nine miles of gas mains laid in the city, and ninety-five public lamp posts. The gas which was described as burning with a "soft, steady, clear light" was also in use in some of the better residences of the city.

On the completion of the plant, the Wellington Light and Heat Co. prospered for a time, but in 1888 when the boom burst, the company, like other concerns fell on hard times. Therefore, in 1894 they were unable to pay a debt of \$55,855 owed the Farmers Loan and Trust Co. and the Circuit Court ordered the property sold at public auction in June, 1894.

Before 1913 Wellington had no public playgrounds and no park. The Cary Circle set out to investigate the establishment of a park. On July 18, 1913 the old dilapidated gas property was purchased by the City of Wellington at a cost of \$1250 from its Eastern owners, to be developed as a park for Wellington, on the promise of Cary Circle and other organizations that they would be responsible for

the cleanup, improvement, and beautification of the site. The Cary Circle was one of the oldest women's clubs in Wellington, it had been established as a literary organization, but, with the park project the group developed an interest in civic betterment and improvement.

Charles A. Scott, State Forester from Manhattan, came to Wellington in November, 1913 to survey the gas property and offered some helpful suggestions for possible improvements and beautification of the place. During the early years of the park, Scott and A. M. Doerner, a landscape architect also from Manhattan, gave valuable assistance in planning and laying out the park grounds.

On the property was also a deep pit 54' in diameter and 20' deep, originally known as the gasometer or holding. It was inadequately covered. Filling the pit was a primary concern of the Cary Circle women. In March, 1914 the city held a trash cleanup day, and trash of every kind was thrown into the hole. In several years the hole was filled and covered over with plantings.

In April, 1915 the Wellington City Commission created the office of Park Superintendent, and appointed Mrs. Lulu Planz Sellers to the post. She served in this capacity until 1921. Sellers had been a member of the Cary Circle Civics committee from its inception and had taken over the park responsibilities when the chairman, Mrs. Cordelia Wood Herrick, became too ill to continue.

Efforts were next centered on the old stone building on the property which had been originally erected in 1886 as a gas works. The walls were still in good condition but much of the rest of the building was deteriorated. Local architect Frank White volunteered to remodel the 35' x 65' building. The basement was filled in with Aetna Mills and Wellington Mills cinders and covered with cement. A new roof, new windows, new doors, and a new pressed tin ceiling were installed. Archways were cut between the rooms. Restrooms were installed. The remodeled building, which became known as the Park House, had six rooms aside from the storeroom. The Park House was completed in April, 1916. As a clubhouse for the community, the place was soon very popular for club meetings, banquets, and various social gatherings.