

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register
Listed
June 29, 2018

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name McPherson Community Building

Other names/site number McPherson Convention Center/Globe Refiners Gymnasium/Municipal Court KHRI #113-266

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 122 E. Marlin

--

 not for publication

City or town McPherson

--

 vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County McPherson Code 113 Zip code 67460

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local Applicable National Register Criteria: x A B C D

See file.

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

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

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

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE/Sports facility

RECREATION & CULTURE/Auditorium

GOVERNMENT/Fire station

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE/Sports facility

RECREATION & CULTURE/Auditorium

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

Stone

roof: Undetermined

other: _____

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Narrative Description

Summary

The McPherson Community Building (1927) is located at 122 E. Marlin Street. The Community Building sits on the eastern edge of downtown McPherson and is one of the larger buildings in the downtown area, just a block east of Main Street which is the heart of historic downtown McPherson. The community (population 13,144) is in central Kansas and is the McPherson County seat. The two-story building constructed originally both as a Community Building and as a fire station in 1927. In 1934 an addition was added to the southeast corner of building along Ash Street which was an extension to the fire department apparatus bay to handle longer fire trucks.¹ A slight change in color of brick indicates where the addition existed. The fire station has since moved out of the south portion of the building, and the space is currently being used by the McPherson Municipal Court. There are currently three levels to the building including a ground floor, mezzanine/second story lobby area, and a basement section located under the current stage area and municipal court.

The original Art Deco design elements still exist in the building with elaborate masonry design elements and metal sash windows consistent with similar buildings of the time. The 1934 addition to southeast elevation (a fire station extension) squared the southeast corner of the building. Renovations in 1976 added metal panels to the front (north) façade and additional build-outs on the southeast and southwest corners of the building. The metal panels and architectural design were consistent with the character of the downtown district at that time; however, they obscured the historic façade. The 1927 façade was uncovered in October 2017, exposing the original exterior design elements of the building.

Elaboration

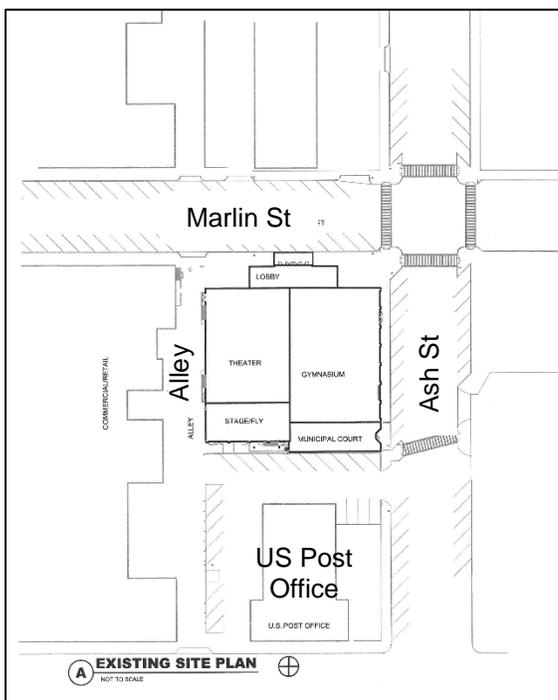


Figure 1: Existing Site Plan

Setting

The McPherson Community Building sits on the eastern edge of McPherson's downtown business district on the southwest corner of Marlin and Ash streets. The building's current footprint extends to the edges of the property footprint, with sidewalks along the right-of-way on the east and north edges of the property. The property is adjacent to a public paved alley on the west side and to the US Post Office on the south side (Figure 1 through 3). Although Figure 4 shows some trees around the facility in the early years, currently there is no landscaping surrounding the building, which is consistent with the entire downtown area.

The Building

The Community Building is constructed primarily of brick with a tall stone water table. The building faces north with lobby entrance opening to Marlin Street. A secondary entrance to the municipal court faces east along the south portion of the east façade. Historic steel windows in the building are mostly on street facing facades of the building, generally the north and east facades. Windows are limited to the east half of the building mostly because they were not conducive to the theatre usage on western portion of the building. In 1934 an addition was built at the south end of the building's east half for fire equipment and more storage for the fire department (Figure 5).² Records indicate that the bay doors for the

Fire Department were converted to windows and an entry door and facade when the space was converted to Municipal Court in 1998.

Exterior

Looking at the building's exterior, there are three different height structures to the building. The main Community Building on the north side is all one height, while the Municipal Court section (formerly the fire station in the southeast corner) is slightly lower. The tallest part of the building is the stage fly area in the southwest corner of the building.

¹ Ellen Lundstrom, C. C. (1934). *McPherson City Commission Minutes*. McPherson: 1034.

² Lundstrom, N/A.

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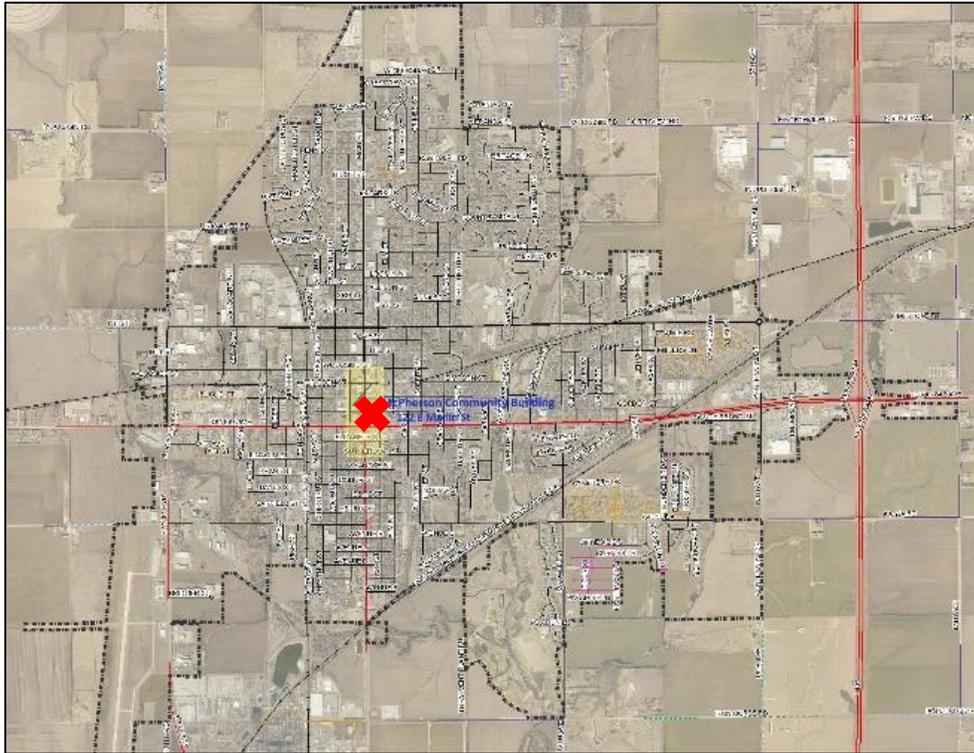


Figure 2: Contextual view of the city of McPherson, Kansas, showing the community building with X (City of McPherson).



Figure 3: Contextual images, showing Community Building within downtown, marked by X (City of McPherson).

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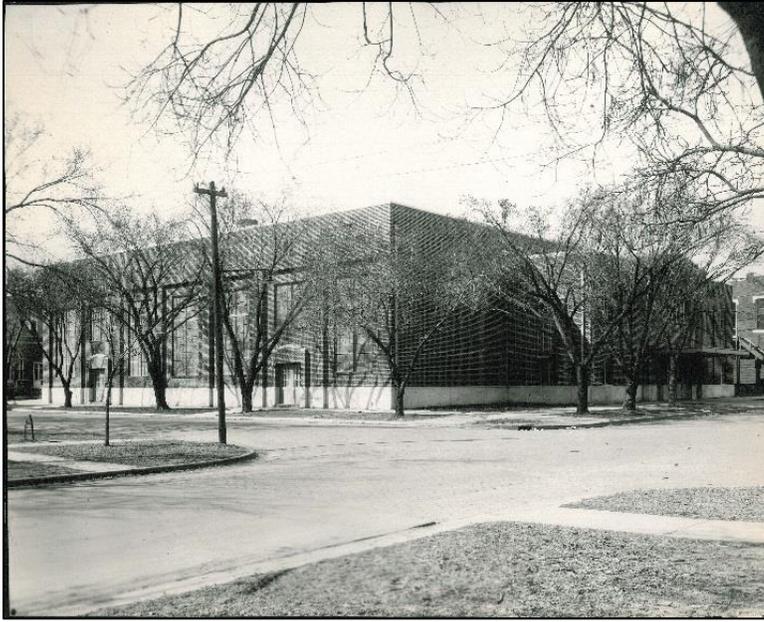


Figure 4: McPherson Community Building, 1930s.

The historic north façade and northwest and northeast corners were recently uncovered. In 1976 the historically stepped (in plan) north wall was given additions at the corners to flatten the wall surface into one plane. At the time, the north façade and northeast and northwest corners were comprised of a metal panel with a concrete masonry back-up. When the corners were added, several original windows were covered along the north, east, and west elevations. As the building currently is, most of the masonry window openings on north façade are infilled with brick.³

Apart from infilled masonry openings, the symmetrical north façade is highly intact. In the center of the façade is the protruding building mass that houses the main lobby. A pair of double aluminum doors are centered within the lobby mass wall with an aluminum framed window on either side. This mass is slightly shorter than the main building. It has a flat roof with a stepped, shaped parapet over the entry doors. The historic awning seen in historic photos is no longer extant.

The east façade is the most ornate on the building. The majority of the wall along Ash Street encloses the gymnasium and is seven evenly-spaced bays wide. Extant windows on this façade are historic vertical steel framed windows that light the gymnasium; the windows are centered in two-story brick insets along the wall. The bay second from the north contains a pair of doors with a shaped surround. Above this is a historic vertical steel window. Historically, this treatment was mirrored in the second bay from the south (Figure 5). Today, this bay contains a large overhead door, and the historic steel window is replaced with brick infill. Above the middle bay and the two door bays is an ornate brick emblem. The east façade of the Fire Station (now Municipal Court) is on an even plane with the gymnasium wall, but it is a few feet shorter in height. The symmetrical façade contains a non-historic aluminum storefront with inset door. Two evenly-spaced windows are located in the second level; the window openings are historic, but the windows themselves are replacements. A brick emblem, like that on the gymnasium wall, is centered in the parapet level above the upper windows. On the north side of the building, the east façade of the lobby mass contains two infilled masonry openings, one on each level, surrounded by patterned brickwork.

The south façade of the Fire Department (Municipal Court) contains seven window bays. The masonry openings are historic, but the window units are replacements. The western three and middle three windows are grouped; the easternmost bay is about one foot shorter than the rest of the wall, indicating that this was the 1934 addition. A single window is located in this bay at each level. The parapet is capped with stone. The south façade of the stage fly is inset from the Fire Department and contains four bays but no windows. The bays are distinguished by brick pilasters (no pilaster at the end corner). A pair of historic wood doors is located at ground level on the west portion of the wall. A non-historic door is located at the east side of the wall at both ground and upper level. The upper level door accesses a metal fire escape, which is also accessed by a door in the west wall of the Fire Department mass; a single door is also located in the west wall of the Fire Department mass at ground level.

The west façade spans the alley and encloses the auditorium. The west façade is one plane, with the stage fly mass rising above the rest of the building. There is no ornamentation on this wall. At the north end and at the wall junction with the stage fly mass are exit doors, one on each level. The upper doors (none are historic) access metal fire escape stairs that lead down to the alleyway along the wall. The parapet wall steps down at the north end of the wall.

Interior (Plans 1, 2 & 3)

There are three usable level to building including the ground level, mezzanine levels, and partial basement levels along the southern sections of the building, including below the stage area and below the municipal court. South of the auditorium on the western half of the building is a stage area with dressing rooms in the basement and a stage and fly area that makes up the tallest portion of the building. In the southwest corner of the building is the current municipal court (formerly the fire station). The municipal court area is walled off from the rest of the building. Original fire escapes are extant on both the

³ There are remnants of paint on the outside bricks of the building on north façade that was in place when those walls served as internal walls for the past additions that were recently removed.

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Figure 5: Undated historic photos of the east elevation prior to 1934.

south and west sides of the building to facilitate emergency ingress and egress to both the gymnasium and the theatre mezzanines.

The main level's primary access is via a lobby on the north portion of the building. Two pairs of double doors in the lobby's south wall open to the theater (west) and the gymnasium (east) that equally divide the building from north to south. The original box office is located between the doors into the gymnasium and theater. The lobby has been adorned with historical graphics dedicated to the Globe Refiner's Team that played both in the facility and in the 1936 Olympic Games. Open switchback stairs at the east and west ends of the lobby provide access to the mezzanine's lobby space. The mezzanine lobby landing also has two pairs of double doors that access both the gymnasium and the theater mezzanines. Storage areas are located under the east stair and under part of the west stair; a small office is located under the west stair's landing.

The gymnasium occupies the majority of the east portion of the community building. The present court is constructed of an all-surface rubberized playing material that accommodates a playing surface for nearly every sport. Originally, the playing surface in the gymnasium was an all-wooden maple court surface. This surface was removed and replaced in 1976. The gymnasium now has a suspended ceiling tile wood structure which was added at an unknown date; although, some type of finished ceiling was historically in place (*Figure 6*). The gymnasium, in its original form, had open steel trusses, exposed wood rafters and a wood roof deck (*Figure 7*). A suspended wood-and-steel-framed mezzanine is supported by steel tension rods fastened to the roof trusses. Historically the mezzanine extended around the entire perimeter of the court. Today, the mezzanine is extant on three sides of the court (the south, west, and north) and was designed to accommodate an "above-the-court" spectator experience. An original east mezzanine was removed most likely for code compliance issues and because it needed to be removed to accommodate an overhead door added in 1976.⁴ The remaining portions of the mezzanine are in their original form, featuring tiered platform seating, pipe-rail guards, and spiral stairs.

The theater/auditorium is a theatre style room with a stage situated at the south end (*Figure 8*). It has a tiered wooden mezzanine on the west, north, and east sides of the space. The mezzanine is supported in a similar method as the mezzanine in the gymnasium. Many original theater seats comprise part of the current mezzanine seating. The ground floor of the auditorium is a 5.5% downward sloping concrete floor and has non-original cloth covering on the historic seats, likely added in the 1980's or 1990's. The ceiling in the theatre is covered with acoustic drop ceiling tile that is most likely original to the building's construction as the original plans call for drop ceiling. Also much of the lighting fixtures in the auditorium appear to be original.

The sloped floor leads down to a thrust stage, the proscenium, and the main stage. The floor elevation of the stage(s) and main lobby are identical. The thrust stage, added in 1976, was constructed over the (original) orchestra pit. The main stage features a full rigging system with a fly curtain system. Much of the stage rigging and curtain system have fallen in disrepair over recent years and have not been used for at least five years since McPherson Community Theatre moved to the McPherson Opera House. The stage has been used more for storage of props and backdrops from the Community Theatre. An interesting element of the theater is some of the show graffiti in the hallways and walls in the below stage dressing room and hallway. Some of graffiti goes back to at least 1949 (Noel Coward's "Hay-Fever") and has the names of characters and cast from past shows that played in the Community Building.

The level below the stage contains the building's only original restrooms and dressing rooms located along an east-west running hallway. The dressing room once housed showers (likely for the basketball teams), and working plumbing fixtures have fallen in severe disrepair and are no longer functional. A spiral staircase is located at the west end of the hallway that leads up to the stage.

⁴ Current building codes prevent this section of gymnasium mezzanine from being restored at a future date.

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Figure 6: Gymnasium, looking north from the south mezzanine, showing the finished historic ceiling at an unknown date.

The McPherson Municipal Court is located to the south of the gymnasium in the space formerly used by the Fire Department. The Municipal Court section of the building is separated from the remaining portions of the building with a firewall that extends from ground level to the rafters. There is emergency egress out of the municipal court into the gymnasium on the main level only. A small prep kitchen opens up to the gymnasium and shares a firewall with the municipal court portion of the building. This kitchen is located at the south end of the gymnasium and at the west end of the court.

No finishes, fixtures, or layout in the ground level court and kitchen are historic. The municipal court entrance opens up into a small lobby. Beyond the lobby is a small cubicle area that is available for court bailiff and for the City Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) Inspectors. To the north of this cubicle is a court clerk office and file room. The court clerk area is separated by a glass teller style protected front with locked access from the office which allows the court clerks to interact with the public. The lobby opens up to hallway that runs along the south wall of the building. The hallway leads to the actual courtroom, a small unisex public restroom

in the middle of the hallway, and attorney's conference area, adjacent to the courtroom. There is access from the courtroom and the joint Clerk's Office/File Room which also has a small unisex restroom facility only open to staff.

An ell-shaped historic stair at the northeast corner of the court's lobby leads to the second floor of the former Fire Department. This level retains a high level of material and design integrity. The stairway leads into a large room. At the east end of this room are three historic doors that lead into a small kitchen (north room), closet (middle door), and small room (south room). The closet was formerly open and contained the fireman's pole. Another small room is accessed through a door at the south end of the room. Two doors are in the west wall of this large room. The north door leads into a storage area; the south door leads into a wood-floored hallway.

This hallway has a slight ell-shaped jog to the south, so it can continue down the south wall of the building. A storage closet is located at the east end of the hall. At the west end of the hall is a fire egress door in the west wall, a small elevator for transferring court records between floors, and a door in the east wall that leads into a large open space without windows, which formerly served as the firefighter's sleeping room (today it is court document storage).

Alterations

In many ways, the current interior of the Community Building retains much of the early elements of architecture that existed when it was originally constructed. Though a number of interior elements were added or modified both before and during the 1976 renovation of the building, there are many elements that have retained the 1927 style. The 1976 renovations mostly revolved around renovations to modernize the facility and improve usability at the time; however, due to budget constraints, air-conditioning was never added. The largest interior changes include: the original fire station space extension on the east elevation (in 1934); the corner additions on the northeast and northwest corners (1976); and the modification of the main level of the Fire Department to accommodate the Municipal Court (1990s).

New corners were added to the northeast and northwest portions of the building in 1976 with the idea of making the building more functional for the needs of the time. These corner additions included locker rooms, public (accessible) restrooms, a meeting room, and a small management office. Also, an additional stairway leading up to a second story locker room was constructed. Over time, other gymnasium facilities around the community and particularly in the schools and colleges, replaced the need for the Community Building for competitive sports. As a result of diminished demand for competitive sports in the building, there was no longer functional value for the locker rooms. Both locker rooms were used for storage of equipment, materials and chairs. Leaks in the roof structure had resulted in some damage to the upstairs locker room. With the feeling that corners took away from the original architecture of the facilities, and with the commitment of the sales tax funds to the project, the 1976 north corner structures were removed in October 2017. Upon their removal, the masonry

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Figure 7: Gymnasium shortly after construction, looking north and showing exposed ceiling.

below appears to be well preserved with some minimal repairs to return the façade to its original state. As part of a future phase of the renovations, windows, doors, facades, and awnings will be restored to historically accurate replacements.

The raised south window and lower exit doors were removed from the east side of the building during the 1976 renovation to accommodate a large overhead door in the gymnasium, making it easier to access the building for maintenance equipment. Windows in the Municipal Court section of the building were replaced in 1998 as part of the Municipal Court conversion with pre-finished aluminum double hung windows.

Also impacted by the 1976 renovation was the original north entrance to the building. The original entrance to the facility was constructed in the same character as the original building and was made of the same brick and stone as the remaining portions of the building. The 1976 addition was built over the top of the original masonry structure making up the north entrance.

After construction in 1927, the southeast corner of the building housed the McPherson Fire Department. The second floor housed the living quarters of the Fire Department, while the main floor housed apparatus and equipment storage areas. In 1934 the east façade to the building was extended to be flush with the remaining portions of the masonry of the remaining building. The addition were made to accommodate larger fire department apparatus and materials.⁵ In 1962, the McPherson Fire Department moved to their current location and the facility was used for storage of equipment and other civil defense supplies. In July 1973, the City Commission authorized the space to be leased or used to house the Arts and Crafts Association as an Art Guild, including an artist-in-residence.⁶ In 1998, the next significant renovation added the Municipal Court to the space. The apparatus bay doors were removed from the east front and replaced with windows and entry doors for the Municipal Court. The current court space, lawyer's conference room, offices, and the prep kitchen off the Community Building gymnasium were added.⁷ Storage for Municipal Court files was made available in the upstairs space. Some remnants of the upstairs living quarters remain to this day and the space hosts support group meetings.

Integrity

Since the historic 1927 façade was uncovered in late 2017, the McPherson Community Building fully retains excellent integrity from its period of significance, 1927 to 1963. Its location has not changed, nor has the surrounding downtown setting been altered significantly. The building remains an anchor of downtown McPherson. Apart from the main level of the former fire station, the entire building's historic design is discernible, as no other major interior alterations have occurred to obscure the overall design. Some historic interior materials have been removed or replaced, but the overall material integrity of the building is good, as a majority of materials remain from its period of significance, especially within the theater. The building's location, setting, design, materials, and workmanship are highly intact, which allow the building to clearly communicate its historic associations and the feeling of this historic building.

⁵ Lundstrom, Book 3, p 559.

⁶ Agreement and Terms sheet in the City Historical File, 7-23-73

⁷ Resolution No. 98-17, Resolution Authorizing Bonding and Improvements, April 6, 1998.

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Summary

The McPherson Community Building has retained many of the historic characteristics of its original architectural design from 1927. The City of McPherson owns and will continue to own the building. Through a ½ Cent Sales Tax approved by McPherson's citizens, the city has earmarked funds for the restoration of the building to preserve the historic architectural elements of the original building exterior along with the gymnasium and lobby. The proposed auditorium renovation will repurpose the space to better fit the needs of the community to continue hosting historical traditions such as community dinners and other similar events.



Figure 8: Auditorium/theater during World War II, looking south from the north balcony.

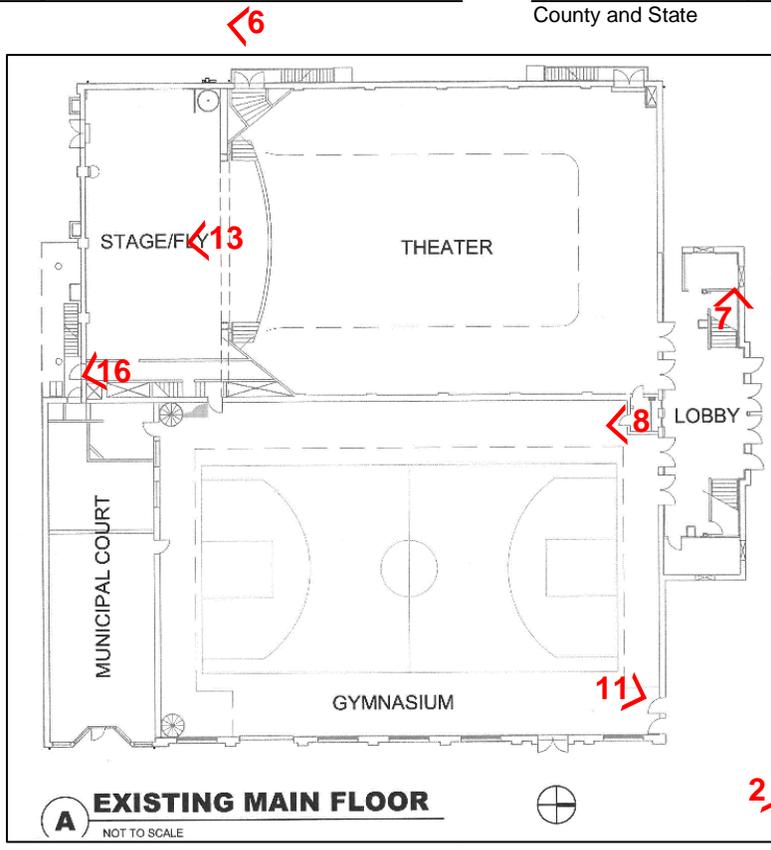
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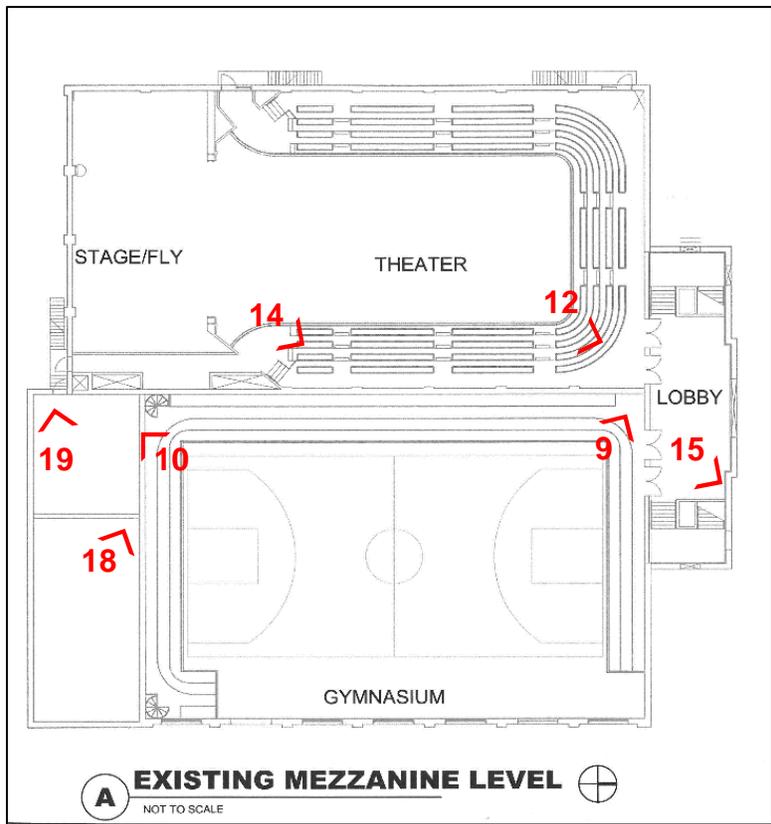
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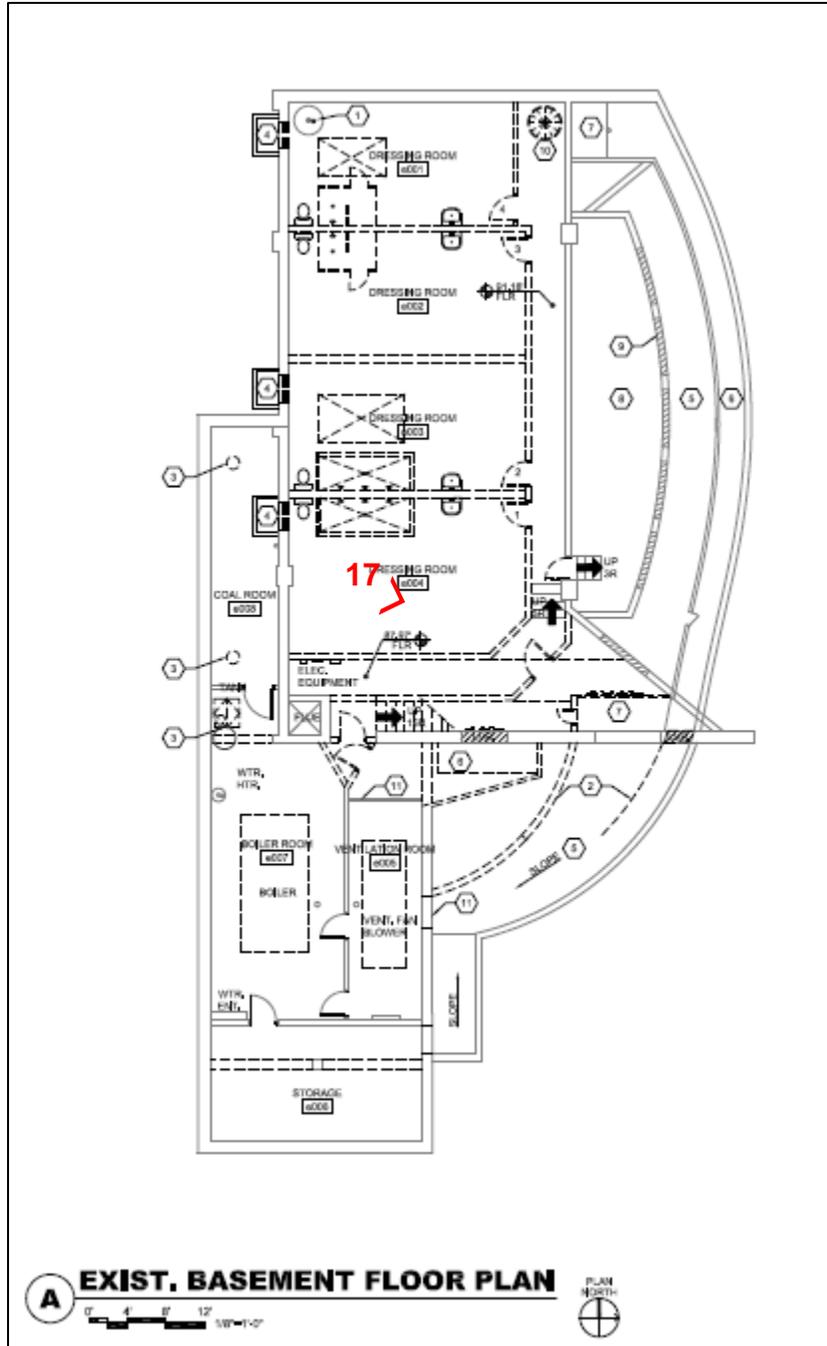
Plan 1: Existing Ground Floor Plan with photo numbers.



Plan 2: Existing Mezzanine Level Plan with photo numbers. Note: second level of municipal court/fire department not drawn.

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Plan 3: Existing Basement Level Plan with photo number.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1927-circa 1963

Significant Dates

1927, 1936

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: Scamell, Ralph E.

Builder: Hjerpe & Sandstrom

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance spans from the building's construction in 1927 to circa 1963 when the fire department moved out of the building, ending the continued historic use of this building.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

Built in 1927 the McPherson Community Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with McPherson's entertainment and recreation history. Best remembered as the homecourt of the Globe Refiners, the building houses a gymnasium and a theater and provided space for the city's first fire department. The Globe Refiners provided five team members of the 1936 US Olympic Basketball Team, who won the first gold medal awarded for basketball. The building served the community of McPherson as a gathering place for basketball games and plays, and until circa 1963, housed the city's fire department. The period of significance spans from the building's construction in 1927 to circa 1963 when the fire department moved out of the building, ending the continued historic use of this building.

Elaboration



Figure 9: The Community Building in the 1930s, looking southwest.

In 1929 following the discovery of the Canton Oil Patch just seven miles away from McPherson, the Globe Refining Company, as subsidiary of the Humble Oil Company (later known as Exxon) constructed a refinery. The Globe Refinery, now a farmer-owned co-op refinery named CHS in south McPherson, has been an integral part of the community since its establishment.⁸ Though the sport of basketball had grown to be big in college by the 1930s, there was no sustainable professional basketball league in the mid-1930s. The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) was the only option for skilled basketball players who had exercised all of their college eligibility.⁹ As a result, building a quality AAU basketball team was an option available to industries and other businesses wanting to form a team. By adding skilled players from around the country, the Globe Refinery was able convert an otherwise small-town basketball team to a national

contender basketball squad.¹⁰ The Globe Refinery saw the opportunity of creating a world class national powerhouse basketball team as a marketing opportunity to sell their refined petroleum product.¹¹

In 1935-36 the Globe Refiners, known affectionately as "the Oilers", were made up of Harry Dowd, Joe Fortenberry, John "Tex" Gibbons, Francis Johnson, Gene Johnson, Delbert Petre, Jack Ragland, Willard Schmidt, Vernon Vaughn, Bill Wheatley, and their Coach Gene Johnson. The Refiners were actual employees of the Globe Refinery, and when they were not playing basketball, they were working for Globe Oil. The Globe Refiners had the opportunity to play some of the best basketball teams nationally during the 1935-36 Season. During the 1935-36 season the Globe Refiners were known for their sizes being coined the "Awesome Kansas Giants" by *Time Magazine*.¹² Writing in 1936, a young sportswriter, Arthur Daley, wrote of the team that they "pitched the ball downward into the hoop, much like a cafeteria customer dunking a roll in coffee."¹³ They were one of the first teams to frequently use the dunk, likely helped by the fact that all but one team member was over six feet tall, the tallest being Wheatley (6'-9") and Fortenberry (6'-8"). The Refiners also were one of the first basketball teams to use the "zone press" by using a 2-2-1 press developed by Coach Johnson. The size and ability of the team to block shots led to changes in the goaltending rules shortly after the period of prominence.

After losing the AAU Championship Game in in 1935, the Refiners were able to capture the AAU National Championship in 1936 by beating Universal Studio Universals by a score of 47-35. Winning the AAU National Championship afforded them

⁸ Rich Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936* (Victoria, BC, Canada: FriesenPress, 2011), 59. Hughes' book provides much of the context for this narrative.

⁹ Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 54.

¹⁰ Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 63.

¹¹ Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 66.

¹² Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 76.

¹³ As quoted in Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 76.

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Figure 10: The Globe Refiners (Bottom row, left to right) Coach Gene Johnson, John W. Franks, "Tex" Gibbons, Jack Ragland, and Francis Johnson; Back row (left to right) Vernon Vaughn, Joe Fortenberry, Willard Schmidt, Harry Dowd and Bill Wheatley.

(Forward); and Coach Gene Johnson. The five Globe Refiners were to represent the US in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, Germany. On August 14, 1936 on a wet outdoor clay court, the US Team defeated Team Canada to win the first Olympic Gold Medal to be awarded in basketball. Dr. James Naismith, the inventor of basketball, was there to award each of the seven players who played in the Gold Medal Game an oak wreath after receiving their medals.¹⁴

McPherson's Globe Refiners used the McPherson Community Building gymnasium as their practice and exhibition court, immortalizing the building in the history of McPherson. Much of the team's memorabilia is presently housed in the building's lobby. There are still ongoing attempts to have those members of the Globe Refiners Basketball Team, who were also integral to the 1936 Men's Olympic Gold Medal Basketball Team, be added to the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Because it was during the Depression and unemployment was at a nationwide high of approximately 17%, the Globe Refiners who chose to attend the Olympics in Germany no longer had jobs for the Refinery when they returned home to Kansas. When they returned home, many of the players went their separate ways with a number picking up sponsorships with other AAU Teams from outside McPherson.¹⁵ Though the 1936 Olympic Victory signaled an end of the glory days for the Globe Refinery Basketball team, their successes have inspired generations of McPherson youth to aspire to be basketball great. Basketball traditions have become and continue to be a vital part of McPherson history. McPherson continues to be known as a basketball town.

Since and during the time of the Globe Refiners, many teams have played on the community building court. The McPherson American Legion basketball team was formed in 1948 and played in the building until 1964. In 1949 the McPherson American Legion team won the National Championship Game in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, beating out 24 teams from different states across the US and granting them the right to host the American Legion Tournament in 1950. The American Legion teams were sponsored by American Legion Posts from around the country and were composed largely of post-high school and post-college skilled players. The 1950 American Legion Championship was played in the McPherson Community Building, and it hosted 20 different team from 19 different states. The best records available indicate that Community Building served as home court for the McPherson High School Boys Basketball team from shortly after construction until 1939 when a new high school was built, and Central Christian College Basketball Team (at the time known as Central College) played in the Community Building from 1943 to 1961. McPherson College also played in the Community Building

¹⁴ Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 56-58, 184, 307-309, 311.

¹⁵ Hughes, *Netting Out Basketball 1936*, 311.

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Figure 11: East elevation shortly after 1934 when the fire station expanded.

from its early year until sometime in the 1940's. Over the years the gymnasium received heavy usage but was eventually replaced by bigger more modern college and public school gymnasiums.

Historical Context of McPherson

McPherson County was organized in 1870 with 783 inhabitants. The City of McPherson was founded two years later and rapidly grew with the expansion of the Santa Fe and Union Pacific Railroads to the area in 1879. McPherson was located and founded by L.G. Skanke of Salina, Kansas.¹⁶ Articles of Incorporation were signed by the City's Founders composing of 12 men including Skanke, Oscar Seitz, J.T. Marlin, R.H. Bishop, T.E. Simpson, Solomon Stevens, H.J. Woodside, John W. Hill, H.A. Hendry, J.B Haight, Landon Raff, and J.R. Fisher on May 28, 1872.¹⁷ The

town was platted and streets laid out in July of 1872.¹⁸ In August 1872, the county seat was moved from Lindsborg to McPherson. The US Census Bureau listed 17,143 residents in McPherson County by 1880. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the population remained between 21,000 and 25,000 residents. The July 1, 2016, estimated population for the City of McPherson, according to the US Census Bureau and Kansas Department of Revenue, was 13,157.¹⁹

McPherson experienced rapid change since its economic foundation was in agriculture. By 1912, four railroad lines converged at McPherson – the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, the Missouri Pacific, and the Union Pacific – making McPherson an important shipping point in the middle of Kansas. In his book, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*, Frank Blackmar described McPherson as having the following:

....two good hotels, an opera house, three flour mills, which are the largest in the state, 4 grain elevators, ice and cold storage plant, electric plant, fire department, waterworks and sewer system. The streets are wide and well kept and the business blocks with well appointed retail stores. The town is supplied by telegraphic communications and express offices and has an international money order post office with seven rural routes. A board of trade has recently been organized and a retail dealers' association has been in operation among the merchants for some years.²⁰

Blackmar's early 20th century description suggests McPherson was a sophisticated community with industry, business, and entertainment. As the community continued to grow, there was a need to add additional cultural and recreational opportunities. The McPherson Community Building became a facility that ensured (and continues to ensure) that McPherson was a community where people could gather socially to enjoy culture and athletics.

Property History

As early as 1922 a group from the American Legion began to press for construction of a community building that would include an auditorium and city offices. A bond election for the Community Building failed in April of 1922.²¹ Four years later in 1926, a second push for a multi-purpose community building was made with the community feeling a strong need for facilities to host the growing basketball needs within the community and space to host gatherings with the recent closure of the McPherson Opera House in 1925. The preliminary plans for the Community Building were to include an auditorium, exhibition building, city offices, fire department quarters, band room, and a kitchen with a serving room. Ultimately, the City Commission approved plans to move forward with the project with all pieces with the exception of City Offices. The

¹⁶ Jesse L. Rowland, Historical Paper: "City of McPherson, Kansas" (1949): 100.

¹⁷ Rowland, "City of McPherson," 101.

¹⁸ Rowland, "City of McPherson," 30.

¹⁹ <https://www.census.gov>

²⁰ Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History* (Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912), 54.

²¹ Raymond L. Flory, *McPherson at Fifty: A Kansas Community in the 1920's* (McPherson, KS: McPherson College, 1970),

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Figure 12: The north façade of the McPherson Community Building as it appears in early 2017 before the historic façade was revealed by the removal of the 1970s addition.

Community Building went back to bond election in April of 1927 when a record 80% of electorate voted 839 to 757 in favor of issuing bonds in the amount of \$95,000.²² In 1927 the decision to build a community center was a solid decision in order to build a community with amenities that would attract workers and families to continue the growth of the community.

The McPherson Community Building was designed by Ralph Scamell, an architect from Topeka, Kansas, in 1927. Bids were open for construction of the building on August 22, 1927. Construction started on August 30, 1927 by Hjerpe & Sandstrom General Contractors from McPherson, Kansas. Construction for Convention Center and Gymnasium portions of the building began in January 1928. The first game to be held in the building was a benefit game between the McPherson Bankers Basketball Team and Wichita Elks. The grand opening for the building was on April 26, 1928.²³

The building's historical use was primarily one of community gymnasium and auditorium/theater.

Community-led plays occurred almost every year in the theater, as evidenced by the abundant cast graffiti on the walls of the stage and basement hallway. An addition was built in approximately 1933 (on the south), that housed the McPherson Fire Department (*Figure 11*). The gymnasium and auditorium/theater are generally intact today, the south addition has been converted over the years for storage use for Civil Defense (1963), the McPherson Art Guild (1973), and the McPherson Municipal Court (1998). Despite efforts to have the building demolished, the community in 1974 voted to restore the facility through a public tax initiative.

The City Commission first looked at a major remodel of Community Building in 1950 when they commissioned local architect, Carl Edwards to survey the building for renovations. It was determined at the time in 1950 that the costs were too high to remodel the building. The Gardner Co. of Chicago performed a study in 1959 to Study McPherson Plan at the time and suggested that building had outlived its useful life. The report was the first of several to suggest tearing down the Community Building.²⁴ A 1969 Report from Oblinger-Smith Planning Consultants suggested that the Community Building had been reduced to a minimum usage, should be considered for demolition, and that there might be more need for modern auditorium and gymnasium spaces at another location with better parking opportunities. In the early 1970's there was a push to demolish the building to open up additional space for the downtown for either new construction or additional parking. The 1969 Comprehensive Development report suggested that the Community Building should be demolished and moved to another area and the current site should be utilized as a parking lot. There was significant support for the demolition of the building by the McPherson City Commission, as well as the Main Street Organization. However, there was push back from a significant faction in the McPherson Community interested in protecting the history of the building. In 1973-74 the McPherson PRIDE Committee put out a community survey asking the McPherson Community what issues were important to the residents. As part of the PRIDE survey, 3,711 surveys were mailed out while 1,612 surveys came back from within the community. Of the total responses received, 1,231 of the total 1,612 stated that preserving and restoring the Community Building should be a priority.²⁵ This survey, in addition to the community outpouring against the concept of demolishing the building ultimately led to a change in momentum to perform restoration instead of demolition. On August 6, 1974, a bond issue to renovate the building was passed by voters. The renovation included adding a new (north) front to the building, including corner additions. The additions and renovations incorporated bathroom (locker room) additions on the northeast and northwest corners, a new boiler, a new roof, a rubberized gymnasium floor, a metal panel façade on the north elevation, and replacement windows on the south, façade, dressing room, a small meeting room, new gym floor (uni-turf), carpeting, a new length of gym ceiling tile, remodeling of the stage, removing the northeast exterior exit door and adjacent glazing in

²² Flory, *McPherson at Fifty*, 139.

²³ Flory, *McPherson at Fifty*, 140.

²⁴ Comprehensive Plan Report, the Gardner Co. of Chicago, 1959.

²⁵ McPherson Pride Committee, 1973.

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the gymnasium and replacing it with an overhead door, removing the east mezzanine in the gymnasium and selective masonry pointing. The work for this renovation was done by Jost and Wiens Construction Co.

Summary

McPherson's Community Building is best revered in the community because of its association with the Globe Refiners and the players who helped the United States win the first Olympic Gold Medal in basketball in 1936. The building is also significant to the community for being a place where residents gathered to play and watch basketball games ranging from high school games to college level to semi-professional teams. The building also provided space for the McPherson Community Theater to perform; the theater also hosted several community events.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

- 1927 Building Contract Documents – City Storage.
- 1969 McPherson Comprehensive Development Plan Report
- 1973 PRIDE Letter and Community Interest Survey Results
- 1974 Community Building Renovation Bond Documents/Contracts/Information files/committee reports – City Storage.
- Archived Pictures of the Community Building – McPherson Public Library.
- Blackmar, Frank. *Kansas: A Cyclopaedia of State History*. Chicago: Standard Publishing Co., 1912.
- Central College – Basketball Promotional Information (Private individual's private collection)
- Comprehensive Plan Report, the Gardner Co. of Chicago, 1959.
- Comprehensive Plan Report: Community Facilities/Public Utilities, Oblinger-Smith Planning Consultants, March 1969.
- Flory, Raymond L. *McPherson at Fifty: A Kansas Community in the 1920's*. McPherson, KS: McPherson College, 1970.
- Hughes, Rich. *Netting Out Basketball 1936*. Victoria, BC, Canada: Friesen Press, 2011.
- Lubar, B.H. *Engines of Change: The American Revolution 1790-1860*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1986.
- “Oil to Gold” – Documentary
- Rowland, Jesse L. Historical Paper: City of McPherson, Kansas. 1949. Collection of historical accounts bound in a book.
- United States Census Bureau Quick Facts Retrieved June 29, 2017, from:
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/map/mcphersoncitykansas,KS/PST040216#viewtop>

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.49

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 38.370148 -97.665933
Latitude: Longitude:

3 _____
Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____
Latitude: Longitude:

4 _____
Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary description is the legal description of the property: McPherson O.T.S. (Original Town Site) Block 67, Lots 1 to 3, Section 28, Township 19S, Range 03W.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

As mentioned previously, this building exists in a downtown area where buildings are known to be constructed to property lines. There is no required parking in the district in which the building exists. Therefore, the boundary has been set as the property description of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nick Gregory, City Administrator

organization City of McPherson

date Spring 2018

street & number 400 E. Kansas

telephone (620) 245-2535

city or town McPherson

state KS

zip code 67460

e-mail nickg@mcpcity.com

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

name City of McPherson - Attn: Thomas A. Brown, Mayor

street & number 400 E. Kansas

telephone (620) 245-2535

city or town McPherson

state KS

zip code 67460

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: McPherson Community Building

City or Vicinity: McPherson

County: McPherson State: Kansas

Photographer: Amanda K. Loughlin (KSHS)

Date

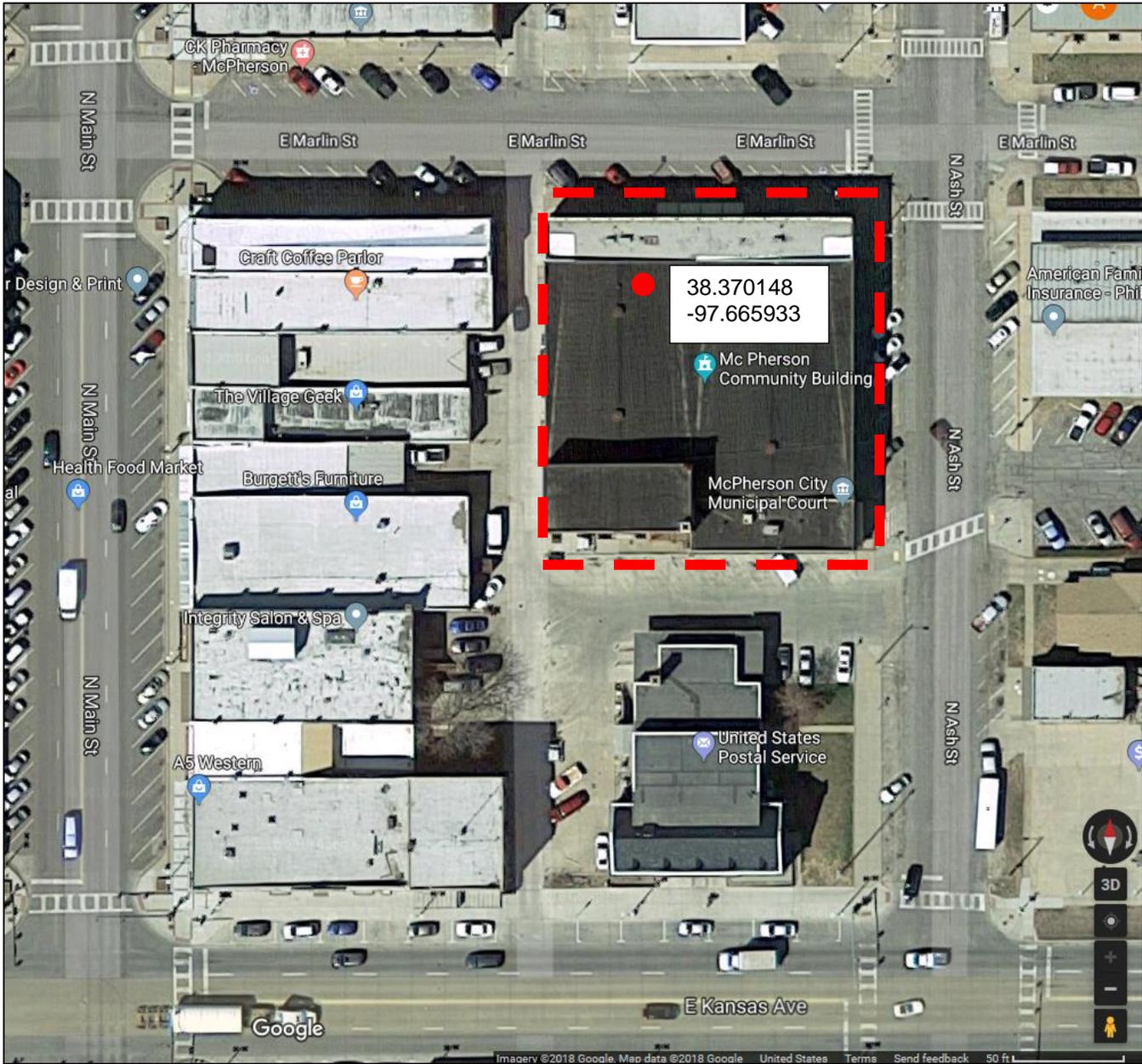
Photographed: February 14, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera (See Plans 1, 2, 3 for photo keys):

- 01 of 19:** North façade, looking SW
- 02 of 19:** East façade, looking SW
- 03 of 19:** East façade
- 04 of 19:** Looking NW at south and east facades
- 05 of 19:** South façade, looking NE
- 06 of 19:** North end of west façade, looking NNE from middle of alley
- 07 of 19:** Lobby, looking E from west stair
- 08 of 19:** Ticket booth, looking N
- 09 of 19:** Gymnasium, looking SE from NW corner of mezzanine
- 10 of 19:** Gymnasium, looking NE from SW corner of mezzanine
- 11 of 19:** Gymnasium, looking SW from NE corner of gym (ground level)
- 12 of 19:** Theater, looking SW from NE corner of mezzanine
- 13 of 19:** Theater, looking N from stage
- 14 of 19:** Theater, looking SW at stage from east side of mezzanine
- 15 of 19:** Second level of lobby, looking SW from NE corner
- 16 of 19:** Hallway to the east of stage, looking N
- 17 of 19:** Basement level, former bathroom, looking SW
- 18 of 19:** Second level of fire department portion, looking ENE from main open room
- 19 of 19:** Second level of fire department portion, looking E down south hallway

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Boundary Map (Google). Boundary is defined by dashed line.