NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

APR 08 2009

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 Mermis, J.A., House 051-95

Other name/site number Jamison House

2. Location

Street & number 1401 Ash Street ☐ not for publication

City or town Hays ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Ellis Code 051 Zip code 67601

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.)

Patrick Zollner 2-13-09

Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date

Kansas State Historical Society

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 herby 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:)

Mermis House
Name of Property

Ellis County, KS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling
Domestic: Institutional Housing
Religion: Church-Related Residence
Commerce/Trade: Professional

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling
Domestic: Secondary Structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Victorian: Queen Anne (Free Classic)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: STONE: Limestone
Walls: WOOD: Weatherboard

Roof: Wood Shake

Other:

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

Mermis House
Name of Property

Ellis County, KS
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 it 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1907

Significant Dates

1907

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bissing, Justus Jr.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Mermis House
Name of Property

Ellis County, KS
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	471220	4302875
2			
3			
4			

☐ See continuation sheet

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Mrs. Heather Jamison with KSHS assistance

Organization N/A Date 07/11/08

Street & number 1401 Ash Street Telephone 785-259-6773

City or town Hays State KS Zip code 67601

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

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

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

Property Owner

Name Daron & Heather Jamison

Street & number 1401 ASh Street Telephone 785-259-6773

City or town Hays State KS Zip code 67601

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

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

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The J.A. Mermis House, built in 1907, is located at 1401 Ash Street, a mere two blocks east of Hays's Main Street, which is historically known as Chestnut Street. Hays, Kansas is located along Interstate 70 and is a popular stopping point for many travelers, as it is nearly halfway between Denver and Kansas City. Over the past eight years many of the properties along Main Street, have undergone renovations and restoration work to preserve their historical heritage and revitalize the community through industry, trade, and tourism. These renovations are in part due to the efforts of the Downtown Hays Development Corporation and the Liberty Group. Both are interested in restoring the integrity and history of downtown Hays, Kansas. Many of the historic properties in Hays were built between the years 1874 and 1930.

This house sits at the corner of 14th and Ash Streets across from the recently register-listed St. Joseph's Catholic Church and stands out as one of several unique homes in the downtown area. A non-historic garage and greenhouse is attached to the west of the home.

Elaboration

Well-know western Kansas craftsman, Justus Bissing Jr., designed and built the three-story, wood frame, Queen Anne house in 1907. The house is generally rectangular in form with a three-story polygonal turret on the front southeast corner. The hipped roof includes two cross-gables and is covered with wood shake shingles. The exterior is comprised of horizontal cedar siding and a hand-cut stone foundation. The porch includes Classical columns, but non-historic Eastlake-style spindlework has been added in recent years. There are two brick chimneys. The larger dominant chimney includes a fireplace in the front parlor. The fireplace of the second chimney, located in the dining room, was covered to accommodate interior changes, which occurred many years ago.

The front door is located on the east elevation where a curved wraparound porch extends to the south entrance. There are two dominant gables – one on the east (front) elevation and the other on the south (side) elevation. The full-height south-facing gable includes two double-hung wood windows on the first and second stories and a pair of small double-hung wood windows with the gable. There is decorative gable trim with cross bracing. The full-height east-facing gable includes three second-story windows in a projecting bay (one of them stained glass), a pair of single-pane fixed windows topped by a round-arch window, and vergeboard trim shaped into three arches. To the south of the front door, there is a large single-pane window with an eight-inch beveled glass pane window above it. Directly above, on the second story, there is a small, fixed rectangular window with beveled glass and ornamental wood trim. Most of the windows in the house are the original double-hung wood windows with iron weights. Unfortunately, many of them are cracked or in poor working condition. Some have been replaced with custom-made, wood, Anderson windows that match the originals.

Upon walking though the front door one sees a handcrafted oak staircase along the north wall. The staircase is the handiwork of Justus Bissing Jr. A central hallway leads toward the rear of the house where the kitchen is located. To the left (south) of the front door is a set of sliding pocket doors leading

into the parlor room. There is an original fireplace that is made of carved oak and marble in the parlor. In the southeast corner of the parlor is a bay window area created by the turret. (There is a second bay window area, created by the turret, on the second level in the southeast bedroom.) Another set of sliding pocket doors leads from the parlor west into the dining room. The pocket doors are in working condition and have retained much, if not all, of their charm.

The ceiling height on the main floor is nearly ten feet, while the second level has heights of 8 ½ feet. Several of the interior doors in the house are the original doors from 1907, while others are replacements from various periods. All doorways reach over seven feet high. Two of the doorways have transom windows, making them even taller. One such transom window has the original hardware and is still operable, opening into the family room.

The second floor includes a central hallway that accesses four rooms and a staircase to the third level. A very steep enclosed staircase leads from the second level to the third level. The most notable feature on the third level is the turret room. Inside the turret room one can see much of downtown Hays, all the way to the horizon. This room has recently had some work done to remove mold and damaged wallboard. The carpet and wallboard has been removed and new windows have replaced the old ones. The replacement windows are the same custom, wood, Anderson windows used in other areas of the home. Along the east wall of the third story is the half round stained-glass window that can be seen from the exterior. Additionally, the third story contains several small windows with half rounds above them. Decorative arches attached to each gable frame these windows from the exterior.

Along with the staircase, pocket doors, fireplace mantle, transom windows, beveled glass, and stained glass windows, other notable features include the wide pine baseboards and trim as well as the original pine floors. All the pine floors in the house, except one bedroom and the family room, have been restored. Along with unique windows, other notable exterior features include the wraparound porch, bay windows, finials, decorative detailing and arches on the gables, and of course the turret.

In 101 years, the house has undergone several alterations. The largest alteration is an addition on the west rear of the house that consists of the kitchen, garage, two, maybe three, bathrooms and a storage area on the third story. This addition was poorly constructed as the ceiling height, trim, windows, flooring, wood finishes, and baseboards do not correlate with the rest of the house. The exact date of this addition is unknown, but it is estimated to be at least 50-60 years ago. During the time that Dr. Tiffany owned the house (1971-1992) an addition was made to extend the main level family room about 4 feet to the north. In the mid to late 1990's some laminate flooring and carpet were removed in order to restore the pine flooring in much of the house. During this same time the plaster and lath was replaced with insulation and sheetrock in four rooms of the house.

The most recent reconstruction was conducted in 2007. This project consisted of replacing some plaster and lath with insulation and sheetrock, restoring the pine floors in one bedroom and the second level hallway, the addition of a hall closet, replacing two exterior doors, installing new trim in some areas, and replacing ten of the old double-hung windows. The new windows, doors, and trim were replacements for

ones that were cracked and malfunctioning. The homes' historic integrity was not diminished during this reconstruction and every effort was made to preserve and enhance the original design, style, and quality of the house.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The J.A. Mermis House, built in 1907, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance as a good local example of the Queen Anne Free Classic style. The home is named after J. A. Mermis, the longest proprietor of the home, who was a prominent banker in town, credited with restoring security and confidence to the banking business during the Great Depression. Justus Bissing Jr., a well-known local builder and carpenter, built the house.

Elaboration

Hays, Kansas, the largest city in Ellis County and much of the northwest part of the state, was developed when the Army chose to locate a fort just south of town near Big Creek. The Fort was built in 1865, just two years before the Union Pacific railroad was established. The railroad was instrumental in bringing permanent residents to Hays, as well as reliable transportation of goods. With these goods came the importation of lumber. Immigrants and builders no longer had to rely entirely on quarried limestone and the minimal lumber supply in western Kansas.[1] By time the fort closed in 1889 Hays was already thriving as a bustling town with the start of a university campus and an agricultural experiment station. The discovery of natural resources such as oil also contributed to the growth of Hays and its economy.[2]

Before the turn of the twentieth century the economy was doing well and architectural influences from Europe and the eastern United States were spreading across the country due largely to the start of architectural curriculum, pattern books, and the first magazine on architecture titled, *The American Architect and Building News*.[3] Rapid industrialization, changes in construction, and the expanding railroad allowed for elements of homes such as doors, porch spindles, brackets, and decorative detailing to be mass-produced in factories and then shipped to various locations via the railroad.[4] Such capabilities spurred the development of Victorian homes, making them most popular from about 1860-1900.

Victorian homes have several sub-categories of styles, yet all are distinguished by asymmetrical facades and steeply pitched rooflines. Queen Anne homes are primarily characterized by steeply pitched rooflines with a dominant front-facing gable, cutaway bay windows, and an asymmetrical facade with a partial or full-width porch. Many Queen Anne homes also feature towers, overhangs, and wall projections to avoid the look of a flat wall.[5] This house at 1401 Ash Street reflects the Queen Anne style with Free Classic elements such as classic columns on the porch and clean, straight lines throughout the interior of the house. However, the house was truly a transitional Queen Anne because it displays some original elements more true to Eastlake design, such as the finials on several roof peaks, and slight gable

[1] George Elrich and David H. Sachs. *Guide to Kansas Architecture.* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1996), 260-261.
[2] George Elrich and David H. Sachs. *Guide to Kansas Architecture.* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1996), 261.
[3] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 268).
[4] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 239.
[5] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 264.

ornamentation. Other Eastlake features include the interior spindlework on the staircase. Both the oak staircase and the fireplace contain meticulous detailing and carvings that showcase Bissing's talent. Additionally, the pine floors and pocket doors display an excellent choice in materials and style.

Justus Bissing Jr., founder of the Hays Planing Mill, cabinet and pattern maker, built the home in 1907 for John Ruder. John Ruder and his wife, Anne Margaret, were originally from Russia. The immigrated to Kansas and settled in Munjor in 1876 where they had eleven children. Information on when the family moved to Hays and John Ruder's occupation could not be found. John Ruder owned the house from 1907-1919. John Ruder's death was noted in the April 26, 1928 edition of the Ellis County News, and reported that his funeral would take place at St. Joseph's Catholic Church – across the street from the house he had once owned.

In 1919 John Ruder sold the house to A.P. Brungardt, who sold the house to J.A. Mermis, just one year prior to being elected Sheriff of Ellis County in 1929. J.A. Mermis, a well-known banker and president of First National Bank, owned the house for 22 years. He was the longest proprietor of the home and was instrumental in restoring local confidence and security to the banking business during the Great Depression. Upon his death the house was sold to Frank A. Bishop and the nuns of St. Agnes in 1952.

During the 18-year proprietorship of the Catholic Church the home served as a boarding house for nuns and later as a boarding house for nursing students at St. Anthony's hospital, when the hospital was located across the street on the corner of 13th and Ash streets. The nurses knew the home as the "Freshman House," as it housed freshman nursing students until 1970 when the house was sold to psychiatrist Dr. Donald N. Tiffany. Dr. Tiffany owned the house for nearly ten years. Thereafter the house changed hands once again to Tim Hageman before the current owners acquired the property in 2007.

The house underwent several changes during the time in which it was owned by the Sisters of St. Agnes. Linoleum was installed on top of all the original pine floors. Old fire alarms were replaced in nearly every room of the house, and it is believed that closets with built-in shelves were constructed in each "dormitory" room. Changes likely occurred in the kitchen and bathrooms at this time, but are unknown.

Previous owners have added onto the west side of the house as well as a small section to the north. The west addition consists of the kitchen on the main floor, two bathrooms on the second level, and a storage space on the third story. Other add-ons include a garage and greenhouse, both of which are listed as non-contributors in this nomination. These additions attempted to match the work of Justus Bissing Jr.'s design on the rest of the house and do not detract from the original building.

Justus Bissing Jr., General Contractor

Justus Bissing Jr. emigrated from Russia with his parents and siblings in 1876. They settled in Catherine, Kansas as one of the first Volga-German families to settle in the area. In order to survive on the frontier, settlers were required to be industrious, hard working, entrepreneurial, and courageous. The Bissings did

not fall short, as they were accomplished in music, craftsmanship, and invention. In 1896, after establishing himself as a pattern and cabinetmaker, Justus Bissing Jr. founded the Hays Planing Mill.[6] An article written in the Hays Republican dated April 14, 1987 states, "Such a plant (the Hays Planing Mill) as this in our midst should merit the appreciation and encouragement of every business man in the community because it will certainly attract to our city a lot of trade that otherwise we would not get."[7] The Hays Planing Mill is still in operation and serving the community and surrounding area. It has indeed played an instrumental role in the early days of establishing and continuing economic prosperity in Hays.

Throughout Bissing's lifetime he served as general contractor for churches in Walker and Catherine, as head carpenter for St. Mary's church in Ellis, and as general contractor for St. Francis School in Munjor. He is credited with building some of the most unique homes in the area as well as starting the first electrical company in Hays, located on the corner of 6th and Fort streets.[8]

Bissing's work displays his ability to adapt with trends and the use of new products as they became available. In some of his earliest projects, he used limestone as the primary building material, which was readily available locally. Later, as European-inspired styles such as Queen Anne and Victorian Gothic became popular, and as the railroad made various woods and prefabricated pieces accessible, he took advantage of such trends and materials to create outstanding homes detailed in fine craftsmanship. Again, when architecture advanced from more European styles to craftsman, Bissing moved with the tide, all the while staying true to his motto, "What is worth doing at all, is worth doing right." [9]

Summary

The Jamison (Mermis) House (1907) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The house displays Bissing's talent as a craftsman and architect due to features such as the staircase, wood trim, pocket doors, fireplace ornamentation, and stained and beveled glass windows. Bissing's ability to showcase architectural trends and styles is also evident throughout the house. Queen Anne is the prominent style of the home due to its steeply pitched rooflines, wrap-around porch, bay windows, turret, and asymmetrical façade. Free Classic elements include bay windows Classical columns, dominant front-facing gables, and clean, straight lines in the interior of the house.[10]

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[6] Ellis County Historical Society, *At Home in Ellis County. Vol. 1.* (Hays: History Book Committee of Ellis County Historical Society, 1991), 335.
[7] Ellis County Historical Society, *At Home in Ellis County. Vol. 1.* (Hays: History Book Committee of Ellis County Historical Society, 1991), 335.

[8] Ellis County Historical Society, *At Home in Ellis County. Vol. 1.* (Hays: History Book Committee of Ellis County Historical Society, 1991), 335.
[9] Ellis County Historical Society, *At Home in Ellis County. Vol. 1.* (Hays: History Book Committee of Ellis County Historical Society, 1991), 335.
[10] [10] Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 265.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dreiling, B. M., ed. *The Golden Jubliee of the German-Russian Settlements of Ellis and Rush Counties, Kansas*. Hays, KS: Ellis County News, 1926.

Ellis County Historical Society. *At Home in Ellis County.* Vol. 1. Hays, Kan.: History Book Committee of Ellis County Historical Society, 1991.

Ellis County (KS) News, April 26, 1928.

Elrich, George, and David H. Sachs. *Guide to Kansas Architecture.* Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996.

McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property includes: Lots 15 and 17, Block 37 (Hays Original Block 14 Thru Subdivision). SEC: 33 TWP: 13 RNG: 18.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

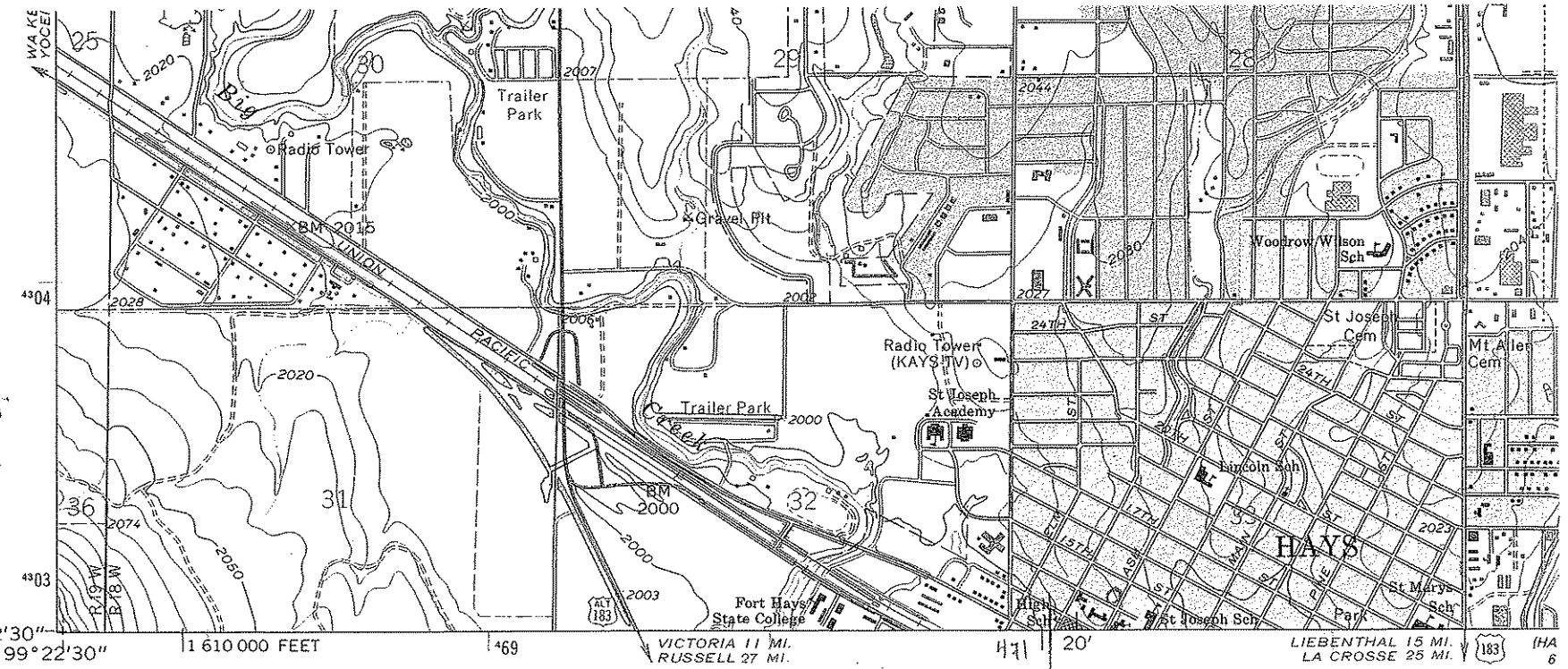
The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Mermis House.

PHOTOGRAPIC INFORMATION

Property Name: J.A. Mermis House
Location: 1401 Ash Street
Photographer: Sarah Martin
Date: August 26, 2008

Photo 1: Overall photo showing east and south elevations, facing NW
Photo 2: East elevation, facing W
Photo 3: Corner turret on 2nd and 3rd stories, facing NW
Photo 4: Second story of east elevation, facing NW
Photo 5: North elevation, facing S
Photo 6: South and west elevations showing attached garage, facing NE
Photo 7: Interior, main staircase
Photo 8: Interior, living room / parlor
Photo 9: Interior, living room fireplace
Photo 10: Interior, dining room
Photo 11: Interior, second floor hallway
Photo 12: Interior, first floor wood door with transom window

J. A. Mermis House
Hays, Ellis Co. KS
14: 471220
4302875



(ANTONINO)
6161 IV SW

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey as part of the Department of the Interior program for the development of the Missouri River Basin

Control by USGS and USC&GS

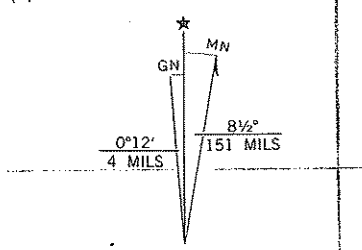
4302 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1959. Field checked 1961

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Kansas coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

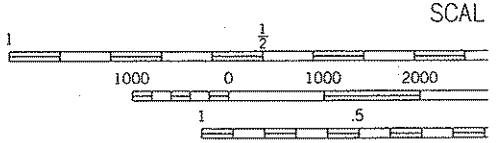
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 3 meters north and 32 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks



UTM GRID AND 1983 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



CONTOUR IN
NATIONAL GEODETIC

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NA
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEN
AND BY THE STATE GEOLOGICA
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MA