United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

MAY 2 1 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** Smyser House

**Other name/site number** 173-5880-5018

## 2. Location

Street & number 931 Buffum Avenue ☐ not for publication

City or town Wichita ☐ vicinity

State KS Code KS County Sedgwick Code 173 Zip code 67203

## 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 DSHPO 4-10-09

Signature of certifying official/Title 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:)

Smyser House
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
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 | |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | | buildings |
| | | sites |
| | | structures |
| | | objects |
| 2 | | total |

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

Residential Resources of Wichita 1870-1957

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

0

## 6. Function or Use

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

DOMESTIC/single dwelling: house
DOMESTIC/transportation: garage

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

DOMESTIC/single dwelling: house
DOMESTIC/transportation: garage

## 7. Description

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

EARLY 20TH CENT AMER MOVEMENT: Bungalow

**Materials**
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE BLOCK
Walls: WOOD: clapboard

Roof: COMPOSITON: shingles

Other:

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

Smyser House
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 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**

1919

**Significant Dates**

1919

**Significant Person**
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Hembree, Charles F. / Builder

## 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:

City of Wichita Historic Preservation Office

Smyser House
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
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 | 645120 | 4173560 |
| 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 Barbara R. Hammond, Planning Analyst

Organization City of Wichita, Planning Department Date 3/7/2007

Street & number 455 N. Main Street Telephone 316-268-4421

City or town Wichita State KS Zip code 67202

## 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 Peter M. Logsdon

Street & number 931 Buffum Telephone 316-263-2287

City or town Wichita State KS Zip code 67203

**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 Smyser House (1919) at 931 Buffum Avenue in Wichita, Kansas is an example of early 20th century bungalow house construction during the Bungalow/Craftsman movement (1915-1939). It is most likely a pattern book house. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its association with houses of similar construction as outlined in the multiple property document Residential Resources of Wichita -1870-1957 and the associated historic context "Residential Development of Wichita 1870 – 1957."

Setting
The house is located in a small residential neighborhood that has not changed significantly in size, scope, or content since the 1920s. It is a tree-lined, sidewalk-connected neighborhood where many residents have lived for their entire adult lives; others continue to move there due to the family-oriented atmosphere.

The Riverside neighborhood, as it is known, is located in a small area of land about one-half square mile in size and bounded on the east and west by two rivers. The outside edges of the surrounding parks conform to the meanderings of the rivers allowing the residential area to be laid out in a grid. In 1919 this location was the farthest west that one could live and still be on the east side of the Arkansas River. The riverbank area was heavily forested by cottonwoods and native undergrowth that created a sense of wilderness on the west edge of the neighborhood. In 1917 the Coler L. Sim family donated this large tract of undeveloped land to the city to be used as a park.[1] That tract is still non-residential; a portion is uncultivated, another segment is now a public golf course, other sections have been developed as a botanical garden and a living history museum. Another large city park bounds the neighborhood on the east. That park contains cultivated landscaping, picnic and playground areas, a bandstand, a zero-depth fountain, and public tennis courts. During the 1920s, these surrounding green lands gave the little Riverside neighborhood a rich aspect of coziness as well as slight exclusivity that contrasted to the neighborhoods that developed on prairie land to the east, north and south where plantings were required to dress up the landscape. It retains that inviting aspect to the present day. The neighborhood is associated with the city's museum district and also contains an Indian cultural center and an art museum.

Buffum Avenue is one of the shorter streets in the area, being a four-block street between the Arkansas River and the Little Arkansas River. It is accessed by Stackman Drive on the south and West River Boulevard on the north, and also by Franklin, Harrison, and Riverside Boulevards, which intersect with Buffum.

[1] "Tihen Notes", *Wichita Eagle*. Feb 8, 1917: 1.

Summary

Simplicity of design with basic horizontal lines is the principal Craftsman characteristic of the Smyser House. Fenestration is slightly asymmetrical in placement, but most windows are either double or triple four-over-one sash style. The front-gabled roof of this bungalow is repeated in the gabled roof of the front porch and a small extension on the rear of the house. A protruding bay on the south elevation adds another variation to the basic rectangular plan. The house is clad in wood lap siding with stucco in the porch gable. A wood lintel course encompasses the house and all window trim and sills are original. Rock faced cast concrete blocks form the foundation and porch piers. The roof covering is composite shingles. The original one-car garage with gabled roof and wood siding matches the house. Both the house and garage were built in 1915 and the present plan is represented on the 1935 Sanborn map.[2] The house contains a living room, dining room, two bedrooms, one bathroom, and kitchen with breakfast nook.

East (front) Elevation
The east elevation faces Buffum Avenue. The nearly full-width front porch dominates this side of the house. Concrete block piers and battered wood posts support the front gabled porch roof, which is slightly lower than the height of the house roof. Flat wood balusters form the porch railing. Simulated plaster and lath (stucco and applied wood), three wood brackets, and a four-light, fixed window provide ornamentation in the gable end. A concrete stoop accesses the south end of the porch.

The front façade is divided into two bays. The front door is slightly to right of center and is balanced on the left by a triple, four-over-one sash window. The original Craftsman front door contains a six-paned vision light.

South (side) Elevation
The south elevation faces the driveway and a neighboring house. This side is divided into three bays, each with their own fenestration pattern. In the right bay, two multi-paned Craftsman casement windows flank the fireplace chimney. A triple four-over-one window fills the center bay. A square, fixed window and the rear door of the house are in the left bay.

West (rear) Elevation
The west elevation faces the back yard. The right bay, which is in the main body of the house, contains a small four-over-one sash window. The left bay, which is in a gabled extension of the house, contains a triple four-over-one sash window. Triangular brackets in the gables match the brackets on the front porch gable. Small, louvered attic vents are also located in both gables.

[2] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Wichita, 1935: Vol 2, Sheet 527.

North (side) Elevation
The north elevation faces a neighboring house. Four bays contain windows, from right to left: a double four-over-one sash, a single four-over-one sash, and two double four-over-one sash windows.

Interior

The interior retains all original woodwork and wood floors throughout with the exception of the kitchen and bathroom.

The living room spans the full width of the front of the house. A reproduction wood fireplace surround has been applied over the original brick face of the fireplace. A hanging light fixture is original to the house. Original glass-fronted bookcases in a wide flat arch divide the living room from the dining room. The distinguishing characteristic in the dining room is the paneled window seat set into the bay window. Original French doors in the dining room access a small bedroom/den to the right. The bathroom contains the original wood-trimmed medicine cabinet with glass knob and original black and white ceramic tile wainscoting. A built-in linen cupboard is located in the hall outside the bathroom. Later cabinetry and the table in the kitchen/breakfast nook have replaced the original pieces, but the wood, high-back benches in the breakfast nook are original. An unusual feature in the kitchen is the crown molding over the nook space. The molding is accented by a corner piece with a large turned pendant.

Garage (1919, contributing)

The front-gabled garage contains a manual-lift overhead door that is paneled with two fixed windows on the east elevation. A rectangular fixed window is on the south elevation. There are no windows on the west elevation. There is one rectangular fixed window and a flush pedestrian door on the north elevation. The door surround on the automobile access door is asymmetrical, having slightly battered trim on the left side, but vertical trim on the right side.

## Statement of Significance

The Smyser House (1919) is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C, as part of the Multiple Property Submission *Residential Resources of Wichita – 1870-1957*. The Area of Significance is Architecture; the house is a good example of a Craftsman-style bungalow and relates to the historic contexts outlined in the MPS.

### Bungalows

Wichita's bungalow heritage is very rich. They appear in every neighborhood developed between 1880 and 1945. Bungalows range from modest working class domiciles to more elaborate houses that can be identified as a specific architectural style.

Traditionally a bungalow is defined as a one or one-and-one-half story single-family dwelling and its chief distinction is a low profile. The house is generally noted for its porch roof that extends from the main house, sweeping over a verandah. Most bungalows were built in the United States roughly between 1880 and 1930.[3] The main rationale of the bungalow was to provide the majority of living spaces on one floor. Plan book catalogs popularized the bungalow as an affordable housing type.

A popular perception regarding bungalows is that they were small – 900 square feet or less. However, many bungalows were large, but maintained the horizontality of the bungalow house type. Bungalows reflected the architectural revival styles popular at the time. According to Robert Winter, the Queen Anne cottage, or bungalow, was prevalent from 1885-1905. Other styles include California Style (1900-1930), Mission Style (1890-1915), Tudor Style (1890-1915), Prairie Style (1900-1920), and Period Revivals (1915-1930) including Spanish Colonial, Pueblo Revival, Colonial Revival, and Log Cabin Revival.[4] The Art Moderne bungalow (1930-1940) was inspired by the streamline designs of locomotives, and other modes of transportation.

Moderate to middle income families were the primary occupants of this house type. Because of this economic demographic, the most common alterations now found in this house type are window replacement and installation of synthetic siding. Attic windows in gable ends may have been changed to louvered vents or glazing replaced by plywood.

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3 Robert Winter and Alex Vertikoff, *American Bungalow Style* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 10.
4 Winter and Vertikoff, 36.

Infrequently, a full second-story rear addition was built to allow for growing families. Because this two-story plan was original to many of the houses, it is difficult to document a second floor addition without confirmation existing in the city building permits. Rear porches have sometimes been enclosed to adapt for use as a main floor utility room.

**The Economic Cycle of the 1920s**

In the "Report of the Committee on Recent Economic Changes", of the President's Conference on Unemployment in 1929, the assertion is made that "the distinctive character of the years from 1922 to 1929 owes less to fundamental change than to intensified activity."[5] Thus, speedy production of goods and delivery of services plus availability of improved technology that had been developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries resulted in a good economy in the 1920s. This convenient access to resources and a higher standard of living was made possible by stable prices. In the early post-World War I years, employers pressed for a return to prewar wages, citing that business couldn't survive. However, laborers were enjoying a better lifestyle and opposed wage cuts. Leading industrial economists noticed that "the result of the continuance of high wages was that the dammed-up purchasing desires which had been held back during the war on account of the national economic program, burst forth and not only the high wages which were being currently earned but accumulated savings as well were poured into the channels of commerce." [6] Thus as earnings outstripped costs, consumers benefited, causing the characteristic national prosperity of the 1920s decade.

Real estate booms and busts are a principle contributor to overall economic cycles. Since the infancy of the United States, land speculation has driven market prices, especially during the times when land was widely available and frequently bought and sold. During the Progressive era and the World War I time period, pressure from property owners, developers, and lenders caused some early governmental management in efforts to control downward spirals and induce upward momentum.[7] Continuing this trend, government planning agencies and land-use regulations such as urban zoning laws, were established in the early 1920s. After a lag in mid-decade when business was booming, the movement was revived during the Great Depression due the backing of large developers who had survived the economic collapse.[8]

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[5] Recent Economic Changes in the United States". Report of the Committee on Recent Economic Changes, of the President's Conference on Unemployment, Herbert Hoover, Chairman. 1929. http://memory.loc.gov/ Accessed 2/26/2007.

[6] "Recent Economic Changes in the United States". http://memory.loc.gov/.

[7] Marc A. Weiss, "*The Politics of Real Estate Cycles*". The Business History Conference: 127, http://www.thebhc.org/publications. Accessed 2/26/2007.

[8] Marc A. Weiss, "*The Politics of Real Estate Cycles*":132.

The interplay of political involvement and economic growth patterns in Wichita followed the national trends. The local law that would govern land use was presented to the citizens when the full text of a new zoning ordinance was published in the Wichita Beacon in December 1921. On March 15, 1922 the *Wichita Eagle* reported that, "Despite a storm of protest, the City Commission yesterday passed the zoning ordinance for Wichita."[9]

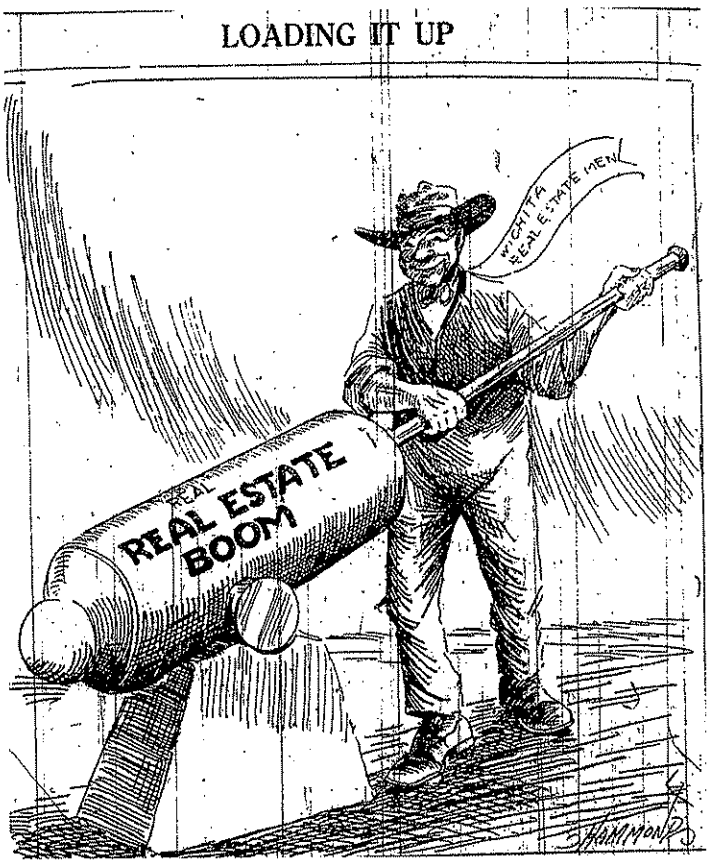
Also in 1921, the City hired Planning Engineer Harland Bartholomew of St. Louis to examine Wichita's physical layout. His first report proposed several extensions of Wichita's streetcar system.[10] The call for more tracks lay in the fact that the vacant lands at the edges of the city limits were being developed with new housing. Automobiles were not yet at every householder's curb, so public transportation was needed. However, the automobile was clearly on the horizon and the Planning Commission and Park Board requested that Bartholomew draw up a complete city report that would analyze resources and design attractive and efficient traffic patterns. Bartholomew submitted his "Comprehensive City Plan" to the Commission in December 1923.[11]

The other influential factor in the real estate prosperity of the 1920s was federal policy on homeownership. As in land use planning, the housing shortages and real estate market recession immediately after World War I marked the beginning of government intervention in the real estate industry. Again, land developers, homebuilders, realtors, and mortgage lenders lobbied for programs ranging from subsidies to regulations. The resulting programs such as the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), Home Owners' Loan Corporation, and the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) worked to put millions of Americans into their own, and often new, homes.[12]

On a local level, Wichita opened the year 1919 by hiring architect Don B. Schuler to design a Victory Arch to be built over Douglas Avenue in anticipation of troops returning home after World War I. Local citizens raised the money to build it and a jubilee celebration was held in May with festivities and parades of soldiers passing under the arch.[13] During that year, newspaper articles disclosed that prices for food and goods were still high and conservation still would be necessary until the country recovered from wartime needs and supplies became more plentiful. However, a spirit of optimism was also evident as the newspapers reported Wichita

[9] *Wichita Eagle*, Mar. 15, 1922: 9.
[10] *Wichita Beacon*, Oct. 30, 1921: B-1.
[11] *Wichita Beacon*, Apr.14, 1922: B-4. *Wichita Eagle*. Dec. 6, 1923: 18.
[12] Weiss, Marc A. "*The Politics of Real Estate Cycles*":132.
[13] *Wichita Beacon*, Jan. 7, 1919: 4.

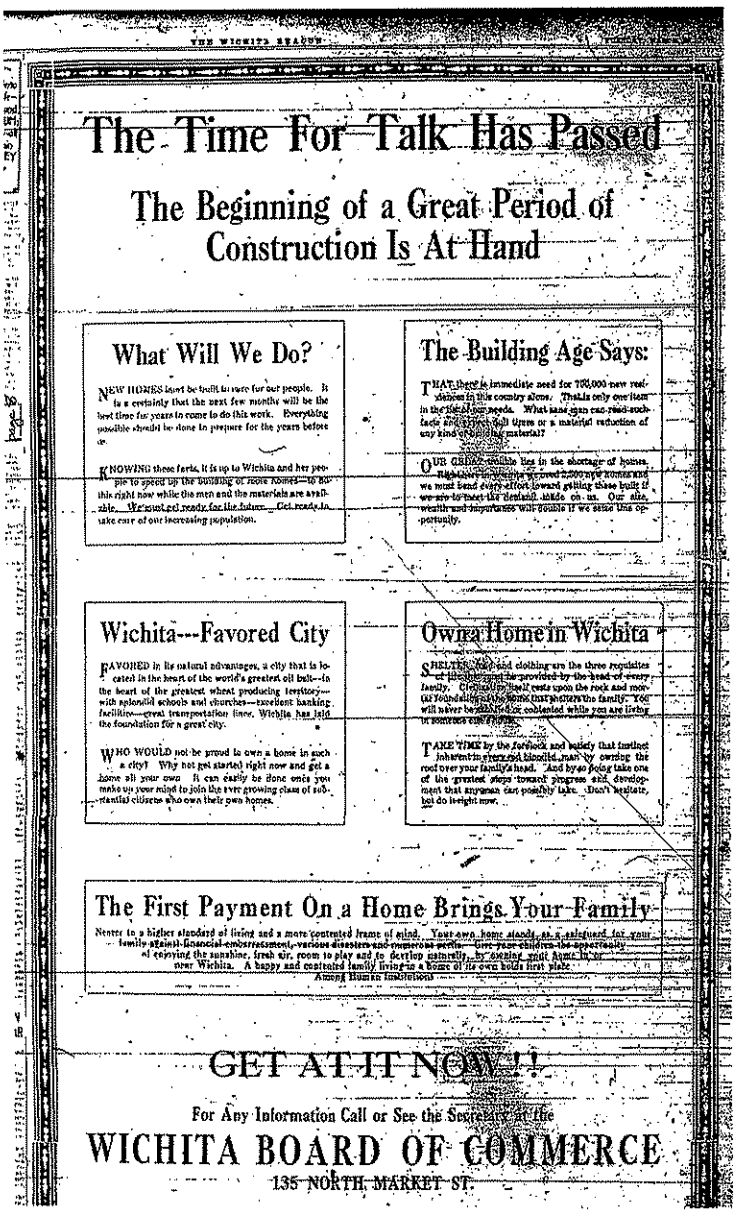
was approaching a phenomenal development period.[14] It was predicted that the era of residential construction that had begun in 1918 would continue due to extreme housing shortages.[15] At winter's end promoters came on strong with the push toward building and home ownership; thus was launched the great post World War I housing boom in Wichita.[16]




Following the message that building would begin came the message that "*you*" need a home of your own. Ads by the Board of Commerce, realtors, lumber companies, publishers of house patterns, and even furniture stores promoted the move away from the boarding houses and tenement houses with the idea that dwellings should be occupied by single families for

[14] *Wichita Eagle.* May 15, 1919: 2.
[15] *Wichita Eagle.* Jan 6, 1919: 2.
[16] *Wichita Beacon.* Mar 25, 1919: 8.

sanitation, privacy, and comfort. Sound construction, practicality and economy of space were important. The promotion worked and the building began.



THE WICHITA BEACON

# The Time For Talk Has Passed

## The Beginning of a Great Period of Construction Is At Hand

### What Will We Do?

NEW HOMES must be built to care for our people. It is a certainty that the next few months will be the best time for years to come to do this work. Everything possible should be done to prepare for the years before us.

KNOWING these facts, it is up to Wichita and her people to speed up the building of more homes—to do this right now while the men and the materials are available. We must get ready for the future. Get ready to take care of our increasing population.

### The Building Age Says:

THAT there is immediate need for 700,000 new residences in this country alone. That is only one item in the list of our needs. What sane man can read such facts and expect dull times or a material reduction of any kind of building material?

OUR GREAT trouble lies in the shortage of homes. Right here in Wichita we need 2,500 new homes and we must bend every effort toward getting these built if we are to meet the demand made on us. Our size, wealth and importance will double if we seize this opportunity.

### Wichita---Favored City

FAVORED in its natural advantages, a city that is located in the heart of the world's greatest oil belt—in the heart of the greatest wheat producing territory—with splendid schools and churches—excellent banking facilities—great transportation lines. Wichita has laid the foundation for a great city.

WHO WOULD not be proud to own a home in such a city? Why not get started right now and get a home all your own. It can easily be done once you make up your mind to join the ever growing class of substantial citizens who own their own homes.

### Own a Home in Wichita

SHELTER, food and clothing are the three requisites of life that must be provided by the head of every family. Civilization itself rests upon the rock and mortar foundation of the home that shelters the family. You will never be satisfied or contented while you are living in someone else's house.

TAKE TIME by the forelock and satisfy that instinct inherent in every red blooded man by owning the roof over your family's head. And by so doing take one of the greatest steps toward progress and development that anyman can possibly take. Don't hesitate, but do it right now.

### The First Payment On a Home Brings Your Family

Nearer to a higher standard of living and a more contented frame of mind. Your own home stands as a safeguard for your family against financial embarrassment, various disasters and numerous perils. Give your children the opportunity of enjoying the sunshine, fresh air, room to play and to develop naturally, by owning your home in or near Wichita. A happy and contented family living in a home of its own holds first place Among Human Institutions

GET AT IT NOW!!

For Any Information Call or See the Secretary of the

WICHITA BOARD OF COMMERCE

135 NORTH MARKET ST.

*Wichita Beacon*, Mar. 25, 1919: 8.

Three years later, enthusiasm was still escalating and the "Better Homes in America" campaign was initiated. President Harding, Vice President Coolidge, and Secretary of Commerce Hoover endorsed the campaign with the idea that home ownership is an investment and would prevent families from being forced into "unsanitary and dangerous quarters", as well as protect cities from the "nomads and vagrants" that were the product of congestion.[17]

The Better Homes movement designated the week of October 9-14, 1922 as Demonstration Week. The leadership compiled a book of complete plans on how to organize an event at the local level and included extensive instructions on how to build, furnish, and decorate an actual demonstration house and publicize the affair. Highlights of their prescription for sound aesthetics included such designations as paint colors for north or south facing rooms, placement of tasteful ornaments, appropriate kitchen fixtures, and the sanitary advantage of indoor plumbing over a sewer-connected toilet in the yard. The authoritarian text also suggested "furnishings and color produce either desirable or disastrous effects upon the sensitive minds of children." It mandated that for boys, "...no frills, light fabrics or woodwork for them to soil...masculinity should be kept foremost in mind." And for girls, "...dainty, bright, and frivolous" would be optimum.[18]

The booklet ended with an article by Dr. John M. Gries, Division of Building and Housing, Department of Commerce. Here a case was made for government involvement in the use of private real estate. Dr. Gries advocated for city zoning on the basis that it would safeguard the home and its surroundings. He appealed to homeowners that "fine residential districts may be threatened by sporadic factories or junk yards, and owners may become panicky and sell at a sacrifice millions of dollars worth of valuable dwellings which will be left to stand practically idle.... Industry and homes are both more efficient if kept generally separate...." Gries states that "about 70 cities and towns" had adopted zoning ordinances since 1916, "and the idea has worked well."[19]

If his figures were accurate, this would indicate that Wichita, Kansas was one of those seventy municipalities that pioneered zoning ordinances.

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[17] *Better Homes in America: Plan Book for Demonstration Week* (New York: Bureau of Information of Better Homes in America, 1922) http://memory.loc.gov. Accessed 3/1/2007.
[18] *Better Homes in America.* 1922.
[19] *Better Homes in America.* 1922.

By the mid-1920s, the real estate pages of the local newspapers were filled with houses for sale, for rent, and to-be-built and realtors published photographs of their most desirable houses. For instance, during several weeks in the summer of 1925, the Architects' Small House Service Bureau printed illustrations with floor plans for purchase. The designs featured a wide variety of bungalow styles, including "Colonial", "Mission", "Spanish Mission Adaptation", and others with no titles that resembled English cottages.[20]

In addition to the comfort and convenience factor, another aspect of the new house phenomenon was that they should be well integrated into their surroundings.[21] Each house should be sited on a lot with a yard on all sides to suggest a private domain and a sense of space. Such continuity resulted in houses that adapted to the street and the neighborhood with their even setbacks and similar architecture. The result was hundreds of neat rows of bungalows along the newly developing streets in Wichita.

Consequently, the prosperity of Wichita workers with money in their pockets, the social awareness of the need for clean, healthful living conditions, and easy access to ideas for their dream houses prompted their willingness to invest. The availability of land surrounding the core area of the city of Wichita spurred real estate development in the four cardinal directions. It was in this economic and political climate that a long list of contractors was able to maintain a substantial career in speculative home building.

**The Smyser House**

The Smyser House represents an excellent example of a simple bungalow house built in the conservative phase immediately at the close of World War I (1919), and preceding the wild prosperity of the 1920s that created the large number of bungalow houses in the United States. The house also represents the middle-income socio-economic lifestyle of two early Wichita businessmen and continues to reflect that standard of living. As Wichita prospered after World War I, the land on the banks of the Big and Little Arkansas Rivers became highly desirable for new residences. These houses, including 931 Buffum, were typically built in the newly fashionable bungalow style of architecture. Property owner Ray Popkess chose a modest

[20] *Wichita Eagle*. Jun 21, 1925:C-3; June 28,1925:C-8; Jul 19, 1925:C-5; Jul 26, 1925:C-3.
[21] *500 Small Houses of the Twenties,* (Mineola NY, Dover: 1990), Publishers Note. This is a reproduction of *The Books of a Thousand Homes: Vol I.*, Home Owners Service Institute, New York: 1923.

Craftsman design on a one-story plan and hired Wichita carpenter Charles F. Hembree to build it. The estimated cost was stated at $4,400.00.[22]

**Ray Popkess - Charles Hembree - Lydia Smyser - Clyde Smyser**

**Raymond A. Popkess** (1891-1933) moved to Wichita in 1912 and made a lifetime career as a telegraph operator and manager for Western Union Telegraph Company. He lived in the house at 931 Buffum for 2 years, and then moved to another bungalow house that he built at 872 Buffum where he lived until his death in 1933. It is not known if he hired Hembree to build that house, also.

When **Charles F. Hembree** (1816-1941) moved to Wichita he announced himself as a Contractor and Builder in large classified ads in the Wichita City Directories. After the first two years, 1910 and 1911, he abandoned the advertisements and simply categorized himself as "Carpenter" in the general listings for the next thirty years. To date, only a few building permits have been found that are attributed to him in addition to the Smyser House at 931 Buffum. These permits mostly include houses that he and his wife Mary owned and lived in. If he was an active carpenter, it is likely that property owners who hired him on other jobs applied for permits themselves, thus his name doesn't appear in the permit files.

**Lydia L. Smyser** (1851-1949) began her married life in Kansas as a farmer's wife in 1883. After her husband's death, she and her unmarried son Clyde purchased the house at 931 Buffum in 1924. Mrs. Smyser was 72 years old at the time and still a very active homemaker. In 1930 she invested in a lot in Eastborough, which proved to be valuable oil property. Lydia Smyser lived to the age of 97, surviving her twin sons, Cleveland M. and Clyde N. Smyser. She lived in the house until her death in 1949.

**Clyde N. Smyser** (1878-1933) died of a stroke at the age of 55. He was a well-known West Side businessman who participated extensively in civic, church, and fraternal affairs. He sat on the board of directors of the West Side Building & Loan Company and of the Union National Bank. With his twin brother, Cleveland Smyser, he operated the West Side Drug Store from 1918 until the store was sold to the Dockum Drug Company in 1928. At that time Wichita was a leading manufacturing site for the emerging aviation industry and had just declared itself the "Air Capital of the World". Smyser became involved with a new enterprise and was named president of the Wichita Blue Streak Motor Company, which was formed to manufacture

[22] Building Permit 2397. City of Wichita, MAPD. 455 N. Main, Wichita, KS.

airplane motors. In keeping with the speculative real estate climate, Smyser also founded another new enterprise in 1930, known as the Presidia Townsite Company. His death precludes any further information about his success in that venture.

Smyser's greatest contribution to the community was in his position as a member of the Board of Regents of Wichita University. The City Commission appointed him to the Board when Fairmount College became a municipally owned university in 1923. He headed various committees including overseeing the financial management of the athletics activities and construction of Jardine Administration Building and McKinley Science Hall. Smyser died of a stroke while driving an automobile in 1933.

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*Wichita Beacon.* Mar 25, 1919: 8.
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**Online Publications:**

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*Wichita Beacon.* Jan 16, 1919: 5

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**Miscellaneous Documents:**

Building Permits. Card File, City of Wichita, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, 455 N. Main, Wichita, KS

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is located on the west side of the 800 block of the north/south street known as Buffum Avenue. Legal Description: LOT 61 & S 16 2/3 FT LOT 63 BUFFUM AVE. RIVERSIDE ADD. Parcel Id: 124180410101700

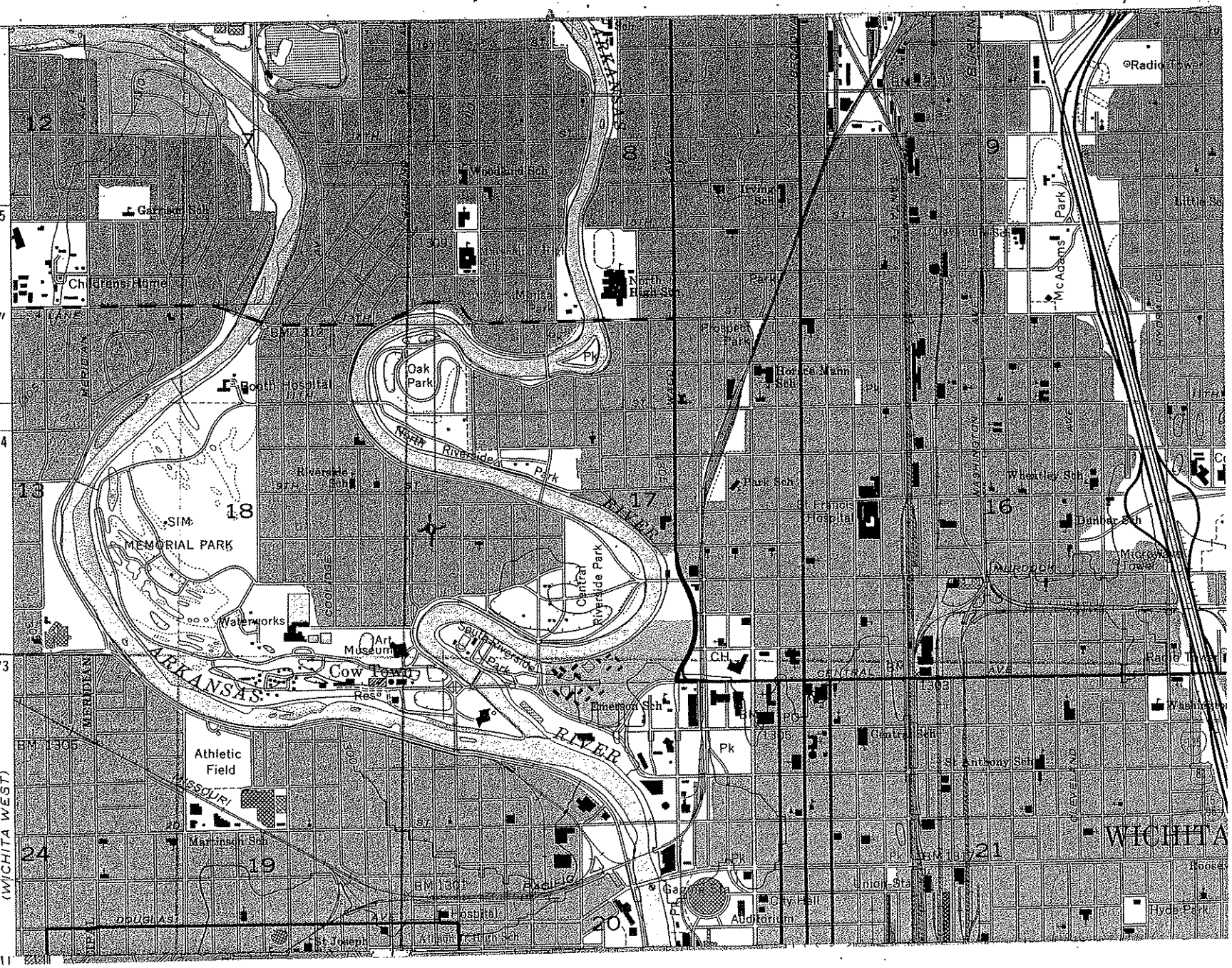
**Boundary Justification**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Smyser House.

**Photographic Information**

Property: Smyser House
Location: 931 Buffum, Wichita, Sedgwick Co., KS
Photographer: Kathy L. Morgan
Date of Photographs: July 2006
Digital Images on File at the Kansas State Historical Society

1. East (front) and north elevations, facing southwest
2. East (front) elevation, looking west toward garage
3. West (rear) elevation, looking east
4. Garage, east elevation (front)
5. Garage; north elevation (side)
6. Living room, looking northeast toward front door
7. Living room, looking south toward fireplace
8. Living room, looking southwest into dining room
9. Dining room, looking northwest toward kitchen
10. Dining room, looking south at window seat
11. Breakfast nook and back door, looking southeast from kitchen
12. Hall between bedrooms; linen cupboard, bathroom door ajar
13. Bathroom, looking northwest
14. East bedroom; looking southeast, separated from dining room by French doors
15. West bedroom; looking northwest

Smyser House
Wichita, Sedgwick Co.
Kansas

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