NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990

O' 'o. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

NOV 0 1 2006

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 Gem Building

Other name/site number

2. Location

Street & number 506-510 SW 10th Avenue ☐ not for publication

City or town Topeka ☐ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Shawnee Code 177 Zip code 66612

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 9/20/06

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:)

Gem Building
Name of Property

Shawnee 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.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE/department store
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style/Craftsman

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: CONCRETE/STONE: Limestone
Walls: CONCRETE/STONE: Limestone
BRICK
Roof: ASPHALT
Other: TERRA COTTA

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

Gem Building
Name of Property

Shawnee 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

1928

Significant Dates

1928

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charles D. Cuthbert, architect

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:

Gem Building
Name of Property

Shawnee County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	267926	4325499
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 Christy Davis

Organization _____ Date 5/1/2006

Street & number 2416 SW Sunset Ct Telephone 785-213-1369

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66604

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 Gem Properties

Street & number 510 SW 10th Telephone 785-233-9930

City or town Topeka State KS Zip code 66612

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

Overall

The Gem Building is located at 506-510 SW 10th Avenue in Topeka, Kansas on Lots 8, 10, and 12 of Tenth Avenue West, Original Town. The building is located southwest of the Kansas Statehouse in an area occupied by single-family dwellings by the dawn of the twentieth century - but supplanted by state office buildings, commercial structures, gas stations, and apartment buildings by 1930. The parcel measures 75' X 130'. The Gem Building abuts the sidewalk on the south side of the lots, alleys on the east and north, and a parking lot on the west. To the back of the lot on the north side is a small garage building, which is accessed from the alley on the north side. There is evidence on the west elevation of a building that was attached to the Gem Building following its construction. This small building, which was home to Akey's Bakery, Poor Richard's Café, and a Health Foods Store, was demolished after 1993. The area it once occupied is now a parking lot.

The base of the building is rectangle, with cutout light courts (about 18,000 cubic feet each) on the east and west sides forming a capital-I shape on the second and third floors. These light courts allow for natural light in each room in each apartment unit, provide balconies for interior units, and allow for skylights to provide natural lighting for the stores on the first floor. Extruded rough tan finish brick, common in the early twentieth century, dons the front elevation and the first bay of each of the side elevations. Lower-quality high-fire red brick was used on the remainder of the side elevations and on the rear elevation. Where the best quality brick was used, the parapet is capped with stone. Elsewhere, the parapet is capped with glazed terracotta tiles.

The building falls into the "Two-Part Commercial Block" typology as defined by Richard Longstreth in *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture.* Longstreth states that two-part commercial blocks are "characterized by a horizontal division of two distinct zones" which identify two distinct uses. In the case of the Gem Building, the first floor or first zone provides for commercial use while the second and third floors provide for residential use in the form of apartment units. The first floor is divided into two main commercial spaces, identified in the original drawings as Store #1 and Store #2. Each of these commercial spaces occupies 3230 square feet on the first floor. Store #1 has a 2900 square-foot basement; Store #2 has a 2400 square-foot basement. There are 12 total apartment units, 6 on each of the 2nd and 3rd floors. Four of the units occupy 648 square feet each. Eight of the units are 540 square feet. Each apartment has a living room, kitchen and dinette, 2 bedrooms, a bathroom, and a balcony. A freight elevator, which can be accessed from a sliding freight door on the rear elevation, historically eased the transportation of furniture and supplies.

South (Front) Elevation

First Floor

The front elevation is symmetrical in design. The main door, located in a recessed arched stone opening centered on the façade, provides access to the central apartment stair. The door is a wood early twentieth century storefront door with a large pane of glass. It is surrounded by an arched 3-part transom window and is flanked by multi-pane sidelights.

Two large storefronts, with recessed doors, occupy the space east and west of the main entry on the first floor. Each of these storefronts features a kickplate with square green ceramic tiles, pierced by metal grates and aprons of coordinating tan 1" X 1" tiles. The storefront windows are bronze with the large expanses of glass that are common in early twentieth-century commercial buildings. The storefront doors, in recessed entries, match that of the central stair - wood with a single pane of glass. Each of the storefront doors has a small transom window above it. Awnings extend from the building between the storefront windows and large segmented transom, which spans the overall width of each storefront. The west storefront has two doors, one facing south and one (angled) facing southwest. The south-facing door accesses 510 SW 10th, now a law office and campaign headquarters; the angled door accesses 508 SW 10th. The east storefront has one recessed door, which provides entry to 506 SW 10th, now a design firm.

Second and Third Floors

The upper part of this two-part commercial block is delineated with a continuous stone sill below the second-floor windows. A similar band separates the third floor from the parapet. The second third floors are divided into seven bays. The first bay features stacked pairs of double-hung 6/1 wood windows. The second bay has arched recessed terraces with decorative brickwork. These terraces each house a door on the east or west side and a pair of 6/1 double-hung windows on the south. The third bay matches the first bay. The fourth, central bay, which houses the stair, has a small window above the main door and a larger stone-quoined 6/1 window at the landing between the second and third floors. Completing the symmetry, the fifth bay matches the third bay; sixth matches the second; and seventh matches the first.

A decorative stone-capped parapet tops of the building. The parapet caps provide perches for six stone finials. A curved parapet articulates the center entry bay. Geometric stones and three decorative medallions, the most elaborate atop the entry bay, create architectural interest.

East Elevation

From the east and west elevations, the building's cutaway massing is evident. Whereas the north and south elevations represent the full massing of the building on the first through third floors, the second and third floors of the east and west elevations are cutaway to provide natural light and outdoor spaces for the occupants of the apartments. The east elevation is divided into three masses. The first mass, on

the south end, features the building's rough tan façade brick. On its first floor are adjacent single-hung single-pane windows. On its second and third floors are adjacent pairs of 6/1 double-hung windows.

The second mass, in the center of the east elevation, has two small windows on the first floor, and a recess on the second and third floors. The east elevation of the recess features a wood covered porch structure that houses a door to the roof of the first floor on the second floor, and a door to a terrace on the third floor. The east, north and south elevations of the recess house 6/1 windows that provide light to the apartments.

North (Rear) Elevation
The rear elevation is a simplified replica of the front elevation. Like the front, it is divided into 7 bays. The first bay features a steel casement window on the first floor, and single windows on the second and third floors. The second bay has a steel casement on the first floor, arched opening and terrace on the second floor, and a single window on the third floor. The third bay has a door and steel casement window on the first floor and a pair of 6/1 windows on each of the second and third floors. The fourth central bay has a utility and man door on the first floor, and single window on each of the second and third floors. Completing the symmetry, bay 5 is the same as bay 3, bay 6 is the same as bay 2, and bay 7 is the same as bay 1, except with pairs of windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Garage
A small free-standing garage sits on the rear of the property abutting the alley on the north side. This one-story utilitarian brick and hollow tile structure has 5 overhead doors on its north elevation. After his retirement in 1955, Bud Lueunberger converted the east end of the garage building into a small office. When he moved his office out, he rented the space to a shoe repair shop, which operated in the location for thirty years.

West Elevation
From north to south, the west elevation has a short west garage wall that ties into the west wall of the main building at the same plane. This short wall, made of Dickey Tile (hollow clay tile), has no openings. The second mass has no windows on the first floor, and adjacent single windows on the second and third floors. The 3rd mass, with its cutaway, features an original wood porch on the 2nd and 3rd levels with access to the roof of the first floor. Each floor of the north elevation of the recess has a double and single window. The west elevation has a single window, single window, double window, French door, and double window. The south elevation mirrors the north elevation. The fourth mass mirrors the first mass on the east elevation, with single-pane windows on the first floor, and adjacent 6/1 single windows on both the second and third floors. The west elevation has tar stains that provide hints to the location of the steel building once semi-attached to the Gem Building.

Interior
First Floor
The west storefront accesses one of the two large commercial spaces on the first floor. This space features its original hardwood floors, plaster walls, wood beamed pressed-metal ceilings, and columns (all exposed). The space, historically open for use as the Gem Drug Store and Liquor Stores, was divided into office space in 1979. A law firm currently occupies the front two offices. Behind the two front offices is a hallway, framed along the original columns, that provides access to a large conference room and three additional offices along the east side, now occupied by a campaign office. A skylight lights the center hallway and conference room. To the rear is a double swinging door that provides access to two small restrooms, a basement stair, a stair to a small loft at the rear of the space, and a vault.

The east storefront accesses the second of the two large commercial spaces on the first floor. Like the west storefront, this space has its original hardwood floors, plaster walls, wood beamed ceilings, and columns. In addition, it still has its original light fixtures. The ceiling in this space is open. Some small enclosures have been created to delineate office spaces. Unlike those on the west side, these are partial walls that allow an open view of the beamed ceiling.

Second and Third Floors
The floor plans of the second and third floors are identical. The main front stair, with its craftsman railing, accesses a six-foot-wide corridor. There are six openings on each of the west and east sides. From south to north on each side, these include an apartment door, a service hall door for access to two apartment units and an icebox, an apartment unit, an icebox access door, a service hall to another icebox door, and an apartment. There are six apartment units on each floor. Units on the north and south sides of the building feature terraces on the north and south walls. The center units have terraces on the east and west light courts. As noted above, eight of the units are 540 square feet. Each apartment has a living room, kitchen and dinette, 2 bedrooms, a bathroom, and a balcony.

The apartment units have an exceptionally high degree of architectural integrity. Original features include doors, hall-side louvered doors for circulation, wood floors, baseboards, French terrace doors, glazed built-in bookcases between the kitchens and dinettes, light fixtures, kitchen cabinets, kitchen sinks, hexagonal floor tiles, tubs, toilets and sinks in bathrooms. The woodwork retains its original finish. Double-doors in the living rooms once provided access to Murphy beds. Today, these are closets.

A stair tower at the back of the building has a craftsman stair, covered with original linoleum flooring, and a freight elevator.

Statement of Significance

Overall
The Gem Building (built 1928) is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an example of an early twentieth century apartment building. The building was designed by Topeka architect Charles Cuthbert. The building was constructed by the proprietors of the Gem Grocery and Meat Market to house their business and families, and also to subsidize their income.

The Leuenbergers, the Klopfers and the Gem Grocery and Meat Market
The Gem Grocery and Meat Market, originally located at 502-504 SW Tenth Street, was one of nearly 200 grocers in Topeka by the time of the construction of the Gem Building. Before World War II, residents in communities throughout the nation relied on neighborhood grocers, located within walking distance of their homes, for staples. At the time of its opening, the Gem Grocery was located within walking distance of the fine homes that then ringed the Kansas Statehouse.

The Gem Grocery and Meat Market first opened for business at 502-504 SW Tenth Street in 1908. The original partners included brothers Henry Earnest Leuenberger (b. 8/28/1882), Fritz John Leuenberger (b. 5/11/1876), and Theophilus Emmanuel Leuenberger (7/20/1881-7/1964). Harry Lawrence Klopfer (b. 9/13/1879 - also recorded as Klopker or Klopper) was also a partner.

According to census records, the Leuenberger family immigrated to the United States from Switzerland in 1881. Theophilus, who was born immediately prior to the family's immigration, matured into a short, stout man with blue eyes and brown hair. In the early years of the store, he was the butcher. Henry, the first of the brothers born in the United States, became a man of medium build with blue eyes and brown hair. Both Theophilus and Henry left the business between 1916 and 1918. According to their 1918 World War I draft registrations (all of the brothers registered on the same day), the two lived and farmed a property at 23 Auburn Road. They may have supplied produce for the grocery store.

After Theophilus and Henry left the business, Fritz Leuenberger and his brother-in-law Harry Klopfer continued to manage the store on their own. Before moving to Topeka, Harry Klopfer was a sales representative for the Swift Meat Packing Company in Kansas City. Fritz Leuenberger likely became acquainted with Mr. Klopfer while working at the C. W. Meyer Co. Grocery on Kansas Avenue, where he began his grocery business career in 1900. It is believed that Leuenberger introduced Klopfer to his sister Esther – and that Klopfer decided to move to Topeka and partner with Leuenberger when he and Esther married.

Fritz, the oldest of the brothers, was a man of medium height, medium build, blue eyes and brown hair. He married Rose Oherli (4/10/1875-3/1966), who, like him, immigrated from Switzerland as a young child (1882). They soon had a son Fritz, Jr. (Bud) and a daughter, Helen. Early in his career, Bud

(Bud– 10/12/1900-8/17/1983) worked as an apprentice machinist for the Santa Fe Railroad. In 1920, however, when a tragic railroad accident took his right arm, he re-joined the family business. In 1928, the year the Gem Building was built, he married Loretta Huber (6/30/1901-12/10/1989). They raised two children, Marla Rae Beimforde and Jan W. Leuenberger (current joint owners) in the building.

At its peak, the store's 15 employees provided groceries to both walk-in clients from the surrounding neighborhood and others from Topeka's growing suburban neighborhoods, such as Westboro, via grocery delivery. Unfortunately, the grocery store – and the Gem Building - fell on hard times during the 1930s and 1940s. Both grocery sales and apartment occupancy dropped during the Great Depression. During World War II, many of the store's most profitable items, such as sugar, were rationed. There was no coffee; and there were no strong young men to help with the heavy lifting. Gas rationing stunted the store's ability to make regular grocery deliveries to suburban clients. A diminishing supply of skilled workmen such as plumbers and repairmen caused the price for such repairs to skyrocket. Meantime, wartime rent control prohibited the Gem Building partners from raising rents to defray increasing expenses.

Most businesses profited from the post-war economic boom driven by the public's pent-up demand for goods. The post-war prosperity was short-lived for some neighborhood businesses, including the Gem Grocery, however. Despite efforts to expand services – such as offering one of the city's first delicatessen counters – profits declined. Both Harry Klopfer and Fritz Leuenberger Sr. died in the 1950s. By this time, chain shopping center grocery stores, had wooed away customers with free parking and vast inventories. Fritz, Sr. worked in the store until his death. In 1955, Bud was forced to close the Gem Grocery. The family retained ownership of the building and leased the commercial spaces to other interests. After Bud's death in 1983, his wife Loretta managed the building. After her death in 1989, her son and daughter Jan and Marla Rae, assumed management.

Charles D. Cuthbert (10/30/1894-1/6/1979), Architect
The Gem Grocery partners hired architect Charles Cuthbert to design their new building. Cuthbert was among an elite group of Topeka architects, which included veteran Frank Squires (former partner of J. C. Holland, who with Squires designed a number of county courthouses) and Thomas Williamson, who designed many prominent area structures, most notably Topeka High School. On occasion, Cuthbert partnered with W. E. Glover, another contemporary and fellow World War I veteran who designed a number of homes in Topeka's Westboro and Prospect Hills neighborhoods.

Cuthbert was destined for a career in architecture from an early age. His father James, a contractor and stonemason, immigrated to the United States from Scotland in 1870. James moved to Topeka in 1879 to cut stone for the Kansas Statehouse. James joined the Smith, Sargent and Company contractors in 1883. Three years later, James became a partner in the firm, which was re-christened "Cuthbert & Sons" in 1910. According to two biographical accounts, "several" of his six sons were associated with the firm,

among whose contracts were Topeka's Lincoln Junior High and Loman Hill Methodist Church and the Phillips County Courthouse in Phillipsburg. His success afforded James the luxury of sending at least one of his sons, Charles, to college to study architecture.

Charles, the 9th of 11 children, graduated from Washington University in St. Louis. He served in World War I, where he was stationed at Camp Funston. After the war, he returned to his hometown where he married fellow Topeka native Grace Catherine Dana on April 5, 1923. In 1925, Governor Paulen appointed him State Architect, a position he held until 1930. It was during these boom years that Charles, like many of his contemporaries, was most prolific. As State Architect, he designed KU's Snow Hall and the building later called Hoch Auditorium. On his own, Cuthbert designed Gage School (Topeka), East Topeka Junior High (NRHP) and Westminster Presbyterian Church (Topeka - NRHP). Early in his career, Charles partnered with his father's construction company. Later, he partnered with other architects, most notably William E. Suehrk (12/6/1890-5/1970). Suehrk came to Kansas from Iowa where he was trained as a draftsman.

Apartments - Context

Although apartment buildings were prevalent in large metropolitan areas beginning in the late nineteenth century, they were not commonly constructed in Kansas until the 1910s and 1920s. By this time, apartments had evolved from tenements designed for maximum occupancy of the urban poor in high-density metropolitan areas to efficient and attractively designed buildings for a growing class of urban professionals.

The history of apartment construction during the early twentieth century is tied to the nationwide trend toward urbanization. The mechanization of farming – which reduced the number of farm workers needed in rural areas, immigration, and industrialization contributed to the rapid growth of cities. Mid-sized cities, with populations from 2500 to 500,000, saw the largest growth at the turn of the century. Between 1890 and 1910 the number of persons living in mid-sized cities grew from approximately 60 million to 80 million.

In the early twentieth century, apartments provided reasonably priced housing for young professionals who moved to cities to provide services to the growing number of residents. Apartments served residents who were either unable to or uninterested in purchasing a single-family house at a time when home ownership was a luxury afforded to a small percentage of families. As the American population became more mobile, apartments were a short-term housing solution for those who did not plan to linger in a community.

Although Kansas developers built some apartment houses, such as Topeka's Devon Apartments (NRHP), in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the construction of apartment buildings in Kansas reached its heyday between the two world wars. These buildings had a number of

commonalities. First, many were architect designed. Secondly, they were typically two or three stories in height. They often featured brick exteriors – usually rough, popular at the time. Included among the Kansas apartment buildings from this time period are the Riverview, Nokomis, Virginia and Navarre apartments. These apartments, all located in Wichita, are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

An increasing demand for single-family residences, spurred by government incentives (including FHA financing), inexpensive standardized housing, the baby boom and an exponential increase in personal income, caused a decline in the construction of apartment buildings following World War II. Between 1940 and 1960, the percentage of American families who owned their own homes had jumped from 44% to 60%. During the 1960s, urban renewal sparked new interest in the construction of high-rise apartments to house the urban poor. This type of housing did not proliferate in Kansas. During the 1980s and 1990s, Kansas has seen a trend toward large apartment complexes to serve as housing for students, young professionals and other residents.

The Gem Building

The Gem Building was constructed in 1928 at a cost of $80,000. As noted in the narrative description, the lower part, or first floor, of the Gem Building was designed to house two commercial enterprises. Apartment buildings with storefronts on the first floor were not particularly common at the time of the Gem Building's Construction. However, its location on the fringes between Topeka's expanding commercial and governmental district to the east and the growing residential district to the west uniquely situated it to serve multiple uses. The apartments provided a built-in customer base for the downstairs businesses.

The Gem Grocery and Meat Market, detailed above, occupied 506 SW 10th (east storefront) until it closed in 1955. Bud Luenberger then leased the space to a dry cleaning business. In recent years, it has been converted to office space. The first occupant of the second store at 510 SW 10th was the Gem Drug Company. Over the years, the first floor has served a variety of other businesses.

During the 1940s, the space originally occupied by the Gem Drug Company became a local restaurant called Maxey's. During the construction of the Docking State Office Building in the early 1950s, the owners leased the space to the State Banking Commission. To accommodate this use, a large vault was placed at the back of this space and office spaces were created. Later, it housed a bar, then Grennan's Liquor Store. During the 1960s and 1970s, after Mr. Grennan was injured in a shooting accident, Bud took over the liquor store, renaming it Leuenberger Liquor. In 1979, Bud Leuenberger's son Jan opened a law office at 510 SW 10th. Today, 508 and 510 are law offices and 506 is a Graphics Arts office.

The upper part, the second and third floors, of the building was designed to house apartment units.

In 1929, the first year it was listed in the City Directory, the Gem Apartments were among 54 apartment buildings in town. Many of these apartment buildings were located near downtown and the Statehouse. In fact, at least three other apartment buildings, the Senate Apartments, Curtis Court Apartments, and Capper Court Apartments, were located on the northwest corner of the same block. This collection of apartment buildings supplanted the single-family homes that had surrounded the original Gem Grocery building (502-504 SW 10th) early in the twentieth century. Like most early twentieth-century apartment buildings, the Gem was also home to single women, widows, and young professionals who did not live there long. Early occupants included M. Ray McLain, a doorman at the Jayhawk Theater, Bert McClintock, an adjuster at Capitol Securities, Merill Dumm, a furniture salesman, Ray McFadden, an assistant auditor at KPL, Fern Smith, a beauty operator, Fred Swarts, a clerk at Hall Stationery, George Lortie, a railroad clerk.

The Gem building was also home to Gem Grocery partners. When the Gem Building was completed, Fritz Leuenberger Sr. and his wife Rose occupied unit 101. Harry Klopfer and his wife Esther lived in unit 201. By 1935, Fritz Junior had moved into unit 102 with his wife Loretta.

The Commercial Style

The exterior of the Gem Building represents the early twentieth-century Commercial Style. This style is most often seen in downtown commercial buildings from the 1910s and 1920s. Unlike their nineteenth-century predecessors, these buildings feature simple lines, without applied or projecting decorative elements such as cornices. In addition to their clean lines, Commercial Style buildings are defined by a number of exterior features such as parapets capped with squared-off stone or concrete, rough brick with raked mortar joints, and double-hung windows with square upper and lower sashes – in contrast to the tall, narrow windows seen in late-nineteenth-century commercial buildings. These windows can be 1/1 double-hung sash, or a multiple-pane upper sash over a single-pane lower sash. Stylistic elements were limited to brick corbelling or the incorporation of integrated decorative masonry elements geometric stone patterns.

Although most examples of the Commercial Style are found in downtown storefronts, the style was also employed for early twentieth-century apartment buildings. Examples include the Nokomis and Navarre Apartments in Wichita (NRHP) and the Lyda Jean Apartments in Manhattan (NRHP). Like these apartment buildings, and other Commercial Style structures, the Gem features geometric masonry patterns, multiple-pane upper sash, rough brick with raked mortar joints, and a capped parapet at the roofline.

The Gem also has interior features common to both apartment buildings and single-family dwellings of the period. These are Craftsman-style elements, popularized by Gustav Stickley during the early twentieth century. Interior features common in Craftsman-style buildings include simple floorplans and the use of natural woodwork in floors, cabinets and built-ins. Cuthbert interpreted the Craftsman style

for the interior space of the Gem by making efficient use of natural light, built-in shelves around doorframes, a simple layout and stained wood for ornamentation.

The Gem Building has a high degree of architectural integrity and is an excellent example of an early twentieth century apartment building.

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Verbal Boundary Description
A 75' X 130' parcel located at Tenth Avenue West, lots 8, 10, and 12.

Boundary Justification
This is the parcel on which the Gem Building and attached garage sit. The parcel is bound on the east and north by alleys, on the south by Tenth Avenue, and on the west by a parking lot.

Photograph Log

Photographer: Christy Davis
Date: April 2006
Location of Digital Images: Kansas State Historic Preservation Office

1. South (front) elevation, facing north
2. Southwest corner, facing northeast
3. Northeast corner, facing southwest
4. Northwest corner, facing southeast
5. North (rear) elevation, facing south
6. Southeast corner, facing northwest
7. Interior central staircase
8. Apartment door
9. Interior closet double door
10. Interior door leading to exterior balcony
11. Interior apartment light fixture
12. Apartment kitchen

Gem Building
Topeka, KS
15: 267926E
4325490 N
Veterans Park
Gaging Station
Santa Fe Park
State Street Sch
Chase Sch
Sacred Heart Sch
SEWARD AVE
SARPOU AVE
FOREST
STRAIT
Old Channel
(GRANTVILLE)
TOPEKA AVE BRIDGE
Gaging Station North
Sumner Sch
Federal Bldg
County Ch
Topeka High Sch
STATE CAPITOL
City Hall
Plaza Park
Shungomungo
Ripley Park
Creek
T & S F
Belmont
Park
Rice Park
Lafayette Sch
Community Center
10TH AVE
Topeka Cemetery
Mount Auburn Cem
Kansas Cont Vocational Tng Ctr
GOLDEN AVE
Belvoir Sch
Golden
Deer Creek
Park
Shimer Park
FAIRGROUND
North Sch
Hillcrest Park
Woodlawn Park
Austin Park
Highland Park
Hudson Sch
High Sch
SANTA FE
RAILROAD
ST
AVE
T 11 S
T 12 S
2'30"
4326
4323
EAST TOPEKA INTERCHANGE 0.3 MI.
INTERCHANGE 20 MI.
S. 69 & 169) 57 MI.