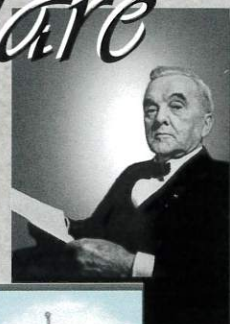


Step back into Nebraska history and discover McCook's beautiful historic district on the Heritage Square Walking Tour. The tour spans across a ten-block area near downtown McCook, displaying a variety of architectural styles from the late 1800s & early 1900s. Your journey begins by picking up the Historical Walking Tour brochure at the Keystone Business Center or the Museum of the High Plains, then moves on to include the Boyhood Home of Governor & U.S. Senator E. Benjamin Nelson, the home of Governor Frank B. Morrison, the Senator George W. Norris State Historic Site, Frank Lloyd Wright's Sutton House and other historical landmarks.

HERITAGE Square



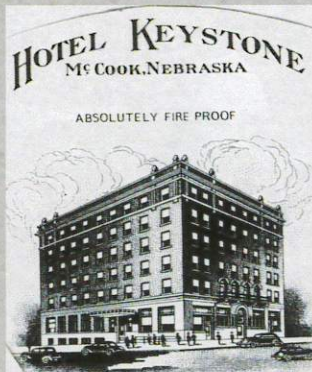
*Historical
Walking Tour*
McCook, Nebraska

1. Keystone Hotel (Keystone Business Center)

402 Norris Avenue

Completed in 1922, the Hotel Keystone was to represent the Can-Do-Club, whose endeavor was to "pursue the organization and completion of a new hotel to expand the commercial attraction of downtown McCook." The Keystone's days of glory lasted for 40 years through Depression, dirt storms, wars, motel development, and location of Interstate 80; however, by the early 60s the Keystone was on its last leg as a hotel, eventually becoming retirement living quarters to survive. After a few failed attempts by others, the McCook Economic Development Corporation secured \$4.2 million from grants, sales tax income and backing by local banks. The Keystone Business Center is now home to incubator businesses and maintains its original purpose to "expand attraction of downtown McCook."

--Dawna Bates



2. Masonic Temple and Theatre

322 Norris Avenue

Constructed in 1909, the Temple Theatre was one of the biggest opera houses in Nebraska. It was a proud, two-story theatre, with a Roman Arch and two balconies. It boasted a large stage and comfortable dressing rooms for traveling operas and vaudeville and minstrel shows from New York, Denver and Kansas City. For example, D.W. Griffith's silent film, *Birth of a Nation*, featured a full orchestra with cannon when it played. In 1916, equipment was added to allow the showing of motion pictures. Fire gutted the building in 1948. When it was rebuilt, the building was converted to the air conditioned Bison Theater with office space on the first two floors, and the Masonic Temple retained its space on the third floor. Later it became all offices on the first two floors. --Walt Sehnert



3. Kelley Building

318 Norris Avenue

The Kelley Building was built in 1889 by Charles H. Meeker, civil engineer for the railroad, and by R.O. Phillips, an officer of the railroad. The railroad supplied the sandstone and reinforcing rails for its construction, obtaining the sandstone from around Colorado Springs. The principle purpose of the building was to house the United States Land Office during the years that it was processing pre-emptions, homesteads and timber claims in the McCook area. The land office closed in 1904, and the building was sold to John E. Kelley, who leased the land office space to the Post Office, which remained until 1915. The Red Willow County Courthouse offices were located in the building during 1896 when the county seat was moved to McCook, and a new courthouse was being built on the present site. Mr. Kelley and then his grandson, Donald E. Kelley, owned the building until 1958, when it was sold to Fred T. Hanson and Helen E. Hanson, my parents, now deceased. Don Kelley extensively remodeled the front in 1956.

--John F. Hanson



4. Post Office/Federal Courthouse

401 Norris Avenue

This stately old building was built in 1915 when William C. McAdoo was Secretary of the Treasury. For many years it was known as the Federal Building, housing the Post Office on the main floor and basement, and richly appointed Federal Court on the upper floors. In 1987, the Post Office was moved to a new location two blocks west. Since that time, the building has operated as Huegel's Hutch (Antiques) by Mr. and Mrs. David Huegel.

--Walt Sehnert



5. Museum of the High Plains

421 Norris Avenue

What a fitting name! The museum has so many articles that were part of the everyday life of the people who settled this part of the country. The kitchen, parlor, bedroom and children's playroom are displayed as if the early days are still here. Imagine music by the pump organ or the cylinder gramophone in the corner. Tour the Railroad Room to revisit steam engine days. (A book is even available to research the work history of the operating department employees.) On the upper level is a large working model railroad with several trains. Also on this level is a display of the former McCook Airbase, where many WWII Air Force pilots and crewmen trained. The DAR Room is full of great historical artifacts, as is the old drug store with its old time remedies still in the original bottle or box, and you'll even see the origins of Kool Aid. Throughout the museum are historic pictures, including the Great Flood of 1935, Burlington Marching Bands, and McCook leaders who influenced the state and the nation. You'll see Frank Lloyd Wright house plans designed for a house that was never built; however, a house designed by Wright is located just up the street from the museum. Visitors can also access the beautiful Carnegie Library. Time in the museum is priceless, but the admission is free! Enjoy! --John Hubert



6. Carnegie Library 423 Norris Avenue

McCook's Historic Carnegie Library was one of the first of 69 built in Nebraska. Construction started in 1907 after the city received an \$11,500 grant from Andrew Carnegie. It is the only Carnegie Library in Nebraska designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. After serving over 60 years as McCook's Public Library, the Carnegie now adjoins the High Plains Museum. The original architecture has been restored, including the fireplace and vintage beamed ceiling. Reading tables are available for visitors to enjoy the many signed First Edition books. In the school exhibit, visitors may view McCook High School and McCook Community College yearbooks from the early 1900s to the present. The Carnegie still serves the community, open during museum hours, and also for meetings, classes and entertainment functions. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. The "Prairie Bull" bronze sculpture, completed in 2000 by Gary Ginther of Cambridge Lake, graces the front lawn of the Carnegie.

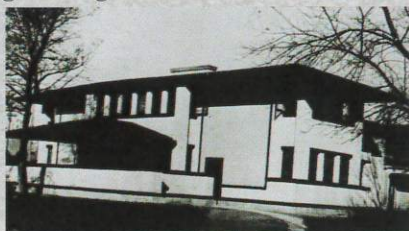
--Linda McGooden Hedges



13. H.P. Sutton Home 602 Norris Avenue

Frank Lloyd Wright-Designed House

McCook is home to the only house in Nebraska designed by the legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright. It is an outstanding example of the Prairie School of Architecture. An unusual amount of the original letters still exist between Wright and the original owner, Mrs. Eliza Sutton. Mrs. Sutton minced no words when corresponding with Wright. "Have tried to make it plain as I know now what my ideas are, but you don't seem to understand. Not so many wings and windows. Do not like such flat roofs - think they would be very warm in summer. Why don't you plan what I ask for?" By January of 1907, after many letters back and forth, the Suttons still only had an "unsightly hole at our front door," but the house was finished by the summer of 1908. The Suttons furnished the house with Wright designed furniture. Current owners Van and Janet Korell have carefully restored the house under the direction of renowned architect John G. Thorpe of Oak Park, IL. (Note: This is a private residence. Please respect the owner's privacy.)



14. Gov. Ralph G. Brooks Site 524 Norris Avenue



When Ralph G. Brooks first moved to McCook in 1947 as Superintendent of Schools, an apartment house on this site was his first home. Brooks pursued a varied path to the governorship of Nebraska. Although he had a law degree, he devoted most of his career to education. As a gifted orator, Brooks became known as a "one-man Chamber of Commerce" because of a famous speech he gave throughout his career promoting Nebraska. In 1958, Brooks was elected governor by less than 1% of the popular vote. Brooks

declined re-nomination in 1960 to run for the U.S. Senate. Shortly before the election, he became the first Nebraska governor to die in office when congestive heart failure cut short his life on September 9, 1960. The structure was torn down in 2011.

15. Red Willow County Courthouse

502 Norris Avenue
Red Willow County was organized in 1873, and after a battle with Indianola, the county seat was moved to McCook in 1896. The present courthouse was constructed in 1926. The exterior of the Grecian/Doric-style building is constructed with buff Bedford limestone. Interior highlights include three huge art glass windows, which adorn the west side of the building between the floors, and a beautiful District Courtroom finished in rich walnut.



*This brochure made available by the
Heritage Square Committee.*

*Photos courtesy of High Plains Museum
and The McCook Daily Gazette.*

16. Old YMCA Building (Now Landmark Apts.)

424 Norris Avenue

On January 10, 1926, the Young Men's Christian Association of McCook dedicated its new facility constructed in the bold Mission Revival architectural style. According to the McCook Daily Gazette, over 1,200 attended the dedication ceremony. During that first week of operation, various service groups and businesses took turns sponsoring activities on their designated night. Later that year, the first classes were held here for the fledgling McCook Junior College, which was the first junior college in Nebraska. The YMCA built a new facility in 1981, and in 1995, the building was acquired and remodeled into 12 apartment units. Many of the activities offered during those first months of operation have become an integral part of today's YMCA programs.

--Mike Gonzales



17. The Gazette Building 422 Norris Avenue



This home of the McCook Gazette from 1926 to 1966 will forever be known as "The Gazette Building." It was here, publisher Harry Strunk built The Gazette, in what was then the smallest community in America to have a daily newspaper. Strunk wrote, "Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy in this world," which became the paper's masthead and emblazoned the credo. Strunk

and The Gazette continued to pay rent forward and formed the Republican Valley Conservation Association, which was the advocate for flood control and irrigation after the 1935 Republican River flood. Through Strunk's effort and persistence, RVCA successfully created river dams in Eastern Colorado, Northwest Kansas, and Southwest Nebraska, making the Republican River the most developed stream in America.

--Walt Sehnert

18. Historic Fox Theatre 408 Norris Avenue

From vaudeville to wide screen cinemascope productions, the Historic Fox Theatre has been serving the changing entertainment tastes of McCook area residents since the Roaring '20s. Built by a pioneer McCook businessman, A. Barnett, the theatre opened in 1927 as a site for Sunday afternoon vaudeville shows. Very soon, the theatre made the transition to the talkies which sparked the 20th Century movie craze. The building was remodeled in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Seating was upgraded, the lobby was redecorated and the screen was enlarged to accommodate the latest cinemascope films. Now, another, renovation is taking place. With the help of grants and donations, an alliance of community volunteers is leading efforts to raise more than a million dollars to restore the theatre for presentation of a wide range of events. With more than a half million dollars already committed, the volunteers are well on their way to their goal of making the Fox a "Show Place" for the Visual and Performing Arts. --Gene Morris

