

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**Amendment Approved on June 27, 2023 for the  
National Register of Historic Places**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

University of Kansas East Historic District  
Lawrence, Douglas County, KS

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Compiled Winter/Spring – March 2023

Irma Smith Hall  
1300 Jayhawk Blvd  
University of Kansas Campus  
Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

Irma Smith Hall was listed as a non-contributing property within the University of Kansas East Historic District on January 8, 2014 - NRIS # 13001038. At the time, the period of significance stopped at the 50-year guide (1963). Upon further research, submitted to KS-SHPO winter 2023, the period of significance was arbitrary and excluded Smith Hall. The context within the nomination (and below) supports the period continuing through 1967 to include Smith Hall as a contributing resource.

The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office requests that the following amendment be accepted. The amendment includes an extended period of significance with justification and information supporting changing Smith Hall to a contributing resource within the University of Kansas East Historic District. Please see the supplemental information below.

  
Katrina Ringler, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

5/19/2023  
Date

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**Period of significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1912 with the construction of the earliest resource in the district and ends in 1967 with the construction of the youngest contributing building in the district. Previously the original nomination stopped at the 50-year guide; however, that does not accurately reflect the properties within this district. There is a clear developmental period that happened across KU's campus during the modern movement. The other two non-contributing buildings within the boundary were constructed around 20 or more years after this time. Therefore, the period of significance should accurately be 1912-1967 to better represent the contributing properties within the boundaries that are representative of KU's Education and Architectural significance. These buildings and objects reflect the evolution of the residential and religious facilities in one concentrated location designed to support the needs of the students and faculty at KU.

**Building Description:**

The description in the National Register for Historic Places Registration Form, University of Kansas East Historic District (hereafter NRHP/UCHEHD) is as follows:

This Modern Movement building has an irregular T-shaped footprint, is clad primarily in smooth limestone panels, and has a flat roof. The rectangular block at the north end of the building is two stories while a narrow one-story corridor connects this block to the smaller rectangular block at the south end. The main entrance is in the connecting corridor and faces a small, landscaped courtyard on the west. The west wall, with the centered aluminum storefront vestibule, is recessed under a flat canopy, supported by rectangular posts. A tall pylon clad in rectangular stone veneer has a concave southwest elevation and rises above the roofline at the intersection of the north block and the connector. The north facade is buff brick with vertical brick bands dividing the facade into irregular bays. The west bay contains a recessed entry with a small flat canopy. The remaining bays contain tripartite windows with lower hopper sashes. The spandrels between the windows are clad in smooth limestone panels. The south block has large sections of glazed wall with multiple fixed panes. A standing seam metal roof over the domed ceiling rises above the flat roofline on the south block.

Additional Description:

Smith Hall is an important and intact example of midcentury modern architecture and one of the last remaining examples of this era of architecture on the University of Kansas campus. The north section on the front elevation facing Jayhawk Boulevard is comprised of cut Silverdale limestone panels (identified by Karl Ramberg, a local stone mason). The Silverdale limestone panels are placed throughout the exterior

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in varying dimensions. The cornerstone features bold type reading “ERECTED 1967” and a time capsule was placed there by Dr. Moore (Director of the Kansas Bible Chair and Dean of the Kansas School of Religion) and his team of supporters.

One of the most striking modern design features of the building is the concave limestone tower, constructed with dry laid limestone. Karl Ramberg, speaks to the craftsmanship of the tower, “Whoever laid that knew what they were doing, maintaining a curve like that is not an easy task.”<sup>1</sup>

The Moore reading library is the focal point of the building. Character defining features of this space include the soaring two story ceiling, and the sixteen panels comprising approximately a 15’ x 17’ stained-glass wall, original to the building. The colors and design could likely have been inspired by the psychedelic era of the late 1960s. During the day, the southern sun illuminates the library in a myriad of colors. During the evening, when interior lights are on, the burning bush projects outward, causing the colors to dance in magnificent ways.

There is a corridor where the main entrance is located that connects the library, and offices and classrooms, with the lecture hall on the south side – Room 100 – or the “Assembly” as the architectural drawings state. The “Assembly” exhibits interesting design details; the interior is a dodecagon, a 12-sided form rarely seen in architecture. The chairs are placed in a circular fashion with several tiers in height. The space is a conversation pit that was popular during the late 1960s and early 1970s, bucking the formal trend of desks in rows and the teacher in front of the class. The light fixtures are long, narrow rectangular fluorescent lights, along with can lights. There is a window wall on the west side of the room that connects the space with Jayhawk Boulevard and the Moses statue.

Smith Hall is locally known to many as the site of Elden Tefft’s Moses sculpture designed and built by Tefft with students assisting, and the monumental stained-glass window of the burning bush, designed and crafted by Jacoby Studios in St. Louis, Missouri. The sculpture and window are indicated on the architectural plans from the time of construction. The nomination describes the statue like this: “A bronze statue of a kneeling man is set on a cylindrical concrete base. A bronze plaque indicating the artist and donor is set in the ground in front of the statue. The statue stands in the small landscaped courtyard in front of Smith Hall.” The window was donated by Mr. and Mrs. L. Allyn Laybourn in memory of his parents, the Rev. Lemuel and Susan M. Laybourn. The statue of the kneeling Moses is the gift of Corinne Wooten Miller of Tonganoxie in memory of her husband, Charles E. Miller. It was dedicated May 12, 1982.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Ramberg, Personal Interview with Tom Harper, Lawrence, KS, October 2022.

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There are no known alterations to the exterior or interior spaces. It is assumed that the mechanical systems have been updated, and roofs and flashings appear to be recently updated. Overall, the building retains excellent historic integrity of design, materials, and workmanship with little to no alterations and thorough documentation of those aspects. The location and setting remain fully intact as part of the historic district on KU's campus in Lawrence. Smith Hall retains its feeling as an excellent example of modern architecture and its historic association with the movement on KU's campus.

The building architect was Charles L. Marshall, Assistant State Architect for Kansas from 1935-1945, and then, State Architect for Kansas from 1945-1952. Marshall designed numerous public buildings around the state including high schools and a laboratory building for the University of Kansas Medical Center. Following his tenure at the State, Marshall started his own firm and continued to practice architecture until his retirement in 1986. Marshall designed Sprague Apartments in 1960, in this same district, and Smith Hall (#11) in 1967.

**University of Kansas East Historic District – Resource Inventory:**

Original Listing 2014:

Buildings-Contributing 14  
Buildings-Noncontributing 1  
Object-Contributing 1  
Object-Noncontributing 2  
Total contributing 15  
Total noncontributing 3

Amended 2023:

Buildings-Contributing 15  
Buildings-Noncontributing 0  
Object-Contributing 1  
Object-Noncontributing 2  
Total contributing 16  
Total noncontributing 2

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**Building significance:**

The University of Kansas East Historic District encompasses the oldest intact residential enclave affiliated with the University. The fifteen buildings (fourteen contributing) were constructed over the course of the twentieth century in order to provide high quality, affordable residential options as well as facilities for spiritual exploration and support. This grouping of resources is concentrated in an area immediately adjacent to the academic core of the campus, for purposes of convenience. The resources in the District are unique in that their construction was funded solely through donations rather than through the appropriations process, as required for campus buildings owned and operated by the state. These buildings reflect their historic functions and the distinct characteristics that define the property types. They also reflect the tradition of giving among the University alumni and supporters who donated funds to erect these much-needed buildings.

Many of the founders and early administrators of the University of Kansas were religious individuals, but as a public institution, the university could not integrate religious doctrine into its curriculum. Religious services offered in buildings immediately adjacent to the campus respected the separation of church and state, while addressing the needs of students. A small node of religious-related buildings formed at the north end of the District as early as 1901. The presence of Smith Hall (#11), the Wesley Building (#17), and Danforth Chapel (#4) reflect a strong desire to support the social and cultural needs of students. Both Smith and Wesley include classrooms and gathering areas, while Danforth contains meditative and ceremonial spaces.

*Religion on Campus*

Religion has long been an important element surrounding KU. The first North College building was originally intended to be a Presbyterian preparatory school, and four of the first five Chancellors were clergymen.<sup>12</sup> As a public institution, however, religious instruction on campus was limited, as public funds could not be used by any particular religious sect. In 1901, the Women's Board of Missions of the Christian Church established the Bible Chair to offer religious history and Bible study courses to KU students. This coursework was housed in a building (Myers Hall) constructed on private property just north of Spooner Hall. This building firmly established the northeast section of the campus as the religious center associated with the campus.

Development of the surrounding area for residential and cultural purposes was both logical and natural. Construction of the non-denominational Danforth Chapel in 1946 reinforced the spiritual context of this campus node. Chancellor Deane Malott cited the University's Christian roots when describing how this public institution was glad to receive the donation to construct the new chapel.<sup>13</sup> A Methodist student center was built on the east side of Myers Hall in 1954. This building contained classrooms and gathering

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space. Myers Hall was demolished in 1966 and Smith Hall (#11) was erected in its place to house the same functions. Smith also included classroom space, gathering and meditation space, and a library.

The teaching of religion for KU students continued in the new Smith Hall, with significant events including the establishment of the KU Department of Religious Studies in 1977, which absorbed the teaching work of the Kansas School of Religion. Though the Department of Religious Studies became part of KU in 1977, Smith Hall was still owned by the Kansas Bible College. KU began renting Smith Hall from the KBC for \$1/year, with the KBC continuing to care for external building maintenance. On May 12, 1982, under the glow of a warm spring sun, the Moses statue was finally dedicated. . .Irma I. Smith spoke of her hope for Smith Hall, and Chancellor Gene Budig spoke of his pleasure that this depiction of the university seal was completed and at such an important place. On October 17, 1997, the trustees of the Kansas Bible Chair passed a resolution to sell Smith Hall to KU. The sale was negotiated and on October 14, 1998, the property was conveyed to the KS Board of Regents and the University of Kansas The sale was a 20-year contract for deed, memorialized through an Affidavit of Equitable Interest. Throughout this period, Smith Hall has continued to play a critical role in the University of Kansas East Historic District, enriching the religious and cultural life of students and faculty.

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Donors to stained glass window and Moses sculpture, KU Website: <https://places.ku.edu/artwork/moses>

Video on making Moses: Tefft, Elden - Moses: Making of a Heroic Sculpture, 1986 - 16mm

<https://archive.org/details/EldonTefftMosesSculpture>

Moore reading room:

<https://religiousstudies.ku.edu/about>

Mary Prickett obituary:

[https://www.campanellastewart.com/obituaries/print?o\\_id=7229008](https://www.campanellastewart.com/obituaries/print?o_id=7229008)

Charles Marshal:

<https://tfaoi.org/aa/2aa/2aa641.htm>

<https://archives.lib.ku.edu/repositories/3/resources/3557>

[https://www.askart.com/artist/Charles\\_L\\_Marshall/11164849/Charles\\_L\\_Marshall.aspx](https://www.askart.com/artist/Charles_L_Marshall/11164849/Charles_L_Marshall.aspx)

[https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23596211/charles-l\\_-marshall](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/23596211/charles-l_-marshall)

Department of Religious Studies, University of Kansas”:

<https://religiousstudies.ku.edu/history-0>

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University of Kansas

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