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**LAWRENCE HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION**  
**ITEM NO. 6: L-16-00536**  
**STAFF REPORT**

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**A. SUMMARY**

L-16-00536 Public hearing for consideration of placing the property located at 1645 Louisiana Street, Benjamin F. Akers House, on the Lawrence Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Lawrence Preservation Alliance on behalf of Philip C. and Linda D. Wedge, property owners of record. Adopt Resolution 2017-02 if appropriate.

**B. HISTORIC REGISTER STATUS**

1645 Louisiana Street is not listed in any historic register.

**C. REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS**

*(Information in the below summaries includes information from the application that was written by Dale Nimz.)*

**1) History Summary**

1645 Louisiana Street, the Benjamin F. Akers House, is located on the west side of Louisiana Street at the convergence of Louisiana, Edgehill Road, and W 17<sup>th</sup> Street. The property encompasses the eastern portion of three platted lots and a portion of a fourth lot in the University Place Subdivision (UNIVERSITY PLACE BLK 1 E 1/2 LTS A,B,C & E 1/2 LT D LESS N 39 FT THEREOF). The University Place subdivision was platted in 1887 from land owned by the Lawrence Investment Company and George and Lillian Leis according to the dedication on the subdivision plat. The structure located at 1645 Louisiana Street had already been constructed at the time the plat was filed.

On November 11, 1872, Benjamin F. Akers bought a sixty-acre tract below Mount Oread from George W. Ogden which included the house site. The property excluded about one-half acre in the southeast corner for a right-of-way to the St. Louis, Lawrence, and Denver Railroad. Akers acquired an additional thirty-six acres from Andrew and Mary Ryan on March 31, 1873. At the time of this purchase, the property was adjacent to the City of Lawrence. A business enterprise, a stud farm, stables and a training course, was created with Colonel Amasa Sprague of Rhode Island.

After the panic of 1873, Colonel Sprague was forced to withdraw from the enterprise in 1874, but Akers continued. In the 1870s, the Stud Farm had approximately three hundred of stock there at any time. Akers held annual sales at the farm where he would sell as many as two hundred horses at each sale. The nomination sites an interview with Ilene Ecord, granddaughter of B.F. Akers, that Ulysses Grant stayed overnight in the Akers residence while on a horse buying expedition.

Although the exact date of construction is not documented, the B.F. Akers house was built between 1872, the date when Akers bought the property, and 1874, the date of a loan application. A historic photograph dated 1873 shows the structure with scaffolding on the east and north sides.

Benjamin Akers died in 1878 and his widow, Rosetta, was unable to continue operating the Stud Farm. Crosby Miller, who held a mortgage dated October 20, 1875, won a judgment versus Rosetta Akers on May 5, 1880. The property was sold to Miller at a sheriff's sale on January 4, 1881. Miller then sold to Joel and Pamelis Walker on September 15, 1883. The Walkers sold the east fifty acres of the Akers tract to George Leis on March 9, 1887. George & Lillian Leis sold the property to the Lawrence Investment Company on May 16, 1887 and the company dedicated the University Place subdivision on August 16, 1887. (The filed plat includes George & Lillian Leis in the dedication but this may be for other land in the platted area.) The partners in the Lawrence Investment Company sold Lots A-E, Block 1, University Place, including the Akers house, to William T. Smith on August 6, 1888. The house changed hands again a few times until 1903 when Elizabeth S. Walker bought the property on March 26, 1903. Elizabeth and her husband Arthur Walker sold to Gladys and Ammon Andes on April 1, 1948. Mr. and Mrs. James Dykes bought the house in 1963. The current owners, George and Margaret Wedge, bought the house in 1972.

## **2) Architectural Integrity Summary**

1645 Louisiana Street, the Akers house, an elaborate example of the Italianate style, has a cruciform plan with an intersecting hipped roof. It is a single-family residence once located in a semi-rural area on the edge of Lawrence, but now in a residential district. The main side entrance is located in the south elevation of the front wing. There is another side entrance in the east elevation of the north wing and a rear entrance in the west elevation of the south wing. The rear entrance is flanked by an exterior brick cellar entrance with paired wooden doors.

The Akers house has excellent architectural integrity. The two-story brick masonry structure stands on a stone foundation constructed of tooled limestone blocks laid in an ashlar pattern. The roof is covered with standing seam metal roofing painted red. The U-shaped front porch wraps around the east wing. There is a smaller screened rear entrance porch in the southwest. The porches are supported on brick piers with a wooden floor and the front porch has an ornamental pierced wooden skirt board between the piers. The porches have ornamental posts with molded bases and capitals, wooden steps and railings as well as a slender arched head molding between the porch bays.

Other prominent ornamental features include a bay window projecting from the south wing, smooth-cut stone sills, projecting ornamental lintels above the windows, and an ornamental molded eave cornice. There are wooden entrance doors and screen doors. The house has two brick chimneys with corbelled tops and a circular metal vent in the central roof ridge. The main exterior alteration has been the repair of the porch with contemporary flooring and railing.

The house interior also has a high degree of integrity despite some alterations for contemporary use. There is an interior curving staircase and a large walnut bookcase originally built for this house. The main interior alteration has been the installation of a contemporary bathroom on the first floor.

Southwest of the Akers house is a small one-car garage constructed in the 1930s. This is a rectangular wood frame structure with a hipped roof and an entrance to the east with an overhead garage door. There is a side entrance to the north. The garage has a concrete foundation, weatherboard sheathing, and ornamental metal shingle roofing. This structure is a contributing structure for the property.

### **3) Context Description**

1645 Louisiana Street is a good example of the housing that was constructed in Lawrence during the "City Building (1864-1873)" context as defined by the Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF).

The Benjamin F. Akers House is located in a neighborhood that contains early 20<sup>th</sup> century single-family houses including Craftsman bungalows, American Foursquares, National Folk houses and later Colonial Revivals. The remainder of the block and to the southwest of the property is platted as University Place. The property is part of the University Place neighborhood. The dates of construction on the Louisiana Street side of the block range from 1873 (Akers House) to 2007 with seven properties constructed before 1950. The construction dates for the Indiana Street side of the block are from 1900 to 1977 with five structures built before 1950.

The development pattern of the area consists of a range of lot sizes, structure types, and structure sizes. Most of the area is currently detached dwellings on individual lots. The varying lot sizes from block to block typically maintain a residential pattern of development with a front yard, structure, and rear yard, although the setbacks for front yards and side yards vary.

### **4) Planning and Zoning Considerations**

1645 Louisiana Street is zoned RS5, Single-Dwelling Residential District as are the properties to the north, east and south. The primary purpose of the RS Districts is to accommodate predominantly single detached dwelling units on individual lots. The zoning district is intended to create, maintain and promote housing opportunities for individual households, although it does permit nonresidential uses that are compatible with residential neighborhoods.

1645 Louisiana Street encompasses the eastern portion of three platted lots and a portion of a fourth lot. The three platted lots meet the density and dimensional standards for lots in the RS5 district.

### **5) Fiscal Comments**

There are no monetary benefits directly associated with nomination of a structure to the Lawrence Register of Historic Places.

However, listing on the local Register does help preserve built resources important to Lawrence's history and helps to maintain streetscapes in older neighborhoods through environs reviews.

The original information submitted with nominations for properties to the Lawrence Register is kept on file in the City Planning office for public review and consultation with regard to development projects within the notification area. It is the intent of the city to place the nomination material on the city's website in the near future.

## **6) Positive/Negative Effects of the Designation**

The positive effect of designation is the creation of a permanent record of the historical significance of an individual property, for its architectural quality or its association with a significant local individual or event. This provides the local Historic Resources Commission, an advisory board, with pertinent historical data which can help to provide an 'historic' perspective to property owners when they desire to improve, add on, or redevelop a property within an older section of the City.

The public accessibility of this information is also a resource as it can be used by realtors, builders/developers, and others in the community prior to a property's resale, redevelopment or rehabilitation. In a more general sense, this information can be used by the Chamber of Commerce and existing businesses and industries to 'identify' one of the facets that makes up Lawrence's *Quality of Living*.

Additional effects of designation are the creation of an arbitrary, 250' environs notification and review area. Within this 250' circle, projects which require city permits, e.g., demolition, redevelopment, renovation or modification, require review by Historic Resources staff or the Commission. These environs reviews permit analysis of proposed development/redevelopment by individuals sensitive to historic preservation.

A *Certificate of Appropriateness* or a *Certificate of Economic Hardship* is required to be issued by the Historic Resources Commission before a City permit can be issued for the proposed project. If the Historic Resources Commission denies a *Certificate of Appropriateness* or a *Certificate of Economic Hardship*, the property owner can appeal to the City Commission for a new hearing. The City Commission can uphold the decision of the HRC or it can grant the proposed development.

Examples of projects which would require review and approval are: projects involving the exterior building which are considered 'structural' changes, demolitions or partial demolitions, rezonings, replats, site plans, variance requests or other items which require a city permit or are the direct result of an action of the City Commission. Minor changes which require a city permit can be administratively approved by the Historic Resources Administrator.

## **7) Summary of Applicable Designation Criteria**

Chapter 22, of the City Code is the *Conservation of Historic Resources Code* for the City of Lawrence. Section 22-403 of this code establishes criteria for the evaluation of an application for nomination to the Local Register of Historic Places.

#### **D. CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION AND DESIGNATION - Section 22-403**

Nine criteria are provided within this section for review and determination of qualification as a Landmark or Historic District. These criteria are set forth below with staff's recommendations as to which this application qualifies for:

***(1) Its character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, county, state, or nation;***

The property is significant as an example of a large tract of land that was developed over time into smaller lots and eventually a residential subdivision as identified in National Register of Historic Places Criterion A and based on Dale Nimz's Living with History and the Multiple Property Documentation Form for the City of Lawrence.

*(2) Its location as a site of a significant local, county, state, or national event;*

*(3) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation;*

*(4) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;*

*(5) Its identification as a work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, state or nation;*

***(6) Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant;***

The Benjamin F. Akers House is an excellent example in Lawrence of the asymmetrical Italianate house form. The house also includes interior details that retain a high degree of integrity.

*(7) Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative;*

*(8) Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;*

*(9) Its character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure; including, but not limited to farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity or architectural significance.*

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The HISTORIC RESOURCES CODE establishes a procedure to follow in the forwarding of a recommendation to the City Commission on applications for listing on the local register.

*"Following the hearing the commission shall adopt by resolution a recommendation to be submitted to the city commission for either (a) designation as a landmark or historic district; (b) not to designate as a landmark or historic district; or, (c) not to make a recommendation. The resolution shall be accompanied by a report to the city commission containing the following information:*

The Historic Resources Commission needs to formulate its recommendation in response to the following subsections section 22-404.2 (b):

- (1) Explanation of the significance or lack of significance of the nominated landmark or historic district as it relates to the criteria for designation as set forth in section 22-403;*
- (2) Explanation of the integrity or lack of integrity of the nominated landmark or historic district;*
- (3) In the case of a nominated landmark found to meet the criteria for designation:  
(A) The significant exterior architectural features of the nominated landmark that should be protected; and,  
(B) The types of construction, alteration, demolition, and removal, other than those requiring a building or demolition permit, that cannot be undertaken without obtaining a certificate of appropriateness.*
- (4) In the case of a nominated historic district found to meet the criteria for designation:  
(A) The types of significant exterior architectural features of the structures within the nominated historic district that should be protected;  
(B) The types of construction, alteration, demolition, and removal, other than those requiring a building or demolition permit, that cannot be undertaken without obtaining a certificate of appropriateness.  
(C) A list of all key contributing, contributing and noncontributing sites, structures and objects within the historic district.*
- (5) Proposed design guidelines for applying the criteria for review of certificates of appropriateness to the nominated landmark or historic district.*
- (6) The relationship of the nominated landmark or historic district to the on-going effort of the commission to identify and nominate all potential areas and structures that meet the criteria for designation.*
- (7) A map showing the location of the nominated landmark or the boundaries of the nominated historic district.*

## **E. RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the Akers House, located at 1645 Louisiana Street, for designation as a Landmark on the Lawrence Register of Historic Places pursuant to Criterion #1 and #6 as described in Section 22-403.

If the Historic Resources Commission recommends this property for local nomination, the Commission should adopt a resolution for recommendation to be submitted to the City Commission for designation as a landmark. In addition to the resolution, the Commission should direct staff to prepare a report to accompany the resolution including the information set forth in Section 22-404.2(1)-(7) and the environs definition.

Staff recommends the following for the report to the City Commission:

- (1) *Explanation of the significance or lack of significance of the nominated landmark or historic district as it relates to the criteria for designation as set forth in section 22-403;*

The Akers House is significant for its Italianate architecture and its value as part of the development of Lawrence.

- (2) *Explanation of the integrity or lack of integrity of the nominated landmark or historic district;*

The primary structure and the accessory structure maintain sufficient integrity of location and design that make them worthy of preservation

- (3) *In the case of a nominated landmark found to meet the criteria for designation:*  
(A) *The significant exterior architectural features of the nominated landmark that should be protected; and,*

### **Primary Structure**

Historic form, fenestration pattern, roof material and shapes including the associated wide eaves and brackets, brick chimneys, window surrounds, main entry porch including size and architectural details such as the wood posts, slender arched head molding between the porch bays, bay window projecting from the south wing, smooth-cut stone sills, projecting ornamental lintels above the windows and stone foundation.

### **Accessory Structure**

Historic form, roof shape, concrete foundation, weatherboard sheathing, and ornamental metal shingle roofing.

- (B) *The types of construction, alteration, demolition, and removal, other than those requiring a building or demolition permit that cannot be undertaken without obtaining a certificate of appropriateness.*

Historic form, fenestration pattern, roof material and shapes including the associated wide eaves and brackets, brick chimneys, window surrounds, main entry porch including size and architectural details such as the wood posts, slender arched head molding between the porch bays, bay window projecting from the south wing, smooth-cut stone sills, projecting ornamental lintels above the windows and stone foundation.

- (5) *Proposed design guidelines for applying the criteria for review of certificates of appropriateness to the nominated landmark or historic district.*

U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, published in 1990, and any future amendments, in addition to any criteria specified by Chapter 22 of the Code of the City of Lawrence, Kansas.

The HRC may also adopt ***An Analysis of the Environs for 1645 Louisiana Street*** and delineate how environs review will be conducted in relation to the listed property.

- (6) *The relationship of the nominated landmark or historic district to the on-going effort of the commission to identify and nominate all potential areas and structures that meet the criteria for designation.*

A primary goal of the HRC is to build a Register of properties which show the diversity and growth of Lawrence since its inception. The nomination of this property is another step toward registering a wide variety of historic properties which together present a visual history of Lawrence's past. The goal of the Lawrence Register of Historic Places is to represent all socioeconomic strata; residences, businesses, and industries which illustrate the diversity that has been prevalent in Lawrence since its inception.

- (7) *A map showing the location of the nominated landmark. (Attached)*





## LANDMARK APPLICATION

Pre-Application Meeting **Required**  
Planner \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE BE ADVISED: THIS APPLICATION WILL NOT BE SCHEDULED FOR A PUBLIC HEARING UNTIL THE HISTORIC RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR HAS DETERMINED THAT THE APPLICATION HAS BEEN COMPLETED.** (City Code 22-105(Y))

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

Name of Historic Property Benjamin F. Akers House (Kansas Stud Farm)  
Address of Property 1645 Louisiana  
Legal Description of Property University Place, Block 1, E1/2 Lots A, B, C, and E, 1/2 Lot D less N 39 feet thereof

### OWNER INFORMATION

Name(s) Philip C. and Linda D. Wedge  
Contact Philip C. Wedge  
Address 1645 Louisiana Street  
City Lawrence State Kansas ZIP 66044  
Phone ( 785 ) 842-0382 E-mail wedge@ku.edu

Is this an owner initiated nomination? ☒ Yes ☐ No

If not, has the owner been notified of this nomination? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### APPLICANT/AGENT INFORMATION

Contact Dennis Brown, President, Lawrence Preservation Alliance  
Company \_\_\_\_\_  
Address P.O. Box 1073  
City Lawrence State Kansas ZIP 66044  
Phone ( 785 ) 841-2460 E-mail djbrown806@gmail.com



## DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Number of structures, objects, or landscape features located on the property 2

Historic Use(s) residence, garage

Present Use(s) residence, garage

Date of Original Construction c. 1873; c. 1930

Architect and/or Builder (if known) Unknown

Date(s) of Known Alterations \_\_\_\_\_

Describe any known alterations including additions to the property. (Add additional sheets if needed)

## REGISTER STATUS

- ☐ Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places
- ☐ Property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places

## HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

Why do you think this property is significant? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ Location of a significant event  
Event \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Association with a significant person  
Person \_\_\_\_\_
- ☒ Architectural significance (Please attach an architectural description of the property)
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_



**HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY** (Add additional sheets if needed)

See attached appendix.

**DESCRIBE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE AREA SURROUNDING THE PROPERTY AT THE TIME OF CONSTRUCTION.**

What year was the property platted? August 16, 1887

What is the name of the subdivision? University Place

What was the zoning? Not zoned at the time of construction

What were the land uses? Semi-rural, urban

What size and types of buildings existed in the area? Scattered rural residences

Did the area have paved streets, sidewalks, gas service or electrical service? Please describe.

No, infrastructure was developed after the surrounding area was annexed into the city of Lawrence and platted as University Place Addition in 1887.

**ATTACH COPIES OF ANY HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS OR DOCUMENTATION INCLUDING CITATIONS FOR THIS PROPERTY.**



**City of Lawrence  
Douglas County**  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

6 East 6<sup>th</sup> St.  
P.O. Box 708  
Lawrence, KS 66044

[www.lawrenceks.org/pds](http://www.lawrenceks.org/pds)

Phone 785-832-3150  
Tdd 785-832-3205  
Fax 785-832-3160

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**REQUIRED INFORMATION TO BE SUBMITTED WITH AN APPLICATION FOR NOMINATION  
TO THE LAWRENCE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

- ☐ Completed Application Form (If the property is nominated for architectural significance, include an architectural description of the structure.)
- ☐ Certified property owner list from the Douglas County Clerk's office for properties within 250' of the nominated property.
- ☐ At least one photograph of each elevation of the structure(s) and streetscape views.
- ☐ Legal description of nominated property.
- ☐ If the property is listed on the State and/or National Registers of Historic Places, copies of the resource materials submitted with the application.
- ☐ Any additional documentation you believe is relevant to this nomination which you would like considered in the review process.
- ☐ The fee for application processing is \$10.00 for landmark nominations and \$50.00 for district nominations.

**Research Resources**

- Lawrence Public Library (707 Vermont Street, Lawrence)  
<http://www.lawrence.lib.ks.us/research-resources/genealogy-and-local-history/>
- Watkins Museum of History (1047 Massachusetts Street, Lawrence )  
<http://www.watkinsmuseum.org/index.php>
- Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas (1450 Poplar Lane, Lawrence)  
<https://spencer.lib.ku.edu/>
- Kansas State Historical Society (6425 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave., Topeka, Kansas)  
<http://www.kshs.org/>
- City of Lawrence Interactive map  
<http://gis.lawrenceks.org/flexviewers/lawrence/>

**PLEASE BE ADVISED:** This application will not be scheduled for a Public hearing until the Historic Resources Administrator has determined that the application has been completed. (City Code 22-105(Y))



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We are committed to providing excellent city services that enhance the quality of life for the Lawrence Community

## Appendix – Benjamin F. Akers House, Local Landmark

### Architectural significance of the property

The Benjamin F. Akers House is an excellent example in Lawrence of the asymmetrical Italianate house form. These are compound-plan houses, usually L-shaped. About twenty percent of Italianate houses are of this sub-type.<sup>1</sup> As the Field Guide to American Houses summarized, “the Italianate style dominated American houses constructed between 1850 and 1880. It was particularly common in the expanding towns and cities of the Midwest.” The Italianate style originated in England as part of the Picturesque movement; it emphasized the historic form of rambling informal Italian farmhouses.<sup>2</sup>

In Lawrence, Italianate residences are found in both working class and merchant class neighborhoods. Some of the best examples such as the Akers house were constructed on larger tracts of land that were located just outside the city boundaries.<sup>3</sup> Construction of the Akers house in the Italianate style also reflected the larger socio-economic context of the state. In Kansas, Italianate-influenced architecture was built from about 1865 until about 1885. “During this twenty-year period Kansas experienced significant growth in its population, economy, and government structure. Early examples of the Italianate style are located in the eastern part of the state, in cities like Kansas City, Leavenworth, and Lawrence.”<sup>4</sup>

### Description

The Akers house, an elaborate example of the Italianate style, has a cruciform plan with an intersecting hipped roof. It is a single-family residence once located in a semi-rural area on the edge of Lawrence, but now in a residential district. The main side entrance is located in the south elevation of the front wing. There is another side entrance in the east elevation of the north wing and a rear entrance in the west elevation of the south wing. The rear entrance is flanked by an exterior brick cellar entrance with paired wooden doors.

The Akers house has excellent architectural integrity. The two-story brick masonry structure stands on a stone foundation constructed of tooled limestone blocks laid in an ashlar pattern. The roof is covered with standing seam metal roofing painted red. The U-shaped front porch wraps around the east wing. There is a smaller screened rear entrance porch in the southwest. The porches are supported on brick piers with a wooden floor and the front porch has an ornamental pierced wooden skirt board between the piers. The porches have ornamental posts with molded bases and capitals, wooden steps and railings as well as a slender arched head molding between the porch bays.

Other prominent ornamental features include a bay window projecting from the south wing, smooth-cut stone sills, projecting ornamental lintels above the windows, and an ornamental molded eave cornice. There are wooden entrance doors and screen doors. The house has two brick chimneys with corbelled tops and a circular metal vent in the central roof ridge. The main exterior alteration has been the repair of the porch with contemporary flooring and railing.

The house interior also has a high degree of integrity despite some alterations for contemporary use. There is an interior curving staircase and a large walnut bookcase originally built for this house. The main interior alteration has been the installation of a contemporary bathroom on the first floor.

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia S. McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses rev. ed. (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 283.

<sup>2</sup> McAlester, Field Guide, 286.

<sup>3</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger and Dale Nimz, “Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas,” F-2. See at <https://assets.lawrenceks.org/assets/pds/planning/documents/lawrencethematicnr.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Martha Hagedorn-Krass, “Italianate Architecture Gains Popularity in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Kansas,” Kansas Preservation 25:3 (May/June 2003), 13.

Southwest of the Akers house is a small one-car garage constructed in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> This is a rectangular wood frame structure with a hipped roof and an entrance to the east with an overhead garage door. There is a side entrance to the north. The garage has a concrete foundation, weatherboard sheathing, and ornamental metal shingle roofing.

### **Historic significance of the property**

The Benjamin F. Akers House is eligible for listing as a local landmark as a well preserved example of the Italianate architectural style. The property is eligible for listing under Criteria 1 because of its character and value as part of the development and heritage of Lawrence and Douglas County, Kansas. Also, the house is eligible for listing under Criteria 6 for its embodiment of popular elements of design, detailing, materials, and craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant.

### Chronology

According to his biography, Benjamin Akers "indulged his natural fondness for horses" by running away from his family's farm in Cuyahoga County, Ohio at the age of twelve, and going to New York City as a drover's boy. Akers was born in Swinton, Yorkshire, England on September 27, 1829 and his family immigrated to the United States in 1842. After his brief adventure in New York City, Akers made his way west to Cleveland where he apprenticed as a painter, served as a journeyman, and then became master in the business. He established a business as a sign and ornamental painter. After the painting harmed his health, Akers joined the clothing firm of C.H. Robinson, learned the business, and rented a storeroom in the same block with his old employer. By working together, they soon controlled "a larger share of the retail clothing trade of the city."<sup>6</sup> In 1851 Mr. Akers married Rosetta M. Hungerford of Rome, New York. A son, Benjamin F. Akers, Jr. was born in 1865 and another son, Amasa Sprague Akers, was born in 1874.<sup>7</sup>

When the recession of 1856 stalled commercial trade in Cleveland, the enterprising Akers shipped his goods to Leavenworth, Kansas Territory where he disposed of his remaining clothing stock. In Leavenworth he became a livery stable operator "where he had abundant opportunity to gratify his inclination and demonstrate his ability and judgment as a horseman, which he did most successfully."<sup>8</sup> After the Civil War began in 1861, Akers began furnishing horses and mules for the U.S. government and freighting military supplies. At one time, he had in service 154 four-mule teams and 60 ox wagons with eight yoke of cattle to each wagon. In this rapid expansion, Akers almost went bankrupt because the government suspended payment for almost a year on his contracts, but a friend's financial support helped the business survive. In 1863 Akers had a very successful winter's freighting running his mule teams to Denver from Leavenworth.<sup>9</sup> Also in 1863, Akers raised a company of militia in Leavenworth which joined Union supporters to organize the 19<sup>th</sup> Kansas Cavalry regiment. Although he was elected colonel, Akers declined in order to save the freighting business by fulfilling his contracts.

By the end of the war, Ben Akers had accumulated enough wealth "to gratify the taste and ambition of his life, which was to become a breeder of fine horses."<sup>10</sup> Akers entered a partnership with Colonel Amasa Sprague of Rhode Island. On November 11, 1872, Akers bought a sixty-acre tract below Mount Oread from George W. Ogden which included the house site. The property excluded about one-half acre in the southeast corner for a right-of-way to the St. Louis, Lawrence, and Denver Railroad. Akers acquired an additional thirty-six acres from Andrew and Mary Ryan on March 31, 1873.<sup>11</sup> The partners purchased "a beautiful tract of land adjoining the city of Lawrence, erected commodious stables, prepared a first-class training course" and stocked the Kansas Stud Farm with the best horses money could purchase. The stock included the veteran trotter, Ethan Allan, at the head of the stud. Ethan Allan was one of the best known stallions of the Morgan breed. Colonel Amasa Sprague bought the stallion in 1870 and sent him to the Kansas

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<sup>5</sup> See Kansas Historic Resources Inventory #045-3010-00006, Akers House, 1645 Louisiana Street, Lawrence.

<sup>6</sup> "Benjamin Franklin Akers," United States Biographical Dictionary: Kansas Volume (Chicago & Kansas City: S. Lewis & Company, 1879), 197-198.

<sup>7</sup> Biographical Dictionary, 199.

<sup>8</sup> Biographical Dictionary, 198.

<sup>9</sup> Biographical Dictionary, 198.

<sup>10</sup> Biographical Dictionary, 198.

<sup>11</sup> Abstract of Title: 1645 Louisiana. The Banks Co., Lawrence, KS 66044. "The South Half of the West Half of Lot "B" and all of the West Half of Lot "A" in Block No. One in University Place, an addition to the City of Lawrence, Sheet 19.

Stud Farm where Ethan Allan died in 1876. His bones were later exhumed and held in the Museum of Natural History at the University of Kansas.

After the panic of 1873, Colonel Sprague was forced to withdraw from the enterprise in 1874, but Akers continued. In the 1870s, the Stud Farm had approximately three hundred of stock there at any time. Akers held annual sales at the farm where he would sell as many as two hundred horses at each sale.<sup>12</sup> As the biography published in 1879 asserted, "his stud embraces representatives from all the leading strains of trotters. Hambletonians, Clays, Abdallahs, Membrinos, and includes both colts and fillies that are trotting wonders."<sup>13</sup> According to an interview with Ilene Ecord, granddaughter of B.F. Akers, sometime during the 1870s, Ulysses Grant, renowned general and president from 1869 to 1877, stayed overnight in the Akers residence while on a horse buying expedition.<sup>14</sup>

Although the exact date of construction is not documented, the B.F. Akers house was built between 1872, the date when Akers bought the property, and 1874, the date of a loan application. A historic photograph dated 1873 shows the structure with scaffolding on the east and north sides.<sup>15</sup>

Benjamin Akers died in 1878 and his widow, Rosetta, was unable to continue operating the Stud Farm. Crosby Miller, who held a mortgage dated October 20, 1875, won a judgment versus Rosetta Akers on May 5, 1880. The property was sold to Miller at a sheriff's sale on January 4, 1881. Miller then sold to Joel and Pamelis Walker on September 15, 1883.<sup>16</sup> The Walkers sold the east fifty acres of the Akers tract to George Leis on March 9, 1887.<sup>17</sup> George & Lillian Leis sold the property to the Lawrence Investment Company on May 16, 1887 and the company dedicated the University Place subdivision on August 16, 1887.<sup>18</sup> The partners in the Lawrence Investment Company sold Lots A-E, Block 1, University Place, including the Akers house, to William T. Smith on August 6, 1888. The house changed hands again a few times until 1903 when Elizabeth S. Walker bought the property on March 26, 1903. Elizabeth and her husband Arthur Walker sold to Gladys and Ammon Andes on April 1, 1948.<sup>19</sup> Mr. and Mrs. James Dykes bought the house in 1963. The current owners, George and Margaret Wedge, bought the house in 1972.

#### History of the area

The historic context for this property is outlined in the National Register multiple property listing "Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas," (1998). In Lawrence, "rebuilding the town after Quantrill's raid, the completion of a transcontinental railroad branch to Lawrence, and the end of the Civil War contributed to a notable, but short-lived, boom in Lawrence. An influx of settlers increased the town's population to 8,320 in 1870."<sup>20</sup> During this period, stone and brick houses were valued as more durable and fireproof than wood-frame houses. By 1866 three brick manufacturers were listed in the Lawrence city directory.<sup>21</sup> During this town-building period, Lawrence was second in commercial importance only to Leavenworth among Kansas towns until Kansas City rose to regional dominance with a population of 32,000 residents in 1870 and more than 56,000 in 1880.<sup>22</sup>

#### Development of the area surrounding the proposed landmark

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Ilene Ecord, granddaughter of B. F. Akers, cited in Alison Smith, "A History of University Place Neighborhood," Topeka, Kansas, 2 April 1988.

<sup>13</sup> Biographical Dictionary, 198-199.

<sup>14</sup> Interview cited in Alison Smith, "A History of University Place Neighborhood," Topeka, Kansas, 2 April 1988.

<sup>15</sup> "State Farm and Race Track, Lawrence, Kansas," No. 11, On the Kansas Pacific Railway. Robert Benecke (1835-1903). See at <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/wes/id/479> accessed 11/18/2016.

<sup>16</sup> Abstract of Title: 1645 Louisiana, Sheet 21.

<sup>17</sup> Abstract of Title: 1645 Louisiana, Sheet 25.

<sup>18</sup> Abstract of Title: 1645 Louisiana, Sheet 25, 27.

<sup>19</sup> Abstract of Title: 1645 Louisiana, n.p.

<sup>20</sup> Deon Wolfenbarger and Dale Nimz, "Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas," E-7. See at <https://assets.lawrenceks.org/assets/pds/planning/documents/lawrencethematicnr.pdf> Accessed 14 November 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Wolfenbarger and Nimz, "Historic Resources of Lawrence," E-13.

<sup>22</sup> Wolfenbarger and Nimz, "Historic Resources of Lawrence," E-10

When the B. F. Akers House was built, the surrounding area was farmland.<sup>23</sup> The house is now located in the University Place subdivision platted in 1887. At that time, a proposed streetcar route was planned for the area, but the subdivision was not served by streetcar until 1913 when the University of Kansas line was extended down from Mount Oread and east on Seventeenth to Tennessee Street.<sup>24</sup> Since the nineteenth century, the University of Kansas has expanded to border the residential subdivision on the north.

### References

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### Photographs

"Stud Farm and Race Track, Lawrence, Kansas," No. 11, On the Kansas Pacific Railway. Robert Benecke (1835-1903). See at: <http://digitalcollections.smu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/wes/id/479> accessed 11/18/2016.

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<sup>23</sup> See Atlas of Douglas County (F.W. Beers & Co, 1873).

<sup>24</sup> "University Place Walking Tour" brochure.



