

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**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 any 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 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Kearney National Guard Armory

Other names/site number BF05-177

2. Location

Street & number 1600 Central Avenue

Not for publication

City or town Kearney

Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Buffalo Code 019 Zip code 68847

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

/s/ Michael J. Smith

June 1, 2009

Signature of certifying official

Date

Director, Nebraska 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

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): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	0	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DEFENSE/arms storage

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Poured in form Concrete and Concrete

Block _____

Roof concrete & wood

Other _____

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- 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 is 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 its original location.
- C** A birthplace or a 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.)

MILITARY

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1936-1959

Significant Dates

1936

1939

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Works Progress Administration

McClure and Walker, Kearney, NE

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 for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Kearney National Guard Armory

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

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10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property** One-half of a city block or about 1 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	493039	4504208	3.			
2.				4.			
				[x]	See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Attached Survey completed while owned by State of Nebraska/

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Nancy S. Freburg, Owner/ Andrew W. Hoffmeister, Ownerorganization Freburg Law Officedate March 6, 2009street & number 1600 Central (P.O. Box 295)telephone 308-234-5779city or town Kearneystate NE zip code 68848**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 the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.) See mid-1980's era fire extinguisher map and 1998 mapping of heat/AC systems.

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Nancy S. Freburg & Andrew W. Hoffmeister,street & number 1600 Central Avenue, Box 295telephone 308-234-5779city or town Kearneystate NE zip code 68848-0295**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Kearney National Guard Armory

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The Kearney National Guard Armory is located in Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska, which is 133 miles west of Lincoln along Interstate 80. The population of Kearney was 28,640 in 2004.¹ Kearney has a well-developed and active Central Business District (CBD) along five blocks of Central Avenue between Railway and 24th Avenue. The Kearney National Guard Armory is located south of the central business district and the railroad tracks on Central Avenue, and it sits on a full half block of land.

The Kearney National Guard Armory was constructed in three phases, in 1936, 1938-1939, and 1957. The roof of the drill hall is an arch, and the walls are poured concrete with concrete engaged buttresses. The armory's first section has two entrances: one on the east elevation allows entrance directly into the drill hall, and the second on the south elevation provides an entrance into an alcove off stairs to the offices and locker rooms in the basement are available, as well as the firing range and the drill hall. The entrance on the east is framed by what could almost be considered a pediment and fluted pilasters. A bronze plaque by the door states "USA 1936 WPA" and incised letters read "NEBRASKA NATIONAL GUARD" in letters that were once outlined in neon. The original doors were replaced with modern commercial glass doors and sidelights, as have the other doors in the building. On the south side of the armory, a rectangular room was built outside of the footprint of the drill room. This long room houses the fifty foot indoor firing range, which was used by guardsmen and Kearney police officers. The south entrance is the same general pedimented shape as the other entrance, but a bit more massive and detailed. Three decorative lines are carved into the top of the pediment, and the pilasters are more massive. Another bronze plaque is located by this door, and the word ARMORY is clearly spelled out above the door.

Through this doorway, the entrant is in an alcove with stairs to the left, and the entrance to the firing range on the right. Upstairs, there are two offices for ranking officers, as well as a dispensary and examination room for the medical unit that was attached to this unit. Downstairs, a large bathroom provided shower and restroom facilities for the men, and storage and a boiler room were also located in the basement. The drill room measures eighty feet by one hundred forty feet, and has a terrazzo floor throughout the expanse of the massive room.² Windows are located just under the roofline, and the room currently has a drop ceiling which covers the arched roof trusses that allow for a thirteen foot clearance. A kitchen on the northwest corner of this first section of the building provided meals for the men while they were working on National Guard business, and provided concessions facilities for socials that were often held in the armory.

In 1938 and 1939, the WPA built a garage for the National Guard adjacent to the armory building. During 1936 and 1937, the Kearney National Guard unit transitioned from a wagon unit to a motorized vehicle unit, and found the facility in need of a garage for housing the vehicles for which they were responsible. The garage was built of concrete block, with cast stone elements at the foundation and quoins at the corners and doorways. The topmost quoin is incised with six fluted lines near the roofline. The garage has an end gabled roof facing south, and one of the large garage doors has been filled in with additional concrete block making the opening a conventional doorway. One large original garage door is still present in what is now the hallway of the breezeway. Presumably the vehicles could be driven straight through the garage.

The garage building was essentially two large rooms the length of the building, with some additional storage spaces on the west end of the building. The garage had storage for cots and supplies for emergencies, as well as a gated enclosed vault for the storage of weaponry. The gated vault is still present, and the shelves in the room in which it is located are still labeled with sizes of ammunition. The large space adjacent to the storage and weapons storage was the garage space, in which the vehicles were stored and maintained. To the east of this room was a slightly narrower multi-purpose room which could be used as a classroom, a large meeting room, or a gathering place for the community.

¹ Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population, Released August 11, 2005.

² *The Kearney Hub*, 23 January 1937.

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In the mid 1950s, the buildings were connected with an addition that has come to be known as "the breezeway" which was constructed to provide more office space for the guardsmen. There is an entrance into the breezeway between the two buildings that provides entrance to these offices. The offices themselves are fairly nondescript, giving no particular indication of the specifics of their use. Currently, these offices house the owners' legal firm.

There have been some alterations to the property over time, as one would expect from the use of the building and the number of substantial additions that have been made. The earliest change would have been the loss of the original hardwood floor in the drill room, which was converted to terrazzo within ten years of the building's construction. Termites wreaked havoc on the integrity of the floor, and the wood had to be replaced. In addition, the original doors were changed to a commercial glass door and sidelights, perhaps in the 1950s when the breezeway was added. The firing range outlived its usefulness for testing weapons or their users as the weapons became more powerful, and the range was converted into several temporary offices with insubstantial walls. However, none of these alterations in any way diminish the property's ability to convey its history, and all of the changes occurred within the historic period of the building and have gained significance in their own right.

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While the stock market crash in October of 1929 created a crisis in America's business and industry, agricultural areas throughout the United States had been in a depression for most of the decade of the 1920s. Farm prices that spiked during and after World War I fell as drastically as they had risen. As prices fell in mid-1920, farmers were faced with debts they were unable to pay. Farmers' incomes did not keep pace with inflation, and a devaluation in land prices contributed to their financial problems. Suffering in the agricultural economy caused economic problems for the rest of Nebraska at large. Black Tuesday was simply another devastating blow to an already depressed economy. As the authors of *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* described the Depression,

"The condition of the farmers affected Nebraska merchants, lumber dealers, realtors, school teachers, laborers, and artisans. Housewives stocked their pantry shelves with the simplest essentials; construction lagged; school administrators curtailed their programs as tax receipts went down; day laborers, formerly sure of a place on Nebraska farms and in Nebraska industries, began the long trek of the unemployed."³

By December of 1932, farm prices were the lowest in Nebraska history. In addition, Nebraska, and the rest of the Midwest, was suffering from a severe drought that caused valuable topsoil to erode, damaged crops and reduced agricultural production. Nation-wide, there were more than 12 million people unemployed and in need of assistance. Twenty-five percent of the American labor force was jobless.⁴ State governments were incapable of supporting the vast numbers of destitute citizens who required help. The Federal government was forced to intercede, and with the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932, the New Deal was instituted. Roosevelt's New Deal policies came in many manifestations, from the Social Security Act that provided monthly pensions to the elderly to direct relief payments from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, and perhaps most importantly public work relief projects that provided jobs to America's able-bodied unemployed. Some of these projects took the form of road construction, sewer repair, ditch digging, reforestation projects, and the construction of public buildings, among many other projects.⁵ Throughout much of the Roosevelt administration, from 1933 to 1940 when public assistance was most required, billions of dollars were spent on projects intended to provide the working man with an opportunity to work. Under the Public Works Administration, programs administered by various administrations including the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, led to the construction of 11,000 public buildings, including courthouses, firehouses, hospitals, gymnasiums, auditoriums, and schools, as well as over 100 airfields and 800 parks. They made repairs and improvements on more than 30,000 other pre-existing buildings, laid out 40,000 miles of public roads and repaired 150,000 miles of roads. They constructed 1,400 athletic fields and 1,800 swimming pools, and reforested 20,000 acres with trees and bushes.⁶

An economic account of Kearney is given in *The Kearney Daily Hub* paper of November 19, 1935, reporting facts disclosed at a joint Buffalo County Board and Kearney City Council meeting.⁷ Board Chairperson Martin Slattery reported that "There were nearly five thousand persons on relief in Buffalo County last year, practically as many as the combined populations of Ravenna, Shelton, Gibbon, Elm Creek, and all other towns in the county outside Kearney." Chairman of the County Board's poor committee, Gene Loomis reported that there were then "about 150 non-employable cases on relief, as well as about 175 employable but jobless cases. The number of unemployed was expected to rise to about 300 in the near future, he said, unless jobs are found soon." The local paper on November 5, 1935 reported the WPA Program, at least for Buffalo County, was "still in future tense."⁸ There were WPA projects on the horizon for Kearney and Buffalo County. One of the several projects was building an armory for the National Guard.

³ Works Progress Administration, *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State* (1939; rpt. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 67; quoted in James C. Olson and Ronald C. Naugle, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 313.

⁴ Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 5.

⁵ Page Smith, *Redeeming the Time: A People's History of the 1920s and the New Deal* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), 598.

⁶ Smith, 814.

⁷ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 19 November 1935.

⁸ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 5 November 1935.

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First mention of the new Armory is reported in *The Daily Hub* in April of 1935. Major Guy N. Henninger of the National Guard spoke to the Kearney City Council and indicated that federal funds had been allocated for the construction of more than a dozen National Guard armories throughout the state. Kearney had been selected as a city that would benefit from a new armory, if the city would donate the land for the building.⁹ The council was sufficiently anxious to accommodate this opportunity and began discussing locations for the armory immediately. Application was made to the federal government, including the offer of six lots, or one half block, adjacent to the County Courthouse. The offer was accepted.¹⁰

According to public records filed with the Buffalo County Register of Deeds, in 1929 the City of Kearney acquired the property upon which the building sits for \$226. The site is located on the north side of 16th Street, between Central Avenue and 1st Avenue north of the Buffalo County Courthouse, in Kearney, Nebraska. The City purchased it at a Sheriff's sale in a tax foreclosure proceeding. Buffalo County was attempting to collect unpaid taxes and the property was sold for nonpayment of taxes. The property sat void of activity until late 1935. The property remained in City ownership until the City deeded the property for the price of \$1.00 to the State of Nebraska in a deed dated February 15, 1937, and later filed with the Register of Deeds on April 8, 1937.

Construction of the Armory took place in three phases. Construction was done by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) with a standard plan provided by the military.¹¹ Because the Kearney National Guard unit had up until this time been a wagon company, there was no need for a garage. However, Major Henninger had been informed that it would be transitioning into a motorized unit at some point in the following six months. Although their project did not have the funding to add a garage for the new trucks, it was expected that an addition could be made to the property for this purpose.¹² By October 1935, the wagon company had confirmation of becoming a motor transportation unit, and was planning on having to house as many as eighteen trucks.¹³ In mid-November, *The Daily Hub* reported that construction of the new facility, the east portion, was about to begin.¹⁴ The WPA was to furnish labor and the United States Procurement Office would furnish all materials for the building. Materials were expected to arrive the following Monday. The original plans called for a brick building. This was changed because at the time there were very few brick masons left on relief rolls due to the new brick construction of local schools.¹⁵ The building was to be of reinforced concrete. E.F. Adams, of the Nebraska State Planning Board for WPA, noted that this type of construction would be equally attractive as brick. He illustrated his ideas of the proposed building by pointing to California's architects' experiments with concrete, resulting in some of the most beautiful buildings in southern California. Adams estimated the project would employ about twenty-five to thirty people for a period of six to seven months. The Armory would cost an approximate \$25,000 to build.¹⁶

Work did begin on the following Monday as reported previously by Adams. Excavation was by hand labor, for it employed more unskilled labor.¹⁷ The west portion of the 1936 building was excavated so that a basement could be built. Additionally all footings for the main structure were also dug by hand labor. The original structure was reported to be "an 'L' shaped structure, providing a large indoor drill hall, as well as a rifle range, officers' quarters, storage rooms, and vaults, kitchen facilities, and other conveniences."¹⁸ Garage facilities were to be built later. The local commander W.J. Atkinson predicted the local Guardsmen would be provided with a fleet of new motor trucks "before the state camp next summer." It was noted by *The Daily Hub* that Holdrege's unit was already mechanized and Kearney was in line for motor truck equipment in the very near future. In December, *The Daily Hub* reported that the first cement was being mixed for

⁹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 16 April 1935.

¹⁰ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 30 September 1935.

¹¹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 7 September 1935.

¹² *Kearney Daily Hub*, 5 September 1935.

¹³ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 14 October 1935.

¹⁴ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 13 November 1935.

¹⁵ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 13 November 1935.

¹⁶ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 27 November 1935.

¹⁷ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 27 November 1935.

¹⁸ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 27 November 1935.

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foundations.¹⁹ Work was planned to proceed as long as they had enough lumber for the construction of forms.²⁰ The pouring was held up a few days because the project awaited the shipment of reinforcing steel. A week later, *The Daily Hub* reported the workmen started pouring the walls. Delays were also caused because of poor weather, and construction was forced to stop until February.²¹

By April, the foundations had all been poured, a boiler installed in the basement, and the poured concrete walls were approaching the second floor on the west side of the building.²² Plans called for the floor in the drill room to be poured concrete subflooring with a hardwood floor above. By the end of August, the walls were all finished, and the construction of the roof had begun. The structural steel members for the trusses were already on site, and it appeared the roof would be enclosed before winter.²³ Within a month, the roof was also completed, as was the wiring and plumbing.²⁴ After a few more weeks, the subfloor for the drill room had been poured, and ceilings had been covered with plywood and insulation board for reducing noise and heating.²⁵ The hardwood floor would consist of matched wood blocks set vertically to give a thickness of two and a half inches. Major W.J. Atkinson stated that the floor "ought to last at least a hundred years."²⁶ Unfortunately he was mistaken. According to the owners, the floor was stricken by termites within a decade of its installation, and the floor was replaced with terrazzo.

At the end of the year, National Guardsmen were able to move their equipment into the new armory. The National Guardsmen planned to formally open the building to the public with a "Golden Gloves Amateur Boxing Tournament" at the end of January, followed by a ball celebrating President Roosevelt's birthday soon after. The boxing tournament included fifty amateur boxers, all vying for the championship titles. The main drill hall was set up with three boxing rings, and ample seating for 800.²⁷ The tournament was extremely well attended. Just days later, the drill room was reconfigured for the dance. Chairs were cleared away, and David Haun's band was hired to provide the music. The funds raised from the dance were donated to Roosevelt's favorite philanthropy, aid to "crippled" children. Seventy percent of the money raised at this dance was earmarked to help local children.²⁸

The 1936 building is made of poured in place formed concrete. It has a wooden arched roof with wooden hand constructed trusses. It has a basement to the west of the drill room originally contained lockers and showers, a coal bin, and steam boiler for heating the Armory with radiators. The upstairs contained administrative offices and a gun safe. On the ground level to the south of the drill room in the southeast corner of the Armory was a kitchen. Darryl Fisher, a former local guardsman with about 20 years in the military who also did heating work throughout in the building, reported that this was the area of the original kitchen. There is no evidence of floor drains or plumbing; he stated that much of the plumbing and heat was run above the concrete floor. An indoor shooting range was west of the kitchen and south of the drill room.

A second WPA structure was added to the west of the 1936 Armory. It too was built by the Works Progress Administration and is known as the 1938 garage. Although the building has a "USA 1938 WPA" seal, the building was approved by the federal government in late December 1938, and construction occurred in 1939.²⁹ It was a garage built for working on military machinery and for storage of military equipment. It was constructed of masonry concrete block with concrete pilasters. Exterior windows and a garage door still exist in the center portion of the 1938 building. The 1938 building had wooden roof trusses built on site. This WPA masonry does not have the finishing of professional-grade masonry work. The exterior and interior walls of this portion of the building reflect either the unskilled labor working on the

¹⁹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 12 December 1935.

²⁰ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 19 December 1935.

²¹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 25 February 1936.

²² *Kearney Daily Hub*, 8 April 1936.

²³ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 27 August 1936.

²⁴ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 30 September 1936.

²⁵ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 15 October 1936.

²⁶ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 30 December 1936.

²⁷ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 25 January 1937.

²⁸ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 29 January 1937.

²⁹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 28 December 1938.

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building or the lack of building materials available. *The Daily Hub* indicated that the building of the garage was held up due to a lack of materials, and that they were waiting for buildings to be torn down in Kearney in order to make use of their materials.

The construction of the garage was not as well publicized in the local paper as the armory had been, so there are few articles describing the process the builders were making aside from lacks of building materials. Nevertheless, the garage was ready for dedication on Armistice Day, November 11, 1939. Prior to the ceremony, the high school band led a parade from 25th Street to the armory, and twelve National Guard trucks representing the motorized units of Kearney and Lexington followed the guard color bearers. There was a gun salute, as well as the playing of "Taps." Presentation of the building was made by WPA engineer Jesse Spray to a representative of the National Guard. Major W. E. Hose of the medical detachment accepted the building on behalf of the National Guard. Architects McClure and Walker were also on hand to observe the transfer of their garage building to the National Guard.³⁰

The exact date of construction the "Breezeway" that connects the two structures is unknown. The two sources of information for its construction are unverified. Both are believed to be accurate as to accounts stated. Major Hassler, the last commanding officer stationed at the Armory told the owner that the 1936 and 1938 buildings were connected in 1957, when two large garages (not a part of this request or owned by applicant) were constructed to the north of the 1938 structure. He referred to this connecting structure as the "breezeway". The kitchen in the southeast part of the 1936 structure was moved to the breezeway. A scullery was also added in the breezeway west of the new kitchen together with toilet facilities in 1957. When 1998 electrical work was performed in the Breezeway area, no pre-1957 wiring (cloth type) or wiring techniques (friction taping of splices) was found in this connection building or breezeway. When electrical work was done in the breezeway attic two prior ceilings, one of plastered lathe and the other of 3/8" sheetrock had to be removed to work safely in the area over the entryway of the breezeway. Also two suspended steam radiators were removed from the breezeway entry area where the plaster was located. The fact that lath plastered ceiling was found would be consistent with building practices prior to 1957.

Over the years many community events were held at this building. Many dances and military balls occurred in the drill room. A month after the armory was dedicated, Roosevelt's birthday ball was held to raise money for children's health. For at least a time, dances were held on a monthly basis. The military balls were a particular community favorite. In addition to the men being in uniform, an "honorary colonel" was named from the ranks of the young ladies present, and she was outfitted with a full colonel's uniform and featured in the newspaper every year.³¹ The National Guard also hosted an annual "Golden Gloves" boxing tournament as entertainment for Kearneyites for a time.

More recently, polio vaccinations were administered in the drill room in the late 1950's and early 1960's. Also gun and tool shows were regularly conducted in the drill room together with community fundraising breakfasts and meals. Jazzercise classes were regularly conducted in the drill room. Barry Sherman, a former guardsmen, who served two separate hitches in the National Guard and stated that the Armory served as a Red Cross Emergency Center at times. He mentioned that it also served as an emergency storm shelter for stranded travelers. The structure has been used for several community purposes beyond military use.

The rifle range is believed to have been used from 1939 to the early 1980's when it was used by military and police personnel. The range was in the basement, poorly ventilated, and cold. Due to poor ventilation and lead issues, its use was discontinued and all shooting equipment was removed. The largest firearms used on the indoor range were officer's hand guns. He recalled that most Guardsman rifle practice occurred south of Kearney or on State Ranges. When the range ceased to be used, the "tankers" built their offices in the rifle range. A present day photograph of a door and insignia painted on the south wall of the rifle range confirm the "tankers".

³⁰ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 11 November 1939.

³¹ *Kearney Daily Hub*, 16 March 1937.

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After completion of construction of the two 1957 garages to the north, which are no longer associated with the property and are still owned by the State of Nebraska, offices were built in the north end of the 1938 structure all north of a WPA masonry interior wall. To the south of the WPA interior block wall, a room known as the "instruction room" was created using the east half of the south half of the 1938 structure. The west half has been left intact as constructed except that the south garage door opening has been filled with concrete block and the windows were removed and boarded over by the Guard. A professionally laid block wall, probably built in 1957, separates the instruction room from the garage area. As originally built, it had two doors that were later blocked in to satisfy security requirements for storage of firearms in the 1938 structure. A firearms gun cage made of grating was placed in a vault safe in the garage area of the 1938 structure for storage of weapons, some of which were machine guns. Major Hassler has stated that a "three lock" rule applied to any stored firearms to secure the weapons safely. That would mean that anyone seeking access to the firearms needed to pass three barriers from the exterior of the building to gain access to the guns. To fulfill the three barrier requirement, the guns were stored in a locked steel grated cage. That cage was in a concrete block vaulted room that had a door type lock similar to a bank vault. The garage room outside the gun cage vault had exterior access only through a small door that was built in the blocked in south garage door opening. All windows in the south portion of the 1938 structure for the instruction room and garage area were boarded over or concrete blocked. Some of the original gun cleaning cabinets and labels in the cage area still exist. The security vault-type door to the gun cage was removed with the Guard moved out of the Armory.

The equipment used by the soldiers who occupied the Armory varied over the years. According to Kearney Centennial booklets, after World War I, the National Guard was organized in March 1923 as Company D, 110th Quartermaster Regiment, 120th Wagon Company, 35th Division Train. Company D went on active duty in 1940, World War II at Little Rock, Arkansas, and served in the European theater of Operations. They were demobilized in 1945. Since then the Kearney National Guard unit has been redesignated several times. In May, 1968, the Kearney Armory became headquarters for 1st Battalion, 195th Armored Division, called the "Tankers" remaining the same until at least 1996.

In the 1990s Kearney's Armory, at 16th Street and Central Avenue, then an 18,400 foot structure not counting the 1957 garages, became Nebraska's oldest armory in use. About 1996 a new Armory was constructed at the Kearney Airport east of Kearney. The Guard left the downtown Armory in late 1996. When the Guard moved out, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission moved into the 1957 garages and remains there to this day. No other state agency adopted the old structure. The Buffalo County Board at meeting in early October 1997 stated that if the County acquired the land, they would demolish the structure and use the land for parking.

On October 22, 1997 the downtown Armory, without the 1957 garages, was sold at public auction to the highest bidder by the State of Nebraska. It sold to Nancy S. Freburg for the price of \$156,000. Ms. Freburg still owns the structure with her husband Andrew W. Hoffmeister. She uses the northwest part of the Armory and the breezeway as her law office.

The Kearney National Guard Armory is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its history as a military training center as well as a social hub for the community. It is also significant for its association with the New Deal and the large building projects that provided employment for Kearney's able-bodied unemployed. The armory is significant on the local level, and its period of significance extends from the year the armory was built in 1936 to 1959, fifty years from the writing of this nomination.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Kearney National Guard Armory

Name of Property

Buffalo County, Nebraska

County and State

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Kearney Daily Hub

Polk City Directories, Kearney, Nebraska 1933, 1937-1938.

Official Souvenir Booklet Commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the City of Kearney, Nebraska 1873-1973, Zimmerman Printing, Kearney, Nebraska (1973)

<http://www.nps.gov/pwro/collection/website/elaine.htm>

<http://www.rootsweb.com/~nebuffal/promo1938/krny.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal

Buffalo County Historical Society, Kearney, Nebraska, Archives Division.

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 1247, 1248, 1249, 1250, 1251, and 1252, in the Original Town of Kearney Junction, now City of Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska together with all vacated streets and alleys adjacent thereto granted by the City of Kearney.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries of the Kearney National Guard Armory include all the land historically associated with the property.

Photo 1
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: SW



Photo 2
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: NW

Photo 3
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: N



Photo 4
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: NW



Photo 5
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: NE



Photo 6
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: SE



Photo 7
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: N



Photo 9
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: Interior - SE



Photo 10
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: Interior



Photo 8
Photo by Stacy Stupka-Burda, 3-20-08, NSHS
View: Interior - W