NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED
MAY 17 2006

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Farmers National Bank
Other name/site number Stafford Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum / 185-5210-0008

2. Location

RA 4/9/10

Street & number ~~100 North Main~~ 100 South Main ☐ not for publication
City or town Stafford ☐ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Stafford Code 185 Zip code 67578

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zollner DSHPO 3/6/06

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I herby certify that the property is — Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, (explain:)

Farmers National Bank
Name of Property

Stafford Co., Kansas
County and State

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		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)

Commercial: Financial, Banking

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Education: Historical and Geneaolgical

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Neo-Classical

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Basement: unfinished with limestone walls
Walls: Brick & limestone

Roof: Bitumin with modified asphalt, thermoplastic on a polyester

Other: sheet

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

Farmers National Bank
Name of Property

Stafford Co., Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from it original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce & Finance

Architecture

Period of Significance

1886-1921

Significant Dates

1886, 1897, 1905

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Joseph D., Frank S. and Frederick D. Larabee

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Charles E. Shepard, architect

Lew Dellinger contractor

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☒ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

Nora E. Larabee Memorial Library

Farmers National Bank
Name of Property

Stafford, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

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

1
Zone: 14 | Easting: 535160 | Northing: 4201450

2
Zone | Easting | Northing

3
Zone | Easting | Northing

4
Zone | Easting | Northing

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

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

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Dr. Pamela D. Kngsbury

Organization Historic Preservation Consulting Date June 14, 2005

Street & number 224 North Crestway Telephone 316-686-1731

City or town Wichita State Kansas Zip code 67208-3840

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name Michael Hathaway, Executive Secretary, Stafford Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum

Street & number 100 North Main Telephone 620-234-5664

City or town Stafford State Kansas Zip code 67578

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

The **Farmers National Bank,** located at 100 South Main at the intersection of Main and Broadway in downtown Stafford, Kansas, is a two-story brick building with limestone trim and a partially finished basement.[1] Charles E. Shepard of Shepard & Farrar of the Kansas City, Missouri, architectural firm, designed the Farmers Bank building, and Lew Dellinger was the contractor.[2] The purple-tinged red brick exterior of the building is laid in running bond with flush mortar joints. In an article in the *Stafford Courier* of April 20, 1905, the brickwork on the bank's front elevation is described:

> The brick selected for the front of this building is of peculiar appearance. It is dark in color, a sort of purpleish-black (sic) and of very rough finish. Viewed individually these brick (sic) have a most uncouth appearance but will no doubt work up into a handsome wall. They are very hard and will give a wall a massive, imposing cast.[3]

The west, front elevation facing Main Street retains its original brick surface (Plate 1). Dominating the front elevation is an Ionic distyle-in-antis entrance portico. The brick pilasters that form the corners of the elevation have tall limestone bases upon which also sit the Ionic columns. The Ionic columns support a wooden Ionic entablature. Sitting on top of the entablature is a wooden balustrade between brick piers with limestone corners. Originally, the entrance was reached by three broad limestone steps, now replaced by one step. The entrance door and the surrounding windows are not original,

[1] The Farmers National Bank building is located on the West Thirty (30) feet of the East Fifty (50) feet of Lots One (1) and Three (3) and the West One Hundred (100) feet of Lot One (1) and the North Seven (7) feet of the West One Hundred (100) feet of Lot Three (3) less the south Eighteen (18) feet of the West Thirty (30) feet of the East Fifty (50) feet of Lot Three (3), Block Twenty-One (21), Maxwell's Addition to the Town (Now City) of Stafford, Stafford County, Kansas, Corporation Deed (General Warranty), #2312, November 12, 1980.

[2] There are two extant copies of the blue prints of the Farmers National Bank in the possession of the Farms National Bank. On the blue print sheet entitled "Detail of Iron Work in the Farmers National Bank, Stafford, Kansas" is printed in the lower right hand corner "Shepard Farrar Archts., Kansas City, Mo." The other blue print is a longitudinal section of the second floor and the south elevation.

[3] *Stafford Courier*, 20 April 1905, p. 1.

although the present day configuration of glass doors surrounded by windows is original to the building. Above the entrance was originally an awning of two colors that could be unfurled to protect the entrance from the glaring western sun. Above the awning was a large sign bearing the inscription "Farmers National Bank." Today a much smaller sign reads "Stafford County Museum." The second floor was defined by three windows, a broader central window flanked by narrower windows. They share the same limestone sill and terminate at the bottom of the Ionic entablature. Today the canvas awning is gone, replaced by a flat aluminum awning. The three second story window openings have lost their original fenestration and now have louvered windows. The roof is flat and is a modern replacement, consisting of bitumen and asphalt laid on a polyester sheet (Plates 1 & 2).

The north, side elevation of the bank consists of a limestone water table, six courses of brick followed by a continuous limestone string course that serves as a sill for the first-floor fenestration. The twelve-bay first floor, consisting of eleven windows and a door, is divided into six units by seven brick pilasters. Although the window openings and door are original, their fenestration is not original. The second floor has twelve bays divided by seven brick pilasters. Like the first floor, the window openings are original and retain their original limestone sills, but the fenestration is not original. The windows terminate at the bottom of the Ionic entablature and above is a brick parapet (Plate 3).

In ca. 1906 a small brick addition was erected at the rear of the building, with its front elevation facing east onto Broadway and not quite as tall as the bank building. This addition housed the Larabee's telephone company. The red brick exterior is laid in running bond. The original first floor consisted of a wooden door flanked by two sets of tall plate glass store front windows and on

top of them sat another set of windows. On the second floor were two tall two-over-two windows. Above the second floor is a diaper-patterned corbel course and a flat roof (Plate 4). Today, the first floor has two large plate-glass windows flanking a glass entrance door. Above is an aluminum sheet running the width of the building and separating the first from the second floors. The second floor consists of two original window openings with modern fenestration sitting on their original limestone sills (Plate 3).

The east, rear elevation of the telephone building, which replaced the rear wall of the bank, consists of orange common brick laid in running bond with flush mortar joints. The elevation has only one opening, a door located on the second floor with a small balcony and a metal fire escape ladder to the ground (Plate 5). The door opening is original, but the door is not original to the building.

The south, side elevation of the telephone building also has orange common brick laid in running bond with flush mortar joints. The elevation shares a party wall on the first floor with the brick building to the south. The second floor is defined by two original segmental window openings with their original limestone sills and modern fenestration. At the southwest corner of the second floor the Ionic entablature on the front elevation turns the corner and stops next to a metal cage protecting the bank's alarm (Plate 6).

The bank interiors and those of the telephone building have been severely altered. Modern double glass doors open onto a small narrow vestibule. To the right is a single glass door into the Stafford County Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum that has occupied the Farmers National Bank since 1979. All that remains of the bank's first floor interiors are the two large, massive safes, standing side by side, by the Moser Safe Company of

Hamilton, Ohio. Each safe door had a swan's neck pediments that are now gone.

No expense was spared on the bank's public spaces and, in particular, its lobby. The original entrance consisted of wooden double doors flanked by windows with the same wooden frames as the doors (Plate 2). Once through the double doors you were in the bank lobby with a fine tile floor composed of small irregular tiles framed by a geometric tile border, now covered by a carpet. Straight ahead were the curving tellers' cages and behind them the two bank vaults with their swan's neck pediments visible above the tellers' cages. Lining the north side of the lobby are windows still in place today and below them was a series of wooden benches with brass spittoons on the floor. In the northeast corner of the lobby was an entrance leading to offices defined by two distyle-in-antis, wooden, unfluted Ionic columns, supporting a wooden lintel. Above is the wooden beamed ceiling that is now covered by a lower, false ceiling (Plate 7).

A November 2, 1905 article in the *Stafford Courier*, nine days before the opening of the new Farmers National Bank, captures the resplendent character of the bank's lobby.

> The bank room when finished will be a model of beauty and its appointments artistic to the point of magnificence. The walls are finished in gold. The ceiling is intersected by giant beams enclosed with hard wood highly polished and the spaces between studded with electric bulbs. In general effect it is massive, solid, splendid. The entire building is a model of modern architecture and is complete

in every detail; steam heated, electrically lighted and has a water and sewerage system.[4]

Judging from contemporary photographs, there were at least two offices in the northeast area of the lobby for the bank's owners Joseph, Fred and Frank Larabee. We have a glimpse of the front office in a contemporary photograph taken just before the telephone building was added to the rear of the bank building in ca. 1906. The photograph shows Frank, the Bank Cashier, seated at an enormous roll top desk, the preferred desk type for bankers of this period. The desk faces north with a window to the right of the desk. On the bank's south, rear wall is a vault and a window (Plate 8).

The bank's second floor had five offices that were rented to dentists, doctors and other professionals. On the windows above the bank's entrance were painted "Dr. Newell/Dentist and Doctor Webb/Office" (Plate 2). These five offices were reached by an exterior door located near the northeast corner of the bank leading to a staircase that provided access to the second floor offices without entering the bank. Today, the original five offices house displays of the Stafford County Historical Museum.

The building at the rear of the bank housed the Larabee's telephone company. On the first floor were the telephone offices and on the second floor were the telephone operators (Plate 9). The door on the north, side elevation of the bank then a now provides access to the second floors of the bank and the telephone building. Today, the first and second floors of the telephone building are rented to local businesses.

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[4]footnote· *Stafford Courier*, 2 November 1905, p. 8.

The **Farmers National Bank** is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion B** because of the significant economic contributions that Joseph D. Larabee and his family made to Stafford, Kansas. The Farmers National Bank also is being nominated under **Criterion C**. The selection of an architect, and somebody of the stature of Charles E. Shepard, a foremost Midwestern architect, is an unusual choice in a small Kansas prairie town during the first decade of the twentieth century.[1]

Stafford, Kansas

Stafford is located in Stafford County in west central Kansas in the fifth tier of counties lying south of the Nebraska border and in the sixth tier of counties lying east of the Colorado border. Although Stafford is the largest town in the county, it is not the county seat. That honor goes to St. John, located a few miles to the northwest. Like so many Kansas counties, the town and county as well were named for a Union soldier in this instance Captain Lewis Stafford (ca. 1833-1863). Captain Stafford was a Vermont native who settled in Grasshopper Falls, now Valley Falls, Kansas, and was killed in 1863 at the battle of Young's Point, Louisiana.[2]

With the mandatory three-hundred residents, Stafford was incorporated as a third class town on September 10, 1885. Agriculture has always been the town's main source of revenue. The sandy soil provides ideal growing conditions for such crops as corn, broom corn, cotton, flax, millet, sorghum and winter wheat. Stafford was a major grain depot for the county with two

[1] I want to thank Michael Hathaway, Executive Secretary of the Stafford County Historical & Genealogical Society for his assistance in gathering information for this nomination.
[2] Initially the town was called Sod Town. *Stafford County Kansas 1870-1990.* (Stafford, Kansas, 1990), p.6.

grain elevators, one at the north and the other at the south end of town. In 1887 two railroads came to Stafford: the Chicago, Kansas and Western, which ten years later became the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, and the Denver, Memphis and Atlantic, which became the Missouri Pacific. Their depots were located at either end of Union Street, the Santa Fe at the north end and the Missouri Pacific depot at the south end of the street.

From 1930 through the 1950Õs the oil industry was a major economic factor in Stafford's economy. On April 10, 1930, oil was discovered in the Richardson Field, followed rapidly by another well in the Zenith Field. During the heyday of the county's oil production, there were as many as eighteen oil companies pumping crude oil out of the ground. Although oil is still being pumped from Richardson #1, today there is little active drilling in Stafford County.

Agriculture remains the primary source of income, but it too is no longer the economic giant it once was. Stafford has lost one of its two grain elevators and one of its railroad lines, along with both depots. The Missouri Pacific depot was demolished in 1984 and its brick was used for planters lining Main Street. The handsome Santa Fe depot still stands, but is windows and doors are boarded shut. Today, the city's major employers are schools, rest homes, a hospital and an alfalfa processing plant. The county's population has steadily dwindled from a high of 9,824 in 1900 to an estimated 4,589 citizens in 2003.

The Farmers National Bank

Joseph D. Larabee came to Stafford from upper New York State hoping to find "a suitable place to start his two sons, just fresh from college into business. Stafford suited him from the start: he saw a future to this country and a great opportunity for his two strapping young men to make money if the

would put their shoulders to the wheel."[3] Larabee came to Stafford "well fixed,"[4] arriving no later than January 28, 1886, looking for a location for a banking house.[5] He purchased a lot located on the northeast corner of Main and Broadway in the center of Stafford for $500.00. On this site, now occupied by a two-story brick building housing the library of the Stafford County Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum, he erected a 24 x 40 feet two-story frame building. With his family settled in Stafford, on May 24, 1886, Larabee opened Farmers National Bank for business, with himself as President, his oldest son Frank Sheridan Larabee (1864-1921) as Vice President and his youngest son Frederick Delos Larabee (1868-1920) as Cashier.[6]

The Larabee's bank flourished, and in 1897 they purchased the old First National Bank then known as the Bank of Stafford,[7] and founded in 1883.[8] They moved across the street from their two-story frame building into the Bank of Stafford's elegant two-story brick building on the northwest corner of Main and Broadway (Plate 10). All went well until the early morning hours of February 1, 1905, when a fire started in the basement of the Farmers Bank, quickly spread to all the brick and frame buildings on the east side of Main Street. By the early mourning hours of February 2, Stafford had endured the "second most serious fire in all its history."[9] The estimated loss for the Farmers Bank was $12,000.00 and the estimated loss for all the buildings lining Main Street destroyed by the fire was between $35,000 and $50,000.[10]

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[4] *Stafford County Republican*, 29 May 1913, p. 1.
[5] *Stafford County Democrat*, 28 January 1886, p. 1.
[6] Ibid., 20 May 1886, p. 1.
[7] *Stafford County Republican*, 24 May 1906, p. 6.
[8] *Stafford Courier*, 25 October 1978.
[9] Ibid., 2 February 1905, p. 1.
[10] Ibid.

The Farmers Bank immediately opened temporary quarters in the nearby Cline Building to receive deposits, and Frank S. Larabee told a *Stafford Courier* reporter that the bank would rebuild at once.[11] The foundation of the Larabee bank building was near completion by April 20,[12] and on November 11, 1905 the bank was opened to the public, with every lady patron given a souvenir.[13]

The Larabees took the unusual step for bankers in a small Kansas prairie town and hired the Kansas City, Missouri, architect Charles E. Shepard (1868-1932) of Farrar & Shepard to design their new bank building.[14] During the late nineteenth century, small town banks generally did not have their own building. Rather, they were located on the ground floor of storefronts, preferably at the corner, sharing space with shops and other businesses, with the second floor occupied by lodgings.[15]

Shepard, born in Iowa and educated at the University of Iowa, came to Kansas City, Missouri, in 1887 during the city's building boom of the 1880s. He became a prominent architect with a succession of partners, while remaining the principal designer. His firms were very versatile, designing in a variety of buildings types and various revival styles. Shepard also worked in Kansas. One of his best-known buildings is the Eldridge Hotel (ca. 1925-1928) located on Massachusetts Avenue, the major thoroughfare of downtown Lawrence, Kansas.[16]

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[11] *Stafford Courier*, 2 February 1905, p.1.
[12] Ibid., 20 April 1905, p. 1.
[13] Ibid., 9 November 1905, p. 1.
[14] *Historic Kansas City News*, December 1980-January 1981, pp. 4-5.
[15] Wim De Wit, "The Image of Progressive Banking," in Wim De Wit, ed.,*Louis Sullivan: The Function of Ornament* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986), p. 166.
[16] Martha Gray Hagedorn, National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 10 September 1986.

Kansas City, Missouri, was a major financial and agricultural center for the south central Midwest. Joseph D. Larabee made frequent business trips to the city as did his two sons, who eventually settled there to be near their largest grain mill in St. Joseph, Missouri as well as other mills in the upper Midwest. In all probability, Joseph and either or both of his sons saw and admired Shepard's architecture and asked him to design their new bank building.

The choice of a style for the bank was of utmost importance for it would define the bank's character. By the early twentieth century there were two clear choices: Richardsonian Romanesque or classical, be it Greek, Roman or Renaissance and its variations.[17] Shepard selected a classical style for its integrity and dignity befitting a financial institution. He designed a Neo-Classical bank building defined by the Ionic order, which he used sparingly to great advantage. Two tall, monumental fluted Ionic columns accent the bank's front elevation and set the character for the bank's interiors. Then as now the Farmers National Bank building dominates downtown Stafford (Plate 11).

The bank that Shepard designed for the Larabee family was a standard bank type of early twentieth-century America. The ideal location for a bank building was at the intersection of two main streets for greater marketing exposure and for practicality. The Larabee bank was not only located at the intersection of two streets, but at the intersection of Stafford's two major streets, Main and Broadway in the heart of downtown Stafford. A corner location also meant that the side elevation provided more space for windows and more light to illuminate the bank's lobby and offices (Plate 12). Before the

[17] A prominent exception to these choices was Louis Sullivan's historical bank buildings in the upper Midwest, erected during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

discovery of fluorescent light, an abundance of natural light was essential to conduct business and create a salubrious business environment.[18] At the Farmers Bank there were eight windows on the north, side elevation providing illumination for the bank's lobby (Plate 3).

By the end of the nineteenth century there were two basic lobby floor plans, with many variations. One was the island plan, where the tellers and their cages were grouped in a central block projecting from the back of the lobby forward into the lobby. In the U-plan, on the other hand, the tellers and officers were situated along the lobby walls, allowing the public maximum access to the lobby.[19] This plan was popular with banks located on a corner site, with the side elevation toward the street, defined by a series of windows. The bank lobby Shepard designed was a variation of the island plan. The tellers and their cage were located at the lobby's rear and followed the south, side wall, stopping well before the entrance. The bank's north, side elevation had a series of eight windows that permitted an abundance of light to illuminate the lobby (Plate 7).

The location of the vault with its massive, imposing door, usually open during banking hours, was dictated by its symbolic value. Almost without exception in small town banks the vault was located at the rear lobby, aligned with the entrance. Upon entering the bank the first view the customer had was of the vault, a symbol of the bank's security and strength. The Farmers Bank followed this arrangement. Their two vaults, situated side by side, were located at the lobby's rear wall and aligned with the entrance. But there was no clear

[18] Wim De Wit, ÒThe Image of Progressive Banking, Ó p. 173.
[19] Ibid.

view of them because they were partially obscured by the teller cages, although one could see the vaults' swan neck's pediments from the entrance (Plate 7).

During this period there were two typical locations for the owners or directors offices. Usually, they were located in one of the corners next to the entrance or, in some cases, in a more secluded location at the rear of the lobby.[20] Shepard placed the Larabee's offices at the rear of the lobby in the northeast corner. An unusual feature of these offices was their openness. There was no office door. Rather, the entrance consisted of a wide opening flanked by Ionic columns, a reference to the pair of Ionic defining the bank's front elevation, The openness of the offices, located between the tellers' cages and the north wall, beckoned the visitor to the offices (Plate 7).

In 1907 the Larabee's obtained a charter as a national bank and changed its name to the Farmers National Bank to reflect its new status. At the death of Joseph in May 1913, his two sons Frank and Fred ran the bank. When Fred died in April of 1920, Frank continued to manage the bank. With Frank's death a year later, the Larabee estate sold the bank to the present owners in ca. 1921-1922. In 1980, the Farmers national Bank built a new building and the Stafford County Historical & Genealogical Society & Museum purchased the bank building.

The Larabee Family

The Larabee Family is responsible for bringing Stafford into the modern world. Joseph D. Larabee and his two sons built a financial empire in Kansas and the surrounding states. With the Farmers National Bank as their base of operations, they branched out into the milling business. In 1897, Frank and Fred acquired the defunct Stafford Milling Company and with it forged a mini

[20] Wim De Witt, "The Image of Progressive Banking," p. 173.

empire under the umbrella of the Larabee Flour Mills Corporation with mills in Hutchinson, Wellington, Marysville, Kansas, Clinton and St. Joseph, Missouri and in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In addition to their milling business, the brothers owned many grain elevators in Kansas, Oklahoma, Nebraska and Missouri.[21] Four years before his death in 1909, Joseph was one of the wealthiest owners of farmland in the state, owning fifty quarter sections of land estimated to be worth $278,000.[22]

Joseph and his two sons were also responsible for introducing modern conveniences to Stafford, creating the city's first electrical system and building the first outside telephone system. Stafford's first manually operated telephone exchange started in ca. 1896 in the home of Mrs. Worral. This manual system was replaced in 1900 by an automatic system owned by the Larabees. Around 1899 the Larabee brothers started building the first outside plant. In about 1906, they installed their phone company in a building addition at the rear of their bank. In 1908, they sold their telephone company to the Arkansas Valley Telephone Company.[23]

The Larabee brothers established Stafford's first electric company. In 1899 they installed a generator in their flour mill and ran electric lines to their homes as well as their father's for lighting. By 1904 they erected a plant to provide electricity for Stafford. They operated the plant until 1911 when they sold it to the city of Stafford.[24]

The most enduring cultural legacy the Larabee family gave to the citizens of Stafford is the Nora E. Larabee Memorial Library. At the death from

[21] *Stafford Courier* , 16 June 1921, p. 1.
[22] *Stafford County Republican*, 14 January 1909, p. 1.
[23] *Stafford, Kansas 1885-1985 Crossroads of Time*, (no publisher & no date), p. 8.
[24] *Stafford Courier*, 16 June 1921, p. 1.

tuberculosis of their only daughter Nora in 1904, her father and mother paid for the erection of a public library in her memory. Not only did Joseph D. and Angeline O. Larabee pay for the construction of Stafford's only public library, their generously included purchasing the library's furniture, bookcases and donating six hundred dollars for the acquisition of books. With this donation the library was able to purchase fifteen hundred volumes to place on the shelves when the library opened to the public on May 26, 1908.

Through the years the Larabee family continued to support the library. During the First World War, Frank S. and Frederick D. Larabee gave two thousand dollars to the library for the purchase of books in memory of their parents Joseph D. and Angeline O. Larabee.[25] In 1955 Charles W. and his wife Lila A. Larabee gave funds to construct a balcony to provide more shelf room for books in memory of Charles's parents Frederick D. and May W. Larabee.[26]

An article in the *Stafford County Republican* newspaper of 1906 celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the Farmers Bank captures the generosity and public spirit of the Larabee family.

> Would that Stafford were possessed of many more the like of the Larabees. Their public spirit and generosity in assisting worthy causes has been a guiding star to many who might other wise (sic) have been content to dwell within the narrow confines of their own shells, so to speak, and not done what was in their might to build up and beautify Stafford.[27]

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[25] *The Story of the Akers Family Biography and Autobiography [1764-1924].* (George W. Akers, n. d.), n. p.
[26] Nora E. Larabee Memorial Library Balcony Dedication, 6 April 1955.
[27] *Stafford County Republican*, 24 May 1906, p. 6.

Bibliography

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Farmers National Bank is located on the West Thirty (30) feet of the East Fifty (50) feet of Lots One (1) and Three (3) and the West One hundred (100) feet of Lot One (1) and the North Seven (7) feet of the West One Hundred (100) feet of Lot Three (3) less the South Eighteen (18) feet of the West Thirty (30) feet of the East Fifty (50) feet of Lot Three (3), Block Twenty-One (21), Maxwell's Addition to the Town (Now City) of Stafford, Stafford County, Kansas, Corporation Deed (General Warranty), #2312, November 12, 1980.

Boundary Justification

The boundary contains all property historically associated with the historic Farmers National Bank of Stafford, Kansas.