

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kansas
COUNTY: Linn
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Marais des Cygnes Massacre Memorial Park
AND/OR HISTORIC: Marais des Cygnes Massacre Site

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: Five miles northwest of U.S. 69 at Trading Post via Kans. 52 + unimproved road			
CITY OR TOWN: Trading Post (vicinity)		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
STATE Kansas	CODE 66064	COUNTY: Linn	CODE

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC: Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER: State of Kansas, Kansas Historical Society, Nyle Miller, Executive Director	STATE: Kansas
STREET AND NUMBER: 10th and Jackson Streets	
CITY OR TOWN: Topeka	STATE: Kansas
	CODE: 66612

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Register of Deeds	STATE: Kansas
STREET AND NUMBER: Linn County Courthouse	
CITY OR TOWN: Mound City	STATE: Kansas
	CODE: 66056

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas; also National Register	
DATE OF SURVEY: 1957; June 1971	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Kansas State Historical Society	
STREET AND NUMBER: 120 W. 10th Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Topeka	STATE: Kansas
	CODE: 66612

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

road

STATE: KANSAS  
COUNTY: LINN  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)					
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
(Check One)			(Check One)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Marais des Cygnes Massacre, which took place on May 19, 1858, is today commemorated by a memorial park administered by the Kansas State Historical Society and owned by the State of Kansas. Situated about 4 miles northeast of Trading Post, the park is characteristic of the area surrounding it. Within the park, the massacre site is located in a small ravine 700 feet northwest of the visitor center and is marked with a plaque briefly describing the episode.

The abolitionist John Brown shortly after the massacre built a "fort" about 220 yards south of the ravine. The fort, built of logs and banked with dirt and rocks, is no longer in existence. Adjoining this site is a three-level stone house built by Charles C. Hadsall, probably in the 1870s, which has been restored and is now operated as a State-owned museum by the Kansas State Historical Society. The park is open to the public.

The area north and northeast of the park is affected by strip mining operations of the Kansas City Power and Light Company (Missouri). To provide adequate screening from this potential intrusion, as well as others unforeseen, it is essential that the park boundary be regarded as the minimum extent of the historic site.

The site is public property.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century
- 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Civil War fought in Kansas in the 1850s between slave and free-state factions branded that inflamed Commonwealth as "bleeding Kansas." After 2 years of terrorism, on May 19, 1858, a band of proslavery sympathizers crossed into Kansas from Missouri, captured 11 men in the vicinity of Trading Post, and shot them down in a nearby ravine known today as the site of the Marais des Cygnes Massacre. That vicious incident illustrated the extent of brutality to which the confrontation over slavery could reach. The murderous episode touched off a national outcry best remembered in John Greenleaf Whittier's poem, "Le Marais du Cygne." The outrage lent its force to the defeat of the proslavery Lecompton Constitution for Kansas and attracted John Brown and his party to construct a fortification near the massacre site. The massacre thus became another prominent link in that chain of notorious events leading inexorably to civil war.

History

The stage for "Bleeding Kansas" was set by the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, which established the concept of popular sovereignty--a doctrine which would have the people decide by vote whether Kansas should be slave or free. A bitter contest then ensued between North and South to gain the majority in Kansas. In the North, societies, such as the New England Emigrant Aid Company, were organized to send free-state sympathizers to the Kansas Territory. Proslavery Southern immigrants were not as well organized but they had the advantage of being closer, many simply crossing from western Missouri into eastern Kansas. Throughout 1855 and 1856 the struggle between free-state and proslavery partisans dominated the Kansas scene, and there seemed little doubt that slavery would prevail. Individual acts of terrorism occurred with increasing frequency in 1856, and numerous instances of lawlessness were reported. Men were attacked, beaten, and sometimes killed for their views on slavery. In Linn and Bourbon Counties, on the eastern Kansas border, raids were constantly being carried on by the opposing factions. In effect, a civil war was being waged in eastern Kansas. Acting Governor Woodson issued a proclamation declaring that the Territory was in a state of open insurrection and rebellion. In September 1856 the arrival of the new Governor,

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Bailey, Judge L. D., "Massacre of the Marais des Cygnes," Charles R. Green, editor, Early Days in Kansas, Vol. 1 (Olathe, Kansas, Charles R. Green, 1912), pp. 40-44.

Botkin, J. T., "Justice was Swift and Sure in Early Kansas," Kansas Historical Collections, Vol. 16 (1923-25), pp. 488-493.

Connelly, William E., A Standard History of Kansas and Kansans (Chicago, Lewis Publishing Company, 1918), Vol. 2, p. 669. (continued)

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	38° 16' 58"	94° 37' 24"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	38° 16' 58"	94° 37' 00"				
SE	38° 16' 47"	94° 37' 00"				
SW	38° 16' 47"	94° 37' 24"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **43 acres.**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of Historic and Architectural Surveys,  
National Park Service** DATE: **11/13/73**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**1100 L Street NW**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE:

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Significance (page 1) Marais des Cygnes Massacre Site

John W. Geary, brought relative calm to the territory. Using Federal troops from Fort Leavenworth to disband both free-state and proslavery forces, he was able to restore a semblance of order to much of Kansas. However, in the eastern border counties the incidents continued through 1857 and 1858, culminating in the Marais des Cygnes Massacre, which was the last significant display of mob violence in Kansas.

On May 19, 1858, a band of proslavery sympathizers entered Kansas from Missouri under the leadership of Charles Hamelton, a former resident of the Trading Post area who had been forced to leave by the free-state group. His band of 30, captured several unarmed free-state men at Trading Post, released all but one, and then took a road leading back to Missouri. Ten additional captives were taken either on the road, in their farm homes, or in their fields. The 11 men were marched to a ravine 4 miles northeast of Trading Post, lined up, and shot. Five were killed, five were wounded, and one was untouched by the volley from the firing squad. Leaving the victims for dead, Hamelton and his gang returned to Missouri; only one of the raiders was ever caught and officially punished for his part in the crime.

Hamelton's reasons for selecting the 11 victims are not clear. Apparently none of them had been an active participant in the factional fighting. Most of them were former neighbors of Hamelton and had no suspicion that he might harm them. The commonly held view is that Hamelton returned to Kansas for revenge and chance determined his victims.

Some reminiscences of long-time Linn County residents claim that the band had a list of free-state people to be captured, but unable to locate more than two or three, just picked up people from the neighborhood.

The Marais des Cygnes massacre was the parting shot of major proslavery action in Kansas. It came at a time when free-state influence had taken hold of the majority of the state forcing the "border ruffians" out of Topeka, Atchison, and Lawrence, and into the eastern border counties. Made upon quiet and peaceful people, the attack succeeded for it had neither the opposition of war nor armed resistance to fear.

In Kansas the massacre delayed John Brown in his fateful foray into Virginia and aroused the population to soundly reject the Lecompton Constitution in August 1858. The census of 1860 demonstrated further opposition to the attack by revealing more than 70 percent of the population to be free-state.

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8. Significance (page 2) Marais des Cygnes Massacre Site

The Nation was horrified and John Greenleaf Whittier made the murders the subject of a poem, "Le Marais du Cygne," which was published in the Atlantic Monthly in September 1858. In Congress the Lecompton resolution, backed by President Buchanan, was defeated by legislators led in their opposition by Stephen Douglas. Though Kansas would have to wait almost 3 years, it was admitted to the Union as a free State in January 1861.

When John Brown returned to Kansas he came to the area of the massacre in June 1858 and built a "fort" on property 220 yards south of the ravine. The "fort" was two stories high, walled up with logs, and banked outside with dirt and rocks to a height of 4 feet. Though Brown made arrangements to buy the land, he apparently never made any payments and thus a friend, Charles C. Hadsall, purchased it instead in the summer of 1858. The "fort" was never attacked and Brown and his men withdrew at the end of the summer.

In later years Hadsall built a stone house which still stands adjoining the site of Brown's "fort." The "fort" itself has long before been taken away piece by piece by souvenir hunters. The house was restored in 1961-62 and is presently operated as a museum by the Kansas State Historical Society.

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9. Bibliography (page 1) Marais des Cygnes Massacre Site

Kansas State Historical Society, "The Marais des Cygne Massacre"  
(Topeka, State Printer, n.d.).

Langsdorf, Edgar, "Bleeding Kansas, 1854-1861," To The Stars, Vol. 9,  
No. 3 (April-May, 1954), pp. 14-19.

Mitchell, William Ansell, Linn County, Kansas (Kansas City, Campbell-  
Gates Printers, 1928, pp. 202-209.

Moody, Joel, "The Marais des Cygnes Massacre," Kansas Historical  
Collections Vol. 14 (1915-1918), pp. 208-223.

Richards, Ralph, "The Forts of Fort Scott and the Fateful Borderland,"  
Fort Scott Tribune, April 9, 10, 12, 14-18, 1941.

Smith, Edward R., "Marais des Cygnes Tragedy," Kansas Historical  
Collections, Vol. 6 (1897-1900), pp. 365-370.

Tannar, Alpheus H., "The Marais des Cygnes Massacre ...," Kansas  
Historical Collections, Vol. 14 (1915-1918), pp. 224-234.

(Sources indicated in National Register Inventory-Nomination Form filed  
with National Register, National Park Service).