

140071159

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
 INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kansas	
COUNTY: Marshall	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER: FEB 23 1972	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
 Alcove Springs

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: SE 1/4, NE 1/4, Sec. 31, T 3 S, R 7 E  
 Four miles north of Blue Rapids on secondary roads.

CITY OR TOWN:  
 Blue Rapids vicinity

STATE Kansas	CODE 66411	COUNTY: Marshall	CODE 117
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" 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 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) _____ _____ _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
 Mrs. Stella Hammet

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Blue Rapids

STATE: Kansas	CODE 66411
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
 Register of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 Marshall County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Marysville

STATE: Kansas	CODE 66508
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
 Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas

DATE OF SURVEY: 1957  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
 Kansas State Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 120 West Tenth Street

CITY OR TOWN: Topeka

STATE: Kansas	CODE 66612
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved     Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The area surrounding Alcove Springs is rather rugged, consisting of steep cliffs out of which grow evergreen and hardwood trees. The spring flows from the walls of a limestone cliff out of an orifice six inches in diameter. About 12 feet above the spring is a ledge of rock, having the appearance of an alcove, from which the "Naomi Pike Falls" cascades into a tree-shaded pool below. This water joins Alcove Springs in forming Sehon creek (or Alcove Springs creek) and moves westward down the valley where it empties into the Big Blue river. During the 1840's to 1870's when the area was used as a stopping place for emigrants, the creek was considerably wider and ran with a rapid current.

Today the spring does not flow so regularly or with as much water as it did, but reportedly it never runs completely dry and during wet periods the alcove provides a miniature waterfall. Renovation of the area was begun in 1961 by a group of Blue Rapids citizens. Dead trees, brush, and weeds were removed, and a parking lot and picnic area were provided.

S E E I N S T R U C T I O N S

**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) 1840-1870

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Alcove Springs, seven miles south of Marysville in north central Kansas, was a stopping point for many travelers on the Oregon trail from the 1840's to 1870's. The spring feeds a creek which is a branch of the Big Blue river and is located about one mile from Independence Crossing, where several hundred thousand people camped and crossed the river during the years of western emigration.

Indians from that region of Kansas were reportedly the first to use Alcove Springs. The first written records indicate that in 1827 James Clyman and a large pack-train stopped there on their way from the Wind River mountains to St. Louis with the furs of W. H. Ashley and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company. A party of surveyors stayed at Alcove Springs in 1832, and a group of 60 persons, the Bidwell-Bartleson party, camped there in 1841. Other pioneers with more famous names, such as John A. Sutter, Father de Smet, Kit Carson and John C. Fremont, rested at Alcove Springs before continuing their travels west. Both Fremont and Carson stayed there for about a week during 1842.

The group which made the springs more significant than any other was the Donner party which camped along the Big Blue at that point in May, 1846. A member of the party, Edwin Bryant, wrote a description of his journey to the west coast entitled What I Saw in California in which he described Alcove Springs as being "as cold and pure as if it had been melted from ice. It gushes from a ledge of rocks, which composes the bank of the stream and, falling some ten feet, its waters are received into a basin. A shelving rock projects over this basin, from which falls a beautiful cascade of water, some 10 or 12 feet. . . . Altogether it was one of the most romantic spots I ever saw."

Several sources state that Bryant gave the name "Alcove Springs" to the falls, but others give credit to another member of the party, John Denton, who carved the name on a rock. The initials of James F. Reed, who led the Donner party, are still legible on a rock at the springs. Reed's mother-in-law, Grandma Keyes, who died during the party's stay at the site, is buried at the right side of the trail.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

"Alcove Springs Area -- Reasons Why It Should Be Erected Into a National Monument" (n.p., n.d.), 4 pp. brochure.  
 "Alcove Springs One of Few Un-Marked Historical Shrines," Marysville Advocate, May 30, 1946.  
 Coons, Frederica, B., "Alcove Springs," The Trail to Oregon (Portland, Oregon, Binfords and Mort, 1954), pp. 41-45.  
 Driggs, Howard R., "A Storied Campground," Westward America (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), pp. 43-46.  
 Ellenbecker, John G., "Alcove Springs Camp Ground," Pony Express Courier, v. 5, no. 3 (August, 1938), p. 14.

**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										
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds						
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	39	44	56	°	'	"	96	40	34
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"									
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"									

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Seven

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: Richard Pankratz, Planner

ORGANIZATION: Kansas State Historical Society DATE: March 8, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West Tenth Street

CITY OR TOWN: Topeka STATE: Kansas 66612 CODE: 20

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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 Nyle H. Miller  
Nyle H. Miller  
 Title Executive Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society  
 Date June 29, 1971

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

Ernest A. Connelly  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

**FEB 23 1972**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:  
[Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Date February 16, 1972

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Kansas	
COUNTY Marshall	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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(Number all entries)

6. Federal Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration (1939)  
Federal  
Records destroyed. A guidebook, Kansas, was published in 1939.

8. Thousands of other emigrants went over the Oregon-California trail in the 1840's, either camping at or passing by Alcove Springs. The great Mormon migration began in the 1840's, and so many of them used this route that the crossing on the Big Blue became known as Mormon Crossing. There are believed to be many unmarked graves of Mormons all around the area. The last usage of Alcove Springs by a great number of persons was in 1849 when prospectors were heading to California, although the trail through Kansas continued to be used until the early 1870's.

Alcove Springs provided thousands of emigrants with a refreshing place to rest while journeying west in the 19th century. Many of the people going to California and Oregon who kept diaries or wrote later about their travels, mentioned the scenic location in Kansas where they had camped. The use of the springs by so many people during the westward migration, particularly well-known individuals who were important in western development, indicates that it is a place of significance to Kansas and the country as a whole.

9. Hulbert, Archer Butler, Forty-Niners, the Chronicle of the California Trail (Boston, Little, Brown and Co., 1931), p. 42.  
Mack, George, "Alcove Spring Was Once a Camping Spot for Pioneers," Topeka Capital, February 20, 1949.  
"Restore Alcove Spring Site," Marysville Advocate, June 15, 1961.  
Schoewe, Walter H., "The Geography of Kansas," Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, v. 56, no. 2 (June, 1953), p. 142.  
Smith, William E., "The Grave of Sarah Keyes on the Oregon Trail," Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 5, no. 2 (May, 1936), pp. 208-212.  
Strimple, Earl E., Topeka Journal, April 13, 1935.

NOTE:

Since the nomination form was completed, word has been received that the Blue Rapids Chamber of Commerce, which had leased the site since 1961, had not been able to renew the lease in 1971. According to chamber spokesmen, the owner had not supplied a satisfactory reason for the termination of the lease. Efforts are still underway to obtain the lease, but the future of the park is not known at this time.