

PH0055760

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Kansas</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Wabaunsee</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER <b>71.2.20.0007</b>	DATE <b>2/24/71</b>

1. NAME

COMMON: **Beecher Bible and Rifle Church**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

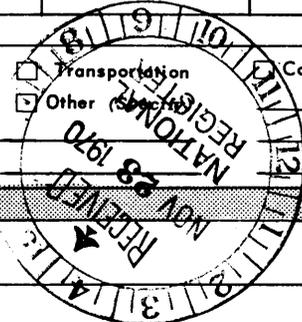
STREET AND NUMBER: **Southeast corner Chapel St. and Elm St.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Wabaunsee**

STATE: **Kansas 66547** CODE: **20** COUNTY: **Wabaunsee** CODE: **197**

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
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 type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ Comments _____



4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: **Congregational Church**

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: **Wabaunsee** STATE: **Kansas 66547** CODE: **20**

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER: **Wabaunsee County Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN: **Alma** STATE: **Kansas 66401** CODE: **20**

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Historic American Buildings Survey**

DATE OF SURVEY: **1965**  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: **Library of Congress**

STREET AND NUMBER: **10 First St. S. E.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **11**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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COUNTY: **Wabaunsee**

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ENTRY NUMBER: **71.2.20.0007**  
DATE: **2/24/71**

**DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION

(Check One)

- Excellent  
  Good  
  Fair  
  Deteriorated  
  Ruins  
  Unexposed

(Check One)

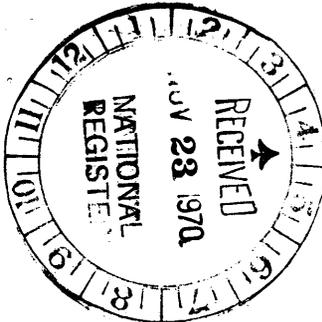
- Altered  
  Unaltered

(Check One)

- Moved  
  Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Beecher Bible and Rifle Church is built of native limestone laid in a random pattern. Out stone was used for quoining, window and door sills, jambs, and the foundation, which is slightly wider than the building. The rectangular building's simple plan is echoed in all parts of the design, from the rectangular windows to the straight gable roof and simple bell tower. The wood roof is given a feeling of strength by the wide eave trim. The small wood entrance was added at a later date, but an attempt was made to carry through the facade theme.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

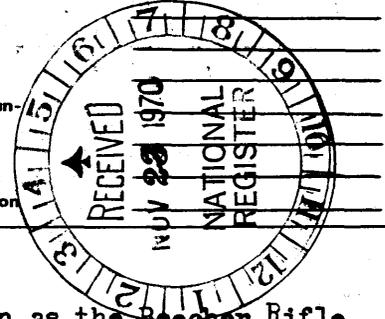
- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1862

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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

The Connecticut Kansas Colony, also known as the Beecher Rifle Colony or the New Haven Colony, was organized at New Haven, Connecticut, in February and March, 1856, by C. B. Lines during the time when the northern states were greatly excited about the Kansas-Nebraska bill and its concept of squatter sovereignty. The purpose of Lines' organization was to help make Kansas a Free State.

The "Beecher Rifle Colony" appellation grew out of the farewell meeting for the colonists held in March, 1856, in New Haven. Rev. Henry Ward Beecher addressed the meeting with a vigorous anti-slavery speech. One of the purposes of the meeting was to provide the colonists with arms for their protection. Beecher said that if the price of 25 Sharps carbines was raised at the New Haven meeting his Plymouth church in Brooklyn would give an additional 25 weapons. The people at the meeting met the challenge and Beecher's church came through with \$625 to buy the carbines and also furnished a supply of Bibles to be distributed to the colonists. "Beecher's Bibles" became the popular designation for the Sharps carbines supplied the colonists.

About 70 colonists, almost all men, arrived in Kansas in late April, 1856, and soon after organized the town of Wabaunsee. At first worship services were held in various places--the company tent, a store, log cabins, and even in a grove near the townsite. A successful effort to organize a church was made on Saturday, June 27, 1857, with 28 charter members. It was decided that the church should be "Congregational in form but not in name and, in fact as unsectarian as possible" and that it was to be known as "The First Church of Christ in Wabaunsee." (In 1858 the Wabaunsee group sought affiliation with the Congregational fellowship in Kansas and was accepted.) A temporary frame building was constructed and plans were also laid for the construction of a stone building. It was a time of hardship and uncertainty, and funds were hard to raise, but after four years of persistence the building was completed and dedicated on May 24, 1862. According to some of the settlers' reminiscences, families had left their own dwellings unfinished in order to give time and money to see the church building completed.

After 50 years of service the building stood unused for 20 to 30 years when Wabaunsee's declining population forced the Congregational Church to discontinue. Restored in 1948 by the Old Timers Association, the building is again in use for religious services.

(see continuation sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

"The Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony," Alma Signal-Enterprise, July 4, 1968.  
 "Beecher Church One Hundred Years Old," Topeka Capital, June 9, 1957.  
 Blenkarn, Rev. William T., "Bibles and Rifles," Semi-Centennial Wabaunsee Congregational Church, June 27, 28, 1907 (Alma, Kan., Alma Enterprise Print, 1907), pp. 17-25.  
 Broderick, Robert C., Historic Churches of the United States (New York, Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1958), pp. 64, 66.  
 Burt, Henry Fairfield, "A Brief History of the Connecticut Kansas Colony," Wabaunsee County Truth, v. 1, no. 11 (October, 1899), to v. 2, no. 9 (August, 1900).

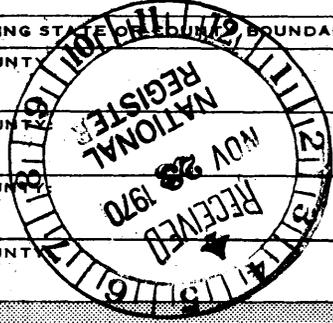
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	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	° . "	° . "		39 08 40	96 20 44	
NE	° . "	° . "				
SE	° . "	° . "				
SW	° . "	° . "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



NO JTM  
HL

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: **Charles L. Hall, Architectural Consultant**  
**Richard Pankratz, Planner**

ORGANIZATION: **Kansas State Historical Society** DATE: **Sept. 25, 1970**

STREET AND NUMBER: **120 West Tenth St.**

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

**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 Nyle H. Miller  
**Nyle H. Miller**

Title **Executive Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society**

Date **October 28, 1970**

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

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

**FEB 24 1971**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

William J. Huntley  
 Keeper of the National Register  
**JAN 20 1971**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Wabaunsee	
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71.220.0007	2/24/71

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

6.

Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas (State)

1957

Kansas State Historical Society

120 West Tenth St.

Topeka, Kansas 66612 Code: 20

Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (Federal)  
1939

Records destroyed. A guide book, Kansas, was published in 1939.

8.

The Beecher Bible and Rifle Church is significant for a number of reasons. Architecturally, it is a good example of early Plains Vernacular style expressed in a religious structure. It is one of the earliest permanent church buildings in Kansas and is today one of the oldest church buildings in the state. The circumstances which brought the Connecticut Kansas Colony to the state--namely, the desire to make Kansas a Free State--and the involvement of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher with the colonists add further significance to the structure.

9.

Cottrell, Amos Adams, "The New Haven Colony's History in Kansas" (Eskridge, Kan., Eskridge Star Print, 1907).

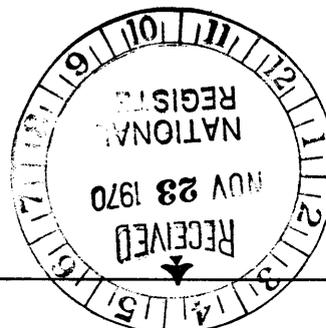
Fairfield, S. H., "Pioneering in Wabaunsee County," Kansas Historical Collections, v. 7 (1909-1910), pp. 594-613.

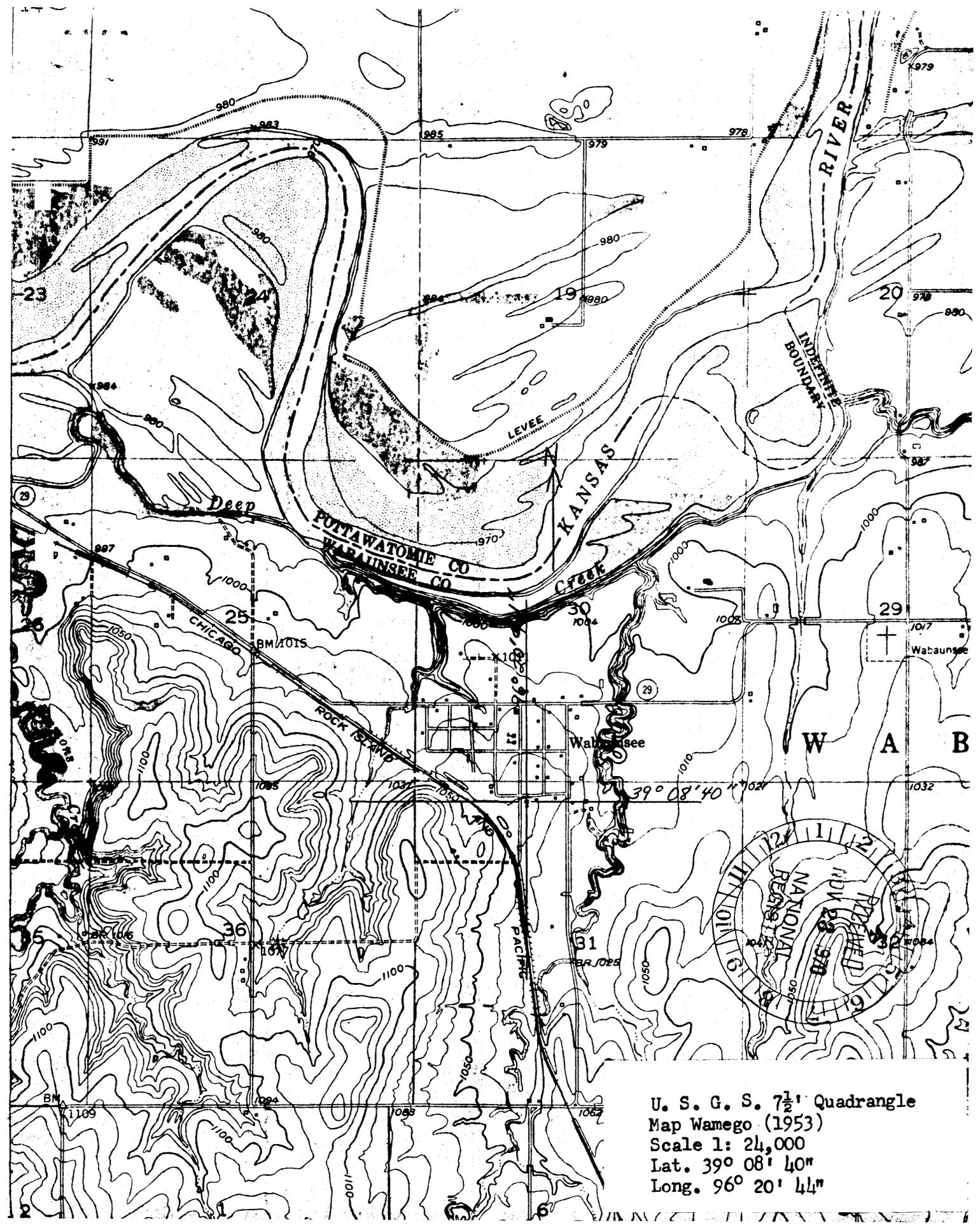
History of the State of Kansas (Chicago, A. T. Andreas, 1883), pp. 988-991.

Howes, Cecil, "Beecher Bible and Rifle Colony," Kansas Teacher, v. 56, no. 8 (April, 1948), pp. 46-48.

"Old Church Is Restored," Manhattan Tribune-News, July 29, 1948.

Pantle, Alberta, compiler, "The Connecticut Kansas Colony," Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 22, no. 1 (Spring, 1956), pp. 1-50, and v. 22, no. 2 (Summer, 1956), pp. 138-188.





U. S. G. S. 7½' Quadrangle  
Map Wamego (1953)  
Scale 1: 24,000  
Lat. 39° 08' 40"  
Long. 96° 20' 44"