

PHOTO 315

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON: Greensburg Well

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: One and one-half blocks south of US-54 on Sycamore street

CITY OR TOWN: Greensburg

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Kansas	67054	Kiowa	097

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Tourist attraction</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: City of Greensburg

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Greensburg

STATE:	CODE
Kansas	67054

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER: Kiowa County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: Greensburg

STATE	CODE
Kansas	67054

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

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

DATE OF SURVEY: 1957

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Kansas State Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West Tenth street

CITY OR TOWN: Topeka

STATE:	CODE
Kansas	66612

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

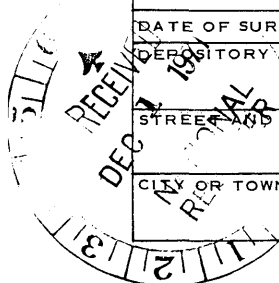
STATE: Kansas

COUNTY: Kiowa

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER: 1079

DATE:



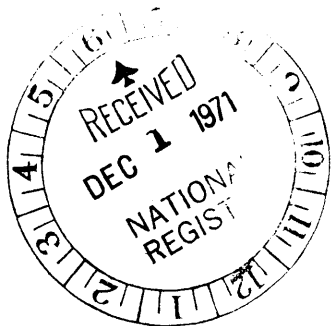
7. DESCRIPTION

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Greensburg Well is located one and one-half blocks south of US-54 on the west side of Sycamore street. The well is 109 feet deep, 32 feet in diameter, lined with a casing of native stone, and usually has about 25 feet of water in it. A steel staircase goes back and forth down the middle of the well to a platform just above water level. The platform formerly held the engines used to pump the water up to a nearby tower. The original staircase was not down the middle but rather a circular stairway built against the wall. The well is advertised as "the world's largest hand-dug well" and has been operated as a tourist attraction since 1939. Visitors may look down into the well through glass windows in the steel cover or for a small fee they can descend the stairs into the well.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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

(Number all entries)

8. off flush with the stone wall as it was laid. Iron pipes were extended outward from the well into the water-bearing sand for a distance of 40 feet to direct the water into the well. A wooden circular stairway down into the well was built against the wall and supported by railroad irons cemented in the wall.

The well furnished water for the Santa Fe railroad until 1895. When the boom bubble burst in the 1890's and the population dropped dramatically in western Kansas, the Santa Fe tore up its tracks to Greensburg. The well ownership had passed into the hands of the Kansas National Bank of Wichita in 1890, and in 1891 the residents of Greensburg voted 29 to 13 to buy the waterworks for \$25,000. Bonds for the purchase were issued in November, 1891. (Costs of digging the well, building a 100-foot-high water tower, and installing the water system were placed at \$55,000 to \$75,000.) The city used the well until 1932 when a new water system was installed. Since 1939 the well has been a tourist attraction, having been visited by more than two million people.

Although the Greensburg Well may not be "the world's largest hand-dug well" as the local promoters claim, it is certainly the largest in Kansas and in all likelihood in the United States and one of the largest in the world.

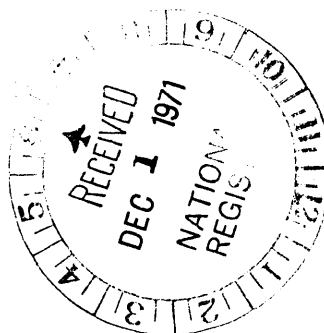
9. Greensburg Rustler, August 4, September 22, December 1, 1887; February 9, March 15, 1888.

"Kansas Historical Notes," Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 8, no. 3 (August, 1939), pp. 334, 335.

Kiowa County Signal, November 21, 1890; October 30, 1891.

"Old Well Attracts Many," Progress in Kansas, v. 6, no. 2 (January, 1940), p. 57. (official publication of the Kansas State Chamber of Commerce)

"The Tourists Still Dig Greensburg's Deep Well," Hutchinson News, June 11, 1967.



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) 1887-1888

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 checked="" 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 | <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

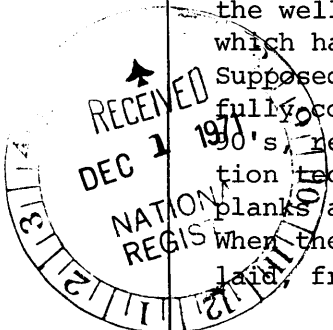
Greensburg's "Big Well," billed as the largest hand-dug well in the world, was dug in 1887 and 1888. The city of Greensburg, which had been organized in 1884, along with most of western and southwestern Kansas experienced a boom in the mid 1880's. By 1886 Greensburg claimed 2,600 inhabitants. The citizens of the town decided the following year that they needed a waterworks system to provide water for household needs, fire protection, and the needs of the Santa Fe railroad, whose first train pulled into Greensburg June 23, 1887. A large well was considered the only adequate source of water in the prairie country, and experts advised the citizens that there was an enormous ground flow under Greensburg, which is about 20 miles south of the Arkansas river.

The townspeople believed that the waterworks project was too much for the financial resources of their young city, so on July 18, 1887, the city council passed an ordinance granting a franchise and right of way to the Greensburg Water Supply and Hydraulic Co., formed under the auspices of the Santa Fe railroad for the purpose of digging the well and constructing the waterworks.

Work on the well began Tuesday, August 9, 1887. Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate 25 to 30 men were employed at the well site. The entire project was supervised by J. H. Rhodes, chief engineer of the Wichita and Western railway (later taken over by the Santa Fe). In charge of the digging and walling of the well was J. W. Wheeler. Harry F. Hall, foreman of the railroad's bridge and building division, was foreman of the carpentry work done at the well. The city council officially accepted the waterworks system March 14, 1888.

Over the years much confusion spread as to how the well had been constructed. Local legend developed that the stone casing of the well had been built on a circular wood platform at ground level which had been lowered inch by inch as the well was excavated. Supposedly when the desired depth had been reached, the casing was fully completed. On August 22, 1960, Harry F. Hall, by then in his 90's, returned to Greensburg and offered an explanation of the construction technique. According to him, the well was cribbed with 2 X 12 planks at regular intervals, as it was being dug, to prevent cave-ins. When the water bearing strata had been reached, the masonry wall was laid, from the bottom up, and the supporting timber braces were cut

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Big Well Attracts Tourists to Greensburg," Wichita Morning Eagle, April 1, 1955.
 "The Celebrated Hand-dug Well Is Not Greensburg's Only Attraction," Topeka Capital-Journal, July 19, 1959.
 Corder, Irven L., "A History of Kiowa County," Kiowa County Signal, December 21, 1960 to February 8, 1961.
 Corder, Irven L., "The World's Biggest Hand-dug Well," Frontier Times, v. 39, no. 6 (October-November, 1965), pp. 49, 56.
 Greensburg Republican, August 10, September 14, October 5, October 26, November 9, 1887.

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
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"	37	36	18
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"	99	17	40

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: One acre

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: January 18, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West Tenth Street

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 Director, Kansas State Historical Society

Date November 20, 1971

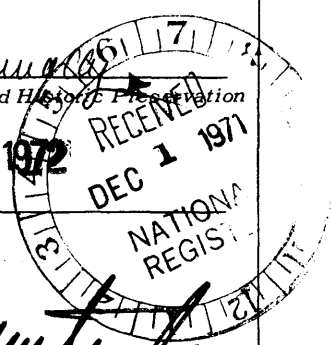
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

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

Date FEB 23 1972

ATTEST: William Hunter
 Keeper of The National Register

Date FEB 11 1972



SEE INSTRUCTIONS