

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

APR 28 2004  
(alt. 6/6/05)

## 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 Black Jack Battlefield

Other name/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

Street & number U. S. Highway 56 and County Road 2000, three miles ☐ not for publication  
east of Baldwin City

City or town Baldwin ☒ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Douglas Code 045 Zip code 66006

### 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.)

Richard D. Pankratz, DSHPO March 1, 2004  
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 hereby 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Black Jack Battlefield

Name of property

Douglas County, KS

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
2		sites
	2	structures
2	8	objects
4	11	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

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter Categories from instructions)

Defense: battlesite

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Landscape: conservation area

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: rustic

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Wood: log

roof Wood: shingle

other

### Narrative Description

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

Name of Property    Black Jack Battlefield

County and State    Douglas County, KS

## 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 its 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)

Military

### Period of Significance

1856

### Significant Dates

1856

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

John Brown

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

N/A

## 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): Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Name of Property Black Jack BattlefieldCounty and State Douglas County, KS**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 20.27 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	5	3	1	4	9	2	0	4	2	9	2	9	3	0	3	1	5	3	1	5	1	0	1	4	2	9	2	5	1	0
Zone	Easting					Northing					Zone	Easting					Northing														
2	1	5	3	1	5	1	2	0	4	2	9	2	9	2	5	4	1	5	3	1	4	9	1	0	4	2	9	2	5	2	0

☐ 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 Carolyn Berneking, Karl Gridley, Ramon PowersOrganization Lawrence Preservation Alliance Date August 2003Street & number P. O. 1073 Telephone \_\_\_\_\_City or town Lawrence State KS Zip code 66044**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 Douglas County Commissionstreet & number 1100 Massachusetts

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Lawrencestate KSzip code 66044

**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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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### BLACK JACK BATTLEFIELD

The first battle in Kansas between anti- and pro-slavery forces was fought on June 2, 1856 at Black Jack Creek, three miles east of present-day Baldwin City, Douglas County, Kansas. It was prelude to the bloody conflict called the Civil War. The battlefield covers 20.27 acres, consisting of a section of Black Jack Creek, prairie to the south that contains Santa Fe Trail ruts, and a wooded area further south and west. The area was surveyed in January 1856 by the U.S. Land Surveys for the Territory of Kansas. The surveyor's field notes describe the countryside as being a high rolling prairie of first quality with several ravine courses; elms, sycamores and black jack oaks grew along the stream with Indian trails going northeast and southwest.

### PRESENT PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Today Black Jack Battlefield looks much as it did in 1856. The fragile prairie remains, and the Santa Fe Trail ruts are still there. Not many Black Jack oaks are left, but there are sycamores and elms along the ravines. The County has grown from 8,637 in 1860 to 99,968 in 2000. The site of the Black Jack Battlefield includes 1) Black Jack Park containing the creek, 2) the Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve containing Santa Fe Trail ruts, and 3) the Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park.<sup>1</sup>

#### Black Jack Park

Black Jack Park is a two-acre roadside park one-half mile west of the old Black Jack townsite at the junction of U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Verbal boundaries. Michael Kelly, Douglas County Surveyor, August 7, 2002. " Starting at intersection of U.S. Hy 56 and E2000, proceed East to first fence line approximately 670 ft. South along fence line, 1,365 ft. to center of road N175. West along N175 road, 680 ft. to E2000. North along E2000 road to point of beginning, a distance of 1,325 ft. Also: beginning at intersection of E2000 road with H175, then West, 114 ft., South, 104 ft., East, 114 ft. to E2000. North, 104 ft. to point of beginning."

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Highway 56 and E2000.<sup>2</sup> The road into Black Jack Park turns onto a half circle under a canopy of trees. At the east end of this drive stands a 40 by 60 foot log cabin built of native white oak trees. The cabin was built in 1969 and funded by the Douglas County Board of Commissioners.<sup>3</sup> The entrance faces west with a door in the middle, flanked by windows on either side. The north wall of the building includes a large fireplace of native stone. There is one window on the south end. The one-room cabin is used for gatherings (Santa Fe Trail Historical Society, Maple Leaf Festival meetings, and nature talks) and contains displays of historical items. An outhouse is attached to the outside east wall. A flagpole at the northwest end of the cabin came from the Black Jack schoolhouse.<sup>4</sup>

Across the drive from the cabin are three historical markers. The first marker is titled "The Battle of Black Jack" and briefly gives the highlights of the battle. This marker was the first to be erected by the Kansas State Historical Society in a campaign by the Kansas State Chamber of Commerce to memorialize the many historic points of interest in Kansas.<sup>5</sup> Next to it is another marker dedicated in 1984 to the memory of Amelia J. Betts. It contains the following script: "Black Jack Park. South of This Park are 18 Acres of Virgin Prairie. Purchased 1967

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas County bought the eighteen acres adjacent and south of Black Jack Park from Russell Hays in 1967. This area includes Santa Fe Trail ruts and is called the Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve. The county commissioners were Travis Glass, Walter Kamschroeder and Harvey Booth. One of the commissioners observed that "our intention is to preserve the area in its natural state - it's simply a matter of holding onto a historical landmark."; County Buys Park Area Site." (Lawrence, Kansas: Lawrence Journal World, 1968).

<sup>3</sup> Derby Allen, "Log Cabin Built for Future," (Lawrence, Kansas: Lawrence Daily Journal, 29 November 1969), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Katharine Kelley, "Along the Santa Fe Trail in Douglas County, Kansas." Pamphlet, (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin Public Library, 1987), 9.

<sup>5</sup> This marker was placed on the site when the State bought it from Russell Hays in 1940 for a roadside park. "Black Jack Park Dedication Is Next Tuesday." (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin Ledger, 3 October 1940).

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by Douglas County From Russell Hays for a Permanent Prairie Preserve and Historic Site. Evidence of Santa Fe Trail Plainly Visible. Original Site of DAR Marker Was Near Pioneer Town of Black Jack One-Half Mile East." The third marker is made of granite and states: "Santa Fe Trail 1822-1872 Marked by the Daughters of the American Revolution and the state of Kansas 1906." This DAR marker was first placed on the H.H. Hays farm. When Highway 50 (now 56) was widened and paved in 1938, the marker was moved to the grove of Black Jack oak trees owned by Russell Hays adjacent to the ruts of the Santa Fe Trail.<sup>6</sup>

### Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve

At the south end of the half circle drive, a wooden foot bridge crosses what is left of Black Jack Creek and leads south to a path up the hill and the prairie beyond. Here the imprints of the Santa Fe Trail ruts can be clearly seen. Two markers appear at the top of the hill: a wooden sign saying "WAGON RUTS SANTA FE TRAIL" and a sandstone marker. The stone was placed in the early 1960s by Russell Hays and inscribed with "Grindstone Creek - 40 Rods - Sibley Survey 1825."<sup>7</sup>

The Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve is named after Ivan Boyd, who was a professor emeritus of biology at Baker University. Very few tall grass prairies are even in existence today, but this one on the Black Jack Battleground, which is open to the public, has never been cultivated. With no excessive cutting, burning or grazing it has over 125 species of native grasses and wildflowers in bloom throughout the year.<sup>8</sup>

### Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park

The Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park is located two-tenths of a mile south on County Road E2000 at the junction of E2000 and N175. Its .27 acres of wooded land was given to Douglas County in 1970 by Mr. and Mrs. Dana Cavender and Mr. and Mrs. James W. Cavender in memory of an ancestor, Robert Hall Pearson, who took part in the Battle of Black Jack. James Cavender's home, south of this area, was built in 1889.

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<sup>6</sup> Dorothea Jackson, "A Brief History of the Black Jack Area in Douglas County, Kansas." Pamphlet, October, 1999. (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin City Library).

<sup>7</sup> A rod is 16.5 yards; Interview with Katharine Kelley on 31 August 2002. Baldwin Public Library.

<sup>8</sup> Lynn H. Nelson, The Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve. Pamphlet. (Baldwin City, Kansas. n.d.), 1.

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The park is enclosed by cyclone fences on the east, south and west including a gate on the east. The north side is fenced with barbed wire. A wooden sign inside the park lists the names of 48 men who participated in the battle including Captain Samuel Shore, August Bondi, and Captain John Brown with his five sons. A granite stone marker at the site displays the words "Battle of Black Jack First Battle Between Free and Slave States Fought on These Grounds June 2, 1856." Originally, this stone marker was placed across the road at the south end of the prairie on the John Hays corner (E2000 and N175). On July 4, 1970, it was moved to the Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park because "it was located on the right-of-way," in danger of being damaged and creating maintenance problems.<sup>9</sup> At the base on the south side of this stone are the words: "Stone first set on land donated by Floyd and Fannie Kalb. Stone set 7/4/70 on land donated by D.P. Cavender."<sup>10</sup> Beside this large granite marker is a small one which states "ERECTED 1913 BY POST 40 GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC WOMEN'S RELIEF CORPS #102 DEEDED TO KANSAS 1917" to explain that the large stone should be credited to the Women's Relief Corps.<sup>11</sup> A shelter with five picnic tables is located in the southeast corner and a barbecue pit built in memory of Wilma Workman, 1900-1980 on the southwest corner. An outhouse is located on the northwest end of the park.

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<sup>9</sup> Letter to Attorney General's Office from Amelia J. Betts, 4 August 1980; Amelia J. Betts, comp. "History", (Baldwin City, Kansas, Baldwin Public Library), n.d.; "Chance For Black Jack Battle Park." (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin Ledger 2 June 1938), 1.

<sup>10</sup> "Chance For Black Jack Battle Park." (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin Ledger 2 June 1938), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Betts, "Marker Erected to Recognize Women's Relief Corps." (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin City Review, 2 October 1981).



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### BLACK JACK BATTLEFIELD

#### Criterion A

The Black Jack Battlefield site is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A because of its significance in our nation's history. The Battle of Black Jack which took place June 2, 1856, was the beginning of a series of armed conflicts between free-state and pro-slavery forces in Kansas in 1856 that embroiled the Territory in continued violence over the issue of the expansion of slavery into Kansas Territory. Santa Fe Trail swales, which were used for free-state forces during the battle, are visible features of the Battle site. The Santa Fe Trail was the artery for trade with first Mexico and the American Southwest.

#### Criterion B

The battlefield meets Criterion B because of the involvement and participation in the battle of a legendary figure in Civil War history, John Brown. The Battle of Black Jack, through its occurrence, and subsequent reporting in the eastern press, led to a significant increase in the notoriety of John Brown as a central figure in the "Bleeding Kansas" drama. In conjunction with the Battle of Osawatimie in August, 1856, it led to a national reputation for John Brown as a militant abolitionist. His subsequent famous raid on Harper's Ferry, in October of 1859, was widely reported as having been conducted by "John Brown of Kansas notoriety."

In his recent The Legend Revisited, John Brown, historian Merrill D. Peterson notes, "Brown became the terror of the prairie in 1856. Reporters for eastern newspapers lionized him. His fame increased in June with the defeat of a superior force under the Border Ruffian Captain Henry Clay Pate at a place called Black Jack." <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Merrill D. Peterson, The Legend Revisited. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 5; Stephen B. Oates, To Purge This land with Blood, Biography of John Brown. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 154. According to Oates, "First the Pottawatomie Massacre, then the victory at Black Jack - Brown was totally and irrevocably at war with the Slave Power in Kansas."

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### THE HISTORIC LANDSCAPE

In 1820, Kansas was Indian country. The Kansa (or Kaw) and Osage Indians occupied the area until a treaty with the government in 1825 moved them further west. Early explorers and traders followed the Indian trails to the Spanish southwest and the Santa Fe Trail was well established by the 1820s. The trail began at Independence Landing, Missouri and entered Kansas two or three miles southwest of Gardner, Kansas.

The first European/American emigrants to Kansas settled in southeast Kansas several years before the territory was officially established in 1854. Settlements appeared along the Santa Fe Trail where there was water and grazing for livestock. Black Jack, Kansas, was one of these first settlements named for a spring-fed creek one-half mile west of town. Mexican trail drivers in the early 1800s named the creek Black Jack because of a surrounding stand of Black Jack oak trees. The population of Douglas County was 8,637 in 1860.<sup>13</sup>

In 1953, Ralph O'Neil drew a map of Black Jack as it was in 1860, showing two churches, two blacksmith shops, two stores, a hotel, a stage barn, a fort, a school, and a doctor's office (O'Neil's grandfather). The main street in the town was named Santa Fe Street since it followed the original trail.<sup>14</sup> The first settlers were members of the Town Company themselves: William Riley, Daniel Fearer, E.D. Pettingill, S.A. Stonebraker and H.N. Brockway. They incorporated the town in 1857.<sup>15</sup> Because of the creek, it was a popular place to stop. Sometimes there would be one or more Mexican freighters passing through the town in a day.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A.T. Andreas, History of the State of Kansas. (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), 310.

<sup>14</sup> Katharine B. Kelley, "Along the Santa Fe Trail in Douglas County, Kansas." Pamphlet. (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin Public Library, 1987), 8; Ralph O'Neil, "A Hand-drawn Map of the Town of Black Jack With a Brief History." 1953. (Baldwin City, Kansas: Baldwin City Library).

<sup>15</sup> Andreas, History of the State of Kansas, 356.

<sup>16</sup> Jackson, "A Brief History of the Black Jack Area in Douglas County, Kansas."

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The Santa Fe Trail continued along the high ground in a northwesterly direction through the town of Palmyra, about three miles west of Black Jack.<sup>17</sup> Palmyra's 320 acres was surveyed and laid out in 1855. A well was dug to tempt the trail travelers to stop there.<sup>18</sup> Located just north of Ye Old Inn, a lodging place in town, the well also served as a gathering place for the community. The town consisted of Stephen's Store, the Santa Fe Hotel, Blood's Grocery Store and Post Office, Bodwell's and Webster's Blacksmith Shops, Fager's Wagon Maker's Shop, Johnson's Harness Shop, Goodin's Law Office, Westfall's Drug Store, a Methodist Church, a stone schoolhouse and a saw mill. In 1859 the Palmyra Association purchased 640 acres of land along the Santa Fe Trail, just south of town from Jacob Hall, a partner in the firm of Waldo, Hall and Co., mail contractors. This company was the first to carry mail by stagecoach from Independence, Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico Territory between 1850 and 1854. Palmyra later merged into Baldwin City.<sup>19</sup>

About one mile northwest of Palmyra was Hickory Point, a small community of four or five settlers' cabins. William Redpath described the area in 1856: "I have not seen a finer part of Kansas for the agriculturist than that lies between the Wakarusa and the tributaries of the Neosha. Indeed, I do not think there is a richer or more beautiful spot on the continent. The prairies are small and undulating; and the streams are so plenty (sic) that you are rarely more than a mile from timber. At Hickory Point there is a grove of many thousand acres, stretching over the hills for miles, and densely timbered."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Letter to W.A. Griffith from G.W.E. Griffith, February, 1913.  
"Recollections of the Battle of Black Jack." Collection of  
Carolyn Bailey Berneking.1.

<sup>18</sup> Gregory M. Franzwa, Maps of the Santa Fe Trail. (St.Louis,  
Missouri: Patrice Press, 1989), 64.

<sup>19</sup> Kelley, "Along the Santa Fe Trail in Douglas County, Kansas."  
13-15.

<sup>20</sup> James Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown; with an  
auto-biography of his childhood and youth. (Boston,  
Massachusetts: Thayer & Eldridge, 1860), 359.

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Prairie City was about one mile southwest of Palmyra and three miles directly west of Black Jack. The town had a post office and a church; and about four or five families lived there.<sup>21</sup> Prairie City was the gathering place for the free-state forces several days before the Black Jack Battle.<sup>22</sup>

After the Civil War the Kansas Pacific Railroad line to Ellsworth, Kansas was completed and the Santa Fe Railroad was routed through Wellsville instead of Black Jack, causing these towns to slowly disappear. A cemetery is all that remains of Black Jack and Prairie City today. A historical marker indicates the well at Palmyra which is still visible.<sup>23</sup>

### POLITICAL CLIMATE

A battle took place 147 years ago, June 2, 1856 on this site. The Battle of Black Jack stands as a significant event leading to the Civil War - one of the nation's first organized armed conflicts between Kansas abolitionists and slavery advocates. It was described as "the first regular battle fought between Free State & Pro-slavery men in Kansas."<sup>24</sup> With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854, Kansas was given the right to determine its statehood as a free state or a slave state. Pending this determination, the territory was a hotbed of armed conflict,

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<sup>21</sup> Letter to W.A. Griffith from G.W.E. Griffith, February, 1913.  
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<sup>22</sup> August Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas." (Topeka, Kansas: Kansas State Historical Society. Transactions, 1903/04. v.8), 281. First published in the Salina Herald, January/February, 1884. Bondi emigrated to St. Louis in 1848 with his parents from Vienna, Austria. He moved to Kansas in 1855 to help establish Kansas as a Free State.

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, "A Brief History of the Black Jack Area in Douglas County, Kansas."

<sup>24</sup> Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood. 154; Quote from: Brown's letter to his wife and children June 24 and 26, 1856. Illinois State Historical Society: Brown's Letters.

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political struggle, and elections that pitted community against community. The East sent money and emigrants to save Kansas for the abolitionists. The South did the same for the pro-slavery forces.<sup>25</sup>

Control of the territorial government was a vital key in determining the fate of Kansas as a free or slave state. It was also critical in addressing issues of land title and other speculative enterprises in this frontier society. In the fall of 1854, President Franklin Pierce selected Andrew H. Reeder as the first governor. Reeder arranged for the November election for the territory's congressional delegate.

The troubles in Kansas began with that election at which Missourians poured over the border and elected a pro-slave delegate to Congress. Widespread eastern newspaper coverage generated both local and national excitement over events in Kansas Territory. In March of 1855, Reeder ordered an election for a territorial legislature that likewise attracted more "Border Ruffians" who swelled voting polls and provided another pro-slavery victory in Kansas Territory. The new legislature enacted laws that were described as "bogus" by freestaters.

In June, freestaters held a convention in Lawrence and repudiated the authority of the pro-slave legislature. From this point on opposition to slavery in Kansas dominated territorial politics and life. Freestaters sought to make anti-slavery resistance the primary issue. Reeder called the legislature into session; and before it adjourned legislators adopted the Missouri statutes for Kansas Territory and other laws "to assure the ascendance of the proslavery forces and the permanence of slavery in Kansas."<sup>26</sup> Reeder was removed and until John W. Geary, stronger proslave territorial governors followed.

In September 1855, the freestate party met in Big Springs and another meeting was held in Topeka. In late October and early November freestaters held a convention in Topeka where a Constitution was drafted that would prohibit slavery in Kansas after July 4, 1857. Under the freestate Constitution, Charles Robinson was elected governor. Subsequently Kansas Territory had a government recognized by federal authorities and a second existing outside the laws of the United States. Each sought to undermine the other.

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<sup>25</sup> William Phillips, The Conquest of Kansas by Missouri and Her Allies. (Boston, Massachusetts: Phillips, Sampston & Co., 1856), 25.

<sup>26</sup> William Frank Zornow, Kansas: a History of the Hayhawk State. (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), 70.

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In the fall of 1855, a new force would emerge in the conflict between the free-state and pro-slavery forces in Kansas. That force would be in the personality of a man who came to haunt Kansas and the nation. That personality was John Brown.

### JOHN BROWN

John Brown was born in 1800 in Torrington, Connecticut to a Calvinist family, whose ancestors had come over on the Mayflower. During Brown's childhood the family moved to the Western Reserve of Ohio, where his father was in the tannery business and a trustee of Oberlin College. Apparently one incident from John Brown's early life clearly affected him. It was later recorded that when he was only twelve he saw a young Negro slave his own age, beaten and abused. His fight against slavery began at that time.<sup>27</sup> "Brown's empathy with blacks was the most remarkable feature of his character," says Merrill Peterson. "He truly believed that black people were the equals of whites, and he conducted himself accordingly."<sup>28</sup>

Brown went into his father's tannery business where he became known as honest, trustworthy, and a tower of strength.<sup>29</sup> He married Dianthe Lusk in 1820 and they had seven children. When she died in childbirth, he married a much younger woman, and they had 13 children. Of these 20 children only eight survived. It was a large, well-disciplined and religious family. W.C. Simons wrote of John Brown in his dedication speech of Black Jack Park in 1940. "John Brown had been a man of distinction in the East. He was of the firm of Perkins & Brown, in Ohio, known throughout the country as importers of the best Spanish, French and Saxony sheep."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, John Brown. (New York, International Publishers, 1962), 26; Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown, 33; see also Villard, Oswald Garrison. John Brown, 1800-1958; a Biography Fifty Years After; Malin, James C. John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six; Oates, Stephen B. To Purge This Land With Blood, a Biography of John Brown.

<sup>28</sup> Peterson, The Legend Revisited, 5.

<sup>29</sup> Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Simons, W.C. "Significance of the Battle of Black Jack." (Lawrence, Kansas; Lawrence Journal World, October 9, 1940); John Brown's sons brought imported stock of Devonshire and Durham cattle when they came to Kansas in 1855.

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John Brown gained support for his anti-slavery cause through contacts with such people as Amos A. Lawrence, treasurer of the New England Emigrant Aid Society, Eli Thayer, originator of the Emigrant Aid Society, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Frederick Douglas, Harriet Beecher Stowe and Harriet Tubman. Tubman, the historical underground railroad conductor, considered Brown, not Abraham Lincoln, the true emancipator of her people. Harriet Stowe collected money for Brown's cause. In 1847, Brown met Frederick Douglass who became his chief confidant and friend throughout his life.<sup>31</sup>

In 1854 when Kansas was opening as a Territory in response to the Kansas Nebraska Act, John Brown's four older sons decided to move to Kansas. In May 1855 they settled on farms northwest of Osawatomie in Miami County. In October 1855 in response to a request from his sons for arms, John Brown arrived with his son Oliver, a son-in-law, Henry Thompson, and a wagonload of weapons. He was an imposing figure, "tall and gaunt with a long, rugged face, which conveyed reserve, endurance, and quiet strength."<sup>32</sup> He settled near his sons and the area was called at various times, "Brown's Station" (now southwest of present day Rantoul), Brownsville, and Fairfield.<sup>33</sup>

### EVENTS LEADING TO THE BATTLE

In November 1855, the situation in Kansas Territory took a serious turn and the conditions would be created for the emergence of John Brown in the critical events in 1856, in Kansas Territory. The murder of free-stater Charles Dow by pro-slavery advocate Franklin Coleman, on November 21st, led Douglas County Sheriff Samuel Jones to arrest Dow's friend Jacob Branson. The subsequent rescue of Branson by his fellow freestaters near Blanton's Crossing, led to the "Wakarusa War" that lasted until late December, 1855.

In the spring of 1856 it was rumored that Lawrence would soon be attacked. There was a general call to all freestate men in Kansas to come to the aid of Lawrence. John Brown and his five sons left Brown's Station on a

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<sup>31</sup> Du Bois, John Brown, 241-244; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 181-205.

<sup>32</sup> Du Bois, John Brown, 173-174; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 14. Brown was 5 feet, 9 inches tall.

<sup>33</sup> Phillips, The Conquest of Kansas, 78; Oswald Garrison Villard, John Brown, 1800-1859; a Biography Fifty Years After. (N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), 112.

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lumber wagon, each with firearms and heavy broadswords strapped around their waists. On the sides of the wagon were fixed bayonets, pointing upwards, a formidable sight. In a letter to his wife, Brown wrote of this incident: "On our way about three miles from Lawrence we had to pass a bridge of which the invaders held possession ... and as we moved directly on to the bridge without making any halt, they for some reason suffered us to pass without interruption."<sup>34</sup> The Brown family was well received in Lawrence as they delivered the firearms to those destitute of arms. A militia called the "Liberty Guards" was organized, twenty in all, with John Brown receiving for the first time the title of Captain.<sup>35</sup> Brown returned to Brown's Station.

On May 21, 1856, Lawrence was sacked by Sheriff Samuel Jones and his posse. Printing presses were destroyed, and buildings burned. On hearing the news at Brown's Station, along with word that Senator Charles Sumner, an abolitionist, had been assaulted in the U.S. Senate Chamber by Preston Brooks of South Carolina (May 22nd), Captain Brown with some of the settlers started for Lawrence to help but were too late. One of the members of Jones' posse was H. Clay Pate, a violent pro-slavery man living near the Kansas-Missouri border. He pretended to be an officer in the U.S. Dragoons and appointed himself leader of about eighty men.<sup>36</sup>

On the night of May 25th, five proslavery men were murdered on Pottawatomie Creek in the vicinity of Osawatimie. The role of John Brown and his sons in these slayings was the subject of great controversy at the time. If he did not personally kill any of these men, he fully sanctioned their execution. Brown was not fearful of the consequences of his actions in Kansas because he believed he was guided by the hand of God in undertaking any acts of revenge. He later said, "I believe I did God service in having them killed."<sup>37</sup> Killing stopped for a few days, presumably because the proslavery raiders feared that for every murdered freestater, John Brown would kill one

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<sup>34</sup> Villard, John Brown, 120.

<sup>35</sup> Villard, John Brown, 120, 121; Phillips, The Conquest of Kansas, 82, 86; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 107.

<sup>36</sup> Andreas, History of the State of Kansas, 132, 355-356; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 129, 152. Oates notes that when Brown heard of the assault on Sumner he and his sons "went crazy - crazy"; Malin, John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six, 46, 47.

<sup>37</sup> Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 147.



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of them.<sup>38</sup> John Brown, Jr. had been in Lawrence after the sacking, and at the time in which the Pottawatomie murders occurred. When he saw he could not help in Lawrence, he came back home to Brown's Station. A few days later, Pate and his company captured John Brown, Jr. and his brother Jason, burned their homes, and delivered them to U.S. Dragoons who were camped on Middle Ottawa creek. Still looking for John Brown, Pate's men took the Santa Fe Road east and camped at Black Jack Creek.<sup>39</sup>

After the capture of his sons, Captain Brown mobilized his own company. Militia had previously been established in every Free State village in the area - the Pottawatomie Rifles under the command of H.H. Williams, Prairie City and Palmyra Guards commanded by Captain Samuel T. Shore and the Osawatomie rifles under a Mr. Dayton, in all about forty men.<sup>40</sup> On May 26, Captain Brown joined these militia in Prairie City with his company of ten. Five of the company were his sons, Frederick, Watson, Oliver, Salmon and Owen as well as Brown's son-in-law, Henry Thompson. The others were Theodore Weiner, James Townsley, Orelus Carpenter and August Bondi.<sup>41</sup> On the 31st of May, Pate's men ransacked a freestater's store in Palmyra. Freestaters responded with a call to meet at Prairie City the next day, Sunday June 1st. Brown and his company arrived in Prairie City in time to attend church services. Suddenly just as the liturgy was coming to an end, commotion and gunfire were heard outside. A crowd from the church had captured two proslavery men who admitted they had come from Pate's camp at Black Jack Creek, four miles to the east. Brown demanded to know what they were doing in Prairie City. The prisoners said Pate had taken two men hostage and was out looking for "the rest of those damn Browns." Brown's men wanted to attack at once but Brown persuaded them to wait until dark when they joined forces with Capt. Shore and a company of eighteen men and started for Black Jack.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas", 280.

<sup>39</sup> Phillips, The Conquest of Kansas, 333; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 151; Connelly, William E. John Brown. (Topeka, Kansas; Crane & Co., 1900), 257.

<sup>40</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas." 281.

<sup>41</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas." 281.

<sup>42</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas." 282, 285-287; Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown, 124.

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### BLACK JACK BATTLE

The twenty-eight men marched until they reached a woods southwest of Black Jack Creek and waited for dawn. Brown's men could hear Pate's horses and sounds of the men stirring. They saw that Pate's wagons had been placed as a shield in a line several yards out along the high prairie ground. Pate's men were well equipped with Sharpe's rifles which had a range of three hundred yards. Shore's company had a few Sharpes, but Brown's group had only older and shorter range rifles. It was Brown's strategy to split into two groups; he and his men would go to the right over the prairie to get to the ravine sheltering Pate's men, and Shore's men would go to the left down to the ravine, thus getting Pate's men in a crossfire.<sup>43</sup> When Brown gave the word, they all ran up the hill to the Santa

Fe Trail ruts and lay down in the tall grass.<sup>44</sup> Brown's group ran to the right into the far south ravine, but Shore's men began trading fire with the enemy who came from behind their wagons. During the heavy firing, some of Pate's men retreated to the ravine and slipped away as did all but eight of Shore's men, including Shore himself.<sup>45</sup> When Brown saw he was losing numbers he stationed his men along the Santa Fe Trail using it as a rifle pit.<sup>46</sup> He told two riflemen to shoot at the enemy's horses. With four shots they downed two horses and two mules. Right in heat of the battle, Frederick Brown, who had been left in charge of the horses, appeared on one of them brandishing his Pottawatomie cutlass over his head and shouting: "Pa, we have them surrounded and have cut off their

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<sup>43</sup> C.G. Allen, "Personal Recollections of the Early History of Kansas." (Meade, Kansas. The Republican, 5 February 1890)

<sup>44</sup> Redpath, The Public Life of Captain John Brown, 130; Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas", 287; Loren K. Litteer, Bleeding Kansas: the Border War in Douglas and Surrounding Counties, (Baldwin City, Kansas: Champion, 1987), 46-55.

<sup>45</sup> Phillips, The Conquest of Kansas, 341; Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 153.

<sup>46</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas", 287. The trail ruts had been worn to about two feet deep and two feet wide.

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communications." Pate thought Frederick was leading a cavalry charge and with his transportation disappearing, thought it was time to surrender.<sup>47</sup>

Captain Brown told the story of the surrender in a letter to Horace Greeley, the editor of The New York Daily Tribune.

"Fifteen Free State men, all told, were all that remained on and near the ground at the time the surrender was made and it was made to nine men only, myself included in that number. . . . When the flag of truce was displayed, I went at once to meet it, being at that moment from sixty to eighty rods from the enemy's camp, and met it half way, it being carried by two men...I at once learned from those bearing the flag that in reality they had no other design than to divert me and consume time by getting me to go to their camp to hear explanations. I sent one of them back to tell the Captain that if he had any proposal to make, to come at once and make it. He also came armed to where I stood and began to tell about his authority from the General Government. I replied that I should listen to nothing of that kind, and that, if he had any proposal to make, I would hear it at once, and that, if he had none for me, I had one for him, and that was immediate and unconditional surrender."<sup>48</sup>

The combat had lasted three hours with no loss of life, though several on both sides were severely wounded, including Brown's son Salmon and son-in-law Thompson. With the surrender came a large collection of guns and goods taken at Lawrence and Palmyra, twenty-three horses and mules stolen from the settlers, along with wagons, ammunition, camp-equipment and provisions for the men.<sup>49</sup>

Captain John Brown and his men marched back to Brown's Station with twenty-four prisoners including Captain Pate. Pate signed an agreement whereby Brown would exchange his prisoners for an equal number of freestate captives. Specifically, Pate would be traded for John Brown Jr. and Jason Brown. According to biographer Stephen Oates, "Brown was immensely proud of his victory over the Missourians and he wrote his wife that Black

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<sup>47</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas", 288.

<sup>48</sup> "Letter to Horace Greeley, editor, from John Brown, Lawrence, Kansas Territory, July 1, 1856." (New York, New York Daily Tribune, July 11, 1856), 6. Lawrence, Kansas. Collection of Karl Gridley. 2002.

<sup>49</sup> Bondi, "With John Brown in Kansas", 288.

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Jack was the 'first regular battle fought between Free State & pro Slavery men in Kansas. May God still gird our loins & hold our right hands, & to Him may we give the glory.'"<sup>50</sup>

Following the Battle of Black Jack, Brown and his sons continued engaging in warfare with proslavery forces through the Fall of 1856. Three sons died in subsequent fighting at Osawatomie and Harpers Ferry. Conflict subsided in late Fall of 1856 when Governor Gerary intervened and brought organized armed conflict to an end. John Brown left Kansas in October and went East to fund raise for support of the anti-slavery cause in Kansas. He returned to Kansas briefly in November of 1857 to gather his first recruits for the raid on Harpers Ferry, including John E. Cook, Aaron D. Stevens and John A. Kagi.<sup>51</sup> Brown also returned to Kansas in June of 1858 following the Marais des Cygnes massacre. In December of 1858 he led a raid into Missouri to free slaves.

In 1859 Brown took over the U.S. Armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, in hopes of inciting a slave insurrection. However, he was captured, tried and hanged for treason. The fight to eradicate slavery in this country, the overriding mission of John Brown's life, was realized when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863 and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on December 6, 1865.

In conclusion, the Battle of Black Jack and subsequent skirmishes throughout the spring and summer of '56 in Kansas became a historical benchmark for the remainder of the territorial struggle. The "Battles of '56" molded and defined much of the political debate and climate that followed and became a historical epoch in their own right.

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<sup>50</sup> Oates, To Purge This Land With Blood, 154. Quote from: Brown's letter to his wife and children June 24 and 26, 1856. Brown letters. Illinois State Historical Society.

<sup>51</sup> See Richard J. Hinton Papers. Kansas State Historical Society. Letters of Cook, Stevens, and Kagi.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property stands on a 20.27-acre tract on the W1/2, NW1/4, NW1/4, S.7, T.15S, R.20E (Black Jack Park and Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve) and the SE1/4, SE1/4, NE1/4, NE1/4, S.12, T.15S, R.20E (Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park) in Palmyra Township, Douglas County, KS. The larger tract, Black Jack Park and Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve, is bordered by U. S. Highway 56 to the north. Douglas County Road 2000 runs along the western edge of the 20-acre site and along the eastern edge of the .27-acre site, Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park. All other boundaries are comprised of adjacent property.

**Boundary Justification**

The nomination includes a large portion of the landscape associated with the 1856 Battle of Black Jack. Adjacent property to the west is also associated with the battle and may be incorporated into the boundaries in the future.

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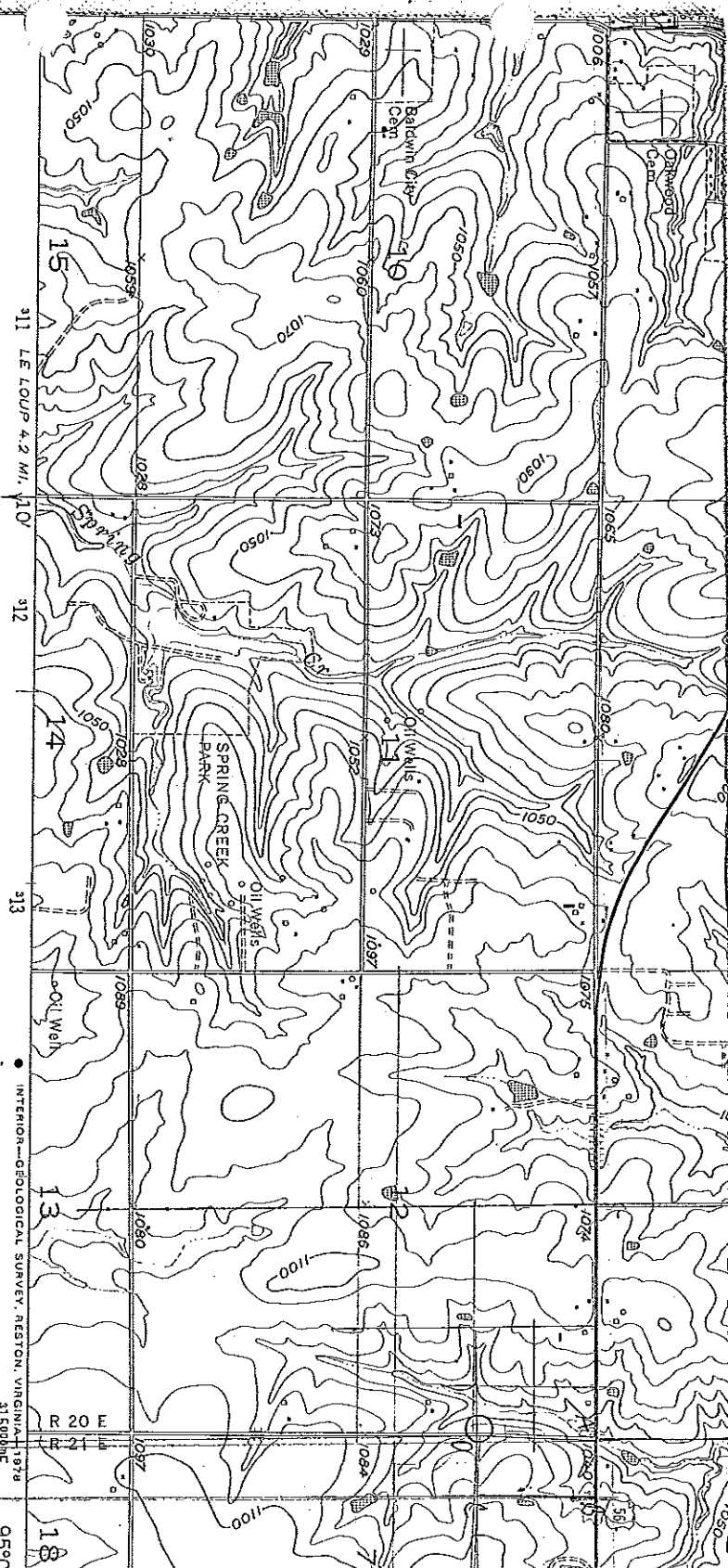
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Black Jack Park

Ivan Boyd Prairie Preserve

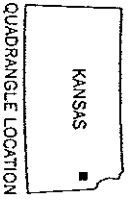
Robert Hall Pearson Memorial Park



EDGERTON 6  
KANSAS CITY

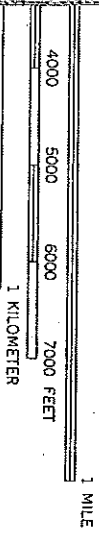
BACK JACK  
BATTLEFIELD  
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(B) 15 315120  
4292925  
(C) 15 315101  
4292510  
(D) 15 314910  
4292520

(WELLSVILLE)  
6961 11 NE



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

10 FEET  
SCALE DATUM OF 1929



MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
LORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
LAWRENCE, KANSAS 66044  
SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

BALDWIN CITY, KANS.

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