

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Nebraska-Kansas Public Land Survey Thematic Group (NeHBS # RH00-062)  
(NeHBS # JF00-072)

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number See Continuation Sheet N/A not for publication

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	N/A occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See Continuation Sheet

street & number N/A

city, town N/A N/A vicinity of state N/A

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. See Continuation Sheet

street & number N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

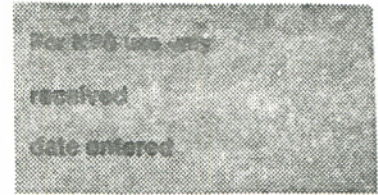
date On-going  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Nebraska State Historical Society

city, town Lincoln state Nebraska

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Continuation sheet    Location    Item number    2    Page    1

Each monument marks the actual point where several counties meet. Since the monuments are larger than a point, they lie in more than one county.

RH00-062

Vicinity of Rulo

Nebraska	code 031	counties Richardson	code 147
Kansas	code 020	counties Brown	code 013
		Doniphan	043

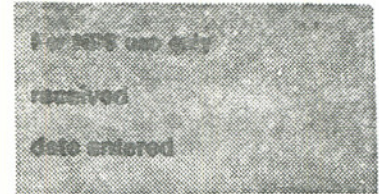
JF00-072

Vicinity of Mahaska

Kansas	code 020	counties Republic	code 157
		Washington	201
Nebraska	code 031	counties Jefferson	code 095
		Thayer	169

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Continuation sheet Owner of Property

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The actual survey monuments are part of the public domain, which is administered by the Bureau of Land Management. The land on which the monuments lie is owned by various public and private individuals.

Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Denver Federal Center—Building 50  
6th Kipling Street  
Denver, Colorado 80225.

RH00-062

HBJ Farms, Inc.  
White Cloud, Kansas 66094

Leonard H. Fee and Pauline Fee  
Rural Route  
Hiawatha, Kansas 66434

JF00-072

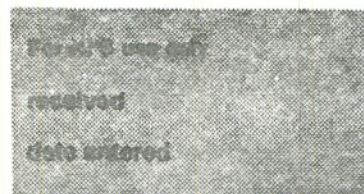
Leslie J. Cossaart  
Rural Route  
Mahaska, Kansas 66955

Walter M. and Frances Schnelle  
618 Woodland Drive  
Washington, Kansas 66968

Nebraska Board of Educational Lands & Funds  
P.O. Box 94986  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68509-4986

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Continuation sheet    Local of Legal Description    Item number    5

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RH00-062

Register of Deeds  
Richardson County Courthouse  
Falls City, Nebraska 68355

Register of Deeds  
Brown County Courthouse  
Hiawatha, Kansas 66434

Register of Deeds  
Doniphan County Courthouse  
Troy, Kansas 66087

JF00-072

Register of Deeds  
Jefferson County Courthouse  
Fairbury, Nebraska 68352

Register of Deeds  
Thayer County Courthouse  
Hebron, Nebraska 68370

Register of Deeds  
Republic County Courthouse  
Belleville, Kansas 66935

Register of Deeds  
Washington County Courthouse  
Washington, Kansas 66968

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date N/A

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The cast iron monument marking the point of intersection of the 40° North latitude line and the bluff on the west bank of the Missouri River is six feet high and tapers from a 16" base to 7" at its top. Its north side is marked "Nebraska", the south "Kansas", the east "1854", and the west "40° N. Lat.". It is located by four witness stones 12" x 3", set 10 feet from the monument. The sandstone monument marking the point of intersection of the Sixth Principal Meridian and the 40° N latitude base line is 14" high with small stones anchoring the base. This is the extant portion of the original 48"x15"x6" monument. Also extant are two of the four witness stones set 10 feet from the monument. The stone to the south is sandstone and measures 21"x11"x2" and the one to the west is limestone, measuring 18"x10"x3". This is a thematic nomination that consists of two separate sites with a total of eight contributing objects (five and three each).

RH00:062 This monument is a hollow cast iron shaft 1" thick, weighing between 500 and 600 pounds. It is six feet high with a flange base 16"x16". Directly above the base it is 11"x11" tapering to 7"x7" at the top which is beveled. The monument is marked on its four sides with raised cast upper case Roman letters that are 1 1/4" high. The north side reads "Nebraska", the south "Kansas", the west "40° N. Lat.", and the east "1854". A St. Louis company cast the monument in 1854. It was set in place on May 8, 1855, by Charles A. Manners, a U.S. Deputy Surveyor. Manner's field notes state that "said monument or cast iron post was erected by setting the same two feet in the ground with a flat stone well bedded underneath it for a foundation and the excavation around the post well rammed with earth and small stones...the sides of the monument facing the cardinal points". Manners also set four stones about 12 inches in width and 3 inches thick in the ground ("witness stones") about one foot deep and ten feet from the monument, one in each of the cardinal directions, which he connected by a trench ten inches deep. He marked four black oak trees, one in each of the four sections that meet at the monument, indicating the appropriate section, township and range for each.

In 1924, after having been toppled and set upright in an erroneous location, the monument was reset in a sturdier foundation. Leo M. Petersen set a cement base 14x30x30 inches on top of the original limestone base. At the exact point of intersection of the lines connecting the witness stones he set (14 inches deep in the cement base and resting upon the limestone) an iron

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Description

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pipe three feet long and three inches in diameter, with a brass cap on the top marked "Kansas Initial Corner 1924" and "SC TIN", "R18E S36" and "R19E S31." He then placed the original cast iron shaft down over the iron survey pipe and secured it with two strap irons on four bolts set firmly in the cement base. This monument stands today in an excellent state of preservation. It is six and one-half miles southeast of Rulo, Nebraska, about 200 feet west of the road between Rulo and White Cloud, Kansas, and on top of the first bluff bank overlooking the Missouri River to the east. It stands on the point where the parallel of 40° N latitude (Kansas-Nebraska state line) intersects the top of the bluff on the west bank of the Missouri River, and marks the initial point of survey for Kansas and Nebraska.

JF00:072 This monument was set June 11, 1856, by Charles A. Manners in a flat area of prairie at the point where the Sixth Principal Meridian intersects the 40° N latitude base line (the point where present day Thayer and Jefferson Counties, Nebraska, and Washington and Republic Counties, Kansas, meet). Made from red sandstone, the mounument measured 48"x15"x6" and was set to correspond with the cardinal points, with its flat sides facing north and south and its edges east and west. The north face was inscribed wth the letter "N" and "T1N", while the south face read "K" and "T1S". The east side was inscribed with "R1E" and the west with "1856" and "R1W". Manners field notes state that the stone was set "2 ft in the ground and firmly fastened with smaller stones about its base". Following accepted procedure, Manners also set witness stones at a distance of ten feet from the monument in each of the cardinal directions. He describes them as follows:

"on the North Limestone 20x10x2  
on the East Limestone 19x11x3  
on the South Limestone 21x11x2  
on the West Limestone 18x10x3"

Present day surveyors had taken the location of this monument for granted, although it was not visible above ground. It was unearthed in 1976 by the U.S. Geodetic Survey and then re-buried, since it lies in the center of a county road. On October 25, 1986, 16 surveyors representing five states once again unearthed the monument. Buried in the ground was the bottom 14" of the sandstone marker with small stones about its base. Also found was the sandstone set ten feet to the south and the limestone set ten feet to the west. The upper approximately 34" of

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Description

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the monument had apparently been broken off at a much earlier time. The top 8" had been found in a nearby ditch by the owner of adjacent property. Visible on that portion was "1856" and "R1W". The group of surveyors spearheading the project to locate the monument intend to excavate the adjacent area in the spring of 1987 hoping to locate the two remaining witness stones and the middle portion of the monument, with the goal of restoring it.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1855, 1856 to 1937 Builder/Architect N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

These surveyors' monuments and the witness stones that locate them are significant on the state level in the area of settlement for their role in the surveying of the public domain and resultant land transfer in five states. The cast iron monument located on a bluff above the Missouri River marks the initial point for survey in Nebraska and Kansas and was the reference point for survey in much of the first settled areas of these two states. The sandstone monument marks the intersection of the Sixth Principal Meridian and its base line (40° N latitude parallel) from which public lands were surveyed in all of Kansas and Nebraska and parts of Wyoming, Colorado and South Dakota. Since these monuments have been used, from the time they were set up to the present for public land surveys, their significance ranges from 1855-56 to the present. Historically, however, this period would end in 1937.

### HISTORY

The passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 opened vast amounts of the Public Domain for settlement. In Kansas, hundreds of Missourians, most of whom were pro-slavery, immediately staked claims just across the Kansas-Missouri border. While settlement proceeded somewhat slower in Nebraska, there was still an urgent need to locate and identify the land so that ownership could be easily transferred from the federal government to private individuals. Arrangements were quickly made for the region to be surveyed, starting at the Missouri River. On August 1, 1854, John Calhoun was appointed Surveyor General of Nebraska and Kansas. On August 26, 1854, the Commissioner of the General Land Office sent instructions to Calhoun to determine the location of the 40° N latitude parallel and to survey it west from the Missouri River. Captain Thomas J. Lee of the U.S. Topographical Engineers determined by astronomical observation the point of intersection of the 40° N parallel and the river. This point was to be the initial point for all survey in Nebraska and Kansas, and the 40° N parallel became the base line for surveys from the Sixth Principal Meridian (Sixth P.M.) as well as the boundary between Nebraska and Kansas. J.P. Johnson, a deputy surveyor set an oak post at the initial point on November 17, 1854, and proceeded to survey west 108 miles to the Sixth P.M.

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The cast iron monument marking the initial point was ordered by Captain Lee when he returned to St. Louis, with the instructions that upon completion it be forwarded up river "with the least delay" so that Johnson could set it. Late in the year 1854 Lee returned to St. Joseph to discover that the monument had only just arrived there. He stored it with Messrs. Donnell, Saxton and Potee, advised the Surveyor General of the situation and suggested that the monument be planted the next year. In April, 1855, U.S. Deputy Surveyor Charles A. Manners was issued instructions to set the iron monument, which he did on May 8, 1855. Manners also set four witness stones and marked four black oak trees.

At this same time, Manners was instructed to examine Johnson's survey of the 40° N base line, which he found grossly in error. He resurveyed the entire 108 miles of the base line and marked its point of intersection with the Sixth P.M. on June 11, 1856. He set the sandstone monument and four witness stones which he connected with a 7" elevation of earth.

In 1924 Leo M. Petersen, a U.S. Surveyor from the Government Land Office was instructed to restore the initial corner of the Kansas and Nebraska Public Surveys. He discovered that the cast iron monument had been toppled from its original base and set upright 2 1/2 feet to the north. The excavation of the witness stones and faint surface indications of a rectangular trench verified this relocation. On June 28, 1924 Petersen set a cement base on top of the original limestone base. In the cement he set an iron pipe with a brass cap marking the location. He then placed the original cast iron shaft over the pipe and secured it. His work has held the monument in place to the present day.

The sandstone monument marking the Sixth P.M. was apparently broken off and covered by roadbed many years ago. It has been unearthed and covered over at least three times: in 1976 by the U.S. Geodetic Survey, in 1985 by Larry Goracke, appointed Jefferson County Surveyor, and in 1986 by a group of surveyors from five states sponsored by the Professional Surveyors Association of Nebraska. The surveyors unearthed the base and lower portion of the shaft and have located the top portion of the monument. Their goal is to locate the missing middle section and completely restore the monument.

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**SIGNIFICANCE**

These surveyors' monuments and the witness stones which locate them are significant on the state level in the area of settlement for their role in the surveying of the public domain and resultant land transfer in five states. The period of significance begins with the setting of each monument. They were used by surveyors from that date on and are used today for the same purposes. Historically, the period of significance, by definition, would end in 1937.

Public lands date from the formation of the United States. The federal government acquired land through cession, treaty and purchase. Nearly two billion acres of land in 32 states (4/5 of the gross area of the U.S.) at one time or another have been part of the Public Domain. This land was transferred to private individuals by various types of land grants and through sale authorized by Public Land Laws.

Shortly after the formation of the United States, the federal government conceived an idea for a method to accumulate funds for its depleted treasury and to protect its western borders. It would sell land from its vast western (west of the Appalachians) holdings. To do so, the land had to be accurately located and described. In 1784, the Continental Congress appointed a committee to develop a plan to facilitate such transactions. The result was the 1785 Land Ordinance whose provisions determined the shape of land parcels, the numbering system for land division and the terms for purchase. A 1796 revision of this ordinance substantially reflects the system in use today.

The method for land location is called the rectangular survey system (sometimes referred to as the "township and range" system). Survey begins at the "initial point", which is the intersection of a principal meridian (a true meridian) and a base line, (run at right angles to the p.m.) of which there are 31 in the contiguous U.S. and five in Alaska. (see map) Six-mile-square townships are laid out and numbered north and south of the base line. A line or column of townships is called a range and they are numbered east or west of the principal meridian. Each township is divided into one-mile-square sections (640 acres) numbered from 1 to 36. The sections can be further subdivided and thus described and identified. Field and fence lines and road networks follow this rectangular system of land division, resulting in the now familiar pattern of squares, rectangles and right angles of the rural landscape.

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In surveying public lands, monuments are set with the intention of establishing a permanent marking of the lines and fixing the corner positions so that the location of the surveyed lands may always be definitely known. Witness stones are set to verify exact location of the monuments. Once monuments have been set and the survey accepted, they cannot be changed, even if technical error is later identified. These surveys are called cadastral surveys and are "the foundation upon which rests title to all land that is now, or was once, part of the Public Domain of the United States" (Cazier, p.107).

In Nebraska and Kansas survey was begun in 1854 with the determination of the 40° N latitude line (which became the base line for the Sixth P.M.) and its intersection with the Missouri River. This point, marked by the cast iron monument in Richardson, Doniphan and Brown counties, is the initial point for survey in Nebraska and Kansas, and was the reference point for land survey in much of the first settled areas of these two states. The 40° N line was run only 108 miles west to the Sixth Principal Meridian because of apprehensions of Indian interruption and because it was thought that settlement would not occur any further west. In fact the survey instructions do not include the Sixth P.M. They state:

At some future time, when necessary, it is proposed to start a principal meridian, extending on the north of such base to the Missouri river in Nebraska, and on the south of the same to the southern boundary of Kansas, which is the 37th parallel of north latitude. Although the public surveys will count from the principal meridian precisely as if the same were surveyed, the labor of such meridian survey will be now omitted, and that labor will be directed to insure practical results of more immediate importance. (Committee, p. 4)

In 1858-59, however, the line was extended west to the Rocky Mountains. This base line and the corresponding Sixth Principal Meridian, marked by the sandstone monument in Thayer, Jefferson, Washington, and Republic counties, serve as the reference points for survey of public lands in all of Kansas and Nebraska, and approximately 95% of Wyoming, 75% of Colorado and 15% of South Dakota. (see map) These two monuments not only represent the larger survey system that made possible the rapid settlement of the western United States, but are also actual monuments, marking major points of reference, that have been used every day since they were set by public land surveyors in a five state area.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data See Continuation Sheet

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name N/A

Quadrangle scale N/A

UTM References

A 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

B 

Zone	Easting			Northing					

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

N/A

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state N/A code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title See Continuation Sheet

organization N/A date N/A

street & number N/A telephone N/A

city or town N/A state N/A

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *James A. Johnson*

title Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

date 4/30/87

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Bibliography

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Brinker, Russell C. and Paul R. Wolf. *Elementary Surveying*, Seventh Edition. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1984.

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Petersen, Leo M. Report of restoration Initial Corner of Kansas and Nebraska Public Land Surveys, "Special Work", Nebraska, in *The Nebraska Surveyor*, 5:2 (April-June, 1986): 8-12.

"Search Is On for Key Surveyors' Monument." *Omaha World-Herald*, October 25, 1986, p. 13.

Sheldon, Addison Erwin. *History and Stories of Nebraska*. Chicago: The University Publishing Co., 1914.

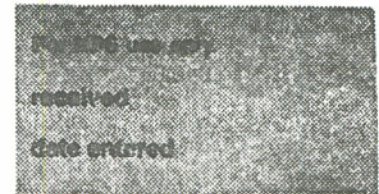
"Surveyors locate historic 1856 marker." *Lincoln Sunday Journal-Star*, October 26, 1986.

"'This must be the place' was right and significant marker was found." *Lincoln Sunday Journal-Star*, March 24, 1985, p. 2B.

U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. *Manual of Instructions for the Survey of the Public Lands of the United States, Technical Bulletin 6*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973.

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RH00-062

Acreage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Big Lake, MO-Nebr.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM Reference

Zone 15, Easting 300925, Northing 4430000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The area to be nominated is a square measuring 14.14 feet per side, totaling 200 square feet. This area will include the monument and the four witness stones. It is determined by the location of the witness stones, which are 10 feet from the monument in each of the cardinal directions. The square is created by connecting the four stones. This follows the trench line that was dug in 1855. The result is a triangular parcel of land in each section that measures 10'x10'x14.14' and totals 50 square feet (see figure below). The triangular parcel is in the extreme corner of each of the following:

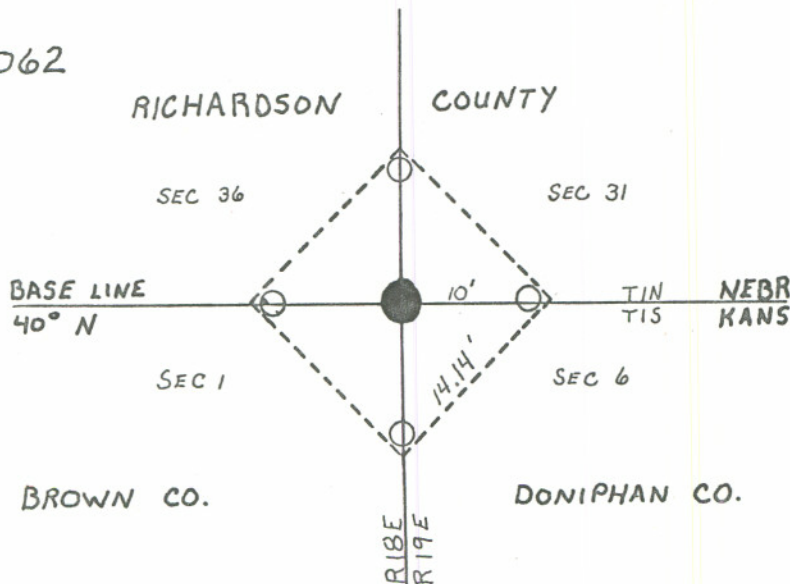
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- SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 31 R19E T1N
- NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 1 R18E T1S
- NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 6 R19E T1S

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries.

RH00-062

Nebraska	code 031	counties	Richardson	code 147
Kansas	code 020	counties	Brown	code 013
			Doniphan	043

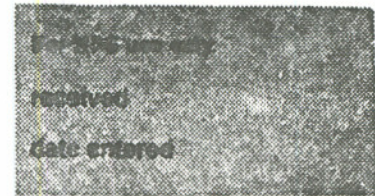
RH00-062



--- NOMINATION BOUNDARY  
 ——— TOWNSHIP LINE  
 ○ WITNESS STONE  
 ● MONUMENT  
 1" = 13.3' ↑

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JF00-072

Acreage of nominated property less than one  
Quadrangle name Reynolds, Nebr.-Kans.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM Reference

Zone 14, Easting 639228, Northing 4429040

Verbal boundary description and justification

The area to be nominated is a square measuring 14.14 feet per side, totaling 200 square feet. This area will include the monument and the two extant witness stones. It is determined by the location of the four original witness stones, which were set 10 feet from the monument in each of the cardinal directions. The square is created by connecting the location of the four stones. This follows the trench line that was dug in 1856. The result is a triangular parcel of land in each section that measures 10'x10'x14.14' and totals 50 square feet (see figure below). The triangular parcel is in the extreme corner of each of the following:

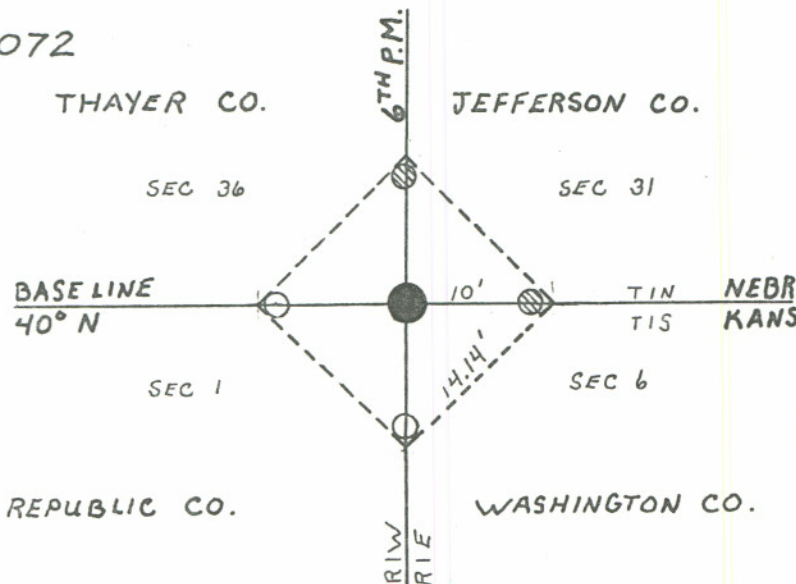
- SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of SE $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 36 R1W T1N
- SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$  of SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 31 R1E T1N
- NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE $\frac{1}{4}$  of NE $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 1 R1W T1S
- NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW $\frac{1}{4}$  of NW $\frac{1}{4}$  Sec. 6 R1E T1S

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries.

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Kansas	code 020	counties	Republic	code 157
			Washington	201
Nebraska	code 031	counties	Jefferson	code 095
			Thayer	169

JF00-072

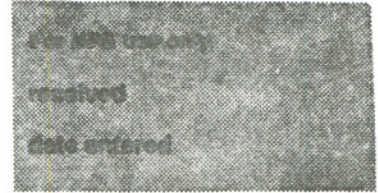


- NOMINATION BOUNDARY
- TOWNSHIP LINE
- WITNESS STONE
- ⊗ NON-EXTANT WITNESS STONE
- MONUMENT
- 1" = 13.3' ↑

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

State Historic Preservation Officer Certification



Continuation sheet

Item number 12

Page 1

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:  
           national        X   state                 local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Richard D. Penkety  
title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date 5/18/87

DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

JAN 22 1987

RECEIVED