### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
#### INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

#### 1. NAME

- **Common:** Lecompton Constitution Hall
- **AND/OR HISTORIC:** Lecompton Constitution Hall

#### 2. LOCATION

- **STREET AND NUMBER:** West side of Elmore, between Woodson and Third Streets
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Lecompton
- **STATE:** Kansas
- **COUNTY:** Douglas

#### 3. CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY (Check One)</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ District</td>
<td>□ Public</td>
<td>□ Occupied</td>
<td>Yes: [ ] Restricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Site</td>
<td>□ Private</td>
<td>□ Unoccupied</td>
<td>[ ] Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Structure</td>
<td>□ Both</td>
<td>□ Being Considered</td>
<td>[ ] Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Object</td>
<td>□ Public</td>
<td>□ Preservation work in progress</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate):**
- □ Agricultural  
- □ Commercial  
- □ Educational  
- □ Entertainment  
- □ Government  
- □ Industrial  
- □ Military  
- □ Museum  
- □ Park  
- □ Private Residence  
- □ Religious  
- □ Scientific  
- □ Transportation  
- □ Other (Specify): Meeting Hall

#### 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

- **OWNER’S NAME:** Rebekah Lodge #698, c/o Miss Mary Nelle Lasswell
- **STREET AND NUMBER:** (no street address)
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Lecompton
- **STATE:** Kansas

#### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

- **COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:** Register of Deeds
- **STREET AND NUMBER:** Douglas County Courthouse
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Lawrence
- **STATE:** Kansas

#### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

- **TITLE OF SURVEY:** National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings (designated other site considered): National Register
- **DATE OF SURVEY:** 1961, 1971
- **DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:** Historic Sites Survey; National Register; Kansas State Historical Society
- **STREET AND NUMBER:** 1100 L St. NW (HSS and NR); 120 West 10th St. (KSHS)
- **CITY OR TOWN:** Washington / Topeka
- **STATE:** D.C. / Kansas
The tragic episode in our nation's history known as "bleeding Kansas" is illustrated by a simple white frame building known as the Lecompton Constitution Hall, the only remaining building of the several where opposing drafts of the first Kansas Constitution were approved. The constitutional debate in Kansas was the political aspect of a bloody struggle to test the divisive Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Since the act permitted Kansans to determine for themselves if their Territory were to become a free or slave State, a great influx of outsiders of opposing sympathies swelled the population in the race to take the State by popular demand. Constitutions were approved in mass assemblies at Topeka, Lecompton, Lawrence, and Wyandotte. The Lecompton Constitution of 1856, a pro-slavery document supported by President Buchanan but rejected by Congress, served to inflame the growing sectional dispute which was shortly to burst out in Civil War.

History

From August 1855 to January 1861, Lecompton was the territorial capital of Kansas and also the headquarters of proslavery elements in the territory.

Constitution Hall, as it became later known, was the meeting place for the second territorial legislature which met from January 12 to February 20, 1857.

In late 1857 a special election was held to choose delegates for a constitutional convention. Charging that the election was rigged to give proslavery supporters a disproportionate share of the delegates, free-State supporters refused to participate. As a result, all 60 members chosen for the convention were proslavery in their beliefs. The "elected" delegates met briefly, on September 7, 1857, and then adjourned, stating that the members needed time to gather and digest information. Free-State forces believed their real reason for adjournment was to await the outcome of the October election for the territorial legislature.

Proslavery advocates suffered a setback when the election's results demonstrated what the majority of Kansans desired by giving a victory to the free-State sympathizers. (continued)
8. Significance: (1) Lecompton Constitution Hall

Seizing a last opportunity to make Kansas a slave state, delegates to the Lecompton convention reconvened on October 19, 1857 at Constitution Hall. Before voting on any document a resolution was passed which informed delegates they could not do so unless they agreed to make Kansas a slave state. The assembled constitution was placed before the territorial electorate with a choice to either vote for a "Constitution with Slavery" or a "Constitution with no Slavery." The latter choice, however, meant only that no more slaves could be brought into Kansas; those already present and their descendants would remain as slaves. Whichever way the choice was made, a protection of existing rights to slave property would be maintained by the constitution.

In Washington President Buchanan urged Congress to accept the Lecompton Constitution while senators such as Stephen Douglas led the fight against ratification. Passage of the document would have seen Kansas admitted as a slave state and debate over it symbolized the growing sectional conflict in the country. In August 1858 the people of Kansas rejected the constitution nearly 6-1 in a proposition to vote for or against it.

The third territorial legislature, dominated by free-Staters, met in Lecompton December 7, 1857, and again January 4, 1858, in special session. Once domination of the legislature by Free-Staters was assured, meeting at Lecompton became a mere formality since it was required by law. Instead, legislators would shortly adjourn to Lawrence where general accommodations were in greater supply.
Lecompton Constitution Hall is a simple rectangular, two-story white frame building with a gabled roof, pediment and stone foundation. Since the terrain slopes to the front of the building, an uncovered porch raised on stone piers with straight stone stairs to the left, provides entry to the building. The front door is glazed with 12 lights. The windows are plain trimmed with double-hung sash two lights over two.

The plans of both floors are basically the same—a large meeting room at the front and two smaller rooms side-by-side at the rear. The second floor is reached by an enclosed straight stairway within the left rear room which is entered from both the meeting room and the outside. There is an inside chimney against the south wall and another that runs down the south wall of the right rear rooms.

The hall is used for lodge meetings, public activities and as a polling place during elections. There has been some minor remodeling inside but the outward appearance is basically unchanged from the historic period. The Odd Fellows Lodge acquired the hall in 1894, and ownership was vested in the local Rebekah Lodge after World War II. The building is privately owned and open to the public by prearrangement.
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM
(Type all entries - attach to or envelope with photograph)

1. NAME
COMMON
Lecompton Constitution Hall
AND/OR HISTORIC
Lecompton Constitution Hall.
NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)

2. LOCATION
STATE
Kansas
COUNTY
Douglas
TOWN
Lecompton

STREET AND NUMBER
West side of Elmore, between Woodson and Third Streets

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT
National Park Service,
Benjamin Levy
DATE
10-10-73
NEGATIVE FILED AT
Historic and Architectural Surveys

4. IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
Front left corner, looking northwest
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PROPERTY MAP FORM**

(*Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map*)

<table>
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<td>TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Property boundaries where required.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. North arrow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Latitude and longitude reference.</td>
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**STATE** Kansas  
**COUNTY** Douglas  
**ENTRY NUMBER**  
**DATE**
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEODATA

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1 acre

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

STATE: CODE COUNTY: CODE

ORGANIZATION: Division of Historic and Architectural Surveys
National Park Service

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington
STATE: D.C.
CODE:

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Paul Ghioto, research assistant and Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of Historic and Architectural Surveys
National Park Service

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington
STATE: D.C.

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 ____________________________
Title ____________________________
Date ____________________________

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

______________________________
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date ____________________________

ATTEST:

______________________________
Keeper of The National Register

Date ____________________________
6. Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas (State)
   1957
   Kansas State Historical Society
   120 West 10th St.
   Topeka, Kansas 66612     Code: 20

   Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration
   1939     Federal

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