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 National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name  Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Other names/site number  KHRI #087-460 (house) & 087-4240-00015 (stone outbuilding)

Name of related Multiple Property Listing  N/A

2. Location

Street & number  609 Walnut Street (US-59)

City or town  Oskaloosa

State  Kansas  Code  KS  County  Jefferson  Code  087  Zip code  66066

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national  ___ statewide  x local  Applicable National Register Criteria:  x A  x B  ___ C  ___ D

See file.

Signature of certifying official/Title  Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO  Date

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official  Date

Title  

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

_____ entered in the National Register  _____ determined eligible for the National Register

_____ determined not eligible for the National Register  _____ removed from the National Register

_____ other (explain:)  

Signature of the Keeper  Date of Action
5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)
- x 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.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributing</th>
<th>Noncontributing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 buildings</td>
<td>1 site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 district</td>
<td>1 site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 structure</td>
<td>1 object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
- DOMESTIC/single-dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
- WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
- VERNACULAR

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)
- foundation: STONE
- walls: WOOD/weatherboard & board & batten
- roof: OTHER/Composite shingle
- other: WOOD/shingle
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Jefferson County, Kansas

Narrative Description

Summary

The Newell-Johnson-Searle House is located on a half-acre parcel along US-59 highway on the east edge of Oskaloosa (population 1,084) in Jefferson County, Kansas (Figure 1). Situated on a slight rise, the former farmstead is a tree-filled lot with a cluster of three buildings – a 2-1/2-story, wood-frame residence, a one-story stone building with a cellar, and a wood-frame garage (Figure 2). The buildings reflect varying periods and methods of construction, illustrating its transition from a Territorial-era homestead to a fashionable early 20th-century farmstead. The property’s setting, location, and built features all reflect its significance to the early history of Oskaloosa.

Elaboration

Setting (Photos 1 & 2)

Oskaloosa is a small county-seat town located near the center of rural Jefferson County in northeast Kansas. The Newell-Johnson-Searle property is all that remains of a once-thriving farmstead of more than 100 acres. The character of the setting surrounding the property has changed in recent decades from close-in rural farmsteads and residences of the 19th and early 20th centuries to small commercial and industrial properties. The development and use of US-59 highway has contributed to the change in character, and today, this property is the only residential parcel along the east side of a nine-block stretch of the highway.

There are a few defining characteristics of the site (contributing resource) that identify this property as a former farmstead. The many trees, particularly along the property lines, provide a wind break and a canopy that envelopes the cluster of buildings. Second, and somewhat less obvious, is the disappearing network of paths and sidewalks of both concrete and native stone pavers on the property. For example, one set of stone pavers skirts the south side of the house, leading to the back porch and stone building. Historic photographs of the property reveal more evidence of the circulation patterns, suggesting most activity and foot-traffic emanated from the rear of the house.

Wood-frame House (ca. 1860, 1877, 1913; contributing building)¹

The Newell-Johnson-Searle House is exactly as its name implies, an amalgamation incorporating components from three distinct major construction/reconstruction activities. The current overall configuration and finishes are from the 1913 reconstruction after a significant fire, with more recent updating of the kitchen and bathrooms.

The 2-1/2-story house faces west toward the highway (Photo 1) and is situated on the west one-third of the parcel, a lot measuring 100’ x 204’. The 2,250-square-foot, wood-frame structure has an L-shaped plan, with a side-gable front section and an intersecting rear gabled ell. It rests on a stone foundation and is clad in horizontal clapboard siding with a narrow reveal and corner boards. It has a wood shingle roof. Older wood windows of varying sizes and configurations are found throughout the building. The four-over-four attic-level windows are likely the oldest sashes, while the remaining one-over-one windows are probably early replacements. Most retain their wood storm windows.

¹ Architect Stan Hernly, Hernly Associates, Inc., conducted an on-site review of the property on January 23, 2017. Findings from his report, dated March 2, 2017, are used throughout this Narrative Description. A copy of his report is on file with KSHS.
The primary façade is symmetrical and three bays wide. The central entrance is marked by a one-story, single-bay wood porch supported by two columns. The porch is raised just one step off the ground. A low wood balustrade encircles the flat roof, which serves as a second-story porch and is accessed by a second-floor hallway door. This porch dates to the mid-20th century and replaced a sprawling, full-width porch (installed in 1877 by F. M. Johnson) as seen in historic photographs.

The windows are trimmed in simple, flat trim with a slightly projecting head casing. The second-story windows are shorter than those on the first story and reach nearly to the roofline. The side-gable roof is quite steeply pitched, has a slight eave with attached half-round gutters with a northwest corner downspout, and is clad in composition shingles.

South Elevation (Driveway Side)

The south façade has a few defining elements (Photo 3). First, a two-story square bay with a shed roof projects from the west end of this south façade. The base of the bay features wood-panel detail and the first and second stories are wrapped in windows – ten windows in all. A small section of clapboard siding with corner boards separates the two stories of the bay. Second, adjacent to the projecting bay is an end-wall brick chimney. It pierces the eave and roofline, just off-center from the peak of the roof. Centered in the gable wall above the projecting bay is a tall, narrow opening with a four-over-four wood window.

The south wall of the intersecting rear gabled bay is flush with that of the main section of the house. This south wall includes one window on each of the first and second stories. The eave projects slightly and a half-round gutter is attached to the roofline. The associated downspout is attached to the southeast corner of the building.

East (Rear) Elevation

Three bays define the east elevation – the gabled end wall at the south end and an L-shaped, shed-roof bay occupied by a sleeping porch on the second story (Photo 4). The north one-third is stepped back and its first-story porch has been enclosed. A one-story, shed-roof porch supported by several wood columns spans the south two-thirds of the east elevation. The concrete floor of the porch is buckling; it covers a cistern where a pump once used to be. A second cistern is to the north of the porch.

Two concrete steps access the porch and a door at the southeast corner of the building. This door likely facilitated much of the foot traffic in and out of the building, given its proximity to the driveway, garage, stone building, and cisterns. Centered on the gabled end wall are two windows – one on the second story and the other at attic level. The second-story sleeping porch, believed to be a 20th century addition, is almost entirely windows.

North Elevation

The north side of the house is three bays wide (Photo 4). The gabled main section of the house makes up the west two-thirds, and the two-story, shed-roof sleeping porch section occupies the east one-third. The gabled main section includes one window and a single-story square bay, two second-story windows, and a pair of attic-level windows centered in the gable wall. The two attic windows each have a four-over-four configuration.

Interior

The house exhibits an interior plan typical of an I-house, a traditional folk form that is two rooms wide and one room deep, with a center stair. The form was common among rural Midwestern dwellings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and preferred ornament could easily be applied to satisfy personal tastes and changing trends. The spaces and circulation patterns throughout the residence have been retained from at least the early 20th century, as have the wood floors, some wood trim and baseboards, interior doors, and hot-water radiators. Most plaster walls have been papered.

The formal entry on the west wall of the residence opens into a central open space with the dining room on the left (north) (Photo 5), the living room on the right (south) (Photo 6), and a narrow, enclosed, straight-run staircase straight ahead to the east. A large fireplace with a rubble stone surround and a wood mantel occupies the south wall of the living room. A kitchen occupies the southeast corner of the first floor and is accessed by a rear, north-south hallway through a swinging

---

door in the east wall of the dining room or through double pocket doors in the living room’s east wall (Photo 20). A bathroom with historic tub and wooden built-ins is also located through the swinging door in the dining room (Photo 21).

The central staircase terminates near the rear east wall of the second floor in an L-shaped hallway (Photo 7). The east-west portion of the hallway terminates at a bathroom along the south wall and a bedroom at the north end. A built-in linen closet is in the hallway next to the bathroom (Photo 8). The north-south hallway accesses bedrooms on the north and south sides (Photo 9). The hall terminates on the west at a door that exits onto the second-story front porch and on the east at the entrance to the sleeping porch (Photo 10).

The full, unfinished attic is accessed by a narrow staircase above the stair from the main level. The rafters and roof underlayment are visible at this level (Photo 11).

The north half of the house has a crawlspace beneath it (Photo 12). A basement occupies the area beneath the south end (Photo 13) of the house and extends east beyond the footprint of the house (under the porch). This basement, an interior space measuring approximately 23'-7" E-W by 11'-0" N-S, has whitewashed limestone walls. There are two points of access – one via a staircase near the rear door and the other through an exterior in-ground cellar door along the south foundation wall. The basement is an unfinished space with a dirt floor, stone walls, exposed structure and piping. There are small windows at ground level, and some have been filled in or boarded. Sawn wood beams stand vertically atop a stone base to support the structure, which includes a mix of large sawn and hewn beams (Photo 14).

Observations on the Building Structure and Change over Time

As previously noted, this building is the result of several construction periods, beginning with Jesse Newell’s tenure (1858-1874). The earliest building dates are circumstantial and based on the documented presence of Newell at Oskaloosa as early as 1858, but exact dates of Newell’s constructions are unknown at this time. Material and structural observations help to understand the various alterations to the house and illuminate possible time frames, especially for those parts attributed to Newell. The following were observed during a thorough site visit in January 2017.  

The south half of the house has a limestone basement, under the kitchen (southeast room) and living room (southwest room). Only the top 8" are visible on the exterior, and the interior walls are whitewashed. There are no stones visible with the strata of fossilized material present in the stones of the adjacent stone building. This does not preclude that the basement was constructed at the same time as the stone building, but it does suggest it was constructed either at a different time or with stone from a different quarry site. This portion of the house appears to be the oldest and may date to ca. 1860.

The north half of the house has a crawl space with stone foundation walls (under the dining room and back hall/bathroom area). There are first-story floor framing anomalies that suggest various expansions and changes in floor plan arrangement. The floor framing under the first-story, directly north of the basement, indicates an original area of approximately 9'-0" x 10'-0", which may also date to ca. 1860 or to as late as 1877. There is a first-story porch directly east of the kitchen, and the south portion of this porch is framed in a way indicating it predates the north portion of the porch; the south porch area probably dates to between ca. 1860 and 1877.

The stair from the basement comes up at the east end of the kitchen. In the south wall a portion of plaster and lath has been removed. The exposed studs have fire char damage, and the wall studs have visible sawmill marks. The room’s south, east, and north walls likely date to ca. 1860.

The west wall of the kitchen has a large double pocket door into the living room; there is a wood post in the basement at the floor joist under the double door. The west wall of the basement is approximately 9'-0" west of the double door. There is a noticeable rise/hump in the living room floor here; this is where the original west wall of the ca. 1860 house would have been located. In the attic is a wood framed truss above this point, and two steel hanging rods come down through the second story to carry floor framing where the wall was removed. It is possible this framing is carrying original second-story floor framing remaining from the ca. 1860 construction; further investigation would be necessary for exact determination. At the top of the basement wall directly below this point is evidence of a brick chimney having been removed, indicating that the original house had a centered west gable-end chimney.

3 The following is taken from a structural report by architect Stan Hernly, Hernly Associates, Inc., dated March 2, 2017. Copy of report on file with SHPO.
The remainder of the first-story construction may date to 1877, with modification made to interior arrangement in 1913. The second-story construction appears to date to 1913. Some of the framing in the attic appears to incorporate salvaged lumber, possibly from the 1877 construction and reused after the 1913 fire.

**One-story, Stone Building (mid-19th century, contributing building)**

A one-story limestone building with a cellar is located directly behind (east of) the frame house and faces west. It measures 23'-5" (N-S) x 12'-2" (E-W) and has a rectangular plan with a side-gable, wood-shingle roof. It rests on a stone foundation and has a full basement. The building has one main-floor entrance, an exterior in-ground cellar entrance, a brick chimney, and three wood-frame windows.

The mortared limestone walls are generally 18" thick. The stone course size is approximately 12" at the base of the basement walls, reduces to approximately 8" through the upper basement and lower first story, and reduces again to 4" to 6" in the upper first story. Many of the approximately 8" stones have an approximately 4" strata at the top or bottom with an abundance of nautical fossilized material. At both the north and south walls there is a steel cross-tie rod just above the window that is tight against the inside face of the walls; these penetrate the east and west sidewalls and have exterior exposed steel nut and large round washer.

The wood-framed roof consists of 2x4 rafters approximately 24" on center and 1x6 collar ties located at all rafters located approximately 1'-6" above the side walls. Two collar ties at approximately 7'-6" height. The roof has 1x board sheathing, plywood sheathing overlay, and one or two layers of deteriorated asphalt shingles.

The primary (west) façade features just one opening: a door centered on the elevation (Photo 15). The opening is one small step above grade with a limestone stoop and a wood frame. It provides the only exterior access to the main floor. The door measures 2'-5" wide and 6'-4" tall. It is a wood stile-and-rail door with two bottom panels and two upper panels, which are divided with two glass lites in each panel. It is uncertain whether the glass lites are original or are modifications replacing previous solid panels. The door hardware is steel with a decorative exterior pull-handle, back plate, and thumb latch, which operates the interior drop-latch. The door hinges are surface mounted and match the finish of the thumb-latch lock. The door and hardware appear to date to the mid-19th century.

The north elevation includes one of the building’s two main-level windows (Photo 16). Positioned nearer the west corner, the two-over-two wood window measures 56" x 30" and has a limestone sill. An approximately 18" square brick chimney is centered on the façade and inlaid within the stone masonry; the bricks are fairly soft, approximately 8-5/8" x 2-3/16". It is unclear whether the chimney is original to the building or a later added feature. Below the window, at ground level, is a crudely framed rectangular opening that measures 20" x 28". On the interior, the window opening is situated at ceiling level in the basement. This opening may have been added later, based on the visible evidence of cracking and repointing nearby.

The east (rear) elevation is an uninterrupted stone wall with no openings or architectural embellishment.

The south elevation includes the building’s second main-level window (Photo 17). Like its counterpart on the north wall, this window is positioned nearer the west corner. It has a one-over-one configuration, a stone sill, and measures 56" x 29". At the base of the wall, centered on the facade, is an angled, in-ground cellar door. The wood cellar door swings outward to reveal a set of stone steps with stone sidewalks that lead down to the full basement.

The interior includes one main-level room and one basement-level room, the spaces measuring 20'-0" x 9'-2". The main-level space has a wood floor structure that consists of 2x6 joists, 1x6 board sheathing, and T&G painted wood flooring. The floor joists are 1-5/8" x 5-3/4" and do not appear to be original to the building; the east and west bearing ends project into the stone walls and sit on top of what appears to be the remaining ends of original floor joists that have been removed. The stone above and below the west first-story door opening appears to be modified to adjust for the raised floor height. It is uncertain when this modification was made, but the floor joists’ size and appearance suggest a 1900 to 1930 time frame.

The interior limestone walls have a thin layer of cement parging (Photo 18). There is no finished ceiling, nor is there evidence one ever existed, and the roof framing is visible. This framing is blackened through fire, smoke, or water damage. The brick chimney in the north wall includes an opening for a stove pipe. There is no interior access to the cellar.

---

4 Much of the following description is based on Hernly’s March 2017 report.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Name of Property: Newell-Johnson-Searle House
County and State: Jefferson County, Kansas

The cellar height is approximately 7'-0" with limestone walls and a dirt floor (Photo 19). The base of the brick chimney tapers and terminates midway down the north wall. There is evidence of water damage on the north wall around the chimney and small window at the ceiling. The ceiling is unfinished and includes the framing for the main-level floor system. The building has been wired for electricity.

**Garage (c. 1940, non-contributing building)**

A gravel driveway along the south side of the property leads from US-59 to a one-car garage located southeast of the residence. The wood-frame building has board-and-batten siding and a front-gable roof with wood shingles. The garage-door opening consists of two outward-swinging, board-and-batten doors on the west façade. The garage is considered non-contributing because it was constructed outside the period of significance.

**Construction Notes & Integrity**

The contributions of Jesse Newell (1858-1874), Francis M. Johnson (1877-1905), and Francis J. Searle (1905-1918) to the development of the property are integrally linked in the buildings and site. The extant frame house largely dates to 1913 when the home was rebuilt after a fire. At the time of the fire, the local newspaper reported that the "original part of the house was a relic of early times – the frame being made of native timber for Jesse Newell. It was the home for many years of F. M. Johnson, who had it completely remodeled [in 1877] …" A subsequent article suggests these early walls were salvaged: "Work has begun on the re-building of Frank Searle’s residence, with W. D. Monroe in charge assisted by Hoskinson and Leach. It will be practically a new house, with a part of the lower walls and the big veranda retained," the latter feature having been added by the previous owner F. M. Johnson.

Both property and court records link Jesse Newell to the nominated property as early as 1858. In 1860 the local newspaper noted that Newell had just built a “large, two-story residence,” and that the Newell residence was the location of the office of physician and surgeon S. A. Fishero. It is believed that this is the early residence referenced in the 1913 newspaper article. Beyond these few historical references, no photographs or substantive documentation of Newell’s residence have been found. Even less is known about the construction history of the stone building, amplifying the importance of any information of this early period that may be gleaned from the structures themselves and their immediate environs.

The property’s setting, location, and built features all reflect its significance to the early and developmental history of Oskaloosa and Jefferson County, from Newell’s Territorial-era homestead to Searle’s sophisticated early 20th century farmstead.

---

5 The Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 18 April 1913, 5.
6 The Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 9 May 1913, 5.
8 The Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 8 August 1860, 3.
9 The Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 19 September 1860, 4. Fishero is also recorded with the Newell family in the 1860 U.S. Census.
# Newell-Johnson-Searle House

## Name of Property
Jefferson County, Kansas

### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Criteria Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property is:</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Removed from its original location.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>A birthplace or grave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>A cemetery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>A reconstructed building, object, or structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>A commemorative property.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Period of Significance**
ca. 1858-1918

**Significant Dates**
1858, 1877, 1913

**Significant Person**
Newell, Jesse

**Cultural Affiliation**
N/A

**Architect/Builder**
Unknown

### Areas of Significance

**EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT**

- **Period of Significance**
  ca. 1858-1918

- **Significant Dates**
  1858, 1877, 1913

**Period of Significance (justification)**
The period of significance begins in 1858 when property and court records link Territorial settler Jesse Newell to the nominated property and extends to 1918 when stockman and breeder Francis J. Searle sold it. This span of years is reflected in the property's extant resources. From Newell's occupation, there are parts of the structure and foundation of the residence. Subsequent renovations in 1877 and 1913, by Francis M. Johnson and his grandson Francis J. Searle, respectively, fall within the period of significance.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**
N/A
The Newell-Johnson-Searle House is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its significance in the area of Exploration/Settlement and Criterion B for its association with Jesse Newell. The property and its built features are associated with the establishment and early development of Oskaloosa, Jefferson County, Kansas. Named for those who owned it during the period of significance (1858-1918), the property reflects layers of occupation, beginning with the ownership of Newell. Although the property has changed since Newell’s occupation, this is the only documented resource associated with this locally significant person. Newell was a co-founder of Oskaloosa and a key figure in the area’s Bleeding Kansas period. After Newell, local banker Francis M. Johnson lived here from 1874 to 1905, renovating the dilapidated frame residence in 1877. Johnson’s grandson, stockman and breeder Francis J. Searle, lived here from 1905 to 1918. He is responsible for the appearance of the homestead as it is today, as he rebuilt much of the house after a fire in 1913. The residence, in its various iterations, has been long known as one of Oskaloosa’s finer early homes.

Elaboration

**Oskaloosa Beginnings**

With the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, Kansas Territory was opened for settlement in May 1854. Jefferson County was among the 33 original counties established by the Territorial Legislature. Among the first to settle near the Big Slough Creek in the area that would later become Oskaloosa was Dr. James Noble, a Missourian. Although he filed no land patent and is not noted in early property records besides the land survey map, he settled near Big Slough Creek in the fall of 1854 (Figure 3). With the opening of the Kansas Territory, prospective settlers arrived in search of land, including a group from Iowa with Jesse Newell and his brother-in-law Joseph Fitsimmons. They returned with their families in May 1856, and Newell acquired Noble’s farm and cabin.

Newell and Fitsimons bought land at the 1850s government land sales that would eventually become Oskaloosa, named after Oskaloosa, Iowa. Newell’s land occupied parts of Sections 4 and 5, Township 10S, Range 19E, including the site that is the subject of this nomination. Newell subsequently purchased the land patent for 85 acres in Section 5, where he established a saw mill, while his son John Newell secured the patent for 113 acres in Section 4. Fitsimons purchased 160 acres in the adjacent Section 32. In 1857, the three men, along with Franklin Finch, Henry Owens, N. B. Hopewell, Newell’s son V.F. Newell, Isaac Newhouse, William Meredith, and W. C. Stagg, formed the Oskaloosa Town Association.

Newell’s arrival in 1856 put him in the harshest year of Bleeding Kansas, when pro-slavers and freestaters clashed over whether Kansas would enter the Union as a free or slave state. Fraudulent voting by Missourians bent on extending slavery to Kansas was coupled with violence and protest. Trying to take mules from Topeka to Lawrence shortly after his arrival in May 1856, Newell was repeatedly stopped and harassed by pro-slavers. Fed up, he stopped in Lecompton, the territorial capital to complain to Gov. Shannon, whom Newell knew from Ohio. Shannon told Newell it was too dangerous to travel freely because of the warring free-state and proslavery factions but wrote him a pass. Newell made it through,

---

10 *Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Troubles in Kansas* (Washington, DC: Cornelius Wendell, Printer, 1856), 283-86. This source includes James Noble’s testimony regarding his residence in Jefferson County and his participation in the controversial March 30, 1855 election. See also: General Land Office Land Survey Map, (Sections 4 and 5, Township 10S, Range 19E), recorded 9 February 1856. Later county and state histories, such as William Cutler’s 1883 *History of the State of Kansas*, credit Noble as Oskaloosa’s earliest Euro-American resident.

11 The surname for Oskaloosa’s co-founder is spelled several ways in early accounts and news items, but most often was spelled Fitsimons. His land patent carries the name “Fitzsimmons” and in later years, and today, it is Fitzsimmons.

12 It remains unclear how John Newell’s land in Section 4 transferred to his father, Jesse, but the earliest court records Jesse Newell as the owner.


arguing his cargo of mules must be delivered. A few days later Lawrence was attacked and property destroyed by proslavery partisans, including flag-bearing South Carolinians, in what was called the Sack of Lawrence.

In September pro-slavery partisans in Kansas Territory, many of them Missourians, and bolstered by South Carolinians and others from southern slave states, harassed freestaters on the eastern side of the territory, including Jefferson County. They burned businesses in Grasshopper Falls, stole horses and livestock throughout the county, destroyed settlers’ crops and other property, and nabbed free-state settlers. Freestaters, led by James H. Lane and James A. Harvey and many others, did not overlook this behavior. While pro-slavers were beginning to move in on free-state Lawrence again, an attack squelched later by incoming Gov. John Geary, Harvey and Lane took on the proslavery bands north of the Kansas River in Jefferson and Leavenworth counties.

Harvey’s Kansas men were returning to Lawrence from Leavenworth County, where many freestaters had been violently driven out by marauding pro-slavery militants, including those from southern states. While Harvey and his company were camped near the future McLouth in Jefferson County (about six miles east of Newell’s log cabin), Jesse Newell rode into the camp late September 10, 1856, to tell Harvey where a group of South Carolinians were camped on Slough Creek (about two miles north of Newell’s log cabin). In the dark early morning hours of September 11 Harvey and troops, along with at least one of Newell’s sons, ambushed and captured the group, taking about 100 weapons and other supplies, then releasing the southerners with the admonition to leave Kansas Territory. The prize item Harvey’s band took was the big, red “Southern Rights” flag carried by the South Carolinians.

Two days later, pro-slavery partisans were camped at Hickory Point in Jefferson County, a stopping point for them between the proslavery strongholds of Lecompton and Atchison. Lane sent his best troops and some Topeka area fighters to Hickory Point on September 13, but recognizing that more men and ammunition were needed, he sent for Harvey in Lawrence. On September 14, Harvey brought Lawrence men and picked up Jefferson County freestaters on his way to Hickory Point, stopping first at Newell’s future town (then called Newell’s Mill) for breakfast. The Battle of Hickory Point, fought about six miles north of Newell’s property, was not a large battle. One man from the South Carolina group was killed; Harvey again made his terms the departure of the pro-slavery partisans. After the fight, Harvey and his men returned to Newell’s Mill to rest, gathering at the nearly constructed mill four blocks from Newell’s home. But soon, U.S. troops sent out because of pro-slavers’ complaints, arrived at Newell’s Mill and arrested the freestaters. Harvey was at Jesse Newell’s home and escaped.

At some point during this five-day September 1856 period, Newell was attacked at his home by proslavery men, who threatened to hang him if he did not give them information about free-state troops’ whereabouts. One account says it was September 12, the day after Jesse Newell led Harvey to the encampment on Slough Creek. On September 20, 1856, Newell wrote an affidavit to Gov. Geary detailing how he and others had been threatened with hanging, the destruction of his home and his sawmill, and how Newell’s fences and grain had been destroyed.

The turmoil probably did not help the town’s growth, but Newell was town president in 1857. Newell’s home was a polling place in the 1858 elections, the first “free state” elections, and Newell was an election judge. That year, 1858, is linked

---

17 Kansas State Historical Society, Kansapedia, Cool Things – Southern Rights Flag; http://www.ohiomemory.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p267401coll36/id/3320/rec/1
20 The flag, which says “South Carolina” on its other side, is on display at the Kansas History Museum in Topeka. https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/cool-things-southern-rights-flag/10254
21 Jefferson County tax records specify where Newell’s mill sat.
22 Pittston Gazette [Pittston, PA], 10 October 1856, 2.
24 The Kansas Herald of Freedom [Wakarusa, KS], 26 December, 1857, 2.
by property and court records to Jesse Newell and the nominated property.25 Also in 1858, a newspaper writer praised Oskaloosa’s development and called it a “real, live two-horse town.” The article described the town’s two good sawmills, 80 homes, citizens raising money for a school, and heaped praise on Jesse Newell, “that whole-souled man.”26

The home of Jesse Newell – born in Ohio around 1812 and called a radical Republican freestater – was tied to the Underground Railroad in 1859.27 Jesse Newell was listed as the first stop on John Doy’s route to take 13 freedom-seekers north from Lawrence to Oskaloosa and on to Holton in Jackson County.28 Doy’s party was ambushed before he made it to Oskaloosa, but five months later when a group of men broke Doy out of a Missouri jail, “Captain” Newell and his “rifles company” served as armed escorts to get Doy and the men who rescued him back to Lawrence, taking the Oskaloosa-to-Lawrence leg of the trip.29

Newell’s home in the town he co-founded was of note in 1860, when the local newspaper was promoting town development and said Jesse Newell had a large two-story residence.30 A month later, an advertisement said Dr. S.A. Fishero had his office in Jesse Newell’s house, Room No. 1.31 Previously, Newell had lived in Mahaska County, Iowa, (from 1848) and was a local political and pioneer leader. Mahaska County’s first school house was built on Newell’s farm in Iowa, and a local Mahaska, Iowa, history said, “families were trained in that school who went to make new homes in different parts of the west.”32 Newell was a doctor of sorts and a Methodist preacher.33

Property and Ownership History

As cited, property and court records link Jesse Newell to the nominated property as early as 1858. He owned about 113 acres of land on the east side of the town, of which one acre was his homestead.34 In 1874, Newell had sold the property to W.H. Easter and the Newells had moved to the Cherryvale area in Montgomery County, Kansas.35

Three years later, Easter had “traded” property with Francis Marion Johnson, an Indiana man who had come to Winchester, Kansas, in 1864 and several years later to Oskaloosa (Figure 4).36 The 1877 newspaper said Johnson’s new property was “the unsightly old landmark once occupied as a residence by Uncle Jesse Newell. The new owner will tear the old hulk to pieces and have a handsome modern residence in its place.”37 Born in 1827, Johnson was a merchant and a banker who amassed a large amount of property and was a wealthy man in Jefferson County.38 In November 1877 the Johnson family was moving into their home: “He has one of the most convenient and substantial dwellings in town.”39

One of Johnson’s grandchildren, Francis J. Searle, lived in his grandfather’s house during part of his youth. After F.M. Johnson died in 1905, “Frank” Searle moved his wife and daughter into the elder Johnson’s home (Figure 5). Searle had run a hardware and tinware store in Oskaloosa, but he was more widely known for his “Sunflower Herd” dairy of Holstein-Friesian cattle, which were on the farm next to the house.

25 Newell v. Newell, 14 Kan.202 (1875), 7th page of document, from the Brief for Defendant in Error. (Kansas Supreme Court briefs in Abraham Newell v. Jesse Newell. Supreme Court Library, Kansas Judicial Center, Topeka) “… 3rd. That said real estate was, at the time of making said deed [November 26, 1861], and for more than three years previous thereto had been, the homestead of said plaintiff [Jesse Newell].”
26 Kansas National Democrat [Lecompton, KS], 19 August 1858.
30 Oskaloosa Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 8 August, 1860, 3.
33 The Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 11 July 1863, 3; The Daily Kansas Tribune [Lawrence, KS], 31 March 1868, 2.
37 Ibid.
38 Oskaloosa Independent [Oskaloosa, KS], 22 September 1905, obituary.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kansas

County and State

A fire that started in a flue burned the home in April 1913. “The original part of the house was a relic of early times – the frame being made of native timber for Jesse Newell. It was the home for many years of F.M. Johnson, who had it completely remodeled and a large veranda added (Figures 6 through 8), surrounding two sides of the upper and lower stories.”40 The Valley Falls New Era noted in its front page article about the fire: “Mr. Searle’s cattle records were saved, they being the most important item [in the house].”41

A May 9, 1913 article in the Oskaloosa paper offered an update, saying the rebuilding was to begin after the fire “…with a part of the lower walls and the big veranda retained.” And in November 1913, the Searle family occupied their “remodeled mansion.”42 The extensive front porch was removed at some point in the late 1940s or early 1950s (Figures 9, 10 & 14).

Five years later Searle was ready to wind down his business and decided to sell his herd and his home. Joseph Drummins bought the nearly 114-acre property on March 9, 1918.43 The farm and home stayed together until the 1940s. In 1944, the Drummins family sold about 110.25 acres to a farmer, Walter Means, and in 1943 had sold the home on about 3.5 acres to Dr. Delos Stevens. The home stayed with the Stevens family until 2015 when descendants of Jesse Newell purchased the deteriorating one-half acre property.

Summary

The Newell-Johnson-Searle House reflects layers of occupation, from the formative years of the late 1850s to the early 20th century. The property’s early association with Jesse Newell is particularly significant. Not only was he an Oskaloosa town founder, but while owning and occupying this property, he played a significant and under-documented role alongside his Jefferson County neighbors in defending the Free State cause. The Johnson and Searle years were those of growth, with prominent and civic-minded citizens developing the property on the edge of the town. The nominated property is less than one acre of Newell’s original landholdings, and it represents the only documented property associated with this town father.

---

41 The Valley Falls New Era [Valley Falls, KS] 17 April 1913, 1.
42 The Oskaloosa Independent [Oskaloosa, KS] 7 November 1913, 5.
43 Deeds, Jefferson County Register of Deeds Office, Oskaloosa, KS.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)


*The Daily Kansas Tribune* [Lawrence, KS]. 31 March 1868.


Ellis, Ron. Provided measurements of stone building.

General Land Office, Bureau of Land Management
- Land Patent Records for Section 4, 5, and 32, Township 10S, Range 19E.


Jefferson County
- Appraiser’s Office Records
- GIS Department
- Register of Deeds Office

*The Kansas Herald of Freedom* [Wakarusa, Kansas], 26 December, 1857.

*Kansas National Democrat* [Lecompton, KS]. 19 August 1858.

Kansas State Historical Society Collections. Affidavit from Jesse Newell to Kansas Territory Gov., John Geary. 20 September 1856.


*Oskaloosa Independent*. 8 August 1860; 19 September 1860; 11 July 1863; 11 May 1878; 18 April 1913; 9 May 1913.

*Report of the Special Committee Appointed to Investigate the Troubles in Kansas*. Washington, DC: Cornelius Wendell, Printer, 1856.


*St. Joseph Weekly West* [St. Joseph, MO], 26 June 1859.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Jefferson County, Kansas

1. Name of Property
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

2. County and State
Jefferson County, Kansas

3. Previous documentation on file (NPS):
   - 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 #
   - recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

4. Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

5. Name of repository:
   - Kansas Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

   Acreage of Property: 0.47

   Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
   (Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

   Latitude/Longitude Coordinates
   Datum if other than WGS84: __________________________
   (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

   1 39.214653 -95.310478 3
   Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

   2 __________________________ 4
   Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

   Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
   In Section 4, Township 10, Range019. Com. 411’ S of SE corner of intersection of Walnut and Jefferson St., thence E203’(S), S100’, W204’(S), N100’ to point of beginning.

   Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
   These are the boundaries for the homestead property as it stands today. All buildings are within it.

11. Form Prepared By

   name/title: Elizabeth Leech, with assistance from Sarah J. Martin (SJM Cultural Resource Services)
   organization: __________________________
   date: Spring 2017
   street & number: 8435 SE 83rd Street
   telephone: (206) 226-2850
   city or town: Mercer Island
   state: WA
   zip code: 98040
   e-mail: fireballhill@comcast.net

   Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)
   name: Paula Ellis
   street & number: 9199 K-4 Highway
   telephone: (785) 484-3380
   city or town: Meriden
   state: KS
   zip code: 66512

   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.460 et seq.).

   Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kansas
County and State

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn’t need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property:  Newell-Johnson-Searle House
City or Vicinity:  Oskaloosa
County:  Jefferson  State:  Kansas
Photographer:  Amanda K. Loughlin (KSHS) & Stan Hernly (SH)
Date Photographed:  April 2016 & January 2017 (SH)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

01 of 21:  Looking east from west side of Walnut (US-59).
02 of 21:  Looking SW from NE corner of parcel, showing garage, stone outbuilding, and house.
03 of 21:  House, looking NW at south elevation.
04 of 21:  House, looking SW at east and north elevations.
05 of 21:  House, main level, looking north into dining room from living room.
06 of 21:  House, main level, looking SSE into living room from main entrance (SH).
07 of 21:  House, second level, hallway, looking west from top of stairs.
08 of 21:  House, second level, built-in closet.
09 of 21:  House, second level, southeast bedroom, looking SE.
10 of 21:  House, second level, sleeping porch, looking east.
11 of 21:  House, attic, looking SE and showing roof framing.
12 of 21:  House, crawlspace, looking NW from basement.
13 of 21:  House, basement, west wall.
14 of 21:  House, basement, framing.
15 of 21:  Stone outbuilding, east elevation.
16 of 21:  Stone outbuilding, looking SE at north elevation (garage visible in background).
17 of 21:  Stone outbuilding, south elevation.
18 of 21:  Stone outbuilding, main level, looking north at north and east walls.
19 of 21:  Stone outbuilding, basement, looking north at west and north walls.
20 of 21:  House, main level, kitchen area, looking west (SH).
21 of 21:  House, main level, bathroom off dining room, looking north (SH).

Figures
Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.
Figure 1: February 2017 Google aerial of Oskaloosa, showing location of property. No scale. Note: Bill Noll, Director of Jefferson County Public Works, pinpointed the location of Dr. Noble’s cabin by studying GLO maps and field notes taken by surveyors in the 1850s and measuring those descriptions against today's aerial GIS photography. Noll is a licensed surveyor in Kansas, a certified floodplain manager and has extensive knowledge of Jefferson County’s old survey and road records.
Figure 2: February 2017. Google aerial of Oskaloosa, showing location of property. North is up; no scale.
Figure 3: General Land Office, Bureau of Land Management. Land Survey Map. Sections 4 and 5, Township 10S, Range 19E. Recorded 9 February 1856.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House  
Name of Property  

Jefferson County, Kansas  
County and State  

Figure 4: Oskaloosa from the 1899 *Descriptive Atlas of Jefferson County, Kansas*, page 40, showing the location of the F. M. Johnson property on the east edge of town.
Figure 5: Oskaloosa from the 1916 Standard Atlas of Jefferson County, Kansas, page 10, showing the location of the Searle Farm on the east edge of town.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Name of Property
Jefferson County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 6: A group of women sitting on the porch of the Newell-Johnson-Searle House. Early 1900s.

Figure 7: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, circa 1921
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Figure 8: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, in background, circa 1910s.

Figure 9: Newell-Johnson-Searle House and garage (at right), circa 1940s.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House

Jefferson County, Kansas

Figure 10: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, west (front) elevation. Camera facing NE. Photo taken during the late 1940s or early 1950s, likely after the removal of the wrap-around porch.

Figure 11: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, south (side) elevation. Camera facing N. Photo taken during the late 1940s or early 1950s.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 12: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, showing porches at NE corner. Camera facing S. Photo taken during the late 1940s or early 1950s.

Figure 13: Newell-Johnson-Searle House (right) stone building (left). Camera facing SE. Photo taken during the late 1940s or early 1950s.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 14: Newell-Johnson-Searle House, 1964

Figure 15: Newell-Johnson-Searle property, showing stone building and concrete pathways, 1960s.
Figure 16: “House on Centennial Tour,” *Topeka State Journal*, 27 March 1959.
Figure 17: Portion of a news article from the Pittston Gazette [Pittston, PA], noting the struggles and violence suffered by Jesse Newell and his family. The article said that free-state men in Newell’s area were “constantly subject to insult and robbery” and that Newell, in speaking freely of his free-state sentiments had made himself “obnoxious to the proslavery rulers of Kansas.” On one occasion they took the elder Mr. Newall [sic] from his bed, with the intent of hanging him, but finally relented. On the night of the [September] 12th inst., they were driven from their homes and one of the sons procured the assistance of a party of men from Topeka under Gen. Cook [alias for James H. Lane] to recapture their property and drive the invaders from their homes.” What followed September 13 and 14, 1856, was the Battle of Hickory Point.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House  
Jefferson County, Kansas

Figure 18: “Searle dairy.” This barn was just south of the Newell-Johnson-Searle House about where a discount store stands today. Photograph from the Jefferson County Genealogical Society, Oskaloosa, Kansas.
Newell-Johnson-Searle House
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Kansas
County and State

Figure 19 F.M. Johnson and family, April 1888. F.M. Johnson is seated in the center of the photograph and his grandson, Francis J. Searle, is seated in the front row on the far left, holding a hat.