

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER
LISTED

OCT 08 2009

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Cuba Blacksmith Shop

Other name/site number 157-1210-0002

2. Location

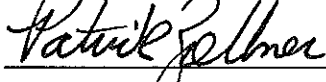
Street & number 1/2 Block West of Baird Street on Lynn Street not for publication

City or town Cuba vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Republic Code 157 Zip code 66940

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



8/17/09

Patrick Zollner, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Kansas State Historical Society

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register. _____
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register _____
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register _____
- removed from the National Register _____
- other, (explain:) _____

Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Name of Property

Republic County, KS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Commerce / Trade: Specialty Store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in Progress

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Vernacular Limestone

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Stone: Limestone
Walls: Stone: Limestone

Roof: Metal

Other:

Narrative Description

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

Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Name of Property

Republic County, KS
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Agriculture

Industry

Period of Significance

1884-1959

Significant Dates

1884

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Davison, John M. (Mitchell)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Name of Property

Republic County, KS
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	4	6	3	2	0	0	0	4	4	0	6	5	4	0
Zone			Easting						Northing					

2

Zone			Easting						Northing					

3

Zone			Easting						Northing					

4

Zone			Easting						Northing					

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Glen Lojka

Organization _____ Date May 2009

Street & number 5240 Terra Heights Telephone 785-776-0643

City or town Manhattan State KS Zip code 66503

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name City of Cuba, Mayor Jay Beam

Street & number PO Box 47 / 313 Baird Telephone 729-3861

City or town Cuba State KS Zip code 66940

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 7 Page 1

Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Cuba Blacksmith Shop is located in downtown Cuba (pop. 194) on the north side of Lynn Street just one-half block west of Baird Street. The blacksmith shop is a small, one-story building made of locally quarried limestone. Over the past twenty-five years, the shop had fallen into severe disrepair. The roof had fallen in and the stone walls were beginning to fail. Community volunteers came together to rehabilitate the building, the brick forge, and the machinery, to return it to a functioning blacksmith shop.

Elaboration

Built in 1884, the Cuba Blacksmith Shop is one of the town's original stone buildings. It was a major machine-building and repair site for mainly agricultural and small industrial machinery. The building is constructed of rectangular limestone blocks and features a flat sloping metal roof supported by wood beams. The rear elevation is wood frame with corrugated metal sheathing.

The building was recently rehabilitated using historic photographs as a guide. The carefully planned work followed the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*, ensuring the original building materials, construction methods, and workmanship were preserved. The stone walls have been stabilized and repointed, stone by stone. With such deterioration to the roof, the stringers were replaced with the same type of wood. All wood in the building was salvaged from the interior of old buildings.

The front, south-facing elevation includes a single large entrance with folding wood doors. A shed-roof awning with wood poles extends over the sidewalk in front of the entrance. There is a single window opening on this south elevation that includes a four-over-four, double-hung wood sash. Both the entrance and window feature segmental arch openings.

The side, east-facing elevation features a single, large door. Until recently, the door opening had been partially infilled with stone. During the recent rehabilitation, this opening was restored back to a door opening as it was originally. There is a single window opening on this east elevation that includes a four-over-four, double-hung wood sash. Both the door and window feature segmental arch openings.

The rear, north-facing elevation includes two rows of exposed limestone foundation topped by a wood-frame wall clad with vertical sheets of recycled corrugated metal.

There are no window or door openings on the side, west-facing elevation.

The interior of the building is very simple as it was historically. The rough, unfinished interior reflects the building's original and longtime industrial use, and appears virtually the same as when it was constructed. The walls and ceiling are unfinished stone and wood framing. The floor is earthen so it does not catch fire from the hot slag that comes off the hot iron when it is removed from the forge. In general the shop is laden with a film of smoke, soot, and light ash as a result of the forge fire and red-hot iron being worked.

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

The focal point of the interior is the massive brick forge, which is original to the building. It is six feet wide by four feet deep and stands all the way up through the roof of the shop, some fifteen feet. The front opening of the forge is where various types of iron materials can be entered into the fire pit of the forge. There are racks of many different shaped tongs hanging from the front of the forge. The tongs are used to handle the many shapes of the hot irons that are fabricated in the fire pit of the forge.

The heavy eight-inch by eight-inch hand-sawed beam construction warrants mention, as do the machinery and tools used in the interior of the shop. The inner beam structure holds up roof beams and some of the working machines, such as post drills and tool holders attached to the standing beams. There is a central drive system suspended from the framing beams, which is called a line shaft. It is a steel shaft about thirty feet long with various size drive pulleys along its length. This shaft is driven by a main power belt that turns the entire shaft with all the attached pulleys. Each of the individual pulleys drives a separate machine located somewhere in the shop. The line shaft eliminates the need for individual drive belts running to a power source. Therefore, one power drive belt from a single cylinder engine, or, in later years, a large electric motor drives the line shaft with all the individual drive pulleys.

Standing within a few feet of the forge are two steel anvils and a large machine called a trip hammer. All three of these implements are used for hammering or forging out steel. There are two large grinding machines located to the sides of the anvils, which are used for final shaping, polishing, and sharpening of the metal objects. Some of these tools and machinery were found on site during the rehabilitation of the property, while others have been donated to the property.

In addition to the large and central machines there are numerous small hand held tools consisting of drill bits, steel cutting chisels and punches, steel cutting files, hammers, hand drills and stores of various length and sizes of stock iron for forming into various iron objects.

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Cuba Blacksmith Shop was built in 1884 in the town of Cuba, Republic County, Kansas. It is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with local Commerce, Agriculture, and Industry.

Elaboration

Blacksmiths accommodated the needs of developing farming communities and local businesses. Shops like the one in Cuba provided services that included constructing, repairing, and maintaining general farm machinery, as well as making special tools and machines for farmers and residents. Not only did blacksmiths provide iron fabrication and machine construction and maintenance, but they typically provided a service of shoeing horses for farmers and ranchers. Another valuable service often included repairing household utensils, sharpening knives, fixing pots and pans, sewing machines, garden hoes, buckles, suspender hooks, and buttons.¹ As with rural farming communities across Kansas, the Cuba Blacksmith Shop provided valuable services to farmers and businesses from the community's early days through the mid-twentieth century.²

Generally, each blacksmith that took over ownership of a shop brought with him some personal skill or fabrication method in addition to the regular blacksmithing skills expected by the community. Some blacksmiths were especially skilled at reshaping and reconditioning plowshares, the cutting edge of the plow. Plowshares needed the cutting point to have a certain degree of angle so it would have a down draft pull into the ground. Therefore, various blacksmiths were more expert than others at knowing just the correct degree of angle to put on the share to make that down draft work. This was a detail many of the farmers did not even realize. They just knew if it worked or didn't.

For a period, the Cuba Blacksmith Shop was in the business of making steel cattle crossing guards. These were placed across drive entrances to farms and ranches. The iron grid work that crossed the drive entrance allowed vehicles and machines to cross, but livestock would get their feet entangled in the grid maze lying on the ground.

¹ Everett Dick, *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas and Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1954), 413.

² For additional historic context on blacksmithing and the development of rural farming communities in the nineteenth century, see: Aldren Watson, *The Village Blacksmith* (1968); expanded and republished as *The Blacksmith: Ironworker and Farrier* (New York: Crowell Publishers), 3 (citation references 1968 edition); Neil Dahlstrom and Jeremy Dahlstrom, *The John Deere Story* (Northern Illinois Press, 2005).

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

The Cuba Blacksmith Shop traces its roots to John M. (Mitchell) Davidson, who first arrived in Kansas in 1870.³ Davidson, a Union veteran of the Civil War, came to Cloud County, Kansas from Belleplain, Illinois, in 1870. At age fourteen, Davidson apprenticed for three years with blacksmith G. W. Derry of Vermont, Illinois for thirty dollars per year. Republic County property records indicate that he purchased the land on which the blacksmith shop sits in 1884 and soon thereafter erected the small limestone building. Davidson sold the property in 1892 to A. V. Terpening.⁴ Although he no longer owned the property, Davidson continued to work as a blacksmith in his old shop until March of 1892 when he moved on to other business ventures.⁵ In March 1894, Davidson moved to Clyde in Cloud County where he operated a blacksmith shop in partnership with John Frederick.⁶

After Davidson left, A. V. Terpening continued to lease the shop to other blacksmiths, including A. Janoushek,⁷ until it was sold to Paul Opocensky in 1906. Opocensky made numerous changes to the shop including the installation of a new six-horse power gasoline engine in 1906,⁸ and outfitting the shop for car repair in 1909.⁹ After marrying Jennie Nemecek in October 1909, Opocensky moved to Richmond, Virginia, to farm.¹⁰ The property continued to change hands several more times since Opocensky sold it in 1909. (A complete list of owners is included below.)

Like many of Cuba's early residents, some past owners, including Opocensky and John Panek, were immigrants from Czechoslovakia.¹¹ Long-time and well-known owners of the blacksmith shop have included Frank Sterba, John P. Panek, and Joe Sterba, who are still remembered today by many locals.

The building continued functioning as a blacksmith shop into the 1970s and then slowly fell into disrepair in the late twentieth century. In recent years, the roof and rear wall had collapsed and the stone walls were beginning to fail. Former Cuba resident Glen Lojka, whose father once owned the property, pitched the idea of restoring the blacksmith shop to the community in 2006. There were six core volunteers who put together a three-year timeline to complete the project. The work was funded using Rock-A-Thon¹² funds, grants, and donations of money, equipment, and labor. The original six organizers recruited many more volunteers and workers, including Darrel Kroulik, an area craftsman and stonemason. The building

³ Biographical information on John M. Davidson taken from E. F. Hollibaugh, *Biographical History of Cloud County, Kansas* (n.p., 1903). Transcription available online at: <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/cloud/1903/>

⁴ *Cuba Daylight*, February 5, 1892.

⁵ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1893.

⁶ Republic County Register of Deeds, Belleville, Kansas.

⁷ *Cuba Daylight*, May 27, 1892.

⁸ *Ibid.*, February 2, 1906.

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 15, 1909.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, November 4, 1909.

¹¹ Anona Shaw Blackburn and Myrtle Strom Cardwell, *History of Republic County, 1868-1964* (Belleville, Kansas: *Belleville Telescope*, 1964), 201 and 212.

¹² Rock-A-Thon is an annual local celebration of Czech heritage that features entertainment, food, crafts, and hours of continuous rocking in rocking chairs to raise money for a community fund. Over \$20,000 was raised at last year's event.

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

reopened as a functioning blacksmith in December 2008 – within their goal of three years. Today, the building is owned by the City of Cuba and is planned to be open for demonstrations about four times a year.

Though a blacksmith shop and the every day happenings that took place in and around it might have seemed somewhat insignificant compared to other world happenings, they did carry on some intriguing and special events that stand out as very historic events in the total evaluation of their era. As was common in rural communities throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most communities hosted holiday or festival celebrations. These celebrations often included games, contests, and events that were significant to specific towns, geographic locations, or cultural heritage. As a result many different and varied events sprang up across the entire country. The homegrown events devised some of the most significant activities imaginable. One such event that seemed to originate around a blacksmith shop was a type of physical feat. This activity, as told to Glen Lojka by elders of the community, was called “hold your brick.” This is a feat of strength, endurance, and calculation. It requires that a standard mason’s brick that measures two inches thick by four inches wide and eight inches long be grasped between the thumb and forefinger. With hands held by one’s side the person is to walk at a regular gate around a standard city block, holding the bricks as long as possible. Generally this seems easy at first, but as the distance comes into play, the bricks begin to get heavier and heavier, resulting in very few people able to complete the assigned distance. However, because blacksmiths grasped hammers and various steel thongs most every day, they developed great strength in their hands and forearms. The event even grew into a competition between blacksmiths of different towns. It is worth noting that with virtually no money involved and no special equipment along with no athletic practice, an exciting event was staged that could give the community such great family fun and entertainment.

Summary

The Cuba Blacksmith Shop, built in 1884, is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with local Commerce, Agriculture, and Industry.

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

The following is a list from the Republic County Deeds Office of all the owners of the lot on which the blacksmith shop sits since the first plat was drawn:

1884 Lincoln Land Company
1884 John M. Davidson
1892 A. V. Terpening
1906 Paul Opocensky
1909 Frank Sterba and Frank Hess
1911 Frank Sterba
1920 John P. Panek
1956 Joseph Nekuda, Jr.
1958 Frank Zeman
1958 Frank Lojka
1962 Joseph Sterba
1977 Cuba Implement Company
1983 Edward and Mary Havel
1988 Walthers Oil Company
2005 City of Cuba

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Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Belleville (KS) Telescope*. "60 Years Belleville Development Townsite Company Organized 1869." 27 November 1930.
- Blackburn, Anona Shaw, and Myrtle Strom Cardwell, *History of Republic County, 1868-1964*. Belleville, Kansas: *Belleville Telescope*, 1964.
- Cuba (KS) Tribune*. "City of Cuba is 50 Years Old This Spring." 29 March 1934.
- Dahlstrom, Neil, and Jeremy Dahlstrom, *The John Deere Story*. Northern Illinois Press, 2005.
- Dick, Everett. *The Sod-House Frontier, 1854-1890: A Social History of the Northern Plains from the Creation of Kansas and Nebraska to the Admission of the Dakotas*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1954.
- Gaines-Riffel, Beth. "Community Comes Together to Rebuild Historic Blacksmith Shop." In *Grass & Grain* newspaper (Ag Press, 54th Year, No. 41), December 9, 2008.
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- Muilenburg, Grace, and Ada Swineford. *Land of the Post Rock: Its Origins, History, and People*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975.
- Republic County Bicentennial Historical Committee. *Homeland Horizons: Places and Things to See in Republic County*. 1975-1976.
- Republic County Register of Deeds. Belleville, Kansas.
- Watson, Aldren. *The Village Blacksmith*. 1968. Expanded and republished as *The Blacksmith: Ironworker and Farrier*. New York: Crowell Publishers.

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Section Number 10 & Photos Page 8

**Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Cuba, Republic County, Kansas**

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A fraction of Lot Thirteen (13) of Block Twelve (12) of the Original Town of Cuba, Kansas, described as follows: Commencing at the Northeast Corner of said Lot Thirteen (13), thence running west 51 feet, and thence north 50 feet to the place of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Cuba Blacksmith Shop.

PHOTOGRAPIC INFORMATION

Property Name: Cuba Blacksmith Shop
Location: Lynn Street, Cuba, Republic County, KS
Photographer: Sarah Martin
Date: June 9, 2009

- Photo 1: South (front) and east (side) elevations, facing N
- Photo 2: South (front) and west (side) elevations, facing NE
- Photo 3: East (side) elevation, facing W
- Photo 4: North (rear) elevation, facing S
- Photo 5: Entrance on south (front) elevation, facing N
- Photo 6: Interior, facing E
- Photo 7: Interior, showing forge, facing NW
- Photo 8: Interior, showing belt drive "trip hammer" (a mechanical hammer machine), facing

