NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME
   COMMON: Beecher Bible and Rifle Church
   AND/OR HISTORIC: 197-0000-001

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: Southeast corner Chapel St. and Elm St.
   CITY OR TOWN: Wabaunsee
   STATE: Kansas 66547
   CODE 20
   COUNTY: Wabaunsee
   CODE 197

3. CLASSIFICATION
   CATEGORY: (Check One)
   □ District  □ Building
   □ Site     □ Structure
   □ Object
   OWNERSHIP: □ Public
   □ Private
   □ Both
   □ Public Acquisition:
   □ In Process
   □ Being Considered
   □ Occupied
   □ Unoccupied
   □ Preservation work
   □ Yes: Restricted
   □ No
   ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC: Restricted
   □ Unrestricted
   □ No
   PRESENT USE: (Check One or More as Appropriate)
   □ Agricultural
   □ Commercial
   □ Educational
   □ Entertainment
   □ Government
   □ Industrial
   □ Military
   □ Museum
   □ Park
   □ Private Residence
   □ Religious
   □ Scientific
   □ Transportation
   □ Other (Specify)
   □ Comments

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
   OWNER'S NAME: Congregational Church
   STREET AND NUMBER: Wabaunsee
   CITY OR TOWN: Wabaunsee
   STATE: Kansas 66547
   CODE 20

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
   COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Register of Deeds
   STREET AND NUMBER: Wabaunsee County Courthouse
   CITY OR TOWN: Alma
   STATE: Kansas 66401
   CODE 20

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
   TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey
   DATE OF SURVEY: 1965
   □ Federal
   □ State
   □ County
   □ Local
   DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress
   STREET AND NUMBER: 10 First St. S. E.
   CITY OR TOWN: Washington
   STATE: District of Columbia 11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
<th>Ruins</th>
<th>Unexposed</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance:

The Beecher Bible and Rifle Church is built of native-limestone laid in a random pattern. Cut stone was used for quoins, window and door sills, jambs, and the foundation, which is slightly wider than the building. The rectangular building's simple plan is echoed in all parts of the design, from the rectangular windows to the straight gable roof and simple bell tower. The wood roof is given a feeling of strength by the wide eave trim. The small wood entrance was added at a later date, but an attempt was made to carry through the facade theme.
The Connecticut Kansas Colony, also known as the Beecher Rifle Colony or the New Haven Colony, was organized at New Haven, Connecticut, in February and March, 1856, by C. B. Lines during the time when the northern states were greatly excited about the Kansas-Nebraska bill and its concept of squatter sovereignty. The purpose of Lines' organization was to help make Kansas a Free State.

The "Beecher Rifle Colony" appellation grew out of the farewell meeting for the colonists held in March, 1856, in New Haven. Rev. Henry Ward Beecher addressed the meeting with a vigorous anti-slavery speech. One of the purposes of the meeting was to provide the colonists with arms for their protection. Beecher said that if the price of 25 Sharps carbines was raised at the New Haven meeting his Plymouth church in Brooklyn would give an additional 25 weapons. The people at the meeting met the challenge and Beecher's church came through with $625 to buy the carbines and also furnished a supply of Bibles to be distributed to the colonists. "Beecher's Bibles" became the popular designation for the Sharps carbines supplied the colonists.

About 70 colonists, almost all men, arrived in Kansas in late April, 1856, and soon after organized the town of Wabaunsee. At first worship services were held in various places— the company tent, a store, log cabins, and even in a grove near the townsit. A successful effort to organize a church was made on Saturday, June 27, 1857, with 28 charter members. It was decided that the church should be "Congregational in form but not in name and, in fact as unsectarian as possible" and that it was to be known as "The First Church of Christ in Wabaunsee." (In 1858 the Wabaunsee group sought affiliation with the Congregational fellowship in Kansas and was accepted.) A temporary frame building was constructed and plans were also laid for the construction of a stone building. It was a time of hardship and uncertainty and funds were hard to raise, but after four years of persistence the building was completed and dedicated on May 24, 1862. According to some of the settlers' reminiscences, families had left their own dwellings unfinished in order to give time and money to see the church building completed.

After 50 years of service the building stood unused for 20 to 30 years when Wabaunsee's declining population forced the Congregational Church to discontinue. Restored in 1948 by the Old Timers Association, the building is again in use for religious services.

(see continuation sheet)
"Beecher Church One Hundred Years Old," Topeka Capital, June 9, 1957.
Burt, Henry Fairfield, "A Brief History of the Connecticut Kansas Colony," Wabaunsee County Truth, v. 1, no. 11 (October, 1897), to v. 2, no. 9 (August, 1900).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corner</th>
<th>Latitude Degrees Minutes Seconds</th>
<th>Longitude Degrees Minutes Seconds</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>SW</td>
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</tr>
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Approximate acreage of nominated property: 1

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state boundaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Form prepared by:

Charles L. Hall, Architectural Consultant
Richard Pankratz, Planner

Kansas State Historical Society

Street and number:

120 West Tenth St.

City or town:

Topeka

State:

Kansas 66612

2. State Liaison Officer Certification

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: Nyle H. Miller

Title: Executive Secretary, Kansas State Historical Society

Date: October 28, 1970

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

Gunt A. Andree
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: FEB 2 4 1971

Attest:

William H. Hunsick
Keeper of the National Register

Date: 2 0 1971
6. Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas (State) 1957
Kansas State Historical Society
120 West Tenth St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612 Code: 20
Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration (Federal) 1939
Records destroyed. A guide book, Kansas, was published in 1939.

8. The Beecher Bible and Rifle Church is significant for a number of reasons. Architecturally, it is a good example of early Plains Vernacular style expressed in a religious structure. It is one of the earliest permanent church buildings in Kansas and is today one of the oldest church buildings in the state. The circumstances which brought the Connecticut Kansas Colony to the state—namely, the desire to make Kansas a Free State—and the involvement of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher with the colonists add further significance to the structure.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

1. NAME
   COMMON: Beecher Bible and Rifle Church
   AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: Southeast corner Chapel St. and Elm St.
   CITY OR TOWN: Wabaunsee
   STATE: Kansas 66547
   CODE: 20
   COUNTY: Wabaunsee 197
   STATE: Kansas

3. MAP REFERENCE
   SOURCE: U.S.G.S. 7½' Quadrangle, Wamego
   SCALE: 1:24,000
   DATE: 1953

4. REQUIREMENTS
   TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
   1. Property boundaries where required.
   2. North arrow.
   3. Latitude and longitude reference.