

**SELGEM**  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
(Type all entries complete applicable sections)

STATE: Kansas
COUNTY: Wilson
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Norman No. 1 Site

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
East Mill street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Neodesha

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
# 5 Cong. Joe Skubitz

STATE Kansas	CODE 66757	COUNTY: Wilson	CODE 205
-----------------	---------------	-------------------	-------------

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
City of Neodesha

STREET AND NUMBER:  
102 South 4th street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Neodesha

STATE:  
Kansas

CODE:  
66757

20

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
Register of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Wilson County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:  
Fredonia

STATE:  
Kansas

CODE:  
66736

20

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Survey of Historic Sites and Structures in Kansas

DATE OF SURVEY: 1957  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Kansas State Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:  
120 West Tenth street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Topeka

STATE:  
Kansas

CODE:  
66612

20

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Kansas  
COUNTY: Wilson  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(Check One)			(Check One)	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The site of the Norman No. 1 oil well is today a Neodesha city park. A reconstruction of the original derrick was made from California redwood and erected over the well site in 1961. (The original derrick was not of redwood, but it was used because of its durability.) The derrick stands 67 feet tall and each of the four sides measures 21 feet at the base and tapers to less than one-third that amount at the top. A small shed and other accoutrements of the oil drilling activity have been placed in the proper location. A fence surrounds the well site and separates it from a museum and information center built on the grounds in 1970.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) <span style="float: right;">1892</span>			
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry	losophy	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	itarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			
<p>The Norman No. 1, which was located in the garden of T. J. Norman, a Neodesha blacksmith, was the first commercially successful well of the Mid-Continent oil field, the nation's largest, which spreads over Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.</p> <p>Oil had been known in Kansas for many years; travelers on the Santa Fe trail knew of oil seepages which they used for lubricating their wagons. Following the news of Edwin Drake's successful drilling at Titusville, Penna., in 1859, interest was stirred in eastern Kansas where oil traces had been found. Several wells were dug with slight success before the Civil War curtailed such activities. After the war the search for oil and gas continued, particularly in southeastern Kansas.</p> <p>One of the key figures in oil and gas exploration in southeastern Kansas was William Mills, who left Pennsylvania in 1884 for Miami county, Kan., where he successfully completed a number of gas wells. Several Neodesha businessmen decided their community in Wilson county should have gas for fuel, and they promised Mills leases on 5,000 acres if he would drill a well. They were not averse to the development of an oil industry in case he should find oil instead of gas, and a clause in the leases stated that if oil was struck, it would be refined in Neodesha. The leased properties included the four-acre garden patch of T. J. Norman along the banks of the Verdigris on the east edge of town. The firm of A. P. McBride and C. L. Bloom of Independence, Kan., contracted to drill Mills' well.</p> <p>On November 28, 1892, the drilling rig struck oil at 832 feet. Mills' diary entry for that date reads: "Well commenced flowing at noon. I staid with it all day and night. Gathered 60 gallons of oil . . ." He believed that the oil was of marketable quality, but he lacked the large sums of money needed to go into large scale production. Therefore the discovery was kept secret, the machinery was taken down and the well capped the next day, and Mills went East to seek capital. His efforts were unsuccessful until he talked to the firm of John Guffey and James Galey in Pittsburg. These men were well-known wild-catters famous for their development of eastern oil fields. Galey made a trip to Kansas and decided that the venture was worthwhile.</p>			

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Kansas	
COUNTY Wilson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

1.

8. They took over Mills' project, offering him one-fourth interest, and soon had leased thousands of acres in Wilson and adjoining counties. (Some estimates say as much as one million acres were leased.) Several drilling operations took place but no gushers were found.

Then on October 4, 1893, after it had been left idle for almost a year, the Norman well was shot with 30 quarts of nitroglycerin. The assembled crowd of onlookers saw a large column of oil and water rise high above the derrick. The first pumping yielded 371 barrels of oil. The well produced as much as two barrels of oil an hour and 18 to 24 barrels a day with continuous pumping. The Norman No. 1 was the first producing well in what became known as the Mid-Continent field. It was the first major discovery of oil in the nation since the Titusville find in 1859.

Other successful wells were drilled, but Guffey and Galey could not market their Kansas oil without paying prohibitive transportation charges. (The rates were controlled by Eastern interests who had no desire to see the Kansas oil fields developed.) Consequently they sold out in 1895 at a considerable loss to the Forest Oil Co., a subsidiary of Standard Oil. Before the turn of the century Standard Oil had erected a refinery at Neodesha.

The Norman No. 1 continued to pump for 24 years until 1917. At that time its yield was down to half a barrel a day and the pipe was pulled and the well abandoned. The site was forgotten until the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the discovery of oil in Neodesha stirred interest in marking the site responsible for much of the growth and prosperity of the city.

In 1961 a 67-foot reconstruction of the original derrick was erected on the site of the well. An information and museum building was placed at the city-owned site in 1970.

The Norman No. 1 oil well site is an important landmark to the industrial growth of Kansas. The well is not significant for the amount of oil it produced but rather for what its successful completion led to. As the discovery well of the Mid-Continent field, whose oil has been so important to the nation's prosperity, the Norman No. 1 is a historic site worthy of National Register listing.

9. Galey, Thomas M., "The Birth of the Mid-Continent Oil Empire," speech given November 30, 1942 at Neodesha, copy in Kansas State Historical Society Library.

Garrett, Genevieve Mong, and Maurine Mong McCray, "The Opening of the Mid-Continent Field," Little Bear Tracks, Neodesha, Ks., 1871-1971 (Neodesha Publishing Co., Neodesha, 1971), pp. 17-23.

"History of Mid-Continent Field" Independence Daily Reporter Oil and Gas Magazine (Independence Daily Reporter, Independence, Kan., 1905).

Knowles, Ruth Sheldon, The Greatest Gamblers--The Epic of American Oil Exploration (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1959), pp. 78, 79.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Kansas	
COUNTY Wilson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

2.

9. McBride, A. P., "History of the Mid-Continent Oil Field," six-page manuscript filed with Kansas State Historical Society Manuscript Division.
- Moore, Raymond C., and Winthrop P. Haynes, Oil and Gas Resources of Kansas, State Geological Survey of Kansas Bulletin No. 3 (State Printer, Topeka, 1917), pp. 20, 348, 349.
- "Norman No. 1 Grounds to Open June 1," Neodesha Daily Sun, May 31, 1973.
- Rister, Carl Coke, Oil! Titan of the Southwest (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1949), pp. 31-36.
- Schruben, Francis W., Wea Creek to El Dorado, Oil in Kansas 1860-1920 (University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Mo., 1972), pp. vii, 13-15.
- Tarbell, Ida M., "Kansas and the Standard Oil Company," McClure's Magazine, September, 1905.
- Whittemore, Margaret, "Kansas Supplied First Oil Well in Midwest," Topeka Capital, October 3, 1937.
- Wilson County Sun, October 6 and 13, 1893, April 7, 1897.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Blackmar, Frank W., editor, Kansas, A Cyclopedia of State History (Standard Publishing Co., Chicago, 1912), p. 923.

"Commemorated 50th Anniversary of Norman No. 1 Oil Well," Neodesha Register, December 3, 1942.

Dains, F. B., "On the Composition of a Natural Oil from Wilson County, Kansas," Transactions of the 26th and 27th Annual Meetings of the Kansas Academy of Science (State Printer, Topeka, 1896), p. 38.

"First Commercial Oil Well West of the Mississippi," Kansas Facts-1931 (Charles P. Beebe, publisher, Topeka, 1931), p. 125.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0     '     "	0     '     "		37°	24'	55"
NE	0     '     "	0     '     "		95°	40'	22"
SE	0     '     "	0     '     "				
SW	0     '     "	0     '     "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Richard Pankratz, Planner

ORGANIZATION: Kansas State Historical Society      DATE: Dec. 3, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West Tenth Street

CITY OR TOWN: Topeka      STATE: Kansas      CODE: 66612      CODE: 20

**12. 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  
Nyle H. Miller

Title Executive Director, Kansas State Historical Society

Date December 4, 1973

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS