

Register of Historic Kansas Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts. The format is similar to the National Register of Historic Places form. 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. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Welch House
Other name/site number 205-0000-0113

2. Location

Street & number Three miles west of highway 39, Wilson/Montgomery not for publication
County Road
City or town Lafontaine vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Wilson Code 205 Zip code 66736

3.,4. Certification

I hereby certify that this property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Patricia Zoller DSHPO 2/28/06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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	
<u>1</u>		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>		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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling house

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant. Not in use.

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Early cottage style native stone house/Vernacular

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Limestone

Walls: Limestone

Plaster

Roof: Metal

Other: Wood

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Criteria

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

Architecture

Period of Significance

1869-1870

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Peter Welch

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Welch House
Wilson County, Kansas

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DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Welch House is a typical stone vernacular cottage house of the mid 19th Century. The house sits on 160 acres on the banks of Duck Creek, 3 miles west of Lafontaine in Wilson County, Kansas. The northeast corner of the property is situated on Edwards Road. The south side of the property is on 6600 Road, which is the Wilson County and Montgomery County Road. The east, north, and west sides are adjacent to private property. Constructed in 1869, it is a one-story home situated on a limestone foundation. The walls are made of native hand-cut limestone. The house faces west and has a steeply pitched front-gabled modern tin roof. The interior is a simple floor plan of two rooms separated by a wooden wall. The wooden windows and doors are original to building.

Elaboration

The Welch House is a one-story, rectangular-shaped, limestone structure measuring 17' x 26'. The house is made up of hand-hewn native limestone blocks that are laid in regular courses, and is supported by a limestone foundation. The house has a modern tin side gabled roof. The house sits on a gradual slope with the west-facing front at a higher elevation. The west side of the house features two evenly spaced Victorian style wooden doors near the corners, and two evenly spaced double hung wood windows at the center. The north side features one six-over-six window in the center of the wall. The east side has two rough-sawn vertical board doors that have the original strap hinges, latches, jambs and lintels. There is one window on this side between the two doors. The south side has one Victorian style door. All of the windows in the house are the original wooden double hung sash, six over six paned windows with wood lintels and sills. All of the windows and doors are original. Where the window frames are exposed one can see the original square nails dating to the mid 1800s. There are five different patterns of surface design where the exterior stone has been hewn. Thus we can assume that at least that many people working on the stone as the house was being built, each person having a special strike pattern to the stone.

The house interior has two rooms divided by a thin wall made up of vertical oak boards with a single door giving entry to either room. The interior stonewalls have been covered with plaster. The flooring consists of oak joists and floorboards. Oak was also used for the roof rafters and ceiling. Where the ceiling has fallen away, crude saw marks are visible on the surface of the wooden roof rafters and ceiling joists. The partial remains of the brick chimney has been covered over on the roof, but is still in place in the interior next to the dividing wall in the north room where a wood burning stove once stood.

The Welch House has been moderately altered over the years. An addition was added on two sides of the house after the property was sold to the Decker family in the early 20th century the need for sleeping quarters and a kitchen. This addition was torn down in the 1930s.

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In the late 1940s electricity was added to the house after rural electricity became available. The house has never had indoor plumbing. A native stone well was filled in in 1994 and is located a few feet from the east side of the house.

Architectural Integrity and Condition

The Welch House is in poor condition. The building itself is structurally sound but has substantial mortar loss on all four elevations. The wooden windows and doors have major deterioration. The interior of the home is also in poor condition. The wooden partition wall is heavily deteriorated as is the ceiling and floor of the house. The plaster walls have several large cracks and pieces missing on both the eastern and western walls in large amounts where the wall meets the floorboards.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Welch House is being nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places under Criterion C as a good example of rural vernacular residential architecture. The building is also associated with Peter Welch who was an early settler in Wilson County. The Welch House is representative of typical rural vernacular housing from the mid to late 19th Century.

History

As early settlers on Duck Creek, Peter and Philadelphia Welch were vital in establishing the small community of Lafontaine in early Wilson County, in Southeast Kansas. Arriving in 1869 they were not newcomers to the state of Kansas, having formerly lived on Buffalo Creek in what is now Woodson County. The commitment of the Welch family to establish roots in the Lafontaine community is typical of the pioneering spirit that began many Kansas communities in the mid 19th century. Peter was almost sixty years old when he, Philadelphia, and their family settled in southern Wilson County. Even at his advanced age, Peter was one of an early frontier breed who did not shrink from adventure in a new place.

Born June 6, 1806 in south-central Kentucky near the Tennessee border, Peter Welch was a rugged and adventurous frontier hunter and trapper. His early years were spent surviving the lawlessness and violence that seemed to follow the frontier. As a young man he moved to Jackson County, Missouri near what is now Independence. It was here that Peter met and married Philadelphia Creek, daughter of David and Peggy McClure Creek in 1833.

During the border wars between Kansas and Missouri, Peter, Philadelphia, and their family decided to leave western Missouri to settle in Kansas not far from Peter's brother-in-law, Nathan Creek, a stonemason. By this time Peter was in his forties and had eleven children. Peter knew that there were many opportunities in Kansas. They settled on Buffalo Creek in Woodson County in Southern Kansas. After ten long tough years Peter decided to relocate to the southern part of Wilson County along Duck Creek to stake a claim where the Osage Indians were in the process of being removed. Choosing a spot high above Duck Creek, Peter built his house. It is thought that his brother-in-law and his grown sons probably helped him due to the solid construction of the house. The claim was on what had been Osage Indian campground.

Accounts of that first year describe the Osage watching Peter as he built his house. Peter established a peaceful relationship with them even though his oxen would mysteriously disappear. The Osage offered to bring the oxen back to Peter in exchange for sugar, coffee, and other prized items. Peter agreed to their terms, and because of this he was considered a friend to the Osage.

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Peter and Philadelphia soon became involved in their community. They were strong Christians, and deeply religious. Church records show that on December 25, 1870 Levi Jones, a Christian minister, called a meeting for the purpose of organizing a church in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Welch on Duck Creek. There were 19 persons present enrolling as charter members. One of these was Mrs. Welch. The Lafontaine Christian Church began in this humble setting. A church building was later constructed three miles away in the small village of Lafontaine, and is active today. Peter and Philadelphia lived out their remaining years on Duck Creek and were active in the small community. Peter passed away on December 31, 1879. Philadelphia passed away in July of 1889 in Buffalo, Kansas.

Peter and Philadelphia had fourteen living children. However, it is said that there were others that died in infancy, totaling twenty-two children in all. Most of the Welch children made their homes in the Lafontaine area. Accounts of the Welch family appear in The Lafontaine Banner newspaper in 1909 when it is recorded in the December 10th issue that Joseph Welch, the youngest son of Peter and Philadelphia Welch, had the distinction of having lived the longest in Wilson County. In the October 22nd issue of that same year John T. (Dewey) Welch was listed as the oldest native-born citizen of the County, born August 19, 1859. Accounts of the Welch family also appear in the books "In The Beginning" by Lester A. Harding, and "Lafontaine and Those Who Made It" by Lewis Strange.

The oldest abstract of the property is dated December 30, 1913 and lists an affidavit of death with J.W. Fisher, 57 years old, as being acquainted with Peter Welch, his widow, and children; having known them over forty-three years. Also, on February 11, 1914, Nathan Welch "declared that he also knew Peter and Philadelphia Welch."

Building A House In 1869

In the late 1850s, residents began erecting simple stone and brick buildings throughout the eastern and portions of the Kansas territory. Simple lines, basic proportions, and rich wall textures resulted from the use of natural materials. The early masonry houses had either a single room or central halls flanked on either side by a room and were a story and a half to two stories high.

Early Kansas settlers lacked time, money, skills and even desire to build elaborate structures. The Welch House reflects this early form of vernacular housing. The simple form and use of local material fits the pattern of construction for early homes in Kansas.

The extremes of Kansas climate and the great distance from any metropolitan area would have required that the Welch House be built with materials available near Duck Creek. It is reasonable to assume that Nathan Creek either helped Peter build his house or taught Peter and his sons the art of stonemasonry. Oak timber, which is indigenous to Duck Creek, and limestone, which is plentiful in the nearby Chautauqua Hills would have been the materials of choice. The simple style of the building makes a statement that the main goal for the Welch family was to build a house that would stand for generations

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and would serve the purpose of supplying the family with shelter. A later owner, May McGinnis, would tell her grandchildren that the house was warm in winter and cool in summer; a comfort greatly prized by hard working ranchers in the days before electricity, air conditioning, and propane heaters.

The McGinnis family inhabited the house until the 1940s when a new house was built next to the Welch House. Fred McGinnis used it as a tool house until 1974. Since it passed to the current owners in 1992 it has not been used for any specific purpose.

The Welch House is significant at the local level because it is an excellent representation of rural vernacular architecture. As it retains much of its original appearance and integrity; the Welch House is worthy of listing on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

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Bibliography

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Lafontaine Christian Church records, copied May, 1988.

Lewis Cline, Elder, *History of Lafontaine Christian Church*. May 24, 1968.

Woodson & Wilson County Census, 1860 & 1870. Library of the State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

Lester A. Harding, President, Woodson County Historical Society. *In The Beginning* Vol. 9-10

Family Bible Records from the bible of Joseph Welch. Mrs. Leslie Housley, Fredonia, Kansas.

Lewis A. Strange, *Lafontaine and Those Who Made It*, Parker Message Publishers, March 31, 1938. Pages 68, 89, 90. Wilson County Historical Society.

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Wynona Christine Welch Swain, *The Family of Peter Welch and Philadelphia Creek*, May 25, 1997.

Bliss Isley and W. M. Richards, *Four Centuries In Kansas: The Removal of The Osage Indians*, Published by the State of Kansas, 1937, page 41.

Kansas Council of Genealogical Societies, Certificate Application, September 8, 1983.

L. Wallace Duncan, *History of Neosho & Wilson Counties*, Monitor Printing Co. Fort Scott, Kansas, 1902.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located in Section 32, Range 14 on Duck Creek, of Township 30 and consists of a 20 feet perimeter around the house.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property was historically associated with a 160 tract; however, the owners wish to nominate only the building and its immediate surroundings at this time.

Photographic Information

The following information is consistent for all the photographs:

1. Welch House
2. Wilson Co., Kansas
3. Photograph by Bob Bettis
4. January 30, 2006
5. Digital image on file at KSHS

The following information is specific to each photograph:

<u>Photo #</u>	<u>Description of View</u>
1.	View of house facing northeast
2.	View of house facing northwest
3.	View of house facing northwest
4.	View of house facing southwest
5.	Detail of stone on south elevation facing north
6.	View of interior south room facing southeast
7.	View of interior north room flooring facing north
8.	Detail of window in north room facing north
9.	Detail of chimney north room facing southeast
10.	View of property facing east