

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON:
Huron Cemetery

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Wyandot National Cemetery

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
on Minnesota avenue, between Sixth and Seventh Streets

CITY OR TOWN:
Kansas City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
no. 2, Bill Roy

STATE: Kansas CODE: 66101

COUNTY: Wyandotte CODE: 209

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 type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
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 type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>cemetery</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
See continuation sheet

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Register of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
Wyandotte County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN:
Kansas City

STATE:
Kansas

CODE:
66101

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 St.

CITY OR TOWN:
Topeka

STATE:
Kansas

CODE:
66612

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Kansas
COUNTY: Wyandotte
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
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7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Huron Cemetery is an open, tree-covered tract on a hill in the center of the Kansas City, Kansas, business district. It is a narrow, two-acre property fronting on Minnesota avenue. The cemetery grounds are twelve to eighteen feet higher than adjacent lots; the cemetery is the only part of the hill remaining since the rest was cut away for streets and commercial development. Stone retaining walls have been constructed around part of the perimeter because of the higher elevation of the cemetery and a stone entrance at the northeast corner, on the south side of Minnesota avenue. Adjoining the cemetery grounds on the south is the Scottish Rite Temple, on the east are the public library and a park, and on the west are business buildings.

Sidewalks wind through the cemetery. There are about forty tombstones on which the inscriptions are still legible. Some are rather recent. Remnants of older deteriorated stones are visible in various parts of the cemetery.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

5. 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) 1843-1844

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/Philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry		<u>Historic Indian</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	<u>cemetery</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1843 about 700 Wyandot Indians from Ohio came to Kansas where they had been promised lands. When they arrived, however, the lands they had been promised were no longer available. Finally the Delaware Indians, referred to as nephews of the Wyandots, sold them 36 sections and gave them three more located above the junction of the Kansas and Missouri rivers.

At the time of their coming to Kansas the Wyandots were one of the most highly civilized tribes. Many white captives had been adopted into the tribe, and Christianity and education had been accepted by most members. Many lived in frame or log houses in the same manner as the white settlers. They were farmers, businessmen, and artisans, and had a quite different life style from the Plains Indians native to Kansas.

What is now commonly known as the Huron Cemetery was established soon after the 1843 arrival. An epidemic claimed upwards of 60 victims that year, many of whom were buried on a hill overlooking the Kansas river. Following a disastrous flood in 1844, another epidemic brought death to an estimated 100 to 300 members of the tribe. Most of these were buried on that same hill, now known as the Huron Cemetery. By 1855 about 400 burials had taken place. No tombstones were placed in those early days. In the late 1850's the Wyandots had tombstones placed on all known graves of chiefs. Because so many graves are unmarked and no records exist for the early burials, the number of graves is not known. Estimates range from 400 to 800. Interments of Wyandot descendants have continued to the present day.

In 1855 the Wyandot nation concluded a treaty with the United States government giving up all right and interest in the lands purchased from the Delawares. This was done so that the lands could be subdivided and conveyed to the individual tribal members; tribal relations were to be dissolved and the Wyandots would be regarded as citizens of the United States. However, that portion of land which had been used as a public burying ground was to be permanently reserved for that use.

The cemetery's location in the heart of the Kansas City business district has spawned periodic attempts to sell the cemetery grounds for commercial development and remove the bodies to another cemetery. Pressure for selling the land came from certain Kansas City businessmen and the remnants of the Wyandotte tribe in Oklahoma. (Members of the Wyandot nation who wanted to continue a tribal existence found their way to Oklahoma, and later reorganized a Wyandotte tribe as permitted by an 1867 treaty.) The first effort to sell the cemetery in 1890 brought enough

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet) #1

STATE Kansas	
COUNTY Wyandotte	
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(Number all entries)

HURON CEMETERY

4. cont.

The Wyandotte County Register of Deeds indicates that so far as his office is concerned, ownership is vested in the Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C. However, ownership is claimed by the Wyandotte tribe in Oklahoma.

6. cont.

Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration

1939

federal

Records destroyed. A guide book, Kansas, was published in 1939.

8. cont.

protests to stop it. Then in 1906 Congress passed a law authorizing the sale. Three sisters, who were perhaps one-eighth Wyandotte--Lyda, Helene, and Ida Conley--led the opposition, both in court and out. Lyda Conley studied law in order to pursue the case in the courts and was admitted to the Kansas bar in 1910. She is believed to have been the first woman to argue a case before the United States Supreme Court. The sisters occupied the cemetery, locked the gates, erected a one-room shanty above the grave of their mother, and stood guard with a loaded shotgun to block the removal of any tombstones or bodies. Their confrontation with the law lasted six or seven years. The courts constantly ruled in favor of the sale and against the sisters. But public opinion was with the Conelys, and in 1913 Congress repealed the law permitting the sale. Instead Congress appropriated \$10,000 in 1916 to improve the cemetery and to build retaining walls and a stone entrance. The city of Kansas City, Kansas, agreed in 1918 to maintain the cemetery in the same manner as the city parks. Until their deaths in the 1940's and 1950's the Conley sisters continued to act as the watchdogs for the cemetery, fighting any suggestion to change its usage. Bills were periodically introduced in Congress to permit the sale; sponsors of these bills were usually Oklahoma congressmen acting for the Oklahoma Wyandottes. Kansas congressmen did their best to block such legislation, but in 1956 a sale authorization slipped through unnoticed. So much furor was created by historical groups and descendants of the Wyandots in the Kansas City area that the sale was again stymied. At the present time the cemetery is still in existence. A local urban renewal agency is seeking Housing and Urban Development funds to develop the cemetery grounds as a park and yet maintain the historic Indian cemetery.

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(Continuation Sheet) #2

STATE Kansas	
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HURON CEMETERY

8. cont.

The appropriateness of the name "Huron Cemetery" has been questioned. The Wyandots never accepted "Huron" as a designation for themselves. Some authorities consider the Wyandots to be remnants of the Hurons; others say they were closely related to the Hurons, lived with them, and were a part of the Huron Indian Confederacy until its defeat by the Iroquois in 1649. After that defeat the Wyandot nation was formed from fragments of tribes of the defeated confederacy. The cemetery is today also referred to as the Wyandot National Cemetery.

Buried in the Huron Cemetery are some of the important figures of the Wyandot people, such leaders as Warpole, Big Trees, Silas Armstrong, Joel Walker, Matthew R. Walker, George I. Clark, Charles B. Garrett--a soldier in the War of 1812--and Francis A. Hicks. It is believed to be one of the oldest cemeteries in Kansas. The long fight to preserve the cemetery by the Conley sisters and others, often against overwhelming odds, should also add significance to the Huron Cemetery.

9. cont.

Morgan, Perl W., History of Wyandotte County, Kansas, and Its People (Chicago, Lewis Publishing Co., 1911), pp. 81-84.

Pennington, Beecher B., History of Seventh Street Methodist Church South, Kansas City, Kansas (Kansas City, Kan., Buckley Publishing Co., 1915).

Scrivner, Erret P., Collection. Papers relating to Huron Cemetery. Manuscript Division, Kansas State Historical Society.

Sheley, Eleanore, "Huron Cemetery--National Burying Ground of the Wyandotte Indians," The Kansas City Genealogist, published by the Heart of America Genealogical Society, Kansas City, Missouri, v. 4, no. 1 (July 1, 1963), pp. 1-4.

Snair, Bob, "Huron Case Coming Up," Kansas City Kansan, May 1, 1960. "Spotlight Fixed on Cemetery," Kansas City Kansan, August 2, 1959, Centennial Edition.

Van Brunt, Henry, "Three Sisters' Defense of Cemetery Continued for Nearly Forty Years," Kansas City Times, June 7, 1946.

"Wyandot," Kansas City Journal, February 17, 1882.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Burial Ground Dispute Has 54-Year History in the Courts," Kansas City Times, October 3, 1960.
 Chandley, John S., "Huron, A Tale of Romance," Jayhawk, the Magazine of Kansas, v. 2, no. 7 (July, 1929), pp. 199, 200, 223.
 Harrington, Grant W., "Colorful History of Huron Cemetery Told in Protest to Proposed Sale," Kansas City Kansas, July 12, 1947.
 Harrington, Grant W., Historic Spots of Wyandotte County, Kansas (Merriam, Kan., The Mission Press, 1935), pp. 113-120.
 Martin, I. T., "Living in a City of the Dead," The Kansas Magazine, v. 1, no. 6, (June, 1909), p. 49.

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	° ' "	° ' "		°	'	"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		39	06	54
SE	° ' "	° ' "		94	37	33
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Richard Pankratz, Director, Historic Sites Survey

ORGANIZATION: Kansas State Historical Society DATE: Feb., 1971

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 West 10th

CITY OR TOWN: Topeka STATE: Kansas 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

Title: _____

Date Sent to NR: 2/8/71

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: _____

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