



Name of Property: Black Jack Battlefield
City, State: Baldwin City Vicinity, Kansas
Period of Significance: 1856
NHL Criteria: 1 and 2
Theme: IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
 1. Parties, Protests, and Movements
 4. Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories
Previous Recognition: 2004 National Register of Historic Places
 2005 National Register of Historic Places, Boundary Increase
National Historic Context: V. Political and Military Affairs, 1783-1860
 J. The Rise of Sectionalism, 1840-1859

NHL Significance:

- The three-hour Battle of Black Jack, fought on June 2, 1856, marked a culmination of escalating violence in “Bleeding Kansas.” Unlike the previous violence in Kansas Territory characterized by guerilla warfare, the Battle of Black Jack was the nation’s first true open military conflict over the issue of slavery, fought between opposing pro and antislavery militias.
- The battle was the first of a series of armed paramilitary engagements and reflected growing national friction over slavery, representing a turning point in the march toward the Civil War.
- The Battle of Black Jack marked the beginning of John Brown’s war on slavery, which would culminate in his raid on Harpers Ferry. Both the battle and subsequent national press coverage introduced John Brown to the nation. Brown’s call for violent resistance to slavery, and the actions that began at Black Jack, moved the national argument over slavery from one of words to one of bloodshed.

Integrity:

- The battlefield has a high degree of integrity overall, particularly the topography and landscape features in the core area, including the creeks, ravines, high ground, and the Santa Fe Trail ruts. These retain their contextual relationship allowing an appreciation and understanding of the



battle action.

- A portion of undisturbed native prairie represents a rare surviving sample of the landscape vegetation at the time of battle, and prairie restoration continues on site. Vegetation that has grown up into woodland is considered a reversible condition that does not diminish integrity. The battlefield remains surrounded by a largely rural landscape, with little modern development. Changes to the landscape have been additive, such as roads, fence lines, and the Pearson Farm buildings. While post-dating the battle, the Pearson Farm was established in the 1880s by a participant in the battle whose descendants ensured that the conflict area would remain undeveloped.

Owner of Property: Black Jack Battlefield Trust (private), Kansas State Department of Transportation (public)

Size of Property: 59.51 acres

Origins of Nomination: The Black Jack Battlefield Trust contracted the preparation of this nomination.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- The nomination represents a “grass-roots” effort to preserve and restore the site, including a sesquicentennial celebration that increased interest in the preservation of the site.
- This honor will assist preservation and interpretation efforts by the Black Jack Battlefield Trust and encourage further heritage tourism to the site.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Advisory Board Recommendation:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 4/25/12):

Sarah J. Martin, National Register Coordinator, Kansas Historical Society