

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Naomi Institute
AND/OR COMMON
Rock Bluff School

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN East Rock Bluff Pct.	___ VICINITY OF	___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT Second
STATE Nebraska	CODE 31	COUNTY Cass
		CODE 025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Cass County Historical Society
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Plattsmouth	___ VICINITY OF	STATE Nebraska
---------------------------	-----------------	-------------------

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cass County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Plattsmouth	STATE Nebraska
---------------------------	-------------------

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic Preservation in Nebraska (and) A Survey of Historic, Architectural and
DATE
1971 Archeological Sites in the Eastern Nebraska Urban Region
___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Nebraska State Historical Society

CITY, TOWN Lincoln	STATE Nebraska
-----------------------	-------------------

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on a south slope overlooking Rock and Squaw Creeks in the Missouri River bluffs, the Rock Bluff Schoolhouse stands as a landmark to the former prominence of the village of Rock Bluff. Established and built in 1870 as the Naomi Institute, the building was originally a two-story structure. Measuring 25 feet by 50 feet the building stands today as a single-story structure housing one large classroom space.

Built upon a limestone foundation, the soft red brick walls stand as the most substantial structure in the Rock Bluff vicinity with the exception of the modern grain elevators near the river. Simply detailed, the building features a gable roof with the longitudinal axis oriented east-west. The south wall is the main facade, providing a wall broken into four bays, three of which are windows, with the fourth (at the east end) providing the entrance. Each gable end provides for two windows, while the north facade is a solid wall. The single chimney is at the west gable.

The interior has seen substantial alteration, not the least of which was a consequence of the removal of the second floor. It is not known precisely when or how this alteration took place. We do know that a fire broke out in the library on the second floor in December of 1871; however, records indicate that the building received only minor structural damage at that time. Local lore tells that the second story was blown off in a tornado, but the date is not known. It is entirely possible that the second-story was demolished in the devastating "Easter Tornado" of March 23, 1913. This storm was a series of tornados which caused nearly \$9,000,000 in property loss in Otoe, Cass, Sarpy, and Douglas Counties in Nebraska that Sunday evening. The "Berlin Tornado", which swept near Rock Bluff, is said to have left the state at King Hill, approximately two miles south-southeast of Rock Bluff (see U.S.G.S. map). One person was killed and \$10,000 worth of property damage was recorded in Rock Bluff. At any rate, what was once a two-story structure with at least three classrooms is presently a single-story structure with one classroom. The cloakroom, situated at the southeast corner of the building, shares the east end of the school with a small study alcove. The building is presently owned by the Cass County Historical Society and used as a period schoolhouse.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1870

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The successful establishment of the Naomi Institute is due entirely to the efforts of Joseph Diven Patterson. Born in 1835 in Pennsylvania of Scottish descent, Patterson led an extremely diversified life, which took him over much of the recently opened great plains area as well as Brazil. Patterson was a well-known and respected educator, having taught schools for over 54 terms in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa and Nebraska. Among the teaching positions he held in Nebraska were the Rock Bluff School, Naomi Institute, Murray and Plattsmouth schools as well as several positions in Sarpy County, Nebraska. In addition to his duties as educator, he found time to serve as Justice of the Peace, Postmaster, County Superintendent of Schools, County Surveyor, and City Engineer, among others, at various times.

Mr. Patterson had returned to Rock Bluff from Brazil in 1869 and immediately began teaching at the Rock Bluff School. By the spring of 1870 he had determined to establish an institute of higher learning and set out, with his own capital, to do just that. By early fall the brickwork had been completed and plans were made to commence a fall term in the new building. The school opened officially on September 13, 1870. An advertisement for this winter term stated that "...pupils of either sex will receive thorough and systematic instruction. Particular attention to Primary Scholars. School books furnished free to all pupils. Good boarding can be obtained at reasonable rates."

The school's success was reflected in the newspaper articles of the next few years. Both the Naomi Institute and Professor J. D. Patterson were the subject of continual praise in the Cass County papers. By January of 1872 the school had an enrollment of over 100 pupils and a staff of four teachers. The school seemingly could survive the disastrous fire of December, 1871, and continue to serve the educational needs of the community; the timely aid of the citizens and the insurance coverage seemed to be the major factors in the school's favor. It is not clear what happened, however, because by May of 1872 the Institute was up for purchase by the citizens of the community in a public election, and Mr. Patterson worked several years to pay the debts incurred in his venture. The most likely reason for failure, in light of the tremendous community support, was a failure on the part of the insuring companies to pay damages.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The fall term of 1872 saw professors Ramsey and Graves teaching the Rock Bluff school, and the Naomi Institute was no longer extant. The structure remained in use as a two-story building until the disastrous tornado, when it was converted into a single-story structure. It was used as the Rock Bluff School until consolidation and the purchase of the building by the Cass County Historical Society

The Naomi Institute was known as one of the leading educational institutes in the state during its operation. It is purportedly the oldest standing schoolhouse in Cass County and the first institution in the county to offer secondary-level education. The significance of this venture is greatly enhanced by the state of public education in Nebraska at this time. The Territorial Legislature passed a free public school act in 1884, providing for a county superintendent of schools and the power to levy a tax for school support. Most of the initiative, however, for the creation of schools rested with the three-member district board, and the development of public schools varied greatly from place to place. Compulsory education was not enacted until 1891. Within this context, the efforts of J. D. Patterson and the people of the Rock Bluff vicinity clearly come to the forefront in terms of providing for the educational needs of this community at an early date.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet, Item #9

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	5
---	---

2	5	8	8	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	4	6	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

D. Murphy, Curator of Historic Sites

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

April 15, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

(402) 432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Marvin D. Knuth

4/19/76

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet, Item #9

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	5
---	---

2	5	8	8	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	5	3	4	6	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

D. Murphy, Curator of Historic Sites

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

April 15, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

1500 R Street

TELEPHONE

(402) 432-2793

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Marvin D. Knuth

4/19/76

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Photo 1 of 3. General view of main entrance (south) façade looking north-northwest. Photo by D. Murphy, 1976, NSHS (7602/2:36A)



Photo 2 of 3. View of west and south facades. Photo by D. Murphy, 1976, NSHS (7602/2:34A)



Photo 3 of 3. View of north and east facades overlooking Rock and Squaw creeks. Photo by D. Murphy, 1976, NSHS (7602/2:30A)