NPS Form 10-900OMB
(Rev. 10-90)

No. 1024-0018

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. 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 any 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 (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Mayhew Cabin

Other names/site number John Brown's Cave; OT06:D-219

2. Location

Street & number 2012 4th Corso Not for publication [ ]

City or town Nebraska City Vicinity [ ]

State Nebraska Code NE County Otoe Code 131 Zip code 68401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [X] statewide [] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

12-21-2010
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[X] entered in the National Register.
[ ] see continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
[ ] see continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- X Private
- ___ Public-local
- ___ Public-state
- ___ Public-federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- X Building(s)
- ___ District
- ___ Site
- ___ Structure
- ___ Object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	Buildings
0	0	Sites
1	0	Structures
0	0	Objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling
RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum
RECREATION/CULTURE: Roadside Attraction

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER: Log Cabin

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Foundation STONE
Walls WOOD: hewn logs
Roof WOOD: cedar shingle
Other

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- X **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 is 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.
- X **B** Removed from its original location.
- ___ **C** A birthplace or a 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.)

Social History
Recreation / Entertainment
Other: Folklore

Period of Significance
1855-1859
1937-1959

Significant Dates
1855, 1859, 1937 and 1959

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Allen Mayhew (Mayhew Cabin)
Edward Bartling ("John Brown's Cave")

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ___ Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ___ Previously listed in the National Register
- ___ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ___ Designated a National Historic Landmark
- ___ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____.

Primary location for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- ___ Other State agency
- ___ Federal agency
- ___ Local Government
- ___ University
- X Other
  Name of repository: Mayhew Cabin Collection

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	257437	4506255	3.			
2.				4.			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bill Hayes / Director and Jessie Nunn / National Register Coordinator
organization Mayhew Cabin Foundation / Nebraska SHPO date August 2010
street & number 1500 "R" Street telephone 406-471-4775
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68501

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Mayhew Cabin Foundation
street & number 2012 4th Corso telephone 402-873-3115
city or town Nebraska City state NE zip code 68401

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

The nominated property is located near the intersection of old State Highway 2 (4th Corso) and South Table Creek on the western outskirts of Nebraska City (2000 pop. 7,228), the county seat of Otoe County, Nebraska. Nebraska City was platted on the western side of the Missouri River. Iowa is immediately across the river to the east, but Nebraska City is only about ten miles north of the Nebraska-Iowa-Missouri boarder. This location made Nebraska City important during heated debates about slavery leading up to the Civil War, as well as a potential stop for escaping slaves fleeing Missouri along the Lane Trail, a well-documented section of the famous Underground Railroad.

The Mayhew Cabin was moved approximately fifty feet north to its current location in 1937. The approximately one-half acre property contains two contributing resources: the Mayhew Cabin (contributing building), and "John Brown's Cave"[1] (contributing structure). The cabin is situated in a park-like setting. Nebraska Department of Roads property and buildings are located to the east and a modest museum and parking area owned by the Mayhew Cabin Foundation are located to the west. A heavily timbered ravine is located approximately fifty feet behind the cabin to the north. Various historic buildings that were moved to the property after the period of significance flank the ravine. The nominated property includes only the Mayhew Cabin and the area behind the cabin that is associated with the cave. Small scale features such as historic memorials and signage are not counted individually, but do contribute to the property's significance as a tourist attraction steeped in both history and folklore.

Mayhew Cabin

The Mayhew Cabin was built in 1855 by Allen Mayhew in 6 weeks. He used mostly cottonwood logs for the construction, which he hewed and squared. Then the 'chinking' and 'daubing' were placed in between the logs and a wood shingle roof added to finish the construction. The original description of Mr. Mayhew's pre-emption application states, "The House is built of hewed logs one & half stories high, five windows & one door, shingle roof, plank floor, cooking stove & cooking utensils in the house."[2] The original cabin consisted of a main level where most of the daily life would be spent and a loft area where the older Mayhew children would sleep. The log cabin served as the home of the Mayhew family until 1864. At this time, the cabin and surrounding property were sold.

The cabin continued to be used as private residence throughout the late 1800s. With these various occupants, the cabin did undergo some changes. However, its structural integrity was maintained throughout the period. The cabin retained all of its original features with the exception of one window in the rear, which was made into a second door during that time. As people continued to use the structure as a home, the cabin was covered with wood siding and the interior walls were plastered. Furthermore, an addition was built onto the rear of the cabin and a small porch was added to the front.[3]

Then in 1937, the proposed route for Highway 2 threatened the cabin. Owner Edward Bartling decided to have the cabin moved at this time to prevent its destruction. With this move, all of the additions and siding were removed. This, in large part, restored the original massing of the building and exposed its original 1850s exterior materials. It also gave the cabin an "old-fashioned" look, which facilitated Bartling's desire to open it to the public and develop a tourist park.[4]

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[1] "John Brown's Cave" is not a cave and has no confirmed connection to abolitionist John Brown. However, since before 1901, Mayhew's underground storage area (most likely a dugout cellar) was called "John Brown's Cave." When the cellar was recreated by Edward Bartling after the Mayhew Cabin was moved in 1937, the name continued to be used.

[2] Allen Mayhew Pre-emption certification, #64-Otoe County, Nebraska Territory, National Archives, Washington D.C. date March 30, 1857.

[3] Surveyor's Record Book #1300, May 8, 1937, Nebraska Department of Roads Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska; *Omaha World-Herald*, October 27, 1929.

[4] Surveyor's Record Book #1300, May 8, 1937, Nebraska Department of Roads Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska; 1940s John Brown Cave Postcard, Mayhew Cabin Collection, Nebraska City, Nebraska.

The cabin remained open to the public from 1938 to 2002 as the "John Brown's Cave" tourist attraction. During the 1960s, a porch and siding were once again added to the cabin.[5] These additions were retained until the Mayhew Cabin Foundation was formed and opened the site as the Mayhew Cabin Museum in 2001. Soon after, the siding was removed to once again expose the original log exterior of the Mayhew Cabin.

The Mayhew Cabin underwent extensive restoration during the fall of 2005. This restoration included a new cedar shingled roof and new daubing in between the log walls. In addition, the false bead board floor of the loft area was replaced with sawmill cottonwood and repositioned at its 1855 height using the original notches. Any visible electrical additions were removed and modern lighting was replaced with reproduction lanterns and hidden wiring, two lanterns in the loft area and two lanterns on the main level. Allen Mayhew's 1857 Pre-Emption claim served as the main basis for the restoration of the cabin in 2005 and helped the organization achieve very accurate results.[6]

Today, the cabin structurally resembles what the Mayhew family lived in during the 1850s. It measures 14 feet in width, 16 feet in length, and 10.8 feet from the foundation to the top of the log walls. The main structure has a small stone foundation, which the log walls sit on. The logs have a rough surface that bear the marks of an adze or axe used to hew and square them. The walls were constructed with the use of a half dove-tail notch and no log crowns. The roof, made of cedar shingles, is pitched at an angle or has a gable that runs on an east-west axis. The gabled ends of the cabin (upper east-west sections) are covered with horizontal siding boards. This suggests that the roof was later replaced in a different fashion. Over 90 percent of the walls are the original logs that Allen Mayhew hewed, while a small percentage had to be replaced due to deterioration. The outside walls have a very dark, almost black, color to them. This is due to the restoration treatment; prior to the project the walls had a gray tone.

The cabin contains four windows, two on the upper level and two on the lower level, along with two doors. The two upper level windows are located on opposite each other in the east and west gable ends. These four-light wood units are approximately 22 inches in width and are side-hinged. The lower level windows flank the original south entrance, and six-over-six double-hung wood units that measure approximately 34 inches in width. Shutters made from vertically boards are attached with hinges and swing inward to protect these windows. These were added during the restoration. The cabin's doors are located opposite each other on the eave sides. Both are approximately 32 inches in width and are constructed of vertical wood planks (not panels). Currently, the Mayhew Cabin is in good condition from the restoration in 2005.

"John Brown's Cave"
The "cave" area underneath the cabin was originally built in 1938 after the cabin was moved. Stories about the Mayhew Cabin attributed the importance of a "cave" where escaping slaves could be hidden on the Underground Railroad.[7] Edward Bartling had this area constructed to provide the public with an avenue to experience the more legendary aspects of the Underground Railroad firsthand. The cave has remained a vital part of the site since the late 1930s in attracting visitors and has undergone only a few changes. [8]

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[5] 1960s John Brown Cave Postcard, Mayhew Cabin Collection, Nebraska City, Nebraska.
[6] Description from Allen Mayhew Pre-emption certification, #64-Otoe County, Nebraska Territory, National Archives, Washington D.C. date March 30, 1857.
[7] There is currently no physical, archeological or documentary evidence to confirm how the Mayhew's underground storage area was created. It may have been a manmade cellar, natural cave or a combination of both. The matter is further complicated by the use of cellar and cave as interchangeable terms during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. However, "John Brown's Cave" as it exists today is a manmade structure begun in 1938 (as described here), and should not be confused with the original Mayhew Cellar / Cave.
[8] Surveyor's Record Book #1300, May 8, 1937, Nebraska Department of Roads Archives, Lincoln, Nebraska.

The cave area has three different sections. The first area is the cellar, which is located directly underneath the cabin. It is constructed of large stones that were fitted and mortared together. The cellar was painted white including the wood beams supporting the ceiling. It measures 12.5 feet by 14.75 feet with a maximum height of 6.75 feet. From the cellar, a small tunnel, which is composed of large fitted stones, runs west by northwest to the "cave" area. It is approximately 12 feet long and 2.5 feet wide.

The second section is the "cave" area, which was constructed to represent a make-shift sleeping quarters for escaping slaves. It is a representation of the original cave and where escaping slaves *may have hid* during the 1850s. The cave is constructed of brick walls with round wooden beams for support. It also contains railroad ties built into very short walls filled in with dirt, which represent beds. There are two sections to the cave opposite each other which mimic the mythologized "cross-wings" important to the folklore of John Brown's Cave. Each measures approximately 9.75 feet wide, 10 feet long, and 5.75 feet in height. The front part of each cave area has a wood pillar face with windows, the latter of which clearly indicate this cave's origins as a tourist site and not a natural cave or storage cellar.

The third section is a long tunnel that exits into a nearby ravine. It is mainly constructed of concrete blocks mortared together. The tunnel is approximately 96 feet in length and is 2.33 feet wide the entire way. The concrete blocks suggest that is was constructed at a later date than the cellar underneath the cabin and the "cave." It is possible that this area was added in the 1950s. All sections of the cave were built specifically for visitation and to allow the public an experience suggestive of what some slaves may have experienced during their escape along the Underground Railroad. The underground cellar, tunnel and cave (collectively knowk as "John Brown's Cave") became very popular after its construction in 1938.

Small Scale Features

Various small scale features add to the significance of the Mayhew Cabin as a tourist attraction and well-visited historic site after 1937. The most important of these features are signs and monuments. Perhaps the oldest of these is the hand-painted metal sign fixed to a stone planter just west of the cabin known as the "well sign." The rectangular, black and white sign reads "Historic Site, John Brown's Cave, 1851," and is decorated with stylized curved flourishes. While fully inaccurate from a historical viewpoint, the sign does help establish the Mayhew Cabin and "John Brown's Cave" as a roadside attraction.[9] More recent signage reflecting inaccurate interpretations has been removed since the property was purchased by the Mayhew Cabin Foundation. This included an arch in front of the cabin reading "John's Brown's Cave" and sign above the entrance reading "John Brown's Cave Cabin Museum, The John Henry Kagi Memorial, 1851."

A memorial to Edward D. Bartling and a Nebraska State Historical Society historical marker are also found on the property. The latter replaced an older marker in 2009 and reflects more recent scholarship. This two-post historical marker is located between the road and a fence around the property just to the east of the cabin. The Bartling memorial is a bronze plaque in a granite boulder placed in front of the cabin during the fall of 1960. The memorial reads:

> This historical site with the John Brown Cabin and Cave of the "Underground Railroad" is a legacy to the people of our country from Edward D. Bartling (1882-1948). A life-time resident of Nebraska City, Mr. Bartling gave of his resources to preserve and maintain this landmark for the public. To this civic-minded student of history and authority on John Brown and John Henry Kagi this memorial is gratefully dedicated.

[9] For instance, the Mayhew Cabin was actually constructed in 1855, not 1851. The "Cave" was built in 1938 and has no association with John Brown.

In addition, to the markers and signage, there are several paved walks and paved areas that date to the period of historical significance. Of these, the most significant is the walk leading from Old Highway 2 to the front door of the cabin, which is depicted in a photograph for 1940.

Integrity and Condition

The Mayhew Cabin retains sufficient integrity of materials, design and workmanship to convey it significant association the Underground Railroad during the mid- late 1850s. While it has undergone numerous alterations and restorations, the final restoration in 2005 by the Mayhew Cabin Foundation was professionally executed and based on scholarly research. The Mayhew Cabin also retains sufficient integrity of location and setting to convey its association to the Underground Railroad. The 1937 move was well-documented by the Nebraska Department of Roads, and the Mayhew Cabin is only fifty feet north of its original location along South Table Creek. While more recent development flanks the cabin, it is backed by a naturally wooded ravine (a tributary of South Table Creek) that creates a rural setting. More broadly, it still sits on the outskirt of Nebraska City. Today, one can still sense the potential benefit of a rural hiding place so near the Nebraska City ferry crossing, which often took escaping slaves across the Missouri River to the relative safety of Tabor or Civil Bend, Iowa the next "stops" on the Lane Trail.

The cave has remained structurally intact since the late 1930s. The area does have modern lights to assist visitors in walking through the tunnel. This does not take away from the historic integrity of the cave nor does it diminish the visitor's experience. The cave did receive a major cleaning and restoration in late 2007 after major flooding in the spring damaged the area. This restoration revealed a concrete floor underneath the mud and pea gravel in the last 55 feet of the tunnel. No other changes are recorded in the history of "John Brown's Cave."

Period of Significance Justification

The property's first period of significance is 1855-1859, lasting from the cabin's date of construction to the last confirmed visit by abolitionist John Henry Kagi.[10] Its second period of significance is 1937-1959. The building was moved to its current location in 1937 by Edward Bartling and subsequently established as a popular tourist attraction. In 1959, the property was purchased from the Bartling estate by the George C. Rowe family. They quickly moved "historic" buildings onto adjacent property also under their ownership, which shifted the focus of tourists at the Mayhew Cabin and marked the end of the nominated property's historical significance in the areas of recreation/entertainment and folklore.

Criteria Considerations: Moved Properties

The Mayhew Cabin meets the requirements for Criterion Consideration B. While moved approximately fifty feet north of its original location in 1937, it is the property most closely associated with the Underground Railroad in Nebraska. Therefore it can be eligible under Criteria Consideration B in the area of social history. The property's significance in recreation/entertainment and folklore was primarily acquired after the cabin was moved and it does not need to meet Criterion Consideration B in those areas of significance.

Statement of Significance

The Mayhew Cabin is significant at the statewide level under National Register Criterion A. As Nebraska's only documented physical link to the Underground Railroad in the period immediately before the Civil War, the property is significant in the area of social history. After almost a half-century as a private residence, the Mayhew Cabin's important history was almost forgotten until it was purchased in 1901 by the enterprising Bartling family of Nebraska City. Hoping to preserve history and potentially turn a profit, the Bartlings developed the property into a tourist attraction that took on mythical proportions in the minds of Nebraskans. As such, the property is also significance at the statewide level under Criterion A in the areas of recreation/entertainment and folklore.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Mayhew Cabin is significant under National Register Criterion A at the statewide level in the area of social history for its association with the Underground Railroad during the years immediately preceding the Civil War. During the Bleeding Kansas period (1854-1861), Nebraska City was a known "free town" along the Lane Trail, a route used by escaping slave attempting to reach Iowa after fleeing Missouri. Barbara Mayhew's brother, John Henri Kagi was a known abolitionist, who eventually served as Secretary of War in John Brown's "Provisional Government" and was killed on October 17, 1859 during the famous raid on Harpers Ferry. The Mayhew Cabin, therefore, would have been an obvious haven at this point along the Lane Trail, an inference that is well supported by contemporary sources. Establishing the validity of connections to the Underground Railroad is difficult, but the Mayhew Cabin is the only extant Nebraska building that is known to have harbored known abolitionists, and quite possibly, escaping slaves.

Emotionally-charged historical realities such as slavery leave an uncertain legacy in the American consciousness that is open to interpretation, empathy and sometimes exploitation. Recognizing the history and significance of the Mayhew Cabin after it became a tourist attraction offers Nebraskans a rare opportunity to examine their role in creating and consuming folklore. As a tourist destination at its current location since 1937, the Mayhew Cabin and "John Brown's Cave"

[10] Kagi is alternately spelled Kagy or Kagey. For the purposes of consistency, the authors of this document will use the Kagi spelling exclusively, unless it is spelled differently in a quotation.

might best be described as a commercial enterprise created by Edward Bartling; however, its importance to the state of Nebraska is much more complex. Whether real or imagined, this property provided Nebraska City residents, and Nebraskans at large, with an easily accessible connection to touchstones in of American History like John Brown and the Underground Railroad. As time went on, visitors could also patronize adjacent facilities and recreational opportunities only loosely—if at all—associated with the Underground Railroad and the Mayhew family. The Mayhew Cabin is, therefore, also significant at the statewide level under Criterion A in the areas of recreation/ entertainment and folklore.

Developmental History / Additional Historic Context

Social History: The Mayhew Cabin and the Underground Railroad (1855-1859)
The Mayhew Cabin has remained a place to visit for the general public since 1938. During the late 19th century, many in Nebraska City still recalled the cabin's involvement in the Underground Railroad. This held the interest of the community for several years until Edward Bartling opened it as an attraction to the public. From that point on, the myths and folklore already surrounding the cabin grew. It became a popular tourist attraction that enthralled thousands of visitors each year. Despite the folklore, the fact of the matter is the cabin does have a direct and well-documented association with the Underground Railroad that is significant to Nebraska's early social history.

The Mayhew and Kagi Families
Allen and Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew moved to Nebraska in 1854. Mayhew took out a pre-emption claim of 160 acres just southwest of Old Fort Kearney (Nebraska City). By 1855 the family had constructed a home from cottonwood logs. The pre-emption claim application states, "The claimant on or about the 15th of July 1855 in person made settlement on the Southwest Quarter Sec 8 Township 8 North Range 14 East by laying a foundation for a dwelling house. Since which time he has erected a dwelling house on said tract into which he moved with his family on 29th August 1855."[11]

Allen & Barbara Mayhew moved from Ohio when they came to Nebraska Territory. Allen was born in Bristol Township, Trumbull County, Ohio on February 11, 1826 and Barbara was born on January 31, 1833 in the same township. The two were married on May 9, 1849 with their first child, Edward, born that same year in Bristol. A second son, Henry, was born in January 1852.[12] It is unclear why the Mayhew family moved to Nebraska. They may have come to the new territory for economic purposes or political reasons. Whatever the reason, Barbara's brother John Henry Kagi soon moved in with the family and would eventually involve them in the anti-slavery movement and, more dangerously, in assisting black individuals escaping slavery in Missouri.

John Henry Kagi
The Mayhew family's involvement with the Underground Railroad can be accredited to the influence of John Henry Kagi, Barbara Mayhew's younger brother. Kagi was born in Bristol Township, Trumbull County, Ohio on March 15, 1835. He served as a teacher in Virginia during the winter of 1854-1855, but was forced to leave due to his abolitionist views. After this incident, Kagi came to live in Nebraska Territory with his sister's family.[13] Kagi was listed in the 1855 Nebraska Territorial Census alongside the Allen and Barbara Mayhew family.[14] By the next summer, Kagi moved to Kansas Territory to serve as a newspaper correspondent for the *New York Tribune* and the *National Era*, both popular abolitionists newspapers published on the East Coast. Kagi took up the anti-slavery cause in the area and joined the Second Kansas

[11] Allen Mayhew Pre-emption certification, #64-Otoe County, Nebraska Territory, National Archives, Washington D.C. date March 30, 1857.
[12] Affidavit of Guardianship, Estate Papers of Allen B. Mayhew, Otoe County Clerk of Court, 1864.
[13] Wayland, J.W., *John Kagi and John Brown* (Strasburg: Shenandoah Publishing House, Inc., 1961) p.38-39.
[14] 1855 Nebraska Territorial Census, Nebraska City, Otoe County, Nebraska Territory.

Militia (Company B, 2nd Regiment, Kansas Volunteer Army). Eventually, he met the infamous abolitionist John Brown and became one of his closest associates.[15] Brown, born in 1800 in Connecticut, had arrived in Osawatomie, Kansas on October 7, 1855.

Slavery, The Kansas-Nebraska Act and "Bleeding Kansas"

The 1850s were unstable times for the nation and those living on the Great Plains. Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas introduced the Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress during the early part of 1854 and President Franklin Pierce signed the bill into law on May 30, 1854. The Act included a provision that settlers in new territories could vote on the allowance of slavery. This caused a major controversy throughout the United States, especially in northern states, because it left the Missouri Compromise null and void. Slavery was allowed to expand into territory where it was previously banned, north of Missouri's southern border. People from both the North and the South, went to Kansas to decide the new territory's fate.[16]

As pro-slavery and anti-slavery supporters assembled in Kansas, tensions boiled over into violent encounters. John Brown saw violence as the only means to end slavery and aggressively engaged with pro-slavery factions. He actively recruited men to join his small army, which fought pro-slavery forces at the battles of Black Jack and Osawatomie in 1856.[17] All of the violent outbreaks on the Nation's western border led Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner to speak on the "Crime against Kansas" and newspapers began to write that "Kansas was bleeding." Soon, pre-Civil War Kansas was labeled "Bleeding Kansas."[18]

The Lane Trail

Another man that took up the anti-slavery cause in the Midwest was James H. Lane, a former Congressional Representative from the state of Indiana. He became heavily involved with the politics of the new Kansas Territory. Lane recruited men in Chicago to help form an anti-slavery force. Soon it became known as "Lane's Army of the North." In July and August of 1856, James Lane led this small army across the state of Iowa, down through southeast Nebraska and into Kansas, bypassing the slave state of Missouri. His route became known as the Lane Trail, which developed into a path anti-slavery supporters could use when travel to Kansas.[19] Abolitionists soon realized the same path could be used to help escaping slaves flee Missouri and Kansas into Iowa. The Lane Trail served as the course for the Underground Railroad in Nebraska. In early 1857, the Underground Railroad on the western frontier started to form. Towns like Falls City and Nemaha, Nebraska are credited as stations on the Underground Railroad.

James Lane was recognized as the "founder" of Falls City, and at the very least, he chose the spot where it would be located. Many abolitionists and anti-slavery supporters moved to Falls City because of this reason.[20] Alice Minick recollected in the late 1890s that several people in the Falls City area were involved with the Underground Railroad. She also specifically recalled slaves being hid on the farm of Houston Russell, near the town of Nemaha.[21] The small town of Nemaha was also referenced as part of the Underground Railroad with its placement on Wilbur Siebert's 1898 map that illustrated all routes of the system.[22]

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[15] Villard, Oswald Garrison, *John Brown: A Biography Fifty Years After* (Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston & New York, 1911) p. 679.
[16] Monaghan, Jay, *Civil War on the Western Border: 1854-1865* (Bonanza Books: New York, 1955) p.3-7.
[17] Villard, p.1, 672-673.
[18] Monaghan, p.53-54.
[19] Monaghan, p.24-25, 70-72, 87.
[20] "Historic Falls City," www.fallscitynebraska.org, accessed July 1, 2010.
[21] Alice Minick, "Underground Railroad in Nebraska," *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* v. 2 (Lincoln:1898), 70-79.
[22] Wilbur Siebert, The Underground Railroad: From Slavery to Freedom (New York: Macmillan, 1898) front cover.

Nebraska City and the Underground Railroad

The Underground Railroad worked its way north through Nebraska bypassing towns like Brownville, which were pro-slavery.[23] The settlement of Camp Creek, eight miles south of Nebraska City, also may have been a stop since John Kagi's father, Abraham, lived in the small rural community. It was clearly considered an anti-slavery community when Jim Lane and his men stayed overnight in the area in 1856.[24] Eventually the Lane Trail reached the settlement of Nebraska City, which was a natural "final stop" in Nebraska for escaping slaves along this branch of the Underground Railroad. Far enough north of Missouri, fugitives could cross the Missouri River at Nebraska City and move directly into the free state of Iowa. The next stop on the Underground Railroad was Civil Bend, Iowa and then the town of Tabor, Iowa, both of which are listed on the National Park Service Network to Freedom.[25]

Analyzing the Sources: Revealing the Underground Railroad at the Mayhew Cabin

The 1850s were clearly a dangerous time, whether you opposed or favored slavery. The Mayhew family unquestionably participated in the anti-slavery movement and the Underground Railroad due to their relationship with John Henry Kagi. The extent and intent of their participation, however, remains open to debate. Statements from Edward Mayhew in 1890 and 1925 and Calvin Chapman in 1925 are good source materials on the connection between and the Underground Railroad and the Mayhew Cabin. Edward Mayhew, the eldest son of Allen and Barbara Mayhew, recalled that his uncle, John Henry Kagi, brought fourteen African Americans to the house where they were fed breakfast.[26] Later Edward Mayhew remembered that one African American woman staying overnight at the Mayhew Cabin on her way north had been directed there by Kagi.[27] Edward Mayhew never mentioned the cave as part of the family's Underground Railroad activities, but made it clear that fugitives had been assisted there on their journey to freedom. Calvin Chapman, a resident of Nebraska City, described his participation in the Underground Railroad during the 1920s and makes a direct reference to the use of a cave on the Mayhew property. According to his 1925 affidavit:

> I came out to Nebraska City, Nebraska in 1859, when I was a little over sixteen years old. It was fall of that year, that I drove my brother Thomas' wagon with negroes from the Black Den (that's what they called it) near South Table Creek, about where the log house still stands, north of the cemetery, to Lick Skillet over in Iowa, near where the settlement of Knox now is.[28]

Chapman also claimed to have made at least ten trips to pick up "human cargo" at the Mayhew cave and ferry them across the river to the next stop.[29]

Skepticism surrounds stories like Chapman's that involve the cave. Most recently, Nebraska State Historical Society historian, James E. Potter explored a variety of primary and secondary sources in his 2002 *Nebraska History* article, "Fact and Folklore in the Story of 'John Brown's Cave' and the Underground Railroad in Nebraska." Potter argues that Chapman's affidavit was delivered when he was eight-one years old and some sixty-five years after the fact, and that it was collected by Ned C. Abbott, an amateur historian intent on proving the validity of the cave's role in Underground

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[23] Patrick Kennedy, "African Americans in Nemaha County," *Nebraska History* Summer 2001.
[24] Richard J. Hinton, John Brown and His Men (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), 54.
[25] "Updated Listings Spring 2010," www.nps.gov/history/ugrr Accessed July 1, 2010.
[26] Edward Mayhew Letter, *Nebraska City News*, April 14, 1890.
[27] Edward Mayhew to N.C. Abbott, April 24, 1925, "John Brown File," Abbott Papers, NSHS.
[28] Calvin Chapman affidavit, March 12, 1925, "John Brown File," Abbott Papers, NSHS.
[29] *Ibid.*

Railroad activities.[30] Also, by 1925 the mythology surrounding the cave on the Mayhew property was already well established, and Chapman may have sought a connection to the more dramatically imagined aspects of the Underground Railroad. On the other hand, there is no solid evidence to discredit Chapman's claims concerning the "Black Den" or his involvement in Underground Railroad activities. In contrast to Chapman, Edward Mayhew's statements are typically viewed with more credibility. His letter published in *Nebraska City News* in 1890 is particularly interesting. In a rather matter-of-fact style that reveals some frustration, Mayhew writes, "There were negroes in the house; John Kagy [sic] was there and was killed a Harpers Ferry; Mayhew lived there and had a cave or wine cellar, and that is all there is to this great mystery."[31]

Although useful in discrediting the legend of "John Brown's Cave," Edward Mayhew's 1890 letter also more than sufficiently establishes a connection between the Mayhew Cabin, or "the house," and Underground Railroad activities. Simply providing breakfast to black individuals escorted by your abolitionist brother may not mesh with the romanticized version of a well-fortified Underground Railroad "station" that was literally underground. However, Barbara and Allen Mayhew's assistance was still a significant contribution to those particular freedom seekers and was done at their own risk. An incident involving Kagi at the Mayhew Cabin in early 1859 is illustrative of the danger. According to a letter by Kagi dated February 7, 1859 form Tabor, Iowa, "The Dept Marshal for S. Nebraska with a small posse attempted to take me at Neb. City, when alone at my sisters, but couldn't do it. While he was raising a larger posse, I escaped."[32] In a 1925 letter to Ned C. Abbott, Edward Mayhew also recalled the incident and suggests it occurred immediately after the breakfast with Kagi and the fourteen black individuals that accompanied him:

> It was at this time that the officers and some men from Missouri came to the house after him. Although my father told them he was upstairs they were afraid to go after him, knowing he was armed. They took his horse and it was said they sold it and divided the money among themselves. My father told them not to bring any more negroes there, as it was only making trouble for him...[33]

There is no evidence that fugitive slaves ever sought assistance from the Mayhews after this incident, but the family did have another potentially troublesome visitor soon after Kagi escaped. George Gill, an abolitionist friend of Kagi's, stopped overnight at the Mayhew Cabin after falling behind a party of escaped slaves escorted by none-other-than John Brown. In Richard J. Hilton's *John Brown and His Men*, published in 1894, Gill recalls, "I stopped over night with Kagi's brother-and-law, Mr. Mayhew, but had some difficulty finding him, having to inquire some."[34] A letter from there shortly afterwards stated that I had not been gone the next morning more that fifteen minutes, before the house was surrounded by about fifty men, being a marshal's party in search of us."[35] If Gill's recollections are true, this means the Mayhew Cabin was visited by the law twice in a very short period of time. Gill arrived in Tabor, Iowa on February 5, 1859 and Kagi wrote the letter documenting his narrow escape from his sister's house from Tabor just two days later. Moreover, if Edward Mayhew's 1925 letter refers to the same incident documented in the February 7, 1859 Kagi letter, the "fourteen negroes" that were served breakfast at the Mayhew Cabin may very well be the eleven Missouri slaves escaping under John Brown's protection. This possibility is not lost on Potter, who writes, "It is possible...[Edward] Mayhew was off about the

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[30] Potter, James E. "Fact and Folklore in the Story of 'John Brown's Cave' and the Underground Railroad in Nebraska," in *Nebraska History*, Summer 2002, 77.
[31] Mayhew, Edward, "Letter" in *Nebraska City News*, April 14, 1890.
[32] John Henry Kagi to William Phillips, February 7, 1859, Hinton Collection, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, KS.
[33] Edward Mayhew to N.C. Abbott, April 24, 1925, as quoted in "Glimpses of the Underground—Helping a Race Enslaved," by Ned C. Abbott in the *Omaha World-Herald,* October 27, 1929.
[34] Richard J. Hinton, John Brown and His Men (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1894), 225.
[35] *Ibid.*

numbers," and while he was clear that John Brown never visited the Mayhew Cabin, "it is possible that Kagi brought Brown's Missouri fugitives to the cabin for a quick breakfast while his leader [Brown] was elsewhere."[36]

Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew
Outside of her status as sister and wife, Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew has been largely lost in the discussions surrounding Underground Railroad activities at the Mayhew Cabin. In contemporary sources, (Kagi) Mayhew is often overlooked entirely. For instance, George Gill claimed to have stayed at the home of Kagi's brother-in-law, when he could just have easily said Kagi's sister. Even their son, Edward Mayhew, tends to focus on his father's response to Kagi's visits rather than actions that were most likely taken by his mother. For instance, in both his 1890 and 1925 letters he mentions that Kagi brought "negroes" to the Mayhew Cabin for breakfast, but never reveals what they ate or who prepared the food. It is possible Allen Mayhew was not pleased with his wife's assistance to her abolitionist brother. This is particularly evident in Edward Mayhew's claim that his father revealed Kagi's presence when the Marshall was there with a "small posse" and that he told Kagi not to "bring any more negroes" there.

Despite very little evidence that Allen Mayhew was sympathetic to abolition, most still concentrate on his (and not Barbara Mayhew's) political views. While Edward Bartling gives Mrs. Mayhew credit for giving them cornbread and sending them, "into the free country," it is Allen B. Mayhew, brother-in-law of John Henri Kagi, who was the "strong abolitionist."[37] Potter's 2002 article also largely ignores Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew's involvement and focuses on Allen Mayhew and Abraham Kagi:

> Kagi's father, Abraham Kagey, also lived in Otoe County. It is possible that Mayhew and the elder Kagey were sympathetic to the abolition cause. Edward Mayhew said that black persons were fed in the house, and there is some hint they had been brought there by John Henry Kagi. But he also told Kagi not to bring anymore blacks because it would make trouble for him. In other words, sympathetic or not, Mayhew was not willing to take significant risks to support the escape of slaves.[38]

Underground Railroad activity at the Mayhew Cabin becomes much more explicable, however, when considered through the participation of Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew. Allen Mayhew may not have been willing to take too many chances to harbor fugitive slaves, but his wife was probably willing to help her younger brother when she could. Kagi lived with the Mayhews in 1855 and, according to his nephew Edward Mayhew, he directed black persons (most likely escaping slaves) to his sister's house on at least two occasions. More to the point, when John Henry Kagi wrote about the Mayhew Cabin in February of 1859, it was his "sister's place."

Final Analysis
It can be difficult to research the Underground Railroad, since it was against federal law to help fugitive slaves. Much of the research on Underground Railroad sites is based on oral history and the memories of those involved or of those who knew someone involved. As such, establishing a direct link between a particular property and the Underground Railroad is challenging, but obviously not impossible. In the case of the Mayhew Cabin, there is a wealth of secondary and primary sources. A critical examination of the evidence reveals that while most of the stories surrounding the Mayhew Cabin are open to debate, it does have a valid connection to John Henry Kagi. The brother of Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew, Kagi was a known abolitionist heavily involved in the Kansas slavery debate who died during John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry. It also served as a stop along the Lane Trail of the Underground Railroad for Kagi, and on one occasion for his friend,

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[36] Potter, James E., "Fact and Folklore in the Story of John Brown's Cave,"
[37] Bartling, Edward. "John Henry Kagi and the Old Cabin Home," Sixth Revised Edition, Nebraska City, NE, [1938] 1963. The very specific imagery of Barbara (Kagi) Mayhew giving slaves cornbread is probably an embellishment by Bartling on Edward Mayhew's story about Kagi bringing escaping slaves to the Mayhew Cabin for breakfast.
[38] Potter, James E., "Fact and Folklore in the Story of John Brown's Cave," 86.

George Gill, who was also an abolitionist linked to John Brown. Finally, black individuals, who were most likely fleeing slavery in Missouri, did stop at the Mayhew Cabin on at least two occasions according to Edward Mayhew, the eldest son of Allen and Barbara Mayhew. Unfortunately the brave individuals who stopped, however briefly, at the Mayhew Cabin during their dangerous journey currently remain among the countless anonymous "fugitive slaves" in our history.

The Legacy of John Henry Kagi and the Underground Railroad in Nebraska

After assisting John Brown in Kansas and along the Lane Trail during the early part of 1859, Kagi helped him carry out the famous ill-fated raid at Harpers Ferry. Brown and his men attempted to capture the federal arsenal there in order to obtain weapons for a slave uprising. The plan failed and Kagi was shot to death during the raid on October 17, 1859 at the age of 24.[39] John Henry Kagi followed his beliefs through to the end and died for the cause of freedom.

The cabin was preserved as testament to Kagi's efforts along with its part in assisting fugitives involved in the Underground Railroad. It seems to have been at the very least an occasional stop for Kagi, and may well have been an integral part of the Underground Railroad through Nebraska. Underground Railroad sites in Kansas and Iowa have been better documented than sites in Nebraska, which leads to the conclusion that much less activity took place in Nebraska. However, that assumption seems unrealistic. Simply put, many escaping slaves and those who assisted them would not have traveled through northwest Missouri, but through southeast Nebraska. The Mayhew Cabin, at the present time, is the only Nebraska site officially recognized by the National Park Service's National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program.

The Underground Railroad has often been overlooked in Nebraska, but the Mayhew Cabin draws attention to a fascinating and important story in the state's history. The site connects the public to the turbulent times of the 1850s when the debate over slavery was intense. Nebraska Territory was part of the controversy because it was created by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The Mayhew Cabin is an excellent example of the tensions that existed in Nebraska over slavery and it illustrates how people on the western frontier fought against slavery via the Underground Railroad. The site also has regional importance because it stresses the connections between Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa in the history of the Underground Railroad. The journey to freedom continued across the river into Iowa from Nebraska City. The Mayhew Cabin helps complete the story of the Underground Railroad in the region. Kagi's February 7, 1859 letter describing his near escape at the Mayhew Cabin was written in Tabor, Iowa and provides an obvious connection between Underground Railroad sites in Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska.

The Mayhew Cabin between Periods of Significance (1959-1936)

From Mayhew Cabin to Rental Property (1859-1901)

After John Henry Kagi's death, Underground Railroad activity ceased at the Mayhew Cabin. Allen and Barbara Mayhew remained in Nebraska City and had six more children: A daughter in 1854 or 1855, Charles in July 1856, Thomas on January 31, 1858, twin boys John Hannibal and James Hershel in April 1860, and Albert in May 1862. The daughter died in infancy and after one of the twin boys died young, the other went by Hannibal Hershel.[40]

Allen Mayhew farmed several acres near the cabin, made wine, and produced homemade brooms for sale.[41] In 1862, he left Nebraska for the Northwest's Snake River Valley in search of gold. During his stay in Salt Lake City over the winter, he fell ill and died on December 1, 1862.[42] It was several months before Barbara heard the sad news.

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[39] Villard, p.444-445.
[40] Birth data on the Mayhew children compiled from headstones, 1860 U.S. Census, Nebraska Territory, Otoe County, p. 85 & 1870 U.S. Census, Pottawatomi County, Grove Twp, Household #28.
[41] Nebraska City News, July 14, 1860; February 2, 1861; July 13, 1861.

On April 15, 1864, Barbara Mayhew filed a petition in the local court to settle her husband's estate. She moved her children into another cabin located on a city lot Allen had purchased in 1858. The original quarter section, along with the 1855 cabin, was sold to Jerome Lathrop on October 21, 1864 for $2,500.[43] Barbara married again in 1865 to Calvin Bradway, but was widowed once more with his death in 1869. She moved to her father's home at Camp Creek where she died at the age of 48 on January 22, 1882. Barbara is buried at the Camp Creek Cemetery.[44]

The cabin was used by various owners as a rental property into the early 20th century. An 1874 local newspaper article mentions that the land had been bought by B.M. Davenport for a Mrs. Graybell, but the actual occupants were a "German family named Raader."[45] By 1901, the property was owned by Henry H. Bartling, who died only three years later. At that time the property passed to his son, Edward, who managed the property at its original location until 1937.[46]

The Beginning of "John Brown's Cave"

In early 1901, an article appeared in the local newspaper titled "John Brown's Cave," that dramatically described how slaves were hidden on the Mayhew property until pursuing officers got tired of looking for them. Afterwards the fugitives were escorted across the river into Iowa. "John Brown's Cave," was not the first or the last newspaper article to offer a "history" of the Mayhew's involvement in the Underground Railroad. As early as 1874, articles appeared in the *Nebraska City News*.[47] Possibly the most sensationalized of these was "The Vegetable Society," which appeared in both the *Omaha Bee* and the *Nebraska City News* during March 1890 and described a secret society of abolitionists who dug a large, and easily defensible, cave with "cross-wings" on the Mayhew property.[48] According to the article the purpose of cave was to hide fugitive slaves, but it was made to appear like a vegetable cellar. It was this article that prompted Edward Mayhew to finally respond to claims about his family's involvement in the Underground Railroad. Clearly by 1890, the legend of the "John Brown's Cave" was already well-established causing Mayhew to write, "This story, with some changes, comes into the papers about once every two years for the past ten years."[49]

Despite Edward Meyhew's attempts to shed light on the real role of the Mayhew Cabin in the Underground Railroad, articles about the cave continued to surface over the next decades, including a handful published in the late 1920s that were associated with N. C. Abbott's research. "The Mysterious Slave Tunnel at Nebraska City," "Glimpses of the Underground-Helping a Race Enslaved," (*Omaha World Herald*), "Late Calvin Chapman Piloted Slaves to Safety at Nebraska City" (*Lincoln Sunday State Journal)* and "Depression Marks John Brown's Cave" (*Nebraska City News*) did have a more scholarly air and offered new evidence such as Calvin Chapman's sworn affidavit.[50] However, they also relied solely on oral history and in some cases resort to using the more sensationalist news stories of the late 1800s as source material. The *Nebraska City News* article, which refers to both the 1874 article and the "The Vegetable Society," is particularly careless in this regard. While Abbott's research warranted a new wave of news coverage, later articles were published for almost no reason at all. In 1937, for instance, the *Sidney Argus-Herald* (Iowa) picked up an article from their

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[42] Allen Mayhew Obituary, *Deseret News*, Great Salt Lake City, Utah, December 2, 1860.
[43] Affidavit of Guardianship, Estate Papers of Allen B. Mayhew, Otoe County Clerk of Court, 1864.
[44] Camp Creek Cemetery Records, Morton James Public Library, Nebraska City, Nebraska.
[45] *Nebraska City News*, November 14, 1874.
[46] *Nebraska City News*, December 3, 1901; January 7, 1905.
[47] Potter, James E. "Fact and Folklore in the Story of John Brown's Cave", 75.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] Mayhew, Edward, "Letter" in *Nebraska City News*, April 14, 1890.
[50] "The Mysterious Slave Tunnel at Nebraska City," and "Glimpses of the Underground-Helping a Race Enslaved," in *Omaha World-Hearld*, September 1, 1929 and October 27, 1929; "Late Calvin Chapman Piloted Slaves to Safety at Nebraska City," in *Lincoln Sunday State Journal*, October 21, 1928; "Depression Marks John Brown's Cave," in *Nebraska City News*, November 14, 1929.

colleagues in Nebraska City that uses the "discovery" of the 1901 "John Brown's Cave" article during a "quest for candle sticks" as an excuse to expound on the Mayhews, John Brown and the Underground Railroad.[51]

Myths and folk-legends need to be maintained in order to survive, and regional newspapers were more than willing to support this particular story during a period when it may have been lost to obscurity. By the time it opened to the public at its current location in 1938, John Brown's Cave, and to a lesser extent the Mayhew Cabin, were already cemented in the public consciousness as a places of deep historical importance.

"John Brown's Cave Opened to Public"

In the context of fairly regular news coverage the 1901 article was not so remarkable, except that it marked the first time an owner of the former Mayhew property saw it as a potential attraction. The article reports that, "There has been so much said about the cave...H.H. Bartling, owner of the property, has become interested and will open it up so the public can explore it."[52] Unfortunately, the cave had collapsed and Bartling's plans to re-excavate apparently never materialized. Interest in developing the property did not die with Bartling in 1904, but there were obstacles to making "John Brown's Cave" a tourist destination, the first of which was the condition of the property itself. By 1929, the cave was described as "nearly obliterated," and the log construction of the Mayhew Cabin was covered in siding.[53] Furthermore, renovating the property in order to draw tourists would not be cheap or easy. That same year, a group of Nebraska City men concluded, "that to open the cave would take months of work and would cost hundreds of dollars, a task too great for any of them."[54] There is no mention of whether Bartling's son, Edward, was among the group, but as the property owner he was surely involved. A final obstacle was access, a point driven home by N. C. Abbott in 1929:

> The automobile traveler coming from the west into Nebraska City over Nebraska highway No. 9...may see...a small cottage. Yet one cannot reach it by any such direct route. Nineteenth street is closed. And the person interested must go east to Eighteenth street, north to Forth Corso, and back to what would be Twentieth street, if opened up. In other words, a rather rough trip of four blocks. No marker of any kind has been erected to guide the traveler...[55]

Six years later, the situation had not changed. One regional newspaper reported, "While [John Brown's Cave] has been listed on tourist maps for years as of historical significance, it never was capitalized here. No roads lead to the site and even many residents here are unfamiliar with its location."[56] Luckily for Edward Bartling, the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation was planning a route for Nebraska Highway 2 between Lincoln and Nebraska City that would bring vehicular traffic right to the Mayhew Cabin's front door.

Recreation/Entertainment and Folklore: The Mayhew Cabin Moved and Re-Imagined (1937-1959)

The coming of Nebraska Highway 2 in 1937 finally gave Edward Bartling the opportunity he needed to develop the Mayhew Cabin as a tourist site. Unfortunately, it also meant that the cabin had to be moved because it sat directly along the new highway's route. On May 5, 1937 a Department of Roads surveyor recorded the Mayhew Cabin with the note, "Above house is historical log cabin built 1850 used by John Brown Underground Railroad."[57] Bartling was paid $150.00 for the 84.3 x 108 feet of property on which the Mayhew Cabin sat, but he also saw to it that he received an addition

[51] "John Brown's Body Is Mouldering But His Soul Marches On," in *Sidney Argus-Herald*, June 3, 1937.
[52] "John Brown's Cave" in *Nebraska City News*, Feburary 3, 1901.
[53] "Late Calvin Chapman Piloted Slaves to Safety at Nebraska City," *Lincoln Sunday State Journal*, October 21, 1929.
[54] "Depression Marks John Brown's Cave," *Nebraska Daily News-Press*, November 14, 1929.
[55] Abbott, NC. "Glimpses of the Underground—Helping a Race Enslaved," *Omaha World Herald*, October 27, 1929.
[56] "Nebraska City to Use John Brown's Cave for Tourists," *Columbus Daily Telegraph*, June 12, 1935.
[57] Surveyor's Book #1300, Station Line 865, May 8, 1937. Nebraska State Department of Roads Archives.

$190.00 "for Moveng of John Brwns Log Cabbin and making of Celler [sp.]."[58] Bartling was able to save the Mayhew Cabin from demolition, while at the same time giving a jump start to his long held dream of recreating the famous "John Brown's Cave" or "Black Den." The cabin currently stands where it has since its 1937 move, approximately fifty feet to the north of its original location.

Edward Bartling: Preservationist, Folklorist and Entrepreneur

Edward Bartling was far from done after moving the Mayhew Cabin in 1937. He had saved the cabin from demolition, but still needed to promote its significance as a historical site and tourist destination. By 1938 he put up a sign reading "John Brown Cave-Cabin," and opened the site to the public.[59] He also authored and published the pamphlet "John Henry Kagi and the Old Log Cabin Home," which, as he explained to the *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star*, established the fact that, "an Otoe county man, John Henry Kagy, was a great figure in the abolishment of slavery and deserves, as does the old log cabin home and its underground chambers, a worthy historical existence."[60] In essence, Bartling was an early historic preservationist and his pamphlet was a statement of significance about Kagi and the Mayhew Cabin. While his decision to move the cabin and re-create the cave would not meet today's historic preservation standards, Bartling's efforts were admirable in a time when guidance in the treatment of historic sites was yet to be fully established.

"John Kagi and the Old Cabin Home" was printed in 1938, 1940, and 1963 (by then owner Richard D. Rowe), and had an obvious influence on how the Mayhew Cabin would be interpreted for decades to come. Just as his historic preservation methods are both admirable and lamentable today, so is his historical scholarship. In Bartling's estimation the "cave" and an association with John Brown was central to what made the Mayhew-Kagi story important, an assessment that was likely based upon his desire to see the tourist site succeed and decades of sensationalist newspaper stories. As such, the pamphlet is filled with tension between historical fact and folklore that has long caused debate among historians and stirred the public's imagination. Bartling included plenty of factual material based on his research in a variety of primary and secondary sources, but he also perpetuated earlier myths and added his own embellishments and fabrications.

The Mayhew Cabin as a Tourist Site

The preservation of the Mayhew Cabin and re-creation of the Mayhew's cave (now known as "John Brown's Cave") was also financially beneficial, and not just to Edward Bartling. Nebraska City's status as a historic community with ample tourist opportunities would also be enhanced by a Mayhew Cabin and "John Brown's Cave" tourist site. In fact, in 1935, the Nebraska City Chamber of Commerce had applied for Federal Emergency Recovery Aid (FERA) funding to re-excavate "John Brown's Cave" and make it accessible to tourists.[61] This plan, however, was rendered unnecessary after Bartling's land deal with the Department of Roads in 1937. The *Nebraska City News* response to Bartling's plans to restore the cabin and "venture into other business enterprises on the grounds," possibly calling it "John Brown's Town,'" was extremely positive. One 1937 article exclaimed, "The cave development is a 'natural.' It is there and all it needs is a suitable setting—parking lot, Sunday lecturer, hot dog stand, and pop-bottle repository."[62]

Bartling was adept at marketing. From his pamphlet to numerous postcards to keeping the newspapers informed of his activities, the Mayhew Cabin developer made sure Nebraskans did not forget about their very own connection to the famous Underground Railroad. However, the Mayhew Cabin's significance and popularity was also solidified by other publications. The most prominent of these was the Nebraska Federal Writers' Project's *Nebraska: A Guide to the*

[58] Right of Way Contract between Edward D. Bartling and State of Nebraska, June 24, 1937.
[59] Peru Pointer, February 17, 1938; 1940s John Brown Cave Postcard.
[60] "More or Less Personal," *Lincoln Sunday Journal and Star*, June 5, 1938.
[61] "Nebraska City to Use John Brown's Cave for Tourists," *Columbus Daily Telegraph*, June 12, 1935.
[62] Potter, James E. "Fact and Folklore in the Story of John Brown's Cave", 78.

Cornhusker State. Published in 1939, the travel guide includes the following entry for "John Brown's Cave," along their automobile tour across eastern Nebraska from Sioux City, Iowa to Hiawatha, Kansas:

> On S. 19th St. [Nebraska City], north of the cemetery (L), adjoining an old log cabin, is the site of John Brown's Cave, which is being restored as a historical shrine. Here John Brown of Ossawatomie hid runaway slaves traveling the Underground Railway from Missouri and Kansas. Interest centers in a 10-by-12-foot cellar under the house, a chamber which until recently had no windows or outside doors. A 30-foot tunnel cuts through this secret room to Table Creek, a deep-banked stream which empties into the Missouri River close by. A score of fugitive slaves at a time were secreted in to the dungeon room by sympathizers. If danger appeared, a tapping on the floor above would warn the fugitives to crawl through the hole to table creek and take refuge in its waters. From Nebraska City the Underground Railway crossed the Missouri in to Iowa, where, at Tabor, the fugitives were outlawed for Canada.[63]

It's no wonder, then, that visitors were long "fooled" into believing Edward Bartling's cave was an original stop on John Brown's Underground Railroad, even though it dates from 1937-1938. Just after it was built, sources like the Nebraska Federal Writers' Project were already reinforcing its supposed authenticity without any mention that the cabin had recently been moved or that the "cave" was re-created based largely on Bartling's imagination.

Edward Bartling continued to operate "John Brown's Cave and Cabin," until his death in 1948, when the property was passed to his estate. There is little to suggest that "John Brown's Town," the full-blown tourist trap imagined by Edward Bartling in 1937, was every completed during the Mayhew Cabin's second period of historical significance (1937-1959). The property was purchased by the Goerge C. Rowe family on September 9, 1959, who finally realized Bartling's dream of creating an entire town. The Rowe's reprinted "John Henry Kagi and the Old Log Cabin Home," and add "several buildings of historical interest" to the park behind the Mayhew Cabin. According to an undated brochure from the 1960s, "John Brown's Cave and Dairy Inn" included approximately 40 "historic" buildings, objects and sites in addition to the Mayhew Cabin on 35 acres of scenic woodland.

Folklore, Caves and the Underground Railroad

Caves, whether natural or manmade, are dark and mysterious places that easily spur the imagination. Renowned University of Nebraska scholar and folklorist, Louise Pound wrote about cave lore for *Nebraska History* in 1948, briefly explaining the many legends surrounding caves from ancient Greece to the American "Wild" West, before turning to Nebraska's few examples. Among these, according to Pound, "the so-called John Brown's Cave, or Cabin and Cave," was the most widely publicized at the time.[64] She, like later scholars, was doubtful about a connection between the Mayhew Cabin and "cave," but was impressed enough to include it in her article, concluding "Whatever is or is not the 'historicity' of the John Brown Cabin and Cave, it is clear that considerable folklore has sprung up around them."[65] Moreover, "John Brown's Cave" is one of many caves across the United States with disputed ties to the Underground Railroad. Brief internet research reveals caves in Missouri, New York, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Ohio and Illinois, among countless others, that "may have" hid fugitive slaves at one time.[66] Caves and tunnels are admittedly good hiding places, and one can see why they are intimately connected with fugitive folklore from train robbers to freedom-seeking slaves.

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[63] Nebraska Federal Writers' Project. *Nebraska: A Guide to the Cornhusker State,* New York: Viking Press (1939), 274.
[64] Louise, Pound. " Nebraska Cave Lore," in *Nebraska History*, Volume XXIX, Number 4, page 308.
[65] Ibid., 315.
[66] An intensive study of cave folklore and the Underground Railroad in the United States would prove interesting and beneficial to understanding American perceptions of this important, but often misunderstood, event in our collective history. In such a context, the Mayhew Cabin and John Brown's Cave would prove exceptionally significant.

Springfield (Nebraska) Monitor Columnist, Megg Richards, wrote after visiting "John Brown's Cave" in 1991:

> The tunnel leads into small chamber on both sides, then before you realize it, you've lapsed back into an era of bondage, degradation, and cruel overseers and plantation masters. An eerie feeling is present. It's one of pursuit. It overwhelms. To the left and right, the small, dug-out rooms are covered by wood and glass partitions. The dim lights reveal black mannequins in various positions...The expressions are so real, they tear your at your heart. The confusion and fear scream at you, yet the silence is master here. The tunnel continues a short distance to the outside near a creek bed. Once again you feel the warm sunshine on your face and clean air fills your lungs. You find freedom has a taste and a smell.[67]

Richards may have been set up to believe "John Brown's Cave" was an authentic Underground Railroad site, but that does not change the emotions evoked during her visit. Even with forewarning of the cave's history (and without the mannequins), journeying below the Mayhew Cabin today, one does get a sense of what it must have been like to hide in a cellar, tunnel or cave, in constant fear of capture. This feeling is why the Mayhew Cabin was historically, and still remains today, an important property in Nebraska folklore. The cave may not be authentic, but as Potter so elegantly explains it in his *Nebraska History* article, it can still:

> ...explain how the Underground Railroad legend exemplifies the pursuit of a noble cause, often at significant personal risk, how it has continued to resonate over time within the context of contemporary social and political issues, and how it has inspired individual and communities to devise ways to connect to it. The story of John Brown's Cave can serve both history and heritage. History will benefit from a more realistic reinterpretation of the site and the folklore that has grown up about it. The folklore can help demonstrate and explain how generations of Nebraskans have come to regard the crusade against slavery as a meaningful part of their past.[68]

Today, the Mayhew Cabin Foundation (current owners of the property), the Nebraska State Historical Society and the National Park Service are partnering to ensure that the Mayhew Cabin and "John Brown's Cave" are properly recognized for their connection with abolitionist John Henry Kagi and the Mayhews, and not for its association with John Brown. In fact, there is general agreement that while John Brown was in Nebraska City, he never stopped at the Mayhew Cabin. Furthermore, the Mayhew Cabin Foundation has created an interpretation plan that acknowledges that the cabin has been moved and restored; while the "Cave" is nothing more than an imaginative reinterpretation of the Mayhew's cellar constructed in the 1930s and 1950s. Whether fugitive slaves every stopped at the Mayhew Cabin (likely) or hid in the Mayhew's cave (less likely) is still a matter of debate among historians, but the argument has narrowed significantly enough that the Mayhew Cabin was listed among other sites contributing to the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

[67] Richards, Megg. "Cave Reminds Columnist About Freedom," *Springfield Monitor* (Springfield, NE), November 7, 1991.
[68] Potter, James E. "Fact and Folklore in the Story of John Brown's Cave", 86.

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"Nebraska City to Use John Brown's Cave for Tourists," *Columbus Daily Telegraph*, June 12, 1935
"John Brown's Body Is Mouldering But His Soul Marches On," in *Sidney Argus-Herald*, June 3, 1937
Peru Pointer, February 17, 1938
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Boundary Description

The nominated property includes the area between the Mayhew Cabin Visitors Center to the west, the Nebraska Department of Roads property to the east and the Old Nebraska Highway 2 right-of-way to the south and an east/west line just beyond where "John Brown's Cave" exits into the bank of South Table Rock Creek. This includes Lot C of John Brown's Subdivision (2001) and the southern portion of Lot 22 of Bartling's Subdivision (1937). (See Site Plan).

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all of the property associated with the nominated property since it was moved to its current location in 1937 that has not been infringed upon by modern development.

Photographs

Name of Property: Mayhew Cabin
City or Vicinity: Pawnee City
County: Pawnee
State: Nebraska
Photographer: Jessie Nunn, Nebraska State Historical Society
Date Photographed: September 10, 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo 01 of 16. General View of Property, Aspect: North

Photo 02 of 16. South Façade of Mayhew Cabin, Aspect: North

Photo 03 of 16. West Elevation of Mayhew Cabin and historic "Well Sign," Aspect: NE

Photo 04 of 16. Restored Interior of Mayhew Cabin (Main Level), Aspect: NW

Photo 05 of 16. Restored Interior of Mayhew Cabin (Loft Level), Aspect: East

Photo 06 of 16. Rear and East Elevations of Mayhew Cabin with Cellar Entry, Aspect: SW

Photo 07 of 16. Cellar with Entrance to Tunnel Leading to "Cave" Chambers with Stairs to Cabin, Aspect: NW

Photo 08 of 16. Flagstone Tunnel between Cellar and "Cave" Chamber, Aspect: NW

Photo 09 of 16. "Cave" Chamber with Cross-wings, Aspect: NW

Photo 10 of 16. Close-up of one Cross-wing Chamber with Dugout Seating / Beds, Aspect: NE

Photo 11 of 16. Brick Tunnel looking back to Flagstone "Cave" Chamber, Aspect: SW

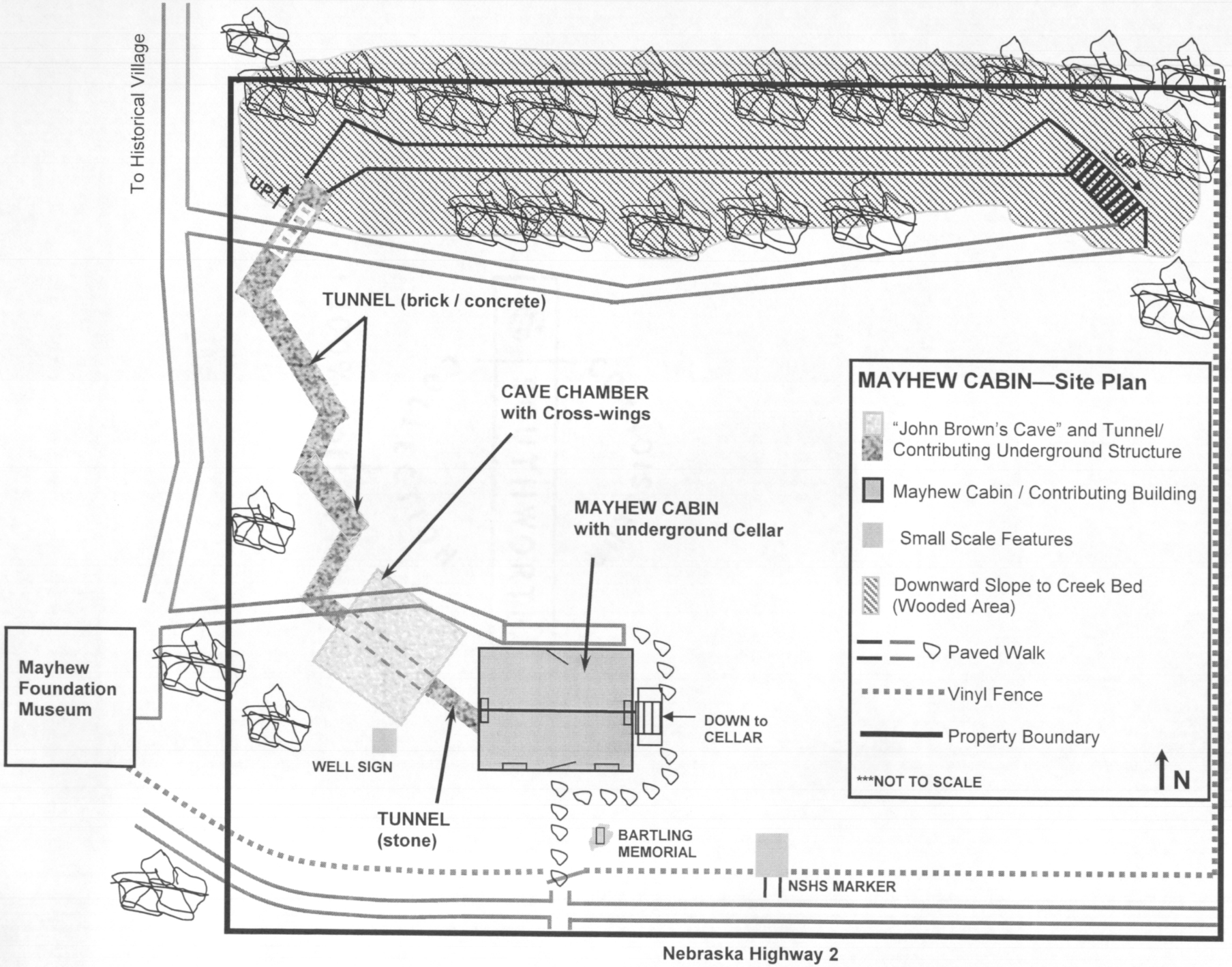
Photo 12 of 16. Tunnel Transitioning from Brick to Concrete Block, Aspect: North

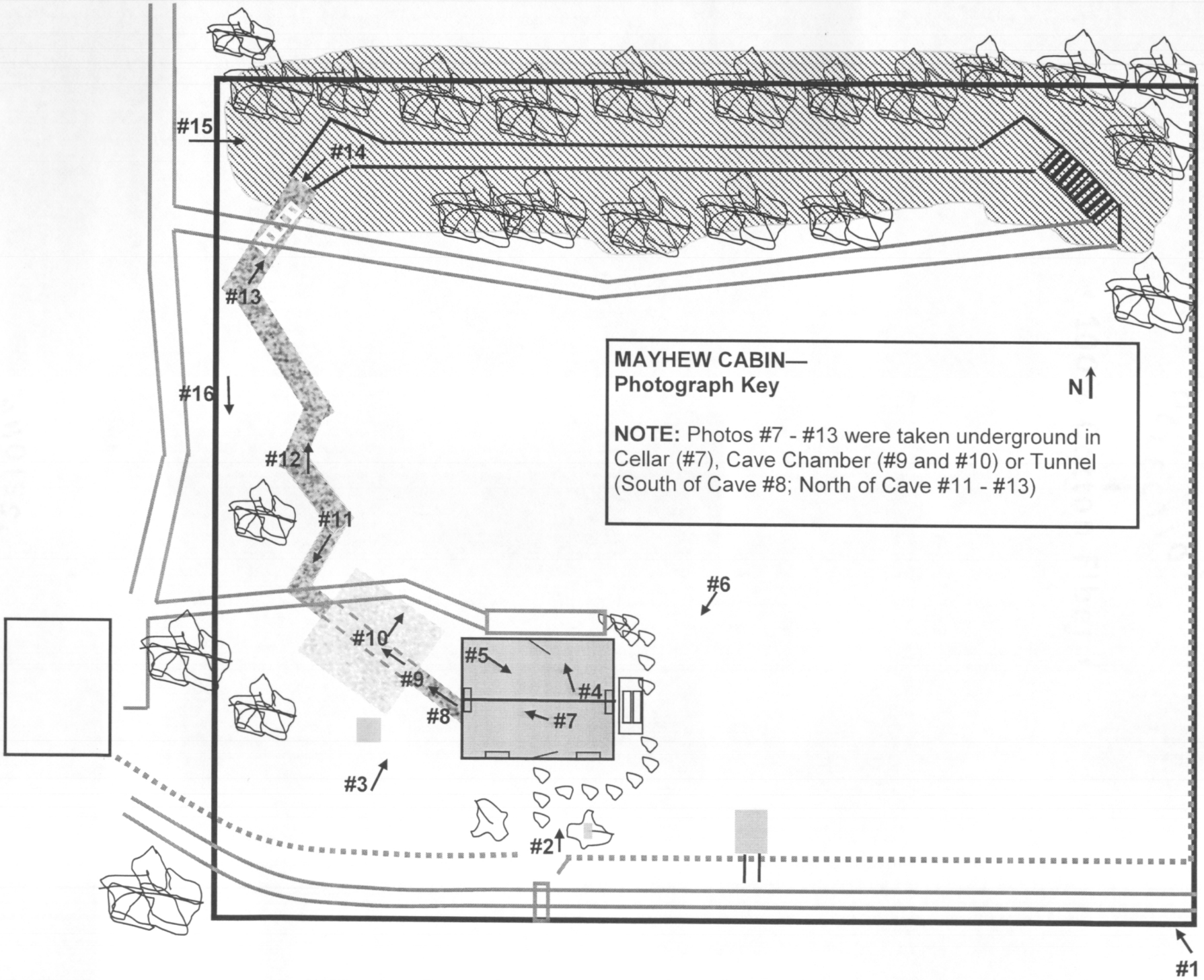
Photo 13 of 16. Concrete Block Tunnel and Stairs to Exit, Aspect: NE

Photo 14 of 16. "Cave" and Tunnel Exit, Aspect: SW

Photo 15 of 16. Walkway through Wooded Area after Exiting Tunnel (Northern Boundary of Property), Aspect: East

Photo 16 of 16. Western Boundary of Property Follows Shrubs (between trees), Aspect: South


To Historical Village
UP
UP
TUNNEL (brick / concrete)
CAVE CHAMBER
with Cross-wings
MAYHEW CABIN
with underground Cellar
Mayhew
Foundation
Museum
DOWN to
CELLAR
WELL SIGN
TUNNEL
(stone)
BARTLING
MEMORIAL
NSHS MARKER
MAYHEW CABIN—Site Plan
"John Brown's Cave" and Tunnel/
Contributing Underground Structure
Mayhew Cabin / Contributing Building
Small Scale Features
Downward Slope to Creek Bed
(Wooded Area)
Paved Walk
Vinyl Fence
Property Boundary
***NOT TO SCALE
N
Nebraska Highway 2


#15
#14
#13
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#11
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#8
#7
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#5
#4
#3
#2
#1
MAYHEW CABIN—
Photograph Key
N
NOTE: Photos #7 - #13 were taken underground in Cellar (#7), Cave Chamber (#9 and #10) or Tunnel (South of Cave #8; North of Cave #11 - #13)

MATHEW CABIN 1855

HISTORIC
SITE
JOHN BROWNS
CAVE ≈
1851

WATCH
YOUR HEAD
The cave entrance and tunnel were just large enough to crawl through and the outlet, which was in the ravine west of the cabin was carefully concealed with brush. This underground railroad station was marked by three oak trees near the cabin.
HOLD ON TO THE RAILING
AND WATCH YOUR STEP!

EXIT

EXIT