

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 Lewis-Syford House  
Other names/site number LC13:D09-002

## 2. Location

Street & number 700 North 16<sup>th</sup> Street Not for publication   
City or town Lincoln Vicinity   
State Nebraska Code NE County Lancaster Code 109 Zip code 68508

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ 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:

- 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Lewis-Syford House

Name of Property

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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.)

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: Buildings, Sites, Structures, Objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Limestone

Walls Clapboard

Roof Wood shingle

Other

Narrative Description

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

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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.)

- 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.
X 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.
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.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1878-1891

Significant Dates

c. 1878

1898

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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
X 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
Other
Name of repository:

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## 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property Less than one

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	694186	4521128	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.)

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office staff

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

date January 22, 2007

street & number 1500 R Street/Box 82554

telephone (402) 471-4787

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska zip code 68501-2554

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## Additional Documentation

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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.)

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## Property Owner

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

name/title Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation

street & number 128 North 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1010

telephone (402) 435-3535

city or town Lincoln

state Nebraska zip code 68508-1565

**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.

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The Lewis-Syford house is located on the east side of North 16<sup>th</sup> Street, amidst larger and more recently built sororities, fraternities and dorms, and other university support buildings. The property is the oldest in an area that used to have many houses that dated to the earliest days of the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. The house currently serves as an office for counseling services for the University of Nebraska, and remains relatively unaltered to serve its current use. It retains excellent integrity. The property consists of three buildings, the house, potting shed/outhouse, and carriage house; one structure, and the limestone retaining wall..

This Second Empire residence is an L-shaped, one and a half story, wood frame structure with a wood shingle mansard roof. The silhouette of this mansard roof is concave, punctuated by dormers with either one or two single-light casement windows with original storms. The house features two corbelled chimneys; the larger one faces front and serves the parlor fireplace, and the smaller is located toward the back of the house and served the kitchen. It has a rough-cut limestone foundation and clapboard siding. The façade contains a central entrance on its asymmetrical façade, bordered on one side by a porch and the other by the projecting leg of the L with a canted bay. The entrance is a pair of eight-light French storm doors and a pair of French doors with two arched and etched glass windows with a star pattern. The doors have the original turning doorbell and hardware. A glass transom above the door is etched with the house number.

Two different sizes of elaborate brackets are located under the eaves in a rotating pattern. Two different styles of iron cresting are present on the house, one style is found on the ridge of the mansard roof. The other is found on the first level atop the front porch, the front entrance and the canted bay. The front porch also has some decorative scrollwork elements under its roofline.

The fenestration of the Lewis-Syford house is largely consistent by floor. Almost all of the windows on the first floor are tall, narrow, two over two double-hung windows, and all of the original glass storm windows are present. The only exceptions to this size of window are the two that are half-width windows that form a square projecting bay on the south side of the building, in the second parlor. The windows on the second floor are all single light, casement windows that open on the side, although these may be arranged singly or in pairs. These windows also still utilize their original glass storms. All of the windows also have functioning shutters.

A sidewalk leads from the western façade to the north elevation. A secondary open porch is located along this side of the building, with wooden steps and limestone rails on both sides, and scrollwork under the porch roof. The door is solid oak, but the panels incised in the wood mimic the two arched windows of the front door. Continuing around the back of the house on the east elevation, there is a full width addition that does not lie underneath the mansard roofline. Another smaller addition was built onto the first, and houses an enclosed porch entrance. This entrance has a substantial oak, Craftsman-era door.

Entering the house from the front doors, one enters a small vestibule with a door into the formal parlor, and an oak door directly ahead that leads to the stairs to the second story and the hallway to the second parlor. The formal parlor has a canted bay window that looks toward the front yard, as well as the marble fireplace. The fireplace has designs etched into its marble surround, an iron insert for gas, and a hearth of geometric tile. The stair in the front hallway has a large round newel post and octagonal spindles. There are many different styles of woodwork present in the house. The woodwork not only becomes less formal as the rooms become less formal, but the parlors' woodwork is made of different kinds of wood. The formal parlor utilizes oak woodwork, with rosettes on the doorframes and broad baseboards, while the second parlor is constructed in pine. The French doors between the rooms are oak on one side and pine on the other. The second parlor has a squared projecting bay and a doorway into an additional room at the back of the house, which could have been a sitting room or office. This room has a doorway that leads into a pantry space with the Craftsman back door.

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The pantry still has built in cabinets and potato bins that remain intact as they were built, although the space has been subdivided into a kitchenette and restroom space. The pantry also has a pass through cabinet that would allow for ease of service of meals to the dining room. The dining room has wainscoting below a chair rail, and pocket doors into what would have been the library. An additional door leads to yet another chamber that shares a wall with the bathroom, and a door to the side porch. The pantry space, as well as the sitting rooms on either side, make up the addition on the rear of the building. The original kitchen is thought to have been in the basement, and the observer can see the benefit of a first floor kitchen addition as time would have passed.

Ascending the stairs from the front hallway, one finds four small bed chambers on the four corners of the second story. The rooms have small closets with hooks, no rods. The original gas lights are still in place, alongside the later electric sconces that would have replaced the gas. The woodwork upstairs is oak, but is finished darker than the woodwork downstairs and has a combed finish.

Behind the house, immediately outside the pantry door, one finds a small board and batten shed with three doors on the south side and three windows for ventilation on the north side. The shed sits on an informal stone, brick, and beam foundation that is elevated above the surface of the ground. The potting shed appears to have original, although deteriorated, wooden gutters. Although the shed contains shelves and is used for storage, its configuration leads to the impression that it may have once been a three bay outhouse that was moved around the property. It is no doubt not in its original location, although it is original to the property.

Behind the house and potting shed sits the carriage house or garage. It is a two story, board and batten building with a jerkinhead roof. A 1930s lamp projects from the main façade. It contains two wide doors that slide laterally. A fixed four-light window is centered under the clipped gable of the jerkinhead roof.

The setting of the Lewis-Syford House includes the three buildings, as well as a limestone retaining wall just east of the sidewalk, as well as limestone steps from the sidewalk. There is also an original iron fence with an elaborate gate that runs the width of the property. An historic iron light post that displays the house number is found in the lawn inside the fence line. An iron hitching post that is shaped like the trunk of a tree with branches cut off is found near the street. In addition to all of these man made features, the property contains several mature cedar trees and other large plantings. It is flanked by a sorority to the north, modern dormitories to the east, and a church to the south.

The Lewis-Syford House was constructed ca. 1878 by the Reverend Elisha M. Lewis, a home missionary of the Presbyterian Church. Plumbing records maintained by the City of Lincoln indicate that this house was connected to city sewer and water in 1889.<sup>1</sup> Reverend Lewis died in 1891. Beginning in 1894, Mr. T. Hodgeman, a professor at the nearby University of Nebraska lived in the house. Professor Hodgeman lived in the house until 1904, when DeWitt Syford acquired the house. The house was occupied by a member of the Syford family until 1965, when the house was deeded to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.

<sup>1</sup> City of Lincoln Sewer connection records, p. 17 vol. 4.

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The Lewis-Syford House was built sometime around 1878, during the apex of the Second Empire style. The property is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The house is an excellent example of the Second Empire style of the Late Victorian period, particularly for Lincoln, Nebraska, where the style is extremely rare.

### History and Background

The Lewis-Syford House is a rare remnant of Lincoln's original residential development and is one of the last examples of a first generation house in Lincoln. The Lewis-Syford House is one of the five oldest known homes remaining in the city of Lincoln. The others are the Guy Brown House, 219-221 South 27<sup>th</sup> (c. 1874); the Miller House, 1029 "E" Street (1874); the Kennard House, 1627 "H" Street (1869), and; the Filley-Burnham House, 905 "E" Street (c. 1875). Additionally, the Lewis-Syford House is one of the last surviving first generation suburban houses in Lincoln, as reflected in its location just outside the original plat of the city. At the time the Lewis-Syford House was constructed, c. 1878, ample house lots remained within the original plat, and land prices were depressed in the early 1870s due to Governor Butler's impeachment and other challenges to the placement of the capital city. As a result, landowners beyond the city were actively promoting their property for house sites.<sup>2</sup> While the Lewis-Syford House represents this construction phenomenon, it also is an example of the construction boom Lincoln experienced from the mid-1870s to the late 1880s as the population exploded from 8,000 to 48,000<sup>3</sup>. The Lewis-Syford House is an excellent representation of the early settlement pattern of Lincoln.

### Elisha M. Lewis

Elisha M. Lewis was born c. 1825 in New York State. Information concerning his childhood, early adult life, and education is not available. However, in 1863 at the age of 37 he was living in Hudson, Michigan. In that year, he received an offer from a Congregational Church in Nebraska City to become its new pastor. Lewis accepted the position and began his new duties on December 25, 1863. He remained at this Congregational Church until resigning on September 24, 1865.<sup>4</sup>

From Nebraska City he moved to Omaha.<sup>5</sup> It is not known what he did there, but he did not stay in that Omaha long. In October 1865 he was invited to be the pastor at the new Congregational Society in Columbus. This appears to be an organizational position because according to Andreas "In October 1866 the church (in Columbus) was organized by Rev. Reuben Gaylord of Omaha."<sup>6</sup>

After time spent in Columbus, according to his obituary, Lewis moved back to Michigan to take care of an ailing relative. This appears to have occupied his time for the next ten years.

<sup>2</sup> Chase, Elizabeth Guy Brown House National Register of Historic Places nomination form. On file, Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. 1997.

<sup>3</sup> McKee, James L. and Arthur Duerschner AIA. *Lincoln A Photographic History*. Salt Valley Press, Lincoln NE. 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Andreas, A.T. *History of the State of Nebraska*, Vol. 1. Chicago: The Western Historical Co., 1882.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

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Reverend Lewis does not perform any more duties in Nebraska, according to Andreas, until 1876. On June 1, 1876 he became pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Falls City. He held this position for about one year. While performing his pastoral duties he also joined the Falls City Lodge No. 106 of the International Order of Good Templars. He was not only a member of this organization but held the position of Lodge Pastor and Lodge Deputy. It appears he stayed in Falls City until 1877.

In 1878, an entry for Reverend Lewis appears in the Lincoln City Directory. The listing reads as follows: "Lewis, Rev. E.M., from Falls City, Nebr., res. 16<sup>th</sup> and V Streets." Lewis is listed again in the 1880 directory, which states he is from Jackson, Michigan and is a Presbyterian minister.<sup>7</sup>

Andreas makes one more mention of him. In his description of the town of Firth, Andreas states that the community's Presbyterian Church was organized by its present (1882) pastor, Rev. E.M. Lewis of Lincoln in 1881.<sup>8</sup>

In 1881 the Lincoln City Directory gives the listing "Lewis, E. M., from Mich., Home Missionary Presbyterian Church, res. n.e. corner U and Grand (16<sup>th</sup> Street) Ave (the subject of this nomination). Lewis does not appear in the 1882 or 1883 directories, but in the 1885 directory he again shows up at the 16<sup>th</sup> Street address.

By 1886, there is a notable change to his listing in the Lincoln City Directory. At this time, he is listed as "clergyman and pres. Neb. Savings bank." The 1887 directory again lists him as the president of a bank located at 1426 "O" Street. In 1889, the directory entry gives the listing "Lewis, Elisha M., of Lewis Hardware & Implement Co., with his residence at 700 N 16<sup>th</sup>. In 1890 and 1891 the directory again includes title of Rev. with his name. Elisha Lewis died in 1891.

**DeWitt N. Syford**

DeWitt Syford acquired this property in 1904. While in Lincoln, Syford was a telegrapher for the railroad. He was also a cattle breeder, introducing some of the first Angus cattle to Lancaster County and organized the first Nebraska Aberdeen Angus Breeders Association. He also served as the first secretary of that organization. His son and two daughters each graduated from the University of Nebraska then distinguished themselves in careers that ranged from cattle breeding to federal service to college teaching.<sup>9</sup> Following his death in 1926, the house remained in the family under the ownership of his children, none of whom ever married. His son, Lester died in 1952, followed by the elder daughter Ethel in 1955. At the request of the youngest daughter Constance, the ownership of the Syford House was gifted to the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation following her death in 1965.

**Criterion C - Architecture**

This style is typified by its distinctive roofline, the mansard or dual pitched hipped roof, credited to the French architect Francois Mansart of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. The taxes imposed upon Parisians during this era were based upon the number of usable stories below the roofline. Mansart designed this dual pitched roof, where one pitch is slanted (either convex, concave or ogee) and the other is so moderately pitched as to often appear flat. The architect delivered the greatest amount of usable space for his clients while saving them from taxes on an additional usable story. The style was later revitalized during the reign of Napoleon III (1852 to 1870) from whence comes its name, Second Empire.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln City Directory, 1880.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ed Zimmer, Personal Communication. January 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 243.

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Second Empire houses often look much like the Italianate houses that became popular in the 1840s, with the exception of the mansard roof. The remainder of the building features tall narrow windows and decorative brackets under the eaves. Emerging in the Late Victorian period, these houses utilize space much like Queen Anne houses or other houses of the Romantic period. The front entrance led into a transitional entrance space, with doorways into parlors for entertaining or stairs to the more private spaces found upstairs. The room closest to the formal entrance is the most formal, becoming less formal as you move toward the back of the house.

The Lewis-Syford House conforms to the strictures of the Second Empire style completely. It features a concave mansard roof punctuated by elaborate dormers with a miniature pediment. The windows on the first floor are all tall, narrow windows that are double-hung. Two different sizes of brackets are located under the narrow eave of the mansard roof. The building is elaborated upon with details of the romantic period, such as iron cresting and scrolled woodwork on the porches. Canted and projecting bays break up the flat planes of the surfaces of the facades.

The historic integrity of the Lewis-Syford House is largely intact. There is a historic addition to the rear of the property that provided a pantry/kitchen space and two additional rooms. Another addition provided an enclosed entrance into the kitchen area. More recently, a modern partition wall was created in the kitchen/pantry space that allowed room for a modern bathroom. Its setting and association are the aspects of integrity that is most compromised in this case. The Lewis-Syford was only one of several houses from the same period that lined the east side of North 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Those houses are long non-extant, replaced by sorority and fraternity houses, and a 1960s era church. All of its other aspects of integrity, location, materials, workmanship, design, and feeling are very much still intact.

Archeological deposits may be present at this early house site. Artifacts consistent with domestic habitation are present on the ground surface. However, no formal archeological investigations have been conducted and the nature of and the integrity of archeological deposits have not been evaluated. At this writing, whether or not these potential archeological deposits are likely to yield important information in history is unknown. Therefore, this property is not nominated under Criterion D at this time.

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**Bibliography**

- Andreas, A.T. History of the State of Nebraska, Vol. 1. Chicago: The Western Historical Co., 1882.
- Chase, Elizabeth Guy Brown House National Register of Historic Places nomination form. On file, Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office. 1997.
- City of Lincoln sewer connection records, p. 17 vol. 4. On file, Lincoln-Lancaster County Offices.
- Correspondence, Edward Zimmer, Preservation Planner, City of Lincoln. Lincoln, NE., 2007
- Lincoln City Directory, 1876-1906.
- McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.
- McKee, James L. and Arthur Duerschner AIA. *Lincoln A. Photographic History*. Salt Valley Press, Lincoln NE. 1976.
- Nebraska State Journal*, July 25, 1891.
- United States Federal Census, 1880.
- Wheaton College. Billy Graham Center Archives. Records of the American Home Missionary Society, Collection 142.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

TUTTLE ETAL SUB L1 LITTLES SUB 24-10-6, Lot J - K, W1/2.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary description includes the legal parcel historically associated with the Lewis-Syford House and currently owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society Foundation.