

**What We See and Why We Stay:  
Place Studies Through Windshield Surveys of Scott County, Kansas**



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*“When your drive down our...road  
spare us your talk about our backwardness,  
of how mile after unrelieved mile dispirits you,  
of how there is nothing, simply nothing to see.*

*Go back to your homes and work on your eyes,  
bring back a sight which can co-create meaning.”  
-Don Welch, “Advice from a Provincial”*

The western plains of Kansas sweep from one end of the horizon to another seemingly without ending. They are broken only by the sharp asphalt of highways cutting through fields and pastures which connect the numerous small towns that dot the prairie. Family vehicles, Semi-trucks, and farm implements are not uncommon sights, often waiting to turn onto highways from gravel roads. Scott County sits solidly in western Kansas, two counties away from the Colorado border and not far enough in either direction to be classified as south-western or north-western as seen in Figure 1 below.

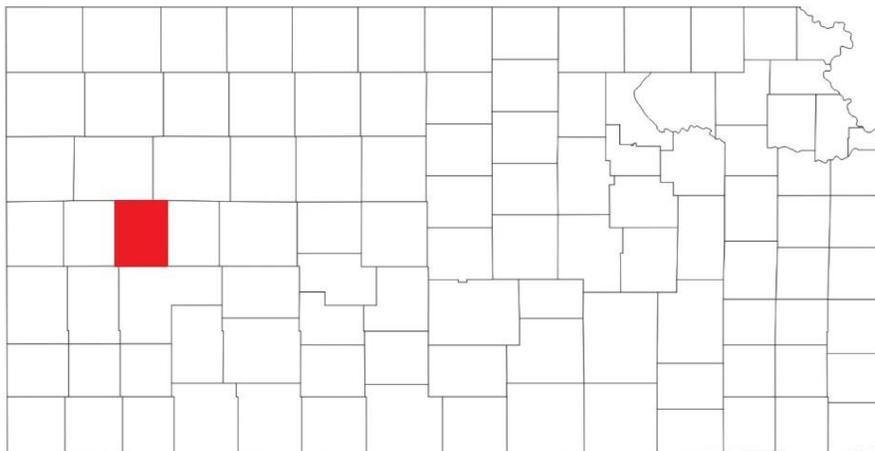


Figure 1. A map of Kansas Counties. Scott County, highlighted in red, is bordered by Wichita, Logan, Gove, Lane, and Finney Counties. With three counties to the north and three counties to the south, it is difficult to classify Scott County, though for official purposes it is often considered Southwestern Kansas. SOURCE: d-maps.com

Scott City, seen in Figure 2 below, the county seat, is in the geographical center of the county. Driving north out of town, Highway 83 dips into bluffs and Kansas's former status as an ancient ocean is apparent. Southbound, the land flattens out heavily into farm fields as Highway 83 directs traffic into the growing-hub that Garden City, Kansas is becoming for the southwestern portion of the state. East and west on Highway 96, the same agricultural views are present, farmland and pastureland dominate the landscape for not only for those who are passing through, but also for those who call the county home.



Figure 2. The south edge of Scott City c. 2017, photographed from Highway 83. Fields can be seen on either side of the highway. Grain elevators and the blue water tower displaying the town's name dominate the skyline. SOURCE: Author photograph, November 24, 2017.

Only an hour-and-a-half south from Scott City is Liberal, self-proclaimed home of Dorothy from Lyman Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. Baum's description of Kansas is bleak, but it permeates the imaginations of those who don't call the state home:

When Dorothy stood in the doorway and looked around she could see nothing but the great gray prairie on every side. Not a tree nor a house broke the broad sweep of flat country that reached the sky in all directions. The sun had baked the plowed land into a gray mass, with little cracks running through it. Even the grass was not green, for the sun

had burned the tops of the long blades until they were the same gray color to be seen everywhere. Once the house had been painted, but the sun blistered the paint and the rains washed it away, and now the house was as dull and gray as everything else.<sup>1</sup>

Though Kansas can experience heavy drought, particularly in the summer months, the landscape within which Scott County is nestled is not always the scorched countryside detailed by Baum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Nor is it the “Great American Desert,” as early European explorers of the area, including Zebulon Pike, termed it.

Instead, the 2012 United States Department of Agriculture paints Scott County as an agricultural community ranking second in the state in terms of total value of agricultural products sold.<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau estimates show that while some of the surrounding counties, such as Lane and Wichita, are experiencing population loss of 5.5 and 6.5 percent respectively,<sup>3</sup> Scott County is maintaining population and from 2010-2016 even experienced an estimated 1.9 percent population growth.<sup>4</sup> These agricultural and population statistics along with Scott County’s position as one of the counties bridging northwest and southwest Kansas, help the county offer a unique lens for place studies. Studying place through sense of place and place attachment offers an intersection of geography, architecture, history, and other social sciences. To understand sense of place and place attachment in Scott County, I will explain place studies theories, situate the windshield survey delve into place studies in Kansas, outline my methodology, and apply these aspects to Scott County.

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<sup>1</sup> Baum, L. Frank, *The Wizard of Oz* (Chicago: Reilly & Lee, 1965), 10.

<sup>2</sup> “Scott County, Kansas,” *2012 Census of Agriculture*, accessed November 15, 2017.

[https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online\\_Resources/County\\_Profiles/Kansas/cp20171.pdf](https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online_Resources/County_Profiles/Kansas/cp20171.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> “Quick Facts. Wichita County, Kansas; Lane County, Kansas,” *US Census Bureau*, accessed November 15, 2017.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/wichitacountykansas,lanecountykansas/PST045216>

<sup>4</sup> “Quick Facts: Scott County, Kansas,” *US Census Bureau*, accessed November 15, 2017.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/scottcountykansas/PST045216>

## Place Studies: Passing Through

Place is all around us. It is seemingly grounded in geography when considering the primary physical aspect of a place, the landscape. Secondary physical aspects such as the town and the home situate place studies within architecture. However, place is more than just physicality; it can be found in community, history, and a sense of belonging. Because of the multi-faceted ways through which place can be defined, it expands beyond just one academic discipline. Bucknell University's place studies program explains that place studies "provides opportunities to actively engage with the social, political, historical, and cultural dimensions of nature-society relationships and sustainability."<sup>5</sup> Two aspects of place studies are sense of place and place attachment, each attempt to understand how people interact with a place. Sense of Place focuses on perceptions, while place attachment narrows that focus to the connections people have with a place and can become highly personal.

Sense of place and place attachment easily coexist with one another. Yi-Fu Tuan coined the term *topophilia* to describe this phenomenon as "the affective bond between people and place or setting."<sup>6</sup> People's perceptions of place and their attachment to it are likely to be entwined with each other. Because place is a meaning-based concept, experiences are often linked to the environments in which they occur.<sup>7</sup> Due to experiential formation of place, sense of place and place attachment seemingly function on a personal level. However, there is a thread running throughout place studies of a "universal historical bond and...deeper understanding of our

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<sup>5</sup> "Place Studies Program," *Bucknell University*, Accessed November 15, 2017. <https://www.bucknell.edu/PlaceStudiesProgram>

<sup>6</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1974), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Stedman, Richard C. "Is it Really Just a Social Construct: The Contribution of Physical Environment to Sense of Place." *Society and Natural Resources* 16, no. 8 (2003), 672

society”<sup>8</sup> that allows for patterns to be established in communities where place studies research is being completed.

When understanding how sense of place and place attachment are created, there are three connecting factors that should be examined: historical, physical, and emotional. Within each factor, there are two levels in place: community and personal. First, historical processes include key events and are time bound.<sup>9</sup> On a personal level, key events in one person’s life or their family’s history that have taken place in the studied area provided a basis for how a place is interacted with.<sup>10</sup> On the community level, places often have rich history, both pre-settlement and post-settlement that can have an overarching effect on those residing in the community.<sup>11</sup> Second, physical factors offer the backdrop for place attachment. On a personal level, this includes specific locations in which people have connection and memories that affect how they view attachment to an area as a whole.<sup>12</sup> Physicality on a community level is grounded in geography; the lifestyle of people in any given area depends on the physical environment they occupy.<sup>13</sup> Urban and rural landscapes provide different sentiments and ways of life for their inhabitants.<sup>14</sup> There is also a difference in attachments based on the connections people have with the “wilderness” around them.<sup>15</sup> Finally, emotional factors perhaps play the largest role in sense of place and place attachment, though they are heavily influenced by the two other factors. Emotional factors are rooted in memory. On a personal level, people’s experiences in a place

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<sup>8</sup> Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 162.

<sup>9</sup> Cross, J. E. “Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework.” *Symbolic Interaction* 28, no. 4 (2015) 506

<sup>10</sup> Cross, J. E. “Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework.” *Symbolic Interaction*, 506

<sup>11</sup> Cross, J. E. “Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework.” *Symbolic Interaction*, 507

<sup>12</sup> Stedman, Richard C. “Is it Really Just a Social Construct,” 682

<sup>13</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia*, 173.

<sup>14</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia*, 102.

<sup>15</sup> Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia* 109.

cause them to have feelings in either a negative or positive direction.<sup>16</sup> When looking at a community, emotional factors are often connected to events which have an effect on the community as a whole.<sup>17</sup> It is a way that a community reacts that lends to how a place is viewed emotionally. These three factors work in conjunction when developing sense of place and forming place attachment.

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<sup>16</sup> Scanell, Leila and Robert Gifford. "Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework." *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 30, no.1 (2010), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Scanell, Leila and Robert Gifford. "Defining place attachment," 3.

## The Windshield Survey

Windshield surveys are observations made from a moving vehicle in order to gain a better sense of a community.<sup>18</sup> Often used by healthcare professionals to gain a better understanding of the communities in which they will be practicing or performing research,<sup>19</sup> the windshield survey takes note of a variety of items including, but not limited to, buildings, streets, people, cultural institutions, education, and media.<sup>20</sup> Though not typically associated with place studies, windshield surveys may have a place within these discussions due to the increasing prevalence of transportation within our society, especially in rural areas.

Rural areas are often defined in terms of miles by their distance from each other and from urban areas, often long distances people must travel.<sup>21</sup> Rural residents travel 33 percent more than urban residents,<sup>22</sup> whether that is in town, on state and national highways between communities, or throughout the county on unpaved country roads. Transportation prevalence in rural areas is not limited solely to transportation of families and individuals from location to location. Many rural areas have distinct agricultural presences, and agriculture is a transport-based industry. From planting, to harvesting and selling agricultural commodities, or taking livestock to market, every step of the agricultural process is defined by the vehicles; tractors, semi-trucks, combines, farm trucks, commercial sprayers, and even spray planes; that are used to

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<sup>18</sup> “Section 21. Windshield and Walking Surveys.” University of Kansas, Community Tool Box, Last Updated 2017. <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/assessment/assessing-community-needs-and-resources/windshield-walking-surveys/main>

<sup>19</sup> “Service Learning: Windshield Surveys.” Duquesne University, Last Updated 2017. <http://www.duq.edu/about/centers-and-institutes/center-for-teaching-excellence/teaching-and-learning/service-learning-windshield-surveys>

<sup>20</sup> “Section 21. Windshield and Walking Surveys.” University of Kansas, Community Tool Box.

<sup>21</sup> “Problems with Rural Life,” Saylor Academy, 2012. [https://saylordotorg.github.io/text\\_social-problems-continuity-and-change/s17-04-problems-of-rural-life.html](https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_social-problems-continuity-and-change/s17-04-problems-of-rural-life.html)

<sup>22</sup> Todd Litman, “Public Transit’s Impact on Rural and Small Towns,” 2017. <https://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA-Rural-Transit-2017.pdf>

help keep them continue to operate smoothly. The transportation based nature of rural areas can be seen below in Figure 3.

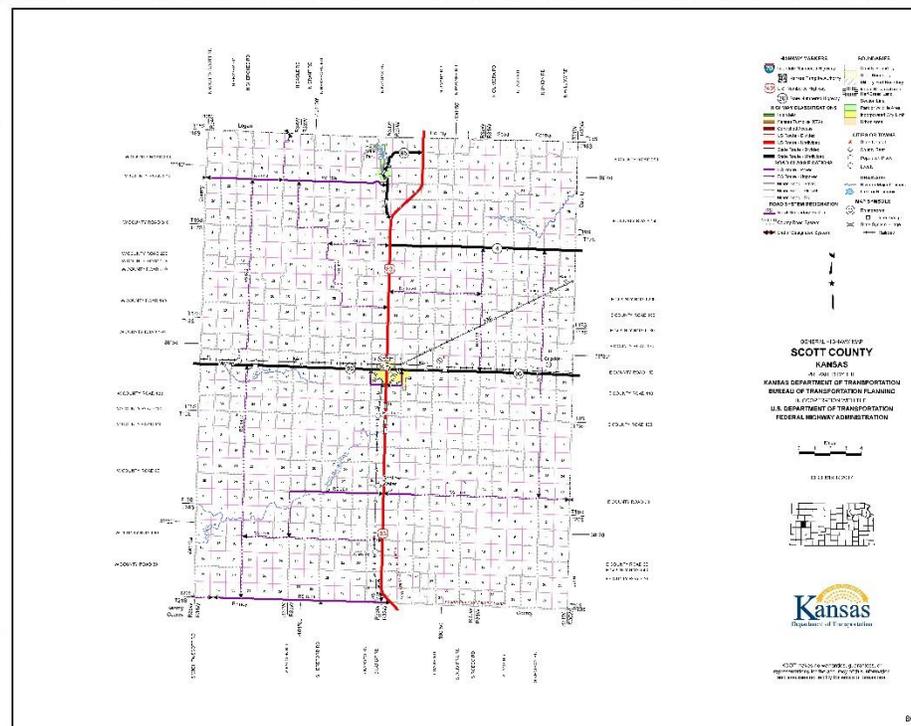


Figure 3. This map of Scott County shows county roads, state and federal highways, and other transportation aspects of the county such as rail lines c. 2017. These markers help identify the transportation mindset that exists in rural areas. SOURCE: Kansas Department of Transportation

This transportation mindset in rural areas lends itself well to using the windshield survey within place studies. In fact, there has been an increased push in place studies to consider roads and the vehicle as places in their own rights. John Brinkerhoff Jackson notes in his work *Sense of Place, Sense of Time*, that “the true function of the road is to serve us by taking us home.”<sup>23</sup> However, Jackson also posits that this base-level definition must be shifted in order to fit the contemporary world within which roads function. The pervasive nature of roads and the

<sup>23</sup> Jackson, John Brinkerhoff. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 189.

transportation that exist in our society have been addressed by Jackson who fits them into place studies by noting “roads no longer merely lead to places; they *are* places.”<sup>24</sup> Jackson addressed this placement in 1994, and in 2014, Per Gustafson takes it a step further with his work “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility.” Gustafson explains that mobility is challenging current perceptions of place attachment.<sup>25</sup> Mobility can cause attachment to multiple places,<sup>26</sup> can change how people are attached to places,<sup>27</sup> and cause attachment to places of different sizes in new ways.<sup>28</sup> However, Gustafson notes that far more research is needed into just how mobility affects place attachment.<sup>29</sup> Despite this need for further research, in the transportation-oriented atmosphere of rural areas, the windshield survey can be potentially useful as a method to be utilized for understanding sense of place and place attachment in these locales.

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<sup>24</sup> Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, 190.

<sup>25</sup> Gustafson, Per. “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility,” *Place Attachment: advances in theory, methods, and applications*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 44.

<sup>26</sup> Gustafson, Per. “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility,” 40.

<sup>27</sup> Gustafson, Per. “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility,” 38.

<sup>28</sup> Gustafson, Per. “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility,” 42.

<sup>29</sup> Gustafson, Per. “Place Attachment in an Age of Mobility,” 46.

## Place Studies in Kansas: A Drive By

Kansas is no stranger to place studies research. Jeffrey Smith and Matthew Cartlidge performed research concerning place attachment among retirees in Greensburg, Kansas, a small community in south-central Kansas. Ninety-five percent of Greensburg was leveled by an EF-5 tornado on May 4, 2007.<sup>30</sup> Smith and Cartlidge focused on the elderly citizens of the community as it began to rebuild.<sup>31</sup> In the north-western portion of the state, Aaron Gilbreath researched sense of place in Gove County, Kansas in conjunction with depopulation. Gilbreath termed Gove in the title of his research, it is “A Little Place Getting Smaller.”<sup>32</sup> Gilbreath’s research focused on the perceptions people had about the size, livelihood, and potential longevity of their communities in the face of depopulation.<sup>33</sup> This is highly relevant considering Gilbreath’s research was published in 2012, and between 2010 and 2016, Gove County has experienced an estimated 3.9 percent decline in population.<sup>34</sup>

Beyond the focused research conducted in Greensburg and Gove County, James Shortridge has written on regional image and sense of place in Kansas as a whole.<sup>35</sup> Shortridge unpacks the historical progressiveness of Kansas.<sup>36</sup> He also explains the differences that separate eastern Kansas and eastern Kansans from western Kansas and western Kansans. They include geography, industry, and politics.<sup>37</sup> Shortridge notes that in the 1890s, western Kansans realized

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<sup>30</sup> Smith, Jeffery and Matthew Cartlidge, “Place Attachment Among Retirees in Greensburg, Kansas,” *Geographical Review* 101, no. 4 (2011): 536

<sup>31</sup> Smith, Jeffery and Matthew Cartlidge, “Place Attachment Among Retirees in Greensburg, Kansas,” 537

<sup>32</sup> Gilbreath, Aaron, “‘A Little Place Getting Smaller’: Perceptions of Place and Depopulation of Gove County, Kansas,” *Great Plains Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2012).

<sup>33</sup> Gilbreath, Aaron, “‘A Little Place Getting Smaller.’”

<sup>34</sup> “Quick Facts: Gove County, Kansas,” *US Census Bureau*, accessed December 7, 2017.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/govecountykansas/PST045216>

<sup>35</sup> Shortridge, James R. “Regional Image and Sense of Place in Kansas,” *Kansas State Historical Society*, 2005, [http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2005autumn\\_shortridge.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/publicat/history/2005autumn_shortridge.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Shortridge, James R. “Regional Image and Sense of Place in Kansas,” 206.

<sup>37</sup> Shortridge, James R. “Regional Image and Sense of Place in Kansas,” 214-215.

“Major public institutions were all hundreds of miles distant from them. They felt that residents of the older counties dictated policy statewide, but did not understand High Plains needs.

Western Kansas was vibrant, they said, eastern Kansas stodgy.”<sup>38</sup> This realization likely continues to play a part in how western Kansans and eastern Kansans function in tandem with each other and their respective portions of the state. Particularly, the sense of independence created in western Kansas by these perceptions continues to play a part in attitudes across the state.

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<sup>38</sup> Shortridge, James R. “Regional Image and Sense of Place in Kansas,” 215

## **Methodology: From Interstate to Highway**

Based upon place studies theories, the windshield survey, and place studies in Kansas, I situate my research into understand perception and attachment to Scott County, Kansas, a community with a population of approximately 5,032<sup>39</sup> located just north of the western Kansas towns of Dodge City, Garden City, and Liberal upon which Shortridge based his assessments. Scott County serves to be researched using place studies because of its population increase when there has been a trend of decline in small communities on the western plains of the state, the agricultural industry upon which the community grounds itself, the historical progressiveness of the community which will be further explained, and its continued steps to move forward. Furthermore, as a native of Scott County, I have my own personal connection to this research.

I derived my research into sense of place and place attachment in Scott County from the three tenants previously explored of historical, physical, and emotional factors. Through semi-structured interviews with five citizens of the community, I gained understanding of sense of place and place attachment on both personal and community levels. Though five does not seem as though it can represent a thorough study of a community, the number served to ground my initial observations about the community and the way its citizens interact with place. As a member of this community, I knew my interviewees, and some selection bias was potentially exhibited; therefore, there may be populations of Scott County that are not represented by this study of place. The goal of my interviews was to understand how people felt about the community and why it functions as it does; thus, questions involved individual history, thoughts about the community, and change in the county and larger area.

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<sup>39</sup> "Quick Facts: Scott County, Kansas," *US Census Bureau*.

I also utilized the aspect of the windshield survey in performing my research. This played a two-fold part. First, I sought to understand the role transportation played in Scott County and in the lives of my interviewees. Second, after holding interviews, I held my own windshield survey of Scott County and I took photographs of many of the aspects of the county that my interviewees mentioned, some of which are included in this work. Both of these parts of the windshield survey helped me understand sense of place and place attachment in Scott County on the community and personal levels. In order to provide a proper introduction for Scott County before explore sense of place and place attachment, I've included a history of the county that focuses on settlement and on important historical events.

## **A History of Scott County, Kansas: Before the Car**

Scott County, Kansas was established by the Kansas Legislature in 1886.<sup>40</sup> The county was named after General Winfield Scott, United States Army hero of the Mexican War. County settlement however, started in 1884, when Mrs. Maria E. DeGeer and her daughter, Mrs. Ida L. Eastman, both widows from Chicago, filed the several claims and started what became the first permanent settlement in the county,<sup>41</sup> their settlement later became Scott City, the county seat. There was no major competition for county seat due to Scott City's location in the exact center of the county.<sup>42</sup> There were however multiple other small communities located throughout the county, including Pence, Manning, Modoc, Grigston, Shallowater, Zenobia, and Painter City.<sup>43</sup> At the time the county was organized, Scott City had an approximate population of 700 citizens.<sup>44</sup> There were also two churches, the Methodist and the Cumberland Presbyterian,<sup>45</sup> in the town as well as three weekly newspapers, four banks, two hotels, and approximately 50 other business entities.<sup>46</sup> Scott City's railroads arrived in 1887 when the Missouri Pacific and the Santa-Fe made a race to the town from the east.<sup>47</sup> Scott County and Scott City continued to grow and prosper over the years after its settlement

Beyond just the settlement history of the county and city, Scott County boasts a rich Native American history. El Cuartelejo, pictured in Figure 4 below, located in historic Lake Scott State Park, is the northernmost Indian pueblo in the United States.<sup>48</sup> The site is believed to

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<sup>40</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 1977, 7

<sup>41</sup> "The Early History of Scott County," scottcity.net, last updated May 18, 1998.  
<http://www.scottcity.net/info/history.html>

<sup>42</sup> "The Early History of Scott County," scottcity.

<sup>43</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 30-34

<sup>44</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 15

<sup>45</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 15

<sup>46</sup> "The Early History of Scott County," scottcity.net

<sup>47</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 340

<sup>48</sup> "El Cuartelejo," elquartelejomuseum.org, last updated 2014.

<http://www.elquartelejomuseum.org/museum/exhibits/native-american-sites/el-cuartelejo>

have been established by Taos Picurie Indians in the 1650s.<sup>49</sup> When Herbert Steele found remnants of the pueblo on his land in 1898,<sup>50</sup> irrigation trenches dating back to the Picuries were also found. Records exist of both the Spanish and the French having made use of the site.<sup>51</sup> After archeological exploration and pueblo restoration, El Quarteletejo was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1966.<sup>52</sup> Scott County celebrates this historical site;<sup>53</sup> the county museum, The El Quarteletejo Museum, is its namesake and serves to inform the community about it's past.



Figure 4. The east side of the sight of the EL Quarteletejo Indian pueblo located in Historic Lake Scott State Park c. 2017. The Historical Marker standing to the left of the pueblo provides information about the reconstructed sight. Out of the picture is a marker erected by the Daughters of the American Revolution. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017.

<sup>49</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 399

<sup>50</sup> “El Cuarteletejo,” [elquarteletejomuseum.org](http://elquarteletejomuseum.org).

<sup>51</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 399

<sup>52</sup> “Kansas-Scott County,” [nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com](http://nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com), accessed November, 22, 2017.

<http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/ks/Scott/state.html>

<sup>53</sup> Shearmire, Brantlee, “El Quarteletejo Pueblo Ruins, Scott County, Kansas,”

<https://ccrsresearchcollections.omeka.net/items/show/2>, 2010

Another site of Native importance located in Scott County is the site of the Battle of Punished Woman's Fork, referred to by locals as "Battle Canyon," seen below in Figure 5. This is the site of the last Indian battle in Kansas.<sup>54</sup> The Northern Cheyenne had been placed on the Darlington Reservation in Oklahoma in 1876.<sup>55</sup> In the fall of 1878, the Northern Cheyenne attempted to make their way back north with ninety-two warriors, one-hundred-twenty women, and one-hundred-forty-one children.<sup>56</sup> On September 27, 1878, Lt. Colonel William H. Lewis, dispatched from Fort Dodge, and his men fought the Northern Cheyenne at Battle Canyon. The women and children were hidden in small cave like feature referred to as Squaw's Den.<sup>57</sup> As the battle was fought, Lewis was injured and died of those wounds, becoming the last officer killed in military action in the state of Kansas.<sup>58</sup> This site was registered on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007, and is just miles away from El Quartejejo. Both sites as well as other local history are detailed in the El Quartejejo Museum in Scott City which is also home to the local historical society.

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<sup>54</sup> "Punished Women's Fork/Battle Canyon," [westernvistahistoricbyway.com](http://www.westernvistahistoricbyway.com), accessed November 22, 2017.  
<http://www.westernvistahistoricbyway.com/battle-canyon/>

<sup>55</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 400

<sup>56</sup> "Punished Women's Fork/Battle Canyon," [westernvistahistoricbyway.com](http://www.westernvistahistoricbyway.com)

<sup>57</sup> Committee, *History of Early Scott County*, 401

<sup>58</sup> "Punished Women's Fork/Battle Canyon," [westernvistahistoricbyway.com](http://www.westernvistahistoricbyway.com)



Figure 5. Battle Canyon, the sight of the Battle of Punished Woman's Fork. The photo, taken from the east, shows the western ridge where the Northern Cheyenne dig rifle pits, Squaws Den at the far right of the canyon, and the draw where the Northern Cheyenne escaped to the northwest. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017.

## **Sense of Place and Place Attachment in Scott County: Through the Windshield**

I spoke to five citizens of Scott County: Brian Vulgamore, Nicole Hedges-Campos, Jim Minnix, John Beckman, and Rod Haxton. Each one has their own story, and connection, to the community, whether they grew up in Scott County or came to the community as adults. Having grown up in Scott County, I've seen the impact that these community members have made; from farming and youth outreach to serving in governmental positions and being business owners. Each uses transportation in their everyday lives, but in conversation that wasn't the most important thing about our county and our community, instead, each at some point described Scott County as progressive. My interviews were not as heavily rooted in the windshield survey as I would have liked: however, transportation is ingrained into everyday life in western Kansas, I saw that as I did my own windshield survey of the community, traversing from one end of the county to another as I captured photographs of the places that were pointed out to me as being important. Through my research, I was able to see distinction in what has become just another part of life on the prairie. I'll be introducing each of my interviewees through their personal history with Scott County and the role that transportation plays in their lives before discussing the collective place attachment and sense of place of Scott County, Kansas.

### *Brian Vulgamore*

Brian is a fourth-generation farmer in Scott County. Vulgamore Family Farms is located just south of Shallow Water, an unincorporated community located seven-and-a-half miles outside of Scott City. His family has been farming in the area since the 1920s.<sup>59</sup> Brian and his brother Myles, seen in Figure 6 below, ran the family operation with their father Larry before he passed away in 2016. Brian's sister Heidi and her family also live in Scott City. Brian and his

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<sup>59</sup> "About Us," *Vulgamore Family Farms*. Accessed December 10, 2017. <http://vffarms.com/about/>

wife Paula have three children Parker, Paige, and Camden. Brian's family history connects him to Scott County, and he acknowledges that if he would have chosen a different occupation he doesn't know if he would have chosen to come back to the area. Nonetheless, Brian doesn't regret the choices he's made to remain in Scott County, he loves the area.



Figure 6. Brian, in the background wearing the blue striped shirt, and his brother Myles in the foreground at their office c. 2017. The two run Vulgamore Family Farms together just south of Scott City, Kansas. Source: David Mayes

Brian is quick to acknowledge that transportation plays a unique role in his life; he's a pilot. Scott County, to Brian, is just as distinct from the air as it is on the ground. He points out that there is a change that happens in the landscape around Lane County and Scott County, a transition from primarily pasture land to more farm land; it looks like a quilt. There are also more lights in western Kansas, which to some may be surprising, but Brian explains that it's not necessarily towns lighting the landscape, but instead feed yards and irrigation center pivots. A simulated aerial view of harvest at Vulgamore Family Farms can be seen below in Figure 7. Being a pilot allows Brian and his wife Paula a chance to travel and get away from the farm

easier than it could be under other circumstances; after all, his favorite place to be is in his plane, hundreds of feet above his farm.



Figure 7. Vulgamore Family Farms wheat harvest, as taken from a drone c. 2017. This vantage point provides an idea of the aerial view that Brian is so fond of. The contrast of the wheat and the neighboring fields, likely corn, offers a semblance of the quilt-like aspect Brian mentioned. SOURCE: David Mayes

### *Nicole Hedges-Campos.*

Nicole Hedges-Campos, seen below in Figure 8 with her husband Mark, is the owner of Bling Glamour, a chain of clothing boutiques across the state. Her parents were both born and raised in Scott County. She lived away from Scott County for about seven years before coming back to the community. Her business was started “with the faith of a mustard seed in 2008 with \$500.”<sup>60</sup> When Nicole came back to Scott County, she says she asked herself “Why did I wait that long?”

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<sup>60</sup> “About Us,” *Bling Glamour*. Accessed December 10, 2017. <https://www.blingglamour.com/service/about/>



Figure 8. Nicole Hedges-Campos and her husband Mark c. 2017 in front of one of their many stores. SOURCE: Nicole Campos

Now, Nicole has grown her business to nine stores across the state and Bling Glamour was named the 2012 Kansas Women Owned Business of the Year. Her western Kansas stores are located in Scott City and Garden City. Her easternmost store is in Overland Park, and she also has two stores in Wichita. Because her stores are spread out, Nicole does her fair share of driving between them. That's where transportation has its main impact on her life. However, she says transportation doesn't shift her view of Scott County, because when she drives into Scott City, she simply sees it as coming home.

### *Jim Minnix*

Jim Minnix, as seen below in Figure 9 with his family, is a fourth-generation farmer on his family farm, but farming wasn't always in his plan. He anticipated doing something different, but returning to Western Kansas to do whatever he chose; at one point, banking was on the table. But then, Jim was in an accident and his time-table changed. He came back home during his recovery process and ended up staying. Jim cites a great high school experience as part of the

reason he stayed in Scott County. His graduating class was 103, and he estimates there are approximately 60 or 70 of his classmates that have returned to the area.



Figure 9. Jim Minnix and his family c. 2017. From left to right: son-in-Law Chris Davis, granddaughter Lillian Davis, daughter Gayle Davis, Jim Minnix, wife Eileen Minnix, son Luke Minnix, daughter-in-law Ellie Minnix, daughter-in-law Lauren Minnix, grandson William Minnix, and son Carl Minnix. SOURCE: Jim Minnix

Jim isn't just a farmer; he's also involved in local government. He's served for 23 years as a county commissioner. Jim's also been part of the economic development board, the library board, the area juvenile detention board, an area representative for the county commissioner's association, the Kansas legislative policy group, and numerous other organizations and positions. It's safe to say that transportations serves Jim twofold, first in his role as a farmer, and then to carry him to meetings throughout the county, area, and state.

### *John Beckman*

John Beckman didn't grow up in Scott County, instead he came there for a very specific reason, the job that he's now held for 26 years. John is one of two county extension agents in

Scott County. He works heavily with agriculture extension and the 4-H program in the county. Before coming to Scott County, he was familiar with the area because he had driving through it when traveling to school at Oklahoma Panhandle State University, one of his classmates at OPSU was also from Scott County. He and his wife Thea have three daughters, all of whom have returned to Scott County.



Figure 10. John Beckman, far left, and a group of Scott County 4-Hers at Rock Springs State 4-H Camp near Junction City, Kansas c. 2017. This is just one of the many groups John has taken across the state for purposes of youth development through 4-H. SOURCE: John Beckman

For John, transportation often takes the form of a 12-passenger van. John can be seen above in Figure 10 with a group of Scott County 4-H members. He spends time driving Scott County youth around the state, primarily to eastern Kansas, for a variety of state 4-H events such as the Kansas Youth Leadership Forum, Citizenship in Action, Discovery Days, and the Great Northwest 4-H Camp. However, sometimes Scott County 4-H members will make a trip west to Colorado or north to Nebraska, and John can be found at the wheel

## *Rod Haxton*

In 1993, Rod Haxton moved to Scott County from Kinsley, and he began publishing the *Scott County Record*. When he made the decision to leave Kinsley, he knew he wanted to stay in western Kansas, and Scott County was where he made the final decision to settle and open a paper. Five years later, Haxton also started publishing the *Tri-County Advocate*, a free monthly publication meant to help bridge together Scott, Wichita, and Lane County. For the last 25 years, Rod has been putting out a weekly paper for Scott County which has seen changes, such as printing partially in color, as technology has advanced.



Figure 11. Rod Haxton interviews Makaela Stevens, a Scott Community High School senior, at a cross country meet c. 2017. Rod routinely travels across the state of Kansas to provide the best coverage on school sporting events and other news stories for *The Scott County Record*. SOURCE: Kathy Haxton

Because Rod covers news on both a local and regional scale, he travels to various events. Rod's presence is particularly notable at sporting events, where he'll travel for hours to report on

Scott Community High School athletics, such as seen above in Figure 11. Rod has seen his use of transportation change during his time in Scott County. When he started publishing *The Scott County Record*, he had to drive the four-hour roundtrip south to Spearville to drop off his pages and then pick them up from the printing press.<sup>61</sup> Now, the *Scott County Record* publishes through the *Garden City Telegram* each Thursday, but the *Tri-County Advocate* is still published in Spearville, it just gets sent digitally instead of hand-delivered by Rod.

### *Scott County: Our Collective Place*

Each interviewee has a different understanding of the place that they inhabit on a personal level. Much of that comes from their personal history and personal connection with the area as explored above. However, the three factors of place: historical, physical, and emotional exist on a community level as witnessed through the common threads identified by each interviewee.

The sense of place that exists in Scott County is that it is progressive, and this can be seen through the recently passed bond issue concerning new construction at Scott City Middle School, enhancements to athletic facilities, and security upgrades at Scott City Elementary School and Scott Community High School. The 25-million-dollar bond issue was spearheaded by Superintendent Jamie Rumford and the USD 466 School Board. It passed by a narrow margin of 747 to 714.<sup>62</sup> Rod Haxton notes that at the same time the bond issue was up for a vote in Scott County, USD 363 Holcomb, located in neighboring Finney County, had two bond issues for their school system totaling approximately 7 million dollars. They were only able to pass one of their two bonds, compared to the massive bond issue passed in Scott County. Haxton is sure that's because the community in Scott County has a sense of selflessness that's unique. Everyone can

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<sup>61</sup> "About Us," *The Scott County Record*. Accessed November 10, 2017. <https://www.scottcountyrecord.com/about-us>

<sup>62</sup> Haxton, Rod. "Voters Okay \$25M Bond," *The Scott County Record*. November 11, 2017. <https://www.scottcountyrecord.com/news/voters-okay-25m-bond-issue>

sense that if certain things, such as the school system perform well, then the entire community benefits.

Jim Minnix notes that it's easy to trace community progress through the bond issues that the county has passed in the past. He looks back to the construction of the current elementary school in the 1980s. Jim remembers that there were some things that went wrong and drew lots of criticism that led to concern over whether other bond issues in the future would be passed. This included a bond issue to renovate the courthouse that people were surprised to see a positive vote on. Since then, there have been bond issues passed concerning the nursing home, the hospital, the law enforcement center, and the library. John Beckman knows that the commitment to healthcare that the community has shown through supporting the hospital and the nursing home are a huge boost to the community, his wife and three daughters all work in healthcare in Scott City. Looking at the Scott County Public Library provides a historical basis for Scott County's progressive attitude. In 1925, Scott County became the first county in Kansas to open a free public library.<sup>63</sup> The progress that this community find so evident, has been part of its values.

Brian Vulgamore traces the bond issues back to the bond that passed in the early 2000s to renovate and add on to the high school. That issue had failed multiple times before finally being passed. Brian in part, sees that eventual success because of a younger generation, his generation, that was returning to the community. He ties the return of some of his generation into the school system, particularly the football success Scott City saw in the early 1990s. Athletic success has played into other aspects of the community identity as well, in fact, it's part of why Rod Haxton came to Scott County. He knew that the community had some decent athletic success and he

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<sup>63</sup> Book Committee, *A History of Early Scott County*, 307

wanted to cover at least one state championship team before he got out of the newspaper business. Rod has covered multiple state championship teams including football, basketball, track, wrestling, and cross country. This isn't to diminish the success of state championship FFA teams, music programs that excel on a state level, and multiple other student successes, Rod has covered those as well. Scott County places a lot of pride in their youth, John Beckman saw that as his daughters grew up and through the 4-H youth that he works with. Beckman says Scott County is a good place to raise kids; that's part of the county identity and why people stay.

But the community doesn't only support each other by creating lasting infrastructure; the support is there on a wider level as well. Nicole Campos says she sees that through her business every day. On September 8, 2014, there was a fire in a building downtown that boarded Bling's location at the time. Nicole's inventory and location experienced massive fire and smoke damage. She said that after the fire, she truly felt the support of the community. People in Scott County come through and help wherever they can. The existing support network is part of the reason Nicole chose to return to the community. She says she likes to use the support she has been given and in turn provide support and hope to others. No matter where you live, you can make it, according to Nicole. Community support also exists through the churches in the community. Scott County has 14 churches. Nicole Campos and her family attend the Baptist church, Minnix and his family attend the Prairie View Church of the Brethren at the southern end of the county. These religious institutions play an important part in creating what Minnix refers to as a happy, comfortable community. These religious attitudes can be traced back through history and the settlement of the area, but the people of the plains are often heavily grounded in Christianity.

The self-sufficient attitude that James Shortridge notes is present in western Kansas, manifests itself in Scott County as well. Minnix can see it through his governmental work, that this is a county that takes care of itself and its citizens. Beckman notes that the fact Scott County is still has an independent extension office is part of that as well. Much of Western Kansas exists in extension districts, such as the Golden Prairie District directly to the north composed of Logan, Gove, and Trego Counties. Scott County is known for having an excellent 4-H program that's benefits from its own extension office and the William Carpenter 4-H Foundation that's attached to the program and provides financial support. That identity might be lost if Scott County were to become part of an extension district. Self-sufficiency on a base level is an important part of what makes Scott County, Scott County, and why people are willing to call it home.

### *My Own Windshield Survey*

Having established personal and community level connections to Scott County on the historical and emotions levels, I asked my interviewees what their favorite places in the county were. I then performed my own windshield survey of the community to capture images of places that they found to be special. This allowed me to understand physical connections in conjunction with the emotional and historical aspects that help form them. The photos below in Figures 12 through 16 were taken through my windshield, and each is part of the sense of place and place attachment formed by the individuals I've spoken to, and to the community.



Figure 12. Buffalo graze at the south entrance of Historic Lake Scott State Park, 15 miles north of Scott City, c. 2017. Each interviewee mentioned the park as one of their favorite places in the community and an important aspect of local tourism. Nicole Campos explains that it's a hidden gem of the community. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017



Figure 13. An important aspect of Historic Lake Scott Park is the lake itself c. 2017. It provides a recreational location that isn't visible from Highway 83. John Beckman likes to come to the lake and kayak. Rod Haxton makes use of mountain biking trails around the lake. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017



Figure 14. Darner Field, c. 2017 is the home to the Scott Community High School Beaver football team. Community members enjoy coming to support local sporting events. Brian Vulgamore's oldest son Parker was a junior in the fall of 2017 and played on the football team. Athletic success and support of youth is a vital part of Scott Community, thus why this was cited by many as a favorite place. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017



Figure 15. The White Woman creek extending to the west taken from Highway 83 c. 2017. The creek has various legends associated with its name. To Brian Vulgamore, the creek is place that he grew up alongside, and a place to hunt. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017



Figure 16. The western side of Scott Community High School, c. 2017. The high school is cited by many as part of what makes the community what it is. It's one of Jim Minnix's favorite places, he likes to watch the Scott City Beavers play basketball there. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017

### *A Place to Call Home*

My own sense of place and place attachment to Scott County is built from many of the same factors of that those I interviewed have mentioned. I understand the support the community provides their youth because I have directly benefited from it. I ran cross country and played softball at Scott Community High School and even our lesser known, or lower performing sports teams got community encouragement. Theater performances and band and choir concerts continually have full audiences in the Marie E. DeGeer Auditorium. My FFA, Forensics, and other successes were all supported by my community through the opportunities I received. I participated in 4-H and went on many a trip where John Beckman was driving and encouraging youth to get the most out of the experience. In the 2017 bond issue concerning school construction and renovations, I got an absentee ballot and voted in favor of the measure because I recognize the importance of making sure others growing up in Scott County have access to the

same opportunities that have helped me excel. Until this research, I had never considered this community progressive, but that's very clearly what Scott County is.

My parents moved to Scott County in the early 1990s. I don't have four generations connecting me to the land, but I do have an appreciation for it instilled by my parents and by my community. My family raised cattle, and I spent many weekends of my childhood out on the prairie in windswept pastures. I understand the tie that comes with historic connections to an area, and I see the rich history of the county. I've done research on the importance of 4-H in one of Scott County's lost communities, Manning. I feel a great affinity for the place that helped raise me.

As for the role that transportation plays in my own life, it's a four-hour drive from Manhattan where I attend Kansas State University to Scott City. I make the drive multiple times a year down Interstate 70 and then south from Oakley on Highway 83, and I never fail to enjoy driving into town from the north and coming home as seen in Figure 17 below.



Figure 17. Scott City as seen from the North Edge of town circa 2017, photographed from Highway 83. This is the view of town I see every time I come home. The grain elevators stand there and beckon me, and other travelers, into town. SOURCE: Author Photo, November 24, 2017

I've spent many summer evenings in a car with my friends cruising around town, heading to the lake, or driving to Garden City to go see a movie. My 2009 Jeep Liberty and I, shown below in Figure 18, have seen almost every corner of the county and probably every street in town.



Figure 18. Me with my 2009 Jeep Liberty c. 2017. I purchased this vehicle as a junior in high school and it has served to transport me across Scott City, Scott County, and the state of Kansas. SOURCE: Kathleen Andrews, December 14, 2017

In the next year, I'll likely be leaving Kansas as I pursue a graduate degree in library sciences, and my parents are moving to Colorado for my dad's job. I'm at the point in my life where my own time in Scott County is limited. Recognizing the unique aspects of this community and understanding how others view it and why they are attached to it, has helped me process my own thoughts and feelings about this special place on the plains. I don't know if I'll ever have the opportunity to return to Scott County, but it will also hold a place in my heart, and I look forward to watching its success from afar.

## **The Future: Driving Towards the Horizon**

Place studies can be partially processed through change, and what citizens of a community have seen over the course of their time in a place. A conversation of change and place cannot exist without looking towards the future of Scott County, especially as there is predicted to be further depopulation within rural areas. Furthermore, agriculture will be facing challenges such as climate change, a growing global population, and the depletion of the Ogallala aquifer. Fortunately, the citizens of Scott County see a positive outlook for their community.

There is an assumption that progression will continue to occur. Brian Vulgamore notes that sometimes he's frustrated at the lack of change, but that Scott City will continue to be a special place especially if there is a change in mindsets as more youth return to the community. Nicole Campos sees that this is a community that can provide success for others in the same way it has for her and her business. Jim Minnix has high hopes for ingenuity and enterprise in the county, and he hopes that more young people will get involved in local government so that the community's positive attitudes can be passed on and continue to thrive. John Beckman thinks Scott County will continue to be a place where people want to raise kids. John says it's hard to put it into words, but the community is just different in a good way and will hopefully continue to be. Rod Haxton thinks there are issues that have to be addressed, such as housing, but he predicts there will be more opportunities within the community. Attitude-wise, Rod doesn't think that there will be any change, just continued positivity. Scott County isn't in the survival stage that Wichita and Lane counties are in, Rod notes, the county is past that and in growth mode, and that matters when looking towards the future.

## **In the Rearview Mirror**

Scott County is a unique community on the western plains of Kansas. Grounded in agriculture, the community defines itself through progress. The sense of place and place attachment spring from progressiveness. Supporting youth is a major facet of the community, and it is only influenced by the historical and physical connections that are made within the county's borders. Transportation plays a vital part in this community from working in farm fields or flying above them, to driving across the state for various school sporting events. This is a community that comes together to do what is best for those living here, and that's what makes it special and a place to be attached to. That's why some of the citizens have returned to the community, and it's why many continue to stay in the area. Those interviewed all have their individual perceptions and attachments to the county; however, perhaps Dorothy Gale sums it up best when she says, "There is no place like home."<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Baum, L. Frank, *The Wizard of Oz*, 43.

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