

The Remnants of a Vanished Landscape:

Camp Pliley, Pottersburg and Ash Grove in Lincoln County, Kansas 1869-2007

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Figure 1. Photograph of Pottersburg Post Office aka W.H. Harlow Home. Photo by author. Located just north of the intersection of 80th Road and Rye Drive, Grant Township, Lincoln County, Kansas.

The lost communities of Camp Pliley, Pottersburg and Ash Grove, Kansas were settled by Civil War Veterans, Scandinavian immigrants as well as homesteading pioneers. While Pottersburg and Ash Grove locations achieved railroad service, the automobile caused the communities to shrink, one room schools and businesses to close as well as the rural churches to dissolve. The study will look at census records, newspaper articles, early history as well as maps for the camp and the townships.

The Remnants of a Vanished Landscape: Camp Pliley, Pottersburg and Ash Grove in Lincoln County
Kansas 1869-2007

What can a lost landscape of several departed towns teach us about people? Along Bacon Creek in northwest Lincoln county, remnants of three lost communities exist which were laid down during the early part of the settling of Lincoln County, Kansas. The rolling hills of the north central prairie and particularly the land along the steam beds of Spillman Creek, as well as Bacon Creek, beckoned the Civil War Veterans, Scandinavians as well as American emigrants as they participated in the Homestead Act that helped to settle Kansas as well as other mid-western states. Ancestors of these settlers continue to live and farm in Grant and Orange Townships as well as in Salt Creek Township in the Barnard, Kansas area. The perseverance of the early pioneers can still be seen in the faces of many local farm families whose countenances are stoic and strong. The settlers in this area, along with many Kansas settlers, showed strong religious beliefs, patriotism, educational aspirations and service to others. They brought national pride and a communal system for sharing the homesteading work, the school system as well as forming churches in this landscape. These two townships are a part of why Kansas is called, “a soldier state” because of all the Civil War Veterans that settled here.¹

Early homesteaders found rich topsoil in the flood plains of Spillman and Bacon Creeks but that wasn't without an occasional disaster due to heavy moisture and flooding. Early crops such as winter wheat, oats, corn and Kafir corn² did well in this part of Lincoln County. Settlers aspired to do well with cattle ranches, due to the buffalo grass pasture land, as can be noted on the 1901 Lincoln County Plat

¹ Kansas State Historical Society's project for 150th anniversary of Civil War, “Sleeping Heroes: Impact of Civil War Veterans on Kansas Communities.” Information accessed by author, November 23, 2012.

<http://www.kshs.org/p/sleeping-heroes-the-impact-of-civil-war-veterans-on-kansas-communities/17356>

² “Lincoln County, Kansas” KS Cyclopedia 1912

http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/archives/1912/lincoln_county.html

Map for Grant and Orange Townships³. “Springbrook Stock Farm”, William H. Leaf, “Maplewood Stock Farm”, John H. Smith, “Cottonwood Place”, Wm H. Harlow and “Ash Grove Stock Farm” were some of the farms in Grant Township⁴ homesteaded by Civil War Veterans and emigrants. Likewise in Orange Township, optimism for cattle can be seen by the farm names such as “Valley View Stock and Grain Farm”, Even Christenson, “Bacon Valley Stock & Grain Farm”, Andrew Heller and “Highland Grain and Stock Farm”, J. C. Whitman⁵. Many of these titled farms were only 160 acres, and it would not take farmers or stockman many years to see that more land would equal more success with a Kansas farm. Building materials for homes, churches, and barns were of limited supply in this part of Kansas and therefore, many of the remnants of buildings built in this area were made from limestone. Today, descendants of the pioneers still live in some of these stone homes.



Figure 2. Mitch Errebo is pointing northwest to where the Camp Pliley blockade stood. Mitch and his brother Steve farm the Healy Land, which is currently planted to wheat. As a boy he remembers exploring around where the blockade was but never found anything. The Errebo brothers also farm Leaf homestead land which was purchased by their parents. Photo by author November 21, 2012.

³*Plat Book of Lincoln County Kansas* Northwest Publishing Company, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1901 , pg. 11 Grant Township.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵*Plat Book of Lincoln County, 1901, pg. 8 Orange Township.*

Camp Pliley: 1868 to 1872

Camp Pliley was the short lived nucleus of this landscape. It was one of four military camps here in Lincoln County, it sat on the northeast quarter of section 8, township 11, range 9 in what is now Grant Township. It was located on the north side of the creek, a little east of where Bacon Creek joins Spillman, consisting of a two story log house built in a square with portholes on both stories.⁶ Capt. A. J. Pliley was certain the blockhouse on the Spillman was built in 1868 and the second story put on in 1869. He was the commander of the construction of the second story of the blockhouse from July to November of 1869.⁷ The building was 24 x 24 feet square and in a pinch it could shelter about one hundred people. The stockade could accommodate about 100 horses. The camp was comprised of a mess house and seven or eight officers' quarters.⁸

It was an ideal location for a camp. There was a splendid grove of trees there and a fine spring of pure water. Southwest of the camp across the Spillman, is a high bluff that could be used as a sentinel point. On clear days, the sentinel had a grand view over several miles of the creek in either direction and so Indians could not easily surprise him.⁹ Capt. Pliley had under his command eighty-two men and nearly ninety horses. The troop stationed there was Company A, 2nd Frontier Battalion¹⁰ and the full quota of soldiers for all four of the camps in Lincoln county area was a battalion of 300 enlisted men with eleven officers and the total expense was \$82,833.26. This seems a large sum of money to spend on 311 men from the middle of July to November 29th of 1869, especially when one considers the settlers were killed prior to the arrival of the soldiers.¹¹ According to Bernhardt, Capt. Pliley was quite a figure in 1867 to 1869 in this part of Kansas and soldiers under his command recognized him as a good

⁶ Christian Bernhardt "Camp Pliley" Eighteenth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1910-1912. pg. 53

⁷Ibid. pg. 55.

⁸Ibid pg. 53.

⁹Ibid pg. 53.

¹⁰" CPT Allison J. Pliley" Museum of the Kansas Nation Guard Hall of Fame, www.kansasguardmuseum.org

¹¹Bernhardt, pg. 55.

natured officer and as brave as the bravest.¹² Pliley was part of the Forsyth's citizen scouts and was involved in the 1868 Battle of Beecher's Island in Colorado, where 50 scouts held off 1,000 Indian warriors over a nine day battle. Pliley was one of four men who were able to sneak through enemy lines and travel by foot to Ft. Wallace for assistance.¹³ He delighted in a desperate situation and was a natural leader.¹⁴



Figure 3. Capt Allison J. Pliley from www.kansguardmuseum.org

The Camp Pliley blockhouse was utilized as a voting station for the western half of Lincoln County in 1872. Some of the settlers near the blockhouse in '69 through '72 included Tom Boyle and wife, P.D. Reed and wife, Dick Alley and wife, Lorentz Christiansen and wife and his brother Peter and family. The Christiansen brothers had escaped from the Indian Raids near Denmark, Kansas on May 30, 1869 and then returned to Lincoln County by 1871.¹⁵ Henry Leaf and Harry Trask were single men living on Spillman Creek at this time as well as Helena Christensen Errebo, widow of Henry Errebo. Later Harry Trask served as Lincoln County Sheriff.¹⁶ Henry Leaf as well as Dick Alley, Capt. John Smith, F. M. Sheppard, S. E. Harlow, E. C. Coffman and 20 others in Grant and Orange Townships were Civil War

¹²Ibid, pg. 56.

¹³Kansas Guard Article.

¹⁴Ibid pg 2.

¹⁵ "Builders: Mrs. Eva (Trask) Crawford" Lincoln Sentinel-Republican, September 21, 1939, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/lincoln/craw.htm>

¹⁶Bernhardt article pg. 58.

Veterans.¹⁷ Sadly, the blockhouse and stockade were burned in a prairie fire in the fall of 1872. In the 1920's, ashes and Army memorabilia were located by Virgil Christensen and J. B. Nygaard, farmers in area.¹⁸



Figure 4. Camp Pliley artifacts horse tethering pin and bridle piece as well as ash from the camp's ovens. Found by J. B. Nygaard and Virgil Christiansen in early 1900's. Currently items are located at the Lincoln County Museum.

Pottersburg: 1874 to 1947

The small, evolving community that sprang up around Camp Pliley, even though the block house burned in 1872, became known as Pottersburg. One cannot mention Spillman pioneers without including Amos S. Potter for whom the town of Pottersburg was named. Potter was an early settler in Lincoln County and elected County Clerk in the first county election of 1870. In fact, Potter served a major role in the county seat fight between Abram and Lincoln Center. And as mentioned in the Homan history, "Lincoln That County in Kansas", he was one of the most controversial figures in Lincoln County. Potter had taken a claim on Spillman Creek fifteen miles northwest of Lincoln and aspired to have a new town there so he named it Pottersburg. He had a general store with M. J. Putney as the manager and also had a post office. Potter achieved this by taking the mail from Lincoln to his place.

As soon as Amos Potter had arrived in Lincoln County, he became entangled in the county seat fight. He voted for Abram in the fall of 1870. And it was charged that he sold his vote for property and for the nomination as county clerk. After his election, he was charged with being ineligible because of being in the state too short of time and with improper recording of the minutes of the commissioners

¹⁷ 1885 Kansas Census Data located <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/kansas/genweb/lincoln/military.htm>

¹⁸ "My Autobiography-Ariel Ernestine (Nygaard) Nielsen" Self-published 2010, pg. 6.

meetings. These and many other charges were printed in numerous letters to the Saline Valley Journal, a Lincoln Center paper.¹⁹ For more about the county seat war, in which Lincoln Center was the winner, can be found in Homan's book on pages 57 to 61.

Pottersburg was located on the second road to be charted in the county and ran northwest from Lincoln²⁰. Mr. Potter deeded certain land to District 19 in Grant Township to be used for the school. Amos S. Potter was appointed postmaster on October 3, 1870 but a relative, Mary L. Potter took over the position on December 1873.²¹ Mary L. Montgomery Potter was married to Elbert H. Potter, assumed to be a relative of Amos Potter. Captain John Smith, who homesteaded in Pottersburg community and Potter had some legal issues over land in this township²² and thus by 1876, he had relocated to Lincoln Center and was known as one of the best workman on watches and clocks.²³

By 1883, Pottersburg was mentioned in Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas*:

Pottersburg was laid out and platted by A. S. Potter in June of 1874. This little city is in the center of the coal region of Lincoln County. It is located at the confluence of Bacon and Spillman creeks and on the line of the proposed Topeka, Salina & Western Railroad. An organized class of the Methodist Episcopal Church is here in prosperous condition. It was organized in 1875 and now numbers over seventy members, with a Sabbath-school of 148 registered scholars in average attendance. The Rev. Ira G. Morrill is the present pastor.²⁴

¹⁹ Dorothe Tarrence Homan *Lincoln-That County in Kansas* Barbos' Printing, Lindsborg, Kansas 1979. Pg. 171.

²⁰ Elizabeth N. Barr *Souvenir History Lincoln County Kansas* n.p. 1908 pg. 44.

²¹ *Record of Appointment of Postmasters, 1832-September 30, 1971*, NARA Microfilms M841, Reel 41, Edwards-Lyon counties. Shared via by Lincoln County's Genweb master, Tracee Hamilton, October 30-31, 2012.

²² Melvin D. Bruntzel *Quick Reference to Kansas Lost-Found-Missing Towns & Places "with selected trivia and truths"* (The Print Shop Belleville, KS.) Lincoln County- Volume 1.

²³ Saline Valley Register (Lincoln Center, Kansas) Wednesday, May 10, 1876

<http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/lincoln/glean70.htm>

²⁴ William G. Cutler's *History of the State of Kansas* was first published in 1883 by Andreas, Chicago, IL <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/>



Figure 5. Photograph of Pottersburg Ladies Aid, ca 1920 Source: Private Collection of Author

William Henry Harlow, Civil War Veteran and homesteader, served as postmaster of the Pottersburg Post Office from 1876 through 1904, when the Post Office was discontinued due to the Vesper Rural Route bringing the mail to this part of Lincoln County. The Harlow family home also served as a safe location for the last Indian scare which occurred in the Pottersburg neighborhood in 1876. According to Eva Trask Crawford, “All the nearby settlers and their families congregated for protection at the home of Mr. William Harlow, father of our present Clerk of the Court in Lincoln, Mr. Ernest D. Harlow.”²⁴ Other pioneer families whose children still reside on or near the “old homeplace” or had real estate interests therein include: Coffman, Weins, Leaf, Kerschner, Wilcox, Christiansen, Smith, Van Leewen, Jansen, and Errebo. Eva Trask Crawford’s proudest recollection was the election of her father, Harry Trask, a soldier in his younger days, to the office of Lincoln County Sheriff in 1881, a position which he fulfilled faithfully for the four succeeding years.²⁵ The family moved to Lincoln Center when he was elected sheriff.²⁶

²⁴ Eva (Trask) Crawford Builder’s Article

²⁵ Ibid. pg. 2

²⁶ H. Stanley Crawford, interview by author, Crawford residence, November 28, 2012.



Figure 6. Photograph of comforter made by Eva Trask Crawford in the 1890's. It is owned by H. Stanley Crawford.

Later Wendell Harlow, son of William Harlow, donated the wooden mailbox from the Pottersburg Post Office, to the Lincoln Historical Society along with was a partial list of family names of the Pottersburg neighborhood in early days: Whitman, Leaf, Putney, Van Leween, Smith, N.P. Peterson, Boyle, Coffman, Mong, White, Thorton, Shmidt, Remington, Powers, Kerchner, Christiansen, Potter, Mahoney, Safford, Errebo, Gould, Baughn, Weians, Nilson, Byler, DeLong, Jensen, Wilcox, Thorp, Case, Harlow, DeForest²⁷Of these family names, the following were listed on the 1889 Roster of Ex-Union Soldiers in Lincoln County, Wm. H. Harlow, S. E. Harlow, W.H. Leaf, Capt. J. M. Smith and L. Kirchner.²⁸

²⁷ Pottersburg Post Office List as found in Lincoln County Museum.

²⁸ Roster of Ex-Union Soldiers and Soldiers' Widows in Lincoln County, 1889 accessed at <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/lincoln/union.htm>



Figure 7. Photograph of wooden mailbox from the Pottersburg Post Office. Donated to the Lincoln County Museum by Wendell Harlow.



Figure 8. Photograph of the Harlow House and Pottersburg P.O. from 1876 to 1904 when the Vesper Rural Route came in to the area. This limestone building stands at the corner of Rye Rd and 80th Rd. in Section 6 of Grant Township. Photo by the author fall 2012.

Pottersburg did achieve their railroad connection at Grant Siding, on property owned by N. P. and Walter Peterson. The Western Railroad (aka Salina Northern) track made it to Pottersburg on north to Ash Grove and to Osborne in 1915-1916.²⁹ Thus, a rail line provided another connection between these two towns of Pottersburg and Ash Grove. Lance Peterson, grandson of Walter Peterson, remembers his dad, Kenneth, riding the train with his cattle in the late 1950's.³⁰ Suzanne Heller Wehrman who currently lives on the Mahoney farm in Pottersburg community remembers the last loads of cattle being hauled out by train in mid-1960's.³¹ The elevator burned down in the late 1960's, but the train continues to operate on a periodic basis, hauling grain crops now instead of cattle. The railroad is now known as the Central Kansas Railway.

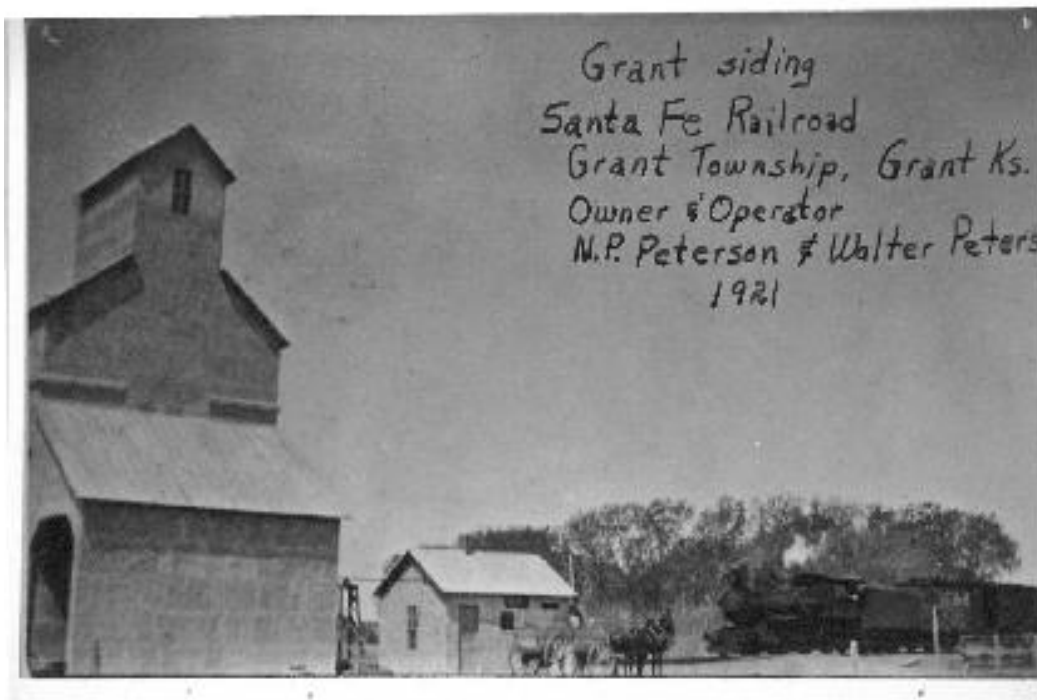


Figure 9. Photograph of Grant Siding Santa Fe Railroad Grant Township, Grant, KS. Owner & Operator N.P. Peterson & Walter Peterson 1921. Source: Richard Peterson Collection.

²⁹Salina Northern Railroad History www.labellemodels.com/manuals/Salina%20Northern%20Railroad.pdf.

³⁰Lance Peterson, phone interview by the author, November 27, 2012.

³¹ Suzanne Heller Wehrman, phone by the author, Current resident of the Mahoney farm in Pottersburg, fall 2012.

A community school was essential to the building of a rural community during pioneering times and Pottersburg was no different. The school began in 1896 and was built of stone. It was struck by lightning in August of 1909 and the roof burned. Area people built a new roof and used cement to cover the stone walls. Pottersburg School (#19) is located in Grant Township across from Captain John Smith's homestead (SW corner of Section 5, Grant Township) where the author's mother-in-law, Ariel Nygaard Nielsen was born in 1916.



Figure 10. Photograph of Pottersburg School taken by the author 2012. School dates are 1896-1966.

Teachers who were recalled by Wendell Harlow in his 1997 notes about Pottersburg include Harold Jaeger, Monty Poague, Ruth Lash, Martha Errebo, Jennie Morrison, Nelly Thompson, Lillian Sowers, Dora Anderson, Ruth McCall, Louise Stoner, Evelyn Jaeger, Madonna Briscoe, Ruth Christiansen, Agnes Christensen and Mildred Thompson.³² Also another teacher to add to this list was P.D. Metzger who received \$30 a month for teaching here in 1896.³³ Harlow remembers Martin Jensen, Peter Peterson and Elbert Harlow as serving on the school board for many years.³⁴ Not only were many of these teachers from the Ash Grove and Pottersburg community, but most students as well as parents

³² Wendell Harlow "Reminiscence of Pottersburg, KS, January 7, 1997. Copy in Jim Harlow's possession.

³³ List of Teachers in the "Lincoln Beacon", August 20, 1896. Accessed on November 25, 2012 from Lincoln Genweb site <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/lincoln/educ1896.htm>

³⁴ Wendell Harlow, 1997.

have fond memories of the last day of school picnics or the Christmas programs. One room schools were a community builder.



Figure 11. Photograph of the Last Day of School at Pottersburg, April 12, 1916. Photo in Christine Andreson Nygaard's scrapbook in author's collection

Life isn't without tragedies, and Eva Trask Crawford remembers the sad day of the death of Jimmy Leaf, four year old son of Henry Leaf, veteran and early homesteader. Jimmy was bitten by a rattlesnake in full view of several school children one evening as the child ran to meet his sister Ida. The neighbors tried to suck out the poisonous venom from the wound and a chicken was killed in the hope that its warm flesh would draw the poison to the surface. "All attempts to save little Jimmy's life were to no avail and he was wrapped in the cloak of Eternal slumber before the next sunrise."³⁵ An equally tragic event happened on June 29, 1905, when two of the Mahoney girls died in Sylvan Grove. Their deaths resulted from injuries received during the explosion of the stock of fireworks in Raffety

³⁵ "Builders: Mrs. Eva (Trask) Crawford" Lincoln Sentinel-Republican , September 21, 1939, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/genweb/lincoln/craw.htm>

Bros.Store the previous day. Honora and Susie were the second and third daughters of Mr. and Mrs. William Mahoney of Pottersburg and were born on that place.³⁶ Surely this was a great community tragedy as well as one for their older sister Elsie, aged 14. Another cemetery story shared by Oda Harlow Keeney, was that an African American woman had died down near Spillman Creek and her brother Wendell offered a burial space in the cemetery for this woman. Later, he purchased a headstone that simply states, “A Pioneer Mother.”³⁷ It was also mentioned by Virgil Christiansen that a Native American was buried just north of the cemetery fence.³⁸ Neither of these stories has been verified by cemetery records as they seem to be lost or still in someone’s attic.



Figure 12. Photograph of the African American Woman’s Headstone purchased by Wendell Harlow.
Photo taken by author November 2012

³⁶ Find a Grave Memorial, Pottersburg Cemetery, <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=cr&CRid=93407>

³⁷ Oda Harlow Keeney, phone interview by author, Fall 2012.

³⁸ Virgil Christiansen, phone interview by author, August 2012.

Other than the Harlow House and the Pottersburg School, no other buildings remain of the community. As Oda Harlow Keeney mentioned in her phone interview, she did attend her first eight grades at Pottersburg, but when it was time for her to move onto high school, her parents drove her down to Lincoln on Sunday evening where she rented a room. Then they would come get her on Friday evenings for her weekend at home.³⁹ The Nygaard family also purchased a vehicle about 1916 and as in other rural Kansas communities; the automobile helped disband local businesses and was a factor in the consolidation of rural schools. As mobility increased, families could purchase food, clothing or machinery in the larger communities of Ash Grove or Lincoln Center. Families explored Kansas with a Sunday drive as well as taking vacations.



Figure 13. Photograph of the Nygaard family's first car in 1917
From the Nygaard family scrapbook in the author's collection

³⁹ Oda Harlow Keeney, phone interview by author, Fall 2012.

The Pottersburg M. E. church served the community until the building was purchased by the Ash Grove Methodist Protestant Church and moved in 1925.⁴⁰ Wendell Harlow and Emerald Heller of the Pottersburg community organized moving the white frame church north six miles to the Ash Grove Methodist Protestant church site. No photographs of this historical event were found by the author although the story was related by three different sources.



Figure 14. Photograph of Ash Grove Methodist Church. Photograph taken Fall 2012 By Author

Ash Grove-1873-2007

Ash Grove was like a twin town to Pottersburg. Early history of the Ash Grove community can be tied to one of the Orange Township Civil War Veterans. Napoleon Bonaparte (Dick) Alley and family hosted the first church in their dugout in 1873. It was 14 x 18 feet in size, dug in the ground 4 feet then built up with logs; and had a fireplace to the east. The door in the west opened out on the ground level. There were 6 x 14 inch glass windows side by side in the south. The seats were blocks of wood with boards on them to support worshipers. David. G. Bacon, another veteran, did some of the preaching in

⁴⁰ "History of the Ash Grove Methodist Church" Shared by Doug Sulsar Fall 2012. No author given but was done at the 50th Anniversary of the church on November 25, 1955.

the early years that were in this home, school house, and church.⁴¹ When the log school house was built near the present site of the Ash Grove School, services moved to this building. Among the early ministers were Rev. Benny Henderson of the Lincoln Christian Church and Rev. H. C. Bradbury, early day circuit rider and connected to the Lincoln Presbyterian Church.⁴² Rosetta Smith was the pastor of the Cedron Mission (located just west of Ash Grove) in 1893, at the time that the Methodist Protestant Church was organized. The church at Ash Grove was one of only six out of the 765 Methodist Protestant churches in the state of Kansas and the only one in Lincoln County. The doctrinal platform of this church meant they were supportive of women in ministry, supported the equalities of African-Americans in the life of the church and did not support the episcopacy of the Bishops.⁴³ Sometime after evangelism meetings were held by Rev. George Horner in December of 1904, construction plans for the church began. Three different sites were considered. One was located in the Sulsar pasture, the second at the cemetery, and the third at the present site. The group was influenced by the donations of materials and labor and the site of Ash Grove was chosen. The land was donated by Chas. Horner, the rock donated and quarried from J.H. Geering land and in 1905, Mart Garrity, John McQuillian, Owen Mulloy and Frank Heizer began the masonry work.⁴⁴

Much physical labor went into the limestone buildings of this time and so the cornerstone was laid Friday morning September 15, 1905. Horse teams hauled the limestone from the Geering quarry and men finished the stone by hand. The church members donated as much time as they could, but they were also busy with their own farm and family needs. By February of 1906, it was reported that the church was nearing completion. But with all the plastering, painting and finishing of the belfry, the church wasn't ready to be dedicated until November 18th. Then wouldn't you know it, a Kansas

⁴¹ "Alley Family History Recalled" [Lincoln Sentinel-Republican](#) July 21, 1977 Written by Louisa Alley Barnhill circa 1940. Accessed on Kansas Genweb site.

⁴² "History of the Ash Grove Church"

⁴³ Pastor Kaye Metzler Lincoln County UMC Cluster, email communication, August 31, 2012.

⁴⁴ "History of the Ash Grove Church"

snowstorm stepped in and the dedication had to be postponed. So on December 30, 1906, the Methodist Protestant Church at Ash Grove was finally completed, financed and dedicated.⁴⁵

During the years as the church grew, more room was needed for a Sunday school and other church activities. So in 1925, the Pottersburg Methodist Episcopal church was purchased by the Ash Grove Church and moved north to Ash Grove. The Pottersburg frame building was placed at the east end of the original stone building. (See above picture) A basement was dug and walled up with rock from the Brown farm, sand from the local pits and masonry work was done by J. H. Geering, carpentry work done by John Kasky and local members and William K. Geyer headed up the plastering work. A new furnace was installed to update the coal burning one, which prior to coal it was wood burning heat.⁴⁶

Following the Great Depression years, nationally, the Methodist Episcopal South and Methodist Protestant churches were united to constitute the Methodist Church. Mary Ellen Lutz was the first pastor after that merger and with her tenure followed a long standing Women's Society of Christian Service, which welcomed community women of all religions. The moving and consolidation of the frontier church changed the old landscape of these communities. With the loss of membership, Ash Grove Church closed on December 24, 2007 following their Christmas Eve services. Pastor Kaye Metzler said:

"An open country church, with no running water, the Ash Grove family of faith was simply a beautiful group of the faithful. The bell rang for worship every Sunday until her close inviting the neighborhood into worship. Her doors were never locked and it was not unusual to arrive and find brand new \$2 bills placed in a circle in the offering plates. Every Christmas the church was filled to standing room only as the whole neighborhood took a part in the worship. At the close of workshop each family passed out gifts for the other families (along with the brown paper sacks filled with fruit, nuts, and candy). It was fitting, I think, for the last worship to be held on Christmas Eve."⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid. pg.3

⁴⁶ Ibid. pg. 4

⁴⁷ Pastor Kaye Metzler



Figure 15. Photograph of Ash Grove School Fall 2012 Taken by Author

As mentioned above, the schoolhouse (#16) was used for church meetings prior to the limestone construction in 1906. School was held in this building until 1966. Later it was given a metal roof, as was the church, by the generosity of Jenny Sowers Wright and her brother Floyd Sowers. Jenny Sowers served as a principal at the Lincoln Elementary School where Mary Helen Zuroveste Andersen attended during her grade school years⁴⁸. This can be considered evidence of the importance of education for the early settlers in Lincoln County as many families in these two townships had teachers in their families.

Hand in hand with the development of the church congregation, this community along with Pottersburg, believed strongly in the education. David Bacon, mentioned above, was one of the first teachers. In Louisa Alley Barnhill's recollections, she mentions as teachers; Joe Lee in 1874, Mrs. Thomas, who was a sister of Wrights, in 1875 followed by Permelia Ellis in 1876 and Mrs. John Smith of Pottersburg⁴⁹ taught in the spring of 1877. Mrs. Smith came on horseback to the school.⁵⁰ While school was a critical factor for early settlers, the facilities were not always the most pleasant. Louisa described the Alley house similarly to the Bacon dugout except she went onto share there were gooseberries growing on the creek and that fleas were a pest there. There were no chiggers and weren't many flies

⁴⁸ Mary Helen Zuroveste Andersen Oral History, December 1, 2012.

⁴⁹ "Alley Family History Recalled"

⁵⁰ "Alley Family History Recalled", Lincoln Sentinel-Republican, published July 21, 1977 but written by Louisa Alley Barnhill circa 1940. Pgs. 4-5.

as today, but the mosquitoes were there by the swarms so they had to smog them before they could sleep as there were no screens.⁵¹

Ash Grove remained a sturdy community in the Depression Years. Richard Peterson, who grew up in Pottersburg, remembered that Ash Grove had a nice grocery store, lumber yard, blacksmith's shop and Rodrick's Hardware Store, where he often shopped with his father, Walter during the 30's.⁵² By 1953, when Anthony and Phyllis Cheney family moved to the Alley Homestead, Ash Grove had already lost the post office which had been there since 1916.



Figure 16. Photograph of Ash Grove Corner Fall 2012 taken by Author

Phyllis remembered the businesses that were left were the Andreason Grocery Store, a machinery repair shop, the telephone office and an old hotel.⁵³ Ash Grove's businesses met a similar fate to other small town businesses with the depression and more folks having better transportation. Mary Helen Zuroveste Andersen, who owns the Boyle Homestead just north of the Pottersburg area, remembers such Ash Grove community members as Jenny and Floyd Sowers, Bertha Anderson Starks, Tony and Nellie Cheney Zachgo.⁵⁴ Mary also remembers how the town of Ash Grove declined in the late

⁵¹ Ibid. pg. 4

⁵² Richard Peterson, personal interview by author, Denmark Community Hall, December 1, 2012.

⁵³ Phyllis Cheney, personal phone interview with author, December 2, 2012.

⁵⁴ Mary Helen Zuroveste Andersen, personal interview by author, Denmark Community Hall, December 1, 2012.

1960's and through the 1970's. The remaining buildings are the school and the Methodist Church as well as the Zachgo family properties.

What is the legacy of this vanished landscape? The same gentle rolling prairie along Spillman Creek, that attracted early settlers to this area⁵⁵, is still home to descendants of the settlers in Grant and Orange Townships. These families still raise winter wheat, milo, corn and cattle. But along with these traditional farm crops, some raise pheasants, some have land designated as a hunting preserve, and have utilized old farm homes for lodging for their hunting customers. Many of these families have consistently participate in the leadership of local organizations such as church, school board, Conservation District Board, American Legion as well as County Commission. The importance of service to others is still evident. This is the inheritance of these lost communities is found in the memories and on the land, "An inheritance built into our character by the careful instruction and force of example of our parents in the days gone by. Inheritances of industry, self-reliance, love of the best in music, literature and art, of a knowledge of integrity, fear of God and a respect for the rights of others."⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Mary Helen Zuroveste Andersen .

⁵⁵"Lincoln County, Kansas" KS Cyclopedia 1912.

⁵⁶ "Reminiscences of My Childhood Home and Of Father and Mother" Memoirs by Abbie Sloo Ruff Sidebottom, December 7, 1925, as shared in the *Prairie Paths: The Ruff Family* Deborah King Ruff, 2004.



Figure 17-Photography looking west to "our home in Pottersburg" From the Nygaard Family Scrapbook in the author's collection. Circa 1914.

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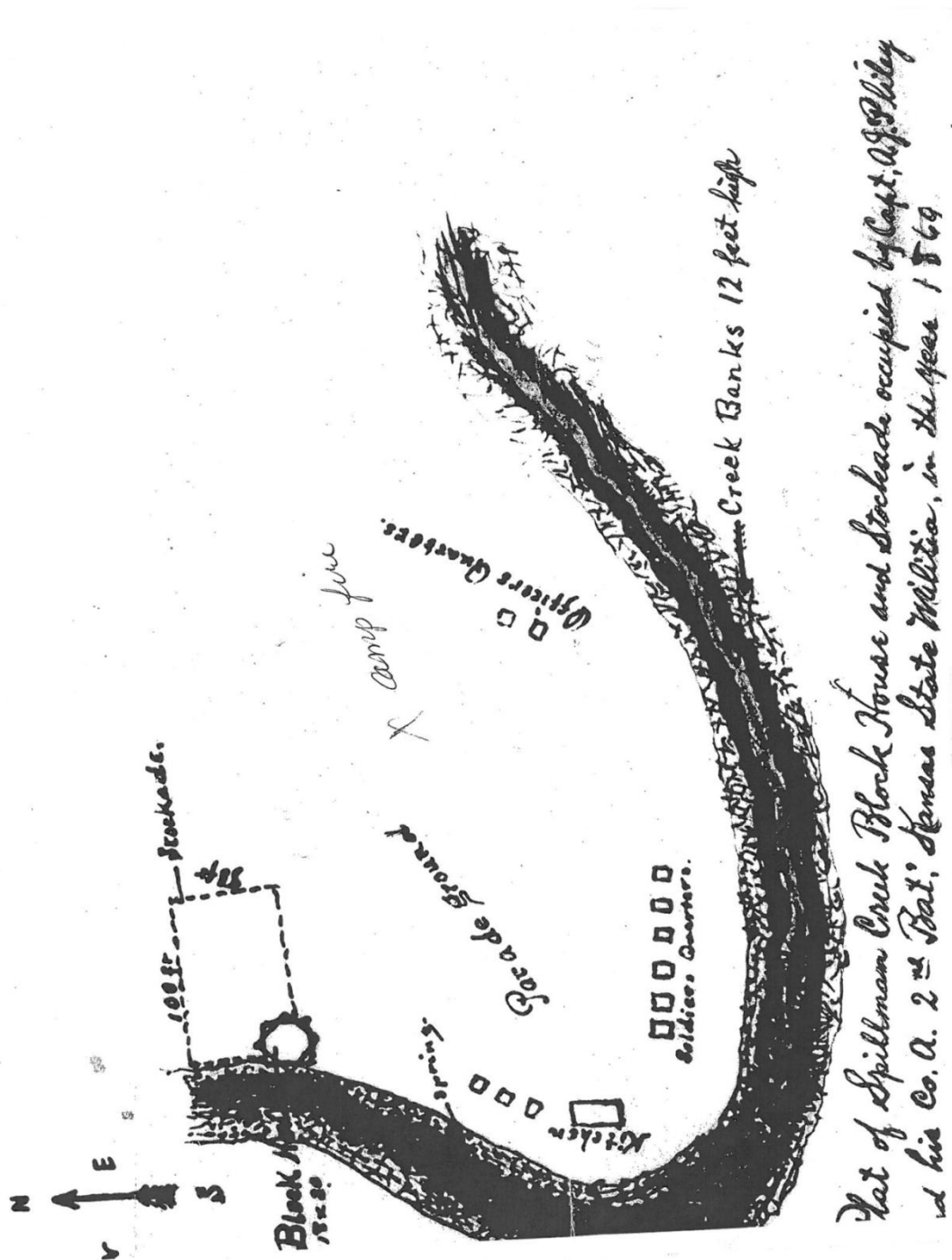


Figure 18. Attachment Camp Pliley map located at the Lincoln Carnegie Library.

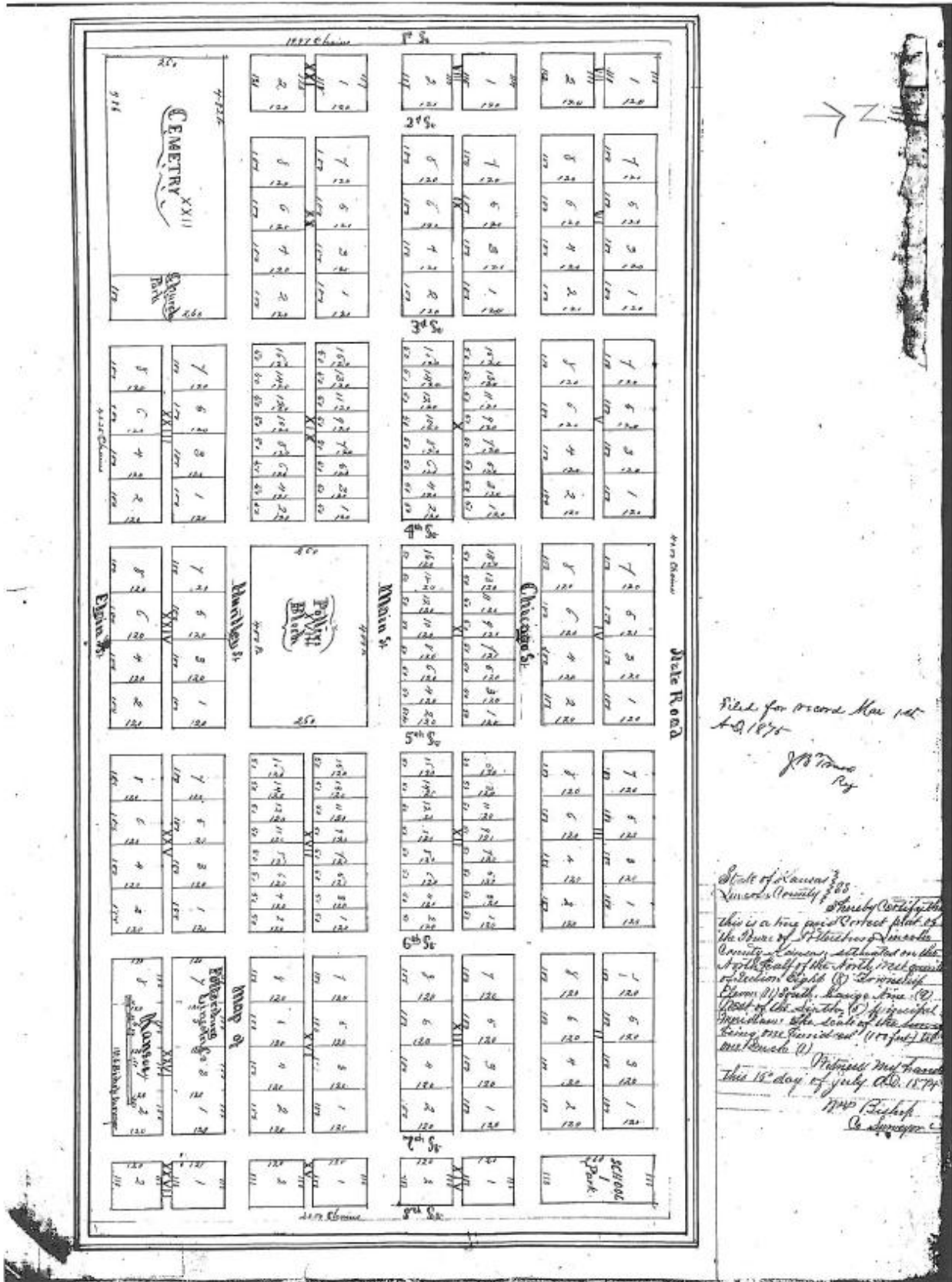
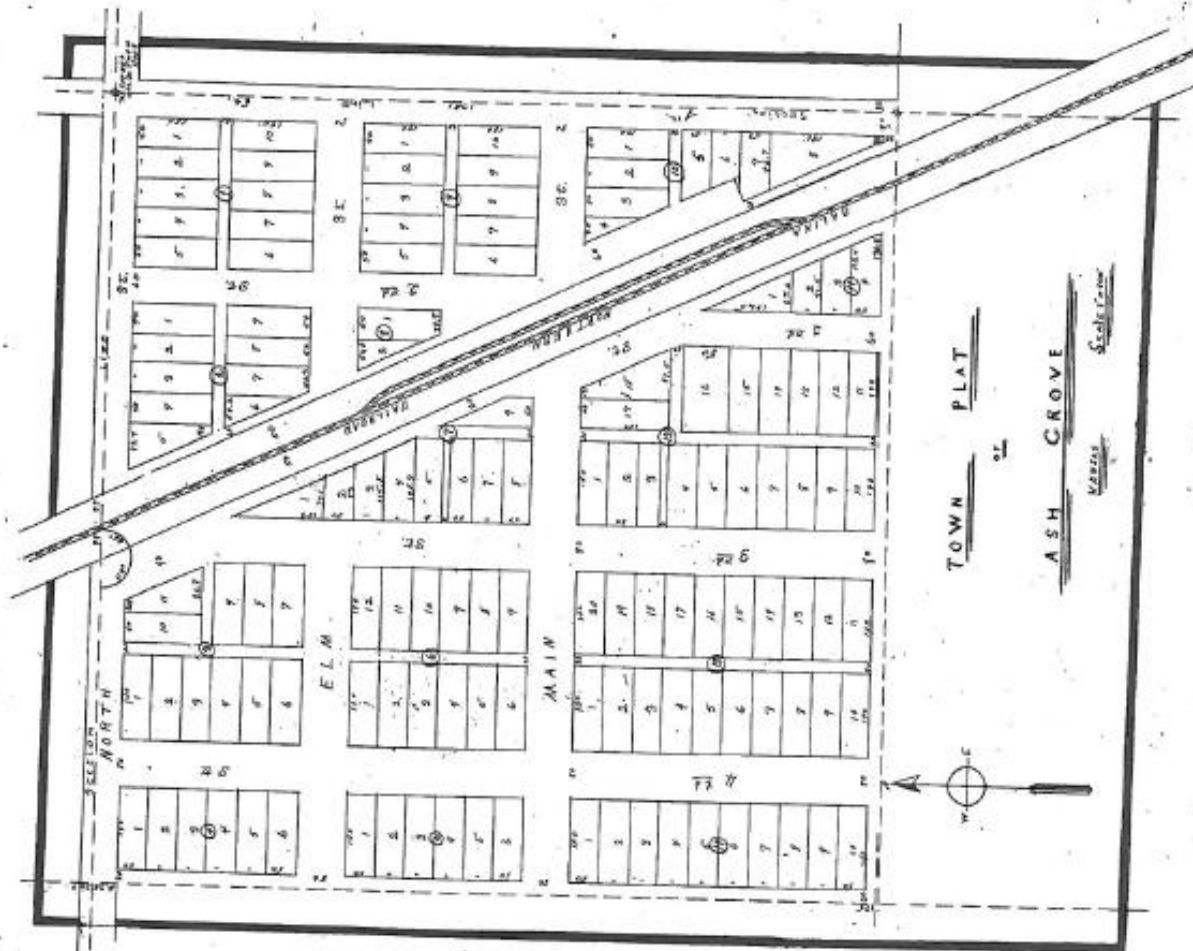


Figure 19. Attachment Plat Map of Pottersburg, Kansas 1875.



Certificate:

State of Kansas
Lincoln County

Wm. J. McQueen, President, and A. J. Maxwell, Secretary of the Ash Grove Township, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing plat was duly prepared and approved by the Board of Trustees of said township, and that the same is correct and true in all particulars, and that the same is in conformity with the provisions of the laws of this State in that behalf made.

Wm. J. McQueen, President
A. J. Maxwell, Secretary

Witness my hand and seal of office this 5th day of July, 1917, and official seal of said corporation.

Ash Grove Township
By J. M. Gray, Secretary

State of Kansas
Lincoln County, ss.

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that on this 5th day of July, 1917, before me, a Notary Public in and for the County of Lincoln and State of Kansas, personally known to me, and being duly sworn, the Board of Trustees of the Ash Grove Township, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing plat was duly prepared and approved by the Board of Trustees of said township, and that the same is in conformity with the provisions of the laws of this State in that behalf made.

My term expires March 24, 1918. (Seal) J. E. Whitman, Notary Public

Approved May 12th, 1917
By J. M. Gray, Secretary
Lincoln County

Dated May 12, 1917 at 4:20 P.M.
Eugene W. Hays - Reg. of Deeds

Figure 20. Attachment Plat Map Ash Grove, Kansas 1917.