

Register of Historic Kansas Places Registration Form

**State Register
Listed
May 13, 2017**



This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts. The format is similar to the National Register of Historic Places form. 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 an 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. Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Wellman Schoolhouse (District #79)

Other names/site number Wellman School House at Old Jefferson Town; KHRI #087-430

Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Public Schools of Kansas

2. Location

street & number 703 Walnut St not for publication

city or town Oskaloosa vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Jefferson code _____ zip code 66066

3-4. Certification

I hereby certify that this property is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

Applicable State Register Criteria: x A B C D

See file.
Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO

Date

Kansas State Historical Society
State agency

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
0		district
0		site
0		structure
0		object
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the State Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions)

Vernacular

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Wood

roof: Composite

other:

 Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (*Briefly describe the overall characteristics of the property and its location, setting, and size.*)

The Wellman Schoolhouse (District #79) is a one room schoolhouse situated in Oskaloosa's Old Jefferson Town (OJT), Jefferson County, Kansas (*Figures 1 & 2*). The school was built circa 1887 on the homestead of Harrison W. Wellman in southeastern Jefferson County; it was moved to Old Jefferson in 1970. The building currently sits atop a poured concrete foundation with a crawl space; the original foundation was stone. The schoolhouse retains its historic siding and windows and much of its historic interior materials. The nominated property includes only the schoolhouse. Although this is an example of the One-Room Schoolhouse property type defined in *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, it does not meet the registration requirements due to its relocation.¹

Elaboration
Setting

Old Jefferson Town is a collection of relocated historic built resources situated within ten acres. Since 1970 ten buildings and one structure have been moved here, the first of which were the Reynolds Store, the Wellman Schoolhouse, and the Edmonds Chapel. Four more structures arrived in 1975: Kilgore School, Plum Grove School, Tibbott School, and the National Register-listed Bowstring Bridge.² The Winchester Jail arrived in 1977, the state register-listed Nincehelter House in 1980, and the state register-listed Curry House in 1991.³ Non-historic features at OJT include a 1973 bandstand and a 1983 blacksmith shop. The bandstand is a reduced-size replica of the local bandstand that was destroyed in a 1960 tornado.⁴

In 1970 the Wellman Schoolhouse was relocated from Sarcoxie Township in the southeast part of the county to its current location at the southeast corner of Old Jefferson Town (*Figure 2*). The schoolhouse is now aligned on a northeast-southeast axis with the entry door on the northwest elevation (*Figure 3*). The Nincehelter House is located due west of the Wellman School and is visually separated from it by a copse of trees. A two-track drive curves from the north to the southeast past the Nincehelter House to the southwest corner of the schoolhouse, while to the south is an open field planted with varieties of native grass and wildflowers. A pond is located to the east of the schoolhouse.

Schoolhouse

There are two steps to the front door on the symmetrical northwest (north) elevation.⁵ This is the only door to the building. There is one window on each side of the entry door. The west and east elevations each contain three evenly-spaced windows. There is no opening in the south elevation. (*Photos 1 through 4*)

The siding of building is lap siding. All the windows are historic two-over-two double sash windows; each has a historic wide-mesh screen. The six panel door has a two-pane transom. The roof is now composite. Vents have been installed at north and south sides of building to improve air flow in attic. The original foundation was stone, but upon moving to OJT, the current foundation is concrete with a crawl space. The siding and windows are primarily as it was prior to moving to new location. The floors are wooden planks and ceiling is painted wood planks.

The front door opens into a foyer measuring approximately 4 ft. deep by 6 ft wide (*Photo 5*). The foyer kept the weather elements out of the building at the time the door was open. Also in this foyer is the opening to the bell tower. That opening is above at ceiling height. A rope was connected to the bell so a student could ring the bell to notify students it was class time. The bell is missing. During the time the school building was vacant, the school bell was stolen from the belfry and was never found. There is no opening in the south wall of the foyer. A single doorway in the east and west walls of the foyer lead into the schoolroom.

On the west wall of the schoolroom immediately across from the foyer doorway is a shelf for children to put their lunch

¹ Brenda Spencer, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, National Register of Historic Places multiple property documentation form (2005): F-29 through F-31.

² The Kilgore School and the Plum Grove School were butted together to become the Jefferson County Genealogy Library. The Tibbott School is now the museum that houses a barber shop, dentist office, doctor's office, and bank fixtures. The Bowstring Bridge was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990

³ John Steuart Curry's boyhood home was listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places in 1997; the Nincehelter House was listed in 2016.

⁴ The original bandstand stood on the grounds of the courthouse square. The courthouse also was destroyed by the tornado.

⁵ For ease in the description of the schoolhouse, the front elevation is referred to as the north elevation; although, it faces northwest. The west elevation faces southwest; the east elevation faces northeast; and the south elevation faces southeast.

boxes and the water bucket as they would have traveled to their seats. The teacher's desk and chair is located on an elevated platform on the north wall (which is the south wall of the foyer) (*Photo 6*). A small blackboard is behind the teacher's desk. A larger black board spans the south wall (*Photo 7*). Bookcases are also along the east and west side walls. A large glass display case is on the south wall too. It is for displaying memorabilia from one room schoolhouses.

The schoolhouse is furnished as an old country school complete with desks, chalk and slates, recitation bench, lunch box and water pail with dipper. The school is used as a country school museum open to the public on weekends throughout the summer months.

The schoolhouse is in great condition now, but at the time of the move in 1970, many improvements had to be made to restore the building. During summer of 1971, Herb Mize, Roger Jeffers, and Karl Swoyer, did the reconstruction work on the building when it looked beyond saving. Walter Grose made the name plate above the door. All furnishings were donated and most of them have the donors' names. Jim F Swoyer, Jr. donated the used lumber for flooring in the southwest corner. The school bell, stolen in the late 1960s, remains missing from the belfry, and the side openings of the belfry have been covered with plastic sheet to reduce the amount of rain into the interior of the belfry. There was some repair/replacement of ceiling boards at time of relocation. The original wood stove was also removed and now a small stove of the period sits in the classroom. Some of the badly weathered exterior siding boards on the rear of the school were replaced with period siding at time of the last painting.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for State 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.
- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Period of Significance

1887-1951

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Snyder, George

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance spans the years this building was in use as a rural schoolhouse. It was constructed in 1887 and closed in 1951.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Because the building was relocated outside of its period of significance and away from its historic environmental context, this building is not eligible for the National Register.

 Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that notes under what criteria the property is nominated.)

The Wellman Schoolhouse served the students of District #79 in Jefferson County's Sarcoxie Township from the time of its construction in 1887 until 1951 when the school closed. In 1970 the building was relocated to Old Jefferson Town to be part of the building collection established in Oskaloosa to showcase the built history of the county. The building is nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places for its association with rural education in Jefferson County from 1887 to 1951. Although not eligible for the National Register due to its relocation, this building's historic significance is tied to the historic context "The Early Years of Statehood (1861-1880)" described in *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*.⁶

Elaboration (Provide a brief history of the property and justify why this property is locally significant.)

Early Settlement in Jefferson County

Kansas Territory was opened for settlement in May 1854. In August 1855 the Territorial Legislature established 33 counties of which Jefferson County was one; Ozawkie was appointed the county seat. The organization of the county into its townships did not come until March 1856, but several towns had already been established. The site on the east side of Big Slough Creek where Oskaloosa was later established was settled by Dr. James Noble in February 1855. Numerous settlers from Iowa, including Jesse Newell and Joseph Fitsimons, arrived later that year. In 1856, Newell bought Noble's farm, and Fitsimons bought land adjacent to the Newell land. The pair then laid out a town of 40 acres which was similar to their former home of Oskaloosa, Iowa, for which the new settlement was named.⁷

Sarcoxie Township, in which the Wellman Schoolhouse was built, is Jefferson County's southeasternmost township. It was formed in 1862 by breaking away from Kentucky Township and is named after the Delaware Indian Chief, Sarcoxie, who lived on the bank of the Kansas River at the time when the county was formed. The first settlements in what became Sarcoxie Township were made in 1859, and the first school was located in Section 36, Township 10 South, Range 19 East on what became part of Harrison W. Wellman's farm.⁸

Wellman Schoolhouse

The Wellman Schoolhouse was built on the Harrison W. Wellman farm in Sarcoxie County. Specifically, Wellman's property was located in the northeast quarter of Section 1, Township 11 South, Range 19 East (*Figure 4*), just over six miles southeast of the school's current location. It is typical of the many one room country schools that were located every few miles with in the county.

School district #79 was formed in 1871, and classes were taught in a log building until 1884. The County Superintendent of Schools noted the condition of this building that year, writing, "A poor log building, nothing."⁹ A new school building was completed in 1887 and became known as the Wellman Schoolhouse for the man who donated the land for its construction.

Born in Kentucky Harrison Wilbur Wellman (1833-1929) (*Figure 5*) came to Kansas in late 1861 or early 1862 after living in Iowa and then Missouri.¹⁰ By 1883 Wellman was known as "one of the most extensive stockmen of the county;"¹¹ by 1899 he owned over 1,200 acres in Sarcoxie Township.¹² Wellman served several times as trustee of the township and as a county commissioner.¹³

⁶ Spencer, E-7 through E-9.

⁷ "Ninceheler House" state register nomination (01/2016): 6.

⁸ William Cutler, "Sarcoxie Township," *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: AT Andreas, 1883) [transcription on-line]; Internet; *The Kansas Collection* website http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/jefferson/jefferson-co-p25.html#SARCOXIE_TOWNSHIP (accessed 18 April 2017).

⁹ Verona Wellman McDonald, "History of the Wellman School," unpublished manuscript, 1973. Available in the State Archives, Kansas Historical Society.

¹⁰ Richard Wellman, *Descendants of Bennett Wellman. 1754-1978* (N.p., 1978). Copy available at the Jefferson County Historical Society; Cutler, "Sarcoxie Township," n.p.

¹¹ Cutler, "Sarcoxie Township," n.p.

¹² *Descriptive Atlas of Jefferson County, Kansas* (Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1899), 49. He eventually owned over 2,000 acres, according to Wellman, *Descendants of Bennett Wellman*.

¹³ Wellman, *Descendants of Bennett Wellman*.

Although Wellman lived and farmed about ten miles north of Lawrence, he traveled around 30 miles northeast to Leavenworth for his farm supplies.¹⁴ When the time came to construct the new schoolhouse on his property, he again traveled to Leavenworth to buy the lumber.¹⁵ Wellman hired George Snyder, a local farmer and builder, to construct the building (*Figure 6*).¹⁶

During the first year of its opening, the school had five students.¹⁷ By 1899 enrollment was up to 33,¹⁸ and 24 students attended during the 1908-09 term.¹⁹ One of the first teachers in the new building was Mrs. Etta (Dias) Bliss, who taught four months between 1894-95 and was paid \$25. Other teachers included Elsa Casebier and Viola Reynolds who each married into the Wellman family. Neal Wimmer taught in 1902 and was paid \$40 a month. When the school closed in 1951, Loren C. Ford was the teacher.²⁰

The Wellman district was annexed into Oskaloosa School District in 1954. The school house had been the social center of the community. Even after the school was closed, the building was used to hold parties, basket dinners, and box socials. The Oskaloosa School Board deeded the school building to the adjacent Wellman church, which became inactive in 1957. In 1965, the church and school buildings were sold by the Trustees of the Methodist Annual Conference to Homayoun Kik-Khah. He was a graduate student at the University of Kansas, and he and his associates used the school building for research studies they conducted. During their ownership, new shingles were installed on the roof and the exterior was painted red (*Figure 6*). It had previously always been white while in operation as a school. During the time the school building was vacant, the school bell was stolen from the belfry by thief(s) never apprehended, nor was the bell ever found.

On January 20, 1968, both buildings and grounds were purchased by Dennis Stevens, whose family still retains ownership of the grounds of church and school. The former church building was subsequently converted into their family residence. Verona (Wellman) McDonald, the granddaughter of Harrison Wellman, purchased the school building and in conjunction with the Jefferson County Historical Society arranged to have it moved into the recreated Old Jefferson Town in Oskaloosa (*Figure 7*). Today the school functions as part of the museum that is Old Jefferson Town.

¹⁴ Wellman, *Descendants of Bennett Wellman*.

¹⁵ McDonald, "History of the Wellman School."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Oskaloosa [Kansas] Independent* (19 November 1887): 3.

¹⁸ *Oskaloosa Independent* (3 November 1899): 4.

¹⁹ Wellman Public School Souvenir, 1908.

²⁰ McDonald, "History of the Wellman School."

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

Cutler, William. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: AT Andreas, 1883.

Descriptive Atlas of Jefferson County, Kansas. Chicago: Acme Publishing Company, 1899.

Historic information from files at the Jefferson County Historical Society.

McDonald, Verona Wellman. "History of the Wellman School." Unpublished manuscript, 1973. Available in the State Archives, Kansas Historical Society (K 379.5 Mss. Jefferson Co., no. 1). McDonald's paternal grandfather was Harrison Wellman.

"Nincehelter House." Nomination form, Register of Historic Kansas Places. January 2016.

Oskaloosa Independent.

Wellman, Richard. Descendants of Bennett Wellman, 1754-1978. N.p., 1978. Copy available at the Jefferson County Historical Society.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.212160 -95.309482 3 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

2 _____ 4 _____
Latitude: Longitude: Latitude: Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary of this nomination includes only the Wellman Schoolhouse at Old Jefferson Town, a tract in Oskaloosa, Jefferson County, Kansas described as follows: Section 04, Township 10 South, Range 019 East, ACRES 10.1, Tract beginning 810' S & 60' E of NW corner of section, thence E 290', N 210', E 118', S 825', SELY 211', S 141', SWLY 170', W 497', N 703', NLY 83', N 86', W 34' and N 73' to point-of-beginning, less right-of-way.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

This boundary was selected because the schoolhouse has been relocated; its integrity of setting and location is lost.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Margaret Dick
organization Jefferson County Historical Society date 11-19-2016
street & number 2253 Oak Rd telephone 785-766-6342
city or town Perry state KS zip code 66073
e-mail Maggie2929@hotmail.com

Property Owner:

name Jefferson County Historical Society
street & number 703 Walnut telephone 785-863-2070
city or town Oskaloosa state KS zip code 66066

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Wellman School House
City or Vicinity: Oskaloosa
County: Jefferson State: Kansas
Photographer: Steve Dick
Date Photographed: October 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 01 of 08:** Looking SE at north (NW) and west (SW) elevations
- 02 of 08:** Belfry with openings covered in Plexiglas
- 03 of 08:** West (SW) elevation, looking NE
- 04 of 08:** South (SE) elevation, looking NW
- 05 of 08:** Entry foyer, looking west
- 06 of 08:** Teacher's desk and platform, looking north (NW)
- 07 of 08:** Looking south (SE) from teacher's desk
- 08 of 08:** Looking west (NE)

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Figure 1. Contextual map, showing location of school in Oskaloosa.
North is up; no scale. (Image: Google)



Figure 2. 2012 Jefferson County GIS aerial, showing Wellman Schoolhouse within Old Jefferson Town.

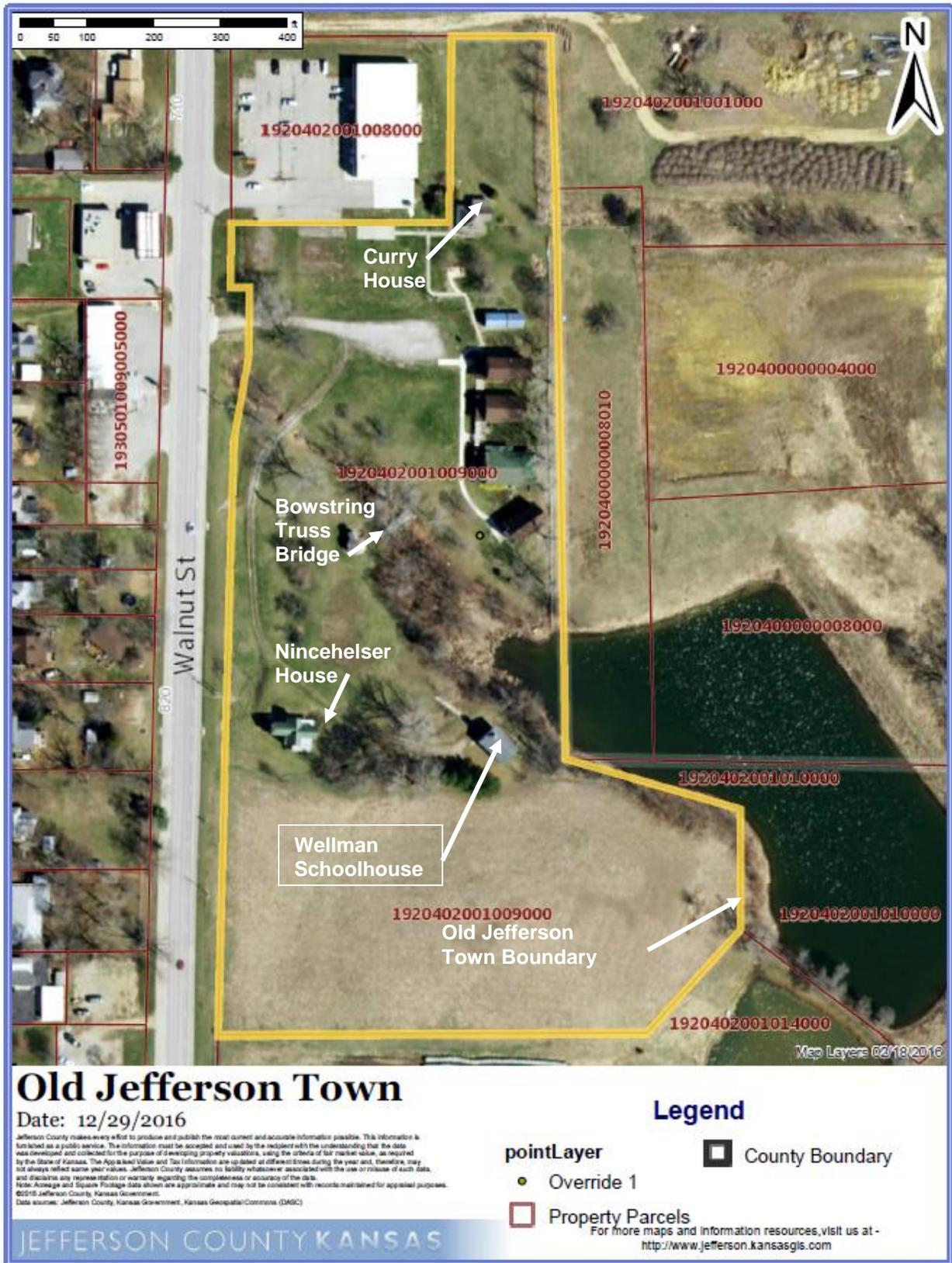


Figure 3. May 2015 Google aerial, showing Wellman Schoolhouse. North is up; no scale.



Figure 4. Snippet of Sarcoxie Township in the 1899 county atlas (page 49), showing original location of Wellman Schoolhouse.

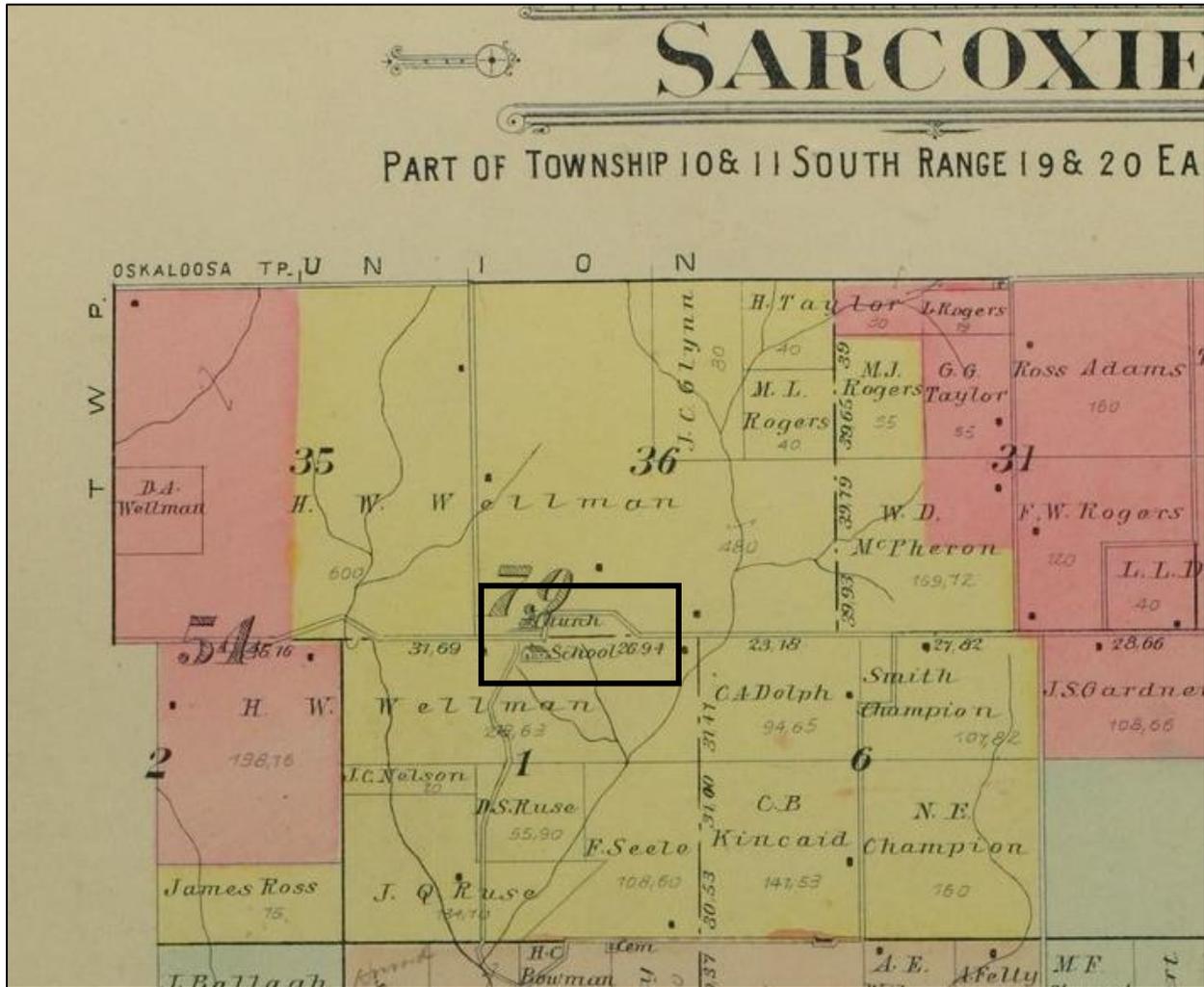


Figure 5. Undated image of Harrison Wellman.

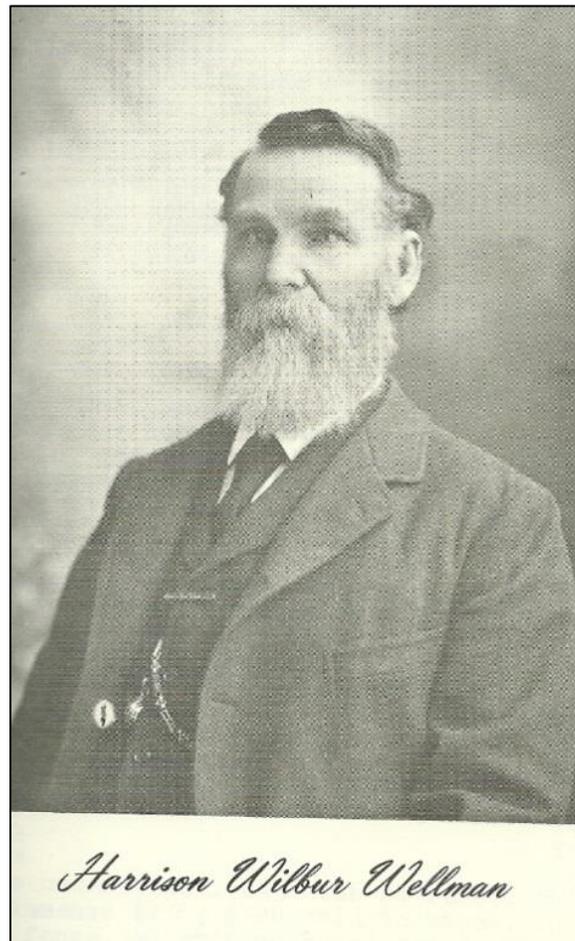


Figure 6. Undated image of the schoolhouse in original location (above) and 1970 after relocation (below).

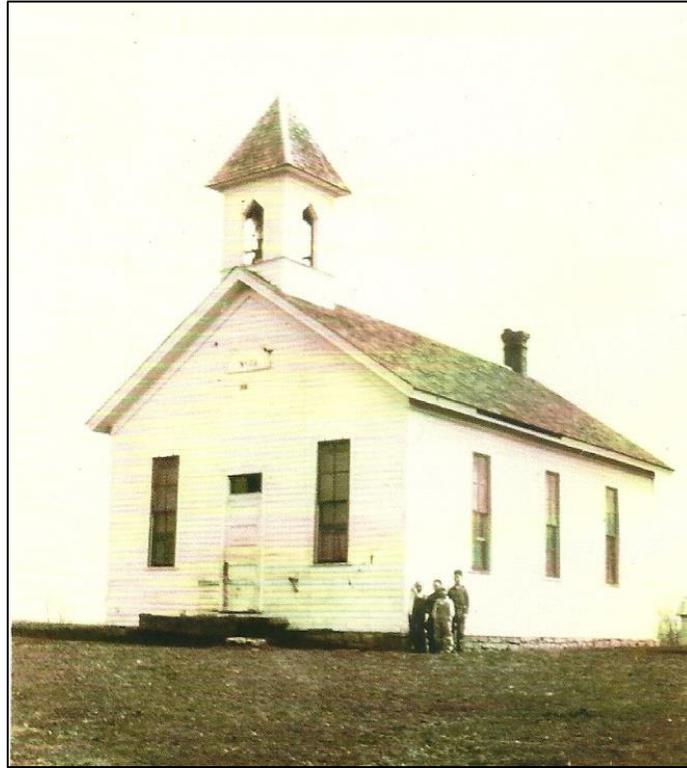


Figure 7. Image of schoolhouse during relocation in 1970.

