A late-nineteenth-century hand-dug well (above) and a French-inspired castle (right) are among thirteen properties recently nominated to the national and state historic registers.

Coverage on pages 2-8.
Preservation in the News

This column is a new feature in Kansas Preservation. It summarizes preservation-related stories that have recently made the news in Kansas. For confirmation or more information, the media source is credited. The KSHS staff is not responsible for the content of the news items, nor have all the details been independently verified. If you know of other Kansas preservation topics in the news, please contact us at cultural_resources@kshs.org or (785) 272-8681 Ext. 225.

The University of Kansas received a $130,000 grant from the Getty Foundation to produce a Preservation Master Plan that will guide landscape design, construction, and preservation across the University’s campus.

“Getty Foundation grant helps fund campus master preservation plan” Lawrence Journal World, July 20, 2006, at jworld.com

The Baxter Springs Historical Society received a grant for $26,202 from the National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program to restore the exterior of a Phillips 66 gas station built in 1930 in Baxter Springs. After the rehabilitation, the building will serve as a Route 66 Welcome Center.

“Fill ‘er up with tourists” The Joplin Globe, August 21, 2006, at joplinglobe.com

A group of local volunteers is working with the Kansas Historical Society, the Daughters of the American Revolution, and Kansas Wildlife and Parks to help protect the pueblo ruins at El Cuartelejo, in Scott County. One of the state’s twenty-three National Historic Landmarks, the El Cuartelejo ruins are the northern-most known pueblo ruins in the United States and were investigated in 1889 by two KU paleontologists. In 1971 the site was developed as an interpretive exhibit by Kansas State Historical Society archeologists. The ruins have deteriorated over the years, and efforts to restore this site are gaining momentum and are generating funds from both the local and state levels to help with preservation.

“Group working to preserve pueblo remains” Topeka Capital-Journal, July 30, 2006, at cjonline.com

The recent historic preservation work of Len and Linus Schamber is highlighted in an article in the Hays Daily News. Based out of Damar and Hays, Schamber Historical Preservation has been involved in several recent rehabilitation projects across Kansas including the Pottawatomie County Fair Pavilion, Historic Fort Hays, and the Old Dighton First National Bank Building.

“Brothers find success in preserving history” Hays Daily News, August 10, 2006, at hdnews.net

Compiled by Kristen Lonard, state tax credit and National Register historian.
Thirteen Properties Nominated to Historic Registers

The Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review held its regular quarterly meeting at the Kansas State Historical Society on Saturday, August 26, 2006. The board nominated seven properties to the National Register of Historic Places and six properties to the Register of Historic Kansas Places. Below are summaries of the nominated properties.

National Register of Historic Places

Shirley Opera House, Atwood, Rawlins County
The Shirley Opera House, erected in 1907, is significant for its association with the entertainment and social history of Atwood and as a Late Victorian-era commercial block. The open space of the second story communicates its historic function as a public space used for performances and gatherings, such as traveling road shows, musicals, debates, local theatricals, dances, political rallies, and graduation exercises. The building represents the important period when public entertainment venues developed in Kansas communities during the late 1800s and early 1900s. Construction coincided with the building of the Rawlins County Courthouse, the creation of permanent sidewalks, and the establishment of a public waterworks. The Aberdeen Steakhouse and Pub currently operates out of the building’s first floor.

Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Abilene, Dickinson County
Located at the southwest corner of Fourth and Cedar Streets in Abilene, the Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church is a Gothic Revival structure built in 1878. The church features pointed arch windows, elaborately carved paneled doors, and a steeply pitched roof covered with diamond-shaped slate tiles. Nestled between a business district to the south and east and a residential district of Victorian-era homes to the north and west, this building is home to Abilene’s second-oldest congregation, with members worshipping in this same structure for nearly 130 years. Some of Abilene’s early influential residents were charter members of the church including Conrad Lebold, a successful banker and state senator, and Jacob Augustine, who partnered with Lebold in 1869 to purchase the original town site of Abilene.

Today it is a steakhouse, but the Shirley Opera House building also has a rich history of public gatherings and performances in downtown Atwood.
The Cather Farm near Beloit has been continually farmed since it was homesteaded in 1883.

The congregation of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Abilene has worshipped in this structure for nearly 130 years.

Cather Farm, Beloit vicinity, Mitchell County

The Cather Farm is five miles north of Beloit in the Solomon River valley of north-central Kansas. Consisting of 160 acres of farmland, a single-story wood-frame house built in 1884, a late nineteenth-century barn, and a wood-frame garage constructed in 1919, the Cather Farm is significant for its associations to the area’s agricultural history as a small Kansas farmstead. The house is also significant as a vernacular building form with applied Classical Revival detailing. The property has been continually farmed since it was homesteaded in 1883 and has been known as the Cather Farm since 1885 when Iowa and Elsie Cather acquired it. It remains in the Cather family and is registered as a Century Farm with the Kansas Farm Bureau.

George T. Brown House, Junction City, Geary County

The George T. Brown House was constructed in 1895 for the owner of a local lumberyard. It is nominated as a good local residential example of the late phase of the Queen Anne style. Although the Brown House deviates somewhat from the traditional heavily embellished Queen Anne house, this structure reflects turn-of-the-century architecture in its overall design and form. The irregular roofline, asymmetrical appearance, and walls clad in shingles and clapboards reflect significant elements of the Queen Anne style. The overall form of the house with interconnected interior spaces and a prominent entry hall also reflect the style; however, restrained interior and exterior ornamentation exemplifies the movement in residential architecture toward Colonial Revival around 1910.

Raymond Community Home, Girard, Crawford County

The Raymond Community Home, built in 1893, is significant for its association with town founder John E. Raymond and as an example of architect-designed...
Queen Anne architecture. In November 1869, at the age of 24, Raymond was one of 97 citizens who petitioned for the incorporation of Girard. He later served on the city council and rose to the position of mayor by 1873.

Designed by architect Charles W. Terry, this two-story wood frame house features a steep hipped roof and lower cross gables with polygonal bays and a defining three-story domed tower. The house is clad with various types of wood shingles and clapboard. The interior was finished to impress visitors with its exceptional woodwork, stained glass windows, and elaborate fireplaces. Many accounts of the Raymond home over the years call it the city’s grandest house. Raymond continued to live in the house until his death in 1930. The home interprets a bygone heyday of the community—when a dedicated merchant class invested in the community’s permanence by constructing stately homes.

**Hand-dug City Water Well, Seneca, Nemaha County**

Seneca’s hand-dug city water well was constructed in 1896 and provided drinking water for the community through 1937. The waterworks system promoted the use of indoor plumbing and played a valuable role in fire protection. Although it no longer served as the primary source of water for the community after 1937, it has been maintained by the city and for many years was used by a local golf club association to irrigate fairways. The well is an example of a

**Constructed in 1896, the hand-dug city water well in Seneca measures 34 feet in diameter and 65 feet deep and consists of approximately 130,000 bricks.**

The Raymond Community Home in Girard exemplifies architect-designed Queen Anne style, and is significant for its association with town founder John E. Raymond.
utilitarian structure essential to the collection and transport of water for human use and consumption. It measures 34 feet in diameter and stretches 65 feet deep. Records show that some 130,000 bricks, 100 cords of stone, 570 barrels of cement, and more than 20,000 feet of lumber were used in its construction. The wood-frame conical structure atop the well, which also dates to 1896, is a unique and intact example of vernacular industrial architecture. The well and protective structure are intact and retain a high degree of their original materials and architectural integrity.

Gem Building, Topeka, Shawnee County

Although apartment buildings were prevalent in large metropolitan areas beginning in the late nineteenth century, they were not commonly constructed in Kansas until the 1910s and 1920s. By this time, apartments had evolved from tenements designed for maximum occupancy of the urban poor in high-density metropolitan areas to efficient and attractively designed buildings for a growing class of urban professionals. Built in 1928, the Gem Building in downtown Topeka is significant as a good local example of an early-twentieth-century apartment building. The building was designed by Topeka architect Charles Cuthbert and cost $80,000 to construct. Located between Topeka’s expanding commercial and governmental district to the east and the growing residential district to the west, the Gem Building was uniquely situated to serve multiple uses. The building was constructed by the proprietors of the Gem Grocery and Meat Market to house their business and families and also to subsidize their income.

Register of Historic Kansas Places

Washington and Julia Marlatt Homestead, Manhattan, Riley County

Washington Marlatt, an early Riley County settler, was a founder and faculty member of Bluemont Central College, which opened in 1860 and eventually became Kansas State University. As an early settler, it was Marlatt’s desire to found a college that could provide both a liberal arts and agricultural education to the new residents of Kansas. He also served as president of the Manhattan Town Association and was influential in the development of the city of Manhattan. In addition to being an educator and businessman, Marlatt was also an experimental farmer who wrote extensively on his agricultural experiments. The homestead dates to 1856 and includes a two-story limestone house, two limestone sheds, and a large two-story limestone barn.

Plymouth Congregational Church, Lawrence, Douglas County

Downtown Lawrence’s Plymouth Congregational Church was designed by prominent Kansas architect John G. Haskell and erected in 1870. Although the brick building is flanked by two twentieth-century additions, this three-story structure with Gothic and Romanesque Revival characteristics retains much of its historic integrity. The congregation dates to Lawrence’s earliest pre-Civil War days. The first church service was held on October 1, 1854, in a mud brick boarding house, just weeks after the first
groups of New England settlers arrived. With many church members still reeling from the devastation of William Quant-rill’s raid of Lawrence in August 1863, some expressed the desire for the new church building to be simply designed with adequate space to allow for growth. Haskell suggested that the addition of “angles, projections, and towers” could make the building much more attractive “without adding greatly to the cost,” while insisting that “beauty costs no more than ugliness.” The building—complete with towers and projections—cost $43,000 to build.

**Dutton-Thomas-Soule Farm, De Soto vicinity, Johnson County**

The Dutton-Thomas-Soule Farm, also known as the Palmberg Farm, is significant for its association with the settlement and continued agricultural history of the Kaw River valley region of Kansas, and in particular for its association with the Kaw Valley potato and vegetable industries. Located at the southeast corner of Seventy-ninth and Sunflower Road, Palmberg Farm is the largest and only functional historic farmstead remaining in the West Bottoms area adjacent to the Kansas River, and it represents a strong tie to the agrarian history of Johnson County. Before the rise of Idaho, California, and other states as national mass producers of agricultural goods, the West Bottoms and similar farming districts stretching along the river to Kansas City represented one of

Washington Marlatt was a founder and faculty member of Bluemont Central College, which eventually became Kansas State University. His Manhattan homestead dates to 1856.
the key vegetable-growing areas serving the entire region. The Soules and Palmbergs have sold produce raised on their farmstead at the Kansas City Market since 1928. The farm complex, which dates to 1884, consists of an Italianate style farmhouse, barn, smokehouse, and ancillary outbuildings.

Matrot Castle, Topeka, Shawnee County
Seraphin Matrot, who fled France after the Franco-Prussian War in the early 1870s, designed and built a French-inspired Chateauesque castle west of Topeka. Matrot planted and operated a vineyard on the grounds. His choice of the wine business in Kansas was a tough economic one as Kansas had voted for prohibition in 1880. Oral histories suggest that Matrot built the castle in 1883-1886 with assistance from area Native Americans using local materials. The castle represents a restrained version of the Chateauesque style popular in grander homes during the late nineteenth century. It features twin turrets, pointed arch windows, vertical emphasis, high-peaked hipped roof, and massive brick construction.

Sells Brothers Building, Topeka, Shawnee County
Four brothers, known for their property investments and as the owners of a traveling circus company, constructed the building at 303 and 305 South Kansas Avenue in 1883. The two-story brick building is one of the few remaining Late Victorian-era commercial buildings in this section of Kansas Avenue. Many commercial and industrial businesses have operated out of this building, including furniture and appliance sales, barrel manufacturing, auto sales, an undertaking business, and most recently an electrical supply shop. The street-level storefront was altered in 1956, but the second floor retains many of its Victorian-era details including the decorative metal cornice and the brick and stonework. The front-facing second story windows were replaced in the 1950s, but plans are underway to return those windows to their original design.

Michigan Building, Wichita, Sedgwick County
Erected in 1909, The Michigan Building was built for $60,000 by Wichita’s first druggist, Oscar D. Barnes, and his son, Maurice P. Barnes, and remained in their family until 1972. The Barnes family played a significant role in Wichita’s commercial history by

The Matrot Castle features turrets, pointed arched windows, and a high-peaked roof, making it a good example of Chateauesque style.
Wichita’s six-story Michigan Building has been part of the downtown landscape since 1909. It is being renovated.

developing downtown business blocks. Designed by Charles W. Terry, the building is a narrow structure of reinforced concrete, steel, and terra cotta brick that stands six stories tall. It is significant for its historic presence in downtown Wichita’s streetscape and as the home of several locally prominent music stores. Its physical presence contributes to the “canyon” of East Douglas Avenue, a busy downtown thoroughfare lined with towering structures. The music stores housed within the building—the Martin & Adams Music Company, The Adams-Bennett Music Company and the Bennett Music House—drew customers from Wichita and the surrounding region.

The next meeting of the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review will be at the Kansas State Historical Society on Saturday, November 18, 2006. For more information, contact the Cultural Resources Division at (785) 272-8681 Ext. 240.

Located on Topeka’s South Kansas Avenue, the Sells Brothers Building retains many of its Late Victorian era features. Plans are underway to return the windows to their original design, shown in the upper photograph taken in 1941.

Prepared by Sarah J. Martin, National Register coordinator.
The historic Leavenworth County Courthouse recently received a makeover that would make any Hollywood starlet jealous. Now the county commissioners are eager to show off the results.

This grand Classical Revival style building was built upon the foundation of the old Second Empire-style courthouse destroyed by fire on March 22, 1911. The county commission immediately hired area architect William P. Feth to design a new modern courthouse. Leavenworth's Daily Times quoted then-board chairman H. C. Short as supporting a design with “simple, graceful lines” that is “entirely absent of any of the ‘gingerbread’ effects.” After seeing a photograph of the Beaux Arts style capitol building in Mississippi, Short commented, “that is just about what we want for our court house.” Short’s comments represent the then-declining appeal of elaborate Victorian era styles and reflect the great popularity of Classical Revival style governmental buildings. The new courthouse was completed in 1913 for a cost of $143,152.54.

According to the building’s 2002 National Register of Historic Places nomination, the Leavenworth County Courthouse is “one of a few county courthouses to have a ‘pure,’ Greek-inspired, Classical Revival treatment that incorporates a projecting pedimented portico supported by classical columns.”

The south entrance is shown circa 1913 and today.
Leavenworth County Courthouse Renovations Completed; Open House Planned

The central rotunda’s impressive stained-glass skylight was cleaned and restored.
The faux marble columns were repaired and repainted, and their gold caps were cleaned and polished.

columns on its primary façades.” In addition, the building is “architecturally significant for the retention of its original floor plan configuration and hierarchy of space.”

The 93-year-old courthouse was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, making it eligible for funding incentives available through the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS). A $90,000 Heritage Trust Fund grant and State Rehabilitation Tax Credits helped offset the $5 million renovation cost.

The phased renovation project encompassed both interior and exterior repairs. Exterior work included replacing the non-original metal-clad windows, repointing and resetting the limestone veneer at the entrances, repairing and repainting the soffits and trim, installing new downspouts, and renovating the handicap accessible entrance. Interior work, too extensive to list, included renovations to both the public spaces and the offices on all floors. The central rotunda, a distinguishing interior feature, underwent the most stunning transformation and now boasts a newly cleaned stained-glass dome, painted walls and wrought-iron handrails, refinished doors and trim, and cleaned and repaired terrazzo flooring, marble stair treads, and wainscot.

Keyta Kelly, Leavenworth County counselor at large, worked with KSHS to successfully complete the grant and tax credit requirements.

“The taxpayers of Leavenworth County entrusted this beautiful building and its preservation into the hands of their elected officials. Both the former county commission and the current board did a wonderful job keeping that public trust by beginning the renovation project and seeing it through to completion,” Kelly said.

An open house is scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. Friday, December 8, 2006. Visitors can enjoy refreshments, tour the restored courthouse, and even see Santa Claus. At 5:30 p.m., the county will unveil murals by three Leavenworth County artists: Ernst Ulmer, Michael Young, and Brad Seever.

“The unveiling of the murals on December eighth is the cherry on top of a project well done,” Kelly said.

By Sarah J. Martin, National Register coordinator.
It is that time of year again—time to think about the coming winter months and how to reduce energy costs. Property owners across Kansas are seeking ways to reduce their utility bills while maintaining comfort in their homes. Adding insulation to a house is one way to achieve this; however, many homeowners do not know the best places to add insulation, nor do they realize the potential damage caused by inappropriate installation.

When addressing energy efficiency and insulation in historic homes, it is important to understand what additional insulation can—and cannot—do for the building. Because most heat is lost through the roof, insulation in the attic will keep hot air from escaping out the roof. Very little heat is lost through the walls, so the expense and possible damage caused by installing insulation in existing walls may render the process, at best, ineffective. However, cool drafts may enter the home through poorly fitted doors and windows. Insulation, weather stripping, and caulking around these openings can help stop air leaks. Caulk should be appropriate in color and composition for the surrounding materials and applied so that it does not detract from the character of the home. Properly fitted storm windows and storm doors also can reduce air infiltration.

**Don’t Strive for Airtight**

While weather-proofing can help increase energy efficiency, care must be taken to avoid making the house completely airtight. As is seen in many newly constructed homes, if moisture from everyday activities becomes trapped in the house without a means of escape, serious mold and mildew problems can occur.

**Start in the Attic**

While air infiltration can contribute to heat loss in a home, the major source of heat loss is through the roof. Of course, heat rises, and adding insulation in accessible attic spaces is a highly effective way of keeping that heat down in the living spaces of the house. Various insulation types are available, and many more have been used throughout history. It was once a common practice to insulate attics with shredded paper. While modern fire codes would not allow that today, chemically treated cellulose (wood fibers) is still used for insulation, along with fiberglass and mineral wool. These materials may come in blanket or batt form or may be blown-in in a loose form. Each type of insulation should come with a manufacturer’s recommendation on the depth of insulation needed for specific climates.

One of the most misunderstood aspects of insulation is the vapor barrier. To function properly, insulation must be kept dry. Vapor barriers and provisions for air movement are incorporated into insulation installations to help keep the insulation dry and assure that any moisture that does infiltrate the insulation evaporates quickly. Insulation in attics

---

**Winter is coming!**

Have you thought about your insulation?
should always have the vapor barrier facing down toward the living space. If the attic is not finished, the insulation, with the vapor barrier facing down, typically is installed between the joists. If the attic is a finished living space, insulation should be installed between the roof rafters, again with the vapor barrier facing down. Keep in mind that when adding new insulation to older insulation to improve thermal protection, a vapor barrier should not be installed over the old insulation.

**Wall Insulation Poses Risks**

Many homeowners are concerned about insulation, or lack thereof, in their exterior walls. Generally houses built in the early twentieth century or earlier do not have insulation in the walls unless it was added after construction. Later houses may have had insulated walls originally, but insulation materials settle or become ineffective over time. The cost of retrofitting an existing wood frame building with wall insulation is relatively high, and a great potential for damage to historic building materials exists if the installation is not done carefully.

As explained previously, insulation...
must be kept dry to be effective and to reduce damage to adjacent materials. If insulation is installed into a wood frame wall without a vapor barrier and ventilation, the results can be ineffective at best or cause severe damage at worst. Insulation installed without a vapor barrier can become saturated with moisture from everyday indoor activities, such as showers, dishwashers, clothes washers and dryers, and cooking. The water vapors pass from the humid indoor environment to the dryer outdoors through the walls and the insulation. If insulation traps the moisture in the walls, the saturated insulation loses its thermal properties and can actually increase the heat loss through the walls. Trapped vapor condensing into water can also lead to rotting of the adjacent wooden frame members, including the sills, window frames, studs, and bracing members.

The first evidence that a problem exists is usually peeling exterior paint, as the saturated insulation on the interior wall cavity affects the exterior siding and loosens the paint. Many homeowners think they have a paint problem when, in fact, they have an insulation problem. Continuing to repaint the area—or worse, installing artificial siding over the wall—only exacerbates the problem by further trapping moisture in the wall.

**Recommendations for Insulating Walls**

The recommended method for installing insulation in existing walls is to remove the exterior siding materials carefully and install batt insulation with a vapor barrier facing into the exposed wall cavities. However, this can only be done if the siding can be removed without causing serious damage to the materials. As this method is very costly and damage to the siding is possible, another installation method to consider is to blow-in loose fill materials. Ideally, individual exterior siding boards or limited areas of interior wall surfaces are removed to facilitate the blowing equipment; this allows the openings to be repaired in a way that causes little visual change to the structure. Drilling holes through the exterior siding and then plugging them with plastic plugs is not a recommended treatment.

*Many homeowners think they have a paint problem when, in fact, they have an insulation problem.*

Because one cannot install a vapor barrier within wall cavities while doing a blown-in installation, it is important that the interior wall surfaces are treated to become a vapor barrier. Two layers of oil-based paint or one layer of impermeable latex paint should cover the entire interior surfaces of all walls receiving the blown-in insulation. This prevents the migration of vapor from the interior of the house through the walls into the insulation. Likewise, ventilating the walls is important. Make sure that lapped siding boards are separated from one another and are not sealed with multiple layers of paint.

Even with these precautions, blown-in insulation carries inherent problems that may be difficult to avoid. Fire stops between wall studs in older homes may prevent loose insulation from falling down to the bottom of the wall cavity. Settling insulation, if it becomes wet, can expand and actually cause walls to bulge at the bottom. It is recommended that homeowners properly ventilate kitchens, bathrooms, and laundry facilities to reduce vapor within the home, even if appropriate vapor barriers are in place.

Many other forms of insulation are available today, including foam boards and expanding foam materials. Expanding foam-type materials are not generally recommended for retrofitting existing historic buildings due to the large amounts of moisture that they introduce into the walls. Similarly, blown-in insulation as described above should be installed in a dry form. Blown-in insulation that is installed wet should not be used in historic buildings.

**Other Helpful Resources**

This article provides an overview of the benefits and problems property owners may encounter when installing insulation in their wood frame historic home or building. The staff of the State Historic Preservation Office encourages property owners to read more about insulating masonry buildings, basements, and crawl spaces.

In Preservation Brief #3 – Conserving Energy in Historic Building at cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/presbhom. Additional information can also be found in the November/December 2004 issue of *Old House Journal* at oldhousejournal.com/magazine/2004/oct/wrap in an article titled “All Wrapped Up – 7 tips to keep in mind when retrofitting your old house with insulation.”

Please feel free to contact the Kansas SHPO staff with any questions about insulation or other energy conservation measures for historic buildings.

*By Katrina L. Ringler, federal and state tax credit coordinator.*
Rows of green ash and black locust on the Gaylord claim.

In the late nineteenth century, the general absence of trees, coupled with settlers’ demands for cheap land, led the United States Congress to enact the Timber Culture Act of 1873 with the express purpose of encouraging pioneer homesteaders to plant trees. This was the first instance of the federal government providing an incentive for tree plantings in the plains states. The act was amended several times and was finally repealed in 1891.

Under the provisions of the original law, a pioneer wanting to homestead a quarter section (160 acres) of land had to plant 40 acres of trees to earn title to the land. An 1878 amendment reduced the acreage dedicated to tree planting to 10 acres. The act also required 300 trees per acre to be planted (eventually reduced to 275) and a 10-year period of cultivation (eventually reduced to 8) before the title was awarded. It was under the 1878 amendment that most of the timber claims were filed in Kansas, primarily in the central and western portions of the state.

When the Timber Culture Act was repealed in 1891, primarily because of numerous fraudulent activities associated with it, more timber claims had been filed in Kansas than in any other state. In
all, 2,005,831 acres of land were patented in the state under this act. However, little, if any, supervision was given the tree plantings and no follow-up reports were provided. Seasons of drought and insect invasions produced disheartening results. With the passage of time and lack of silviculture knowledge, many trees died, and the claims deteriorated. A study devoted to Kansas’ forestland prior to World War II estimated that one-eighth of the original tree claim plantings were still in evidence as patchy timberland, and one-twentieth of the original planted acreage remained forested. In retrospect, the total amount of forested land created under this act was negligible.

In spite of the failure of many trees to survive, some claims were planted in good faith. Successful claims served as demonstrations to guide other tree planters. On soils and in locations favorable for trees, many fine groves were established and some exist in part today. This article focuses on three 10-acre timber claims initially planted in the 1880s. Two other remnant 10-acre timber claims that have not been studied were located along Kansas Highway 4 in Ness County near the community of Brownell and northeast of Dighton in Lane County.

For this student of long-forgotten landscapes, it was with great pleasure and exuberance that I not only was able to observe and record information about each claim, but also to photodocument and follow up with substantive research on two of the three sites. Only during the process of observation and recording of information was it determined that the old claims were no ordinary landscapes but historic landscapes because of the age and the “good” condition of the various species of trees. The very existence of nineteenth-century timber claims with their configurations and tree specimens surviving into the twenty-first century provides a physical blueprint for study.
None of the three claims were extant as originally planted because of the ravages of time embodied in natural destructive elements. Some have features in common, while some have yet their own distinct personality because of their evolution over time, which in part was influenced by cultural activities. Pertinent information on each of the three claims follows.

**Gaylord Claim**

Around 1882, William F. Gaylord began planting eastern cottonwood, black locust, common hackberry, green ash, and Osage orange on his timber claim about 15 miles southwest of Ellis in Rush County. The origin of the seeds/seedlings utilized is unknown; however, nursery sources existed in Salina and Emporia at the time. Whether Gaylord had any association or acquaintance with the state-sponsored tree nursery station then operating at Ogallah is open to question. Gaylord was a broker and salesman of trees. He met the train in Ellis, where he picked up nursery stock for prospective buyers. His own planting site was selected because of its proximity to an intermittent stream and a sufficient water table to insure the trees’ survival and ultimate maturation. Runoff from surrounding higher elevations assured him of additional moisture. As required by the Act, trees were planted 12 feet apart. Gaylord was given title to the land in 1890.

The site has not been maintained in recent years, and eastern red cedar and Siberian elm have invaded the original planting. At some point, 3 acres of the claim (mostly Osage orange) were harvested for posts and firewood. The family built a rustic cabin with an outdoor oven in the interior of the claim, and it served as a gathering place for social activities of family and friends until recent years.

**Pratt Claim**

On the Sheridan and Graham County line about a mile north of Studley is the “Little” Tom Pratt timber claim. One of 257 timber claims recorded in Sheridan County, the Pratt claim sits at the head...
Downed tree branches and driftwood from the nearby creek indicate availability of ground water and, therefore, an excellent vantage point in which to locate a timber claim. The image includes Osage orange trees, which were initially planted in rows. This species shows evidence of somewhat stunted growth compared with other varieties on this claim, no doubt because of lack of sunlight, which is needed for the growth of Osage orange.

Large eastern cottonwoods, planted on the extreme west side of the claim.

waters of Keys Creek, a tributary to the south fork of the Solomon River. Two productive springs also run through the claim that emerges from the Ogallala Formation. The survival of these trees is directly related to the abundance of surface and groundwater.

Unlike the Gaylord claim, which is contiguous and rectangulard in shape, the Pratt claim was planted in random groupings of trees that collectively formed 10 acres. Mulberry, catalpa, and eastern cottonwood were planted around 1888, and the patent was awarded in 1896. (Timber claims filed prior to the appeal of the Timber Culture Act in 1891 could yet be proven up and patented after that date, if all provisions of the act were met.)

J. F. Pratt, Tom’s older brother and neighbor, ordered thousands of seedling trees from nurseries in Salina and Emporia to sell to settlers for timber claim plantings. These species included mulberry, green ash, black locust, Osage orange, catalpa, box elder, and cottonwood. Descendants of some of these trees are still found in this area.

McDowell Claim

This claim is located in Smith County about 2 miles north of the community of Bel Aire. The original 10-acre claim has been reduced over the years to about 5 acres because part of it was used for firewood, posts, and other sundry projects.

Located on a branch tributary of West Oak Creek, it was ideally situated for the eventual growth of numerous large trees that occupy this claim today. Cottonwood, catalpa, honey locust, Osage orange, and mulberry were planted sometime in the early 1880s on bottom ground, supported by an intermittent spring-fed stream. Lack of management over the years resulted in the collection of woody debris, driftwood, and tree branches on the forest floor. Evidence exists of coppice growth, especially Osage orange. The cottonwood species planted on the perimeter of the claim are extremely large and healthy, as are the catalpa planted toward the interior of the tract.

Although no structures are apparent in or near the claim, like the Gaylord claim, the author was informed that the “grove of trees provided a location for numerous social gatherings in the early twentieth century through the Great Depression period.” Resident landowners from the surrounding communities utilized the claim for periodic picnics, weddings, and other social activities.

Why These Survived

Unlike upland locations where many tree claims were initiated and subsequently failed, the keys to the success of these three claims were favorable alluvial soils and well-watered locations that sustained

Larry Rutter of Meriden, Kansas, retired after 20 years with the KSHS Historic Sites Division in 2001 and continues to conduct research and write about historic landscapes. He provided the accompanying photos. Credits are extended to Jim Strine, Kansas Forest Service district forester, and Don Rowlison, administrator of the Cottonwood Ranch State Historic Site, for their contributions to this article.
growth and survival. Evidence suggests that all three properties were proven up, and claimants gained titles to their quarter sections through diligent tree planting and nurturing endeavors. When mature, the timbered part of the claims provided wood for myriad uses, as well as a shaded haven for family and community social functions.

Most of the species of trees planted on these claims are indigenous to Kansas and allowed for a certain measure of success. In addition, many of these are considered disease resistant, and their relatively good growth rates were factors that permitted their survival after the required eight-year period of cultivation. Two of the successful species are not indigenous: black locust and Osage orange. These two species ultimately became naturalized and widespread throughout the state.

Although the planting of Osage orange figured prominently in these three claims and was utilized upon reaching maturity, it was not readily accepted at the time, nor is it fully accepted in some quarters today. Planting of this species was not permitted at the inception of the Timber Culture Act in 1873, as it was considered a plant unsuitable to be used in a timber claim. After pressure was brought to bear, the Commissioner of Forestry at that time, Martin Allen, relented, and the 1880 Kansas Legislature passed an act that permitted this species to be “lifted from the status of a shrub to the dignity of a tree.” It subsequently allowed nurserymen to grow seedlings for qualified “tree claims” that might then be proven up.

The significance of the survival and maturation of the trees on these timber claims more than 120 years ago should not be lost on the present or future generations. It should provide an incentive for those wanting to plant trees in the plains region today. After all, the pioneer tree planters in the 1880s could not foretell the severe droughts of the 1890s, 1930s, or 1950s, not to mention the shorter extended periods of sparse rainfall; nor did they have knowledge of soils, insects, rodents, and proper management techniques. Subsequently, improved genetics, newer cultivars, exacting planting and nurturing instructions, and the presence of professional foresters are all conditions that did not exist for those late-nineteenth-century homesteaders.

Though few nineteenth-century timber claims, or even remnants, exist today in Kansas, what remains does provide a study about the pioneers who settled the high plains. Pioneer homesteaders’ efforts to provide a landscape that included trees—not unlike what they had been familiar with in the eastern United States or Europe prior to their immigration—had to be a labor of love, a hope for the future and, ultimately, title to their claims.

Continued on back cover
In spite of the prospect of the ravages of time, will similar endeavors by the current generation be evident for those who observe and record our landscapes in the next century?

Bibliography


Sarvis, James. Oral interview conducted by author on 22 March 2000. (Mr. and Mrs. Sarvis are direct descendants of William F. Gaylord.)


The Kansas State Historical Society is proud to announce that the 2007 State Preservation Conference will be held in Dodge City, May 10-12. The theme is “Experience the Legend, Through Preservation.” Watch for more information in the coming months!