



KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CENTER FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

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Certification of State Register Listing

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: Regier House

Address: Route 1, Box 136, Whitewater, Kansas 67154

County: Butler

Owner: Theodore and Sandra Henry

Address: Route 1, Box 136, Whitewater, Kansas 67154

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible _____

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on November 7, 1992.

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

State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

The Regier House (c. 1907) is being nominated to the Register of Historic Kansas Places for its architectural significance as an I house. The house is located in northwestern Butler County, near Whitewater, on a 1.83 acre tract in the SW 1/4, W 1/2, S. 9, T. 24, R. 3E in Milton township. The house was originally part of a larger complex that included two barns, neither of these structures is extant.

The property was given to Helene A. Harder (1886-1974) and Jacob J. Regier (1886-1963) in 1907 for a wedding present from the bride's parents Gustav Harder (1856-1923) and Helene Kroeker Harder. The property contained 320 acres, and included the two-story, I house, and two large barns.

"The two-story, eight room house had a furnace heating system which was somewhat unusual for that day. The house, barn, and other buildings estimated at seven thousand dollars, and a half section of land was a very generous gift to the young couple by the bride's parent's, who lived one mile south of their children's farm." (Stoesz)

Helene and Jacob were the children of West Prussian Mennonites that had immigrated to Kansas in 1874. The Harder family, and six other West Prussian Mennonite families settled in Milton Township in 1876. The families were prosperous farmers who built large houses and barns, planted orchards, and raised fine horses and cattle. The families built and maintained the Emmaus Mennonite Church, and conducted services in German. Helene and Jacob were married in the Emmaus Mennonite Church, which stands in the northeast corner of Section 9, less than one mile as the crow flies from the Regier House.

Levi H. Mellor (1858-) and his sons built the Regier House and barns. Mellor was a prominent Butler County contractor and builder. He emigrated to Brainerd in northwestern Butler County from Ohio in 1885, and was "engaged in contracting and building practically since coming here." (Mooney, 1916, p. 650) Mellor was responsible for all of the schoolhouses in Murdock township, and several of the schoolhouses in Milton and Fairview townships. Mellor also worked a great deal in Harvey County. By 1916, Mellor had completed his sixth residence. "His work is done by contract, as well as by the day, and he has the reputation for close estimates and first class work." (Mooney, 1916, p. 650)

Mellor and his sons constructed a two-story, T-plan, I house for the Regiers. The I house is classified as a two-story house that is two rooms wide and one room deep. Many I houses were built with wings, or were later added onto. In the case of the Regier House, the two-story wing takes the form of being two rooms wide and one room deep.

The I house is a simple and widely built type that has its roots in "...traditional British folk forms that were common in pre-railroad America..." (McAlester, 1984, p. 96) The Regier House derives its stylistic character from applied detailing, reflecting both the Queen Anne and Classical traditions. Fishscale shingling was applied to each of the building's three roof gables, and to each of the three porch pediments. Elegantly fluted window surrounds accentuated the singly and paired lights. Panelled cornices defined the eave lines for each porch and the main roof. Classical wooden porch columns supported each of the building's three porches. The interior woodwork reflects the merging of late Victorian treatments as well. Transomed doorways house five-panel doors. High baseboards complete each wall.

The I house was a symbol of success, representing "...the fine houses built by prosperous and ambitious farmers..." (Marshall, 1981, p. 62) "The I house symbolized prosperity and

respectability both among farmers and among businessmen and professionals in the villages and towns. The rise of commercial agriculture associated with the development of regional railroad networks first accounted for the growing affluence...." (Jakle, 1989, p. 121)

"'FarView Farm' became the name the Regier family fondly used when referring to their home, because you could see forever from the site. 'Muensterburg' is the name that neighbors used to refer to 'FarView Farm' which is a German word meaning 'Master on a Hill.'" (Stoesz)

The Regier's five children were all born in the parlor of the house. Alvin was born in 1910, Wilbert was born in 1913, Elfriede was born in 1914, Jacob was born in 1915, and Helen Louise was born in 1922.

The Regiers farmed the half-section that was their wedding gift from the Harders. The 1915 agricultural census shows that 100 acres were in winter wheat, 60 acres were in corn and 40 acres were in oats. One hundred acres of uncultivated land was under fence for meadow or pasture, 1280 rods of wire fence were in place at the farm. The Regiers cut five tons of hay in 1914, and made 200 pounds of butter. The value of the animals sold in the year ending March, 1915 was \$1400. The livestock on the farm included 6 horses, 2 milk cows, 105 other cattle, and 48 swine.

The 1925 agricultural census indicates that the Regiers had purchased an additional 80 acres. One hundred and thirty acres were in winter wheat, 100 acres were in corn, 100 acres were in oats, and 40 acres were in native prairie grasses. The Regier farm produced 2600 bushels of wheat, 500 bushels of corn, and 100 pounds of butter. The value of animals sold during the year equalled \$50. The livestock on the farm included 5 horses, 12 milk cows, and 83 other cattle. The Regiers owned one tractor and one cream separator.

The Regiers lost the farm during the Depression in 1935, the family moved into Helene's parents house, and lived there until the home was destroyed by a tornado in 1941. The family then moved to Newton. The large barn was sold and moved 1/2 mile east to the Thiessen homestead in 1935. The smaller barn was destroyed by fire some years later.

John Epp, who lived directly west of Gustav Harder, purchased the Regier's land and buildings in 1935. Epp used the house for tenant laborers until 1968, when he sold the house and 1.83 acres to George Roets. Roets sold the property in 1978, and in 1979, the current owners purchased the house.

The Regier House maintains a moderate degree of integrity, retaining its original form but lacking a number of details which would make it complete.

During the ten years that the property was owned by Roets, many modernizations were made. The maid's quarters on the west end of the second floor was opened up to the rest of the house. The spiral staircase leading to the maid's quarters was removed. The screen was removed from the south porch. The pocket doors between the parlor and the living room were removed. The kitchen was downsized. The interior stairs to the basement were sealed. The northeast porch was closed in. Four exterior doors were closed off: the door from the south porch into the living room, the door from the south porch to the kitchen, the door from the parlor onto what was the northeast porch, and the door from the small northwest porch used to access the second story maid's quarters. The white picket fence which surrounded the house is gone, as is the metal roof cresting.

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