United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. 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 (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

   Historic name: Thornton Adobe Barn
   Other name/site number: 007-0000-0027

2. Location

   Street & number: 1 mile East and 1 1/4 miles North of Isabel
   City or town: Isabel
   State/Kansas Code: KS
   County: Pratt
   Code: 151
   Zip code: 67065

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

   As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [ ] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [ ] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally. [ ] See continuation sheet for additional comments.

   Signature of certifying official/Title: [Signature]
   Date: [Date]
   State or Federal agency and bureau: Kansas State Historical Society

   In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet for additional Comments.

   Signature of commenting official/Title: [Signature]
   Date: [Date]
   State or Federal agency and bureau: [State or Federal agency and bureau]

4. National Park Service Certification

   I hereby certify that the property is [ ] entered in the National Register.
   [ ] See continuation sheet.
   [ ] determined eligible for the National Register
   [ ] See continuation sheet.
   [ ] determined not eligible for the National Register
   [ ] removed from the National Register
   [ ] other, (explain:)

   Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]
   Date of Action: [Date]
Thornton Adobe Barn
Name of property

Pratt County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ownership of Property</th>
<th>Category of Property</th>
<th>Number of Resources within Property</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Check as many boxes as apply)</td>
<td>(Check only one box)</td>
<td>Building(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>private</td>
<td>building(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public-local</td>
<td>district</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public-State</td>
<td>site</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public-Federal</td>
<td>structure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>object</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter “N/A” if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

6. Function or Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historic Functions</th>
<th>Current Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE: animal facility</td>
<td>VACANT/NOT IN USE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Architectural Classification</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OTHER: gambrel-roofed adobe barn</td>
<td>foundation CONCRETE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | walls ADOBE |
| | Walls: Brick with limestone trim |
| | METAL: tin |
| | roof METAL: tin |
| | other |

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
Name of Property: Thornton Adobe Barn
County and State: Pratt County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

☐ 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 likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance

1942

Significant Dates

1942

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

James Edward Thornton

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): Primary location of additional data:

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record #
Name of Property: Thornton Adobe Barn  
County and State: Pratt County, Kansas

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: one acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

Zone

Easting

Northing

2

3

Zone

Easting

Northing

4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Melissa Fisher Isaacs, National Register Intern
Organization: Kansas State Historical Society  
Date: June 18, 2003
Street & number: 6425 SW 6th Avenue  
Telephone: 785-272-8681
City or town: Topeka  
State: Kansas  
Zip code: 66615-1099

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name: Kansas Department of Parks and Wildlife
street & number: 512 SE 25th Avenue  
telephone: 620-672-5911

City or town: Pratt  
State: Kansas  
Zip code: 67124

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503
Thornton Adobe Barn
Pratt County, Kansas

Description

The Thornton Adobe Barn is an adobe dairy barn with a corrugated metal-clad gambrel roof. The barn was built by James Edward (Ed) Thornton and other members of the Isabel, Kansas, rural community. In response to the materials shortages of World War II, the walls of the lower story are constructed of adobe bricks covered on both the interior and the exterior with white stucco; the exterior walls of the hayloft are reused corrugated metal. A recent restoration effort has preserved the barn’s unique adobe walls and rendered the barn weather-tight once again.

The rectangular footprint of the barn measures 40 feet by 24 feet, and is situated with the lengthwise axis running east to west. The south elevation of the barn features, from west to east, a four pane window, a four foot wide walk-in doorway with a gate constructed of wooden slats, a second four pane window, and an eight foot wide sliding door covered with corrugated metal. All of the barn’s windows are set into pre-cast cement frames, and measure 24 inches by 16 inches. Between the walk-in doorway and the second window, a section of the adobe has been left unstuccoed and is framed and protected by glass.

The north elevation has one four pane window near the center of the facade and a four foot wide board-and-batten door near the west end of the facade. On the west elevation, two four pane windows penetrate the adobe wall, and centered above them, a four foot by four foot corrugated metal door provides access to the loft level. The east elevation is accessed at the ground level by a four foot walk-in doorway near the facade’s north end and at the hayloft level by a four foot by four foot corrugated metal door near the facade’s south end.

The interior of the ground level is dominated by three rows of five stanchions for dairy cattle; the ground level also features a four foot by seven foot grain bin. The pre-cast window casing on the west-facing wall is inscribed “Aug. 1942,” while the casing in the north-facing wall is inscribed with the names of both Ed Thornton and Fred Westphal, a teenager who assisted Ed Thornton in the construction of the barn. The hayloft, accessed from the interior of the barn via a wooden staircase in the southwest corner, is open.

By 1999, some of the barn’s protective stucco coat had fallen off, leaving adobe bricks exposed and vulnerable. A group of concerned local citizens donated time and money to replace damaged bricks.
with those from another, more severely deteriorated, local adobe barn that had also been built by Ed Thornton. No new adobe bricks were created for the restoration. All of the barn's original masonry covering was removed and replaced. The windows were also replaced. This restoration, completed in 2001, leaves the barn in excellent repair.
United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8  Page 1

Statement of Significance

The Thornton Adobe Barn (c. 1942) is historically significant under Criterion C as a rare and excellently preserved example of adobe architecture in Kansas. The barn was built of adobe as a result of the shortages experienced by Americans during World War II. The use of this locally unusual building technique exemplifies the resourcefulness of those who remained on the home front. It illustrates the ingenuity required of rural Kansans who were recovering from the Depression and making do despite the domestic privations of wartime.

In January 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt created the War Production Board (WPB), which was responsible for directing the nation’s industrial resources during World War II. The WPB immediately began to issue orders that prohibited the production of many appliances and other nonessential goods, and that persuaded companies to retool their factories for the manufacture of munitions. In February 1942, the WPB issued Order L-41, also known as the building conservation order, which limited farm construction to $1000 or less. This restriction, paired with the shortages of materials that had been redirected to the war effort, obliged farmers to investigate the use of native materials in constructing agricultural buildings.

In the early 1940s, Kansas farmers were also encouraged to consider adding or expanding dairy operations on their farms. For instance, the federal Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) advertised a loan plan for dairy cattle. The RFC was a government agency created to stimulate economic activity during the Depression by implementing loan programs. The effects of the economic depression and devastating drought of the 1930s still lingered, and one of these effects was the depletion of dairy stock on Midwestern farms.

These two circumstances encouraged James Edward (Ed) Thornton to construct an adobe barn to house dairy cattle in 1942. With lumber, steel, and money in short supply, Ed Thornton turned to native building materials. Adobe is one of the oldest building materials known to humankind. For centuries, adobe bricks have been made of a mixture of earth and water and often straw or grass, which helps the bricks to shrink evenly as they dry. Poured into a wooden form, this mixture is allowed to bake in the sun.

According to Fred Westphal, who helped Ed Thornton construct his barn, “We would go to the low part of a pasture where water would stand sometimes, [Mr. Thornton] would plow up a portion of the grass and ground...and we would incorporate a little straw into it and he would disc this together and we would haul water and put it on all this and then put it into a bunch of forms he had made. Then, after blocks cured...the process would start again.”¹ This process resulted in adobe bricks that

were six inches tall, eight inches wide, and 18 inches long. These bricks were laid in header courses, on a footing of cement blocks, to a height of seven feet.

The raising of Ed Thornton’s barn, as is famously traditional in barn construction, was a community affair. Several of his neighbors pitched in their time and energy to assist Mr. Thornton in building his barn. Adobe became a locally popular building material during this time. A few of these neighbors also had adobe structures built on their farms. Bruce Hiskett’s adobe chicken house is no longer extant; two walls of Harvey Dalbow’s barn have been replaced by pole barn construction. The reminiscences of local people indicate that other area farmers also had barns built of adobe. Ed Thornton’s farmstead alone eventually included a round adobe brooder house and an adobe shop building, neither of which are still in existence.

The barn now stands on lands owned by the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks known as the Isabel Wetlands. The barn is currently open to the public. Inside, visitors will find a display of photographs and newspaper articles detailing the restoration process and the barn’s history.

Bibliography


“Group Works to Preserve Barn,” *Pratt Tribune*, 31 August 2000.


Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on the W ½ of the NW ¼ of the SW ¼ of the SW ¼ of Section 28, in the vicinity of Isabel, Pratt County, Kansas, on a one acre tract of land. The acreage is bounded on the west by a county road and to the north, east and south by the original farmland.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property stands on a portion of the land historically associated with the James Edward Thornton farmstead.