

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

1995

## SMALL HISTORIC SITES IN KANSAS MERGING ARTIFACTUAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITY VALUES

Cathy Ambler

*University of Kansas Main Campus*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Ambler, Cathy, "SMALL HISTORIC SITES IN KANSAS MERGING ARTIFACTUAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITY VALUES" (1995). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1044.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1044>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

# SMALL HISTORIC SITES IN KANSAS MERGING ARTIFACTUAL LANDSCAPES AND COMMUNITY VALUES

CATHY AMBLER

In Kansas during the past two decades, county historical societies and local community groups have initiated a trend that deserves attention—the establishment and support of small historic sites. Conceived with little aspiration of becoming the next Williamsburg, Plimoth Plantation, or Conner Prairie, they are endeavors by small communities to preserve elements of their traditional built environment and identify themselves with their respective pasts. With the community itself as its essential audience, each site celebrates a historical identity of success, harmony, and

stability. Kansas's small historic sites are assembled landscapes that represent local community values, but in which rural and urban definitions merge and concepts of time and distance collapse.

This study compares the types of buildings and landscapes at seven historical sites associated with small Kansas museums. The results show that regardless of the community's history, particular structures are commonly represented from site to site: structures depicting community activities, events, and values from Kansas's settlement period.<sup>1</sup> The structures most frequently represented are *loci* of community space, where events transpired that encouraged and nurtured "progress" from settlement to civilization. There are also symbols of agrarian rootedness and structures that comment emphatically on values of achievement and success—for communities and individuals alike. The physical environments in which these structures now repose are also significant, for the mix of buildings in the museum setting creates a visual presence in the community that heightens, validates, and communicates a merging of the community's values and the artifactual landscape.<sup>2</sup>

*Cathy Ambler is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, whose research interests are in vernacular architecture and cultural landscapes as material culture. She has had a long term interest in historic site museums since she served as an intern at Colonial Williamsburg during the summer of 1989.*

[GPQ 15 (Winter 1995): 33-48]

TABLE 1  
STRUCTURE FREQUENCY\*

	Old Jefferson Town	Prairie Museum of Art and History	Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum	Shawnee Town	Historic Ward Meade Park	McPherson County Old Mill Museum and Park	Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village
Schools	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gift Shops	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Roads, Lanes, Sidewalks	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Churches	X	X	X**	X	planned	X	X
Hovels and Houses		X	X	X	X	X	X
Town Buildings	X		X	X	X	X	X
Windmills	X	X	X		X	X	X
Barns	X	X	X	X	X		X
Museums	X	X	X	X		X	X
Homes	X	X	X	X	X		
Ponds and Streams	X		X	X		X	X
Fencing	X	X		X		X	X
Picnic Facilities		X		X	X	X	
Gardens (Flower/Vegetable) or Orchards		X		X	X	X	
Bridges	X		X	X			

\*See site plans (pp. 46-47) for detailed information.

\*\*While there is no building *per se*, the privately run site is affiliated with the Mennonite Church.

#### KANSAS MUSEUM GROWTH

The number of small sites has grown in Kansas, aided by legislation passed in 1974 allowing cities, not just counties, to raise money for museums through the mill levy.<sup>3</sup> Many groups had already preserved local history through established genealogical organizations or museums, but new tax money at the city level nourished the formation of additional

groups and activities. Regardless of when or how they started, groups selected structures, moved them to different locations, and produced new "communities" from old, new, and reconstructed buildings. Table 1 shows the frequency of visual and landscape elements most prominent at each site. Table 2 shows related demographic data.

It is difficult to account for the similar choice of buildings at these sites apart from

TABLE 2  
OTHER DATA\*

	Old Jefferson Town	Prairie Museum of Art and History	Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum	Shawnee Town	Historic Ward Meade Park	McPherson County Old Mill Museum and Park	Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village
Core Historic Structure <i>in situ</i>	no	no	no	no home	Ward Meade	Mill	no
Governance	County	County	Private	City	City	County	County
County Population Density/square mile	30	8	14	745	293	30	33
Percent of Minority Population	2.7%	3%	2.4%	6.4%	16.3%	3.4%	6%
County Per Capita Income	15,538	18,276	14,833	26,156	19,558	17,443	17,441
State Rank	71	30	84	2	17	40	41
Town Population	Oskaloosa 1140	Colby 5396	Goessel 506	Shawnee 37,993	Topeka 120,269	Lindsborg 3076	Great Bend 17,697

\*Demographic information drawn from Thelma Helyar, ed., *Kansas Statistical Abstract, 1991-92* (Lawrence: Institute of Public Policy and Business Research, University of Kansas, 1993), pp. 6-8, 38, 74-75, 268-70. Town populations drawn from Kansas Department of Transportation Maps for each County.

the context of Kansas's settlement and early history. Kansans have traditionally viewed their state as a hard, difficult place because of its fickle and exacting climate. Its settlement spanned cyclical periods of drought, boom, and bust. The ideas of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin manifested themselves in collective aspirations toward "progress" and "improvement."<sup>4</sup> By the 1880s, writers were using a recurrent set of traits to describe Kansans:

self-reliant, independent, kind, open, thrifty, pragmatic, industrious, idealistic, moral, and—not least of all—humble. Kansans took pride in their work and were worthy specimens of plain, sensible, honest folk. Even then these were idealized traits, subscribed to as the factual results of hardship and adversity.<sup>5</sup> While this sketch of the prevailing ethos of late nineteenth-century Kansas does not explain every building choice, the state's heritage—real and

perceived—is closely tied to struggle and the resulting values attached to success and failure by individuals and communities. What is richly informative is how small communities use buildings and landscape settings to reveal their beliefs about how struggles in the past came to define the cultural values they esteem today.

#### SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

What a society wants its children to know reveals its vision of what it wants to be. It is of considerable consequence, therefore, that the most commonly found structures at these sites are schools and churches. They predominate because they were agents of social order, centers of community life and ritual, and symbols of vital community functions. Kansas communities traditionally have held schools in high esteem. Nineteenth-century settlement included lands set aside for schools, and settlers expected schools to transform their rough children into refined citizens. By teaching the

ideals of democracy and extolling the possibilities of individual economic opportunity, schools helped mold values that would create and preserve a homogeneous, orderly community. They also functioned as centers for communal activities, patriotic ritual, and the dissemination of moralistic messages of good citizenship and social order. Whether rural or urban, building the school was usually an event of paramount social significance. Many schools in rural Kansas were built even before any official organization of districts and at great cost to small communities still lacking the ease of tax support. Though many schools went without amenities and even books, education did occur, usually in the prototypical one-room schoolhouses that prevailed in nearly every community and predominate at these small sites.

Churches functioned in much the same way as schools, Christianity validating the belief that land was a commodity to be owned. Nature and its bounty were divinely intended, after all, for human domination, “to be altered and rearranged more or less” at will.<sup>6</sup> The church also provided women with socially approved outlets away from the home and served as a gathering place for watchdogs of social conduct. While acting as agents of moral improvement, churches offered their members vital experiences in service that also prepared them to perform civic duties. When faced with isolation, grasshoppers, and drought, many settlers stayed, although most wished they could be anywhere else. Some were fortified by the belief that they could affect the success of God’s vision for the nation’s political expansion.<sup>7</sup> Churches, predominantly Protestant, helped Kansas communities endure.

#### HOMES AND TOWN BUSINESSES

While buildings such as schools and churches symbolize communal values, rugged homesteads and family homes celebrate the success and progress of individuals. Most settlement-period Kansans, if they met with some success



FIG. 1. A school at Old Jefferson Town. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.



FIG. 2. Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village church. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.

and remained, went through a progression of dwellings from “hovel” to “house” to “home.” Homestead structures, first-homes or hovels, include materials of log, sod, and rock. Only at one site is a “house” present, for most sites prefer to emphasize the extent of the progression. “Homes” are more refined and represented by late nineteenth-century national trends in eclectic Victorian design. At the Goessel Site, for example, the contrast between “house” and “home” is clear: a small, plain, early immigrant house, with its outdoor oven, is placed next to the more elaborate, capacious, and fashionable home. Besides inculcating the values of progress and success, the home, even before school and church, was the

place for educating heart and mind in an extensive code of morality.<sup>8</sup>

Town buildings at the surveyed sites tend to represent the interconnectedness of town and farm, or nod to their positions as service providers; they include general stores, banks, blacksmith shops, and, less frequently, post offices, telephone exchanges, and mortuaries. Although depots were embarkation and terminal points connecting communities to the outside world, only three appear among the sites. This might reflect Kansans’ long and complicated relationship with the railroads, which was frequently combative although Kansas townsfolk were strongly dependent on railroads. All three depots are small, rather



FIG. 3. "Hovel" at the *Prairie Museum of Art and History* in Thomas County. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.



FIG. 4. "House" at the *Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum*. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.



FIG. 6. Castleton Post Office at Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.



FIG. 5. "Home" at the *Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum*. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.



FIG. 7. *Shawnee Town*. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.

nostalgic images; nevertheless, their presence acknowledges the reluctant dependency of towns on the railroad for goods and services.

Shawnee Town and Warde Meade are good examples of almost entire communities created out of an assortment of both urban and rural structures. Removed from their original locations and nestled tightly together, they lose some of their individuality in groupings arranged to produce a sense of communal wholeness.

#### FARMS AND TECHNOLOGY

Clearly distinguishable as farm structures, barns have become symbolic guarantors of agrarian origins and function in this way at these sites. The yeoman farmer, perceived as

the traditional embodiment of democracy and morality, has a connection to these structures that makes them iconic. Some Kansas farmers once considered barns so crucial to their economic survival that they built them before their own homes. In Kansas the barn has been a visual survivor in the landscape, outlasting many a failed farming endeavor. All sites but one include a barn; many have several. While housing forms seldom instantly disclose their urban or rural origins, barns plainly announce their rural lineage, evoking values commonly associated with Kansas farming history. Although changing agricultural practices and new technologies decreased a farmer's reliance on animals needing shelter, the barn has remained a potent conveyer of agrarian values.



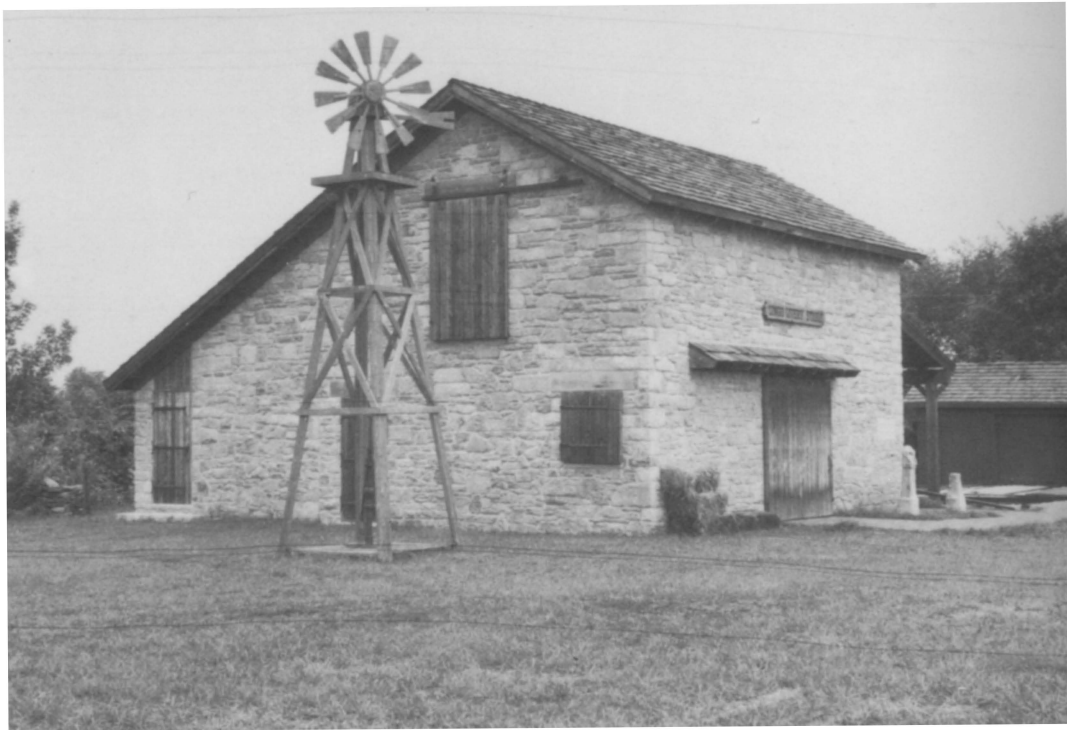


FIG. 8. *Barn at Historic Ward Meade Park.* Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.

One technological innovation at six of the seven sites—the windmill—objectifies technology on the Plains. In Kansas the windmill stood above every farm like a totem, serving physical rather than spiritual needs.<sup>9</sup> It was not only reasonably cheap but capitalized on persistent Kansas winds. Both useful and democratic, it offered to all the possibility of conserving labor, freeing the farmer from endless hours of hand pumping and adding a measure of likely success to his enterprise. Today their squawking rusty skeletons abound in the Kansas landscape as reminders that human and animal movement was once limited to the space around them.

There is only one mill among the seven sites. Since mills represented the economic promise and strength of modern technology

to a community interested in cultivating local industry, one might expect such structures to appear more frequently. Few Kansas towns, however, had sufficient flowing water to keep a mill like the one at the McPherson site running. With their emphasis on the human scale of things, sites generally do not contain structures as large as mills. The one at the McPherson site, therefore, is a unique presence.

Historic sites incorporate miscellaneous buildings, such as an occasional shed or privy, but not frequently, since their purpose is to convey respectable values—often at the expense of life's cruder aspects. Even old farm machinery and artifacts such as millstones, or windmill heads, are placed around a site with care. As purveyors of cultural values, few sites would ever risk looking trashy.



FIG. 9. McPherson Mill. Photograph courtesy of Cathy Ambler.

#### THE RELATIONSHIP OF VALUES TO ARTIFACTS IN A MUSEUM SETTING

Although a discussion of the sites' predominant buildings helps clarify the values attached to them, it is also important to understand how the museum setting itself links value and artifact. The types of structures, their frequency, and the landscape features (offered in Table 1) support each site's historical nature. These images, whether old, new, or reconstructed, meet the general demand for historical atmosphere; their museum setting assigns them credibility regardless of their age.<sup>10</sup> This survey therefore treats site buildings as part of a whole museum creation. For example, no one anticipates an 1880s sod house to have survived on the most appropriate spot

in a created museum setting. Sod houses are, therefore, recreated to serve as necessary image-bearers of the values associated with their originals. The museum site, or collection of arranged structures, tends to become more important than the origins of its elements; the powerful visual language or experience the site transmits tends to overshadow any data concerning particular artifacts.

Table 3 untangles the blending of site features and helps distinguish the museums' added elements.

Some added elements are easy to discern, such as museum buildings, gift shops, and sculptures.<sup>11</sup> While these contemporary images would be anachronistic in a true historical setting, they produce little dissonance in a created historic environment. Picnic tables, water fountains, trash cans, and other amenities define it as a place for public use. The Ward Meade site is perhaps the best example of how concrete sidewalks, fencing, parking, lights, roads, and flower planters control the way visitors use the site.

A museum's landscape features also play a vital role in creating the impression of an inviting scene. Fencing, orchards, vegetable and flower gardens, brick or board sidewalks, and symbolic country lanes lend credible historic elements from the Kansas settlement period. Water meanders through sites in streamlets, with ponds nearby, although at many sites water sources and neatly mown grass are more representative of the contemporary management of nature than a realistic presentation of Kansas settlement landscapes. Such features further mark the human urge to impose order on the land, to replace the wild with the tame. A country lane, while suggesting the muddy way into town of the 1880s, is apt to be reliably maintained for the use of museum service vehicles.

In their combinations of landscapes and structures, historical societies or towns have chosen to transmit their communities' history and cultural values. David Lowenthal notes that the selection process, the "creation" of history, perpetuates self-awareness and

TABLE 3

## SITE IMAGES

	HISTORIC URBAN/RURAL	CONTEMPORARY
STRUCTURES	School Church Town/Farm Buildings Houses Utility Buildings Bridges Depots Bandstands Windmill Mill, Powerhouse, Dam	Museum Gift Shop Picnic Tables Storage Buildings Sculptures Bridges
LANDSCAPE	Fencing Gardens (Vegetable & Flower) Water, Ponds, and Streams Roads, Lanes, Sidewalks Scattered Artifacts Orchards Trees	Fencing Trees and Shrubs Water, Ponds, and Streams Roads, Lanes, Sidewalks Lighting Planters Trash Cans and Parking Lots Picnic Tables and Water Fountains

identity. Groups define themselves to ensure their continuity by making “collective statements about the past [that] help to conserve existing arrangements,” which in turn sustain “the feeling of belonging to coherent, stable, and durable institutions.”<sup>12</sup> The process involves selecting values a community wishes to have recognized about itself and merging them in an assembled historical site. Historic sites, therefore, are containers of community history that capture in buildings and the landscape the values contemporary communities have chosen to celebrate as outgrowths of the Kansas settlement experience.

Just as site landscapes reflect contemporary notions of order, the buildings project values that Kansas communities wish to see extolled today. Table 4 records these dominant cultural values, along with conditions that have been erased.

Since sites are tributes to success, they offer no symbols of failure. A well-kept 1930s Dust Bowl house, for example, has no derelict and abandoned farm house counterpart. Moreover, the hovel-house-home progression is meant to imply that home ownership was common, for its opposite, landlessness, signifies impermanence, failure, and lack of community stability.

TABLE 4  
CULTURAL VALUES

APPARENT	MISSING
Success	Failure
Closeness	Distance
Harmony	Conflict
Stability	Instability
Control of Nature	Wilderness
Simplicity	Complexity
Timelessness	Change

Closeness is sensed by the way buildings are arranged to mix contentedly together, merging rural and urban landscapes. Most share a commons or a focal point, suggesting cohesiveness. This is particularly true at the Old Jefferson Town Site where a jumble of buildings, removed from the original locations that gave them meaning, has been arranged and positioned to create an illusion of coherence. While two sites (McPherson Old Mill Museum and Park, and Historic Ward Meade Park) retain a core historic structure *in situ*, others appear to have been designed and situated with their proximity to a major highway or the interstate system in mind.

Harmony reigns not only because buildings have been dislodged from their original contexts, but because the museum landscape offers little opportunity to represent conflict. Real communities often experienced discord between their rural and urban residents. Different social classes dwelled in these communities, and political contingencies led to their vying for power. Housing standards varied between “haves” and “have nots,” for example, but no ramshackle shanties of the poverty-stricken are found at these sites.

Distance was of major significance in the development of Kansas farm-town communities before the automobile. One researcher has argued that farmers may have measured their worlds by distances from their homeplaces.<sup>13</sup> If a farmer had stock, he or she had to be home by the end of day to feed it; distance “to” and “from” was vital. These sites ignore distance and time, collapsing them into manageable settings.

Positive cultural features allow a community, which is actually more diverse than its historic site professes, to use and enjoy its reconstructed past for a variety of ambitious ends. If a site revealed contentious values, it would have difficulty fulfilling its multiple purposes—sacred, secular, and profane. Were a site known for disclosing a community’s experiences with conflict, instability, and failure, for instance, its purpose of reinforcing local citizen identification with an ethos of unthwarted historical progress would be frustrated. While its mission may be to collect and protect the community’s relevant cultural artifacts for posterity, interpret them, and educate the community about their meaning and use, a site serves many masters. It also must function as a business that can sustain itself, and as a tourist attraction satisfying the hopes of its local chamber of commerce.

A site’s sacred use is most frequently as a memorial. Historic sites commemorate the transformation of the landscape by Kansans who began the “settlin-up” process. Those wishing to read the past as a contrast to what they perceive as the morally inferior present of American society at large can pay homage to those valued personality traits deemed necessary for success. Sites commemorate by encouraging people to recall their own myths and images of how life used to be. The artificial environment, the created historic site, has the power to arouse reflections on such virtues, for, as James M. Mayo has noted, “a memorial is an artifact that imposes meaning and order beyond the temporal and chaotic experiences of life.”<sup>14</sup> Buildings and artifacts carefully selected to offer visual representations of

positive community values allow a site's memorial role to serve just about anyone.

Rites of remembrance can renew the secular goal of identity definition, discussed earlier, through pleasurable public events. Six of the seven sites perform rites of remembrance: Thomas County, for example, celebrates "Threshing Days"; McPherson, a "Heritage Christmas." People attending and participating in such communal events are offered opportunities to affirm, evoke, assign, revise, and communicate the conventional symbols and meanings of a desired cultural order. They may celebrate the successes of the harvest, the close affinity of farm and town, or a sense of general accomplishment in a temporary event.

The sites' most intrinsic secular value is education. Their settings themselves communicate this value to communities through the visual language of landscape arrangement and building selection, linking artifacts to community values and imprinting the linkage on the public's mind. This visual language is further illuminated and embellished by special talks, tours, and programming. Children and adults come to sites to learn about their local heritage, memorialize the past, and participate in rites of remembrance. Visual landscape and site interpreters convey educational messages that weave a site's values into the fabric of everyday life.

Profane or worldly uses of a site can also produce gratifying results, but there are limits to what is acceptable. Towns are quite happy to capture their share of tourist dollars. Historic groups and chambers of commerce promote their sites as tourist attractions, and state visitors' centers carry brochures and information to publicize them. Clearly, if tourists stay in a community even for a short time they spend money. Rites of remembrance draw huge crowds, translating attendance into income. Church organizations sell baked goods, craft makers ply their trades, and motels and restaurants eventually pump tourist dollars back into the community.

The most visible business features of sites themselves are gift shops, which capitalize on community values and convert the past into cash. Gift shops must sell materials that are site-related or risk losing their nonprofit status, but they may also sell "suitable" local gift items and indeed have become outlets for goods made by local artisans. In all these ways, then, visitor dollars are funneled into a community, some of which eventually return to the historic site.

The mixed uses a museum site sustains and benefits from profoundly affect the visual landscape. At the same time, the landscape reflects and refines how a community sees itself. Although mixed uses encourage considerable imaginative flexibility within a limited theme, they cannot violate the values historic sites are meant to display and celebrate. Community values, then, are paramount in determining what appears in the landscape and how sites are used.

#### IMAGE AND SMALL TOWN IDENTITY

A review of structure frequency, apparent values, and site use at small historic sites in Kansas, along with the materials presented in the Tables and the resulting observations, confirms what John Jakle notes in his study of the *American Small Town*: "[P]eople behave not so much according to reality, as to reality conceptualized. It is the image of place that is important."<sup>15</sup> Each of the small historic sites in Kansas is a creation and embodiment of its community's image of itself.

Wilbur Zelinsky observes that small communities seem to be in search of an identity and what sets them apart from other towns. He argues that the forces of homogenization in government, commerce, travel, communication, and mass culture at the national and international level intensify the urge for individuation, even for communities.<sup>16</sup> Zelinsky may be right when it comes to these Kansas sites, for the choice of structures almost totally denies dependencies. The sites create a world

of self sufficiency, communal pride, and independence from outside influences.

The enormous changes Kansas towns have experienced in the twentieth century have tended to diminish their identities. Small towns once had stronger power bases and larger populations. Current demographics record the magnitude of their transformation. Radically reduced perceptions of time and space ushered in by the automobile and curtailed again by air travel have further weakened the individualized identities of small communities. Until interstate highways sped travelers through Kansas, some communities were able to preserve identities as “stopping places” on the state highway system. Traveling from town to town demanded patterns of slowing down as well as speeding up. The “Travel Court” may have been a good place to stay; “Sarah’s Cafe” may have had a reputation as a good place to eat. Perhaps the public park had an enticing swimming pool or picnic site. Communities had something unique to offer, since cafes, lodgings, parks, and ice cream parlors varied from place to place. The atmosphere for travelers has changed so fundamentally that now it hardly matters where one stops leaving the Interstate. Just barely off the exit ramp are standardized Holiday Inns and Pizza Huts offering the anodyne of familiarity. Few travelers venture beyond the safe world of the strip or find their way to a town’s interior. People’s willingness to travel greater distances to shop has further contracted the sphere of influence over which towns once held sway. The small town has become less “used.” Now shoppers from western Kansas drive to Denver for the day, a distance of some 250 miles.

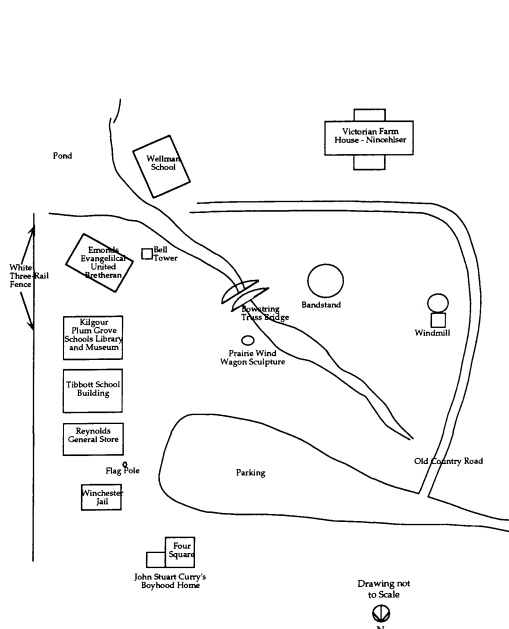
## CONCLUSION

Each of these Kansas sites boasts some uniqueness. The Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum commemorates the Mennonite immigrant experience in Kansas and the introduction of Turkey Red Wheat; the McPherson County Old Mill Museum and Park

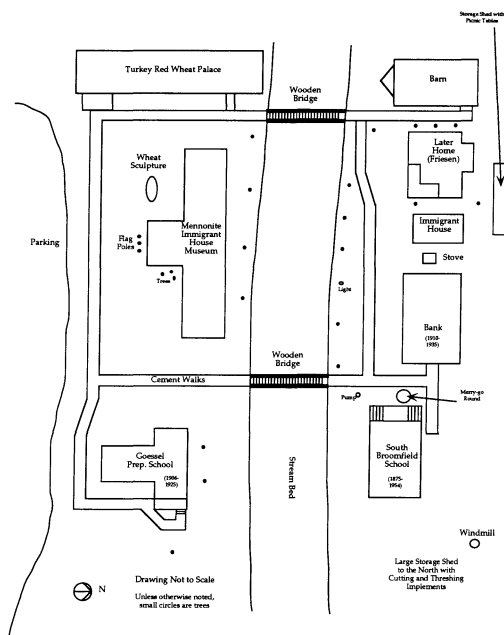
celebrates the Swedish immigrant experience and the mill’s contribution to the community. The Thomas County Museum of Prairie Living focuses on wheat farming and the Plains experience, while the Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village, nearly in the heart of Kansas, pays homage to the county’s rural structures. Old Jefferson Town in the rolling woodland area of eastern Kansas stresses its natural surroundings. The more urban Shawnee Town and Ward Meade sites convey less discernible regional messages and do not focus on immigrant experiences, but differ in number of houses and their arrangement. Although each of the seven sites manifests unique qualities, their communities have selected many of the same structures as links to their central values. Sharing a perspective on the difficulties encountered in Kansas’s settlement process, the citizens of these communities wish to enshrine the values they believe laid the groundwork for the state’s social, political and economic history—and continue to define who they are now.

What small Kansas communities wanted to be and how they wish to see themselves today result in the idealized history offered at these historic sites. The cherished values they believe helped them survive the difficulties of settlement, dust storms, Depression, the devaluation of small farmers, and a declining and aging rural population perpetuate reassuring myths, such as the idea that “stickers,” or Kansans who remained in the state and stuck things out, made a go of it by possessing the right qualities—self reliance, independence, industry, thrift, morality, and humility. The focus of these sites consequently proscribes their ability to place their communities in the context of historical movements and impoverishes their account of the past’s rich complexities and diversities of experience. Their inwardness locks the sites into a timeless world where all is well. Their persuasive visual language constantly expresses to their communities exactly what they want to know about themselves.

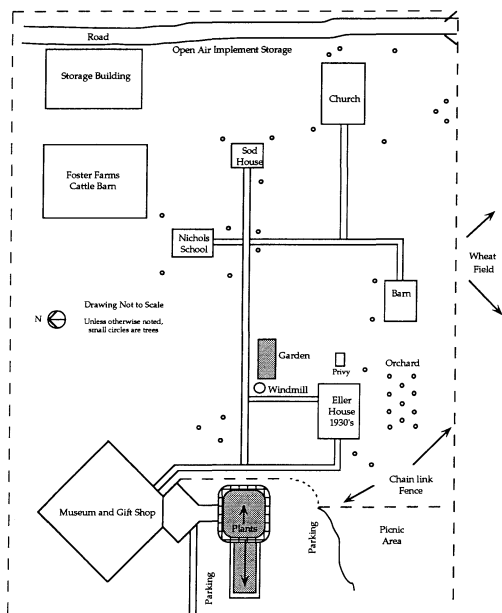
# SITE PLANS (MAPS BY CATHY AMBLER)



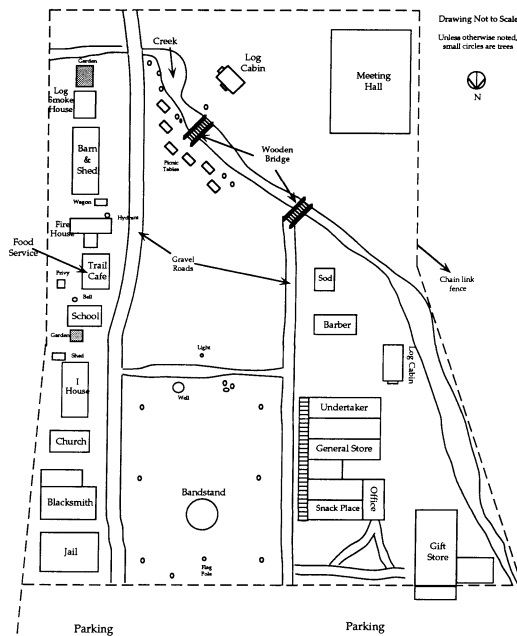
Old Jefferson Town Site (approximately six acres).



Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum (approximately five acres).

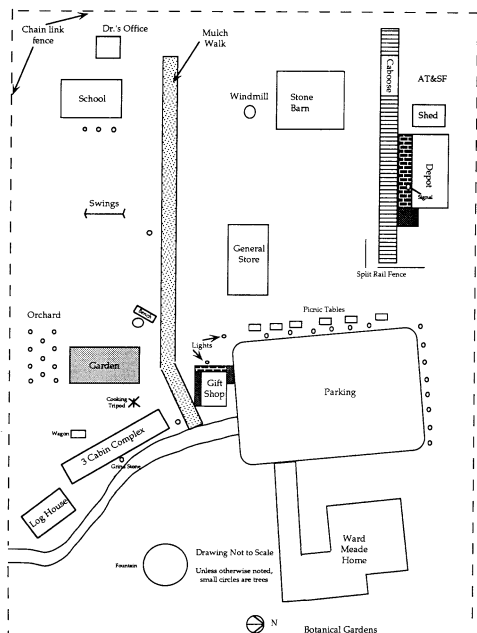


Prairie Museum of Art and History (twelve acres).

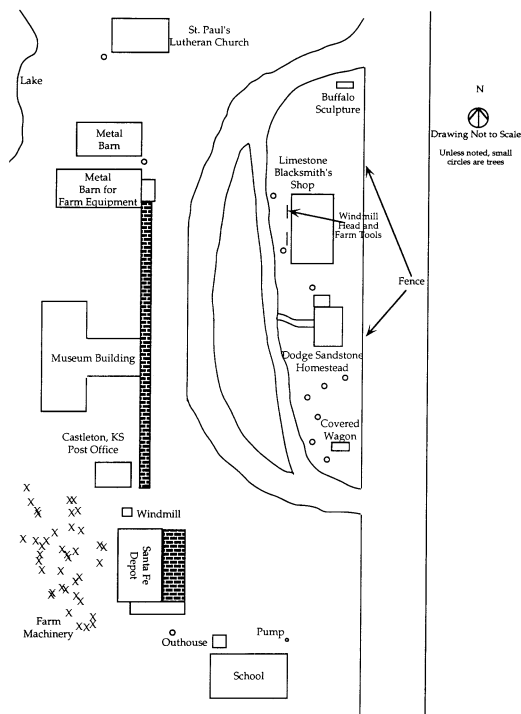


Shawnee Town (approximately six acres).

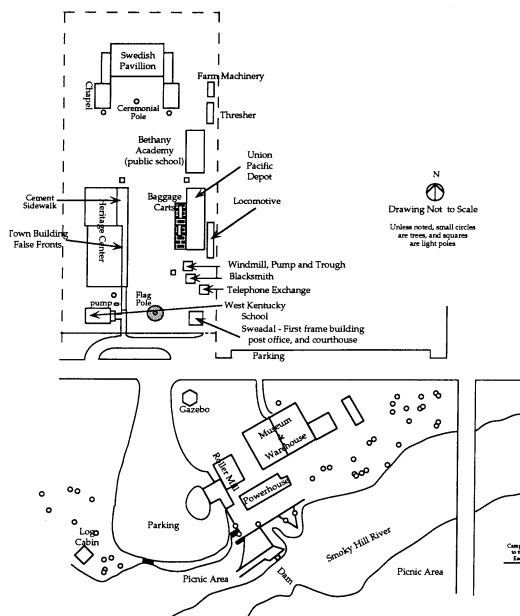
## SITE PLANS (MAPS BY CATHY AMBLER)



*Historic Ward Meade Park (unknown acreage).*



*Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village (unknown acreage).*



*McPherson County Old Mill Museum (unknown acreage).*

### NOTES

1. Kansas was settled over approximately thirty-five years: the earliest counties in 1854; the last five counties, in western Kansas, in 1888.

2. For material culturalists, this issue is highly significant, for it is difficult to make generalizations about the meaning of artifacts. We have to look to examples of patterns over time, and even then it is difficult to conclude there are commonly understood values attached to those patterns. Dell Upton has argued that if we use a semiotic approach to help understand the choices people make in adopting and adapting building forms, then material culture can become a means of primary research rather than merely furnishing supporting



or reflective evidence for larger inquiries. Dell Upton, "The Power of Things," in *Material Culture: A Research Guide*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 71. The museum site setting facilitates the merging of value and artifact.

3. *Kansas Statutes Annotated* (Ensley 1988) Sec. 12-1684 and 12-1688, pp. 244, 245-46.

4. C. Robert Haywood, *Victorian West: Class and Culture in Kansas Cattle Towns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), pp. 6-7, 33-35. Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), devotes Chapter 4 to discussing how women assumed many of the "civilizing" duties. Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 170, also notes the pervasiveness and intensity of "civilizing," which began in the 1860s and continued to the end of the century.

5. James R. Shortridge, *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1989), pp. 17-18.

6. Worster, *Nature's Economy* (note 4 above), p. 29.

7. Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretive History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Collins, 1984), pp. 242-43, 253, 256.

8. Lewis Atherton, *Main Street on the Middle Border* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 72.

9. Hine, *The American West* (note 7 above), pp. 172, 330.

10. Edward Relph, *Places and Placelessness* (London: Pion Ltd., 1983), p. 101. Relph observes that it probably does not matter to the visitor whether structures are genuine relics or complete fakes or facades, for attempts to provide accuracy of replication in visual detail appear to affect the site's impact on the visitor very little.

11. Old Jefferson Town memorializes the Prairie Wind Wagon; the Goessel Mennonite Immigrant House Museum, the introduction of Turkey Red Wheat into Kansas; and Barton County Historical Society Museum and Village, the buffalo.

12. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, 3rd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 213-14.

13. See Dennis Domer, "Commons on the Prairie" (Master's thesis, George Washington University, 1990), pp. 10-15.

14. James M. Mayo, "War Memorials as Political Memory," *Geographical Review* 78 (1988): 62. Mayo paraphrases Yi-Fu Tuan, "The Significance of the Artifact," *Geographical Review* 70 (1980): 462-72.

15. John Jakle, *The American Small Town: Twentieth-Century Place Images* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1982), p. 172.

16. Wilbur Zelinsky, "Where Every Town is Above Average: Welcoming Signs along America's Highways," *Landscape* 30, no. 1 (1988): 1-10.