



119

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Low Center School - District 115  
Other names/site number KHRI # 201-3790-00001  
Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Public Schools of Kansas

## 2. Location

Street & number SW Corner of Indian Road & 27<sup>th</sup> Road not for publication  
City or town Morrowville vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Washington Code 201 Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local Applicable National Register Criteria: x A \_\_\_ B x C \_\_\_ D

Patrick Zollner Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date 2-11-14

Kansas State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_ other (explain:)

Greg Edson H. Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 4-7-14

Low Center School – District 115  
Name of Property

Washington County, Kansas  
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**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

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

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
3		<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: School

Vacant/Not In Use

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: Vernacular one-room schoolhouse

foundation: Stone; Concrete  
walls: Wood: Clapboard  
roof: Metal: tin  
other: Wood windows

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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

### **Summary**

The Lowe Center School is located in rural north-central Kansas, three miles south of the Kansas-Nebraska border. The former one-room school is at the southwest corner of the intersection of 27<sup>th</sup> and Indian roads north of Morrowville in Lowe Township, Washington County. The building faces east toward Indian Road and is situated on a one-acre parcel, which also includes two wood-frame outhouses at the northwest and southwest corners of the property.

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### **Elaboration**

#### *Schoolhouse (built 1884, contributing)*

Built in 1884, the one-story, wood-frame building is clad with horizontal clapboards, rests on a limestone and concrete foundation, features the original double-hung wood windows, and has a metal roof covering an older wood shingle roof. The building has an inset central entrance flanked by two anterooms. There is an interior metal stovepipe that extends above the roofline near the northwest corner of the building. A defining feature of the building is the bell tower atop the peak of the gable roof near the entrance.

There are two wood-frame outhouses – one each at the northwest and southwest corners of the property. The site slopes downward from west to east.

#### *Exterior*

The east (primary) elevation features a full-width entry vestibule with a central recessed entrance. It appears this entry vestibule may have been added later, as it has a distinctly separate foundation from that of the schoolhouse. It is situated on a raised concrete foundation, and is accessed by concrete steps. It has a hipped roof with asphalt shingles. The entry bay contains four windows – one on each side of the recessed entrance and one each on the north and south sides of the vestibule. Access to the interior of the building is through one of three doors: a central recessed door, and through a door on either side of the recessed entry through the boys' and girls' coat closets.

The south (side) elevation includes three, 2-over-2 wood windows with exterior wood-frame screens. The north (side) elevation is the same with three, 2-over-2 wood windows with exterior wood-frame screens. The windows on the north elevation are in poor condition, with glass panes falling out. The center window has been boarded to protect it from additional deterioration.

The west (rear) elevation has no fenestration. There is a small, shed-roof bay that spans the north two-thirds of the elevation. It is believed this was used for the storage of coal, wood, and supplies. This shed-roof bay is clad with the same horizontal wood siding, contains a single fixed window on its south elevation, and two hinged openings on its west elevation. It is not known if this shed-roof bay is an original feature or was added later.

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### *Interior*

One accesses the interior through one of three doors on the east (front) wall of the building. One can enter directly into the building through the central exterior door or through the flanking anterooms. The north anteroom was used for both boys' and girls' coats; the south anteroom had a hand-washing area and was used to store lunchboxes, the drinking water crock, teacher supplies, and cleaning supplies. These anterooms are roughly finished with flush horizontal boards on the walls and ceilings. The spaces feature a concrete floor and the windows and doors feature simple square wood trim. The wood surfaces are painted. Five-panel doors topped by a transom window on the west wall of the anterooms lead directly into the classroom space.

The interior includes a single classroom with wood floors, lathe-and-plaster walls with fiberboard and a wood wainscoting, a pressed metal ceiling, and chalkboards extending around the south, west, and north walls. Historic light fixtures hang in a row down the center of the classroom space. The window and door openings feature decorative wood trim that includes corner bulls-eyes. There is a vertical 4-panel door on the west wall of the classroom that leads into the shed-roof storage bay attached to the west end of the building.

It appears the central door on the east wall may have been added later, perhaps when the entry bay was added or enclosed, as its interior trim does not match with that of other doors and windows. It also appears the classroom may have been oriented to face east, given the arrangement of the chalkboards.

Though they are not affixed to the floor, there are four rows of old desks. Each desk is big enough for two students.

### *Southwest Outhouse (date unknown, contributing building)*

A wood-frame outhouse is situated behind the schoolhouse at the southwest corner of the property. It has a rectangular footprint, is clad in horizontal clapboards, and has a shed roof. The door is on the east wall of the outhouse.

### *Northwest Outhouse – (date unknown, contributing building)*

A second wood-frame outhouse is situated behind the schoolhouse at the northwest corner of the property. It exhibits similar characteristics to the outhouse opposite. It has a rectangular footprint, is clad in horizontal clapboards, and has a shed roof. The door is on the east wall of the outhouse.

### *Integrity*

Though the building is in deteriorated condition, it retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, feeling, association, design, workmanship, and materials. Alterations typical to one-room schoolhouses include the addition of entry vestibules and storage sheds (both attached and detached). Often, as is the case with Lowe Center School, these changes are done within the period of significance and do not detract from the original building.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Areas of Significance**

Education \_\_\_\_\_

Architecture \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1884-1963 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1884, 1963 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown \_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins with the construction of the school in 1884 and ends when the school closed due to consolidation in 1963.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**

N/A

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### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

### **Summary**

The Lowe Center School is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* multiple property nomination under Criteria A and C for its local significance in the areas of education and architecture. It is an example of the One-Room Schoolhouse property type, as defined by the multiple property nomination. The schoolhouse was built in 1884 and served district 115 in Washington County until it closed in 1963.

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### **Elaboration**

Travelers began passing through what is now Washington County, Kansas in the early 1840s along the Oregon and California trails, and permanent settlement of the area began in the late 1850s after Kansas Territory was opened in 1854. One of the county's well-known trail-related sites is Hollenberg Station, an outpost established by Gerrat and Sophia Hollenberg in 1858. They sold supplies, meals, and lodging to travelers, and became a stop on the Pony Express.<sup>1</sup> Washington County was organized in April of 1860, and Washington was designated the county seat. The county's first school district was organized in 1861 and was led by teacher Agnes Hallowell. At the time William Cutler wrote his *History of the State of Kansas* in 1883, Washington County had been divided into 120 school districts, with 110 teachers instructing nearly 5,000 school-age children. Cutler noted that "the county is settling up so rapidly that six new buildings are about to be erected for educational purposes."<sup>2</sup>

The construction of Lowe Center School in 1884 is reflective of that population growth in Washington County during the early 1880s noted by Cutler. At the time of the school's construction, the nearest post office was in the small settlement of Albia, located two miles north and two miles east. (Figure 3) C. W. Marsh is noted on an 1882 township map as the owner of this land in Section 21 from which a one-acre corner was used for the construction of a public school.

The school served grades one through eight, and the first classes were held in late 1884 with Cora Stratton serving as the teacher. School attendance records note 24 pupils between the ages of five and 18 as enrolled at Lowe Center School, and an additional eight students signed up for the spring and summer term. A sampling of annual reports from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century suggests the enrollment numbers fluctuated between 16 and 34 students.<sup>3</sup> All students noted in this sampling of annual reports were white.

1907-1908:	Clara Benne taught 34 students
1910-1911:	Marie Benne taught 34 students
1923-1924:	Joe Portwood taught 34 students
1931-1932:	Ruby Wertenberger taught 39 students

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Lissandrello, "Hollenberg Pony Express Station" National Register of Historic Places nomination (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1966), 4. Accessed online 25 November 2013  
<[http://www.kshs.org/resource/national\\_register/nominationsNRDB/Washington\\_HollenbergPonyExpressStationNR.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/nominationsNRDB/Washington_HollenbergPonyExpressStationNR.pdf)>.

<sup>2</sup> William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: Andreas Publishing Co., 1883), 1056.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report of District Clerk of Lowe Center School District 115. 1907-1908; 1910-1911; 1923-1924; 1931-1932; 1936-1937; 1937-1938; 1944-1945; 1947-1948. Copies in National Register file, Cultural Resources Division, Kansas Historical Society.

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1936-1937: Thelma Terpening taught 27 students  
1937-1938: Kathryn Dull taught 22 students  
1944-1945: Agnes L'Ecuyer taught 16 students  
1947-1948: Bonnie Cassill taught 21 students

School districts in Washington County were being consolidated throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s. Low Center School closed in 1963 and was the last rural school to close in Washington County. After Low Center School closed, it was used by area residents as a community center. Local families met there for social functions for many years, but it has remained unused since before 1980.

Area resident Leo Miller was a long-time caretaker of the building. Miller scraped and painted the school with 27 gallons of white paint in about 1986. At about the same time, the wood-shingle roof was replaced and the belfry rebuilt. Sadly, Miller died of a heart attack in January 1987 while cutting weeds along the property's fence line.

The Low Center School is one of only a few remaining one-room schoolhouses in Washington County. At one time there were 146 school districts in Washington County, with schools built close enough so students could walk. After World War II, state public officials and education leaders evaluated the status of public school infrastructure in Kansas and found over 80% of school facilities were rural, with over 50% being one-room schools serving less than 9% of the state's primary and secondary students.<sup>4</sup> These findings, coupled with a declining rural population in many areas led to the construction of city primary and secondary schools able to serve many more students – both rural and urban.

The land surrounding the schoolhouse has changed hands a number of times, as documented by numerous county maps.

1882 Plat map lists C.W Marsh as the owner of Section 21  
1906 Mortgage lists David W. Norris purchasing this land  
1906 Plat map lists David W. Norris as the owner of Section 21  
1968 plat map lists Ida Mae Mason as the owner of Section 21

Today, the schoolhouse is owned by Stella and Robert Fenn. Stella, whose family owned surrounding land, attended the school as a young child.

### *One-Room School Architecture*

According to Brenda Spencer's *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* National Register multiple property documentation form, "The earliest school sites were typically one acre, located in the corner of a section. In addition to the federal government setting aside Section 16 (and later 36) for the use of common schools, farmers often sold or donated land for the community school."<sup>5</sup> The latter was true in the case of Low Center School.

Regarding one-room schoolhouse architecture and stylistic features, Spencer notes:

The simple form of the country school reflected its function. Even before the standardization period, a common plan emerged for the country school and is still distinguishable in the remaining schoolhouses

<sup>4</sup> A. F. Throckmorton, *The Kansas System of Schools* (Topeka: Kansas State Department of Public Instruction, 1962), as quoted in Brenda Spencer, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* National Register multiple property documentation form (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 2004), E-25.

<sup>5</sup> Spencer, E-17.

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that dot the landscape today...The basic plan was a simple rectangular form, typically with three windows on each side and a single door (sometimes flanked by windows) on one end (the front). The frame or stone buildings were only one story with a stone foundation and a gable roof. A brick or stone chimney was in the center or rear of the building, depending on the location of the stove inside. The front entrance was typically covered by a small hip or gable roof extensions and there was typically a cupola or bell tower at the front gable end. Exterior style varied with local taste. The most common architectural stylistic influences (in Kansas) included Gothic Revival, Queen Anne and Romanesque. Stylistic influences were manifested in the details of windows and doors and the bell tower.<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after statehood, the Kansas Department of Public Instruction was offering suggestions on schoolhouse desing. One of the earliest documented architect-designed schoolhouses in Kansas was constructed near Lawrence in the late 1870s (Sunnyside School). The design, by Topeka architects Haskell and Wood, was published in the 1879-80 Second Biennial Report of the State Superintendent.<sup>7</sup> [It featured a double-door entrance and a bell tower, not unlike Lowe Center School.]

...There are four general stylistic categories for the country school: folk vernacular, mass vernacular, architect-designed through plan books, and the rare commissioned design. Folk vernacular relied on the expertise of local settlers and available materials while mass vernacular utilized machine-produced materials – dimensional lumber and brick...By the 1880s, the national trend toward standard school designs took hold in Kansas and school designs were distributed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction.<sup>8</sup>

The Lowe Center School reflects the hallmarks of one-room schoolhouse design in its setting, design, and function.

### *Summary*

The Lowe Center School is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the *Historic Public Schools of Kansas* multiple property nomination under Criteria A and C for its local significance in the areas of education and architecture. It is an example of the One-Room Schoolhouse property type, as defined by the multiple property nomination. The schoolhouse was built in 1884 and served district 115 in Washington County until it closed in 1963.

<sup>6</sup> Spencer, E-16.

<sup>7</sup> Spencer, E-17.

<sup>8</sup> Spencer, F-30.

Low Center School – District 115  
Name of Property

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Annual Report of District Clerk of Low Center School District 115. 1907-1908; 1910-1911; 1923-1924; 1931-1932; 1936-1937; 1937-1938; 1944-1945; 1947-1948.

Cutler, William G. *History of the State of Kansas*. Chicago: Andreas Publishing Co., 1883.

Lissandrello, Stephen. "Hollenberg Pony Express Station" National Register of Historic Places nomination (Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 1966), 4. Accessed online 25 November 2013  
<[http://www.kshs.org/resource/national\\_register/nominationsNRDB/Washington\\_HollenbergPonyExpressStationNR.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/nominationsNRDB/Washington_HollenbergPonyExpressStationNR.pdf)>.

*Plat Book of Washington County, Kansas*. Des Moines, IA: Brown-Scoville Publishing Company, 1906. Accessed 28 January 2013 online at: <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209435>.

Spencer, Brenda. "Historic Public Schools of Kansas" National Register multiple property documentation form. Topeka: Kansas Historical Society, 2004. Accessed 29 January 2013 online at:  
[http://www.kshs.org/resource/national\\_register/MPS/Historic\\_Public\\_Schools\\_Kansas\\_mps.pdf](http://www.kshs.org/resource/national_register/MPS/Historic_Public_Schools_Kansas_mps.pdf)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Kansas Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acree of Property** 1 acre

**Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.**

(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 39.958580 -97.201228  
Latitude: Longitude:

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude:

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude:

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Latitude: Longitude:

Low Center School – District 115  
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**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The Low Center School occupies one acre at the northeast portion of the property described as follows:  
Northeast quarter of Section 21, Township 1 South, Range 2 in Washington County, Kansas.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes the school and land with which it is associated.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Bonnie Wilkerson / Robert Fenn / Sarah Martin  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 2013  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_  
e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Property Owner:** (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name ████████████████████  
street & number ████████████████████ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town ██████████ state ██ zip code ██████

**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.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Low Center School  
City or Vicinity: Morrowville  
County: Washington State: Kansas  
Photographer: Sarah Martin  
Date Photographed: August 29, 2013

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

- 1 of 11: Schoolhouse – East (primary) and south (side) elevations, camera facing NW
- 2 of 11: Schoolhouse – South (side) elevation, camera facing N
- 3 of 11: Schoolhouse – South (side) and west (rear) elevations, camera facing NE
- 4 of 11: Schoolhouse – West (rear) elevation, camera facing NE
- 5 of 11: Schoolhouse – West (rear) and north (side) elevations, camera facing SE
- 6 of 11: Schoolhouse – North (side) and east (primary) elevations, camera facing SW
- 7 of 11: Southwest outhouse – East (primary) and north (side) elevations, camera facing SW
- 8 of 11: Northwest outhouse – East (primary) and north (side) elevations, camera facing SW
- 9 of 11: Schoolhouse interior, south coat closet, camera facing S
- 10 of 11: Schoolhouse interior, classroom, camera facing E
- 11 of 11: Schoolhouse interior, classroom, camera facing W

### Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Low Center School – District 115  
Name of Property

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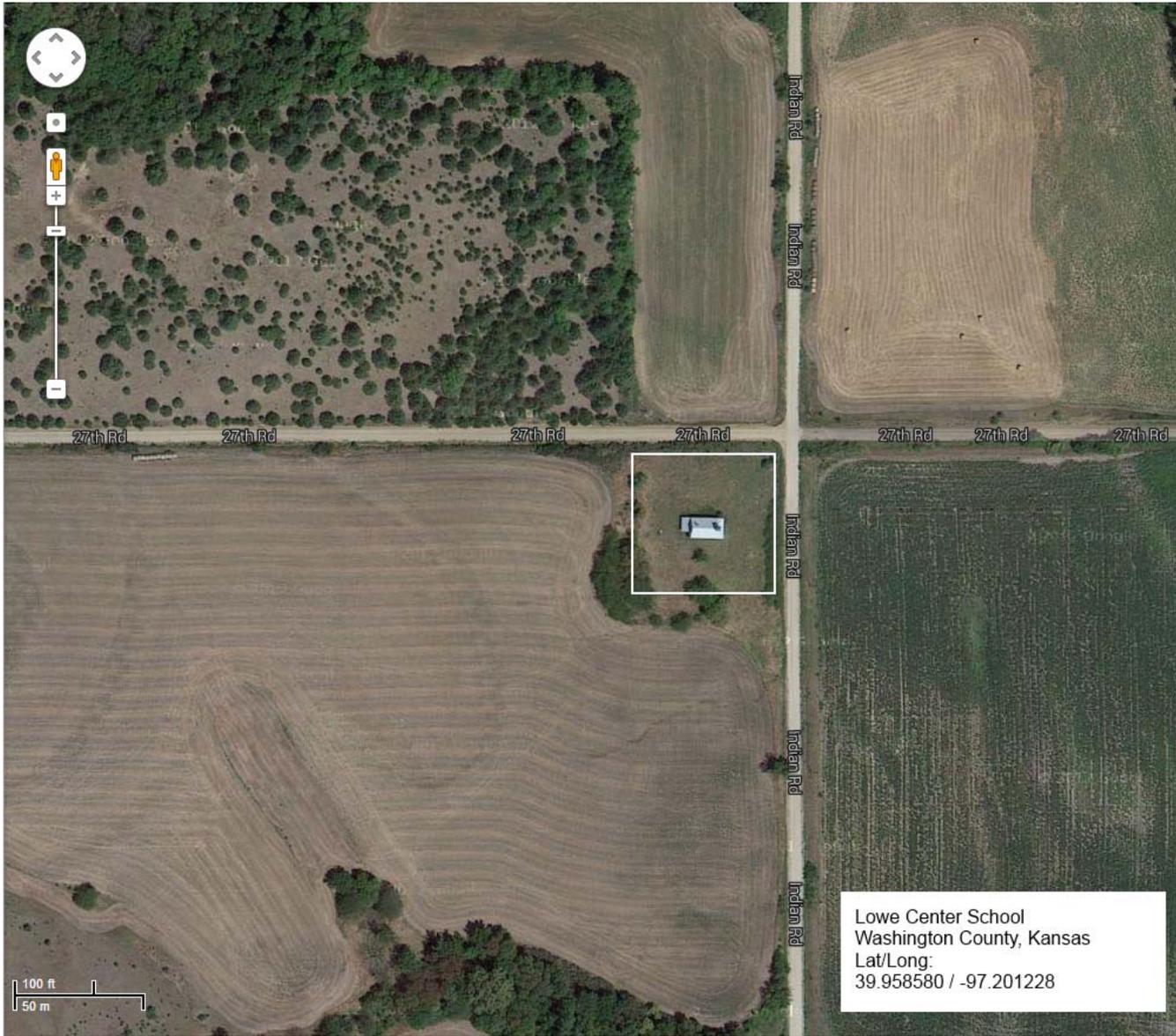
**Figure 1: Contextual aerial image, Google, 2013**



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**Figure 2: Close-in aerial image, Google, 2013**



Lowe Center School – District 115  
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Figure 3: Plat Book of Washington County, Kansas (Des Moines, IA: Brown-Scoville Publishing Company, 1906), 24.  
Source: <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209435> (Accessed January 28, 2013)

