NPS Form 10-900
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

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Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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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 Oak Grove School, District 20

Other names/site number KHRI #133-0000-00150

Name of related Multiple Property Listing Historic Public Schools of Kansas

2. Location

Street & number 20505 20th Road [ ] not for publication

City or town St. Paul vicinity [x] vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Neosho Code 133 Zip code 67357

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 5-4-16
Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date

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:

X ___ 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:)

Signature of the Keeper 6/23/16
Date of Action

5. Classification

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

X	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

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

X	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1	1	structures
1		objects
3	**1**	**Total**

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education: School
Religion: Religious Facility
Social: Clubhouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Recreation & Culture: Museum
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Vernacular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Sandstone
walls: Sandstone
Main structure: Metal;
roof: Front porch: Asphalt/Composition Shingle
other: Fascia/trim: Wood
Front porch floor: Concrete

Narrative Description

Summary

The Oak Grove School is a single-story, one-room stone schoolhouse built in 1877. The school is located within the rural political community of Lincoln Township, Neosho County, Kansas, about eight miles south of St. Paul, and about four miles north and five and one-half miles east of Parsons (Labette County), one mile north of the Neosho-Labette county line (*See Contextual Map*). The school is situated on a two-acre site in the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 36, Township 30 South, Range 20 East. Surrounded by farmland on the east and south sides (*Photo 1*), the one-acre the Oak Grove Cemetery to the west (*Photo 2*), and 20th Road on the north (*Photo 3*), the building sits parallel to the road and faces east (*See Boundary Map*). Typical of early one-room schoolhouses, this building features a simple rectangular form with a gabled roof. The walls of the building are solid native sandstone (from the "Bandera" geologic formation) quarried locally from a site that lies about one quarter mile north of the school. Bearing no specific stylistic references, the building is classified as a late 19th century American movement "vernacular" one-room school, and it retains a high degree of historical integrity. It has experienced minimal architectural modification since its original construction and remains situated on its original site. Alterations that have occurred include the addition of a front porch (1913), a bell cupola (since removed), and an architecturally-consistent coal room at the rear (1937). These changes were all done within the period of significance and in keeping with the school's original design, workmanship, and materials. The building is still in sound physical condition, resting on its original stone foundation which was laid on a solid layer of sandstone bedrock. The nominated property contains three contributing resources: 1877 school building, ca. 1895 flagpole, and a ca. 1897 cistern.

Elaboration

1. Schoolhouse *(1877, 1913 & 1937 alterations)* **Contributing Building**

East (Front) Elevation (*Photo 4*)

The gabled east (main) elevation of Oak Grove School contains a single center-spaced door measuring 3 feet wide and 7 feet high; the door itself is temporary (discussed below). About 5 feet above the door, embedded in the face of the exterior east wall above the porch roof, is a block of sandstone measuring 2 feet high and 3 feet long bearing the inscription "Oak Grove / District No. 20 / 1877" (*Figure 1*). A plain, wide frieze board completes the junction of the wall and overhanging roof eave.

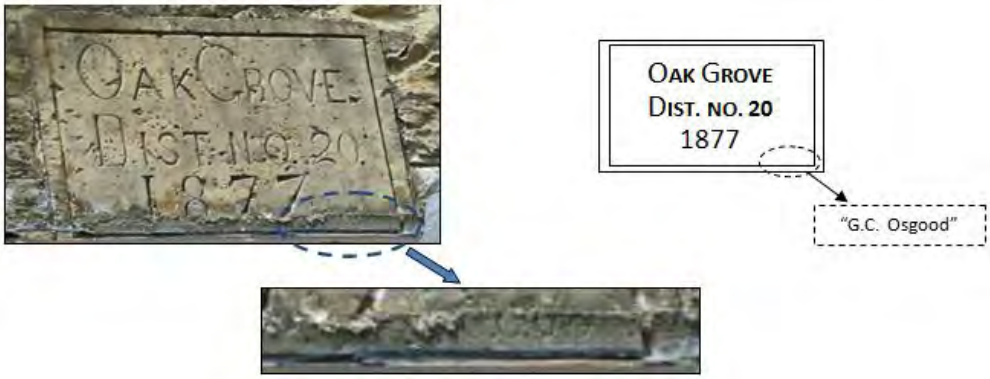

Figure 1: East inscription. G.C. Osgood was the builder.

No early photographs showing the original appearance of the Oak Grove School have yet been found. However, a late-1800s photo of the nearby Mentor School (District 22) is illustrative for comparison (*Figure 2*). Mentor School (no longer extant) was built of native Bandera sandstone and was located just three miles north and one mile west of the Oak Grove School. Both schools were built in the same period of time, shared social and scholastic events together, and also shared school district boundaries; these boundaries were occasionally adjusted to balance pupil attendance between the two schools. The only structural difference between the two schools was that the Mentor School had four windows on each side while the Oak Grove School has only three windows on each side.

Figure 2: At left is the Oak Grove School in 2015. At right is the Mentor School in the late 1800s.

Front Porch (1913) (*Photos 4, 5, & 7*)
Like the Mentor School, originally Oak Grove School did not have a covered front porch. Its current porch was built in the summer of 1913.[1] At the time of the porch's construction, a large sandstone slab that had served as the front doorstep to the Oak Grove School (similar to the slab that is shown at the foot of the front door in the photo of the Mentor School) was moved out to the front (east) edge of the covered porch to serve as a step up to the porch floor. That original sandstone slab, measuring about 5 feet long by 4 feet wide and 12 inches thick, remains at the front edge of the Oak Grove porch today and can be seen in the picture above. The front porch has a concrete floor about 18 inches thick and measures 9 feet east to west and 20 feet north to south. The top of the porch is fitted with a hip type roof that is supported at the outer corners by two 18 by 18 inch square pillars constructed of ornamental concrete blocks of early 1900s vintage. The porch roof is composition shingle.

Front Door
The original front door of the Oak Grove School was a six-panel wooden door that has been removed for preservation. Upon inspection after the door was removed, it was discovered that the original six-panel door had two bullet holes in it (*Figure 3*). While there may not be a direct correlation of these two bullet holes to the following entry in the Oak Grove Record Book of District Board Meetings, dated Thursday, July 20, 1905, the possible parallel is interesting to note: "Motion by J.S. Thomas that the teacher be instructed to seat the boys and girls on separate sides of the school house, and that any pupil caught writing notes or carrying revolvers, etc., be punished."[2] The door is currently being refurbished.

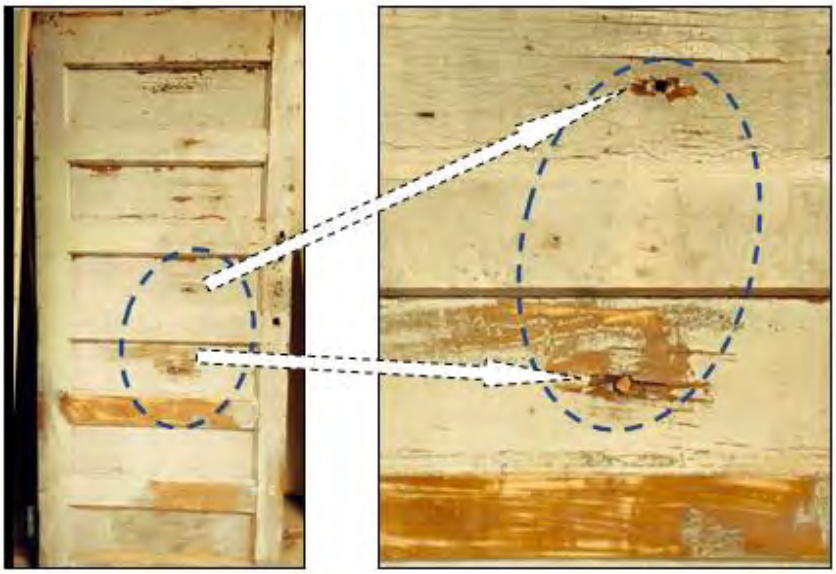

Figure 3: Historic front door with bullet holes (shown in close-up in image at right).

[1] Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, p. 121.
[2] Ibid., p. 108

North and South Elevations (*Photos 4 through 8*)

The north and south elevations of the main school building block are identical, each with three evenly-spaced windows. The windows are wood-framed, double-hung, with four panes per sash set within sandstone lintels and sills. Each window measures 29 inches wide by 69-1/2 inches tall. Galvanized metal screens cover each of the six windows – these screens were originally approved for purchase in an annual school board meeting on July 15, 1909.[3] These window "guards" appear in the earliest known class picture, taken in 1912 (*Figure 4*). Prior to the acquisition of these window guards, the replacement of "window lights" (window panes) was a fairly frequent entry in the school Treasurer's ledger, but much less so after July 1909. The sandstone window sills contain etchings from former students.

Figure 4: Oak Grove School 1912. Arrows point to window screens.

West Elevation (Coal Room Addition, 1937) (*Photos 3 through 7 & 11*)

Historically, the west elevation of the 1877 building was plain except for a single six-panel exterior door on the north side. This door became the access to the coal room in 1937 (*Figure 5*). The coal room is a shed-roofed stone addition resting on concrete slab. This coal room addition has 14-inch thick walls and measures 8 feet east to west and 21 feet north to south (interior measurements). Today, the west elevation contains two non-historic one-over-one windows; the south elevation contains a similar centered window, and a centered door is located on the north elevation. The three windows are each 28 inches wide by 36 inches high. The doorway measures about 3 feet wide by 7 feet high. The shed roof was historically tin, but it has been replaced by 26 gauge galvanized aluminum.

Figure 5: South side of the school taken in about 1937, showing the coal room at the rear (west end) of the school.

[3] Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, p. 113. The book notes, "A motion was made to buy 'guards' for all windows carried."

Figure 6: Oak Grove School, 1937.

Exterior Alterations

Cupola and School Bell
The original Oak Grove School building did not include a belfry (cupola) for a bell. However, a bell was acquired in 1913 at the same time that the porch was added to the front of the school (*Figure 6*). The belfry originally measured four feet square, with a louvered panel measuring 2-1/2 feet by 2-1/2 feet located in each of the four sides of the structure. It was fitted with a hip roof, measuring 6 feet along each side. The belfry straddled the gable roof at the front end of the schoolhouse, with the bell rope passing down through the roof and ceiling into the open classroom. The belfry lasted until about 1960, at which time it was removed from the school due to deterioration of the belfry structure and the roof of the school.[4]

School Roof
The original type of roof installed on the school in 1877 is unknown, but it may have been covered by cedar shakes.[5] For a long time the roof consisted of composition shingles overlaid on top of an earlier-installed layer of red cedar shingles (which may have been the original roofing material installed in the late 1800s). In 1993, the old layers of composition shingles and red cedar shingles were removed and replaced with 26-gauge galvanized aluminum roof.

Interior (*Photos 9 through 11*)

The interior of the 1887 building measures 33 feet east to west and 21 feet north to south with a wall thickness of 18 inches. The walls of the interior are of a plaster finish, painted white with green trim, including baseboard, window sills, chair rail, and crown molding. For the most part the plaster walls are in good condition, but there is one section on the west end of the north wall that has a vertical crack from a previous roof leak. The flooring of the interior is planked solid oak. The flooring is in fairly good condition with exception of one spot along the west end of the south wall where some rotting has occurred, again due to previous exposure to moisture.

Ceiling (*Photo 12*)
The existing ceiling of the school room is 9 feet high, but it appears that the original ceiling height was higher than this. The original ceiling framing can be seen in the attic space above the current ceiling – that framing is positioned about 2 feet higher than the height of the existing ceiling. An entry was made in the treasurer's ledger on September 24, 1920, for "Steel Ceiling."[6] This entry may indicate the first time a new ceiling was installed in the school. However, the existing ceiling today, although lowered, is a composite material common to mid-century construction. The existing lowered ceiling appears to have been installed to accommodate the wiring of electrical light fixtures; electricity was not installed in this rural area until the late 1940s.[7]

Teacher's Platform/Stage and Blackboards
There is a teacher's platform/stage at the west end of the building, also made of solid oak flooring, that measures 15 feet wide by 7.5 feet deep and about 17 inches high. There are three sections of slate blackboard on the west wall above the stage (each section being five feet wide and four feet high spaced 33 inches above the stage floor). There is also one section of blackboard on the north wall, located between the two windows on the west end of the north wall, also spaced 33 inches above the floor level. A curtain rod (made of one-inch pipe) runs overhead across the front of the stage between

[4] The Oak Grove School Historical Society still retains possession of the bell but currently keeps it on display at the Parsons Historical Society Museum.
[5] Both the Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School (August 27, 1898), p. 117 and the Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School (October 10, 1898), pp. 28-29, mention roof re-shingling.
[6] Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School, Vol. 2, p. 14. Payment of $124.85 to Scaletty Brothers.
[7] Oral history from a former student who attended this school in 1952 indicates the ceiling was this material at the time (conversation during site visit, March 2, 2016).

the north and south walls. This curtain rod hangs about 18 inches below the ceiling and may have been used for pulling a curtain for private teacher interviews, stage plays, etc.

School Desks and Furnishings
There are few original furnishings remaining in the school. It is unknown exactly what kind of student seating existed when the school was first built 1877, but typical of that era would have been the use of benches for seating and tables along the walls for writing. The only original furnishings remaining in the school today are: two old upright bookshelf cabinets with hinged doors (appear to be over 100 years old); two tables with hinged tops for storage of materials inside the tables (both appear to be over 100 years old); two hand-made 8-foot-long benches that appear to be quite old (and which appear to be pictured in a school photograph from 1912); two 8-foot-long tables that were once used as voting tables for the Lincoln Township voting precinct at the school.

Stove
A coal-burning stove is located in the northwest corner of the main room, to the right of the stage. The manufacturer is labeled as the "Original Enamel Range Co., Belleville, Ill., Mfrs. of Stoves, Ranges, and Heaters, (Model) No. 110."[8] The exact age of the stove is unknown; however, compared with similar stoves from the Original Enamel Range Co. with known dates of manufacture, this stove appears to be 1900s vintage.

2. Flagpole *(ca.1895)* **Contributing Object**

A flagpole is located about 40 feet north of the northeast corner of the school (*Photos 4 & 7*). This flagpole appears to have been locally constructed, consisting of two different sizes of pipe welded together. Former students of Oak Grove (still living) report that this flagpole has been in existence as long as they can remember, at least since the 1940s, but school records indicate a flagpole was in place in 1895.[9] No known other records exist that indicate a new pole was erected.

3. Cistern *(ca. 1897)*[10] **Contributing Structure**

A hand-dug cistern is located about 40 feet south of the southeast corner of the school (*Photo 1*). Covered with a concrete cap and a steel plate, the cistern measures about six feet in diameter with walls lined with brick. There is evidence of piping that once connected the cistern to the southwest corner of the school, but the roof-top guttering and downspouts no longer exist. The 12-feet deep cistern still holds water.

School records indicate that at one time there may have been both a well and separate cistern on site, but the cistern today still holds water (about 12 feet deep), indicating it may have at one time doubled as a well. School record books exhibit the following associated journal entries regarding a well and a cistern:

4. Girls' Outhouse *(ca.1890, rebuilt 1960s)*[11] **Non-contributing Structure**

Two outhouses were originally located on the school grounds. The boys' outhouse walls have collapsed, but the site is located at the south end of the property, along the fence line, about 250 feet south of the coal room. The girls' wood-framed outhouse was re-built in the 1960s (*Photos 3 & 4*). It is now in disrepair, but the structure still stands. This latter outhouse is located about 150 feet west of the school, adjacent to the fence line that borders the east side of the adjoining Oak Grove Cemetery. Because this outhouse was reconstructed after the period of significance, it is considered non-contributing.

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[8] As early as 1877 Belleville, Illinois was known as "the stove capital of the nation". At various times, at least twenty manufacturers made stoves there. See: Robert Goodrich, "Museum Puts Stove-Making History of Belleville Out on Front Burner", *St Louis Post-Dispatch* (12/13/2001): n.p.

[9] The Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, (July 25, 1895), p. 95, notes motion to purchase a flagpole. The Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School, (October 5, 1895), p. 26, records reimbursement of $4.00 to Hiram Humphrey for pole and rope.

[10] The Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, (July 29, 1897), n.p., notes that the annual school board meeting carried a motion to have a cistern built. By October 1897, the Treasurer's Record Book lists reimbursements for digging of cistern and having it spouted and a pump installed.

[11] Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School, pp. 24-25. The first mention of an outhouse in school records was recorded on December 30, 1890, when Ely Rich was reimbursed $17.45 for "Building (a) privy".

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.)

[X] 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.

[X] 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.

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.

Areas of Significance

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1877-1960

Significant Dates

1877

1960

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Osgood, George Clark (Stone Mason)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance ranges from 1877, the year Oak Grove School was built, to 1960 when the school closed due to rural district consolidation in 1960.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Oak Grove School (1877) is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its associations with public education in rural Kansas and under Criterion C for its architectural significance as a good example of an early vernacular one-room schoolhouse. The property meets the registration requirements of a Country School: One-room Schoolhouse property type, which is described in the *Historic Public Schools in Kansas* multiple property submission (MPS).[12] Built in 1877, this school building is associated with the MPS's historic context "Evolution of the Public School System in Kansas (1857-1955)." The school closed in 1960 due to rural district consolidation.

Elaboration

The Oak Grove School represents more than the story of a one-room schoolhouse. It is an iconic representation of the efforts to settle southeastern Kansas following the Civil War. The structure erected in 1877 for Oak Grove, School District No. 20, is a reflection of the trials and hardships experienced by the early settlers of Lincoln Township and the Oak Grove community. Of the 96 school districts existing in Neosho County by 1880, only three had school buildings of stone – one of those was Oak Grove.[13] Affected by the challenges of early southeastern Kansas, the citizens of the Oak Grove community felt it a priority to build a structure of permanence. Erected on sandstone bedrock, the school was centrally located within the district to facilitate its usage for more than just a school – it was also used for community meetings, church meetings, and social gatherings. And it was located on high ground to avoid flooding from the nearby Neosho River. Notably, of the more than 100 rural schools built in Neosho County in the late 1800s, Oak Grove is one of the very few that remains intact in its original location.[14]

The Osage treaty of September 1865 opened the doors for farmers and settlers to migrate into southeastern Kansas,[15] but the release of the Osage lands also paved the way to the cultivation of the prairie and the advent of the railroad. The availability of land for settlement combined with the thrust of railroad competition introduced an array of influences, both reputable and disreputable, into the region of southern Neosho and northern Labette counties. By the spring of 1870, "immigrants, honest settlers, squatters, promoters, adventurers, all accompanied by the lowest riffraff of the frontier, were flooding into southern Kansas in the wake of the railroad."[16] Lincoln Township, established in 1866, was located in the heart of this movement, and the early settlers of that township, including those of the Oak Grove community, were undoubtedly affected by the local historical events that surrounded them. On May 10, 1870 the Katy railroad reached the rail terminus town of Ladore (7.5 miles west of the Oak Grove School). Overnight five men violently ransacked the town, only to be lynched the following day. Lincoln Township lay only five miles to the east. In February 1871 the notorious Bender family settled on a farm in southern Neosho County, only 18 miles west of Lincoln Township. Just two years later the posse that sought Dr. William York, last of the many Bender victims, traversed Lincoln Township, searching from house to house for the missing doctor.[17]

Oak Grove School is a reflection of these difficult and trying times. The school is a sturdy, surviving example of the strength and determination of the early settlers who built it. It is a testament to their commitment to educate their children and protect their community while developing a wild southeastern Kansas frontier into a land of prosperity and opportunity.[18]

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[12] Brenda R. Spencer, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2005), F29-F31.

[13] W. W. Graves, *History of Neosho County* (St. Paul, Kan.: Journal Press, 1949), 483.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Ibid., 204.

[16] V. V. Masterson, *The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952), 55.

[17] W. W. Graves, *Annals of Osage Mission*, (St. Paul, Kan.: Self-Published, 1935), 176.

[18] For additional details supporting the local historical context, see Addendum: "The Story of Oak Grove School, District 20, Lincoln Township, Neosho County, Kansas." This document is on file with the State Historic Preservation Office, Kansas Historical Society.

The Establishment of School District No. 20

In his 1949 *History of Neosho County*, historian W. W. Graves writes, "About the time the first railroads reached Neosho County, the building of school houses began in earnest. Thirty-nine buildings were erected in 1870, and four years later there were 90 school buildings in the county."[19] These schools were each accompanied by the establishment an associated rural school district. By the year 1880, the number of organized rural school districts totaled 96, with a total school population of 4,475.[20]

The establishment of School District No. 20 preceded the building of the 1877 Oak Grove schoolhouse. The exact date that the District was formed is not certain, but the following records discovered in a *Miscellaneous Records Book for Neosho County, 1871-1884* indicate that District 20 was in existence at least as early as August 1871:

- As of August 5, 1871, 50 school-aged children were living in District 20;
- As of August 12, 1872, 46 pupils lived or were attending school in District 20;
- For the year 1873, George C. Hewitt was the "Director" of District 20, with William Hull as Clerk, and Noah Walters as Treasurer.[21]

This *Miscellaneous Records Book for Neosho County* also includes two noteworthy hand-drawn maps pertaining to School District 20. The first of these maps shows the boundaries of District 20, enumerating the sections contained therein (*Figure 7*).[22] The date the map was created is unclear, but it would have been drawn sometime prior to March 1873 since, per the record, it was "updated" in March 1873 when additional pencil shading was added to the northern halves of sections 23 and 24 to reflect a boundary change between School District 20 (Oak Grove) and School District 22 (Mentor).

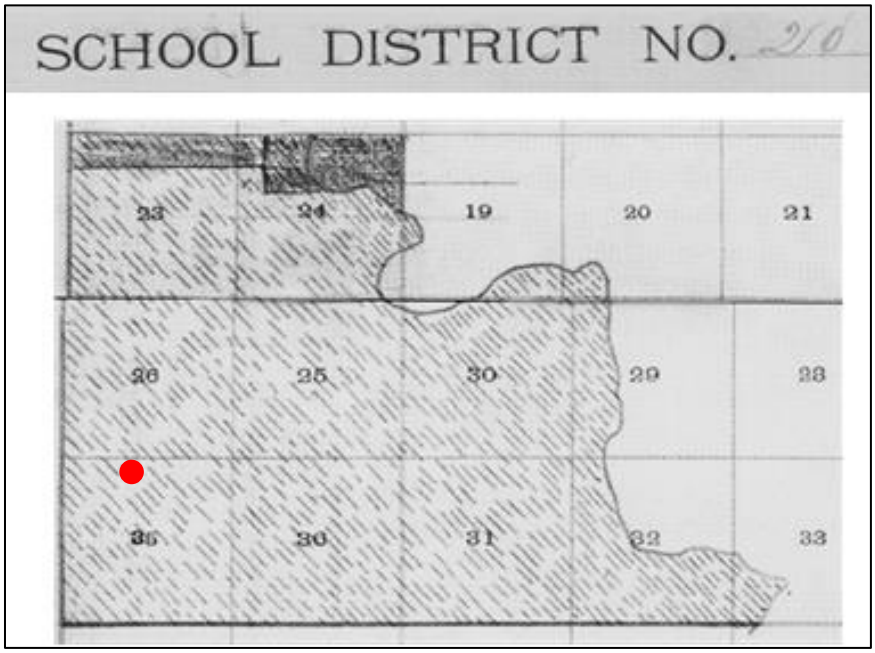

Figure 7: School District 20 Boundaries, Lincoln Township, Neosho County, Kansas. Approximate location of current Oak Grove School noted by dot.

[19] Graves, *History of Neosho County*, 482.
[20] Ibid., 483.
[21] *Miscellaneous Records Book for Neosho County, 1871-1884*, Register of Deeds Office, Neosho Co. Courthouse, Erie, KS.
[22] Ibid.

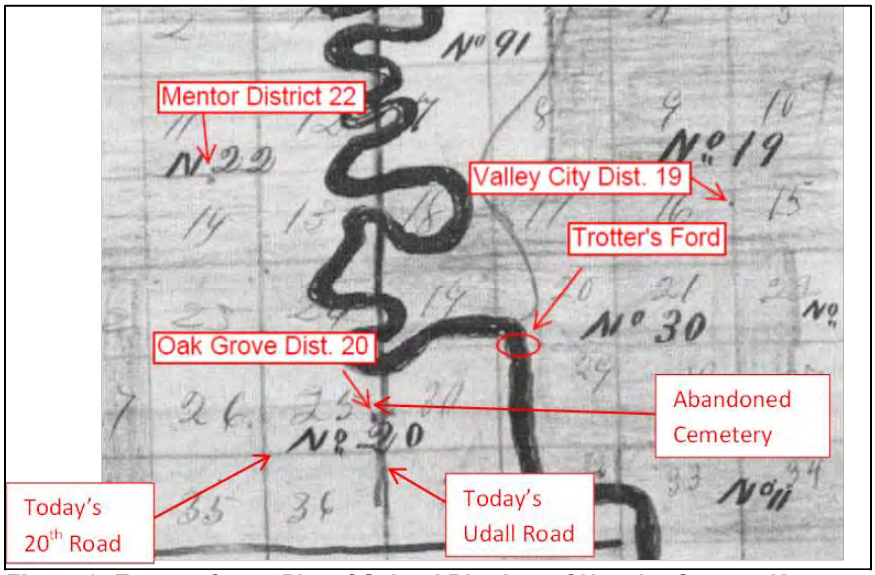

Figure 8: Excerpt from "Plat of School Districts of Neosho County, Kansas, 1871" with author's notations on original hand-drawn map. Pencil marks denote locations of schoolhouses in 1871.

The second map in the *Miscellaneous Records Book for Neosho County* delineates all the Neosho County school districts (*Figure 8*) and appears to have been edited over time. It is unclear exactly what the original content may have been in 1871, but the map is notably marked with pencil dots showing the locations of the schoolhouses for each school district in the county. The marking for the District 20 schoolhouse is faint, but it indicates that (at the time this map was made) the location of the Oak Grove School was in the southeast quarter of Section 25, Township 30 South, Range 20 East, of Lincoln Township. This location is about one quarter mile north of the junction of modern day 20th Road and Udall Road, on the west side of the road. This map helps confirm that School District No. 20 (Oak Grove) was established prior to 1877 with a schoolhouse in Section 25. By 1877, however, a decision was made to relocate the school to Section 36 and construct the stone schoolhouse that exists today.

Building a New Oak Grove School

The exact reason for the relocation of the Oak Grove School in 1877 can only be conjectured, but one possible reason is the frequent flooding of the school site in Section 25. Oral history shared at school reunions in the 1960s indicated that the original location of the school was very prone to flooding from the swollen waters of the Neosho River. This oral history also indicated that as a result of this flooding, snakes and disease were a considerable problem in the area. The Neosho River did incur severe flooding several times during the years leading up to 1877, including significant floods in the years 1869, 1871, 1873, and 1876.[23]

Corroborating this theory are the circumstances of an old abandoned cemetery in Section 25, located in close proximity to the original school site. Known locally as the "Old Oak Grove Cemetery," this cemetery was referenced in Dr. Eric Conrad's book *Neosho County Cemeteries*. Dr. Conard's record explains that some of the graves from the "Old Oak Grove Cemetery" in Section 25 were at one time relocated to the site of the "new" Oak Grove Cemetery in Section 36:

> Originally used as one of the earliest cemeteries here. It [the Old Oak Grove Cemetery] was abandoned in favor of the "Oak Grove" or Hewitt Cemetery, located next to the Oak Grove School in Section 36. Mrs. E. W. Lamb, who lived nearby in that section, said some of the bodies were re-interred in the new Oak Grove or Hewitt Cemetery. Mrs. Lamb further said that there is a large pile of stones indicating a burial lot on the east end of the old cemetery. This contains a husband, wife and two children, all of a family who died of a contagious disease in the middle 1870s. They were buried away from the rest and stones piled on top of the graves make it noticeable. There are no markers and their identity may not be known.[24]

The statement that a particular family interred in the "Old Oak Grove Cemetery" succumbed to a "contagious disease in the middle 1870s" lends further credence to the oral history citing disease as a possible reason for the relocation of the school.

The only known reference of public record to the Oak Grove School in the year 1877 is an entry in the *Neosho County Journal* (housed at the Osage Mission Museum), dated December 12, 1877, listing "Wm. Hull (Post Office: Parsons), District Clerk, District 20."[25] No newspaper account, land record or court record has yet been discovered that refers to the actual building of the school. Only a one-line entry in the Gladys Volmer papers, a granddaughter of William Hull,

[23] Graves, *Annals of Osage Mission*, 87, 91, 145, 173, 227.
[24] Dr. Eric P. Conard, *Neosho County Cemeteries* (Chanute, Kans.: Chanute Genealogical Society, 1978), n.p.
[25] *Neosho County Journal* (December 12, 1877): n.p. This journal is held at the Osage Mission Museum in St. Paul, Kansas.

corroborates the building date of the school. That lone entry states: "Re-built, 1877."[26] School records indicate that on July 27, 1899 at the Annual School Board Meeting "A motion was made and voted to build a stone coal house." The exact location of this original free-standing coal house is not known but was likely at the west of the school.[27]

The stone marker on the front of the school clearly records the date of 1877 (*Figure 1*). Along with this date and the name and of the school, the marker bears the name of "G.C. Osgood' in the lower right-hand corner. This name is significant for it both identifies the builder of the school and also corroborates the timing of the construction. George Clark Osgood was a stone mason who migrated from Saranac, Michigan to the Parsons, Kansas area sometime between 1870 and 1875. In 1870, Osgood was listed at age 22 in the federal census of Saranac, Ionia, Michigan, with his occupation recorded as a stone mason. He appears next, at age 27, in the 1875 Kansas state census for North Township, Labette County. His name is recorded again in the 1880 federal census of North Township, Labette County, at age 32, with occupation listed as a brick layer. This then places Osgood in the North Township of Labette County by the year 1877; living in the North Township of Labette County would have placed his residence just a short distance west of the Oak Grove School.

To what extent George Osgood was involved in the building of any other schools in the area is not known, but he was definitely involved in other local construction activities in the late 1870s and early 1880s, further corroborating his role in building the Oak Grove School in 1877. In August of 1878, he performed the brick work for a two-story, 24x50-foot brick building for the Osage Coal Mining Company in Parsons.[28] In September 1884 he was contracted by the city of Parsons to build a bridge over Labette Creek on the east side of town,[29] and in December 1884, he "laid out an addition to Parsons on high ground just across (east) the Labette Creek."[30]

Although George Osgood was the lead stone mason in the building of Oak Grove, it is likely that area families donated labor and materials, including the native sandstone that was quarried less than a quarter mile away. The Oak Grove school building is representative of the Country School: One-room Schoolhouse property type outlined in the *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*:

> In addition to eastern settlers, immigrants, many of whom were craftsmen such as stone masons, helped to shape Kansas schoolhouses. The earliest country schools in Kansas were built by local settlers with the available materials. These buildings are classified as vernacular in style. The schoolhouse was typically among the first community buildings constructed, along with a church. The schoolhouse symbolized permanence and was prominently located to entice new settlers as they passed early settlements.[31]
>
> A common universal form emerged: the earliest buildings were typically a rectangular plan with one open room. The wood-frame schoolhouse with wood clapboard siding and stone foundation is most common, although in areas blessed with native stone, early schools were built of local limestone and sandstone. The schoolhouses typically had a simple gable roof with wood shingles and a brick or stone chimney located at the center of the gable peak. The majority had a cupola or bell tower on the front gable. The common schoolhouse had three windows on each side and a single central door on the front, sometimes flanked by two windows. The interior of the schoolhouse was utilitarian with wood floors, plaster walls (sometimes with wood wainscoting), and plaster or wood ceilings. The schools were heated with a wood or coal stove and furnishings were limited to students' desks, the teacher's desk, and typically a slate chalkboard.[32]

These early one-room schools frequently served multiple purposes within the community, such as providing space to hold religious services, community meetings, and classes.[33] Such was the case with the Oak Grove School, which is a classic example of this rural, vernacular-style, multi-purpose building.

Early History of the Oak Grove School, 1877-1899

The late 1870s was a period of rapid development throughout Neosho County and particularly in nearby Parsons. As a developing city, Parsons had achieved such notoriety that it actually received a stopover visit from the President of the

[26] Personal Papers of Gladys Volmer, held at Oak Grove School Historical Society.
[27] Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, p. 102
[28] *Parsons Weekly Sun* (August 31, 1878): n.p.
[29] *Parsons Daily Sun* (September 26, 1884): n.p.
[30] Parsons Kansas History, "1880s Timeline." Internet. http://parsonskansashistory.com/1880s.html (accessed March 1, 2016).
[31] Spencer, *Historic Public Schools of Kansas,* E-16.
[32] Ibid., F-29.
[33] Ibid., F-37.

Year	Living in District	# Enrolled
1881	81	62
1882	65	65
1883	69	50
1884	55	48
1885	47	44
1897	49	39
1898	54	46
AVG	60	51

Figure 9: Table of number of children in District 20 compared to the number enrolled at Oak Grove School. Data only available for the years shown.

United States. President Rutherford B. Hayes, traveling through Parsons by train, arrived on the evening of September 27, 1879. The President delivered a speech, attended a banquet, and remained overnight in the bustling frontier town.[34]
After leaving Parsons the next day, the President's train passed through Osage Mission, traversing Lincoln Township on that route.[35] While there is no mention of any such event in the Oak Grove School records, it is conceivable that residents of Lincoln Township attempted to watch the President's train as it passed through the countryside. With the route of the train passing within just four miles (west) of the Oak Grove School, it certainly would have been a very short field trip for students of the school to have had a one-time opportunity to wave at the President's passing train and perhaps steal a glimpse of the President.

In parallel with the development of the city of Parsons, the farms in the surrounding rural areas were also producing prodigiously. Despite being plagued with millions of grasshoppers in February 1877,[36] and more flooding of the Neosho in June 1877 and again in May 1878,[37] by October 1878 Neosho County had produced a bumper crop of 8367 acres of wheat and 66,539 acres of corn.[38] Thus, this period of time of the founding of the Oak Grove School was a period of significant growth and opportunity throughout both Neosho and Labette counties.

Between 1877 and 1899 no known newspaper articles directly reference the Oak Grove School. However, a few newspaper articles during this period do make indirect references to the school, references such as burials at the adjacent Oak Grove Cemetery for family members of those associated with the school (e.g. the interment of an infant child of P.A. Grommet, School Board Treasurer 1878-1880)[39] and to church meetings or picnics held at the nearby Trotter's Ford on the Neosho River (1.5 miles east of the school).[40]

The school's records between 1877 and 1899 were extensive, covering board meeting minutes, expenses, and enrollment.[41] These enrollment statistics were not recorded for every year, but enough data exists to conclude that the average enrollment for the time frame of 1877-1899 was about 50 students (*Figure 9*). Interestingly, these numbers compare closely with the previous two data points available for the years 1871 (Living in District = 50) and 1872 (# Enrolled = 46) when the District 20 school was located in Section 25.[42]

Though the school building had been in use since 1877, the first mention of student desks was in the summer of 1898. In July the clerk of the school board "was instructed to write letters to various school desk supply houses for quotation on school desks."[43] By the end of August, the board ordered three desks from Sherwood & Co. out of Chicago.[44]

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[34] *Parsons Weekly Sun* (September 27, 1879): n.p.
[35] Graves, *Annals of Osage Mission*, 281.
[36] Ibid., 238.
[37] Ibid., 257.
[38] Ibid., 263.
[39] *The Parsons Daily Sun* (July 15, 1886): n.p.
[40] *The Parsons Daily Sun* (August 1, 1894): 4.
[41] The Volmer Papers list school board members for the years 1878 to 1880; the Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School makes note of school board members, their elections, and meeting minutes between August 1881 and April 1921; and the Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School lists all expenses and receipts from December 1880 to July 1947.
[42] Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, 1881-1921.
[43] Ibid., p. 116.
[44] Ibid., p. 117.

In August 1966, one of the numbered students in the above table, Susie (Thomas) Pruitt (1885-1972), who attended the Oak Grove School from 1892 to about 1904, reflected back upon her experience as a young girl attending Oak Grove during the 1890s:

> Many, many times as it neared 4pm, I'd run past the barn, look down the hill towards Oak Grove and watch for the older school children to come home. Away I would run to join them – I just couldn't wait until I was one of them. Then, the big day arrived and I went to school. Oak Grove supplied me with my education and entertainment. I feel I owe an awful lot to my early training at Oak Grove.[45]

Representative of so many students who earned their education in America's one-room schools, Susie Thomas leveraged her education at Oak Grove to become a school teacher herself, going on to teach school at one-room schools in Labette County and at times substituting as a teacher at Oak Grove itself in the early 1900s.

Later History of the School, 1900-1945

The importance of the Oak Grove School to the citizens of Lincoln Township and surrounding communities is more prominently illustrated in the personal memoirs, photos, and newspaper articles for the period of 1900 forward. One very significant contribution of the Oak Grove School is that it served not only as a place for educating school children, but also as a center for social, religious, and political gatherings of the rural community of Lincoln Township. For over 80 years the school provided a central gathering place for a variety of local community concerns. On the occasion of the centennial celebration (1877 to 1977) of the construction of the Oak Grove schoolhouse, Martin Thomas, former managing editor of the *Parsons Sun*, wrote:

> From 1877 until it was closed, the old structure was the focal point of Oak Grove community functions which ran the gamut from the gaiety of weddings to the solemnity of funerals. In between were lively "literary" meetings, box suppers and other general events for which it was the logical meeting place.[46]

Writing in 1988 Frances (Salmans) Fought, a former Oak Grove student from 1912 to 1920, recorded her memories:

> Oak Grove was the only social life we had. It was our church and Sunday school, also church revivals. We had literaries [sic] and debates, Christmas programs, spelling bees, pie suppers, box suppers, last day of school programs and dinners, and also funerals... Oak Grove District 20 means so much to us as we have a lot of happy memories of Oak Grove.[47]

Numerous local newspaper articles from the early 1900s referred to these types of events that occurred at the Oak Grove School. One of the more significant examples of these was recorded in the *Parsons Daily Sun*, dated August 6, 1904:

> E. W. Percy, residing nine miles east of this place, was in the city today and told of the big picnic that is to be held at Oak Grove on the 14th of this month. Mr. Percy is the superintendent of the Sunday school and his school, a year ago, decided to have a picnic every year. Last season was the first of the picnics. He believes this will be a great picnic as the last one was attended by over a thousand people and this year that number will likely be doubled.[48]

This remarkable event places an exclamation mark on the importance of the Oak Grove School to the residents of Lincoln Township. An attendance of over 1000 people – even twice that number – on the grounds of the school would have been huge. Aside from the number of people, one can only imagine the number of wagons, buggies, and horses that had to be accommodated.

The influence of the Oak Grove community on the Neosho county political process was also important enough for politicians to invest campaign time there. One example of the political importance of the Oak Grove community and the involvement of the Oak Grove School in that process is noted in an article that appeared in the Chanute, Kansas newspaper (*The Sun*) on October 13, 1900 (*Figure 10*).

The J.M. Nation mentioned in this article was James Milton Nation. He was elected to the Kansas State House of Representatives from Neosho County in 1901 and 1903. C.A. Cox was elected to the Kansas State House of Representatives from Neosho County in 1895. Possibly both Nation and Cox were campaigning for G.W. Wheatley for Congress in the 1900 election.

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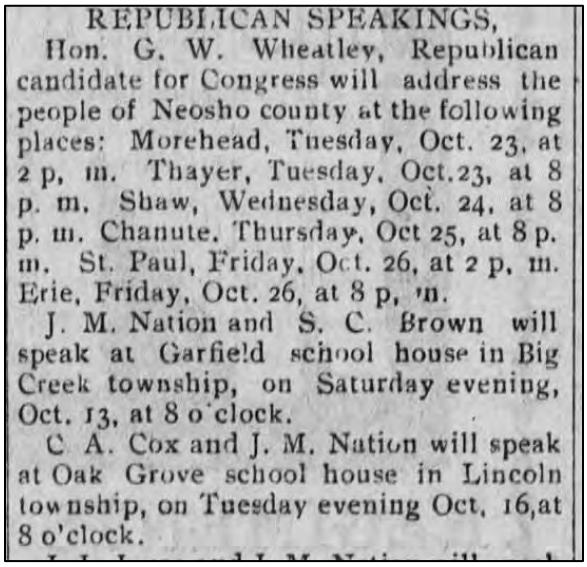
[45] *The Parsons Sun* (Thursday, July 21, 1966): 10.
[46] *The Parsons Sun* (August 7, 1977): n.p.
[47] Frances (Salmans) Fought, Personal letter to author, May 24, 1988.
[48] *The Parsons Sun* (August 6, 1904): n.p.



REPUBLICAN SPEAKINGS,

Hon. G. W. Wheatley, Republican candidate for Congress will address the people of Neosho county at the following places: Morehead, Tuesday, Oct. 23, at 2 p. m. Thayer, Tuesday, Oct. 23, at 8 p. m. Shaw, Wednesday, Oct. 24, at 8 p. m. Chanute, Thursday, Oct 25, at 8 p. m. St. Paul, Friday, Oct. 26, at 2 p. m. Erie, Friday, Oct. 26, at 8 p. m.

J. M. Nation and S. C. Brown will speak at Garfield school house in Big Creek township, on Saturday evening, Oct. 13, at 8 o'clock.

C. A. Cox and J. M. Nation will speak at Oak Grove school house in Lincoln township, on Tuesday evening Oct. 16, at 8 o'clock.

Figure 10: Snippet of the Chanute *Sun*, October 13, 1900, page 3. Oak Grove School is mentioned.

The early 1900s was still a very active period in the history of Parsons and the surrounding rural community. Farming was at a zenith of activity, and Parsons was booming with railroad business. The area was so active that it warranted yet another stopover visit by the President of the United States, this time Teddy Roosevelt. President Roosevelt arrived by train on the morning of April 5, 1905. He made a brief speech to a gathering of about 5000 people while the train engines were being switched. The train then resumed its journey northward and would again have traversed the countryside of Lincoln Township and would have also passed through the small railway station at South Mound – just a few miles northwest of Oak Grove. Again, there is no mention of this event in the school records, but it stands to reason that it would have been a perfect opportunity for school children to wave at the passing train of the nation's President.[49]

Several improvements were made to the Oak Grove School in 1913. In April of that year, the Clerk's Record Book recorded the following, "O.T. Hull made the District a proposition that he would furnish a good bell if the District would build a belfry and a porch 8 X 10 X 20 feet on the school house and the District accepted it."[50] Both the belfry and the extant porch were built in accordance with this agreement. Per the authorization given by the school board, Hull purchased the school bell at Sears Roebuck in Kansas City on June 12, 1913, at a cost of $18.00. The bell was shipped on the Katy Railroad and was received in Parsons on July 3, 1913. Measuring two feet in diameter and with a crank shaft length of 36 inches, the bell is made of cast iron and was manufactured in 1913 by the C.S. Bell Company of Hillsboro, Ohio.[51] Additional desks were purchased for the students of Oak Grove School in September 1913.[52]

In August 1937 the school board voted to tear down the free-standing sandstone coal house and use the rock to construct a new coal house on the west end of the school with a connecting door into the school at the northwest corner of the building.[53]

The Oak Grove School continued to serve the needs of Lincoln Township until its closing in 1960. School sessions were held consistently every year from 1877 to 1959 without fail. A total of 56 teachers taught at Oak Grove between 1881 and 1959. During the 1940s and '50s Oak Grove served as a voting precinct location for Lincoln Township. Two eight-foot-long tables once used for that purpose are still present inside the school. In 1959 the school fell victim to the movement to close all the rural schools in Neosho and Labette counties and consolidate them with the larger public school systems in the surrounding cities. The last school session was held from the fall 1959 to spring 1960. At that time the school was closed.

[49] *The Parsons Sun* (April 5, 1905): 1.
[50] Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School, p. 121
[51] Personal Records of O.T. Hull family.
[52] Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School Vol. 2, p. 6. These desks were purchased for $132 from the Peabody School Furniture Company. All desks have been removed from the school and loaned out to museums or historical societies for safekeeping. Eight of the "Peabody" desks were loaned to the Kansas State Historical Society and are on display in the Stach Schoolhouse in Topeka.
[53] Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School, p. 28

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Conard, Dr. Eric P. *Neosho County Cemeteries.* Chanute, Kans.: Chanute Genealogical Society, 1978.

Goodrich, Robert. "Museum Puts Stove-Making History of Belleville Out on Front Burner." *St Louis Post-Dispatch* (December 13, 2001): n.p.

Graves, W. W. [William Whites]. *Annals of Osage Mission*. St. Paul, Kan.: Self-published, 1935.

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Masterson, V. V. *The Katy Railroad and the Last Frontier*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1952.

Miscellaneous Records Book for Neosho County, 1871-1884. Register of Deeds Office, Neosho County Courthouse, Erie, Kansas.

Oak Grove School Historical Society, *Clerk's Record Book for Oak Grove School*, 1881-1921.

Oak Grove School Historical Society, *Treasurer's Record Book for Oak Grove School*, 1880-1947.

Parsons Kansas History. "1880s Timeline." Internet. http://parsonskansashistory.com/1880s.html (accessed 03/01/2016).

Personal Papers of Gladys Volmer, granddaughter of Wm. Hull. Held at Oak Grove School Historical Society.

Spencer, Brenda R. *Historic Public Schools of Kansas*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Submission. Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 2005.

U.S. Federal Census 1870, recorded on March 1, 1870, Lincoln Township, Neosho County, Kansas.

Newspapers & Periodicals:

The Parsons Sun

The Parsons Daily Sun

The Parsons Weekly Sun

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:

_X_State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
_X_Local government
____University
_X_Other
Name of repository: **Osage Mission – Neosho County Museum**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____n/a_____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2

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)

	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:
1	37.398631	-95.170048	3		
2			4		

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)
The school is situated on a two-acre site in the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 36, Township 30 South, Range 20 East (the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of the NE ¼ of the NW ¼ of Section 36, Township 30S Range 20E), Neosho County, Kansas.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)
The nominated property includes the land historically associated with the Oak Grove School, District 20.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Roger Pruitt / Treasurer
organization Oak Grove School Historical Society date 15 October 2015
street & number 8335 Town Creek Dr. telephone 281-855-9818
city or town Houston state TX zip code 77095
e-mail rogerpruitt@gmail.com

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

name Oak Grove School Historical Society
street & number 8335 Town Creek Dr. telephone 281-855-9818
city or town Houston state TX zip code 77095

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:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: **Oak Grove School, District 20**

City or Vicinity: **St. Paul vicinity**

County: **Neosho** State: **Kansas**

Photographer: **Amanda Loughlin, KSHS**

Date: **March 2, 2016**

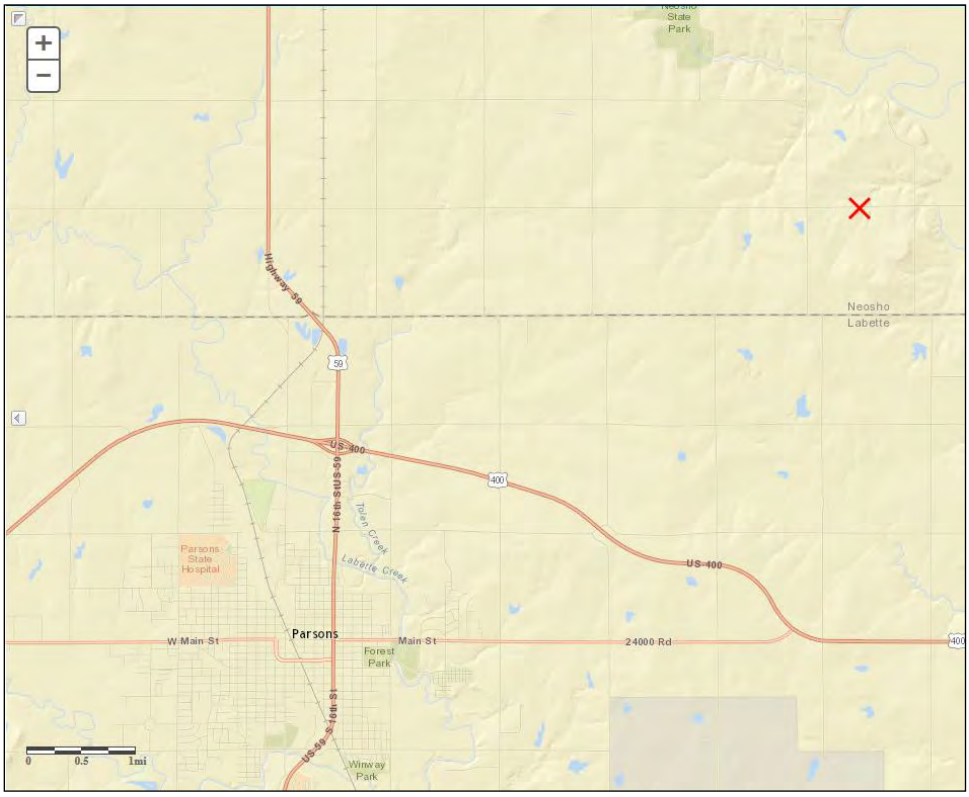
001 of 012: View SE from south side of school. Top of cistern is located in center foreground.
002 of 012: View SW from south side of school. Oak Grove cemetery is beyond metal fence.
003 of 012: View north from SW of school. Outhouse is located at left.
004 of 012: Oak Grove school, looking NW at south and east elevations.
005 of 012: Oak Grove school, south elevation.
006 of 012: Oak Grove school, looking SE at north and west elevations.
007 of 012: Oak Grove school, north elevation with flagpole in foreground.
008 of 012: Oak Grove school, window sill on south with carvings.
009 of 012: Oak Grove school, interior, looking SW.
010 of 012: Oak Grove school, interior, looking NE.
011 of 012: Oak Grove school, interior of coal room, looking SSE.
012 of 012: Oak Grove school, interior, plenum above main classroom, showing historic plaster ceiling.

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Boundary Map. 2015 Google Aerial. Nominated boundary is indicated by dashed line.

Contextual Map. Kansas Historic Resources Inventory (kshs.org/khri), Oak Grove School denoted by X. North is up.



WELCOME