



In its precarious position next to the new courthouse, the Wolf Photography Studio was moved in 1957 to the Wolf property on Fremont Street to save it from demolition for parking spots. Courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society & Museum.

Why the Historical Society owns a former photo studio and why we need to restore it now

By Carol Hockersmith

How did the former Wolf Photography Studio building get to be just east of the current Wolf House Museum, 630 Fremont St., in Manhattan? It wasn't always there.

Folks used to go to Wolf Photography Studio at 112 N. 5th St. Built in 1901 and opened in 1902, Henry Wolf (1850-1924) and his son James McNair "Max" Wolf (1879-1956) operated a studio there for 54 years.

After Max died in 1956, Max's wife, Lucile, moved the studio in

1957 to land just east of the Wolfs' family home on Fremont Street. That family home is now the Wolf House Museum. The studio was moved because the City of Manhattan sought parking spots where the studio sat for the new Riley County Courthouse.

Restoration so far

While continuing care to the Wolf House Museum (opened 1983), the society is turning restoration attention to the Wolf Photography Studio.

The society has proposed six

phases to preserve the studio for future usable space: first and second phases being the exterior and roof; third phase being the 30-paned, glass-walled, shed dormer skylight that lets natural light into the interior; fourth phase being the interior, fifth being interpretation, and sixth being the grounds.

In 2023, restoration was completed for doors and windows other than the skylight including the original hand-painted lettering of the studio name on a west-side window. This work was done by John Wood of Woodworks Restoration and his family of craftsmen and women.

That same year, Weddle and Sons replaced the roof with an architectural shingle to replicate the appearance of weathered wood. Exterior restoration is in progress by Riley Construction.

Being part of a historic district

Lucile had a heart for history. When she moved the studio, she also moved the Moses House, owned in 1957 by her son, who deeded it to Lucile. Moses House was also saved from demolition for courthouse parking. In 1982 Lucile acquired the limestone house, now known as the Mansfield House, just north of the family home, and that house was her residence from 1982 to 1993 (she lived in Colorado 1990 - 1993).

Lucile gave the four structures to the Riley County Historical Society — the Wolf House in 1982, the Moses House and Wolf Photography Studio in 1983, and the Mansfield House in 1993. Together, the buildings are designated as the Wolf House Historic District. The district has been on the Register of Historic Kansas Places since 2018 and the National Register of Historic Places since 2019.

"The district was listed as having

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a connection to significant events that played a part in settlement, commerce, as well as serving as examples of architectural style and conservation," says Katharine Hensler, director of the Riley County Museum. "Upon listing, properties are usually subject to guidelines of the certified local government for protecting and preserving historic and cultural resources, and the State Historic Preservation Office may also have some oversight in determining appropriateness of preservation projects and care of a historic property."

She says projects deemed appropriate for the property's preservation may be eligible for tax credits.

Who were the Wolfs?

Who were the Wolfs and why is the studio worth saving? Henry, the father, formerly had a studio in Garden City, Kansas, and is especially known for a photograph named "Independence on the Plains, Gathering Chips."

That photo, now in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Fort Worth, Texas, features a pioneer woman of the 1880s pushing a wheelbarrow piled with manure chips. Also Henry and Max's studio was one of the longest continually-operated businesses in Manhattan and the longest running photo business when it closed.

The house at 630 Fremont St. became the home of Max and his wife, Lucile, in 1941. They were the fourth owners. It was a family home for the Wolfs, yet it was a boarding house when it was built in 1868.

Henry died in 1924, and Max continued to operate the Wolf Photography Studio on Fifth Street north of the alley between Poyntz and Humboldt streets until his death in 1956. When Lucile moved the studio



The Wolf Photography Studio in 2022 before restoration work began

and the Moses House built in 1870 with clapboard wood siding that had once housed a classroom for a subscription school, she created the little area of history around her home.

According to the registration form for the district's national historic places listing, the studio didn't sit empty after it was moved to the Wolf House grounds: "A restroom was added after the building was moved to its current site and the south half of the building (former reception and work rooms) were leased as an apartment.

The north half of the building continually functioned as a studio, used by Mrs. Wolf after the photography business was closed following the death of her husband."

Although Lucile gave RCHS the Moses House and the photography studio in 1983, she retained use of these two buildings until she died in 1993 at age 99. Upon her death, the Mansfield House, too, was deeded to the historical society.

Donations help with restoration

Last year Riley County Historical Society participated in Grow Green Match Day facilitated by

the Greater Manhattan Community Foundation of Manhattan, Kansas, and funds RCHS raised were targeted for Wolf Photography Studio restorations. It will take many dollars to restore the studio.

Hensler says the exterior restoration will cost around \$110,000. She gives rough estimates for the next phases as \$60,000 for the 30-pane skylight window, \$200,000 for the interior of the building to include a restroom and ADA accessibility, and \$12,000 for landscaping.

If you would like to support this preservation project, you can donate online at <https://www.rileychs.org/make-a-donation.cfm>, or reach out to Hensler at khensler@rileycountyks.gov or 785-565-6490.

Carol Hockersmith holds a journalism and mass communication degree from Kansas State University. She used to write for social service and educational organizations. She is a member of the Riley County Historical Society board.



Sherri Hooper, museum volunteer, with award from Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. Hooper was nominated by the museum staff. From left: Staff members Tim Sidorfsky, Dawn Munger, Melanie Highsmith, Katharine Hensler, Hooper (volunteer), Brantlee Shearmire, and Carly Farrens.

Sherri Hooper receives Freedom's Frontier volunteer honor

By Carol Hockersmith

As National Volunteer Week is celebrated annually during the third week of April, Riley County Historical Society highlights Sherri Hooper of Manhattan. She has volunteered nearly every Thursday for the past three years with the Riley County Historical Museum. She recently garnered an award from Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, or FFNHA.

The FFNHA appreciation cer-

tificate thanks Hooper for the ways she contributed to sharing local stories and historical wisdom. She was one of 16 volunteers selected by FFNHA at the end of last year from those nominated by partner organizations. The historical society and museum are FFNHA partners, along with more than 230 other museums, historical societies, and heritage sites.

Hooper assists the museum staff where needed. She answers phones, greets visitors, and

dives into historic research. Museum Director Katharine Hensler says Hooper is consistent and reliable, which makes her a great volunteer contributing to historical wisdom.

The work of the FFNHA, based in Lawrence, Kansas, builds awareness of struggles for freedom in western Missouri and eastern Kansas. The FFNHA website states it was established by Congress in 2006, and "promotes three diverse, interwoven, and nationally significant stories: frontier settlement, the Missouri-Kansas Border War and Civil War, and enduring civil rights disputes."

FROM THE PRESIDENT Help welcome new RCHS administrator and board members

Hello Friends,

It's that time of year again when many of us decide to do some spring cleaning at our residences. It feels so good to sort through clothing and other items that can be eliminated from closets and garages, opening up space in our households that then feels directly correlated to freeing one's *mind* of clutter.

If you have recently driven by the Wolf House Museum Complex on the corner of Fremont and Juliette streets, you surely have noticed that work has begun to bring the Wolf Photography Studio back to new life. Painting and repairs to the exterior of the building will freshen the area and are the start of restorations and repairs of all the other buildings that make up that historic complex. Keep your eyes on the progress being made throughout the year and let us know what you think.

Our society has an announcement! We have recently hired a new society administrator. Jennifer Pursley began her tenure with us in February 2026 and is currently learning the ropes and filling a much-needed role on staff as we move forward with our Strategic Plan 2025-2031. Jen will be working with all of our committees as well as handling oversight for the society's historic property contracts. (Side note, she also owns 15 dogs that



Mary Mertz

compete in canine sport competitions.) We are looking forward to a long and productive working relationship with Jen.

Additionally, the society has three new individuals who have joined our board of directors. Their respective three-year terms began in January. Each submitted brief biographical information, which I have included below.

Mary Kohn, Ph.D., is a professor in English and director of the Chapman Center for Rural Studies at Kansas State University. As a sociolinguist, her work examines regional and social variation in language with a focus on the Great Plains. Her most recent book was awarded the Leonard Bloomfield Book Award from the Linguistic Society of America. As director of the Chapman Center for Rural Studies, Kohn works to bring faculty, students, and community members together to tell the stories of rural Kansas and to launch the research that will help rural communities thrive.

Steven Smethers, Ph.D., is a former Kansas broadcaster and journalism educator. He taught journalism and broadcasting classes at K-State for 20 years before retiring in 2022 as director of the A.Q. Miller School of Journalism and Mass Communications. As a historical researcher, Smethers has authored numerous articles on the use of the telegraph in news and sports reporting, as well as stories of early-day broadcast programming. He is also interested in railroads and their role in building the state of Kansas and its agriculture industry. In retirement, Smethers works for the Abilene and Smoky Valley Railroad as a narrator and member of the board of directors, and he handles the railroad's public relations and advertising.

Originally from Wisconsin, **Robin Edmunds** has been a Manhattan resident for more than 40 years. Her background is in journalism and education. She has been married to Joe Edmunds since 1983. The Edmunds have two daughters and three grandsons. Robin's hobbies include genealogy, history, and traveling. She is also a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

On behalf of the Riley County Historical Society, I welcome these new directors to the board and thank them for committing to this service.

I hope you will all have the opportunity to meet each of these four new faces working within our society. Many wonderful upcoming events and programs should allow that interaction.

Happy Spring!

Mary Mertz
RCHS Board President



Hands-on history

“History of K-State Workshop”

course has students create public projects from rarely-seen, historic university materials

By Rafael Garcia

Like most students, Benjamin Karten quickly learned to love full well the historic buildings and facilities at Kansas State University. The difference is, he decided to help write some of that history. Through the hands-on “History of K-State Workshop” three-hour credit course, Karten and other students last fall worked closely with K-State Library’s Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Archives and Special Collections to delve deep into the department’s extensive holdings of historic university materials. Led by Eric Brandom, visiting assistant professor of history, workshop students developed public-facing materials over a K-State history topic of their choice. Karten focused on how K-State buildings such as Seaton and Regnier Halls — as well as the since-destroyed Farm Machinery and Denison Halls — have

Eric Brandom, Kansas State University associate professor of history, guides Lilly Schultejans, K-State junior in political science, as she researches archival materials on K-State’s fraternities and sororities. Photo by Kansas State University.

historically been used as learning spaces. “I’ve done a lot of random and fun research on K-State history on my own before, but with this class, I could expand on that in a more formal setting and find some cool information on K-State’s long lost buildings,” said Karten, a senior in real estate and community development. While the students do get a learning opportunity, the university and its archives department also benefit from the students’ projects in that unique pieces of K-State history are unearthed. “A lot of these items — no one’s seen them ever since they went into their (archival) boxes, so it’s a perfect opportunity for students to do hands-on, unique research that no one has probably done before,” said Ryan Leimkuehler, university archivist.

This story originally ran in “K-State Today,” an on-line publication of Kansas State University’s Division of Communications and Marketing on January 21, 2026. Rafael Garcia is a member of the Riley County Historical Society Board and a writer for K-State’s News and Communications Services.

FROM THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Riley County kicks off America250 Celebration

2026 is a landmark year in our nation’s history as we enter into the American Semiquincentennial (or 250th anniversary) of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. All across the nation, celebrations will take place from large scale, coast-to-coast to smaller, community-driven festivities. Our community is no exception, and, judging by the size and energy of the planning committee — more than forty organizations represented — this will be a year to go down in history. Riley County and Manhattan kicked off the milestone by public proclamations by county and city commissioners during the first week of January. Since then, the Riley County Historical Society hosted a Kansas Day celebration with much more to come from us and other community partners. This will include a history scavenger hunt, a community time capsule, a Chautauqua event, exhibits, foot races, a historic homes tour, and much more! We also have added a new member to our marketing team at the Riley County Historical Museum. Come meet “SemiQuinn,” the state of Kansas’ America250 mascot. You’ll be seeing “Quinny” join us at local events this year to help us promote our programs. The museum is also adding America250 merchandise to our gift shop including relevant

books, stickers, drinkware, stuffies, and more. Remember that RCHS members get 10% off their gift shop purchases as a member benefit! Finally, we encourage you to keep up with all of our local America250 programs and activities by visiting the Visit Manhattan’s America250 community calendar: visitmanhattankans.org/events/america-250/ We hope to see you at the many events planned to commemorate the nation’s 250th anniversary in 2026.

Katharine Hensler is director of the Riley County Historical Museum.

Below: SemiQuinn, the America250 mascot, poses next to Johnny Kaw at the Riley County Historical Museum’s gift shop and looks over Riley County history.



Riley County Historical Society			
2026 Board of Directors			
Executive committee		Directors through 2027	
• Mary Mertz, <i>President</i>		• Charlene Brownson	
• Carol Hockersmith, <i>Vice President</i>		• Gloria Freeland	
• Dori Milldyke, <i>Immediate Past President</i>		• Rafael Garcia	
• Janet Lowell, <i>Treasurer</i>		• Joe Knopp	
• Colene Lind, <i>Recording Secretary</i>		Directors through 2028	
Directors through 2026		• Robin Edmunds	
• Jana McKinley		• Mary Kohn	
• Larissa Oshima		• Steve Smethers	
• Lauren Ritterbush		Society administrator	
		• Jennifer Pursley	
		Museum director	
		• Katharine Hensler	

COLLECTIONS CORNER

Childs were significant settlers

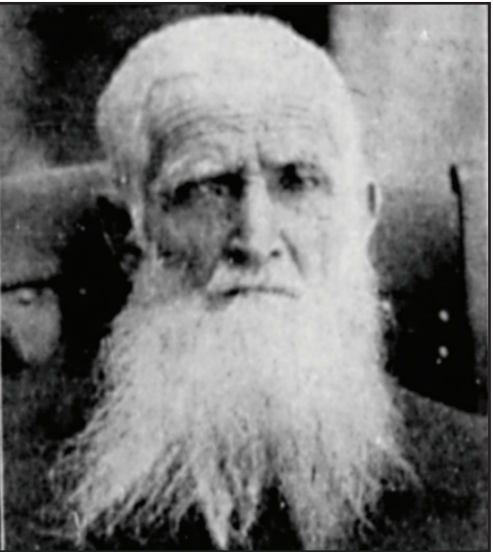
By Brantlee Shearmire

When Seth Child, his wife Eliza Lyman Child, and her three children from her previous marriage, arrived in eastern Kansas Territory in 1854, they likely didn't expect their family name to be uttered daily by countless Riley Countians 172 years later.

Seth Isaac Child, namesake of the busy western Manhattan thoroughfare "Seth Child Road," also known as K-113, held various titles during his time in Riley County. Child was the first post-master at the town of Juniata, a ferry crossing on the Military Road between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Riley located on the Big Blue River operated by a man named Samuel D. Dyer (also namesake of a road in Pottawatomie County).

In the spring of 1855, Seth Child was appointed as the first sheriff of Riley County by Kansas Territorial Governor Andrew Reeder until a proper election

Seth Child. From the April 12, 1913, edition of The Manhattan Mercury.



could be held.

Riley County at the time was on the westernmost edge of organized land in Kansas Territory, and Seth Child's area of patrol as sheriff technically extended north into what is now Marshall County, east to the Potawatomi Reservation, south to Council Grove, and west to the Rocky Mountains.

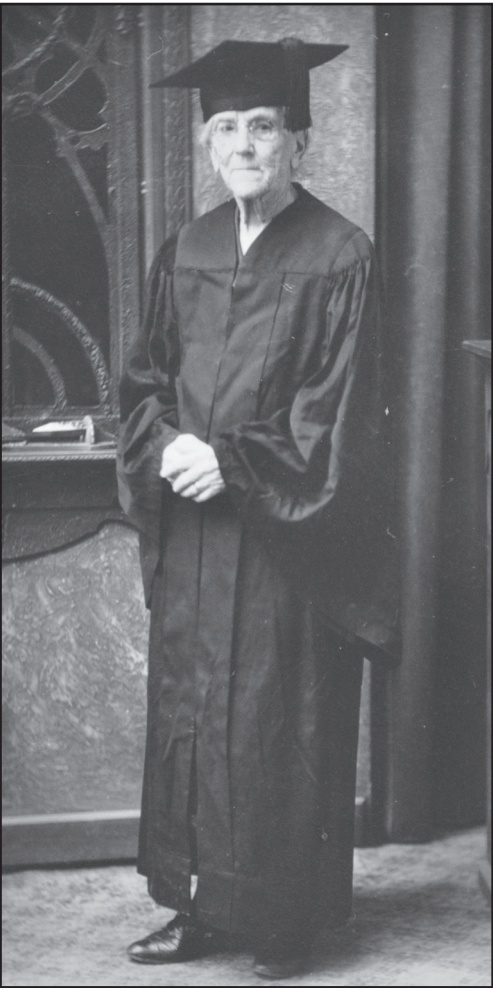
In August 1855, Seth Child was replaced as sheriff by John T. Price. Upon his death in 1913, Seth Child was 86 years old and the oldest person in Manhattan at the time. Another, more unique, title Seth Child could lay claim to was father of the first white child born in the immediate area.

That child, Ella, later to become Ella Child Carroll, was purportedly born September 7, 1856, in Juniata to Seth and Eliza. She would be the couple's only child. Ella would attend school in Manhattan and would graduate from Kansas State Agricultural College with a Bachelors in Science in the spring of 1877.

After her graduation from KSAC, Ella would teach at various schools in the area including Deep Creek, Strong School, Randolph, Junction City, Manhattan, as well as Holdrege, Nebraska.

By late 1894, Ella's teaching career seems to have come to an end and she began advertising in the local newspapers as a dressmaker.

Ella was regarded as an accomplished dressmaker in Manhattan; however, in late 1897 she was struck with a serious bout of typhoid fever, which put a pause on her dressmaking business for



Ella Child. Courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society & Museum.

almost a year.

On March 19, 1907, at the age of 50, Ella married John C. Carroll of Topeka at her home on Osage Street in Manhattan. After their marriage, the Carrolls would move to Topeka to live on a fruit farm in the suburbs briefly before returning to Manhattan in November 1907.

Throughout her lifetime in Manhattan, Ella led a very active social life. Her name can be found throughout the society columns of local newspapers for entertaining guests in her own home or attending various social and church group meetings.

Ella and John never had any children of their own; however, newspaper articles note the two

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adopted a young boy and girl.

Unfortunately, the boy, Seth Irvin Carroll, drowned in the Big Blue River in August 1919, when he was just 6 years old. The girl, also named Ella, would survive into adulthood and give her adoptive parents two granddaughters.

On November 14, 1935, Ella's husband passed away at age 80 due to a heart ailment. Ella would live for another 26 years after the passing of her husband.

She would live at her home at 521 Thurston St. until she was nearly 100 years old before moving into St. Mary's Hospital.

On her 100th birthday, she received a very special birthday card in the mail from President Dwight D. Eisenhower extending his "sincere congratulations" and wishing her "good health, through many more happy years."

Ella Child Carroll would live five more years, passing away on April 25, 1962, at the age of 105. At the time of her passing, Ella was the oldest living alumna of Kansas State Agricultural College and was presumed to be the oldest living Riley Countian, just as her father Seth Child was at his passing.

In the collection of the Riley County Historical Society and Museum are artifacts from the Child family: Seth Child's bison skin driving gloves, a steamer chest, a corner cabinet, and Ella Child's photograph.

Brantlee Shearmire is on staff of the Riley County Historical Museum as Museum Assistant.



Fourth graders will churn butter and grind nutmeg in the kitchen during the Wolf House tours.

Be a Wolf House field trip docent

By Melanie Highsmith

The Riley County Historical Society and Museum are gearing up for our annual fourth-grade field trip tours at the Wolf House. We are looking for volunteer docents for this April event!

Local students visit the Wolf House Museum to engage with hands-on activities to help build a deeper sense of connection to their Manhattan and Riley County histories. Students can visualize how households and household objects have changed by comparing the experience to modern times.

In 2025, 597 students and teach-

ers visited the Wolf House during field trip season. We are on track to match those numbers again this year.

If you are interested in serving as a docent for this phenomenal program, please reach out to Melanie Highsmith, mhighsmith@rileycountyks.gov or 785-565-6490, to sign up or learn more. The dates for this year's field trips are April 14-17, April 21-23, and April 28-30.

Thank you for your support of this wonderful youth education program.

Melanie Highsmith is on staff of Riley County Historical Museum as curator of education and design.

Ninth Street and Poyntz Avenue in Manhattan has a rich history of educational use

By Janet Duncan

In **1857**, the Manhattan City Council built their first public school on Poyntz Avenue at Ninth Street. Said to be “the best public-school building west of Topeka,” it was the first public school in town.

Known as the “Avenue School,” it had two rooms on each floor with the classrooms upstairs and a family living downstairs. One teacher, who began her year with no books and no supplies, taught grades 1 – 8 as well as any students continuing into the next two years, which completed a high school education.

“Best” or not, the location was not popular with all the parents. Complaints were recorded that this school was “too far away” and that the road for the children was either “too dusty” or “too muddy.”

Manhattan grew rapidly, and Manhattan’s City Council turned their public-school property over to Riley County’s newly organized

County School District, “provided they levy a tax to be spent on school purposes.”

By **1880**, the “best public-school building west of Topeka” wasn’t good enough anymore. The new District Board of Education decided to replace the Avenue School with a bigger, prettier stone school building.

Only two rooms were ready for the fall term **1882**, however, so students had to sit two-to-a-seat. Two successive high school principals quit — the superintendent’s report showed the difficulty of “hiring for one year and not paying well.”

At this time, the “colored” children were in a separate class of 30 pupils taught by Mr. Freeman, a Black teacher, who had taught at the Avenue School for five years.

Troubles such as the principal and two or three teachers leaving for marriage or jobs with better working conditions caused the school board to consider closing the high school after the fall term of 1891, but the result was public

outcry.

Therefore, Mr. Freeman’s class was dropped instead, and his pupils were apparently dispersed among the other classes.

In **1913**, the school board took the next big step in secondary education by authorizing a four-year senior high school to be built on the Avenue School site, and at the same time authorized a two-year junior high school addition.

Completed on time and within budget during wartime, each building held 450 students; the high school was to be occupied in **1914** and the junior high ready in **1918**.

1924 was another big year for Manhattan and education. The school board proposed to change the name of Bluemont School to “Lincoln School,” but the motion was defeated. The Junior and Senior High School Annex was authorized, which included an auditorium seating 1,070, a gym behind the stage, additional classrooms, shops, vocational agriculture rooms and storage.

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The Lincoln Education Center in February 2026.

The Grand Army of the Republic, a Civil War veterans’ organization, requested that the high school, with this expansion, be named for Abraham Lincoln. The motion was unanimously passed, and, in **1927**, “Lincoln High School” was carved above the entrance to the school auditorium.

By **1951**, the city’s school population was again pushing the walls of the Poyntz Avenue and Ninth Street buildings, and construction started on the Poyntz Avenue and Sunset Avenue school. The first class from the newer building graduated in **1958**.

The continued use of the Poyntz Avenue and Ninth Street buildings richly illustrates Manhattan’s growth since then. From **1957-1977**, the complex included grades 7, 8, and 9.

From **1978 - 1994**, the building became the Manhattan Middle School for grades 7 and 8.

After considering and rejecting the idea of building a second high school in town, two new middle schools were built, and, in **1997**, the ninth grade was moved back to the old Poyntz Avenue location, becoming the Manhattan High School East Campus with the two wings of the school connected by a skywalk.

This solution wasn’t ideal, as it required additional bussing, with many freshmen also enrolled in classes held at the MHS West Campus at Sunset Avenue and Poyntz Avenue.

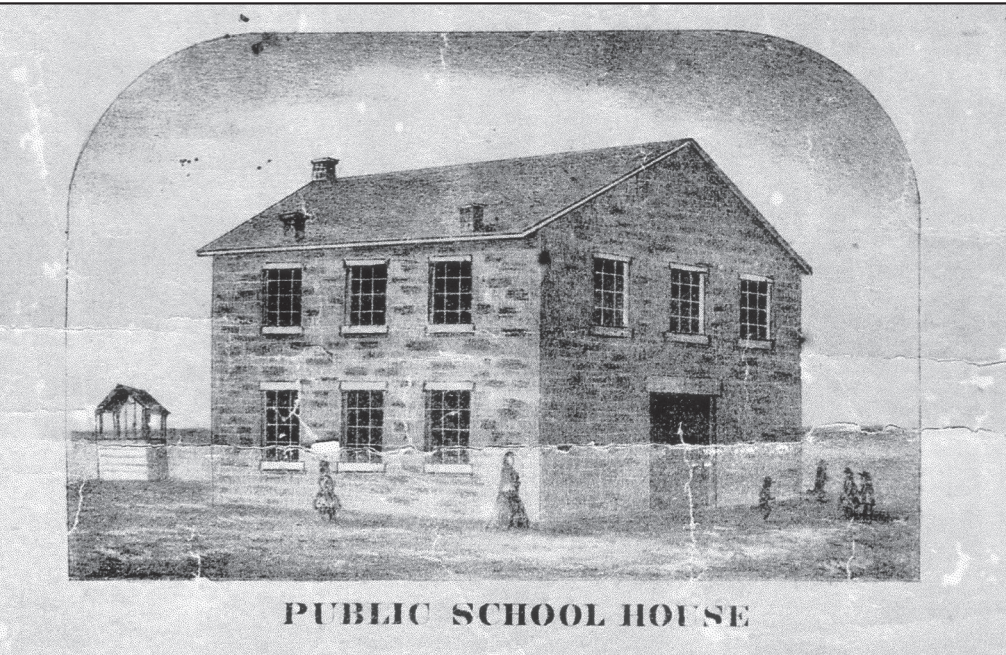
The solution was to build again — not another high school but additions to the MHS West campus which ultimately united grades 9 -12 in one building.

The MHS East Campus buildings, with Lincoln High School engraved on the entrance to the

auditorium, were then refurbished for office space and district-wide activities.

In **2025**, the office of the superintendent and his Unified School District 383 staff moved into now-renamed Lincoln Education Center. Abraham Lincoln has again been honored.

Janet (Krider) Duncan moved with her family to Manhattan, Kansas, in 1949. Educated in Manhattan schools and Kansas State University, she and her late husband returned to their roots after many years living in many places.



Top photo: The Public School House. Bottom: The Second Avenue School at 9th and Poyntz. Photos courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society & Museum.