



Keystone Ranch  
Name of Property

Marion County, Kansas  
County and State

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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
6	4	buildings
1		sites
7	1	structures
		objects
<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<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.)

- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure
- AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Field
- AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility
- AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Outbuilding
- AGRICULTURE/Processing
- AGRICULTURE/Storage
- LANDSCAPE/Natural Feature

- DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling
- DOMESTIC/Secondary Structure
- AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Field
- AGRICULTURE/Animal Facility
- AGRICULTURE/Agricultural Outbuilding
- AGRICULTURE/Storage
- LANDSCAPE/Natural Feature
- VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

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

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

- Vernacular
- Other: Agricultural
- Italianate
- Second Empire

- foundation: See Section 7
- walls: See Section 7
- roof: See Section 7
- other: See Section 7

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Narrative Description

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**Summary**

Keystone Ranch is a rural agricultural district located in southeast Marion County approximately four miles northeast of the town of Burns (pop. 228). The boundaries of the 1,800-acre ranch were established through Frank Wells' gradual acquisition of land beginning in 1881. Intact historic boundaries of early ranches are rare in Kansas, making Keystone Ranch one of few such places in the state. The ranch's farmstead is located in the center of the southwest quarter of Section 11, Township 22 South, Range 5 East. The farmstead is situated on a high point between Turkey Creek to the east and an intermittent tributary of this creek to the north and west. An additional structure, a circa 1883 mill, is located on the west bank of Turkey Creek about a quarter mile northeast of the farmstead cluster; an abandoned silo (circa 1920) sits to the southwest of the mill. The majority of extant built resources date to Wells' tenure between 1881 and 1913, while some resources date to between 1915 and the 1950s when the Grace family added resources to support their agricultural endeavors. With the exception of about five acres around the main house, the majority of the land is pasture, as it has been since the 1880s, first for sheep then (and now) for cattle.

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**Elaboration**

**Setting and Landscape**

Located northeast of Burns, the ranch's eastern boundary abuts Chase County, and Butler County is four miles south of the ranch (*Figure 1*). The property includes 1,800 acres in Township 22 South, Range 5 East, specifically all of Sections 10 and 11, the south half of the south half of Section 3, the entire southeast quarter of Section 4, the north half of the north half of Section 15, and the north half of the north half of the northwest quarter and the northwest quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 14 (*Figures 2 & 3*).

Keystone Ranch is part of the historic agricultural landscape of southeastern Marion County established within the predominately native grass pastureland. This landscape is part of the Flint Hills Upland division of the Osage Plains section of the Central Lowland province of the Interior Plains division of North America.<sup>1</sup> This linear physiographic unit consists of a series of north-south irregularly trending escarpments with steep, terraced eastern faces and flat-to-gently-inclined western slopes. The topography was formed by the exposure and consequent erosion at the ground surface of alternating beds of unequally resistant Permian-age limestones, sandstones, and shales, which dip gently to the west. Stream courses within the region are generally eastward flowing and typically have deeply entrenched channels lined with outcropping rock ledges. Valleys are usually asymmetrical with the steeper slopes located on the south sides. In places where the streams pass through resistant limestones, narrow box-like channels have been incised. In locations where the streams have cut through weaker shales, the valleys are wider and the slopes are much gentler.<sup>2</sup>

The consistent water feature at the ranch is Turkey Creek. This stream, located approximately 1,350' above sea level, enters the ranch from the south, flowing northeast from the northwest corner of Section 14, into Section 11, and exiting the ranch's boundary in the northeast corner of Section 11. This creek has a number of intermittent streams that feed into it from the west and northwest; the most prominent intermittent stream crosses Sections 10 and 11 from west to east. Turkey Creek's water supply was sufficient to maintain a mill along its west bank into the 1960s.

The natural vegetation of the region prior to the encroachment of modern civilization apparently consisted of tall grass prairie interpenetrated by narrow bands of riverine forest.<sup>3</sup> Warm season grasses continue to dominate the prairie vegetation community, with big and little bluestem, switchgrass, and Indian grass being the most important elements of that community. Moderate rainfall, a relatively long growing season, and rich soils provide conditions suitable for many other grasses and numerous annual and perennial herbs. Within the stream valleys, periodically flooded shallow depressions host wetland communities dominated by prairie cordgrass, while mud flats serve as preferred sites for smartweeds, docks, purslane, and chenopods. Gallery forests occur in narrow bands along the major streams. The forest

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<sup>1</sup> Walter H. Schoewe, "The Geography of Kansas: Part II. Physical Geography," *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science* (1903-) 52, no. 3 (1949): 286. Ranging from 20 to 80 miles wide, the Flint Hills Upland stretches from north to south across the eastern half of Kansas, taking in such towns as Clay Center, Manhattan, Junction City, Abilene, El Dorado, Augusta, and Winfield.

<sup>2</sup> Paragraph adapted from standard language used in reports written by Kansas State Historical Society, Cultural Resources Division, Archeology Department. Sources consulted include: A.W. Kuchler, "A New Vegetation Map of Kansas," *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science* (1903-) 77 (Spring 1974): 57-64; Schoewe, 286-289; & Waldo R. Wedel, "An introduction to Kansas archeology," *Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin* (1959):14.

<sup>3</sup> Kuchler, 57-64.

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vegetation is dominated by medium tall to tall broadleaf deciduous trees like cottonwood, hackberry, willow, and elm. Hillsides and ravines along valley edges support woodlands of bur oak with scattered individuals of bitternut hickory and shagbark hickory. Black walnut, green ash, and sycamore prevail in the lower, more mesic areas. The understory is mostly buckbrush and Missouri gooseberry, with the herbaceous flora being similar to that found in oak-hickory forests to the east.<sup>4</sup> At Keystone Ranch, creeks are most noticeable by the prevalence of several of the previously mentioned vegetative species, including cottonwood and oak. The ranchland consists of mostly native grasses; although, several acres are considered tame (introduced) grasses to support livestock grazing, especially during low forage production.<sup>5</sup>

Access to the farmstead is by a gravel drive. This meandering drive generally follows the topography between the farmstead and Turkey Creek for almost half of a mile before splitting to the northeast and northwest (*Figure 3*). The drive enters the ranch from 50<sup>th</sup> Street in the northwest quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 14. The entrance is celebrated by a metal gateway with "KEYSTONE" in an arch above the ranch's Rocking G brand. Immediately to the north of the gateway is a concrete low-water crossing with stone wing walls (date unknown).<sup>6</sup> The drive splits as it reaches the main house, heading to the northwest to access the house and sheep barn; the drive heads to the northeast to access the old bunk house and corral. The gravel becomes dirt as the drive heads into the ranchland to the west and north of the farmstead.

The ranch's **landscape** is considered a contributing site to the ranch district. This includes the farmstead cluster, the associated ranchland, the creeks and ponds, the livestock fencing, and the driveway. The site also includes the area to the east of the creek from which Wells quarried the stone for his buildings.<sup>7</sup> The landscape is intrinsically tied to the ranch, the location and characteristics being a justification for Frank Wells' acquiring and settling this land, as well as an important factor in the ranch's success into modern day. The farmstead cluster is strategically located within the ranch to maximize views,<sup>8</sup> and the creek played a key role in the processing of feed for livestock even into the 1960s.

### Individual Resources

The majority of the ranch's buildings are clustered in the southwest quarter of Section 11 between Turkey Creek to its east and the main intermittent tributary to its north. At an elevation of 1,400' above sea level, the five-acre farmstead sits atop one of the highest ridges in the ranch (*Figure 4*) and is oriented on a slight northwest-to-southeast axis.<sup>9</sup> The following resources begin at the main house and are described in a clockwise direction around the farmstead cluster; the letters correspond with the key on *Figure 3*. The gravel driveway acts as the organizing feature of the farmstead.

**A. Main House (KHRI #115-910)**

38.146576,-96.855324

**Noncontributing Building**

ca. 1880; ca. 1885; ca. 1952

The two-and-a-half story main house is located on one of the highest elevations on the ranch. Its complex form is the result of several additions. The core of the house is a circa 1880 structure around which Frank Wells had additional rooms constructed in the early-to-mid 1880s.<sup>10</sup> The house's east façade and some interior spaces were altered in the early 1950s by the Grace family. The house's foundation is stone, cladding is vinyl, and the roof is composite shingles. Although significant to the ranch, the house is considered noncontributing to the district due to its secondary siding; however, should this siding be removed and the historic materials extant, the house's status should be reconsidered.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph adapted from standard language used in reports written by Kansas State Historical Society, Cultural Resources Division, Archeology Department.

<sup>5</sup> The total tame grass equals about 79 acres or 5% of the total acreage of the ranch, as calculated from county appraiser records.

<sup>6</sup> This low-water crossing is not called out as a contributing resource due to the unknown dates of its construction.

<sup>7</sup> "The Keystone Ranch: A City in the Country; A Palace in the Hills," *Peabody [Kansas] News* (1901): n.p. [transcription online]; available from KSGenWeb Digital Library <http://www.ksgenweb.org/marion/library/peabody.htm> (accessed 15 April 2017).

<sup>8</sup> Margaret E. Lyons, "'White House' Landmark of Big Marion County Ranch," *Wichita Eagle Magazine* (January 27, 1957): n.p. in Kansas Historical Society, Library and Archives Division, *Marion County Clippings*, Vol. 3, 137.

<sup>9</sup> For clarity the buildings and structures are described according to cardinal directions. The east (primary) façades actually face southeast; the south façades face southwest; the west façades face northwest; and the north façades face northeast, all unless otherwise noted.

<sup>10</sup> Lyons, "White House," 137.

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The house is oriented with the primary façade facing east. The house form is complex with four prominent sections, creating an L-shaped plan. The ell is a two-and-a-half story square mass at the northwest corner of the house. Its top half story is an octagonal garret with mansard roof. The remainder of the house forms a wide rectangle (main block). The eastern half of the main block has a side-gable roof with a two-story shed-roof portico. The western half has a square mass with deck-on-hip roof at the building's southwest corner; between this mass and the ell is a gable-front structure that connects to the western slope of the east half's side-gable roof. A one-story flat-roof carport is located at the building's northeast corner; although, it is not attached to the house. Concrete walks to the north and west of the house lead to a well with hand pump at the northwest corner of the house. The house site is surrounded by mature cottonwoods.



The east (primary) façade of the house's main block is symmetrical and three bays wide. At the main level is a one-over-one sash window (typical) on either side of the entry.<sup>11</sup> This entry contains a single door with sidelights. The second level contains a single window directly above the openings on the main level. A two-story shed-roof portico (ca. 1952) spans the entire width of this façade; the portico roof is supported by square wooden columns. Three columns are clustered at the portico's corners; two pairs of columns support the middle of the roof. The concrete floor is accessed by three continuous steps around its perimeter. The east elevation of the two-and-a-half story ell is two bays wide. The main level contains a door on the south with a window on the north; above these openings are two windows. At the garret level each of the faces of the octagonal roof contains a pedimented dormer window.

The two story south façade is three bays wide. The west half, which has the deck-on-hip roof, has a three-window box bay at the main level with a single window on the east and west sides of the box. This bay has a shallow hip roof and a dentilled frieze. Two windows are centered above this feature in the second level. The windows in this section are taller and narrower than those to the east. The east half of the elevation has a gable-front roof with a single window centered in each level. At the attic level is a small vent. A stonewalled planter is located across this façade under the main level windows.

The west façade best shows the house's complex roof. The northern third of the elevation is the ell block, which protrudes about 12" from the rest of the wall plane. Besides the garret dormers, the ell only contains a single window located in the second level. The middle third of the elevation is a gable-front mass with two small windows centered in the gable at the second level. The south third of this elevation has the deck-on-hip roof. Two tall windows, matching those on the south elevation, are located in the second level. The main level of this façade has no visible openings, but it does contain a historically enclosed decorated wood porch with dentillated frieze (*Figure 5*). The porch appears to have contained three open bays along the elevation, with a door in the middle bay. Access to the basement is through a covered cellar door to the south of the porch.

The north façade of the ell contains a single window at the east side of the main level, two windows evenly-spaced in the second level, and garret dormers. The main block's gable-fronted north façade contains a single window at each level, centered in the gable. An attic vent is located within the gable end. A stonewalled planter is located at the northwest corner of this elevation.

The main level of the house's main block contains a single room (living room) in the eastern half that was created in the 1950s by removing dividing walls. To the west of the living room and through a wide cased opening (with bullseye trim) is the dining room. The house's box bay is located in the south wall. A historic door with bullseye trim is located in the west wall and formerly accessed the west porch. The stair to the second level is located through a door at the east end of the dining room's north wall. A door in the west end of this wall leads into the kitchen. To the north of the kitchen is the main level of the ell. A foyer from the secondary east entrance connects to the kitchen, and a bathroom is located in the north end of the ell.

The upper level is accessed by a stair immediately behind the door in the dining room. The stair leads to a large landing. A door leading to the garret stairs is in the north wall opposite the stair; to the west of this door is a

<sup>11</sup> All historic four-over-four wood windows appear to have been replaced with one-over-one units (*Figure 5*).

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bedroom located in the northwest corner of the ell. A bathroom is located to the south of this bedroom along the west wall of the hall, and a larger bedroom with tall ceilings is located at the south end of this landing/hallway (directly above the dining room). To the south of the stair is a doorway in the east wall of the landing/hallway. There is a small step at this location, leading into another (north-west) hallway in the east half of the main block. Three bedrooms are located along this hallway: one at the north end; one in the center, and one at the south end of the hallway.

The garret is a completely open space, occupying the entire half story of the ell. Vistas encompassing miles of land in all directions are viewable from each of the eight dormer windows in this level. The basement was not accessed during the site visit.

**B. Privy & Shed (KHRI #115-911)**

38.146586,-96.855613

**Contributing Building**

ca. 1900

A concrete sidewalk extends west 50' from the main house's west porch to a one-story building that houses a privy and a shed (8'x16').<sup>12</sup> The rectangular wood-framed structure sits atop a stone foundation; it is clad in historic Dutch-lap clapboard, and its side gable roof is covered in composition shingles. The only openings are in the east façade, facing the main house. The privy is located at the south end of the building; the remainder of the structure is storage. This building is in excellent condition.



**C. Frank Wells' Office (KHRI #115-912)**

38.147354,-96.855415

**Contributing Building**

ca. 1900

This one-story wood structure is located about 240' northeast of the main house on the north side of the gravel drive. The gable-fronted rectangular structure (10'x12') is clad in wood clapboard and sits atop a stone foundation. The building's primary (south) façade contains two openings. The west opening used to be a window; the opening now is covered in chicken wire. The east opening is a historic four panel door, leading into the one room space. The west façade contains a single window opening centered in the wall. There are no openings in the north or east walls. The building is in poor condition and is no longer used.



A metal gate is to the immediate west of the building. To the immediate east of the building is a +/- 20' long stone wall section approximately four feet tall.

**D. Metal Outbuilding**

38.147342,-96.855243

**Noncontributing Building**

ca. 1970

On the east side of the stone wall mentioned above is a pre-manufactured metal storage building (25'x25'). This building is in the location of a previous shop building identified in the 1902 county atlas (*Figure 6*). It has a shallow front-gable roof. The south elevation is almost completely covered by sliding metal doors. A pedestrian door is located at the north end of the east elevation.

<sup>12</sup> Measurements in parentheses throughout this narrative are taken from the county appraiser's records.

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**E. Sheep/Hog Barn (KHRI #115-913)**  
38.147844,-96.854913

**Contributing Building**  
ca. 1883

The ranch's largest structure is the gable-roofed stone sheep (later hog) barn located to the north of the main house and immediately east of the metal outbuilding previously mentioned. The rectangular structure measures approximately 420' long (north-south) by 32' wide (east-west).<sup>13</sup> The stonework is rough-cut ashlar made of long narrow stones; the roof is corrugated metal. A metal horse weathervane is located at the roof's south end. To the west of the barn are a series of metal corrals and gates currently used for the ranch's cattle.



The south façade features a single pedestrian doorway. A single large stone lintel spans the opening. A metal gate abuts the barn on both the east and west sides of this façade.

The east façade is partially obscured by the metal corrals. Between the south end of the façade and the south end of the corral are five evenly-spaced square wooden windows at the top of the wall; their headers abut the roof structure (typical). To the north of the fifth window from the south is a wide opening that allows livestock access into/out of the barn. Another, wider opening is to the north of this opening. To the north of this wide opening is a series of at least four evenly-spaced square wood windows. Spanning a large portion of this façade to the north of these windows is corrugated metal paneling that covers the top half of the wall. Five openings are cut out of the metal to allow light into the barn where masonry openings are located. The remainder of the façade includes a wide, wood-framed opening followed by three tall openings evenly spaced between the north end of the elevation and the wide opening. These tall openings have a wood shutter closed over them. Their sills are approximately three feet above ground while their headers align with the top of the wall.

The north façade contains no extant openings; the stonework indicates a wide opening may once have existed in the center of the elevation. The gable end of this façade is covered with corrugated metal.

The east façade has three main sections all within the same wall plane. The south portion is stone. A wide opening near the south end had a large timber lintel at the top of the wall. To the north of this opening are six window openings at the top of the wall; these are irregularly spaced and not evenly sized. Another wide opening is to the north of these openings. Abutting the north end of this opening is the façade's middle portion that is a wide section of corrugated metal paneling over frame construction; this section of the wall contains no openings. The north end of the metal abuts another wide opening in the stone wall that also contains a timber lintel. In the stone wall to the north of this opening is: a tall opening with wooden shutter similar to those at the north end of the west façade; a square wood-framed window at the top of the wall; a wood-covered pedestrian door; and another square window unit. At the north end of the wall is another wide opening with heavy timber lintel.

The barn's interior is divided into two main sections. The south end is relatively open with some interior columns (made of logs) and metal gates. The north end contains a series of historic wooden stalls complete with wooden troughs, likely installed for swine feeding. The majority of the barn has a dirt floor; some concrete is evident in the center. The roof structure appears to have been formerly replaced (circa 1950s-1960s).

The barn retains good integrity. Portions of the interior stone wall have collapsed, but overall the barn is in fair condition.

<sup>13</sup> The county appraiser's measurements are 394'x32'.

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**F. Stone Corral (KHRI #115-914)**  
38.148491,-96.853942

**Contributing Structure**  
ca. 1883

The area between the sheep barn and the horse barn is enclosed by dry-laid stone fences. This area presumably was used as a corral for the sheep when the ranch first started. At the north end of the enclosure, the elliptical wall follows the 1,400-foot contour line to the north and east of the sheep barn. The stone wall spans approximately 550' at this point and is over six feet tall when measured from its north side. At the south end of this corral area, a linear section of wall spans approximately 220' east of the sheep barn before turning northeast for an additional 80+/- feet.



The farmstead's gravel driveway penetrates the south portion of the wall at its west end and the north portion of the wall at its apex. This drive leads north into the pasture and down to the ranch's mill. Portions of this wall have collapsed, but several sections are still intact and show its oblique single coping typical of rock fences in the region.

**G. Metal Outbuilding**  
38.147960,-96.854444

**Noncontributing Building**  
ca. 1980

A modern-day metal Morton building (60'x42') is located at the center of the stone corral and is oriented perpendicularly to the sheep barn. Its eastern façade is comprised of large sliding doors; a pedestrian door is at the west end of the south façade. There are two modern granaries and a windmill tower located to the south of the building.

**H. Horse Barn (KHRI #115-915)**  
38.147519,-96.853838

**Contributing Building**  
ca. 1883

Keystone Ranch's horse barn (80'x30') is one of the best preserved buildings of the district. It sits due east of the sheep barn and is oriented on a north-south axis. The two-story stone bank barn has decorative arched stone lintels above each opening that are commonly seen on Italianate-styled buildings. These lintels have a central keystone. The barn's stonework consists of coursed rough-cut blocks while each corner of the barn has prominent rock-faced quoins. The hipped roof has a narrow stepped monitor at the center; the roof is covered with corrugated metal.



The primary façade faces east. This elevation is a full two-stories and the fenestration is arranged symmetrically. Each level contains five evenly-spaced openings. With the exception of the central entrance bay on the ground level, each opening contains a historic four-over-four wood window with arched header and a heavy stone sill (typical of all windows, unless otherwise noted).<sup>14</sup> The central entrance is comprised of a pair of wooden gates with an infilled transom above them.

The south façade has two openings centered in the elevation. At the lower level is a smaller fixed two-light window. Directly above this is a six-over-four unit. The north façade is similar to the south. The ground level opening has wooden bars in place of a sash. Above this opening is a tall opening with wooden lintel. The inset opening is covered by corrugated metal; there is no heavy stone sill at this opening. A corrugated metal lean-to with stone foundation is attached to west end of this façade and is flush with the stone wall. There are no openings in the lean-to. The lean-to appears in the earliest images of the farmstead (*Figure 7*).

<sup>14</sup> The second window from the south at the upper level appears to be missing its sashes.

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Only the upper story is visible on the west façade. This elevation is centered on the central entrance. To the north of the entrance is the historic lean-to. One rectangular opening is at the north end of the lean-to's west wall. A gable-fronted dormer is near the south end of this lean-to. Formerly it appears this was a door; a gutter now spans across the door. There are no openings in the lean-to's south elevation. To the south of the entrance are two typical windows. In the wall below these windows are two small square vents into the stalls at the lower level. The central entrance is a sliding wooden door with a wooden transom piece. The transom has four eight-point star cutouts on either side of a centered cutout (of unspecified design).

The barn's upper level is primarily open space with exposed heavy timber columns and a wood plank floor. The exposed stone walls are in good condition and show heavy timber interior lintels above all exterior masonry openings. These openings are splayed at the interior to maximize light infiltration. Along the west wall are hay chutes that connect to horse stalls directly below them; a hay chute is also located at the north and south walls. At the north end of the west wall are two masonry openings. These access the lean-to, which is used for hay storage. The interior of the lean-to shows that the walls are frame construction with wood siding. A historic tack closet is located in the southeast corner just south of an interior stair to the lower level.

The L-shaped stair leads north down to the lower level that houses the horse stalls. Eight stalls are found along the west wall; one stall is located in the southeast corner. The stalls at the southeast, southwest (the stallion chamber), and northwest corners each have a door with wooden bars at the top; the remaining stalls have wood-slat walls on the north and south and are open on the east. The east half of the lower level has a dirt floor; concrete has been previously installed on the west side at the stalls.

To the east of the barn is a metal enclosed corral.

**I. Shed (KHRI #115-916)**  
38.147698,-96.853516

**Contributing Structure**  
ca.1900

This rectangular shed (14'x12') is situated along the north edge of the metal corral associated with the horse barn. It is oriented perpendicular to the barn on an east-west axis. The building has vertical wood siding and a corrugated metal roof. A lean-to is attached to the west half of the south elevation; its east and south elevations are open.

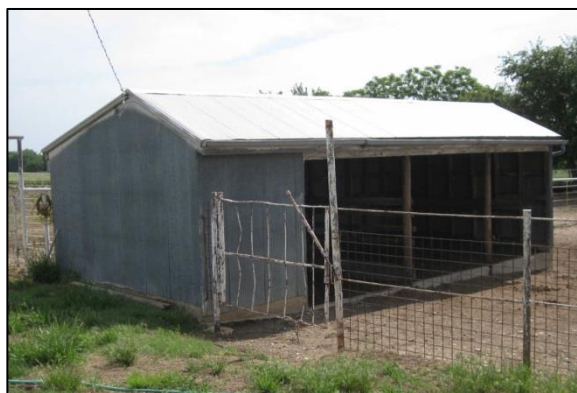
The east elevation contains a square opening in the gable end (covered) and a pedestrian door that is flush with the siding. The shed is in fair condition and has good integrity.



**J. Loafing Shed (KHRI #115-917)**  
38.147105,-96.853596

**Contributing Structure**  
ca. 1950

At the south end of the horse barn's metal corral is a loafing shed (30'x14'). This rectangular structure, used for animal shelter, is on an east-west axis. The wood frame structure is covered with corrugated metal. Three of the four bays on the south elevation are open; the westernmost bay is covered. There are no other openings in the gable-roof structure. The loafing shed is open to a separate metal corral. The shed is in good condition.



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**K. Foreman's/Shepherd's House (Former) (KHRI #115-918)**

38.146930,-96.853918

**Contributing Building**

ca. 1883; ca.1950

The old foreman's house is located south of the horse barn and northeast of the main house. The one-story house, which is currently vacant, has an L-shaped plan. The ca. 1883 portion is a rectangular stone building (facing west); a wood-framed rear addition (with vinyl siding) on a concrete foundation was added in ca. 1950. The gable roof is covered with composition shingles. The stonework is rough cut ashlar.



The west façade is two bays wide. At the north end of the elevation is a single one-over-one sash window with rectangular stone lintel and sill (typical of this house unless otherwise noted). At the south end of the elevation is a single pedestrian door. Extending from the southeast corner of the stone portion is a stone lean-to; this has a single pedestrian door located in its west elevation.

The north façade of the stone portion is centered on the gable end. A single window is located in the center of the elevation; above this window is a stone keystone decoration. To the east of the stone portion is a frame lean-to, set back from the stone wall. This contains a single pedestrian door in the north wall. The north elevation of the addition contains two openings. Almost centered in the wall is a single pedestrian door accessed by a set of three concrete steps; to the west of the door is a single one-over-one sash window.

The east façade of the addition has a single window centered in the elevation. A large single-pane window is located in the east wall of the lean-to. A covered window opening is located in the east wall of the stone portion, between the addition and the lean-to.

The south façade contains one window in the stone portion, offset to the east of the gable. There is no opening in the south wall of the stone lean-to. Two windows are located in the addition's south wall.

The interior was not accessed, but the building retains a good degree of integrity and is in good condition.

**L. Foreman's House (Current)**

38.146875,-96.854068

**Noncontributing Building**

2003

The current foreman's house is a rectangular building to the immediate west of the old house. This is a manufactured home with stucco siding and a concrete foundation.

**M. Cyclone Cellar Ruins (KHRI #115-919)**

38.147117,-96.854347

**Noncontributing Structure**

ca.1883

Northwest of the foreman's houses is a structure currently functioning as a garage/carport/storage space with its opening in the east wall. Ruins of former stone walls surround the gable-roofed structure which is mostly built into the land. In the 1902 county atlas, a "cyclone cellar" was located here (*Figure 6*), and the walls appear to have been repurposed for its current use. Due to the loss of the majority of the structure, it is considered noncontributing to the district.



Keystone Ranch

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**N. Ice House (KHRI #115-920)**  
38.147054,-96.854416

**Contributing Structure**  
ca. 1883

The square stone ice house is located to the immediate southwest of the cyclone cellar ruins. Like the horse barn, this structure is banked into the land such that the east façade is two stories while the west façade is one story. The foundation is stone; the hipped roof has a small monitor at the peak, and the whole roof is covered with corrugated metal. The stonework is similar to the quality found on the horse barn. The rough-cut blocks are coursed and rock-faced quoins are found at each corner. Rectangular rock-faced sills and lintels are found at masonry openings.



Both the east & west façades feature a single door (made of vertical wood planks) at their ground levels. The north & south façades have a single window opening centered in the elevation. These windows light the upper story. Each level is one room.

Though large portions of cement parking are present, the structure is in fair to good condition and retains a high degree of integrity.

**O. Bunk House (KHRI #115-921)**  
38.147189,-96.854698

**Contributing Building**  
ca. 1880

The bunk house (also called the tenant house) predates most of the resources at Keystone Ranch.<sup>15</sup> This one-story stone house interrupts the south wall of the stone corral and is located to the northwest of the ice house. The side-gabled house has a stone foundation and walls. The roof is deteriorating but it does show its historic shake shingles under later asphalt shingles. A single brick chimney rises from the east end of the gable roof. The stonework on this building is not as refined as the horse barn; it matches more closely the stonework at the sheep barn with long, narrow stones.



The primary (south) façade has a window almost centered in the wall. The masonry opening has a prominent stone sill. A single pedestrian door is located at the east end of the elevation. The north façade has two masonry openings similar to that found on the south. At the west end of this elevation is a door opening (now covered). This doorway leads directly into the stone corral. To the east of this door opening is a masonry opening that once contained a window.

There are no openings in the west façade. In the east façade is a single masonry opening (missing its window unit). This is located just south of the center, presumably to accommodate the chimney.

The house was not accessed during the site visit, but this house contains a single rectangular room. It is in fair condition yet retains a high degree of integrity.

<sup>15</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

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The following two resources are located northeast of the farmstead cluster; see *Figure 3*.

- P. Silo (KHRI #115-922)**  
38.149167,-96.851482

**Contributing Structure**  
ca. 1920

Approximately 870' northeast of the horse barn is the cylindrical clay tile silo. This two-story structure is missing a roof and is no longer used; however, it is in good condition.



- Q. Mill & Mill Race (KHRI #115-923)**  
38.149832,-96.850170

**Contributing Structures**  
ca. 1883 (mill); ca. 1950 (mill race)

Along the west bank of Turkey Creek and approximately 430' northeast of the silo is the ranch's elevator/mill. The timber-framed structure rises two and a half stories over a full stone basement that houses the water wheel and equipment. The half story is a tall monitor roof. The mill's clapboard walls are covered with corrugated metal while the gabled roof contains remaining wooden shingles.



Along with a window opening at the half story, the west façade contains a centered tall wood-framed opening at the first and second levels, as well as a small masonry opening in the foundation at ground level.

The first level on the north façade contains one square wood-framed opening in the eastern half of the wall. To the immediate west of this opening is a small covered opening. At the north end of the wall are also two tall covered openings. All covered openings contain a hinged corrugated metal shutter. There are no openings in the upper stories or foundation wall.

The south façade contains three openings in the first level. A wooden vertical plank door is near the east end of the wall; to its west is a wood-framed window opening, and centered in the wall is a small opening with metal hood. A square wood-framed opening is located in the second level directly above the door. There are no openings in the half story or the foundation wall.

The east façade faces Turkey Creek. A window opening is located in the half story and centered in the wall at the second level. A tall arched masonry opening is located in the stone foundation to allow access to the water wheel and machinery.

The mill's operation was described in 1901:

The ear corn is thrown into the hopper on one side of the mill from which it is fed into a cornsheller in the basement that shells it at the rate of 1,000 bushels per day. From there the corn is carried by an elevator up to the third floor and poured into a No. 8 Bowsher grinder with a capacity of 100 bushels per hour. The ground corn is then carried to bins, which have loading spouts to convey the grain to wagons. Everything is done automatically, the turbine wheel furnishing the power and a shovel is not a necessary tool after the ear corn is shoveled from the wagon into the hopper.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> "The Keystone Ranch," n.p.

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The mill's original race is no longer extant, but to the south of the structure is a concrete mill race installed in the 1950s.

### Keystone Ranch's Historic Integrity

Keystone Ranch is nominated as an excellent example of a farmstead described in *Historic Agricultural-related Resources of Kansas*.<sup>17</sup> This district contains historic agriculture-related structures that exhibit this property's historic ranch associations, including: two barns, shepherd's house, ranch office, stone corral, and mill/elevator. To this are added secondary domestic buildings that supported the residents, including: main house, privy, ice house, bunk house, and former cyclone shelter. Included around the farmstead cluster is the historic associated ranchland that supported Keystone Ranch's stock.<sup>18</sup>

The extant resources of this agricultural district represent a majority of buildings, sites, and structures that defined Keystone Ranch from its beginnings in 1881 through the 1950s. The ranch's historic setting is virtually unchanged, as this rural area of Marion County has not seen an abundance of encroachment from housing, industrial, or energy development over the decades. The district's resources remain within their original locations, allowing the ranch to continue to convey an excellent degree of historic feeling through the resources' contextual associations. Although a number of resources contain a corrugated metal covering, this treatment was done during the district's period of significance, which is allowable under the registration requirements described in the *Historic Agricultural-related Resources of Kansas*.<sup>19</sup> The materials, design, and workmanship of each resource are discernible and well-preserved. Overall the district retains a high level of integrity.

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<sup>17</sup> Christy Davis & Brenda Spencer, *Historic Agriculture-related Resources of Kansas*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (2009): F-87 – F-88.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, F-83.

Keystone Ranch  
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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.

**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**

Architecture

Agriculture

**Period of Significance**

1881-1960

**Significant Dates**

1881, 1912

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance ranges from 1881 to 1960 to encompass the two historic eras of the ranch. From 1881 to 1913 Keystone Ranch was developed by its original owner, Frank Wells, with a focus on sheep, hogs, and cattle. After Wells death, the Grace family acquired the property and continued in the ranching tradition established by Wells, focusing instead on cattle and horses. The end year, 1960, incorporates those resources built by the Grace family to support their agricultural endeavors, as the majority of extant built resources were constructed by that date.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**

N/A

Keystone Ranch  
Name of Property

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Narrative Statement of Significance

**Summary**

Established in the early 1880s Keystone Ranch is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A & C for its association with Marion County's ranching history. From 1881 to 1902 German immigrant Frank A. Wells acquired 1,800 acres in the southeastern portion of the county where he established a sheep ranch. During his tenure, Wells constructed most of the extant structures at the ranch, including a house, two barns, and several outbuildings. After Wells' death in 1913 the ranch was sold to T.J. Grace, whose family continues to own the entire 1,800 acres. Although the focus shifted from sheep to hogs, cattle, and horses, the ranch buildings continued to be used to support the agricultural functions first established by Wells. Grace constructed several additional outbuildings, which were in place by 1960. Today Keystone Ranch is an excellent example of the evolution of ranching in this part of Kansas. Its period of significance reflects the two eras of ranching families at this property from 1881 to 1960 and the associated historic contexts discussed in *Historic Agriculture-related Resources of Kansas* from these years.<sup>20</sup>

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**Elaboration**

Keystone Ranch is located in southeastern Marion County's Milton Township in the heart of the Flint Hills, an area "well suited for ranching."<sup>21</sup> The Kansas Territorial Legislature established the county in 1855, but not until 1872 – 11 years after statehood – were the current boundaries set.<sup>22</sup> The earliest settlers patented land as early as 1860, often claiming the richest areas along stream and river bottoms for agricultural pursuits.<sup>23</sup> By 1872, the population was close to 1,000 people who cultivated over 10,000 acres.<sup>24</sup> When the proprietor of Keystone Ranch, Frank Wells, arrived in Marion County in the early 1880s, over 93,000 acres were cultivated, and the population was over 12,000 people.<sup>25</sup>

Field crops were by no means the only agricultural pursuit of Marion County residents in the late 1800s. Livestock – including cattle, sheep, and hogs – was also a staple for many farmers and ranchers, as native grasses were abundant for grazing. Cattle have been prevalent in the area since the days of the Chisholm Trail (late 1860s to 1871). In 1870 alone, from 18,000 to 24,000 Texas cattle wintered near the town of Marion, while the total number of cattle owned by Marion County residents that year was 3,368.<sup>26</sup> Sheep were the second most numerous livestock animal in the county in 1870, with a total of 485.<sup>27</sup> One rancher is quoted in 1870 as saying, "One great advantage of this State is that we can raise as much wool on land worth from five to ten dollars per acre as can be produced in New York on land costing one hundred dollars per acre; and we can send our wool to their market for three cents per pound."<sup>28</sup> By 1891 the county's sheep population (5,654) paled in comparison to other livestock such as cattle (34,368), swine (31,590), horses (13,246), and milk cows (10,259).<sup>29</sup> Cattle and swine historically were the most numerous livestock in Marion County, and Keystone Ranch raised them, along with sheep and horses.

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<sup>20</sup> These historic contexts include: "The Best and Worst of Times: Ranching, Diversification and Drought in the 1880s;" "Less Corn and More Hell: Kansas Populism in the 1890s;" "The Golden Age: Farming in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920;" "Down and Out: Farming the Great Depression, 1920-1941;" "Producing for Victory: World War II, 1941-1945;" and "Consolidation and Corporations: The Post-War Years, 1945-1960."

<sup>21</sup> Davis & Spencer, *Historic Agriculture-related Resources*, E-18.

<sup>22</sup> Sondra Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present* (Hillsboro, Kans.: M.B. Publishing Co., 1972), 29.

<sup>23</sup> Marion County General Land Office Records, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of the Interior [database online]; available from Bureau of Land Management, <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov> (accessed 12 April 2017); Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 55.

<sup>24</sup> Kansas historian, William Cutler, gives the U.S. Federal Census for 1870 as 663 people; however, Kansas Historical Society records indicate the number of persons was 768. The difference may be related to the shifting boundaries prior to 1872. William Cutler, "Marion County," in *History of the State of Kansas* (Chicago: A.T. Andreas, 1883), part 1 [transcription online]; available from *Kansas Collection Books*, <http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/marion/marioncr.htm> (accessed 12 April 2017); Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 59. According to Van Meter, corn accounted for over 6,400 acres, followed by wheat (2,524), oats (1,031), and sorghum (36). Van Meter references the Kansas State Board of Agriculture's annual and biennial reports for her statistics.

<sup>25</sup> Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 61 & 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>28</sup> C.G. Stone as quoted in Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 62.

<sup>29</sup> Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 63.

Keystone Ranch

Name of Property

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	Land Description (T22S, R5E)	Acreage (Total: 1800)	Date of Wells' Acquisition
<b>Section 3</b>	S ½ of the S ½	160	January 15, 1884
<b>Section 4</b>	SE ¼	160	December 8, 1883
<b>Section 10</b>	NW ¼	160	January 15, 1884
	NE ¼	160	September 17, 1902
	SE ¼	160	February 19, 1881
	SW ¼	160	January 30, 1882
<b>Section 11</b>	N ½	320	January 30, 1882
	SW ¼	160	February 19, 1881
	E ½ of the SE ¼	80	September 2, 1891
<b>Section 14</b>	W ½ of the SE ¼	80	February 19, 1881
	N ½ of the NW ¼	80	February 19, 1881
	NW ¼ of the NE ¼	40	February 19, 1881
<b>Section 15</b>	N ½ of the NE ¼	80	February 19, 1881

See Figure 8 for corresponding graphic.

\$150,000 in today's currency) for his land.<sup>32</sup> Working as a machinist and engineer in Memphis, Wells endeavored to improve on the cotton gin design, finally patenting a new machine in October 1869.<sup>33</sup> This patent he licensed to an unspecified manufacturer.<sup>34</sup> His improved knife design for his gin received an additional patent in January 1881.<sup>35</sup> When he relocated to Kansas, Wells "received as much as \$40,000 annually" (roughly \$1 million today) for his license.<sup>36</sup>

Between 1881 and 1885 Wells vigorously improved his property. According to local historian Margaret Lyons, Wells "had a love for sheep and decided to raise them almost exclusively."<sup>37</sup> In June 1885 alone Wells' sheep herd provided 17,000 pounds of wool – more than double other area herds.<sup>38</sup> He hired workers, many of whom appear to be family members, and constructed several of the stone structures still seen today.<sup>39</sup> One of the first buildings on the grounds was the old bunk house where Wells initially resided (Figure 9).<sup>40</sup> Also constructed were the foreman's house, tenant houses, sheep and horse barns, ice house/storm shelter, mill/elevator, and stone fences.<sup>41</sup> An existing structure was relocated to Section 11 to be used as Wells' main dwelling.<sup>42</sup> By 1885 Keystone Ranch encompassed over 1,500 acres (Figure 10).

<sup>30</sup> Union Pacific Railway Company, *Immigrants' Guide to the Most Fertile Lands of Kansas*, ca.1880 [digitized online]; available from *Kansas Memory*, item 1445, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/1445> (accessed 14 April 2017). See also the MPS context, "The Best and Worst of Times: Ranching, Diversification and Drought in the 1880s."

<sup>31</sup> Kansas State Census, 1885; US Federal Census, 1900.

<sup>32</sup> Price listed in deed dated 19 February 1881, conveying the acreage from Alexander K. Pedrick to F. A. Wells. Deed on file with county clerk, and a copy is in the possession of owner.

<sup>33</sup> US Federal Census, 1870 & 1880; Frank A. Wells, "Improvement in Cotton-Seed Hulling Machines," Letters Patent No.96,177, United States Patent Office (awarded 26 October 1869) [digitized online]; available from Google Patents, <https://www.google.com/patents/US96177> (accessed 13 April 2017); & Lyons, "White House," 139.

<sup>34</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

<sup>35</sup> Frank A. Wells, "Huller-Knife," Specification forming part of Letters Patent No.236,470, United States Patent Office (applied, 26 April 1880; awarded 11 January 1881) [digitized online]; available from Google Patents, <https://www.google.com/patents/US236470> (accessed 13 April 2017).

<sup>36</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> *The Atchison [Kansas] Daily Champion* (27 June 1885): 2. The next highest yield was 6,000 pounds.

<sup>39</sup> The 1885 Kansas Census lists Wells (49) along with August (47), Paul (9), Stiller E. (25), Gustle (22), Schivler (26), and Miller John (40) Wells as ranch help. Two additional, men are also listed as ranch help. Later census records show that August and Paul stayed in Marion County.

<sup>40</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139. This may have predated Wells' tenure.

<sup>41</sup> Until the spring of 1872 Marion County was open rangeland. With the influx of settlers, free-ranging livestock became a liability to cultivated crops, so in April 1872 county commissioners declared that, "no cattle, horses, mules, asses, sheep, hogs or any other domestic or domesticated animals would be allowed to run at large within the limits of the county" (Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 62). Before barbed wire became the prevalent fence material, early farmers and ranchers relied on materials readily available within the landscape. In Marion County, that material was most often stone, as is seen at Keystone Ranch. Animal pens, barnyards, and occasionally entire farms were enclosed "with dry-laid limestone walls, built in a battered form from wide bases" (Davis & Spencer, *Historic Agriculture-related Resources of Kansas*, F-74).

<sup>42</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

Keystone Ranch

Name of Property

Marion County, Kansas

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Sheep continued to be the mainstay of Keystone Ranch through the early 1890s. Wells pastured “3,500 sheep on cornfields” in 1890.<sup>43</sup> He reportedly had 6,000 head in September 1891, which is above the Kansas State Bureau of Agriculture’s reported total sheep population in Marion County for the year (5,654).<sup>44</sup> Specific numbers aside, Wells continued in the sheep business well after most area ranchers switched their focus to cattle, which apparently did not endear him to his neighbors.<sup>45</sup> One of the reasons for the shift in livestock had to do with foreign competition in the wool market. In an effort to protect domestic industries, Congress passed the Tariff Act of 1890; domestic wool was heavily guarded under this law by a high tariff on imported wool.<sup>46</sup> The tariff was lowered in 1894, however, through the Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act, and Wells was forced to diversify his stock. In 1896 the *Hutchinson [Kansas] News* wrote:

F.A. Wells of Florence, Kan., was in the city yesterday and purchased a number of high bred hogs of Mr. Graham, the fine stock raiser, north of town. Mr. Wells owns the Keystone ranch, south of Florence, which is one of the best ranches in Kansas. He formerly was a successful sheep raiser, but the Democrats took the tariff off of the wool and he was forced to quit that business. He says that any Kansas farmer that says that a tariff does not protect him, don’t [sic] know what he is talking about.<sup>47</sup>

Wells was a well-respected rancher whose “likes he frankly expressed as he did his dislikes.”<sup>48</sup> This applied also to his treatment of hired workers. If he felt his employees were shirking duties, “he fired them all, as many as 10 to 12 at a time.”<sup>49</sup> He was not a man of compromise when it came to his convictions, and this came across as his being “hard,” quick tempered, and eccentric.<sup>50</sup> Wells’ friends, however, knew him as an honest, generous, and positive man who was “kind and considerate to his wife.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1892 at the age of 57, Wells married his second wife, Jennie Bostwick Waite, aged 32.<sup>52</sup> The couple occupied the ranch’s main house, which Wells had expanded with additions to create an 18-room mansion (*Figure 5*). The house was intentionally located on the highest ridge of the property, and a turreted addition on the northwest corner enabled Wells to survey the ranch from every direction – often with binoculars to make sure his hired help were working – which he did into his final years.<sup>53</sup> The house was equipped with the finest luxuries available, including a marble lavatory in the master bedroom and speaking tubes throughout the house, both of which are extant. The house was also equipped with running hot and cold water, a sewer system – which was also connected to the barn – and a hot water heating system throughout the dwelling.<sup>54</sup> “Heavy, ornate furnishings had been trucked in, and magnificent hanging lamps, draperies, linen, silver and china purchased. Maids were hired, and all was in readiness for the couple’s occupancy.”<sup>55</sup> Many of the furnishings remain in the house to this day.

The first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – during the “Golden Age of Kansas Farming” – was prosperous for Wells. Unlike many of the state’s farmers and ranchers in the 1890s, Wells successfully weathered the economic difficulties.<sup>56</sup> In 1900 he was one of the directors of the newly organized Burns State Bank, which incorporated with a capital of \$6,000.<sup>57</sup> That

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<sup>43</sup> *Burns Monitor* (14 March 1890): n.p., as transcribed in Burns Centennial Committee, *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years, 1880-1980* (N.p.: 1980), 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Westmoreland [Kansas] Recorder* (3 September 1891): 6; Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 63.

<sup>45</sup> Ethel Spinden, “Things I Imagine, Things That I Heard, and Things That I Remember,” in *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years*, 84.

<sup>46</sup> F.W. Taussig, *The Tariff History of the United States*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 251-283 [digitized online]; available from Hathi Trust <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101066788249> (accessed 13 April 2017).

<sup>47</sup> *The Hutchinson News* (19 May 1896): 3.

<sup>48</sup> “Francis August Wells,” *The Burns [Kansas] Citizen* (3 July 1913): n.p. as transcribed in *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years*, 90.

<sup>49</sup> Lyons, “White House,” 139.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Lyons, “White House,” 139; “Francis August Wells,” 90.

<sup>52</sup> Michigan, Marriage Records, 1867-1952, available from Ancestry.com. Jennie lived in Detroit when the couple was married, and it is unknown how they met.

Wells’ first wife, Jennie (Jane), was 35 in 1870, according to the Federal Census. She is also listed in the 1880 Federal Census, but Wells is listed as a widower in the 1885 Kansas census. It is unknown if she traveled to Kansas with Wells. The date of their marriage is noted in “Francis August Wells,” 90.

<sup>53</sup> Lyons, “White House,” 139.

<sup>54</sup> “The Keystone Ranch.” n.p.

<sup>55</sup> Lyons, “White House,” 139.

<sup>56</sup> Davis & Spencer, *Historic Agriculture-related Resources*, E-20.

<sup>57</sup> *Marion [Kansas] Record* (28 September 1900): 4.

Keystone Ranch

Name of Property

Marion County, Kansas

County and State

year he also received his third patent, this one for a seeding plow.<sup>58</sup> His prosperity is exemplified in the following excerpts from a 1901 sketch of Keystone Ranch:

Let us now stroll around over the ranch. There are 1,640 acres of it, 1,200 in pastureland, the largest fenced pasture owned by any one man in Marion County. Below the home Turkey creek has been dammed up, forming a small lake from the edge of which extends the [hay] pasture, sown to alfalfa, where roam 350 head of Poland China hogs. From the dam to the mill is built a race, giving a twenty foot fall to furnish power to turn the mill by the means of a turbine wheel. ...

There are seventy-five [hog] pens, each with a sleeping room and dining room, while behind the line is a [flagstone?] alley where the waiter passes up and down the line with a barrel on wheels full of cooked corn and cornmeal mush. The drainage is perfect as well as the shelter afforded. Mr. Wells raises each year 350 to 400 head of hogs and confines his attention solely to Poland China stock. He also feeds and fattens annually 300 to 400 head of steers. He buys them as early in the spring as he can, and puts them in his vast pastures to fatten, corn feeding them in the fall. For the purpose of feeding his stock he farms about 300 acres in corn, 65 acres in sorghum and 70 acres of alfalfa and millet.<sup>59</sup>

The sketch also explains that "windmills are conspicuous by their absence."<sup>60</sup> He had an extensive hydraulic waterworks system that piped water from Turkey Creek to the "house, barn, hay lots, and cattle yards."<sup>61</sup> Wells completed his land purchases for the ranch in 1902, giving the property a total of 1,800 acres. In 1904 he was known as "the Milton township cattle king,"<sup>62</sup> and the following year his ranch was valued at \$60,000 (\$1.6 million today).<sup>63</sup> Wells advertised for 400 head of cattle in March 1908 to "pasture in one of the best watered pastures in the state."<sup>64</sup> By 1910 Wells' agricultural endeavors were part of why Marion County ranked "among the foremost in the state in the amount of money [\$2,000,000] realized from the sale of stock sold for slaughter."<sup>65</sup>

Wells is perhaps best remembered locally for his eccentricities. He was known to parade his livestock from his ranch to the railroad in Burns when it was time for market and to use white gloves to check his horses for dirt.<sup>66</sup> Margaret Lyons further recalls:

At one time he ordered four horse-drawn binders [reaping machines] from Charlie M. Lyons, local hardware and implement dealer. These arrived in one freight car, and a great ceremony was made of the deal. A long procession of a great many wagons, the binders and loads of hogs paraded through the village. Wells, his foreman and all his ranch hands were in the parade. Pictures were taken, for it was a most unusual event for any rancher to buy four binders. ...

He had the finest horses and equipment he could buy. His carriages were works of art. Ordinary leather was not to be thought of for the seats and accessories. One carriage was done in alligator, and another in kangaroo skin. There were dozens of carts, surreys and carriages.<sup>67</sup>

Wells passed away in June 1913 at the age of 78.<sup>68</sup> At the time of death, his estate was valued at \$51,000 (\$50,000 real estate; \$1,000 personal property) or \$1.2 million dollars in today's money. His will stipulated that his wife received

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<sup>58</sup> Frank A. Wells, "Seeding Plow," Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 649,559, United States Patent Office (applied for 8 February 1900; awarded 15 May 1900) [digitized online]; available from Google Patents, <https://www.google.com/patents/US649559> (accessed 13 April 2017).

<sup>59</sup> "The Keystone Ranch," n.p.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Marion [Kansas] Record* (1 December 1904): 8.

<sup>63</sup> *The Evening Star [Independence, Kansas]* (21 October 1905): 3.

<sup>64</sup> *The Wichita [Kansas] Daily Eagle* (12 March 1908): 9.

<sup>65</sup> Frank Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopaedia of State History*, vol. II (Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912), 226 [digitized online]; available from the Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/kansascyclopedia02blac> (accessed 14 April 2017).

<sup>66</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Kansas Wills & Probate Records, 1803-1987, v. 5-6 Records of Wills 1907-1916 [online database]; available from Ancestry.com.

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everything, unless she preceded him at death, in which case the will became void.<sup>69</sup> Mrs. Wells sold the entire ranch in 1915 to T.J. Grace for \$75,000 cash (\$1.8 million) (*Figure 11*).<sup>70</sup>

Thomas J. (T.J.) Grace, Sr. (1868-1959) and his wife, Margaret, had immigrated to Kansas from Ohio in 1883.<sup>71</sup> The family lived in western Sedgwick County where T.J. operated a farm and ranch outside of Cheney. Like Wells T.J. weathered the economic turmoil of the 1890s. He was a director of the Citizens State Bank in Cheney and prolific stock raiser during the early 1900s.<sup>72</sup> Unlike Wells the Graces did not relocate to Keystone Ranch after their purchase. Instead brothers Jim and Pete Smith were hired to manage the farm while the Graces lived in Wichita.<sup>73</sup>

When he acquired Keystone Ranch in 1915, Grace had "300 thoroughbred Hereford cattle and forty Percheron horses" that he relocated in January 1916.<sup>74</sup> Explaining why he chose to relocate his ranch to Marion County, Grace said, "The wheat men have made it too hot for me with their plows in Central and Southwest Kansas. I am going to move to the Flint Hills, where they can't grow wheat on account of the rocks."<sup>75</sup> Wheat lands were selling from \$15 to \$30 an acre during this era, so Grace decided sell.<sup>76</sup>

Grace ushered in a new era for Keystone Ranch. Instead of hogs and cattle, the ranch raised horses and cattle. Throughout the 1920s local newspapers included stories on and advertisements by Grace for the sale of cattle, bulls, and horses raised at Keystone Ranch.<sup>77</sup> By 1931 Grace contributed significantly to the total cattle population of the county, which was counted at 36,398.<sup>78</sup>

The Graces' son, Thomas, Jr. (Tommy), and family, moved to Keystone Ranch around 1940 to take over ranch operations.<sup>79</sup> The younger Grace had a penchant for horses, even from a young age,<sup>80</sup> so while cattle remained a staple at Keystone Ranch, horse breeding, especially for racing, became a focus. Tommy raced his horses (*Figure 12*), and in 1965 received a trophy and award "from the United States Trotting Association for [the Graces'] horse, 'Midwest Scott,' who paced the fastest race in the state of Kansas for all time."<sup>81</sup> During Tommy Grace's tenure, additional outbuildings were constructed to support the horse industry. He also is responsible for the remodeling of the main house.

The 1,800 acres that define this historic ranch district continue to support livestock. Tommy's son, Rick, now manages Keystone Ranch, focusing primarily on cattle; although, horses are still seen in the barn built so many years ago to shelter the animals. Keystone Ranch is significant to the ranching story of the Flint Hills and specifically to this area of Marion County. The extant buildings and relatively unchanged landscape offer a tangible link between Frank Wells' successful endeavors through the generations of the Grace family who continue to operate the property as it historically functioned.

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<sup>69</sup> Kansas Wills & Probate Records, 1803-1987.

<sup>70</sup> "Big Marion County Ranch Sells," *El Dorado Daily Republican* (26 June 1915): 2; *Burns Monitor* (24 June 1915): n.p., as transcribed in *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years*, 23.

<sup>71</sup> Lyons, "White House," 139.

<sup>72</sup> *The Cheney [Kansas] Sentinel* (14 January 1910): 1 & (24 May 1907): 1.

<sup>73</sup> Spinden, "Things I Imagine," 84.

<sup>74</sup> "A Marion Ranch Sold for \$65,000," *Wichita Beacon* (30 June 1915): 10. The price differs from the two sources in fn 71.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> "Successful Cattle Farmer," *The Wichita Beacon* (1 May 1921): 6; *The Wichita Beacon* (4 May 1917): 15.

<sup>78</sup> Van Meter, *Marion County Past & Present*, 63.

<sup>79</sup> Spinden, "Things I Imagine," 84.

<sup>80</sup> *Wichita Beacon* (24 January 1922): 8. In this article, Thomas "easily won" a Shetland pony hurdle jumping competition.

<sup>81</sup> *The Burns News* (15 January 1965): n.p. as transcribed in *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years*, 61.

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Wells, Frank A. "Huller-Knife." Specification forming part of Letters Patent No.236,470. United States Patent Office. Applied, 26 April 1880; awarded 11 January 1881 [digitized online]; available from Google Patents, <https://www.google.com/patents/US236470> (accessed 13 April 2017).

Wells, Frank A. "Improvement in Cotton-Seed Hulling Machines." Letters Patent No.96,177. United States Patent Office. 26 October 1869 [digitized online]; available from Google Patents, <https://www.google.com/patents/US96177> (accessed 13 April 2017).

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*Atchison [Kansas] Daily Champion*

*The Cheney [Kansas] Sentinel*

*El Dorado Daily Republican*

*The Evening Star [Independence, Kansas]*

*Marion [Kansas] Record*

*Westmoreland [Kansas] Recorder*

*The Wichita Beacon*

*The Wichita [Kansas] Daily Eagle*

**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 1,800

**Provide latitude/longitude coordinates.**

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

A <u>38.165502</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.886598</u> Longitude:	B <u>38.165637</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.877371</u> Longitude:
C <u>38.161945</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.877354</u> Longitude:	D <u>38.161917</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.858945</u> Longitude:
E <u>38.158314</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.858917</u> Longitude:	F <u>38.158146</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.840206</u> Longitude:
G <u>38.143668</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.840378</u> Longitude:	H <u>38.143567</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.845013</u> Longitude:
I <u>38.140124</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.844970</u> Longitude:	J <u>38.140158</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.867973</u> Longitude:
K <u>38.143769</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.867973</u> Longitude:	L <u>38.143972</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.877156</u> Longitude:
M <u>38.158517</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.877328</u> Longitude:	N <u>38.158483</u> Latitude:	<u>-96.886555</u> Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundaries of Keystone Ranch correspond to the legal boundaries on file with the county. The ranch includes 1,800 acres (excluding rights-of-way) in the following sections of Township 22 South, Range 5 East in Marion County, Kansas:

- Section 3: S ½ of the S ½ (160 acres)
- Section 4: SE ¼ (160 acres)
- Section 10: Entire section (640 acres)
- Section 11: Entire section (640 acres)
- Section 14: N ½ of the NW ¼ & NW ¼ of the NE ¼ (120 acres)
- Section 15: N ½ of the NE ¼ (80 acres)

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

Although a landscape, the boundaries were selected to correspond with the legal boundaries due to the Kansas tradition of establishing farms and ranches by sectional divisions. Further, the boundary as drawn represents the historic boundary of Keystone Ranch through Frank Wells' acquisitions. The 1,800-acre ranch has retained its historic boundary since 1902 when Wells received the deed for the NE ¼ of Section 10. The intact historic boundary of a ranch in Kansas is rare due to land sales and farm consolidations; therefore, the boundary at Keystone Ranch is drawn to include this rare extant example of an intact historic boundary.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Amanda K. Loughlin  
organization Kansas Historical Society date April 2017  
street & number 6425 SW 6<sup>th</sup> Ave telephone (785) 272-8681  
city or town Topeka state KS zip code 66615  
e-mail [cultural\\_resources@kshs.org](mailto:cultural_resources@kshs.org)

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

name Rick Grace  
street & number On file with SHPO 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.

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### Additional Documentation

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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: Keystone Ranch

City or Vicinity: Burns vicinity

County: Marion County State: Kansas

Photographer: Amanda K. Loughlin (KSHS); Rick Grace (RG)

Date

Photographed: Throughout the winter and summer 2016

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

See photo key maps 1 & 2

- 01 of 20:** View NNE from county road into ranch (RG)
- 02 of 20:** View N along driveway, approaching farmstead (RG)
- 03 of 20:** View NE of ice house and horse barn (RG)
- 04 of 20:** View NNW showing sheep barn, bunk house, stone fence, and ice house (RG)
- 05 of 20:** View E from north of house, showing bunk house and ice house and part of new foreman's house (KSHS)
- 06 of 20:** View SW from west side of horse barn (within stone corral) (KSHS)
- 07 of 20:** View W from SE of silo along Turkey Creek, showing horse barn, shed, and stone fence (KSHS)
- 08 of 20:** View SW from east side of mill, showing silo and farmstead buildings (KSHS)
- 09 of 20:** View SSE from west side of horse barn (visible at left), showing old & new foreman houses (KSHS)
- 10 of 20:** View W, house, east elevation (RG)
- 11 of 20:** View SE, house, north and west elevations (RG)
- 12 of 20:** View W from house turret, showing privy/shed and Keystone ranchland (KSHS)
- 13 of 20:** View NNE of south elevation of Wells' office and stone fence (KSHS)
- 14 of 20:** View NE of south and partial west elevations of sheep barn (RG)
- 15 of 20:** View SW of sheep barn's east (and most of north) elevation (RG)
- 16 of 20:** View W of horse barn's east elevation (RG)
- 17 of 20:** View NE of horse barn's west and south elevations and part of stone corral wall (RG)
- 18 of 20:** View NW of ice house, bunk house, and sheep barn in background (RG)
- 19 of 20:** View ESE of mill/elevator north and west elevations (KSHS)
- 20 of 20:** View W of mill's east elevation and stone culvert at creek; also present is concrete raceway (RG)

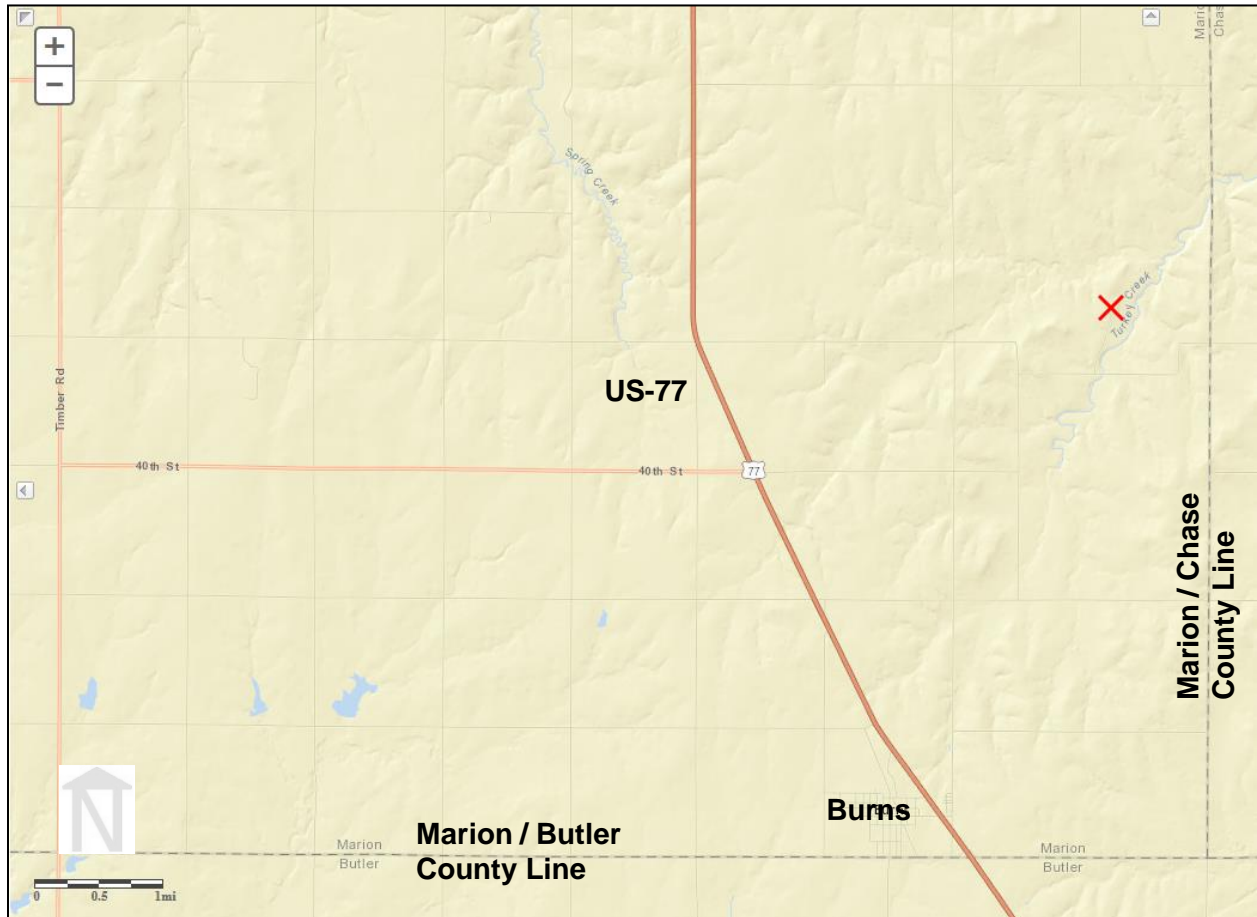
#### Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

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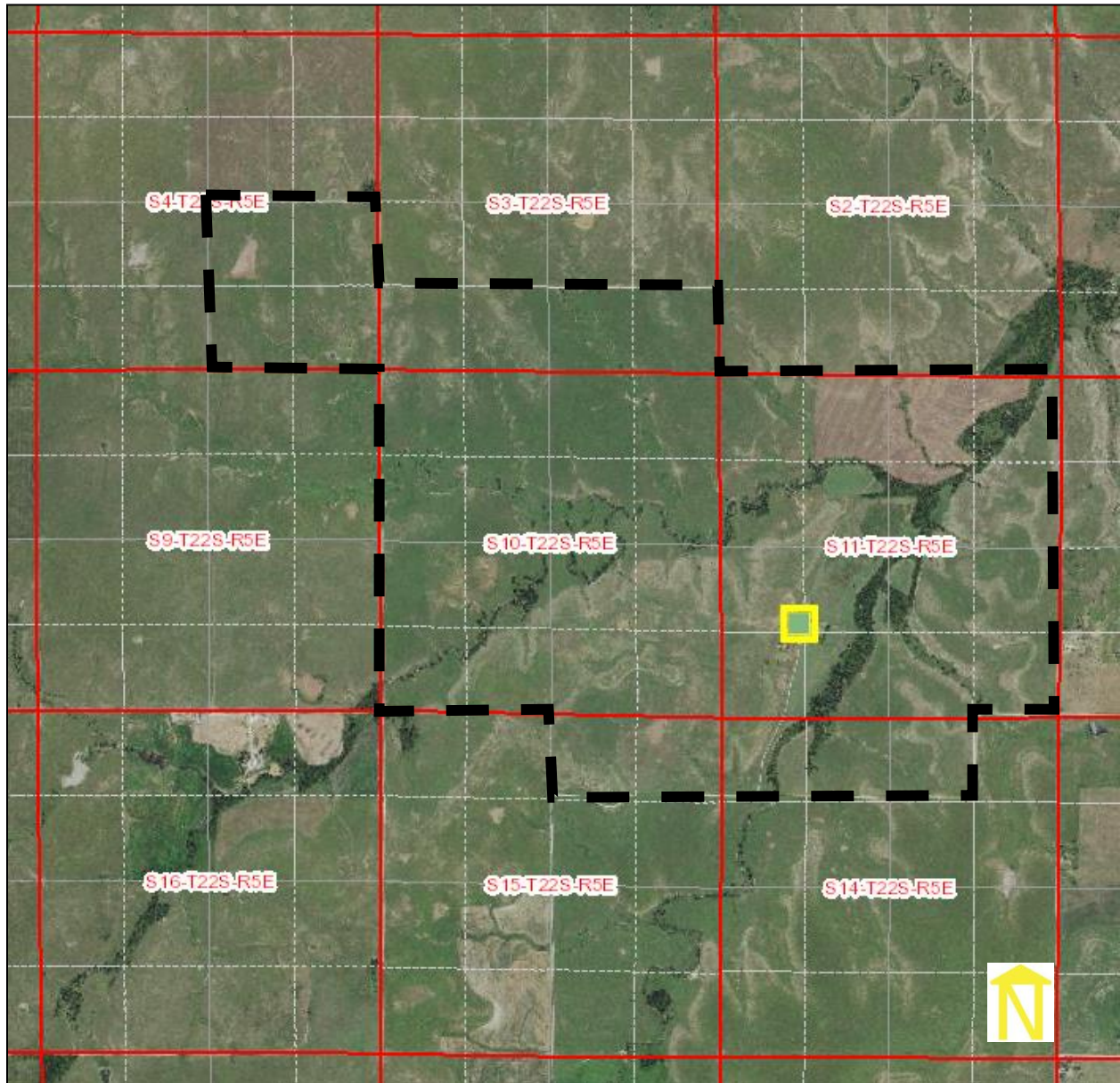
**Figure 1.** Contextual map of the southeastern corner of Marion County, showing the location of the farmstead denoted by X.  
Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory, kshs.org/khri



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**Figure 2.** Current aerial showing extent of Keystone Ranch.  
The square in Section 11 is the location of the farmstead.  
Source: Kansas Historic Resources Inventory, kshs.org/khri



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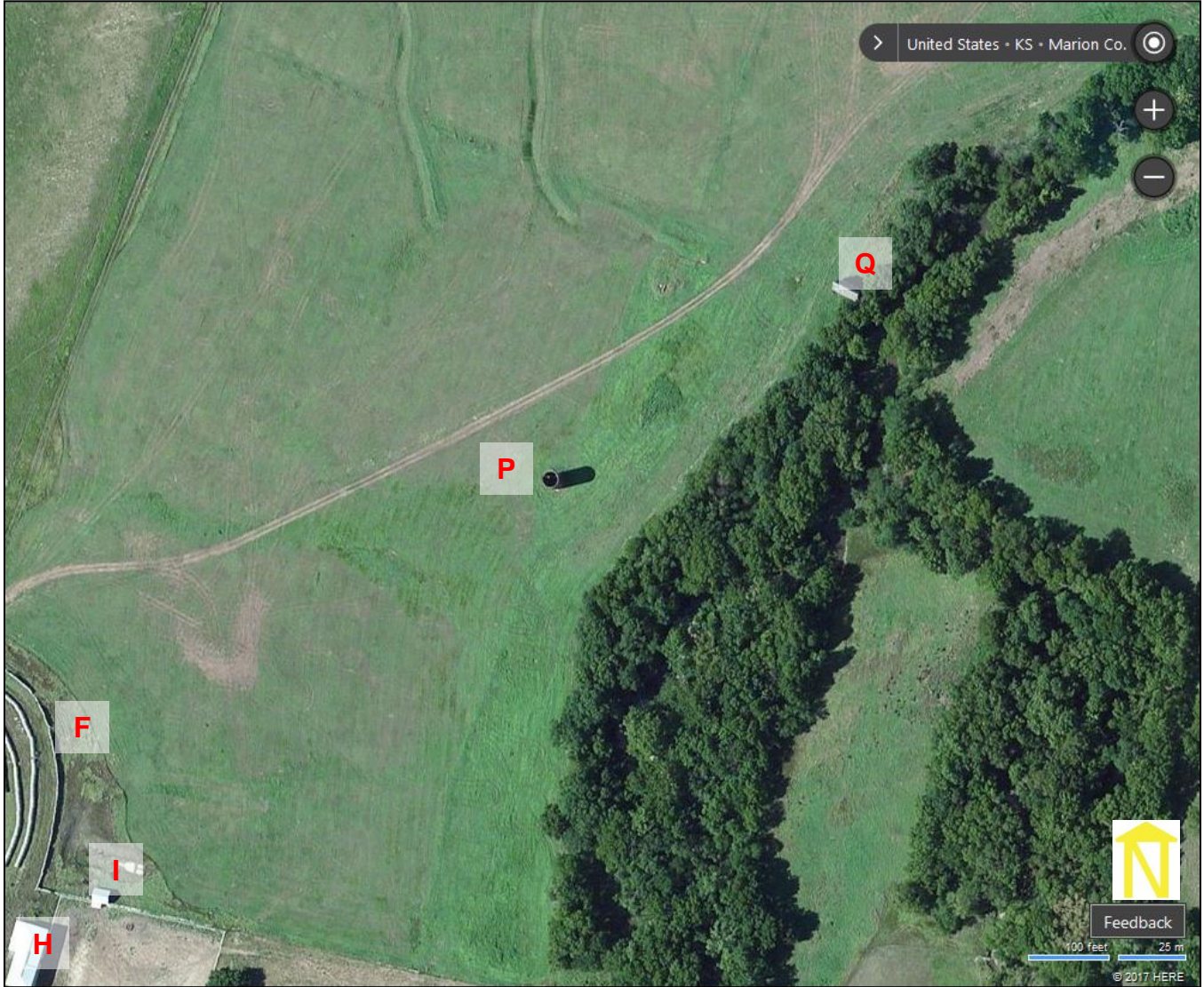
**Figure 3a.** 2017 Bing aerial image, showing farmstead cluster.



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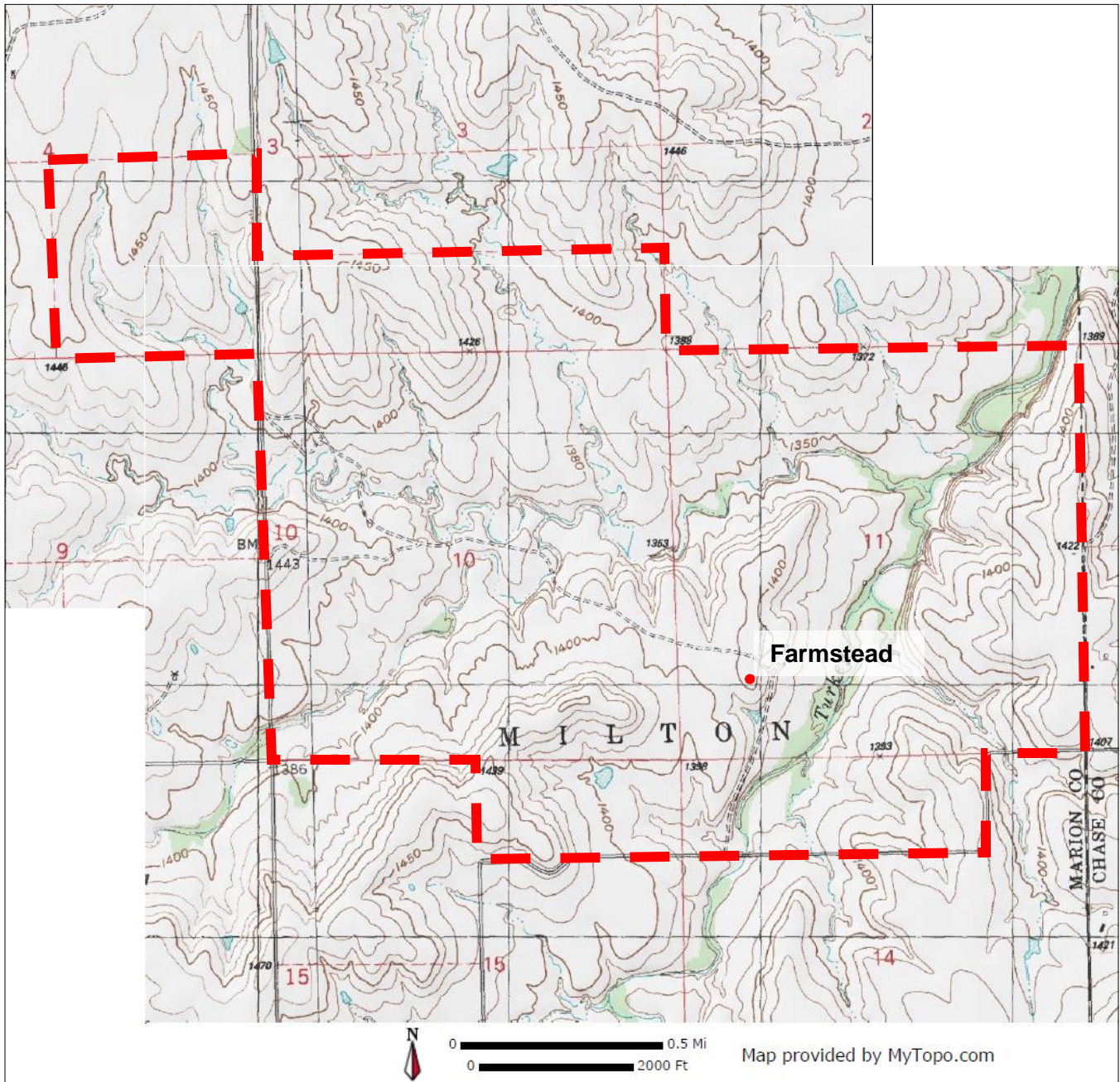
**Figure 3b.** 2017 Bing aerial image, showing farmstead cluster.



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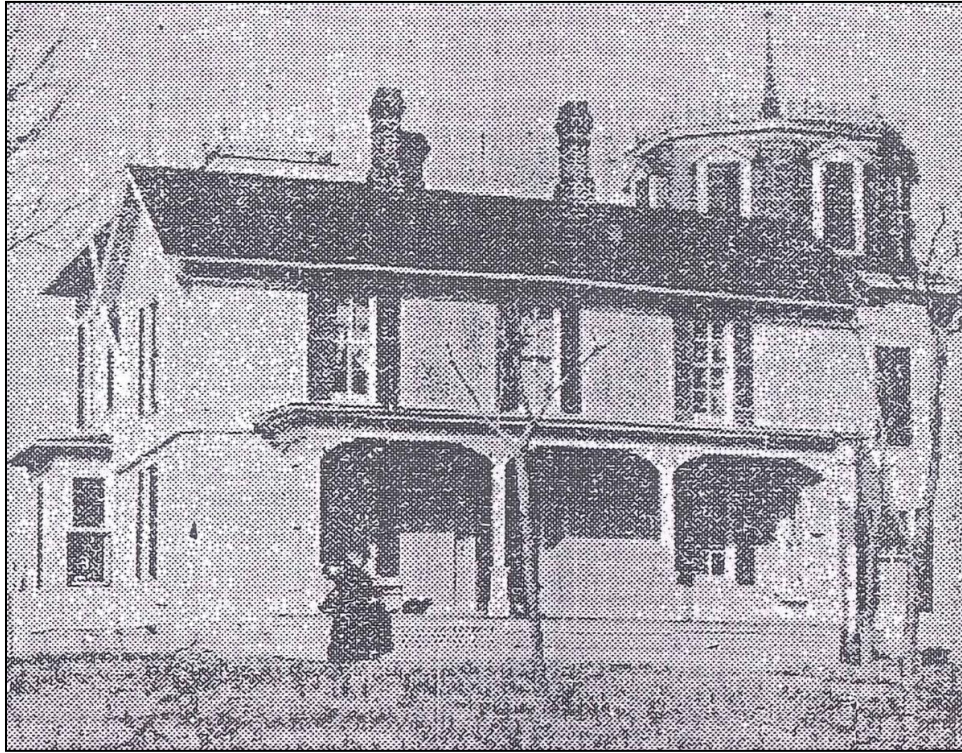
**Figure 4.** Topographic representation of the Keystone (Grace) Ranch.



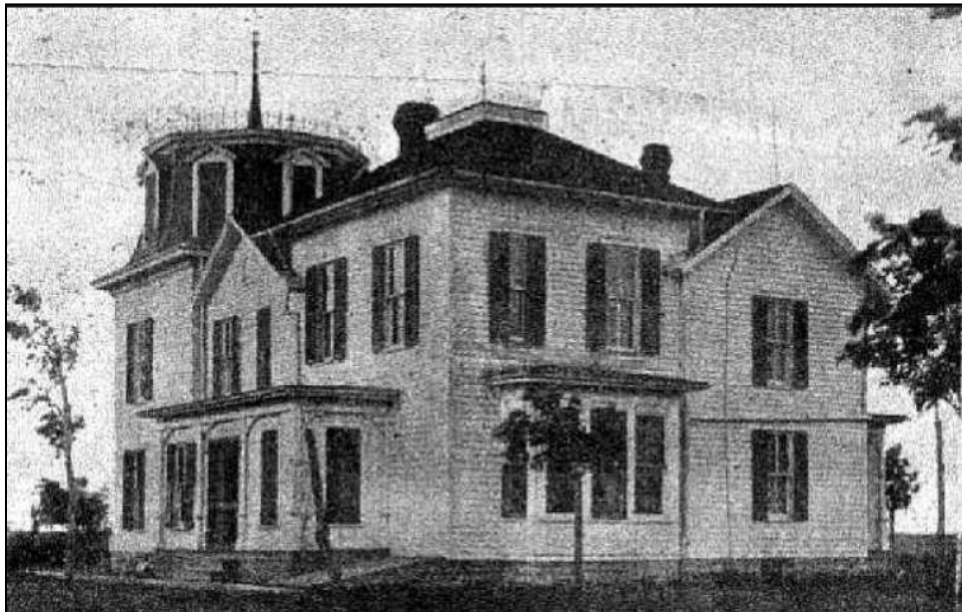
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**Figure 5a.** Undated historic image of main house  
(Source: Lyons, "White House' Landmark of Big Marion County Ranch," 137.)



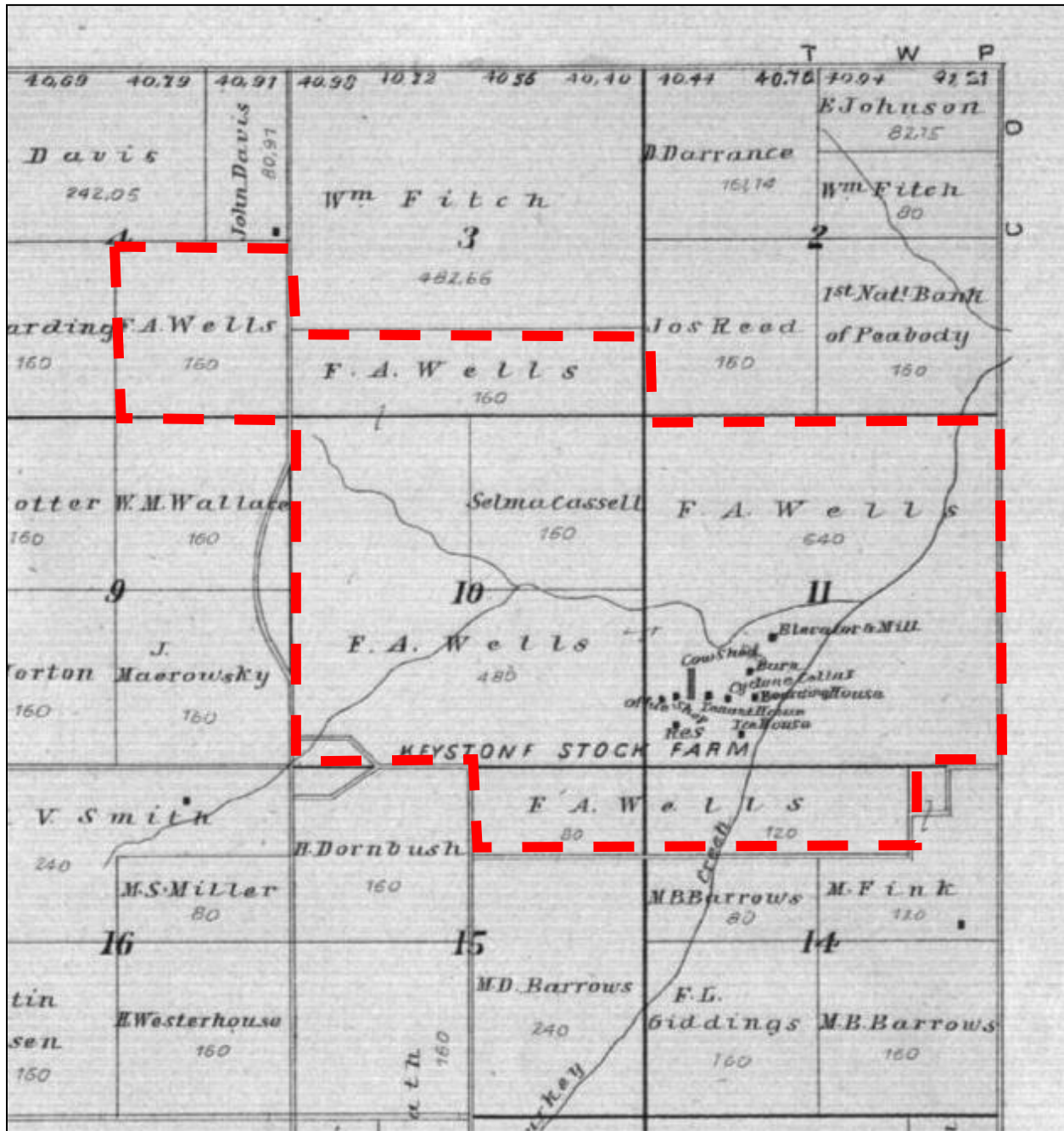
**Figure 5b.** Undated historic image of main house, looking NE  
(Source: *Peabody News*, 1901.)



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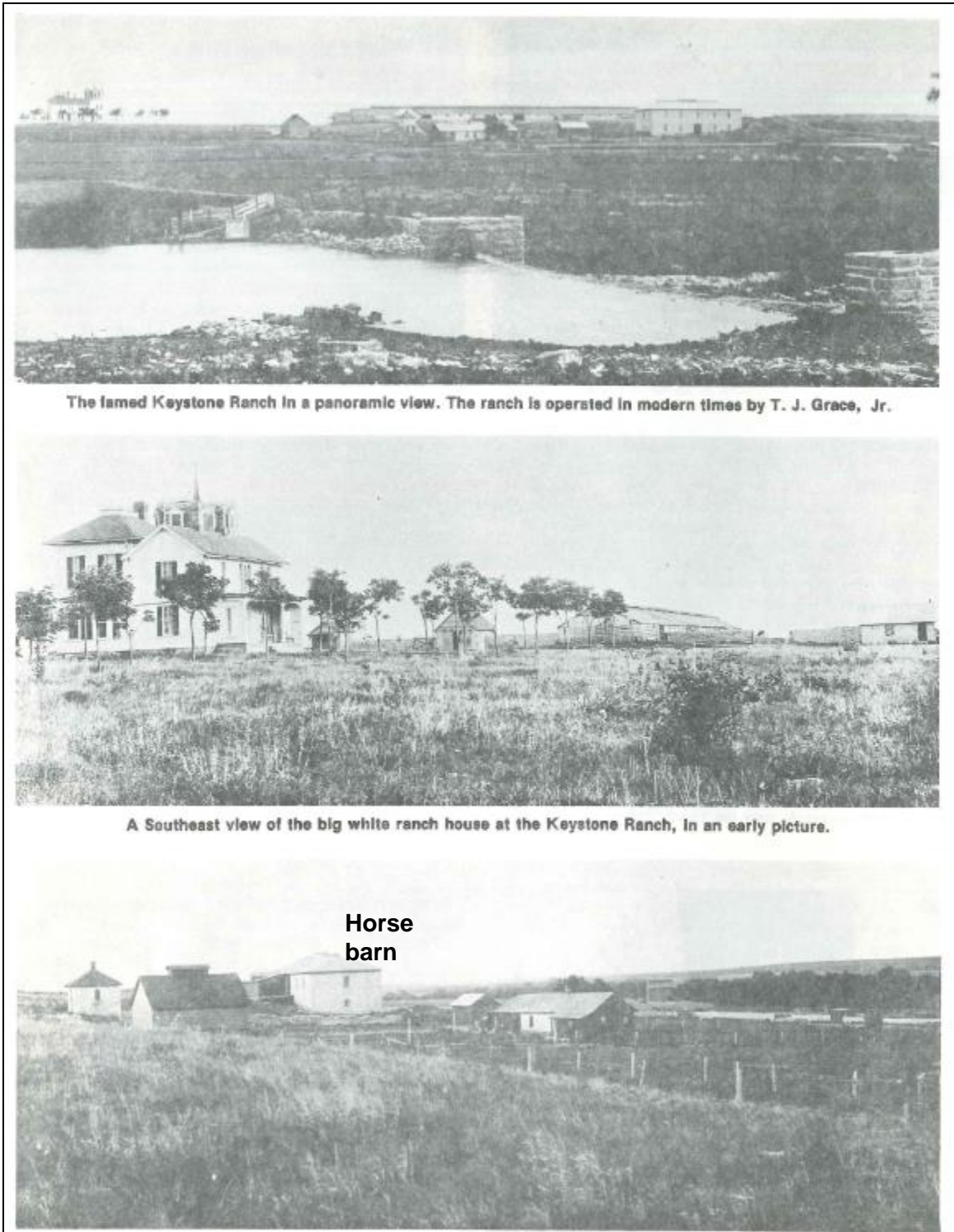
**Figure 6.** Snippet of 1902 Marion County Atlas, showing the Keystone Ranch.  
(Source: Ogle 1902 Atlas, p. 9)



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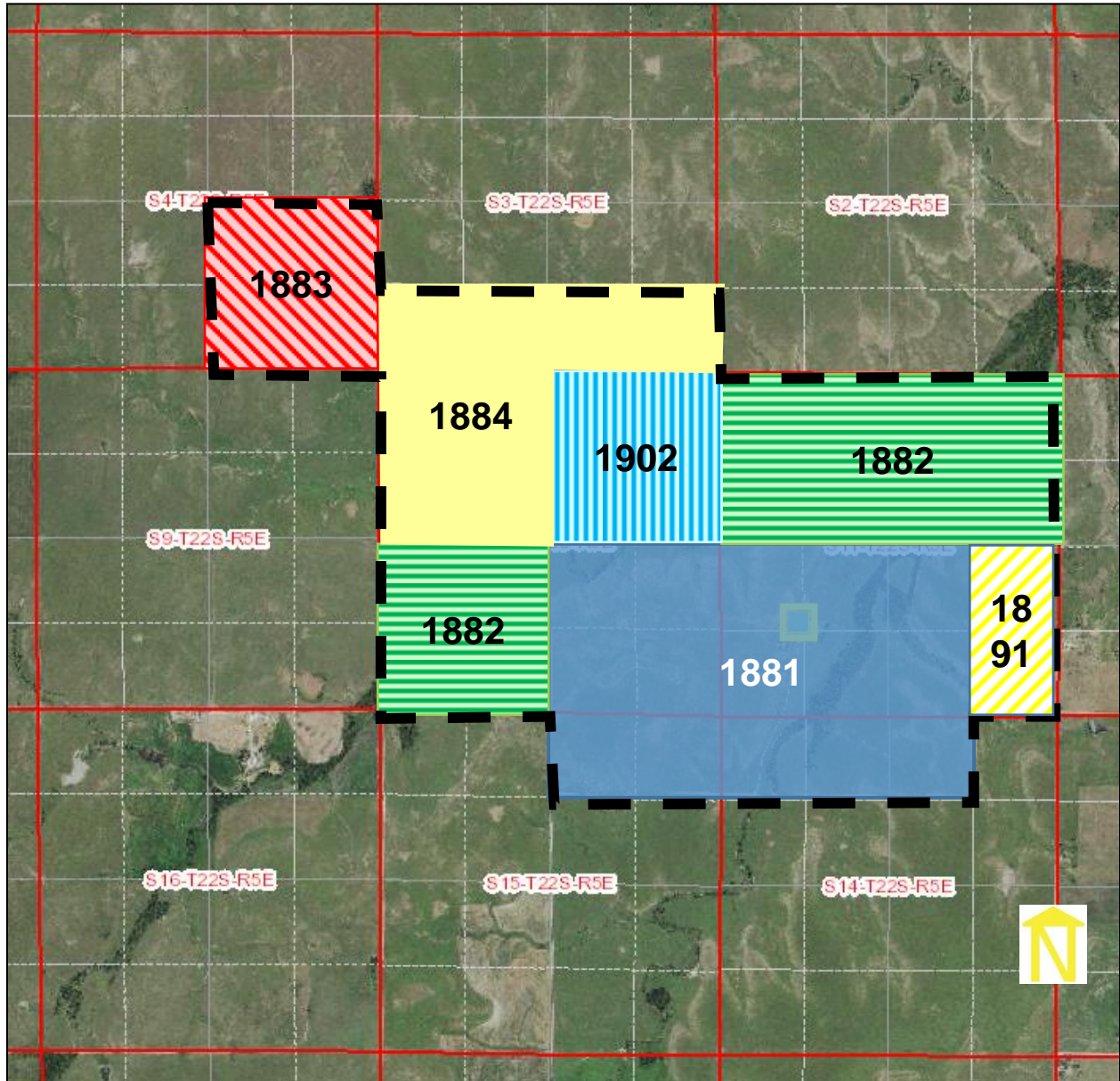
**Figure 7.** Undated historic images of Keystone Ranch. Bottom image shows south and west sides of horse barn (Source: *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years, 1880-1980*, 14).



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**Figure 8.** Dates of land acquisition.



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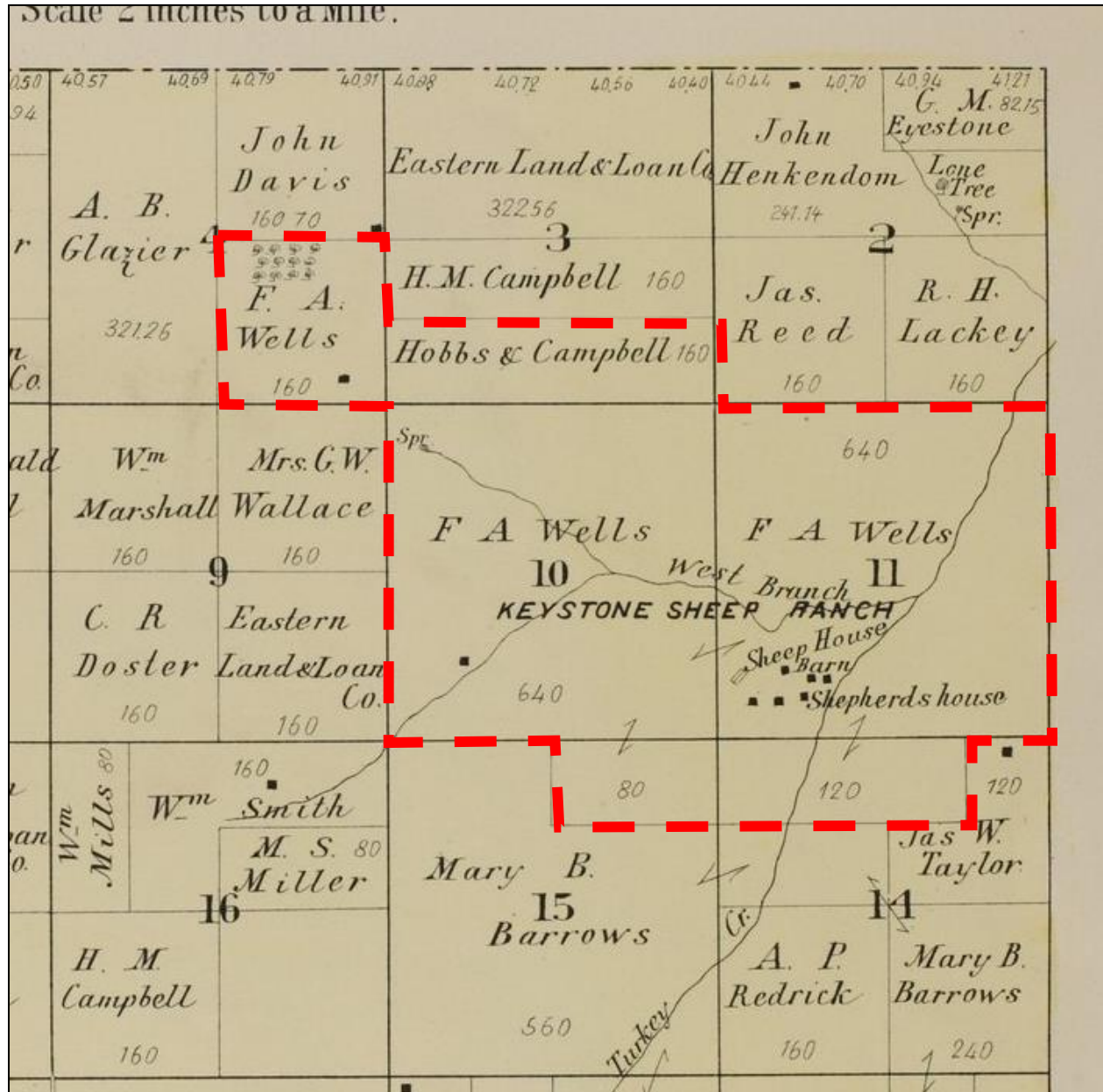
**Figure 9.** Undated image of bunk house (Source: Lyons, "White House," 139).



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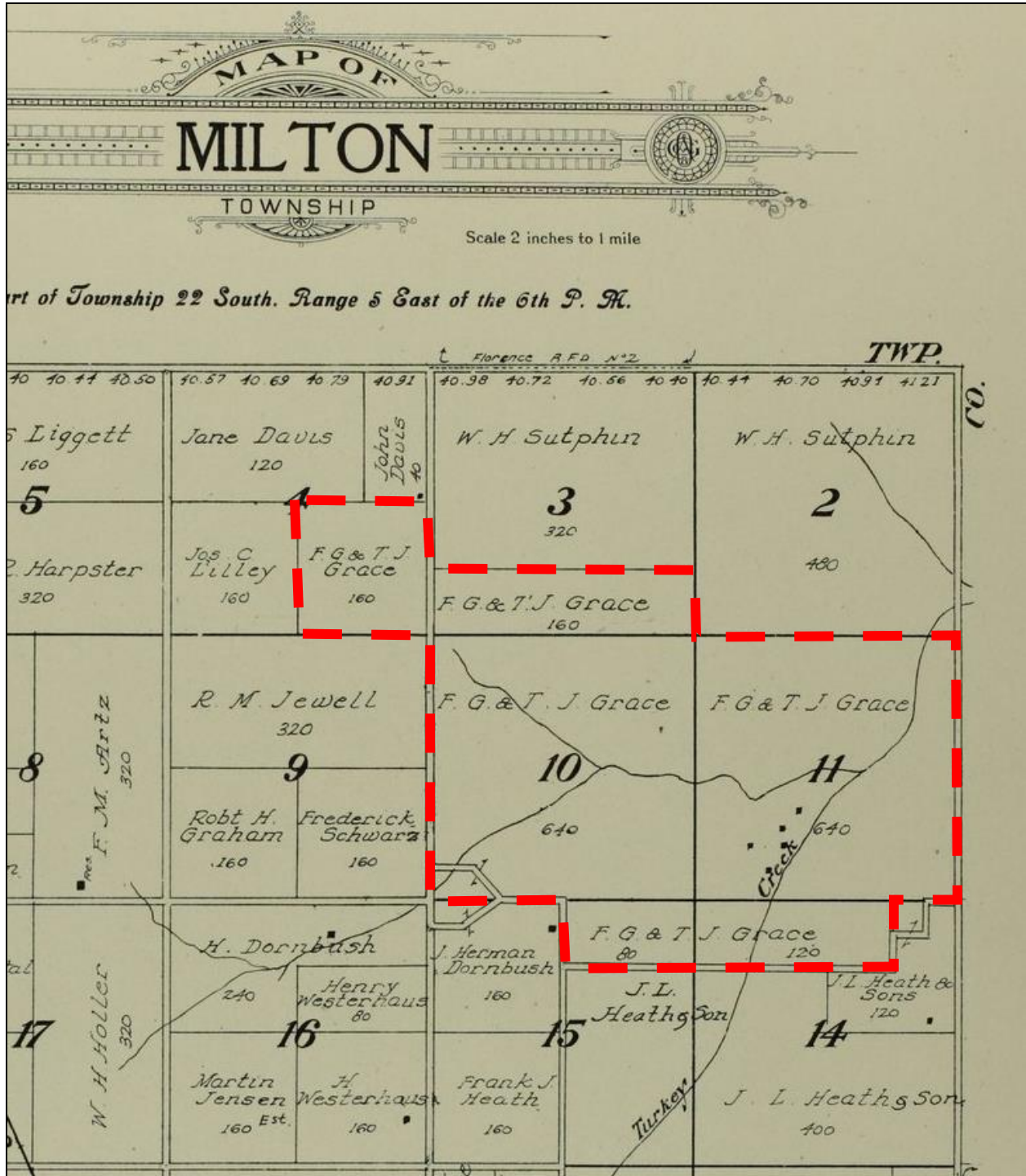
**Figure 10.** Snippet of 1885 Marion County Atlas, showing the Keystone Ranch. The land in Section 3 was acquired by Wells in January 1884. (Source: Davy Atlas, p. 61)



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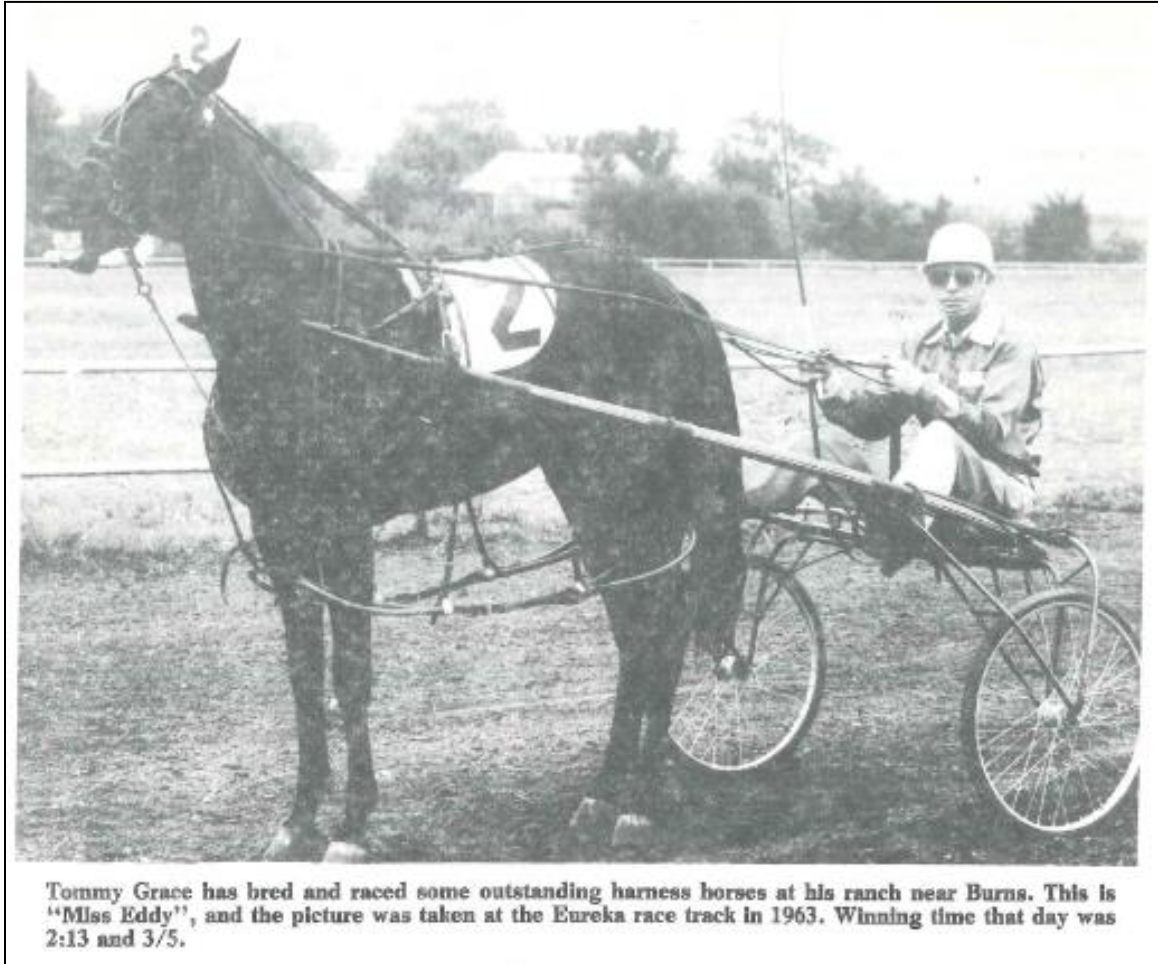
**Figure 11.** Snippet of 1921 Marion County Atlas, showing the Keystone (Grace) Ranch.  
(Source: Ogle 1921 Atlas, p. 43)



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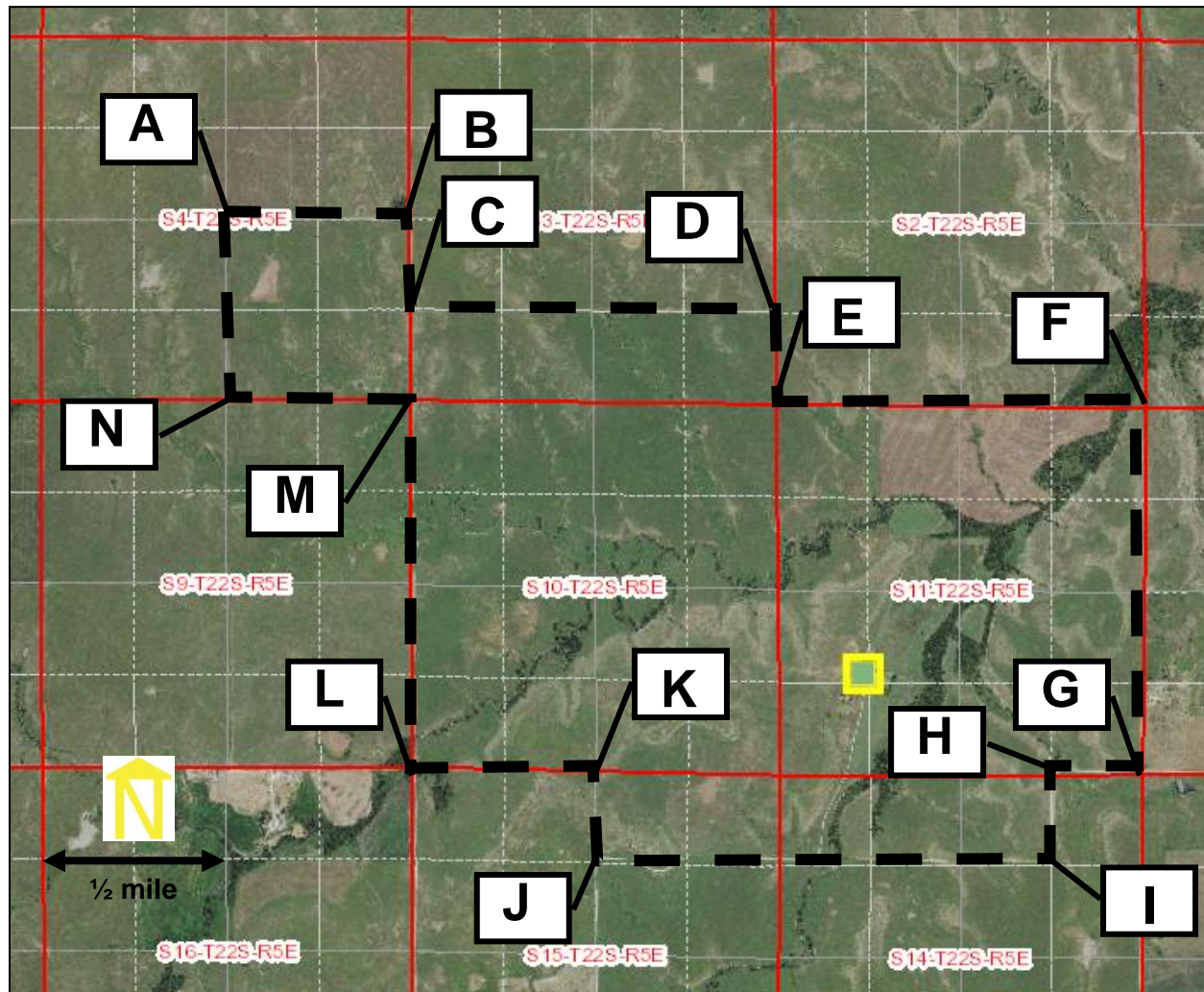
**Figure 12.** Tommy Grace in 1963 with one of his racing horses.  
(Source: *Burns, Kansas: 100 Years, 60.*)



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**Boundary Map.** The nominated ranch is depicted by the dashed outlined shape (Datum=WGS84).



A	38.165502	-96.886598	B	38.165637	-96.877371
C	38.161945	-96.877354	D	38.161917	-96.858945
E	38.158314	-96.858917	F	38.158146	-96.840206
G	38.143668	-96.840378	H	38.143567	-96.845013
I	38.140124	-96.844970	J	38.140158	-96.867973
K	38.143769	-96.867973	L	38.143972	-96.877156
M	38.158517	-96.877328	N	38.158483	-96.886555

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**Photo Map Key 1.** Numbers correspond with photo key.



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**Photo Map Key 2.** Numbers correspond with photo key.

