

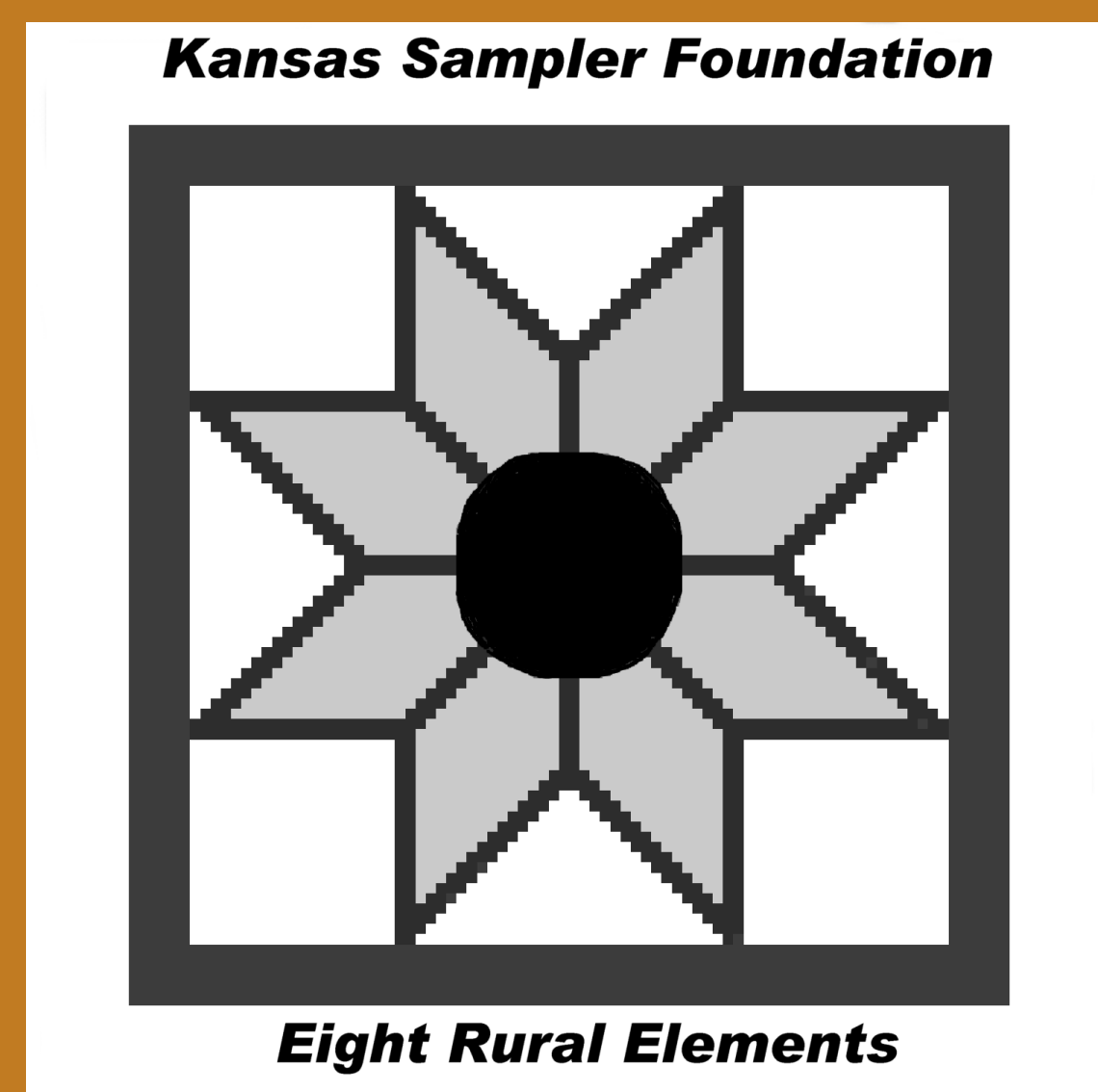
STUDLEY

Established 1888

HISTORY

Two Towns Become One

What is now known as the unincorporated hamlet of Studley at one time consisted of two separate towns straddling the Graham-Sheridan County line. Skelton, on the Sheridan County side, was named by early settler Abraham Pratt for the River Skel which ran through his hometown of Ripon, Eng-



land. A new town was platted just across the county line in Graham County when the railroad was constructed in 1888 and called Carll. The confusion began, with two towns in different counties but located in the same one half mile along the Lincoln-Colorado Railway.

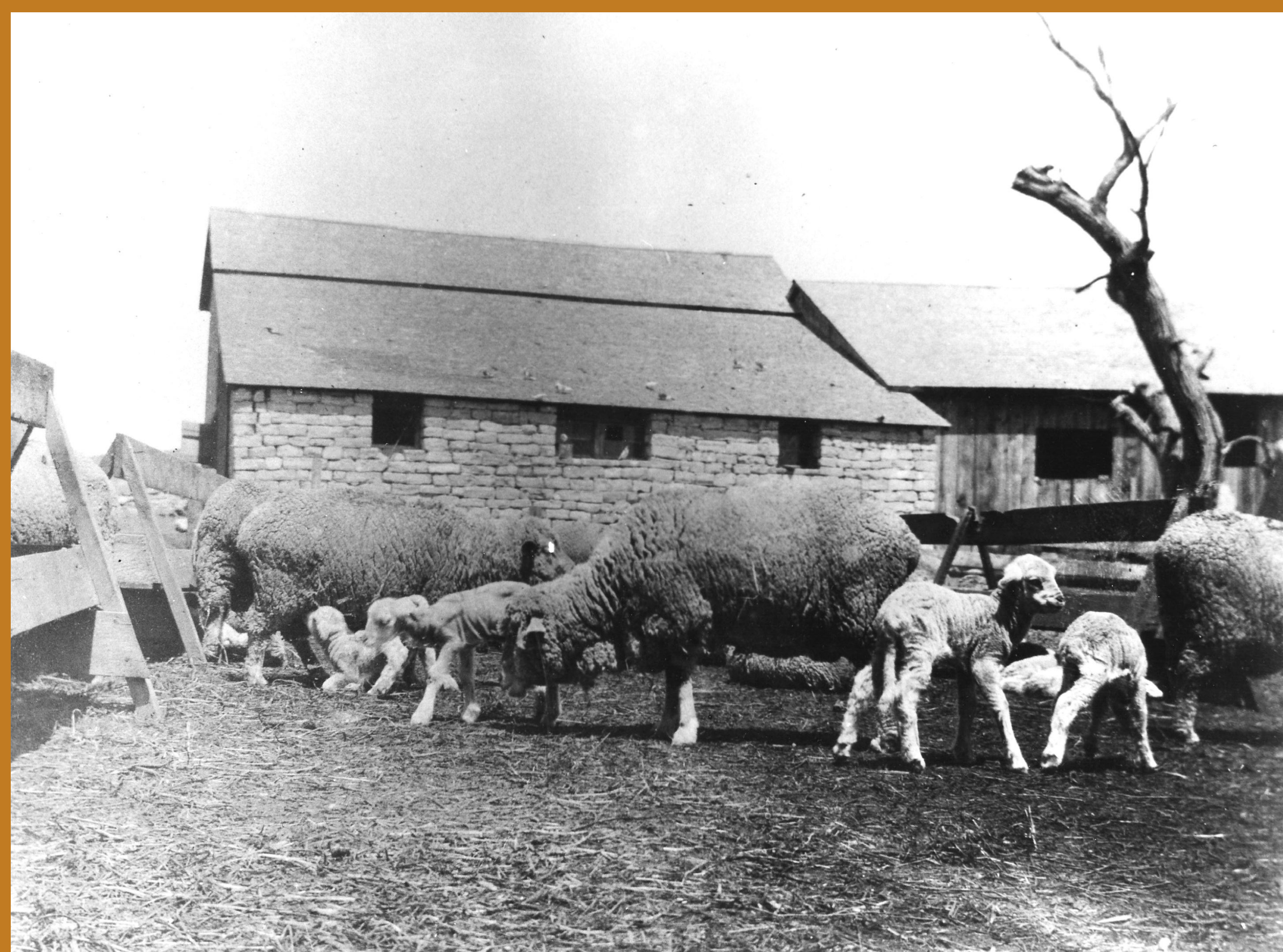
Due to this confusion both the railroad and the U.S. Postal Service applied pressure to combine the two hamlets under one name. In 1894, the two hamlets were renamed as one, Studley, by Abraham Pratt, the local postmaster. He named it for Studley Royal a country park near his hometown of Ripon, England in North Yorkshire.

Studley was never incorporated as a city but was a popular trade center for the vicinity. The church at Studley was somewhat unique in as much as it was built in 1910 through a partnership of two denominations. The British residents in the area were mostly Episcopalians whereas other immigrants were often Methodists.

ARCHITECTURE

English Yorkshire Pattern Homes

Four extant native stone houses on ranchsteads within the valley to the west were constructed by British settlers who were all relatives or friends from the same area in England and shared labor. The native stone structures range from a cubicle, three-room house to a 2½ story, five bedroom structure. Construction on all of these houses began in the 1880's by quarrying and dressing two varieties of native stone and importing yellow pine lumber for framing and roofing.



At the Pratt Ranch it was sheep, not cattle, that was the livestock of choice.

One exception to the generic rural pattern is Cottonwood Ranch State Historic Site. The ranch house is not of a certain British style but the lineal arrangement of the stone outbuildings and the replicated frame "bath house" are similar to those found on farmsteads during the 19th century in only north-central England and are built in a "Yorkshire pattern." The stone house, constructed 1885-1896, and outbuildings, 1891-1892, symbolize English settlement and ranching on the High Plains of northwestern Kansas.

CUISINE

"A More Natural Cuisine"

The British immigrants living in the vicinity ate somewhat differently than the more "Americanized" settlers. The traditional tea with scones or delicate sandwiches were common fare. Fresh meat was not fresh after it was allowed to hang for several days, or weeks, to age or "mellow". Lamb was often the entree as compared to the other families whom mostly dined on beef, pork, or chicken.

Wild game also found its way to the dining table and was more commonly eaten prior to the more intensive settlement and the construction of the railroad. Pronghorn antelope often served as the primary protein source. Migratory waterfowl such as ducks and geese were hunted and consumed whenever available.

Trapping and hunting are both favorable pastimes enjoyed in the Studley area today.

PEOPLE

A British Settlement

As a young man Abraham Pratt (1827-1901) came to America as a sailor, arriving in California during the Gold Rush of the late 1840s. In 1866 Pratt's wife died and he never remarried. Twelve years later, in 1878, Pratt sold his British businesses, returned to America, and bought 160 acres of land along the South Solomon River in extreme eastern Sheridan County, Kansas. For their first few years in Kansas, Abraham and his sons lived in a dugout along the south bank of the Solomon River. In late 1879 or early 1880 Abraham Pratt returned to England to visit friends and relatives. During this visit he convinced his eldest son, John Fenton Pratt (1856-1937), known as "Fent," to come to America and join him at his homestead. Two years later Abraham's other son, Tom (1861-1940), also known as "Little Tom," came to Sheridan County. Throughout the 1880s other Englishmen arrived in the area to homestead or purchase land for ranches and farms. In 1885 the first section of the house at Cottonwood Ranch was constructed.

CUSTOMS

Cowboys and Sheep Dogs

Many activities are held annually to preserve and celebrate the homesteading tradition of Studley and the Cottonwood Ranch. The Annual Sheep Dog Trials is a Studley tradition that draws visitors from a far to test their dogs in a long time ranching tradition. The ranch is also host to many traveling exhibits, such as the showcase of boots. These exhibits allow visitors to the ranch to have a better understanding of life on the prairie.



At one time downtown Studley was a thriving center of commerce.

GEOGRAPHY

Change in the Land and People

Wind, water, vegetation, and human interventions continue to modify the landscape of the South Fork Solomon River Valley from the west to the east. When the first Euro-Americans began to permanently settle this portion of the valley during the late 1870s the landscape was very different. The clear stream contained much more water and the river valley contained tall grasses which extended to the gently sloping banks of the stream and very few trees. Trees were scarce, with only five cottonwoods between Morland and Hoxie. Trees follow farming throughout the Great Plains and now there tens of thousands of trees along the margins of the river and uplands.

COMMERCE

From Cattle & Sheep to Tourism

As early as 1876, after the demise of the vast buffalo herds, cattle were driven into the area to graze the open range and utilize the South Fork Solomon River and its tributaries as watering sources for the thousands of Texas longhorns.

The winter of 1885-1886 was severe and devastated the "open range" cattlemen with immense death losses. For approximately seven years the area was sheep country rather than "cattle country"

The railroad was the primary factor for permanent settlement along the valley and the establishment of towns and trade centers along its line from east to west.

The Cottonwood Ranch served as the hub for the Pratts' sheep-raising operation. Cottonwood Ranch was acquired by the State of Kansas in 1982 to be preserved and developed into an outdoor museum to interpret ranching and farming in northwestern Kansas. The Cottonwood Ranch State Historic Site is listed on both the Kansas and National Registers of Historic Places.

ART

Stained Glass and Pressed Tin Ceilings

Many examples of art in the form of several displays of stained glass panels can be seen in the ranch home at the Cottonwood Ranch State Historic Site. These panels can be found in the bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, and living room. Pressed tin ceilings can be seen inside many of the rooms.