NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990

OMB No. 10024-0018

RECEIVED 2280
JUL 26 2006
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

272

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Niles, Rial A., House
Other name/site number Col. William March House / 021-0390-0013

2. Location

Street & number 605 East 12th Street ☐ not for publication
City or town Baxter Springs ☐ vicinity
State Kansas Code KS County Cherokee Code 021 Zip code 66713

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zollner DSHPO 5/22/06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I herby certify that the property is Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

☑ entered in the National Register. Edson H. Beall 9.6.06
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, (explain:)

Niles House
Name of Property

Cherokee Co., Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling
Social: Clubhouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation: Stone, Concrete
Walls: Brick
Asphalt
Roof: Wood
Other:

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Niles House
Name of Property

Cherokee Co., Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register

☒ **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 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 it 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Social History

Period of Significance

1870-1955

Significant Dates

1870, 1938

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Rakestraw, Allen

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 #

Primary location of additional data:
☒ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository:

Niles House
Name of Property

Cherokee Co., Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1
Zone: 15 Easting: 362220 Northing: 4098660

2
Zone: Easting: Northing:

3
Zone: Easting: Northing:

4
Zone: Easting: Northing:

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Carla Jordan

Organization CL Jordan Preservation Date March 17, 2005

Street & number P.O. Box 711 Telephone 573-651-3780

City or town Cape Girardeau State MO Zip code 63702

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Name Gabe Nichols

Street & number 605 East 12th Street Telephone 620-856-5006

City or town Baxter Springs State KS Zip code 66713

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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

Summary

The R. A. Niles House is located at 605 East 12th Street, Baxter Springs, Cherokee County, Kansas. It was constructed in 1870. The (36' x 36') square floor plan brick Italianate structure has one-and-a-half stories, a hipped roof with central cupola and four symmetrically placed chimneys on the expanse end of the rooflines. It has a full basement. The foundation is stand stone with replacement concrete blocks. The façade is dominated by the porch with wooden posts, wooden filigree accoutrements and wooden arches. The original carved walnut door is flanked by narrow, symmetrically placed walk-out windows. The ornamental porch posts and arches wrap around both ends of the porch with a concrete step entrance on the western end. The original porch entrance was central on the façade. The fenestration is comprised of four symmetrically placed windows one the western expanse and three symmetrically placed windows on the eastern expanse. All of the windows have arched brick hoods. The western expanse has two brick chimneys. Originally there were two chimneys on the eastern expanse. The original chimney on the northeast side is no longer present and was replaced in1977. The two rear walnut doors are original. The back porch was enclosed in 1915, and has a bank of aluminum windows that were added in the late 1960s.

The interior of the house consists of a full basement, main floor and loft rooms. The basement housed the original kitchen and has a dirt and concrete floor with ground level (two-over-two casement) windows. The main floor has three rooms. Three walls and a stairway were removed in 1938.

Elaboration

The Italianate style R. A. Niles house was constructed in 1870 by Allen Rakestraw for Rial A. Niles. Rakestraw was the builder for many of the local brick structures in the late nineteenth century. The bricks on the exterior were made by either the VanEpps brickyard, located at the mouth of the local Willow Creek, or the Fenton & Lamson brickyard, located on the banks of the local Spring River.[1]

The façade of the R.A. Niles house is defined by the ornate porch and hipped roof. The façade roofline includes dentils with double brackets below the upper roofline, and dentils with single brackets below the lower roofline. Eight tapered square ornamental porch posts, with archways and gingerbread-style filigree wood trim, support the lower section of the hipped roof, and are separated by wooden balustrades.

[1] *Cherokee Sentinel*, 1870.

The central, original walnut door has four carved panels with circular ornamentation, and is flanked by four narrow, symmetrically placed (four-over-four paned) walk-out windows that stretch from the porch ceiling to the porch floor. In 1976, the property was an Episcopal Church and the wooden porch floor was replaced with a cement floor. At this time, the central porch entrance was moved to the west end to provide access to the parking area.

The cupola has a pyramidal roof, with brackets and dentils supporting the overhang of the eaves. It includes end posts that are reflected in the porch post style, with arched windows on each side. A "widow's walk" surrounds the cupola and no longer has the wooden balustrade.

Fenestration on the eastern and western expanses consists of 11 main floor and 11 ground level basement windows. The main floor windows have single arched brick hoods with a keystone. Six of the main floor windows—on the northeast and northwest end of the expanse--have arched tops with two-over-two panes and are 8'10" x 34.5". Five of the main floor windows--on the southeast and southwest end of the expanse--have arched tops with two-over-two panes and are 7'2" x 30". The sills of the 8'10" x 34.5" windows rest on the floorboards of the main floor. The ground level casement basement windows have two-over-two paned windows and are 30" x 30". Seven of the eleven basement casement windows are in original condition and four of the windows have been covered. The ground level basement windows provided ventilation and light for the original kitchen.

The ceiling heights are 7' 5" in the basement, 12' on the main floor, and 8' center height in the loft room.

The interior floor plan currently has three rooms. Prior to 1938 there were four rooms in the basement—kitchen, dining room, pantry, and laundry/store room. The main floor had four rooms and a stair hall. The main floor plan originally had two symmetrical parlors, and two bedrooms. In 1938, the Baxter Springs Women's club modified the interior by removing walls and a staircase. The removal of a wall transformed one of the symmetrical parlors, the shotgun hallway, and one bedroom into a large meeting room. The original walnut floors and woodwork are still present. One of the original parlors has the original plaster ceiling moldings. The second story loft room has the original wooden stairway that leads to the cupola. The passage-way to the attic was removed to enlarge the other parlor into a small dining room. The remaining bedroom was converted into a kitchen for the club's use. The shotgun hallway wall was a load bearing wall and over the next sixty years the floors sloped toward the center of the meeting room and required preservation intervention in 2003. Preservation contractors raised the floors seven inches and placed permanent lifts in the basement to stabilize the meeting room floors. Between 1915-1923 the Fancher family added the indoor plumbing and

enclosed the back porch. The bathroom included a "one seater" with a brick-lined hole. There was a stove for heating water for bathing.[2]

The original privy was excavated in 2004 and the following items were found at the site that was closed after 1870: a porcelain washbasin, a bone smoking pipe, a glass marble, an 1870 coffin-shaped whiskey bottle, shards of glass, shards of porcelain, shards of pottery, a lice comb, and a lampshade.

[2] Compiled from correspondence that is a part of the house archives and the owner's documentation of the house history.

Summary

The R. A. Niles House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an excellent example of an Italianate-style residence with a central cupola. It is also being nominated under Criterion A for its association with the Baxter Springs Women's Club from 1938 to 1955 when the nominated property served as a club house and was considered the cultural center of the community during that time period. The home was originally designed as a residence and after serving as a social club and an Episcopal church, it has returned to its original purpose as a residence. It continues to be an architectural tourist attraction for travelers along Route 66 and is one of the oldest remaining structures in the community.

Elaboration

The R. A. Niles House is located at 605 East 12th Street, Baxter Springs, Cherokee County, Kansas. It was constructed in 1870 by Allen Rakestraw for Mr. Rial A. Niles and his wife Mary. Niles relocated to Baxter Springs, Kansas along with his business partner, Mr. Graves, from Adrian, Michigan. Baxter Springs was a booming cattle town. Niles and Graves were entrepreneurs and immediately started construction of a hotel in the downtown area. Niles also purchased four residence lots in the Riggins addition of Baxter Springs on what was then known as River Street, and is currently East Twelfth Street. The *Cherokee Sentinel* reported that Baxter Springs was a "hell hole" in 1870, but that did not stop Niles and Graves from finishing the 50' by 70' foundation for their new bank building on the southwest corner of Military and Neosho Streets. They named their new enterprise the Cherokee Bank and it also boasted two storefronts.[3]

After 1873, Baxter Springs, Kansas suffered the end of the cattle boom because the herds that had originally moved through town from Texas were steadily decreasing due to the new rail lines connecting to the major cattle centers. Niles and Graves experienced financial difficulties. Niles mortgaged his home at his own bank. After the second mortgage, the Cherokee Bank failed and Niles was forced into bankruptcy. The Niles family returned to Adrian, Michigan and their property—including the house, bank and hotel—were abandoned. They were sold at a Sheriff's tax sale, and attempts to contact Niles were futile. Several individuals held quit-claim deeds to the properties and the bank was sold to a group of

[3] *Cherokee Sentinel*, May 7, 1870, June 4, 1870, August, 1870. The *Cherokee Sentinel* went out of business in August of 1870, ending the reports on the progress of the Niles and Graves enterprises and the Niles home.

businessmen in 1876 and was renamed the Crowell Bank of Baxter Springs. It prospered for many years.[4]

In 1875, the R.A. Niles home was sold at a Sheriff's tax sale for $5.00. The winning bidder was Colonel William march, a Union Civil War veteran and postmaster of Baxter Springs for two non-consecutive terms. Colonel March and his wife, Frances—known as "Frank"—lived in the home for the next twenty-seven years. Their home was a social gathering place for the community. One party is remembered in local history that included an "apron making" contest. The men sewed aprons and the women judged the finished products and chose a winner. The March family lost a child while living in the house. They watched from the front porch while Chief Joseph and his people from the Nez Perce tribe were marched to Spring River where they were transported down the river on boats to Indian Territory.

The March family resided in the home when in the later part of the 1870s when Baxter Springs became an advertised "Black Colony." After emancipation, Baxter Springs was promoted as a place of settlement, "Come to Kansas" to find a better life. Some of the African-American population in Baxter Springs today can be traced to this era in local history.

Like the Niles family, the March family experienced the bankruptcy of the community and a dwindling population in the late 1870s. By 1880 the community experienced their next boom era with the local spas and healing mineral spring waters that had given Baxter Springs its name. The "spa era" rejuvenated the economy and the population and brought in thousands of visitors to the numerous bathing pagodas. After 1883, Colonel March took advantage of the local boom and ventured into real estate. His business was profitable for sometime.[5]

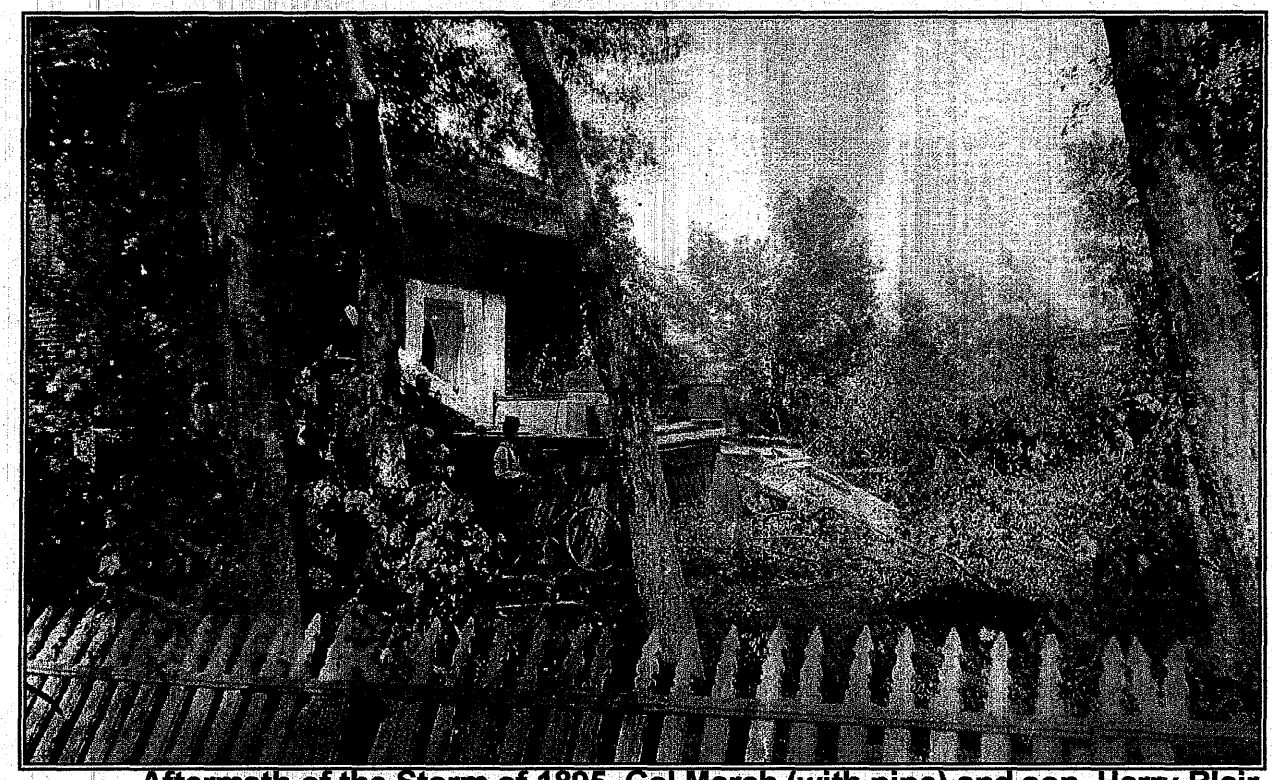
By 1883 the community was in full boom and the "Old Soldier's Reunion" was initiated to commemorate Baxter Spring's 1863 Civil War battle. Thousand's of veteran's flocked to the community for the reunion until it was discontinued after 1914. Baxter Spring's Fort Blair was a frontier log fort. The fort was attacked by William Quantrill in 1863. The site of the fort was near the Osage Blackdog Trail, and was also the site of the "hanging tree" from the cattle boom era. The fort is located near the mineral springs. In 1886, the United States government designated a national cemetery plot to commemorate the soldiers killed at the Battle of Baxter Springs—also called the Baxter Springs Massacre. Nearly one hundred men are buried in a common grave that is marked by a large stone monument with a Union soldier statue,

[4] Compiled from the abstract of the house and Baxter Springs, Kansas history from the Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum archives.
[5] Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum exhibit and local history archives.

surrounded by four cannons standing on their ends. The names of the fallen soldiers are inscribed on the monument.[6]

The home continued its heritage as a community hub with the birth of Herb Price, son of Will and Laura Cooper Price. Price was born in the March home on September 25th, 1893. Price later became owner of Price Motor Company in Baxter Springs, and CEO and president of the Baxter State Bank.[7]

The end of the economic boom was initiated by a killer tornado on July 5, 1895. The tornado killed six local residents. The March home had extensive damage. The back porch was destroyed and numerous trees in the yard were destroyed. The main structure of the residence withstood the high winds and retained the original appearance.



Aftermath of the Storm of 1895, Col March (with pipe) and son, Harry Blair March.

Photograph courtesy of the residence archives, Gabe Nichols, owner.

[6] Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum archives.
[7] Oral history from the owner.

Colonel March experienced financial difficulties after 1895. Like Niles, he borrowed against the residence and complained that a lower value was placed on the home than what it was worth. His troubles continued with the death of his wife, Francis, in 1902. He walked away from his financial burdens, and the house experienced a second foreclosure. March moved to nearby Galena, Kansas where he resided until his death in 1908. The house was again sold at a Sheriff's Auction.

The new owners of 605 East Twelfth Street were H. B. and Kate Francis. Kate's son, Steve Etter, and his wife, Ella, along with their children moved into the residence in 1902. Steve Etter owned the Etter Bakery in Baxter Springs. The bread was known for the slogan "*Our Bread Can Be Buttered—But Not Bettered.*" H. B. Francis died in 1905. Kate continued living in the home and she served at the Etter Bakery booth at the Old Soldier's Reunion every year. During the Francis/Etter era all of the woodwork in the house was painted red. It was a traditional Victorian era custom that denoted "hospitality."

After 1915, Kate died and the Etter family sold the home to William and Sadie Fancher. The Fancher's enclosed the back porch and added indoor running water and a sewer line. Sadie Fancher's name can still be seen written in the concrete stoop near the exterior basement entrance. After Sadie's death in 1923, William sold the house to L. D. Brewster. Brewster used the home as a rental property and it had numerous tenants over the next fifteen years. Brewster did not modify the interior or exterior appearance during this period.

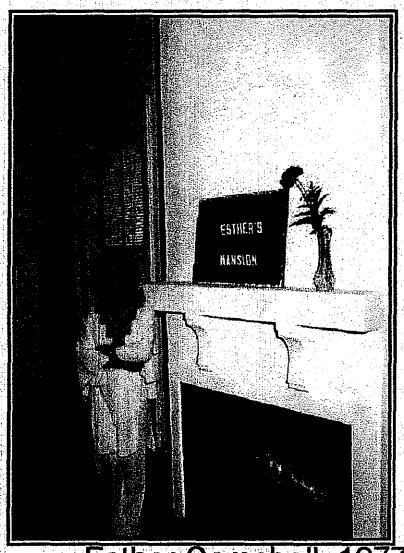
In 1938, the Baxter Springs Women's Club obtained Brewster's approval to remodel the interior of the house to fit their needs as a club house. Walls and a stairway were removed to create a large gathering space. The passage to the attic was removed to enlarge the remaining parlor into a dining room. The remaining bedroom was converted into a large kitchen. The new Women's Club was the cultural center of the community for the next eighteen years. Numerous weddings, bridal showers, baby showers, fashion shows, community dances, and organizational events were held in the club house. Local resident, Virginia Thieme Ness reported to the current owner, that she and her mother were the caretakers of the club in the 1940s. At one dance, her date disappeared, and Virginia responded, "I wasn't the best looking, but I had a good wit, and I thought I had a good personality." She then realized that her date had only left her to join the other gentlemen in the dining parlor to gamble. Local resident, Betty Kyrias reported to the current owner that her wedding reception was held at the club in 1947. After 1956, the Baxter Springs Women's Club disbanded leaving Brewster without a tenant.

The Episcopal Church reformed in Baxter Springs in the mid-1950s and they were meeting in the basement of the Schurman Funeral Home. Mr. Brewster agreed to let the Episcopalian's rent the building, but local folklore stated that Effie Semple, a local mine owner was going to take possession of the property and turn into a youth center. The Brewster family and the Semple family were in the mining business. The mining fields just south of Baxter Springs, Kansas that stretch into northeast Oklahoma were the world's largest lead and zinc industry during this era. Lead and zinc mining followed the cattle and spa enterprises as the most recent boom for Baxter Springs and the region.

Brewster negotiated with Effie Semple and kept his promise to the Episcopal congregation. The 605 East Twelfth Street residence turned social club, became St. Mark's Episcopal Church for the next twenty-one years. L. D. Brewster died in 1958 and the property was left to his children, Margaret and Frank, Jr. The Episcopal Church attempted to buy the property at that time, but the estate was under dispute until 1964. In 1964 the Episcopal Diocese of Kansas purchased the property.[8]

In 1977, the dwindling attendance created a need for the Diocese to disband the congregation and put the property on the market. A member of the St. Mark's congregation, Genive Prauser, told her sister, Esther Campell of San Francisco, California, about the upcoming sale of the property. Campbell purchased the property for $11,000 before it was placed on the market. Campbell temporarily moved in with her sister, Genive, while she restored the church back into a residence. Campbell did not manipulate the integrity of the structure but completely painted the interior, painted the wooden aspects of the exterior, restored the east parlor fireplace and put wooden shutters on the interior of all of the windows to eliminate the need for draperies. Campbell referred to the house as "Esther's Mansion" and had dreams of opening a French cooking school. She once stated to the current owner, "these twelve foot walls cry out for great paintings." Esther Campbell was a Renaissance woman and it was her dream to someday return to the home. She returned to San Francisco and the residence was rented. Campbell died in 1987, after a long battle with cancer, and did not realize her dreams at 605 East Twelfth Street. She left the home to her sister, Genive Prauser, who continued to used the property as a rental. She stated, " I'd feel funny about living there because it was my church. . .my sister made me an heiress." After four years, Prauser decided to sell the home to her long time family friend, Gabe Nichols, on October 23, 1991.

[8] Local folklore recorded by the current owner; house abstract.



Esther Campbell, 1977
Photograph courtesy of Gabe Nichols

Gabe Nichols is a historian with an M.A. He has a passion for preservation and the residence at 605 East Twelfth Street has presented itself with numerous preservation issues. The main level floors had to be lifted in 2003. The original sewer line from 1915 collapsed in 2001. In June of 2001, the outer layer of bricks on the southwest corner collapsed. The sewer line has been restored and plans are underway for restoration of the southwest exterior brick wall.

The R. A. Niles residence has a colorful history as a social and religious hub in the community. This residence is most likely one of two of the oldest remaining residences in the community. The other residence is also Italianate but has been highly modified. The residence has returned to its original purpose as a home and continues to adorn the local landscape with its grand legacy and classic architectural style.

Bibliography

Baxter Springs Heritage Center and Museum archives.

Cherokee Sentinel, May 7, 1870, June 4, 1870, August, 1870.

Deed Abstract.

Niles House archives, documented by owner Gabe Nichols through oral interviews.

Verbal Boundary Description

W ½ Lots 5 & 6, Block 9 of Riggins Subdivision.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Niles House that retains its integrity.

Photographs

The following information is consistent for all photographs:

1. Niles House
2. Cherokee Co., Kansas
3. Photograph by Patrick Zollner
4. November 8, 2005
5. Digital image archived at Kansas State Historical Society

The following information is specific to each photograph:

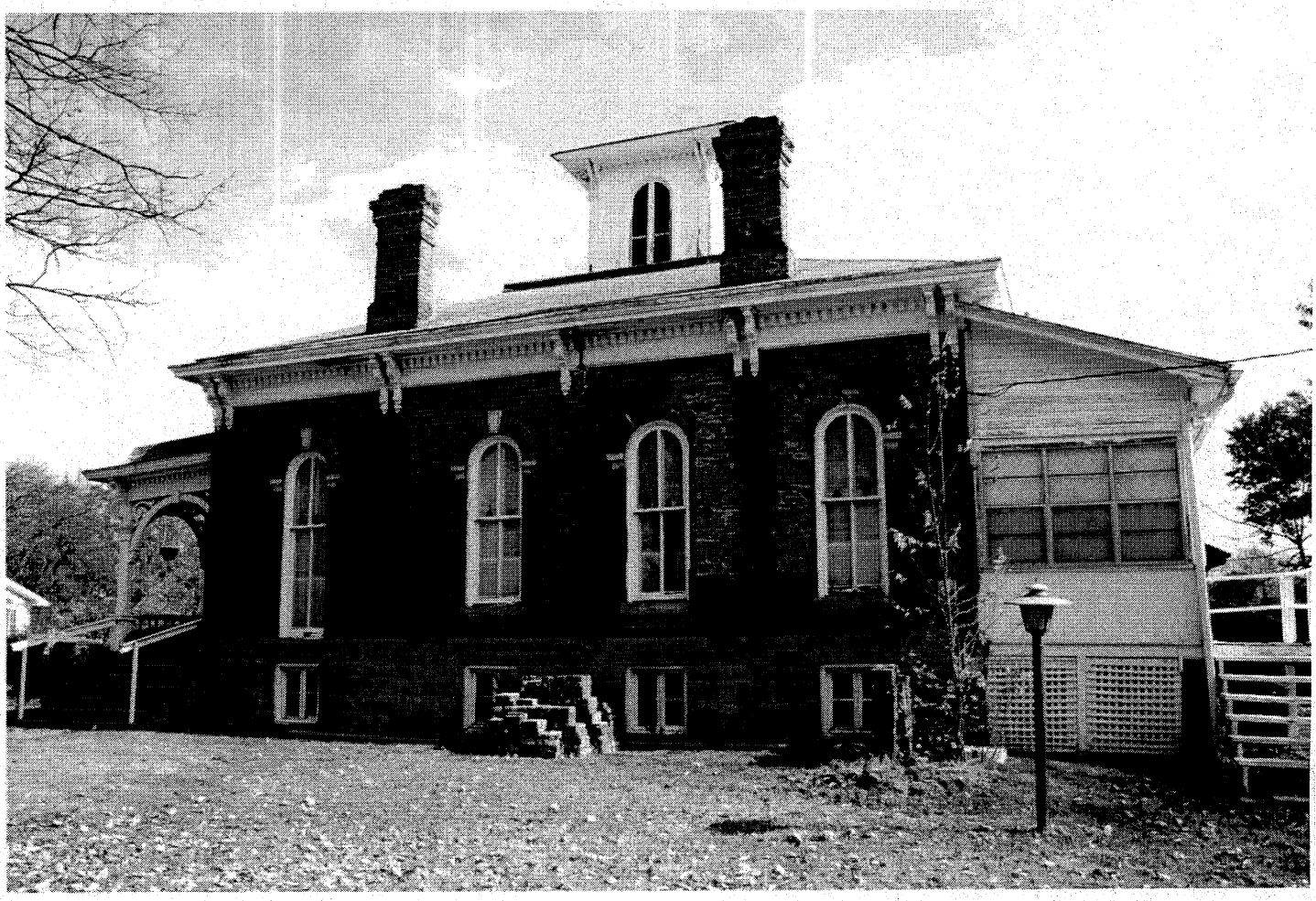



Photo #	Description of View
1.	View of front elevation from the north.
2.	View from the west.
3.	View of rear elevation from the southwest.
4.	View of rear elevation from the southeast.
5.	View of front elevation from the northeast.
6.	View of porch bracket detail from the north.
7.	View of window and eave detail from the west.
8.	View of front door from the north.
9.	View of cupola from the west.
10.	View of front room from the north.
11.	View of double doors from the east.
12.	View of bedroom fireplace from the east.