

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 Coal Creek Library  
Other name/site number 045-0000-0020

2. Location

Street & number 698 E. 1719 Road  not for publication  
City or town Baldwin City  vicinity  
State Kansas Code KS County Douglas Code 045 Zip code 66006

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.)

Richard D. Penkatz DSHPD 10-22-03  
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 hereby certify that the property is

- entered in the National Register.  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:)

Edson A. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

12/10/03  
Date of Action

Coal Creek Library  
Name of property

Douglas County, Kansas  
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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  
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter Categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: library

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: library

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: tin-sheathed frame pyramidal

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls METAL

~~Walls~~ Brick with limestone trim

roof METAL: tin

other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

Name of Property Coal Creek Library

County and State Douglas County, Kansas

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, and D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

Period of Significance

1900-1953

Significant Dates

1900

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Coal Creek Library Association

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): Primary location of additional data:

- Checkboxes for documentation status: preliminary determination, previously listed, etc.

Record #

- Checkboxes for repository type: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, etc.

Name of repository:



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**Coal Creek Library  
Vinland, Kansas**

**Description**

The Coal Creek Library, built by the members of the Coal Creek Library Association and people from the Vinland area in 1900, is a one story rectangular frame structure, measuring 20 feet by 24 feet, topped by a corrugated tin-covered pyramidal roof. The roof is pierced on its east elevation by a brick chimney with a clay cap. The foundation is constructed of rectangular limestone blocks. The frame building is sheathed in metal sheeting stamped and painted red to simulate brick. A hipped-roof porch supported by six white, turned spindle posts shades the front facade. White wooden lattice decorates the space between the porch floor and the ground. One large window is situated near the center of the front facade; a two paneled door with window is placed near the south end of the building's face. Two steps, flanked by curved metal railings, lead to the front door. A sign hanging between the window and door is painted with the words "Coal Creek Library Nov. 1859; a second sign, posted in the yard off the building's northwest corner, similarly announces that this building is the "Coal Creek Library Founded 1859."

The north facing facade is punctuated by five one-over-one double hung windows, the east facade has no windows, and the south facing facade has two, two-over-two, double hung windows. All of the building's windows and the door are crested by white cast metal lintels consisting of an entablature bracketed by medallion-stamped blocks.

The interior of the Coal Creek Library consists of a single open room with wood floors. Bookcases of various heights line the walls; along the building's north wall, between the five windows, the bookcases stand perpendicular to the wall. A wood stove is situated toward the east end of the room; a wooden wainscot covers the wall behind the stove and stovepipe. Single-bulb pull chain light fixtures are installed on the ceiling. Tables with glass cases stand in the middle of the room and serve to display photographs of the library association's early members and prized volumes from the library's collection.

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**Statement of Significance**

The Coal Creek Library (c. 1900) in Vinland, Kansas, is historically significant under Criterion A as the oldest subscription library in the state of Kansas that is still in existence, and as a vital part of the community of Vinland. The library association that went on to build the Coal Creek Library building was organized in 1859, and a descendent of the original librarians continues to open the library to the public on a regular, if limited, basis. The Coal Creek Library is also significant under Criterion C for its integrity as an early 20<sup>th</sup> century vernacular structure.

Anne Hemphill, a Vinland historian, has said of Vinland that “It wasn’t ever really founded; it was just an idea that grew, and then developed into a town.” The first residents of the Coal Creek area, so named for the local coal-lined creek that emptied into the Wakarusa River, arrived in 1854. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, passed by Congress in 1854, allowed the people residing in the Kansas and Nebraska Territories to decide the answer to the slavery question for themselves. Many of these early settlers came to the Kansas Territory in the hopes that their presence there would sway the admission of Kansas to the Union as a free state. Annie Soule, one of the founders of the Coal Creek Library Association, came to Kansas with her family to support the abolitionist cause; her father’s house was a station on the Underground Railroad. Annie knew first-hand the power that literature could have; she later commented that reading Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* had greatly influenced the family’s decision to come west. Educated in Maine, Annie had experienced literary societies in the East, and hoped to create a social organization that would contribute to the “moral, social, and intellectual improvement of its members.”

Historical background and significance:

The Coal Creek Library Association, originally named the Coal Creek Social Library Association, was organized in the summer of 1859 by Martha Cutter and Annie Soule. The two teenage girls had in mind a literary society like those held in New England. Their aim also was to prevent dancing from becoming the only form of entertainment in the community; the organization’s constitution specifically prohibited dancing at meetings. Early meetings included not only book discussions, but also singing, oration, and novelty activities such as fortune telling. This social group was soon popular with the area’s young people, and when they decided to become a library association, the fifty cent dues they imposed on themselves quickly accumulated to ten dollars. And the books they ordered from the Gift Association of Philadelphia became a means of fundraising, too: each book came with a piece of jewelry, which the library association members sold to buy more books. The association employed a second means of fundraising, which in time would become something of a

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tradition—the group held an elaborate supper, which drew people from surrounding communities, and raised about \$50.

As the collection grew, the library association had to find new solutions for housing it. At first, the books were kept at the home of the librarian. The first librarian was George Cutter; after nine months he was succeeded by his sister, Sarah. The collection remained in the Cutter home from 1860 to 1877. By 1875, the collection had grown to about 400 volumes, and it was becoming impractical to expect the librarian to keep the books at home. In 1879, the books were moved to the Vinland Grange Hall; when the Grange built a new stone building in 1884, that building became the new home for the library.

The first subscription libraries in the United States were formed in New England in the 1740s, and were most popular there between 1790 and 1850. These libraries, available only to those who could afford to pay the subscription, provided the basis for the true public libraries that later followed. The lack of a source of funding and the inability to find a stable location for the collection kept many communities from forming libraries, and when they did, the support usually came from women's groups, churches, and civic improvement groups. The founding of the Coal Creek Library Association was representative of the manner in which libraries across the frontier came into existence. As Margaret Whittemore described in her *Sketchbook of Kansas Landmarks*, "Women in many...Kansas towns started libraries by gathering up a few books from their neighbors; earning money for more by means of minstrel shows, chicken pie suppers, and fairs." Although men played an active role in the creation and maintenance of their communities' libraries, women such as Martha Cutter and Annie Soule were often the guiding force behind such activities.

Likewise, the early nature of the library association was typical of cultural institutions in fledgling Kansas communities. Due to the influx of Eastern abolitionists, a strong percentage of early settlers in Kansas Territory were educated, and Victorian society placed a high value on the pursuit of intellectual endeavors. Accordingly, community members pooled their resources to create opportunities for cultural improvement and social interaction, and as a community became more stable, it erected a building to house and represent the community's cultural achievement.

In April 1899, the Coal Creek Library Association met to discuss the "advisability of building a home for the Library and also to propose plans for the same." A committee, consisting of Dr. Evans, Alfred Cutter, and S.K. Funk, was appointed to investigate potential building sites. A second committee, comprised of J.G. Iliff, C.A. Peairs, and D.A. Harshbarger, was appointed to research building costs. A third committee, made up of William Roe, Fred Cutter, and D.G. Kennedy, was appointed to solicit funds and materials for the proposed building.

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William Barnes, whose vineyards gave Vinland its name, offered to donate a lot to the library association, but with several conditions attached. One of those conditions was that the association name the building the Vinland Library, rather than the Coal Creek Library. This stipulation led to a heated debate over the name of the future library which spanned the summer of 1899. Eventually, the members settled the matter: the library should retain the name of Coal Creek. Mr. Barnes withdrew his conditions, and the library association purchased Lot 12 in Vinland for \$40. With money from subscriptions and supper-and-auction fundraisers, the library association procured materials and built the library according to a plan devised by the building committee. The frame building, swathed in metal stamped to imitate brick, was opened in May 1900, and had cost \$400.

A succession of modestly paid librarians tended the collection, which continued to grow thanks to subscriptions and the annual supper and auction held by the association, and opened the library to readers a few hours each week. The roll of librarians, beginning with George and then Sarah Cutter, includes Mrs. Hugh M. Williams (March 1877-March 1879), Mrs. Joseph Iliff (March 1879-November 1884), Mrs. Amos Iliff (November 1884-November 1891), Mrs. Lillie A. Funk (November 1891-November 1902), Miss Anna Sturdy (November 1902-November 1905), Mrs. Mary Baer (November 1905-November 1923), Mrs. Mary King (November 1923-August 1926), Miss Martha C. Kelley (August 1926-1944), Mrs. Alma Heinrich (April 1947-April 1954), and Mrs. Martha Smith (formerly Miss Martha C. Kelley) (May 1956-present). Until 1980, the Vinland Extension Homemakers Unit helped to keep the library open during periods when there was no official librarian.

By the late 1930s, the library was showing the effects of time. In the February 4, 1937, edition of the *Baldwin Ledger*, an editorial remarked that, "...in Vinland, Kansas, is located the beginning of a culture in this state; the beginning of education for hundreds of young Kansas youths; the establishment of a pattern; a place where early settlers could improve themselves and, in turn their surroundings. It was planned—it did not just happen—yet a great state and its historical society allows deterioration, rust and rot to take it. A great state where Peace is prayed for, marks its battlefields but allows rot to blot out its early culture." This editorial prompted the Coal Creek Library Association to pass a resolution asking the State of Kansas for the money to build a native stone building to house the collection, and to set aside an annual fund for the maintenance of the building and collection. In cash-strapped Depression-era Kansas, however, funds to fulfill this resolution were not forthcoming.

In 1939, on the eve of the library association's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, members of the Vinland Grange began to push for the reorganization of the library and the rehabilitation of the timeworn building. A photograph of the building published in the February 21, 1939, edition of the *Kansas City Star*

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shows numerous shingles missing from the porch roof and a gutter hanging loose, and the photograph bears a caption mentioning that, "an old orange crate is used as a step now." The association raised the funds for the rehabilitation in its time-honored manner—the library association hosted a chicken pie dinner, and local farmers donated eggs, dressed chickens, heifer calves, yellow corn seed, and other produce and merchandise to be auctioned off. This event raised \$92.71, enough to cover necessary repairs for the building and to purchase a few new books.

In November 1944, as a result of dwindling membership, the library ceased to charge subscriptions for membership or to purchase additional books for the collection. Since that time, the librarian on duty has been a volunteer. Due to donations, the collection has continued to grow. From April 1947 until April 1954, when the United States government officially closed the Vinland branch of the post office, the library also served as the post office and librarian Mrs. Alma Heinrich served as Vinland's postmistress.

The investment of volunteered time, money, and materials vividly illustrates the Coal Creek Library's importance to the people of the Vinland area. In 1963, the community again pulled together to rejuvenate their library. Fifty-five 4-H members and their parents spent six months devising and implementing a cataloging system, creating a card catalog, repairing books, refinishing the building's floors and constructing new shelves. Most of the materials for building the new shelves were donated by members of the community. In 1997, the maintenance of the Coal Creek Library was one of the projects tackled by the Neighbors Helping Neighbors campaign coordinated by Baker University and area churches.

The structure designed and built by the members of the Coal Creek Library Association at the turn of the century reflects the aesthetic sense, the values, and the economic means the community could muster at that time. As James Deetz noted, "Vernacular building is folk building, done without benefit of formal plans. Such structures are frequently built by their occupants or, if not, by someone who is well within the occupant's immediate community. Vernacular structures are the immediate product of their users and form a sensitive indicator of these persons' inner feelings, their idea of what is or is not suitable to them. Consequently, changes in attitudes, values, and world view are very likely to be reflected in changes in vernacular architectural forms." The Coal Creek Library is a physical embodiment of the sensibilities and abilities of the association and the community at the time of its construction; that it has remained so static over time indicates that the Vinland community continues to hold these values in high regard.

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The simplicity of the Coal Creek Library's structure belies the thoughtfulness of its design. The bank of five windows along the north side provide illumination to the building as a whole, but specifically to the bookcases which stand between the windows. This factor reminds visitors that at the time of the library's construction, Vinland was a rural village far beyond the reach of electric lights. The pyramidal roof, which required fewer long rafters, was less expensive to build than a more typical gabled roof. Additionally, the steeply pitched pyramidal roof allowed hot air to rise out of the living space, and was seen as an appropriate style of roof for areas with long, hot summers. The structure's square plan and roof style, then, reflect the limited resources available to the builders, as well as their understanding of the most cost-effective and efficient use of materials. Although this building form was unusual for public buildings, it was a popular style of working class housing during the early decades of the twentieth century. The pyramidal house was more spacious than the traditional hall-and-parlor house, and was often used to replace it during this period. The square plan lent itself easily to the function of the library, providing a maximum of usable, open space.

The library is currently open from April to October for a few hours on Sunday afternoons. Mrs. Martha Smith, who has been librarian at the Coal Creek Library off and on since 1926, staffs the library and tends the 3500-plus volumes in the collection with the aide of other volunteers. The wood stove that was purchased by the library association in 1900 is still used to heat the building on chilly spring mornings. Although patrons are still welcome to check out books, the library is more often regarded as a local museum. The Coal Creek Library's history has, for over one hundred years, been one of community effort and dedication to the preservation of the values and aspirations of the earliest members of the Coal Creek Library Association.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property is located on Lot 12 in Vinland, Douglas County, Kansas. The property is bounded on the west by East 1719 Road and on the east, north and south by adjacent property lines.

**Boundary Justification**

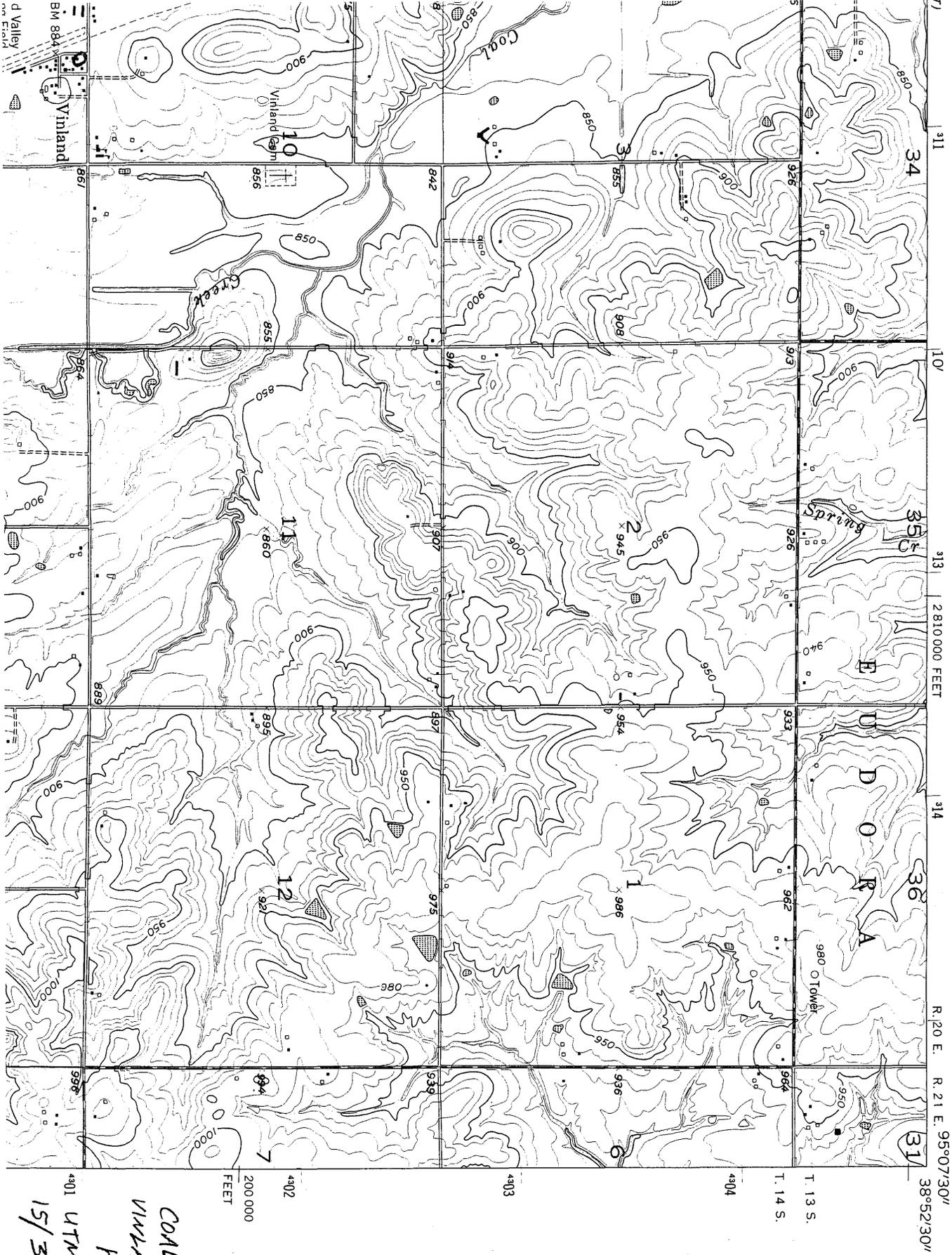
The nominated property contains all land historically associated with it.

Vinland Fair Association Fairgrounds

KANSAS

BALDWIN CITY QUADRANGLE  
KANSAS—DOUGLAS CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

88°1' NE  
(EUDORA)



R. 20 E. R. 21 E. 95°07'30"  
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T. 13 S.  
T. 14 S.

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