



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 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Spring Creek School

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number NW4, NW4, SW4, SW4, S15-T34S-R2W  not for publication

city or town Corbin  vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Sumner code 191 zip code 67032

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 Parkins* D-SHPO 3/19/97  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Kansas State Historical Society  
State of 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 certifying 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:)

*Erson H Beall* Signature of the Keeper 5/9/97 Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Spring Creek School  
Name of Property

Sumner 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	
4		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4		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)

Education: School; Schoolhouse

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social: Clubhouse

**7. Description**

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

Other: Weatherboard

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: Limestone

walls Wood: Weatherboard

roof Wood: Shingle; Other: Composition

other

**Narrative Description**

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

See Attached "Narrative Description"

Spring Creek School  
Name of Property

Sumner County, Kansas  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	4
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6	3	0	8	4	0
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4	1	0	5	4	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

3 

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Zone Easting Northing

4 

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 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 Marci Hess

organization Spring Creek Community Club date May 1, 1996

street & number 534 North Roosevelt telephone (316) 685-7364

city or town Wichita state KS zip code 67208

**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 the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Ted Lungren, Spring Creek Community Club

street & number 121 North Osage telephone 316-845-2962

city or town Caldwell state KS zip code 67022

**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.

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, 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.)

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, etc.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Education

Architecture

Period of Significance

1904-1946

Significant Dates

1904; 1917

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, etc.

Name of repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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The Spring Creek School is District #36 of the 196 school districts in Sumner County. It is located approximately four miles east and four miles north of Caldwell, Kansas. It stands in a rural setting four miles north of U.S. Hwy 81 on "a tract of land 10' wide beginning at a point 30' East of the NW corner of the South 1/2, SW 1/4 of Section 15, Township 34, South, Range 2 West, thence South on the present road R/W of 30', 264' thence East 10' thence North parallel and adjacent to the present road R/W 264', thence West 10' to place of beginning. [This area contains] .061 acres more or less."<sup>1</sup>

Built in 1904, the architecture of Spring Creek Schoolhouse is a plain one-story rectangular box with three windows on each side and virtually no ornamentation. The school, 27'-2" deep and 19'-2" wide has a 5" clapboard exterior and a frieze that lines the soffit. The schoolhouse sets on an uncut limestone foundation that was constructed by simply stacking limestone "blocks" into a pattern than allowed them to fit into each other; mortar of cement and rock was used. Although structurally sound, the shifting of the limestone has caused large cracks in the walls and has left the foundation with substantial gaps between the stones. The front vestibule, on the west side, duplicates the building's single, front-gabled design. The vestibule was a later addition (date unknown) and probably constructed to allow for a place to hang coats and add more insulation from the winter winds. The vestibule is 9'-3 1/2" wide and 5'-2" deep. When the schoolhouse was originally built, the front door had been built on the southwest corner at a diagonal. (The door's original location is apparent when viewing the schoolhouse. The date of alteration is unknown) The east elevation is a solid wall.

The schoolhouse's north and south elevation are identical - each having three windows. The four-pane (two over two), double hung windows are 29" wide and 65" high; they are of equal distance from each other and all three are centered on the side of the building. On the exterior, each window is blanketed with a diamond-shaped wire frame to protect the glass from baseballs and the schoolhouse from burglars and vandals. They have a very simple, but decorative crown which consists of a quarter-round, a decorative piece, and a 1x3 board used as a cap.

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<sup>1</sup> Sumner County, Kansas Engineering Department. Order of Purchase No. 845. April 20, 1962.

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The symmetrical roof has a normal pitch of about 30 - 45 degrees with a wide eave overhang. It supports a cement brick chimney which is placed on the ridge in about the center of the roof. Although the chimney needs to be tuckpointed, it does not have any disintegrating bricks. The original roof of staggered wood shingles, overlaying rafters, can be viewed from the north, but the southern half and the roof of the vestibule were replaced with composition shingles on November 15, 1976. The roof was replaced due to deterioration and fear that the winter weather would damage the interior; lack of funding was the reason that only half was completed at that time.

Additional buildings found at the District 36 schoolhouse include a coal house and two outhouses. The coal house is symmetrical in design and each half mirroring the other. It sets immediately behind the schoolhouse - their southern elevations, although 11'10" apart, are in a direct line. The southern elevation has a double-door, double compartment construct while the northern elevation is solid. The entire building measures 12'4" wide and 10'3" deep. It has a wood floor, and its foundation consists of 3" high blocks of cement spaced erratically around its periphery. The east and west elevations have a small bottom-hinged framed wooden "window." This "window" was placed high - its bottom frame is almost level with the eave of the southern elevation. These windows were added in 1907 by a motion on July 18 of the School Board to "...build coal house screen windows...."<sup>2</sup>

The two outhouses are identical - both face west and both are considered to be "2-holers." Setting 69' apart and 61'6" from the schoolhouse, these outbuildings have dimensions of 6'3" wide and 5'3" deep. The north and south elevations of both buildings have a diamond-shaped ventilation opening located just above the eave of the roof and centered. Although some type of outhouses existed, the current outbuildings were built in 1917 after the School Board moved to "build more satisfactory out buildings."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sumner County, Kansas. "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting," Spring Creek Community Club: July 18, 1907.

<sup>3</sup> Sumner County, Kansas. "Proceedings of Annual Meeting." Spring Creek Community Club: April 13, 1917.

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The cement slab remains of the well can be seen at the northwest corner of the schoolhouse. The original pump is available, but is not on the school grounds. It was sold for \$15.00 in an auction when the schoolhouse was closed. There is some confusion about how many wells were built for Spring Creek School District. On July 26, 1890, the school board voted to "make an effort to get a well."<sup>4</sup> And on October 6, 1900, the school board authorized spending \$17.92 for well fixtures.<sup>5</sup> These two comments in the school board minutes indicate there was a well dug for the pre-1904 schoolhouse, but no evidence of that well can be found and no reason for digging another can be located either.

Although some updating has occurred, the interior of Spring Creek's one-room schoolhouse appears much the same as it was in 1904. The soft green walls are plaster and lathe skirted by a 3' high oak tongue and groove wainscotting that has been stained and varnished; the door and windows are trimmed with undecorated wood that has been stained and varnished. The 1925 floor is comprised of 2 1/4" oak slats diagonally laid from southwest to northeast.<sup>6</sup> The original floor was laid east to west and had wider wooden slats.<sup>7</sup> The ceiling height is 11'4" and is not original. Its wooden tongue and groove pieces were replaced in the late 1930s with acoustic tile.<sup>8</sup> The reason for the replacement is not known as there are no electrical improvements - kerosene and second-hand Coleman lamps were used until the school closed in 1946. The vestibule was added directly to the exterior of the schoolhouse, therefore one of its walls is the 5" clapboard while the other three are wooden tongue and groove slats; they are painted white. There is a built-in cupboard in the northwest corner that stretches from the floor to the ceiling. The 1912 Cheerful Monogram stove, which updated the original potbelly stove, sets close

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<sup>4</sup> Spring Creek School Board minutes. July 26, 1890.

<sup>5</sup> Spring Creek School Board minutes. October 6, 1900.

<sup>6</sup> Sumner County, Kansas. "Official School District Clerk's Record Book," Spring Creek Community Club, June 1925.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Verna Evans on May 23, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Ruth Baker on January 6, 1996.

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to the middle of the room and its exhausts are expelled through a pipe that leads to the chimney. The schoolhouse remains unplumbed.

A blackboard or two did exist in the schoolhouse at one time because the School District Clerk recorded a purchase in 1907 after the school board voted to "put in a new blackboard."<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, these blackboards fell victim to several burglaries after the school closed and were eventually replaced in July of 1995. A glass bookcase and the teacher's desk were also crime victims. There are still numerous text books and books that once comprised the library as well as a 1908 set of pull-down maps housed in a wooden case.

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<sup>9</sup> Sumner County, Kansas. "Proceedings of Annual Meeting." Spring Creek Community Club: July 18, 1907.



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Spring Creek Schoolhouse is being nominated to the National Register under Criteria A and C for its association with education in Sumner County and its architectural significance as a one-room schoolhouse. The original Spring Creek schoolhouse was built in 1879 and was located south of the extant schoolhouse. The present schoolhouse was built in 1904 and principally served as a schoolhouse until 1946 when it closed. It was purchased from F.E. and M.F. Robinson for \$40.00 on August 22, 1904.<sup>1</sup> During its tenure, it has functioned as a community meeting place as well as a school. It was purchased for \$1.00 in February 1947 by the Spring Creek Community Club and operated as a meeting place for several years.<sup>2</sup> Currently it serves as an educational tool for school children who are allowed to visit and experience a day in a one-room country school.

The Spring Creek Schoolhouse is located in the 36th district organized in Sumner County. Kansas is known for its advocacy of education. This is demonstrated by a clause in the Lecompton constitution that allowed for "convenient" organization of districts within a county rather than requiring a certain concentration of individuals.<sup>3</sup> Sumner Countians took full advantage of this and have been avid proponents of education since the county was formed. Sumner is known for having the largest number of school districts in any county in Kansas. In 1897 there were 197 districts and 200 schoolhouses, all organized and built in a 25 year period.<sup>4</sup>

Spring Creek Schoolhouse exemplifies the typical one-room country schoolhouse of Kansas in its architecture, its educational process, and its organizational design, or lack of it since

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<sup>1</sup> Sumner County, Courthouse. Deed. Presiding School Board officers: R.M. Hess, Director; W.L. Yost, Treasurer; David Eshelman, Clerk.

<sup>2</sup> Sumner County, Courthouse. Deed record 181, supplement 72-406.

<sup>3</sup> John D. Bright, ed. Kansas, The First Century (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1956), 216.

<sup>4</sup> Kansas Educators, comp. Columbian History of Education in Kansas (Topeka: Press of the Hamilton Printing Co., 1893), 214.

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"the system of Kansas school districts did not develop by plan or design...."<sup>5</sup> Typical only of the Middle West and Plains states, schoolhouses were normally located in the middle of the district so that children would not have to travel more than two or three miles to school. This was certainly the case for Spring Creek whose students came from 1/4 mile to 2 1/2 miles to attend classes.<sup>6</sup>

Students of all ages attended Spring Creek school.<sup>7</sup> Often the older boys would be needed to help with various activities on their family farm and would be taken out of school for several weeks or months. When they returned to school they would begin their studies from where they left off; this created quite a mixture of ages not only in the school itself, but within the grades that were being taught. School terms increased, via legislation, from three months in 1859 to 8 months as a minimum term in 1923. Fortunately, the annual meetings minutes, sketchy as they are, have been preserved and demonstrates the fluctuation of school terms. Although they offer no reason for why the school board voted for such erratic terms, it is presumed that the agricultural activities of the area were the dictating forces.<sup>8</sup> Again noting the importance the Sumner Countians have placed on education, the Spring Creek school board typically voted for a six month term even though by law they were only required to have a minimum term of five months.<sup>9</sup>

Teachers in one-room rural schools seldom taught more than one year, but Spring Creek has several exceptions. On more than one occasion Spring Creek had the same teacher

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<sup>5</sup> Bright, Kansas. The First Century, 215.

<sup>6</sup> Letter from Richard Hess, April 8, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Student listings are available for years 1879 -1946 with 1887-1891, 1893-1896, and 1911 and 1912 missing.

<sup>8</sup> Further research in this area could prove to be useful in determining why the term fluctuations.

<sup>9</sup> State School Code Commission (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Press, January 15, 1929), 9.

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for two years and twice had the same teacher for three consecutive years.<sup>10</sup> Teachers usually knew all the student's names by the first day and often they knew their parents exceptionally well because many were relatives. Spring Creek was honored to have five students who graduated from Spring Creek eventually become teachers at Spring Creek. They are Flossie Hess, Winnie Yost, Fanny Sargent, Georgia Hess, and Lois Youree. Some of the teachers at Spring Creek would have Souvenir cards printed with their pictures on it and a listing of all the students in the class. (Maybe Appendix copies of the 2 that Ted and Pearl have.) All teachers were hired by the school board and their pay ranged from \$30 per month in 1904 to \$125 per month in 1946. The teachers were responsible for the daily operation of the school including the janitorial services. One time the teacher hired Richard Hess to start a fire in the school stove during the winter so it would be warm when she and the others arrived. He was instructed to be at the schoolhouse 30 minutes to one hour earlier than the others. This "luxury" obviously was paid for from her salary and was not subsidized by tax dollars.<sup>11</sup>

Libraries were an important part of any school, and Spring Creek was no exception. Each year a certain number of books were ordered and added to the library. This was always voted on by the school board who sometimes would merely designate a certain dollar amount to be spent rather than a required number of books to be purchased.<sup>12</sup> Because of the importance that the school board placed on books and reading, in the 1900s, Kansas had the majority of its children in one-room schools and simultaneously had the highest percentages of literate people in all the states in the nation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A listing of teachers from 1877 - 1946 has been compiled. Only 1878, 1879, and 1893 are unknown.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Hess, July 26, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with Verna Evans on May 23, 1995. Annual meeting minutes always show a dollar amount rather than a certain number of books.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne E. Fuller, One-room Schools of the Middle West (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 77.

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Spring Creek's recesses and lesson plans were representative of America's rural one-room schools. A typical day in 1943 would begin at 9:00am and dismiss at 4:00pm with one hour for lunch and a fifteen minute recess in the morning and another in the afternoon. Although the games played were quite common at the time, one will seldom find middle-school children playing them now. Among the favorites then and best remembered of Spring Creek alumni are Cop and Robbers; "shoe"skating on the icy pond; "2" Deep; marbles; tag; mumble pegs; and "I dare you." Baseball, or more accurately just bat and ball, was popular because "everyone had a hedgeapple at least."<sup>14</sup> Spring Creek was among the fortunate because they also had a Merry Whirl, which was purchased in 1929 for the amount of \$147.50.<sup>15</sup> Rainy day activities were much more cerebral and consisted on spelling bees, ciphering matches, geography games, art, and music.<sup>16</sup> Although lunch was not a fancy event, it offered time to socialize and play after the meal which typically was a peanut butter sandwich with home-canned fruit and sweets. Each child brought their own lunch; usually it was packed in a syrup bucket. In the winter they huddled around the stove and in the warmer months, they would picnic on the school yard.<sup>17</sup>

No matter how close the children lived to school, it was always an adventure getting to and from the schoolhouse, particularly in bad weather. Rural midwestern schools rarely closed for winter storms unless there was a blizzard. Many times, if there was a snowstorm or dust storm, the children would have to rely on a fence line to guide them to safety. Many of the kids attending Spring Creek had a country road to follow, but some chose to cross pastures as a short cut. In nice weather, some of the kids would play on their way to school by kicking a can (which was a rare find!) or by playing "Roll The Wheel." One lucky Spring Creek student hitched a ride on the road grader that was operating toward his home.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Eula Capps on April 20, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> Sumner County Kansas, "Proceedings of Annual Meeting," August 15, 1929.

<sup>16</sup> Letter from Ruth Baker and Eva Steed dated May 6, 1995.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Richard Hess July 26, 1995 and Eula Capps April 20, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Harold Capps April 20, 1995.

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Spring Creek, like so many other schools across America, was the focal point of the community. They symbolized many things to the early settlers. Not only were they the medium for educating their children, they epitomized the essence of true democracy. It was the place where the voice of the farmer would be heard and his vote counted. The schoolhouse served as an educational place, a community building, sometimes as a church, and always as a board room for the governing body of Spring Creek, the elected school board.<sup>19</sup> Spring Creek enjoyed monthly community meetings that included a potluck supper and a program.<sup>20</sup> Spring Creek liked to have Pie Suppers for fun and fundraising. It was customary for the males to bid on the pies, much like at an auction, and then share it with the person who baked it. It caused quite the scandal when one man paid for the pie and took it home without sharing it with the woman who baked it! Fortunately, this only happened once!<sup>21</sup>

Disorganization of Spring Creek occurred in 1946 after twenty-four successful years of educating thousands of Sumner Countians. The state began passing disorganization laws as early as 1899 but they were little used.<sup>22</sup> The first real attempt at any concerted reorganization and consolidation began in 1901 when a law provided for the consolidation of several one-teacher schools into graded schools.<sup>23</sup> The consolidation movement did not progress rapidly. Communities valued their rural schools. They not only served educational purposes, but they were social and political centers for that community. The abandonment of a one-room school was an emotional issue that provoked deep sentiment and a financial issue that meant increased property taxes but nonetheless, Kansas schools began to close. Two hundred and fifty schools closed in 1933 and by 1939 more than 1000 districts ceased holding school leaving only 8197 common school districts still

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<sup>19</sup> Meeting minutes have been preserved for the years between November 1, 1877 and April 10, 1942.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Verna Evans on May 23, 1995.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Bright, Kansas: The First Century, 216.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 217.

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organized in the state of Kansas.<sup>24</sup> Each year that passed brought new closings and by 1942, there were 7270 one-teacher districts but only 5445 were operating schools, and many of them had less than 12 pupils.<sup>25</sup> In 1945, Kansas enacted a Reorganization Law and during the first two years of its existence another 2674 school districts were closed, including Spring Creek District #36 in Sumner County.<sup>26</sup> In 1946 when Spring Creek was consolidated, its grades 1-10 went to Corbin school while grade 11 and 12 attended Caldwell High School.<sup>27</sup>

It was the reorganization law that set in motion acts that would virtually extinct the one-room schoolhouse. Many of the schoolhouses were torn down, used as storage, or merely abandoned and neglected. The more fortunate ones became homes or were moved to the city to be used as school rooms. But the most blessed were allowed to remain as a monument to the rural families that believed that education and knowledge were the tools to success. Spring Creek is the only known one-room schoolhouse in usable condition remaining in Sumner County. Its preservation will allow it to remain as a sentinel forevering guarding the learning, the memories, and the history that have been created in its midst.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>26</sup> Kansas Legislative Council. "Reorganization of School Districts in Kansas 1945-1946," Publication No. 140, iv.

<sup>27</sup> Caldwell Messenger, History of Sumner County Kansas (Dallas: Curtis Media Corporation, 1987), 20.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The nominated *property* stands in a rural setting four miles north of U.S. Highway 81 on a .061 acre tract of land in the NW4, NW4, SW 4, SW4, S15-T34S-R2W in Sumner County, Kansas. The property is bounded to the west by Anson Road and to the north, south and east by adjacent property lines.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundaries include all property historically associated with the nominated school.