

"The Last Chance Store"  
Council Grove  
Morris County  
Kansas

HABS No. KANS-6

HABS  
KANS  
64-CO. JCR  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction  
120 South Third Street  
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEYLAST CHANCE STORE  
Morris, Council Grove, Kansas

Present Owner: Mrs. Helen Prater, 19 N. Chautauqua Street,  
Council Grove, Kansas.

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Storage area.

Brief Statement of Significance: This simple one-story stone structure is typical of frontier architecture and was the last place where supplies could be obtained on the Santa Fe Trail between Council Grove and Santa Fe, a distance of six hundred miles.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners:  
Council Grove Town Company  
G. M. Simcock and T. S. Huffaker  
Gus O. L. Sauer  
William Tolbert (grandfather of present owner) Purchase 1868  
Ella V. Prater (mother of present owner) inheritance  
Helen E. Prater (by deed)
2. Date of erection: 1857 (Brigham, Lalla Maloy, The Story of Council Grove on the Santa Fe Trail, n.p., 1921, P.15)
3. Architect, builder, suppliers, etc.:  
Built by Thomas G. Hill who came to Council Grove from Vermont in June 1856 (per Mrs. Prater, Present owner)
4. Original plans, construction, etc.:  
No information.
5. Notes on alterations and additions:  
The front door has been closed off and doors were cut in the sides of the building as well as a window in the north end. (per Mrs. Prater, present owner)
6. Important old views and references:  
None.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

- (1) Was a post office for several years.
- (2) Then became a Government trading post.
- (3) Residence, occupied by the Morris County Nation Farm Loan Association.

This structure was built in 1857 by Tom Hill and his wife, Lucy Hill, who had come to Council Grove from New England. It was used as a store and residence. Since it was the last place where supplies could be obtained on the Santa Fe (a 600 mile distance) it became known as the "Last Chance Store". The store stock was brought from St. Louis by boat to Westport Landing and then by mule teams to Council Grove. It also served as a post office for several years. Later, a Government trading post was located here. It was then used by the Morris County National Farm Loan Association and later as a residence. The building is now utilized as a storage space. (Brigham, Lalla Maloy, op.cit., p.15)

C. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Since this was a post office and government trading post reference might be found in National Archives, Washington D. C., Public Buildings Service Records. The present owner, Mrs. Helen Prater, 502 Chautauqua Street, Council Grove, Kansas might also provide addition information.

Prepared by J. P. Noffsinger date 7/58

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATIONA. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: This is a simple one-story stone edifice typical of frontier building but having no particular architectural merit.
2. Condition of Fabric: The building is in fair condition. The walls are in need of some repair, the roof is in good condition but the interior needs considerable work.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Eighteen and one-half feet (18-1/2') by forty feet (40').
2. Foundations: Native Limestone.
3. Wall construction: Native limestone.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads etc.: None

5. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The doorway has a stone lintel and threshold with a simple wood trim. The doors are wood paneled but are probably not original.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The windows have stone lintels and sills with wood frames. There are no shutters.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The structure has a gable roof covered with cedar shingles.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: A very simple wood cornice is utilized.
  - c. Dormers, cupolas: None.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor Plans: There is a basement area under the south half of the building. (Entry was not gained to the main floor of the building). Originally one room, at present divided into three rooms by wooden partitions. (per Mrs. Prater, present owner)
2. Stairways: Rough stones lead to the basement.
3. Flooring: The underflooring is original. There is wide rough flooring which is probably original.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls have been plastered and wall paper applied. The wooden partitions are covered with wallpaper.
5. Doorways and doors: The interior doorways and doors are not original.
6. Trim: The trim is very simple.
7. Hardware: Probably no original remains.
8. Lighting: No original lighting remains. Drop cords in each room but now disconnected.
9. Heating: There is a flue at each end of the building.

D. Site

1. General Setting and orientation: The building is situated on a corner lot which gently slopes from

the north down to the south. The present entrance is on the east side.

2. Enclosures: None
3. Outbuildings: None
4. Walks: A few stones lead to the east door
5. Landscapeint, gardens: One large tree exists near the east side door.

Prepared by J. C. Noffsinger date 7/58