

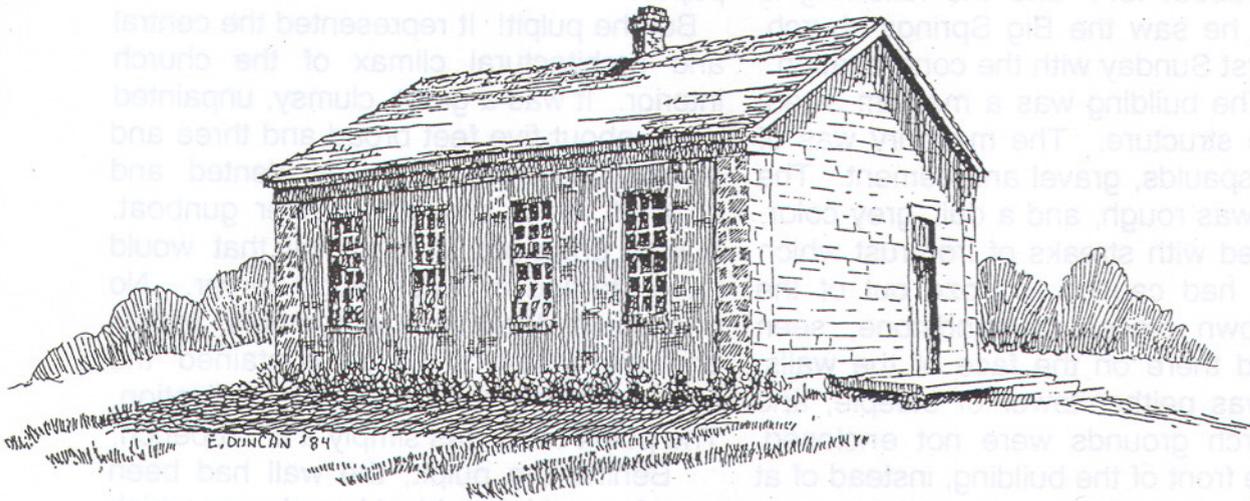
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U B CHURCH, BIG SPRINGS, ERECTED 1856

BIG SPRINGS UNITED BROTHERS CHURCH

Big Springs is an unincorporated city in the northwestern part of Douglas County in Lecompton township. It is about half way between Topeka and Lawrence on Highway #40. In early history, this highway was call the California road.

The first settlers there were William Harper and John Chamberlain who came in the fall of 1854. Emphraim Banning of Big Springs, George W. Zinn of Lecompton and William A. Cardwell were appointed Trustees of the Big Springs City Company, who surveyed the city of Big Springs, which contained two quarter sections.

It was in 1855, that Rev. William A. Cardwell, a United Brethren missionary, came to the Kansas Territory. The

territory was in the midst of civil strife, with almost daily battles between the Free-state and Pro-slavery residents. Rev. Cardwell and his family arrived in a covered wagon at an area called Big Springs, so-called because of three large springs near-by. Because of the long journey, the family found themselves penniless, homeless and almost friendless. They settled into a shack and Rev. Cardwell began a survey of the people of the locality. It was on June 10, 1855, that he preached his first sermon in a log house belonging to Emphraim Banning.

On June 15, 1856, the first United Brethren church in Kansas Territory was organized by Cardwell at Big Springs with

13 members. A cornerstone for a stone church was laid October 13, 1856. This church was built of native stone. There is a good description of this church in Horace D. Herr's book, "Harvey Vonore, The Making of a Minister." This book is a biography of his life as a United Brethren minister in Kansas, who started as a circuit rider for Big Springs, Richland, and several other churches. He came to Kansas about 1877 and the following is the way he saw the Big Springs church, on his first Sunday with the congregation.

"The building was a medium sized, barn-like structure. The masonry was of stones, spaulds, gravel and cement. The outside was rough, and a dull, grey color, variegated with streaks of iron-rust which the rain had caused to ooze out of the dirty brown pieces of sandstone, seen here and there on the face of the walls. There was neither tower or steeple, and the church grounds were not enclosed. Near the front of the building, instead of at its rear, extended a rude and in some places, broken, hitching rack, to which several teams, harnessed to farm wagons, were tied.

There had been no service for some time, and since public buildings were scarce in those days, the church, in the meantime, had been used for school purposes. The seats, they could not even by courtesy be called pews, if not many, were at least varied. Some were simply rough trestles, standing like long, low slender horses stabled in a church and capable of bearing as many as could be seated upon them. Others were long unpainted, pine seats, with a single strip extending the length of the bench at the proper height, to furnish a rest for the backs of the worshipers, but many of these had lost that back strip.

The rest of the interior was in keeping with the benches. The rude school boys

had kicked out one of the lower panels of the door, leaving a hole large enough for a coyote to enter. The loose window sashes responded to the breezes with an irregular tattoo far removed from the music of an Aeolian harp. A big bloated and rust-bleared stove stood like a big brown buffalo in the center aisle, as if to confront the pulpit in silence defiance. The walls were dingy and destitute of fresco or paper.

But the pulpit! It represented the central and architectural climax of the church interior. It was a great, clumsy, unpainted desk, about five feet broad and three and a half feet high. It was dented and scarred like a blockade-runner gunboat. It was engraved with a skill that would have startled a Swiss wood-carver. No one could decipher the symbols, initials and hieroglyphics which contained the record of the local juvenile civilization. The pulpit chair was simply a short bench.

Behind the pulpit, the wall had been transformed into a blackboard upon which were the white chalk records of mathematical battles, together with dissected members of grammatical or ungrammatical sentences; also pictures of prehistoric animals."

This stone church with constant improvements served the community until October 29, 1892, when it burned. It is then thought that a period of time the congregation met in the Greenwood Valley schoolhouse.

Not until 1898 was another church set up, this one was an abandoned church from Whiting, Kansas, which was moved to Big Spring in sections, and then reassembled. The building was finished and dedicated September 26, 1898, on a site across the road from the stone church. A fund for a modern structure was started in 1922 and by 1932 enough money was accumulated to build a large,

modern brick church and parsonage under the leadership of Rev. Arthur Ward and a church board composed of William P. Henry, C. W. Swecker, Gus Hartman, Sam Dark, Jr. and Michael Zeeb. The church was dedicated May 29, 1932, and the parsonage a year later. At the time of the dedication, there was one descendant of the charter members of the church present, Mrs. Wilma Morris of Lecompton. Some of these charter members included Benjamin Moore, William Harper, John Chamberlain, Ephraim Banning, and of course others from which there is no available record.

Not only did Rev. Cardwell organize the first United Brethren Church in Kansas, but he also is thought to have delivered the first prohibition speech in the state. About the time the church was started, a Missourian set up a saloon in Big Springs. The drinking and carousing caused Cardwell to call together a group of citizens. He mounted a whiskey barrel and made such a stirring speech, that the settlers seized the barrel of whiskey and poured its contents into the saloon keeper's yard. The Missourian fled toward Lecompton and was never seen in Big Springs again. This event started the prohibition movement in that part of Kansas. Big Springs was one of the first Free-State cities in that time.

Ref: Topeka Capital: April 14, 1956, Aug. 24, 1947 & May 7, 1956

Ruth Rankin-Big Springs History
Herr, Horace D.: "Harvey Vonore, The Making of a Minister," Geddes Printing Co. Fort Myers, Fla., 1934.

ST. PETERS CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Peters Catholic church parish began in 1859 in an old frame building in Lecompton, Kansas. It was destroyed by fire, and parishioners met once a year in

homes. A church was built north of the present site in Big Springs. It was in need of repairs, so in 1878, Amos Custard gave five acres of land west of town to the church. Mr. Wallenbush, a stone mason, built the entire church for one hundred dollars. It was completed in 1879 and mass was celebrated there once a month. After twenty-six years, the church was too small. In 1905, it was torn down and the present church was built at a cost of \$3,390.93. The following article was taken from the newspaper at Lecompton.

"The new Catholic church at Big Springs will be dedicated Monday, April 23, at 10:30 a.m. Bishop Lillis, of Kansas City, Bishop of this diocese, assisted by ten priest will have charge of the ceremonies.

One of the features for the day will be the confirmation of a class of thirty.

The day of the dedication will be the greatest that Big Springs has known since the constitutional convention met there in 1857.

Father Patrick Smith made plans for the new church. The building committee was: Theodore Kreipe, John Engleke, William Fitzpatrick, Dr. J. P. Gergan and William Anderson.

A beautiful laid-out cemetery lays south and west of the church. The oldest grave there is that of Ann Geelan, daughter of P. H. & S. S. Geelan, who died August 13, 1871, one year old.

Though this church building is unoccupied today, its bells are silent, but its picturesque presence still dominates the area. The local Catholic church organization asked the Lecompton Historical Society if they could preserve their sacred statues, which are now in the Art room at the Lane University Museum and also the windows are inset in the up stairs windows of the museum.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Big Springs Christian Church was organized by Elder Campbell in 1859. He served as pastor from 1862 to 1869. This was the oldest Christian church in the state. It held its first revival with Elder Hutchinson officiating. In 1870, a church was build by Mr. Anderson, which Frank, Oliver and Clum Spencer helped in building it.

They had a membership of 200, with Frank Spencer, as an elder. Mr. and Mrs. Frank Spencer were among the charter members of the church.

The church was served by the following ministers: Pardue Butler, A. J. Butler, Henry Painter, Justus McCoy, D. W. Johnston, Bro. Robinson, Solomon G. Brown, Bro. Ireland and J. M. Sheppard. At one time the church tried to established a college in Big Springs.

This church building was later converted into an implement store, with a storage room being built on the north side. Oscar Webber was the owner and operator of the implement store, with his son Wayne. The church building is now a residence and makes a nice comfortable home.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

A new tradition was started at our December meeting. The suggestion was made by Howard Duncan that a yearly group picture be made of the members. So, Mary Nelle Lasswell took a picture in the chapel of all of those attending the December meeting. After all, we will be history sometime in the future, and this will be a good record for the next generation to study (We will remember to identify people in the photos for them NOW) and they will be happy that today's history was preserved in this way.

Dorothy Shaner has presented the Historical Society with two beautiful hand made candelabras as a part of the memorial to her husband, Les Shaner. They have been placed on the stage in the chapel. William J. Reynolds made the candelabras for her from walnut lumber that Les had preserved to use for something special. The white candles were donated by Bill Reynolds. We appreciate this fine addition to the chapel.

James Douglas Howard was baptized in the Lane University Chapel on November 25, 1983. He is the newborn son of Phil and Catherine Wright Howard of Muncie, Indiana. Charles and Sally Wright of Lecompton are the proud grandparents. It was a beautiful ceremony, and the first baptismal service held in the restored Lane University Chapel.

The Museum has recently received a slab cut from the historic cottonwood tree located on the State Capitol grounds in Topeka. Several years ago, a windstorm caused a limb to break from this tree and slices of that limb were made available as souvenirs. Thanks to Dorothy Shaner, we now have a nice piece of this historic tree to display.

Thanks to Joe Stauffer who used his tractor to smooth out the gravel adjacent to the new driveway at the west entrance to Lane. He also cleared the snow on several occasions, and that was appreciated by all of us.

Iona Spencer would like to receive copies of obituaries of any of your relatives, neighbors, friends or acquaintances who were buried in the Lecompton or Big Springs Cemeteries. She plans to publish a book on the history of area cemeteries, and when this book is

completed, it will be a valuable record for everyone to see. Iona is a dedicated genealogist and would also appreciate copies of any marriages, births and deaths that you might have a record of. Please check your scrapbooks and clipping collections for items of this type.

Another Douglas County Quilt Show will be held on April 29th through May 20th at the Watkins Museum in Lawrence. We have been invited to participate again this year, and if you have an interesting quilt to display, please get in touch with Elizabeth Johnson. Many beautiful and unique quilts were shown last year and our local quilters enjoy having the opportunity to display their handiwork, or the work of their ancestors.

We are looking forward to another exciting year for our fast-becoming-famous Lane University Museum in the historic Lecompton community. We will have some new displays and items for you to see while visiting here this summer. If you are interested in a special tour, contact Sara Walter at 887-6267 and she will help make arrangements.

1984 began with the Lecompton Historical Society participating in the first annual Travel Industry Show at the Municipal Auditorium in Topeka; Jan. 7th, 8th and 9th. We were thrilled to be a part of this successful event as it gave our town and its history a special credibility by being a part of this group of 51 booths representing tourist attractions and cities across Kansas. We distributed our brochures and were proud to enthusiastically promote Lane University Museum, the historic town of Lecompton and the surrounding area.

The focal point of our display was the

painting of "Senator James Lane at Constitution Hall" which was done by Ellen Duncan. The James Lane mannequin (top hat and all) draped with the Confederate Flag added his own bit of color to the exhibit. David Paslay and George Simmons heard lots of curious comments from bystanders when they were caring "old James" in and out of the Municipal Auditorium. (The Lecompton Historical Society members always create a special interest wherever they go!) Opal Goodrick made appropriate colorful banners for the booth.

Iona Spencer outfitted more little pioneer dolls which we offered for sale along with other items from our gift shop. A drawing was held for a Lecompton souvenir plate, and it was won by Mrs. Ann Marley, wife of the Oakland United Methodist minister.

We thank all the following people who helped operate the booth during the Show: Dorothy Shaner, Opal Goodrick, Rich and Karen McConnell, Ross & Margaret Wulfkuhle, Jason Dexter, Joyce Dexter, George & Arloene Simmons, Daryl and Joyce Colton, Charles & Donna Vausbinder, Jack Pruett, Howard Duncan, Malcolm & Karen Smith, David and Darlene Paslay, Doris Matney, Wilma Tibbs, Marguerite Bowman, Sally Wright, Julia Springer & Paul Bahnmaier. This was a positive experience for our society and we appreciate everyone's help so much. One good result, so far, has been making arrangements for the Legislative Wives organization to tour Lecompton and Lane Museum on March 22nd.

The Lane University Library is open the first and third Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. Sara Walter, Elda Flowers and Lydia Long would be most pleased to help you select some interesting reading material,

or you might enjoy looking at some scrapbooks or old pictures.

Future meetings of the Lecompton historical group will be March 8th, April 12th and May 10th-the second Thursday of each month. A covered dish supper starts at 6:30 p.m. followed by a business meeting and program at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome to come and be a part of this dedicated group.

Territorial Day will be on June 30th this year, and you might want to start thinking about making plans to be here for this homecoming celebration. Its an opportunity for old friends to get together to do some reminiscing and just have a good time being back home again. Also, neighbors can visit with neighbors who don't see each other so often nowadays.

I have the following marriage licenses on couples that lived in Lecompton and were married in or secured their license in Shawnee County. These are duplicate marriage licenses on hand at the County Court house and to preserve them, they were given to a genealogist to see if she could find someone who wanted them. If you would like any of these licenses or know of someone who does, please send me a stamped, self-addressed business envelope and I will see that you get them. Write to Iona Spencer, R. R. #1-Box 54, Lecompton, Ks 66050

Wm. H. Long-Kingman, Ks. & Emma J. Troll-Lecompton.

Henry McDowell-Topeka, & Ida Lewis-Lake View

Lee H. Hogan-Lecompton & Ellen M. Mitchell-Ritchey, Mo.

Charles G. Miller-Topeka & Hattie F. Connell, Lecompton

Frank Logan-Lecompton & Louise Berger-Burlingame.

J. D. Peace-N. Topeka & Eunice Owen-Lecompton

Ernest L. Hollar-Lecompton & Ethel H. Kafton-Lecompton.

G. W. Williams-Coatsville, Ind. & Maggie McCollum-Grover.

Archie McNillin-Big Springs & Mabel McAtee-Fairview.

Nelson Thompson-Big Springs & Ethel Hastings-Topeka.

Wm. A. Smith-Lawrence & Alma R. Masterson-Lecompton.

William Sulzen-Lecompton & Josephine Lux-Topeka

N. N. Van Dyke-Topeka & Lauretta Fuller-Lecompton.

Edward W. Cleland-Alma & Susan Nickell-Grover.

Harry Shafer-Topeka & Grace Larison-Lecompton

Garfield Mair-Lecompton & Lois Johnson-Lecompton.

John S. King-Big Springs & Wilhelmina Rausch-Big Springs.

Fred Gems-Spencer & Ida Speilman-Topeka

Geo. H. Jeffers-Big Springs & Mrs. Flora Christian-Grover.

George Christian-Topeka & Lillie Farris-Big Springs.

James A. Thomas-Topeka & Anna Johnson-Big Springs.

Oscar Kuehne-Topeka & Stella M. Liggett-Grover.

Theodore Sulzen-Lecompton & Maggie Crittenden-Topeka.

Robert W. Poston-Shawnee Co. & Mary E. Burns-Douglas Co.

Wm. G. Barker-Lecompton & Mary E. Greer-Oakland	William D. England-Topeka & Harriet E. Smith-Lecompton
Calvin Albritten-Lecompton & Alice Elliott-Lecompton.	D. L. Doub-Lecompton & Edna Hush-Cloud Co.
Michael Shelley-Lawrence & Maude E. Hetrick-Lawrence	Leroy W. Holley-Madison, Wis. & Lula Steele-St. Joe, Mo.
Edward Edwards-Topeka & Lydia Stoneburner-Lecompton.	Wm. Warner-BigSprigs & Ethel R. Custard-Big Springs
Charles Duncan-Lecompton & Rosa Geelan-Lecompton.	John H. Johns-Topeka & Joicy Ballard-Lecompton
Fred Eberhart-Douglas Co. & Bertha Eller-Shawnee County.	Cyril P. Holcomb-Soldier Twp. & E. Stella Hart-Lecompton
Nathan H. James-Rock Creek & N. Jane Harms-Big Springs.	L. M. LaDuke-Shawnee Co. & Addie Dugarthy-Shawnee Co.
Ernest Winsor-Big Springs & Esther Giese-Carlton, Ks.	Richard McCann-Maple Hill & Margaret A. Cummings-Lecompton
G. C. Bailey-Shawnee Co. & Nora Masterson-Shawnee Co.	Archie W. Coffman-Topeka & Leona K. Wilson-Lecompton
William Swecker-Lecompton & Anna Durow	Everett E. Gray-Lawrence & Isabella W. Banks-Lawrence.

MEMORIAL LIFE MEMBERS

L. A. Pease-Lawrence & Ola I. Atkinson-Lecompton	John M and Etta S. (Lutz) Taylor-This memorial was given by their daughter Hazelle (Taylor) Dyer. Frank Taylor their son is also a member of the Lecompton Historical Society.
Charles Walrod-Lecompton & Evaline Warner-Meriden	

THE LECOMPTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Lecompton, Kansas 66050 is a non-profit corporation for the preservation of Historic Sites. We are eager for continued membership and new members!

Individual membership is \$2.50 per year, from December to December. Life membership is \$50 per individual. Contributions are tax deductible. Checks should be made payable to the Lecompton Historical Society, and mailed to Mrs. Iona Spencer, R.R. #1, Lecompton, Kansas 66050.

(Please clip and mail with your check)

_____ \$2.50 Annual Individual Member _____ \$50 Individual Life member

_____ Other Contribution _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: If your name or address is not correct as shown on this copy of your Bald Eagle, please let us know.

Doren Glenn Herschell-Doren was a member of our society who passed away Nov. 25, 1983. This memorial was given by his brothers; William, Norbert & George E. Herschell, his sisters; Sararene Moore and Iona Spencer and his Aunt: Wilma Glenn Tibbs.

LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Candace (Schott) Sehon Ronald Robb
Wilbur M. Hildenbrand Martha (Perkins) Robb
Helen J. (Frye) Hildenbrand Philip H. Lewis
David F. Bartlett Nellie (Worthington) Glenn
Martha L. (Bartlett) Letcher Hazelle (Taylor) Dyer
Katie (Hart) Armitage

We now have a total of 219 Life Memberships and 527 paid memberships. I would grant to say, we have the largest membership in the United States.

President-Paul Bahnmaier
Editor-Ellen Duncan
Genealogical Writer-Iona Spencer
Historical Writer-Sara Walter

We are saddened to report the deaths of four historical society members recently. All four exemplify the loyalty and dedication people have for Lecompton, whether they live here or many miles away.

Louis E. Lasswell, 74, passed away November 18, 1983, the son of George R. and Bama Lasswell. Louis graduated from Lecompton High School in 1929 where he was very active in athletics. He is survived by his wife the former Emilie Reynolds, and a daughter, Carol Werdon. A son, Dale, preceded him in death. He is also survived by six grandchildren and a brother, Cecil, of Ottawa. Burial was in the Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn.

Doren Glenn Herschell, 70, passed away November 27, 1983, the son of George C. and Bessie Glenn Herschell. He was a Life Member of the Historical Society and enjoyed visiting the Museum and our meetings whenever he was in the area. He is survived by his wife Evelyn and a daughter Sheryl. Also 2 sisters; Iona Spencer, Lecompton, and Sararene Moore, Portland, Or. 3 brothers; William & Norbert Herschell of Tecumseh; George, of Cato, Wisc. Services were held in Port Hueneme, Ca. Burial ashes at sea.

Gladys V. Holloway, 87, passed away January 30, 1984, the daughter of Samuel L. and Mary D. Dick Dark. She was a Life Member of the Lecompton Historical Society and was also an effective and interested worker for the Lecompton community, having served as the City Treasurer for many years. She was a former teacher and homemaker. Survivors include three daughters, Doris Sindt, Pittsburg, and Mrs. Lura McAlexander and Mrs. Geraldine Harrell of Lecompton, 4 grandchildren & 4 great grandchildren. Her husband, Gerald, and a son, Eugene Harding, a WW11 casualty, preceded her in death. Also surviving are 2 brothers; Elton "Bill" Dark and Harley M. Dark, both of Lecompton. Services were held at the United Methodist Church in Lecompton with burial in Maple Grove Cemetery.

Goldie F. McCall, 81, passed away Jan. 30, 1984, the daughter of Robert and Caroline Goepfert Gray. She was a 1922 graduate of Lecompton High School and was married to Harry McCall in 1922 at Lecompton. She has lived in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., since 1967 to be near her son, Harry, who survives. Also surviving are a sister, Mrs. Grace Dark, Lecompton and a brother Robert Gray of Wagoner, Okla. Services were held at the United Methodist Church in Lecompton, with burial in Maple Grove Cemetery.

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