

SELF-GUIDED TOUR HALSTEAD TRAIN STATION TO THE HOPEFIELD IMMIGRANT HOUSE.

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WALK IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF YOUR ANCESTORS

It was on this trail that our Swiss Mennonite ancestors completed the last leg of their epic journey from Russia to their home in America, the immigrant house at the Hopefield Mennonite Church, 3.5 miles west of Moundridge and .5 north. Historians have not known what trail they used. In the Centennial year of 1974 celebrating the immigration of Mennonites to several Kansas communities, I wanted to walk in the footsteps of my ancestors.

As a college junior I organized and led the “Swiss Mennonite Pilgrimage Hike.” About 45 people dressed in old-time authentic clothes or dresses walked or rode a horse-drawn wagon. This journey went from the Halstead train station to the west edge of Halstead, traveling the Halstead-Moundridge road 14 miles, then through Moundridge in the parade, then going west to the Hopefield Church grounds where there were tents, food, threshing, and other elements of a cultural celebration. It was a good effort to follow a trail, but of course in 1874 there was no Moundridge, and no roads on mile section lines yet, but we didn’t know exactly where the trail went.



1974 Swiss Mennonite Pilgrimage Hike, Halstead to Hopefield. Hikers in the Moundridge parade

What we know now that we didn’t know in 1974: In my study of pioneer and Indian trails in central Kansas, I try to find all the documentary evidence available. When there are still gaps in the information, I use the practice of Dowsing to find wagon and Indian trail patterns, made by wheels and scratches into the native soil years ago. By this, I have mapped many trails in central Kansas, five of which are in the Kansas State Historical Society library.

The path I now believe they used was actually a military trail, the Fort Harker to Wichita/Fort Gibson (OK) trail. This passed near the corner 4 miles west of Moundridge, and

angles directly to Halstead. In 1869-1870, there was no railroad to the embryonic village of Wichita, where there was a small military outpost. The nearest railroad came to Fort Harker, today the city of Kanopolis just east of Ellsworth. Fort Harker was a supply fort, and wagons traveled down to Wichita by this trail.

I have discovered a branch trail veering off the Fort Harker trail, which split and went north to the Hopefield Immigrant House. I can also detect no other trail in the area that could possibly be a more correct trail. What I have also found is that the Fort Harker Trail followed and paralleled an existing Indian trail all the way. Part of the original story is as follows:

“They (the Swiss Mennonites) came to Peabody, Kansas. Here they stopped; it was their temporary destination. Here they tried to arrange for temporary living quarters as much as was possible. From here they went to look at the land where they wanted to settle. (Wedel, P.P. “A Short History of the Swiss Mennonites” p. 58)

After a three week investigation tour, to select land, they returned to Peabody. They reported that they were agreed on Mound and Turkey Creek townships in McPherson County as a promising place for a settlement. During their absence, those who stayed in Peabody went through hard experiences when almost all the children became sick, which may have been caused by a change in the climate. Some children died (including my grandfather’s baby sister)...When they (the men) returned everyone was glad to proceed with the journey, and as soon as possible get to his permanent home. In order to get to their permanent home and get as close as possible to the determined place to settle, some went by train to Halstead. Here they were delayed again. Friends put up a lodging place, close to the Warkentin mill, for temporary shelter. Their stay here was not long, some for a few days and for most of them a week and for a few several weeks. Here also some children died and were buried ½ mile west and 3 ½ miles north of Halstead.” (p. 64-65) (This would be at the Fairview cemetery at 12th and Halstead Road)

“In the meantime they had bought dairy cattle and especially draft animals. It was much cheaper to buy oxen than horses so most of them used oxen instead. They also bought wagons and on these they loaded their belongings, hitched the oxen to it, and started on the last journey to their chosen place which they hoped to call their home. Though the distance was only 15-20 miles, it took two days to make the journey as the oxen did not make much headway in a day. (p. 66)

So here, let us begin to follow in the footsteps of the Swiss Mennonite pioneers.

NOTE: Take care on unpaved roads. Most are sanded. Take care if it has rained a lot.

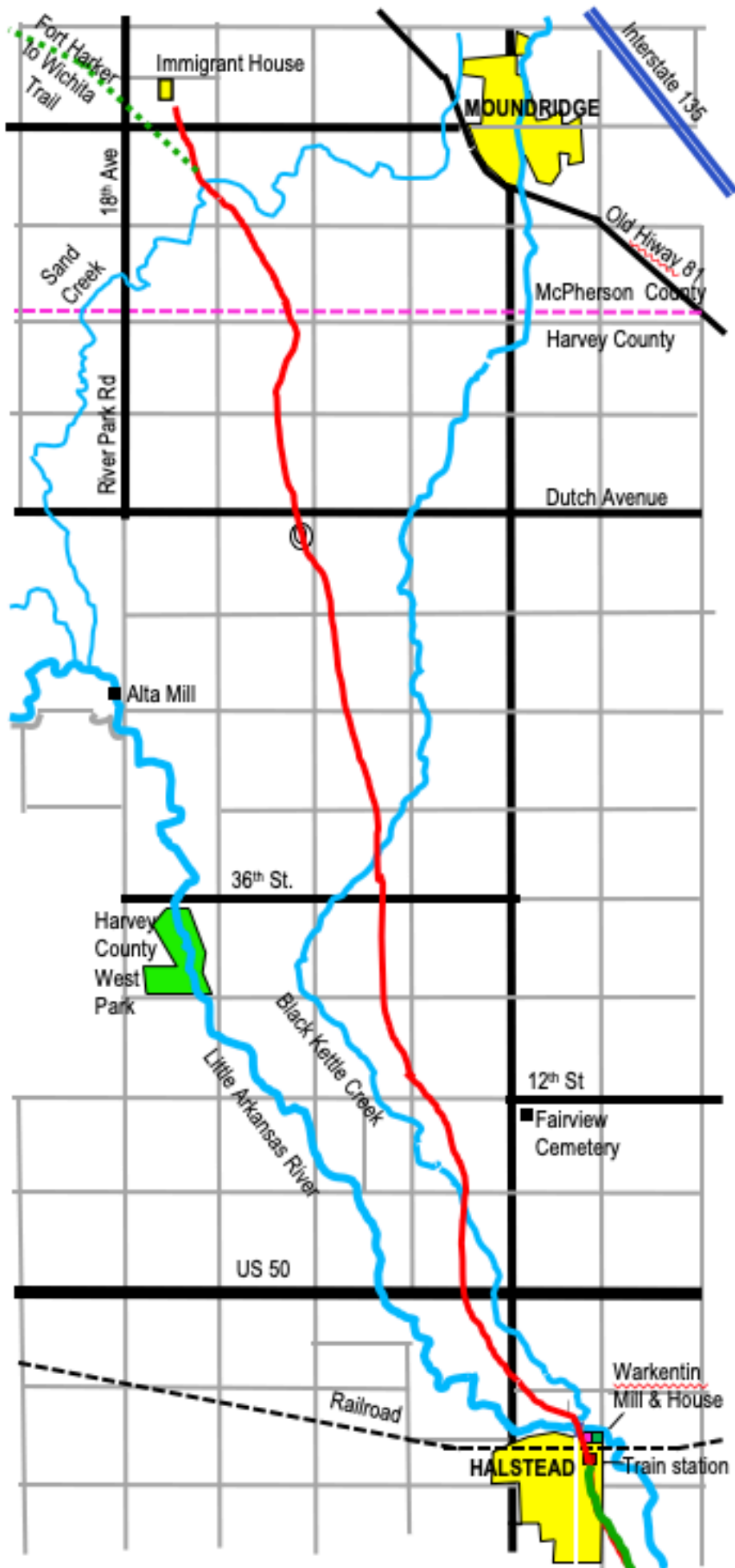
STOP #1. HALSTEAD TRAIN STATION. The Wedel story says some stayed close to the Warkentin Mill for temporary shelter. That is on the site of today’s COOP and elevator. The Bernard Warkentin Homestead with house, barn, and silo is to the east of the COOP, north of the train station. This is where he first did test plantings of Turkey Red Wheat in America. His barn was said to be the largest in Harvey County. The Homestead is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. When the Swiss Mennonites were ready to go, they literally just stepped on the Fort Harker trail. The first point on our journey is the lawn of the train station just west of the station, where the Fort Harker trail and the Indian trail it parallels angle SE-NW.

DIRECTIONS: The trails cross Main Street from a little south of the railroad tracks to right up to the bridge. West of Main Street, the trail goes through what is now the levee on the south bank of the river. Go ahead and cross over the bridge. Turn left at the park. Go through the gate marked “Riverside Park.”

STOP #2 RIVERSIDE PARK. From the park sign gate,

TRAIL: At 39 to 111 ft., 10 wagon tracks crossing the river near the old bridge, going NW.

At the west end of the driveway loop is a curb coming to a point. To the north is the confluence of the Black Kettle Creek and the Little Arkansas River.



It is also the site of what was once the Kit Carson Tree, “*A famous pow wow between the frontiersman Kit Carson and the Native American Chief Black Kettle had taken place some years earlier at this same confluence*”, (according to the city of Halstead website)

On the north side of the drive, there is one set of wagon tracks and one set of Indian trails. Beginning at zero as the west end of the driveway loop,
TRAIL: At 100 to 175 ft. east, 10 pairs of wagon tracks going SE-NW are crossing the Black Kettle just above its mouth. They pass just west and through the stone bandstand.

As you leave the park, look SE across the levee and see the silo and barn of the Warkentin Homestead. Turn right. Halfway between the north and south gates to the park is a small historic marker, saying that the Old Settler’s Picnic was held here starting in 1896 and some scenes of the 1956 movie, “Picnic” were filmed here.

DIRECTIONS: Go out the drive onto Main Street. Turn left on Hertzler Memorial Highway. Go .5 mile NE. At SW 24th St, turn left (west). Go west on 24th.

STOP #3. From Hertzler Highway and SW 24th, go west.

At about .42 mile is the Black Kettle bridge.

TRAIL: At .69 to .70 miles are 7 wagon tracks SE-NW.

LOOK AT: Flat ground. Look back SE. Trail points toward the middle of 3 Halstead elevators; this is actually the COOP, at the site of Warkentin’s mill. Amazing how the trails line right up.

DIRECTIONS: Go on ahead to Halstead Road and 24th. Turn right (north)

STOP #4. From Halstead Road and 24th, go north.

TRAIL: At .12 to .13 miles there are 7 wagon tracks ESE-WNW.

The trail takes a northerly turn here, headed for Highway 50.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to Highway 50. This corner is locally called “Farmer’s Corner.” Highway 50 is extremely dangerous with fast truck traffic. Turn left (west).

STOP #5. From Halstead Road and Highway 50, go west.

TRAIL: At .34 to .35 miles are 7 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: The trail crossed the Black Kettle in the section to the north. Flat farmland here.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around where you can, go back to Halstead Road and Highway 50. Turn left (north). Go 1 mile north to Halstead Road and 1st Street. Turn left (west).

STOP #6. From 1st and Halstead go west SSE-NNW.

TRAIL: At .43 to .44 miles are 7 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: You are just east of the Black Kettle bridge. Indian trail to the east, wagon tracks right next to the bridge. Trail will cross the creek shortly to the south.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around. Go back to 1st and Halstead Road. Turn left (north). Go 1 mile north to 12th and Halstead.

Here we have on the southeast corner, the Fairview Cemetery. Originally begun by Friends (Quakers) in the area. The “Short History of the Swiss Mennonites” tells about a connection to this cemetery.

“Three weeks they were camped at Peabody while the men were on a tour to search for a place to settle. When they returned, everyone was glad to proceed with the journey, and as soon as possible to get to his permanent home. In order to get as close as possible to the determined place to settle, some went by train to Halstead.Here also some children died and were buried ½ mile west and 3 ½ miles north of Halstead.” (Wedel p. 64-65) This would have been in the Fairview (Friends) cemetery, today at NW 12th and Halstead Road. By dowsing, I have found the location of three child-length rectangles along the west edge of the cemetery, unmarked.

DIRECTIONS: Turn left (west).

STOP #7. From 12th and Halstead, go west.

TRAIL: At .68 to .69 miles 7 wagon tracks cross SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: Flat farmland.

DIRECTIONS: Go on west to corner of 12th and Old Settler's Road. Turn right (north).

STOP #8. From 12th and Old Settler's Road go north.

TRAIL: At .25 to .25 miles are 7 wagon tracks crossing at a sharp angle SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: Look to NNW. Trail crosses farm driveway near the electric pole. Here, flat bottomland in the Black Kettle Valley. Trail will follow on the east edge of the ridge as we get to NW 24th.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to corner of NW 24th and Old Settler's Road. Turn left (west).

STOP #9. From NW 24th and Old Settler's Road, go west.

TRAIL: At .11 to .12 miles are 7 wagon tracks crossing N-S.

LOOK AT: You are just on the east edge of a ridge, going up the slope – a good vantage point to see north or south. Go on west to 24th and Spring Lake Road.

DIRECTIONS: Turn right (north) At about .4 you pass a farmyard that was the boyhood home of Swiss Mennonite Olympic steeplechase athlete Conrad Nightingale. His mother was a Stucky. It was said during high school track season he ran 8 miles to school at Halstead, did his regular Track practice, and ran home again at night.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to 36th and Spring Lake Road. Here 36th is a paved road leading west, to the north side of the Harvey County West Park. But turn right (east).

STOP #10. From 36th and Spring Lake Road, go east.

TRAIL: At .59 to .61 miles are 7 wagon tracks crossing SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: You are right by a single underground cable post on the north side. This is the west edge of the wagon tracks. Look to the section NNW and imagine where the trail may have crossed the Black Kettle.

DIRECTIONS: Because Old Settlers Road isn't the best road, turn around, go back to 36th and Spring Lake Road. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 48th. Turn right (east).

STOP #11. From 48th and Spring Lake Road, go east.

TRAIL: At .50 to .51 miles are 7 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: In the section to the south, the trail crosses the Black Kettle Creek.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 48th and Spring Lake Road. Turn right (north) Go 1 mile north to 60th and Spring Lake Road. Turn right (east).

STOP #12. From 60th and Spring Lake Road go east.

TRAIL: At .39 to .40 miles are 7 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: You are just west of a driveway at 13003 NW 60th. The trails pass through the heart of the yard and several buildings, but not the house. The east edge of the wagon trail is right in the middle of driveway. Go on a bit past the driveway to look at the hedge dips to the east.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 60th and Spring Lake Road. Turn right (north). Go 1 mile north to 72nd and Spring Lake Road. Turn right (east).

STOP #13. From 72nd and Spring Lake Road, go east.

TRAIL: At .13 to .14 miles are 7 wagon tracks SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: Trail stays right on top of long ridge. You are at the crest of this hill, going down the east slope. Look NNW, along the ridge where the trail goes.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 72nd and Spring Lake Road. You are 1 mile east of the site of Liberty Grade School. The silver round top gym is still visible to the west. Turn right (north).

STOP #14. From 72nd and Spring Lake Road, go north.

TRAIL: At .76 to .78 miles is where 7 wagon tracks of the Fort Harker trail are going SE-NW.

LOOK AT: Trail continues on high area. You are about 120 ft. south of the driveway on the east side. Continue north to the corner of Dutch Avenue and Spring Lake Road. You are at a hill which is the highest for miles around. When I was a kid, we called it the "5 towns hill" because, especially at night, you could see lights from 5 towns: Buhler to the west, Inman, McPherson, Moundridge, and Hesston. Maybe Newton on a good night. On a Friday night in fall, we could easily tell who had a home football game.

STOP #15. From Dutch Ave. and Spring Lake Road, go west.

TRAIL: At .12 to .13 miles is the Fort Harker wagon trail.

LOOK AT: Good pasture on the north side; I would love to explore that for trail ruts. High hill to SE. The wagon trail goes through the east part of the yard on the south side, then through the windmill east of the house on the north.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to Dutch Ave. and Spring Lake Road. Turn left (north). Go 1 mile north to 96th and Spring Lake Road. Turn left (west).

STOP #16. From 96th and Spring Lake Road, go west.

TRAIL: At .31 to .32 miles 7 wagon tracks cross at SSE-NNW.

LOOK AT: Look at a map to see that although the trail is meandering around, it is staying on high ground.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 96th and Spring Lake Road. Turn left (north). Go 1 mile north. This is the Harvey-McPherson County Line. In Harvey County it is 108th and Spring Lake Road. In McPherson County, it is 20th and Arapaho Road. From this point on we will use McPherson County road names. Turn left (west).

McPHERSON COUNTY

STOP #17. From 20th and Apache Road, go west.

TRAIL: At .25 to .26 miles are 7 wagon tracks of the Fort Harker trail.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 20th and Apache Road. Turn left (north) towards 20th and Arapaho Road.

LOOK AT: At about .6 miles, look to the NE. See the farm on the high land that is in line with the Moundridge elevator. This farm is on the "Mound" and the "Ridge" from which Moundridge gets its name. No kidding.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to 20th and Arapaho Road. Turn left (west)

STOP #18. From 20th and Arapaho, go west for two trails on this mile.

TRAIL: At .28 to .29 miles are 7 wagon tracks ESE-WSW of the 1857 Lt. Col. Morrison Trail.

When there were disturbances among Indians in western Kansas and eastern Colorado, Fort Gibson in eastern Oklahoma was in charge of the western plains. Lt. Col. Pitcairn Morrison was ordered out to Fort Atkinson (Dodge City) and to Bent's Fort, CO. to settle them and talk peace with the chiefs of the Kiowa, Comanche, Arapaho, Apache, and Cheyenne. (*Chronicles of Oklahoma*) A north route came up through Towanda, through the north part of North Newton, through the Hesston College campus, on its way to join the Santa Fe Trail near Inman and Groveland, and then out west. Early maps are before surveys, thus only relative to rivers. So, this was a military trail, with the intention of talking peace.

LOOK AT: Coming from the SE, that trail is just on the west side of a high spot. Looking NW, trail heads to the west side of the house on the north side of the road.

TRAIL: At .51 to .53 miles are 13 wagon tracks SSE-NNW of the Fort Harker trail that the Swiss Mennonites traveled on.

LOOK AT: Just 150 ft. west of the half mile line is an irrigation riser pipe on the north side of the road. This riser would be about by the west side of the Fort Harker trail.

DIRECTIONS: Go on west to next corner, Arapahoe and 19th. Turn right (north)

STOP #19. From Araphaho and 19th, go north for again two trails.

TRAIL: At .44 to .45 miles are 7 wagon tracks SE-NW of the Lt. Col. Morrison trail, coming from Oklahoma.

LOOK AT: You are by the trees of a half mile hedge. Trail goes off NW through low wetland creek area of the Sand Creek. This creek runs from a few miles west of Moundridge and joins into the Little Arkansas just north of the Alta Mill. It has sometimes been seen on maps as the "Crooked Creek." This is not the Sand Creek that runs through Newton and joins the Little Arkansas at Sedgwick.

TRAIL: At .60 to .62 mile just north of the bridge are 5 wagon tracks SE-NW of the Fort Harker/Swiss trail.

LOOK AT: Trails cross through the low bottomland of the Sand Creek. It is reported by neighbors that Indian artifacts have been found around here. In the section to the west, the Swiss trail splits off of the Fort Harker Trail.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to 19th and Arrowhead. This is a paved road coming west out of Moundridge. Turn left (west).

STOP #20. From 19th and Arrowhead, go west.

TRAIL: At .55 to .56 miles there are 5 wagon tracks SSE-NNW that appear to be a split off the Fort Harker trail. They head NNW to the Hopefield Church and the Historical Marker placed on the site of the Swiss Mennonite Immigrant House.

TRAIL: At .92 to .93 miles there are 7 sets of wagon tracks of the Fort Harker trail crossing SE-NW.

DIRECTIONS: At 18th and Arrowhead, turn right (north). You will immediately see a marker placed by the Swiss Mennonite descendants in 1943, in gratitude to the United States for granting religious freedom. Continue on .5 mile north to Aztec Lane. This is a road on the half mile line.

DIRECTIONS: Turn right (east) and go to the Hopefield Church and the Memorial monument on the site of the Immigrant House. Get out of your vehicle to read the several plaques of the marker. I have confirmed the location of the immigrant house, and that 5 sets of wagon tracks lead right to it, from the SSE. See the map below.

Again, from the Wedel book: *"About the middle of October the congregation gathered in the so-called Immigrant House, to join in praise and thanksgiving to God for his protection, His blessing, and His leading on this journey . . . The railroad company kept its promise and built a temporary building 20 feet by 120 feet on the land given for church and school purposes on section 19 in Mound Township. It was a simple building, a shed with a roof, board walls, without floor or ceiling. Fifteen to twenty families moved into this Immigrant House for the winter. They arranged to get along with one stove."* (Wedel, p. 66)

From here, they went out to claim their land, and build their first homes. Prairie was broken, wheat was planted, and they began their lives in America.

This is the end of this trail. You have now traveled in the footsteps of your ancestors.



Hopefield Immigrant House

and other features

Mapped by Brian D. Stucky

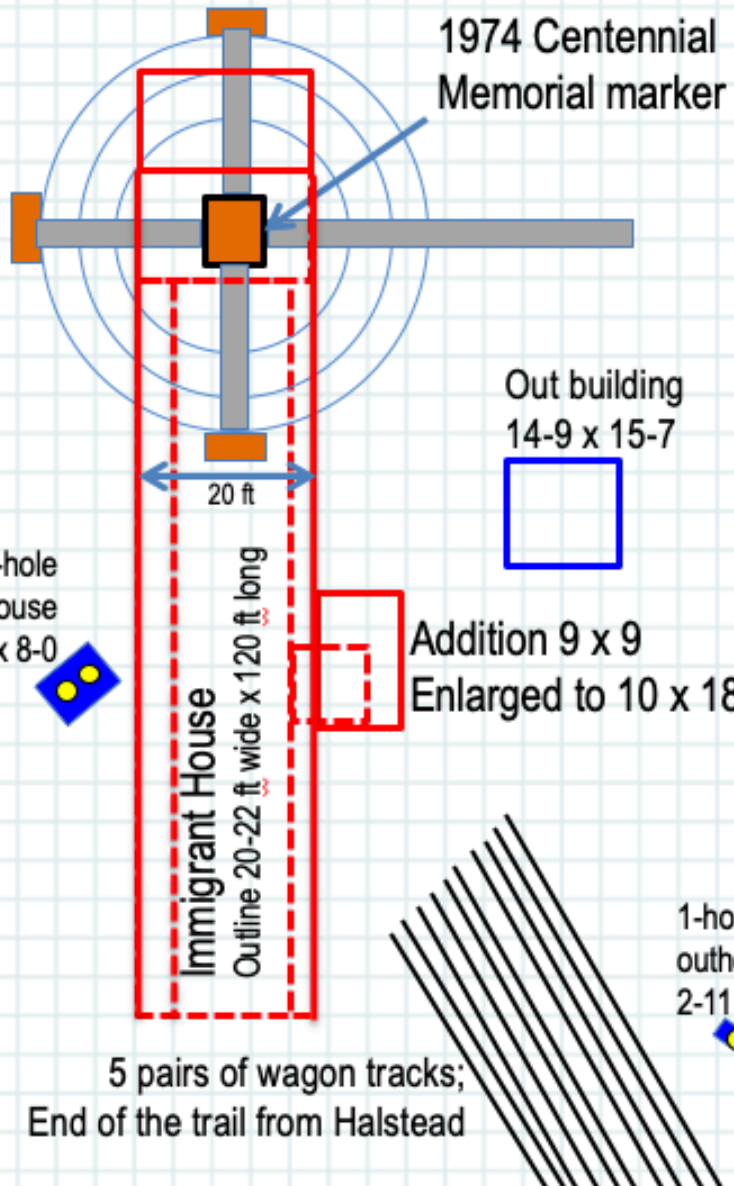
September 23, 2017 Revised Oct 23

Scale 1/4" equals 5 ft



Possible
child grave
1-11 x 2-11

Possible well
2-9 Diameter



1974 Centennial
Memorial marker

Out building
14-9 x 15-7

20 ft

2-hole
Outhouse
5-9 x 8-0

Addition 9 x 9
Enlarged to 10 x 18

Unknown
square
2-5 x 2-5

5 pairs of wagon tracks;
End of the trail from Halstead

1-hole
outhouse
2-11 x 4-2