

OXFORD TOWNSHIP

This southern area of the City of Leawood lies within a portion of Johnson County once called Oxford Township. An event here in 1857, the "Oxford Fraud," played an important role in the election of Abraham Lincoln and the start of the Civil War.

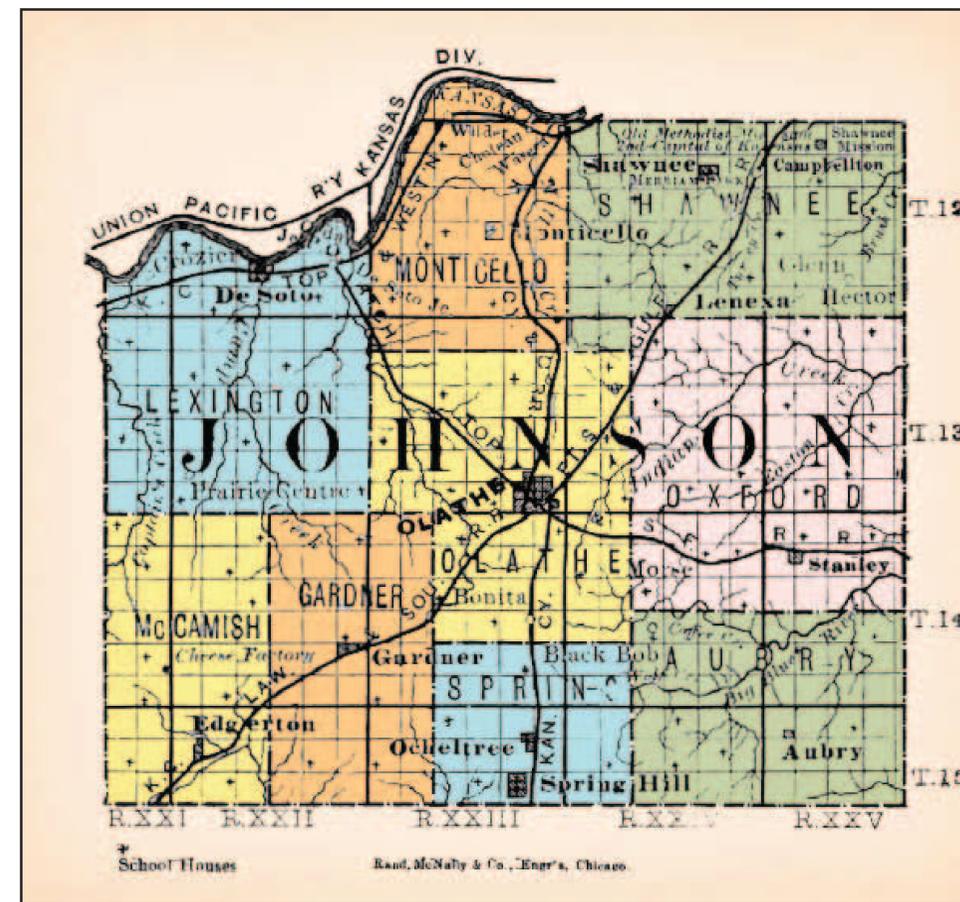
Originally Oxford Township contained more than 74 square miles, bordered on the north by 95th Street, on the west by Lackman/Black Bob Road, on the south by 167th Street, and on the east by State Line. It was the largest of Johnson County's townships.

Native tribes of Kansa and Osage Indians inhabited this region. Treaties of the late 1820s forced Indian tribes living east of Kansas to relocate to this area, at that time not part of the United States. A reservation was established here for the Shawnees.

OXFORD SCHOOLHOUSE

The new settlers followed a common practice of building one-room schoolhouses every four miles. More than 100 one-room schools stood in Johnson County alone in the early 1900s. Oxford School is one of the oldest remaining schools in Kansas. The Oxford School, District 20, was built in 1877 and operated until 1955.

The schoolhouse was moved from its original location at Mission Road and 135th Street to this park in 2003. Great care has been taken by the Leawood Historic Commission to restore the building to its original beauty with historical accuracy.



Map of Johnson County 1878

BLEEDING KANSAS AND THE OXFORD FRAUD

The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 opened the territory to non-native settlement and eventual statehood. The act provided popular sovereignty to each territory, allowing the residents to decide the issue of slavery through the constitution under which the territory would enter the Union as a state. The six-year struggle for control of Kansas Territory, a prelude to the Civil War, is often referred to as "Bleeding Kansas."



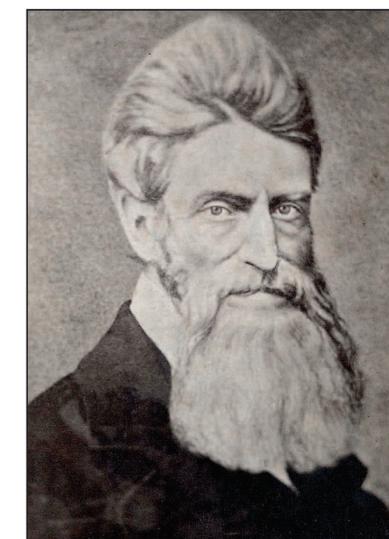
New England abolitionists settled the territory to be a "free state," but Missourians crossed the border to support slavery. A vicious and bloody border war raged for several years between the factions.

Over the six years as a territory, Kansas at times had two governing bodies, one pro-slavery and one "free state." Ten governors presided in this period, with the capital changing locations several times, and there were four constitutional conventions. In 1857 President James Buchanan appointed Robert J. Walker as territorial governor to bring peace to "Bleeding Kansas." Walker pledged to end unlawful voting.

During an election October 5 and 6, 1857, a polling place for Oxford Township was set up for the 42 eligible voters about a mile south of New Santa Fe, Missouri, near present-day West Blue Ridge Boulevard and State Line Road. Hundreds of Missourians cast their votes. The final tally revealed 1,628 pro-slavery candidate votes cast, with the majority of these voters' names having been copied from an old Cincinnati directory while the voting records were being held in Westport, Missouri.

Governor Walker, accompanied by Kansas Secretary of State Frederick Stanton, visited the site, concluding "the whole county of Johnson can give no such vote." His decision on October 19 to throw out the votes gave the Free State Party its first victory. It also angered southern Democrats in Congress, causing a split in the party that allowed Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln to be elected in 1860. That prompted southern state secessions, which led to the Civil War.

The abolitionists won statehood for Kansas on January 29, 1861, with a constitution banning slavery.



Abolitionist John Brown

BLACK BOB SHAWNEES

Emigrant tribes of Indians that were moved from their lands in the east included the Black Bob Shawnees, led by a chief of that name. A Black Bob reservation of 33,400 acres, ten miles long (east to west) and five miles wide (north to south), dominated southern Johnson County and served an estimated 167 tribe members. The main Black Bob camp was at the source of the Blue River, at the union of Coffee and Wolf Creeks, northeast of 179th Street and Antioch Road.

By the start of non-native settlement in 1854, Indians of the Great Plains had seen their landholdings reduced repeatedly by “broken promise” treaties. Given a choice of individual 200-acre allotments, the Black Bobs chose holding land in common. They retained tribal customs of living in bark huts and wigwams and relied primarily on hunting and fishing for their livelihood.

During the Civil War many Shawnees fled the area. When they returned after the war they found their lands occupied by white settlers. Legal disputes followed, but in the late 1870s President Rutherford B. Hayes ordered the Black Bobs to Oklahoma Territory permanently.



HISTORIC FRONTIER TRAILS

The Oregon and Santa Fe Trails shared the first 40 miles through Johnson County. The Oregon then veered northwest just past Gardner. The trails avoided river crossings by following natural ridges along the crests of watersheds. They served pioneers, tradesmen, teamsters, and scouts. They were also used in the Border War by invading Missouri Bushwhackers and counterattacking Kansas Jayhawkers. In October 1855 John Brown and his sons entered Kansas Territory where the trails crossed the border into Oxford Township just north of 123rd Street and State Line. “Old Brown” led a horse-drawn wagonload of rifles in boxes labeled “Bibles” sent by New England abolitionists to aid the anti-slavery cause.



The Santa Fe Trail opened to traders and settlers in 1821. It was 775 miles long, beginning in Franklin, Missouri, then Independence, and later Westport, and ending in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The primary purpose of the Santa Fe was for transporting trade merchandise on pack mules and wagons.

The California Road was used throughout the 1830s and 40s by Indians, missionaries, and surveyors. It was connected to the Oregon-California Trail and was known locally as the “Westport to Lawrence Road.”



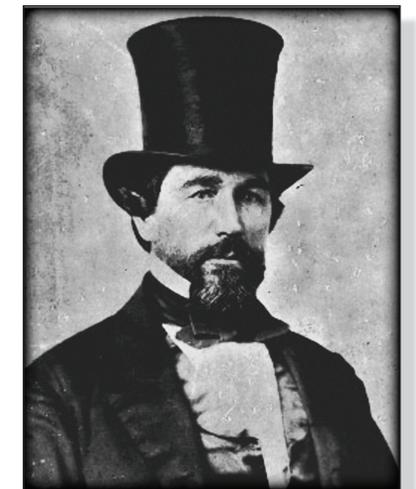
Colonel Henry Leavenworth

The Oregon-California Trail Hundreds of thousands of homesteaders emigrated in covered wagons or “prairie schooners” about 2,000 miles to Oregon and California. Oxen-pulled wagons traveled two miles per hour, covering 12 to 13 miles per day. Soldiers, Mormons, gold-seekers, and emigrants were the common users of this trail system. This route continued in use by pioneers and traders out of Independence, Missouri, until the arrival of railroads. Tracks were often laid out along the same paths as the trails.

The Old Military Road created in 1837, was actually part of an earlier route that Congress designated as the demarcation line of the “permanent Indian frontier.” As the number of pioneers in the westward movement increased, the need grew for military protection. Military escorts used the road to meet with the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails.

A military base was established on the Kansas side of the Missouri River in 1827 by Colonel Henry Leavenworth, and the fort there carries his name. It served as a general supply post, distributing materials to other frontier military bases.

Fort Scott was built in 1842 halfway between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Smith, Arkansas. The military road connecting the forts passed through Oxford Township. This road became critical in the Civil War, 1861-65, for use by Union soldiers to prevent Confederate advances.



Alexander Majors

HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS IN OXFORD TOWNSHIP

OXFORD

The settlement for which the township was named was located opposite New Santa Fe, Missouri, just north of 123rd Street and State Line Road. It was laid out by pro-slaver Christopher Columbus Catron in 1857.

Oxford grew rapidly in importance as a trade center with a large number of stores until the outbreak of the Civil War. Its citizens, mostly pro-slavers, joined the Confederate Army, and Catron led slave owners and their slaves into exile in Texas. Union Army soldiers occupied vacated buildings. During the harsh winters of the war they dismantled the buildings for firewood.

STANLEY

Settlement of Stanley began when the Dougan family left the Santa Fe Trail on July 4, 1866, to claim a home site on what is now Antioch Road at 155th Street. The thriving community was unnamed until the opening of a post office in 1871. Citizens agreed to name the town for Sir Henry M. Stanley, a journalist/explorer sent to Africa to find Dr. David Livingstone.

The Kansas City, Clinton, and Springfield Railroad came to Stanley in 1872, traveling through the township from Olathe eastward and linking a number of Missouri communities. Rail service ended in 1934.

In 1971 Stanley was annexed by Overland Park, but opposition resulted in deannexation three years later. Citizens filed an incorporation petition in 1978, but County Commissioners voted against the request. In 1985 Overland Park again filed for annexation, and County Commissioners approved annexation of one-third of Oxford Township, including the communities of Stanley and Morse.

MORSE

The Morse area was considered to be the most fertile farmland in this part of Johnson County. Morse Village was established May 19, 1884, east of Quivira Road between 153rd and 156th Streets. Swales or wagon ruts from the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails can be found in this area today, even though trails were replaced by the Kansas City, Clinton, and Springfield Railroad in 1872.

Morse became the namesake of a superintendent of that rail line, although records indicate his name was spelled Morris. Because of defective roofing on the boxcars of the KCC&S, the nickname "Leaky Roof" stuck. Flour mill operators told workers on rainy days, "Don't ship out any flour today. They've sent us another batch of leaky roofs."

At its peak, Morse contained a bank, general store, blacksmith shop, grain elevator, feed and hardware store, creamery, lumberyard, and grocery. Only a few old buildings remain, the most prominent being Morse Church, established in 1884 and still in use 125 years later.

KENNETH

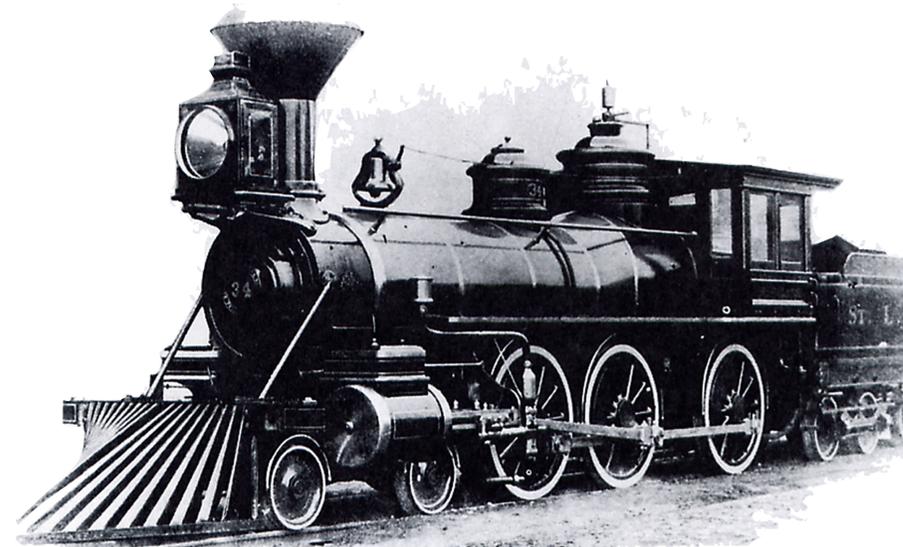
The first settlement was called Newington and was located on the southeast corner of 151st Street and Kenneth Road. In 1899 this crossroads settlement was renamed Mastin or Maston and was a stop on both the Missouri Pacific Railroad and the KCC&S.

The community reached south along the west bank of the Blue River past 159th Street and Mission Road. In 1907 the name was changed again, this time to Kenneth, and a post office was located there until 1943.

REDEL

The Redel Historic District is located at 163rd Street and Mission Road in an area earlier called South Mastin and then Woodland, after the nearest school and church. In 1905 the Prairie Oil and Gas Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil Company, bought farm property from Jesse T. Elder for construction of a pipeline and pumping station along the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The name Redel is an anagram of Elder.

Company housing was constructed in 1906, forming a small, self-contained community with single-family homes, duplexes, a grocery, with gardens and tennis and croquet courts. Three building types were used, and five of the homes remain. They were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 for their architectural significance as early Twentieth Century housing for industrial workers.



"Leaky Roof" train engine of the KCC&S Railroad Company.



The school bell seen here once served the Blue Valley School (District 50), at the northeast corner of 151st and Mission Road. The Blue Valley School was destroyed by a tornado in 1957.