

Larkin/Larkinburg, Jackson County, Kansas

Chapman Center for Rural Studies

Brooke Schofield

History 558

James Sherow

December 5, 2011

Larkinburg is a small, unincorporated hamlet that straddles the county line between Jackson County and Atchison County, Kansas. In its prime, Larkinburg had a population of about 200. The town was named after M.E. Larkin, who owned 160 acres of land outside of the main town strip on the Atchison County side of Larkin Avenue.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Larkin moved to Kansas from Indiana in 1860 but the town was not officially settled until 1880.<sup>2</sup>

Like many early towns of Kansas, Larkinburg's economy depended on the railroad. The town, which originally consisted of little more than Mr. Larkin's barn, would eventually become a booming German settlement that included a blacksmith shop, a wagon repair shop, a livestock stable and a physician. The Leavenworth, Kansas, and Western branch of the Union Pacific railroad reached Larkinburg in the 1860s,<sup>3</sup> spurring the growth of the livestock industry in Larkinburg and the surrounding communities due to increased accessibility to eastern markets and bringing with it a grain elevator, a hotel and several new families.

For a time, Larkinburg was identified as Kimball,<sup>4</sup> the name of the settlement's railroad station.<sup>5</sup> With the arrival of a post office identified by the name of Larkin in 1872<sup>6</sup> or 1873,<sup>7</sup> the

---

<sup>1</sup> Map of Kapioma township, *Standard Atlas of Atchison County, Kansas* (Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co., 1903), 21, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209399/page/7>.

<sup>2</sup> Bob Walter, "Larkinburg, Kansas," *Blue Skyways*, last modified September 24, 2001, <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/history/lrknbrg.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

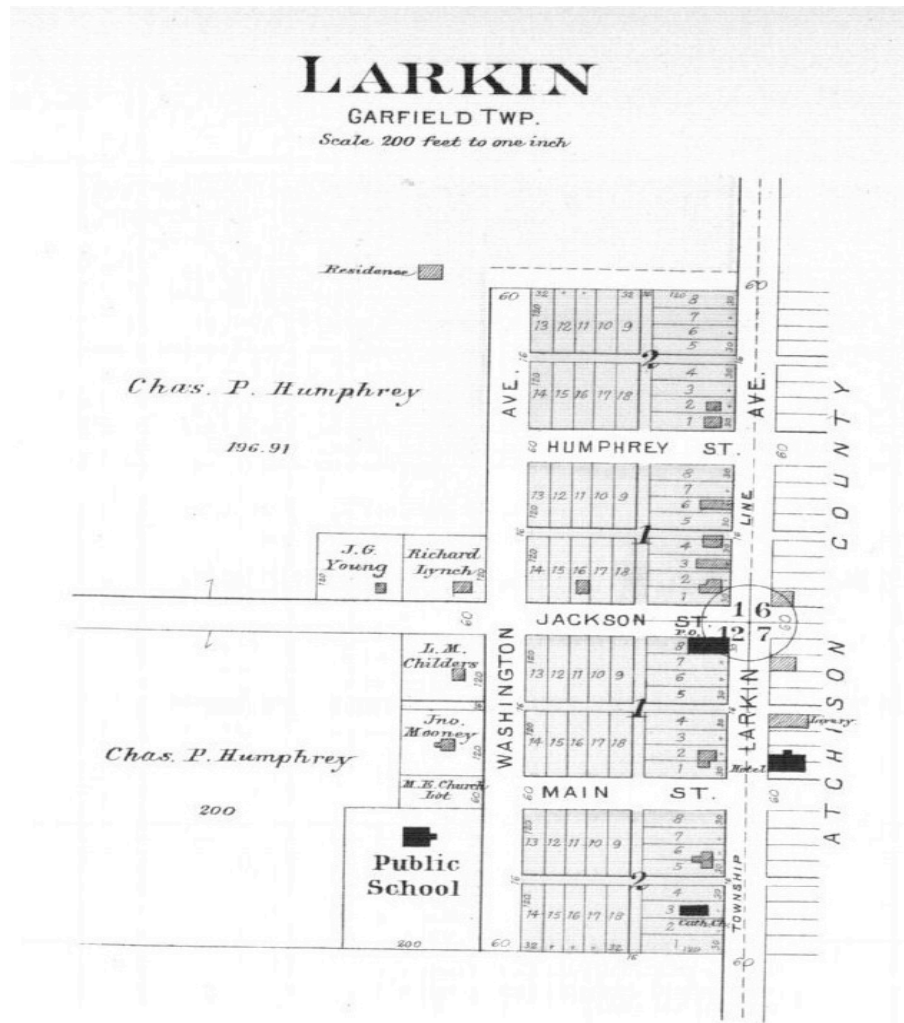
<sup>4</sup> "Wonders of Atchison County," *Atchison County Historical Society*, accessed March 21, 2012, <http://www.atchisonhistory.org/WondersAtchisonCountyHistory.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Map of Larkin, 1881. *Historical Plat Book of Jackson County, Kansas* (Chicago: J.S. Bird, 1881), 96, <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/219811/page/85>.

<sup>6</sup> "Wonders of Atchison County," *Atchison County Historical Society*.

<sup>7</sup> Frank Wilson Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, Embracing Events, Institutions, Industries, Counties, Cities, Towns, Prominent Persons, Etc.*, (Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912), 2:106.

community was officially named in honor of M.E. Larkin. The post office was run by one of the town's early settlers, Henry Priddy.<sup>8</sup> As more settlers came, Jackson County changed the site's name to Larkinburg so that the mail would not be mixed up with Lakin in western Kansas. As more families moved in, the cultural community of Larkinburg grew. Many of the families in Larkinburg were direct relatives of the first settlers, like James M. Artman and Preston M. Humphrey, whose family owned most of the farm land west of the main town strip and whose name adorned a Larkinburg street.



<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Figure 1. Township map of Larkin, 1903. *Plat Book of Jackson County, Kansas* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Northwest Publishing Co., 1903): 14. Source: <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209404/page/15>.

Around 1900, a one-room schoolhouse was built that cost the people of the town \$1,200. The school, which was under Atchison County control at the time, had many pupils, ranging in age from five to twenty years old.<sup>9</sup> During the early 1910s, the one-room schoolhouse was divided into two rooms, one for primary students and one for secondary students. Another change for Larkinburg residents was the construction of both a Christian church, in 1903

---

<sup>9</sup> Emily Jane Stoll, interview by Brooke Schofield, Larkinburg, Kansas, September 16, 2011.



Figure 2. The Larkinburg Christian Church was established in 1903 and still stands today. Larry Hornbaker, *Larkinburg Christian Church*, October 15, 2009, digital photograph. Source: <http://ke2013.smugmug.com/Dare-To-Do-Dirt/North-East-Kansas/Atchison-County-Dirt>.

, and a Catholic church. St. Agatha's Catholic Church was a popular choice for the residents and in its prime had over forty families in attendance.

Larkinburg had all the potential of becoming a great Kansas town until the 1920s, when the railroad shifted its course further south, leaving the town with few prospects to offer new inhabitants. In 1910, the population had dwindled to 129 residents and the once booming businesses were almost all gone.<sup>10</sup> The businesses that did remain, such as the general store, the

<sup>10</sup> Blackmar, *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History*, 2:106.

post office, the telegraph and the Christian church, were necessary for the functioning of the community. Today, all that remains standing of the original town is the general store, the Christian church and Mr. Larkin's original barn south of town. Not too far from the main street is a cemetery that holds the clues to the settlers of Larkin and the early inhabitants of Larkinburg, but even many of the bodies have left the town, moved by relatives to other cemeteries closer to home.

#### Sources

Blackmar, Frank Wilson. *Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, Embracing Events, Institutions, Industries, Counties, Cities, Towns, Prominent Persons, Etc.* Chicago: Standard Publishing Company, 1912.

*Historical Plat Book of Jackson County, Kansas.* Chicago: J.S. Bird, 1881. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/219811/page/85>.

*Plat Book of Jackson County, Kansas.* Minneapolis, Minn.: Northwest Publishing Co., 1903. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209404/page/15>.

*Standard Atlas of Atchison County, Kansas.* Chicago: Geo. A. Ogle & Co., 1903. <http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/209399/page/7>.

Stoll, Emily Jane. Interview by author. Larkinburg, Kansas. September 16, 2011.

Walter, Bob. "Larkinburg, Kansas." *Blue Skyways*. Last modified September 24, 2001. <http://skyways.lib.ks.us/history/lrknbrg.html>.

"Wonders of Atchison County." *Atchison County Historical Society*. Accessed March 21, 2012. <http://www.atchisonhistory.org/WondersAtchisonCountyHistory.html>.