NPS Form 10-900
Oct. 1990

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A) Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-9000a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Bichet School, District 34

Other name/site number 115-0000-0815

2. Location

Street & number 4 1/2 miles east of Florence on US 50 and 1/10 miles ~~north on Bluestem Road~~ ☐ not for publication

City or town Florence ☒ vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Marion Code 115 Zip code 66851

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard D Pankratz DSHPO December 10, 2003

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of commenting official /Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I herby certify that the property is

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register
☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other, (explain:)

Bichet School District 34
Name of property

Marion County, KS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
4		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
4		total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter Categories from instructions)

Education: school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/ Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: functional, gable roof

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone: limestone
walls Stone: limestone

roof Other: composition; Metal: aluminum

other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for Natonal Register

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from it original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Education

Period of Significance

1896- 1946

Significant Dates

1896, 1946

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Johnson, Oscar

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ☐ preliminary determination of individual lising (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ Previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

Name of Property Bichet School District 34 County and State Marion County, KS

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	688300	4235780
2			
3			
4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Dwight and Helen Beckham

Organization _____ Date December 2002

Street & number 48 Lakeshore Drive Telephone 620-382-2671

City or town Marion State KS Zip code 66861

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Georgia Lalouette

street & number 2850 Highway 50 telephone 620-878-4508

city or town Florence state KS zip code 66851

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16) U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

Bichet School District 34 is located four and one half miles east on Highway US 50 from the junction of Highway US 50 and US 77 at Florence, KS and one-tenth of a mile north on Bluestem Road. The school house was built in 1896 by Oscar Johnson, a local stone mason. Oscar Johnson worked at the Horner Quarry, one of several in the Florence area during the early years of its founding. Mary Lalouette Grimmett, the granddaughter of August Lalouette early 1876 pioneer, was told the school house was built from the limestone found at the site. The vernacular architecture is symmetrical and rectangular in form, with three windows on each side, a gable roof, double door, and bell tower.

The school house, with the front facade facing east, sits on a small hill on the west edge of the Flint Hills. The school yard contains more than one acre of fenced pasture. The original hand dug well and the drilled well with its hand pump are in the front of the building. The original well is covered with cement.

In addition to the schoolhouse there are three other structures on the grounds. Two identical stone outhouses are situated along the west boundary of the school yard. They are 9" long x7" wide and 10 feet high with wooden doors, corrugated tin roofs over old shake shingles and two 15"x18" windows covered with wooden louvers.

North of the school there is a cave storm shelter measuring approximately 17 ft. x 15 ft. x 9 ft. deep which faces east. The cave is completely made of stone including an arched ceiling. A small rectangular opening in the rear wall and a pipe in the center of the roof were used for ventilation. There is a 32" wide stone stairwell with nine steps leading down to the doorway. The doorway has a 32"x84" opening. The front and back walls extend above the ground approximately two feet. These extensions need some repair.

The school house is 24'x44' with a height approximately 30 feet at the peak. The gabled roof has a 12/12 pitch with composition shingles over shakes. There are three two-over-two widely spaced windows on each long side hung in double sash. The walls are 18" thick.

The school entrance includes a porch made of three slabs of quarried stone. The two bottom stones are 10" x 5'4" wide x 7' thick. The top stone measures 7'4"x 4' and 6' thick. The double door opening is 6'4" wide x10' 6" with a glass transom. The stone etched lintel above the transom supports an arc that is 6'4" wide and 48 inches tall to the top of the keystone. This decorated arch includes the name "Bichet School" and the date 1896. The gable has a small round window. Each corner of the building has eleven quoins 22" wide x 10" deep x16" high. The height of the sides are approximately 17'. The three windows on each side are 3'x8' with faced lintels that have a decorative point at the top and inverted curved corners. There is a small ornamental stone on the upper corner of each window. The chimney extends through the roof at the peak on the west end. A small chimney clean out chute is located on the west wall.

The wooden, open bell tower is approximately 14' tall. Each of the three sections has an uniform height of approximately 4 ½ ft. The wide solid base is shingled like the roof and extends upward with sloping sides. Six by six vertical posts with decorative brackets are attached to each corner of this bell section. The ceiling of this section is ribbed wainscoting that looks like small to large picture frames. The top section is similar to the base but does not have the four corners. It is covered with the same composition shingles and the point is topped with a lighting rod. It is evident that the roof of the bell tower had fishscale shingles.

Yellow pine is used throughout the interior for flooring, mop boards, wainscoting, door, windows and trim. The finish is mostly stain and varnish. There is a small section that has been painted white. The walls and ceiling are lath and plaster. The opening to the attic is covered with ribbed wainscoting.

The entrance has a 6' x 21' vestibule used as a cloakroom. There are two openings from the vestibule into the main schoolroom, one on the south end has the original molding and door, the one on the north end has been widened and the door removed. The decorative ribbed 21" pine wainscoting is tongue and groove boards that are capped with chair rail. A higher chair rail is on each wall which was used for hanging maps, etc. The mop boards are 9" with carved corner squares at each end. The door, windows and wainscoting have similar ornamentation. All the wall spaces between the windows were painted black. The six windows, three per side are 2-over-2 with each glass pane measuring 14"x42". Two windows have missing sashes. Each window sill is 13" deep.

The structures on the site are basically in good condition. The interior and exterior of the school house, shelter cave, and outhouses are intact and original. The only noticeable alteration is the enlargement of one doorway from the vestibule to the classroom which was done by the Lalouettes after they purchased it in 1946. There is evidence of weathering and some neglect. The school needs shingled, tuck pointed, and some window sashes need replaced. The interior needs cosmetic repair such as painting, plastering and removing paint on a small section of wainscoting. The outhouses need some maintenance and reshingled. The storm shelter's entrance needs to be rebuilt but the stone interior is in excellent condition except for the need for tuck pointing.

The Bichet School District 34 is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion A and C for its architectural significance and its educational contribution to the children of the French speaking settlement four miles east of Florence, Kansas. The school was built in 1896 and continued to serve the community until 1946 when it closed because of low enrollment. The last class had two students. August and Georgia Lalouette, owners of the site, purchased the school house for $600 when it was sold at auction. The coal house, merry-go-round, furnishings and books were sold, also.

The Bichet School stands as the second school to serve the settlement. Prototypical in its design and use of native limestone, the school represents one of many one-room schools that were constructed every three miles or so in each township. These schools were funded with public money and usually stood on an acre of land donated by a farmer. Until consolidation forced the closure of many of Kansas's one-room schools in the 1950s and 1960s, Kansas children learned their ABCs and algebra in small groups taught by only one teacher. For the students at the Bichet School, the educational experience must have been unique. Serving a primarily French speaking student population. lessons were taught in English but the cultural identity of the school was enhanced through the bi-lingual abilities of the students.

The Bichet School's architecture is an excellent example of the typical one-room midwestern stone school built during the late 1800s. Built by a skilled local craftsman, the one story school was constructed of native limestone, with a stone foundation and entrance steps. There is an imposing bell tower on the gabled roof. The school has 18 inch walls which were common. Like many schools of the time it is rectangular shaped and symmetrical with one centered door on the front facade facing east. The side elevations have three large, deep-set windows with lintels and sills.

The Bichet School's architectural significance is in its similarity to other stone buildings that were built in the Marion County area. Barns, wash and smoke houses, schools, churches and homes, some of which are still standing, are of the same vernacular style and design. However, its architecture can also be described as distinctive and unique.

The builder, Oscar Johnson who was a well known stonemason and artisan left examples of his decorative work on the quoins, cornices, and lintels, the intricate arch stone where the date and "Bichet" appears, the round decorative window and the bell tower. He was foreman for a rock quarry which yielded magnesium limestone. The rock was cream colored, it hardened upon exposure, was extremely durable and could be easily sawed into any shape. If this limestone was used for the school it could explain its good condition. The existence of the stone outhouses and stone cave compliment the building.

The French immigrants settled in the Cottonwood Valley from 1857 to 1885 growing to more than 60 families. It was unlike many of the foreign colonies in Kansas in that it was made up of individuals or family groups who arrived at intervals over a period of some 40 years .

The first Bichet School built for the French children was located, according to Fred Bichet III, near the Cottonwood River in Doyle Township. This property was owned by Alphonse Bichet who came to the valley in 1858. The school was a frame building. The school records began in the year 1878. According to the Florence Bulletin, January 17, 1896, this Bichet school house was destroyed by fire.

In 1896 J. Brouse Oldreive sold one acre of land to District 34 for $25 and the school district received $800 from the sale of school bonds. The annual report showed expenditures totaling $664.31 to build and furnish a new school.

The Florence Bulletin on April 10, 1896 reported that "work on the Bichet School east of town is progressing nicely and Oscar Johnson has the contract to build it." Johnson was an employee of A. F. Horner who owned a rock quarry east of Florence where building and paving stones, ashlar facings, window sills, corner blocks, and door sills were produced. Johnson was described as a skilled and artistic stone mason and is credited with building the Horner Building and many other homes and structures in Florence.

The school house was completed on July 14, 1896. The stone Bichet School is located on property belonging to Georgia Lalouette, but has continued to be known as the Bichet school.

The first school year in 1896-1897 began with 19 children from eight French families. Their ages ranged from five to nineteen years. Their surnames included Bichet, Goffinet, Lalouette, Louis, Martinot, Reverend, Rensen and Featherkile. These names continued on the school records until the school closed in 1946, with their descendants serving as teacher, student, board member or clerk.

The first teacher, Laura M. Keller, was legally qualified to teach with a Grade I certificate. She received $40 a month for the eight month school year. The first year the teacher reported using the following teaching aids and books. The primary students had charts, participated in recitations, and read from the Monroe Readers. The intermediate students used the following textbooks: Monroe Readers, Watson Spellers, Spencerian Copy Books, Gayots Geography, Barnes U. S. History, Steels Physiology and Hygiene, Byrant and Stratton Bookkeeping and Gage Natural Science.

Only two school board minutes were discovered and they indicated that the school may close. April 13, 1945 the board members were Mrs. Leon (Anna) Lalouette, Ernest Lalouette, and Jess Osgood. During the meeting the board approved a motion to raise $900 to maintain the school for the next year, with a term of eight months, if taught in district. On June 27, 1945 the proceedings of the board meeting reported that they balanced the budget, gave reports and decided to hire a teacher for $100 per month, "if we can."

All of the annual reports on class roles, grades, schedule of classes, and money expenditures were found in the Marion County court house. Occasionally, notes were written on the reports stating that the repairs, cleaning, mowing, painting and the fixing of the chimney were to be completed.

The board hired Frances Pinkston who held a Life and Emergency certificate that would expire on June 2, 1946. The term opened September 3, 1945 and closed April 19, 1946. She had two students, Leo Grimmett age 8, third grade and his brother Edwin Grimmett, age 11, sixth grade. They were the last students to attend the Bichet School. The boys are the step-grandchildren of Leon Lalouette who started his schooling in 1886 at the age of five and continued until 1898.

The one room schools in the area had few notices in the local newspaper concerning social events and programs at the schools. The Bichet events that were publicized were: a Republican meeting in October 1896, M. L. Wheeler of School District #34 presented a paper on "Whispering" to the Marion County Teacher's Association in February 1896, a cake walk in January 1927, and a pie social in October 1927. Mary Lalouette Grimmett graduated from the school in 1933 at the age of 14. Graduation ceremonies were held in the Marion County court house with other rural schools participating.

After the school house was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. August Lalouette many events were held at the school. Motorcycle races were held for three years and the school was the race headquarters. The local 4-H club led by Mrs. Lalouette would have food and drinks to sell. One year a group of cyclists gave the club a couple of boxes of spark plugs to sell for a money maker. (A photo is included in the appendix of the racers and their motorcycles in front of the school). Other events included 4-H parties, square dances, trap shoot contests and Lalouette family reunions. The Lalouettes have used it for storing alfalfa and clover seed.

August and Georgia Lalouette dreamed of having a museum in the school to display their extensive collection of artifacts and animal trophies. But after they started moving showcases into the building it was vandalized several times so they abandoned the project. The bell was stolen in the 1980s and the Laouettes were told that it had been sold for scrap iron. They opened it to many school children, but because of continued threat of break-ins, it is no longer open to the public. Georgia, who lives nearby, said that people traveling on Highway 50 are fascinated with the structure and many motorists stop to photograph it.

In June 2002, a film company from Omaha, Nebraska, after seeing the building on the internet, called the Marion Chamber of Commerce for information on the owner. They wrote to Georgia to get permission to film a music video using the exterior of the school as the backdrop. They chose Bichet because of its openness and condition. They spent five days filming the video with the aid of a helicopter.

The building has been a part of the Lalouette family's heritage for one hundred and six years and they are committed to its preservation.

Bibliography

"Annual Reports of School District 34 County of Marion." 1879-1946. Marion County Court House.

Bichet, Fred. telephone interview, August 2002.

"Century of Pride, 1872-1972 Florence Centennial, Florence, KS." (Bulletin)

Florence Bulletin: 17 January 1896, 7 February 1896, 10 April 1896, 14 July 1896, 8 October 1896, 17 December 1897, 20 October 1927.

Grimmett, Mary Lalouette. Interviews. August-December, 2002.

Gulliford, Andrew. America's Country Schools. The Preservation Press, Washington D. C. 1984.

Hammond, Craig. Letter to Georgia Lalouette, April 11, 2002.

Lalouette, Georgia. Interviews. August-December, 2002.

Marion County Register of Deeds: J. Brouse Oldrieive, February 27, 1896: page 601, book 81.

Moore, John Terry. "History of Florence, Kansas," May 1969. (Unpublished paper)

Pantle, Alberta. "History of the French-Speaking Settlement in the Cottonwood Valley." The Kansas Historical Quarterly, Vol. XIX: No.1, February 1951 pp.12-49. Part I. Vol. XIX: No. 2, May 1951 pp. 174-206. Part 2.

"Report to County Superintendent of Common School District Board Meetings." April 15, 1945 and June 27, 1945.

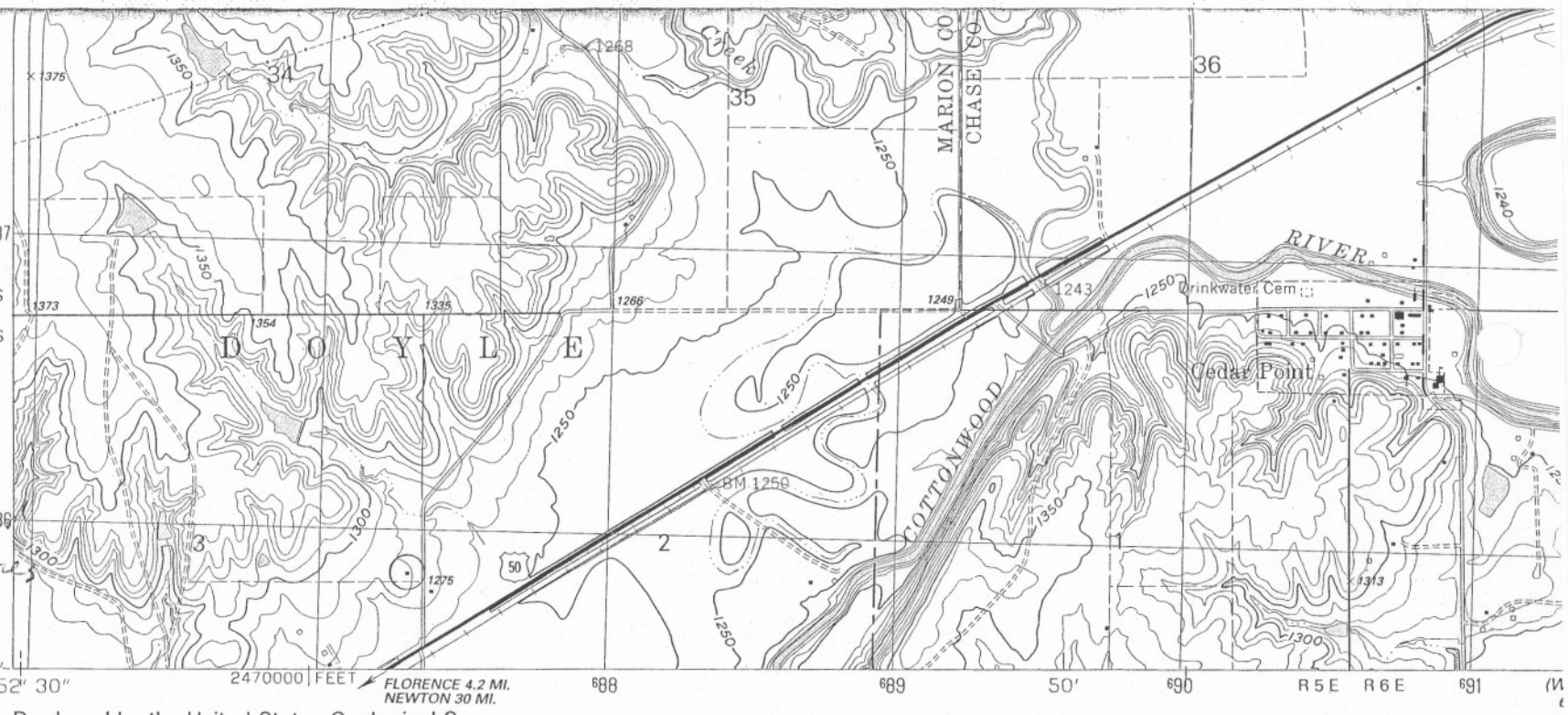
Van Meter, Sondra. Marion County, Kansas Past and Present. Board of Directors of the Marion County Historical Society, Inc. M. B. Publishing House, Hillsboro, KS. 1972.

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on a tract of land beginning at the SE corner of the NE quarter of Section 3, Township 21, Range 5 E, running thence N on section line between said Section 3 and Section 2, Town 21, Range 5 E, 12 rods and 10 1/2 feet. Thence W parallel with 1/2 section line between NE quarter and SE quarter of Section 3 Town 20, Range 5 E. Twelve rods and 10 and 1/2 feet. Thence S parallel with E line of NE quarter of Section 3, Town 21, Range 5 E, 12 rods and 10 1/2 feet to 1/2 section line between NE quarter and SE quarter of said Section 3. Thence E on said 1/2 section line 12 rods and 10 1/2 feet to the place of beginning containing 1 acre more or less being part of the NE quarter of Section 3, Township 21, Range 5 E.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property that is historically associated with the school.



Bichet School District 34
Cedar Point Quad
UTM Coordinates
14 688300
4235780

(FLORENCE)
6660 III NW

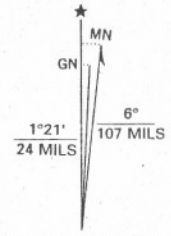
Produced by the United States Geological Survey
in cooperation with State of Kansas agencies

Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1956. Field checked 1957. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1986. Field checked 1989. Map edited 1989

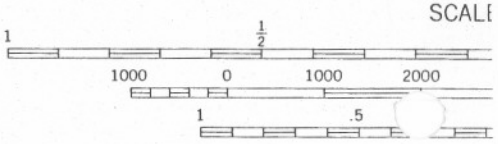
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Kansas coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 14
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983, move the projection lines 1 meter north and 26 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



UTM GRID AND 1989 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE



CONTOUR IN
NATIONAL GEODETIC

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NA
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEN
AND KANSAS GEOLOGICAL S
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MA