

Kuna Area Historical Agricultural Resources

Reconnaissance Level Survey



SHRA Project Code: KAS

August 2020

By: Nathan Hallam, Ph.D.; Aimee Rollins, M.A.

Stevens Historical Research Associates—445 West Main Street, Boise, ID 83702

Abstract

As a certified Local Government (CLG), Ada County was awarded a grant from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund which is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In addition to this funding, Ada County was also awarded a local matching grant. These grants were awarded to the county for the purposes of hiring a qualified consultant to conduct a Reconnaissance-Level Survey of historic agricultural resources within the greater Kuna area of Ada County. Stevens Historical Research (SHRA) was retained by the Ada County Historic Preservation Commission for this purpose. The following report details SHRA's findings.

CERTIFICATION OF RESULTS

I certify that this investigation was conducted and documented according to Secretary of Interior's Standards and guidelines and that the report is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Nathan Hallam

8/20/2020

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Key Information

PROJECT NAME

Kuna Area Historical Agricultural Resources: Reconnaissance Level Survey

PROJECT NUMBER(S)

SHRA Project Code: KAS

LOCATION

Ada County

USGS QUADS

Cloverdale, ID

LEGAL LOCATION OF SURVEY

Township 2N, Range 1E, Section 9

PROJECT AREA

640 Acres

AREA SURVEYED

0 Acres Intensive Survey

640 Acres Reconnaissance Survey

AUTHORS

Nathan Hallam, Ph.D.; Aimee Rollins, M.A.

REPORT PREPARED FOR

Ada County Historic Preservation Commission

REPOSITORY

Stevens Historical Research Associates

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

Nathan Hallam, Ph.D.

DATE

8/20/2020

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Project Objectives

As a certified Local Government (CLG), Ada County was awarded a grant from the Federal Historic Preservation Fund which is jointly administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In addition to this funding, Ada County was also awarded a local matching grant. These grants were awarded to the county for the purposes of hiring a qualified consultant to conduct a Reconnaissance-Level Survey of historic agricultural resources within the greater Kuna area of Ada County. Stevens Historical Research (SHRA) was retained by the Ada County Historic Preservation Commission for this purpose. The following report details SHRA's findings.

Methodology

This survey included reconnaissance-level documentation of historic agricultural resources in a square-mile section located approximately four miles northeast of downtown Kuna between Columbia Road, South Cloverdale Road, East Hubbard Road, and South Eagle Road. Collectively the properties included in the survey area possess houses that have turned 50 years of age, or possess residential improvements that have turned 50 years of age, since 2000, the year the Arrowrock Group conducted its initial survey (Ada County Historic Sites Inventory Phase III) of agricultural resources in the area. The current survey was conducted by SHRA team members Nathan Hallam (Ph.D.) and Aimee Rollins (M.A.). The project was completed in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Identification and the latest survey guidance provided by the Idaho SHPO. SHRA received the results of a Record Search performed by SHPO for the survey area on January 31, 2020. SHRA conducted research for the project using building dates obtained from the Ada County Assessor's Office, maps, historic online newspapers, previously recorded Idaho Historic Sites Inventory (IHSI) site forms from SHPO, and other documents. Field work took place on June 12, 2020. All farmsteads surveyed received an evaluation of National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. As per NRHP guidelines, a resource must be at least 50 years of age to be considered historic. Evaluation of each farmstead's integrity was based on current condition and modifications to the original character-defining features:

- scale, massing, and ornamentation;
- alterations to fenestration (window) patterns, materials, and types; and
- replacement or alterations of original siding materials.

SHRA evaluated the integrity of each farmstead feature separately. However, SHRA did not assign an *individual* temporary site number for each individual feature, except where a feature was determined individually eligible for listing on the NRHP. In most cases, individual farmstead features located on the same Ada County parcel were differentiated by structure type but assigned the same temporary site number. Information on the greater Kuna area obtained through the above described historical research and field work was used to compile this report and accompanying IHSI site forms.

Survey Area

This survey included reconnaissance-level documentation of historic 1950-1970 agricultural properties in a square-mile section bounded Columbia Road, South Cloverdale Road, East Hubbard Road, and South Eagle Road, located approximately four miles northeast of downtown Kuna.

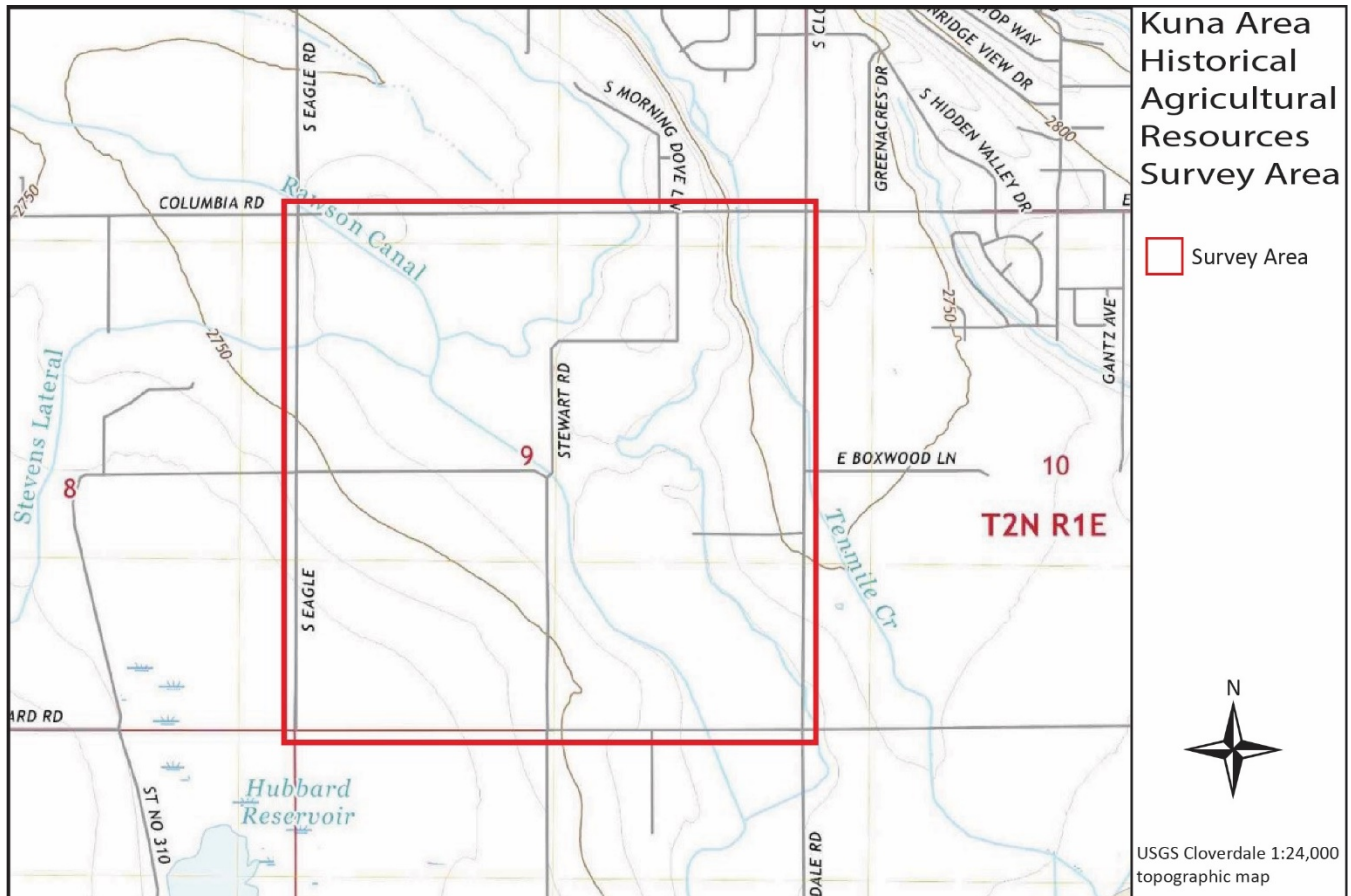


Figure 1. Kuna Area Historical Agricultural Resources Survey Area.

Environmental Setting

Kuna, Idaho is an agricultural region marked by flat farmlands interlaced by canals, laterals, and ditches. Paved two-lane roads running north-south and east-west overlay cadastral survey lines established by federal surveyors in 1875. Prior to the construction of irrigation systems in Ada County, the physical landscape around Kuna consisted of dry sagebrush steppe: Indian Creek and Ten Mile Creek drained the area's modest runoff. Following the introduction of irrigation systems after 1900, agriculture became the dominant land use activity. In recent decades, housing tracts and commercial developments, suburban in nature, have superseded farmlands in the vicinity of Kuna.

Historical Setting

Northern Paiute, Shoshone, and Bannock people occupied the Boise Valley for thousands of years prior to white settlement. Spring and fall salmon runs on the Boise River attracted groups from what is now eastern Oregon, northern Nevada, and eastern Idaho. Salmon, along with roots collected in the Camas Prairie and wild game hunted in the Boise Valley, provided winter subsistence for Shoshone families, who built clusters of lodges near perennial streams and geothermal hot springs.¹ This pattern of life prevailed in the Boise Valley until the arrival of white settlers in the mid-to-late 1800s. Upon establishing Fort Hall Indian Reservation in 1868 and Duck Valley Reservation in 1877, the United States government began forcibly removing the region's native peoples from their aboriginal lands.

White incursions in the Boise Valley began with the fur trade, which was characterized by competition between American and British interests. On November 21, 1811, an American party led by John Jacob Astor's field agent, Wilson Price Hunt, arrived in the region by way of the Boise River. They were followed three years later by a party led by Hunt's colleagues, John Reid, who sought to establish a permanent outpost—but the outpost, and the party, failed to survive the winter. Two decades later, a British party led by Thomas McKay of the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Boise at the confluence of the Snake and Boise Rivers. This private British-backed venture competed with American fur trade interests upstream on the Snake River at Fort Hall; in 1836 the Hudson's Bay Company took possession of Fort Boise and installed Francois Payette as its manager.²

For a British outpost in competition with American interests, Fort Boise ironically played a key role in the American settlement of the Pacific Northwest. Between 1834 and 1854, Fort Boise stood as the only supply center between Fort Hall and Fort Dalles along the Columbia River, offering rest and nourishment for American emigrants along the Oregon Trail. In 1863, Fort Boise was abandoned and relocated to what is now the city of Boise as a U.S. military outpost.

White settlement in Boise accelerated after gold was discovered in 1862 near Idaho City in the mountains northeast of the Boise Valley. Suddenly, a market for hay, grain, and other produce emerged in southeastern Idaho. A year later, silver and gold discoveries in the Owyhee Mountains, 50 miles to the southwest, drew still more newcomers and increased regional demand for farmed goods. Rudimentary wagon roads with intervening stage stops connected the disparate mining towns to Boise: the road to Silver City in the Owyhee Mountains was marked by a stage stop called Fifteen Mile House, appropriately located fifteen miles southwest of Boise. For weary travelers on the road from Silver City, Fifteen Mile House stood as "the last place for changing horses, and the last opportunity for a meal in the desert before driving over the intervening sage land to the green paradise on the Boise."³ Decades later, Fifteen Mile House would become the location of the town of Kuna.

¹ Robert F. and Yolanda Murphy, "Shoshone-Bannock Subsistence and Society," *Anthropological Records* 16, no. 7 (1960): 316-319, <https://digitalassets.lib.berkeley.edu/anthpubs/ucb/text/ucar016-008.pdf>.

² "Fur Trade Posts in Idaho," Idaho State Historical Society Reference Series #62, October 1970, <https://history.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/0062.pdf>.

³ Quoted in Danielle Wiley, "The Disappearing, Reappearing Town of Kuna," *Idaho Press*, March 25, 2016, https://www.idahopress.com/cavalcade/the-disappearing-reappearing-town-of-kuna/article_2ab9fea2-3ddd-5f44-8db0-56732f00d7b0.html.

Idaho's gold and silver rushes coincided with adoption of the Homestead Act of 1862, which made 160-acre tracts of surveyed public lands available to settlers at low upfront costs.⁴ Scores of prospective farmers descended upon the Boise Valley. At the U.S. General Land Office at Boise they filed cash-entry and homestead claims on the region's arable lands. Early Boise farmers, however, encountered many obstacles. With little annual rainfall, an underdeveloped network of roads, and no navigable waterway to the nearest port facilities at Lewiston on the Snake River, the remote high desert landscape required considerable feats of engineering before it could sustain productive farms.

Railroads and irrigation systems became the basis for Ada County's modern agricultural landscape. In August 1883, the Oregon Short Line Railway entered the county from the southeast. On August 23, it reached Fifteen Mile House, where officials established a rail stop.⁵ Due to geographic obstacles, the Oregon Short Line bypassed Boise, making Fifteen Mile House the nearest shipping point for Idaho's capital city. For four exciting years, all railroad freight and passengers bound to and from Boise made stagecoach transfers at Fifteen Mile House: warehouses, saloons, and other services popped up immediately. In 1884, an Oregon Short Line official renamed the rail stop "Kuna"—likely a derivative of the Shoshone word, *Kunawopin*, meaning "train" or "railroad."⁶

In 1887, the Idaho Central Railroad initiated rail service between Nampa and Boise, connecting Idaho's capital to the Oregon Short Line and depriving Kuna of its geographical advantage. Kuna all but disappeared. What it needed was water. By 1887, the landscape south of the Boise River primarily consisted of dry sagebrush steppe. Along the south banks of the Boise River, early settlers had engineered small diversion dams and ditches, but it was not until the 1890s that capital-intensive projects such as the Ridenbaugh, Settlers, and New York canals fully reconditioned the region for farming.⁷ The modern town of Kuna and its surrounding farmlands owe their existence to irrigation—and to the U.S. Reclamation Service.

Established in 1902, the U.S. Reclamation Service made Idaho's Boise Valley an immediate priority. Its Boise Project, begun in 1905, initially involved enlarging and extending the New York Canal into southern Ada County.⁸ In anticipation, settlers began filing land claims in the vicinity of Kuna, and in 1905 the U.S. Postal Service established a post office at Kuna to serve the growing number of newcomers. After two decades of inactivity, Kuna's rail stop once again teemed with goods and passengers. Finally, in February 1909, Reclamation officials turned the gates at Diversion Dam on the Boise River, east of Boise, releasing water into the New York Canal, which, in turn, spilled into Indian Creek three miles east of Kuna. Laterals tied to Indian Creek began distributing enormous volumes of surface water to new farms in the area, bringing 50,000 acres under cultivation and greatly increasing the scale and variety of Ada County agricultural production.⁹

⁴ The Desert Lands Act of 1877 amended the Homestead Act to encourage settlement of arid and semiarid public lands in Western states: many public lands in the vicinity of Kuna were disposed under the Desert Lands Act after 1900.

⁵ Donald B. Robertson, *Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History, Vol. II: The Mountain States* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1991), 223-225.

⁶ Dave Lyon, "A Brief History of Kuna," *Kuna Kompass* 4, Issue 1 (March 2016): 2, <http://kunahistoricalsociety.org/KHSNewsletter2016Mar.pdf>.

⁷ Jennifer A. Stevens, *Water in the Boise Valley: A History of the Nampa and Meridian Irrigation District*, Stevens Historical Research Associates, <https://www.shraboise.com/docs/Water-in-the-Boise-Valley-NMID.pdf>.

⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, "The Story of the Boise Project," November 2012, <https://www.usbr.gov/pn/project/brochures/boiseproject.pdf>.

⁹ "Kuna History," <https://kunacity.id.gov/354/History>.

Shortly after initiating the Boise Project, the U.S. Reclamation Service acquired Hubbard Lake, a 450-acre reservoir located three miles northeast of Kuna. The reservoir predated the Boise Project: David Hubbard, a local landowner, built several small dams in Ada County during the first decade of the twentieth century. Lateral canals linked the reservoirs, which stored water for local irrigators. After 1911, U.S. Reclamation Service engineers integrated Hubbard Lake into the New York Canal system as an emergency water storage facility: a place to store water in the event of downstream failure. It remains the lone survivor of Hubbard's turn-of-the-century system of Ada County reservoirs.¹⁰

For David Hubbard, the arrival of irrigation water signaled new commercial possibilities at Kuna. Absolved of his reservoir-building duties, Hubbard turned his attention to real estate. In the summer of 1909, he and his brother-in-law, Fremont Tweed, began auctioning town lots platted in a 200-acre site near the Kuna rail stop.¹¹ The modern town of Kuna was born. A year later, the Lilyquist-Christianson Building opened its doors on Main Street. It housed a mercantile store, an assembly hall, and a bank. Each underscored the crucial role Kuna played in the development of the local agricultural landscape. As a rail stop, Kuna provided local farmers with an outlet for shipping agricultural goods to distant markets; as a commercial cluster it also provided an array of essential services: hardware stores and produce markets, farm equipment and lumber dealers, banking and legal services, schools, churches, a post office, and passenger depot.¹²

Out in the countryside, Kuna farms flourished. Local staples included hay, clover, alfalfa, wheat, oats, barley, rye, potatoes, onions, beets, turnips, and cabbage. Alfalfa ranked as the leading crop and hay the leading export, but orchards and vineyards also emerged as quintessential features of the Kuna landscape. In 1909, a Chicago firm purchased 720 acres east of the Kuna townsite and established the Avalon Orchard Tracts Company to manage the Avalon Nursery and Fruit Farm, which was planted in vineyards, apples, and prunes. Southwest of town, the Nampa Apple Orchard Company acquired 240 acres in 1911 and platted Kuna Orchard Tracts, which produced three varieties of apples.¹³ By the 1940s, dairy farming had, according to one government report, emerged as "the most widely practiced activity" at Kuna.¹⁴

Today Kuna remains essentially agricultural in character. After 2000, however, an improved network of surface roads, coupled with rising home prices in the vicinity of Boise, introduced new development pressures. The widening of Highway 69 during the 1990s gave motorists easy access to Interstate 84, seven miles north of Kuna, bringing the area into the automobile nexus of the Boise Valley. Housing tracts and commercial developments, suburban in nature, began superseding farmlands in the vicinity of Kuna between 2000 and 2020: analysts expect this mode of development to accelerate in succeeding decades.¹⁵

¹⁰ Madeline Kelley Buckendorf, "Historic Rural Properties of Ada County, Idaho," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, October 15, 2001, 9, https://history.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Historic_Rural_Properties_of_Ada_County_Idaho_64500836.pdf.

¹¹ Sharon Fisher, *Kuna* (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 2012), 58-59.

¹² "Kuna History," <https://kunacity.id.gov/354/History>.

¹³ Fisher, 48, 50-51.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation, *Columbia Basin Joint Investigations, Farm Experience Studies* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1942), 115.

¹⁵ "Kuna History," <https://kunacity.id.gov/354/History>.

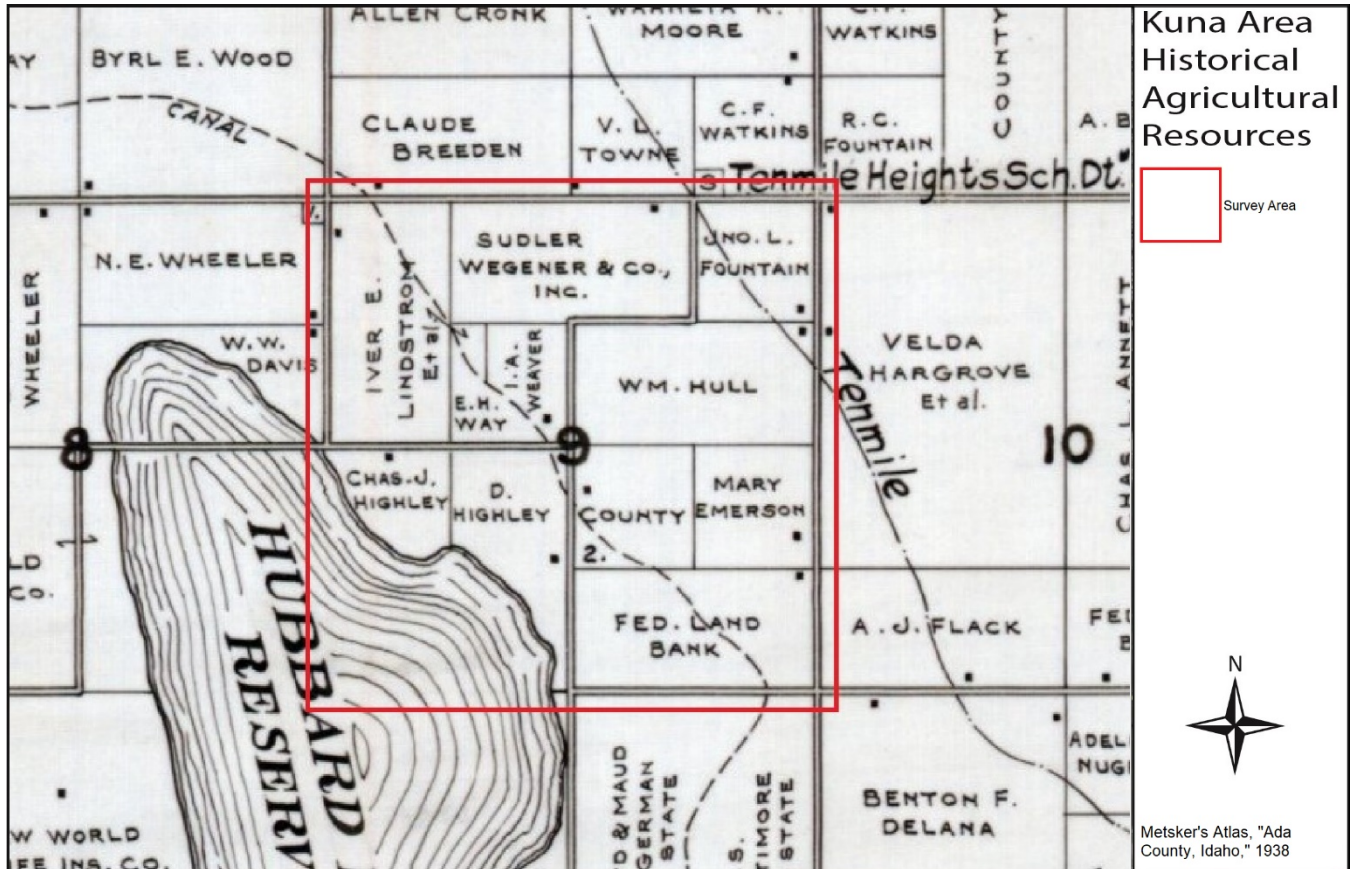


Figure 2. 1938 Metsker's Atlas of Ada County showing names of property owners.

Data Summary

Estimated Dates of Construction

Years	Number of Resources
1900-1949	10
1950-1954	1
1955-1959	3
1960-1964	0
1965-1970	7

Recommendations

Future Survey

Agricultural properties evaluated within the survey area reveal a concentration of early-to-mid-twentieth-century buildings and structures. Most appear individually eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A for their association with Ada County's agricultural development: all contribute positively to the rural agricultural character of the survey area, and could potentially be classified as contributors to a larger concentration of resources, such as an historic district. Additionally, many of the properties evaluated within the survey area could be listed on a Certified Local Government historic property register. SHRA recommends further survey efforts beyond the scope of the current survey to provide a fuller picture of properties in the Kuna area that possess houses that have turned 50 years of age, or possess residential improvements that have turned 50 years of age, since 2000.

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Appendix A: List of Properties Surveyed

E = Appears Eligible

NE = Appears Not Eligible

Address	Inventory Number	Construction date	Individual NRHP Eligibility
8005 S Eagle Rd	KAS001	1940	NE
8535 S Eagle Rd	KAS002	1949	E
8505 S Eagle Rd	KAS003	1930	E
8385 S Eagle Rd	KAS004	1945	E
3205 E Hubbard Rd	KAS005	1970	E
3445 E Hubbard Rd	KAS006	1920	E
3445 E Hubbard Rd	KAS006b	1920	E
3890 E Hubbard Rd	KAS007	1959	E
3975 E Hubbard Rd	KAS008	1965	E
8820 S Stewart Rd	KAS009	1970	E
9065 S Stewart Rd	KAS010	1968	NE
9225 S Stewart Rd	KAS011	1920	E
4545 E Hubbard Rd	KAS012	1959	E
12175 W Hubbard Rd	KAS013	1969	E
9140 S Cloverdale Rd	KAS014	1958	E
9073 S Cloverdale Rd	KAS015	1966	E
8911 S Cloverdale Rd	KAS016	1940	E
4612 E Faith Ln	KAS017	1910	E
8736 S Cloverdale Rd	KAS018	1946	NE
8601 S Cloverdale Rd	KAS019	1969	E
8015 S Stewart Rd	KAS020	1950	NE

Appendix B: Photographs



Figure 1. 8385 S Eagle Rd, view of historic house, historic barn, that appear eligible for the National Register, and non-historic pen, looking west, 6/12/20.



Figure 2. 8505 S Eagle Rd, view of historic house that appears eligible for the National Register, looking slightly northwest, 6/12/20.



Figure 3. 8601 S Cloverdale Rd, view of historic house that appears eligible for the National Register and non-historic fence, looking west, 6/12/20.



Figure 4. 8820 S Stewart Rd, view of two historic houses that appear eligible for the National Register, looking east, 6/12/20.



Figure 5. 9225 S Stewart Rd, view of historic house, historic barn, and historic outbuilding which appear eligible for the National Register, and non-historic fence, looking west, 6/12/20.



Figure 6. 12175 W Hubbard Rd, view of historic house that appears eligible for the National Register, looking southwest, 6/12/20.



Figure 7. 8005 S Eagle Rd, view of historic house that does not appear eligible for the National Register due to an incompatible addition and materials, looking west, 6/12/20.