

Tallgrass Prairie

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
Strong City, KS



Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse



Local schoolchildren attend special Education Day program activities.

The Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse, completed in 1882, was just one of many signs that a more settled, stable, and established existence was taking shape in the American West. One-room

schoolhouses would soon spread across the West as settlers established themselves, believing that only through education and knowledge could a child one day fully participate in American society.

Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse Introduction

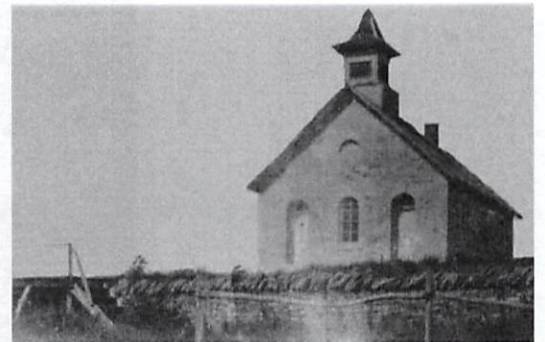
Residents of the Fox Creek area decided in 1878-1879 that a school district should be formed for the education of their children. Being one of the earlier districts formed, it was given the number 14, though it was commonly called the Lower Fox Creek School.

The site for the schoolhouse was donated by Stephen F. Jones, located approximately 1/2 mile north of his Spring Hill Farm and Stock Ranch. He stipulated in his donation of the land that if the school would ever close, the land would revert back to the ranch owner.

The limestone for the schoolhouse came from the quarry of David Rettiger. David Rettiger, the same architect who built the Chase County Courthouse and the Spring Hill Ranch main ranch house, built the schoolhouse for \$1,000, completing the work in 1882.

The Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse did not hold its first class, however, until September 1, 1884 when

the first teacher was finally hired. The average enrollment at the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse ranged from one to nineteen students in grades 1 through 8. Classes continued to be held in the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse until 1930, when the school was closed. The school district disbanded in 1946-47 and the schoolhouse property reverted back to the ranch owner at that time, George Davis.



Photograph of Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse, ca. 1880s.

Restoring the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse

After the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse reverted back to the Davis Ranch in 1946, it was used for a time as a residence by some of the ranch's employees. In 1950, a tornado or windstorm collapsed the original roof and roofline. The roofline was repaired when the ranch was owned by the Davis-Noland-Merrill Grain company and a tin roof applied. The schoolhouse was then used to store hay.

In 1968, the fourteen garden clubs in the Mid-East District of the Garden Clubs of America selected the restoration of the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse as their special project. After the approval of the ranch owner at that time, the Davis-Noland-Merrill Grain Company, the clubs raised the funds and restored the building to as close to its

original 1882 configuration as possible. The Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 6, 1974.



Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse as it looked after restoration in 1973.

Interior of the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse

The interior of the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse has been restored as much as possible back to its original 1882 appearance. Although no original furnishings survive to the present, period furnishings from other one-room schoolhouses in the area were acquired by the fourteen garden

clubs in the Mid-East District of the Garden Clubs of America to complete the interior restoration. The preserve conducts programs for school groups recreating the experience of attending classes in a one-room prairie schoolhouse.



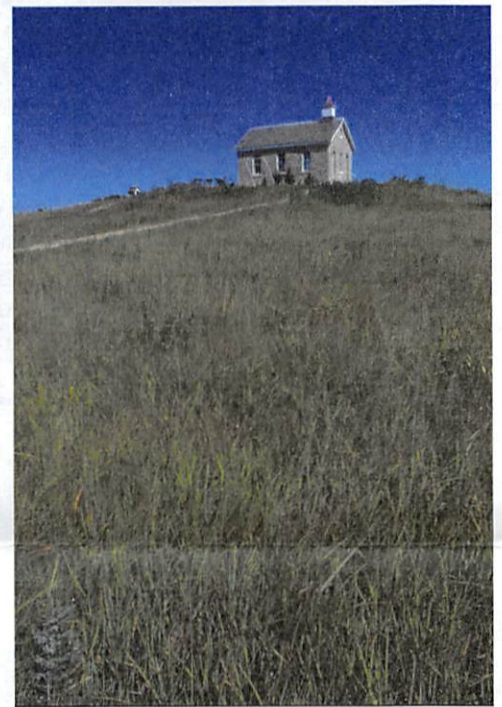
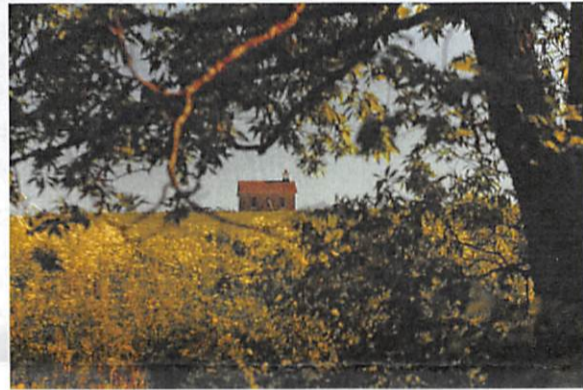
Interior view of Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse, looking northeast. Room specially outfitted for Education Day program activities.



Interior view of Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse, looking southeast. Room specially outfitted for Education Day program activities.

Images of the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse

Below is an assortment of photographs highlighting the Lower Fox Creek Schoolhouse and the scenic beauty of the tallgrass prairie.



For More Information

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is a public/private partnership between the National Park Service (the primary land manager) and The Nature Conservancy (the primary land owner). The preserve offers a variety of activities, including ranch house tours, hiking trails, prairie bus tours, and more. The historic Spring Hill Ranch house and barn are open daily 9:00 am to 4:30 p.m., except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. All hiking trails and all outdoor areas are open 24 hours. No camping is permitted.

To learn more, please contact the preserve at:
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