

Curve Station  
Intersection of Highway K-383 and Bryant Road  
Vicinity of Almena  
Norton County  
Kansas

HABS No. KS-70

HABS  
KS-70

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Rocky Mountain Regional Office  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 25287  
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

# HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

## CURVE STATION

HABS No. KS-70

Location: The Curve Station is located at the intersection of Highway K-383 and Bryant Road immediately east of the community of Alma, in Norton County.

It is in the extreme northwest corner of the southwest quarter of Section Nine, Township Two, Range Twenty-one West. Several transportation routes are located near and around the building. These systems include an off-systems township road, locally known as Horse Creek Road, which extends along the boundary line between sections Eight and Nine and the eastern city limits of Alma. The township road intersects West Bryant Road, an east-west street bisecting the community of Alma that ends after branching and intersecting K-383 Highway on the east and west sides of the tract that contains the Curve Station. The building, which is located on a triangular parcel, is bounded on the southeast by K-383 Highway, on the north by Bryant Road, and on the southwest by a branch of Bryant Road. The highway bridges Horse Creek on the northeast and Prairie Dog Creek on the southwest of the Curve Station. Immediately north of the service station and Bryant Road are the Burlington Northern Railroad tracks which diagonally cross the northern half of Section Nine. Highway K-383, located southeast of the Curve Station, parallels the railroad tracks across the north half of Section Nine and diverges from the railroad southwest of the station. A farmstead driveway intersects the highway southwest of the building. The drive extends south of the highway along the boundary that separates sections Eight and Nine.

Present Owner and Use: The present owner of the Curve Station is the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). Currently the building is not in use.

The KDOT has stated the building is available for relocation after the station was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The agency set a deadline of November 15, 1994 for relocation inquiries. If no offers are made, then the projected tentative date for demolition of the building is February 1, 1995.

Significance: The Curve Station was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places based upon its local significance with the growth and development of the automobile service industry. In addition, it was determined eligible based upon its architecture as an example of small, cottage-like service stations constructed during the 1930's.

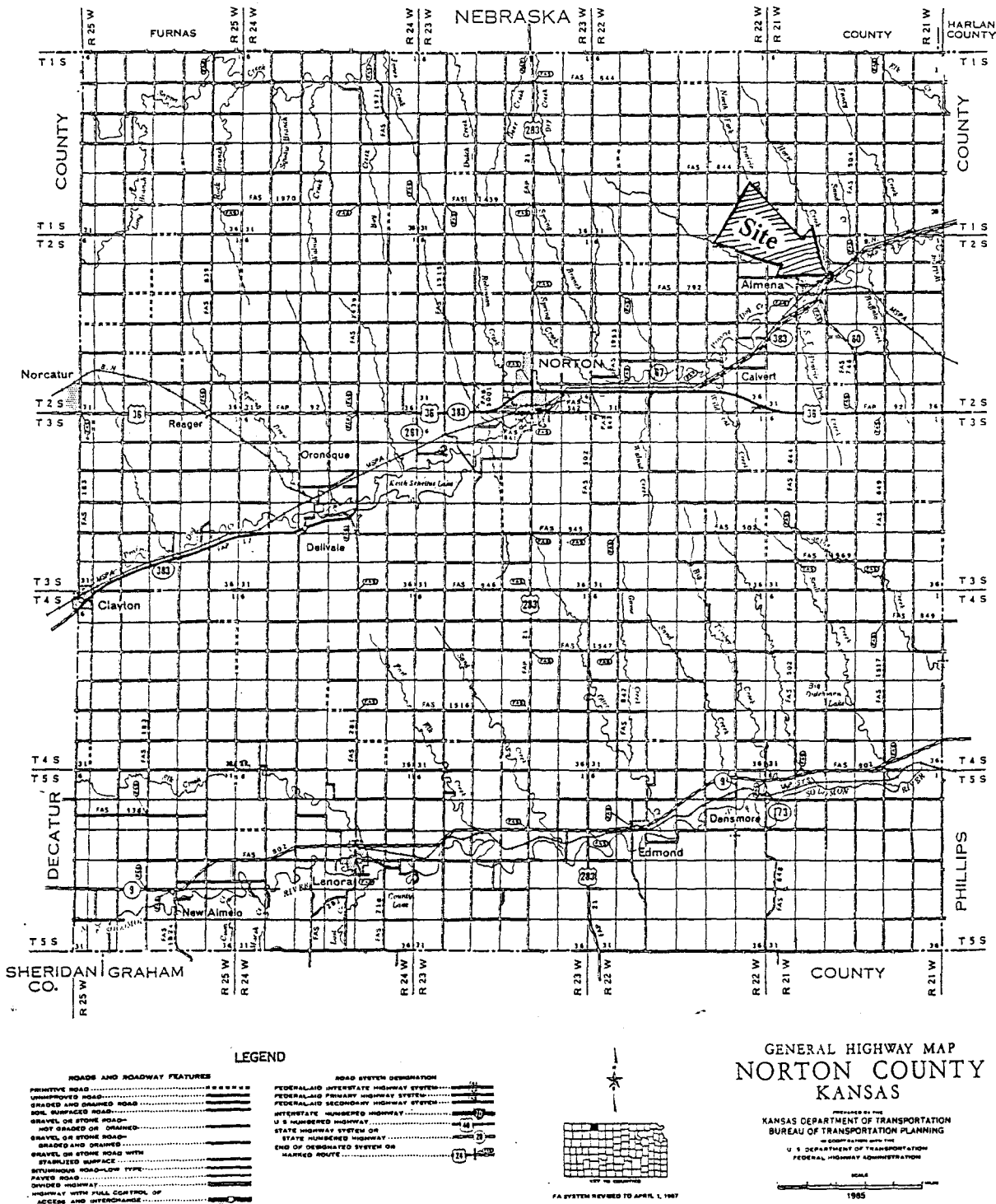


Figure 1 Norton County Map.

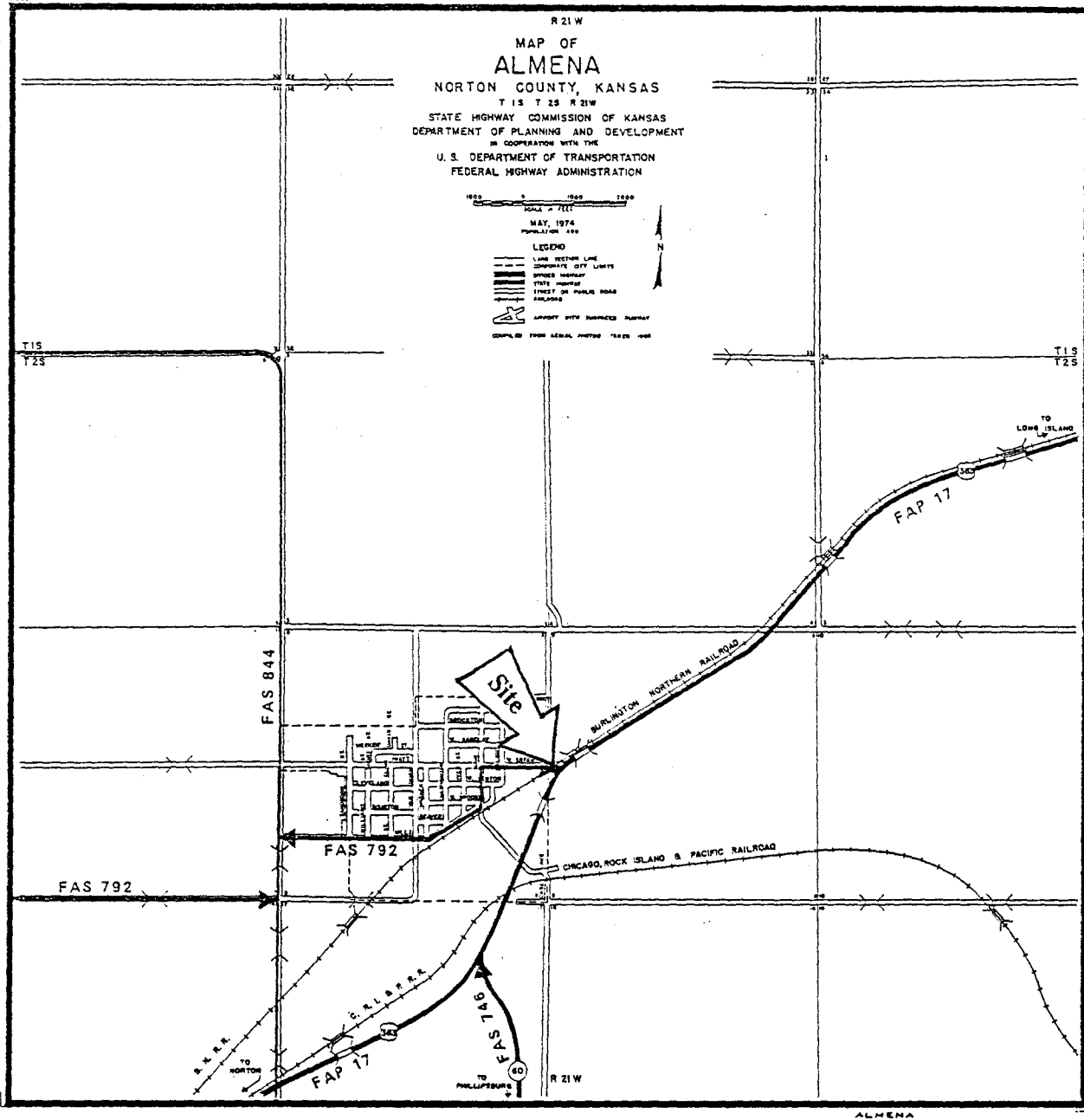


Figure 2 Map of Almena.

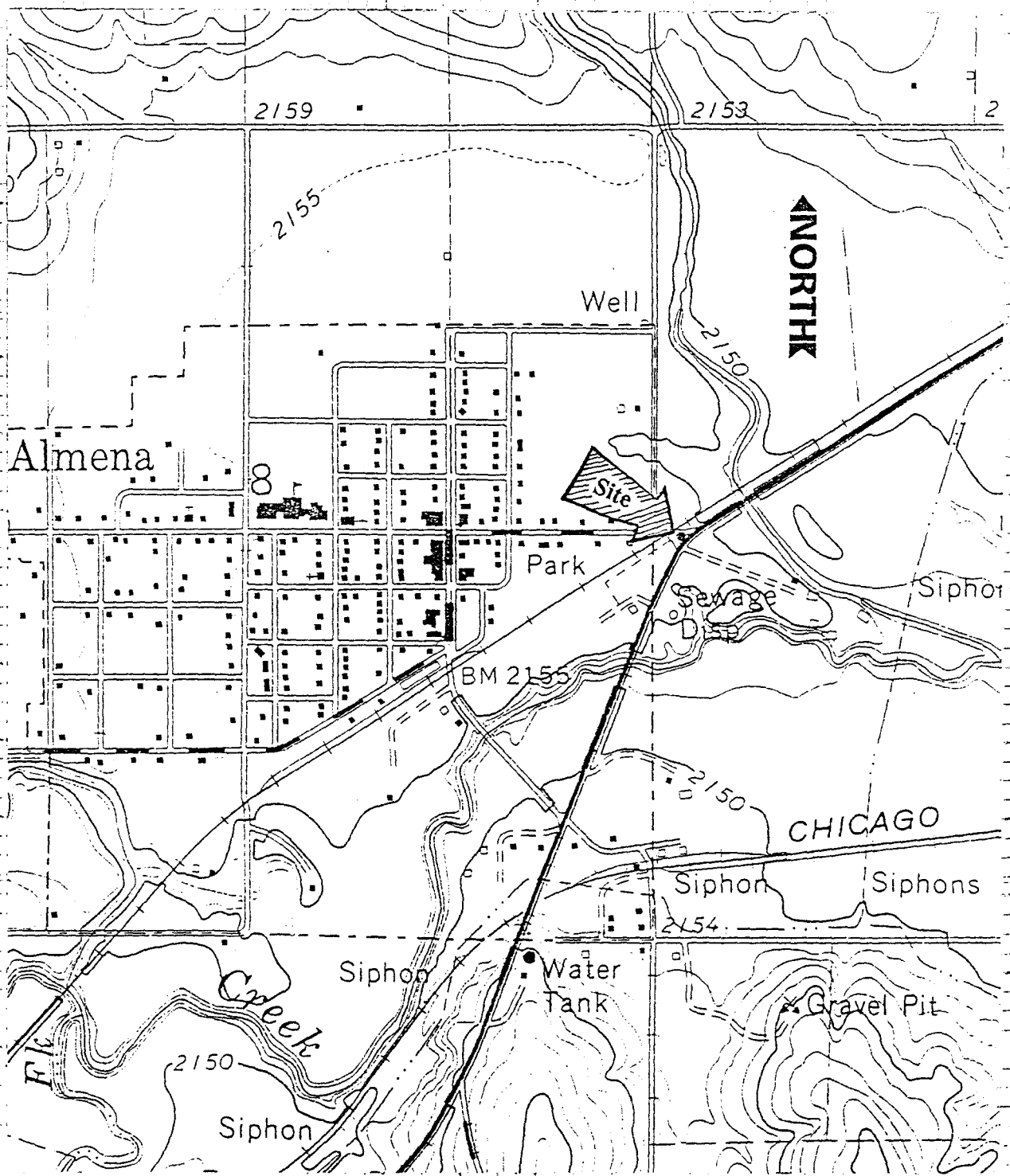


Figure 3 USGS Map of Almena.

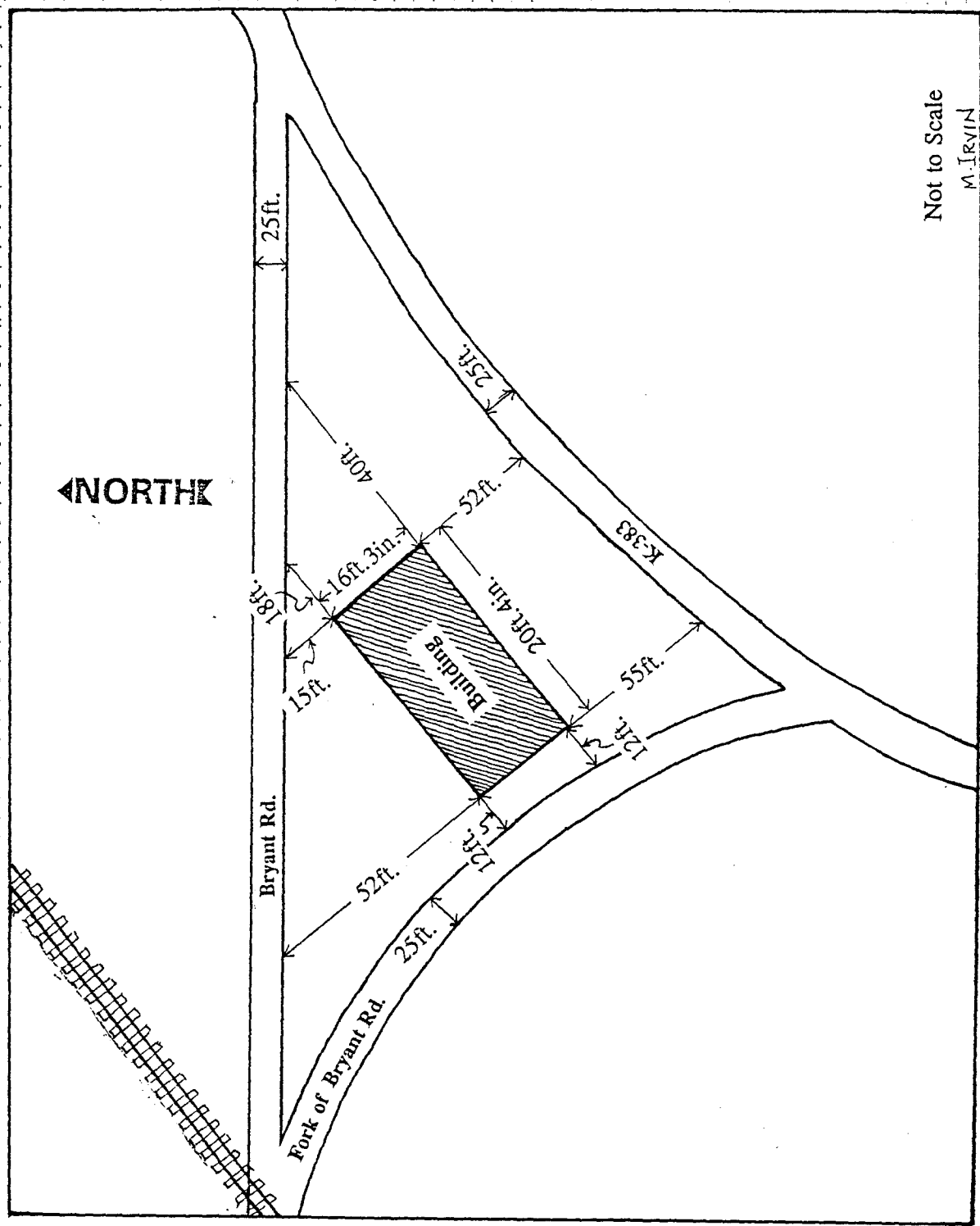


Figure 4 Sketch of site plan.

#### Date of Erection

The Curve Station was constructed ca. 1937. The building was modeled after the fire-retardant, concrete-and-brick Conoco Service Station in the neighboring community of Norton, Norton County, which had been designed by corporate architects of the Conoco Corporation. The date of construction of the Curve Station at Almena was determined from oral interviews with Charles Marsh Henderson, Melvin Cummings, Bud Stevens, Jim Underwood, and research of *The Almena Plaindealer* newspaper from January 1936 to May 1940. Charles Marsh Henderson was the previous land owner. His father, Charles Henderson, leased the land to Melvin Cummings who had the station constructed. Henderson acquired the building ca. 1984 after two leases expired. Melvin Cummings stated the building was erected in the mid-1930s, a couple of years after the station at Norton was built. An interview with Jim Underwood, present owner of the Underwood Conoco Service Station at Norton, established the date of construction of the Norton station as 1934. An interview with Harry (Bud) Stevens, who was twelve or thirteen years-old when he began working at the Curve Station, said the building was erected after the bridge was constructed that spans Prairie Dog Creek west of the station.<sup>1</sup> The bridge was completed in September 1936.<sup>2</sup> Cummings died in October 1994. Cummings's obituary states he became a distributor for the Skelly Oil Company in 1937. The same firm with which the Curve Station was originally affiliated. Based upon these various sources, it seems reasonable to assume the station was probably constructed about 1937.

#### Original and Subsequent Owners

The chain of ownership for this building is based upon oral interviews conducted with owners and managers of the building and land. Recent tax appraisal records provided no information about the building. The Norton County Appraiser's Office had removed the building from tax records by the 1980s, believing the structure was state-owned because of its close proximity to the highway. County records regarding the building are obscure because the building was constructed on a tract owned by local farmer Charles Henderson and part of a larger holding in Section Nine. In part, documentation based upon county records is complicated because the tract of land associated with the station was never legally separated from the larger land holdings of the Henderson family. In addition, Cummings retained several managers. Interviews with Cummings were inconsistent and vague when trying to document time periods and chronological order of managers and subsequent owners. Most of these managers have since either died or moved elsewhere. Furthermore, the station's location is within transportation right-of-ways held by the Burlington Northern Railroad Company, the Kansas Department of Transportation, and Norton County.

During the history of the station, the building was owned by five individuals before being acquired by the Kansas Department of Transportation. Melvin Cummings owned the building from ca. 1937 until ca. 1976. Alvah Yeager acquired the structure in November 1976. Yeager probably retained ownership until ca. 1979 when it transferred to James Frickey. The latter sold the station in 1980 to Kenneth Wynn who owned the building for the next four years. At that time, Charles Marsh Henderson, the land owner, acquired the service station.

Cummings sold the building ca. 1976, sometime after negotiating a second land lease. Henderson said he believed the first lease was for thirty years, and knew the second one was for a shorter period. The time-span for the second lease was less because the land owner wanted control of the property. The leases may

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<sup>1</sup>Harry (Bud) Stevens, interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November 1994.

<sup>2</sup>"Bridge on Highway 83 Has Been Completed," *The Almena Plaindealer*, 17 September 1936, 1.

have been for twenty-five and twenty years rather than thirty and twenty-five or twenty years. When the second land lease expired, Charles Marsh Henderson refused negotiation for a third agreement. Henderson then purchased the building from Wynn. Henderson was the owner of the building until the summer of 1994 when property title transferred to the current owner, the Kansas Department of Transportation.

Historic Events and Persons  
Associated with Structure

According to Cummings, the architectural inspiration for the building came approximately two years before the Curve Station was built when Conoco Incorporated constructed a cottage Tudor-style service station in the neighboring town of Norton. Stevens stated the tract associated with the station had been used as an easement borrow during the construction of K-383 Highway. In building the station, one of the first priorities was filling the hole left from the road project.

The location of the Curve Station was possibly the prime motivator for Cummings having the service station erected. As a local businessman who managed the Standard Oil Company bulk petroleum plant at Alma and owned the Cummings Garage, which included automobile sales and service, the thirty-nine-year-old Cummings was a transportation entrepreneur when the station was constructed. A frequent visitor at Norton, he had seen and admired the new Conoco Service Station in the neighboring community. Shortly after the Norton building was erected, Cummings went to Colorado for a vacation. According to Cummings, while on the trip he stopped at a service station located along a curve of a highway near a small community. He became fascinated with the amount of commercial activity the Colorado station attracted. He interviewed some of the patrons about the station's consumer appeal. From his observations and conversations Cummings became convinced that the ideal service station location required a setting along a curve in a highway and near a community.

Cummings returned home with the site of his new business concept already determined. He knew the curve site he wanted. He only needed approval from land owners to develop his newest business venture. According to Cummings, the access drives surrounding the building were right-of-ways owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad and Kansas Department of Transportation. Access on the north and west might also have been part of Bryant Road easement. Cummings stated he received permission from the Kansas Department of Transportation for parking use of their right-of-way adjacent to the station. Based upon impressions from interviews with Cummings and familiarity with Kansas Highway Commission records, it is unlikely the request and subsequent approval were formally made. More likely, an informal agreement was reached between a local Kansas Highway employee and Cummings. Although Cummings stated the driveway at the rear of the building was part of the railroad right-of-way, he said he never requested permission for land use from the Burlington Northern. No mention was made of receiving approval from Norton County officials who would have been in charge of local easements. In the middle of these various right-of-ways were a few feet of land owned by farmer Charles Henderson whose home was located immediately south of the highway and the station. Construction of the highway had isolated the few feet of farmland from the rest of Henderson's holdings. The farmer leased the building site to Cummings for a period of approximately thirty years. When the lease expired, another was issued for approximately twenty-five years.

"In 1937 Cummings signed a distributorship agreement with the Skelly Oil Company, which he operated as the Home Oil Company."<sup>3</sup> Cummings never managed the Curve Station, which was affiliated with

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<sup>3</sup> "In Memory, In Loving Memory of Melvin Richard Cummings," Memorial Service at Alma United Methodist Church, 29 October 1994, Enfield Funeral Home, Norton, Kansas.



the Skelly Oil Company during his ownership. Instead, he hired various managers who received four cents per gallon from gasoline sales. The managers retained all profits from other products sold at the station. Originally, gasoline, soft drinks, candy, and tire service were part of the business trade. The first manager, Dale Barngrover, also introduced gambling with punch boards. The small portable gambling devices were kept behind the counter and appeared only when a patron requested the machines. Chances cost five cents. The winnings were either collected in nickels or candy bars.<sup>4</sup>

According to Cummings, the Curve Station attracted more trade than service stations in the business district of Alma. Cummings and Jim Underwood agreed the station served as a social gathering point for local males, a role the Conoco Service Station in the town of Norton never matched. During the last month Skelly gasoline was sold at the station during Cummings ownership, a record 13,000 gallons of fuel was sold by station manager Jack Archer. The increased sales can be accounted for as Cummings slashed prices as a going-out-of-business sale. According to Suzanne K. Dillon, granddaughter of Cummings, and her mother Betty Getty, daughter of Cummings, the local businessman continued owning the station after his retirement in 1966 when he sold his other business interests. Cummings retained the station because of his concern for an employee in poor health finding work elsewhere. Jack Archer had worked as a tanker truck driver for Cummings's bulk oil company. Failing health left the employee with few options. Cummings offered Archer the managerial position of the Curve Station where Archer was able to continue working until near his death. Cummings retained ownership of the station where Archer was able to continue working for a few years.

At least two businesses were operated at the station after Archer retired and before Cummings sold the building. These were enterprises were owned by Bob Cate, and Dana and Orvetta Hewett. In each case these local entrepreneurs rented the building from Cummings. Beginning in August 1975, when Cate opened the station, until 1979, when Jim Frickey purchased the building and operated the business, the station was associated with the Conoco Company brand of gasoline.<sup>5</sup>

According to local residents, the Curve Station was a gathering point for truckers and local residents. Over the years a massive volume of gasoline and beer were sold, a number of card games were played, a few fights occurred, and "some things happened that are better left unsaid."<sup>6</sup> From ca. 1937 until ca. 1984, the station was open for business, functioning as a gasoline service station and an informal community social center for men. During that time, a few alterations were made to the building as the role of the structure shifted from that of a traditional gasoline service station to that of a truckers' hospitality stop.

Over the years the building has undergone some changes, most were made between 1977 and 1981. Wooden counters were removed and installed at different times. All were placed parallel, but not attached, to the northeast wall of the building. The last counter (nonextant) was installed in 1980. A number of alterations were made in 1977; most affected the interior of the building. The original pressed paper ceiling was treated with blown textured paint, the original pine floor was covered in one-fourth inch fiberboard as a subsurface for shag carpeting. The window was removed on the northeast replaced with a stucco patch. The window on the southwest facade was painted. Photographed wood-grain paneling installed on the walls and over the windows on the northeast and southwest sides. In 1980, the women's rest room was converted into a storage area and the exterior door replaced with an interior entrance. This alteration occurred after the building had sat empty during part of one winter with water remaining in the plumbing pipes. As a result,

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<sup>4</sup>Stevens, interview by author, Alma, Kansas, 4 November 1994.

<sup>5</sup>Bob Cate, telephone interview by author, 30 November 1994.

<sup>6</sup>Kenneth Wynn, interview by author, Alma, Kansas, 20 April 1994.

pipes burst from freezing conditions. A stucco patch was applied on the northeast side of the building where the original door was for the women's rest room. Some of the wire anchors attaching the stucco to the original mesh on the exterior wall have separated. Other changes made in 1980 include the installation in the west wall of a small ventilation fan and a used 110-watt air conditioner. The original gasoline pumps and underground tanks were removed, the former in 1980 and the latter in 1993.

### Builders

There were no known working architectural plans for the construction of the building. Melvin Cummings stated that he had farmer-carpenter Chet Short model the Almena Curve Station after the Conoco Service Station at Norton, which currently operates under the name of the Underwood Service Station. The Norton station had been designed by a Conoco Company architect and built of concrete and brick because of their fire retardant traits. According to Cummings, Short was not noted for delivering high quality work, but was used by many local residents who needed a carpenter readily available. Although Cummings said Short had constructed some local houses in Almena, he was unable to name any specific examples, and added that Bob Pratt was the local mason hired for the stucco finish. Working with materials he was familiar, Short built his adaptation of the Norton station with a wood frame, the material he was most familiar. In copying the Norton Conoco Service Station, Short meticulously followed the detailing of the eaves. Bob Cate, who owned the business at the station from August 14, 1975, to November 1976, said his father, Clarence Cate, installed the plumbing and electrical systems in the building. Clarence Cate, whose primary business was plumbing and heating work, may also have installed the heating system.<sup>7</sup>

## PART TWO, ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### General Statement

Located along a curve of K-383 Highway, between the two intersections formed by branches of Bryant Road that leads directly into the community of Almena on the west, the Curve Station reflects the architectural influence of small cottage-type, commercial service stations built in the Tudor style during the 1930s. The building has a steeply-pitched side-gable roof. The general condition of the stucco exterior of the structure is sound except for an area on the northeast side where a stucco patch covering the original opening of a doorway has separated from the mesh wire on each side. The roof and foundation appear in good condition.

### Description of Exterior

The station is a one-story, rectangular, symmetrical, commercial building. Its overall exterior dimensions are twenty feet 3.6 inches long and sixteen feet 2.4 inches wide. The front of the building has southeast orientation, parallel with the highway. According to Bob Cate who recalled hanging a lamp in the crawl space during winters to keep the plumbing from freezing, the poured concrete foundation is at least three feet deep.<sup>8</sup> The exterior walls are faced with one-inch thick stucco over mesh wire which is attached

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<sup>7</sup>Bob Cate, telephone interview by author, 15 November 1994.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

to a wood frame.

The structural system framing of the Curve Station consists of two-by-fours that are spaced sixteen inches on center. The walls are two-by-four inch studs, also sixteen inches on center. According to Cate, who owned the business but not the building from August 1975 until November 1976, there was a crawl space accessible through the men's rest room. Kenneth Wynn, who owned the building during the early 1980s, recalled the crawl space access was in the women's rest room. The opening was not found during site analysis. Cate said the drop from floor to ground was three or four feet deep. Floor joists were not measured, but may be two-by-sixes spaced sixteen inches on center. The original pine floor is covered in fiberboard randomly nailed in position. Roof rafters are two-by-fours that are fourteen feet in length and sixteen inches on center.

Various types of bracings have been used in the construction of the roof. The trusses are two-by-fours set at various distances ranging from twenty-three to twenty-four inches on center. Two "X" braces are located six feet from the northeast and southwest ends of the building. Two Queen Post trusses are also located at each of these same ends; the one at the southeast is located nine feet six inches from the wall and the one at the northwest end is nine feet eight inches from the wall. Most of the trusses are the simple inverted "V" pattern.

The entry is centered and accented by a small steeply pitched sixty-five degree gable with plain verge board. A cross-bar intersects the lower half of the entry gable, forming a capital "A." Two steps provide direct access into the building. Two feet of the five feet six inch wide concrete steps extend east of the entry door. These steps have an eight inch rise, and a twelve inch run. A railing of galvanized steel pipe joined with coupler and flange plates is located along the east edge of the steps. The railing is attached to the stucco wall with a flange plate. Another flange plate anchors the pipe in concrete at ground level in front of the lower step.

The exterior of the building has various openings, including the main entry door, three windows, an exhaust vent, an opening for a small 110 watt air conditioner, and a flue. The entry doorway, which is the only extant exterior door opening, measures two feet eight inches wide by six feet seven inches high. The door is two inches deep. This wooden door has four panels and a single plate glass window. The latter is twenty-three inches wide by two feet one inch high. The building has three windows, two on the main facade flanking the entry, and one on the southwest facade. All are metal framed pivot windows; the lower row of panes are fixed while the upper portion pivots on the horizontal plane. The windows on the southeast side are three feet 1.2 inches wide by four feet four inches high, and have nine panes, six in the upper section arranged three across, and a single row of three panes in the fixed lower section. The window on the southwest side is two feet one inch wide by four feet four inches high; this window has six panes arranged with two panes across; four panes are in the upper pivoting portion of the window and two in the lower fixed row. The panes of the window are painted white. The flue intersects the gable peak. Constructed of galvanized sheet metal tubing, the flue is supported by a collar and metal flashing. Openings were cut in the upper part of the southwest side for the installation of an air conditioner and small exhaust vent.

The roof is a simple, steep, side gable with a secondary steep gable centered above the entry on the southeast side. The main roof has a seventeen inches per foot of run, or a seventeen in twelve slope. The small entry gable has a twenty-six inches per foot of run. The roofs of both gables are covered in gray interlocking asphalt shingles. The roof has modest eave extensions that are not part of the rafters. These pseudo or mock extended eaves are finished in a curvilinear pattern and form eight inches of roof overhang.

Other exterior features include two bare bulb metal light fixtures, two stucco patches, a short-wave antenna, and a metal sign pole. The two light fixtures extend from round metal tubes and have metal reflector

plates above the bulb outlet. One fixture is centered at the entry gable peak, and the other is located above a sign board on the southeast corner of the northeast side of the building. The light on at the corner of the northeast side originally illuminated the path leading from the front of the station to the women's rest room door (nonextant) at the northeast corner of the same side. This door has been removed and the space patched with mesh wire and stucco. A metal sign post is located near the southeast corner of the building, along the northeast side. The pole has three extensions and once advertised the building's association with "Skelly" and Conoco petroleum.

#### Description of Interior

The Curve Station has a single story with an attic crawl space. The floor plan of the building includes three rooms (See Figure 5). Two small rooms are along the northeast half of the northwest wall. Combined, these two rooms create a four feet eight inch jog which forms an "L" shaped large room. This jog begins along the northwest wall, directly across from the entry, and continues ten feet 10.8 inches to the northeast wall. The main entrance is centered along the southeast wall of the main room which has an interior length of 19 feet 3.6 inches. The northwest wall of the large room is fifteen feet 3.6 inches wide. The east half of the main room is ten feet 10.8 inches wide from the southeast wall to the southeast wall of the small rooms.

Immediately across from the main entry is a rest room, which was originally designed as the men's rest room. This room extends three feet 9.6 inches in length by four feet 4.8 inches in width. Entrance to the rest room is along its southwest wall. A storage room, which was originally the women's rest room, abuts the other rest room and extends four feet 10.8 inches to the northeast wall. The entrance of the storage room is along its south wall.

The building has the original five inch wide pine flooring.<sup>9</sup> In the larger room, this flooring was later overlaid with one-fourth inch fiberboard covered in a green shag carpeting. Flooring of asphalt tile is present in the storage room and bathroom. The present one-half inch bare fiberboard in the large room was laid in 1981 after the other fiberboard and shag carpeting were removed. The carpeting and first fiberboard flooring were added ca. 1977.

The walls and ceiling were originally finished in one-half inch pressed paper that remained unpainted for years. Later, the walls were painted white. Interior walls are finished in photographed wood-grain fiberboard paneling that cover the pressed paper walls that have no insulation. The pressed paper for the ceiling was attached to two-by-four ceiling joists set sixteen inches on center. In ca. 1977, photographed wood-grain paneling was installed over the paper walls, and the ceiling was treated with blown textured paint.

The size of the two interior doors and doorways vary. Both are wooden doors painted white. The five panel door for the extant bathroom is five feet ten inches high, two feet wide, and 1 1/2 inches deep. The four panel door of the storage room is six feet high, two feet wide, and 1 1/4 inches deep. Since the storage room was created from the conversion of the women's rest room, which had an exterior door until 1980, the interior door for this room was added in ca. 1980.

The building was designed with natural lighting provided by two large windows on the southeast side and two slightly smaller windows located on the southwest and northeast sides. The openings on the southwest and northeast sides were altered ca. 1977. The east-northeast window was completely removed. The west-southwest window was painted. Paneling was placed over both of these window openings and the remaining

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<sup>9</sup>Stevens, interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November 1994; Wynn, interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November 1994.

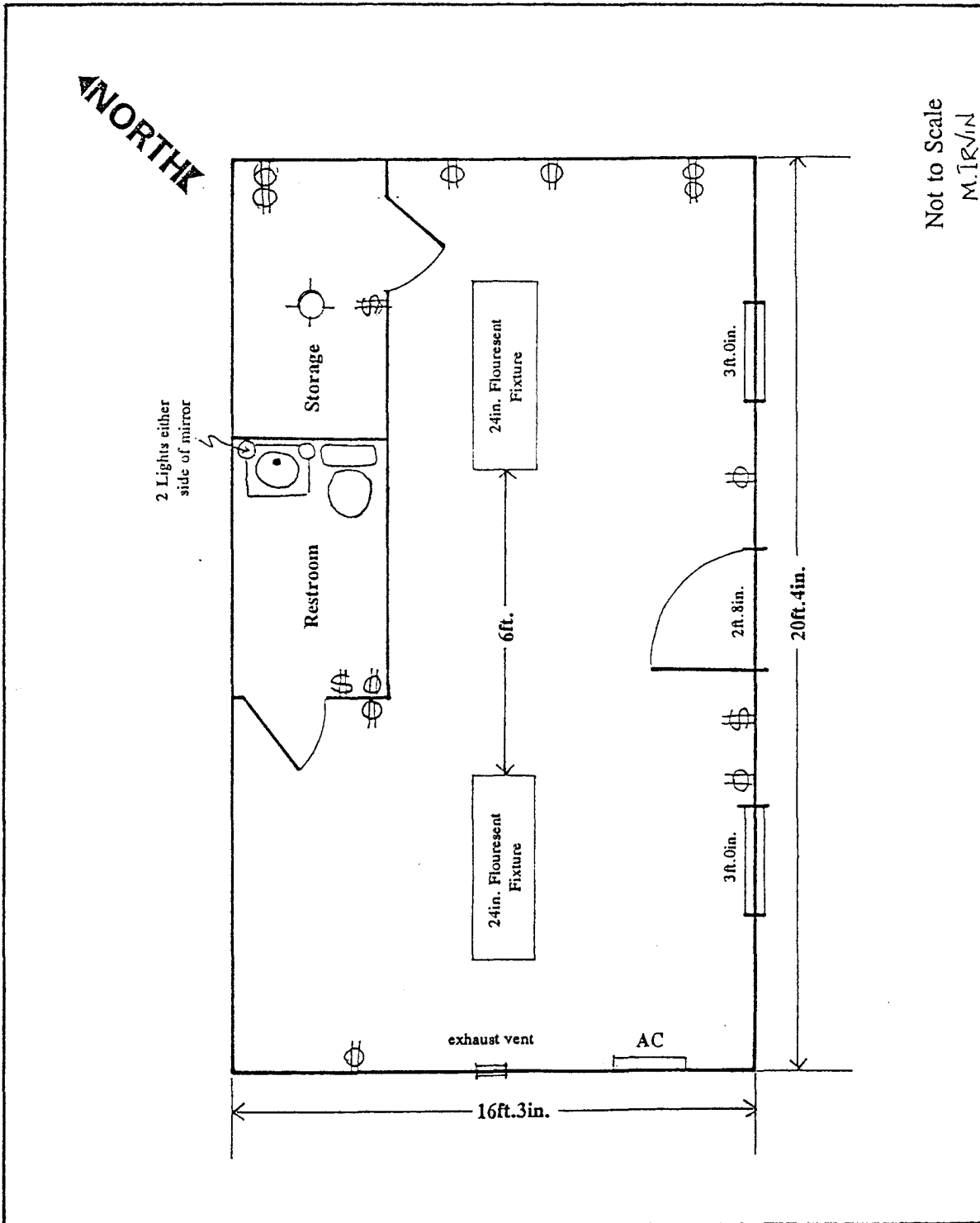


Figure 5 Sketch of interior.

interior wall surfaces.

The inside of the building is spartan, completely lacking decorative detailing. Doorknobs are plain, round, metal knobs. Originally, a wooden counter was installed parallel with the northeast wall of the building. The counter remained until the 1970s when a wooden replacement was installed in the same place; ca. 1980 a synthetic counter top was installed over this counter surface. The last counter was removed since 1989.

Mechanical equipment in the building includes a flue pipe, bathroom fixtures and plumbing, and an electrical system. The latter includes a 110-watt air conditioner and a small exhaust fan, both of which are installed in the west-southwest wall. The interior section of the flue pipe is located south of the southeast wall of the men's rest room. The installation of the flue in its location required cutting a jog in the Queen Post Truss in the northeast section of the building. The flue was once part of the heating system, which is nonextant. The building was originally heated by a fuel oil stove. This was replaced ca. 1970s by a propane stove which was installed in approximately the same location.<sup>10</sup> The propane stove has since been removed.

The original bathroom plumbing fixtures have been replaced in the existing bathroom and removed from the room that was converted to storage space. The original plumbing fixtures included porcelain lavatories and toilets. The toilet and sink were replaced with other porcelain fixtures in the existing bathroom before 1977, and the fixtures in the converted rest room were removed ca. 1980-1981.

The electrical system includes twelve outlets, five lighting fixtures, three switches, a 110-watt air conditioning unit, and a small exhaust fan (See Figure 5). The outlets and switches are installed at various levels. A total of eight outlets are located in the large el-shaped room. This number includes one double outlet, which is located along with two single outlets on the northeast wall. Two other single outlets are on the southeast wall near the windows. Two more single outlets, along with the air conditioner and small exhaust fan, are on the southwest wall. The remaining single outlet in the room is located south of the door of the men's rest room. Two light fixtures are centered along the northeast-southwest axis of the room, and spaced six feet apart. Although the present fixtures are florescent tubes two feet in length (probably installed ca. 1976), the original light fixtures consisted of bulb sockets without protective or diffuse coverings. (The two small rooms still have the original light fixtures that once were located in the large room.) The switch controlling the ceiling lights of the large room is located southwest of the entry door which opens toward the northeast (placing the switch behind the door when open). In ca. 1980-1981 a used 110-watt air conditioner and a small exhaust fan were installed in the wall of the southwest wall of the main room after holes were cut through the wall.

The existing bathroom has two light fixtures which are controlled by a single switch mounted adjacent to a single outlet. The switch and single outlet are installed south of the bathroom door. The bare bulb light fixtures are one foot five inch apart and flank a mirror located above the lavatory on the northeast wall of the room. There are no other outlets in this room.

The storage room has an electrical switch installed four feet two inches above the floor, southwest of the room's door. The room has a ceiling light fixture equipped with a bare bulb. An outlet is mounted three feet six inches from the floor on the northeast wall of the room.

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<sup>10</sup>Stevens, interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November 1994.

### General Setting and Orientation

The Curve Station has a southeast orientation which fronts K-383 Highway and enclosed on the other two sides by Bryant Road and its branches which intersect the highway (See Figure 4). The structure sits on a few feet of fill dirt in an extremely small triangular tract between various transportation routes, including the road systems mentioned and the Burlington Northern railroad tracks north of Bryant Road. The parcel of land has a southeast frontage of 117 feet 8 inches extending along the highway right-of-way. The southwest corner of the building is fifty-five feet north of the edge of the roadway (sixty-six feet north of the highway center line). The southeast corner of the building is fifty-two feet north of the highway (sixty-four feet north of the highway center line). Twelve feet of land separates the building and the edge of the west branch of Bryant Road. Twenty-seven feet separate the northwest corner of the building from Bryant Road, and fifteen feet of real estate lies between the northeast corner of the building and the east fork of the same road. A distance of forty feet exists between the southeast corner of the station and the east fork of Bryant Road. The diagonal distance between the southwest and southeast corners of the building and the intersections of Bryant Road and K-383 Highway is fifty-six feet four inches and 100 feet respectively. The Northern Burlington Railroad tracks are fifty-two feet north of the northwest corner of the building and forty-eight feet north of the northeast corner. Immediately south of the intersection of K-383 Highway and Horse Creek Road is a dirt farmstead access driveway. Southwest of the building, along the highway is a bridge that spans a tributary of Prairie Dog Creek. Cultivated farmland lies south and north of the roadways bordering the tract. The city limits of the community of Almena begin at the western edge of Horse Creek Road, which ends just north of the railroad tracks where they intersect Bryant Road.

Local traffic exiting Almena generally turn south at West Bryant Road using the west fork of the road that intersects the highway. The small eastern stretch of Bryant Road west of Horse Creek Road has become the traffic thoroughfare for truck and semi-truck traffic exiting the highway for entry to Almena. This gently angled stretch of roadway eliminates a ninety degree turn truckers would otherwise be forced to make.

The setting of the station is restricted more by traffic patterns than by terrain or climatological factors. The terrain in the area is relatively flat and open. The harshest climate factor is the blowing Kansas wind. The closest shelter belt of trees are southeast of the station, south of the highway. The trees are aligned in a north-south pattern. There are no trees near the building to shelter the structure from the natural elements.

### SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Cate, Bob, of Almena. Interview by author, 15 and 30 November 1994, telephone. An Almena resident, Cate's father (Clarence) installed the plumbing and electrical system. Clarence Cate also probably installed the heating system as his main business was plumbing and heating work, with some electrical work also undertaken. Cate worked for Cummings in his other businesses located in downtown Almena until World War II. He briefly returned home after the war then moved to New York until relocating in 1975 to Almena. Bob Cate operated a business at the station from August 14, 1975 to November 1976. According to Cate, he owned the business although not the building. Cummings stated Cate was one of the managers of the Curve Station at the time Cummings owned the building.

Cate, Marjorie, of Almena. Telephone interview by author, 14 November 1994, telephone. An Almena resident and wife of Bob Cate. Her husband operated a business at the site from August 14, 1975 until November 1976.

Craig, Laura, of Almena. Interview by author, 14 November 1994, telephone. Craig works at the Post Office in Almena and for the *Almena Plain Dale* newspaper. A relative newcomer to Almena, she researched the history of the building for a newspaper article after the Curve Station came under review for the bridge project on K-383 Highway. According to her article, she interviewed previous owners, managers, and patrons of the station.

Culvert, Donna, of Ponca City, Oklahoma. Telephone interview by author, 29 December 1993, telephone. At the time of the interview, Culvert was in the Personnel Department of the Conoco Incorporated Office in Ponca City, Oklahoma. The company was contacted for possible plans of the Norton Station in the hopes of comparing the Norton Station design details with that of the Curve Station at Almena. Culvert indicated numerous Tudor-style cottage stations were constructed from corporate designs of the period, but believed it was unlikely the plans still existed.

Cummings, Melvin R., deceased. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 21 October 1993 and 20 April 1994. Almena businessman who had the station built and owned it from ca. 1937 until ca. 1976.

Dillon, Suzanne K., of Lawrence, Kansas. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November, 1994. Suzanne Dillon is the granddaughter of Melvin Cummings. She searched her grandfather's personal papers for this project in search of any written record about the station or old photograph and recommended some people as possible contacts.

Frickey, James, of Almena. Interview by author, 3 November 1994, telephone. Frickey briefly owned the station from 1979 to the winter of 1980. According to Melvin Cummings, Frickey moved from the south, possibly Alabama, to Almena where he managed the local pool hall. According to local residents Henderson, Wynn, and Cummings, Frickey's interests are drinking, fishing, and gambling impeded his success as a businessman.

Getty, Betty of Lawrence, Kansas. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, November 4, 1994. Betty Getty is the daughter of Melvin Cummings.

Henderson, Charles Marsh, of Almena. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 21 October 1993 and 20 April 1994. He is the son of Charles Henderson, the original land owner of the station site. Charles Marsh Henderson acquired ownership of the station in the 1980s and retained the title until the property was acquired by the Kansas Department of Transportation in 1994.

Henderson, Donna, of Almena. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 21 October 1993 and 20 April 1994. Wife of Charles Marsh Henderson.

Moody, H. E., of Almena. Telephone interview by author, 28 November 1994. Moody and her husband moved to Almena in 1950. They purchased and edited the local newspaper, *The Almena Plain Dealer*, in 1952. She continued operating the paper by herself after her husband died in 1981. In 1990, she retired, and publication of the paper ceased. She was contacted as a possible source for any published newspaper picture of the station.

Stevens, Harry (Bud), of Almena. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 4 November 1994. Stevens worked at the station when approximately twelve or thirteen years old. Currently 70 years old, Stevens purchased Melvin Cummings's businesses in the business district of Almena when Cummings retired; the Curve Station was not part of the sale. Stevens has lived most of his life in Almena, moving from the area for only a few years before returning in the 1960s.



Underwood, Jim, of Norton. Interview by author, Norton, Kansas, 21 October 1993, and telephone interview 14 November 1994. Underwood owns the Underwood (Conoco) Service Station at Norton, Kansas which served as the architectural model for the Curve Station at Almena. Burchie Underwood, Jim Underwood's father, acquired the Norton Service Station in 1945. A local resident of Norton since his birth, Jim Underwood knew the history of the Norton Service Station.

Wynn, Kenneth, of Almena. Interview by author, Almena, Kansas, 20 April 1994. Wynn owned the Curve Station beginning in 1980 until 1984. A retired trucker, Wynn operated a nonprofit Curtesy Truck Stop, complete with short-wave radio system in his home and at the station so truckers could call ahead at anytime and arrange assistance for equipment or personal needs.

The present owner of the Curve Station is the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). Currently the building is not in use. The KDOT has stated the building is available for relocation after the station was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. According to the *Kansas Preservation* issue of September-October 1994, the *Almena Prairie Dog Press* of October 19, 1994, and newspapers in Salina, Norton and Hays, interested parties would be required to present a relocation program detailing the intended use and new location of the building, as well as providing information about resources available for assuring the maintenance of the building. The KDOT has offered assistance with relocation expenses. The agency set a deadline of November 15, 1994 for relocation inquiries. If no offers are made, then the projected tentative date for demolition of the building is February 1, 1995.

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