

Washington and Julia (Bailey) Marlatt Homestead

The Washington and Julia (Bailey) Marlatt Homestead was the residence of the initial educators for Bluemont Central College, predecessor of Kansas State University. It was constructed around 1856 by Davies Wilson of local limestone in colonial American style and is considered the oldest standing stone home in Riley County.

Washington came to Kansas in 1856, motivated by a desire to ensure the territory would be free from the institution of slavery. Julia came in 1859, and they worked together as principal and assistant at the college, a private institution founded in 1858. They married in 1861, the same year Kansas became a state. Soon after, efforts began to establish a state university, and Bluemont Central College became Kansas State Agricultural College (KSAC) in 1863, the nation's first operational land-grant institution established after the passage of the 1862 Morrill Act.

The Marlatts were prominent members of the community and played a significant role in developing the area. Washington was integral to Bluemont's transition to KSAC — today's Kansas State University — and was president of the Manhattan Town Association.

The original Bluemont Central College building, located on the northwest corner of Claflin Road and College Avenue, was torn down in 1883-84. Washington Marlatt purchased the materials and constructed a bank-style barn on the property. The carved stone "Bluemont College" blocks were installed above the barn's west entrance. They were moved to the campus library in 1926-27 and are now above the fireplace at the K-State Alumni Center.

The homestead was primarily a family residence and is currently owned by Kansas State University. The property is on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

As the first land-grant institution, K-State acknowledges that the state of Kansas is historically home to many Native nations, including the Kaw, Osage, and Pawnee, among others. Kansas is currently home to four federally recognized Native nations: the Prairie Band Potawatomie, the Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas, the Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska, and the Sac and Fox Nation of Missouri in Kansas and Nebraska. The recognition that K-State's history begins and continues through Indigenous contexts is essential.

Marker placed in 2023 by the Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance and the Riley County Historical Society, with the assistance of Kansas State University.

