

Dutton-Thomas-Soule Farm (1884)

7925 Sunflower Road – De Soto

Register of Historic Kansas Places

The Dutton-Thomas-Soule farmstead, located in De Soto, Kansas, was added to the Kansas State Register of Historic Places in 1996. It represents one of the oldest working farmsteads in the “West Bottoms” – the fertile region of the Kansas River Valley between Lawrence and Kansas City. With many challenges over the course of its 100-plus year history, the farmstead has remained remarkably intact and is an excellent example of the changes in agri-business over the last century.



The Dutton-Thomas-Soule Farmstead, 2009.
Johnson County Museum Collection.

The West Bottoms is known as prime agricultural land in Johnson County – famous for its potato, melon, tomato, squash, and corn crops. By 1874, the Dutton family owned 40 acres of land and built the Italiante-Victorian home in 1880s. They sold the farmstead to Fred Thomas by the turn of the century. During the valley’s peak potato growing period in the 1920s and 30s, produce was shipped not only to the local City Market in Kansas City, but also to outlying markets such as St. Louis and Chicago. The Thomas family played a key role in that history with its easy access to the Santa Fe Railroad just south of the property.

By the 1940s, Ruth and Edgar Soule (a nephew of Fred Thomas) had purchased the farm. During their ownership, the infamous flood of 1951 wrecked havoc on the valley. Despite the entire valley being engulfed by the floodwaters, the home and outbuildings were spared due to their relatively high location. The Palmbergs, the current owners of the property, began farming with the Soule’s in the 1970s. Together, both families survived another threat from nature, a small tornado which tore through the property in 1980. Luck again played a role, in that only a chicken coop was damaged beyond repair. The Palmbergs continue to farm the property

The buildings included in the register nomination are the main farmhouse, a smokehouse/ garage, a tool shed, one large barn and a small storage shed. The farmhouse, located on the southeast corner of 79th and Sunflower Road, is architecturally typical of late 19th century farm houses: traditionally built with an

eclectic blend of Victorian and Italianate accents. Despite significant changes to the roof of the home which made the property ineligible for inclusion on the National Register, the farm house itself is the most architecturally significant building on the site. The outbuildings are typical wooden frame agricultural structures.

Significant suburban development is occurring in the Kaw Valley region -- K-10 connects the Kansas City metropolitan area to the fast-growing communities of Lawrence and Topeka. Operating farms like the Dutton-Thomas-Soule farmstead are increasingly rare and represent a significant lifestyle in Johnson County's history – that of the family farmer. Increasingly land still in agricultural use is being consolidated and farmed by large-scale regional agri-business corporations

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