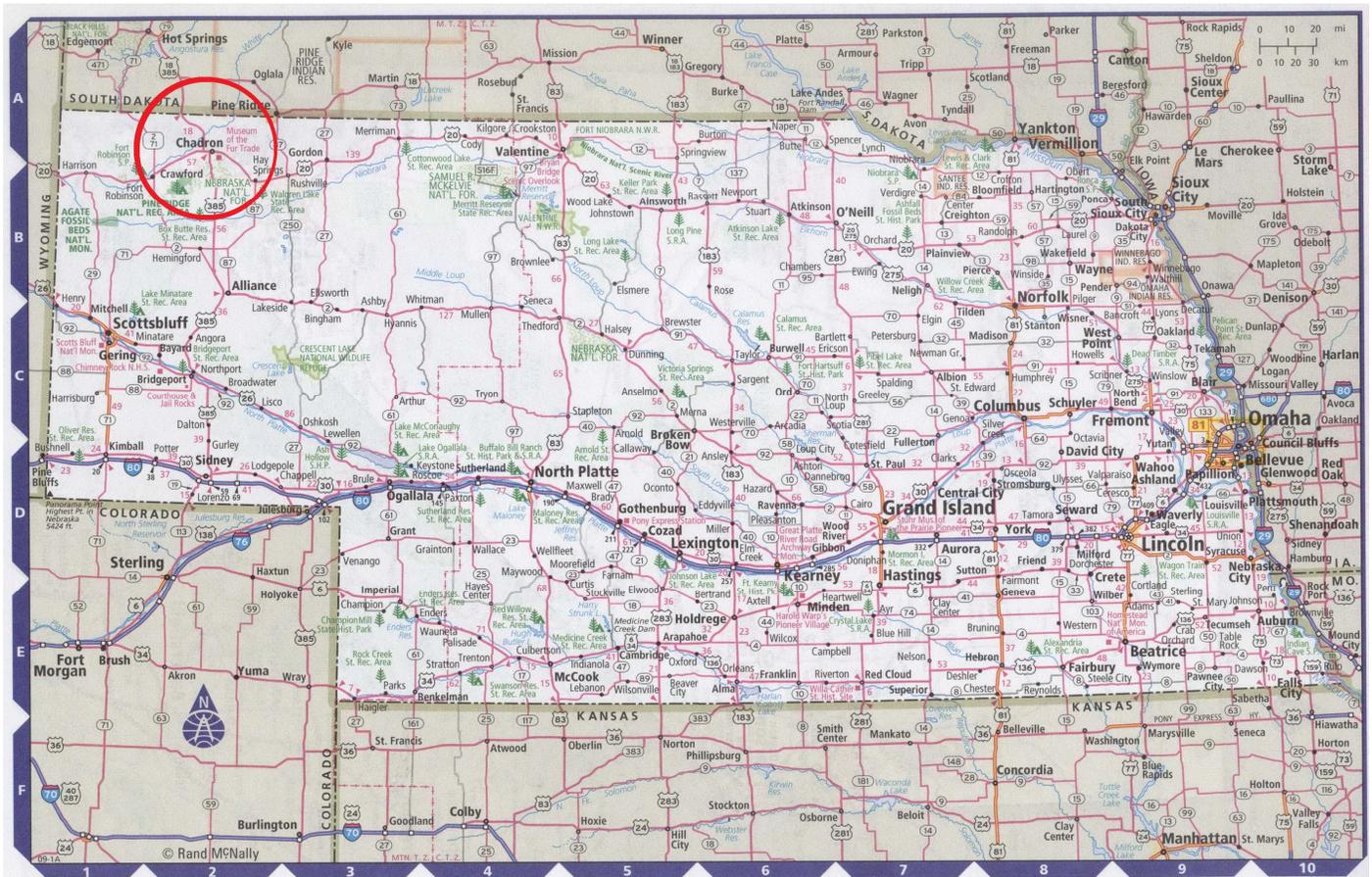


Chapter 13

Homesteading in Chadron, Nebraska 1885-1891

Aaron Burr Oakley (my great-grandfather) was born on 8 August 1835, in Redding, Fairfield County, Connecticut. Aaron Burr Oakley married Hannah Mariah Miller (my great-grandmother) on 6 April 1858 in Beloit, Wisconsin (just north of Rockford, Illinois). Hannah was born on 1 October 1838 in Portageville, New York.

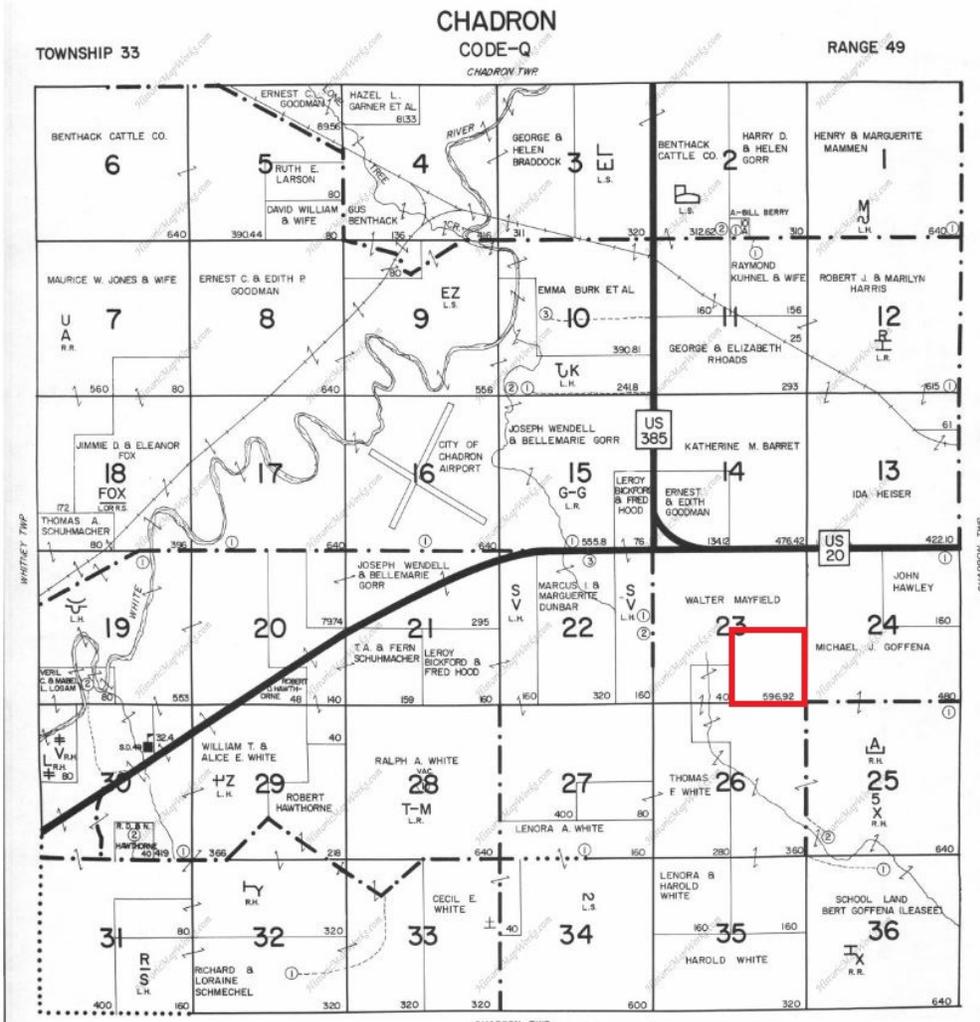
A. B. and Hannah had a son, Ray Miller Oakley (my grandfather), who was born on 2 April 1876, when the family was living in Mechanicsville, Cedar County, Iowa. From 1885 until 1891, Aaron and Hannah, along with their son Ray, homesteaded on 160 acres of land in Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska (in the far northwest corner of the panhandle of Nebraska – near South Dakota and Wyoming).



[Note: The images on this page are scaled. Right-click on any image and select "View Image" to view the image full-size.]

Based on paperwork filed by Aaron B. Oakley in the land office in Chadron, Nebraska, in 1885, the land he was homesteading was legally described as "the south-east quarter of Section 23 in Township 33 north of Range 49 west of the sixth principal meridian". This location is several miles west of the present city of Chadron.

The following map shows the "Sections" (number 1 through 36) of Chadron Township 33, along with the landowners as of 1964. The A.B. Oakley homestead is outlined in red:



When the west was surveyed, each county was divided into townships. Each township typically measured 6 miles by 6 miles. Each township was divided into 36 sections, each one mile square, using the numbering scheme shown in the map above (1 - 36). Aaron homesteaded on the "South-East Quarter" of Section 23 - his land measured one-half mile by one-half mile. Since one square mile is 640

acres, Aaron's homestead was one-quarter of that, or 160 acres.

Actually, the Public Land Survey System (dividing the land using section, township, and range descriptions) was the surveying method developed and used in the United States to divide real property for sale and for settling. It was created by the Land Ordinance of 1785 to survey land ceded to the United States by the Treaty of Paris in 1783, following the end of the American Revolution. Beginning with present day Ohio and moving west, this approach was used as the primary survey method in the United States.

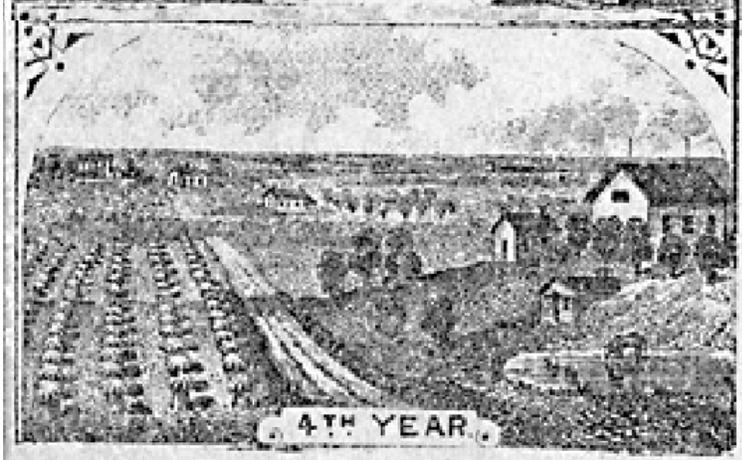
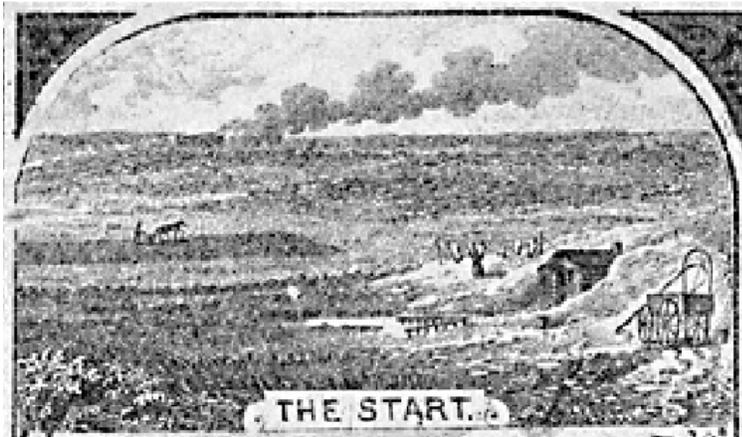
By means of background, the Homestead Act of 1862 helped to settle the west. The "yeoman farmer" ideal of Jeffersonian democracy was still a powerful influence in American politics during 1840 - 1850, with many politicians believing a homestead act would help increase the number of "virtuous yeomen". Various political parties demanded that the new lands opening up in the west be made available to independent farmers.

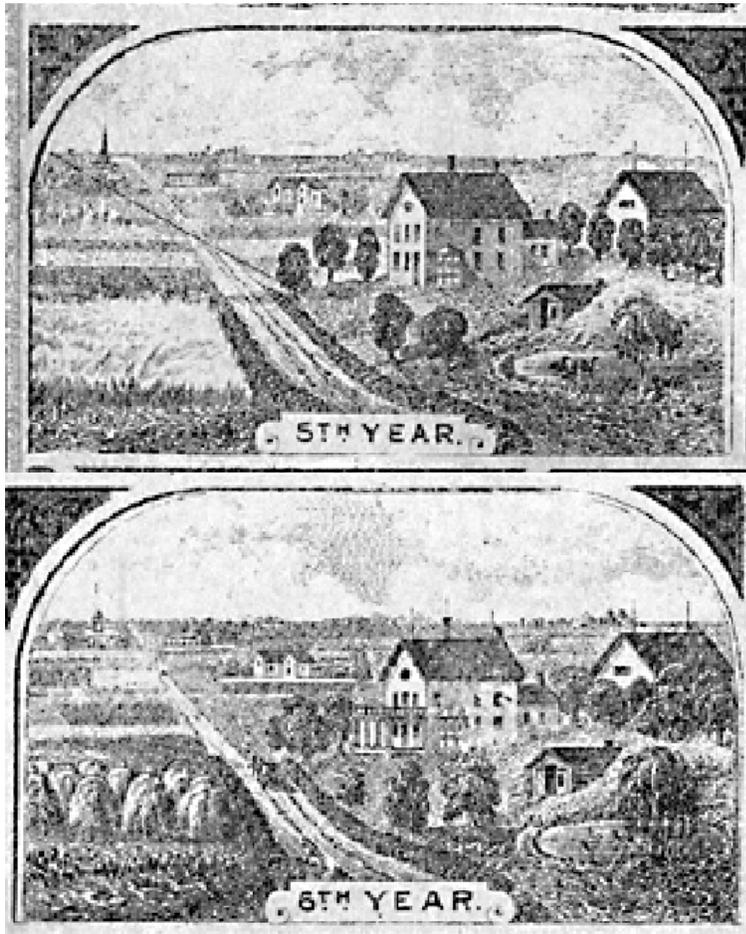
The homestead was an area (usually 160 acres) of public land in the West granted to any US citizen willing to settle on and farm the land for at least five years. The law required a three-step procedure: file an application, improve the land, and file for deed of title. Anyone who had never taken up arms against the U.S. government (including freed slaves) and was at least twenty-one years old or the head of a household, could file an application to claim a federal land grant. The occupant had to reside on the land for five years, and show evidence of having made improvements.

When Congress passed the Homestead Act in 1862, the technology of the day was still primitive enough that 160 acres was thought to be the maximum amount of land a family could realistically farm. Each homesteader had to "prove up" to officially claim their land. That meant within five years they had to live on the land, build a home (at least 12' x 24'), make improvements and farm before the 160 acres was theirs to keep. Keep in mind that while plowing one acre of ground, a homesteader walked 10 miles behind a horse or mule. To plow the required 10 acres of farmed land, the homesteader had to walk at least 100 miles. And in many places, such as Nebraska, the prairie sod was thick and was difficult to plow, so just breaking the sod was quite an accomplishment.

Of the approximately two million claims made under the Homestead Act, about sixty percent were unsuccessful. Claims not "proved up" (meaning that the homesteaders on them did not complete the ownership requirements and receive title to the property) were known as relinquishments. When a homesteader relinquished his or her claim, it reverted back to the active control of the U.S.

government. Most relinquishments were opened back up to homesteading, and many new settlers moved onto relinquished claims in hopes of finding homes already built, trees cleared, wells dug, or crops planted. The Homestead Act of 1862 eventually transferred 270,000,000 acres from public to private ownership. Here is what *ideal* homesteading would have looked like:





The part of northwest Nebraska where Aaron B. Oakley and his family homesteaded from 1885-1891 can be described as rolling, short-grass prairie - with almost no trees. This type of prairie lacked standard building materials, such as wood or stone; however, sod from thickly-rooted prairie grass was abundant. Prairie grass had a much thicker, tougher root structure than modern landscaping grass. Therefore, homesteaders typically built a sod house in which to live. Construction of a sod house involved cutting patches of sod in rectangles, often 2'x1'x6", and piling them into walls. Builders employed a variety of roofing methods. Sod houses accommodated normal doors and windows. The resulting structure was a well-insulated, but damp, dwelling that was very inexpensive to construct. At least during their initial time in Chadron, Aaron and his family lived in a sod house.

Here is what a sod hut in northwest Nebraska actually looked like:



This photo was taken in 1888 by Solomon D. Butcher (1856-1927), who was an itinerant photographer who spent most of his life in central Nebraska. A settler in Nebraska under the Homestead Act, he began in 1886 to produce a photographic record of the history of white settlement in the region. Over 3,000 of his negatives survive; more than 1,000 of these depict sod houses. The number and scope of his photographs of Nebraska pioneer life have made them a valuable resource to students of that period of history, and they have become a staple of historical texts and popular works alike. His oeuvre (don't you just love that word!!) has been described as "the most important chronicle of the saga of homesteading in America". More on this subject is at:

<http://www.nebraskalife.com/The-Photographs-of-Solomon-Butcher/>

Aaron B. Oakley's Homestead

Aaron B. Oakley first filed a homestead claim (application 2911) on 15 January 1885. It was filed in Valentine, Nebraska, which is about 135 miles east of Chadron. Aaron paid a \$14.00 fee to make this claim. Note that it spells out the claim as being the “SE4 of Section 23 in Township 33 of Range 49W”:

The wording at the bottom of this document was quite important:

“Note - It is required of the homestead settler that he shall reside upon and cultivate the land embraced in his homestead entry for a period of five years from the time of filing the affidavit, being also the date of entry. An abandonment of the land for more than six months works as a forfeiture of the claim. Further, within two year from the expiration of said five years he must file proof of his actual settlement and cultivation, failing to do which, his entry will be canceled. If the settler does not wish to remain five years on his tract, he can, at any time after six months, pay for it with cash [\$1.25 per acre] or land warrants, upon making proof of settlement and cultivation from the date of filing affidavit to the time of payment.”

The page in the application appears to be written in Aaron’s own hand. In this affidavit, he swears that he is eligible to make this homestead claim:

Note that in this affidavit, Aaron states that he lives in O'Linn, Nebraska. Chadron was first named O'Linn for its founder Fannie O'Linn, who built a community at the confluence of the White River (Missouri River) and Chadron Creek. This is where the Fremont, Elkhorn, and Missouri Valley Railroad was expected to have a depot. When it was built six miles away on Bordeaux Creek in 1884, the townspeople packed up the entire town - buildings included - and moved the town to the new location. And they re-named the town Chadron. It was interesting that Aaron B. Oakley listed his home as being in O'Linn on his original application for a homestead in January 1885.

And here is his receipt for \$14.00 for registering his claim:

OK, now, fast-forward six years - years that were filled with hot, dry summers and brutally-cold winters, years of drought, years of hard work improving the A. B. Oakley homestead. So Aaron then had to file a statement of intent to make final proof to establish his claim on the land, which he did on 24 February 1891 at the Land Office in Chadron, Nebraska. He listed four witnesses who could support his claim of living on the land, making improvements, and cultivating crops - Hiram Klingman, Charles Klingman, James Gilliland, and Joseph Hilton, all of Chadron, Nebraska. Furthermore, he stated that he would publish notice of this intent in the **Dawes County Journal** newspaper:

That brings us to 11 April 1891, when Aaron began to submit all the final paperwork to get a deed for his land. He first had to show proof of publishing his intent in the *Dawes County Journal* newspaper:

This is the cover page of Aaron's homestead application, which was filed in the Chadron, Nebraska, land office on 13 April 1891. It describes the property as "Sec. 23, Town. 33, Range 49":

So what follows are the components of his final affidavit, dated 13 April 1891:

NOTE.—The officer before whom the testimony is taken should call the attention of the witness to the following section of the Revised Statutes, and state to him that it is the purpose of the Government, if it be ascertained that he testifies falsely, to prosecute him to the full extent of the law.

Title LXX.—CRIMES.—Ch. 4.

SEC. 5392. Every person who, having taken an oath before a competent tribunal, officer, or person, in any case in which a law of the United States authorizes an oath to be administered, that he will testify, declare, depose, or certify truly, or that any written testimony, declaration, deposition, or certificate by him subscribed is true, willfully and contrary to such oath states or subscribes any material matter which he does not believe to be true, is guilty of perjury, and shall be punished by a fine of not more than two thousand dollars, and by imprisonment, at hard labor, not more than five years, and shall, moreover, thereafter be incapable of giving testimony in any court of the United States until such time as the judgment against him is reversed. (See §. 750.)

(4-369.)

HOMESTEAD PROOF.

LAND OFFICE AT

CHADRON, NEB

Original Application No. 2291

Final Certificate No. 846

Approved: APR 13 1891

M. McGinnis, Register.

J. J. Morris, Receiver.

6-577

FINAL AFFIDAVIT REQUIRED OF HOMESTEAD CLAIMANTS.

SECTION 2291 OF THE REVISED STATUTES OF THE UNITED STATES.

I Aaron B. Oakley, having made a Homestead entry of the _____
SE 4 Section No. 23 in Township No. 33
of Range No. 19, subject to entry at U.S. Land Office Chadron Neb
under section No. 2289 of the Revised Statutes of the United States, do now apply to perfect my claim thereto
by virtue of section No. 2291 of the Revised Statutes of the United States; and for that
purpose do solemnly swear that I _____
Am a Native born a citizen of the United States; that I have made actual settlement
upon and have cultivated and resided upon said land since the 14 day of July, 1885
to the present time; that no part of said land has been alienated, except as provided in section 2288 of the
Revised Statutes, but that I am the sole bona fide owner as an actual settler; that I will bear true allegiance

Note that he stated “that I have made actual settlement upon and have cultivated and resided upon said land since the 14th day of July 1885”.
The next page of the claim spells out specifically that the homestead was the “South East Quarter”:

Next came a receipt for \$4.00 for filing the claim, plus a fee of \$1.20 for the “testimony fee” - it appears that the individual filling out the form received 15 cents per hundred words, or \$1.20 for this 800 word application:

Here is the testimony of Joseph Hilton (37 years of age):

HOMESTEAD PROOF—TESTIMONY OF WITNESS.

Joseph Hilton being called as witness in support of the Homestead entry of *Abaron B Oakley* for *Sec 23-33-49*, testifies as follows:

Ques. 1.—What is your name, age, and post office address?
Ans. *Joseph Hilton 37 years of age Chadron Neb.*

Ques. 2.—Are you well acquainted with the claimant in this case and the land embraced in his claim?
Ans. *I am. It is the SE 1/4 Sec 23 Twp 33 R6 H9 W*

Ques. 3.—Is said tract within the limits of an incorporated town or selected site of a city or town, or used in any way for trade or business?
Ans. *No. No. No.*

Ques. 4.—State specifically the character of this land—whether it is timber, prairie, grazing, farming, coal, or mineral land.
Ans. *Rolling prairie land for farming & grazing*

Ques. 5.—When did claimant settle upon the homestead and at what date did he establish actual residence thereon?
Ans. *March 23 1885. July 14 1885.*

Ques. 6.—Have claimant and family resided continuously on the homestead since first establishing residence thereon? (If settler is unmarried, state the fact.)
Ans. *They have lived there all the time since July 14 1885.*

Ques. 7.—For what period or periods has the settler been absent from the land since making settlement, and for what purpose; and if temporarily absent, did claimant's family reside upon and cultivate the land during such absence?
Ans. *He has never been absent.*

Ques. 8.—How much of the homestead has the settler cultivated and for how many seasons did he raise crops thereon?
Ans. *35 acres planted Crops 6 seasons.*

Ques. 9.—What improvements are on the land and what is their value?
Ans. *House 200. Stable 25. Cellar 25
40 acres fenced 100. 35 acres broke 100⁰⁰*

Ques. 10.—Are there any indications of coal, salines, or minerals of any kind on the homestead? (If so, describe what they are, and state whether the land is more valuable for agricultural than for mineral purposes.)
Ans. *None. Just adapted for agricultural purposes*

Ques. 11.—Has the claimant mortgaged, sold, or contracted to sell, any portion of said homestead?
Ans. *Not that I know of.*

Ques. 12.—Are you interested in this claim; and do you think the settler has acted in entire good faith in perfecting this entry?
Ans. *No Sir. I do*

Note that the information included that Aaron had planted 35 acres of crops for 6 seasons, had a house, a stable, and a cellar, had fenced 40 acres, and broken the sod on 35 acres more. And that Aaron had lived there continuously since 14 July 1885.

Next comes the testimony of Charles Klingman (25 years of age), who basically confirmed what Joseph Hilton had stated:

HOMESTEAD PROOF—TESTIMONY OF WITNESS.

Charles Klingman, being called as witness in support of the Homestead entry of Aaron B. O'Keefe for SE 1/4 Sec 23-33-49, testifies as follows:

Ques. 1.—What is your name, age, and post office address?

Ans. Charles Klingman 25 years of age Chadron Neb.

Ques. 2.—Are you well acquainted with the claimant in this case and the land embraced in his claim?

Ans. Yes. It is the SE 1/4 Sec 23 Twp 33 R 49 W

Ques. 3.—Is said tract within the limits of an incorporated town or selected site of a city or town, or used in any way for trade or business?

Ans. No. No. No.

Ques. 4.—State specifically the character of this land—whether it is timber, prairie, grazing, farming, coal, or mineral land.

Ans. Rolling prairie land for farming and grazing

Ques. 5.—When did claimant settle upon the homestead and at what date did he establish actual residence thereon?

Ans. March 23 1885. July 14 1885

Ques. 6.—Have claimant and family resided continuously on the homestead since first establishing residence thereon? (If settler is unmarried, state the fact.)

Ans. They have lived there all the time since July 14 1885.

Ques. 7.—For what period or periods has the settler been absent from the land since making settlement, and for what purpose; and if temporarily absent, did claimant's family reside upon and cultivate the land during such absence?

Ans. He has never been absent.

Ques. 8.—How much of the homestead has the settler cultivated and for how many seasons did he raise crops thereon?

Ans. 35 acres. planted crops 6 seasons

Ques. 9.—What improvements are on the land and what is their value?

Ans. House 900⁰⁰ stable 25⁰⁰ 40 acs fenced 60⁰⁰ Cultar 10⁰⁰ 35 acs broke 4⁰⁰ per acre

Ques. 10.—Are there any indications of coal, salines, or minerals of any kind on the homestead? (If so, describe what they are, and state whether the land is more valuable for agricultural than for mineral purposes.)

Ans. None. best adapted for agricultural purposes

Ques. 11.—Has the claimant mortgaged, sold, or contracted to sell, any portion of said homestead?

Ans. Not to my knowledge

Ques. 12.—Are you interested in this claim; and do you think the settler has acted in entire good faith in perfecting this entry?

Ans. No I am not. He has

Now we get to Aaron B. Oakley's testimony. He was 55 years of age at the time:

HOMESTEAD PROOF—TESTIMONY OF CLAIMANT.

Aaron B. Oakley being called as a witness in his own behalf in support of homestead entry, No. *2911*, for *SE Sec 23 Twp 33 R6 49 W* testifies as follows:

Ques. 1.—What is your name, age, and post office address?

Ans. *Aaron B. Oakley 55 years of age, Chadron Neb*

Ques. 2.—Are you a native born citizen of the United States, and if so, in what State or Territory were you born?*

Ans. *I am. I was born in Conn.*

Ques. 3.—Are you the identical person who made homestead entry, No. *2911*, at the *Valentine Neb* land office on the *15* day of *January*, 188*8*, and what is the true description of the land now claimed by you?

Ans. *I am. It is the SE Sec 23 Twp 33 R6 49 W*

Ques. 4.—When was your house built on the land and when did you establish actual residence therein? (Describe said house and other improvements which you have placed on the land, giving total value thereof.)

Ans. *March 23 1885. July 14 1885. Frame house 16x26. 100 Board Stable 14x24 25⁰⁰ Cellar 10⁰⁰ Ho acres fenced 35 acres broke 140⁰⁰ total value 275⁰⁰*

Ques. 5.—Of whom does your family consist; and have you and your family resided continuously on the land since first establishing residence thereon? (If unmarried, state the fact.)

Ans. *Wife and one child. They came from Minnesota and moved on the land Oct 1 1885 and has lived there ever since*

Ques. 6.—For what period or periods have you been absent from the homestead since making settlement, and for what purpose; and if temporarily absent, did your family reside upon and cultivate the land during such absence?

Ans. *I have never been absent.*

Ques. 7.—How much of the land have you cultivated each season and for how many seasons have you raised crops thereon?

Ans. *planted crops 6 seasons 1 acre 1885. 10 acres 1886. 20 acres 1887. 24 acres 1888. 35 acres 1889*

Ques. 8.—Is your present claim within the limits of an incorporated town or selected site of a city or town, or used in any way for trade and business.

Ans. *No No No*

Ques. 9.—What is the character of the land? Is it timber, mountainous, prairie, grazing, or ordinary agricultural land? State its kind and quality, and for what purpose it is most valuable.

Ans. *Rolling prairie land for farming purposes.*

Ques. 10.—Are there any indications of coal, salines, or minerals of any kind on the land? (If so, describe what they are, and state whether the land is more valuable for agricultural than for mineral purposes.)

Ans. *None. Best adapted for agricultural purposes.*

Ques. 11.—Have you ever made any other homestead entry? (If so, describe the same.)

Ans. *No I never have*

Ques. 12.—Have you sold, conveyed, or mortgaged any portion of the land; and if so, to whom and for what purpose?

Ans. *No I have not.*

Ques. 13.—Have you any personal property of any kind elsewhere than on this claim? (If so, describe

Aaron stated that he was born in Connecticut. He adds that he has built a frame house (16' x 26'). Also that he planted crops on 1 acre in 1885, 10 acres in 1886, 20 acres in 1887, 24 acres in 1888, 35 acres in 1889 and 1890. And that his wife and son moved in on 1 October 1885. At that time, Ray M. Oakley would have been nine-and-a-half years old.

Next we have the final checklist (drum roll, please):

FINAL HOMESTEADS.

Register and Receiver's Report.

H. E. 2911 F. C. 846 District CHADRON,

1. Was proof prematurely made? Ans. *No*
(Instructions 1.)
2. Was proof made after 7 years from date of entry? Ans. *No*
If so, did you apply Instructions 2? Ans. *No*
3. State No. of weekly insertions of published notice. Ans. *6*
Was notice definite as to time, place, and officer to take the proof? Ans. *Yes*
Was proof taken (a) by officer advertised? Ans. *Yes*
Was proof taken (b) on day advertised? Ans. *Yes*
Was proof taken (c) at place advertised? Ans. *Yes*
Was land properly described in published notice? Ans. *Yes*
Were names of witnesses properly published? Ans. *Yes*
(See Instructions 3.)
4. Was officer legally qualified to take the proof? Ans. *Yes*
(See Instructions 4.)
5. Was all the proof taken before the same officer? Ans. *Yes*
6. Has he properly signed and attested the proof papers? Ans. *Yes*
7. Have you signed all necessary papers? Ans. *Yes*
8. Are names of claimant and witnesses properly signed to all the papers? Ans. *Yes*
9. Do they agree with published notice? Ans. *Yes*
10. Have you compared description and names in the original proof and final entry papers and found them correct? Ans. *Yes*
11. Are proof of publication and posting of notice correct? Ans. *Yes*
(No interlineations or erasures of published notice will be permitted.
Fernandez, 6 L. D., 379.)
12. Are any papers lost, not dated, not signed, or sealed, if neces-

I assume that sometime after 13 April 1891, Aaron B. Oakley then received a deed to his land.

Sometime in 1891, Ray M. Oakley moved to Quincy, Illinois, to work for the **Quincy Herald**, which was owned in part by his uncle, Charles L. Miller. When he left Chadron, Ray would have been about fifteen years old. So Ray lived in Chadron from age nine to age fifteen.

Shortly after Ray moved to Quincy, Aaron B. Oakley and his wife, Hannah Mariah Miller Oakley, also moved from Chadron to Quincy.

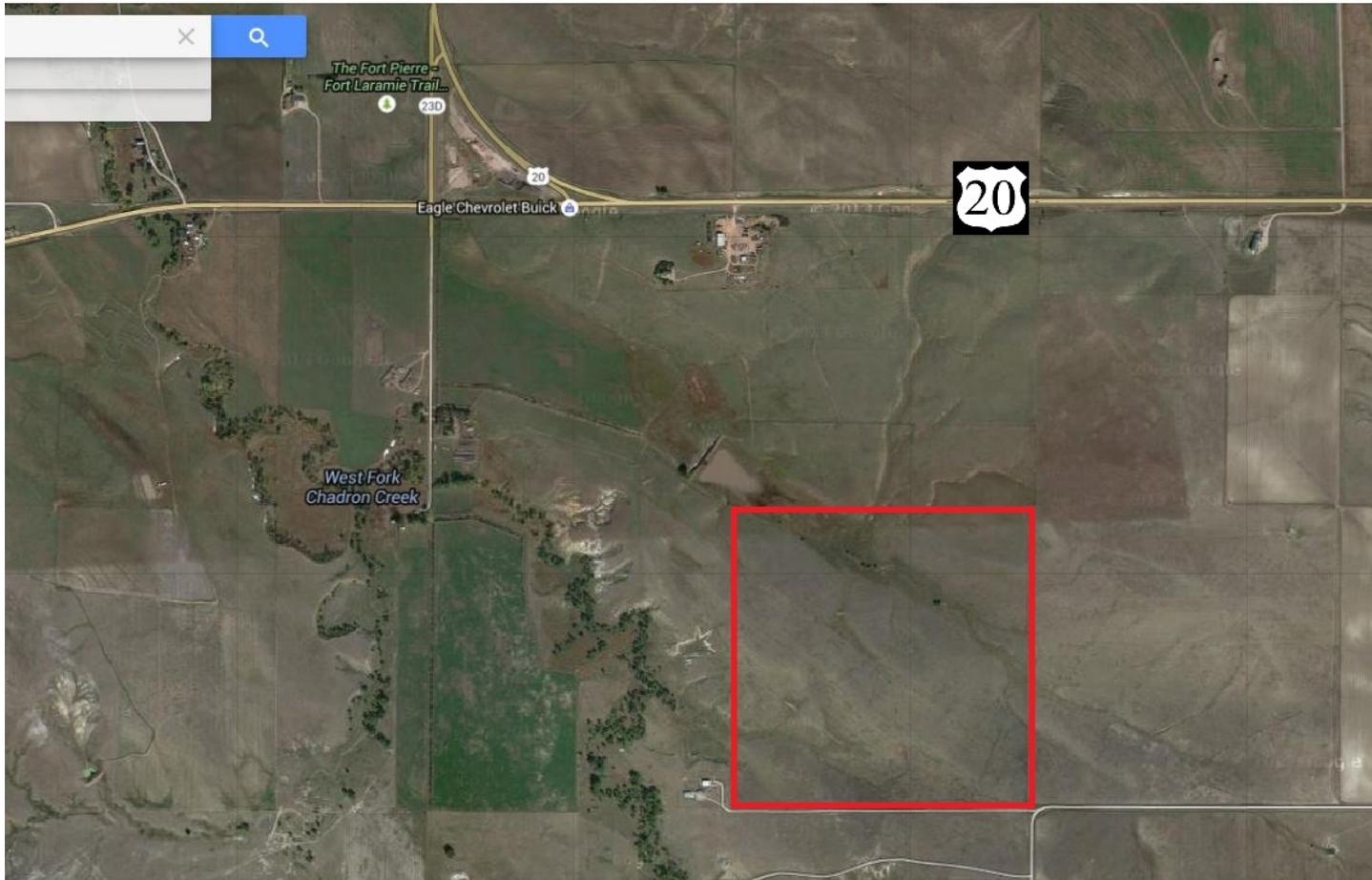
Did Aaron sell the land to someone? Or did he just walk away?

From **Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey - Dawes County**, Prepared for the Nebraska State Historical Society by The Louis Berger Group, Inc., August 2005
Establishment of the county closely coincided with the arrival of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad and Fremont, Elkhorn & Missouri Valley (FE&MV) Railroad. The first Chicago and Northwestern passenger train arrived in Chadron in August 1885 beginning a flood of settlers into the county. By December, the population of Chadron was around 2,500. Settlers in Dawes County in the late 1890's came primarily from England, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, and Czechoslovakia and to a lesser extent Denmark, Scotland, Wales, and Switzerland. By 1890, the population of Chadron alone was 1,867 and several other towns had been established including Crawford, next to Fort Robinson, Marsland, Whitney, and Belmont. The county population was 9,722.

Though many settlers succeeded in building homesteads, several years of drought and depression in the 1880s and 1890s drove many out of the arid plains. The population of Dawes County dropped to 6,215 by 1900.

So was there even a market for Aaron's land? I guess that is the next thing I'll have to research....

Today, the Aaron B. Oakley homestead appears to be empty land, as indicated in this photo from Google Maps:



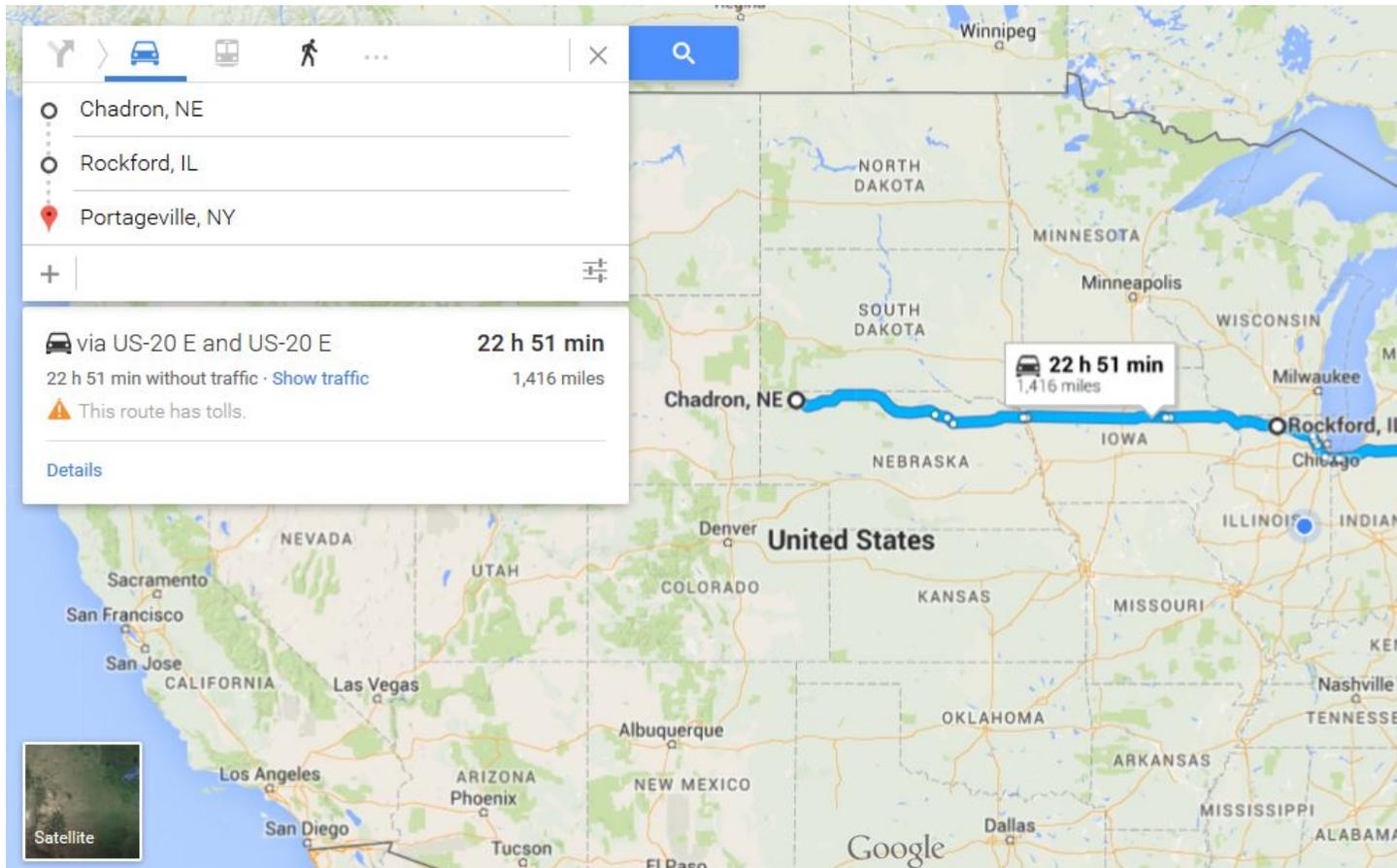
Note that this land is less than 1.5 miles from the Wal-Mart Supercenter, which is at the west edge of Chadron. US Route 20, which is the main road through Chadron, is one-half mile north of the A. B. Oakley homestead.

Here is the Google Street View, taken from U.S. Route 20 looking south towards the A. B. Oakley homestead:



It appears that Aaron’s description of the land as “rolling prairie land” is still accurate.

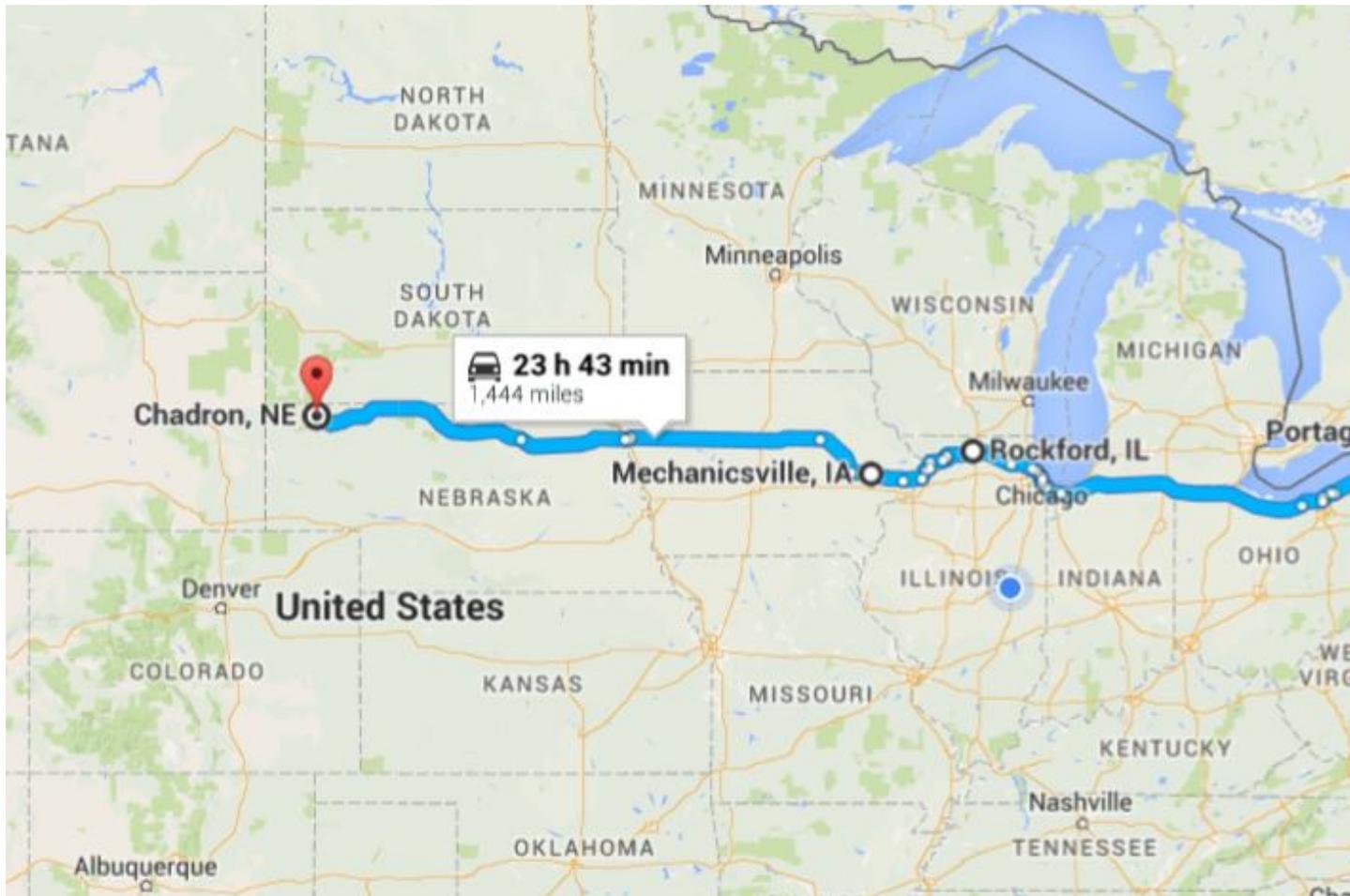
As an aside, U.S. Route 20 is an east-west United States highway. Spanning 3,365 miles, it is the longest road in the United States. The highway’s eastern terminus is in Boston, Massachusetts, and its western terminus is in Newport, Oregon, within a mile of the Pacific Ocean. And it passes 0.5 miles to the north of A. B. Oakley’s homestead just west of Chadron, Nebraska (in fact, U.S. Route 20 is the main street through Chadron). What is really incredible is that U.S. Route 20 goes through the south side of Rockford, Illinois, within a mile or two of where Hannah lived as a young girl in New Milford, Illinois. And Aaron, Hannah, and Ray were living in Rockford at the time of the 1880 U.S. Census, before they moved to Chadron. [According to Google Maps, it is 762 miles from Rockford to Chadron via U.S. Route 20.] And even more incredible is that Hannah was born in Portageville, New York, which is about 20 miles south of U.S. Route 20. [According to Google Maps, it is 1,416 miles from Portageville to Chadron via U.S. Route 20.] Here is a map showing U.S. Route 20 from Portageville to Chadron:



Of course, U.S. Route 20 didn't even exist when Aaron and Hannah lived along what was to be its future route. In fact, U.S. highways were not created until after the Federal Highway Act of 1921, and 11 November 1926 is generally thought of as the date of the official birth the United States Highway System - see:

<http://www.historicus20.com/historic-us-route-20.html>

But wait, there is more!! Ray M. Oakley was born in 1876 when Aaron and Hannah were living in Mechanicsville, Iowa. Could it be that Mechanicsville is also near U.S. Route 20? Well, actually it is about 40 miles south of U.S. Route 20 - but that still is pretty close:



I have to say that this boggles the mind ...

I was able to go to the Dawes County Assessor and find the parcel that today includes A.B. Oakley's quarter-section. It has:

Property Address: 5615 Highway 20

Parcel ID: 230003541

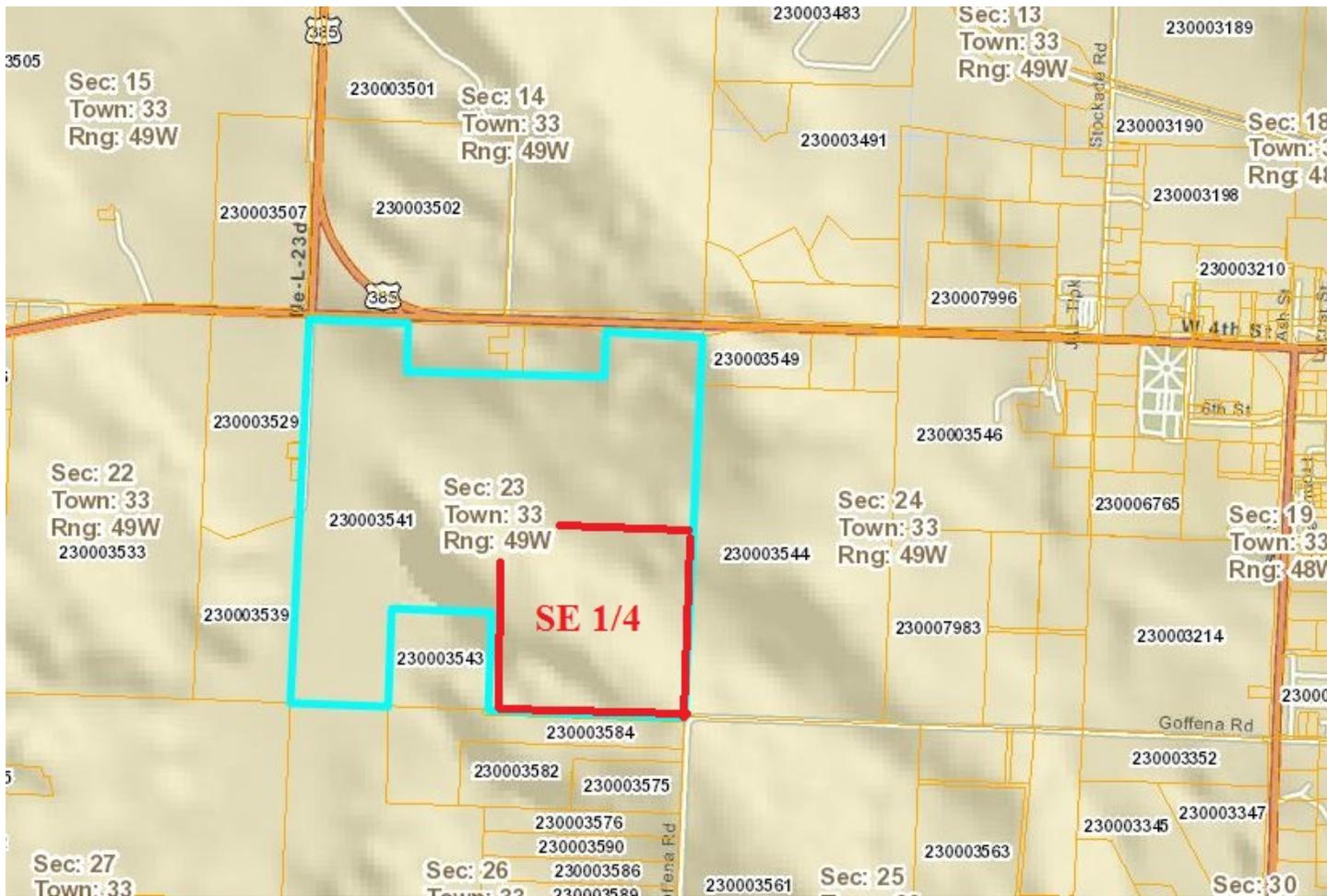
This parcel includes the following (marked in light blue on the map below):

PT.N2, SE4, N2SW4, SW4SW4

Section 23 - Township 33 - Range 49

561.060 acres

Parcel ID: 230003541



Note that the A. B. Oakley homestead was just the SE 1/4 (south-east quarter section) – 160 acres.

According to the Dawes County Assessor, the 561 acre parcel is valued at \$235,585 and the most recent annual taxes were \$3,768.22. This works out to a value of \$420 per acre and taxes of \$6.71 per acre.

The current owners are:

Donald H. Mandelko & Pamela K. Mandelko

771 N. Whitney Lake Road

Whitney, NE 69367

Whitney is about 15 miles straight west of the A. B. Oakley Homestead in Chadron, Nebraska. It has a population of seventy-seven people.

Finally, here is a photo of the Chadron of today:



All homestead claims generated paper records. These records are currently stored in the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The National Park Service is working on a long-term project to digitize these records. So far, records for the homestead claims in Nebraska have been put into an online database that can be searched at [Fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) (with a subscription). Aaron B. Oakley's claim can be found at:

<http://www.fold3.com/document/291044961/>

It is estimated that there are 1,933 homestead records in the Chadron collection, and 104,260 total records from Nebraska. "The case files preserve material of considerable historic and genealogical significance." The Chadron records were digitized starting in 2011 - see:

http://rapidcityjournal.com/thechadronnews/latest/homestead-digitization-project-to-work-on-chadron-area-records/article_a26bada4-c2b9-11e0-a104-001cc4c002e0.html

All of the images of the paperwork associated with his claim that are contained in this narrative were downloaded directly from the [Fold3.com](http://www.fold3.com) website.

fold3 