

# The Platt House and who was Jeremiah Platt?

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Contributing writer



An attractive two-and-a-half story red brick house with white trim sits on the south side of Claffin Road just west of the Kansas State University campus. A large sign identifies the house as the research library of the Riley County Genealogical Society. Aside from being an attractive old structure, what is the significance of this building and who was Jeremiah Evarts Platt, who built it in 1871?

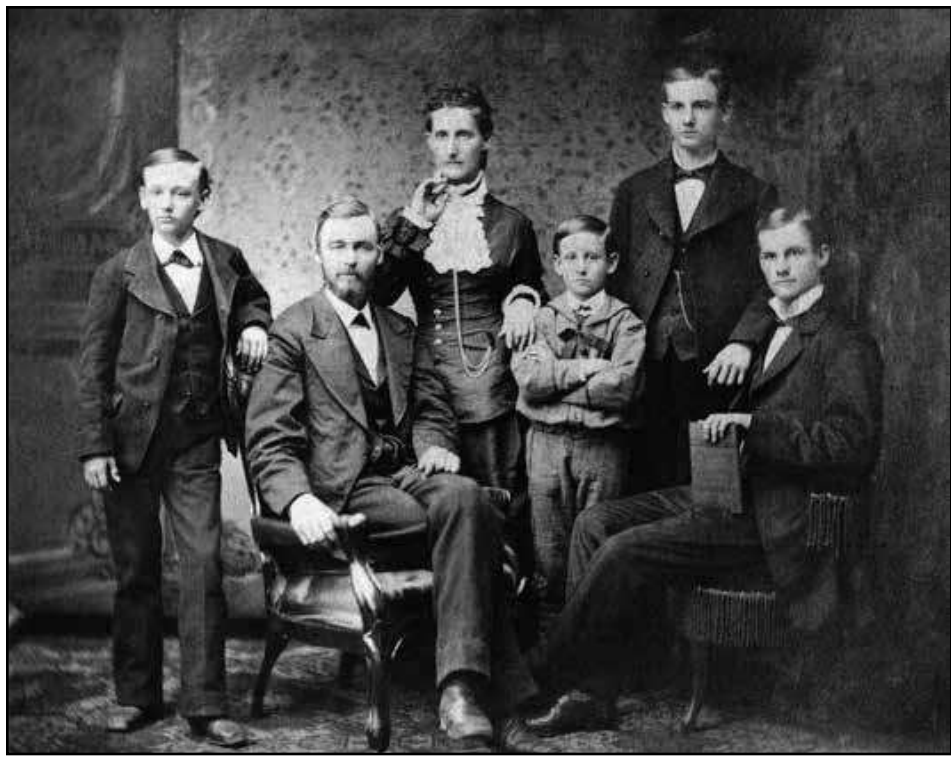
The significance lies with its builder and his role in the territorial, educational and religious history of Manhattan, Riley County and Kansas. Jeremiah Platt's life intersects with New England abolitionists coming west, the Underground Railroad, Bleeding Kansas, the founding of Lincoln College later to become Washburn University, the early faculty of K-State, and the development of Congregational church ministries in Kansas and Oklahoma.

Jeremiah, who most often went by Evarts, was born May 28, 1833 in Plymouth, Connecticut, the fifth of seven known children born to Jireh Platt and Sarah Dutton. Both parents were Congregationalists of old New England Puritan stock. Jeremiah's father was persuaded by a church sermon to emigrate to Illinois to form a bulwark against the spread of slavery. In 1833, the Platt family followed other Connecticut abolitionists to Mendon, Illinois, where Jireh became a stationmaster on the Underground Railroad. His sons Enoch, Henry Dutton and Luther Hart

Platt, along with Jeremiah, were actively involved as well. The Platt family and many others risked their lives at a time when helping fugitive slaves was a felony.

In 1856, Jeremiah and brothers Enoch and Luther Hart Platt were members of the "Mendon Five," who heeded the call to come to "Bleeding Kansas" during the Free State movement. They came to Wabaunsee, Kansas, a new community founded by New Haven abolitionists supported by the New England Emigrant Aid Company with financial and material support from Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. In Wabaunsee, they established a homestead and were founding members of the Wabaunsee Beecher Bible and Rifle Church. The Platt brothers are highlighted in the documentary "Dawn of Day" about the Underground Railroad in Wabaunsee County directed by Rusty Earl, narrated by Richard Pitts and produced by the K-State College of Education: [coe.k-state.edu/dawn-of-day/](http://coe.k-state.edu/dawn-of-day/).

Jeremiah became a teacher and a county superintendent in Wabaunsee. He also became a teacher in Topeka in 1862-63 and became the principal of Topeka's first graded school. He and wife Jennie also assisted in the founding of Lincoln College by Congregationalists that later became Washburn University. In December 1863, he was elected to the faculty of newly-established Kansas State



Above: Jeremiah and Jennie Platt with their four sons. Below: A view of the Platt House today.

Agricultural College, where he was a faculty member until June 1883. He taught vocal music, mathematics and elementary English. He was a popular faculty member, initially one of only two male faculty members and voted to remain on faculty by students while the other went into the army during the Civil War. He was not always popular as tradition holds he resigned his position under pressure in 1883 because of his too-ardent support of Prohibition.

In 1867, the Platts purchased a 10-acre farm west of campus adjacent to the farmstead of Isaac T. Goodnow, another New England abolitionist and president and co-founder of Bluemont College. In 1871, Jeremiah built his home, one of the first brick houses in Manhattan.

He was also active



in the Manhattan Congregational Church, teaching Sunday school and directing the choir. He was well known as a singer and musician, as were his brothers. He also held singing classes in Wabaunsee and preached at the Beecher Bible and Rifle Church, commuting from Manhattan in the 1870s. He was ordained a minister in Clay Center in 1888 and became

an agent of the Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, riding circuit on horseback in Kansas establishing Sunday schools.

In 1893, Jeremiah was transferred to Oklahoma, settling in Guthrie, where he continued his ministerial work. During one of his circuit rides in Oklahoma, he suffered an eye injury serious enough to affect his health. Despite fail-

ing health, he continued his ministerial work. He died April 16, 1899 in Guthrie a few days after returning from a Sunday School Convention in Alma, Kansas. His wife Jennie moved to St. Joseph, Missouri, to live with a niece, where she died in 1917. Both, along with son Henry Augustus, are buried in Manhattan's Sunset Cemetery.

The Riley County Genealogical Society is honored to be in the Platt House, which is on both the state and national historic registries. The Platt House is a prime example of an historic building preserved and repurposed to serve the public. We welcome visitors interested in exploring our collections and, perhaps, to find out more about the Platts, but definitely to explore their own family histories in Kansas or beyond. Our website is: <http://www.rileycgs.com>.

The Riley County Historical Museum also has information about the Platt House and other historical properties in the county. The museum's website is on the Riley County, Kansas page: [www.rileycountykansas.gov](http://www.rileycountykansas.gov) and the Riley County Historical Society website is: [www.rileychs.com](http://www.rileychs.com).

I am particularly thankful to Zona Platt Galle of North Newton, Kansas, descendant of Jeremiah's brother, Luther Hart Platt, for her kind assistance preparing this article.

Barry Michie is an anthropologist with a doctorate from Michigan State University, and he is retired from the K-State Office of International Programs. He is president of the Riley County Genealogical Society.

# Woman, 82, arrested at airport says she forgot bipolar meds

Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — An 82-year-old Texas woman who was jailed for about two hours after scuffling with an airport security officer in Kansas expressed embarrassment Friday, calling herself a "plain old grandma" who'd forgotten to take her bipolar medication.

The confrontation ensued Wednesday when Transportation Security Administration workers at Eisenhower International Airport in Wichita tried to confiscate Lila Mae Bryan's bottle of Bath and Body Works foaming hand gel because it exceeded the 3.4 ounce limit.

The TSA said Friday that the 5-foot-2, 120-pound woman walked around an X-ray screening belt early Wednesday morning and assaulted a TSA officer. The officer, 37, was not injured, according to reports.

"I can't believe I did all that," Bryan, of Mesquite, said Friday in an interview with The Associated Press, after issuing an apology.

TSA spokeswoman Carrie Harmon said the security officer found the bottle during a routine search when the woman's

bag triggered an alarm. An airport police officer who saw the commotion "removed the passenger from the checkpoint," Harmon said. Airport police authorized the woman's arrest.

Bryan said she is "usually really good" about taking her medication, but she hadn't slept at all the night before and was exhausted from the trip. Her 85-year-old husband, Silas Bryan, said they had been to their farm in Kansas and gone to her 65th class reunion. He said they'd had a long drive that included stops to visit relatives. Because he has Parkinson's disease, she did all the driving.

"Sometimes I just guess I lose it," she said after a trip to the beauty shop and grocery store. "I was so tired, and I was upset. I've never been in jail before. I'm just a plain old grandma, great-grandma."

She spent nearly two hours in the jail's booking area and was photographed and fingerprinted before being freed, Sedgwick County Sheriff's Lt. Lin Dehning told The Wichita Eagle.

After hearing about the incident, Sedgwick County District Attorney Marc Bennett authorized the woman's immediate

release without bond.

"She was very shaken, embarrassed, and I think the simplest description would be overwhelmed by the time we got to her," Bennett told The Eagle on Thursday. "She was clearly having a hard time handling the stress of the situation."

### 3 children found safe in Amber Alert; suspect in custody

WICHITA — Authorities have found three children alive and well and apprehended the man they apparently were with who is suspected in the death of a woman at a Wichita home that burned down.

An Amber Alert has been issued earlier Friday for William J. Thompson III, 12, Ethan Thompson, 5, and Damien Wright, 2, who authorities believed

were with Dane Wright, 29, a suspect in the death and fire.

Wichita police consider the death associated with the fire suspicious and are trying to identify the victim. Authorities said Dane Wright was taken into custody and all three children were found safe. Authorities did not say the relationship between Dane Wright and the children.

### Man accused of crimes in 3 states waives hearing

PRATT — A man accused of killing and wounding people in Mississippi, New Mexico and Kansas in February has waived a hearing.

Alex Deaton is charged in Kansas with attempted murder, aggravated robbery, theft, fleeing and attempting to elude an officer.

KSNW-TV reports that a Pratt County judge bound Deaton over after he waived Friday's hearing. The stepfather of Pratt store clerk Riley Juel, whom Deaton is accused of shooting, says a recovering Juel has resumed work.

Deaton is indicted in Rankin County, Mississippi, for murder, auto theft and drive-by shooting, accused of strangling his girlfriend, stealing her car, and shooting a jogger.

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