

Community saves service station

By **KIMBERLY DAVIS**
k.davis@nwkansas.com

The former brick gasoline and oil service station that used to sit at the corner of U.S. 36 and U.S. 83, where Ampride is now, was successfully saved from demolition by community fundraisers.

The station was built in fall 1933 by Paul A. Nitsch and sold Phillips Petroleum products. According to an article in *The Oberlin Herald* in 1933, it was referred to as "Paul's Super-Service Station."

The first manager of the station was Fred Walton, then later Wert Frerichs and Mark Cleland served as the station attendant.

Seven years later, Mr. Nitsch leased his bulk business and the station to Bob Robson of Russell. In May, 1946 Ross Van Pelt and Charles Lincoln leased the station and sold Sinclair products.

Later the station was sold to Lester Olmsted, who began operating it in December 1947. Under Mr. Olmsted, the station handled Standard Oil products. At that time the station also did wheel alignments.

The brick station then became Petro Pal, owned by the Decatur Cooperative Association. The station was phased out when plans to build a new convenience store on the same site.



PAUL'S OIL COMPANY, originally located at the intersection of U.S. 36 and 83 highways, was moved to the museum by William/Midwest Movers of Hastings, Neb. It was originally owned by Paul Nitsch Sr.

When the plans to tear down the building were announced, the Decatur County Museum didn't have the money to move the station because of other projects.

Museum Board President Jack Metcalf was quoted in a newspaper article stating, "Because priorities are as they are and the capital account has been drawn down, the board did not feel comfortable in taking on a project of this size and cost."

The museum had recently received the Lo-hoefener Seed House, which was donated to the Historical Society, and the board was putting a new roof on it. Wiring and duct work also needed to be done to the building.

The board, however, agreed that the preservation of the service station was an excellent idea.

Members of the board, including Julia DeGroot, Cathy Fraker, Peggy Hardman and Barbara Dehlinger and community members, formed a "Save Our Station" organization.

The group raised the \$15,000 needed to move the brick station to the museum grounds.

On July 24, 1996, the money had been raised and the building was loaded onto a trailer and moved down York Avenue to its new location at the museum by Williams/Midwest Movers of Hastings, Neb.

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