

5. OLD HOMESTEADS

Homesteading in Livermore was a tough business as the Tibbits place testifies – it is one of the few local homesteads that managed to survive beyond the ripe old age of 100.¹

There had been at least two older homesteads on the Tibbits place: the Sawin or Seavin² and the Morgan places. I am confused as to which was which or if they were one and the same. The Larimer County records have so far been opaque on this question. Information Evan Roberts gave me gets more confusing with the passage of time, and I clearly didn't ask enough questions of Bill and Olive Tibbits.

Sawin Place. In 1873 Marcellus Sawin filed a "Land Declaration" (squatters claim) in Colorado Territory³ for the 160-acre parcel shown on the opposite page.⁴

George Roberts (1863-1966), Evan's father, recalled a story of his father and mother (Robert and Mary Roberts) attending the first dance held in Livermore August 1874. It was held at the newly constructed frame house of brothers Marcellus (1833-1912) and Frank Sawin (1835-1892).

George Roberts described the Sawin house as being across Stonewall Creek from the Aldrich place (not yet there, I think, in 1874). The one-room house was so small (12' x 14') that it could only accommodate the twelve women who attended, so the men had to stand outside taking turns to go inside to dance.⁵ Almost certainly in attendance was a neighbor's daughter, Clara Barlow (1859-1919), Marcellus' future bride. They were married soon afterward.

Evan told me the Sawin Place had been located about where the Higgins house is now. He was quite specific about it being the site of Livermore's "first frame house". If so, it was not within the described bounds of the Sawin's squatters claim.⁶

In 1877 Marcellus and Clara deeded their claim to Aquilla, Acquilla or Aguilla Morgan (three spellings

in the records) and eventually resurfaced on a homestead near Buffalo, Wyoming in the 1880s.

Morgan Place. On the west bank of Stonewall Creek, about a quarter mile north of our house, are the remains of what Evan and Bill identified as the Morgan Homestead, with many cottonwoods, several apple trees and some lilacs.

The most prominent remnant is a two-room, stone-lined dugout. The outside dimensions appear to have been about 12' x 28'. The two rooms were probably about 9' x 15' and 9' x 9', the front being the larger. The back room could have been a bedroom or a pantry/root cellar. The dugout is full of old tin cans and other junk just waiting for an archeological picnic – it was used as a dump by Aldrich and/or Tibbits.

Evan told me that the Morgan house was taken down and moved in halves – one half was moved to the Forks Hotel to be used as a lean-to coal shed. He thought the other half was part of our old chicken coop. If that is true, the Morgan house was other than the stone dugout. There is an indication of what might have been a stone foundation for a building (house?) about 24'x30' but it is situated oddly with respect to the dugout.

There is a well-defined outline of a 30'x36' foundation. We know that was a barn, which was taken down and moved across the creek, board by board, beam by beam to its current location at our place.⁷ The roof of the barn in its original location may be visible in the photograph of the Aldrich Place in the previous chapter. The large haystack seen next to the barn testifies to Morgan's skills as a farmer.

Aquilla Morgan filed for the third major water right in Livermore rather grandly titled "*The Ditch of Acquilla Morgan*" with a priority of No. 59.⁸ It irrigated the beautiful little hay meadow (now known as the South 40) that lies south of County Road 76H along the river. His water right was transferred to the North Poudre Irrigation Company around 1910⁹ with water for the South 40 hay meadow being subse-

quently supplied from the North Poudre Canal.

It is not clear why or when Morgan and his wife, Mary, left Livermore, but they show up in Turlock, California as farmers in the 1910 census.

All in all, I have more questions than answers. Why was the Sawin/Morgan squatters claim never proved up? Where was the Sawin house located? How did Morgan and Aldrich coexist on land claimed by both under different acts of Congress?¹⁰ Did Morgan sell out informally (I can find no public record) or just pack up and leave? Was the 1904 flood a factor? How did North Poudre Irrigation come to acquire title to the Morgan Ditch water right? More time spent poking around would undoubtedly provide some of the answers, but I'm out of time for now.

¹ The Livermore area has only recently reached a population that exceeds that of a century ago. This was an area of many small subsistence homesteads.

² The spelling varies in the Larimer County records.

³ "*commencing at a spot approximately 50 rods southeast of the junction of Rabbit Creek and the North Fork of the Cache la Poudre River, thence north 80 rods, east 240 rods, south 160 rods, west 80 rods, north 80 rods, west 160 rods.*"

⁴ Marcellus' brother, Frank, filed a Land Declaration for 160 acres on ten Mile Creek in 1874.

⁵ The Larimer County Stockgrowers Association 1884-1956, p. 20

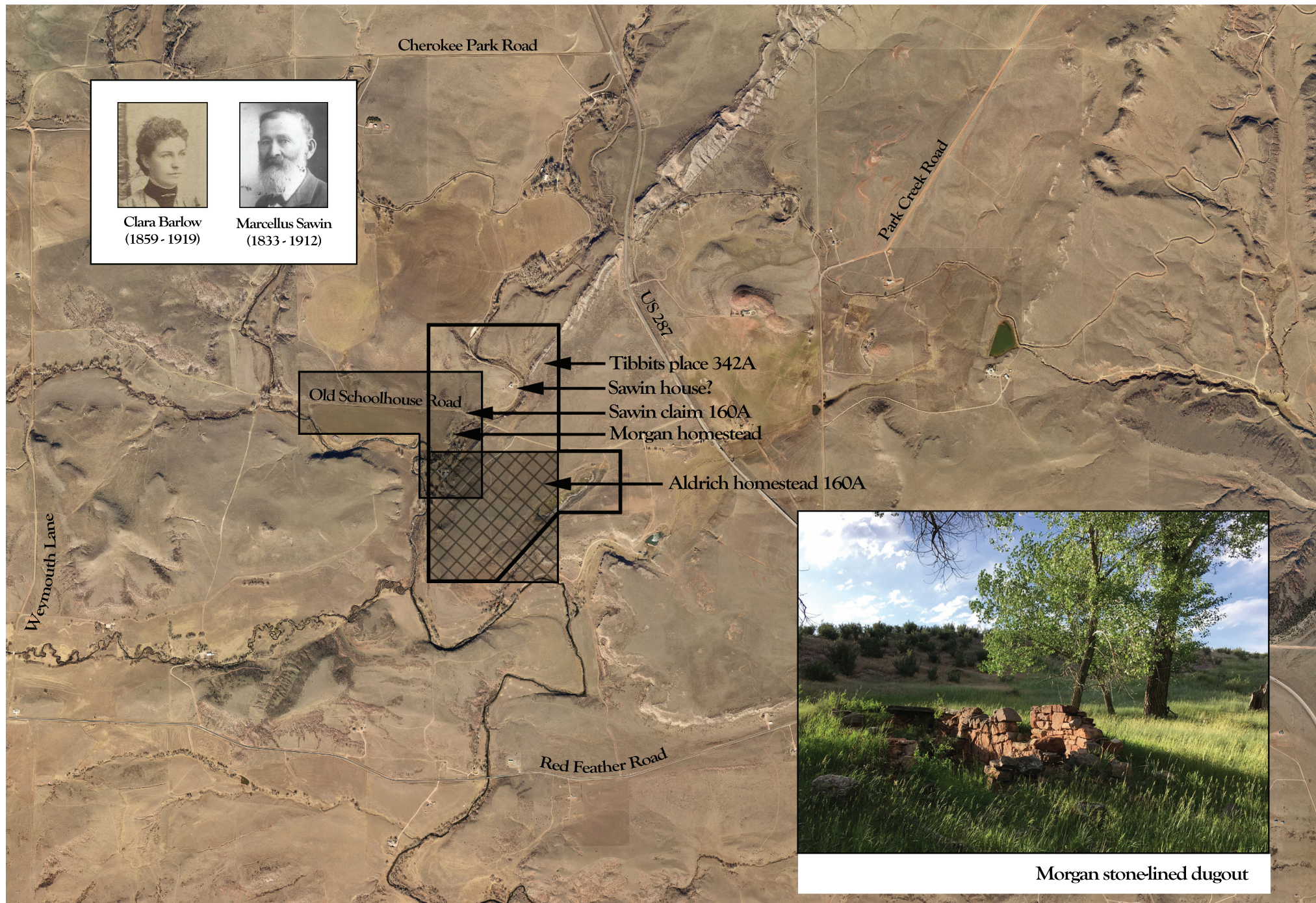
⁶ North of County Road 76H and west of Stonewall Creek. There was some remnant, perhaps of the Sawin Homestead, but that was unfortunately obliterated when the Higgins' house was built in 1996.

⁷ Bill Tibbits told me the barn was moved in 1927.

⁸ With an appropriation date of 1873, the ditch was probably dug by the Sawins and named by Morgan.

⁹ In 1917 the District Water Court granted North Poudre a new point of diversion for the "Ditch of Acquilla Morgan" at Halligan Reservoir.

¹⁰ Mary Aldrich was granted a homestead patent in 1894 on the SW1/4, SEC 29, T10N, R70W. I do not know the year it was filed, but think it was 1882 or 1883.



Clara Barlow
(1859 - 1919)



Marcellus Sawin
(1833 - 1912)

Old Schoolhouse Road

Tibbits place 342A

Sawin house?

Sawin claim 160A

Morgan homestead

Aldrich homestead 160A

Red Feather Road



Morgan stonelined dugout