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KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Certification of State Register Listing

The Register of Historic Kansas Places includes all Kansas properties nominated to the National Register as well as lower threshold properties which are listed on the state register only.

Property Name: The Ratcliff Real Estate Building, Butcher Shop, and Carriage House

Address: 412 State Street, Atwood, KS

County: Rawlins

Owner: Onamae Dechert

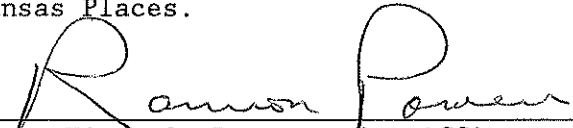
Address: 507 Plumb Place, Atwood, KS 67730

National Register eligible _____

State Register eligible

This property was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review for the Register of Historic Kansas Places on February 24, 1990.

I hereby certify that this property is listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places.



State Historic Preservation Officer

March 7, 1990
Date

The Ratcliff Real Estate Buildings are located at 412 State Street in Atwood, Kansas. The complex is comprised of a two story frame building (c. 1887) that fronts onto State Street and a one story frame butcher shop (c. 1880s) and one story frame carriage house (c. 1887) that stand behind the two story building. The Ratcliff offices were the center of much activity including an abstract office, a notary public, and a small bank. The original bank counter remains in the building as does the wall of file boxes, the large original safe, desks, high stools, the abstract table, carved swivel office chairs, other small accessories. The complex as a whole maintains a high degree of integrity. However, in 1988 the main building was faced with vinyl siding and part of the wooden storefront was replaced with a brick veneer. The butcher shop was moved from its original site. It is possible that it was used as the first Ratcliff Real Estate and Loan Office.

John Ratcliff and his son Wilfred J. Ratcliff (1867-1954) established one of the first real estate offices in Rawlins County in 1887, naming it Ratcliff Real Estate and Loans. The partnership was dissolved in the early 1890s and Wilfred became the sole proprietor of the business. In 1898 Wilfred purchased the two story frame building at 412 State Street for \$900 to house the growing business. Wilfred Ratcliff and his wife Alena Hudson occupied the apartment above the real estate office, and probably rented the space before their purchase of the building.

John and Elizabeth Ratcliff and their children Wilfred and Cora, moved from Ohio to Belleville, Kansas in 1885 and then settled in Atwood in 1886-1887. Atwood was platted in 1879 and in 1881 became the Rawlins County seat.

During the settling of Rawlins County in the 1880s and 1890s this business establishment was the center of "tremendous activity"; and the Ratcliff promotional flyer of Atwood was widely circulated in the U.S. Railroad passenger cars that were chartered by Ratcliff to bring potential buyers to this area. Quoting from an early Editor of the Citizen Patriot: "W.J. Ratcliff was recognized as probably the best-informed man on real estate titles in the County in the early development days. He visualized the development possibilities of the area and was active in advertising and promoting it." The first maps of Rawlins County, Northwest Kansas, Sherman County, and Cheyenne County were compiled and printed by W.J. Ratcliff. These were the maps used for many early land-sales in the area.

"Ratcliff's Map of Northwest Kansas", n.d. advertises that, "The farms platted on this map are for sale and are all bargains. Write for full description and price of each farm shown. Farms that do not appear on my latest list have been sold and are no longer controlled by me. I have many other choice properties not shown on the map."

W.J. Ratcliff was admitted to the Kansas Bar in March 1897. He was the vice president of the Citizens State Bank of Atwood (later sold to the Rawlins County Bank) which was located in his office building. One of the first Abstract offices in Rawlins County was established at Ratcliff Real Estate. Ratcliff was one of the first Notary Publics in Rawlins County. Ratcliff attended college in Ohio. Alena Huson Ratcliff had been an English teacher at Atwood High School. Her father, Byron Huson, was a

contractor and builder who was responsible for many of the homes and other buildings in Atwood.

In 1950 W.J. Ratcliff's son Dewey Ratcliff (1898-1980) became the manager of the business. He attended Atwood elementary school. Later he graduated from Los Angeles High School then graduated from the Southwestern School of Law and Brownsburger Business College, both in Los Angeles. He was a member of the Kansas Real Estate and Brokers Association and handled the business of many non-resident land-owners as well as the family property. With his death in 1980 Ona Mae Ratcliff, his wife, became the owner-manager of the business. She had served as an accountant for the business for over twenty-five years.