

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

Historic name Howe, Edgar W., House
Other names/site number Potato Hill; KHRI #005-0000-00030
Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number 20045 266th Road
City or town Atchison
State Kansas Code KS County Atchison Code 005 Zip code 66002

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: [x] national [] statewide [X] local Applicable National Register Criteria: [] A [X] B [x] C [] D

Patrick Zollner (signature)
Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO
Date 2-6-21

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting official
Date
Title
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
[] entered in the National Register [] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register [] removed from the National Register
[] other (explain:)

Listed in the National Register June 7, 2021

Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS: Bungalow/Craftsman

foundation: STONE

walls: OTHER/Cementitious siding

roof: ASPHALT

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

The Edgar Watson Howe house, also known as Potato Hill, is located at 20045 266th Road southeast of Atchison in Atchison County, Kansas. The house sits on 72.35 acres atop a bluff above the Missouri River. The house is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B for its association with Edgar W. Howe, a locally prominent journalist who owned and operated the *Atchison Daily Globe* for more than three decades. Howe was also the author of publications and several books that caught the attention of a national audience.

The house is also nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an early example in Kansas of a Craftsman bungalow. Howe planned his bungalow as a home for his retirement, naming his acreage Potato Hill. The house was begun in 1906 and completed in 1907. The 1½-story bungalow, the only remaining structure from Howe's period of ownership, still has its original Craftsman appearance with its shingled and stone exterior, impressive south and east porches, original floor plan and interior Craftsman woodwork. The historic portions of the frame house are clad in modern Hardie brand shingles that replicate the house's original shingles. The modern northwest addition, added in the early 1960s, has fiber cement clapboard siding to distinguish it from the historic portion of the house. The house is in excellent condition and retains its integrity of design, location, and materials.

Elaboration

Site

The Edgar Howe house faces south toward 266th Road, a rural road that ends just east of the house. The house is surrounded by rural fields and wooded areas. A bluff that overlooks the Missouri River is east of the house. The house was built on the north border of the abandoned town of Sumner.¹ A road east of the house leads to a house at 20073 266th Road. The house's immediate site includes a circa 1960 garage located northwest of the house, a large south concrete driveway, a circa 1970 in-ground north swimming pool, and a north 1988 gazebo.²

Architectural Description

The side-gabled 1½-story Craftsman bungalow faces south. The house's lower porch walls, front porch columns, and two side chimneys are of uncut, irregularly coursed limestone boulders. The exterior walls of the original portion of the house are clad with cementitious shingles. Walls of the 1960s northwest addition have clapboard siding. The roof has modern asphalt shingles. Unless noted, all windows are wood six-over-one double-hungs installed in 2017 to match the windows shown in a 1908 photograph (Figure 4).

Three stone columns support the house's enclosed porch in the **south façade** (Photographs 1, 2, 3).³ A modern entrance door with a transom light and sidelights is located between the porch's first two columns. Concrete steps with stone sidewalls lead to the entrance. Two windows with a common stone sill are left of the entrance. Four windows are located between the second and third porch columns. Above the porch, the

¹ According to *The History of Atchison County* by Sheffield Ingalls, Sumner was platted in 1856 by Massachusetts emigrants as a free-state outpost to Atchison. The town grew during its first year to include several businesses that included a ferry, sawmill and grist mill. Sumner declined rapidly due to an 1859 drought and, in 1860, a tornado followed by a plague of grasshoppers. The surviving Sumner houses were moved to Atchison or to nearby farms.

² The auxiliary structures are not included in this nomination because they are not historically associated with Howe's significance as a newspaper man and writer.

³ The porch was enclosed by the house's second owners, Harry and Hazel Vanstrum. The Vanstrum family, who owned the house from 1935 to 1950, also screened in the house's east porch.

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second story has a center pair of hipped dormers, each with two windows. A flat latticed balustrade fronts the dormers. A recessed two-story extension extends west of the front porch. The extension has windows in both stories of the south side. A one-story entrance to the 1960s addition protrudes west of the two-story section. A one-story screened porch extends from the east side of the house's front porch, supported on the south side by a large wood arched bracket.

The house's **east elevation** (Photograph 5) has a central exterior chimney the extends above the roof gable. Windows are located on either side of the chimney in the second story and in the north portion of the first story. The screened porch fills the south first story of the east elevation. Tile steps with stone sidewalls lead to the side porch's screen door. A large arched bracket matching the south bracket is located within the north side of the side screened porch. A pair of French doors with multi-paned sidelights leads from the screened porch to the enclosed front porch. An exterior grill is attached to the north base of the stone chimney. A concrete and tile deck wraps around the house's northeast corner.⁴

The one-story 1960s extension fronts the **west elevation** (Photograph 4). The modern addition fills the first story of the west wall and continues to the north elevation, providing a center ADA ramp to the house. The extension has a stone veneer foundation, flat roof, clapboard siding and four windows. The west second story is clad in shingles and has a chamfered bay window above the first-story entrance.

The house's **north elevation** (Photograph 6) consists of the original two-story north wall with a projecting center bay and the one-story 1960s addition, approximately 22 feet deep. The house's deck fronts the east portion of the north elevation, approached by a short set of tile steps. The first and second stories of the east portion of the north elevation have pairs of narrow four-over-one double-hung windows. The extended center bay in the second story has one pair of center windows in the north wall and single windows in the side walls. A single window is located in the second story of the north elevation's west section. The one-story 1960s addition has a pair of northeast corner picture windows with three-light transoms adjacent to a double-hung window on each side. The north wall also has a small pair of west windows. The east wall of the addition has an entrance door at the juncture.

Interior

The Howe house's 1906 **interior** retains its original layout, wood floors, and most of its historic moldings.⁵ The first story has red oak floors and quarter-sawn oak woodwork that includes wainscoting in the entry, dining room, and living room. The 1960s addition expanded the house's west kitchen and added a north bedroom and library.

The house's **first story** foyer is entered through the south enclosed porch. The space has wainscoting and an elaborate quarter-sawn oak staircase (Photograph 7). The staircase walls have upper latticed openings. The south entrance door and stairway window have leaded glass windows. Wide doorways lead from the foyer to the dining room and living room. The focal point of the living room is the east fireplace with green tiles that fill the hearth and extend to the ceiling (Photograph 9). The room's ceiling has radiating beams. The house's central dining room has pocket doors leading to the foyer, living room, and library (Photographs 8, 10). The house's modern north library room has large picture windows on the north and east walls. The library's painted woodwork complements the woodwork in the rest of the first floor. The rooms in the house's northwest addition—the kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, and laundry area—all have modern finishes. This addition provided an accessible living space for the house's previous elderly owner.

The house's **second story** has three bedrooms—two small bedrooms and Edgar Howe's large bedroom. Woodwork is painted, and the floors are natural heart pine. The west bedroom (Photograph 11) has a west bay window, east closet, and south attached bathroom. The central bedroom has a west closet. Howe's bedroom spans the east portion of the second floor. The room has an east fireplace, two south closets, and a southwest

⁴ The elevated deck was originally stone but has been coated with concrete.

⁵ Missing moldings have been replicated by the current owner.

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bathroom.⁶ Howe's desk was located within a south nook between the bedroom's closets (Photograph 12). From here he overlooked the fields that were once the deserted town of Sumner. He wrote here for more than 25 years, spreading his influence across the country.

The house's **basement** is utilitarian with stone walls and concrete floors. The space contains a central concrete block "safe room" added in the middle 1970s.

The house's interior and exterior character-defining features demonstrate its uniqueness as an outstanding early Craftsman Bungalow. These features include the house's compact exterior form and massing that incorporate the south front engaged roof and south dormers, as well as its limestone base, columns and chimneys. Interior character-defining features include the abundance of quarter-sawn woodwork, the living room's ceiling beams, and the living room's tiled fireplace.

Condition and Integrity

The Edgar Howe house retains a significant portion of its original appearance, despite changes that occurred with each owner after Howe sold it in 1935. The second owners, Harry and Hazel Vanstrum, owners between 1935 and 1950, enclosed the south front porch, replaced the house's windows, and painted the shingle siding white. Lanore and Sarah Cloud purchased the house in 1950. The Clouds expanded the house and replaced its garage in the early 1960s (Photograph 13). They added a swimming pool in 1970 (Photograph 14) and a pool gazebo in 1988. In 2017-2018, the Cloud family began restoration on the house, beginning with a new roof and replacing the deteriorating windows with wood windows that match the house's original fenestration. Missing interior woodwork was also replaced. Second-story bathrooms were updated. The house's exterior rotting shingles were replaced with cementitious Hardie brand shingles that match the house's 1906 shingles in size, shape, and scale. Hardie clapboards were installed on the 1970 addition to delineate it from the original portion of the house. All exterior work on the original portion of the house was done to match its earliest appearance as seen in historic photos (Figures 4, 6). The house's clearly defined later additions are set back from the original portion of the house and do not negatively impact the house's historic appearance.

The Howe house retains its architectural integrity from its period of significance, the period of time that it was owned by Edgar Howe. The well-maintained house continues in its original function as a single-family home. Renovations have been mindful of the house's history and its original finishes, maintaining the integrity of its appearance while readying it for its next 100 years. The house is in excellent condition and retains its architectural integrity in form, location, setting, design, workmanship, feeling, and association with Edgar W. Howe.

⁶ The fireplace surround is currently under restoration. The second-story bathrooms have modern finishes.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

LITERATURE

COMMUNICATIONS

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1906-1935

Significant Dates

1906

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Edgar Watson Howe

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

William H. Saylor—Architect

George H.T. Schaefer—Builder

Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance, 1906-1935, begins with the year that construction began and ends with the year that Edgar Watson Howe sold the house. The property is significant in the area of Literature and Communications for its association with Edgar Watson Howe, a prominent and important newspaper editor, publisher, and writer in the area. Howe had the property constructed as his retirement home and lived there until the early 1930s.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The Edgar W. Howe house, 20045 266th Road southeast of Atchison, Atchison County, Kansas is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B, significant at the local level for its association with Edgar W. Howe. Howe was the founder of the *Atchison Globe* newspaper and continued as its editor for 34 years. As he was preparing for retirement in 1905, he purchased a quarter section of land south of Atchison overlooking the Missouri River. He built his Craftsman bungalow here in 1906 as a home for his retirement and future literary activities. Howe continued working as a prolific writer during his nearly 30 years in this house. From here he wrote and published *E.W. Howe's Monthly*, a journal that expressed his observations and opinions on life, politics and news events. The *Monthly* attracted nationwide attention, leading to his submissions in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *The New York Post*.

The house is also nominated under Criterion C, significant locally in the area of Architecture as an early Craftsman bungalow. The house's architect was William H. Sayler and the builder was George H.T. Schaefer. Howe's bungalow attracted local attention during its construction for its style and materials. Howe intended for the house to have a rustic appearance that is preserved today. The well-maintained house has much of its original exterior and interior appearance and details. Its 1960s addition has also achieved historic status, contributing to the 1906-1935 Period of Significance. The bungalow atop the river bluff retains its architectural integrity as a rural residence.

Elaboration

Edgar W. Howe

Edgar Howe was Kansas' best known and one of the most prolific journalist in the late 1800s and early 1900s, making a name for himself as the founder, editor and publisher of *The Atchison Daily Globe* for 34 years (Figure 3). He also authored more than 20 books, reaching a wide audience and drawing national recognition. Howe built the house at "Potato Hill" in 1906 and moved there after his retirement from the *Globe* in 1911. From his "old man's house," he wrote more than ten books and founded *E.W. Howe's Monthly*, a national publication that he continued until 1933.

Edgar Howe was born in Wabash County, Indiana in 1853. When he was three years old, his family moved to Harrison County in northwest Missouri. Howe's childhood was dominated by his strict father, Henry Howe, who was an abolitionist and Methodist preacher. Howe's schooling was inconsistent, and he left formal instruction early. At the age of 11 or 12 he learned how to spell and proof newspaper galleys by working as a typesetter in a printing office run by his father.⁷ Howe left home at the age of 15 and began several years working as a journeyman printer for newspapers across the Midwest.⁸ His skills expanded. While working as a printer for the *Nemaha Valley Journal* in Falls City, Nebraska, Howe was left in charge of the newspaper for two weeks while the owner took a vacation. In Falls City he eventually became the foreman, pressman and local editor of the *Journal*. Howe met Clara Frank in Falls City, whom he described at the time as "the object of my affection."⁹ Edgar Howe and Clara Frank married in 1873.

Ed and Clara Howe moved to Atchison, Kansas in 1877, where he established the *Daily Globe*, despite the presence of three other newspapers in the town. He gave away free copies of the *Globe* for two weeks; after

⁷ Calder Pickett, *Ed Howe: Country Town Philosopher* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1968), 9.

⁸ Pickett, 13.

⁹ Pickett, 17.

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that he had no problem selling advertising or getting subscribers.¹⁰ Howe's biographer, Calder Pickett, describes Howe as a small-town man who understood small-town life and would be satisfied with life in the Midwest.¹¹

News in the early issues of the *Atchison Globe* focused on local-interest stories acquired by Howe, featuring items that included news from the police court, agriculture, the state of the Missouri River and legal notes. Interspersed with the recordation of local happenings were Howe's often sardonic observations of life and news. He regularly reflected on religion, marriage, women and temperance. One never knew for certain whether he was indignant or amused. Howe's observations appeared in snippets of the *Globe* among the news articles. Examples included:

"Were it not for the fact that Christians have to put on a clean shirt every Sunday morning, we have an idea we would be a very good one." (16 February 1878)

"Let us pass a law forever prohibiting the manufacture or sale of lace, silk, and other useless and high priced stuffs." (20 March 1882)

One of his early and most popular editorials listed his resolutions for the coming year of 1878, beginning with:

I won't smoke. If I can help it.

I won't chaw plug tobacco.

I won't drink whisky, beer, gin, ale, or other spiritous or malt liquors except on the written advice of twelve disinterested and competent physicians. (29 December 1879)

The Howe family—Ed, Clara, son James and daughter Mateel—moved to 1117 North Third Street in the early 1880s (listed in the National Register, 1 July 1977). The brick Italianate house and Howe's growing salary accommodated the family, four servants, a horse and carriage, cows and chickens. The couple's youngest child, Gene, was born there in 1886.¹²

As *The Globe* entered the 1880s, it ran more news from other cities, such as Kansas City, Chicago, Denver and New York, but continued to focus on local stories. He covered but sharply criticized prominent visitors to Atchison, including financier Jay Gould in 1879 and writer Oscar Wilde in 1882. Howe also rallied the town for local improvements. His tours of the local jail in 1884 and a meat packing house in 1886 cried out for action against horrific conditions.

Howe continued to receive increasing recognition for his literary mannerisms. Biographer Calder Pickett best describes Howe's traits:

What a newspaper prints provides one dimension of its place in a community. How it says it is much more important in the case of *The Atchison Globe*. *The Globe's* editor, Edgar Watson Howe, was becoming a celebrated figure in the Kansas of his time, largely through the vigor and style of his expression.¹³

As the *Globe* became a stronger and better newspaper, Howe completed his first and most famous novel, *The Story of a Country Town*, the 1882 book that helped boost his national recognition. Howe self-published his semi-autobiographical novel, running off four pages at a time until he had 2000 copies.¹⁴ The book was not immediately popular. He sent copies to newspaper contacts, as well as literary figures. The maneuver succeeded, as the book found favor from William Dean Howells and Mark Twain. Howells contacted his publisher, James R. Osgood, who gave the book a wider circulation. Howells and Twain each sent letters to

¹⁰ Dick Pankratz, "Edgar W. Howe Home" National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, 16 November 1971.

¹¹ Pickett, 28.

¹² Pickett, 54.

¹³ Pickett, 54.

¹⁴ Pickett, 67.

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Howe with praise for *The Story of a Country Town*, focusing on the author's delivery. Twain wrote to Howe, "You write as a man TALKS and very few can reach that height of excellence. I think a man who possesses that gift is quite sure to write a readable book—and you have done that."¹⁵ *The Story of a Country Town* positioned Howe as an American writer. The book was reviewed in the *Atlantic Monthly*, London's *Saturday Review* and countless other publications, eventually going into 25 printed editions.¹⁶

Howe's professional reputation grew in the 1890s, sparked by *The Story of a Country Town* and his quotable paragraphs printed in the *Globe*. His printed comments continued as quaint barbs, for example, "There are two ways of raising boys; but judging from the men turned out, both ways are wrong," or "If you go slow others will overtake you; if you go fast, you will exhaust your strength and die young."¹⁷ The paragraphs ran under his regular newspaper column, "Globe Sights." The column was frequently quoted in other newspapers, including the *Boston Globe*. His admirers included Kansas historian Sheffield Ingalls, *Topeka Record* editor and author of *History of Kansas* Noble Prentis and William Allen White, well-known Kansas author and editor of the *Emporia Gazette*. Howe's printed comments reflected his cantankerous and biased views that were common during his era. Reflecting the attitudes of the time, he felt free to speak ill of women, "Indians" and "Negroes." As he grew older and more sophisticated, Howe amended his views somewhat, but never ceased his critical comments of all mankind.¹⁸

Clara and Ed Howe's marriage was deteriorating in the late 1800s. Howe's abrupt and volatile personality likely did not improve the home's atmosphere. After the brick house on Third Street was built, Howe built a one-room frame house in the yard. The small house was built as a study for Howe, but he probably lived in it for several years. When Clara Howe filed for divorce in 1901 on grounds of abandonment, the petition stated that the defendant had not lived with the plaintiff for over two years. Howe wrote in his 1929 book, *Plain People*, that he had lived in the house in the yard.¹⁹ After the divorce, Clara moved to Emmet, Idaho with two of her children, Jim and Mateel. Ed and his son Gene moved into the big house and Ed's brother moved into the yard house. Gene worked for his father setting type and selling advertisements.²⁰

Howe began considering retirement from the *Globe* in 1905. *The Atchison Daily Champion* reported that Howe wished to retire from the newspaper, turn it over to his sons and devote himself to literary work.²¹ He purchased a quarter section of land south of Atchison in August 1905 to begin construction of his "Old Man's Place."²² Construction began on the bungalow in the summer of 1906. Early on, he decided to name his acreage Potato Hill, explaining, "By-the-way, suburban places are given such poetical names that I have resolved to call my place 'Potato Hill,' instead of 'Cedar Crest,' or 'Oak View, or 'Maple Ridge,' or 'Elmhurst.'"²³

Throughout construction, comments on the house's bungalow design—a novelty at that time in Atchison—appeared in the *Atchison Globe*. Although the comments appeared deprecating, it is likely that they were written by Howe. In June 1906 a paragraph ended, "A bungalow, some people say, is nothing more than an ugly house."²⁴ During construction of the foundation, the head stonemason visited the site and was unhappy with the rough appearance of the stonework. He told the contractor, G.H.T. Schaefer, that the foundation looked terrible and that his company would tear it out and do it over. Schaefer reportedly replied, "O, that's all

¹⁵ Pickett, 75.

¹⁶ Pickett, 77.

¹⁷ Pickett, 106.

¹⁸ Howe's comments are not printed in this document but are clearly illustrated on pages 158-159 of Calder Pickett's biography.

¹⁹ Pickett, 207.

²⁰ Pickett, 208.

²¹ *The Atchison Daily Champion*, 10 November 1905, 2.

²² Warranty Deed, 11 August 1905. Pickett, 258.

²³ "Vacation Notes" *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 3 February 1906, 2.

²⁴ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 26 June 1906, 2.

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right; that's the way the architect wanted it. Evidently you are not onto the bungalow idea."²⁵ In October 1906, a brief article ended with, "When you see that bungalow you will laugh, and laugh, and laugh, it's so ugly."²⁶

By October 1906, the house could be seen from any high point in Atchison.²⁷ In November, a carload of sand was received from Topeka for the plaster walls. The *Globe* reported, "What do you think of that: sand shipped from Topeka to Atchison, with thousands of acres of sandbars in sight of Atchison!"²⁸

A photograph of the completed house appeared in *The Atchison Daily Globe* in April 1908 (Figure 4). The accompanying article extolled the location with views of the Missouri River, Atchison and the lights of St. Joseph, Missouri. The article went on to describe Howe's planned activities there:

This place will be the old age retreat of the editor of The Globe. There, when he retires from active business, he intends to print Smith's Quarterly. Being a printer, he will set the type for the quarterly, and do the presswork, in order that he may be entirely independent. The editor of The Globe has never been able to print what he thinks, but his candid opinions will appear in Smith's Quarterly. He does not wish to say anything that is untrue, or lacking in dignity, or decency, but he would like to say what he actually thinks, and not what he is forced to think by others.²⁹

Howe built his "Old Man's Place" atop Potato Hill for his retirement. Its design allowed him sufficient room to live and work. Building two bathrooms into the house was especially important to him. He wrote, "A man rarely wants to go to the bathroom that he does not find a woman in it, or waiting to get in."³⁰ Howe's bedroom had a private bath, as well as a view of the surrounding acres. In 1911 he wrote his appreciation of the house:

A windstorm does not worry me at Potato Hill, although the bungalow is built on a high point, overlooking a wide sweep of the Missouri valley; from the east veranda, there is a view probably unsurpassed in the West. The house has modern improvements, and I shall be as comfortable there as a town man. The room where I shall work in future is 24x19 feet, with two closets, fireplace, private bath, and light and air on three sides. Think of a man having two closets of his own; one supplied with hooks, and the other drawers!³¹

It wasn't until January 4, 1911 that Howe announced that he had retired from the *Globe*, his son Gene Howe succeeding him as editor.³² In March 1911 Howe embarked on a new stage of his career from his country home, Potato Hill. Volume I, Number I of *E.W. Howe's Monthly* was launched wholly written by Ed Howe. The first edition carried the subtitle, "Devoted to Indignation and Information."

Howe had much to say in his retirement. His thoughts and observations kept the *Monthly* going for 22 years, most of it written from Potato Hill. His wry remarks were akin to those printed in the *Globe*, reflecting his views on women, politics and life in general. Howe was a voracious reader; he often rewrote articles, political news and world events for his intended audience.³³ The *Monthly* gained a national audience during the 1910s. Howe's stories and opinion pieces were widely reprinted in popular magazines, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Collier's*. The journal was praised in other popular publications, including *The Philistine* and *The Fra* run by Elbert Hubbard. Hubbard's promotion added 800 subscribers to the distribution of the *Monthly*. By 1916, the eight-page journal had 10,000 subscribers and

²⁵ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 28 September 1906, 5.

²⁶ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 30 October 1906, 8.

²⁷ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 16 October 1906, 2.

²⁸ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 3 November 1906, 3.

²⁹ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 1 April 1908, 8. Smith's Quarterly was published as *E.W. Howe's Monthly*.

³⁰ Pickett, 259.

³¹ Pickett, 260. The room Howe refers to is his bedroom.

³² Pickett, 262.

³³ Della Josephine Heckert, "A Critical Review of E.W. Howe's Monthly" (Master of Science Thesis, Kansas State College, July 1961), 9. <https://digitalcommons.pittstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=etd>

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Howe was becoming known as "The Sage of Potato Hill." He rejected that title, stating, "I am neither sage nor philosopher; I know only simple things, and in a long and active life encountered nothing else."³⁴

Ed Howe wrote and published at least 13 books after his retirement, primarily from his bedroom desk on Potato Hill. *Country Town Sayings* in 1911 was a collection of paragraphs from the *Atchison Globe*. Later book and booklet topics ranged from reports of his travels to advice to personal reflection. Titles included *Travel Letters from New Zealand, Australia, and Africa* in 1913, *The Anthology of Potato Hill* in 1916, *Ventures in Common Sense* compiled by H.L. Mencken in 1919, *Notes for My Biographer* in 1926 and *Plain People*, his 1929 autobiography.

Howe had reached an audience that expanded far beyond the Midwest, making him the most recognized journalist in Kansas. His post-*Globe* writings were republished and reviewed in periodicals across the eastern half of the country. Dr. Frank Crane, minister and *New York Globe* columnist, fittingly summed up Howe's appeal in the 1916 book, *History of Kansas Newspapers*:

E.W. Howe is a national institution. On earth, in the heavens above, or in the waters beneath the earth, there is nothing like his *Monthly*; it is a broad stream of horse sense; he is giving to the world the most perfect example of self-expression with which I am familiar.

In the same publication, *Emporia Gazette* editor William Allen White stated:

E.W. Howe is the most remarkable man Kansas or the Middle West has produced. Moreover, he has written the greatest novel ever written in or about Kansas or the Middle West. His "Story of a Country Town" is one of the ten best novels written in America.³⁵

Ed Howe relished his reputation and comfort in his final years. His niece, Adelaide Howe, was his housekeeper at Potato Hill and a beloved companion until his death. In late 1916 he began spending his winters in Florida, continuing to visit there until 1936. In the early 1930s, his eyesight began failing and he suspended publication of the *Monthly* with the November 1933 issue.³⁶ In 1935 he sold Potato Hill and returned to his Atchison house on Third Street with Adelaide.

Edgar Watson Howe died on October 3, 1937 at the of 84 from gradual paralysis and complications from pneumonia. The tributes following his death came from across Kansas and across the country. Editorials and eulogies appeared in the *Lawrence Journal-World*, the *Leavenworth Times*, the *Wichita Eagle* and the *Kansas City Star*. Tributes came from H.L. Mencken, Henry Haskell, H.T. Webster, Arthur Capper and President Roosevelt's cabinet.³⁷ *The New York Times* ran a two-column obituary that summarized Howe's career, noting that the "Sage of Potato Hill" was a champion of plain, successful and well-behaved people.³⁸

Howe's newspaper and legacy, the *Atchison Daily Globe*, is still published weekly.

Journalism in Eastern Kansas

Newspapers proliferated early in eastern Kansas, typically serving as springboards for the political ambitions of their editors and publishers. The *History of Kansas Newspapers* lists 32 newspapers in Atchison County that were discontinued by 1916. Most of these publications were begun in the town of Atchison, but papers also appeared in the towns of Effingham, Huron, Muscotah and Potter. Most prominent in the county were E.W. Howe's *Globe* and John A. Martin's *Daily Champion*.³⁹

³⁴ Pickett, 287.

³⁵ William E. Connelley, *History of Kansas Newspapers* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1916), 121-122.

³⁶ Pickett, 361.

³⁷ Pickett, 368.

³⁸ "Ed Howe, 84, Dead; 'Potato Hill Sage'" *The New York Times*, 4 October 1937, 21.

³⁹ Connelley, 143.

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John A. Martin (1839-1889) moved to Atchison at the age of 19 in 1857 and purchased the *Squatter Sovereign* in 1858. He changed its name to the *Freedom's Champion* in support of abolition and it later became the *Daily Champion*. Like other newspapermen of his time, he used his influence in territorial and later state politics. Martin served in the Eighth Kansas Regiment from 1862 to 1864. Upon leaving the military service, he returned to Atchison, operating his newspaper to promote his Republican views. He was elected Atchison's mayor in 1865 and again in 1878. He passed away in 1889. The weekly *Champion* was discontinued in 1909.⁴⁰

Later well-known Kansas newsmen include Emporia native William Allen White and Topeka's Arthur Capper. White (1868-1944) purchased the *Emporia Gazette* in 1895. Besides writing and publishing the *Gazette*, he wrote magazine articles, novels, short stories and his autobiography. He drew national recognition in 1896 for his essay, "What's the Matter With Kansas?" In 1923, he received a Pulitzer prize for his editorial, "To An Anxious Friend."⁴¹ White had political ambitions, joining Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party in 1912 and running unsuccessfully in 1924 for governor.⁴² The *Gazette* continues as a daily newspaper. In 1893, Arthur Capper (1865-1951) began his string of publications with the purchase of the *North Topeka Mail*, which he combined with the *Kansas Breeze* in 1895. He purchased controlling interest in Topeka's *Daily Capital* in 1901.⁴³ He eventually owned several other newspapers in the Midwest, as well as the radio station WIBW. His best-known publication, *Capper's Weekly*, had a large rural following and boosted his political backing in Kansas. Capper's renowned political career, advanced by his media holdings, included serving two terms as the Kansas governor, 1915 to 1919, and five terms as U.S. senator, 1919 to 1949.⁴⁴

Howe's biographer, Calder Pickett, notes, "Mainly Edgar Watson Howe was trying to make a living and compete with the other newspaper editors of his city."⁴⁵ He had views to express but, unlike other area newspapermen, no political ambitions. Howe was first and foremost a prominent journalist with local and far-reaching influence.

Architecture and History

Construction began on E.W. Howe's Potato Hill house in the summer of 1906. A paragraph in *The Atchison Daily Globe* noted that architect William H. Saylor and contractor G.H.T Schaefer were meeting at Potato Hill to decide on plans for a bungalow.⁴⁶ During the fall of 1906, the stone foundation was constructed of rocks quarried on the property, white oak was ordered for the house's siding and sand was purchased for plaster walls.⁴⁷ Paper blotter sheets from the *Globe's* printing were used as a layer of insulation between the exterior and interior walls (Figure 5). Construction continued through 1907 and a small fire in August 1907 caused \$400 of damage to the plaster.⁴⁸ The house was completed by April 1908, when a photograph (Figure 4) and article appeared in *The Atchison Daily Globe* extolling the house and its location.

The building pictured above was built around a location; it is situated on top of the Missouri River bluffs three miles below Atchison. From the porches of the structure may be seen probably the finest view in Kansas: miles and miles of the winding Missouri river and valley, and

⁴¹ Sarah Martin, "White, William Allen, House" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. 19 September 2013 Amendment.

⁴² Richard Pankratz, "White, William Allen, House" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. 17 February 1971.

⁴³ Connelley, 44.

⁴⁴ "Arthur Capper" <https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/arthur-capper/12001>.

⁴⁵ Pickett, 98.

⁴⁶ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 26 June 1906, 2.

⁴⁷ Atchison, Kansas, "The Town Reliable": Illustrated Industrial Souvenir Magazine. (Atchison, KS: Burbank's Printshop, 1909), 37.

⁴⁸ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 30 August 1907, 4.

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the bluffs on either side. From the north porch, Atchison is plainly seen, and the lights of St. Joe may be seen at night. The bungalow is built on an old time fruit farm of a hundred acres.⁴⁹

Architect William Saylor (1878-1948) was a partner in the firm of Saylor & Seddon. Saylor began his architectural career as a draftsman for Kansas City architect Charles A. Smith in 1900 and for the firm of Shepard and Farrar in 1901. Shepard and Farrar promoted him to architect in 1904, where he worked until forming a partnership with Herbert Seddon in 1906. The firm of Saylor & Seddon was based in the Gumbel Building in Kansas City, Missouri between 1906 and 1915.⁵⁰ The firm frequently advertised in Atchison newspapers and briefly opened an office at 526½ Main Street in 1911.⁵¹ The firm designed several buildings in Atchison, including the 1908 Atchison High School building, 301 N. 5th Street, the 1911 Wherret-Mize Drug Company Building, 201 Main Street (listed in the National Register, 6 July 2010), the 1911 Blish, Mize & Silliman building, 5th and Utah Streets and the 1915 Manglesdorf Brothers Seed Building at 11th and Main Streets. The firm also designed several Elks lodges in Kansas, including the lodge in Atchison in 1906, lodges in Independence and Topeka in 1907 and in Salina and Concordia in 1909.⁵² Saylor was a partner in the firm of Owen Saylor & Payson around 1925 and later in the firm of Saylor & Jourdan. He served as the president of the Kansas City chapter of the American Institute of Architects and as the architectural administrator for the Federal Housing Authority from 1934 to 1940.⁵³

George H.T. Schaefer (1857-1951) was a well-known Atchison builder. He arrived in the town in 1880 and immediately found work on the construction site of the Presbyterian church. The following year he began his career as a contractor, employing crews of ten to 75 men. He is credited with building more than 40 churches in Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. In Atchison, Schaefer built the Atchison High School, the Masonic temple, the Elks Home, the Blish, Mize & Silliman building and several homes.⁵⁴

The 1906 construction date of Potato Hill indicates that the house was one of William Saylor's earliest designs. The bungalow style was very new at the time. The style was popularized in California by brothers Charles and Henry Greene, who practiced in Pasadena from 1893 to 1914. They specialized in designing small, Craftsman bungalows that brought together influences of the English Arts and Crafts movement and Asian architecture. Bungalows were the most popular house style across the country from around 1905 into the early 1920s.⁵⁵

E.W. Howe's house may be the oldest documented bungalow dwelling in Atchison County. The house falls into the side-gabled roof subtype, which makes up about one-third of Craftsman bungalows. Within this subtype, front porches are usually contained under the main roof, as it is on the Howe house. The house retains other original character-defining features of the style, such as the rough stone foundation, massive porch supports that extend from ground level to roofline, front dormers with paired windows and the front latticed roof balustrade. The house originally had wood shingles, the second-most common bungalow wall cladding. The modern replacement material successfully simulates that original material. The house's modern windows also match the window configurations in the 1908 photograph.

Atchison has a handful of Craftsman Bungalows. Many houses in the city display Craftsman details but most examples of the bungalow form post-date the Howe house. The 1911 C.W. Ferguson Residence, 509 N. 5th Street (KHRI #005-0260-00293), is a classic gable-front dwelling. The 1917 side-gabled E.H. Johnson/Nass Residence, 415 Atchison Street (KHRI #005-0260-00163), is two-and-a-half stories but clearly falls into the

⁴⁹ *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 1 April 1908, 8.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Lane, "Wherret-Mize Drug Company Building" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 17 February 2010.

⁵¹ *The Atchison Weekly Globe*, 2 February 1911, 6.

⁵² Brenda Spencer, "Lincoln High School" National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 28 January 2019.

⁵³ "William H. Saylor" *The Kansas City Times*, 1 October 1948, 19.

⁵⁴ "Hold Schaefer Rites Sunday" *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 22 July 1951, 1.

⁵⁵ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2013), 568-578.

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bungalow form. The 1920 Bernard Kletzky house, 520 N 4TH Street (KHRI #005-0260-00419), is a good example of the style in stucco.

Edgar Howe owned the home on Potato Hill until he sold it to Harry and Hazel Vanstrum in 1935.⁵⁶ Harry Vanstrum worked at the Blish, Mize & Silliman hardware company. The couple replaced the windows and painted the exterior shingles white. They also enclosed the front porch and screened the east porch (Figure 6). Harry Vanstrum died in July 1947. His wife attempted to sell the house one year later. An article in *The Atchison Daily Globe* described the house as sitting on two acres with a large sunroom, screened porch, quarter-sawn oak paneling and “modern.”⁵⁷ The house did not sell and was rented until it was purchased by Cloud Lanore and Sarah Jane Cray in November 1950.⁵⁸

“Bud” and “Sally” Cray raised three daughters in the house at Potato Hill. Bud Cray, a chemical engineer, was CEO and Chairman of MPG Ingredients, an Atchison company begun in 1942 by his father as Midwest Solvents. The couple expanded the house in the early 1960s, adding a north library, bedroom, bathroom and laundry area in the first story (Figure 7.) The kitchen was also expanded and the garage replaced. Around 1970, the family added an in-ground Esther Williams swimming pool north of the house. A concrete block “safe room” was built in the basement in the mid-1970s. The gazebo by the swimming pool was added in 1988. Sally Cray died in 2010 and Bud Cray died in 2019.

The house underwent an extensive restoration and renovation in 2017-2018. Bathrooms were updated and missing interior moldings were replaced in kind. The roof, deteriorating windows and deteriorating shingle siding were replaced. All work was guided by historic photographs.

Conclusion

Edgar Watson Howe was an important and influential man in Atchison, as well as the state of Kansas. His outspoken manner drew attention to himself and the area. His prolific writings throughout his life, especially during his time at Potato Hill, kept him in the forefront of American journalists during his adult life. The bungalow Howe built at Potato Hill is a metaphor for his endeavors to gain recognition. Although he claimed to be but a simple country town man, his writings brought him admiration from nationally known figures, a status that he seemed to appreciate. A bungalow can be viewed as a humble house, but the new style and interior trimmings made it a well-designed and refined house.

The Edgar Howe house retains its integrity in location, setting, design, feeling and association. The house’s form, architectural details and site all reflect its original function as a country home. It is an early demonstration of the bungalow style in Kansas. The house is significant for its association with Edgar Watson Howe, Kansas’ best-known journalist of the time. The house is also architecturally significant as an early example of the bungalow style. It is eligible for National Register listing under Criteria B and C.

⁵⁶ Warranty deed dated 1 September 1935. Property of owner.

⁵⁷ “For Sale,” *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 13 July 1948, 7.

⁵⁸ Warranty deed dated 29 November 1950. Property of owner.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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"Vacation Notes." *The Atchison Daily Globe*, 3 February 1906.

Warranty Deed, 11 August 1905.

Warranty Deed. 1 September 1935.

Warranty Deed. 29 November 1950.

"William H. Saylor." *The Kansas City Times*, 1 October 1948.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>39.5246</u> Latitude:	<u>-95.1007</u> Longitude:	3	_____	_____
				Latitude:	Longitude:
2	_____	_____	4	_____	_____
	Latitude:	Longitude:		Latitude:	Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The nominated house is located within a 72-acre parcel in the southwest quarter of Section 17, Township 6, Range 21 Est. The nominated building is identified on the maps in Figures 1 and 2 and includes the footprint of the house

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nominated property includes only the Edgar W. Howe house. The adjacent buildings and acreage have been altered since Howe's ownership and are not included in this nomination nor are they associated with the property's significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Jezak Ford
organization Citysearch Preservation date 11 November 2020
street & number 3628 Holmes Street telephone 816-210-2096
city or town Kansas City state Missouri zip code 64109
e-mail citysusana@gmail.com

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Karen Cray Seaberg Revocable Trust
street & number 20073 266th Road telephone 913-367-5823
city or town Atchison state Kansas zip code 66002

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Howe, Edgar W., House
City or Vicinity: Atchison Vicinity
County: Atchison State: Kansas
Photographer: Susan Jezak Ford
Date Photographed: 22 June 2020

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include a description of view indicating the direction of camera:

Photo Number	View	Description
#1	NW	Howe house exterior, SE elevation.
#2	N	Howe house exterior, S elevation.
#3	NE	Howe house exterior, SW elevation.
#4	E	Howe house exterior, W elevation.
#5	SW	Howe house exterior, NE elevation.
#6	S	Howe house exterior, N elevation.
#7	W	Howe house interior entrance stairway.
#8	SE	Howe house interior. View from dining room to living room and entry.
#9	SE	Howe house interior living room.
#10	NE	Howe house interior. View from dining room to library.
#11	NW	Howe house interior. 2 nd -story NW bedroom.
#12	S	Howe house interior. Howe's bedroom.
#13	N	Circa 1960 garage.
#14	NW	1970 swimming pool.

Figures

Include GIS maps, figures, scanned images below.

Figure 1. Edgar W. Howe House location.

Figure 2. House site plan.

Figure 3. Portrait of Edgar Watson Howe between 1915 and 1925. (Kansasmemory.org)

Figure 4. 1908 photograph of Potato Hill. (*Atchison Daily Globe*, 1 April 1908)

Figure 5. Blotter sheet from the *Atchison Daily Globe* used for insulation in the house. (Susan Jezak Ford)

Figure 6. Circa 1950 photograph of Potato Hill.

Figure 7. Early 1960s construction photos of northwest addition. (Karen Cloud Seaberg)

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Figure 8. Exterior photo map.

Figure 9. Interior first story photo map.

Figure 10. Interior second story photo map.

Photograph 1.



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Photograph 2.



Photograph 3.



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Photograph 4.



Photograph 5.



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Photograph 6.



Photograph 7.



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Photograph 8.



Photograph 9.



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Photograph 10.



Photograph 11.



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Photograph 12.



Photograph 13.



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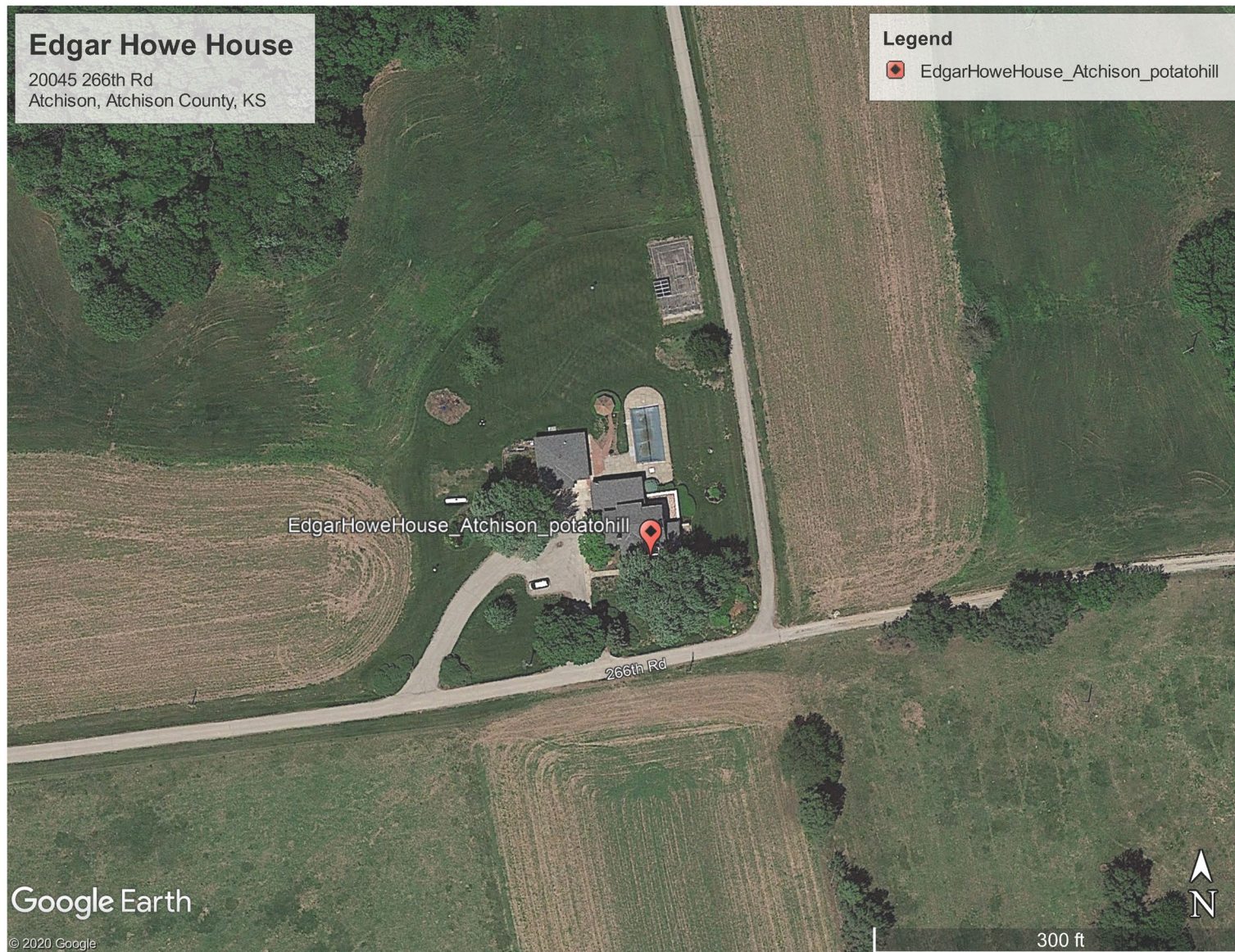
Photograph 14.



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Figure 1. Edgar W. Howe House location at 20045 266th Road, Atchison County, Kansas. 39.5246; -95.1007.



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Figure 2. House site plan.
(Google Maps accessed 1 September 2020.)



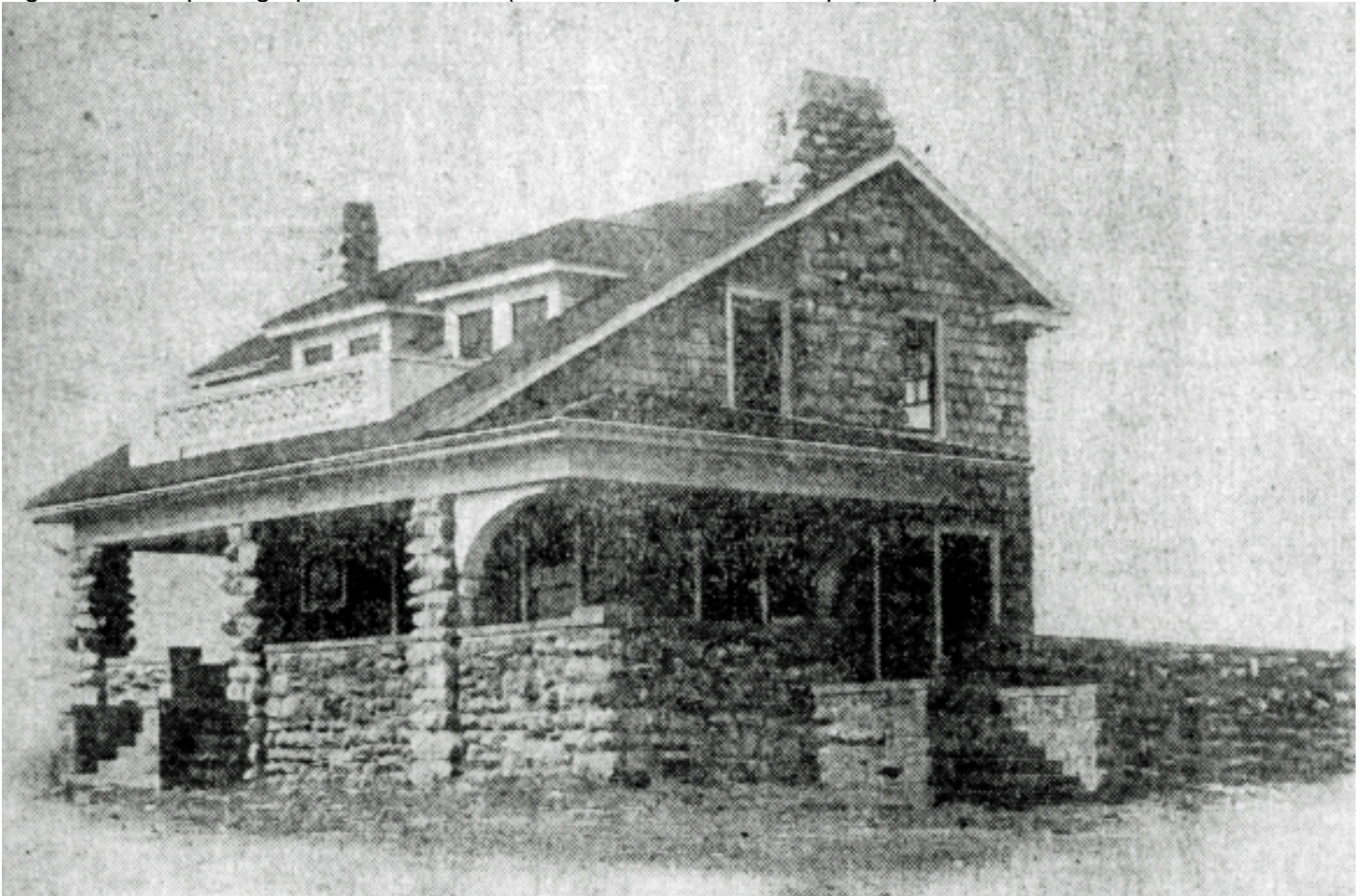
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Figure 3. Portrait of Edgar Watson Howe between 1915 and 1925. (Kansasmemory.org)



Figure 4. 1908 photograph of Potato Hill. (*Atchison Daily Globe*, 1 April 1908)



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Figure 5. Blotter sheet from the *Atchison Daily Globe* used for insulation in the house. (Susan Jezak Ford)



Figure 6. Circa 1950 photograph of Potato Hill.



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Figure 7. Early 1960s construction photos of northwest addition. (Karen Cloud Seaberg)



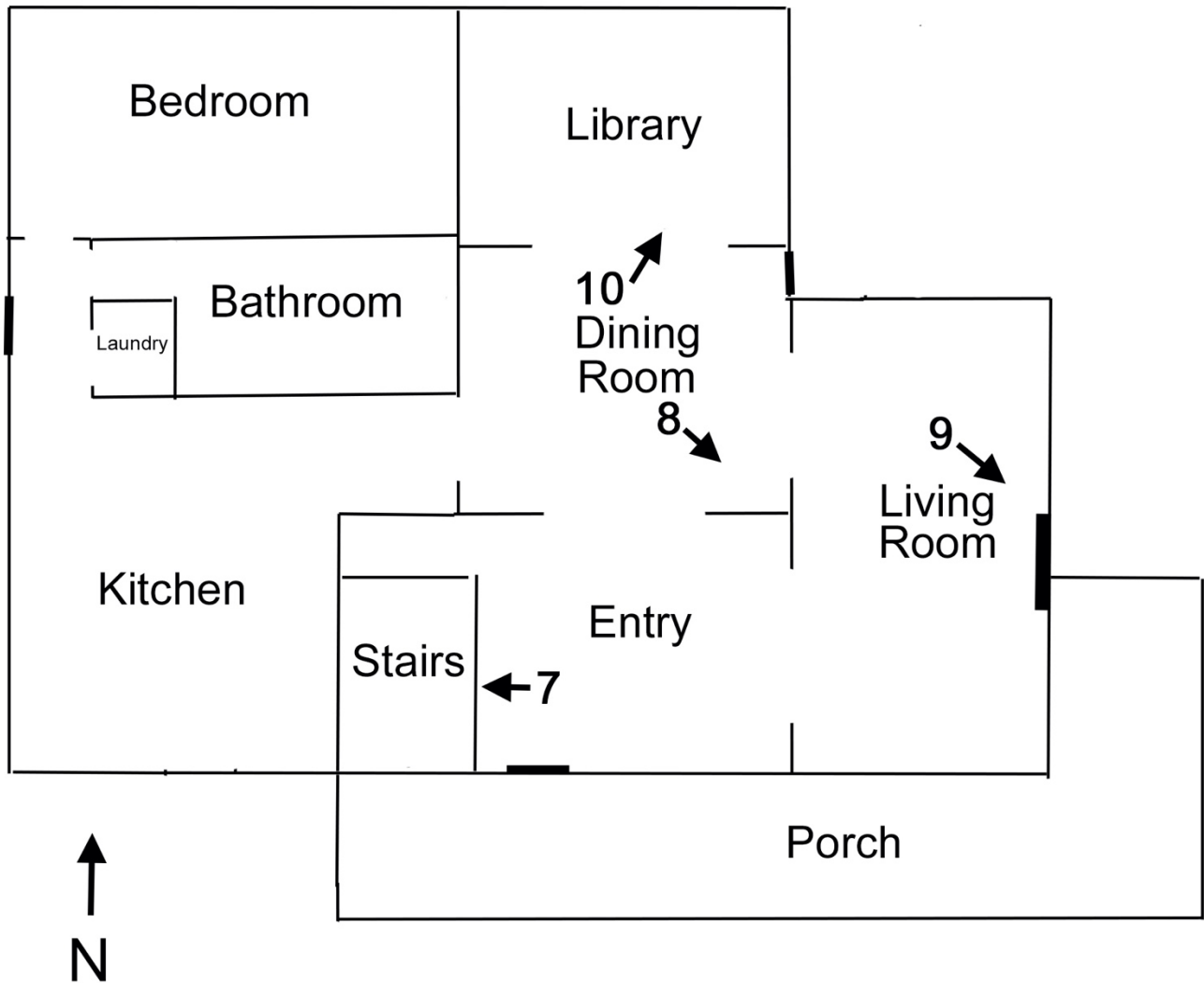
Figure 8. Photo map—exterior.



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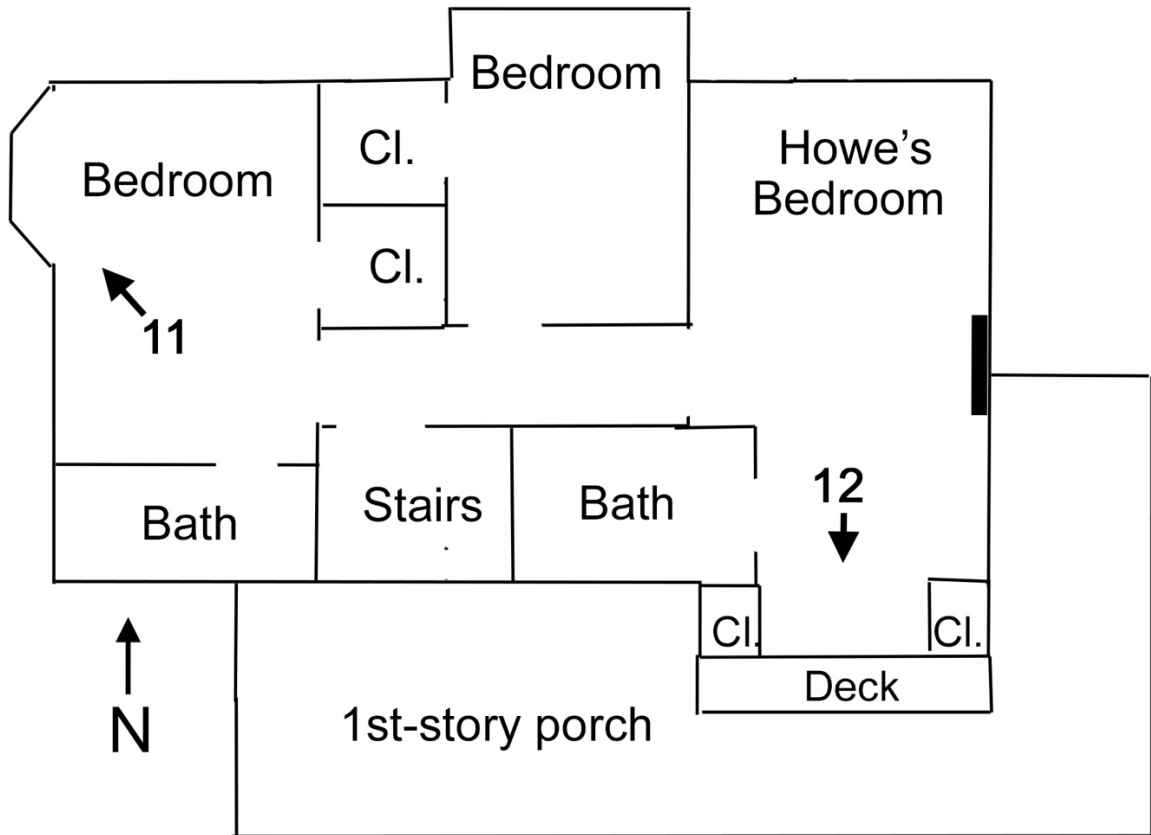
Figure 9. Photo map—interior first story. Not to scale.



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Figure 10. Photo map—interior second story. Not to scale.



Howe, Edgar W., House

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Owner

Karen Seaberg
Cloud L. Cray Family Trust
20045 266th Road
Atchison, KS 66002