

# 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 E.S. Cowie Electric Company Buildings

Other names/site number KHRI #173-11714 & 173-11715

Name of related Multiple Property Listing NA

## 2. Location

Street & number 222-226-230-232 S. Topeka Street  not for publication

City or town Wichita NA vicinity

State Kansas Code KS County Sedgwick Code 173 Zip code 67202

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
 I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  local      Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

**SEE FILE**  
 Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_

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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_  
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City or town <u>Wichita</u>		vicinity
State <u>Kansas</u> Code <u>KS</u> County <u>Sedgwick</u> Code <u>173</u> Zip code <u>67202</u>		

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 \_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local Applicable National Register Criteria: x A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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 \_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register \_\_\_ removed from the National Register  
 \_\_\_ other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

E.S.Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas  
County and State

**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

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
2	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
2	0	<b>Total</b>

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: SPECIALTY STORE

DOMESTIC: MULTIPLE DWELLING

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: SPECIALTY STORE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American

Movements: Commercial Style

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

roof: Asphalt

other: \_\_\_\_\_

E.S.Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas  
County and State

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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 E.S. Cowie Electric Co. buildings at 222 and 230 S. Topeka Avenue in downtown Wichita were built in 1920, each housing auto-related business throughout their history. The E.S. Cowie Electric Company moved into the one-story building at 230 S. Topeka in 1931 and expanded into the adjacent two-story building at 222 S. Topeka four years later. Extant fire doors at interior openings in the parting wall between the two buildings date to the business' 1935 expansion.

The buildings are concrete and brick structures with matching tan brick facades. Both buildings have rectangular footprints and parapets that obscure the roof. The two-story building (222) has a tapered roof with a corbelled brick parapet; the one-story building (230) features a corbelled brick stepped parapet with barrel vaulted roof, originally featuring a large skylight in the rear shop.

The buildings retain a significant degree of architectural and historic integrity on the exterior with original character-defining features intact including the storefronts and upper windows. Extant original interior features include masonry piers with curved capitals, vaulted trusses, hexagonal ceramic tile floor in the original showroom of the one-story building, and the original stair to the second floor. The buildings are typical examples of traditional Commercial Style buildings distinguished by their matching brick facades with punched windows and subtle brick corbelling as the only ornamentation.

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## **Elaboration**

### Site

The E.S. Cowie Electric Co. buildings are located in the 200 block of S. Topeka Street, one and a half blocks south of Douglas Avenue and one block northwest of the downtown arena. The neighborhood is predominantly commercial with historic buildings in the minority. There is an abundance of surface parking lots and a majority of buildings are contemporary construction, many are freestanding individual structures versus blocks of buildings in a traditional historic commercial configuration. The property is one block west of the core downtown arena.

Positioned on the east side of the street near the middle of the block, the Cowie buildings face west fronting S. Topeka Street. A one-story commercial building abuts 230 S. Topeka and a west-bound one-way alley runs along the north side of property at 222 S. Topeka, providing through access for buses. The Wichita Transit Center (bus station) occupies the north half of the 200 block, north of the mid-block alley. The Transit Center is a one-story contemporary structure with an irregular footprint. The nominated property is comprised of two adjoining buildings constructed in 1920 however; the two buildings have been occupied by a single business since 1935 and under single ownership since 1944. Addressed at 222 and 230 S. Topeka, the buildings have pedestrian and vehicular entrances off S. Topeka on the west/front facade as well as from the rear/east alley facade. Public sidewalks border the building on the west along S. Topeka at the front facade in a traditional downtown setting. South Topeka Street is a three-lane southbound one-way street with parallel parking on both sides of the street. The building footprints span the entire width and depth of four lots and are bordered by an alley at the rear. A private parking lot east of the rear alley provides parking for the nominated property. The parking lot is a separate parcel from the buildings and not included in the nomination.

### Exterior

The nominated property is comprised of two adjacent buildings addressed at 222 and 230 S. Topeka Street. On the north is the two-story building (222 S. Topeka) that occupies a single lot (31). Adjacent on the south is the one-story building (230 S. Topeka) that occupies three lots (33-35-37)<sup>1</sup>. Although built separately, both buildings were designed and constructed by local architect and builder S.G. Bond in 1920. The buildings are concrete and brick structures both featuring tan brick facades and matching details including the storefront bays, doors, and brick corbelling on the upper facade and parapets.

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<sup>1</sup> Early maps and deed records show that the one-story building located on Lots 33-35-37 was originally addressed at 224 S. Topeka, later addressed at 226 S. Topeka, and ultimately at 230 S. Topeka. The historic addresses and lot numbers are clearly illustrated on the Sanborn Map in Figure 5.

E.S.Cowie Electric Co. Buildings

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Typical of traditional commercial buildings constructed in the early decades of the twentieth century, the Cowie buildings are classified as Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movement buildings, in the Commercial Style. Using Richard Longstreth's classification system set forth in *The Buildings of Main Street*, the two-story building on the north is a two-part commercial block where the upper facade is distinctly separate from the lower-facade or storefront and is distinguished by regularly-spaced windows (windows of this era were more square than their tall and narrow Victorian predecessors). The one-story building is a one-part commercial block distinguished by its vaulted roof and stepped parapet. On both buildings, brick piers divide the lower facades into storefront bays, a single bay on the two-story building and four bays on the one-story building. Each bay is comprised of large display windows over a short concrete bulkhead with the original glass transoms are extant but covered by wood. Brick corbelling on the upper facade and parapet is the only ornamentation.

The buildings have recently undergone a historic rehabilitation project, converting the function from the electric company to an event center. The primary exterior alterations involved reopening the garage bays along the rear facade of 230 S. Topeka.

#### *One-Story Building at 230 S. Topeka*

The storefront bays at 230 S. Topeka - the one-story building - are asymmetrical with two smaller bays at the south end and two larger at the north. The southern-most bay historically was a garage bay and maintains that function today. The original garage doors as illustrated in early photos were bifold wood doors with multiple glass lights over a single wood panel. The second generation garage door (dating to the early days of Cowie Electric) was an overhead wood door with multiple small panes having glass on the upper three rows over wood on the lower two. The existing front garage door is a contemporary replacement overhead door with no historic significance. The storefront entrance is a single-light wood door centrally located in the second bay from the north. The door features original chrome hardware. The storefronts are original to the building's construction with only the garage door formerly replaced and the glass transoms covered.

When Cowie's moved to 230 S. Topeka in 1931, a newspaper article touted features of the new location including drive-in access from Topeka Street and the rear alley. Upon seeing or hearing a customer, Cowie employees would run to open the door allowing the customer to pull right into the shop. The article also described a clean well-lit shop with the service departments arranged along the front of the building where customers could see them working from the street front.

Designed and constructed for auto sales and service, the rear facade is comprised of three bays framed by concrete block piers, each bay originally having two garage doors. Replacement doors were installed in each garage bay in the recent project. The central bays have glass overhead doors with panels similar to the historic garage doors. The end bays are paired and hinged metal doors with a paneled grid resembling the historic garage doors. The rear facade of both buildings received a new parged stucco coating (formerly parged prior to recent project). With buildings adjoining on the north and south, there are no windows on the sides of the one-story building.

#### *Two-Story Building at 222 S. Topeka*

The two-story building at 222 S. Topeka has a single storefront bay that spans the full-width of the building, framed by brick piers. A single-light wood door, corresponding to the interior stairway to the second floor, is located at the north end of the storefront. The door retains historic hardware matching the door at 230 S. Topeka. There are two pairs of double-hung wood windows on the upper facade. The window openings have punched lintels with corbelled brick detailing above and a continuous concrete sill spanning across the facade beneath the windows. The 2/2 wood windows are in place with angled slat-metal awnings. Aluminum storm windows with screens have formerly been installed. Single 2/2 wood windows are in place in select bays on the north and south facades. These windows feature a unique shallow metal canopy that appear original to the building's construction. The eastern-most opening on the upper floor serves as a fire exit with a straight-run metal fire stair extant along the north facade. Ground-floor windows are in place in select bays on the north facade. These openings have been downsized with brick infill to accommodate 6/6 double-hung steel windows likely installed ca. 1940 when the garage bays were infilled and steel windows installed on the rear facade of 230 S. Topeka. Like the adjoining rear facade, a parged coating has formerly been applied to the south and north facades; the parging has a painted finish on the sides of the building. New parging was added to the rear facade as a part of the recent project. Three pilasters divide the rear facade of 222 S. Topeka into two bays. Rear windows were infilled in the rehabilitation project. A pair of metal slab doors was installed in the former garage bay on the south half of the ground floor; the double-doors are the only opening on the rear facade.

#### Interior

##### *One-Story Building at 230 S. Topeka*

According to deed records and early city directories, both buildings were built as rental properties and originally occupied by auto-related businesses. Superior Auto Co. was listed at 224 S. Topeka in the 1920 City Directory (the original address

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of the one-story building). At least three other automobile sales and service agencies occupied the building during its first decade. Existing physical characteristics suggest the building was designed and constructed as an auto dealership with front showroom and rear service department/garage. No documentation has been found on the original plan configuration. Physical evidence suggests that there were garage bays across the rear facade likely used as service bays accessed from the alley. Prior to the rehab project, a recessed drain was in place in the second bay from the north suggesting the presence of a wash bay or service bay that logically would have corresponded to vehicular access. The south garage bay remains in place with an overhead door on the front serving as a drive-in passage into the building. A rectangular opening in the roof of the rear shop suggests that a skylight originally provided light and ventilation in the rear shop area; the skylight was formerly removed but the former opening is evident. Ceramic hexagonal tile flooring is in place across the front/west side of the building corresponding to the original showroom typical of early auto dealerships.

Prior to the recent rehabilitation project, the plan configuration of both buildings reflected the evolving needs of the Cowie business as an auto electric/parts shop and its eventual transition to small engines. The various service departments were reportedly arranged along the front of the building at the time of Cowie's opening in 1931 however that configuration appears to have been short-lived. Throughout a majority of Cowie's occupancy, the front portion of the building was used as the customer entry with a parts and service counter running N/S approximately 15 feet from the storefront. The storefront space in front of the service counter was the customer waiting room. Floor-to-ceiling shelving to store the extensive parts inventory was located behind the service counter creating congested space with narrow pathways. A small cluster of rooms were enclosed at the north end of the storefront space and a corridor ran along the storefront west of these rooms providing an interior connection between the two buildings. Small rooms were enclosed along the north and east sides of the rear shop area each serving one of the various departments. The walls partitioning the office cluster at the NW corner of the storefront and department workspaces in the rear did not extend full height to the ceiling/trusses. The only floor-to-ceiling walls were partition walls that separated the front half of the building from the rear and the E/W wall enclosing the drive-through access along the south side of the building.

The one available historic interior view was taken from a perimeter balcony with the vaulted roof and trusses exposed overlooking an open shop area ca. 1940s.<sup>2</sup> The balcony had been removed by mid century. When additional storage was needed for storage of the parts inventory, plywood was installed at the lower chord of the trusses creating a mezzanine storage area accessed by an interior stair in the rear shop area. Applied acoustical tile was installed on the underside of the mezzanine creating lowered ceilings throughout. The transoms above the storefronts were covered with wood corresponding to the lowered ceilings.

The 2017-2018 rehabilitation project converting the former electric company to an event center reversed many of the former interior modifications in the one-story building. The interior partitions and shelving were removed as was the suspended ceiling. The mezzanine was removed except a small section used for mechanical space. The interior of the building is divided into three primary spaces: the front display/sales room, a central storage area, and the rear garage functioning as the event space. The drive-in bay on the south was maintained with vehicular access from the front/west facade. Most non-historic finishes were removed, exposing natural finish of brick and concrete and the mosaic tile was cleaned and re-exposed in the front sales room. Removal of the acoustical tile ceiling exposed the trusses and underside of the vaulted roof throughout.

The E.S. Cowie Electric Company moved into the one-story building at 230 S. Topeka Street in 1931. A 1935 building permit for installation of fire doors in the parting wall between 230 and 222 S. Topeka documents Cowie's expansion into the adjacent two-story building at 222 four years after their move to 230 S. Topeka. Two sliding metal fire doors are extant at interior openings between the two buildings. The two commercial spaces have been occupied by a single business since the 1935 Cowie expansion. The new business/event space also occupies both buildings.

#### *Two-Story Building at 222 S. Topeka*

The original configuration of the ground floor is unknown; the first occupants of the building at 222 S. Topeka in 1920 included multiple auto-related businesses followed by auto sales shops. The existing plan configuration reflects former remodelings and has few distinguishing features. A reception area is located in the storefront space. The street entrance is a single door at the north end of the storefront where a small vestibule provides access to the storefront space on the south and a stair to the second floor along the north side of the building. A small office and restroom are enclosed east of the reception area and a corridor along the south wall accesses an open room in the central portion of the building used for storage. The rear of the building now houses restrooms and a bride's room for the event space accessed from the one-story building on the south. At the rear/east end of the building is a catering kitchen with exterior access to the alley and

<sup>2</sup> This photo was published in the company's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet in 1951.

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access to the event space on the south. Throughout, finishes include exposed concrete floors, concrete and brick walls and exposed concrete structure at the ceiling; the concrete has a painted finish. Finished rooms including the storefront reception area, office and open storage room have plaster walls and tile or carpet installed. The curved concrete capital/ bracket at the junction of ceiling beams and columns are again exposed throughout the building following removal of suspended ceilings.

An enclosed wood stairway provides access to the second floor along the north side of the building. For the first twenty years, the upper floor of 222 S. Topeka functioned as a hotel with long-term room rentals. The hotel had closed by 1939 and following WWII, Cowie gutted the hotel rooms to create a large classroom used for training. In later years, the upper floor was used for long-term storage. A single office/room remains across the front/west end of the floor with original wood windows in place along the west wall/front facade. This room retains ca.1970s wood paneling, applied acoustical tile ceilings, and carpeting. The rear of the floor is generally a large open space with a small restroom at the west end and a mechanical area partitioned at the rear/ east end. Finishes in the rear space included sheetrock walls and ceilings, and carpet. The second floor is used as a work room and storage.

#### Alterations

The "modernization" of traditional commercial storefronts has long been viewed as a sign of progress throughout the twentieth century. Common alterations included the installation of aluminum-framed display windows, cladding on the facade, and replacement or covering of upper windows. Retaining original storefronts and original upper windows, the Cowie Electric Company buildings exhibit a rare degree of architectural integrity with few exterior modifications on the street facade. The primary exterior alteration was the former infill and recent re-opening of the rear garage bays on 230 that dated to the building's original function as auto sales and service. The existing overhead glass doors in the center bays and the hinged metal doors in the end bays are paneled to resemble the pattern of the historic wood overhead garage doors. The original drive-in bay on the south end of the front facade remains with a former replacement overhead door.

The primary known modifications in the two-story building were alterations to the original rear facade and converting the original hotel/rental residential rooms to an open classroom following WWII. The interior of the Cowie buildings reflects the common practice of remodeling to keep up with the changing times and needs of the business. As outlined above, the existing plan configuration of both buildings reflected numerous former alterations, most recently the 2017-2018 rehabilitation converting the property to an event space. Occupied by E.S. Cowie Electric Company for over eighty years (1931-2012), the interior of both buildings reflect the growth and changes of the business as it adapted from automobile electric service to small engines. Although the level of interior integrity is significantly lower than the exterior of the building, many of the former modifications including room partitions, shelving and lowered ceilings, were recently reversed. Interior walls are minimal with the two-story building providing administrative and service facilities for the event space in the former garage (one-story building). The one-story building maintains the front salesroom as a display room and the rear garage as the event space with a central storage area between. The event space allows retention of the original garage as a large open space with exposed utilitarian finishes. The buildings retain sufficient integrity to portray their original function as auto-related businesses and reflect their classification as Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Commercial Style Buildings.

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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**

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1920 – 1959

**Significant Dates**

1920

1931 and 1935

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

S.G. BOND, architect/builder

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance for the E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings is 1920 to 1959. This period begins with the building's dates of construction and ends with the end of the Cowie family ownership. Cowie Electric Company moved into the one-story building at 230 S. Topeka in 1931 and expanded into the two-story building at 222 S. Topeka in 1935. The Cowie family owned the property until 1959 when store manager and Cowie protégé Lee Thorn purchased the business and the property from E.S. Cowie's widow.

**Criteria Considerations (justification)**

NA

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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 E.S. Cowie Electric Company Buildings at 222-230 S. Topeka Street in Wichita are being nominated to the National Register under Criteria A. The buildings are significant on a local level under Criterion A in the area of Commerce reflecting the influence of the automobile and auto-related businesses on the commercial development in Wichita, Kansas. The buildings were built to house auto-related businesses and served that function from their construction in 1920 until 2012.

The E.S. Cowie Electric Company was established in 1900 in Kansas City, Missouri, and expanded to Wichita in 1916. The Wichita store moved three times in the first fifteen years of business before settling in the 200 block of S. Topeka in 1931 – its location for the next 81 years. By the time it moved to the S. Topeka location the company was firmly established as one of the largest automotive electric suppliers in the Midwest and Southwest.<sup>3</sup> The E.S. Cowie Electric Company buildings are significant for their reflection of the pioneering and enduring role in the automotive industry in Wichita and surrounding states. The Cowie firm was known for its business acumen and fidelity to servicing customer needs with a well-trained expert team. The company, having only three owners two of whom were father and son, created life-long relationships with manufacturers and customers. When the founder E.S. Cowie died in 1951, his hand-picked protégé, Lee Thorn, who had managed the Wichita store for 25 years, became president of the company and the headquarters moved to Wichita. Cowie Electric Company was transferred to the Thorn family in 1959, ending the Cowie family's ownership of the business.

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### Elaboration

#### Wichita and the Automobile

Wichita was incorporated on July 21, 1870; the city was well on its way to becoming a thriving center of trade two years later when it welcomed its first railroad. A real estate boom followed the early development and by 1887 Wichita was ranked third in the United States in volume of real estate transactions.<sup>4</sup> By 1889, however, the boom had ended and Wichita's population growth reversed itself causing many local investors to lose everything. The bust continued through the remainder of the nineteenth century. The first two decades of the twentieth century were marked by renewal and growth.<sup>5</sup>

By 1900, Wichita was the third-largest city in Kansas with more than 24,000 residents.<sup>6</sup> In the first two decades of the new century monumental change would befall Wichita with the arrival of two new industries: oil and aviation. Wichita's economy had been largely dependent on agriculture until oil was discovered twenty five miles northeast of Wichita in 1915. The El Dorado oilfield would bring in \$65M into Wichita's economy in the late teens and early 1920s, which provided ready capital for entrepreneurs to invest in other industries.<sup>7</sup>

The first automobile was shipped to Wichita in 1899 to A.S. Parks, President of United Sash and Door; by the summer of 1907 over 150 automobiles were licensed in the city.<sup>8</sup> Motor cars were manufactured and sold by a variety of companies by the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but the cars were not widely available or affordable to the masses. "Henry Ford's introduction of the mass-produced Model T in 1913 signaled the transformation of the automobile from a rich person's toy into a dominant form of transportation that would shape American society. With a price tag of \$528, the Model T was a

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<sup>3</sup> "Cowie Celebrates Big Year." *Wichita Beacon*, 25 Feb 1931, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kathy Morgan and Barbara Hammond. *Multiple Property Documentation Form, Residential Resources of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas 1870-1957*. City of Wichita, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, 2008: E-4.

<sup>5</sup> Kathy L. Morgan and Kyle M. Palmer. *Draft Multiple Property Documentation Form, Commercial and Industrial Resources Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas*. City of Wichita, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, 2013: 8.

<sup>6</sup> Population of Cities in Kansas accessed at <http://www.ipsr.ku.edu/ksdata/ksah/population/2pop33.pdf> on 26 Mar 2016 and Historic Preservation Services, LLC. *Historic Context Report, Waterwalk Redevelopment Area, Wichita, Kansas*. Kansas City, MO: 2005: 10.

<sup>7</sup> Kathy Morgan and Barbara R Hammond. *Residential Resources of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas 1870-1957*. Multiple Property Documentation Form, City of Wichita, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, 2007: E8.

<sup>8</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, 27 Sep 1899, 1 as quoted in in Morgan and Palmer, *Draft Commercial and Industrial Resources*.

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vehicle built for 'Everyman'.<sup>9</sup> The *Roadside Kansas National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form* deemed the era 1900-1917 as the pioneering automobile period. During this time, car ownership in Kansas grew at a rapid pace. In 1910 there were nearly 10,500 automobiles in the state, and just two years later Kansans owned 30,000 vehicles.<sup>10</sup>

In Wichita, auto-related businesses including service and gas stations sprang up throughout downtown. Between 1910 and 1912 the city spent over \$1,000,000 to pave streets.<sup>11</sup> In 1915, John J. Jones opened the first automobile factory in Wichita and was producing 25 automobiles per week by mid-year.<sup>12</sup> The rapid rise in popularity of the automobile in the boom-period of the 1920s brought rampant congestion to the city center.

By 1914, Wichita's city directories and Sanborn maps show a significant amount of business growth on the city's main thoroughfares of Douglas and Main as well as on the cross streets of Lawrence (later became Broadway) Main, Market, and Topeka. Commercial businesses had generally replaced dwellings in the first two blocks south off Douglas Avenue.<sup>13</sup> The 1916 Wichita city directory listed 5 auto accessory and supply dealers, 5 battery sellers, 15 auto repair shops, numerous garages and approximately 25 auto dealers and manufacturers many of which congregated on Broadway, Douglas and surrounding streets.<sup>14</sup> By 1922 the north and south 100-200 blocks of Emporia, Douglas, Market and Lawrence had more than five auto-related businesses each. The 100-200 blocks of S. Topeka had more than ten.<sup>15</sup>

The wide availability and affordability of the automobile led to development in cities across the states, and ultimately to a system of roadways as travelers demanded good roads and available services. In the 1910s, "Meridian Road" that roughly follows the route of present-day U.S. Highway 81, was one of several cross-state touring routes that allowed the public to travel between cities. With the designation of U.S. Highway 81, Broadway, a hub of commerce and entertainment, replaced Main Street as Wichita's primary north-south thoroughfare. The concentration of automotive-related businesses on Broadway stretching three blocks on each side of Douglas Avenue became known as "Auto Row." By October 1920 the auto-related businesses in this six-block area were transacting \$30,000 in business each day.<sup>16</sup> A *Wichita Daily Eagle* article stated that the city's Auto Row was known to every driver in the southwest.<sup>17</sup> Approximately fifty percent of the dealers in automotive, trucks, tires and accessories were located on Auto Row; while 75 percent of the floor space in this area was engaged in the automotive industry.<sup>18</sup> The ever-expanding auto industry was fanning out to nearby downtown streets on Main, Market, and Topeka. In the same year the E.S. Cowie Company moved from its early Wichita location in the 1200 block of E. Douglas to a spot on S. Market Street in the heart of the bustling auto industry.

A major influence on the growth and development of Wichita was the adoption of a city plan that was developed by Harland Bartholomew, recommending the creation of boulevards, parks and scenic drives. The plan led to the implementation of zoning and planning in 1921 and 1922 that was meant to address the pressures of expansion and growth in the city. However, car ownership continued to rise; by 1923 there was one car or truck for every five Wichita residents constituting the highest motor vehicle ownership in the nation.<sup>19</sup> Within only a few years due in large part to the city center congestion and physical limitations of downtown streets, many of the major auto dealerships began relocating to the area of Douglas Avenue east of downtown from the 1000 to 1900 blocks. The recent elevation of the railroad tracks made Douglas an ideal location for improved customer access. The moniker "Auto Row" soon shifted to E. Douglas, east of the core area of downtown.

The 1935 Sanborn map attests that while some auto-related businesses followed the major auto dealers to E. Douglas, many stayed downtown shifting off Broadway, Market and Main, to the surrounding streets south of Douglas. Placing the

<sup>9</sup> James J. Flink, *America Adopts the Automobile, 1895-1910*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970: 50. Ford Motor Company. "The Model T Put the World on Wheels." as cited in Elizabeth Rosin and Dale Nimz. *Roadside Kansas National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2009: E12.

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth Rosin and Dale Nimz, *Roadside Kansas National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*. Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2009: E7.

<sup>11</sup> Craig Miner. *Wichita: The Magic City*, Wichita: Wichita-Sedgwick County Historical Museum, 1988:111.

<sup>12</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, 16 May 1915, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Sanborn 1914, 154 & 155.

<sup>14</sup> 1916 Wichita City Directory, Ancestry.com, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>15</sup> 1922 Wichita City Directory, Ancestry.com, *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>16</sup> "Automobile Row Daily Transacts \$30,000 Business." *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 3 Oct 1920, 58.

<sup>17</sup> *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 3 Oct 1920, 58.

<sup>18</sup> *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 3 Oct 1920, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Miner, *Wichita: The Magic City*, 270.

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Cowie location in the middle of the map near the corner of S. Topeka and E. English, auto-related businesses virtually surrounded Cowie on all sides from the west on the 200-300 blocks of S. Market and S. Broadway and to the east on Emporia, as well as north two blocks to E. Douglas and south one block to Waterman. In this eight-block radius in 1935 at least forty businesses were auto-related; four were filling stations, eleven were garages, and the remaining were auto dealers, service and repairs [Figure 5].<sup>20</sup>

After a brief delay during World War I, road improvements, auto transportation, and tourism took off in Kansas from 1918 to 1929. The Depression slowed but did not stop Kansas from adopting the automobile as the primary mode of individual transportation.<sup>21</sup> After World War II, car ownership burgeoned, as did Wichita's economy. Wichita's population returned to its wartime highs by 1950 with 190,000 residents within the city limits and roughly 255,000 in the metropolitan area.<sup>22</sup> It was at this time that Wichita outpaced Kansas City as the largest city in Kansas.<sup>23</sup> Between 1940 and 1960 Wichita city limits grew from just under twenty-three square miles to over 48 square miles.<sup>24</sup>

As downtowns nationwide scrambled to protect investment in their city centers, more and more businesses were making the leap to the suburbs where they could take advantage of inexpensive real estate, provide ample parking and vehicular access, and serve a rapidly growing residential market.<sup>25</sup> The 1954 city directory indicates a decline of auto-related businesses downtown, including on S. Topeka. However, a few stalwarts remained. South of Cowie Electric Company at 230 S. Topeka, Yingling Chevrolet was on the corner of the 200 block, Price's Auto Service remained in the 300 block, with Butts Buick and Swenson Motors in the 400 block. Increasing use of the automobile and suburbanization had forever changed the density, scale, and appearance of downtown Wichita.<sup>26</sup> By 1951 there were 17 parking garages and almost 40 parking lots listed in the Wichita city directory and numerous buildings had been demolished along the streets south of Douglas to accommodate surface parking lots.<sup>27</sup> The historic commercial buildings and the auto-related businesses that occupied them throughout the first half of the century became a scarcity in this part of downtown Wichita. The 2010 construction of a new downtown arena now dominates the area south of Douglas and east of Broadway; extant historic commercial buildings are a scarcity.

E.S. Cowie Electric Company

Ernest Solan Cowie was born on July 20, 1878, to Thomas and Lucinda Cowie of Kansas City, Missouri. Cowie was educated in public schools but took correspondence courses in electrical engineering and began working at age 15.<sup>28</sup> At some point in his early years he met and befriended Thomas Edison; and worked for Edison's American Phonograph Company in Kansas City in the late 1890s.<sup>29</sup> In February 1900, Cowie opened his own small enterprise called the Kansas City Phonograph Company selling the new spring motor Edison Phonograph, developed by Thomas Edison.<sup>30</sup> (Figure 8) Less than two years later Cowie moved his firm to larger quarters and added an electrical contracting department. The firm was renamed the E.S. Cowie Electric Company and Ernest Cowie would remain at the helm throughout his lifetime.<sup>31</sup> As the new century dawned Kansas City was experiencing a building boom; Cowie saw an opportunity to focus his talents on large light and power installations. Cowie's early electrical business included contracts for work on the original Electric

<sup>20</sup> 1935 Sanborn map, sheets 4,5,6,12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21,22,23, & 24.

<sup>21</sup> Kathy Morgan and Barbara R Hammond. *Residential Resources of Wichita*, E12.

<sup>22</sup> Rachel Nugent and Lauren Rieke. *Colorado-Derby Building Kansas Historic Register Nomination*, Kansas State Historical Society, 2015: 10.

<sup>23</sup> Craig Miner. *Kansas: The History of the Sunflower State, 1854-2000*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas: 2002: 313.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan and Hammond. *Residential Resources of Wichita Nomination*, 95.

<sup>25</sup> Susan West Montgomery. *Making Room for the Automobile: The Parking Garage in the City Center 1920 to 1970*, Master's Thesis. Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1999: 98.

<sup>26</sup> Nugent and Rieke, 10.

<sup>27</sup> 1951 Wichita City Directory. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011 and 1950 update of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for the City of Wichita.

<sup>28</sup> "Ernest Solan Cowie." *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* 38. New York: James T. White: 544-545.

<sup>29</sup> Several sources cite the two as friends. Similarities exist in Edison and Cowie's lives including the fact that they were interested in electrical engineering and automobiles and engaged in those industries from their inception. Cowie sold Edison phonograph machines at a time when only a few dealers existed and thus shop owners were likely to have interacted with Edison himself who was known for micro-managing his business interests. Cowie also attended early auto shows where much of the industry focus was electrical where Edison was likely in attendance. Additionally, they worked for Western Union (at different times) and for newspapers. Both developed and manufactured batteries. "The E.S. Cowie Electrical Company." *Electrical Review and Western Electrician* 70, 13 Jan 1917, 83 accessed on Google Books on 27 Mar 2017, "Still Trying." *Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 14 Aug 1938, 135 and Randall E. Stross. *The Wizard of Menlo Park*. New York: Broadway Books, 2008.

<sup>30</sup> "Commemorating a Half Century of Pioneering." *Cowie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet*. [Annual Sales Meeting, 10-12 Apr 1950] and "Still Trying." *Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 14 Aug 1938.

<sup>31</sup> *Cowie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet*.

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Park, Swope Park, Jenkins Music Store, remodeling the electrical equipment for the *Kansas City Star*, complete electrical wiring of the Jackson County Courthouse, and wiring the residence of W.R. Nelson, the owner of the *Kansas City Star*.<sup>32</sup> In addition to his electrical projects in Kansas City, Missouri, Cowie had at least two electrical jobs in Kansas. In 1917 his firm wired the newly remodeled Michigan Building constructed at 206 E. Douglas Avenue 1909 (formerly listed on Kansas Register of Historic Places but later lost to demolition).<sup>33</sup> The building was initially leased and later purchased by Martin & Adams Music and features of the building included Victrola booths and a recital hall.<sup>34</sup> Mr. Cowie also wired one residential property in Wichita in the 1920s, considered an electrical dream house with numerous electrical outlets, 110v appliances, and a major entertainment system.<sup>35</sup> Cowie moved away from electrical contracting in the 1910s to focus largely upon automobile parts and service.<sup>36</sup>

Cowie was active in civic organizations related to his interests. He was president of the Missouri State Association of Electrical Contractors, a member of the Kansas City Accessory Dealers Association, a charter member of the Kansas City Automotive Club, and a founding member of the Auto Electric Association, the last of which became a national organization that set the standard for training and certification of members.<sup>37</sup>

E.S. Cowie was an adept businessman who could see that the automobile industry was the way of the future. In 1905 Cowie had become a dealer for Haynes autos; the Kokomo, IN, company produced a car that had no electricity outside the magneto. Cowie had the idea to use storage batteries for headlights and used the Haynes car to demonstrate his idea.<sup>38</sup> In 1906, Cowie abandoned the sale of phonographs; in 1907, he displayed his wares at the first auto show in Kansas City.<sup>39</sup> In the same year his business added a 24-hour electric car charging station and service station for gasoline autos.<sup>40</sup> The service station, while not unique, was novel in its ability to offer quick, efficient service provided by experts in their field. A *Motor Age* article of the era explained that the electrical elements of the automobile were the hardest to manage because few garages had men who could understand the engineering aspect of the automobile. "They hesitate when it comes to taking down a coil or adjusting a relay, in fact they have not the right apparatus."<sup>41</sup> In Cowie's business if a tool didn't exist to test or fix the problem, they built one that would. The service manager, Butler J. Haskins, designed much of the equipment used by the Cowie team. Later Haskins would acquire several patents for his creations, many of which would be used and improved upon in the decades to follow by companies including General Motors, Western Electric, Northrop and General Electric.<sup>42</sup>

Cowie's company developed and manufactured a self-starter for motors, battery chargers and storage batteries.<sup>43</sup> They began manufacturing the batteries in Kansas City in 1916 and within two years, the Wichita branch was making the popular batteries as well (*Figures 9-10*).<sup>44</sup> The "Cowie" battery was made in sizes to fit any car on the market and operated twenty-five percent more efficiently than the competition.<sup>45</sup> It was encased in walnut and used a double compound adhesive to secure the cell. Although manufacturing was never the primary focus for the E.S. Cowie Co., one company representative said the Cowie battery was "our hobby. We wanted to see how good we could make it."<sup>46</sup> Ultimately Cowie chose to foster sales relationships with other manufactures thereby ending his own product line in the late 1930s.

<sup>32</sup> *Cowie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet* and Jim Thorn, Interview by Brenda Spencer. Phone interview. Wamego, KS, 13 Mar 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Jim Thorn, Interview by Brenda Spencer. Wichita, KS, 30 Mar 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Susan J. Ford. *Michigan Building Kansas State Register Nomination*. Kansas State Historical Society, 2006.

<sup>35</sup> Jim Thorn. Interview, 30 Mar 2017.

<sup>36</sup> *Cowie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet*.

<sup>37</sup> "The E.S. Cowie Electrical Company." *Electrical Review and Western Electrician* 70, 13 Jan 1917, 83 accessed on Google Books on 27 Mar 2017 and Jim Thorn. Interview, 30 Mar 2017.

<sup>38</sup> The Haynes Automobile Company based in Kokomo, Indiana, produced automobiles from 1905 to 1924. The company was formerly known as the Haynes-Apperson Company. and produced automobiles under that name from 1896 to 1905. "Talking Machines to Electric Spots Mark Cowie Steps." *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 12 Jun 1921, 28.

<sup>39</sup> *Cowie 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet*.

<sup>40</sup> "Still Trying." *Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 14 Aug 1938, 135.

<sup>41</sup> B.M. Ikert. "Cowie's Electric Service Station." *Motor Age* 35, no. 11, (13 Mar 1919): 8-10.

<sup>42</sup> B.J. Haskins, "Holding and Driving Device for Testing Purposes." Patent US1310396, patented 13 July 1919, and Patent US2851879 "Engine Test Stand," accessed on Google Patents, on 25 Mar 2017 at <https://www.google.com/patents/US1310396>. Haskins others patents include no. US1729109, US1426868, US3493089, US2072984, US244649, and US1966066; all of which are related to automotive testing and repair.

<sup>43</sup> "A New Electric House for Wichita." *The Wichita Beacon*, 8 Apr 1916, 6 and "Ernest Solan Cowie." *The National Cyclopedia of American Biography* 38. New York, James T. White, 544-545.

<sup>44</sup> "New Plant Here Making Storage Cells for Autos." *The Wichita Beacon*, 30 Mar 1918, 18.

<sup>45</sup> *The Wichita Beacon*, 30 Mar 1918, 18.

<sup>46</sup> "Talking Machines to Electric Spots Mark Cowie Steps." *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 12 Jun 1921, 28.

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The demand for automobiles was growing, especially in the southwest and their distribution of parts and provision of services was growing in the same direction; the Cowie Company was ready to expand. On April 6, 1916 the Wichita newspaper announced that the E.S. Cowie Electrical Co. had signed a lease on a building on the 1200 block of East Douglas Avenue with plans to open the new branch by June of the same year. The primary reason for the expansion to Wichita, according to a local newspaper, was the extent of business the Kansas City office had received from the Wichita area.<sup>47</sup>

#### The Cowie Service Model

The Wichita branch of the E.S. Cowie Electric Co. opened in 1916 with three men transferred from the Kansas City office. By 1920, Wichita employed twenty men and generated more than \$150,000 in proceeds.<sup>48</sup> By 1931 the firm had opened another branch location in Amarillo, Texas and had grown to include nine traveling salesmen who covered territory across the southwest.<sup>49</sup>

The Wichita store steadily expanded its customer base and regularly outgrew its floor space. During its first fifteen years the firm moved to three separate locations before moving into the nominated property on S. Topeka Avenue.<sup>50</sup> The new home for Cowie Electric was a former auto dealership and service station – a one-story building at 230 S. Topeka Street that provided the company with fifty percent more space than their previous building. Positioned between Auto Row on E. Douglas and Tractor Row on S. Water, the S. Topeka shop was located among other auto-related businesses and provided easy access for customers. Like all of the Cowie business locations, the new facility was designed to allow customers to drive into the front of the building so that employees could immediately begin to assess the problem. The company advertised “the sound of your horn opens doors.”<sup>51</sup>

Touting the service motto, “A Direct Route to Superior Automotive Electric Service,” an article announcing the 1931 grand opening of the S. Topeka location detailed the breadth of the auto-supply business and Cowie’s focus on customer service.<sup>52</sup> The article listed numerous manufacturing representatives present at the opening including Splitdorf Electrical, Eisemann Magneto, Packard Electric, Briggs & Stratton and United Motors (General Motors parts division).<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the paper listed twenty-five Kansas-based Cowie battery dealers who were in attendance at the company’s annual meeting that was held in conjunction with the Wichita grand opening.

Quick, efficient, expert service was Cowie’s niche. The firm offered 24-hour service in the early automotive years when cars were new and difficult to maintain.<sup>54</sup> As an authorized service station, Cowie mechanics were equipped with “modern tools and devices” and were trained by factory representatives using factory methods and genuine parts.<sup>55</sup> In each store, organization and compartmentalization were the keys to ensuring knowledgeable, efficient service. During the height of the auto business (1930s to late 1960s) there were six to eight service departments with its own supervisor and each employee worked exclusively in their area of expertise. Employees underwent continual training primarily by factory representatives. The firm kept as many parts on hand as were possible requiring every usable space within the building to be covered with shelving full of parts ready for the customer.

The Cowie Company built its business on relationships with the manufacturers of numerous electrical parts including carburetors, magnetos and batteries, used by both automobiles and agricultural machinery. Many of the Cowie Company advertisements found in the Wichita newspapers in the 1920s-1930s targeted farmers; agriculture machinery represented approximately half of the company’s business in this era (*Figure 12*).<sup>56</sup> The linkage to agriculture-related business would wane as customers moved to national chains and computerization of machinery reduced the need for trained mechanics.

Throughout the years the Cowie Company strongly encouraged family participation in the business; Ernest Cowie’s wife Elinor was named secretary of the firm early in its history; while at each location management was encouraged to educate

<sup>47</sup> “Auto Plant to Wichita.” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 7 Apr 1916, 5.

<sup>48</sup> *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 12 Jun 1921, 28.

<sup>49</sup> “Cowie Celebrates Big Year.” *The Wichita Beacon*, 25 Feb 1931, 1.

<sup>50</sup> While Auto Row was officially considered to be East Douglas Avenue, the industry expanded to surrounding streets including East Williams Ave., North and South Main Street, South Market and North and South Topeka Street. “Automobile Row Daily Transacts \$30,000 Business.” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 3 Oct 1920, 58.

<sup>51</sup> *The Wichita Beacon*, 1 Jan 1921, 4.

<sup>52</sup> *The Wichita Sunday Beacon*, 22 Feb 1931, D1.

<sup>53</sup> *The Wichita Beacon*, 25 February 1931, 1.

<sup>54</sup> “The E.S. Cowie Electric Company.” *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 25 Sep 1921, 83.

<sup>55</sup> *The Wichita Sunday Beacon*, 22 Feb 1931, D2.

<sup>56</sup> Jim Thorn. Interview, 31 Mar 2017.

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and foster growth and loyalty amongst the staff. Shortly after opening the branch in Wichita a young man began employment as a janitor and under Mr. Cowie's personal tutelage would rise to become Cowie's successor. His name was Lee Thorn.

L. E. Thorn, a life-long Wichita resident, was born on August 13, 1899, to Edwin and Elizabeth Thorn. Lee began working for the E.S. Cowie Electric Co. in Wichita as a janitor in 1917; by 1919 he had worked his way up to a shop foreman.<sup>57</sup> Thorn was taken under Cowie's wing and groomed for management. Cowie wanted to provide his employees with some of the same educational opportunities he had experienced. He paid for Thorn to attend the International Correspondence School, whose mission was to "provide practical men with a technical education, and technical men with a practical education."<sup>58</sup> In 1923, according to city directory listings, Thorn had moved to sales; a year later his wife joined the firm as a stenographer. At age 26, Lee Thorn was managing the store. He was manager of the Wichita branch when it moved to the S. Topeka property where the store would remain until it closed eighty one years later. In 1944, Cowie and Thorn jointly purchased the Wichita property; prior to that, they had leased the buildings at 222 and 230 S. Topeka.<sup>59</sup>

Kansas City was the home store and company headquarters of the E.S. Cowie Electric Company throughout founder E.S. Cowie's lifetime, but Cowie worked closely with his managers, especially Lee Thorn, manager of the Wichita store. As the company grew, the stores in Kansas City and Wichita worked together overseeing their regional salesmen and the branch locations. By 1951, when the company celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the E.S. Cowie Electric Co. had stores in Kansas City, MO, Amarillo, Texas (1928), Enid, Oklahoma, (1937) and Wichita (1916), Salina (1940), Dodge City, Kansas (1948).

Cowie considered his relationship to the public as the pinnacle of his enterprise and this relationship went beyond selling a quality product to the customer. As servicemen returned home after World War II many did not have jobs and were looking for a way to support their family. Cowie and Thorn decided there was something they could do to help: they could offer training. Lee Thorn built a classroom on the second floor of their building at 222 S. Topeka where the Clifton Hotel previously had resided. In this classroom the Cowie Company offered a series of six-week training courses in auto repair at a nominal cost to students. Each class would have fifty men meeting three evenings per week. One week was carburetor school; the next was electric motors, then batteries, etc. Students had to pass a test at the end of the session and factory representatives came in to present "diplomas" to each graduate. Graduates of the course dispersed throughout the Midwest and many opened auto parts stores and dealerships. The training program had unintended consequences for the company – it built an enduring loyalty to Cowie for giving veterans a way to support their families. The Cowie Company had a network of dealers with which they maintained life-long relationships.<sup>60</sup>

E.S. Cowie died in 1951. Following Mr. Cowie's death Lee Thorn gradually assumed all management responsibilities. By 1959 Thorn bought the business from the Cowie family and the company headquarters was moved to Wichita. The Thorn family owned and managed the Cowie Electric Company from this point forward. With the exception of the Kansas City store, in the 1960s Thorn offered local managers the opportunity to buy their branch locations with in-house financing. Each manager did so and most kept the valued Cowie name.

Back in the late 1930s, Lee and Lena Thorn had a pesky seven year old – James "Jim" Thorn. They decided the best remedy was to send him to work with his father. Jim Thorn thus became the youngest member of the Cowie Electric Co. staff. He worked for the shop foreman who had him dust shelves and stock. The satisfaction of seeing the clean shop each day stuck with him to the end of his career. In a recent interview Jim said that even today, he could "clean up the storeroom better than anyone."<sup>61</sup>

Jim Thorn went into the Army in WWII serving in the Guided Missile Battalion. He returned to Wichita and by the mid-1950s was working for his dad at the store. The 1957 Wichita City Directory lists him as "parts manager" at the E.S. Cowie Electric Co.<sup>62</sup> By 1961, Jim was managing the Wichita store. When his father Lee died in 1964, Jim took over as president; an office he held for more than fifty years.

<sup>57</sup> WWI Draft Registration and Wichita City Directories. Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

<sup>58</sup> Jim Thorn. Interview, 13 Mar 2017 and "Education for Success: The International Correspondence Schools of Scranton, Pennsylvania." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 120 (October 1996), accessed online on 25 Mar 2017 at <https://journals.psu.edu/pmhb/article/viewFile/45108/44829>. The ICS was founded in 1890, and by 1900 one in 27 Americans had taken a course.

<sup>59</sup> Sedgwick County Register of Deed records for 222 – 232 S. Topeka Street - Lots 31, 33, 35, 37 English Addition.

<sup>60</sup> Jim Thorn. Interview, 13 Mar 2017.

<sup>61</sup> Jim Thorn. Interview, 13 Mar 2017.

<sup>62</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S. City Directories, 1822-1995* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

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The Cowie Electric Company moved into the former auto dealership/garage at 230 S. Topeka Street<sup>63</sup> in 1931 and expanded into the adjacent two-story building at 222 S. Topeka in 1935.

The one-story building at 230 S. Topeka Street was built in early 1920 and occupied by Superior Motor Company the same year. In 1922 Pete's Chevy Service Station was listed at this address in the city directory. By 1923, the building housed Pete-Mark-Kell Motor Co. and the following year, the Smith-McKay Motors Service Station.<sup>64</sup> The Smith-McKay Studebaker agency was sold to William F. Floto of Tulsa in 1924.<sup>65</sup> The dealership was located on S. Lawrence (Broadway). Floto kept the Service Station at 226 S. Topeka; the business was listed as Floto Studebaker Service in 1927 (Figure 7). By 1930, the building was vacant and in February 1931, E.S. Cowie moved into 230 S. Topeka (formerly known as 226).<sup>66</sup>

The adjacent two-story building at 222 S. Topeka Street also was constructed in 1920 by the same builder. By December 1922, the Clifton Hotel advertised rooms that were "new, modern and close in" and available for day and weekly rates.<sup>67</sup> The hotel occupied the upstairs of 222 S. Topeka Ave through 1939. There were several auto-related businesses sharing the first floor including Alemite Lubricator Co., Burpee-Johnson auto accessories, Gill Piston Ring Co. and Wichita Auto Laundry listed in the 1923 directory. First-floor commercial tenants changed several times in the building's first decade. In 1926, the building was occupied by Buchanan & Brown Autos, Motor Industries Corp. in 1927, Cain T.P. Auto Sales and Service in 1931, and Fenneberg Motor Co. Used Cars in 1934. A building permit dated November 24, 1935, documents installation of fire doors in the wall between the two buildings confirming Cowie's expansion into 222 S. Topeka.<sup>68</sup>

According to city records, S. G. Bond took out a building permit in January 1920 to construct a two-story reinforced concrete building at 222 S. Topeka, at a cost of \$20,000. The following month, Bond obtained a second permit for construction of a one-story concrete and brick building at 224 S. Topeka at a cost of \$30,000. At the time of construction, Bond owned Lot 31 at 222 S. Topeka and W.H. Bretch, a former client of Bond's, owned Lots 33-35-37 addressed at 224 S. Topeka. Bond sold the property at 222 S. Topeka in 1924; Bretch sold the property at 224/230 S. Topeka in 1928. It was not until 1944 that Ernest Cowie and Lee Thorn bought the two properties where Cowie Electric Co. had been located since 1931 (expanding into the two-story building in 1935).<sup>69</sup>

Bond designed and built the two commercial buildings on S. Topeka in 1920. The building at 230 S. Topeka was designed as an auto dealership and garage and housed a variety of auto sales and service departments prior to Cowie moving to that location in 1931. The building at 222 S. Topeka provided rental commercial space on the ground floor and rental residential rooms on the second floor. The first floor of 222 S. Topeka also housed a variety of auto-related businesses including at least three auto dealers in the first fifteen years of its existence prior to Cowie expanding into the building in 1935.

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<sup>63</sup> The original address for the one-story building was 224 S. Topeka as identified by the building permit and city directories listing Superior Motor Co. By 1923, the building was addressed at 226 S. Topeka and later became known as 228 and ultimately 230 S. Topeka. The Sanborn Map shown in Figure 5 clearly illustrates the numbers corresponding to each lot.

<sup>64</sup> It was not uncommon for early auto dealers to have a separate service "station," the term refers to the dealer's garage/shop, not a gas station, which was known as a filling station.

<sup>65</sup> *The Wichita Eagle*, 12 Oct 1924, 9 as found in Edward N. Tiehen. "Dr. Edward N. Tiehen's Notes from Wichita Newspapers." Special Collections and University Archives. Wichita State University Libraries.

<sup>66</sup> 1919 – 1931 R.L Polk Wichita City Directories.

<sup>67</sup> *The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 31 Dec 1922, 18.

<sup>68</sup> Old Building Permits, Historic Preservation Department, Wichita Metro Planning Department.

<sup>69</sup> Sedgwick County Register of Deeds records for Lots 31,33,35,37 on S. Topeka Street, English Addition, Wichita.

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings

Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas

County and State

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E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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**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: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** Less than 1

**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>37.684167</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.334150</u> Longitude:	3	<u>                    </u> Latitude:	<u>                    </u> Longitude:
2	<u>                    </u> Latitude:	<u>                    </u> Longitude:	4	<u>                    </u> Latitude:	<u>                    </u> Longitude:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)  
The property is comprised of Lots 31, 33, 35, and 37 English Addition, City of Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas. The parcel houses two connected buildings addressed at 222 S. Topeka Avenue and 230 S. Topeka Avenue.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)  
The description above reflects the existing commercial property. The two buildings were occupied by a single business beginning in 1935 and were jointly purchased/combined in 1944.

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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**11. Form Prepared By**

---

name/title Brenda R. Spencer, with Michelle L. Spencer  
organization Spencer Preservation date 14 April 2017  
street & number 10150 Onaga Road telephone 785-456-9857  
city or town Wamego state KS zip code 66547  
e-mail [brenda@spencerpreservation.com](mailto:brenda@spencerpreservation.com)

---

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

---

name Jesse and Brandy Zogleman  
street & number 230 S. Topeka Avenue telephone 316-440-2829  
city or town Wichita state KS zip code 67202

**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.

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas  
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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: E.S. Cowie Electric Co.

City or Vicinity: Wichita

County: Sedgwick State: Kansas

Photographer: Brenda R. Spencer

Date Photographed: 30 August 2018

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

- #1 of 20 SE West/street facade of E.S. Cowie Buildings at 222 and 230 S. Topeka Street
- #2 of 20 S Looking south from sidewalk in front of 222 S. Topeka
- #3 of 20 NE Detail of upper window and brick corbelling on 222 S. Topeka
- #4 of 20 SW East/rear facades of 222 and 230 S. Topeka
- #5 of 20 W Rear facade of 230 S. Topeka from alley
- #6 of 20 N Looking N from sidewalk in front of 230 S. Topeka with drive-through garage bay on south end
- #7 of 20 NE Front facade of Cowie buildings at 222 and 230 S. Topeka
- #8 of 20 W Looking N in storefront display room (former showroom) in 230
- #9 of 20 W Looking W along N wall of storefront space with hex tile in 230
- #10 of 20 SW Original door at entrance to 230 from interior of storefront space
- #11 of 20 SE Central storage area in 230 with drive-in bay on south, front showroom partitioned on R
- #12 of 20 E Rear shop area looking E at rear facade with new replacement doors in garage bays
- #13 of 20 SE Looking at SE corner of rear garage in 230 w/ exposed brick wall, trusses at ceiling and concrete floor
- #14 of 20 SE Detail of replacement metal swinging doors at garage bays on end of rear/east facade -230
- #15 of 20 N Sliding metal fire door extant at openings between buildings, looking north from 230
- #16 of 20 NE ca. 1940s replacement steel window in downsized opening extant on 1<sup>st</sup> floor N facade - 222
- #17 of 20 SE Looking E into center storage room with restroom on left in 222
- #18 of 20 NW Storefront space in 222 S. Topeka with corner door also accessing stair to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor on right
- #19 of 20 E Looking E from inside NW door to 222 up stairway to 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
- #20 of 20 W Looking W at office enclosure along front/west end of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor with stair along N (R) - 222

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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**Figures**

Include GIS maps, figures, and scanned images below

**PHOTO KEY – Exterior**

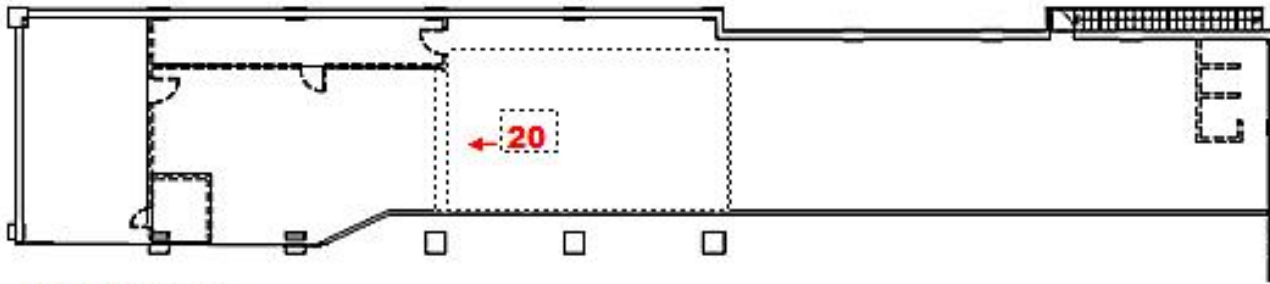
2017 Google Satellite View used as base plan



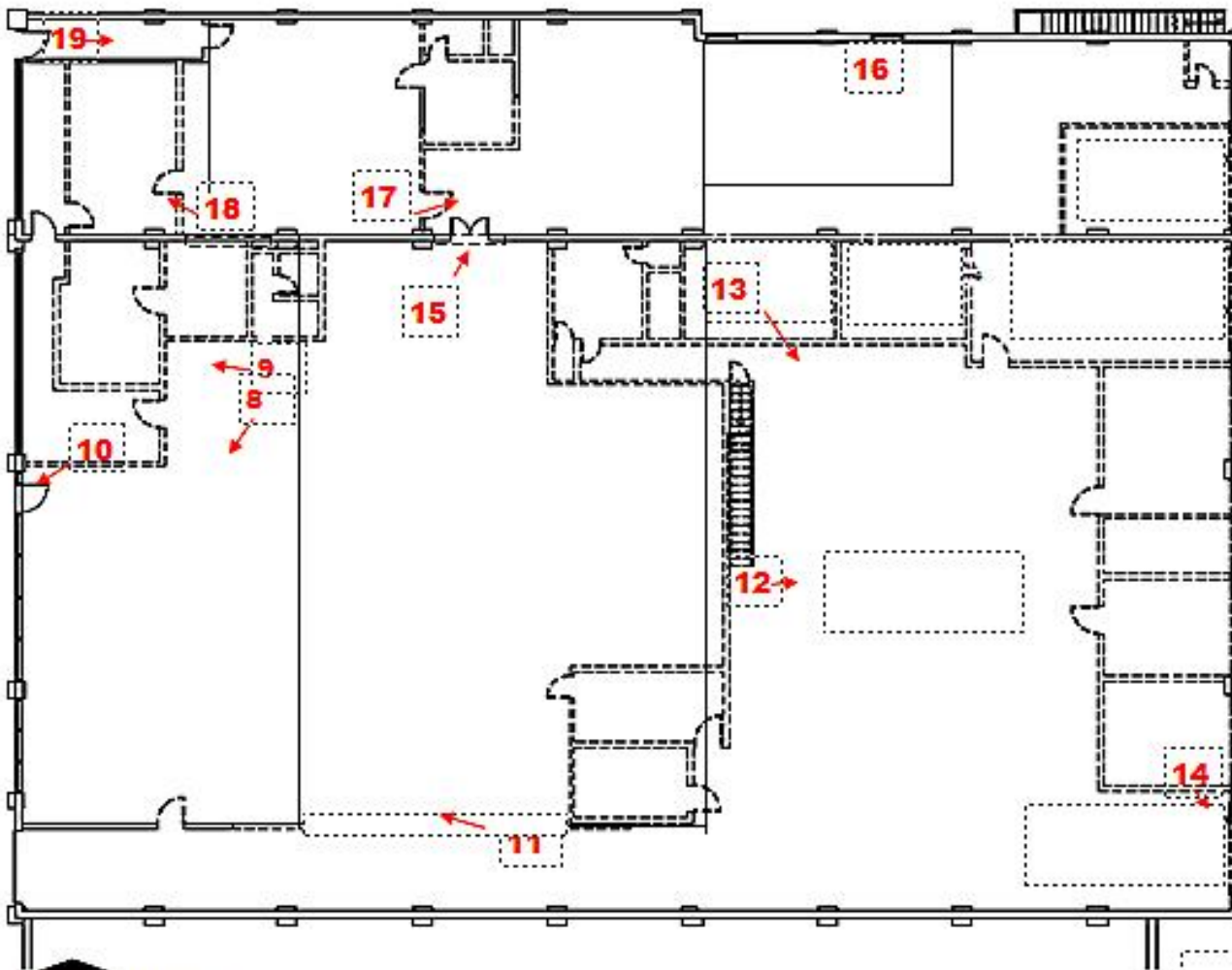
E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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**PHOTO KEY – Interior**



SECOND FLOOR - DEMO PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"



FIRST FLOOR - DEMO PLAN  
1/8" = 1'-0"

Preliminary demolition plan by Wolf & Associates Architecture  
Used as base plan for interior photo key (no other floor plans available)

**E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings**  
222-230 S. Topeka, Wichita, KS  
**PHOTO KEY**

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas  
County and State

**HISTORIC VIEWS**

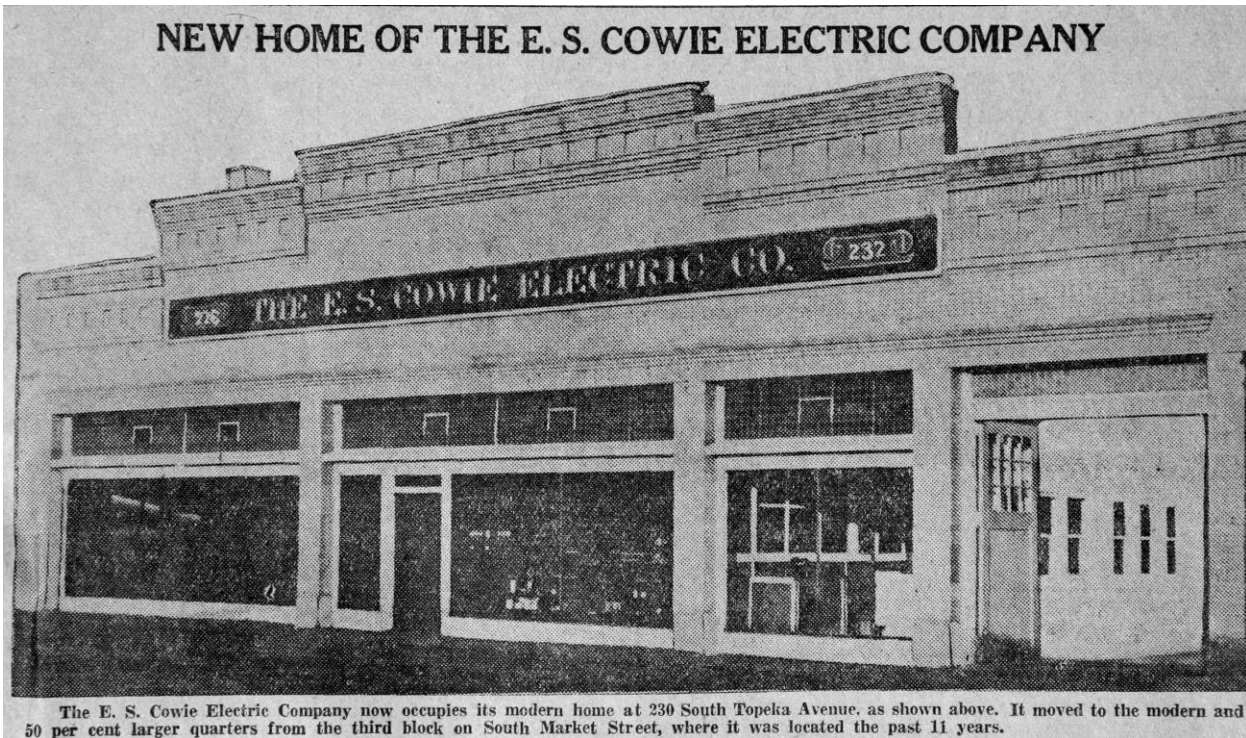


Figure 1 – View of 230 S. Topeka when Cowie moved in, *The Wichita Eagle* 22 February 1931

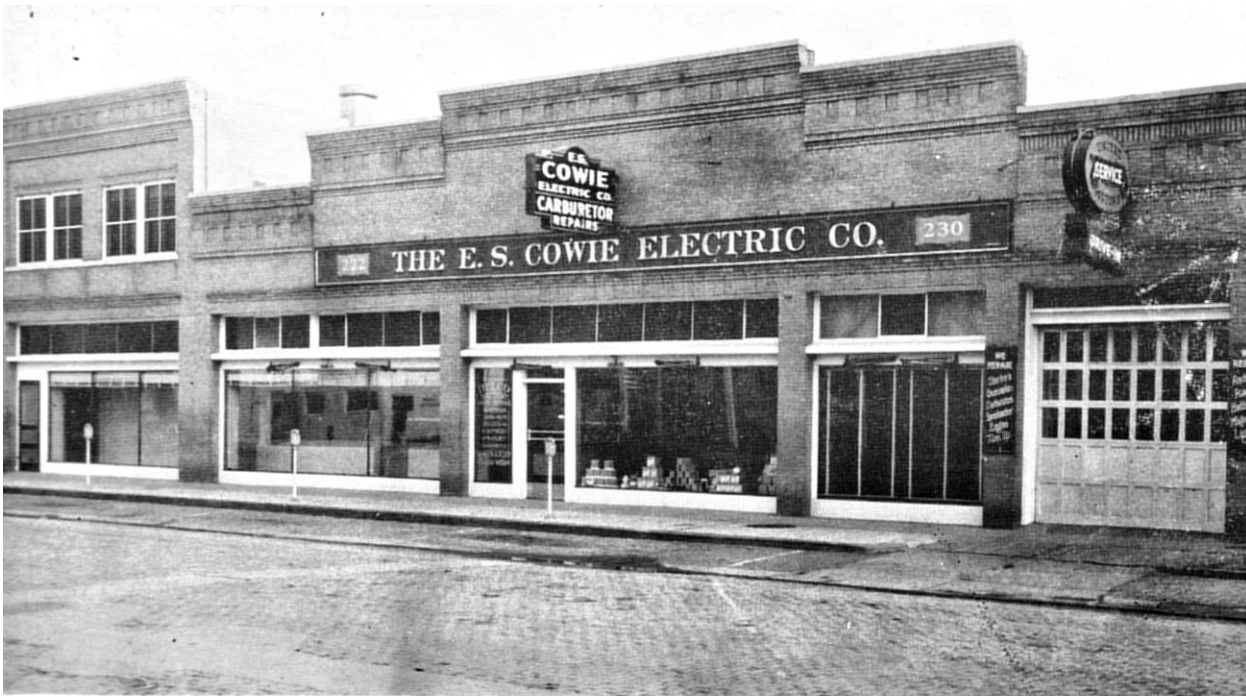


Figure 2 – ca. 1950 view of Cowie Electric Company at 222 – 230 S. Topeka; the business expanded into the adjacent 2-story building at 222 S. Topeka in 1935 (1951 Cowie Electric 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet provided by Jim Thorn)

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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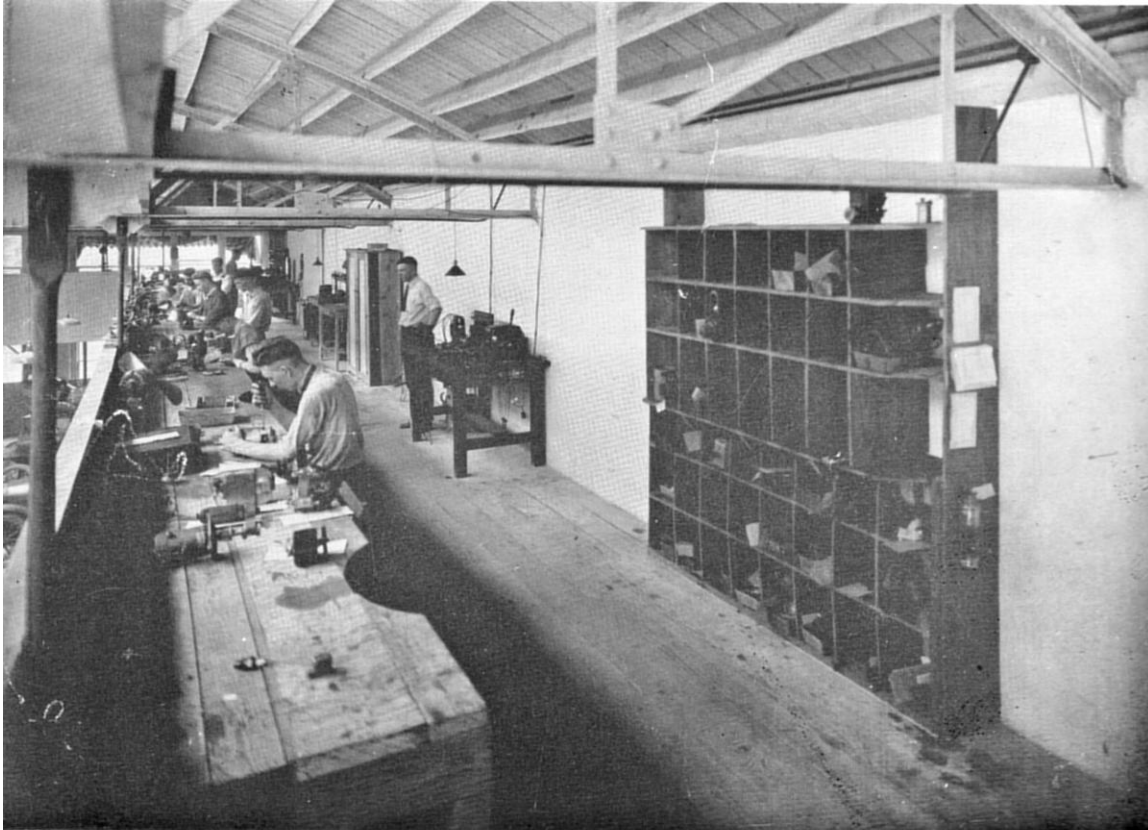


Figure 3 – ca.1940s interior view of perimeter balcony with workshop overlooking rear garage in 230 S. Topeka; 1951 Cowie Electric 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Booklet provided by Jim Thorn

**MAPS**

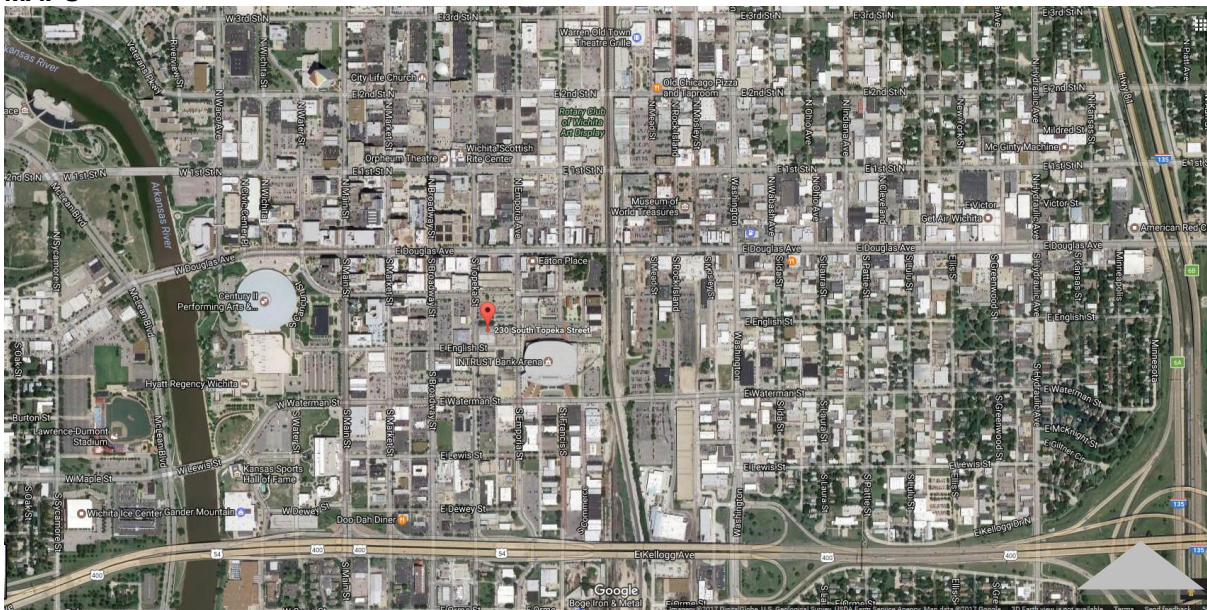


Figure 4a – Aerial View of Context with pin marking location of nominated property  
E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings at 222 & 230 S. Topeka Street  
Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas  
Lat/Long: 37.684167/-97.334150 Datum WGS84  
Downloaded at Google Earth 2017

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Figure 4b – Aerial View of Site downloaded at Google Earth 2017  
E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings at 222 & 230 S. Topeka Street, Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas  
Lat/Long: 37.684167/-97.334150 Datum WGS84

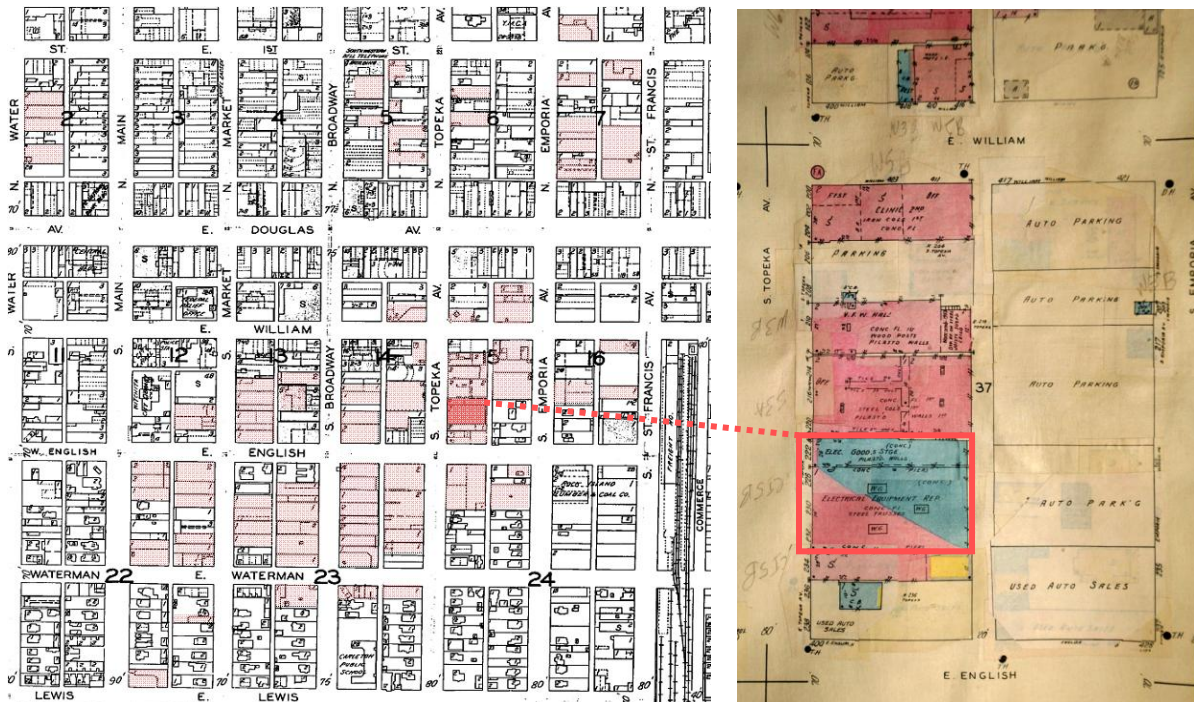


Figure 5 – Left: Auto-related businesses highlighted on 1935 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map [Vol 1, Excerpt from Sheet b Wichita, Sedgwick County, KS]. Primary Auto Dealers had moved to new Auto Row on E. Douglas out of core area of downtown but secondary auto businesses surrounded Broadway/Main and Douglas intersection with Cowie business in place on S. Topeka (red). Right: Cowie Electric Company remains in place at 222-226-230-232 S. Topeka on 1950 Map [1935 + October 1950 update Vol 2, Excerpt from Sheet 15 Wichita, Sedgwick County, KS]

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
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OTHER



When You Want Plans or Building Done,  
Phone or Call on  
**S. G. BOND**  
227 E. Douglas Av. —:— WICHITA —:— Phone Mkt. 2952

**One Profit Car**

Honest Value  Real Worth

**Floto Motor Co.**

Sales Room      Phones      Service Station  
228 S. Lawrence      Market 1805-06      228 S. Topeka Ave.

Left: Figure 6 – Advertisement for architect/builder S.G. Bond, from 1924 R.L. Polk Co. Wichita (KS) City Directory  
Right: Figure 7 – Advertisement for one of the early building occupants – Floto Motor Co. from 1926 R.L. Polk Co. Wichita (KS) City Directory

**The E.S. COWIE COMPANY**

THE MUSIC TRADE REVIEW 51


## The Piano and The New Edison Phonograph

The high grade piano and the new Edison belong in the same salesroom. Eventually they will find their way into the same drawing-room. Because

### The Edison is A Musical Instrument

with its own peculiar merits that entitle it to stand side by side with the highest grade piano made. The most exclusive piano houses are now carrying it. They find that in addition to a piano and even in addition to both a piano and a piano-player their patrons want an Edison Phonograph.

We are prepared to demonstrate the superior tone—the musical excellence of the Edison. We are also anxious to tell you WHY you should carry it and the success you will have with it if the experience of other first-class piano houses is any criterion. Write for particulars to

 **67 Lakeside Avenue  
Orange, N. J.**

Jobbers Who Handle Edison Phonographs and Records

<b>CALIFORNIA</b> Los Angeles—Southern California Music Company San Francisco—Pacific Phonograph Co. Denver—Deering Music Co. New Haven—The Phonograph Co. <b>CHICAGO</b> Chicago—The Phonograph Co. Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. <b>CONNECTICUT</b> New Haven—The Phonograph Co. <b>FLORIDA</b> Orlando—The Phonograph Co. <b>GEORGIA</b> Atlanta—The Phonograph Co. <b>ILLINOIS</b> Chicago—The Phonograph Co. St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. <b>INDIANA</b> Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. <b>IOWA</b> Des Moines—The Phonograph Co. <b>KANSAS</b> Kansas City—The Phonograph Co. <b>KENTUCKY</b> Louisville—The Phonograph Co. <b>LOUISIANA</b> New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. <b>MAINE</b> Portland—The Phonograph Co. <b>MASSACHUSETTS</b> Boston—The Phonograph Co. <b>MICHIGAN</b> Detroit—The Phonograph Co. <b>MINNESOTA</b> St. Paul—The Phonograph Co. <b>MISSISSIPPI</b> New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. <b>MISSOURI</b> St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. <b>MONTANA</b> Butte—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEBRASKA</b> Omaha—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b> Manchester—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW JERSEY</b> Newark—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK</b> New York—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK (cont.)</b> Buffalo—The Phonograph Co. Cleveland—The Phonograph Co. Columbus—The Phonograph Co. Detroit—The Phonograph Co. Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. Knoxville—The Phonograph Co. Louisville—The Phonograph Co. Memphis—The Phonograph Co. New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. New York—The Phonograph Co. Philadelphia—The Phonograph Co. Pittsburgh—The Phonograph Co. Portland—The Phonograph Co. St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. St. Paul—The Phonograph Co. Trenton—The Phonograph Co. Wichita—The Phonograph Co.	<b>OHIO</b> Cincinnati—The Phonograph Co. Cleveland—The Phonograph Co. Columbus—The Phonograph Co. Dayton—The Phonograph Co. <b>OKLAHOMA</b> Oklahoma City—The Phonograph Co. <b>PENNSYLVANIA</b> Philadelphia—The Phonograph Co. Pittsburgh—The Phonograph Co. <b>RHODE ISLAND</b> Providence—The Phonograph Co. <b>TENNESSEE</b> Nashville—The Phonograph Co. <b>Texas</b> Dallas—The Phonograph Co. Houston—The Phonograph Co. San Antonio—The Phonograph Co. <b>VIRGINIA</b> Richmond—The Phonograph Co. <b>WASHINGTON</b> Seattle—The Phonograph Co. <b>WEST VIRGINIA</b> Martinsburg—The Phonograph Co. <b>WISCONSIN</b> Milwaukee—The Phonograph Co. <b>WYOMING</b> Cheyenne—The Phonograph Co.	<b>ALABAMA</b> Birmingham—The Phonograph Co. <b>ARIZONA</b> Phoenix—The Phonograph Co. <b>ARKANSAS</b> Little Rock—The Phonograph Co. <b>CALIFORNIA</b> Los Angeles—The Phonograph Co. <b>CONNECTICUT</b> Hartford—The Phonograph Co. <b>FLORIDA</b> Tallahassee—The Phonograph Co. <b>GEORGIA</b> Atlanta—The Phonograph Co. <b>ILLINOIS</b> Chicago—The Phonograph Co. <b>INDIANA</b> Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. <b>IOWA</b> Des Moines—The Phonograph Co. <b>KANSAS</b> Kansas City—The Phonograph Co. <b>KENTUCKY</b> Louisville—The Phonograph Co. <b>LOUISIANA</b> New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. <b>MAINE</b> Portland—The Phonograph Co. <b>MASSACHUSETTS</b> Boston—The Phonograph Co. <b>MICHIGAN</b> Detroit—The Phonograph Co. <b>MINNESOTA</b> St. Paul—The Phonograph Co. <b>MISSISSIPPI</b> New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. <b>MISSOURI</b> St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. <b>MONTANA</b> Butte—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEBRASKA</b> Omaha—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b> Manchester—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW JERSEY</b> Newark—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK</b> New York—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK (cont.)</b> Buffalo—The Phonograph Co. Cleveland—The Phonograph Co. Columbus—The Phonograph Co. Detroit—The Phonograph Co. Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. Knoxville—The Phonograph Co. Louisville—The Phonograph Co. Memphis—The Phonograph Co. New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. New York—The Phonograph Co. Philadelphia—The Phonograph Co. Pittsburgh—The Phonograph Co. Portland—The Phonograph Co. St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. St. Paul—The Phonograph Co. Trenton—The Phonograph Co. Wichita—The Phonograph Co.	<b>NEW HAMPSHIRE</b> Manchester—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW JERSEY</b> Newark—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK</b> New York—The Phonograph Co. <b>NEW YORK (cont.)</b> Buffalo—The Phonograph Co. Cleveland—The Phonograph Co. Columbus—The Phonograph Co. Detroit—The Phonograph Co. Indianapolis—The Phonograph Co. Knoxville—The Phonograph Co. Louisville—The Phonograph Co. Memphis—The Phonograph Co. New Orleans—The Phonograph Co. New York—The Phonograph Co. Philadelphia—The Phonograph Co. Pittsburgh—The Phonograph Co. Portland—The Phonograph Co. St. Louis—The Phonograph Co. St. Paul—The Phonograph Co. Trenton—The Phonograph Co. Wichita—The Phonograph Co.
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Figure 8 – Edison Advertisement listing E.S. Cowie's first business in Kansas City – The Phonograph Co. of Kansas City. *The Music Trade Review*, 1914 © mbsi.org.arcade-museum.com

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

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## Cowie's "Fourteen Points"

1. **TO MAKE THE BEST POSSIBLE BATTERY**—a battery that would stand up under all conditions and give maximum service at all times. In order to do this, QUALITY has been kept uppermost in mind, and only the best materials have been used.
2. **TO MAKE A BATTERY EXTRA STRONG**—In order to do this the lead connectors are all about 5% heavier than used on any competing battery. A large quantity of sealing compound is used in fastening our rubber jars in our wood cases so that the question of broken jars and leaky batteries is almost disposed of.
3. **TO MAKE AN ATTRACTIVE LOOKING BATTERY**—We have made an effort in the manufacture of Cowie Batteries to pay particular attention to its appearance, and we believe that our battery, when it is new and first-handed to a customer, is a better looking battery than any other now on the market. It has a fine finish, the top being finished off in polished hard rubber.
4. **TO MAKE A BATTERY THAT WOULD MEET WESTERN CONDITIONS**—Cowie Batteries are made in the West for Western people to meet Western conditions. They are made strong and rigid—tongue and groove walnut cases with doweled corners—strong, wear-resisting plates, etc. They go to you and your customers full of "zip."
5. **TO MAKE A TESTED BATTERY**—In order that Cowie Batteries might be made as perfect as possible, they were placed on the market and sold direct from the factory for over a year before an effort was made to push their sale through dealers. As a whole, the batteries gave universal satisfaction. Where shortcomings were found to exist they were immediately and thoroughly corrected. The COWIE Battery of today is a thoroughly tested battery—built on experience.
6. **TO EMPLOY ONLY SKILLED WORKERS**—It has been the Cowie policy from the first to employ ONLY skilled workers. Every man in our establishment is thoroughly trained and experienced in his particular line of work, and his product is therefore as good as human skill can make it.
7. **TO TREAT WORKERS FAIRLY**—Every workman in the Cowie plant is encouraged to put his best into his work. There is no driving done in this factory, but it IS understood that every employee is to take a personal and painstaking interest in his work. Our employees are lappy and contented and their product is therefore of the best. Good wages are paid.
8. **TO HIRE MEN ON A SALARY BASIS**—All of our employees work on a definite salary basis. There is no piece work operation in our plant at any point. We pay our employees by the week—not by the hour and the day. Consequently, there is no incentive for them to INCREASE PRODUCTION by slighting quality. Every piece that goes into our battery is made right, no matter how long it takes.
9. **TO ADVERTISE HONESTLY**—While Cowie thoroughly believes in advertising—and advertises extensively—it is the policy of this firm to advertise truthfully. No claims are made that cannot be fulfilled. The idea of rendering satisfaction—rather than merely selling goods—dominates our advertising as it does everything else.
10. **TO BUILD UP A LOYAL DEALER ORGANIZATION**—A storage battery, in order to give utmost satisfaction, must have someone in the immediate vicinity who is interested and who knows more about the battery than the ordinary automobile owner. For this reason it is our intention to build up a loyal dealer organization, toward which end we are offering our dealers the fullest possible co-operation.
11. **TO SELL THROUGH DEALERS ONLY**—It is the COWIE policy to sell through dealers only, and all inquiries received as a result of our extensive advertising are referred directly to the nearest dealer. No mail-order sales are solicited. Dealers, therefore, are assured of a square deal always.
12. **TO STAND BACK OF THE DEALER**—All COWIE Batteries are fully guaranteed for six months. This guarantee is without qualification of any kind and has no strings tied to it. COWIE stands back of the dealer all the way through and will see that adjustments and replacements are promptly and satisfactorily made.
13. **TO GIVE ABSOLUTE SATISFACTION**—From the time the first COWIE battery was made until the present, it has been the policy of this company to give absolute satisfaction. This means that it is not the COWIE policy to quibble and bicker about replacements, nor is it the COWIE policy to give anything but the BEST service to dealer and consumer alike. Satisfaction is always aimed at and practically always attained.
14. **TO BUILD FOR THE FUTURE**—It is the Cowie creed that GOOD-WILL is the most valuable asset in business today. Therefore, every effort is made to build for the future by maintaining at all times the high standards, the prestige and the good name of the Cowie organization. Consequently, when you sell COWIE BATTERIES you, too, build for the future. There is a big demand right now for COWIE BATTERIES in your territory. GET IN ON IT. Let us have your order right now—today!

## THE BEEBE ELECTRIC CO.

A. E. BEEBE, Mgr.

Figure 9 – Advertisement for Cowie Battery, wholesaled to dealers throughout the Midwest, *Manhattan Republic* 12 June 1919 clipped at newspapers.com



*Weak Spark Plug—*  
Where d'ye get all that pep?

*The Strong One—*  
Oh, I'm bein' fed now by a Cowie Battery. Great stuff! But it certainly keeps a fellow on the job. I haven't missed one of the timer's "Fire" orders since the boss began using

### Cowie Storage Batteries

Hot Spark—Quick Start—Long Life—Hard to Freeze.  
Every cell cushioned to withstand roughest usage.  
If a "Cowie" Doesn't Make Good, We Will.

BEEBEE ELECTRIC CO.



Figure 10 – Left: Advertisement for Cowie Battery, wholesaled to dealers throughout the Midwest, *Manhattan Mercury* 16 July 1921 clipped at newspapers.com. Right: "Tag" from Cowie Battery, provided by former owner, Jim Thorn

E.S. Cowie Electric Co. Buildings  
Name of Property

Sedgwick, Kansas  
County and State

**Motor Age Says:**

... "Probably few cities of this country can boast of an electric service station that can equal that of the E. S. Cowie Electric Co., Kansas City, Mo., both as to equipment and the way of rendering service. Something like five years ago this concern made its first contract to handle the service and maintenance work of one of the leading makes of starting and lighting systems. Since that time the Cowie Company has been selected by fifteen of the principal makers of automotive electrical equipment for the maintenance of their products in this territory."

This suggests that car owners of Wichita will find, in the local branch of this company, an efficiency in methods that is both practical and pleasing.

*"Cowie"*

"The Right Kind of Service at the Right Time"  
1236-8 East Douglas  
Phone Market 1407

Figure 11 – Advertisement for Cowie Electric Co. at first Wichita location. *The Wichita Daily Eagle* 20 January, 1920 clipped at newspapers.com

**LONDON**  
**PARIS**  
**Berlin**



**At Your Call**

**THE** all-wave reception, unusual tone quality and modern cabinets of the new 1936 Delco Radios truly prove why they are leaders in beauty of design, style and performance.

**All Electric**

Delco Radios are all electric. . . . There is no "A" battery to bother recharging. . . . No "B" and "C" batteries to replace. . . . Just plug the radio in any 32-volt wall plug or light socket.

Also Available in 6-Volt Type, Which Require No B or C Batteries

**THE E. S. COWIE ELECTRIC CO.**  
230 SOUTH TOPEKA AVE.      PHONE 2-2401

**DELCO RADIO**



**ENJOY THE SAFETY OF DELCO LIGHT**

No need for us to contrast the danger of oil lighting with the safety of electricity. Delco-Light is safer, because it is electric light. More than that, it is reliable and low-cost power for use in farm work. Now is the time to think about Delco-Light and its safety. If you will call on us when convenient we shall be glad to give you Delco-Light literature, explain about our convenient payments, about financing through the National Housing Act, and talk with you about our **FREE DEMONSTRATION** on your farm.

**The E. S. Cowie Elec. Co.**  
230 SOUTH TOPEKA AVENUE      PHONE 2-2401  
WICHITA, KANSAS

Figure 12 – Left: Advertisement for Delco Radio carried by Cowie Electric at 230 S. Topeka, *The Catholic Advance* 12 October 1935 clipped at newspapers.com. Right: Advertisement for Delco Light carried by Cowie Electric at 230 S. Topeka, recommended for farm use. *The Catholic Advance* 27 October 1934 clipped at newspapers.com.