



## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty  
Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade: Specialty Store

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th  
Century American Movements:  
Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
roof Asphalt  
other Wood  
Terra Cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Blakeslee Motor Company Building (1918) is located at 211 West Myrtle in Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas (pop. 10,598). This rectangular brick two-story flat-roofed commercial building has Classical Revival detailing. It stands on the west side of the town's central business district. The main three-bay facade faces Myrtle Street to the north. The structure is approximately 50 feet wide and 140 feet long. The Motor Company building retains substantial exterior and interior architectural integrity.

The interior is divided into three main areas with a plan based on the original function as an automobile agency. While the front showroom and rear garage are common features of this property type, the showroom mezzanine and second floor storeroom distinguish the Blakeslee building from other simpler examples. The front and rear sections are separated by transverse partition walls. There are two side stairways to the mezzanine between the mezzanine and storeroom. Both the garage and storeroom have two longitudinal rows of iron columns supporting the ceiling and roof. Originally, there was an elevator from the lower garage to the storeroom; this features was removed c. 1930.

The Motor Company building has a concrete foundation, brick walls with limestone and terra cotta ornamentation, and a flat built-up asphalt roof behind parapet walls. The main north and east facades are constructed of brown wire-cut brick laid in running bond. The west and rear walls are common red brick laid in header bond with six stretcher courses.

The main building facade is divided into three regular bays. A modern metal entrance door is centered in the middle bay. There are modern metal-covered bulkheads and three overhead lights in this bay. A multi-pane woodframe transom with three sections surmounts the entrance. One of the original iron fixtures for an entrance light remains projecting from the west pier. In the flanking bays there are smooth-cut stone bulkheads, two display windows, a woodframe lintel, and 60-light wood transoms. The pier bases are smooth-cut stone and small stone blocks

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ornament the piers. A gold molded terra cotta belt course crowns the transom row. There is a central terra cotta sign with "Motor-Cars" in raised letters above the entrance. A raised brick belt course and a projecting terra cotta cornice accent the eave. The cornice has a widely spaced dentil molding. There is a terra cotta cap on the parapet wall.

The ornamental treatment of the main facade extends around the northeast side of the building for two bays. A display window in the south bay has been filled with brick. There are two small windows next to these bays. A square brick flue is located in the east sidewall between the front and rear sections of the building. Two rows of six large windows in the east wall light the rear of the building. These have smooth-cut stone sills. The first floor opening to the north in this row has been filled with brick. Second floor windows are covered with white corrugate metal.

In the rear wall a central wooden garage door is flanked by two large windows. There are three windows on the second floor. All rear windows are covered with metal. The entire west wall of the building is blank. It has a stepped parapet in three sections.

The most significant feature of the building's interior is the two-story showroom. This room has an ornamental black and white tile floor with white tile base. The east third of this floor has been covered with modern asphalt tile. The lower half of the engaged piers in the showroom are covered with mottled green tile. The exterior walls are plastered. The ceiling is separated into six panels by intersecting beams. An elaborately ornamented pressed metal ceiling covers the beams and panels. Each panel had a suspended light fixture on a chain. The original fixtures have been replaced with modern fluorescent lights. There is stained wood trim around the display windows, under the mezzanine, and on the stairs. Each stairway has two flights at right angles with an intermediate landing. A small bathroom is located under the east stairway. A modern woodframe office has been constructed in the southeast corner of the showroom.

Modern fiberboard partitions enclose the two east bays of the mezzanine. A pipe railing extends along the top of the original mezzanine wall. The mezzanine and second floor showroom have narrow oak flooring. There are three rooms between the mezzanine and the storeroom in the rear.

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This configuration may date from the bowling alley/dance hall of the 1930s. The mezzanine and rooms have triple stepped oak baseboard and casing. The east room has a 10-light stained oak door and bathroom fixtures. A similar door to the west has been moved to an opening in the modern partition blocking the center of the mezzanine. A 6/6 double-hung wooden window remains in the second floor opening of the east wall. The central and northwest rooms have light woodframe walls of plaster on wire screen.

Two rows of five iron columns in the storeroom support the building roof. A sprinkler system with exposed piping is suspended from the ceiling. There are paired 12/12 double-hung wooden windows in the east and south wall openings.

At the rear of the showroom a wide central opening leads to the garage. There is a wooden ramp from the showroom to the lower garage. A modern woodframe storage room has been constructed in the northeast corner of the garage. The second floor rests on steel I-beams supported on two rows of five iron columns. The garage is divided into three bays by these columns. There is a concrete floor and plastered exterior walls. Some areas of the rear wall have damaged plaster. The ceiling is fiberboard with wooden battens. A sprinkler system with exposed piping is suspended from the ceiling.

The Blakeslee Motor Company building has excellent exterior and interior architectural integrity. It appears today much as it did when completed in 1918. The building is slightly deteriorated, but is in good structural condition. Almost all alterations are minor. Where the original plan and details are obscured by modern construction, these changes could be reversed in a certified rehabilitation. The building is architecturally significant as a well preserved example of an early twentieth century auto salesroom.

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of the post office. According to the newspaper:

"Mr. Blakeslee has built up a wonderful business in the last six years, and has done so by carrying high class cars, such as the Hudson, Cadillac, and Essex cars, with the Acme and Republic trucks and the Cleveland Tractors.

This building and lot costing Mr. Blakeslee something like \$33,000 give him one of the most complete buildings in the state, and he thereby shows his confidence in the future of Independence."

The Blakeslee building represented a distinctive property type designed for auto sales and service. There was a two-story showroom with mezzanine in the front and a second floor storeroom in the rear above a lower service garage. The building's classical exterior detailing was a refined treatment appropriate for the more expensive automobiles offered by Blakeslee. As the Tribune described the building:

"It is built of brown mottled, wire-cut brick with plenty of windows, giving an abundance of light. In size 50 x 140 feet, with salesroom 50 x 50 feet with 21-foot beam ceiling, and tile floor with two wide stairways leading to the Mezzanine floor 16 x 50 for office with private offices near. Both floors and columns being beautifully decorated. In the rear of salesroom the lower floor 50 x 90 feet is for service, and the second floor same size for storage stock, all complete with electric elevator and modern conveniences, such as steam heat, electric lighted, and the Grinnell Automatic Sprinkler system, making it fire proof."

Reportedly, the International "gas buggy" was the first automobile sold in Independence beginning in 1902. The industry grew rapidly in the early years of the twentieth century. Besides the Blakeslee Motor Company, at least four other auto agency buildings from this period remain standing in downtown Independence. The Litchfield and Sawyer garage, a one-story doublefront building at 304-306 N. Penn., was constructed in 1908. The property was not used as an auto agency after 1922. The Independence Motor Car Company with W.W. and J.S. Curtin, proprietors, was built at 301 W. Main about 1912. It is a two-story building with a recessed corner entrance. The property housed an auto agency and service garage until after 1939. Comparable buildings located near the Blakeslee building were the Ernest Brothers Auto Company (1918) at 214-216 W. Main and

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the Arnold Auto Company (c. 1925) at 215-217 W. Main. Both were one-story doublefront buildings with showrooms and rear garages. They housed automobile agencies until after 1939.

Although the Blakeslee building was "a model in its line," the business was not so successful. Blakeslee sold the property October 4, 1926 for \$35,000. He was later listed as an auto dealer at 217 N. 6th in 1929 and at 121 W. Laurel in 1931. The business did not survive the early effects of the depression. The Blakeslee family left Independence sometime between 1931 and 1935.

After Blakeslee sold the Motor Company building, another auto dealer George J. Marr, was listed as the building's tenant in 1929. Marr also lived in the building. The property belonged to Mary Shultis, Beatrice Stewart, and Muriel Noonan, heirs of A.W. Shultis. Shultis was a prominent Independence banker and capitalist.

By 1931 the property was occupied by the Plamor Bowling Alley with Wilbert Wilson and William Stotts, proprietors, Sweeby's luncheonette, managed by Morton Rees, and Albion Daggett, a confectioner. These tenants initiated a long period of the building's use as an amusement center. In 1937 and 1939 the property was also listed as the Plamor dance hall. The combined use as a bowling alley and restaurant continued for many years. The property was known as the Plamor until after 1953. In 1957 Cordie and Martha Peterson operated the bowling alley and grill under their name. The present tenant, Tri-State Electrical Supply Company, occupies only the front showroom and the lower rear garage. However, throughout the years of different tenancies the building has retained much of its integrity. Shultis Properties, the partnership which owns the building, plans a rehabilitation for another tenant who would utilize the entire building.

The Blakeslee Motor Company building has significant associations with the local development of automobile sales and service in Independence, Kansas. The building is a distinctive and well-preserved example of an early twentieth century auto sales room. The period of historical significance includes the years from 1918 until 1926 when the property housed the Blakeslee Motor Company. The period of architectural significance is associated with the date of construction, 1918. Compared with other examples of this property type, the Blakeslee building may also have regional or state-wide architectural significance.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Independence, Kansas City Directories, 1912-1957.

Montgomery County, Kansas Register of Deeds. Boden-Independence Motor Company Warranty Deed. 124:68. Barton Blakeslee and wife Mary B. Shultis Warranty Deed. 162:566

South Kansas Tribune, 24 September 1917; 17 October 1917; 21 November 1917; 2 January 1918; 20 March 1918; 12 June 1918.

### 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

### Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

### Specify repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than 1 acre

### UTM References

A 15 259760 4123140  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description The nominated property stands on a rectangular tract (approximately 7500 square feet) comprising the west 50 feet of Lot 3, Block 41, Independence, Kansas. It is bounded on the east, west, and south by the adjacent property lines and on the north by Myrtle Street. The property is located on the west side of the town's central business district.

See continuation sheet

### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all property historically associated with the nominated building.

See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

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organization \_\_\_\_\_

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