

Mrs. H. R. Ellsworth, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

MOLINE, KANSAS IS A SMALL COMMUNITY IN Elk County, a farming area in southeastern Kansas. It was founded in 1879 and is said to have been named by a salesman from the John Deere Company of Moline, Illinois. In 1910 Moline had a population of 808 and the county a population of about 10,000.

The Moline National Bank was found in 1906, a conversion of the Moline State Bank. It received charter number 8369. The first president was Oliver S. Stevens, a native of Maine. He died a decade later on May 12, 1916 at the age of 80.

He was succeeded as president by Mrs. H. R. (Elizabeth) Ellsworth, the widow of Herbert Ryan Ellsworth. Mr. Ellsworth, before his death on August 16, 1913, had been a Moline businessman, and a director and vice president of the bank.

Presumably because of her ownership in the bank, Mrs. Ellsworth became the president at Mr. Stevens' death. She served until 1922/23 when E. A. Chaffin, who had been the national bank's cashier since its founding, assumed the presidency.

Mrs. Ellsworth died at her home in Moline on Sunday afternoon, March 12, 1933, at the age of 83. She had resided

in the community for almost 50 years. No mention of her bank presidency was made in the obituary, but it did speak of her keen interest in community and national affairs and her mental alertness, dignity and refinement. The couple's only child, a daughter, had died as a teenager in 1895.

The bank, unfortunately, closed on Monday, April 12, 1926. Fearing a run on the bank if it opened that day, the directors decided to suspend the bank and place it in the hands of bank examiners.

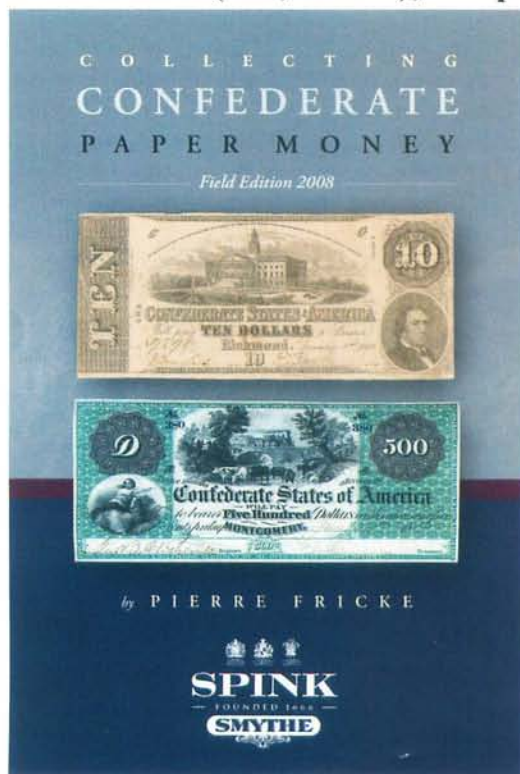
The local newspaper hoped the failure would not "be so bad as many fear even if it is not so good as others hope." But that was rather optimistic, for the bank did not reopen and its affairs were not completely settled until 1931.

Sources

Biographical sketches of Herbert R. Ellsworth and Edward A. Chaffin are found in *Kansas, a Cyclopedia of State History* (1912), vol. 3, part 1. An obituary for Oliver S. Stevens is found in *The Moline Advance* for May 18, 1916; one for H. R. Ellsworth in the issue for August 21, 1913; and, one for Mrs. Elizabeth Ellsworth in the issue for March 16, 1933. The closing of the bank is noted in the same newspaper for April 15 and April 22, 1926. ❖

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