

NR LISTED 11/19/93

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Big Flat School Gymnasium

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: Between State Highway 14 and County Road 121

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Big Flat

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Baxter code: AR 005 zip code: 72617

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u>	buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: Public Schools in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940

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**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Clarence H. Slater \_\_\_\_\_ 10-6-93  
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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**5. National Park Service Certification**

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic: EDUCATION Sub: School  
RECREATION AND CULTURE Sports facility

Current: VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: N/A

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

Other  
Craftsman

Other Description: Plain Traditional

Materials:	foundation	<u>Stone</u>	roof	<u>Asphalt</u>
	walls	<u>Stone</u>	other	<u>Wood porches</u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: SOCIAL HISTORY  
ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1938-1942

Significant Dates: 1938-1942

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: National Youth Administration  
Griffin, Harrison

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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X See continuation sheet.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>15</u>	<u>553660</u>	<u>3984220</u>	B	<u>15</u>	_____
C	<u>15</u>	_____	_____	D	<u>15</u>	_____

\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point on the western edge of County Road 121 formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the northern elevation of the gym and located approximately 25 feet to the north thereof, proceed westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the gym's western elevation; thence proceed southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the building's southern elevation; thence proceed easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the western edge of County Road 121; thence proceed northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with the resource that retains its integrity.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
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Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian  
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 10/05/93  
Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880  
City or Town: Little Rock State: AR Zip: 72201

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National Park Service

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**Summary**

Located between State Highway 14 and County Road 121 in the center of the Big Flat community, the Big Flat School Gymnasium is a single-story, stone masonry gymnasium building designed in the Plain Traditional style with Craftsman influences. Constructed in 1938-41, its rectangular, symmetrical massing is augmented only by the two gable roof Craftsman style porches on the southern elevation and the stone stoop on the western elevation.

**Elaboration**

The Big Flat School Gymnasium is a single-story, stone masonry gymnasium building designed in the Plain Traditional style with Craftsman influences. Its rectangular, symmetrical massing is augmented only by the two gable roof Craftsman style porches on the southern elevation and the stone stoop on the western elevation. A total of three chimneys vent the structure: an exterior end stuccoed chimney adjacent to the southeast corner, and two brick chimneys, one inside but near the northeast corner and another near the southwest corner. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the cut stone walls are supported by a continuous stone foundation. A full basement underlies the entire structure.

The southern or front elevation is composed of the full-height side wall and the two single-story, gable roof porches at either end. The symmetrically-fenestrated wall is composed of four pairs of six-over-six wood sash windows on the first floor and another four pairs of fixed nine-pane windows placed directly above; a single nine-pane fixed window placed in the center of the upper story completes this clerestory. The gable roof porches below have had their supports replaced, but they retain their Craftsman-style roofs. They each shelter a concrete deck and a single-leaf entrance flanked by five-pane half-sidelights. Exposed rafters run along the cornice and complete the elevation. The northern elevation opposite is simpler, though no less symmetrical. A row of eleven rectangular openings (now filled with plywood) light the basement. The main story above is fenestrated by four individual six-over-six wood sash windows at each end of the elevation, with a large area of blank wall in between.

The eastern elevation displays the only serious change to the building: the dismantling of the original stone wall -- due to advanced deterioration -- and its replacement with artificial siding over a stud wall. A total of four windows light this wall and a single-leaf entrance placed to the north of center provides the only access. The western elevation also features four original window openings -- all now filled with plywood -- and a single-leaf entrance placed toward the northern end that is accessed via a stone and concrete stoop.

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As is often the case with such stone construction from this era, the significant exterior details are limited to unusual solutions to common construction problems. The glory of this structure are the rough-hewn, irregular stone voussoirs used to carry the load of the wall above the window openings. These voussoirs have even been painted on the southern elevation, which only enhances their strange appearance. Otherwise the texture of the rough-hewn stone throughout provides the only detail of note.

Unfortunately, the interior of the gymnasium itself has been largely redone in the relatively recent past to accommodate new code and safety standards for such construction. However, some of the adjacent rooms retain their original horizontal and vertical beaded board walls.

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### Summary

Criteria A and C, local significance

The Big Flat School Gymnasium is locally significant under Criteria A and C through its associations with the National Youth Administration, the Depression-era federal public works agency that hired the workers to build it, and as the best example of federal public works construction within the town of Big Flat. Its characteristic symmetrical massing and composition, its minimal Craftsman detailing and its typical selection of locally-available building materials firmly establish this building as a typical example of the more restrained, functional architectural style preferred by these public works agencies during this era.

### Elaboration

Though the community of Big Flat was officially incorporated one year *after* the beginning of construction on the new gymnasium, a hearty and enduring settlement had existed here since before the Civil War. Located in a broad glen in the middle of the Leatherwood Mountains (now a part of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forest), Big Flat had long enjoyed a healthy agricultural output from its surrounding fields; however, it became a fairly prosperous community during the growth of the timber industry in Arkansas during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth. In fact, the timber industry remained the primary employer in Big Flat well into the twentieth century, even continuing to produce lumber during the Depression.

In fact, it was as a result of the Depression that the National Youth Administration came into being at all. The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and the subsequent advent of such federal public works programs as the National Youth Administration (NYA) brought a new gymnasium to Big Flat in 1938. The NYA -- an organization that hired unemployed young men and women between the ages of 14-30 to work on a variety of public projects throughout the nation -- was established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration as part of the federal response to the dire economic circumstances brought upon the American people by the Great Depression. The NYA was but one of many such public works organizations instituted by the Roosevelt Administration and managed under the aegis of the umbrella agency in charge of all such public works efforts, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); other agencies under its direction included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the short-lived Public Works and Civilian Works Administrations (PWA and CWA), and such regional projects as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Rural Colonization Projects in Arkansas established at such places as Dyess, Clover Bend and Plum Bayou. Among its various other projects, the NYA constructed or repaired a number of rural school buildings



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throughout the state, and the gymnasium at Big Flat was erected as part of this statewide effort.

A local resident, Mr. Harrison Griffin, served as the construction supervisor initially, though his son Clifton took over after his father's death, and many local residents remember helping with the construction when they were still students at the school. It continued to serve the community until 1985, when the Big Flat School consolidated with the nearby Fifty-Six School to become the Tri-County Consolidated School. Though it now remains largely vacant, it continues to serve as a focal point of community and civic pride.

The Big Flat School Gymnasium, in addition to its associations with the NYA and its significant social history, is also representative of the construction ethos of such Depression-era public works organizations. Obviously, with labor costs already at a minimum, the clear emphasis was on minimizing materials costs and utilizing existing local construction expertise. With the abundance of local stone throughout the Ozark region and its long-standing stone masonry construction tradition, a cut stone masonry gymnasium fulfilled the design and construction ethos of the NYA. While it is admittedly of plain and unornamented design, the Big Flat Gymnasium remains a representative example of this philosophy, and so a reminder of that era and the creative architectural solutions it produced. Constructed during the period covered by the historic context *The Evolution of the Public School System in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940*, its documented construction by the N.Y.A. and its use during this period as a local school building clearly identify it with this historic context and with this property type. It is significant locally under Criterion A through its direct associations with both the history of the evolution of the public school system in the Ozark Mountain region of the state during this period and the N.Y.A. It is also significant under Criterion C by virtue of its unusual construction details and its remarkable state of preservation.

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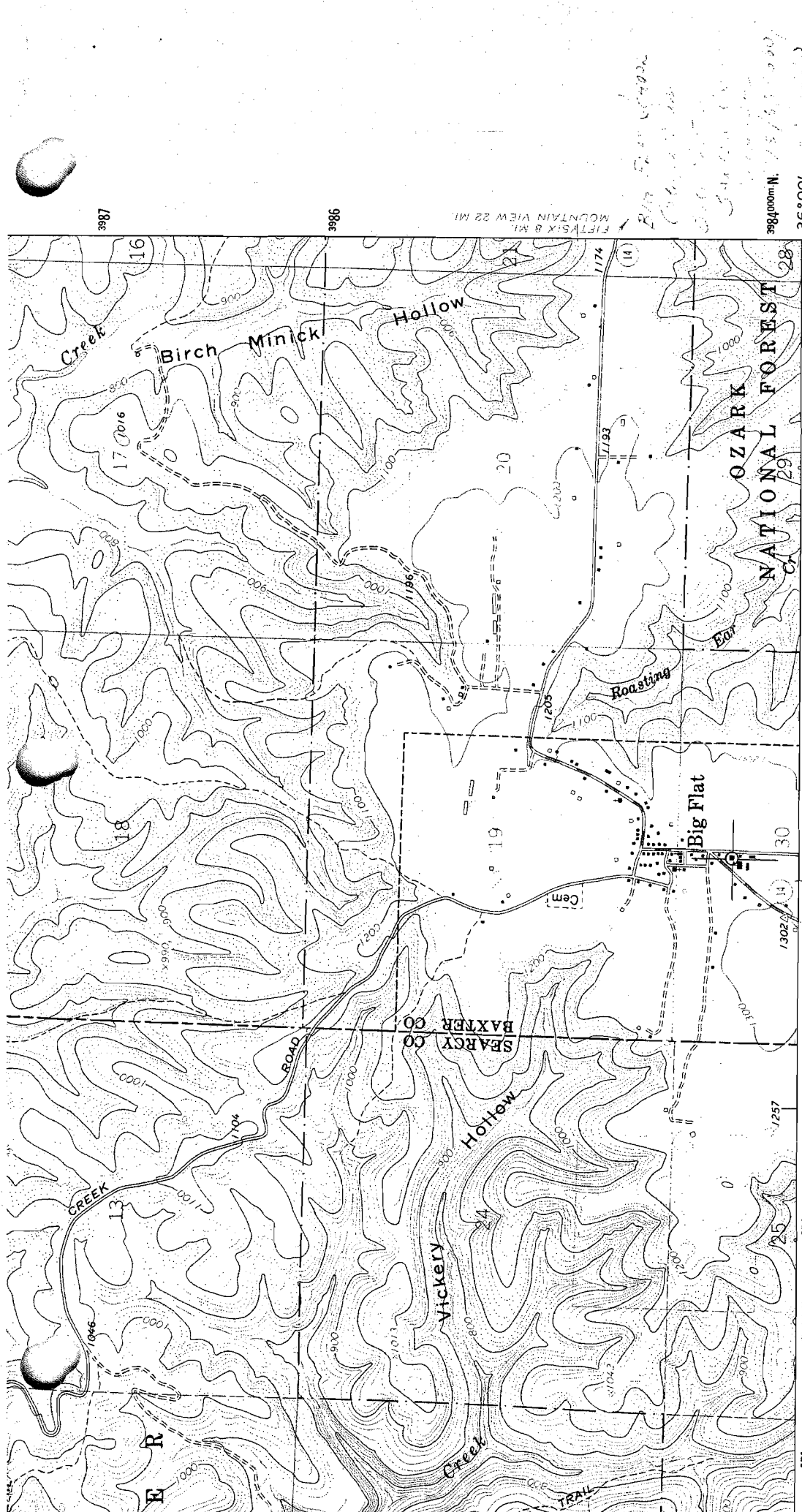
## Bibliography

*Deed Records*, Baxter County Courthouse, Mountain Home, Arkansas.

*Interview with Warren Balentine*, March, 1993.

Messick, Mary Ann, *History of Baxter County*, (Mountain Home, 1973), pp. 94-96.

*Minutes of Big Flat School Board*, August, 1978.



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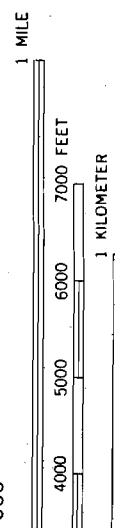
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**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

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Unimproved dirt .....

State Route

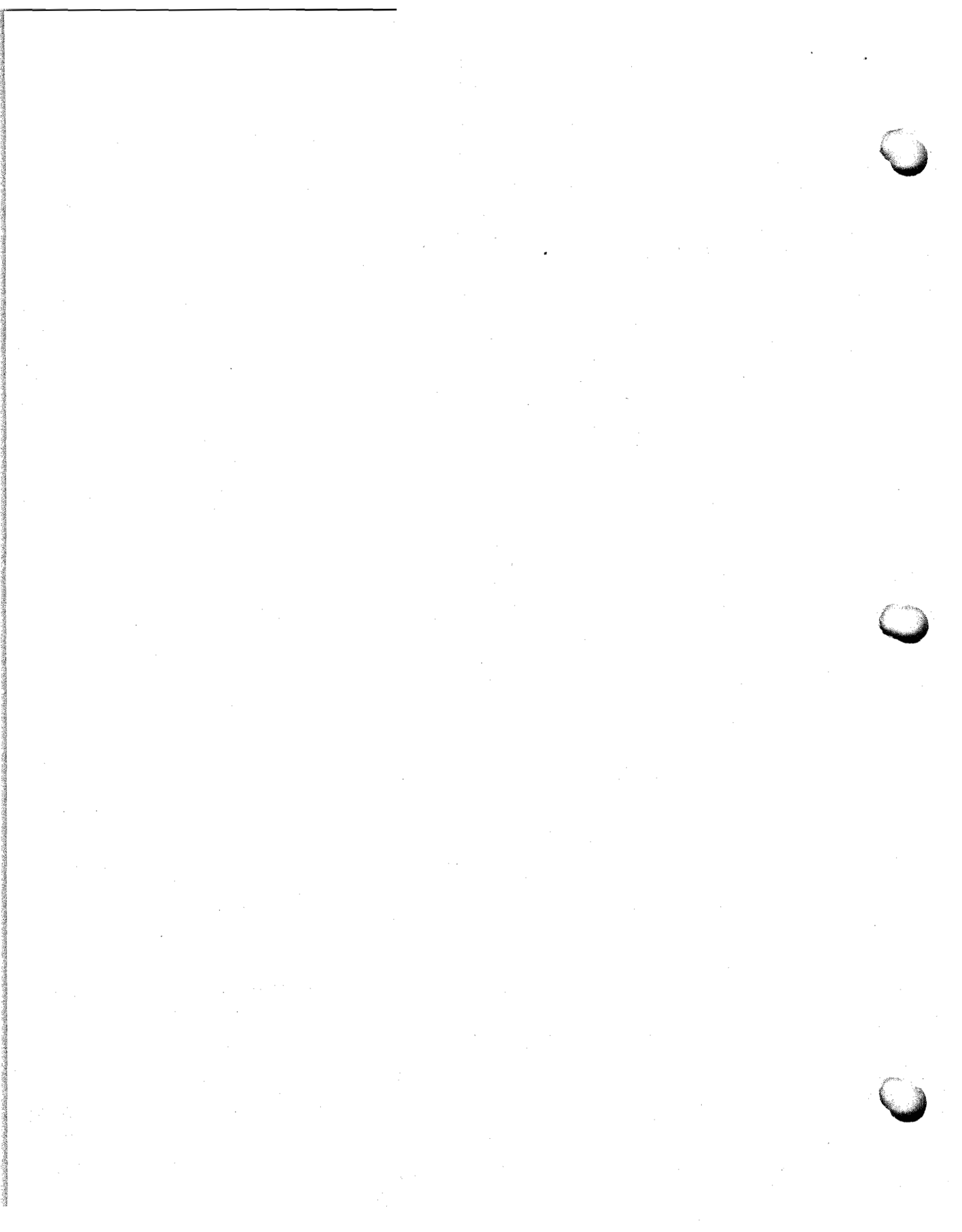


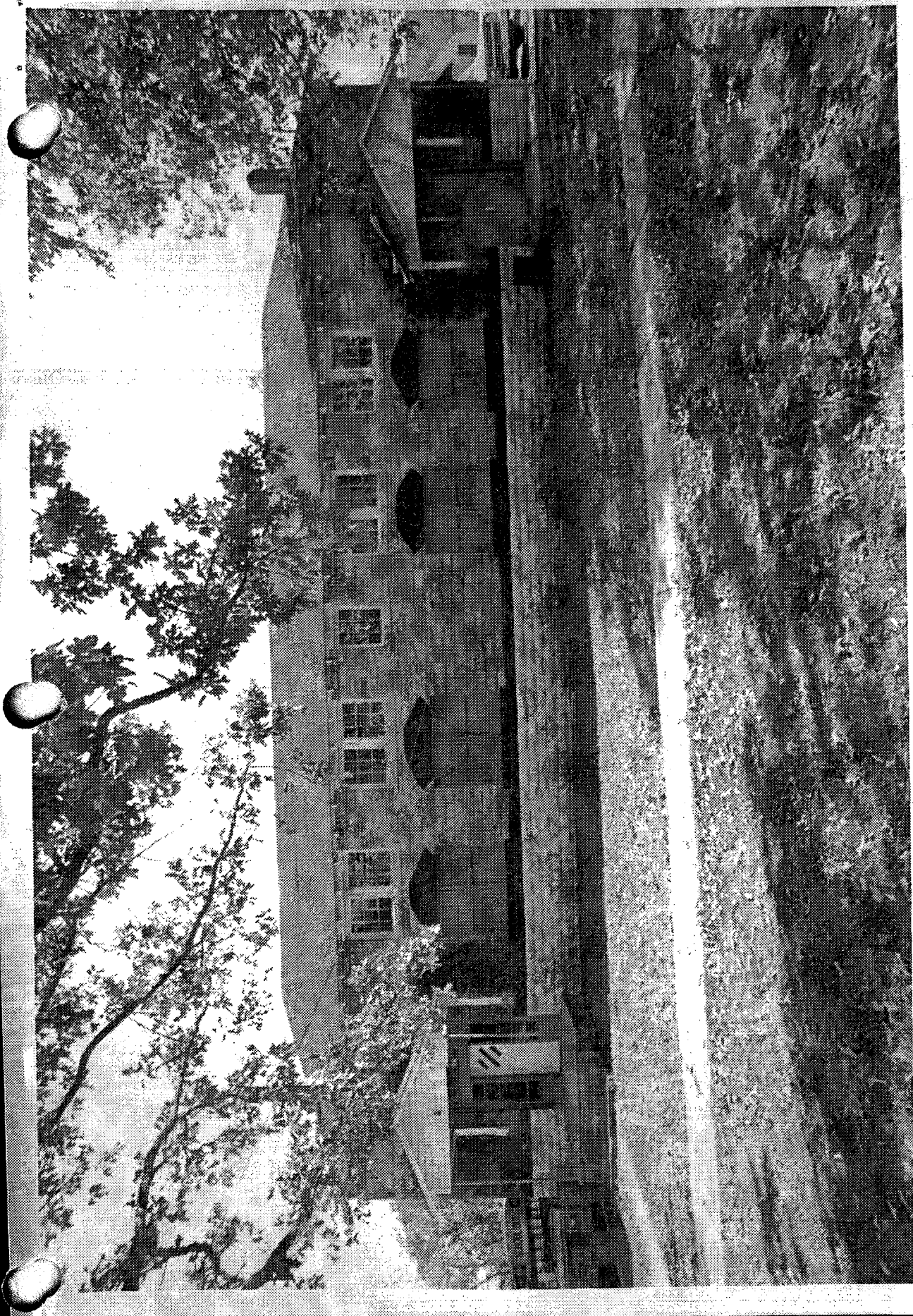
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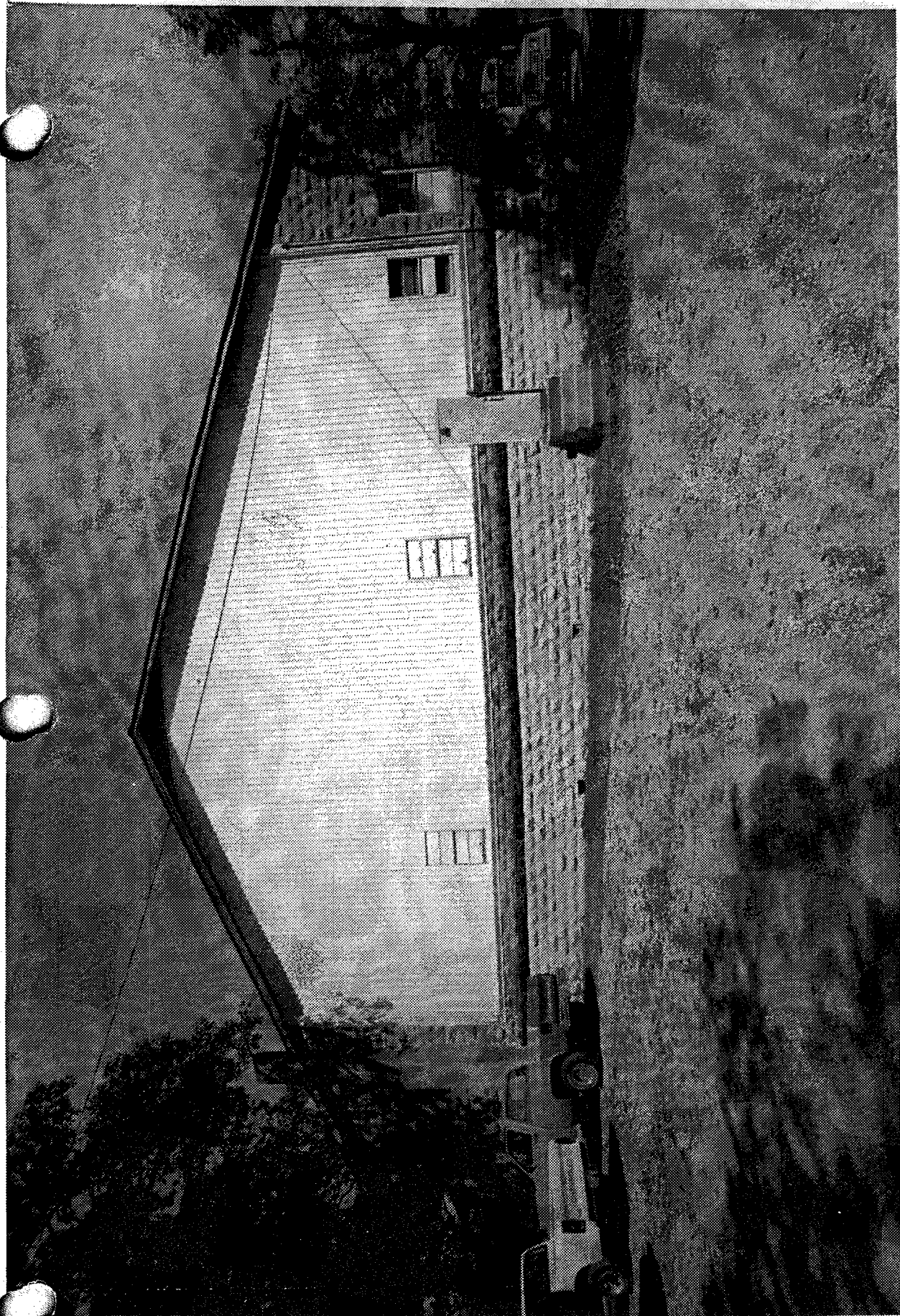
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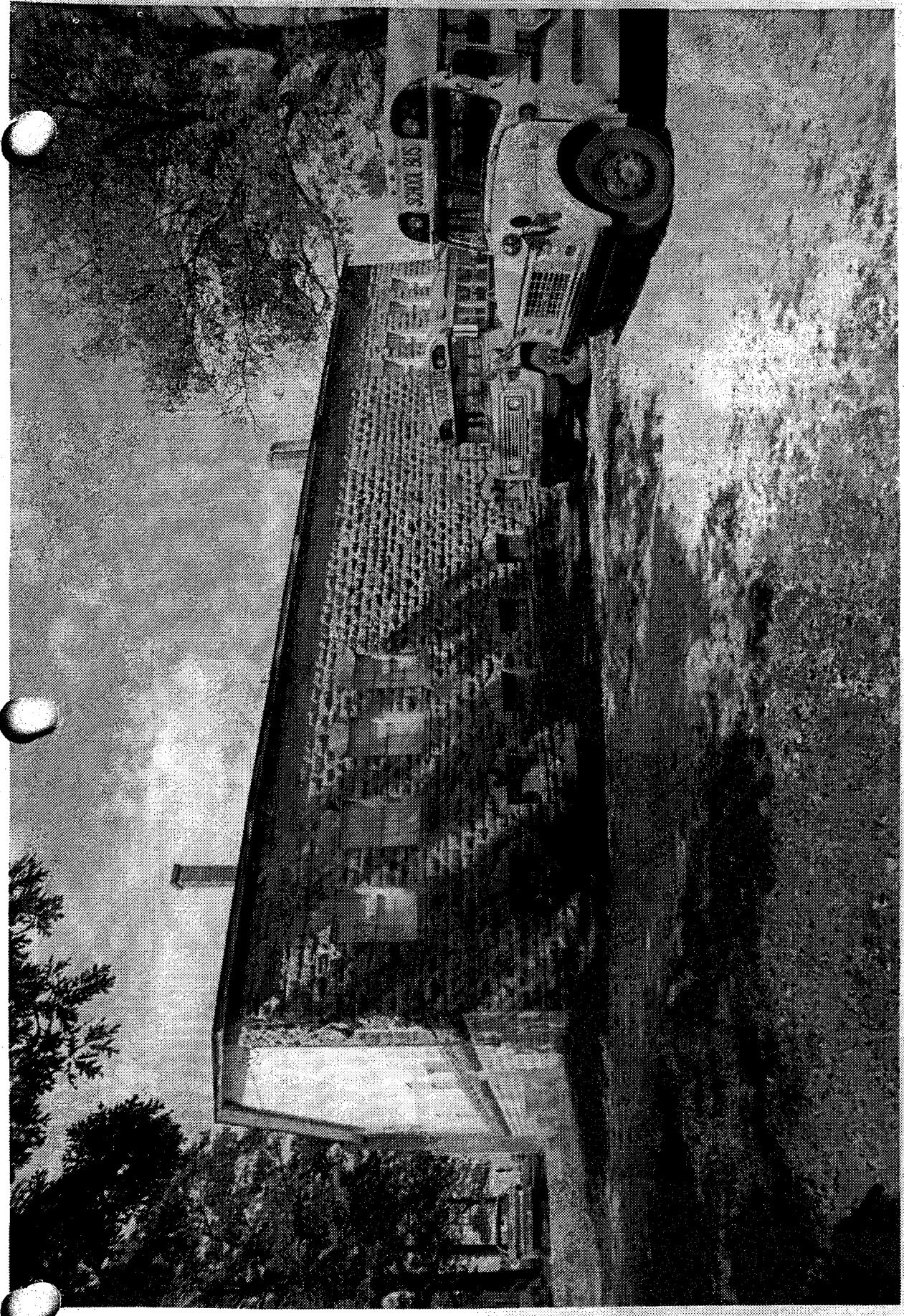


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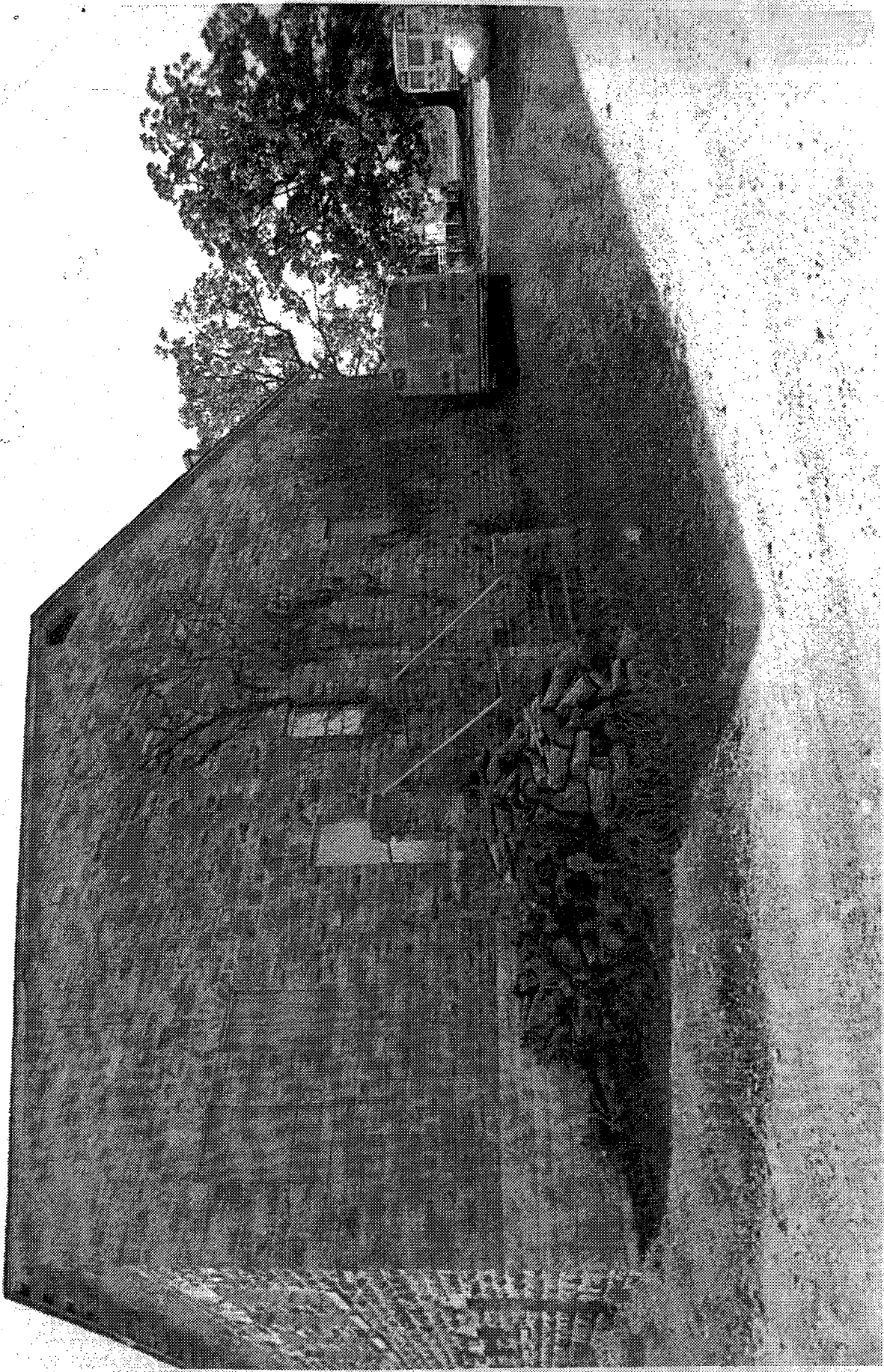


FOR THE VENUE GYM  
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OCTOBER, 1992  
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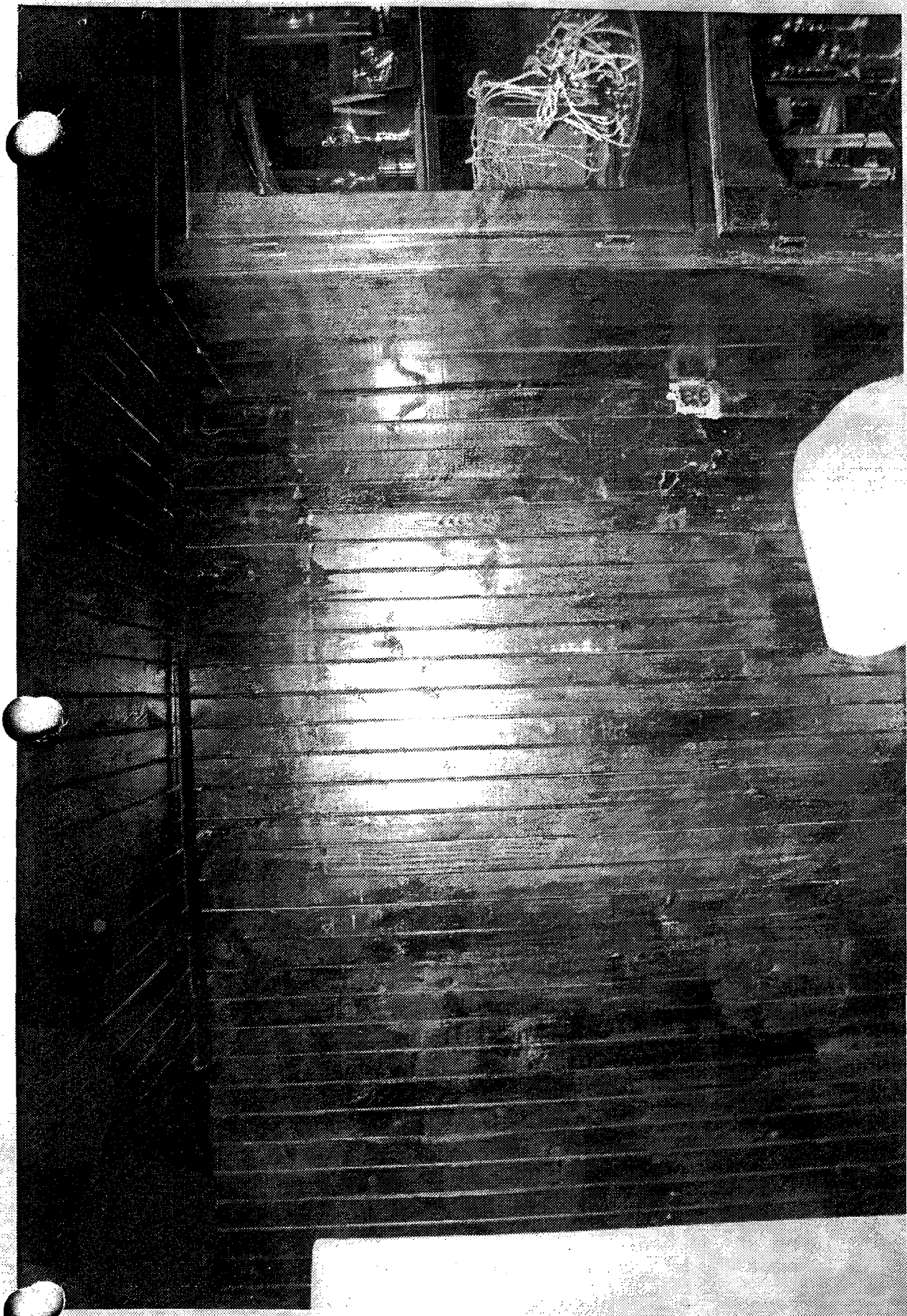


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DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535  
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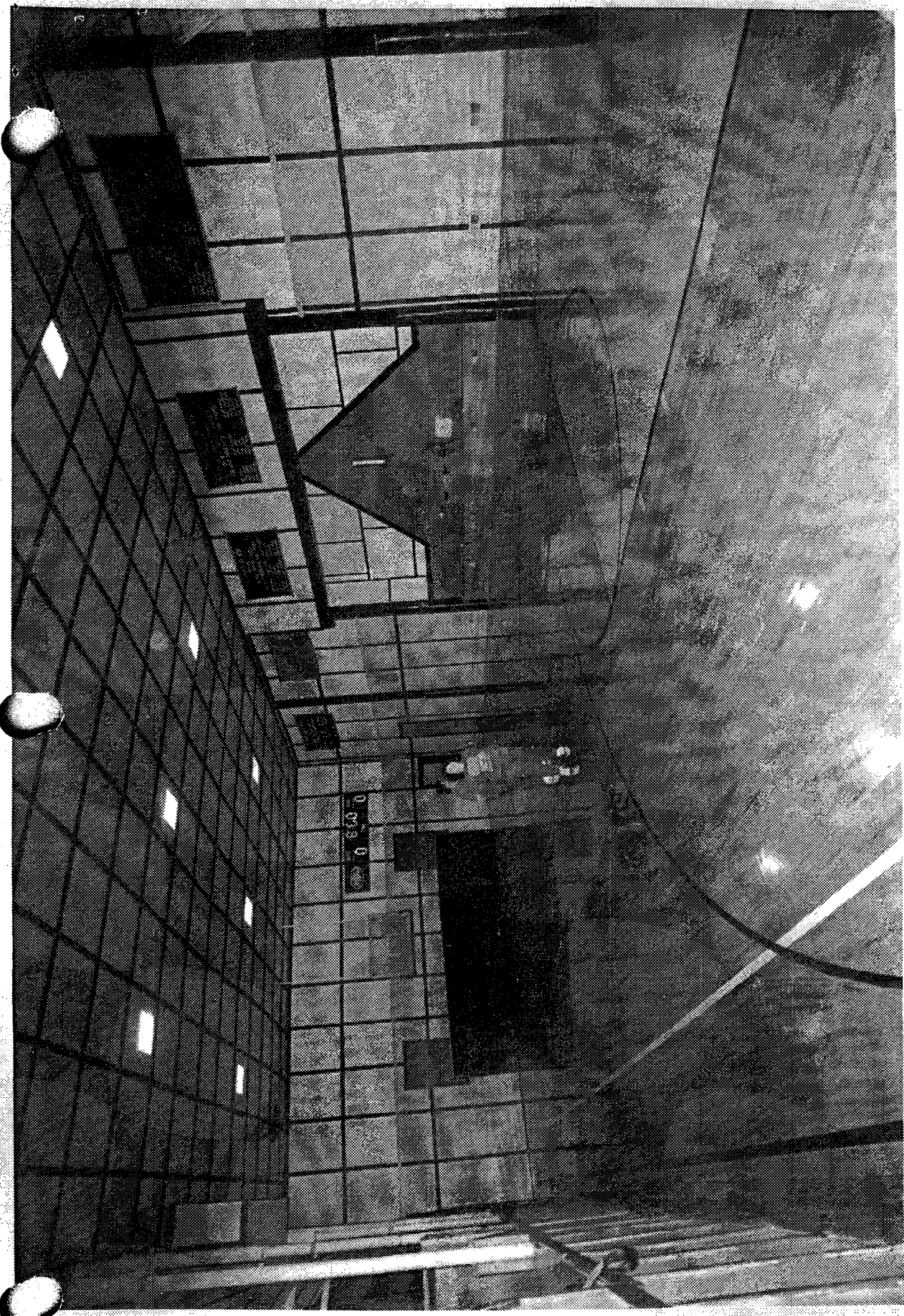


W. Frank Crum  
Sgt. A. Butler R. Beckmuss  
Photographed by T. Ferguson  
October, 1893  
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