

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NR 5/20/08

# 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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery  
other names/site number Site #BE3149

## 2. Location

street & number West side of NE Young Avenue approximately 200 feet north of NE Carnahan Court  not for publication  
city or town Bentonville  vicinity  
state Arkansas code AR county Benton code 007 zip code 72712

## 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 for 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  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Debbie Matthews 3/14/08  
Signature of certifying official/Title 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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing		Noncontributing		
_____	_____	_____	_____	buildings
1	_____	_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	_____	_____	structures
1	_____	2	_____	objects
2	_____	2	_____	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
walls N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof N/A  
other METAL, PLASTIC, STONE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions of property significance.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

c.1860-c.1905

Significant Dates

c.1860-c.1905

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions of property characteristics.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal Agency, Local Government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery

Benton County, Arkansas

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 392321 4027989
Zone Easting Northing
2

3 Zone Easting Northing
4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date February 5, 2008
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Benton County
street & number 215 East Central telephone
city or town Bentonville state AR zip code 72712

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 listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

### SUMMARY

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is located on the west side of NE Young Avenue north of NE Carnahan Court northeast of Bentonville in Benton County, Arkansas. The small cemetery is located in a new housing subdivision and is marked by depressions of unmarked graves, fieldstone grave markers, and remnants of a stone wall. A plastic fence surrounds the cemetery on the west and north sides, a wire fence is located on the west side, and a wood fence is located on the south side.

### ELABORATION

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is located approximately 1 mile northeast of downtown Bentonville in Benton County, Arkansas. It is located on the west side of NE Young Avenue north of NE Carnahan Court in the Allencroft Subdivision. The cemetery contains several fieldstone markers along with several unmarked grave depressions.

The entire cemetery is surrounded by wood, wire, or plastic fencing, most of which was likely installed when the housing development was begun c.2000. (The wire fencing on the west side of the cemetery is likely older.) In addition to the fence, a decorative, arched, wrought-iron gate with benches is located on the east side of the cemetery. A plaque that reads "POOR FARM / CEMETERY / CIRCA 1860" is placed at the top of the arch. Both the fence and gate are considered to be non-contributing resources. In addition to the gate and fence, remnants of a stone wall line the east side of the cemetery and half of the south side. The stone wall remnant is considered to be a contributing resource.

The cemetery contains an unknown number of graves, and although it is not possible to break the burials down by decade, it is known that the burials occurred between c.1860 and c.1930 when the Benton County Poor Farm was in operation. As a result, they are all considered to be historic for the purposes of the nomination.

### Integrity

Overall, the Benton County Farm Cemetery retains good integrity. Today, several historic fieldstone markers exist in the cemetery. Although the fence and gate surrounding the cemetery were installed c.2002, they are relatively small in scale and help to protect and preserve the cemetery's legacy.

The biggest change to the cemetery's integrity is its setting. Originally, the setting of the cemetery, like much of Benton County, was rural. A few buildings stood on the farm complex, and after the farm closed the buildings were demolished. After remaining vacant for many years, however, the site has been redeveloped in recent years as a housing subdivision. Although houses are built to the cemetery's immediate south and north, and across the street to the east, the area to the west of the cemetery retains a rural feel. Additionally, trees located throughout the cemetery and in the cemetery's immediate vicinity also help to give a vestige of the cemetery's rural roots. Even though the cemetery's setting has undergone several significant changes, the

Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery

Name of Property

Benton County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

retention of the original fieldstone markers and the current relatively rural setting still allow the cemetery to convey its associations with the Benton County Poor Farm and some remnants of its original setting.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

### SUMMARY

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the Benton County Poor Farm and Benton County's efforts to provide aid to the poor and destitute. It is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries**.

### ELABORATION

Benton County is in the extreme northwest corner of Arkansas, bordered by Oklahoma on the west and Missouri on the north. According to Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, it is believed that the first white settlers in the area now known as Benton County arrived around 1830. On June 15, 1836, Arkansas became the 25<sup>th</sup> state of the Union and Benton County was organized shortly afterwards on September 30, 1836. The county was named after Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who helped the Arkansas Territory reach statehood.<sup>1</sup>

Although the town of Bentonville was created in 1837, it was re-incorporated on January 7, 1838, which is the date generally accepted as the "official" designation of the City of Bentonville. Three men, Robert Cowen, Robert Weaver and Thomas Swaggerty, selected the site for the town of Bentonville in 1837. These men wrote, "We the undersigned Commissioners elected under an act of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas...beg leave to report that we have selected a site... for the county seat..." With the authority given to them, they proceeded to lay out a town, "leaving a square and making 136 lots and have named and called said town, Bentonville." Therefore, the town of Bentonville in Benton County became one of only two such county seats in Arkansas with the same surname, the other being Perryville in Perry County.<sup>2</sup>

By 1837 the town had at least 30 settlers, and it grew fairly quickly from its humble beginnings. By the year 1860 the town of Bentonville contained five general stores, the furniture store of Henry Baumeister, the Vestal Hotel, the saddle and harness shop of J. W. Clark, the Clark Hotel and three or four mechanics shops. Bentonville was growing considerably with some 500 residents. (Benton County's population by 1860 was 9,285.)<sup>3</sup>

Because of the considerable growth that was occurring in Benton County during the 1850s, it became necessary to establish a county poor farm. In 1857 the county began the process to establish the poor farm,

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1890, pp. 20 and 36.

<sup>2</sup> Perkins, Wendy S. "Craig, Charles R., Building, Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2003.

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, p. 28 and 96.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

but it was not put into operation until 1858. Even though Benton County did not establish a poor farm until the 1850s, other mechanisms existed prior to that to address the needs of the poor.<sup>4</sup>

Even after the poor farm was established, the county did give temporary relief on a limited basis to people not living at the poor farm through small appropriations from the county treasury. The Benton County court records contain several references to aiding paupers. For example:

Now on this day A. N. Davenport presented to the Court Sarah Ann Clark as a pauper who after being duly qualified stated that she had been brought here without her consent from Newton County, Missouri. And she further stated that she had no means of support and wished to be sent back to Newton County, Mo., having no relatives or friends here upon whom she could rely for support or protection - .

Whereupon it is ordered by the Court that a warrant be issued on the County Treasurer for the sum of Five Dollars to A. N. Davenport for the purpose of conveying the said Sarah Ann Clark to Newton County, Missouri - .<sup>5</sup>

Some of the paupers in the county ended up in the court records more than once, once to have them declared a pauper, and then other times as costs for their care were reimbursed. In the case of Rachel Rhia, for example, she appears twice in the court's records. First, the records state:

Now on this day it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court upon the testimony of Sylvanus Blackburn that Rachel Rhia is in a helpless condition and is unable to support herself and has no visible means of support. And the Court being fully advised on the premises,

It is therefore ordered by the Court that the said Rachel Rhia be and she is hereby declared a pauper - .<sup>6</sup>

Later, Blackburn came back to the Benton County Court for reimbursement for her care, and it was also noted in the court records:

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Now and on this day S. W. Blackburn presented Miss Rachel Rhia as a pauper she having been previously declared a pauper and S. W. Blackburn having been employed to keep said pauper up to the present time – Now it is ordered by the Court that the said S. W. Blackburn be ?? to keep the said pauper until the ?? day of January A.D. 1863 and that he be allowed the sum of one dollar and fifty cents ...<sup>7</sup>

As in other parts of the country, Benton County did not just reimburse costs incurred to take care of paupers. The county also auctioned off paupers to local residents. The case of John Fleming is a good example. Initially, Fleming was declared a pauper in the court records.

Now on this day it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court upon the testimony of A. G. Williams that John W. Fleming is in a helpless condition and is unable to support himself and has no visable means of support and the Court being fully advised on the premises –

It is therefore ordered by the Court that the said John W. Fleming be and he is hereby declared a pauper – .<sup>8</sup>

Fleming was then auctioned off by the county to the lowest bidder. The court records state:

On this day the Court proceeded to examine the condition of John W. Phleming. After the examination the Court area of the opinion that the said John W. Phleming is unable to take care of himself and is hereby declared a pauper –

It is therefore ordered that the Sheriff of Benton County proceed to let the said John W. Phleming to the lowest bidder ?? for the term of twelve months at the courthouse door in Bentonville on ?? the 16<sup>th</sup> day of April AD 1861 – by giving at least five advertisements in the most public places in Benton County. The contractor to give bond with approved security to feed cloth and medicate said pauper – .<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Interestingly, Fleming was auctioned off again later in 1861. The court records later state that it was, "Ordered by the Court that the Sheriff will proceed to let out John W. Fleming pauper at the lowest bidder at the Court House door on the first Monday in November 1861. The bidder is required to give bond and approved security."<sup>10</sup>

The aiding of a pauper by another person in the community was not unheard of prior to the establishment of poorhouses. Many areas provided "outdoor relief" to paupers that was normally administered by an Overseer of the Poor, who was often a local elected official. Usually a budget of tax money was set aside to help the poor by providing food, clothing, or even medical treatment, when family members, friends, or church congregations could not provide enough aid. However, other methods of supporting the poor were sometimes employed, including contracting with a person in the community to care for a group of paupers or auctioning off the poor, which allowed the lowest bidder to use the pauper's labor for free for a specified period of time in exchange for food, clothing, housing and health care.<sup>11</sup>

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the poorhouse system came to the United States from England, and poorhouses were built with great optimism. It was hoped that they would be cheaper and more efficient, and also aid in the reformation of paupers to eliminate the bad habits and character defects that many people assumed were the causes of their poverty. Although this was not always the case, the poorhouse system was an improvement over previous methods used to aid the poor.<sup>12</sup>

Even though many places saw poorhouses as the answer to the problems of aiding the poor, apparently not all counties in Arkansas had poorhouses by the early twentieth century. A special report on paupers in almshouses done by the Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, gave an outline of the laws governing poor relief in each state, and said about Arkansas that:

Every county must relieve its own poor. Sheriffs, coroners, constables, and justices of the peace shall give information to their respective county courts of the poor and the county court has the duty of providing for such persons. If satisfied that the applicants are paupers the county court shall order their commitment to the poorhouse, there to remain until discharged by an order of the court. County courts have the power to establish poorhouses, and when completed the court shall let them out annually to the lowest responsible bidder under bond for the faithful care of the inmates. In counties without

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> "History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Poorhouses." Found at: [www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm](http://www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

poorhouses, the court may let the care of the poor to the lowest responsible bidder. The county is not liable for the support of any pauper who refuses to accept county aid in the manner provided above. The county court may cause the employment of each able-bodied pauper on work for the county.<sup>13</sup>

Benton County began the process to establish a poor farm in April 1857, but it did not happen overnight. It was not until early 1858 when the buildings were completed and the paupers were moved to the farm. As Goodspeed's *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*, states:

In April, 1857, the county court, finding it necessary and expedient to establish a poor-house in the county of Benton, ordered that Samuel Woods, James Jackson and Dysert Woods be appointed to act as commissioners to select a proper site for such building. At the following October term of the court two of these commissioners, James Jackson and Samuel Woods, reported that they had not been able, as yet, to select such a place as in their judgment would be suitable for such purpose, and asked for further time, which was granted until the next regular term. The court then ordered its clerk to make or draw a warrant upon the treasurer of the county, in favor of the commissioners, for the sum of \$1,200, provided they or a majority of them call for the same, to enable them to purchase a farm or site for a poor-house. It seems, however, that this order was not called for. In January, 1858, the commissioners, all joining, reported to the court that they had selected a site for the poor-house on forty acres of land lying north of Bentonville, owned by William Clements, together with five acres off of a tract owned by William McDaniel, including a spring or interest in the spring, and had made a contract, therefore, at the sum of \$300. They further reported that there was a log house on the same without floor, ten acres in cultivation, and about four acres in wheat, and recommended the place as the most eligible site they had been able to select, and asked the adoption of their report.

The report was adopted, and a warrant for \$300 was ordered to be issued and paid to the said Clements upon his making, to the commissioners and their successors in office, a warrantee fee simple deed for the lands aforesaid. The court then authorized the commissioners to enter at the United States Land office at Fayetteville, forty acres of land lying due north of the

<sup>13</sup> Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. *Special Reports: Paupers in Almshouse, 1904*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906. (Excerpts found at: [www.poorhousesstorv.com](http://www.poorhousesstorv.com))

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

forty-acre tract already purchased. Afterward, in April, 1858, Jacob Candill, county surveyor, in obedience to a former order issued to him, made to the court a survey of the poor-farm, showing that it embraced the east half of the southwest quarter, and four and a half acres out of the southeast corner of the southwest one-fourth of the southwest quarter of Section 20, in Township 20 north, Range 30 west, as surveyed by him February 26, 1858. As soon as the necessary buildings on the poor-farm were put in order, the paupers of the county were removed thereto and placed under the care of a superintendent engaged for that purpose.<sup>14</sup>

Although a building existed on the parcel that was acquired for the poor farm, the Civil War delayed any work on the farm. Once the war was over, however, the county began to address the need to construct buildings at the poor farm, especially for housing the farm's residents. Coincidentally, at the same time, the county was looking at constructing a new courthouse. Goodspeed's reports:

In November 1875, the court appointed Zach. Baker commissioner to let the contract to the lowest responsible bidder, after giving ten days' notice, for the removal of the old frame court-house to the poor-farm, and for repairing the same so as to make it suitable for a poor asylum. In January following Commissioner Baker reported in full to the court, whereupon it was ordered that a county warrant for the sum of \$330 should be issued payable out of the public building fund, to William Stewart and J. V. Lee, for removing the old court-house to the poor-farm, and for materials for fitting it up and putting it in order; and that another warrant for the sum of \$120.50 should be issued to James Haney for materials furnished and work and labor performed by him in fitting up the same building.<sup>15</sup>

By 1880, there were twelve residents at the farm, plus the housekeeper, which was apparently slightly above the average number of residents living at the farm. Goodspeed's states that, "The pauper inmates of the poor-house average from eight to ten in number. The method of keeping them is by letting or renting the poor-farm to a superintendent, who takes care of them for a stipulated price." Goodspeed also reported that caring for the poor did not occur just at the poor farm. It states that "Temporary relief is also administered in a limited degree, to a few persons not confined in the poor-house, by small appropriations from the county treasury."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

The inmates living at the farm, according to the 1880 census, which was the first one to include the poor farm, were:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Marital State/Race/Other:</u>
Permelia Morse	74	Widow, White; Crippled, Female Inmate, born South Carolina
Sylvania Lee	67	Married, White; Dropsey [sic.], Female Inmate, born Kentucky
Lucy Younger	59	Single, White; Crippled, Female Inmate, born Tennessee
Matilda Furgerson	58	Single, White; Old Age, Female Inmate, born Kentucky
James Barnes	79	Married, White; Old Age, Male Inmate, born Virginia
William Bryson	72	Married, White; Old Age, Male Inmate, born North Carolina
Archibald Whinery	49	Single, White; Paralysis, Male Inmate, born Arkansas
William Brawhill	21	Single, White; Idiotic, Male Inmate, Unknown Birthplace
Margaret Robins	16	Single, White; Idiotic, Female Inmate, born Arkansas
Margarett Garrett	59	Widow, White; Insane, Female Inmate, born Tennessee
Eli Suter	38	Single, White; Insane, Male Inmate, born Missouri
William Dwyer	59	Married, White; Insane, Male Inmate, born Tennessee
Mary Barnes	46	Married, White; Housekeeper, born Kentucky <sup>17</sup>

Although there were a number of residents who lived at the farm during the last part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries, it is virtually impossible to know who is buried in the cemetery. There are two known deaths at the poor farm from the period 1890-1910. In 1892, John Noonan passed away, and the *Bentonville Sun* reported that "John Noonan, one of the paupers on the poor farm, died out there Thursday of last week. The deceased was 35 years old. Mrs. Jas. Oakes, manager of the farm, is doing a good part by the inmates of the farm." The second death, which occurred in September 1903, was reported by the *Benton County Democrat*, which wrote that "Frank McClelland [McClendon?], one of the inmates of the poor farm, who came here about six months ago from Colville, died at the poor farm Wednesday morning. He was 52 years old and had long been a sufferer of consumption."<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, the Benton County court sometimes helped to pay burial expenses for the county's paupers. With respect to the pauper Van Jennings, the records state that it was, "Ordered by the court that William Hughes be allowed the sum of three dollars and fifty cents for burial clothes furnished Van Jennings a pauper of this county."<sup>19</sup>

Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at: <http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1880.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume One, 1884-1898*. Heritage Books, 1994, p. 109 and Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume Two, 1899-1904*. Heritage Books, 1994, p. 277.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Frank McClendon apparently arrived at the poor farm in March 1903 after being ordered to go there by the Justice of the Peace. His committal was recorded by stating that "It appearing from the certificate of M. F. Grunsley, J. P., of Coleville Twsp. and other good and sufficient evidence that Frank McClendon is a citizen of Benton County and has no means of support and is in poor health and unable a [sic.] support he is therefore declared a pauper and W. R. Ford the Keeper of the Benton County Poor Farm is hereby ordered to take charge of the said Frank McClendon and keep him at the expense of Benton County until further ordered."<sup>20</sup>

W. R. Ford had been employed as the keeper of the poor farm for at least five years when he was ordered to take in Frank McClendon. Although the poor farm, in many ways, was a depressing place to be, Ford tried to make it as pleasant as possible for the residents. An article in the January 6, 1898, edition of the *Rogers Democrat* repeated a report on Christmas at the poor farm from the *Bentonville Sun*. It reported:

W. R. Ford, keeper of the Poor Farm, surprised his bounty borders by giving a Christmas tree at his house on Christmas eve. There were many presents on the tree for the poor who appreciated the generous donation, which amounted to over \$25. There was nice new under clothing for the men and dress patterns for the women besides many smaller presents. It was truly gratifying to see the joy and happiness of those people who have to rely upon the county's generosity for their homes and living. Mr. Ford deserves credit for thus furnishing a rare treat to his indigent friends. It is the first time in the history of the county that a Christmas tree has been had for the poor of the county farm. The many businessmen who so generously donated to the fund should feel thankful that they helped to bring happiness to the poor and needy.<sup>21</sup>

Although Ford was the manager of the poor farm in 1898, and was supposedly the manager in 1903 when he was ordered to take in Frank McClendon, Ford does not appear in the 1900 census of the people living at the farm. According to the 1900 census, the residents of the poor farm were:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Marital State/Race/Other:</u>
(Harry?) Williams	44	Married, White; Manager, born Arkansas
Joseph Wilson	42	Single, White; Male Inmate, born Illinois
(Gran?)	50	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born Tennessee

<sup>20</sup> Rankin, Mary McClendon. Letter to the Benton County Cemetery Preservation Group. 26 December 2002.

<sup>21</sup> "Christmas at Poor Farm." *Rogers Democrat*. 6 January 1898.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Wm. Jefferson	68	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born ___ Carolina
George Ellis	42	_____, White; Male Inmate
Wm. Mathis	95	Married, White; Male Inmate, born Arkansas
John McBride	76	Single, White; Male Inmate, Birthplace Unknown
James Wilson	78	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born Arkansas
Mary Wills	78	Single, White; Female Inmate, born Kentucky
Ruthie Roberts	104	Single, Black; Female Inmate, born Missouri
_____	34	Single, White; Female Inmate, born Arkansas
_____	25	Single, White; Female Inmate, Birthplace Unknown
Margaret Whitman	27	Single, White; Female Inmate, born Missouri
_____ English	38	Single, White; Female Inmate, born Arkansas
_____ English	1 ½	Infant, White; Female Inmate, born Arkansas <sup>22</sup>

The Benton County Poor Farm remained at the location of the cemetery until c.1905 when it moved west of Bentonville. (The location of the poor farm west of town is now occupied by the Benton County Road Department.) Although the poor farm relocated, the new location did not include a cemetery. Rather, paupers were buried in the "Pauper's Section" of the Bentonville Cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

Today, the Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is the last surviving element from the Benton County Poor Farm, and a rare reminder of the county's early efforts to provide assistance to the poor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The preserved cemetery, with its simple fieldstone markers, is a testament to the efforts of Benton County to restore, preserve, and maintain this important, but often overlooked, aspect of Arkansas's past.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the Benton County Poor Farm and Benton County's efforts to provide aid to the poor and destitute. It is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries**.

<sup>22</sup> Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at: <http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1900.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Feroe, Nancy. E-mails to the author. 15 January 2008.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1890.

"Christmas at Poor Farm." *Rogers Democrat*. 6 January 1898.

Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. *Special Reports: Paupers in Almshouse, 1904*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906. (Excerpts found at: [www.poorhousestory.com](http://www.poorhousestory.com))

Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume One, 1884-1898*. Heritage Books, 1994.

Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume Two, 1899-1904*. Heritage Books, 1994.

Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Feroe, Nancy. E-mails to the author. 15 January 2008.

"History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Poorhouses." Found at: [www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm](http://www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm).

Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at:  
<http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1880.htm>.

Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at:  
<http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1900.htm>.

Perkins, Wendy S. "Craig, Charles R., Building, Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2003.

Rankin, Mary McClendon. Letter to the Benton County Cemetery Preservation Group. 26 December 2002.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

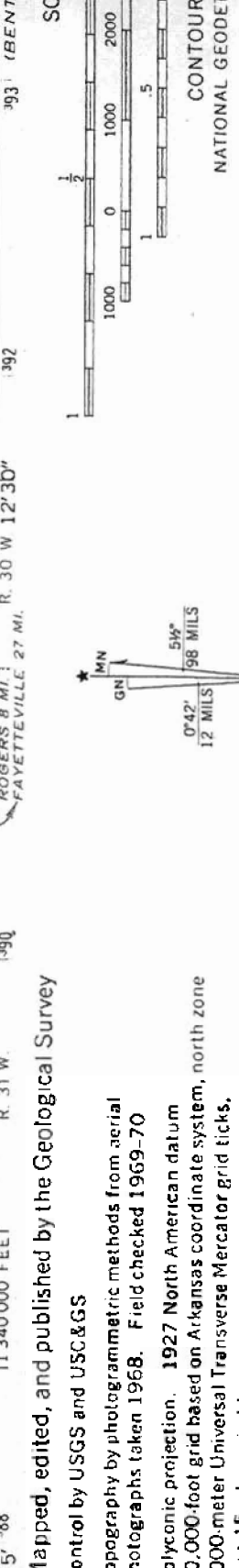
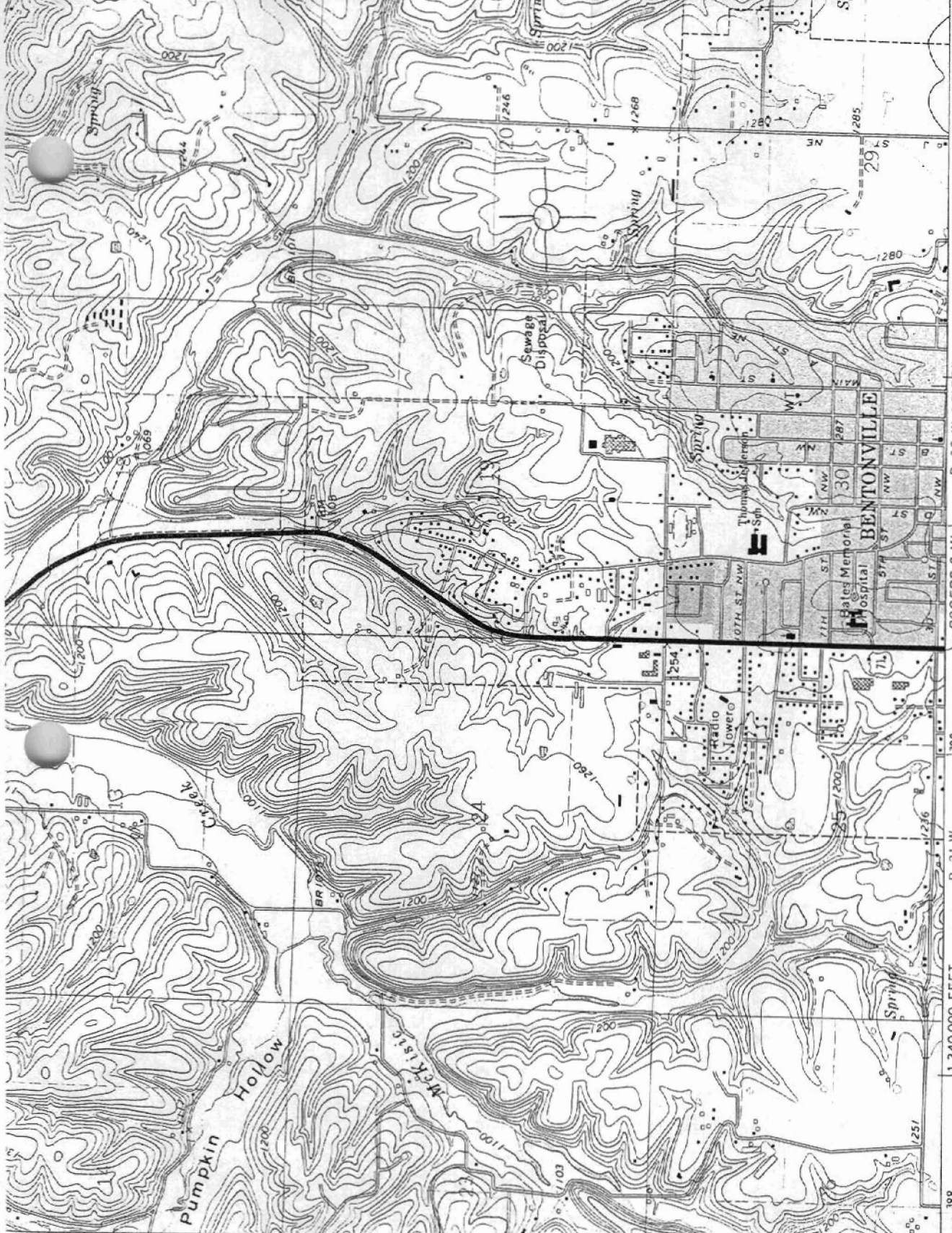
---

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the northwest corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'26.89" North and 94°12'02.53" West, proceed easterly to the northeast corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'26.90" North and 94°12'01.67" West, thence proceed southerly to the southeast corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'25.37" North and 94°12'01.66" West, thence proceed westerly to the southwest corner of the cemetery at 36°23'25.31" North and 94°12'02.62" West, thence proceed north to the point of beginning.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains the land of the Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery and its immediate surroundings that retains integrity.



Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1968. Field checked 1969-70

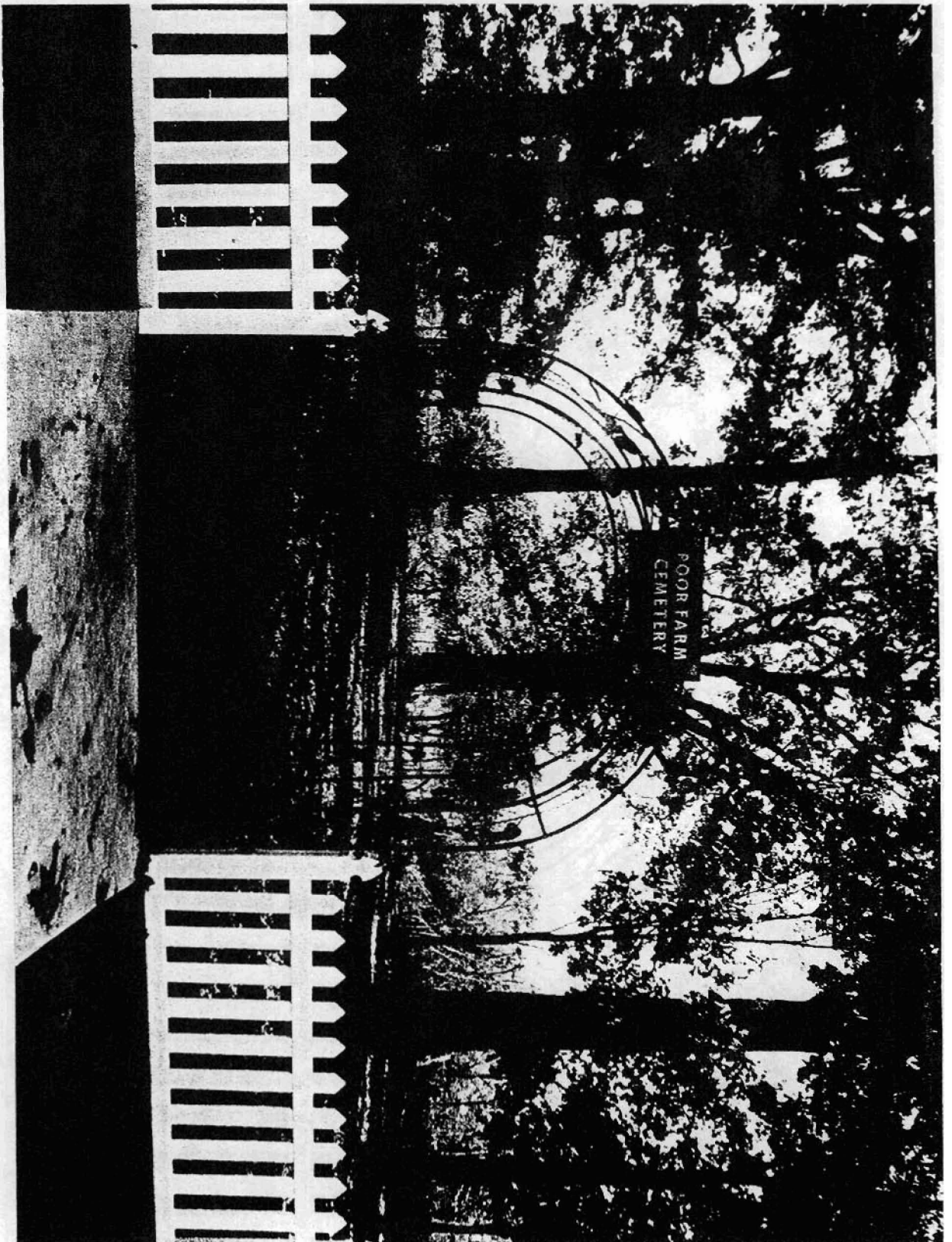
Projected projection. 1927 North American datum  
 10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas coordinate system, north zone  
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
 zone 15, shown in blue

36° 22' 30" - 38  
 94° 15' - 38

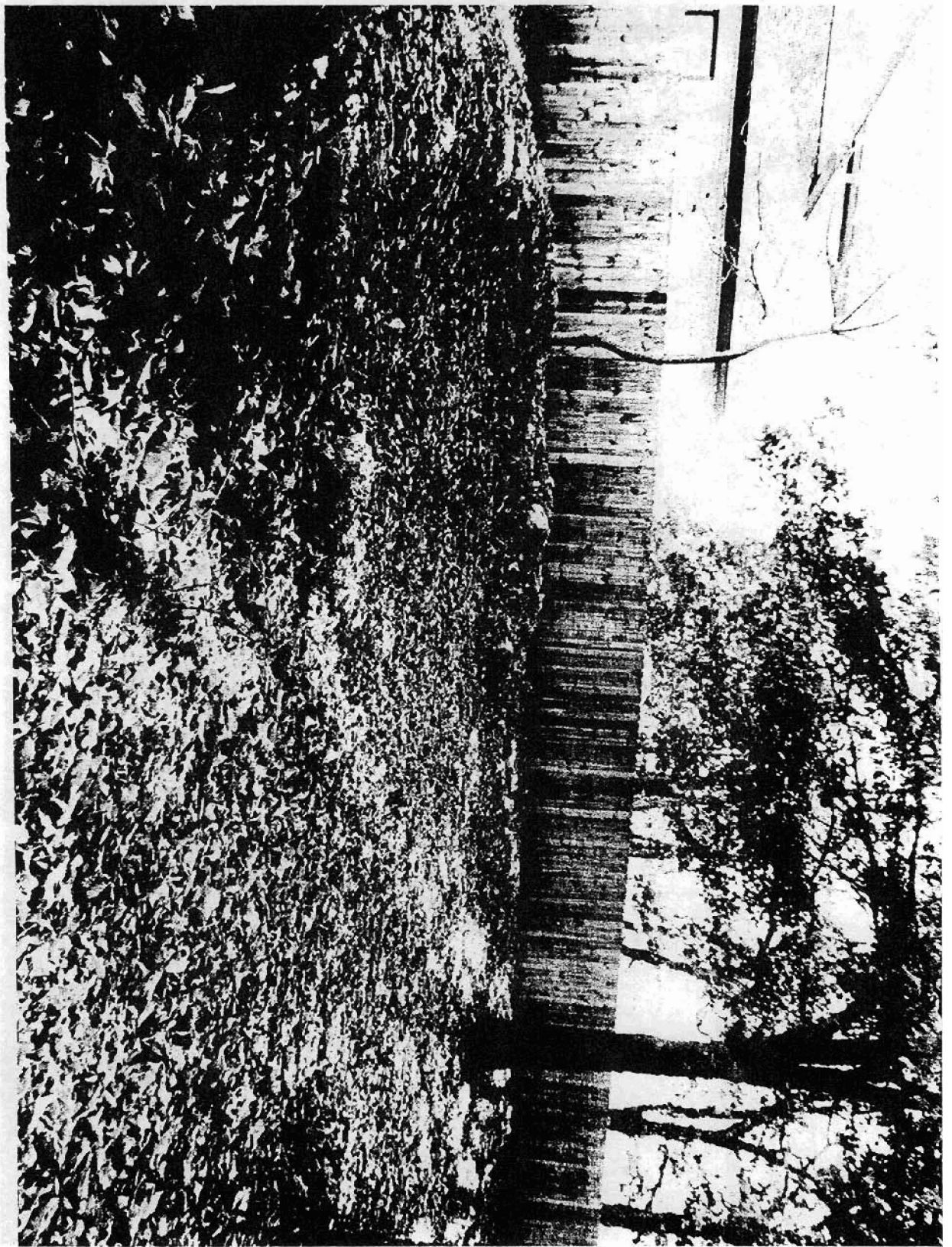
(CENTERTON)  
 7156 N SE

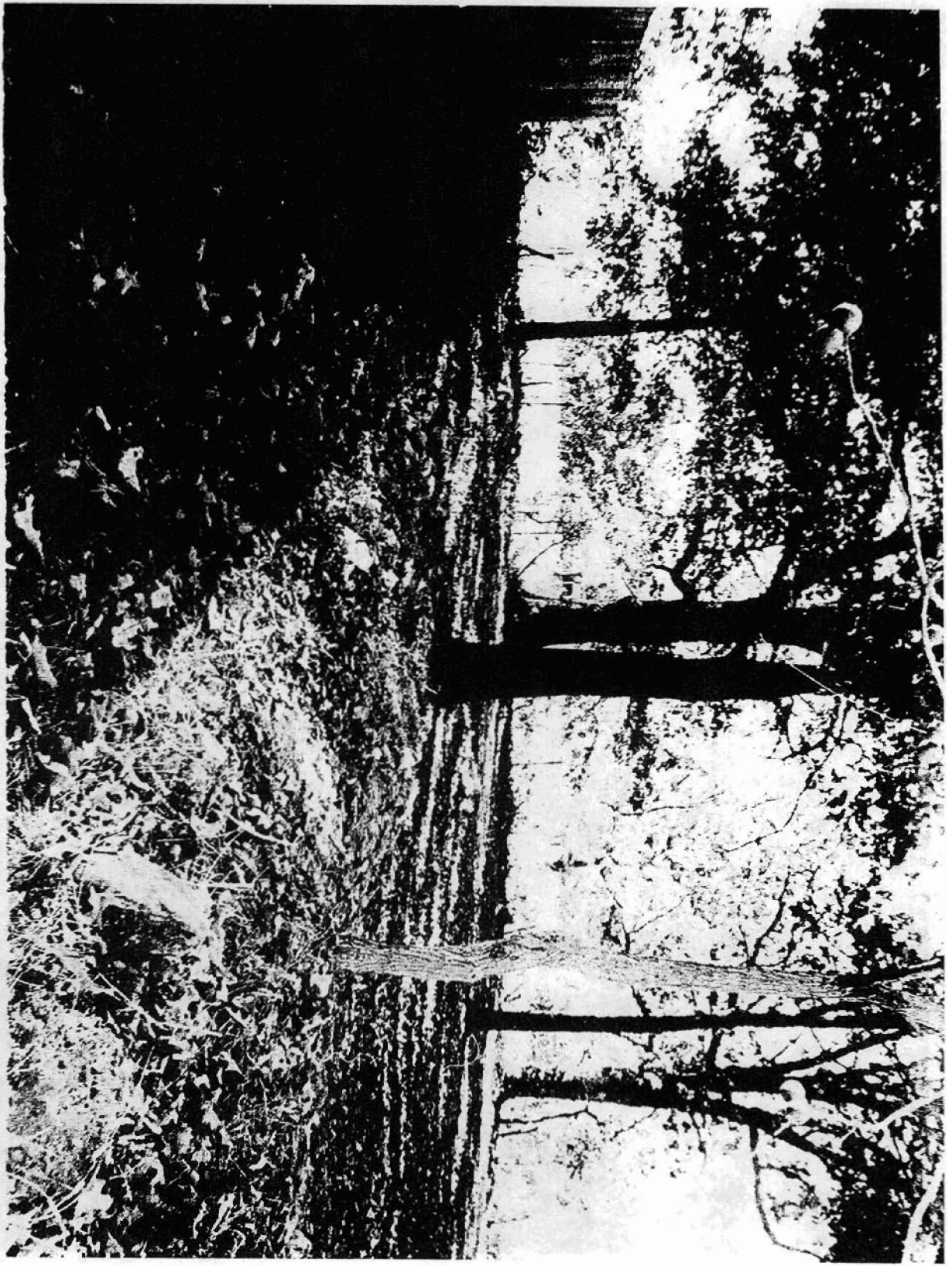
4030  
 4029  
 760 000  
 FEET  
 4028  
 4027

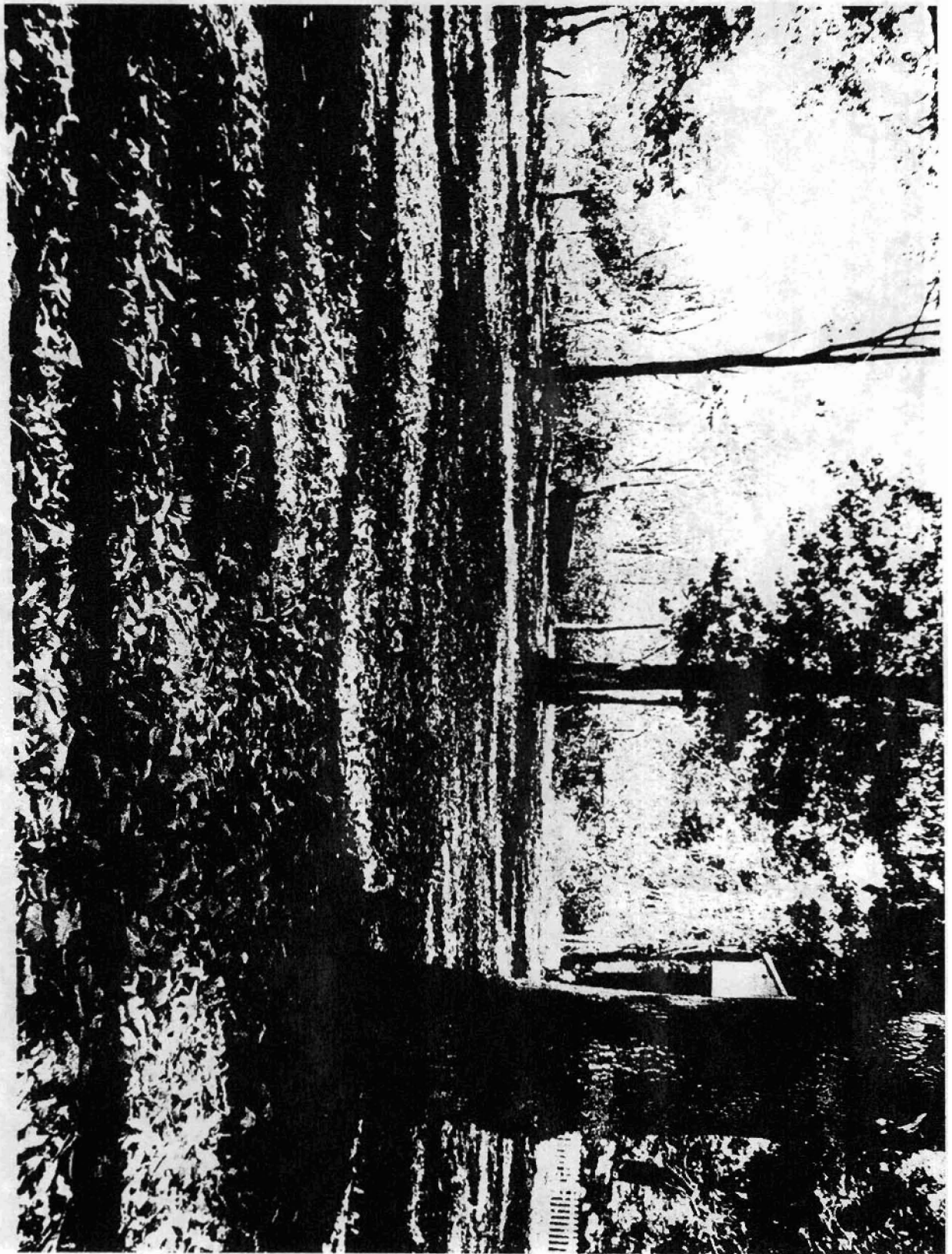
1 340 000 FEET  
 R. 31 W.  
 190  
 R. 30 W 12' 30"  
 193  
 (BENTONVILLE)  
 1 1000 0 1000 2000  
 1 1 5  
 5W  
 96 MILS  
 0°42'  
 12 MILS  
 SC  
 NATIONAL GEODETIC

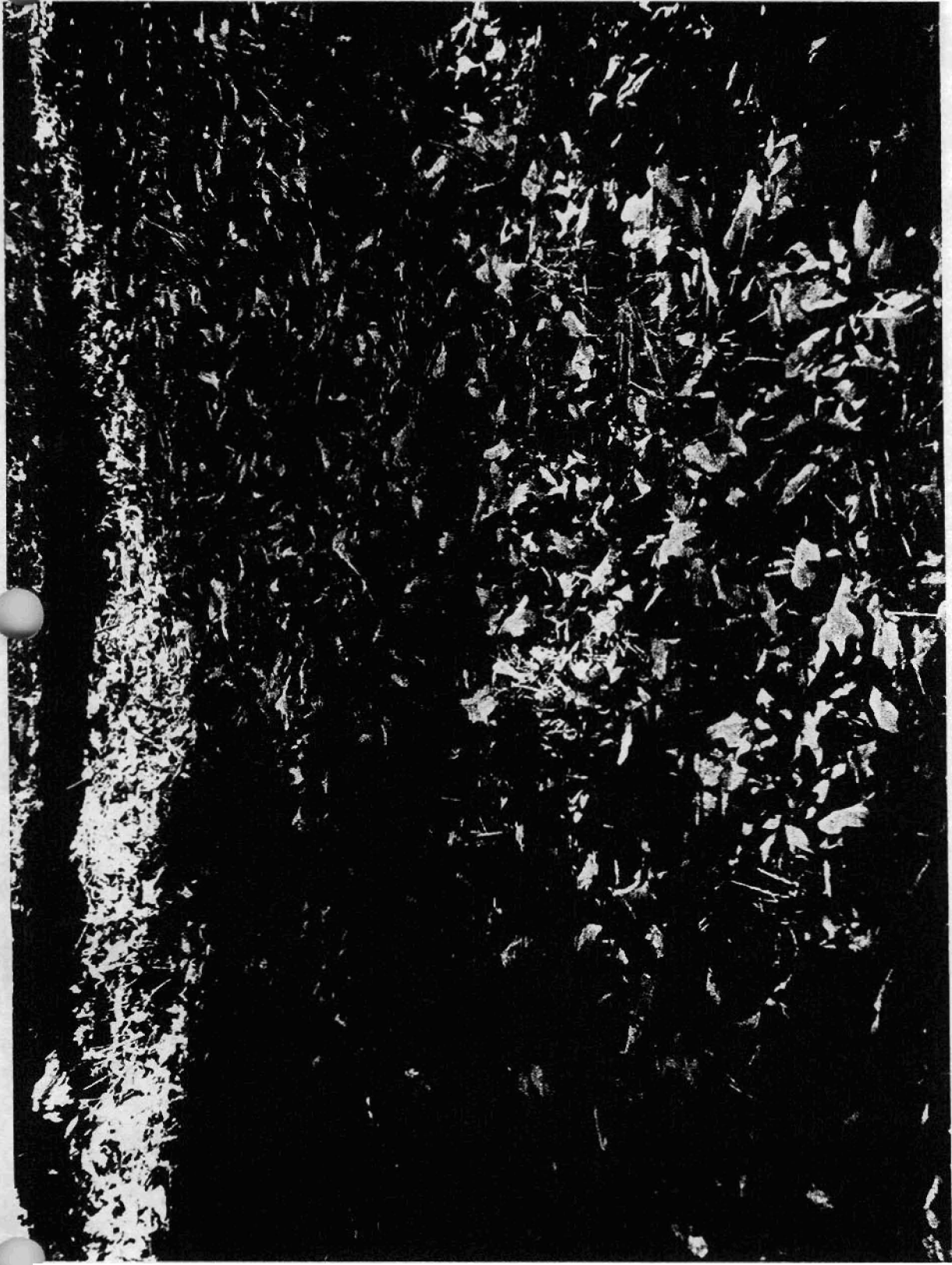


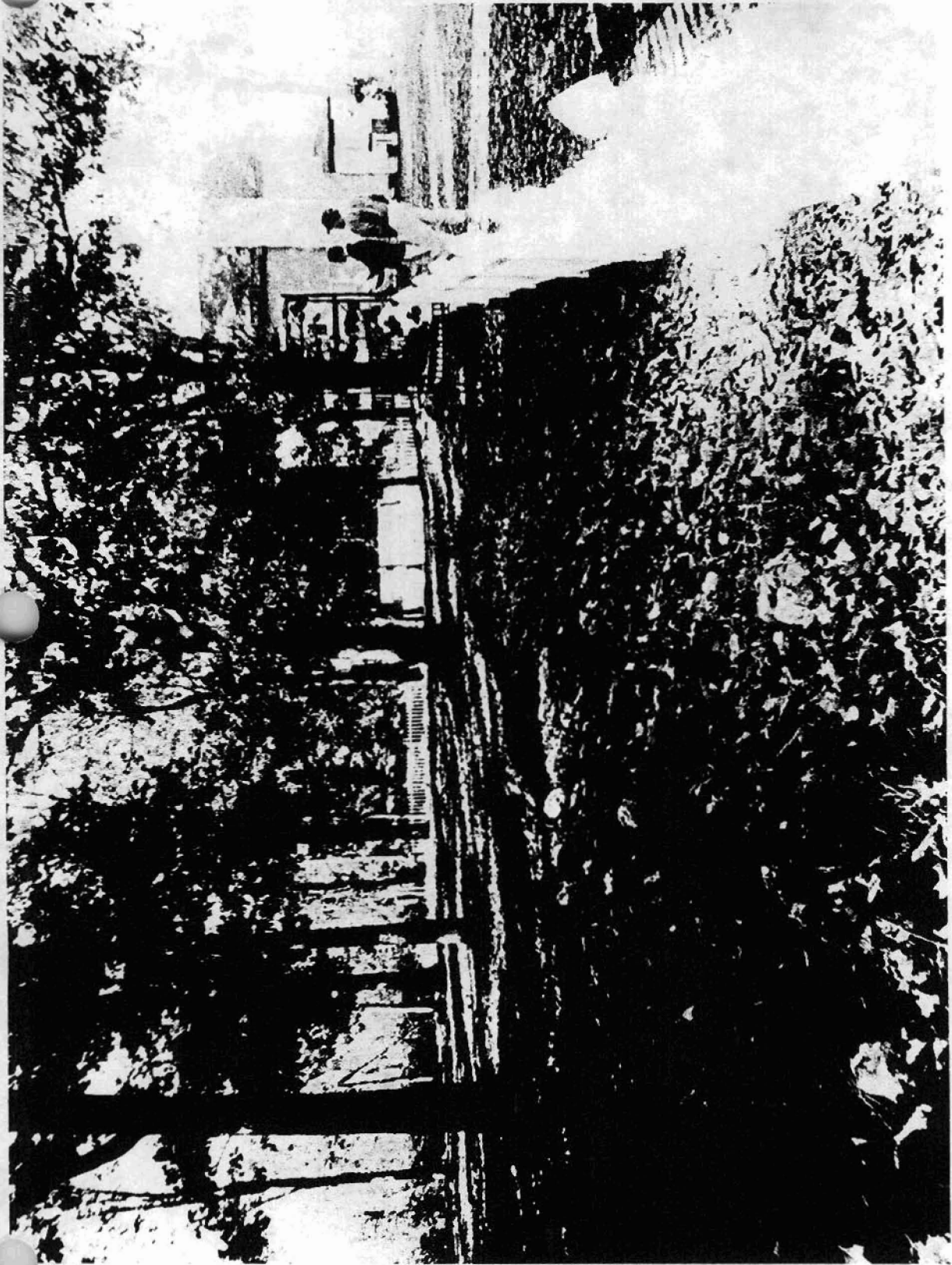
POOR FARM  
CEMETERY



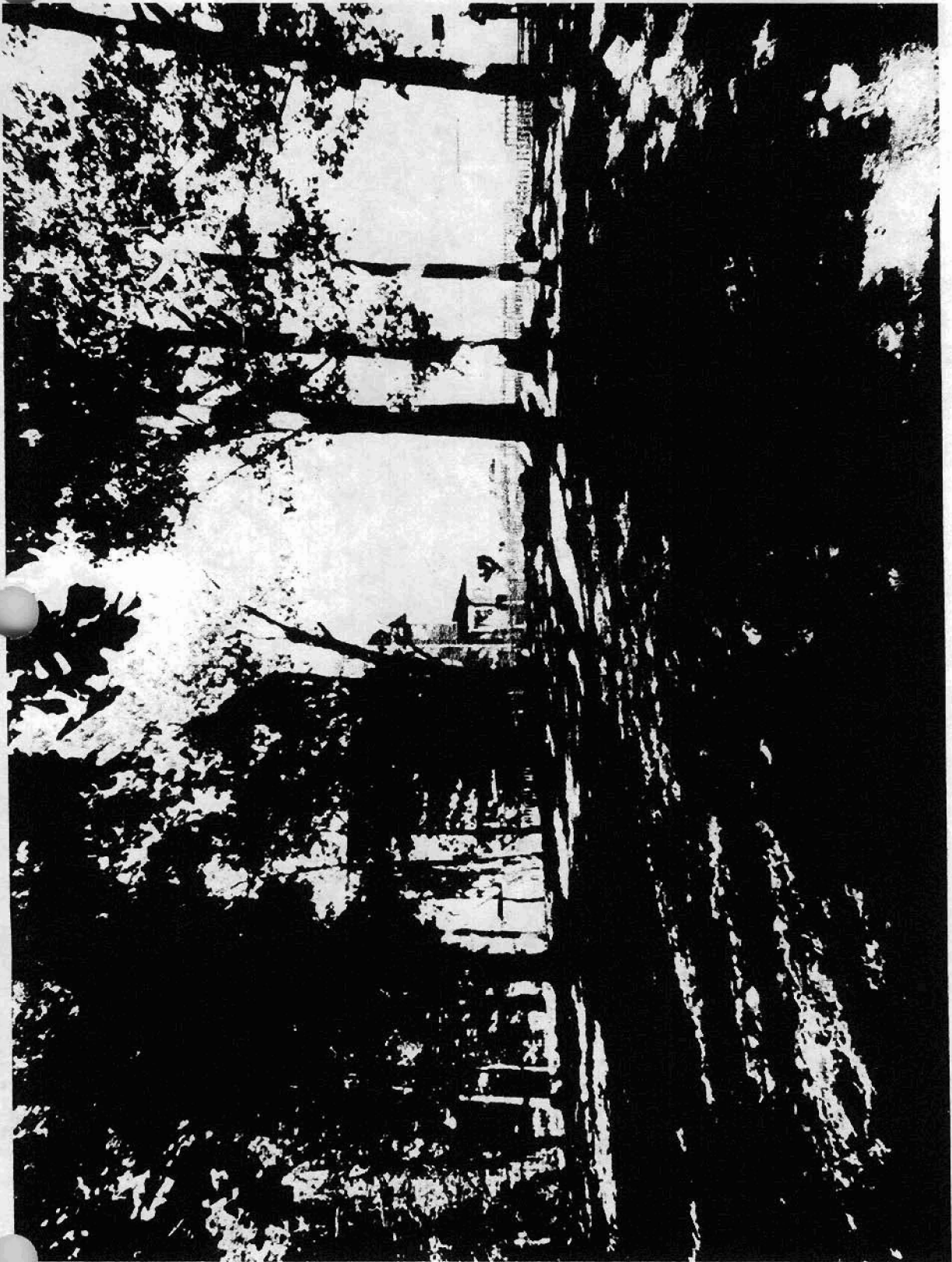


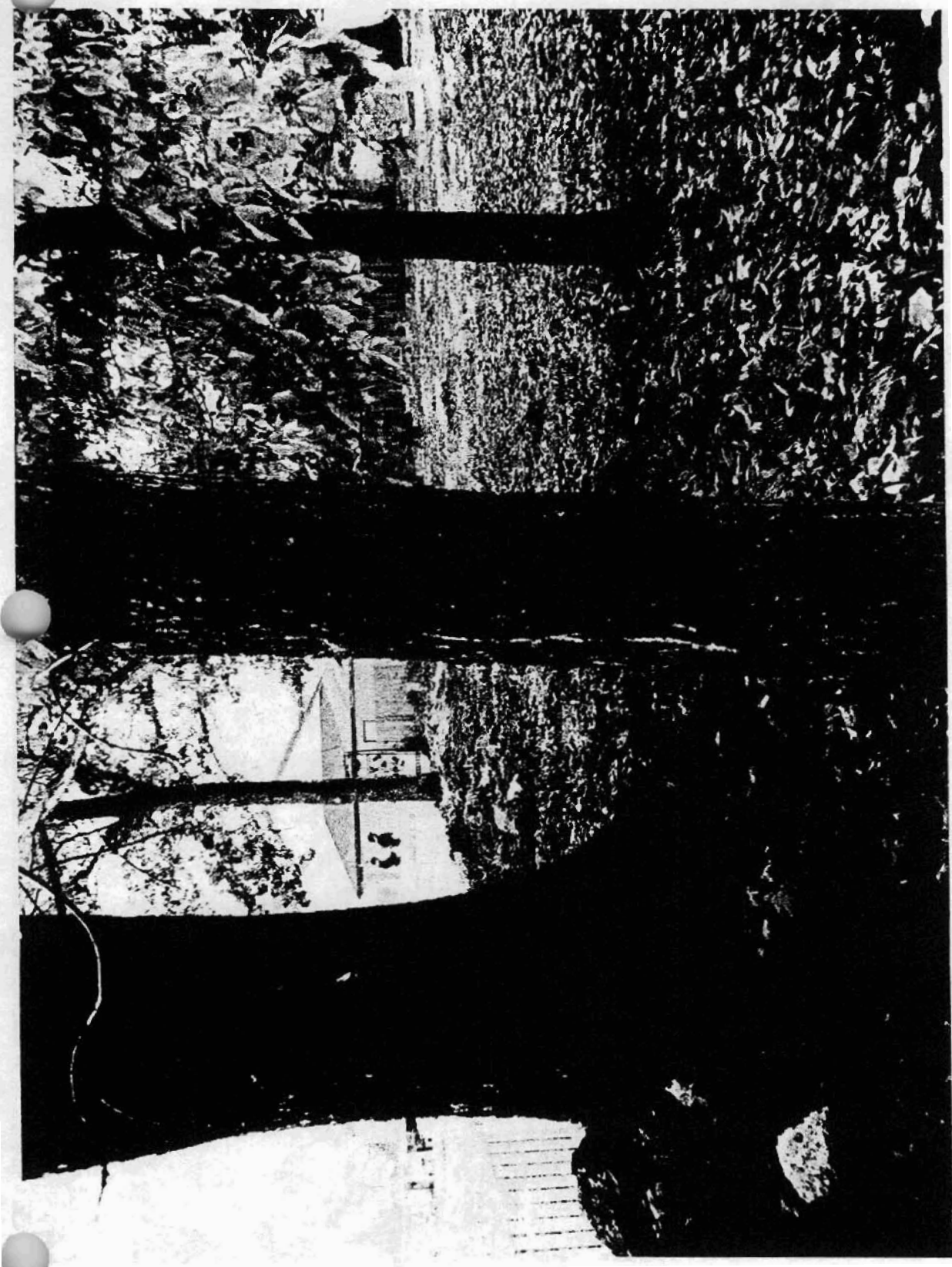














United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NR 5/20/08

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery

other names/site number Site #BE3149

2. Location

street & number West side of NE Young Avenue approximately 200 feet north of NE Carnahan Court  not for publication

city or town Bentonville  vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Benton code 007 zip code 72712

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 for 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  nationally  statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ 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 for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

		Contributing	Noncontributing	
				buildings
		1		sites
				structures
		1	2	objects
		2	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of Contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A  
walls N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof N/A  
other METAL, PLASTIC, STONE  
\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

c.1860-c.1905

Significant Dates

c.1860-c.1905

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Criteria for previous documentation on file.

Primary location of additional data:

- Criteria for primary location of additional data.

Name of repository:

Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery  
Name of Property

Benton County, Arkansas  
County and State

### 10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property Less than one.

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 392321 4027989  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

#### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

#### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date February 5, 2008  
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787  
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

### Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Benton County  
street & number 215 East Central telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Bentonville state AR zip code 72712

**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 listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

### SUMMARY

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is located on the west side of NE Young Avenue north of NE Carnahan Court northeast of Bentonville in Benton County, Arkansas. The small cemetery is located in a new housing subdivision and is marked by depressions of unmarked graves, fieldstone grave markers, and remnants of a stone wall. A plastic fence surrounds the cemetery on the west and north sides, a wire fence is located on the west side, and a wood fence is located on the south side.

### ELABORATION

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is located approximately 1 mile northeast of downtown Bentonville in Benton County, Arkansas. It is located on the west side of NE Young Avenue north of NE Carnahan Court in the Allencroft Subdivision. The cemetery contains several fieldstone markers along with several unmarked grave depressions.

The entire cemetery is surrounded by wood, wire, or plastic fencing, most of which was likely installed when the housing development was begun c.2000. (The wire fencing on the west side of the cemetery is likely older.) In addition to the fence, a decorative, arched, wrought-iron gate with benches is located on the east side of the cemetery. A plaque that reads "POOR FARM / CEMETERY / CIRCA 1860" is placed at the top of the arch. Both the fence and gate are considered to be non-contributing resources. In addition to the gate and fence, remnants of a stone wall line the east side of the cemetery and half of the south side. The stone wall remnant is considered to be a contributing resource.

The cemetery contains an unknown number of graves, and although it is not possible to break the burials down by decade, it is known that the burials occurred between c.1860 and c.1930 when the Benton County Poor Farm was in operation. As a result, they are all considered to be historic for the purposes of the nomination.

### Integrity

Overall, the Benton County Farm Cemetery retains good integrity. Today, several historic fieldstone markers exist in the cemetery. Although the fence and gate surrounding the cemetery were installed c.2002, they are relatively small in scale and help to protect and preserve the cemetery's legacy.

The biggest change to the cemetery's integrity is its setting. Originally, the setting of the cemetery, like much of Benton County, was rural. A few buildings stood on the farm complex, and after the farm closed the buildings were demolished. After remaining vacant for many years, however, the site has been redeveloped in recent years as a housing subdivision. Although houses are built to the cemetery's immediate south and north, and across the street to the east, the area to the west of the cemetery retains a rural feel. Additionally, trees located throughout the cemetery and in the cemetery's immediate vicinity also help to give a vestige of the cemetery's rural roots. Even though the cemetery's setting has undergone several significant changes, the



Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery  
Name of Property

Benton County, Arkansas  
County and State

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

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

---

retention of the original fieldstone markers and the current relatively rural setting still allow the cemetery to convey its associations with the Benton County Poor Farm and some remnants of its original setting.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

### SUMMARY

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the Benton County Poor Farm and Benton County's efforts to provide aid to the poor and destitute. It is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries**.

### ELABORATION

Benton County is in the extreme northwest corner of Arkansas, bordered by Oklahoma on the west and Missouri on the north. According to Goodspeed's *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, it is believed that the first white settlers in the area now known as Benton County arrived around 1830. On June 15, 1836, Arkansas became the 25<sup>th</sup> state of the Union and Benton County was organized shortly afterwards on September 30, 1836. The county was named after Missouri Senator Thomas Hart Benton, who helped the Arkansas Territory reach statehood.<sup>1</sup>

Although the town of Bentonville was created in 1837, it was re-incorporated on January 7, 1838, which is the date generally accepted as the "official" designation of the City of Bentonville. Three men, Robert Cowen, Robert Weaver and Thomas Swaggerty, selected the site for the town of Bentonville in 1837. These men wrote, "We the undersigned Commissioners elected under an act of the General Assembly of the State of Arkansas...beg leave to report that we have selected a site... for the county seat..." With the authority given to them, they proceeded to lay out a town, "leaving a square and making 136 lots and have named and called said town, Bentonville." Therefore, the town of Bentonville in Benton County became one of only two such county seats in Arkansas with the same surname, the other being Perryville in Perry County.<sup>2</sup>

By 1837 the town had at least 30 settlers, and it grew fairly quickly from its humble beginnings. By the year 1860 the town of Bentonville contained five general stores, the furniture store of Henry Baumeister, the Vestal Hotel, the saddle and harness shop of J. W. Clark, the Clark Hotel and three or four mechanics shops. Bentonville was growing considerably with some 500 residents. (Benton County's population by 1860 was 9,285.)<sup>3</sup>

Because of the considerable growth that was occurring in Benton County during the 1850s, it became necessary to establish a county poor farm. In 1857 the county began the process to establish the poor farm,

<sup>1</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1890, pp. 20 and 36.

<sup>2</sup> Perkins, Wendy S. "Craig, Charles R., Building, Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, p. 28 and 96.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

but it was not put into operation until 1858. Even though Benton County did not establish a poor farm until the 1850s, other mechanisms existed prior to that to address the needs of the poor.<sup>4</sup>

Even after the poor farm was established, the county did give temporary relief on a limited basis to people not living at the poor farm through small appropriations from the county treasury. The Benton County court records contain several references to aiding paupers. For example:

Now on this day A. N. Davenport presented to the Court Sarah Ann Clark as a pauper who after being duly qualified stated that she had been brought here without her consent from Newton County, Missouri. And she further stated that she had no means of support and wished to be sent back to Newton County, Mo., having no relatives or friends here upon whom she could rely for support or protection – .

Whereupon it is ordered by the Court that a warrant be issued on the County Treasurer for the sum of Five Dollars to A. N. Davenport for the purpose of conveying the said Sarah Ann Clark to Newton County, Missouri – .<sup>5</sup>

Some of the paupers in the county ended up in the court records more than once, once to have them declared a pauper, and then other times as costs for their care were reimbursed. In the case of Rachel Rhia, for example, she appears twice in the court's records. First, the records state:

Now on this day it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court upon the testimony of Sylvanus Blackburn that Rachel Rhia is in a helpless condition and is unable to support herself and has no visible means of support. And the Court being fully advised on the premises,

It is therefore ordered by the Court that the said Rachel Rhia be and she is hereby declared a pauper – .<sup>6</sup>

Later, Blackburn came back to the Benton County Court for reimbursement for her care, and it was also noted in the court records:

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Now and on this day S. W. Blackburn presented Miss Rachel Rhia as a pauper she having been previously declared a pauper and S. W. Blackburn having been employed to keep said pauper up to the present time – Now it is ordered by the Court that the said S. W. Blackburn be ?? to keep the said pauper until the ?? day of January A.D. 1863 and that he be allowed the sum of one dollar and fifty cents ...<sup>7</sup>

As in other parts of the country, Benton County did not just reimburse costs incurred to take care of paupers. The county also auctioned off paupers to local residents. The case of John Fleming is a good example. Initially, Fleming was declared a pauper in the court records.

Now on this day it appearing to the satisfaction of the Court upon the testimony of A. G. Williams that John W. Fleming is in a helpless condition and is unable to support himself and has no visable means of support and the Court being fully advised on the premises –

It is therefore ordered by the Court that the said John W. Fleming be and he is hereby declared a pauper – .<sup>8</sup>

Fleming was then auctioned off by the county to the lowest bidder. The court records state:

On this day the Court proceeded to examine the condition of John W. Phleming. After the examination the Court area of the opinion that the said John W. Phleming is unable to take care of himself and is hereby declared a pauper –

It is therefore ordered that the Sheriff of Benton County proceed to let the said John W. Phleming to the lowest bidder ?? for the term of twelve months at the courthouse door in Bentonville on ?? the 16<sup>th</sup> day of April AD 1861 – by giving at least five advertisements in the most public places in Benton County. The contractor to give bond with approved security to feed cloth and medicate said pauper – .<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Interestingly, Fleming was auctioned off again later in 1861. The court records later state that it was, "Ordered by the Court that the Sheriff will proceed to let out John W. Fleming pauper at the lowest bidder at the Court House door on the first Monday in November 1861. The bidder is required to give bond and approved security."<sup>10</sup>

The aiding of a pauper by another person in the community was not unheard of prior to the establishment of poorhouses. Many areas provided "outdoor relief" to paupers that was normally administered by an Overseer of the Poor, who was often a local elected official. Usually a budget of tax money was set aside to help the poor by providing food, clothing, or even medical treatment, when family members, friends, or church congregations could not provide enough aid. However, other methods of supporting the poor were sometimes employed, including contracting with a person in the community to care for a group of paupers or auctioning off the poor, which allowed the lowest bidder to use the pauper's labor for free for a specified period of time in exchange for food, clothing, housing and health care.<sup>11</sup>

By the second half of the nineteenth century, the poorhouse system came to the United States from England, and poorhouses were built with great optimism. It was hoped that they would be cheaper and more efficient, and also aid in the reformation of paupers to eliminate the bad habits and character defects that many people assumed were the causes of their poverty. Although this was not always the case, the poorhouse system was an improvement over previous methods used to aid the poor.<sup>12</sup>

Even though many places saw poorhouses as the answer to the problems of aiding the poor, apparently not all counties in Arkansas had poorhouses by the early twentieth century. A special report on paupers in almshouses done by the Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, gave an outline of the laws governing poor relief in each state, and said about Arkansas that:

Every county must relieve its own poor. Sheriffs, coroners, constables, and justices of the peace shall give information to their respective county courts of the poor and the county court has the duty of providing for such persons. If satisfied that the applicants are paupers the county court shall order their commitment to the poorhouse, there to remain until discharged by an order of the court. County courts have the power to establish poorhouses, and when completed the court shall let them out annually to the lowest responsible bidder under bond for the faithful care of the inmates. In counties without

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> "History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Poorhouses." Found at: [www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm](http://www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm)

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

poorhouses, the court may let the care of the poor to the lowest responsible bidder. The county is not liable for the support of any pauper who refuses to accept county aid in the manner provided above. The county court may cause the employment of each able-bodied pauper on work for the county.<sup>13</sup>

Benton County began the process to establish a poor farm in April 1857, but it did not happen overnight. It was not until early 1858 when the buildings were completed and the paupers were moved to the farm. As Goodspeed's *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas*, states:

In April, 1857, the county court, finding it necessary and expedient to establish a poor-house in the county of Benton, ordered that Samuel Woods, James Jackson and Dysert Woods be appointed to act as commissioners to select a proper site for such building. At the following October term of the court two of these commissioners, James Jackson and Samuel Woods, reported that they had not been able, as yet, to select such a place as in their judgment would be suitable for such purpose, and asked for further time, which was granted until the next regular term. The court then ordered its clerk to make or draw a warrant upon the treasurer of the county, in favor of the commissioners, for the sum of \$1,200, provided they or a majority of them call for the same, to enable them to purchase a farm or site for a poor-house. It seems, however, that this order was not called for. In January, 1858, the commissioners, all joining, reported to the court that they had selected a site for the poor-house on forty acres of land lying north of Bentonville, owned by William Clements, together with five acres off of a tract owned by William McDaniel, including a spring or interest in the spring, and had made a contract, therefore, at the sum of \$300. They further reported that there was a log house on the same without floor, ten acres in cultivation, and about four acres in wheat, and recommended the place as the most eligible site they had been able to select, and asked the adoption of their report.

The report was adopted, and a warrant for \$300 was ordered to be issued and paid to the said Clements upon his making, to the commissioners and their successors in office, a warrantee fee simple deed for the lands aforesaid. The court then authorized the commissioners to enter at the United States Land office at Fayetteville, forty acres of land lying due north of the

<sup>13</sup> Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. *Special Reports: Paupers in Almshouse, 1904*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906. (Excerpts found at: [www.poorhousestory.com](http://www.poorhousestory.com))

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

forty-acre tract already purchased. Afterward, in April, 1858, Jacob Candill, county surveyor, in obedience to a former order issued to him, made to the court a survey of the poor-farm, showing that it embraced the east half of the southwest quarter, and four and a half acres out of the southeast corner of the southwest one-fourth of the southwest quarter of Section 20, in Township 20 north, Range 30 west, as surveyed by him February 26, 1858. As soon as the necessary buildings on the poor-farm were put in order, the paupers of the county were removed thereto and placed under the care of a superintendent engaged for that purpose.<sup>14</sup>

Although a building existed on the parcel that was acquired for the poor farm, the Civil War delayed any work on the farm. Once the war was over, however, the county began to address the need to construct buildings at the poor farm, especially for housing the farm's residents. Coincidentally, at the same time, the county was looking at constructing a new courthouse. Goodspeed's reports:

In November 1875, the court appointed Zach. Baker commissioner to let the contract to the lowest responsible bidder, after giving ten days' notice, for the removal of the old frame court-house to the poor-farm, and for repairing the same so as to make it suitable for a poor asylum. In January following Commissioner Baker reported in full to the court, whereupon it was ordered that a county warrant for the sum of \$330 should be issued payable out of the public building fund, to William Stewart and J. V. Lee, for removing the old court-house to the poor-farm, and for materials for fitting it up and putting it in order; and that another warrant for the sum of \$120.50 should be issued to James Haney for materials furnished and work and labor performed by him in fitting up the same building.<sup>15</sup>

By 1880, there were twelve residents at the farm, plus the housekeeper, which was apparently slightly above the average number of residents living at the farm. Goodspeed's states that, "The pauper inmates of the poor-house average from eight to ten in number. The method of keeping them is by letting or renting the poor-farm to a superintendent, who takes care of them for a stipulated price." Goodspeed also reported that caring for the poor did not occur just at the poor farm. It states that "Temporary relief is also administered in a limited degree, to a few persons not confined in the poor-house, by small appropriations from the county treasury."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

The inmates living at the farm, according to the 1880 census, which was the first one to include the poor farm, were:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Marital State/Race/Other:</u>
Permelia Morse	74	Widow, White; Crippled, Female Inmate, born South Carolina
Sylvania Lee	67	Married, White; Dropsey [sic.], Female Inmate, born Kentucky
Lucy Younger	59	Single, White; Crippled, Female Inmate, born Tennessee
Matilda Furgerson	58	Single, White; Old Age, Female Inmate, born Kentucky
James Barnes	79	Married, White; Old Age, Male Inmate, born Virginia
William Bryson	72	Married, White; Old Age, Male Inmate, born North Carolina
Archibald Whinery	49	Single, White; Paralysis, Male Inmate, born Arkansas
William Brawhill	21	Single, White; Idiotic, Male Inmate, Unknown Birthplace
Margaret Robins	16	Single, White; Idiotic, Female Inmate, born Arkansas
Margarett Garrett	59	Widow, White; Insane, Female Inmate, born Tennessee
Eli Suter	38	Single, White; Insane, Male Inmate, born Missouri
William Dwyer	59	Married, White; Insane, Male Inmate, born Tennessee
Mary Barnes	46	Married, White; Housekeeper, born Kentucky <sup>17</sup>

Although there were a number of residents who lived at the farm during the last part of the nineteenth and first part of the twentieth centuries, it is virtually impossible to know who is buried in the cemetery. There are two known deaths at the poor farm from the period 1890-1910. In 1892, John Noonan passed away, and the *Bentonville Sun* reported that "John Noonan, one of the paupers on the poor farm, died out there Thursday of last week. The deceased was 35 years old. Mrs. Jas. Oakes, manager of the farm, is doing a good part by the inmates of the farm." The second death, which occurred in September 1903, was reported by the *Benton County Democrat*, which wrote that "Frank McClelland [McClendon?], one of the inmates of the poor farm, who came here about six months ago from Colville, died at the poor farm Wednesday morning. He was 52 years old and had long been a sufferer of consumption."<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, the Benton County court sometimes helped to pay burial expenses for the county's paupers. With respect to the pauper Van Jennings, the records state that it was, "Ordered by the court that William Hughes be allowed the sum of three dollars and fifty cents for burial clothes furnished Van Jennings a pauper of this county."<sup>19</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at: <http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1880.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume One, 1884-1898*. Heritage Books, 1994, p. 109 and Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume Two, 1899-1904*. Heritage Books, 1994, p. 277.

<sup>19</sup> Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Frank McClendon apparently arrived at the poor farm in March 1903 after being ordered to go there by the Justice of the Peace. His committal was recorded by stating that "It appearing from the certificate of M. F. Grunsley, J. P., of Coleville Twsp. and other good and sufficient evidence that Frank McClendon is a citizen of Benton County and has no means of support and is in poor health and unable a [sic.] support he is therefore declared a pauper and W. R. Ford the Keeper of the Benton County Poor Farm is hereby ordered to take charge of the said Frank McClendon and keep him at the expense of Benton County until further ordered."<sup>20</sup>

W. R. Ford had been employed as the keeper of the poor farm for at least five years when he was ordered to take in Frank McClendon. Although the poor farm, in many ways, was a depressing place to be, Ford tried to make it as pleasant as possible for the residents. An article in the January 6, 1898, edition of the *Rogers Democrat* repeated a report on Christmas at the poor farm from the *Bentonville Sun*. It reported:

W. R. Ford, keeper of the Poor Farm, surprised his bounty borders by giving a Christmas tree at his house on Christmas eve. There were many presents on the tree for the poor who appreciated the generous donation, which amounted to over \$25. There was nice new under clothing for the men and dress patterns for the women besides many smaller presents. It was truly gratifying to see the joy and happiness of those people who have to rely upon the county's generosity for their homes and living. Mr. Ford deserves credit for thus furnishing a rare treat to his indigent friends. It is the first time in the history of the county that a Christmas tree has been had for the poor of the county farm. The many businessmen who so generously donated to the fund should feel thankful that they helped to bring happiness to the poor and needy.<sup>21</sup>

Although Ford was the manager of the poor farm in 1898, and was supposedly the manager in 1903 when he was ordered to take in Frank McClendon, Ford does not appear in the 1900 census of the people living at the farm. According to the 1900 census, the residents of the poor farm were:

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Marital State/Race/Other:</u>
(Harry?) Williams	44	Married, White; Manager, born Arkansas
Joseph Wilson	42	Single, White; Male Inmate, born Illinois
(Gran?)	50	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born Tennessee

<sup>20</sup> Rankin, Mary McClendon. Letter to the Benton County Cemetery Preservation Group. 26 December 2002.

<sup>21</sup> "Christmas at Poor Farm." *Rogers Democrat*. 6 January 1898.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Wm. Jefferson	68	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born	Carolina
George Ellis	42	_____ , White; Male Inmate	
Wm. Mathis	95	Married, White; Male Inmate, born	Arkansas
John McBride	76	Single, White; Male Inmate, Birthplace	Unknown
James Wilson	78	Widower, White; Male Inmate, born	Arkansas
Mary Wills	78	Single, White; Female Inmate, born	Kentucky
Ruthie Roberts	104	Single, Black; Female Inmate, born	Missouri
_____	34	Single, White; Female Inmate, born	Arkansas
_____	25	Single, White; Female Inmate, Birthplace	Unknown
Margaret Whitman	27	Single, White; Female Inmate, born	Missouri
_____ English	38	Single, White; Female Inmate, born	Arkansas
_____ English	1 ½	Infant, White; Female Inmate, born	Arkansas <sup>22</sup>

The Benton County Poor Farm remained at the location of the cemetery until c.1905 when it moved west of Bentonville. (The location of the poor farm west of town is now occupied by the Benton County Road Department.) Although the poor farm relocated, the new location did not include a cemetery. Rather, paupers were buried in the "Pauper's Section" of the Bentonville Cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

Today, the Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is the last surviving element from the Benton County Poor Farm, and a rare reminder of the county's early efforts to provide assistance to the poor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The preserved cemetery, with its simple fieldstone markers, is a testament to the efforts of Benton County to restore, preserve, and maintain this important, but often overlooked, aspect of Arkansas's past.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the Benton County Poor Farm and Benton County's efforts to provide aid to the poor and destitute. It is also being nominated under **Criteria Consideration D: Cemeteries**.

<sup>22</sup> Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at: <http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1900.htm>.

<sup>23</sup> Feroe, Nancy. E-mails to the author. 15 January 2008.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   1  

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*. Chicago, Nashville, and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1890.

"Christmas at Poor Farm." *Rogers Democrat*. 6 January 1898.

Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census. *Special Reports: Paupers in Almshouse, 1904*. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906. (Excerpts found at: [www.poorhousestory.com](http://www.poorhousestory.com))

Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume One, 1884-1898*. Heritage Books, 1994.

Easley, Barbara P. and Verla P. McAnelly (eds.). *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Volume Two, 1899-1904*. Heritage Books, 1994.

Excerpts from the Benton County court records in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Feroe, Nancy. E-mails to the author. 15 January 2008.

"History of 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Poorhouses." Found at: [www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm](http://www.poorhousestory.com/history.htm).

Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at:  
<http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1880.htm>.

Information on the Benton County Poor Farm found at:  
<http://www.arfamilies.info/poorfarmbenton1900.htm>.

Perkins, Wendy S. "Craig, Charles R., Building, Bentonville, Benton County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2003.

Rankin, Mary McClendon. Letter to the Benton County Cemetery Preservation Group. 26 December 2002.

**United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

---

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the northwest corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'26.89" North and 94°12'02.53" West, proceed easterly to the northeast corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'26.90" North and 94°12'01.67" West, thence proceed southerly to the southeast corner of the cemetery located at 36°23'25.37" North and 94°12'01.66" West, thence proceed westerly to the southwest corner of the cemetery at 36°23'25.31" North and 94°12'02.62" West, thence proceed north to the point of beginning.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains the land of the Benton County Poor Farm Cemetery and its immediate surroundings that retains integrity.