

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

historical name: Frauenthal & Schwarz Building

other name/site number: Front Street Mall

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2. Location

street & number: 824 Front Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Conway

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Faulkner code: AR 045 zip code: 72032

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3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	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: N/A

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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.

Catherine A. Byford Signature of certifying official 6-12-92 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: Commerce/Trade Sub: Department Store

Current : Commerce/Trade Sub: Department Store

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Commercial Style
Mediterranean Revival

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Asphalt
walls Brick other _____

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

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1925

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Sanders & Ginocchio

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:

- 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

Table with 4 columns: A, B, C, D. Values include 15, 550980, 3883110.

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Block 12, Robinson Plat, Lot 8 & 9.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, National Register Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 06/09/92

Street & Number: 225 E. Markham, Suite 300 Telephone: (501) 324-9346

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

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Summary

Designed by the firm of Sanders & Ginocchio circa 1925, the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building is a two-story commercial building constructed of brick with concrete and steel reinforcements and covered by a flat roof with a parapet. The current structure was created by expanding and completely renovating an existing 1879 building.

Elaboration

The firm of Sanders and Ginocchio was contracted circa 1925 to renovate the existing Frauenthal & Schwarz Building. The store building dated from 1879, but had received a facade renovation by Charles Thompson in 1915. Sanders and Ginocchio took the original 50 ft.- wide, two-story brick commercial building, encompassed an adjoining single-story structure, and created a two-story commercial building with a 100 ft. frontage.

In essence, a new building was created. The new structure was constructed of brick with concrete and steel reinforcements and covered by a flat roof with a parapet. A continuous concrete foundation supports the structure.

The front, or southwestern, elevation consists of two symmetrically placed, double-leaf door entrances with plate glass across the entire storefront. A suspended flat metal roof separates the storefront from the upper facade. The entire second-story consists of sixteen bays of windows, with each bay containing a six-pane pivot window within nineteen fixed panes. The transoms are divided into twenty-four bays, each containing prism glass. The dark brown brick upper facade is decorated by a white-painted cornice with a classical dentil course underneath that is interrupted by six white-painted, flattened Italianate brackets, the combination of which lends a Mediterranean look to an otherwise spartan facade.

In the 1960's, the store building was covered with aluminum siding. Fortunately, the facade was restored to its original appearance, with the sole exception of the application of multi-colored ceramic tile applied to the bulkhead, when the building was converted to the Front Street Mall in 1989.

The first story interior was extensively altered during the conversion; however, the integrity of the building is not affected by this according to National Register criteria for commercial buildings. The second story is basically original in appearance and retains the pressed-metal ceiling, some of the pressed-metal cornice trim, and some of the pressed-metal wall cladding. The building originally contained two skylights, which are now covered. Balustrades around the two second-story floor openings remain as a reminder of their existence.

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Summary

The Frauenthal & Schwarz Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance as the best example in Conway of a mid-1920's, two-story commercial building that was styled with an emphasis on function and constructed using the latest technology.

Elaboration

The Frauenthal & Schwarz mercantile business began in 1872 when Max Frauenthal, a German immigrant, erected a small wooden store in Conway. Frauenthal had arrived in "Conway Station" with the railroad construction gangs a year earlier in 1871. The town of "Conway Station" was laid out and platted by Colonel Asa Peter Robinson, a Little Rock and Fort Smith railroad official who in 1871 was granted a section of land of his own choice by the railroad company on which to build a town.

Max Frauenthal was born in Marienthal, Rhenish Bavaria, on November 11, 1835. At age fifteen, he immigrated to the United States and lived in New York City, practicing the furrier's trade he had learned in Bavaria. He later resided in Texas and Louisiana before finally settling in Brookhaven, Mississippi. Unfortunately, his residence there was interrupted by the Civil War. Frauenthal enlisted in Company A, Sixteenth Mississippi Infantry of the Confederate Army and served the duration of the conflict. After the war, Frauenthal located in Corinth, Mississippi until 1868 when he got married in Louisville, Kentucky, to Miss Sallie Jacobs, a native of Baltimore. They had seven children: Mortimer, Cora, Eugen, Theresa, Clarence, Arthur, and Ruth.

The location of Frauenthal's new store, the second to be opened in the new railroad town, would eventually prove crucial to the town's future development. When Colonel Robinson laid out the plans for Conway Station, he intended that Main Street and Railroad Avenue (now known as Parkway) constitute the business district of his new town. Accordingly, several new stores were built along these two thoroughfares. The principal customers of these merchants, the farmers, would park their wagons in an alley across the town square from Railroad Avenue while transacting business. Oral tradition holds that Frauenthal built his new store on an alley, figuring that he would get the farmer's business first if he put his store where they left their wagons. That alley soon became Front Street, and the fact that the principal business areas today are along Front and Oak streets and not Main and Parkway attests to the significance of Frauenthal's decision.

On April 12, 1873, Faulkner County was formed from portions of Conway and

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Pulaski counties. Conway Station was selected to be the county seat, and on October 5, 1875, the town was incorporated under the name of Conway by a petition of thirty citizens including Max Frauenthal, who was rapidly becoming one of the leaders of the community. In the same year, Frauenthal enlisted the aid of his cousin, Jo Frauenthal, who came from Louisville to work as bookkeeper in the thriving store. The mercantile business continued to grow and, the next year, Max Frauenthal brought another cousin, Leo Schwarz, from his home province of Rhenish Bavaria to help manage what was becoming a family business. The growth of the Frauenthal mercantile business is illustrated by the increase in the value of goods, merchandise, money, and credits from \$2,000 in 1873 to \$8180 in 1876.

In 1878, a fire destroyed all of the store buildings, which were constructed of wood, along Front Street. Max Frauenthal moved to the forefront of the business community by constructing the first two-story brick commercial building in Conway the following year. The new building was designed in a rather elaborate form of the Italianate style of architecture that was popular at the time. The new storefront also featured the first plate-glass window in Conway. Frauenthal showed civic responsibility as well, for in 1879 he pledged sixty dollars in lumber to help build Conway's first public school. Only Colonel Robinson and a Mr. George Bruce pledged more.

In 1880, Max and Jo Frauenthal formed a business partnership known as the M. and J. Frauenthal & Company. To understand the almost phenomenal growth rate of the Frauenthal business, one must examine the new business methods that the Conway merchants were forced to adopt due to the seasonal income of their principal customers, the farmers. Dr. Hubert Lee Minton explains these methods in his doctoral thesis:

Aside from the change in quality and variety of merchandise induced by the changing form of farm economy, Conway merchants were forced to give heed to the seasonal income of farmers accentuated by it. Many farmers needed credit in the production of a crop, something that the larger merchants were willing to grant because of the merchantable qualities of cotton and the chance thus provided for increasing the value of their businesses. A crop mortgage, usually included chattels, was extracted from each farmer and an upper limit to his account was set which depended upon what the merchant knew concerning his reliability and the quality of his securities. Prices of goods were advanced to cover carrying charges and all risks of non-payment, so that a good crop invariably meant a handsome profit to the credit merchant. And it should be remembered that poor crop years were rare during the period because of the amount of fresh land that opened up. Moreover, a

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merchant was able to avoid strain upon his own capital during the spring and summer when his income was low, by the consignment of cotton to some large cotton company for delivery in the autumn. He could well afford to do this, with limitations, by virtue of his possession of crop mortgages. As further means of reducing his risks the general credit merchant employed one or more field men to check the progress of the crop of each debtor so that the limit of credit in each case might be readjusted in accordance with the reports from the field.

Max Frauenthal was apparently a master in conducting these business methods. In 1881, he held chattel mortgages valued at \$15,035. In these chattel mortgages, Frauenthal included in the terms of agreements such essentials to farming as the grantors, horses, cattle, wagons, harnesses, and farm machinery. If the farmer could not repay the debt, then he was left with land but nothing to farm it with. The merchant would then transfer the mortgage to the farmer's land and "refurnish" him under the original conditions. In one instance in 1887 this practice netted Frauenthal: eighty acres, three horses, one wagon, one cow, two steers, one calf and the entire crop of one J. S. Stringfellow, who sold all of the above for \$10 in order to release himself from a \$220 loan from M. and J. Frauenthal & Company. By utilizing practices such as these, the company was able to acquire 6,096 acres of farmland by 1890.

The likelihood of failure for an independent farmer grew steadily throughout the last half of the nineteenth century. Between 1870 and 1890, the population of the nation rose thirty percent; however, the number of farms increased by fifty-one percent over the same period. The predictable result was a market glut, and the farmer's profit continued to dwindle while his debts and operating costs remained the same. By capitalizing on this trend, M. and J. Frauenthal & Co. achieved the distinction of being the largest mercantile store in the county in 1883.

With a significant amount of surplus capital, Frauenthal was able to diversify his holdings. In 1888, a local newspaper ran an advertisement for the company listing them as agents for: Elliott Douglas Cotton Gin; Phoenix Cotton Gin; The Planters Cotton Press; Stationary and Portable Engines; Saw Mill; Cane Mills; Corn Shellers; Wheat and Corn Mills and Threshers. In 1892 the Conway Cotton Oil & Gin Company was opened by M. and J. Frauenthal & Co to process cottonseed oil. Max Frauenthal also owned an excelsior production factory near Cadron Creek. In the same year, Max Frauenthal sold his interests in his mercantile company to Jo Frauenthal and Leo Schwarz.

In his article on Max Frauenthal, on which this nomination is primarily based, Robert Doolos assesses Frauenthal's significance to the development of Conway and the county as a whole:

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Frauenthal is significant because of the effect he had upon the locality in which he operated and the time span in which he undertook these activities. He geographically changed the commercial center of town thereby forever altering its history. He was the largest mercantile business operator in Faulkner County in a period when it was easy to begin an enterprise at a favorable time in the business cycle, but unless the business had far-sighted and able management it would go bankrupt with the first depression.

Doolos also addressed the significance and effect of the chattel mortgage practice:

Even more important is the fact that by studying Frauenthal's business one can see the many problems that were eventually brought to the public's attention through political organizations spurred by the farmers' dissent.

Although the role of Max Frauenthal as the leading businessman in the early development of Conway and Faulkner County is clearly evident, the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building does not qualify under Criterion B as the period of significance for Max Frauenthal's association with the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building, 1872-1892, is before the structure attained its current facade c. 1925. Nevertheless, the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building is locally significant under Criterion C as the best example in Conway of a mid-1920's commercial building.

The firm of Sanders and Ginocchio designed the new store building with more of an emphasis on function rather than style. The entire second story is composed of sixteen bays of six-within-nineteen pane windows. The transoms above these windows utilized the latest technology in architectural glass, prism glass that reflected the near-vertical rays of sunlight and refracted them horizontally into the store. Though function was emphasized, the building was not devoid of ornamentation. The upper facade reveals a restrained, yet elegant touch of the Mediterranean style, seen largely in the flattened Italianate brackets. When constructed, the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building was the first of its style in Conway, and it set the standard for future commercial buildings. Although copious amounts of aluminum siding was unthoughtfully attached over the entire upper facade in the 1960's, the offending material was removed during a complete facade restoration in 1989. Since that time, four other buildings on the block have undergone restoration to some degree - a welcome consequence that reveals that the Frauenthal & Schwarz Building is still setting the pace for downtown Conway.

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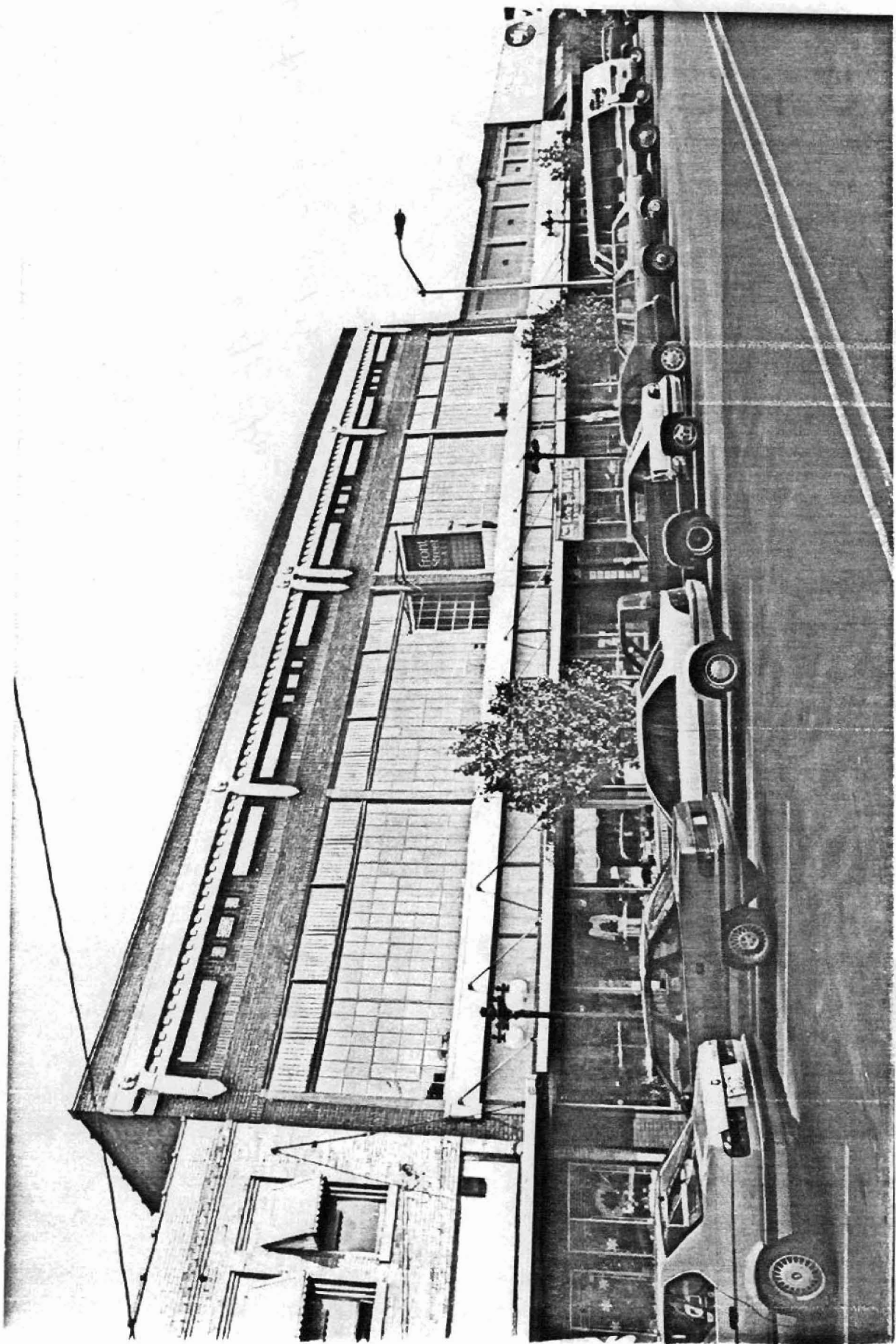
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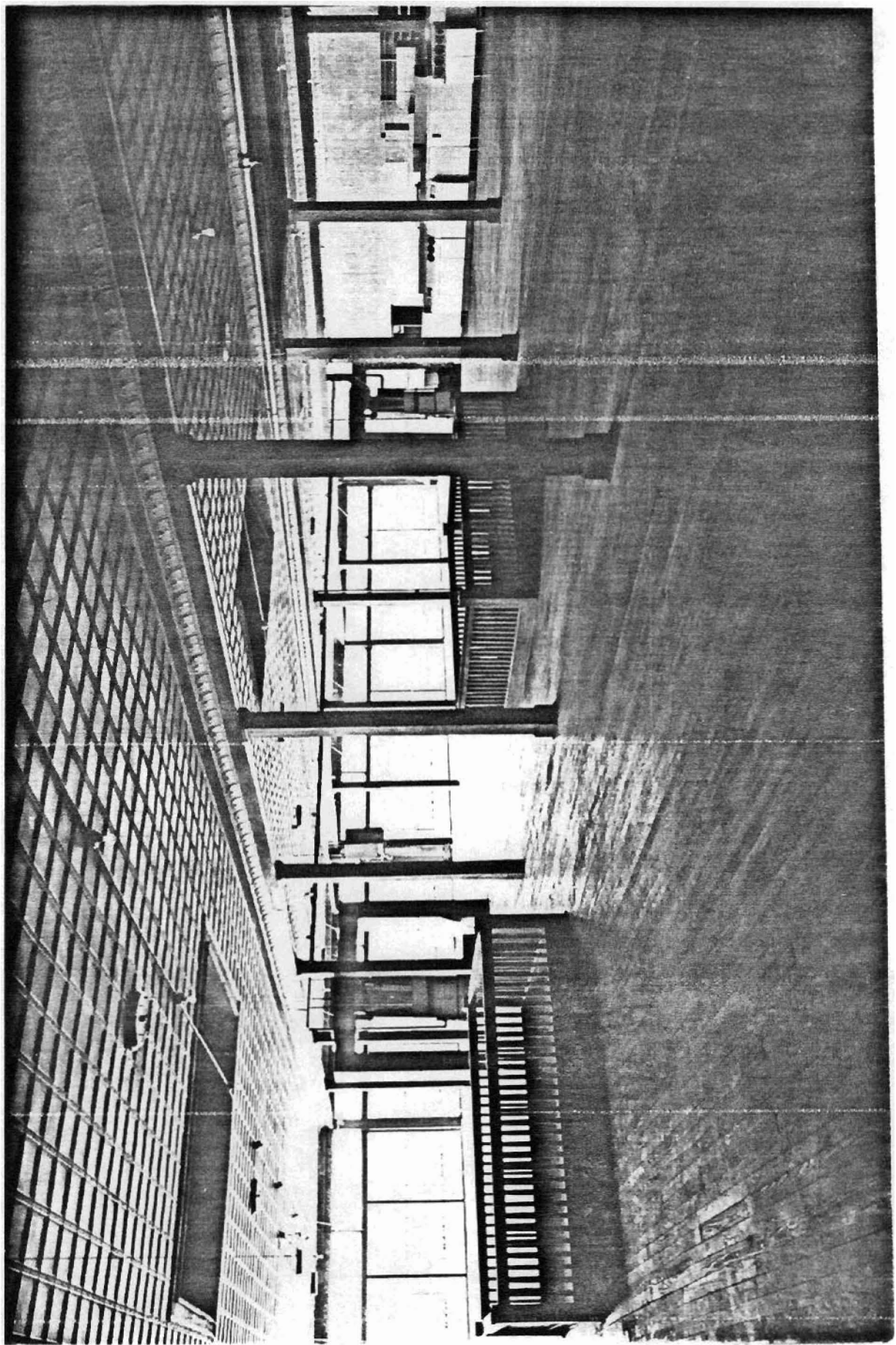
Bibliography

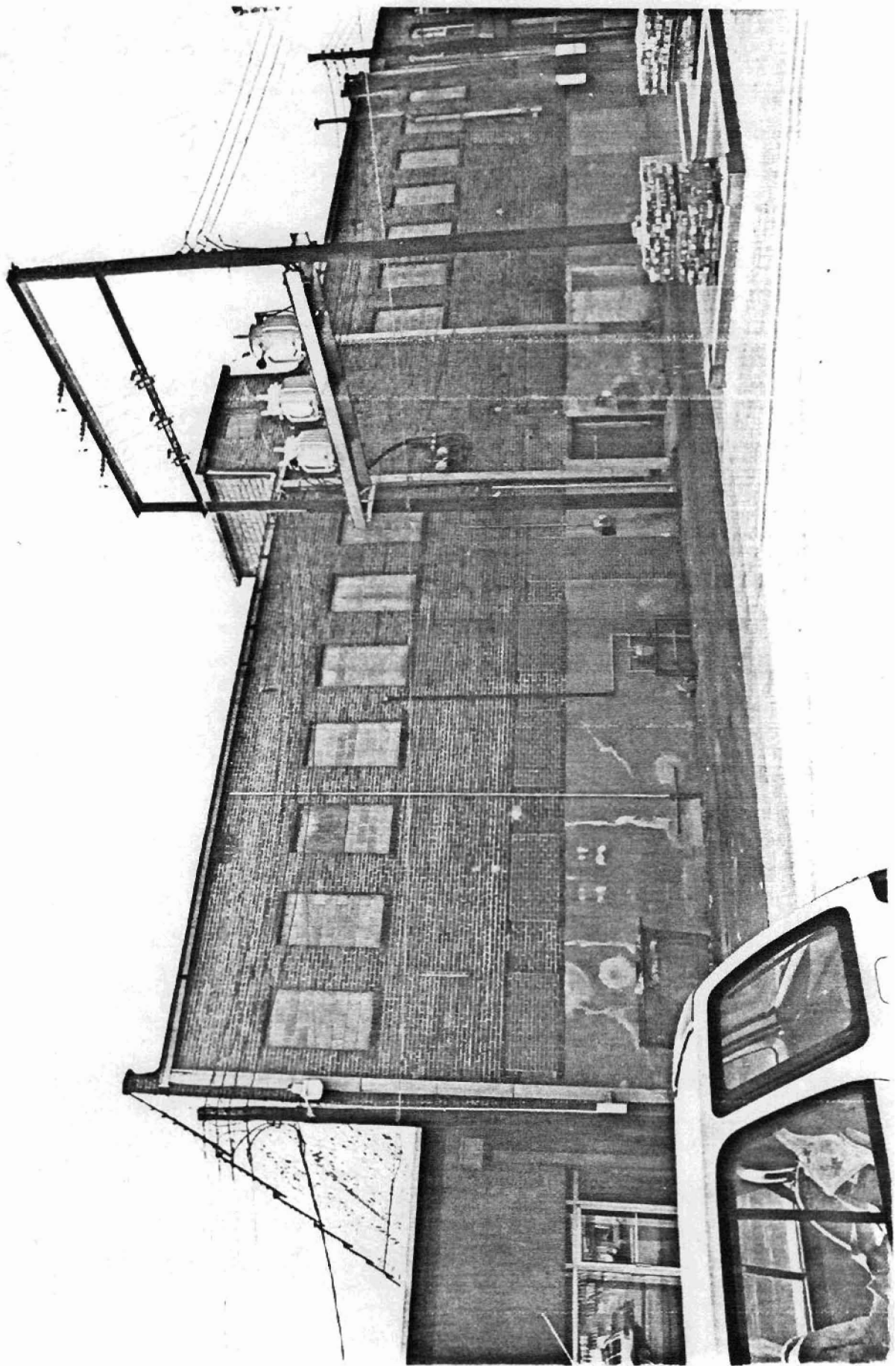
Doolos, Robert Kenneth. "Max Frauenthal: An Early Conway Entrepreneur," *Faulkner County: Its Land and People*. Edited by Doris B. Dolan, Hattie Ann Kelso, and Corinne H. Robinson. Faulkner County Historical Society, 1986.

Interview with Sue Boze, Main Street Conway Manager, June 1991.

Marinelli, Janet. "Architectural Glass and the Evolution of the Storefront," *Old House Journal*. July/August 1988. pp. 34-42.







UTM 15/550980/3883110

GREENBRIER 12 MI.
WOOSTER 6.6 MI.

R 14 W. 51

92°30'
35°07'30"

546000-E

547

548

549

27°30'

RUSSELLVILLE 43 MI.
MORRILTON 15 MI.

3485000m N
T. 6 N
T. 5 N

PERRYVILLE 20 MI.
NEW DIXIE 8.5 MI.

