

NR listed 9/13/90

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a) Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name German-American Bank
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Northeast corner of N. Franklin and Main Streets not for publication N/A
city, town Altus vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code AR county Franklin code AR 047 zip code 72821

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Cathy R. Buford 8-13-90
Signature of certifying official Date
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

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 the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Plain Traditional
Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
walls Brick

roof Asphalt
other STONE/Sills and trim

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1905

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A 15 43,088,00 3,922,610
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The part of Lot 7, Block 6 of the town of Altus described as beginning at the southwest corner of said Lot 7, thence proceed easterly 50 feet; thence proceed northerly 25 feet; thence proceed westerly 50 feet; thence proceed southerly 25 feet to the point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

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

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date July 31, 1990
street & number 225 E. Markham St., Suite 200 telephone (501) 371-2763
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

The German-American Bank is a two-story, brick masonry commercial building sited on the edge of the park area in downtown Altus, adjacent to the former route of the Missouri-Pacific Railroad. It was designed in a simple, vernacular style with Italianate influences.

Elaboration

The German-American Bank is a two-story, red brick masonry commercial building designed in a simple, commercial vernacular style with Italianate influences. Its plan is fundamentally rectangular, though it features a recessed, diagonal bay on the first story at the southwest corner. Its cut-stone foundation supports brick walls which are covered with a flat roof set behind a raised brick parapet.

The western of front elevation is three bays across on the second story, each bay being lighted by a double-hung wood sash window set into the symmetrically-placed segmental arch openings. The first floor is accessed via the diagonal bay at the southwest corner, which is filled with a double-leaf entry surmounted by a double transom. The overhanging second story is supported by a single cast iron column placed at the outside of the corner, and the entry is reached by a set of triangular stone steps. The wall to the north is lighted only by a group of two large single-pane windows, each surmounted with a two-pane transom window. The entire first story on this elevation is covered by a later metal shed porch supported on metal posts and brick piers.

The southern elevation is divided into four symmetrically-placed bays on the second story, each consisting of a double-hung wood sash window set into a segmental arch window opening. The first floor features the diagonal corner bay to the west, two wood windows in the center (each filled with a two-pane fixed wood window below a two-pane transom), a recessed, double-leaf, divided wood entry to the east accessed by stone stairs, and another double-hung wood window at the eastern end of the elevation. The eastern and northern elevations are blank.

There are a number of significant exterior details in spite of their relatively two-dimensional quality. The diagonal corner bay is decorated with a wood dentil course on the cornice at the bottom of the overhanging second story. The entry itself is crowned with a Classical wood entablature, and the intersections of the diagonal wall with the exterior walls of the building are rounded through the use of curved bricks. The floors are divided by a stone stringcourse, a detail which is echoed by the stone sills of the windows and the cut-stone of the basement. The second story windows are capped by flush segmental brick arches and the cornice on both the western and southern elevations is corbelled and divided by short, corbelled brick pilasters

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

into bays that correspond to the window bays below. The western elevation is further ornamented by a central, taller rectangular brick signage block which contains a stone panel engraved with the word "Bank."

The interior is relatively simple though it has suffered few alterations. It features the same trim above the doorways inside as that seen on the exterior and also retains its original wood floors.

The German-American Bank as a whole has suffered few alterations. The only addition of significance has been the sheet metal canopy over the first floor of the western elevation; however, this is scheduled for removal in the near future.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

Criteria C, local significance

The German-American Bank is the best extant example of a two-story, turn-of-the-century Italianate commercial building in downtown Altus. Located at the northeast corner of Main and North Franklin Streets, it remains one of the most visible reminders of Altus' heyday as a prosperous railroad town.

Elaboration

The community of Altus was first settled after 1875, when the Central Collegiate Institute, an institution of higher education, was established on land bought for the purpose by the founder of Altus, U.J. Nichols. His hopes for establishing the school at Altus were founded upon the simultaneous construction of the railroad to Altus by the Little Rock-Fort Smith Railroad (later the Missouri-Pacific), which for a period of a year terminated at Altus. Though the railroad soon proceeded with its plan to complete the line through to Fort Smith, Altus remained a principal freight and passenger stop on the line; in fact, the town acquired its name through its association with the railroad, as it occupied the highest elevation on the railroad between Little Rock and Fort Smith (the name "Altus" came from the Latin "alta," meaning "high").

Incorporated on August 31, 1888, Altus' status as an early college town was soon complimented by its role as a shipping center for the burgeoning local coal mining industry. Coal had been discovered in Old Spadra (Johnson County) as early as 1873; by 1880 it was a prosperous local industry. The mining community of Denning, located approximately two miles south of Altus, was the most productive mining community and was connected to the main rail line via a spur. Between 1880 and 1920, Denning became a coal "boom town," and ceased production completely only after the end of World War II.

In the meantime, the Central Collegiate Institute, which had been founded in October of 1876 by the Reverend Isham L. Burrow, grew from a faculty of one in that year to a faculty of seven by 1884 in response to the growing student enrollment. In that year it was purchased by the Arkansas Valley, the Little Rock and the White River Methodist Conferences as part of their higher education expansion plans, with the intent to enlarge the college significantly. Rev. Burrow was retained as president of the new college, which was renamed Hendrix College, in honor of Bishop Hendrix of Kansas City. The college remained in Altus until 1890, when the joint governing board of the three Methodist conferences decided that the college had to be relocated to a larger community if it were to grow to the level of both size and reputation which they had envisioned. Various communities throughout the state bid for the school, including Arkadelphia, Clarksville, Conway and Morrilton. Conway won with a bid of \$72,000 and a gift of thirty acres as a site. After Hendrix College left Altus, however, Rev. Burrow reopened another school on the same campus called Hiram and Lydia College, in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

honor of his mother and father. The new school also flourished for sixteen years, 1890-1906, at which time Rev. Burrow decided to close the school because of his advanced age. Thereafter the buildings were sold to the Altus School District.

German and Swiss settlement in Altus began in 1881, when immigrants from the wine-making regions of both countries who had been encouraged to settle here by the railroads began growing grapes on Pond Creek Mountain just to the north of the center of Altus. These immigrants continued to settle the rich, fertile farmland on the hills above Altus, and the wine industry continued to grow through the first decades of the twentieth century, as Altus celebrated its first Grape Festival in 1926, an celebration which continues until this day.

As was frequently the case for immigrant groups throughout America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most services, including credit, were easier to obtain from members of one's own ethnic and cultural group than from more established sources outside it. This situation existed for a number of reasons, the most prevalent of which were ethnic prejudice and an unwillingness to risk investing in cultural groups whose reliability and work ethic was considered uncertain at best. In response to this, immigrants frequently took matters into their own hands and established their own services; the German-American Bank was such an institution.

Located at a corner of the town square, the German-American Bank was constructed in 1905, the bank itself beginning with a total of \$25,000 in capital. True to its name, its president, vice-president, cashier and board of directors included people of both Germanic and non-Germanic descent. Like many banks founded during the period 1903-1913 in Arkansas -- a period which saw the number of national banks in Arkansas grow from 15 to 50 and the number of state banks grow from 85 to 251 -- the German-American Bank grew steadily and prospered. It changed its name to the Bank of Altus around 1916 when World War I broke out, due to a wave of local anti-German hysteria. By 1918 the Bank of Altus closed its doors and paid off but three per cent of its deposits. Another bank did not occupy the building until 1935, when the Altus Banking Company opened a new bank here; however, this bank survived only three years, closing in June of 1938.

Though several early twentieth-century commercial buildings survive on the south side of the square, the German-American Bank remains the best extant example of its particular architectural style in the commercial center of Altus. It is the only two-story, turn-of-the-century commercial building remaining on the square, and the only building to feature such ornament as the elegant brick corbelling at the cornice and the rounded brick corners at the edges of the diagonal corner bay. More importantly, its balanced, regular composition and restrained though impressive detail clearly recall its earlier status as a stable and dependable financial institution which sought to serve the community.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Canady, Virginia, *Altus, Arkansas: 100 Years, 1888-1988*.

Conklin, E.P., "Higher Education," *Arkansas and Its People, A History, 1541-1930*, David Y. Thomas, ed., (New York, 1930), pp. 493-494.

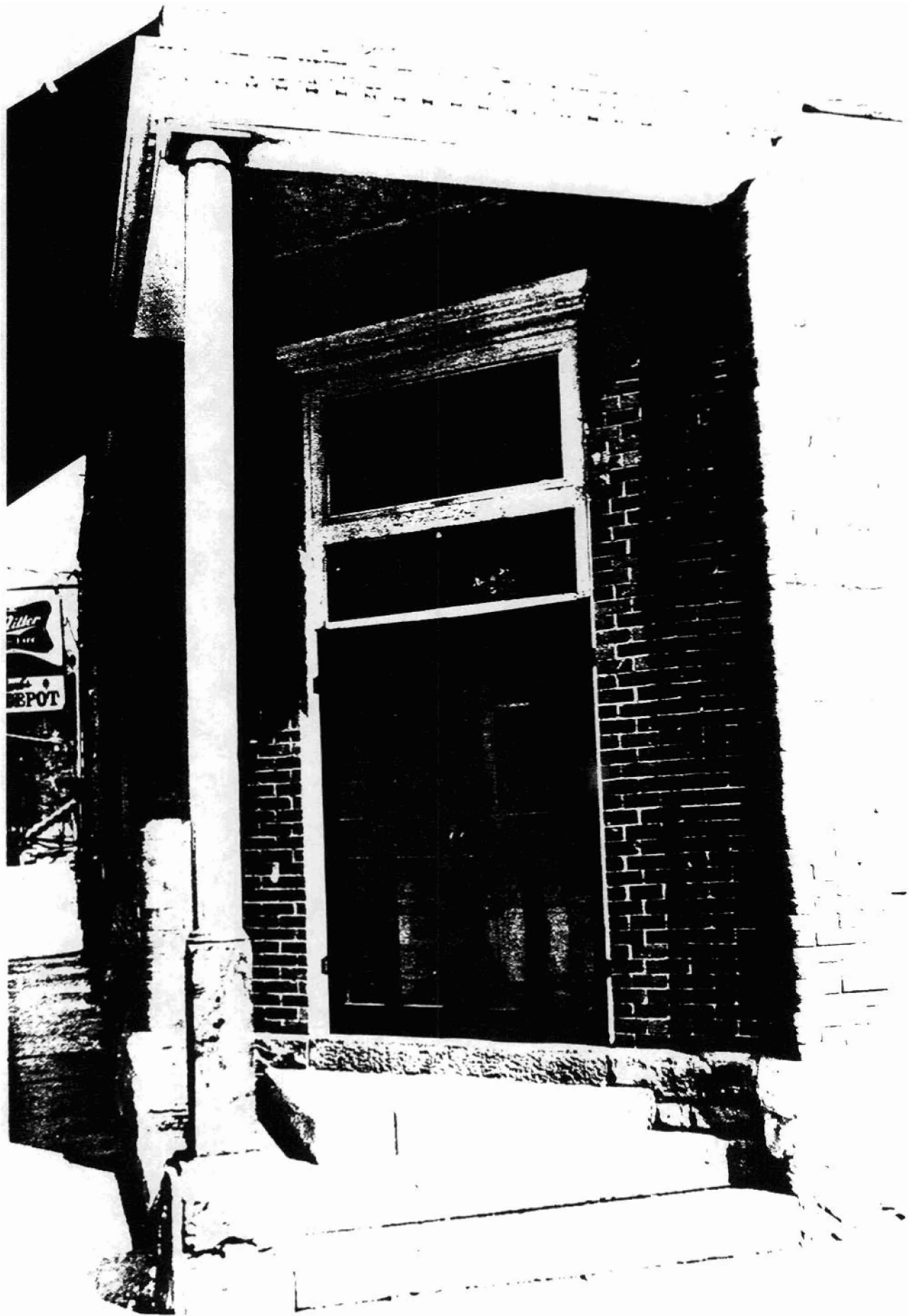
Fichtner, Charles C., "History of Banking in Arkansas," *Arkansas and Its People, A History, 1541-1930*, David Y. Thomas, ed., (New York, 1930), pp. 454-455.

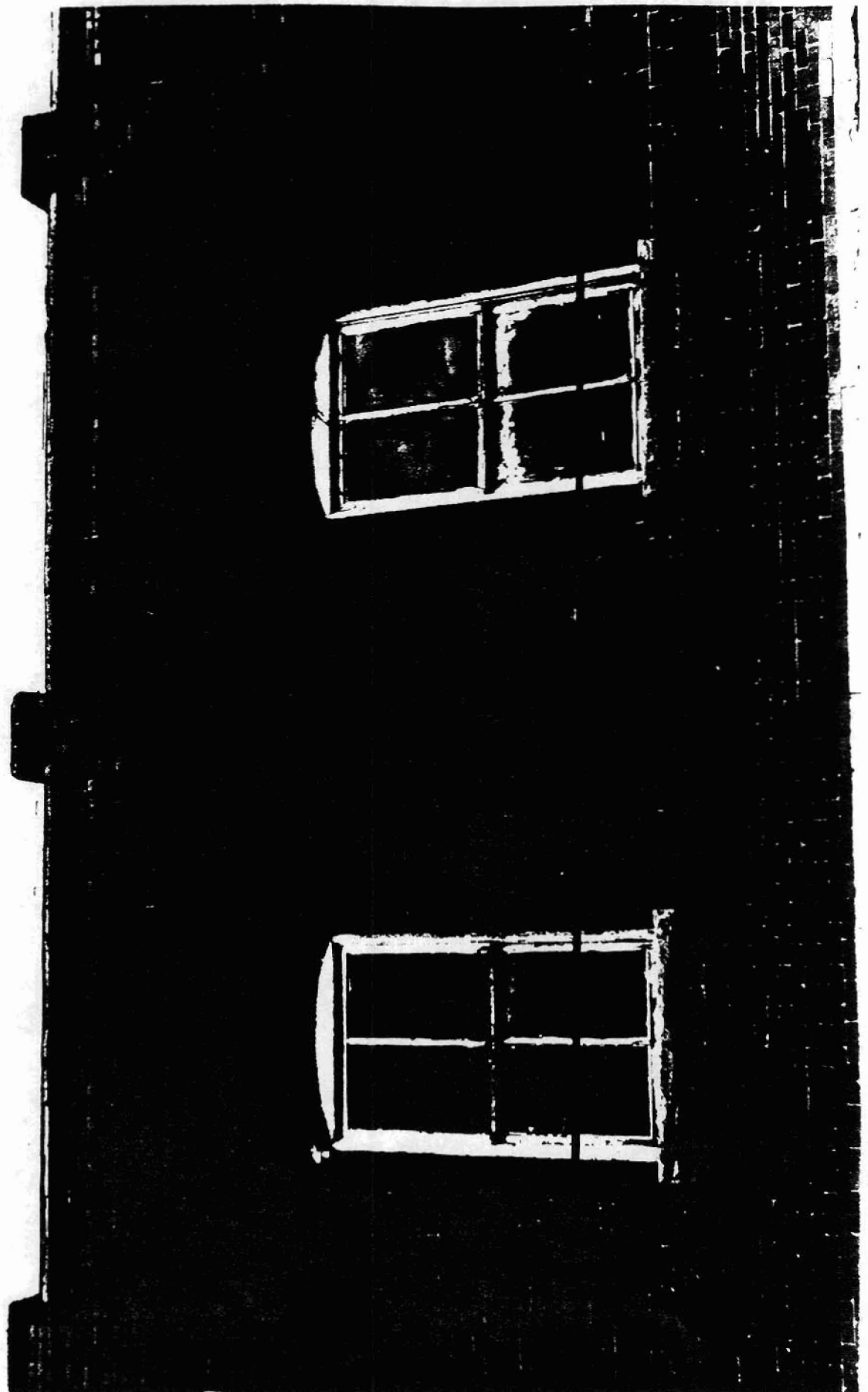
Goodspeed's *History of Northwestern Arkansas*, 1889, pp. 658-659.

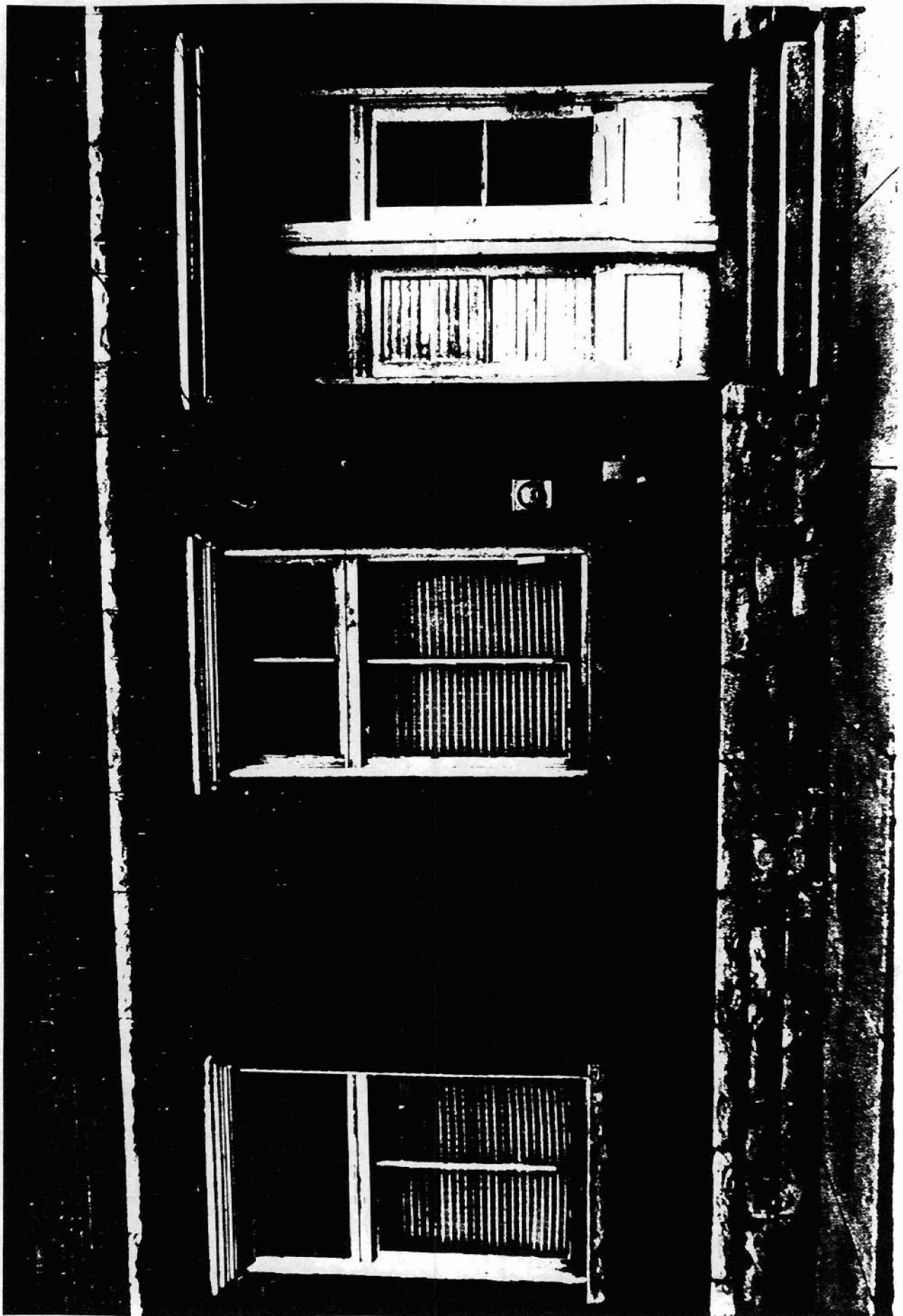
Herndon, Dallas T., *Annals of Arkansas, 1947*, pp. 679-680.

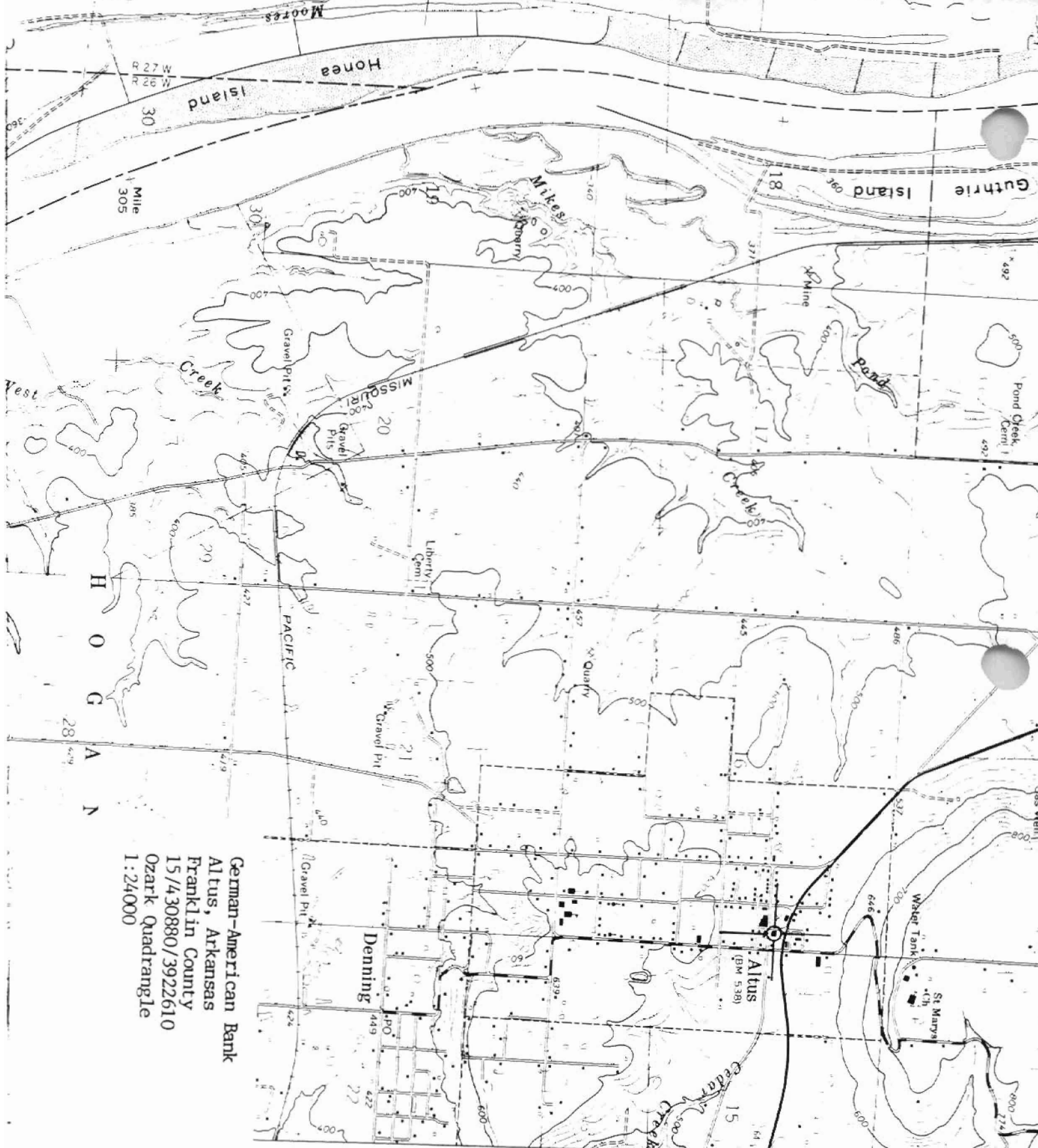












German-American Bank
 Altus, Arkansas
 Franklin County
 15/430880/3922610
 Ozark Quadrangle
 1:24000

(COAL HILL) 7254 / NW
 COAL HILL 7254 / NW
 RUSSELLVILLE

27°30"