

April 12, 1990

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 Old Post Office

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Convention Boulevard

not for publication N/A

city, town Hot Springs

vicinity N/A

state Arkansas

code AR

county Garland

code AR 051

zip code 71901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
_____	_____ structures
_____	_____ 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.

Charles W. Boyd
Signature of certifying official
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

2-22-90
Date

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)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/
Italian Renaissance

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Stone

Brick

roof Asphalt

other Metal/Cast Iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1Summary

The Old Post Office is a two story, steel and brick public building designed in the Renaissance Revival style. It is covered with a hipped roof and supported by a raised stone basement.

Elaboration

The Old Post Office is of steel frame construction, faced with buff brick, and two stories in height with a raised basement. Its plan is essentially rectangular, with a single story, flat roof historic addition attached to the rear of the original two-story building. A single brick chimney rises from the roof toward its western end. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and the flat roof on the rear addition has a built-up tar roof. The walls are faced with brick and stone, and the foundation is dressed in stone.

The southern or front facade is composed of four monumental wood windows symmetrically arranged around the central entrance. The facade is also divided horizontally into a brick-faced second story and a stone-faced first story and raised basement. The double-leaf entrance features pocket metal security doors to either side and a Florentine window transom above. The entrance is trimmed with stone voussoirs and a large, decorative keystone. The windows which flank the entrance are each trimmed in sandstone and filled with wood frame, combination casement/transom/sidelight windows. The wall space between is ornamented with limestone rusticated in simple geometric and linear patterns, stopping at the springing line of the arches, which are then physically and visually connected by a slightly projecting sandstone lintel. The second story features five evenly-spaced rectangular windows of identical size and design. Each is trimmed in sandstone with dog-ear crowns and identical jamb moldings which descend to a projecting sill and which are each terminated beneath by a regula and three triangular guttae. The brick in the wall around the windows and between the limestone below and the wood cornice above is laid in such a fashion as to produce a diamond-shaped diaper pattern. A thin, rounded band of projecting stone trim surrounds the building just above the second story windows, and atop the brick wall a tripartite stone frieze -- consisting of a leaf and tongue course beneath a dentil course which supports an egg and dart molding -- is finished by a projecting bracketed wood cornice with scroll-cut rafter ends and an integral copper gutter. The elevation is accessed by a large, stone exterior stair with curved walls at the street level and sloped stoops rising to the entrance.

The eastern and western elevations are virtually identical, with the exception of the fact that the central bay on the first floor and basement of the eastern elevation is an entrance, while the central bay on the western elevation is a window. Otherwise they both are three bays across, with basement windows capped with decorative pyramidal granite lintels, arched windows on the first floor of the south elevation, and rectangular windows on the second floor identical to those on the second floor of the south elevation. The frieze and cornice details seen earlier also continue around these elevations, as they do around the northern elevation.

The northern or rear elevation is identical to the southern elevation on the second floor with identical windows placed symmetrically across the facade. The first floor features the later 1909 addition, with its projecting cornice beneath a brick parapet roof on all of its three sides. It also is five bays across, featuring four symmetrically placed arched windows of identical sash configuration as the arched windows elsewhere on the building flanking a central arched entrance which now provides access to the building from the later (c. 1950) loading dock. The eastern and western elevations of the addition are each three bays long and also feature the same arched windows with the exception of the southernmost bay on the western elevation, which features an arched entrance accessed by a raised stone step platform.

The other exterior details on the building include elaborate scroll keystones over all arched openings, with the two entrances on the original building and the western entrance on the addition featuring even larger keystones. The decorative stone arch moldings over the windows are replaced by stone voussoirs over these three entrances

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also. The moldings around the first-floor windows rest upon decorative fluted scroll brackets which frame the interstices between these windows and basement windows below. The single-story addition also features raised stone quoins at the corners.

The interior retains the original red Vermont marble in the lobby and staircase, including a variety of elaborately carved pilaster capitals and other details. The original quartersawn oak millwork for the postal windows and grilles is almost completely intact, as are such features as combination lock vaults, Tennessee pink marble in the bathrooms, and a postal inspectors' walkway with vision grilles and peepholes for the purpose of checking on the conscientiousness and honesty of postal employees. The single story rear section retains its original skylight with movable wood baffles.

The 1909 single story, flat roof rear section is an historic addition and is designed in an identical style. Otherwise, the building has undergone a few alterations, although mostly of a cosmetic nature. The red clay tile roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles, the wood casements on the second floor have been replaced with aluminum fixed glass, and the skylight in the first floor addition has been covered over with a ballasted roof. The arch windows have had the panes within the arch itself removed, but the original larger mullions remain.

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Summary

The Old Post Office is the finest example of a Renaissance Revival design in downtown Hot Springs. Its abundance of elaborately carved and high-quality stone on the interior and exterior, coupled with the extraordinary craftsmanship required in the laying of exterior brick masonry and the assembly of the large fields of marble in the interior lobbies, elevates it to the status as one of the most expensive and labor-intensive structures in the city.

Elaboration

The Old Post Office, designed by Treasury Department architect James Knox Taylor in 1901, is locally significant as the most outstanding extant example of the early twentieth century Renaissance Villa/Classical Revival that swept over American architectural taste after the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1891-93 -- in which the high style of most of the exhibition buildings proclaimed a grand and unapologetic return to the Classical European architectural traditions and a turning away from the earlier issue of establishing a unique, indigenous American style -- found particular favor in government commissions, and post offices in particular.

James Knox Taylor was Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1897 to 1912. At the time, the Treasury Department was responsible for the design and erection of all public buildings around the country, and it was the Supervising Architect's duty to oversee all these commissions. Taylor, a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota, wielded a wide influence during this period. Though larger government commissions were frequently designed by private architects through the competitive bid process, the government found it more expedient and less expensive to assign the smaller commissions to the Supervising Architect. Such commissions almost always included local post offices, and hence Taylor designed postal facilities throughout the nation.

In 1901 Taylor announced a return to the "classic style of architecture" for government buildings. And though the Neoclassical would influence virtually every design his office produced, the federal government had yet to establish the policy (which it executed in 1915) that standardized all federal construction and design. Hence, Taylor's office tailored each design to its site and volume of activity, resulting in a different design for each community, and ultimately, a different interpretation of the Neoclassical as well.

An exhaustive survey of historic post office buildings in Arkansas has not been completed, and so an accurate count of the number of post offices designed by Taylor's office is not available. However, the two extant post offices known to have been constructed during this period, though similar in style and overall effect, are not comparable in extent of elaborate materials and detail. The Old Hot Springs Post Office stands as one of the most detailed and elaborate in the state. This difference may be attributable to the status which Hot Springs enjoyed in the early twentieth century as a national park, a popular American health resort, and playground for the wealthy.

Such ornament and expense, especially in the choice of such a quantity and variety of stone, inside and out, is also typical of this period in the history of American architecture (approximately 1890-1910), when the accrual of large personal fortunes combined with the lack of a federal income tax to produce the means and the demand for large, expensive commissions, even in the public realm. Many state capitols constructed during this period are of the finest materials and most grandiose design of anything in the history of American architecture, and not coincidentally, most are designed in the same Classical Revival idiom (e.g. Minnesota, Rhode Island, Arkansas, and Mississippi; a total of fourteen were either constructed anew or substantially re-designed during this period). The labor-intensive craftsmanship evidenced in the detailing of the exterior masonry and the extensive millwork and vast fields of marble on the interior clearly distinguish the Old Post Office as the finest extant public representative of this trend in Hot Springs.

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Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and William Seale, Temples of Democracy, The State Capitols of the U.S.A., (New York, 1976), pp. 215-219.

United States Postal Service, History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940, (Washington, D.C., 1982).

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Verbal Boundary Description

A part of Lot 16, Block 78 of the Hot Springs Reservation as surveyed, mapped and platted by the United States Hot Springs Commissioners and being more particularly described as follows: Commencing at the southwest corner of the City Park in Block 78 of the Hot Springs Reservation and formerly known as Cemetery Lot; running thence easterly along the north line of Convention Boulevard (nee Benton Street) 150 feet; thence northerly 235 feet to a point on the north line of the said Park 150 feet easterly of the northwest corner thereof; thence to the said northwest corner; thence along the west boundary line of said Park 262.7 feet to the point of beginning.

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

N/A

Significant Dates

1901

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Architect: James Knox Taylor

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

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

Acres of property Less than one

UTM References

A

1	5	4	9	5	4	8	0	3	8	1	8	2	3	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

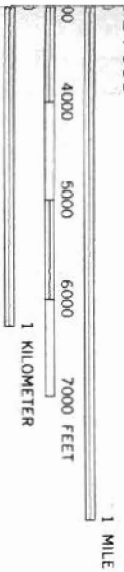
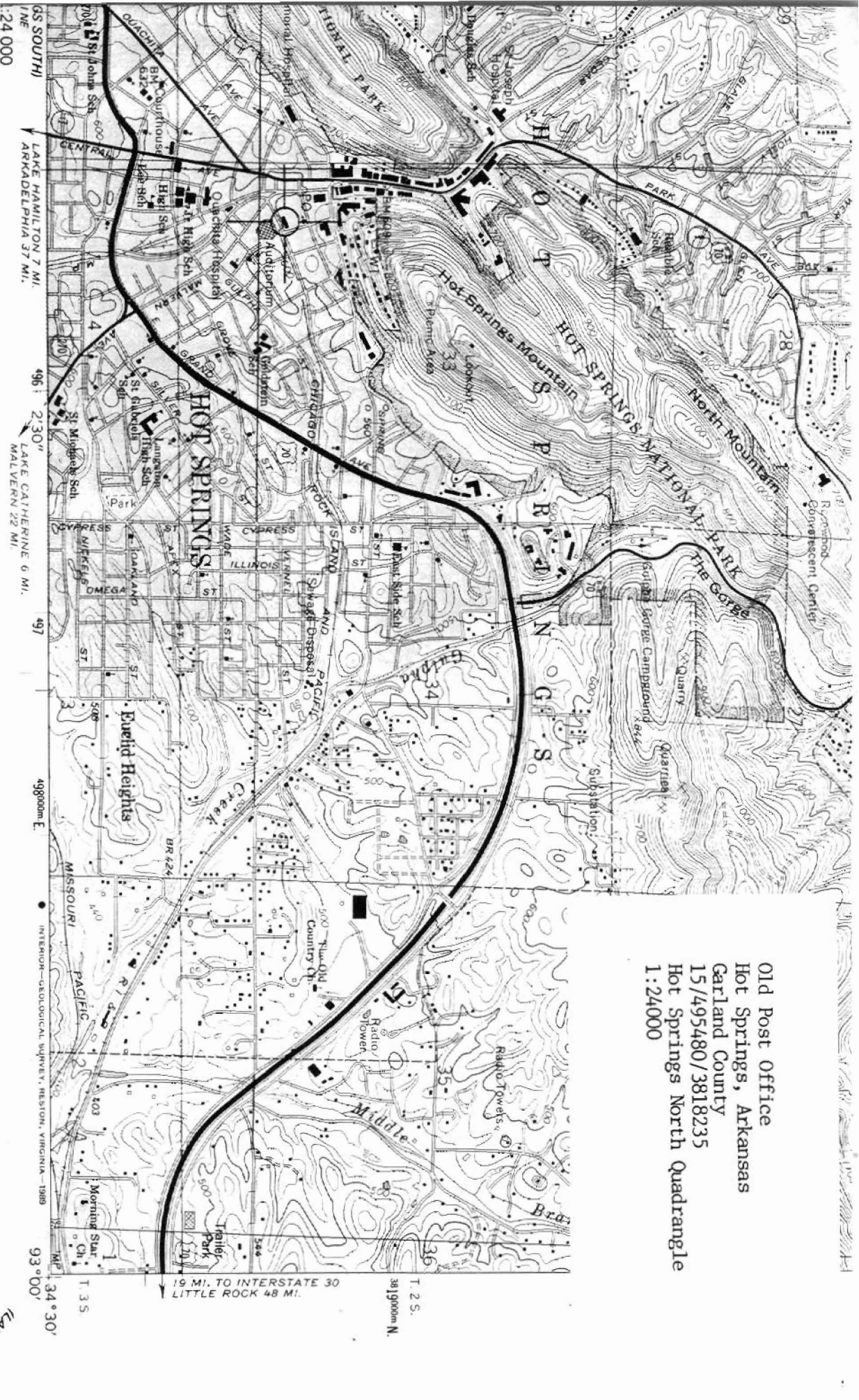
This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

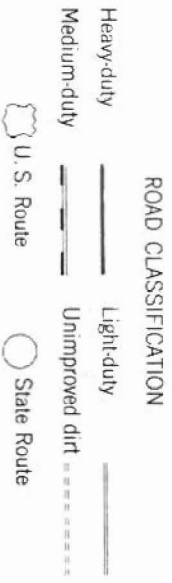
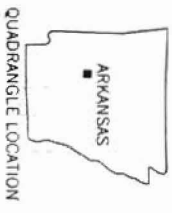
name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date February 13, 1990
street & number 225 E. Markham St., Suite 200 telephone (501) 371-2763
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

Old Post Office
 Hot Springs, Arkansas
 Garland County
 15/495480/3818235
 Hot Springs North Quadrangle
 1:24000



RYAL 20 FEET
 RTICAL DATUM OF 1929

NAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 COLORADO 80225, O
 STON, VIRGINIA 22092
 SION, LITTLE ROCK, A
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 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



HOT SPRINGS NORTH, ARK.
 34093-EL-TF-024

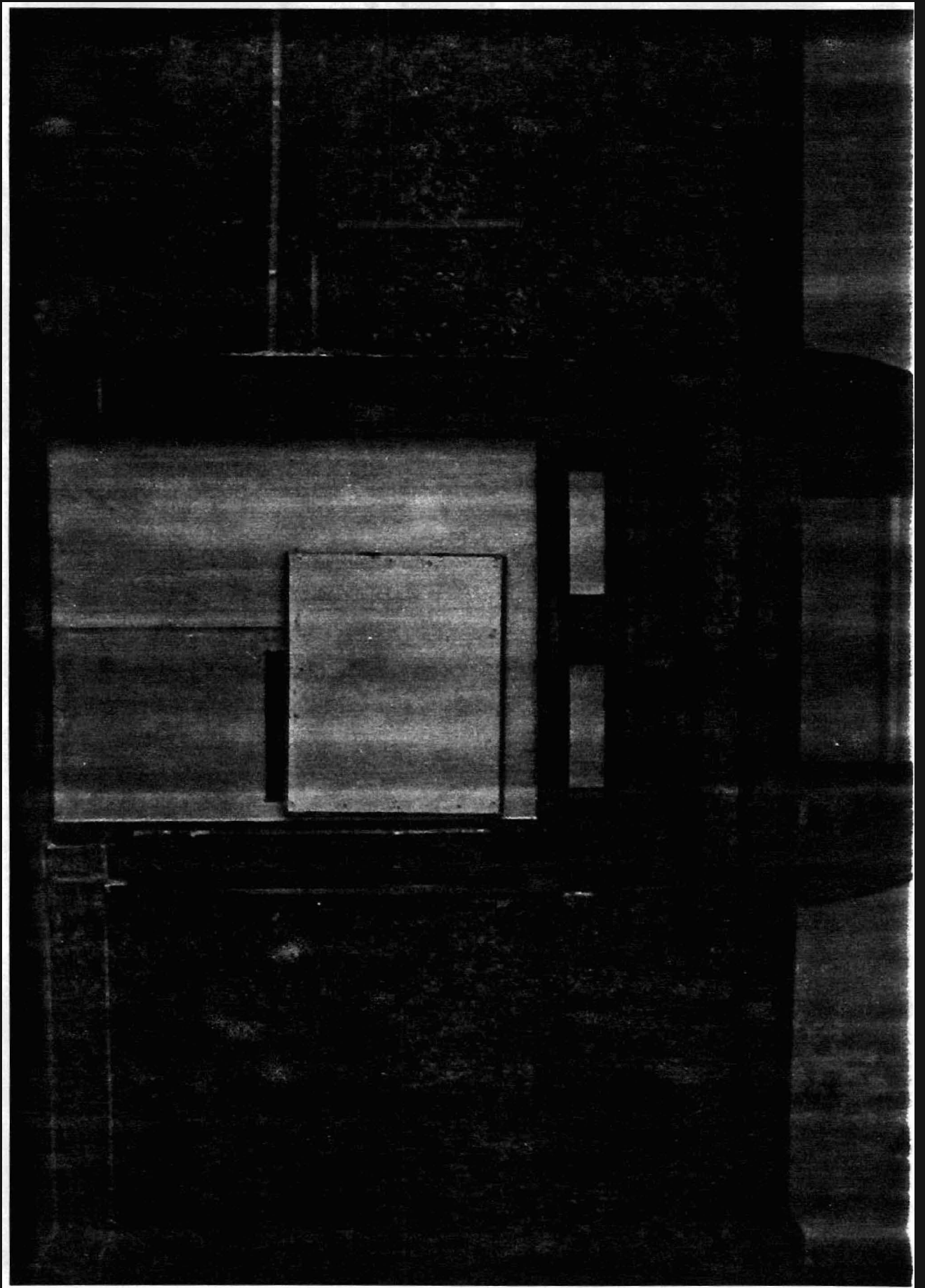
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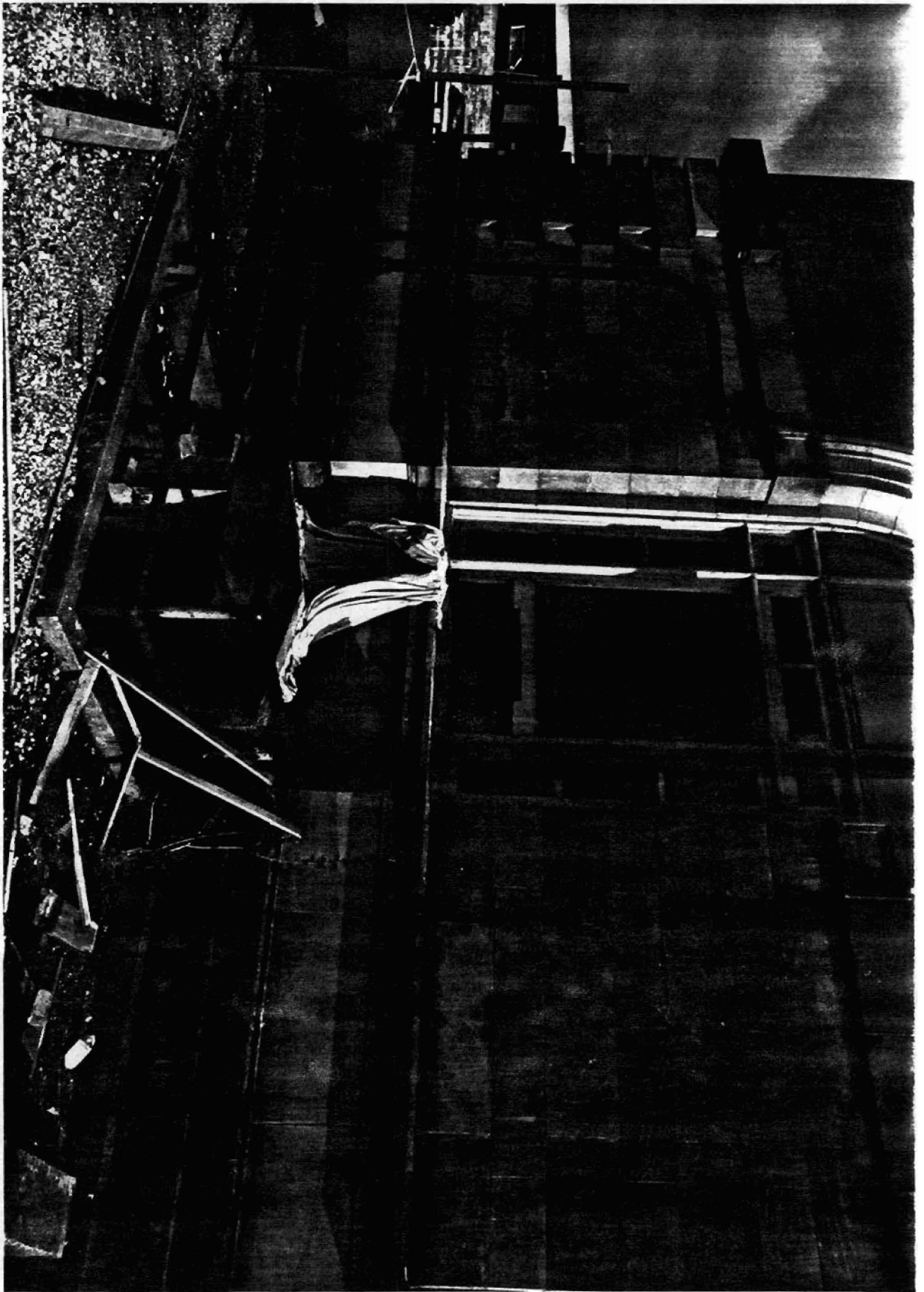
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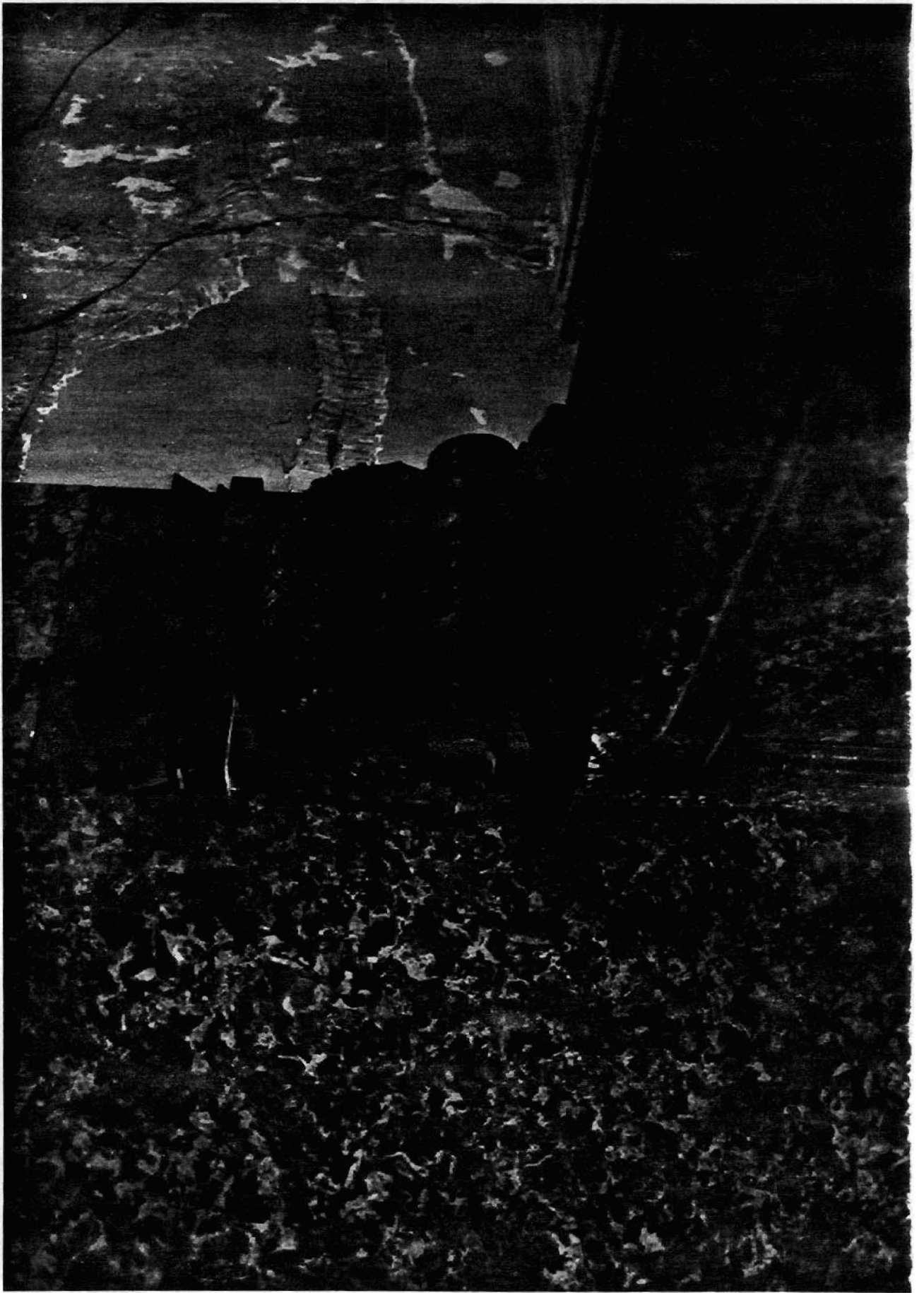
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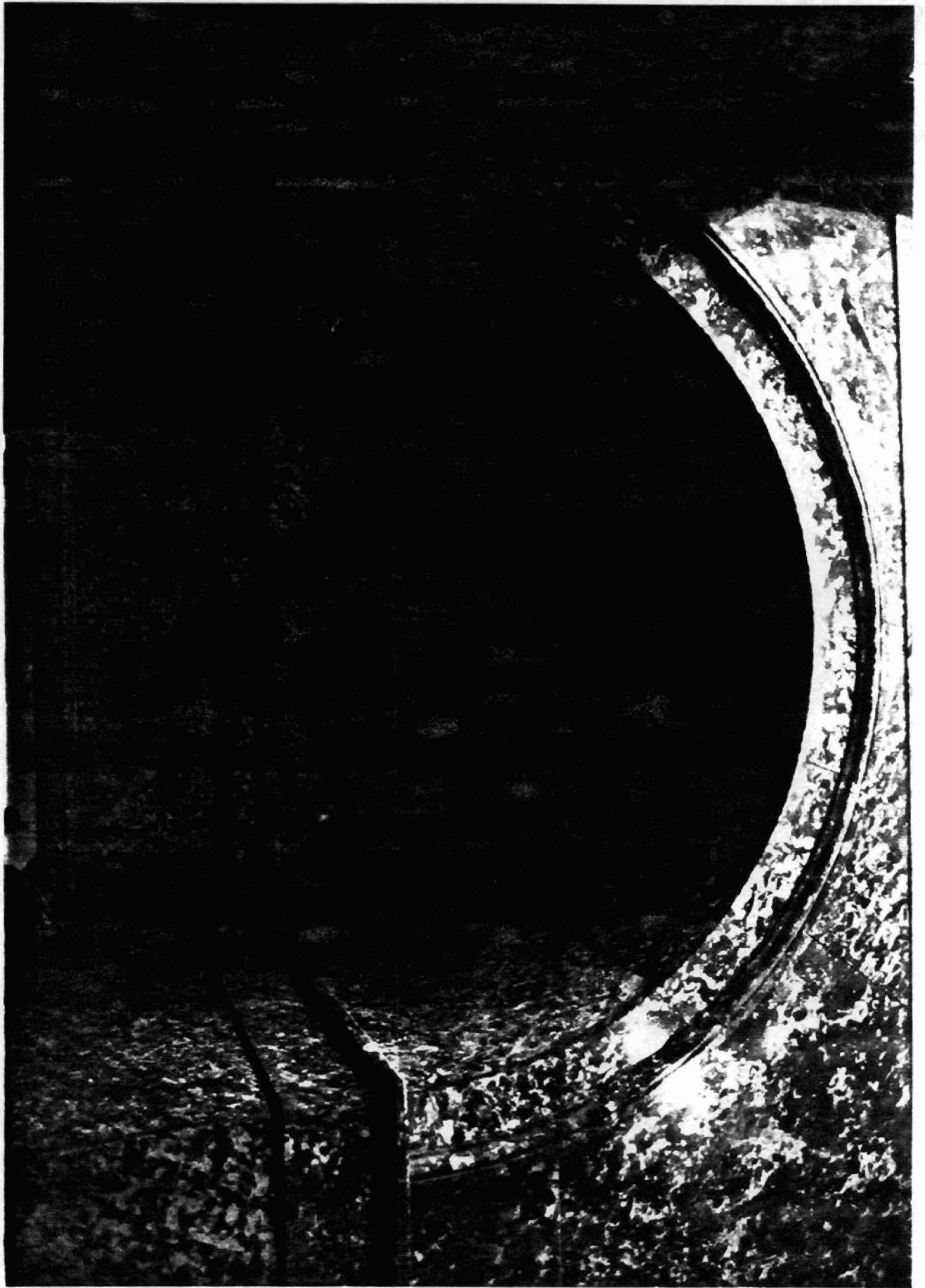
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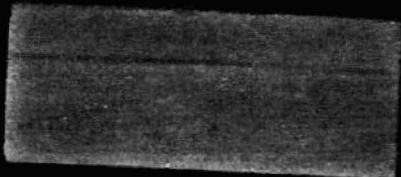
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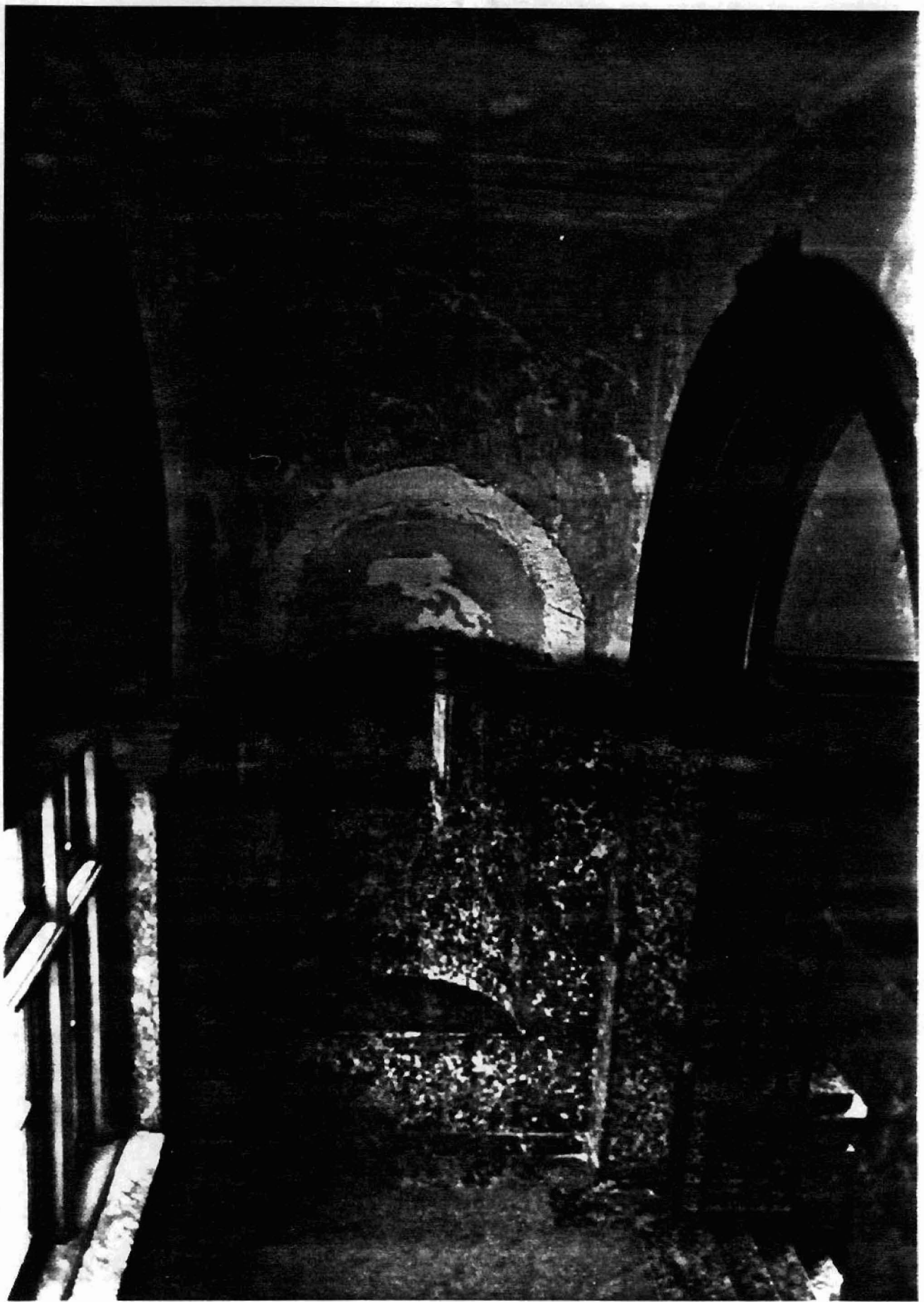


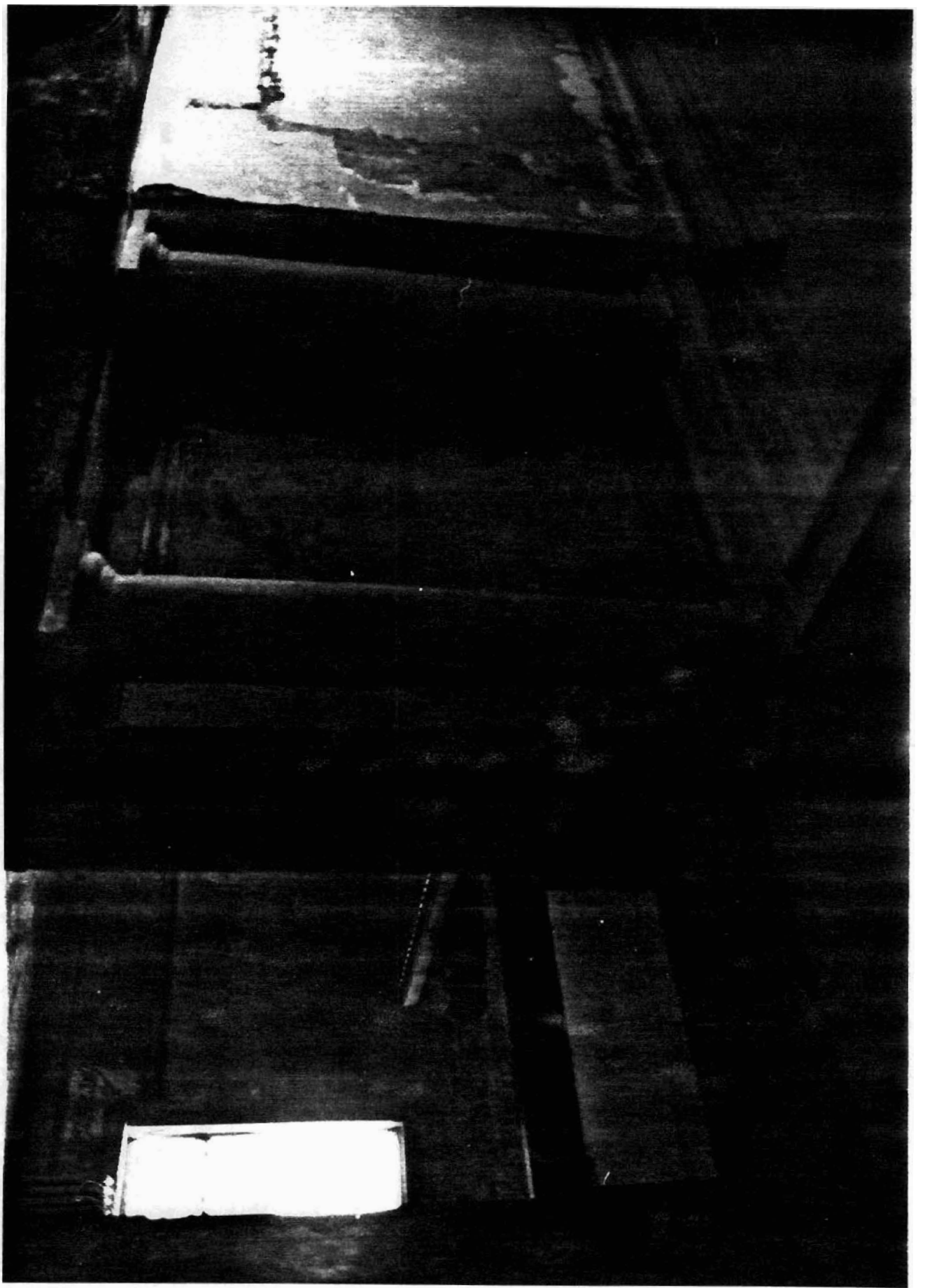




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CONFERENCE
ROOM





U.S. POSTAL
SAVINGS BANK

MONEY ORDERS
9 A.M. - 5 P.M.

