

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Belding-Gaines Cemetery

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: U. S. Highway 270

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Hot Springs

vicinity: X

state: AR county: Garland code: AR 051 zip code: 71901

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
<u>1</u>	_____	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

=====  
**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**  
=====

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 H. Boyd  
Signature of certifying official

1-25-93  
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 Keeper      Date  
  of Action

=====  
**6. Function or Use**  
=====

Historic: FUNERARY

Sub: Cemetery

Current: FUNERARY

Sub: Cemetery

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification:

A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation N/A roof N/A  
walls N/A other \_\_\_\_\_

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

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: B

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): D

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT  
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND  
DEVELOPMENT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1828-1833 1851-1894

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): Belding, Ludovicus  
Gaines, William H.

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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

=====

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

=====

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: \_\_\_\_\_

-----

**10. Geographical Data**

-----

Acres of Property: Approximately one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>501910</u>	<u>3813880</u>	B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

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

Beginning at a point on the northern edge of U. S. Highway 270 formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the western edge of the cemetery (located approximately 5,280 feet (1 mile) east of Bench Mark 371), proceed northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the northern edge of U. S. Highway 270; thence proceed easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the eastern edge of the cemetery; thence proceed southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with the northern edge of U. S. Highway 270; thence proceed westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to the point of beginning.

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

This boundary includes all of the known original plot set aside by the Welding and Gaines families as a family cemetery that retains its integrity.

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Date: 01/20/93

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

---

## Summary

Located on the north side of Highway 270 between the communities of Hot Springs and Malvern, the Belding-Gaines Cemetery contains a total of twenty marked burials from the nineteenth century, several of which mark the resting place of the area's earliest recorded settlers of European ancestry. The gravestones, relatively common and not artistically-exceptional, are placed in three distinct groups, the central of which is surrounded by a square stone wall. All are enclosed within a plot of land historically set aside as a cemetery by the Gaines family.

## Elaboration

The Belding-Gaines Cemetery is located in a wooded area on the northern side of U. S. Highway 270 approximately 5.3 miles southeast of downtown Hot Springs. The cemetery contains a total of twenty marked burials (though local informants maintain that many more unmarked burials are also located within these boundaries), all of which feature death dates of between 1833 and 1900. The marked burials are separated into three distinct groups: five burials located in the western section of the cemetery, containing members of the Bassett family; nine burials within the stone wall, containing primarily members of the Belding and Gaines families; and six burials in the northern section, reputed to be former slave burials, most of which feature the name of the Simpson family.

The headstones within the stone wall are relatively elaborate in design, though even they tend to be more simple and unadorned. Of particular note is the marker for Ludovicus Belding (though originally placed vertically, deterioration and vandalism required the resetting of the stone horizontally in concrete). Elaborate decorative relief carving adorns the top of the stone, below which is the inscription tablet that is capped with an incised trifoil. Those headstones outside the wall are all of the vertical slab type, and in some cases feature decorative carving near the top of the stone, with the inscription below. However, most of these grave markers are relatively unornamented.

By all accounts, the Belding-Gaines Cemetery has always been a family cemetery directly associated with the Bassett, Belding and Gaines families that maintained connections with the farmland surrounding the original farm of Jonathan Bassett; furthermore, it is known from deed records that David Bassett, the son of Jonathan Bassett, specifically set this plot aside to serve as a cemetery and only as such relatively soon after his father's death. Thus it is appropriate to include the entire known extent of the cemetery, a total of approximately

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

one acre.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1**Summary**Criterion B, local significance  
(Criteria Consideration D)

The Belding-Gaines Cemetery is locally significant under Criterion B through its status as the site most directly-associated with two of the earliest recorded settlers in and developers of what would come to be known as the Hot Springs area: Ludovicus Belding and Major William H. Gaines (it also contains the grave of the only known Revolutionary War veteran to be buried in Garland County, Jonathan Bassett, who was also one of the earliest settlers in the area of European descent; however, due to the fact that little else is known about his contributions to the settlement, growth and development of the Hot Springs community, the cemetery cannot also be considered significant for him). No other known sites survive with stronger associations with either of these two individuals, and this property has been set aside as a family burial plot since the Bassett family came to this area in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

**Elaboration**

Native Americans from throughout the surrounding region had been visiting the valley between North and West Mountains for many years prior to the arrival of settlers of European descent. Like those later settlers, the Native Americans visited the valley for the natural springs that emanated from both hillsides, and particularly the hot springs that were to give the later community its name. The Native Americans were the first to believe that the hot springs in particular -- heated through a natural process the actual physics of which remain unknown until this day -- possessed medicinal and restorative properties (though, according to legend, the abundance of distinct springs in the valley led them to believe in the almost mystical nature of the entire valley), a belief shared by the first trappers and hunters of European descent that passed through the valley. These early white travelers took stories of the hot springs back with them to civilization, and awareness of the springs began to spread widely thereafter.

The first actual white settlement took place by the second decade of the nineteenth century, though by all accounts it was sparse and of limited tenure. These earliest settlers, typically sufferers of various, poorly-understood maladies, would relocate individually to the vicinity of the springs and erect a small, temporary shelter that would serve them for the duration of their stay, and which they would then abandon when they felt that they had benefitted all that they could from the waters. There is documentation of one known early settler attempting to establish a commercial enterprise near the springs for the accommodation of



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

visitors, but even these efforts were short-lived, and the structures erected were crude and insubstantial.

The first recorded successful attempt to exploit and develop the "valley of the vapors" was conducted by Ludovicus Belding, a settler from central Massachusetts who immigrated to the area with his father-in-law and mother-in-law, Jonathan and Temperance Bassett, and his wife, Lydia Bassett Belding, along with various other family members and children. Arriving to the area via what was then the principal route to the springs area from the territorial capital at Little Rock, the road that has since become the roadbed for modern U. S. Highway 270 (also known as the Hot Springs - Malvern Highway), it is thus not surprising that they settled near the first springs they encountered along the route, located approximately five miles southeast of the present site of downtown Hot Springs. This area, which became known as Lawrence Station, was mentioned by the Arkansas historian Fay Hempstead in 1911 as containing "...springs of potash-sulphur, which likewise draw crowds of visitors to receive their benefits...". The extended Bassett/Belding family settled near these springs, and established their farm near the banks of Gulpha Creek.

Jonathan Bassett was born May 24, 1764 in Sandwich, Massachusetts, and his wife Temperance Crocker, was born on January 2, 1763 in Barnstable, Massachusetts (both communities being located on Cape Cod). They were married on December 2, 1789, and proceeded to have three children before they left Massachusetts: David, Lydia and Nathaniel. Jonathan Bassett served as a Colonial soldier in the Revolutionary War (it should be noted that with a birthdate of 1764, he would have been but twelve years old at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and only seventeen years of age at the cessation of hostilities signalled by Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown; family genealogical research maintains that he was indeed seventeen years of age when he fought), during which it is surmised that he was wounded, as he came with his family in 1828 to the springs for treatment of his wounds. He served as a private in Colonel Freeman's regiment from Massachusetts, and though it is not known exactly where he fought, it can be assumed that he served during the final battles of the war. He and his family passed through Kentucky and Indiana on the way to Arkansas; once in Arkansas he remained upon the farm he established here near Gulpha Creek until his death in 1833 at the age of sixty-nine.

Almost immediately after their arrival, Ludovicus Belding (1792-1833), Jonathan Bassett's son-in-law, initiated the permanent development of the area around the springs, first with the repair and improvement of several of the abandoned earlier structures, and then with the establishment of the first mercantile store nearby. He soon followed these efforts with the construction of the area's first hotel, and for a time this budding community became

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

known as "Thermopolis." In spite of both the bad roads into the valley from Little Rock and these humble beginnings at establishing the spa community that would become known as Hot Springs, a newspaper article in the Arkansas Gazette of late 1828 already praised Belding's hotel establishment, noting that good fare and comfortable accommodations could be found here as good as at "...any public house in the territory." Belding was specifically commended for his provision of "...good fare, clean linen, silver forks and spoons, much attention to guests and moderate charges...". Belding's improvements to the springs area were of sufficient magnitude that by the next year the springs were being widely advertised throughout the east as a spa destination, and in particular for invalids suffering from chronic and paralytic affections and rheumatism.

By 1832, Belding's development of Thermopolis inspired the improvement of several of the roads leading into the valley, as well as the establishment of several other industries in the vicinity. Of especial note is a letter written by one permanent resident of the community who commented on the new permanence of the place, as opposed to the particularly transient character of the entire community that had prevailed earlier. Speaking of the community as a whole, he went on to say "Last season it was supplied every other day with vegetables; this season every day by the same man; and many others find it their interest to bring in casually, their surplus fruits, etc. etc." By this same year, another settler who was later to make his mark on the community, Hiram A. Whittington, joined the community as a permanent resident. Sam Houston reportedly came to the springs and stayed a full month. The commercial development potential of the springs area, if not yet fully exploited, had certainly become clear, and all through the concerted and persistent efforts of Ludovicus Belding. Apparently, Belding's health also deteriorated fairly soon after his arrival to the springs, as he is recorded as having relocated from the valley back to the area adjacent to his father-in-law's farm near Gulpha Creek as of 1831, and having placed his commercial enterprises in the hands of his heirs. He died on October 9, 1833, and was buried within the Belding-Gaines Cemetery.

Ironically, it was the growing recognition of the commercial potential of the springs that brought "Major" William H. Gaines to the area to settle (the origin of the title is not clear). Born June 30, 1797 in Charleston, Virginia, he was reared in Kentucky, but relocated to Chicot County in 1833 at the age of 33 to become a planter. Apparently he was rather successful, as the 1850 census records him owning 83 slaves with real estate worth \$50,000. Another account lists as many as 165 slaves. For unrecorded health reasons, Gaines began coming to the springs for some time before he settled there permanently in 1851, two years after his marriage to Ludovicus Belding's daughter Maria (his first wife, Litha Early, who he had married in Kentucky and with whom he had one child, died in 1828, just prior to his

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

moving to Arkansas).

Almost immediately upon settling in the area of the springs Gaines took over a lawsuit that had previously been filed by his new wife against the United States government over the ownership of the valley. In 1832, the federal government declared the valley a federal reservation, thus throwing into question the allegedly legitimate and binding land titles held by earlier settlers that they believed pre-empted the government's claim (in fact, in 1830 Congress had passed a pre-emption act that effectively protected the rights of those with legitimate land claims filed prior to the designation of the federal reservation; nevertheless, the issue of what constituted legitimate land claims remained in dispute, and hence the subsequent lawsuits). The first such suit had been filed by another early settler, Henry Massie Rector, who claimed to have obtained ownership to the entire valley. The filing of the Belding suit initially angered Rector, as he saw it as a competing claim to his own that only complicated matters further. However, the suit was initially settled in the state courts to some satisfaction of the plaintiffs, as the state court framed a compromise that effectively allowed the three plaintiffs development rights over discrete thirds of the valley as lessees until the final decision regarding ownership should come from a higher authority. This litigation would drag on for a total of twenty-four years, lasting from 1852 to 1876.

Yet it was during this "interim" period that Gaines proceeded with his own development plans for his southern third of the valley, no doubt gambling that the risk of not prevailing in his lawsuit was outweighed by the profits to be made in the commercial development of the valley, even as a lessee. On a site near the southern end of the present-day Bathhouse Row (approximately where the former Park Administration Building stands today) he erected the Hot Springs Hotel, which operated as one of several hotels in the city of Hot Springs until it burned in 1878. Part of the land he controlled near the valley also became the site of the Eastman Hotel, which upon its completion claimed to be one of the largest hotels in the world, and which he owned along with the same co-investors with whom he had earlier built the original Arlington Hotel, which, when it was built in 1875, was the premier luxury hotel in the city. It was the Arlington Hotel, in fact, which under the supervision of Gaines and his co-investors spared no expense at making every modern improvement over time to retain this distinction.

By the mid-1870's, however, the slow progress on the resolution of the lawsuits against the government induced Gaines to travel to Washington, DC and convince the Congress to pass an act allowing himself, Rector and a third plaintiff, a man named Hale (for whom the Hale Bathhouse would later be named) to sue the government over the issue of ownership of the valley. The passage of the act ultimately allowed for the settling of the claims between the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5

plaintiffs and the government, even though the Supreme Court eventually upheld the earlier ruling of the federal Court of Claims which decided in favor of the government. In this manner Gaines insured that he and the other plaintiffs would receive some compensation for their lost land, instead of losing everything. The following year the federal government set up the Hot Springs Commission, which, awarded a considerable amount of acreage adjacent to the formal boundaries of the reservation to the plaintiffs, in addition to, for the first time, establishing the formal administration for the management and supervision of the reservation (Benjamin F. Kelley, the first government resident superintendent of Hot Springs, arrived in 1877). In effect, then, the filing of the lawsuit, along with the subsequent compromise legislation largely authored by Gaines, produced the effect of both resolving finally the issue of the federal government's ownership of the valley and forcing the federal government to recognize its formal responsibility to manage and to maintain the reservation in an active manner.

Gaines remained active in the community of Hot Springs as a private real estate investor and builder, a career that was only reinvigorated by the construction of the first railroad to Hot Springs from Malvern in the mid-1870's (called the Diamond Jo Railroad and named after its builder, Diamond Jo Reynolds, a steamboat magnate who frequented the springs because of his rheumatism but could not stand the jostling of the coach ride over the bad roads between Malvern and Hot Springs; in response, he built his own railroad running parallel to the coach road). Now the poor roads between the old overland highway between Little Rock and Texas (and its parallel railroad line) would not be an obstacle to those seeking the benefits of the waters, and Gaines did not fail to see the opportunities this development afforded. In 1881 he constructed a three story brick building at the intersection of Broadway and Central Avenue that he named the Gaines Block. Among other businesses, this structure housed The Citizens National Bank of which his son, A. B. Gaines, was the president. This imposing, Italianate style commercial building served as a focal point at the southern end of Central Avenue for many years, surviving until the 1980's. Major William H. Gaines died on June 1, 1894, at 97 years of age, and was buried within the Belding-Gaines Cemetery.

The Belding-Gaines Cemetery is locally significant under Criterion B by virtue of its being the single surviving site with the strongest associations with both Ludovicus Belding and Major William H. Gaines, both of whom were two of the most influential developers -- if not *the* two most influential developers -- of the spa community that would become Hot Springs, Arkansas. Through their investment of effort, money and energy, and through their vision of the commercial potential of the hot springs and the surrounding community that could result, the rough, Ouachita Mountain wilderness that was largely inaccessible to most

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

---

of the earliest European settlers became a medicinal and recreational destination for visitors from throughout the world.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 9 Page 1

## Bibliography

Belding, Amelia S., "This Record of the Belding and Bassett Families," *The Garland County Record*, Vol. 5, 1964, pp. 68-73.

Brown, Dee, *The American Spa, Hot Springs, Arkansas*, (Little Rock: 1982).

Brown, Walter L., "The Henry M. Rector Claim To The Hot Springs of Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XV, No. 4, Winter, 1956, pp. 281-292.

Cline, Inez H., "Ten Years In Garland County Cemeteries," *The Garland County Record*, 1969, pp. 10-11.

Gaines Family Correspondence, 1855-1865; personal collection of Ms. Patty Adams, Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Garland County Deed Records: Book 4, Page 559.

*Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas*, (Chicago, Nashville and St. Louis: 1889).

Hempstead, Fay, *Historical Review of Arkansas*, Vol. I, (Chicago: 1911).

*The History of Jonathan Bassett From Massachusetts*, compiled by Nellie Maner, Hot Springs, Arkansas, October, 1968 (unpublished manuscript).

Hodges, T. L., "Ludovicus Belding of Thermopolis," *The Garland County Record*, Vol. 2, 1969, pp. 18-20.

Jones, Ruth Irene, "Hot Springs: Ante-Bellum Watering Place," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, No. 1, Spring, 1985, pp. 3-31.

Paige, John C. and Laura Soulliere Harrison, *Out of the Vapors: A Social and Architectural History of Bathhouse Row*, (U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service: 1987).

Scully, Dr. Francis J., *Hot Springs, Arkansas and Hot Springs National Park*, (Little Rock: 1966).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

---

Walz, Robert B., "Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XII, Nol 1, Spring, 1953, pp. 38-74.

Williamson, Marie L., Etna Williamson Powers and Mary F. Williamson Relyea (under auspices of Arkansas Pioneer Association of Hot Springs), biographical sketch entitled "William H. Gaines," in *Arkansas Pioneers*, (Hot Springs: 1939), pp. 7-8.

(HOT SP...  
DARTH)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



STATE OF  
GEOLOGIC  
141T



93°00'  
34°30'

R 19 W 50 1000M  
R 19 W 50 1000M

0.3 MI TO US 70 R 18 W

903

57°30"

905

1600

Mudon/1 sec

916

516

516

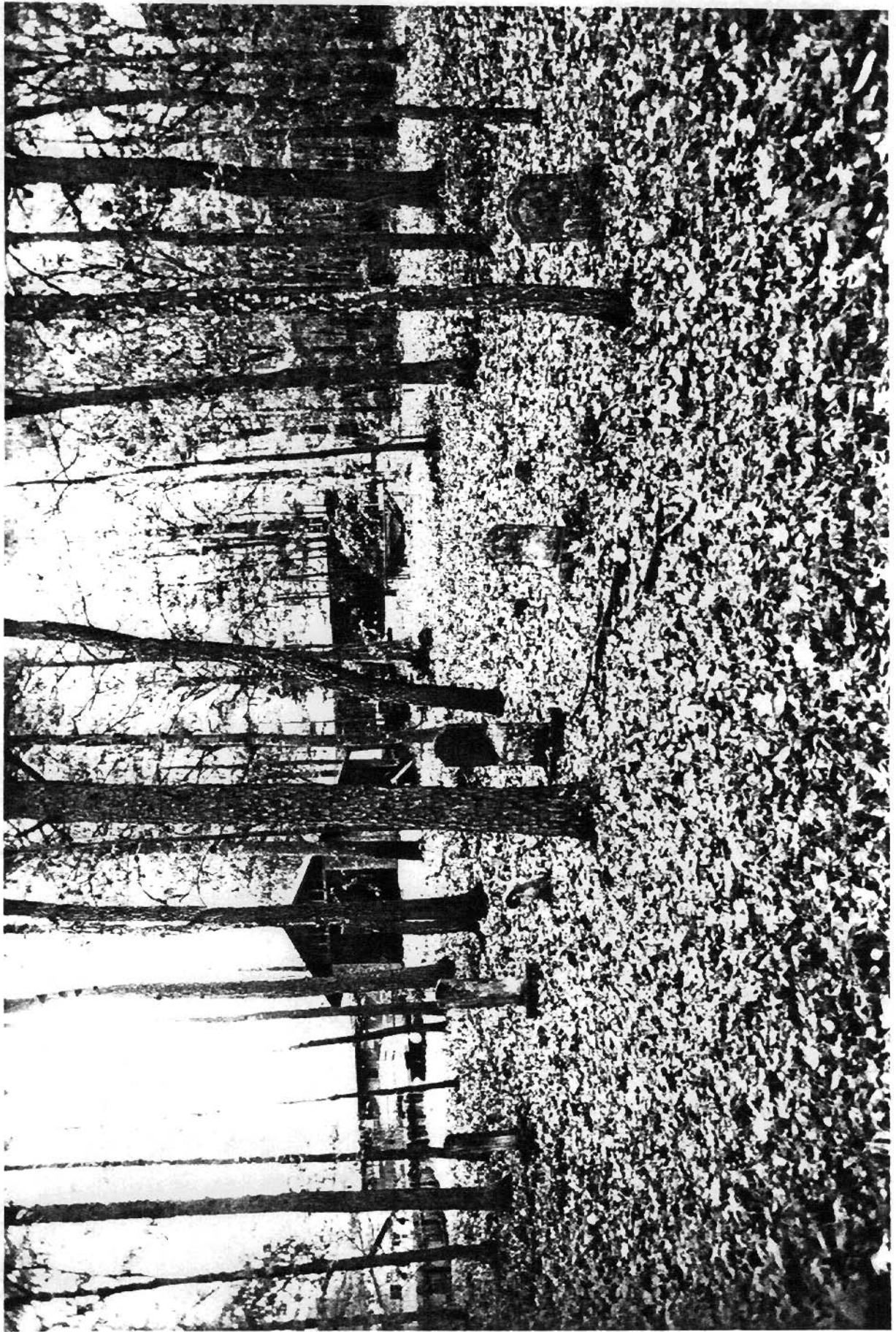
3013

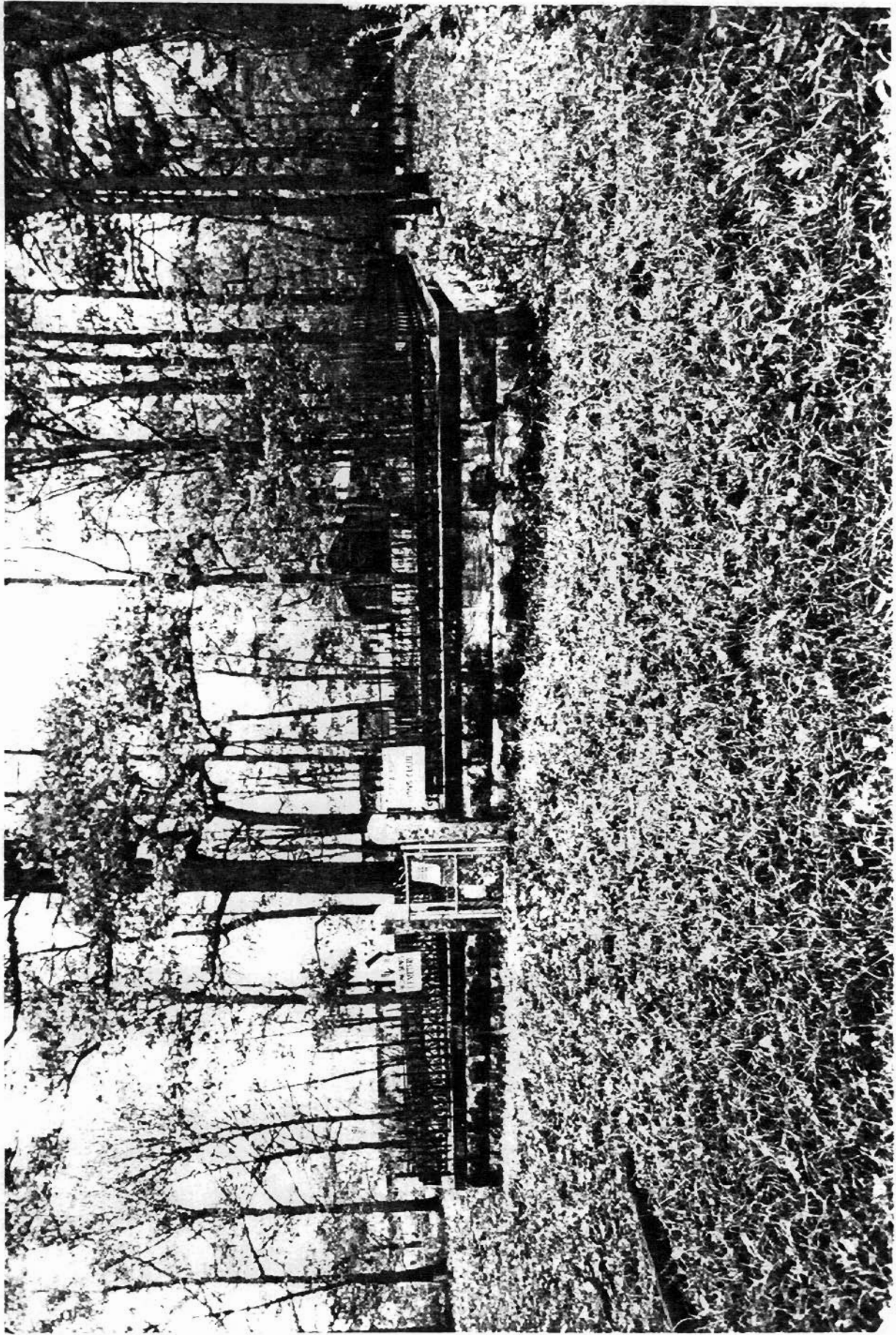
4 MI TO US 70  
MT 104 41 MI

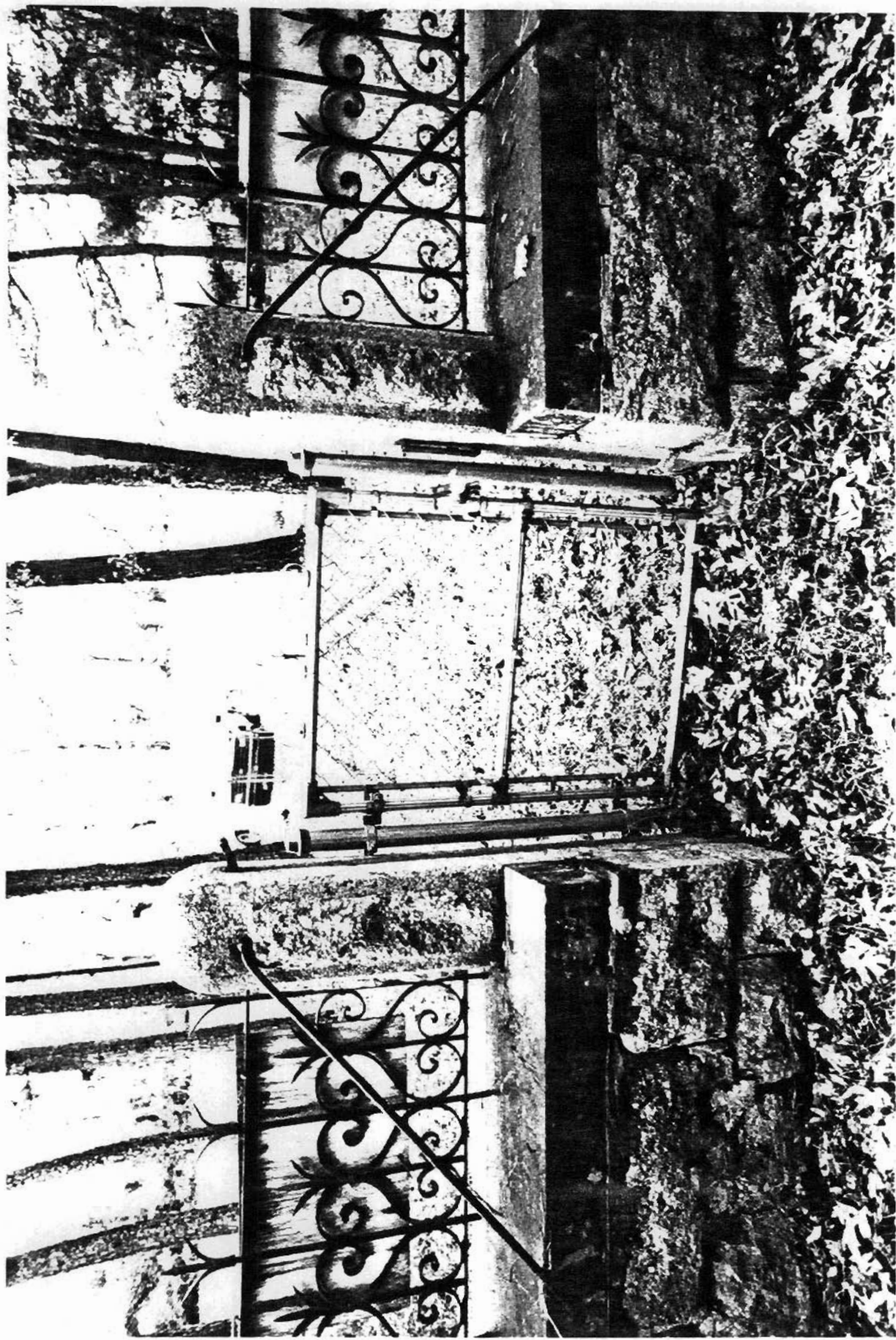
HOT SPRINGS

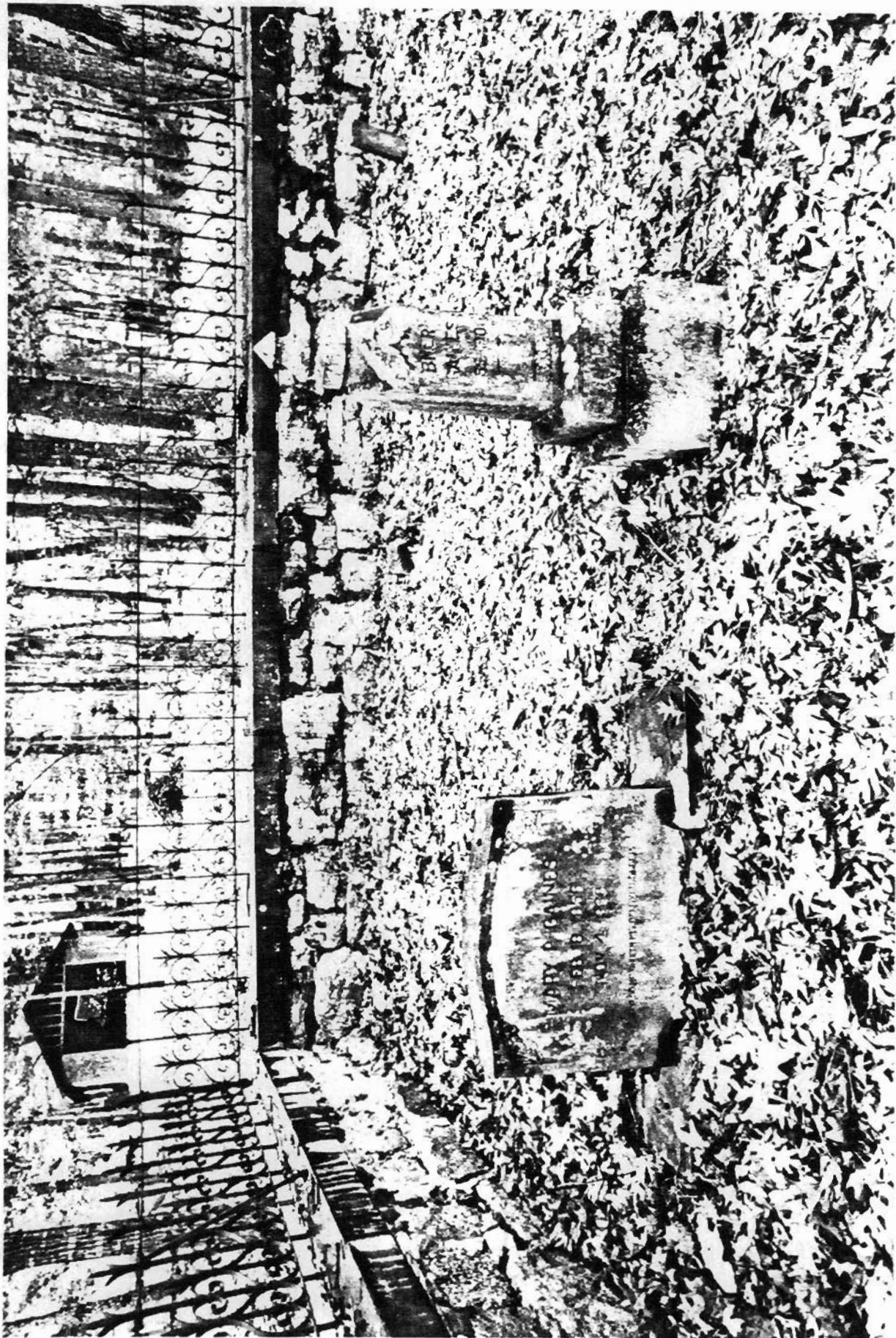
*Baronville Geomys  
CEMENT  
HOT SPRINGS via  
to ... Co  
Auk cases  
15/501710/  
35 15 500*













JONATHAN BASSETT  
MASSACHUSETTS  
PVT COL FREEMAN'S REGT  
REVOLUTIONARY WAR  
MAY 24 1764 JULY 4 1833



THIS STONE  
WAS PLACED HERE

IN MEMORY OF

ADIA BELLINE

BY HER

SON & SONS

To whom a life she was  
devoted and whose last prayer  
was for their happiness.

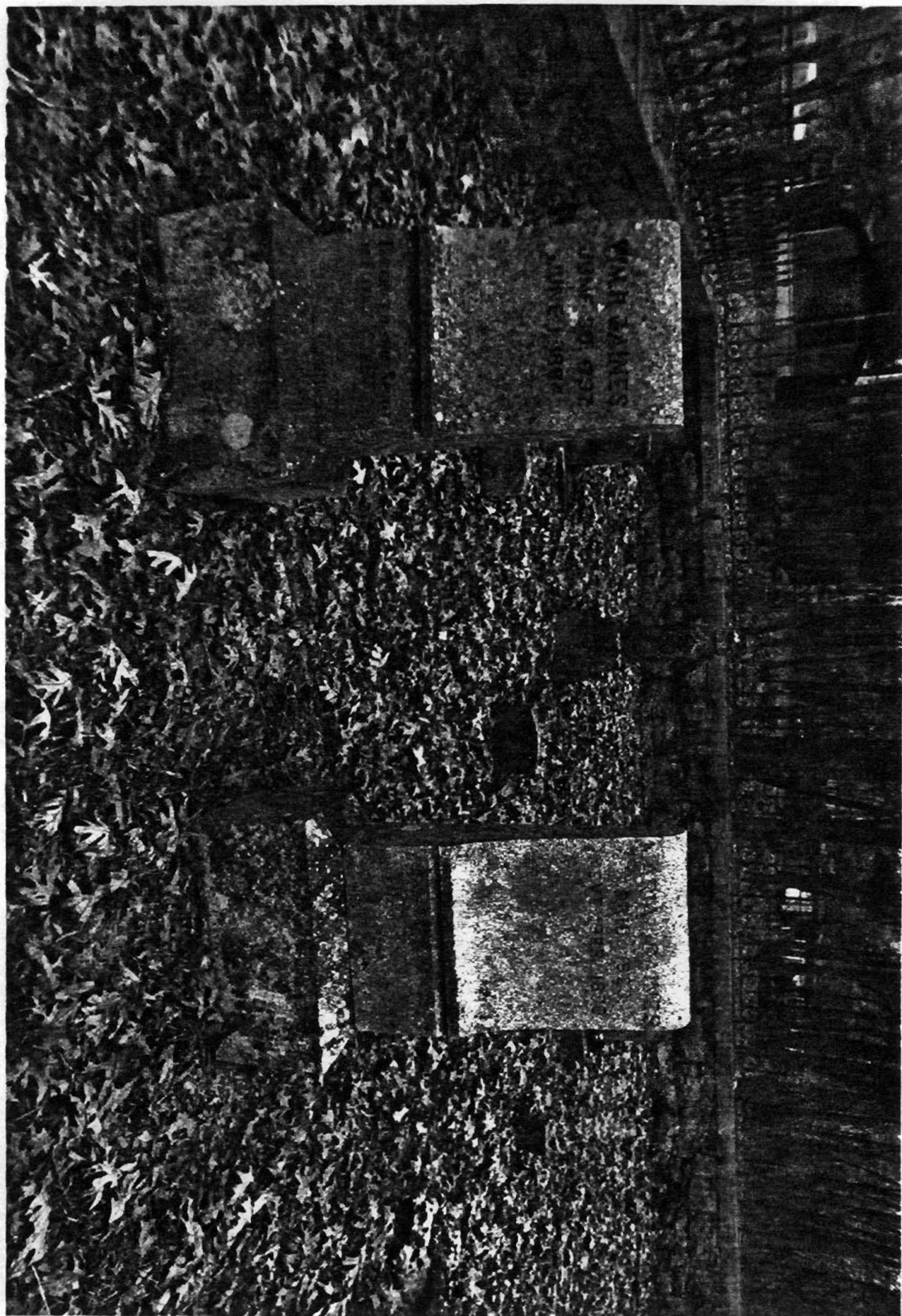
SHE WAS BORN

MAY 17 1899

and died on Christmas Eve

1964

and she is now at rest





WM H GAINES.  
JUNE 30. 1797.  
JUNE 1 1884

THE FRIEND OF THE SPOKE  
1811



