

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NR LISTED  
July  
JAN 04 1998  
AHPP

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: St. Peter's Cemetery

Other Name/Site Number: JE0826 JE0826

2. Location

Street & Number: Morgan Road

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Pine Bluff

Vicinity: X

State: AR County: Jefferson

Code: AR069 Zip Code: 71613

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing

Noncontributing

1  
1

0

Buildings  
Sites  
Structures  
Objects  
Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

St. Peter's Cemetery  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas  
County and State

**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.

William A. Statu  
Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date 4-14-98

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_\_\_ meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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

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Name of Property

Jefferson County, Arkansas  
County and State

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic: Funerary Sub: Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Current : Funerary Sub: Cemetery  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification:  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

**Summary**

Located on Morgan Road at the former town site of New Gascony in Jefferson County, is the two acre St. Peter's Cemetery site. The foundation of a small c. 1855 parish church lies within the 1919 iron fence of the cemetery which is located within a cotton field. Volunteers from St. Joseph's parish in Pine Bluff have documented 53 burials dating from the first recorded death date of 1827. Not all of the monuments are visible and some are just jumbled segments of grave markers. All headstone that have been found thus far are stylized and are composed of traditional materials such as sandstone and granite.

**Elaboration**

St. Peter's Cemetery covers two acres of land in a cotton field within Jefferson County. Morgan Road leads to the cemetery and follows the old railroad bed that transported goods to the town of New Gascony. A landing on the Arkansas River south of the plot serviced the population of the small town that once stood in the tilled fields surrounding the cemetery. Traces of the old road that led directly into town past St. Peter's can still be seen in the soil.

Access to the cemetery is from the north through double gates beneath a square metal sign reading "St. Peter's Cemetery". The decorative trim on the top of the sign is original and was found one foot beneath the soil, and the sign and the gates have been recently restored to their original location. The decorative iron sign and the fencing around the cemetery were installed

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St. Peter's Church, of which the foundation remains, was built about 1855, and stood within the grounds to the southeast of the entryway. The building followed a T-plan with a rounded apse to the south, or rear elevation. The foundation has been outlined with plastic gardening borders and filled in with pea gravel. A stone that supported the foundation piers is exposed on the northwest corner.

A concentration of complete and segmented headstones is located at the eastern fenceline. Volunteers have unearthed iron fence finials, rusted chains and pieces of glass and crockware which are piled along the fence as well. The graves of Creed Taylor, first Territorial sheriff and his three wives are placed together in this section. At one time their headstones were placed behind a two-foot brick sarcophagus but the soft bricks have crumbled and been replaced with a concrete pad on top of which rests the stones of Creed, Eulalie, Mary and Mary Ann Taylor.

East of this group of stones, beneath two large cedar trees, is a small cluster of headstones dedicated to the Gracie family. A few feet away to the west are eight members of a family early twentieth-century Italian immigrants, brought to New Gascony by the Gracie family in the early 1900s to work the family cotton fields.

A decorative iron enclosure at the rear, southwest corner of the cemetery contains three graves from the Fratesi and Boccarossa families. Running south to north along the fence are several more graves belonging to families of Italian descent. In the center of this section is a simple, unmarked iron cross. The most recent burial, that of Bessie Pipkin, dates from 1927 and is located at the northwest corner. The north and south central sections are largely empty and are covered with bare soil but efforts are underway to reseed the ground to provide grass cover, and help prevent further erosion. Through the hard work of St. Joseph's parishioners the ground has been cleared of weeds and those tombstones that were broken or covered with dirt have been restored. Pieces of stones that have been recovered are stacked to the side awaiting repair. The foundation of the church has been outlined and filled in with pea gravel but the stone for the building's piers remains exposed. Unchecked deterioration had fragmented the entry sign and toppled some fence sections. Volunteers had the sign refurbished but the pattern of the fence was no longer made. Through the help of a local business a jig was provided and trustees were able to replicate those sections that were destroyed.

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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: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): D

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Areas of Significance: Exploration/Settlement

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

Period(s) of Significance: 1827-1927

Significant Dates: 1827-1927

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria:

**Elaboration**

The town of New Gascony was located in Jefferson County, close to the community of Cornerstone. The settlement was one of a few established in the area prior to the 1829 incorporation of the county. Frenchman Antoine Barraque reached Arkansas in 1816 after serving with the army of Napoleon. He became proficient in the language of the Quapaw and established a trading relationship with the tribe which enabled him to acquire tracts of land below Pine Bluff. Eventually, a community developed around his cotton plantation which he named New Gascony, after his hometown in France. Barraque was a headstrong leader and persuaded the county government to move to New Gascony in 1832. However, after a special election was held the county seat was moved back to Pine Bluff.

New Gascony grew to include the first mill in the county, a store owned by Barraque and a river port. Reverend Patrick A. McGowan had St. Peter's church built in 1855. In the late 1880s the Cotton Belt Railroad was extended east through New Gascony.

St. Peter's Cemetery is the only burial ground representing New Gascony with interments beginning in 1827 and ending in 1927. The French and Spanish influences on the community began with Eulalie Vaugine, the granddaughter of Joseph Valliere, Spanish commandant of the Arkansas Post in 1787. Joseph's daughter Marie, married into the French Vaugine family and produced Eulalie, whose tombstone contains the earliest recorded death date in St. Peter's. Eulalie was the first wife of Creed Taylor who is buried beside her. Creed came to Arkansas in 1821 and became the first territorial sheriff of Jefferson County, and after Arkansas' admittance to the Union he was elected first county judge. He established the first sawmill in this sector of the state and donated heavily to the Catholic Church. After Eulalie died he moved his plantation nearer to New Gascony and married her first cousin, Mary Ann



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Valliere. After her death he married Mary Boone, granddaughter of Daniel Boone. Both Mary and Mary Ann were interred beside Creed at St. Peter's.

Several graves belonging to the Gracie family are gathered beneath the limbs of two large cedar trees. Creed Taylor's daughter Ann Elizabeth Taylor, married Pierce B. Gracie in 1848. Gracie had migrated to America from Castlecomer Kilkenny, Ireland in 1835. Pierce and Ann's son, John Gracie was selected as an original board member of the Colored Industrial Institute in Pine Bluff and was also vice president of the Bank of Pine Bluff. John Gracie and his father were postmasters at New Gascony. A station along the Pine Bluff Arkansas River Railroad was named for the Gracie family and the postal operation was moved there but at John's request it retained the name of New Gascony Post-Office. Gracie used convict labor to clear thousands of acres of land until 1906 when the practice was abandoned. He then turned to northern Italy for a new work force whom he provided with a four room cabin and one acre of land for a garden. The cluster of worker homes was located to the east of the cemetery. This accounts for names like Gacio, Fratesi, Mancini and Boccarossa, found on tombstones in St. Peter's. John Gracie, his wife and his parents also rest under the cedars in St. Peter's.

### **Historical Significance**

St. Peter's Cemetery bridges history to remind Arkansas of the settlement of New Gascony. The burial plot is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion A with local significance with Criteria consideration D as a link to the past for descendants of those buried within its grounds and an example of an early multi-ethnic community. New Gascony's English, Irish, French, Spanish and Italian roots are demonstrated in the names found on St. Peter's tombstones.

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### **9. Major Bibliographical References**

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Lambert, Eleanor Rucks *In the Palm of His Hand*. August House Publishers, Little Rock, Arkansas 1985. Pp. 28-29.

Leslie, James W. *Pine Bluff and Jefferson County, A Pictorial History*. The Donning Company Publishers, Norfolk, Virginia, 1981. P. 19, 22.

*The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Central Arkansas*. The Goodspeed Publishing Co., Chicago, Nashville and St. Louis, 1889. Pp. 128, 132, 142.

Information submitted by J. French Hill, Little Rock, 1997.

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 #

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- 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: Two acres.

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>612400</u>	<u>3788200</u>	B	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Beginning at the Northwest corner of the Northeast quarter of the Northwest quarter of Section four(4), Township six(6) South, Range seven(7) West and running thence East 6.32 chains, thence South 3.16 chains, thence West 6.32 chains and thence North 3.16 chains to the point of beginning;

Also the West half of the Northwest Quarter of Section Four(4), Township Six (6) South, Range seven(7) west, less and except approximately two(2) acres as fenced and used for cemetery purposes, being 188 feet on the North and South sides and 204 feet on the East and West sides.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary includes all of the property historically associated with St. Peter's Cemetery.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Holly Hope/Survey Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 03/31/98

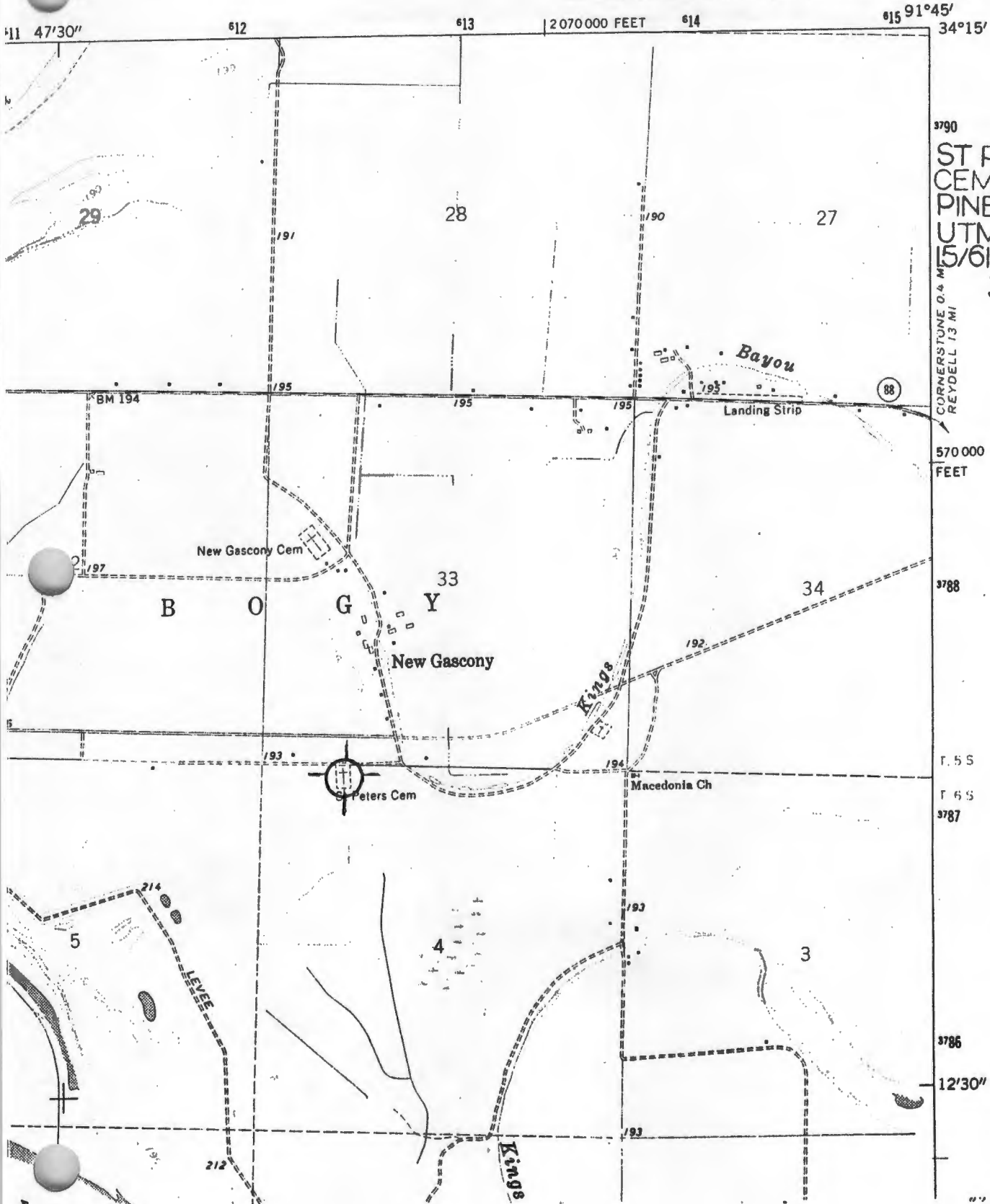
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock

State: AR ZIP: 72201

MOSCOW QUADRANGLE  
ARKANSAS—JEFFERSON CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7652 1 SW  
(HUMPHREY SW)



3790  
ST PETERS  
CEMETERY  
PINE BLUFF VIC,  
UTM  
15/612400/  
3788200

CORNERSTONE 0.4 MI  
REYDELL 1.3 MI

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FEET

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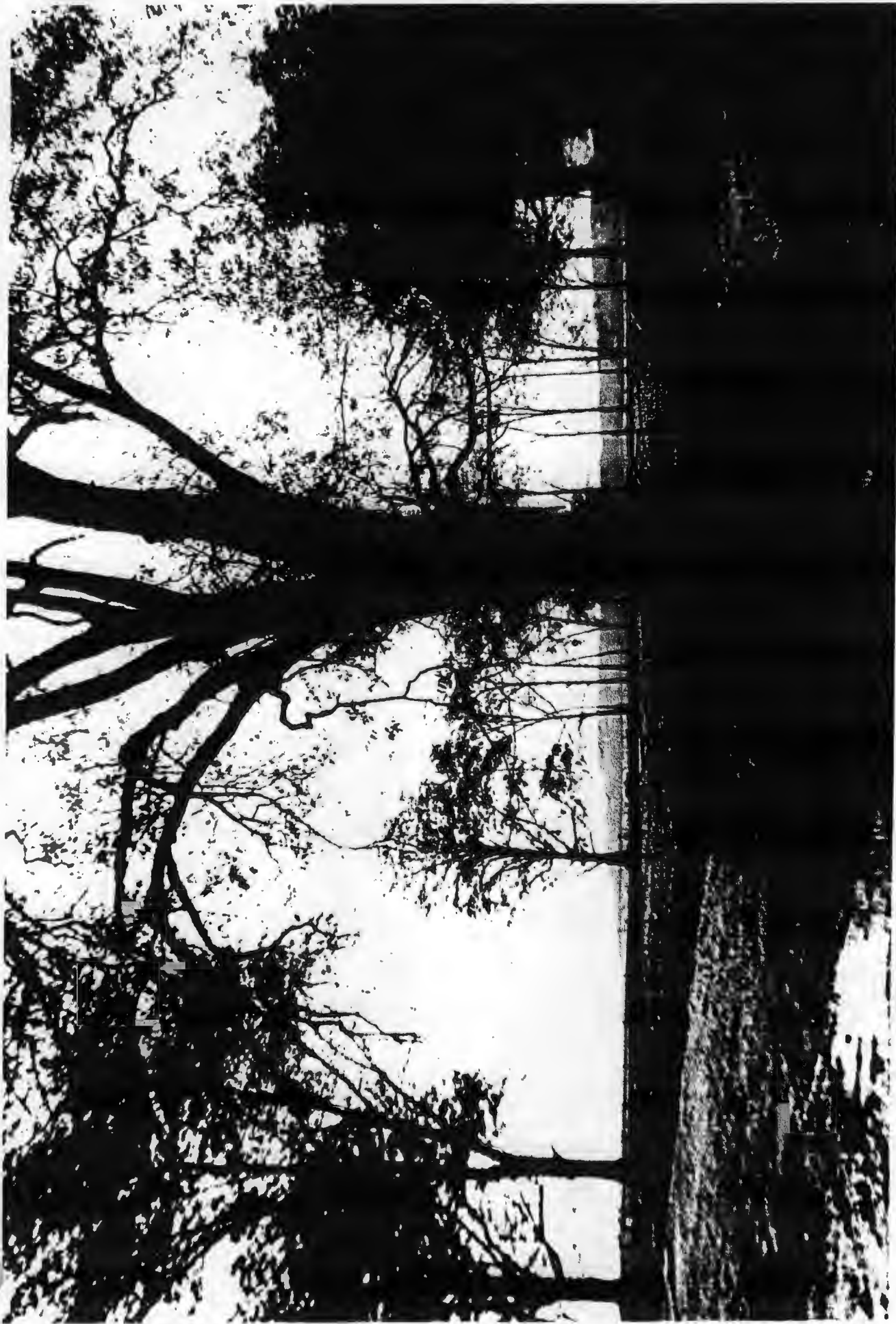
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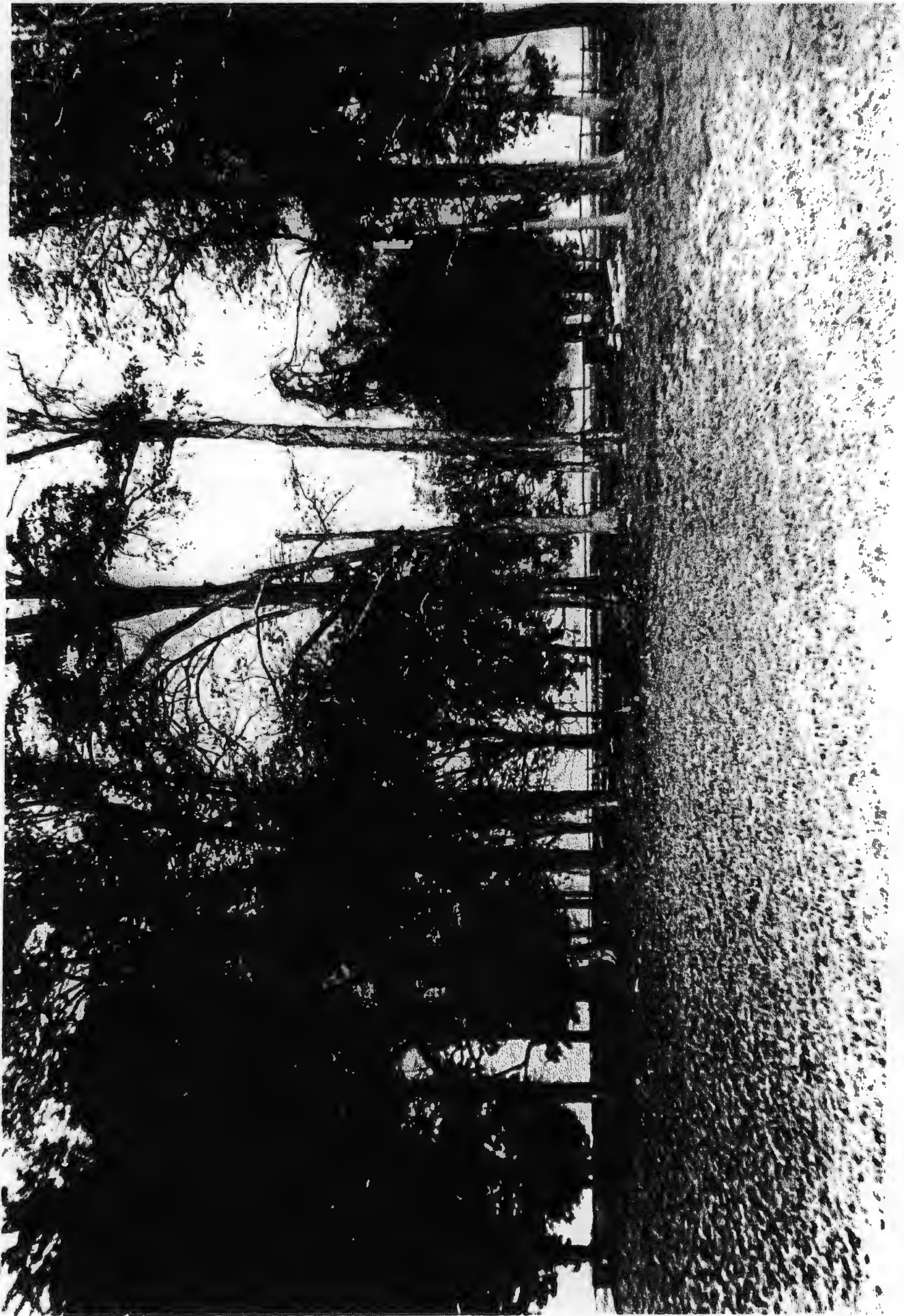
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