

01-75-7090-63

NR 11-30-78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Masonic Temple

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

East Fourth Avenue and State Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Pine Bluff

VICINITY OF

Fourth

STATE

CODE  
05

COUNTY

CODE

Arkansas

Jefferson

069

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER: Fraternal

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

M.W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Arkansas

STREET & NUMBER

East Fourth Avenue and State Street

CITY, TOWN

Pine Bluff

VICINITY OF

STATE

Arkansas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Circuit Clerk's Office, Jefferson County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

1800 East Harding Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Pine Bluff

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

# DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Black Masonic Temple is a four story masonry building of rectangular plan. The building is divided into three bays with the middle projecting slightly forward. On the first story, rusticated stone piers mark the corners and a stone pediment with full entablature articulates the entrance. Between these elements, store fronts infill. The second story has two narrow windows in the center bay and two wider windows on the flanking bays. Below the windows is a stone storyline and above is a stone cornice. Openings on the third and fourth floors are vertical with terra cotta infills between floors and arched tops. Arches spring from the capitals of pilasters which divide the five windows and begin at the cornice. There is stained glass in the arch above the impost. The motif is the masonic insignia.

The side elevations (east and west) have the same conformation as the front (south) and are three bayed with ten rows of windows, the center containing four.

The interior contains the original stairs and wainscots. The second story is divided into offices working from a central hall. The third and fourth stories are large open meeting spaces.

Alterations include an elevator and the partial restoration of the top floor, which was damaged by fire.

# GNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	July 7, 1902 - August 9, 1904	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	W.S. Helton, Pine Bluff Pat Powers, Little Rock
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	Arch: Gibbs & Sanders, Little Rock		

When it was completed, the Masonic lodge on the corner of Fourth and State Streets was the tallest building in Pine Bluff. The structure was built in stages during 1902, 1903 and 1904 by the Sovereign Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Arkansas, the state's black Masonic order.

The first black masonic organization in Arkansas was the J.M. Alexander Lodge Number 4 established at Helena in June, 1866, by the Grand Lodge of Missouri. On March 28, 1873, representatives from the three black Masonic Lodges met in Little Rock to form a Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in Arkansas. The organization of the grand lodge was perfected on March 31, 1873, and William Henry Gray, a free-born native of Washington, D.C. was elected the first grand master.<sup>1</sup>

Black masonry thus began a period of rapid growth and by the 1880's a movement began to construct a grand lodge building. A group headed by Wiley Jones initiated efforts to persuade the grand lodge to locate in Pine Bluff. Jones bought two lots on East Second Avenue and presented them to the lodge. Edwin Cook, a local architect, drew plans for a building.<sup>2</sup> When the Grand Lodge met in Pine Bluff during August, 1891, after a "stormy session", the organization gave approval to locate the temple in Pine Bluff.<sup>3</sup> However, the proposed building was never started as the financing of the structure proved to be an insurmountable problem.

Apparently the approval of Pine Bluff as the location of the temple by the Grand Lodge in 1891 at least decided the question as to where the lodge would be built. By 1902 the Grand Lodge has accumulated enough money to buy a lot and start the building. On March 24, 1902, the Grand Lodge bought Lot 3, Block 40 of Old Town Pine Bluff for \$7,000.<sup>4</sup> Gibbs and Sanders, Little Rock architects, were employed to design the building and on July 7, 1902, W.S. Helton, a Pine Bluff builder, was given a contract to construct a four-story brick and stone structure.<sup>5</sup>

As part of the Grand Lodge meeting the cornerstone of the building was laid August 14, 1902, with elaborate ceremonies which involved local dignitaries as well as officials of the Grand Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Star. "Fully 900 Masons" marched up Main Street from Jones Park (located at Harding and Main Streets) to the site of the new building for the services.<sup>6</sup>

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Funds available for construction were exhausted by the time the lot was bought and foundation was laid. For over a year work was suspended on the structure. Through the efforts of J.N. Donohoo and J.C. Corbin, Grand Lodge Trustees, a loan of \$25,000 was obtained from the Peoples Savings Bank of Pine Bluff to complete the building. Pat Powers of Little Rock was given a contract to finish the structure on the foundation built by Helton.<sup>7</sup>

Enough had been completed on the temple to permit the Grand Lodge to hold its annual meeting there beginning on August 8, 1904. Stairways were improvised and the sessions were held in the lodge hall on the third floor. In opening the first session, Grand Master Moses A. Clark said: "I now sound the gavel for the first time ever in a building of this kind, built and owned by Negroes."<sup>8</sup>

When the Grand Lodge met in August, 1912, the last payment was made on the temple mortgage. At a special ceremony held at exactly the same hour and date (August 14) that the cornerstone was laid 10 years previously, the payment was made and the temple dedicated.<sup>9</sup>

In the early morning hours of May 25, 1954, fire struck the building and burned out the third and fourth floors. The losses were covered by insurance and the building was restored except for a dormer on the roof. As part of the remodeling a self-service elevator was installed to make it easier to reach the upper floors of the temple. The work was completed in 1955 and a second cornerstone was installed on the northeast corner of the building above the original stone.

The first floor of the building contains stores and shops. The second floor in addition to the Grand Lodge's Offices has several offices which are rented to doctors and dentists. The state now has 184 lodges with 6,000 to 7,000 members and Grand Lodge continues to hold its annual communications in Pine Bluff each year.<sup>10</sup>

FOOTNOTES

1. Centennial Souvenir, 100 years of Free Masonry 1872-1972, M.W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge. (Pine Bluff, M.W. Prince Hall Grand Lodge, 1972), pp.8-9.
2. Pine Bluff Weekly Commercial, February 15, 1891, p.4
3. Weekly Commercial, August 16, 1891, p.4
4. Deed Book 40, Jefferson County Land Records, p. 269
5. Pine Bluff Weekly Graphics, July 9, 1902, p.4
6. Pine Bluff Graphic, August 15, 1902, p.1
7. Graphic, October 5, 1902, p.1
8. Graphic, August 9, 1904, p.8
9. Commercial, August 14, 1912, p.1

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J-74)

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Footnotes cont'd:

Hall Grand Lodge, Personal Interview, January 27, 1978.  
Special Note - Name of the Grand Lodge was changed to "The Most  
Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, Arkansas"  
on August 8, 1944.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Footnotes

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Pine Bluff, Ark.

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 591840 378800

B \_\_\_\_\_

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_

F \_\_\_\_\_

G \_\_\_\_\_

H \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 3, Block 40, Old Town Pine Bluff

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James W. Leslie

ORGANIZATION

Historian

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

608 West 20th

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Pine Bluff

STATE

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Donna B. Atley*

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Suite 500, Continental Building · Markham and Main · Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

MAY 31 1978

Phone: (501) 371-2763

May 26, 1978

M. W. Prince Hall Grant Lodge of Ark.  
East Fourth Ave. & State Street  
Pine Bluff, AR 71601

Re: Masonic Temple, Pine Bluff

Dear Sirs:

The staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program is preparing a National Register nomination for the above captioned property which will be presented to the Arkansas State Review Committee at their June meeting. If approved, the nomination will be submitted to the National Register office in Washington for final consideration.

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing of historic sites, buildings, objects and districts from all across the country that are worthy of preservation. Entry in the National Register is an honor which places an obligation on a private owner. It does, however, provide protection through comment by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation from federally financed, assisted or licensed projects that might affect a National Register property.

On October 4, 1976, the President signed a Tax Reform Act of which Section 2124 refers to tax incentives for historic properties. Enclosed you will find an information sheet on that tax act.

If you have any questions concerning the program or this property's nomination, please contact Sandra Taylor Smith of our staff.

Enclosed are two copies of this letter. Please complete the form below, sign and return the original to our office. The copy is for your files. We would appreciate receiving any comments you might have concerning the nomination of this property. If we do not hear from you within 30 days your approval will be assumed.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Woodard* <sup>lg</sup>

Barbara Woodard, Deputy Director  
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

I approve of the nomination of the above property to the National Register of Historic Places.  Yes  No

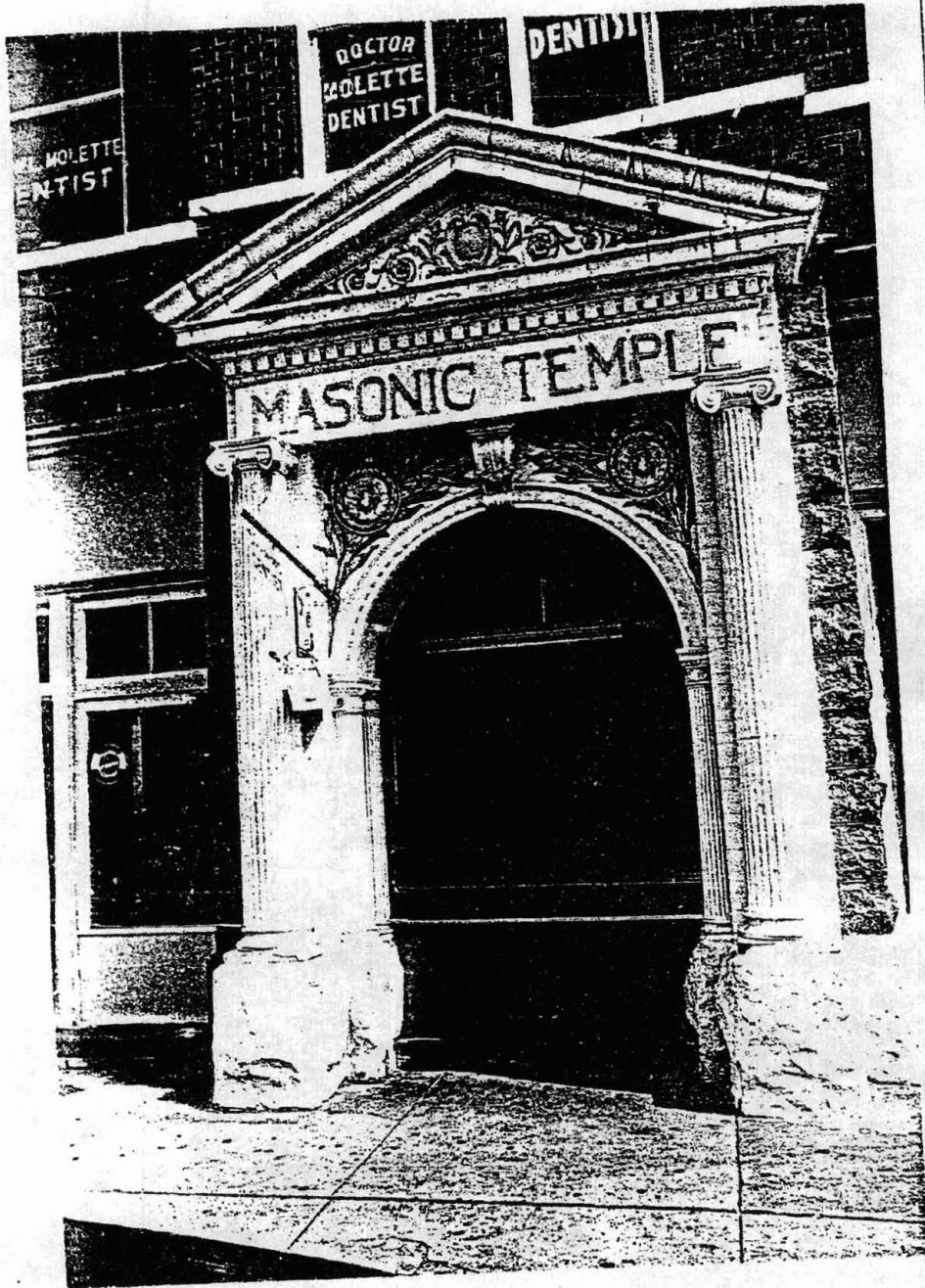
Comments: *Thank you*

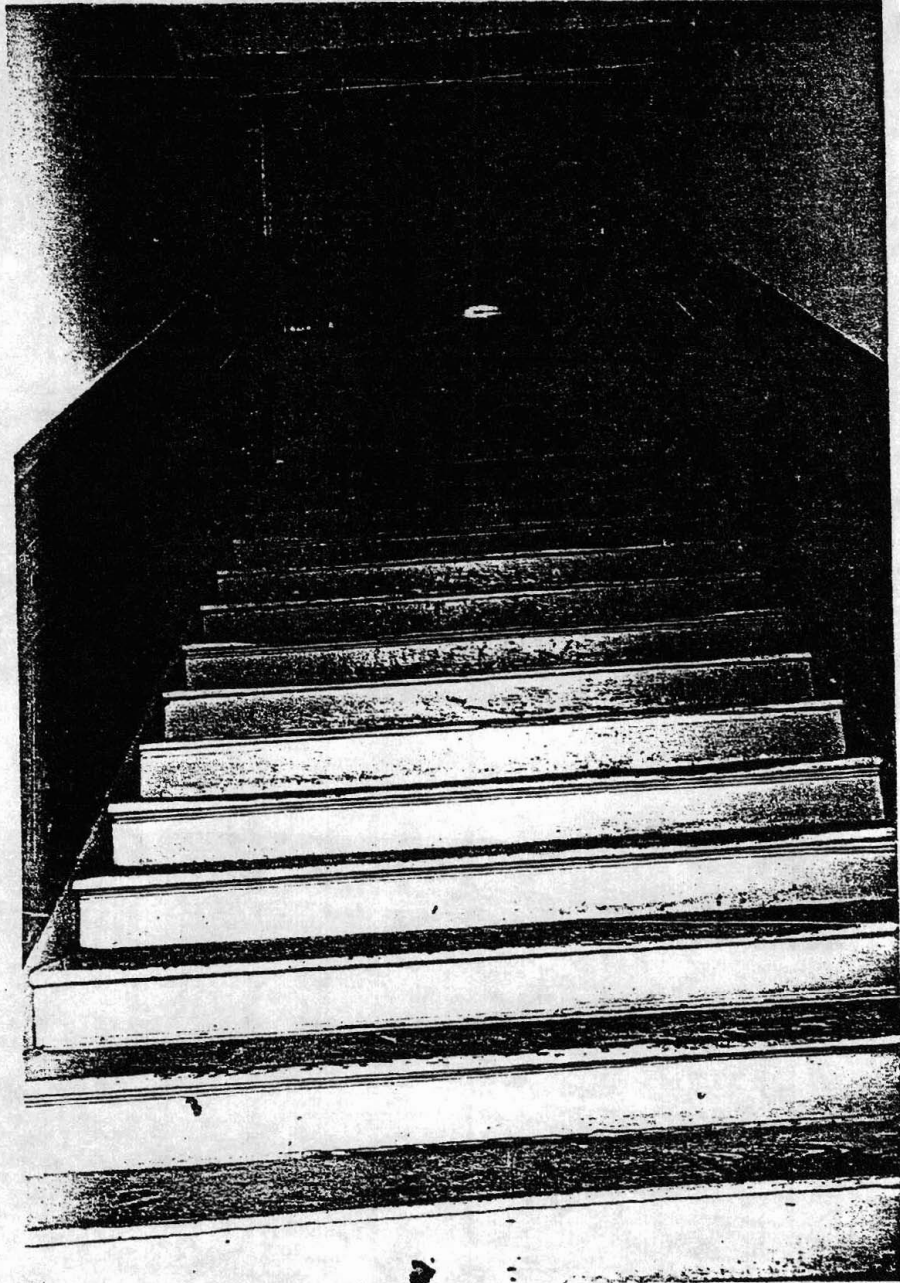
*May 30, 1978* *Rev. Harace J. Evans*  
Date Signature

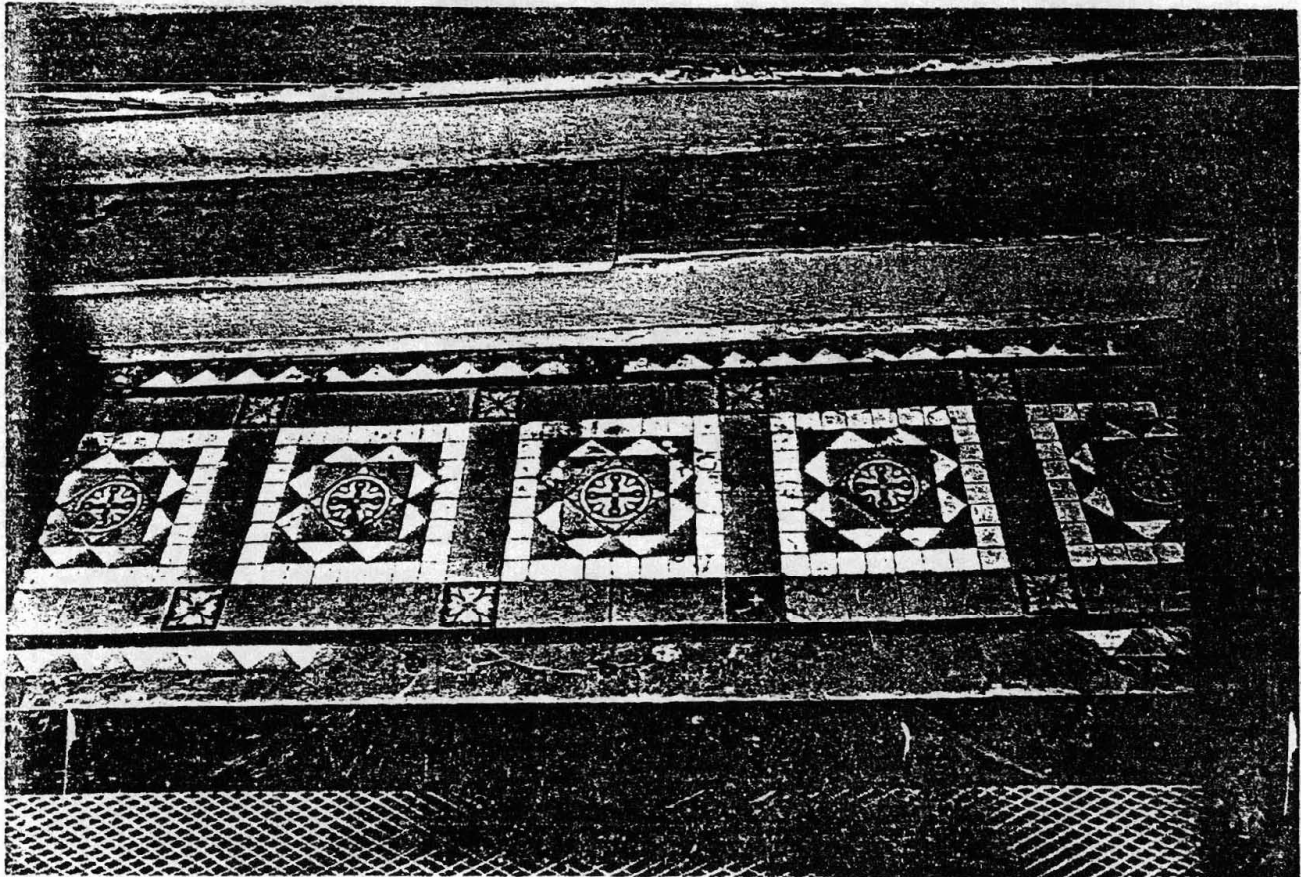
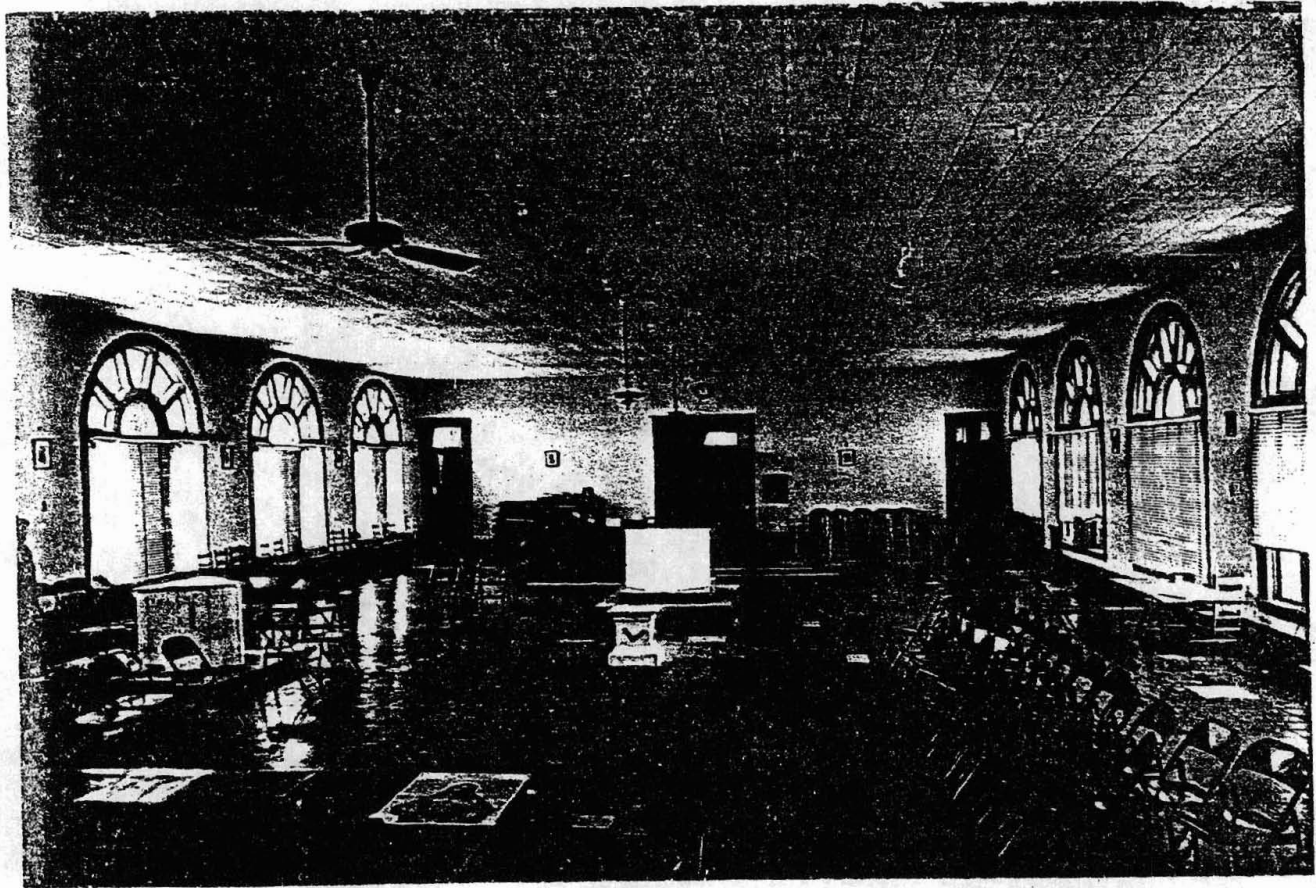












# PINE BLUFF QUADRANGLE

ARKANSAS—JEFFERSON CO.

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7652 N SW  
(ROB ROY)

2'30"

589 1990 000 FEET

R. 9 W. 590

15 79

STUTTGART 35 PA

5.2 MI. TO JUNC. U.S. 79 AND ARK. 15

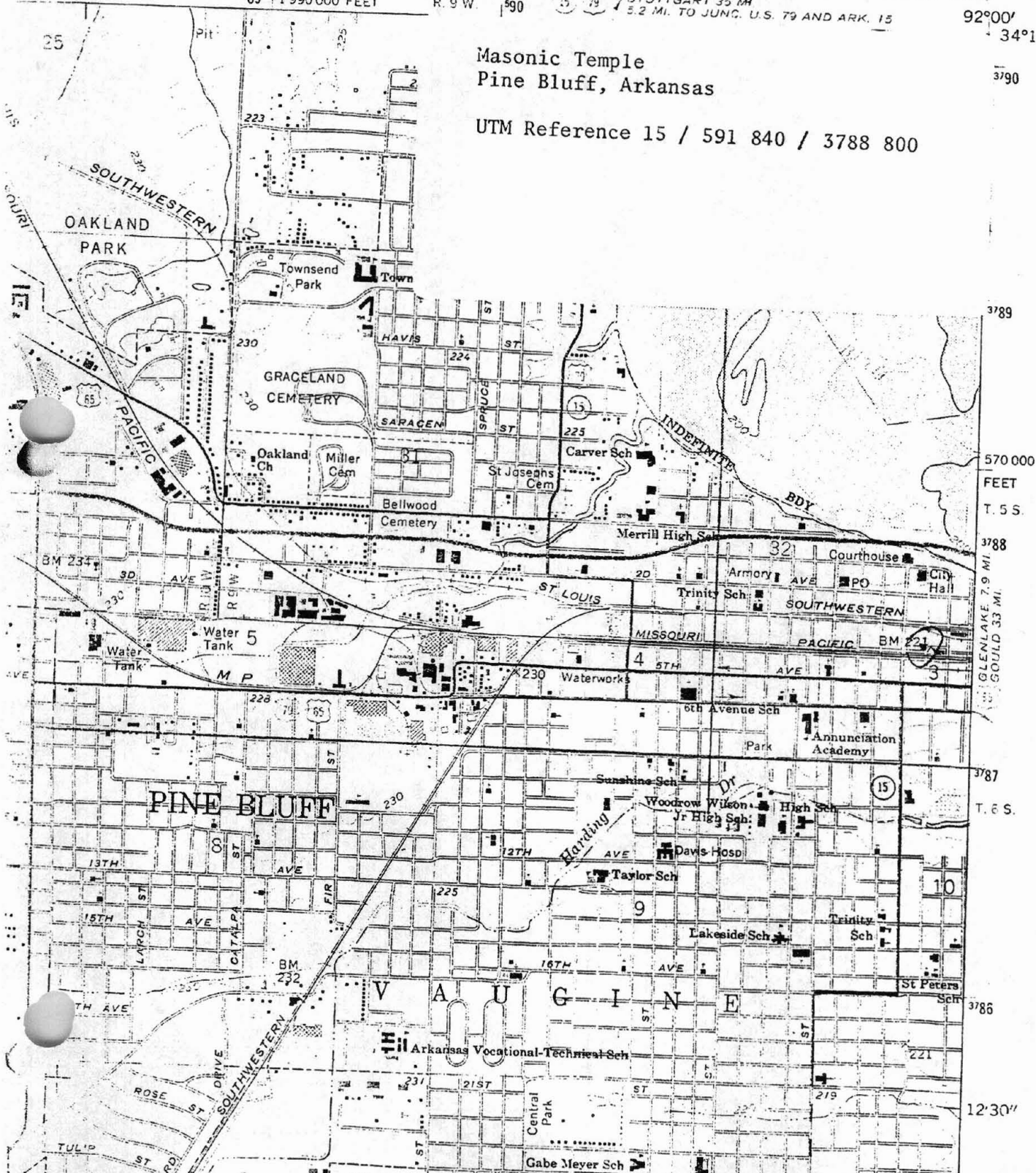
92°00'

34°15'

Masonic Temple  
Pine Bluff, Arkansas

UTM Reference 15 / 591 840 / 3788 800

3790



3789

570 000

FEET

T. 5 S.

3788

GLENLAKE 7.9 MI

GOULD 3.3 MI

3787

T. 6 S.

3786

12'30"