

NR listed 6/14/91

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 Johnson County Courthouse
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Main Street not for publication N/A
city, town Clarksville vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code AR county Johnson code AR 071 zip code 72830

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>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</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.

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

4-23-91
Date

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

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

Date

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)

County Courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stone

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

The Johnson County Courthouse is a three story, brick and concrete masonry public institutional building designed in the Classical Revival style with some Colonial Revival influences. It is crowned with a flat roof behind a parapet, faced with rusticated concrete and brick, and supported upon a continuous concrete foundation.

Elaboration

The Johnson County Courthouse is a three story, brick and concrete masonry public institutional building designed in the Classical Revival style with some Colonial Revival influences. Its plan is fundamentally rectangular. A single brick chimney rises through the flat roof near the southeast corner of the building. It is crowned with a flat roof behind a parapet, faced with rusticated concrete and brick, and supported upon a continuous concrete foundation.

The northern or front elevation is nine bays in length on the second floor (behind the central seven bays of which is the courtroom) and only two stories tall due to the height of the courtroom ceiling. The first floor is accessed via three arched entrances, each of which contains a double-leaf door. Flanking these entrances on each side are two arched, double-hung windows, each of which in turn are flanked by a single square-headed window that finishes the elevation. The second story courtroom is lighted by seven tall, metal casement windows. To each side of the courtroom are two stories of offices, resulting in two stories in these flanking sections. These are lighted with square-headed windows that are filled with metal casements also. The wall surface surrounding the central first floor entrances and windows is faced with concrete that has been rusticated to resemble stone; the second story windows that light the courtroom are separated by monumental, attached Classical columns capped with Ionic capitals, all of which are set into the wall and surmounted by a Classical entablature that supports the raised parapet. The recessed bays at either end of the elevation are faced with brick and are more restrained in their ornament.

The eastern and western elevations are virtually identical. Each is symmetrical in its window placement, consisting of a projecting central wall bay (as seen on the front elevation) containing five window bays on each of the three floors; all are filled with metal casement windows. The only difference between the two elevations is the placement of an entrance in the southern bay of the projecting central wall bay on the eastern elevation, while the western elevation opposite is accessed via a central entrance.

The southern elevation is symmetrical also, and consists of three symmetrically-placed, projecting wall bays connected by two recessed bays. The central bay is lighted by three

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Continuation Sheet**

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windows on each of the upper two floors and entered via a central entrance on the first floor; the other four wall bays are lighted with two windows per floor; again, all the windows are metal casements.

Significant exterior details include the aforementioned rusticated concrete and Classical columns on the northern elevation; Classical, bracketed porches over the side entrances; and a Classical entablature that surrounds the raised parapet and features a heavy dentil course throughout. Otherwise the ornament is relatively restrained.

The interior is elaborate relative to W.P.A. courthouse construction of the period in Arkansas. Polished granite, though not of lustrous quality, is used for flooring and dados in the hallways and stairwells; heavy, panelled oak doors are hung throughout; and handsome metal balustrades adorn the central stairway at the rear of the central entrance hall. Most noteworthy of all is the courtroom upstairs. An abundance of rich, stained wood is used for the doors, seats, dado, panelling, and other accoutrements. The entrances into the courtroom are trimmed with an elaborate broken pediment. The wall behind the judge's bench is ornamented with a large, wood pediment supported upon Ionic pilasters. The use of these pilasters is continued around the courtroom walls, stretching between the wood dado and the tall wood entablature that forms the transition from the wall to the ceiling. Even the original Art Deco lighting fixtures are intact. This abundance of rich, original decoration combines to create an effect that is both historically impressive and aesthetically beautiful.

The replacement of the original exterior doors with aluminum thermal doors constitutes the chief alteration to this building. Otherwise it is substantially intact.

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1**Summary**

Criterion C, local significance

The Johnson County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance as the best example in Johnson County of the Classical Revival style of architecture constructed with federal monies during the Depression era.

Elaboration

Johnson County was created on November 16, 1833 from part of Pope County. Wesley Garrett, a legislator from the newly formed county, named the county not after himself but after his close friend and territorial judge, Judge Benjamin Johnson. The temporary seat of justice was held at the house of Elijah B. Alston in old Spadra or Spadra Bluff. Following statehood in 1836, three commissioners, Elijah Alston, Abraham Laster, and Lorenza Clark were elected to decide upon a location for a new county seat. A local state legislator, James Cravens, proposed his farm, four miles north of Spadra, as the new location. Laster was favorable to this proposition because of the pure water springs in the area. Clark favored his hometown of Morrison's Bluff for the new county seat, and Alston likewise supported his hometown of Spadra even though the water was somewhat polluted by the underlying coal. A compromise was eventually reached when Clark agreed to support Craven's location in exchange for Laster's vote that the town be named Clarksville.

For many years after its creation, Clarksville fared poorly in relation to its thriving river landing towns of Pittsburg, Spadra, and Morrison's Bluff. In 1844, a Frenchman named Procta opened the first coal mine in Spadra, enriching the economy of that town and further establishing it as the leading town in Johnson County. The river towns thrived during the late 1840's and 1850's when commercial trade on the Arkansas River increased dramatically. Clarksville also grew during this period, and the town was incorporated on December 21, 1848. Notably, the first school for the blind in Arkansas was established in Clarksville in 1850. The Civil War, however, greatly disrupted the growth of Clarksville and the other communities. Although no major battles were fought in Johnson County, the area suffered from various skirmishes and bushwacker raids. Most of Clarksville was burned by the Federals to prevent the approaching Confederates under General Fagan from acquiring valuable stores and supplies left behind.

Clarksville recovered slowly from the effects of the war. Several of the river towns disappeared altogether in the aftermath of the war. In 1871, an Arkansas company negotiated for the railroad to extend from Little Rock to Fort Smith. Hopes were dashed, however, when shortly after the railway beds were completed the company went bankrupt. Fortunately for Clarksville, Jay Gould acquired the defunct railroad, and the town consequently became a prosperous railroad town. In 1872, the court announced that a new county courthouse would

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be constructed to replace the one built in 1837 which had burned earlier in the year. The contract was awarded to A. J. Millard and R. S. King of Little Rock with John D. Edwards of Little Rock the architect. The new structure cost \$30,875 and was completed on June 30, 1874.

Plans were drawn for the present courthouse on November 30, 1934 by the architectural firm of Haralson and Nelson from Fort Smith. Funded by the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, Project number 7431 was completed in 1935 by the contractors, Linebarger and Feaser. The combination of Haralson and Nelson's imagination, Linebarger and Feaser's execution, and, perhaps most importantly, federal money produced an elegant new three-story Classical Revival structure. Alterations have been remarkably minor and consist of the addition of central heat and air conditioning in 1978, the renovation of the basement in 1982, and a handicap-access ramp installation in 1988.

The Johnson County Courthouse is significant as the best example of federally-funded Classical Revival style structures built in Johnson County during the Depression era. The building is in excellent condition and possesses exceptional integrity. Although interiors of historic buildings are highly susceptible to extensive renovation, the interior of the Johnson County Courthouse is practically original. The second-story courtroom with its lavish dark-stained woodwork and ornately-carved broken pediments and pilasters accurately reflects the look and atmosphere of a 1930's era courtroom. With the exception of some door replacements, the exterior is virtually unaltered and continues to remind one of the grander aspects of the Depression.

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Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Herndon, Dallas T. *Annals of Arkansas*. Little Rock: The Historical Record Association, 1947. Vol. I, p. 493. Vol. II, pp. 690-691.

Langford, Ella Molloy. *History of Johnson County Arkansas: The First Hundred Years*. Clarksville, Arkansas: Sallis, Threadgill & Sallis, Printers, 1921.

Workers of the Writer's Program. *The WPA Guide to 1930's Arkansas*, with new introduction by Elliot West. Lawrence, Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 1987. pp. 250-251.

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
1935

Significant Dates
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Haralson and Nelson

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

Acres of property Less than one

UTM References

A

1	5
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4	5	7	8	2	5
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3	9	2	5	1	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Northern half of Courthouse Square in the Original Survey of the Town of Clarksville, Arkansas

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 Patrick Zollner/National Register Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 4/10/91

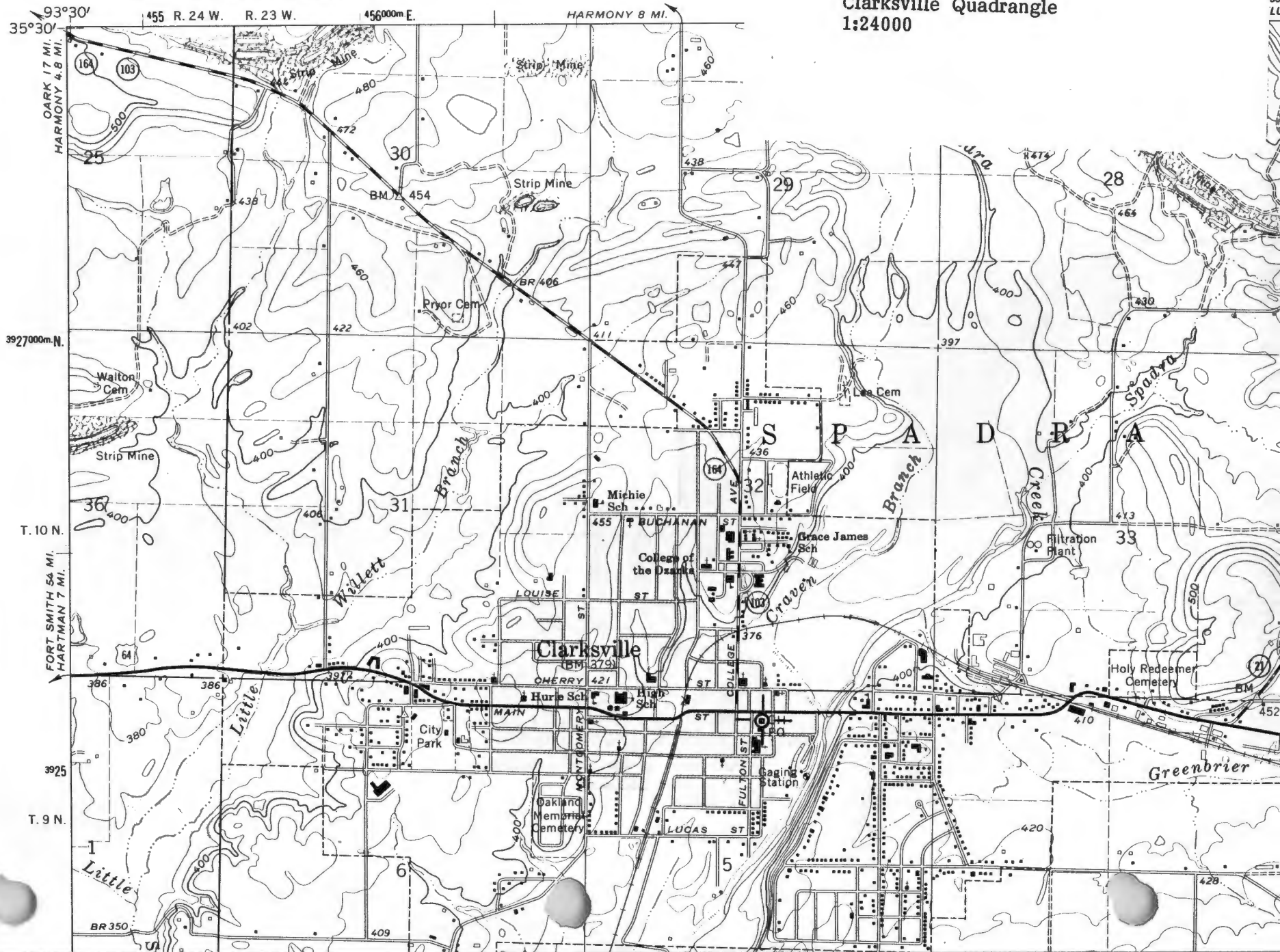
street & number 225 East Markham, Suite 300 telephone (501) 324-9346

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

725 11 SE
(HARMONY)

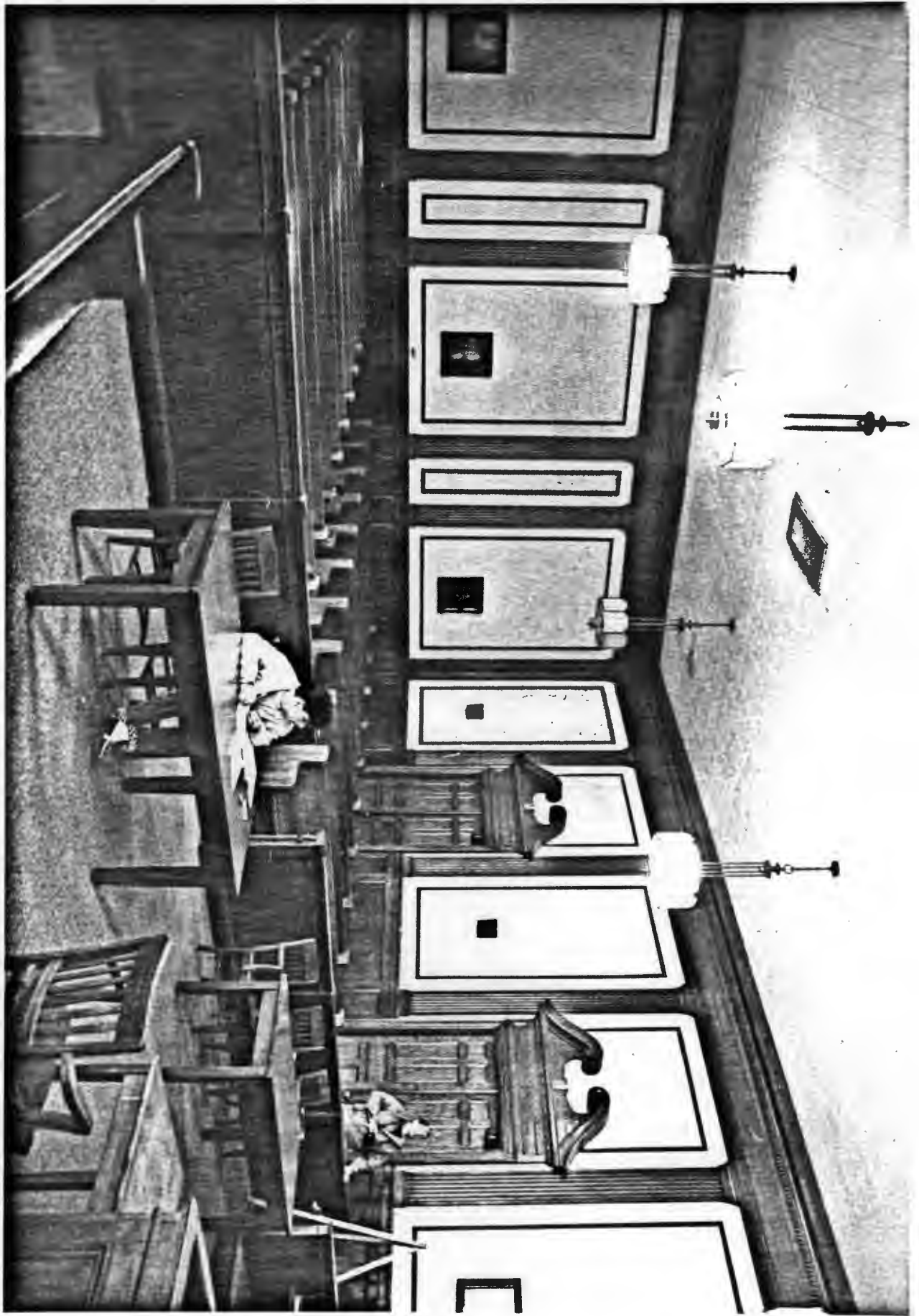
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Johnson County Courthouse
Clarksville, Arkansas
Johnson County
15/457825/3925170
Clarksville Quadrangle
1:24000

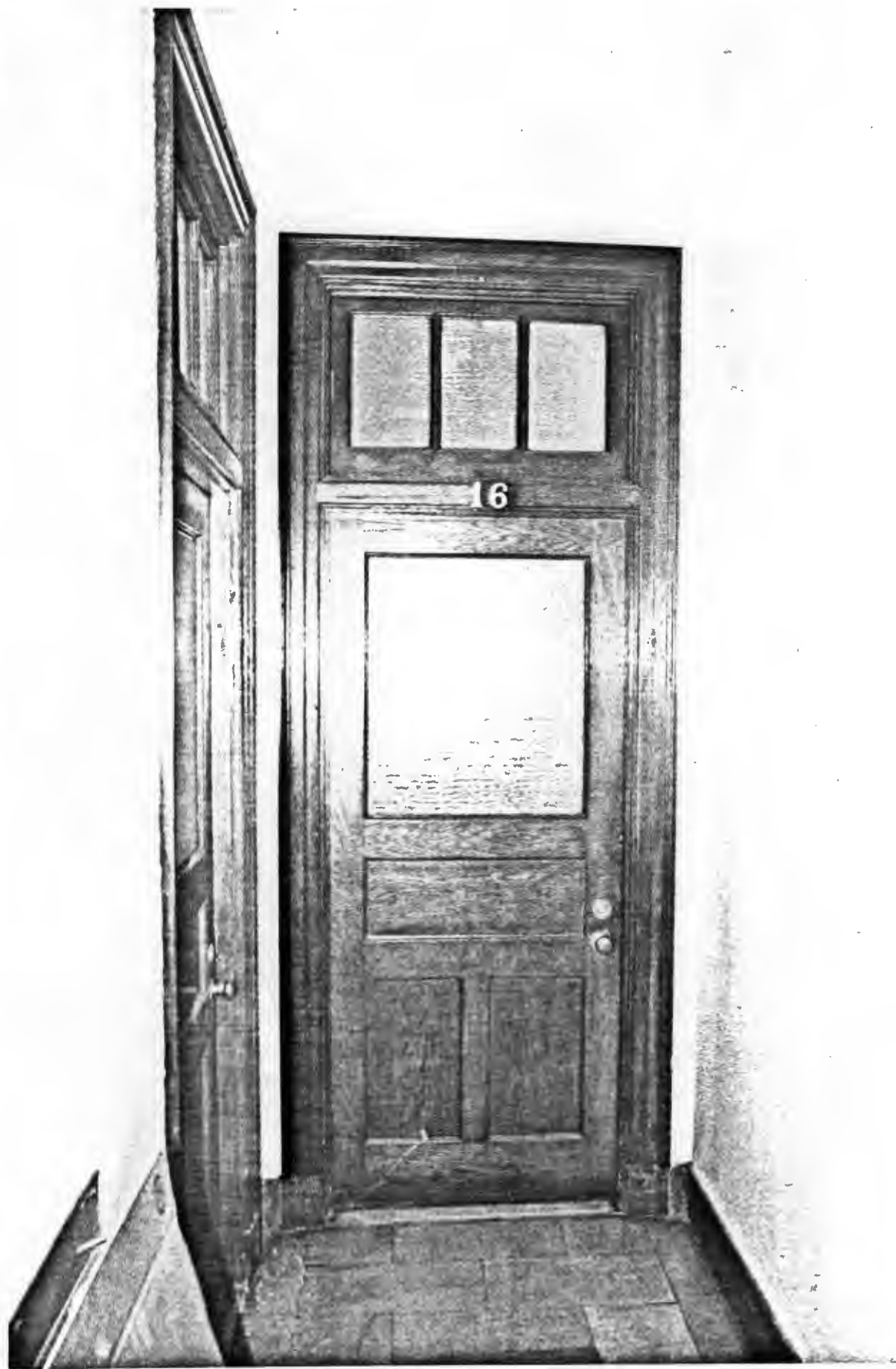




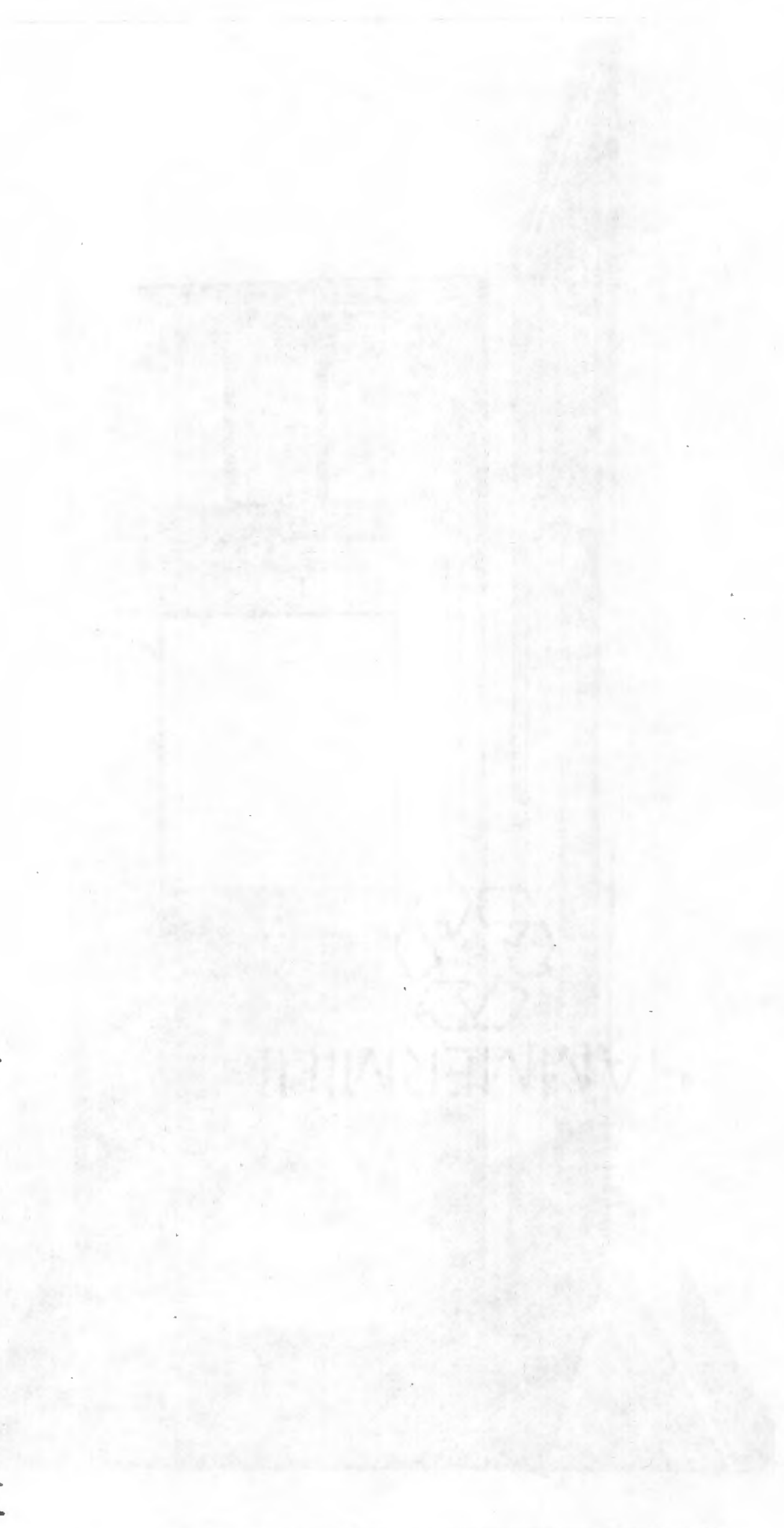
Photographed by Patrick Zolhe
January 1991
Negatives on file at DHPD
View from the southeast

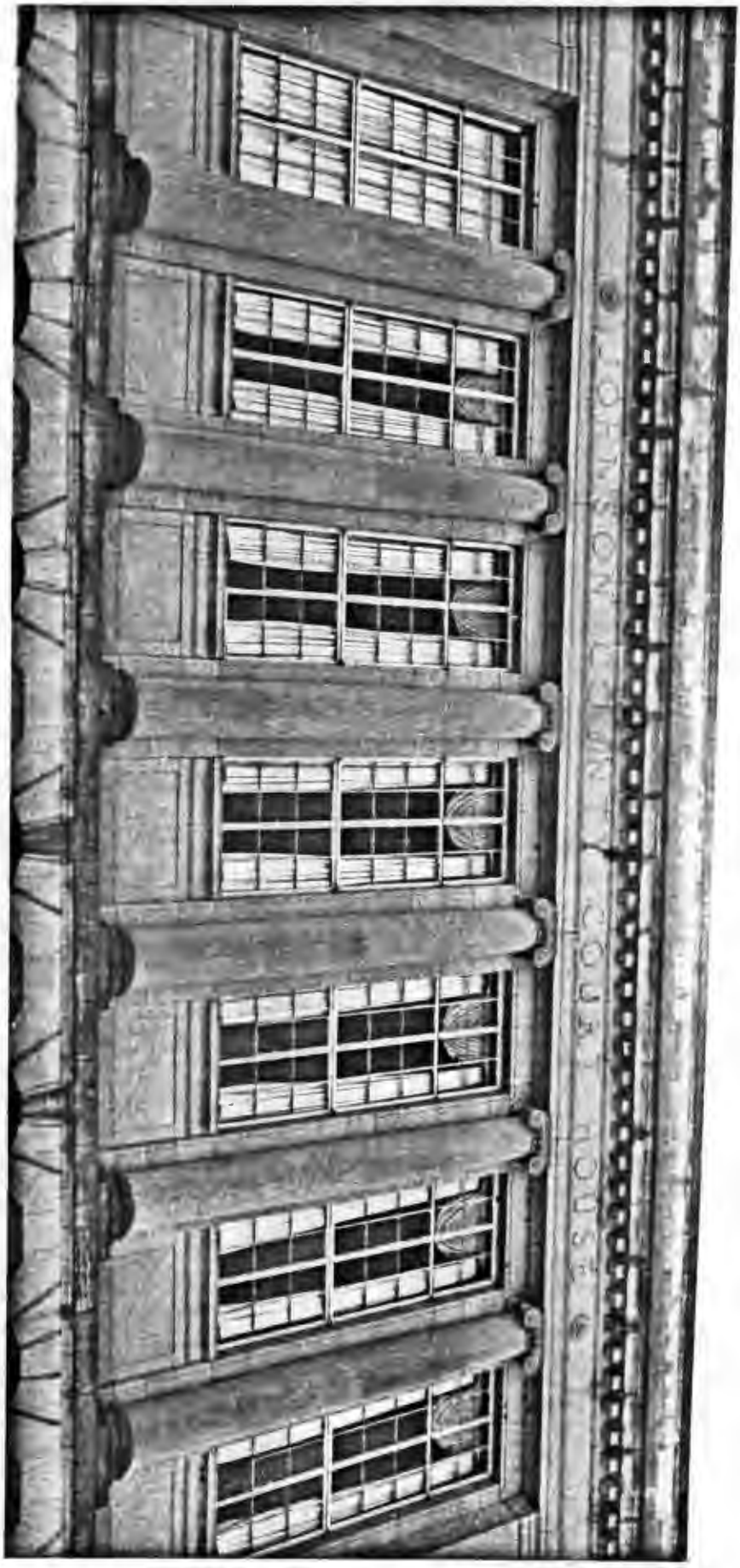


Cookeville, Arkansas
Photographed by K. Luck Zolha
January 1991
Negatives on file at JHMA
View of construction

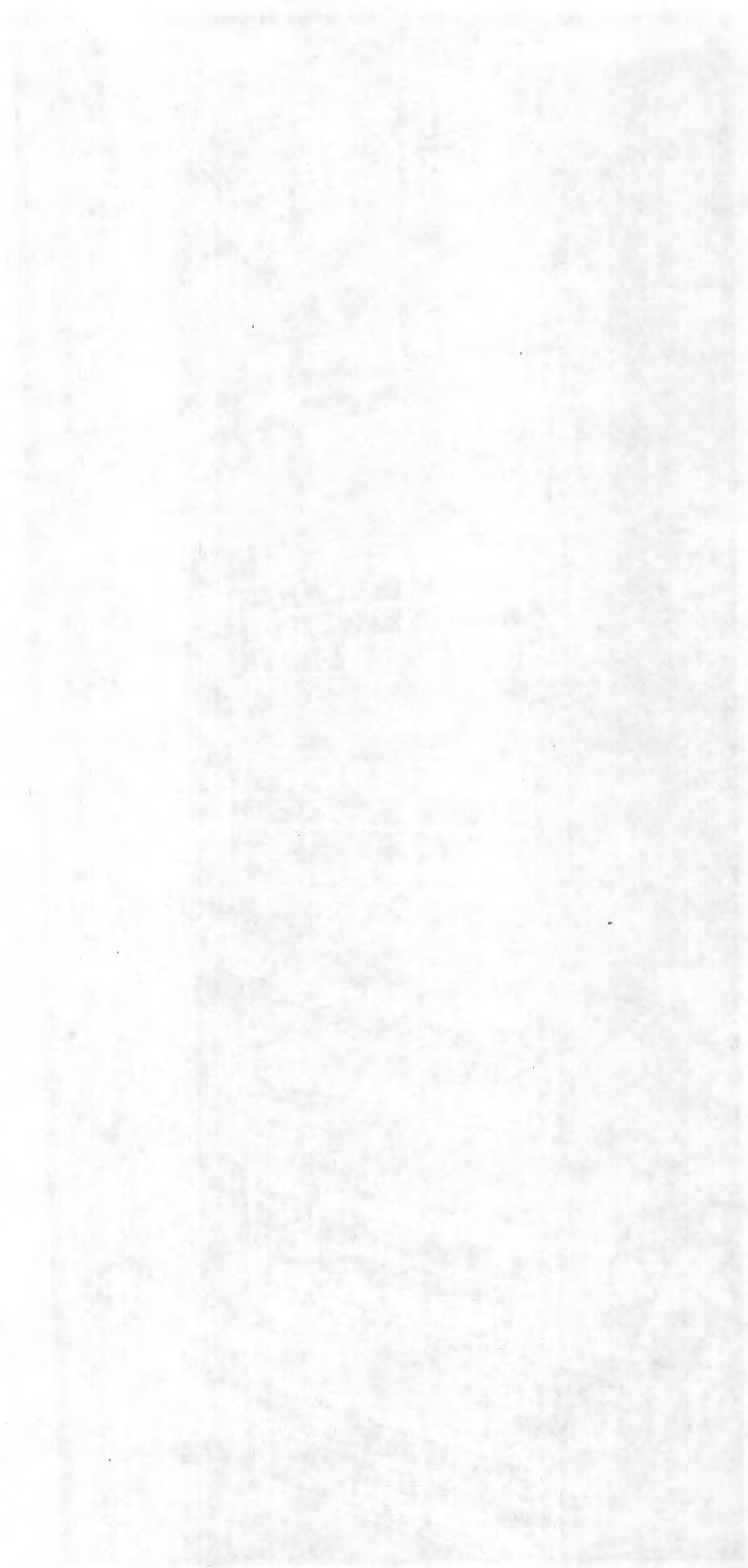


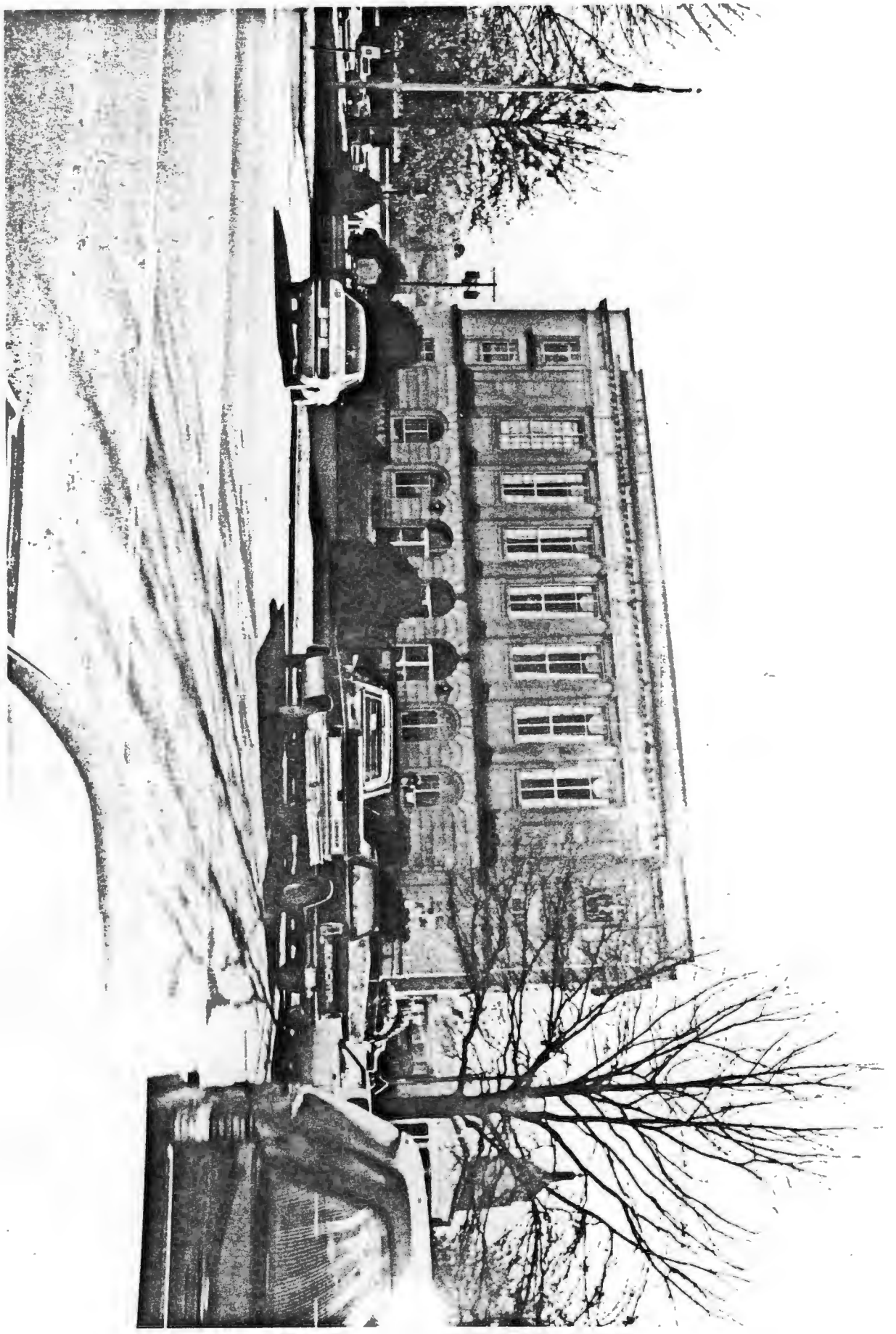
1000 South Main Street
Chicksville, Arkansas
Photographed by Peter Zolman
January 1991
Negatives on file at AHP
View of interior doorway



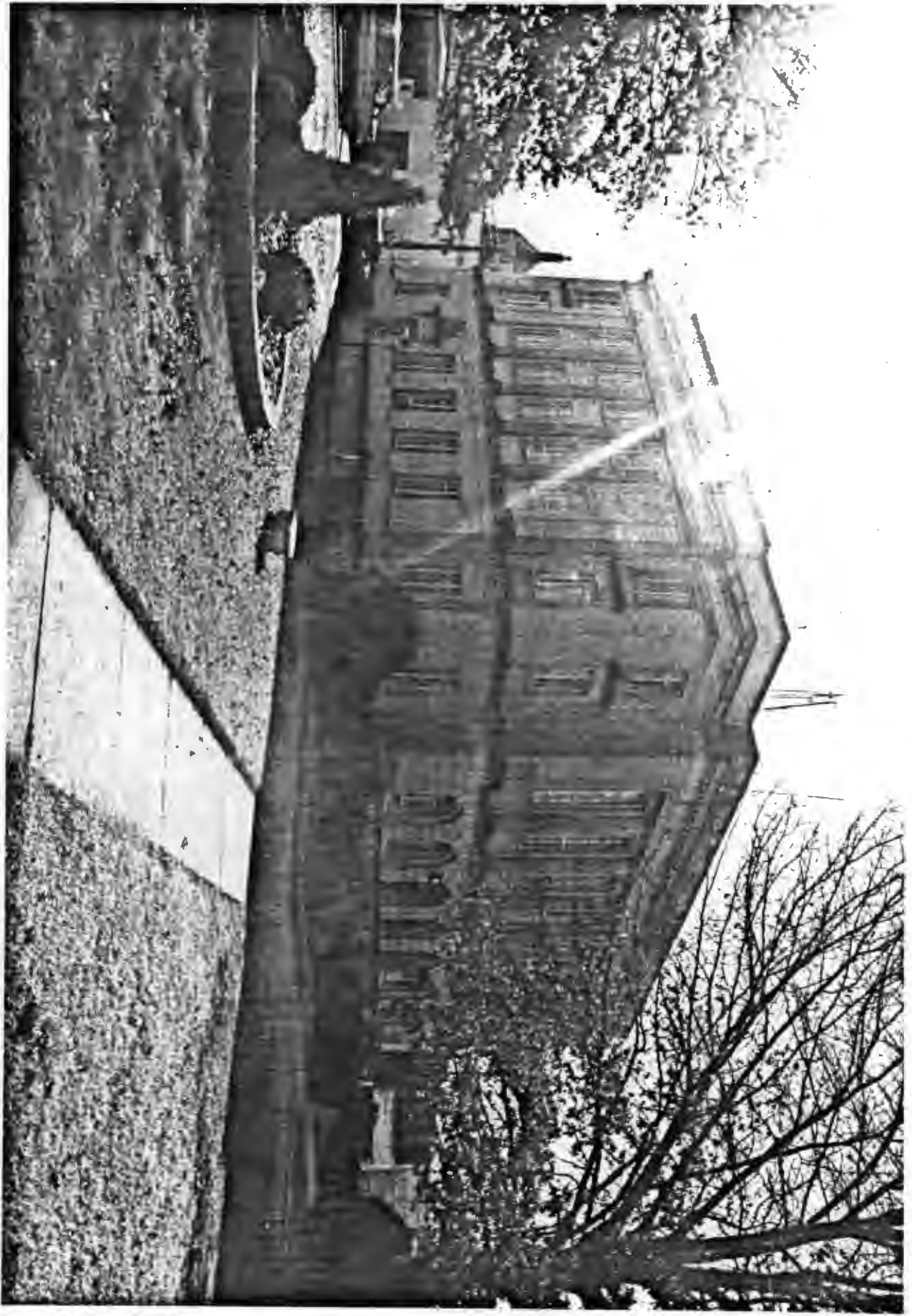


Johnson County Courthouse
Clarksville, Arkansas
Photographed by Patrick Zolner
January 1991
Negative on file at AHPF
View from the north

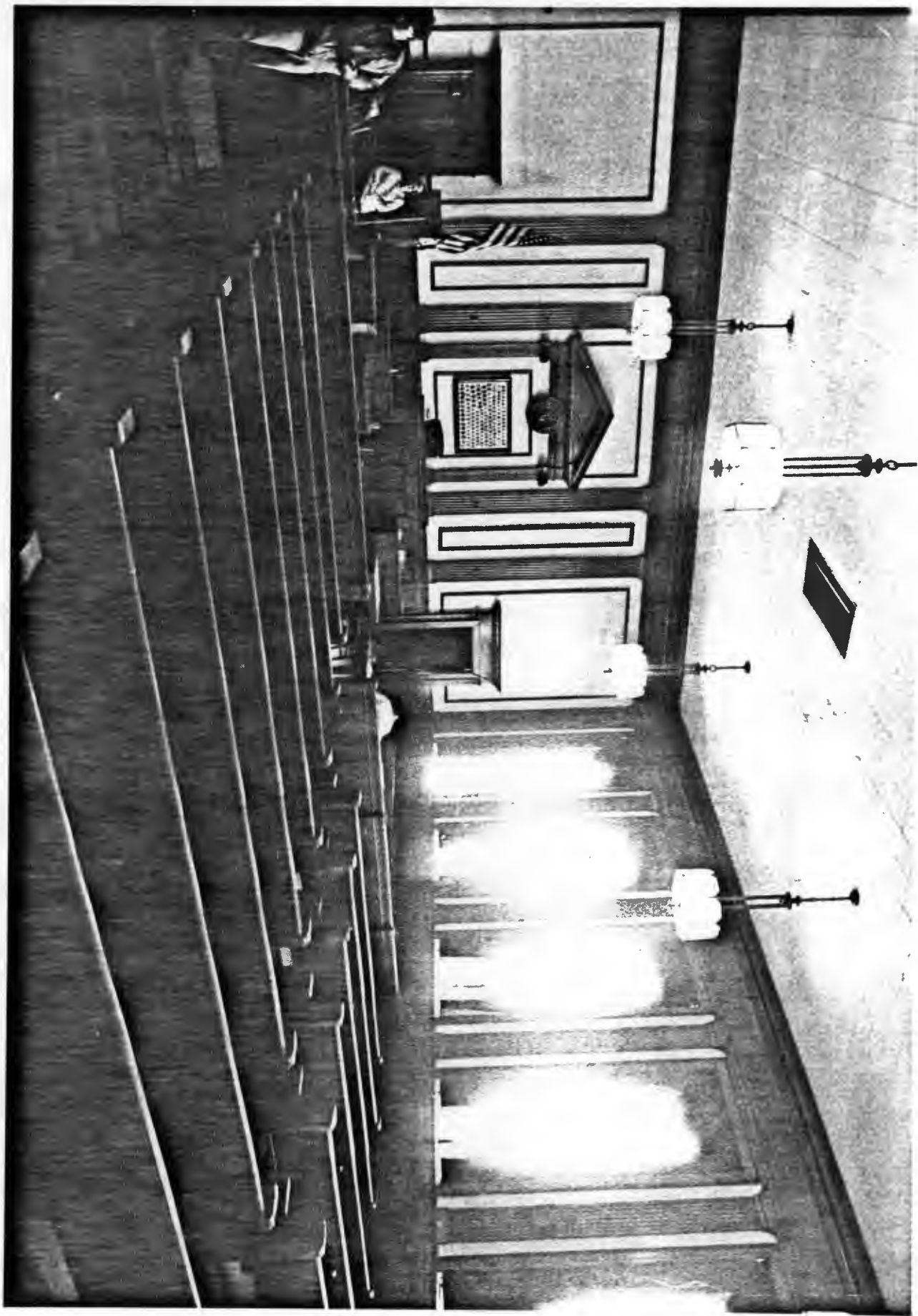




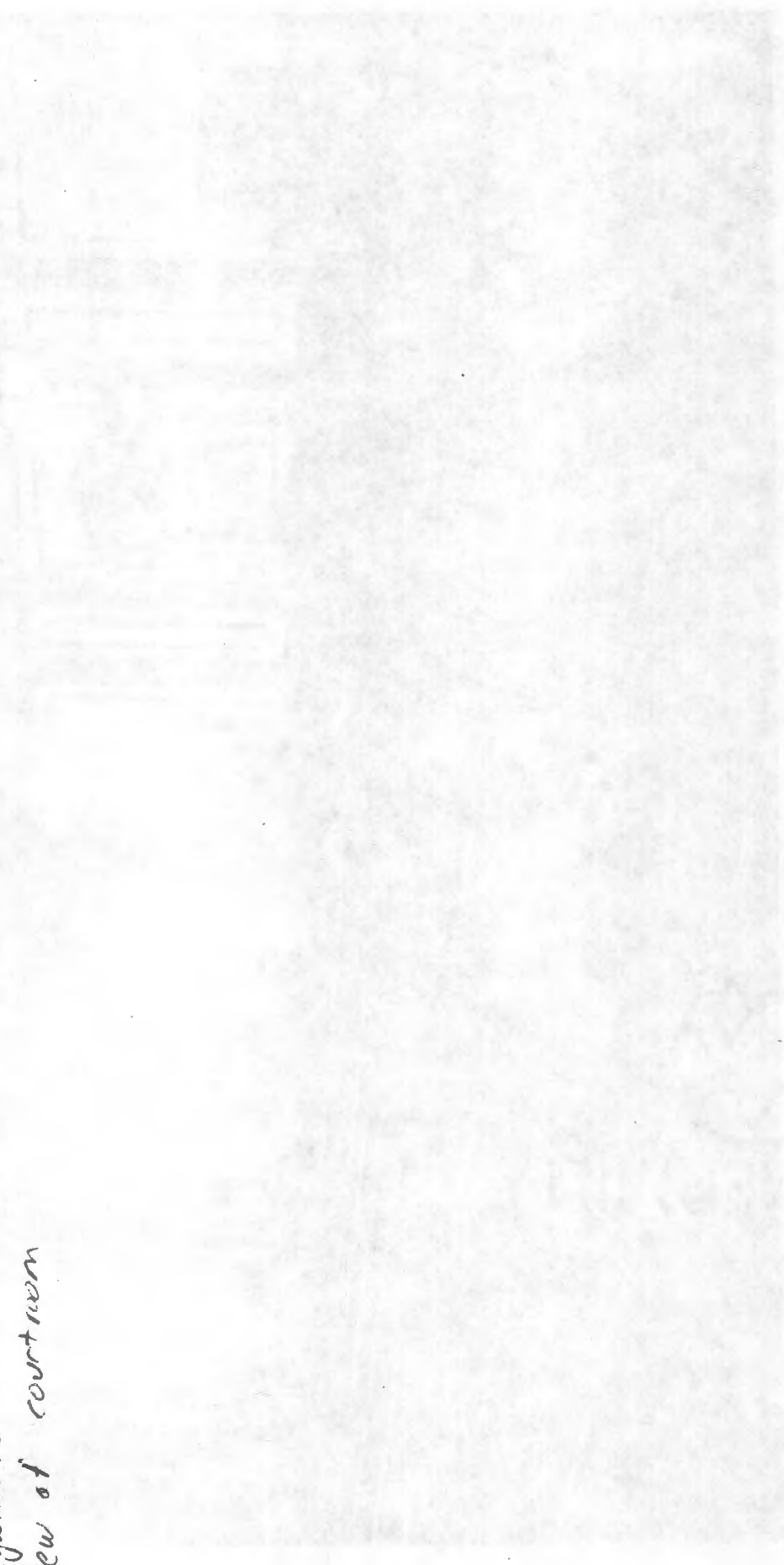
Clarksville, Arkansas
Photographed by Patrick Zolner
January 1991
Negatives on file at AHP
View from the north



View from Court House
Marksville, Louisiana
Photographed by Patrick Zellmer
January 1941
Negatives on file at AHP
View from the northeast

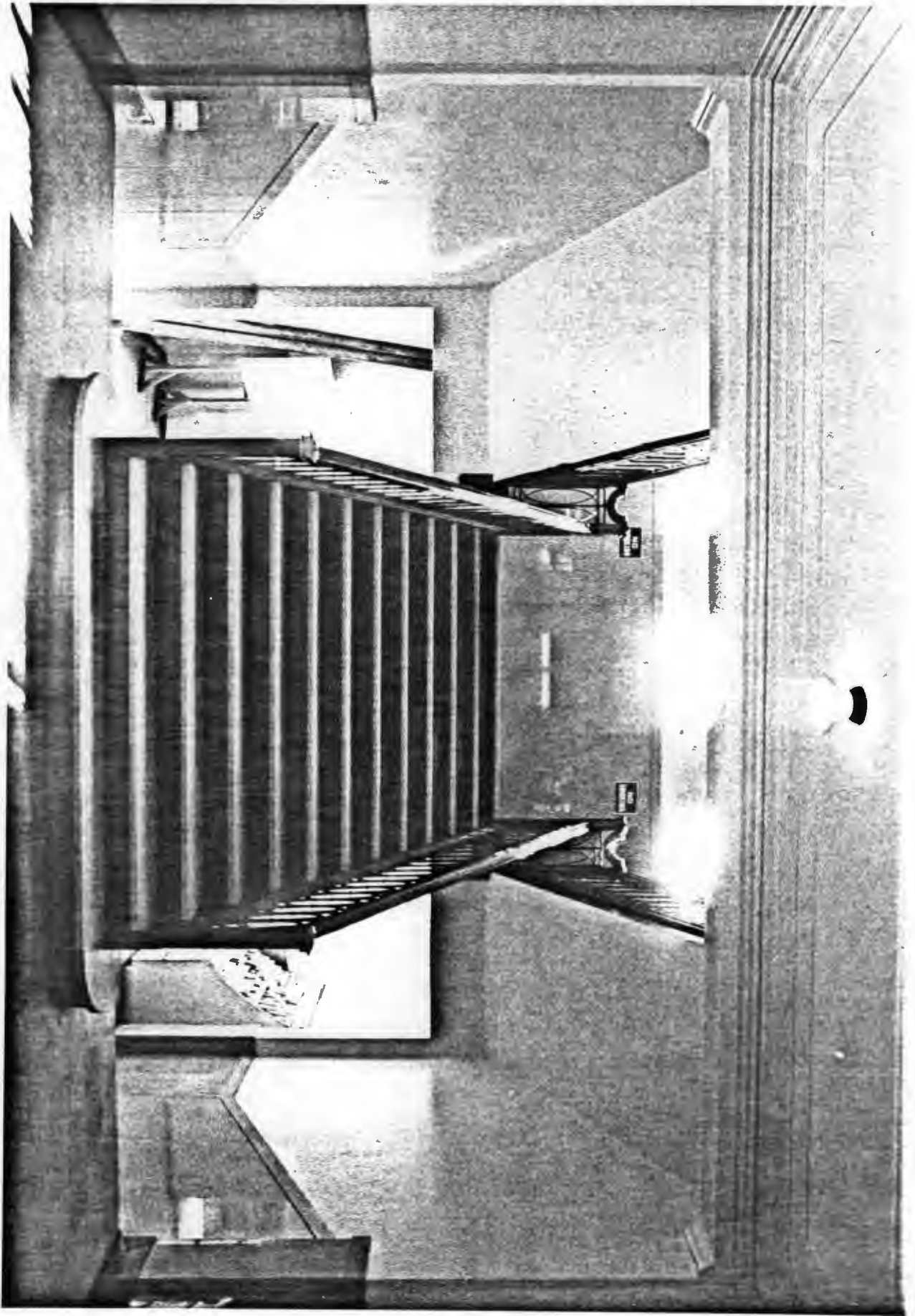


Johnson County Courthouse
Greenville, Arkansas
Photographed by Patrick Zolner
November 1941
Negatives on file at AHP
View of courtroom

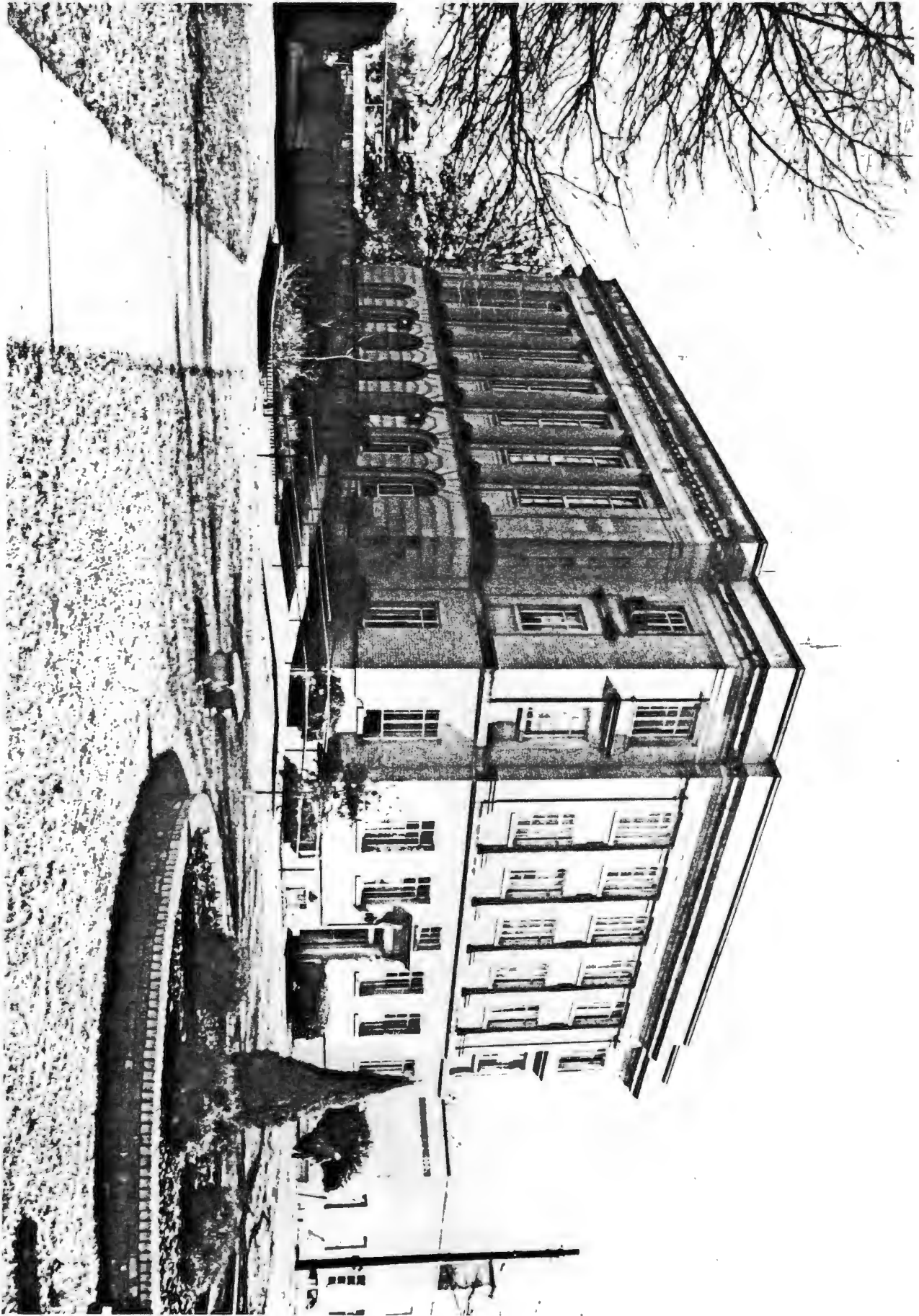




in county Overlook
Arkansas
Photographed by Patrick S. Collins
January 1991
Negatives on file at AHPP
View of interior doorway



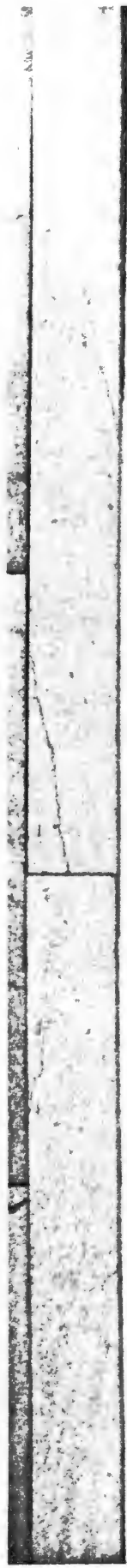
Blacksville, Arkansas
Photographed by Patrick Zoller
January 1991
Negatives on file at AHIP
-Hans J. Siorce



Photographed by Patrick Zollner
January 1991
Negatives on file at AHPP
View from northward

JOHNSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE
FEDERAL EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION
OF PUBLIC WORKS
PROJECT No. 7431

JOHNSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE
ERECTED A. D. 1935
COUNTY OFFICERS
H. C. STUBBLEFIELD JUDGE
FRED RUSSELL CLERK
L. H. PIERSON TREASURER
G. W. LADD SHERIFF
B. B. LOGAN COUNTY CLERK
O. D. BRINKS ASSESSOR
REYNOLDS & MAZE ATTORNEYS
HARRALSON & NELSON ARCHITECTS
LINEBARGER & FRASER CONTRACTORS



Wagon County, New Mexico
Borkeville, Oklahoma
First photographed by Patrick Zoller
January 1991
Negatives on file at NHPP
View of Plaque



Townsend Family Courthouse
Clarksville, AR
Photographed by Vicki Zolner
January 1997
Negatives on file at AHPP
View from the north

