

Listed

6/14/90

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 Home Economics/ F.F.A. Building
other names/site number

2. Location
street & number [] not for publication N/A
city, town Portia [] vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code AR county Lawrence code 075 zip code 72457

3. Classification
Ownership of Property: [] private, [x] public-local, [] public-State, [] public-Federal
Category of Property: [x] building(s), [] district, [] site, [] structure, [] object
Number of Resources within Property:
Contributing: 1, Noncontributing: 0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total: 1
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 [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.
Signature of certifying official: Cathryn A. Buford, Date: 5-4-90
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 the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
EDUCATION/ Schoolroom

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions) ·
VACANT/ Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/ Rustic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation _____ Concrete
walls _____ Stone
roof _____ Asphalt shingle
other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation Sheet**

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Summary

The Home Economics/F.F.A. Building is a single story, stone masonry community/school building designed in the simple, Rustic style common to public works projects during the 1930's. Its plan is rectangular and it is covered with a gable roof.

Elaboration

The Home Economics/F.F.A. Building is a single story, stone masonry community/classroom building designed in the simple, Rustic stone style with Craftsman influences common to public works projects in Arkansas during the 1930's. The stone is a variety of the local sandstone particularly common in the Ozarks. Its plan is rectangular and as indicated by the slight shift in the roofline, contains but two rooms of almost identical size. Its gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles, its walls are stone, and it rests upon a continuous cast concrete foundation.

The western or front elevation is asymmetrically divided by the single-leaf entrance, with its gable roof, bracketed porch hood and concrete stoop. The wall to the north is accessed by a large, double-leaf vehicle entrance and is lighted by a single, two-over-two wood window placed to the south. The entrance is filled with a single-leaf wood door with geometric Craftsman muntins. The wall to the south is fenestrated with two six-over-six wood sash windows.

The northern elevation is fenestrated with two symmetrically-placed six-over-six wood sash windows and the gable pediment above is stuccoed. The southern elevation is fenestrated with a central bank of three six-over-six wood sash windows (which have recently been covered with wood planks, but not removed).

The eastern or rear elevation is divided into two sections by the change in cornice height. The wall of the southern half is blank; the wall of the northern half is symmetrically fenestrated, containing a central group of two six-over-six wood sash windows flanked by two single identical windows.

The interior is simply appointed and features plank trim boards and plastered walls. With the exception of the covering of the southern windows, there have been no significant alterations.

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Summary

Criteria A and C, local significance

The Portia Home Economics/F.F.A. Building is locally significant under Criteria A and C for its association with the National Youth Administration, the youth arm of President Franklin Roosevelt's Depression-era economic relief program, the Works Projects Administration (WPA), and for its status as the best local example of a building executed in the indigenous stone Rustic style which was popular with the WPA in its construction throughout Arkansas, and in the Ozark region in particular.

Elaboration

The first federal relief program established for the benefit of America's Depression-era unemployed was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Set up in April, 1933, it was targeted in part to the unemployed youth of America and proceeded to put 250,000 unmarried men to work who were between the ages of 18 and 25 and from families on public relief. Their assignments included work in forestry, park and soil-erosion camps throughout the country. This program met with widespread public approval, and by 1935 the age limits had been expanded to include men ranging in age from 17 to 28. And yet the shortcomings of the CCC program for the youth it employed soon became evident. Any type of educational dimension of the CCC program - general or occupational - had never been considered, as its initial mandate had been that of a conservation and relief program. The lack of education among many of the young participants soon became dramatically evident, particularly among the youth from rural areas, and did not improve appreciably in spite of redoubled efforts by the CCC to address the problem. Furthermore, the CCC was always targeted to men, and the employment, vocational and educational needs of women were ignored altogether.

By 1934, the federal government's umbrella agency that oversaw all economic relief efforts, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), had set up several educational camps for unemployed women. Furthermore, by this time the federal government felt that the worst of the Depression was over and that the new mandate therefore was for apprentice training. By June, 1934, a Federal Committee on Apprentice Training was authorized to work with the states to initiate or to further existing apprentice training programs.

However, it was obvious that these efforts, however sincere, were piecemeal and without focus. Critics of these early relief efforts and their inadequacies charged that idleness was especially devastating to the youth of a nation, as without gainful employment they could neither further their families nor themselves, and would have an entire lifetime to be a drain on the nation's meager relief resources. Several of President Roosevelt's closest advisors, including his wife, Charles W. Taussig (president of the American Molasses Company and a devoted supporter of America's youth during the Depression) and Harry L. Hopkins, FERA Administrator,

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encouraged the President to deal with this problem more comprehensively. In the late spring of 1935, after some admittedly legitimate hesitation caused by the nation's limited financial resources generally and his initial confidence in the youth-oriented relief programs already in place, President Roosevelt established by executive order the National Youth Administration (NYA) and allotted \$50,000,000 for its use during the ensuing fiscal year.

By the fall of 1935, when \$30,000,000 of the NYA's appropriation had been earmarked for youth work projects, the NYA had already adopted a firm philosophy regarding the need for decentralization: the needs of urban youth were perceived as being radically different than the requirements of young people in rural, undeveloped areas of the country. Hence a Youth Director for each state was appointed and in turn was charged with the division of his state into districts, with supervisory personnel for each. Each state Director and his district staff were given great latitude in the selection and planning of specific projects. However, construction for public agencies at all levels became the dominant trend in the work program, particularly for the young men, just as it had been for the CCC and WPA. And though there was concern that NYA construction projects would take away from the opportunities for CCC and WPA projects and the employment they provided for adults, it was widely agreed that the NYA projects would routinely focus on construction projects of smaller scale and scope. The NYA work program allowed its participants an average of 44.5 hours of work per month and an average monthly pay of \$15.73.

One of the first innovations developed by the NYA to address both the logistical and motivational problems indigenous to rural areas was the formation of the NYA Resident Project for young men and women from relief families. Drafting a relevant and stimulating educational and/or vocational curriculum for rural young people had been a chronic problem for all of the federal relief programs, largely because low-income or impoverished rural youth rarely had the means to travel to and from a central school or classroom. Southwestern Louisiana State, an engineering, teachers and agricultural college in Lafayette was the first institution to begin a low-cost co-operative living plan where students could room and board at a central location and share the daily responsibilities of cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc. Soon the NYA, seeing an opportunity for the resolution of the logistical problems of its own rural students, set up an experimental Resident Project with the Institute to allow some of its young people to participate in the same living arrangement while learning basic agricultural methods, the repair and maintenance of farm machinery, and the construction of agriculture and other types of buildings. This experiment proved successful, and in less than a year NYA Resident Centers were established throughout rural areas of America. By June of 1937, Arkansas alone could boast of eight (Stella, Izard Co.; Beebe, White Co.; Solgohachia, Conway Co.; Camp Couchdale, Hot Spring Co.; Pine Bluff, Jefferson Co.; Magnolia, Columbia Co.; Conway, Faulkner Co.; Russellville, Pope Co.).

One of the more popular building types among the NYA's various construction projects

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nationwide was the community youth center. The need for recreational and community function facilities for young people was identified by the NYA early on, as was the fact that young people who are not rich or employed do not have the means to belong to most private clubs or organizations. Communal activities were valued as promoting productive and mentally refreshing social interaction among America's youth as well as useful activity that prevented idleness and dissipation. The greatest problem in the short history of the relief effort, however, had been finding space.

The facilities that resulted served various purposes and interests. Classes, lectures, dances, music performances and discussion groups were just a few of the activities sheltered by these youth community buildings. Outside civic groups which frequently used the NYA community building for functions included the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, the 4-H Club and even the Chamber of Commerce.

The years 1937 and 1938 saw an extraordinary number of this specific type of building constructed in America. Statistics from the period reveal that as of May 1, 1938, the state of Oklahoma could boast of seven completed youth centers and fifteen more under construction.

It was within this broader context, then, that in 1937 construction was begun on the combination NYA youth community center/classroom in Portia, Arkansas. Always known as the Home Economics/F.F.A. Building, construction was begun in 1937 with Oris McKnight, a local resident, as supervisor. A living local resident, Floyd West, was one of the NYA participants working on the job, and recalled that he was paid 15 cents per hour initially and 25 cents per hour later. The construction was completed by 1938. The building has served a variety of functions since then. In addition to being a classroom and function area, it housed teachers from the Portia School next door, provided the local Boy Scout chapter with a meeting place and sheltered classes of the School for Exceptional Children until a new structure could be built. Perhaps its most famous service to the local community and to the nation came during the Second World War, when the Red Cross used it as a bandage folding station. Six Portia women trained in nearby Walnut Ridge and then came here for as many as five afternoons per week to fold bandages for the wounded. Its vehicle bay at the northern end currently serves as a city garage; otherwise it is unoccupied.

The Home Economics/F.F.A. Building survives virtually intact as a modest but probably typical example of the youth community buildings constructed by the National Youth Administration in the late 1930's. As an architectural design, it is also the best local example of the Rustic style preferred in Arkansas for the construction projects of the federal relief agencies.

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Bibliography

Lindley, Betty and Ernest K., *A New Deal for Youth, the Story of the National Youth Administration*, (New York, 1938), pp. 3-93.

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Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the point formed by the intersection of the eastern edge of City Park Drive and a perpendicular line running along the building's southern elevation, proceed easterly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the eastern elevation of the building; thence proceed northerly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the building's northern elevation; thence proceed westerly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with the eastern edge of City Park Drive; thence proceed southerly along City Park Drive to the point of beginning, comprising in all less than one acre.

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
EDUCATION
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1938

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Bullder

National Youth Administration

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
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6	7	3	7	9	0
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3	9	4	9	1	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

B

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

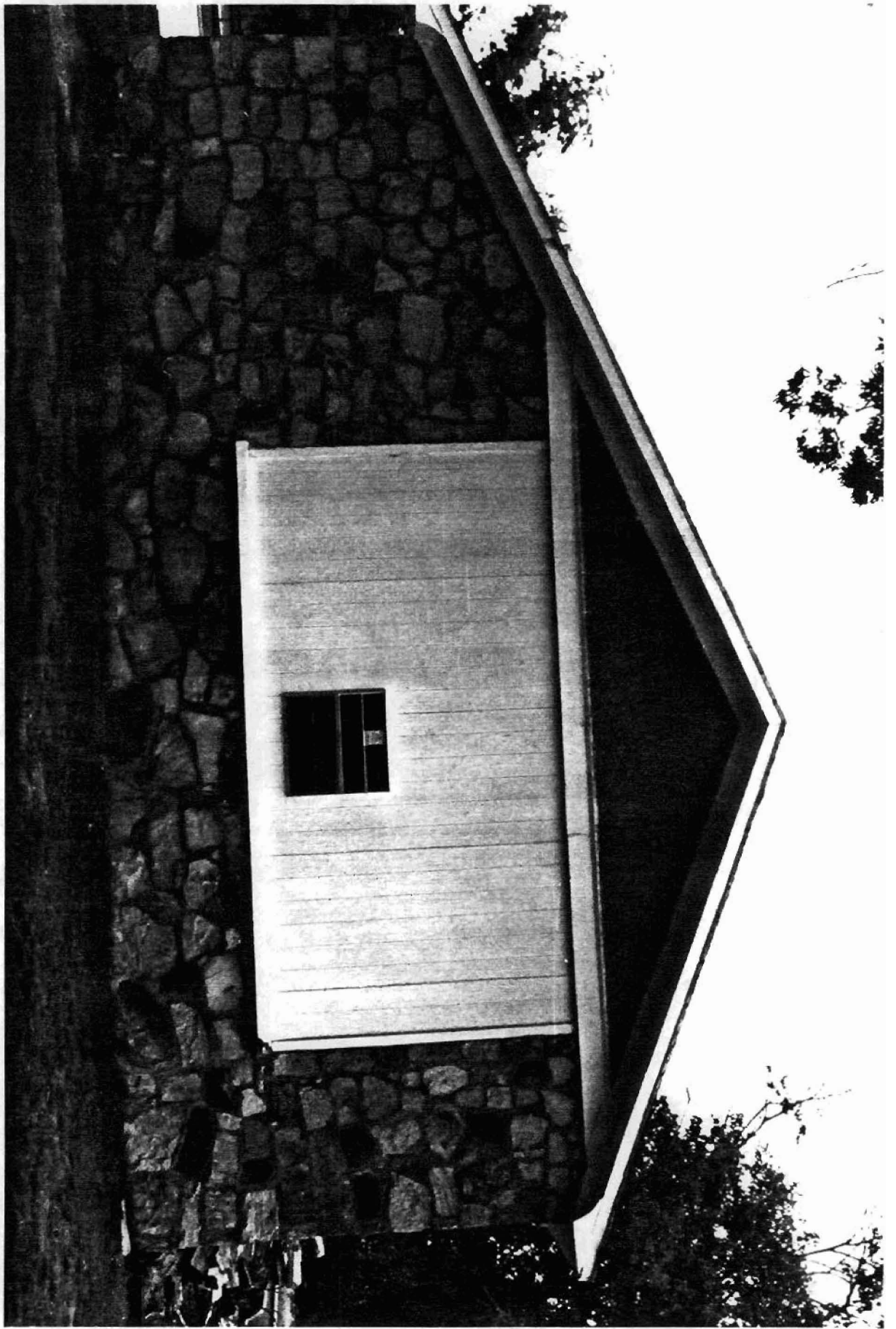
Boundary Justification

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

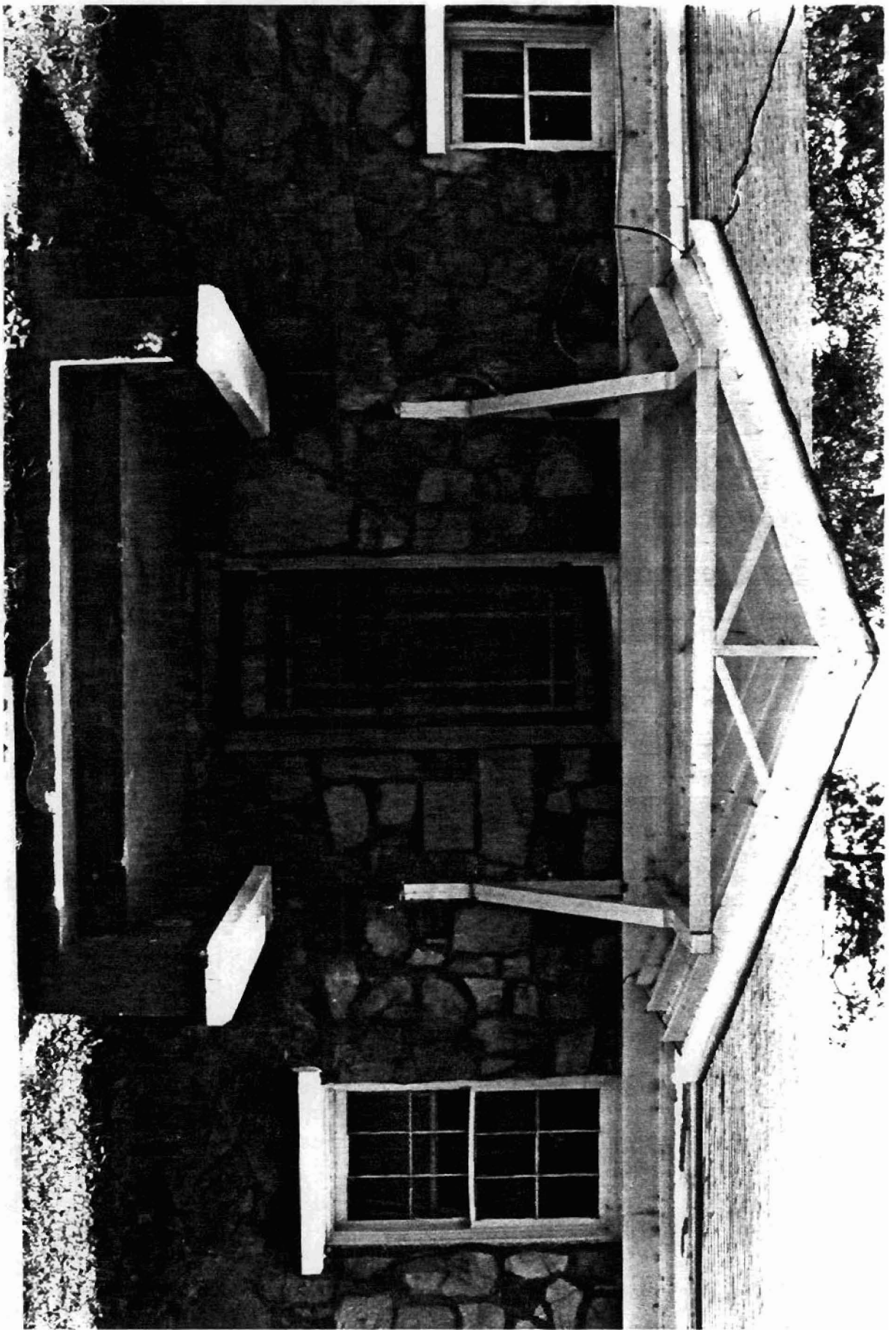
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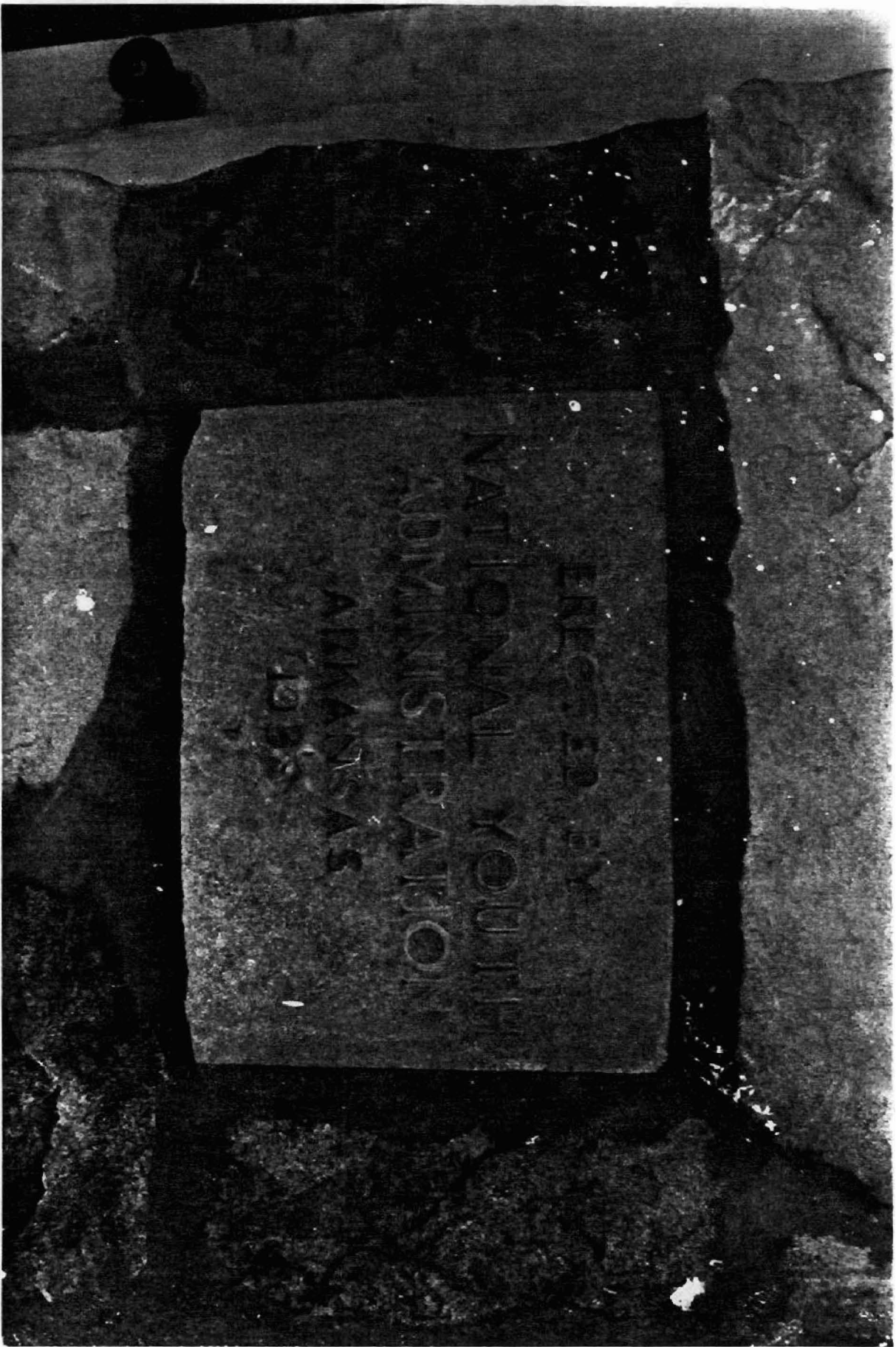
11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
 organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 4 May, 1990
 street & number 225 E Markham, Suite 300 telephone (501) 371-2763
 city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201







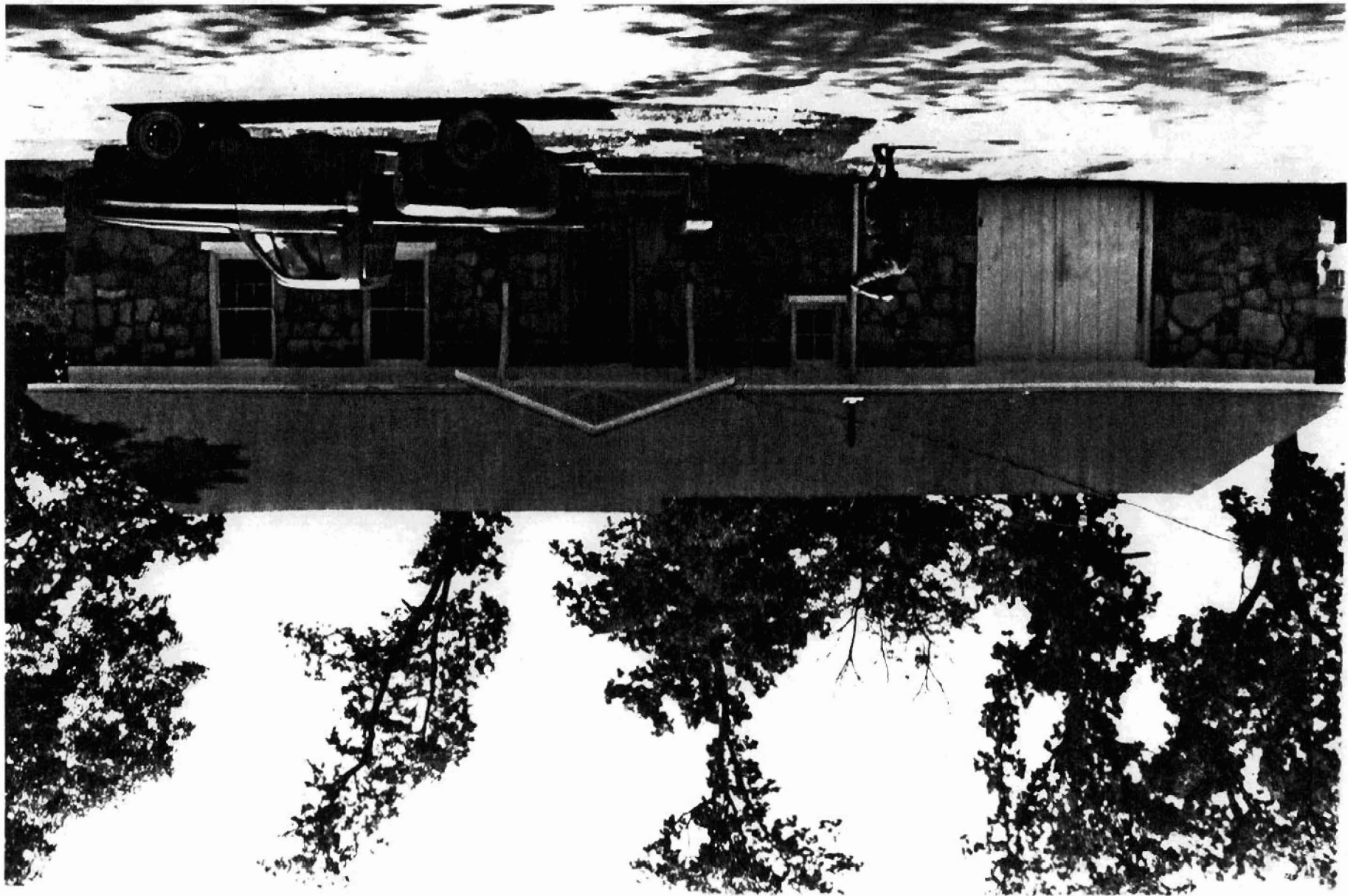


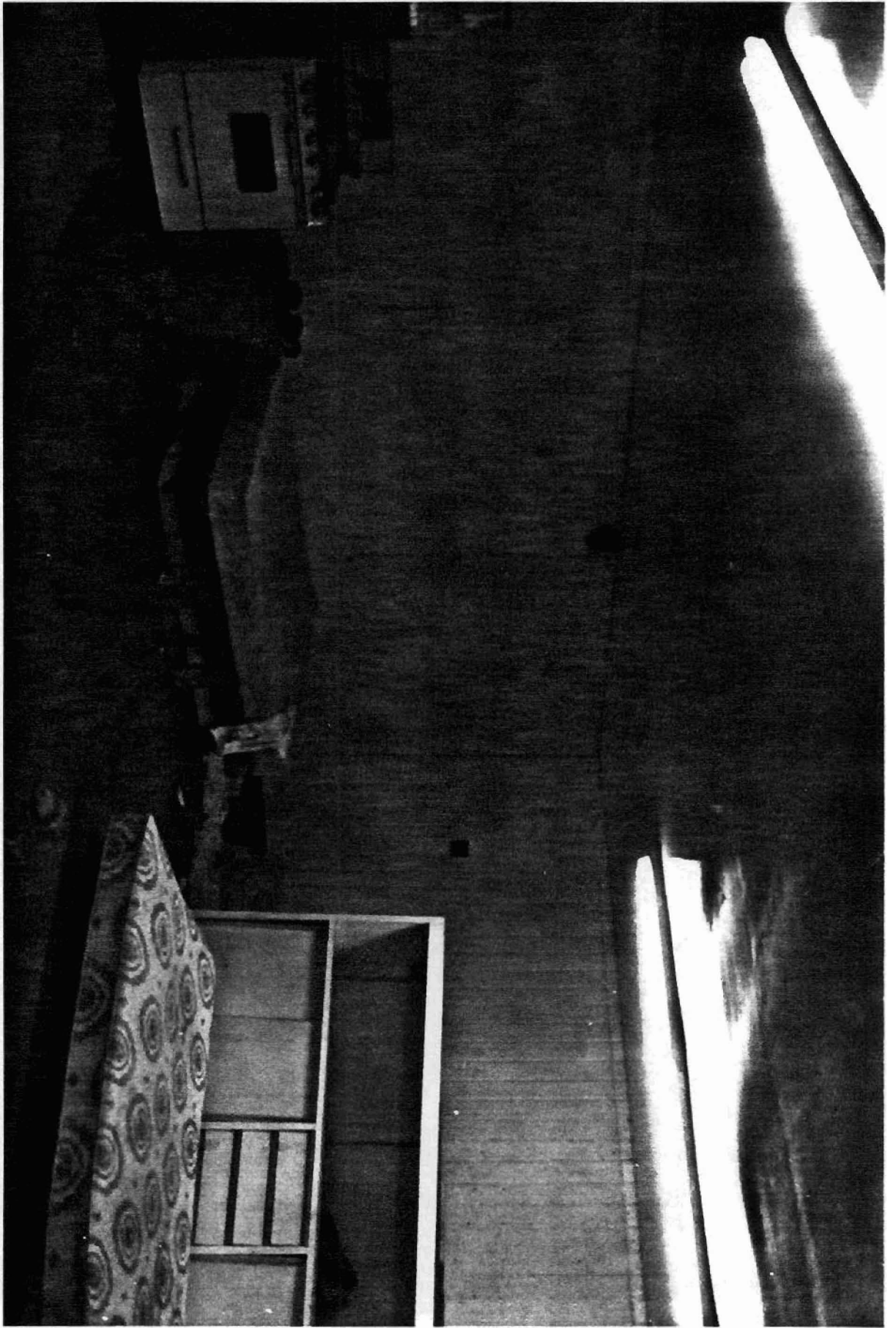
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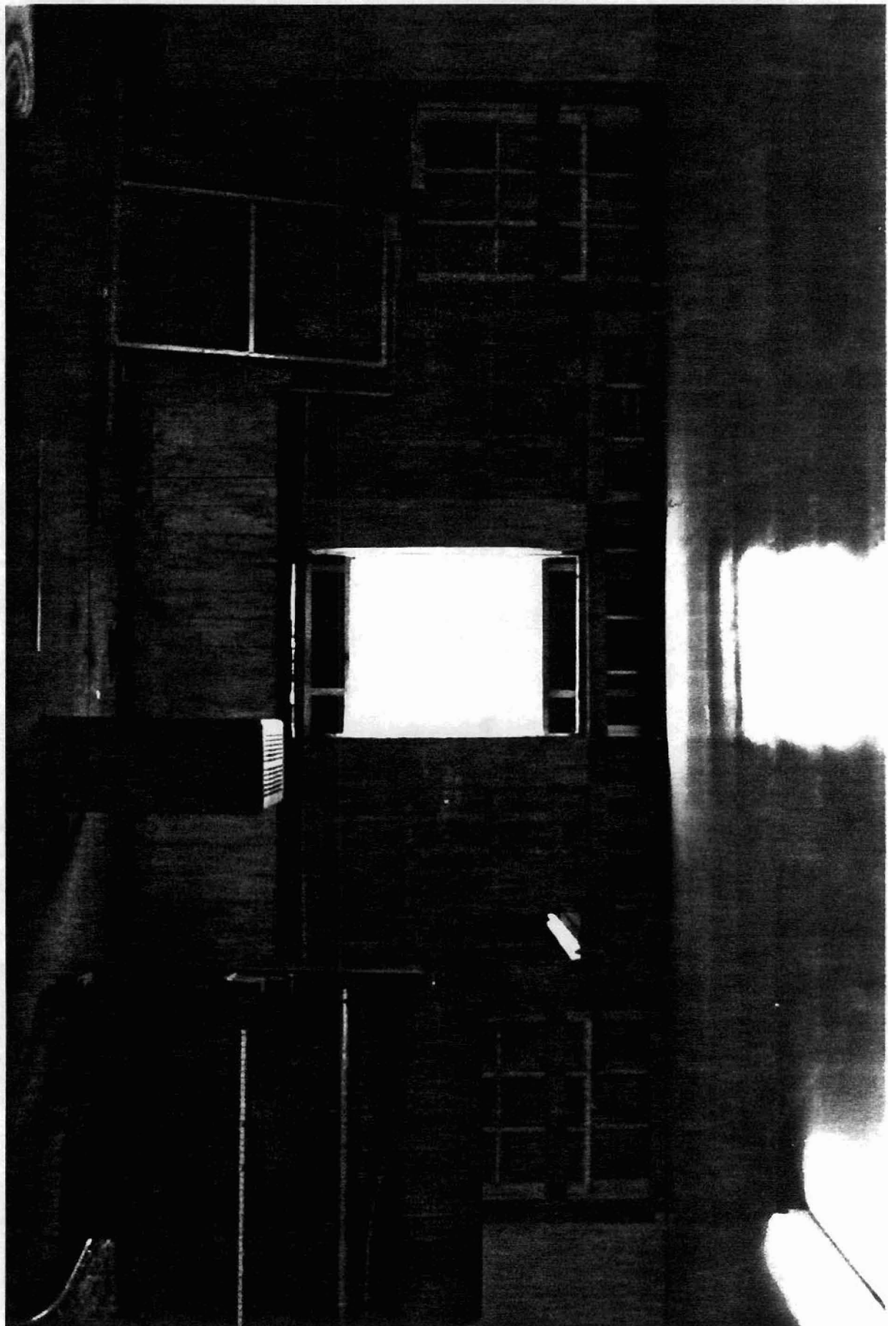
AMMANAS

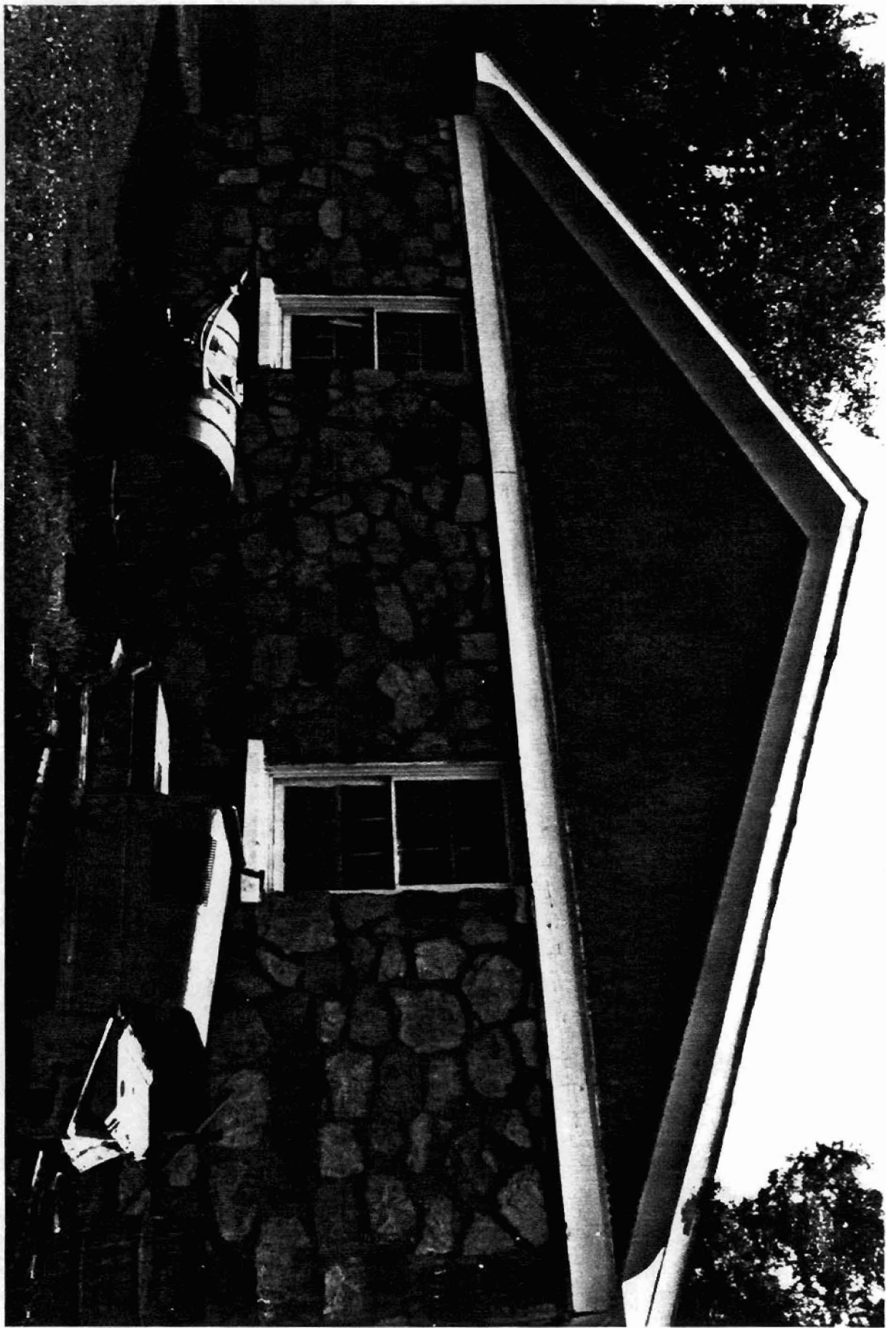
NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

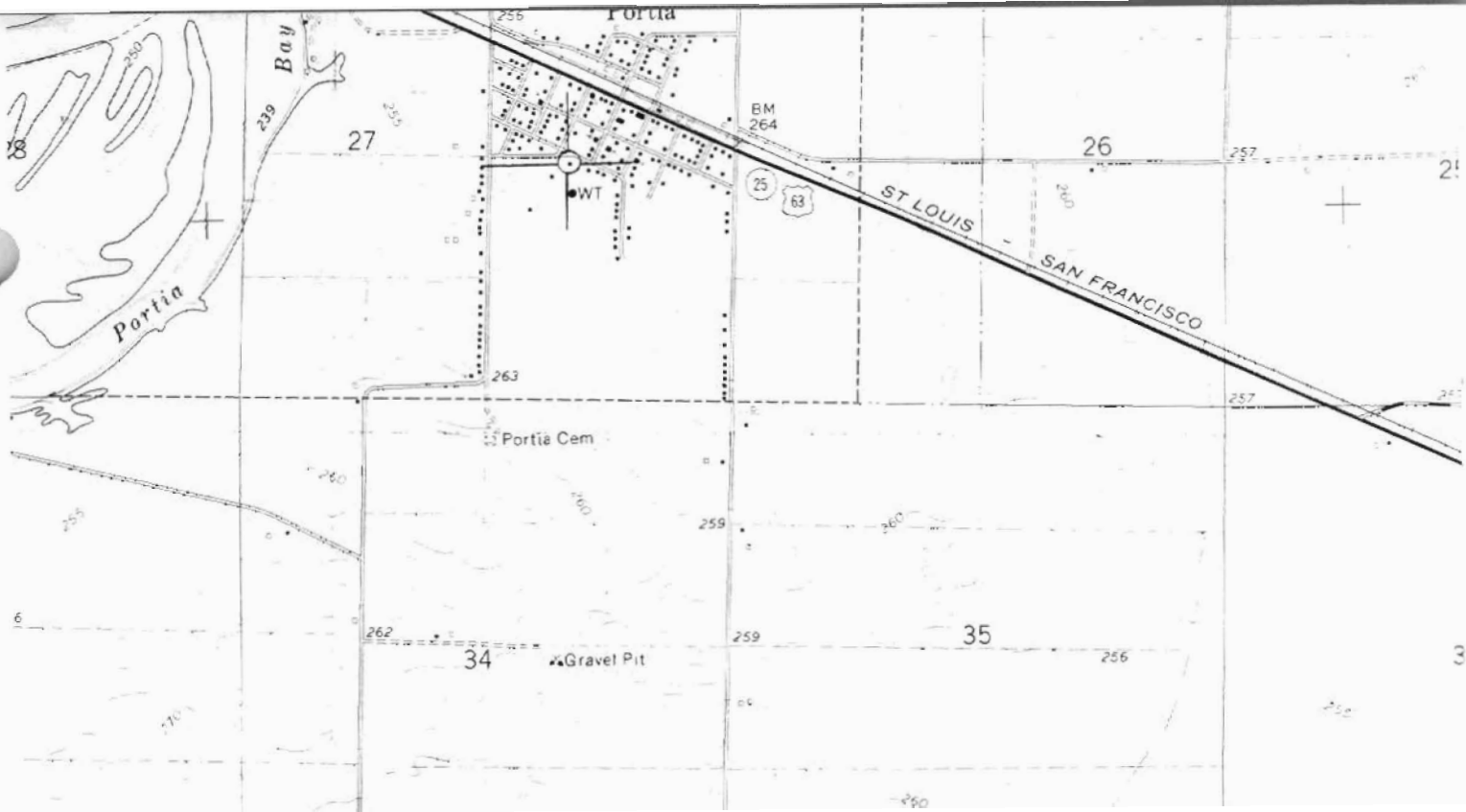
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Home Economics/F.F.A. Building
 Portia, Arkansas
 Lawrence County
 15/673790/3994910
 Black Rock Quadrangle
 1:24000

