

NR LISTEN

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1 23 1998

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

AHPP

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**1. Name of Property**

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Historic Name: Miller County Courthouse

Other Name/Site Number: MI033

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**2. Location**

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Street & Number: 400 Laurel Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Texarkana

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR

County: Miller

Code: AR 091

Zip Code: 71854

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>  1  </u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>  1  </u>	_____	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Miller County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Miller County, Arkansas  
County and State

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

Cathryn J. Sater \_\_\_\_\_ 4-17-98  
Signature of certifying official 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

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**5. National Park Service Certification**  
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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

Miller County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Miller County, Arkansas  
County and State

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

Historic: GOVERNMENT Sub: courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Current : GOVERNMENT Sub: courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**  
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Architectural Classification:  
MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation STONE/Granite roof CONCRETE  
walls STONE/Limestone other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

**Summary**

Located at 400 Laurel Street in Texarkana, the Miller County Courthouse was constructed in 1939, as a four story cut limestone and molded concrete building designed in a simpler version of the Art Deco style known as W.P.A. Moderne. The courthouse was designed by the architect E. C. Seibert, and built by Manhattan Construction. The Art Deco-styled building is symmetrically organized overall, with each facade having its own entry. The only alterations to the exterior have been a few window replacements, and a 1974 addition to the eastern facade that is largely unobtrusive.

The interior remains remarkably intact with only a limited amount of alteration. In 1996, rewiring was begun and fluorescent lights and acoustical tiles were installed on several floors. The first three floors are devoted to the offices of the courthouse, and the jail occupies the fourth floor. The basement contains more office space and the holding cells for prisoners, as well as the heating and cooling systems for the building. Original interior decorations include: marble floors and wainscoting, simple molded entry ways, ceiling molding and courtroom furniture and pews.

### Elaboration

The Miller County Courthouse, located at 400 Laurel Street in downtown Texarkana, Arkansas is a four-story, cut stone and cast concrete masonry courthouse building designed in a restrained version of the Art Deco style that was quite popular with such federal public works projects during the 1930s. Its plan is almost completely symmetrical. Each elevation contains one-story flanking wings that contain offices. The central rectangular block of the building contains the courtrooms, file rooms and additional offices. The set-back section on the fourth floor contains the jail. The only exceptions to the symmetrical plan are the 1974 addition on the east elevation, and the asymmetrical placement of an elevator shaft that rises from the roof of the jail. The flat roof is covered with built-up tar, the walls are faced with cut stone, and the 1974 addition is faced with matching stone.

The principal, or southwestern, elevation faces Laurel Street. This elevation is symmetrically organized overall, with each of the projecting wings divided into four window bays, while the central block is divided into eleven window bays with a centrally located main entrance. The main entrance the double-leaf metal door is flanked by two full-height two-light sidelights and surmounted by a three light transom grouping consisting of one large central glass pane flanked by two narrower panes. A stylized floral motif on the tall, flat lintel above the entrance is flanked by two, broad, stepped-up pilasters with shallow fluting. Also flanking the entry is a pair of three-story pilasters surmounted by eagles. Located between the eagles, three stories above the entrance are the words, "MILLER COUNTY / COURTHOUSE." Access to the entry is made by climbing up twelve stone steps flanked by massive concrete balustrades and a two historic lamp pole on each side. Other Art Deco inspired details on this elevation include: a pair of slightly-raised paterae on three-story tall pilasters, fluting and panels placed between stories to visually connect the windows, chevron patterns between the eagles, and stylized cornice details on both the flanking single story wings and the third and fourth stories. On the roof of the third story a chain-link fence, razor wire and other deterrents (are located in front of the set back fourth story jail area). The eight windows of the fourth story are infilled or covered by protective screens.

The side, or northwest, elevation faces Fifth Street and is similar to the front elevation. The only differences are the number of window bays and lack of some of the Art Deco ornamentation. The elevation is symmetrically divided, with each of the projecting wings divided into three window bays, while the central block is divided into eight window bays with a centrally located main entrance. Again the words, "MILLER COUNTY COURTHOUSE" appear centrally on the third story, this time in a single line. The fourth story contains three large windows covered by protective screens.

The rear, or northeast, elevation faces Ash Street and contains the 1974 addition. The addition is basically a single story extension beyond the flanking wings. The addition is faced with stone matching the rest of the building and is largely hidden from view by two evergreen trees. The centrally located addition contains no windows except for those surrounding the entrance. The entry is composed of a set of double-leaf metal doors beside three full-length windows on the basement story surmounted by three large stationary windows on the first story. Access is gained by descending eight concrete steps. Above the addition, the rest of this elevation composed like the front elevation, but lacks the words "Miller County Courthouse" and all the fourth story windows have been enclosed or covered by screens.

The southeastern elevation is composed in much the same way as the opposite side elevation except that instead of an elaborate entrance there is a single off-center, glass door located in the basement story and covered by a flat-roofed metal awning denotes the entry area. The basement is raised on this elevation and faced with rose-colored stone. A metal staircase ascends to a side entrance in the south flanking wing. On the first story, three windows have been replaced by double-hung modern windows that mimic the look of multi-paned windows. On the fourth story, one window has been infilled with ventilating louvers, another has been infilled with limestone and the other is hidden by a protective screen.

The interior remains remarkably intact with only a limited number of alterations. The first three floors are devoted to the offices of the courthouse, and the jail occupies the fourth floor. The basement contains more offices, the holding cells for prisoners, and the heating and cooling systems for the building. The only interior alterations include: separation of large rooms into smaller areas, the removal of several radiators, the addition of shelving and cabinets, the introduction of carpeting in many of the offices, the addition of an elevator in the 1970s, and the replacement of the Venetian blinds with mini blinds. In 1996, rewiring was begun and fluorescent lights and acoustical tiles were installed on several floors. Original decorations such as marble floors and wainscoting, simple molded entry ways, ceiling molding and courtroom furniture and benches are designed in the Art Deco manner.

Miller County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Miller County, Arkansas  
County and State

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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: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1939

Significant Dates: 1939

Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Seibert, E. C. (Architect)  
Manhattan Construction (Builder)  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above:

**Summary**

The Miller County Courthouse is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance as an excellent example of a Depression-era Art Deco (W. P. A. Moderne) building within the city of Texarkana. The courthouse was designed by architect E. C. Seibert, and construction was completed in 1939.

**Elaboration**

Miller County was created by an Act of the Congress of the Territory of Arkansas in 1820 from a portion of Hempstead County. The name for the new county was a tribute to General James Miller, the first governor of the

Arkansas Territory. At the time, the boundary between Texas (Mexico) and Arkansas was thought to be ten miles farther west than it really was. Many of the citizens of Miller County preferred the jurisdiction of Texas to Arkansas. Sixth judicial circuit judge William B. Conway reported in 1830 that "Texas has usurped full jurisdiction over Miller county..." After his inauguration in 1836 as first governor of the state of Arkansas, James S. Conway proposed that "The easiest and most effectual remedy that presents itself to my mind is the abolition of Miller County and attachment of her territory to some other possessed of more patriotism." Miller County was re-established in 1874 with the addition of land from Lafayette County.

The city of Texarkana, Arkansas was founded in 1873. The tracks of the Texas and Pacific Railroad and the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway met at the Arkansas-Texas state line and prompted the creation of the city at this location. The first lots on the Texas side of the town were sold on December 8, 1873. Texarkana, Arkansas was incorporated as a town on November 12, 1880 and the plat of the original town was recorded December 13, 1880.

The first Miller County Courthouse was built around 1888 in Texarkana. During a meeting on September 19, 1938, it was decided the old courthouse was no longer serviceable, and the jail had been condemned as unfit by the Western District of Arkansas Courts. The federal government helped fund the project through the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. Architect E. C. Seibert was employed to design the new courthouse. Seibert was a partner in the firm of Witt, Seibert and Halsey from 1912 to 1930. The firm was prolific and is noted for the design of numerous buildings in Texarkana as well as many other towns in Texas and Arkansas. The firm designed such National Register properties as the Bottoms House in Texarkana, Arkansas (NR listed 6/8/82), the Arthur Dean House in Texarkana, Arkansas (NR listed 12/12/76), and the Sidney A. Umstead House in Camden, Ouachita County (NR listed 6/30/95). After the architectural firm of Witt, Seibert and Halsey was dissolved Seibert continued his career independently, and designed several buildings including: the First Methodist Church in Eldorado, Arkansas, the Dr. Joseph Nichols House in Altanta, Texas, and the Dr. Charles Smith House in Texarkana, Texas. E. C. Seibert's largest project after leaving the firm was the Miller County Courthouse. Besides his architectural career Seibert served as Texarkana's mayor for two terms from 1934 until 1938.

The construction company hired to build the courthouse was Manhattan Construction. Other buildings credited to their construction skills are the Chemistry Building at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (NR listed 9/4/92), and the Sebastian County Courthouse (NR listed 6/8/93). According to the plaque that is displayed on the first floor wall the Miller County Courthouse was dedicated in 1939.

The Miller County Courthouse is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C with local significance as a good example of a government building constructed in a design variant of the Art Deco style, also known as W. P. A. Moderne. The courthouse defines itself within this idiom by its stark symmetrical facades enlivened by concrete and stone carvings of floral motifs, eagles, chevrons, simplified pilasters, and other Art Deco ornamentation.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**  
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Gill, John and Marjem. On the Courthouse Square in Arkansas. Copyright 1980.

Workers of the Writer's Program. The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas. With a New Introduction by Elliot West. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1987 (original copyright 1941).

Chandler, Barabara O., et al. History of Texarkana and Bowie and Miller Counties. (Shreveport, Louisiana: J. Edward Howe Publisher, 1939) p. 62.

Information provided by the Texarkana Museums System, April 1998.

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:

- x State historic preservation office
- \_ Other state agency
- \_ Federal agency
- \_ Local government
- \_ University
- \_ Other -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_



Miller County Courthouse  
Name of Property

Miller County, Arkansas  
County and State

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**10. Geographical Data**  
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Acreage of Property: Aproximately four acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

A 15 404500 3698840    B                
C                          D              

Verbal Boundary Description:

All of Block 46, Original City

Boundary Justification:

This boundary contains all the remaining historically significant structures associated with this property.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
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Name/Title: Amy Bennett, Survey Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 4/9/98

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

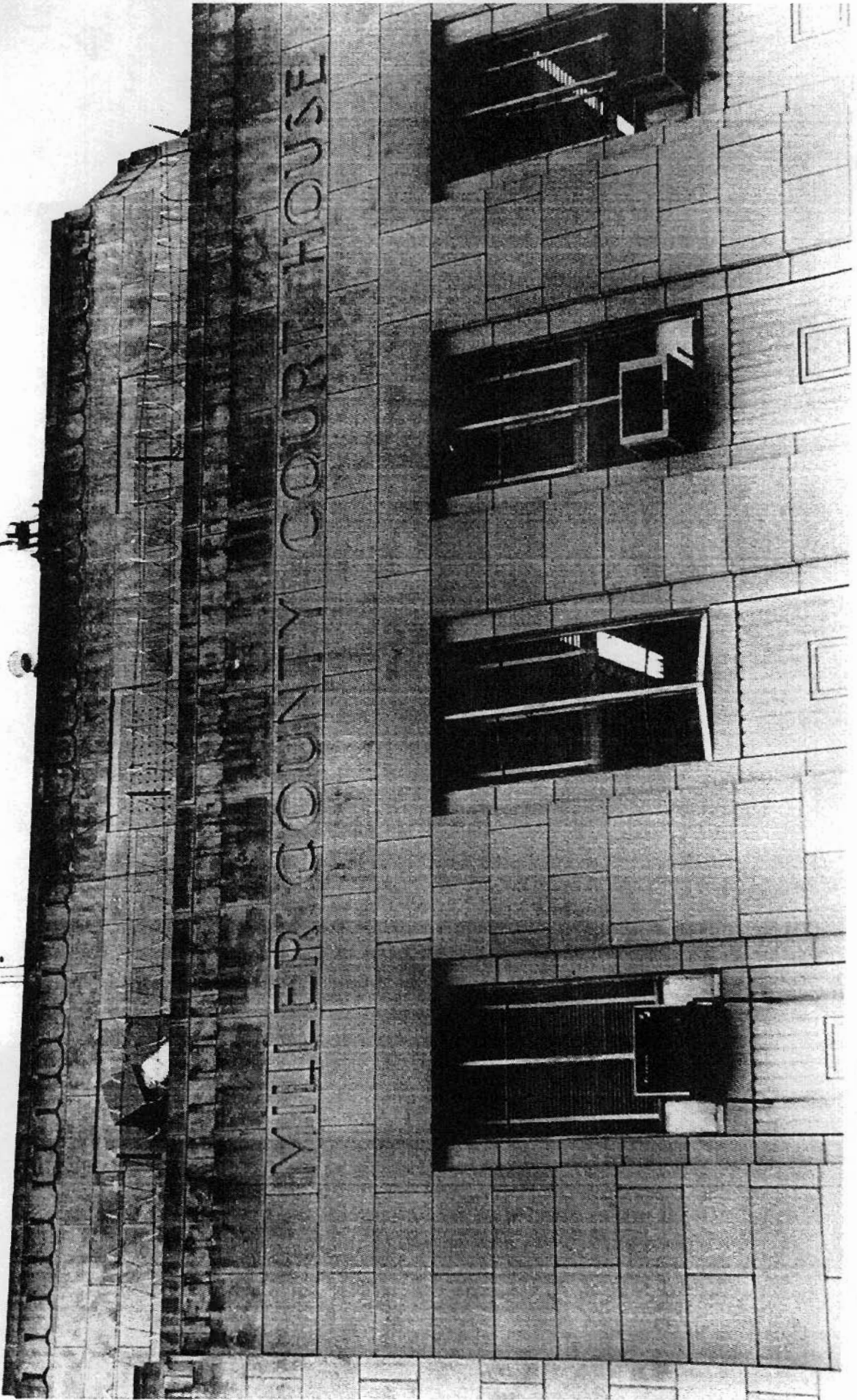
City or Town: Little Rock                                    State: AR    ZIP: 72201



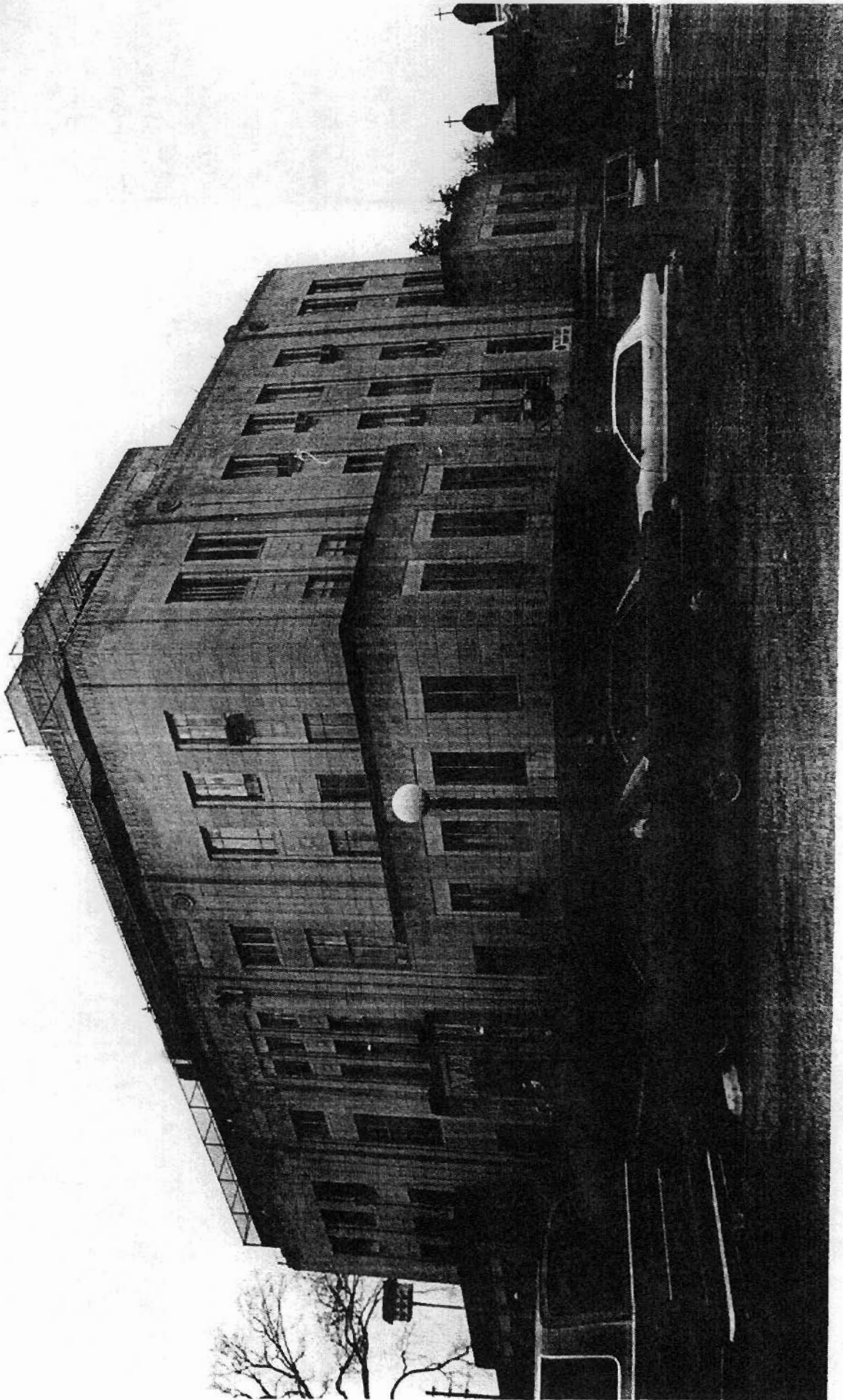




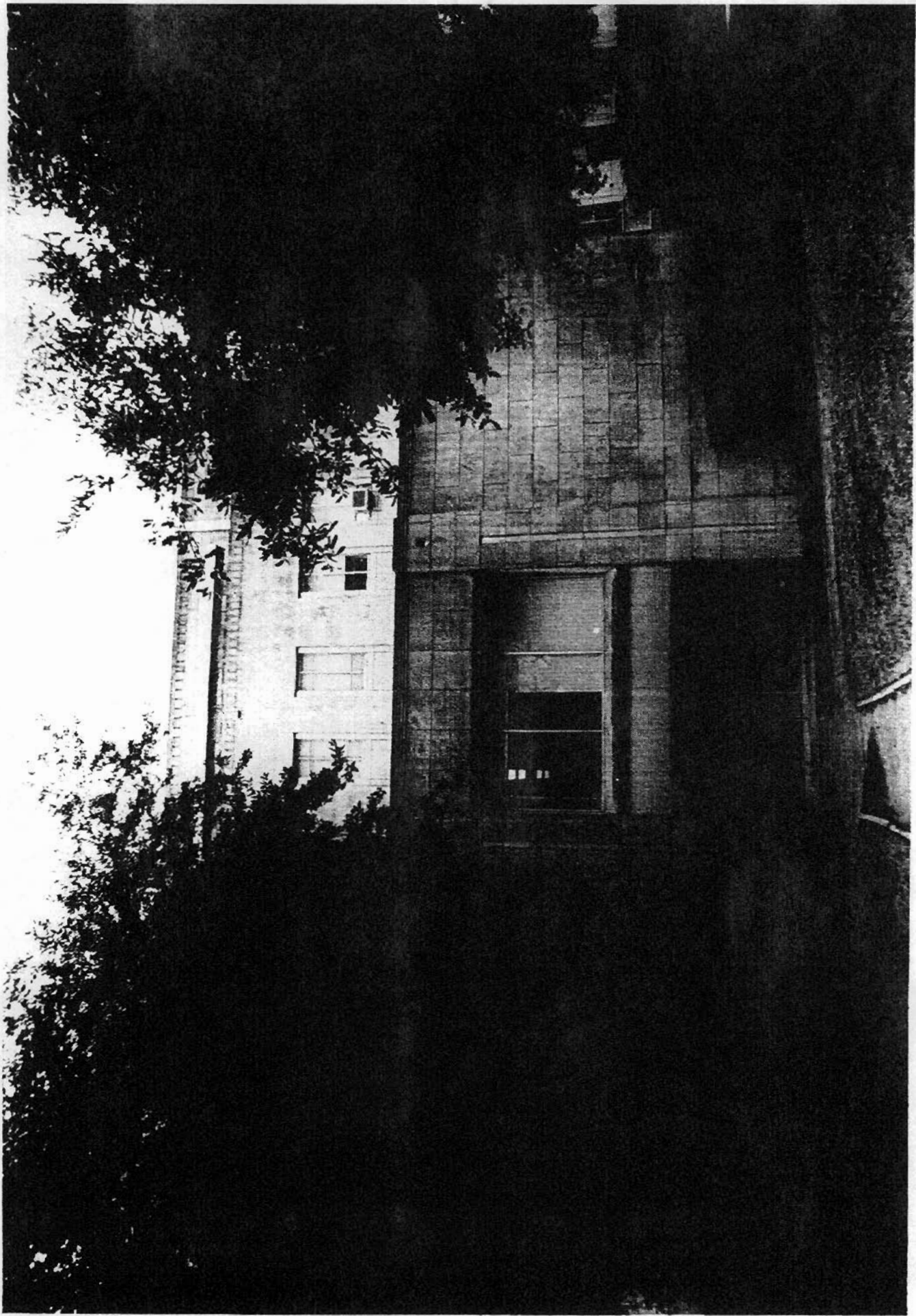


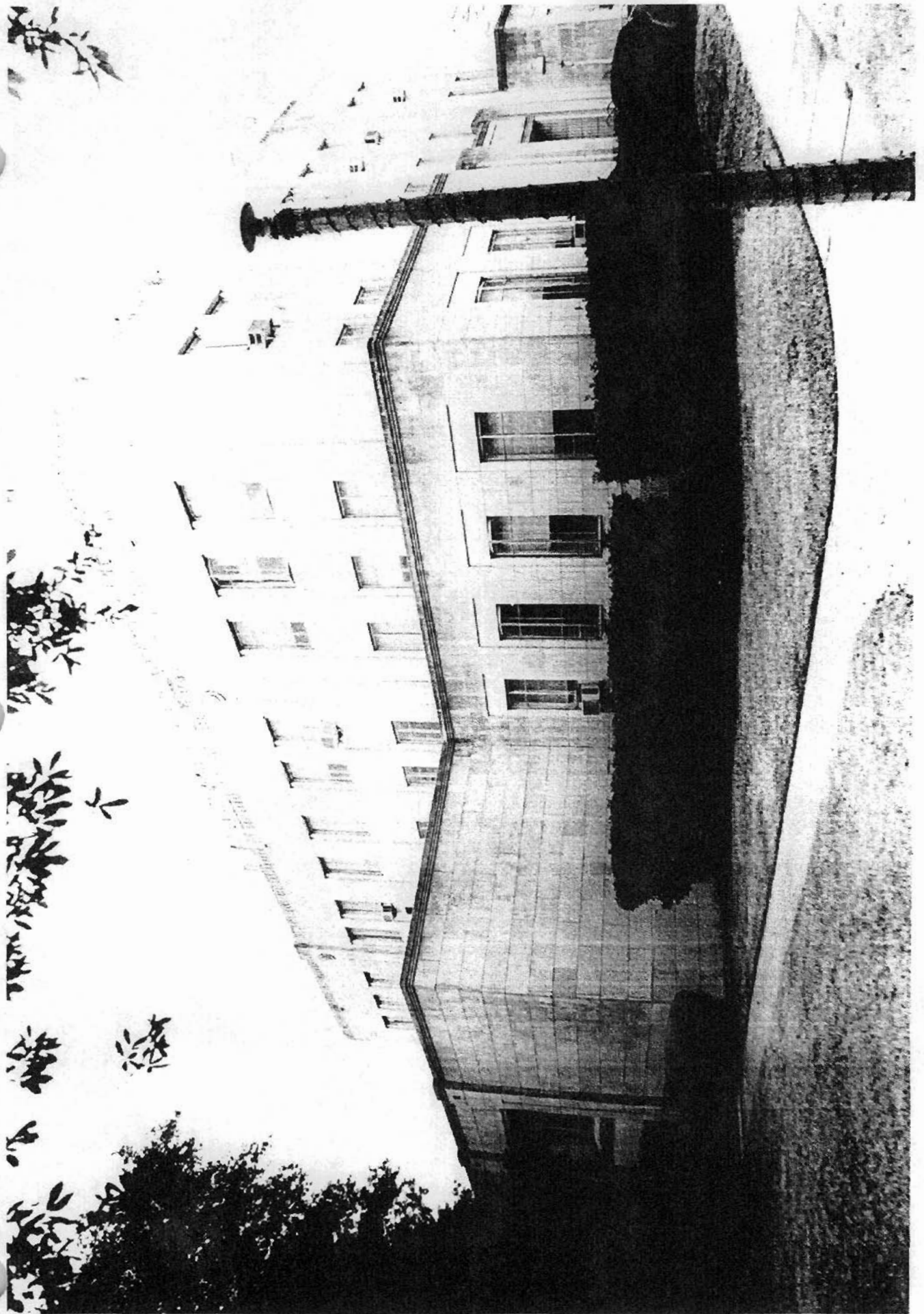


MILLER COUNTY COURTHOUSE



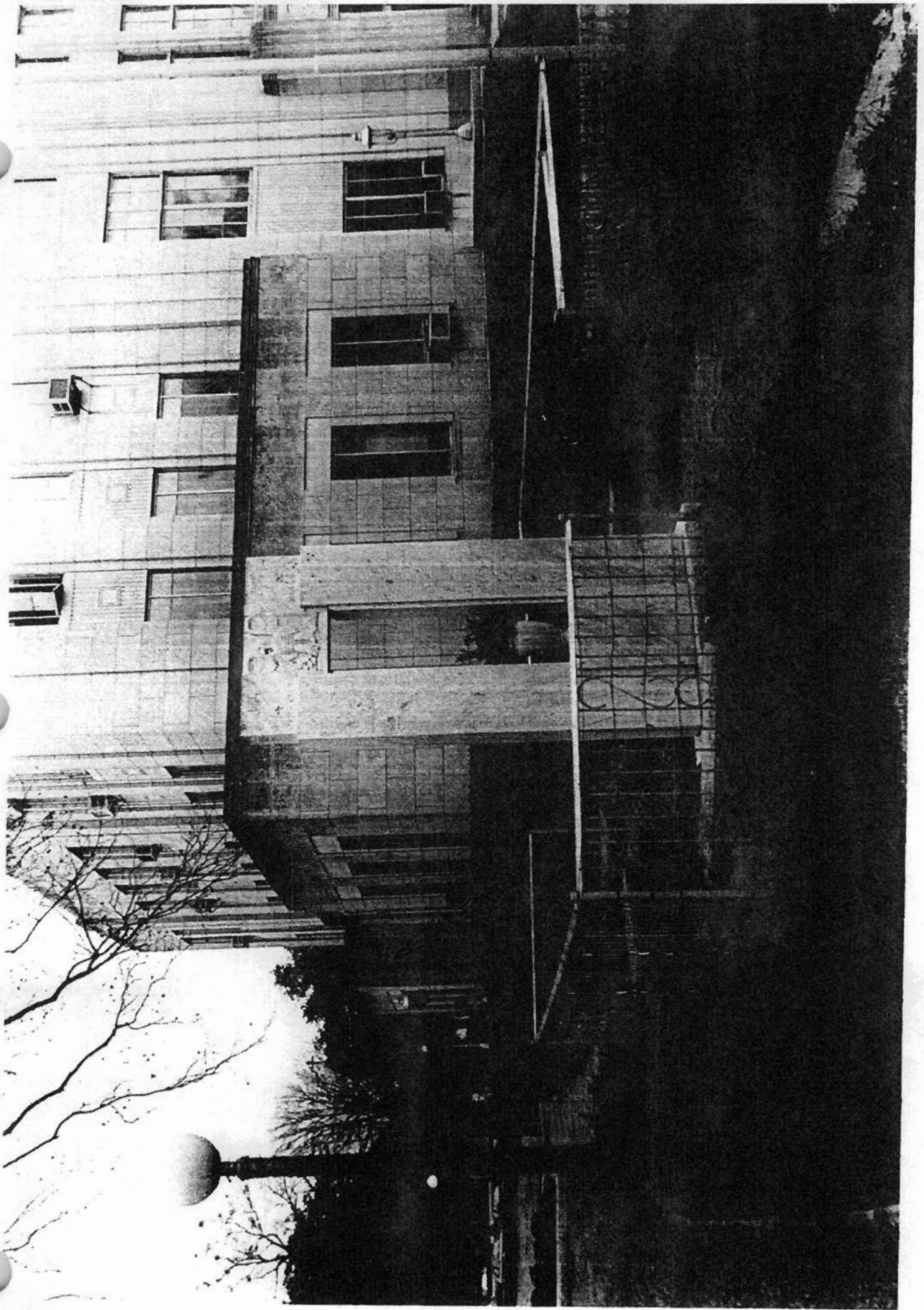


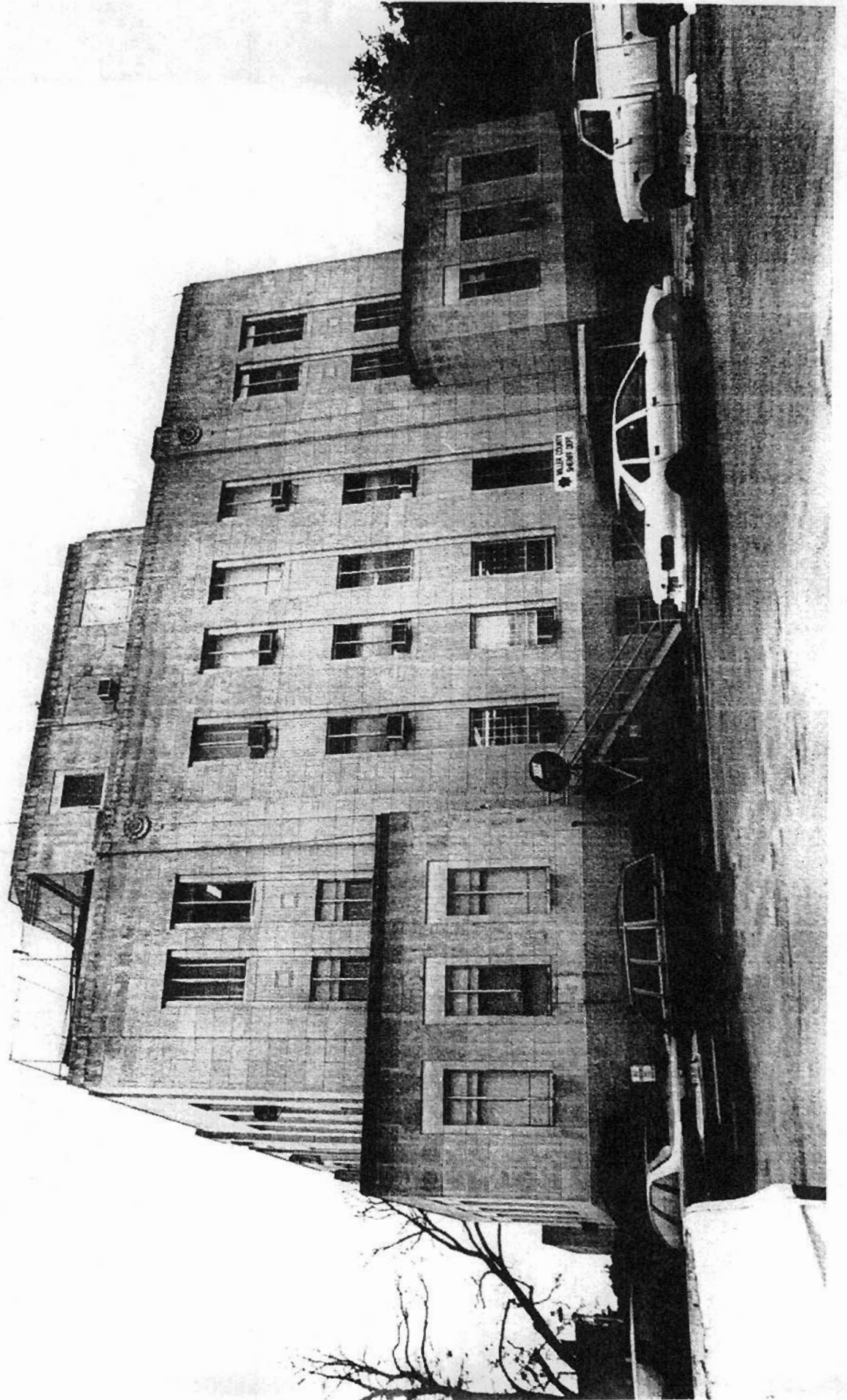






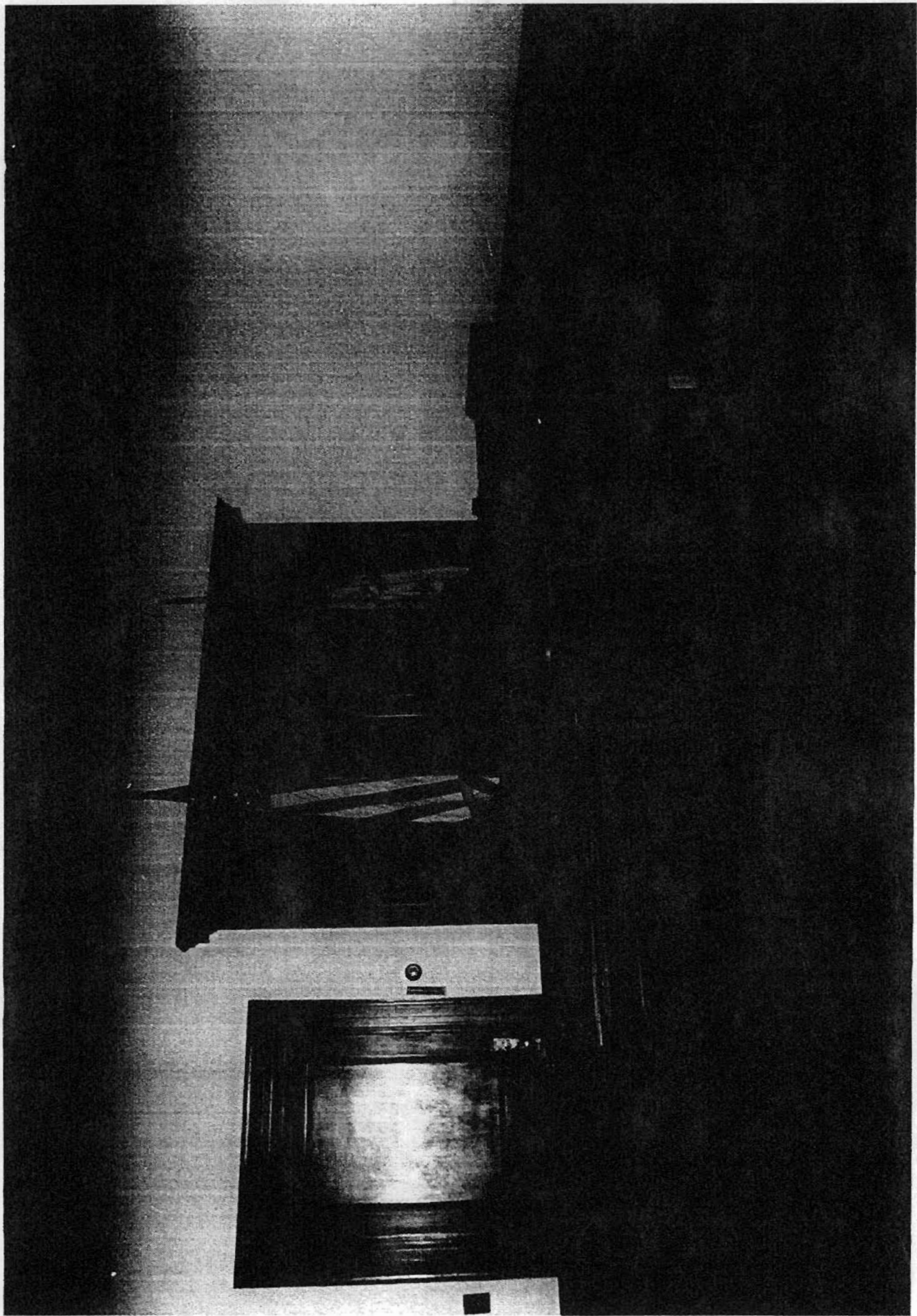


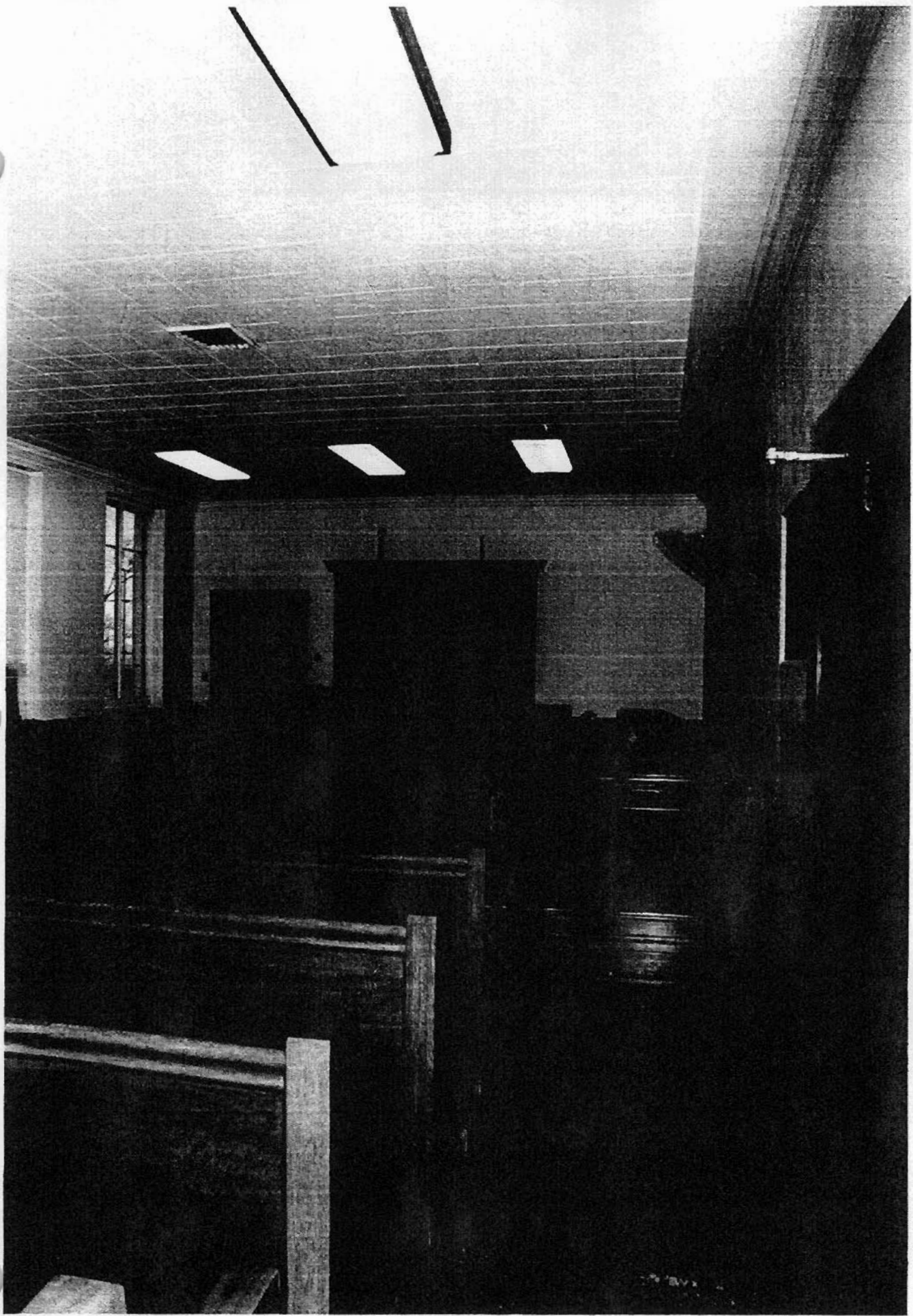




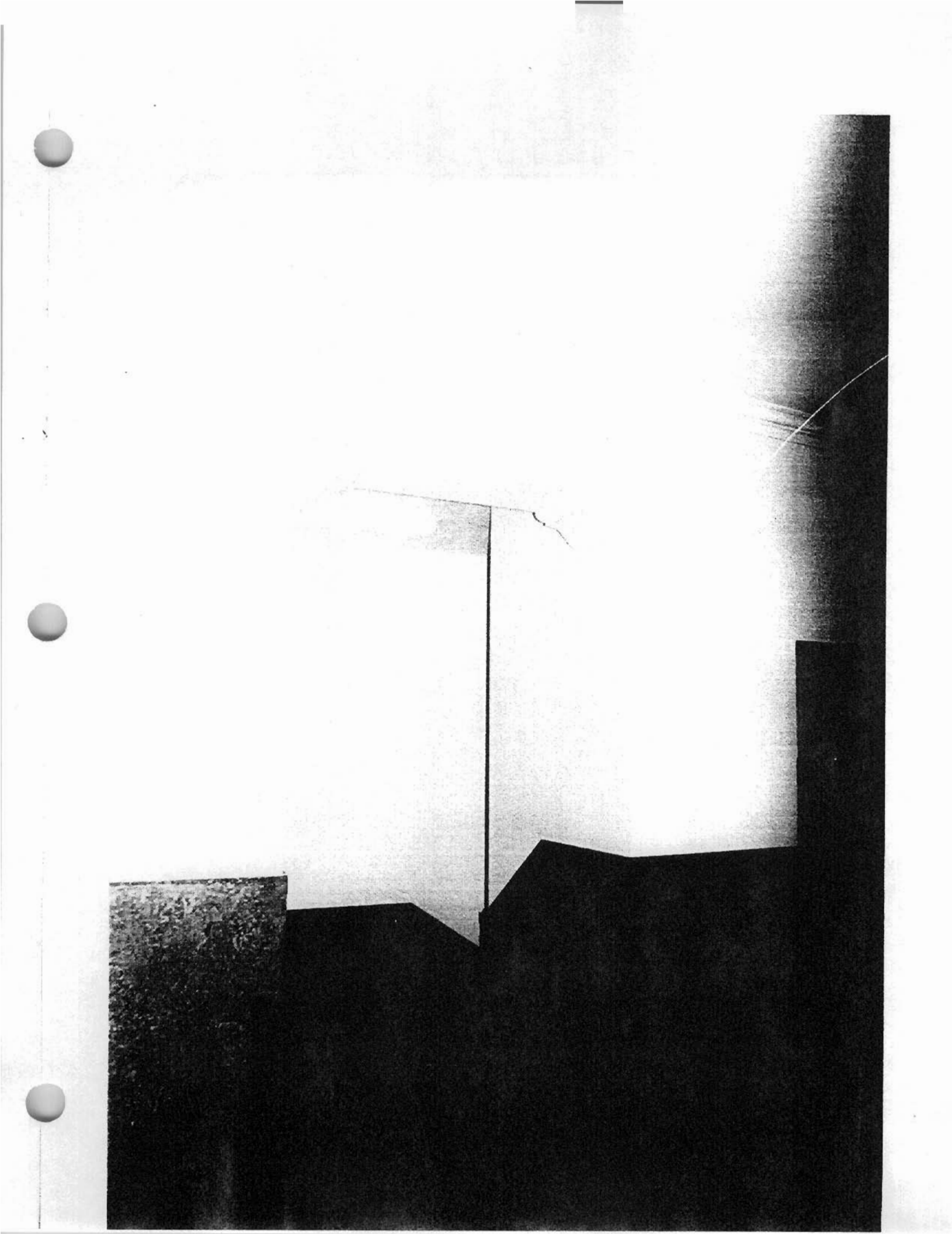


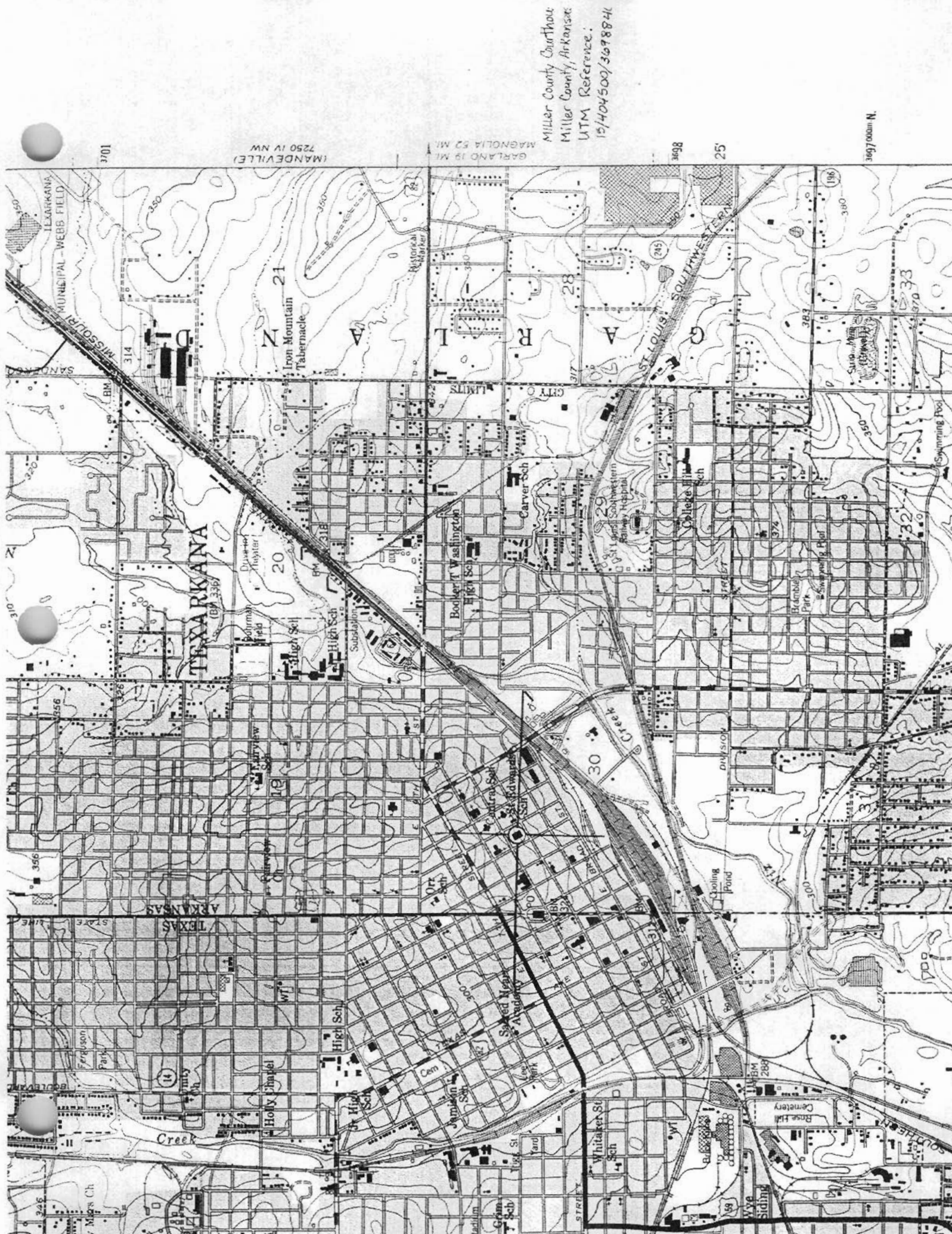












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7250 IV NW  
(MANDEVILLE)

GARLAND 19 MI

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Miller County Courthouse  
 Miller County, Arkansas  
 UTM Reference:  
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