

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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historic name: St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

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street & number: SW Corner of New Orleans Ave. & W. Ash St.

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Brinkley

vicinity: N/A

state: AR

county: Monroe

code: AR 095

zip code: 72021

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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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 A. Byrd
Signature of certifying official
Date 8-28-92

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

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6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: Religion Sub: Religious Facility
Current: Religion Sub: Religious Facility

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7. Description  
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Architectural Classification:

Classical Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: N/A\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Asphalt  
walls Brick other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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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): A\_\_\_\_\_

Areas of Significance: Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1929\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates: N/A\_\_\_\_\_

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

Cultural Affiliation: N/A\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: Kramer, Harry J.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.  
X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

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:

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreeage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 15 665140 3861620 B
C D

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Beginning at the SW corner of New Orleans Ave. and W. Ash St., proceed west along the southern curblineline of W. Ash St. to the point formed by the junction of said line and a line formed by, and a foot away from, the eastern elevation of the rectory. Thence proceed south along this line to a point formed by the junction of said line and a line formed by, and one foot away from, the northern elevation of the education building. Thence proceed east to the western curblineline of New Orleans Ave. Thence proceed north to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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11. Form Prepared By  
=====

Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, National Register Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 08/27/92

Street & Number: 225 E. Markham, Suite 300 Telephone: (501) 324-9346

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

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Summary

The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Brinkley is single-story, brick-veneer church building designed in the Classical Revival style of architecture. The church was originally constructed in 1875 as a wood frame Gothic Revival-styled church building. The church attained its current appearance in 1928.

### Elaboration

The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church was originally constructed in 1875 as a rectangular-plan, wood-frame church that reflected a vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style of architecture. In 1929 the church was re-designed in the Classical Revival style by architect Harry J. Kramer of Memphis, Tennessee. The frame walls were brick veneered and a continuous cast-concrete foundation was poured to replace the earlier brick pier foundation. The gable roof form was retained and covered with composition shingles. The original belfry was shortened, and the pointed arch-shaped, wood-slat louvers were replaced with rectangular-shaped, wood louvers decorated with a carved simulated keystone. A dentil course was added underneath the bellcast hipped roof, which retained the cross for a spire. The floor plan was altered by extending the church to accommodate a larger altar. Different-sized anterooms were added at this time on the eastern and western elevations, giving the church an irregular plan.

A massive, broken-pedimented, double-leaf entrance dominates the front or northern elevation. Fluted pilasters support the broken triangular pediment, which is adorned by dentilling underneath the cornice of the entablature and the boxed cornices of the broken pediment. A pedestal-based cross within the broken pediment crowns the affair. Underneath the broken pediment, the recessed, six-panel wood doors enter into the narthex, which is lighted by a five-pane transom with yellow-tinted, semi-circular arched panes. The choir loft above the entrance is illuminated by a stationary six-pane window, also yellow tinted with the top three panes arched. The window is surrounded by a full-length drip mold and is topped by a jig-sawn, broken ogee-shaped pediment over a projecting crown. A raking boxed cornice with returns defines the gable end of the front elevation. The familiar dentil course is present here as well and further adds to the classical appearance of the front elevation.

The eastern elevation consists of a small stained-glass window to the north, which lights and beautifies the narthex and four large, stained-glass windows that illuminate the nave. The stained-glass windows are composed of multiple panes with a transom and a small, movable lower sash. All stained-glass window feature masonry lintels with keystones. To the south of the row of windows, a single-leaf door, sheltered by a bracketed shed roof, opens into the front of the

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nave. Near the southern end of the elevation, a gable-roof anteroom projects from the main body of the church. The gable end is marked by a raking boxed cornice with returns and is covered with stucco. Fenestration is accomplished by two one-over-one double-hung patterned-glass windows located north of center. A single leaf door entrance is placed at the southern end of the bay and also has a patterned-glass panel. A small window and a coal chute door just above the water table indicate a partial basement underneath this section. A tall brick chimney extends through the main gable roof at the point just beyond the intersection with the smaller gable roof ridge.

Two anteroom projections and the gable end of the main body of the building compose the southern elevation of the church. A single, small, one-over-one window allows light into each anteroom, and the eastern anteroom also contains a small three-pane basement window. The main gable end is blank; however, it is somewhat unusual in that the stucco extends below the boxed cornice returns to the cornice line of the much shorter anterooms. A large, rectangular, recessed panel occupies the center of the expanded stuccoed area.

The western elevation is similar to the eastern elevation. The anteroom projection, however, is much wider and is covered with a hipped roof. Two small one-over-one windows compose the southern portion of the anteroom, and a single-leaf door at the northern end opens into the sacristy. This entrance is connected with the neighboring rectory by a metal covered walkway. The stained-glass window placement is the same on this elevation; however, the small stained-glass window that illuminated the narthex on the eastern elevation is positioned near the cornice on this elevation in order to light the stairwell to the choir loft.

Although the interior of the church has been largely unaltered since the 1929 renovation, the original plaster ceiling recently fell due to age and deterioration. Not only did the ceiling and light fixtures have to be replaced, but also the church pews, many of which were completely crushed by the weight of the ceiling. Otherwise, the narthex, nave, and apse appear as they did in 1929. The expressive stained-glass windows are a product of the Emil Frei Studio in Munich, Germany. Their appearance is enhanced by dark-stained wood trim on light, cream-colored walls. The central altar, designed by the firm, Chicago Masters, cost \$1500 in 1929 and was presented as a memorial to Major William and Bena Black by their five daughters. The two side altars were also presented at this time.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1**Summary**

The St. John the Baptist Catholic Church is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance as the best example in Brinkley of a Classical Revival-styled church.

**Elaboration**

There were few Catholic families living in Monroe and St. Francis Counties prior to 1870. Missionary priests from Little Rock and Helena attended to their spiritual needs. The resumption of construction on the Little Rock and Memphis Railroad in the late 1860's and the resulting flood of immigrant workers employed by the company spurred the development of numerous towns along the path of the railroad. The town of Brinkley was laid out in the winter of 1869-70 and named for the president of the Little Rock and Memphis Railroad Company, Robert Campbell Brinkley. In 1869, Bishop Fitzgerald appointed Reverend D. A. Quinn to offer Mass in the section houses along the railroad from Hopefield to DeValls Bluff. Discovering that about a dozen Catholic families had settled in Brinkley, Father Quinn obtained permission from the bishop and constructed a frame church in 1875 and named it in honor of St. John the Baptist. Father Quinn continue to serve congregations in four counties until 1878. The first resident pastor in the Brinkley church, Reverend M. McGill, arrived in 1886 and remained until 1892.

A parochial school was established shortly after the turn of the century, and a report from Father Jenne to the bishop in 1904 reveals that 27 students were enrolled for the school year. Five years later on March 8, 1909, a devastating tornado (then called a cyclone) struck the town of Brinkley, and within a few minutes destroyed all but six or eight homes out of 1500. St. John's Catholic Church was the only church left standing. The damage wrought by the tornado, which has been labeled the most destructive in Arkansas history, prompted Governor Donaghey to place Brinkley under martial law. State Guard units from Helena and McCrory were called in to patrol the streets. Sixty people were killed and more than 600 injured. As one of the few buildings in town left intact, St. John's Church was utilized as an emergency hospital and morgue. School was suspended by request of the bishop, and the sisters were asked to wait on the sick and injured.

In 1929, the church was extensively renovated under the guidance of Father Charles McCoy. A building committee of Frank Andrews, James Gunn, and Frank Federer chose the architect Harry J. Kramer of Memphis, Tennessee to design the renovation. The existing church had been constructed in a vernacular interpretation of the Gothic Revival style of architecture. Characteristics of the



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style were clearly evident in the pointed-arch louvers in the belfry; pointed-arch windows along each side of the nave; a pointed-arch shaped crown above the entrance, which contained double-leaf doors with recessed, lancet panels; and a clover-like foil in the gable end. The Gothic Revival style remained fashionable in Arkansas for religious structures, especially high-style masonry examples, until the first World War. After that time, the style was generally supplanted by the derivative Collegiate Gothic style, which also experienced considerable approval as a church style. Nevertheless, during the decade of the 1920's the Classical Revival style of architecture attained widespread popularity among prosperous congregations. It is apparent that St. John's parish was no different in this regard.

Constrained to the existing building form, Kramer maximized the classical potential offered by the front gable orientation. He established a heavy, monumental atmosphere, a required characteristic of proper Classical Revival styling, by focusing attention on the massive broken pediment above the double-leaf front entrance. Boxed cornice returns were added to the gable end to further promote the temple front effect. By utilizing dentil courses wherever possible, Kramer was able to temper the inherent starkness in the style. This added a more delicate Federal flavor to the building's appearance. The result of Kramer's efforts was a well-executed, remarkably integrated design with little hint of the previous Gothic Revival style.

The exterior of the church appears as it did in 1929 with virtually no alterations. For the reasons stated above, the St. John the Baptist Catholic Church is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance as the best example in Brinkley of a Classical Revival-styled religious structure.

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### Bibliography

*Brinkley Argus*. March 10, 1909; May 16, 1929.

*Brinkley Centennial Yearbook, 1872-1972*. Edited by Holly Almond. Brinkley, Arkansas: *The Citizen*, 1972.

Information supplied by Mrs. Paul M. Farrell, October 1991.

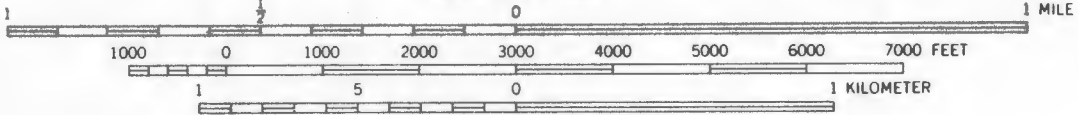
Pellin, Sr. Eugenia, RSM. "Parish Profile." *Arkansas Catholic*. January 20, 1991.

St. John the Baptist Church  
Brinkley, Arkansas

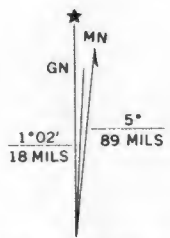
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LITTLE ROCK (VIA U.S. 70) 66 MI.  
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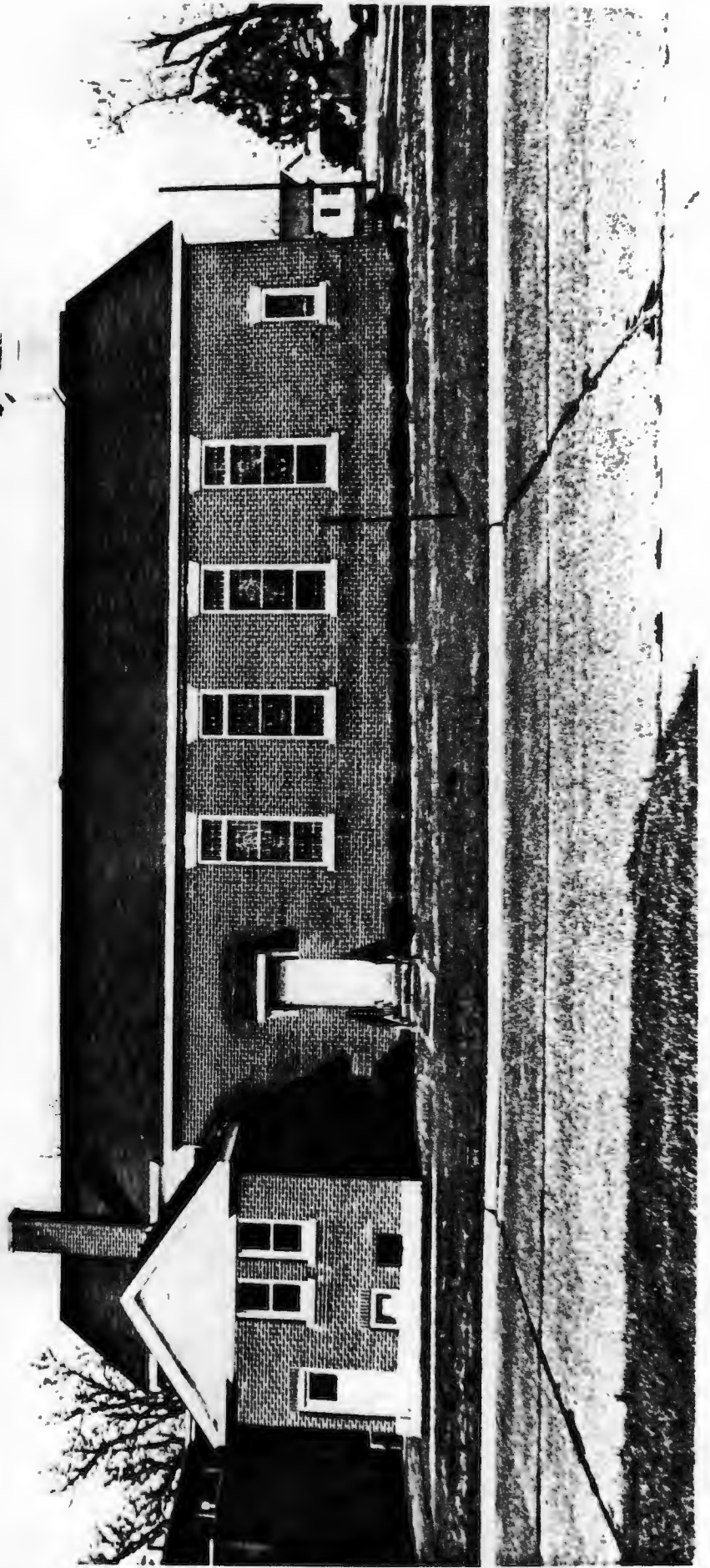
UTM GRID AND 1971 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
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AND BY THE ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



St. John the Baptist Church  
Morris Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zollner  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AHPD  
View from the northeast



5. John the Baptist Church  
Menard Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zolher  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AHPP  
View from the east



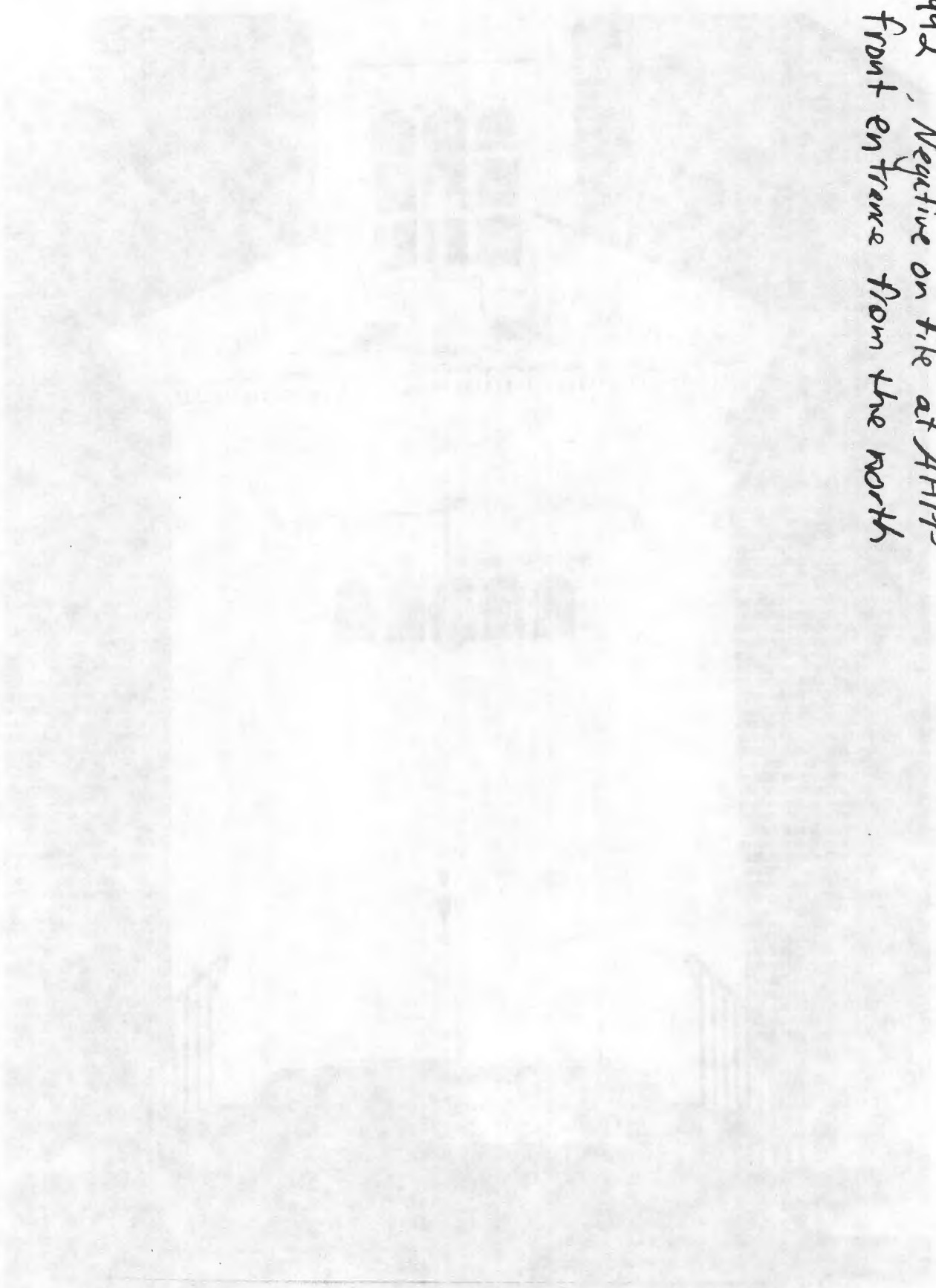


St. John the Baptist Church  
Monroe Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zollner  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AHPP  
View from the north



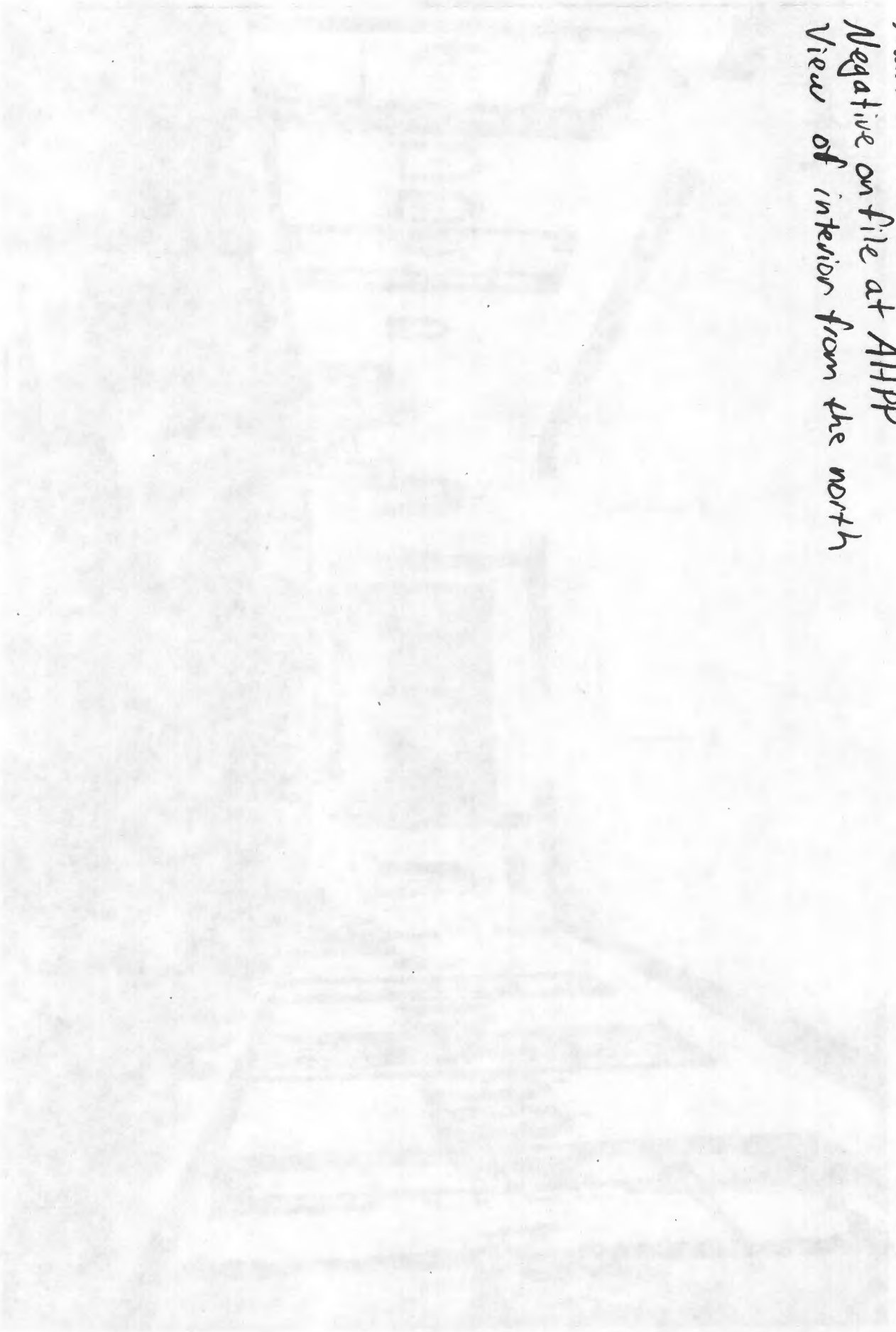


Dr. John H. Baptist Church  
Monroe Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zollner  
March 1992 Negative on file at AHPP  
View of front entrance from the north





St. John the Baptist Church  
Monroe Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zollner  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AIHP  
View of interior from the north





St. John the Baptist Church  
Brinkley, Monroe Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zolner  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AHPD  
View of interior from the south.





St. John the Baptist Church  
Monroe Co., Arkansas  
Photographed by Patrick Zoller  
March 1992  
Negative on file at AHPD  
View of interior from choir loft.