

Nov. 24, '89 OMB No. 1024-0018

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 Ouachita County Courthouse other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 145 Jefferson Avenue not for publication N/A city, town Camden vicinity N/A state Arkansas code AR county Ouachita code AR 103 zip code 71701

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local (checked), public-State, public-Federal. Category of Property: building(s) (checked), district, site, structure, object. Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1, 3, 4), Noncontributing (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). 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 (checked) does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: Cathryn D. Byrd, Date: 10-9-89, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

In my opinion, the property meets (checked) 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)

Government/Courthouse/County Courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Courthouse/County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals/
Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

Summary. The Ouachita County Courthouse is a two-story, symmetrical 'T'-shaped plan, buff brick and concrete Art Deco/Colonial Revival design with a raised basement and central cupola atop a flat roof. It was constructed in 1933 and has remained substantially unaltered since that time.

Elaboration. The design for the Ouachita County Courthouse, erected in 1933, constitutes a locally rare synthesis of the popular Colonial Revival and Art Deco styles. Its northern or front facade is seven bays across, with a two-story, five bay central block flanked by a single-story projecting wings. The main block features a central entrance on the first story (consisting of a pair of modern metal entrance doors with a single pane transom) surmounted by a pair of twelve-over-six wood sash windows grouped under a broken pediment. A single story concrete Classical porch frames the entry and is composed of a pair of Doric columns supporting a simple entablature and balcony. The four first-story windows are the same paired twelve-over-six wood sash type, though recessed within shallow arches which are decorated only with a concrete fleur-de-lis tile set into the center of the brick tympanum. The four second-story windows are square-headed with concrete sills and lintels. The two flanking wings each feature only a central paired wood sash window of identical composition and detail as the other first-story windows except for being slightly larger to accommodate the twelve-over-twelve sash. A concrete water table extends around the entire building, and the other detail on this elevation consists of brick quoins on both the concrete wings and central block, swag-and-cartouche panels above the four square-headed second story windows, the concrete coping on the parapet (ornamented with the two decorative urns at the corners of the central entrance bay), and the elaborate wood cupola, with its windows and surmounting clock on each of its four sides, capped with an octagonal drum and cylindrical lantern.

The eastern and western elevations are virtually identical. To the north, the projecting single-story wing is ornamented only with brick quoins, a blind arch containing a concrete fleur-de-lis tile, and a two-pane central basement window. Behind it, the wall of the two-story block features quoins, a central concrete swag-and cartouche panel, and three symmetrically-placed twelve-over-six wood sash windows below. To the south, a concrete stairway leads up to a modern metal entrance door with single-pane sidelights, and above it is placed a window grouping consisting of two-pane stationary windows above two twelve-over-six wood sash windows on each of the two stories, while the eastern elevation features one such window above another to the north and the southern end is fenestrated with only a smaller twelve-over-six wood sash window on the second story.

The southern or rear elevation is a symmetrical, nine bay composition, with the exception of the narrow external brick chimney between the central and eastern bay of the main block, the smaller twelve-over-six sash window in the eastern bay on the second story, and the two basement sash windows to the west, with only one to the east. Otherwise, the second story features three tall paired twelve-over-six wood sash windows on the second story of the main block, with two smaller windows of identical sash below flanking a central small six-over-six wood sash window. The narrow, recessed entrance bays

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

flanking the main block each contain a smaller, twelve-over-six wood sash window on the second story and a metal entrance door with single-pane transom below. The eastern and western two-story bays feature one twelve-over-six wood sash window above another, both centrally placed. The flanking single story wings are each relieved only by brick quoins and a single nine-over-nine wood sash window set into a recessed arch with concrete tile decoration as seen in the other recessed arches on the building. Small rectangular vents open into the attic above each of the second story windows around the rear of the building between the eastern and western entrances. The interior reveals typically simple Art Deco stylized Classical detail in the moldings and original lighting fixtures.

The nomination includes three monuments on the property which commemorate either the courthouses that have stood on the site or the citizens of the county. As such they are appropriate to the courthouse block and contribute to it.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1

Summary. The Ouachita County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance. Designed by the Little Rock architect Tom Harding, Jr. in 1933, it is an outstanding example of the transitional style of the late 1920's-early 1930's when architects were moving away from the heavy and traditional ornament of the Classical and Colonial Revivals and moving toward the more streamlined compositions of shallower and more stylized ornament which would soon characterize the Art Deco.

Elaboration. The Ouachita County Courthouse, constructed in 1933 and designed by Little Rock architect Thomas Harding, Jr., is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance. It is the best example in Camden of a style of building best termed 'transitional.' It clearly employs Colonial Revival vocabulary and detail while at the same time flattening and minimizing that detail so that it recedes back upon the mass of the building itself and becomes subservient to it. As such it resembles the geometric, balanced building masses which later became typical of the Art Deco.

Ouachita County was formed in 1844 from part of what had been Union County. The early French settlement community known as Ecore Fabre was chosen as the county seat at that time (the site of the present-day Camden). Several different structures housed the county business until 1888, when Thomas Harding, Sr. was hired to design a new two-and-one-half story brick Victorian Gothic structure on the site of the present courthouse. This building served the county until the night of December 13, 1931, when it was virtually leveled by Camden's first and most disastrous tornado.

Work began immediately on plans for building a new courthouse, but in the meantime all the county business was conducted within a collection of temporary wooden buildings which were scattered around the courthouse lawns. Several architects submitted plans for either rebuilding the old courthouse or replacing it with a new one, but Judge Watt Jordan waited to select a building commission before any decision was made. After the Christmas holidays of 1931 the commission was formed, and by December 31, Thomas Harding, Jr. had been selected. Several months passed while the commission pondered at least three alternative designs for the new courthouse, and did not make a selection until November of 1932. The delay was no doubt due to the need to wait for Ouachita County voters to approve the necessary temporary tax increase during the November election, which they did. The clearing of the rubble of the destroyed courthouse began immediately thereafter which was funded by federal aid for the unemployed. The contract for the construction of the building was awarded soon thereafter.

A controversy developed over the construction specifications drafted by Harding, the architect. It was believed by a segment of the local citizenry that Harding had specified a variety of materials that could not be obtained locally, fueling speculation that he was attempting to divert county business and money away from Ouachita County and toward Little Rock.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

Understandably, this became an especially sensitive issue during the Depression, when the economy was so poor. Harding worked with the building commission to specify competitive bidding and to remove even the appearance of sponsoring certain contractors or manufacturers. Finally, William Peterson of Little Rock submitted the lowest bid for the construction (\$46,050).

The courthouse was ready for occupancy by August of 1933. By this time Judge George R. Gordon (elected the previous November) had taken office and was working with the building commission to complete the work. It was considered to be of fireproof construction, though it is not certain exactly what that meant to them.

The Ouachita County Courthouse is locally significant as the best example of its particular architectural style. This style is difficult to name, spanning as it does a period of change in American architectural taste. Two decades of Colonial Revival and Classical Revival were slowly wearing on the American imagination and the variety of advances in both technology and industrial design began to move popular American taste away from the traditional and toward the modern, or 'moderne.' Nevertheless, such trends always took longer to gain acceptance in the rural areas and in rural public commissions in particular. Frequently the result was a hybrid composition such as what occurred at the Ouachita County Courthouse. A variety of Colonial Revival details have been distributed evenly and symmetrically across the facade, paying homage to those traditional tastes. Yet the striking aspect of the building is not its detail but rather its boxy, balanced massing onto which the detail has been applied. In this style the massing of the structure itself delivers the principal design statement, not the detail; in fact, the detail becomes increasingly shallow in depth and sparingly applied as it seems to recede backward into the building. Harding managed to combine these two styles to good effect here, however, as the uncluttered wall surfaces and 'building-up' of the forms toward the center of the composition work with the detail to create a design which is formal and yet visually familiar. It survives as the best product of this stylistic transition period in the Camden area.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

"New Structure to Cost Only \$48,000 In Its Entirety," The Camden News, 12/1/32, p.1.

"Officers Move To Court House," The Camden News 8/23/33, p.1.

"Plans Completed For Bond Issue To Build Edifice," The Camden News, 11/1/32, p.1.

"Work Started On Courth House," The Camden News, 12/27/32, p.1.

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

Significant Dates

1933

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Harding, Thomas, Jr./Peterson, William

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

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- "Architect Asked to Amend Plans Of Courthouse," The Camden News, 11/18/32, p.1.
"Child Killed As Tornado Swoops Down Upon City," The Camden News, 12/14/31, p.1.
"Construction Work Hampered," The Camden News, 12/17/31, p.1.
"County Board In Conference Here Over three Plans," The Camden News, 1/13/32, p.1.
"Court House body Will Give Local Folks Preference," The Camden News, 11/17/32, p.1.
"Court House Is Completed Here," The Camden News, 9/18/33, p.1.
"Frame Houses For Officials," The Camden News, 12/15/31, p.1.
Goodspeeds Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas, (1890).
"Judge Announces Committee for Building Edifice,:" The Camden News, 12/31/31, p.1.

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:

- State historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A 15 515760 3715910
Zone Easting Northing
C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing
D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 83, 84, 85 and 86, Block 18, and Lots 107, 108, 109 and 110, Block 24, and the unopened alley between said Blocks.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

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

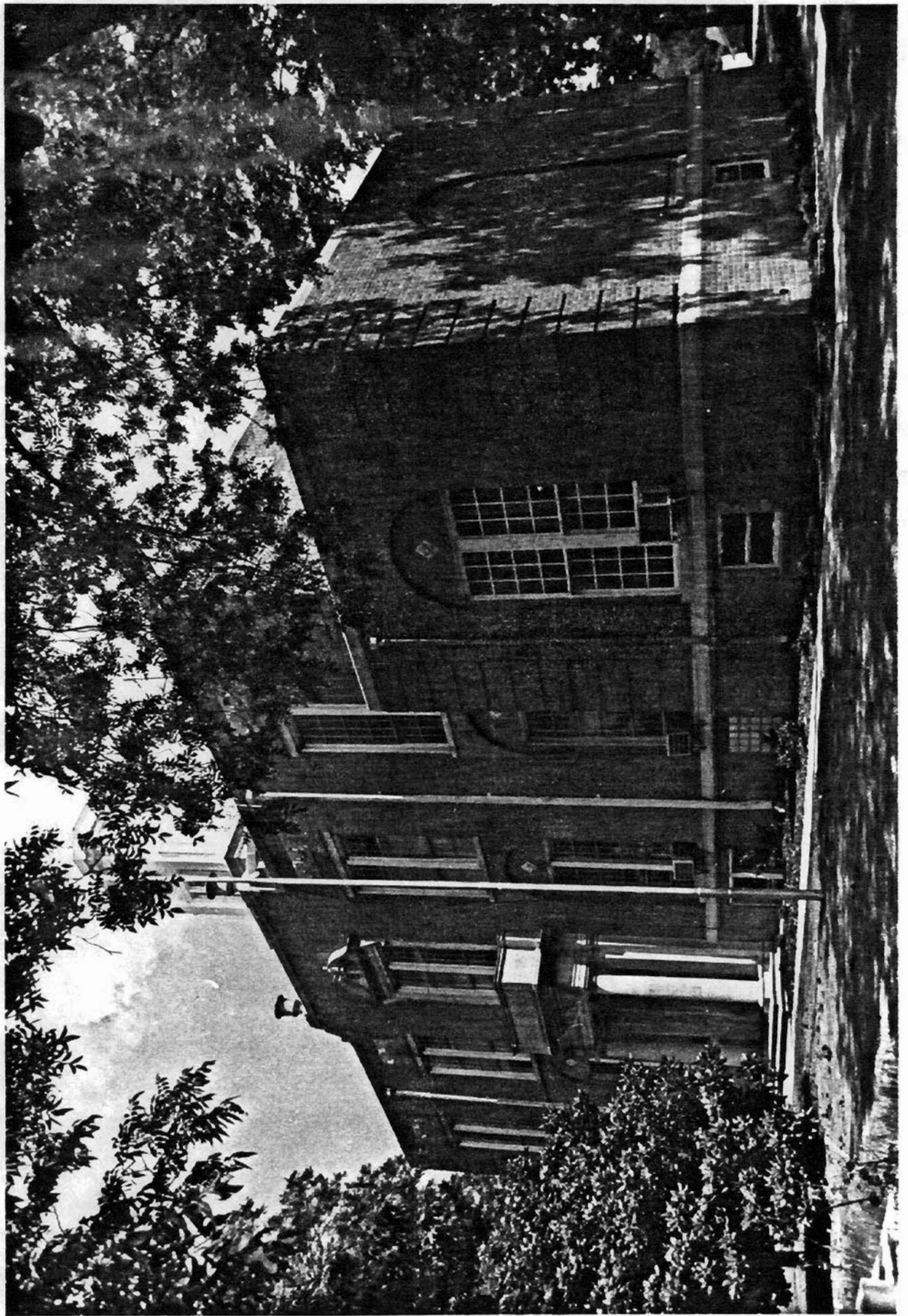
See continuation sheet

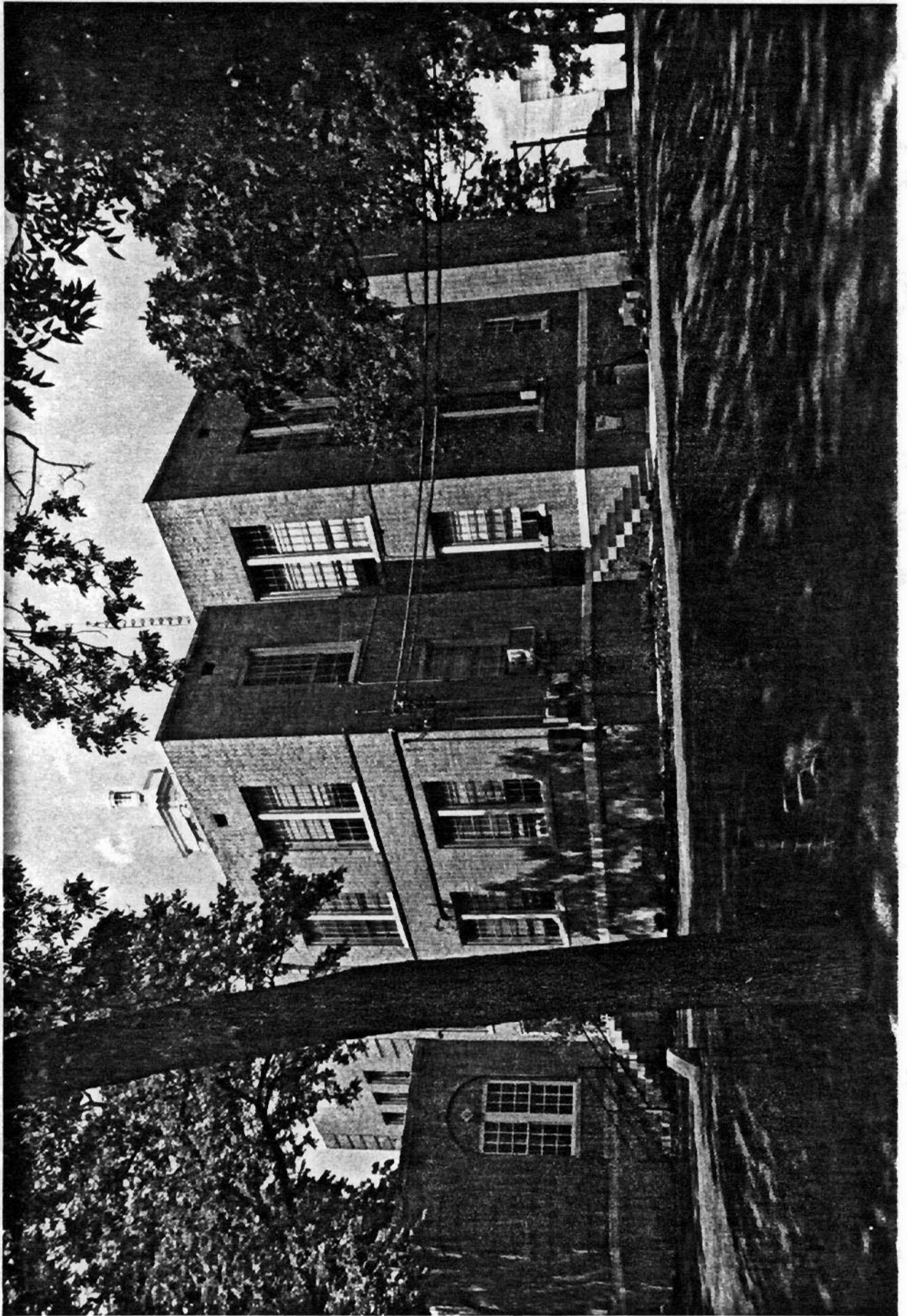
11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date October 9, 1989
street & number 225 E. Markham St., Suite 200 telephone 501-371-2763
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

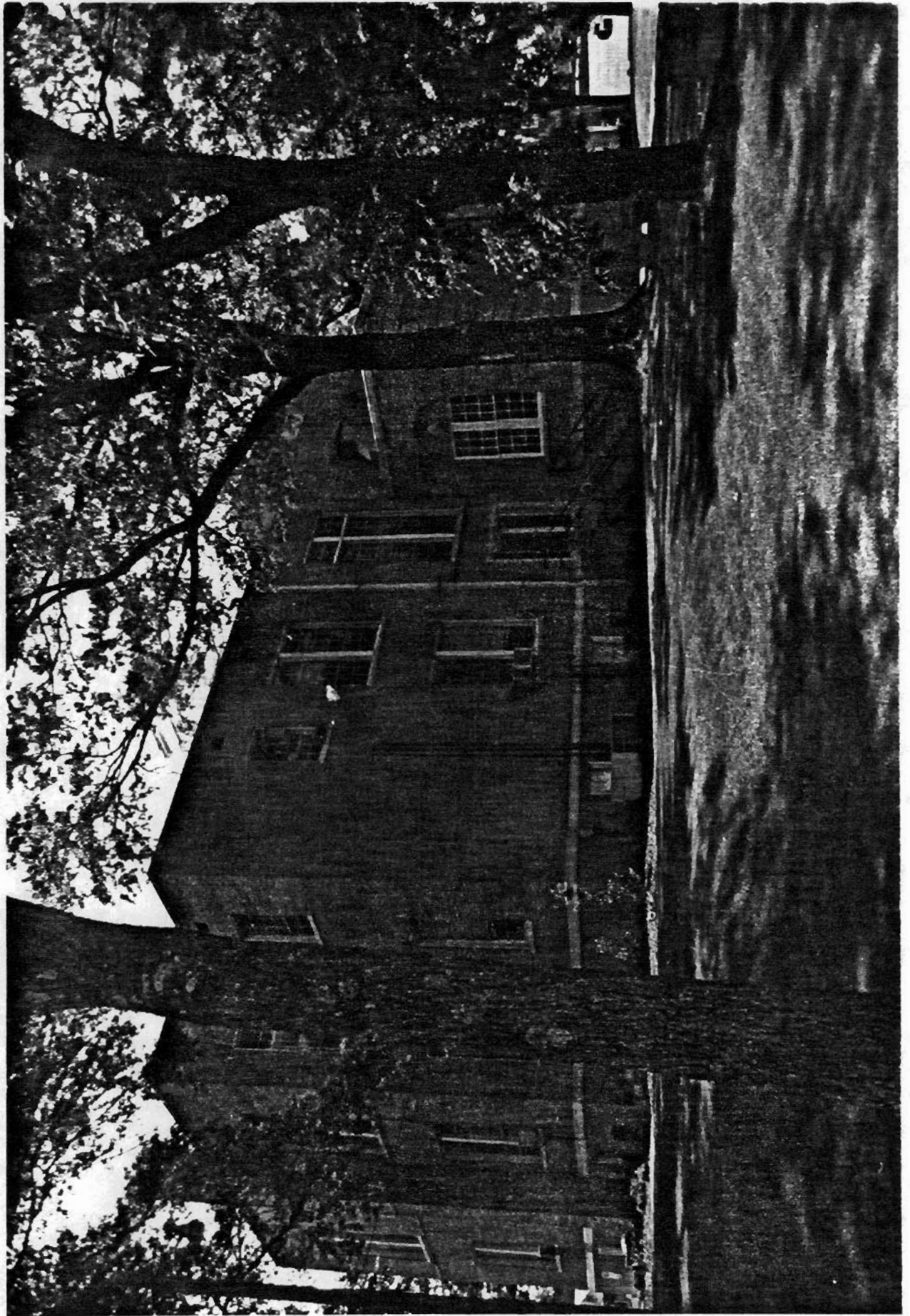


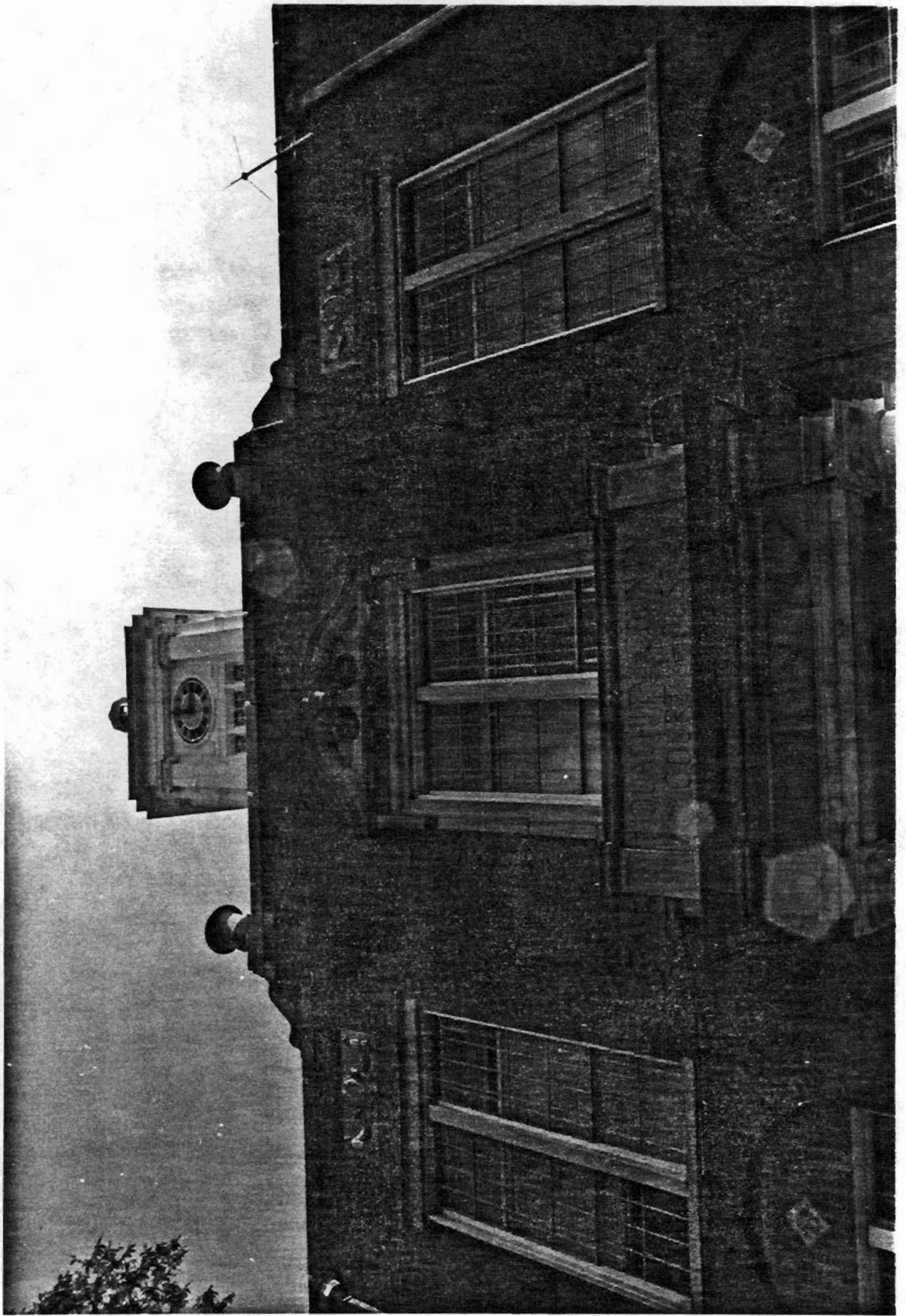


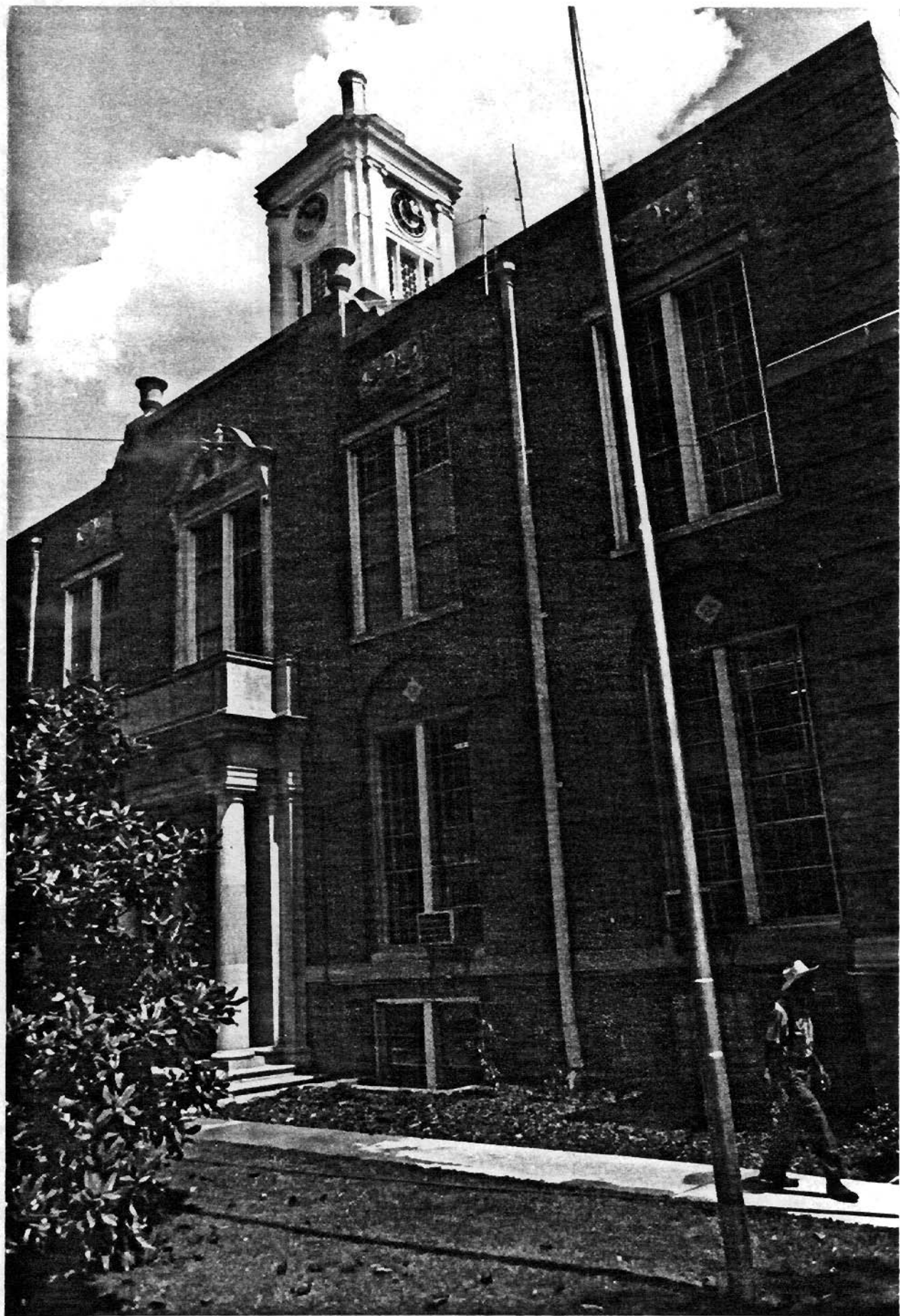


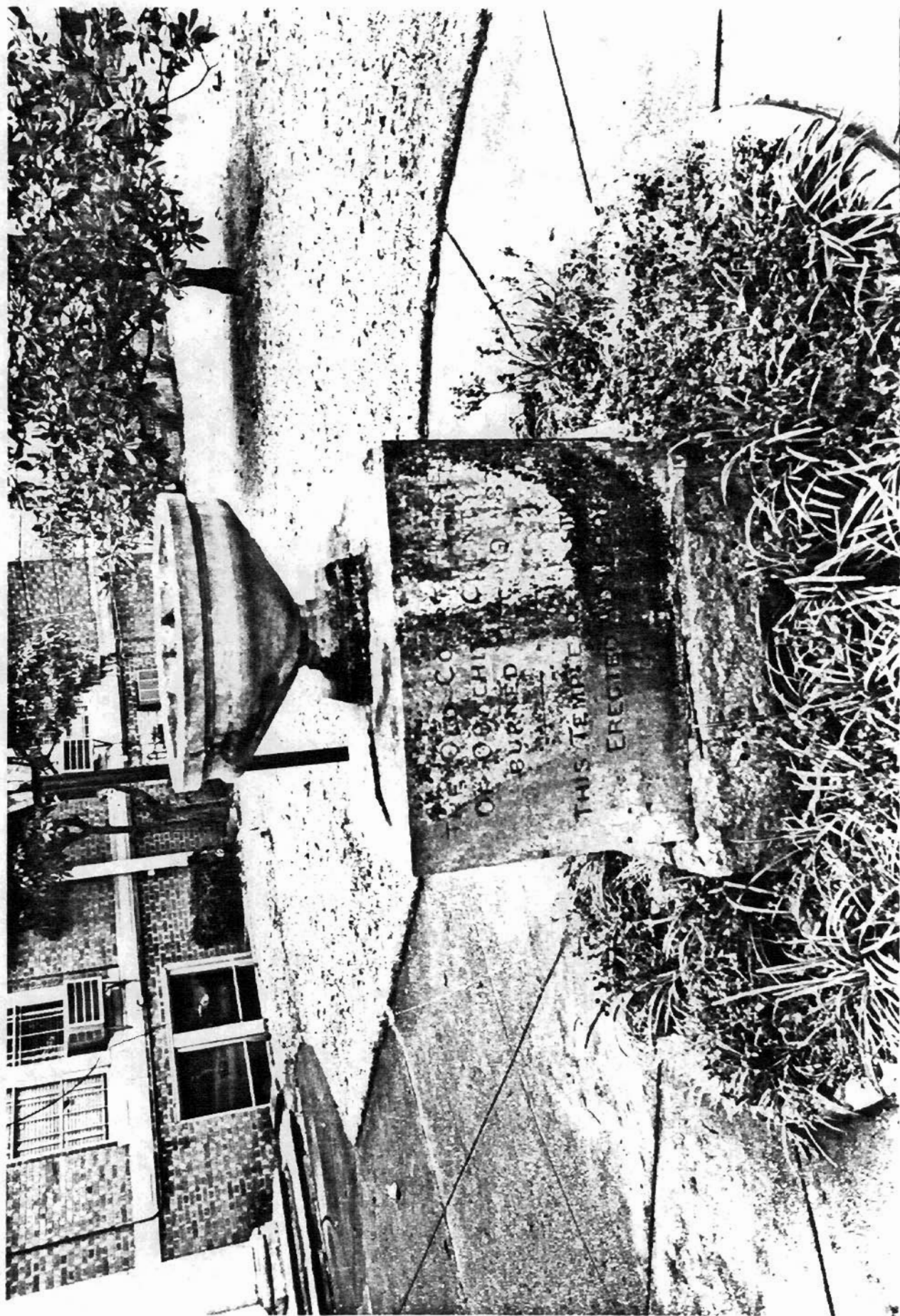












GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

33° 30' N

1:20000 E.

513

Quachita County Courthouse
Camden, Arkansas
Ouachita County
15/515760/3715910
Camden Quadrangle
1:24000

3719

37200000 N.

515

50'

516

517 (HARMON)

3

10

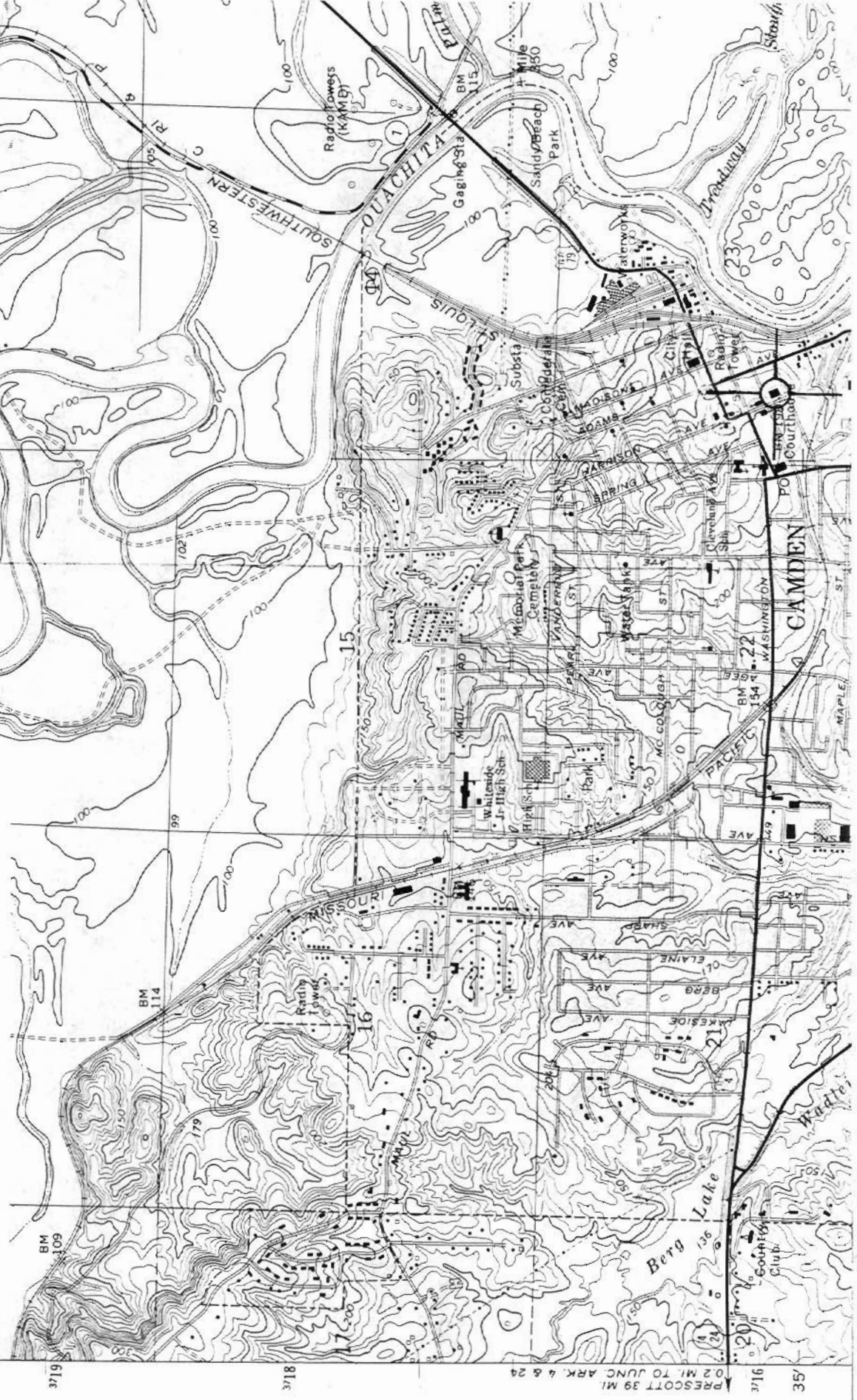
11

15

16

17

74511



BM 114

3719

816

PRESCOTT 39 MI.
0.2 MI. TO JUNC. ARK. 4 & 24

35

3716

35