

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Nov. 10, '89

# 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 Poinsett County Courthouse  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number \_\_\_\_\_  not for publication N/A  
city, town Harrisburg  vicinity N/A  
state Arkansas code AR county Poinsett code AR 111 zip code 72432

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</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.

Althynne K. Byrd 9-27-89  
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

### 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/  
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestonewalls Limestoneroof Ceramic Tile

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

**Summary.** The Poinsett County Courthouse was designed in 1917 by Pine Bluff architect Mitchell Selligman and is constructed of grey Bedford stone and reinforced concrete. It is two stories in height, set upon a raised basement, and covered with a hipped roof and central dome on the main portion and a flat roof on the wings. Its rectangular, symmetrical plan features two intersecting hallways which allow entrance into the building from all four elevations.

**Elaboration.** The Poinsett County Courthouse was designed by the Pine Bluff architect Mitchell Selligman in 1917, just one month after the earlier courthouse had burned. It is constructed of gray Bedford stone facing reinforced concrete walls and is designed in a very free Classical Revival style, originally combining Roman, Palladian, and Colonial Revival elements in a large and impressive composition. It is a full two stories in height and is set upon a slightly raised basement. It is covered with a flat roof laid behind a carved stone balustrade on the northern and southern wings. The roof of the taller central block of the structure is intersected on opposite sides by the gable roof, full-height entrance porticos, while the block itself is capped with a low, pyramidal hipped roof, all of which is finished in clay tile. The pyramid roof is truncated by a raised, square stone platform which supports an octagonal clock tower. The tower is composed of an octagonal drum, each face of which features two pilasters flanking a tall central window, and a tall, octagonal dome which is itself punctuated by four molded clock openings (one above each elevation) and finished by a carved spherical ornament. The plan is symmetrical and essentially square. The first floor entrances on all four elevations lead into two perpendicular axial hallways, with twin straight staircases at the northern and southern ends which flank the hallway itself and lead up to the second floor and down to the basement. A single stone chimney rises from the northern flank of the hipped roof.

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

The eastern and western elevations are identical. Both present symmetrical facades organized around the clear focal point, the full-height, pedimented Corinthian portico. At each end of the facade a slightly projecting two story bay consists of two square-headed, fixed, aluminum single pane windows on each floor, the upper windows slightly smaller than the lower, placed between two end pilasters which in turn rest upon a water table molding and which support a blank frieze and cornice. These projecting bays frame the taller central block, which is five bays long behind the portico. The first story of this central section is fenestrated by two square-headed fixed aluminum windows on each side of the central aluminum pair doors and transom, while the second story features five identical arched aluminum windows which have a small awning window built into the bottom and a semi-circular solid aluminum piece inserted into the arch above. The portico is composed of a low, stone staircase rising between flat stone stoops to a porch floor, which in turn supports four massive, evenly distributed round Corinthian columns which narrow as they rise to their elaborate capitals. A simple entablature with a frieze featuring the name of the building and a raised blank circle at each end is finished with a delicate dentil course extending the entire length of the projecting interior pediment molding above. The pediment molding is ornamented underneath with a larger dentil course, of fewer dentils and each being a sculpted scroll. This course is continued also beneath the pediment cornice, as is the smaller dentil course. The tympanum is decorated with a stylized floral motif on either side of an elaborate central cartouche. The same frieze and cornice detailing as seen here appears also on the main body of the building, but on these elevations only.

The northern and southern elevations are also identical. Each is nine bays across and balanced around a projecting central bay, which contains two thin stairwell windows on either side of a central, square-headed fixed single-pane aluminum window on the second story and an aluminum pair door entrance with a single-pane transom on the first story. To either side of this central bay these elevations are punctuated with three square-headed single-pane fixed aluminum windows on each story, with the upper story windows being slightly smaller than those on the first story. These elevations also feature fixed aluminum basement windows, with three to each side of the central low, stone staircase. The stone balustrade seen on the eastern and western elevations (atop the flanking wings) is continued around both of these elevations. Otherwise the ornament is confined to the pilasters and dog-ear decorative stone crown moldings around the doorways. The interior retains much of its original plaster walls and decorative plaster moldings and ornament. Noteworthy among these are the eagle and Corinthian capital groupings in the courtroom. The interior also retains original light fixtures and wood door trim.

The Poinsett County Courthouse has only been altered slightly over the years, with the most drastic changes occurring in the early 1970's, when the original Colonial Revival wood fanlight-and-vertical-pane sash and the one-over-one wood sash windows were replaced throughout with aluminum thermal windows. The clay tile roof developed leakage problems but was restored rather than replaced. The Poinsett County Courthouse remains the finest and most sophisticated example of its architectural type in Harrisburg.





**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Goodspeeds Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas, 1890.

Hodges, Curt, "Major Roofing Project Should 'Dry' Courthouse," The Jonesboro Sun, 11/09/85, p.1.

Poinsett County Court Records.

Up-To-Date, Poinsett County, 1919.

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 1

**UTM References**

A 15 71061890 3937700  
 Zone Easting Northing

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Starting at a point formed by the intersection of the southern boundary of Market Street with the western boundary of East Street, proceed southerly along latter boundary to the intersection with the perpendicular line formed by the northern boundary of Court Street; thence proceed westerly

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 August 30, 1989  
 street & number 225 E. Markham, Suite 200 telephone (501) 371-2763  
 city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

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clover, cow peas, rice, alfalfa, soy beans, timothy, oats, potatoes, vegetables, fruit, etc. After the construction of the railroad, Harrisburg became an important commercial and transportation center for the thriving agricultural community around it.

Thus it is no surprise that when the earlier (c. 1872) and presumably more modest courthouse burned on May 4, 1917, the county desired not only something fireproof (hence the reinforced concrete and steel frame) but also a grand and imposing structure which would speak of the county's stature. Of additional significance was the courthouse square site for the structure, surrounded as it was by a thriving commercial district and bordered by four principal thoroughfares from which the courthouse could be seen on all sides. County Judge S.T. Mayo oversaw the effort which by June 6 of that year saw appropriations ordered by the court for the building of a new courthouse which included the levying of a tax for the purpose. Mitchell Selligman, the young architect from Pine Bluff, was selected to design the new edifice, and J. E. Hollingsworth was the contractor hired to construct it.

Selligman answered the challenge of a site which demanded four front elevations with an essentially Palladian plan, featuring four entrances and two identical main entrances. He highlighted the main entrances with grand, full-height, pedimented Corinthian porticos complete with heavy Classical detail which could be easily read from the street and which clearly identified this structure as an official public building. He fenestrated the bulk of the building with simple one-over-over wood sash windows, as was common for public buildings at the time, but filled his arched windows with wood fixed and sash windows of a distinctly Colonial Revival aspect. Yet he complimented these details with the balance and stasis of the composition and overall proportions. As such he lent the eastern and western (or entrance) elevations both a Classical and Georgian Colonial character.

Though it is difficult to discern just which vocabulary he was trying to emphasize, there is no doubt about the use of the Classical idiom to convey a stately, formal presence. There is also no doubt about the ambitiousness of the county officials in desiring this effect, for stone construction is always one of the most expensive; indeed, this structure cost \$200,000.00 to build in 1917. Selligman clearly availed himself of an opportunity to create a grand and expensive yet appropriately restrained design.

The Poinsett County Courthouse also survives as a symbol of a prosperous place during a prosperous time, a symbolism which is actually part of a contemporaneous, early twentieth century tradition which swept the United States. No fewer than seventeen states built new state capitols during the first two decades of the twentieth century in this grand, Neoclassical vocabulary (the Arkansas State Capitol of 1902 is a representative example). A remarkable amount of wealth was circulating during this period and even public entities found themselves with a surplus of capital. This classical imagery clearly harkened back to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

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Europe and especially the grandeur of Rome during its period of greatest conquest and wealth, the days of "bread and circus." Americans, whether deliberately or not, drew parallels between the growth and development of a newly industrialized America and the might and wealth of early Imperial Rome. It is then interesting to see this trend manifest itself in what was a relatively removed, albeit thriving agricultural center. Clearly, the technical advances and growth of transportation networks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries facilitated the spreading of popular architectural styles; and though it is doubtful that the county officials in Harrisburg embraced such a sophisticated understanding of this new symbolism, it is evident that architects like Mitchell Selligman believed in the correctness and appropriateness of the Neoclassical vocabulary for government buildings. As such, his studied rendering of this style in the Poinsett County Courthouse speaks to this belief, and thus stands as both an erudite handling of the Classical Revival vocabulary and a testimonial to the pervasiveness of its popularity and meaning in the early twentieth century.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

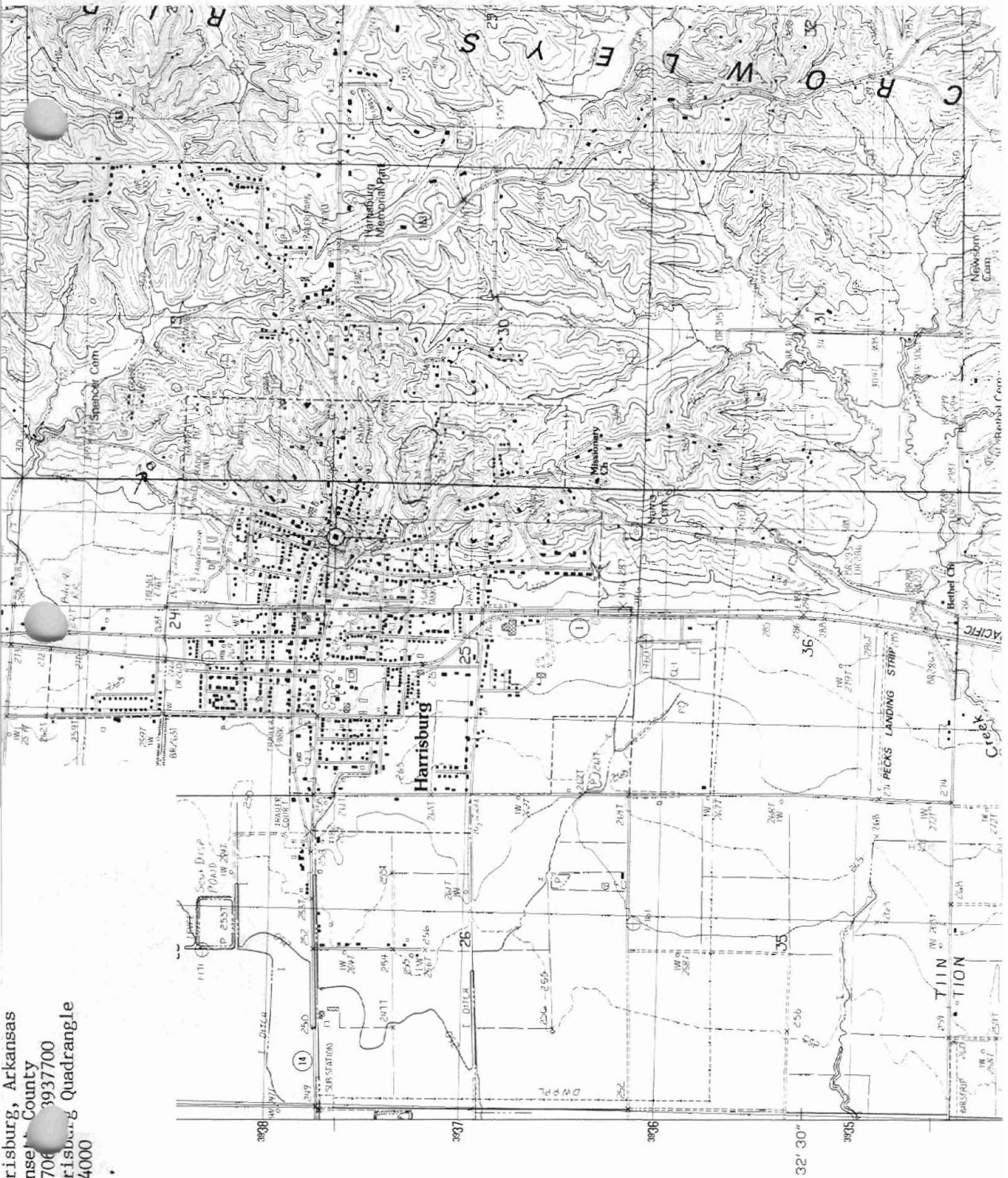
Section number 10 Page 1

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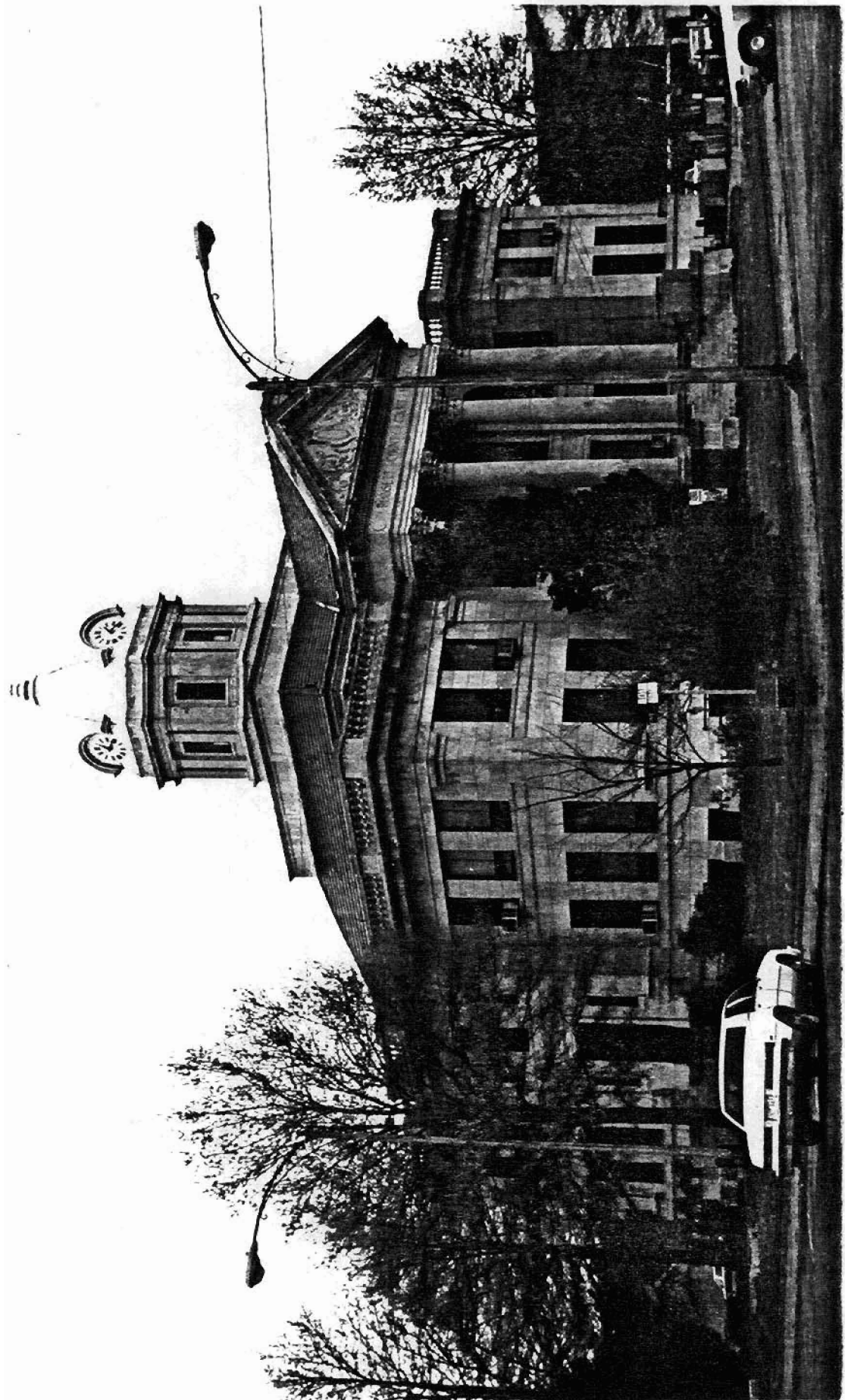
Verbal Boundary Description (cont'd)

along latter boundary to intersection with perpendicular line formed by eastern boundary of Main Street; thence proceed northerly along latter boundary to intersection with perpendicular line formed by southern boundary of Market Street; thence proceed easterly to point of beginning, comprising in all less than 1 acre.

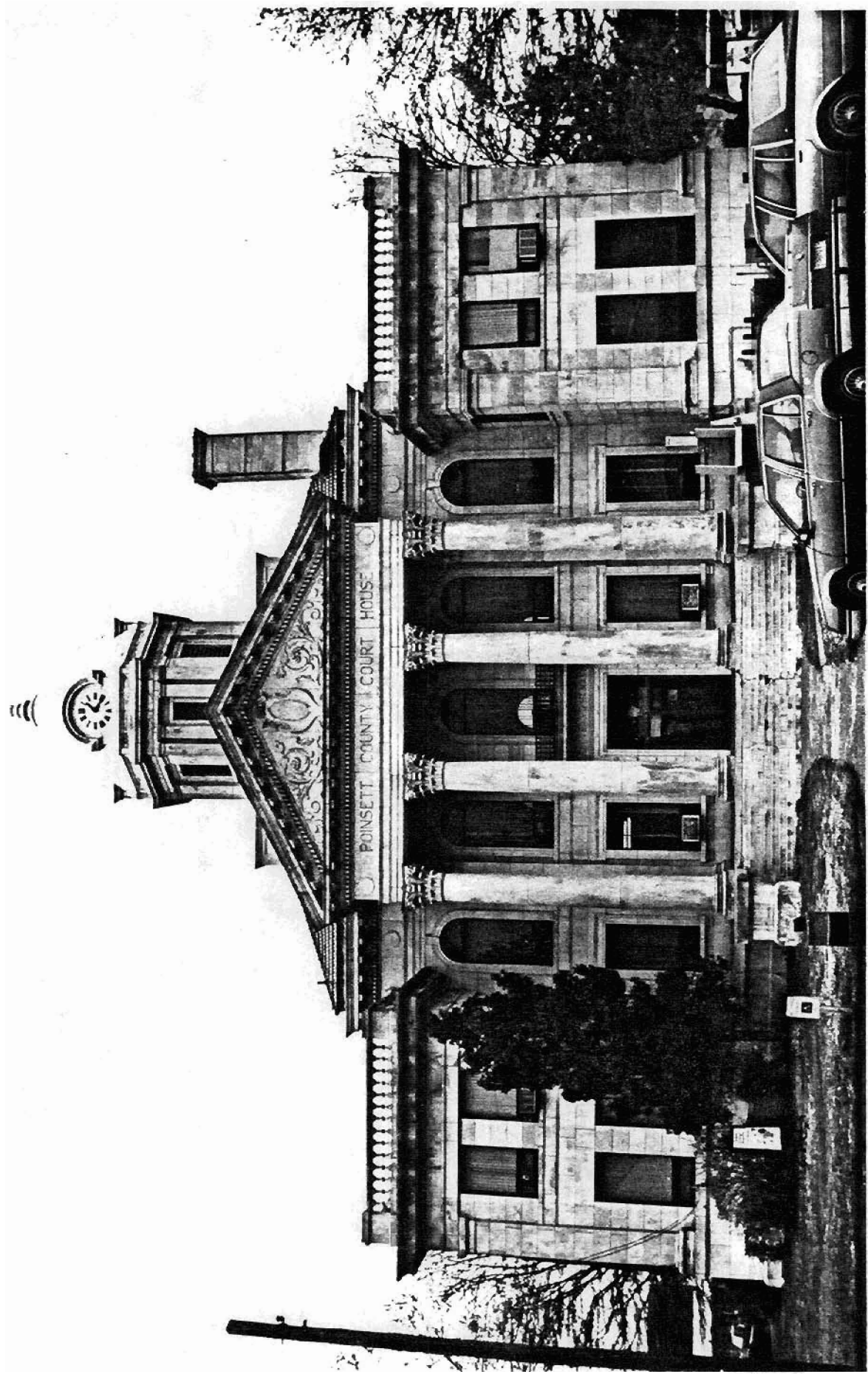
Harrisburg, Arkansas  
Poinsett County  
157706 3937700  
Harrisburg Quadrangle  
1:24000



32° 30'

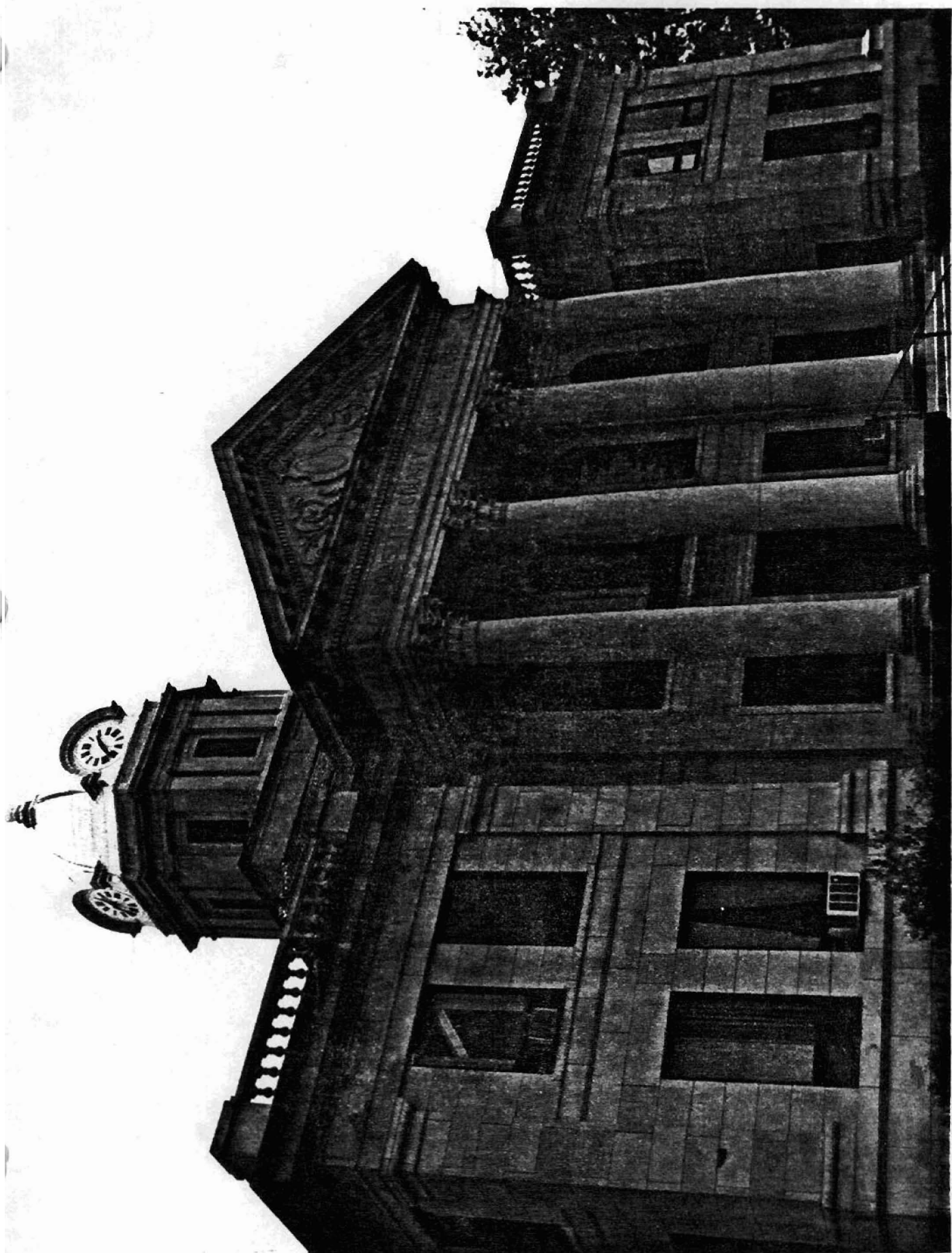




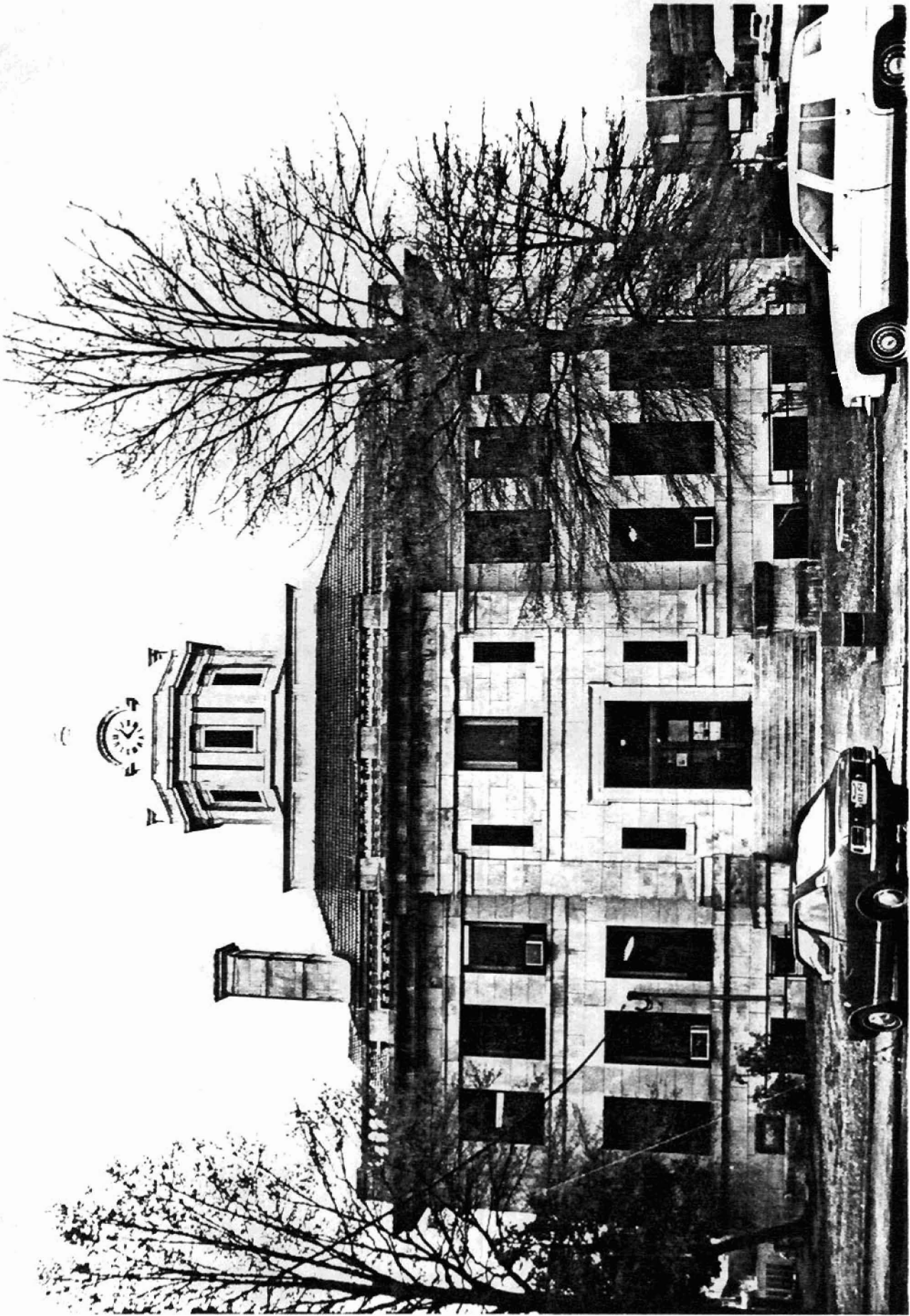




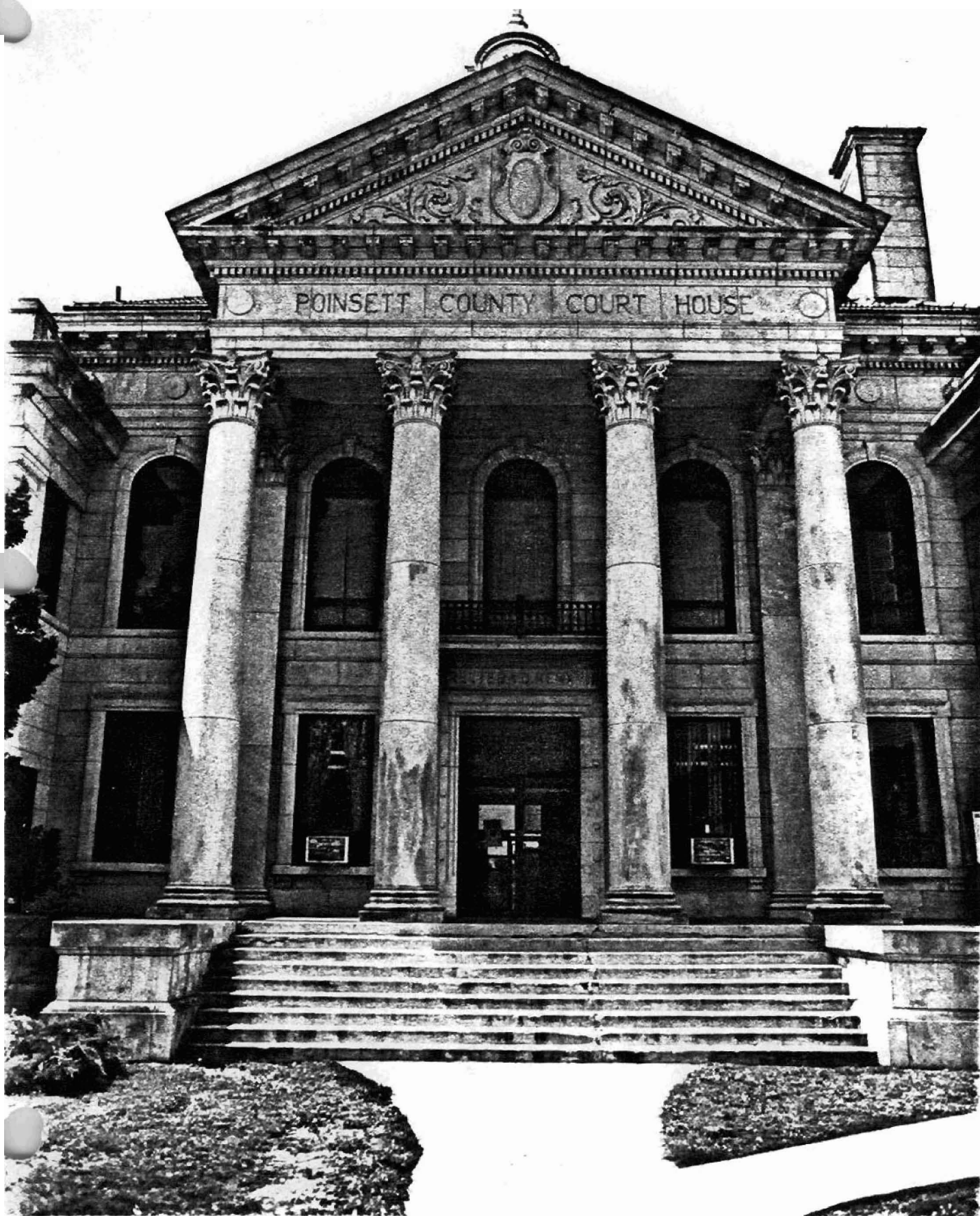


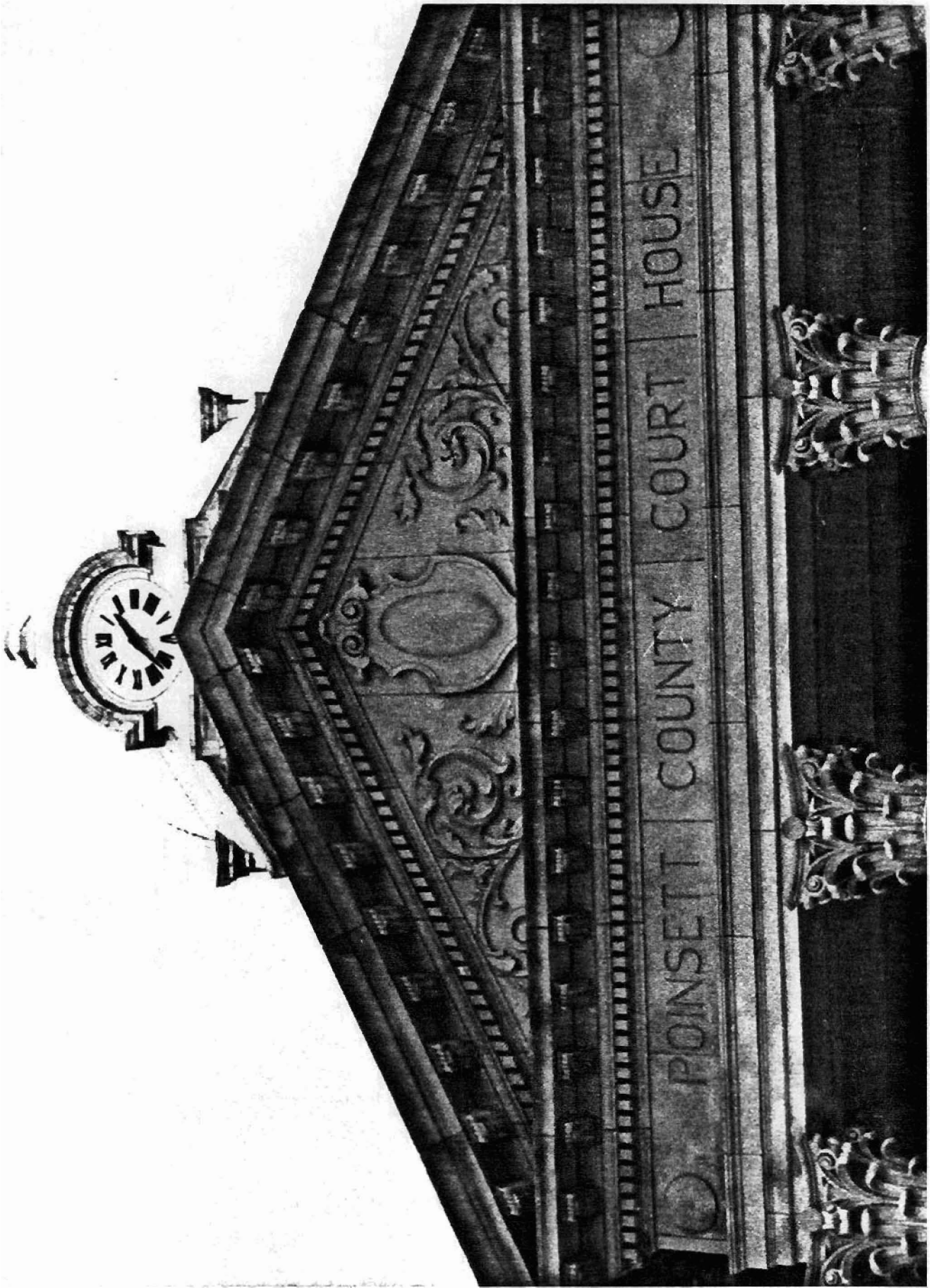


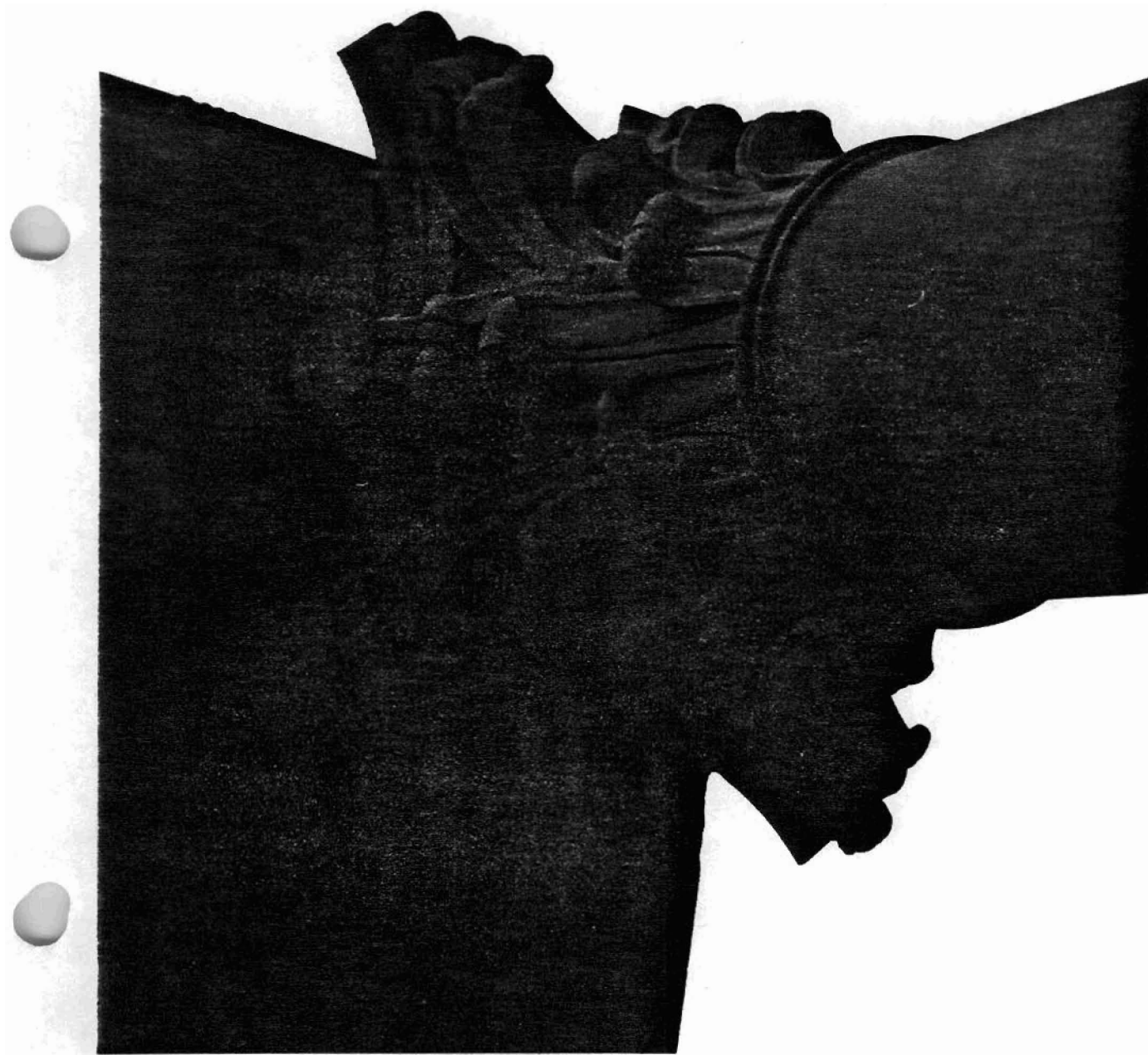
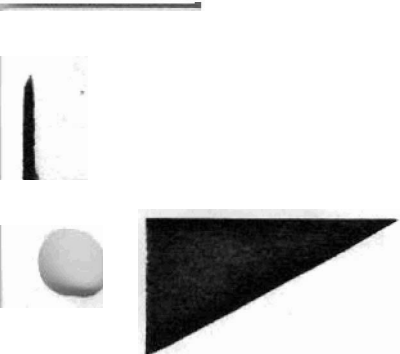




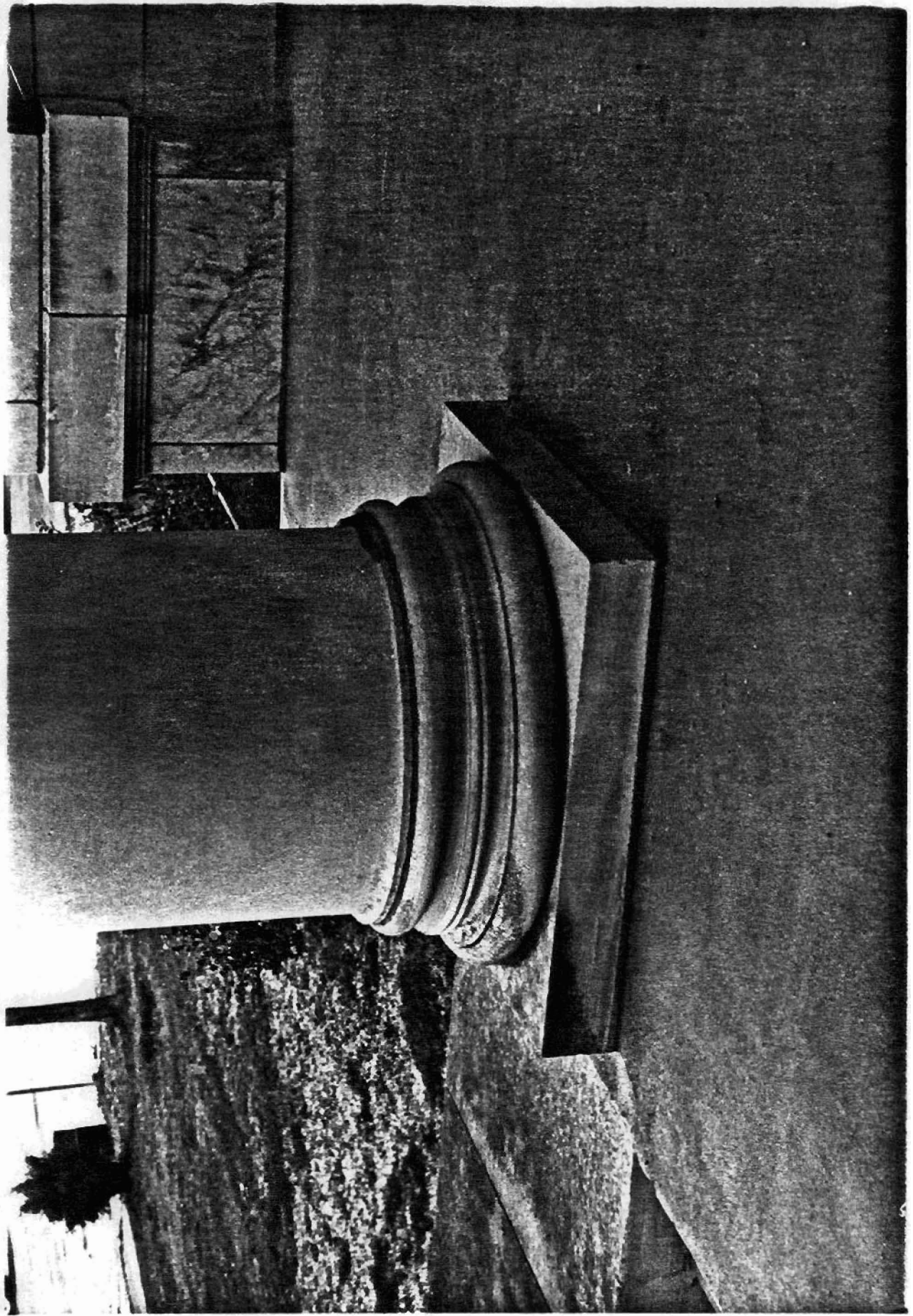


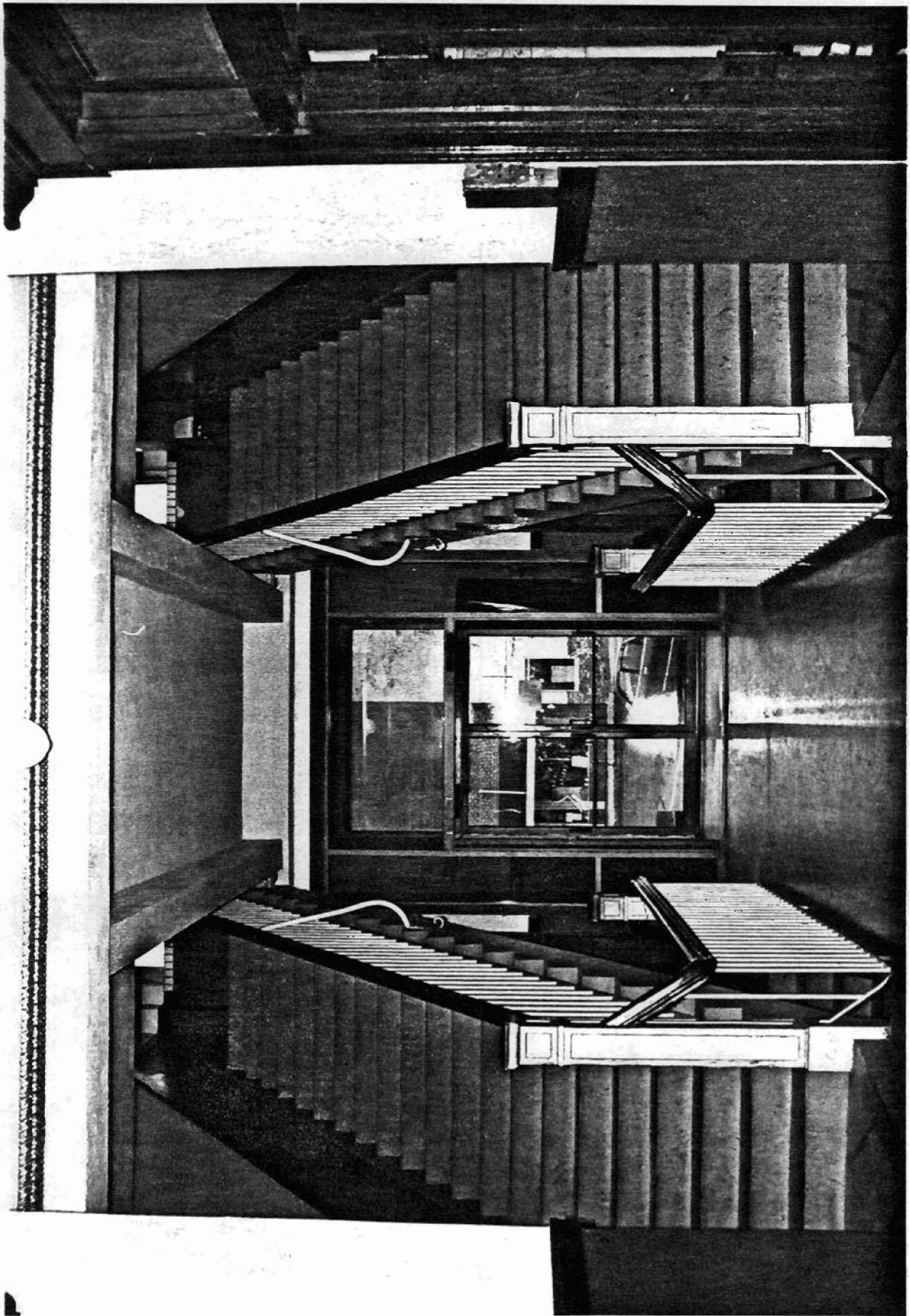








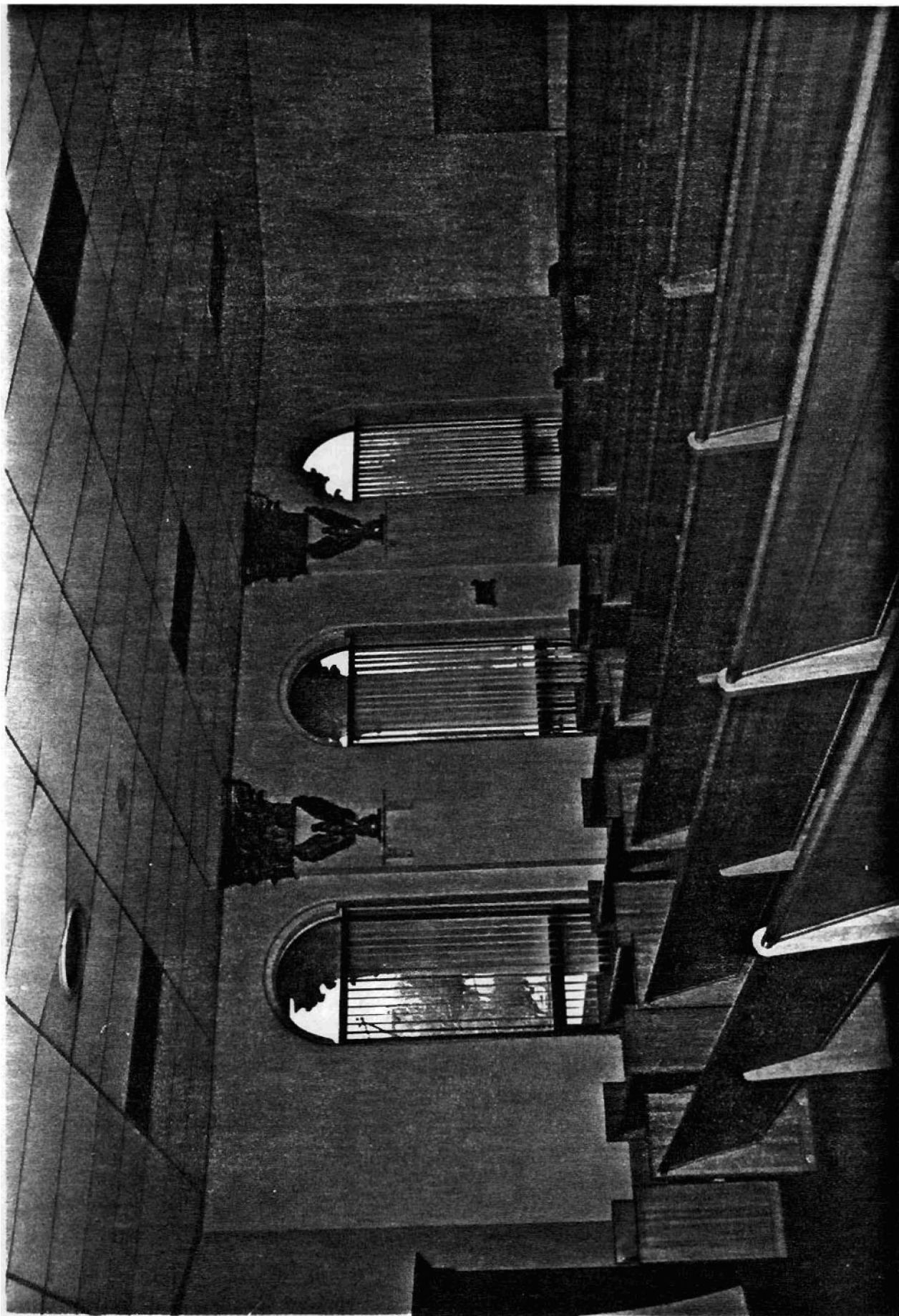






**DONT GET ON  
SEAT WITH FEET  
\$500 FINE**



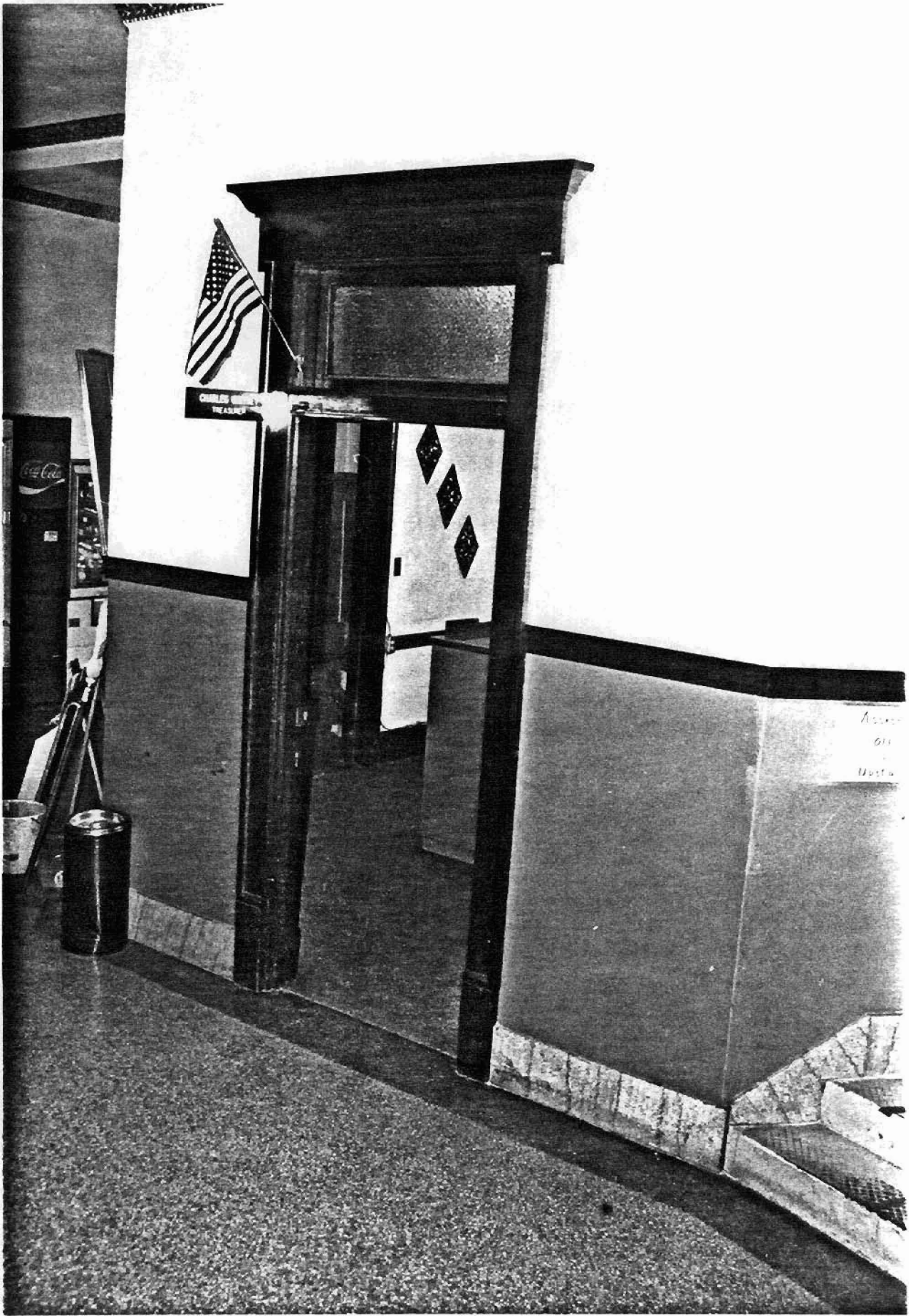


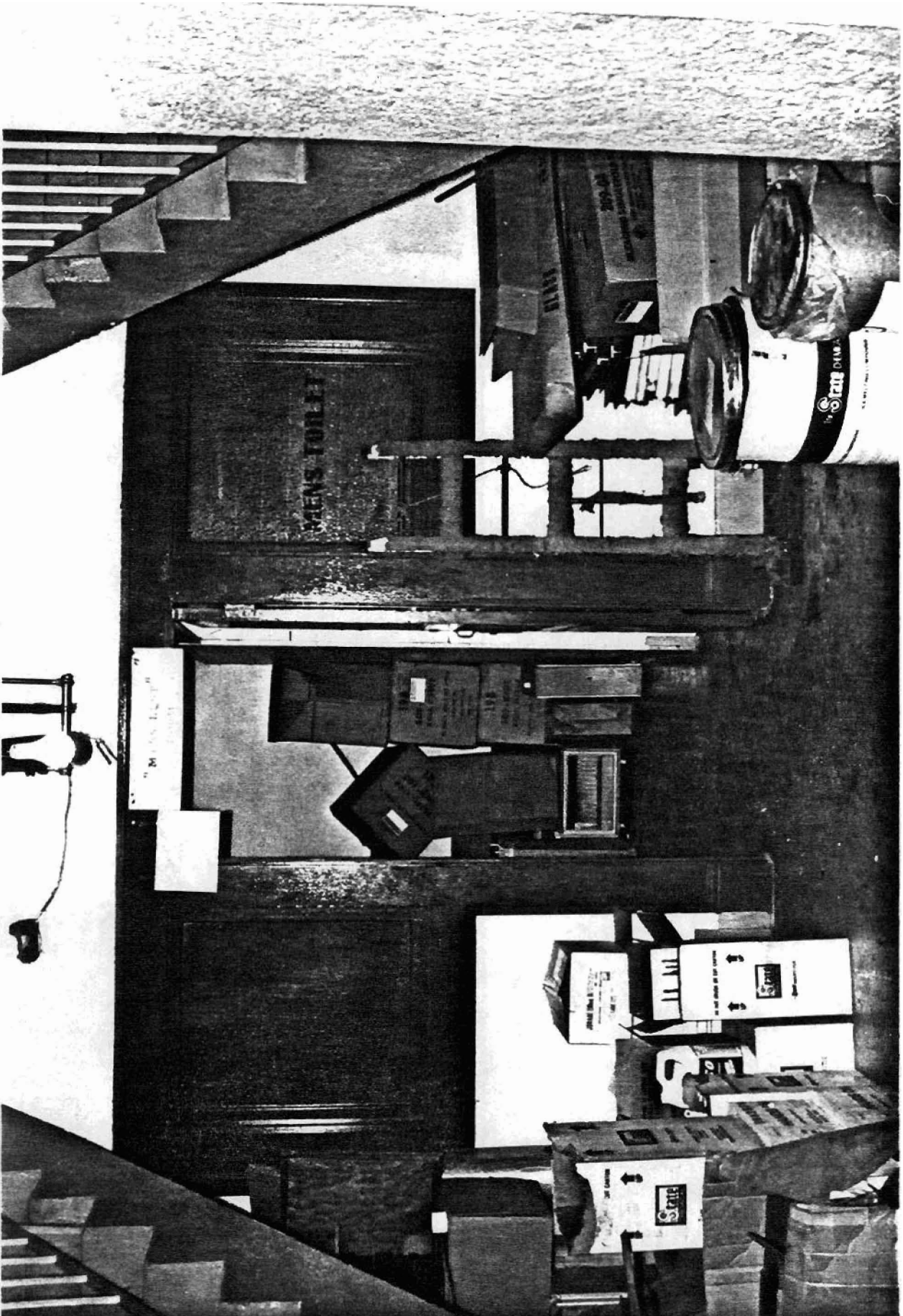


QUIET  
COURT IN  
SESSION

ASSESSOR'S  
OFFICE →







MENS TOILET

MENS TOILET

Strat DIM-A

Strat

Strat

Strat