

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: 215 North Denver Avenue

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Russellville

vicinity: N/A

state: AR

county: Pope

code: AR 115

zip code: 72801

3. Classification

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. Slater  
Signature of certifying official

July 5, 1994  
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

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic: Social Sub: Meeting Hall

Current: Social Sub: Meeting Hall

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Other  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Description: WPA Rustic

Materials: foundation Stone roof asphalt  
walls Stone 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: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Social History  
Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1934-1944

Significant Dates: 1936

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Works Progress Administration (WPA)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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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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: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Creage of Property: \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>487650</u>	<u>3903900</u>	B	<u>15</u>	_____	_____
C	<u>15</u>	_____	_____	D	<u>15</u>	_____	_____

\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point approximately 200 feet from the northwest corner of North Denver Avenue and West "B" Street in Russellville proceed northwest approximately 100 feet; thence proceed southwest approximately 50 feet; thence proceed southeast approximately 100 feet; thence proceed 50 feet northeast to the beginning point.

Boundary Justification: \_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

This boundary covers all the property associated with this building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Todd L. Ferguson, Survey Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: June 22, 1994

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

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

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**Summary**

The Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 in Russellville is a one-and-one-half story stone masonry structure supported by a continuous stone foundation and topped with a gabled roof covered with composition shingles. The structure features stucco and half-timbering in the gable ends and concrete medallions of the American Legion and American Legion Ladies Auxiliary above the entrances.

**Elaboration**

The Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 at 215 North Denver Street in Russellville, Arkansas is constructed of native stone in the Rustic style with a rectangular plan. The eastern facade of the structure serves as the entrance and faces North Denver Street. This facade features two separate entrances placed near the northern and southern ends of the facade with separate stone porticos. The entrances are faced with stone and concrete with a slight stone arch above each door and transom light. Centered above each door and transom is a concrete medallion featuring the crests of the American Legion and the American Legion Ladies Auxiliary. The facade is fenestrated with a central set of three windows between the two entrances on the first story and a central set of four windows on the second story. The second story features stucco and half timbering in the gabled end which is flanked on each side by the smaller gables of the entrances. On the south corner is a cornerstone which reads "Riggs-Hamilton, Post No. 20, American Legion, Erected 1934." The cornerstone near the north corner reads "This lot donated to Riggs-Hamilton Post of Pope County - By Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Mathews - in honor of our brothers - William R. Davis, Virgil H. Davis and Walter E. Blackburn - served with the A.E.F." Just to the right of the southern entrance is the standard brass W.P.A. plaque with the year 1936 on it.

The north facade of the structure is fenestrated with four sets of double windows which have been covered with boards. The wall is rather simple and plain with the exception of a chimney which is located in the middle of the wall and a small outcrop at the rear of the structure which is part of the kitchen area. The western or rear of the structure has two separate doors located symmetrically on either side. The door on the south side is flanked by two windows which have been in-filled with boards. The southern facade is a simple stone wall with five pairs of windows. On the east side of this wall is a buttressing wall which is the only other feature of this facade and the only buttress on the entire structure. The structure rests on a continuous stone foundation and has a simple gabled roof which is covered with asphalt shingles.

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The interior of the structure is largely intact on the second half story. The first story has been remodeled but still retains many of the original features. The structure has been altered over the years with the replacement of the windows to a thermally-efficient variety as well as an update of the kitchen after a fire a few years ago. The only other known alterations to the structure are the removal of dormers from the roof line; no clear date for these alterations could be obtained.

United States Department of the Interior  
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Criteria A and C, local significance

The Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 is eligible under Criterion C with local significance as the best example of an assembly/meeting structure of typical W.P.A. Rustic construction in Pope County. The post is also eligible under Criterion A through association with the American Legion and its history as an American social organization.

**Elaboration**

The American Legion was founded in France during the relatively quiet and uneventful days that followed the signing of the armistice that ended World War I. American enlisted men from all three of the principal branches of the service then in existence -- the Army, Navy and Marine Corps -- were billeted in various locations for the purpose of maintaining a military presence while the negotiators worked out the details of the treaty that would outline the political future of much of Europe for the next decade. These servicemen found life during the occupation uneventful and boring, and this only compounded the frustration felt by many at not being allowed to return home to family and friends. A small group of officers -- and especially Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. and Lieutenant Colonel George A. White -- met to discuss the possibility of establishing a veterans' organization which would include all branches of the military and which would serve the immediate purpose of providing an outlet for some of the energy and frustration felt by the occupation forces but which would also set as its larger goal the establishment of a nationwide veteran's organization that would provide its members with both a social organization and a vehicle for voicing their collective concerns about such issues as national defense, subversive activity, radical thought, domestic social programs and veterans' affairs.

Successive meetings over the course of the next several months in both Europe and America further defined the Legion's mandate and purpose. However, it was the shooting of four Legionnaires during an Armistice Day parade in the lumber town of Centralia, Washington in 1919 by socialist IWW organizers and the subsequent coverage of the trial that followed -- in which the Legionnaires were portrayed as the aggressors -- that both galvanized and tempered the Legionnaire spirit. Both the public and the Legion press recognized the dangers of extremism by any party while admitting the need for responsible vigilance against any activity that threatened the democratic form of government. The American Legion began to grow steadily thereafter through an organization that elected officers on the national, state and local levels and provided a voice for its members regarding a variety of national concerns. During the

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Depression the American Legion distinguished itself in particular through the expansion of local programs targeted at youth. Of particular note were the founding of American Legion Junior Baseball, the American Legion Oratorical Contest and Boys' State. The Legion took as its motto "We have stood together, let's stick together."

On January 23, 1919, a story in a local newspaper in Russellville, Arkansas reported that an Army-Navy Club of Pope County was being formed to assist and to serve as a civic organization for all veterans and their families. Eligibility requirements for the club stipulated that an individual be an honorably discharged member of the Army, Navy, or Marine Corps that had been on either home guard or overseas duty. Honorary membership could be extended to the wife, parents and siblings of men who made the supreme sacrifice. The club was dedicated to assisting partially disabled veterans in finding work and to provide free legal and medical advice. This organization was first conceived by Mr. Robert A. Ragsdale, who was elected president of the organization, and Mr. Wallace Cowan, who was elected secretary.

This organization met in the Ferguson Building which was located at the corner of Arkansas highway 7 and U.S. highway 64. One of the specific tasks the organization had in mind was to construct a memorial auditorium and armory. The armory would serve as the barracks and drill hall for infantry and artillery units to be formed in town.

At the July meeting of the Army and Navy Club of Pope County, a vote was taken to join the national organization of the American Legion. The post was named in honor of Samuel L. Riggs and Ed Hamilton, two Pope County men who were killed in battle in France.

In 1934 and 1935, construction on an American Legion Hut was begun but ran into financial difficulty. However, by July 1936, the post was ready for dedication and the date for the official ceremony was set for July 31, 1936. Speakers at the dedication were Mr. Jerome Thompson of Fayetteville, the State Commander of the American Legion; Mr. Charles Q. Kelly, National Committeeman of the American Legion; and U. S. Senator Joe T. Robinson. Mr. Wallace Cowan -- the original secretary of the Army-Navy Club of Pope County and later Commander of the Post in Russellville -- would preside at the meeting and Mr. Robert Ragsdale -- original president of the Army-Navy Club of Pope County, later State Vice President of the American Legion in Arkansas -- would introduce Senator Robinson.

The structure was built at a cost of \$6,000 at its completion. The lot for the structure was donated by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Mathews in honor of Mrs. Mathews brothers, W.R. Davis of North Little Rock and Virgil H. Davis of Searcy, and her brother-in-law, Wallace E. Blackburn



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of Forrest City, all of whom saw service overseas with the American Expeditionary Force (A.E.F.) in the First World War. The Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 has remained active in Veterans affairs and in the Russellville community generally since its inception and the facility is still used for many events and meetings.

The Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 building is locally significant under Criterion A (Social History) by virtue of its direct associations with the American Legion for which it was built. As a particularly good example of this popular, Depression-era style and the most intact example in the community of Russellville, the Riggs-Hamilton American Legion Post #20 is also locally significant under Criterion C.

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**Bibliography**

*The Russellville Weekly Courier Democrat*, Vol. XLV, No. 4, January 23, 1919, pg. 1.

*The Russellville Weekly Courier Democrat*, Vol. XLV, No. 19, July 17, 1919, pg. 1.

*The Russellville Weekly Courier Democrat*, Vol. LIX, No. 56, July 16, 1936, pg. 1.

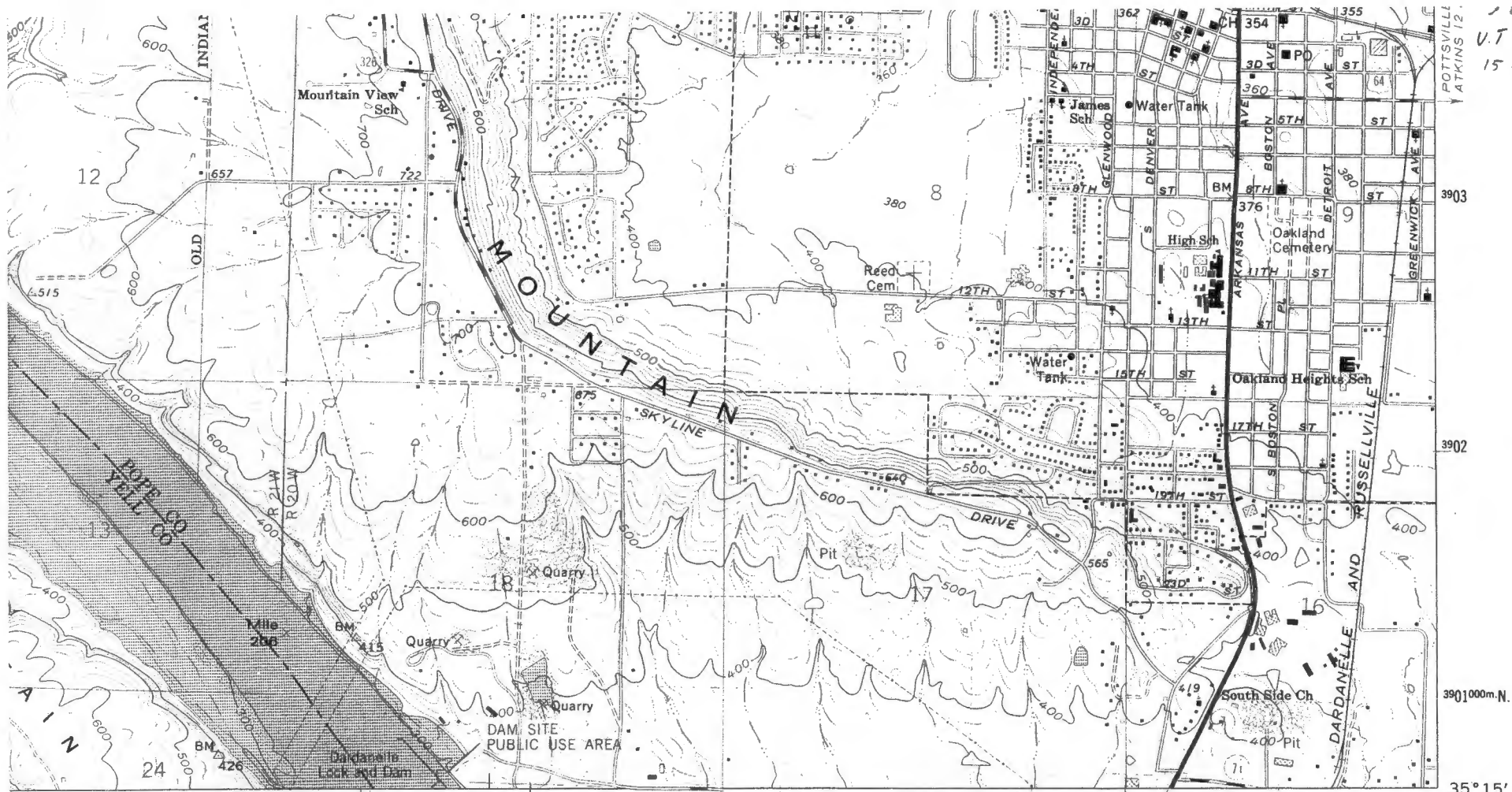
*The Russellville Daily Courier Democrat*, Vol. XIII, No. 182, July 30, 1936, pg. 4.

*The Russellville Daily Courier Democrat*, Vol. XIII, No. 184, August 1, 1936, pg. 1.

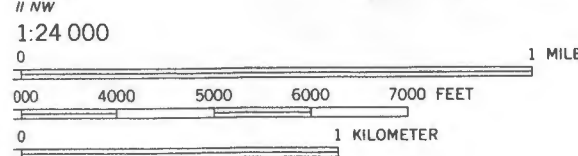
*The Russellville Weekly Courier Democrat*, Vol. LIX, No. 59, August 6, 1936, pg. 1.

Information provided by Barbara Bowden of Magazine, Arkansas.

U.T.M. Refers.  
15 19S 76E 3



ANELLE) 11 NW 1:24 000 0 10' 484 485 486000m.E. 35° 15' 93° 07' 30"



VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

CONFORMS TO NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR THE STATES OF COLORADO, ARIZONA, CALIFORNIA, COLORADO, ILLINOIS, MISSOURI, NEBRASKA, NEVADA, NEW MEXICO, NORTH CAROLINA, NORTH DAKOTA, OREGON, SOUTH DAKOTA, TEXAS, UTAH, WYOMING, AND WASHINGTON, D.C.  
AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1977. Map edited 1979  
This information not field checked

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route

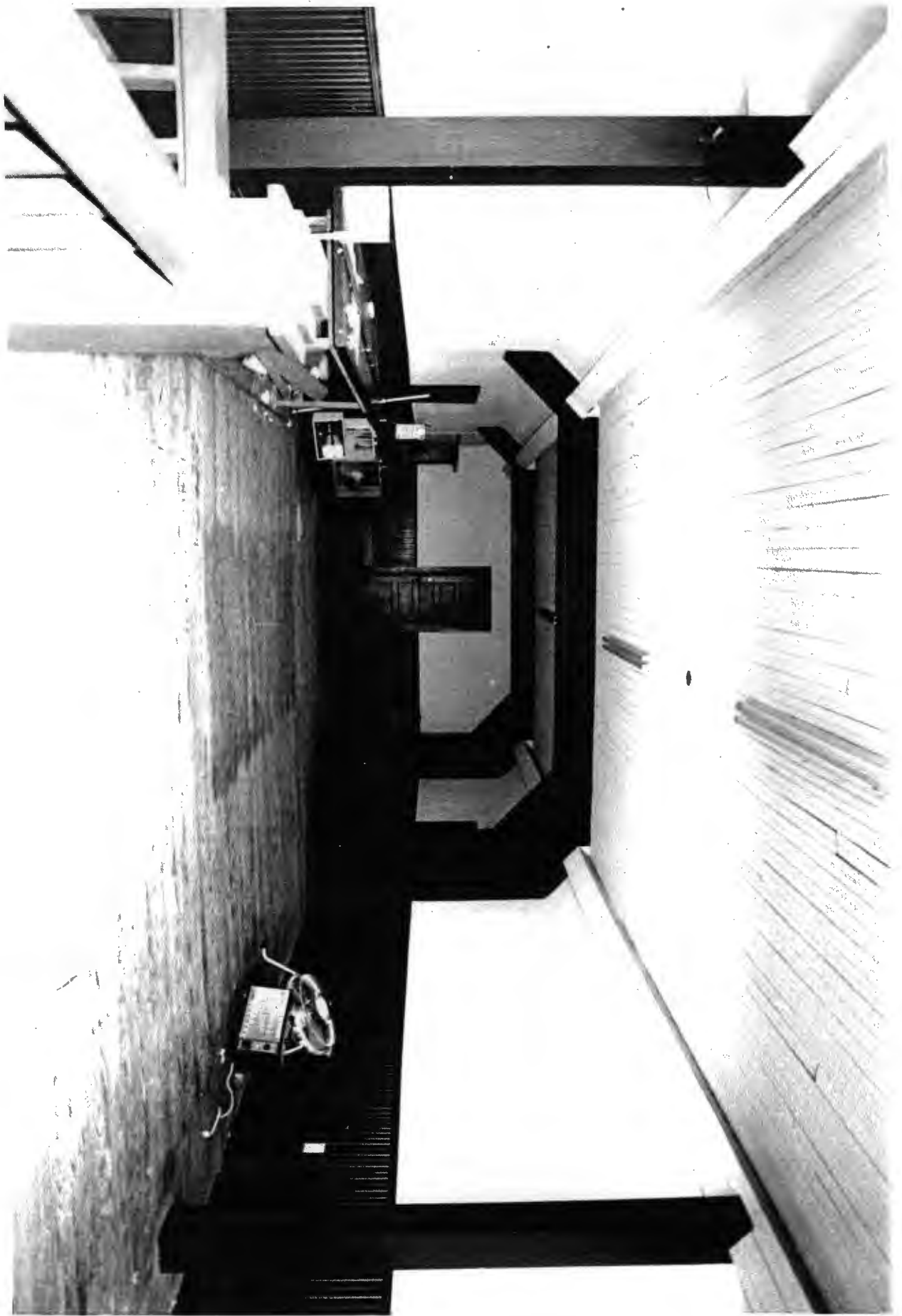
RUSSELLVILLE WEST, ARK.

N3515—W9307.5/7.5

1963  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
DMA 7354 I SW—SERIES V884

(HOLA BEND)  
7354 II NE







FIGGS MIL - MILLTON  
POST NO. 20  
AMERICAN LEGION  
ERECTED 1934

