

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name St. Mary's AME Church—Pocahontas Colored School

other names/site number Eddie Mae Herron Center

2. Location

street & number 1708 Archer Street

not for publication

city or town Pocahontas

vicinity

state Arkansas

code AR

county Randolph

code 121

zip code 72455

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Catherine Matthews
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/26/02
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 for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/religious facility

EDUCATION/school

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Plain/Traditional

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof METAL

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1918-1952

Significant Dates

1918

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Blankenship, L. F. *Directory of Randolph County Arkansas 1910*. Star Herald Printing Company, 1978.

Carroll, Ann B. "Here and There," Pocahontas Star Herald, January 4, 2001.

Interview with Pat Johnson and Jean Oaks, December 26, 2001. Notes with Jan Ziegler.

Interview with Nyla and Martella Mansker. December 27, 2001. Notes with Jan Ziegler.

Tyler, David D. *Hometown: A Study of Race Relations Randolph County, Arkansas 1865-1965*. Unpublished thesis, University of Memphis Department of History, 1995.

Name of Property

County and State

Warranty Deed, Randolph County Clerk, Recorded December 12, 1918.

Warranty Deed, Randolph County Clerk, Recorded July 2, 1948.

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

Name of repository:

Randolph County Library

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property Less than one acre.**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Lot number five (5) in Block number Ten (10), Shannon Addition to City of Pocahontas.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

This boundary contains all of the property of the St. Mary AME Church—Pocahontas Colored School and maintains its historic integrity.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Claudia C. Shannon, ASID/Amy Bennett Survey Historian

Organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date March 30, 2002

street & number 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9874

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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SUMMARY

The small, plain, white frame building served as both a church and school for the town's African American community when it was built in 1918. Known originally as the St. Mary's AME Church, the building soon came to be known also as the Pocahontas Colored School. The one-room wooden building served the relatively miniscule Black population of Pocahontas, most of who lived in that area of the town where the building is located. For the next thirty years after its construction it would serve as a church and for nearly half a century from its construction it would serve dually as the schoolhouse, grades one through eight, for African American children. The community found other uses for the little school house after that, and even added on a kitchen, bathrooms, and expanded the main room. But even so, its distinctive exterior with two single doors on the front façade, its gabled roof, and especially its interior with original flooring, walls, and ceiling, evoke a feeling of its past.

ELABORATION

Located at the intersection of Archer and Pratt Streets, the St. Mary's AME Church—Pocahontas Colored School was constructed in 1918. The building sits on three city lots in a residential part of town. The fenestration is accomplished by a series of six-over-six windows on the main portion of the building. The only exception being a two-pane sash that replaced one of the six-pane sashes on the west elevation. The original portion and later side additions are both covered in original wood novelty siding, the smaller portion 1967 rear addition is sheathed in aluminum siding and the rest of the addition is constructed of concrete blocks. The front portion of the roof is covered with green aluminum standing seam metal, while the back portion is of asphalt shingles.

Exterior

Two small concrete porches, two shingled porch covering, and two identical single doors on the front (south) façade make an otherwise indistinct building noticeable. On the ground at the corner of the porch on the right is a small marker, approximately 18x10x6 inches. It is inscribed with the names of key individuals responsible for the building's existence—Trustees of the AME church. A single front window looks out toward Archer Street, while four windows give view out either side of the structure to the east where a large shady fenced lawn waits the school children of times past, or to the west, toward Pratt Street. On the building's east side, a third single door opens from the kitchen addition, while two more small windows give light into each of the bathrooms.

Interior

Whether those coming for worship or for "their books" entered through one door but exited the other, or whether one door was for men and the other for women is not known. But the fact is that those who entered in the building's early days and those entering now find this space with a story to tell. The original green color of the walls, the warm if worn pin planks—one by six tongue-in-groove pieces—and the original one by six tongue-in-groove planks on the walls and one by four tongue-in-groove floor in the original church/school suggest the building's austere past. The original space measures approximately 39x23 feet. Replicas of old school house lights and ceiling fans provide illumination and ventilation in the school room.

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Faint markings on the floor of the original portion suggest where a platform/pulpit once stood, at the north west end of what was the original structure. This area also served as a stage for school functions. Other markings, a trace of red numbers on the stained wood floor, give evidence of games and "cake walks" at school socials and fundraisers. A flue on the west side of the building shows where the old wood stove stood. This flue also served as vent for a warm morning stove during the years from about 1986 to last year, when the building served as a community center for the African American Community.

The kitchen area, a 19 x 9-foot space added on to the north side when the building was rented out in 1967 as a day-care center, expands the building behind the "stage" area. The east wall of the original building was also extended outward at this time, another alteration made by the day-care center. This "side" room, approximately 14x50 feet, is obviously separate from the original room. It differs in ceiling height, and its sheet rock walls and suspended ceiling mark it as a modern era space. The day-care center alterations also included two bathrooms on the north end behind the "side" room. Each bathroom is 9 1/2 x 10-feet.

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Statement of Significance

For almost half a century, the St. Mary's AME Church—Pocahontas Colored School served as the center for religious and educational activities for the small African American population in Pocahontas. This small, unadorned, one-room wood frame building served to provide Blacks living in the town and elsewhere in the county a place of worship, a place of schooling, and by extension, a place for community activities and social events associated with the school and church. In the five decades between the end of World War I and the passage of Civil Rights legislation in the 1960s, this miniscule African American community in a small, poor rural southern state existed as much as possible in a state of anonymity; the church/school building on Archer Street served that anonymity while simultaneously providing this "hidden people" opportunity to forge an identity as a thriving community striving for spiritual and educational growth and fulfillment. In addition to the Sunday church services led by Deacon Henry Taylor from 1918 until his death in 1948, the building housed school for grades one through eight. Even after *Brown vs. Board of Education* ruled segregated school were not acceptable, the state of Arkansas, Randolph County, and Pocahontas continued the practice of separation, with African American children required to attend Pocahontas Colored School through grade eight. (High school students were bussed an hour away to a segregated Newport school.) During this time, the church/school was host to graduations and other "socials." The building thus served the invaluable functions of nurturing a sense of ethnic and social group identity as well as offering an albeit limited educational opportunity to Pocahontas' African American children during a time when opportunity was scant for this portion of the community's citizens.

History of Property

A group of individuals—the St. Mary's A.M.E. Church Board of Trustees—purchased two lots in the Shannon Addition of Pocahontas in August of 1918. These Trustees were Bob Taylor, Ransom Looney, w. H. Powers, and Henry Armstrong. The site soon became the location of the St. Mary's A.M.E. Church and served as the schoolhouse for the African American community in Pocahontas. Deacon Henry Taylor served as pastor for the church until his death in 1948. At about that time, the St. Mary's Trustees—Essie Johnson, Birdie Pitman, and Della Henderson—entered into an agreement with the Pocahontas Special School District to transfer to the public school board ownership of the land, along with an extra lot and the building, with certain provisions. The warranty deed signed June 30, 1948, mentioned the unanimous vote of the congregation authorizing the action. Agreements included an "understanding" that the board would "arrange" for a building "of sufficient size and comfort" to "accommodate the congregation of the St. Mary's A.M.E. Church of Pocahontas, and also suitable(sic) arranged for Public School to accommodate the colored children of said Pocahontas Special School District."

Although the building remained technically a church, the religious function of the building waned after the death of Henry Taylor, and the school function became predominant. Already a school building, the Pocahontas Colored School continued to function thus even after *Brown v. Board of Education* declared segregated schools unconstitutional. Children in grades one through eight continued to attend school in this single room as before, only now they received a measure of financial support and oversight from the public school system. Pocahontas Public Schools began furnishing a bus to transport African American children to a segregated school in Newport for grades nine through twelve. The one and only teacher in the Pocahontas Colored School from the time it came under the jurisdiction of the public school was Eddie Mae Herron. Ms. Herron came to the Pocahontas Colored School when her job at the Biggers school for Black children ended with the school's

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closure. Those children were bused to Pocahontas. The school and Ms. Herron would remain in this status until forced integration at the end of the 1964 school year.

The church/school building ceased to exist in that function at that time. In 1967, Black River Area Development Corporation, a community action agency assisting low-income families, acquired use of the building as a pre-school day care center, under the name, McDonald Head Start/Day Care Center. The building continued to serve this function until 1985, when a new day-care center was acquired and the facility was no longer needed.

Local leaders of the African American community became concerned at the deteriorating state of the historic building. In 1986, Roland and Helen McCarroll contacted the building's owners, the Pocahontas School District, and received permission for the building to be used as a Senior Center where quilting, crafts, and other community activities such as feeding of bereaved families could take place. Once permission was granted, the building again became a community hub for the small African American community.

Upkeep of the building proved expensive and difficult, however. Their continued concern and interest in preserving and restoring the old church/school prompted younger members of the African American community to begin preservation efforts. In November of 2000, Pat Johnson organized those who had attended school there, and members of the older generations, to create the "Eddie Mae Herron Center" Board of Directors. This group of twelve members of the African American community formed a nonprofit corporation and secured the support of the Pocahontas Area Chamber of Commerce, Black River Technical College, and other community groups and individuals. In April of 2001, the Eddie Mae Herron Center Board was given a quitclaim deed to the property by the Pocahontas School District 319. Their goals are to restore the building as much as possible to its original state, to establish it as a museum to tell the history of the African American experience in Randolph County, and to secure funding to maintain the structure from this point on.

In subsequent month, the Pocahontas City Council provided \$35,000 in funding assistance. In addition to this funding, many individuals have made donations for restoration purposes. To date, work projects completed on the building include the installation of a new roof, part of which is the same sort of metal covering as the original roof; the addition of blown-in insulation and central heat and air; plumbing up-dates and other restroom alterations to make these ADA-compliant; the addition of period-appropriate school house lights and ceiling fans; and restoration of the original floor and walls by stripping way of materials added by the Day Care Center. The group has begun collecting and restoring and/or copying old photographs, and to seek artifacts appropriate to the museum setting. To assist them in these efforts, the Eddie Mae Herron Center Board has begun initial steps to apply for planning and other grants for establishing a museum and learning center in the building.

Historic Context

This building is one of the few extant physical reminders of a time in the history of Pocahontas, Randolph County, and the state of Arkansas, when African Americans were denied basic opportunities, such as schooling, readily afforded their white

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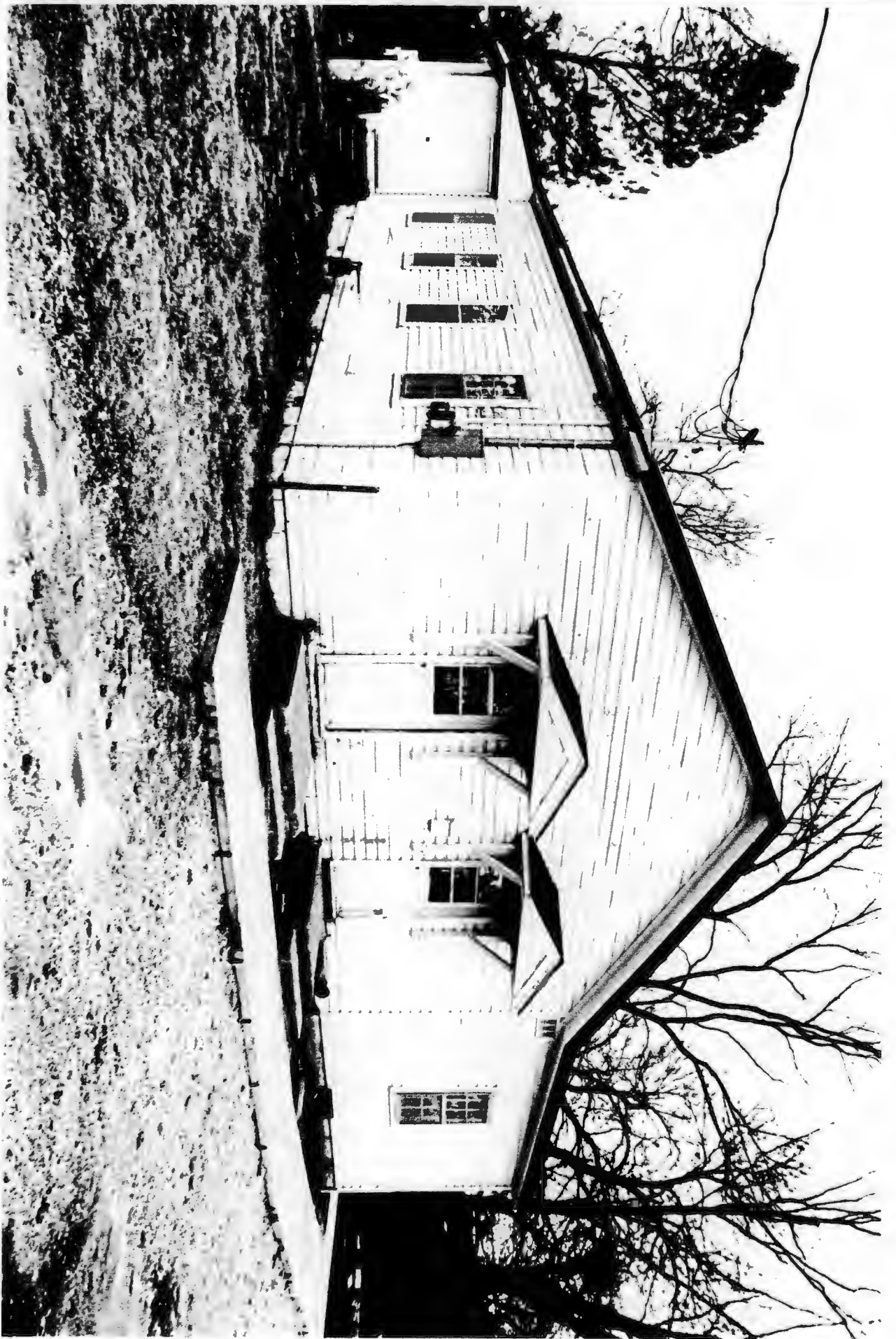
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fellow citizens. It serves as a reminder also of the exclusion of African Americans here from social interaction with their white neighbors. Spanning the half-century from the end of World War I to the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, the building gives testimony to the way of life for the African Americans of Pocahontas and Randolph County. While much attention has been given to the history of race relations in areas of the South where African Americans formed significant number of the overall populations, little note is given in history texts of the plight of those such as Randolph County's Black populace, which peaked at about six percent of the county's total population in 1860, but had dropped to about two percent in 1930, a figure where it remains in 2001. While segregated African American schools existed in other communities in Randolph County for a time, the St. Mary's A.M.E. Church—Pocahontas Colored School is the only existing black Schoolhouse.

The African American community thus utilized the building to provide its citizens services and opportunities the larger local, state and to a large extent, national, communities would not. It found in the building a haven where its people could worship, where its children could be educated, and where its people could enjoy fellowship and could celebrate the important functions and milestones such as graduations and other school socials.

The building thus is significant as a living monument to the exclusions and segregation imposed on Randolph County's African Americans through 1964. The one-room church/schoolhouse offered a place of openness and received those the larger white community would not.

The building exists still, and with it, the living memory of those days. Thus, the St. Mary's A.M.E. Church—Pocahontas Colored School is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A with local significance because of its association with the pattern of segregation in Pocahontas and the educational history of African Americans in this small town.







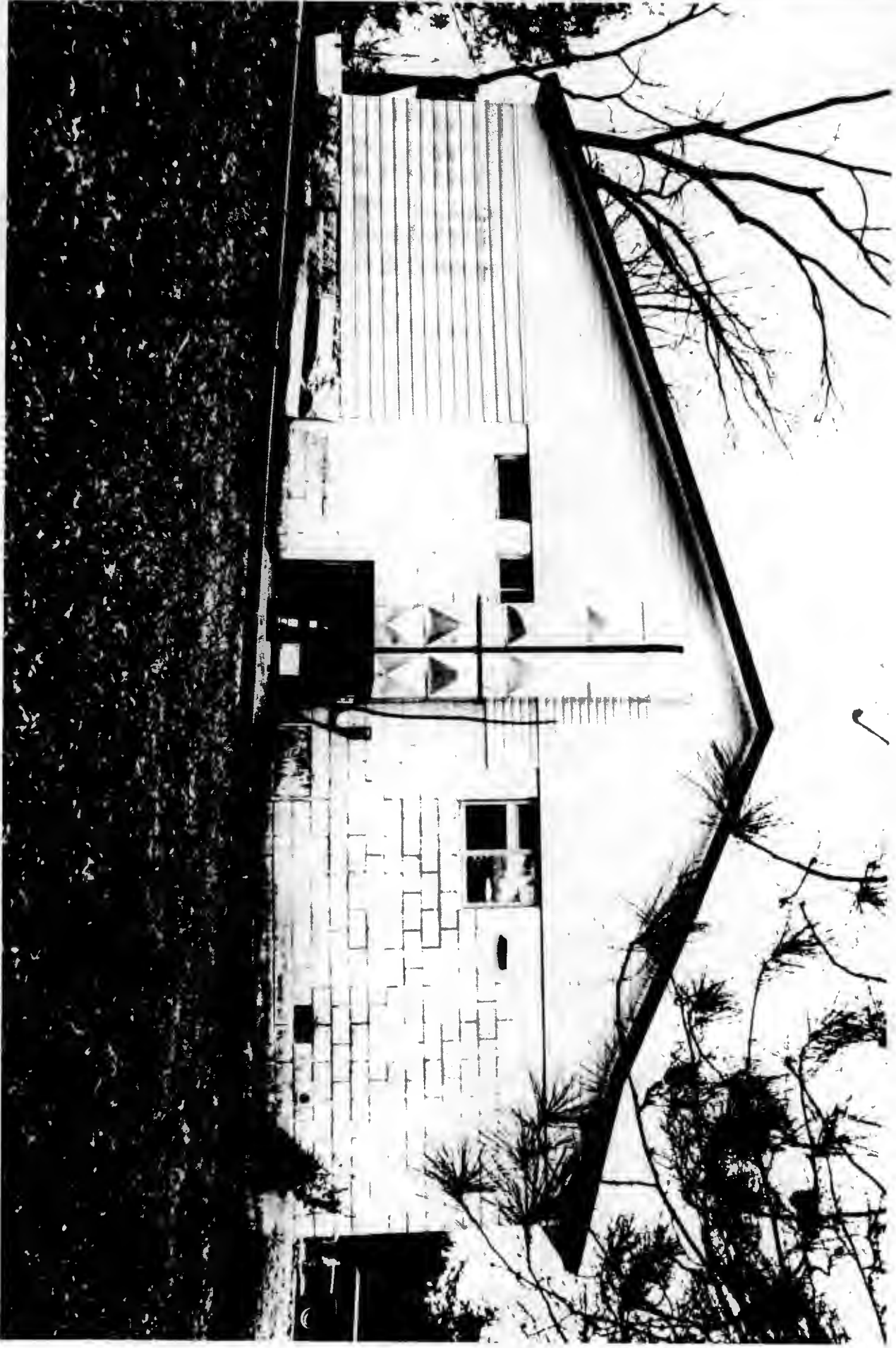










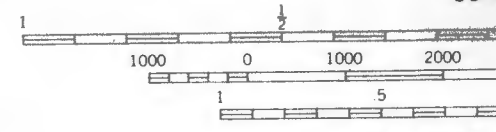
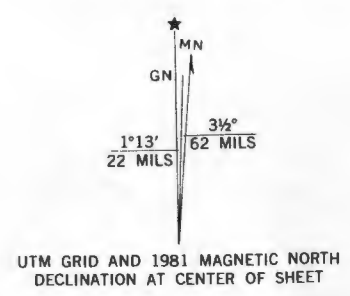


St. Marys AME/
 Pocahontas Colored School
 Randolph County, AR
 UTM Reference:
 15/681348/4014712



(INLAND)
 7768 # NE

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
 photographs taken 1965 and planetable surveys 1966
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas coordinate system, north zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
 zone 15, shown in blue
 Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
 To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
 move the projection lines 4 meters south and
 11 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
 Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken
 1980. Map edited 1981. This information not field checked
 Purple tint indicates extension of urban area



CONTOUR I
 DOTTED LINES REP
 NATIONAL GEODETIC
 THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NA
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEN
 AND ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COM
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC M