

NR 8/24/1990

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 Smith, Joel, House  
other names/site number UN0111

### 2. Location

street & number U.S. Route 167  not for publication N/A  
city, town El Dorado  vicinity  
state Arkansas code AR county Union code AR 139 zip code 71730

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>        </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>        </u>	<u>        </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>        </u>	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>        </u> objects
			<u>1</u> Total

• 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.

Chryssalyn A. Byrd 7-5-90  
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)

DOMESTIC/Single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: I-House

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Weatherboard

roof Asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**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  
ARCHEOLOGY/HISTORIC NON-ABORIGINAL  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

c. 1840  
1840-1940  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

N/A  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

European  
Afro-American  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Smith, Joel  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property Approximately four (4)

**UTM References**

A 

1	5	5	3	3	7	2	0	3	6	6	5	2	5	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

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

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian  
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date June 30, 1990  
street & number 225 E. Markham Street, Suite 200 telephone (501) 371-2763  
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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Summary

The Joel Smith House is a two-story, wood frame residence of braced frame construction and designed in a late Colonial vernacular style which adorned an I-house and its two single story, shed roof porches with rudimentary Classical details. The single pile, central hall floor plan characteristic of the I-house type is augmented with an original enclosed room at the eastern end of the northern porch and a larger room on the southern porch which was a later though historic enclosure of the original open porch. The gable and shed roofs are covered with asphalt shingles, the walls are sheathed with weatherboard, and the foundation is composed of brick piers.

Elaboration

The Joel Smith House is a two story, wood frame residence designed in a late Colonial vernacular style. Its gable roof shelters a typical rectangular, single pile/central hall I-house plan, though the inclusion of full-length, single story shed roof porches on both side gable elevations is a form typical of these late Colonial designs. The enclosed rooms on the porches (an original two-bay room on the northern elevation and a later three-bay room on the southern elevation) are also characteristic of other such late Colonial vernacular residences in Arkansas. An originally detached, single story, gable roof kitchen was later moved and attached to the eastern elevation of the house, adjoining the northern porch. Two large, exterior end brick chimneys are augmented by a smaller brick chimney (now covered with a thin coat of stucco) the firebox of which opens into the later enclosed room on the southern or back porch. The gable and shed roofs are covered with asphalt shingles and the walls are sheathed in weatherboard. It is without a basement, as it is supported on brick piers.

The northern or front elevation and the southern elevation opposite are similar, as they are both five bays in length and both feature the full length, single story shed roof porch supported on box columns with portions enclosed. The northern elevation is fenestrated with five nine-over-six double-hung wood sash windows spaced symmetrically across the second story and four identical windows in the first story which flank a central, double-leaf entry with five-pane half-sidelights. The entry doors are extraordinarily tall and narrow. The two eastern windows light the original enclosed room on the porch while the two western windows light the main body of the house. The elevation is completed by the gable roof kitchen (originally detached) which has been adjoined to the eastern elevation of the house and flush with the northern wall of the enclosed porch room. The kitchen is lighted with a single central, nine-over-six double-hung wood sash window on both its northern and southern elevations, and is accessed from the exterior by a single door and steps placed toward the southern wall of the eastern elevation.

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The southern elevation is also lighted by five nine-over-six double-hung wood sash windows in the second story and four identical windows on the first floor, which flank a rear entry of identical form to that on the front. The enclosed room on this elevation has recently been extended by one bay to cover the originally exposed entrance, though the entrance itself survives within.

The eastern and western elevations are similar, featuring two nine-over-six double-hung wood sash windows flanking the central chimney on each story, with the exception of the attached kitchen adjoining the northern wall and the single-leaf entry to the south on the eastern elevation, and the exterior chimney which heats the enclosed room on the southern porch on the western elevation.

The interior is largely intact and features horizontal planks on the walls, many original panes in the windows, most of the original moldings, mantels and doors, and hewn beams with mortise-and-tenon joints set in braced frame construction throughout.

The alterations to the house are relatively minor. They include the extending of the enclosed room on the southern or rear porch by a single bay and the replacement of the original interior stair with a wider, more serviceable stairwell. The chimneys were largely rebuilt in the relatively recent past, though they retain their original profile and general color. In addition, the shortening of the porch floor on the northern porch which was executed by the previous owners has been reversed, and the original deck of the porch floor restored.

The nomination includes an associated single story, gable roof outbuilding, which is sited just across the driveway (formerly the main road through this area) from the main house; oral tradition maintains that this was the commissary building for the plantation. Also included are such early landscape features as an assortment of paved walks extending from the west of the outbuilding (some just visible above the surface and others just below the most recent layer of sheet midden), the historic road running east-west to the north of the house (paralleling the current driveway into the property), a patch of early brick rubble and a row of berry vines located approximately 100 feet to the northeast of the house and two early wells (one to the north and one to the south of the house) that have since been filled for safety reasons. The only non-contributing structure on the site is a recent metal carport building (scheduled to be removed).

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## Summary

The Joel Smith House, constructed in c. 1840 by one of Union County's earliest settlers, Joel N. Smith, survives in its original location (the now virtually abandoned historic community of Smith) as the finest extant example in the area of this vernacular late Colonial style, which though common in the southern seacoast states is rare in Arkansas. This property is also being nominated for its potential to reveal further information about the known use of this site as both an antebellum and post-Civil War cotton plantation. As such it is being nominated under Criteria C and D with local significance.

## Elaboration

The Joel Smith House was constructed c. 1840 by Joel N. Smith, a farmer who immigrated to this area from Wilcox County, Alabama in 1829 with his brother Lawson Smith (one legend maintains that Joel came with several other brothers as well; though this cannot be substantiated, the fact that Joel Smith was born on April 3, 1818, and therefore would have been but eleven years old in 1829 supports the claim that other family members would have been involved in the relocation from Alabama). Joel Smith later became the founder of the small community known as Smith (of which this house was the center) and his brother founded the community of Lawson just a few miles to the northeast, which was later also named in his honor.

Though little is known of his activities before the Civil War, Joel Smith was an active merchant immediately after the conclusion of the war, a vocation which he continued until his death on September 22, 1883. Joel Smith & Co. opened as a mercantile business in 1867 in the community of Caledonia, located just to the south of Smith. However, he sold the business three months after its formation to two other local Caledonia businessmen, Messrs. Woolley & Morgan. By the mid-1870's he had formed a general mercantile business in partnership with Horatio Gates Perry Williams, a renown confederate Civil War veteran and native of nearby Hillsboro (located approximately eight miles to the east of Smith). The business was also located in Hillsboro and advertisements indicate operation as early as 1877. Listed among the items available were harnesses and collars, bleached and unbleached cloth, shoes and boots, clocks, single and double barrel shotguns, oil and paints, and such kitchen staples as flour, meat, sugar, coffee and molasses.

The extent of Joel Smith's prosperity is indicated by the account of the marriage of one of his sons, Dr. W.W. Smith, to one Lucy Gresham. Joel Smith and his wife gave the entire dinner for the bride and groom. The dinner was prepared on the cook stove which W.W. Smith had bought for his mother earlier in New Orleans, the first such stove in Union County, and was served on the 320-piece set of china which he had also given his mother.

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The cooks spent weeks preparing the repast, which included "ten turkeys, chickens, goats, hogs, cakes and all else that was needed to entertain the people of the whole county that were invited." Another son, C.W. Smith, became first a county judge and then a circuit judge after receiving both his Bachelors and Law degrees from Washington & Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, completing his education in 1879. Judge C.W. Smith served as Union County judge from 1882-86 and as circuit judge from 1886-1906, when he retired from the bench.

Local legend maintains that both Smith brothers who emigrated to what is now Union County built houses of exactly this type, though no others have survived to substantiate this. The oral tradition also maintains that Joel Smith camped across the old highway on a knoll (now the woods to the north) while he was cutting and hewing the cypress lumber for the construction of this house. Union County marriage records indicate that Joel married Mary McClellan in 1840 and hence the attributed date for the construction of this house. It certainly must have been built not long after this date, as it is also recorded in the county records that he and his wife had twelve children.

The recent appreciation for vernacular design and its meaning within American culture has resulted in the recognition of the need for serious scholarship and research in the field. Such research has resulted in attempts to identify and categorize such vernacular designs by plan and elevation; this particular type has been generally identified as the extended I-house, a sub-type of the Tidewater South Folk houses constructed in the region before the mid-nineteenth century. This design, the tall, gable roof I-house with continuous shed roof porches on each side gable elevation, was common within the southern Atlantic seacoast states, and it is virtually certain that more of them were originally built in Arkansas than those which survive. However, there are now only two of this type extant in Arkansas: the Block-Catts House in Old Washington (Hempstead County; listed on 6/20/72 as a contributing resource to the Old Washington Historic District) and the Joel Smith House.

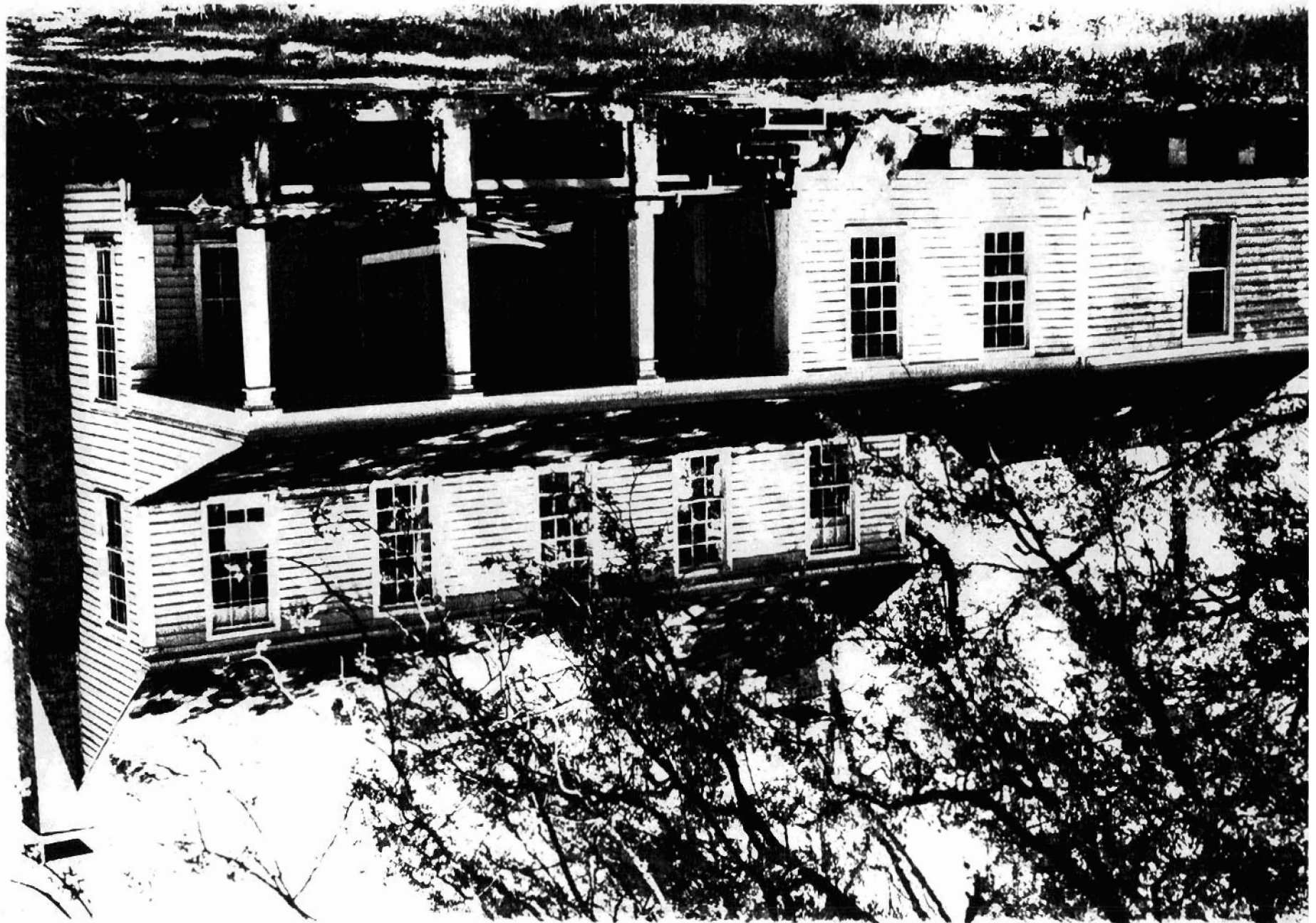
It is important to note that not only is the Joel Smith House one of our last examples of this vernacular type, but it is also a particularly fine example relative to other such designs throughout the south. The shallow depth of the rooms relative to the tall, soaring chimneys and the unornamented, two-dimensional character of the exterior surface of the house proper -- resulting in the treatment of the wall and roof as a skin stretched around the frame -- is typical of early Colonial design in the northeast, while the addition of the two side gable porches for ventilation and family gathering space is a particularly southern solution to regional differences in climate and recreational needs. The combination here, however, has resulted in a particularly elegant composition which is aesthetically successful and which, as such, bespeaks the craftsmanship of the builders and the Southern vernacular traditions which guided them. The Joel Smith House would thus be significant among any company; its survival as one of only two such designs only makes it more so within both



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Union County and the state of Arkansas.

The Joel Smith House and its surrounding property also retains the potential to reveal further information about its historic occupation as both an antebellum and post-Civil War cotton plantation. Though any remains of the original slave quarters have long since disappeared (according to the oral tradition, they were located to the west of the house, on the other side of modern U.S. Highway 167; however, since that part of the site has been subdivided recently, there is nothing visible on the surface to indicate their exact location, and hence the exclusion of that part of the site from the nomination), the 1860 county records indicate a minimum of twenty-two slaves belonging to Joel Smith. The 1870 county records continue to list Joel Smith as a farmer, and mention his wife and six of his children as still living at home. Though only a small portion of the original acreage associated with the farm survives intact, it retains a number of such original features as the early road, brick walks, two wells, a standing associated outbuilding that was almost certainly constructed at the same time as the house itself, and other unidentified foundations and plantings around the house. As such, the archeological record surviving at the site could reveal valuable information about the operation of a known slave-holding plantation and the trade patterns that surrounded it and its daily functions; about the treatment of slaves and their employment both inside and outside the household; about the extent (or absence of) subsistence farming to supply the household; about non-extant structures that sheltered various functions of the farm; and about the continuing operation of the farm after the end of slave-holding and the ways in which the Smith family adapted their lifestyle to this significant change in their family economic situation.



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Buckalew, Arthur R. and Robert B., "Hillsboro's Soldier-Citizen: Horatio Gates Perry Williams," Arkansas Historical Quarterly, Spring, 1972, Vol. XXXI, No. 1, pp. 36-56.

Deed Records, Union County Courthouse, El Dorado, Arkansas.

Goodspeed's History of Southern Arkansas, (Chicago, Nashville and St. Louis, 1890), pp. 829-30 and p. 839.

Green, Juanita Whitaker, The History of Union County, Arkansas, (1954).

Marriage Records, Union County Courthouse, El Dorado, Arkansas.

Property Records, 1860-1870, Union County Courthouse, El Dorado, Arkansas.

Stewart-Abernathy, Leslic C., Arkansas Archeological Site Survey Form for the Joel Smith House, December 13, 1989.

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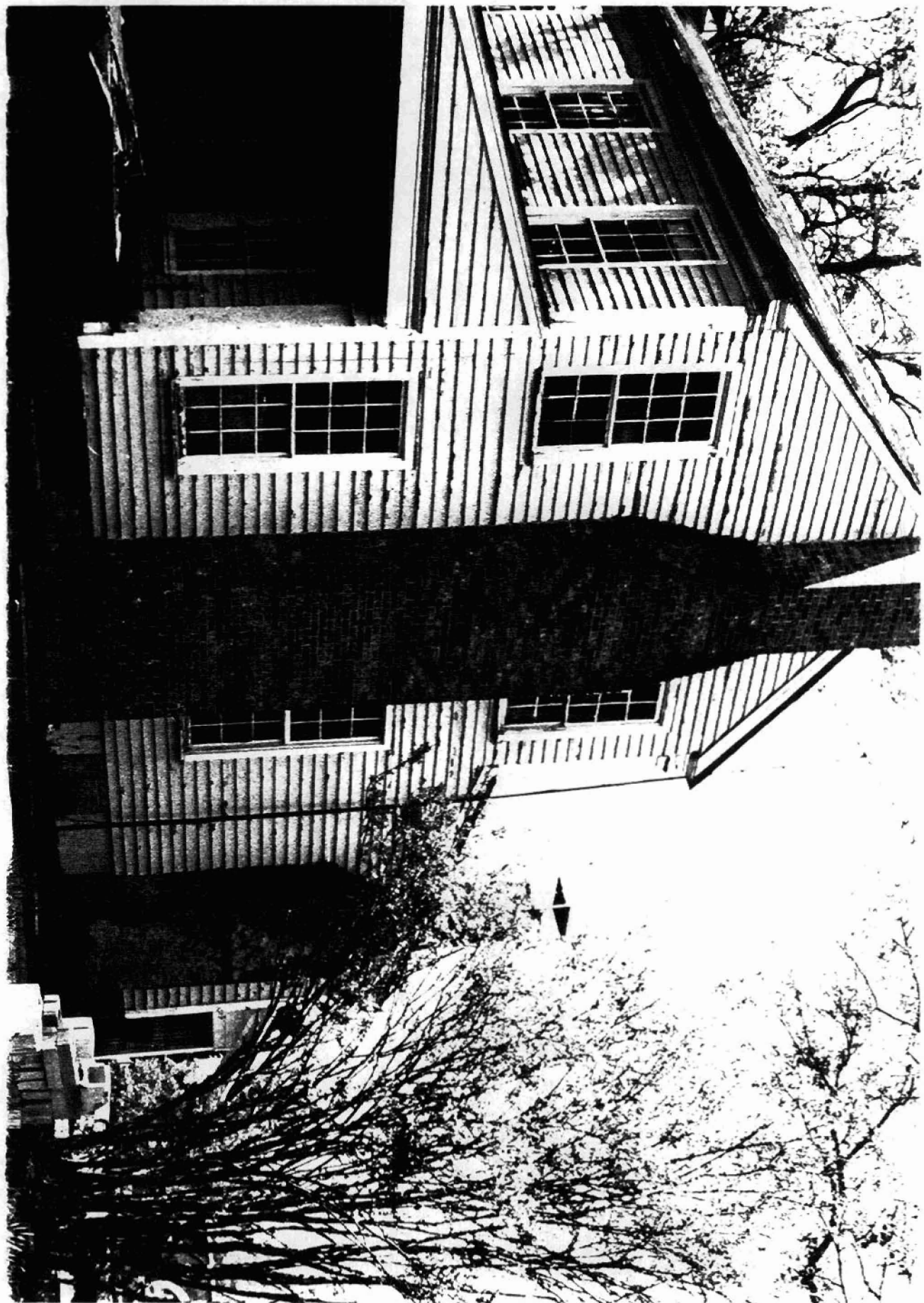
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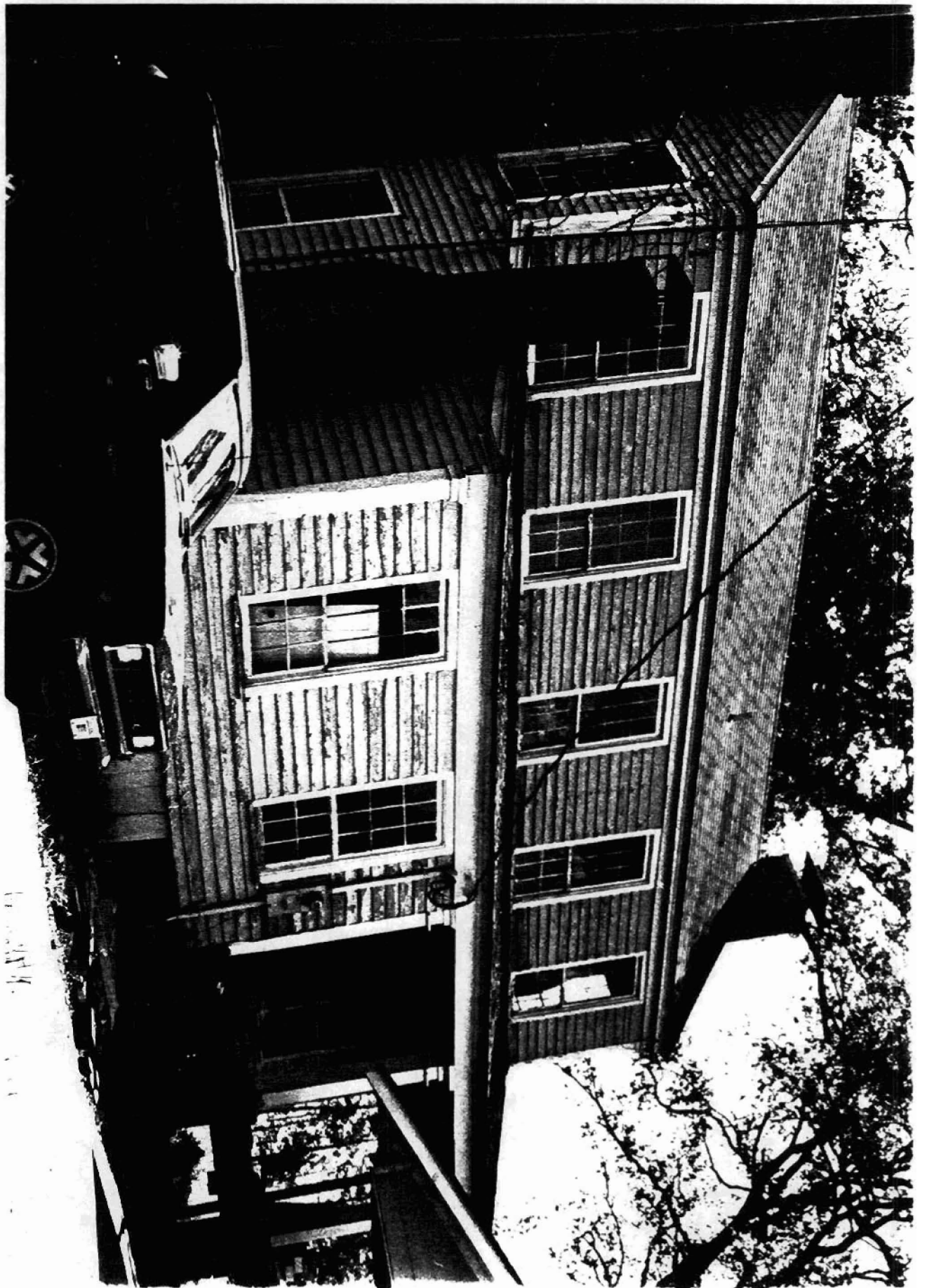
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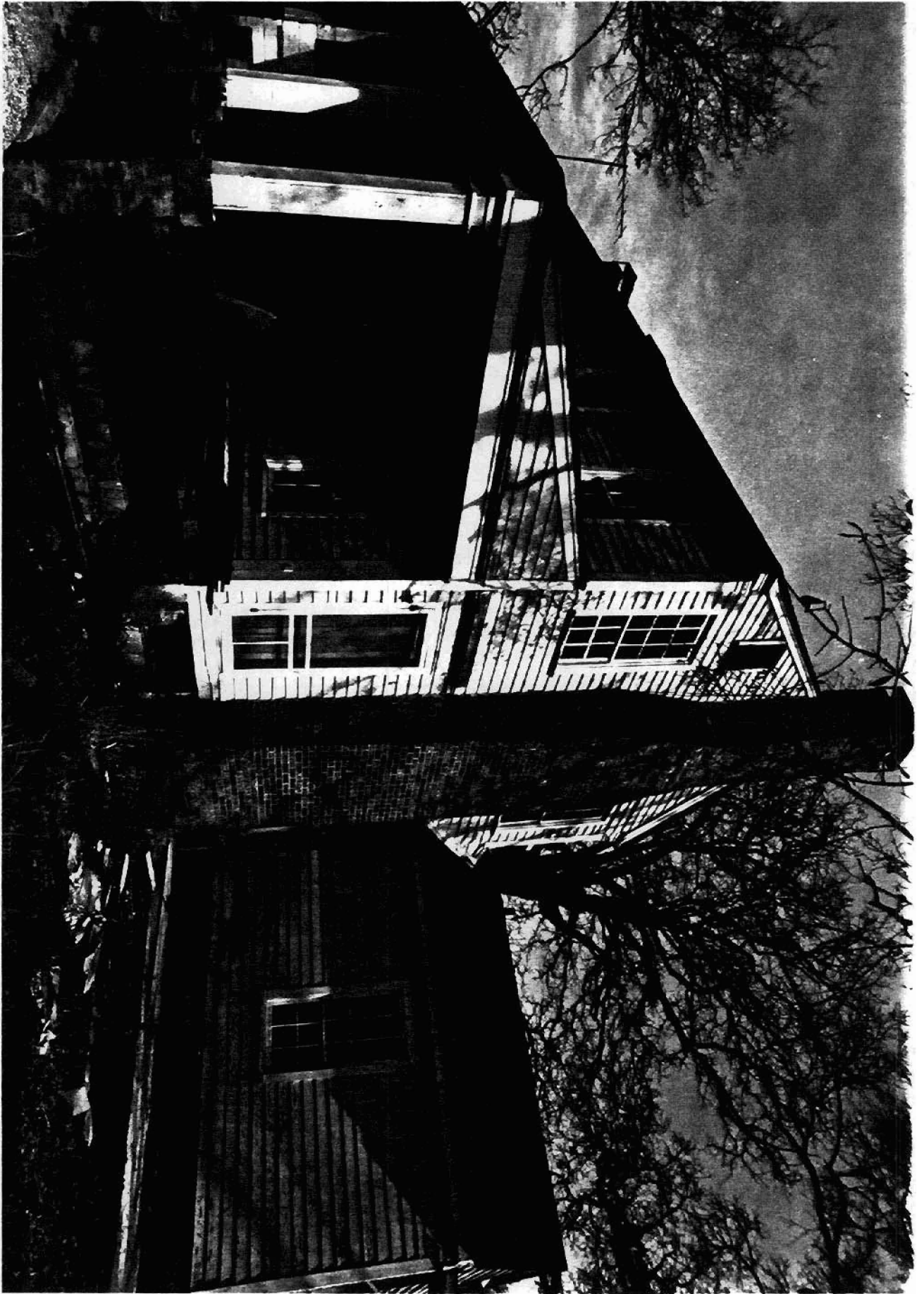
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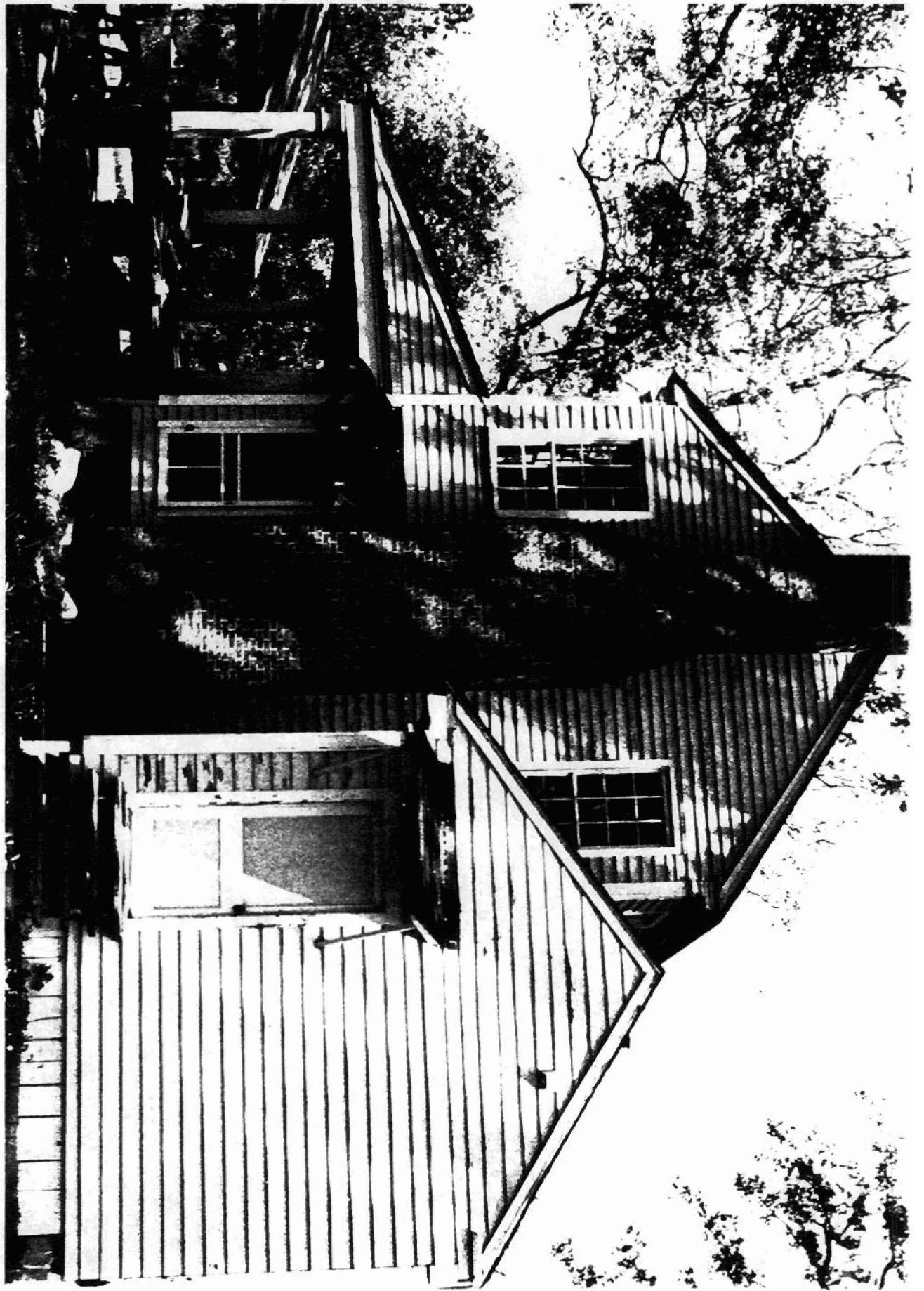
### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the southern edge of the driveway into the Joel Smith House property with the line formed by the eastern edge of US Route 167, proceed southerly along said line to the point formed by its intersection with the line formed by the extension of the southern edge of Union County Road #5 (extending to the west); thence proceed easterly for a distance of 200 feet along said line to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel to the eastern elevation of the main house; thence proceed northerly along said line for a distance of 300 feet to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel to the northern elevation of the main house; thence proceed westerly along said line for a distance of 200 feet to the point formed by its intersection with the eastern edge of US Route 167; thence proceed southerly to the point of beginning, comprising in all approximately four acres.

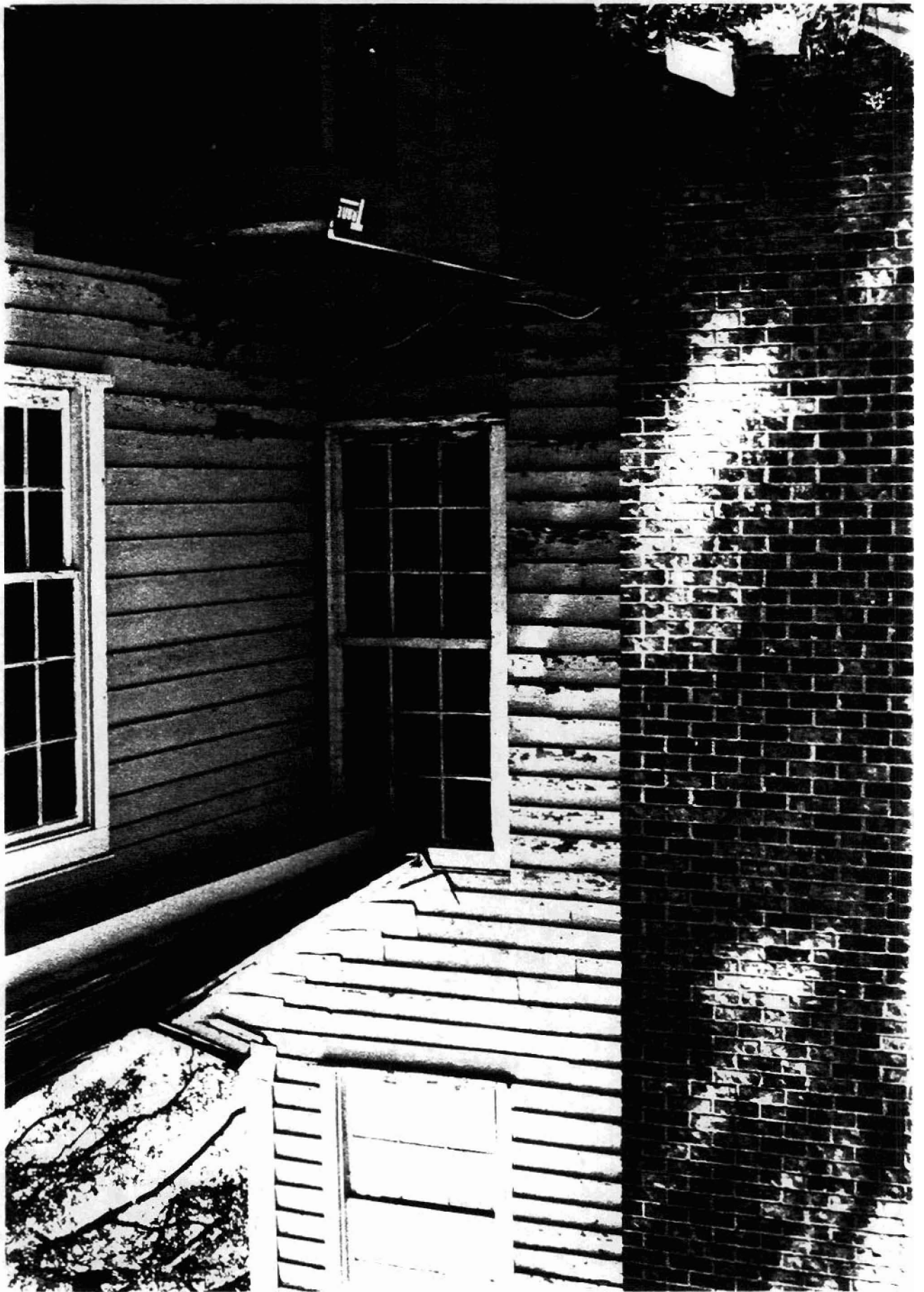


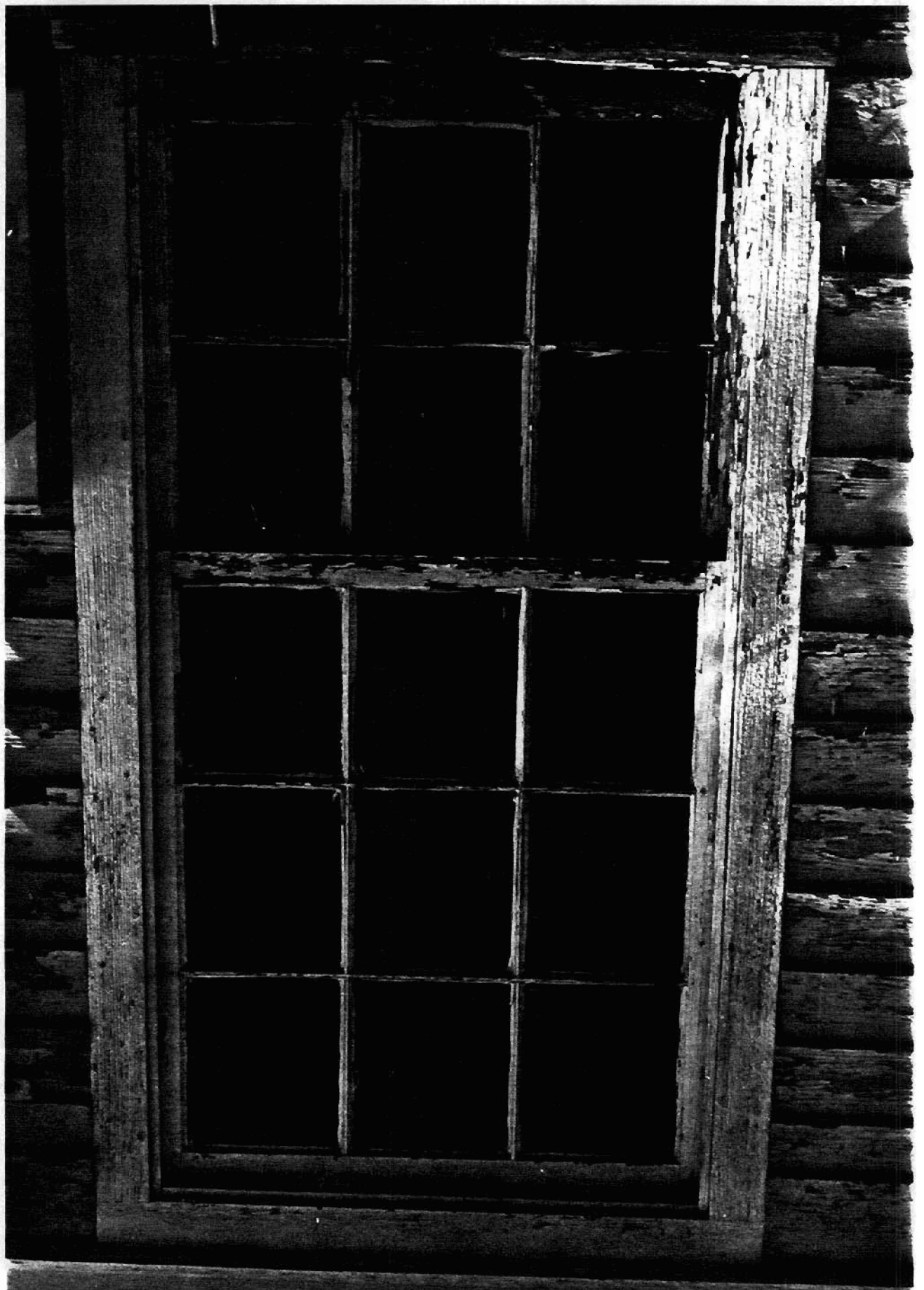


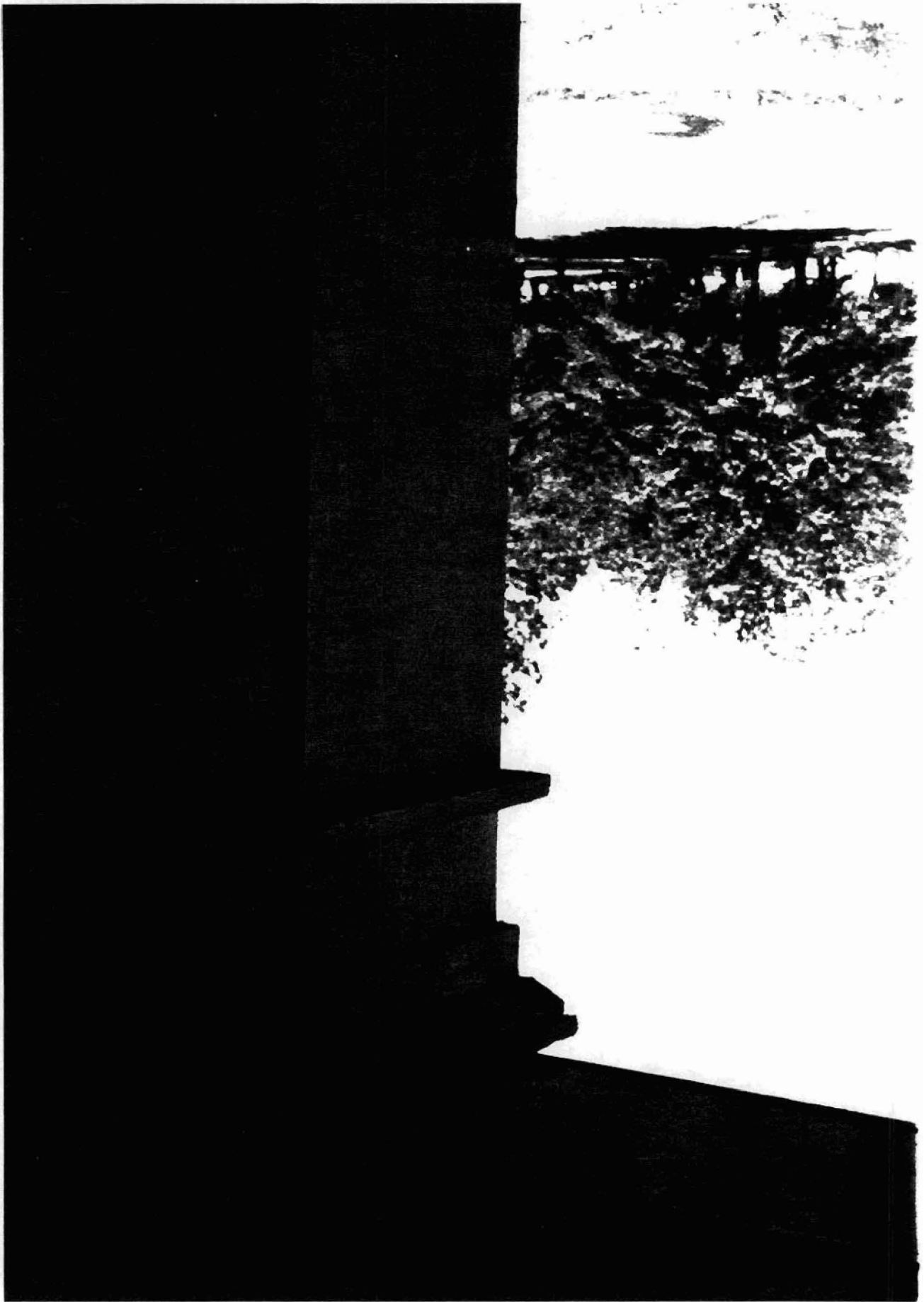


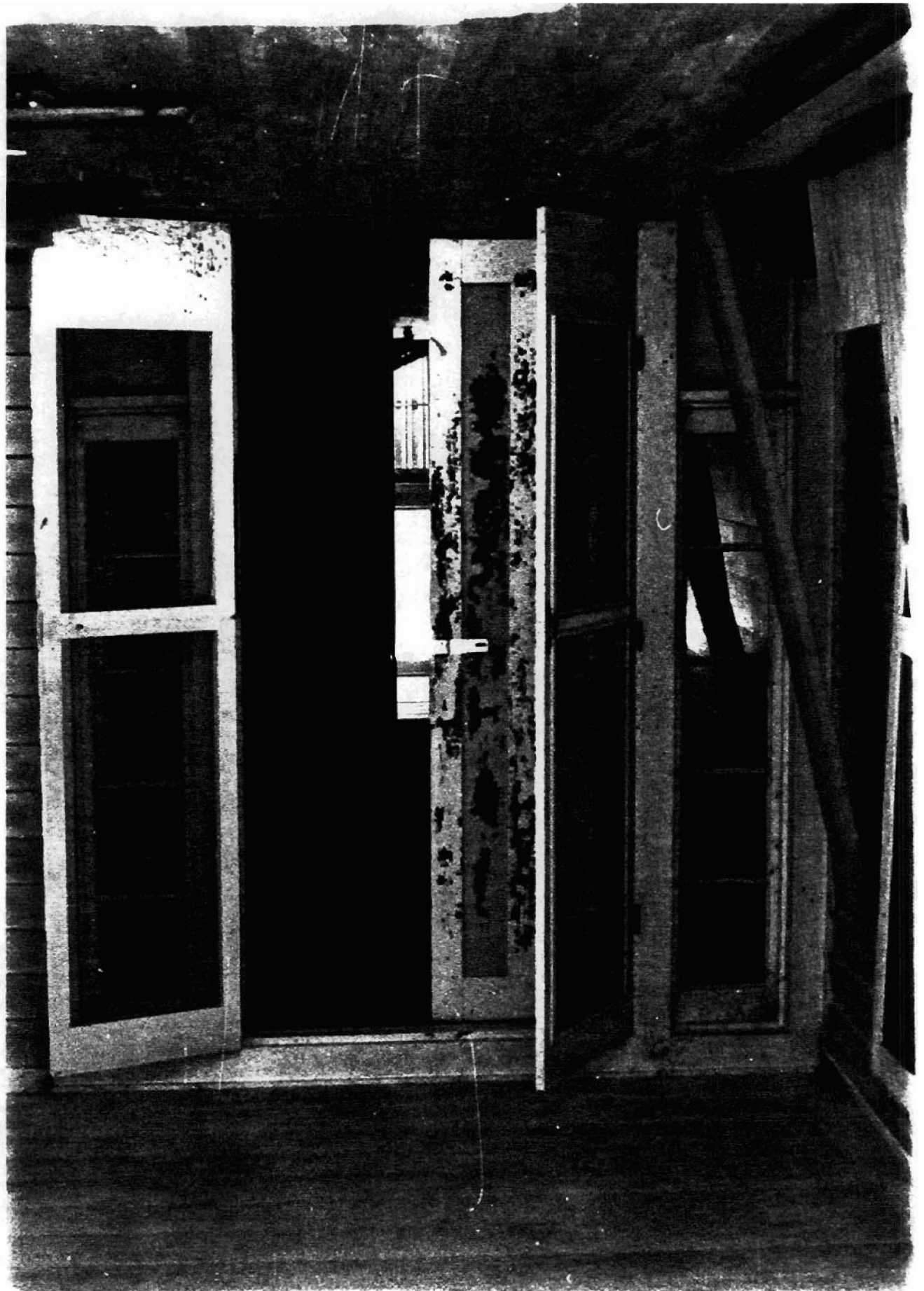


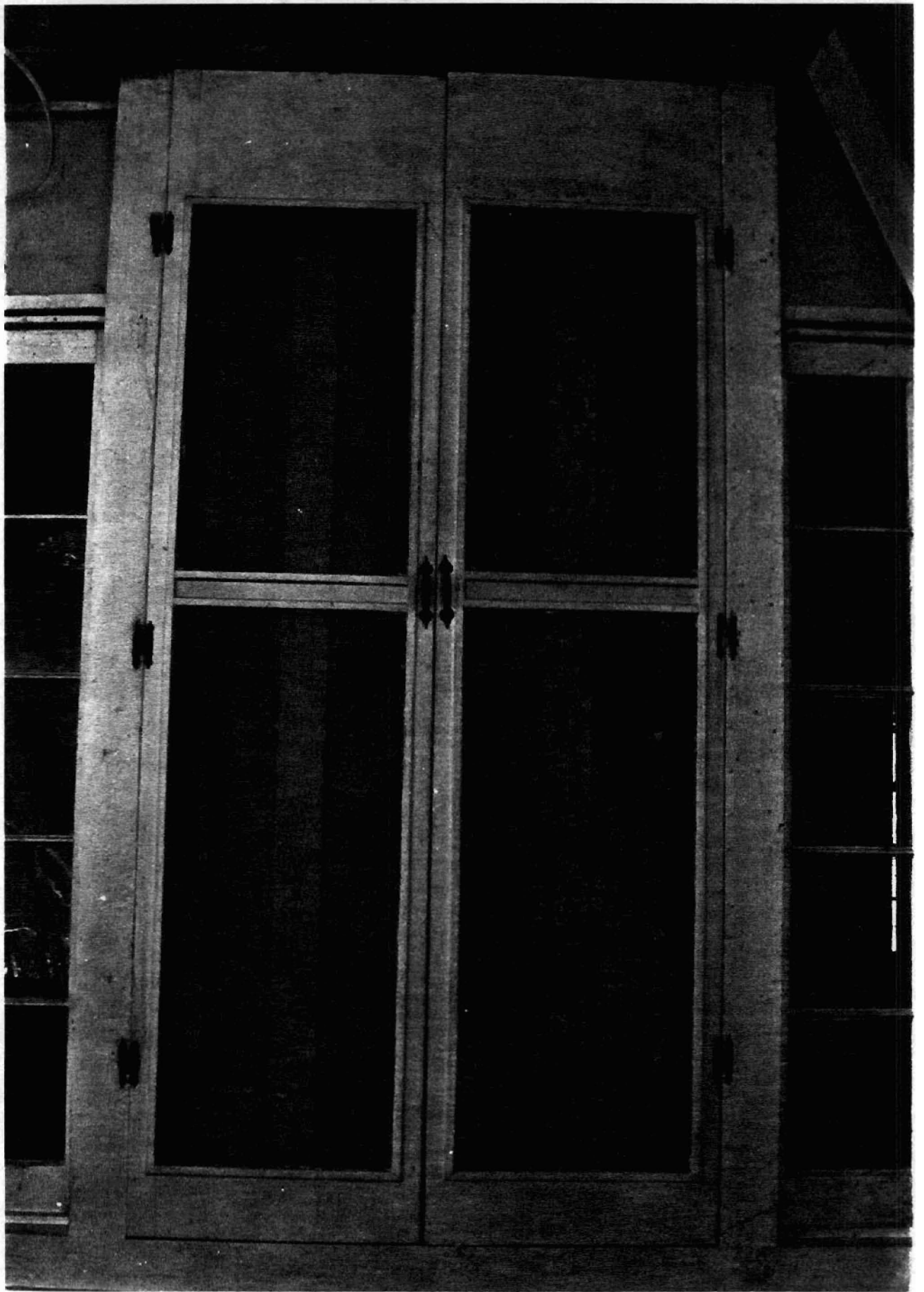


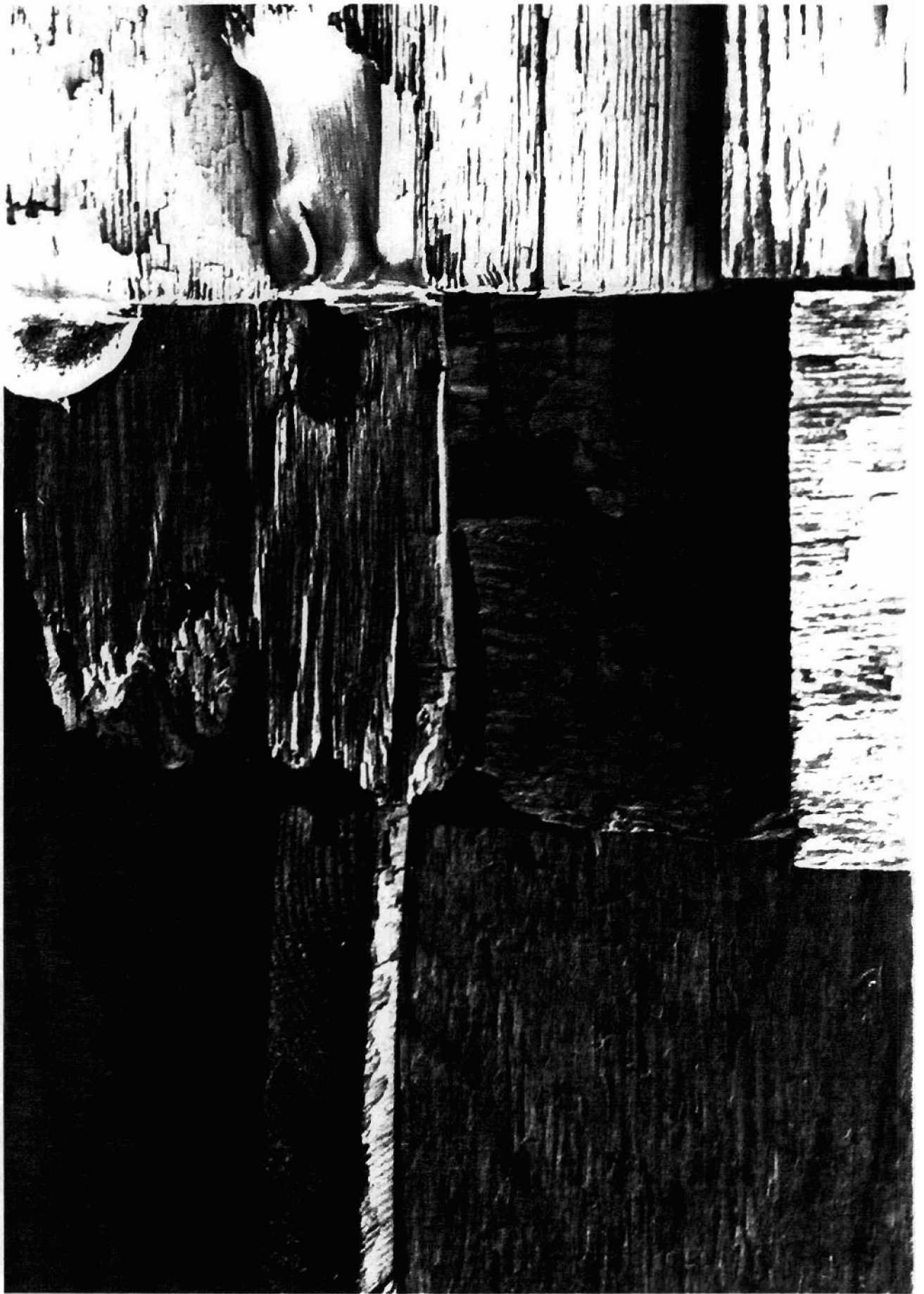


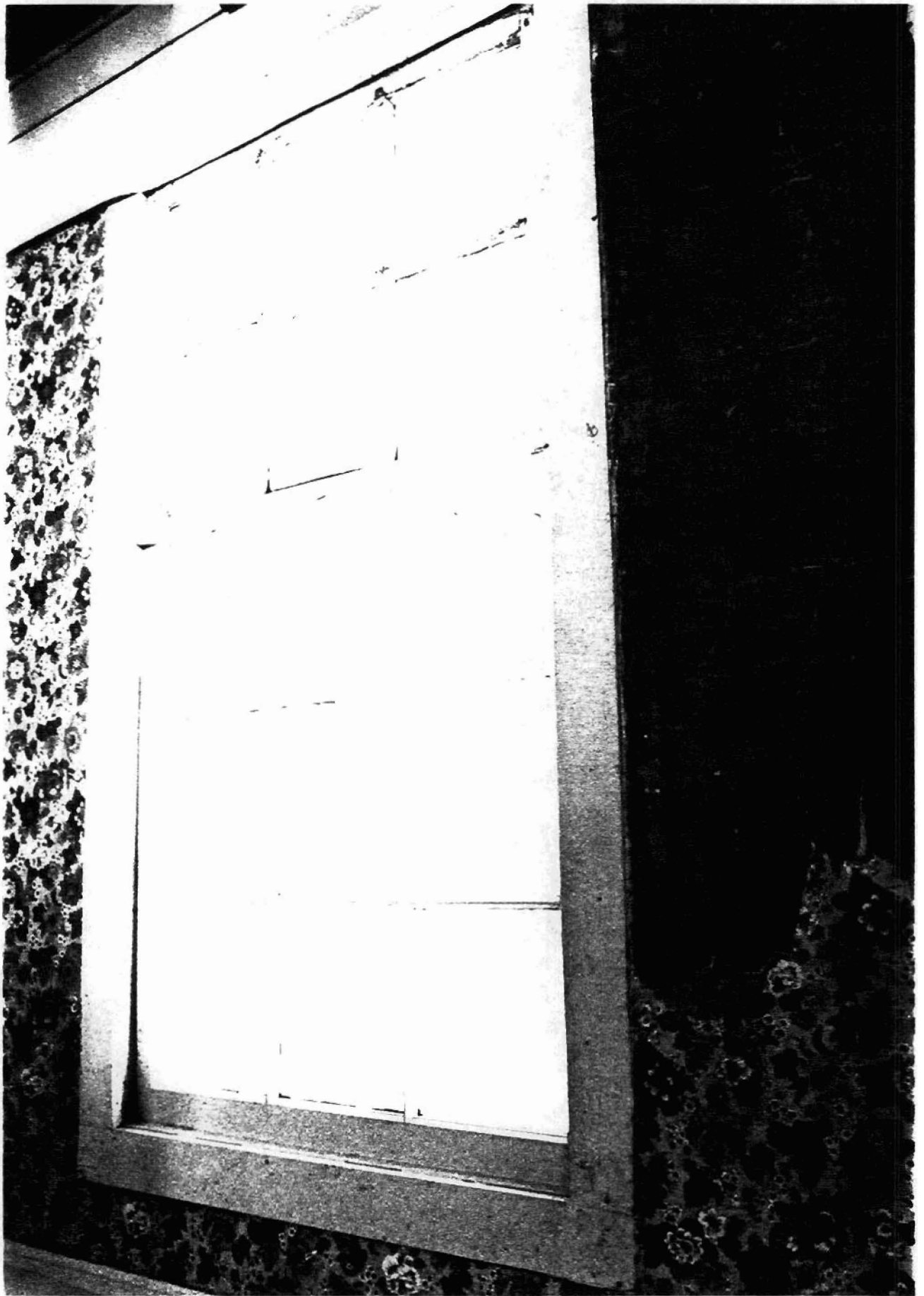


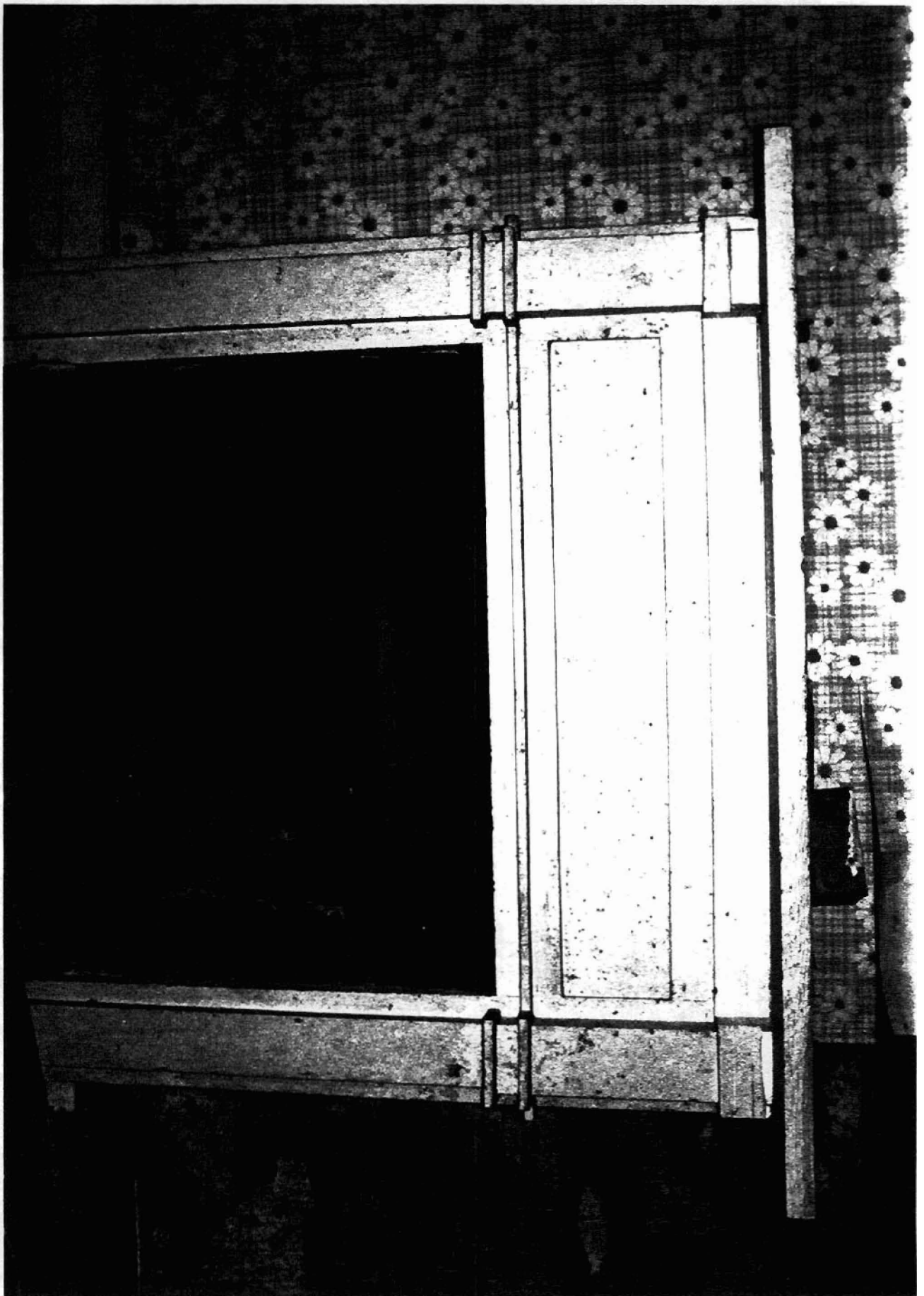




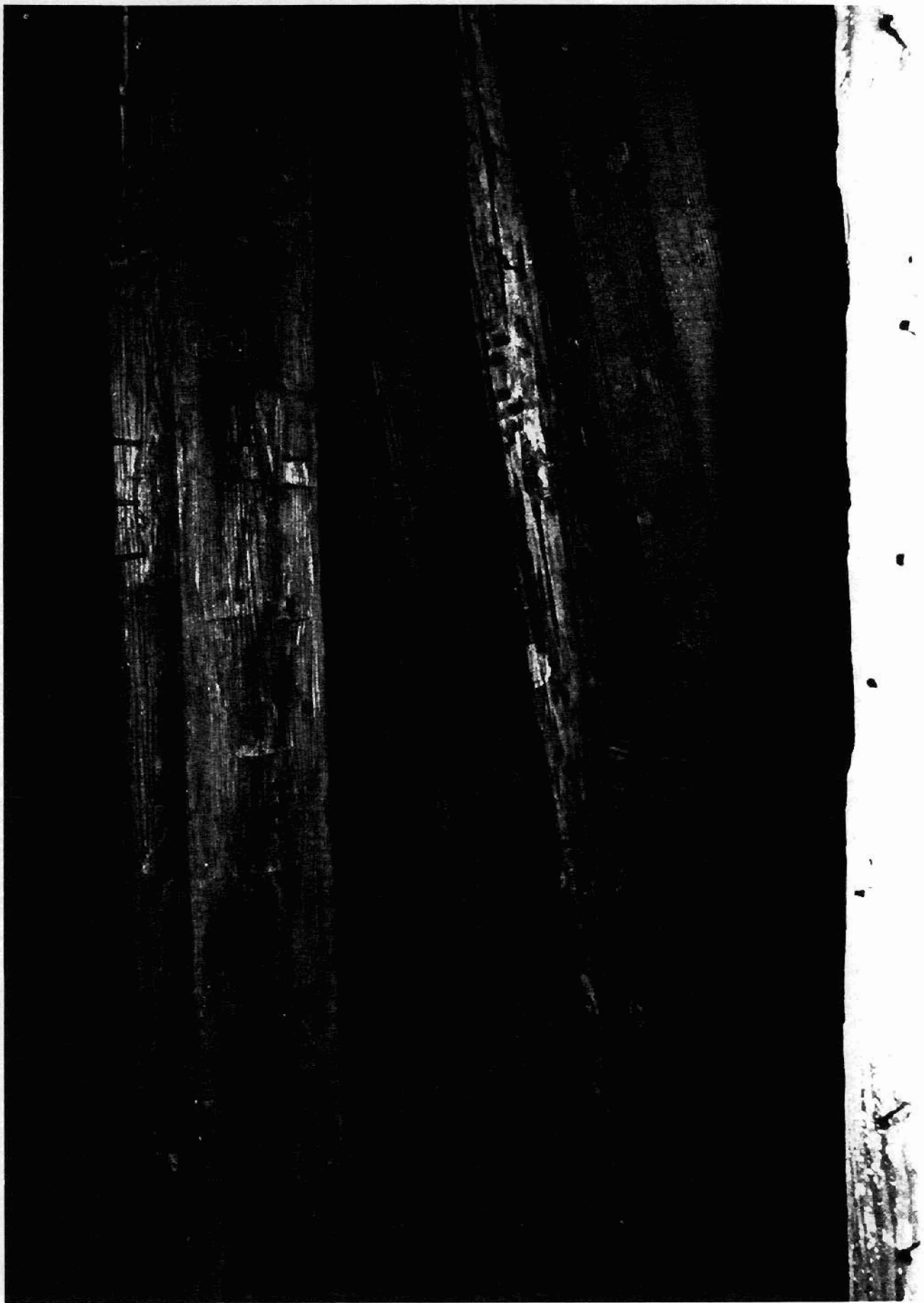






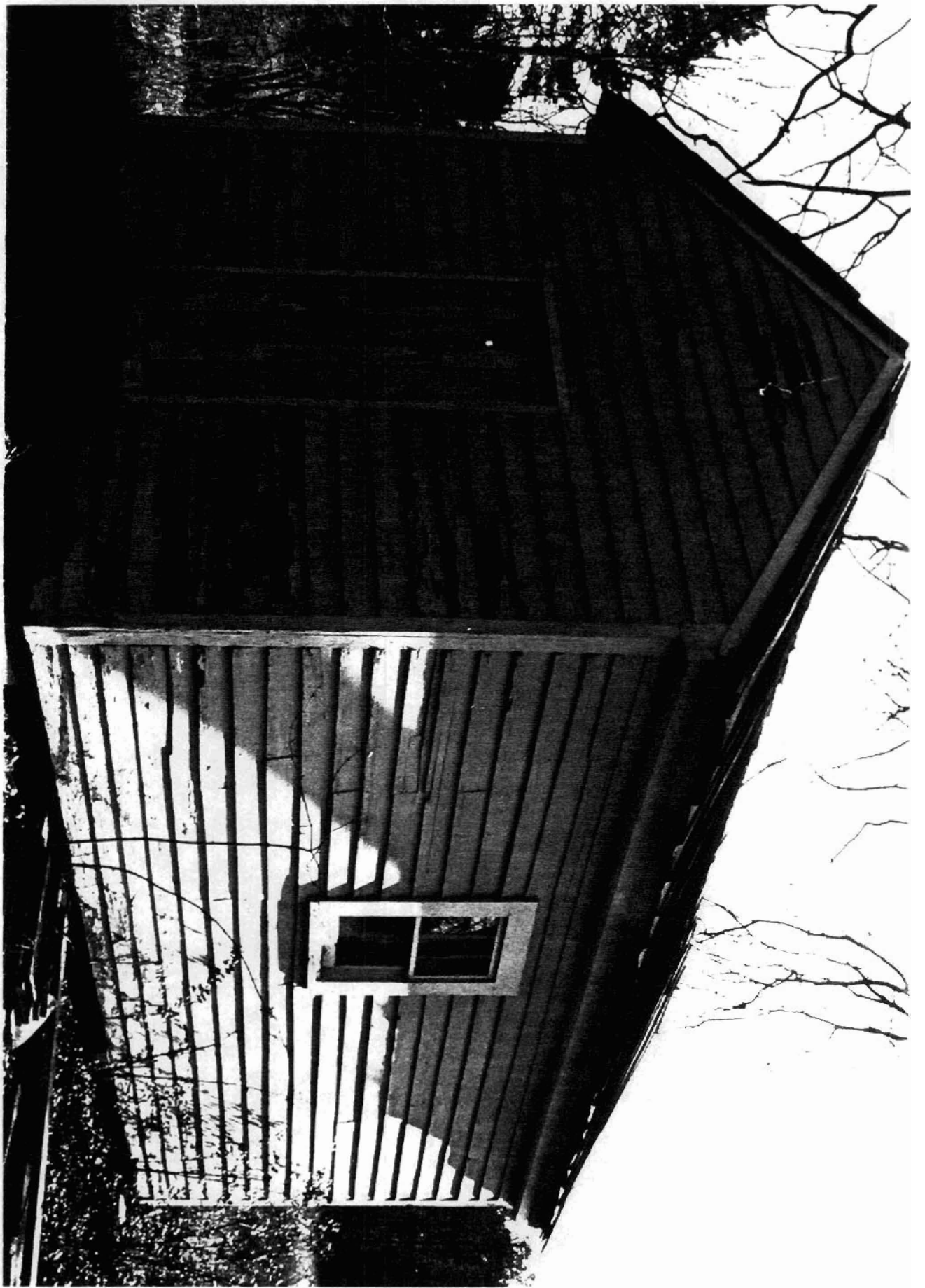


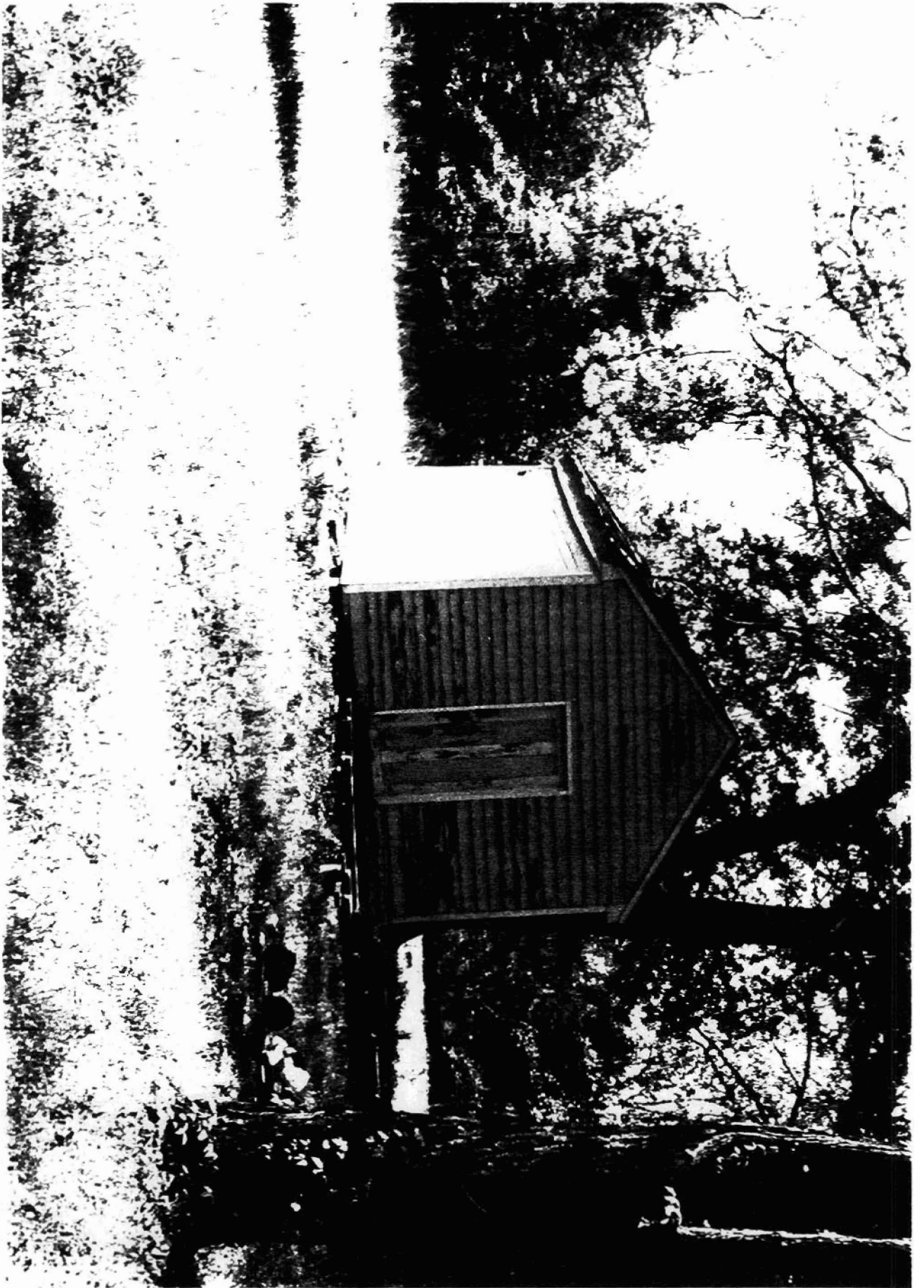




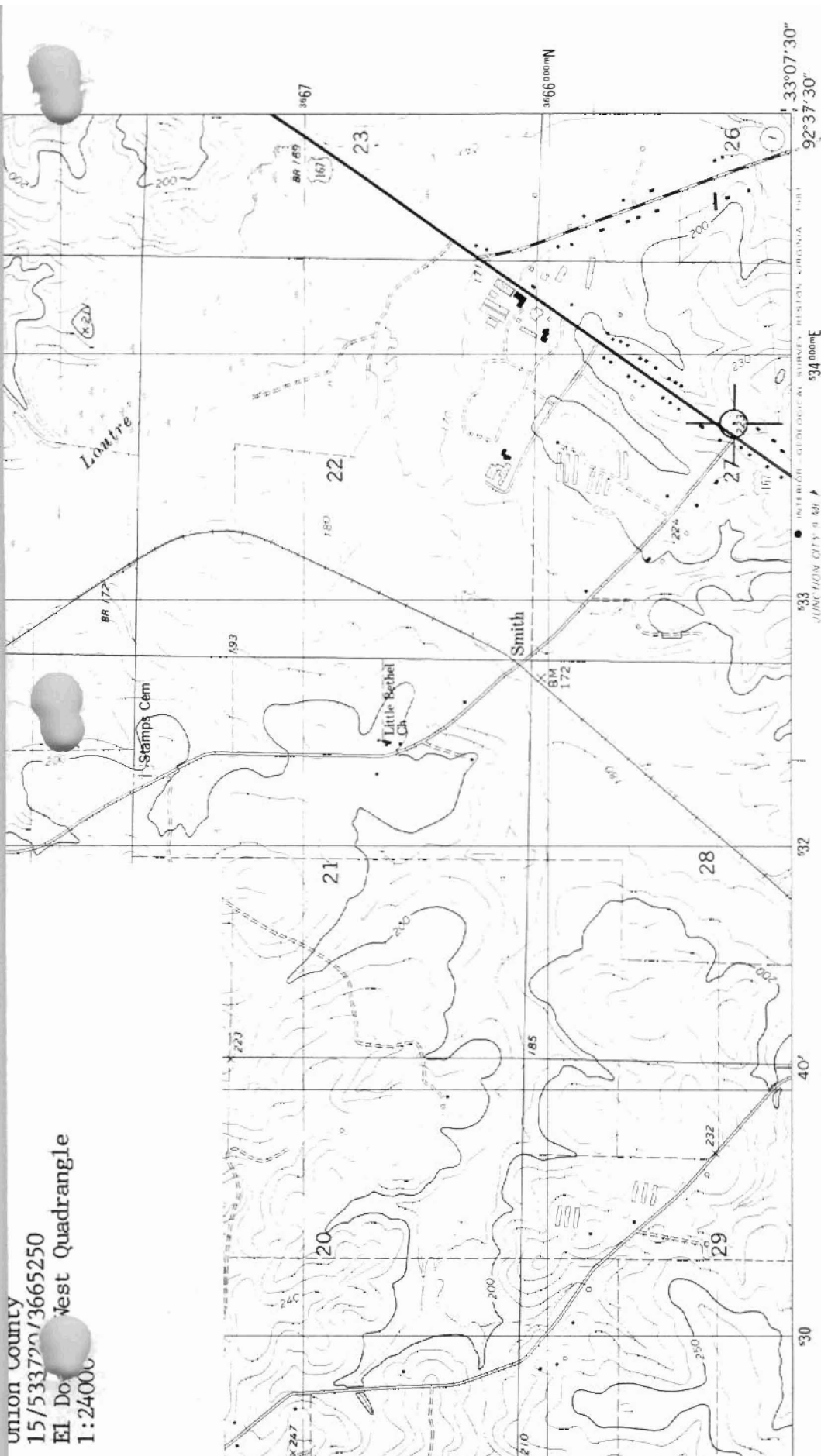








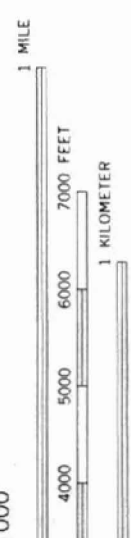
Union County  
 15/533720/3665250  
 El Dorado West Quadrangle  
 1:24000



33°07'30"  
 92°37'30"  
 LOCKHART  
 7450 II SE  
 INTERIOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 534 0000E  
 JUNIOR CITY 0 50  
 RAINSTONE LA 45 M

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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



VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

EL DORADO WEST, ARK.  
 NW/4 EL DORADO 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N3307 5-W9237.5/7.5

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 ON, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204  
 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

1981

DMA 7450 II NW SERIES V884

