

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 James, Randolph, House

other names/site number Site #UN0526

2. Location

street & number 1212 North Madison Avenue

not for publication

city or town El Dorado

vicinity

state Arkansas

code AR

county Union

code 139

zip code 71730

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 locally statewide nationally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

3/14/12

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

James, Randolph, House

Name of Property

Union County, Arkansas

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Choose as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Choose only one box)

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

- private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Contributing Noncontributing

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: 2, 0, 0, 0, 2.

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Mission/
Spanish Colonial Revival
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Bungalow/Craftsman

foundation CONCRETE
walls STUCCO
roof CERAMIC TILE
other WOOD, METAL

Narrative Description

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

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 birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
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)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1927

Significant Dates

1927

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Mann & Stern, Architect
Charles Skinner, Builder

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.)

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:

James, Randolph, House
Name of Property

Union County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>531661</u>	<u>3676103</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	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.)

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date January 11, 2012
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Russ & Gay Bechtelheimer
street & number 1212 North Madison Avenue telephone
city or town El Dorado state AR zip code 71730

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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SUMMARY

Located at 1212 North Madison in a residential area north of downtown El Dorado, the Randolph James House was designed by the architecture firm of Mann & Stern. The James House was built in 1927 and represents an outstanding example of the Spanish Revival style. The James House rests on a continuous, cast-concrete foundation and the house's walls are stucco. The side-facing gable roof is covered in clay tiles. A variety of window and door openings on the front façade, along with two decorative balconies, one made of iron and one constructed out of wood, add to the picturesque qualities of the house's Spanish Revival character. In addition to the main house, the property has a two-story, two-car garage with apartment above.

ELABORATION

The Randolph James House is located at 1212 North Madison in the Mellor's Fifth Subdivision of the City of El Dorado. The neighborhood around the house is characterized by gracious homes that date from the early to mid-twentieth century, and is located north of El Dorado's main commercial district. The James House was designed by the noted architecture firm of Mann & Stern and was built by contractor Charles Skinner in 1927. The house represents an outstanding example of the Spanish Revival style, with its stucco walls, decorative balconies, and clay tile roof.

The James House rests on a continuous, cast-concrete foundation and its walls are stucco. The house is fenestrated by a variety of double-hung, casement, and stationary windows that add to the picturesque qualities of the house's Spanish Revival design. The house is also crowned by a side-facing gable clay-tile roof.

In addition to the main house, the property also has a two-story, two-car garage with apartment above. The wood-frame building also rests on a cast-concrete foundation and is sided with wood weatherboard siding. The outbuilding is fenestrated with double-hung, one-over-one, wood-frame windows. The side-facing gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Front/East Façade

The front façade of the James House faces Madison and is approached by a concrete sidewalk that terminates at a brick terrace that spans the south half of the house. Three brick steps access the terrace from the sidewalk and they are flanked on each side by a decorative planter on a pedestal.

Beginning at the south side of the house, the southernmost bay is slightly recessed from the rest of the façade. On the first floor, which contains a sunroom, it is fenestrated by a large plate-glass window with wood lintel and sill. Wrought-iron bars, with an abstract lyre pattern cover the window. The second floor of the bay is fenestrated by a four-panel casement window with four panes in each panel.

Proceeding north along the façade along the main body of the house, the first floor is fenestrated by three sets of narrow French doors that provide access to the terrace. Each door has five panes of glass. The second

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floor is also fenestrated by three sets of French doors, although the ones on the second floor are wider than the doors on the first floor. Each door on the second floor has four panes of glass, and the doors on the second floor provide access to a balcony.

The second floor balcony is constructed out of pecky cypress, and is supported by four cypress beams that project out from the wall. The balcony has four columns with decorative turnings, and railings with decorative balusters span the space between the columns. The balcony is sheltered by a shed-roofed extension of the house's main roof.

In the center of the front façade is the house's main entrance. The entrance is slightly recessed from the rest of the façade and has a wooden door with fanlight at the top and two rectangular windows in the middle. The bottom of the door has two, recessed, rectangular panels. The entrance is topped by decorative scalloped decoration in the recessed roof. Above the entrance in the center of the façade is a decorative stucco leaf design. The second floor is fenestrated by a six-paneled casement window above the entrance.

To the right of the entrance, the façade is fenestrated by three narrow, wood-framed, single-pane, arch-topped windows that descend left to right. The windows fenestrate the house's main staircase. The northernmost bay on the first floor is fenestrated by a double-hung, six-over-six, wood-frame window. The second story has another set of French doors that match the southern ones on the second floor. This set of doors provides access to the wrought-iron balcony, which wraps around the north end of the house.

Finally, to the left of the French doors, a window, recessed behind a decorative, diamond-paned, stucco grillwork, fenestrates an upstairs bathroom.

Side/North Façade

The main body of the James House, on the first floor, is fenestrated by two wood-frame, single-pane windows located near the corners of the house. The second floor is fenestrated by a centered six-over-six, wood-frame, double-hung window. The wrought-iron balcony also wraps around from the front façade. In the gable peak is a decorative, quatrefoil panel.

The north façade of the rear wing is fenestrated by a double-hung, wood-frame, eight-over-eight window on the first floor. A small projection on the rear façade has an entrance on the north side. The entrance has a wood lintel and a wood door with wooden screen door, and is accessed by four concrete steps.

Rear/West Façade

The northern portion of the rear façade is the rear of the main body of the house. This bay is fenestrated by double-hung, wood-frame, six-over-six windows, one on each floor. To the south of this portion of the façade is a rear wing with rear-facing gable roof. This bay of the façade is fenestrated by two pairs of

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double-hung, wood-frame, six-over-six windows, one on each floor. The second floor pair of windows also has decorative, wood-board, shutters.

A small projection off of this portion of the façade has the rear entrance to the house. An entrance is on the south end of this part of the façade and a window behind a decorative, diamond-paned, stucco grillwork. Another smaller decorative, diamond-paned, stucco grillwork vents the gable peak.

Proceeding south along the façade, the next section consists of a two-story porch that has been enclosed. Unlike the rest of the house, the porch is sheathed in vertical board, and it has a heavy cornice between the first and second floors and wide eaves at the top. The first floor of the enclosed porch has two wood doors with eighteen panes of glass, one towards each end of the former porch. The second floor is fenestrated by a single, double-hung, wood-frame, eight-over-eight window with decorative wood-board shutters near the north end. Near the south end is a decorative wood panel mimicking closed shutters.

The southernmost bay of the rear façade is slightly recessed from the main body of the house. As on the front façade, it is fenestrated by a large plate-glass window with wood lintel and sill on the first floor. Wrought-iron bars with an abstract lyre pattern cover the window. The second floor of the bay is fenestrated by a four-panel casement window with four panes in each panel.

Side/South Façade

The south side of the main body of the house has a central entrance on the first floor. The entrance has a wood door with plate-glass window. Flanking the entrance on each side are large plate-glass windows with wood lintels and sills. Wrought-iron bars with an abstract lyre pattern cover the windows. Also on the first floor, a large cloth porte-cochere is on the south side. The second floor of the house's main body is devoid of fenestration, although it had a large, arched, casement window originally.

The south side of the enclosed porch on the rear has decorative wood panels on each floor that mimic closed wood shutters. Finally, the south side of the projecting rear entrance has a window behind a decorative diamond-paned, stucco grillwork.

Interior

Unlike the exterior of the house, the house's interior possesses an English feel. Many of the rooms in the house, including the living room and dining room on the first floor and the bedrooms upstairs, have elaborately detailed plaster crown moldings or ceiling medallions. The plaster moldings came from Chicago and were applied to the existing walls and ceilings. The moldings feature a variety of designs, including a Shriner's logo in an upstairs bedroom, and a Scottish-thistle theme in the living room, that represents prosperity, wealth, and good cheer. The interior also features its original woodwork and doors.

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Garage

Located to the southwest of the house, the garage is a two-story, wood-frame building covered in weatherboard siding. Unlike the main house, it shows minimal influence of the Craftsman style with exposed rafter tails and knee brackets supporting the eaves on the side of the building. Like the main house, it rests on a cast-concrete foundation and has a gable roof. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The first floor of the building is occupied by two garage spaces and a stairway providing access to the second-floor apartment. (A carport has been added on to the building's south side.) The building is fenestrated by double-hung, wood-frame, one-over-one windows. The garage contributes to the nomination.

Integrity

Overall, the Randolph James House has outstanding integrity. The largest changes to the main house include the removal of the arched casement window on the south side of the second floor and the enclosing of the rear porch for additional living space. The house retains its original windows, roof, and balconies. On the interior, the house also possesses remarkable integrity, retaining original plaster moldings and detailing as well as original woodwork. The garage also possesses good integrity when compared to photographs from the 1930s. The largest change to the garage has been the addition of the carport on the south side. The neighborhood around the house also retains its residential character and reflects the same setting as when the James House was built in 1927.

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SUMMARY

The Randolph James House, which was built in 1927, is an excellent example of the Spanish Revival style in El Dorado. As the oil boom hit south Arkansas during the 1920s, it brought new-found wealth to the El Dorado area, which allowed residents to build new and elaborate homes in the latest architectural styles. Such was the case with the Randolph James House. With its stucco walls, clay tile roof, pecky cypress and wrought-iron balconies and variety of window styles, the house employed textbook characteristics of the fashionable Spanish Revival style. Because of its significance as an excellent example of a Spanish Revival-style house in El Dorado, the Randolph James is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance under Criterion C**.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

Most historical accounts of the land that became Union County, Arkansas, begin in November 1541, when, according to local legends, famed Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, accompanied by more than 500 men, marched into the area and established camp on a hill not far from what is now El Dorado. It was not until 1803 that the United States purchased Louisiana from the French, subsequently dividing it into two territories, Orleans and Louisiana. In 1812, the Louisiana Territory was reorganized as the Territory of Missouri of which what is now Arkansas was a part. The United States Congress named Arkansas a territory in 1819, and ten years later, in 1829, Union County was formed. The county's boundaries were vastly larger than the current ones, which were defined in 1852.¹

Although the bulk of the city's built environment derives from the period following discovery of oil in 1921, El Dorado had enjoyed a long, though modest, history before that time. According to local folklore, El Dorado was founded around 1830 by Virginia-born Matthew F. Rainey whose wagon broke down in the area. Unable to travel any further, Rainey was forced to sell his goods on the spot. It is said that Rainey was so impressed by the local farmers' eagerness to buy that he sent for more goods and set up a store. Rainey was generally regarded as El Dorado's first citizen and the town's first businessman.²

Most historical accounts define 1843 as the year that El Dorado was formally established. In August of that year, a county election was held to choose three men to serve as commissioners responsible for the selection of a centrally located place as the county seat. Earlier, Camden, a town fifty miles north, had served as a county seat and court was held in a local home there. By October 1843, the commissioners recommended their favored choice for a new centrally located county seat. It was 160 acres of land owned by Matthew Rainey. He deeded the 160 acres of land to the county, retaining four acres on which his cabin stood. Rainey recognized that the development of the town would be advantageous to his business interests. For the

¹ Taylor Smith, Sandra. "El Dorado Commercial Historic District, El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2003.

² *Ibid.*

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county, this 160 acre site was located on the east-west trail between Arkansas Post and Texarkana and the north-south route between central Arkansas and Louisiana. Of equal importance was the site's proximity to a major regional transportation artery, the Ouachita River.³

The commissioners were authorized not only to select a site, but to "lay off into town lots the county site selected and to construct the necessary public buildings." The men were also granted the right to sell some town lots to cover the expense of getting the town into habitable condition. The 1843 plat of El Dorado was laid out in a grid fashion. The original town of El Dorado consisted of forty-nine lots; of these twenty-four encircled the courthouse square in successively larger rings. In 1844, the first courthouse, for which the construction contract called for only a roof and four walls, was built at a cost of two hundred dollars. The 160 acre town site seemed imposing in 1845, but El Dorado was a "bare suggestion of a village" with few substantial buildings. In response to a growing population in 1846, \$12,000 was allocated to build a new courthouse.⁴

In the mid nineteenth century, El Dorado was essentially an agricultural community settled primarily by individuals who had migrated from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and the Carolinas, with an economic base in farming and to a lesser degree lumber operations. Popular crops included cotton, corn, sweet potatoes and peanuts. Timber, before the discovery of oil, was the county's most plentiful resource with forests of yellow pine, oak, gum and other hardwoods available.⁵

During the 1850s, El Dorado was a "well-to-do town becoming the cultural as well as the business center of the county." The modest prosperity of the town was evidenced by construction of homes and organization of local churches. A private school had been established in 1845 and a local newspaper, the *El Dorado Union*, had been published as early as 1849. Although no battles were fought in El Dorado or Union County during the Civil War, records indicate 1,500 men volunteered for the Confederate cause, two-thirds of whom never returned. Like so much of the beleaguered post-Civil War South, El Dorado was besieged by carpetbaggers and jayhawkers. Some efforts were made by the government to allay the citizens' anxieties such as the establishment of a military camp on the northern edge of the town for Federal soldiers relocating to the area. It was many years before normalcy returned to Union County and county government could rid itself of the carpetbag exploiters.⁶

The most significant event in latter years of the nineteenth century was the arrival of the railroad in 1891. Until the rail lines reached El Dorado, most goods were shipped by steamboat to the Ouachita River, and

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

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hailed to El Dorado by wagon. The railroad suddenly made the large marketplaces of Memphis, St. Louis and New Orleans easily accessible.⁷

As described in a publication titled "El Dorado and Her Advantages," the town was a bustling commercial center with a sound moral character in the early years of the twentieth century. The publication stated, "There are no saloons to entice the young man from his studies, no dancing halls to divert the minds of young ladies from their work, no gambling dens to corrupt the morals of the boys. The moral and religious tone of the town is healthy....we have a good town full of good people, good churches, good business advantages, and a good school." Another record of El Dorado by resident Violet McRae Giller in 1910 reported, "El Dorado was a very young town, with its small population in the process of accepting running water, electricity and sidewalks; yet there was an aristocratic vein running through its citizenry (with) the accent of Eastern schooling and the habit of intellectual and artistic pursuits."⁸

Cultural life in early twentieth century El Dorado was active with ladies' organizations such as the "Self-Culture Club" and "Musical Coterie of El Dorado." El Dorado in the early years of the twentieth century enjoyed many benefits attributable to its considerable number of wealthy citizens, whose wealth was amassed before the oil boom of the 1920s. Among these benefits were an arts center, library, auditorium, and health care facilities. Many of the prosperous citizens constructed substantial homes that displayed their stature in the community.⁹

Although the arrival of the railroad in 1891 signified the greatest growth of the city to date, it was the discovery of oil at the Busey Well on January 10, 1921, that caused startling and immediate change in the peaceful town of El Dorado. There had been oil-related activity in the area as early as 1914 when the first oil leases in Union County were sold for ten cents an acre. Most of the early oil production efforts were costly and unproductive.¹⁰

The Busey Well, credited with securing El Dorado's place of prominence in American oil production, was located two miles west of town. The well was financed by Dr. Samuel T. Busey and a consortium of local investors. A physician turned geologist, Busey and his wife arrived in El Dorado in late 1920, purchased a local hotel, and made an agreement to resume drilling in an exploratory well that had been abandoned. Dr. Busey was convinced there was oil in the well. On Monday, January 10, 1921, when the well had been drilled to 2,233 feet, a small crowd of eager spectators gathered at the rig. Drilling had ceased and bailing

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

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operations had begun to try to bring in the well. In the late afternoon, as the bailer was being lifted from its sixth trip into the deep hole, a rumble was heard from deep in the well. The crowd and drilling crew moved back as the rumbling grew in intensity, shaking the derrick and the ground around it. Suddenly with a deafening roar, "a thick black column" of gas and oil and water shot out of the well drenching the crowd of spectators. The wind caught the spray of oil and water and spread it over the countryside to the town of El Dorado where clothes on Monday's wash lines dripped with oil. The black column of oil gushing through the derrick on the hill southwest of town was viewed by many citizens in El Dorado. The next morning **unscheduled trains began to arrive in El Dorado carrying passengers who hurried off and disappeared into the town to seek their fortune.** The *Arkansas Gazette* announced that five special trains would begin to run daily from Little Rock to El Dorado. Twenty-two trains a day were soon running in and out of El Dorado. The state legislature, meeting in regular session at Little Rock, announced plans for a special legislative railway excursion to the new oil well. Within six days of the discovery of oil at the Busey Well, an air service was established between El Dorado and Shreveport, Louisiana.¹¹

The petroleum industry was still fledgling and there was little technical sophistication so that significant amounts of oil and gas were lost. The El Dorado oil boom, which was to inalterably change the city's future, began within forty-eight hours after the Busey well blew in. As described in one account, "...the streets...of the town were thronged with a seething mass of conglomerate humanity...diamonds and costly furs rubbed elbows with oil-spotted khaki..." The town was inundated with people who hurried to south Arkansas to find their fortune. El Dorado became the destination of oil promoters, lease hounds, swindlers, beggars, prostitutes, experienced oil workers, and young men and women looking for a life off the farm. The rush of population overwhelmed El Dorado. Hotels in the town were taxed beyond capacity. The newly formed Chamber of Commerce appealed to citizens to provide lodging for the vast influx of people. Barber chairs for sleeping were rented for \$2 a night and in desperation some people took over the Presbyterian Cemetery as a place to sleep. Tents and shacks sprang up overnight throughout town. Fires ravaged the city of several occasions and crime ran rampant. El Dorado's civic and political leaders were at a loss as to how to handle the situation at first, but eventually dealt with most of the problems that confronted them. They were aided in their efforts by the massive influx of capital drawn by the oil. In the span of just four years, El Dorado went from a town where chaos reigned and only four roads were paved to a cosmopolitan city filled with sprawling homes, a thriving business community, modern conveniences (including indoor plumbing and electricity in most homes and businesses), and an active social calendar, which included everything from opera to an amusement park.¹²

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

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At the end of the summer in 1921 more than 275 wells had been completed within a fifteen mile radius of the city. Rapid population growth from less than three thousand to over 15,000 occurred in less than two years. In 1923 El Dorado boasted of 63 restaurants, 23 doctors, 32 hotels, 48 law firms, 59 oil companies, 13 independent oil investors, 13 oil operators and 22 oil production companies. Also listed in the 1923 City Directory were 84 groceries and countless boarding houses. By 1925 the population of El Dorado was recorded at over 30,000. It was the oil boom and its peripheral effects that would ultimately lead to the construction of the Randolph James House in 1927.¹³

Randolph James' father, George William James (1872-1939), was born in Union Parish, Louisiana. He was married to Willie Cunningham. They had four children that were born in Randolph, Louisiana, including David Randolph James (1899-1983). Randolph's father, George William James, and his brother, T. L. James, ran a sawmill in Union Parish and both were involved in real estate. At the time of the oil boom in El Dorado in 1921, the brothers left Union Parish. T. L. James went to Ruston, Louisiana, where he founded the T. L. James Construction Company. Over the next 70 years, the company grew into one of the largest heavy civil contractors in the southern United States, performing heavy civil, highway, airport, and marine construction services. They were responsible for the building of I-20 and many other highways throughout the South.¹⁴

George William James, on the other hand, came to El Dorado where he was involved with real estate and joined with Colonel T. H. Barton to found the Exchange Bank. Though not directly involved with the oil business, he acquired mineral rights as payment for loans made by the bank. George William James also built the Randolph Hotel in El Dorado. The Randolph Hotel and the Exchange Bank/Lion Oil Building were built in the 1920s at the same time as the Randolph James House at 1212 North Madison. George James had the house built for his son, Randolph and his wife, Georgia. The architect for all three buildings was the firm of Mann and Stern.¹⁵

The Randolph James House was built in 1927 for a cost of \$27,000 and contains 3,200 square feet of space. The home was designed by the firm of Mann and Stern, and the contractor was Charles Skinner, who was known for his outstanding foundation work and for building refineries in the area. The firm of Mann & Stern, which was comprised of George R. Mann and Eugene John Stern, was one of the most prominent firms in Arkansas from 1913 until it dissolved around 1927. Stern was born in Austria-Hungary on October 25, 1884, and received his architecture training at the Mechanics Institute (1900-1904) and the Beaux Arts Atelier (1904-1905) in New York City. Stern began his active practice in New York City as a principle in the firm of Stern & Morris. However, the firm was short-lived; by 1908 he had relocated to

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Information on the Randolph James House provided by Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer.

¹⁵ Information on the Randolph James House provided by Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer.

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Charlotte, North Carolina, and was a principal in the firm of Wheeler & Stern. Stern came to Little Rock in 1913 to become a part of Mann & Stern. After the dissolution of Mann & Stern in 1927, Stern practiced on his own in Little Rock until 1939, when he relocated to Kansas City, Missouri, and then ultimately to Mexico City.¹⁶

George R. Mann was born on July 22, 1856, in Syracuse, Indiana. Beginning in 1874, Mann studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.), and graduated in 1876. He apprenticed with W. H. Brown in Indianapolis and also worked with McKim, Mead, & White from the time of his graduation from M.I.T. until September 1877. Mann then worked briefly in Goshen, Indiana, before opening an office with Edward Stebbins in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1877. Mann then relocated to Missouri before opening his own firm on January 1, 1880. Mann's firm designed many courthouses in Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa, and Mann was also offered an appointment of Supervising Architect under President Harrison, although he did not accept it. Mann also entered several competitions for state capitol buildings, including Washington (3rd place), Minnesota (2nd place), and Montana (1st place), and he received the commission for the Arkansas State Capitol in 1901.¹⁷

By the time that Mann joined forces with Stern in 1913, he had already designed several prominent buildings in Arkansas, including the Southern Trust Building in Little Rock, State Bank Building in Little Rock, the Hotel Pines in Pine Bluff (NR-listed August 10, 1979), Gazette Building in Little Rock (NR-listed October 22, 1976), Pulaski County Courthouse addition in Little Rock (NR-listed October 18, 1979), and the Fordyce and Hale Bathhouses in Hot Springs (NR-listed November 13, 1974; NHL May 28, 1987). The firm of Mann & Stern continued to be a prominent firm throughout the state during the period of 1913 until 1927, designing such buildings as the Riceland Hotel in Stuttgart (NR-listed May 21, 1986), the Arlington Hotel and Ozark and Quapaw Bathhouses in Hot Springs (NR-listed November 13, 1974; NHL May 28, 1987), the Arkansas Bank & Trust Building in Newport (NR-listed October 16, 1986), the Little Rock Y.M.C.A. in Little Rock (NR-listed July 22, 1979), and the Union County Courthouse (NR-listed June 30, 1983) and Exchange Bank Building in El Dorado (NR-listed December 16, 1986).¹⁸

Since Mann & Stern had designed the Union County Courthouse and Exchange Bank Building in El Dorado, the James family would have been familiar with their work in the city. When Mann & Stern designed the James House, they used the Spanish Revival style, which was reaching the peak of its popularity during the 1920s. Typical of this style of architecture is the use of heavy beams with stucco. Construction was also meant to depict an illusion of a large Spanish manor house. However, the James House is only one room and

¹⁶ Information on Eugene Stern in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

¹⁷ Information on George R. Mann in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

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a hallway deep. The width of the façade, however, gives it a sense of grandeur that goes beyond the home's depth.

Prior to 1920, houses built with Spanish characteristics tended to be free interpretations of Mission-style architecture. The evolution of the style to a more "precise imitation of more elaborate Spanish prototypes" was a direct result of the Panama-California Exposition, which was held in San Diego, California, in 1915. (Interestingly, Mann & Stern designed the Arkansas-Oklahoma Building at the Panama-California Exposition.) Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who had written a detailed study on colonial Spanish architecture, was the architect for the exposition. Rather than limiting designs to the Mission interpretations that had been popular previously, Goodhue wanted to expand the interpretations to encompass the Spanish architectural precedents that were found throughout Latin America.¹⁹

The Panama-California Exposition received much attention in the press of the time, and as a result, other architects started to utilize the style, even looking directly to the architecture of Spain for inspiration. The use and blending of elements from Latin America and Spain led architects to refer to the style as Spanish Colonial Revival. The style reached its zenith of popularity in the 1920s and 1930s before quickly falling out of favor in the 1940s.²⁰

When Mann & Stern designed the James House, they adapted the house's design and style to the sultry climate of South Arkansas. By giving the house a play that is essentially one room deep (plus the hallway), it was easy to provide cross ventilation. The provision for cross ventilation is evident throughout the house with the placement of French doors opposite each other and the placement of doors and windows where they could be opened.

The interior designer for the home was Paul Heerwagen, who was born in Bavaria, Germany, in 1866, the son of Gottlieb and Mary (Stahl) Heerwagen. Heerwagen received his education in Berlin before coming to the United States in 1881. Heerwagen first settled in Detroit, Michigan, where he learned decorating, before coming to Arkansas in 1891. He married Ida Killian, a Little Rock native, in 1893, and the Heerwagens eventually settled in Fayetteville in 1911. Heerwagen was known as "one of the foremost decorators in the state," but his work was not limited to Arkansas. Before his death in 1955 Heerwagen did work throughout the South, including the Hotel Piedmont in Atlanta, Georgia; the Hotel Gay Teague in Montgomery, Alabama; the Hotel Galvez in Galveston, Texas; the Henry McKinney house at 510 E. Faulkner in El

¹⁹ McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, pp. 182 and 418.

²⁰ McAlester and McAlester, p. 418.

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Dorado; the Peabody Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee; the Adolphus Hotel in Dallas, Texas; the Commercial National Bank in Shreveport, Louisiana; and the Arkansas State Capitol in Little Rock.²¹

The most distinctive element of Heerwagen's design for the James House is the elaborately-detailed plaster moldings found throughout the house. Heerwagen ordered the plaster crown molding for the James home from Chicago, choosing different designs for each room. For example, Scottish thistle is the featured design used in the formal living room. Typical of the time, the plaster molding is made of straw and plaster. The house's dining room and the breakfast room also feature a concave ceiling, while the ceiling in the entrance hall is vaulted.²²

Randolph James, the house's original occupant, attended school in Bernice, Louisiana, and Washington University where he was president of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. He was managing director of the Randolph Hotel in El Dorado from 1924 to 1965, and a member of the Arkansas Hotel Association and the American Hotel Association. In addition, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Exchange Bank and Trust Company (the bank George William James founded in partnership with Colonel Barton) and also served as Vice-President. He presided over the El Dorado Chamber of Commerce. He was Vice President of the James Hotel Company. He also served on the El Dorado City Council. Mr. James had two children, D. R. James, Jr., and Mary Dell James with his first wife, Georgia. After her death, he married Alice Baucum, and they had two children, Mark James and Susan James Christian.²³

After Alice James died, Mr. and Mrs. John Lowery bought the house and they moved in to it in October 1997. The Lowerys installed a new central heating system and air conditioning and also had the house rewired. The Lowerys sold the home in 2007 to Gay and Russ Bechtelheimer. Gay Bechtelheimer is an artist and art instructor with the El Dorado Public Schools. She is also a life long resident of El Dorado and serves on the Arkansas Arts Council. Russ Bechtelheimer is an administrator with the El Dorado Public Schools. They continue to care for and maintain the residence.²⁴

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

The construction and design of the Randolph James House illustrates the growth and development of the Spanish Revival style in southern Arkansas, and the influences of the latest architectural fashion. The arrival of the oil boom in El Dorado in the early 1920s brought a lot of wealth to the area, which also allowed residents to hire the era's fashionable architects, such as Mann & Stern, to design high-style residences using the latest architectural styles.

²¹ Herndon, Dallas T., *Centennial History of Arkansas*. Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1922, pp. 65-66.

²² Information on the Randolph James House provided by Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer.

²³ Information on the Randolph James House provided by Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer.

²⁴ Information on the Randolph James House provided by Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer.

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The Randolph James House is an excellent example of the Spanish Revival style. The house exhibits the identifying features of the style noted by McAlester and McAlester, notably a low-pitched roof, red tile roof covering, prominent arches placed above doors or principal windows, a stucco wall surface, and an asymmetrical façade. In fact, the description of some of the Spanish Revival details in Virginia and Lee McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* almost seem to have been written while looking at the Randolph James House. It states:

The typical roof tiles are of two basic types: Mission tiles, which are shaped like half-cylinders, and Spanish tiles, which have an S-curve shape. ... Dramatically carved doors are typical of Spanish architecture; these are more common on high-style Spanish Eclectic houses but also occur on modest examples. Doors are usually emphasized by adjacent spiral columns, pilasters, carved stonework, or patterned tiles. Less elaborate entrance doors of heavy wood panels, sometimes arched above, are also common. Doors leading to exterior gardens, patios, and balconies are usually paired and glazed with multiple panes of rectangular glass. Many examples have at least one large focal window. These are commonly of triple-arched or parabolic shape and may be filled with stained glass of varying design. Decorative window grilles of wood or iron are common, as are similar balustrades on cantilevered balconies, which occur in a variety of shapes and sizes. Other typical details include tile-roofed (and otherwise decorated) chimney tops; [and] brick or tile vents...²⁵

Because of its significance as an excellent example of the Spanish Revival style in El Dorado, the Randolph James House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion C**.

²⁵ McAlester and McAlester, pp. 417-418

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James, Randolph, House
Name of Property

Union County, Arkansas
County and State

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 2, Block 22, of Mellor's Fifth Subdivision of the City of El Dorado.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the Randolph James House.

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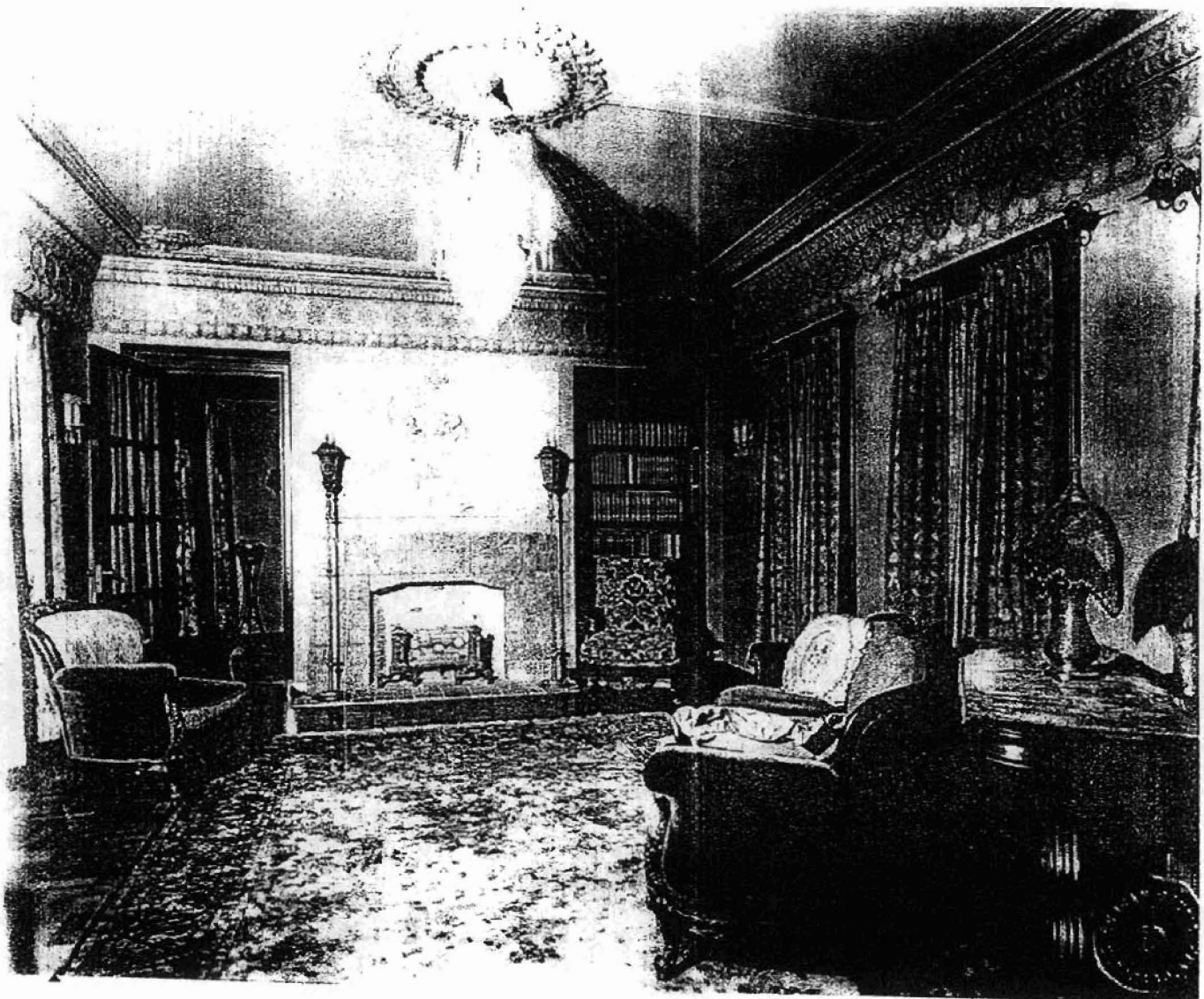


Randolph James House – 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer)

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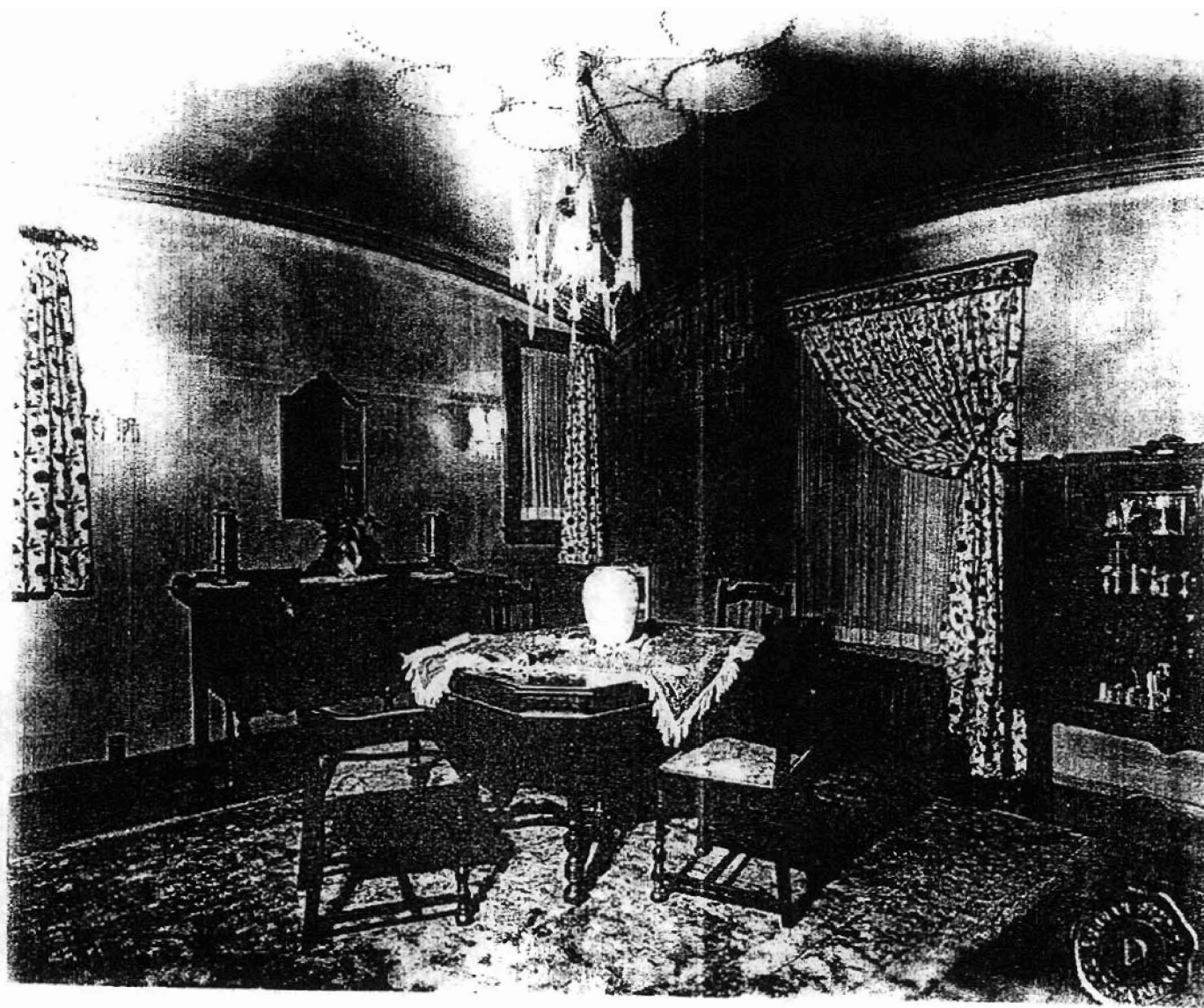


Randolph James House Living Room – 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer)

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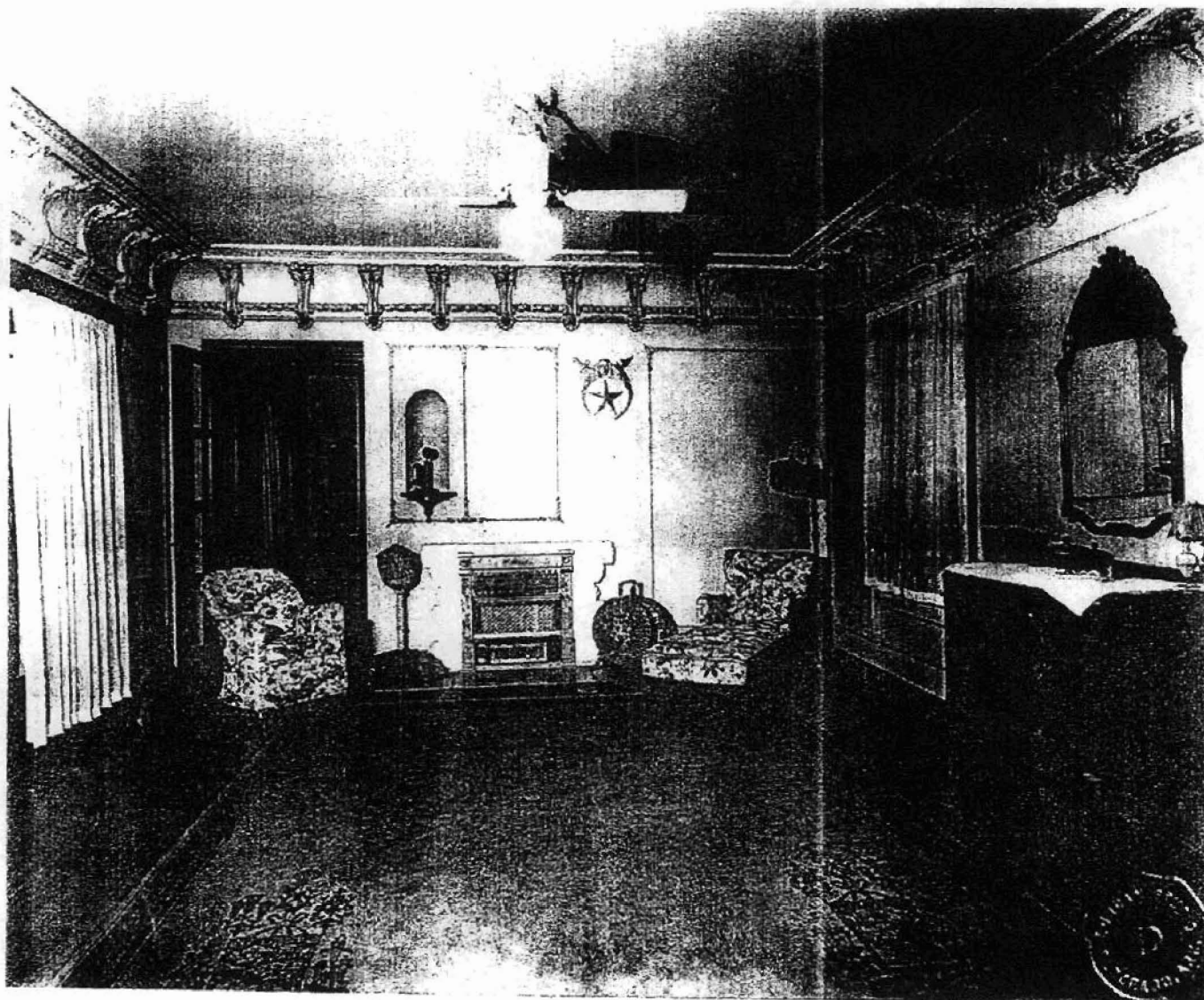


Randolph James House Dining Room – 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer)

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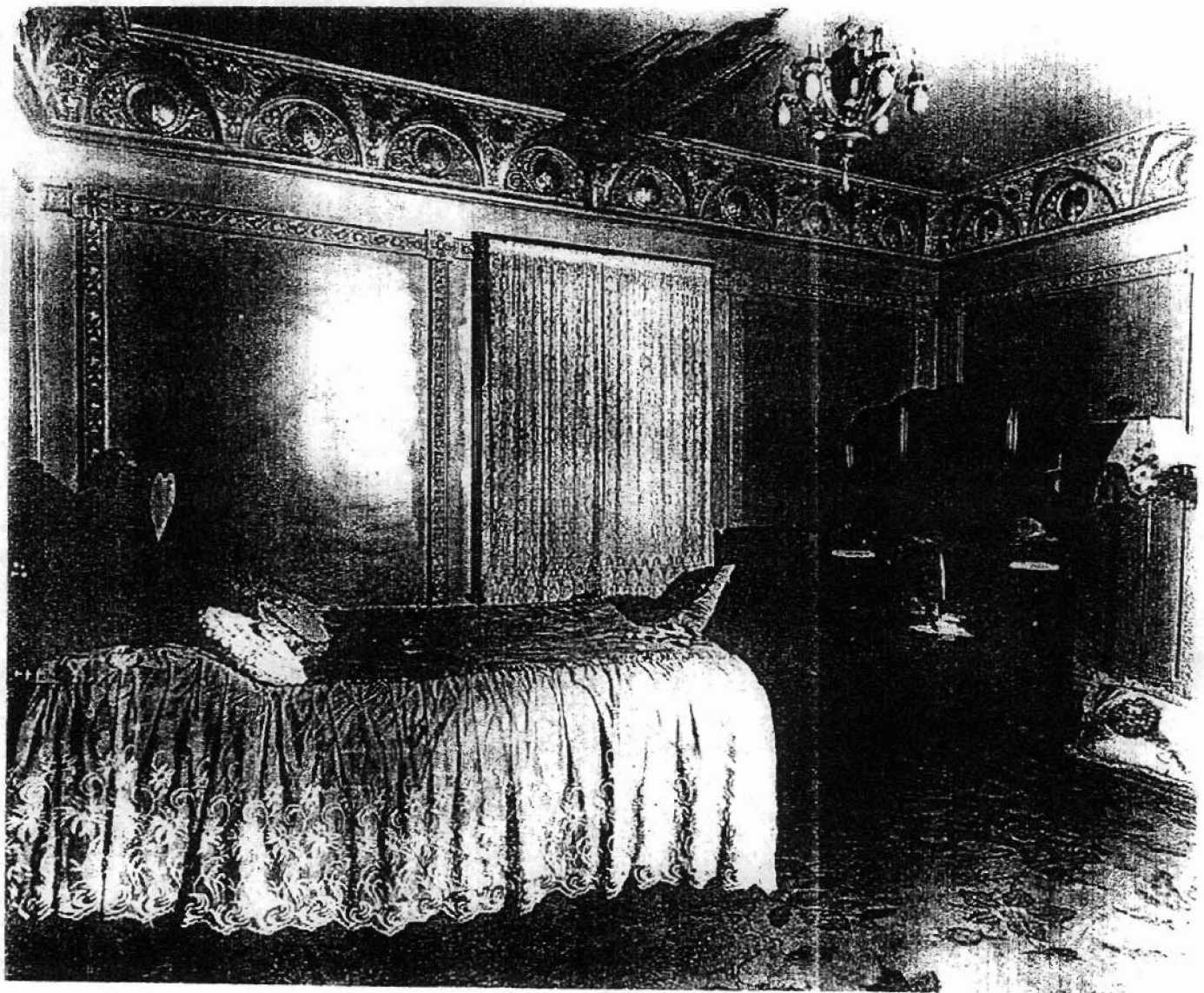


Randolph James House Upstairs Living Room (now a bedroom) – 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer)

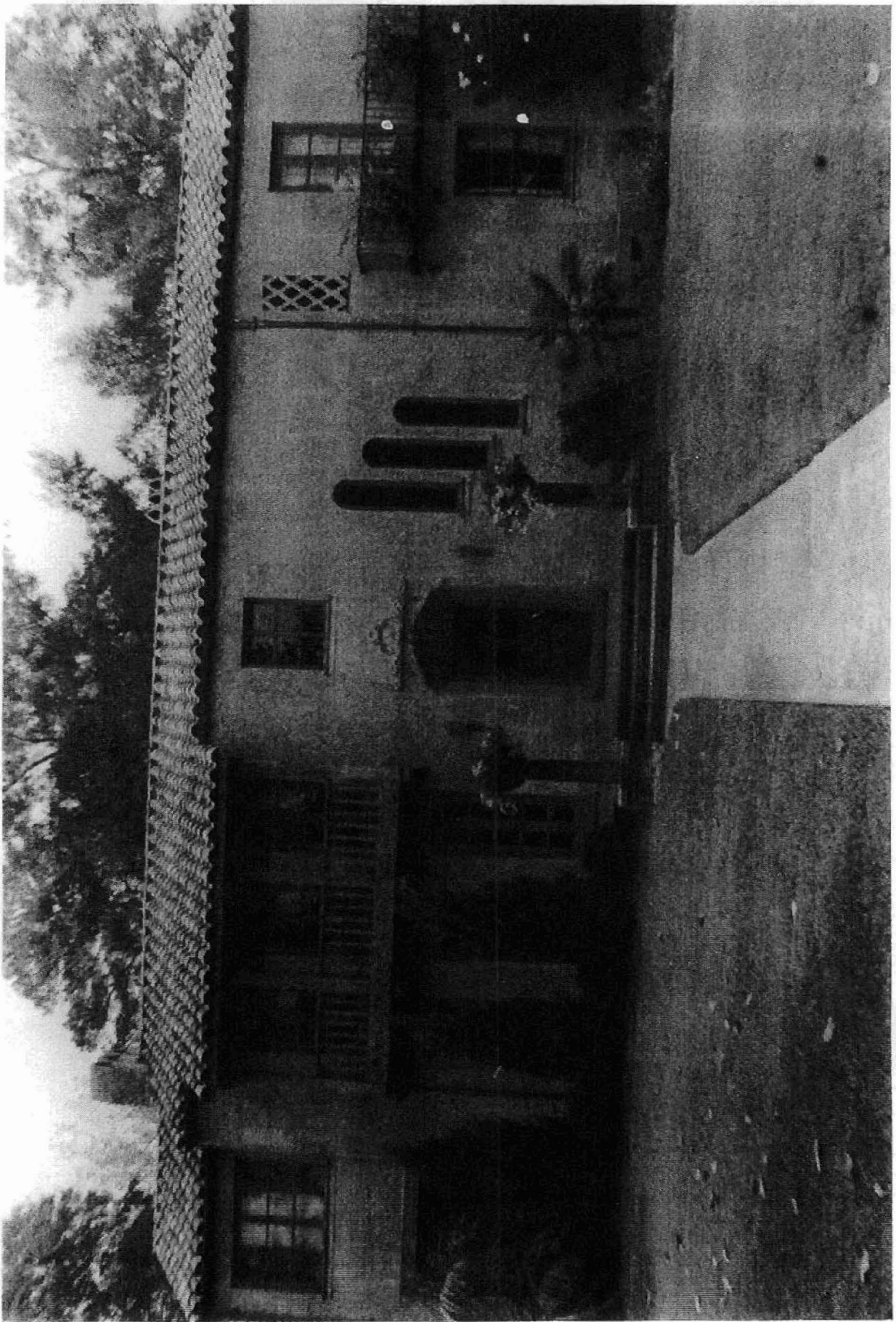
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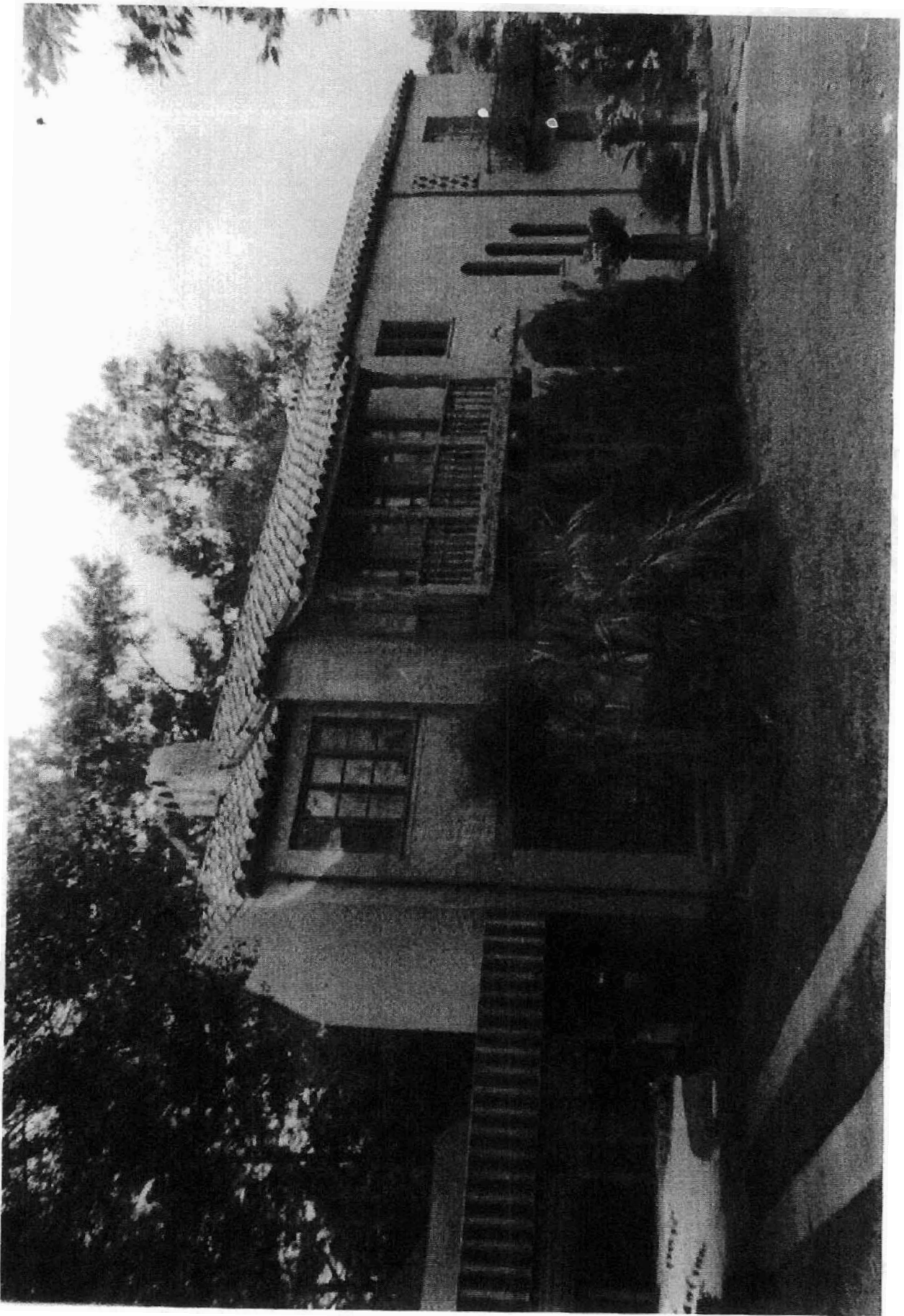
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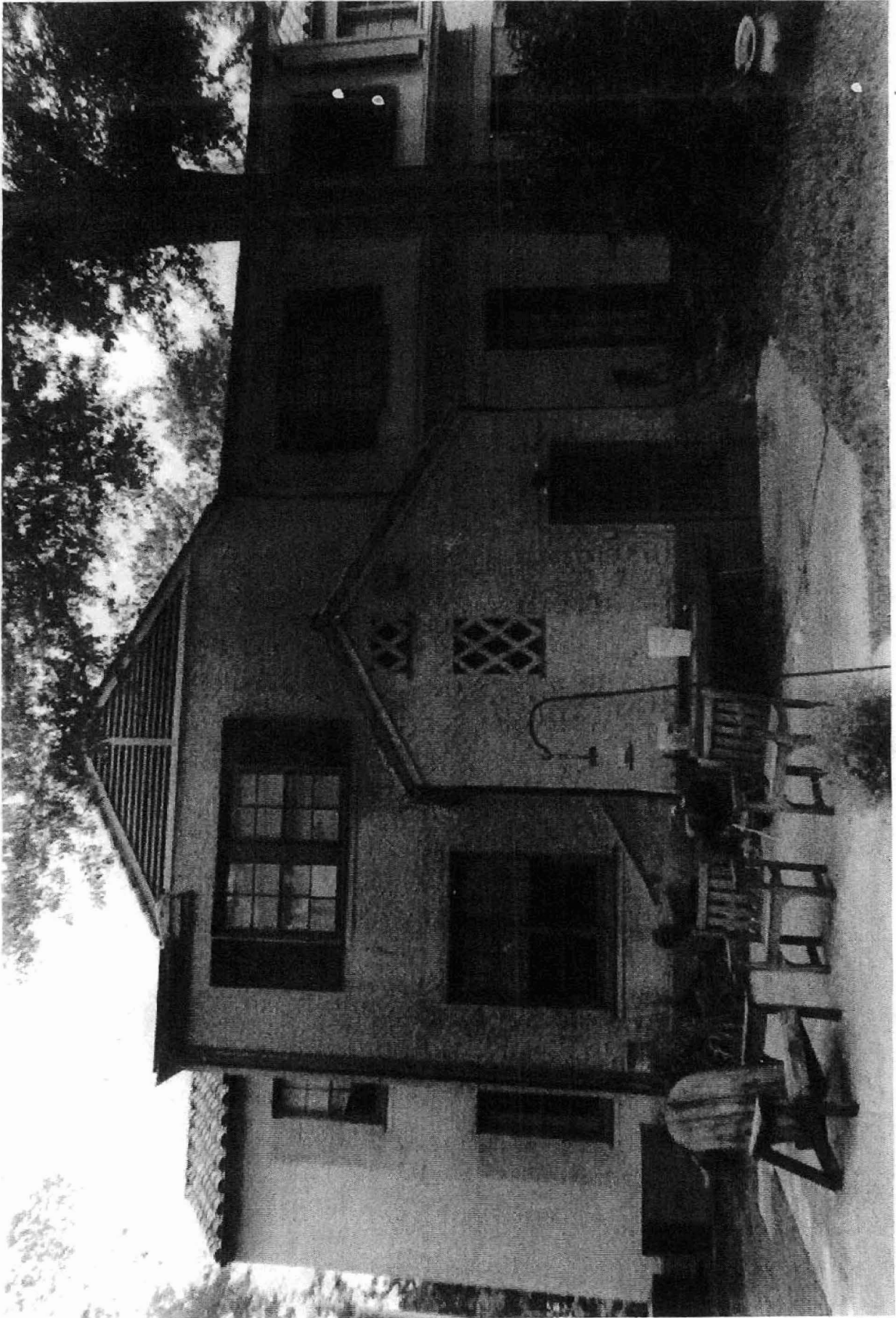
Randolph James House Guest Bedroom – 1930s (Photograph courtesy of Russ and Gay Bechtelheimer)



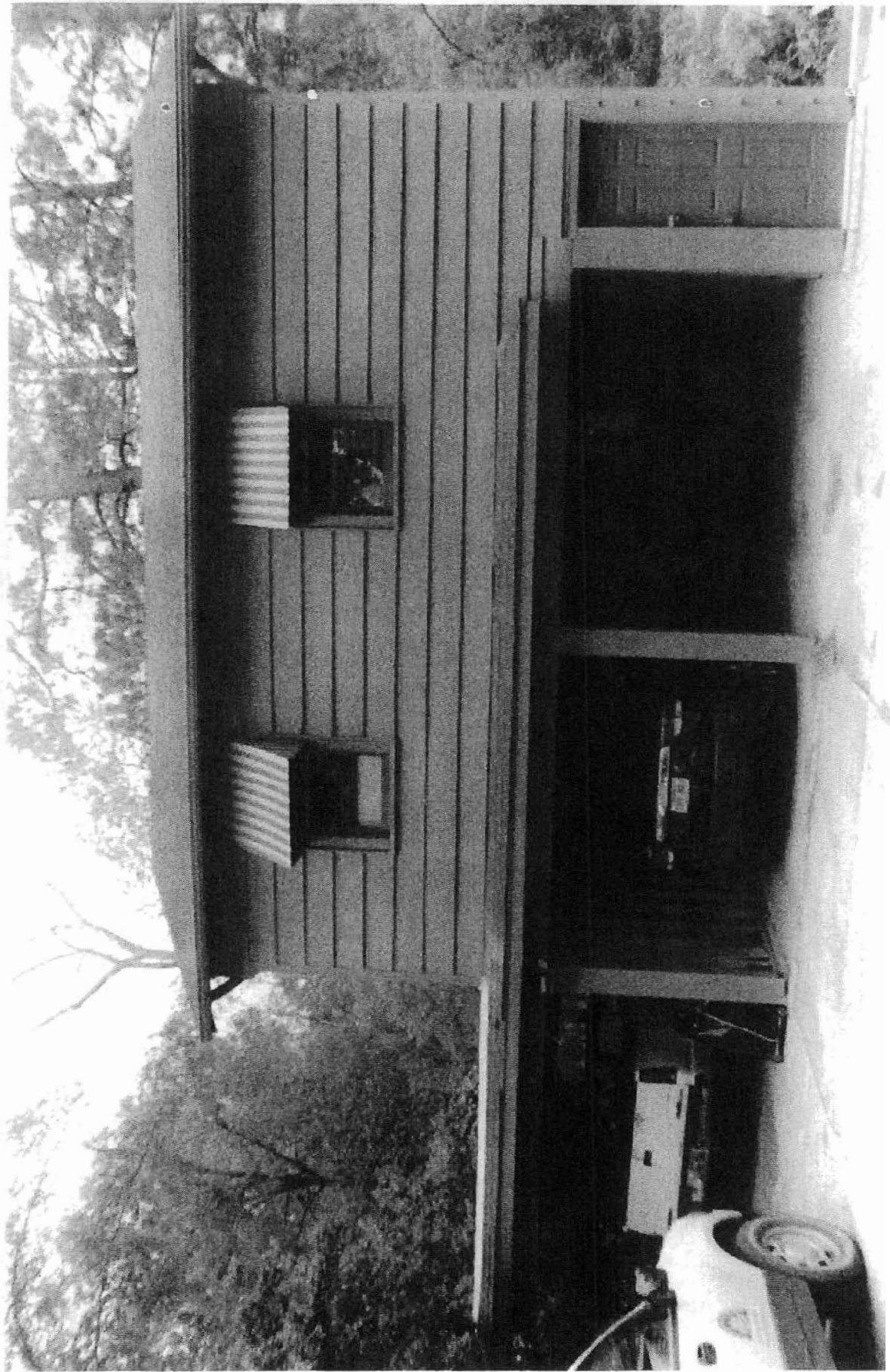






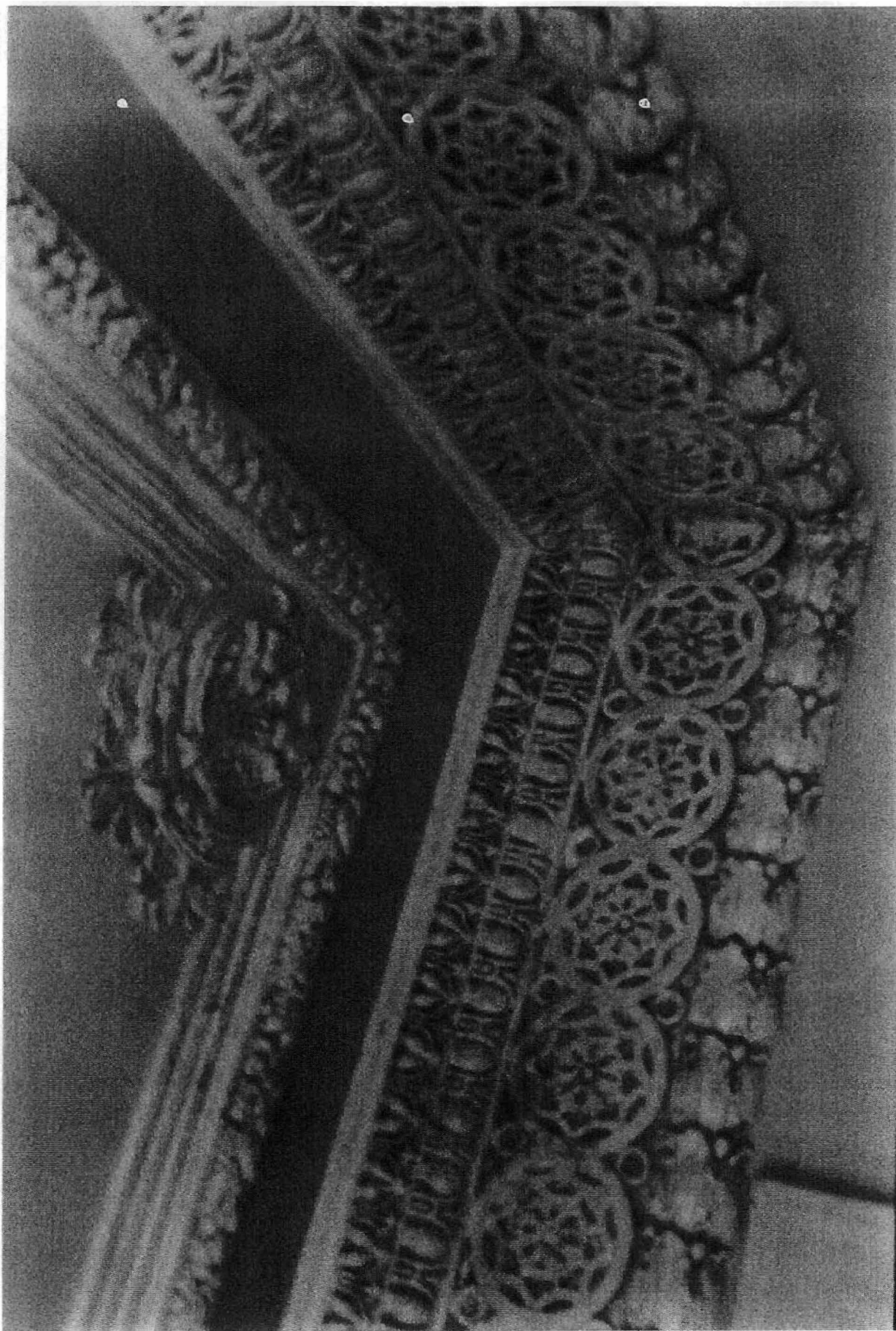


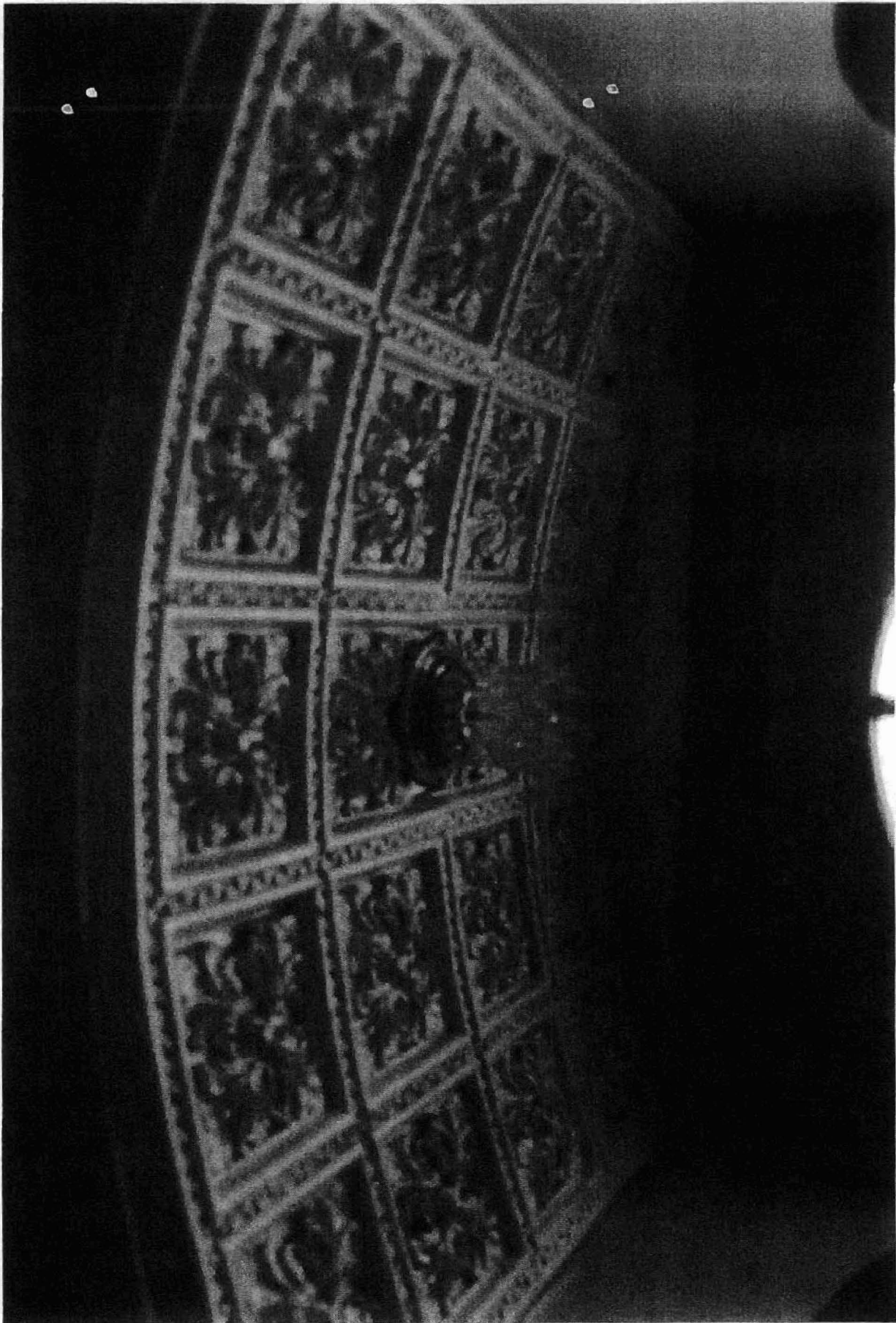














Google earth



James, Randolph, House
El Dorado, Union County, AR
33.223409 -92.660216