

NR listed 5/13/91

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 Van Buren County Courthouse
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Griggs and Main Street not for publication N/A
city, town Clinton vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code AR county Van Buren code AR 141 zip code 72031

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<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> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
			<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Caitlyn A. Boyd 4-3-91
Signature of certifying official Date
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/County Courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Other/WPA Rustic

Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 1**Summary**

The Van Buren County Courthouse is a two story native stone structure constructed in 1934 by the WPA. It has a continuous stone foundation and a flat roof set behind a stone parapet. This courthouse features the typical WPA/Rustic style common to most WPA structures with a restrained Art Deco influence.

Elaboration

The Van Buren County Courthouse is a two story structure with a basement constructed by the WPA in 1934. The courthouse is laid out in a rectangular floor plan of relatively small dimensions and consists of structural indigenous stone with a continuous stone foundation. The flat roof is set behind a stone parapet and is covered by rolled asphalt. The western elevation is divided into five bays of two story metal framed windows symmetrically arranged with slightly raised pilasters between and on the ends. The upper story windows consist of side-by-side, triple-hung, six-pane windows with fixed upper sashes and the lower sash opening awning-style. The ground level windows are side-by-side six-over-six sash windows. The recessed entrance is situated in the center of the facade and consists of slightly raised fluted concrete pilasters, a transom with fixed wooden four-pane windows separated by a mullion, and a broad entablature with "Van Buren County Courthouse" engraved upon it.

The northern elevation is dominated by large side-by-side, quadruple-hung, six-pane windows with fixed upper sashes and a lower sash which opens awning-style. This fenestration, which provides lighting for the interior staircase, is flanked on both sides by slightly raised pilasters each containing a single upper story triple-hung six-over-six window with a bottom sash opening awning style and a ground level window of the standard six-over-six sash variety. The eastern elevation is identical to the western elevation with the exception of a bronze plaque containing the date of construction and list of county officers on the northern pilaster. With the exception of the large central windows, the southern elevation is likewise identical to the northern elevation.

The interior of the building consists of a basement, a ground level floor for county offices, and a second floor for the courtroom and associated offices, law library, and storage rooms. The interior was remodeled in 1973 under the administration the Honorable Joe D. Villines, Circuit Judge, and Honorable Richard Ward, County Judge and consisted primarily of paneling the walls, and the installation of air conditioning. In 1983 the courthouse was again remodeled as consequence of the flood of December 3, 1982. The courtroom was reduced in size to accommodate the addition of storage rooms so as to keep the records above flood level. Most of the original wooden doors and accompanying trim remain as does the original staircase.

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1**Summary**

Criterion C, local significance

The Van Buren County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance as the best example of WPA/Rustic style architecture in the county.

Elaboration

The Van Buren County Courthouse is typical of the WPA constructed buildings. Funded by the Federal Administration of Public Works, Project number 3454 was designed by the Little Rock architects Frank Erhart and Howard Eichenbaum. Earl and Carl Bird received the contract for the building which was completed in 1934. The courthouse is built of native stone quarried from an area of land north of Dennard in Van Buren County.

Since before the Civil War, Van Buren County has been noted for the strength of its legal bar and judicial history. When the county was created in 1833 from parts of Conway, Independence and Izard counties a temporary courthouse was established at the one room log house of Obadiah Marsh at Bloomington. Soon, the people of the community had a new courthouse constructed at a log raising. This new structure was also a one room log structure; however, the front yard boasted the unusual distinction of having the second largest horse racing track in the state.

The county seat was moved to Clinton in 1842 by a petition and vote led by George Counts, the founder of Clinton. This necessitated the construction of a new courthouse which was again a one room log house. A two story frame courthouse with a "columned front" was built sometime later. It was burned by bushwhackers at the end of the Civil War in 1865. In 1869 a new courthouse was constructed on the site of the present courthouse. This, too, was a two story frame structure with a full facade, two story porch. This building survived two burglaries and two arson attempts only to succumb to the wrecking crew in 1934 when it was torn down and the present courthouse erected.

Through the years the courthouse has provided a forum for some of Arkansas's finest lawyers and judicial officers. Some lawyers left a lengthy legacy, such as Colonel J.H. Fraser who served and attended 100 consecutive terms of court over a 50 year period of practice. His son, Judge Garner Fraser, served as circuit judge and provided legal counsel during the construction of the present courthouse in 1934. Other notable lawyers to have practiced in Van Buren County include Judge J.F. Koone, Opie Rogers, and Judge Isbell who later became a federal judge in Oklahoma. The juries of Van Buren County have also left their mark in the pages of the county's history. Four men have been sentenced to hang, although one sentence was reversed. The first hanging occurred in 1895. A few years later the notorious case of Lee Mills and W.H. Hardin jolted Van Buren County. Mills and Hardin were accused

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2

of murdering a man named Patterson and attempting to take the life of Patterson's wife. Hardin confessed and implicated Mills who received a change of venue and was tried in neighboring Cleburne County. Hardin gave testimony for the state, and consequently Mills was convicted and sentenced to be hanged in 1898. Hardin was likewise convicted in Van Buren County and sentenced to death by hanging. On appeal, however, his case was reversed and remanded for a new trial. Denizens of county were outraged and feared that Hardin would escape the punishment he had been sentenced. A group of twelve men assembled late at night and forced the jailor, an old ex-slave, to unlock the cell. The vigilantes advised Hardin that they were delivering a sentence that could not be reversed and suggested that he make his peace with God. Hardin responded by covering his head with a blanket, and a prominent citizen in the community administered the punishment with a shotgun.

The old courthouse was not a place only for the administration of county business; it also served as a community convention center and hosted family reunions, fraternal organizations, and Christmas programs. Judge Fraser once reflected, "If those old walls could have talked, they would have told a tale that ranged all over the scale of human emotions from the most flippant comedy to the most blood curdling tragedy. Could dictograph and a moving picture machine reproduce the words that have there been spoken and the scenes that have there been enacted, there would be an album of oddities, a medley of emotions that would run the entire gamut from the sublime to the ridiculous. There would be wit, humor, pathos, smiles, tears, passions, prejudices, truth, falsehoods, spite, fear, hate, love, revenge, deceit, vindication, victory and defeat."

The present Van Buren County courthouse is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C with local significance as the best example of WPA/Rustic style architecture in the county. It is well constructed and features typical WPA courthouse characteristics such as restrained Art Deco influences, use of metal framed windows, and the use of indigenous stone.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Herndon, Dallas T. *Annals of Arkansas*. Vol. II. Little Rock: The Historical Record Association, 1947. pp. 721-722.

Van Buren County History. Conway: River Road Press, 1982. pp. 25-29.

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

Period of Significance
1934-1940

Significant Dates
1934

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Frank Erhart and Howard Eichenbaum

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 Less than 1

UTM References

A

1	5
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5	4	9	1	2	5
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3	9	3	8	6	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 4, Block 3 City of Clinton

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patrick Zollner/National Register Historian date 3/13/91
 organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program telephone (501) 324-9346
 street & number 225 East Markham, Suite 300 state Arkansas zip code 72201
 city or town Little Rock

2455 11 NE
(BOTKINBURG)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

STATE OF
GEOLOGICAL
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7555
(OLD LE

92°30'
35°37'30"

546000m.E.

547

548

27°30" MARSHALL 25 MI.
OLD BOTKINBURG 4.2 MI. 550

3942000m.N.
33 MI. TO ARK. 27
CRABTREE 6 MI.

Van Buren County Courthouse
Clinton, Arkansas
Van Buren County
15/549125/3938680
Clinton Quadrangle
1:24000

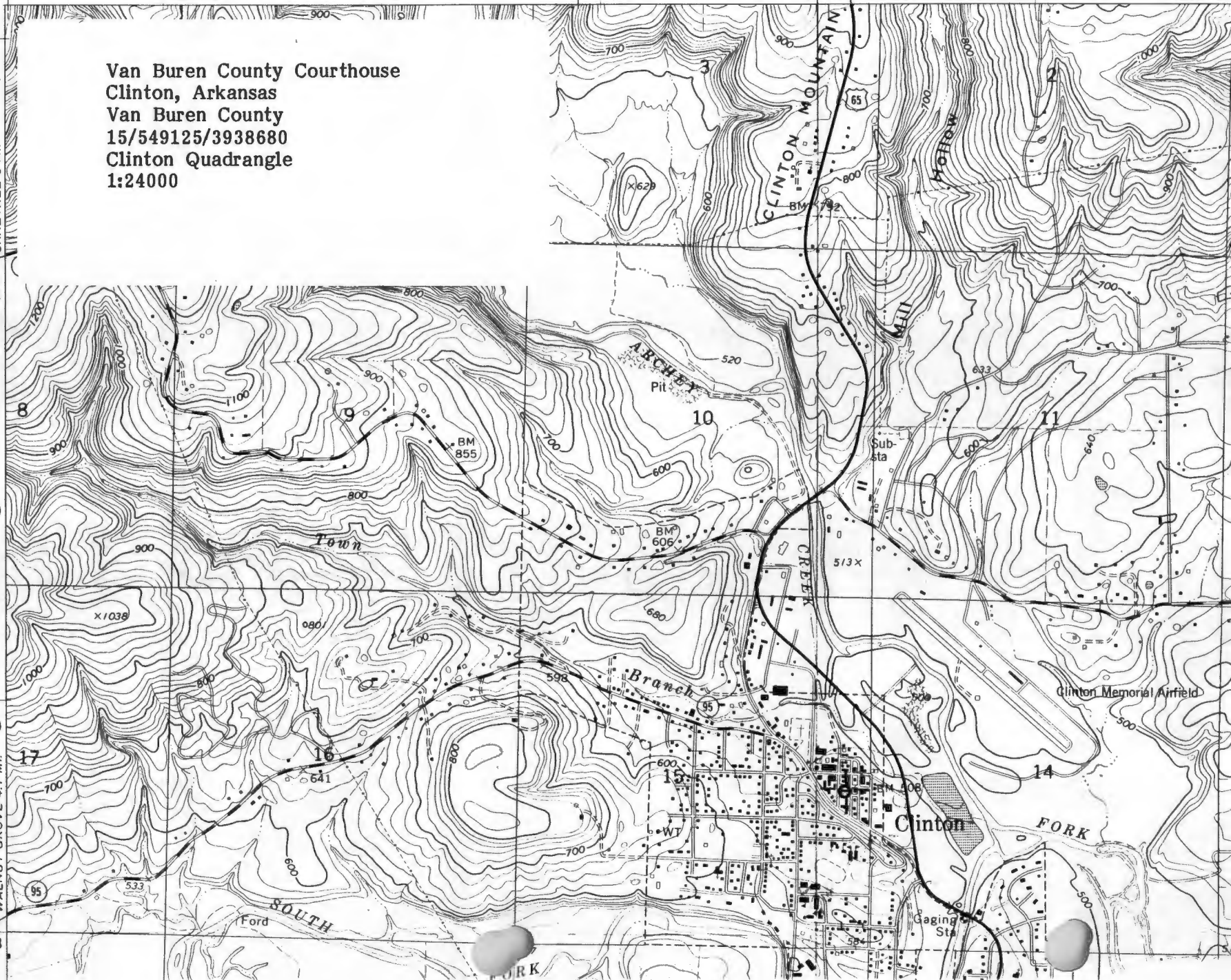
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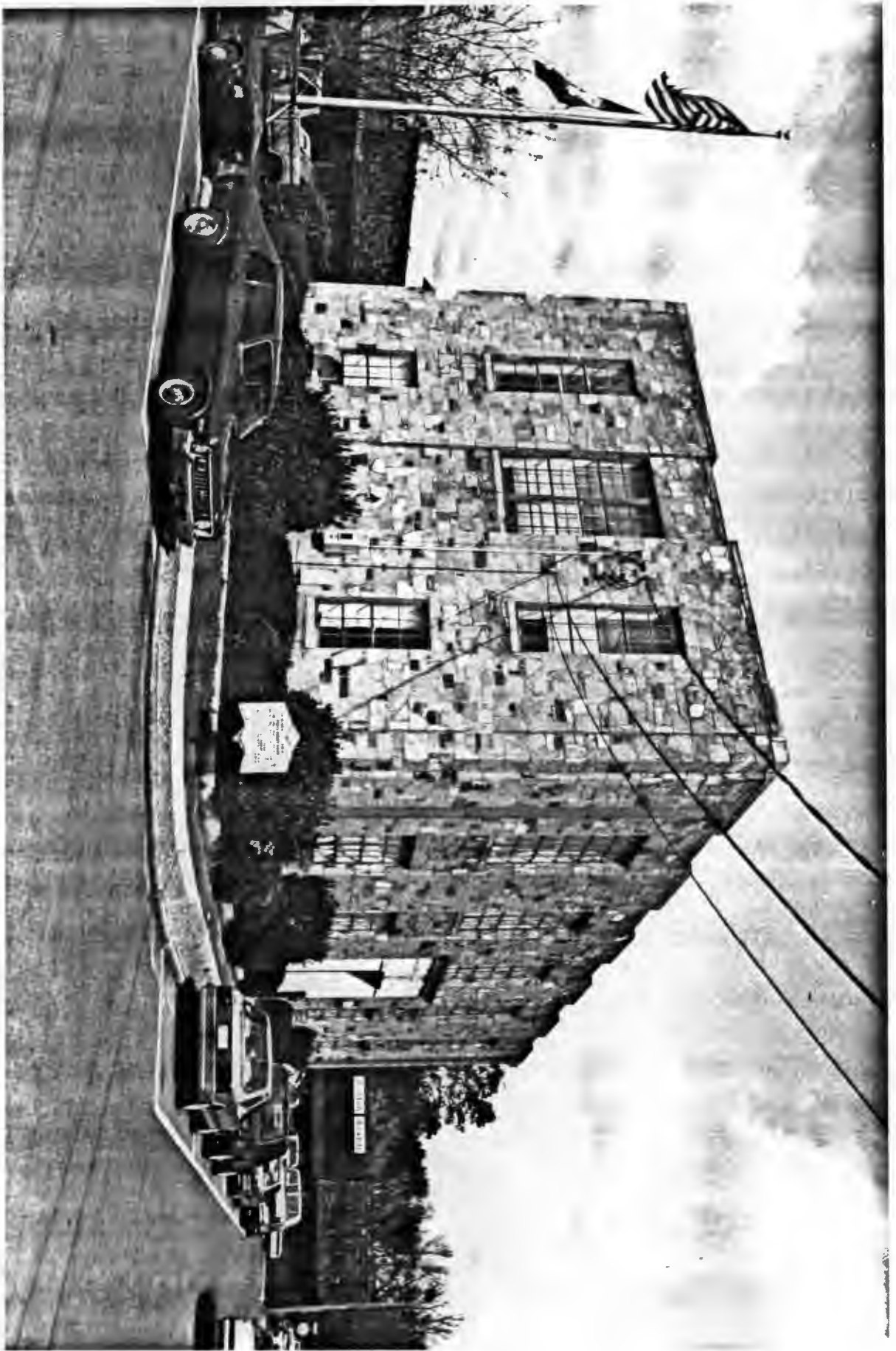
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MORRILTON 41 MI.
WALNUT GROVE 4.1 MI.





in Buen County Courthouse
Clinton, Arkansas

Van Buren Co.

Photographed by Patrick Zellner

November 1996

Negatives on file at AHPP

View from the southeast





as well as Court House

Clinton, Arkansas

Van Buren Co.

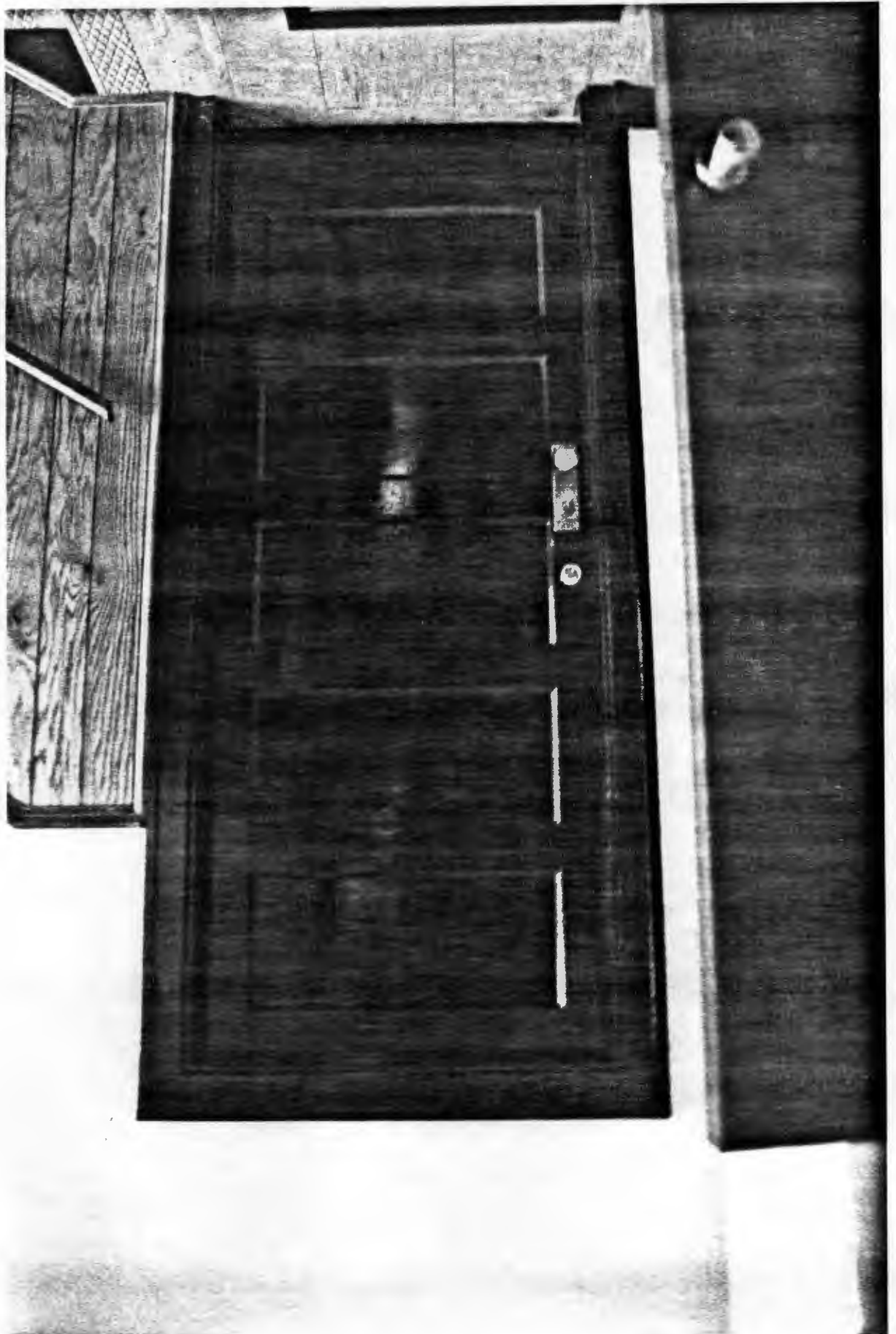
Photographed by Patrick Zollner

November 1990

Negatives on file at AHPP

View of window from interior Storrwell





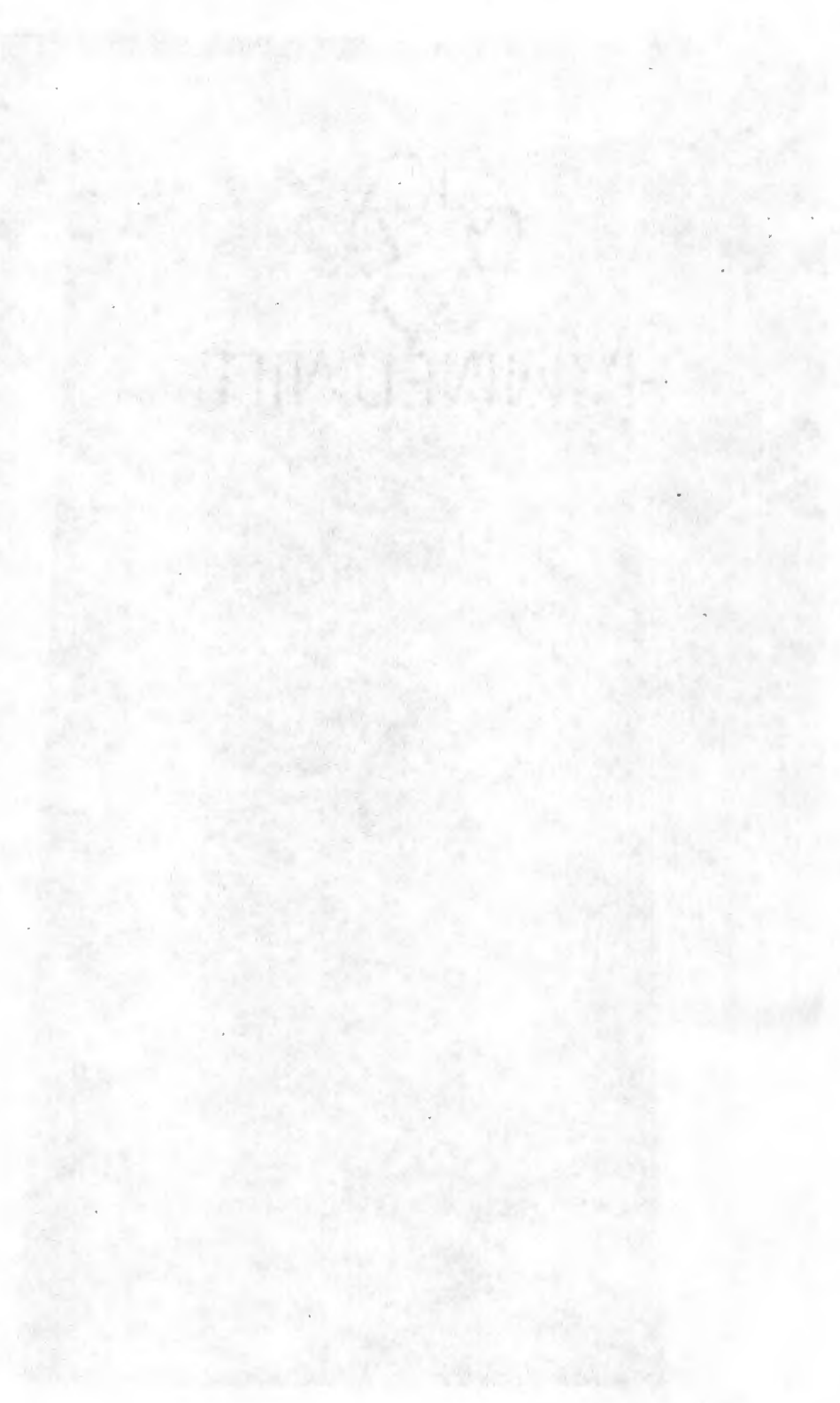
Van Buren County Courthouse
Clinton, Arkansas
Van Buren Co.

Photographed by Patrick Zollner

November 1940

Negatives on file at AHPP

View of interior door



VAN BUREN COUNTY

COURT HOUSE

FEDERAL EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION
OF PUBLIC WORKS
PROJECT NO. 2374

COUNTY OFFICERS

ADMINISTRATION OF

JOHN H. JOHNSON, COUNTY JUDGE

T. W. HAIGHELL, SHERIFF

T. R. CUMMAIR, COUNTY CLERK

R. R. HAYES, COUNTY TREASURER

E. W. PARKER, COUNTY ASSessor

JOE HALL, STATE JENITOR

CLYDE BRADFORD, REPRESENTATIVE

ATTORNEYS

GARIBER FRASER, OPIE ROGERS

COMMISSIONERS

STONOR JOHNSON, J. S. COLLINS

GEORGE SIMPKINS, R. M. LOVE

W. H. BARKS

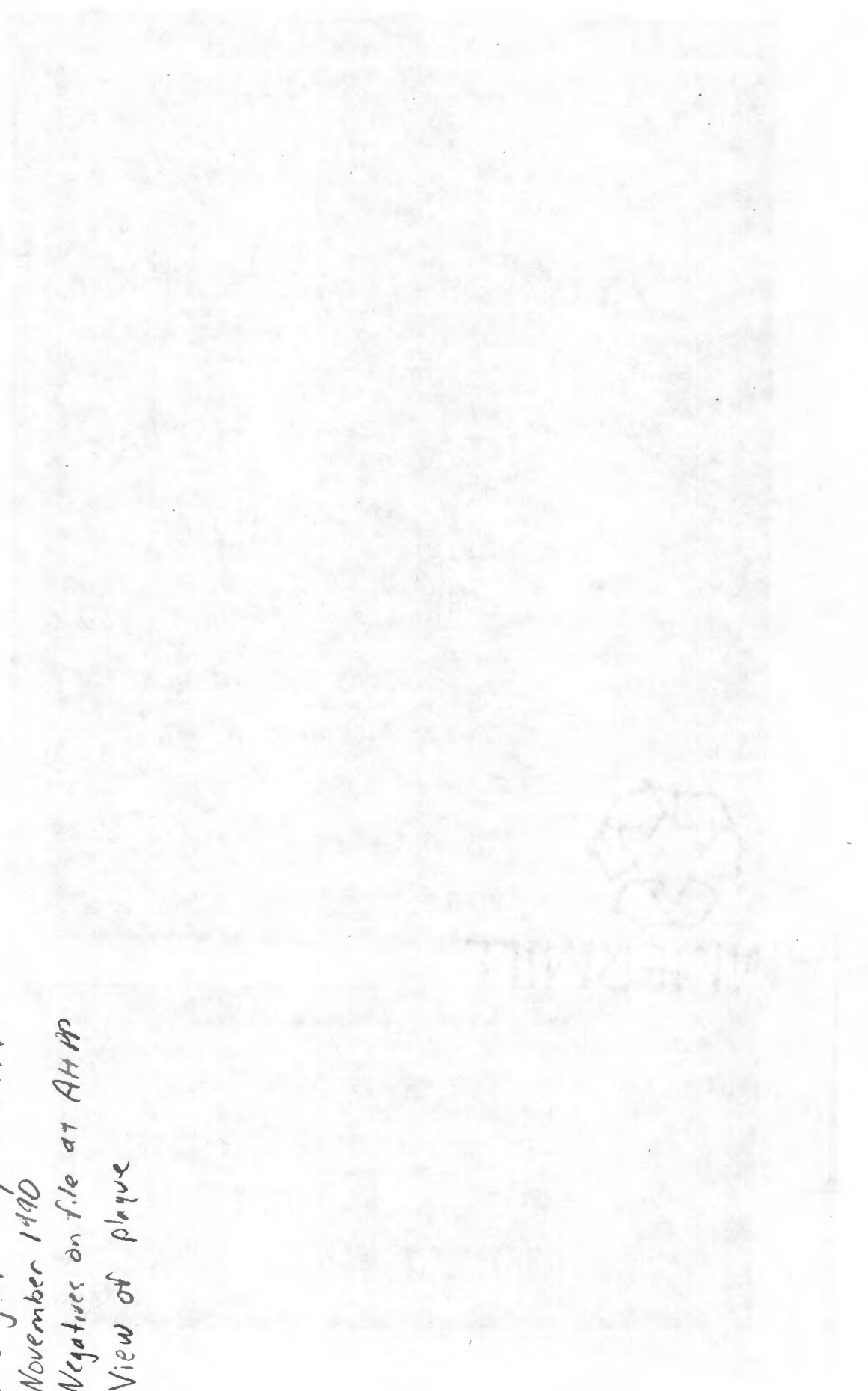
ARCHITECTS

FRANK BRHART, HOWARD BEHNBAUM

CONTRACTORS

BART AND CARL BIRD

in Buren 'merry' (corn) house
Clinton, Arkansas
Van Buren Co.
Photographed by Patrick Zoller
November 1990
Negatives on file at AHP
View of plaque





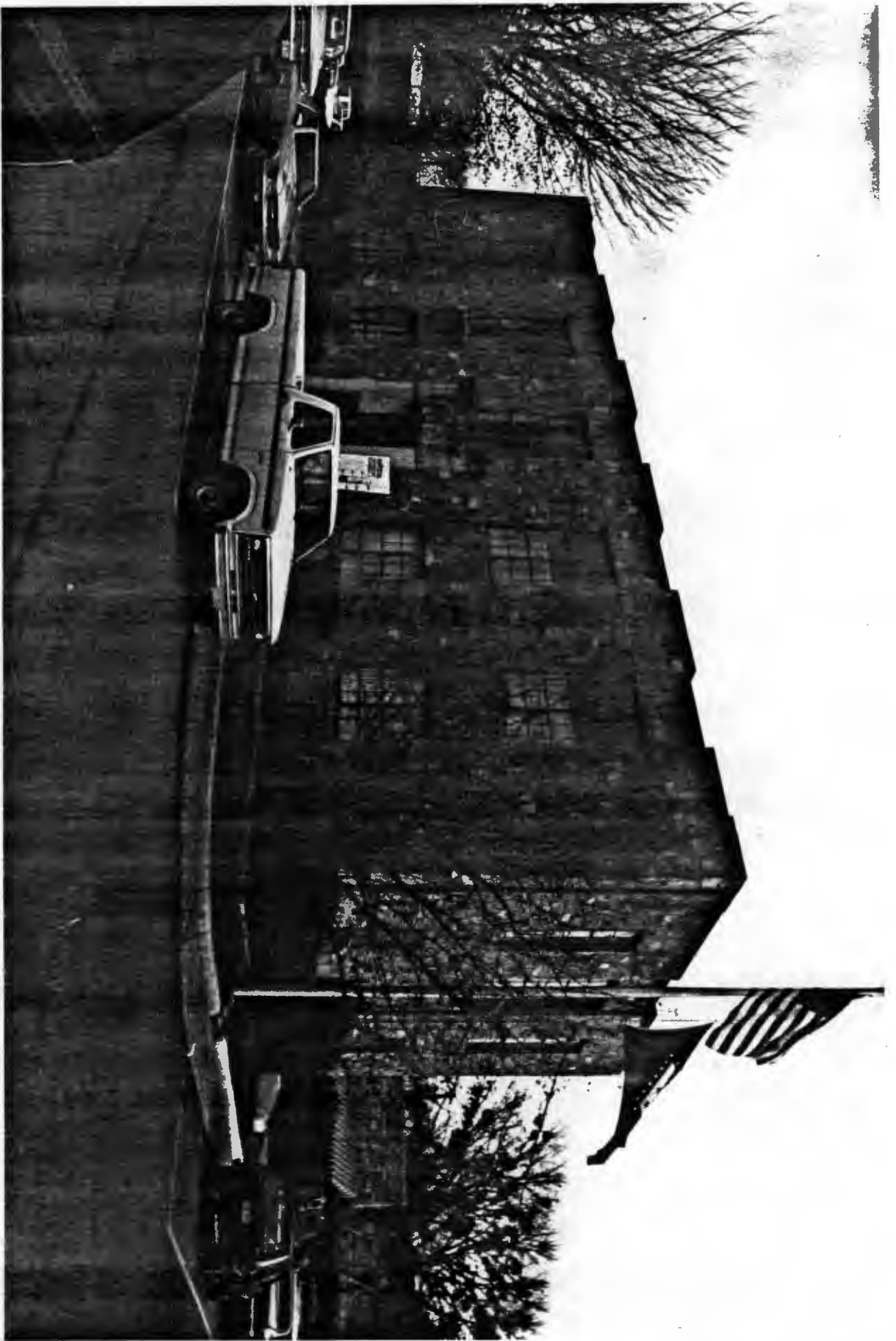
Van Buren County Courthouse
Clinton, Arkansas

Van Buren Co.

Photographed by Patrick Zuther
November 1990

Negatives on file at AHPP

View from the west



Van Buren County Court house
Clinton, Arkansas

Van Buren Co.

Photographed by Patrick Zollner

November 1990

Negatives on file at AHPP

View from southwest

