

Listed

6/14/90

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 Southern Mercantile Building
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 107 E Buchanan (State Highway 62) not for publication N/A
city, town Prairie Grove vicinity N/A
state Arkansas code AR county Washington code 143 zip code 72753

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>1</u>	<u>0</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
			<u>0</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.

Cathryn A. Buford 5-7-90
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

6-2-31

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Department Store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/ Specialty Retail

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Commercial Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Continuation Sheet**

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Summary

The Southern Mercantile Building is a single story, brick masonry vernacular commercial building. Its sloping roof and raised stucco parapet shelter a rectangular plan. The interior is divided into a single large retail area with divided display areas at the rear and a smaller, separate retail space to the east.

Elaboration

The Southern Mercantile Building is a single story, brick masonry vernacular commercial building. Its sloping roof and stucco parapet shelter a fundamentally rectangular plan. A later concrete loading dock extends across the entire southern or rear elevation. Four narrow brick chimneys rise through the roof, two adjacent to the western wall and two adjacent to the eastern wall of the main block of the building. A skylight lights the display area toward the rear of the building. The roof is a built-up tar system, the walls are brick, and a continuous stone foundation supports the entire structure.

The northern or front elevation is a retail display storefront, four entrance bays in length, and capped with a raised, stepped stucco parapet. Each bay is accessed by a pair of single-light pegged wood doors set into a three-sided, recessed, pegged wood frame entry. Two large plate glass windows flank the entry, above which are smaller, horizontal plate glass windows with a fixed, two-pane transom between them. The vertical wood framing between the bays is accented by load-bearing, painted cast iron pilasters. The stucco parapet above has been placed over the original 1883 brick parapet and is constructed of 2' x 4' decorative tin covered by wire mesh. The parapet runs the full length of the facade.

The western elevation features the stepped roofline which gradually descends to the south and the six brick oculi, now filled. The common bond is laid with six rows of stretchers for every row of headers and creates a decorative banding pattern to the otherwise blank wall surface. The unusual coloration of the bricks is evident on this elevation, a feature which is common to bricks manufactured by the nearby Terpening Brick & Tile Company. The southern or rear elevation is accessed by two double-leaf cargo doors, one at each end, and a central single-leaf entry. Four one-over-one wood sash windows with single-pane transoms are symmetrically-placed between these entries. A later concrete loading dock runs the full length of the elevation. The exposed portion of the eastern wall (to the south of the party wall) is blank.

The interior is divided into two principal retail spaces, the result of the fact that two separate party wall commercial structures were joined under the same parapet in 1920. The smaller, narrow room is placed to the east of the large, open retail space. The main room is open and the ceiling span is supported on two rows of round steel posts running north and south

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between the pine strip flooring and the laminated 8" x 12" roof and ceiling support beams (the flooring rests upon 2' x 12' oak floor joists). A balcony runs the full length of the rear wall and is accessed at the eastern end by a wood staircase, all of which is decorated with a turned pine balustrade.

The original 1883 mercantile building and its smaller neighbor were joined beneath a common parapet c. 1920, after both buildings had been come under common ownership. At that time, the original brick raised parapet was covered with decorative tin and wire mesh to receive its finish coat of stucco. This alteration was of sufficient magnitude to change the period of the building's architectural significance from 1883 to 1920. Otherwise, the building is virtually unaltered.

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

Criteria A and C, local significance

The Southern Mercantile Building is by far the largest and most intact vernacular commercial storefront building to survive in downtown Prairie Grove. Furthermore, it served this community as both the largest and most versatile general store and as a social center.

Elaboration

Though the present site of Prairie Grove was first settled in 1829, the establishment of a commercial and civic center did not commence until 1871, when the first post office was established. This was followed in 1872 by the opening of a blacksmith and wagon shop by Messrs. W.D. Rogers and J.J. Baggett (later the founder and builder of the Ozark Mercantile Building, which became the Southern Mercantile Building), two of the first entrepreneurs of the town. Soon thereafter, in 1877, the town was formally laid out and the first sale of lots took place on March 24 of that year. By 1890, Prairie Grove could boast of a population of approximately 500.

J.J. Baggett came to Prairie Grove in 1872 from Georgia via Fort Smith and built the first Prairie Grove Mill in 1876. Its success allowed him to sell his interest two years later and by 1883 he formed a partnership with A. Sanders and built the present building as a hardware store. First known simply as Baggett and Sanders, the store's name changed to Baggett and McCormick in 1891 after Baggett dissolved his first partnership and entered into a new one with A.N. McCormick. By 1903 the store was organized as the Ozark Mercantile Company.

While operating his mercantile business Baggett increased his involvement in an ever-widening circle of financial and commercial endeavors throughout Washington County during the last decades of the nineteenth century and into the first two decades of the twentieth century. He helped direct the Bank of Fayetteville in its takeover of the McIlroy Bank in 1892. In 1896 Baggett invested in the Fayetteville Grocery Co.; he was elected its president the next year. By 1907 his fortunes had increased to the point that he was able to buy out his principal competition in Prairie Grove - the mercantile store owned by the brothers S.R. and Frank Wilson - and rename his mercantile business the Southern Mercantile Company.

J.J. Baggett died in Florida in 1919, but the business continued to prosper. The Southern Mercantile's initial focus on the sale of hardware and dry goods was expanded over the years to include new services and lines of merchandise. The motto of the store was "From the cradle to the grave", referring to the large variety of merchandise available at the store. Serving the needs of its broad range of customers, which included both town residents and rural farmers, required the Southern Mercantile to carry such items as feed, seed, groceries, hardware, dry goods, caskets, farm machinery, buggies, buggy parts, furniture, electrical supplies and

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household appliances. At one point in time the feed department had contracts to feed twenty flocks of chicks, a total of over 16,000. Later, such services as a radio service shop, funeral parlor, burial insurance and an ambulance service were added. During its period of operation - 1907-1987 - a large number of Prairie Grove residents worked at the Southern Mercantile and it served as one of the town's major employers.

Improved roads and the advent of the automobile precipitated the demise of the Southern Mercantile as they have done across the nation. Operations began scaling down in 1948 with the closing of the dry goods department and continued until the death in 1987 of its last owner and manager, Ms. Florence Hill.

The Southern Mercantile Building survives as an intact and vivid record of the design and floor plan of early twentieth century, local mercantile stores that is remarkable for its size and retail display area. It is also architecturally significant by virtue of its construction materials: the Terpening Brick and Tile Company was a local brickyard known for the distinctive red and violet color variations in its brick, the result of the unusual clay found in the bottoms of the Illinois River valley, located approximately ten miles from Prairie Grove. The Terpening Brick and Tile Company was also one of the last localized brick and tile factories in the area, before the introduction of the railroad and the ensuing competition from large brickyards elsewhere rendered such local operations obsolete. Furthermore, the Southern Mercantile Building is historically significant for its associations with the Southern Mercantile, the largest and most active mercantile operation in Prairie Grove until the Second World War.

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Bibliography

Goodspeed History of Northwestern Arkansas, (Chicago, 1889), p. 253, pp. 265-266.

Wiswell, George E. and Essie, *Centennial History: 1888-1988*, (Siloam Springs, 1988), pp. 85-86, 129-130.

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Verbal Boundary Description

A part of Block 3, Town of Prairie Grove, Arkansas: Beginning at the northwest corner of said block proceed southerly for a distance of 297 feet; thence proceed easterly 154 feet; thence proceed northerly 157 feet; thence proceed westerly 50.5 feet; thence proceed northerly 140 feet; thence proceed westerly 103.5 feet to the point of beginning, comprising in all less than one acre.

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
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1920

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

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

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 one

UTM References

A

1	5	3	8	1	2	8	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

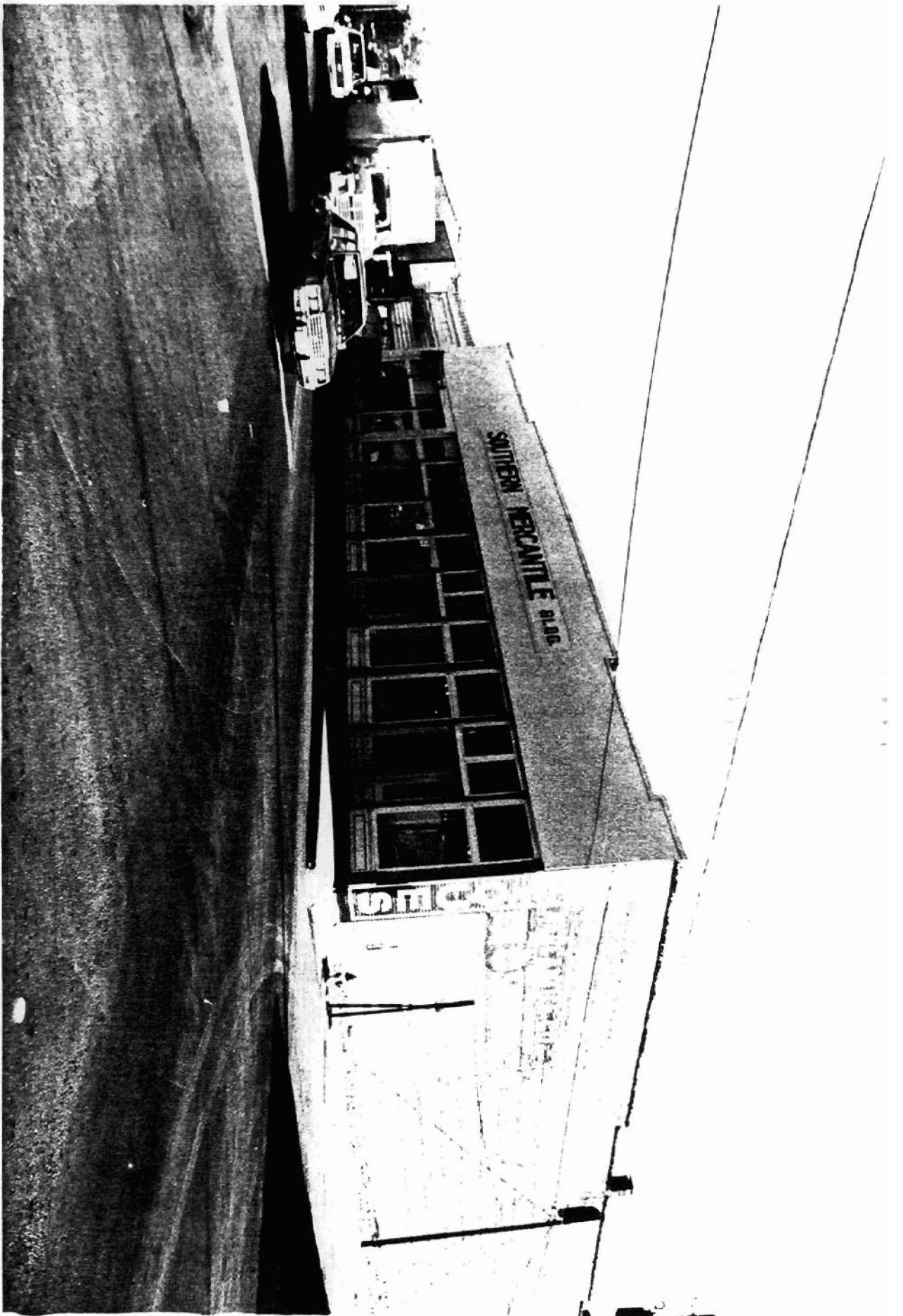
Boundary Justification

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

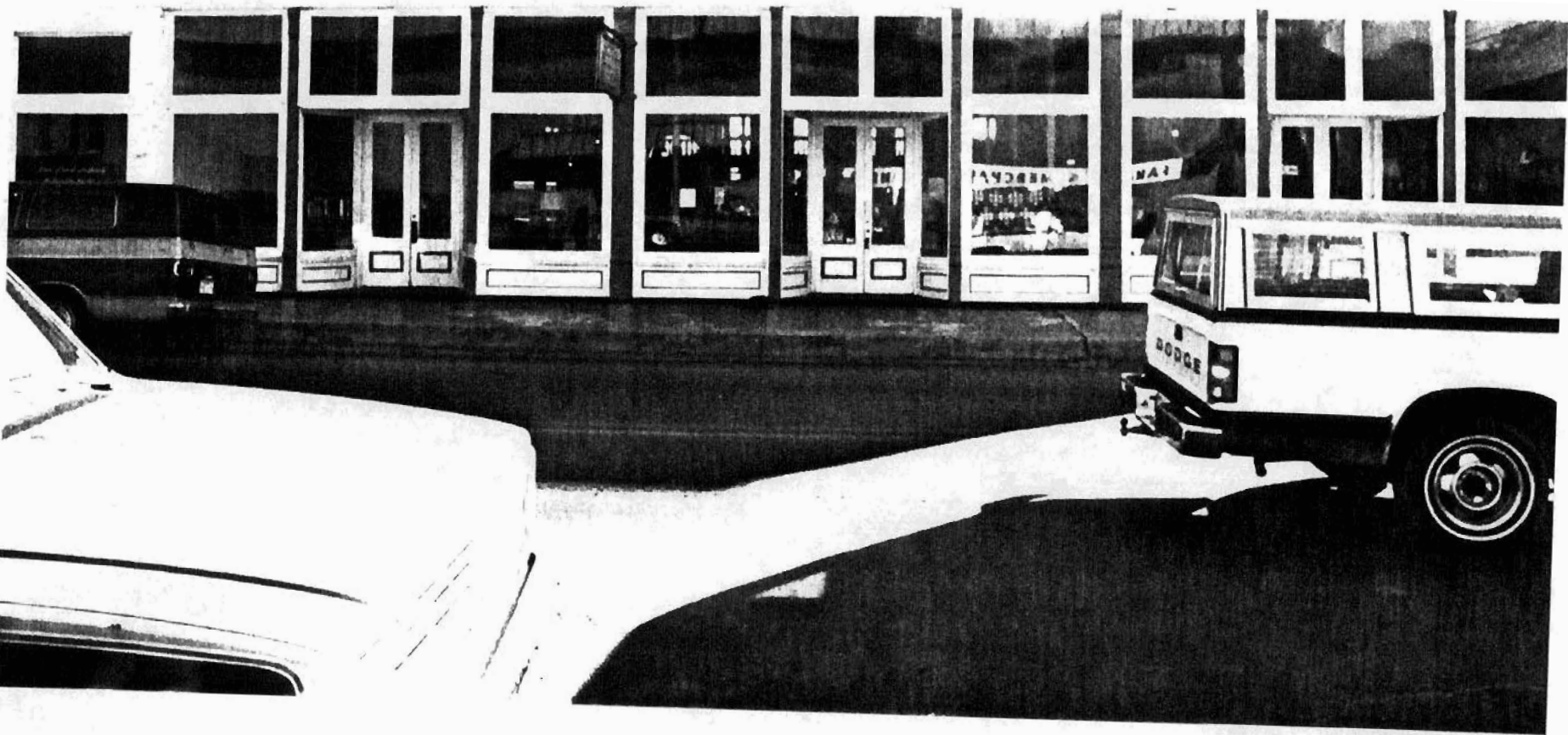
See continuation sheet

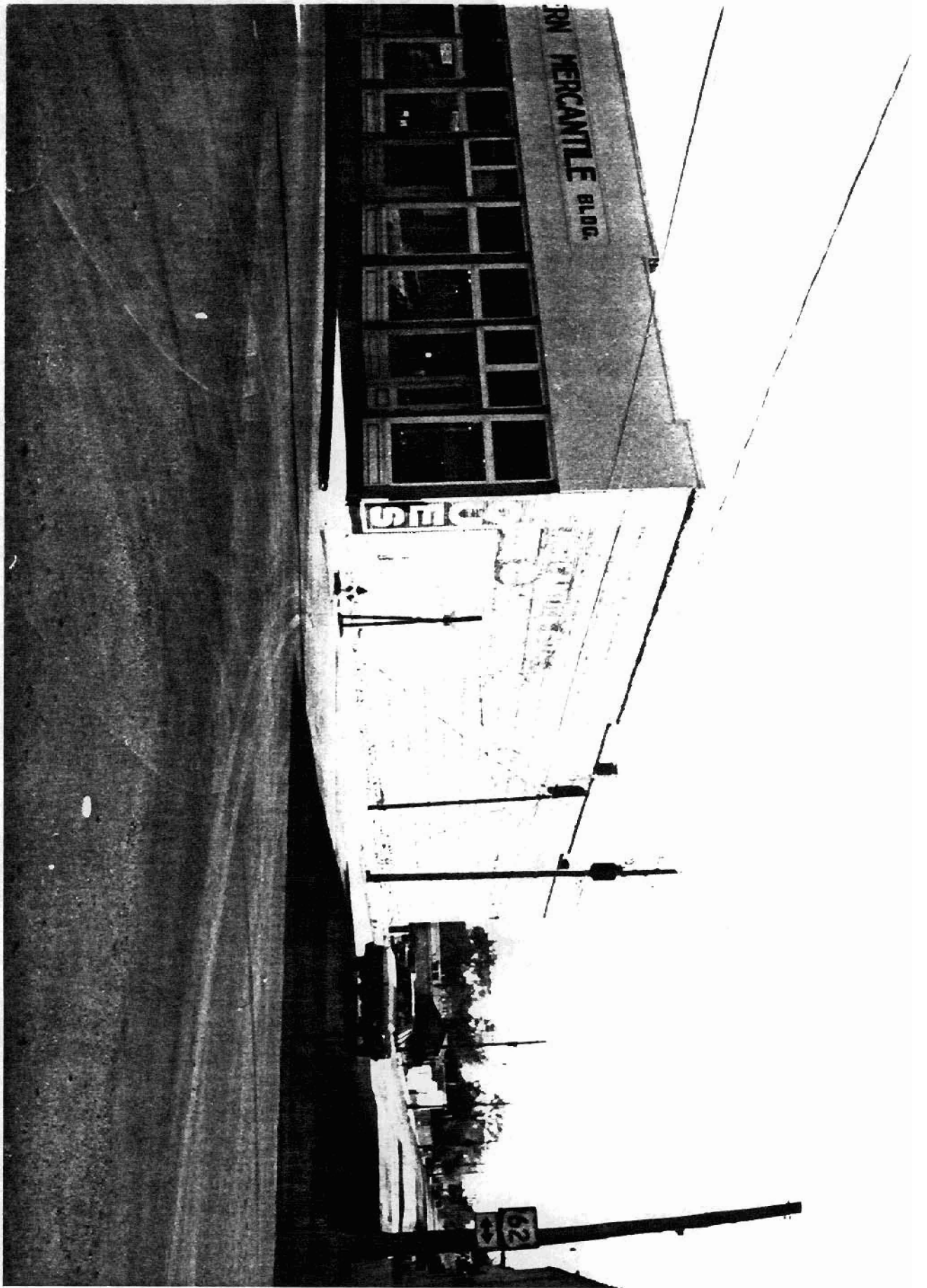
11. Form Prepared By:

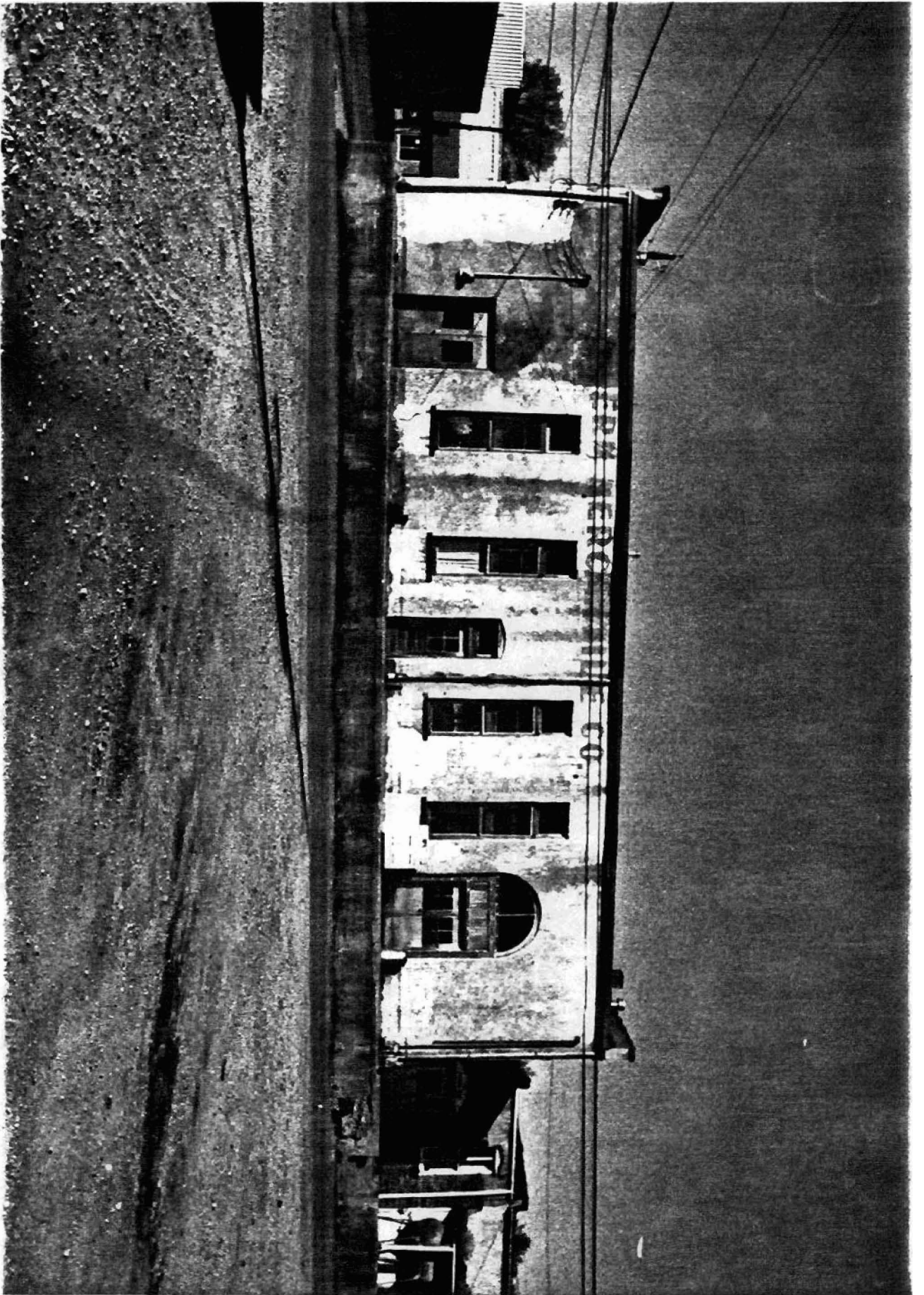
name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 4 May, 1990
street & number 225 E Markham, Suite 300 telephone (501) 371-2763
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

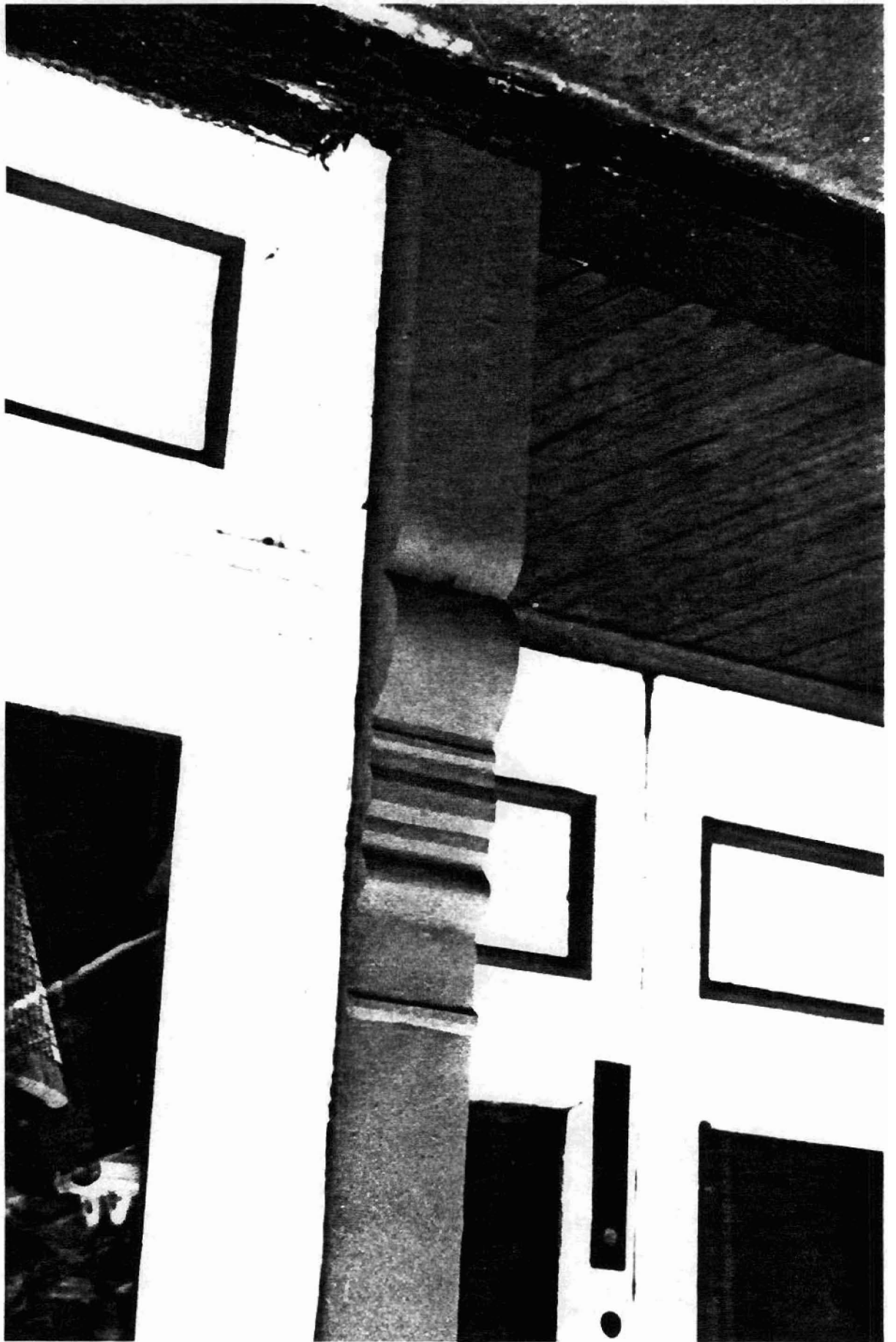


SOUTHERN MERCANTILE BLDG.



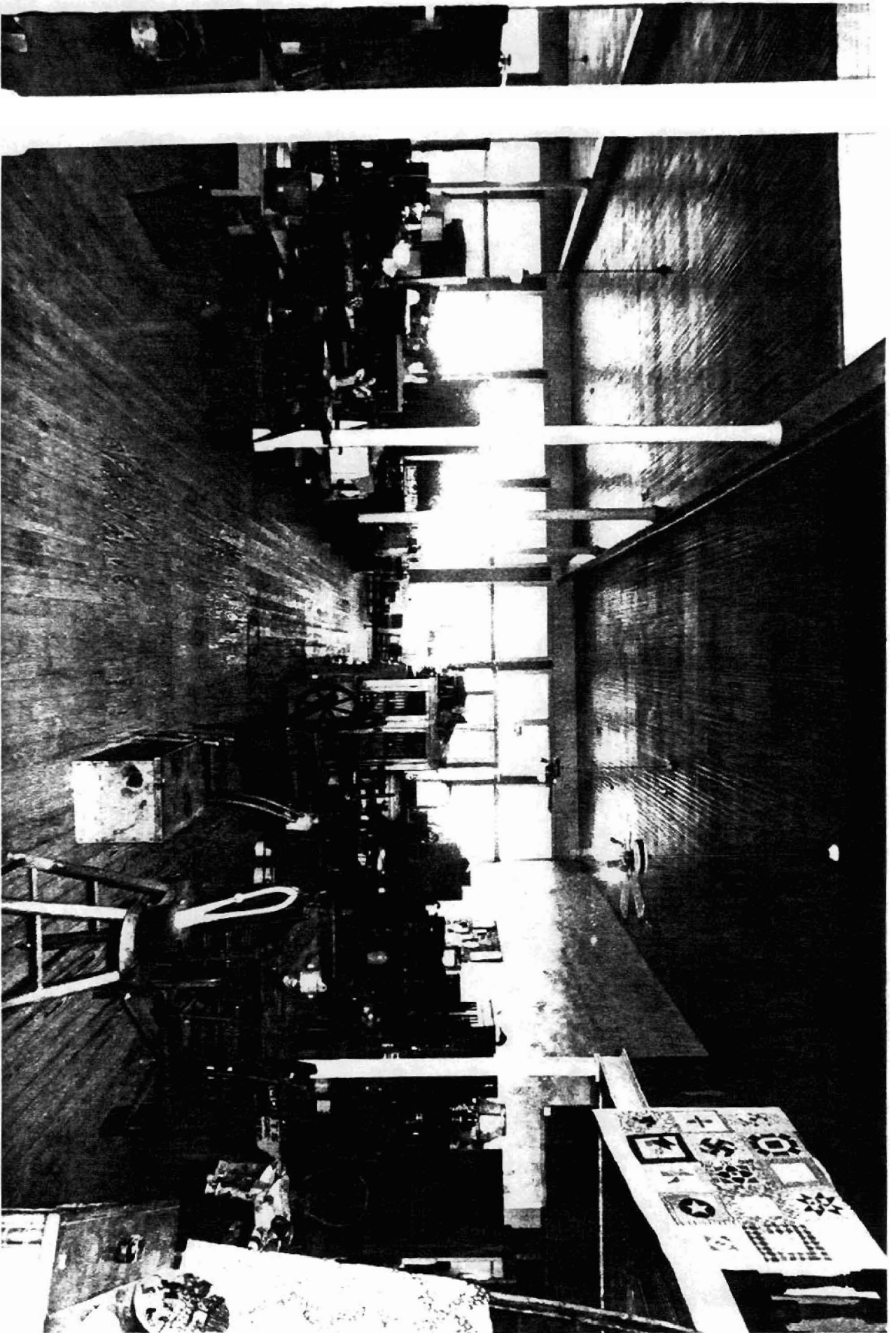


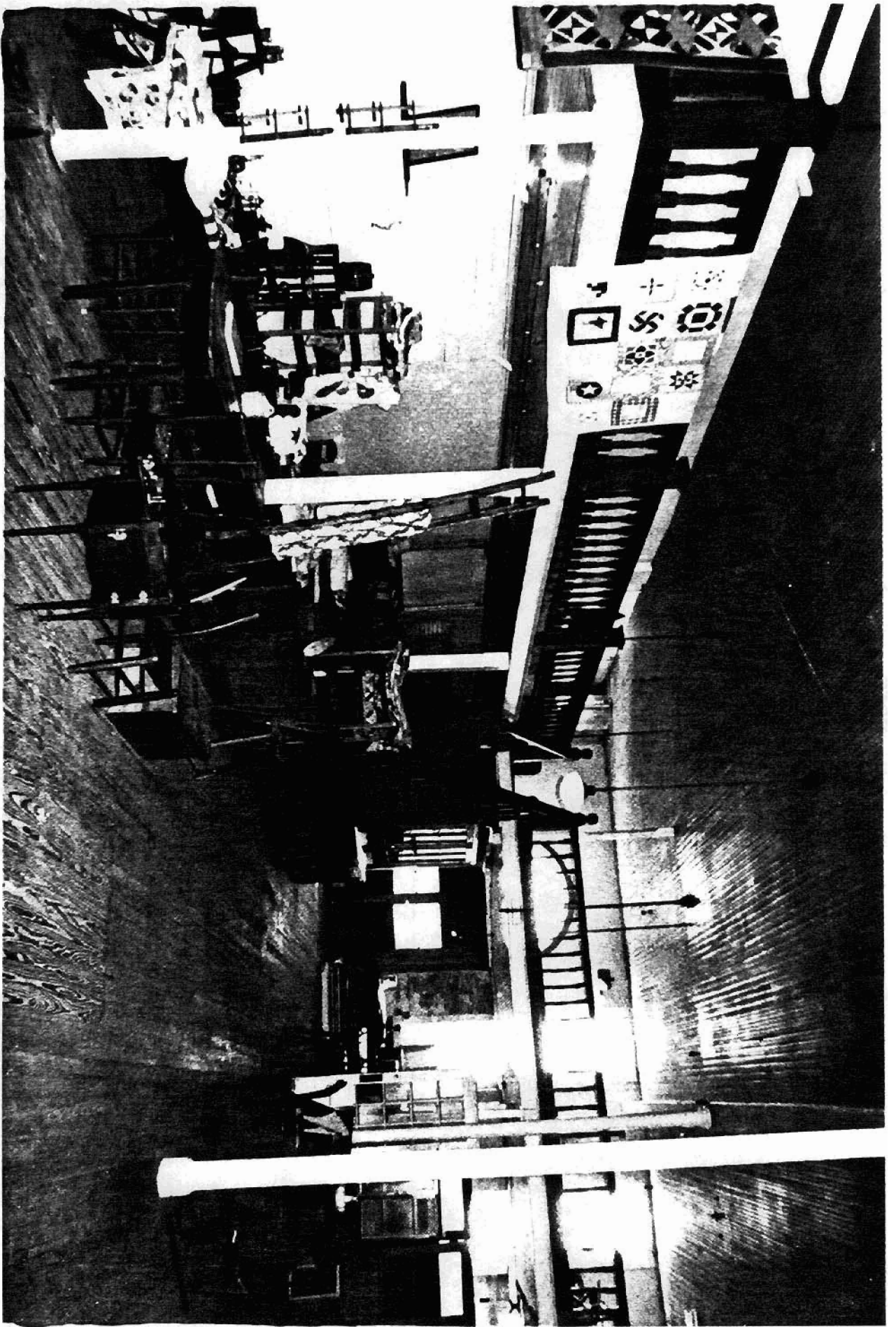




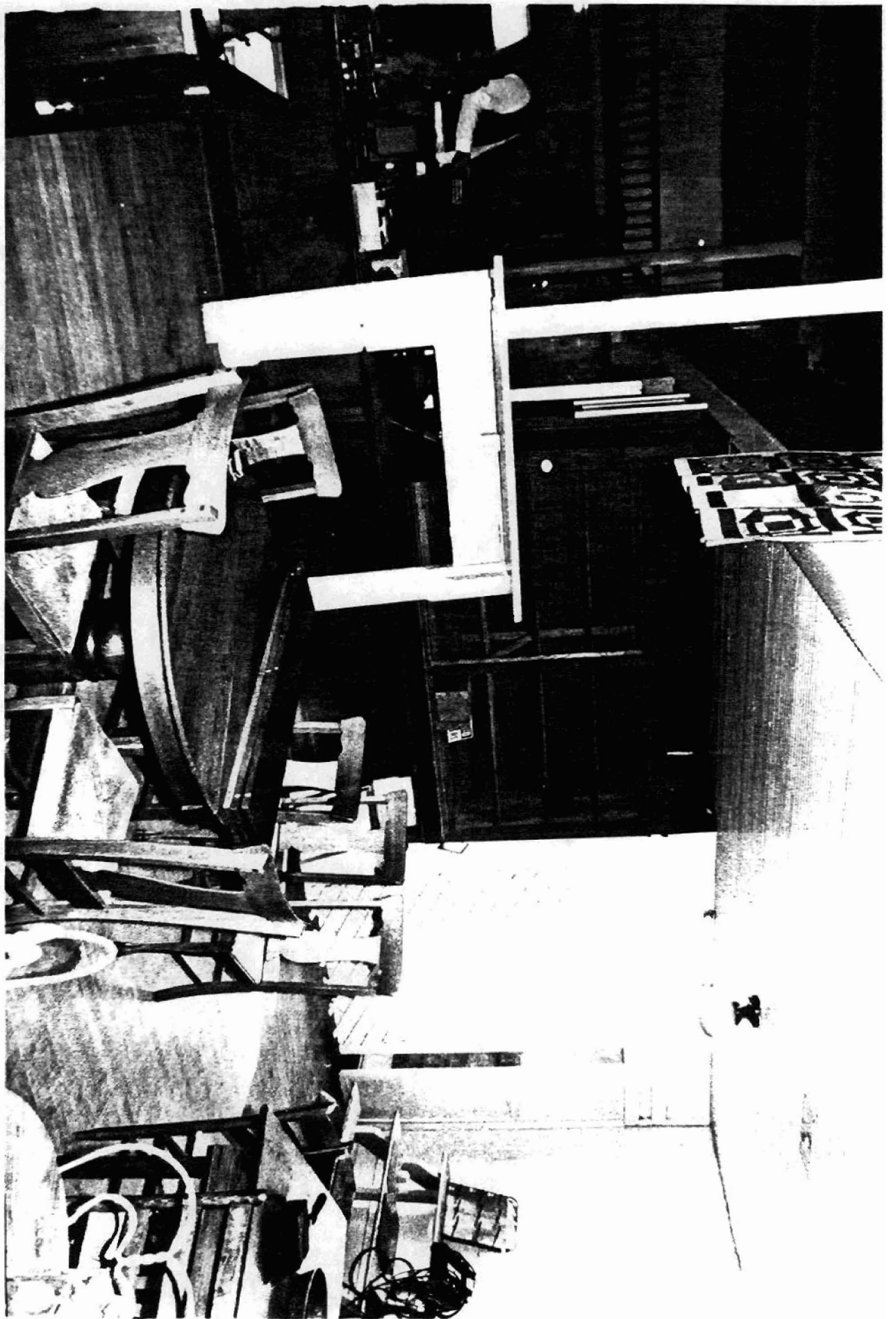












Southern Mercantile Building
Prairie Grove, Arkansas
Washington County
15/381280/3981820
Prairie Grove Quadrangle
1:24000

