

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Smith, Tom, House

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: State Highway 74

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Elkins

vicinity: X

state: AR county: Washington code: AR 143 zip code: 72727

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A



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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification:

Other

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Other Description: Late Georgian

Materials: foundation Stone roof Asphalt  
walls Brick other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: B,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT  
ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: 1834-1860

Significant Dates: 1834

Significant Person(s): Smith, Tom

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Smith, Tom

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\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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X See continuation sheet.

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 -- Specify Repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: Approximately 33.5

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>413620</u>	<u>3988560</u>	B	<u>15</u>	<u>413610</u>	<u>3988250</u>
C	<u>15</u>	<u>413160</u>	<u>3988260</u>	D	<u>15</u>	<u>413180</u>	<u>3988570</u>

     See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description:      See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point on the northern edge of State Highway 74 formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the western edge of the adjacent dirt road leading to Richland Creek to the north, proceed northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 1,025 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the northern elevations of the non-contributing barns; thence proceed westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 1,400 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the western elevations of the Tom Smith House; thence proceed southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 1,025 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the southern elevations of the Tom Smith House; thence proceed easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 1,400 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:      See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes virtually all of the property upon which Tom Smith

maintained his home and farm during the period of significance, including the locations of the associated outbuildings and other agricultural structures.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: August 31, 1992

Street & Number: 225 E. Markham, Suite 300 Telephone: (501) 324-9346

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

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### Summary

The Tom Smith House, constructed c. 1834 and located on Highway 74 in the Elkins vicinity, is a single-story, brick masonry residential structure designed in a restrained version of the late Georgian style. Its asymmetrical, double-pen plan is augmented by the two, exterior end chimneys that vented the fireboxes at the end of each pen.

### Elaboration

The Thomas Smith House is a one-story, two room brick residence designed in a restrained interpretation of the late Georgian style. The single-story structure features a gable roof with two exterior end chimneys attached to the east and west gable ends. The walls are constructed of hand-made brick four courses deep. The entire structure rests on a continuous uncut stone foundation at least three feet deep with an approximate 30% outward slant from the top of the foundation. The gable roof is covered with asphalt shingles. Two historic (though not original) lightning rods punctuate the roof line at each gable end.

The southern or front elevation features two entries and two windows. The most distinctive detail of both the southern and northern elevations is an "S"-shaped brick cornice just below the eaves. This molding is a rare example of vernacular cornice with few known examples existing in the United States, and to present knowledge, this is the only known example in Arkansas (the "S"-shaped cornice adds not only decorative distinction to the structure but it serves as an excellent barrier under the eaves between the roof and finishing course of bricks for the walls). The two entry doorways are framed in identical unadorned trim and recessed approximately one foot. The exterior doors on this elevation appear to be original with original unadorned hinges. The doors are hand-planed pegged construction featuring five panels with the three upper horizontal panels graduated in size and the two lower panels equal in size. The two offset window frames reveal early, if not original, notches for one fixed sash on the upper post of the window and one moving sash below. The window trim is without ornamentation. No original windows, nor evidence of the original window form remains. The size of the window opening would have accommodated a twelve over nine, or at least a nine over nine window arrangement that would have been standard for 1830's construction in Arkansas.

The northern elevation also features two entries and two windows. The two entry doorways are trimmed with identical unadorned framing as the southern elevation and the doors are identical hand-planed pegged five panel doors. The two windows reveal the same notches for earlier

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window sashes but no evidence of the early window form remains. These windows are presently outfitted with modern fixed sash replacement windows identical to those on the southern elevation. The eastern window of the north elevation features the original hand-planed three-inch thick wood sill. Other window sills on the north and south elevation were replaced during the most recent restoration due to rotted wood.

The eastern and western elevations are identical in form and feature the gable ends of the structure with the roofline punctuated by the brick chimneys. The chimneys are simple in detail with shoulders at the base of the roof line. They rest on stone foundations. Single recessed openings flank the chimney on the southern side at the roof peak. Unadorned trim frames the opening and a single sided board interior shutter forms the closure. The purpose of these openings is to provide circulation for the attic or loft area above the single story.

The interior two rooms are divided by a wall composed of three courses of brick with a single doorway. The west room is fifteen by eighteen feet with wide beaded trim around the windows. The same trim is featured around the interior door of the west room and the trim is wider and more elaborate in beading detail than the trim of the east room, which would seem to indicate that the west room may have functioned as the parlor originally. During recent restoration, evidence was uncovered of a stairwell ascending to the attic or loft space above the first floor. Only the "shadow" of the stairs remained so it is unknown as to the form of the stairs. The stairs led to an unfinished attic area that did not appear to have ever been floored or finished in any way. The original hand-hewn roofing joists are exposed and are in stable condition.

The east room is eighteen by eighteen feet in size and features smaller and less detailed trim around the windows and interior door. The trim around all four exterior doors (two for each room) is identical and executed with simple beading. The firebox of the east room has been filled in and, at present, features a flue for a stovepipe that serves a cast iron stove. The flooring for the two rooms was random-width hand-planed planks one-inch thick resting on puncheons. Examples of these original materials were salvaged by the current owner.

The original plaster of the interior walls has been replaced with wall board applied during the most recent restoration. The interior walls of both rooms featured chair rails, documented with photographs by the current owner, and six-inch baseboards with a single row of beading at the top (the owner salvaged an example of the original baseboard).

An example of other original detailing can be seen in a recent photograph recording the interior of the Smith house prior to restoration and repair of the ceilings of the house. Both rooms had

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unfinished wood ceilings that had been decorated in a swirl pattern. The medium used for the decoration is believed to have been smoke, according to the current owner who repaired the ceiling and painted it. He states that the decoration acted like other smoke finishes he had removed from other types of objects - not as a decorative finish. Regardless of the medium, the decoration indicates an effort on the part of perhaps the original builders to embellish the interior of their home. It was common in the first half of the nineteenth century for homes and furnishings to be decorated with simple stencils, faux finishes, sponge, comb or smoke decorations.

The nomination boundary includes the Tom Smith House itself (#1), as well as the wellhouse (#2) and the fruit cellar (#3), both constructed c. 1850 and therefore also contributing, as well as the later (c. 1900) residence (#4) and two later barns (#5 and #6), all constructed after the period of significance and therefore non-contributing. All of these structures and the associated surrounding property (approximately 33.5 acres) are being nominated due to the fact that this property includes both the principal standing structure and the known former location of the outbuildings and cemetery directly associated with Thomas Smith's tenure on this land. Therefore, all of this property retains the potential to reveal further information about his occupancy thereof through future archeological testing and investigation.



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**Summary**

Criteria B and C, local significance

The Tom Smith House is eligible under Criteria B and C locally, both through its direct associations with Thomas Smith and the earliest documented historic settlement in the fertile Richland Creek area, and by virtue of its status as the last extant building of the late Georgian style in this vicinity.

**Elaboration**

Among the first settlers of Washington County, Arkansas Territory, was Thomas Smith. He arrived from Rutherford County, Tennessee, at a time when the white population of the county was beginning to increase rapidly.

Since the creation of a territorial government in 1819, Arkansas was becoming more settled and was encouraging white immigration. During the first decade of the Arkansas Territory, Indian tribes, one by one, were forced to relinquish the land claims given them by the United States government during the previous decade. They were moved farther and farther west to make room for the westward movement of white settlers. However, a depressed national economy slowed this westward movement during the 1820's.

Northwest Arkansas had served as hunting grounds for Osage Indians for many years prior to the nineteenth century. Treaties negotiated in 1818 and 1825 extinguished the Osage title to the area. As early as 1806 Cherokees began pouring into the area from their forced removal of eastern lands. An 1828 treaty with the Cherokees pushed the eastern boundary of their claim to a line running north from Fort Smith. With this act, the Territory was freed of tribal reservations. From 1830 to 1839 several branches of the "Trail of Tears" brought Cherokees into the Northwest Arkansas area as they passed through heading for resettlement in the new Indian Territory.

The Cherokee Cession of 1828 gave rise to the rapid settlement of whites in Northwest Arkansas. Washington County had been created in 1828 and embraced all of its present territory, all of what is now Benton County, about one-half of present Madison County and about one-fourth of present Carroll County. In 1830 the county had a population of 2,007 whites, 5 free colored and 170 slaves. This shows that much of the settlement area was by wealthy white land owners.

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Richland Township was created during the March, 1829 term of the Washington County Circuit Court with the township taking its name from the creek that runs through it. Its land was mostly open, untimbered prairies that were attractive to immigrating farmers. The area already showed good signs of settlement when Thomas Smith arrived in the early 1830's. Several good roads had been in existence for some years and families had begun to settle. The reminiscences of Col James P. Neal, as recorded in Goodspeed's History of Northwest Arkansas, relate that in 1829, "the buffalo had receded some fifteen to twenty miles to the northwest, . . . there never were many panthers, . . . bear were never numerous in this valley, the smooth open county not suiting them".

Coming with Thomas Smith to their new home was his wife, their two sons, six daughters and the spouses and families of those that were married. Mr. Smith may have made at least one trip to the area to arrange for housing and land before moving his family from Rutherford County, Tennessee along with his father and brothers, all of whom were prosperous according to official records.

Thomas's first wife was Rebecca Wilson. Her parents were John and Sarah (Boone) Wilson and her maternal grandfather, John Boone, was a first cousin of frontiersman Daniel Boone. In addition to Rebecca Smith, other members of the Boone family were among the early settlers of Washington County.

Thomas and Rebecca Smith had at least eight children, all born in either North Carolina or Tennessee. Several were married prior to their arrival in Arkansas and several married in Washington County. In some cases they seem to have married spouses from families that immigrated to Richland Township with them and were their neighbors.

By the time the original survey of Richland Township was made in early 1832 (filed November 12th, 1933), Thomas Smith was established on the southwest side of Richland Creek at the junction of Sections 20, 21, 28 and 29. The original survey map shows "Smith's Improvements" as several cleared plots of land, a house, two outbuildings and a horse mill. His establishment is located at the conflux of three roads. This map also shows a tan yard, a water mill and numerous residences with cleared lands around them. The earliest Smith house, if the map is accurate, would have been about where the Tuttle Cemetery is now located. The present State Highway 74 passes almost directly over that spot.

Post office records show that in 1832 Thomas Smith served as the first postmaster of Richland Creek Post Office. He served until 1836 when he was replaced by his son, Wilson R. Smith.

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Mr. Smith also donated land for a church and school.

After the death of his first wife about 1841, Thomas Smith married Annaliza (Riddle) Tuttle, the much younger widow of a neighbor, Nathan Tuttle. Ann's family had also been from Rowan County, North Carolina on the Yadkin River as was Thomas Smith's family. Thomas may have known Ann in North Carolina. Ann had two daughters by her marriage to Tuttle. No known children were born to Ann and Thomas Smith.

Thomas Smith, pioneer, prominent land owner and community leader outlived two wives (Ann Smith died in 1864) and all but one of his children. During his lifetime he had owned over 1,000 acres of land in Richland Township and owned over 25 slaves. Because of the Civil War he saw his wealth and possessions severely reduced. His last transaction (recorded in the County Deed Book) a few months before his death reflects the poignant circumstances in which he found himself when he arranged for step sons-in-law and a step grandson to provide for his care in exchange for the remainder of his property. He kept only his bed. He died August 3, 1870, at the age of 86 years. He is buried in the Tuttle Cemetery at the site of his first 1830 home.

"Smith's Improvements" on the 1832 map shows a large field in the general area where Thomas Smith's brick house stands today, so it appears that Smith was making plans for his "permanent" residence at the time the original survey was made. Also, the section of land on which the horse mill was located is shown as the original patent of Samuel Vaughan in 1834. Evidently, when Samuel Vaughan moved from Cane Hill, he bought that land from Thomas Smith, although records never show Thomas Smith owning the land. Land titles could not be legally established until after the original land survey had been conducted and filed.

The sale of the horse mill site along with Thomas Smith's first house helps to establish the construction date for the second Thomas Smith House located about one-half mile from the site of his first house. The placement of the "new" brick house is approximately at the eastern edge of the cleared area on the original survey map. For the house to have been completed in 1834, the brick-making process would have to have started much in advance in order to have had enough bricks dried and ready for construction. Even with the twenty-five slaves Smith had, the brick-making task would have consumed a good amount of time.

The two room house was constructed with two end gable chimneys. It is perhaps at one of these interior fireplaces that Thomas Smith's feet were held to the flames by bushwhackers during the Civil War in an effort to make him reveal the supposed hiding place of his money. This incident left him crippled in his later years of life.

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The Smith House features an interesting S-shaped brick cornice under the eaves (known as a *cyma recta*). The use of this decorative and functional molding may have been an influence brought by Smith from North Carolina or Tennessee, though most of the known examples occurred in Virginia. Very few examples of such detailing exist in the United States and, to present knowledge, no other examples exist in Arkansas. The S-shaped brick cornice not only adds decorative distinction to the structure but it serves as an excellent barrier under the eaves between the roof and the finishing course of bricks for the walls.

The refined design and craftsmanship of the brick house plus the existence of nicely proportioned and well executed interior woodwork, along with the existence of a chest of drawers made by slaves for Thomas Smith's step-daughter before her marriage, seem to indicate that Smith had at least some slaves that were skilled craftsmen.

Although no visual evidence of other territorial period outbuildings exists on the property at this time, a farmstead that was the center of over 1,000 acres of land, over 25 slaves and numerous family members had to have had many additional dependencies in order to maintain the daily needs of both humans and animals. The original survey map shows an early road passing close to Smith's brick house location. The farm site would reveal additional information from an early cemetery located a few hundred yards from the brick house (behind an existing barn). The cemetery was plowed over a number of years ago but, according to cemetery records, was to have contained over 100 graves, some of them being Indian graves. It is believed that Rebecca Wilson Smith, Thomas's first wife, was buried in this cemetery. All are reasons why the site holds significant potential to reveal further information about the wealthy land owner population of the territorial and early statehood period of Arkansas; however, further site evaluation and research would be required to document this area of significance adequately.

The Smith property and house has passed through various owners over the years. The current owners are Jerome and Carol Johnson who have restored Thomas Smith's brick house which sits behind their early twentieth century home. Mr. Johnson is himself a distinguished land owner whose ancestors also settled just across Richland Creek from Thomas Smith in the early 1830's. The earliest Johnson family homesite, which Jerome Johnson owns today, is shown on the 1832 original survey map but now is in Madison County.

It should be noted that during restoration of the Thomas Smith House much work was needed to stabilize weakened and sagging brick walls, particularly the west gable end. Mr. Johnson, in searching out early hand-made brick for the restoration, was able to acquire brick from the Maguire Store less than two miles from the brick house. The three story brick store had been

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built in the 1860's, was struck by lightning in years past and was standing only as a crumbling shell. As it was being demolished, Mr. Johnson was able to salvage enough hand-made brick to complete the stabilization of the brick walls of the Smith house. Further investigation revealed that the bricks came from the same local clay pit that was used by Thomas Smith's slaves when the Smith house was constructed. Today, only the replaced mortar gives any clue to the restoration work done as the 1860's bricks match the 1830's bricks perfectly. Family connections prevail in this incidence as well, since H.M. Maguire, whose slaves built the store, married the widow of Thomas Smith's youngest son, Andrew Jackson Smith.

Mr. Johnson has salvaged examples of all replaced materials when restoring the house. Puncheons were found under one-inch random width, hand-planed floor boards. Hand-planed and beaded six-inch baseboards had been used throughout the house. All other molding and trim, original doors and hardware and one existing mantel were left intact.

The Thomas Smith House is eligible under Criteria B and C with local significance. It is eligible under Criterion A through its associations with Thomas Smith and his crucial role in the early settlement and community history of the Richland Creek area. It is eligible under Criterion C by virtue of its status as one of the state's finest examples of a brick structure of the territorial period. It served as the family seat for three generations of community leaders before being sold out of the family. The original over-all interior appearance of the Smith residence must have been one of simple elegance befitting the simple elegance of the exterior brick facade. The combination of plastered walls, stately window and door trim, chair rails and perhaps a decorated ceiling gives the impression of a refined lifestyle for a rural setting. The time and effort it took to build a brick residence while settling a virgin prairie and making a living to support a large household reflects the dedication Thomas Smith gave to establishing a fine homesite.

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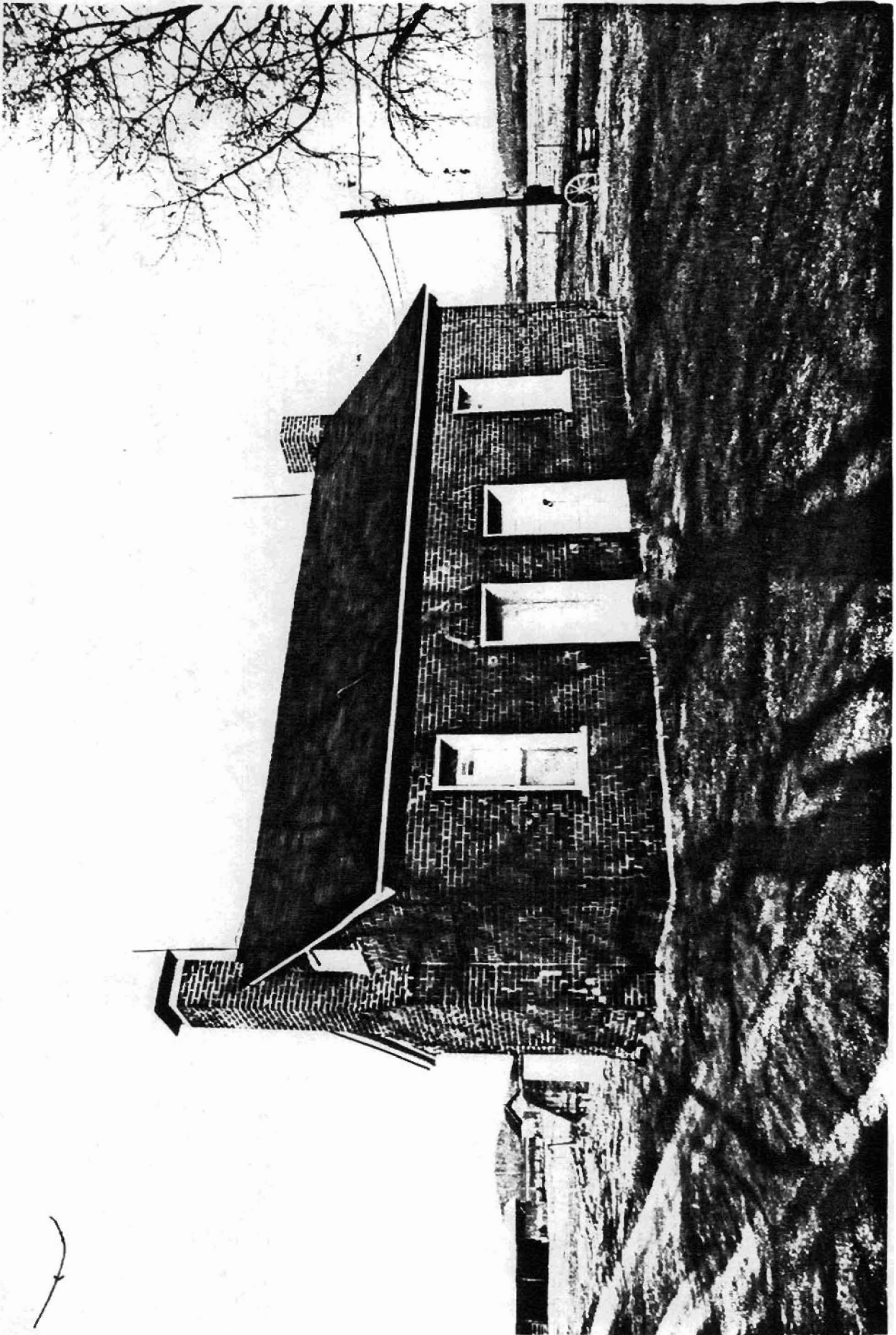
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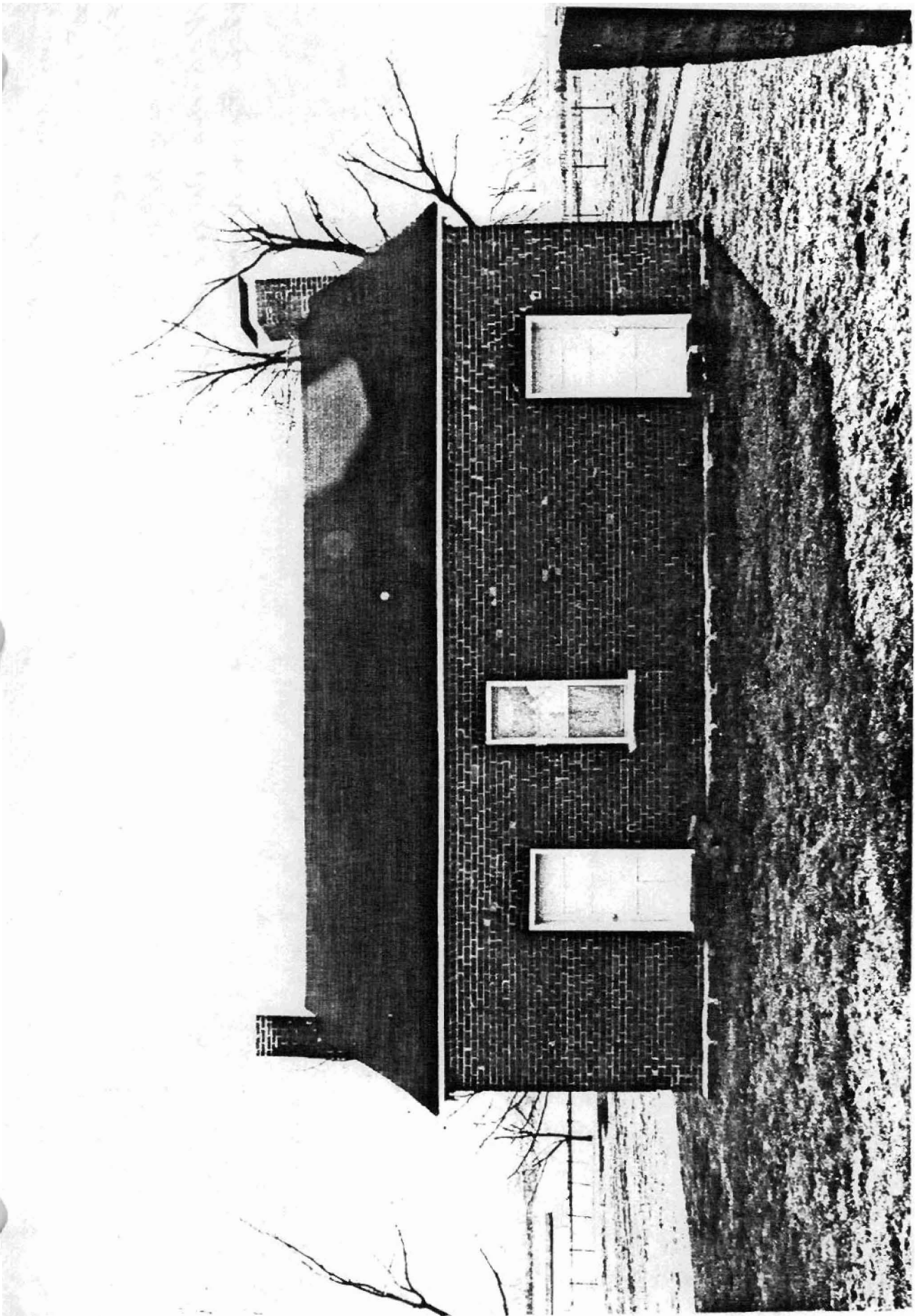
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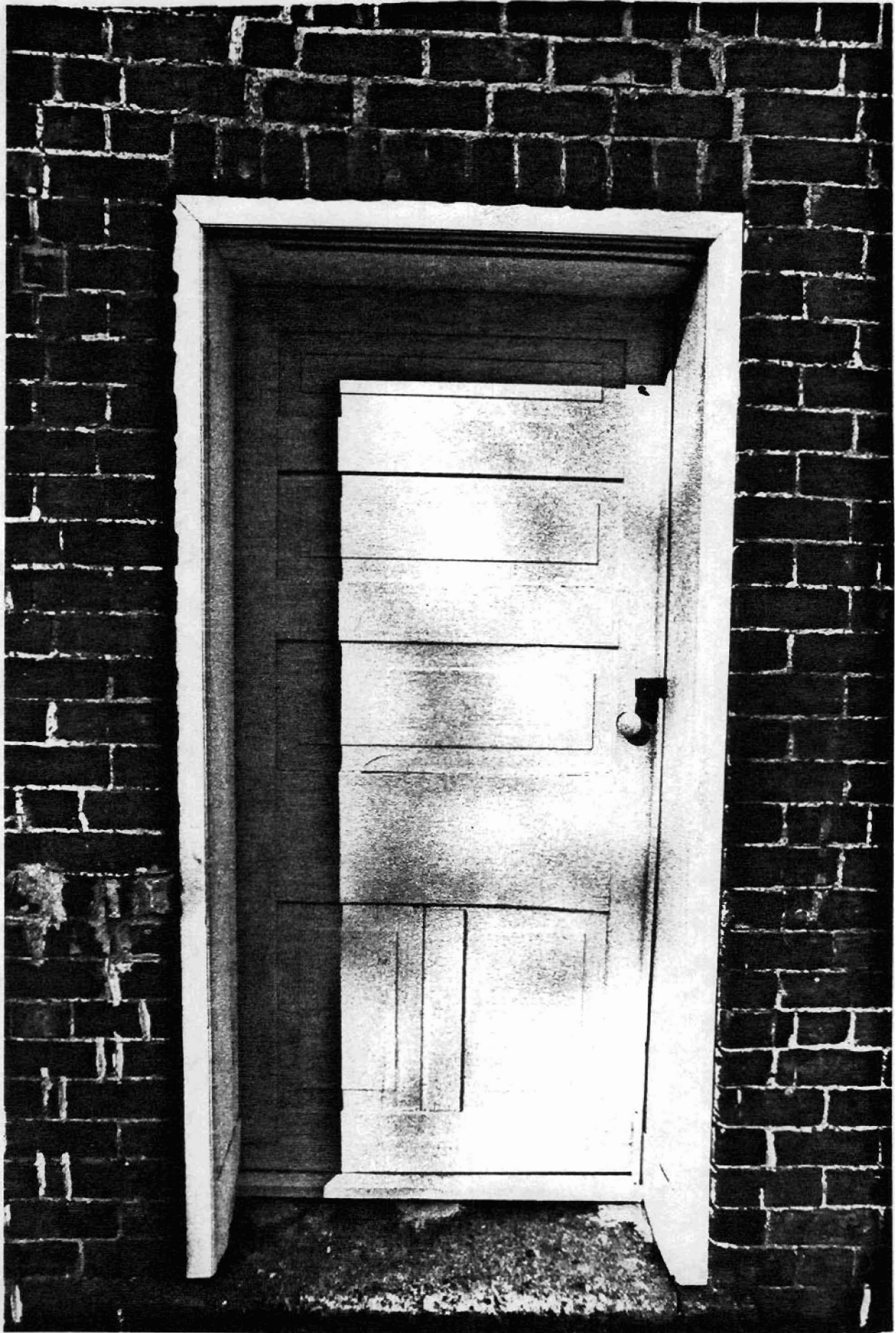


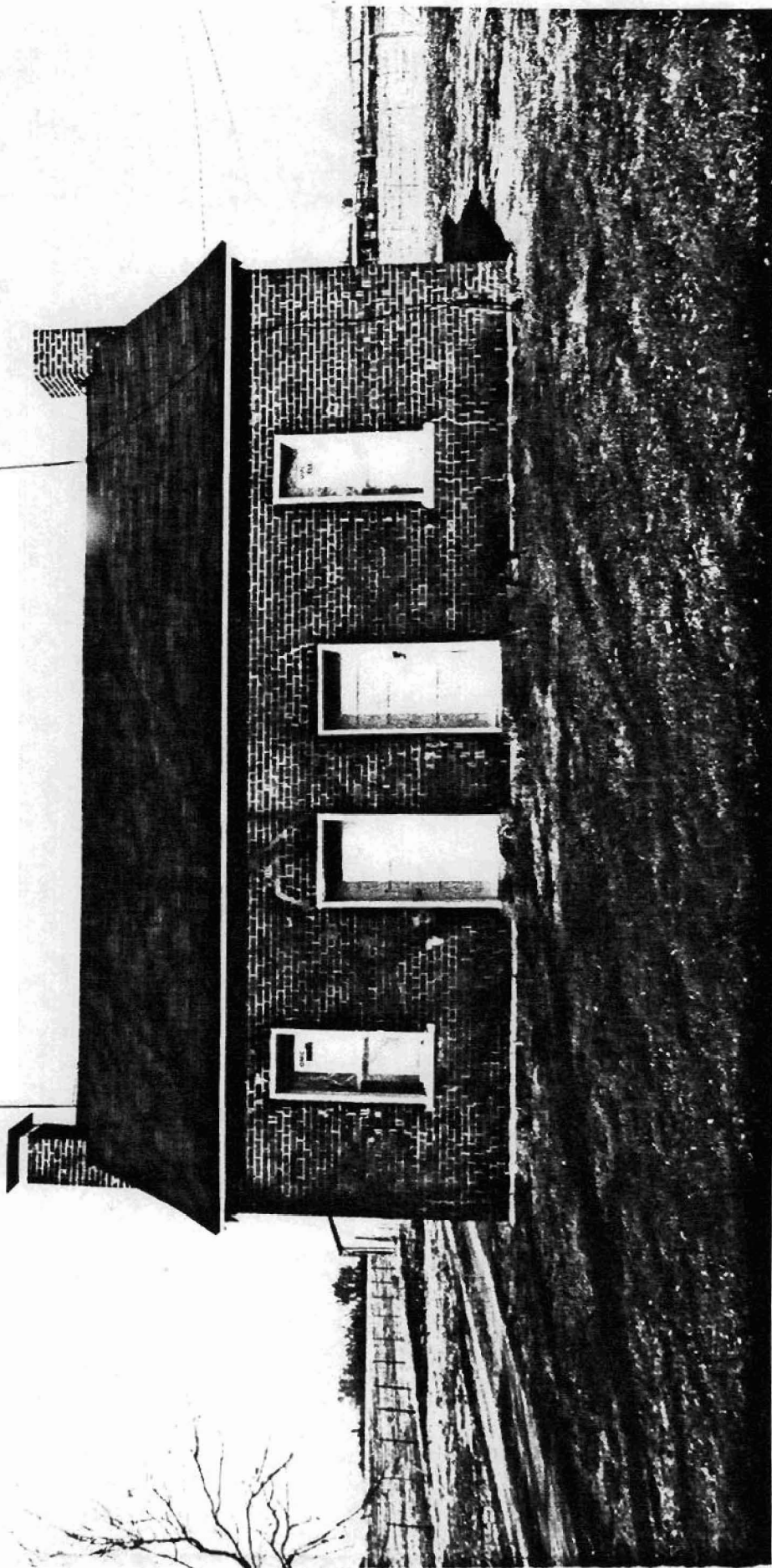






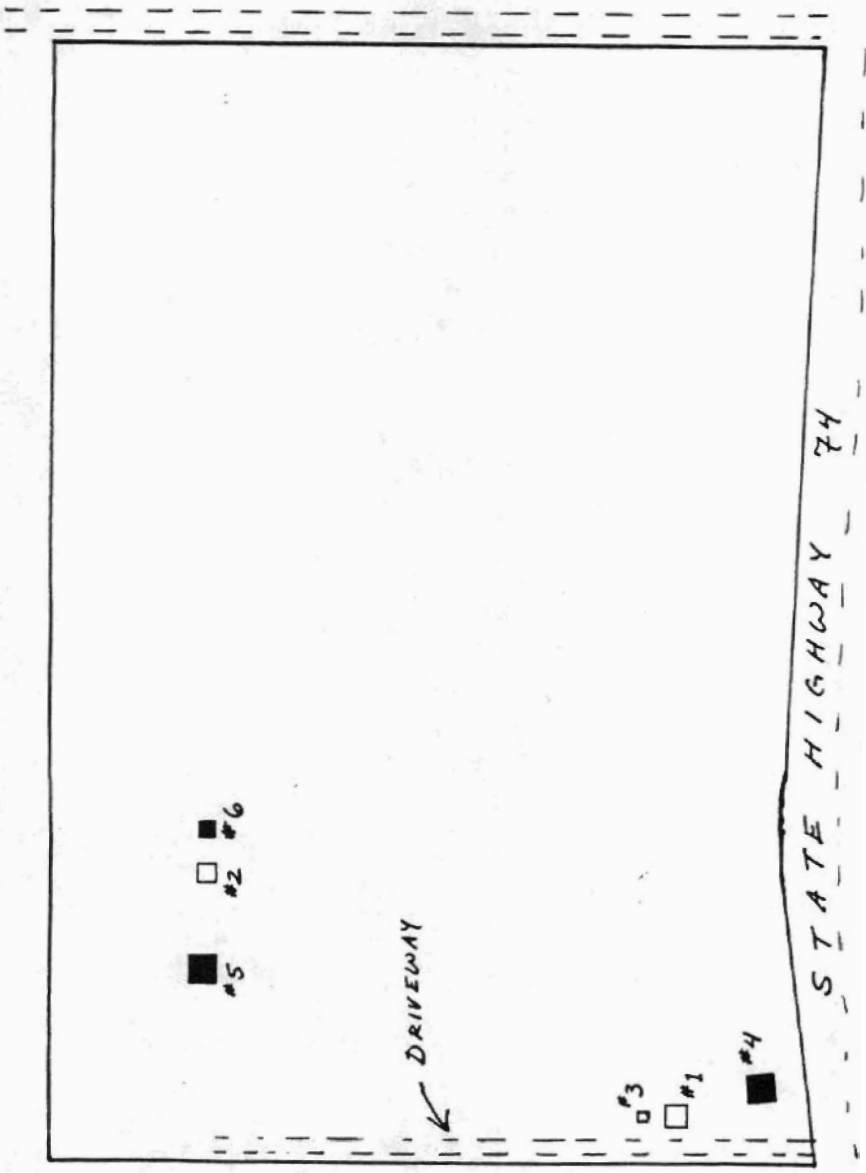








DIRT ROAD  
TO RICHLAND  
CREEK



**Tom Smith House**  
Elkins vic., Washington County, Arkansas

Approximate Scale: 1" = 250'

Boundary: \_\_\_\_\_

Contributing:

Non-contributing:

Tom Smith House  
 ELKINS vic,  
 WASHINGTON  
 COUNTY,  
 ARKANSAS

A) 15/413620/3988560 230"  
 B) 15/413610/3988560  
 C) 15/413160/3988260  
 D) 15/413180/3988570

