

Washington Co.  
Johnson  
Johnson (Switch Grocery)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

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**1. Name of Property**

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Historic Name: Johnson Switch Building

Other Name/Site Number: (WA0838)

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**2. Location**

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Street & Number: 3201 Main Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Johnson

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Washington Code: AR143 Zip Code: 72741

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**3. Classification**

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Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>      </u>	buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</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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County and State

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**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**  
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

*Cathy A. Slaton* \_\_\_\_\_ 1-19-99  
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

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**5. National Park Service Certification**  
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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 Keeper Date

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**6. Function or Use**  
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Historic: GOVERNMENT Sub: post office  
COMMERCE department store  
Current : VACANT/NOT IN USE Sub: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**7. Description**  
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Architectural Classification:

Other: Early 20th Century Commercial Building  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: foundation STONE roof METAL  
walls METAL other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

**Summary**

Located at 3201 Main Street in Johnson, the Johnson Switch Building is a one-story commercial building constructed c. 1904. The building's name derives from its location across from the railroad switch. The building is sheathed with original pressed-metal siding designed to mimic brick and rests upon a continuous field stone foundation. A modern metal roof recently replaced the failing one. The interior of the building is largely original featuring wooden grocery store shelves and bins. A set of post office boxes and a teller's box will be reinstalled. The iron bars on the windows are historic to the building. There are no outbuildings associated with the building.

**Elaboration**

The c. 1904 Johnson Switch Building is the only extant historic commercial building located on the Johnson community's Main Street. A historic photograph of the building shows it was once surrounded by four other commercial buildings including two buildings of similar construction. The vernacular one-story building rests on a continuous stone foundation and is covered by a gabled roof behind a stepped parapet. Fenestration of the

building is composed of two pairs of double-hung wood-sash windows located on the front elevation, and single pane awning style windows located on the northwestern and southeastern elevations. The building is framed by diagonal boards and clad in panels of pressed-metal siding designed to mimic brick. Corrugated metal covers original pressed-metal siding on the rear and part of the northwestern elevation. However, plans are underway to remove the corrugated metal and restore the exterior.

The front, or northeastern elevation is composed of a single-leaf, four panel door with a single light, flanked by a pair of double-hung windows and shielded from the weather by a shed roof porch. The porch is supported by two metal poles and its cast concrete floor is accessed by concrete stairways to either side of the elevation. A metal handrail is located by the east side stairs. A historic flagpole is located near the east corner of the front elevation. A large wooden box, used to hold butane tanks, is located in the center of the elevation.

The northwestern and southeastern elevations are fenestrated by single light awning style windows. The northwestern elevation contains six windows and the southwestern elevation contains five windows.

The interior of the building has been altered slightly over the years. A partition was built to separate the post office from the grocery store. The grocery store cabinets and bins remain in the rear of the building, but were removed from the front when the post office modernized its facilities. Near the rear of the store is a stairway leading down to the basement.

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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: local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period(s) of Significance: c. 1904

Significant Dates: c. 1904

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Significant Person(s): N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation: N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder: UNKNOWN  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

### Summary

The Johnson Switch Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criterion C, as an unusual example of a vernacular single story commercial building. The building is also being nominated under Criterion A for its association with the early history of the town of Johnson. The Johnson Switch Building is the only extant historic commercial building remaining in Johnson. The building has served as a grocery store, gas station and is best known for its use as a post office. Despite its various owners and uses, the building is known as the "Johnson Switch" because of the railroad switch located across Main Street (Hwy. 28).

### Historical Background

The original Johnson Post Office was established on March 19, 1887, and was first located in the Johnson Mill (National Register listed 12/12/76) then in the home of Captain Mayes. *Goodspeed* lists Joseph Ellis and Charles W. Spencer as Post Masters in Johnson in 1887 and 1888, respectively. In 1900, Captain G. P. Hanks, a local grocery store owner, was appointed by Theodore Roosevelt as Post Master of Johnson. In 1904 when the Ozark Lime company store burned down, Hanks took the opportunity to build on the lot and relocated his general store and the Johnson Post Office. A historic photograph show the building when it housed an Esso station, but the gasoline pumps have since been removed.

The store building frequently changed owners. In 1906 Hugh Lichlyter began to work for John McClendon, who owned the Johnson Switch Building. By 1910 Hugh, along with Bill and Jack Bennett, had bought the store. By 1916 Hugh owned the store by himself and in that year became Johnson's postmaster. He served as such for thirty years, retiring in 1946. Mrs. Hoyt Combs became the postmaster when Hugh retired and after his death she and her husband purchased the store.

Before post office boxes were installed in the store, a mail route ran

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throughout Johnson. Arthur Smith was the carrier. He used a bicycle, buggy, and finally a motorcycle in traveling his route. Roads were rough and in some places streams had to be forded. Local history relates that in crossing one stream after a rainstorm Mr. Smith lost his mail and nearly drowned.

The Johnson Post Office officially closed in 1975. Incidentally, this is the same year the general store closed. Local newspaper writer Kay B. Hall describes the nostalgic scene common at the post office/general store: "... most anything from feed to gas could be purchased and a game of checkers was nearly always in progress." Despite the "official" closing, Johnson kept the post office open in the Johnson Switch Building as a branch of the Fayetteville Post Office and continued to accept and postmark mail "Johnson, AR."

In 1992, funds were allocated by the city council to build a new post office on land owned by the city. Reasons for relocating the post office were that the community had outgrown the Johnson Switch Building, the original building was one of the state's oldest post offices, and a leaking roof was also sited as a major problem.

The new location of the Johnson Post Office is a few blocks away at 2805 Main Street, across from Johnson's City Hall. The new building was designed by local architect Jim Lambeth, constructed by contractor James Hathorn and local stonemason Roy Barrett. While the residents are proud of their new post office with its modern facilities, several residents hope to save the historic Johnson Switch Building, and use it as a community museum. To this end, the metal roof has been replaced in order to stabilize the building.

### **Elaboration**

The Johnson Switch Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with local significance under Criterion C as an unusual example of a vernacular single story commercial building. Its pressed tin exterior sheathing--molded to resemble brick--was not an uncommon treatment for such small commercial buildings at the turn-of-the-century, when the growth of the state's railroad system made such prefabricated building products cheap and available. However, its survival to this day is indeed remarkable, and so elevates this otherwise modest structure to a heightened level of historic significance. The building is also being nominated under Criterion A for its association with the early commercial history of the town of Johnson. Historic photographs of the town show that this building is representative of other Johnson one-story commercial buildings. The Johnson Switch Building is the only extant historic commercial building remaining in Johnson. The building has served as a gas station, a grocery store and is best known for its use as a post office. The building is now

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owned by Rick Allen of Siloam Springs and is leased by B. W. Dykes who plans to use it as a museum.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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*The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas.*  
Chicago, Nashville and St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890.

*The Morning News.* Washington County. 1992.

Rothrock, Thomas. *The Story of Johnson.*

Information Provided by B.W. Dykes. 1998.

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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Acreeage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing      Zone Easting Northing

A 15 395030 3999210      B \_\_\_\_\_

C \_\_\_\_\_                                      D \_\_\_\_\_

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Verbal Boundary Description:

A part of the SW 1/4th of the NE 1/4th of Section 22, Township 17, Range 30 West.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary contains all of the property historically associated with the Johnson Switch Building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**  
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Name/Title: Amy Bennett, Survey Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 1/15/99

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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









1964

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

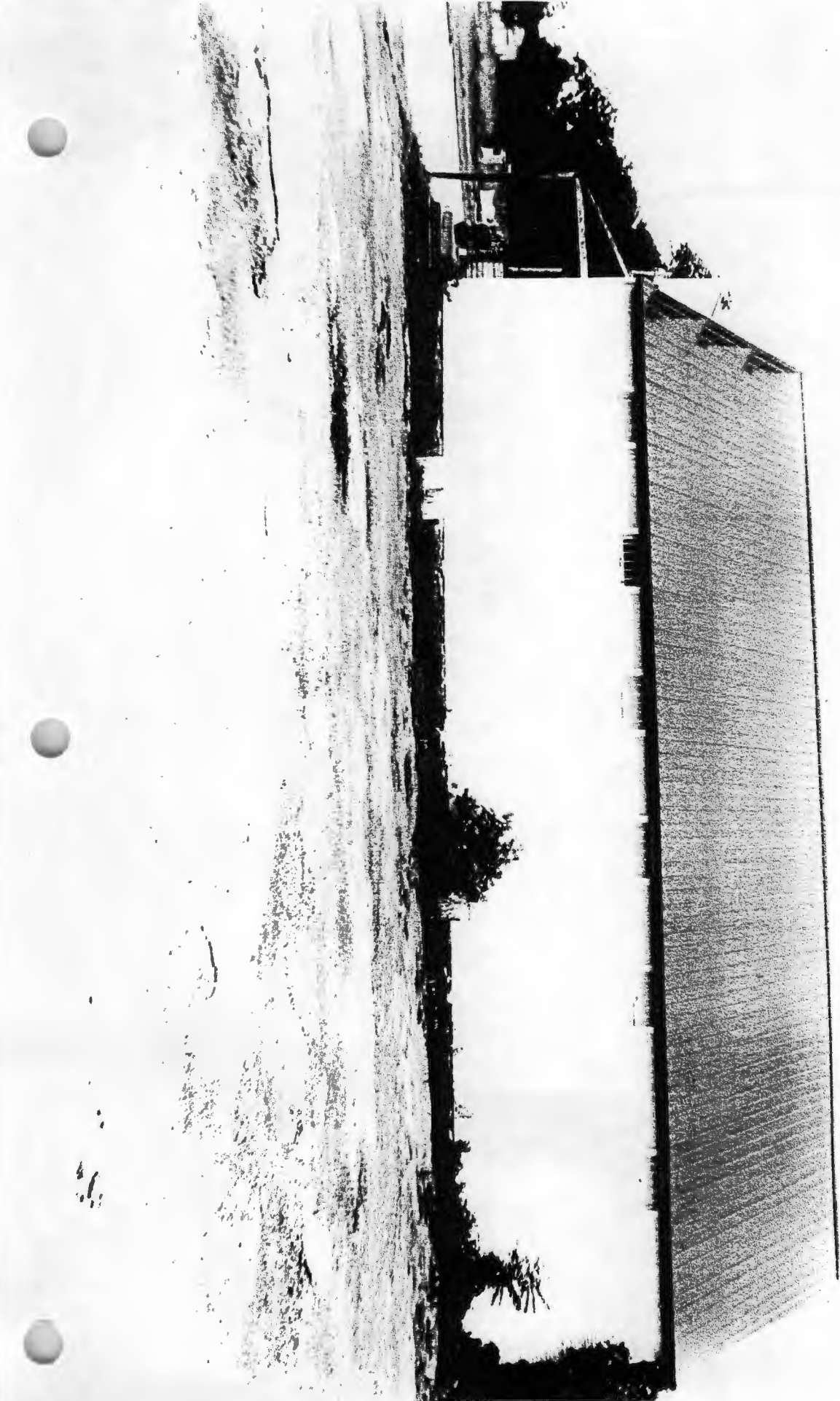
4. The fourth part of the report deals with the cultural situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

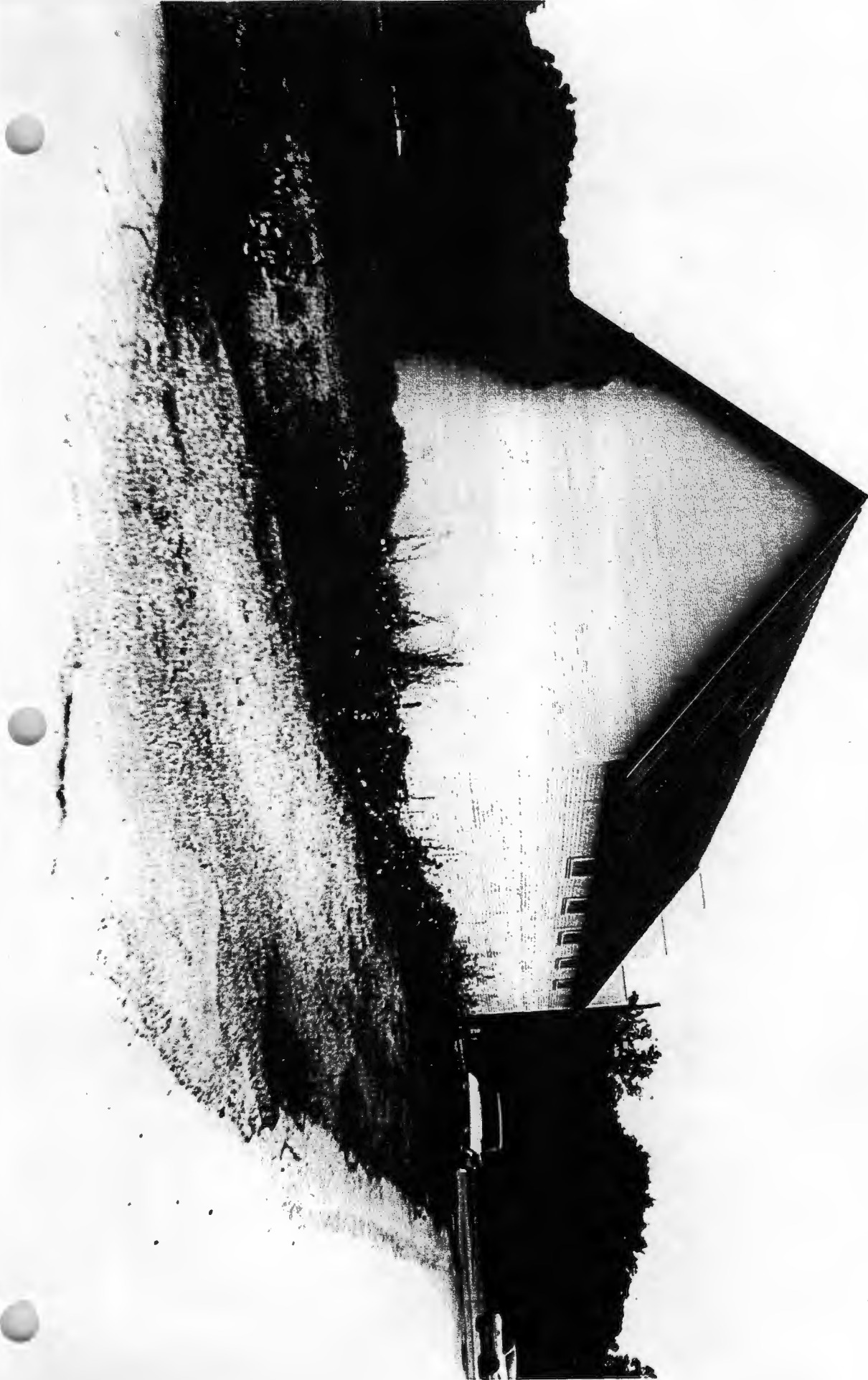
5. The fifth part of the report deals with the political situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

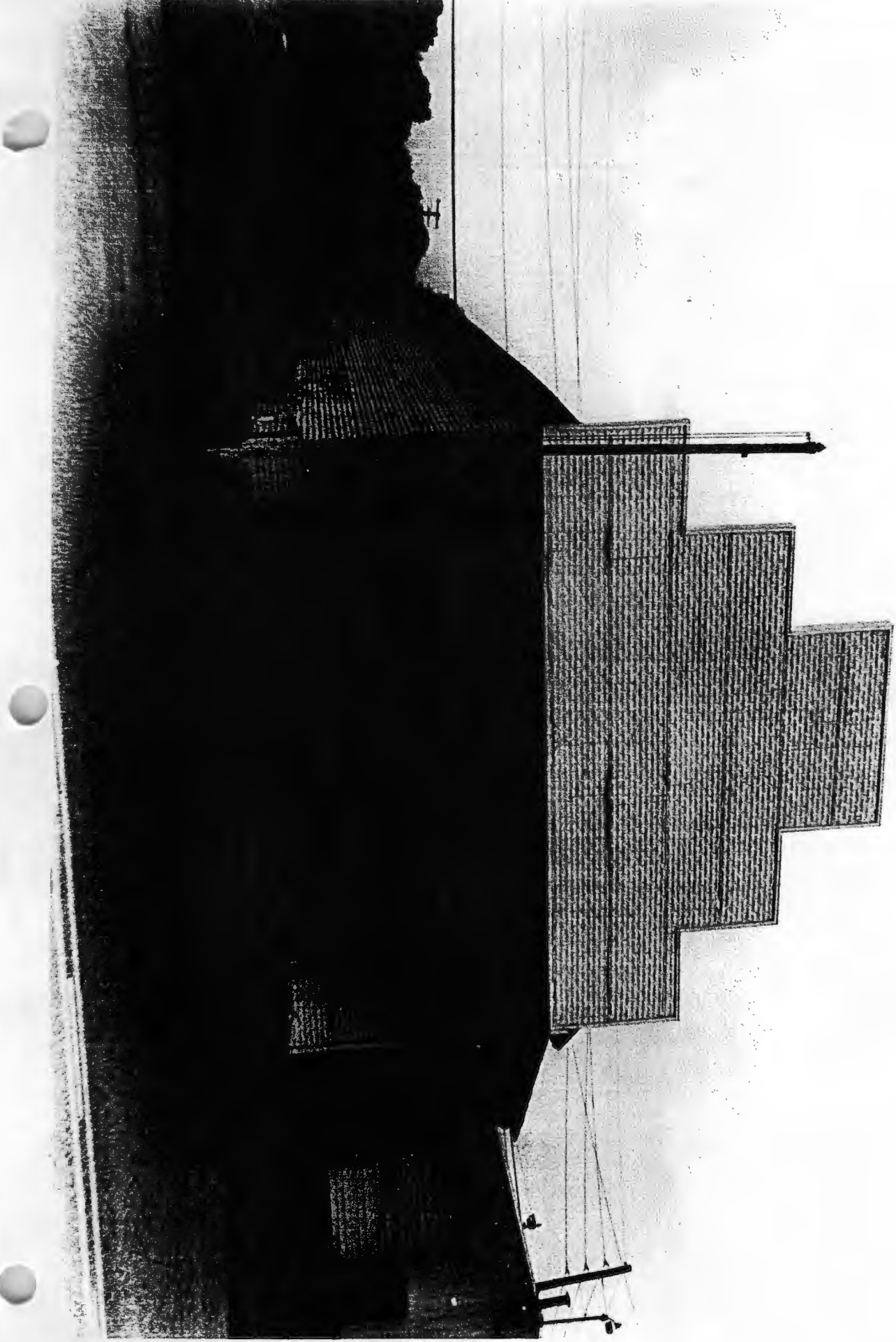
6. The sixth part of the report deals with the geographical situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

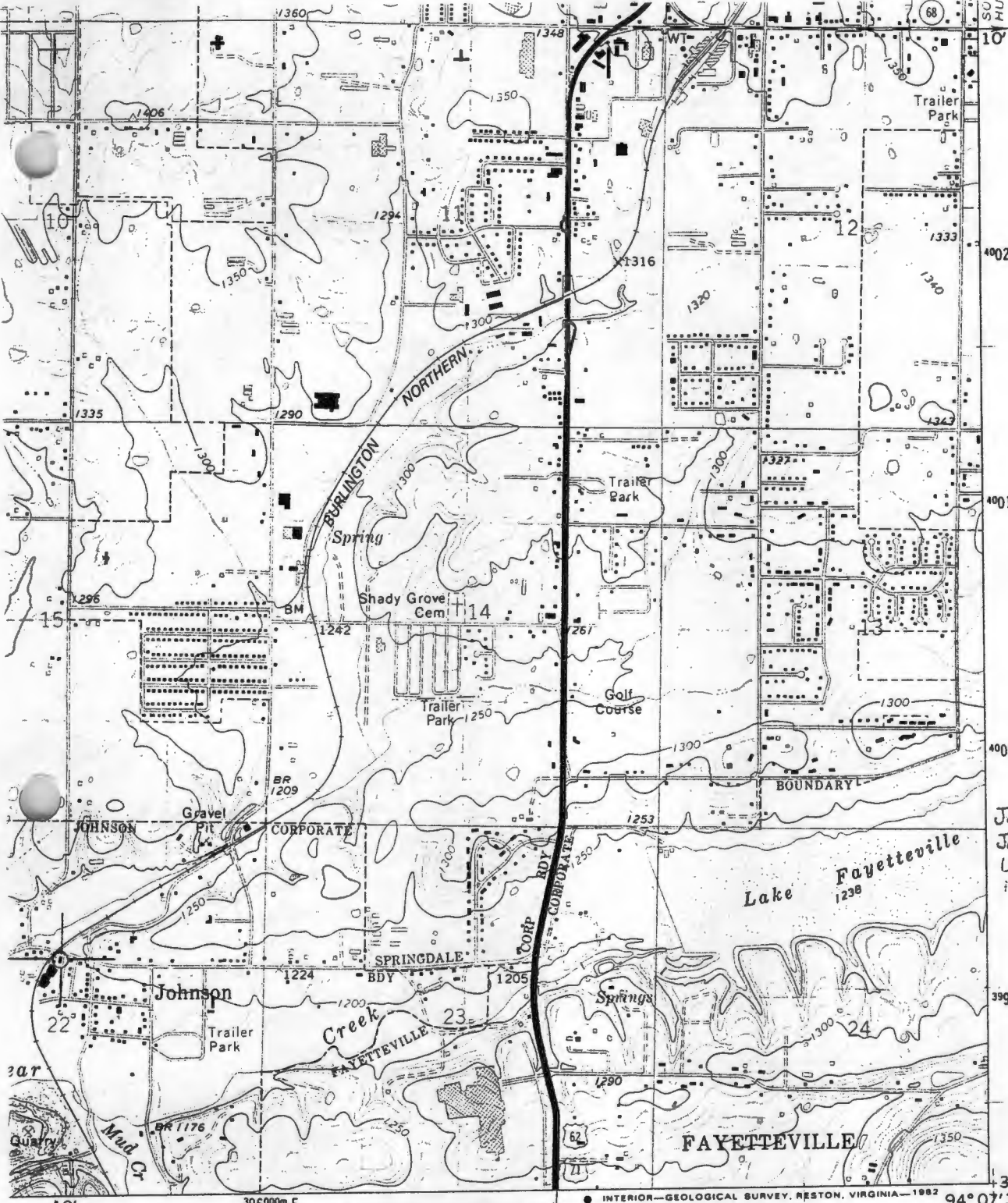
7. The seventh part of the report deals with the historical situation of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the future of the country and the position of the various regions. It is followed by a detailed description of the various regions and their characteristics.









Johnson Switch  
 Johnson, Washington Co., AR  
 UTM Reference:  
 15/395030/3999210

10' 395000m.E FAYETTEVILLE (CH.) 4.4 MI. FORT SMITH (VIA U.S. 71) 65 MI. 36° 07' 30" 94° 07' 30" 3999000m.N

● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1982

MILE

**ROAD CLASSIFICATION**

- Primary highway, all weather, hard surface
- Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface
- Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface
- Unimproved road, fair or dry weather

- U. S. Route
- State Route



(ELKINS)  
 7156 II SE

**SPRINGDALE, ARK.**  
 N3607.5—W9407.5/7.5

1970  
 PHOTOREVISED 1982  
 DMA 7156 II NW—SERIES V884