

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR Listed: 7-18-03

**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 Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Roughly bound by 3rd Ave., Kingshighway, 3 1/2 St., and W. Highland St. not for publication

city or town Paragould vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Greene code 055 zip code 72450

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

Cecile Matthews
Signature of certifying official/Title

6/4/03
Date

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

Name of Property

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 and 4 rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

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

2

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE
GOVERNMENT: courthouse
SOCIAL
RELIGION

COMMERCE/TRADE
GOVERNMENT: courthouse
SOCIAL
RELIGION

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY 20TH CENTURY COMMERCIAL
EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: classical revival
MODERN MOVEMENT

Foundation BRICK, CONCRETE, STONE
walls BRICK, STONE, STUCCO
roof OTHER: tar built-up
other

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.)

- Criteria A, B, C, and D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1882-1953

Significant Dates

1883, 1888, 1947

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Boone & McGinnis; Hanker & Cairns; Mann & Gatlin

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, National Register, National Historic Landmark, Historic American Buildings Survey, Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State Agency, Federal Agency, Local Government, University, Other.

Name of repository:

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property Appx 40 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>726060</u>	<u>3993100</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>15</u>	<u>726680</u>	<u>3993160</u>

3	<u>15</u>	<u>726680</u>	<u>3992500</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<u>15</u>	<u>726060</u>	<u>3992480</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 Patrick Zollner & Lynne Braddock Zollner, Contractors to the City of Paragould, Arkansas
 organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 1 February 2003
 street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Stret telephone 501-324-9880
 city or town Little Rock state Arkansas 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 Multiple property owners
 street & number _____ telephone _____
 city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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

The Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District is located in the heart of Paragould and encompasses the historic intersection of two competing railroad lines which led to the town's founding. There are 90 buildings within the district of which 56 (62%) are contributing to the district's significance. Although construction was fairly continuous throughout the period of significance (1882-1952), there are three broadly defined phases of development with corresponding architectural differentiation. The earliest extant buildings, with the exception of the 1888 Greene County Courthouse (NR 8/11/76), date to around 1900 and reflect both Paragould's booming timber economy and the Early Twentieth Century Commercial style then popular. The 1920s witnessed the construction of numerous plain, single-story, brick commercial buildings, but also several high-style Classical Revival-style structures such as the National Bank of Commerce (NR 5/14/93). Finally, the post-World War II period saw several historic buildings altered to reflect the modern age as well as innovative new construction represented by the Rhine Building at Poplar and 2nd Streets.

ELABORATION

Situated on the eastern slope of Crowley's Ridge in Northeast Arkansas, Paragould is the county seat of Greene County. Paragould was created in 1882 with the intersection of two competing railroad lines. The boundaries of the Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District comprise the core of the historic business development of the town.

When incorporated in 1883, Paragould was essentially a timber camp consisting of a few simple wood-frame buildings erected at the corner of Main and Pruett Streets and along the now defunct Front Street (located between the Iron Mountain Railroad tracks and the rear of the businesses now located on Pruett Street). Drainage was nonexistent, and Pruett Street had been described as "a pond covered with swamp lilies." By 1896, the city had seven miles of graded gravel streets, and the first paved streets appeared in 1912.

While improved streets facilitated city expansion, numerous fires hindered the early commercial development of Paragould. A devastating c. 1890 fire (between 1888-1893) resulted in the destruction of the first S. L. Joseph Store along with several other commercial properties west of Front Street. This fire may have been the reason the city council passed an ordinance in the late 1880s requiring commercial buildings be constructed of brick or stone (and prohibited buildings less than ten feet in height in certain downtown areas). An 1896 *Arkansas Gazette* article confirmed the town's progress by noting that all sixty businesses were built of brick, earning Paragould the sobriquet, "a city of bricks." Nevertheless, fires in 1909, 1919, 1922, and 1991, among others, claimed many downtown commercial properties.

As a result of development patterns, fires, and contemporary demolition, the earliest extant buildings are scattered throughout the district. Highlighting this earliest phase of construction--and anchoring the entire district--is the magnificent Greene County Courthouse located at the southwest corner of Third and Court Streets. When constructed in 1888 by W. F. Boone and S. R. McGinnis (also the builders of the Lawrence County Courthouse at Powhatan that same year), the two-story brick courthouse with clock tower exhibited restrained Beaux Arts influences. A local Paragould architect, J.E. Shane, oversaw the remodeling of the courthouse in 1917. Gray stucco was applied over the brick and a two-story wing added to the west elevation. The clock tower was removed in the 1960s. Preservation efforts began in the early 1990s when the courthouse was threatened with demolition. Since a ten-year restoration effort, which included the reconstruction of the clock tower, was completed the structure has been occupied by the Paragould/Greene County Chamber of Commerce. Future work at the site will include improved landscaping, brick memorial sidewalks, a gazebo, and restoration of the iron fence.

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The majority of the surviving early buildings date to around 1900 and reflect the Early Twentieth Century Commercial style then popular. The two Jackson Buildings at 114/116 and 118 W. Emerson Street were constructed in 1900 by Richard Jackson (see Jackson-Herget House, NR 7/24/92) as commercial properties. The single-story, No.118 building was leased to the federal government upon completion and housed the post office until the new facility was completed in 1914. The two-story building at 114/116 W. Emerson is distinguished by its extra story and four, second-story, one-over-one, double-hung windows with transoms. Both brick buildings feature projecting, bracketed cornices, decorative brickwork, and relatively unaltered storefronts.

Based on historic photographs, the red-brick, two-story building at 117 N. Pruett Street, currently the Red Goose Deli, was constructed c.1903. It is notable for the use of rock-faced, concrete block quoins, arched and triangular concrete pediments over the three second-story windows, and a short concrete balustrade across the top of the parapet.

Other significant structures from this period include the two-story Wood Store/A.O.U.W. Building at the southwest corner of N. Pruett and W. Poplar Streets and the 221-225 S. Pruett Street building. The two-story brick Wood Store/A.O.U.W. Building was constructed in 1902 as a dual-purpose facility. The first floor housed a mercantile establishment while the second story served as a meeting hall for the Ancient Order of United Workmen. As originally constructed, the building featured a beveled corner entrance on the first floor with a typical Early Twentieth Century Commercial storefront consisting of short wood bulkhead, large plate glass windows and transoms. Currently, the structure has a modern board-and-batten storefront with two single-leaf entrances facing Pruett Street underneath an asphalt-shingled awning. In addition, five of the second-story, one-over-one, double-hung windows have been boarded over. Interesting architectural features include two decorative chimney pilasters, paneled brickwork in the frieze, continuous stone lintels and sills for the upper floor windows, and three round-arched, clerestory windows with stone keystones on the Poplar Street elevation. A c.1909 photograph reveals an A.O.U.W.-inscribed pediment atop the beveled corner section of the parapet and a large, parapet-mounted bell near the south end chimney on the Pruett Street elevation.

Based on historic photographs, the large two-story brick building at 221-225 S. Pruett was constructed sometime between 1902 and 1909. Located at the northeast corner of S. Pruett and E. Main Street and across the street from the Union Depot, this building has always housed a variety of businesses. The 1917 city directory lists a confectionary, barber shop, and restaurant on Pruett Street and a restaurant and rooming house on E. Main Street. The second story displays classic Early Twentieth Century Commercial style characteristics such as the singled, one-over-one, double-hung windows with flat stone sills and lintels and a projecting, bracketed, metal cornice. Another interesting feature is the beveled corner entrance at the E. Main Street and rear alley junction. Alterations to the building are confined to the modernized, first-story storefront with new plate glass, doors, and bricked-in transom windows.

There are several buildings erected during this earlier period of development that are extant, but with an altered appearance—sometimes dramatically. Arnold's Jewelry Store at the northeast corner of S. Pruett and E. Emerson Streets was originally constructed in 1889 as the Bank of Paragould. Like the 1888 Greene County Courthouse, it warranted mention in *Goodspeed's* history. This ornate building featured a prominent second-story oculus window, Italianate-style, bracketed window crowns, spherical parapet finials, eight chimneys on the Emerson Street elevation, and the required projecting, bracketed cornice. In 1950, the exterior façade was stripped of all decoration, the brick covered with stucco, and short, aluminum-framed windows installed to give the impression of modern Fifties styling. As such, it is considered contributing to the district.

The former Belk Department Store Building at the southeast corner of S. Pruett and E. Court Streets was constructed in 1892 as the S. L. Joseph Department Store. This distinctive two-story building featured an ornate storefront with cast-iron pilasters, multi-paned transoms, paneled bulkheads, and a beveled entrance facing E. Court and S. Pruett Streets. When the upper story was severely damaged by a tornado in 1947, it was remodeled as a single story building with a gray metal-paneled facade and modern plate-glass storefront. This facade was in turn damaged by the 1991 fire that destroyed the three-story Bertig Building across Pruett Street. The metal panels were removed and a smooth coating of stucco applied.

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The 1947 tornado also damaged the exterior façade of the Breckinridge Mercantile Company Building (now Holland's Furniture) at 218 N. Pruett. Constructed in 1907, this two-story brick commercial building featured a recessed, double-leaf entrance at the beveled corner of N. Pruett and the alley alongside the south elevation in addition to two similar recessed entrances on Pruett Street. The second story contained one-over-one, double-hung windows with continuous sills and lintels, and distinctive arched niches in the brick frieze below the denticulated cornice. After the tornado, the front elevation was rebuilt with a flattened façade. The niches were filled in, the parapet rebuilt without a cornice, and the windows filled in with the exception of three half-height windows on Pruett Street. The storefront has been modernized with new windows and doors, and the corner entrance eliminated. The expansive transom windows are now hidden beneath a metal slipcover. Nevertheless, the Breckinridge Mercantile Company Building is considered contributing as an example of 1940s Minimal Traditional styling.

The Paragould Post Office was constructed in 1914 at the northwest corner of W. Court and N. Second streets. This stately Classical Revival-styled structure featured six monumental Ionic columns of Georgia marble. In 1964, the structure was "remodeled" into a completely new and much larger government facility. A portion of the original wall can still be seen from the rear of the building.

The 1920s saw a multitude of plain, single-story brick commercial buildings interspersed with a few high style structures. Of the traditional commercial-style buildings, the building at 209 N. Pruett (currently Alvin Taylor's Flowers and Gifts) is unusual for its recessed second-story porch. Other buildings were updated during this period. The two-story brick façade of the c.1898 Mack Building at the northwest corner of S. Pruett and W. Main streets was remodeled from an Early Twentieth Century Commercial style appearance with singled, one-over-one windows and a simple denticulated brick cornice to a more elaborate glazed-brick façade with paired, one-over-one, double-hung windows.

The Classical Revival Style is well represented by the National Bank of Commerce (NR 5/14/93) at the southwest corner of S. Pruett and W. Emerson Streets, and the First Baptist Church at 120 N. Third Street. Designed by the Memphis architectural firm of **Hanker and Cairns**, the National Bank of Commerce was built of ashlar-finished limestone in 1923. Its monumental façade achieved the desired appearance of stability and grandeur appropriate for a proud banking institution. The imposing First Baptist Church was completed in 1925. A large split-level, two-story portico supported by four Ionic columns is the focal point of this highly ornamental, two-story brick religious structure.

Other significant buildings from this period include the Capitol Theater at the southeast corner of W. Emerson and S. Second streets and the Crowley Building across the street at 113 W. Emerson. The red brick, two-story Capitol Theater was designed by the Memphis architectural firm of Mann and Gatlin and completed in 1925. Brick pilasters with stone capitals and large stone paterae in the frieze suggest the various Renaissance Revival styles then popular. The white glazed-brick façade of the Crowley Building is a departure from the normal red brick favored by early Paragould builders. The second story is fully fenestrated with ribbon windows containing geometric-patterned, multiple-pane transoms. A cartouche on the parapet lends a Beaux Arts flavor to the building.

Limited construction occurred during the Depression and is typified by the simple, buff-brick, 1935 Mack Building on W. Main Street. More imposing structures during this period usually required government assistance, and the striking Municipal Power Plant on N. Second Avenue between the two railroad lines is no exception. Erected in 1938 under the auspices of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, the Classical-inspired, red brick building is fully fenestrated by tall, round-arched windows with the original metal-framed, multiple-paneled sashes.

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New building construction resumed after World War II. In addition to the previously mentioned buildings that were renovated during this period, several new structures were completed, including the Rhine Building, Southwestern Telephone Building, and the Central Fire Station—all built in 1950 and contributing to the district. Modern department stores at 103 N. Pruett and 216 S. Pruett were also constructed in the early 1950s. The buff brick, two-story Rhine Building at 120 N. Second Street was designed by Stuart Mueller to house a modern newspaper facility with architectural design features unique for this purpose. The partially underground first floor was designed for the offset newspaper plant with pressrooms, two darkrooms, process camera alcove and a folding and storage area. In addition to the pressroom, light table and layout areas, there were editorial rooms with typesetting equipment in individual glassed-in alcoves.

Although victimized by fire, tomadic activity, and misguided alterations, the Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District retains its essential historic integrity and provides an interesting visual tour of Paragould's architectural record.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Boundaries of the Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District are based upon information gathered during a comprehensive survey of the downtown area. Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of South 2nd Street and West Kingshighway, proceed north along the eastern curb of South 2nd Street to its intersection with West Emerson Street; then proceed west along the northern curb of West Emerson Street to its intersection with South 3 ½ Street; then proceed north along the eastern curb of South 3 ½ Street to its intersection with West Poplar Street; then proceed east along the southern curb of West Poplar Street to its junction with the alley behind the businesses on the west side of Pruett Street; then proceed north along the middle of the alley to its intersection with the rear (west)party wall of the Kroger Building at 220 North Pruett Street; then proceed north along party wall to the south curb of West Highland Street; then proceed east along said curb to its junction with the west curb of North 2nd Avenue; then proceed south along said curb to its junction with Chestnut Street; then proceed east along the southern curb of Chestnut Street to its terminus near the western edge of the Union Pacific RR; then proceed due south along an imaginary line to a point formed by the southwest corner of East Court Street and South 3rd Avenue; then proceed south along the western edge of South 3rd Avenue to its intersection with East Main Street; then proceed west along the northern curb of East Main Street to its intersection with the Union Pacific Railroad tracks; then proceed southwest along the western edge of the railroad tracks to a point formed by the intersection of the railroad tracks and the northern edge of the East Kingshighway/Hwy 412 Overpass; then proceed west along the north curb of East Kingshighway to the point of beginning.

VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary contains all of the commercial property associated with the development of downtown Paragould that retains its historic integrity.



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SUMMARY

The Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District is being nominated under **Criteria A and C** with **local significance**. Under **Criterion A**, the district is significant for its direct association with the founding, planning and development of Paragould and the ensuing building boom fueled by the timber industry. Under **Criterion C**, the district is locally significant for its depiction of the various architectural styles popular in Arkansas during the period from 1882 through 1952 including the Early Twentieth Century Commercial style, Classical Revival, and Fifties moderne.

ELABORATION

The community of Paragould was founded in 1882 when the Texas and St. Louis Railroad crossed lines with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad in southeastern Greene County. The Texas and St. Louis was chartered in east Texas in 1877 by a former Confederate officer, J. P. Douglas, to facilitate faster transportation and a wider market for the products of his fruit orchards. Douglas made arrangements with the owners of the Iron Mountain Railroad and began construction of a narrow-gauge line called the Tyler Tap Line that would connect with the Iron Mountain at Texarkana. Unfortunately, construction setbacks and financial difficulties soon forced Douglas to cease work on the line and search for new financing.

In St. Louis, Douglas found a partner in Colonel James Paramore, a former Union officer from Ohio. Paramore operated the St. Louis Cotton Compress Company and was interested in securing direct transportation of Texas cotton to his mills in St. Louis. The Texas and St. Louis Railroad Company was formed, and Paramore was, somewhat surprisingly, able to obtain financial backing from several New York bankers. After the creditors were paid and construction resumed, Douglas left the nascent railroad to pursue other interests, and Paramore became president of the fledgling company. Unfortunately, before the Texas and St. Louis could connect with the Iron Mountain line in Texarkana, railroad mogul Jay Gould purchased the Iron Mountain and revoked all Texarkana traffic agreements made by the previous owners.

Without an outlet to a major line, the Tyler Tap Line was now useless, and Gould naturally expected that Paramore would have to sell his interests in the company or face bankruptcy. Paramore, however, rejected Gould's offer and started construction of an independent line, as far away from the Gould lines as possible, through Arkansas and Missouri to Cairo, Illinois. Gould, determined to break Paramore at all costs, ordered his railroad to cross the lines of the Texas and St. Louis whenever possible, thereby dividing the business Paramore expected to receive. In Greene County, the two lines arrived, almost simultaneously, at the site of present day Paragould in 1882. Myrl Rhine Mueller noted in her *A History of Greene County, Arkansas* that "... a silver spike was *not* driven at this juncture."

The fierce competition between Paramore and Gould ensured the success of the future town, for the area now had complete transportation facilities in all directions. In her book, Mueller described the origin of the new town's name:

In searching for a suitable name to submit to the Post Office for the proposed town, a group of citizens, led by Dr. Edrington, came up with the idea of coining a unique and original name honoring the presidents of the two railroads who had played leading roles in a classic railroad drama. By combining syllables from each of the names, Paragould was invented and accepted by the Post Office in July, 1882.

Mueller also notes that Gould "pettishly" refused to use the new name for his station because he resented having his name linked with that of Paramore; moreover, his name had been relegated to the last syllable. The Iron Mountain used the name of Parmly for several years on their station and schedules until the resultant confusion among arriving passengers finally became too much for the company to ignore. The hyphenation of the two syllables was also dropped at some point in the early years of the town.

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While the Texas and St. Louis Railroad and the Iron Mountain were still completing rail lines to the new community in April of 1882, the Southwestern Improvement Company, in conjunction with Mr. and Mrs. Willis S. Pruet and Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Lambert, were in the process of laying out the city of Paragould. The Pruets and Lamberts were the owners of the land on which the town was to be built. According to Mueller, the improvement company may have been a subsidiary of the Iron Mountain Railroad. Because survey and planning were expensive, railroad companies often offered financial and technical assistance to new towns that were proposed along their new railways. Land deeds indicate that the ownership of the land included in the incorporation of Paragould was divided between the Pruets and Lamberts, with the largest portion on the west side of the tracks and to the south belonging to the Pruets and the smaller area to east of the tracks owned by the Lamberts. The original survey for Paragould included the area bounded by Vine Street on the south, Hunt Street to the north, Lambert Street (now Fourth Avenue) on the east, and the western boundary was Cumberland Street (now Third Street). Most of the land incorporated in the original survey was timbered, and many of the proposed streets had to be surveyed through trees before they were cut to create the actual streets. A slough curved to the east of Pruet Street (the modern spelling of the street is "Pruett"), which had been variously described as "a pond covered with swamp lilies," and, less flattering, "a mud hole."

When Paragould was incorporated on March 3, 1883, it was little more than a timber camp. Crude buildings were scattered in the cleared spaces, and there were still many tents that served as both businesses and residences. The area where the two railroads crossed served as the focal point for the new town. It was here at the intersections of Main and Front streets and Main and Pruet streets that permanent structures were first constructed. The city well was located at Main and Pruet. Early businesses included a general store, a bakery, a fish market and butcher shop—both in tents—and several businesses that moved from Gainesville. Planks were laid along the storefronts to serve as sidewalks.

The first post office in the Paragould vicinity was established on January 19, 1880 under the name of Buia. On July 26, 1882, the name was changed to Paragould, and Christopher Ritter was appointed as the first postmaster in August of that year. The location of this first post office was described as being one tenth of a mile from the Parmy station on the east side of the tracks and one-fifth of a mile from the Paragould depot. The post office was moved to various storefront buildings until 1900 when Richard Jackson leased a new office building at 118 West Emerson Street to the Post Office Department. In 1914, a substantial Classical Revival-style post office with six Ionic columns of Georgia marble was erected at the northwest corner of Court and Second Streets. By 1960 John Mueller, postmaster, requested a larger facility citing inadequacy for the increasing volume of post office business. No funds were available at the time for new facilities, but continued efforts on Mueller's part found financial support for remodeling and renovation in 1964. The interior of the old building was kept and new walls were built around it adding additional space. A two-story wing was added to create the appearance of the Federal Building as it exists today.

Paragould grew quickly and in 1884 a campaign was initiated to move the county seat from Gainesville, which had held that honor since 1840. This issue bitterly divided not only the residents of Gainesville but the entire county as well. After months of bitter controversy, a referendum was held in September of 1884, in which the Paragould faction won by a narrow margin, 943 to 707.

The County Clerk, R.H. Gardner rented a small room on West Main and Third Streets for a temporary county office while plans for the construction of a temporary courthouse could be drafted and the structure built. A section of land had been given to the county by Robert Pruet to aid in securing the county seat for Paragould. The temporary structure was constructed on the east side of court square and was a simple log structure of only twenty-four by ninety feet. It was subdivided into a courtroom, petit and grand jury rooms and office space. Plans for a new brick courthouse were initiated in August of 1887. Constructed by S.R. McGinnis and W.F. Boone, the new courthouse was completed in April, 1888 at a cost of \$14,700. The new two-story courthouse exhibited a restrained interpretation of the Beaux Arts style and was crowned by a graceful clocktower. Interestingly, the cost of \$700 for the clock was subscribed by the citizens, while the county provided an extra \$300 for the installation and construction of the tower.

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Paragould's government was not fully organized until the spring of 1885. A group of local businessmen gathered together to act as an unofficial council and appointed a temporary mayor, L.B. Toler, on May 4, 1885. An official city council of eighteen men is listed in the first city records, and David Crockett Norvell was elected to serve as the first mayor. The new city government began to try to organize a rapidly increasing population and new construction that had no regulation for almost three years. The council quickly adopted ordinances to direct the removal of loose planks and sidewalks and specified exactly how sidewalks were to be built. Other early ordinances addressed sanitation, removal of large trees, and the confinement of livestock. In 1886, the city council paid twenty-five dollars to a local publisher, J. W. Taylor, to take a census of the fledgling city. Taylor reported 1,364 people living in the township.

The first purpose-built city hall was a two-story, brick, commercial-style building erected in 1890 at 119 N. Pruett Street (just north of the current Red Goose Deli). A single-story brick fire station was built on the north side of City Hall, and a small city park occupied the remainder of the lot to the southeast corner of Pruett and Poplar streets. A paved parking lot occupies this space today.

In 1890 the population of the county was 12,908 of which 1666 lived in Paragould. Goodspeed's history provides a glimpse of the town at this time:

It contains the Greene County Bank, nine general stores, five family groceries, four drug stores, one hardware, saddlery and farm implement store, six saloons, two bakeries, two millinery stores, four hotels and many boarding houses, two livery stables, two butcher shops, one shoe, four blacksmith and one foundry shop, five stove factories, three saw-mills, one cotton gin, a feed store, photograph galleries, barber shops, laundry and many other industries, four church edifices--Methodist, Baptist, Cumberland Presbyterian and Christian, a public school-house, seven physicians, three dentists, a lodge each of Masons, Odd Fellows, Knights of Honor, Knights of Pythias and a Post of the G.A.R.

Goodspeed also lists three newspapers--the *Paragould Evening Times*, the *Record*, and the *Press*--that were available in Paragould in 1889.

Several of the pioneer businessmen in Paragould were Jewish, including S. L. Joseph and the Bertig Brothers. S. L. Joseph had opened a mercantile business in Gainesville in 1880. After returning from a visit to Germany, S. L. Joseph moved to Paragould in 1885 and opened the Harris and Joseph Department Store on the east side of the railroad tracks. When Joseph bought out his partner in 1889, he renamed his business the S. L. Joseph Mercantile Company and moved to the southeast corner of E. Court and S. Pruett streets where an elegant two-story department store was constructed in 1892. This building is still extant although modernized and only one story in height. S. L. Joseph owned several department stores in Missouri, and had extensive land holdings. His nephew, Alvin Samuel, joined the business in 1900, and the company purchased the existing gin at S. Second and W. Garland Streets. Joseph died in 1909, and Samuel assumed control of the various Joseph business interests.

Austrian immigrants Adolph and Saul Bertig arrived in Greene County in 1881 as pack peddlers. In 1883, the Bertig Brothers opened a store in Paragould, and this modest business quickly grew into a business empire encompassing real estate, cotton ginning, brokerage and railroading. When a fire destroyed the original store in 1909, an imposing three-story brick department store was built at the southwest corner of Court and Pruett streets (across from the rival S. L. Joseph Store). Unfortunately, this landmark building burned in 1991. Stores were also opened in Marmaduke, Piggott, Blytheville, and Cardwell, Missouri. A company town named Bertig was established in 1893 on the Arkansas side of the St. Francis River, which was then the terminus of the Paragould and Southeastern Railroad. Bertig contained a sawmill, hotel, post office, and a few homes, but was perhaps best known for the Knobel Hunting and Fishing Club and the Buffalo Island Hunting and Fishing Club, both owned by wealthy St. Louis businessmen.

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In 1893, the Paragould Opera House was built at the southeast corner of West Court and Second Streets to replace a theater that had burned. Although elegant and luxurious, the opera house was too large and expensive to be profitable and was purchased by the First Baptist Church in 1900 for \$2700. Among other alterations, the building was transformed by the addition of a steeple to the northwest tower. The Baptists utilized this building until 1925 when they built a new church at Third and Poplar Streets. This church, still in use today, has had several additions in order to accommodate the growth of the church organization.

The Paragould Electric Light and Power Company was created in 1891 in response to the Paragould City Council's call for the need to "electrify" the city. The Council agreed to purchase electricity from the company for twenty years for forty city street lights. A power plant was constructed and placed in operation by 1892. In 1911 the city awarded the Crystal Ice Company the contract to supply Paragould with electricity. On July 4, 1916, a celebration was held on Pruett Street as a Queen and her court illuminated seventy-six electric street lights. The high rates of the Crystal Ice Company caused a controversy, and the city's power contract was awarded to Arkansas Light and Power Company. A \$90,000 federal grant from the WPA in 1938 allowed the city to enact a \$100,000 bond issue that had been approved by the city council in 1933 for the construction of a municipal light plant. The plant, located on North 2nd Avenue, was completed and operational in 1939 and began to compete with Arkansas Light and Power Company. The growth of Paragould created power needs that the local plant could not economically generate and the city decided to contract with Southwestern Power Administration for their electricity. The municipal plant was maintained for emergency use but is no longer in operation.

The first telephone company in Paragould was organized in 1896 by a small group of investors. The Paragould Telephone Company served 150 subscribers and used simple equipment and a switchboard. According to Mueller, "an early reporter marveled the Paragould Central office was kept open day and night 'giving as good service as Little Rock or St. Louis.'" In 1903, the city council granted a permit to Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company to operate distance and local phones. Although the Paragould Telephone Company had 200 subscribers by 1905, they could not compete with such a large company and sold their system to Southwestern. In the 1917 city directory the Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph office was located in the First National Bank Building at 115 S. Pruett (now Arnold's Jewelry). The appearance of downtown was improved somewhat in 1913 when the poles were replaced with underground cable. Southwestern erected a modern office and equipment building on North Third Street in 1950. The office closed in 1981, but the building is still used for equipment and storage.

By 1920, Paragould had grown into a thriving town of 6,306 people. Greene County's vibrant timber industry, which was made possible by the transportation afforded by its two railroads (known at this time as the Missouri Pacific and the St. Louis and Southwestern or "Cotton Belt"). The town consisted of four banks, two department stores, two newspapers, a pressed brick factory, a tile factory, an ice and cold storage plant, a flour mill, two spoke factories, three cotton gins, the Missouri Pacific railroad shops, a post office, an 800-seat theater, a telephone exchange, and other assorted businesses. In light of the town's prosperity, the Chamber of Commerce proudly adopted as its slogan the epithet "You'll like Paragould."

Paragould also claimed one of the finest hotels in Arkansas. The four-story brick Vandervoort Hotel opened December 1, 1915, at the northwest corner of W. Emerson and S. Second Streets. Designed by the Memphis architectural firm of Hanker and Cairns, the Vandervoort duplicated the Hotel Chisca in Memphis but on a smaller scale. It featured a large lobby with marble floors, an elegant stairway leading to the mezzanine, a balcony on each floor, and a skylight over the lobby. The Vandervoort Hotel served as the social center of Paragould for nearly a half century until it was razed in 1961 to make room for the new First National Bank Building.

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In 1925, the Capitol Theater was built at the corner of W. Emerson and S. Second Streets. Built by the Bertig Realty Company and managed by John Collins, this theater hosted various types of entertainment including vaudeville artists, first run movies, and local theatrical events. Will Rogers headlined a 1930 flood relief benefit show. In December, 1941, the theater held a world premiere of the movie, "The Man Who Came to Dinner", starring Paragould native Richard Travis, Bette Davis, Ann Sheridan, and Jimmy Durante. Travis, whose real name was Bill Justice, attended the premiere. The Collins family purchased the theater in 1936. The building, now known as the Collins Theatre, is currently used for a community theater.

The booming Timber Age of Paragould lasted approximately forty years. During this time, numerous timber-related industries thrived in Paragould. Barrels, railroad ties, and heavy construction lumber were the primary exports, though wood baskets, boxes, axe handles, dowels, and spokes were also produced. An 1894 *Arkansas Gazette* article claimed that more whiskey barrel staves were manufactured in Paragould than any place in the world. As the forests were gradually cut over, the various timber-related industries in Paragould ceased operation. The boom was over.

Agriculture, which had always been important to the economy, became dominant as the huge tracts of cut-over land were cleared and drained through the efforts of the St. Francis Levee District. Cotton was the primary crop, though cattle, dairy farms, and fruit orchards were present on a small scale. The Alvin Samuel gin, which is still in operation, anchored the south end of the Pruett Street commercial area, while the Bertig Brothers gin was located at the north end of Pruett (the site is now a car dealership). These two gins provided the downtown area with heavy, though seasonal, traffic. Industry, such as the J. E. Wilbourn and Sons wholesale grocery, provided less than twenty-five percent of the economy in the late 1930s through the 1940s. Without additional industry, the town's growth stagnated, and the population remained at seven to eight thousand people. Many Paragould and Greene County residents moved north during this period in search of work.

Factories began locating in Paragould beginning in the 1950s, in part due to the availability of natural gas in 1950. In 1952, Foremost Food's Dairy Division built a large plant at 222 E. Emerson Street. At the time, there were ninety-six dairies in Greene County. The plant expanded several times and employed over one hundred people before closing in the late 1980s.

The post-World War II period also brought new construction to the downtown commercial district. New department stores were built or remodeled on Pruett Street. In 1950, the Rhine Building was erected at the southwest corner of N. Second and W. Poplar Streets. It was built specifically as a newspaper publishing plant for *The Big Picture* weekly newspaper. Organized in August of 1948 by John J. Mueller, *The Big Picture* was the first newspaper in Arkansas to be published entirely by lithography or offset, a photographic process that simplified publishing when compared to the standard "cold-type" process. *The Big Picture* was some thirty years ahead of the large city dailys in this regard. Over its twelve-year publication run, *The Big Picture* received about fifty awards from the Arkansas Press Association and from agricultural groups.

From the 1888 Greene County Courthouse to the 1950 Rhine Building, the Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District encompasses the rich history of Paragould from its early Timber Age boom economy to its post-World War II embrace of new technology.

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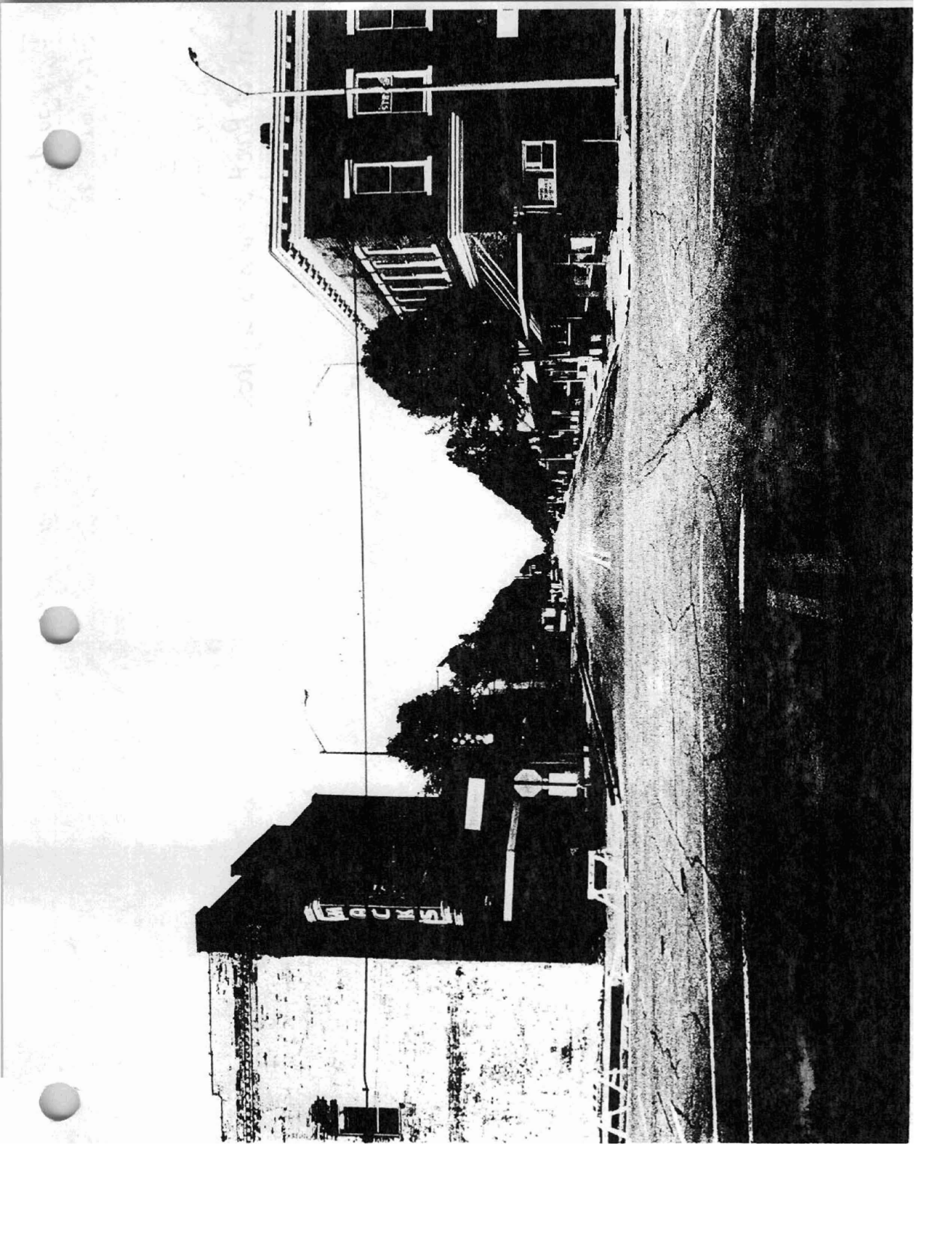
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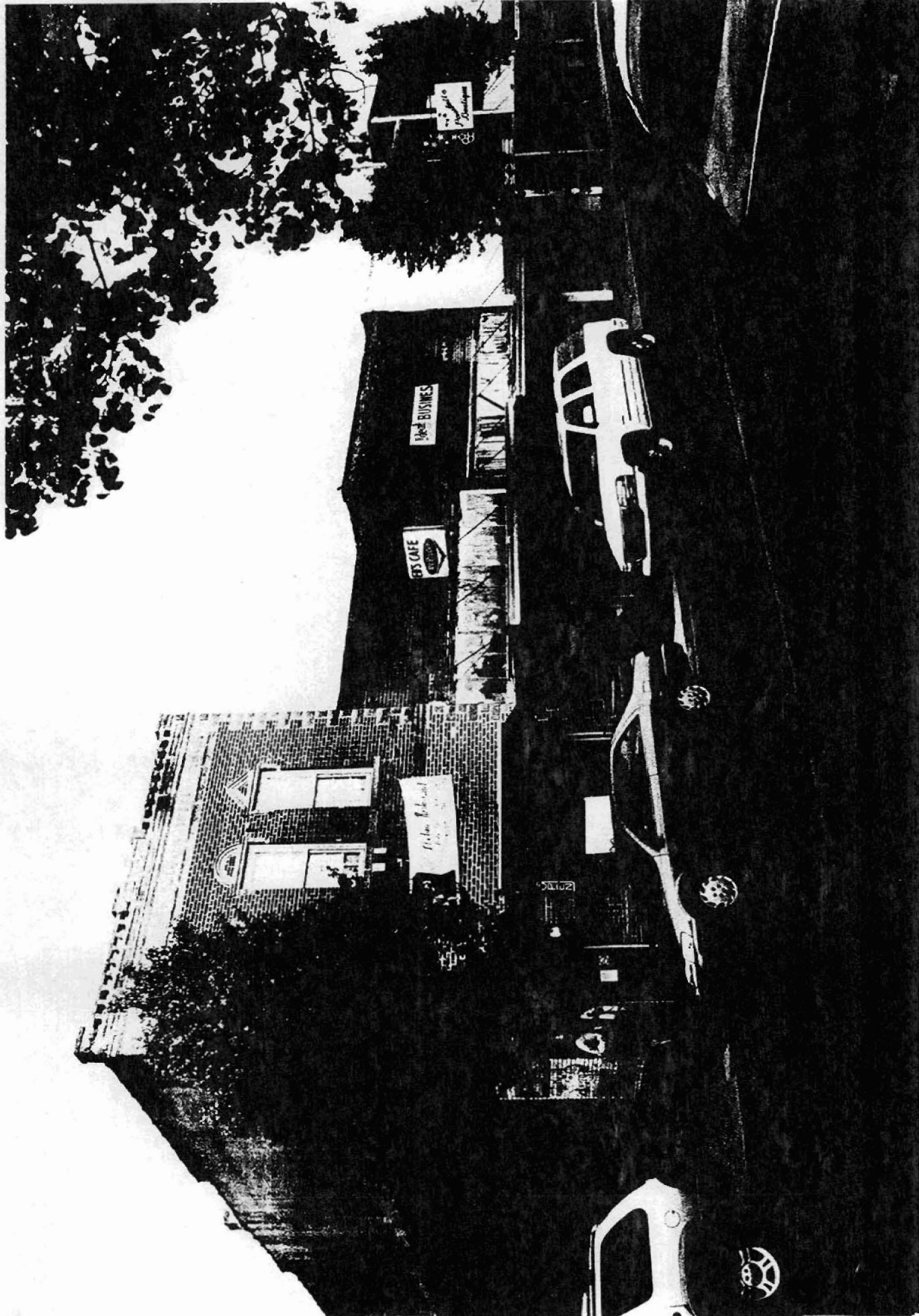
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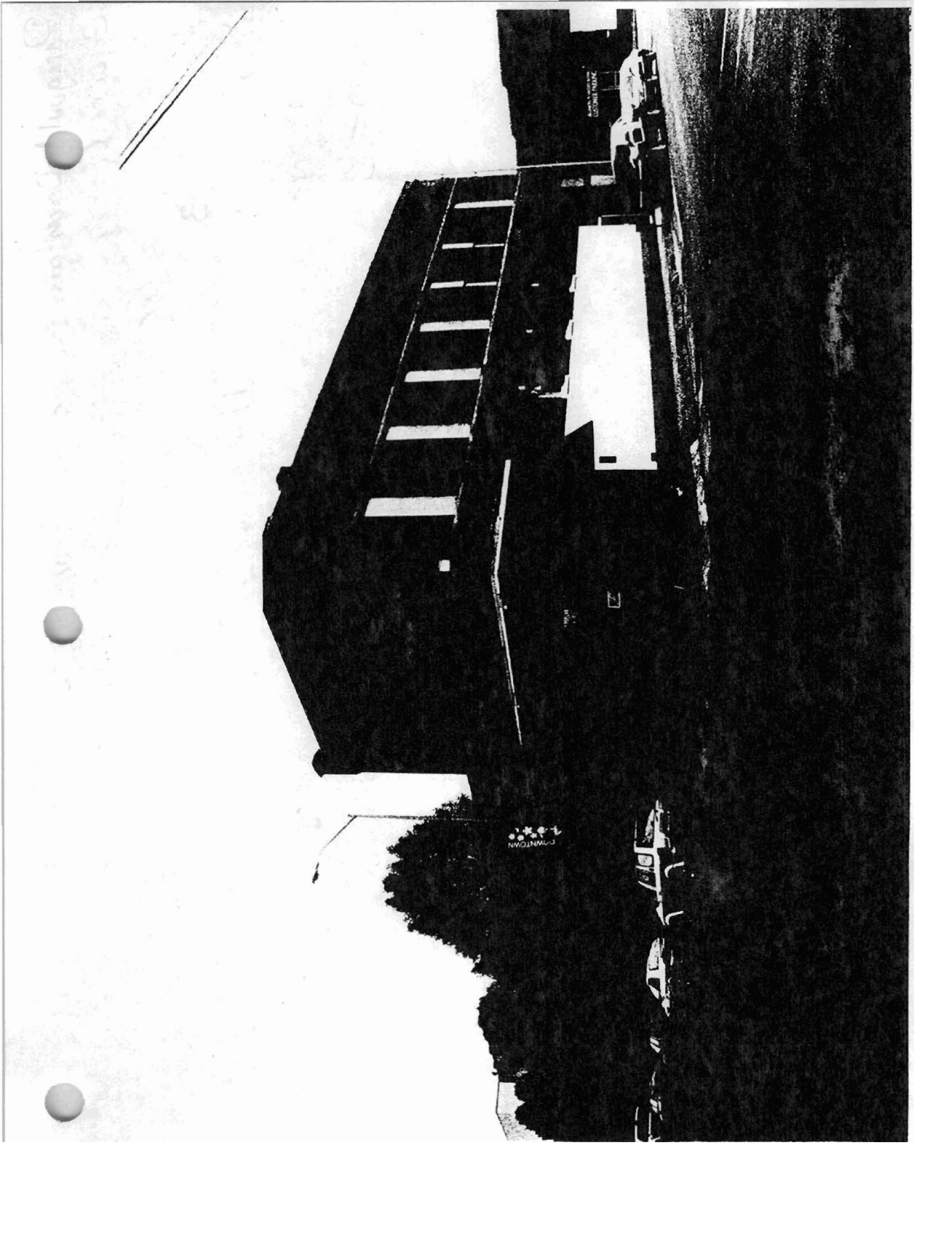
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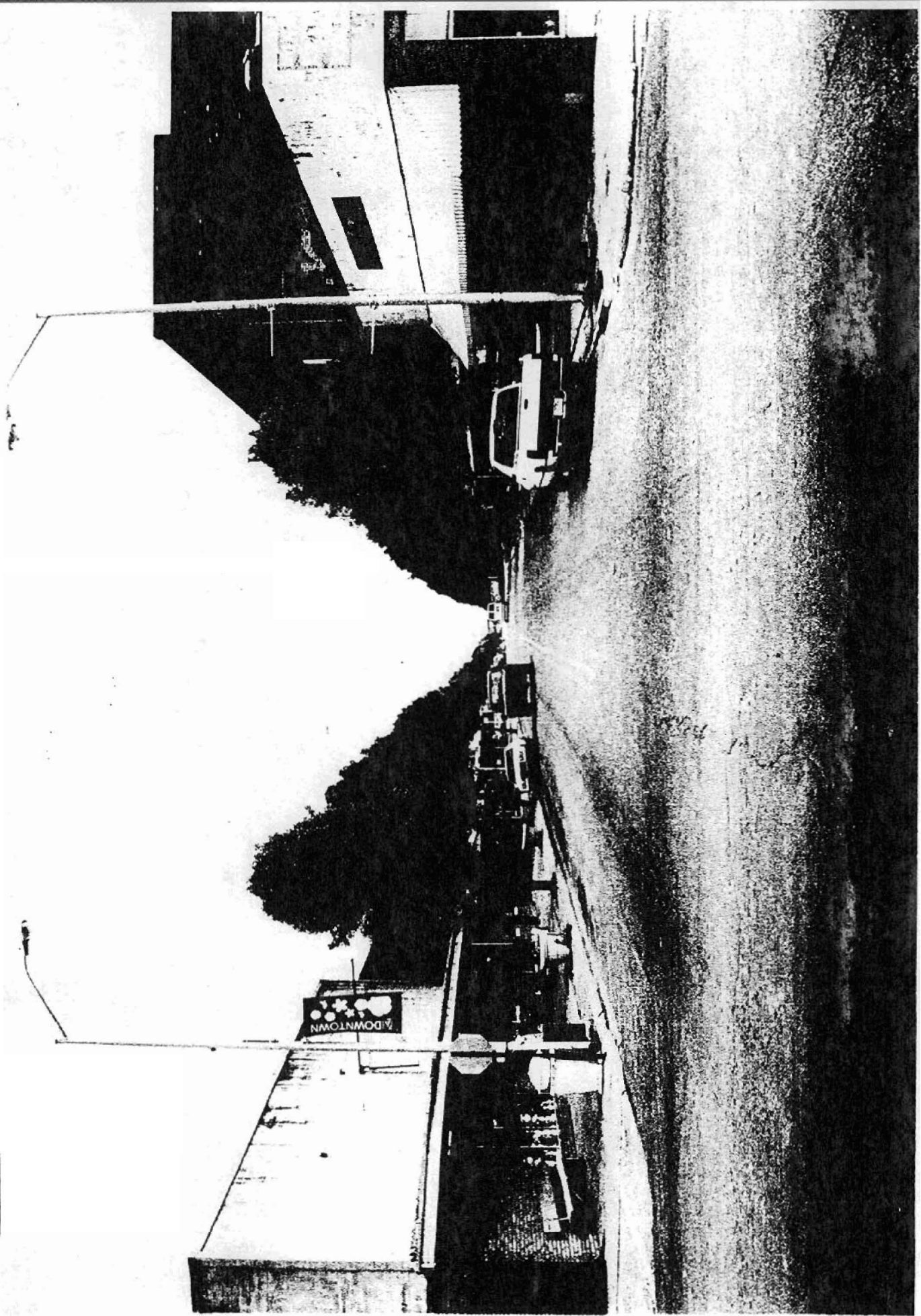
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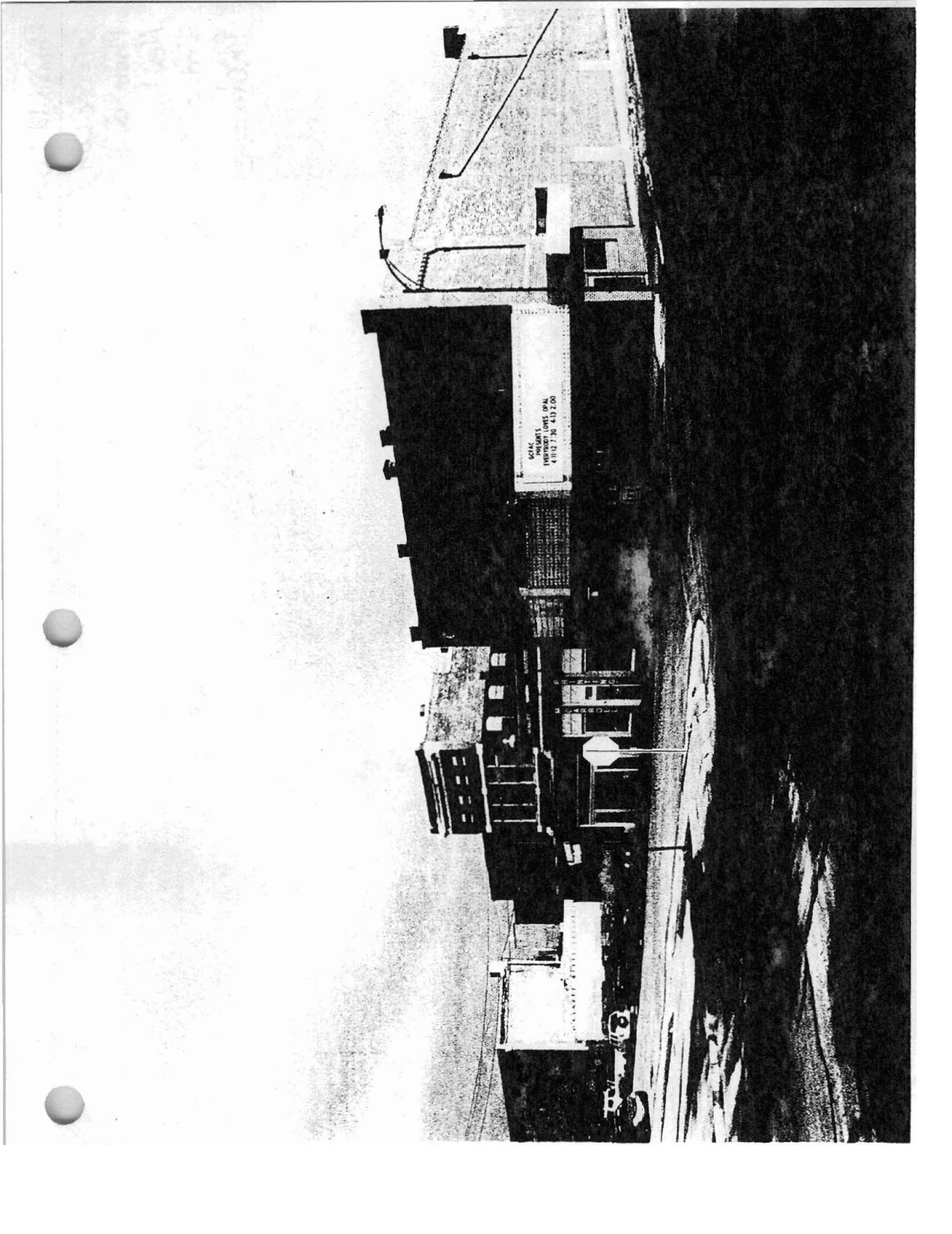


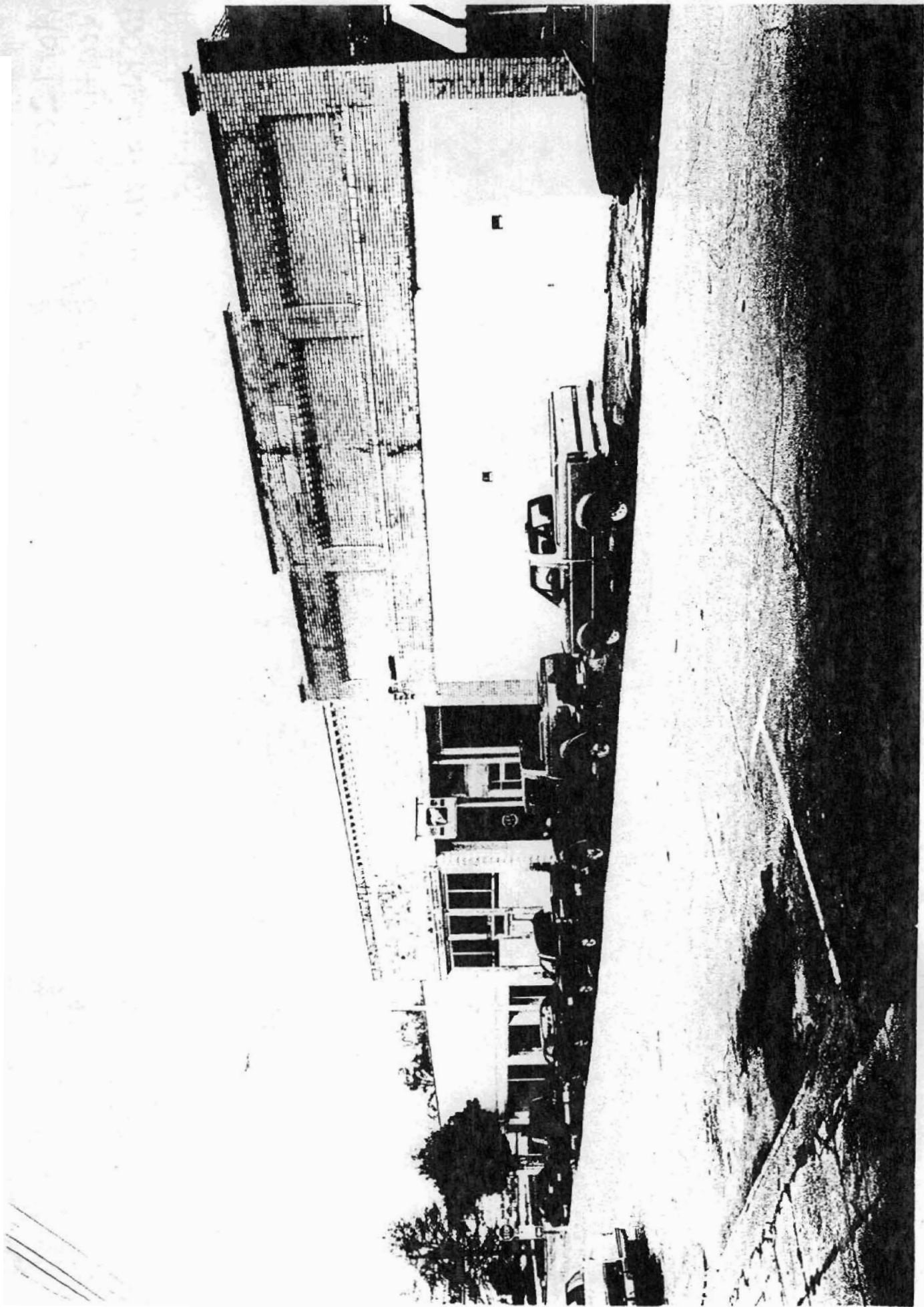


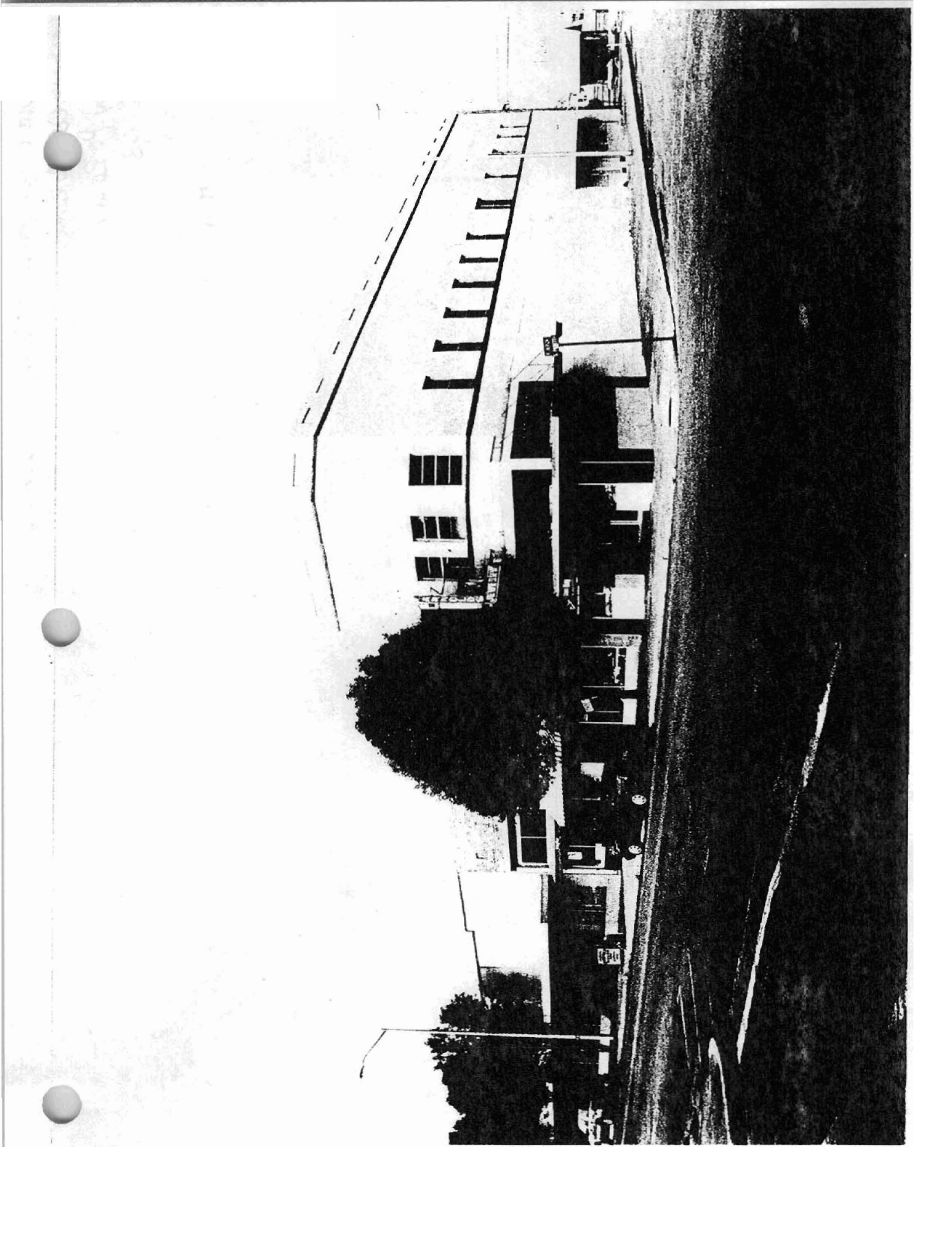


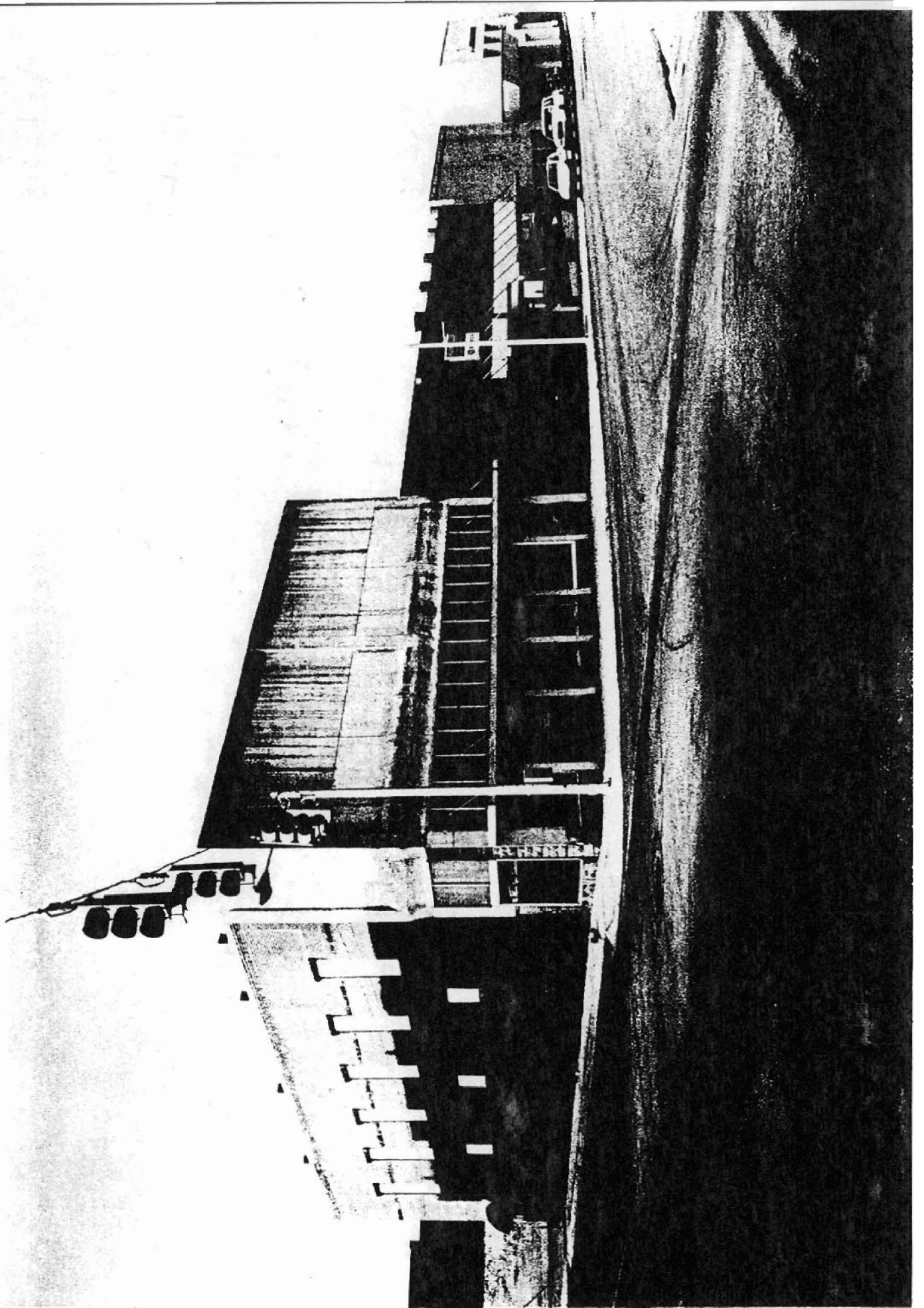
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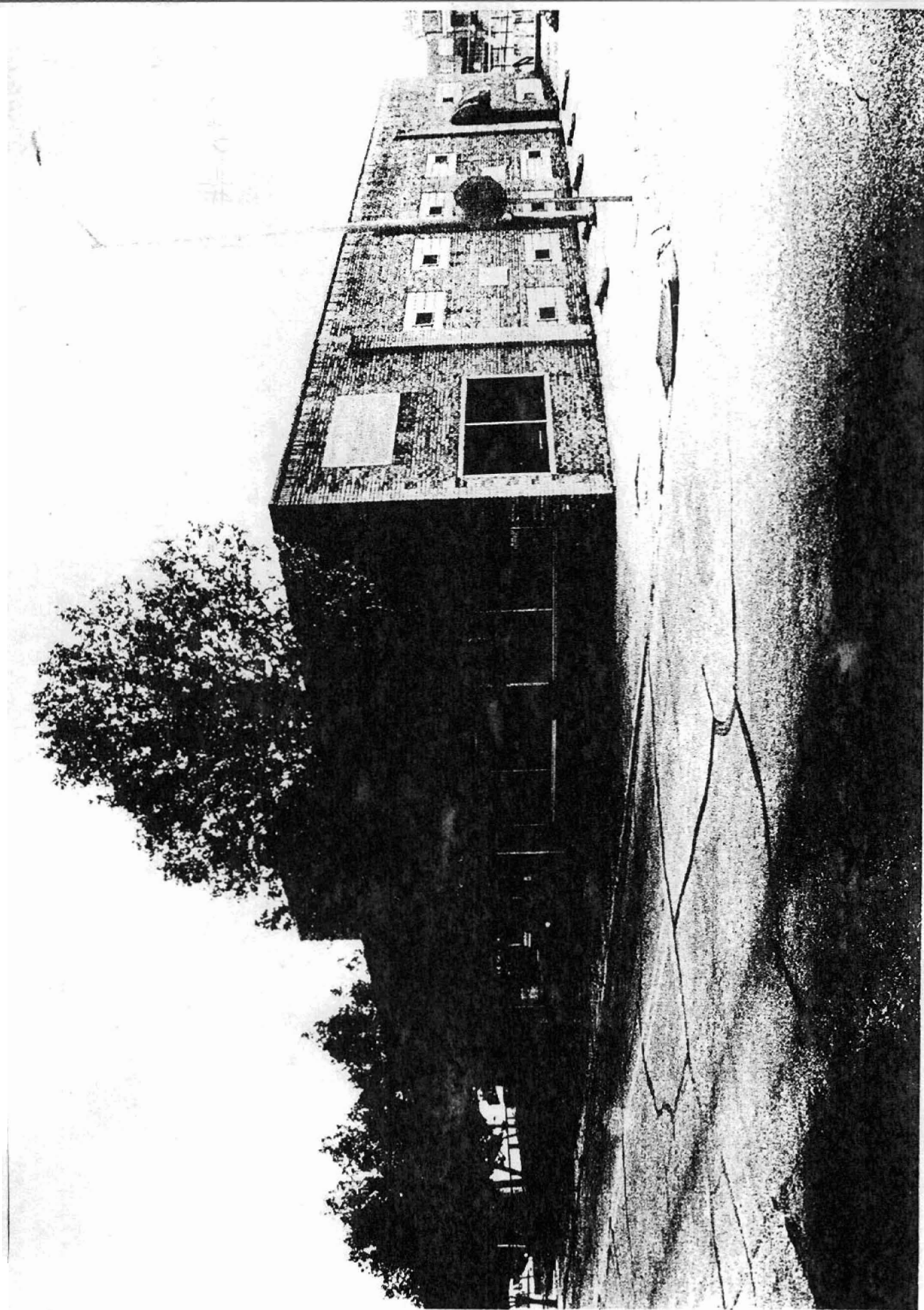


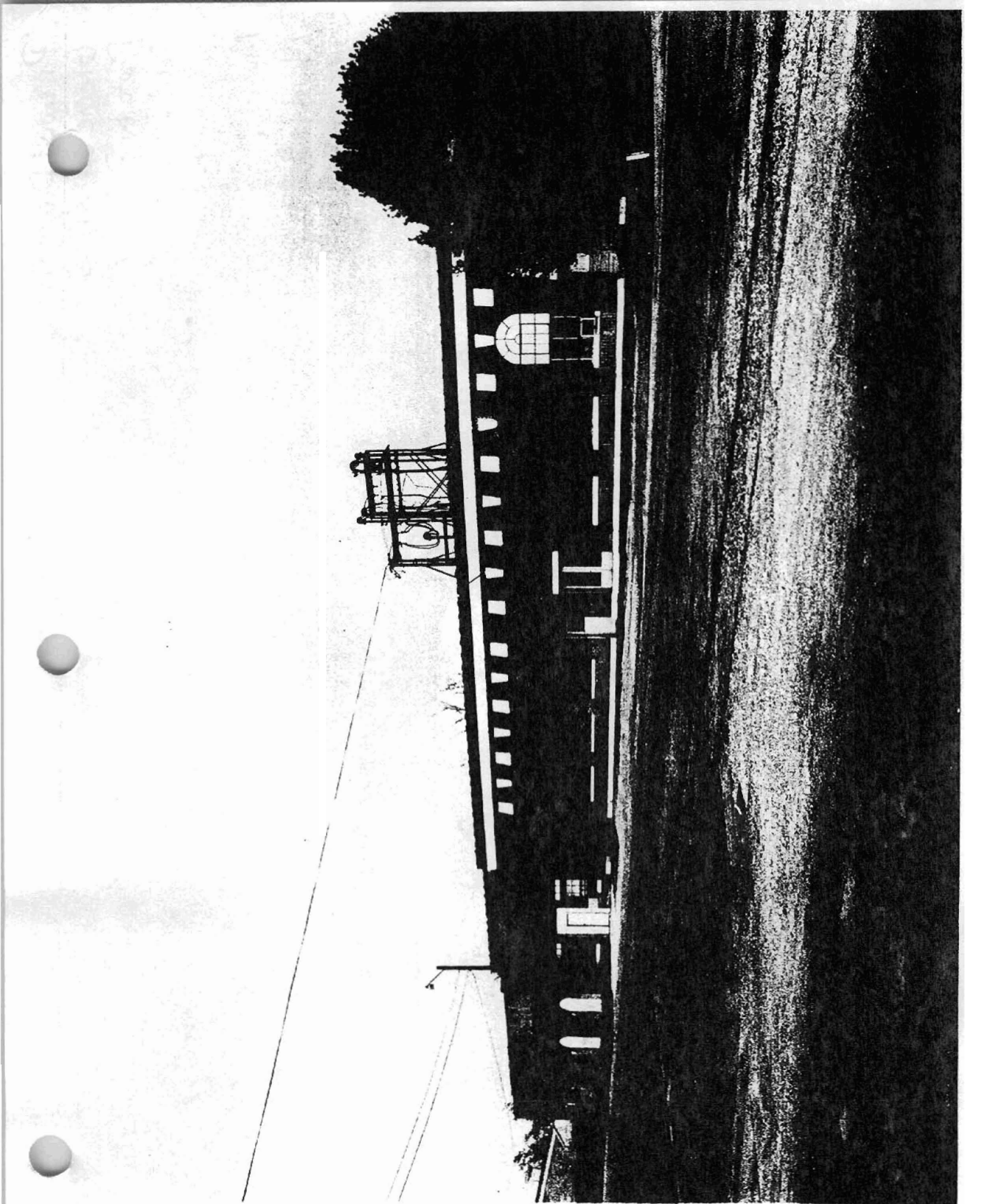


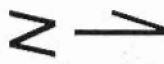






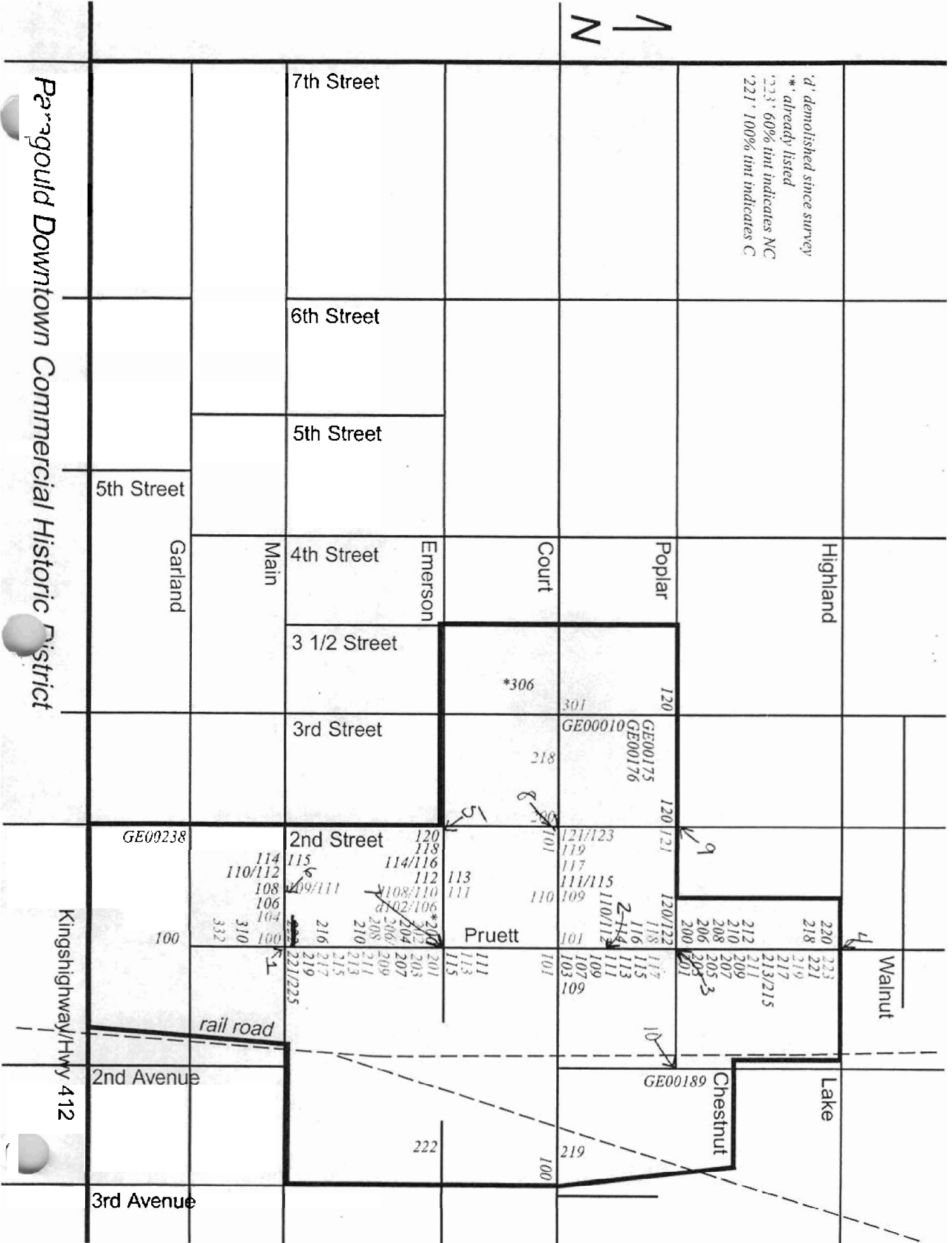






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Paragould Downtown Commercial Historic District



Highland

Poplar

Court

Emerson

4th Street

Main

Garland

5th Street

6th Street

5th Street

4th Street

3 1/2 Street

3rd Street

2nd Street

Pruett

Walnut

Lake

Chestnut

2nd Avenue

3rd Avenue

Kingshigway/Hwy 412

rail road

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GE00189

*306

301

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GE00175
GE00176

218

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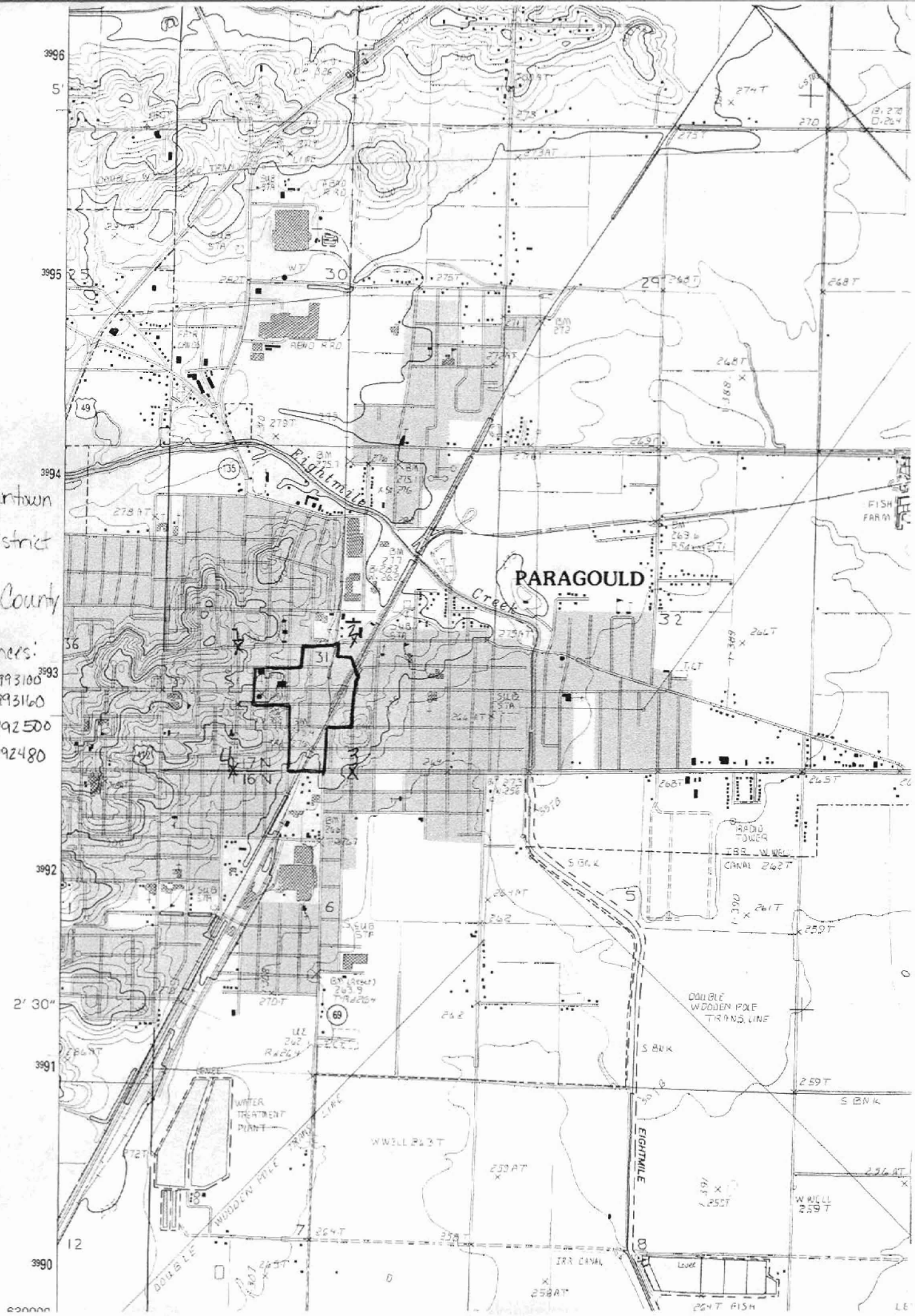
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