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NPS Form 10-900
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OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR LISTED

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AHPP

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Berger House

Other Name/Site Number: CG0069

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 1120 South Main Street

Not for Publication:

City/Town: Jonesboro

Vicinity:

State: AR County: Craighead Code: AR Zip Code: 72401

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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> 0 </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </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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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.

Carlton A. Sata
Signature of certifying official

3-14-96
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
of Action

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

Current : Domestic Sub: Single Dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Queen Anne

Materials: foundation brick roof asphalt
walls brick other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

The Berger House is a two-story brick residence constructed in 1896 in the Queen Anne style which features unusually fine detailing and trim. Although there were alterations made to the house in the 1950's which reduced some of the Queen Anne features of the home, (at that time a wrap-around porch and other exterior detail was removed), the house retains sufficient architectural integrity to be nominated under criterion C with local significance. The house is also being nominated under criterion B for its association with Morris Berger, Jr. who was

a prominent early Jewish businessman in Jonesboro.

Elaboration

The Berger house is a two-story residence constructed in 1896 in the Queen Anne manner. The house is of solid brick construction, and is currently painted white. The house has a composition shingle hipped roof with lower cross gables on all four elevations; however, the most prominent roof feature is the large turret on the front, or southwest corner of the building. Originally, the chimneys were crowned with elaborate brick chimney caps, and of these only one has been preserved and retains its original appearance. A photograph from 1950 gives evidence to the ornate iron roof cresting which was located atop the roof peak and along the northwestern roof ridge. These roof features were removed at some point; however, the current owners have recently re-installed the cresting in their attempt to restore some of the original architectural features. The house contains a small one-room basement which was originally built to house a boiler for the radiator systems.

The front, or western, elevation is dominated by the aforementioned two-story turret which protrudes from the body of the house and contains three double-hung one-over-one windows on each story. Decorative features on this portion include a decorative roof finial along with fishscale and alternating bands of conventional slate shingles on the turret roof, and a wide, rough, textured frieze board directly under the eave-line which continues around the house. Another simple decorative band punctuates the level directly below the second story window. This pattern is mirrored on the first level, with a simple belt-course at the top and bottom of the windows here as well. These decorative bands are seen on all four elevations of the house, also serving to emphasize the hood moldings which are seen elsewhere on the building.

The center section of the main facade contains a single arched window on the second story and a single-leaf entrance directly below. The window is topped by a heavy, plain, arched hood with small inverted ziggurat-style brackets below it. This exotic treatment is mirrored on the first floor by the semi-circular sidelights which flank the door on

all sides, forming an exotic ogee profile around the entrance. The sidelights are wrapped by a wide band of heavy, plain decorative brick molding which features a simple eastern step pattern at the base on each side. This entrance is highlighted by a one-story porch supported by two turned posts with a decorative turned balustrade on one side, and a simple spindle frieze beneath the porch roof.

The main facade of the house has a forward facing gable section on the northernmost end. This section contains a small window in the gable end which is symmetrically oriented with the single double-hung single light window on the second story of this section. This window is crowned by a simple, arched brick hood. This window configuration is the most common on the building, and unless stated elsewhere, all windows follow in this vein. Underneath this window on the first floor, a simple bay with three windows protrudes from the elevation. At one time, the bay had a simple balustrade on the top which was removed about 1950, and has recently been replaced. This bay projection retains the small simple brackets in the cornice under the eave.

The northern elevation consists of three parts and is dominated by a central projecting forward-facing gable section which contains two windows on each level on the main north side, and a single window on both stories on the east and west facing sides. To the west of this section, the main body of the house contains two symmetrically oriented windows on each level. The easternmost section consists of a screened-in porch on the first level which contains spindle-work detailing and brackets, and a composition shingle mansard roof on the second story, punctuated by a single window on the north and east sides. This porch area is a later addition made by the Joneses. Underneath this mansard roof, behind the screen porch, the main body of the house contains two single-leaf entrances, the easternmost of which is surrounded by sidelights and a transom.

The eastern elevation is dominated by a relatively new detached car-port which is three cars in width, and contains a brick utility/storage area on the south end. The main body of the house behind the car-port contains two forward-facing gables, with a single newer double-hung six-over-six window seen in the southernmost gable. The primary, more central gable section on this elevation contains a single window on the second story, and a single-leaf entrance on the first with two newer

double-hung one-over-one windows to the south of this door. The only other fenestration on this elevation is a small new window on the first level to the south of the grouping just described.

The southern elevation is dominated by a forward-facing gable section which contains two symmetrically oriented windows on each story. The main body of the house contains two windows on the second level, and a single-leaf entrance with transom, and another single window on the first level. The first floor of this section is covered by a porch, which although the decorative detailing differs slightly, mirrors a porch which was probably original to the building. The porch is supported by posts, and the decorative spindlework detailing is similar to that seen on the front of the house.

The interior of the house contains many notable features including stained glass windows in the sidelights which surround the doorway, and in the arched window on the second story above. The woodwork seen in the interior is also remarkable. The main stairwell contains solid quarter-sawn oak spindles which are original to the structure. The other woodwork in the house remains in original form as well. The living room contains raised paneling, and a mantel which features two fluted columns with decorative capitals. Other interior woodwork includes crown molding and decorative woodwork around the doors and transoms. Many of the original light fixtures, switch plates, and the original door and window hardware still remain.

The site originally included a separate garage to the northeast of the house, and a servants' quarters further away from the house to the northeast. There was also an outbuilding on the southeast corner of the lot, and another smaller outbuilding to the immediate southeast of the home. There are no historic outbuildings extant.

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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: B,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Commerce/Ethnic Heritage
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1896-1932

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): Berger, Morris Jr.

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 Berger House is being nominated under criteria B and C with local significance. The house is significant under criterion B for its association with Morris Berger, Jr., a prominent early Jonesboro businessman who contributed significantly to both the wholesale grocery and furniture industries as well as the general development of the city. As an important example of the Queen Anne style in Jonesboro, the Berger House is significant under criterion C as well.

Elaboration

Morris Berger, Jr. was an Austrian immigrée who came to Jonesboro in 1881. He purchased the property on which the house stands from Emma D. Frierson for nine hundred dollars on February 8, 1896. The house was constructed the same year, and although the architect is unknown, it is believed that the architect came from St. Louis. Significant to the Jonesboro community, the Berger House served as The Craighead County-Jonesboro Public Library from 1950 to 1964 and as commercial business offices after that.

The Bergers were one of the most prominent early families of Jonesboro, and the Berger brothers are listed with thirty four other residents in the Papers of Incorporation for the City of Jonesboro in January of 1883. Morris Berger, Jr. should also be noted as one of the most successful Jewish immigrants in that part of the state, and his accomplishments are noted in Carolyn Gray Lemasters book, A Corner of the Tapestry. This work documents the achievements of Jewish people in the growth of Arkansas, and its communities. Carolyn Lemasters states:

[Mr. Berger] settled in Jonesboro in the 1880's and with John M. Johnson established a furniture business--Johnson, Berger and Company--which did business all over northeast Arkansas. According to a local newspaper, Jonesboro owed its progress to such men. The Johnson-Berger firm, cited as the oldest and largest furniture company in eastern Arkansas, remained as such until the depression, and the death of Morris Berger in 1932.

Morris Berger, Jr.'s family also held positions of prominence in Jonesboro. Marcus Berger constructed the Arkansas Hotel, which was located in the 200 block of Main Street, and stood there until it was razed in 1986. (Hodges, 1986) A devastating fire ravaged downtown Jonesboro on April 27, 1889, and The Arkansas Hotel is believed to have been one of the first buildings which was reconstructed after the fire. Herndon states, The fire "destroyed the large brick building of Marcus Berger, the leading merchant, and over forty small buildings, the loss being about \$200,000." (Herndon, 1977) Morris Berger, Jr.'s cousins Alex and Ben re-established a bank in Jonesboro after all five of the banks in town had failed due to The Great Depression. Charles Stuck states:

The bottom of the depression came in Jonesboro on December 11, 1931, when the bank of Jonesboro, last bank in town, closed its doors. Jonesboro, proud little city that at one time had five banks, now had none. The Bank of Nettleton and The Bank of Bono were the only banks operating in the entire county. There was no bank in Jonesboro until January 6th, 1932, when the Mercantile Bank was organized by a group of investors headed by Alex Berger of St. Louis, who had grown up in Jonesboro...

Thus, the contributions of the Berger family were significant. Morris Berger Jr., as Secretary of the Johnson-Berger Company gained prominence in Jonesboro as a local merchant, and businessman. The prosperity of this company is described in The Jonesboro Enterprise (1903):

Johnson-Berger & Co. do perhaps the largest wholesale grocery business of any house in the city, carrying a stock of goods worth between \$100,000 and \$150,000. To accomodate their immense business require besides [sic] their large two-story building, two-large and commodious warehouses [sic]. It is estimated that this firm does a business in the neighborhood of \$400,000 annually, though this may be a small estimate. They keep two men on the road, besides a large force of salesman and accountants in their store.

Johnson-Berger and Company were also stockholders in other businesses in the community, in particular, the Jonesboro roller mill (The Jonesboro Sun, July 24, 1970). The roller mill was "a local industry born in 1896 to fill a need for the people of Craighead County. The 'Roller Mill' offered a market for the farmer's wheat and other product regardless of amount or quality of the crop. The 'Mill' also provided jobs to many local people." (J. Hardy Little, History of the Roller Mill). The contribution the roller mill made to the citizens of Craighead County is also mentioned in Charles Stuck's The Story of Craighead County, and in Dallas Herndon's Annals of Arkansas. The entrepreneurial spirit of Morris Berger, Jr., and his contemporaries is reflected in the fact that during the period between 1880 and 1890, the city of Jonesboro grew from 1,390 to 3,528 residents. The Johnson-Berger Company certainly was one of the main centers of activity during

this period. The business was located on Main Street, and supplied dry-goods, furniture, and groceries for the growing community. The business is recalled in Tom Love's "Visit With an Old Timer" in which the individual interviewed recalls the company and its location on Main Street.

The Berger Family were all active in the local Jewish Community. Morris Berger Jr. served on the Board of Trustees of the Temple Israel, and was on the Building Committee during construction in 1897. He also helped to organize the dedication of the Temple on Sunday, January 2, 1898. Morris Berger, Jr. prospered through most of the 1920's, remaining actively involved in the businesses, as well as civic and religious organizations. However, as The Great Depression approached, he was involved in several business dealings which weakened his financial situation. The Jonesboro Evening Sun reported on February 3, 1932:

Last evening, while in deep despondence over the state of his financial affairs, Mr. Berger swallowed Bichloride of Mercury, at his home on South Main Street at 9:00. He was home alone, his wife and daughter having gone to the home of Mrs. Schoenfield for a visit. Upon becoming ill, Mr. Berger advised the Central operator to contact his wife and daughter, who hurried home while a [Gregg] ambulance was dispatched. Mr. Berger was immediately taken to the hospital, where his condition improved for a short period of time, then worsened, his death coming early the morning of February 4th.

The services were held at the home, and the local newspapers contained editorials who hailed Mr. Berger as a "Pioneer Merchant" of Jonesboro. Mrs. Berger lived in the house until June 23, 1944, at which time it was sold to A.J. and Ruth Gatlin of Weiner who occupied the house until 1950. The Berger House became The Jonesboro-Craighead County Public Library in 1950, and remained a public library until 1964. It was during this time that the wrap-around porch was removed, and other changes were made to the house in order to suit its new function as a library. When the library outgrew their home, it was purchased by Billy and Ione Rees in 1964 for use as a business, the "House of Carpets." It was during this time that the building was painted white. The business

was not successful, and the building was subsequently sold to Mr. and Mrs. Phil Jones in 1965. The Joneses continue to occupy the house at present, and they have done a great deal of restoration work on the house, including: finishing out the attic for use as additional living space, the addition of a carport in the rear, the replacement of the south porch, interior refinishing of the woodwork, and their most recent replacement of the roof creasting and the ballustrade over the front dormer.

The Berger House is significant under criterion B as the best extant structure associated with Morris Berger, Jr. It was his home for thirty-six years, and represents the progress that he made as an early founding father and businessman in Jonesboro. The Berger House is also being nominated under criterion C as one of the finest examples of the Queen Anne style in Jonesboro. For these reasons, the Morris Berger, Jr. House at 1120 South Main Street in Jonesboro is being nominated under criteria B and C with local significance.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Information supplied by Philip A. Jones, August, 1995.

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: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>707340</u>	<u>3967540</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

The South 100 feet of Lot 22 of Knight's First Addition to the City of Jonesboro, Arkansas, also described as Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Morris Berger, Jr.'s Subdivision of the South 100 feet of said Lot 22 of Knights First Addition to Jonesboro.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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11. Form Prepared By

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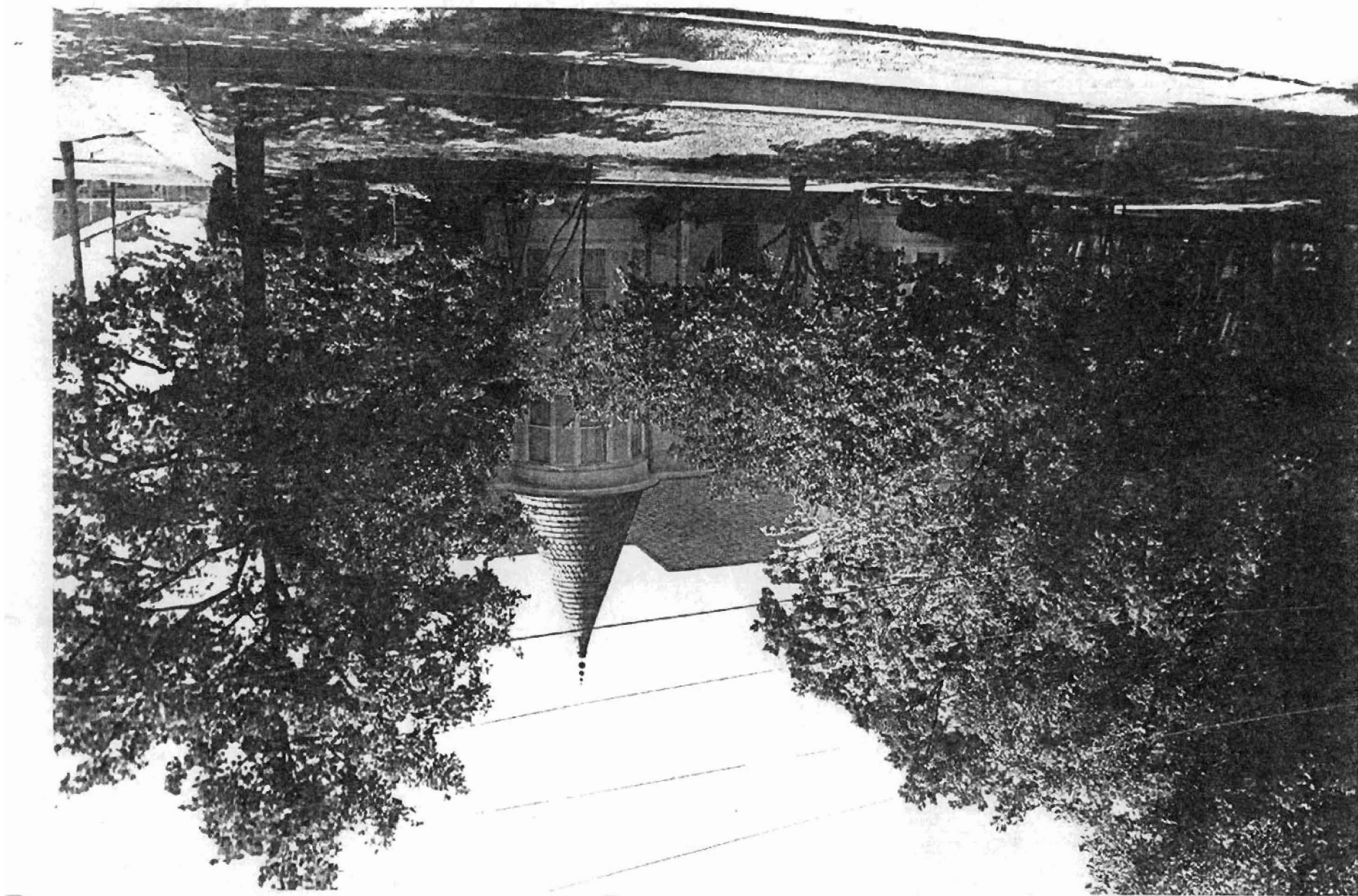
Name/Title: Helen Barry, Survey Historian

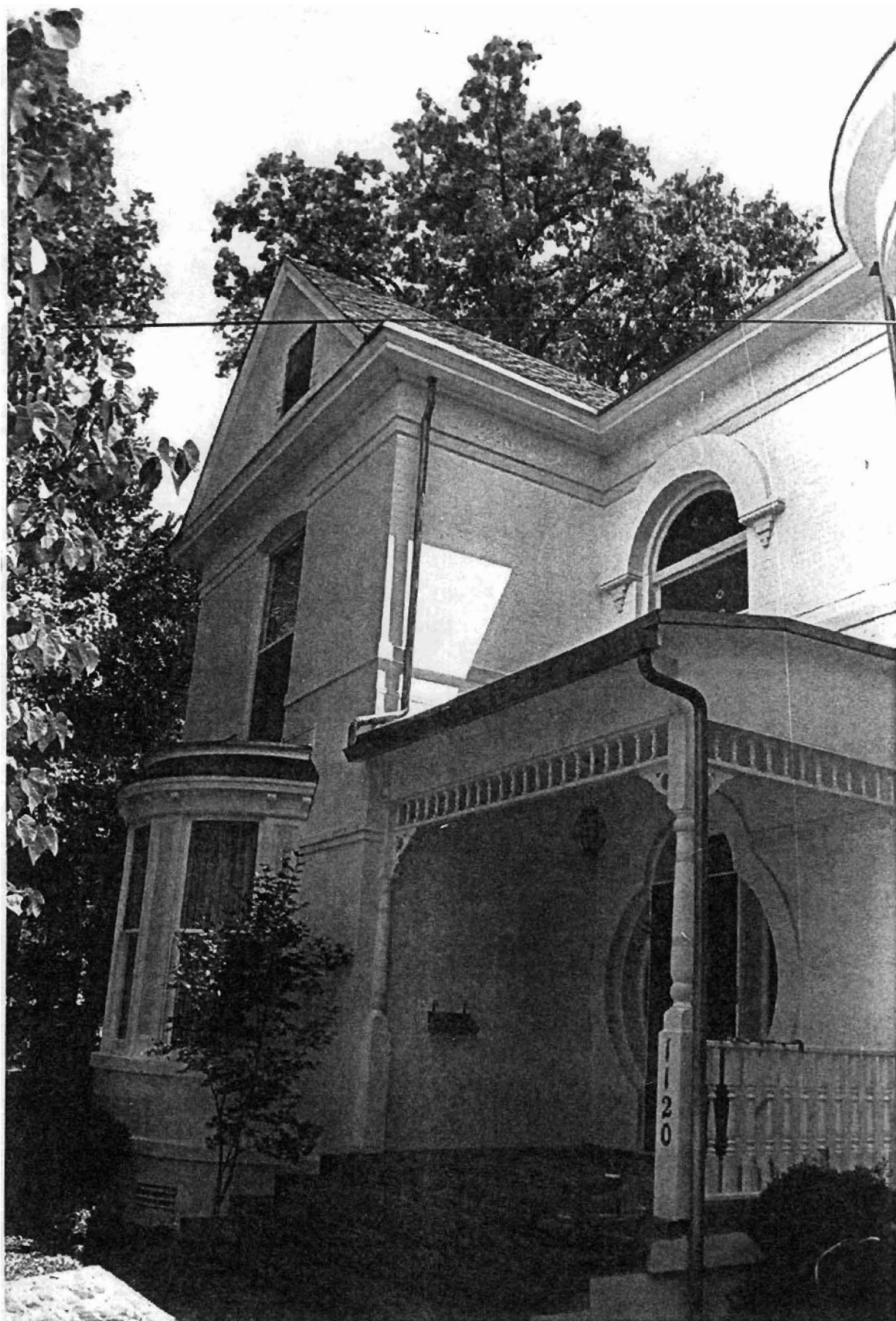
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 03-12-96

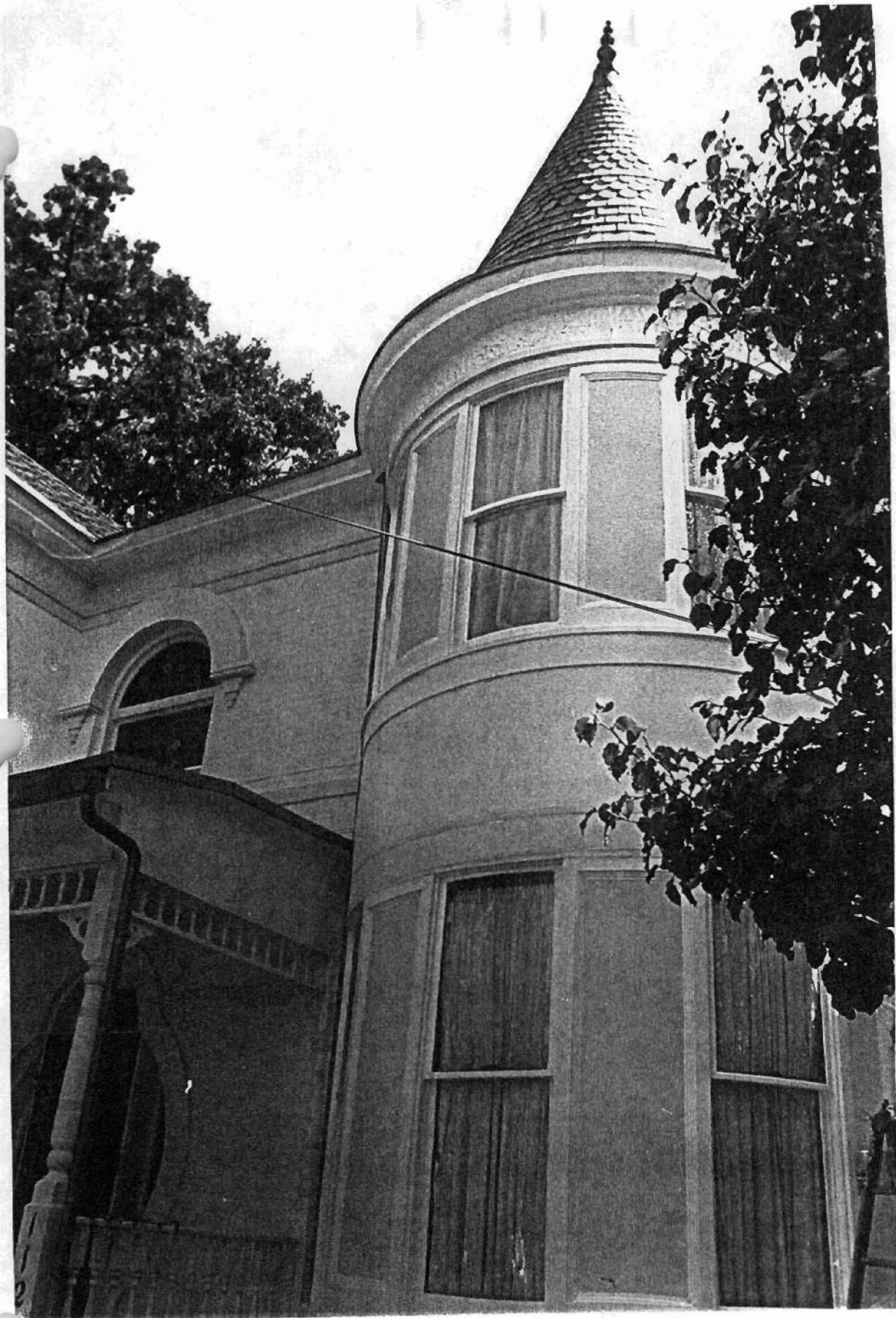
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St.

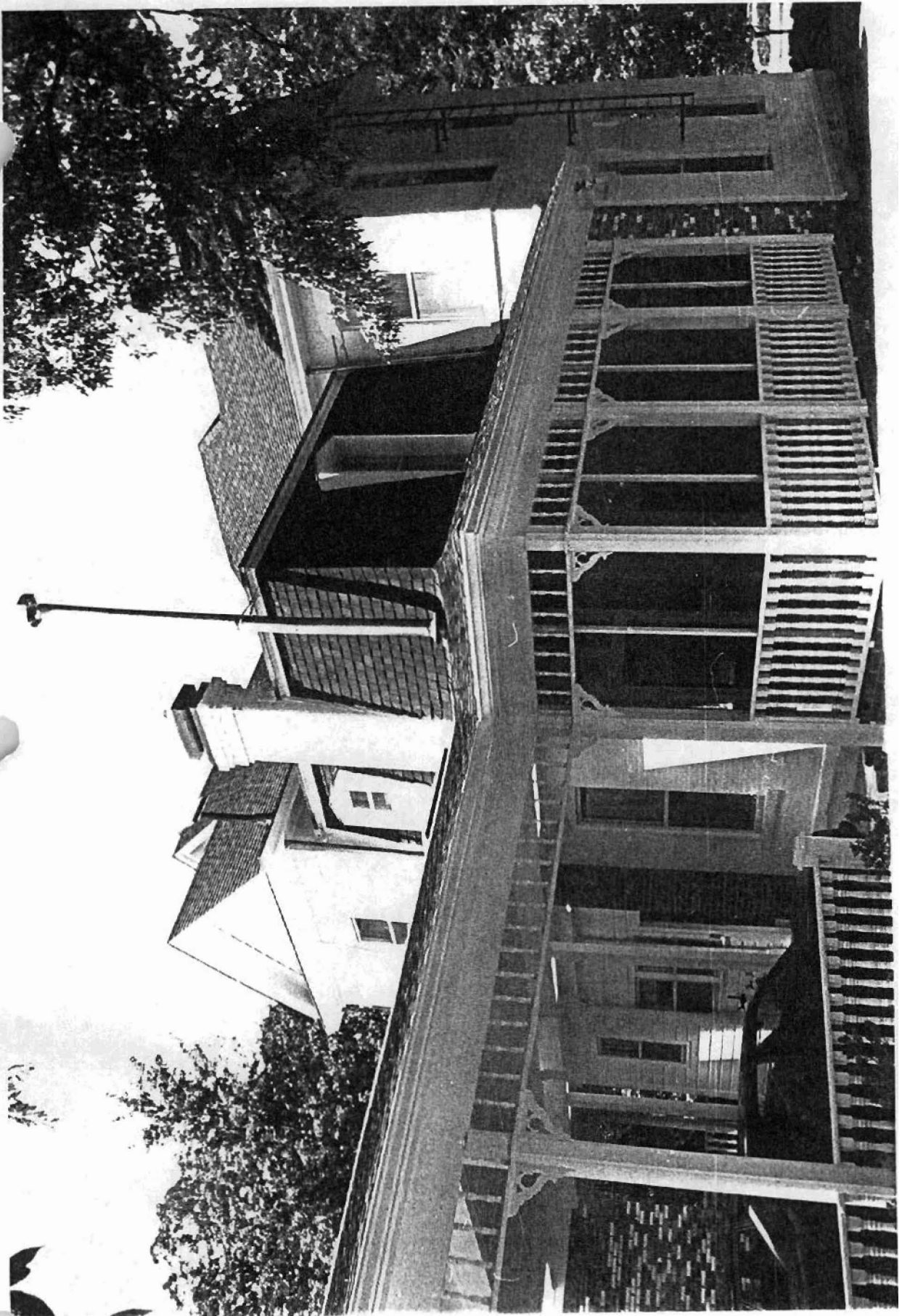
Telephone: (501) 324-9880

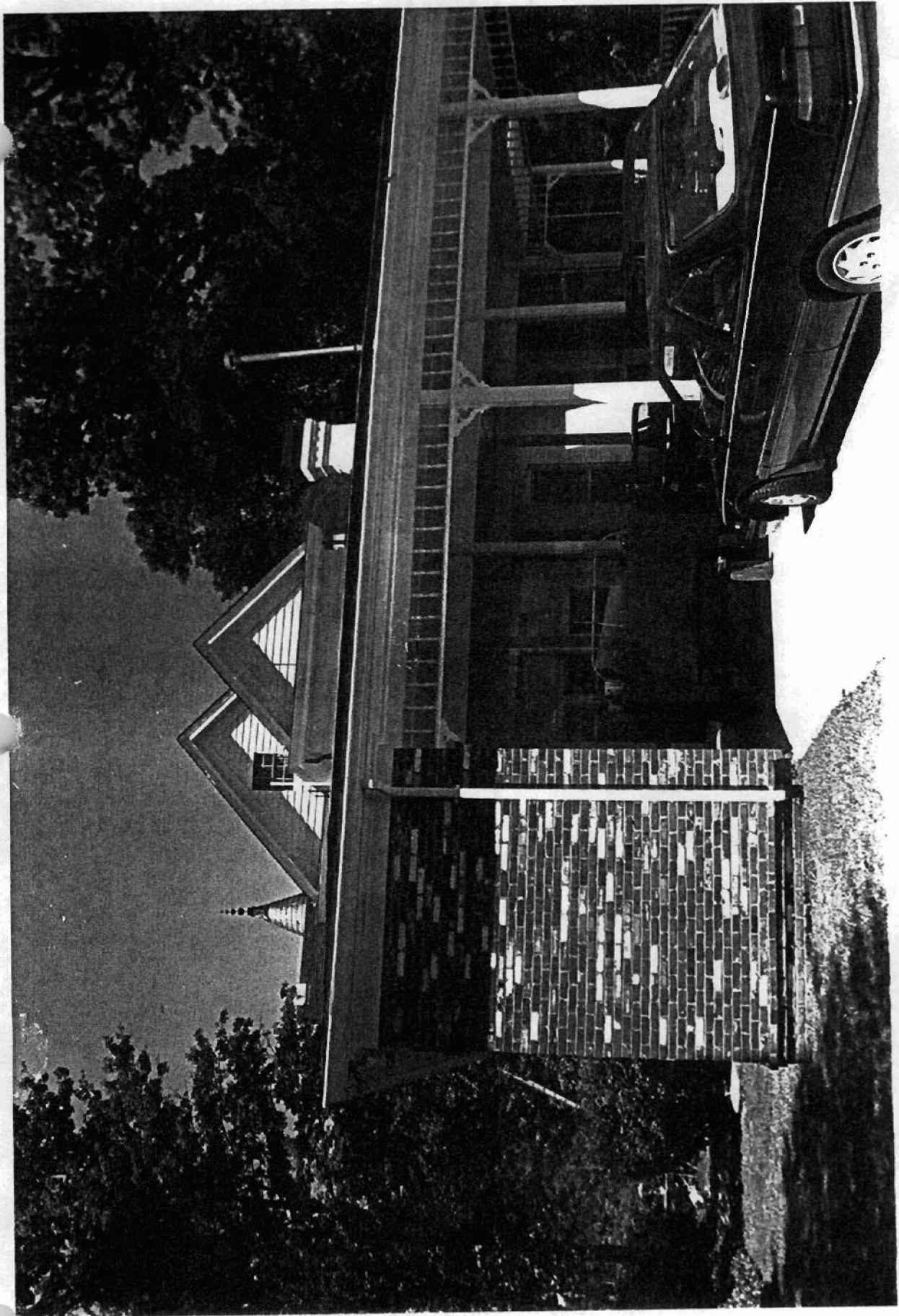
City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

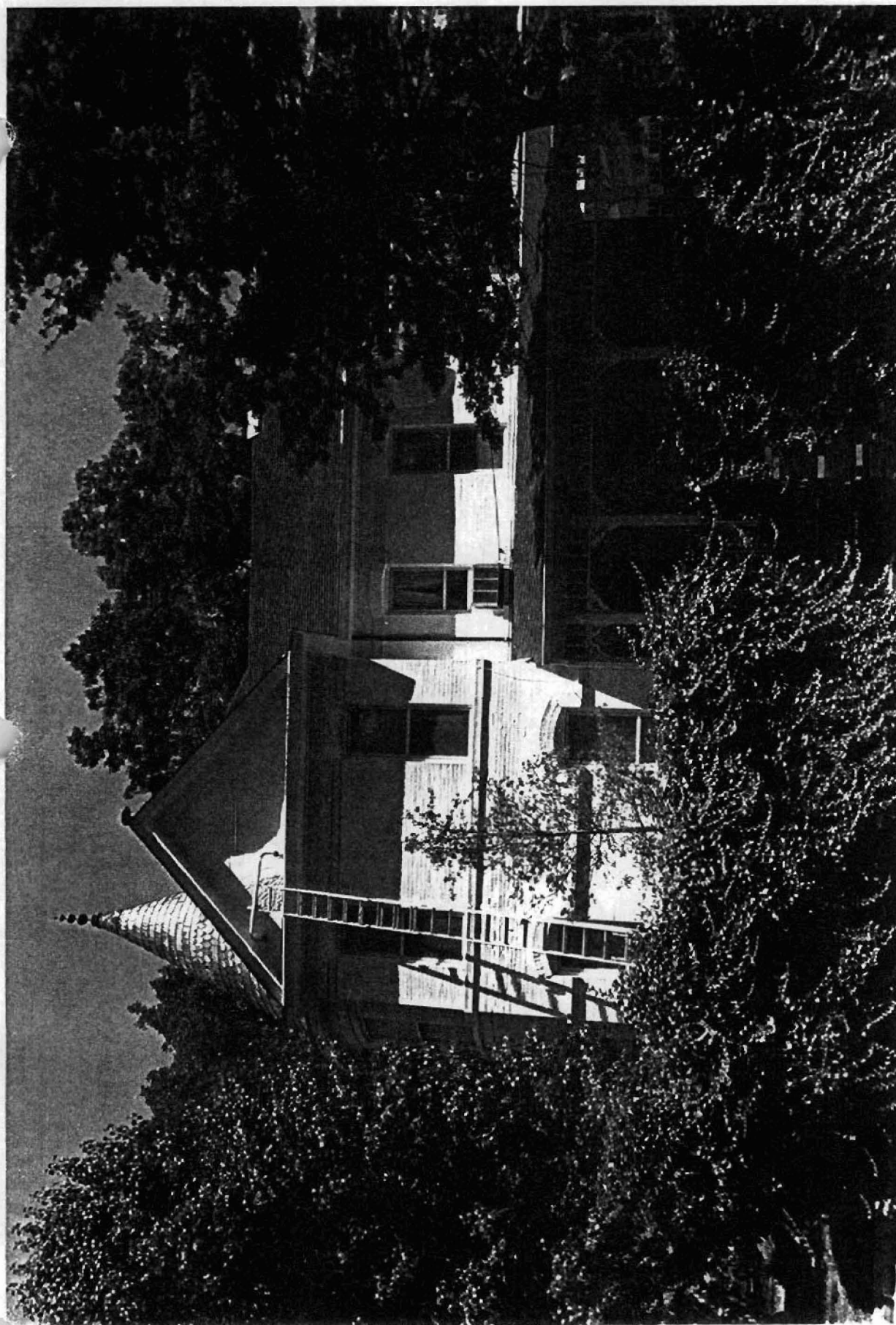


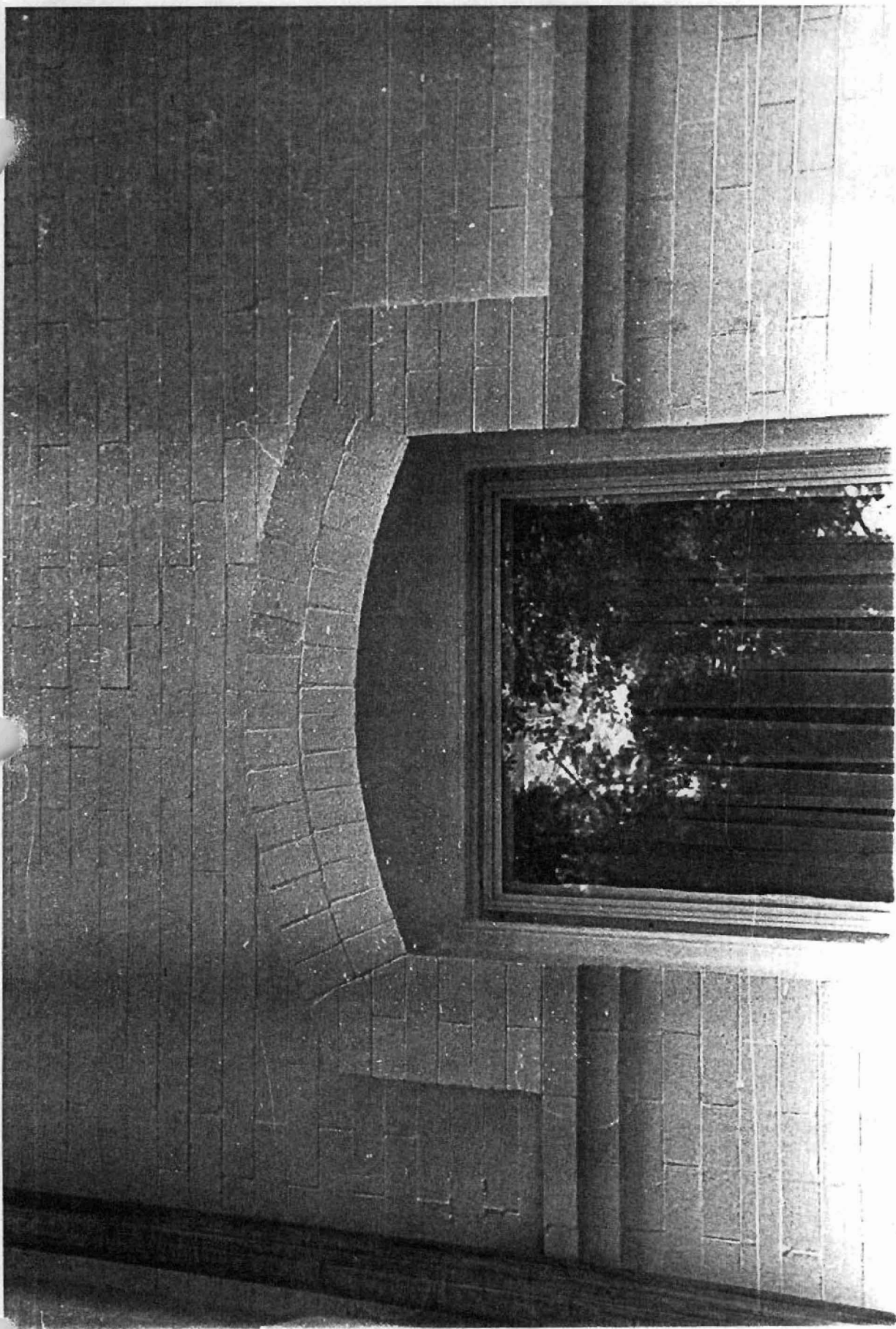


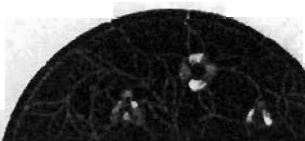
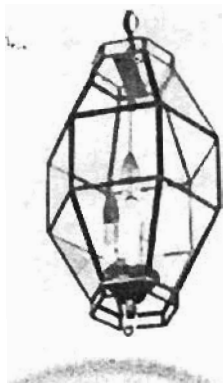






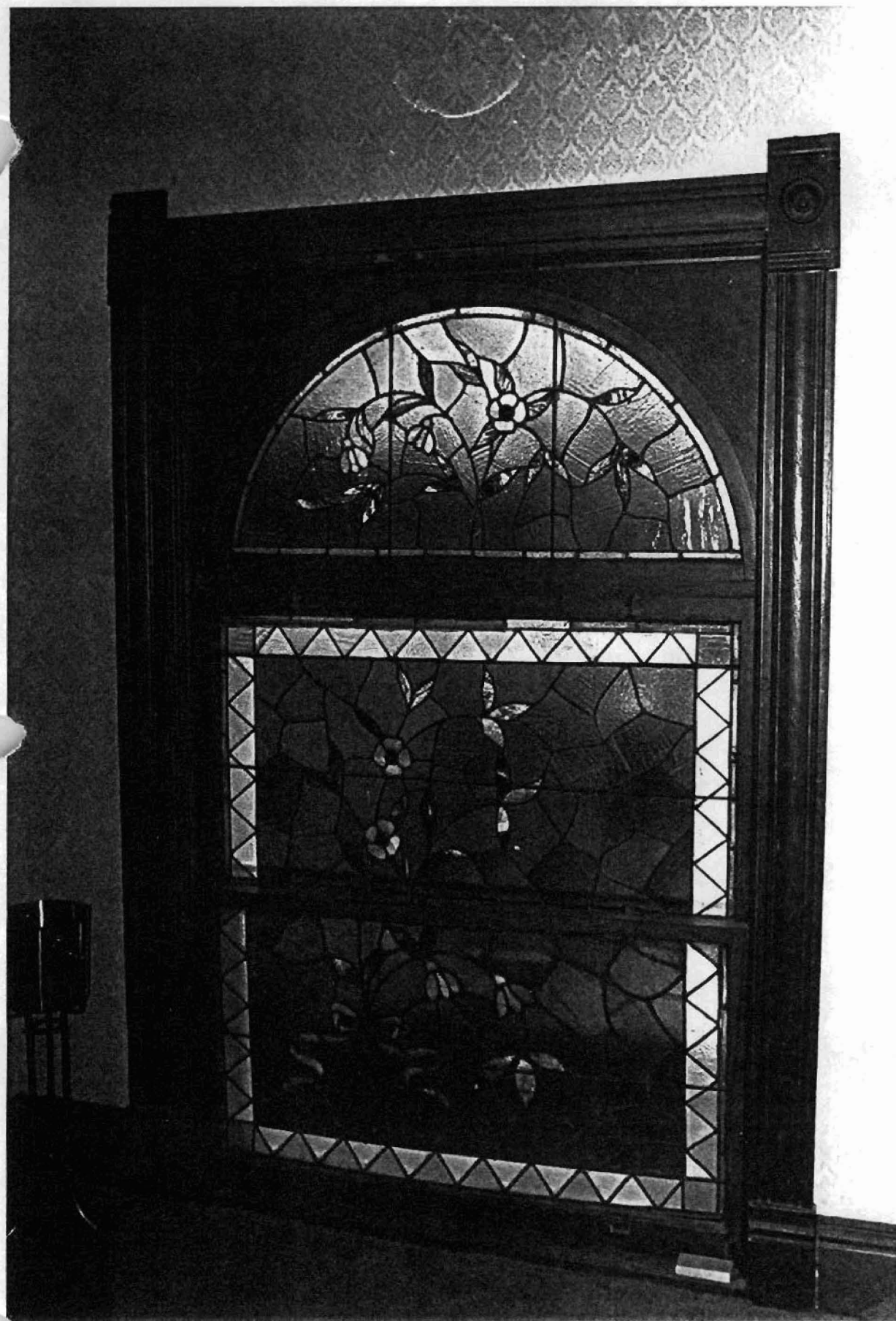














Berger House
 1120 South Main Street
 Jonesboro
 Craighead Co., Arkansas
 UTM: 15/707340/3967540

