

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR-10-5-2009

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 Old School Presbyterian Churchother names/site number Van Buren Women's Literary Club / Site # CW0069

2. Location

street & number 421 Webster Street☐ not for publicationcity or town Van Buren☐ vicinitystate Arkansas code AR county Crawford code 033 zip code 72041

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Cecile Shattuck 8/3/09
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 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

Old School Presbyterian Church

Name of Property

Crawford County, Arkansas

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

buildings

sites

structures

objects

1

0

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/Religious Facility

EDUCATION/Library

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/Clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain Traditional

MID-19TH CENTURY/Gothic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Old School Presbyterian Church
Name of Property

Crawford County, Arkansas
County and State

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.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- ☐ A. owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B. removed from its original location.
- ☐ C. birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ D. a cemetery.
- ☐ E. a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F. a commemorative property.
- ☐ G. less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1903, 1919-1959

Significant Dates

1903, 1919

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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):

- ☐ 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

Name of repository:

Van Buren Women's Literary Club, Van Buren, AR

Old School Presbyterian Church

Name of Property

Crawford County, Arkansas

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 377073 3922076
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____
☐ 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 Lynn Rotert, Trustee, Van Buren Women's Literary Club; Edited by Van Zbinden, National Register Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 21 May 2009
street & number 323 Center Street, 1500 Tower Building telephone (501) 324-9880
city or town Little Rock state AR 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 Van Buren Women's Literary Club
street & number 421 Webster Street telephone _____
city or town Van Buren state AR zip code 72956

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 Old School Presbyterian Church is representative of the Gothic Revival style of architecture. However the church is reflective of a plain-traditional architecture more than a true Gothic Revival. The training and background of Reverend Finney, the reported designer, is unknown and the building lacks a formality seen in other Gothic Revival structures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Old School Presbyterian Church is somewhat more reflective of middle nineteenth century architecture.

Elaboration

The Old School Presbyterian Church, now known as the Van Buren Women's Literary Club is located one block southwest of the downtown Main Street area and one block east of the county court house. The single-story brick structure was built in 1903 in the Gothic Revival style, from plans drawn by Reverend Finney who was pastor of the church at that time. The church sits at the northwest corner of Webster and 5th streets.

The building rests on the cut-stone foundation of the original Old School Presbyterian Church, built circa 1845. The red brick walls are laid in a running bond pattern with stone topped buttresses on all four elevations. Four wood-framed windows adorn the northeast and southwest walls of the building. All of the Gothic-arched windows are glazed with clear glass with the exception of the first window on the northeast side. This window contains stained glass in the top arched section. A large, double-arched window fenestrates the front of the structure. The lower halves of these windows are covered by open-work, iron grills installed at an unknown point to protect the glass. The brick walls rise to shallow, closed eaves at the front-facing gable roof. A vestibule occupies the southeast corner of the building and above the front door is a wood-framed arched window with clear glass. A rectangular window is on the northeast side of the vestibule. Wooden shingles are under the gabled roof above the front door. There are concrete steps with an iron railing leading to the front door.

Southeast Façade/Front

This southeast façade faces Webster Street. The entrance is on the east side of the façade. This simple, single-door entrance is reached at the top of two stairs. The doorway is topped by a pointed three-part window with clear glazing. The bay rises to a shingled pediment under a gable roof. Originally, this was the base of a 35 foot tower. That tower was removed at some point between 1914 and 1922, though it is unknown why it was removed.

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The main bay of the façade is to the west of the entry. This frontispiece is fenestrated by a two-part window topped with a three-part pointed window. The façade is supported by stone topped buttresses at the corners of each bay. These buttresses rise three-fourths of the height of the building and are uniform thickness top to bottom.

Northeast Elevation/Side

Facing 5th Street, the northeast elevation is a very symmetrical elevation. The side is comprised of two bays. The southernmost bay is the northeast side of what was the tower. This bay is fenestrated by one, one-by-one window with clear glazing. Each corner of the bay is supported by buttresses.

The main bay of the elevation is fenestrated by four, double-hung, pointed, three-over-two windows. The one exception is the southern most window of the bay where the top three-part glazing has been replaced with stained glass. Additionally the bay has three equally spaced buttresses. The bay sits on the continuous stone foundation and rises to a shallow, closed eave at the roof.

Northwest elevation/Rear

The northwest elevation is the rear of the church and faces an alley though it is visible from 5th street. The plain brick wall is fenestrated by one round louvered vent. Two buttresses support provide support at the corners. The brick veneer rises through the pediment directly to the end-facing gable roof.

Southwest Elevation/Side

The southwest elevation is a symmetrical match to the northeast elevation. The elevation lacks the entrance tower at the southern most corner but the windows and buttresses are in the same location and style as those on the opposite side.

Interior

The interior is three rooms. The foyer at the entrance has little in the way of decoration save a tongue-and-groove ceiling. From this entrance one moves toward the northwest into the main room of the church. This main room features wide-planked, hardwood floors and eight inch base boards. The large, open room has no stage and the floor is flat. A row of two supporting columns runs down the middle of the floor. There is no stage or dais in the room. The original ceiling is hidden under square acoustical tile installed in the 1950s. In the northwest corner of the main room is a nine-foot plywood wall. This partition hides a toilet, sink, and counter originally added in 1921 but since updated.

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Integrity

Little has been done to alter the original 1903 structure. The most significant change was the loss or removal of the tower between 1914 and 1922. The interior renovations in no way detract from the original form of the structure and do not reflect on the exterior. When the church moved to First Presbyterian in 1919 the stained glass windows were removed and placed in that church. This change to clear glazing has become historic and is more appropriate to a library/clubhouse than the stained glass glazing. In the late 1970s an asphalt shingle roof was placed on the structure. It is unknown if this roof replaced a pre-existing asphalt shingle roof, or if this replaced some earlier roof type.

The church building fits well into the neighborhood. The house adjacent to the west, the William Heard Residence (CW0070), was constructed circa 1856. This Greek Revival home, along with the church, contributes to the feeling of the block; giving the block a feeling of the nineteenth century. On the three corners of 5th and Webster streets opposite the church the structures have been torn down for surface parking lots. What were once single family residential dwellings were lost to commercial structures as suburban neighborhoods grew and commercial zoning laws required sizeable off-street parking areas.

In many ways, the Old School Presbyterian Church, is reflective of a plain-traditional architecture than a true Gothic Revival. The training and background of Reverend Finney is unknown and the building lacks a formality seen in other Gothic Revival structures of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Old School Presbyterian Church is somewhat more reflective of middle nineteenth century architecture. There are other gothic Revival Churches in Van Buren. The Mount Olive United Methodist Church (NR listed 7/30/1976) is approximately eight blocks from the Old School Presbyterian Church and has a more formal feel than the more plain-traditional Old School Presbyterian. The First Presbyterian, which replaced Old School is Classical Revival. Woods Memorial Christian Church is Classical Revival. There are few churches in Van Buren that have the feeling, association, and workmanship of plain-traditional late nineteenth century structures.

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Summary

The Old School Presbyterian Church, more commonly known as the Van Buren Women's Literary Club (the preferred name), was constructed 1901 to 1903. The official dedication of the church was held September 12, 1903. This "new" Old School Presbyterian Church sat on the foundation of the first church constructed circa 1845. The Gothic Revival style structure was built to serve the religious needs of the community's Presbyterian communion. From 1903 to 1919 the building remained in continuous use. In 1919, the church sold the building after combining with other churches to form First Presbyterian Church.

After briefly serving as the home of the Royal Order of Moose Lodges, Order 1039, the building was purchased as the home of the Van Buren Women's Literary Club. This club was formed in 1896 with the mission of advancing education for their members as well as the people of their city. It was the work of this club that led to the creation of the Van Buren Library and it was this club that staffed the library for free into the 1930s. The city of Van Buren continued to use the Van Buren Women's Literary Club building as its library into the early 1970s. Many, many residents of Van Buren have fond memories of days spent in the library. It is because of this that the Old School Presbyterian Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A with Local Significance**.

Elaboration

The Old School Presbyterian Church came into existence by the benevolence of two founding fathers of Van Buren. John Drennen, a businessman, donated the property, and Dr. James A. Dibrell, a noted physician and surgeon, assisted with finances. Their efforts were possibly prompted by the statement of a missionary to the Indians who said Van Buren had more than the usual share of sin.

Arkansas was still a District of the Territory of Missouri when in 1818, David Boyd arrived at the future town site of Van Buren. His arrival was the first recorded event in the history of Van Buren. Although Boyd was the first to arrive, he was not the first white settler. Thomas Martin was the first settler and claimed his rights to the land, which later became a boat landing and a small settlement. In 1819, Arkansas was established as a Territory. Daniel and Thomas Phillips settled in the area of Martin's claim and established a wood yard for supplying fuel to the flat-bottomed steamboats that traveled the Arkansas River. The small community became known as Phillips Landing.¹

¹ Clara B. Eno, *History of Crawford County, Arkansas*, (Van Buren, Arkansas: Press Argus, 1950), 27-9.

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The city is situated in Crawford County, Arkansas, and it was the largest county in Arkansas upon its establishment in 1820. Prior to this, Crawford County was part of eight counties and also part of the Indian Territory. The county was named for William Harris Crawford (1772-1834), who was secretary of the treasury under President Monroe. The March 30, 1831, issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* carried a notice that a post office had been established at Phillip's Landing with Major Thomas Phillips appointed postmaster. This post office was named for Martin Van Buren, Secretary of State, appointed by President Jackson.

As the community began to grow, the business and commerce of the region began to expand, quickly becoming the center of commerce for the distribution of goods for northwest Arkansas. John Henry & Company, along with John Drennen and David Thompson established general stores and ferry operations. By 1835, Drennen and Thompson became prominent members of that community. Drennen represented Crawford County at the Constitutional Convention and helped to write the first Constitution of Arkansas. Drennen, Thompson, and others, established the town of Columbus very near the property of the Phillips brothers. Seeing the competition, the Phillips brothers laid out plots of land in their new town in 1836 and advertised them for sale in the *Arkansas Gazette* in April of that year. David Thompson and John Drennen, noting this advertisement, left their lucrative business in Columbus, and purchased the "new Town of Van Buren" from the brothers for \$11,000 on January 1, 1837. Thompson and Drennen then purchased an additional 263 acre tract owned by Hugh and Prudence Pierce on September 29, 1837, for \$500 to expand their city plan. These two men generously gave a ten acre plot early in 1837 for a new cemetery which still exists today as Fairview Cemetery. In 1839, they donated Block 14 for the Court House and jail.²

The State Legislature first incorporated Van Buren on December 24, 1842, but it was reincorporated on January 4, 1845. Van Buren became the county seat and Drennen donated land for use as a public square in the center of town and for the location of the Crawford County Courthouse. The first newspaper, *The Intelligencer*, was published in 1842, and the first railway, The Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway, arrived in 1853.³

On April 13, 1851, Congress passed an act that provided for two terms of the Federal court of the Western District of Arkansas to be held yearly in Van Buren. The first recorded term was held in the Crawford County Courthouse in May of 1854 with the Honorable Judge Daniel Ringo presiding. With the secession of Arkansas from the United States at the onset of the Civil War, Ringo resigned and the Federal Court ceased operation. During the Battle of Van Buren on December 28, 1862, Federal Troops destroyed all courthouse records dating from 1855 to 1860. After the raid on Van Buren, the Federal Court of the Western District of

² *Ibid.*, 52-66.

³ *Ibid.*

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Arkansas was moved to Fort Smith, Arkansas. Then on March 23, 1877, the courthouse burned, destroying most of the records with only a few surviving the fire.⁴

The Old School Presbyterians were organized into a "society" in 1844 and erected a brick and wood structure on Lots 7 and 8 in Block 17 at the cost of \$1,200. The proposals for the building were published in the town's first newspaper, *The Intelligencer*. The building was 62 feet long, 40 feet wide, and 20 feet high. The brick walls featured eight windows and a wide double front door. In the vestibule, were two staircases leading to the gallery. A cupola rested 27 feet above the cone roof. Dr. Dibrell was quoted as saying the fine acoustic properties were planned by the famous Washington sculptor, Clark Mills, whose equestrian statue of General Andrew Jackson stands in the nation's capital.⁵ Rev. W. K. Marshall served as pastor during the construction of the church.

Many of the prominent of families of Van Buren attended the services at the church including many Cherokee Indians who had become Christians. Sarah, the wife of Judge Paschal and daughter of Cherokee Major John Ridge, was a prominent member of the church. Rev. Cephas Washburn, a well known Presbyterian missionary to the Cherokees and author of the book *Reminiscences of the Indians*, often visited.⁶

During the Civil War the Old School Presbyterian Church was used as a hospital for both Northern and Southern troops. The building became a troop headquarters after General James Blount entered the town in December of 1862. Cannon balls tore through the roof and rafters, but the building was the least damaged of all the churches. After the war, the members of the church and the people of Van Buren decided it was more practical to repair the Old School Church first so that it might be used by all congregations and for all practical purposes, became a Union church. It was not only used for worship, weddings and funerals but for all types of meetings and entertainment.

After enduring many years of use by the community and abuse during the Civil War, it was decided that the original structure be dismantled and a "new" Old School Presbyterian Church be erected on the foundation.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27-56.

⁵ Editor's note: Clark Mills was primarily a sculptor. He is best known for casting the first bronze equestrian statue in the United States; that being the statue of Andrew Jackson in Lafayette Square, Washington, DC, completed in 1852. In the 1840s, Mills was living in Charleston, SC, and working in decorative plaster; it was at this time that he developed an innovative way to create plaster life-masks. Though his sculptures showed a complex understanding of engineering principals, he was never known to have worked as an architect or carpenter. His connection to the Old School Presbyterian Church is tenuous. See U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *Mills, Clark, Studio*, by James Dillon, January 5, 1975, 3, NHLS 66000703; Available online at <http://nrlp.focus.nps.gov/natreghome.do?searchtype=natreghome>, record number 139904. Accessed May 21, 2009.

⁶ Cephas Washburn, *Reminiscences of the Indians* (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1869). Also Cephas Washburn, *Reminiscences of the Indians*, ed. Hugh Park (Van Buren, AR: The Press-Argus, 1955).

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A committee of Miss Nanny Rea, Mrs. William Bostick, and Mr. James Barrett was chosen to make plans for a new structure. Reverend Finney, pastor of the Baptist Church, a noted draftsman, drew up plans and presented them to the congregation as a gift. While dismantling and construction took place, the congregation met with the Cumberland congregation of Jefferson Street. Mr. Pope and Mr. Plevins were selected as contractors and brick work was to be done by Mr. Kelton and Sherd Hunter. A beloved minister, Reverend E. P. Pillans, came as pastor and spent time soliciting money for the building fund. His efforts would provide the congregation with a debt-free building at the time of its dedication.

The "new" Old School Presbyterian Church was officially dedicated on Sunday, September 12, 1903 after two years of building. However, services had been held in the building since May 16th. Rev. Pillans conducted the dedication service, assisted by Rev. William Sherman of the Methodist Church South. Mrs. George Sparks and Mrs. G. F. Hynes, daughters of Dr. James Dibrell were in attendance. The ladies had given a stained-glass window in memory of their father of "Jesus Knocking at the Door." This window now graces the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church of Van Buren.

In 1906, the congregations of the Old School Presbyterian Church and the Cumberland Church merged but would worship at the Old School building. In 1908, Dr. W. B. Miller was called to pastor the church and would remain with them for almost half a century. Under the leadership of this much beloved minister, the congregation would soon outgrow their present structure. After consulting with several architects, all agreed that it would be impossible to enlarge the sanctuary. On June 17, 1914, a corporation was formed allowing the First Presbyterian Church of Van Buren to be organized. Directors/Trustees were W. H. H. Shibley, J. A. Barrett, J. E. Blakemore, R. J. Miller, and L. F. Sherwood, with Dr. Miller serving as Moderator. On April 30, 1915, rights to the property of the Old School Presbyterian Church were dissolved under the direction of Washburn Presbytery, a ruling department of the Presbyterian Church. Then new church would be constructed on the corner of 10th and Jefferson, where it remains to this day.

On May 19, 1919, the Old School Presbyterian Church was sold to T.L. Wallace for \$1,500. Ownership then passed to the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge, Order 1039 and would remain in their possession until January 20, 1921. On this date, the Women's Literary Club would purchase the property and it remains in their possession to this day.

The Women's Literary Club of Van Buren was organized March 3, 1896, in the home of Mrs. J.M. Wood by Miss Margaret Wood. This group is believed to be the oldest club of its kind in the southwest. The object of the club was self improvement by the study of general literature and to establish a library in Van Buren where none existed. The first study meeting was held at the home of Mrs. Lewis Bryan and the lesson subject was Chaucer. It was at this meeting, the group voted to begin purchasing reference books, working toward their goal of opening a library.

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The first yearbook bears the date 1899-1900. From 1896-1904 the club studied only English Literature, devoting one year to Shakespeare. The 1904-1905 year was devoted to American Literature.

The second meeting was held on March 10, 1896, electing the following officers: President, Mrs. Lewis Bryan; Vice President, Mrs. Jesse Wood; Secretary, Mrs. O. M. Bourland; Treasurer, Mrs. McKinney. Mrs. Coppage, Mrs. Pierce, and Miss Wood made up the executive committee. The Club voted to meet every two weeks throughout the year, that dues would be ten cents per month, and that they would study English Literature. The club selected the colors of green and pink, the LeFrance rose as its flower, and the motto, "Strength United is Stronger."

One of the most memorable occasions in the long history of the Women's Literary Club was an elaborate banquet given in honor of famed orator, William Jennings Bryan in 1897. Mr. Bryan's cousin, Mrs. Lewis Bryan, served as president of the club at the time.

The one purpose of the Women's Literary Club has always been to promote education, not only with its membership, but also within the community. The ladies who were, and are its members, have consistently worked to improve conditions where possible. Not only did they strive to improve education but they have also worked in the past to improve health and living condition in the city of Van Buren. In 1901, the Women's Literary Club members formed the Village Improvement Club for the city. This club hoped to improve sanitary conditions in the town. In World War I and World War II they devoted countless hours to relief work for the American Red Cross.

In her history of the Women's Literary Club Library, noted Van Buren historian, Clara B. Eno asks, "Do the citizens of Van Buren realize what the Women's Literary Club Library means to the town of Van Buren?" She goes on to add that one bookcase was set aside for the high school supplementary reading, with several copies of each subject.

Meetings were held in the homes of members until 1914, when Henry Meyer generously offered the club use of a room on South 5th Street in which to meet and to open a library. They continued to meet at South 5th Street until the spring of 1921 when the club purchased the Old School Presbyterian Church building from the Loyal Order of Moose Lodge, Order 1039.

Club members took turns operating the library and offered it rent-free to the city of Van Buren for 52 years. The library was open twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday from three to five p.m. During the months of July, August, and September, it was open on the same days but only from four to five p.m. A full-time librarian was hired in the 1930s thanks to a government grant for her salary. Little change was made to the building with the exception of adding a restroom in the 1930s and lowering the ceiling in the 1950s.

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Very little has changed with the building since the city of Van Buren moved its library in 1973. The Women's Literary Club continues to have regular meetings and continues to maintain a small library and collection in the building. The members of the Van Buren Women's Literary Club continue to promote education in the city. Many of the members today are former teachers and some assist at the Adult Education Center. Club members continue to carry on the spirit of learning, knowing the importance it plays in personal growth.

Statement of Significance

Without the efforts of the Van Buren Women's Literary Club the city of Van Buren may well have had no public library well into the twentieth century. The mission of this organization to educate and advance the community well being was an integral part of making Van Buren what it is today. A large number of people have fond memories of this building as the city's library. In that role this building was an integral part of the education of the community.

As the home of the Van Buren Women's Literary Club from 1921 to the present, and as the Moose Lodge prior to that, the building has played a significant role in the social history of the community. It is because of these factors that the Old School Presbyterian Church is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A with Local Significance**.

Old School Presbyterian Church

Name of Property

Crawford County, Arkansas

County and State

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_____. *Reminiscences of the Indians*. Ed. Hugh Park. Van Buren, AR: The Press-Argus, 1955.

Crawford County Abstract Co., Inc. Information from deed transfers.

Old School Presbyterian Church

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

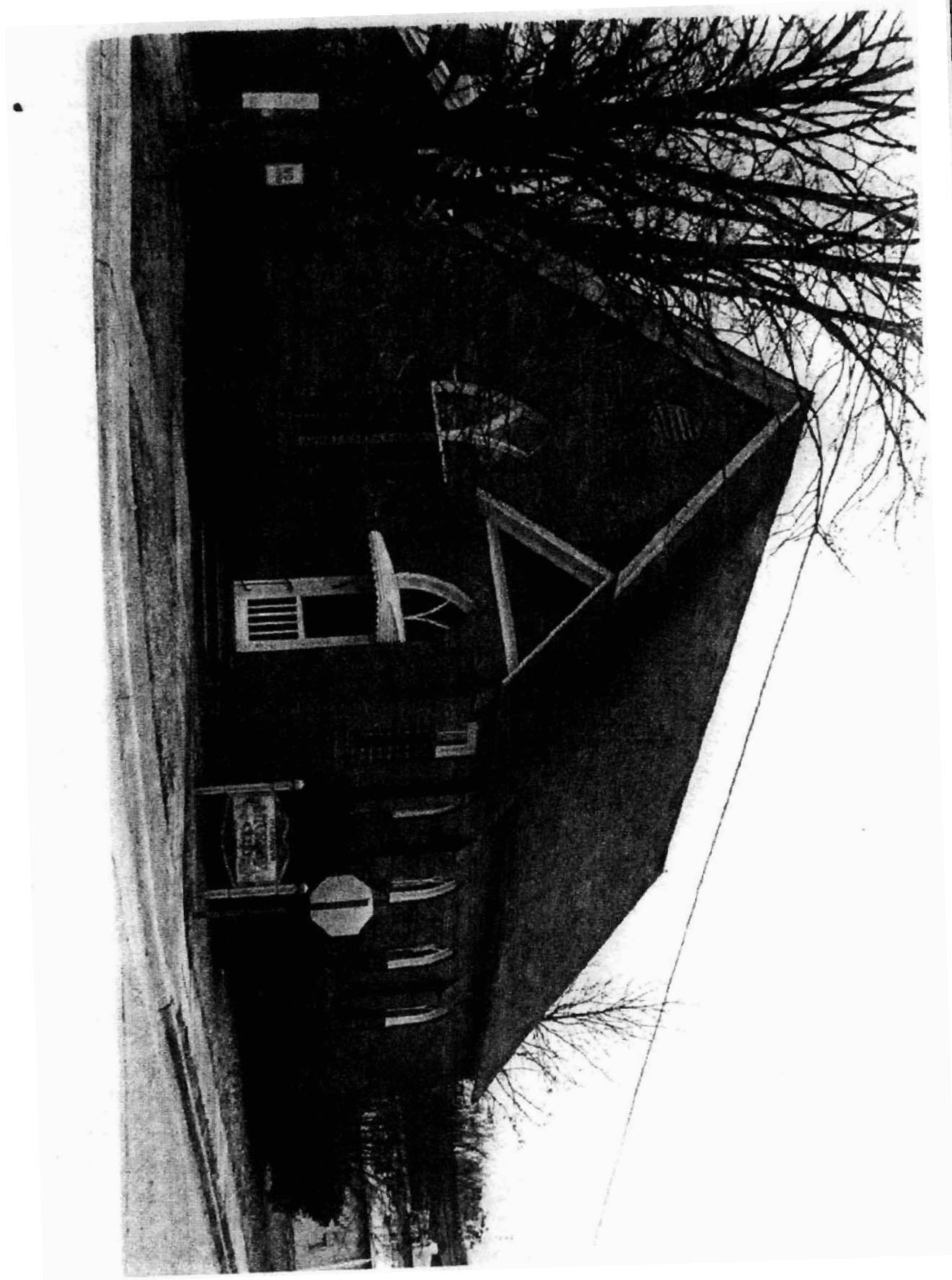
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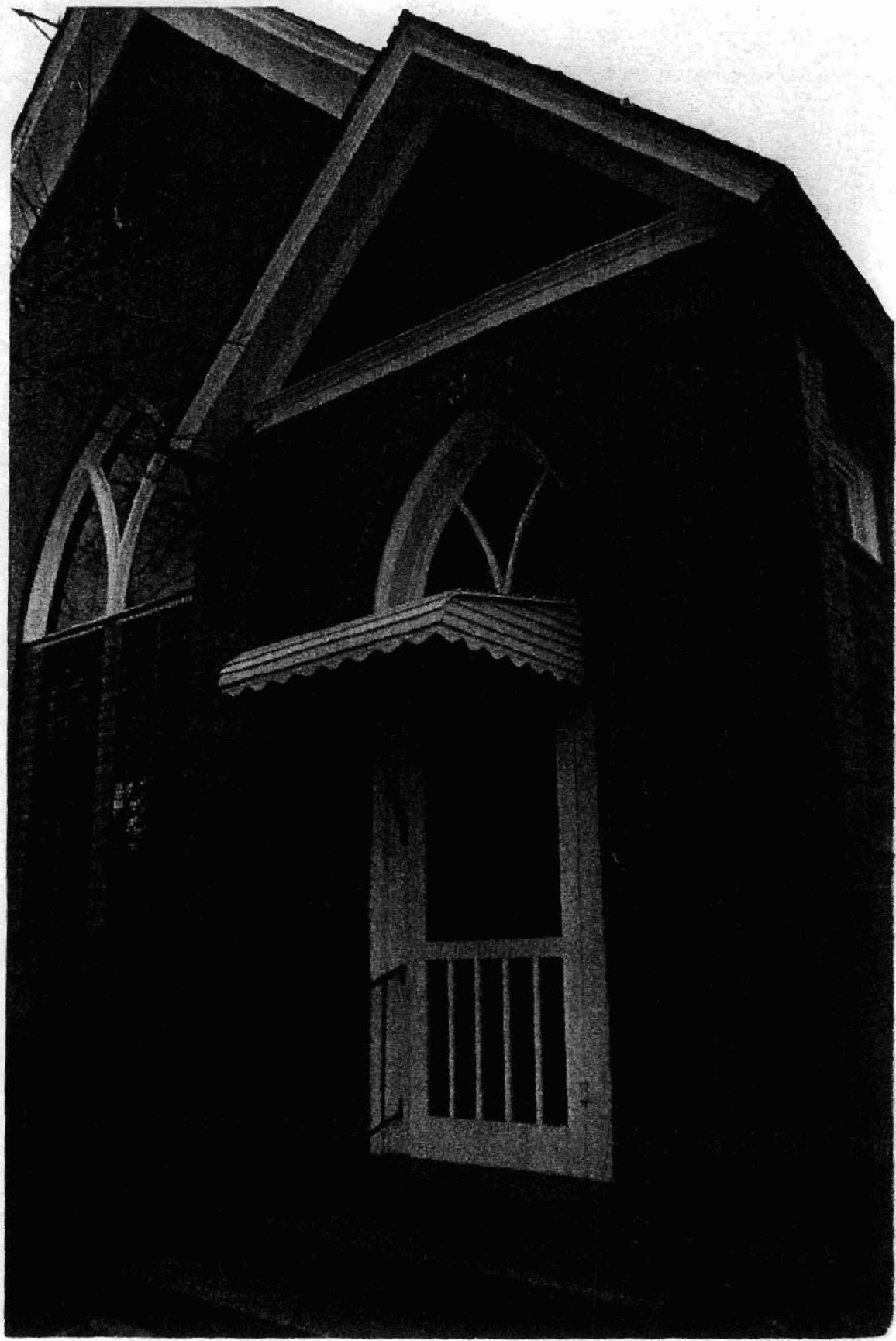
Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 7 and 8 in block 17, original Town of Van Buren, Arkansas.

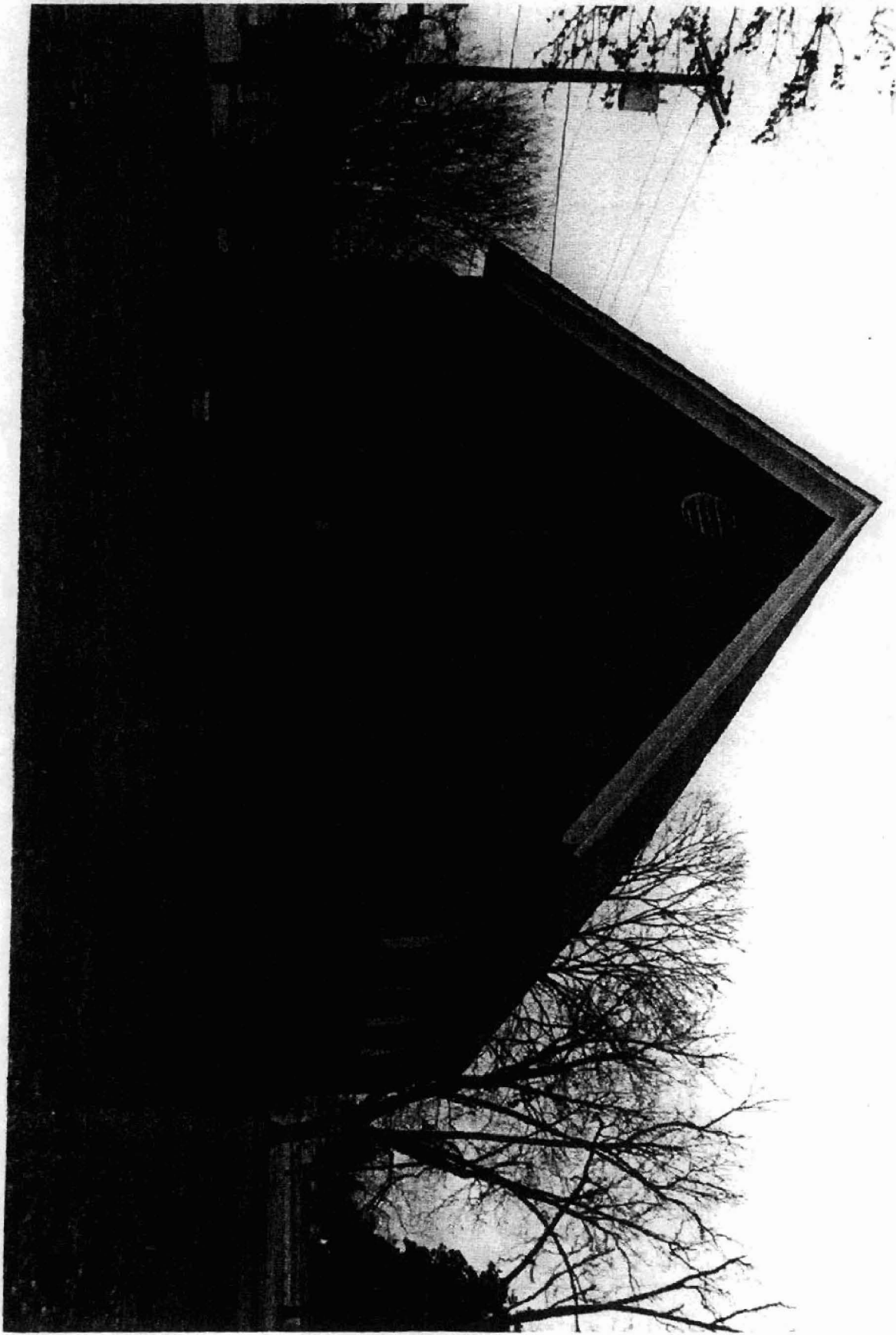
Boundary Justification

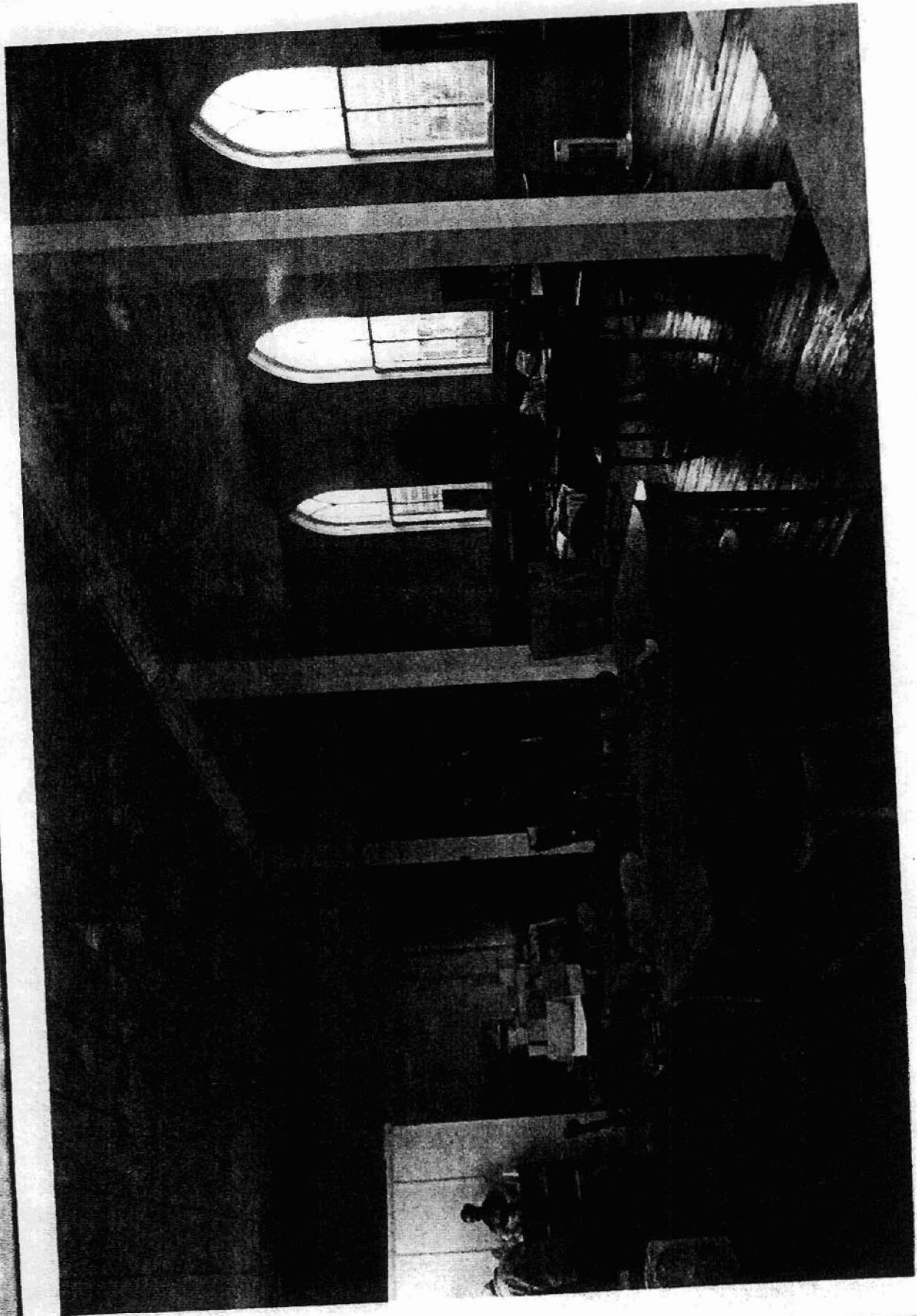
The boundary contains all of the land historically associated with the Old School Presbyterian Church, now the Women's Literary Club of Van Buren.

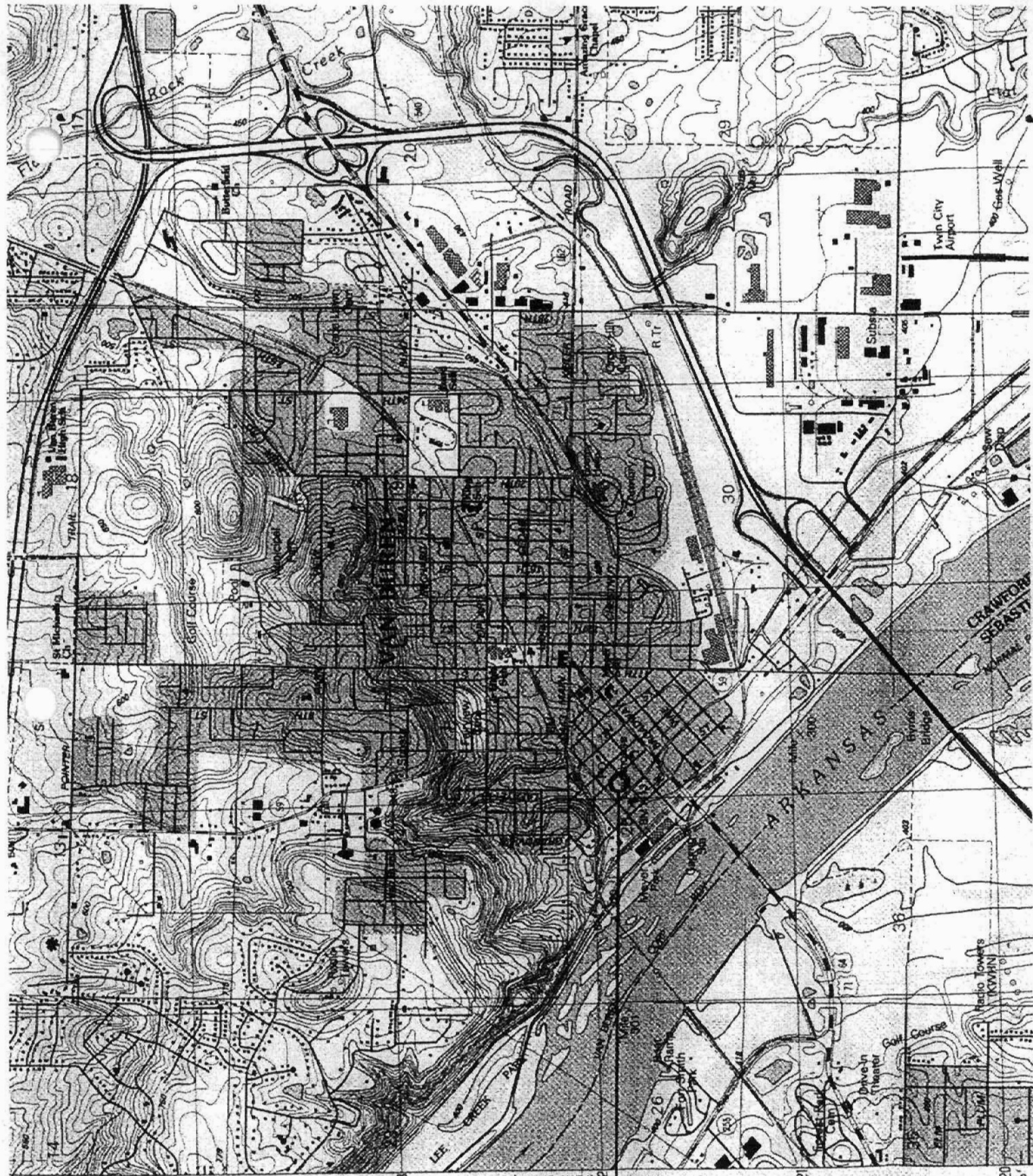












27° 30"

32° 20'

32° 20'

7154 N NW
(FORT SMITH)

32° 20'

25'

OLD SCHOOL
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH,
VAN BUREN,
CRAWFORD CO.
UTM REFERENCE:
15/377073/
3922076