

*Crawford Co.
Chester
Chester Masonic Lodge & Community Building*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building

Other Name/Site Number: (CW0455)

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2. Location

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Street & Number: Corner of Front Street and Dickson Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Chester

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Crawford

Code: AR033 Zip Code: 72934

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: public-local

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building

Name of Property

Crawford County, AR

County and State

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

Cathryn A. Sater

Signature of certifying official

12-20-97

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

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: SOCIAL Sub: meeting hall
Current : SOCIAL Sub: meeting hall

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

OTHER: Plain Traditional

Materials: foundation STONE roof ASPHALT
walls Weatherboard other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary:

Located on the corner of Front Street and Dickson Street in Chester in Crawford County, the Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building was constructed in 1942. The Plain Traditional rural community building remains wonderfully intact with exterior alterations limited to the installation of exterior metal security doors. Rectangular in plan, this two-story frame building was designed to accommodate a community building and church on the first floor and a Masonic lodge on the second floor. A belfry, which gives a religious overtone to the exterior of this dual-function building, pierces the gable roof. There are no outbuildings associated with the Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building. A new nine-foot tall chain-link fence is located to the north of the front elevation.

Elaboration:

The Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building is a two-story, frame building with dropped siding that features a simple, rectangular plan with one-story gable covered front and side entryways. Some of the building's materials (most notably the windows) were taken from a two-story 1903 Chester School and Masonic Lodge that was destroyed the previous year to construct a one-story stone-veneer WPA school building. The main gable roof and entryway gables are covered with asphalt shingles and feature exposed rafter ends. The continuous stone foundation incorporates the cornerstone of the earlier Chester School and Masonic Lodge Building. A small interior brick chimney punctuates the roofline on the

center of the northern elevation. The building is located on the corner of Front Street and Dickson Street in the community of Chester in Crawford County.

Exterior Description

The front, or western, elevation is defined by the aforementioned central gable-roof entrance projection. A pair of steps and a wheelchair ramp accesses the double-leaf metal door entry. No windows enliven this elevation only a rectangular louvered wood vent is placed near the peak of the gable end. Like the front elevation, a rectangular louvered wood vent placed near the peak of the gable end punctures the rear (eastern) elevation.

Originally the northern elevation was penetrated on each floor by five evenly spaced four-over-four double-hung wood windows on the first floor and six evenly spaced four-over-four double-hung wood windows on the second floor. Over time as the wood muntins deteriorated, larger panes of glass replaced some of the smaller panes, causing some of the window configurations to become four-over-two, or three-over-four. Some of the windows feature removable wood-frame screens. Access is gained through a single-leaf door located on the northeastern corner of the first floor.

The southern elevation is similar to the northern elevation, however the narrow one-story entry projection is located near the southwest corner of the elevation. The gable-end of the projection features the Masonic crest—an upper case "G" surrounded by a mason's compass and square. The crest is temporarily removed while the building receives a new coat of paint. The interior walls of the projection feature both horizontal and vertical beaded board. Entrance is gained directly to the second story through an interior staircase.

Interior Description

The interior of the building is divided into two stories with no interior access between the floors. The first floor interior is used as a community center and sometimes holds church events. The large open room contains a raised stage to the east with two rooms to either side of the stage. These two rooms are now used as storage for city records. Horizontal beaded board enlivens the walls and two equally spaced center posts support the beaded board ceiling. The floors consist of slender tongue-and-groove hardwood planks. Molded trim with bull's eye corner molding surrounds the windows. The interior double-leaf front doors are each composed of three panels topped by a square glass pane. Unlike the windows, the doors are more plainly trimmed without corner molding. Church pews and a pulpit (originally from a local church that is no longer standing) furnish this level of the building.

The second floor is accessed from the southern elevation entrance by climbing up a steep staircase located at the southwest corner of the building. The staircase hall features both vertical and horizontal beaded board partially covered by wood paneling. Two doors lead from the staircase hall to the large meeting room. The interior of the Masonic meeting room is covered in a veneer of modern paneling, its original ceiling height is lowered by acoustical tile and the floor is covered in carpet. Many furnishings of significance to the Masonic tradition

accentuate the meeting room. These fixtures include a pair of freestanding Egyptian-inspired columns, a centered altar surrounded by three freestanding cast iron electric lamps with working Masonic crest light bulbs, and seating is provided at the sides of the room by theater chairs taken from the demolished Mountainburg Opera House.

Integrity:

The Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building maintains its integrity of location, as the building has not been moved since its 1942 construction. The setting surrounding the building is a small rural town in the foothills of the Ozark Mountains. The addition of metal doors in the building's entrance projection and the installation of a small air-conditioning unit into the rear elevation have had a negligible impact in the overall design of the building. The original local craftsmanship of the Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building is evident in the reuse of materials collected from a previous building and the overall appearance of the building.

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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: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1942

Significant Dates: 1942

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Emory Seratt, Builder

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

Summary:

Built in 1942, the Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building is a two-story, wood frame, Plain Traditional building with a rectangular plan. Inside, many

Original features remain intact. The building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. It meets the eligibility requirements under Criterion C, by retaining a high degree of integrity as a vernacular 1942 Plain Traditional two-story building that employed materials from an earlier building.

Elaboration:

In 1882, the Frisco Railroad completed the tract running south from Fayetteville to Van Buren, past a point near Captain James C. Wright's cabin in the valley of Howard's Fork Creek. The next year Captain Wright built a small store near the tracks, thus establishing the first business enterprise in Chester. The town was named in 1883 for the Iowa hometown of one of the locomotive engineers.

After 1884, when the Frisco Railroad made the decision to designate Chester as a division point for the railroad, Chester began to grow rapidly. In March of 1887, Captain Wright divided the thriving town of Chester on the eastern side of the railroad track into nine blocks. The same year, a two-story red brick building known as the Colonel Jacob Yoes Building (listed in the National Register 6/5/75) was constructed on Front Street. A business directory lists several businesses in the town, including mercantile stores, barber shops, a meat market, a sawmill, a blacksmith shop, and three carpenters. Chester also had doctors, drugstores, hotels, and saloons, along with churches and a combination school and Masonic Lodge hall. By the 1890s the town boasted a population of nearly six-hundred people living in the vicinity of Chester.

However, the railroad boom was short-lived. Near the turn of the nineteenth century, the Frisco Railroad transferred the division point and roundhouse from Chester to Fort Smith. This coupled with destructive fires in 1908 and 1936, and the Great Depression left Chester only a shadow of its former self.

Chester's educational history began about 1844 in a log cabin at the mouth of Howard's Fork. This cabin served as a summer school. In 1882, citizens of the town petitioned for a new school district, and a Union School and Masonic hall were built on the western side of Howard's Fork Creek in Chester. According to the Crawford County Bicentennial Commission's *An Historical Salute to Crawford County*: the two-story school was replaced on site by another two-story, frame building in 1903. In 1941 when the building was demolished to construct the one-story stone-veneer WPA school, the materials from the building were transported across the creek by Mr. Emory Seratt with his wagon and mule team, and he and others built a new dual function two-story building.

Architectural Significance:

The 1942 building is best described as a recycling, not simply a relocation, of materials of an older building. Although the windows and most of the structural elements are recycled from the 1903 two-story building, several differences are evident: the 1903 building had a square plan with simple weatherboard siding, under a hipped roof with boxed rafter ends. Whereas, 1942 Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building is rectangular in plan, the walls are covered in a drop siding, and the roofline features an exposed rafter front gable roof. Other differences that lend distinction to the 1942 building include its gable roofed

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bell tower, single story entrance bays, and interior front doors that are not capped by transoms.

The 1942 Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance. The building has suffered only the enclosing of its originally open front entrance with metal security doors, the addition of an air-conditioning unit in its rear elevation, and some deterioration of its original materials. The building is eligible under Criterion C because it retains a high degree of integrity as a vernacular 1942 Plain Traditional two-story building that employed the use of materials from an earlier building.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Crawford County Bicentennial Commission. "An Historical Salute to Crawford County." Van Buren, Arkansas: *The Courier*, 1975.

Seratt, Emory. Interview by Don Ramey on 3 December 1998.

The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889.

Eno, Clara B. *History of Crawford County.* Van Buren Arkansas: The Press Argus, 1951.

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 15 393560 3948990 B
C D

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots 11 and 12 in Block 4, in the City of Chester, Arkansas.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary contains all the property historically associated with the Chester Masonic Lodge and Community Building.

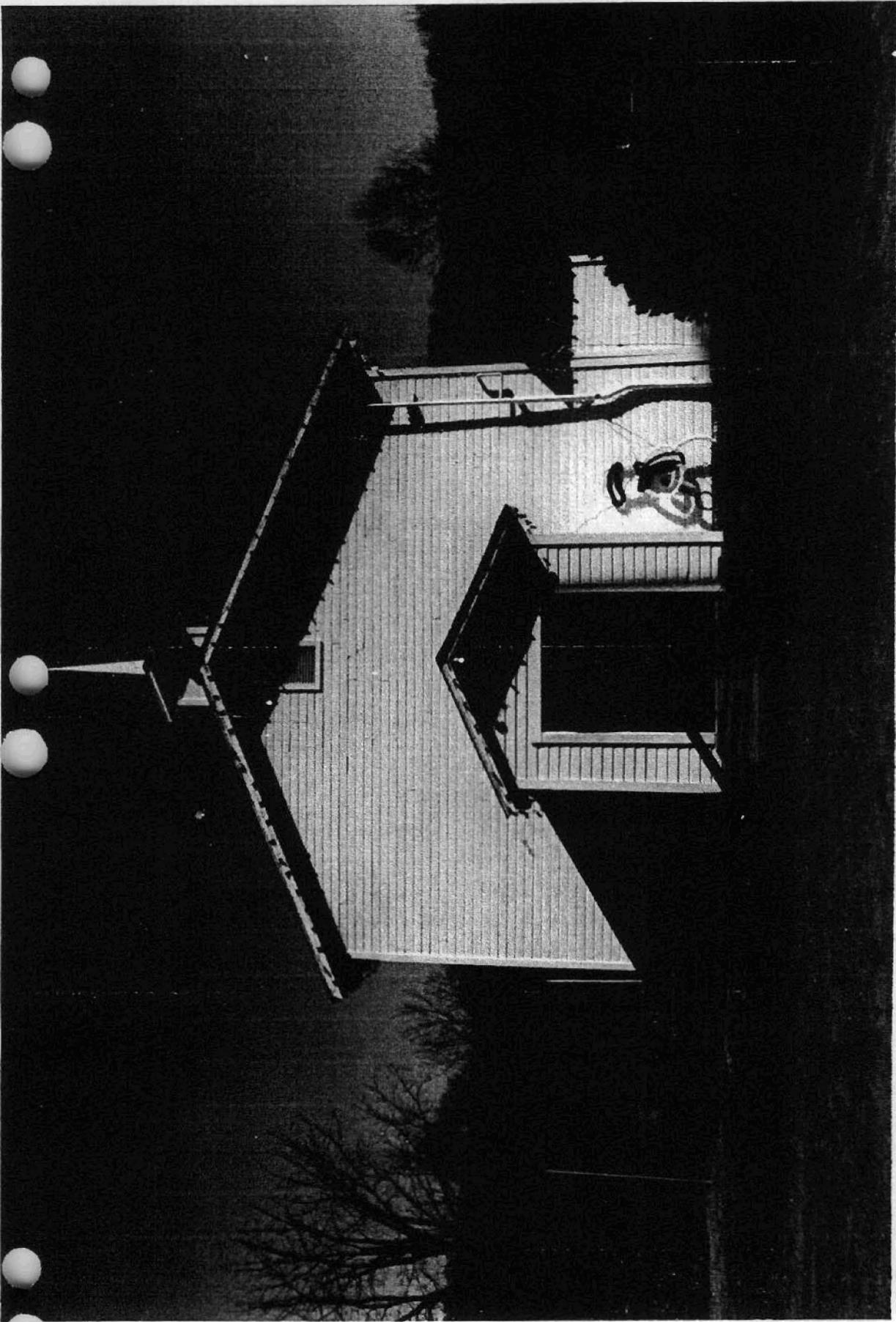
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11. Form Prepared By
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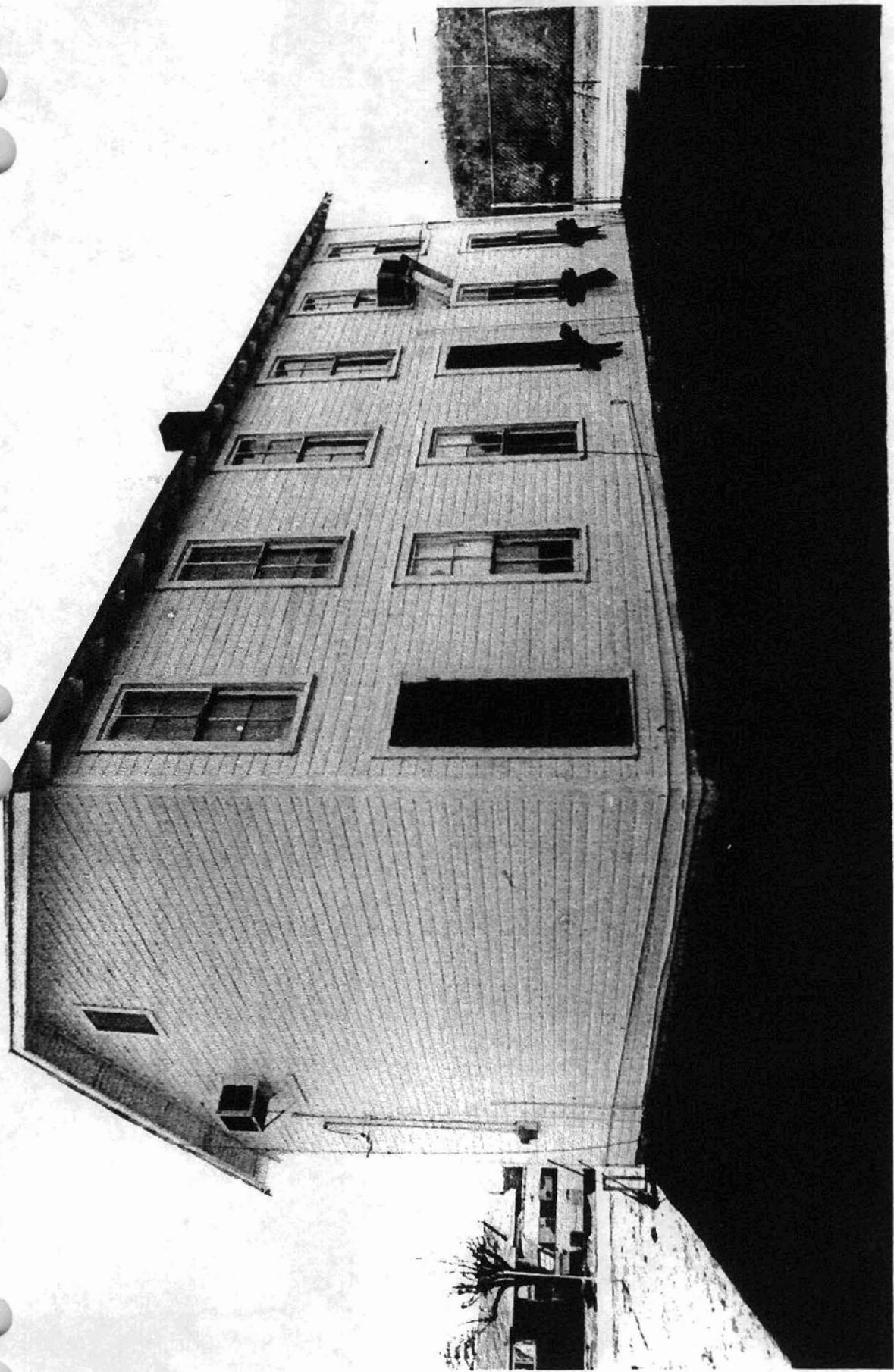
Name/Title: Don Ramey, Crawford-Sebastian Community Development Council Inc.

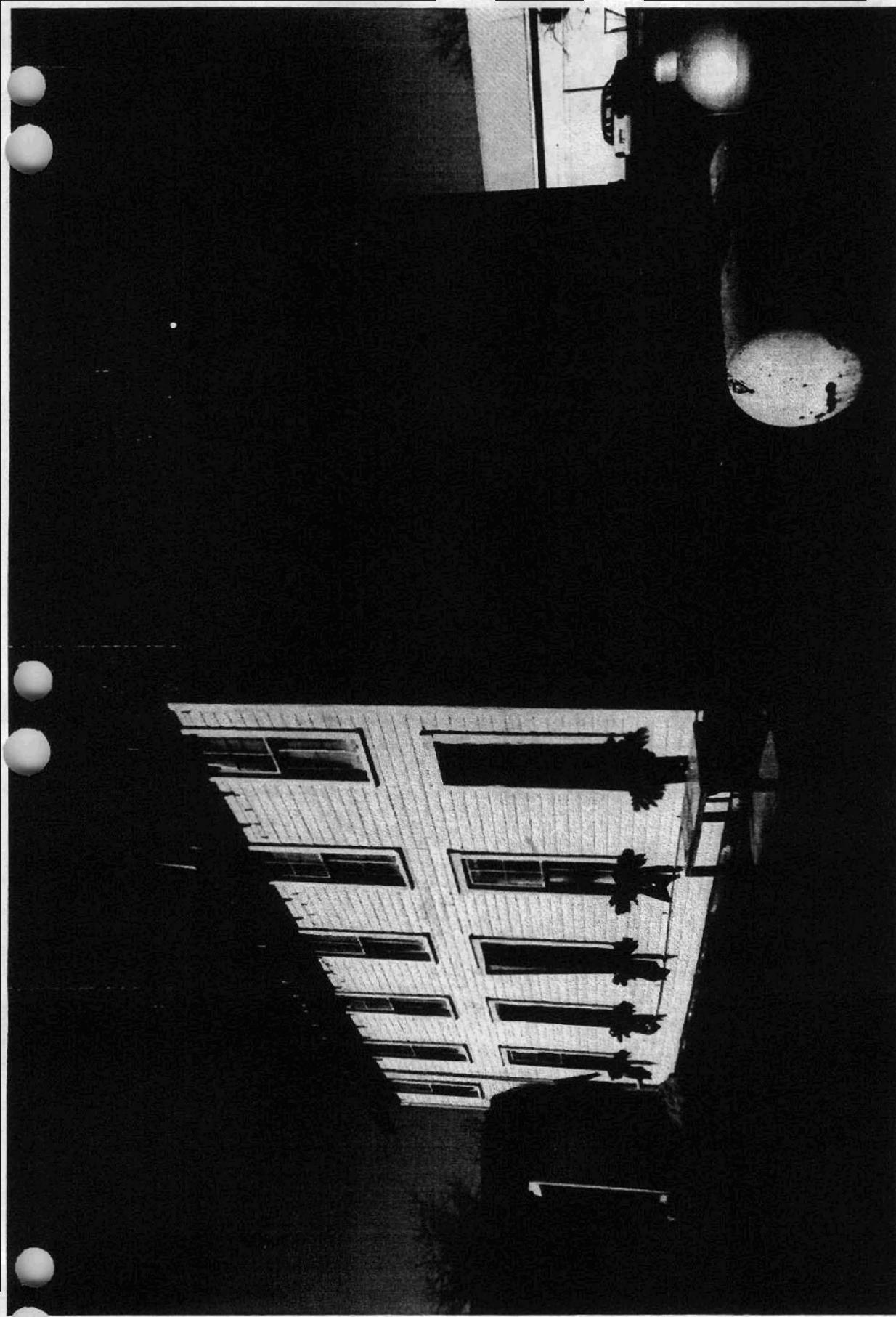
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 12/14/99

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

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

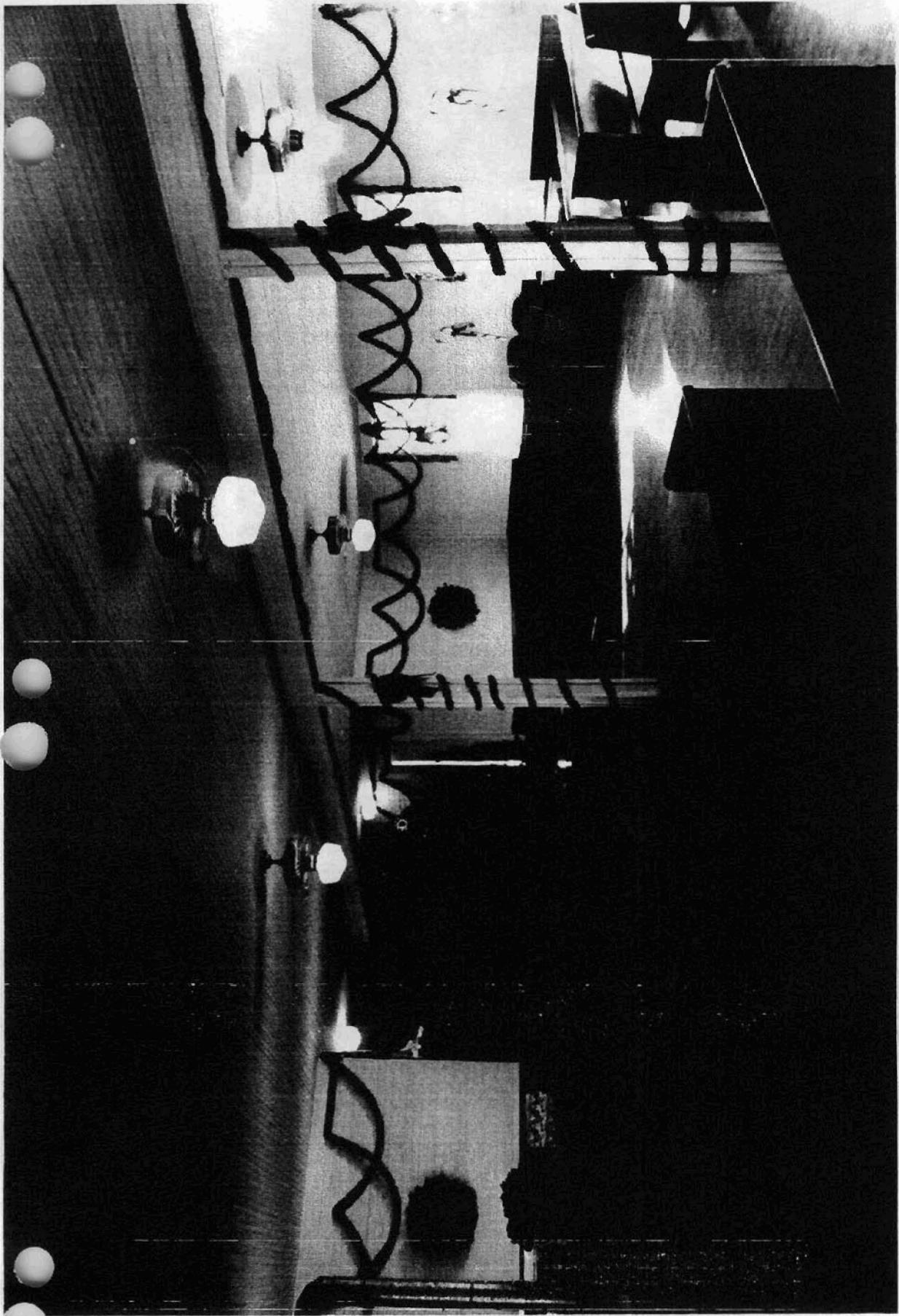


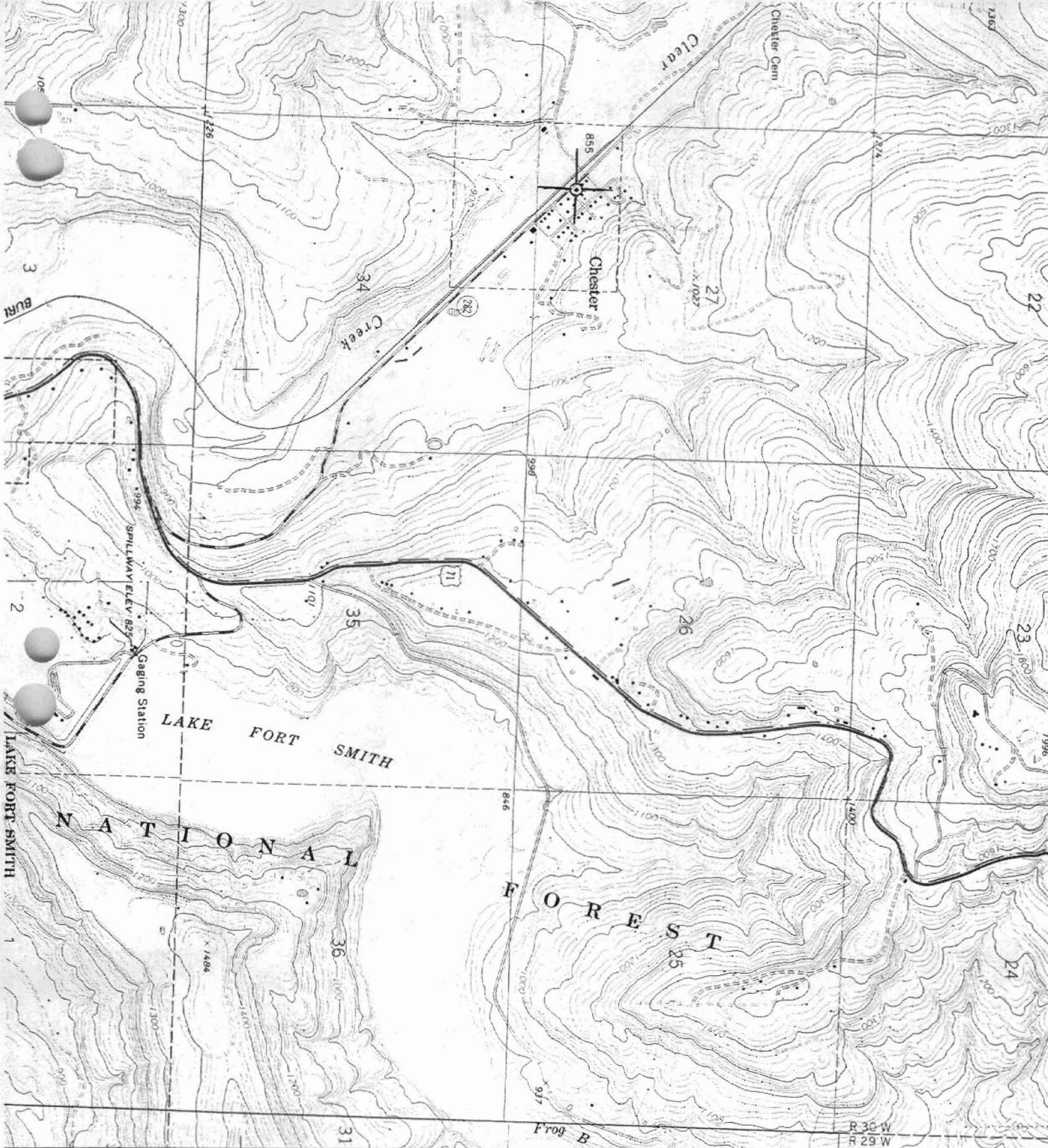












3950
 (FERN)
 7155 11 NE
 3951

Chester Masonic Lodge
 and Community Building,
 309 Crawford Co., AR
 UTM Reference:
 15/393560/3948990

3948
 40'
 T12N
 T11N

R30W
 R29W

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