

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: Johnswood

other name/site number: N/A

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2. Location

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street & number: 10314 Cantrell Road

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Little Rock

vicinity: N/A

state: AR

county: Pulaski

code: AR 119

zip code: 72207

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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>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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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. Slatu _____ 4-7-94
Signature of certifying official Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification
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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- _____ entered in the National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.
- _____ determined eligible for the _____
National Register _____
_____ See continuation sheet.
- _____ determined not eligible for the _____
National Register _____
- _____ removed from the National Register _____
- _____ other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
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:

Other: Minimal Traditional
Other: Rustic
Colonial Revival

Other Description: see above

Materials: foundation Sandstone . roof Asphalt
walls Sandstone other Weatherboard

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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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: Statewide.

Applicable National Register Criteria: B,C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Literature
Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1941-1944

Significant Dates: 1941

Significant Person(s): Fletcher, John Gould
Simon, Charlie May

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Mayer, Maximilian F.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

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:

- X 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: Approximately nine

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 15 556000 3849520 B
C D

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Part of the SE 1/4 SW 1/4, Section 22, Township 2 North, Range 13 West, Pulaski County, Arkansas, more particularly described as: Beginning at the Northwest Corner, SE 1/4 SW 1/4, said Section 22; thence South 88 degrees 30 minutes East, 375 feet to a point; thence South 0 degrees 02 minutes West, 1031.2 feet to a point on the North right-of-way line of Arkansas State Highway No. 10; thence on the West line of said SE 1/4 SW 1/4, thence North along said West line 990.7 feet to the point of beginning, containing 8.68 acres, more or less.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

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

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11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Patrick Zollner, National Register Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 03/25/94

Street & Number: 323 Center, 1600 Tower Bldg. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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

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Summary

Designed by the noted architect, Max Mayer, Johnswood was constructed in 1941 for two famous Arkansas writers, John Gould Fletcher and his wife, Charlie May Simon. The single-story stone and frame residence is representative of the Minimal Traditional houses being constructed during the Depression, yet it also reflects subtle Rustic and Colonial Revival influences.

Elaboration

Completed in 1941, Johnswood is composed of the main side-gable section that is built of rough-cut, uncoursed sandstone and a smaller, end-gable room attached at the western end that is frame constructed and covered with wide weatherboard. A continuous stone foundation is employed for both sections, and both gable roofs are clad with composition shingles. There is one exterior stone chimney in the center of the rear elevation. Designed by the prominent Arkansas architect, Max Mayer, the house was constructed for two famous Arkansas writers, John Gould Fletcher and his wife, Charlie May Simon, on a pine-covered hilltop with a view of the distant Arkansas River. At the time, the house and thirty-four acres was considered "out in the country" and was some eight miles from downtown Little Rock. Today, Little Rock city boundaries easily encompass the property, which is listed at 10314 Cantrell Road.

The front, or southern, elevation¹ features a central entrance that is shielded by a small, projecting gable-roof porch supported by two wood box columns on a stone floor. The gable end is enclosed to form a simple pediment, which is filled with vertical siding, that rests upon an equally simple entablature. Underneath, the six-panelled wood door is flanked by three-pane sidelights. Fenestration for this elevation is asymmetrically arranged and consists of four wood-frame, double-hung windows. To the east of the entrance is a small six-over-six window and a large eight-over-eight window. To the west of the doorway is an identical large-size eight-over-eight window and smaller-size window of the same sash configuration.

At the west end of the stone section is a side-gable hyphen with a single-leaf entry that connects the end-gable room that served as Simon's study. This room is fenestrated on the southern elevation by a small four-over-four double-hung window and a much larger eight-over-eight window. While these windows may be historic, they are not, however, shown in

¹In *Johnswood*, Simon notes that while Mayer argued that the lay of the land dictated an orientation diagonal to north/south, Fletcher insisted on a due south front elevation as he wanted to sleep facing the south.

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photographs taken shortly after construction. A small gable-roof projection, slightly larger than a dog house, extends to the south from the western end of the room and is shown in the construction photographs. There is one small door constructed of matching weatherboard on the western elevation.

The western elevation of Simon's study consists of a flat-roofed, carport supported by four wood posts that was added at some point after construction. The rear, or northern, elevation is lighted by a single eight-over-eight double-hung window that is positioned off center. It is not known if this window is original.

The rear, or northern, elevation of the main section is symmetrically composed with a set of French doors, ten panes per leaf, at each end. Otherwise, the central chimney is flanked by two large eight-over-eight double-hung windows.

A large shed-roof, screened-in porch, or "gallery" as the Fletcher's called it, dominates the eastern elevation of the house. Access to the porch from the interior is permitted by two single-leaf, fifteen-pane doors at each end of the porch.

Like the exterior, the interior was designed with a restrained use of ornamentation. The living room features built-in bookcases on the eastern and western walls and an elegant, white-painted Colonial Revival mantelpiece. Although the door and window moldings are of simple design, the panelled wood doors are unusual in that they are double-leaf within a single-leaf size doorframe.

After Charlie May Simon Fletcher died in 1977, Bob and Charlotte Brown purchased the house and nine acres of surrounding land. The interior, other than plumbing and electrical upgrades, was left essentially unaltered. At the rear of the house, however, a small garden room and master bedroom was added in 1977. The garden room attaches to the hyphen and the northwest corner of the stone section. Extending to the northwest, the small room connects with the larger master bedroom, which follows the northwest orientation. Both rooms are on brick foundations, have board-and-batten cedar siding, and are covered with composition-shingled gable roofs. This addition is not visible from the principal frontal elevations and does not compromise the historic integrity of the house.

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Summary

Johnswood is being nominated with statewide significance under Criterion B for its association with two of Arkansas's most prominent writers, John Gould Fletcher and his wife, Charlie May Simon. Under Criterion C, the house is also significant for its association with the architect, Max Mayer.

Elaboration

John Gould Fletcher was born in Little Rock on January 3, 1886. He was the son of Captain John G. Fletcher, a prominent Little Rock citizen and wealthy cotton merchant. Fletcher was only three years old when the Captain purchased the Pike-Fletcher-Terry House (NR 8/21/72), which was considered historic then. John Gould experienced a sheltered childhood in the old mansion. He was at first privately tutored, then enrolled in the private schools of Little Rock until he entered the public high school. Captain Fletcher had determined that his son should attend Harvard University, and with that in mind, John Gould was educated at Phillips Andover Academy in Massachusetts for one year in preparation.

Fletcher enrolled at Harvard in 1904 and wrote his first poems the summer after his freshman year. After being graduated from Harvard in 1907, Fletcher left for Europe in the summer of 1908. In Paris, he became close friends with Ezra Pound, the founder of Imagism, and Amy Lowell, one of the chief exponents of the Imagist movement in the United States.

Imagist poetry utilizes common language and attempts to create new rhythms and clear, concise images while maintaining complete freedom of subject matter. At the time, it was a significant break from the romantic conceptions of poetry and the classical verse form. Simple, commonplace items were the primary subjects of this poetry.

Fletcher quickly became noted as a leading poet of this movement. His work, which received mixed critical response (as it did throughout his career), was both popular and prolific as attested by the month of May, 1913, when he concurrently published five books of poetry with four different publishing houses. In the succeeding years, Fletcher was to publish in rapid succession: *Irradiations-Sand and Spray* (1915), *Goblins and Pagodas* (1916), *Japanese Prints* (1918), *Breakers and Granite* (1921), and *Preludes and Symphonies* (1922). All together, Fletcher published ten volumes of poetry between 1915 and 1947. Two of Fletcher's better known prose works are *Paul Gauguin: His Life and Art* (1921) and his autobiography, *Life Is My Song* (1937). In 1939, John Gould Fletcher was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his

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Selected Poems published a year earlier by Farrar and Rinehart, Inc.

His greatest poetic achievement was his ability to reproduce in verse the texture, mood, rhythm, and total effect of symphonic music. Robert Penn Warren, writing in the May 1932 issue of *Poetry* said of Fletcher:

His work would be important, if for no other reason, on account of the extension of rhythmical possibilities of the language and the peculiar care bestowed upon the richness and variety of verse texture . . .

Fletcher had returned to the United States in 1914, but only for two years. While abroad, he had read an article, "Retreat to the Land," by an Arkansas author, Charlie May Simon, and was determined to meet her. Fletcher returned to the United States in 1933, and they met a year later. Although it was apparently love at first sight, the two were not able to marry until January of 1936.

Charlie May Simon was born August 17, 1897 in Monticello, Arkansas. She was the daughter of a little-known Arkansas writer, Charles Wayman. Her family moved to Memphis a few years after her birth, and Simon was educated in the Memphis public schools. Despite a modest family income, Simon was able to augment her public education with art lessons given at a private school. She continued this interest after high school and, after one course at the Memphis Normal School (now Memphis State University), attended several art schools including the Chicago Art Institute and Grande Chaumiere in Paris. In Paris, Charlie married Howard Simon, four days after meeting him in the Latin Quarter. They were divorced in 1935, although Charlie May was to use his name professionally for the rest of her life.

Simon began her literary career as a teenager when she submitted a novel that was inspired by one of her father's works. When it was rejected by a publisher, Simon falsely assumed that her talents lay elsewhere and concentrated on her art exclusively for several years. In 1933, she attempted writing again, mainly out of dire financial need, and successfully published "Retreat to the Land" in *Scribner's Magazine*. This was the beginning of a literary career that spanned more than forty years and produced twenty-nine published works including two autobiographical novels, an adult novel, eight biographies for young people and numerous children's books. Because the majority of her writing was intended for children, Simon's style was simple and appropriately paratactic. "Well-written" was a frequent accolade read in reviews of her books. In 1941, the *New Yorker* magazine noted that Simon was ". . . doing some of the best writing for children now being published."

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Some of Simon's better known biographies include: *All Men Are Brothers* (1956) about Albert Schweitzer, *A Seed Shall Serve* (1958) concerning the Japanese spiritual leader, Kagama, and *Faith Has Need of All the Truth* (1974) whose subject was the French religious philosopher, Teilhard de Chardin. As a result of her diligent efforts in this genre, Simon received three literary awards: The Charles and Bertie J. Schwartz Award for *Martin Buber*; The Albert Schweitzer Award for *A Seed Shall Serve*; and the 1947 Boys' Club of America Junior Book Award for *Joe Mason*.

Charlie May Simon also wrote an autobiographical fragment entitled *Johnswood* (1953) that reflects upon her marriage to John Gould Fletcher. It begins in 1941 with the construction of their new residence, which received its name from John's wood. Concerning the new house, Simon observed in *Johnswood* that, "To John it was small and cozy, and dearly loved because it was completely his and mine. But to me it was spacious, with drawers and closets for myself alone, and a room of my own which I used as a study." Among some of the books written by Simon during the early Johnswood years include: *Roundabout* (1941) and *Young Brother* (1942).

While living at Johnswood, Fletcher continued his writings and was honored in 1946 with the designation as first Poet Laureate of Arkansas. A year later he authored a history of his native state entitled *Arkansas*, which was published by the University of North Carolina Press. It was during this period of Fletcher's career (beginning upon his return to the United States) that he was associated with the Southern Agrarian movement, of which John Crow Ransom, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren were other leading figures. In essence, this group advocated the South's return to an agricultural economy and resisted industrialization.

During his later years, Fletcher suffered from painful arthritis, insomnia, and periodic depressive moods. On May 10, 1950, John Gould Fletcher drowned in a pond near Johnswood, an apparent suicide. Charlie May Simon Fletcher lived at Johnswood until her death in 1977.

Although John Gould Fletcher was raised in the Pike-Fletcher-Terry House, Johnswood is the only extant Arkansas property that he is known to have resided in during his productive period (roughly 1909-1947). Similarly, Charlie May Simon was an established author in midst of her long career during her residency at Johnswood during the historic period (1941-1944). Thus, due to the association with two extraordinary figures in Arkansas's literary record, Johnswood is being nominated with statewide significance under Criterion B.

Johnswood is also significant for its association with the architect, Maximilian F. Mayer.

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Mayer was born in 1887 in San Antonio. He received a degree in architectural engineering from Texas A & M and also studied in Europe. After practicing architecture in New York and California, Mayer came to Little Rock around 1920 to work as a draftsman for two of Arkansas's more prominent architects, George R. Mann and Eugene Stern. By 1923, Mayer had established his own practice and soon became known as a designer of large period revival style residences that were fashionable in suburban development at the time. Among his French Eclectic, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival-style houses, several are listed as contributing properties to the Hillcrest Historic District (NR 12/18/90). In addition, the Mayer-designed Justin Matthews, Jr. House (NR 12/18/90) in the Park Hill Addition of North Little Rock is listed under Criterion C as a virtually unrivalled example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Arkansas.

The demand for these expensive residences in Little Rock was brought to a halt by the Great Depression, and Mayer returned to his native San Antonio to play the stock market (to undetermined success), learn Spanish, and to pursue his hobbies of painting in watercolors and playing the violin. In the late 1930's, he was enticed back to Little Rock by Louise Loughborough to oversee the restoration of a group of badly deteriorated downtown houses that would become the Arkansas Territorial Restoration.

In 1941, Mayer designed Johnswood for his friends, John Gould Fletcher and his wife, Charlie May Simon. This structure is significant in that it represents a unique facet of Mayer's architectural repertoire. Certainly none of Mayer's National Register-listed properties exhibit this simple, Minimal Traditional style appearance with both Rustic and Colonial Revival overtones, and he is known to have designed only one other structure that is remotely similar, a 1937 single-story, Colonial Revival-style frame cottage in downtown Little Rock. Thus, Johnswood is also eligible under Criterion C.

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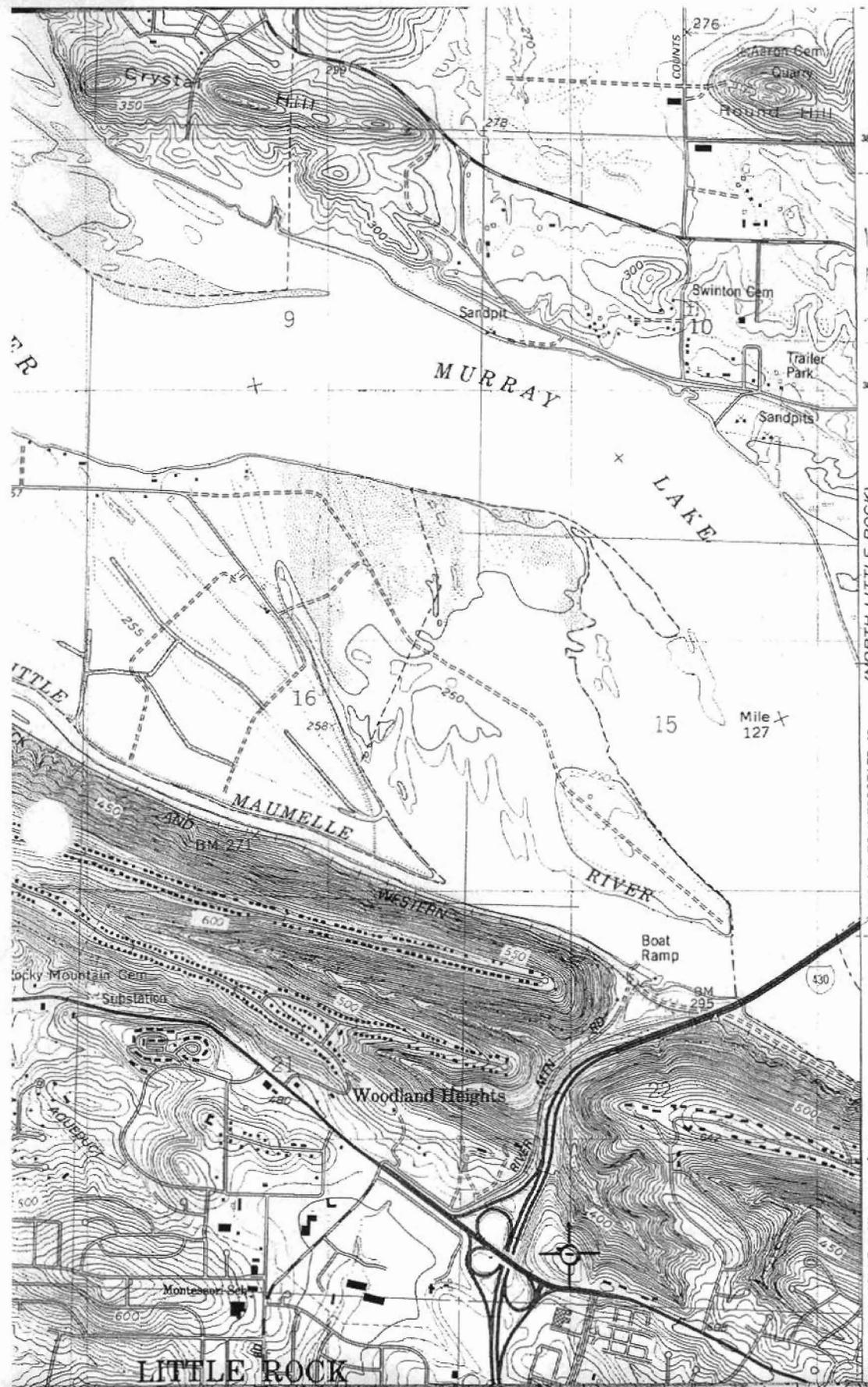
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Johnson
 Little Rock
 Pulaski Co.
 Arkansas

UTM:
 18 556 7 7
 72 7500

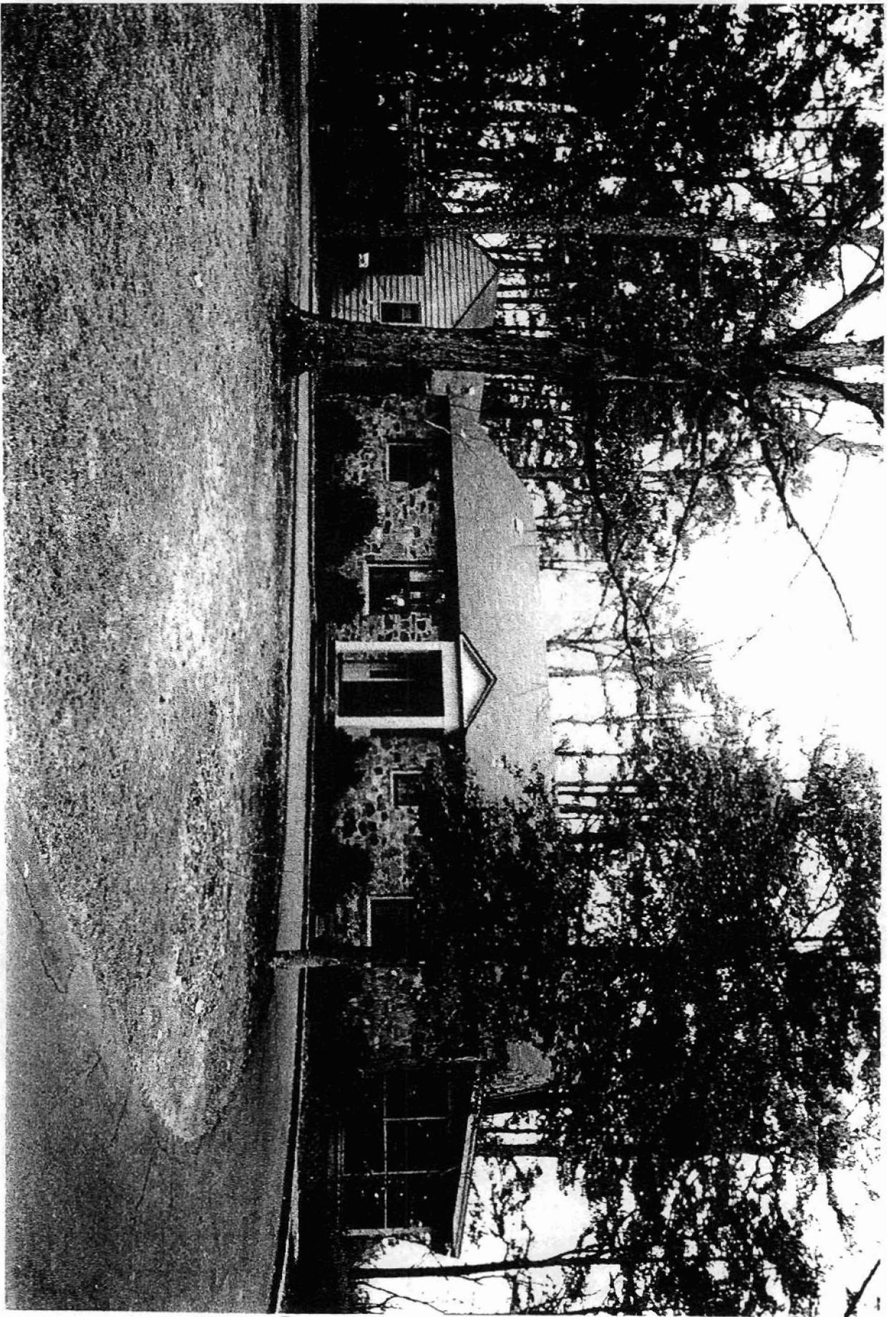
(NORTH LITTLE ROCK)
 7553 IV SE

2.5 MI. TO INTERSTATE 40

3850
 47'30"

ROCK (CAPITOL) 7.3 MI.





Johnswood

Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photograph by Paine-Zo 10

February 1997

Negative on file at AHP

View from the southeast



Johnswood

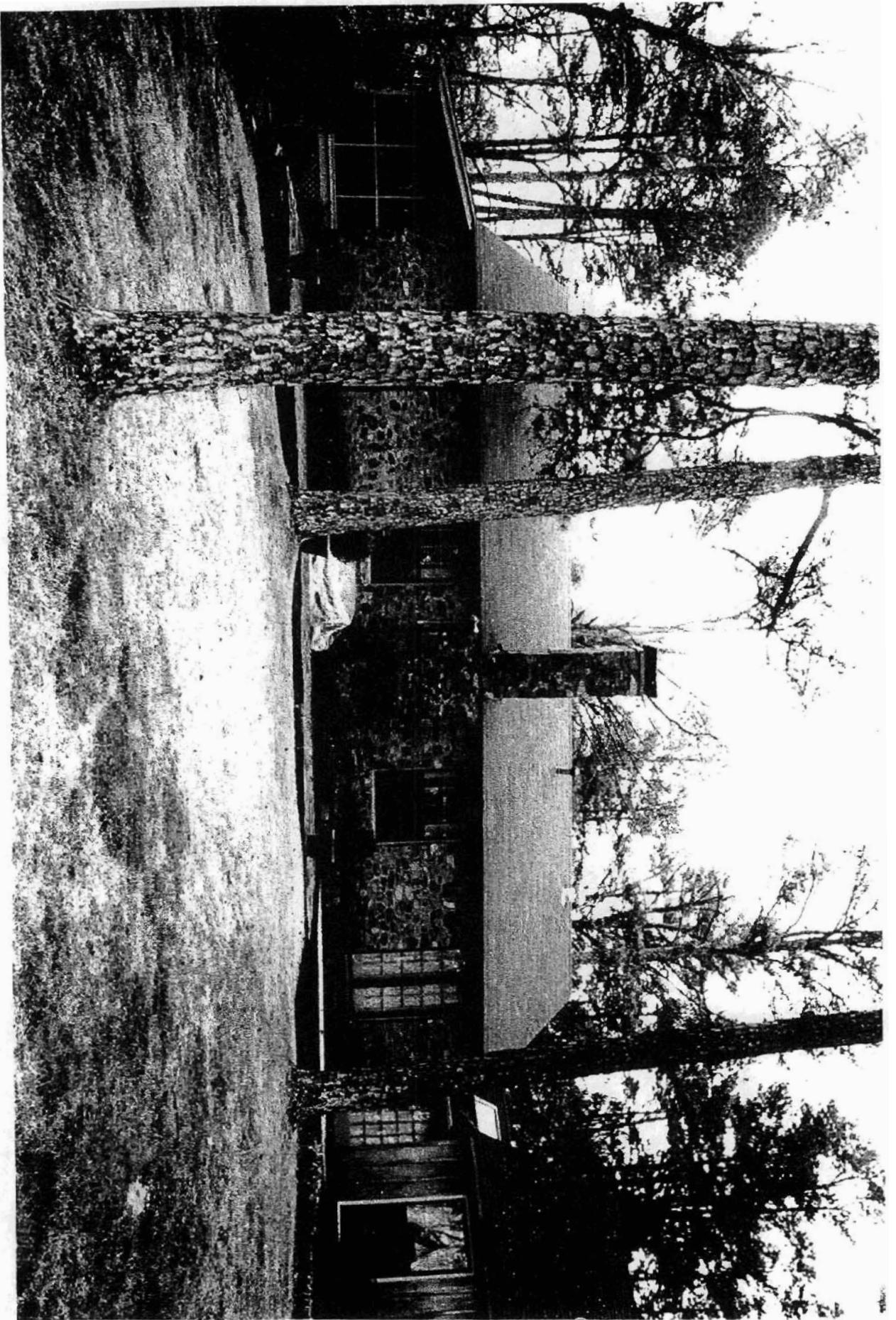
Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photograph by Patrick Z.

February 1944

Negative on file at AHP

View from the east



Johnswood

Poleski Co., Ar
Photograph by

February 1997

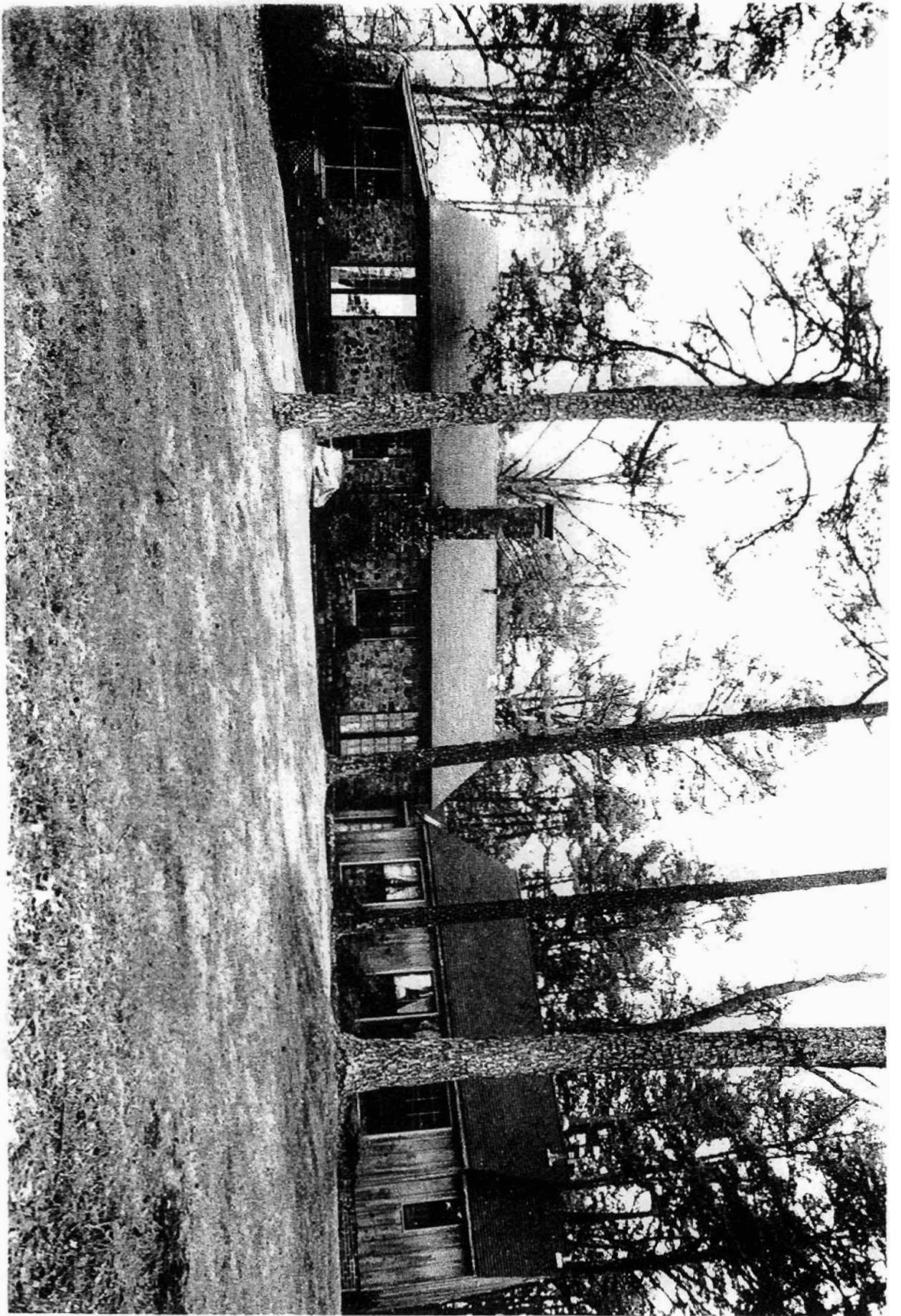
Negative on file at
view from the [unclear]

Conservation

A

11

4



Johnswood

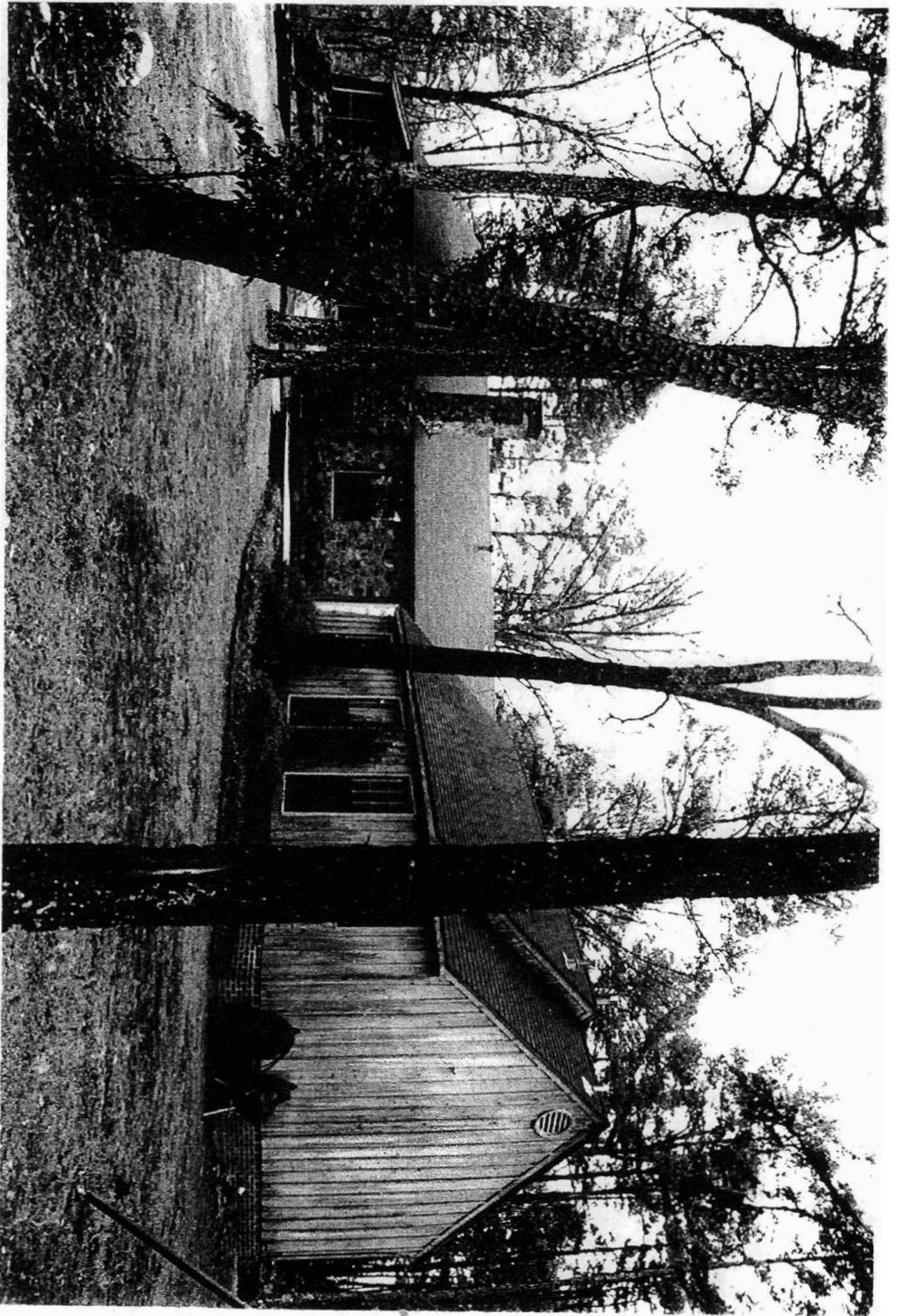
Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photograph by Patrick Zolner

February 1994

Negative on file at AHPP

View from the northeast



Johnswood

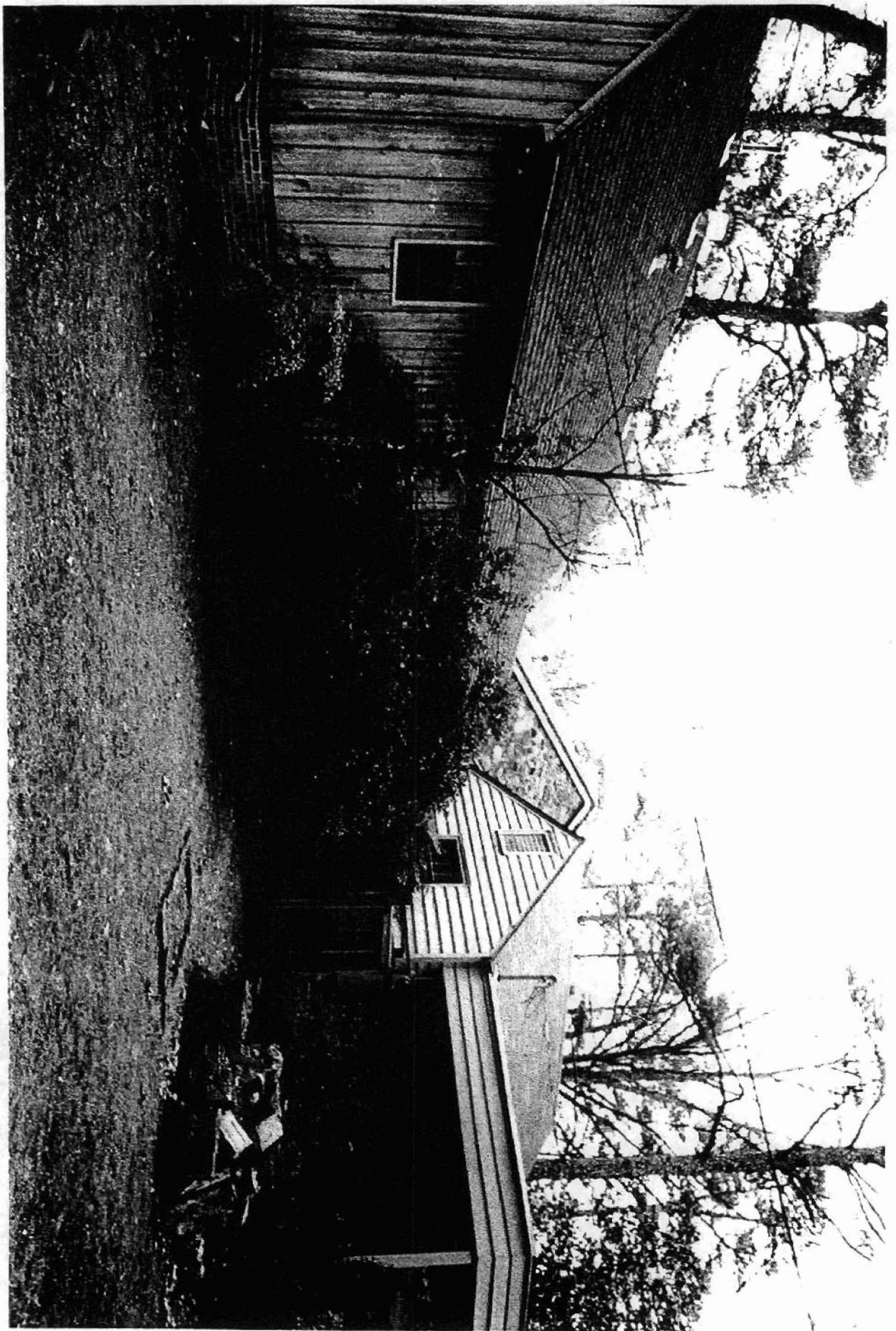
Pulaski Co., Arkansas

Photograph by Patrick Zollner

February 1994

Negative on file at AHPP

View from the northwest



Johnswood

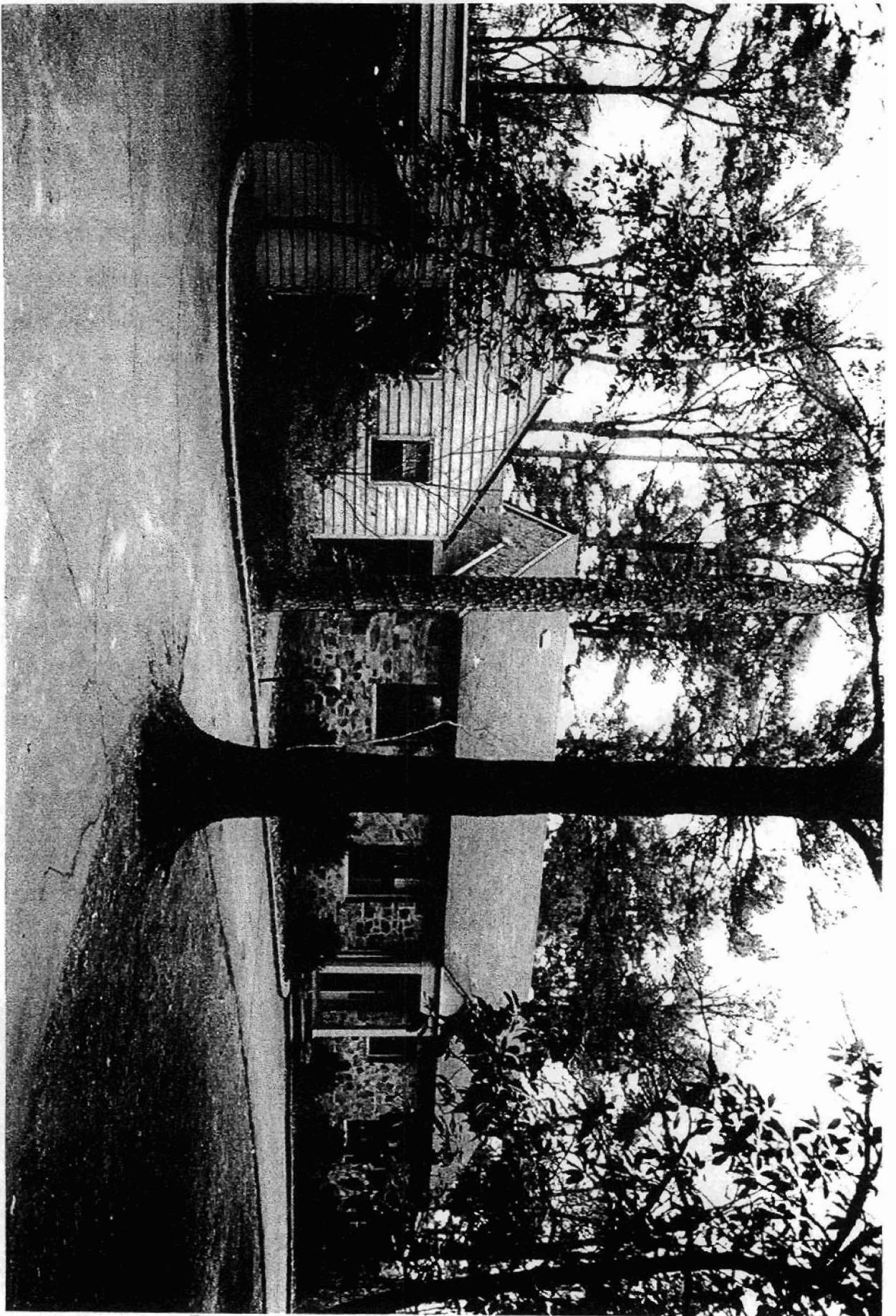
Polaski Co., Arkansas

Photographed by Patrick Zolman

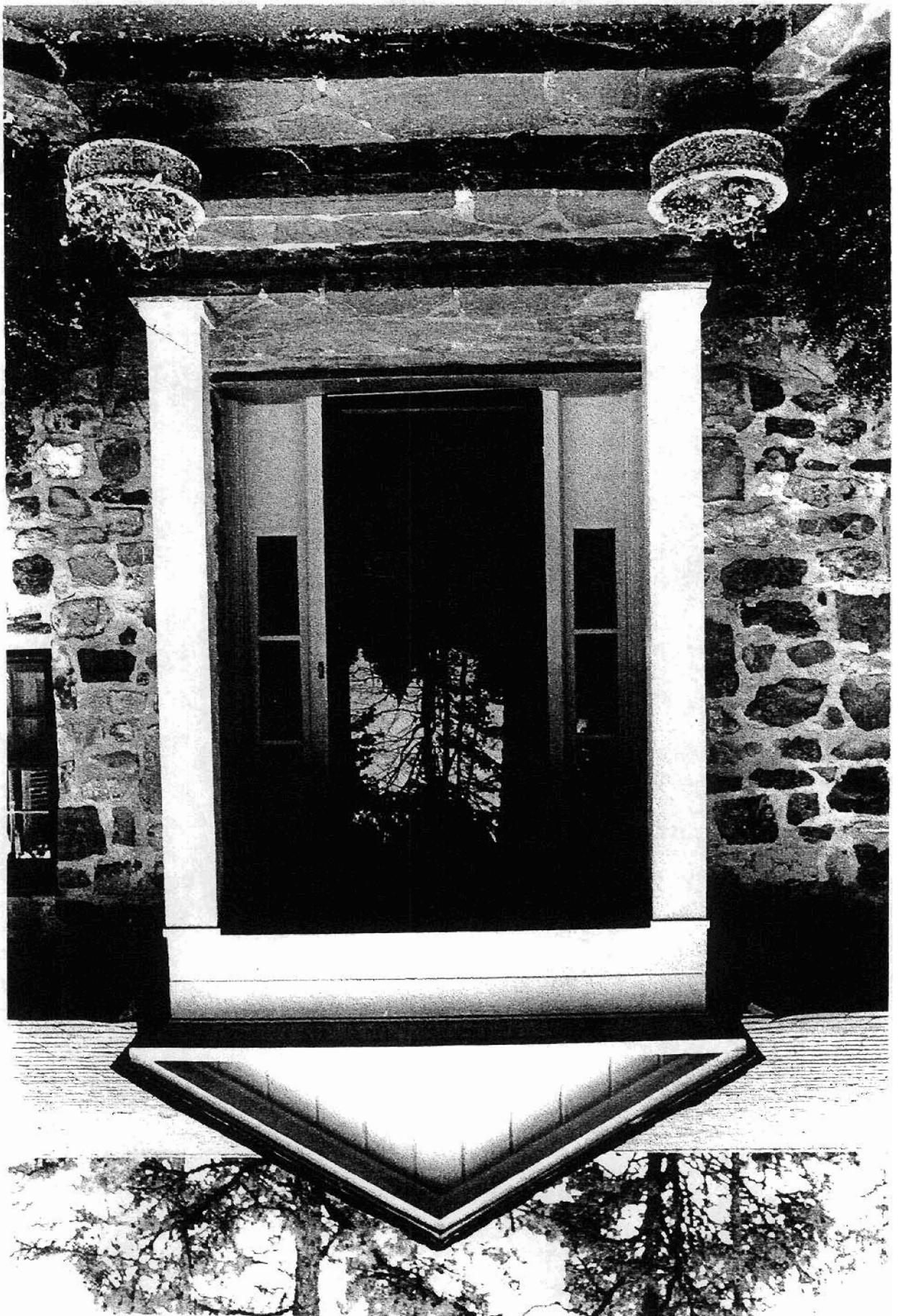
February 1994

Negative on file at J-APP

View from the northwest

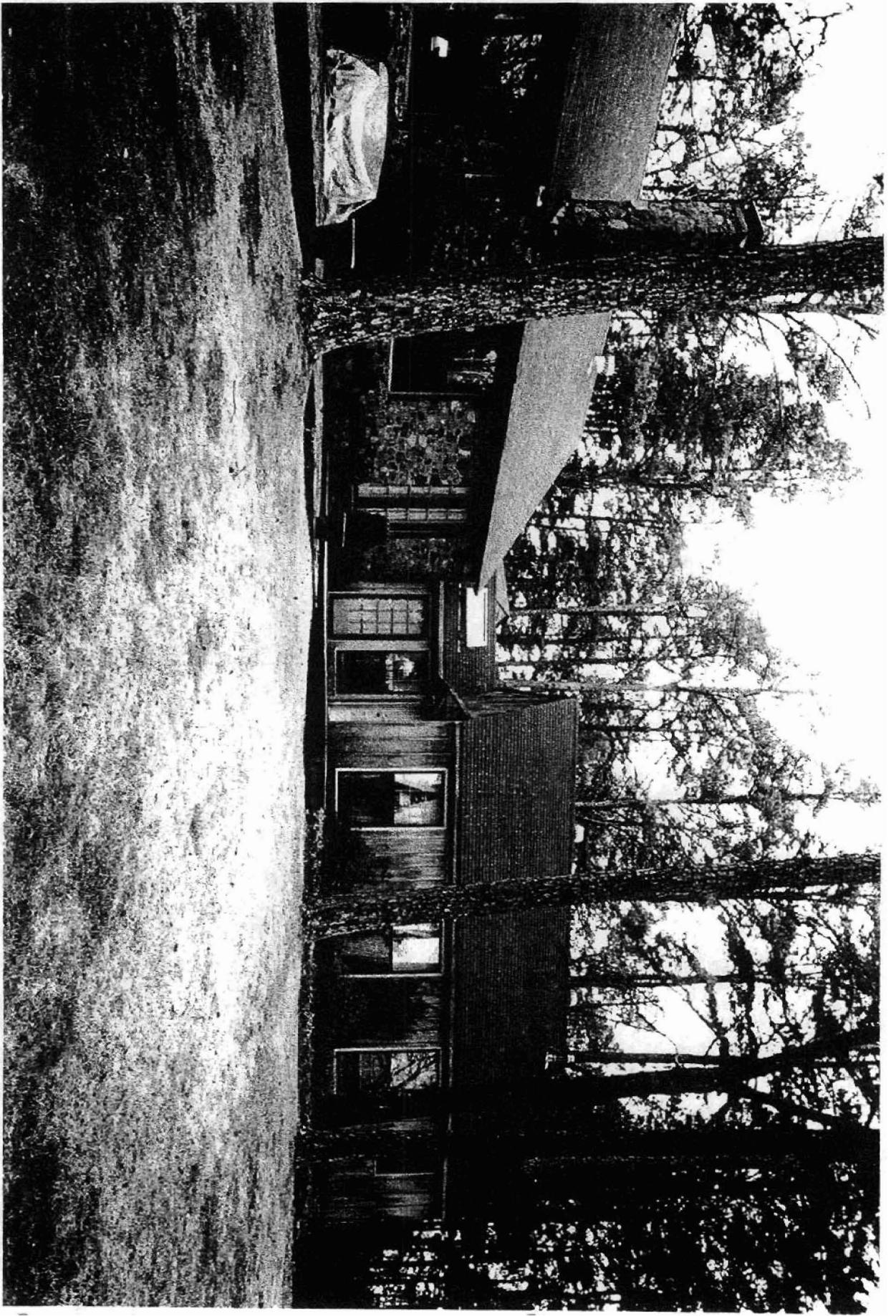


Johnswood
Pulaski Co., Arkansas
Photograph by Paul S. [unclear]
February 1941
Negative on file at AHP
View from the southwest



Johnswood
Pulaski Co., Arkansas
Photograph of Drink Line
February 1994
Negative on file at AHP
View of front entrance from
the south

✓



Johnswood

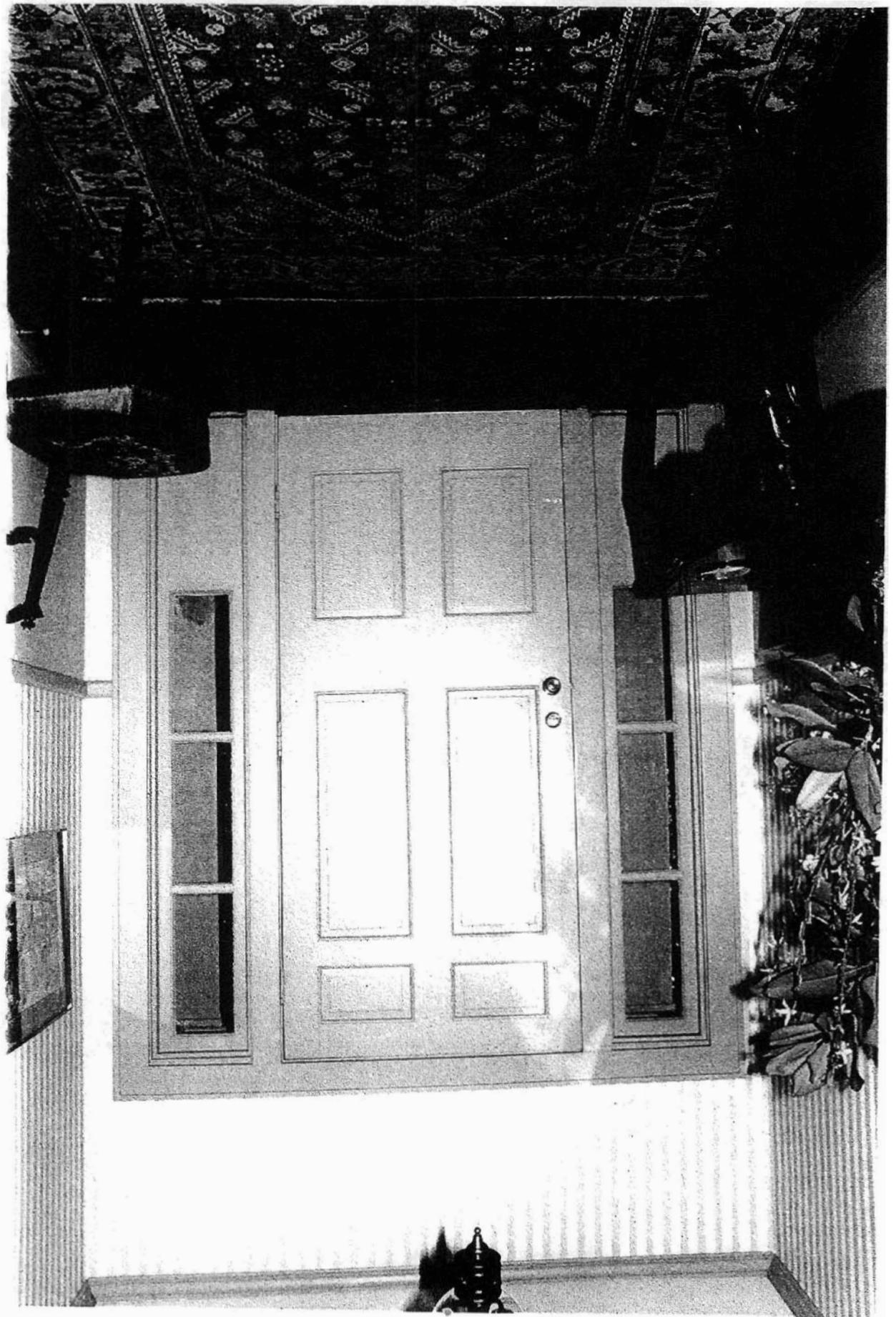
Polk Co. Arkansas

Photograph of John & John

February 1914

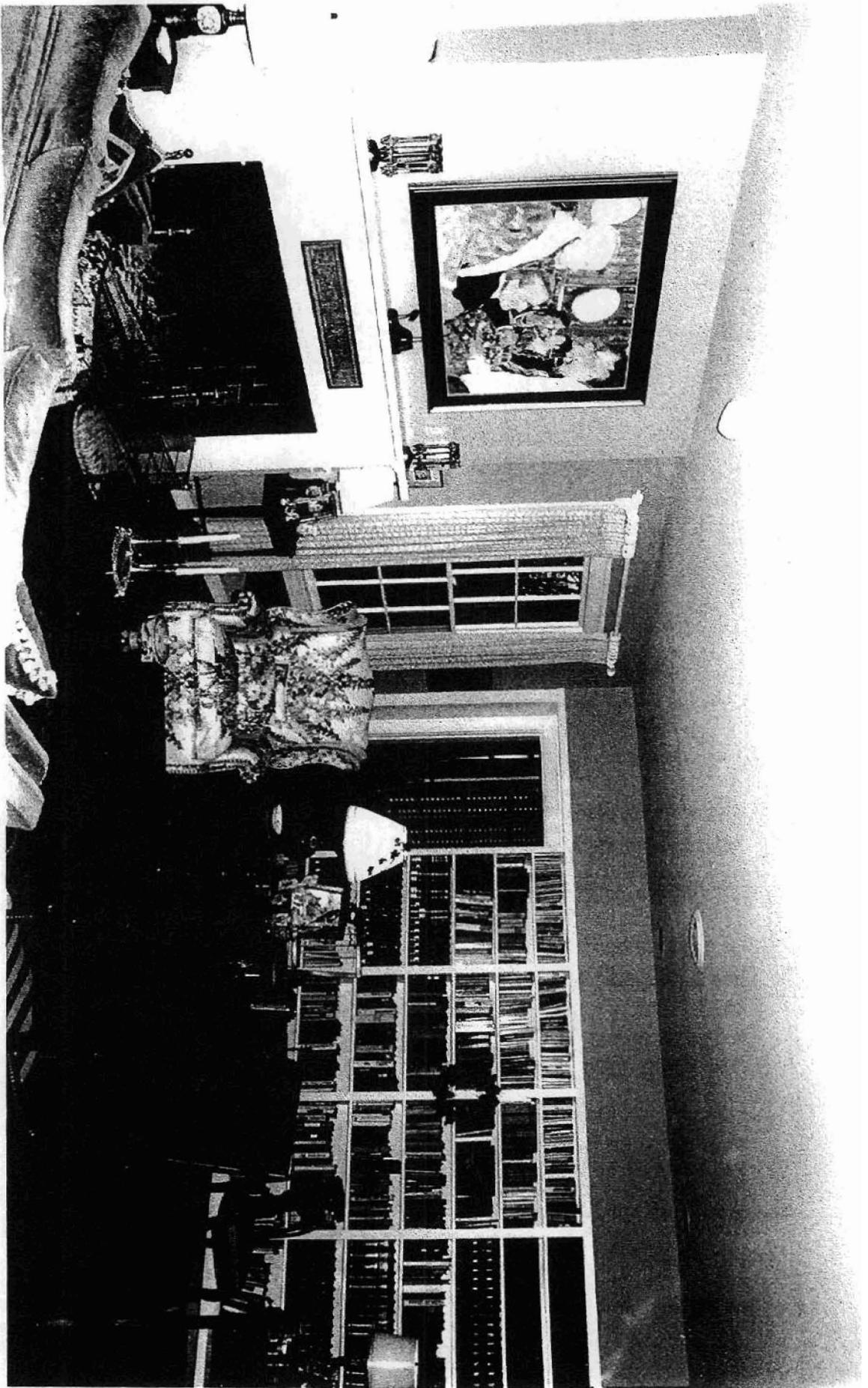
Negative on file at AFD

View of rear addition from east



no

Johnswood
Polask Co., Arizona
Photograph by Paris
February 1994
Negative on film
View of the area
71



Johnny O.

Alaska Co. 11/20/00

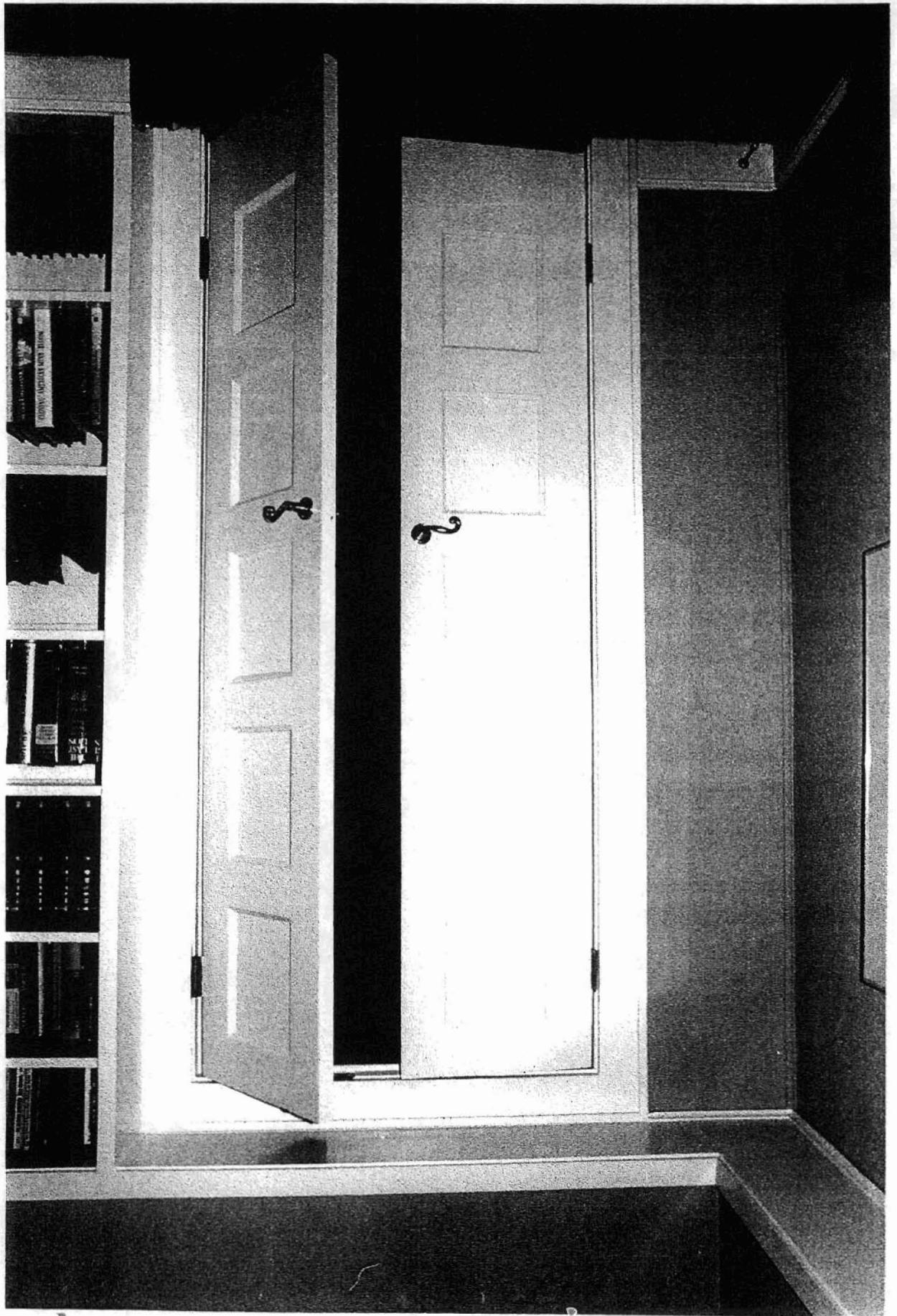
Photograph of Barrow

February 1994

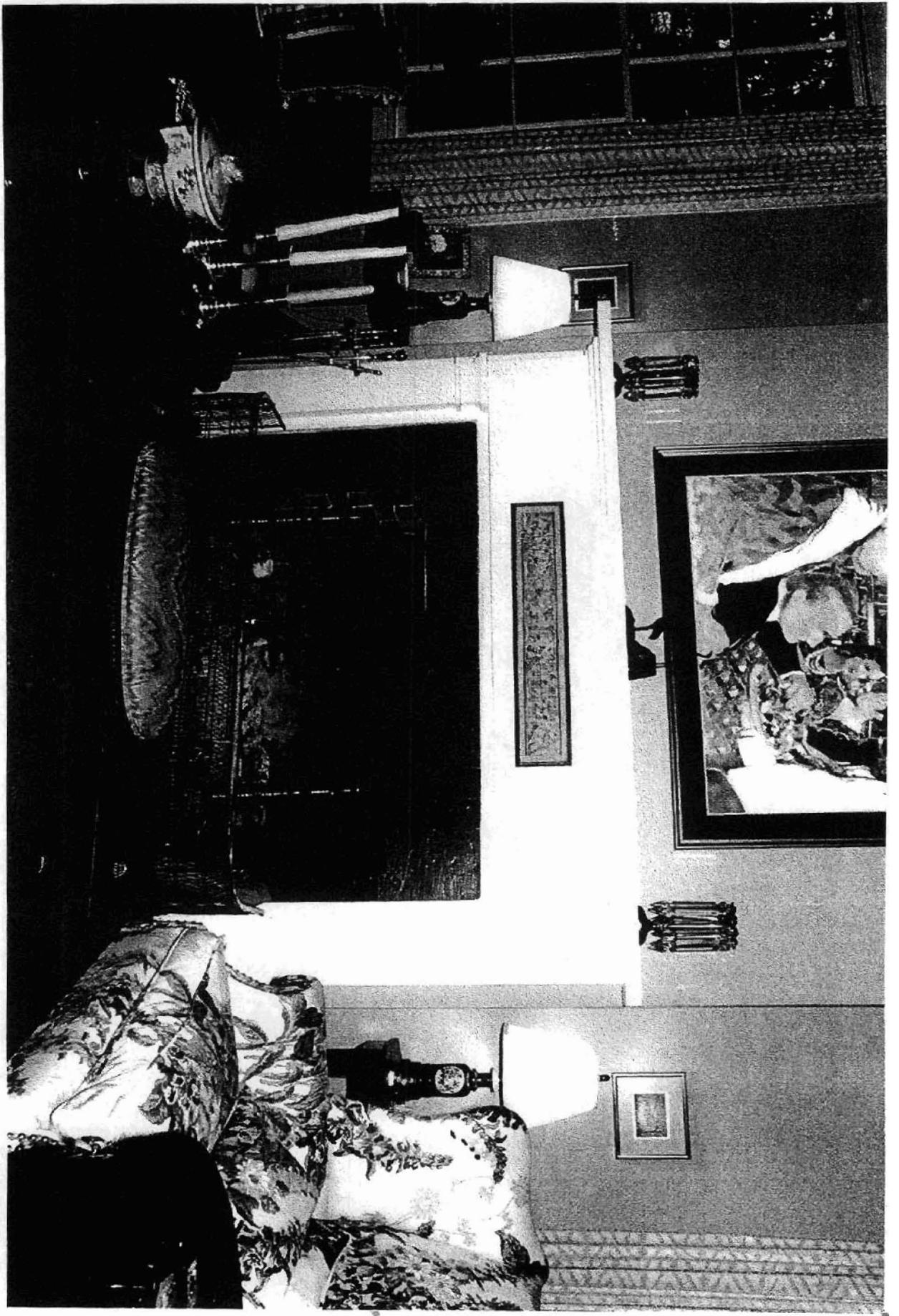
Negative on file at A-17

view of the area from

west



Johnswood
Point Co., Ariz.
Photograph by Peter Zahner
February 1994
Negative on file at AHP
View of dome - at base
-from the east



Woods

Alaska Co., Arkansas

Photograph by Patric's 26

February 1944

Negative on file at ATIP

View of this room from

from the southeast