

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR 1/23/08

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 Look See Tree

other names/site number Site #DR0323

2. Location

street & number Southwest corner of AR 83 and Pleasant Springs Road

☐ not for publication

city or town Coleman

☒ vicinity

state Arkansas

code AR

county Drew

code 043

zip code 71567

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.)

Cathie Matthews
Signature of certifying official/Title

10/31/07
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 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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ 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): _____

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew 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

	buildings
1	sites
	structures
	objects
1	Total

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

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Fire Tower

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other WOOD

Narrative Description

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

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew 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)

State

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Conservation

Period of Significance

c.1930-c.1940

Significant Dates

c.1930-c.1940

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

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:

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew 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	<u>15</u>	<u>615757</u>	<u>3738939</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

date October 10, 2007

street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street

telephone (501) 324-9787

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 Olin Tucker

street & number 3791 Highway 83 North

telephone

city or town Star City

state AR

zip code 71667

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-C018), Washington, DC 20303

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SUMMARY

The Look See Tree is a large white oak located at the southwest corner of AR 83 and Pleasant Springs Road in the Coleman vicinity of northern Drew County. Although the age of the tree is unknown, by c.1930 it was one of the largest and tallest trees in the area and large enough to be utilized as a fire tower by the Arkansas Forestry Commission in the Coleman area. Climbing pegs were installed to allow rangers to climb the tree, and a platform was built at the top of the tree. In addition, a telephone line was installed so that a call could be made in case of an emergency.

ELABORATION

The Look See Tree is a large white oak located at the southwest corner of AR 83 and Pleasant Springs Road in the Coleman vicinity of northern Drew County. Although the age of the tree is unknown, by c.1930 it was one of the largest and tallest trees in the area and large enough to be utilized as a fire tower by the Arkansas Forestry Commission in the Coleman area. White oak trees can reach a height of 100 feet and have a spread of 50 to 80 feet, and the Look See Tree is likely close to that size. Examples of the White oak are known to live as long as 600 years, and it is likely that the Look See Tree is at least 100 years old, especially given its large size in c.1930.

Climbing pegs were installed to allow rangers to climb the tree. The iron bars, which each have a hook on the end, are arranged in two vertical rows on the west side of the tree. Although as the tree has grown they are slowly being engulfed by the tree, the pegs are still readily visible.

A wood-framed platform was built at the top of the tree to allow the rangers to get a good view of the surrounding area. Although most of the platform has disappeared, a remnant is visible on the northwest side of the tree.

In addition, a telephone line was installed so that the rangers could make a call in case of an emergency. The telephone line has also been removed, but a white porcelain insulator remains on the west side of the tree slightly below and to the right of the platform remnant and to the right of the climbing pegs.

Integrity

Considering the fact that the Look See Tree was likely abandoned more than sixty years ago, it has remarkable integrity. The tree retains its climbing pegs and remnants of the platform and telephone system, all of which were integral components of a lookout tree. Although the area surrounding the tree is much more wooded than it was in the 1930s (It is reported that the buildings in downtown Dumas, approximately 20 miles to the northeast, could be seen from the tree's platform.), it still remains rural like it was during the tree's period of significance. The tree has also continued to grow over the past sixty years, but remains one of the largest trees in the area.

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SUMMARY

The Look See Tree, which was utilized between c.1930 and c.1940, is a rare surviving example of a lookout tree. Lookout trees were used by Arkansas Forestry Commission rangers to supplement the small number of fire towers that the Commission operated. Equipped with climbing pegs, lookout platforms, and telephone lines, lookout trees allowed the rangers to survey surrounding lands for fires, something that was especially important in the timberlands of southern Arkansas. For its associations with conservation efforts in Arkansas during the first part of the twentieth century, the Look See Tree is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **statewide significance**.

ELABORATION

Drew County was formed on November 26, 1846, approximately ten years after European settlement began in the area. The early settlers of the area migrated from a variety of other states, including Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana. The population of the county grew fairly rapidly, and by 1850 Drew County's population was 3,276.¹

The earliest industry in Drew County was agriculture. The main crops in the area were corn and cotton, although oats, peas, sorghum, and millet were also extensively farmed. In addition to crops, some farmers raised stock, including short-horn and Jersey cattle and Norman and Clydesdale horses. However, by the 1880s, because of the county's extensive forests, the timber industry began to develop. According to the *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*:

Just in the infancy of their development are the timber resources of the county, the cypress received first attention, and much of it has been sawed up, but there are large bodies of cypress timber yet intact.

About 250 square miles of pine grows in the county, very little of which has been cut, the remaining area is covered with hardwood forests, including differed varieties of white and black oaks, hickory, gum, elm, sycamore, beech and holly. Along the bayou the oak is converted into barrel staves, in which work many men are engaged. The gum is largely being logged and shipped to England.²

In order to successfully log forested land for a long period of time, it was imperative to manage the trees wisely, and one of the people who was at the forefront of forest conservation in Arkansas in the first part of the twentieth century was William L. Hall. Hall's first involvement in Arkansas forestry occurred in 1907 when, at the request of Gifford Pinchot, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service, he traveled through the Ouachita

¹ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, pp. 927-928.

² *Ibid*, pp. 934-935.

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region of the state to inspect the unappropriated public land. He found that the land was unsuitable for farming but could be used as a source of timber. As a result, Hall recommended that the land should remain publicly owned and managed, which led to the first national forest created in the south. On December 18, 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt "reserved from settlement or entry and set apart as a public reservation, for the use and benefit of the people" much of the public land in the Ouachita Mountains. The newly created area was originally known as the Arkansas National Forest and renamed the Ouachita National Forest in 1926.³

Hall would return to Arkansas in the 1920s at the request of the Dierks family to help develop a forest management plan for their land holdings. Dierks began a forestry program in 1925 as a result of Hall's commendations, and because of the profitability of Dierks to his consulting, Hall relocated to Hot Springs from Chicago. The key to forest management in Hall's opinion was fire protection, something that flew in the face of conventional wisdom of most people in Arkansas and across much of the South. Although setting fires killed off ticks and chiggers and allowed grass to grow for cattle, it also killed off saplings, which would eventually lead to the depletion of the forests.⁴

In order to help prevent forest fires, Dierks hired two foresters who were to work specifically as fire prevention supervisors. One supervisor would be located in Arkansas while the other would be located in Oklahoma. Kenneth Smith writes in the book *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies* about the duties of the foresters:

They were to locate and build fire lookout towers, and set up a telephone system to connect the towers, the homes of fire wardens, and logging operations with the central office. They were to hire and supervise sixty-two local fire wardens, each of whom was to oversee fifteen to twenty thousand acres and educate his neighbors about damage caused by fires and the advantages of growing more timber. The foresters were also to organize fire fighting crews among those who worked in the woods, including brush pilers, railroad section gangs, and steel gangs. All of this they were to do as soon as possible.⁵

Even though some of the earliest conservation and fire prevention practices were put in place through the efforts of private companies, the government was not too far behind.

³ Smith, Kenneth. *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies*. Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1986, p.46

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 116-117.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 118.

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As the government became involved in the protection of forests from fires, the lookout tree developed. The Multiple Property Listing "National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region" describes two different types of lookout trees:

Ladder Trees: Access to the tops of these trees is provided by wooden ladders or by spikes (or lag bolts) driven into the side of the tree. The limbs are removed from the ladder side, and some limbs are also removed from the tree top to provide a view. These lookouts were meant only for short-term transitory use, as they have no associated features in them such as telephone line, fire finder, or platform. Simple and inexpensive structures, these lookouts were scattered through areas with low relief. Fire crews would use these lookouts to monitor the progress of a fire or during routine patrols. These points would supplement permanent lookout vistas. Occasionally, ladder trees are located next to a platform on the ground which held a map board for a fire finder (or its predecessor, the alidade and protractor) to aid in locating the fire on the map.

Platform Trees: Wooden ladder or spikes (also known as "lag bolts" provide access to a platform built into the top of the tree. The top ten feet or so of the tree is sawn off (and often found near the tree base) and a wood frame platform measuring about six to eight feet on a side is built into the top of the tree. The platform usually had a railing around it and a hatchway leading up to it. Features in the platform included a seat and a map board for the fire finder. Telephones were often located in the lookout tree for quick communication with a ranger station. Lightning protection and guy wires were often installed. Remnants of these features can still be seen today in these trees. Often, a nearby tent provided housing for the fire lookout.⁶

By 1905, the Forest Service's first manual for rangers, which was called the *Use Book*, indicated that the "...Officers of the Forest Service, especially forest rangers, have no duty more important than protecting the reserves from forest fires." The use of fire lookouts to help rangers protect areas from forest fires began around 1900, and often the earliest form of lookout was just a mapboard located on top of a mountain that

⁶ "Amendment to National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region, USDA-Forest Service." National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1991, pp. 7-2 and 7-3. Found at <http://www.nr.nps.gov/multiples/64000046.pdf>.

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had good visibility of the surrounding area. Lookout trees, which rangers used while on patrols of designated routes, soon followed.⁷

Early on when rangers conducted their patrols, they were often done in pairs, with each pair including the lookout and the lookout fireman, or "smokechaser." The lookout was responsible for climbing the tree, spotting the fire, and alerting the ranger station of the fire's location via radio or telephone. While the lookout continued to monitor the fire, the "smokechaser" would take his firefighting gear and ride on horseback to the fire's location to begin fighting the fire until reinforcements arrived.⁸

In many parts of the country, lookout trees began to be replaced by fixed lookout towers in the 1930s, especially with the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was able to provide the manpower needed to build fire towers and upgrade fire lookout and protection systems. (Another wave of tower construction occurred in the 1950s and 1960s as some of the aging CCC-built towers were replaced.) However, lookout trees continued to be used in some locations as late as the 1960s, specifically in the Kaibab National Forest in Arizona.⁹

In Arkansas, lookout trees likely came about later than in other parts of the country (they were used in the Kaibab National Forest at least as early as 1916) given the fact that the Arkansas Forestry Commission was not created until the 1930s. The 1931 session of the Arkansas Legislature passed Act 234, which created the State Forestry Commission, and gave it, among other things, the responsibility to cooperate with timber owners to prevent and suppress forest fires. By 1934, the Commission had approximately 2.5 million acres under protection. Lookout trees would have been an easy way early on for the State Forestry Commission to provide a measure of fire protection without the substantial cost of erecting towers.¹⁰

Whether the ranger was looking for fires from a lookout tree or a tower, the process of alerting the authorities was pretty much the same. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas* gives an account of how the process worked, from the initial spotting of smoke up through the fire fighters responding to the fire.

When the finger of smoke poked its way above the tree tops a ranger in a fire tower squinted expertly through sights mounted over a map. Picking up the telephone, he called a dispatcher many miles away: "This is Blue Mountain Tower reporting. There's a small fire at alidade reading one ninety." The

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8-2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8-3.

¹⁰ James, Elizabeth. "Crossroads Fire Tower, Hamburg vic., Ashley County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006, p. 8-1.

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ranger dropped his official tone to add: "John, it looks like it's in that little glade where Ferguson killed the wildcat last winter."

The dispatcher pulled a button from the Blue Mountain location on a map and stretched a string through the number 190 on a graduated scale. Just then a second tower reported a wisp of smoke and gave an alidade reading. After a moment's calculation the dispatcher telephoned a Civilian Conservation Corps camp, told the fire warden where the blaze was, what roads and trails to follow, and how many men were needed. In less than eight minutes after the ranger in the first tower had reported, a pick-up truck with a "hotshot" crew aboard was racing toward the fire. The pick-up, which skidded around curves in a manner that would have delighted a motion picture director, was followed by a slower and larger truck filled with youthful fire fighters. In two hours the blaze was out.

Except for the soil, timber is the most valuable resource of Arkansas, and the protection of more than 22,000,000 acres of trees is a major conservation task in the State.¹¹

Lookout trees could work just as well as later fire towers in fighting forest fires, especially if equipped with a telephone line as was the Look See Tree. The key element in responding to forest fires was speed, which telephone service allowed.

The Look See Tree was used by the Arkansas Forestry Commission rangers during the 1930s as a way to supplement the few towers that they had at the time. Since the surroundings of the Look See Tree were much more open at the time and it was one of, if not the, tallest tree around, it was an inexpensive solution to providing a fire lookout in the area. It is reported that the buildings in downtown Dumas, approximately 20 miles to the northeast, could be seen from the tree's platform. The fact that it was immediately adjacent to a county road (now AR 83) meant that it was easily accessible by the rangers as they made their patrols.¹²

However, the Look See Tree was only used for a short period of time, likely only about ten to fifteen years. A lookout tower (since demolished) was eventually built approximately 0.25 miles to the southeast, making the Look See Tree unnecessary. (As in other states, the CCC erected some towers in Arkansas during the 1930. One example is the Crossroads Fire Tower in nearby Ashley County, which was built by the CCC in

¹¹ West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication, p. 18.

¹² Information on the Look See Tree found at http://www.arhistorictrees.org/historic_trees_details.php?id=30 and Tucker, Olin. Conversation with the author. 8 August 2007.

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew County, Arkansas

County and State

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1936 [NR-listed March 2, 2006].) Even so, the climbing pegs and platform, at least, were left in place, although the telephone line was likely removed.

Since the Look See Tree was last utilized, most of the lookout platform has deteriorated and disappeared. However, a portion of it remains, as does the porcelain insulator for the telephone line. In addition, the two rows of iron climbing pegs, which are slowly being engulfed by the tree, remain on the west side of the tree. The Look See Tree represents a rare and early form of fire protection for the forests and timberlands of southern Arkansas. The significance and rarity of the Look See Tree has been recognized by the Arkansas Forestry Commission, which registered the tree in its Arkansas Famous and Historic Tree Program on August 18, 2006. It is not known how many lookout trees were utilized in Arkansas, but the Look See Tree the last known example of this type of lookout. As a result, it represents an important tangible remnant of Arkansas's early forestry and conservation efforts.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Look See Tree, which was utilized between c.1930 and c.1940, is a rare surviving example of a lookout tree. Lookout trees were used by Arkansas Forestry Commission rangers to supplement the small number of fire towers that the Commission operated. Equipped with climbing pegs, lookout platforms, and telephone lines, lookout trees allowed the rangers to survey surrounding lands for fires, something that was especially important in the timberlands of southern Arkansas. For its associations with conservation efforts in Arkansas during the first part of the twentieth century, the Look See Tree is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **statewide significance**.

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

"Amendment to National Forest Fire Lookouts in the Southwestern Region, USDA-Forest Service."
National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. 1991. Found at
<http://www.nr.nps.gov/multiples/64000046.pdf>.

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1890.

Information on the Look See Tree found at http://www.arhistorictrees.org/historic_trees_details.php?id=30.

James, Elizabeth. "Crossroads Fire Tower, Hamburg vic., Ashley County, Arkansas." National Register of
Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006.

Smith, Kenneth. *Sawmill: The Story of Cutting the Last Great Virgin Forest East of the Rockies*.
Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press, 1986.

Tucker, Olin. Conversation with the author. 8 August 2007.

West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint
of 1941 publication.

Look See Tree

Name of Property

Drew County, Arkansas

County and State

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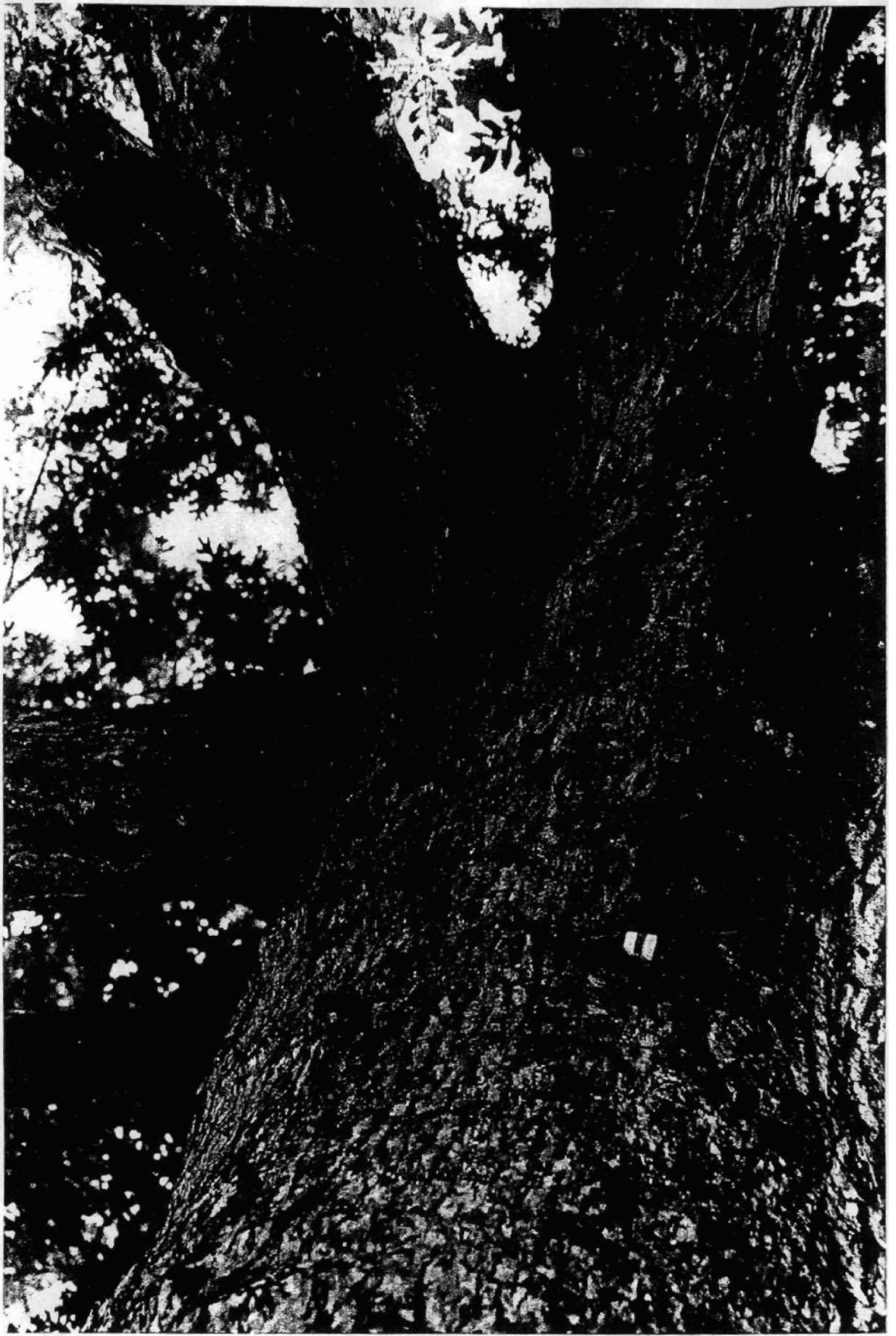
VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

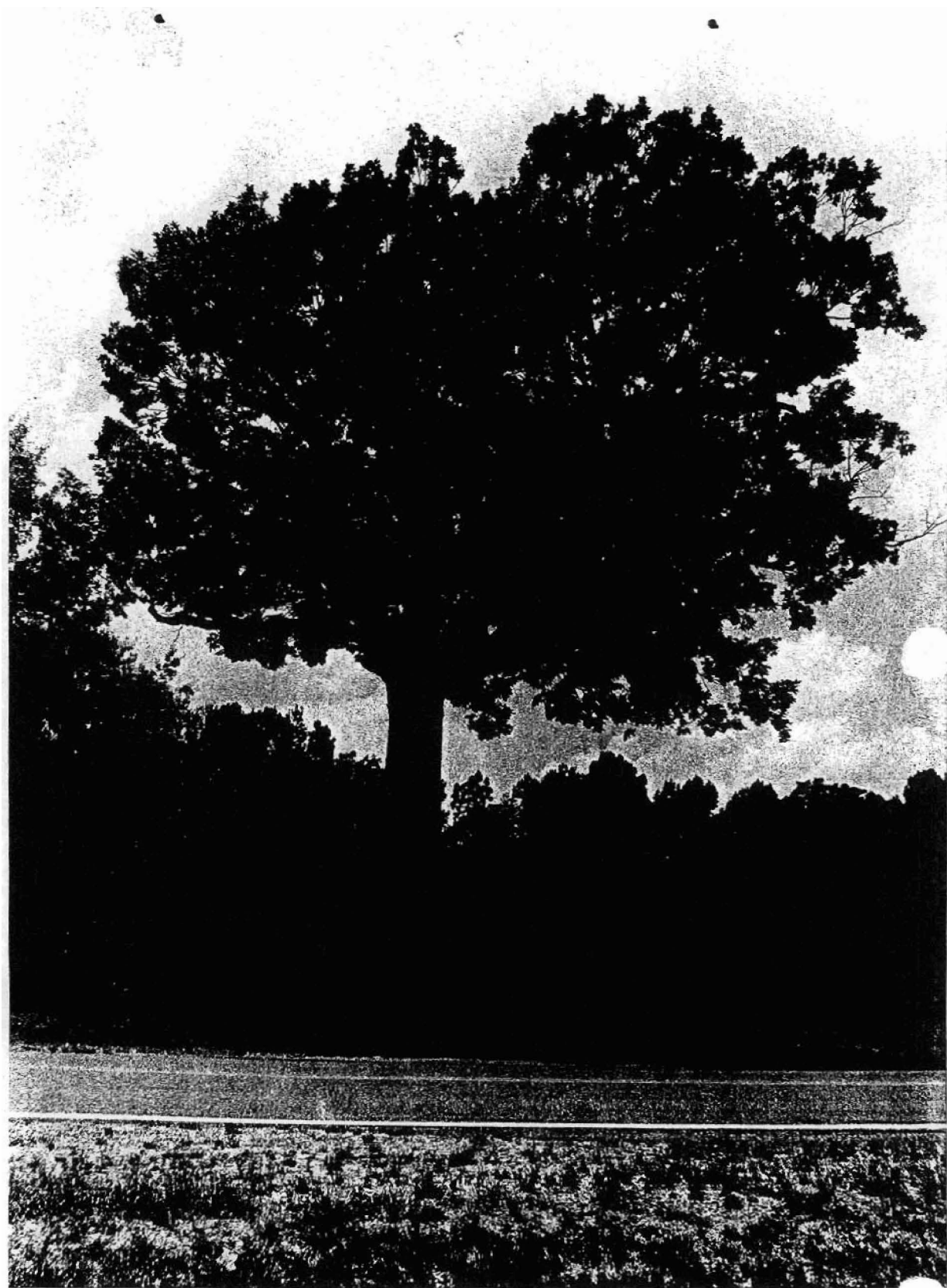
From the southwest corner of AR 83 and Pleasant Springs Road, proceed southeasterly along the west side of AR 83 for 50 feet, thence proceed westerly for 85 feet, thence proceed northerly for 85 feet, thence proceed southeasterly along the south side of Pleasant Springs Road for 100 feet back to the point of beginning.

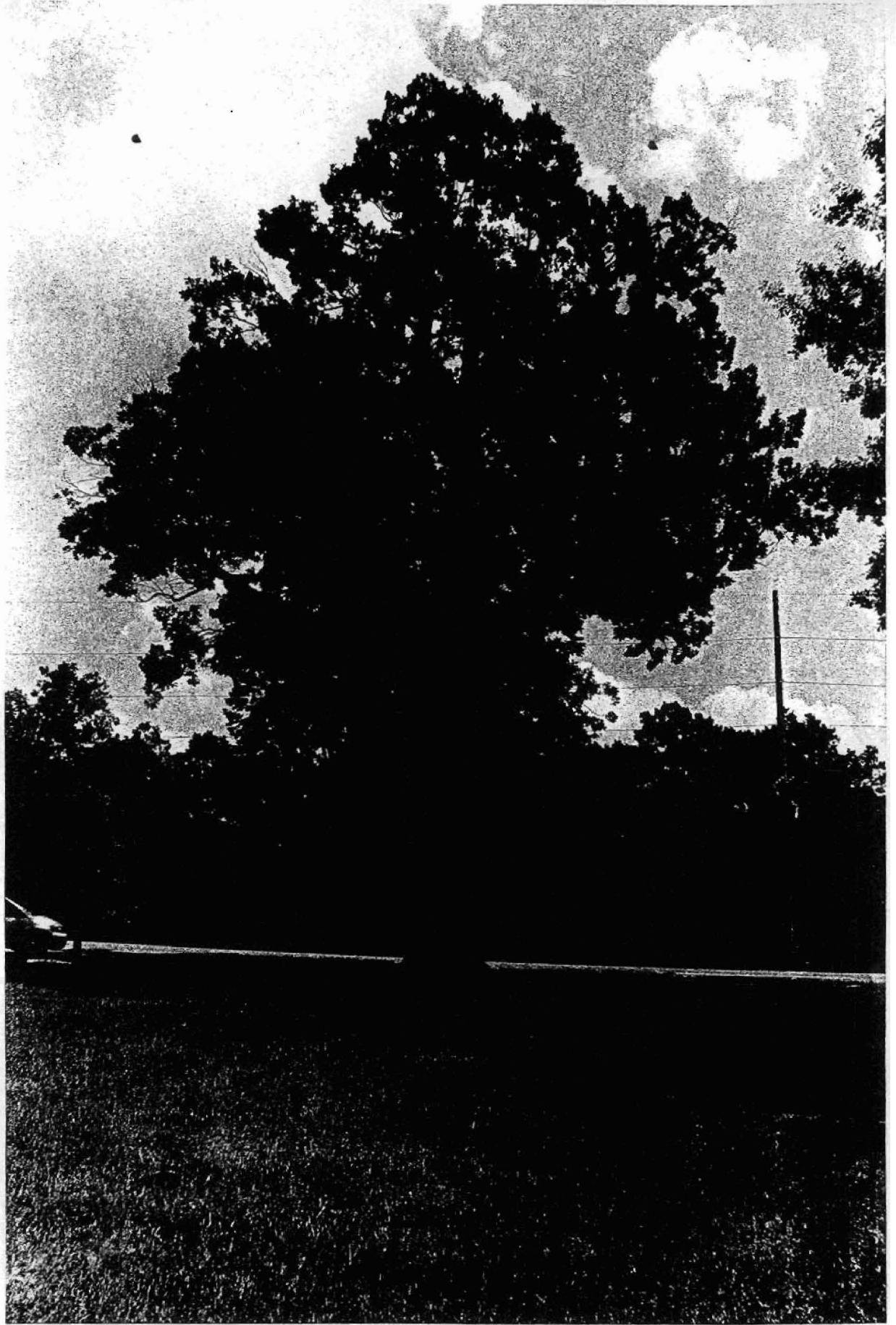
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes the Look See Tree and its immediate setting.









5751/712542

SEE TREE
COUNTY ARKANSAS

T 10 S
47 30 W
T. 11 S



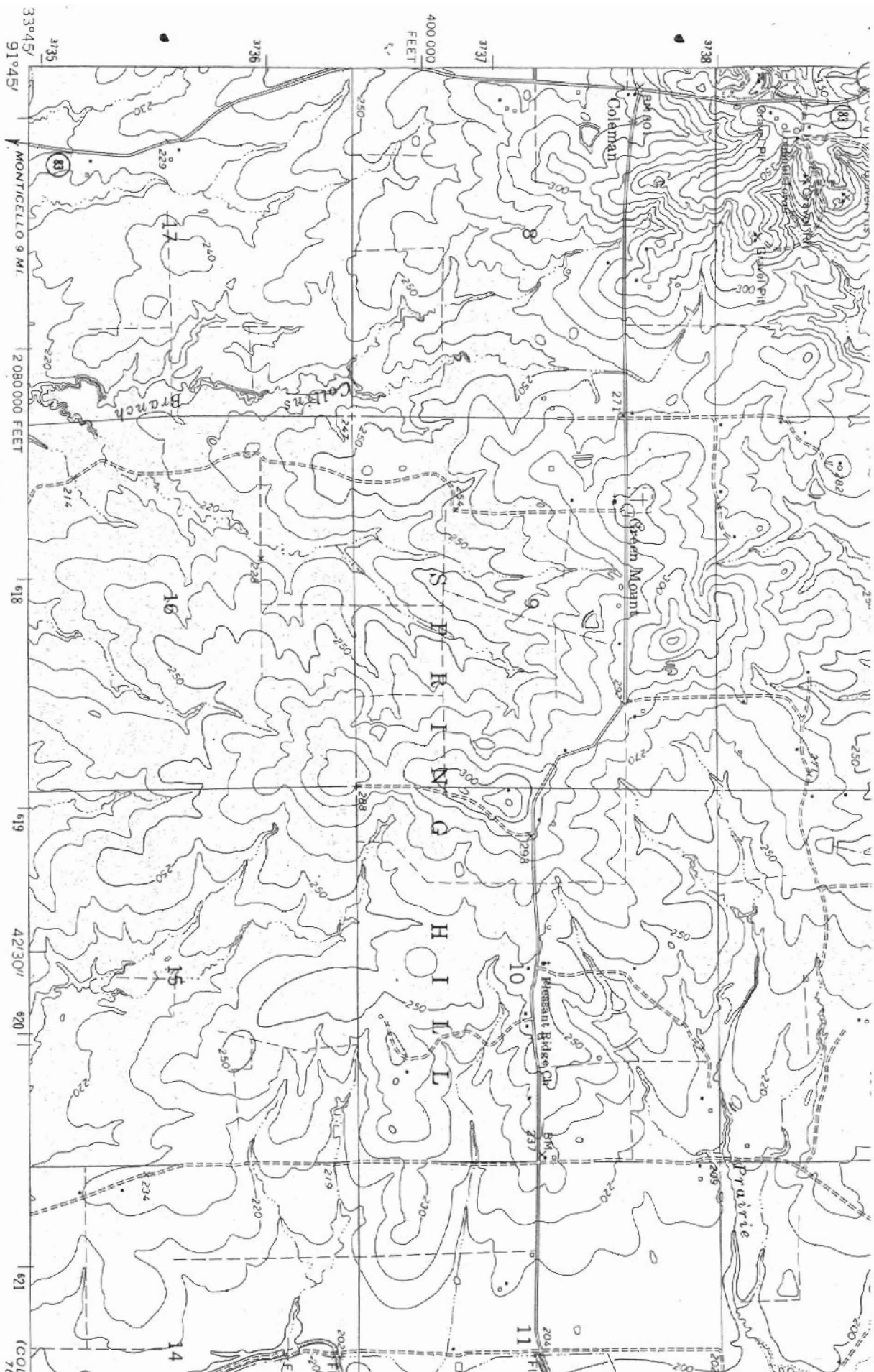
LINCOLN CO
DREW CO

34

35

23

20

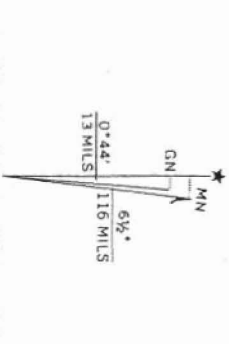


Control by USGS and USC&GS

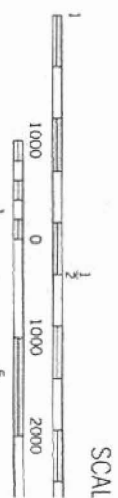
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1962. Field checked 1964

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



UTM GRID AND 1964 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR II
DOTTED LINES REP
DATUM IS

THIS COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL SURVEY, DEN
AND BY THE ADVANCEMENT OF

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DEN