

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Arkansas
COUNTY:	Jefferson
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME	
COMMON:	Plum Bayou Homesteads
AND/OR HISTORIC:	Wright Plantation

2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Wright		Fourth	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Arkansas	05	Jefferson	069

3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS
☒ District ☐ Site ☐ Object	☐ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☐ Public ☐ Private ☒ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered
		☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC Yes: ☒ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☐ No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☒ Agricultural ☒ Commercial ☒ Educational ☐ Entertainment	☐ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☐ Museum	☐ Park ☒ Private Residence ☐ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY		
OWNER'S NAME:		
multiple ownership		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION		
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:		
Jefferson County Courthouse		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
Main and Barraque		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE
Pine Bluff	Arkansas	05

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY:			
DATE OF SURVEY:			
☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
ENTRY NUMBER	
DATE	

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☒ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☐ Altered	☒ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Plum Bayou Homesteads was established in December, 1935, along the east bank of the Arkansas River about 30 miles north of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. The Resettlement Administration purchased 9,853 acres of river bottom land for a total of \$386,000.00. The land was divided into 200 family-size farm units of which 180 were developed.

Plum Bayou was a planned agricultural community. It was laid out in rectangular tracts of approximately forty acres with one tract allotted to each family. Several community buildings were built at the northwest boundary of the project. These buildings were the center of community life, and housed the social activities that helped make this planned rural community a success. The community center, school, store, and gin were a part of the common property of Plum Bayou residents. Several of these simple white frame buildings are now used to house Plum Bayou High School.

Plum Bayou houses were small one-storey structures with white ship-lap siding. Three slightly different architectural styles provided variety in the four, five and six room houses. Each house had a wood burning fireplace, running water and electricity. Square, T-shape, or ell-shape floor plans were used with gable or hipped roofs to produce bungalow style houses. Behind each house was a two-storey barn with a gambrel roof, along with such small structures as a poultry house, well-house and privy. All-weather roads ran in front of each farm house, making transportation and communication easily accessible to all Plum Bayou residents.

Though many of the original houses have been moved away to other communities, about fifty of the homestead houses remain. Most of these have received minor alterations, such as screening porches, adding shutters, etc.; however, the overall integrity of this 1930's government housing project remains. The simple features of these white frame houses, the two-storey barn behind each house, and the small outbuildings with each homestead combine to exemplify the typical farm homesteads established under the Resettlement Administration. Recent intrusions are minimal, and are limited to a few commercial and residential structures in the area of the original community center complex, now the Wright community.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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(Number all entries)

Significance (Continued - Page 3)

Because it was the first in the Nation, the dedication of Plum Bayou on November 20, 1936, was attended by many dignitaries, including Resettlement Administrator Rexford G. Tugwell, Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, Senators Joe T. Robinson and Hattie Carraway, and other state and local officials.

In presenting keys to the first homes at Plum Bayou, Administrator Rexford Tugwell told the new residents that he was giving them not only keys to the houses, but also keys to the future. Tugwell saw the Plum Bayou project as representative of a new chapter in American agricultural history.

Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace spoke to the large crowd about the era of transition from farm tenant to land owner. He hoped that business and industry would closely watch this experiment in farmstead operation and see it succeed on a business basis as a paying proposition. According to a recent (1974) interview with Mr. E. B. Whittaker, Assistant Regional Director of the Resettlement Administration, Plum Bayou proved to be the most successful of the sixteen resettlement projects in Arkansas.

Today about a fourth of the 180 developed homesteads are still intact and in use at Plum Bayou. Many of the original houses have been moved to nearby communities; nevertheless, most of these are recognizable as originating at Plum Bayou because of the uniform and simple architectural styles used at the farm project. The community buildings now house educational facilities. Though still standing, the gin is now longer in use and is rapidly deteriorating.

Despite the removal of many of the original buildings, the area still retains its historic integrity as a government-established farm community. Plum Bayou represents the Resettlement Administration's success in transforming at least a part of the old cotton culture tenant farmers into successful and independent landowners. Because it was the first of the many Resettlement Administration farm projects, and because it represents an important part of American agricultural and social history, Plum Bayou is an important twentieth century historic site.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American Guide Series. Arkansas, A Guide to the State. New York: Hastings House, 1941.

Baldwin, Sidney. Poverty & Politics: The Rise & Decline of the Farm Security Administration. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968.

Johnson, Charles S.; Embree, Edwin R.; and Alexander, W. W. The Collapse of Cotton Tenancy. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935.

Sain, Walter Branch. Personal interview at Plum Bayou, July 16, 1974.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	34° 27' 38.3"	92° 04' 57.2"		0	0	0
NE	34° 27' 34"	92° 01' 38.2"				
SE	34° 24' 5.7"	92° 01' 46.4"				
SW	34° 24' 10"	92° 05' 3.2"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 5.307 acres

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Dianna Kirk, Staff Historian

ORGANIZATION: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

STREET AND NUMBER:
Plaza West, Suite 1030 McKinley and Lee Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Little Rock

STATE: Arkansas

CODE: 05

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name

William E. Henderson

William E. Henderson

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date September 10, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☐ 18th Century | ☒ 20th Century |
| ☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☐ 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| ☐ Aboriginal | ☐ Education | ☐ Political | ☐ Urban Planning |
| ☐ Prehistoric | ☐ Engineering | ☐ Religion/Philosophy | ☐ Other (Specify) |
| ☐ Historic | ☐ Industry | ☐ Science | |
| ☒ Agriculture | ☐ Invention | ☐ Sculpture | |
| ☐ Architecture | ☐ Landscape | ☒ Social/Humanitarian | |
| ☐ Art | ☐ Architecture Literature | ☐ Theater | |
| ☐ Commerce | ☐ Military | ☐ Transportation | |
| ☐ Communications | ☐ Music | | |
| ☐ Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In the years following the Civil War, the loss of the slavery system left southern plantations with an inadequate labor supply. Therefore, the continued existence of the cotton culture became dependent on a new breed of laborer. A system of farm tenancy grew up in which large landowners rented out small portions of their land to individual farmers. Rent was paid in cash, or by providing the landlord with a portion of the crop produced on the land. As each post-Civil War decade passed, the number of tenant farmers continued to increase. By 1930, over sixty percent of Southern cotton farms were operated by tenants.

Because most farm tenants/share croppers lived below subsistence levels, this socio-economic system was considered to be one of the greatest social blights in America. By 1930 Southern tenant farmers were adding a billion dollars annually to the world economy, yet the cotton growers themselves were the most impoverished and backward group of producers in the Nation.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1932, he promised a "New Deal" for the American people who were then suffering through the Great Depression. Among the many groups of people to benefit by the New Deal programs were Southern tenant farmers. Rural relief, rehabilitation and reform came to the tenant farm society through the efforts of the Resettlement Administration, established April 30, 1935, by Executive Order 7207.

The goals of the Resettlement Administration were deeply humanistic and concerned with the overall improvement of the human condition. According to historian Sidney Baldwin, the overall rural rehabilitation program had little widespread effect on the nation's agriculture; nevertheless, it had a tremendous beneficial impact on the lives of the low-income farm families.

The resettlement plan was to move tenant farmers off marginal and overworked land and onto land capable of producing a

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Arkansas	
COUNTY Jefferson	
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Significance (Continued - Page 2)

decent living. To meet the needs of the ill-housed, ill-clad, and ill-nourished segment of the rural population, resettlement projects were established.

After careful scrutiny, certain farm families were selected to become part of the government's great experiment. Only those families who had proved their good intentions and shown a definite ability to succeed were chosen. Each farmer was provided with an acreage allotment (usually 30 - 50 acres), a simple, but respectable home, and a barn. Most of the resettlement farms were set up so that the residents could purchase their farms over a long-term period. The Resettlement Administration felt that if an honest, hard-working tenant farmer could be given an opportunity to cast aside his yoke of unending poverty, made even more unbearable by the depression, he could make a success of the experiment. Many farmers were given such a start, and though many failed, others were able to make a new and better life for themselves and their families.

In the attempt to change farm tenancy to farm ownership, the Resettlement Administration established a number of rural resettlement projects throughout the South. The first project to be officially and ceremoniously dedicated was located in Jefferson County, Arkansas. Plum Bayou Homesteads marked the implementation of an economic theory which had, up to then, existed only on paper.

Plum Bayou was typical of the resettlement projects which were to follow. Almost 1,000 acres were purchased by the Resettlement Administration (prior to Federal purchase, the land had been owned by several individuals but cultivated by convict labor from the nearby penitentiary). The land was divided into 200 family units averaging about 43 acres each. A four to six room house with electricity and running water was built on each tract, along with a barn and several smaller farm-support structures. Families selected to live at Plum Bayou were chosen from among low income families from all parts of Arkansas. Each farm family was responsible for their own tract of land. After a trial period each successfully resettled family was given a contract to purchase their farm with payments extended over a forty year period.

One of the most innovative features of the resettlement projects were the community and cooperative services. Jointly owned by all residents of the farm were properties such as a cotton gin, store, farm equipment, school and community building. When the commercial ventures showed a profit, the excess was divided equally among the project settlers.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Arkansas
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(Number all entries)

Major Bibliographical References (Continued - Page 2)

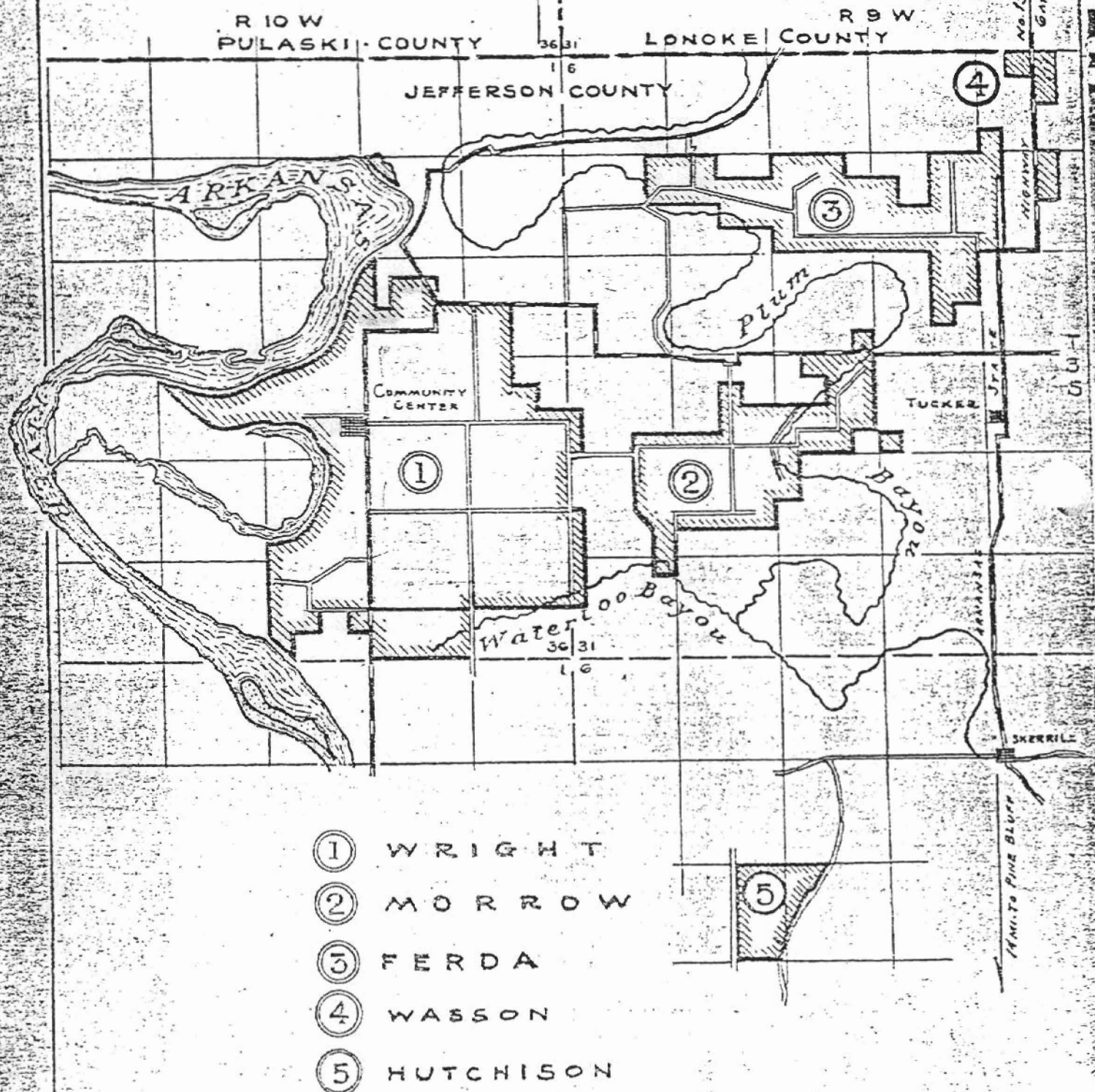
Snow, Paul G. "Resettlement Administration Helps to Solve the Tenant Problem in Arkansas." Federal Writer's Project Manuscript. Archives, Arkansas History Commission.

Whittaker, E. B. (formerly Assistant Regional Director of Resettlement Administration). Personal interview, July 15, 1974.

_____ Personal correspondence, documents and manuscripts relating to the Resettlement Administration, 1935-1941.

Ernest D. Fisher

area marked in pink is that
being nominated to the National Register
It is shown in relation to other
original sections of Plum Bayou



PLUM BAYOU HOMESTEADS

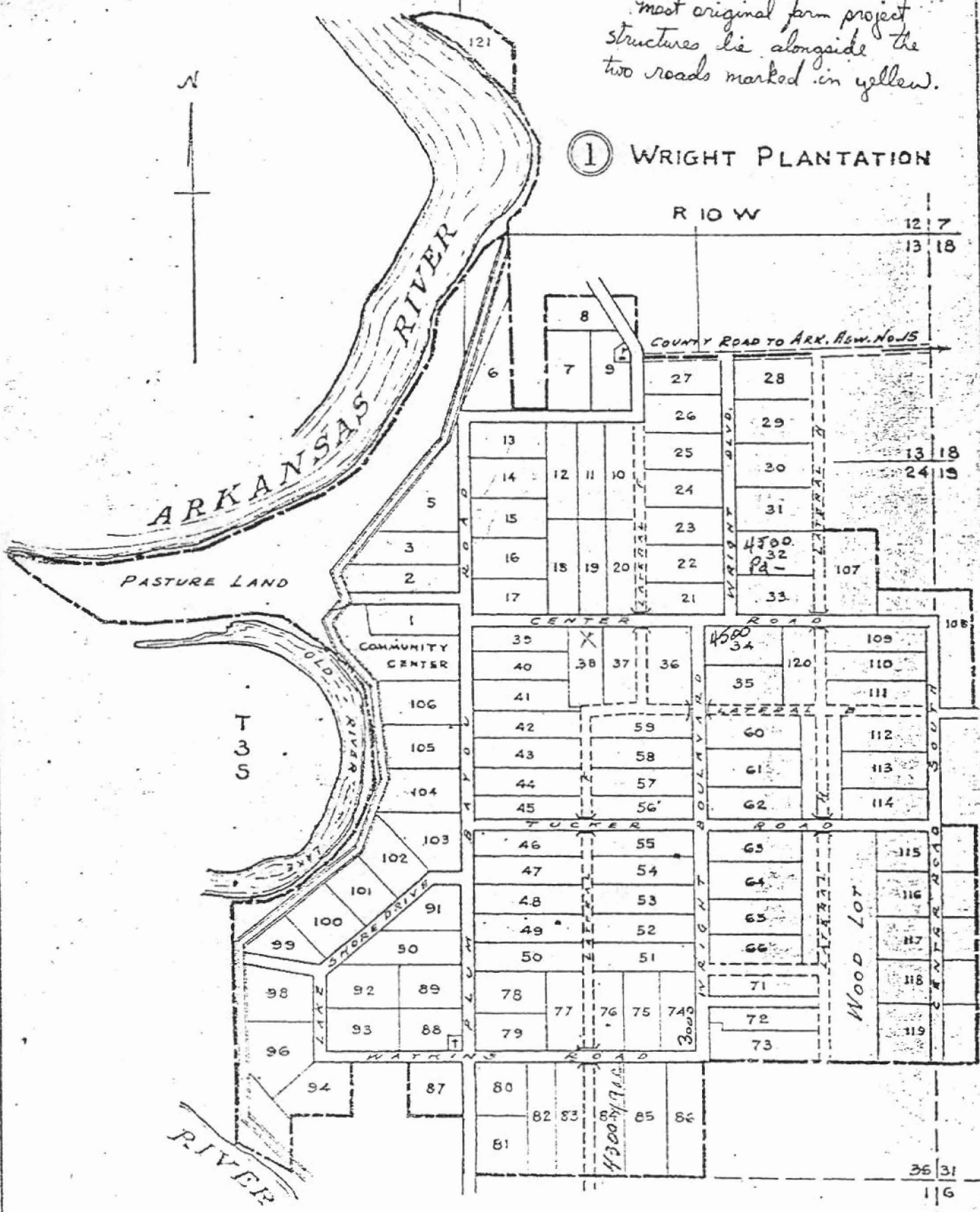
RF-AK-II

JEFFERSON CO. ARK.

1 OF 5

most original farm project
structures lie alongside the
two roads marked in yellow.

① WRIGHT PLANTATION



PLUM BAYOU HOMESTEADS

RF-AK-II

JEFFERSON CO. ARK.

2 OF 5

REGION 6.

DISTRICT 4

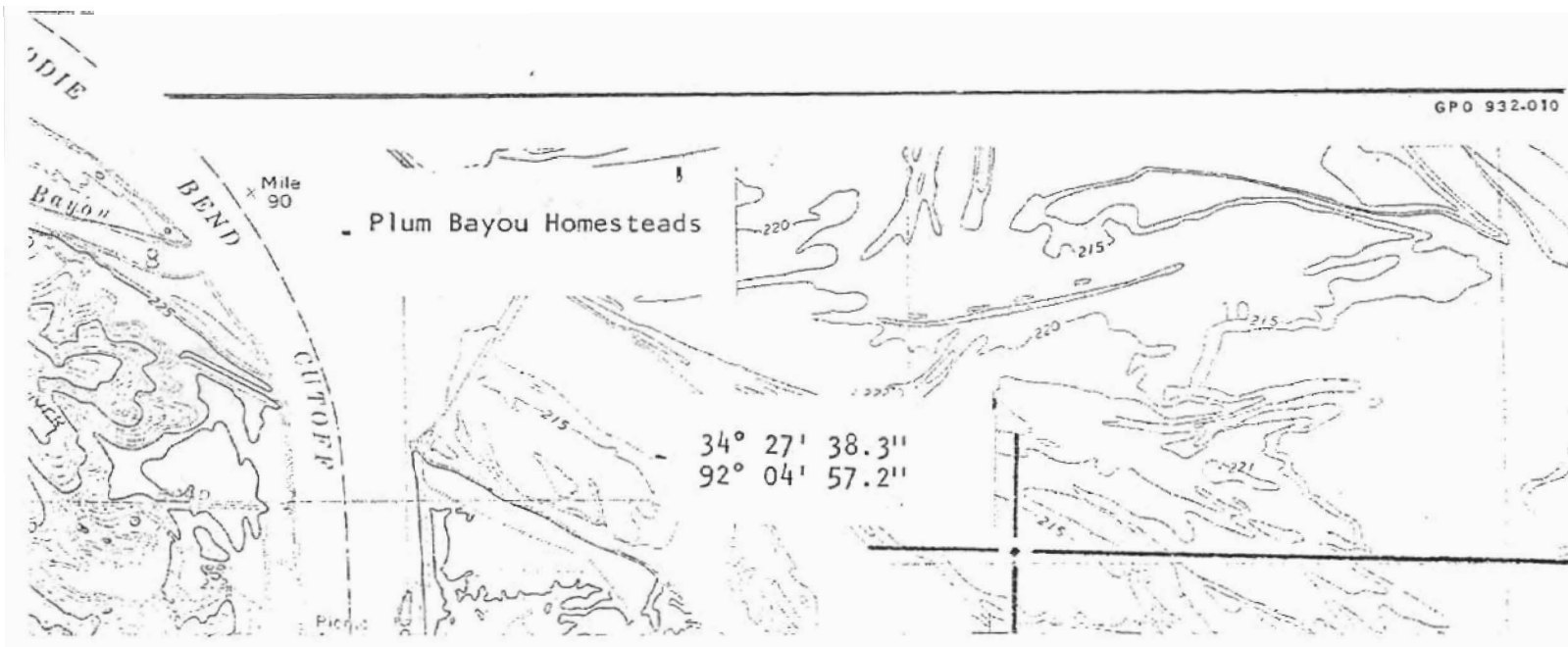
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND SURVEY

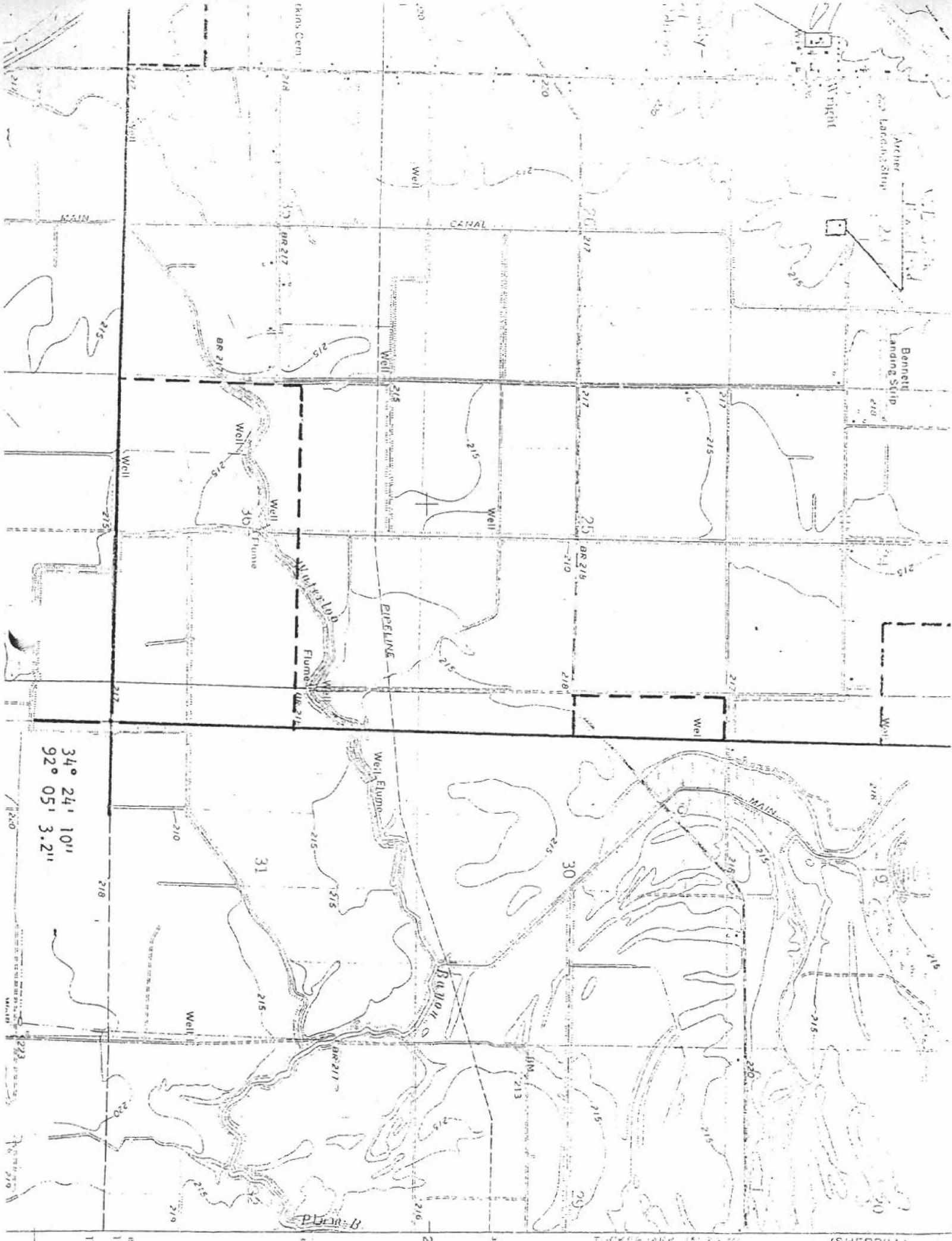
Form 10-301
(July 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM
(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

1. NAME		
COMMON	LAND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Plum Bayou Homesteads	Wright Plantation	
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Arkansas	Jefferson	Wright
STREET AND NUMBER		
Center Road		
3. MAP REFERENCE		
SOURCE	DATE	SCALE
U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Quadrangle Series	1970	1/24000

REQUIREMENTS: PROPERTY BOUNDARIES, WHERE REQUIRED, AND NORTH ARROW.





34° 24' 10"
92° 05' 3.2"

Plum Bayou Homesteads

1 Mile
90

CUT OFF

Picnic Area

17

Public Ground

34° 27' 38.3"
92° 04' 57.2"

LEVEE

16

20

21

Hensley

Grain Elevator
School Building

Wright

Archer
Landing Strip

W.B. Sain
Homestead

23

Gennett
Landing Strip

B O I V

Cem

14

LANDING

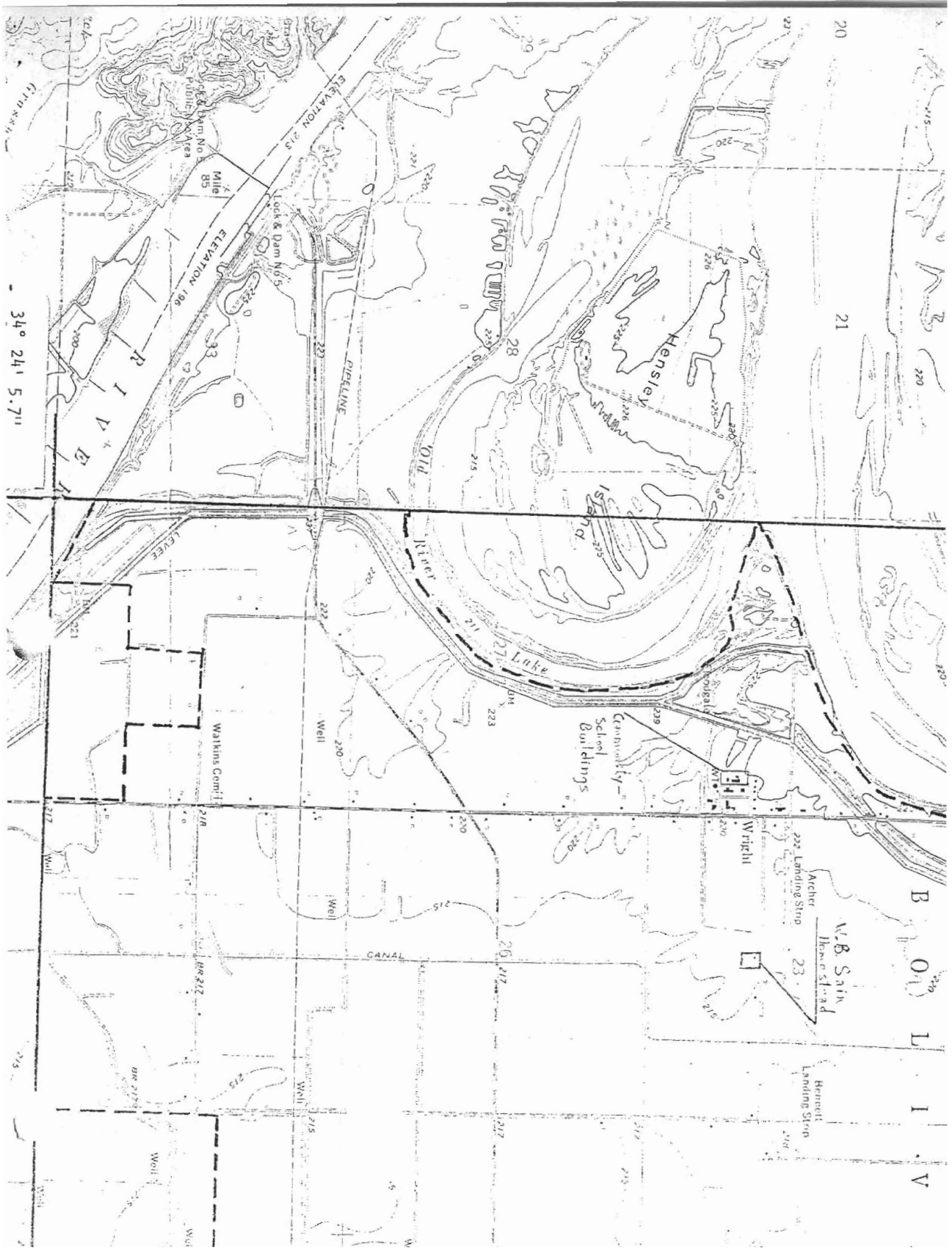
Siphon

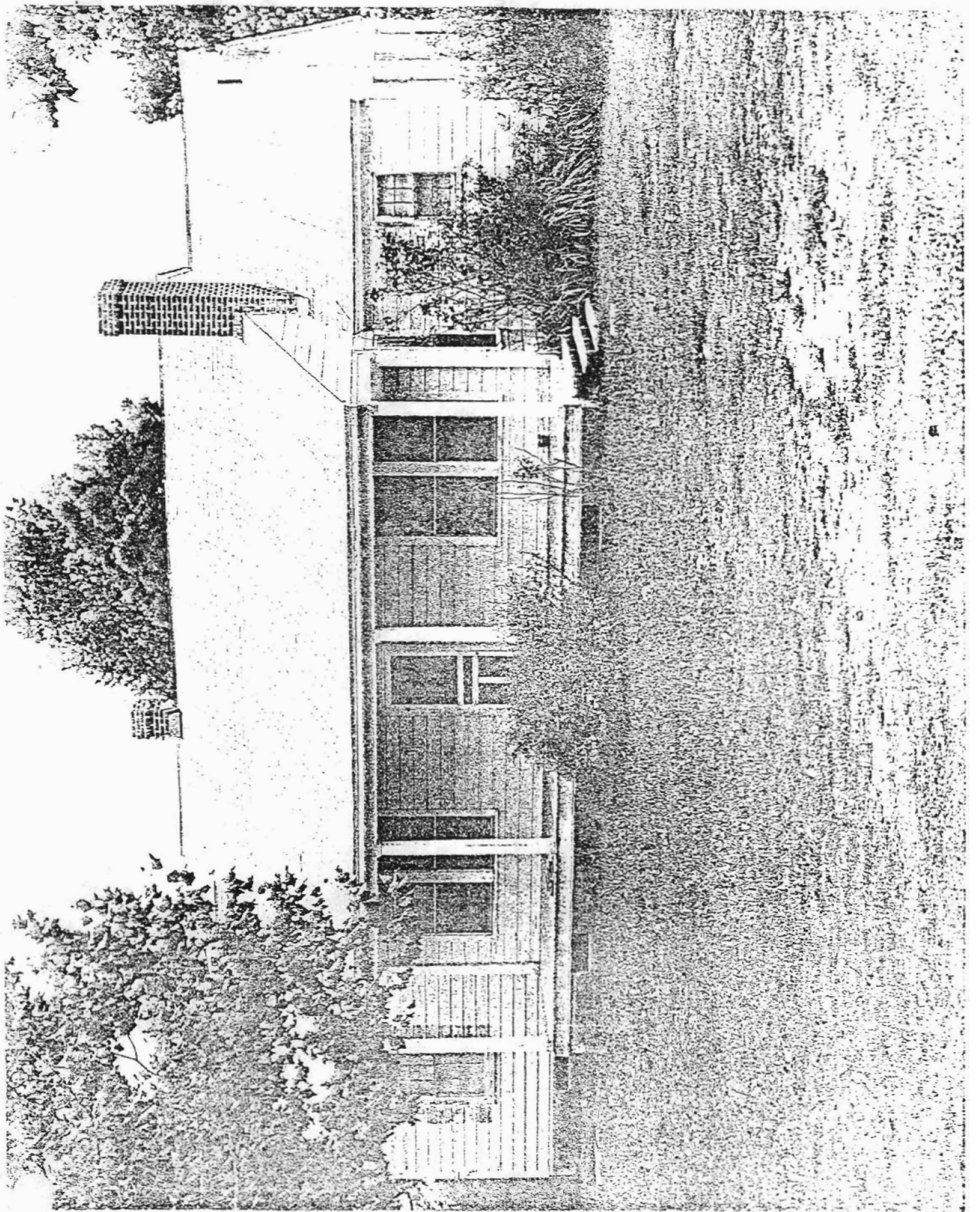
Siphon

Well

Floodgate

Well





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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC Plum Bayou Homesteads

AND/OR COMMON

Wright Plantation

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Wright

— VICINITY OF —

COUNTY Jefferson

STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

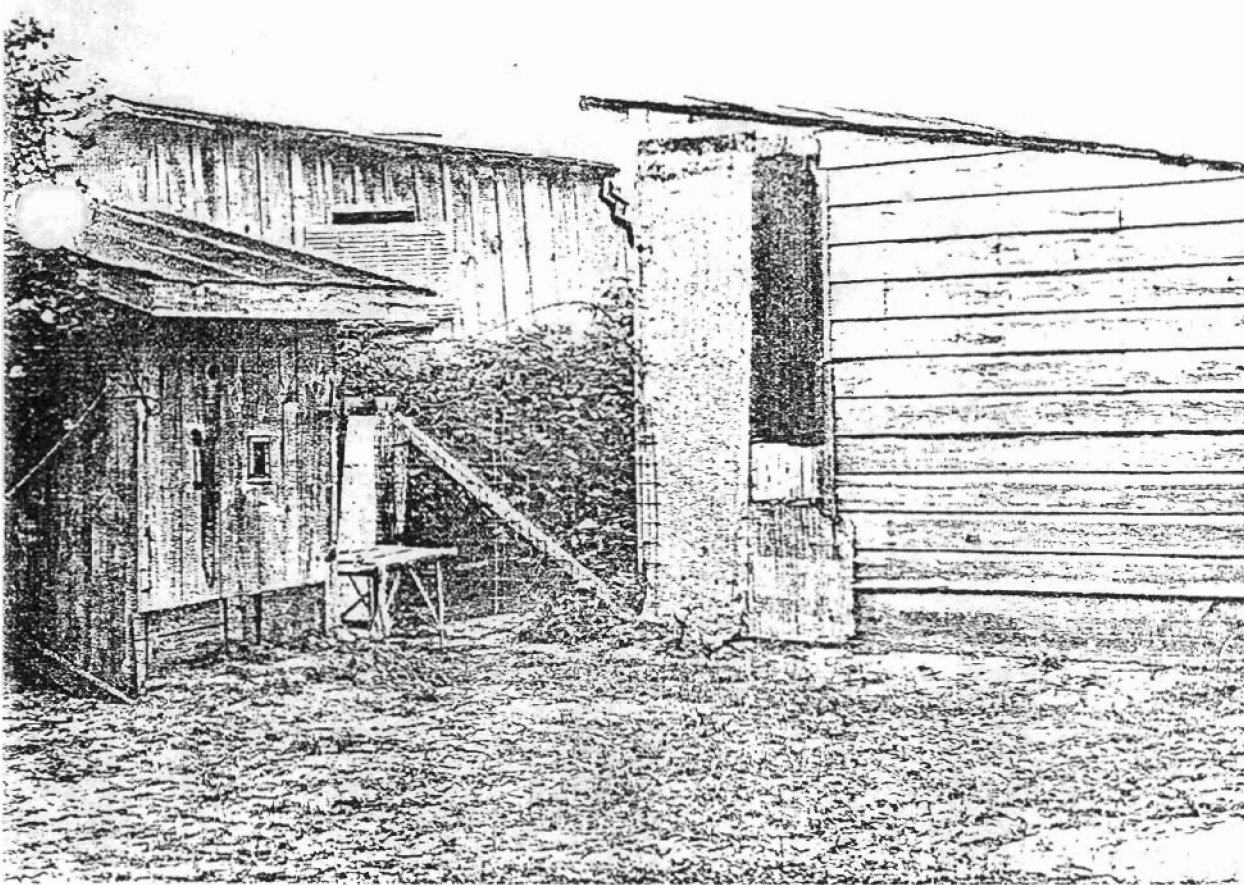
NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

House #1

PHOTO NO.



Form No. 10-301a
(Rev. 10-74)

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

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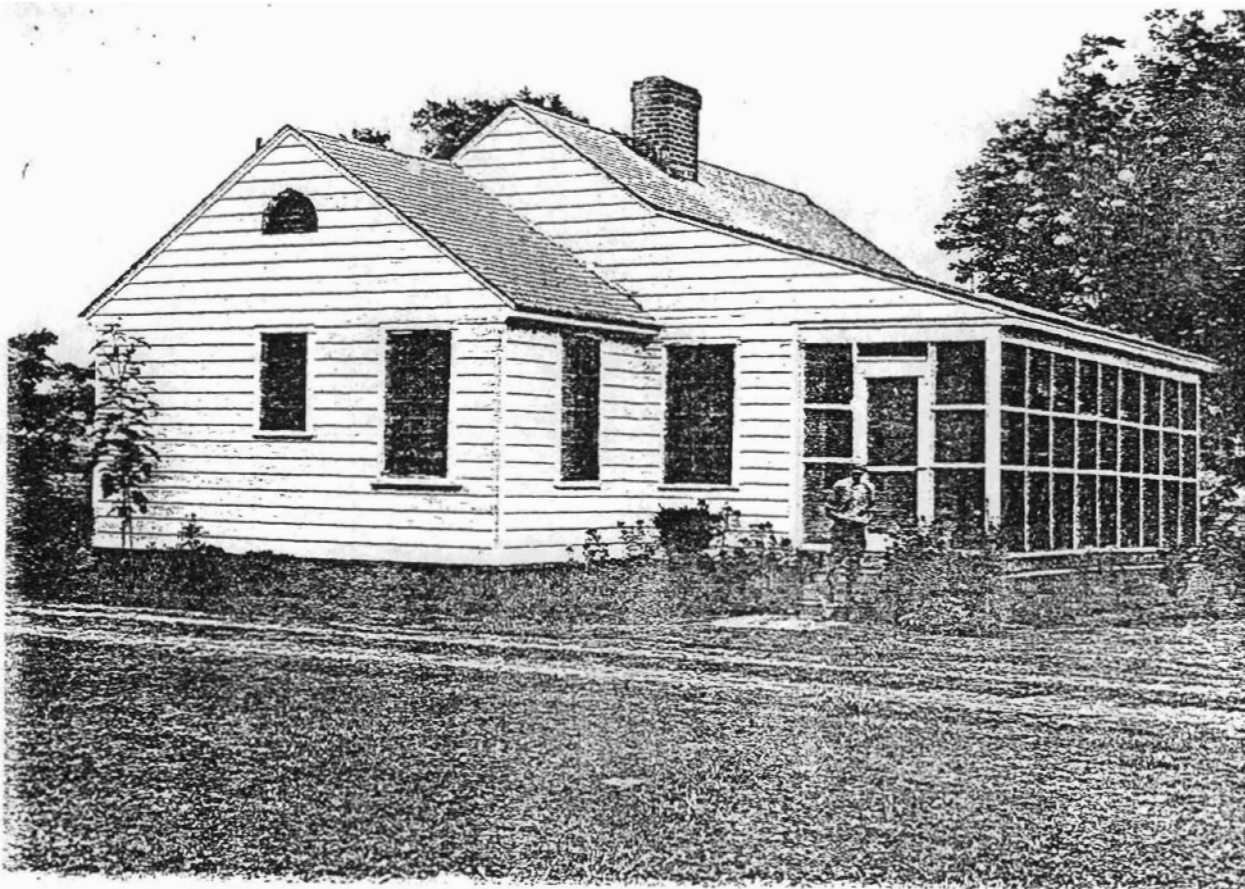
DATE OF PHOTO 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
Sain farm structures, viewed from northwest

PHOTO NO



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HISTORIC Plum Bayou Homesteads

AND/OR COMMON Wright Plantation

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Wright

VICINITY OF

COUNTY Jefferson

STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

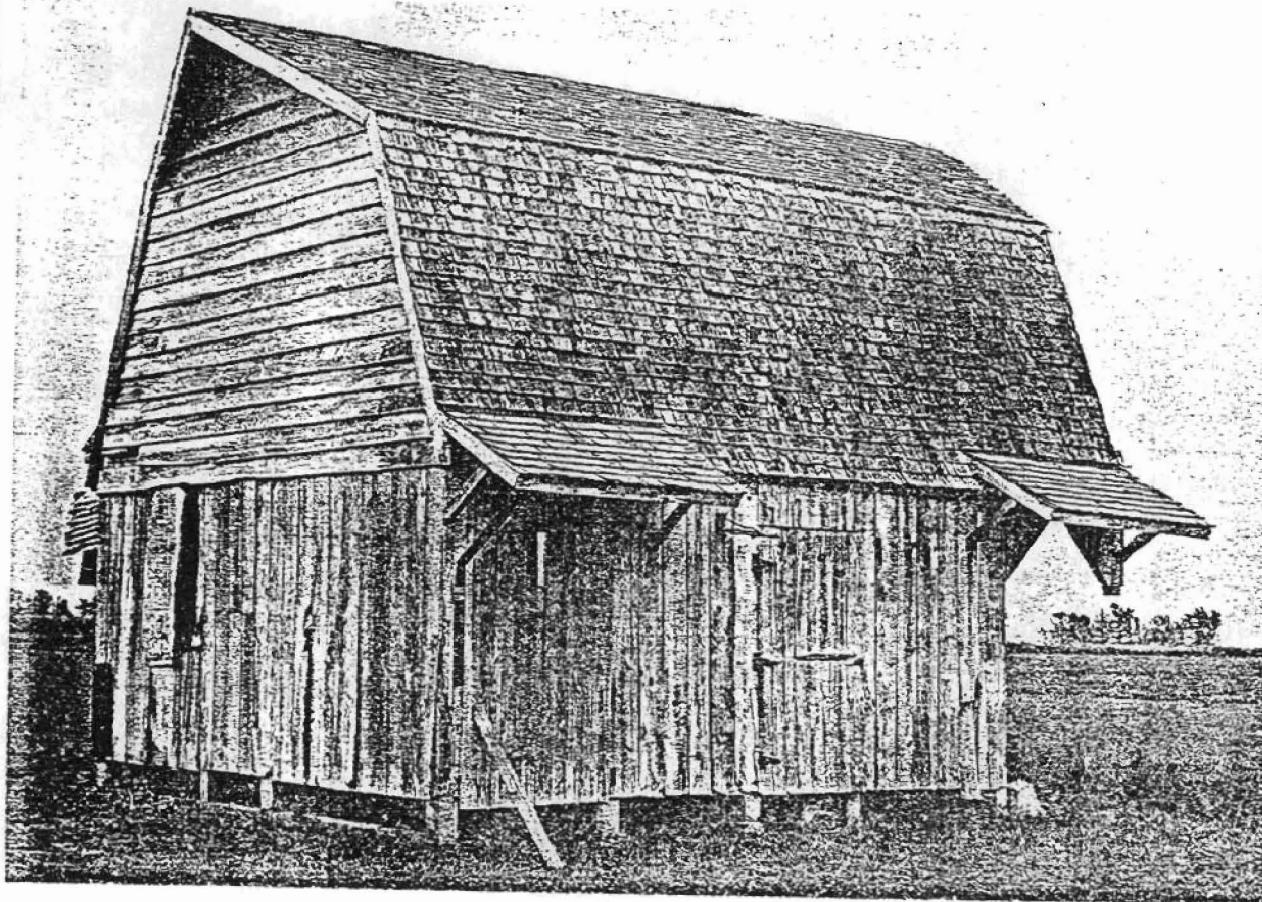
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PHOTO NO

Walter Branch Sain House, viewed from northeast



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HISTORIC

Plum Bayou Homesteads

AND/OR COMMON

Wright Plantation

LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Wright

___ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Jefferson

STATE Arkansas

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk

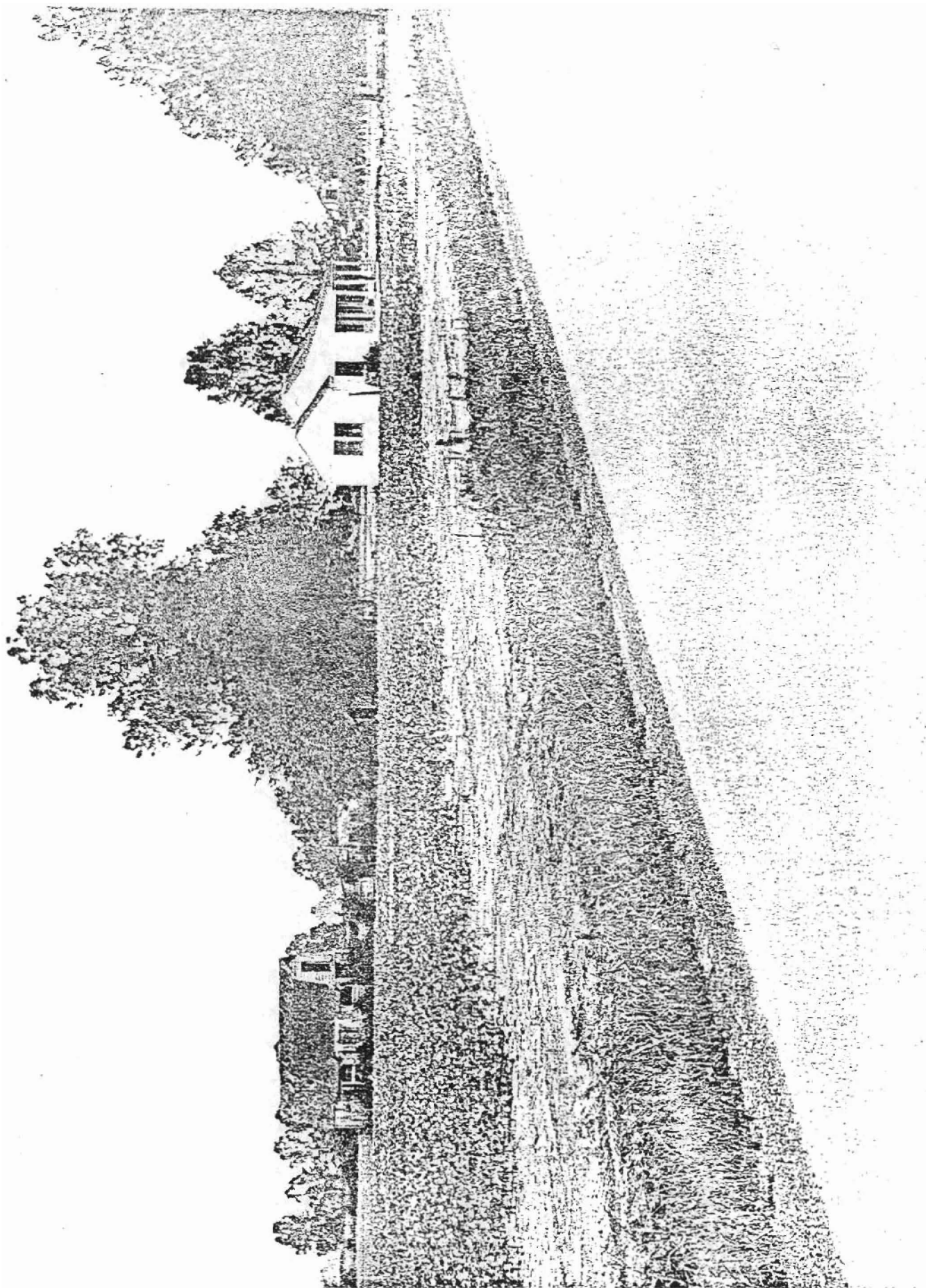
DATE OF PHOTO 1974

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IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
Sain barn, viewed from northwest

PHOTO NO.



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CITY, TOWN Wright VICINITY OF COUNTY Jefferson STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk DATE OF PHOTO 1974

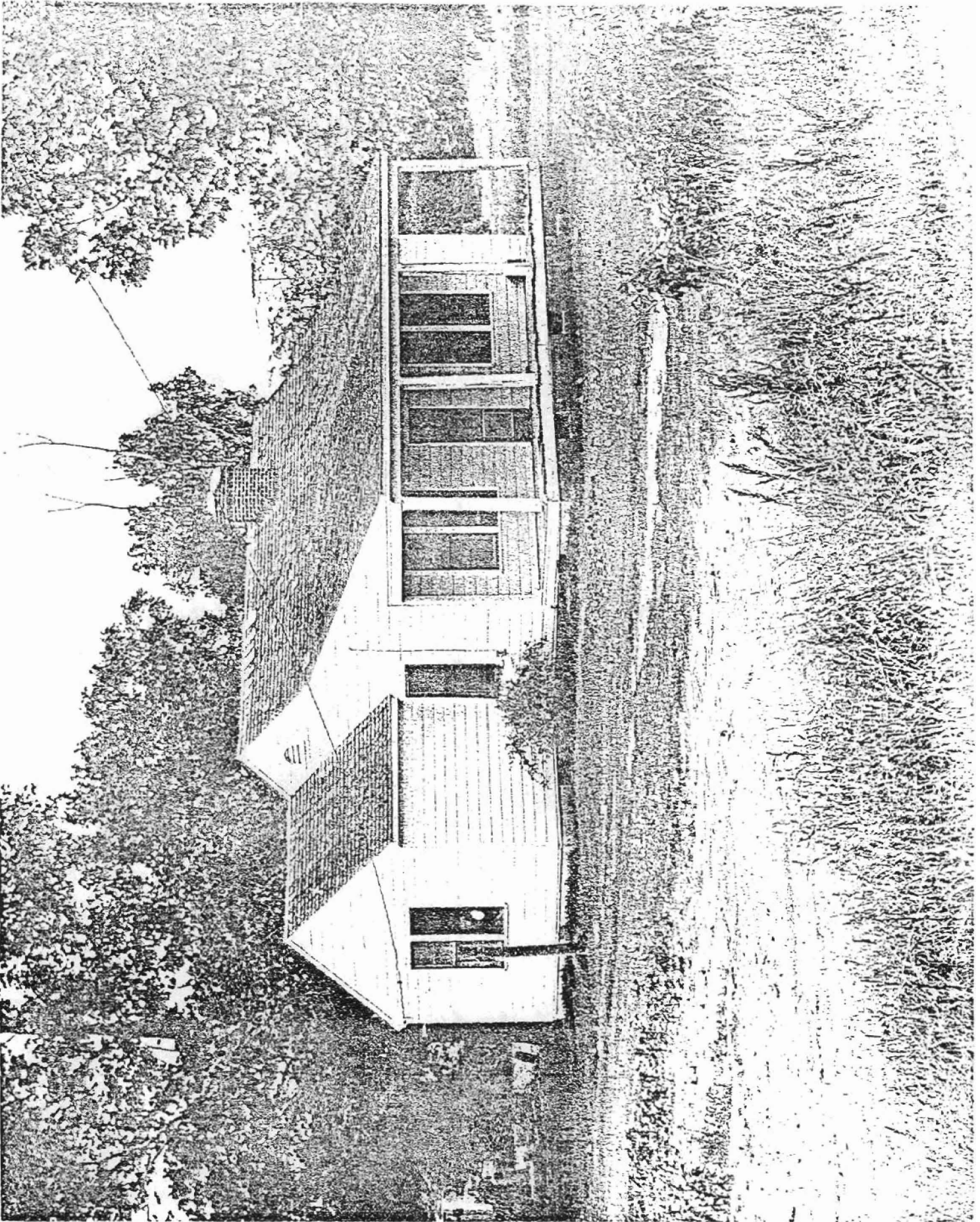
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

House #3, showing barn and outbuildings

PHOTO NO.



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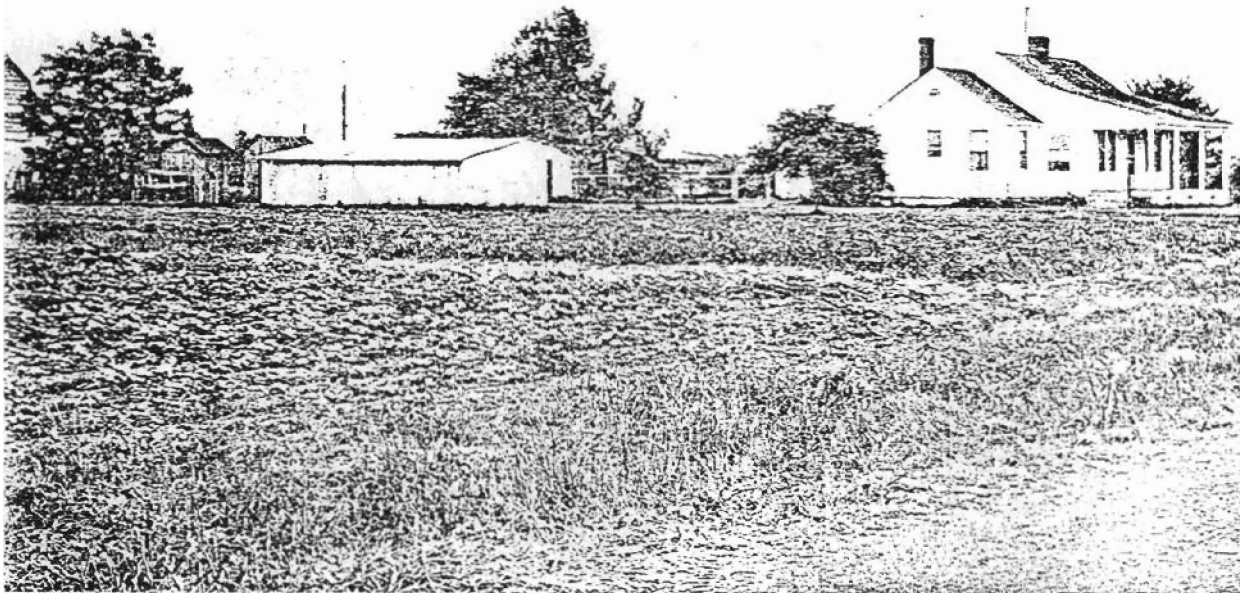
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO

House #2



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Wright Plantation

2 LOCATION

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3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
house #4, showing barn and outbuildings

PHOTO NO



Form No. 10-501a
Rev. 10-74)

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NAME

HISTORIC Plum Bayou Homesteads

AND/OR COMMON

Wright Plantation



LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Wright VICINITY OF COUNTY Jefferson STATE Arkansas



PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program



IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
house #5

PHOTO NO.



Form No. 10-301a
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2 LOCATION

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VICINITY OF

COUNTY Jefferson

STATE Arkansas

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DATE OF PHOTO 1974

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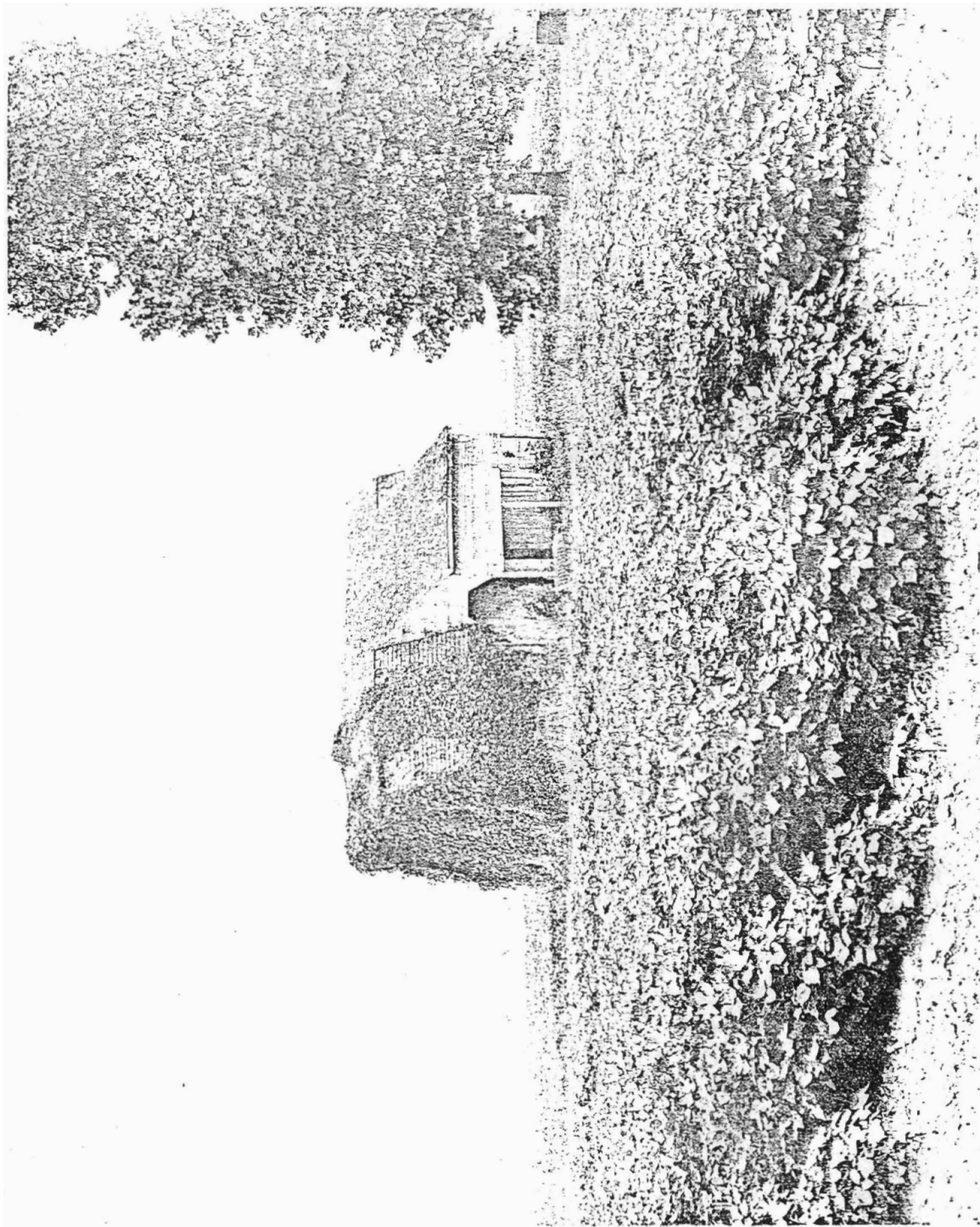
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PHOTO NO

House #6





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CITY, TOWN Wright COUNTY Jefferson STATE Arkansas

____ VICINITY OF

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

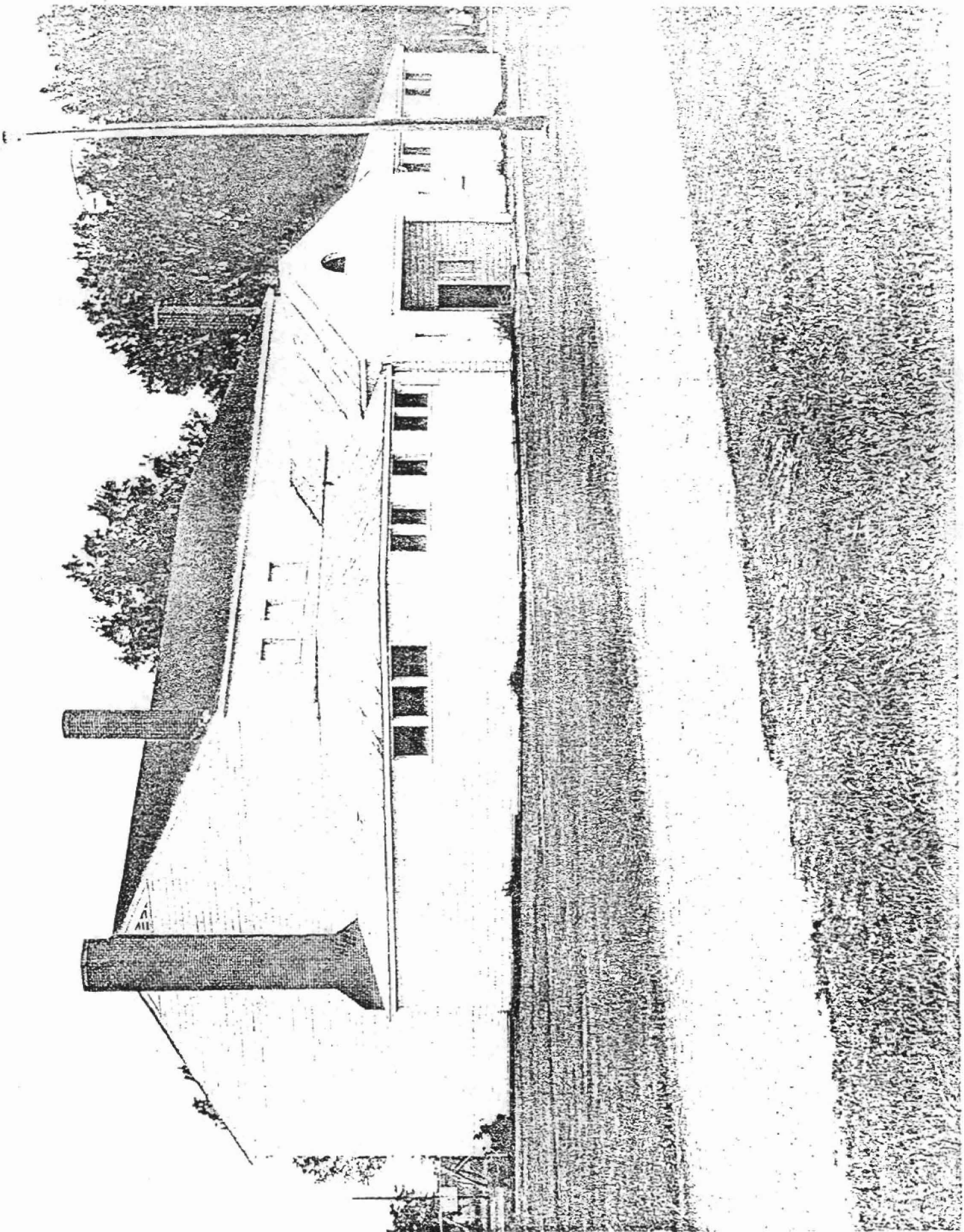
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4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
Typical barn

PHOTO NO.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME
HISTORIC

Plum Bayou Homesteads

AND/OR COMMON Wright Plantation

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Wright

— VICINITY OF —

COUNTY

Jefferson

STATE

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1974

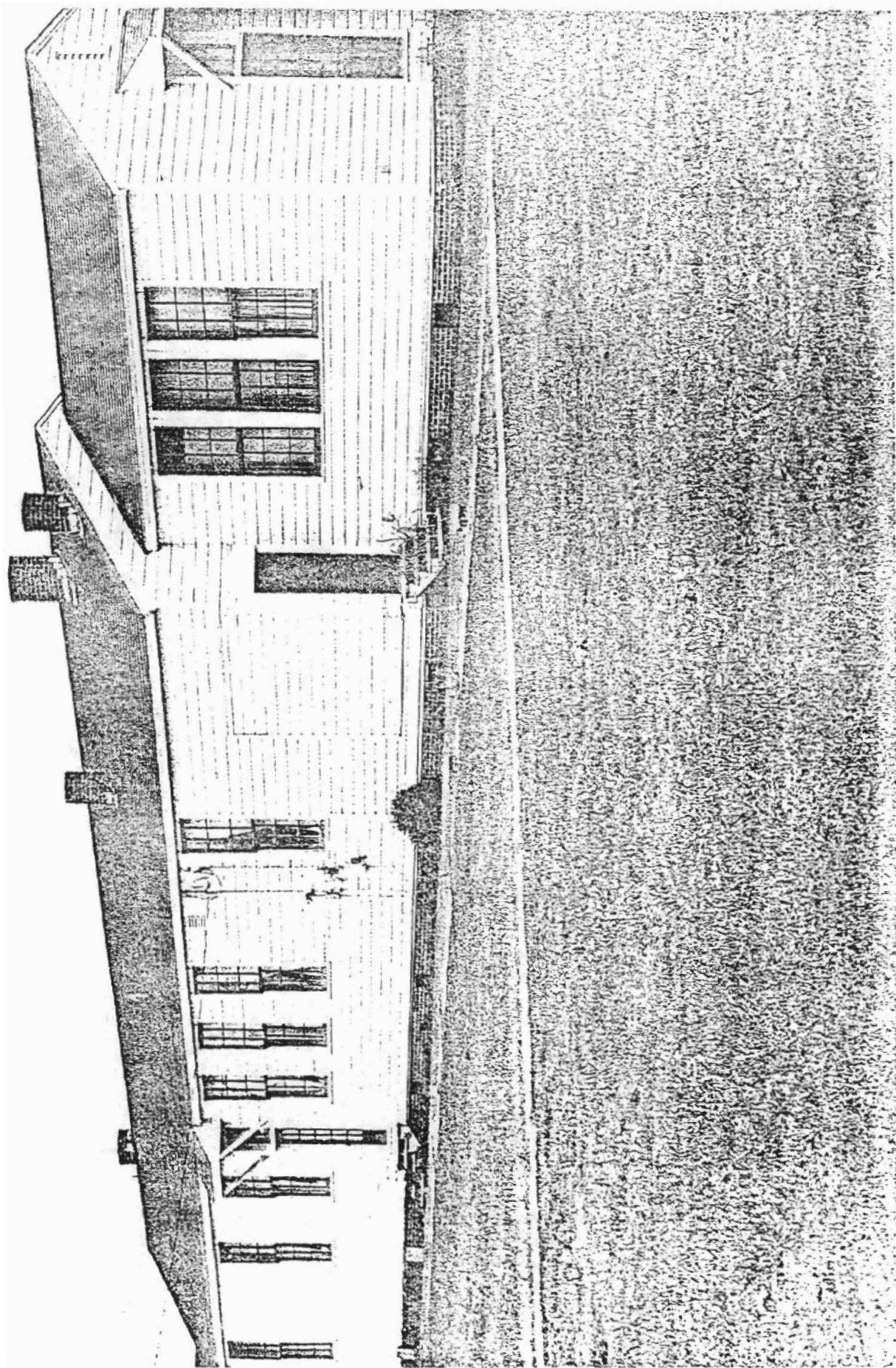
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4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT. GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET
Community building/gymnasium, viewed from the southeast

PHOTO NO.



Form No. 10-301a
(Rev. 10-74)

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4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Community building/school, viewed from the northwest

PHOTO NO.