

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Norman Town Square

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: State Highway 8

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Norman

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Montgomery code: AR 097 zip code: 71960

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</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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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

er
craftsman
Rustic

Other Description: Plain Traditional

Materials: foundation Brick roof Asphalt
walls Brick other Wooden porch

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: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1935-1940

Significant Dates: 1935

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Black, Emmory/Mitchell, G. S.
Works Progress Administration

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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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:

- 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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reage of Property: Approximately one-and-one-half

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>437520</u>	<u>3812600</u>	B	___	_____	_____
C	___	_____	_____	D	___	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the southern edge of State Highway 8 with the western edge of 8th Street, proceed southerly along the latter edge to its intersection with a perpendicular line formed by its intersection with the northern edge of Gurdon Street; thence proceed westerly along said edge to its intersection with the eastern edge of 7th Street; thence proceed northerly along said edge to its intersection with the southern edge of State Highway 8; thence proceed easterly along said edge to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Date: 01/20/93

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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

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Summary

The Norman Town Square, located in the center of the small business district of Norman, attained its present appearance during the period 1935-1940, beginning with the erection of small brick library building in the center of the square and the four diamond-shaped flower beds in the center of each of the square's four quarters. This initial construction was augmented by the construction by the W.P.A. in 1940 of the stone and concrete wall that surrounds the entire square and features an entrance gate on the south side and four sets of steps that provide access over the wall from all four sides.

Elaboration

The Norman Town Square consists of a largely open lawn, in the center of which is a small, single-story, brick masonry building, originally built in 1935 to serve the community as a public library. Away from the library and toward each of the four outer corners of the park itself are four diamond-shaped, fieldstone masonry flower beds that were installed by local stone masons around 1937. The stone wall and steel cable "railing" that surrounds the park was constructed in 1940 with the aid of W.P.A. labor.

The open, largely unimproved, one-and-one-half acre town square features three principal built features. The first of these (1935) was the small brick library building in the center of the square. A single story in height and of brick masonry construction, the building features a rectangular plan with a gable roof, Craftsman style front porch sheltering its central, single-leaf entrance on its northern or front elevation, and a simpler, shed roof porch over the central southern entrance opposite. Each of the eastern and western elevations are fenestrated with a pair of nine-pane, metal sash windows. The asphalt shingle, gable roof (that replaced the original hipped, ceramic tile roof that leaked) is supported upon the brick walls and continuous brick foundation.

The four low, diamond-shaped, stone masonry flower beds were added next (1937) and were built of wet-laid fieldstone. They retain flower beds raised approximately eight inches above grade, and each is placed near the center of each quarter of the town square lawn.

The low, stone masonry and concrete wall around the square was the last part of the square construction (1940) and consists of a continuous wall that is punctuated at regular intervals by taller piers, all of which has been coped with a broad band of concrete. The park within is accessed by four sets of stairs placed at the center of each wall, and a gate near the center

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of the southern wall that permits vehicular access to the park. The W.P.A. labor that built the wall also installed, at the same time, the heavy steel cable atop the wall that runs between the raised stone piers. This cable was salvaged from the old Slatington Mill site and re-installed here at the park.

With the sole exception of the replacement of the original hipped, ceramic tile library roof with the asphalt shingle, gable roof, the park remains exactly as it appeared when the final work on the wall was completed in 1940.

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Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1**Summary**

Criterion C, local significance

The Norman Town Square is locally significant under Criterion C as the only known designed town square in the entire county from the Depression era. Its original library building, flower beds and stone wall were all constructed during this period in an effort to give Norman a more formal, central public square, and so a focus of civic pride. It remains largely intact, and is currently the focus of a repair and restoration campaign by the town.

Elaboration

The town of Norman, now located at the intersection of State Highways 8 and 27 and just to the northeast of the channel of the Caddo River, has a rather interesting and colorful history. First called Chivestown for a Mr. Chives that ran a gristmill on the Caddo River in the 1890's, some of the first families to settle the area were the Graves and Howards. The area remained a sparsely- and irregularly-settled farming community until 1897, when the Missouri-Pacific Railroad announced plans to build a railroad spur into Montgomery County from the lumber mill town of Gurdon, located on its main railroad line approximately fifty miles to the southeast (the spur was intended to facilitate the shipping of the raw timber of which Montgomery County possessed an abundance) that was eventually to connect with the fledgling Kansas City-Southern Railroad line that ran north-south through Mena, near the Oklahoma border. A land speculator by the name of Mr. Schultz predicted that the existing community of Black Springs, located approximately two miles to the west of Chivestown and at one time the largest community in the county, would be the likely destination of the initial spur, and that all land between it and the main Missouri-Pacific line to the east would increase in value through its enhanced accessibility. He came to the Chivestown community and platted an area that he renamed East Black Springs, complete with a town square (located just to the west of the current site of Norman). However, the railroad failed to arrive according to Mr. Schultz's predictions, and the land he platted remained largely undeveloped for the next several years.

The increased demand for the yellow pine found in such abundance throughout Montgomery County encouraged the Missouri-Pacific Railroad to proceed with its plans for a spur into the county by the first few years of the twentieth century. The railroad began purchasing and clearing the necessary right-of-way through the Terre Noir and Caddo River valleys, but stopped at a point about two miles east of Black Springs due to a dispute over the price of the land that lay in between. The railroad simply stopped their line at this point as a result, and with the arrival of the first train in 1905 it became clear that the land around this

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terminus, and not Black Springs, would be the land of greatest value. The first passenger train arrived on January 1, 1908 to the community that by July 17 of the year before had become known as Womble, renamed for a Mr. W. E. Womble, another intrepid real estate dealer who gambled on the attractiveness of the Caddo River valley to the railroad.

As a result, Womble soon became one of the more active and vital communities in the county, drawing many businessmen away from Black Springs and other more isolated communities. Soon W. E. Womble himself began efforts to pass a law that would move the county seat from Mount Ida (located approximately eight miles to the north) to Womble. Though he succeeded in having the bill placed on the ballot for three consecutive general elections, it was defeated each time. By 1925, Womble's influence had dwindled to the point that the town's residents voted to change it's name to Norman (supposedly named after a Mrs. Norman from Oklahoma who contributed a substantial sum to the building of the Caddo Valley Academy in the early 1920's).

The town square in the center of Norman had been allowed to remain open and without commercial encroachment since the turn of the century; however, neither had it been improved or enhanced in any way by the middle of the 1930's, even while Norman had grown as a regional railroad terminus. The exterior of the square was marked with a crude, barbed-wire fence, and the lawn within remained rough and unlandscaped. The first efforts to improve the looks and appearance of the square came from Mrs. Marie Little Pinkerton, who arrived in Womble in 1912 with her husband, J. Luther Pinkerton, who came to work at the town's lumber mill. She disliked the untidy appearance of the town square and believed that it reflected rather little civic pride for a community growing as fast as Norman. It was through her efforts that the brick library building was constructed, as she helped to obtain the funding, and through her organization of the Norman Garden Club the following year, she also founded the group that would sponsor the library henceforth, helping it to accumulate over five hundred volumes. Naturally, the Garden Club also organized the installation of the diamond-shaped stone flower beds shortly thereafter (with the work being done by Emmory Black and G. S. Mitchell, local stonemasons).

Finally, it was also through Mrs. Pinkerton's efforts that the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) became involved in the construction of the stone and concrete masonry wall around the square in 1940. The W.P.A. -- an organization that hired unemployed adult men and women to work on a variety of public projects throughout the nation -- was established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration as part of the federal response to the dire economic circumstances brought upon the American people by the Great Depression. The W.P.A. was but one of many such public works organizations

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instituted by the Roosevelt Administration and managed under the aegis of the umbrella agency in charge of all such public works efforts, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); others included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the short-lived Public Works and Civilian Works Administrations (PWA and CWA), and such regional projects as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Rural Colonization Projects in Arkansas established at such places as Dyess, Clover Bend and Plum Bayou. The W.P.A. completed an assortment of public works projects throughout the state, leaving an indelible mark upon Arkansas's historic built environment that can be seen in virtually every community in one form or another. The majority of their construction work was done in stone and concrete masonry, and the wall around the Norman Town Square is no exception. Constructed of local stone and coped with concrete, perhaps the most distinctive feature of the wall is its steel cable "railing." This was also a local touch, as it was salvaged from the old Slatington Mill site, which had been located somewhat further up the Caddo River to the west. Interestingly, local legend maintains that the cable arrived at the mill site after the mill had closed in 1910, and workers there simply threw the cable into the river. The W.P.A. workers retrieved, cleaned and painted the cable and installed it atop the new stone wall as part of the original construction process. Its placement signalled the completion of the Depression-era construction on the Norman Town Square.

The Norman Garden Club continued to remain active for many years after the completion of the square, pursuing such projects as the planting of a native arboretum within the park, as well as the construction of both a pair of pigeonnaires and a fish pond (both now removed). The onset of the Second World War forced the dissolving of the Garden Club, and the town square fell on hard times for many years thereafter, but it is currently undergoing rehabilitation by Norman residents that should be completed by the spring of 1993.

The Norman Town Square is locally significant under Criterion C as the best and only known surviving example of a Depression-era designed town square in Montgomery County.

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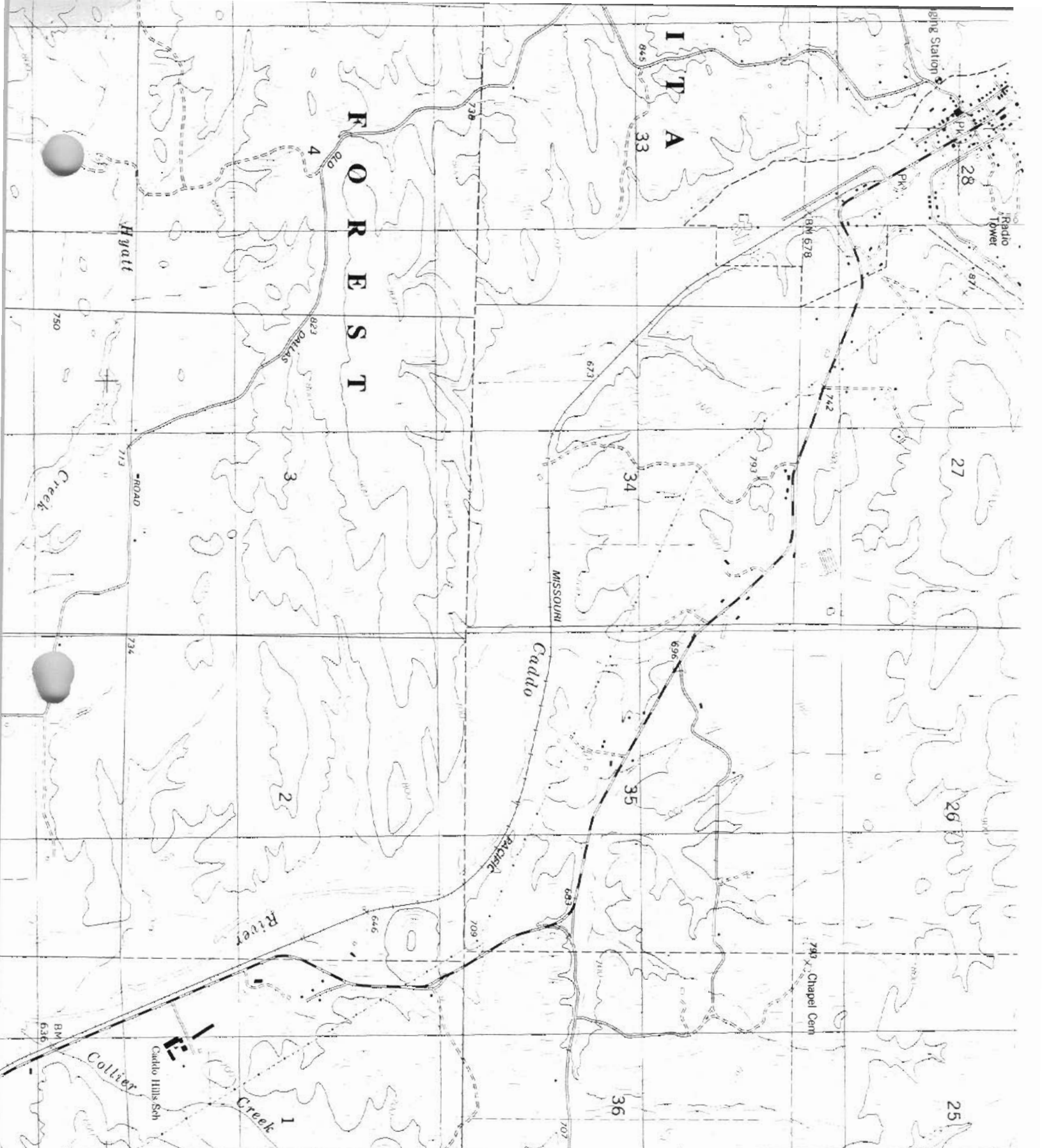
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Bibliography

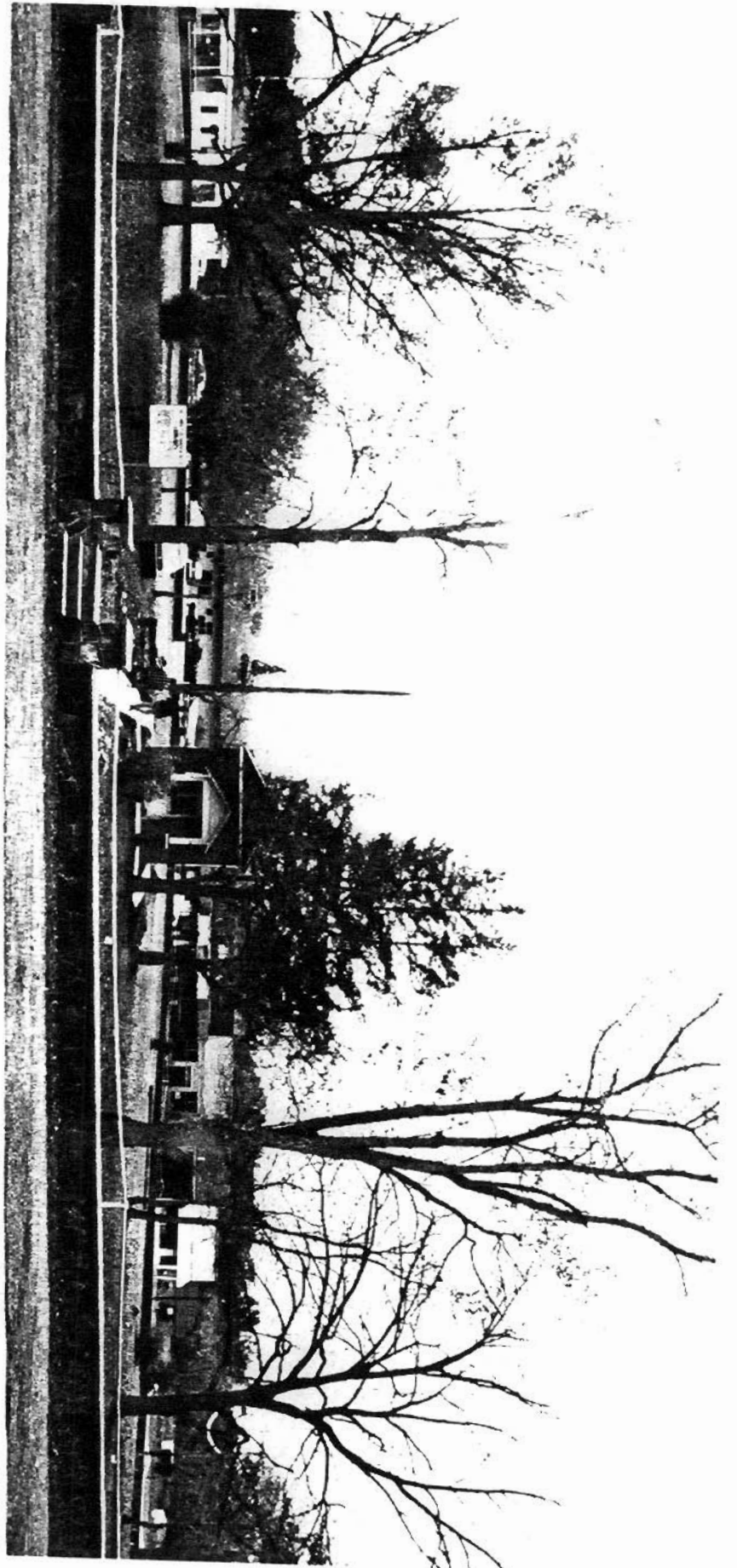
Historical information provided by Betty Horne, Norman, Arkansas, November, 1992.

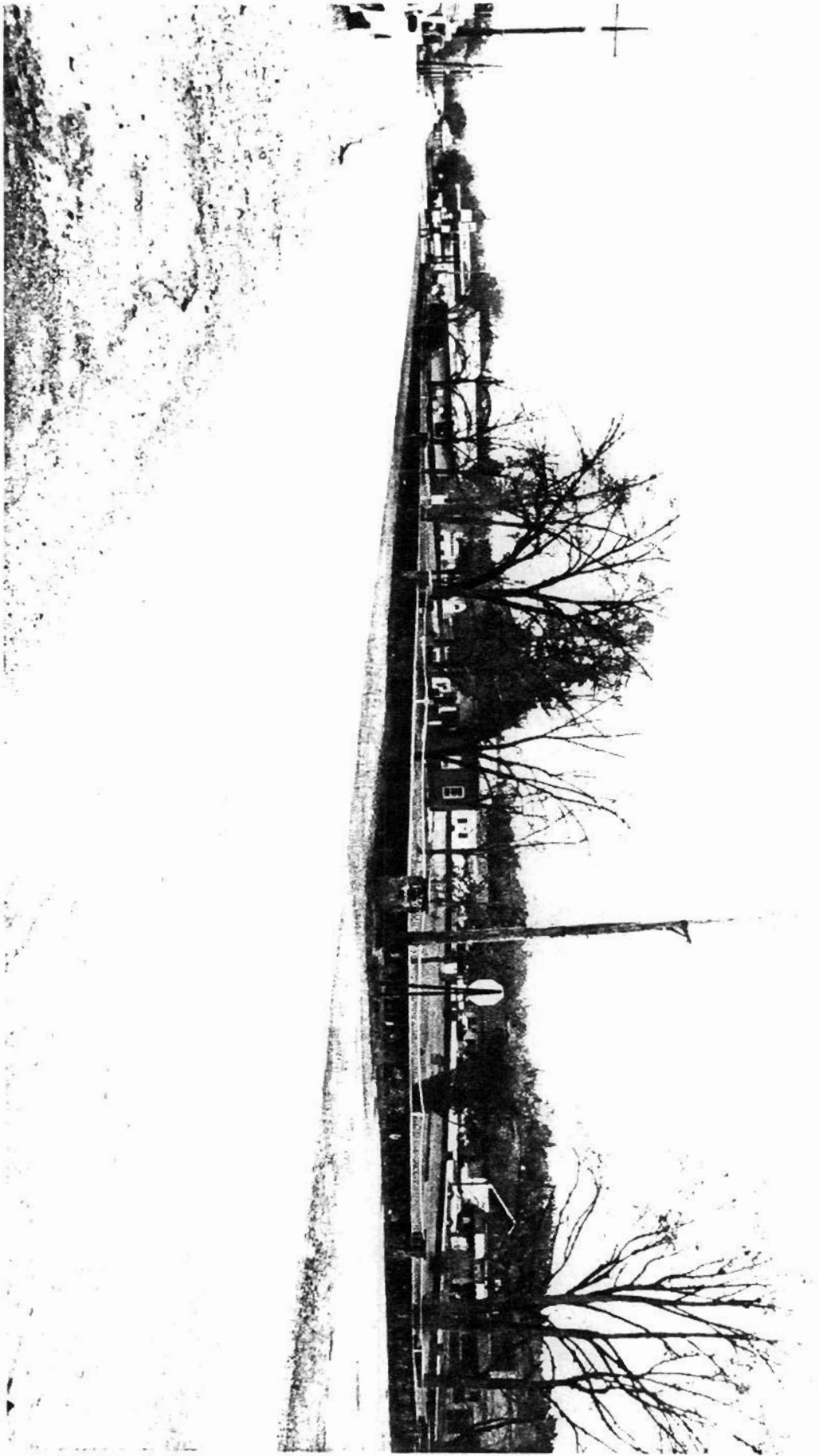
Horne, Ruth, "Chivestown, Pore Horse, Womble and Norman Remembered," in *Montgomery County, Our Heritage*, (Delight, Arkansas: 1986), pp. 418-423.

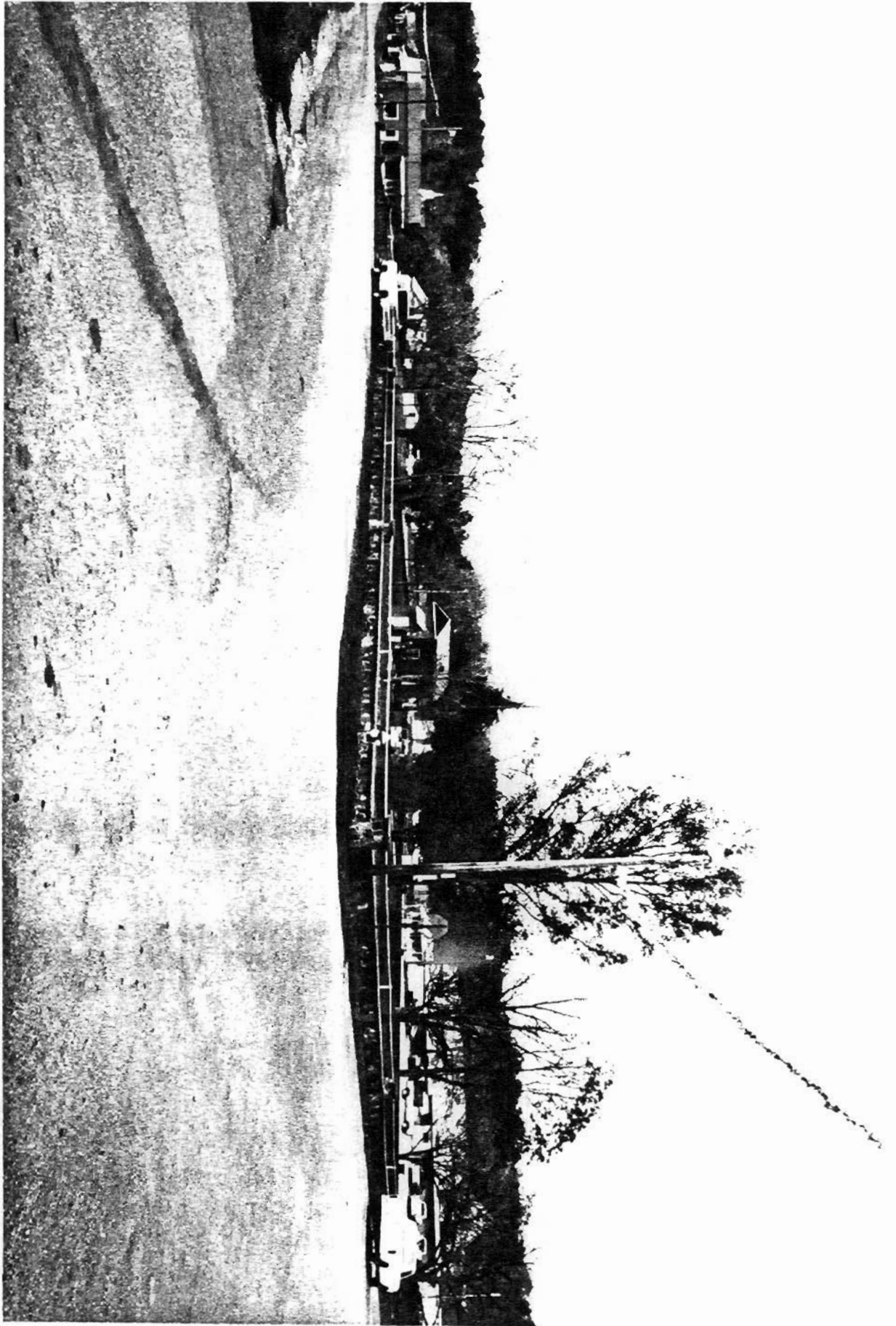
Peppers, Dell, "Marie Little Pinkerton," in *Montgomery County, Our Heritage*, (Delight, Arkansas: 1986), pp. 882-883.

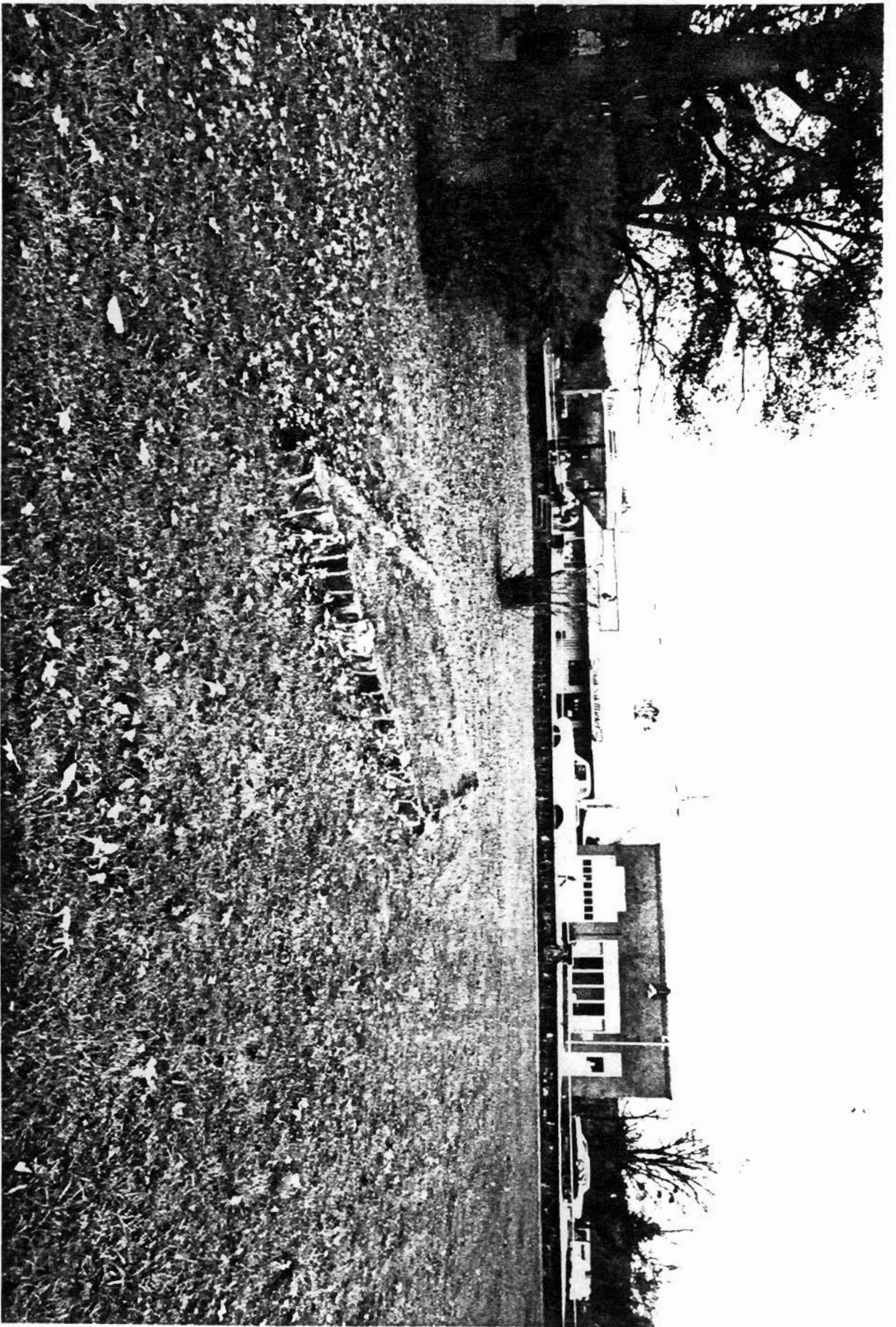


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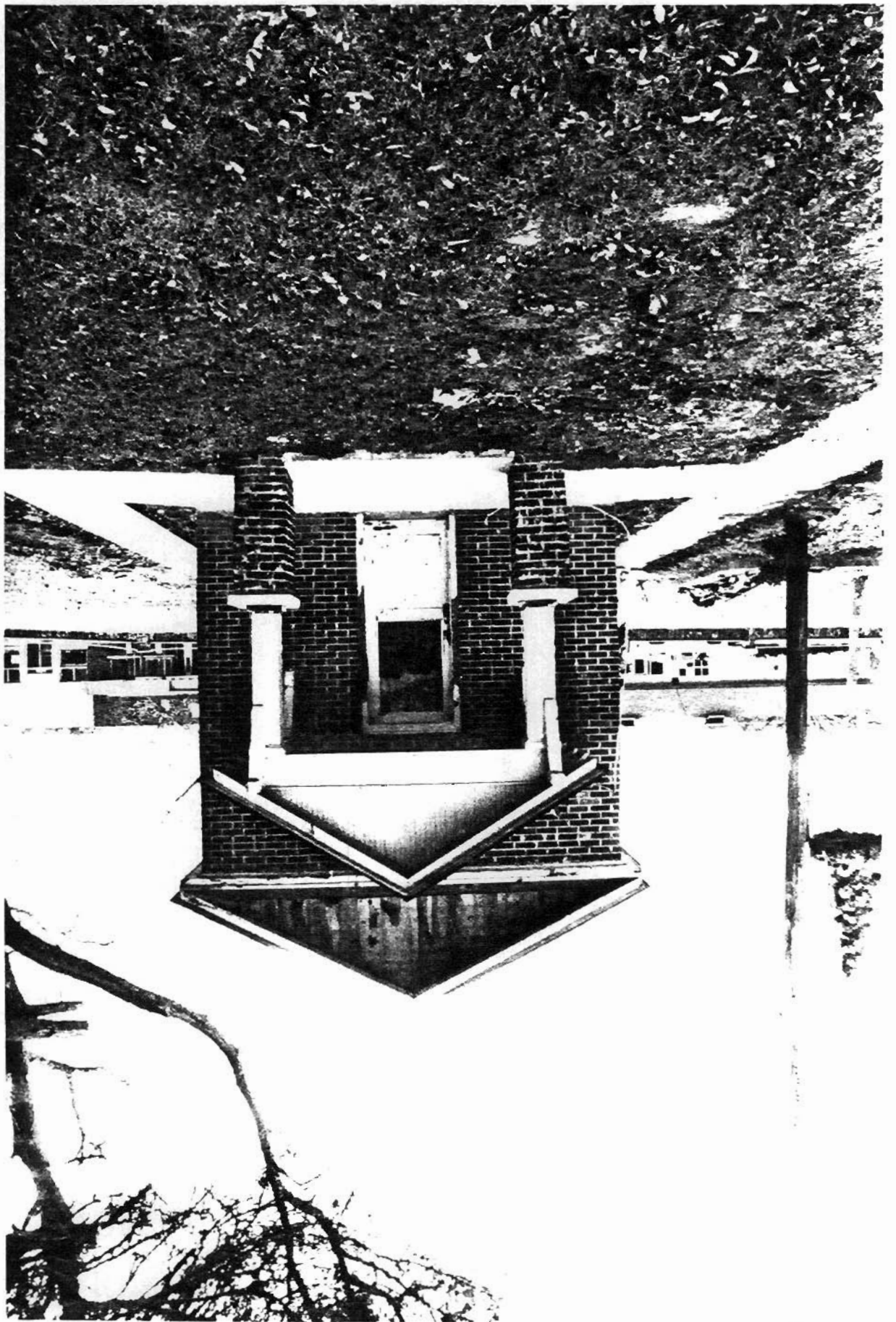
















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