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(7-1969)

60-18-1100-61
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Listed: 6-4-73
NA

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Magnolia

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
502 East 7th Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Little Rock

STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05 COUNTY: Pulaski CODE: 119

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Roman Catholic Diocese of Little Rock

STREET AND NUMBER:
2415 North Tyler

CITY OR TOWN: Little Rock STATE: Arkansas CODE: 05

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Pulaski County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Little Rock STATE: Arkansas CODE: 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:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Absalom Fowler House was probably begun late in 1839 and completed sometime in 1840. Upon its completion Mr. Fowler named the house "Magnolia" and planted a double row of magnolia trees from the front steps to the street. Apparently Mr. Fowler was his own architect as was typical of this day and time, however, he had some unusual ideas about the kind of house that he wanted and the appearance he wanted to achieve. The house strongly resembles the classic designs of Thomas Jefferson.

The one story front portico is supported on fluted Ionic columns having a cornice of very well proportioned design including dentils. A balustrade rail tops the one story front portico having a sheaf design set between simple paneled square piers decorated with small moldings. The front entrance has a wide single door with sidelights and a fan-shaped transom. Directly above is an identical doorway opening onto the open area atop the portico. Three windows, having double hung six lights sash, flank the doorway on either side on both the first and second floors. Originally they had louvered shutters. The entablature that completely surrounds the house is of unusual design with small scaled modillion blocks and an unusual double row of dentils alternately spaced directly above one another to form a small checkerboard pattern. The east side of the house had originally a small porte cochere with a balustrade rail and columns matching exactly the front portico. The moderately low hipped roof was originally crowned with a balustrade railing which also matched both the front portico and the east porte cochere. The rear ell-shaped piazza had a double set of eight Ionic style columns, one set superimposed over the other to form a two story gallery. The main house has four chimneys, one on either end of the main center section of the house, the third at the end of the original ell going to the southeast and the fourth at the end of the extended ell on the south end of the building. The two story kitchen building located west of the main structure separated by a distance of not more than eight feet was probably originally only a one story kitchen. This structure has a hip roof with an entablature treatment that resembles the main house, however, it is executed in offset ribbons of brick

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7. Description

with only a simple wood cornice. The kitchen building is presently connected to the main house by a small enclosed passageway, obviously not original, however. The ell to the southeast of the main house was built in two sections, the first part at the same time as the main central part of the house, however, at some later date the ell was extended to twice its original length. The joint in the brickwork can be clearly seen as the coursing does not match perfectly, however, the cornice, gallery columns and entablature do match the original exactly.

Originally the house had six major rooms arranged in an ell shape with the entrance portico on the north, a porte cochere on the east and an ell-shaped open piazza on the south and west sides of the ell. The very unusual front hall or gallery, as it might be called, stretches completely across the north front of the house. A beautifully proportioned spiral staircase is at the east end of this gallery that is approximately nine and one-half feet wide. This stairway makes a full three-quarter turn beginning at the bottom and ending at the second floor. A simple but finely proportioned balustrade runs the entire length and at the half-way point where the stairs no longer touch the outside curved wall a balustrade rail begins again to close in the outer side of the stairway, forming a balcony railing from the second floor. This stairway is built against a curved plaster wall which creates a blind window of the easternmost window on the north facade both on the first and second floors. The stair is open underneath and has twenty-one treads with twenty-two risers. The outer curved wall of the stair is decorated with a plaster relief design divided into twenty-five panels, each panel alternating four panels vertically in one section with the next section having three panels vertically. These panels are decorated with oval designs and garlands of flowers in a very delicate, small scale, classical pattern.

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7. Description

East and west downstairs parlors each open from the front gallery or hallway and have a single door with transom into them. The west parlor has two interior double hung sash windows between this interior gallery hall and the room itself. The east room has one window opening from the gallery into it. The two parlors downstairs both have their original fireplaces, however, the mantels appear to have been changed at a later date. The present mantels are marble Renaissance style with wood framed ornate overmantels with mirrors. As late as 1941 both parlors had handpainted ceilings with oval patterns of nymphs holding garlands of flowers, arranged around a large brass and crystal chandelier. This decoration was undoubtedly not original but probably dated from the 1870's. The two rooms in the original ell downstairs have had the partition removed between them. An extension onto the original ell of the house is as large again as the original ell was and contains one large room downstairs with paneled wainscoting and plate rail and fireplace with mantel and was intended as the dining room. This woodwork is in late Victorian style. Under this wing is a cellar containing the furnace as well as storage space. No basement exists under the original main house. The ell-shaped piazza has been closed in on both the first and second floors, however, the original fluted Ionic style columns are still in place.

It is believed that an oval-shaped opening existed in the ceiling of the front gallery with a railing surrounding it at the second floor level and two chandeliers suspended from the second story ceiling down through this opening to light both the first and second floors of the house. This upstairs gallery has now been divided into three rooms with the floor well closed up and a bathroom installed in the western end of this space with a partition between a center room that was created and a smaller area where the stairway still exists as it did originally.

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7. Description

A door separates this front gallery from the inner center hall on the second floor. However, it appears that a partition did not exist when the house was first built and originally formed a T-shaped hall on the second floor. A door in the south end of this center hall opens onto the upstairs ell-shaped piazza. On the east wall of this center hall is a narrow staircase that goes to the attic, beginning at the south end of the center hall just inside the door to the piazza. At the top of this stair is another still more narrow staircase that leads to the flat upper portion of the roof that was originally surrounded by a balustrade railing. The two original large bedrooms upstairs still have their original wood mantels that match the basic design of the woodwork used throughout the original house. The two rooms in the original ell of the house upstairs have had the partition removed between them and is one large room presently. This room also has a wooden mantel with engaged fluted columns having Ionic capitals that match the columns of the rear piazza.

The present two story kitchen building located just west of the piazza contains three rooms on the first floor and one large room on the second floor. It is believed that the kitchen has always been on the first floor and that servants' quarters were later located on the second floor. However, other outbuildings, no longer existing, were probably the original servants' quarters because the kitchen apparently was a one story building when the house was first built.

This solid brick house is in basically sound condition. Because the alterations to the house are of a relatively minor nature, a restoration could be technically authentic as far as the main structure is concerned. And, because of the unusual, if not unique floor plan, and the interesting arrangement of stairs, galleries, piazzas, and porticos, the Absalom Fowler House is one of the most architecturally significant structures existing in Arkansas today.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Absalom Fowler, the builder of "Magnolia," was an important figure in the early days of Arkansas. His life has been something of a mystery in the annals of the state because almost nothing is known of his early life. It is not even known with certainty when he first arrived in Little Rock, the city where he was to make his fortune.

It is known that Fowler was practicing law in the territory in 1829, for the Arkansas Gazette carried his professional card in its advertisements. It is tradition that Fowler had arrived at the small settlement of Little Rock a year or two earlier, having come on foot and having arrived penniless. In 1834 Fowler married Elvira Boswell of Batesville. There were no children.

By 1837, Absalom Fowler was prosperous enough to purchase a three acre tract of land from William Stevenson and several adjoining lots the following year. By this time Fowler had already served as delegate to the State Constitutional Convention of 1836 and as a Representative from Pulaski County in the Territorial General Assembly of 1835. He had also already run for Governor as a Whig but had been defeated by James S. Conway. The rising young lawyer was to serve two other terms in the legislature and to become the leader of the Whig party in Arkansas.

"Magnolia" was built between 1838 and 1840. Again, the records are uncertain.

It is certain that Elvira died in 1842. Only seven months later Absalom was remarried to Frances

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8. Significance

Ann Lewis, a young lady nineteen years his junior. Again, there were no children.

After 1840 Fowler was less active in public life, although he once more served in the state legislature (1844). He seems to have spent most of his time in the small office which stood on the grounds of his home. He became less and less popular with his colleagues and perhaps more and more isolated from the mainstream of the young State's political and social life.

Absalom Fowler died June 4, 1859, after suffering a stroke while arguing a case in the Federal court.

Next to Absalom Fowler the most noted owner of "Magnolia" was Major John D. Adams. By 1852 Major Adams had established a steamboat line between Little Rock and Arkansas City and another between Memphis and New Orleans. As his shipping interest became more lucrative, he diverted profits for the purchase of cotton land and ultimately acquired six large cotton plantations.

At the beginning of the Civil War, John Adams disposed of his river boats and enlisted in the Confederate cause. Although he served throughout the war and attained the rank of major, this conflict proved as disastrous to him personally, as it had to the Southern cause. His long absence from his business interests and his heavy investment in Confederate bonds left him in a precarious financial position. He immediately set to work rebuilding his river boat business and succeeded to an even greater degree than he had before the war.

By 1875 Major Adams had regained sufficient affluence to purchase the Fowler Home. A Mason and prominent Episcopalian, Major Adams served his state as president of the World's Fair Commission from the State of Arkansas. He also served Arkansas as Commissioner of Agriculture, Mines, and Manufacturers.

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8. Significance Continued:

The next owner of the Fowler House was the Gracie family who lived in it until 1923 when John M. Gracie sold it to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Little Rock.

The property was assigned to St. Andrew's Parrish and served as St. Andrew's Catholic School from 1923 until 1961. From 1961 to the present time the Absolom Fowler House has served the St. Andrew's Parrish as the St. Andrew's Day Care Center and residence for the two Nuns who operate it.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arkansas Gazette, July 8, 1829; June 11, 1859; December 8, 1892; March 28, 1936.

Hallum, John. Biographical and Pictorial History of Arkansas. Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1887.

Pulaski County Probate Court. The Will of Absalom Fowler.

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
NW	0	.	"	0	.	"	34°	44'	30"
NE	0	.	"	0	.	"	92°	15'	48.8"
SE	0	.	"	0	.	"			
SW	0	.	"	0	.	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: _____

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Staff

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

STREET AND NUMBER:

1023 West Third Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Little Rock

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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 _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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STATE	
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(Number all entries)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Pulaski County Probate Court. The Inventory of the Estate of Absalom Fowler.

Ross, Margaret. "Absalom Fowler and His Home," The Pulaski County Historical Review, Vol. V, No. 2, (June 1957).

Ross, Margaret. Arkansas Gazette - The Early Years 1819 - 1866. Little Rock: Arkansas Gazette Foundation, 1969.

ANNING COUNTY

LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE

ARKANSAS

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRA

NBY 4 ALEXANDER 15' QUADRANGLE

CONWAY 32 MI. (VIA U.S. 65)
0.5 MI. TO JUNC. U.S. 65

1.7 MI. TO NORTH TERMINAL INTERCHANGE

1910000 FEET 17' 30"

IVESVILLE 10 MI.
WOODLAND HEIGHTS 7.9 MI.

ARKANSAS HILL

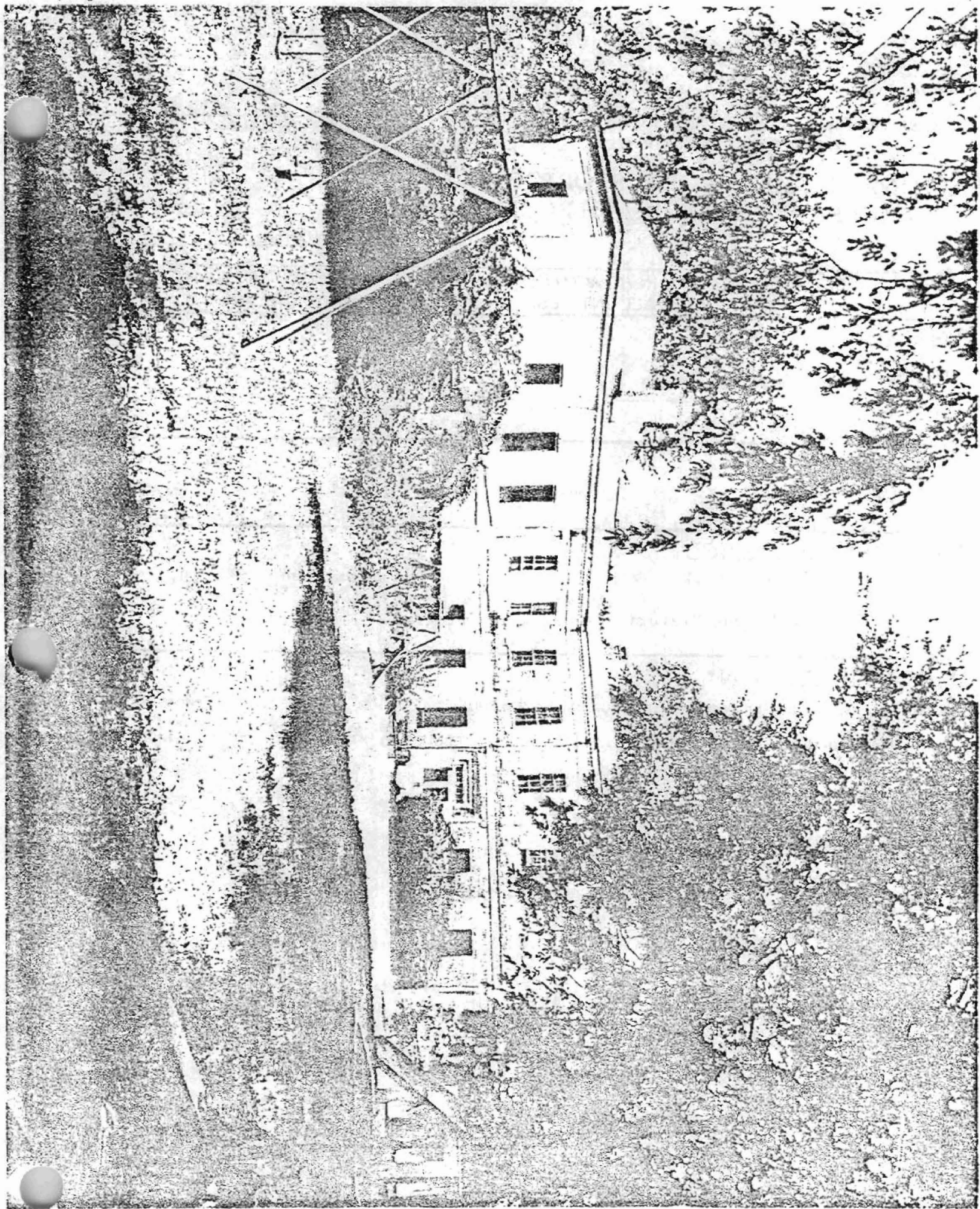
LITTLE ROCK

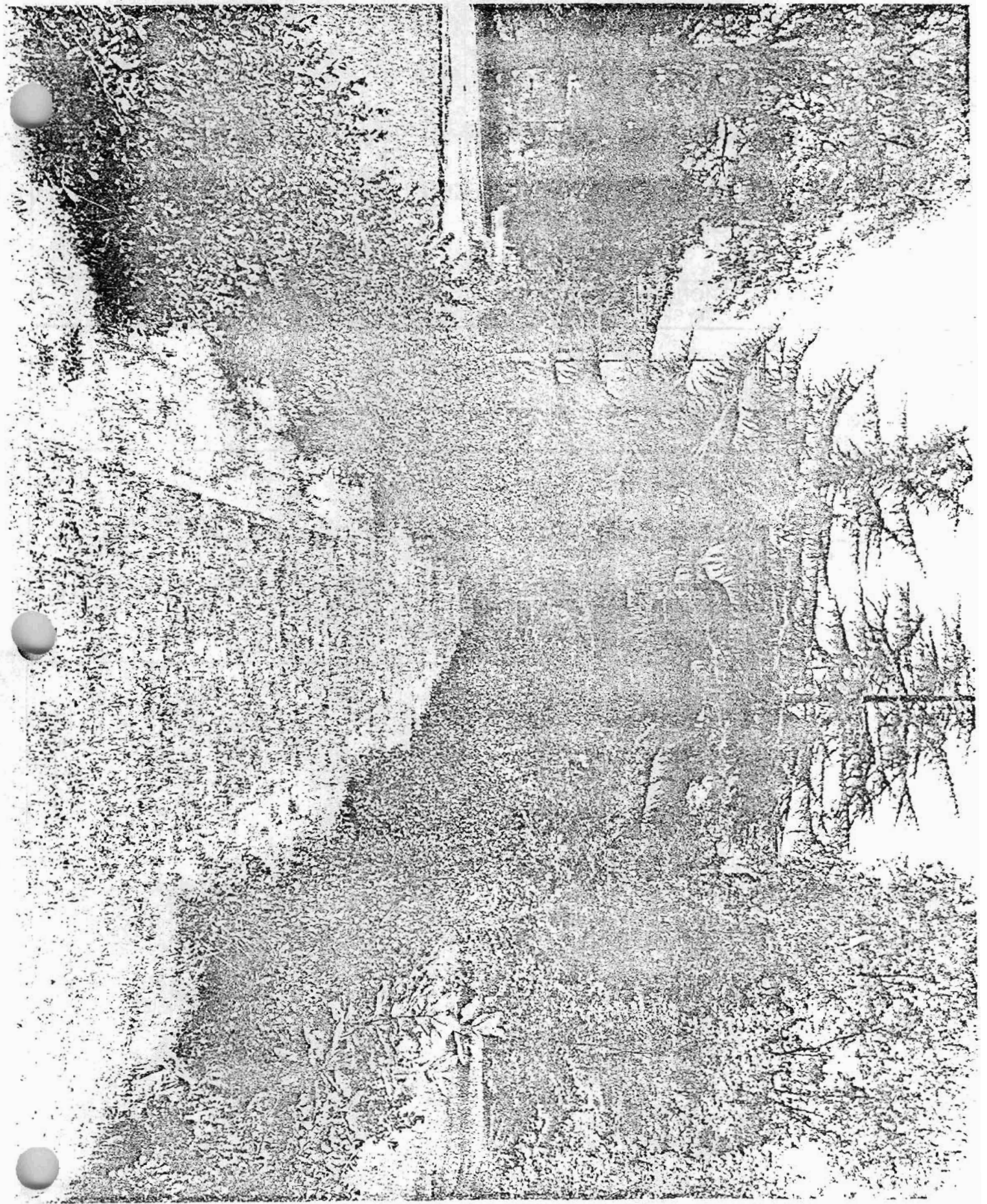
34° 44' 30"

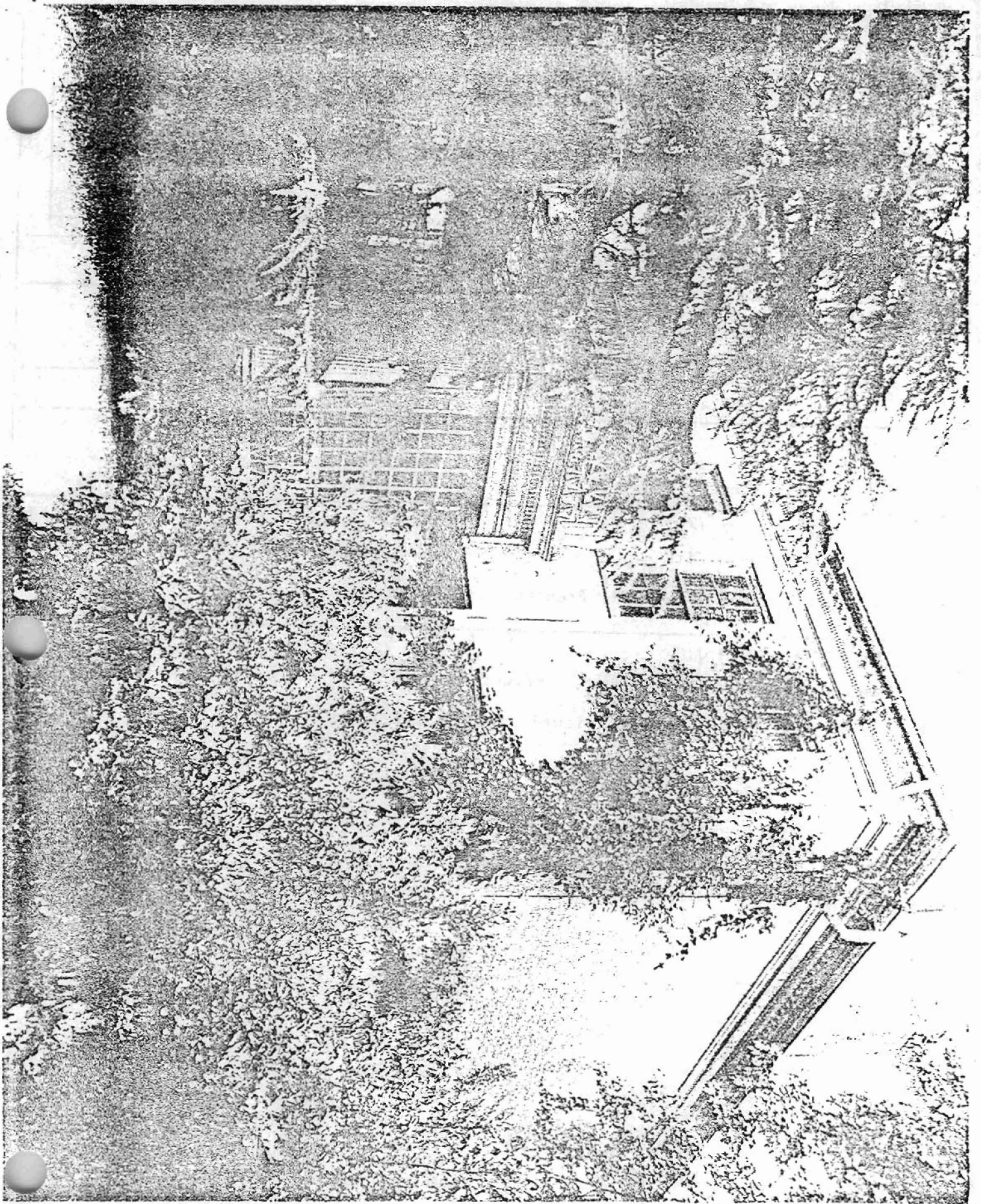
USGS 7.5' SERIES
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS
QUADRANGLE
1961 SCALE -- 1:24,000

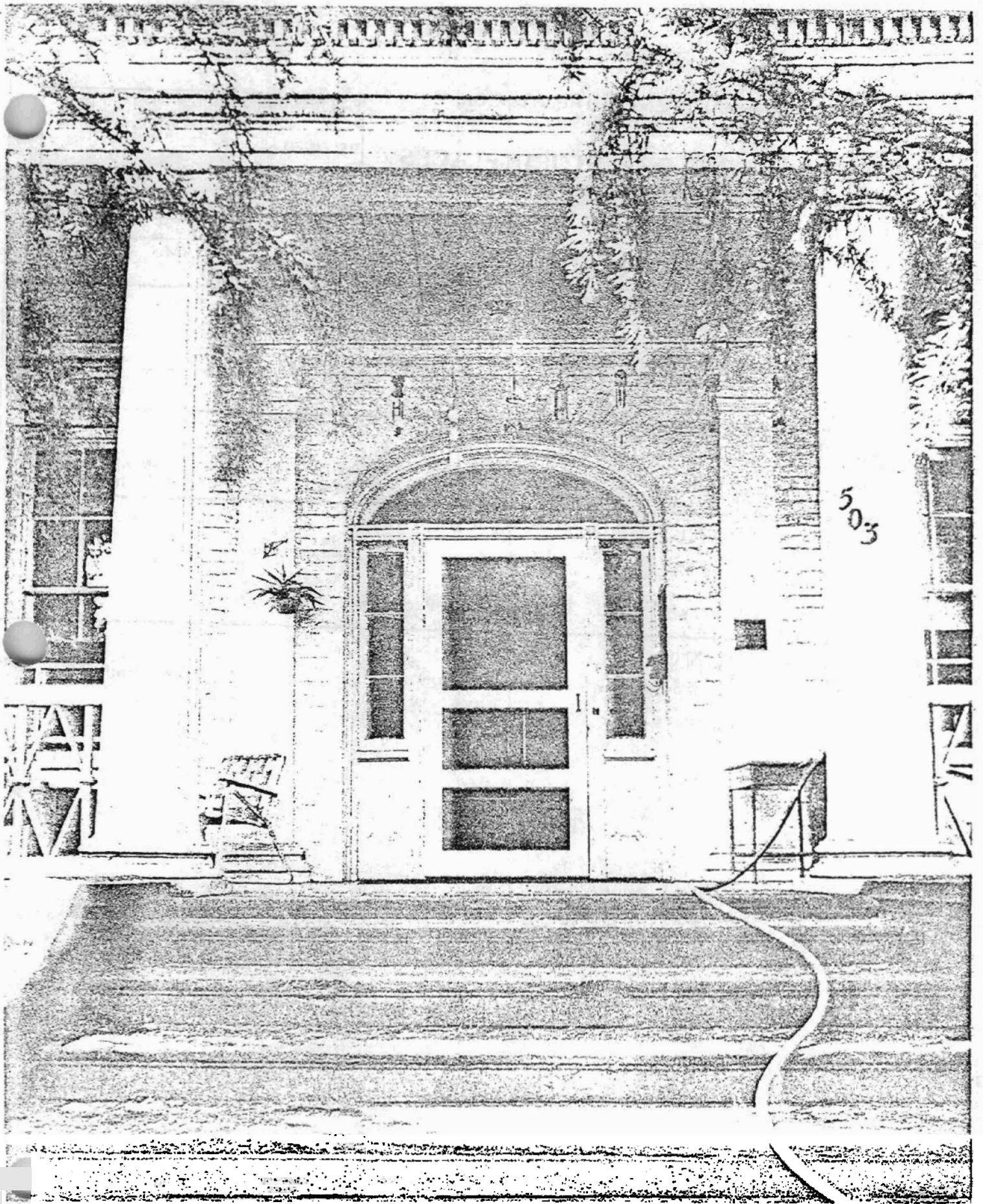
92° 15' 48.8"

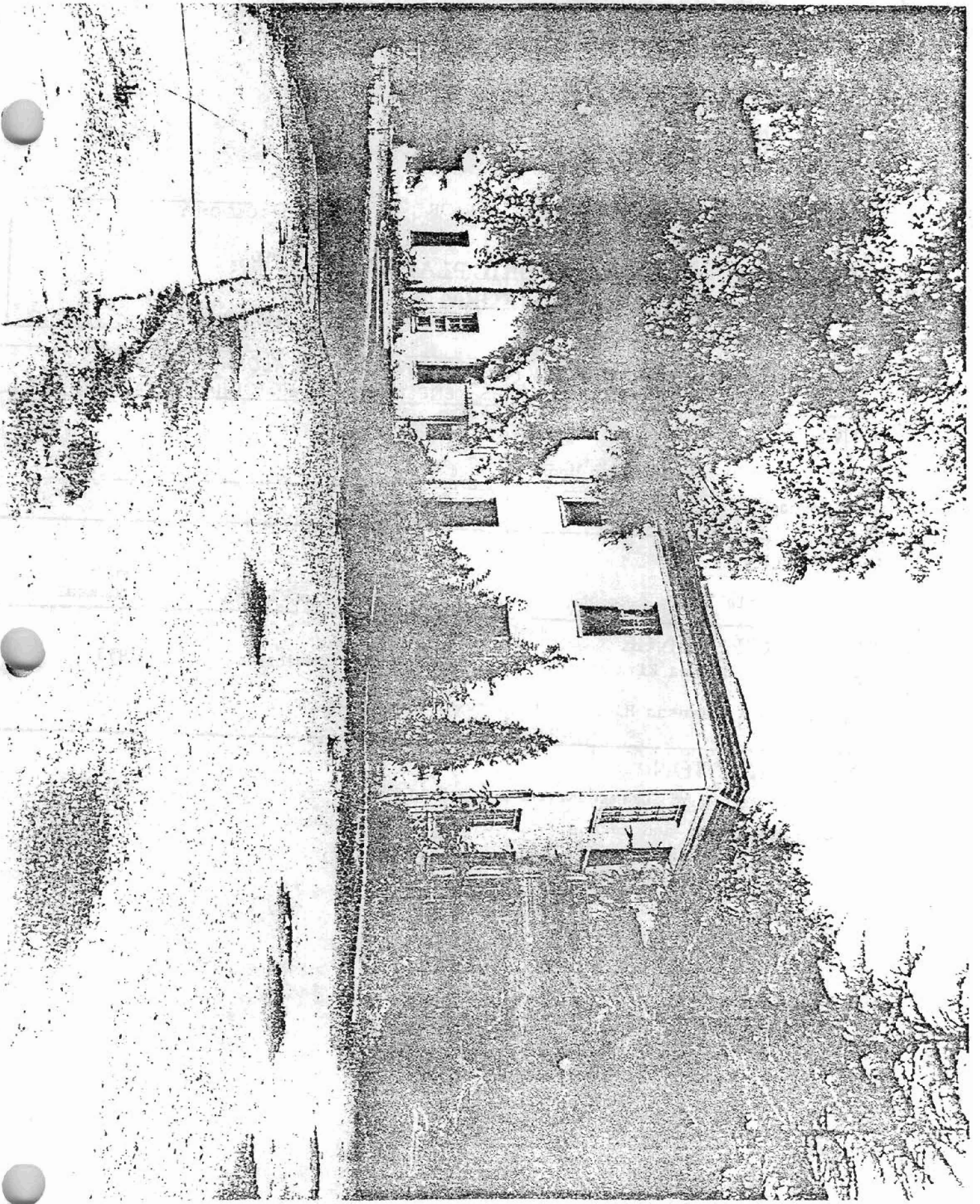


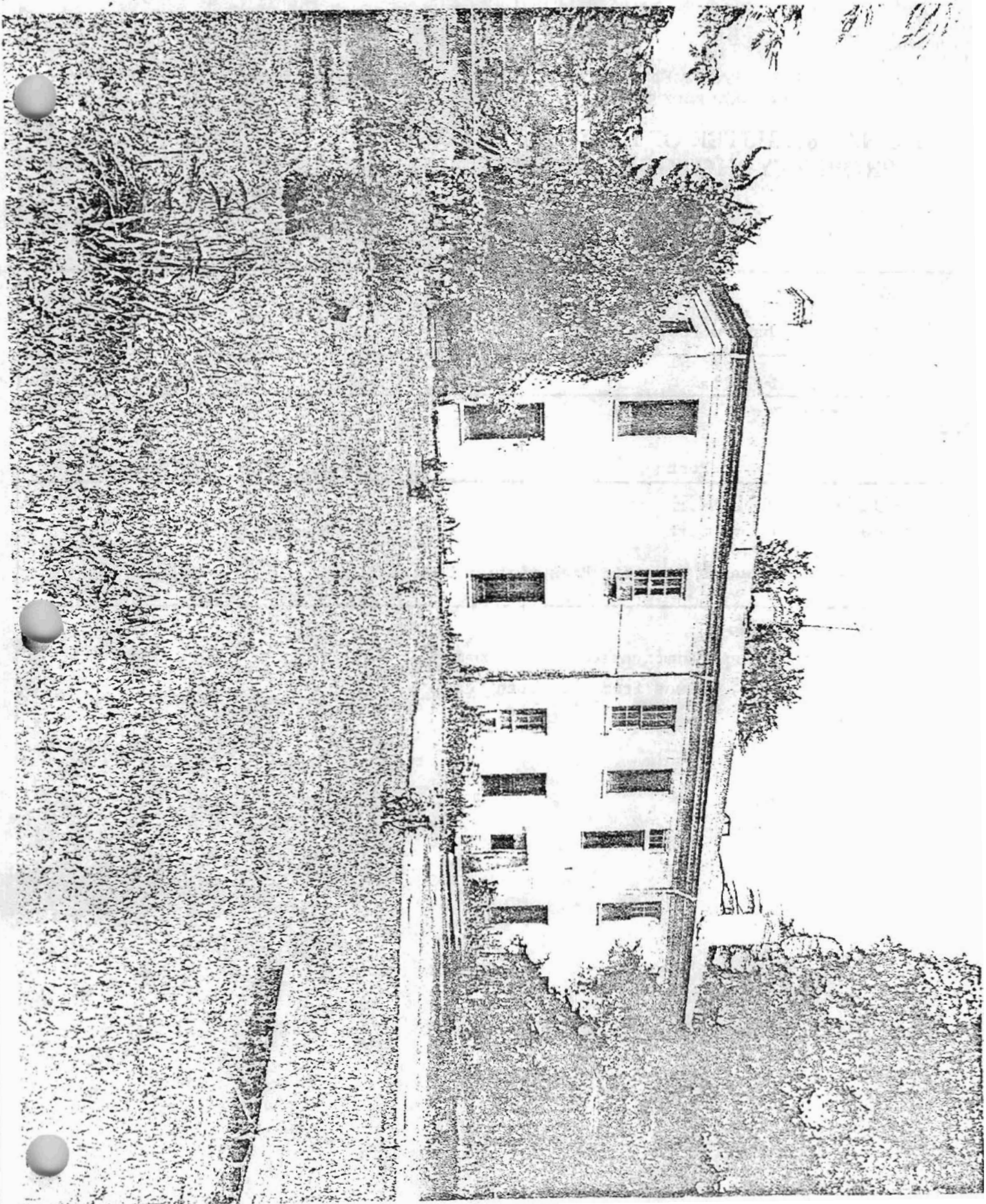


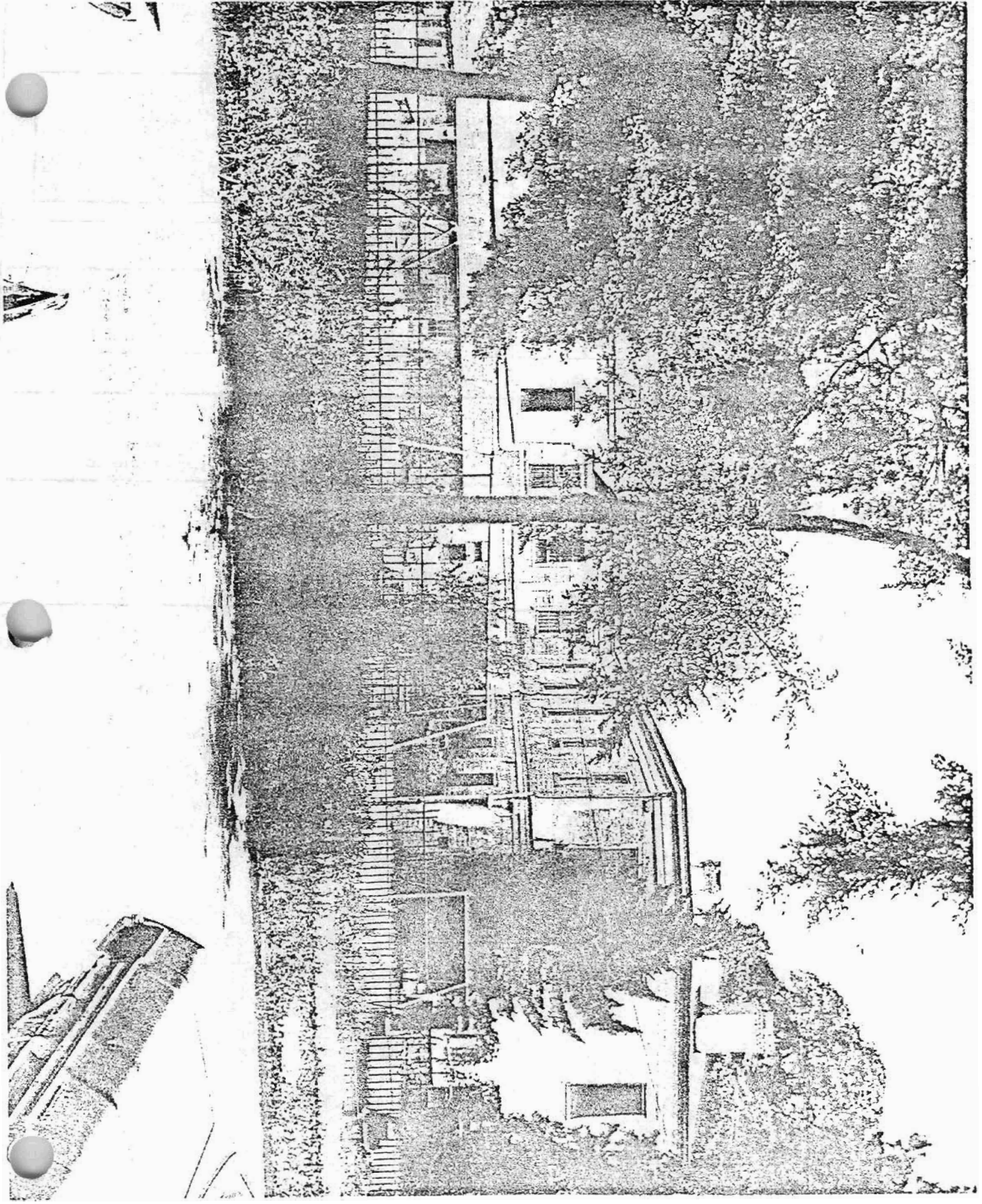


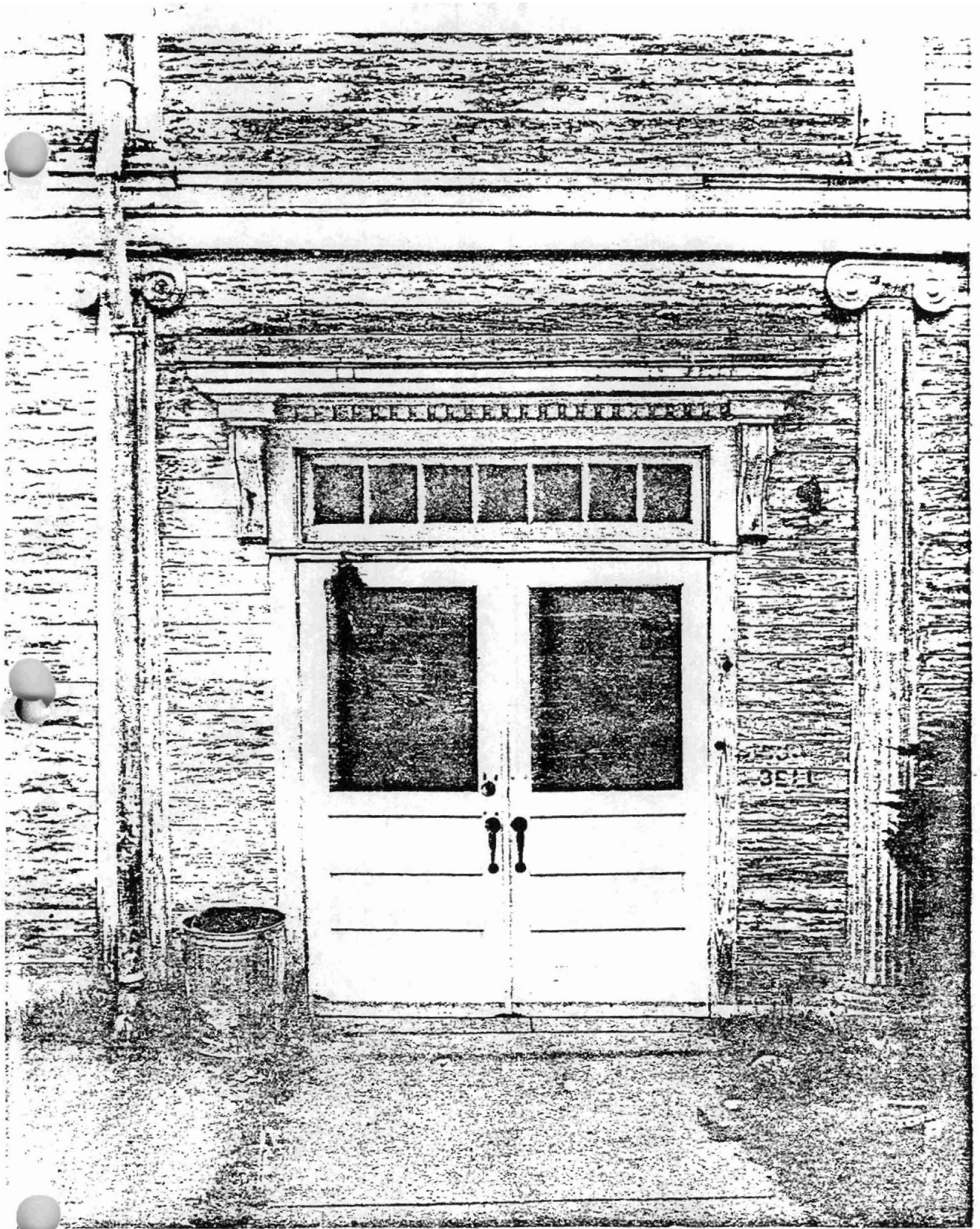












UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE


NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

 NAME

HISTORIC Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON Magnolia

 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Little Rock VICINITY OF COUNTY Pulaski STATE Arkansas


 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Dianna Kirk DATE OF PHOTO 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

 IDENTIFICATION

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

PHOTO NO.

Entry detail, west elevation all extension.

8

The attached National Register Inventory-Nomination form is being returned to your office for clarification of the information indicated below. 1-26-73

1. Name. _____
2. Location. _____
3. Classification. _____
4. Owner of Property. _____
5. Location of Legal Description. _____
6. Representation in Existing Surveys. _____
7. Description. _____
8. Statement of Significance. IS A HOME ACCORDING TO THE NOMINATION DISCUSSION STOPS AT 1875 PLEASE CLARIFY WHEN IT BECAME A SCHOOL WHEN ACQUIRED BY THE CHURCH ETC
9. Bibliography. _____
10. Geographical Data.
 - a. Longitude and Latitude Coordinates: _____
 - b. Acreage. _____
11. Form Prepared By. _____
12. Certification. _____
- Photographic Coverage. _____
- Map Coverage. _____
- Other. _____

Clarification or correction of the above items must be made prior to the initiation of our professional review. Correction of these technical errors does not necessarily insure that the nomination will then satisfy National Register criteria in full.

Thank you for your attention to the above items checked.

SIGNED: _____

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

~~300 WEST MARKHAM STREET, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201 TELEPHONE - 501-371-1639~~



"THE OLD STATE HOUSE" 300 WEST MARKHAM

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201
TELEPHONE - 501 371-1639

July 2, 1975

Ms. Sally Oldham
National Register Publications
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Oldham:

Enclosed are the photos you requested of the Absolom Fowler House in Pulaski County, Arkansas. After using these photos in the preparation of your publication, please have them added to the permanent file on the Absolom Fowler House.

Please contact me if we may be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Dianna Kirk, Historian

DK:cal