

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Lawrence County Courthouse

and/or common

## 2. Location

street & number City Square \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Mt. Vernon \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 7th - Gene Taylor

state Missouri code 029 county Lawrence code 109

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Lawrence County

street & number Lawrence County Courthouse

city, town Mt. Vernon \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Missouri 65712

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office

street & number Lawrence County Courthouse

city, town Mt. Vernon \_\_\_\_\_ state Missouri 65712

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Missouri State Historical Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1977 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176

city, town Jefferson City \_\_\_\_\_ state Missouri 65102

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lawrence County Courthouse is rectangular in plan with the south and north sides measuring 101'8" and the east and west sides measuring 81'2". It is constructed of limestone quarried just north of Mt. Vernon. Originally it was white (the tower remains so), but now the stone has weathered to gray. The cornerstone, placed at the northeast corner, is polished red granite, 20" x 20". Engraved on the stone is the name of the architect, G.E. McDonald, and the latter part of Numbers 32:23 "Be Sure Your Sins Will Find You Out."

The courthouse is an excellent example of Romanesque Revival architecture with its rock-faced stonework and rounded arches. It stands in the center of a 270' square lot in the center of the townsquare. The courthouse not only dominates Mt. Vernon by its massive size and impressive architecture, but it also commands the surrounding countryside with its clock and bell tower surmounted with a statue of Lady Justice that can be seen miles away as Mt. Vernon is situated upon a hill. The grounds of the courthouse are meticulously kept and the landscaping is tastefully conservative.

The elevation of the structure consists of a basement, first and second stories, an attic, and a bell and clock tower. The south facade constitutes the main entrance and is duplicated by the north facade. The east and west facades are identical and are similar to the south and north facades with a few variations.

Each facade is divided into five bays with the central and end bays projecting forward. At each corner of the building where the projecting end bays meet an attached tower is formed. Each of these is topped by a polygonal ogee roof crowned with a finial. The central bays of the north and south facades are topped by pediments and the central bays of the east and west facades are capped by stepped gables. Each gable and pediment constitutes the termination of a gable roof which intersects the clock and bell tower which rises from the central vertical axis of the courthouse. The main roof is gabled with two gablets. The original roofing material (tin) has been replaced by red asbestos shingles except for the east and west gable roofs which are gray. The roof is again in need of repair and there are serious leaks in some second story offices.

The first story on each side of the courthouse is delineated from the basement and second story levels by a course of smoothly dressed limestone which serves as a contrast with the rock-faced stonework. The attic is contained within the pediments, stepped gables, the corner towers, and the bottom level of the bell and clock tower. The tower consists of a base, the center section which is rectangular and houses the bell, and the roof which is a polygonal ogee shape. There are clock faces on all four sides and they are placed at the juncture of the tower proper and its roof. The tower is surmounted by a statue of Lady Justice which was temporarily removed in 1974 for repairs and refinishing. The pediments of the north and south facades also were topped by statues, but neither remains today.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

1

Many outstanding features enliven the exterior of the courthouse including the ornamented treatment of the fenestration.

The focal point of the south and north facades is the triple arched entrance. Both facades feature an entrance of double glass doors recessed beneath the central arch with each side arch curving over a tympanum that caps paired double-hung 1/1 light windows. On either side of the entrances the arches spring from smoothly dressed imposts which rest upon four engaged colonets standing upon tall smoothly dressed bases.

The triple arch pattern is repeated in the second story over the entrances. Here the arches frame three windows identical to the first story windows. The central window and arch are slightly higher than those on each side conveying inappropriate element of Palladianism.

All other second story and attic windows on all four sides are rectangular double-hung 1/1 light design with the exception of those in the central bay of the east and west sides which are similar to those of the north and south central bays. First story fenestration of all four sides is a mixture of the types previously described along with a rounded double-hung paired 1/1 light style. Basement windows are double-hung 1/1 light.

The courthouse has six chimneys; four are situated at the inside corners of the end bays of the east and west sides, with the other two located on each side of the central bay of the east facade.

Other highlights of the building are the second story decorative bartizans located at each corner of all end bays and the decorative elements of the clock tower such as the louvered windows, small gilt columns, and pendentives.

In all respects the exterior of the courthouse has fared well and is in excellent condition with the exception of the roof. No detectable deterioration is apparent apart from the darkening of the limestone.

The interior, however, has not met with the same fate. Through elements of nature, normal wear, neglect, and lack of funds the interior condition has become less than satisfactory. This is particularly disturbing as the courthouse features original decorative woodwork, ornamental wrought iron stair brackets, and first-story octagon-patterned tile inlaid floors.

The basement is in a state of disrepair with cracking walls, water damage to window sills, and termite infested woodwork. One feature that is still worthy of notice is the ceiling which consists of a series of parallel shallow barrel vaults.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

The first and second floors are laid out on a cross plan with entrances in the center of each of the four sides. The stair case is in the east section, and its lighted newel post is an outstanding feature. The ceilings except for those that have been lowered, are twenty-two feet high. The walls are the original stucco except for those which have been paneled.

The decorative woodwork is of oak and walnut (predominately the latter) and is found in the main staircase, window and door frames, fireplace mantels, and courtroom railings. Some of this ornamentation has been hidden by the lowered ceilings and paneling. The walk-in vaults with their painted pastoral scenes on the massive iron doors have not been altered.

A narrow stairway in the east section leads to the attic which has low ceilings and, like the basement, is in a state of disrepair. The rooms, located in the corner towers and beneath the stepped gables are used for storage. Originally they were used as offices and even for jail cells for a short time. The central attic area is an open space with exposed wooden beams. In the center a wooden stairway leads up to the clock tower. This area is rarely entered perhaps because the flooring does not seem particularly firm. The wooden stairway, however, is sturdy.

Although the attic remains basically unaltered, the rest of the interior has undergone changes in an effort to update the building. Ceilings have been lowered to conserve energy, walls were paneled because the stucco is falling off, and decorative woodwork in the courtrooms has been covered with paneling to cut down on maintenance. An example of such activities occurred about six years ago when at the direction of the county court paneling was placed over the original wainscoting, decorative walnut posts, and mouldings in the Circuit Courtroom. Such practices are continuing. Rewiring has been done, although it is still outmoded and in some places the fixtures are eyesores. Gas-heat has replaced the original coal-burning system and air-conditioning was recently installed. In the rooms and halls where the ceilings have not been lowered, the heating ducts are exposed. Unfortunately these changes are spoiling the aesthetics of the courthouse interior.

According to Engineer Paul Ferder the Lawrence County Courthouse is structurally sound. There are, however, at this time two problems that deserve immediate attention. The first is the roof which does leak in places and has allowed moisture to warp woodwork and to crumble away the plaster of the ceiling. The second problem is the termites which are destroying window sills, other woodwork, and books.

The general deterioration of the interior is unfortunate since even in its current condition the courthouse is beautiful, although it is not living up to its potential. Lack of funds and confusion between restoration and renovation are endangering the historic authenticity and aesthetic beauty of the interior of the Lawrence County Courthouse.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1900 Builder/Architect Builder - T.A. Miller/Architect - G.E. McDonald

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Lawrence County Courthouse is significant as an impressive example of Romanesque Revival architecture and as the political, legal, and social center for the citizens of Lawrence County.

The courthouse was constructed in 1900 and is one of four Missouri courthouses built according to a design by the Nebraskan architect, G.E. McDonald, who had designed three Nebraska courthouses from 1890 to 1894.<sup>1</sup> Its sister courthouses in terms of style and design in Missouri are the Johnson County Courthouse in Warrensburg, built in 1896; the Andrew County Courthouse in Savannah, built 1898-1900; and the Bates County Courthouse in Butler, built in 1901.

The Lawrence County Courthouse with its rock-faced limestone exterior and rounded arches over the doors and windows stands as an impressive example of Romanesque Revival architecture popular in the mid-west at the turn-of-the-century. Interior features such as high quality woodwork, inlaid tile floors, and wrought-iron brackets are fine examples of interior decoration of the period.

The present Lawrence County Courthouse is the third building to house the county offices. The first courthouse was a two-storied wood frame building built in 1846. It was moved in 1854 from the center of the city square to the north side of the square to make room for the second courthouse. This was a more imposing three-storied brick edifice. In 1900, a fire reputedly damaged a part of the interior so the building was condemned, sold for \$225, and razed.

The first bond of \$50,000 for construction of a new courthouse did not pass, but the second attempt was successful and the contract was given to J.D. Armstrong in July of 1900. The contract was annulled, however, when he failed to file the required bond. The contract was then awarded to T.A. Miller of Aurora for \$49,600 and work began in late August. McDonald, the architect, was appointed superintendent, but was later replaced by E.B. Case. The cornerstone was laid November 28, 1900 with 5000 persons in attendance to hear Dr. C.C. Wood, editor of the St. Louis Advocate, deliver the oration.<sup>2</sup>

For the past eighty years the courthouse has played an integral part not only in the political and legal life of Lawrence County, but also in its social activities. From the County's inception the land upon which all three courthouses have stood has been used for social gatherings that exemplify the local culture.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

On July 4, 1845 when the jubilant citizens celebrated the birth of the new county, one of the principle activities was the "bran dance" which took place on the land where the courthouse now stands. The ground was cleared and leveled, approximately two inches of wheat bran was distributed over the area, and the dance began.<sup>3</sup> This event is commemorated today with the annual celebration of Apple Butter Makin' Days which recreates the life and history of Lawrence County and attracts tourists from the four-state area. The courthouse is the scene of several plays such as the old-fashioned melodramas staged in the Magistrate and Circuit Courtrooms.<sup>4</sup> The fine detailing of the interior wood ornamentation provides a suitable backdrop for the players in their turn-of-the-century costumes.

Such festivities are not necessary, however, to feel that one has stepped back in time upon entering the courthouse. Such features as the inlaid tile floors, wrought-iron brackets on the underside of the main staircase, and the walnut staircase itself with the lighted newel post on the ground floor are extremely fine examples of high-quality turn-of-the-century craftsmanship. Other period interior features include the large walk-in safes with painted pastoral scenes on the massive doors and the fireplaces with mirrored highback mantelpieces.

The Lawrence County Courthouse warrants recognition both for its Romanesque architecture and interior decorative elements, and for the central role it has played and continues to play in the lives of Lawrence County residents. As with many old courthouses, the Lawrence County Courthouse was built not only as an edifice to house county offices and courts, but also as a symbol of the people's pride in democracy and in their community.

FOOTNOTES

1. Paul Goeldner, Temples of Justice (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilm, 1971), Dissertation.
2. Jessie C. Miller, ed. Lawrence County Historical Society, 1974), p. 184.
3. Ibid., p. 183.
4. Ibid., p. 192.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Goeldner, Paul. Temples of Justice. Ann Arbor, Mi.: University Microfilm, 1971. Dissertation.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name "Mt. Vernon, Mo."

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	<input type="text" value="115"/>	<input type="text" value="421721915"/>	<input type="text" value="41101641610"/>	B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Barbara Carr - Research Assistant

Department of Natural Resources

organization Historic Preservation Program

date March 12, 1980

street & number P.O. Box 176

telephone 314/751-4096

city or town Jefferson City

state Missouri 65102

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Director, Department of Natural Resources and  
State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

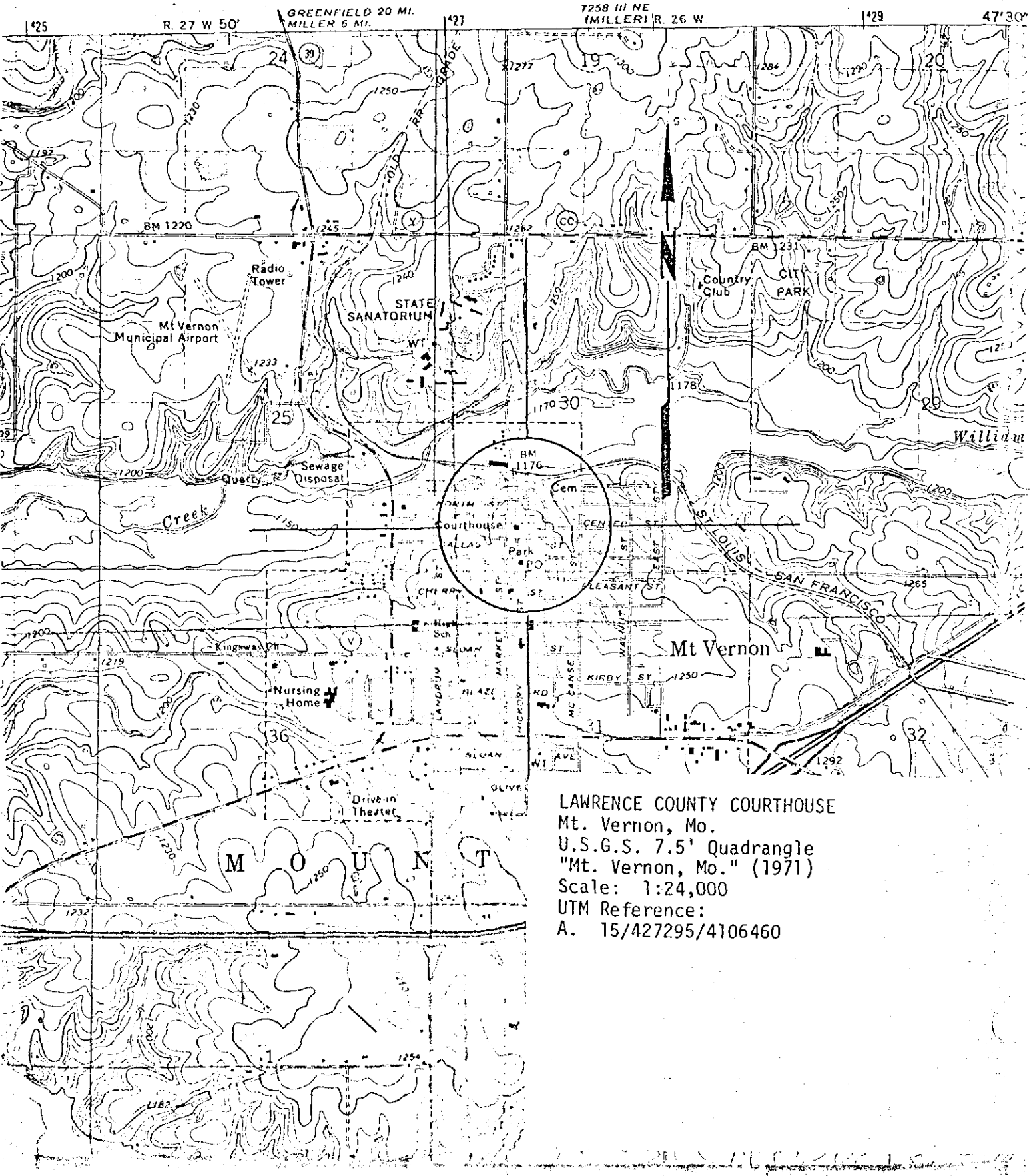
2. Hurley, Lottie Sedwick, History of Mt. Vernon and Lawrence County, Missouri 1831-1931. Lawrence County, Missouri 1845-1970, A Brief History. Lawrence County Historical Society publisher, 1970.
3. Miller, Jessie C., ed. Lawrence County, Missouri History. Mt. Vernon, Missouri, Lawrence County Historical Society, 1974.
4. The Ozark Region, Its History and Its People, Vol. I, Springfield, Mo.: Interstate Historical Society, 1917.

Item number 11

Page 1

2. James M. Denny, Section Chief, Nominations-Survey  
and State Contact Person  
Department of Natural Resources  
Historic Preservation Program  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City  
March 10, 1980  
314/751-4096  
Missouri 65102





LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Mo.  
U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle  
"Mt. Vernon, Mo." (1971)  
Scale: 1:24,000  
UTM Reference:  
A. 15/427295/4106460

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

#485

COUNTY :

Lawrence

LOCATION :

City Square; Mt. Vernon, Mo.

OWNER:  
ADDRESS:

Lawrence County Court  
Lawrence County Courthouse; Mt. Vernon,  
Missouri 65712

DATE APPROVED BY A.C.:

April 25, 1980

DATE SENT TO D.C.:

June 30, 1980

DATE OF REC. IN D.C.:

July 10, 1980

DATE PLACED ON NATIONAL REGISTER:

September 23, 1980

DATE CERTIFICATE AWARDED  
(AND PRESENTER):

Given to Bob Flanders: July 12, 1983  
Presented:

DATE FILE REVIEWED:

The Lawrence County Courthouse is significant as an impressive example of Romanesque Revival architecture and as the political, legal, and social center for the citizens of Lawrence County.

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Neg. Loc. Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Date: December 14, 1979

South (main) facade

1 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc. : Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

South entrance

2 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

East facade

3 of 12





LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

North facade

4 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Close-up of the tower from the north

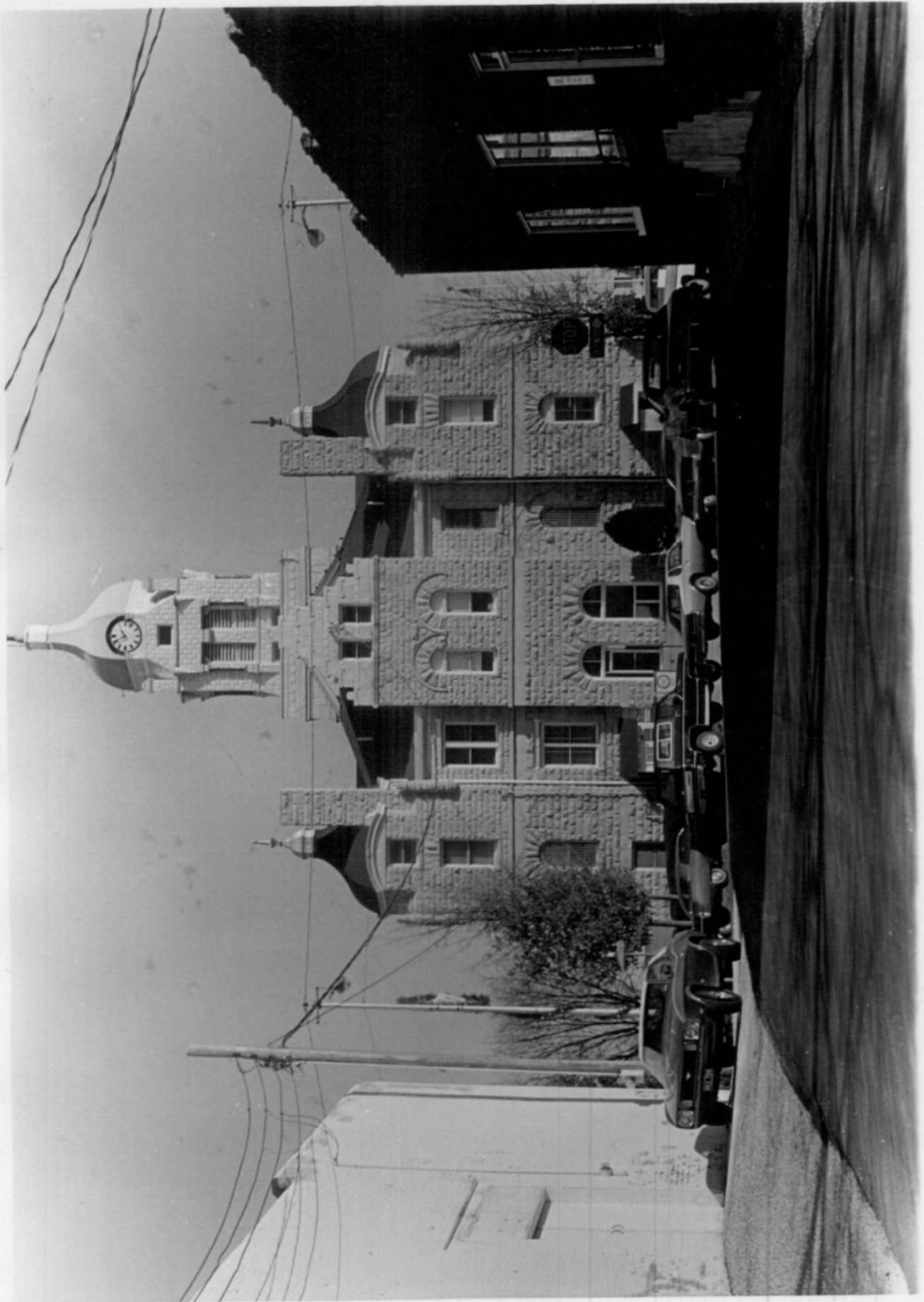
5 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

West facade

6 of 12

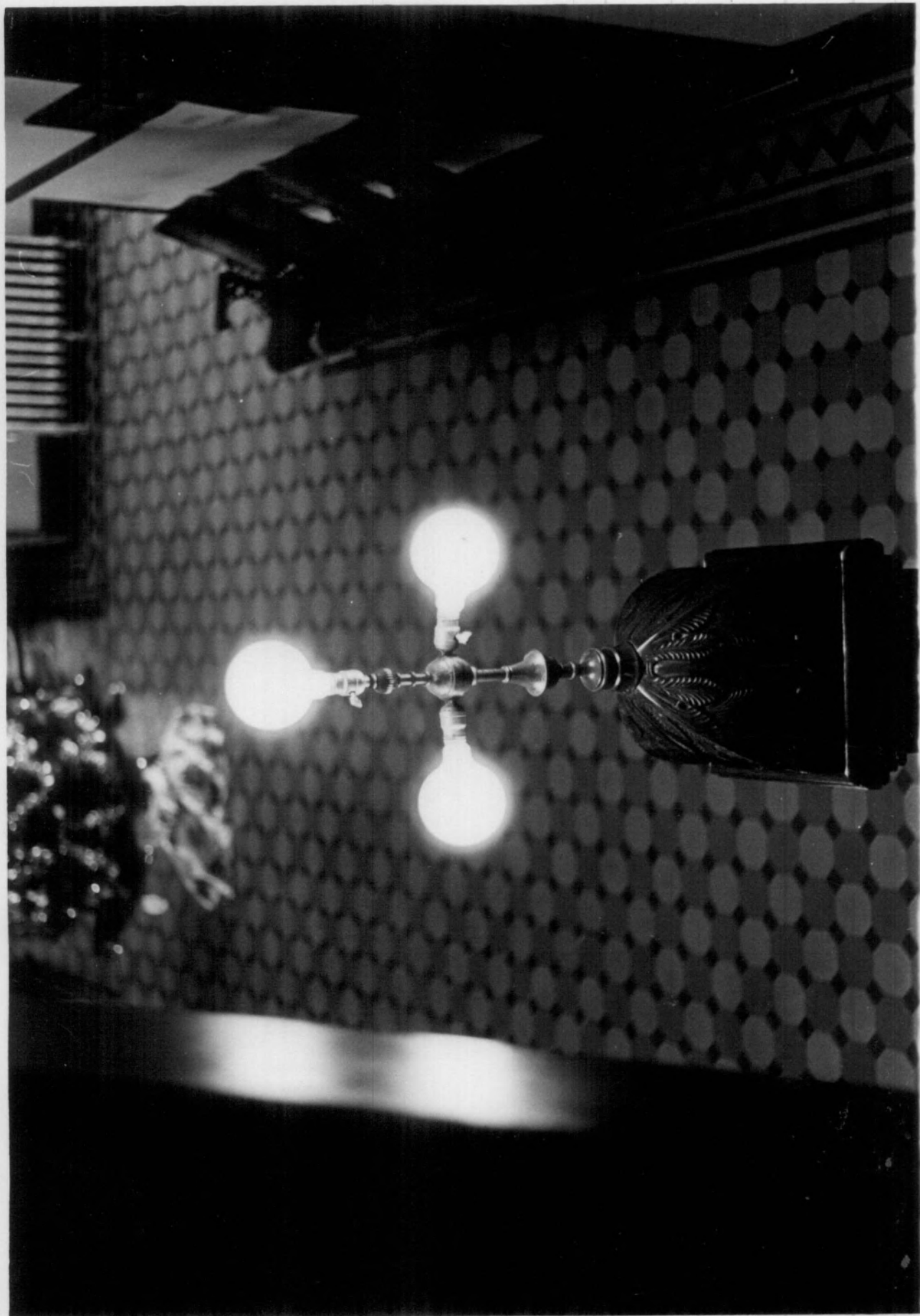


LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box. 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Lighted newel post and inlaid tile floor

7 of 12

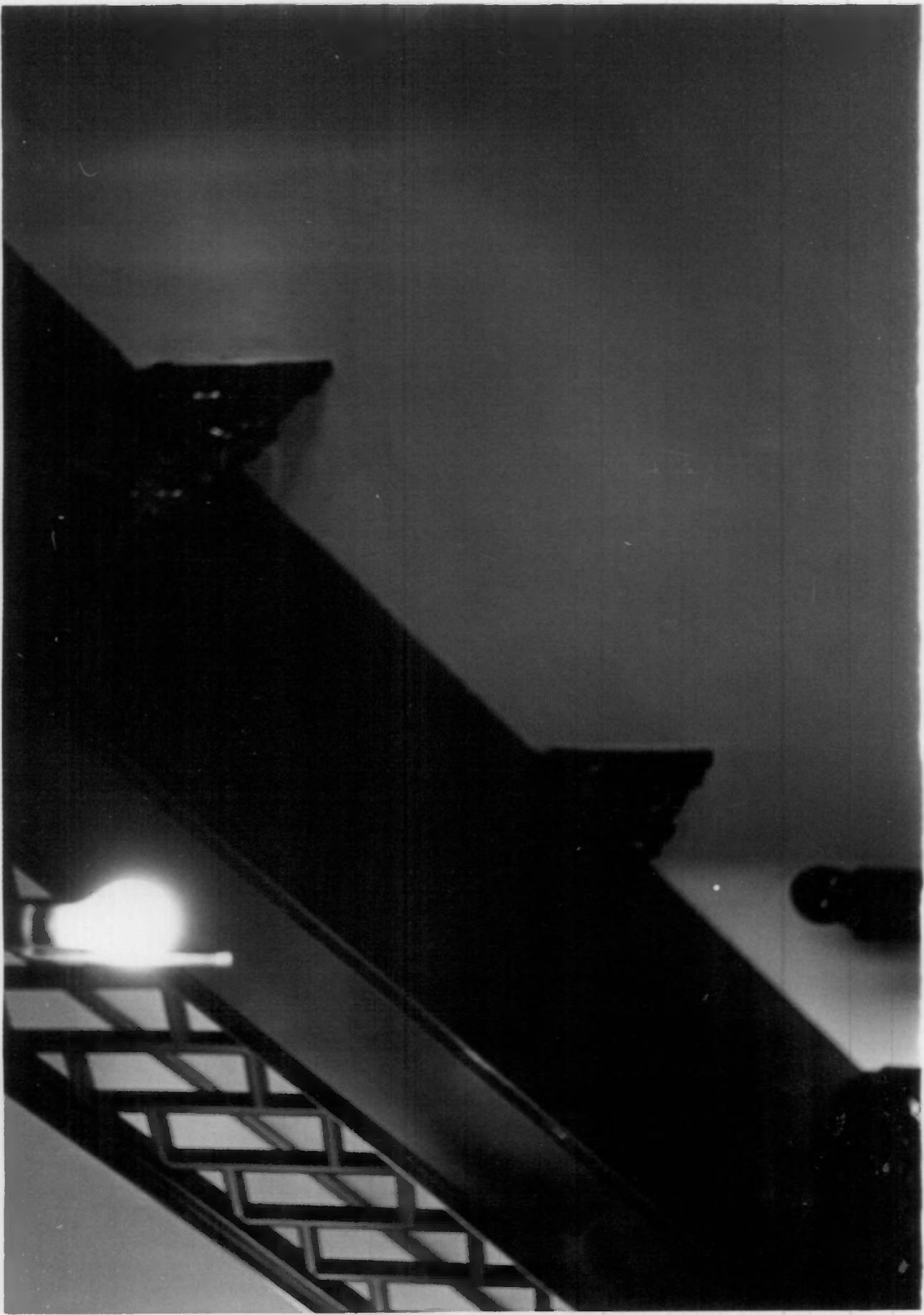




LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box. 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Stairs with decorative brackets and exposed  
lightbulb

8 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Hall with exposed heating duct

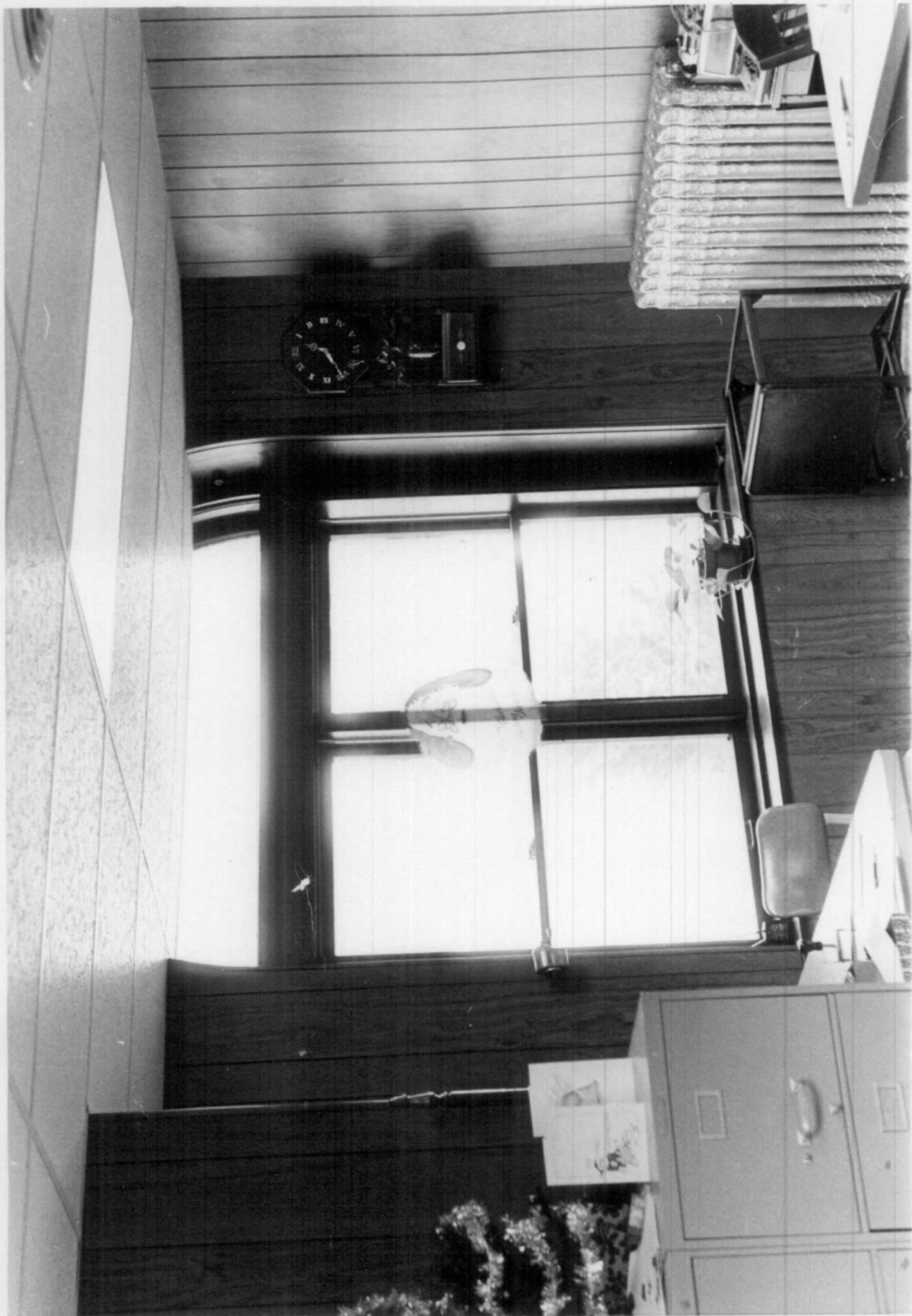
9 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Lowered ceiling and recent paneling

10 of 12



LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Vault door with painted scene

11 of 12





CIRCUIT COURT.

*© Hester & Co.*

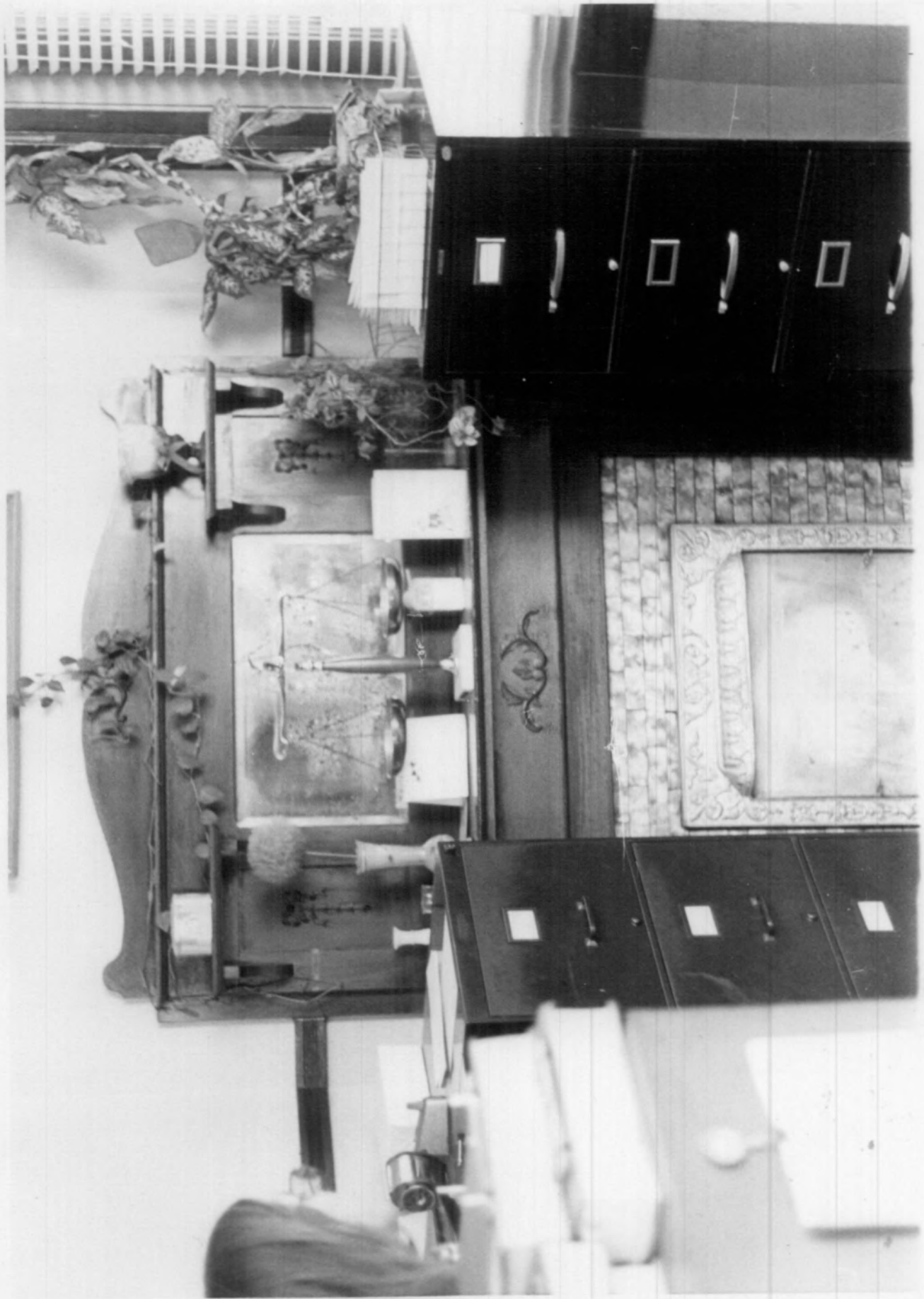


Congressman  
**GENE TAYLOR**  
RE-APPOINTED

LAWRENCE COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
Mt. Vernon, Lawrence County, Missouri  
Photographer: Doug Carr  
Date: December 14, 1979  
Neg. Loc.: Office of Historic Preservation  
Department of Natural Resources  
P.O. Box 176  
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Fireplace

12 of 12



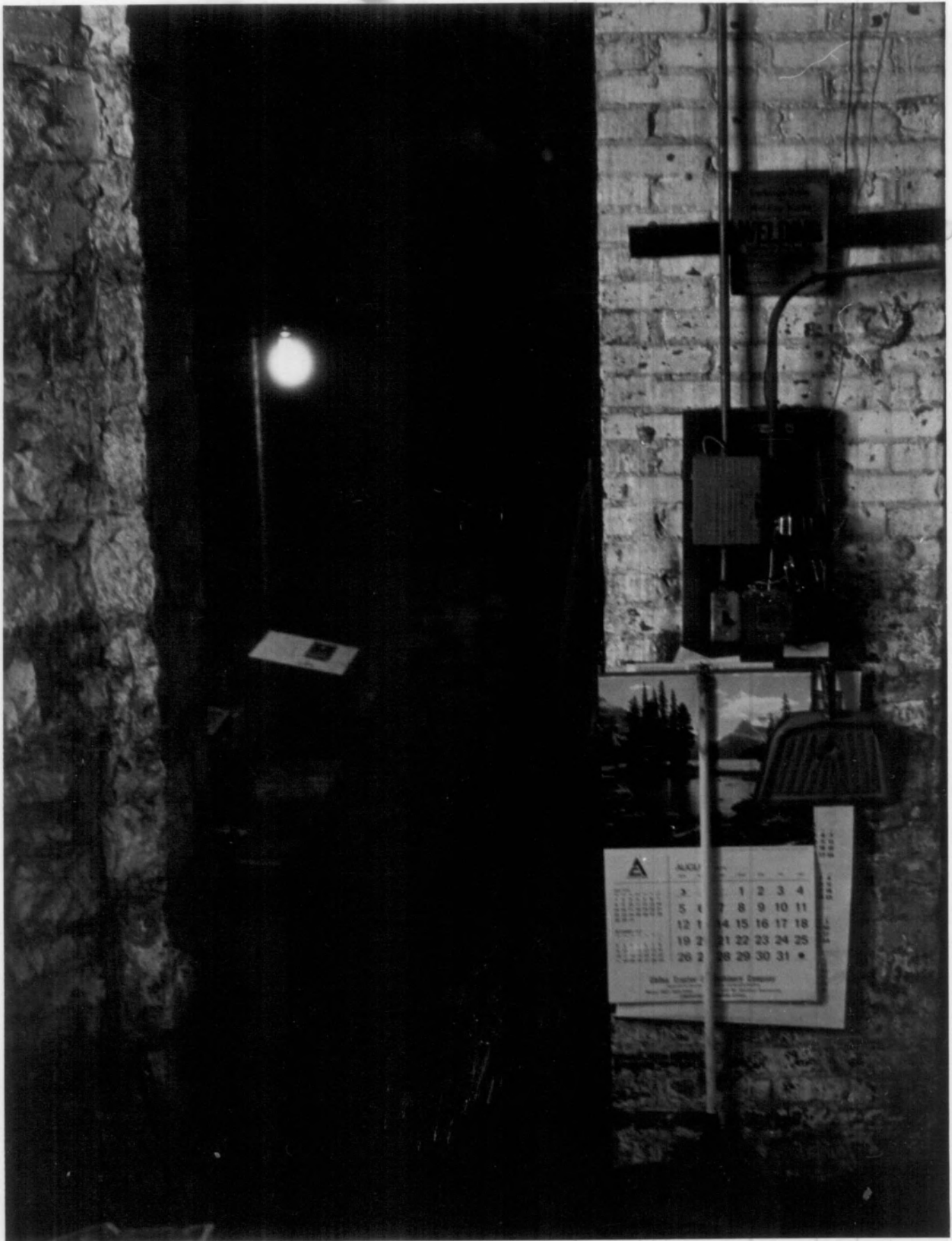
EXTRA  
PHOTOS







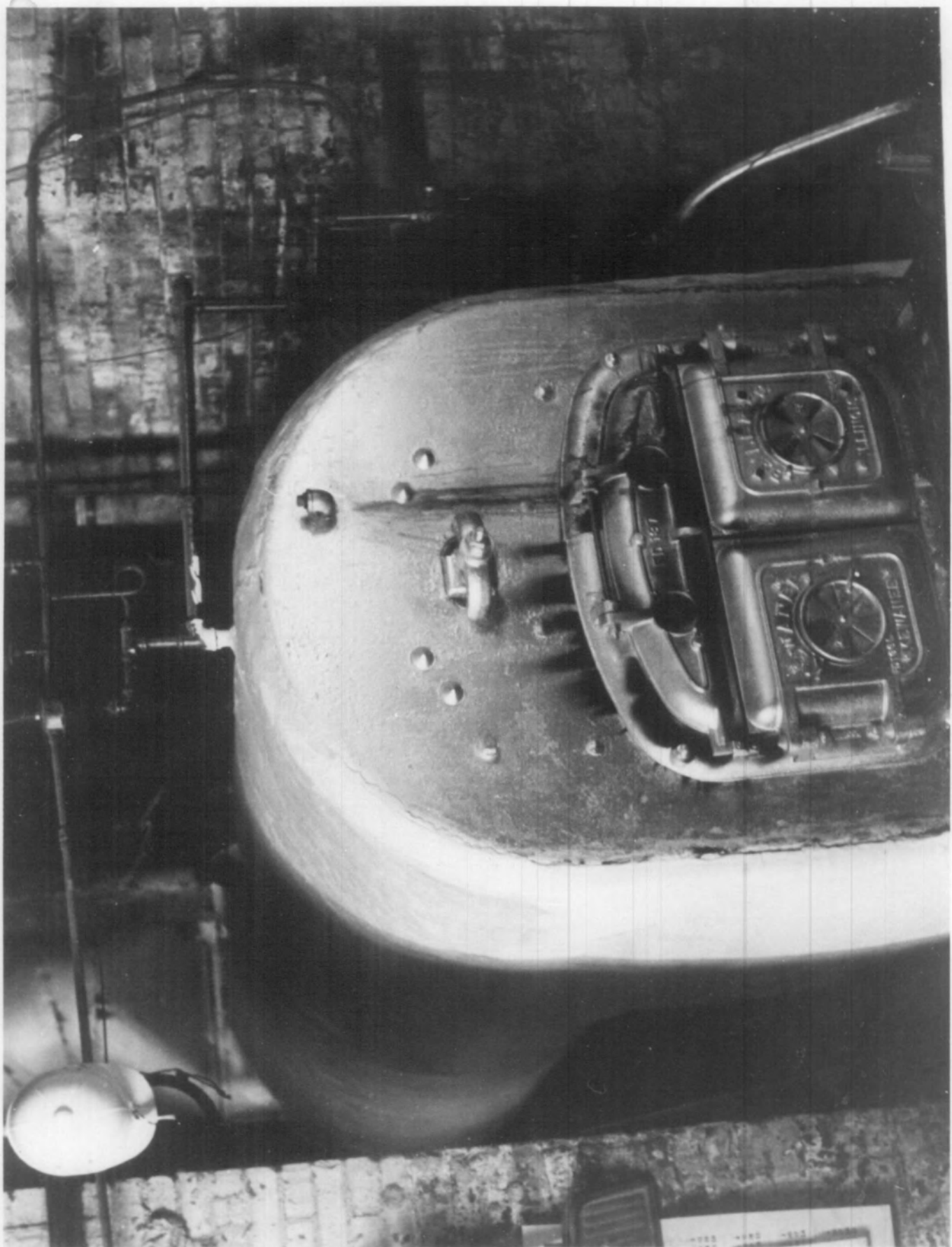


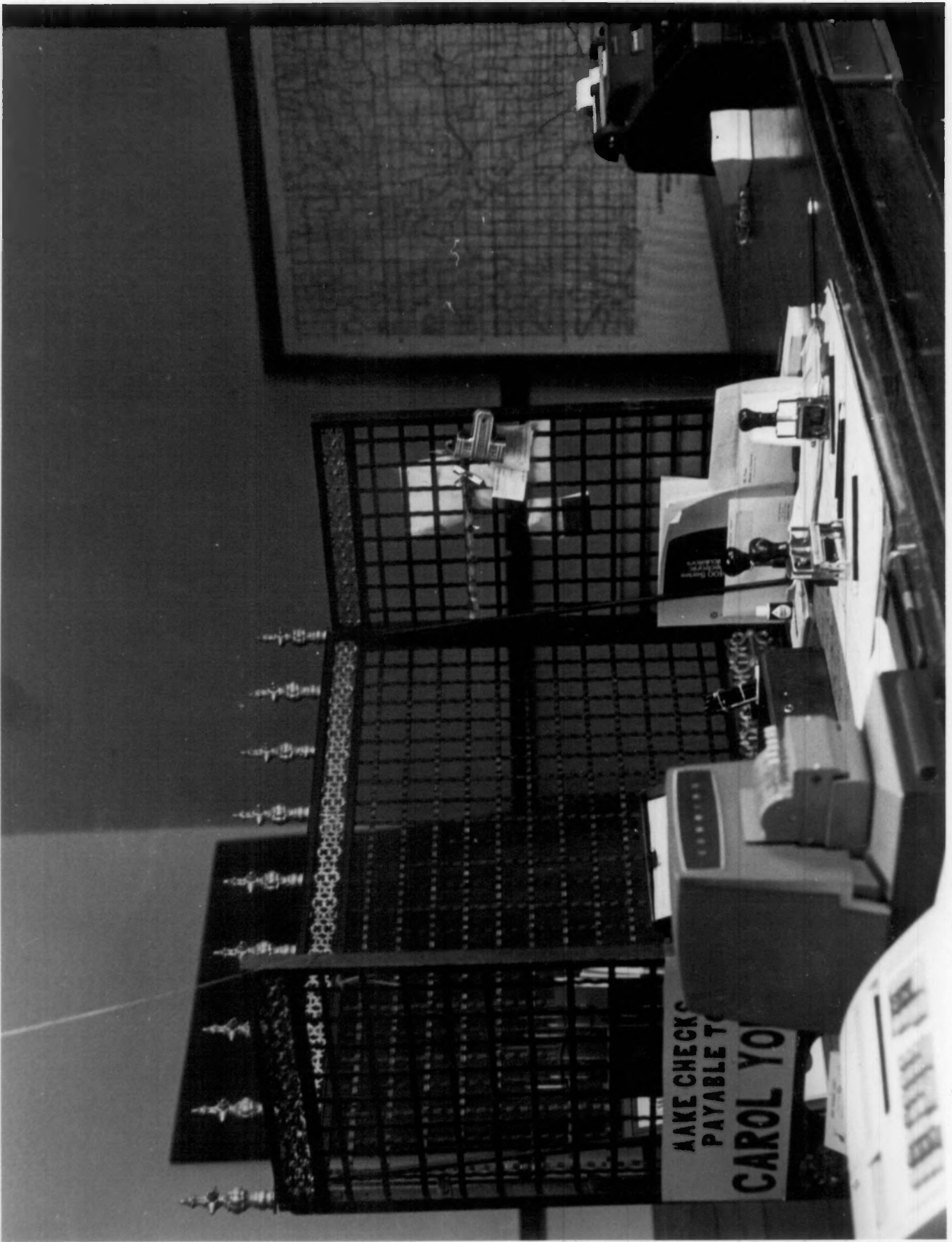


ALCU		1	2	3	4
3					
5	1	7	8	9	10 11
12	1	14	15	16	17 18
19	2	21	22	23	24 25
26	2	28	29	30	31 *

Delta Tractor & Equipment Company  
1000 1st Street  
Delta, Colorado







MAKE CHECKS  
PAYABLE TO  
CAROL YO

10



