

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Phelps County Jail  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number Park Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Rolla N/A vicinity  
state Missouri code MO county Phelps code 161 zip code 65401

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official G. Tracy Mehan III, Director

Date 3/30/96

Department of Natural Resources and State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes sub-headers for Contributing and Noncontributing resources.

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5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:)

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Correctional FacilityVacant/Not in Use**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Other/Nineteenth Century Jailfoundation Stonewalls Stoneroof Asphaltother Iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

SUMMARY: The Phelps County Jail, built in 1860, is located on the east side of Park Street between Second and Third Streets, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri. The two story, twenty-two feet square jail was built on a small residential lot near the railroad tracks and within one block of the Phelps County Courthouse. Designed by James Wilson and constructed by J.A. Schnable in 1860, the Phelps County Jail was the first permanent jail for the county. The locally quarried, rectangular, hand-dressed ashlar are laid in courses and bonded with a lime and sand mortar. The pyramidal roof was originally covered with iron. In 1892, the original wooden roof structure burned but was replaced in 1893. Presently, an asphalt shingled roof similar to the original covers the building. The two story building has one outside entrance secured with an iron cell door taken from the old Rolla City Jail on Eighth Street and installed in 1984. Although the iron cells installed on the second floor have been removed and the plaster has fallen from the interior walls, the first Phelps County Jail is essentially unaltered and retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, and association.

## ELABORATION:

North Elevation: The north side of the jail building has a door opening 36 inches by 75 inches, secured with an iron cell door and padlock. It was welded to the original iron work embedded in the stone. The other opening is a 12 inches by 24 inches, open window centered in the wall on the second floor of the building. Three sets of hand-worked iron bars are fixed in the window. The middle set of bars is embedded in the stone. The other two on the outside and inside were secured in iron plates with a "riveting" technique by hammering the heated metal.

West Elevation: The west side of the jail faces Park Street and is identical to the east side. This side contains two window openings, one on the ground floor and the other on the second floor. The ground floor window measures 19 inches by 24 inches and the second floor window is 12 inches by 24 inches. Both are centered left and right on the wall and have iron bars like the ones described in the north elevation.

South Elevation: This side of the building has only one window on the second floor identical to the window on the north elevation.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Law  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1860-1912  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

1860  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Wilson, James/Schnable, I.A.  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY: The Phelps County Jail is significant under Criterion A in the area of LAW. It was the first permanent building to house the prisoners of the county and served as the county jail from its construction in 1860 until 1912. The building of the jail enabled the county court to enforce the decisions of the judiciary in an orderly, formal manner. The erection of the Phelps County Jail helped impart an air of permanence and authority to the newly formed county and its government.

ELABORATION: Following its creation by the Missouri legislature on November 13, 1857, the new county of Phelps held its first county court meeting at the John Dillon house, located six miles east of Rolla. The court consisted of William C. York as presiding judge, with Hiram Lane and John Matlock as associate judges. This new court selected Lyle Singleton as the county clerk and Franklin Wishon as the county treasurer. The first sheriff selected was Francis M. Wishon. The newly formed county court spent much of their first meetings developing a basic road system to connect Rolla with the many surrounding communities. Another significant action undertaken by the court was selecting Rolla as the county seat, a move that caused a great amount of protest. To show its commitment to Rolla, the Phelps County Court began meeting at various temporary locations. One of these was at the Pacific Railway Office on Eighth Street near the tracks of the Southwest Branch of the Pacific Railroad.<sup>1</sup>

Law enforcement and the urgent need for a jail were important items of business on June 4, 1860, when the court stated in their records the following:

Ordered by the court . . . the erection of a county jail in the Town of Rolla within and for the County of Phelps and . . . the elevation

<sup>1</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 1.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Ohman, Marian M. Encyclopedia of Missouri Courthouses. Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division, 1981.

Phelps County Court Records. Rolla, Missouri 1860-1912.

Rolla, Missouri, Express, September 3 and November 26, 1860; and November 3, 1892.

Rolla, Missouri, Herald, March 2, 1893; and March 8, 1894.

Rolla, Missouri, Weekly Express, January 28, 1893.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 15 607705 4200310  
 Zone Easting Northing

B           
 Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description South 35 feet of Lot 3 Block 14, Original town of Rolla, Missouri, which lies south of a line that is 5 feet north from the trimmed corners of the old stone county jail building situated on said south part of said lot. Portion measures approximately 35 feet x 59 feet.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification The boundary includes the remaining portion of the lot that has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title 1. Art Smith, President  
 organization Phelps County Historical Society date October 23, 1989  
 street & number P. O. Box 1535 telephone 314/299-4472  
 city or town Rolla state Missouri zip code 65401

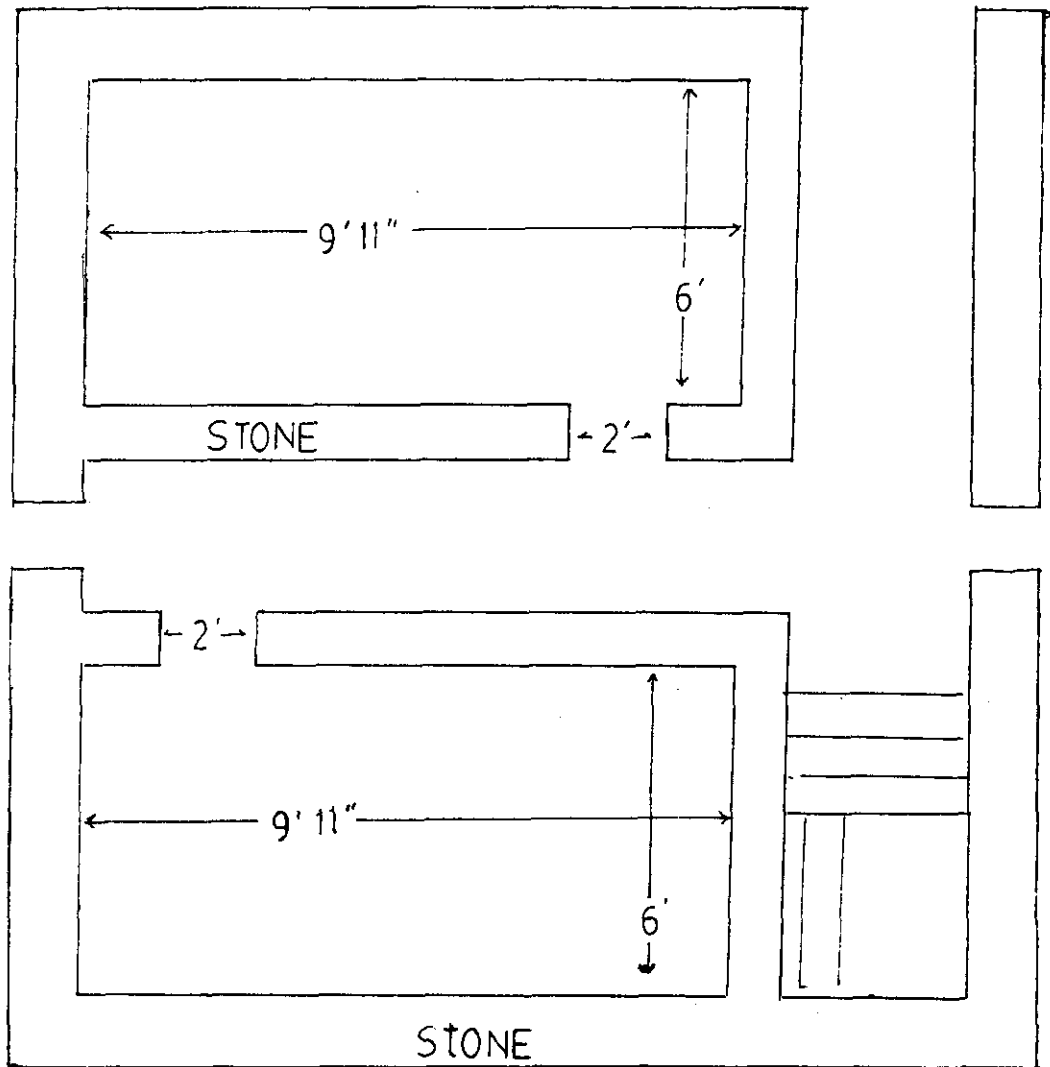
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Phelps County Jail

East Elevation: This side of the building is identical to the west elevation in all ways.

Interior, First Floor: The first floor of the building contains an entrance hallway 45 inches wide by 84 inches high which leads to the cell hallway and the stairway leading to the second floor. The entrance hallway runs the length of the building. The cell hallway is 36 inches wide by 12 feet 6 inches long with two stone steps down to floor level. There are two solitary cells on either side of the cell hallway. Each cell has a single door opening 24 inches wide by 63 inches high with an iron grill over the doorway. The iron doors for the opening were removed at some time in the past. The two cells in the northwest and southwest corners of the building measure 6 feet wide, 8 feet high, and 13 feet long. The walls and ceiling are stone with a plaster material covering the walls. Much of the material has fallen over the years. The floors are dirt packed with lime and sand mixture covering them. Iron drain pipes which were used for disposal of waste materials remain in the floors of the cells. There were no window openings to the cells. The only source of light and air was through the doors and grill work above the doors. The cell doors were staggered so they did not open directly across from each other. The entrance hallway has different pieces of iron embedded in the stone which were used possibly to attach a second cell door. The wooden stairway at the end of the entrance hallway was built in 1957 to provide access to the second floor.

Interior, Second Floor: The second floor is a single room measuring 18 feet 6 inches by 18 feet 6 inches, with the stone walls 7 feet 10 inches thick. The room has four identical open windows situated midway on the four walls. After some early escapes through the roof, an iron cage was installed in the room to contain the prisoners. The main cage extended the entire length of the room north to south with the ends of the iron embedded in the stone walls. A smaller cage extended from the east wall to the larger cage. Each cage was formed of iron bars and had its own ceiling, also of iron bars. The openings in the stone for the cages are still apparent. The iron cages were supposedly removed to the new jail built in an addition to the courthouse. The floor of the second story and entrance hallway consists of a six inch layer of large slabs of stone. On the second floor, this six inch layer is placed upon a sub-floor of 10 inch stone which also serves as the ceiling. The ceiling of the second floor does not remain. Newspaper accounts indicated there was a wooden ceiling covering the entire second floor. They also wrote of a heating system consisting of a chimney and stove, neither of which remain today.



PHELPS COUNTY JAIL  
PARK ST., ROLLA, PHELPS COUNTY  
not to scale

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Phelps County Jail

submitted by James Wilson through Superintendent E.W. Bishop for said jail to be built twenty two feet square on the outside. The wall to be of thorough stone two feet thick and to be known as rock work on the outside and dressed to receive plastering on the inside and to consist of two cells and a hall and passage way upon the ground floor [and] a stairway and one room over the cell. Iron doors be well secured with locks and bolt as per specifications now on file accompanying said elevation.<sup>2</sup>

On April 24, 1860, the Court appropriated "for the purpose of erecting a county jail of stone as per elevation submitted and on file, the sum of three thousand dollars."<sup>3</sup> The contractor was I.A. Schnable.

The jail was not the first building authorized by the county court. In August 1859, the court appropriated \$8,000 for the construction of a brick courthouse. However, construction was delayed and the court did not accept the still uncompleted building until June 1863.

The Court Records of June 7, 1860, stated that the jail was to be built on the "SE corner of Lot 3, Block 14 within 10 feet of the SO & E boundary line."<sup>4</sup> Later, on August 11, 1860, Thomas F. Jones was declared the first elected sheriff of Phelps County to serve a term of two years. By September, construction of the jail had begun. On September 3, the Rolla Express reported: "Up again. The derrick which fell a few days since has been erected again, and the work upon the jail has resumed. Mr. Schnable, the builder, we are glad to hear is rapidly recovering from his injuries."<sup>5</sup> On November 26, 1860, the Express declared:

"Our County Jail is now completed and is a strong concern. It is very small, however, and if our justices' courts continue to do as good a business for the coming time [sic], between now and this next

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<sup>2</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 138.

<sup>4</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 150.

<sup>5</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Express, September 3, 1860, p. 2.



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Phelps County Jail

session of the circuit court, as it has been doing so far, it will be full and need an addition. It has been some three weeks since the adjournment of the court and there are five subjects already in the 'jug' waiting for trial."<sup>6</sup>

The edition of the Rolla Express that announced the opening of the jail also informed the public of the jail's first escape. The article stated:

ESCAPED--We have been informed that Peter Keveney, C.C. Wiles, G.W. Davis, Jacob Runnells and John Arthur, who have been confined in Phelps County Jail to await their trial at the next term of the circuit court, all escaped on Friday evening last while Mr. Webber, the jailor, was at supper. They escaped through the roof from the upper room, and from thence by a ladder.<sup>7</sup>

These escapes were the first of a number of breakouts spanning the fifty-two years the building was used as a jail.

According to the Court records of February 9, 1861, K.R. Woodard was allowed \$85.46 for services as jailor in furnishing the jail, and, in March, I.A. Schnable, the builder, received "the sum of \$725.50 balance due him on his contract to build Jail."<sup>8</sup> James Wilson had already received on February 8, 1861, the sum of \$10.00 for "services in geting [sic] up a model and specifications of Jail."<sup>9</sup>

This dark and foreboding jail reflected a time when any imprisonment was grim. The jail contained two lower cells for isolation and maximum security. Each was six feet by thirteen feet. A small doorway provided the only light. The single unpartitioned upper room was the scene of numerous escapes through the roof. Later this part of the jail was made more secure by the addition of iron

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<sup>6</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Express, November 26, 1860, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book A, p. 218.

<sup>9</sup>Idem, p. 211.

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Phelps County Jail

"cages" in the room, with the round iron bars embedded in the rock walls. A crude sanitary drain was installed in the cells for sewage. The interior walls were covered with plaster, which proved to be a chalkboard for the inmates to express their feelings about the jail, Rolla, and the world in general. Some of the writings remain today, but many have been lost as the plaster fell victim to vandals and the elements.

The jailer's residence was adjacent to the jail entrance and this proved to be a problem, as the jailor was involved in at least one escape which occurred in 1860 and in numerous other suspicious incidents. This problem was partially solved on November 6, 1885, when a grand jury recommended and the Court ordered that "the jailor's residence moved north from the jail to within about 10 feet of the south side of 3rd street."<sup>10</sup>

On November 1, 1892, the jail was nearly destroyed. A fire caused by a "defection in the chimney flue" left the substantial stone and iron works standing after burning all of the wood in the jail including the wooden parts of the pyramidal roof. The Rolla Express reported that "four prisoners were confined in the jail at the time, and although they knew the roof was on fire and no alarm had been given up to that time, they retired to the lower corridor and quietly awaited results." Just before the "fire boys" arrived, the sheriff, John Cooper, awoke to the fire from his living quarters in the house next to the jail. The newspaper also stated that "a majority of the people thinking that a complete renovation of the filthy structure by fire would be more beneficial than to save it. Many regrets that the jailor's residence had not been consumed too, but no such good luck befell it. The loss will not be over \$800."<sup>11</sup>

Following the fire in the jail, the court used various means to provide for the care of the count's prisoners. Some were assigned to the sheriff for him to simply "board out" some place for fifty cents a day per prisoner. More dangerous offenders were sent to the Rolla City Jail or neighboring county jails. For example, on February 17, 1893, court records show a payment of \$74.50 to Crawford County for board of Phelps County prisoners through December 31, 1892.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book F, p. 632.

<sup>11</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Express, November 3, 1892, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book H, p. 377.

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Phelps County Jail

Meanwhile, the citizens of Phelps County were in disagreement over what to do about the burned out jail. E.Y. Mitchem came to court on December 29, 1892, with a petition signed by 137 others to have the county build a new jail. The court did not have the money or the authority to levy a tax for this project but did agree to put the proposal to the people for a vote on January 28, 1893. The sum requested for the new jail was \$9,000. Many believed this was far too extravagant and their comments were recorded in the letters in the editorial section of the newspaper. There must have been some agreement about the need for a new jail for the proposed tax failed by a vote of six to one.<sup>13</sup>

On March 2, 1893, the Rolla Herald published a short notice that a grand jury had recommended to the court that the old jail be repaired.<sup>14</sup> Later in the year, on November 10, Philip Cook and thirty-two others came to court to ask for its repair. The court once again disclaimed the money or the authority to levy a tax. In February 1894, another group came to the court with the same proposal. Some action eventually resulted, according to the court records, because, on March 5, 1894, Frank Stanzel presented a bill and was paid \$24.00 for "mounting jail walls, work on dungeons and cages."<sup>15</sup> On March 8, 1894, the Herald noted "the repairs on the jail are about completed and the resort is ready for occupancy."<sup>16</sup>

The last active use of the jail was during 1912. On July 16, 1912, the court ordered a contract be let for the construction of a "jail [and] petit and grand jury room" on the southwest corner of the courthouse.<sup>17</sup> Following the move into the new jail in the courthouse addition, the old jail fell into disuse. The elements rotted the wooden parts and scavengers carried away souvenirs. The elements could not destroy the huge rock walls and strong hand-forged iron work, however, and they remain intact.

<sup>13</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Weekly Express, January 28, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Herald, March 2, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book H, p. 547.

<sup>16</sup>Rolla, Missouri, Herald, March 8, 1894, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Phelps County Court Records, Book M, p. 453.

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National Park Service

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Phelps County Jail

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Dr. E.A. Stricker bought the jail on April 6, 1940, and donated it to the Phelps County Historical Society on December 4, 1943. A modern composition roof was added to replace the original iron sheeted roof. The outside iron cell door came from the Rolla City Jail and was added in 1984 to protect the interior. The Phelps County Historical Society hopes to ensure the preservation and appreciation of this representative of a small, boisterous Missouri county of the 1860-1912 era. The this end, the corner lot next to the jail on Third and Park Streets was purchased in 1989 by the Phelps County Historical Society.

The Phelps County Jail is the oldest extant building constructed for the use of the county government. Although the county court authorized the construction of the Phelps County Courthouse in 1859, the partially completed building was not accepted by the court until 1863. The courthouse was altered circa 1881 with the addition of vault wings, in 1912 with the addition of a jail, and in the 1940s with the removal of its cupola.

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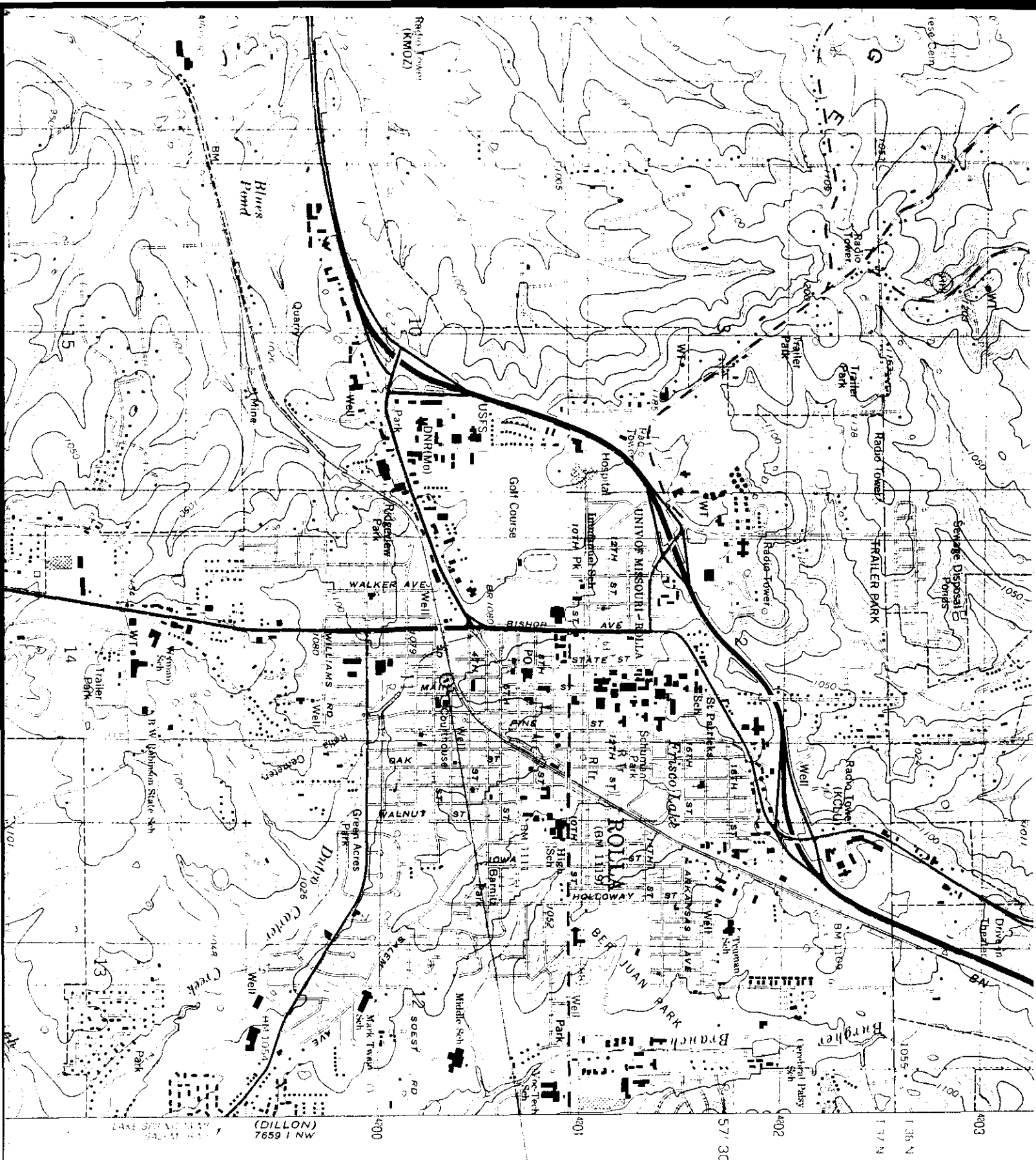
## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 1

Phelps County Jail

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2. Steven Mitchell  
National Register Historian  
Department of Natural Resources  
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Jefferson City, Missouri 65102  
Date: March 30 1990  
Telephone: 314/751-5368  
Editor and State Contact Person



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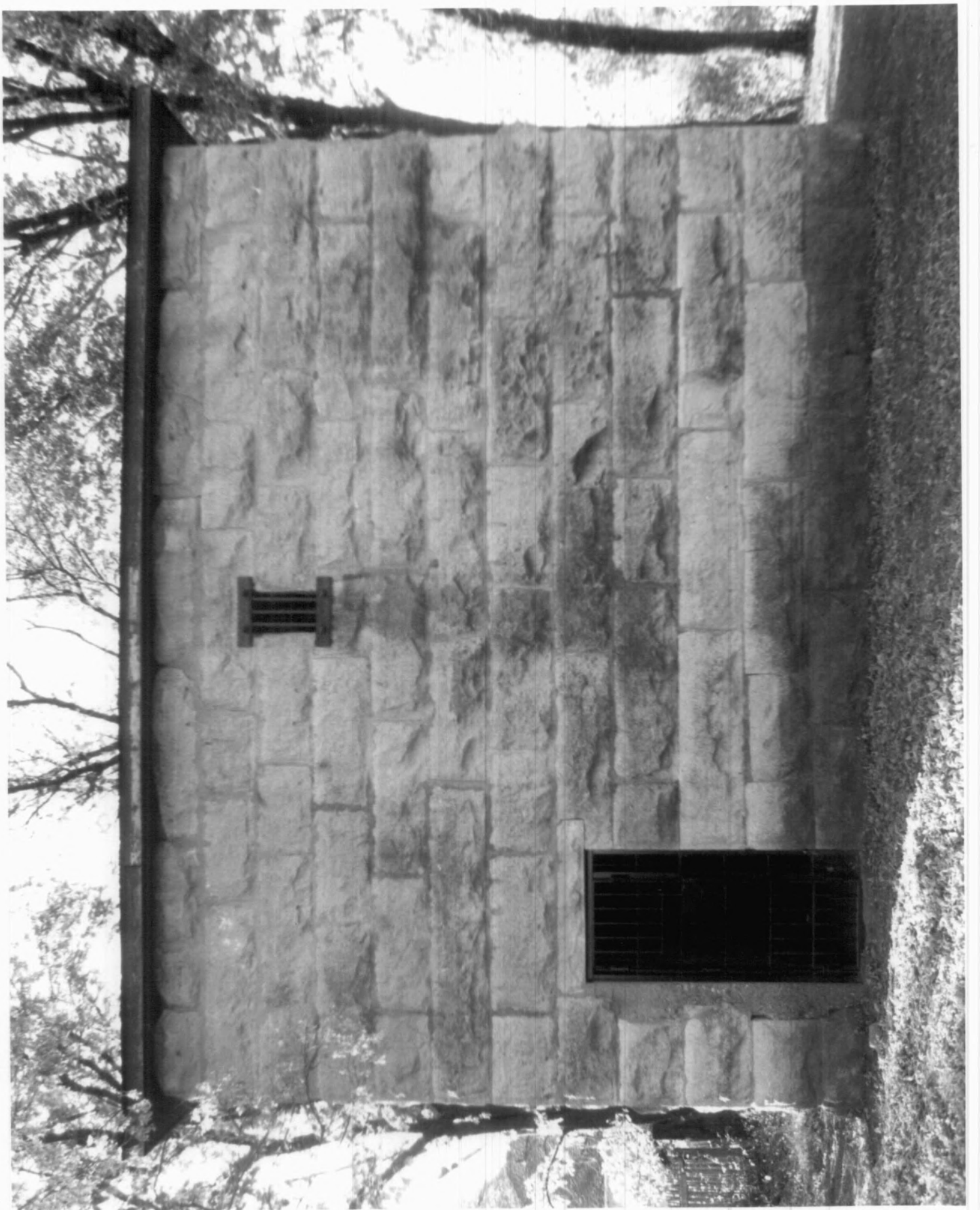
Phelps County Jail  
 Park Street  
 Rolla, Phelps County  
 15/607705/4200310

Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri  
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society  
North elevation

# 1 of 9





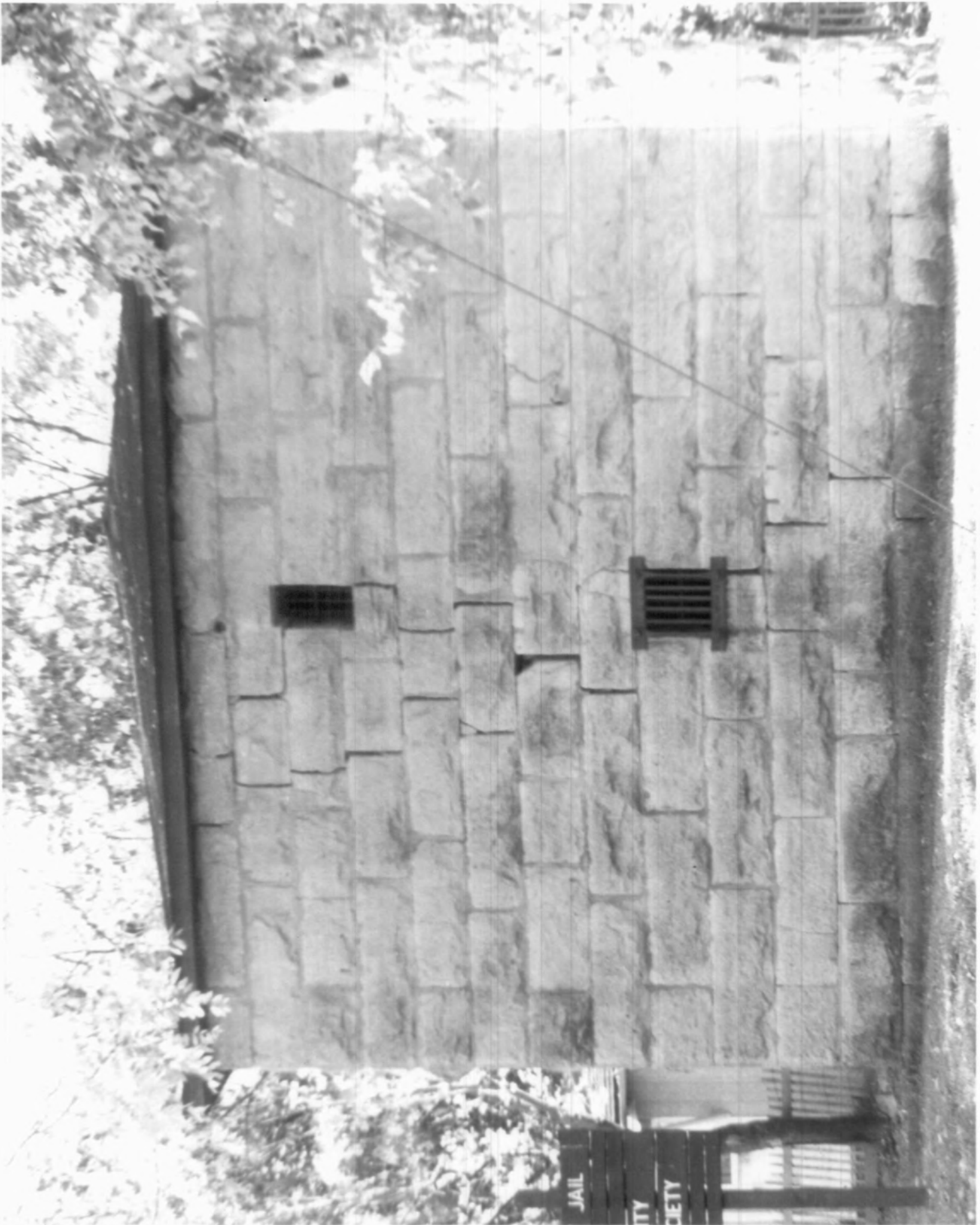
Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri  
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

West elevation

# 2 of 9



JAIL

CITY

SOCIETY

Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri

Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

South elevation

# 3 of 9



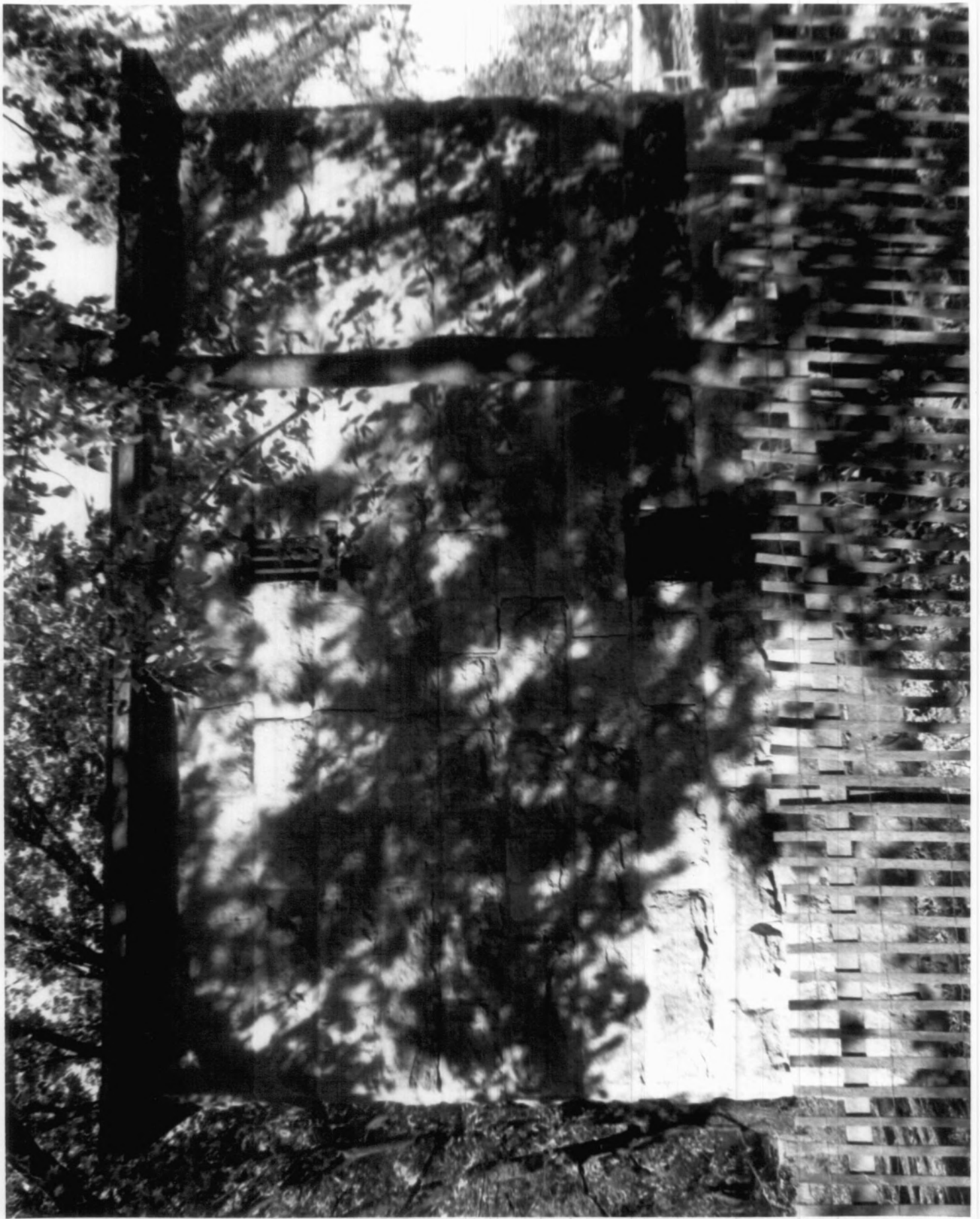
Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri  
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

East Elevation

# 4 of 9



Phelps County Jail

Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri

Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

Detail of second floor interior, northeast corner

# 5 of 9





Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Ralla, Phelps County, Missouri,

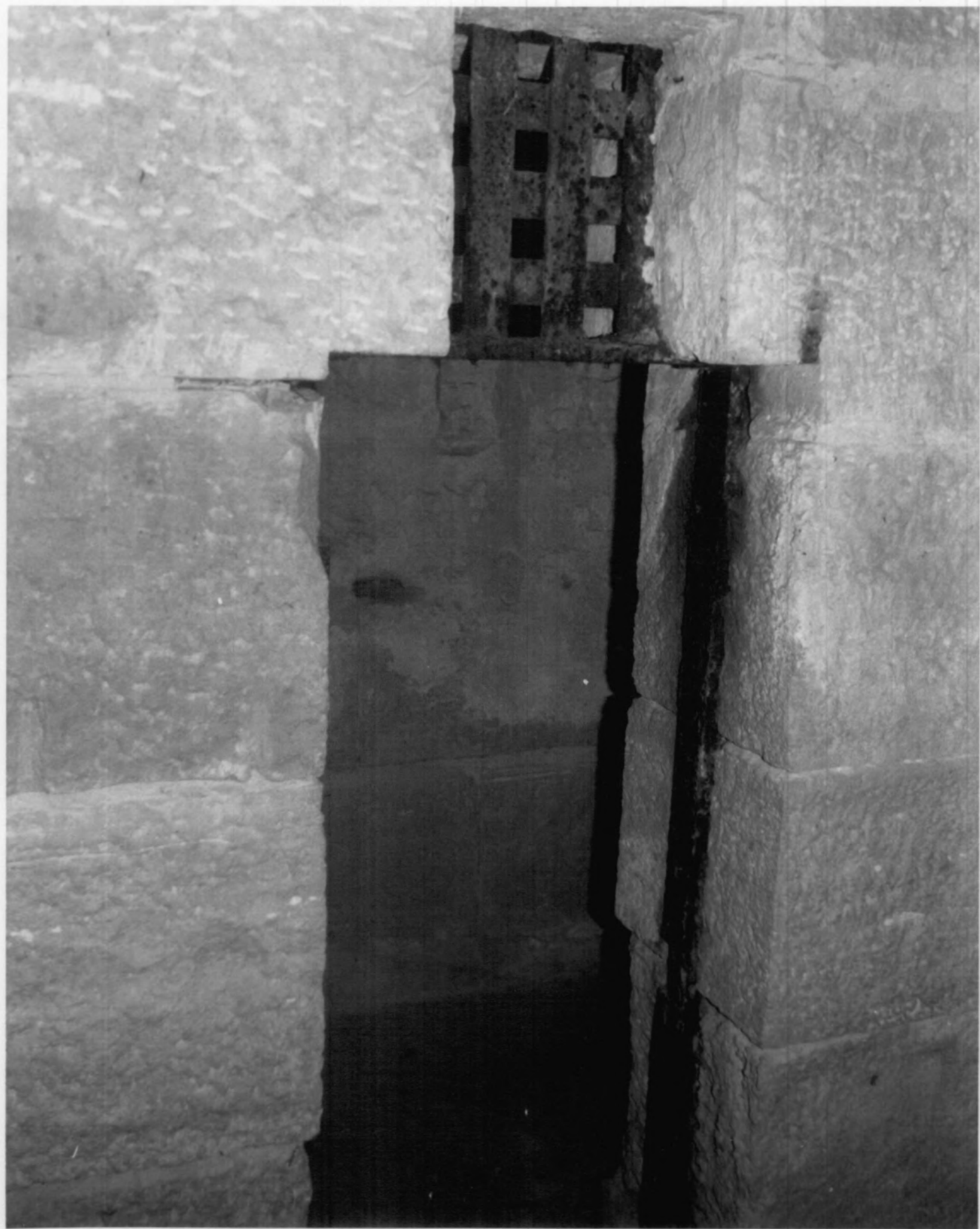
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

Detail of cell doorway, first floor

# 6 of 9



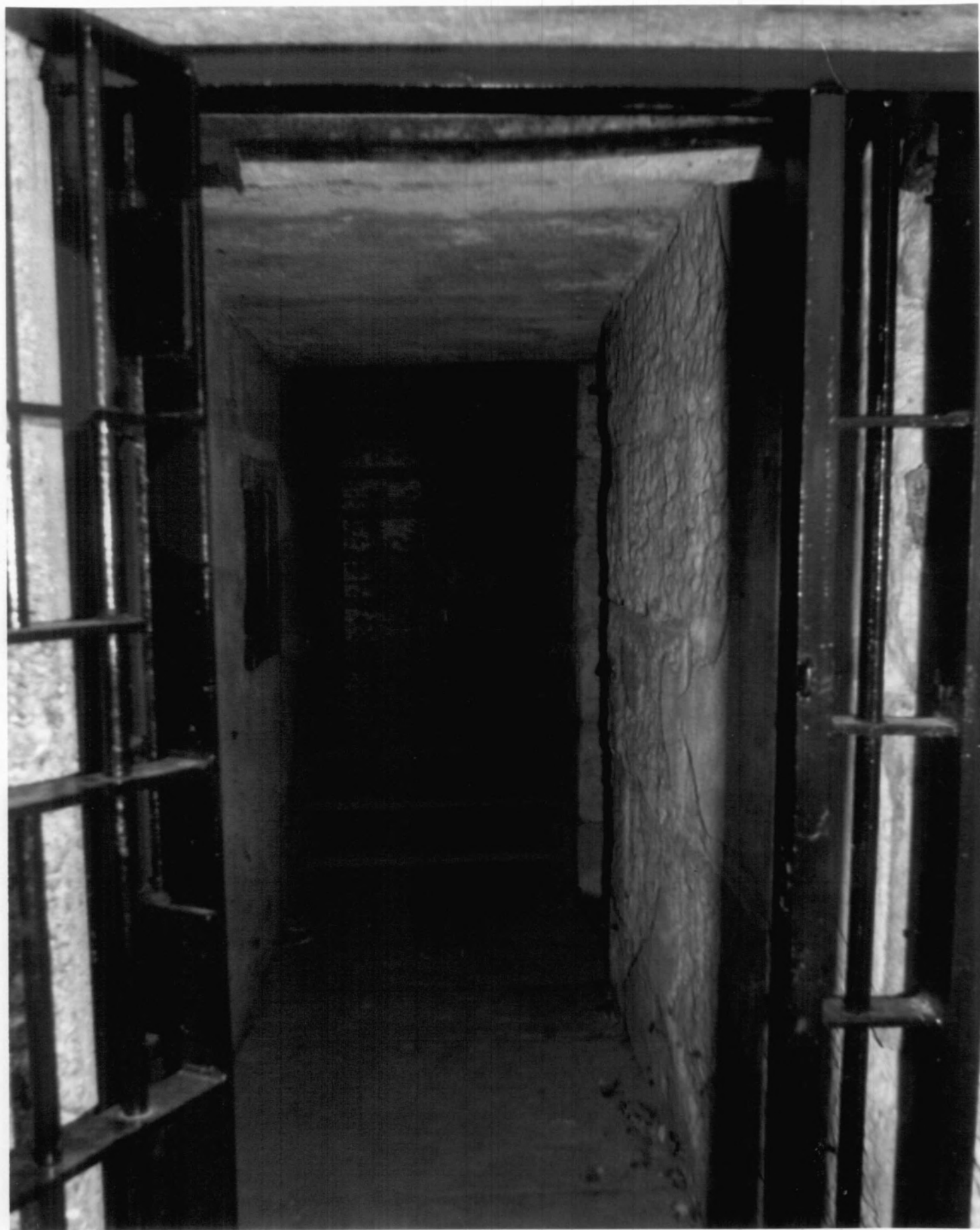
Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Phelps County, Rolla, Missouri  
Art Smith  
October 23, 1989  
Phelps County Historical Society  
Detail of hallway, first floor  
# 7 of 9



Phelps County Jail  
Park Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri  
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society  
Detail of entrance hallway, first floor  
#8 of 9



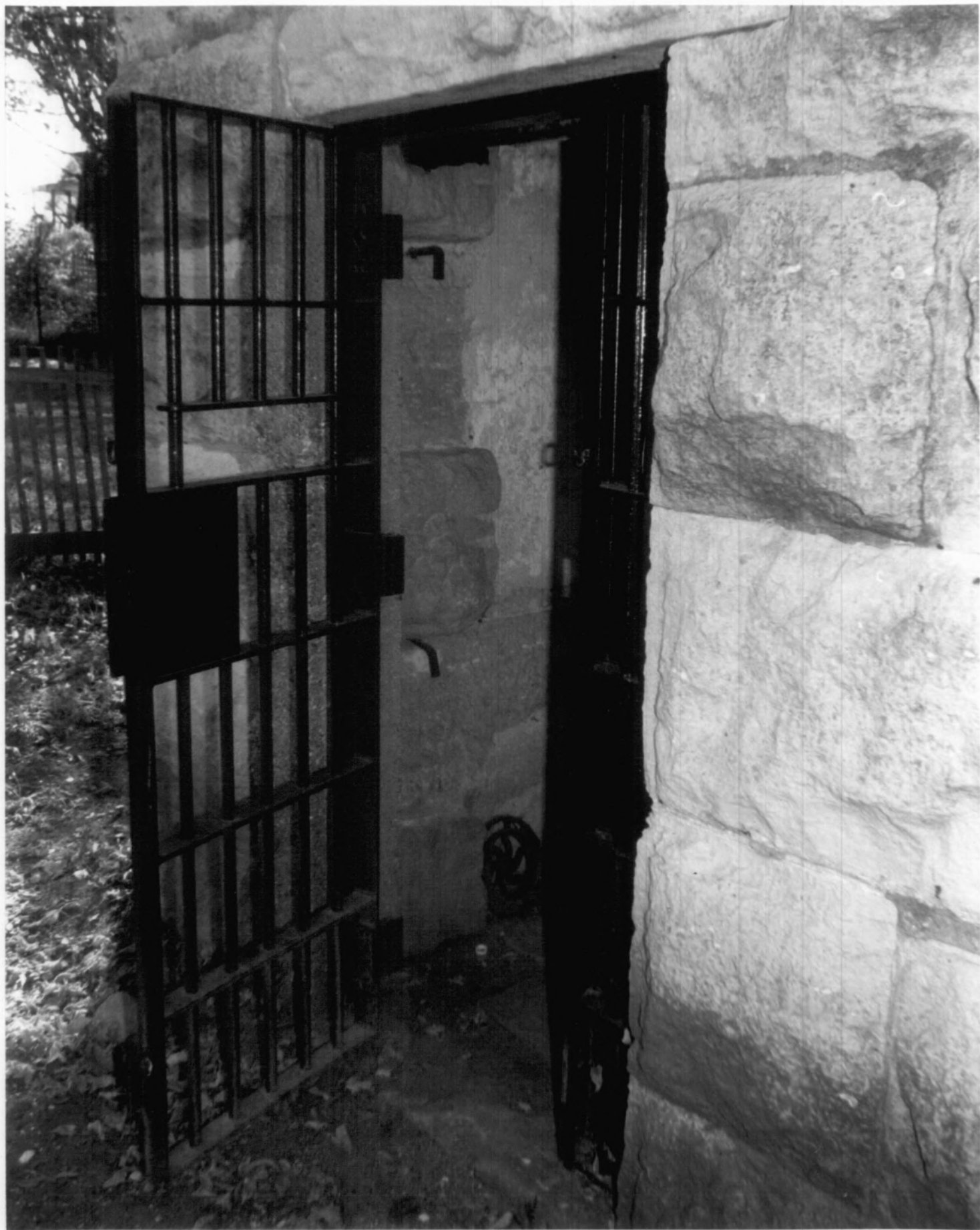
Phelps County Jail  
Pack Street, Rolla, Phelps County, Missouri,  
Art Smith

October 23, 1989

Phelps County Historical Society

Entrance, north elevation

# 9 of 9





EXTRA  
PHOTOS

