

# **Kenneth Smith Residence and Golf Club Factory Complex**

**12925 W. 71<sup>st</sup> Street, Shawnee, KS**

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## **A Section 106 Documentation**

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### **Introduction**

The property that is known today as the Kenneth Smith Residence and Golf Club Factory Building (Figures 1- 4), was purchased in several parcels. The first of the parcels, which included 20 acres located in the NE quarter of the NW quarter of Section 22, Township 12, Range 24, was purchased by Smith from L. A. Petit in 1933. In 1934 an additional 20-acre parcel was purchased, again from Petit. Smith continued acquiring the surrounding land through c. 1954 when he amassed approximately 160 acres surrounding the original purchase.<sup>1</sup>



**Figure 1:** Kenneth and Eva Smith Residence, main or north façade, facing southeast, April 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Numerical Index, Johnson County Records, Property Deed Books 1867 - 1960. Location: N half of NW quarter of Sec. 22 Twp. 12 Range 24.



**Figure 2:** The Smith Residence, rear or south façade, facing north, April 2005.

Beginning c. 1935, Smith had several new buildings constructed to the west of the house. The main facility, more than likely the first of the buildings to be constructed, served as a factory where hand-made golf clubs, custom designed for his clientele, were manufactured.



**Figure 3:** Kenneth Smith Golf Club Manufacturing Facility, east or main façade, facing west, April 2005.



**Figure 4:** Kenneth Smith Golf Club Manufacturing Facility, east or main façade, facing west, April 2005.

The Kenneth Smith Residence, modified over the years, appears to date back to c. 1869 when John Garrett, a master stonemason who emigrated from England to the United States in 1855, purchased the property and settled at the site.<sup>2</sup> Between 1871 and 1933, warranty deeds demonstrate that the parcel containing the Garrett house transitioned through a total of four owners prior to Kenneth and Eva Smith (see Timeline below).<sup>3</sup> During the 1940s, the Smiths constructed an addition to the east bedroom wing of the old Garrett house, thereby expanding the house's original square footage. Although there is evidence of additional, yet minor modifications, the home has remained intact for nearly 135 years.

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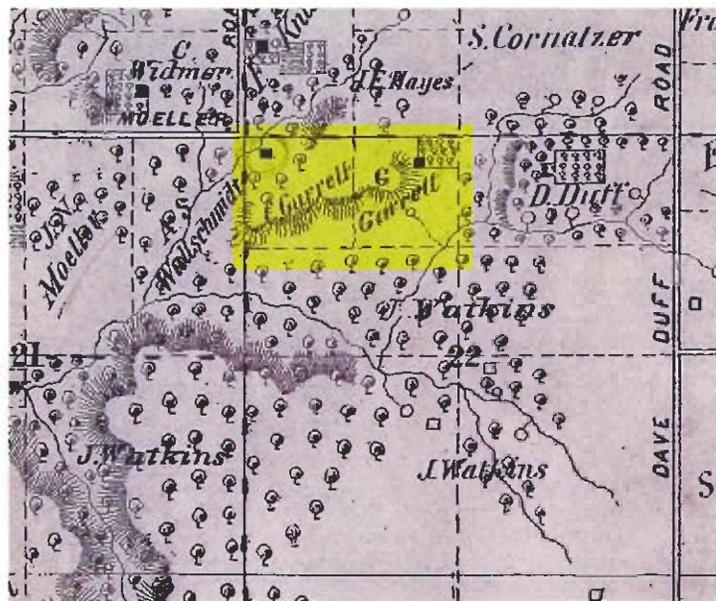
<sup>2</sup> Numerical Index, Johnson County Records, Property Deeds, Book M 1867, 212 and Book 156, 597. The property location: N half of NW quarter of Sec. 22 Twp. 12 Range 24.

<sup>3</sup> Land Patent, Abstract of Shawnee Indian Lands in Johnson County, Numerical Index, Johnson County Records, Kansas, Patent Book 99-015.001, 140.

## Elaboration

Shawnee Township, Johnson County, Kansas, was part of Indian Territory until 1861 when the area became part of the State of Kansas. Abstracts of Shawnee Indian lands during the 1860s state that 160 acres of Section 22 Township 12 Range 24, Johnson County, Kansas, belonged to the Whitedeer family, members of the Shawnee Indian tribe of Kansas Territorial lands. Eighty acres of the north half of the Section belonged to Jesse Whitedeer and his wife Mary.<sup>4</sup>

On February 5, 1867, Jesse Whitedeer sold his 80 acres to John and Anna Garrett for \$350.<sup>5</sup> The Garrett's paid an additional \$400 to Whitedeer on August 25, 1868. A land patent was granted to the Garrett's by the Secretary of State on November 23, 1869. Prior to Kansas statehood in 1861 the only land records available did not list property improvements; therefore the Garrett house is the first recorded residence within this plat (Figure 5).



**Figure 5:** *Kansas Atlas 1874*; Kansas City Lithographers, 1874.  
Garrett Property, Shawnee Township, N half of NW quarter of Sec 22 Twp 12 Range 24.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Please see the timeline for information on the owners of the NE quarter of the NW quarter of Sec. 22 Twp. 12 Range 24 following this text.

<sup>5</sup> Numerical Index, Johnson County Records, Property Dceds, Book M 1867, 212. The property location: N half of NW quarter of Sec. 22 Twp. 12 Range 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Kansas Atlas 1874* (Kansas City: Kansas City Lithographers, 1874), Plate 80. Johnson County Museum Archives, Johnson County, Kansas. G. Garrett as illustrated on the atlas was in error. All land records are recorded as J. Garrett.

## **The Garrett Residence**

John (Jack) Garrett was born in Devon County, England, on October 31, 1824. He immigrated to the United States with his brothers, c.1855. According to family records, the Garrett brothers were all stonemasons. John, along with his youngest brother Uriah, built the Wagon Master's House that stood at 6315 Nieman Road, Shawnee Kansas. The owner of the house was Dick Williams, a wagon master and freighter on the Santa Fe Trail. Williams had the house built for his wife, Margaret Parks, the daughter of Shawnee Chief Joseph Parks. The house was torn down in 1959 and although it was to be reconstructed, the reconstruction was never completed.<sup>7</sup>

John's wife, Anna, and four of their children, immigrated to Shawnee sometime after the arrival of John, but the exact date is not known. After purchasing the property from Whitedeer, John Garrett built a three-room stone house (c. 1868-1872), consisting of a parlor and bedroom at the north or main façade of the residence and a stone fireplace at the east and west ends of the building (Figure 6).

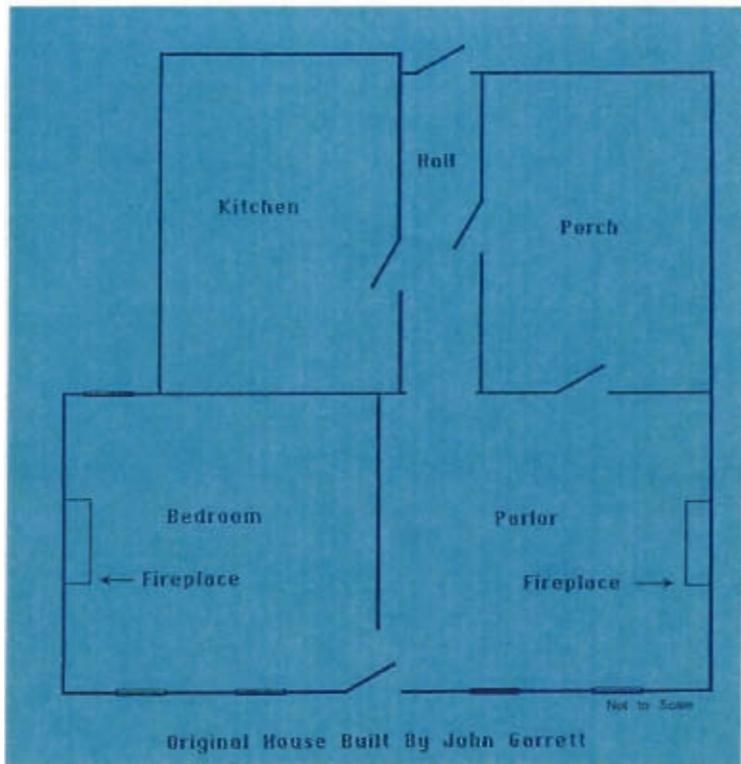
Each room had two large windows with headers built of large stones measuring 12" x 16" x 72". The kitchen was built on the south side or rear of the house with a hallway between the kitchen and a large porch on the southwest corner.<sup>8</sup> The exterior stone walls were perpendicular to the ground but the interior walls sloped from a two-foot thickness at the ceiling level to one foot at ground level. According to information from descendants of John and Anna Garrett, the interior wall of the home sloped slightly inward toward the ceiling (Figure 7). This construction technique was commonly used in England as a means of conserving heat.<sup>9</sup>

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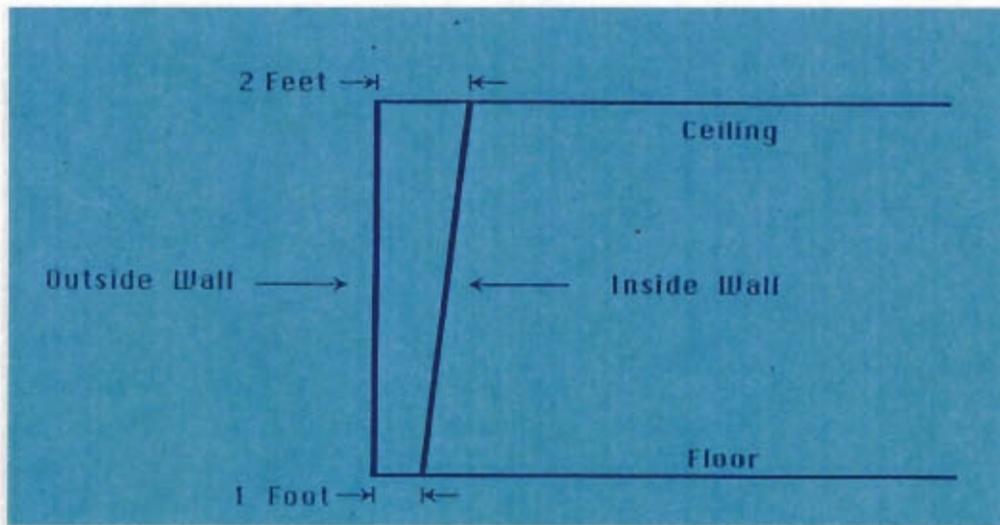
<sup>7</sup> Betty Jean Collins Garrett, "John Garrett and Anna Emmett and Their Descendants," N.P. 1991, 46. Mrs. Garrett compiled a Garrett family history Included were interviews with Gilbert Garrett, descendant of John and Mrs. Kenneth Smith who resided in the house from c. 1932-1979.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, 1-3

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 3. The drawings and history specific to the Garrett house were given to Betty Garrett by Gilbert Garrett, grandson of John Garrett.



**Figure 6:** Garrett House Floor Plan



**Figure 7:** Detail of wall construction

As it stands today, the property also features a dry wall rock fence that runs along 71<sup>st</sup> Street for approximately one-quarter of a mile in length that was built by John Garrett using stones from his property. According to Garrett family history, the stones were hauled to the fence site on a six foot long stone sled made of V-shaped tree limbs, six inches in diameter, with rough hewn planks placed on top of the limbs that served as a platform for the stones.<sup>10</sup>

Garrett's wife Anna died c. 1896. However, John Garrett continued to live on the property until 1900. In June 1901, he sold the 40 acres of the NE quarter of the NW quarter Section 22, Township 12, Range 24 to Severin Nunnink for \$1,800. John Garrett died in September 1904 at the age of 81. Both he and Anna are buried in the Shawnee Cemetery at 61<sup>st</sup> Street and Quivira Road, Shawnee Kansas.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 8:** The Garrett House as it appeared c.1923 from R. Hamler family archives. The Hamler Family was the third owner of the Garrett House.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Photocopy of photograph from the R. Hamler family photographs. Photos were obtained from Dorothy Hamler who resided in the home as a little girl from 1922-1925.

## **Kenneth Smith Golf Club Factory**

Kenneth Smith Golf Clubs is America's oldest custom golf club maker. When Kenneth and Eva Smith purchased the property at 12925 W. 71<sup>st</sup> Street in Shawnee, Kansas, in 1933, Kenneth Smith was operating a custom designed golf club factory at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and Gillham Road in Kansas City, Missouri, beginning c. 1930. It appears that he continued to operate his factory and sales room on Gillham Road until the new factory facility was built next to his home at 12925 W. 71<sup>st</sup> Street, c. 1935.<sup>13</sup> His business continued at the Lenexa location for a number of years after his death in 1977. Today, the clubs that Smith made famous are still manufactured under his name.

Kenneth Smith's interest in golf began in 1916 when he saw an advertisement for work as a caddie at the Mission Hills Country Club in Kansas. He was hired for the job, and eventually worked his way into an apprenticeship with the Mission Hills club maker. He later went on to college receiving a degree in Business Administration from the University of Michigan. After several years as an assistant pro in a Duluth, Minnesota, club, Smith decided to strike out on his own.<sup>14</sup>

In 1928 Smith and his father, a master mechanic, built a shop behind their home. Without the money to buy all the proper power tools, Smith and his father used hand tools. In June 1928, Horton Smith (no relation) was in Kansas City for a tournament. Kenneth Smith fitted him with a set of custom made clubs. During the 1928-1929 professional golf tournaments, Horton Smith became the leading money-winner while using his new custom club. Kenneth Smith's custom made golf clubs became a tournament sensation and his business quickly grew from that point forward.<sup>15</sup>

Smith is credited with putting science into the art of making golf clubs. He held thirteen patents on various aspects related to the construction and production of golf clubs. In 1926 he developed

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<sup>13</sup> Rhodes, Kenneth Smith Golf Clubs, Kansas Historic Resources Inventory Reconnaissance Form, November 4 1999.

<sup>14</sup> Jim Edward Ladesich, "Kenneth Smith Golf Clubs," *Kansas! Magazine*, Volume 2, 1975, 7-9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

the first “swinging weight scale” and later he developed a perforated, non-slip grip that has been imitated by many other manufactures. Kenneth Smith was granted Patent No. 1,997,889 in April 1935 (his first) for a method of manufacturing golf clubs.<sup>16</sup> Smith is also responsible for the design of the leather hoods used to protect the finish on wooden clubs.<sup>17</sup>

Sixty craftsmen were employed at the Smith factory in Lenexa. Several were second generation club makers who followed their fathers into the trade. His employees were staunchly loyal, many having spent eighteen to forty years in their trade. Several were local farmers that lived in the vicinity. Their ability to succeed in the craft of constructing hand made clubs came from their understanding of hand tools, as well as machinery. Art Nunnink, whose family had been a previous owner of the Garrett house, was one of Smith’s oldest employees, along with Walt Wiebke and Glennon Riley. All three men worked for Smith prior to the opening of his factory in Shawnee c. 1935.<sup>18</sup>

Kenneth Smith was a research and development expert that never relied on expensive advertising to promote his product. The quality that went into each of his clubs did the promoting for him. Name recognition came by way of his customers who ranged from golf pros to golf lovers. His customers came from many walks of life. Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, actors Bing Crosby, Clark Gable and Mickey Rooney, as well as sports figures like Babe Zaharias, and Mickey Mantle all used Smith Golf Clubs. In addition, Smith’s golf clubs have international recognition from Japanese executives who admire the quality in craftsmanship to the King of Morocco. Bob Hope did not get into Kenneth Smith Clubs until years after Kenneth Smith’s death but he was so pleased with the product that he gave up his Ping brand clubs and made a commercial to promote the Smith product.<sup>19</sup>

Kenneth Smith died in July 12, 1977. Besides being a world recognized golf club manufacturer, Smith was also an active civic leader in Kansas City. He served on the board of directors for a

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<sup>16</sup> Ladesich, 7-9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Jerome Maag, “Hope Joins the Club: Many VIPS use locally-made golf clubs” *The Journal Herald* 6 February 1991, 2A.

variety of foundations including the Arthritis Foundation of Kansas City, St. Luke's Hospital and Johnson County United Way. Bill Carlucci, a master craftsman in Connecticut, continues to custom manufacture golf clubs under the Kenneth Smith Golf Club brand. The company that now holds exclusive rights is Nutmeg Golf, LLC, of Connecticut.

### **Summary**

The Kenneth Smith Residence and Golf Club Factory Complex, 12925 W. 71<sup>st</sup> Street, Shawnee, Kansas, appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A, B and C in the areas of ARCHITECTURE, INVENTION, and INDUSTRY. ARCHITECTURE: The historic property includes a residence (dating back to 1869) that employed a design and construction technique popular in England during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This early settlement house, also influenced by many early housing styles including the New England and Tidewater South Traditions (pre-railroad) and the National Folk style, generally remains intact from the original design by John Garrett. Improvements to the property were minimal until Kenneth Smith purchased the site in 1933. The associated buildings, including the Arts and Crafts influenced factory, are part of the Smith complex and were built so that Smith could live and work in one location. INVENTION and INDUSTRY: Kenneth Smith's golf club manufacturing plant is the oldest custom golf club manufacturing facility in America. With more than a dozen patents to his name, Kenneth Smith's contribution to the research, development and manufacturing of highly crafted clubs has left a legacy that continues to be influential in the manufacture of custom golf clubs as an industry standard. Smith was granted at least thirteen patents for his clubs while he was living and working at this historic complex.

The property could also be significant in the area of EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT due to the fact that the Whitedeer family, members of the Shawnee Indian tribe of Kansas Territorial lands, originally settled the property now owned by the Smith estate. An archeological examination of the site may be warranted, if not already completed.

The site includes a residence and detached garage, a manufacturing facility, a secondary residence and seven ancillary buildings including barns and storage areas. Two sizable ponds are also included as part of the property.

**Statement of Impact**

Any modifications or razing of the primary buildings of the Kenneth Smith complex, including the main residence and the manufacturing facility, would result in an adverse effect on the historic properties.

## **Timeline of Property Transfers:**

### **NE quarter of the NW quarter of Sec. 22, Twp. 12, Range 24**

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The following timeline was developed from information taken from the Numerical Index for Johnson County Records. Property Deeds Books beginning in 1867 through 1950 were researched for the data herein.

**Prior to 1867:** This parcel of land was part of land tracts owned by the Shawnee Indians of Kansas Territory. All sales transaction had to be approved through the office of the Secretary of Indian Affairs in Washington D.C.

#### **February 1867:**

Jesse Whitedeer deeded 80 acres of the North half of the Northwest quarter of Section 22, in Township 12 south of range 24 to John Garrett and his wife Anna. Transaction of title transfer was completed in 1869.

#### **December 1871:**

John and Anna Garrett sold the NW quarter to their son Charles Garrett.

**November 1901:** John Garrett sold the remaining forty acres of the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 22 in Township 12 range 24 to Severn and Silvia Nunnink for \$1,800.

**1922/23:** Sylvia Nunnink, widow, sold the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 22 in Township 12 range 24 to the Hamler family.

**1925:** The Hamler's sold the 40 acre NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 22 in Township 12 range 24 property to L. A. Petit

**1933:** L. A. Petit sold 20 acres of the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 22 in Township 12 range 24 property to Kenneth Smith for one-dollar. Details of this transaction could not be found.

**1934:** L. A. Pettit sold the remaining 20 acres of the NE corner of the NW quarter of Section 22 in Township 12 range 24 to Kenneth and Eva Smith. Again, the property sold for one-dollar; no discernible details could be found.

Kenneth Smith continued to purchase surrounding property as it became available until he owned more than 160 acres along 71<sup>st</sup> Street. Most of Section 22 Twp 12 Range 24 belonged to Kenneth Smith by 1970.

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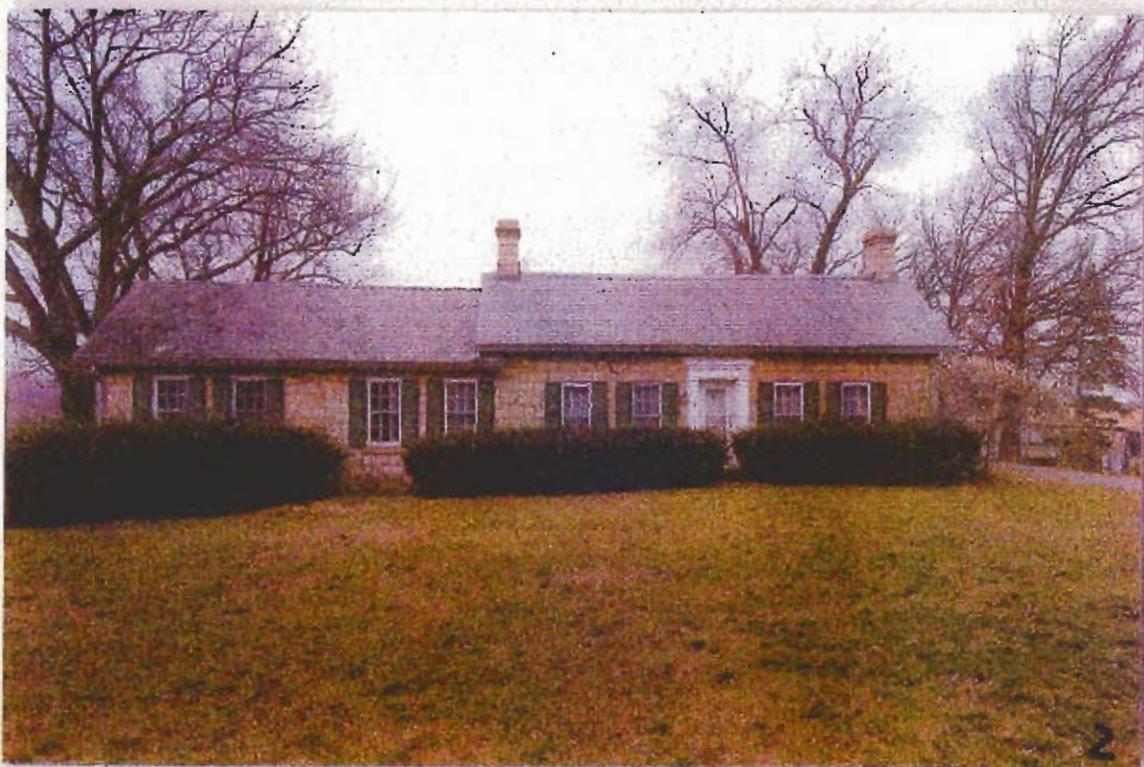
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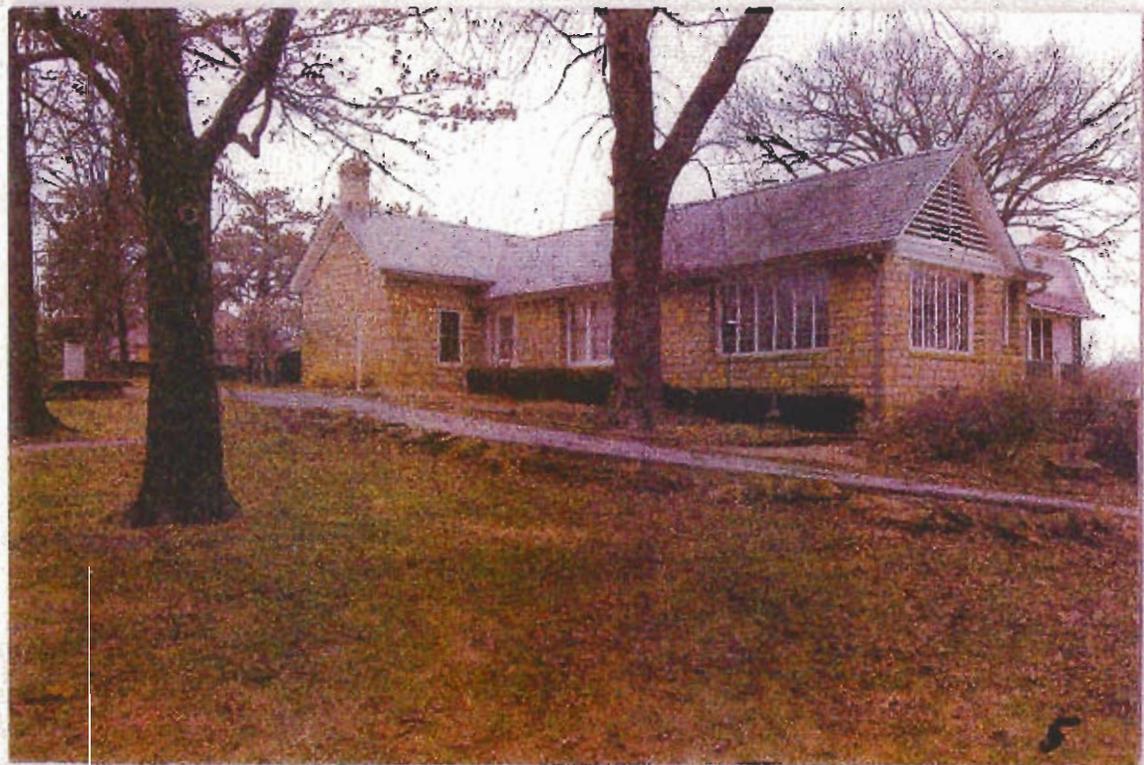
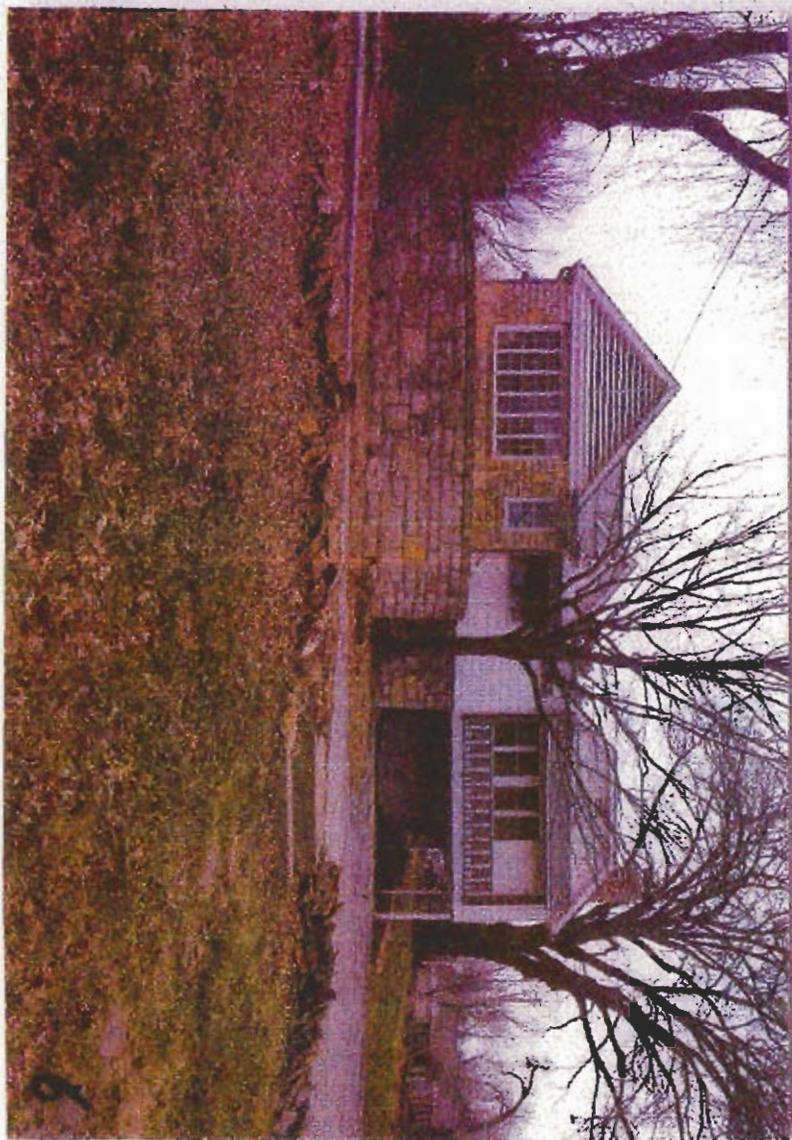
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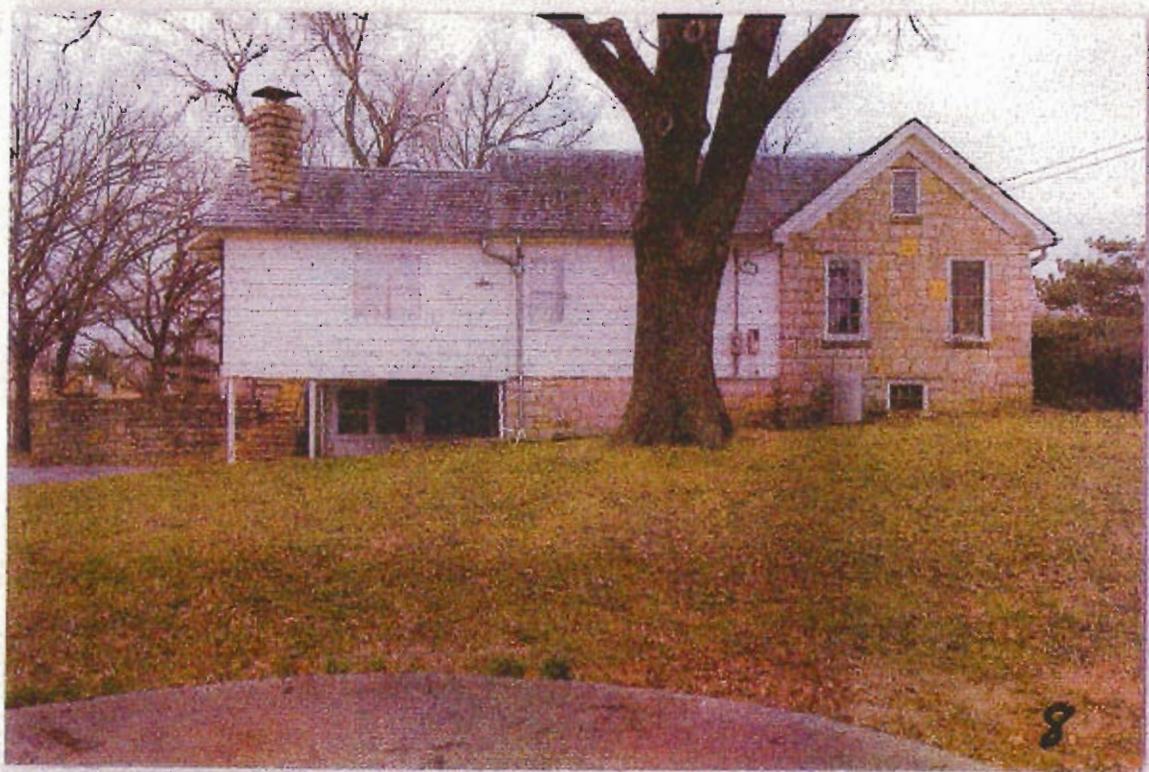
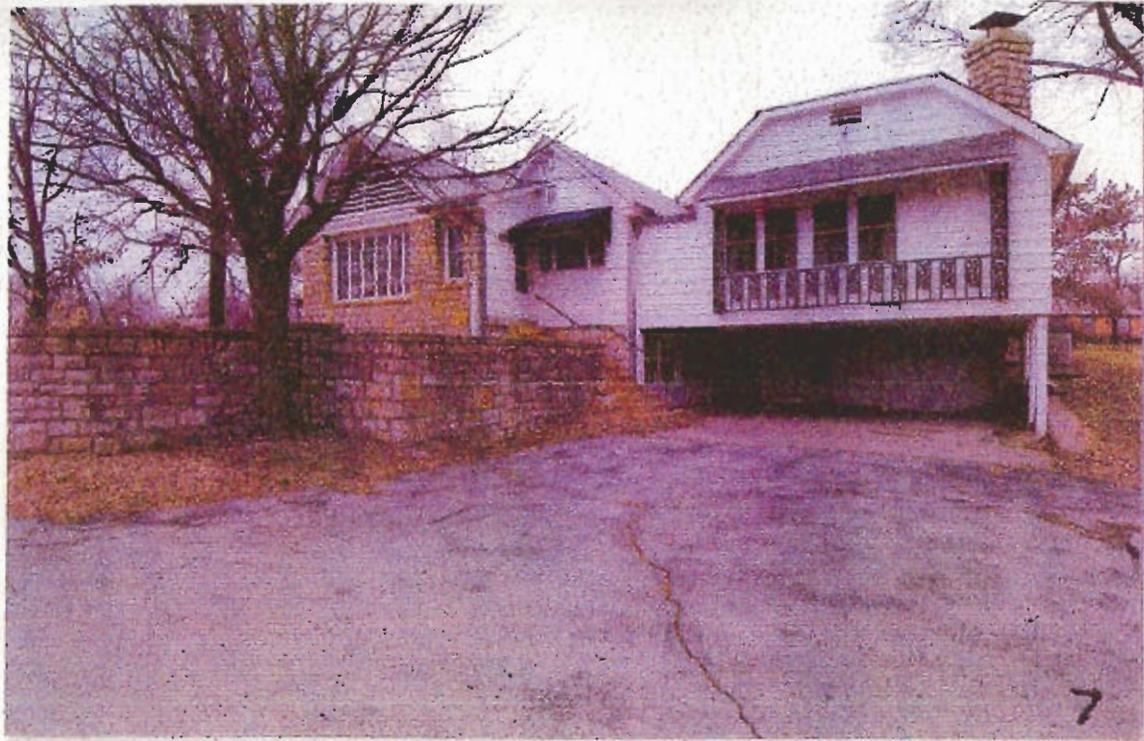
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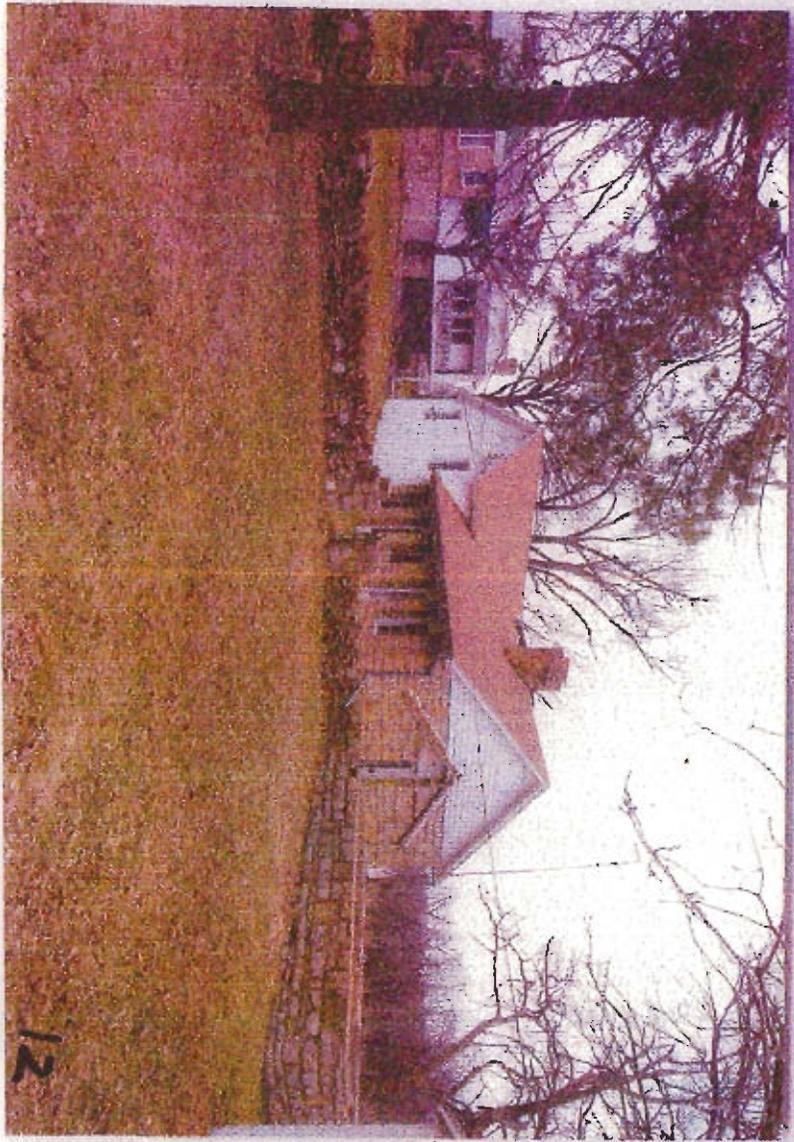
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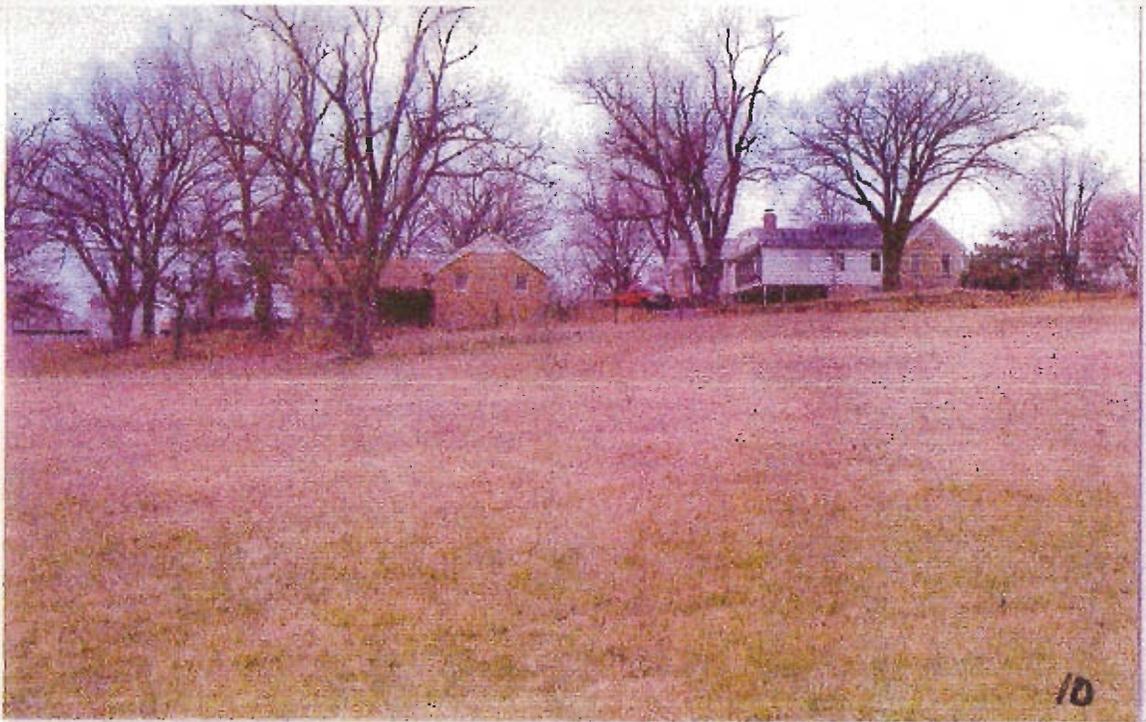




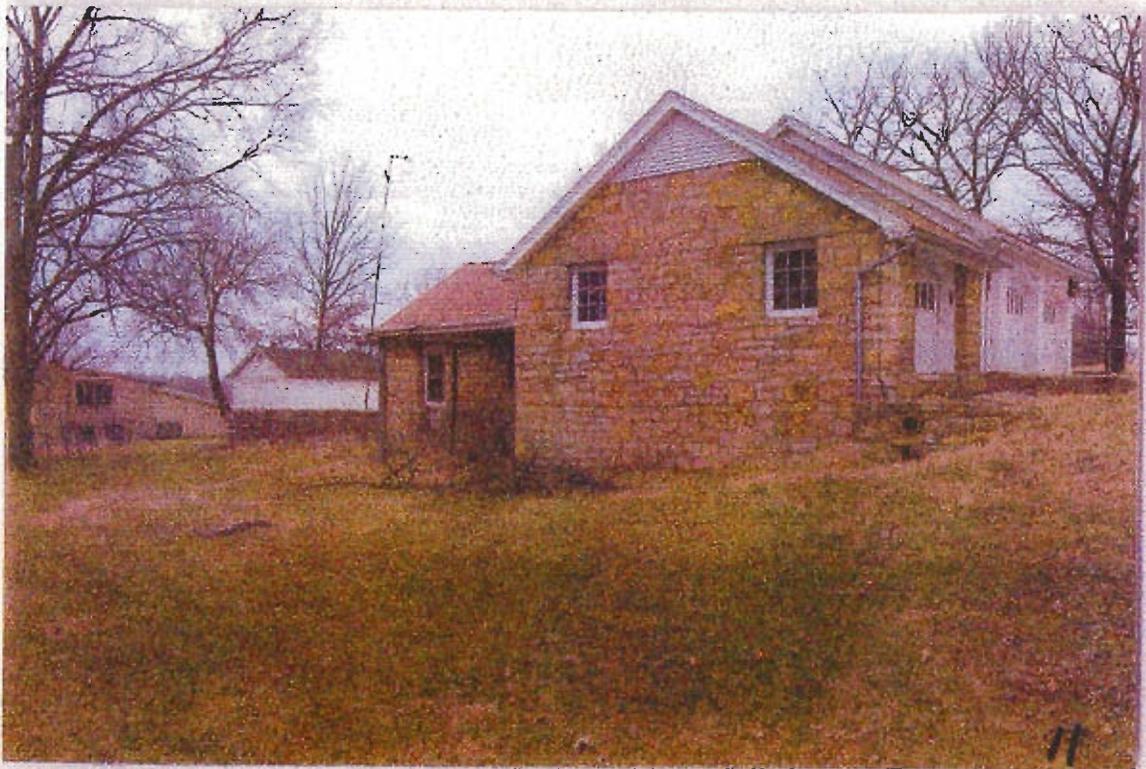




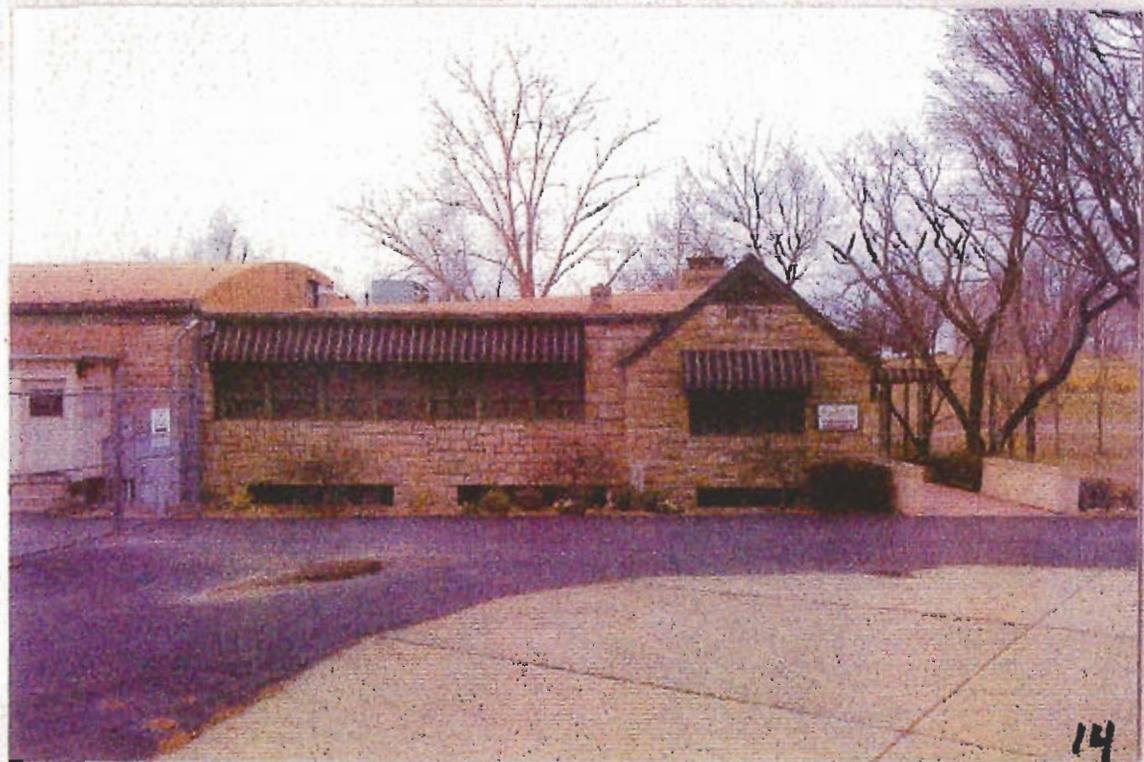
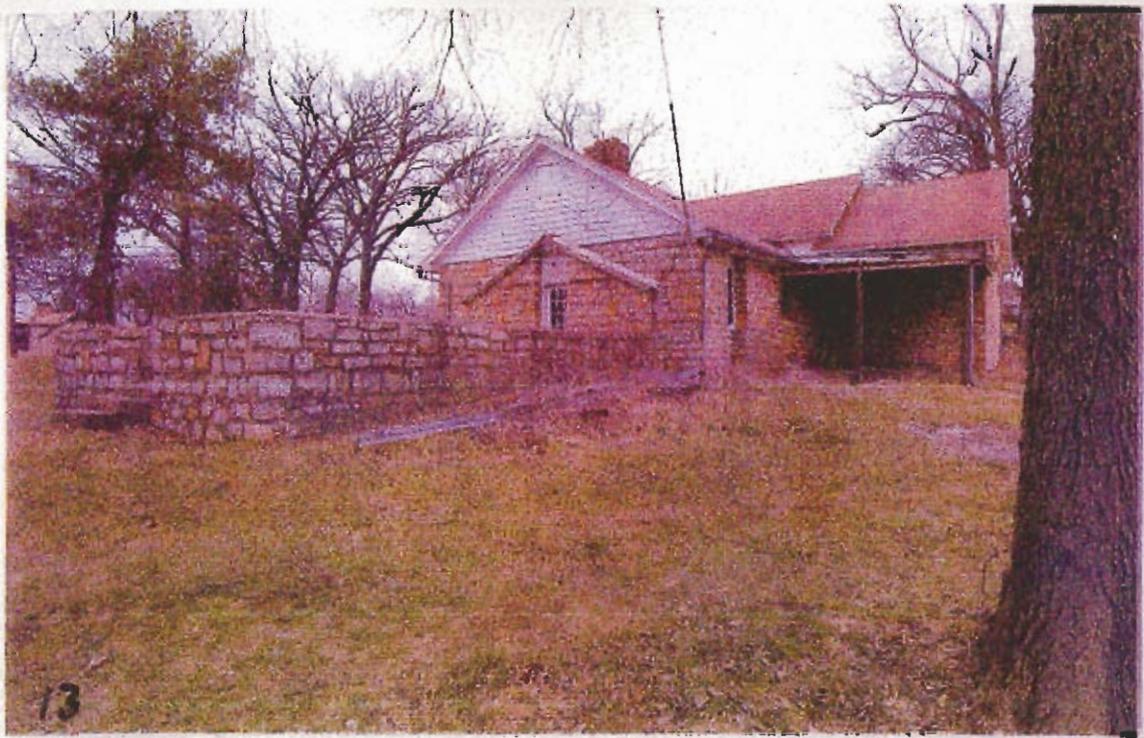
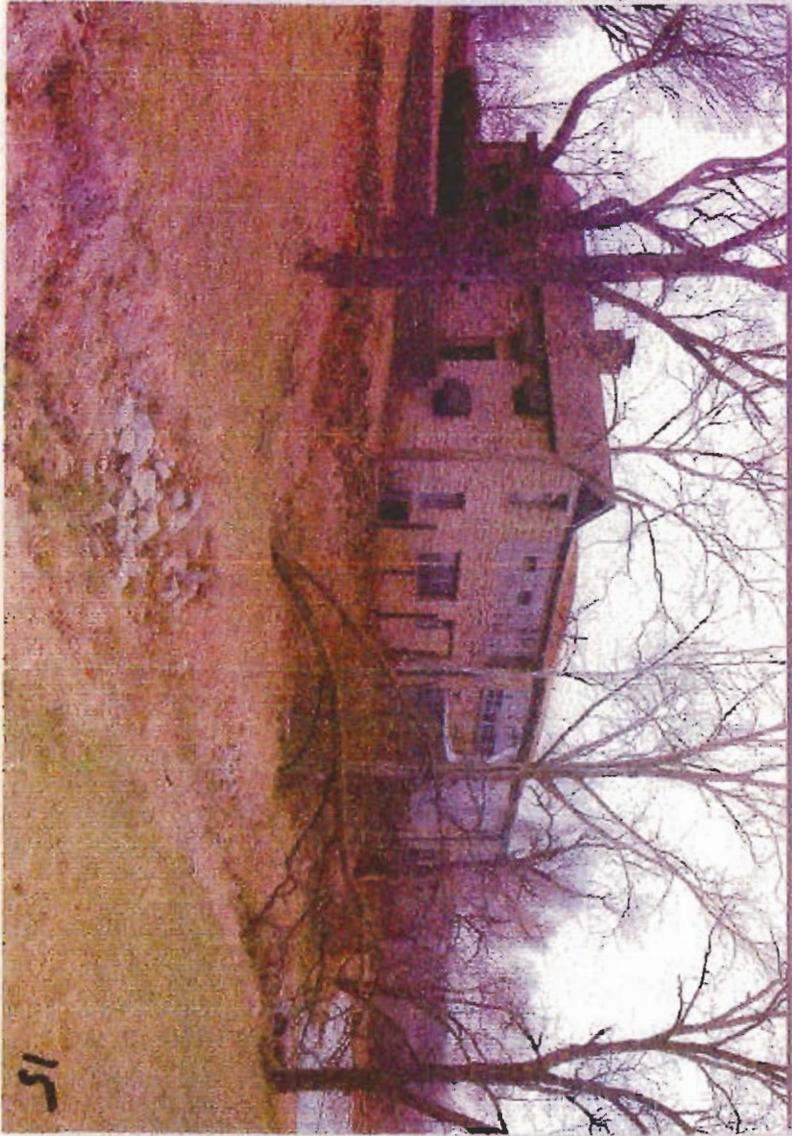
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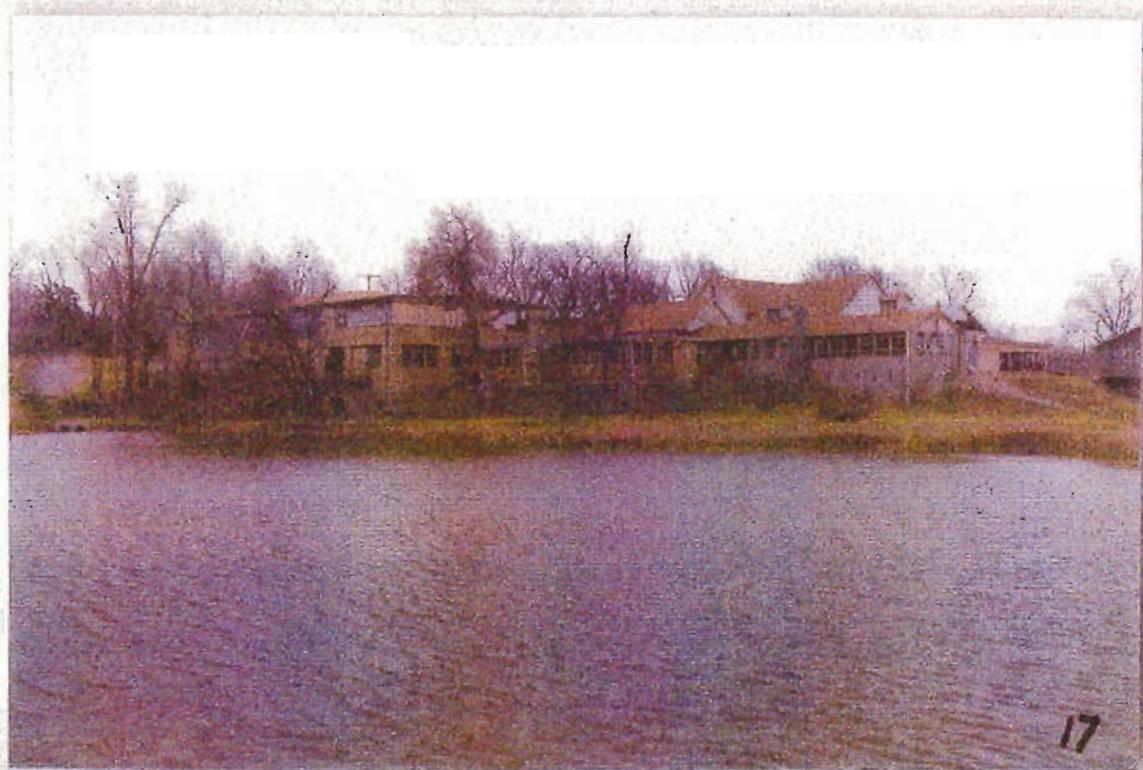
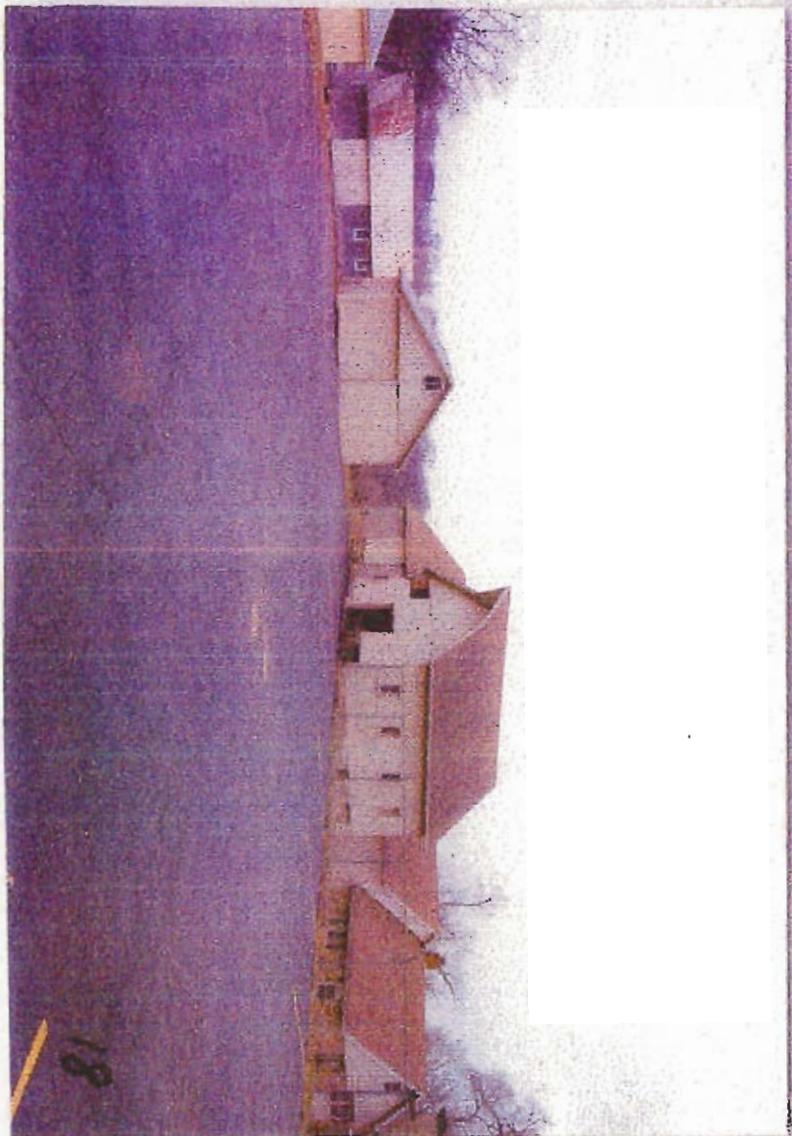


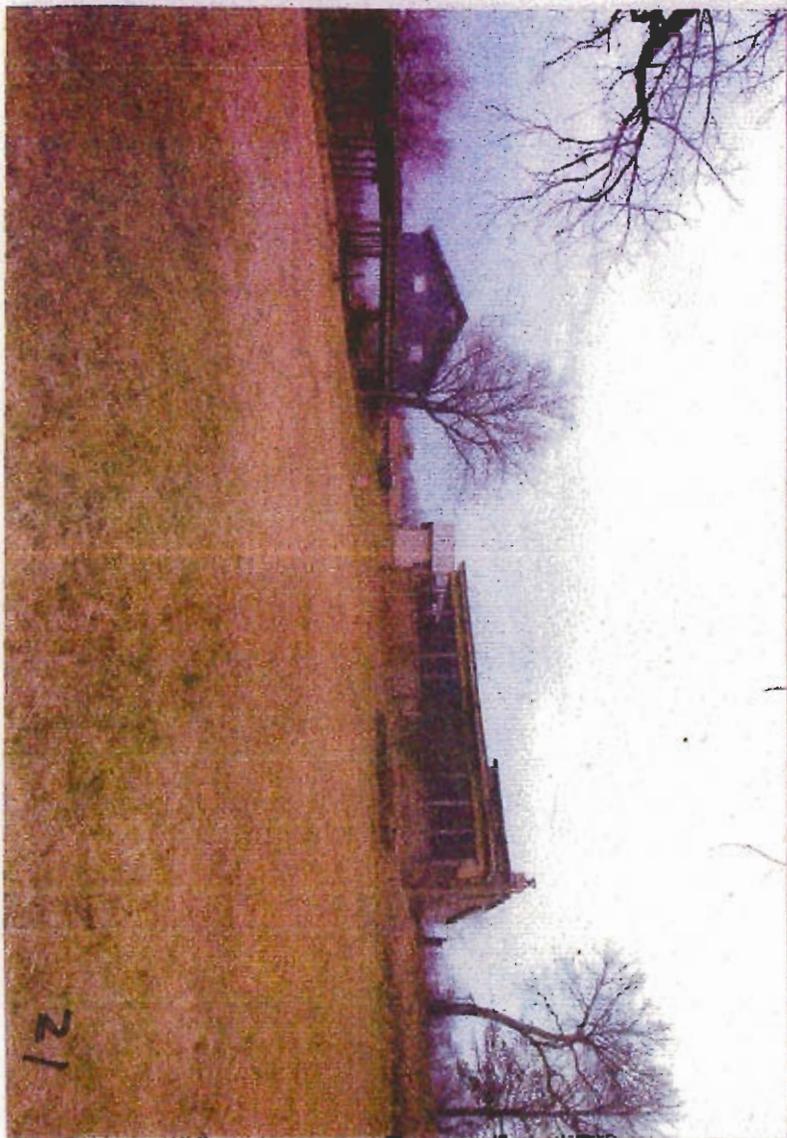
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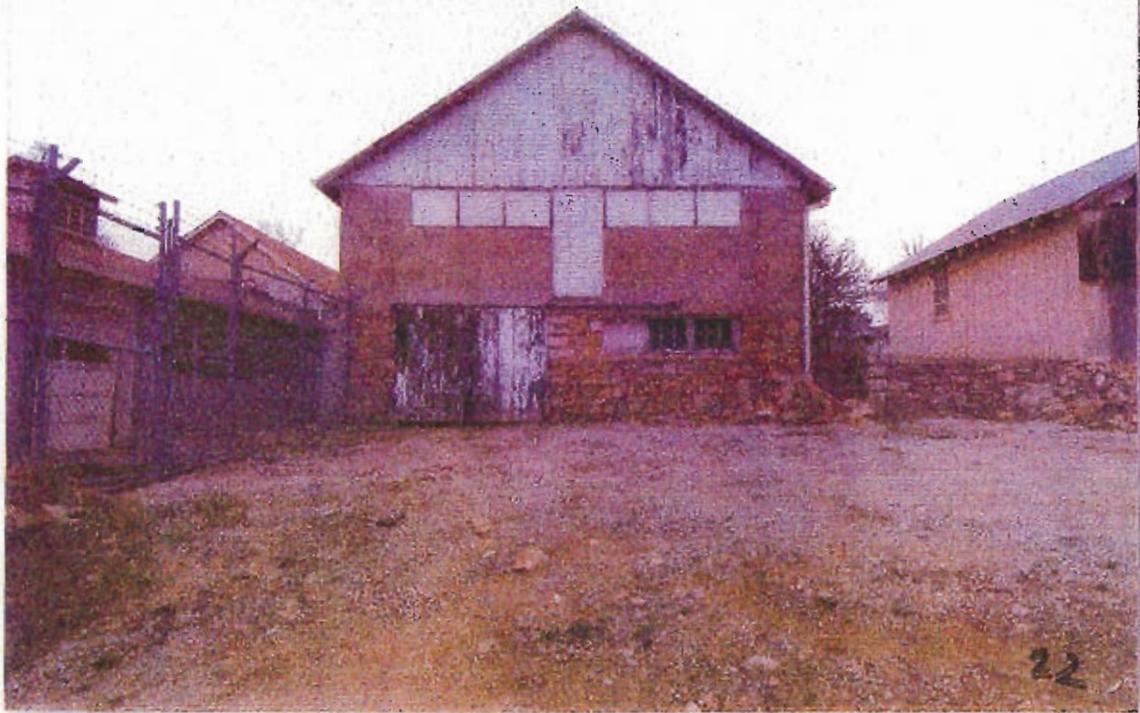
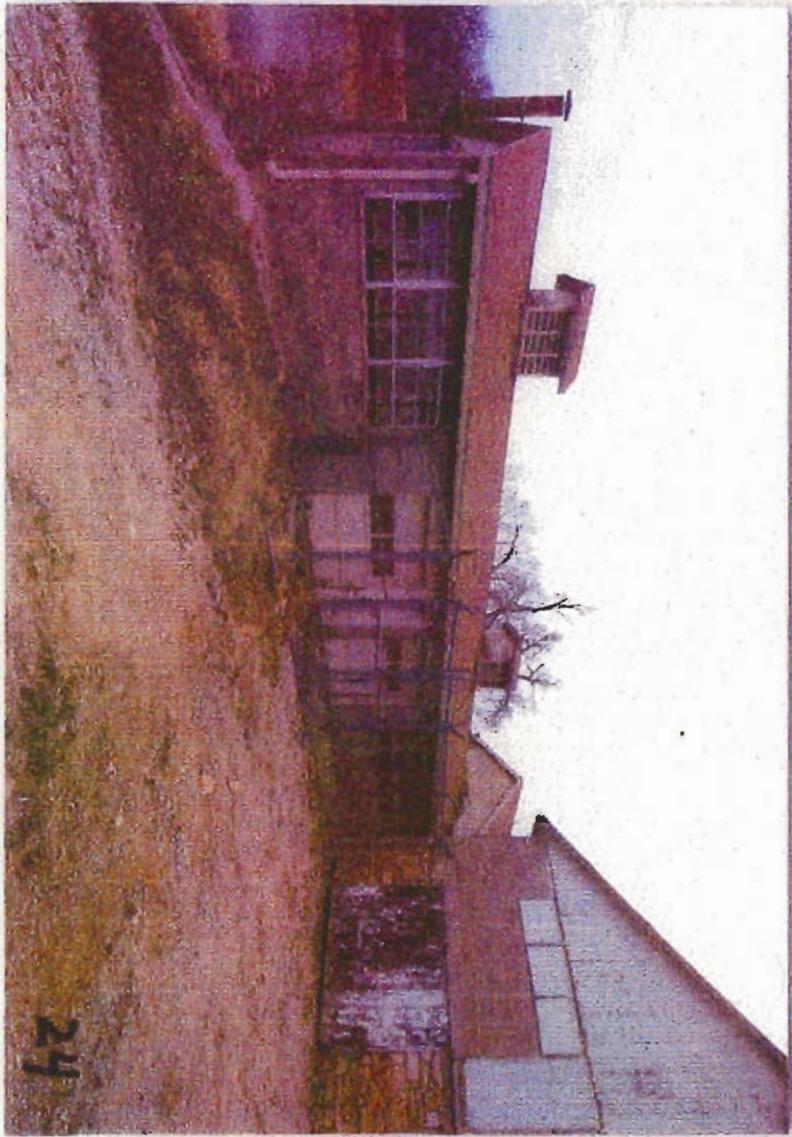
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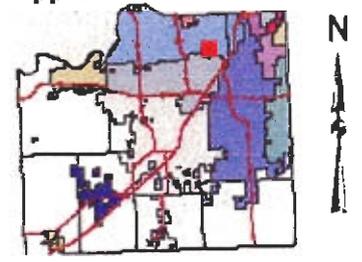


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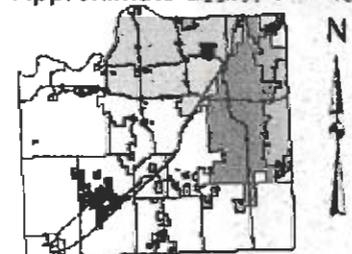
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Approximate Scale: 1" = 131'



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SECTION 22-12-24

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