

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

M- 35-41

For NPS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

Glen Echo Amusement Park

historic

and or common

Glen Echo Park Historic District

2. Location

street & number

MacArthur Boulevard

not for publication

city, town Glen Echo

vicinity of

state

Maryland

code 24

county Montgomery

code 031

3. Classification

Category

☒ district
☐ building(s)
☐ structure
☐ site
☐ object

Ownership

☒ public
☐ private
☐ both

Public Acquisition

☒ in process
☐ being considered

Status

☐ occupied
☐ unoccupied
☐ work in progress

Accessible

☒ yes: restricted
☐ yes: unrestricted
☐ no

Present Use

☐ agriculture
☐ commercial
☒ educational
☒ entertainment
☐ government
☐ industrial
☐ military☐ museum
☒ park
☐ private residence
☐ religious
☐ scientific
☐ transportation
☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name

National Capital Region, National Park Service

street & number

1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.

city, town

Washington, D.C.

vicinity of

state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number

city, town

Rockville, Maryland

state

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Existing Conditions

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

date October 1981

☒ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

George Washington Memorial Parkway

city, town

McLean

state Virginia

7. Description

M.3S-41

Condition

☐ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☒ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nominated district, which was determined to be eligible in 1982, includes 8 frame, masonry, stone, and stucco structures in a park setting. The district consists of 9 contributing elements including 2 previously listed properties (Chautauqua Tower and the Carrousel) and 7 non-contributing properties. These structures are arranged in an irregular plan facing into the central area. Although numerous small amusement structures and several larger features such as the roller coaster have been removed, the district represents an amusement park installation with elements dating from the 1890s through 1940s.

A. Chautauqua Tower - Built in 1891-1892, is a circular structure of rough native stone, approximately 34-feet in diameter and three-story high, capped by an 11-sided roof of steep pitch with a flagpole rising from its peak.

B. Carrousel - Consists of a suspended stage and canopy divided into 18 bays or segments. It contains 52 carved wooden animals in 3 concentric rings around the stage and 2 decorated circus chariots with fixed wheels, each having two seats. The animals include 39 horses, 4 ostriches, 4 rabbits, and a single deer, tiger, giraffe, and lion, all bearing fanciful saddles with colorful saddle blankets and harnesses. The carrousel and its accompanying Wurlitzer Band Organ are housed in a 12-sided building with segmented domed roof.

C. Bumper Car Pavilion - Dating from 1923, this is the oldest surviving amusement park structure at Glen Echo other than the carrousel and its house. This frame structure measures 55' by 95'. The roof forms a broad bell-shaped curve at the gable ends, which are decorated with open latticework, and a pediment centered on the front or long side upon which is a painting of a bumper car. The sides are open above low fencing. None of the contents remain. The structure is in fair condition. The steel plated floor is original. This is one of the first bumper car rides in a park.

D. Remnants of the Crystal Pool - Designed by Alexander, Becker, and Schoeppe of Philadelphia, who specialized in amusement park pool designs, the pool was erected on the site of the former Derby Racer in 1931. Measuring 150' by 250' overall, the structure contained three swim areas, a sand "beach", and lockers for the 3,000 swimmers it was designed to accommodate at a time. The concrete pool and especially the frame locker room along the northwest side became severely deteriorated and a safety hazard. In 1981, a management decision was made to demolish the pool. Under the Memorandum of Agreement negotiated with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation the National Park Service agreed to retain the art deco entrance pylon and part of the retaining wall of the pool, as well as adjoining first aid building and restroom building. These remaining features constitute Registered elements of the former pool. Pools were typical of amusement park operations of that period. The entrance pylon,

M.35-41

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

the first aid building, remnants of the pool wall and the buried filled-in pool remain and contribute significance.

E. Spanish Ballroom - This large structure, designed by Edward Schoeppe of Philadelphia, was constructed in 1933. The stuccoed walls, entry tower, projecting wood viga ends, and roof tiles simulate Spanish architecture. The building measures 90' by 145' and contains a 7,500 square foot dance floor designed to accommodate 1800 dancers. A highly decorated interior combines art deco and Spanish motifs. The art deco decoration of the stage is noteworthy. The ballroom hosted big name bands of the 1930's and World War II era. An original terrazzo floor leads through an arcade into the ballroom. Some evidence indicates that an earlier ballroom may have been remodeled to produce the existing structure. Sometime during the history of the structure, the facade was remodeled into a "Jungleland" amusement feature. In recent years the badly deteriorated "Jungleland" remains were removed and the facade was partially restored to its 1933 ballroom appearance.

F. Administration Building (Arcade) - These 2 structures, built in 1940, are joined and present a continuous facade along their west sides. The combined buildings measure approximately 340' by 70'. The surfaces are predominantly stuccoed. Two lighted towers bearing stylized vertical stripes flank a theater entrance in the middle of the arcade; shorter towers are on either side. Three projecting concentric medallions occupy the panel over the former shooting gallery to the left (north) of the theater. A low banded cornice runs along the facade, and a flat roof with banded edges on columns between the northeast end of the administration building and the Chautauqua Tower served as the covered entryway to the amusement park. The overall stylistic influence is art moderne. The rear of the arcade is exposed brick. Decorating the one storied front extension of the administration building are stylized lamps on the roof deck and a moderne rendering of POPCORN to advertise what was sold below.

Part of the mechanism, back drop, and targets of the shooting gallery are extant.

G. Cuddle Up Pavilion - Built in 1947, this open structure consists of a steel-framed roof on stuccoed piers. The roof, measuring 45' by 75', is a flat ellipse with a broad band edge, reflecting the art moderne influence of the arcade and park entrance. The amusement ride, once sheltered here, is gone.

H. Amusement Park Maintenance Shop (yellow barn) - This two story frame building abuts the Chautauqua Tower and provides interior access to the Tower. The two story wooden section adjacent to the Tower has balconies, one facing the inside, and one facing the outside of the park. Attached to the two story section is a one story long extension. A stone masonry wall faces the northeast side of the building. This stone wall is all that remains of a stone building constructed in 1891 adjacent to the Chautauqua

M:35-41

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page 3

Tower, to house a series of shops catering to the Glen Echo Chautauqua participants. During the period of 1897-1910, the stone arcade was converted to a small bowling alley for the amusement park. In 1914, the stone arcade burned, except for the remaining back wall and a wooden barn-like structure was built in its place. The stone wall was incorporated into this wooden structure. From 1914-1928, the yellow barn and the second floor of the stone tower served as the residence of the Glen Echo park manager. From 1914-1968 part of the yellow barn served as maintenance shop for the amusement park. During National Park Service ownership to 1982, the barn has served as a woodworking shop and pottery shop. Except for the stone wall, the entire structure is frame. The lower floor consists of large open room, hallway to the Chautauqua Tower, and a small storage room. Four enclosed rooms and two covered balconies are on the second floor.

I. Picnic Grove - Although not a structure, the picnic grove in the area between the carrousel, ballroom, and the bumper car pavilion is an element of the historic environment evident in plans and aerial photographs of the 1930s. Company picnics were an important part of the amusement park business.

There are other structures some dating from the historic period located in the National Register Historic District. These predominantly service related structures do not contribute to the primary historical and architectural significance of Glen Echo Park:

A. Comfort Station - This two story brick structure with gable roof is utilitarian in design and use. It houses public restrooms on the upper floor and maintenance activities on the first floor.

B. Yurts - These conical frame structures were placed at Glen Echo in the mid-1970s, to house park craft activities.

C. Ice House - This circa 1920s structure is currently used as a boiler room.

D. Horse Barn - This circa 1920s structure formerly housed park electrical operations. The adjacent office trailer is temporary.

E. Incinerator Building - This one story stone structure formerly was used for burning trash. The stone walls remain from a two story caretaker's residence of the Chautauqua era.

F. Maintenance Shed - This open sided steel structure dates from the 1950s and formerly housed "kiddie rides".

G. Hall of Mirrors - This circa 1950s concrete block structure is of one-story, flat roofed design and once housed park amusements. It is currently used for park dance activities.

8. Significance

M:35-41

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

Specific dates 1891-1892/1899-1940s Builder/Architect Edwin and Edward Baltzley/Glen Echo/ Washington Railway & Electric Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

(See Item 8-1/8-5)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

M:35-41

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 1

Glen Echo Park is significant as the site of the late nineteenth century Chautauqua movement at Glen Echo, Maryland; as a rare surviving regional example of an early twentieth century amusement park of architectural and historical significance and as a major commercial and recreational facility for area residents and visitors from its establishment in 1899 on the site of the short-lived chautauqua until its closing in 1968. Although the rides and amusements are gone, sufficient major buildings and structures of this fragile kind of resource remain to convey the visual environment of the amusement park as it existed in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.

The Chautauqua movement, so called from the first assembly of its adherents on the shore of Lake Chautauqua, New York, in 1874, was an effort to democratize learning within an ecumenical Protestant religious framework by bringing the culture of the well-to-do to the masses. By 1891, the movement had expanded from its permanent home base to 52 more modest assemblies conducting 2-weeks summer programs of educational lectures, classes, and entertainments in tents. The idea caught hold in Washington, D.C. where several groups formed a Chautauqua Union to plan programs for the area.

Coinciding with this local flowering of the Chautauqua movement were the plans of Edwin Baltzley, Philadelphia real estate promoter, and his brother Edward of Washington for a residential and resort development to be known as "Glen Echo-on-the-Potomac" between Cabin John Creek and Sycamore Island, northwest of Washington. An elaborate rustic resort "cafe" of rough cedar logs, the "Potowmack," was opened to the public in July 1980 but succumbed to fire that November. A giant stone hotel evocative of a Rhineland Castle was promised in Glen Echo publicity but was never realized.

Seeing the Chautauqua idea as a potential enhancement of their development, the Baltzleys on March 24, 1891, deed 80 acres to the "National Chautauqua of Glen Echo." The National Chautauqua was incorporated by 42 prominent citizens including John Wesley Powell, George Peters, Arthur B. Cropley, and the Baltzleys themselves "to promote liberal and practical education, especially among the masses of the people; their several pursuits and professions in life, and to fit them for the duties which devolve upon them as members of society."

Construction began quickly on two principal structures--the Amphitheater and the Hall of Philosophy--and on the stone tower, archway, and adjoining buildings forming the gateway to the campus. The Amphitheater and Hall of Philosophy (both demolished) were designed in rustic style by Theophilus Parsons Chandler of Philadelphia, architect of the Baltzley house and the cafe. The tower, listed in a separate individual nomination, housed administrative offices and mounted bells from the McShane foundry of Baltimore. It was designed by Victor Mindelef, a local architect.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

M:35-41

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

Clara Barton, founder of the American Red Cross, became president of the Women's Executive Committee of the National Chautauqua of Glen Echo, formed to foster the "Advancement of Woman, Improving and Enlarging her Scope of Usefulness." Miss Barton herself acquired adjoining property at Glen Echo in 1891 and built what would later become her residence and American Red Cross headquarters. Listed separately as the Clara Barton House on the National Register, the Red Cross headquarters was also designed in the rustic style. Its original rough stone facade, removed in 1897, except for corner towers, matched the character of the Chautauqua buildings nearby.

The assembly opened in June 1891 with the buildings still unfinished, although the Amphitheater was sufficiently complete to accommodate the large dedication crowd. The array of Chautauqua programs was well attended by several hundred people until August. But this first successful season proved to be the last. In late August, Dr. Henry Spencer, head of the Chautauqua Business School, died of pneumonia. Rumor spread that he had contracted malaria, making people reluctant to visit the area. This dampened residential lot sales and cut the cash flow necessary to support expansion. With the area's image thus tainted, the National Chautauqua of Glen Echo was doomed (Except for the original assembly, which remains active on Lake Chautauqua to this day, the Chautauqua movement evolved to a popular traveling format).

Meanwhile, parks which presented the public mechanical rides involving the visitor in direct participation gained increased popularity around the turn of the century. Simple merry-go-rounds and forerunners of the ferris wheel graced county fairs from the mid nineteenth century. In 1884, the "switch-back," an antecedent to the modern roller coaster was built at Coney Island, New York. In 1893, at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the ferris wheel developed by George W. Ferris, appeared as did the Midway. Coney Island led the way in mechanical amusements, two years after the Columbian Exposition, the first two Coney Island Parks, Steeplechase and Sea Lion were in operation. In 1903, Luna Park, the most fanciful of Coney Island Park architecture, opened to be copied all across the country. The St. Louis fair of 1904 popularized the craze for mechanical rides, and amusement parks became a major recreational industry.

The local trolley companies greatly added to the amusement park development. Trolley parks were built usually on a loop track at the end of the trolley line to encourage use of the traction railways during nonwork hours. At first the parks consisted of picnic groves and beer gardens, with theatres for vaudeville acts and a dance hall. But more amusement park owners found that active entertainment, rides, shooting galleries, midways, and penny arcades increased the popularity of their parks. Consequently, in the early part of this century more rides were added to the parks while the vaudeville and theatrical acts eclipsed. Company picnics and organizational outings provided growing crowds for the new mechanical amusement parks, where patrons could escape their urban routine into a world of mechanically induced thrills and fantasy. The

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

M:35-41

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

craze continued on through the 1920s and 1930s with the introduction of public swimming pools and bigger dance halls to accommodate the Big Band era. Rollercoasters became higher and more terrifying. Carrousels became polychromed works of art. Rides like dodgems, skooters, and tilt-a-whirl joined the more traditional ferris wheel. Enterprising amusement park owners tried to add a new ride each year to anticipate jaded public taste.

Surviving World War II, amusement parks continued through the 1950s after the baby boom furnished new park goers. But by the 1960s public taste was turning fickle. Theme parks, originated by Walt Disney's Disneyland in the early 1950s, captured the public taste as Americans began to patronize regional theme parks often many miles out of town foresaking the old local mechanical amusement parks. Still many amusement parks survived, though several were closed by racial disturbances in the 1960s. With the advent of the nostalgia movement of the 1970s, movements came about to save the mechanical amusement parks still in existence.

Glen Echo spent most of its life as a mechanical amusement park owned by the Washington Railway and Electric Company and the Capital Transit Company, which ran trolley services to the site. In 1899, the National Chautauqua property was leased to the Glen Echo company, an amusement park venture. In 1911, the Washington Railway and Electric Company bought Glen Echo and the modern amusement park was built. Leonard B. Schloss was manager of the park. He was a pioneer in the development of the mechanical rides park and under his direction, Glen Echo became very successful. By 1913, a dance hall had been built which was charging 5¢ per dance, and a rollercoaster was constructed. In 1921, the carrousel was built by the firm of Gustav and William Dentzel of Philadelphia. In 1923, the bumper car pavilion was built to house the dodgem bumper car. The structures housing the carrousel and the bumper cars are significant for their late Queen Anne and Shingle Style influenced designed which recall the original architectural styling of the first phase of the amusement park development.

In 1931, the Crystal Pool was built to accommodate 3,000 swimmers; it was one of the largest of the period with 1,500,000 gallons of circulating water. Adjacent to the pool is the Spanish Ballroom, opened in 1933, and which is significant for its Spanish Colonial Revival Style exterior and Art Deco influenced interior. Other Spanish Colonial Revival Style structures, such as the main entrance gates, were later replaced by buildings in more "up-to-date" designs.

Beginning in 1940, construction began on the current entrance canopy, administration building, two cafes, and the arcade building with its distinctive two towers. The large complex, which defines the southwest portion of the district, is significant for its Moderne/Art Deco architectural styling. This was also the last major phase of building construction for the amusement park.

During the 1950s, the park began to decline in use. In 1956, the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

M:35-41

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 4

amphitheater was deliberately burned down by park authorities to make way for a parking lot. In June 1960, pickets protested the park's policy of segregation. As a result of public attention to Civil rights issues, Glen Echo was opened on March 31, 1961 to Blacks for the first time.

In 1968, the Federal government acquired the defunct amusement park in a land exchange to protect the Potomac palisades from threatened adverse development on the property. The National Park Service acquired administrative responsibility and has sponsored a range of recreational and educational activities at the site, continuing in a modern fashion the original Chautauqua ideal which led to its initial development. Its public use continues to evolve, and the old amusement park facilities have lent themselves well to artists and sculpture studios, children's theatre, folk dancing, writing clinics and a variety of cultural programs. For the purpose of this nomination, the significance of the park is historically designated as the Chautauqua and amusement park eras. Its significance as a local public cultural facility administered by the National Park Service continues to evolve.

9 Major Bibliographical References

- Griffin, Al Step Right Up Folks Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1974
- Kyriaxi, Gary The Great American Amusement Parks, A Pictorial History
Secaucus, New Jersey: Citadel Press, 1976
- Levy, Benjamin Glen Echo on the Potomac Washington, DC: National Park Service, Division of History, 1980
- Mackintosh, Barry "Chautauqua Tower" Glen Echo Park National Register Nomination Form Washington, DC: National Park Service
- Onosko, Tim Funland U.S.A. New York: Ballantine Books, 1978
- Salisbury, Elwood A. "Evolution of our Industry" The Billboard, 1931
(January 26, 1921) pg. 54 (January 31, 1984) pg. 64-65
- Scott, Gary "Carrousel at Glen Echo Park National Register Nomination Form" Washington, DC: National Park Service, National Capital Region, 1980
- Travers, H.G. "Park Rides and Devices" The Billboard, (March 22, 1913)
pg. 30
- Wilmeth, Don B. Variety Entertainment and Outdoor Amusements, A Reference Guide Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1982
- Evening Star, November 27, 1950
Evening Star, August 21, 1965

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

M:35-41
For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8 & 12 Page 5

Washington Post, June 27, 1966

Personal interview, Richard Flint, Division of Performing Arts, Smithsonian
Institution, June 23, 1983

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this
property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic
Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the
nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance.
The evaluated level of significance is _____ National _____ State _____ Local

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Date _____

Title _____

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approximately 9

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A

1	8
---	---

3	1	4	2	8	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	1	5	1	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

1	8
---	---

3	1	4	4	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	1	4	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

C

1	8
---	---

3	1	4	2	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	1	4	8	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

D

1	8
---	---

3	1	4	1	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	1	4	9	4	5
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

E

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

See boundary as delineated on the attached scaled sketch map

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

state Maryland code _____ county Montgomery code _____

state _____ code _____ county _____ code _____

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gary Scott, Regional Historian, NCR - Bill Brabham, Historian, GWMP

organization National Park Service - NCR date _____

street & number 1100 Ohio Drive, S.W. telephone (202) 426-6660

city or town Washington, D.C. 20242 state _____

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *J. M. H.* 4-5-84

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

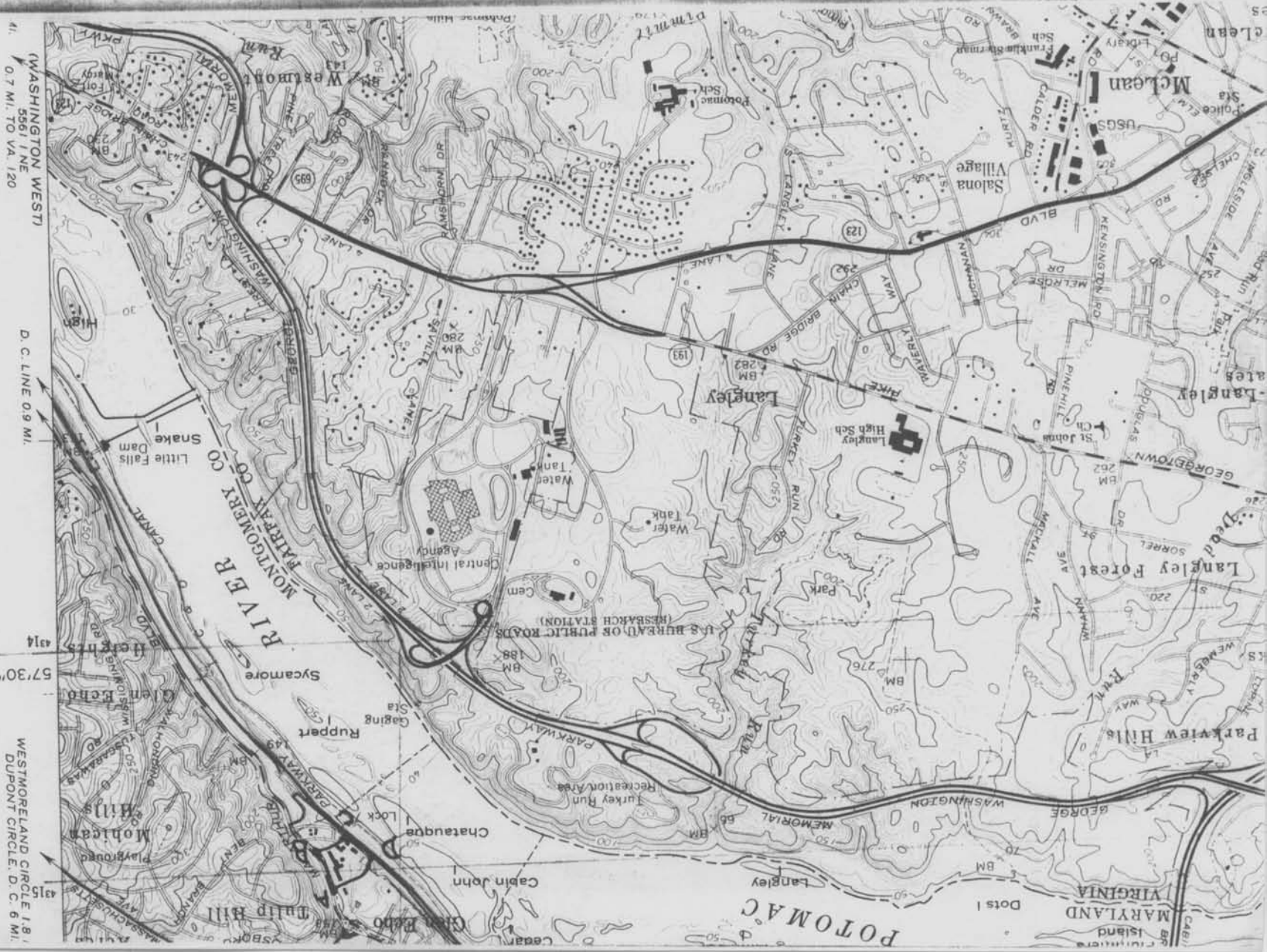
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

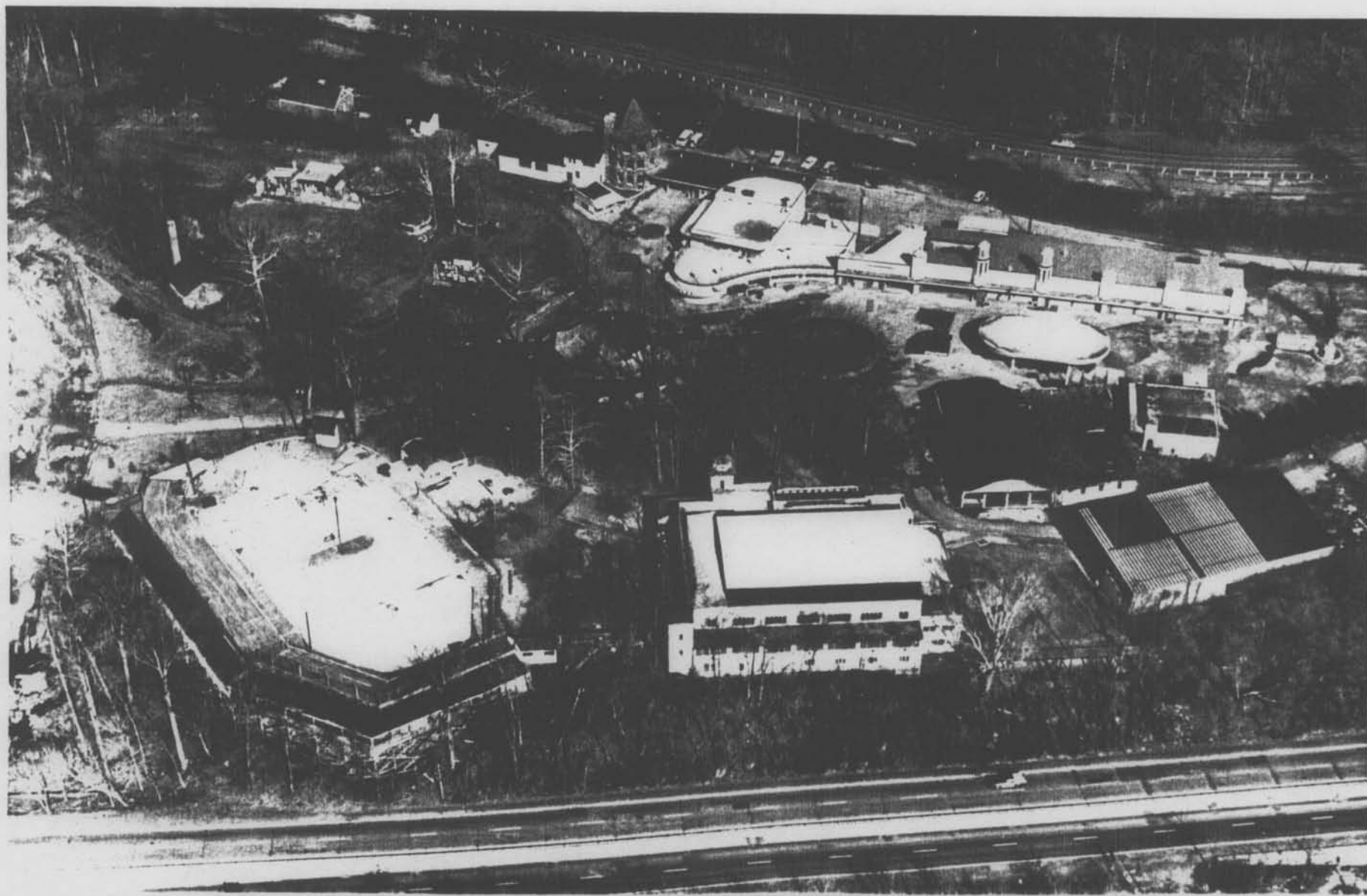


M:35-41

WESTMORELAND CIRCLE 1.8
DUPONT CIRCLE D.C. 6 MI.

Glen Echo Park Historic Distri
A 18 314280 4315100 B 18 314
G 18 314270 4314860 D 18 314

M:35-41



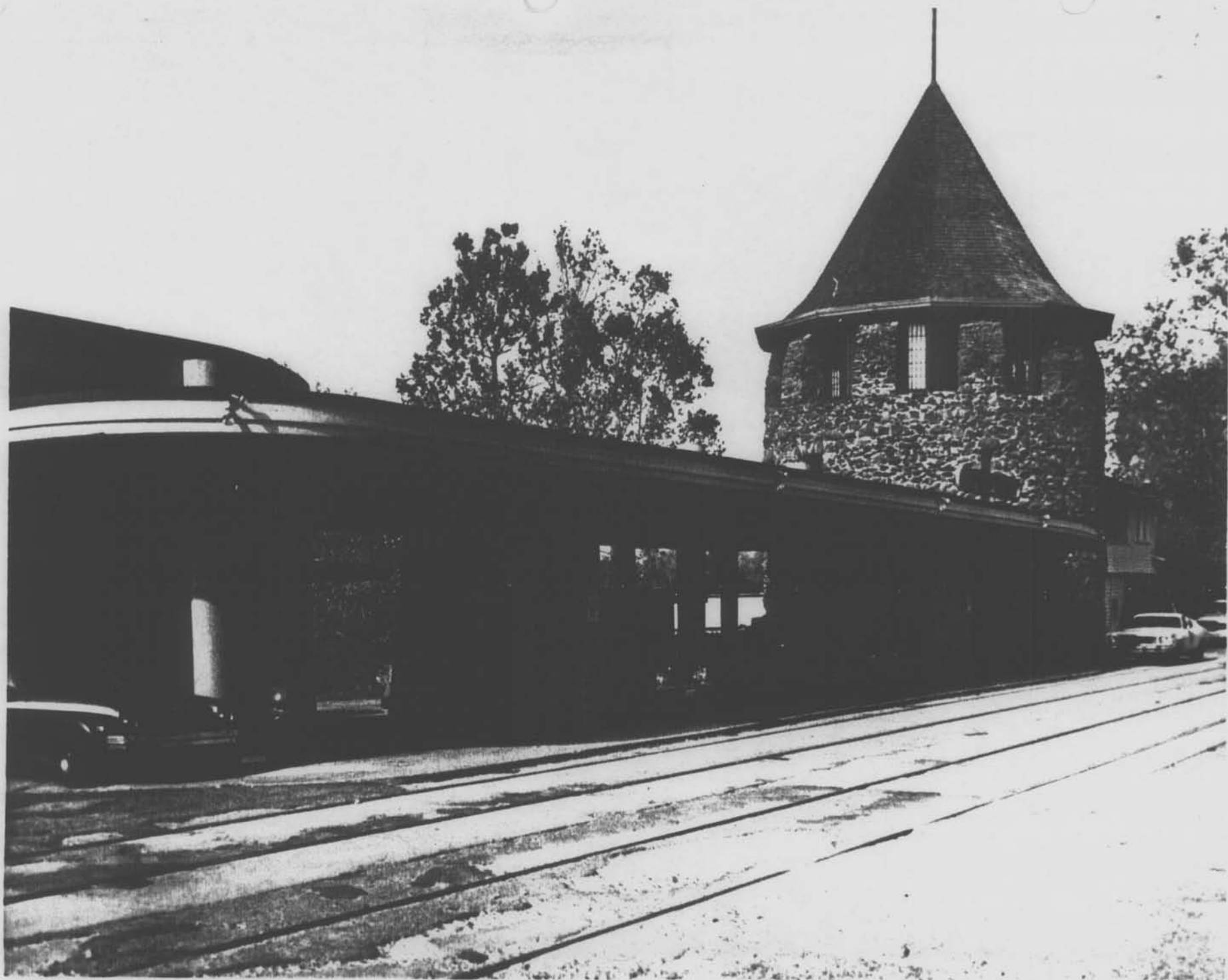


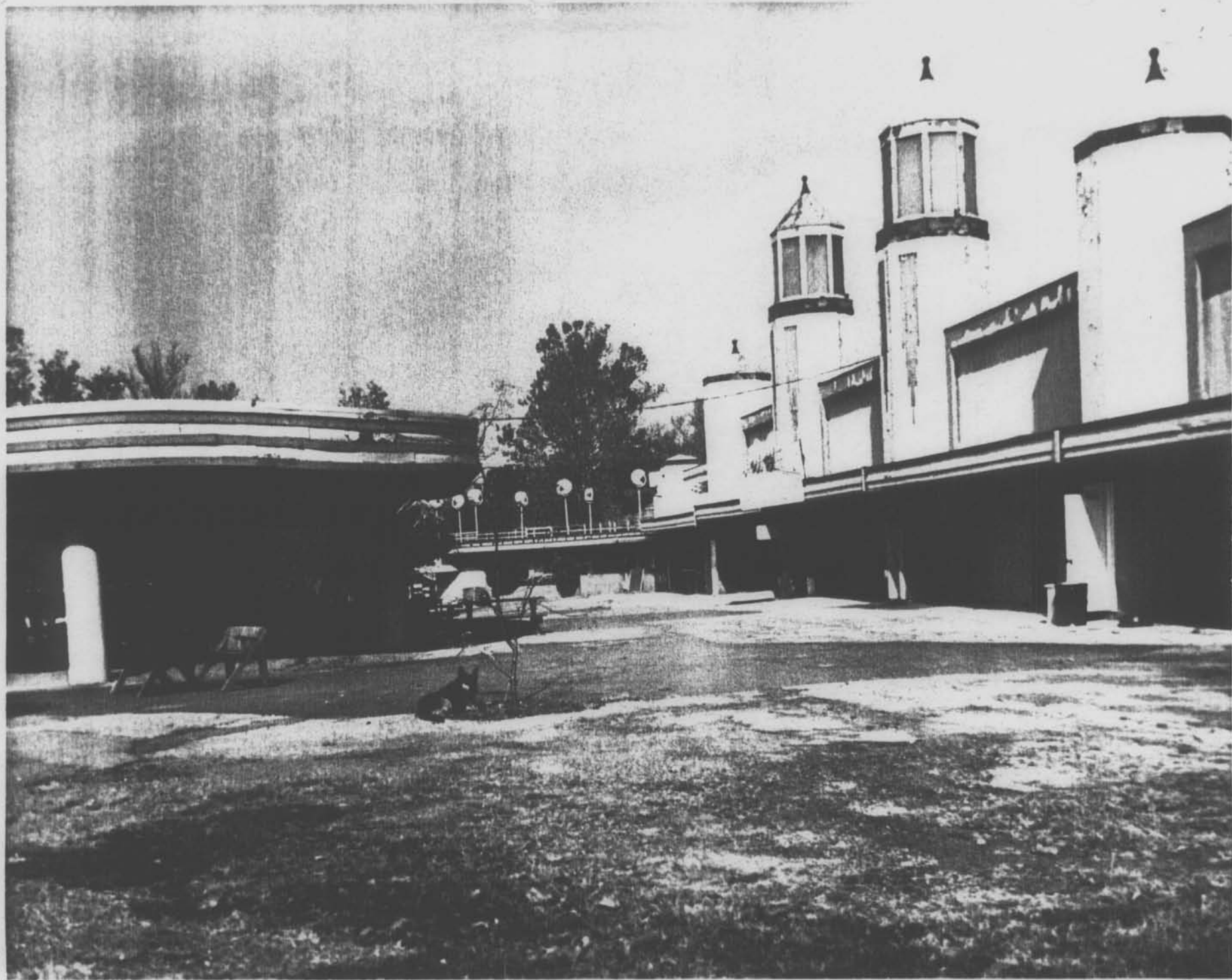
M:35-41

M.35.11



M.35-41

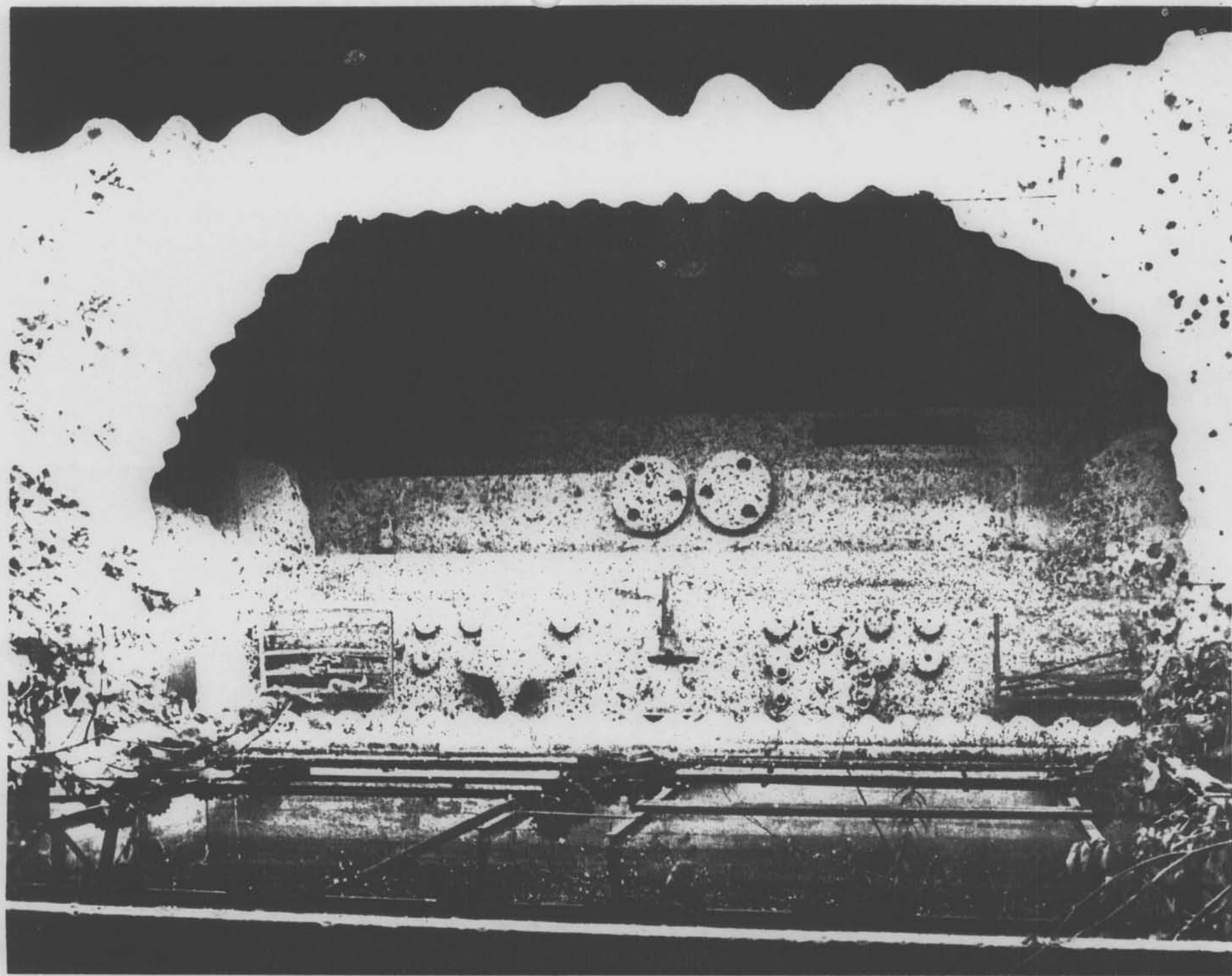




M:35-41

M:35-41





M:35-41

M.35-41





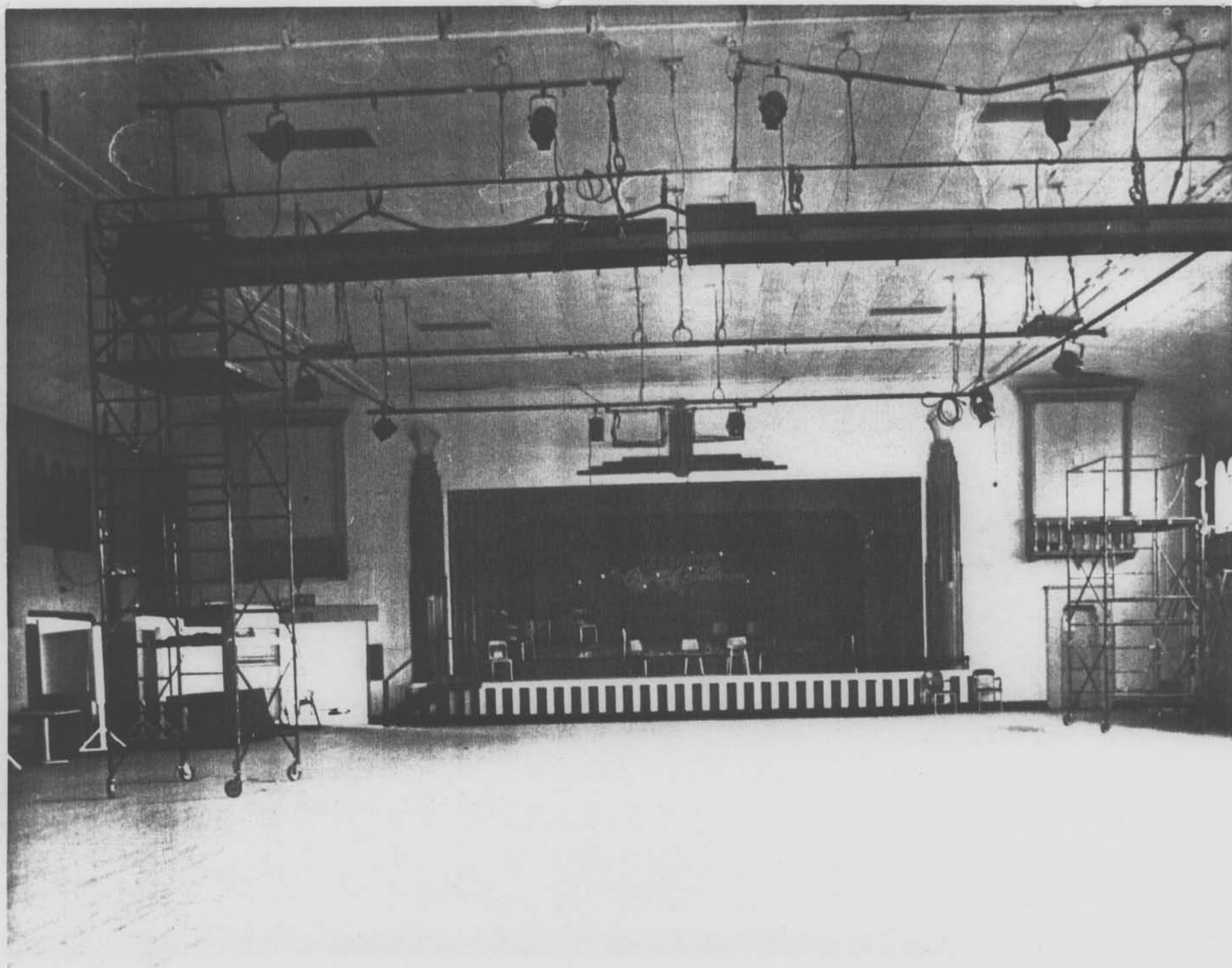
M.35-41



M.35-41

M:35-41





M.35-41

M.35-41





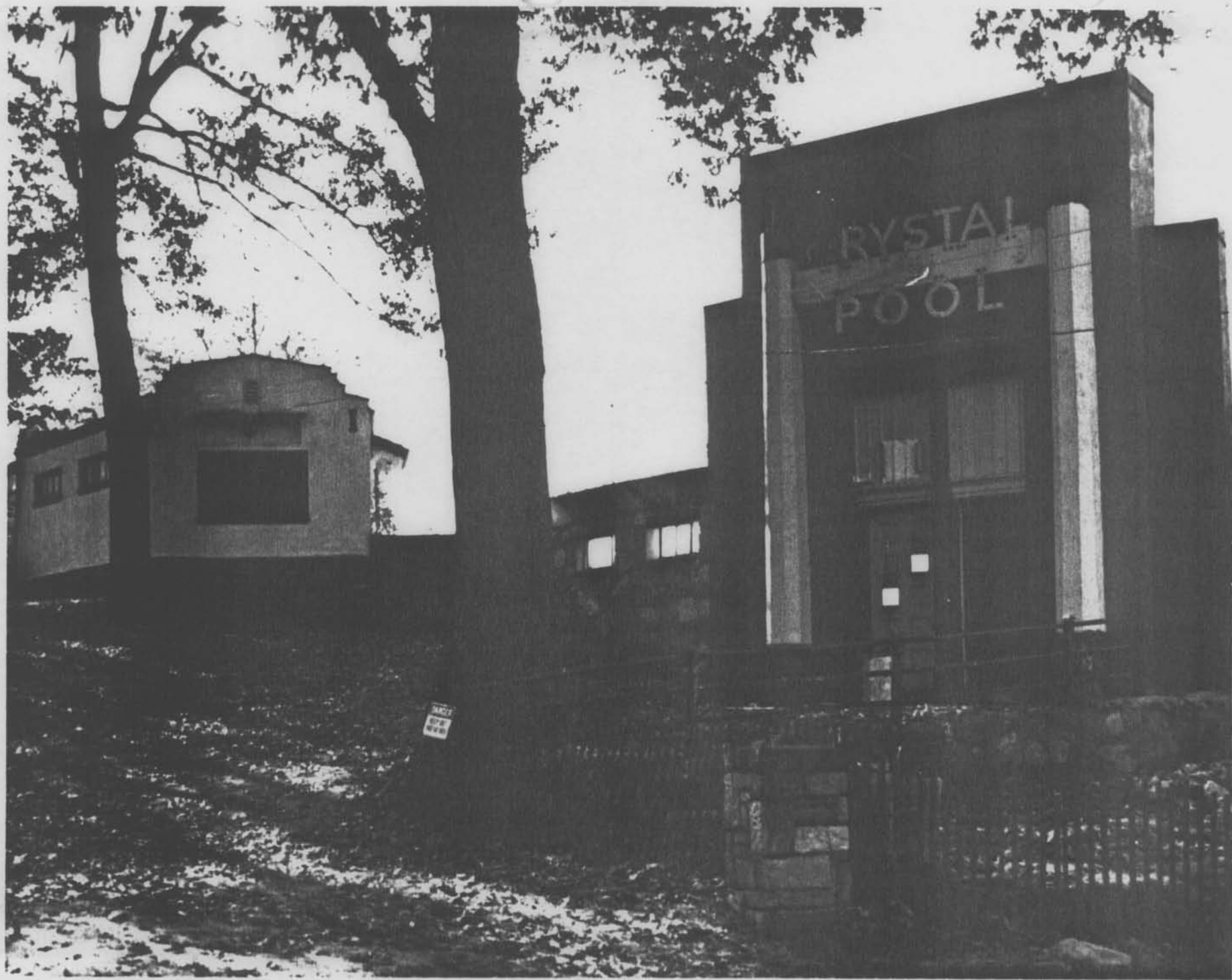
M.35-41

M.35-41



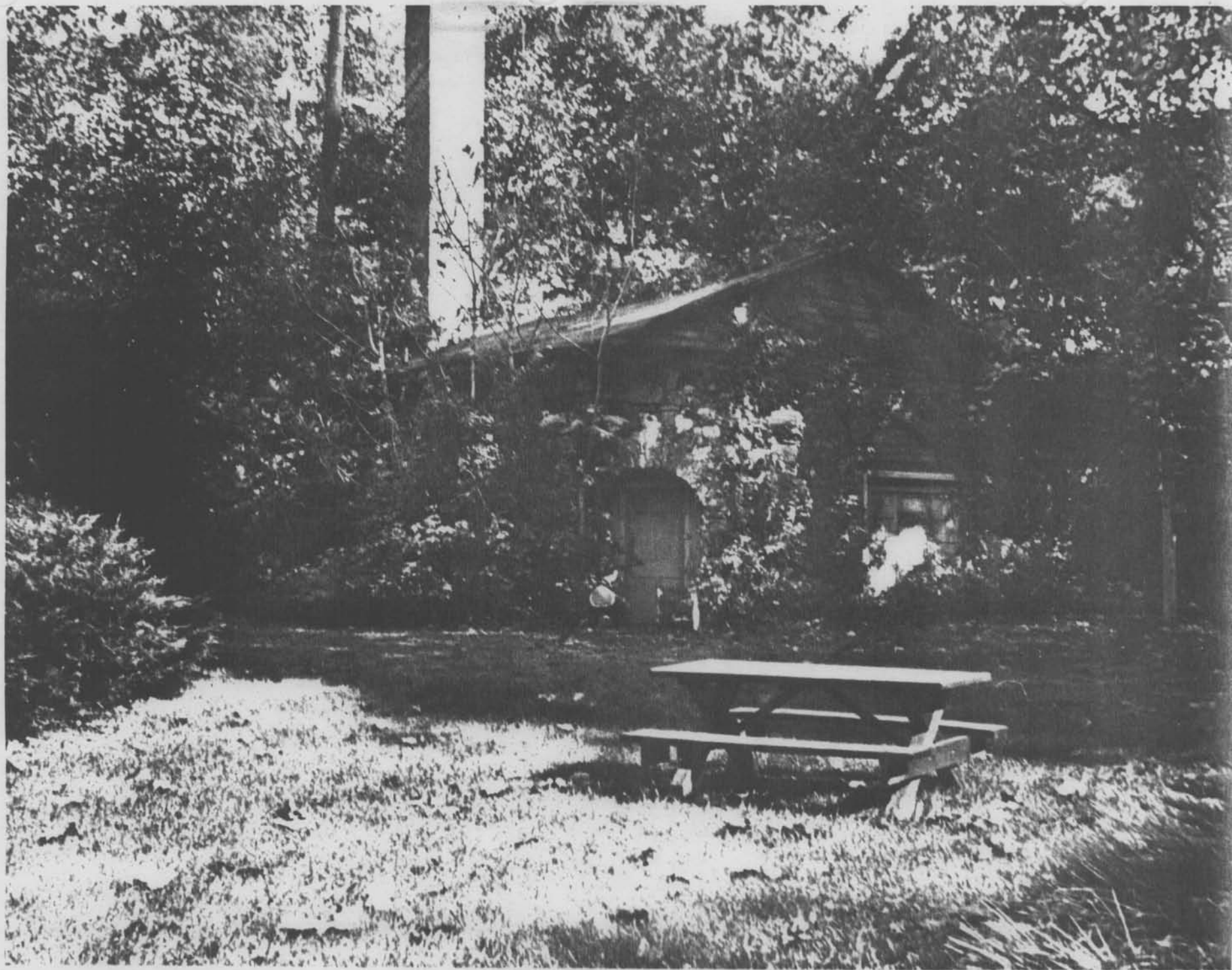
M.35-41

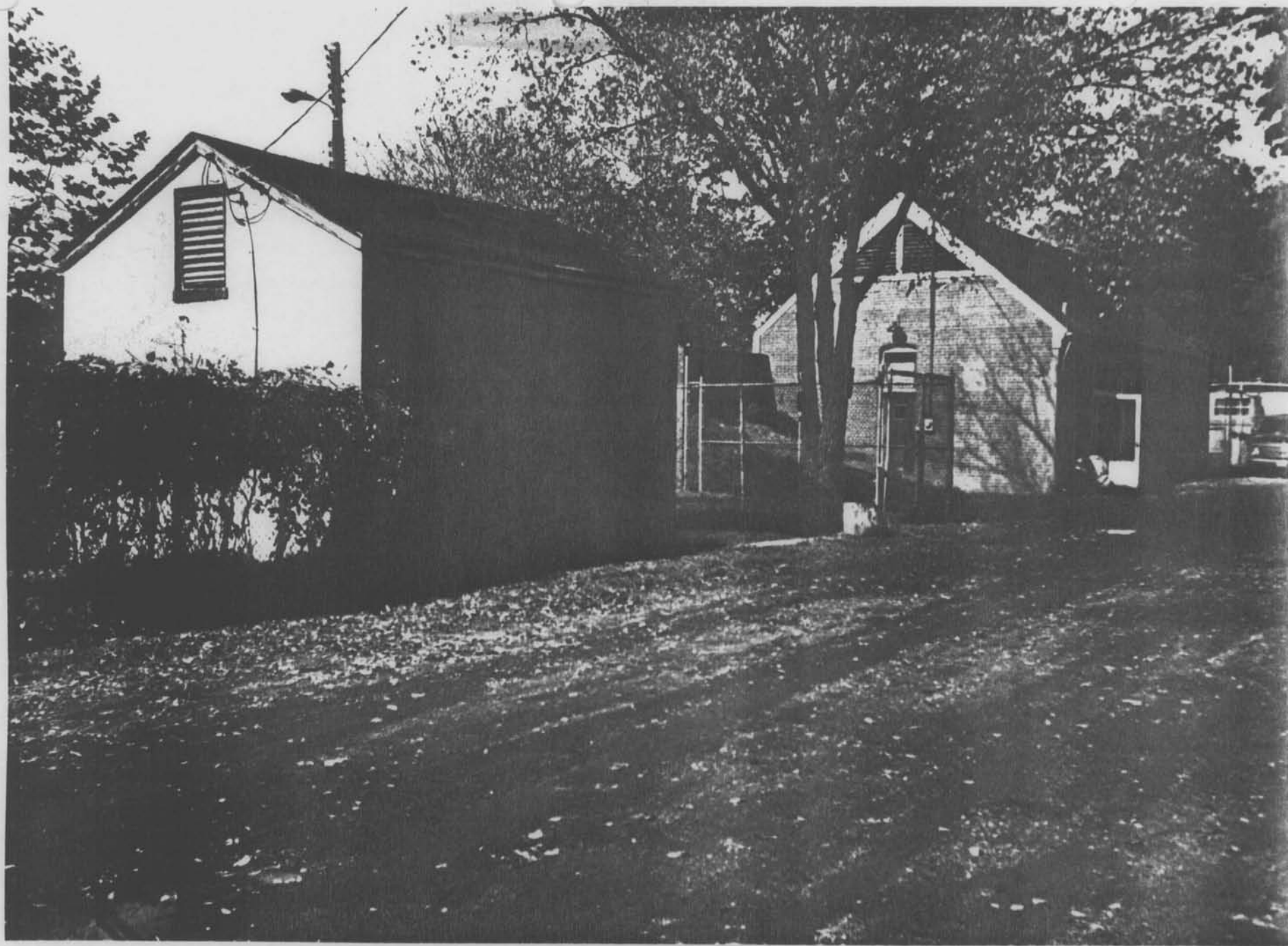




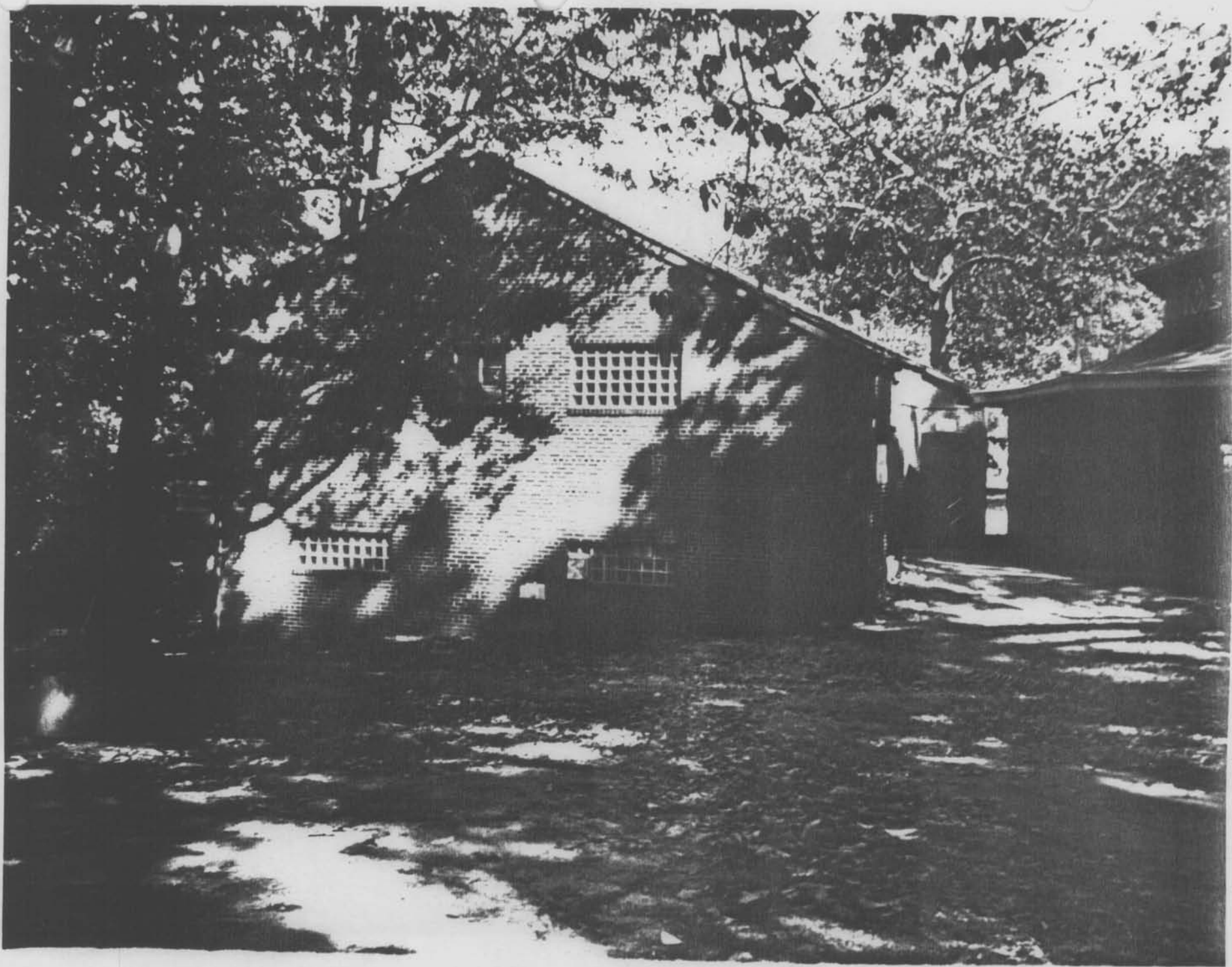
M.35-41

M.35-41



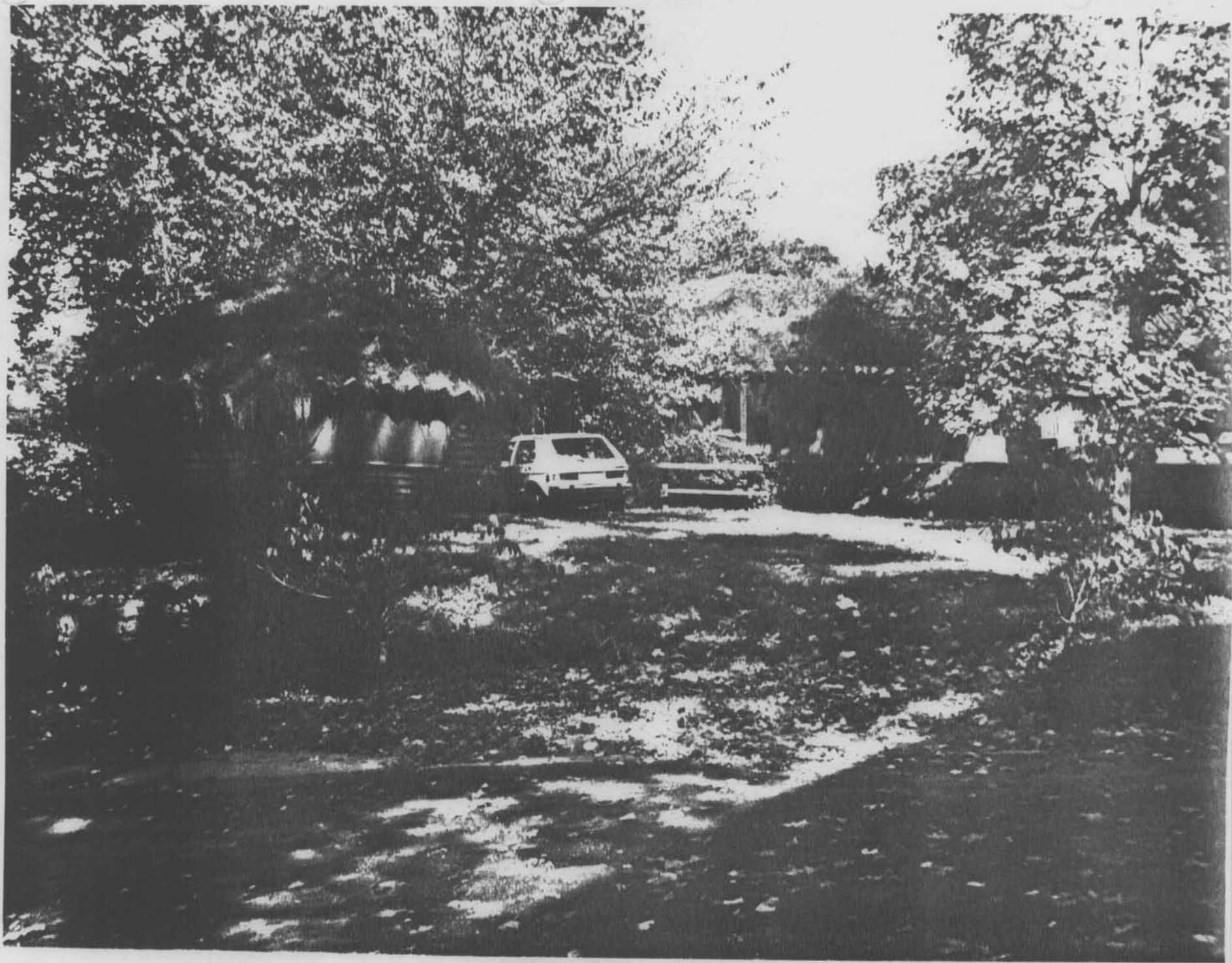


M:35-41



M:35-41

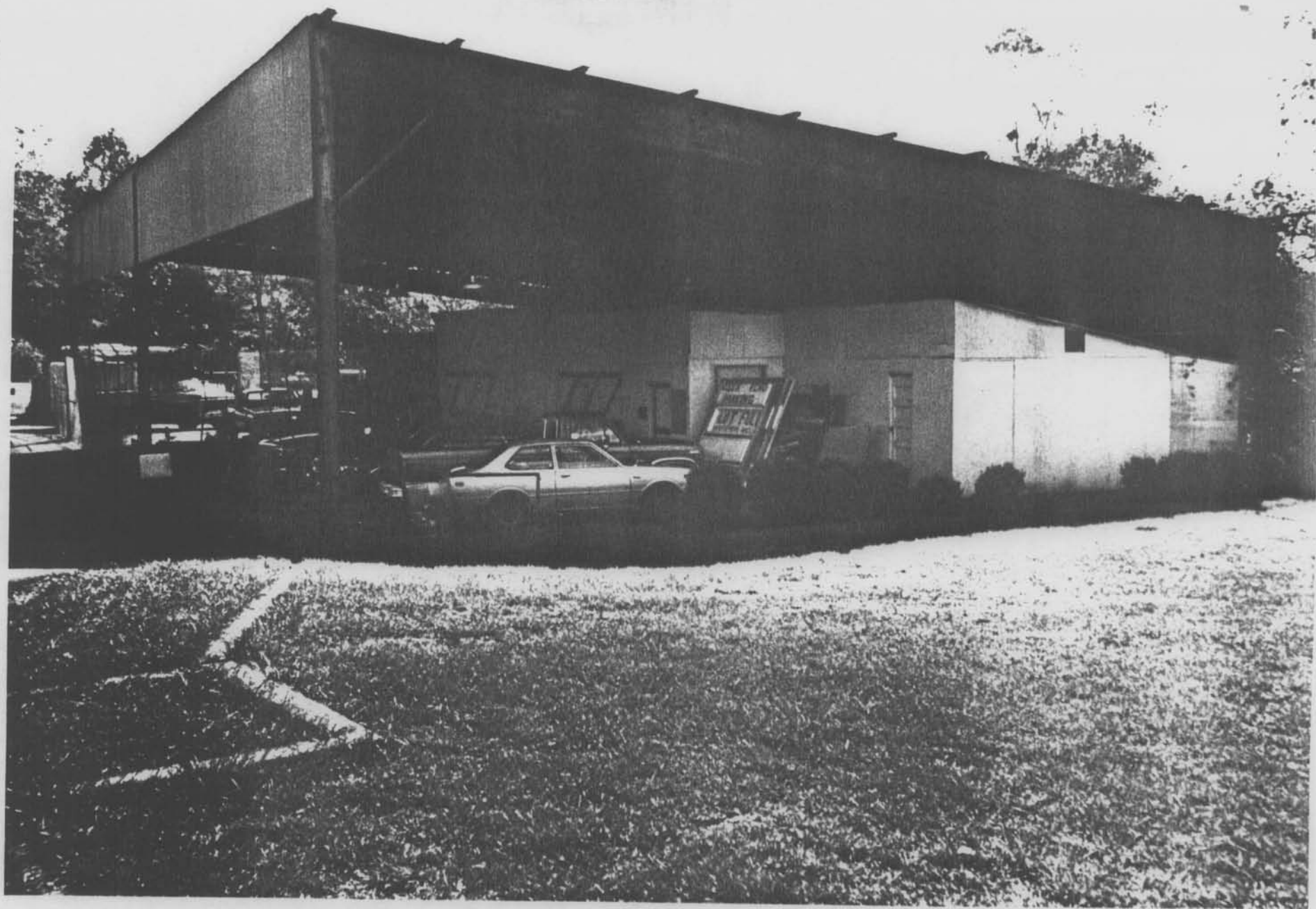
M:35-41





M:35-41

M:35-41





M.35-41