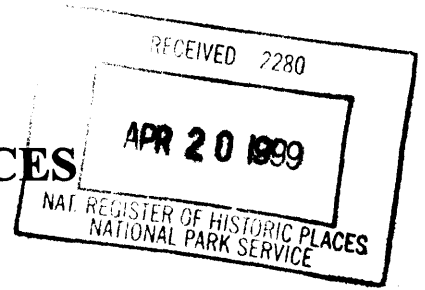


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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Adams Block

other name/site number:

## 2. Location

street & number: 123 Main Street


not for publication: na  
vicinity: na

city/town: Three Forks

state: Montana code: MT county: Gallatin code: 031 zip code: 59752

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.

 \_\_\_\_\_ Date 3-7-99

Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency or bureau ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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

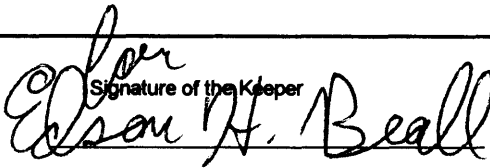
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

## 4. 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  
    see continuation sheet
- removed from the National Register  
    see continuation sheet
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

 \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action 5/20/99

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**5. Classification**

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<b>Ownership of Property:</b> Private	<b>Number of Resources within Property</b>	
	<b>Contributing</b>	<b>Noncontributing</b>
<b>Category of Property:</b> Building	<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> building(s)
<b>Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:</b> na	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
<b>Name of related multiple property listing:</b> na	<u>  1  </u>	<u>    </u> TOTAL

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**6. Function or Use**

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**Historic Functions:**

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store  
SOCIAL: clubhouse

**Current Functions:**

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

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**7. Description**

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**Architectural Classification:**

OTHER:  
Early 20th Century Commercial

**Materials:**

foundation: Concrete  
walls: Brick, stone  
roof: Built-up asphalt  
other:

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**Narrative Description**

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The Adams Block is located on Main Street in Three Forks, Montana. The local newspaper proclaimed the prominent two-story building as "one of the most modern stores in the state of Montana" upon its completion in 1918. The building, approximately 50'-0" by 90'-0", is a large rectangular mass that dominates the corner of Main and Cedar streets. Elegant brick work and the careful use of proportion reflect an attention to detail that must have been provided by a (as of yet unidentified) professionally-trained architect.

The first of the building's two primary facades faces west to Main Street. At the street level, two glazed tripartite storefronts with recessed entrances once invited pedestrians to enter. This expression was altered during the 1970's when the original storefronts were replaced with brick in-fill and smaller windows. However, the building above the first floor retains complete integrity of design. The fenestration is original with the arrangement of two window groupings, each comprising three sets of six-over-six double hung sash. Each grouping of windows is encased in a band of stone, and a continuous string course, topping the second floor windows, runs the entire width of the west facade and turns the corner to continue along the south elevation. The string course is continuous except for a projecting stone "urn" which supports a flag pole in the center of the west elevation. The face brick on both primary elevations is laid in a running bond pattern. Stone quoins accentuate each corner. Above the string course at the top of the building's walls, a decorative checkerboard pattern of brick and stone emphasizes each window grouping. The west facade is completed by a concrete coping that caps the parapet wall.

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The architectural details of the west elevation continue along the south facade (the second primary elevation), facing Cedar street. At the street level, a rhythm of four pairs of four-light windows once existed along the length of the first floor wall. A band of wood veneer now covers these windows. The original historic fabric emerges at the southwest corner where an elegant, two-story, formal entrance is encompassed in an intricate stone surround. A pair of 7'-8", eight-light doors provide access to the second floor. Above the doors are eight-light casement windows topped with two-light transoms. At the second floor level, the fenestration is similar to the west elevation. A grouping of three six-over-six double hung sash windows is located near the corner. Three pair of six-over-six double hung sash windows are spaced along the wall. A decorative checkerboard pattern of brick and stone again emphasizes each window grouping and a concrete coping caps the parapet walls.

The east elevation faces the alley. It is utilitarian in design; the walls are common brick. This side is dominated by a large brick chimney. Access to the building is provided by a door flanked by a single-sash window and a pair of one-over-one double hung sash windows. A later entry door has been cut into one sash of the latter window. At the second floor level, a pair of two-over-two double-hung sash windows is located to the south of the chimney, and two, two-over-two double-hung sash are located to the north. The north facade abuts an adjoining building. It has no openings.

The interior of the Adams Block retains varying degrees of historic fabric. Most of the finishes on the first floor are new, except for the original pressed-metal ceiling. The office space on the west side of the building still has the original mosaic tile beneath its carpet. Other original elements on the lower level include two concrete safes.

On the second floor, more original fabric remains. Originally, this floor housed a private men's club. The entire floor was dedicated to the club, and included a fireplace room, billiards room, meeting room, and a small apartment used by the in-house servant. The fireplace and billiards rooms retain much of their original finishes and have been rehabilitated.

## Integrity

Although the first floor storefronts have been replaced, the finely detailed upper floor of the Adams Block retains complete integrity of design from the building's completion date. It is from the second story that the choice of materials and their configuration define the building's early twentieth century commercial design. Three Forks' commercial center is centered on the two facing blocks just to the south of the Adams' Block. The west side of the street has several fine pre-World War I buildings, while the east side of the street is primarily comprised of one-story, remodeled buildings. Other commercial buildings are found, but less densely, along Main Street. The Adams Block is the most prominent building on the east side of Main Street (until the Sacajawea Hotel is reached on the north edge of the business district, two blocks north of the Adams Block).

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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Applicable National Register Criteria: A and C

Areas of Significance: Community Planning and  
Development; Architecture

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): n/a

Period(s) of Significance: 1918-1948

Significant Person(s): n/a

Significant Dates: 1918

Cultural Affiliation: European-American

Architect/Builder: unknown

## Narrative Statement of Significance

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### Statement of Significance

Within the town of Three Forks, the Adams Block is an important reminder of the town's founding father and a prominent building on Main Street. The building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the development of railroad towns in Montana. Adams, identified as the "father of Three Forks," was an official in the Milwaukee Land Company, a subsidiary of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. Adams and his son, Ben, promoted the town long after the initial sale of townsite lots. The Adams Block is also eligible under Criterion C as a representative example of early twentieth century Neo-Classical commercial architecture. The two-story brick building, located at the corner of Main and Cedar, stands as a constant reminder of one of the most modern architectural designs of its time in Three Forks, in strong contrast to Main Street's earlier Queen Anne and Italianate style buildings. The Adams Block Neo-Classical design is apparent in its simple lines and careful use of symmetry accentuated with stone quoins, horizontal stone banding, stone window and door surrounds, and multi-light windows

### Three Forks Background History

The town of Three Forks takes its name from its location near where the Gallatin, Jefferson, and Madison rivers join to form the Missouri River. A small community developed one mile from the present town in 1863. The town saw limited growth until the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway (Milwaukee Road) began building its tracks through the area in 1908. Like many other small Montana towns, however, the railroad bypassed the older community.

Sometime before the railroad's route became publicly known, John Quincy Adams of Iowa purchased 5,400 acres in the Three Forks area from the estate of Marcus Daly. Part of this land was soon platted as the new Three Forks townsite. John Quincy Adams held the position of general land agent with the Milwaukee Land Company and his son Benjamin was the company's townsite agent. This company was a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Milwaukee Road. The relationship between the Milwaukee Road, the Milwaukee Land Company, and John Quincy Adams in the development of Three Forks is tangled. Railroad town historian John Hudson notes that executives of railroads often received the financial benefits from developing townsites, although the railroads maintained an active role in selecting their locations.

In 1913, the *Three Forks Herald* suggested Adams acted as an individual in the development of Three Forks. The paper stated "It is now evident and the fact generally recognized as well as appreciated, that Mr. Adams had sufficient inside knowledge [of the railroad's intended route] to warrant himself his (sic) and company starting a new town and purchasing farm lands in all surrounding region, employing in the neighborhood of a million dollars." Other reports clearly state that the Milwaukee Land Company held the sale of town lots in Three Forks. This company was formed in 1881 to buy, sell, lease, and improve lands. Milwaukee Road executives ran the company. In 1906, the company began purchasing townsites in Montana and timberlands in Idaho and Washington. Adams may have acted as agent for the Milwaukee Land Company in the town of Three Forks, while using his knowledge of the railroad's route to acquire private ownership of adjoining lands.

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At Three Forks, the Milwaukee Land Company held a successful lot sale in September 1908, with the many anxious purchasers confined to tents along the railroad's right-of-way. Within a month of the sale, construction projects employed 125 carpenters and masons. The railroad assured a strong economic base for the new community by establishing it as headquarters for the Rocky Mountain Division. Three Fork's population neared 2000 five years after its founding, and local boosters projected 10,000 residents by 1918.

In an atypical role for railroad-associated officials, J. Q. Adams and his son, B.S. Adams, took a personal and lengthy interest in the development of Three Forks. The men owned the Three Forks Land Company which served as the resident agent (to buy and sell town lots) for the Milwaukee Land Company. J.Q. constructed the Sacajawea Hotel across from the depot shortly after the railroad's arrival. The two men also owned a number of other businesses including the Adams Realty Company and the Adams Investment Company. The latter, with offices in Iowa, Chicago, and Three Forks, constructed the Adams Block.

## The Adams Block

The *Three Forks Herald* of March 28, 1916 reported that foundations were being laid for the new J.Q. Adams building. No further mention is made of the building for two years, so if it is the same building, wartime building restrictions may have delayed construction. Finally, in March 1918, the paper reported completion of the Adams Block --- "one of the most beautiful [buildings] in the state." The Robertson Jewelry and Drug Company opened in the corner storefront as the building's first tenant. Reuben Robertson operated the jewelry store and his brother, R.L. (Ralph) Robertson, oversaw the drug store. The Robertson store offered a complete line of prescription and patent medicines plus the newest designs in stationery, soaps, rubber goods, perfumes, powders, and toilet waters. The drug store included a soda fountain with an onyx back-counter and an opal-glass front counter. The Wilmarth Company of Grant Rapids, Michigan supplied the store's furnishings and fixtures.

The Adamses' Three Forks Land Company first occupied the northern storefront. The Three Forks Furniture Company had the contract to furnish the office in the "metropolitan style." Sometime during the 1920s, the Adamses began liquidating their Montana properties. They sold the Adams Block to the Robertson Jewelry and Drug Company, and it took over the entire first floor of the building.

The Sacajawea Club, a private men's social club, first occupied the second floor of the Adams Block; the space was specifically designed for the club. The club fell under the beneficence of the Adamses and documents the families continued personal involvement in Three Forks. J.Q. Adams was the club's president in 1918. B.S. wrote his father in December 1917 for guidance in drawing up a lease for the new club facilities. In the letter, he chronicles ordering about \$1500 of furniture, floor coverings, and draperies for the club from the Carson, Pirie, Scott Department Store in Chicago.

A 1935 *Three Forks News* article provides a reminiscent, perhaps tongue-in-cheek glimpse at the Sacajawea Club's activities. It describes an evening 'business meeting' where "soft lights blended about the rooms making a harmonious coloring in keeping with the occasion." Club members played billiards and were served drinks by the black steward while cooks and waiters prepared a banquet. A choral provided dinner music while club members feasted on a whole roast pig. After dinner, members gathered around the piano, at first singing old familiar refrains and then as the drinks continued, such songs as "Her Pink Pajamas." At 3:00 a.m., the "business meeting" adjourned, and the members "straggled home" rehearsing excuses to tell their wives for the lateness of the hour.

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In 1929, the Robertson Drug and Jewelry went into receivership. The receiver, Hal Stewart, of Livingston, put the stock up for auction on March 27, 1929, and Louis Dreibelbis of Butte purchased it for \$6,250. Albert Gustave Johnston, commonly known as "Doc," operated the store for the Dreibelbis Drug Company.

In 1933, Johnston became a Greyhound Bus Lines agent, and he operated a bus station, open 24 hours a day, out of the drug store. "Doc" Johnston attended to many medical emergencies in the Three Forks area. With a limited medical background, he provided several still-remembered lifesaving acts---for animals and humans alike. Thus, he became a popular friend to local ranchers and farmers. In 1940, Johnston bought the building and inventory and renamed it the Johnston Drug Company. Johnston died of heart failure on October 12, 1951. Mary Johnston, A.G.'s widow, continued to operate the drugstore. Leslie Max Olson came to Three Forks in 1952, and worked as a pharmacist for Mary. Later, in 1954, Olson purchased the business from Mrs. Johnston. After the death of Mary Johnston, in 1971, her granddaughter, Charlotte Frick, and her husband bought the building from the other heirs.

Patrick J. Marrinan, who operated the City Drug Store across the street from the Adams Block, bought the Adams Block and the Johnston Drug Store inventory. He then moved into the building and renamed his business Bi-Rite Drug. The Bi-Rite store took on a new "modern" look, with alterations to both the exterior and interior of the Adams Block including removal of the historic storefronts. The Bi-Rite's doors remained open until 1980, when in lieu of foreclosure, Marrinan conveyed the building back to the Fricks. The Adams Block remained under the Fricks' ownership until June 1993, when they sold the building to Beverly Llewellyn, the current owner.

For some time, Llewellyn Architects occupied the building's first floor. In May of 1997, Llewellyn Architects moved its offices to the second floor. Other professional offices moved into the storefronts.

## Architectural Significance

The Adams Block is a significant, representative example of early twentieth commercial architecture on the local level. The local newspaper's description of the building being "modern" had a basis in fact. The building's simple lines and clean appearance contrast with the fussy ornamentation of Three Fork's earlier buildings. The building retains the basic organization and design of earlier commercial buildings, but rejects the verticality, elaborate cornices and brackets, and heavy window surrounds of these styles. The Adams Block "modern" design stems from its simple lines and careful use of symmetry accentuated with stone quoins, horizontal stone banding, stone window and door surrounds, and multi-light windows.

The building is the finest example of this period of commercial architecture in Three Forks; it is the most prominent building on the east side of Three Forks' Main Street. The building is a representative example of what might have been built had Montana's economy not collapsed shortly after World War I due to drought and poor agricultural prices. Although other commercial buildings would be constructed in Three Forks between the two world wars, they were small, one-story buildings. Broad storefronts, simple stepped parapets, and recessed brick panels characterized the design of these later buildings. Their architectural presence does not approach the sophisticated design of the Adams Block.

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## **Future of the Adams Block**

Llewellyn Architects is rehabilitating and restoring the Adams Block. The Technical Services Branch of the National Park Service granted a "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 - Evaluation of Significance" for the individual eligibility of the building in 1996. The National Park Service approved "Part 2," the determination that the proposed work meets the "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Projects," in 1998. Already portions of the second floor that include the original wood paneling and trim, the original windows, and sections of the floor and ceiling finishes have been restored to their original condition. Through careful work and determination, the future holds promise that one day the Adams Block will again be restored to its 1918 appearance, including restoration of the now missing storefronts.

Adams Block  
Name of Property

Gallatin County, Montana  
County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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See continuation sheet

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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:

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property:** Less than one

**UTM References:**   **Zone**       **Easting**       **Northing**  
                          12        457230        5082130

**Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):** Section 25, Township 2 North, Range 1 East, M.P.M.

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### Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 7 and 8 in Block 13 of the Original Townsite of Three Forks, Montana

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### Boundary Justification

Lots 7 and 8 are those historically associated with the Adams Block.

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## 11. Form Prepared By

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**name/title:** Eric E. Laszlo  
**organization:** Llewellyn Architects  
**street & number:** P.O. Box 888  
**city or town:** Three Forks

**date:** September 1998  
**telephone:** 406-285-3169  
**state:** MT    **zip code:** 59752

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### Property Owner

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**name/title:** Beverly A. Llewellyn  
**street & number:** 123 Main Street - P.O. Box 888  
**city or town:** Three Forks

**telephone:** 406-285-3169  
**state:** MT    **zip code:** 59752



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## **Bibliography**

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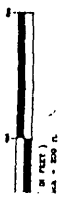
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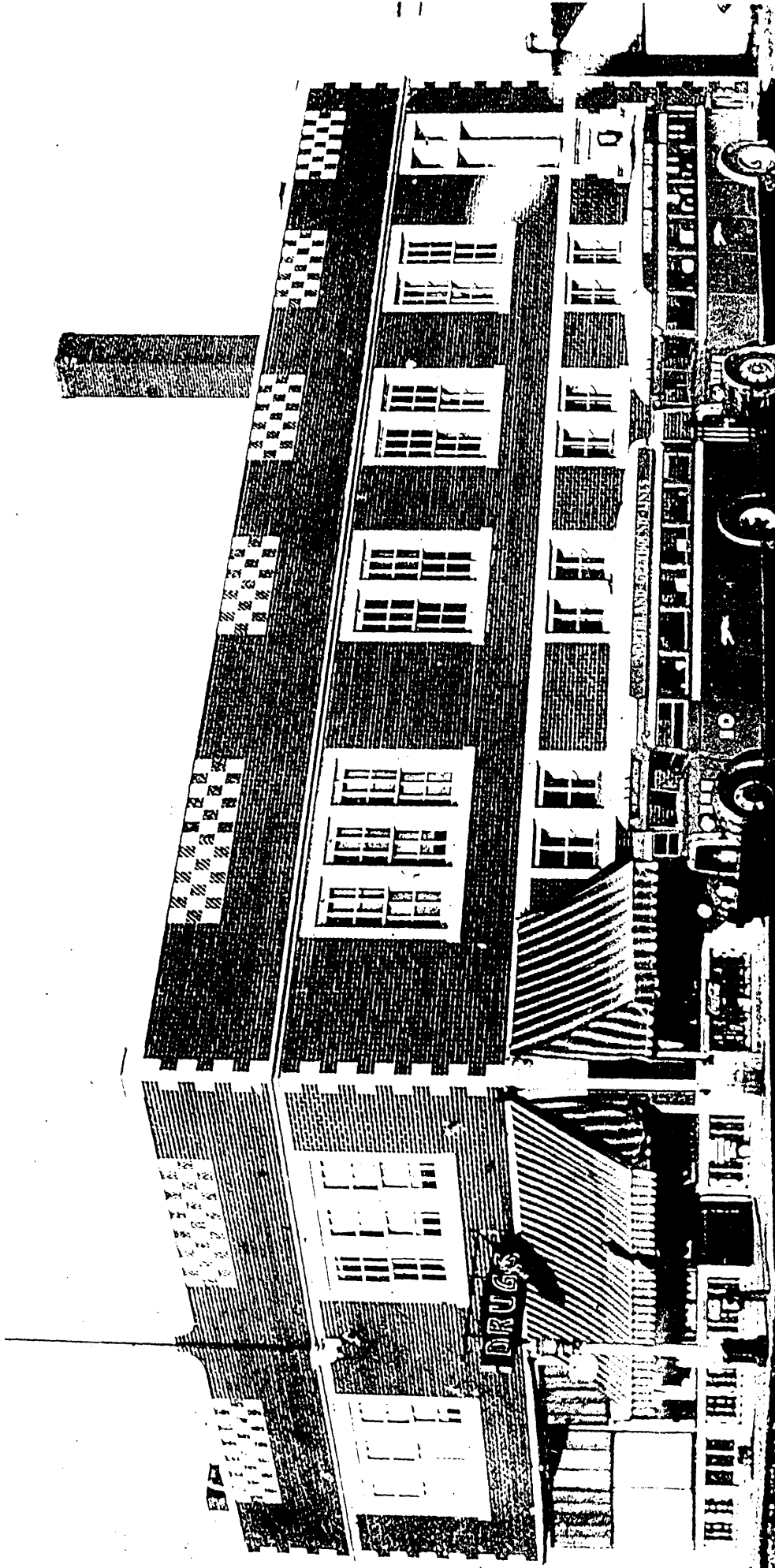


ADAMS BLOCK

PHIC SCALE



THREE FORKS



JOHNSTON DRUG CO. THREE FORKS, MO.

