

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

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

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



APR 12 1992

**1. Name**

historic COULTERVILLE MAIN STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Various addresses, Main Street, Coulterville not for publication

city, town Coulterville vicinity of congressional district 15

state California code 06 county Mariposa code 043

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

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

street & number 10th and Bullion

city, town Mariposa state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title California Historical Landmark #332 has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1959  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Office of Historic Preservation

city, town Sacramento state California

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## 7. Description

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**Condition** excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

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

The Coulterville Main Street Historic District includes twenty-five structures along either side of Main Street, the historical and present-day commercial avenue of the town of Coulterville. The district extends along the full length of Main Street, from its juncture with Highway 49, the principal artery linking communities in California's Mother Lode, to the old Chinatown and red-light district at the outskirts of Coulterville. District boundaries have been drawn to exclude noncommercial and intrusive new structures; several historic residences and one intrusive commercial structure fall within the boundaries of this otherwise commercial historic district.

The unincorporated town of Coulterville occupies a flat at the confluence of several intermittent streams in the chaparral and oak-covered foothills of the Sierra Nevada in northern Mariposa County. Situated due west of Yosemite National Park, Coulterville is at about 1,750 feet in elevation. Surrounding peaks range from 2,600 to 3,500 feet in elevation. The population of Coulterville today is about 129. The building stock of the town is predominantly residential, with historic and newer homes scattered across a broad area joined by meandering streets. The Coulterville Main Street Historic District roughly bisects the town of Coulterville, with residential sections at either side.

Coulterville's Main Street today represents one of the better preserved commercial districts in California's Mother Lode. It is largely unchanged since 1900, being spared the demolition and misguided improvements that have destroyed the historical character of many towns along Highway 49. The careful observer can read in the structures along Main Street the history of the town in the nineteenth century -- the boom and the bust, the ravaging by fire, and the constant process of rebuilding. Coulterville's business district grew quickly in the 1850s, and several structures in this district retain at least some part of their 1850s appearance. Numerous fires raged through the town, consuming all but a few fortunately situated structures and the masonry shell of structures in the path of the fire. New wood-frame structures were built and masonry shells were reused with wood-frame additions. The pattern of fire and rebuilding continued until 1900, when a decline in mining activity and improved fire protection techniques broke this cycle. Coulterville's present appearance largely dates to the rebuilding that followed the last great fire in 1899.

The structures in the Coulterville Main Street Historic District clearly reflect this pattern of development. The largest group -- twelve of the twenty-four contributing structures -- are built on the shells of masonry structures dating to the 1850s or 1860s, generally of brick or stone, with wood-frame additions dating to the period just after the 1899 fire. These structures are clustered near the intersection of Main Street and Highway 49 and constitute the core of the commercial district. The district also includes six wood-frame structures from the early years of the twentieth century, some of which are private residences. The remainder of the district structures are diverse in nature, including an adobe store at the edge of town, built in the 1850s but spared the periodic fires, a 1900 garage sided in corrugated metal, and several concrete storehouses from the early twentieth century.

Specific descriptions, keyed to numbers on enclosed district map:

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1850s-1900      **Builder/Architect** Various, generally unknown

### Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Coulterville Main Street Historic District is significant historically for the important role played by these commercial structures in the early development of mining and tourism in Mariposa County, and architecturally as a large and well-preserved ensemble of Mother Lode vernacular structures. The commercial establishments of Coulterville constituted a vital supply link for the early mining industry in northern Mariposa County, including placer mining of the 1850s, and quartz mining, which proceeded in earnest through the 1890s. Coulterville businesses and businessmen also played a key role in the opening of a tourist trade to the Yosemite Valley, the first passable stage route to the valley passing through Coulterville and Coulterville acting as an important stopping place. Architecturally, the structures along Coulterville's Main Street represent a significant entity, comprising a broad range of vernacular forms common to the Mother Lode region of California. Included here are several of the regional forms often associated with what might be considered Mother Lode architecture -- "fire-proof" buildings of locally-quarried stone and/or local brick, with iron shutters at the doors and window; wood-frame structures, often of a simple board-and-batten, with the two-or-three-sided porch ubiquitous in the Mother Lode region of California; a remarkably well-preserved 1850s adobe, representative of a once common but increasingly rare variant on California's adobe building tradition. The existence of these common Mother Lode building types and forms contributes to the capacity of the district to convey a sense of the time and place in which they originated.

Coulterville was founded by George Wilson Coulter and his wife, Margaret, in the spring of 1850. Coulter recognized an excellent commercial opportunity in supplying the miners at Maxwell Creek, a large mining district isolated from existing supply center in the Mother Lode. Coulter's store was at the outset a blue tent displaying the Stars and Stripes and called the "banderia", or little flag, by Mexican miners. Soon, this humble establishment was enlarged to include a saloon, an assay office, as well as the retail store.

Soon, other commercial structures were clustered around Coulter's store. As the town which was to become Coulterville grew, a few single-story adobe buildings were erected along the main street to serve as rooming houses, saloons, and other businesses. On the branching streets, small wooden frame cottages appeared as early as 1850. On the north-east corner of the plaza, Mexican masons built one of the first adobe structures. It was called the "Mexican" or "Adobe" Hotel. The Gazzola store (#15) was another stone building of importance in the town. It was started about the same time as the Adobe Hotel and was completed soon after it. In 1851, the Sun Sun Wo store (#9) was constructed, also of adobe with stone foundations, at the east end of town, where a bustling Chinatown was soon to appear.

Because of the great influx of miners, a post office was established. It was first called Maxwell Creek, but the name was changed in 1853 to Coulterville in honor of the town's popular founder. By that time, Coulter had further expanded his store and had opened a two-story hotel (#24) which faced onto the plaza.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

UNRECORDED

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 7

Quadrangle name Coulterville

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A 

1	0	7	4	7	0	6	0	4	1	7	7	2	1	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

D 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

E 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

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

state n/a code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ann S. Peak

organization Peak & Associates date 7/24/81

street & number 8167A Belvedere Avenue telephone (916) 452-4435

city or town Sacramento state California 95826

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title date 12-22-81

For HCERS use only

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

William H. Braitham

date 3.12.82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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1. Hillcrest Properties  
Box 564  
Los Gatos, CA 45030  
Attn: Benjamin Griffin
2. Hillcrest Properties  
Box 564  
Los Gatos, CA 45030  
Attn: Benjamin Griffin
3. Cooper, Iren et al.  
324 N. Oakhurst Drive  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
4. Cooper, Iren et al.  
324 N. Oakhurst Drive  
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
5. Murphy, Joyce A.  
Smith, William  
Route 2  
Malvern, IA 51551
6. Barrett, Ila Goss  
P.O. Box 59  
Coulterville, CA 95311
7. Stout, Robert L., and  
Anna Georgina  
P.O. Box 27  
Coulterville, CA 95311
8. Shirley, Charles W., and  
Marna E.  
P.O. Box 8  
Coulterville, CA 95311
9. Moyers, Danny W.  
P.O. Box 43  
Coulterville, CA 95311
10. Moyers, Danny W.  
P.O. Box 43  
Coulterville, CA 95311
11. Ross, Evah Santos  
1710 Poplar Drive  
Walnut Creek, CA 94595
12. Coulterville Lodge IOOF  
Coulterville, CA 95311
13. Gaetani, Tony E. Jr.  
4444 Geary Blvd.  
San Francisco, CA 94118
14. Jaenecke, Norman E., and  
Elizabeth F.  
Greeley Hill St. Rt. Box 70  
Coulterville, CA 95311
15. Dalton, Eugene P. Sr., and  
Ruth E.  
639 14th Street  
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266
16. Wilson, Robert B., and  
Lisbeth  
Hwy. 49 North  
Mariposa, CA 95338
17. Wilson, Robert B., and  
Lisbeth  
Hwy. 49 North  
Mariposa, CA 95338
18. Milani, Everett  
P.O. Box 14  
Coulterville, CA 95311
19. Wilson, Robert B., and  
Lisbeth  
Hwy. 49 North  
Mariposa, CA 95338
- \*20. Lawson et al., Robert C., and  
Ruby M.  
P.O. Box 50  
Coulterville, CA 95311

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21. Sherlock, Neal W., and  
Mary R.  
P.O. Box 7  
Coulterville, CA 95311

22. Sherlock, Neal W., and  
Mary R.  
P.O. Box 7  
Coulterville, CA 95311

23. Barrett, Frank H., and  
Ila G.  
Ferry Road  
Coulterville, CA 95311

24. Northern Mariposa County  
History Center  
P.O. Box 149  
Coulterville, CA 95311

25. Barrett, Ila Goss  
P.O. Box 59  
Coulterville, CA 95311

\*Non-contributing structure

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1. JEFFREY HOTEL

Built 1848-9; 1903

Present Building Occupant: Vacant

The Jeffrey Hotel is an anchor structure within the Coulterville Main Street Historic District. A hotel has operated at this site since the early years of the Gold Rush. The structure was burned in catastrophic fires of 1859, 1879, and 1899 but rebuilt after each, utilizing the basic rubble and adobe shell of the original structure, dating to 1848 or 1849. In this respect, the Jeffrey Hotel is typical of the bulk of this district, bearing remnants of several stages of occupation and use.

This three-story L-shaped structure occupies a prominent site near the intersection of Main Street and Highway 49. Street elevations are dominated by two features: a veranda extending across the sidewalk on both street elevations, supported by turned posts and bracing; and a two-story rectangular bay window on the second and third stories at the angle of the "L". The second and third stories are sheathed in "pressed tin" siding dating to 1903; this siding is in generally excellent condition. A projecting cornice with decorative endpieces surmounts the structure. Windows are evenly spaced along both street elevations on the second and third stories, with paired windows at the front of the bay. The first story is covered in cement applied to the 30-inch adobe and rubble walls. It is estimated that this early material comprises two-thirds of the walls on the first story, becoming interior walls behind an 1880s extension along Highway 49.

The hotel, as indicated, was rebuilt after the fires of 1859 and 1879. It was not rebuilt immediately following the fire of 1899. Rather, it was rebuilt in its present form in 1903, specifically to accommodate the entourage of President Theodore Roosevelt, who stayed overnight in this hotel on his way to Yosemite National Park for his historic 1903 encounter with the noted conservationist, John Muir.

2. MAGNOLIA ROOM

Built 1860, ca. 1900

Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This one-story brick structure, the masonry shell of which dates to 1860, possesses a tall gabled roof dating to its rebuilding and reuse following the fire of 1899. It is accessed through two large metal doors facing Main Street. Like structures #1, #3, and #4, its entrance is sheltered by a long veranda with climbing wisteria vines.

3. COMMERCIAL BUILDING

Built 1860, ca. 1900

Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This one-story building is of brick, dating to 1860, now covered in cement scored to simulate stone work. Like structure #2, this building is topped by a gabled roof with corrugated metal roofing material above the older brick shell. This structure has been utilized for a variety of purposes; in 1896, it was a laundry, general store, barber shop, and cigar store. The doors are of wood but the pins for the original metal doors are still in place.

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4. MARIS STORE Built 1860, 1899  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This is the most northerly of four structures along the west side of Main Street sheltered by an extended porch or covered sidewalk. The masonry shell of this structure dates to 1860, when it served as the original Bruschi Store. It is constructed of schist slab with a mud mortar. The store has two rooms, the front measuring about 35' x 15', the rear about 15' x 15'. The walls are plastered, exterior and interior.

5. VILLA ROMA RESTAURANT Built 1899  
Present Building Occupant: Restaurant

This one-story wood-frame structure was constructed by the Sample family in 1899, replacing an earlier residence on this site destroyed by a fire of that year. At one point in the early twentieth century, this structure was utilized as a grocery store. As originally constructed, this residence was sheltered by a three-sided porch, a common vernacular form in California's Mother Lode, also represented in this district by the Canova House (structure #11). The left, or west, side porch has been enclosed, and the fenestration at the facade has been altered to permit twentieth century commercial uses.

6. BARRETT GARAGE Built ca. 1915  
Present Building Occupant: R&R Ranch Supplies

This large industrial building was built in 1915 by Demetri Bruschi to serve as a garage. During the 1920s, it was fitted with a gas pump at the street. During the 1930s, the structure was utilized as a dormitory for a Civilian Conservation Corps group working on a nearby project. The structure includes a gable roof, hidden from street view by a stepped gable false front. The roof and side walls are sheathed in corrugated metal siding and roofing, while the facade is covered by a decorative "pressed tin" siding, simulating brick.

7. HARLOW HOUSE Built 1899  
Present Building Occupant: Georgina Stout Antiques

This one-story wood-frame structure was constructed as a private residence shortly after the fire of 1899. It is sheathed in shiplap siding, with composition roofing material on its gabled roof. Fenestration is generally two-over-two double-hung sash, except for a six-over-six double-hung sash at the rear of the main structure. A small extension has been added at the rear. A front porch extends across the width of the facade, supported by four turned columns with decorative millwork at the eaveline. The structure, originally a private residence, is presently utilized as an antique shop.



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8. CANOVA WAREHOUSE

Built 1859 or 1860

Present Building Occupant: Carmel Bay Mining Company

This one-story gable-roofed structure was constructed in 1859 or 1860 for use as a storehouse, or warehouse, connected with Canova's retail operations elsewhere. It is constructed of local stone with mud and lime mortar. The roof is framed with wood with corrugated metal roofing material. The porch, extending across the facade, is built upon a rock foundation with wooden planking. This contributing structure is joined by a thin wooden partition to a noncontributing structure, a wood-frame structure built in the 1970s and utilized today for retail operations and office space. While noncontributing, this recent structure is generally sympathetic to the architectural character of the Coulterville Main Street Historic District.

9. SUN SUN WO COMPANY

Built 1851

Present Building Occupant: Sun Sun Wo Trading Company

This one-story adobe structure is a key contributor to the Coulterville Main Street Historic District. The Sun Sun Wo Co. building, originally a Chinese general store, is a composite of several materials, including a 37' x 17' single-story adobe building with a board-and-batten and wood shake lean-to addition. The adobe bricks were molded in forms and contain shards of Chinese porcelain, along with twigs, straw, and other binding material. This store is one of few adobe structures, and simply one of the oldest extant structures, associated with Chinese immigrants to California.

The building was constructed in 1851 and has a tin roof covering a simple gable construction. The gable ends are protected by a coat of cement with a prominent sign noting, "SUN SUN WO. CO. FOR MERCHANDISE". There is a simple front porch with a concrete floor and a similar back porch area. The shed-roofed addition consists of one large room 26' x 11' and two smaller rooms 9' x 11'. Originally used as living quarters for Chinese workers, this area was later used for storage. There is a single window in the adobe segment of the building on the west elevation with vertical iron bars permanently mounted. Another window, covered with hand-forged iron shutters and iron bars, is located on the north (facade) elevation. The wooden residential quarters has one window on the north side and five windows and a door on the east side. The main entrance to the adobe store is through two hand-forged iron doors that have a single latch inside. In addition, there are two screen doors with double-acting hinges and a set of wooden doors with six glass panes each. The rear entrance to the adobe store has a set of hand-forged iron doors that are fastened with two latches and can be operated from the outside. These latches are secured by two hand-made bolt locks that were opened by key.

The interior of the adobe store contains many of the original shelves, and the interior walls are covered with slake lime. The tongue-and-groove floor is original and consists of various widths of oiled lumber.

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A portion at the rear of the adobe store is panelled in wood and was used as an office area and living quarters for the proprietor. The ceiling of the adobe store has 10" x 4" ceiling joists on 21" centers. The area above the joists has been covered with planking and sealed. The adobe portion of the building has a basement extending the full length of the building. This area is entered through two iron doors with a single latch.

10. CANDY'S HOUSE

Built ca. 1905

Present Building Occupant: Vacant

Candy's House, or Candy's Place, is a wood-frame structure with board-and-batten siding and a metal roofing material. This building was built about 1905 and is 14' wide and 33' long. There is a simple front porch with a concrete floor and a more detailed wooden side porch that extends the entire length of the house. The main entrance is through the front (north), and it is flanked by two six-over-six double-hung sash. There is also an entrance from the east, through the side porch. There are no windows on the east elevation. There are three windows on the west side of the building. Attached at the rear of the building is a small shed-roofed extension. The main part of the structure is divided into three rooms.

Candy's House is the sole remnant of the once-thriving "Red-Light" District in Coulterville's Chinatown section of Main Street. A very old rose bush is located at the front entrance, said to date to the use of Candy's House for its original purpose.

11. CANOVA HOUSE

Built ca. 1860

Present Building Occupant: Private Residence

The history of this private residence cannot be verified with certainty, but local historical records suggest that it was built shortly after the fire of 1859, making it the oldest wood-frame structure along Coulterville's Main Street and in this district. The structure served as a residence for the Canova family, important to the commercial development of Coulterville. Its plan conforms to a common vernacular form in California's Mother Lode, a gabled residence surrounded by a three-sided porch. The original horizontal wood exterior siding is partially covered by asbestos shingles scored to simulate brick. The porch and roof are covered in metal roofing material.

12. IOOF BUILDING

Built 1900

Present Building Occupant: IOOF

This two-story wood-frame structure was constructed in 1900, shortly after the fire of 1899, on the site of an earlier lodge building. Its facade is dominated by a two-story veranda reaching across the width of the structure. This porch is supported by four turned columns at each level. Balusters on the second level are arranged in an interesting pattern of intersecting diagonals. The structure is sheathed in shiplap

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siding of redwood. Fenestration consists of six-over-six double-hung sash. A one-story extension was added to the rear of the lodge in 1925 and has served as a kitchen and dining area for the lodge. The interior of this structure is almost completely intact. A large meeting room surrounded by several smaller meeting rooms is located on the second story. The lower level is a large, open dance hall/meeting room, with a stage and proscenium at the rear.

13. ELLIS HOUSE Built ca. 1900  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

Very little is known of the history of this structure, presumed to have been constructed shortly after the fire of 1899. The structure is supported by mudsills, except at the rear where it rests directly on the ground. This structure represents a blending of several vernacular forms, incorporating a generally slabbox form with the addition of the three-sided porch found elsewhere in this district and throughout California's Mother Lode. Siding is board-and-batten. The gabled roof is covered in corrugated metal.

14. COMMISSIONA STORE Built 1900  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

The walls of this one-story structure are of cement. The gabled roof is covered in corrugated metal. There is a porch before this structure, also covered in corrugated metal. It is joined by a noncontributing side structure, faced in historically inaccurate fieldstone fixed in mortar. Mrs. Commissiona operated a store at this site both before and after the fire of 1899. The structure is vacant at present.

15. GAZZOLA BUILDING Built 1850, 1899  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

A two-story structure, with masonry first story dating to the 1850s and wood-frame second story dating to 1899. The first story here, as with adjoining structures and other buildings within this historic district, was burned out in the fires of 1859, 1879, and 1899, but rebuilt at each time with new interior partitions and a new roof and/or second story. Its present appearance, including the cement facing and large second-story space, date to the rebuilding effort following the fire of 1899. Until its abandonment in recent years, the structure was always used as a saloon.

16. GAZZOLA'S STORE Built 1860, 1900  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This property is in ruins, although continuing to make a strong contribution to the streetscape along this, the most concentrated commercial development along Coulterville's Main Street. The standing facade is of brick, partially faced in

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cement. The second story is seriously deteriorated. The left (northern) entrance is protected by two large iron doors. The right entrance includes two wooden doors with six glass panes and an overhead transom. The structure behind the facade is in ruins.

17. THE MINT Built 1860, 1900  
Present Building Occupant: Yosemite Sam's

This one-story structure, like buildings #15, #16, and #18 which adjoin it, is part of a row of masonry structures originally constructed in the 1850s or 1860s, burned in the fire of 1899 and subsequently rebuilt. The gabled wood-frame attic space dates to 1900, as does the interior space and central storefront area. The recessed entrance to this storefront is the most decorative and specifically "Victorian" of the many storefronts in the Coulterville Main Street Historic District.

18. BRUSCHI WAREHOUSE Built 1860, 1900

This structure, the masonry shell of which dates to 1860, served for many years as a warehouse for the Bruschi Store across the street. The wood-frame attic space dates to 1900, as does the porch, which is supported by turned wooden columns. The gabled roof and porch are covered in corrugated metal. There are two entrances at the facade, one gained through heavy metal doors, the other through paired wooden doors with six glass panes each. The masonry walls are at present covered in cement.

19. WAREHOUSE/POWDER HOUSE Built ca. 1860, with 1940 addition  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This small structure, like the bulk of the Coulterville Main Street Historic District, is a survivor of the great fires of the nineteenth century with masonry remnants augmented by more recent wooden additions. The original structure, facing Water Street, is an interesting composite of local materials, the walls chiefly composed of schist slabs laid in mortar, but with end walls of adobe. This structure was constructed in 1860 and served as a powder house for mining related explosives. Because of the volatility of their content, very few powder houses have survived, and this is the only known such structure in Mariposa County utilizing adobe materials. The wood-frame rear extension was added in the late 1930s or 1940s in an attempt to convert this industrial structure into a private residence. The entire structure is covered by a corrugated metal roof.

20. LAWSON BUILDING Built 1979  
Present Building Occupant: U. S. Post Office, Lawson Realty

This one-story wood-frame structure, the only noncontributing structure in the Coulterville Main Street Historic District, was built in 1979. It makes some attempt to conform to the architectural character of the district, utilizing a false front and multiple-sided wooden porch.

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21. E. E. WARNE STORE Built 1899  
Present Building Occupant: Sherlock's Americana

A two-story structure with poured concrete first-story walls and a wood-frame second story. The facade is dominated by a two-story veranda supported by four large turned columns. A simple balustrade encloses the second-story porch. Side and rear second-story siding is board-and-batten, pierced by irregularly placed windows. The facade was originally sheathed in pressed tin, simulating rough stonework, similar to the siding on the Jeffrey Hotel (structure #1) directly across the street. This siding has deteriorated and has been replaced on the first story; remnants are visible above the veranda.

22. WAREHOUSE Built ca. 1900  
Present Building Occupant: Vacant

This structure includes four walls of poured concrete with a corrugated metal roof. The structure represents the rear portion of a previously existing structure, presumably serving as a storehouse, perhaps for valuables or explosives. It can be accessed through an iron door which once opened onto the second story of the previously existing structure. While partially in ruins, this structure is located at the rear of the parcel for structure #21, a district contributor, and contributes to the sense of time and place within this district.

23. TRADING POST Built 1860, 1910  
Present Building Occupant: Coulterville Trading Post

This structure, like the bulk of this historic district, is the product of several phases of construction, destruction by fire, and rebuilding. The 1860 brick shell is essentially intact, although cluttered with numerous alterations over more than a century of use and rebuilding. The design intent of this structure, however, clearly survives these many alterations. A corbelled brick course with dentil detailing surrounds the structure near its original cornice line. A plain frieze surmounts this corbelling. Quoin-like brick patterns accentuate the four corners and surround all door and window openings. A gabled roof with corrugated metal roofing and vertical board gable ends surmounts the original brick structure. Several doorways have been enclosed or partially enclosed with concrete and stone. A large canopy and gasoline service bay have been added at the facade. Small noncontributing structures adjoin the original structure on the south and east.

24. COULTER HOTEL Built 1860  
Present Building Occupant: Northern Mariposa County History Center

Although in structural disrepair, this stone hotel is historically a key component of the Coulterville commercial area. Constructed in 1860 by George Coulter, the town's founder, this hotel occupied a prominent site at the intersection of Main Street and the

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wagon road that is now Highway 49. This structure is constructed chiefly of schist slab, which forms the foundation as well as three walls. The facade, however, is built of neatly dressed locally quarried sandstone block. Soapstone, rhyolite, and tuffaceous sandstone were often used in the Mother Lode to add elegance to structures built of rough and common stone. The Coulter Hotel is the only extant example of this architectural type in Coulterville. The stone walls of this structure remain but have begun to collapse in several key places. Concrete blocks have been added for emergency support of the soapstone blocks at one of the former entrances to the hotel. The Northern Mariposa County History Center intends to rehabilitate this structure as faithfully as possible to its original appearance and utilize it as an historical museum.

25. McCARTHY BUILDING

Built 1860; 1879; 1899

This structure, like the Coulter Hotel next door, dates to the late Gold Rush period. Its 1860 brick first story is largely intact, including three sets of iron doors at the facade. Like other structures in this district, this brick building has a late nineteenth century gabled roof built atop the original roof, covered with corrugated metal on the roof and at the gable ends. A recently added porch with corrugated metal roof extends across the facade, covering a porch area built upon a rock foundation and covered with wooden planking. Between 1879 and 1899, this structure served as the Wells Fargo office for Coulterville. It is vacant at present.

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Among the many foreign settlers who came to Coulterville in the early days of the Gold Rush was Francisco Bruschi. Bruschi was born in Genoa, Italy in 1828 but immigrated to New York. While in the East, Bruschi met and married Rosa Castagnetto. In 1850, the Bruschis came to San Francisco, where Francisco learned the cobbler's trade. He decided, however, to move to Coulterville, and here he opened a shoemaker's shop. A year later, at the suggestion of George Coulter, he built another store next to his shoe shop (#4). The Second Store, as it was called, was to stock general merchandise, and thereby assisted Coulter by supplying the need for goods that the growing community demanded.

Estimates of Coulterville's population during the 1850s vary. Many miners came to Coulterville, stayed at one of the hotels, worked for a short while, and left. Moreover, the Coulterville mining district was large, extending about fifty miles from New Year's diggings to Hazel Green. Miners from all the surrounding areas came to Coulterville for supplies and entertainment. It seems likely that the population of semi-permanent residents in Coulterville during the boom days was about five thousand, of which nearly one thousand were Chinese. Yet, the town certainly catered to a population of over twice that number.

Hardrock mining, on the other hand, played a significant role in the growth of the town of Coulterville. The development of hardrock mining began in 1849, when the quartz veins, or lodes, were first discovered. After a brief period of public excitement over the new source of wealth, the boom in quartz subsided due to the difficulties involved in extracting and processing the auriferous ore. While free gold was still plentiful in the sand and gravel beds of streams, few miners concerned themselves with investing vast sums in machinery, or with acquiring the technical knowledge necessary to obtain the gold from quartz ore. Indeed, the technical know-how to design and install the heavy stamp equipment used to crush the ore required the services of mining engineers. Moreover, the extraction methods used in separating the precious metal from the waste were often complex and depended on the particular type of ore being mined.

The real beginning of lode mining came, therefore, not in 1849 but sometime in the late 1850s. For the succeeding fifty years, lode mines like the Mary Harrison, Malvina, Louise, and Potosi poured forth millions of dollars in gold that contributed largely to the prosperity and improvement of the town of Coulterville.

By 1859, Coulterville was a thriving community. Numerous small businesses had blossomed and were doing well in those prosperous times. Francisco Bruschi's merchandising business had become so successful that he had added a warehouse to his other properties in 1847.

On July 19, 1859, the first in a series of great fires swept through the town. The residents of Coulterville rebuilt their town above the ashes and foundations of the devastated area. Fire was an ever-present danger to the mining communities built in the arid foothills of the Sierra Nevada.

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By the beginning of the 1860s, the best days of California mining were already past. As the gold output from the mines declined, so did the number engaged in producing it. When the news of other gold strikes and of the "excitement" over the Comstock Lode silver strike reached the Southern mines, many restless miners departed for the richer diggings.

There was still great optimism concerning the wealth that was believed to lie in the quartz mines of Mariposa County. Coulterville was fortunate to have several rich quartz mines in the vicinity which provided employment to a comparatively large population in the mills, foundries, machine shops, and other industries dependent upon them. Many miners who had experience in subterranean mining gave up their independence and went to work for one of the mining companies that were organized and financed to mine the quartz ore.

At a time when many small communities of the Southern mines were abandoned, Coulterville continued to enjoy prosperity. After the 1859 fire, the town was rebuilt on a grand scale. Along Main, Sutter, Water, and Stockton Streets were erected general stores, a Wells Fargo office, and finely-equipped saloons and gambling halls. Coulter reopened his hotel at a new location and advertised that he had made such additions and improvements as were demanded by increased travel and patronage. One of these improvements was an ingenious water system that Coulter had designed for the hotel. It consisted of a pump driven by a flywheel that was forty feet around and had a two-foot rim. Coulter trained his two black Newfoundland dogs to operate the pump by running inside the wheel. When the hotel's water tank became full, the wheel stopped automatically.

The stores of Antonia Tiscorgnia, Pendola and Company and Francisco Bruschi were doing a thriving business. The blacksmiths, Bill Shimer and Tom Harlow, along with Oliver Fiske, were busy attending the needs of the growing freight and shipping business. With the gradual improvement of the roads, the wagon and team began to replace the pack mule as the most efficient method of shipping freight from the valley towns to the surrounding mountain communities. Throughout this period, which lasted well into the twentieth century, most goods and passengers were conveyed in either wagon or horse stage. Even the bricks that were used to rebuild the town in a more permanent fashion after the fire of 1859 were hauled by wagon from Stockton.

The town school was housed at this time on the ground floor of the newly built Yosemite Masonic Lodge building. The lodge stood on the same site as the contemporary school building. During the 1860s, the enrollment of children in the school was one hundred twenty, of which a number were local Indians.

Up until 1860, mining had been the chief industry of California. After that year, both agriculture and manufacturing surpassed it in importance. During the 1860s, a considerable number of small farmers, fruit growers, and dairymen settled in the foothills, while other men grazed sheep and cattle on the unfenced range land of the Sierra.



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The advent of rural husbandry greatly changed the ethnic composition of the mining counties. The agricultural population was much more "American" than were the miners. It was significant that in the census of 1870 the greatest increase in the proportion of native-born occurred in those former mining counties where agriculture had made the most progress. In 1860, the foreign-born were the majority in all three of the main counties of the Southern mines. By 1870, the departure of many of the independent miners, coupled with the immigration of American settlers during the Civil War, changed the racial composition to parity. The census of 1870 also showed that the overall population of Mariposa County declined to 4,572, of which a little less than half resided in the Coulterville area.

Tourism was another important industry which began to develop in the late 1860s and early 1870s. Yosemite Valley had been discovered accidentally in 1850 by Major Savage and the Mariposa Battalion while they were endeavoring to check the frequent Indian raids on white settlers. For the five years following its discovery, Yosemite Valley remained almost unknown and unvisited. In the summer of 1855, J. M. Hutchings, accompanied by a group from Coulterville, went there for the purpose of sketching and describing the valley.

By the middle 1860s, Yosemite was beginning to attract many visitors, and hotels were built in the valley to accommodate them. Prior to the construction of the first wagon road into Yosemite, the only access to the valley was by horse, mule, or on foot over precipitous trails. Stage roads were needed to provide safe transportation to the valley for the increasing numbers of tourists. In 1868, local men of Tuolumne County responded to an appeal by Mr. Hutchings by organizing a road company. A franchise for fifty years was granted to the company on February 20, 1869, on the condition that the road be completed by July 1871. It was to be called the Big Oak Flat and Yosemite Toll Road Company.

The businessmen of Coulterville realized by 1870 that they would either have to construct a road of their own to the valley or lose the patronage of the growing tourist trade. They quickly organized the Coulterville and Yosemite Turnpike Company and incorporated in June 1871, with Dr. John T. McLean as president.

While surveying the route, the men from Coulterville rediscovered and named the Merced Grove of Big Trees. They decided to detour the road through the grove and, in doing so, abandoned six miles of completed roadway that went to Crane Flat. The new route was to run from Coulterville up Brake Leather Grade to Greeley Hill, then to Bower Cave through to Merced Grove, then Big Meadow and on to the valley floor. In June 1874, the first wheeled vehicles entered the valley by way of the Coulterville Road.

As time passed, it became evident that the Coulterville Turnpike, although well managed by its owner, Dr. McLean, was not getting enough traffic to prosper. McLean continued to defend his exclusive franchise of the toll road by arguing that only by this means could the company's financiers recoup the high cost of construction.

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The Coulterville Turnpike was the first stagecoach road to have reached the floor of Yosemite Valley. Its completion signaled the opening of a new era in the history of Yosemite Valley tourism. Stimulated by the publicity given to the valley by Hutchings and other enthusiasts, tourists began to travel to the Mother Lode in large numbers to see for themselves the Yosemite wonderland. For them, the stagecoach provided some degree of comfort and safety. For a short time, Coulterville enjoyed a monopoly of the tourist trade bound for Yosemite until the competing Big Oak Flat route was opened. After that, these roads shared the traffic until both were eclipsed by the opening of the Yosemite Valley Railroad in 1906.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Coulterville benefited from the economic stimulus that the influx of tourists brought, and the town experienced a second boom period. New hotels were opened to accommodate the staging tourists. The most imposing of these was the elegant Jeffrey Hotel, built on the site of the old "Adobe". George Jeffrey, an English emigrant, had acquired the property during the 1850s. He built a three-story hotel in the 1870s, using the original Mexican masonry as part of the superstructure. The Wagner Hotel, located in the building that had been Coulter's first hotel, also catered to many distinguished visitors.

At a time when the town's prospects seemed bright a second disastrous fire razed Coulterville. The Mariposa Gazette reported that on July 9, 1879, a fire "swept away nearly one-half of that beautiful village". The fire had started in the Reed house, where Mrs. Reed ran a bakery. As with the fire twenty years earlier, most of the business section was destroyed. A contemporary estimate of the financial loss was placed at well over \$27,000.

After the fire of 1879, Coulterville was rapidly rebuilt, with many buildings being enlarged. New hotels were built to replace those destroyed. The Jeffrey Hotel was rebuilt, this time as a two-story structure. The Coulter properties on the west side of Stockton Street had passed through various hands. In 1879, William J. McCarthy acquired the buildings next to Coulter's hotel from Nelson Cody, brother of the famous Buffalo Bill. Here, McCarthy operated the Wells Fargo Express Agency and a drug store. This building curiously managed to avoid destruction during the 1879 fire.

The Coulter Hotel building directly adjacent to McCarthy's business was also unaffected by the 1879 fire. In this case, however, it was because the building was already in ruins when the fire occurred. Although the Coulter Hotel was no longer owned by the Coulter family, it was rebuilt as a three-story structure some time in the 1890s and operated as the Coulter Hotel until it was again destroyed by fire in 1899. George Coulter was living in Yosemite at this time, where he and a Mr. Murphy were operating a hotel.

In the early 1880s, quartz mining still boomed, and the stamp mills continued to operate. The larger mines of the Coulterville area now worked around the clock in three shifts; the average miner's pay at that time was forty-four cents an hour.

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It was during the last two decades of the nineteenth century that quartz mining enjoyed its last era of prosperity. The most prominent mines that were operated during this period were those belonging to the Merced Gold Mining Company. One of the most important of this group was the Mary Harrison, located not quite two miles south of Coulterville. The Mary Harrison shaft was dug to a depth of twelve hundred feet and was equipped with a splendid hoist and every facility for mining. During the early 1890s, the Merced Gold Mining Company began construction of the first steam railroad in Mariposa County. The thirty-inch, narrow gauge track ran from the Mary Harrison mine to Coulterville, where it crossed Maxwell Creek on a wooden trestle which was fifty-three feet high. It then wound its way along the contours of the hills until it reached the forty-stamp mill at the Potosi mine on Black Creek. Construction of the track and trestle was completed in 1897 under the direction of Dan G. Kidder, a prominent mining engineer.

In the same year, the Merced Gold Mining Company purchased an eight-ton Porter locomotive for \$3,500. The engine traveled by boat around Cape Horn to Stockton and by rail to Waterford and finally by team to Coulterville. The problem of transporting the engine from Waterford to Coulterville was solved by the Fiske Freighting Company. The locomotive was placed on a logging wagon and hauled the thirty-five miles by mule teams. An eighteen-mule team was needed to pull the load up Penon Grade, the last steep hill just north of Coulterville. The journey took thirty days to complete.

The engine has been affectionately called both Whistling Billy and Leaping Lena. It served the Merced Gold Mining Company for many years by hauling quartz ore from the Mary Harrison to the Potosi stamp mill, a distance of about four miles. Ore ran \$7 to \$12 a ton in those days, and the mine produced more than a million dollars in gold. The Santa Fe Railroad advertised it once as "the crookedest railroad in the world".

By 1890, the unparalleled chapter of American history which followed the discovery of gold was drawing rapidly to a close. Coulterville still depended largely on the mines for employment for its citizens and business for its merchants. Some residents, however, had abandoned work in the mines to pursue horticulture and farming. Locally produced vegetables were shipped to Yosemite and to other towns along the Mother Lode. Experiments with viticulture were also tried, and grapes were planted wherever the soil and drainage permitted. Slowly but surely, the economic reliance of the town was shifting away from mining toward diversified agriculture.

The older generation of miners noticed these subtle changes. Those of the pioneers of the 1850s who remained gathered in hotel bars and lodge halls to reminisce of the early days. In good weather, these older men, known affectionately as the "Grand Jury", would sit outside on Main Street under the umbrella trees and discuss the passing of the heroes of the Gold Rush.

On July 8, 1899, Coulterville was once again ravaged by fire. For the third and last time, Coulterville was destroyed.

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The three major fires in Coulterville's history occurred at twenty-year intervals, always in the month of July. There were, however, other minor fires; one in particular had destroyed Chinatown some time earlier, but none of these caused such extensive damage as the July fires.

The painful difficulties of the struggle to build a new town on the ruins of the old caused many Coulterville residents to despair. True, the town had recovered from two earlier fires, and buildings could be rebuilt, but many businessmen felt that their energies and resources would be better spent elsewhere. Perhaps they saw the signs that pointed to the end of mining as an important industry. A few stalwart ones remained, however, and reconstruction was begun. By 1900, the Main Street still bore the signs of the fire.

The Jeffrey Hotel was left in ruins until the end of 1902, when construction of the present three-story building was begun. Similarly, the Percy Davis property, which had earlier been the Holborn Store, was left derelict until after 1902.

Mining continued at the Mary Harrison until 1903, when it was permanently shut down. All the buildings on the property were destroyed by a forest fire in 1926. Other mines of the area continued working at a reduced pace until the United States entered World War II in 1941.

The population of Coulterville dwindled throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. Many young men left the town in 1906 to work on the reconstruction of San Francisco after the great fire and earthquake, and few returned to Coulterville.

Although Chinatown was still flourishing in 1903, by 1910, most of the Chinese population had left for San Francisco or the valley towns. In 1910, the town's total population had dropped to about six hundred and, ten years later, the number had further declined to less than half that number.

In 1906, the Yosemite Valley Railroad was completed. The railroad replaced the horse-drawn stages that operated between Merced and Yosemite Valley over the Coulterville road. When Yosemite Valley was established as a National Park in 1906, there were no appropriations for purchasing the privately owned toll roads. The government offered to maintain the roads if the turnpike companies would declare them toll free. The Big Oak Flat Company accepted, but the Coulterville Road Company refused. The Coulterville road rapidly fell into comparative disuse, with accompanying disrepair. The Mariposa County Board of Supervisors declared the section of the Coulterville road from Hazel Green to the valley a public highway in 1911, and a complex lawsuit followed, with Mary McLean, daughter of Dr. John McLean, demanding the right to collect tolls. This eventually involved the National Park Service in 1917. Her rights were refused because no maintenance had been done since 1908.

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The road was, however, open to use during this period and, in 1913, the automobiles were allowed to enter the park via the Coulterville road.

In 1940, a modern highway was built along the Merced River which superseded both the Big Oak Flat and the Coulterville routes. This highway became the preferred route into the valley for most tourists, and its competition with the Yosemite Valley Railroad led to the abandonment of the train service in 1945.

During the Depression of the 1930s, a brief revival of gold mining occurred. Stimulated by the price of gold reaching thirty-five dollars an ounce and the shortage of work in other industries, young men came to the mines not to get rich but to survive. Several mines in the Coulterville area remained open until 1941.

During the past several decades, few changes have been visited upon the town of Coulterville. It has remained a small hamlet. The tempo of the town is quickened slightly only during the summer months when the visitors come. Those tourists who have a taste for history take pleasure in the brick and stone buildings along Main Street, whose old iron shutters are authentic insignia of an early mining town.

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Shirley, Mr. and Mrs. Charles  
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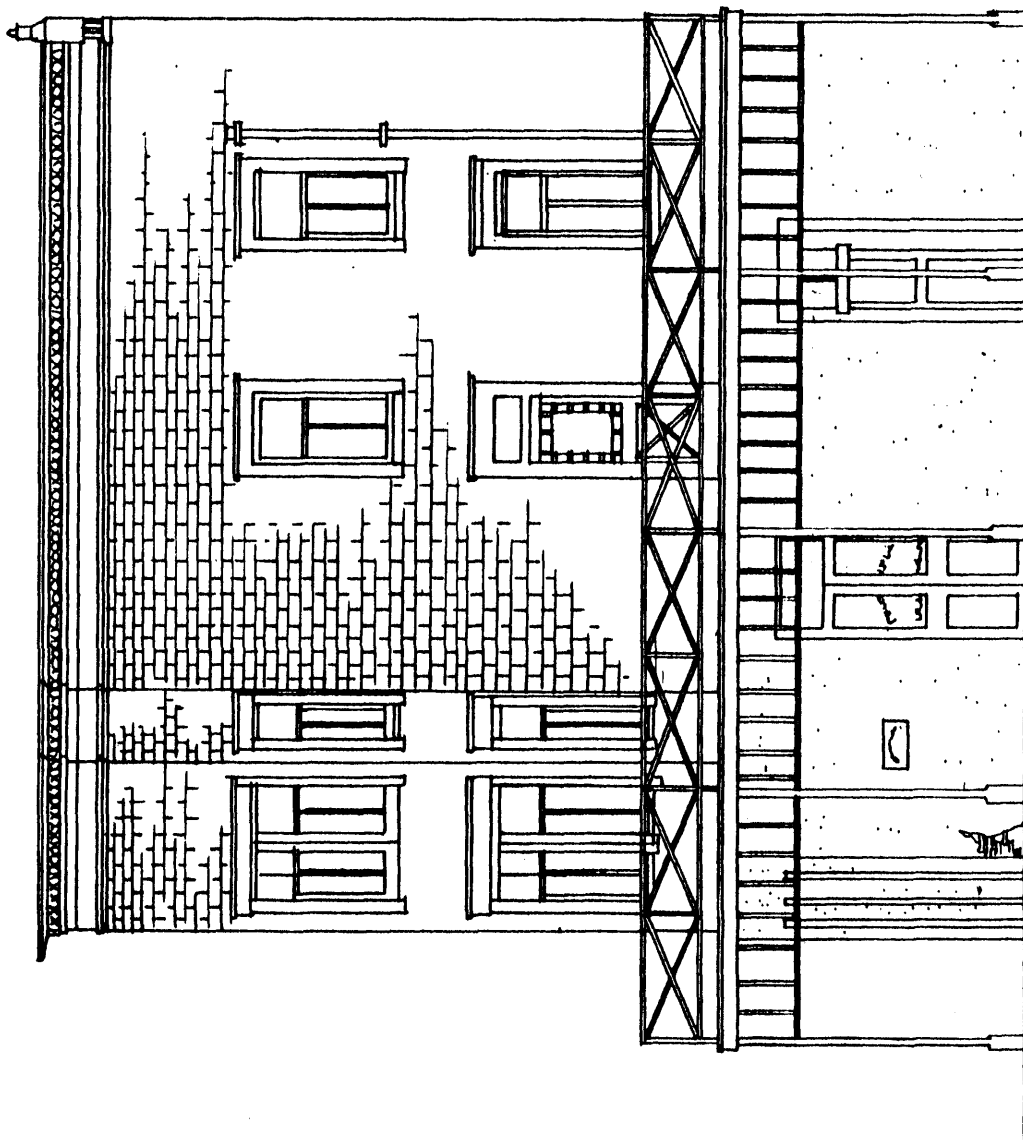
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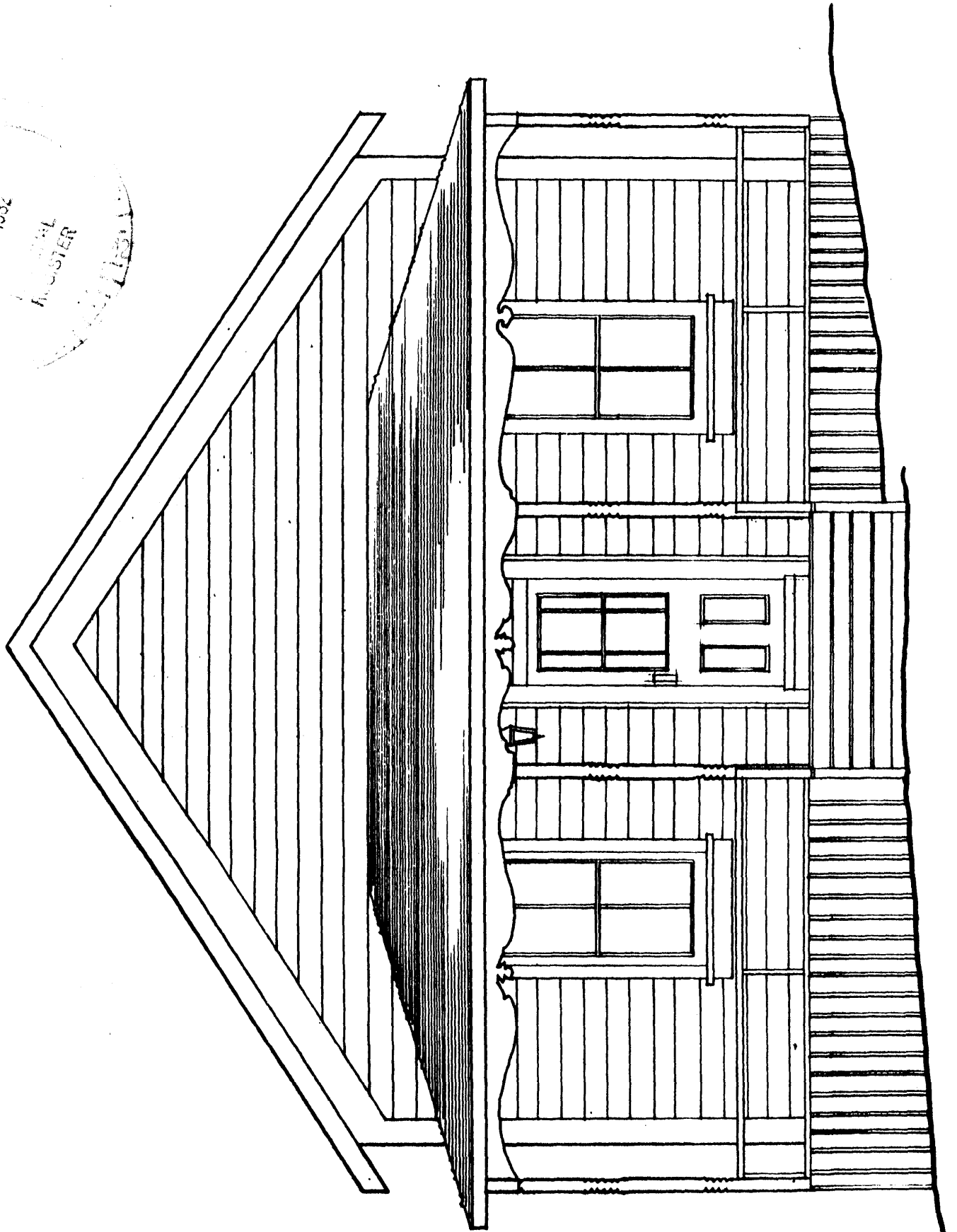
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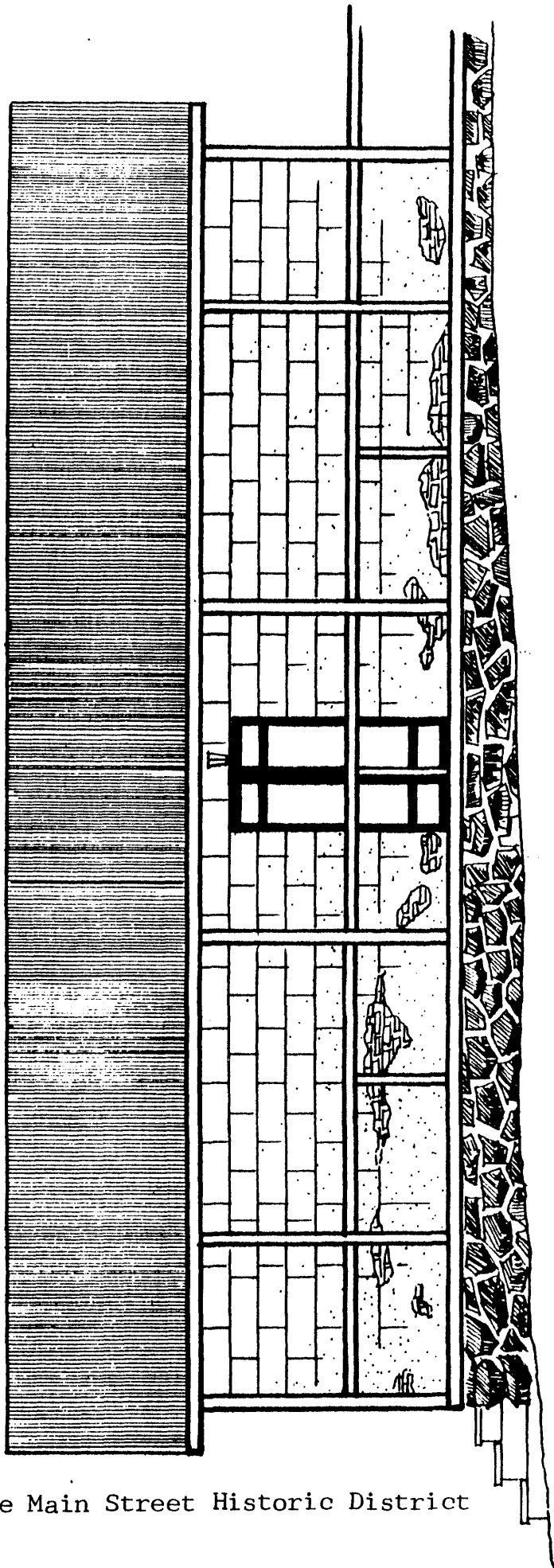
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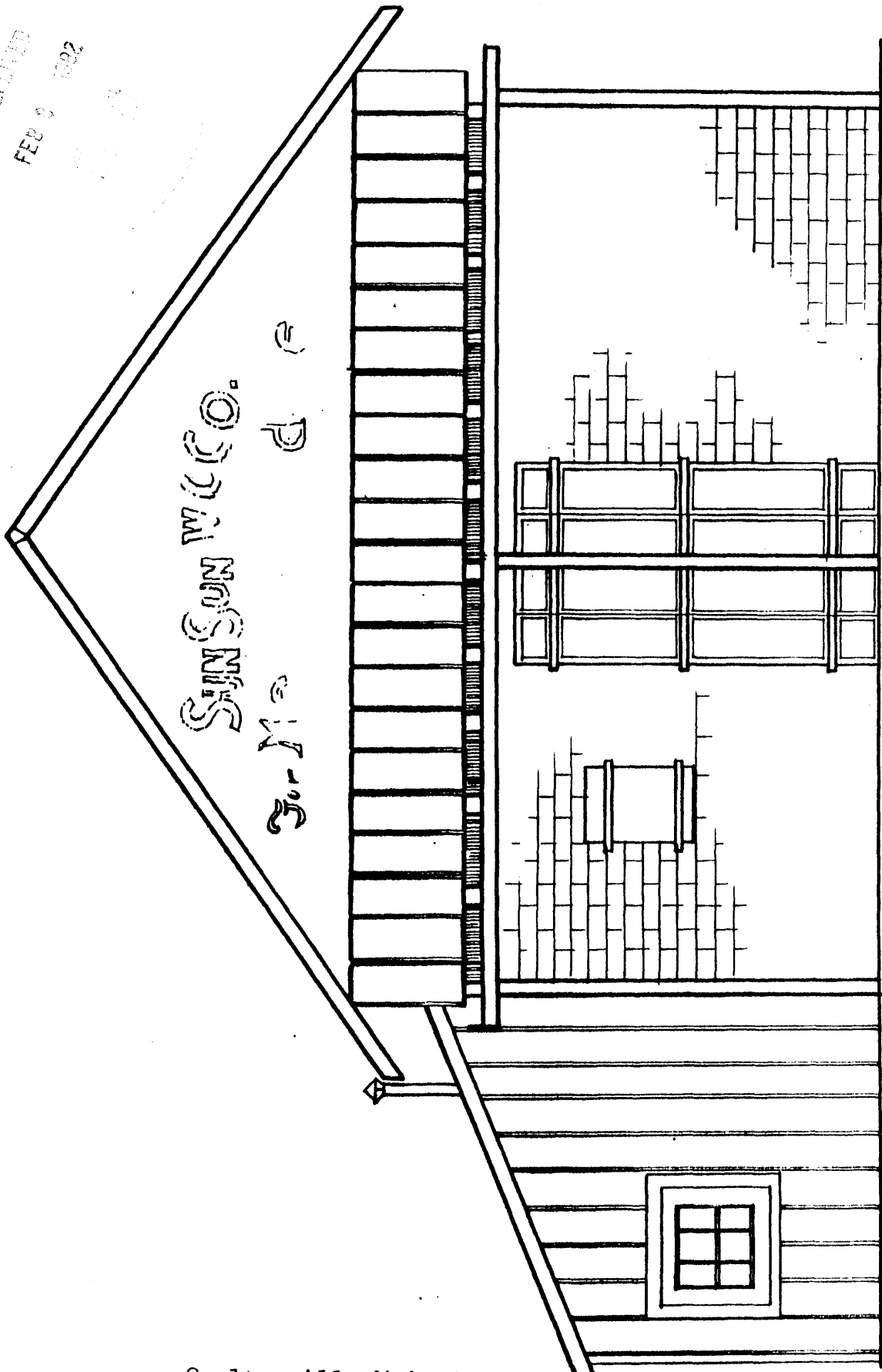


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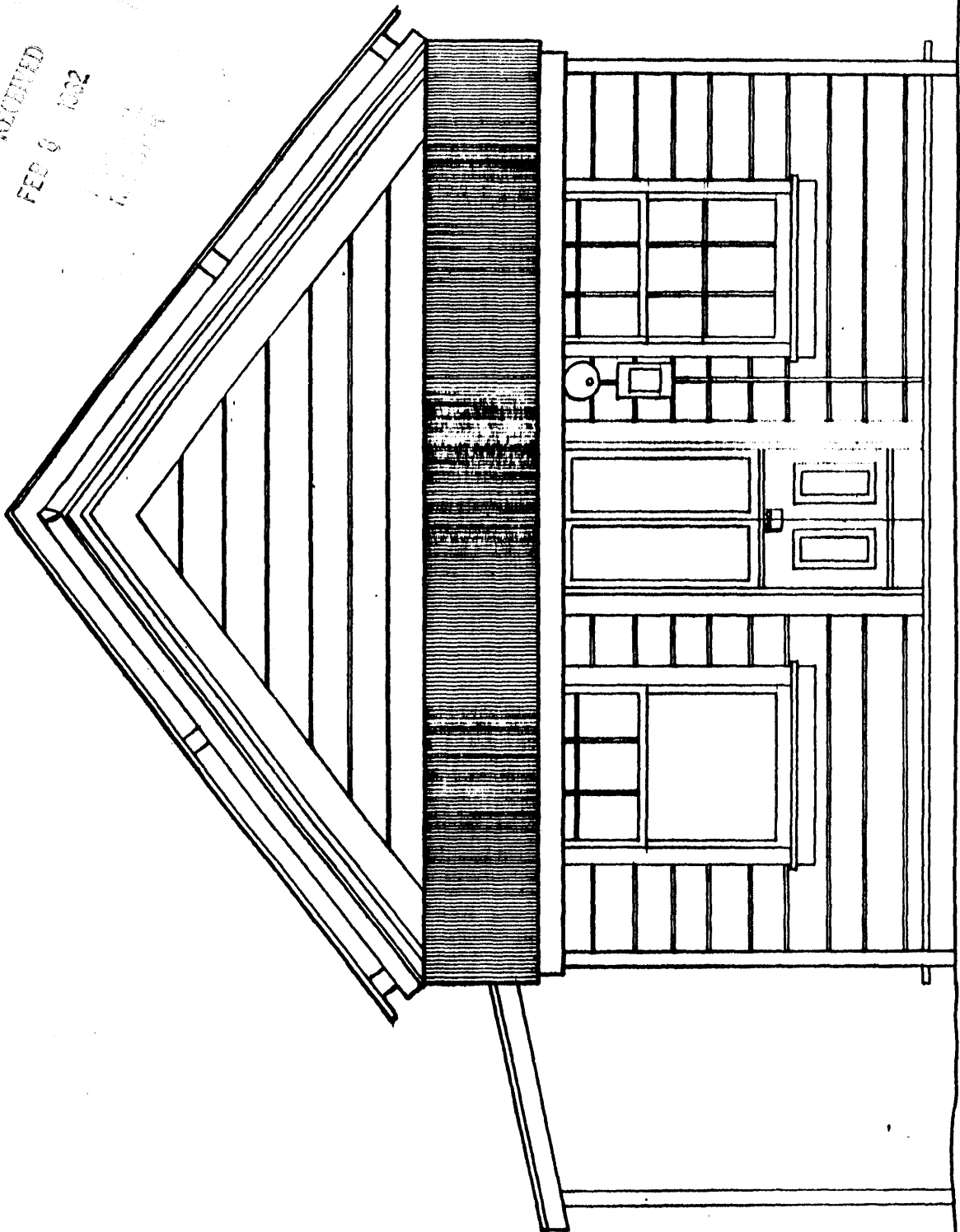


SHINSON W & CO.

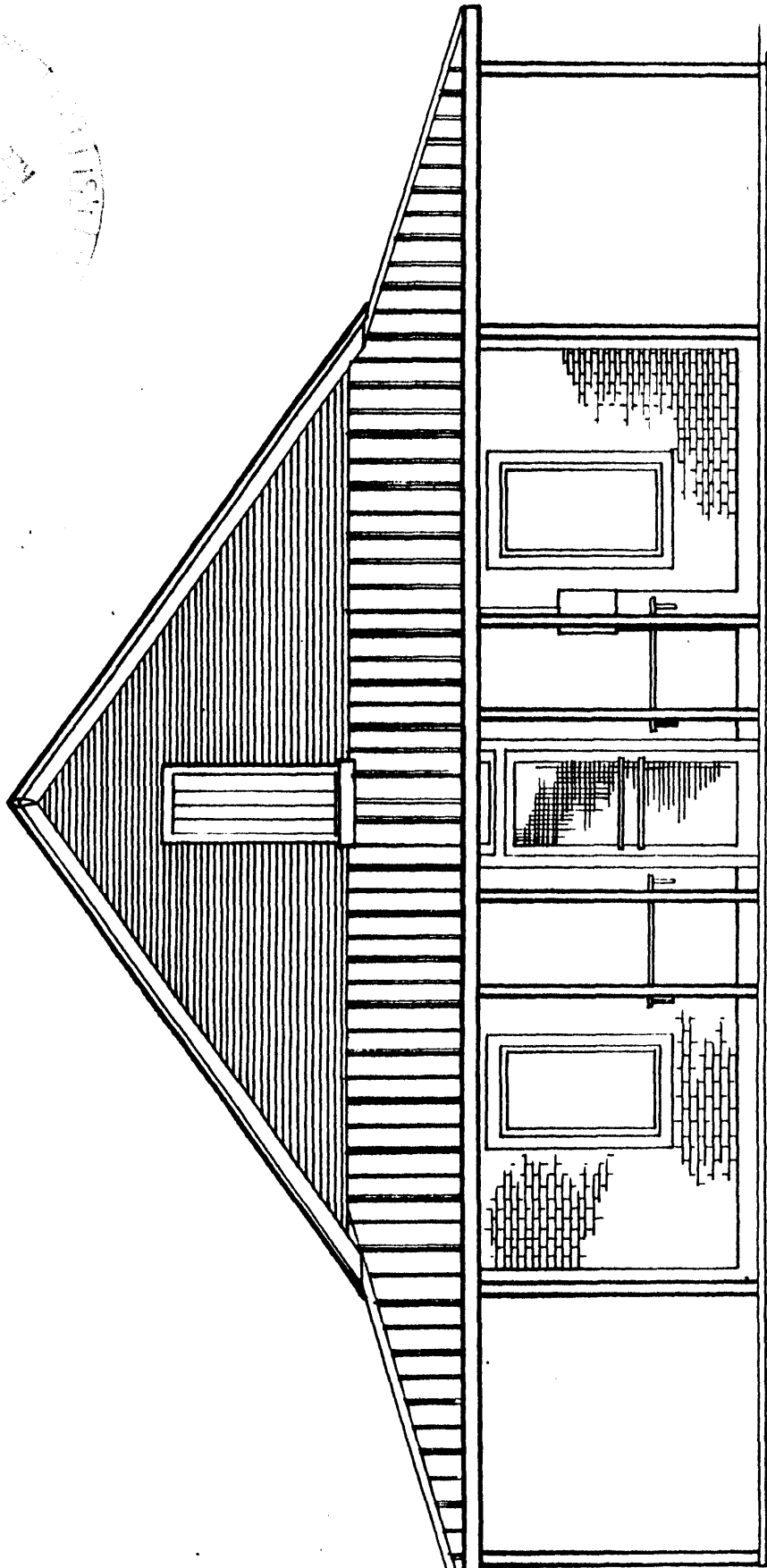
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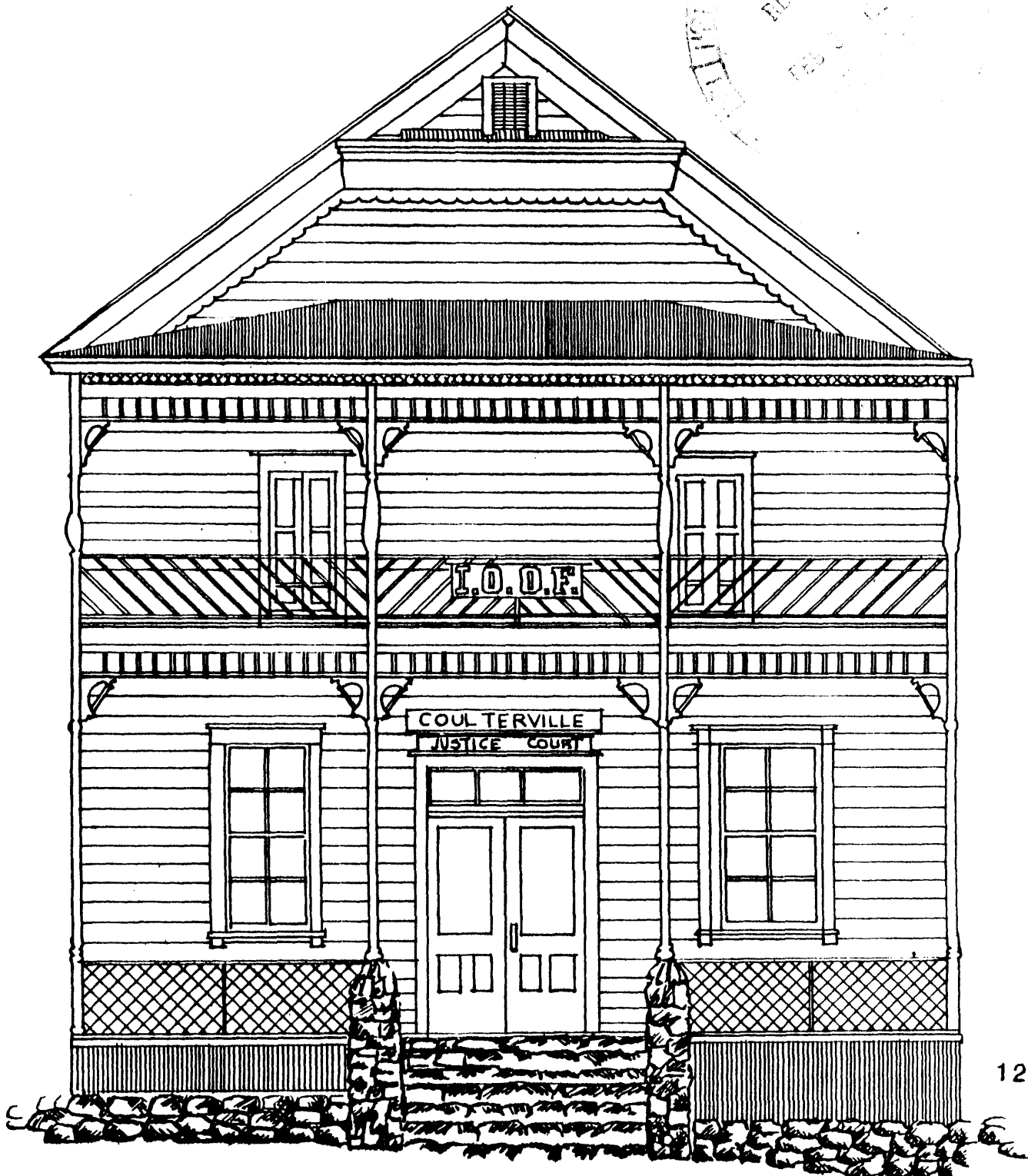
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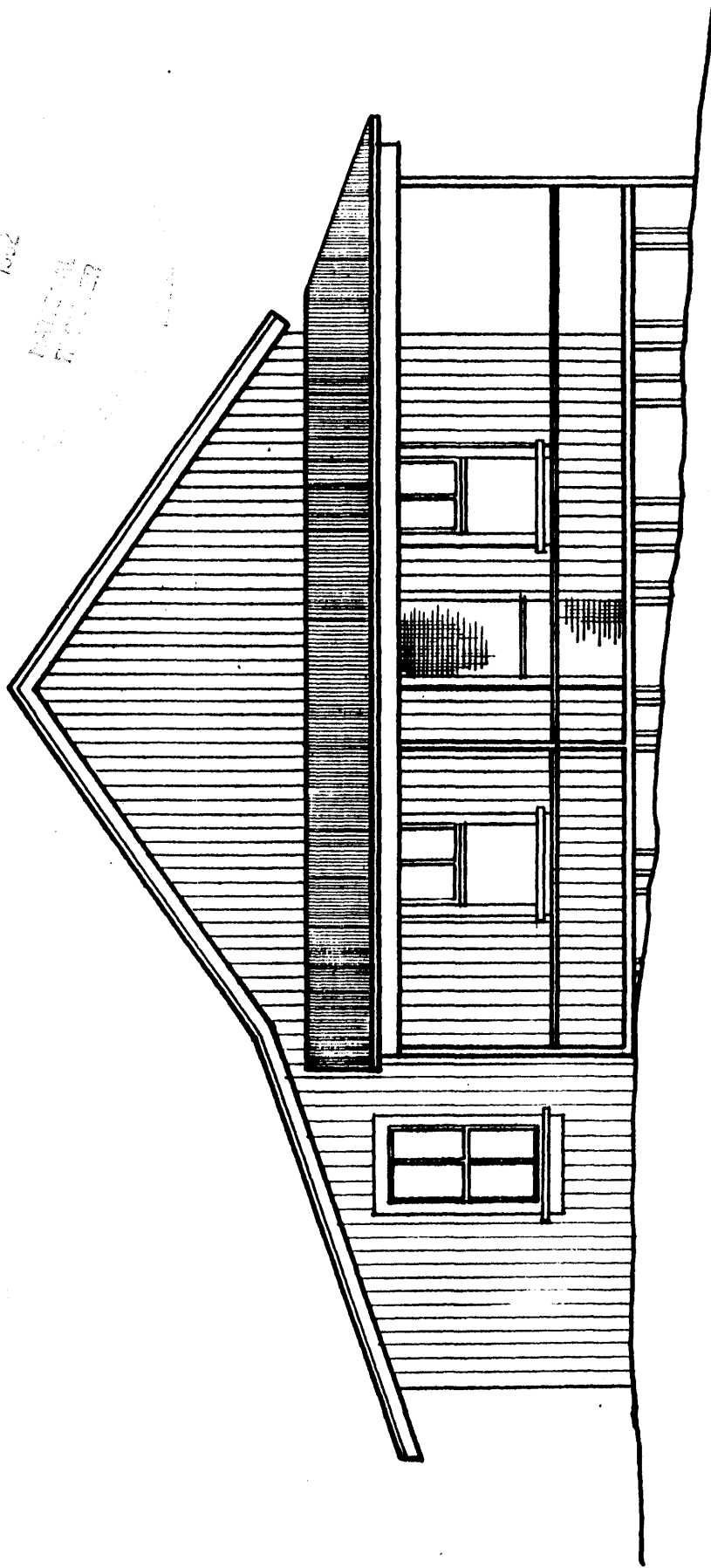
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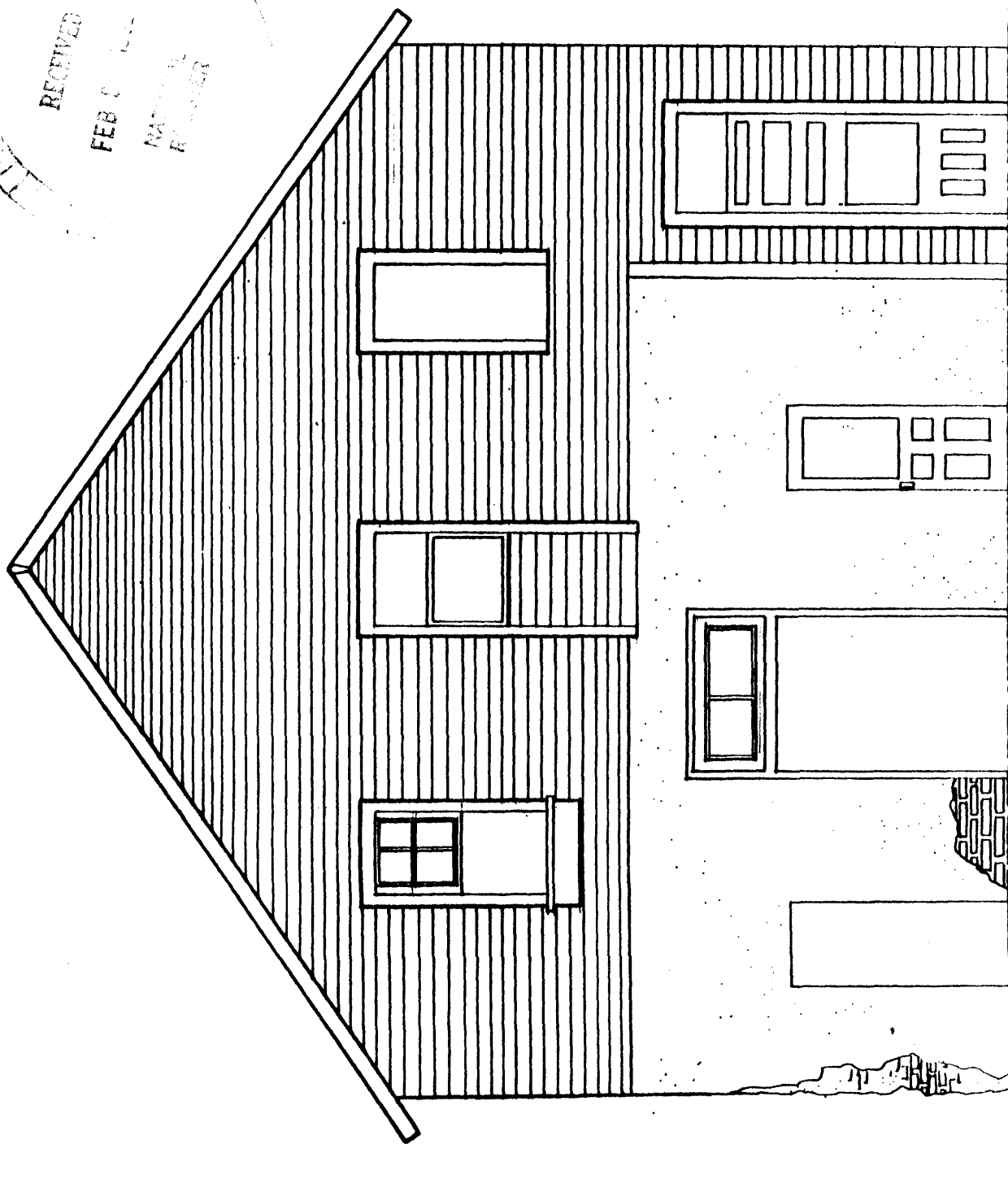
Coulterville Main Street Historic District

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PLANNING DEPARTMENT

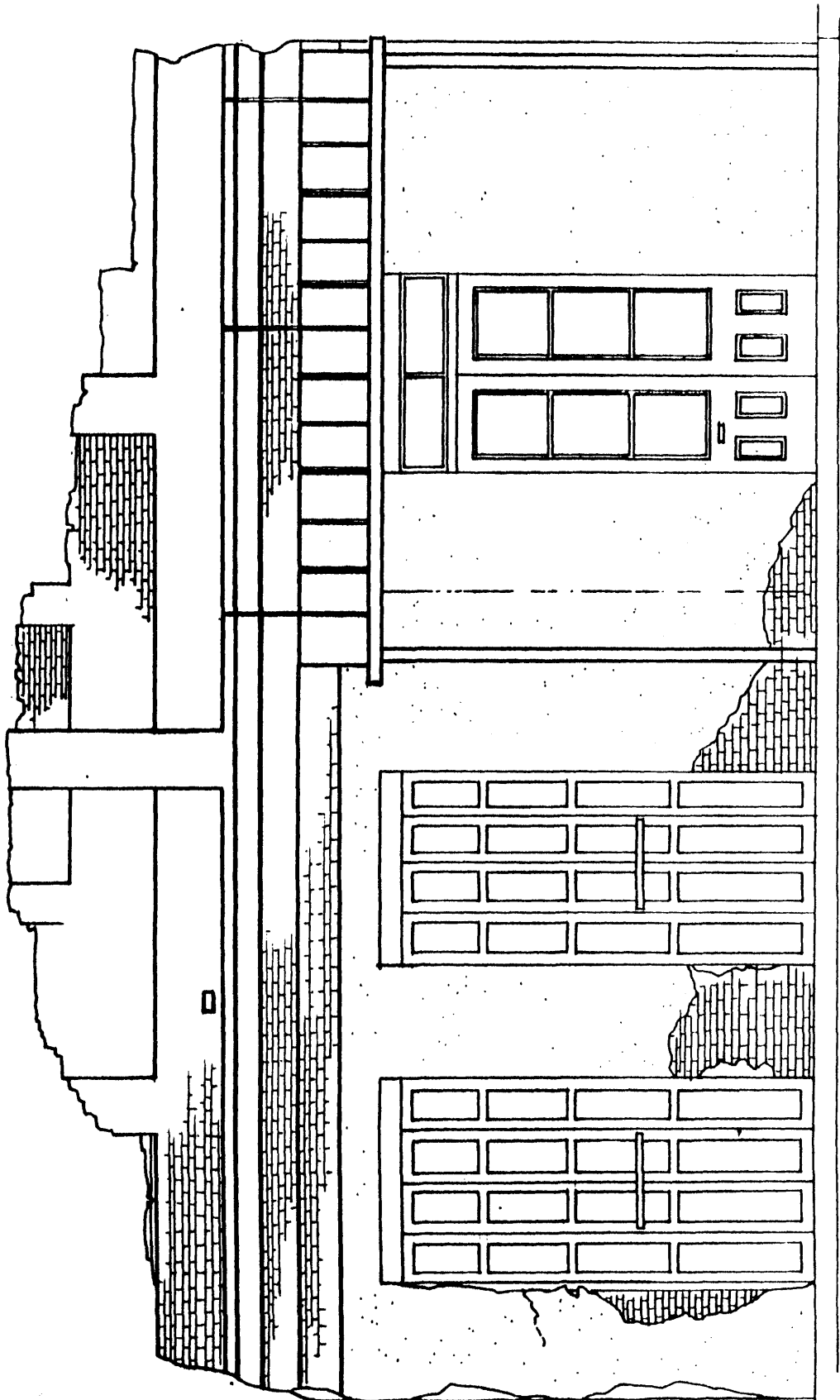




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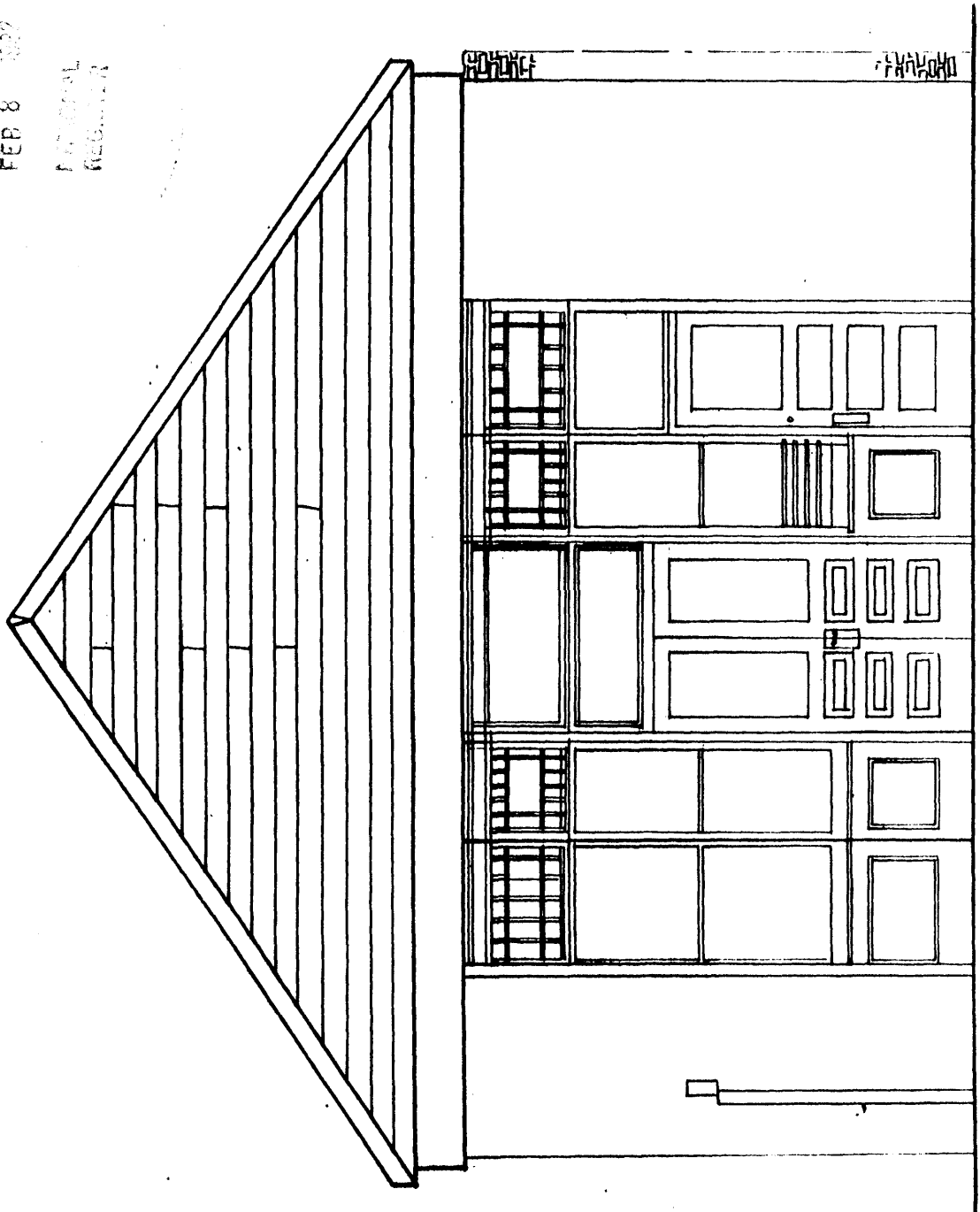
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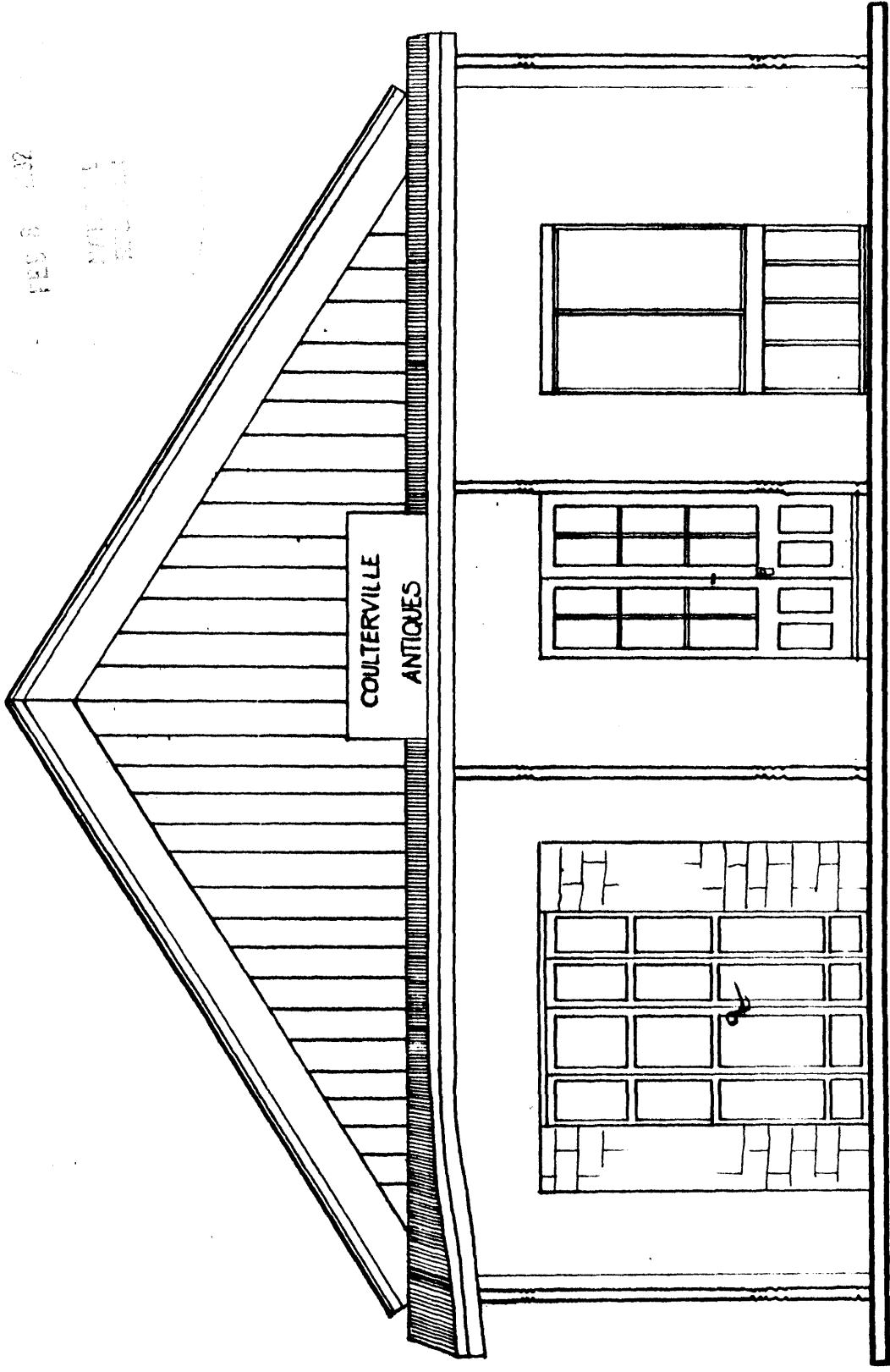
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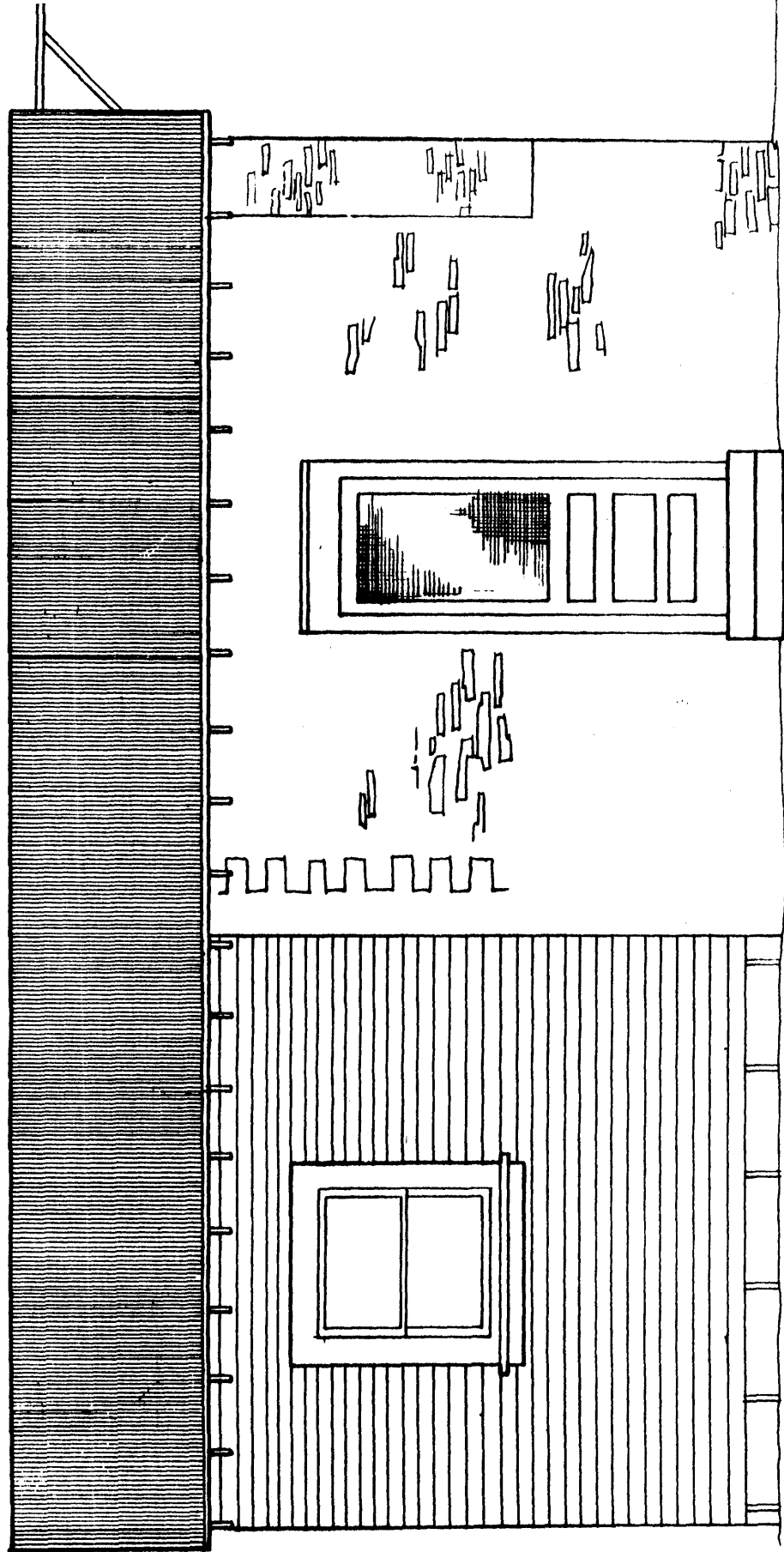
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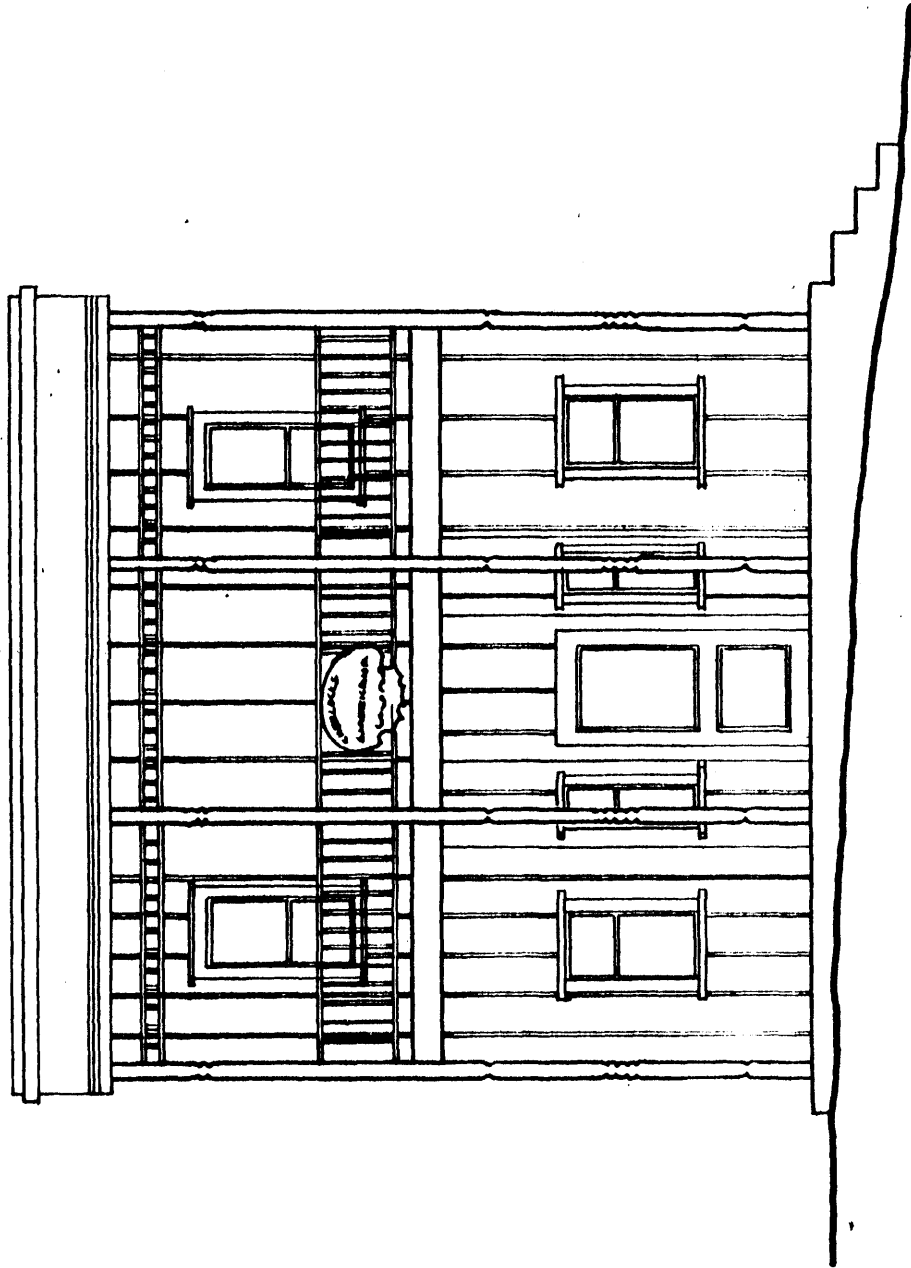


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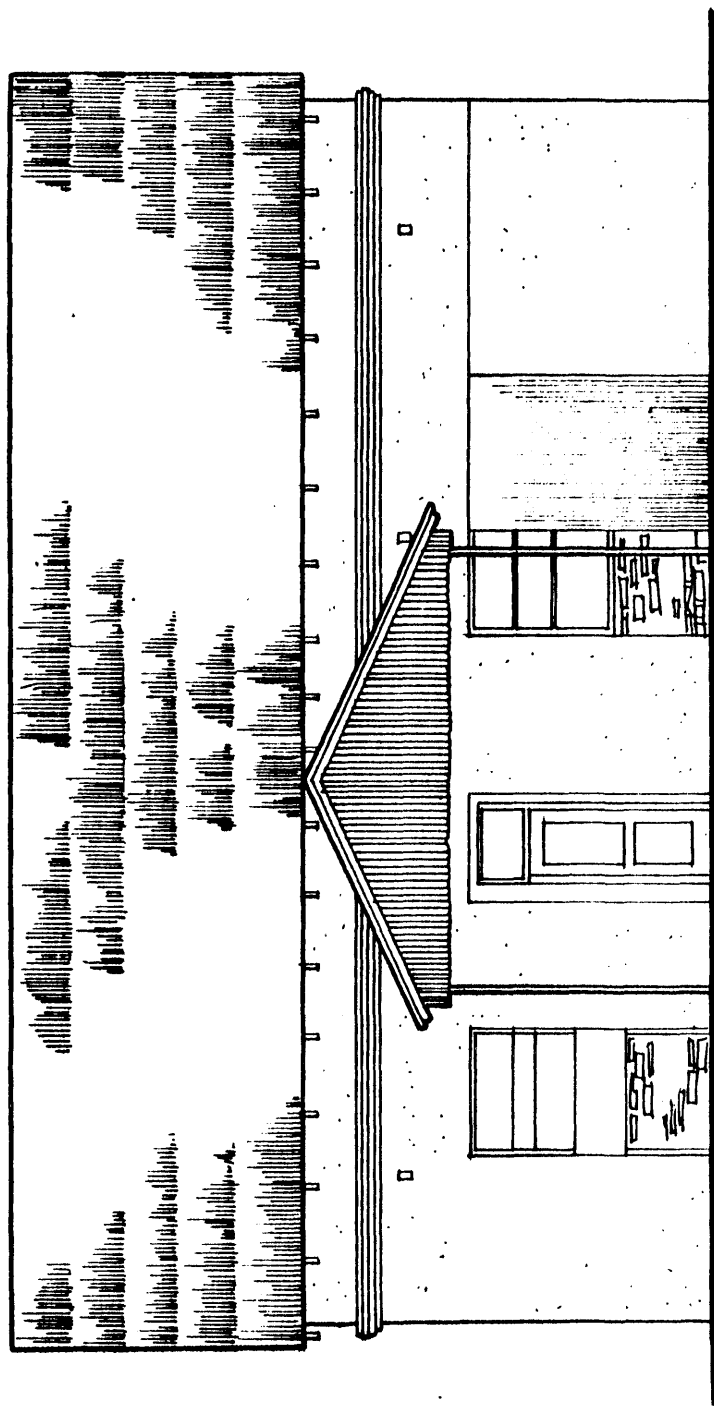
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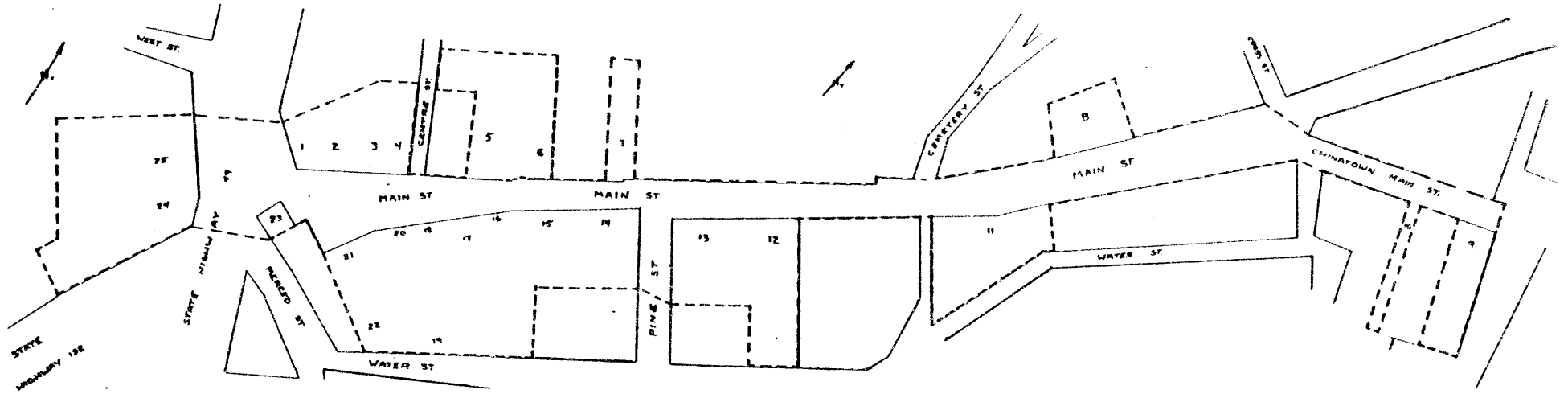


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1932



# District Map, Coltonville Main Street Historic District Coltonville, Mariposa County, California



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