

United States Department of the Interior Registration Form

This form is for use in nomination or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete registration by checking appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" or "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building

other name/site number Pittman Center City Hall

2. Location

street & number 2839 Webb Creek Road n/a not for publication

city or town Pittman Center n/a vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Sevier code 155 zip code 37862

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Hays 10/11/96
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau Date

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain):

Edson H. Beatty 11-29-96
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION/church school

DOMESTIC/institutional housing

HEALTH CARE/clinic

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Craftsman Influence

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD/weatherboard

roof METAL/standing seam

other peeled log posts

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

N/A

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

EDUCATION

HEALTH/MEDICINE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1937 - 1946

Significant Dates

1937

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Thomas, Dr. Robert F.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hammond, Dr. Edmund/architect

Townsend, Joe, and McCarter, Carl/builders

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed on the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by HABS #
recorded by HAER #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository: East Tennessee Development District

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately one-half acre

UTM References

Richardson Cove, TN 164-SW

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

UTM grid with Zone, Easting, and Northing columns for 1, 2, 3, and 4.

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

Form fields for name/title, organization, street & number, city or town, date, telephone, state, and zip code.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Form fields for name/title, street & number, city or town, telephone, state, and zip code for the property owner.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form.

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Section number 7 Page 1 Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building, Sevier Co., TN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The town of Pittman Center is located approximately ten miles northeast of the resort town of Gatlinburg in Sevier County. The city hall is located in the former Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building in a secluded hollow two miles north of the commercially developed US 321. State Route 416 winds north from Pittman Center to Richardson Cove and on to the county seat of Sevierville.

Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building is sited on a gentle slope across the road from Webb Creek. The grounds are landscaped with grass and foundation plantings. There is a drive circling the building with small parking lots at the west and east sides. A small well-shaded park lies west of the building. Pittman Center Elementary School, constructed circa 1964, stands east of the building. Neither the park nor the school are included within the boundaries of this nomination. The Home Economics Building is the only extant educational building associated with Pittman Community Center.

The building was constructed in 1937 to serve as the Home Economics Building for Pittman Community Center, a mission school. A large classroom/workroom and offices were on the main floor, teachers lived in the rooms upstairs and kitchen facilities were located in the basement. Dr. Thomas, the school's physician and superintendent, also maintained his medical office in the building for a time. The building retains its original plan and appearance with few intrusive additions. The building's interior was remodeled in 1977 to serve as city hall for the newly incorporated town of Pittman Center, but few changes were made to the floor plan. The large classroom is used as a library and computer learning center, the rooms on the first and second floor are used as city offices, and the kitchen in the basement is still used.

The Craftsman influenced two-story building has a rectangular plan with a five-bay porch across the primary (south) elevation and a raised basement of uncoursed stone. The frame building has original weatherboard siding and double hung windows in wood frames. An inspection of the building reveals that while all the sills, jambs, and frames are original, all sashes have been replaced and are replicas of the originals. The gable roof is covered with standing seam metal. There are knee braces supporting the eaves on the east and west ends and the rafter ends are exposed across the lengths of the front and rear elevations. There is a small interior chimney at the east end of the roof crest, and a larger interior chimney slightly off-center and to the rear of the building.

The first story of the primary (south) elevation is divided into five bays with a centered entrance. The upper story is divided into three bays of paired windows. The windows are six-over-six double hung wood sashes and frames. The entrance has a circa 1977 wood and glass door with the upper section having nine lights. It is not clear in photographs whether this doorway is original or if there was a window in this space.

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The porch has a standing seam metal shed roof and is supported by battered columns resting on a solid balustrade clad with weatherboard siding. Horizontal boards which ran between the columns and parallel to the balustrade have been removed. These boards, which appear to have been two-by-fours, are seen in one circa 1950 photograph, but not in another. Sometime between 1950 and 1977, plywood sheathing was used to enclose the porch and a door was placed at the west end. The sheathing and door were removed and the original columns and rail were preserved or repaired, as necessary during the 1977 renovation. The porch floor and roof are of original wood boards. At the basement level, the porch is supported by peeled logs used as posts. Peeled logs are shown in a circa 1950 photograph and are presumed to be original. The middle section of this lower level was enclosed to form a storage area probably after 1977, as it is not shown on the renovation blueprints. The rest is open and permits light and air into the original wood basement windows. A window at the east end is 6/6 double hung, while a rise in the ground grade forces a window on the west end to have only six lights in a fixed sash. There is a circa 1960 aluminum storm door leading into the basement through an original door opening. A set of circa 1990 wood steps with wood balusters and rails leads to the west end of the porch.

The west elevation has three bays in the first story and an irregular fenestration pattern in the second story. There are two sets of paired 8/8 double hung windows in the first story. An entrance is centered on the first floor. The original five-panel wood door has been replaced with a paneled wood and glass door with nine-lights in the upper half. There is a gabled hood above the entry supported by knee braces. In the second story are paired 6/6 windows; one 6/6 window; one 6/6 window; and another set of paired 6/6 windows. A metal fire escape of simple design leads to these paired windows, located on the southern end of the west elevation. The fire escape was constructed prior to 1977.

The rear (north) elevation has three bays with a centered entrance in the first story. There is a gabled hood supported by knee braces above a non-original wood and glass door. Like the entrance to the south elevation, this door has nine lights in the upper half. The original door had three horizontal panels with three vertical lights above. There are three sets of 8/8 double hung wood sash windows in the second story. There are three sets of paired 6/6 double hung wood sash windows in the second story. There is a poured concrete walk with a wrought iron rail leading to the entrance. This walk and a rail appear in 1960s era photographs.

The east elevation has two stories over a raised basement of uncoursed stone. The fenestration in this elevation is symmetrical. In the basement are two bands of three 6/6 windows with a wood door at the outer ends of each band. The doors are protected by circa 1960 aluminum storm doors. There are two bands of four 6/6 windows in the first story and in the second story are two sets of paired 6/6 windows in the center with a single 6/6 window in the outside bays.

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The primary entrance to the building is through the entrance in the west elevation. The door opens directly into a small hallway. To the left (south) is a small office. To the right (north) is another, slightly larger office which serves as the city office. Straight ahead is a door leading upstairs to the second floor. The stairway creates a kind of foyer in the upstairs area, with rooms arranged around the perimeter of the interior space. There are eight rooms upstairs, one of which is in use; the others are under renovation. Nearly all of the doors on the interior are original five panel wood doors. Door and window surrounds are simple and undecorated.

The interior floor plan was only slightly altered in a 1977 renovation – existing storage spaces were turned into bathrooms but bedrooms/offices in the second floor were preserved. There are hardwood floors throughout the building, although some have been covered with carpeting. Nearly all walls and ceilings are clad with original horizontal boards which have been painted. This kind of wall treatment is also seen in period photographs of other dwellings in Pittman Center. A large room on the first floor at the east end of the building is used as a library and computer center. The ceiling in this room is plaster or gypsum board and is reinforced with large beams. The ceiling height does not appear to have been changed. Other interior spaces are used as municipal offices.

The rooms upstairs served as teachers quarters and are currently being repaired and painted. The wall separating the two rooms at the south east corner has been removed to form an office for the police station. Interior features like horizontal board walls and ceilings remain intact. The room at the northeast corner has been turned into a closet and has a door leading from the south wall.

The kitchen has been updated with modern equipment because it is used on a daily basis.

Original chimneys are visible throughout the building. With the exception of one, these chimneys do not appear to have been used as fireplaces but were constructed for use with pot-bellied wood stoves instead. There is one fireplace in the northwest office which has probably been altered. A 1920s era interior photograph of the teachers cottage shows a fireplace of smooth river stones. This fireplace is of glazed brick and has a plain wood mantel.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as the only extant educational building associated with the Pittman Community Center mission school. By 1940, Pittman Community Center (PCC) included fifteen buildings on fifteen hundred acres of land along Webb's Creek and the Little Pigeon River. Of these, only the Home Economics Building, constructed in 1937, remains. Pittman Community Center typified the missionary schools which were established throughout rural Appalachia during the early part of this century. Although not the only mission school in the region, Pittman Community Center had a tremendous social, educational and medical impact on eastern Sevier County. The building is eligible under criterion B for its association with Dr. Robert F. Thomas, a minister and physician whose medical practices contributed to the elimination in Sevier County of several diseases common in poverty-stricken areas of Appalachia. The building is also significant under Criterion C as a good example of a basic/minimal Craftsman influenced building. Pittman Community Center maintained its importance in eastern Sevier County from 1921 to 1963, when the county's schools were consolidated.

Today, Pittman Center is an incorporated town of approximately 500 residents located in Sevier County, Tennessee, ten miles northeast of the popular tourist town of Gatlinburg. The town has its roots as a missionary school called Pittman Community Center founded in 1921 on the banks of Webb Creek, near its junction with the with Little Pigeon River. Located at the edge of Emerts Cove, the community is just outside the western boundary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP), and many of the school's students were relocated when the GSMNP was established in the 1930s. Before the designation of the GSMNP, there were few improved roads through the mountains. During harsh winters, Pittman Community Center was often cut off from the rest of the county. The physical isolation of eastern Sevier County was accompanied by social isolation as evidenced by higher instances of poverty and disease which no longer affected more developed areas of Appalachia. Pittman Community Center introduced advanced educational methods, modern medical practices, and alternative agricultural and economic programs to the cove.

Pittman Community Center was founded by Dr. John S. Burnett as a missionary school to meet the spiritual, educational and medical needs of mountain families. Most local schools during this time were funded jointly by the county and state and operated only five months of the year. The Board of Home Missions and Church Extension, Methodist Episcopal Church, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, proposed to create a full-term school which would continue to operate after the county and state funds set aside for each term were exhausted. With financial backing from Dr. Eli Pittman, Superintendent of the Elmira District of the Central New York Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the school opened in August 1921 with an enrollment of over one hundred students. According to an article in *Montgomery's Vindicator* dated September 28, 1921, the church proposed

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"to operate this school as a vital educational force for nine and one half or ten months each year, paying the expenses beyond the scheduled official term, thus 600 children in that community will have school annually to the standard school terms of the cities and equal to the standards of any education. The difference is that this school is scientifically situated and adapted for the needs of the community for whose particular and unusual conditions it has been built."¹

According to the *Vindicator*, the Board of Home Missions thus created the first and only known school in Tennessee at that time to be operated jointly by the state, a county, and a church.

The school started in a single frame school building. Pittman Community Center ultimately grew to include the School Building, the Principal's House, Teachers Dormitory, Community House, Home Economics Building, Gymnasium, Shop, Goodwill Store and Building, Dr. Thomas' house, Baldwin Hospital (or clinic), the McCrea House, the Tilman Huskey home, one other rental house, the Barn, and the Cannery. Upon opening, it was touted to be the best equipped school in the county: it offered electric lights, steam heat, and a water system with flush toilets in the basement, drinking fountains on each floor, and shower baths in the teachers' living quarters. Domestic science courses were offered for girls, manual training and agricultural courses for boys, and training courses for teachers. Devotional classes were held each morning before classes began. Calisthenics were required, as good physical health was linked to good spiritual health. It was the first school in the vicinity to offer student transportation, bringing pupils to Pittman Community Center via covered wagons, and later in motorized vehicles. Although most pupils were day students, those who lived considerable distances away stayed on campus during the school year.

The students who attended Pittman Community Center ranged from the very young (in Kindergarten) to adults who had never attended school. Some adult students had been teaching in one-room schoolhouses in the area and had not even graduated from the eighth grade. The first graduation ceremonies were held at the school in 1928 when five students received high school diplomas. A total of 520 students graduated from Pittman Community Center between 1928 and 1963. Most became teachers, "domestic engineers", industrial workers, or government employees. Two became doctors, one went on to play professional sports, and one served in the Tennessee General Assembly.

The influence of the school on the surrounding communities was studied by Russell Hall, a teacher and pastor at Pittman Community Center for six years. He saw the greatest effect on the community as educational. By raising the standard of education and inspiring more students to continue their

¹Pittman Community Center Alumni Association, *Pittman Community Center, A Mountain Mission* (Gatlinburg, TN: The Buckhorn Press, 1985), 3.

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formal education, Pittman Community Center can be credited with changing the community attitude towards schooling. When Pittman Community Center was founded, there were only six elementary school teachers in Sevier County who were college graduates. In 1938, thirty-three teachers were college graduates, and three of them had more than five years of college training. Although somewhat cynical about the effect of the school, Hall concluded that the school had

"without a doubt, changed the moral and religious life of the people for the better. It is furnishing some needed recreation for the young people. It is also doing good work in the medical care and prevention of disease. All of these enterprises are handicapped, however, by the great economic problem which has not been solved and has hardly been attacked."²

The problem he mentions is the continued poverty in which the local mountain people lived. The land in the mountain regions was submarginal, leaving mountain farmers far worse off than their counterparts in the valleys. The lack of industry in the area made it difficult for these farmers to supplement their incomes with seasonal work. New Deal programs later provided jobs to men who worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA), usually building roads.

The influence of the school beyond the educational needs of Appalachian children was mixed. Pittman Community Center established a chicken farm, vegetable garden, and apple orchard. These ventures made the school self-supporting, but once the apple market was flooded, for example, prices dropped, and the economic benefits to individual farmers were negligible. The farm introduced a better breed of hens to help local farmers raise better eggs, an important barter item. A cannery was built to preserve fruits and vegetables, although it failed without proper guidance from PCC staff. The garden and orchard soon grew into a profitable truck farm which also included milk cows and a model reforestation project. The introduction of fruits and vegetables into the diets of the residents was intended to eradicate pellagra, a disease caused by malnutrition. However, convincing the local inhabitants that changing their eating habits was the key to preventing illness was challenging. The school's most successful agricultural venture was its nursery, where hemlocks and other native trees were grown and sold.

A successful home economics program had been operating under the direction of Juanita Maupin since her arrival at Pittman Community Center in 1926. She taught girls not only the basics of cooking, cleaning, and sewing, but also taught them how to grow kitchen gardens and how to preserve vegetables they grew by canning them. The girls made their own graduation dresses and even made

²Russell Hall, "The Effect of Pittman Center on the Community Life" (M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1939).

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the uniforms for the girls' basketball team. Maupin left Pittman Community Center in 1936 after receiving her Master's degree from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She later wrote that she was proud that a new building had been built [in 1937] and that "better equipment was obtained."³

One consequence of the home economics program was the establishment of a women's shop for weaving and quilting. Handicraft production in the Southern Highlands had declined in the early part of the twentieth century with the increased availability of manufactured goods through mail order. The craft of basket making was the only skill which had not been forgotten because baskets were utilitarian and always needed. A revival in handicrafts began when people outside Appalachia showed an interest in purchasing handmade goods. Sidney Hodges found that Pi Beta Phi School in Gatlinburg and Pittman Community Center "were the main agencies through which handicrafts were brought to the attention of the tourists."⁴ Because Pittman Community Center was so isolated, the development of its handicrafts was slower than Pi Beta Phi's. In 1921, Helen Wesp began re-teaching the skills of weaving and quilting. The women's shop continued under her direction until she left in 1930 and interest was lost in the shop. Reverend W. E. Bishop revived interest in handicraft production in 1939 and scoured the community for antique looms and spinning wheels to use in the new shop. By this time, more roads were leading to and through Pittman Community Center, bringing more people in. It was out of this established program, that Dr. Thomas created the Pinnacle Handicrafts cooperative in 1942. Handicrafts, mostly woven goods, were sold through mail order, primarily to small social societies of various churches throughout the U.S.

The Home Economics Building was begun in 1937 and completed in 1939. In response to a request from Dr. Burnett, the Board of Home Missions sent architect Edmund Hammond to design the new building. Burnett, Hammond, and teacher Cora Deats visited home economics departments at schools in the Knoxville area before coming up with a design for Pittman Community Center's building. Burnett wanted modern equipment, but nothing so modern that the girls would not use it in their own homes. Burnett and Hammond decided to include the school cafeteria and lodging for the teachers in the building. As an architect for the Board of Home Missions, Hammond had many projects to oversee and would visit Pittman Community Center only occasionally to check on the progress of construction before moving on to his other projects. The building was built using local labor and construction was supervised by Joe Townsend and Carl McCarter, Pittman Community Center carpenters.

³Juanita Maupin McMahan, presumably to Mary Reed, Pittman Center Alumni Association Historic Committee, circa spring 1981. Included in uncatalogued collection of loose papers in Pittman Center City Hall.

⁴Sidney Cecil Hodges, "Handicrafts in Sevier County, Tennessee," (M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1951).

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The Home Economics Building is a good example of a basic Craftsman influenced building. It retains such identifying features as a roof overhang supported by knee braces, a full width front porch, local stone in the foundation, and horizontal board wall and ceiling cladding on the interior. The short chamfered porch columns resting on a porch with a solid balustrade are hallmarks of the Craftsman style. Because the building sat vacant for over a decade, the original windows were missing or severely damaged. They have been replaced with custom windows made to replicate the originals based on photographic and physical evidence. Only the sashes have been replaced. The surrounds are original. Although the work was done in 1977, the replacement windows meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* as revised in 1992.

The teachers quarters upstairs included four bedrooms, a living room, bathroom, kitchen and dining room. Prior to 1937, there had been a separate building used as teachers housing. Dr. Thomas later kept an office on the second floor and his equipment and many of his medical texts are still there. The titles are a testament to the multi-purpose medicine practiced by a rural doctor: *De Schweintz' Diseases of the Eye* (copyright 1893), *Sajous' Annual and Analytical Cyclopaedia of Practical Medicine* (copyright 1900), *A Homeopathic Text Book of Surgery* by Charles Fisher and T. L. MacDonald (copyright 1896). The building remained in use until 1963 and stood vacant until the newly incorporated city of Pittman Center renovated it as the City Hall on 1977.

The direction of the school was most influenced by its founder, Dr. John Sevier Burnett, and by its first physician, Dr. Robert F. Thomas. These two men were perhaps most influential in establishing the purpose and character of the school. Dr. Burnett envisioned an institution which would extend the basics of education to include development of character, spirit, and body. Dr. Thomas introduced health practices which eliminated diseases common to poor communities.

John Sevier Burnett was born in Webster, North Carolina in 1866. As a youngster growing up in the highlands of North Carolina, he was sensitive to the needs of Appalachian children. A witness to the lack of educational facilities available to mountain people, he strove to educate himself and in 1901 graduated from U.S. Grant University (now the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga). He excelled as a Methodist minister, becoming a Presiding Elder in 1911, but maintained his focus on providing to Appalachian children the educational opportunities which he had not enjoyed as a child. He traveled on foot throughout Sevier County until he found a site for his first missionary school in Emerts Cove, at the confluence of Webb's Creek with the Little Pigeon River. Recognizing the alarming lack of modern medical services, he appealed to Francis Baldwin, president of Thatcher Manufacturing Company, makers of babies' milk bottles, to sponsor a medical clinic, asking, "What good is schooling to youngsters that are sick?" By combining public and private resources, Burnett was able to establish Pittman Community Center as the first of many successes he enjoyed throughout his life. He told one writer that he established twenty-four elementary and high schools during his life. He died in 1942 and in 1951, the people of Pittman Community Center constructed a memorial chapel to honor Dr. Burnett and his wife.

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Dr. Robert F. Thomas served Pittman Community Center from 1926 until 1964 as school physician, and as Superintendent of the Center from 1942 to 1964, after the consolidation of Gatlinburg and Pittman Center High Schools. He was born in 1891 in Scranton, Pennsylvania, and became an ordained minister of the Methodist Church. He began his missionary work in Penang, Malaya, in 1916. Realizing the urgent need for medical help in Malaya, he returned to the States to pursue a medical degree, which he obtained from Syracuse University Medical College in 1924. However, his wife's poor health prevented the couple from returning to Malaya. On the advise of Eli Pittman, Thomas decided to go to Pittman Community Center in 1926.

Thomas served Pittman Community Center primarily as a doctor and minister. He soon found himself in the role of veterinarian, horse trader, banker, and counselor. Thomas was the only physician in the area. In one year he logged an estimated 15,000 miles making 1002 house calls (in addition to 2307 office calls). Thomas was also a circuit riding preacher, making monthly rounds at the chapels established by the Board of Home Missions. His monthly announcements from the pulpit were usually medical, explaining where and when he would next be giving inoculations. He is credited with having wiped out smallpox, typhoid fever, and whooping cough in the area, primarily because of his introduction of inoculations. He found that pellagra, malnutrition, hookworm, and tuberculosis were common and instituted hot lunch programs and other methods of treating those diseases. The Home Economics students prepared hot soup for the underprivileged children who were unable to bring lunches from home.

Although he travelled often to North Carolina, Kentucky, and western Tennessee, Dr. Burnett's importance to Pittman Community Center was continually in evidence. His fund-raising tours provided clothing and shoes for the children, educational materials for the school, and financial support for the hiring of teachers and nurses. During the times when Dr. Burnett was away, Dr. Thomas shouldered many responsibilities for the school's operation. Thomas was appointed Superintendent of Pittman Community Center upon the death of Dr. Burnett in 1942. As Superintendent, Thomas continued to establish Sunday schools throughout the area, coordinated with Berea College in Kentucky to get student nurses to serve in the clinic, and expanded the social, educational, and medical programs at the Center. In 1942 he established Pinnacle Handicrafts as a crafts cooperative. Five years later, the cooperative were bringing in \$10,000 annually and most weavers earned about \$100 each month; some of the exceptional weavers earned as much as \$200.

Thomas also served as physician for the Civilian Public Service Camp No. 108 at Sugarlands, a former CCC camp in the GSMNP. He coordinated visits to Knoxville for optical and dental exams for residents throughout eastern Sevier County. In his forty years of service to Pittman Community Center, he worked tirelessly and was the Center's driving force. Thomas did more to carry out the mission of the Center than any individual in the history of the school. He retired in 1964, after Pittman Community Center was consolidated with Pi Beta Phi High School in Gatlinburg to form Gatlinburg-Pittman High School.

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By the 1930s, there were around 150 mission schools in the Southern Highlands. Nearly every Protestant denomination was represented, with most schools registered as Independent (21), Episcopal (20), Methodist Episcopal (17), Presbyterian - USA (17), and Southern Baptist (17). Other denominations included Friends (Quakers), United Presbyterian, and United Methodist. It was common for the counties to take over the operations of these schools as they were able.

In Appalachia, the mission schools were established in an area where resistance to public education was strong. Public education was seen as expensive by county residents who were opposed to innovations which might increase taxes. Parents also feared that once their children gained an education, they would leave home, abandoning family and tradition. Teachers were seen as outsiders whose ideas ran counter to accepted and traditional ways. Finally, children, especially older children, were economic assets who were needed on the farm, not at school. Consequently, in Sevier County at the turn of the century, only 1361 out of 6876 registered students were enrolled in the fourth grade or higher. There were no public high schools. Most schools were held in one-room buildings which doubled as churches. The average student spent just three months of the year in school.

There were a number of private schools in Sevier County - some were mission schools, others were subscription, or "free" schools which charged a monthly tuition. The mission schools provided better education to students than the "free" schools because students were taught in a controlled and heavily supervised environment; teachers were better trained, nearly always having college degrees; the curriculum often included music instruction and physical education; and students were encouraged to participate in such extra-curricular activities as sports, literary societies, and debating clubs. The most significant innovations of the mission schools were the lengthening of the school year, and the encouragement of pupil attendance through the eighth grade. Between 1900 and 1920, enrollment in later grades (4 through 8) dramatically increased in the county.

Pittman Community Center was one of several mission schools, also called settlement schools, in Sevier County in the early twentieth century. The Juniper School was founded in 1900 by the Women's Board of Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. and evolved into Sunset Gap School on the Sevier-Cocke County border. The school, whose building is still extant, offered some of the same services and forwarded similar ideals as Pittman Community Center. Gatlinburg's Pi Beta Phi School, although technically not a mission school, was sponsored by a University of Illinois sorority in 1916 and had a tremendous impact on the development of the local handicraft industry. Mountain women were trained and encouraged to make things in quantity to sell, especially woven goods. Weaving was taught at most mission schools in the county for the purpose of reviving a "mountain craft" and encouraging economic self-sufficiency. The nearby Smoky Mountain Academy was founded in 1915 by the Sevier County Baptist Association with the directive that students need to be protected from the sinful world. The oldest settlement school was the Chilhowee Institute near the Knox County line, established by the Southern Baptist Association in 1840.

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The introduction of medical facilities by the mission schools had a significant effect on the county. In 1900, there were doctors working throughout the county. By 1922, however, many had moved their practices to Sevierville, leaving rural districts without medical care. The health situation in the county nearly reached a crisis point. A county health department was established in 1922, conducting general health education and encouraging inoculation. Pi Beta Phi recognized the desperate need for medical care and established a health center employing the only registered nurse in the county until 1929. At Pittman Community Center, Thatcher Manufacturing Company sponsored the establishment of the Baldwin Clinic, but had been unable to staff it until the arrival of Dr. Thomas in 1926. Diseases were wiped out, infant mortality rates dropped, and the overall health of the county's residents improved, in part due to the introduction of health clinics at various mission schools. Dr. Thomas was effective throughout Sevier County, working with the county health department and canvassing a good part of the county during times when there were shortages of doctors and nurses. With the cooperation of Knoxville doctors, he sponsored annual tubercular clinics, dental clinics, and mother and child clinics offering inoculations, dental hygiene, and pre- and post-natal care.

Scholars who have studied the myths and stereotypes surrounding the Appalachian region have argued about the role of these missionary schools and their effect on mountain life. Arguments have been made that these early Christian educators were blind to the value of the indigenous mountain culture. Indeed, one teacher at Pittman Community Center looked at the mountain communities with some contempt, characterizing local religious beliefs as histrionic and fatalistic. Other views see these educators, most of whom were women, as early feminists who "were consciously or unconsciously challenging traditional conceptions of women's proper sphere."⁵ The breakdown of the indigenous mountain culture was inevitable, with or without the influence of mission schools. The establishment of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) played a great role in homogenizing Appalachian traditions by building roads to heretofore unreachable locations, hiring locals to work alongside "outsiders", and introducing tourism as an industry to the region.

The mission schools were an important supplement to public education in Sevier County in the early part of this century. By 1930, however, statewide improvements in public schools made mission schools less important. Russell Hall asserted that "with the coming of better county schools, supported partly by the state, the need for outside help was not so urgent."⁶ Consolidation occurred throughout

⁵Durwood Dunn, "A Meditation on Pittman Center: An Interview with Jessie Mechem Ledford," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* (Spring 1991): 55.

⁶Russell Hall, "The Effect of Pittman Center on the Community Life," (M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1939).

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Tennessee beginning in the 1950s and had a negative effect on enrollment in mission schools. It had always been the intention of the Board of Home Missions to gradually relinquish the operation of Pittman Community Center school as the county became able to support it. In 1955 the Board sold 7.6 acres and Pittman Community Center's educational buildings to the Sevier County Board of Education for \$20,000. Sunset Gap discontinued classes in 1960, and in 1963, Pittman Community Center was merged with Pi Beta Phi School to form Gatlinburg-Pittman High School. This consolidation, combined with the retirement of Dr. Thomas in 1964, effectively ended the role of the Methodist Church in education in the community.

In 1974, in an effort to protect the Middle Prong of the Little Pigeon River, the town of Pittman Center was incorporated under a Mayor-Aldermanic Government. The Board of Home Missions donated the Home Economics Building, which had been vacant since 1963, to the newly formed town to use as a city hall. Between 1963 and 1977 all of the school buildings were torn down. By 1977, the only buildings remaining on the campus were the Home Economics Building and Pinnacle Handicraft building. No evidence of the handicrafts building now exists.

While the GSMNP and TVA affected the region overall, mission schools like Pittman Community Center worked within individual communities to affect change. "Pittman Center made available for the people a high school and has been instrumental in improving the standards in the whole school system of the county. Smoky Mountain Academy, only four miles away, has never been able to reach many of the people because it always lacked the funds sufficient to support the best educational activities."⁷ The transformation of Emerts Cove from a rural, isolated mountain community to a community center offering educational, economic, and medical advantages, then to an incorporated town is evidence of the impact of mission schools like Pittman Community Center on Appalachian communities. The city hall, as the seat of government for the town and as the only extant educational building, is significant as a reminder of the transformation of eastern Sevier County during the mid-twentieth century.

The town of Pittman Center would like to preserve its unique charm in the face of a rapidly developing tourist trade. Outgrowth from Gatlinburg has extended northeast, nearly to Cosby, in Cocke County. Golf courses, condominiums, and mountain chalets have replaced many of the homesites and churches influenced by Pittman Community Center. There are four Methodist churches in the area which were established as outgrowths of Pittman Community Center. The Pittman Center Methodist Circuit in 1984 included: Burnett Chapel; Webbs Creek; Shultz Grove; and Shields Mountain. Webbs Creek Chapel retains its architectural integrity and may be eligible for future listing

⁷Russell Hall, "The Effect of Pittman Center on the Community Life," (M.S. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1939.)

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on the National Register. In 2001, Burnett Memorial Chapel Methodist Church may also be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of Pittman Community Center Home Economics Building is described in the Quitclaim deed between the National Division of the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church and the City of Pittman Center, dated July 13, 1976, and recorded in Wd Book 260, Page 60, in the Sevier County Register's Office. The property is "situated in District No. 17 of Sevier County, Tennessee, on the waters of Webb Creek and being Lots No. 2 and 3 of a map recorded in the Register's Office, Sevier County, Tennessee, in Map Book 9, Page 19..." This nomination applies only to Lot No. 3.

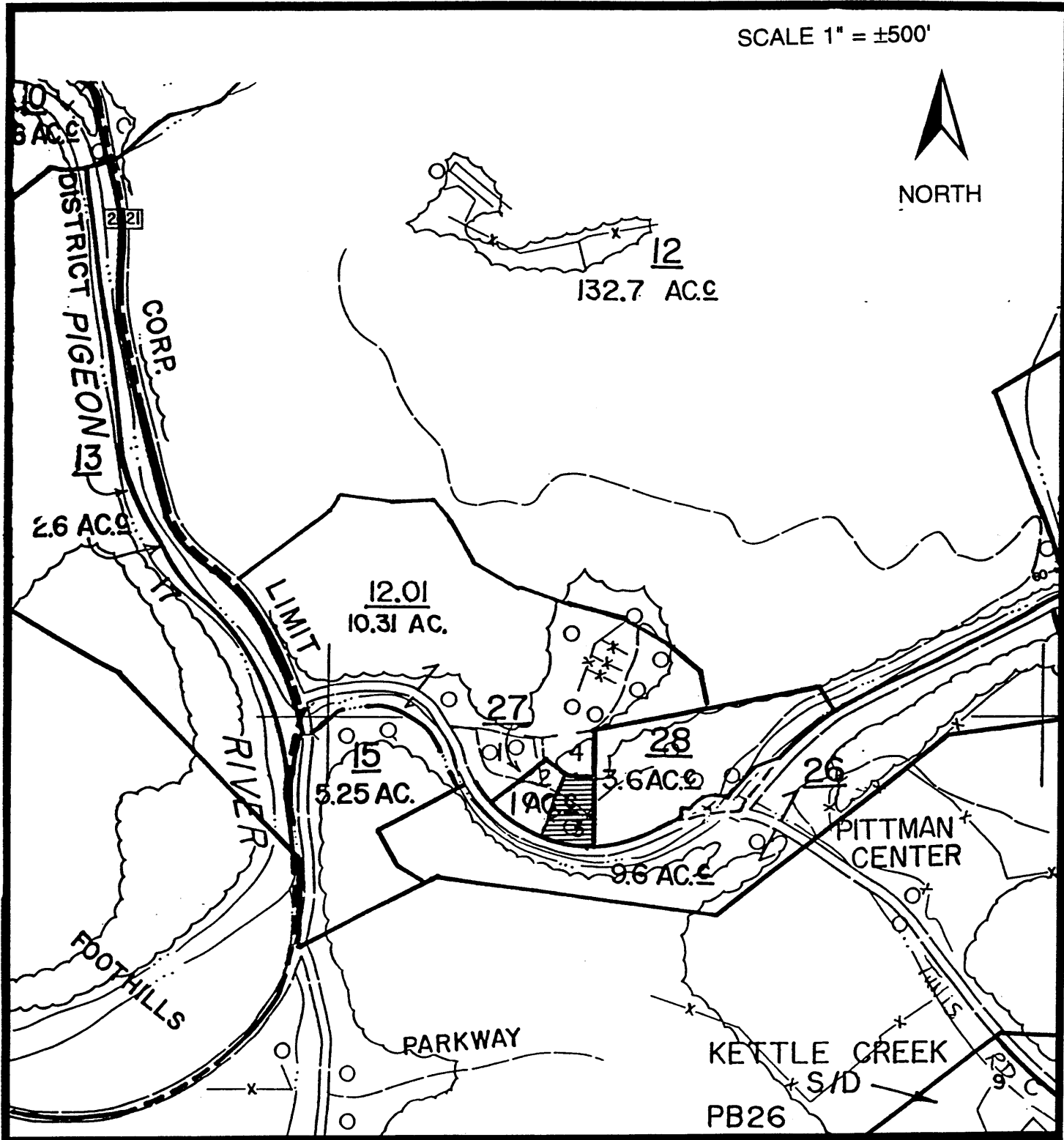
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the Pittman Center City Hall and the lot on which it sits, including the driveway and two small parking lots, and is the legal boundary as recorded in the Sevier County Courthouse. The lot is shown as lot number 3 and is shaded on the accompanying property map.

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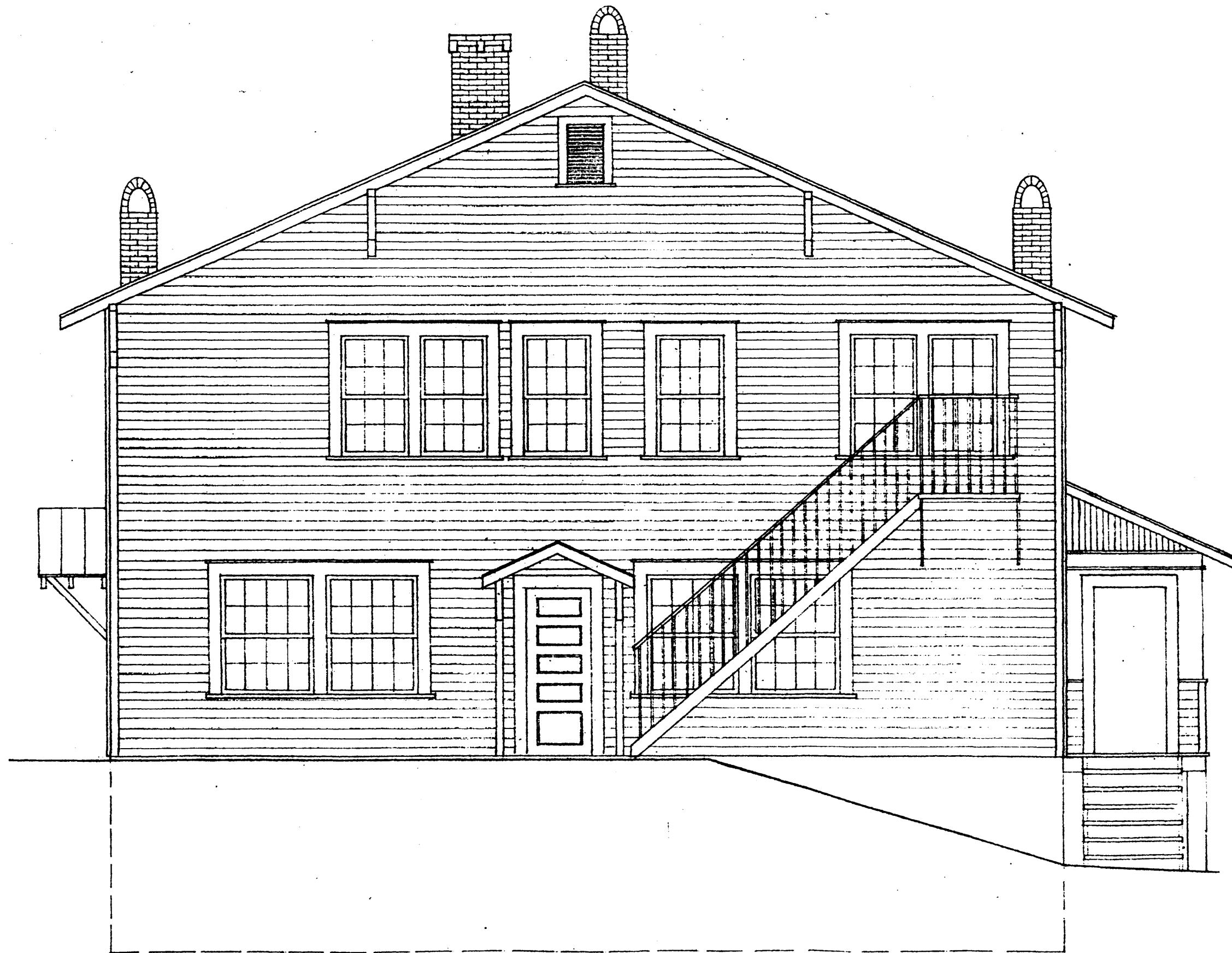
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Negs: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

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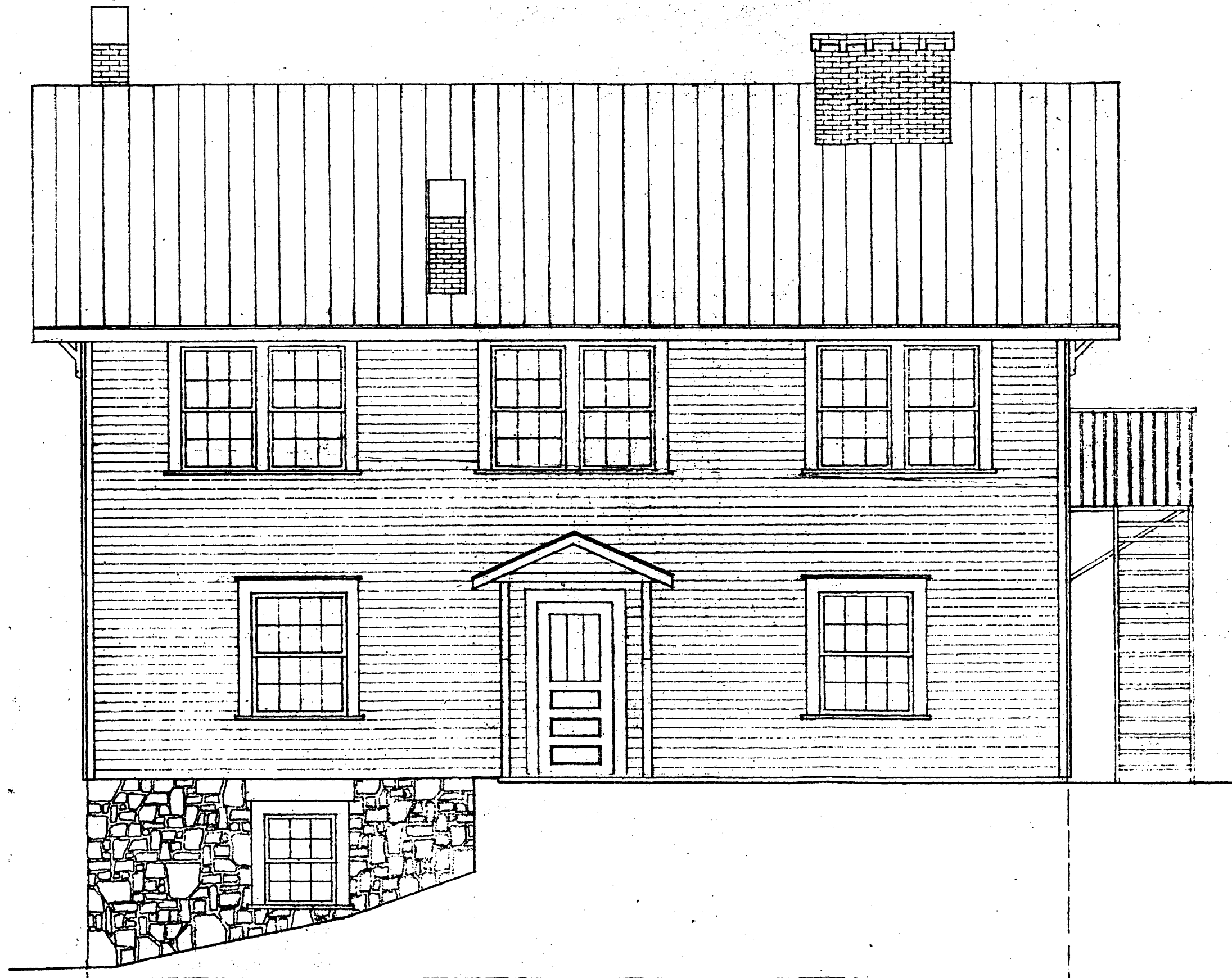
#	Subject	Date	View
1 of 13	South and east elevations from Webb Creek Road	06/13/95	Northwest
2 of 13	South and west elevations from driveway	06/13/95	Northeast
3 of 13	South and west elevations from Webb Creek Road	06/13/95	Northeast
4 of 13	West elevation	06/13/95	East
5 of 13	West elevation	07/02/96	Southeast
6 of 13	North elevation	07/02/96	East
7 of 13	West elevation	06/13/95	East
8 of 13	City Manager's office, main floor	01/13/95	South
9 of 13	General office, main floor	01/13/95	Northeast
10 of 13	Fireplace in general office, main floor	07/02/96	South
11 of 13	West wall of library, main floor	01/13/95	Northwest
12 of 13	Stairway, from first floor	01/13/95	East
13 of 13	Southwest corner room, upper floor	01/13/95	Southwest



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL	
SOUTH ELEVATION	
SCALE	1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 1977	



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL	
WEST ELEVATION	
SCALE	1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 1977	



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL
NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE 1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS
BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC.
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE
1977



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL

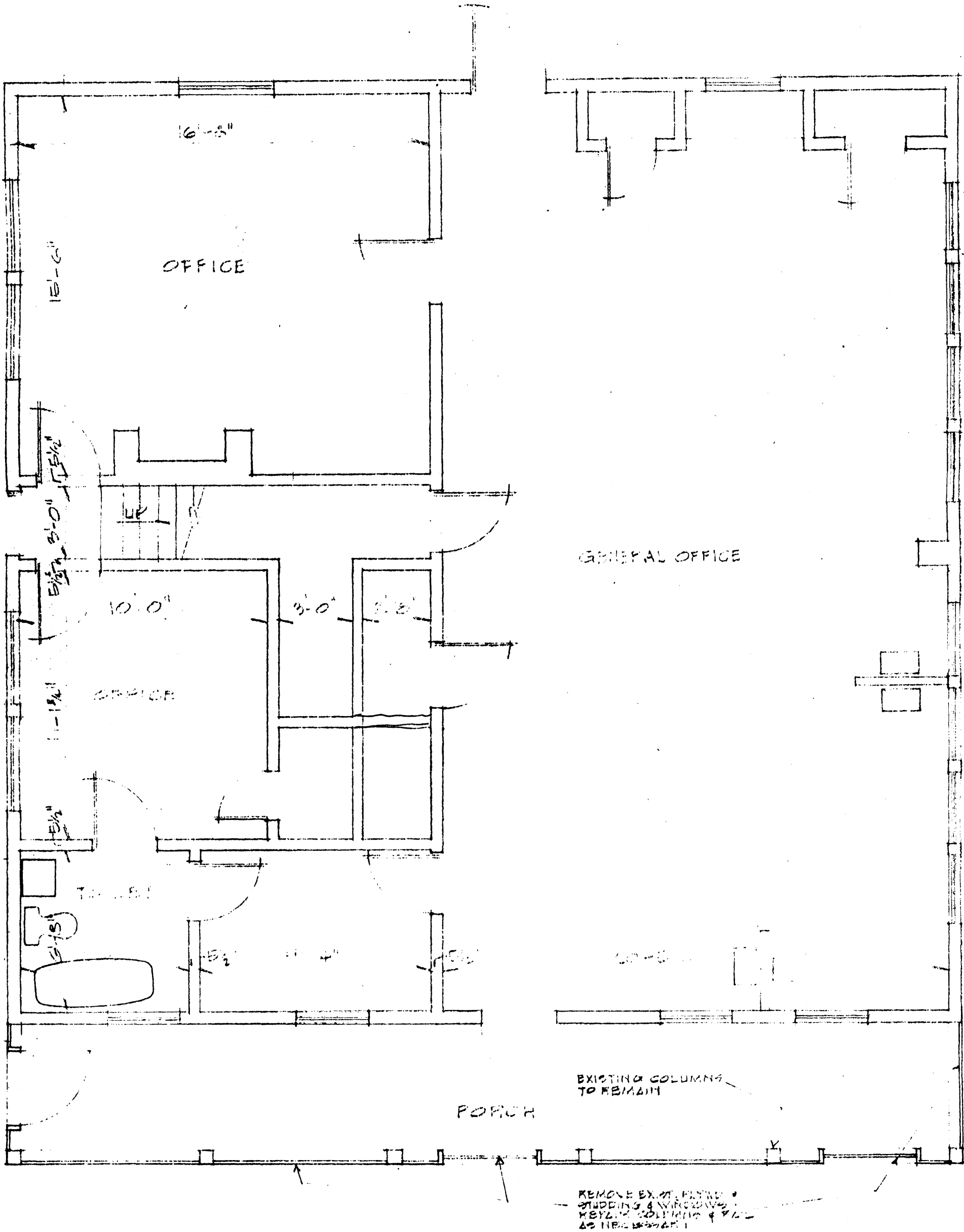
EAST ELEVATION

SCALE

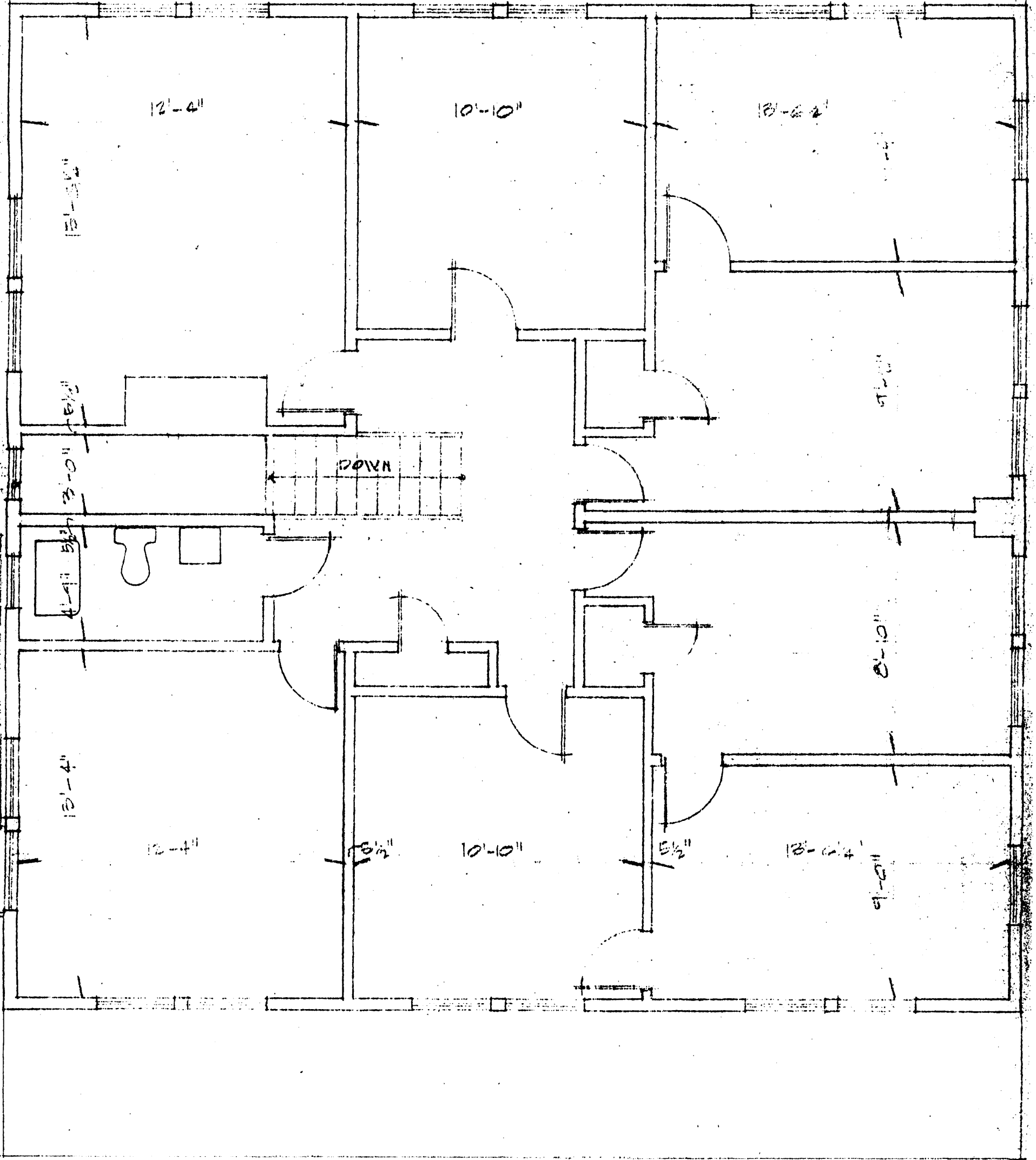
1/4" = 1'

DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS
BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC.
KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE
1977

PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL	
MAIN FLOOR PLAN	
SCALE	1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 1977	



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL	
UPPER FLOOR PLAN	
SCALE	1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 1977	



PITTMAN CENTER CITY HALL	
BASEMENT	
SCALE	1/4" = 1'
DRAWINGS FROM ORIGINAL BLUEPRINTS BY: COMMUNITY TECTONICS INC. KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE 1977	

