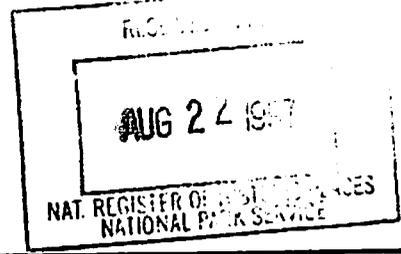


1160

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Tower Station
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: U-Drop-Inn Cafe

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 101 East 12th Street
CITY OR TOWN: Shamrock
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Wheeler CODE: 483 NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A
ZIP CODE: 79079

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.)

Curtis J. Munnell
Signature of certifying official

12 Aug. 1997
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas 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 or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
9/18/97

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: COMMERCE / TRADE: Restaurant
OTHER: Gasoline Station

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: VACANT / Not in Use

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: Art Deco

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION Concrete
WALLS Concrete
ROOF Asphalt
OTHER Ceramic Tile; Glass; Metal

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture; Commerce

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1936-1947

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1936

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Berry, J.C. (architect); Tindall, J.M. and Lewis, R.C. (builders)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-10).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-11).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	386440	3898720	3	##	#####
2	##	#####	#####	4	##	#####

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Lots One (1), Two (2) and Three (3), Block Two (2), High School Addition to the Town of Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Gregory Smith, THC Historian)

NAME/TITLE: James M. Olsson

ORGANIZATION: NA

DATE: 3/97

STREET & NUMBER: Box 886

TELEPHONE: (616) 827-0941

CITY OR TOWN: Grand Haven

STATE: MI

ZIP CODE: 49417

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-12 through Map-13)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-14)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: James Ray Tindall, Sr.

STREET & NUMBER: 800 S. Madden

TELEPHONE: (806) 256-1028

CITY OR TOWN: Shamrock

STATE: TX

ZIP CODE: 79079

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

The Tower Station in Shamrock, Texas, is a 1-story concrete and brick commercial building with a modified rectangular plan and flat roof. Erected in 1936, the Art Deco building contains two separate business spaces, and is named for its most notable features - a large concrete tower on the gas station and a smaller one over the café. The building is an outstanding and unusual example of Art Deco decoration applied to a roadside commercial building, and retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

The Tower Station is located on a large flat commercial site on the northeast corner of 12th Street (historic U.S. 66, now Business Route 40) and North Main Street (U.S. 83), about six blocks north of Shamrock's downtown commercial district on North Main Street. Downtown Shamrock features several blocks of early 20th-century 1- and 2-story commercial buildings on Main Street, primarily between 2nd and 6th Streets. The paving of Route 66 in the 1930s, and the subsequent increase in east-west traffic, resulted in the rapid development of a new commercial district along 12th Street, featuring businesses such as gasoline stations, restaurants, and tourist courts. The Tower Station is located adjacent to other commercial properties and parking lots, and is set back approximately 12 feet from the curb, with two canopies that reach towards the sidewalk. No trees or plantings are located in the immediate area.

The Tower Station is constructed of brick and concrete and is clad with stucco on its two main facades (south, facing U.S. 66; and west, facing U.S. 83). Decorative glazed tile and cast concrete provides ornamentation. One of the first commercial buildings erected in the 1930s along new U.S. 66, the two large towers, along with geometric detailing and curvilinear massing, were designed to attract the attention of passing motorists. Neon lighting outlining the two towers plus the two main facades remained in place from the 1940s through the 1960s.

The building has historically held two separate businesses separated by a common interior wall. The western portion, commonly referred to as the Tower Station, is dominated by a large four-sided obelisk rising from the flat roof and topped by a metal "tulip." This tower featured the word "CONOCO" spelled out vertically on each side plus neon lighting along the corners through the 1960s. The vertically-ribbed detailing at the base of the west tower is repeated on the east tower, as well as on the upper portions of two canopies (one extending south, the other extending west) extending out over the two fuel islands adjacent to U.S. 66 & U.S. 83, respectively. Tiled pilasters (painted) on the west tower extend slightly above the canopy rooftops.

The canopies, supported by posts covered with decorative tile, feature the same embossed metal ceiling found throughout the building. Each canopy support is covered with glazed tile (now painted). The fuel islands, situated between the canopy supports, each have room for three gas pumps. Five 1960s-vintage pumps remain: three on the west side and two on the south. Metal sign posts, some dating to 1930s are located at the ends of each island. The station office features glass doors surrounded by multiple-pane windows facing both fuel

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Section 7 Page 6

Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

islands. The station features a chamfered corner between the two canopies. This southwestern facade (facing the intersection of U.S. 66 & U.S. 83) is dominated by a multi-paned window. A large electric clock was located above this window through the 1980s. A small public restroom with an exterior door is located just east of the south door of the station office. Beyond this, two roll-up type overhead doors mark the two separately enclosed service bays. One of these features a working hydraulic lift.

The eastern portion of the building, commonly referred to as the U-Drop-Inn cafe, is also dominated by a smaller three-sided version of the station tower. This tower, located over the main entrance at the eastern end of the south facade features the word "CAFE" painted in green on the two sides visible from U.S. 66, and a small ornamental sphere on top. On the south facade, just below the tower is a metal and wooden sign erected in 1950, identifying the business as the "U-Drop-Inn Cafe." Below the sign, the recessed main entrance is flanked on each side by awning covered windows surrounded by the same tile found on the station exterior. The base of the cafe tower extends out toward the street, and repeats the detailing found on the upper portion of the station canopies. This extension serves as a roof over the entranceway and a support for the main sign. Neon was once arranged in a "sunburst" pattern on this extension around the sign and entranceway.

Inside the cafe, a handful of booths line the eastern and southern walls. A wooden counter with stools once stood inside, but was removed c.1977 to make way for a barbecue pit, no longer extant. Two small restrooms are located along the back (northern) wall of the cafe. Behind the main cafe is a small storage room. The kitchen was located in the northeast corner of the building. Of the original kitchen equipment, only the stove ventilation hood remains.

Sitting back a few feet on the south facade between the cafe and the station is an exterior entrance to the main dining room. Although not as elaborate as the cafe entrance, this doorway is also recessed and flanked by large single-paned glass windows. The dining room extends several feet back beyond the rest of the building. Another small restroom is located between the separate doorways leading to the cafe and kitchen.

The building's exterior walls on the west, south and east facades are currently painted beige with some of the tiles and decoration painted green. On the north facade, the original brick remains unpainted.

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Section 8 Page 7

Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

The Tower Station is named for its most distinguishing features: two magnificent towers placed above the gas station and cafe which are housed at opposite ends of the building. Located in the town of Shamrock (1990 pop. 2,286) in Wheeler County, Texas, the Art Deco-styled Tower Station serves as both a reminder of the many commercial buildings erected along the U.S. Route 66 during the 1930s, and as an example of the use of vertical architectural elements as signage to call attention to roadside businesses. The building is eligible under Criterion A in the area of Commerce, and Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an outstanding example of Art Deco design, both at the local level of significance.

The Tower Station was the first commercial building located on the newly-designated U.S. Route 66 at the northern end of Shamrock. Although Shamrock was a well-established community when the Tower Station was built in 1936, less than a century had passed since Captain R.B. Marcy crossed the area on his way from Ft. Smith to Santa Fe in 1849, describing it as "...a vast, illimitable expanse of desert prairie... which always has been and must continue uninhabited forever..." In 1890, federal postal officials granted an application to open a post office called "Shamrock" at the home of George Nickle, six miles north of the present city of Shamrock. This Irish immigrant and sheep rancher chose the name in honor of his homeland. The present location of Shamrock was established in 1902 when the Chicago, Rock Island, and Gulf Railroad crossed lower Wheeler County. E.L. Woodley, a depot agent for the C.R.I. & G., sponsored a lot sale with a barbecue on August 12 of that year; the first buildings followed soon after. The new community, originally called "Wheeler," then briefly "Exum," officially became "Shamrock" on June 10, 1903, shortly after the U.S. Post Office closed the original Shamrock post office. The first school and bank were constructed in 1904, followed by businesses relocated from nearby communities. The City of Shamrock was incorporated in 1911, and in 1925, the population reached 2,500. The discovery of oil nearby in 1926 help to boost the population to 3,778 in 1930. New industries included cottonseed oil mills, a compress, a carbon black plant and a gasoline extraction plant. A decrease in oil activity left the population at 3,123 in 1940, while the 1950 population was 3,326.

The earliest commercial development occurred near the railroad depot. Eventually, downtown Shamrock grew along the primary north/south road (Main Street). This highway at various times was known as the "Del Rio and Canadian Road," the "D.C.D. Highway" (Dallas, Canadian, and Denver) and, until at least the late 1930s, as State Highway 4. Today it is part of U.S. 83, the longest highway in Texas. The Federal Highway Act of 1926 led to the establishment of a federal highway commission to select and design a system of interstate highways with uniform numbers and signs. Cyrus Avery, known as "the Father of 66," helped select the route for the first transcontinental highway between Chicago and Los Angeles, conveniently routing it through his hometown of Tulsa, OK. Route 66 stretched over 2200 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles. The Texas portion of Route 66 is the second smallest state segment of the old highway, cutting across seven counties for a distance of 177 miles, roughly parallel to modern Interstate 40. The early highway was a dirt road which took a crooked path across the Panhandle, featuring numerous square turns as it followed section lines, and crossing the Rock Island Railroad line numerous times. In 1929, Route 66 between Amarillo and Shamrock

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Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

remained unpaved, and required travelers to open at least four barbed wire gates during the course of the 100-mile trip. Without breaking down or getting stuck in the thick Panhandle mud, drivers might average 60 miles per day. As late as 1945, only three paved highways existed in Wheeler County — U.S. 66, U.S. 83, and Texas 152, a state highway running east from the county seat of Wheeler to the Oklahoma state line.

The emergence of a national highway network and growth in automobile traffic fostered the development of roadside businesses aimed at travelers. Prior to the paving of Route 66 in the 1930s, the highway's alignment in the eastern Panhandle changed four times in a five-year period, as the road was straightened out and many railroad crossings eliminated. After the final alignment through northern Shamrock was announced in the mid-1930s, L.R. "Lack" Randall, the father of Bebe Nunn, who would later operate the U-Drop-Inn with her husband John, found that he owned all four corners at the intersection of Route 66 and U.S. 83 in Shamrock. Already the owner of the sole gas station at that busy intersection, Randall refused all offers to sell his land. Upon Randall's death in the mid-30s, Amarillo businessman James M. Tindall (whose son owns the building today) offered to build John and Bebe Nunn a new building on the site if Mrs. Randall would sell the land. "So my husband picked up an old rusty nail in our yard and drew up just what he wanted," Bebe Nunn later recalled (Amarillo Globe News, 2/2/95).

John Nunn's sketch-in-the-dust was transferred to paper by Tindall and given to architect Joseph Champ Berry for execution. Berry (1875-1950) worked throughout the Texas Panhandle, Oklahoma, and New Mexico for most of his career, designing a wide variety of projects, including houses, schools, and civic buildings. Operating primarily out of Amarillo, Berry established an office in Shamrock for a short time in the early 1930s. Berry designed many successful buildings utilizing modern styles, best evidenced in his Moderne-style Texas courthouses in Wellington (Collingsworth Co., 1930), Dumas (Moore Co., 1931), and Panhandle (Carson Co., 1950). Berry designed at least one service station prior to the Tower Station commission: his 1930 Firestone building in Amarillo (1000 S. Tyler St.), features Spanish baroque and Mayan details combined with Streamlined Moderne massing. The Tower Station was constructed by Tindall and R.C. Lewis at a cost of \$23,000. Augmented with green and red neon, the remarkable Tower Station stood high above the treeless Texas plains. Bebe Nunn noted that the building "shined so bright (at night) that you could see it from way past McLean (about 20 miles away)."

The Nunns operated the U-Drop-Inn in the eastern half of the building. The business name (which was the winning entry in a "name the cafe" contest) is a misnomer, implying the existence of lodging, when actually the "inn" was never more than a restaurant. When Route 66 finally came through in 1937, the U-Drop-Inn was the only eating establishment for a hundred miles along the new highway. After a few years, the Nunns sold their interest in the cafe, but returned in 1950, changing the name to "Nunn's Cafe." In the early 1980s, the name reverted back to the "U-Drop-Inn." Throughout much of its life the building also served as a Greyhound bus station.

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Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

The western half of the building housed the gasoline station, with W.C. Tennison as the first operator. For many years it served as a Conoco station, as evidenced by the faded letters still visible on the tower. By 1976, it had been converted into a red-white-and-blue Fina station, and the neon was removed. This Bicentennial-inspired color scheme remained in place through the early 1980s, but the entire building has now reverted back to the original tan and green. Since the retirement of the Nunns, the building and its two separate businesses have gone through numerous operators. It was last operated as a cafe and gas station in November, 1995. The garage with its working hydraulic lift is in temporary use as a private auto repair facility.

The completion of I-40 through Texas, which included the bypassing of Shamrock's business district, led to the demise of Route 66 as a major automobile route. In recent years, however, Route 66 has become a popular and internationally-known tourist route, largely due to numerous books and articles written on the topic since the mid-1980s. Route 66, at one time the main road from Chicago to Los Angeles, has also been celebrated in popular American literature, music, television and film.

The Tower Station is significant in the area of architecture as an excellent example of the Art Deco style, featuring glazed brick, a "zigzag" motif, strong vertical elements, and decorative sculpture, most notably the metal "tulip" atop the large tower. Art Deco in the United States was inspired by the exotic designs popularized by the 1925 Paris Exposition des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Early examples of Art Deco architecture in America feature geometric designs, dominant vertical lines, and an emphasis on sculptural ornament, often applied to classically-derived forms. According to architectural historian David Gebhard, Art Deco originated as a sophisticated urban style in major cities, spreading to smaller communities throughout the country by the late 1920s. Considered a high style, Art Deco most often manifested itself in large commercial and public buildings, and is rarely found in gas stations or roadside restaurants. The Tower Station is an unusual example of late Art Deco applied to a small-town roadside business, built at a time when "Streamline Moderne," a popular offshoot of Art Deco, became a common style for shops; restaurants, movie theaters, gas stations and diners. Streamline Moderne is distinctly smooth rather than sculptured, and features curved corners, round "porthole" windows, and modern materials, such as light-colored glazed brick, aluminum doors and decorative details, glass blocks and opaque glass facades.

The Tower Station retains its integrity of location, setting, workmanship, materials, design, feeling and association. The building is located on its original site, along old Route 66, which is still drive-able through much of the Texas Panhandle. Its distinctive towers and the majority of tiled surfaces are intact and any changes to the historic fabric have been minor. The original window configuration has been slightly modified, most notably on the eastern section of the building, where multi-paned casement windows have been replaced by plate glass windows. An extra garage bay has been added adjacent to the original garage bay, replacing a door and picture window. None of these changes, however, are detrimental to the overall integrity of the building. The neon, though removed, could be replaced. Up until a few years ago, the building housed the same types of businesses - a cafe and gas station - that it was designed for.

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Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

In February, 1995, plans were announced to turn the then-vacant Tower Station into a tourist information center with offices for the local Chamber of Commerce. The city of Shamrock, which would then own the entire building, planned to rent out the adjoining U-Drop-Inn for \$6,000 per year. These plans fell through, however, primarily because of a dispute over the building's asking price. The applicant currently has an option to purchase the building, with the intention to rehabilitate the Tower Station into a tourist information center for all of Route 66. The building has been featured in many books, magazines, videos and web sites on Route 66, and is well known throughout the world. This plan would include restoration of the building to its 1950s appearance, including neon. Plans for the U-Drop-Inn include the operation of a souvenir store and possibly a small ice cream shop.

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Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

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Privately-owned archival resources:

Archival Photo collection of Todd Helms, Xenia, OH

Postcard collection of Jerry McClanahan, Corsicana, TX

Postcard collection of Norbert Schlegel, Shamrock, TX

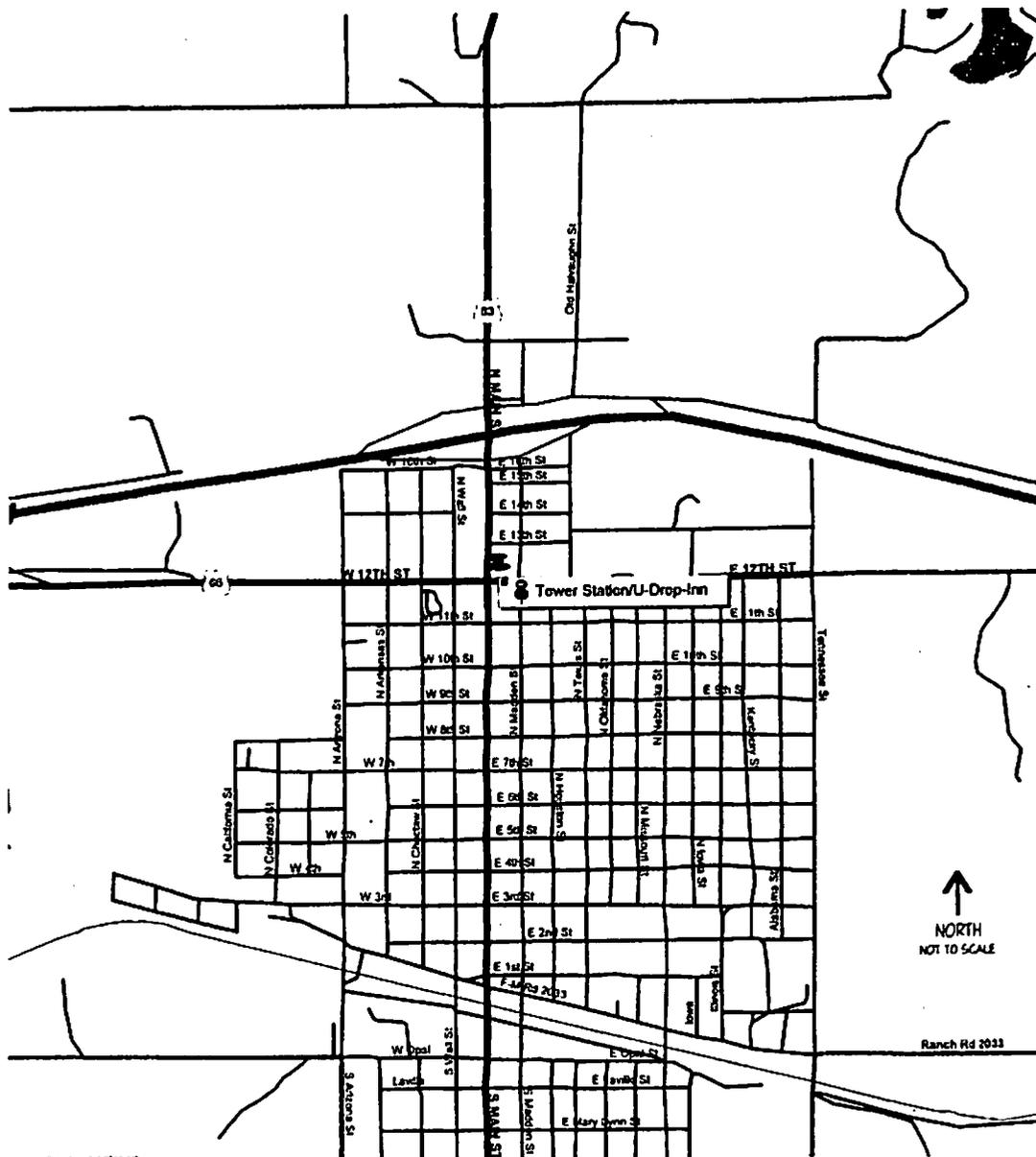
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National Park Service

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Section Map Page 12

Tower Station
Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas

Map of Shamrock, Texas showing location of Tower Station on W.12th Street/Route 66. (Source: Rand McNally & Co. computer-generated map, provided by Jim Olsson).



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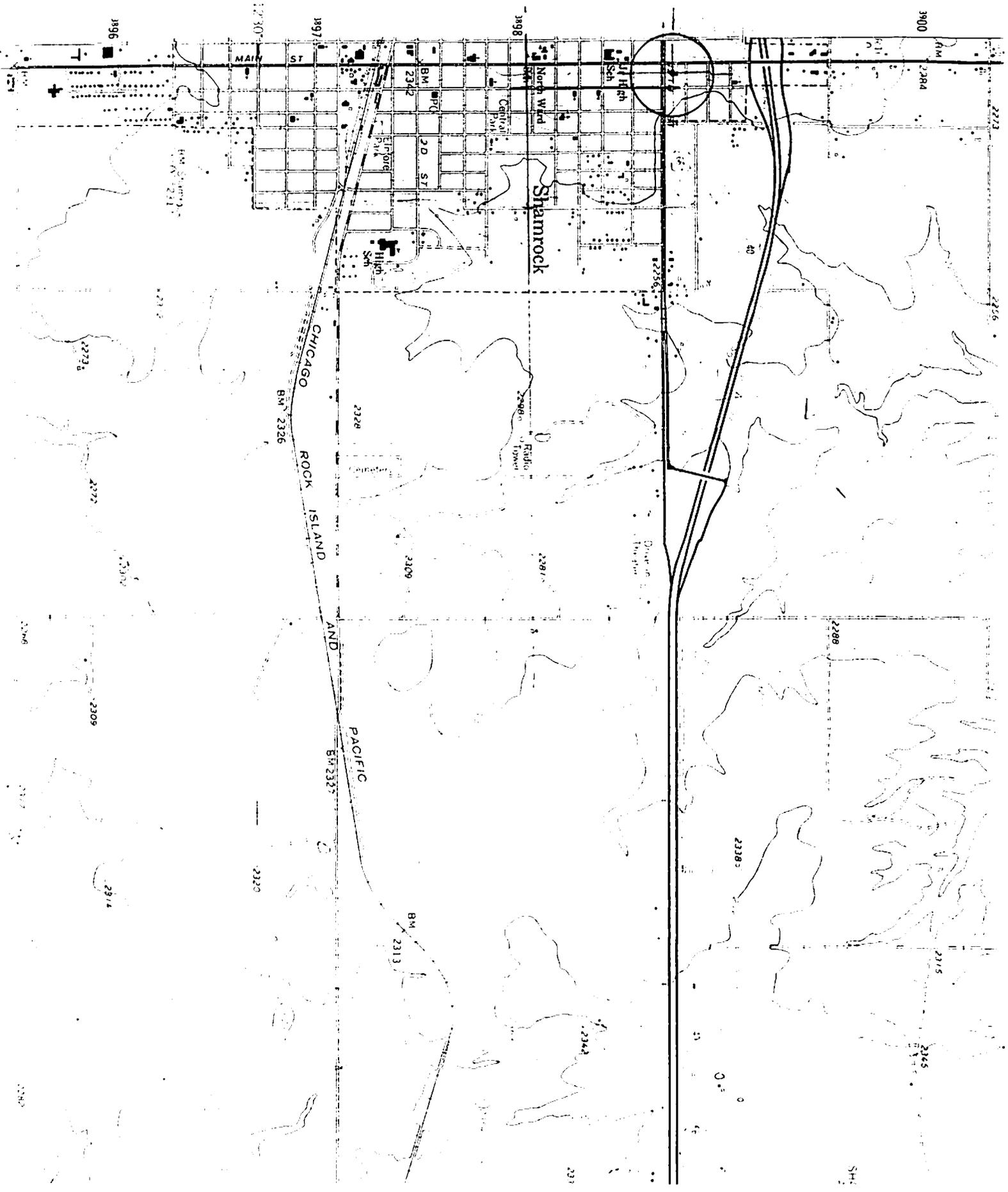
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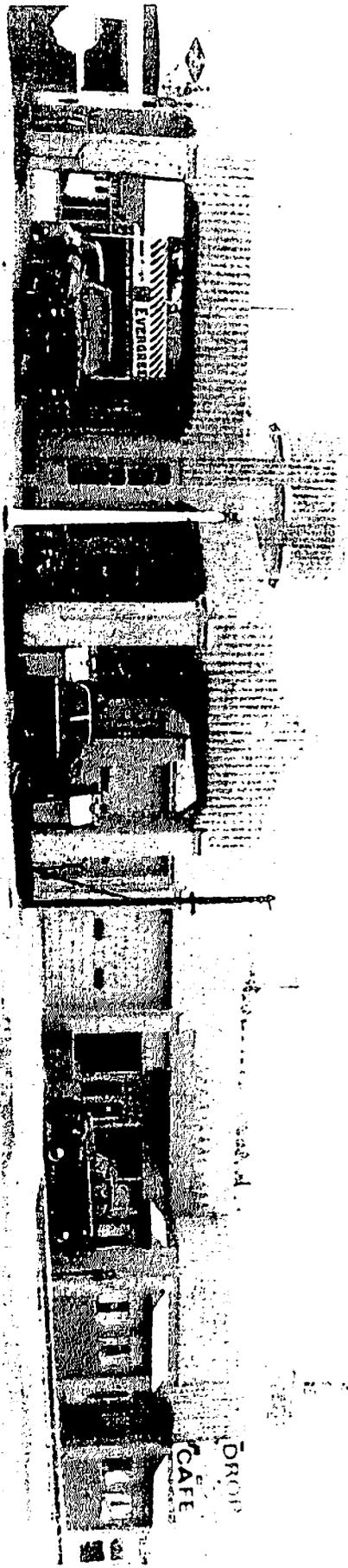
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Shamrock, Wheeler County, Texas
Original negatives on file with the Texas Historical Commission

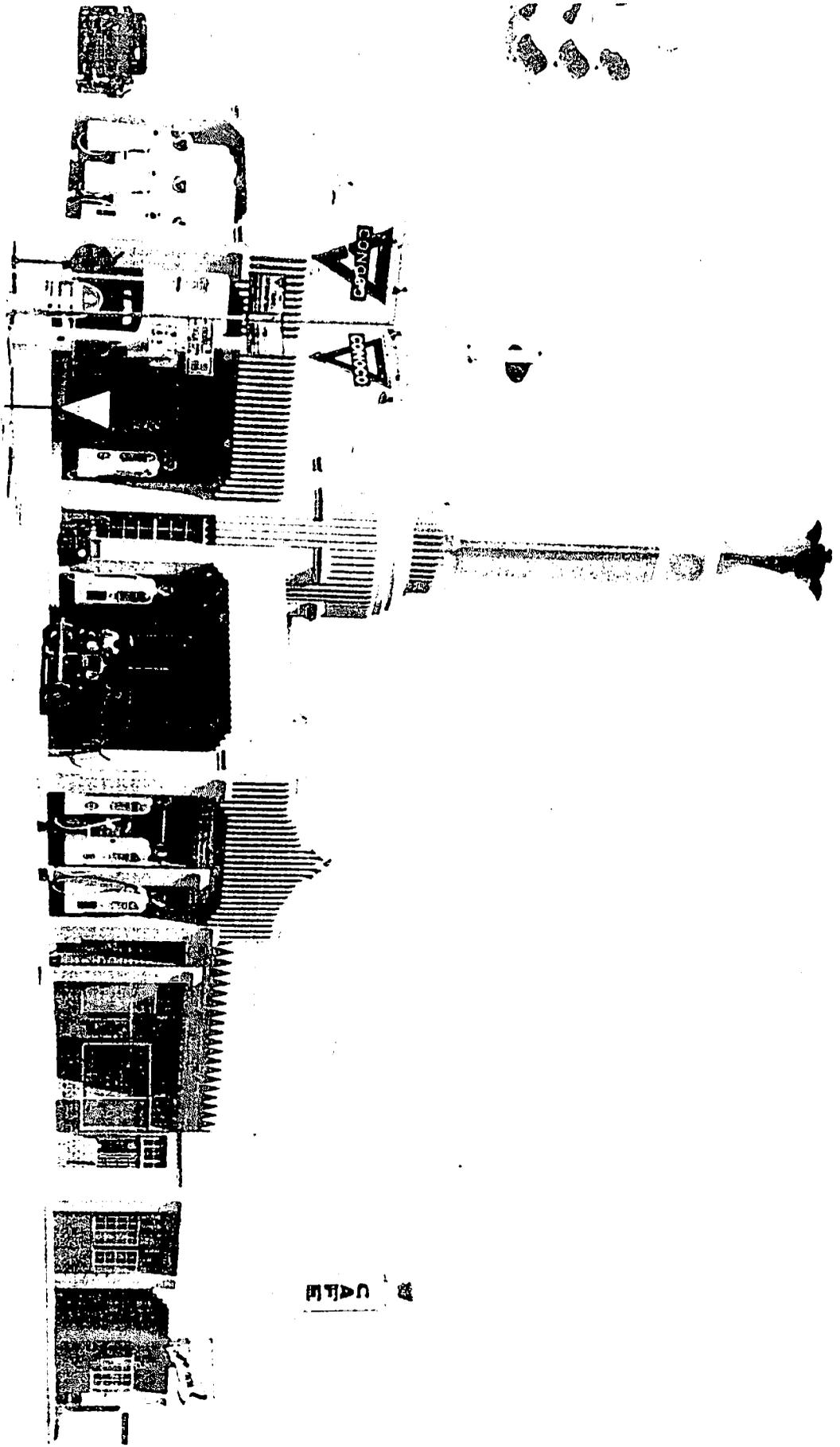
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| Photo 1 of 5 | Southwest elevation
Camera facing northeast
Photo by Jim Olsson, April 1997 |
| Photo 2 of 5 | Southwest elevation
Camera facing northeast
Undated photo postcard, late 1930s |
| Photo 3 of 5 | West tower detail
Camera facing northeast
Photo by Gregory Smith, September 1993 |
| Photo 4 of 5 | Southeast elevation - station canopy
Camera facing northwest
Photo by Jim Olsson, April 1997 |
| Photo 5 of 5 | South elevation - café entrance
Camera facing northeast
Photo by Jim Olsson, April 1997 |

TOWER STATION
101 EAST 12TH STREET
SHAMROCK WHEELER CO., TEXAS
UTM REFERENCE: 14/386440/3818720

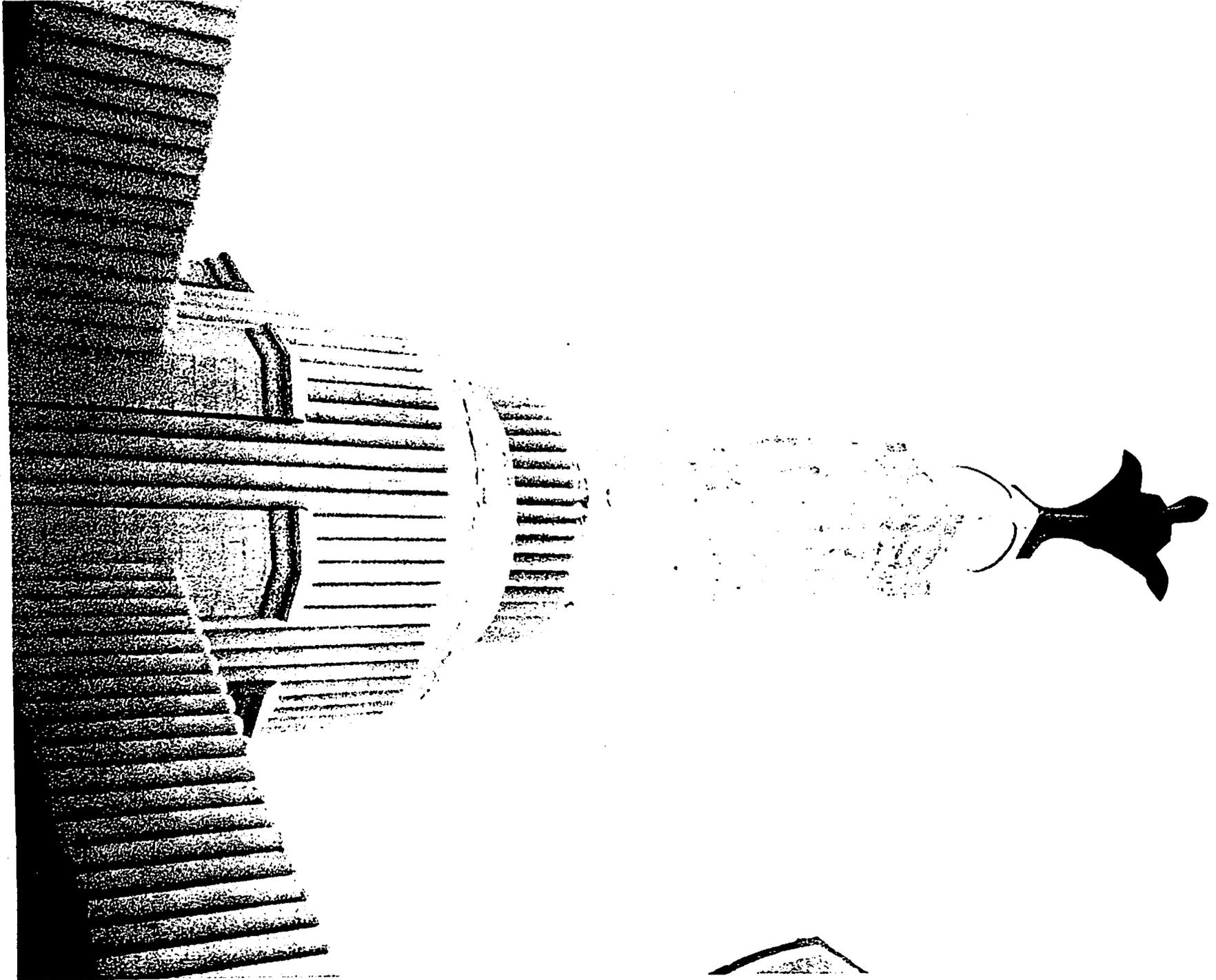


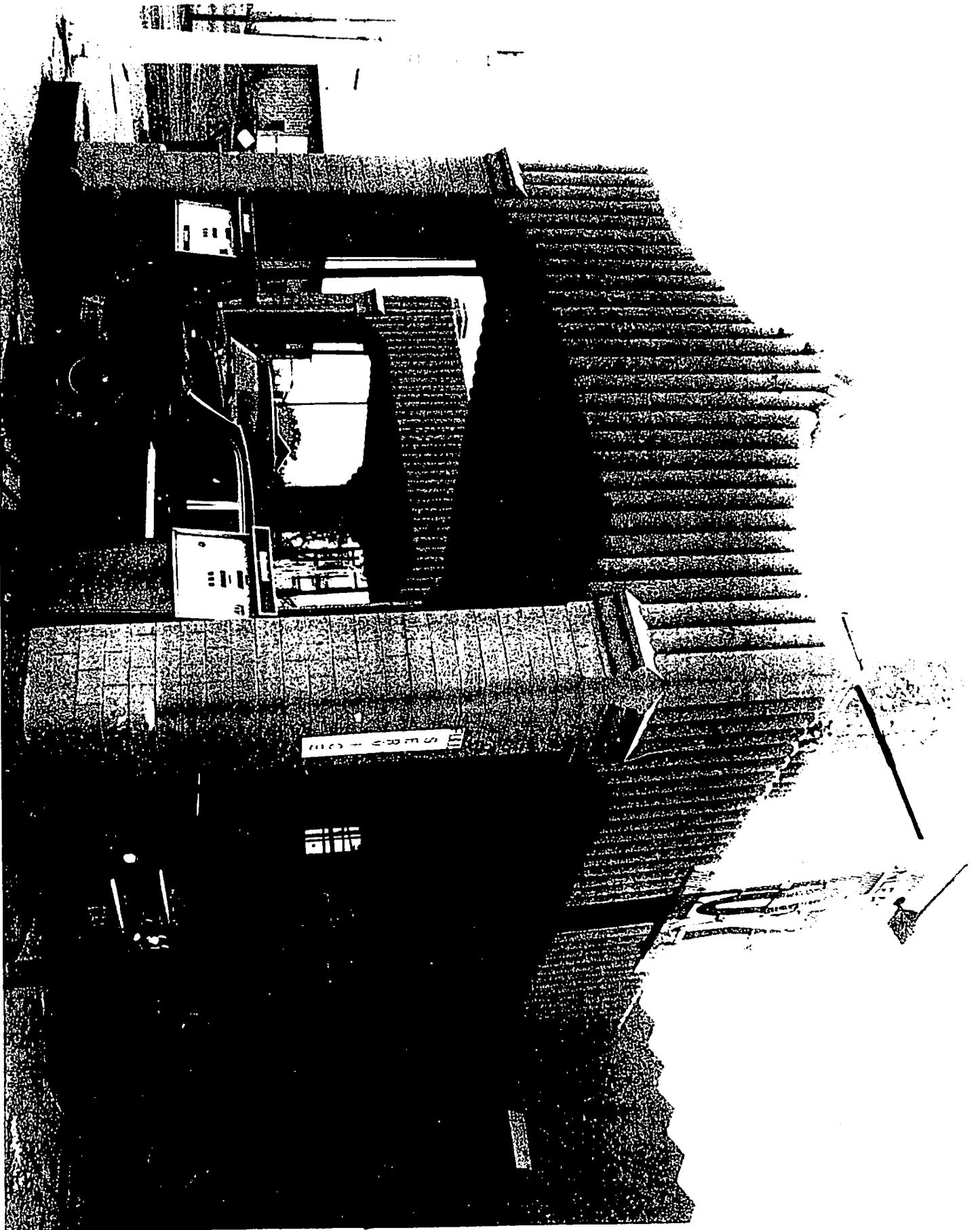


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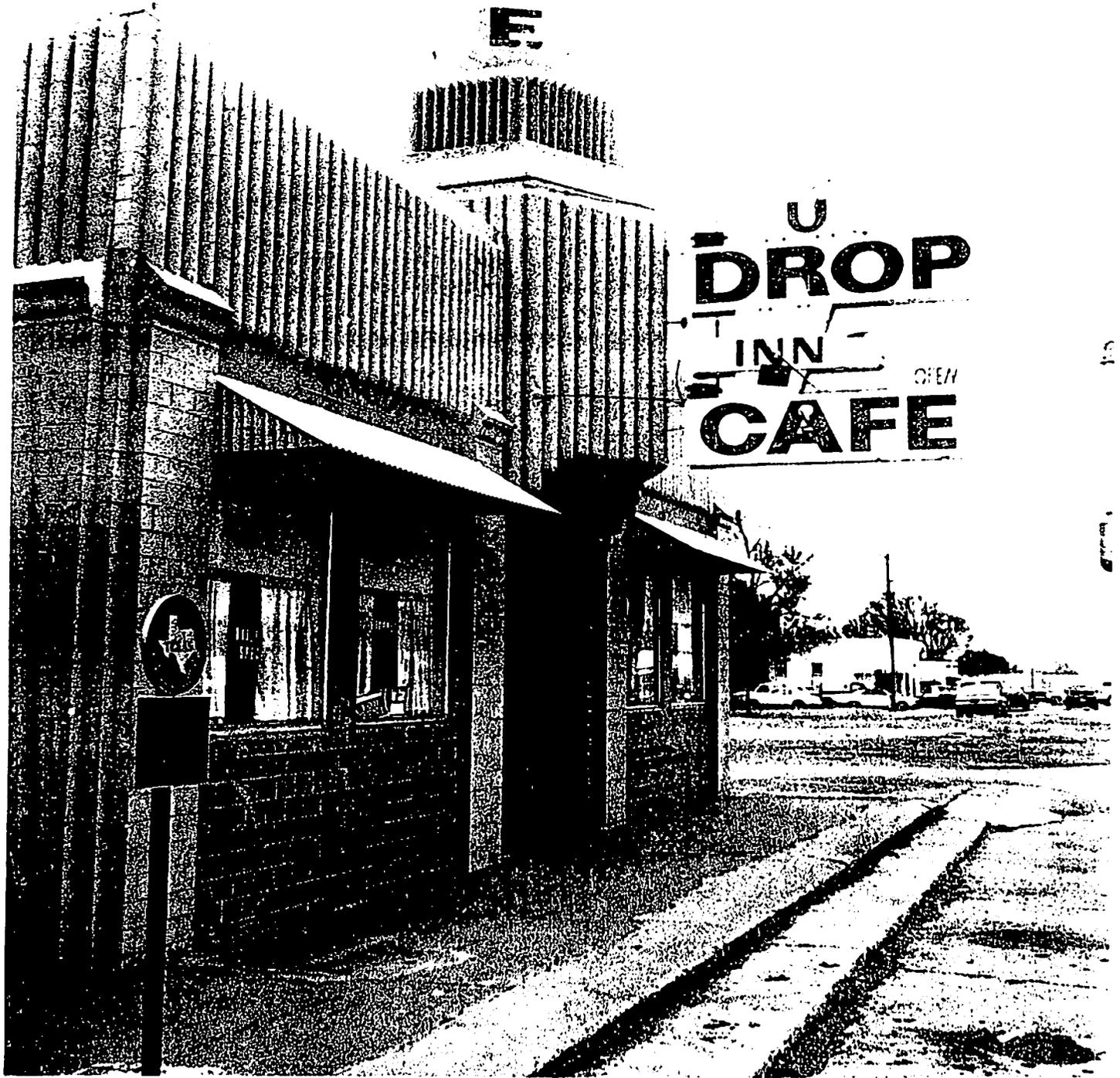


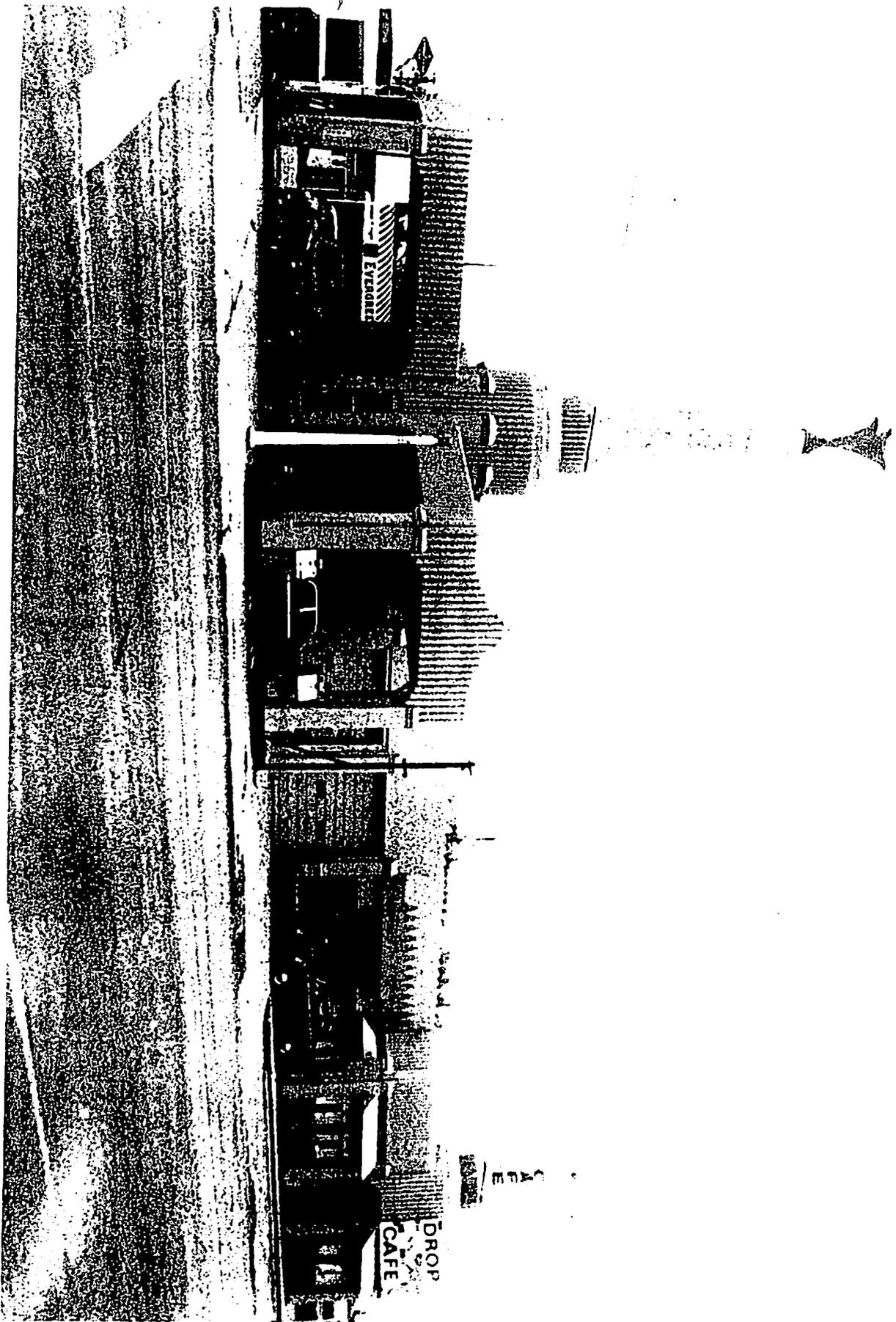


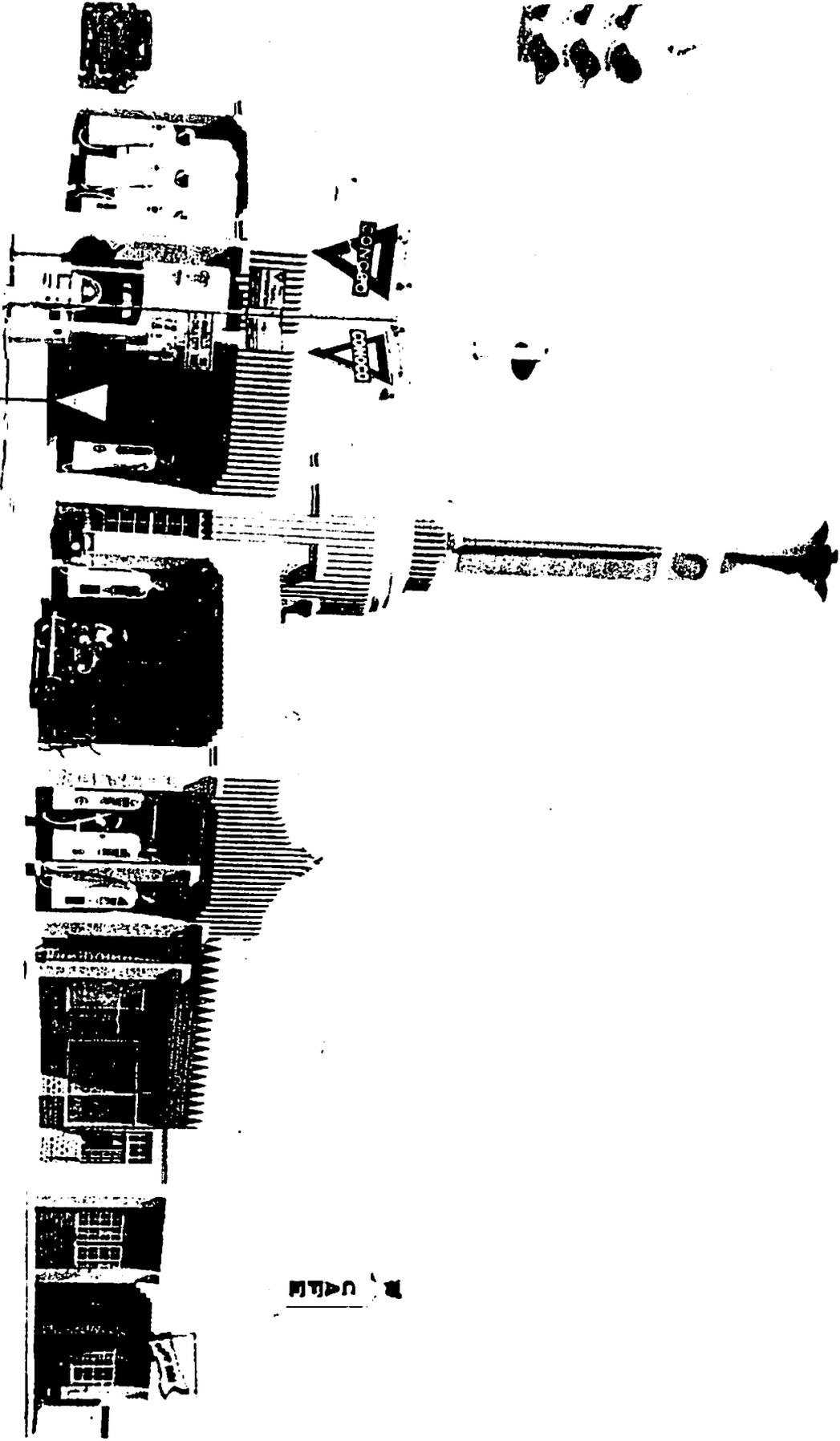
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