

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Elkins' Ferry Battlefield - Red River Campaign

other name/site number: Battle of Elkins' Ferry/NE0052

2. Location

street & number: On Little Missouri River, Nevada-Clark county line

not for publication:

city/town: Prescott

vicinity: x

state: AR county: Nevada

code: AR

zip code: 71857

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u>2</u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: Red River Campaign NHL

=====
4. State/Federal Agency Certification
=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Byrd _____ Date 3-29-93
Signature of certifying official

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

=====
5. 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): _____

Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic: Landscape Sub: Forest
Defense Battle site

Current : Landscape Sub: Forest

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification:

N/A

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation N/A roof N/A
walls N/A other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====
8. Statement of Significance
=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: N/A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Historic Context Theme VI.
Civil War
Subtheme C.:War in the West

Period(s) of Significance: 4-3-1864 4-4-1864

Significant Dates: April 3-4, 1864

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification:

N/A

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation N/A roof N/A
walls N/A other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: N/A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Historic Context Theme VI.
Civil War
Subtheme C.:War in the West

Period(s) of Significance: 4-3-1864 4-4-1864

Significant Dates: April 3-4, 1864

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreage of Property: app. 575

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>467480</u>	<u>3754190</u>	B	<u>15</u>	<u>468440</u>	<u>3754190</u>
C	<u>15</u>	<u>468260</u>	<u>3754820</u>	D	<u>15</u>	<u>467060</u>	<u>3755850</u>
E	<u>15</u>	<u>466150</u>	<u>3755000</u>				

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

Based on the Official Records and staff research, this boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Battle of Elkins' Ferry.

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Don Baker, Planning Officer

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: March 29, 1993

Street & Number: 323 Center, 1600 Tower Bldg. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

SUMMARY

The Elkins' Ferry Battlefield is located on both banks of the Little Missouri River that divides Clark and Nevada counties, approximately ten miles north of Prescott (Nevada County). Middle Creek and Howard Creek flow through the southern portion of the battlefield, on the south bank of the river. The remote rural area is heavily wooded and flood-prone, just as it was on April 4, 1864, when Steele's federals met their first heavy resistance of the Red River Campaign in attempting to cross the Little Missouri River at Elkins' Ferry and advance toward Washington and Shreveport beyond. Only a handful of intrusions are currently extant on the battlefield, which is excellently preserved.

ELABORATION

The Elkins' Ferry Battlefield has excellent integrity of setting, feeling, association and location, and represents an excellently preserved element of the Red River Campaign in southern Arkansas. The only major intrusions within the proposed boundaries of the battlefield are the remains of a collapsed wooden automobile bridge that replaced the river ferry in the 1920s, the washed out remains of a smaller mid-20th Century concrete bridge across Middle Creek, and a few dirt roads traversing the area. Nevada County Road 37 that travels south from the river approximates the route of the Washington-Arkadelphia Road that Steele's army was following in an attempt to avoid the heavily fortified Confederate stronghold of Camden; once the river had been forded, the Union troops straddled this road in an attempt to maintain their bridgehead on the southern bank against its Southern defenders. Although the southern bank of the river included an orchard and an open field in 1864, today the area is dominated by a mixture of pine and hardwood trees and undergrowth. The Little Missouri bottoms, with an elevation of just 210 feet, remain low and flood prone.

The Elkins' Ferry Battlefield is located between the Little Missouri River to the north and Middle and Howard Creeks to the south in the Little Missouri River bottoms, near where Elkins' Ferry crossed that river on the Washington-Arkadelphia Road. The probable ferry crossing is still visible as a deep cut in the bank leading to the Little Missouri River, a few feet west of the current Nevada County Road 37. The northern, Clark County bank of the river, from which Colonel William E. McLean ordered his federals to take the river's southern bank, is similarly wooded and free of intrusions. Ironically, the collapse of the Elkins' Ferry bridge in the 1950s or 1960s and the development of Interstate 30 to the southwest altered transportation patterns between Clark and Nevada counties, contributing to the preservation of the Elkins' Ferry battlefield. Today, the location of the battle is little

known, relatively inaccessible, rarely visited by all but deer hunters, and very well preserved.

Overall, the Elkins' Ferry Battlefield has excellent integrity. As a result of the battlefield's position in the Little Missouri river bottoms, the area is damp and prone to flooding, and thus unsuitable for major construction or development; this, as well as the collapse of the Little Missouri bridge and the afore-mentioned shifts in transportation patterns, have helped to ensure the site's continued integrity. The land remains heavily forested with a combination of old- and new-growth timber. Today, the bottomlands in which Colonel McLean established a Union bridgehead on the southern bank of the Little Missouri River in the face of staunch Confederate opposition would be easily recognizable to a soldier who had participated in the battle in 1864.

The Battle of Elkins' Ferry

SUMMARY

The Elkins' Ferry Battlefield site, in Clark and Nevada counties, Arkansas, is an important element of the Red River Campaign National Historic Landmark nomination under NHL Criteria 1. Although a minor battle in terms of the Civil War as a whole, Elkins' Ferry's true importance is evident when it is placed in its larger historic context as a component of the Red River Campaign of 1864. The Red River Campaign was an important campaign during the Spring of 1864 in which Union forces in Little Rock under the command of Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele were to move toward Shreveport, Louisiana, where they would join forces with an amphibious force under the command of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel P. Banks and Rear Adm. David Porter. The Red River Campaign had its impetus in the desires of New Englanders to invade and occupy Texas in order to establish a free-soil cotton growing colony to supply northeastern textile manufacturers with raw materials. The possibility of French intervention in Mexico also concerned the Lincoln Administration, which felt that a stronger Union presence on the Rio Grande might discourage Napoleon III's dreams of empire in the Western Hemisphere. The failed Confederate attempt to halt the Union crossing of the Little Missouri River at Elkins' Ferry represented the Southerner's best opportunity to halt the Federal's advance and presaged the pivotal battle at Prairie De Ann the following day, an encounter that was to irrevocably alter the tenor of the campaign. Ultimately, the Red River Campaign's failure to achieve any of its objectives in Arkansas, Louisiana, or Texas, provided a much-needed morale boost to the Confederate military leadership in the Trans-Mississippi West, which subsequently authorized the disastrous Price's Raid into Missouri that Fall.

ELABORATION

The Elkins' Ferry Battlefield site, in Clark and Nevada counties, Arkansas, is an important element of the Red River Campaign National Historic Landmark nomination under NHL Criteria 1. The failed Confederate attempt to halt the Union crossing of the Little Missouri River at Elkins' Ferry represented the Southerner's best opportunity to halt the Federal's advance and presaged the pivotal battle at Prairie De Ann the following day, an encounter that was to irrevocably alter the tenor of the campaign. Ultimately, the Red River Campaign's failure to achieve any of its objectives in Arkansas, Louisiana, or Texas, provided a much-needed morale boost to the Confederate military leadership in the Trans-Mississippi West, which subsequently authorized the disastrous Price's Raid into Missouri that Fall.

Leaving Brig. Gen. Nathan Kimball in charge of the federal arsenal, Steele left Little Rock via the Benton Road on March 23, 1864, with Brig. Gen. Frederick Salomon's Third Division, 7th Corps, and two brigades of cavalry under the command of Brig. Gen. Eugene A. Carr, a total of about 6,800 effectives. The troops marched about nine miles that first day and Steele ordered the issuance of half-rations on the second day of the expedition. The column reached the nearly deserted town of Rockport on the easily-forded Ouachita River on March 26. Nevertheless, a bridge was hastily constructed to guard against a sudden rise in the shallow river so that the infantry and artillery might cross. The column pushed on toward Arkadelphia to the southwest, arriving on the 29th.¹

Arkadelphia in 1864 was an attractive village of white frame houses that had thus far remained largely untouched by the ravages of war. The weary and hungry Union troops quickly broke ranks and began foraging for food on entering the town and reportedly paid for "almost all" that they found. Despite reports that Union troops ransacked the community's young ladies' seminary, some of the local women are reported to have commented to Steele that "your men treat us better than our own men do." The Union forces remained encamped at Arkadelphia for two days awaiting the arrival of Thayer's column from Fort Smith. Steele however was concerned that he could not afford to wait indefinitely while consuming his limited supplies, and on April 1, with no word as to Thayer's whereabouts, the Union column left Arkadelphia on the Old Military Road to Washington.²

While Steele continued to march toward Shreveport, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, who had recently been placed in command of the Confederacy's District of Arkansas, prepared to counter his advance. Three understrength cavalry divisions, led by Brig. Gens. John S. Marmaduke, James F. Fagan, and Samuel B. Maxey were assigned to Price's command. Price had at his immediate disposal five brigades of cavalry, including Crawford's and Dockery's brigades of Fagan's division stationed to the east of Saline River near Monticello and Mount Elba. Marmaduke was in command of the other three brigades as a division based at Camden; Brig. Gen. Joseph O. Shelby's and Col. Colton Greene's brigades were with Marmaduke in Camden, while Brig. Gen. William L. Cabell's brigade was on the Red River sixteen miles west of the Confederate state capital in Washington. Although Marmaduke's three brigades totaled only 3,200 effective troops, they were seasoned and well-trained.³

On receiving news of Steele's advance, Price ordered Shelby to Princeton and Cabell's brigade to march for Tate's Bluff, at the confluence of the Ouachita and Little Missouri Rivers north of Camden, where he would be met by Marmaduke and Greene's brigade. From these positions, Cabell and Greene would harass the vanguard of the Union column while Shelby attacked its flanks and rear. Marmaduke was to harry the enemy column until it reached the Little Missouri,

where he would attempt to prevent the Federals from crossing. On arriving at Tate's Bluff and learning that the Yanks were en route toward Arkadelphia, Marmaduke ordered Shelby to cross the Ouachita and attack the rear of Steele's army. General Price, fearing that Steele was advancing on Washington, diverted Cabell to Antoine.⁴

Skirmishing was fierce as Cabell's brigade attempted to counter Steele's advance toward Washington on April 1. That night, as Steele camped near the community of Hollywood (also known as Spoonville or Witherspoonville), Marmaduke ordered Greene to move most of his brigade to Cottingham's Store, three miles south of the Little Missouri River on the Old Military Road. The following day, Cabell's brigade withdrew to Cottingham's Store as well, leaving just one regiment near Antoine as a rear guard. Falling back slowly, this regiment sharply repulsed the Federal's advance at Wolf Creek on April 2, then rejoined the rest of the brigade south of the Little Missouri.

Early on the afternoon of April 2, Confederate scouts brought word to Cottingham's Store that the Federals had unexpectedly turned off the Old Military Road and were now marching toward Elkins' Ferry on the Little Missouri by way of Okolona. One section of the 9th Wisconsin Infantry under Capt. Martin Voegele, guarding the rear of the Union train, skirmished continually with Shelby's cavalry division and three pieces of artillery beginning four miles south of Hollywood near Gentry's Creek. Brig. Gen. Samuel A. Rice moved quickly to the rear of the train to assess this new threat, and ordered the 50th Indiana back to reinforce Col. Thomas Benton's 29th Iowa. The attackers were soon repulsed and Benton fell back about half a mile to the summit of a ridge near Terre Noir Creek, where he placed his artillery in position and prepared to meet the enemy again. The Confederates reformed to the left of Benton's line on the summit of a nearby hill, but a Union charge soon drove them back in confusion and disarray with heavy losses. Benton then rapidly fell back to regain the train, reported to be menaced on another front by the approach of Cabell's forces from Washington to the south. The Confederates mounted another attack on Benton's rear guard as they established camp late that afternoon but were summarily repulsed, and Benton rejoined the Union train at 9:30 that evening.⁵

Aware of the importance of seizing and holding the strategic Elkins' Ferry crossing to the south of the Union train, on the afternoon of April 2 Salomon told Col. William E. McLean of the 43rd Indiana Infantry to lead his brigade on a forced march through the evening to reconnoiter the ford. Arriving at the river after dark, McLean ordered a squadron of cavalry sent forward across the shallow Little Missouri as advance pickets, while the remainder of his forces -- the 36th Iowa Infantry under Col. C. W. Kittredge, the 43rd Indiana Infantry under Maj. W. W. Norris, and Company E of the 2nd Missouri Light Artillery under Lt. Peetz -- encamped near the river for

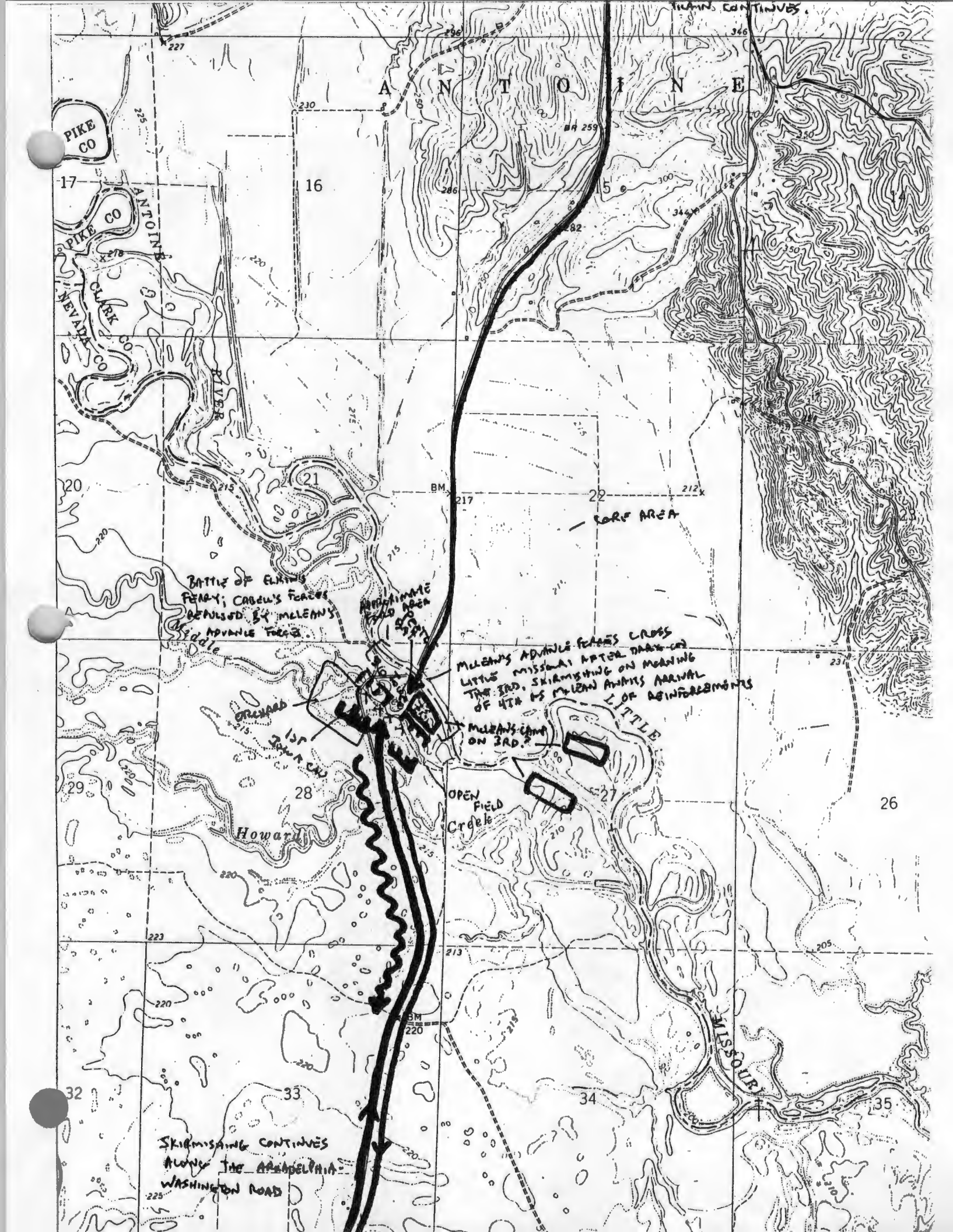
the night. On the morning of April 3, skirmishing and occasional firing along the Union picket line alerted McLean to the presence of the enemy and prompted him to order Norris to cross the river with four companies of the 43rd Indiana to support the cavalry pickets and flush out the Confederates. Norris succeeded in driving back the enemy skirmishers, cutting off and capturing sixteen Confederates in the process.⁶

Satisfied that a Confederate attack was imminent in the morning, that evening McLean ordered Lt. Col. Francis Drake to have three companies from the 36th Iowa and three companies from the 43rd Indiana to position themselves on the left and right of the road leading from the ford to resist possible rebel encroachments. One section of artillery under Lieutenant Peetz was deployed so as to command all possible approaches to Elkins' Ferry. Meanwhile, Marmaduke's division prepared itself nearby, deployed along a ridge overlooking the river bottom to the northeast. In an attempt to relieve pressure on Shelby's forces to the north and counter the Union advance, the 1,600 men of Cabell's brigade attacked Drake's positions early on the morning of the 4th and a lively skirmish ensued for the following two hours. On discovering the location of Peetz's battery, the Confederates moved four pieces of artillery into position and forced the Union pickets and advanced companies back toward the river, but an effort to flank the Union left and capture the battery was met by a well-coordinated defense by the 36th Iowa under Colonel Kittredge and turned back. Soon after Cabell's charge had been repulsed, the arrival of the 29th Iowa Infantry and the 9th Wisconsin Infantry as reinforcements convinced the Confederates that the main body of the Union train was approaching, and the attack was called off. Losses on both sides in the Battle of Elkins' Ferry were light, with 30 Union soldiers slightly wounded, 50 Confederates wounded, and 18 Southerners killed. On the evening of the 4th, Shelby's brigade joined Marmaduke, and together they withdrew sixteen miles south to Prairie DeAnn the following morning.⁷

NOTES

1. Johnson, 171-72.
2. Johnson, 172-175.
3. Johnson, 172-173. On March 30, Dockery's brigade was surprised and routed at Mount Elba by a small expedition from Pine Bluff under Powell Clayton.
4. Johnson, 173.
5. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series 1, Volume XXXIV, Part 1 (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: National Historical Society, 1971), 693-694. Hereafter cited as O.R.
6. O.R., 705.
7. O.R., 705-706.

Beginning at a point on Nevada County Road 37, approximately four-tenths (0.4) of a mile south of the Little Missouri River [Okolona South Quadrangle, UTM point A]; proceed east approximately seven-tenths (.07) of a mile to a point on the western bank of the Little Missouri River [Okolona South Quadrangle, UTM point B]; proceed north-northeasterly, across the river, approximately one-half (0.5) mile to a point [Okolona Quadrangle, UTM point C]; proceed northwesterly, across the river, approximately one (1) mile to a point on the western bank of the Little Missouri River [Okolona South Quadrangle, UTM point D]; proceed southwesterly approximately seven-tenths (0.7) of a mile to a point [Okolona South Quadrangle, UTM point E]; proceed southeast approximately eight-tenths (0.8) of a mile to the point of origin. This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with the Battle of Elkins' Ferry.



PIKE CO

ANTOINETTE

17

16

PIKE CO
CLARK CO
NEVADA CO

20

21

BATTLE OF ELKHORN
FERRY; CABER'S FEARS
REPELLED BY MEADE'S
ADVANCE FORCES

MEADE'S ADVANCE FORCES CROSS
LITTLE MISSOURI AFTER DARK ON
THE 3RD. SKIRMISHING ON MORNING
OF 4TH AS MEADE OPENS AARVAL
OF REINFORCEMENTS

HOWARD
1st
Cavalry

MEADE'S CAMP
ON 3RD.

29

28

OPEN
FIELD
CREAKS

32

33

34

26

SKIRMISHING CONTINUES
ALONG THE ARCHBOLD-
WASHINGTON ROAD

LITTLE
MISSOURI

35



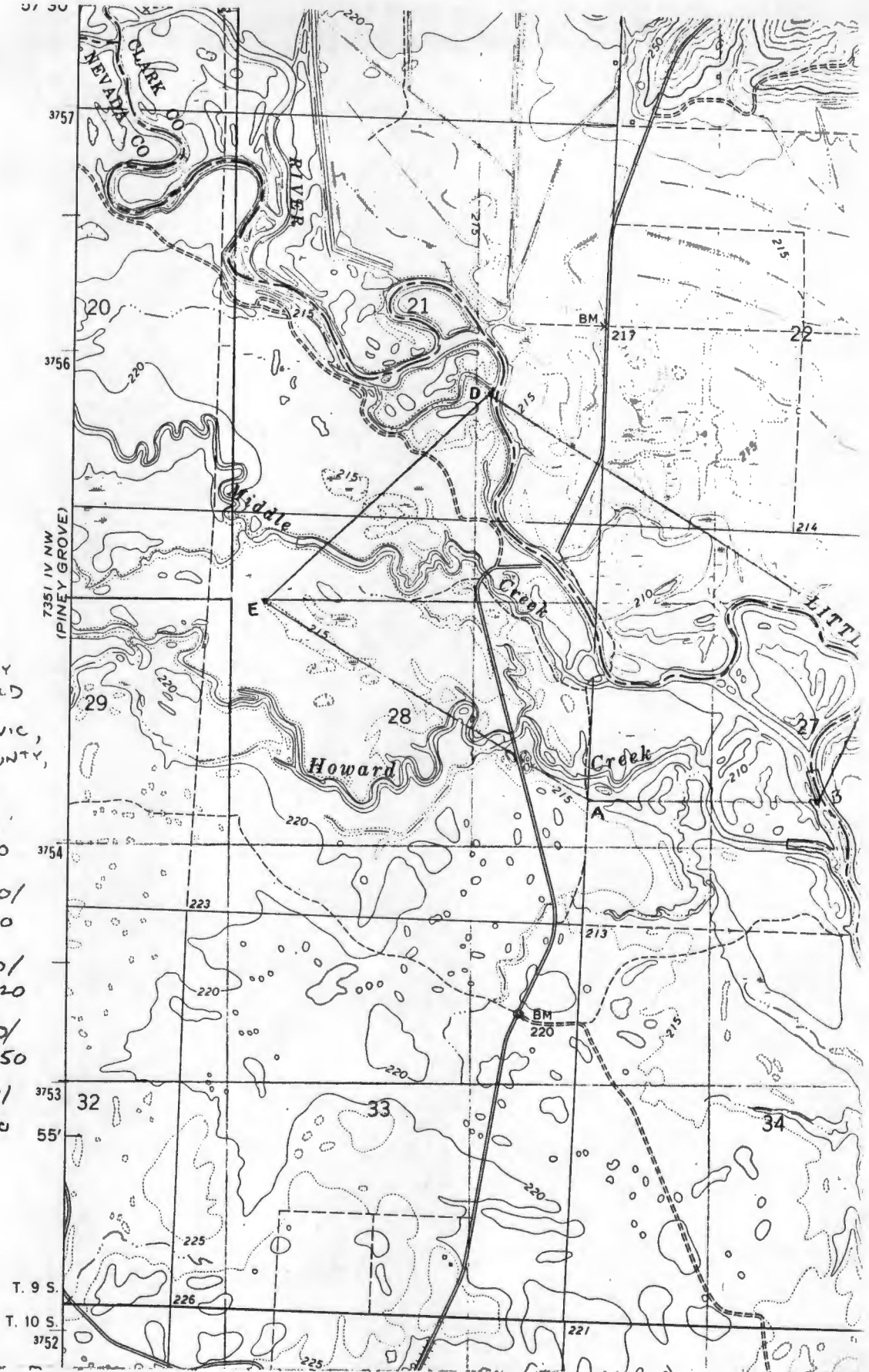
Handwritten notes and markings on the left margin.

- ELKINS' FERRY
BATTLEFIELD
- PRESCOTT VIC,
NEVADA COUNTY,
ARKANSAS

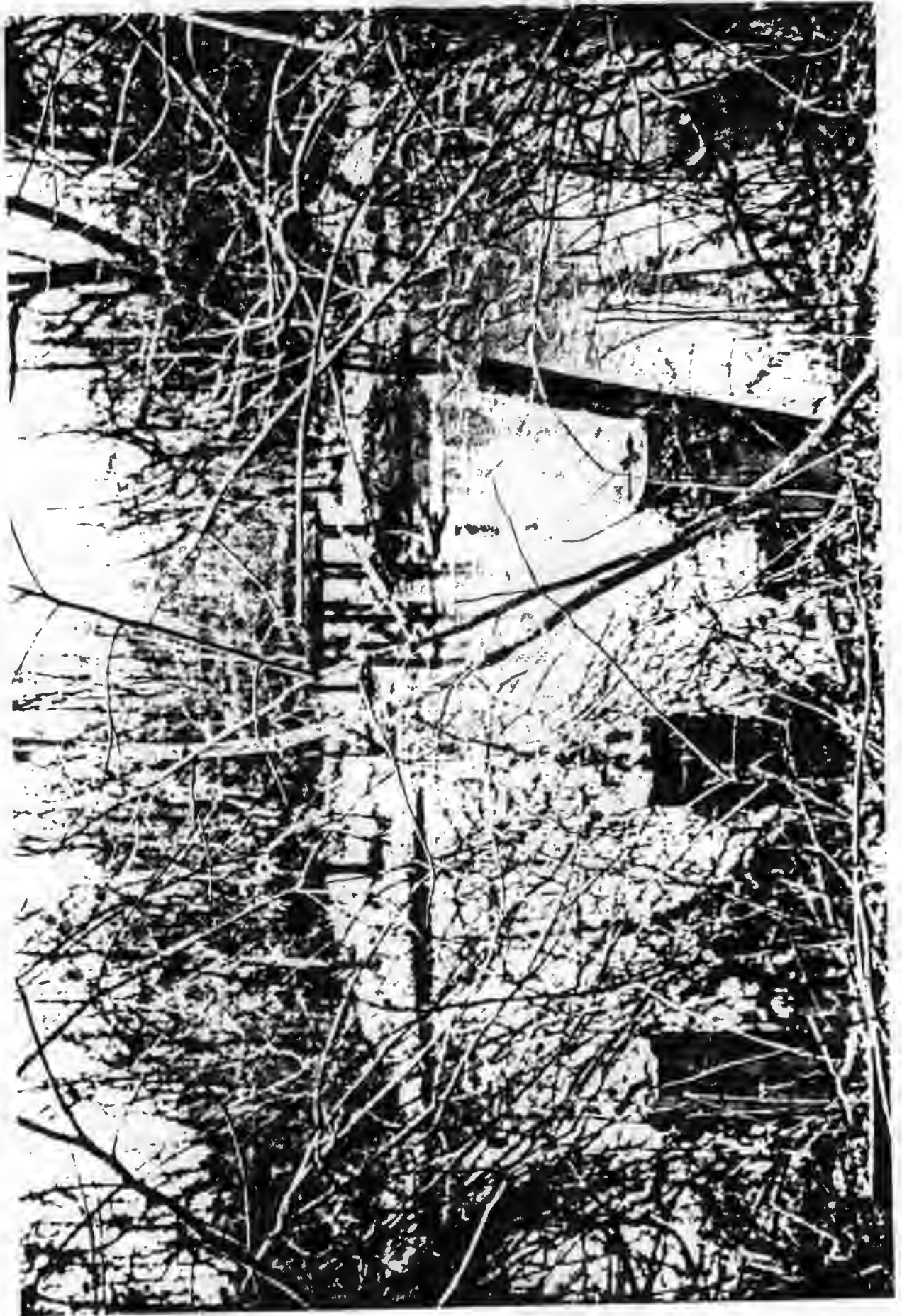
- A) 15/467480 / 3754190
- B) 15/468440 / 3754190
- C) 15/468260 / 3754820
- D) 15/467060 / 3755850
- E) 15/466150 / 3755000



Handwritten notes and markings on the left margin.



T. 9 S.
T. 10 S.

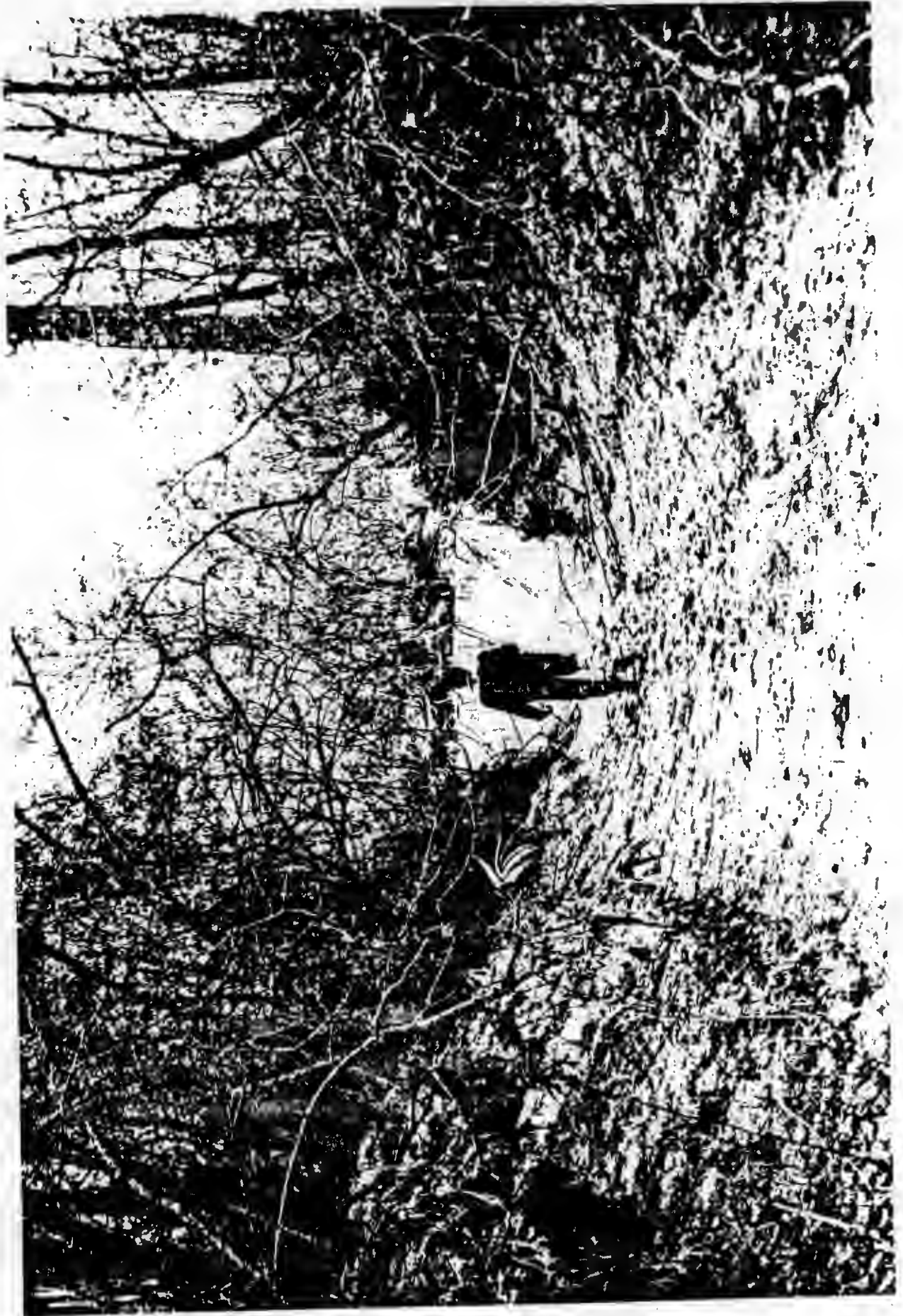


LINDA HENRY ISATTLEFIELD
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS
DON BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-93

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST (NEVADA COUNTY) ACROSS LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER TO
CLARK COUNTY. APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF UNION CROSSING POINT. REMAINS
OF WASHED OUT BRIDGE ARE INTRUSIONS.



UNIT 121116FIELD

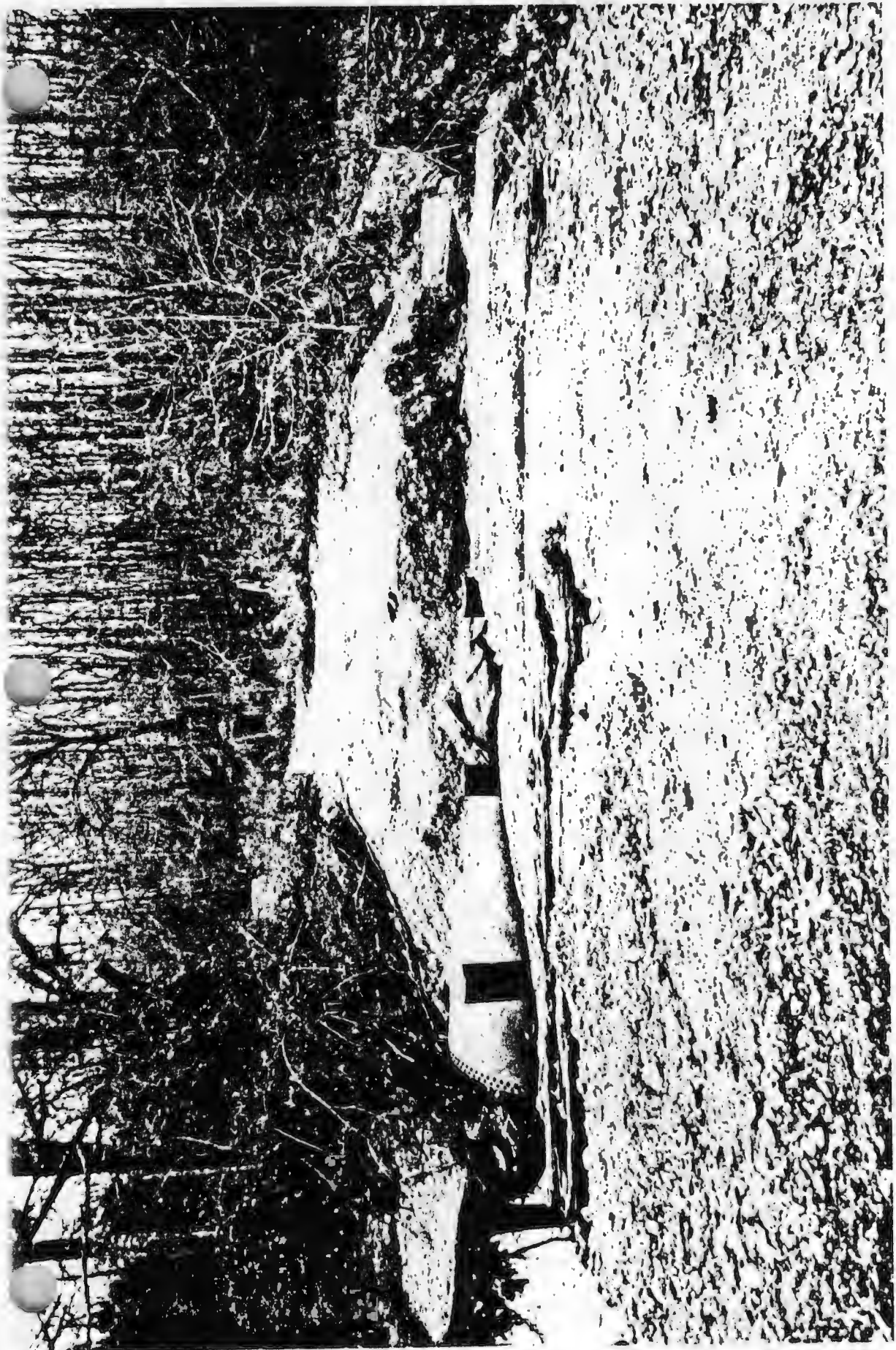
NEA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

DAVID BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-43

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPD

VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST AT PROBABLE FERRY LANDING SITE.



ELKINS' FERRY BATTLEFIELD

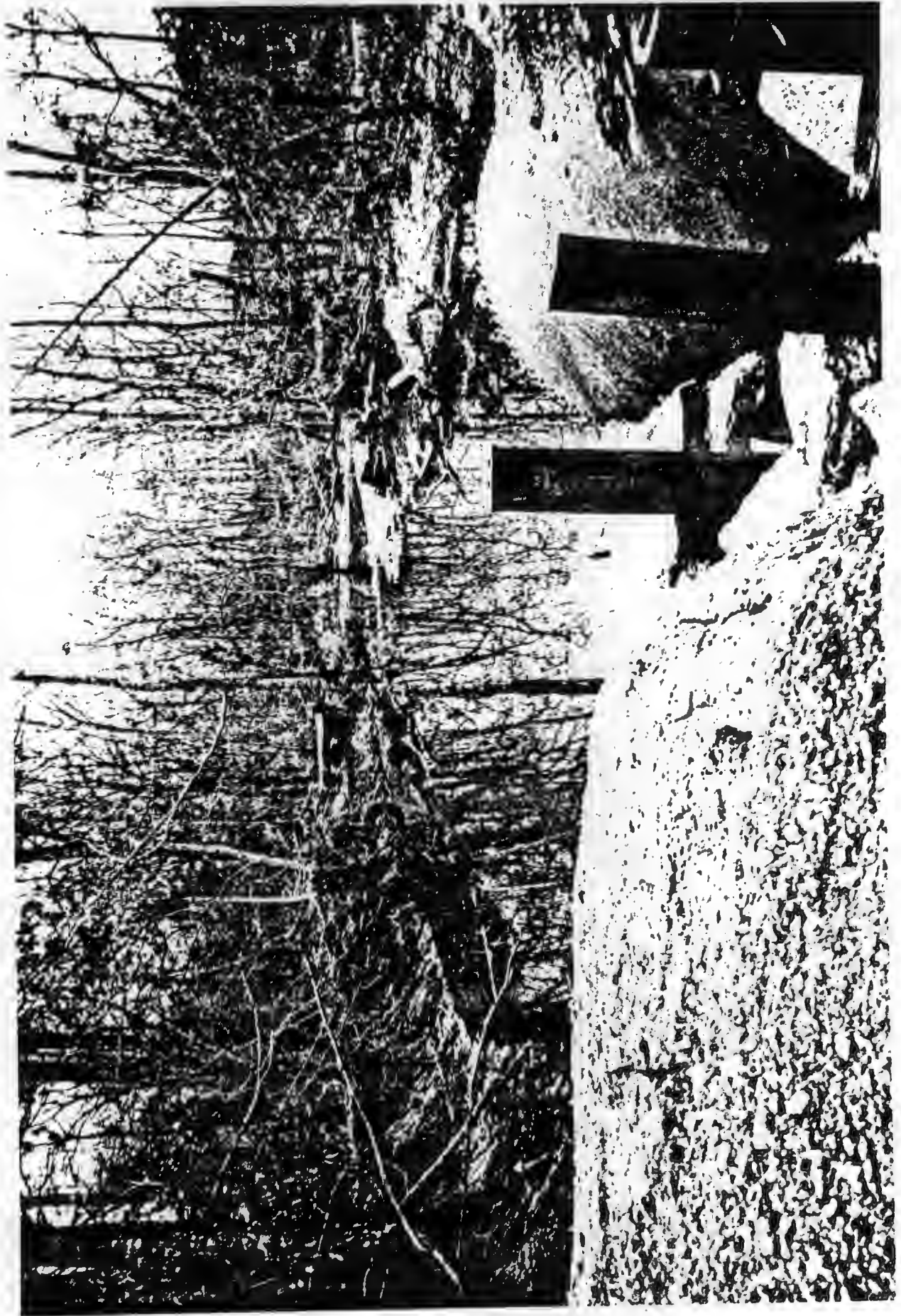
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

DON BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-93

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST AT WASHED OUT MIDDLE CREEK TRAIL - INTRUSION.



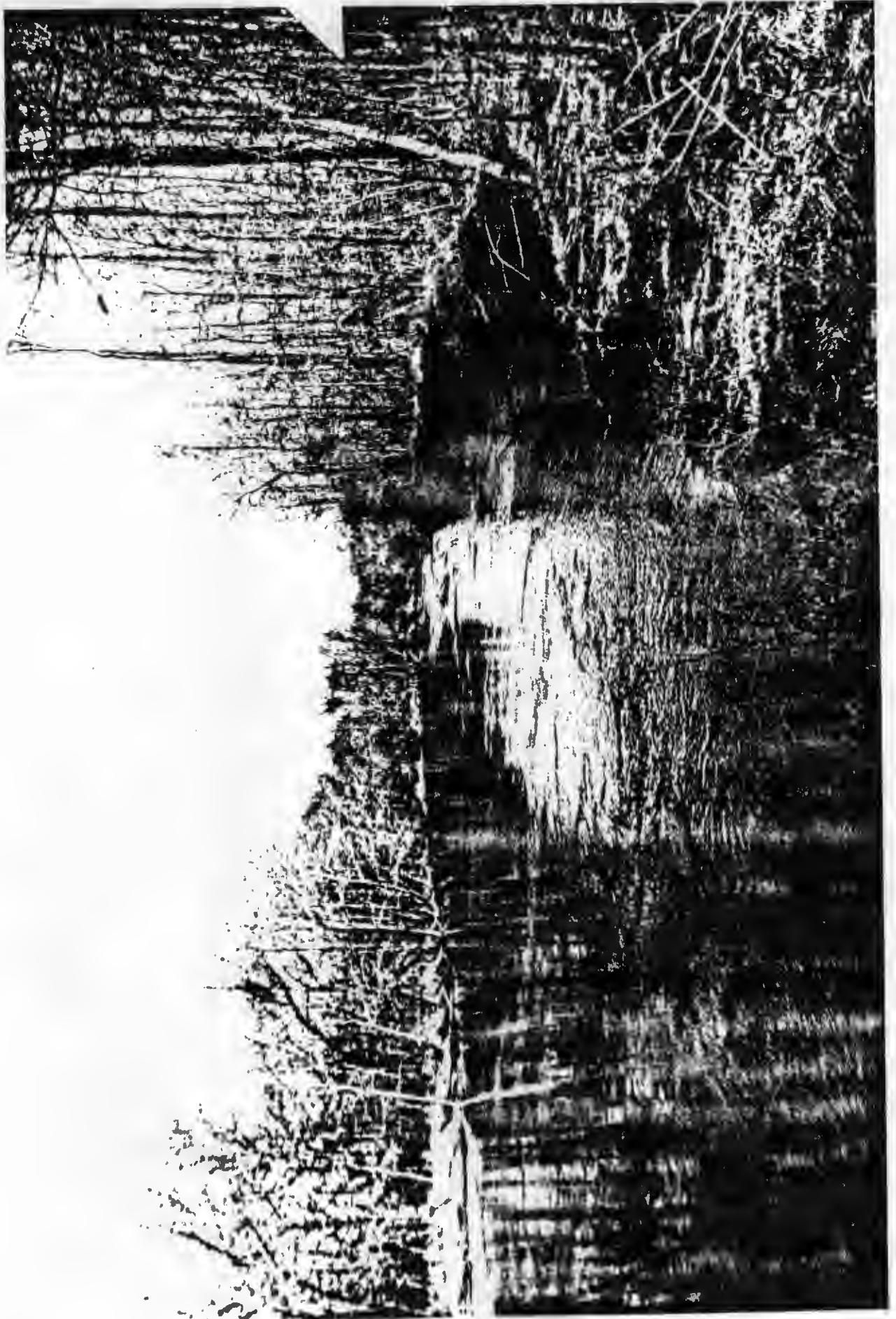
INDIA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

TOM BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-93

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANPA

VIEW FROM WEST AVENUE MIDDLE CROSS. WASTED OUT BRIDGE IS INTRUSION



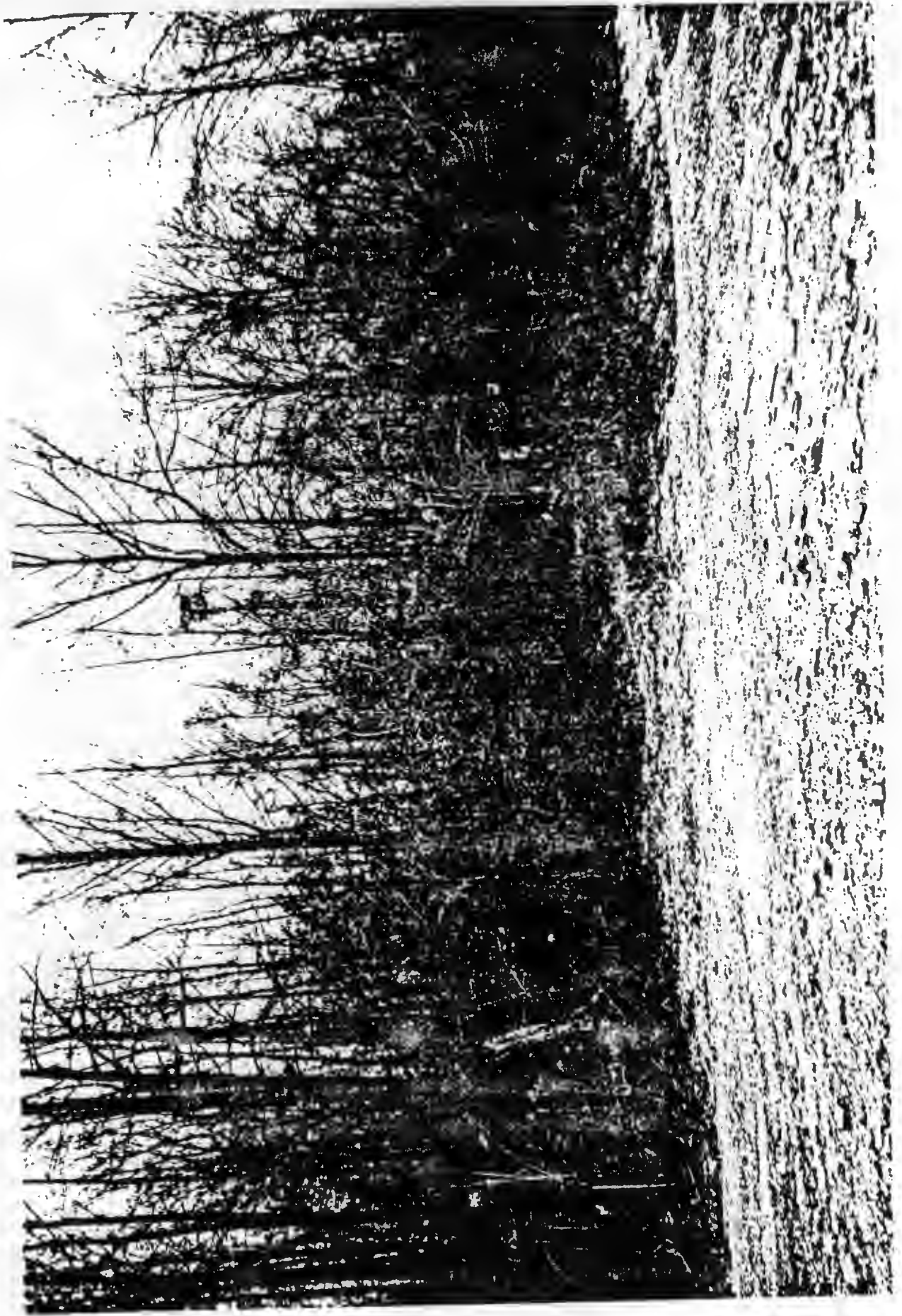
ELKINS' FERRY BATTLEFIELD
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

DON BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-43

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHP

VIEWS FROM WEST DOWN THE LITTLE MISSOURI RIVER TOWARD
APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF UNION CROSSING



KINS' FERRY BATTLEFIELD

NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

DEAN BAUER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-93

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANPP

VIEWS FROM EAST ALONG CONFEDERATE LINES. APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF
ORCHARD AT TIME OF BATTLE.



ELKINS' FERRY BATTLEFIELD

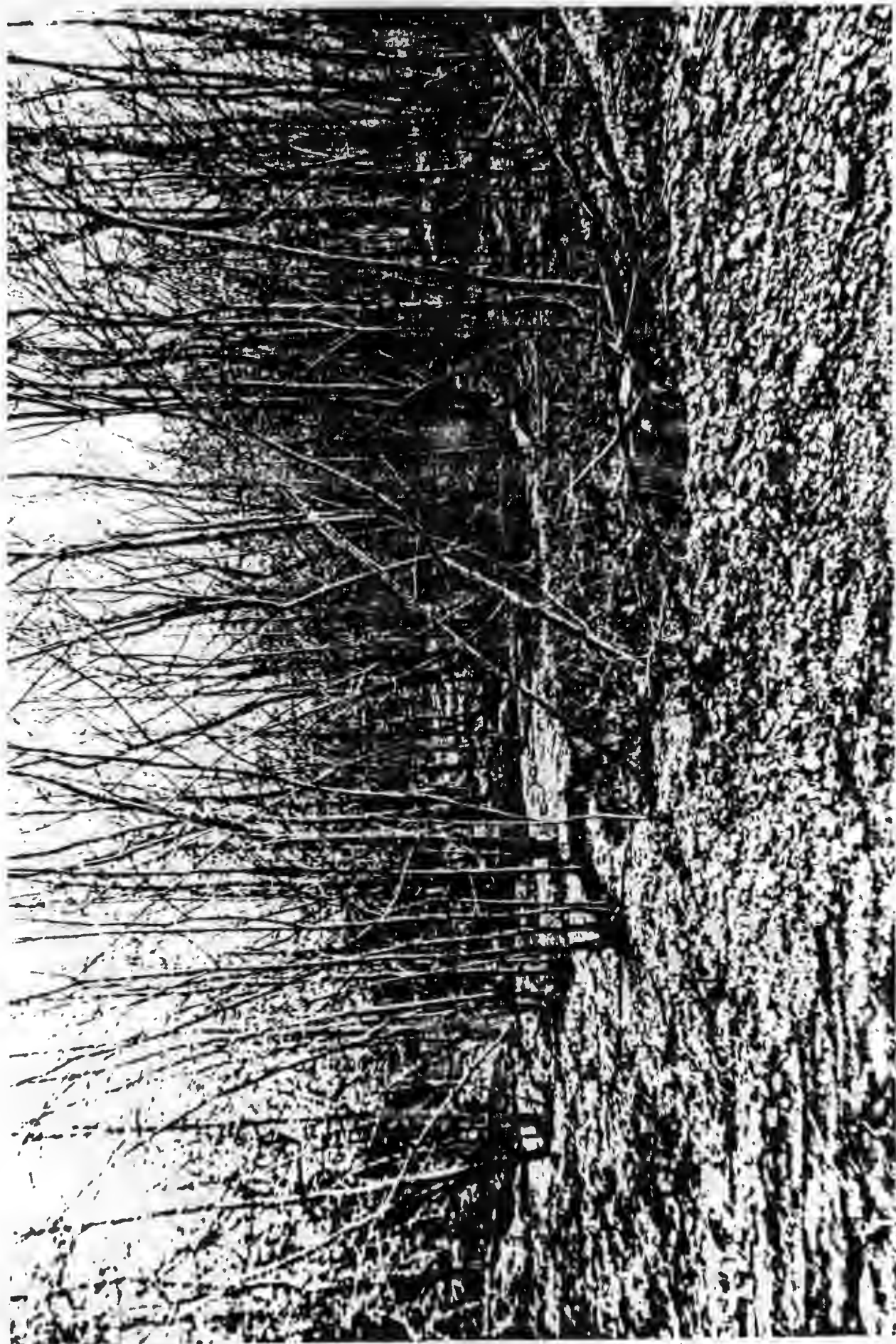
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS

DON BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-43

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANNA

VIEW FROM WEST ALONG CONFEDERATE LINES.



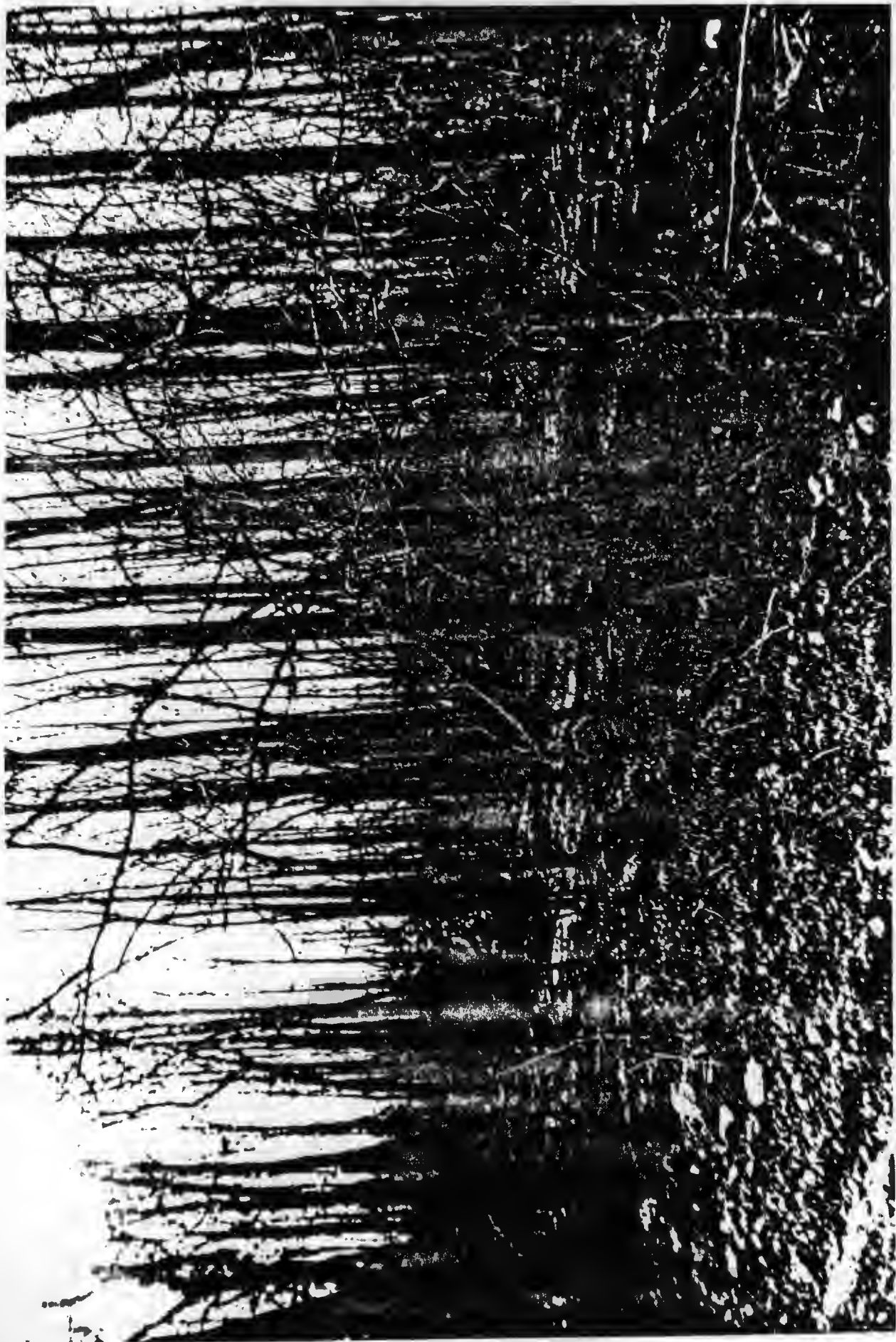
MS. TERRY BATTLEFIELD
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARKANSAS
DON BAKER PHOTOGRAPHIA

1-7-93

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT APP

VIEW FROM SOUTH, FACING UNION LINES.

4
4
4
4
4



KING'S' FERRY BATTLEFIELD
NEVADA AND CLARK COUNTIES, ARIZONA
DON BAKER, PHOTOGRAPHER

1-7-93

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHDD

VIEWS FROM WEST, AVENUE UNION LINES