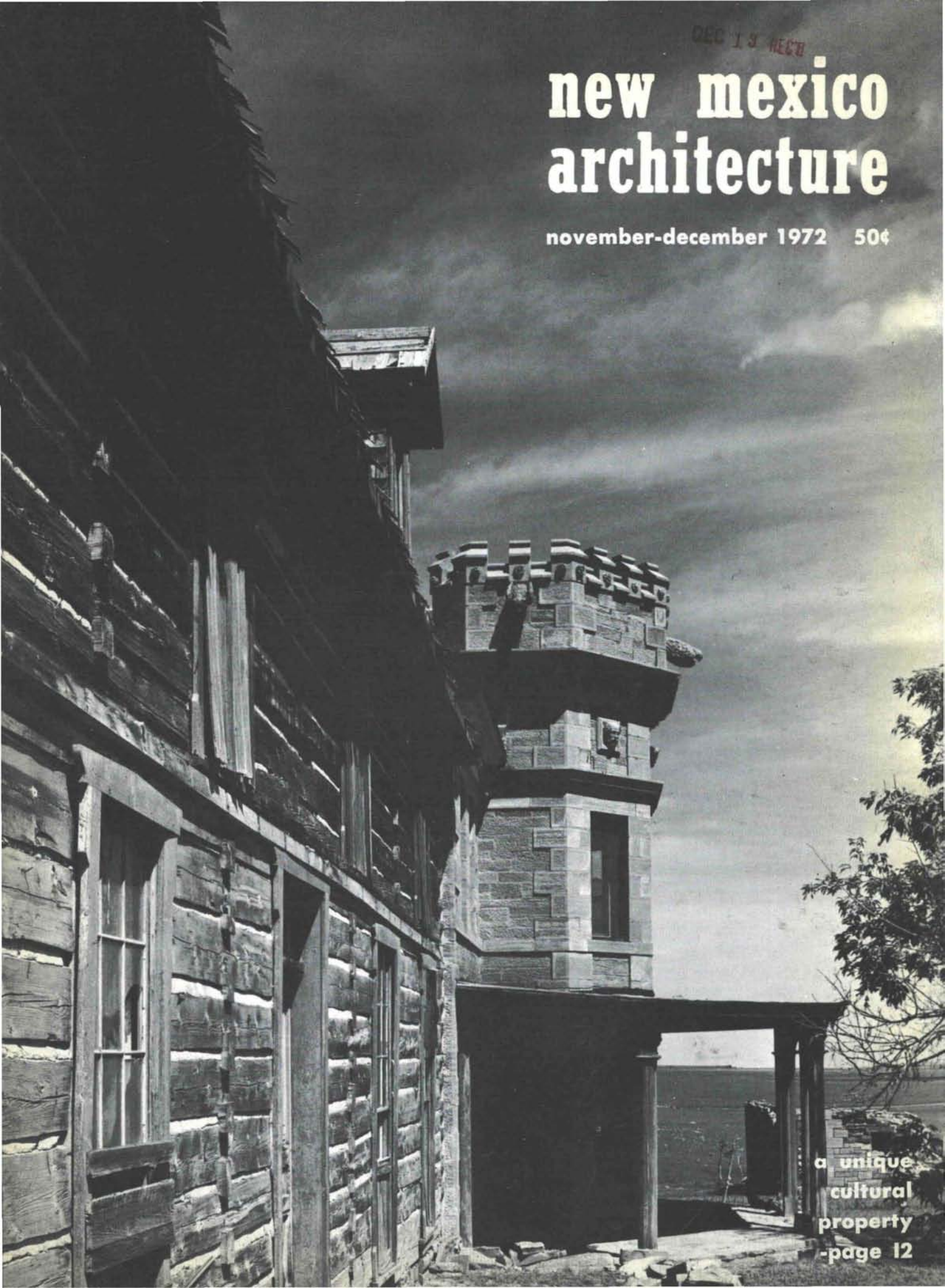


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nma

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—by Robert Beauvais

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(Cover—The Dorsey Mansion—Robert Nugent, Photographer)

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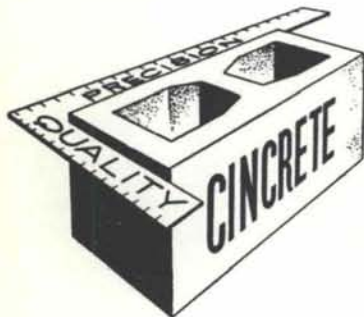
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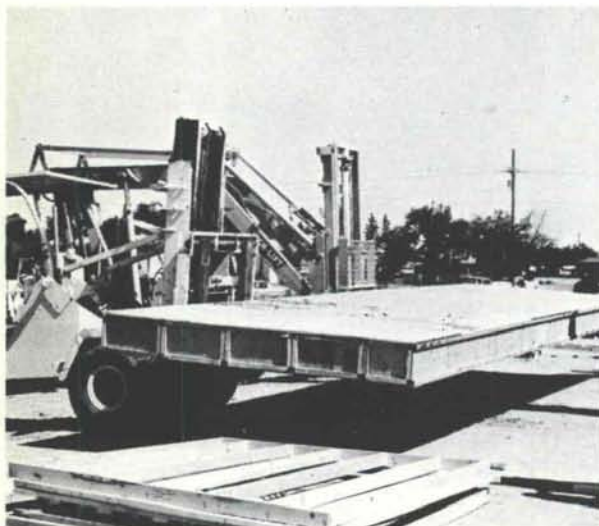
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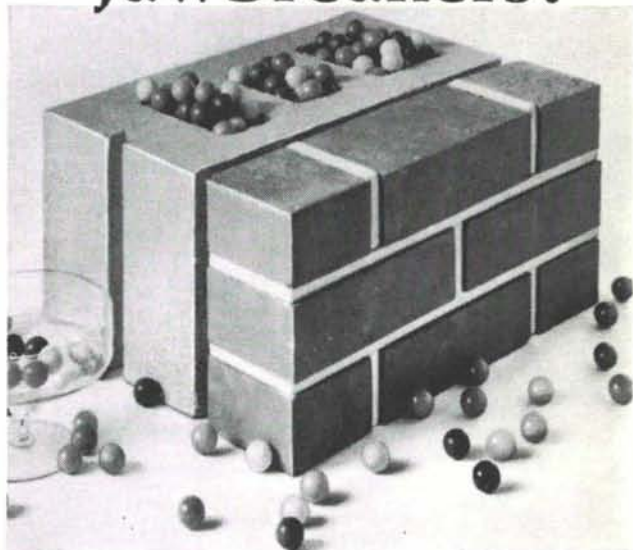
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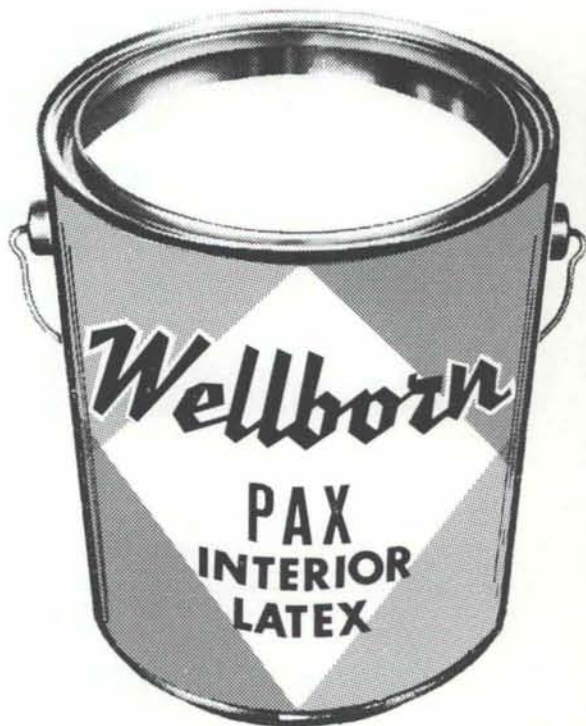


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THE HIGHWAY TRUST FUND NEEDS TO BE BUSTED OPEN

Again proposals have been made to cut down the allowable traffic in and through downtown Santa Fe. The latest proposal, published in the Santa Fe *New Mexican*, was written by a new resident to Santa Fe. His suggestions are not new, versions of this proposal have been made from time to time by many concerned citizens over the twenty years that I have lived in Santa Fe. This is not to put down the author of this proposal at all, rather to suggest that his proposal—as well as all those other versions—needs listening to. But the actual planners and decision makers don't appear to be listening. Rather, the planners proceed to widen still more streets in and around the central core of Santa Fe.

Highway departments breed highways like over-sexed rabbits. The asphalt jungle proliferates! More roads allow for more cars and thus demand more roads to allow for more cars; all controlled by myriads of flashing and changing traffic lights.

Santa Fe is not unique. Albuquerque is spreading its streets and tacky mansarded roof apartment/condominiums out into the far reaches of Bernalillo County, overlapping into Sandoval County, and starting to swallow the San-

dias to the east and the volcano craters to the west. In the downtown, a hole of immense proportions is being dug to accommodate the hundreds upon hundreds of one and two person occupied, overly elongated and wide-tracked pollution belching machines which will be regurgitated onto the streets of Albuquerque after a sell-out function at the new convention center. It follows quite naturally that all of the downtown streets will have to be widened to facilitate this increased volume of automobile usage.

Until the National Highway Trust Fund is broken open to make possible other transportation

If each state, whose agency is called "Highway Department," would change the name to "Transportation Department," then, perhaps, just perhaps, the idea of broader thought would become probable.

solutions the ribbons of asphalt and concrete will widen and lengthen.

Certainly there is need for well thought out and planned highway expansion. We can no more deny the car than we can deny mother-

hood, and certainly I do not harbor the idea for a moment that a return to the "good old days" of the horse and buggy is possible or even desirable. I like my little BMW!

Because of geographical reality, New Mexico will have to rely more upon the highway, than other more compressed and crowded states.

But there are other ways to move people, and planners must address themselves to this pressing problem before we all are strangled by the ribbons and bow knots of the freeways.

Every two years Congress passes a Federal Aid Highway Act which provides the enormous sums of money needed to further the spread of pavement. To be sure, this money comes from the taxes we pay on each gallon of gasoline. This money makes up the Highway Trust Fund. And all the money in that fund has been earmarked for more roads. Wisely, the Senate passed a bill which would make \$800 million from the trust fund available to support mass transportation. However, the House version did not provide any but roadway money. At this moment, the bills have died in a joint House-Senate Conference Committee. But, even this first po-

Continued Page 11 *27*

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EDITORIAL CONT.

tential break in the use of the trust funds was offset somewhat by other bad features; the legislation contained provisions damaging the highway beautification program, including a two year moratorium on billboard removal. The new Congress will have to start again on a Federal Aid Highway Act. As this issue of *NMA* comes out the election is history and surviving or newly elected senators and congressmen are about to get to work. Now would be a good time to reach them. Urge them to open up the Highway Trust Fund, so that a real transportation system designed to

better serve us all can be planned and funded. Representatives of the American Institute of Architects have appeared on Capitol Hill to press for an open fund. The AIA's National Policy Statement (*NMA* March/April 1972) contains a specific reference to the trust fund:

The tradition of categorical funding that long has been followed in American government needs to be modified. Above all, the Highway Trust Fund, we think, must be converted into a general fund for community development and greatly expanded. If this self-regenerating fund is not re-

fashioned to serve our highest priority needs, the nation will place itself in bondage to the automobile and superhighway.

These funds are high; at minimum of some \$4 billion for each of the two-year funding periods. Compare this amount for roads, against the *increased* funds passed this year for historic preservation. It took major effort to get the Congress to appropriate \$10 million for this coming year. In simple terms—to try to save and protect some of the cloth of history: one dollar; to build more roads: 400 dollars, or 400 times as much money!

JPC

NMA NEWS

SANTA FE CHAPTER, AIA, ELECTS 1973 OFFICERS

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FAIA

Secretary-Treasurer—Robert
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At press time the other two New Mexico chapters had not held elections; so, their new 1973 officers will be reported in the January-February, 1973, *NMA*.

NMA MUST KNOW!!

Do you want to receive *New Mexico Architecture* magazine???

The mailing list for this magazine needs to be overhauled. Therefore, *we must have your response*. In the last issue of *NMA* was a postcard asking our readers to fill out and return. Many did, but *many did not*. Naturally, all New Mexico registered architects will continue to receive the magazine. And, of course, the many paid subscriptions will not be affected. But, the magazine has been sent to many other people through-

out the country, including architects, legislators, government officials, libraries, etc.

The list has become "confused" and must, therefore be given a thorough cleaning and sorting. We want all present recipients to continue on our list, *IF* they wish to, but you are now asked to *Say So!*

Please fill out the card from the September/October issue, if you have not already done so—or drop us a note, if the card is lost. Don't be caught without, we hope, those exciting, provocative and informative 1973 issues!

John P. Conron, AIA, FAID, Editor



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A New Mexico Registered Cultural Property the residence of Stephan W. Dorsey

by Robert Beauvais, Historic Preservation Program, State Planning Office
with a postscript by George Pearl, AIA
and photography by Robert Nugent

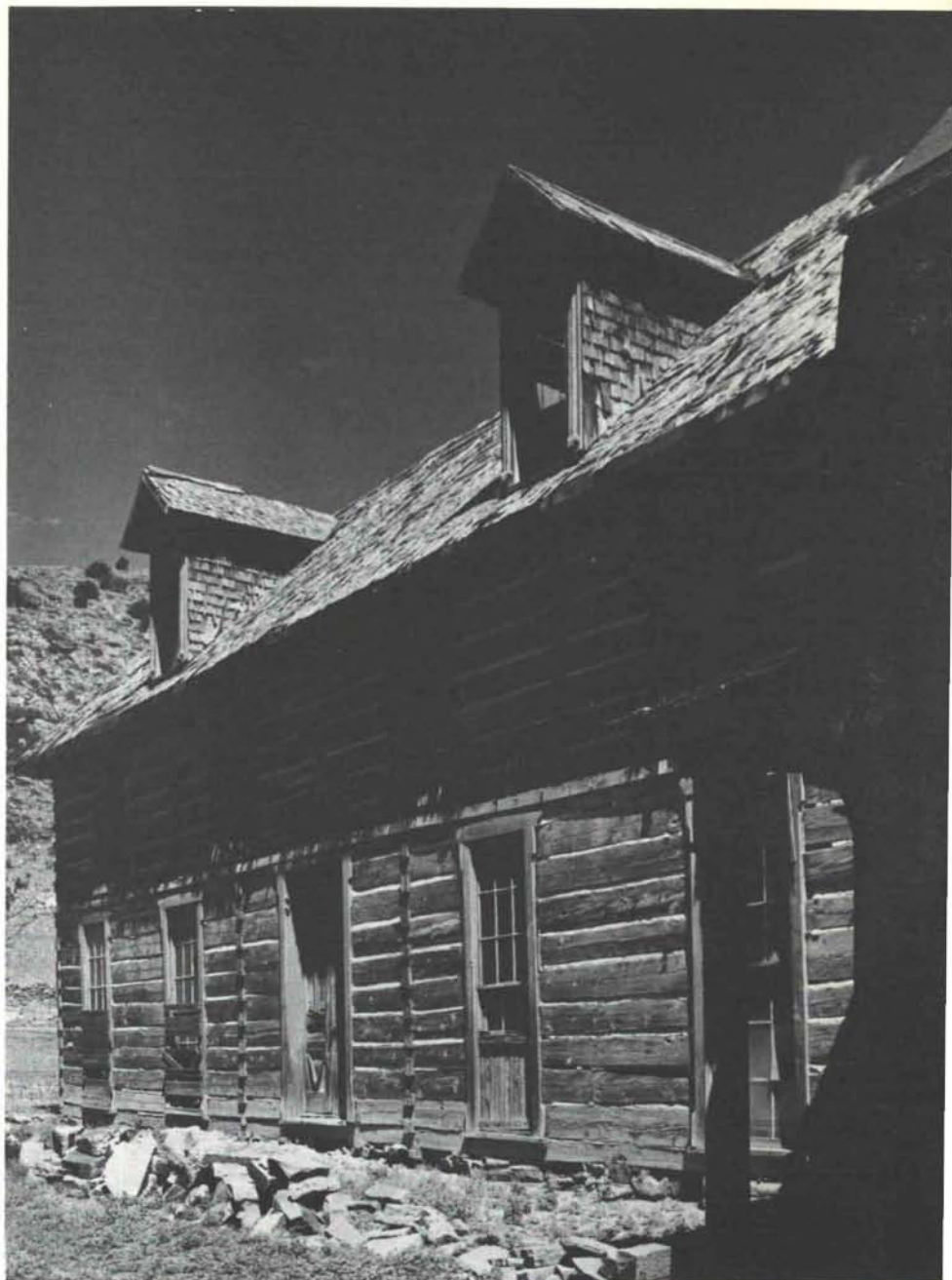
"As we approach, we see behind a neat door-yard fence, a mass of trees, and rising above these, a turreted tower of stone surrounded by a flagpole and the stars and stripes . . . As we dismount we note a portion of the house of hand-hewn logs, but added to this is a much larger structure of sandstone, castle-like in appearance, a building which would do credit to any eastern town."

*Orange County, New York
November 13, 1891*

The preceding statement typifies the impressions registered by visitors during the past 90 years on their arrival at the Dorsey Mansion in Colfax County, New Mexico.

Located off State Highway 56, approximately 20 miles northeast of Springer, the house stands both as a testament to the exciting career of U. S. Senator Stephen W. Dorsey and as an example of one of the most unusual architectural structures built in the New Mexico Territory.

Dorsey was born in 1842 in Benson, Vermont, where he spent the greater part of his childhood and adolescent years. In his late teens, he and his family moved to Ohio where he became an employee of the Sandusky Tool Company. With the outbreak of the Civil War, Dorsey left his job in order to enlist in the Union Army as a private. He showed an ability to lead other men and was quickly elevated in rank, emerging from the war as a captain. Dorsey returned to the Sandusky Tool Company and in a short time he was elevated to the office of president. Apparently his executive capabilities did not go unnoticed, for in 1870 he accepted the offer of the newly organized Arkansas Central Railroad to become president of that corporation. The railroad had become a political issue under Governor Powell Clayton and Dorsey made the most of the political

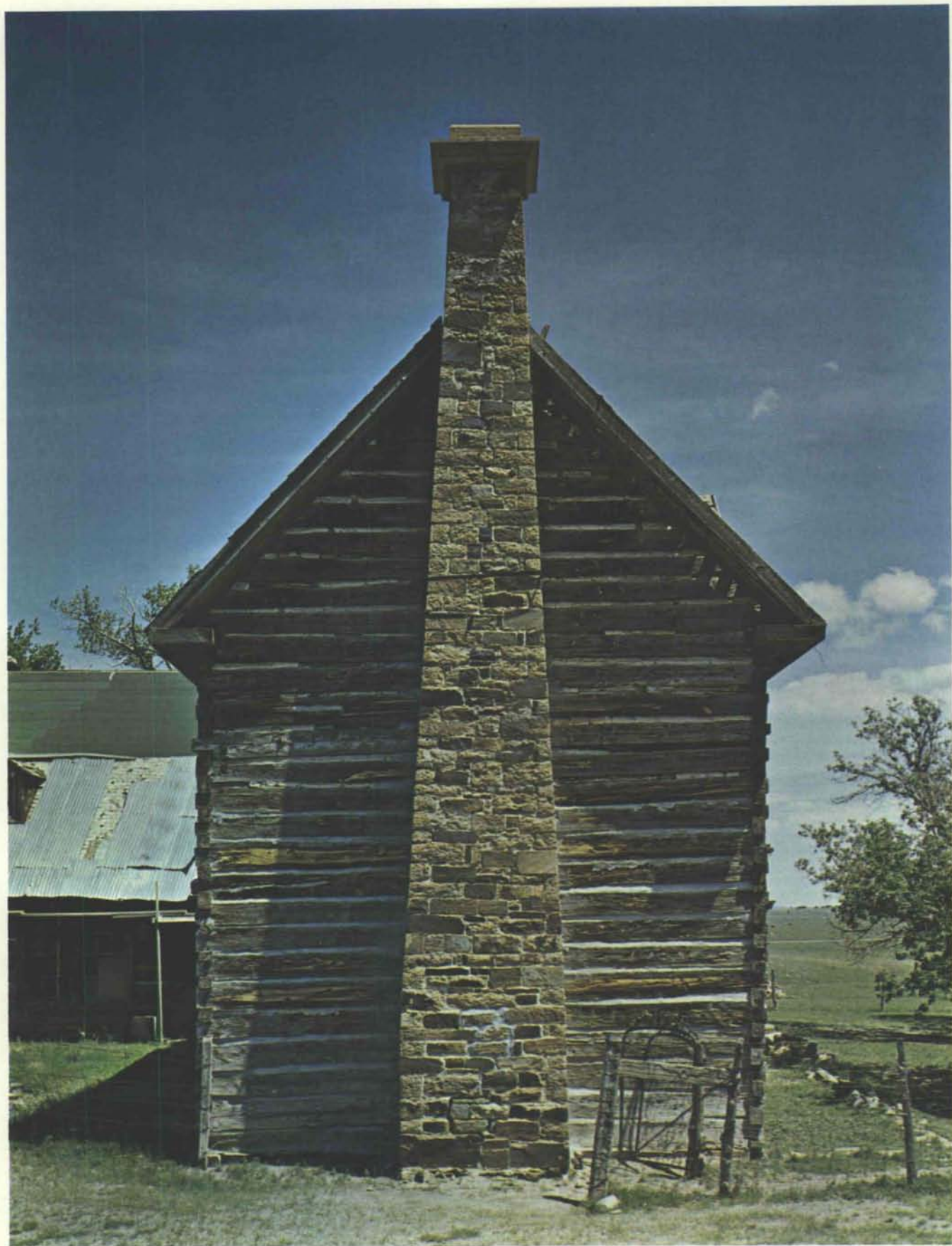


opportunities afforded to him by this position. In 1874, at 31 years of age, he was elected a U. S. senator from the state of Arkansas.

It was during this senatorial term that Dorsey began his land and cattle speculations in the southwest, acquiring very extensive holdings of both in northern New Mexico. Records show that in 1877 he acquired 160 acres of land near Point of Rocks, a landmark on the Santa Fe Trail at the Cimarron cutoff. Before his fortune suffered serious setbacks in 1893, he would not only build the 36-room Dorsey Mansion, but would also hold the

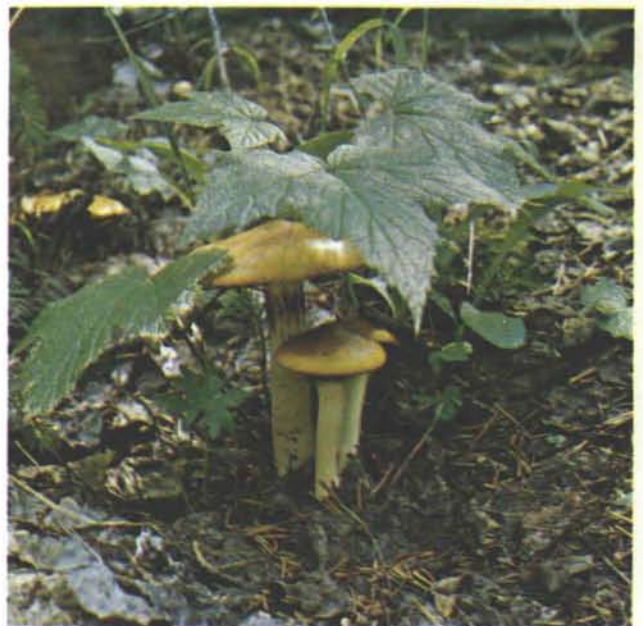
deed to over 24,000 acres of land over which many thousand cattle, boasting his Triangle Dot brand, would graze.

Dorsey's prominence in the Republican ranks is attested to by the fact that, with the backing of President Grant and Chester A. Garfield, he was made Secretary of the Republican National Committee in 1880. Dorsey's material wealth was simultaneously being augmented by his involvement in the lucrative star route mail business. Star routes were designations for mail service where regular means of transportation such as





The most astonishing thing about the Dorsey Mansion is its being there, and as early as 1880.



Only a trace of the once lush gardens remains.

railroad and steamboat were not available. During the administration of President Hayes, many such contracts had been let to individuals to provide this service over designated star routes. Dorsey's impending financial doom was sounded by the investigation ordered in 1881 by newly-inaugurated President Garfield (for whose election, ironically enough, Dorsey had vigorously campaigned), into the possibility of fraudulent claims being perpetrated by various star route contractors. Dorsey was directly implicated in these allegations. The information which the prosecution procured proved that the Federal government had been defrauded of over \$2 million. Due to the brilliant legal counsel of controversial Robert Ingersoll, Dorsey's main lawyer, Dorsey was able to gain acquittal from all the federal charges brought against him. However, the trial proceedings of this scandal seriously damaged Dorsey's business reputation and signaled an end to his political future. Concurrent with the trials was a drastic drop in the price of cattle in the southwest. This development plus the court costs and Dorsey's loss of credit hastened the end of the Dorsey Empire. In 1893, through foreclosure, the mansion was sold at an auction.

Prior to the complete financial ruin which befell its original, illustrious inhabitant, the Dorsey Mansion had enjoyed several years of being the focal point in New Mexico for entertaining and luxurious living. Presidents Garfield and Grant and Governor/Author Lew Wallace numbered among its most renowned house guests. A bust of Garfield still occupies its original recess in the wall by the main staircase.

Following the last trial in 1884, Dorsey had returned to his Victorian manor in New Mexico to attend to what remained of his cattle and land business. It is to be assumed that he remained there until the foreclosure in 1893.

From an architectural standpoint, the mansion itself is at least as worthy of consideration as is



A bust of President Garfield stands in its original recess.

the man who ordered its construction. It is composed of two portions: one half log and the other half of locally quarried rose sandstone. Construction on the original log portion began in 1878. The facade consists of square hewn, debarked logs which had been oiled prior to placement. This original structure was built in the shape of an "L" and stands two stories high. The roof, which is now badly in need of repair, was constructed of wooden shingles.

In general, the building interior reflected the pioneer ruggedness of the times. The basement housed the large carbide tank of acetylene gas which Dorsey had installed, at a cost of \$5,000.00, in order to provide lighting throughout the man-

Senator Dorsey's brother adorns the tower.





The commodious wine cellar.



The tower gargoyle of Senator James Blaine—a political foe of Senator Dorsey.

Mrs. Dorsey looks solemnly out across the New Mexico landscape.



sion. Here also, behind an iron grill door, was Dorsey's extensive wine cellar. The attic of this building, despite its very low pitched roof and narrow width, was utilized as servants' quarters for the Dorsey domestic staff.

In 1881 construction commenced on the stone portion of the mansion. It, too, incorporated two stories and was also "L" shaped in order to be symmetrical to the already existing building. This addition was truly a commanding architectural structure. It was erected out of hewn sandstone and had a composition roof. A major element of the facade was designed as a tall octagonal tower upon whose upper reaches were carved likenesses of Dorsey, his wife and his brother. There are also two sculptured gargoyles, caricatures of his political arch-enemy, Senator James Blaine, a political foe from his Capitol Hill days.

After completing the stone building, the ground floor of the log cabin became a smoking room, card room, billiard room and library. Although these rooms are now barren and in disrepair, there are many written accounts praising the beautiful furniture which once occupied the floor space. Only the intricately embossed door hinges and doorknobs are left as a reminder of the log portion's gilt-edged days. (Photo page 18)

The furnishings of the interior of the stone portion bespoke a world of wealth and aristocracy. There were brass chandeliers hanging from an ornate cast plaster medallion. These fixtures bear the image of the benign and somewhat Hellenic face of Mrs. Dorsey. Some of the chandeliers have carved cut glass light shades, which depict a hunting scene. This same motif can be seen on the mantelpiece for the fireplace in the dining room and on several other pieces of furniture still remaining in the house. A carved cherrywood staircase still extends gracefully upward from the salon to the second story of the stone portion, where the nine master and guest bedrooms are located. Brilliantly



The Salon/Reception Room chandelier.

colored stained glass still adorns the top of the main entrances into the salon.

The spacious dining room could comfortably seat 50, and it seems to have done so on many occasions.

The large kitchen and secluded butler's pantry can be found to the rear of the dining room. To the west side of these three rooms was constructed the art gallery, in its day exhibiting not only paintings collected during Dorsey's extensive travels, but a variety of stuffed animal heads as well. Located right between the log and stone portions on the first floor, this room often served as a ballroom. To today's visitor the most impressive quality of the room would be the Gothicized trussed and beamed, pitched walnut ceiling, affording the sunlight to stream in through its two skylights. Today the room has miscellaneous articles in it, including Dorsey's safe, his foreman's saddle and the last vestiges of the Chico Springs Post Office.

From extant pictures and written accounts, the front grounds were befitting of a Victorian-style manor, being all the more remarkable for their oasis-like existence in the middle of the prairie. To a

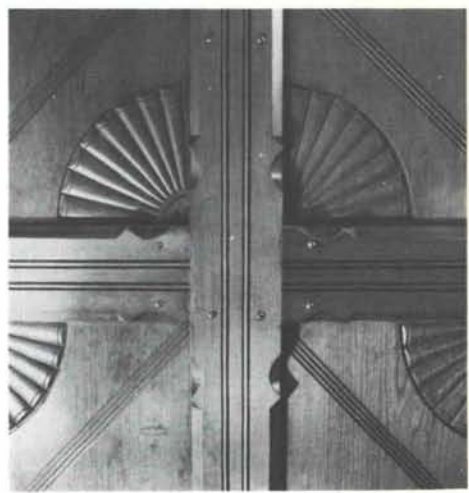


The Reception/Salon Room above, and the Dining Room, across the page.

From the Reception/Salon Room the carved cherrywood staircase rises to the second floor of the stone house. (See staircase details on page 19.)

The Dining Room, above right, could seat 50 guests and it seems to have done so on many occasions. (See page 20 for a photography of the fireplace.)







The gothicized trussed and beamed ceiling of the art gallery with its present collection, including the Chico Springs Post Office.



The Dining Room fireplace with hunting scenes cut into the marble.

large degree they were laid in the romantic manner with a profusion of fruit trees, shrubs and flower gardens.

A large sandstone fountain, 20 feet in diameter, is dominated by a monument topped with a bobcat and rattlesnake engaged in mortal combat; waterdogs and owls add further amusement to the fountain. Two other fountains, cast in iron, grace different spots in the gardens—these latter two were imported by Dorsey from France.

On the west side of what was the front lawn of the mansion there had been constructed a romantic free form pool of stone, 180 feet by 780 feet in maximum dimension and varying from 4 to 5 feet in depth. Three islands were placed in the center and on the largest of these was a six-sided rustic gazebo.

There were many other buildings on the grounds; all were built and functioning to service the Dorsey family, guests and ranch hands. These structures included a large barn, bathhouse, bunk

The main fountain with the mansion beyond.





An overview of the mansion with the old Santa Fe Trail landmark, Point of Rocks, across the prairie to the southeast on the right skyline. The once lush, romantic garden is gone, but the free form pool can be seen in front of the houses on the right, and in the photograph below. To the rear of the house stand the remains of the commissary.

A bobcat and rattlesnake in mortal combat top the fountain.

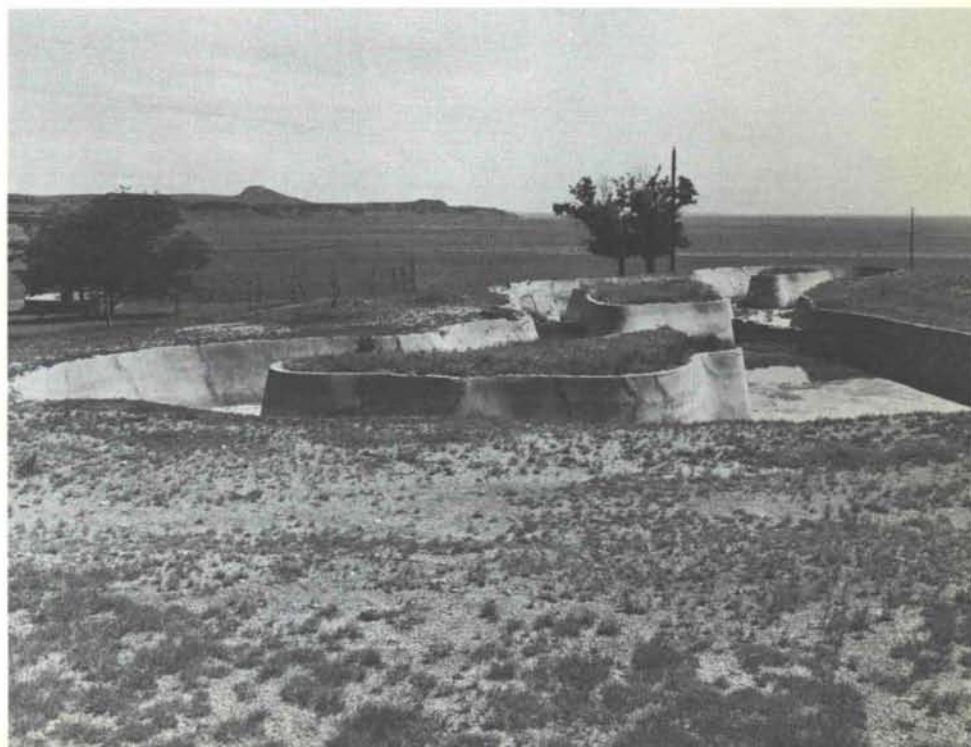


house, carriage house, smokehouse, greenhouse and commissary. Only the shell of the commissary remains and is presently used as storage area and barn. Ruins of the stone greenhouse stand to the left of the mansion. All of the buildings surrounding the main building formed a complex which was incorporated as the town of Chico Springs. The post office, once located in the commissary and later moved to the art gal-

lery, was in service as late as 1956.

The second story of the stone tower contains a solarium connecting the master bedroom and the sitting room. The tower bay windows command a panoramic view of the surrounding prairie.

The Dorsey Mansion slipped from prominence after the senator's departure. Although several families later lived in the structure, it was generally regarded as a ranch house and not much cre-





The elegance of front door and window details, and the superbly joined hand hewn beams of the formal log portion.

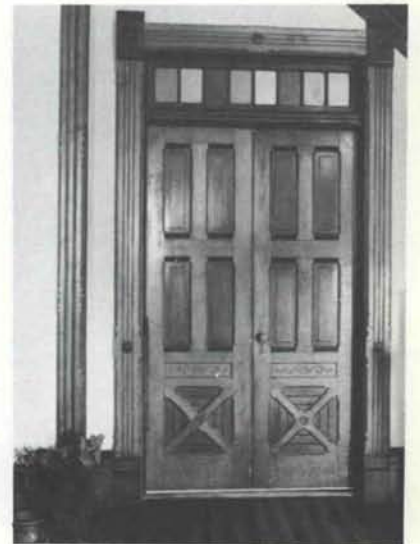
The ruins of the commissary.



dence given to the history and man who had lived there.

However, this was changed in 1966 when Mr. and Mrs. K. E. Deaton acquired the mansion and the surrounding 40 acres of land. The Deatons decided that the house could both serve as a home and also could be restored to the magnificence of the time it was owned by the senator. During those years the Deaton's devoted monumental effort toward that end. At the time of Mr. Deaton's death, the stone house had been stabilized and restored. However, the log portion is deteriorating rapidly, primarily because of the severe erosion of the wood shingles.

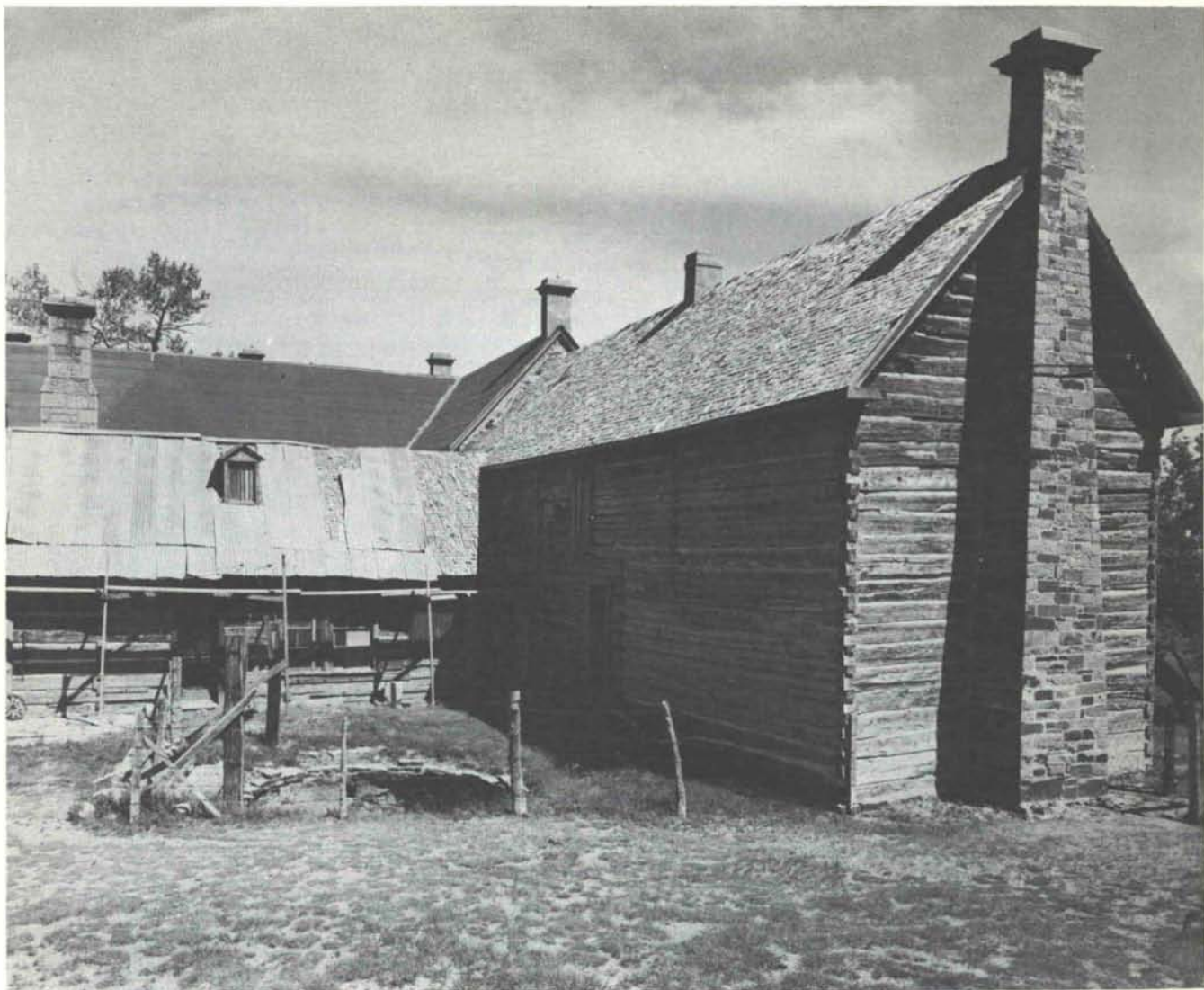
R. B.



The most astonishing thing architecturally about the Dorsey Mansion is its being there, 25 miles out on the prairie and its being there as early as 1880.

The log portion of the house is the most difficult to explain stylistically. The symmetry of the facade and plan of the main pavilion recalls an eastern seaboard tradition which had been abandoned long before the Civil War and was not revived until well into the 1890's. The formality of plan, elegance of door and window details in a house executed in superbly joined hand hewn logs are enigmatic regardless of their date or location.

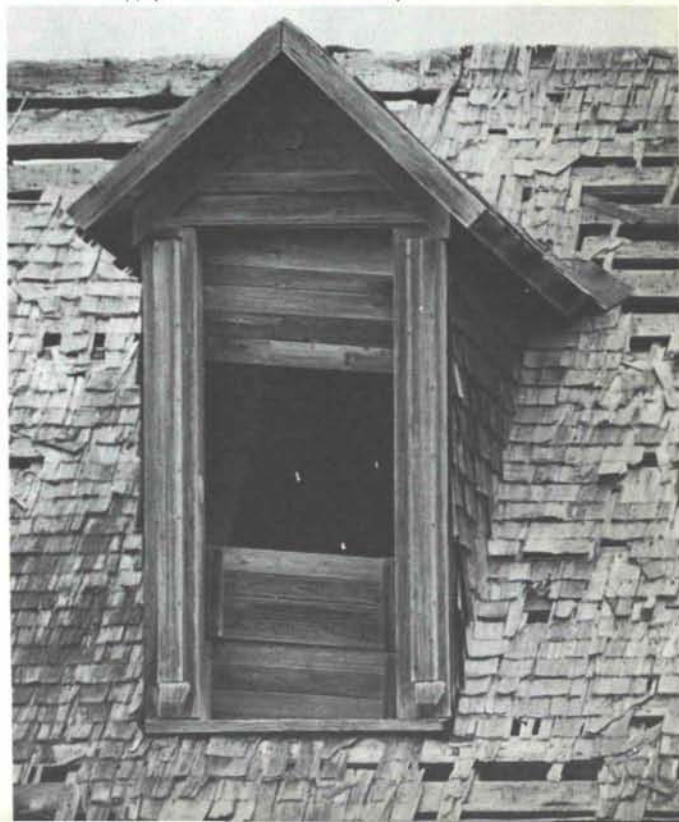
The stone house, built at the



The log portion is in need of immediate restoration.

same date in Denver, St. Louis or Boston would have represented the architectural fashions of that day and would probably have been admired primarily for the custom design of lighting fixtures, fireplace details, portrait sculpture and for the excellent work of the craftsmen and sculptors who built it. Similar gardens, water elements, sculpture and fountains existed already in the public gardens in Boston, Central Park in New York and elsewhere. The entire complex, formal log mansion joined in row-house fashion to dissimilar gothicizing stone pavilion, all surrounded by gardens of such late design and great elaboration, constitute one of the most astonishing exurbs in the country.

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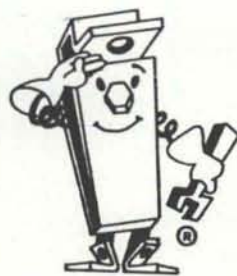
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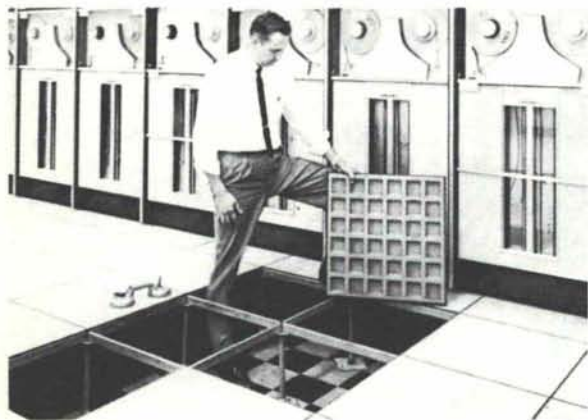
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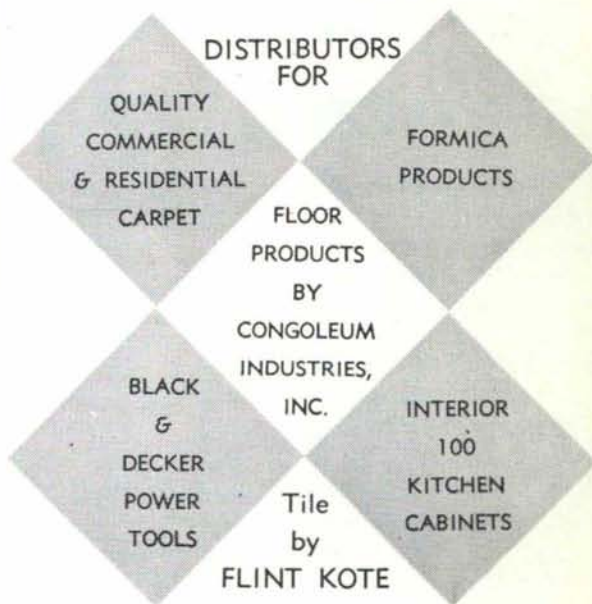


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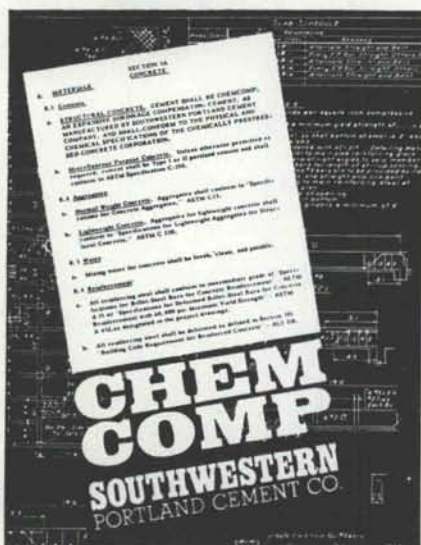
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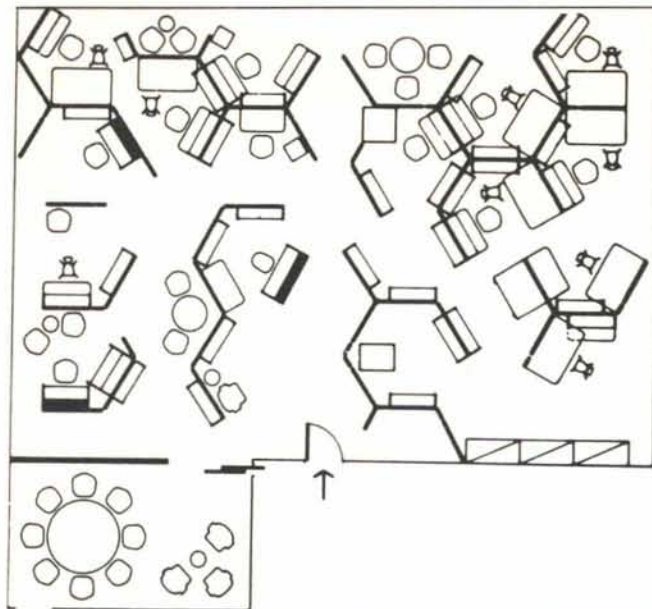
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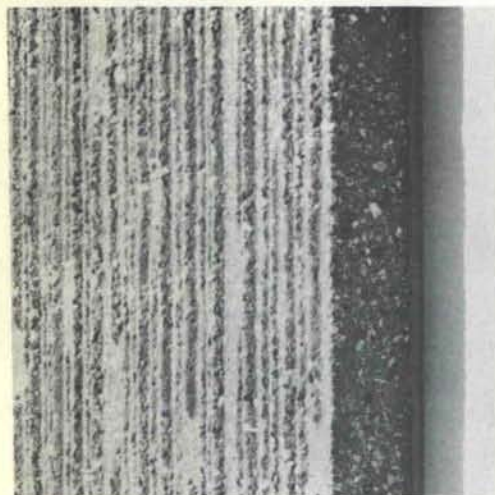
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