

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating 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 each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "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 MAR-VA THEATER

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 103 Market Street N/A not for publication

city or town Pocomoke City N/A vicinity

state Maryland code MD county Worcester code 047 zip code 21851

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.)



Signature of certifying official/Title

2/5/96
Date

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER

State of 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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

MAR-VA THEATER
Name of Property

Worcester County, MD
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
		sites
		structures
		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)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick

roof Asphalt
other _____

Narrative Description

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 1

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

The Mar-Va Theater was erected in 1927 on Market Street in the central business district of Pocomoke City, Worcester County, Maryland. It is a two-story, three-bay building constructed of brick laid in stretcher bond. The principal (west) facade is basically symmetrical, and reflects classical influence in recessed panels defined by narrow rusticated brick pilasters, a dentiled brick cornice, and parapet. The four-door front entrance is topped by a metal marquee hung by linked chains fastened to the wall. On each side of the front entrance are small shopfronts, and a separate entrance formerly used by black patrons is located at the north end of the facade. The interior reflects an extensive redecoration carried out in 1937 in the Art Deco style. The stage is flanked by narrow silver columns and Art Deco embellishments enhance the side walls. A coffered pressed metal ceiling remains in place along with metal and wooden folding seats. Under the stage are dressing rooms formerly used by stage performers.

See Continuation Sheet No. 2

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The Mar-Va Theater is located on the east side of Market Street in the center of Pocomoke City, Worcester County, Maryland. The two-story, three-bay brick commercial building faces west.

Built in 1927 and remodeled inside in 1937, the Mar-Va Theater is a two-story, three-bay, stretcher bond brick commercial building that is covered by a flat roof hidden behind a stepped parapet front. The building extends deeply into the lot but is flanked by other commercial buildings.

The west (main) elevation is a basically symmetrical facade with a center entrance and marquee and flanking commercial shopfronts that are incorporated within the theater building. The main elevation is visually divided into three sections by inset brick panels defined by rusticated brick pilasters that stretch from the ground to the cornice. The center bay includes four partially glazed doors sheltered by a metal marquee hanging by three sections of link chain fastened to the wall. The marquee has simplified Art Deco decoration. To each side of the entrance are separate storefronts with display windows and flanking doorways. Soldier brick courses stretch above the window and door openings. On the north end of the theater facade is a separate entrance that provides access to a segregated stair formerly used by black patrons.

On the second floor, a tripartite window comprising two six-over-one windows flanking a nine-over-one sash defines the center bay, while paired nine-over-one windows fill the outside bays. Openings are topped by a soldier course. The top of the facade features a dentiled brick cornice running below a stepped parapet wall, which is highlighted by a light colored brick panel. The parapet has a flat masonry cap.

The north and south sides of the theater, laid in seven-course common bond, are largely covered by the adjacent commercial structures. The tops of the parapet walls, capped with terra cotta tiles, descend slightly in graduated steps. The back end of the structure, as is typical of theater buildings, rises an additional story for the hanging storage of stage sets and curtains.

See Continuation Sheet No. 3

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Continuation Sheet**

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 7 Page 3

The interior of the theater has not been significantly altered since the 1937 Art Deco remodeling. Centered in the entrance vestibule is the ticket booth, which is flanked by glazed doors opening into a transverse lobby where the concessions are located along with the stair to the balcony. A separate, non-descript entrance, found on the north side of the main block, provides access to a separate staircase formerly used by black patrons. A segregated lavatory, ticket booth, and concession stand are found at the top of the staircase.

The vestibule opens into the auditorium, with seating facing a stage. The proscenium is flanked by tall, narrow silver Art Deco fluted columns. Flanking the columns are side entrances surmounted by large sculptural panels with a stylized tendril form executed in an abstract pattern. Located under the stage is a basement space fitted with individual, board partition dressing rooms. The side walls are covered with large fabric-covered panels with a stepped outline, alternating with vertical painted columns of Art Deco motifs. The interior also retains period lighting fixtures and metal and wooden folding seats. The pressed metal ceiling survives in excellent condition and retains azure blue paint.

MAR-VA THEATER

Name of Property

Worcester County, MD

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.
[X] 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

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

Property is:

- 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1927-1937

Significant Dates

1927

1937

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 4

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 9

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

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
[X] Other

Name of repository:

Worcester County Library, Snow Hill, MD

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 4

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Mar-Va Theater is significant under Criterion C as an example of an early 20th century theater building, the only example of this resource type surviving intact in Worcester County. Its conservative, functional brick exterior is typical of commercial architecture of the period in the Eastern Shore region; its Art Deco interior, the result of a 1937 remodeling, reflects then-current national fashion in theater decor, and speaks of the management's desire to present an up-to-date, "metropolitan" image. The building retains character-defining plan features associated with its function, including ticket booth, vestibule and concession area, auditorium, stage, and dressing rooms; in addition, a separate entrance, lavatory, vending machine, and balcony seating area were provided for black patrons during the era of racially segregated accommodations.

See Continuation Sheet No. 5

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 5

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA

Geographic Organization: Eastern Shore

Chronological/Developmental Period(s):

Industrial/Urban Dominance, A.D. 1870-1930

Modern Period, A.D. 1930-Present

Prehistoric/Historic Period Theme(s):

Architecture/Landscape Architecture/Community Planning

Social/Education/Cultural

Resource Type:

Category: Building

Historic Environment: Urban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s):

RECREATION/CULTURE/theater

Known Design Source: none

See Continuation Sheet No. 6

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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 6

HISTORIC CONTEXT:

The Mar-Va Theater is significant as the only intact early 20th century theater building surviving in Worcester County. The other early 20th century theaters in Worcester County, the Globe Theater in Berlin (WO-161) and the old Mason's Opera House (WO-260) in Snow Hill, both have been radically changed on the exterior and gutted of interior features. The only other theater of the period on the Eastern Shore with some intact features is the Avalon Theater in Easton, Talbot County.

The exterior of the Mar-Va is characterized by a symmetrical, classically inspired design, simply executed in a brown colored brick. The conservative, functional design and modest exterior decoration are typical of commercial architecture of the Eastern Shore during the early 20th century. The interior, redecorated in 1937, remains intact with Art Deco style wall treatments and silver fluted columns flanking the stage. The building retains character-defining plan features associated with its function, including ticket booth, vestibule and concession area, auditorium, stage, and dressing rooms; in addition, a separate entrance, lavatory, vending machine, and balcony seating area for black patrons reflect the era of racially segregated accommodations.

The Mar-Va Theater is a relatively modest example of theater design in comparison to the highly decorated and elaborate movie palaces of large urban centers. Nevertheless, the Mar-Va Theater exemplifies a relatively small town's participation in the historic movement of theater construction that swept the nation during the early 20th century. The Art Deco redecoration, carried out ten years after the building's initial construction, signals a desire to keep the Mar-Va as up-to-date as other East Coast movie houses. The Art Deco style was the architectural embodiment of the new early 20th century technologies that were capturing the imagination of small town America in the form of speeding trains, fast automobiles, and electric current. The style also had glamorous, urban associations.

See Continuation Sheet No. 7

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MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 7

Resource History

As part of a rebuilding effort following a devastating fire that largely destroyed the commercial area of Pocomoke City on April 17, 1922, Frank H. Bartlett purchased several adjacent parcels in the middle of the town in 1927-28 and financed the construction of the Mar-Va Theater. Bartlett also owned the Globe Theater in Berlin. On the Mar-Va's tenth anniversary, the interior was redecorated in the Art Deco fashion. A local newspaper described the work:

The Marva Theatre, Pocomoke, is a picture of loveliness these days, following the work of artists who, for four or five weeks, have been engaged in redecorating and refinishing this popular moving picture theatre.

With the interior decoration being done by the Paramount Interior Decorators of Philadelphia, under the direction of a Russian master in his line, the use of modernistic designs in blue, gold, silver, combined with the generous use of rust velour and colorful damask, the Marva takes on a metropolitan atmosphere with its also new indirect lighting schemes and stage decoration.

The theatre will be closed Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday nights of next week, with the grand opening on Thursday night, May 20. For the opening Mr. Fox has selected that sterling picture with Don Ameche and Anne Southern, "Fifty Roads to Town".

This is the tenth anniversary of the new Marva Theatre which, during the entire time, has been under the management of Mr. Fox. The building is owned by F. H. Bartlett, of Berlin, and these two gentlemen have seen that Pocomoke has a theatre in which it can justly feel proud.

For Pocomoke City, the Mar-Va Theater was the central focus in the town's secular social life. In addition to the nightly screening of movies, the generous stage, cellar dressing rooms, and large seating capacity, provided the facilities to support

See Continuation Sheet No. 8

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MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 8 Page 8

traveling vaudeville acts and a variety of city events such as beauty pageants and holiday celebrations.

Frank H. Bartlett's widow, Sarah Della, transferred the Mar-Va Theater to John T. Hudson in March 1958, and two years later the property was purchased by Calvin P. and Alma T. Pruitt, who held title to the theater for ten years. In July 1969, the Mar-Va was bought by J. Dawson and Hattie W. Clarke, who operated the theater until the 1980s. After J. Dawson Clarke's death, Hattie Clarke sold the Mar-Va to the current owner, Tom Daub, who continued to run the business until 1993 when a lack of attendance forced him to close the theater.

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National Park Service

W0-363

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 9 Page 9

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Arwas, Victor. Art Deco. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1980.

Democratic Messenger, 13 May 1937, Worcester County Library
Microfilm Collection, Snow Hill, Maryland.

Hall, Ben M. The Golden Age of The Movie Palace. Clarkson N.
Potter, Inc: New York, 1961.

Heide, Robert and John Gilman. Popular Art Deco: Depression Era
Style and Design. New York: Abbeville Press, 1991.

Land Records of Worcester County, various volumes, Worcester County
Courthouse, Snow Hill.

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties, Maryland Historical
Trust, Crownsville, MD.

Naylor, David. American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of
Fantasy. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company: New York, 1981.

Personal interview with Hattie Clarke, former owner and admission
booth operator for nearly 30 years, July 1990.

Telephone interview with Thomas Doub, current owner, April 1994.

MAR-VA THEATER
Name of Property

Worcester County, Md
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately .14 acre

USGS quad: Pocomoke City, MD

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1, 8	4, 5, 0, 0, 7, 0	4, 2, 1, 4, 1, 8, 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 10
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification SEE CONTINUATION SHEET NO. 10
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul B. Touart, Architectural Historian

organization Private Consultant date 29 April 1994

street & number P.O. Box 5 telephone (410) 651-1094

city or town Westover state MD zip code 21871

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Thomas Doub

street & number 3910 Chatham Road telephone _____

city or town Ellicott City state MD zip code 21042

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. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

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. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

MAR-VA THEATER
Worcester County
Maryland

Section number 10 Page 10

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property comprises a single lot located on the east side of Market Street, in Pocomoke City, indicated as Parcel 617 on Worcester County Tax Map, bounded on the south by the property now or formerly of Citizens National Bank of Pocomoke City, and by an alley leading therefrom in a northeasterly direction to Vine Street; on the east by the property of Lynwood W. Duncan and Arville J. Duncan; on the north by the property of Duncan Brothers, Inc.; and on the west by Market Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property, 0.14 acre, includes the single lot on which the resource stands.

See Continuation Sheet No. 11



#2

WO-363

Mar-Ua Theater
Pocomoke

WO-363

Prestige
PAPER

Prestige
PAPER

AGFA

24

MMN

MAR 00 022

Pocomoke

AGFA

Agfa

THANKS PHS
FOR CLEANUP



3

WO-363

Marquee - in need
of total restoration

MAR 00 022 NNNN

20



#1- WO-363

Ceiling damage

Showing Pilasters

and Brocade wall covering

Mar-Va Theater

MAR 00 022 NNNN 10.---



AGFA Agfa

PAPER
MAR 00 022 NNNN 3

#4 WO-363

Close-up of water damage
to wet ceiling. Roof has
been replaced

Prestige
PAPER

Prestige
PAPER

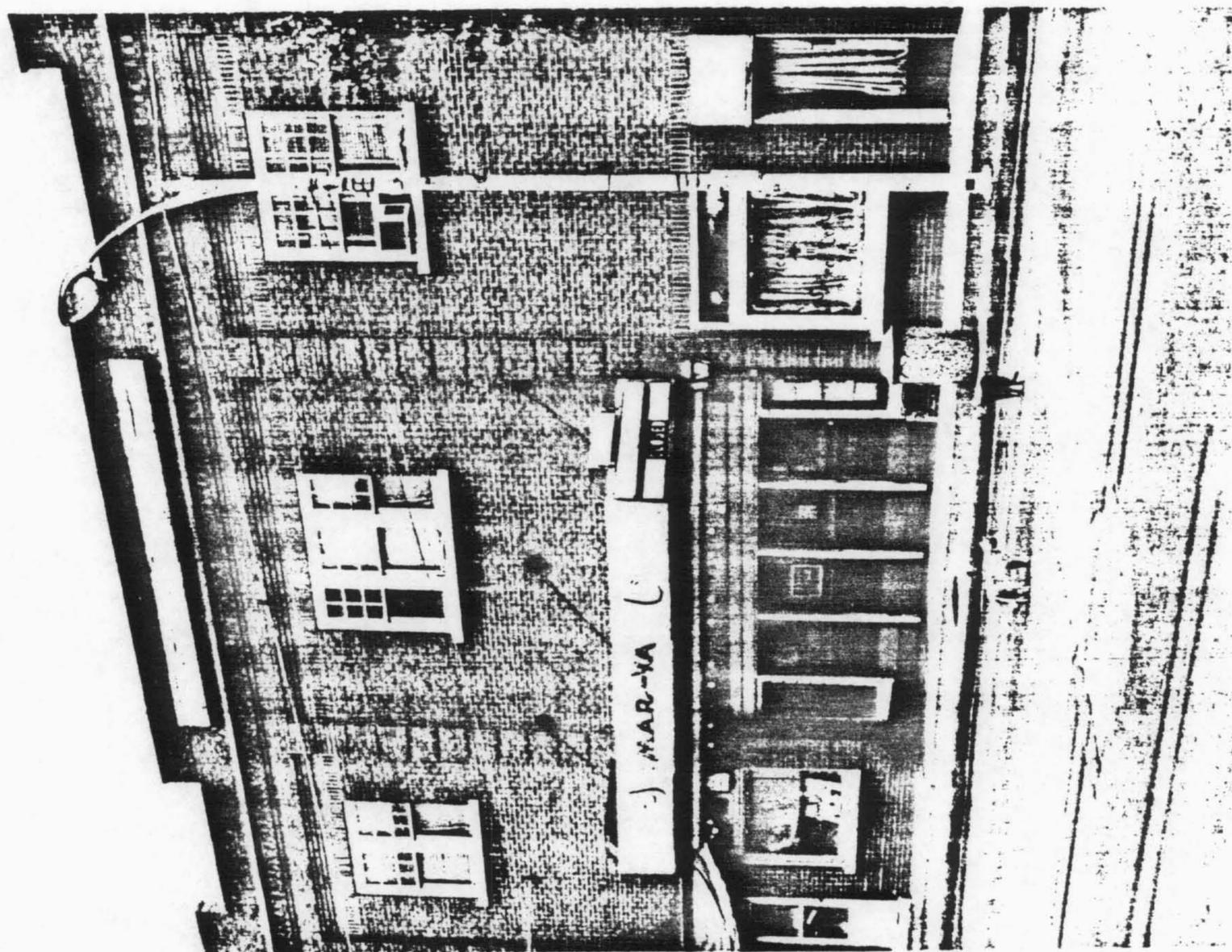
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wo-363



Wo-363

