

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NR Listed 2-11-11

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 Dickinson-Moore House  
other names/site number DE0290

2. Location

street & number 707 Robert S. Moore Ave.  not for publication  
city or town Arkansas City  vicinity  
state Arkansas code AR county Desha code 041 zip code 71630

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 for 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.)  
Cathie Matthews 12/14/10  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
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 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

Dickinson-Moore House  
Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
Check as many boxes as apply

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
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1	_____	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.)

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow/Craftsman  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick  
walls Weatherboard  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof Asphalt  
other \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(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 birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

c. 1915

Significant Dates

c. 1915

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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

Name of repository:

Dickinson-Moore House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.8 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 666660 3720132
Zone Easting Northing

3 Zone Easting Northing
4 Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clint Pumphrey, National Register Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date December 1, 2010
street & number 323 Center Street, 1500 Tower Building telephone (501) 324-9789
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72202

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 Robert S. Moore, Jr.
street & number P.O. Box 446 telephone
city or town Arkansas City state AR zip code 71630

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 listing. 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 20303.

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### Summary

Built c. 1915, the Dickinson-Moore House is located at 707 Robert S. Moore Avenue, one block west of the Desha County Courthouse and two blocks north of historic downtown Arkansas City. The one-and-a-half-story home, built in the Craftsman style, sits atop a five-foot foundation intended to protect the structure from the frequent flooding experienced in Arkansas City. This unique feature, combined with its Craftsman attributes--exposed rafter tails, knee braces, and square brick pillars--make the Dickinson-Moore house an important part of Arkansas City's architectural history.

### Elaboration

The Craftsman-style Dickinson-Moore House is set on a five-foot continuous brick foundation meant to protect the building from floodwater. The only feature that breaks the building's rectangular floorplan is a small weatherboard addition with shed roof, located on the east end of the south wall. A full porch, supported by square brick pillars, adorns the west side of the home, which faces Capitol Avenue. All four walls of the house retain their original weatherboard siding. The original wooden windows also remain in the house, most of which are double-hung with a six-over-one pane arrangement, and are flanked by black louvered shutters. Consistent with the Craftsman style, the roof eaves exhibit exposed rafter tails and decorative wooden knee braces. Composition shingles cover the simple gabled roof, which is broken by a single interior brick chimney on the house's south side.

### *Northwest Elevation*

Technically the front of the house, the northwest elevation features a wide brick staircase leading to an entrance on the left end. The door opens into a screened-in room, with two screened panels to the left of the door and three to the right. An aluminum awning shades this room. The other end of the building has five six-over-one windows; one of which stands alone and is flanked on each side by a group of two windows.

### *Southwest Elevation*

The most prominent aspect of the southwest elevation is the open porch, supported by four square brick pillars. A simple 2x4 wood railing surround all sides of the porch, which is only accessible from the inside of the house. Under the porch's hipped roof is a central doorway surrounded on each side with a group of two six-over-one windows. Above the porch is a group of three six-over-one windows that look out from a small attic room.

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### *Southeast Elevation*

The southeast side of the house features mostly windows. The left end of this elevation has a window arrangement identical to the north elevation: five six-over-one windows, one of which stands alone and is flanked on each side by a group of two windows. To the right of these windows is an air conditioning unit and another set of two six-over-one windows which are not shuttered like the others. A small addition stands flush with the right end of the southeast elevation. It sits on three brick foundation piers and is covered with a shed roof. The addition has five single-pane picture windows, two on the west side and three on the south side.

### *Northeast Elevation*

Like the southwest elevation, the northeast side of the house has a group of three six-over-one windows tucked just under the gable which look out from the attic. Below is a wooden six-over-one window. To the left is a small aluminum two-over-two window topped with a window air conditioning unit. To the right are four screened panels shaded by an aluminum awning--a continuation of the room described on the northwest elevation. The small side addition, which protrudes from southeast elevation, is accessed through a door on the northeast elevation. A wooden deck and stairway lead up to this entrance. The crawlspace access is also on this side; there is a small wooden door on the right end of the high foundation.

### **Integrity**

Aside from the small addition to the southeast elevation, the Dickinson-Moore House retains a considerable amount of historic integrity. The main architectural features remain intact, including the weatherboard siding, square brick porch pillars, exposed rafter tails, and knee braces. Furthermore, all but one of the windows are original to the house. It has survived numerous floods in surprisingly good shape, thanks in part to its unusually high brick foundation.

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### Summary

Located in Arkansas City on Robert S. Moore Avenue, the Dickinson-Moore House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a good example of Craftsman architecture that has been adapted to withstand high water in a flood-prone area. From the foundation up, the building looks like a typical Craftsman house, but its construction on a five-foot brick base is what makes the Moore House architecturally unique. Such a feature was particularly practical in Arkansas City where floods were once a common occurrence. Today, the Mississippi River bypasses Arkansas City and flooding is less common, but the Moore House remains as a testament to the town's past disasters.

### Elaboration

#### *History of Desha County and Arkansas City*

Because of its location at the intersection of the Arkansas, White, and Mississippi rivers, many of the area's earliest explorers passed through Desha County. Hernando de Soto, Father Jacques Marquette, Louis Joliet, Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, and Henri de Tonti, are all known to have visited Indian tribes in the area during the 16th and 17th centuries. In 1756, French Captain Charles Marie de Reggio moved Arkansas Post--the first European settlement in Arkansas--to a site ten miles from the Mississippi River on the Arkansas River, in present-day Desha County. The French presence grew in 1766 when Francis D'Armond built a trading post on the banks of the Mississippi River just north of its intersection with the White River.<sup>1</sup>

Settlement picked up after the United States acquired the territory with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. In 1810 General William Montgomery built a hotel, casino, mercantile store, and warehouses on the site of D'Armond's original settlement, making the location an important docking point for steamboats carrying freight and passengers up the Arkansas and White rivers. Frederick Notrebe, a native of France, built additional warehouses at the mouth of the Arkansas River around 1820, eventually naming the site Napoleon in 1837.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after Arkansas became a state in 1836, the state legislature created Desha County from parts of Arkansas and Chicot counties on December 12, 1838. They named the county for Captain Ben Desha, who served in the War of 1812 and the Kentucky Legislature before moving to Arkansas in 1824 as the Collector

<sup>1</sup> Kathleen DuVal, "Arkansas Post," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 15 December 2009, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=3> (accessed 23 October 2010); Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder, "Desha County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 17 May 2010, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=765#> (accessed 23 October 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Schexnayder, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=765#>.

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of U.S. Moneys. On March 4, 1839, justices of the peace met at William Sexton's house at Wellington Landing to form a county court and elect county officers. The Sexton House served as the first county seat of Desha County, which boasted a population of 1,598 by 1840. In 1841 commissioners moved the county government to Bellville, now known as Red Fork. Just two years later the county government again relocated, this time to Notrebe's prosperous settlement of Napoleon, at the confluence of the Arkansas and Mississippi rivers.<sup>3</sup>

When Napoleon became the county seat of Desha County in 1843, it was rapidly becoming the political and economic center of the region. The town had a post office by 1837, and in 1839 the Second General Assembly of Arkansas chartered a railroad to connect Napoleon to Little Rock (though the line was never completed). In 1837 the United States surgeon general chose Napoleon as the site for one of three marine hospitals along the Mississippi River. The rough and rowdy town reached its peak between 1850 and 1860, when it claimed as many as 2,000 residents. Napoleon even made an impression on Mark Twain, who, in his 1883 memoir *Life on the Mississippi*, described it as "town of innumerable fights—an inquest every day; town where I used to know the prettiest girl...and the most accomplished in the whole Mississippi Valley."<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, the Mississippi River, which elevated the importance of Napoleon, also caused its demise. By the mid-1860s, the town began to slowly crumble, house-by-house, into the Mississippi River. The erosion was so bad that the county government was moved to Watson in 1874.<sup>5</sup>

After just five years in Watson, the county government moved once again in 1879, this time to its current location in Arkansas City. Isaac Adair and his sister were the first white settlers of this community, having cleared four acres at the future town site in 1834. About this same time Charley Campbell and his wife arrived in the area, purchasing the surrounding land for 25 cents an acre and establishing the first farm in that part of the county. Campbell's overseer, Dr. Oscar Bowles, transported his boss' slaves on a flatboat from Virginia in 1835. The community did not obtain a post office until 1872, a year before the incorporation of Arkansas City on September 12, 1873. Originally a part of Chicot County, Arkansas City became a part of Desha County on February 10, 1879, and was voted the new county seat in September of that year.<sup>6</sup>

County leaders located the county government at Arkansas City because, by the late 1870s, it had become an important transportation hub in Desha County. The community had a steamboat landing, known as the Kate

<sup>3</sup> Edythe Hobson, "Captain Ben Desha," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1980): 12-14; Schexnayder, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=765#>.

<sup>4</sup> Steven Teske, "Napoleon," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 27 September 2010, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356> (accessed 23 October 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Teske, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>.

<sup>6</sup> Paula Reaves, "Arkansas City," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 7 April 2010, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875> (accessed 23 October 2010); *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890), 998, 1001, 1003, 1009.



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Adams Landing, as early as 1834, and became an important stop for steamboats prior to the Civil War. It was also one of the earliest port cities in the county to gain access to the railroad. The Little Rock, Pine Bluff, & New Orleans Railroad Company, organized around 1870, built the first railroad through Desha County. Beginning the line at Chicot City on the banks of the Mississippi River, construction crews reached Pine Bluff in 1874. Traffic on the line was interrupted every year between 1874 and 1876 by flooding along the stretch nearest to Chicot City. As a result, the Little Rock, Mississippi River, & Texas Railroad, as the company was now called, relocated the Mississippi River terminus to Arkansas City in 1878. This move brought unprecedented prosperity to the community.<sup>7</sup>

The boom that followed the arrival of the railroad turned Arkansas City from a sleepy town of 503 people in 1880 to a bustling economic center of 1,485 people by 1910. By 1890, according to *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas*, the town boasted:

...about forty business houses, large and small; a cotton compress, with a capital of \$60,000; the plant of the Desha Lumber & Planing Company, with a capital of \$500,000; a planing-mill, with a capital of \$18,000; an opera house with a seating capacity of 400; an elevator, several cotton-gins and two hotels.<sup>8</sup>

A natural steamboat landing brought a great deal of river traffic to the town. The towboat *Kate Sprague* was a frequent visitor to Arkansas City, as was the *Kate Adams*, a passenger and cargo ship. The town's prosperity was evident in an article written in 1910 by the editor of *The National Magazine*, which suggested that upon a visit to Arkansas City, "[t]he tourist must expect to find the ladies of Arkansas not only beautiful but exquisitely attired, and charming in mind and manner, for more delightful and well-governed social gatherings never were held anywhere."<sup>9</sup>

A central figure in the growth of Arkansas City was Henry Thane, an entrepreneur born in Germany and raised in Metropolis, Illinois. Soon after his arrival in Arkansas City in 1876, Thane became a lawyer for the Little Rock, Pine Bluff, & New Orleans Railroad. He held numerous political offices in the county, including justice of the peace, mayor of Arkansas City, postmaster, circuit clerk, and *ex officio* county clerk, before becoming a state senator. Owner of a sawmill and lumber company, Thane eventually controlled the Desha County Bank and Trust. One of Thane's later residences can still be seen today on DeSoto Avenue--a 1919 brick Craftsman home designed by prominent architect Charles Thompson. While his former house still stands, all that remains of the Thane Bank Building--once the most prominent structure downtown--is an

<sup>7</sup> C.C. Stuart, "Arkansas City and Its History," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1979): 34-36; *Goodspeed*, 1001.

<sup>8</sup> *Goodspeed*, 1003.

<sup>9</sup> "Arkansas City--Early Days," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1983): 64-65; Reaves, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>.

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empty lot. Built on the corner of Sprague Street and DeSoto Avenue around 1890, this three-story brick building featured a round turret on its northeast corner and was a pertinent symbol of Thane's financial success. It was destroyed by fire in the 1960s.<sup>10</sup>

A number of other buildings from this boom time still stand in Arkansas City. The Cotham Drug Store, Ramus Brothers Market, and Red Star Grocery, all built between c. 1900 and c. 1910, are all that remains of the once-thriving downtown commercial district. Another remnant of the town's bustling past is the c. 1882 law office of X.O. Pindall, acting governor of Arkansas from 1907 to 1909. Two churches built around the turn of the 20th century also remain. The First Methodist Church, built in 1888, and the St. Clement's Episcopal Church, built c. 1901, both survive as reminders of Arkansas City's once-diverse religious community. The Old Opera House, constructed in the 1880s, now houses the Riverton Lodge 296 F&M Masonic Hall. Boxing greats like John L. Sullivan and Jack Dempsey both held events there--Sullivan in 1891 and Dempsey in 1924. The most prominent building from this time period is the Desha County Courthouse, a two-story brick building with a corner clock tower, constructed in 1900. The Arkansas City High School, constructed in 1910, now serves as the courthouse annex.<sup>11</sup>

Arkansas City continued to prosper until the devastating Flood of 1927, which rerouted the Mississippi River one mile east of the town's levee and effectively ended its importance as a commercial center. In an attempt to prevent a similar disaster in the future, the community increased the height of the levees, but this effort could not save Arkansas City from the drought and economic depression that soon followed. By 1950 the town began losing a few hundred residents every decade, and in a March 1958, pictures of the town were featured in a *Look* magazine article entitled, "The Shrinking South." Concerned about the decline of their hometown, residents initiated an organized effort to revitalize Arkansas City through the development of tourism. Despite these efforts, the town's population continued to decline, dropping to just 589 residents in 2000.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Flood of 1927*

Located on the banks of the Mississippi River, just downstream from its confluence with the Arkansas and White rivers, Arkansas City is geographically positioned in an area predisposed to flooding. For centuries waters from the rivers have escaped their banks, depositing nutrient-rich silt on the surrounding plain to create the fertile farmland on which the region's economy is now based. The first such flood to be recorded

<sup>10</sup> Marcia Schnedler, "Arkansas City: Awash in History," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1997): 88-91; Archives of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, Arkansas; *Goodspeed*, 1049; Reaves, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>.

<sup>11</sup> Archives of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, Arkansas; Reaves, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>.

<sup>12</sup> Matt Dellinger, "Old Man Bridge," *The Oxford American*, Winter 2005; Reaves, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>.

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occurred on the Mississippi River in 1543. Described by Garcilaso de la Vega in his history of the de Soto expedition, the deluge began in March and lasted about 80 days. For those who later settled the region, flooding became a way of life; between 1800 and 1973, 42 floods occurred on the Mississippi River.<sup>13</sup>

In Desha County, floods were frequent and often devastating, destroying not just individual homes and businesses, but entire communities. Napoleon, one of the county's earliest seats of government, survived numerous bouts with high water before finally eroding into the Mississippi River during the 1860s and 1870s. In Arkansas City the river crested at ever-higher levels during the floods of the 19th and 20th centuries--46 feet in 1859, 55 feet in 1912-13, and 58 feet in 1922, covering some parts of the town in 10 to 15 feet of water. More minor floods were so common that many residents built their homes and businesses on unusually tall foundations, sometimes five or six feet high.<sup>14</sup>

One of the worst disasters in American history, the Flood of 1927 affected Arkansas City more than any other catastrophe. It began in the spring of 1927, when the upper Mississippi River swelled from early snow melt in Canada. Rain in the upper Midwest and South further exacerbated the situation, causing water in the Mississippi to back up into its tributaries. The resulting floods covered hundreds of thousands of acres in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The Red Cross estimated the total death toll from the flood at 246, while approximately 750,000 Americans found themselves without food, water, clothing, or work. Damage from the disaster, in addition to relief, recovery, and lost productivity, cost the nation an estimated \$1 billion.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps the state hardest hit by the flood was Arkansas. Unprecedented amounts of rain fell on the state in April 1927, including one storm that dumped seven inches on Little Rock in just a few hours. The Mississippi, already brimming with rainfall from further upstream, backed up into the Arkansas, St. Francis, and White rivers with disastrous consequences. Water up to thirty feet deep covered 36 out of 75 counties, submerging a total area of about 6,600 square miles that included over two million acres of farmland. The floodwaters affected more people in Arkansas than in any other state; eighty Red Cross camps were needed to assist the 350,000 Arkansans displaced by floodwaters and over 41,000 families received federal aid. Tragically, the flood killed almost one hundred people in Arkansas, more than any state except Mississippi. Then-president Herbert Hoover called the flood "America's greatest peacetime disaster," adding that "the disaster felt by Arkansas farmers, planters, and residents of river lowlands was of epic proportions."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jim Merritt and B. Gill Dishongh, Sr., "The Levee System of Desha County, Arkansas," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1988): 7-25.

<sup>14</sup> Donald Harrington, *Let Us Build Us a City* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986), 324.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Hendricks, "Flood of 1927," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, 14 September 2010, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356> (accessed 23 October 2010).

<sup>16</sup> Hendricks, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>.

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The effects of the Flood of 1927 were particularly devastating and far-reaching in Arkansas City. As rains fell in April, residents anxiously watched the waters of the Mississippi River rise higher and higher against the city's levee. Then, on April 27, 1927, a crevasse opened on the levee at Mound Landing, Mississippi, just across the river from Arkansas City. Cheers erupted from the Arkansas side of the river as the break on the river's eastern shore lessened the pressure on the western levee. The celebration was short-lived, however, because later that day there was a break along the Arkansas River levee at Pendleton. Water gushed from the breach, slowly spreading south to Arkansas City where it began to flood the streets shortly after noon on the 28th.<sup>17</sup>

No one in Arkansas City was spared from the devastation that followed. The floodwater quickly rose to unprecedented levels, finally cresting at sixty feet and covering the entire city in five to thirty feet of water. As residents fled to the top of the levee and the upper floors of the downtown buildings, newly-buried coffins floated to the surface and had to be taken to McGehee for identification. When it was clear that the flood would not soon recede, citizens erected a tent city on the levee and converted boxcars from the Mo Pac Railroad Company into makeshift dining cars and washrooms. A floating bridge was built to the upper levels of the Thane Bank Building and the Riverview Hotel where other residents took refuge. The Red Cross fed and sheltered the town's 1,500 residents until the waters finally receded in August of 1927. Nearly the entire town had to be rebuilt.<sup>18</sup>

While the population of Arkansas City remained steady through 1940, the town would never really recover from the devastation caused by the 1927 flood. Because the region's agricultural land remained covered in water through the spring and summer, farmers lost a year's worth of income as they were unable to plant their crops. Three years later the once-saturated farms turned to clouds of blowing dust when a severe drought hit the area in 1930. The Great Depression of the 1930s only worsened the hardship of these back-to-back catastrophes. While the entire region suffered through considerable adversity, Arkansas City was especially affected as its main source of influence, the Mississippi River, moved one mile east, leaving dry land on the west side of the levee where steamboats and barges once docked.<sup>19</sup>

### *The Dickinson-Moore House and the Moore Family*

Constructed c. 1915, the Dickinson-Moore House has experienced the ebb and flow of Arkansas City's history and its floodwaters. Like many buildings in Arkansas City, it is built upon a high foundation to

<sup>17</sup> *Dumas Clarion*, 14 July 2004; Hendricks, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>; Harrington, 320.

<sup>18</sup> *Dumas Clarion*, 14 July 2004; "Flood Recollections," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1976): 57; Saeler, 14 July 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Reaves, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>; Hendricks, <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>.

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protect it from the high water that frequently visited the area. This practical adaptation makes the Dickinson-Moore house a unique example of Craftsman architecture in Arkansas City.

It is not known who exactly had the house built, but it is thought to be a member of the Dickinson family, a prominent name in Arkansas City business and politics. Their patriarch in the town was planter and attorney Colonel J.W. Dickinson, of whom the *Goodspeed* history speaks rather glowingly: "[n]o name is entitled to a more enviable place in the history of Desha County than the one that heads this sketch, for it is borne by a man who has ever been honorably and usefully identified with the interests of this county, and with its advancement in every worthy particular."<sup>20</sup> Born in Madison County, Tennessee, Dickinson moved to Arkansas City from Memphis, Tennessee, in 1874. There he began studying law, and in 1876 was elected the treasurer of Chicot County, then to the Arkansas legislature in 1879. His son J.W. Dickinson, Jr. was also an influential member of the community, becoming mayor of Arkansas City in the 1885. Colonel Dickinson's other two sons, W.W. and C.F., both lived in Little Rock; the former served as the president of Dickinson Hardware Company while the latter attended school.<sup>21</sup>

The Dickinsons only occupied the house for a decade or so, selling it to Arthur Preston Price and Emma Jean Safford Price in the mid-1920s. A.P. Price was a cultivator by profession, but after struggling to make a living on his nearby farm, he and his wife decided to move into town. The Prices brought with them their daughter Dorothy Elizabeth, born October 26, 1910, on the Desoto Plantation near Potlatch.<sup>22</sup>

Dorothy and her parents lived in the Dickinson-Moore House when the Flood of 1927 ravaged the area. That spring, Dorothy graduated from Arkansas City High School with little of the usual ceremony. Her brother rowed her from their temporary residence in the second floor of the Riverview Hotel to a window in the Memphis Bank, where school board president DeWitt Poe presented her diploma. Their family's home, she recalls, was almost completely underwater: "[m]y brother took me out to our house in a motorboat. I could just see the tip of the house."<sup>23</sup> The floodwater reached eight feet deep in the rooms. As the water receded, Dorothy left Arkansas City to attend college at Hendrix in Conway, where she studied until 1930 when financial difficulties led her to drop out of school and seek employment. She moved back to her hometown and soon began work at Sheriff Howard L. Clayton's office. There she met her future husband, Robert Smith Moore.<sup>24</sup>

Robert Moore was born on August 16, 1908, in Dumas, Arkansas, to Sen. and Mrs. I.N. Moore, Sr. After graduating as valedictorian of Dumas High School, he moved to Arkadelphia to attend Ouachita Baptist

<sup>20</sup> *Goodspeed*, 1016.

<sup>21</sup> *Goodspeed*, 1016, 1019.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Robert S. Moore, Jr., August 27, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Ross, 14 July 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Dorothy P. Moore, "My Husband, Robert Smith Moore," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1996): 35; Flood Recollections," 57.

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University. There he was a member of the football, track, and basketball teams, earning all-state recognition for his athletic talents. Moore soon returned to Desha County, where he worked under Sheriff Howard L. Clayton and met his wife of 35 years, Dorothy Price. The couple married on September 4, 1938, in the Old Christian Church in Arkansas City, and moved into the Dickinson-Moore House with Dorothy's parents. Less than a year later, on June 24, 1939, the Moores gave birth to a daughter, Dorothy Lee. With this new addition to the family, the house became a little too crowded for the Prices, who soon moved out. The Moores would reside in the Dickinson-Moore House for the remainder of their marriage.<sup>25</sup>

Robert Moore quickly became a prominent citizen of Arkansas City. In 1941 Moore volunteered for the United States Army, entering as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the 35<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. He served in Arkansas, Kentucky, Michigan, and Georgia before an old football injury forced him to leave the military. Upon returning to Desha County, Moore served as deputy treasurer before taking office as circuit and chancery clerk in 1945. Then, in 1948, he ran for the office for which he is best known--Desha County sheriff. Moore won, and took his first oath of office on January 1, 1949.<sup>26</sup>

Moore's service as Desha County sheriff would define his career. He was elected to thirteen consecutive terms, during which time he became involved in law enforcement organizations on the state and national level. He served as president of the Arkansas Peace Officers Association, the Arkansas Sheriff's Association, and the National Sheriff's Association, and was instrumental in the formation of the Arkansas Law Training Academy. Tragically, Moore died in a two-car accident on Highway 65, just south of Pine Bluff on March 12, 1973. Desha County residents and prominent state politicians alike mourned his passing; the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, legislators, and law enforcement officials, as well as local citizens, descended on the Arkansas City Baptist Church for Moore's funeral. Governor Dale Bumpers appointed his widow, Dorothy, to finish out his thirteenth term. She went on to work as a receptionist for Governor Bill Clinton before returning to Arkansas City, where she lived in the Dickinson-Moore House until her death on April 9, 2008, at the age of 97.<sup>27</sup>

### Summary

Located in Arkansas City on Robert S. Moore Ave., the Dickinson-Moore House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a good example of Craftsman architecture that has been adapted to withstand high water in a flood-prone area. From the foundation up, the building looks like a typical Craftsman house, but its construction on a five-foot brick base is what makes the Moore House architecturally unique. Such a feature was particularly practical in Arkansas City where floods were once a

<sup>25</sup> *Dumas Clarion*, 14 March 1973; Interview with Robert S. Moore, Jr., August 27, 2010; Moore, 34.

<sup>26</sup> *Dumas Clarion*, 14 March 1973; August 27, 2010; Moore, 36-37.

<sup>27</sup> Robert S. Moore, Jr., "Robert S. Moore, Sr.," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1996): 49; *McGehee Times*, 21 March 1973; *Dumas Clarion*, 14 March 1973; Interview with Robert S. Moore, Jr., August 27, 2010.

Dickinson-Moore House  
Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas  
County and State

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common occurrence. Today, the Mississippi River bypasses Arkansas City and flooding is less common, but the Moore House remains as a testament to the town's past disasters.

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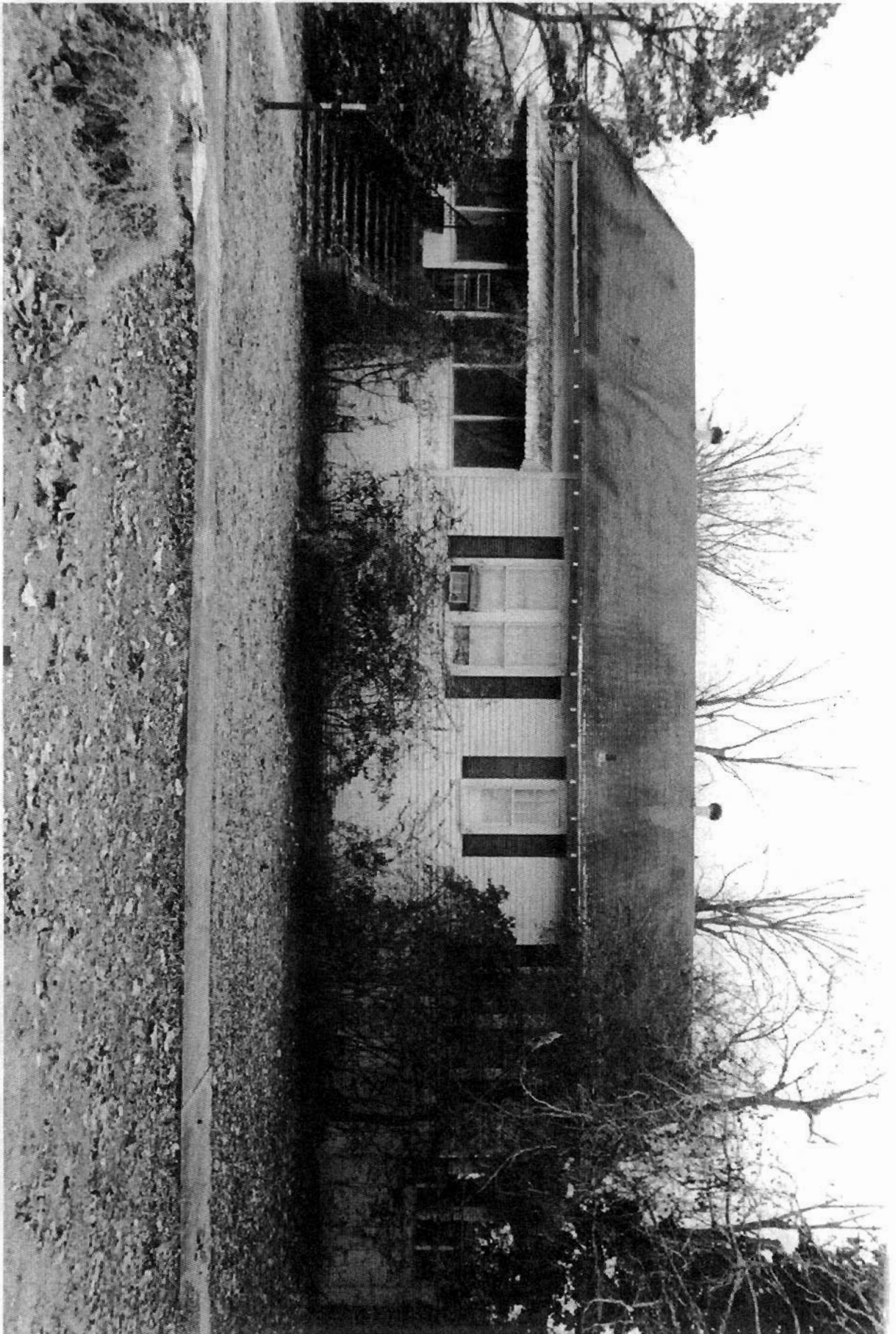
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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From a point at the east corner of the intersection of Robert S. Moore Avenue and Capitol Street, proceed northeast 175 feet along the edge of Robert S. Moore Avenue, then southeast 200 feet, then southwest 175 feet, then northwest 200 feet along Capitol Street.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary contains the land that is historically associated with the Dickinson-Moore House.



Dickson - Moore House

Desha Co., Arkansas

Travis Roterhann

January 4, 2010

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR

Northwest elevation

#1



Pickens - Moore House

Desha County, Arkansas

Travis Katermann

January 4, 2010

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR

Southeast elevation

#2



Dickinson - Moore House

Desha County, Arkansas

Travis Ratermann

January 4, 2010

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR

Southwest elevation

#3





Dickson - Moore House  
Desha County, Arkansas

Travis Ratermann

January 4, 2010

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Little Rock, AR  
Northeast elevation

#4

