

59-03-D109-61

Listed in the N.R. 6-10-82

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

**1. Name**

historic The Frith-Plunkett House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Eight and Main Streets N/A— not for publication

city, town Des Arc N/A— vicinity of congressional district Second

state Arkansas code 05 county Prairie code 117

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Harvey and Grace Drewry

street & number Box 212

city, town Des Arc N/A— vicinity of state Arkansas

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Prairie County Courthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Des Arc state Arkansas

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Arkansas Historic Preservation Program <sup>Survey</sup> has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1976  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town Little Rock state Arkansas

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY

Situated on a spacious, tree shaded corner lot, the Frith-Plunkett House stands as the oldest residence in Des Arc. Built circa 1858, the house exhibits the pervasive influence of the Greek Revival style in antebellum Arkansas, eloquently communicated in the building's Classically derived portico. The building is a two-story horizontal weatherboarded woodframe structure raised slightly above grade on brick piers, exhibiting the one-room deep single pile with end chimneys that typifies the traditional "I" house form. An ell, constructed of the same weatherboard material as the house, extends from its rear elevation.

#### ELABORATION

The five bay principal (north) facade of the Frith-Plunkett House illustrates the impact of the Greek Revival style on the traditional "I" house form. Here, a single bay, two-story cross gable-roofed portico projects from the center of the elevation. The portico is supported by two pairs of finely crafted box columns with simple squared capitals that appear to have been designed in imitation of the Doric order. These columns carry an unembellished frieze and box cornice. The portico is capped with a triangular pediment that completes the imagery of the "Greek temple" front. Plain balusters, square in section, compose the portico's first and second floor porch rails. The columns visually embrace the main entrance to the house and the second floor balcony's entrance. Engaged box columns articulated with the same treatment as the portico columns, frame the double-doored front entrance. These engaged columns are flanked by sidelights set above wood panels and capped by a multi-light transom. The entrance itself is composed of impressive four-panel doors. The design of the second floor entry is almost identical to that of the principal entrance with one exception. Upstairs, access is provided through one oversized four-panel door. The first and second floors of the principal elevation display a fenestration of double-hung six-over-six light rectangular windows set in plain frames.

The east and west (side) elevations are quite austere in comparison to the principal facade. Although the building originally had two brick end chimneys, characteristic of the "I" house form, only the east chimney survives; the west chimney was destroyed in a 1960s storm. One double-hung six-over-six light window appears in the first floor of the east elevation, just south of the chimney while the west elevation, with its original chimney gone, is an uninterrupted weatherboarded wall. A one-story gable-roofed ell projects from the southeast corner of the house. The east facade of the ell is pierced by a single door with a shed awning and a six-over-six light double-hung window. It appears that the ell is contemporary with the main "I" structure. Physical evidence indicates that this ell may well have been the original detached kitchen, connected to the "I" house by a breezeway.

The rear (south) elevation of the Frith-Plunkett House is characterized by a one-story shed-roofed porch and the back of the gable-roofed ell. The porch, supported by square wood posts, originally ran the full length of the elevation, probably creating the aforementioned breezeway between the "I" house and its kitchen. Now, the east end of the porch is enclosed, a result of the circa 1880s attachment of the ell. The

FHR-8-300A  
(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

fenestration of the second story of the rear elevation of the house reiterates the articulation of the principal facade. However, the two eastern windows, probably not original to the structure, are shorter than the others in order to accommodate the pitch of the ell's gable roof below. (it is likely, therefore, that this window alteration dates to the circa 1880s attachment of the ell.) The first story of the south elevation is penetrated by one window flanked by two doors. The east door provides a rear entrance to the central hallway.

When the ell was attached to the "I" house, the back porch was extended to continue along the west side of the ell. However, the south extreme of the ell's porch was enclosed (circa 1960) to provide a modern bathroom and the enclosure is relatively small and unobtrusive on the building facade. The south facade of the ell has one window, identical in design to the window that appears in its east facade. The ell is capped with a simple cornice moulding and curvilinear brackets appear under the eaves of its gable roof.

In plan, the Frith-Plunkett House also reflects the typical arrangement of the traditional "I" house consisting of a central stair hall with one room to either side, both upstairs and downstairs. The four dwelling rooms, each with dimensions of 20 feet by 20 feet and 12 feet high ceilings are simply articulated, and each room was accommodated with a fireplace. The central hall is noteworthy for its flushboarded walls which display the marks of a circular saw, and its appropriately simple staircase with plain post balusters. Four-panel doors appear throughout the interior of the house. The ell continues to function as a kitchen.

One original outbuilding, a cistern, remains on the Frith-Plunkett House site. Located to the southwest of the dwelling house, this one-story hip-roofed structure is built of cypress boards. Square in plan, it is divided by a partition which separates the cistern from a storage area. Two doors on its north elevation provide access to the outbuilding and lattice work under the eaves of the building indicate the presence of the cistern inside.

There is evidence of a second outbuilding which stood west of the house and the present outbuilding. The second, smaller outbuilding was also square in plan, capped with a hipped roof and constructed of cypress. The Frith-Plunkett property represents potential archological value.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates    circa 1858                      Builder/Architect    unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

As Des Arc's oldest residence, the Frith-Plunkett house reflects the prosperity of the most successful economic era (1850-62) in this rural rivertown's history. As a result of its auspicious location on the White River, a critical transportation artery in antebellum Arkansas, Des Arc's population increased dramatically during the 1850s. According to the 1850 census the town, platted just two years earlier in 1848, had only 98 citizens, but by 1860 when Des Arc was at the peak of its economic heyday the city boasted a population of 2000. Both the house's builder, John Frith, and its second owner, William A. Plunkett, were associated with this early economic history. Frith opened one of the town's first stores in the early 1850s and by the end of the decade he emerged as a prominent merchant and real estate speculator. Plunkett established a successful wholesale and retail business in Des Arc after the Civil War, a period when the once-flourishing town was beginning to decline as the railroads, which initially bypassed Des Arc, surpassed the river as prime vehicles for transporting goods across the state. The Civil War period was quite devastating for Des Arc with many buildings burned and others moved to nearby DeVall's Bluff by the Union Army, thus rendering the survival of the circa 1858 Frith-Plunkett house especially compelling. Not only historically important, the Frith-Plunkett House, retaining much of its antebellum integrity, is an important East Arkansas vernacular example of the Greek Revival style. Though essentially an "I" house, a traditional Arkansas form, the two-story Classically-influenced portico distinguishes this residence. The portico depicts a clear understanding of the components of the Classical Greek Revival style. Although the Classical vocabulary is interpreted in a simplified fashion, careful attention to detail and craftsmanship is evident. Both architecturally and historically significant, the Frith-Plunkett House presents a unique representation of the architecture that formed the backdrop for Des Arc's pre-Civil War development.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Prairie County, Deed Records, 1859, 1877.  
Prairie County, Tax Records, 1849 - 1880.  
1850-1880 U.S. Census, White River Township, Prairie County, Arkansas.  
Morley, Ted, Early History of Des Arc and Its People. Little Rock, 1957.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Des Arc West Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 15 636630 3871300  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

Verbal boundary description and justification

lots 1, 2, 3, Block 32, Watkins Survey

lot 1, E 1/2 of 2, Block 1 Walts Addition

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Donald R. Brown, Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date February, 1982

street & number Suite 500 Continental Building telephone (501) 371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

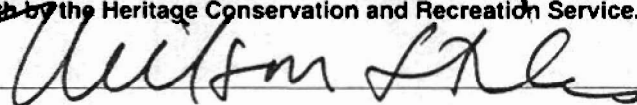
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title date

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

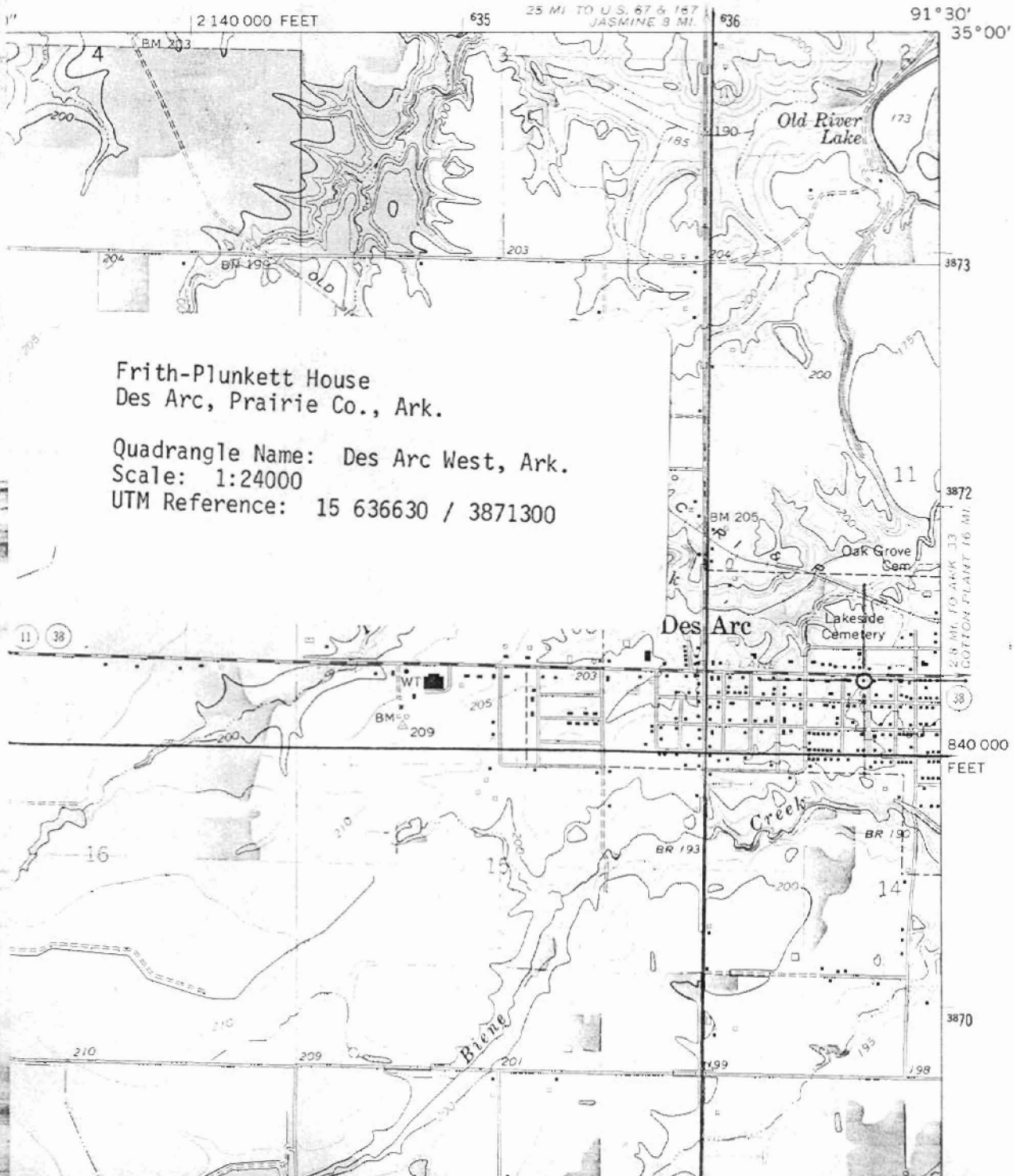
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

DES ARC WEST QUADRANGLE  
ARKANSAS—PRAIRIE CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
NE/4 HAZEN 15' QUADRANGLE

7754 III  
GREGORY 1:62 500'



Frith-Plunkett House  
Des Arc, Prairie Co., Ark.

Quadrangle Name: Des Arc West, Ark.  
Scale: 1:24000  
UTM Reference: 15 636630 / 3871300

28 MI. TO ARK 33  
16 MI. TO COTTON PLANT

840 000  
FEET

