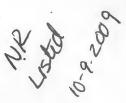
NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

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 Dr. John William Morris Clinic historic name other names/site number 2. Location not for publication 118 West Main Street street & number vicinity McCrory city or town zip code 72101 147 coide Woodruff county AR code state AR 3.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 ationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.) atthe Signature of certifying official/Title 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.) Date Signature of certifying official/Title State or Federal agency and bureau 4. National Park Service Certification Date of Action Signature of the Keeper 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:)

OMB No. 10024-0016

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(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheet

### 8. Statement of Significance

**Applicable National Register Criteria** A fark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property ational 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 historical figure

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.

## 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

Woodruff Co., AR County and State

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE HEALTH/MEDICINE

Period of Significance 1936-1959

**Significant Dates** 1936-1959

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked) Dr. John William Morris

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

- Primary location of additional data: State Historic Preservation Office Other State Agency Federal Agency Local Government University
  - Other

Name of repository:

recorded by Historic American Engineering

3 Zone Easting Northing 4

### Verbal Boundary Description

From a point of beginning at the northwest corner of the property proceed east 46.2 feet, thence south 154.51 feet, thence west 46.2 feet thence north 154.51 feet to the point of beginning.

#### **Boundary** Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Holly Hope/ Special Projects Historian organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program	date	e 08/21/09
	telephor	ne 501 324-9880
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street city or town Little Rock	state AR	zip code72201

### 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

city or town

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

McCrory

#### **Property Owner** (Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.) Babbie Lovett name 870 731-2208 telephone street & number PO 403 zip code 72101 state AR

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.

Dr. John William Morris Clinic Name of Property	Woodruff Co., AR County and State
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of Property       5.88 acres         YM References       (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)         1       15       663672       3902944         Zone       Easting       Northing         2	3 Zone Easting Northing 4 See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

From a point of beginning at the northwest corner of the property proceed east 46.2 feet, thence south 154.51 feet, thence west 46.2 feet thence north 154.51 feet to the point of beginning.

#### **Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

11. Form Prepared By				
name/title Holly Hope/ Special Projects Historian				
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program		date	08/21/09	
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street		telephone	501 324-988	0
city or town Little Rock	state	AR	zip code	72201

### **Additional Documentation**

bmit the following items with the completed form:

#### **Continuation Sheets**

#### Maps

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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 Babbie Lovett	
street & number PO 403	telephone 870 731-2208
city or town McCrory	state AR zip code 72101

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### SUMMARY

The Dr. John William Morris Clinic in McCrory, Woodruff County, was the office of John William Morris, McCrory's only doctor for many years. In 1975, he was recognized as the longest practicing physician in the United States. His office was built in 1936 in the Mixed Masonry style with Craftsman influence, using concrete details rather than the typical brick and stone combination usually found on such architecture.

The clinic displays a rectangular floor plan with gabled roof sheathed in original hexagonal shingles, open rafter tails and arcaded front porch. All windows are original and the interior layout remains intact. The building also features a partial basement.

### **ELABORATION**

The front, north façade of the clinic features a three-quarter arcaded front porch. The haunches of the arches are composed of concrete with concrete keystones at the crown. The abutments are embellished with concrete quoins. Concrete coping spans the roofline of the porch. Centered between the arches is a concrete datestone reading "J.W. MORRIS M.D. CLINIC – 1936."

The flat roof of the porch is missing but was never visible from the street so the absence of the covering does not impact the building's historic integrity. The floor of the porch features a mosaic of marble and sandstone blocks randomly arranged. The clinic is fenestrated west to east with a single three-over-one Craftsman sash double-hung window, a single-leaf one-light paneled door in the center of the façade and a second

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single window. A pair of windows lights the attic level above the porch. All openings are surrounded with concrete quoins and windows feature concrete sills.

The northeast corner of the front porch is accessed by three concrete steps leading to a single arch with concrete detail. Four single double-hung windows are evenly spaced north to south on the east elevation.

The rear, southern elevation features a one-story, three-quarter porch. The corrugated metal shed roof of the porch is supported by three sandstone posts with concrete quoins. Fenestration mirrors the northern façade with two single windows flanking a centered door. A pair of windows is centered in the gable at the attic level.

The west elevation is fenestrated south to north by three single windows, a singleleaf door and a window at the northwest corner. A shed-roofed porte cochere supported by two stone and concrete posts shelters the door. The northwest corner of the front porch is a repeat of the northeast with arch and three concrete steps.

### INTERIOR

The interior of the clinic features a large waiting room accessed via the centered front door. Dr. Morris's office was to the right of the waiting room. A central hall with swinging wood doors delineates the public area from the treatment rooms, which flank

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the hallway. A large room to the rear of the building contains a small staircase to the attic, under which is situated the darkroom Dr. Morris used for developing x-rays. Original office furniture, x-ray machines, cabinetry, operating tables and darkroom equipment and film are still stored in the clinic. The attic contains a single large room, which was used for beds.

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### SUMMARY

The Dr. John William Morris Clinic is being nominated to the National Register under Criteria B and C with local significance. Dr. John William Morris was an important citizen in McCrory and throughout the county due to his lifetime of service answering resident's medical needs. His years of service stretched into his 101st year, which brought national attention to McCrory. During World War II and for several years after, Dr. Morris was the only physician in McCrory and surrounding towns. He made housecalls but his clinic also served as a treatment center. The Dr. Morris Clinic is a unique example of a Mixed Masonry with Craftsman influence. Stone buildings are rare in the Delta because of the lack of quarries and the clinic was the first one in town. The use of concrete on the arches, window and door surrounds and corners is also unusual overall in the Mixed Masonry style. The interior of the clinic has been painstakingly maintained by Dr. Morris' granddaughter and great-granddaughter and contains the doctor's medical equipment, records and furniture.

Morris' home in McCrory at 112 E. Raney Avenue still exists but is not eligible for the National Register on an individual basis because of the application of vinyl siding on the gabled areas. The clinic best represents Dr. Morris' productive life and also exemplifies his importance to the community as a doctor.

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### **ELABORATION**

The earliest settler in the area of McCrory was Cyrus G. McCrory in 1862. His homestead was on its way to becoming a town in the late 1880s when a representative from the Iron Mountain Railroad came to Woodruff County. Cyrus McCrory signed over the right-of-way on his farm for a depot and railroad line. By 1890, the line had been constructed and a petition for incorporation of the town of McCrory had been granted by the county court.<sup>1</sup>

Cyrus McCrory sold off several lots in town to new residents and by the early twentieth century the commercial area had begun to form with the construction of banks and mercantiles. Oxley's Stave Factory in McCrory was considered the largest in the state in the 1890s. Cotton was the main agricultural crop and farmers raised hay and corn to feed cattle and hogs. Three doctors practiced in the town at that time but by the early twentieth century the town's most prominent physician and certainly longest-lived, came to be Dr. John William Morris.

Dr. Morris was born in 1875 in Honey Hill, AR, west of Searcy. He began his higher education at Searcy College and then attended The University of Nashville, Tennessee, where he graduated from medical school in 1900. After graduation he moved to DeView, AR, two miles south of McCrory, where he took over the practice of the local physician, Dr. Lumpkin. A year later he married Amma Burkett of DeView. Once the

<sup>1</sup> Vernon Paysinger, "The McCrory Family in McCrory," *River and Roads and Points in Between*, Vol. XI, 1, (Winter 1983), pp. 2-12.

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railroad came to McCrory there was a general migration of businesses and residents away from DeView. However, Dr. Morris and his wife stayed there until 1922 when they also moved to McCrory. Morris and his wife constructed the first brick home in town on East Raney Avenue. The couple had two children, Gerald and Minnie.

When Morris first came to DeView window screens were not in use so malaria was a constant ailment. He started a local campaign to persuade people to utilize screens and netting. His initial rounds were made on horseback and he covered dozens of miles a day over a seven-day work week. Dr. Morris was the first to get an automobile in the county, which aided in his rounds and enabled him to see more people and get to them easier. Some surgery procedures could not be performed at the office or in the patient's home so Morris would put the patient on the train and accompany them in the baggage car to the hospital then bring them back.

He opened his first office in a drug store in downtown McCrory, which was destroyed by fire. His practice was moved twice until he constructed the Dr. John William Morris Clinic in 1936 at 118 West Main Street, one block east of AR Highway 145. When it was opened it was hailed as the best and most modern clinic in the county. The clinic contained four beds and two examination rooms. In 1971, Morris said, "I didn't want to turn it into a dadburned hospital. That would have kept me from getting out to make my appointed rounds and see my people."

Dr. Morris' compassion for the ailing citizens of McCrory did not stop with his practice. The Morris home was opened to patients when the clinic was full and to those

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who came after hours for treatment. The family also allowed transients from the rail cars to sleep in the barn or upstairs at their home. During World War II Dr. Morris was the sole physician in an area including Wynne, Augusta, Cotton Plant and Newport. His community service included assisting local children through school and serving as a Mason, president of the Rotary Club, president of the Woodruff County Medical Society and a steward in the Methodist Church. Besides his medical practice he held ginning interests and was one of the county's largest cattle owners. His use of purebred sires introduced improved local livestock.<sup>2</sup>

On February 6, 1950, McCrory held a citywide celebration to honor Dr. Morris on his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday and to recognize his fifty years of medical service. All businesses in town were closed for two hours to participate in the festivities. A parade down Edmonds Avenue was led by the high school band followed by Doctor and Mrs. Morris in a buggy. Residents who had been delivered by Dr. Morris and named after him and his wife and children were the next contingent and groups of African American and white schoolchildren completed the troupe. As the parade entered the school grounds birthday salutations to the doctor were extended and the crowd sang "Happy Birthday," while flowers and gifts were presented.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Mary Arwood Miller, "McCrory Honors Its Beloved Dr. Morris," *The Memphis Press-Scimitar*, (February 13, 1950); "Almost Half a Century Helping Folks," *The McCrory Rotary Bulletin*, (February 16, 1943); "After 7,000 Deliveries, Arkansas Doctor, 96, May Be Oldest At Work," *The Arkansas Gazette*, (November 12, 1971).

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Afterward, a program was held in the school auditorium. The next day the Rotary Club honored the doctor and the same week the Elmyra Brown African American School presented a program for him. The chimes at the Methodist Church in McCrory played the doctor's favorite musical numbers over the week and the Belinda Theatre featured the film "The Country Doctor," for two days. As if that were not enough, a large banner and American flags were hung on Edmonds Avenue for the doctor. In that year he was also honored by the University of Tennessee (which was the University of Nashville when he graduated) for his fifty years in practice.<sup>3</sup>

In 1971, Dr. Morris was reported by *Ripley's Believe it or Not* to be the oldest practicing physician in the United States. When he turned 97 he was still seeing patients at his clinic as well as making house calls. Dr. Morris stated that he would go to anyone's house whenever he was needed. His philosophy was that his duty - and the duty of all doctors - was to provide help to their patients in any manner possible. At that time the doctor still performed all medical services for the Missouri Pacific Railroad in Woodruff County.

In an interview with *The Commercial Appeal* he estimated that he had delivered approximately 7,000 babies over his career. At the time there were two families in town that he had attended for 15 births each, including the parents. The doctor's belief was that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Dr. Morris To Be Honored Next Week By Home Folks," *Arkansas Central Leader*, McCrory, AR, (February 2, 1950); "McCrory Region Will Honor Dr. Morris – He Couldn't Quit," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, TN, (February 06, 1950); John William Morris obituary, 1979, Information from scrapbook in possession of Babbie Lovett, McCrory, AR.

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modern physicians prescribed too much medicine and kept them on it even after they were cured. His feeling was that elderly people were subjected to too much hospital treatment, prolonging their lives artificially. "We didn't used to keep people in that kind of misery," he stated. He did think however, that the fact that patients were not waiting to visit the doctor's office until their illness had reached a serious stage was an improvement.

Perhaps because of his own stamina and work ethic even in his late nineties, Morris was of the opinion that retired people should keep busy and find something to do that stimulates their mind. He felt that such activity would keep them from thinking so much about how bad they feel and prevent the onset of debilitation in old age. At age 99 he cut his work week in half so he could go fishing more but he continued to see 10 to 20 patients daily. At that point he no longer performed surgery but continued as a general practitioner.<sup>4</sup>

When Dr. Morris reached the age of 100 he was awarded the Arkansas Certificate of Merit, signed by Governor David Pryor, Secretary of State Kelly Bryant and Representative Joe Peacock. At the ceremony Peacock also presented the doctor with a citation from the Arkansas House of Representatives in honor of his birthday and to recognize his still-active practice of medicine in Woodruff County. His contributions to

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> William Thomas, "Seven Decades of Doctoring," *The Commercial Appeal*, Memphis, TN, (December 19, 1971); "Arkansas Doctor, 99, Still Sees From 10 to 20 Patients Daily," *New York Times*, from scrapbook in the possession of Babbie Lovett, McCrory, AR.

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the health and welfare of the citizens of the county were also recognized. He was still going to work six days a week and had been cited in medical journals as the oldest practicing physician in the nation. National news networks NBC and ABC both came to McCrory that day to film news stories on Dr. Morris.<sup>5</sup>

The doctor finally retired in 1975 at the age of 101. Two years later the McCrory First United Methodist Church honored Morris with a fellowship dinner to acknowledge his many years of service. He also received the Masonic Lodge Service to Mankind Award. In March 1979, the doctor passed away at home, one month after his 104<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>6</sup>

After his death the clinic was used for storage and was later given to his greatgrandson, Paul Lovett, Jr. When Lovett passed away in 2004, the family used the building as storage and office facilities for their company, Farmer's Liquid Fertilizer. Morris's granddaughter Babbie Lovett, and great-granddaughter Deborah Lewis, continue to use the building for business purposes.

The Dr. John William Morris Clinic still presents its original historic appearance with the only alteration being the absence of a porch roof, which was removed because of rot approximately 10 years ago. The parapet of the porch originally hid the flat roof from view anyway so its historic integrity has not been altered. Dr. Morris' circa 1922 Craftsman brick house on E. Raney Avenue still stands in McCrory, but the application

<sup>5</sup> The McCrory Leader, McCrory, AR, (February 13, 1975).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Morris obituary

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of vinyl siding on the gable ends of the home precludes it from individual National Register listing. The clinic best represents the productive life of Dr. Morris as the town's longest-working and most prominent physician.

The town of McCrory, historically an Arkansas Delta cotton town, continues to convey the feel of an early twentieth century agricultural community. The original commercial section of Arkansas Highway 145 is lined with historic brick buildings and large cotton ginning operations are interspersed through the town. The clinic is situated one block west of the highway on the edge of the railroad and a residential section of older homes so its surroundings are still evocative of its 1930s environment.

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dr. John William Morris Clinic is being nominated to the National Register under Criteria B and C with local significance for its connection to Dr. John William Morris and for its Mixed Masonry architecture with Craftsman influence. Dr. Morris was considered an exemplary physician who devoted his life to caring for the people of Woodruff County and McCrory. His service knew no racial boundaries and he worked until the age of 101 because he considered it fun. Dr. Morris said in 1971 at age 96, "Too many doctors nowadays consider a phone call to a nurse or a telephone prescription adequate service for their patients. I never felt that way."<sup>7</sup> This was obvious to the people

<sup>7</sup> "After 7,000 Deliveries."

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of McCrory and the nation as Morris was recognized repeatedly for his caring service that never wavered.

The Dr. John William Morris Clinic was the first stone building constructed in McCrory and was considered state of the art at the time it was built. It exhibits Mixed Masonry and Craftsman architecture but the elements usually composed of brick on such a building are of concrete. The mosaic pattern of the porch floor is also a unique and attractive touch. The interior of the clinic remains original as well, to the extent that the doctor's equipment and furniture are still in place. The Dr. John William Morris Clinic is a symbol of the historic built environment of McCrory and also a reminder of Dr. Morris and his legacy of caring.

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