

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 Hubert and Ionia Furr House

other names/site number DE0292

2. Location

street & number 702 Desoto Avenue ☐ not for publication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
Signature of certifying official/Title

12/15/10
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

Hubert and Ionia Furr House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

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 count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

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.)

N/A

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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial
Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls OTHER: Concrete Block

WOOD: Shingle

roof OTHER: Composition Shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

Hubert and Ionia Furr House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

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.
- ☒ 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.

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 # _____

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

LOCAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1910

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

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:

Hubert and Ionia Furr House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property Less than one.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 666858 3720029
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing
4 _____

☐ 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 Rachel Silva, Preservation Outreach Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date November 9, 2010
street & number 323 Center Street, 1500 Tower Building telephone 501-324-9788
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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 Arkansas State Representative Robert S. Moore, Jr.
street & number P.O. Box 446 telephone 870-877-1210
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

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House at 702 Desoto Avenue in Arkansas City was built in 1910 by local timber man Hubert Furr, and his wife, Ionia. The 1 ½-story house rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation with a partial basement. It is an excellent example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style of architecture in Arkansas City, featuring a rectangular plan with a symmetrical façade and a side-gabled roof with flared eaves and prominent shed dormers on both the front and rear slopes of the roof. The first story features ornamental concrete block construction, and the large side gable ends and dormers are clad in wood shingles. A full-width porch extends across the front façade and is supported by four fluted, Doric columns resting atop a low, ornamental concrete block wall. Each side gable end is decorated with four triangular knee braces and an oval-shaped window surrounded by keystones. A small porch with a hipped roof projects from the center of the home's rear elevation. The southwestern-most portion of this rear porch is enclosed with weatherboard, but according to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, it has been enclosed since at least 1917. The Furr House is also significant because it is the only extant example of ornamental concrete block construction in Arkansas City.

ELABORATION

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House at 702 Desoto Avenue in Arkansas City was built in 1910 by local timber man Hubert Furr, and his wife, Ionia. The 1 ½-story house rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation with a partial basement. It is an excellent example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style of architecture in Arkansas City, featuring a rectangular plan with a symmetrical façade and a side-gabled roof with flared eaves and prominent shed dormers on both the front and rear slopes of the roof. The first story features ornamental concrete block construction, and the large side gable ends and dormers are clad in wood shingles. A full-width porch extends across the front façade and is supported by four fluted, Doric columns resting atop a low, ornamental concrete block wall. Each side gable end is decorated with four triangular knee braces and an oval-shaped window surrounded by keystones. A small porch with a hipped roof projects from the center of the home's rear elevation. The southwestern-most portion of this rear porch is enclosed with weatherboard, but according to Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, it has been enclosed since at least 1917.

Southeast Façade (Front)

The southeast façade (front) is dominated by a dual-pitched roof, which extends out over the full-width front porch at a lower pitch. The roof is covered with synthetic shingles. Two shed dormers are situated on the downward slope of the roof where it begins to flatten out to a lower pitch. The dormers are clad in wood shingles and each is fenestrated by a row of three one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows. A wide, overhanging eave extends out over the porch roof. The front porch is supported by four fluted, Doric columns atop a low, ornamental concrete block wall. This concrete block wall surrounds the porch with the exception of the front entry steps, as the porch floor is about three feet above the ground. Two porch

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columns retain their original capitals, and the other two have been modified or replaced. The original capitals are very simple, but feature a small row of rosettes topped by a small row of acanthus leaves.

The first floor wall of the facade is faced with ornamental concrete block, as is the porch wall. A single-light door surrounded by a transom and sidelights is centered in the front facade. One one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame window with a concrete sill is positioned on either side of the front door. Five concrete steps bounded by low, concrete walls lead up to the front porch from the ground level to provide access to the porch. The small portion of the wall visible below the porch floor is finished in smooth cast concrete and is part of the partial basement.

Northeast Façade (Side)

The northeast façade (side) is a gable end. The upper gable portion of this elevation is clad in wood shingles and features a deeply recessed wall under a widely flaring eave. Four decorative knee braces are positioned under the overhanging eave, and a stationary oval-shaped window surrounded by keystones is centered in the peak of the gable end. This upper gable end portion is also fenestrated by two one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows. The first floor of this elevation is faced with ornamental concrete block fenestrated by two one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows with cast-concrete sills as well as a pair of one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows with a cast-concrete sill on its northernmost end. The partial basement is visible below a single row of smooth-faced concrete block. The lower basement wall is smooth cast-concrete punctuated by three evenly-spaced, stationary, three-pane windows.

Northwest Façade (Rear)

The northwest façade (rear) features a large shed dormer on the downward slope of the roof. The dormer is clad in wood shingles and is fenestrated by two one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows with a smaller one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame window in the center. The first floor of this façade is faced in ornamental concrete block and fenestrated by three one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows with cast-concrete sills and a half-light, wood door. The partial basement is visible below a single row of smooth-faced concrete block. The lower basement is smooth cast concrete punctuated by one stationary, three-pane window near the southwestern-most corner.

A hipped roof porch with widely overhanging eaves is centered on the rear façade. The porch is supported by five square, wood columns. The porch also features a balustrade with turned wooden spindles. A seven-step wooden staircase provides access to the rear porch. The southwestern-most corner of the porch is enclosed with weatherboard and fenestrated by a small one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame window and a half-light, wood door. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps indicate that the southwestern-most corner of the rear porch has been enclosed since at least 1917. The porch rests on a foundation of cast-concrete piers.

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Southwest Façade (Side)

The southwest façade (side) is a gable end. The upper gable portion of this elevation is clad in wood shingles and features a deeply recessed wall under a widely flaring eave. Four decorative knee braces are positioned under the overhanging eave, and a stationary oval-shaped window surrounded by keystones is centered in the peak of the gable end. This upper gable end portion is also fenestrated by two one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows. The first floor of this elevation is faced with ornamental concrete block fenestrated by three one-over-one, double-hung, wood-frame windows with cast-concrete sills. The partial basement is visible below a single row of smooth-faced concrete block. The lower basement wall is smooth cast concrete punctuated by three evenly-spaced, stationary, three-pane windows.

Interior

In addition to the Furr House's unaltered exterior appearance, the home's interior is equally impressive. A set of interior columns is situated in the front entry, which opens up to a central hall with stairs to the second floor. On either side of the central hall are parlors accessed by pocket doors. The house retains its original hardwood floors. Four bedrooms of equal size are located upstairs.

INTEGRITY

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House retains excellent integrity of location, materials, workmanship, and design. It stands as a relatively unaltered example of a 1910 Dutch Colonial Revival-style house faced in ornamental concrete block and wood shingles. The house is located on Desoto Avenue (formally known as Front Street) in Arkansas City and faces the Mississippi River Levee. Although the devastating Mississippi River Flood of 1927 altered the river channel, moving it further to the east away from Arkansas City, one can still imagine the hustle and bustle of river traffic just beyond the front porch of the Furr House in the early twentieth century. Arkansas City remains a small town in the Mississippi River Delta, just as it has since the 1927 Flood. Thus, the Furr House retains its integrity of setting, feeling, and association.

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SUMMARY

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House at 702 Desoto Avenue in Arkansas City, Desha County, Arkansas, was constructed in 1910 by local timber man, Hubert Furr, and his wife, Ionia. The house is architecturally significant in Arkansas City because it is an excellent example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style and the only house faced with ornamental concrete block. For these reasons, the Hubert and Ionia Furr House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance.

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, all encountered Native American tribes in the area during the sixteenth and seventeenth 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.³

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 1837.⁴

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

³ Kathleen DuVal, "Arkansas Post," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture, accessed 23 October 2010; available from <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=3>; Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder, "Desha County," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture, accessed 23 October 2010; available from <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=765#>.

⁴ Schexnayder, "Desha County," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture.

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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.⁵

After Napoleon became the county seat of Desha County in 1843, it rapidly transformed into 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 a "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."⁶ 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. Due to the terrible erosion, the county government was moved in 1874 to Watson.⁷

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 in 1834 the first white settlers of this community, having cleared four acres at the future town site. 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. In 1835 Campbell's overseer, Dr. Oscar Bowles, transported the Campbell slaves to Desha County from Virginia via flatboat. 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.⁸

County leaders located the seat of 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 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.

⁵ Edythe Hobson, "Captain Ben Desha," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1980): 12-14; Schexnayder, "Desha County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

⁶ Steven Teske, "Napoleon," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, accessed 23 October 2010; available from <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>.

⁷ Teske, "Napoleon," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

⁸ Paula Reaves, "Arkansas City," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, accessed 23 October 2010; available from <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=875>; *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890): 998, 1001, 1003, 1009.

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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. Therefore, in 1878 the Little Rock, Mississippi River & Texas Railroad, as the company was then called, relocated the Mississippi River terminus to Arkansas City. This move brought unprecedented prosperity to the community.⁹

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 planning-mill, with a capital of \$18,000; an opera house with a seating capacity of 400; an elevator, several cotton-gins and two hotels.¹⁰

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."¹¹

Henry Thane was a central figure in the growth of Arkansas City. Thane, an entrepreneur born in Germany and raised in Metropolis, Illinois, arrived in Arkansas City in 1876 and soon 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. Thane's 1919 brick Craftsman house, designed by prominent architect Charles L. Thompson, is still extant and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR-listed 12/22/1982). While his former house still stands, all that remains of the Thane Bank Building--once the most prominent structure downtown--is an empty lot. Built about 1890 on the corner of Sprague Street and DeSoto Avenue, this three-story brick building featured a round turret on its northeast corner and served as a symbol of Thane's financial success. It was destroyed by fire in the 1960s.¹²

⁹ C.C. Stuart, "Arkansas City and Its History," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1979): 34-36; *Goodspeed*, 1001

¹⁰ *Goodspeed*, 1003.

¹¹ "Arkansas City--Early Days," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1983): 64-65; Reaves, "Arkansas City," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

¹² Marcia Schnedler, "Arkansas City: Awash in History," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1997): 88-91; Jean Sizemore, Sandra Taylor Smith, and Mary D. Thomas, "Structures in Arkansas Represented by the Charles L. Thompson Design

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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 about 1900 and 1910, remain as the only reminders of the once-thriving downtown commercial district (Arkansas City Commercial Historic District, NR-listed 2/18/1999). Another remnant of the town's bustling past is the ca. 1882 law office of X. O. Pindall, acting governor of Arkansas from 1907 to 1909 (X. O. Pindall Law Office, NR-listed 5/10/1999). Two churches built around the turn of the twentieth century also remain--the First Methodist Church, built in 1888, and the St. Clement's Episcopal Church, built ca. 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 1900 Desha County Courthouse, a two-story brick building with a corner clock tower, is the most prominent building surviving from this time period (Desha County Courthouse, NR-listed 7/12/1976). The Arkansas City High School, constructed in 1910, now serves as the courthouse annex (Arkansas City High School, NR-listed 10/4/1984).¹³

Arkansas City continued to prosper until the devastating Mississippi River 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 March 1958, photos 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 2000.¹⁴

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 documented flood occurred in 1543 on the Mississippi River. Described by Farciliaso de la Vega in his history of the de Soto

Collection--A Thematic Group," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (1982); *Goodspeed*, 1049; Reaves, "Arkansas City," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture.

¹³ Reaves, "Arkansas City," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture.

¹⁴ Matt Dellinger, "Old Man Bridge," *The Oxford American* (Winter 2005); Reaves, "Arkansas City," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture.

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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.¹⁵

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 nineteenth and twentieth 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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 locations 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 Arkansas's 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."¹⁸

¹⁵ Jim Merritt and B. Gill Dishongh, Sr., "The Levee System of Desha County, Arkansas," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1988): 7-25.

¹⁶ Donald Harrington, *Let Us Build Us a City* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1986), 324.

¹⁷ Nancy Hendricks, "Flood of 1927," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, accessed 23 October 2010; available from <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=356>.

¹⁸ Hendricks, "Flood of 1927," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

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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 April 28.¹⁹

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 Missouri Pacific 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 1927. Nearly the entire town had to be rebuilt.²⁰

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.²¹

¹⁹ Clara Saeler, "Flood of '27 Changed Course of Many Lives," *Dumas Clarion*, 14 July 2004, p. 6C; Hendricks, "Flood of 1927," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

²⁰ Agnes W. Ross, "Bayou Bartholomew Had Come to Town," *Dumas Clarion*, 14 July 2004, p. 7C; "Flood Recollections," *Programs of the Desha County Historical Society* (1976): 57; Saeler, "Flood of '27 Changed Course of Many Lives," 14 July 2004.

²¹ Reaves, "Arkansas City," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*; Hendricks, "Flood of 1927," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

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The Hubert and Ionia Furr House

Hubert Furr was born in 1872 in Tennessee and moved to Arkansas City in 1892.²² A special "Historic Edition" of the *Arkansas City Democrat*, published in 1910, included a small section about Hubert Furr as well as a photograph of his house at 702 Desoto Avenue. According to this publication, Furr was known as a "hustling Real Estate and Timber Man of Desha County...[and] one of the best informed men as to timber values in the whole country."²³ Furr purchased valuable timberland, cut the timber to sell for profit, and then sold the cleared land as prime real estate. A civic-minded citizen, Furr never failed to support Desha County.

In 1910 Furr purchased lots 27, 28, and 29, block 7, original town of Arkansas City, from prominent Arkansas City resident Henry Thane. Furr and his wife, Ionia, constructed a Dutch Colonial Revival-style house on the corner lot. Like other local merchants, Lena Lambe and Joe Demarke, Furr decided to use ornamental concrete block on the first floor of his 1 1/2-story house. According to the "Historic Edition" of the *Arkansas City Democrat*, there were three ornamental concrete block houses in the city limits in 1910—the homes of Lena Lambe, Joe Demarke, and Hubert Furr. The Lambe & Demarke firm was a well-respected wholesale and retail liquor distributorship in Arkansas City. Mrs. Lambe and Mr. Demarke's ornamental concrete block homes were lauded as being "magnificent" and "probably the two best residences of the city."²⁴ Hubert Furr's residence was pictured in the publication and described as a "modern and up-to-date dwelling" and a "great credit to this little city."²⁵ James P. Hughes was named as the contractor and builder of the Lambe and Demarke houses, and it is likely that he also built the Furr residence. Hughes owned and operated a successful carpenter shop in Arkansas City, where he planed his own lumber. In 1910 he was considered "by far the leading contractor of the city."²⁶ Unfortunately, the Lambe and Demarke houses are no longer extant. The Furr House is the only ornamental concrete block home remaining in Arkansas City and was locally known as the "gray stone."²⁷ It features "rock face" concrete block, designed to appear like rough-cut stone.

Beginning in the mid-1920s, Furr was delinquent on his property taxes, but he slowly repaid his debts on the house. After Furr's death in 1945, his daughter, Beatrice Furr Tucker, became the administratrix of his estate. The Furr House was sold by his heirs in 1946 to Nilah Shurley and his wife, Louise. The house was briefly owned by R. R. and Kathryn Siever in 1952, before being sold back to the Shurley family in 1953. In 1955 Nilah Shurley sold the house to Ralph W. Inman and his wife, Laura Lee Inman. The Inman family was a

²² FamilySearch, "Hubert Furr," 1880 U.S. Census record; Internet, accessed 4 November 2010, available from http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/frameset_search.asp?PAGE=/eng/search/ancestorsearchresults.asp.

²³ William Downey, ed., "Historic Edition," *Arkansas City Democrat*, 1910, not paginated.

²⁴ William Downey, ed., "Historic Edition," *Arkansas City Democrat*, 1910, not paginated.

²⁵ Downey, ed., "Historic Edition," *Arkansas City Democrat*.

²⁶ Downey, ed., "Historic Edition," *Arkansas City Democrat*.

²⁷ Robert S. Moore, Jr., interview by author, 27 August 2010, Arkansas City, Arkansas.

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well-respected business and farm family in Arkansas City. They operated a restaurant downtown and were active in the community and the church. Inman family descendants remain in the Arkansas City area.²⁸

Arkansas State Representative Robert S. Moore, Jr., acquired the Furr House in 2006. Moore plans to convert the home into a bed and breakfast.

Ornamental Concrete Block

The Furr House is unique because it is the only ornamental concrete block residence in Arkansas City. Ornamental concrete block became a popular building material around the turn of the twentieth century. Ornamental concrete block could be substituted for any use of stone or brick. Its manufacturers touted it as low cost, insulating, and maintenance free. The blocks could be purchased commercially or molded at the building site using special equipment and molds purchased from sources such as Sears, Roebuck and Company. Molds for home use could make one block at a time. Different side panels could be substituted in the molds to make different block designs, or to make corner blocks. Ornamental concrete block had become so popular that in 1917, Sears published a separate specialty catalog of concrete block machinery.

Initially, styles of ornamental concrete block were designed to mimic stone, but the flexibility of concrete soon encouraged the design of a variety of decorative styles. In the early years of ornamental concrete block manufacture, the most popular style was "rock face," which was designed to appear like stone. A small variety of different rock-like textures were available. Second in popularity was "panel face," a flat surface with beveled edges. Mail order house companies offered a limited number of concrete block home designs. From 1911 to 1918, Sears offered six models: three were two-story hipped roof designs, one was a one-story cross gable design, and two were 1 ½ -story side gable models with small dormers. During the same time period, Montgomery Ward also offered four concrete block models.

After 1930, concrete block began to lose popularity. Two factors have been cited in its demise—the rise of modernism and changes in technology. Concrete as a building material did not decline, but sleek, smooth surfaces had become more stylish by 1920. Also at this time, automated machines that had the capability of producing more than one block at a time were available, upstaging antiquated hand-tamped units. Improved block machines and the growth of the concrete industry into new areas of construction brought an end to the use of ornamental face concrete blocks in Arkansas and nationwide.²⁹

²⁸ Youree Title & Abstract Company, Abstract of Title, Lots 27, 28 & 29, Block 7, Original Town of Arkansas City, Arkansas. Prepared for Hubert Furr, Estate, and Nilah Shurley, Arkansas City, Arkansas (1956); Robert S. Moore, Jr., interview by author.

²⁹ Darcy Baskin and Sara Drew, Sarah Jampole Marks, ed., "Hanger Hill Historic District, Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2007).

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Dutch Colonial Revival

Dutch Colonial Revival-style architecture is a sub-type of the Colonial Revival style and takes its name from the Dutch colonists who settled in the northeastern United States in the 1700s. They typically constructed 1 or 1 ½-story rectangular, symmetrical houses with side-gabled or side-gambrelled roofs, dormers, and flared eaves. As the style became more popular and spread across the U.S. between 1890 and 1930, more distinctly Colonial Revival-style elements were added, such as front porches and accentuated front doors with transom windows or sidelights.³⁰

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House exhibits several characteristics of the Dutch Colonial Revival style of architecture in its 1 ½-story, rectangular form with a symmetrical layout. The house features a side-gabled roof with two shed dormers on the downward front slope as well as one large shed dormer on the downward rear slope. Flared eaves, especially evident in the side gable ends, add architectural significance to the house. On the house's front façade, the roof extends out over a full-width front porch supported by four fluted, Doric columns atop a low, ornamental concrete block wall. This concrete block wall surrounds the porch with the exception of the front entry steps, as the porch floor is elevated about three feet above the ground. The single-light front door is accentuated by a transom and sidelights.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House at 702 Desoto Avenue in Arkansas City, Desha County, Arkansas, was constructed in 1910 by local timber man, Hubert Furr, and his wife, Ionia. The house is architecturally significant in Arkansas City because it is an excellent example of the Dutch Colonial Revival style and the only house faced with ornamental concrete block. For these reasons, the Hubert and Ionia Furr House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C with local significance.

³⁰ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1984): 112-119; Antique Home, "Colonial Revival: Dutch Colonial," Internet; accessed 3 November 2010, available from <http://www.antiquehome.org/Architectural-Style/dutch-colonial.htm>.

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Hubert and Ionia Furr House

Name of Property

Desha County, Arkansas

County and State

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

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Verbal Boundary Description

The Hubert and Ionia Furr House occupies Lots 27, 28, and 29, Block 7, Original Town of Arkansas City, Arkansas.

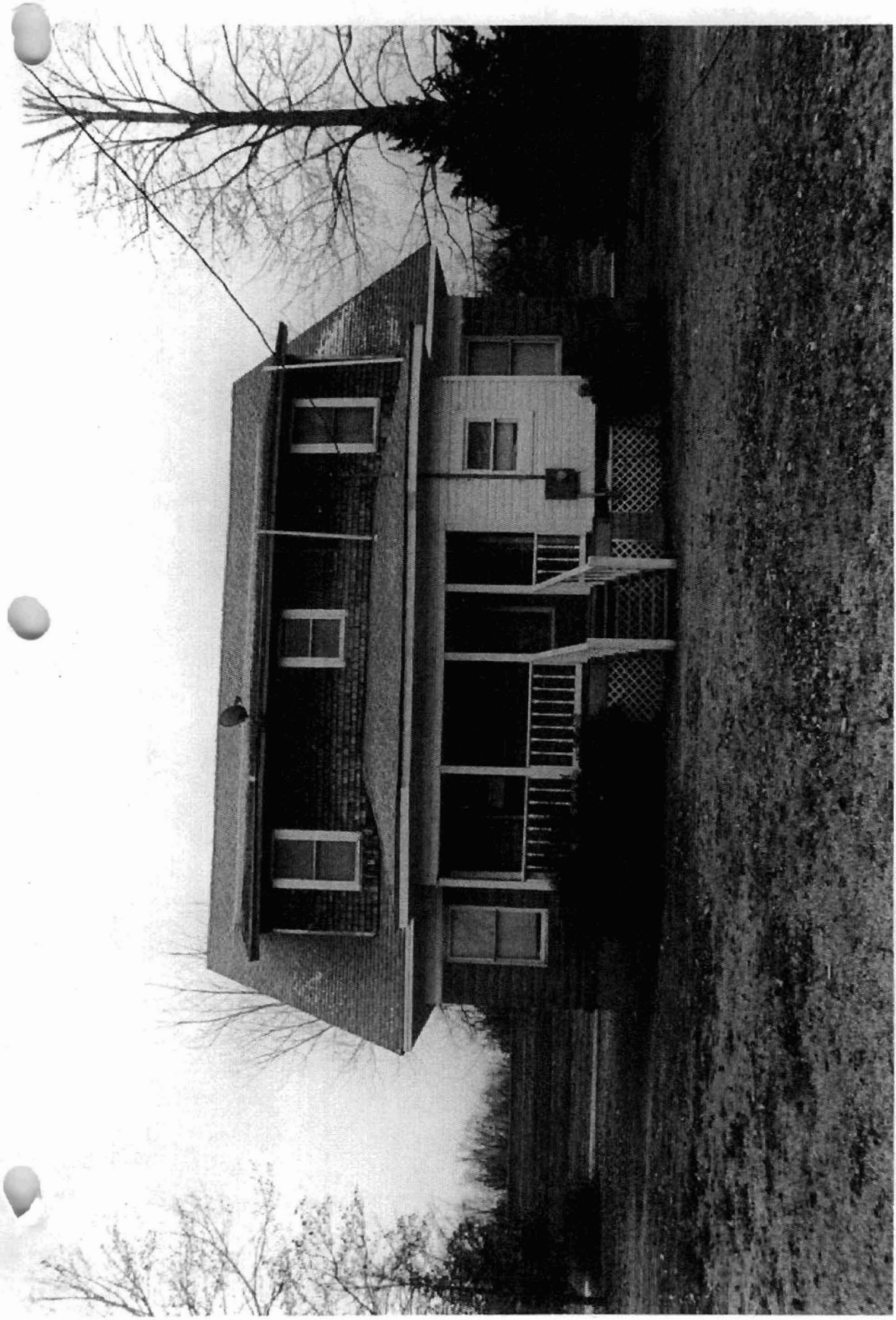
Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the parcel historically associated with the Hubert and Ionia Furr House.











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1751 III

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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(CATF)

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T. 12 S

Hubert and Ida
Furr House

Arkansas City

Desha Co., ARK.

UTM Reference
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T. 13 S
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(ARK.)

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