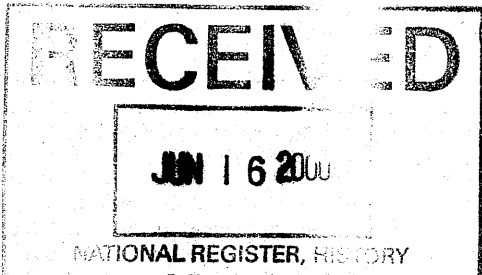


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form



789

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 all items 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 LITTS-DIETER HOUSE

other names/site number 041-0020-0039

2. Location

street & number 702 NORTH CEDAR not for publication

city or town ABILENE vicinity

state KANSAS code KS county DICKINSON code 041 zip code 67410

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard D. Penkatz D-SHPO 5/31/00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

KANSAS STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

7-14-00
Date of Action

LITTS-DIETER HOUSE
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
	2	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

N/A

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)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS: BUNGALOW/CRAFTSMAN

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: LIMESTONE

walls WOOD: SHINGLE

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

LITTS-DIETER HOUSE
Name of Property

DICKINSON COUNTY, KANSAS
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property LESS THAN ONE ACRE

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

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2

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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 NANC SCHOLL

organization CITY OF ABILENE date AUGUST 1999

street & number 813 N. OLIVE STREET telephone _____

city or town ABILENE state KS zip code 67410

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 MARY RUTH DIETER

street & number 702 N. CEDAR telephone _____

city or town ABILENE state KS zip code 67410

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

The Litts-Dieter House at 702 North Cedar in Abilene, Kansas was built in 1910 in the Craftsman style. The house is of wood frame shingle construction with a nearly square plan built upon a concrete foundation. The foundation is veneered with uncut and uncoursed rubble stone. The pitched roof is gabled at the north and south ends. The principal facade faces east.

A textbook example of the style, the house features numerous character-defining elements both inside and out. Regularly coursed wood shingles stained dark brown clad the main body of the house. All exterior masonry is a brown rubble stone. This masonry includes the foundation, a dominant exterior chimney, and massive battered porch piers. The exaggerated irregularity of the stones' size, shape, and placement creates a dramatic textural effect. The roof features unusually wide eaves with exposed square rafters. An east facing shed dormer provides horizontal emphasis as does the front porch with its low-pitched shed roof and expressive structural members. Windows are frequently grouped with as many as five adjacent. Exterior window and door casings are simple and flush but elaborated with wide heads. These extend well past the frames on each side in a manner typical of the California genre. Window sash varies from room to room and includes both double-hung and casement. Most sash is divided by varying numbers of small square panes ranging from 4/1 to 9/1. The front door is a flush oak-veneered slab pierced with 12 square glass panes. The roof is covered by asphalt shingles but was originally wood-shingle. The exterior utilizes structure, both physical and implied, in lieu of conventional applied ornament to achieve its character.

The east (principal) facade is symmetrically composed and dominated by a deep porch extending the entire width of the house. The center section of this porch is covered by a low-pitched shed roof. The roof is supported by battered stone piers which actually project through it; they are finished with shallow concrete caps. These piers are in turn pierced by wood beams in each direction which support the porch roof. Uncovered areas of the porch flank this section and are defined by short but massive piers at each corner. These rise to balustrade height and also have shallow concrete caps. Originally without balustrade or rail, portions of this porch now have a modern decorative white wrought iron railing.

The south facade is asymmetrically composed and dominated by a towering rubble chimney. This chimney is quite wide at the base and narrows at each weathering to end in a nearly square stack. It pierces the eave above to extend several more feet. The chimney is flanked by two windows, to the east a pair and to the west a tripartite arrangement. The west end of the south facade juts slightly in a gabled projection aligning with the western slope of the main roof. A bank of five windows is centered in this wall. Three adjacent windows are centered in the gable at the second floor. Both south side gables are heavily articulated with exposed square rafters below the eaves. These rafters extend well past the edge of the roof and create a pronounced rhythm, which is decorative in effect.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

The north facade is also characterized by an asymmetrical arrangement of windows including a projecting square bay with leaded glass sash. The asymmetry was originally more pronounced on this elevation as the west end of the first floor began as a recessed service porch. This area was enclosed in the 1960s during a kitchen remodeling and the void was infilled with a wood shingled wall flush with the north wall plane. A horizontally oriented window in this area lacks the wide casing characteristic of original windows. Other detailing is consistent with that of the south facade.

The west facade implies symmetry but subtle variations in fenestration fail to maintain it. A door roughly centered at ground level provides access to the basement and kitchen. This area is flanked by rooms projecting from the main body at each end of the elevation, each with a west-sloping shed roof. A shed dormer centered in the main roof above illuminates the stairwell to the second floor.

The interior maintains the Craftsman character in its plan and finishes. The centered front door opens into a surprisingly shallow and unusually wide foyer. Door and window casings are oak, they are plain. Baseboards are similarly plain but have a slightly tapered upper third. Floors throughout are tongue and groove oak.

The northern half of a massive oak colonnade (or cased opening) is directly opposite the front door. It consists of two full height square columns supporting a full-width header above. The area between these two columns is filled with a flush oak partition extending to a height of approximately six feet. This arrangement is mirrored on the south end. A decorative arts and crafts pendant lamp hangs between the columns at each end. This opening serves to define the entry from the living room beyond but is so open that the two seem to merge. The living room features a rustic fireplace centered in the south wall. Its masonry matches that of the exterior, and it has a hearth of green ceramic tile. Pendant Arts and Crafts light fixtures inspired by Tiffany hang from each end of the living room; unfortunately they lack their original shades.

At the north end of the foyer a door opens into a first floor bedroom. Woodwork in this room is of pine. This room originally contained a built-in Murphy bed that could be pulled out of the wall. The bed and niche were removed to facilitate a bathroom enlargement but the extra-wide Murphy door remains. A door in the west wall of this room leads to a closet between the bedroom and dining room. The north end of this closet has been converted to a bathroom.

The west end of the living room's north wall contains a cased opening to the dining room. This room contains several dominant features, another Tiffany inspired Arts and Crafts pendant lamp with five iridescent art glass shades and an oak housing. The dining room ceiling is fitted with boxed oak beams. The north wall has a slightly projecting square bay with high leaded glass sash. A built-in oak buffet on the west wall once connected to the kitchen. It has leaded glass doors above. To the south of this buffet a swinging slab oak door opens into the kitchen.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

The kitchen was completely remodeled in the 1960s and retains virtually nothing of the original plan. As originally built, the kitchen was smaller and compartmentalized with a service porch for deliveries in the northwest corner. This area was enclosed during the remodeling and incorporated into the kitchen. A subtle French Provincial theme is carried out in the maple millwork and cabinetry. Appliances and countertops are aqua and capture the feel of the ideal mid-20th century luxury kitchen. Walls are clad in vertically grooved wood paneling and the floor is covered in a patterned wall-to-wall carpet. An original door leads to the basement stair hall and access to the outside. The kitchen side of the dining room's swinging door has applied molding which mimics the French paneled profile of cabinet doors. The kitchen is also accessible from a small central hallway near the back of the house.

A hall opens to the living room, kitchen, an enclosed stair to the second floor, a full bathroom, the master bedroom, and a spacious linen closet. The woodwork in this area has been painted. The master bedroom boasts two closets and abundant windows including a bank of five casements. The bathroom is finished with ceramic tile. The door to the stairwell is glazed with translucent patterned glass to allow "borrowed" light from the second floor to illuminate the hall.

The second floor was originally an unfinished attic equipped with four spacious storage closets. The attic was recently finished as a large bedroom and retains its four closets. An additional full bath was added above the first floor bath.

The basement is unfinished and has an unusually high ceiling. It provides ample storage and laundry functions.

Of special note is the garage, which is picturesque and carries out the Craftsman theme. It is built entirely of stone rubble matching that of the house and has a pitched roof. It is located in the northwest corner of the lot. The east and west ends are gabled; each has a garage door opening for both street and alley access. Although a contemporary overhead door has been installed in the east end, the west still retains its original folding doors. Each garage door has a full-width transom sash above. The interior of the garage is finished and boasts an enclosed toilet and wall-hung sink which are original. The south elevation has a glazed door and a window overlooking the side yard.

The property is bordered on the south by a low wall of rubble stone. Together the house, garage, and wall create a well-planned whole and they express the ideas promoted by the Arts and Crafts movement. Both house and grounds are well maintained and in a good state of preservation. While other houses in Abilene have an Arts and Crafts influence, none approach the Litts-Dieter House in sophistication or purity of style.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

The Litts-Dieter House (1910) is being nominated to the National Register under criteria B for its association with Abilene businessman Harry C. Litts (1867- 1929) and for its architectural significance as an example of a Craftsman style bungalow.

The Craftsman-style bungalow house built in 1910 by Harry C. and Florence Litts is a home of special architectural interest because it incorporates many of the hallmarks of the Arts and Crafts movement. Natural woodwork, built in cupboards and cabinets, natural rock and stone were all included in the Litts' home, which was designed by a California architect. Stone from Manchester, Kansas, was used for the foundation; stonework also marks the front and around the house, the fireplace and the garage. The exterior of the local landmark remains virtually unchanged since its construction. The interior has been renovated but the basic structure remains the same.

A textbook example of the Craftsman style, the house features numerous character-defining elements both inside and out. The house is of wood frame shingle construction with a nearly square plan built upon a concrete foundation. The foundation is veneered with uncut and uncoursed rubble stone. The pitched roof is gabled at the north and south ends. Regularly coursed wood shingles stained dark brown clad the main body of the house. All exterior masonry is a brown rubble stone. This masonry includes the foundation, a dominant exterior chimney, and massive battered porch piers. The exaggerated irregularity of the stones' size, shape, and placement creates a dramatic textural effect. The roof features unusually wide eaves with exposed square rafters. An east facing shed dormer provides horizontal emphasis as does the front porch with its low-pitched shed roof and expressive structural members. Windows are frequently grouped with as many as five adjacent. Exterior window and door casings are simple and flush but elaborated with wide heads. These extend well past the frames on each side in a manner typical of the California genre.

Harry C. Litts, born May 15, 1867 in Ransom, Pennsylvania, came to Dickinson County in 1871 at the age of 4 with his parents, from New York. He worked on a farm, and, in 1881, when he was 14 years old, beginning at \$1.50 a week at Sterl & Zahner clothing store. He also served in the Kansas National Guard as a Private in Company D, of the Fourth Regiment, and received an Honorable Discharge on January 3 1889. For nearly 20 years he was with Sterl & Zahner clothing store and its successor, G. C. Sterl & Co., raising to be head salesman and buyer with a wide knowledge of his business.

March 1, 1901 was an important date for Mr. Litts, he opened his downtown clothing store which was located at 306 North West Second Street (between Broadway and Cedar), next to Abilene State Bank (formerly Kirby's Bank). He had the first washroom and closet for customers and the first electric sign in this part of the state, spelling out the word "Litts", according to an article in the Abilene Reflector. In 1906 Mr. Litts did extensive remodeling to his store. As business grew, Mr. Litts became something of a mail order establishment as he was receiving requests for his merchandise from customers outside of Dickinson County.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Mr. Litts was elected President of the Merchants' Association in February 1910. This was an organization of Abilene businessmen who joined together to help with the betterment of the community as well as assist the members in putting their advertising dollars to good use through investigation of the proposed venture before the member participated. Mr. Litts was also a member of the Commercial Club serving on the Reception Committee, and a member of the Abilene Business Men's Association. This association, which had 68 members, was organized for the good of Abilene and had as its object the promotion of progress, extension and betterment of Abilene, increasing trade, encouraging industries and manufactures and everything towards the betterment of the City. Some of the most prominent businessmen in Abilene were members, and the board of managers were A. O. Duckwall, H. C. Litts, J. E. Brewer, C. A. Case, C. M. Troup and G. W. Minick. The officers were H. C. Litts, President; C. L. Brown, Vice President, D. W. Tappan, Secretary; W. M. Sterl.

By the spring of 1915, a few clothiers went to Lawrence and organized the Kansas Retail Clothiers Association. Among the men who signed the Charter for this Association was H. C. Litts of Abilene, Kansas.

Litts sold the store to Howard W. Keel in 1924. Forty-six years later, in 1970, Hines-Roth Inc. purchased the clothing store and reopened it as the first all jeans shop in Abilene, managed by Frank Roth. Charlie Bessey purchased the store five years later.

Mr. Litts was the director of the Citizens Bank in Abilene as well as the Dickinson County Building and Loan Association. He was a charter member of the Kansas State Retail Clothiers Association and a Director of the National Retail Clothiers Association.

In April 1924 Mr. Litts was elected Mayor of Abilene and reelected in April 1927. He ended his political career two years later (May 1929) when he resigned due to illness. Under Mr. Litts terms as Mayor the \$125,000 auditorium and City Hall was dedicated on January 12, 1927. He was also responsible for the building of the Third Street Bridge (Third Street is the main east/west street leading to downtown Abilene) and was responsible for the improvements to the City Park. He was also instrumental in the plans for the construction of the new Union Pacific Passenger Depot, which currently houses the Abilene Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Freight Depot, which is the location for Geske Interiors.

Litts wife, Florence Mac Master came to Dickinson County with her parents in 1879 from New York. She lived on a farm 16 miles south of Abilene and graduated from Abilene High School with the class of 1890. She taught at the Farmington School and in the Lincoln Grad School in Abilene until her marriage to Harry C. Litts on February 7, 1897 in Denver, Colorado. No children were born to this couple. Mr. Litts died December 16, 1929 and Florence died February 1, 1960.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8, 9, 10 Page 3, 1, 1

John Dieter, related to Mrs. Litts on his mother's side, and his wife Mary Ruth Dieter, purchased the home in 1955, and are only the second owners in this home's 89-year history.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

"Abilene, Kansas Past and Present, Progress and Prosperity" published in 1910 by Freeman Publishing Company and printed by Chronicle Print, Abilene, Kansas.

Abilene Reflector Chronicle Newspaper April 21, 1887, April 12, 1888, January 12, 1924, February 1, 1924, February 15 1924, March 11, 1924, November 11, 1924, January 6, 1925, January 7, 1925, January 27, 1925, February 14 1925, May 29, 1925, July 9, 1925, July 31, 1925, August 9, 1925, January 13, 1927, April 6, 1927, May 8, 1927, June 8 1927, July 6, 1927, July 8 1927, February 29, 1928, March 5, 1928, November 11, 1928, December 16, 1929, December 19, 1929, July 16, 1976, February 1, 1990

Dickinson County Historical Society records:

Royer, Paul H. Recollections of Abilene from 1900 to 1909 (approx.) 1975.

Verchler, Stewart. Steward Verchler Newspaper Notes - 1870 - 1909, Vol.

Scrapbook owned by Ruth Dieter (containing dated and undated newspaper clippings).

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is located on Lot 3 and the south 3 feet of Lot 1, Bonebreak Subdivision, City of Abilene, Kansas. The property is bounded on the south by N. E. 7th Street, on the east by North Cedar Street, on the west by the alley, and on the north by adjacent property lines.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary includes the property that is historically associated with the house.