

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	OCT 18 1976
DATE ENTERED	NOV 23 1977

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
 Jesse C. Bickle House  
 AND/OR COMMON  
 The Maples *rh*

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
 411 Crete off 11th St  
 CITY, TOWN  
 Crete  
 STATE  
 Nebraska  
 COUNTY  
 Saline  
 CODE  
 31  
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
 First  
 VICINITY OF  
 First  
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
 Crete Bicentennial Society  
 STREET & NUMBER  
 Box 277  
 CITY, TOWN  
 Crete  
 STATE  
 Nebraska  
 VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
 REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
 County Clerk's Office  
 STREET & NUMBER  
 Saline County Courthouse  
 CITY, TOWN  
 Wilber  
 STATE  
 Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
 DATE  
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
 CITY, TOWN  
 STATE  
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jesse C. Bickle house is located on an 18 acre tract of bottom land south of a bend in the Big Blue River west of Crete, Nebraska. The property includes grass and timbered lands as well as a small section of the Blue River. Structures on the property include the dwelling, a small frame barn and wood framed entrance gate with a sign announcing "The Maples" (see photo #1).

The dwelling is a two story frame tee-shaped structure with a rear (west) kitchen shed addition, the final form of which may have been arrived at by successive additions and alterations. The original dwelling, built ca. 1864 was a one story, two room log house. This log structure was oriented east-west and still supports the ground story of what is now the rear tee extension. Little is known of the original character of the log house. The present basement-cellar under the log portion appears to be original. The walls which support the log are dry-laid local limestone, while the log sill is hewn flat on its bottom side to rest firmly on the foundation. The floor of the log section is supported by large log joists notched into the log sills at the side walls and hewn flat on top to accept the floor boards.

The architectural evidence seems to indicate that the frame portions of the house were built at slightly different times. More intensive research, both architectural and historical, will be needed to determine the facts. This description will hypothesize that the frame sections were built at different times based upon both the plan form of the two sections and the interior and exterior architectural details.

Sometime around the early 1870s (Bickle had a sawmill on his property by 1870) the log house was enlarged slightly to the east and a second floor was added. The resultant form was a simple two story house with a gable roof, central entrance (south) gable, and gable end chimneys. The arrangement of the rooms and location of the stairway has not yet been determined, although the slightly off-center entrance leads to a passage (possibly a stair hall) which ran straight through the house to a door on the north. It seems logical to assume a hypothesis of a basic 3 over 2 or 2 over 2 room arrangement for the dwelling at this time.

By the mid to late 1870s (before 1879), Bickle made a final addition to the house. A new "front" was added on the east and substantial alterations were made to the remainder of the house. This front addition is highly reminiscent of the early I type house common to the prairie states of the Mississippi basin.

(see Continuation Sheet)

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Long and narrow in plan, the tall vertical proportions of the gable ends, the central entrance and stair hall, and the gable end chimneys all relate to the I type house form. The 2 over 2 room arrangement with the central hall and stairway confirms this view.

The final addition to the house also gave Bickle an opportunity to dress the whole house in the prevailing stylistic garb. The gables of the house all (except the west gable) received a highly decorative verge-board in the Gothic mode and the chimneys of the new addition featured semi-elaborate corbeled brick designs which were popular by the 1870s. The hood moldings of the windows reflected the basic pedimented form of the earlier house, but were elaborated with additional moldings and a "flaring" of the pediment beyond the sides of the jamb itself. In its early days, the house also featured an elaborately detailed entrance porch on the east with a walk-out above. Wooden shutters were also used on all of the windows. The house was painted a light color with the verge-boards, corner pilasters, window moldings, shutters and porch trim painted in a dark color. Interior decorative details in this section included plaster molded ceiling medallions.

The house has deteriorated considerably over the years, perhaps most notably on the inside. In later years, the house served as an apartment house which has altered the basic floor plan. For the most part, however, the original plan information may be recoverable, as should some of the interior architectural features. Structurally, the house is in fair to good condition with the major problem appearing in the settlement of the last (or east front) addition. The brick foundation of this portion is in bad condition and has caused considerable problems, especially to the first floor of this section. Exterior alterations include the loss of the south end chimney of the latest addition, damage to the other three chimneys, the loss of the front entrance porch and all of the window shutters. The most recent paintings have been an all white color scheme, however, original colors may be preserved in earlier layers of paint.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1864 - 1870s

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Jesse C. Bickle homestead was patented by President U. S. Grant on September 1, 1869, after Bickle had proved a 5-year residency on his claim. His log cabin, ca. 1864, is now a part of the carpenter Gothic house Bickle completed in the 1870s.

Bickle was born near Coshocton, Ohio in 1820 and farmed in Illinois and Iowa before settling in Nebraska. He filed for a homestead on 160 acres of land along the Big Blue River in Saline County and became the first white settler in the area. His original home was a dugout in the bank of the river, but according to several historical accounts, a flood during his first year of residence forced him to build a cabin higher on the flood plain. Being the first permanent resident, he was named postmaster of the area on August 26, 1868, with the post office to be located in his cabin. He named the post office Crete in honor of his wife's hometown of Crete, Illinois.

In the summer of 1870, Jesse Bickle selected a site on the southern portion of his land and platted a town which he named Blue River City. Later that year the Burlington and Missouri Railroad Town Company chose a site directly adjacent to the north and east of Blue River City and laid out a town which would be on their new railroad line from Lincoln. This town was named Crete after Bickle's post office, as that name followed their plan to alphabetically name the towns along the B & M Line. (Berks Siding and Dorchester had been platted to the east and west of the proposed Crete site). A rivalry developed between the leaders of the two towns and the townsite company was entertaining the idea of relocating Crete, thereby isolating Blue River City from commercial growth. However, a compromise was reached and Blue River City and Crete were combined by an act of the Nebraska Legislature under the name of Crete before the first regular train came through June 12, 1871.

In addition to being a founding father of the community, Bickle was actively involved in the social life of the county. An account in Andreas' History of Nebraska, 1882, tells of a 4th of July party held in 1870 to celebrate the completion of

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 18 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	14	671980	4499160	B	14	671980	4498980
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	14	671840	4498980	D	14	671840	4499160

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Janet Jeffries, Historian; D. Murphy, Architect

ORGANIZATION

Nebraska State Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER

1500 "R" Street

CITY OR TOWN

Lincoln

DATE

October, 1976

TELEPHONE

402-432-2793

STATE

Nebraska

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Miriam E. Knott

10/11/76

TITLE

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Robert B. Rettig

DATE

11/23/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

Charles A. Murray

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11.17.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Mr. Bickle's new barn (no longer extant). Over eight hundred people came from distances of thirty to forty miles to join in the festivities.

Jesse Bickle maintained his philanthropic attitude toward the community despite the antagonistic beginnings. In addition to his farming and stock raising activities on the homestead, he served on a committee in 1871 which investigated the possibility of the incorporation of Crete, a successful venture. In 1872 he opened a brick yard and burned 100,000 bricks that fall. Bickle also owned a general store in Pleasant Hill, then the county seat of Saline County, which was located about nine miles southwest of Crete.

Jesse Bickle's home was quite an attraction in early day Crete. In July of 1876, travelers from Michigan noted the impressive Bickle estate:

"Arriving at Crete on an excessively hot day, and missing the Michigan shade trees, our walks around town were suggestive of their value. Of course we sought out the magnificent fringe of green on the north of the city, where we soon found the Big Blue winding around between borders of stately shade trees of all kinds. Here also we came across a nice house all buried in refreshing green. Nature had tended to the matter on two sides, and the art of man on the others, where were rows of ornamental trees and a fine young orchard. Envy is a mean passion, yet we probably feel something akin to it, when we longed to possess a nest just about like that, or even that--if, etc. We inquired who was the happy owner of that spot. 'That! why that belongs to Mr. Bickle.'" (Saline County News, July 29, 1876)

In 1879 Bickle chose a site on his farm for the location of a community cemetery which was named Riverside. Owned by the city of Crete since the 1920s, it was platted by Bickle, who offered free lots for a time to those who wanted to move their relatives' graves from a nearby unkempt cemetery.

After Jesse Bickle died October 15, 1885, his widow rented out the first floor of their home. The house remained in the family until 1923 when Milton O. Smith purchased 18 acres of the property including the house. Smith operated an amusement park

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on the grounds and lived in the house. He named the acreage "The Maples", a name still commonly used when referring to the "old white house" nestled in the trees.

The Jesse C. Bickle house stands today as a significant example of Nebraska folk architecture whose facades display, to some extent, the additive nature of its form. Built up over a period of less than ten years, the house developed from its rudimentary log beginnings to a house which displayed considerable architectural refinement. This development, in turn reflects social and economic situations of Mr. Bickle who struggled with the problems of early settlement until his station in life had become substantial enough to found a town and remain one of its strongest supporters. Architecturally the house is both typical in the form and composition of the individual elements, and unique in the overall composition of the final, combined form. This, together with the overall Gothic revival character, especially of the east front section with its tall vertical proportions and steep pitched roof, establishes the dwelling as a significant example of the carpenter Gothic style which enjoyed only limited popularity in the state of Nebraska

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Gregory, Annadora F., Pioneer Days in Crete, Nebraska, State Journal Printing Co., 1937.

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Saline County Land Records, County Clerk's Office, Wilber, Nebraska.

State Vidette, Crete, Nebraska, pp. 5, col. 2, October 15, 1885.

Watkins, Albert, History of Nebraska, Vol. IIIA Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913.

Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780, Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1969.



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Verbal Boundary

**CONTINUATION SHEET** Description ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Commencing at a point 219 feet east and 33 feet north of the Southwest corner of Section Twenty-seven (27) Township Eight (8) North, Range Four (4) east of the 6th P.M., thence north parallel to the west line of said section Twenty-seven (27), a distance of 994 feet to the center of the Big Blue River, thence right 123 degrees, a distance of 133 feet, thence right 33 degrees and 30 minutes, a distance of 270 feet; thence left 20 degrees and 40 minutes, a distance of 120 feet, thence left 42 degrees and 30 minutes, a distance of 120 feet, thence left 51 degrees a distance of 130 feet, thence left 37 degrees a distance of 115 feet, thence right 88 degrees and 30 minutes, a distance of 325.8 feet, thence right 90 degrees, a distance of 16.5 feet, thence left 63 degrees and 40 minutes a distance of 284.5 feet, thence right 63 degrees and 40 minutes a distance of 365.25 feet, thence right 61 degrees, a distance of 600 feet, thence right 30 degrees a distance of 580 feet to the place of beginning, all in said Saline County, Nebraska and containing 16.978 acres, more or less, also described as Lots 19 and 9, being a part of the Southwest Quarter (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the Southwest Quarter (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of Section Twenty-seven (27) Township Eight (8) Range Four (4),

Except a parcel of land described as follows:

Commencing at a point on the southwest corner of Section Twenty-seven (27), Township Eight (8) North, Range Four (4) East, thence easterly along the south line of Section Twenty-seven (27), a distance of 426 feet, thence northerly 90 degrees left a distance of 33 feet to the point of beginning; thence continuing northerly on the same line a distance of 120 feet, thence easterly 90 degrees right a distance of 176 feet, thence southerly 90 degrees right a distance of 40 feet, thence easterly 90 degrees left a distance of 151 feet, thence southerly 90 degrees right a distance of 80 feet, thence westerly 90 degrees right a distance of 327 feet to the place of beginning.