

PH0006737

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: IOWA  
 COUNTY: WAPELLO  
 FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 ENTRY DATE: OCT 1 1974

**1. NAME**  
 COMMON: American Gothic House (Dibble House)  
 AND/OR HISTORIC: Dibble, House  
 House used as model in Grant Wood's painting; 1930

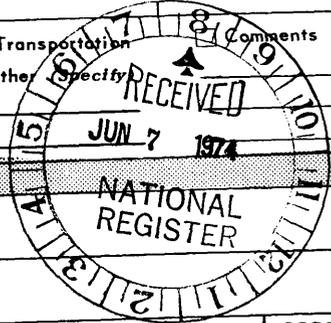
**2. LOCATION**  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Corner Burton & ~~Hearn~~ Gothic Street  
 CITY OR TOWN: Eldon  
 STATE: Iowa  
 CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fourth  
 COUNTY: Wapello  
 CODE: 14  
 CODE: 179

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Specify
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	



**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
 OWNER'S NAME: Carl E. Smith  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 8200 Snowville Road  
 CITY OR TOWN: Cleveland  
 STATE: Ohio  
 CODE: 34

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
 COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Wapello County Courthouse  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Corner Court and Fourth Street  
 CITY OR TOWN: Ottumwa  
 STATE: Iowa  
 CODE: 14

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**  
 TITLE OF SURVEY:  
 DATE OF SURVEY: June 7, 1881  
 Federal  State  County  Local  
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Recorder's Office  
 STREET AND NUMBER: Corner Court and Fourth Street  
 CITY OR TOWN: Ottumwa  
 STATE: Iowa  
 CODE: 14

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: IOWA  
 COUNTY: WAPELLO  
 FOR NPS USE ONLY  
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins
	(Check One)			(Check One)	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The American Gothic House is a one and one-half story L-shaped frame structure with gable roof and two wood porches. Its original portion with stone foundation and board and batten construction is distinguished at each gable end by two Gothic-inspired pointed arch windows. It was the simple curved mullions of these openings that were essential to painter Grant Wood's painting American Gothic (1930). In contrast to this shape, at the first floor level a rectangular double sash opening appears. The full L-shaped front porch (South) has turned posts. And, at the rear (North), a similar porch was added in 1972 to replace a lean-to structure which was removed. Completing the overall L-shape of the building is a post-1900 one story clapboard wing with concrete block foundation extending to the northwest.

On the interior, the American Gothic House remains apparently unaltered. The main block has four rooms and at the northeast corner an enclosed staircase. Wall plaster is of a horsehair, lime and sand composition.

Aside from repainting and some exterior repair work, the American Gothic House remains for the most part in its original condition. Its setting is rural and whereas it once overlooked a railroad stockyards, it now views an open field.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1881-1882

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dibble or American Gothic House served as the model for the small white frame building which appeared in the background of American painter Grant Wood's painting American Gothic (1930). A year before his painting which now hangs in the Chicago Art Institute was completed, the Iowa born painter was invited by a Gallery in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to give a sketching exhibition in Eldon which is located in Wapello County south of Cedar Rapids. Apparently Wood's search for the right house with the proper window to appear in his next painting ended upon first sight of this small frame house in Eldon. And, indeed, his faithful rendering of the building in his painting alone testifies to his choice. Wood sketched the window and part of the house on the back of an envelope and upon his return north requested that a photo be provided him as well. The resulting composition with frontal views of two figures dressed in farm attire standing before the frame house reveals how essential the gentle curved mullions of the central window in the house were to the overall composition. A three pronged arrangement of lines is repeated both in the pitchfork held by the male figure and in the seams of that figure's clothing. Also, the arched nature of the window itself is reflected in the elongated oval shapes of the figures' faces.

Although the Dibble House might well be considered a remarkably well preserved document for modern American painting, it was apparently not held in such high esteem architecturally by the painter who succeeded in rendering it. According to contemporary accounts at the time the painting was sold to the Chicago Art Institute where it received terrific critical acclaim, the artist was presenting in American Gothic a comment on the pretentiousness of those who dress a flimsy frame house with an architectural feature that belonged to a previous and perhaps greater age. Further, he wished to show that although the houses may be flimsy and their features pretentious, the people who built them and lived in them were by contrast good and strong.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Wapello County Recorder - Book 5, Page 627  
 Wapello County Auditor - Transfer Books D-307 and I-362  
 Original Jacques Plat. Filed June 7, 1881  
 Darrell Garwood - Artist in Iowa  
 A Life of Grant Wood, New York: W. W. Norton - 1944, page 105  
 PICTURES: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Sunday, January 23, 1972  
 Iowa Motor News - Davenport, Iowa  
 Ottumwa Courier - Ottumwa, Iowa, February 15, 1968  
 Mrs. Earnest Jacobs - Eldon, Iowa 52554. Local Artist  
 Tom Reardon - Eldon, Iowa 52554. Local Senior Barber. Native

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

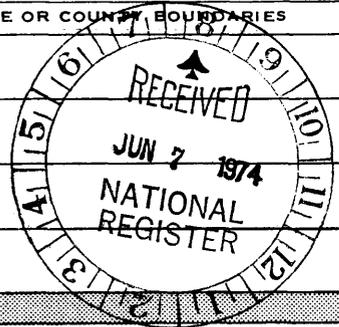
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0 . "	0 . "	0		
NE	0 . "	0 . "	0		
SE	0 . "	0 . "	40	55	17
SW	0 . "	0 . "	92	12	49

UTM  
 15/566230  
 4530140  
 CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: -

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Alvin Harding, Eldon, Iowa. Heritage Committeeman and Director

ORGANIZATION: Wapello County Bicentennial Association, Inc. DATE: February 8, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Ottumwa STATE: Iowa CODE: 14

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Adina D. Anderson

Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date June 3, 1974

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

Alvin Harding  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 10/6/74

ATTEST:

Charles H. Hays  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 7.18.74

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE IOWA	
COUNTY WAPELLO	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER OCT 1	1974 <sup>E</sup>

(Number all entries)

8. Significance Continued

Presently unoccupied the Dibble House is nonetheless well preserved due to the efforts of local Grant Wood enthusiasts and the owner.

OWNERSHIP

Lot 14 on which the Dibble House stands was platted in 1881 by W. H. C. Jaques and deeded shortly thereafter to Catherine B. and Charles A. Dibble. In December of 1881 a mortgage was placed on the property and it is believed that it was at this time that the house was constructed. In 1897 under the ownership of H. B. Jones and E. P. Forest Howard, the building became a candy and novelty shop. In 1939 when Grant Wood visited Eldon the property was owned and maintained by one, Gideon Jones.



8/12/90

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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Dibble House          Wapello County, IOWA

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION APPROVAL

*Alton Byers* 8/23/90  
*for keeper*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**RECEIVED**  
AUG 13 1990  
**NATIONAL  
REGISTER**

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

CFN-259-1116

Dibble House (Geographical Data Correction)  
Eldon  
Wapello County  
Iowa

The Latitude and Longitude coordinates on the original nomination are in error. The Geographical information should be replaced with the following (this is merely a correction and does not increase or decrease the boundaries of this property in any way):

### UTM References

A. 15 566215 4530135

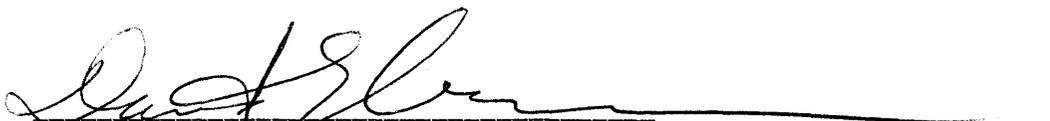
### Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 14, Jaques Addition, City of Eldon, Iowa

### Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the house.

I certify that the above information is accurate and I agree with these revisions.

  
David E. Crosson, State Historic Preservation Officer