

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 30 1987

date entered MAY 29 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Dixie Plantation House

and or common same

2. Location

street & number LA 182, about one mile southeast of Franklin N/A not for publication

city, town Franklin X vicinity of

state Louisiana code 22 parish county St. Mary code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Langfitt B. Wilby

street & number Dixie Plantation HC 60, Box 23D

city, town Franklin X vicinity of state LA 70538

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. St. Mary Parish Courthouse

street & number Main Street (no specific address) P. O. Box 1231

city, town Franklin state LA 70538

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title LA Historic Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_X no

date 1982 \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_X state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Louisiana State Historic Preservation Office

city, town Baton Rouge state LA

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____ N/A _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

### **Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

Dixie (c.1845) is a two-story frame Greek Revival plantation house located on Bayou Teche in a rural setting near the town of Franklin. Despite some alterations, the house retains its National Register eligibility.

According to family history, the house existed in 1844 when the Wilkins family bought it from the Carline family. However, some of the moldings indicate a date closer to 1850. But speculation of this kind is largely immaterial because Dixie is significant for its late nineteenth-early twentieth century historical associations.

The house has a central hall plan, two rooms deep, with a hip roof and a colossal pedimented portico. The portico features four slender Doric posts and a lancet arch vent in the tympanum. Other noteworthy architectural features include the six aedicule style mantels, the main staircase which is located in a closet-like space off the central hall, and shoulder molded door and window surrounds on the interior.

Evidently the original rear elevation had a single story gallery surmounted by a promenade deck with a balustrade. Because of subsequent alterations, it is very difficult to tell exactly what the rear originally looked like, but this seems the most likely scenario. Evidently the present second story rear colonnade was added in the late nineteenth century. Around 1900 Dixie stood as a single block without wings. But there was a galleried cottage dependency located a few feet from the north corner of the house. Shortly after 1900 this dependency was incorporated into a side wing, and the gallery was enclosed to form a passageway to the main house. Also about that time a single story wing was added to the other (southeast) side of the house. In addition, a narrow two story "L" wing was added in the rear. Subsequently the north corner wing was extended. Sometime during this spate of renovations, much of the rear gallery of the house was enclosed, the rear gallery staircase and the staircase to the attic were widened, and two of the eight aedicule style mantels were replaced. In 1931 a two-story glazed sleeping porch was added on the side of the house. Since that time the house has been little altered. The only recent alteration has been the screening in of the front portico; however, this is very minor and easily reversible.

### Assessment of Integrity:

Dixie is historically significant for its association with Governor Murphy J. Foster. It was Foster's principal residence from 1883 to his death in 1921, and most of the previously described changes took place during his period of ownership. There is no doubt that he would very easily recognize the house today.

# 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 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 type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1883-1921 **Builder/Architect** Uncertain  
(Foster association)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)** Criterion B

Dixie is of state significance in the area of politics/government because of its long and close association with Murphy J. Foster, a major figure in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Louisiana political history. Foster was a State Senator from 1880-1892, the political head of the 1890-92 anti-lottery movement, Governor from 1892 to 1900, and a United States Senator from 1901-1913. In 1913 he was appointed Collector of Customs for New Orleans by Woodrow Wilson and remained in that position until his death. Foster purchased Dixie in 1883, and it remained his principal residence throughout his political career. He died there June 12, 1921. Of course, given the very nature of his career, Foster's time was divided between his home in Franklin and his political duties in Baton Rouge and Washington and later his New Orleans position. During his two gubernatorial terms a caretaker was left at Dixie, and he left his family there when Congress was in session. During the Collector of Customs period he divided his time between his hometown and New Orleans. Dixie is clearly the Foster property in Louisiana. Any others have remote associations (homes of relatives, places he visited, the Old State Capitol, etc.).

Politics/Government: State Level of Significance

The guiding force behind Murphy J. Foster's political career was devotion to the Democratic party. He "cut his teeth" on Reconstruction politics and fought tenaciously then and thereafter to assure the party's supremacy. Although by all accounts personally honest (a rarity for the period), Foster used whatever means at his disposal, including vote fraud and disfranchisement, to assure the success of the "Democracy."

Foster's twelve years in the State Senate were fairly typical and uneventful. In hindsight, his introduction of an anti-lottery bill in 1884 marks the beginning of probably the greatest fight of his political career, that waged against the infamous Louisiana Lottery Company. The company had been incorporated by act of the 1868 legislature and given a twenty-five year monopoly on the sale of tickets in Louisiana in return for a \$40,000 per year fee to the state. A phenomenal financial success, the lottery and its "boodle" almost controlled Louisiana during its existence. The company's corruptive influence permeated state politics. In addition to having Louisiana in its grip, the lottery exerted a nationwide influence. Tickets were sold by mail throughout the United States, and more than ninety percent of the proceeds came from outside Louisiana. Because the lottery company was incorporated into the state constitution of 1879, it would have to be rechartered by constitutional amendment. Although the company's charter would not expire until 1894, the lottery's head, John A. Morris, decided to submit his recharter proposal in 1890. This time round the yearly fee to the state was a staggering \$1,250,000. The scene of the bitterly waged "recharter fight" was the 1890 legislative session,

CONTINUED

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property @ 4½ acres

Quadrangle name Centerville, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	6	4	6	1	2	0	3	2	9	4	6	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to enclosed property plat map. Boundaries follow property lines to encompass the house and its setting.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title National Register Staff  
Division of Historic Preservation ASSISTED BY OWNER

organization State of Louisiana date March 1987

street & number P. O. Box 44247 telephone (504) 922-0358


city or town Baton Rouge state LA 70804

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national X state \_\_\_ local

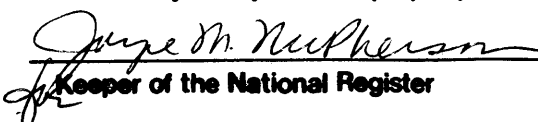
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature   
Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer date April 20, 1987

### For NPS use only

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

  
Keeper of the National Register date 5-29-87

Attest: Chief of Registration date

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

Continuation sheet Dixie, St. Mary Parish, LA Item number 8

Page 1

## 8. Significance (cont'd)

with State Senator Murphy J. Foster as leader of the "antis." Despite determined opposition, the recharter bill passed, and was to be voted upon by the electorate in the general election of 1892.

The lottery recharter was clearly the only issue in the 1892 gubernatorial race, one of the most divisive and hotly contested elections in Louisiana political history. The campaign actually began in earnest right after the 1890 legislative session with the formation of the Anti-Lottery League and the opposing Progressive League. The anti-lottery Democratic candidate was Foster, the champion par excellence of the cause. The "antis" pictured the fight to end the lottery as a moral crusade--a battle between the forces of good (themselves) and the forces of evil (lotteryites). Foster, or as he was frequently called, the "Saint from St. Mary," was given an almost Christ-like image as he did battle against the forces of Satan.

There is no question that the anti-lottery crusade was a major reform movement in Louisiana history; however, it was an 1890 act of Congress denying lotteries the use of the United States mail that killed the Louisiana Lottery Company. This act was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in February 1892 and the lottery immediately withdrew its recharter bid. The Foster ticket was declared victorious at the polls in April in an election that was clearly fraudulent.

Easily the most important concern of the two-term Foster administration was permanently squelching any opposition to the Democratic party through disfranchisement. The targets were the constituencies of the Republican and Populist parties (blacks and poor whites). Foster began pushing for disfranchisement early in his first term, and it is clearly something he was personally behind, rather than something that happened to occur during his administration. Instead of "counting out" the opposition, as had been done in the "stolen" elections of 1888, 1892, and 1896, Louisiana Democrats decided to simply rid themselves of the problem. Foster urged the convening of a constitutional convention to adopt suffrage restrictions. It was imperative, he explained, that "the mass of ignorance, vice and venality without any proprietary interest in the state" be totally disfranchised. On another occasion, Foster defended his position by emotionally pleading for the erection of "a more lasting and enduring monument to their /the Confederate veterans/ memory than marble, granite and bronze by engrafting on the organic law of the State the great and imperishable principle for which they fought and struggled, that the intelligence, the virtue and the manhood of the Caucasian shall preside over and rule the destinies of the state for generations to come, and thus attest that those who have suffered for the cause and gone before have not fought and died in vain."

The constitutional convention that convened in 1898 was aptly described by its president as "little more than a family gathering of the Democratic party of the State of Louisiana." The convention's work consisted of tacking property and literacy requirements for voting onto the 1879 constitution. No longer would the so-called "Bourbons" have to steal elections, for virtually no one could vote but themselves. As historian William Ivy Hair concluded: "Bourbonism once again ruled serenely. The Negro had been removed as a direct political factor. White agrarianism had seemingly been crushed." Although disfranchisement was a decidedly

CONTINUED

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Dixie, St. Mary Parish, LA Item number 8

Page 2

8. Significance (cont'd)

negative "accomplishment" and is something to be condemned today, it was certainly of immense consequence. Its long-range results, namely the end of two-party politics in Louisiana, is a legacy still with the state. In spite of a much stronger Republican party in recent years, Foster would be heartened to know that his party is still basically in control.

Upon retiring from the governorship, Foster's political influence was so great that he could pretty much choose his successor. As his biographer writes, all it took was "a mere indication of his preference." The Foster influence was such at the Democratic convention that it gave rise to the standing joke: "When the next convention comes around, they [the delegates] will ask the master from St. Mary [Foster] what his wishes are, and then forward their proxies, and thereby avoid a disagreeable journey to Baton Rouge." The principal issue in the campaign was "Fosterism," or the Foster "dictatorship" as it was often called. The Democratic candidate was accused of being "a shadow of Foster," and it was claimed that his election would mean a continuation of "Fosterism." Needless to say, the Foster candidate won, and Foster relinquished the governor's chair on May 20, 1900. The following day the legislature unanimously elected him to succeed Donelson Caffery to the United States Senate at the expiration of his term March 3, 1901.

As a United States Senator for twelve years, Foster centered his activities upon three major objectives: protecting the Louisiana sugar industry, railroad regulation, and floor control in the Mississippi Valley. He did not attain great notoriety, nor did he even deliver many prepared speeches to the Senate. His most effective work was done in the various committees of which he was a member and in personal contacts. He was a member of the committees of Claims, Commerce, Coast Defense, Enrolled Bills, Military Affairs, Patents, Interstate Commerce, and Appropriations.

Foster was defeated for re-election to the Senate in 1912, and was then appointed Collector of Customs at New Orleans, a position he held from 1913 until his death. For the remainder of his life he divided his time between his native town and his duties in New Orleans. After seventy-two certainly eventful years, Foster died at Dixie on June 12, 1921. The house has remained in the family, and is presently owned by his granddaughter and her husband.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Dixie, St. Mary Parish, LA Item number 9

Page 1

9. Bibliography

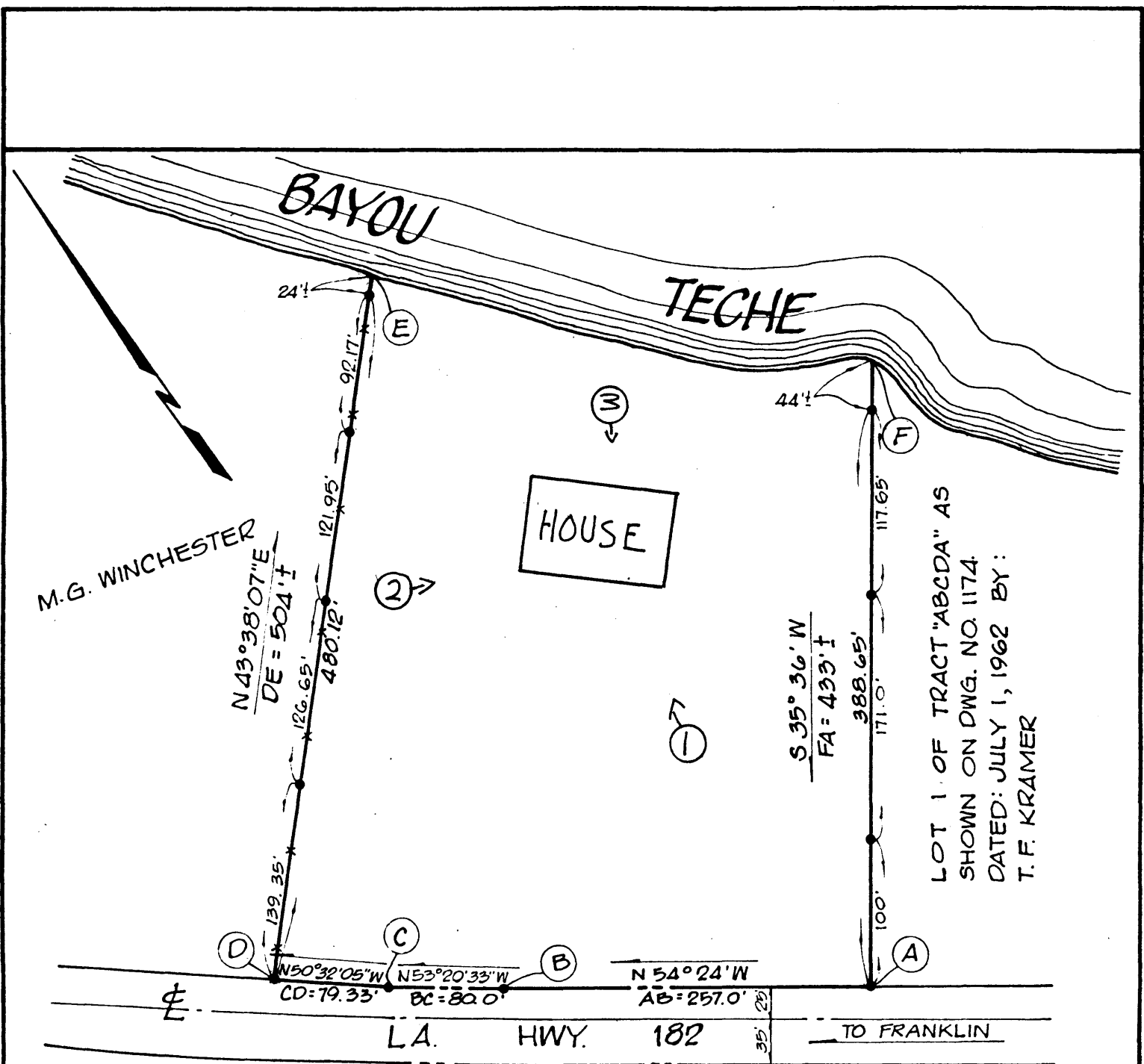
Hair, William Ivy. Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877-1900.  
Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1969.

Drew, Donna. "The Louisiana Election of 1892 Re-examined." Louisiana Studies,  
Summer 1976.

Romero, Sidney James, Jr. "The Political Career of Murphy James Foster."  
Louisiana Historical Quarterly, October 1945. This is a reprint of a  
master's thesis in history, Louisiana State University, 1942.

Interview with Routh Wilby, owner of Dixie and granddaughter of Murphy J. Foster.

Louisiana Historic Structures Survey, St. Mary Parish.



M.G. WINCHESTER

N 43° 38' 07" E  
 DE = 504.1'

S 35° 36' W  
 FA = 433.1'

LOT 1 OF TRACT "ABCDA" AS  
 SHOWN ON DWG. NO. 1174.  
 DATED: JULY 1, 1962 BY:  
 T. F. KRAMER

# PLAN OF LAND SHOWING HOME SITE OF DIXIE PLANTATION

BEING TRACT "ABCDEF A"  
 SITUATED IN: WARD 3, T 155-R 10 E  
 ST. MARY PARISH, LA.

MILLER ENGINEERS AND ASSOC., INC.  
 ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS  
 FRANKLIN, LOUISIANA

SCALE: 1" = 100'  
 BOUNDARY HIGHLIGHTED \_\_\_\_\_  
 DWG. NO. 7106

*Robert E. Miller, Jr.*  
 ROBERT E. MILLER, JR. L.S. NO. 2685  
 JUNE 12, 1985