

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 15 1986

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Dickerson Site (22-Co-502)

and or common N/A

2. Location

street & number [redacted]  not for publication

city, town [redacted]

state [redacted]

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 Sidney D. Sessions

street & number Box 3

city, town Friars Point  vicinity of state Mississippi 38631

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Chancery Clerk  
Coahoma County Courthouse

street & number First Street

city, town Clarksdale state Mississippi

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Lower Mississippi Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1940-1947  private  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Peabody Museum, Harvard University

city, town Cambridge state Massachusetts

## 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 N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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

The Dickerson site was first investigated by Col.P.W.Norris, probably about 1882. From his original handwritten notes, an edited report was published by Cyrus Thomas (1894:255-256). This brief description was quoted in its entirety by Brown (1926:107-108), who had never visited the site. The description given by Thomas (1894:255-256) is as follows:

On the Dickerson farm, [redacted] is another interesting group of mounds.

[redacted] There is no inclosure, but several fields of the farm are literally strewn with stone chips and fragments of ancient pottery, and upon long oval hillocks are found numerous fragments of human bones.

[redacted]; yet the mounds are mostly oblong or oval or flat on top, like those found on the bottoms subject to overflows. They are built as usual of the material from adjacent ground, which, being gravel instead of clay or mud, rendered the outlines of the beds of burned clay distributed through them more distinct than usual. Most of them seem to have been the sites of dwellings, the same as those upon the bottoms; yet on the intermediate areas are saucer-shaped depressions, indicating that the earth lodge so common farther north had been in use here.

Of the numerous mounds explored only one was found to be a true cemetery of the ancient inhabitants. [Norris (1882) dug pits over the 50 by 100 foot surface, along with a 6-8 by 50 foot trench through the center.] This was, as usual, one of the least conspicuous of the group. The first tier of skeletons was barely covered and the vessels, which are usually a little higher than the skeletons, were broken into fragments, only one whole one [a "basin with an ornamental head" (Norris, 1882)] being found in this tier. The next tier was about 2 feet below the first and the bones more decayed. Relatively fewer vessels were found and these so badly broken that but two bowls were obtained entire. The third tier was 2 feet below the second, or 5 feet from the top, and slightly below the original surface of the ground.

As less than a hundred skeletons were found here, there are doubtless other burying places in this group, but there are so many modern burials in these mounds that it was impossible to sink a pit without disturbing the skeletons of whites and negroes.

There seems to be some discrepancy as to whether the site described above by Thomas is the same as that reported some sixty years later by Phillips, Ford, and Griffin (1951:51), although the latter do not elaborate on the reason for the confusion. They describe Dickerson as a "large village site with conical mound and small mounds" falling into the F-E time range or Early Baytown period (1951:51). What was described by Thomas sounds more like a Mississippian occupation, although Mississippian artifacts are in a minority at the site.

[redacted]

Norris could have confused the direction at the time of his work there. The close proximity of the old Dickerson Cemetery could account for the presence in the area of so large a percentage of historic period burials mentioned by Thomas and Norris.

(see continuation sheet)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input checked="" 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** see Description      **Builder/Architect**      American Indian

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

The Dickerson site is significant in that it has intact, undisturbed midden containing Marksville and Baytown period refuse pits. These pits not only contain period ceramics in large numbers, but large quantities of faunal and possibly floral remains. The potential for socio-economic, subsistence, and paleo-ecological studies is thus quite evident. The presence of a Hopewellian style clay figurine in one pit was mentioned in the site description. Of this, Toth (1977) sees many similarities with Illinois and Ohio Hopewell examples and, based on this and a few scattered other southern specimens, has postulated the introduction of figurines into the Lower Valley "toward the end of the time span allowed for early Marksville phases"(1977:152), possibly accounting for their uneven distribution in early Marksville contexts. Recently a resorting of excavated materials from Dickerson pits has turned up a portion of the head of another figurine from a different pit. The potential for analysis of Hopewellian trade and interaction in a late Early Marksville time frame thus becomes more manifest at the site. Concerning artifacts, especially ceramics, Toth states that "collections from Dickerson are outstanding, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and in working with them one gets the intuitive impression that perhaps Dickerson was the dominant center of the Dorr Phase. If so, its position [redacted] rivers must have been one factor influencing its status within the region (1977:234). Considering the numerous crosshatched rims, with every known variation represented at the site, along with the potential stratigraphy, Toth adds that "the Dickerson collections offer an excellent sample for precise statistical definition of the Marksville rim treatments"(1977:243). Furthermore, says Toth, "full analysis of the collections, particularly the excavated material, will bring the Dorr phase into better focus and begin to add important subsistence data"(1977:245). Thus, the potential importance for both excavated and unexcavated materials in defining this phase is probably greater at Dickerson than at any other site known. Burials are also known to exist on the site (two were removed by amateurs to the Friars Point museum), realizing another entirely different potential for studies in mortuary customs, human osteology and pathology, and possibly even demography during the Marksville period, something practically unknown [redacted]



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Phillips, Ford, and Griffin go on to describe the site as a "large rich village site covering [redacted]

[redacted] 4). Other than the one measurement given by Norris (1882), no dimensions are recorded for any other mounds at the site. The mound described by Norris was apparently rectangular (50 by 100 feet on the surface) and somewhat larger than that mentioned by Phillips, et.al., but the diminished size may have resulted from some sixty intervening years of cultivation.

When the site was viewed by Mississippi Department of Archives & History archaeologists in 1968, there was no distinct mound remaining, although one large knoll appeared to be a mound remnant (see sketch map). The site was visited in the mid-1970s by Toth, who mentions this knoll: "The mound is gone now, but there is a small rise with a large rectangular dark stain around it that may mark the former mound location"(1977:235). This "dark stain" had previously been observed by M.D.A. & H. archaeologists and could possibly coincide with the rectangular configuration of the mound mentioned by Norris.

In his study of Marksville period artifacts, Toth (1977) was particularly interested in the recovery of a Hopewellian style ceramic figurine at Dickerson. In 1970, a group of local Mississippi Archaeological Association amateurs conducted excavations in an area of relatively undisturbed midden just north of the "mound remnant" at a tenant house site (see sketch map). The excavation, reported by Larson (1970), consisted of six 10-foot square units in which dark midden was encountered in the upper levels, gradually becoming lighter until sterile was reached at about 30 inches. Only numerous refuse pits were encountered in these units, mostly unrecognizable except in the lower levels because of the dark, homogeneous midden. In one of these pits was found the figurine, which Toth (1977:150) describes as "the most Hopewellian-Looking of the three Lower Valley specimens." A radiocarbon date of 170 A.D.(UGa-488), collected from charcoal in this same pit, was reported by the M.D.A. & H. (Toth 1977:148). It is thus known that relatively deep midden and undisturbed features still exist on the site, dating from the Marksville and Early Baytown periods. The excavation by no means included this entire midden area, but rather only a small portion of it. Until the present time, the tenant house site has remained undisturbed by cultivation, although a number of mulberry trees have grown up there, undoubtedly creating some root disturbance.

Phillips (1970: Figures 444-447) places the various components of the Dickerson site in the Dorr phase, Marksville period;<sup>1</sup> the Coahoma phase, Baytown period;<sup>2</sup> Peabody phase, Coles Creek period;<sup>3</sup> and the Parchman phase, Mississippi period,<sup>4</sup> but he neither describes the site nor elaborates on its relationship to these phases. Brown did not visit the site during his survey of Mississippi period sites in Coahoma County in 1977, but in his report (1977:13) he briefly mentions Dickerson and gives sherd counts for the few Mississippian pottery types and varieties analyzed from the M.D.A. & H. collection. These types represent a small minority, the major components having been during the Marksville and Baytown periods (Starr 1984:169). In Starr's (1984) synthesis of the Parchman phase, she reviews much of the previously mentioned history of the site and tallies Mississippian sherd counts for both the Lower Mississippi Survey (Peabody Museum) and the M.D.A. & H. collections, but offers no new data on the site's physiography.

(continued)

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There are essentially no "mounds" remaining, although the primary knoll, probably the remnant of the mound mentioned by Phillips, Ford, and Griffin, is still quite prominent and lies within the area of most intense concentration of surface debris (see sketch map). The nominated area has been reduced to ca. 17.9 acres based on the limits of this surface concentration and apparent midden. Peripheral areas within the 40 acres mentioned by Phillips, Ford, and Griffin (1951:314) show only light scatters with no definite continuity of association with the primary area.

Attached to this nomination are copies of two photos taken by the Lower Mississippi Survey around 1941, both views of the mound as it appeared then on its west and southwest sides.

1. 0 - AD 200
2. AD 400 - AD 850
3. AD 850 - AD 1000
4. AD 1000 - AD 1200

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Mississippi  
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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There are other higher elevations seen on the quadrangle map to the north, south, and west of the nominated area, but the surface scatters there are light and not distinctly connected with the nominated acreage.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In any case, the area outlined, primarily the eastern half, contains the heavy concentration of debris and the dark midden.

[REDACTED]