

Arkadelphia's Weber House



Many Clark Countians may recall the structure that once stood at 307 North Sixth Street, known by older locals as the “Weber House.” Believed to have been built in the early 1860s by Rev. J.E. Cobb and his wife Sarah, the home changed hands several times before being purchased in 1879 by its long-time owner, Louis J. Weber. Weber lived in the home with his family until his death in 1919.

Louis J. Weber was born in South Carolina and as a young man worked in Georgia, where he became a close friend of Joel Chandler Harris (known for his “Uncle Remus” stories). Weber served the Confederate Army and came to Arkadelphia in 1874.

He and his brother George opened a dry-goods store at the corner of Johnston and Maddox (Main and Sixth) streets. The frame building was about twenty-five feet wide, faced north, and ran south back to an alley. An awning extended out to the edge of a pressed dirt-and-cinders sidewalk along the building’s entire west side. Later, Louis Weber worked there as a bookkeeper for his brothers-in-law, Bobe and Charlie Thomas, after they began operations in 1893 at the same location in what became known as the “Racket Store.”

Weber served as an elder in the Presbyterian church and was also the Sunday School Superintendent for about thirty years. Civic-minded and popular in town, he became mayor, and was secretary of the local school board for many years.

Built in a style reminiscent of New England saltboxes, Louis Weber’s one-story Greek Revival style house on Sixth Street had high ceilings and tall baseboards. With a low-pitched gable roof and rectangular transom above the front door, the home included a central fireplace framed by a hand-carved mantel. Sill beams were hewn and dowelled, and the original interior walls were made of plaster put onto strips of lathing. Square nails were used throughout the structure. The building included five rooms and a small porch on back, as well as a full-length front veranda. In later years, a kitchen and bathroom were added on both sides of the small porch. The home stood high off the ground for good ventilation and protection from termites. This construction method also allowed for the addition of a kitchen and dining room in the cellar.

In 2005 the building was moved to the historic Washington community in Hempstead County, where it is preserved today. Prior to the move, Dr. Trey Berry, then Director of the Pete Parks Center for Regional Studies at Ouachita Baptist University and now President of Southern Arkansas University, led an archeological study of the site. The home, officially called the “Cobb-Weber House,” had been added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2002 but was removed from the Register in 2006 after its relocation to Hempstead County. Today, the site is a part of the OBU campus.