

APPENDIX A



Little Rock’s Proud Past — Historical and Architectural Development



Overview

With a population of 193,000, Little Rock is Arkansas’s most populous city, the state capital, and the county seat of Pulaski County. The cities of Little Rock, North Little Rock, Conway and Pine Bluff clustered in the center of the state comprise Arkansas’s primary metropolitan corridor, with a total population of 850,000.

The heart of this metropolitan zone is Little Rock, founded on the south bank of the Arkansas River in 1821. Little Rock derived its colorful name from a rock formation on the south bank of the Arkansas called *la Petite Roche* ("the little rock") by French explorers. A landmark for early river traffic, the site became a popular river crossing. The 1830 census listed 527 citizens in Little Rock.

Little Rock grew from a village into a town during the 1830s when the War Department cleared the Arkansas River of hazards, linking it to the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri rivers. During this same decade, the U.S. went to war with Mexico, necessitating a military buildup in Arkansas, and thousands of Native Americans passed through Little Rock on their way west during Indian Removal. Content to build a community around this pass-through traffic of western immigrants, along with state government and steamboat transportation, Little Rock delayed building railroads during the 1840s and 50s. By then the Civil War was rapidly approaching.

In 1861, Arkansas seceded from the Union. The following year, federals occupied the city. Little Rock saw a building boom as Union troops constructed facilities to accommodate an occupying army more than 12,000 strong. Building continued after the war with an infusion of northern capital, and the railroad finally linked Little Rock to Memphis and other cities to the east in 1873 with the building of the Baring Cross bridge spanning the Arkansas. During the final decades of the 19th century, Little Rock's population grew to 38,000. By then multiple-story, brick buildings were replacing the wooden structures of the pre-Civil War era. Meanwhile, the city's residential areas expanded south and west, especially during the early decades of the 20th century when automobiles became commonplace in Little Rock.

With the advent of World War I, Camp Pike was commissioned northwest of the city, infusing the Little Rock economy with vitality. During the 1920s, new construction in Little Rock was dominated by downtown retail buildings rising as high as 14 stories and by civic projects, including two new bridges spanning the Arkansas. Among the many projects of this prosperous era was the new Little Rock High School, widely recognized as one of the most beautiful schools in the country. A second high school for African-American students was built to the east. This separation in educational facilities was reflected in the segregated nature of Little Rock as a whole. For the first half of the 20th Century, the West 9th Street area functioned as an African-American city within a city, with black businesses, churches, banks, and social halls located along the street.

The Great Depression of the 1930s was signaled in Little Rock by the failure of Arkansas's largest financial institution, the American Exchange Trust Company. Prolonged drought killed the farm trade in the state, and by 1932 one in three of the city's residents was out of work. During the mid-1930s federally funded projects provided some relief.

When the U.S. entered World War II, Camp Pike was reactivated as Camp Robinson, and Little Rock expanded to accommodate military personnel. By the war's end, the city's population had reached 100,000 and Little Rock's footprint had expanded farther west and south. This migration was accelerated when developers built Broadmoor Subdivision on the southwest edge of the city. In 1957 two large shopping centers opened to serve this new residential area.

That same year Little Rock drew international media attention as local opposition to the federally mandated integration of Little Rock High School reached fever pitch. The National Guard was called in and a heated drama ensued. Schools were desegregated in 1959. During the early 1960s, civil rights activists staged sit ins in downtown stores; these met with harsh responses from anti-integration forces, but for the most part, Little Rock businesses desegregated in a relatively peaceful fashion. Success with integration allowed the city's developers to return to their plans for expanding the city's western boundaries with more suburbs and shopping centers.

As the suburbs expanded, urban renewal programs did away with many of Little Rock's downtown commercial structures, replacing them with parking lots and high-rise buildings. The character and appearance of downtown changed rapidly. Buildings of 20 and 30 stories transformed the downtown area from a predominately retail center to a district dominated by office space. Commuters drove in for the day and retreated to the suburbs with the afternoon rush hour. In response, the Quapaw Quarter Historic Association was formed in 1964. Utilizing federal tax policies that encourage redevelopment of historically significant structures, the Association led a revival of re-investment in Little Rock's "old town." Initially focused on preserving single structures, the Association has expanded its mission to include preservation of entire neighborhoods. Many Little Rock properties have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Louisiana Purchase through Early Statehood

By 1799, the name Little Rock (*le Petit Rocher*) had begun to appear on the maps of French explorers traveling the frontier west of the Mississippi river. "The Rock" was included in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, but the first settlement near the landmark was not made until the spring of 1812 when a trapper named William Lewis built a cabin on the bank of the river where the Old Southwest Trail crossed the Arkansas River. The rock formation extending into the river created a natural harbor for boats. Pine and cypress were plentiful, as were springs of good water. Though the site was promising, the entire Arkansas region lagged behind other states and territories in population, and no one settled Little Rock permanently until 1820.

Arkansas became a territory in 1819. For two years, several locations, the undeveloped Little Rock site among them, were championed as territorial capital town sites. Little Rock was chosen in 1821, in part because two speculators, William Russell and Chester Ashley, compromised their overlapping claims to the site and platted 88 square blocks south of the Arkansas. This established the city's "old town" area, bound by today's Eleventh Street on the south, Broadway on the west and the old Quapaw Boundary on the east. Half a dozen log buildings were all that marked the new territorial capital, but one of them housed the *Arkansas Gazette*, the territory's only newspaper, which on December 29, 1821 optimistically predicted that "in a few years we shall have the most flourishing and pleasant town west of the Mississippi."

Though located on the Arkansas River, Little Rock was essentially landlocked for three seasons of the year. Only in spring did the slow, sluggish current of the Arkansas rise high enough and run fast enough to clear its channel of driftwood, snags and sandbars. Just four miles south of Little Rock, the river bent sharply to the southwest creating a rough stretch of water dubbed Dog Tooth Bar by steamboat crews. Steamboats routinely unloaded cargo at the bar and goods were transported overland to Little Rock. Insurance rates for vessels traveling the Arkansas were among the highest in the nation. As a result, the cost of trade and consumer goods was often double what those goods cost in other towns along the western frontier. Not even mail service could be depended on. During the 1820s, the settlement often went an entire winter without mail. While Little Rock was the region's leading community from the first year it was founded, the capital city remained little more than a village. The town boasted about 60 buildings, mostly log but a handful of them brick or frame. The town had a reputation as a rough area, making it less than appealing to traditional settlers and families. Geologist George Featherstonehaugh, passing through the area in the mid-1820s noted that rough individuals admired Arkansas "on account of the very gentle and tolerant state of public opinion which prevailed there in regard to such fundamental points as religion, morals and property."

In 1831, a decade after the first Anglo settlers built their cabins there, Little Rock incorporated as a town, but numbered fewer than 1,500 people contained within a 12-block area stretching south from the river. Typical of the buildings during that era was Jesse Hinderliter's Grog Shop, built in 1826 as a two-story, rough-hewn log structure. The building was Hinderliter's home and business, where he lived with his wife and two slaves until his death in 1834. Today the Hinderliter Grog Shop is the oldest surviving building in Little Rock, and may have been the meeting place of the last Territorial Legislature before Arkansas became a state in 1836.



The Hinderliter Grog Shop as it appears today as part of Historic Arkansas Museum. Originally log, the building was later covered with frame siding.

Little Rock as Western Frontier Town

Growth came to Little Rock with the opening of the Arkansas River in 1832. That year, President Jackson signed a bill authorizing the construction arm of the War Department (soon to become the Corps of Engineers) to clear and maintain a channel on the Arkansas River, thus joining the Arkansas to the Ohio, Mississippi and Missouri Rivers as part of the nation's strategic infrastructure. With reduced hazards and travel time, steamboats docked in greater numbers below the "little rock" on the river. In 1830, it typically had taken a steamer more than two weeks to travel from Little Rock to New Orleans. By 1840, that time had been reduced to four or five days.

At the same time that the river was becoming navigable, the War Department moved to meet two potential threats, making Little Rock a strategic frontier crossroads. The first threat was growing border tension between Mexico and the United States. Mexico adopted a new colonial policy that closed Texas borders and required settlers there to become citizens. The U.S. responded by recommissioning Fort Smith west of Little Rock and by building a 36-acre Army Arsenal in Little Rock. The arsenal was unique in that it had a central Tower Building, named for its octagon tower. Over the next decade, more than thirty buildings were added to the installation, including barracks for enlisted men, officers' quarters, stables, gun repair shops and storage facilities for 100 tons of ordinance. The installation was formally commissioned on June 23, 1838.



The Little Rock Arsenal Building in the 1890s.



The Arsenal Building today.

As a gateway to the western frontier, Little Rock was key to the government’s response to a second threat – the presence of increased numbers of newly removed Native Americans in Oklahoma and beyond. In May of 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, mandating the removal of native tribes east of the Mississippi to new “Indian Territory” carved out of the Louisiana Purchase. Several southeastern tribes — Cherokee, Muscogee Creek, Choctaw, Seminole, Seneca and Chickasaw — all reluctantly traveled the Trail of Tears across Arkansas to present-day Oklahoma. Some 30,000 Native Americans passed through Arkansas, many of them on the southern route (also called Bell’s route) through North Little Rock. Merchants found ways to sell merchandise to the immigrants even as town leaders adopted ordinances to keep them outside the community.

The newly recommissioned Fort Smith placed Army troops between the relocated native peoples and Arkansas' United States residents, and gave Little Rock businessmen access to the federal dollars spent to supply the Army. Throughout the 1830s, Little Rock received traffic destined for Indian country as well as traffic to Mexico, resulting in more than \$100,000 injected into the Arkansas economy during that decade. While the rest of country suffered panic of 1837 and depression for five years, Little Rock was actually growing economically and demographically. With 1,500 people in 1840, the Arkansas capital rivaled Memphis in size.

Little Rock's new buildings during this era illustrated the town's prosperity. In 1833, construction began on the territorial capitol building, the Old State House, the first building in Arkansas constructed with public funds and the first designed by a professional architect. The oldest standing state capitol building west of the Mississippi River, the Old State House was built in the classical Greek Revival style and was originally designed as three separate buildings to house the three branches of government. The central block featured a portico with a massive pediment and Doric columns on both the north and south façades. Construction was well under way by 1836, when Arkansas entered the Union as a slave state. That year, the first session of the Arkansas General Assembly met in the House of Representatives chamber while construction continued around the legislators.



The Old State House, circa 1870.



The Old State House, circa 1930.

The Greek Revival style of the Old State House harmonized with the homes built by well-to-do Little Rock citizens during this era. The early 1840s saw big houses rise in what is now the MacArthur Park Historic District. Notable among these prominent homes was the Pike House, home of lawyer and newspaper editor Albert Pike. Distinguished by six Ionic columns, the house occupied the entire 400 block of 7th street.



The Pike House, constructed circa 1840.



The Absalom Fowler House built in 1840 has Federal elements but echoes the Greek Revival style with Ionic columns supporting the portico.

Two other homes now listed on the National Register survive from the early 1840s: Trapnall Hall and the Curran Hall. Both are located on Capitol Avenue within the MacArthur Park Historic District. Their symmetry of design, with two large rooms on either side of a central hall, is typical of the Greek Revival style.



Built in 1842, Curran Hall is one of Little Rock's best examples of residential Greek Revival architecture.



Trapnall Hall was built in 1843 as the home of early state legislator Frederic Trapnall and his wife, Martha.

As noted previously, Memphis and Little Rock were of roughly equal size in 1840. But by 1850, Little Rock had fallen significantly behind its neighboring city to the east. During that decade, the Memphis population grew to nearly 9,000 while Little Rock remained a city of 2,000. By 1860, the difference was even more pronounced, with the Memphis census revealing more than 20,000 residents and Little Rock not quite 3,800. By 1860, Little Rock's industry was limited to a handful of manufacturers with no national market, including a tanning yard, a foundry, a furniture maker and a slate processing plant. Moving west, the frontier era boom washed over and past Little Rock, leaving the city without significant emerging sources of commerce.

The growing disparity between Memphis and Little Rock had much to do with railroads. Relying on steamboat traffic and pass-through traffic of western migrants, Little Rock failed to invest in railroads. During the 1850s, railroad companies were created, sold and resold due to lack of funding or manipulation of the market. Tracks were planned, but by the end of the 1850s most plans that were made remained unexecuted, and Little Rock's expansion stalled. Meanwhile, Memphis used bonds to build rail lines north, south, east and even west into Arkansas, tapping the agricultural economy of the Mississippi delta.

Also during the 1840s, the federal government moved native groups even farther west, and the war with Mexico ended. Federal troops in Arkansas were redeployed farther west. Fort Smith was all but abandoned and the Little Rock arsenal lapsed into disrepair. Fortunately, river trade continued. In 1858, 317 boats docked at the Little Rock wharf in only six months' time. Wharf fees on vessels were the single greatest source of city revenue and kept the Little Rock treasury in the black until the Civil War. While Little Rock did not grow significantly during the 1850s, progress did continue. Free schools for white boys and girls started in Little Rock in the 1853. Gas lighting arrived in 1860, followed by the telegraph in 1861, just in time to report the early battles of Civil War.

Two simple frame residences, the Kadel Cottages, built in 1850 and 1860 respectively, survive on Tenth Street in the MacArthur Park Historic District. Though modest in size and simple in design, they are among Little Rock's most important antebellum houses because they are the sort of homes—home to a butcher and his family, rather than to a person of wealth—that do not often survive.



The second Kadel Cottage, built in 1860, had decorative brackets under the cottage eaves, a flourish unusual for pre-Civil War Little Rock.



The first Kadel Cottage, built in 1850, is typical of the homes of artisans and professionals in the city before the Civil War.

By 1860, tensions over slavery had grown intense thorough the nation, and Arkansas was no exception. Nearly 110,000 of Arkansas's 435,000 people—one in four—were slaves. They were owned by a relatively small planter class, 12% of the population, who lived in the Delta region of the state southeast of Little Rock. Few of the highland farmers living north and west of the city were slave owners. The natural topography of the state set the wealthy planter class of the lowlands at odds politically with the population of the highlands.

Civil War and Reconstruction

In November of 1860, a contingent of 65 federal soldiers disembarked from a steamboat at the Little Rock wharf, marched ten blocks and occupied the Little Rock Arsenal which had been largely abandoned since the Mexican War. Tensions mounted quickly. Citizens staged anti-Union rallies in several communities across the state. By December the Little Rock population had swelled with self-styled anti-Union militia, assembly members preparing for the state's 13th regular session and delegations from South Carolina and Georgia in Arkansas to lobby for the Confederacy.

In February of 1861, Arkansas voters chose delegates for a convention to consider secession. The convention met in Little Rock on March 4 but, agreeing to reconvene in August, did not vote to secede. That changed in April when President Lincoln called up federal troops after the clash at Fort Sumter. On May 6, the House chamber was packed at the Old State House as the Arkansas Assembly voted to sever ties with the United States of America. Little Rock emptied in 1861 as men left to join the newly formed Arkansas Army, but then filled again in 1862 as more than 1,000 casualties from the Battle of Pea Ridge poured into the city. As the war went on the city swelled with Confederate troops, deserters, unattached officers and people displaced by the war. On September 10, 1863, Union troops skirmished along the north side of the Arkansas River as a diversion, meanwhile putting up a pontoon bridge nine miles south of the city and crossing the Arkansas River. Thus flanking Confederate rifle pits and breastworks, Federal troops occupied Little Rock by afternoon. The city surrendered to Union occupation.



The Old Statehouse during occupation by the Third Minnesota Infantry, 1863-64.

At the time the Union army occupied Little Rock, the city was still made up of mostly wooden structures built along the Markham Street and Main Street axis. Union dollars and planning did much to transform the city as the Quartermaster's Department constructed facilities to house, feed, transport and support 12,000 occupying soldiers. A stable complex west of downtown housed 1000 horses and hundreds of teamsters. The Union Army expanded Arkansas's rail lines, built a number of large warehouses on Commerce Street near the wharf and constructed a 50-bed hospital. Payroll for the Union troops bolstered the local economy, and Little Rock commerce grew. The city itself was bustling: fraternal orders were meeting, theatre performances were frequent and four newspapers were in circulation.

The war brought physical and social upheaval to Arkansas and Little Rock. The state's once-thriving cotton economy collapsed, and thousands of former slaves made their way to the city. By spring of 1864, many African Americans displaced by war had migrated to the vicinity. The provisional government designated a tract of land on the east side of town and another on the southwest side where black people could settle. Blissville, one of the settlements created by Federal authorizes in Little Rock for newly-freed slaves, was located just west of the Old State House. The war and reconstruction radically changed the racial makeup of Little Rock. In 1860, 23% of Little Rock citizens were African American. By 1870, that number had grown to 43%.



This well known drawing by Alfred Waud captures the exuberance of Little Rock's African-American community as the U. S. Colored Troops returned home at the end of the Civil War.

The Civil War ended in 1866, but military rule returned to Little Rock in March of 1867 when the federal government passed the First Reconstruction Act, requiring a new state constitution for Arkansas. Meanwhile, the Fourteenth Amendment granted African American people the right to vote. Hostility towards African Americans and Unionists flared, especially as black voters helped elect new, Republican candidates to government and former Confederates were not permitted to participate in Reconstruction politics.

This conflict became violent in April of 1874 during the “Brooks-Baxter War.” Republican Joseph Brooks seized the Old State House as governor after the courts declared him elected over Elisha Baxter. A cannon dubbed “Lady Baxter” was placed on the lawn of the Old Statehouse, and both sides called up troops. Governor Baxter appealed to President Grant, and U.S. troops were moved from the Little Rock Arsenal to downtown. Two hundred men were killed in the confrontation. In May a special session of the legislature confirmed Baxter as governor, and Brooks withdrew.

Reconstruction also brought an infusion of northern capital accompanied by a building boom. The city's three brick yards ran at capacity during the late 1860s. More than 400 houses were built in 1867, and 200 more in 1869. The peak of building came in 1871 and 1872 when 1200 houses were built. Northern capitalists continued to invest in Little Rock into the 1870s, establishing three new banks to finance the building of new homes south of the river. Key to this investment was the Baring Cross Bridge, completed in 1873, spanning the Arkansas River and providing the final railroad link between Memphis and Little Rock. In 1877, the city's first streetcars began running on Main Street.

During this post-war surge of construction, Little Rock's building style changed. Residences took on Italianate influences. An early example of this shift is the First Hotze House on Main Street. Built in 1868, the house has a floor plan much like Little Rock's antebellum houses, but the decorative porch columns and ornate brackets under the eaves are decidedly Italianate.



The First Hotze House is in the Governor's Mansion Historic District. It was the home Peter Hotze, successful in the general mercantile business.

The Italianate style features tall, narrow windows, often with arched upper sashes, bay windows, decorative entrances, bracketed eaves and sometimes a cupola. The Pollock House on Scott Street dates from 1870. Its bracket eaves, bay window and ornate trim attest to the growing popularity of Italianate design in Little Rock.



The Pollock House in the MacArthur Park Historic District is evidence that builders were abandoning the more sedate Greek Revival and Federal styles.

By the time then-U.S. Senator August Hill Garland built the Garland-Mitchell House in 1873 with its elaborate detailing, tall windows and two-story gallery, the Italianate style was dominant in Little Rock.



The Garland-Mitchell house on Scott Street is located in the MacArthur Park Historic District. The mansion housed two Arkansas governors, is the birth place of a Pulitzer Prize winning poet, and was home to a prominent newspaper publisher.

Italianate influence was not limited to residences. Little Rock residents incorporated Italianate detailing into their commercial buildings, too. In the photo below, Italianate buildings line Markham Street.



Tall, arched windows and elaborate parapets once distinguished the Italianate commercial buildings on Markham Street. (postcard ca. 1900)

The city's most prominent Italianate commercial building remaining from the 1870s is the Capital Hotel. Built in 1872 as the Denckla Block of offices and apartments, the building became a hotel in 1877. For many years the most luxurious hotel in the state, The Capital often served as an unofficial political headquarters where decisions, as well as political careers, were made. The hotel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.



The Capital Hotel was built on Markham Street in 1872. One of the hotel's most notable features is its prefabricated cast-iron façade. (photo ca. 1892)

During the 1870s, many of Little Rock's Northern investors chose to build homes along a new street named Lincoln Avenue, just west of newly constructed Baring Cross Bridge. Local residents referred to the new development as Robbers Row, because so many of the houses were built during an era of governmental graft and corruption. One of the most prominent of the Robbers Row homes was built by Alexander McDonald who moved to Little Rock in 1868. He constructed a massive example of a style new to Little Rock, the Second Empire style, with its distinctive Mansard roof.

A decade later, Italian immigrant Angelo Marre, having amassed a fortune in the liquor import and saloon business, built a Second Empire home called Villa Marre. More than a century later, the house is one of Little Rock's most prominent landmarks, familiar to millions of people around the world through its appearance in the opening credits of the popular television show, *Designing Women*. The predominant feature of the home is its Mansard roof, which is adorned with multi-colored rectangle slates interspersed in a decorative fish-scale motif.

The 19th Century Draws to a Close

The 1880s and 1890s have been called Little Rock's Gilded Age, a time of robust growth during which the city's population doubled to 38,000 people. Multiple-story, brick commercial buildings largely replaced the wood structures of the pre-Civil War era. New public buildings distinguished the skyline, including a new Post Office and Courts building, a Board of Trade building, the new Pulaski County Courthouse and the Union Station Depot. In 1893 the federal arsenal grounds became City Park. A second bridge spanning the Arkansas, Junction Bridge, opened in 1885, and the Free Bridge was completed in 1897.



Shown here circa 1890, Little Rock's Union Station served the city until it burned in 1921.



Built in 1889, the Pulaski County Courthouse on the corner of Second and Center Streets is an example of Queen Anne architecture, popular in Little Rock and across the country during the 1880s and 1890s.

During the 1880s, a new architectural style began to dominate building in Little Rock. Called Queen Anne, this exuberant new style featured asymmetrical facades, bays, balconies, towers and turrets. The region's most flamboyant example of Queen Anne style is the Hornibrook House, known as The Empress of Little Rock. Located on Louisiana Street within the Governor's Mansion Historic District, Hornibrook House has an expansive wraparound porch trimmed with millwork, an imposing turret, a multi-gabled roofline and elaborate windows.