

MacArthur Park Historic District

Little Rock, Arkansas

Guidelines for Rehabilitation and New Construction

December 1016



Department of Planning And Development

MacArthur Park Historic District

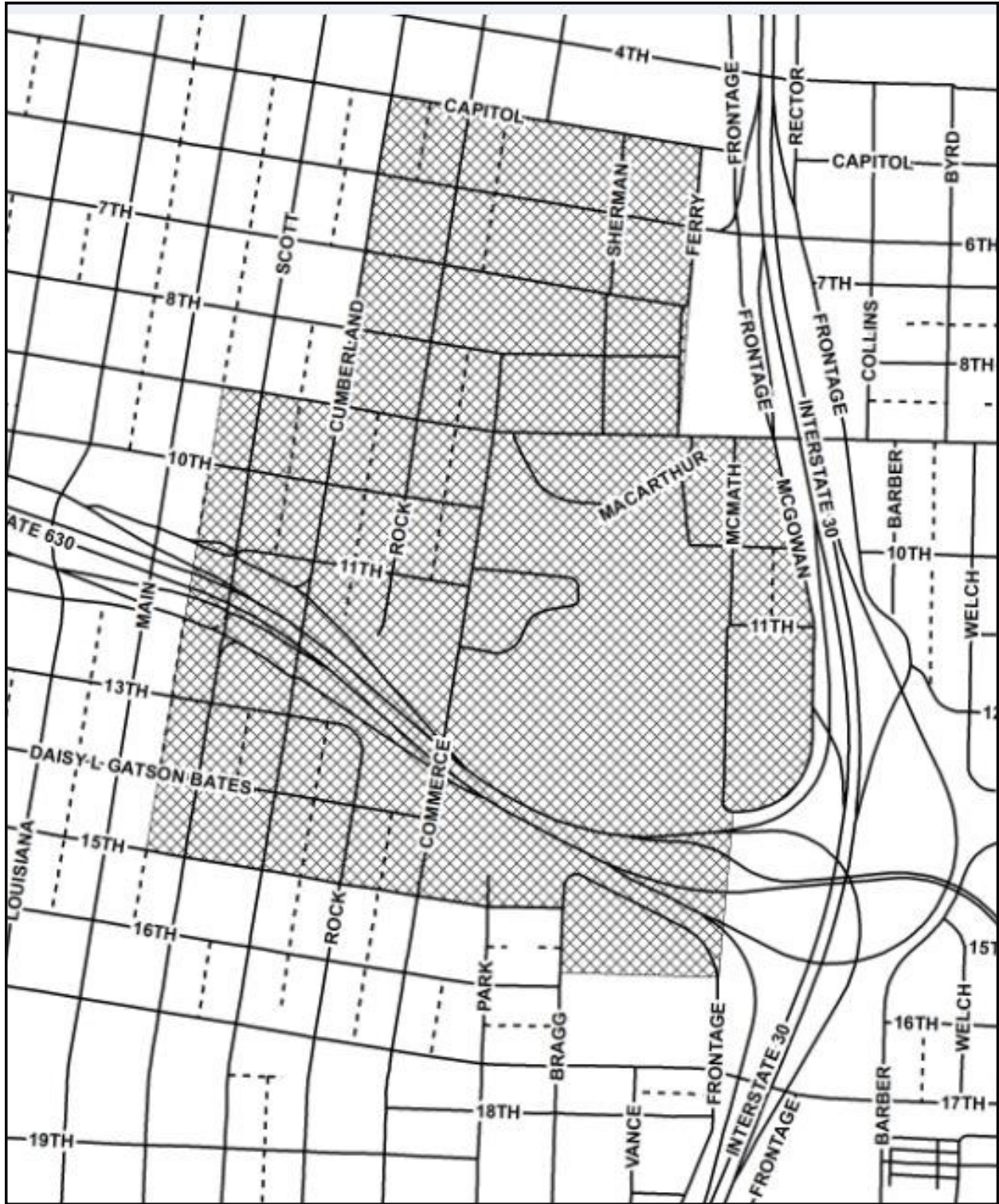
Guidelines

for

Rehabilitation and New Construction

**Little Rock Historic District Commission
Little Rock, Arkansas**

December 2016



*Figure 1. Map of the MacArthur Park Local Ordinance Historic District
Little Rock, Arkansas*

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Contemporary photographs by Wesley Walls, Brian Minyard and Charles Bloom

Historic Streetcar photographs from the collection of Tommy DeVore.

Historic Arsenal photographs from the collection of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central

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Additional Photos from the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History and the Quapaw Quarter

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Published by the City of Little Rock, Department of Planning and Development, November 2016

This document is available on the web at :

<http://www.littlerock.org/citydepartments/planninganddevelopment/boardsandcommissions/historicdistrictcomm/>

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The activity which is the subject of these “Guidelines” has been financed in part with Federal Funds from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, administered through the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement of or recommendation by the Department of the Interior or the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

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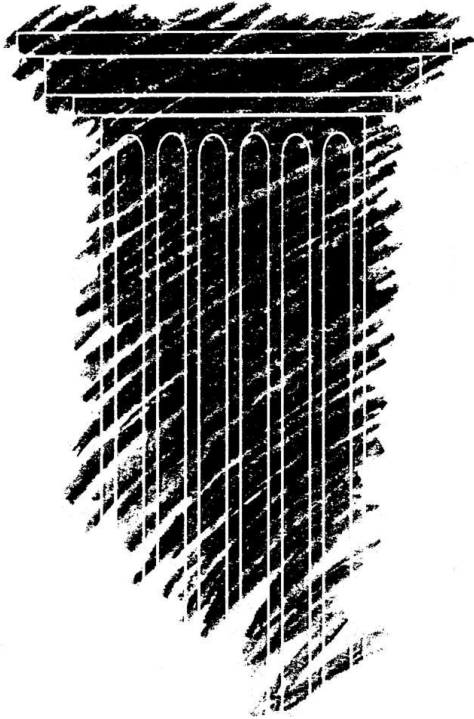
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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

Preserving historic resources makes good economic sense. Vital and attractive inner-city neighborhoods define the unique character and heritage of a city and promote the overall quality of life by reusing established infrastructure. Throughout the country, historic neighborhoods are becoming important magnets for heritage tourism.

Little Rock's MacArthur Park Historic District is a local ordinance historic district that surrounds and includes a national historic landmark – the Old U.S. Arsenal constructed in 1840 as part of a United States military post. Before becoming a local ordinance historic district, the MacArthur Park Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As of 2014, there are twenty-one other National Register Historic Districts in Little Rock. (See Appendix B.) A few blocks of the MacArthur Park Historic District are also located in the Governor's Mansion Area of the Capitol Zoning Districts and are regulated by the Capitol Zoning District Commission with respect to zoning restrictions and the issuance of certain permits. (See Appendix D for comparison of National Register Historic Districts, Local Ordinance Historic Districts, and National Landmarks.)

The purpose of this manual is to provide information about the requirements that must be met prior to undertaking construction, demolition, and certain other changes to property located within the MacArthur Park Historic District. (See map of the MacArthur Park Historic District on Appendix A.) This manual is designed to guide property owners with respect to whether Historic District Commission approval is required for a particular project, the procedural steps that must be followed to submit a proposal for review by the Commission, and the design standards that will be considered by the Commission in making its determination of appropriateness.

Historic district guidelines are based on design principles and preservation standards used by historic district commissions nationwide and on federal standards for rehabilitation of historic buildings. In addition to explaining the philosophy and value of historic preservation, these guidelines provide illustrations that note the architectural styles and landscape features that are the character-defining elements of the MacArthur Park Historic District. These are, therefore, the elements that should be retained and protected by the property owner. Solutions for rehabilitation and recommendations regarding new construction are provided by these guidelines to help preserve the historic character of the District and to allow change that is appropriate to the District's historic integrity.

The U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for historic preservation projects were initially developed in 1977 to assist the long-term preservation of the historic significance of properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. These federal standards are used by the Secretary of the Interior to determine the appropriateness of a proposed rehabilitation project when the owner is seeking financial

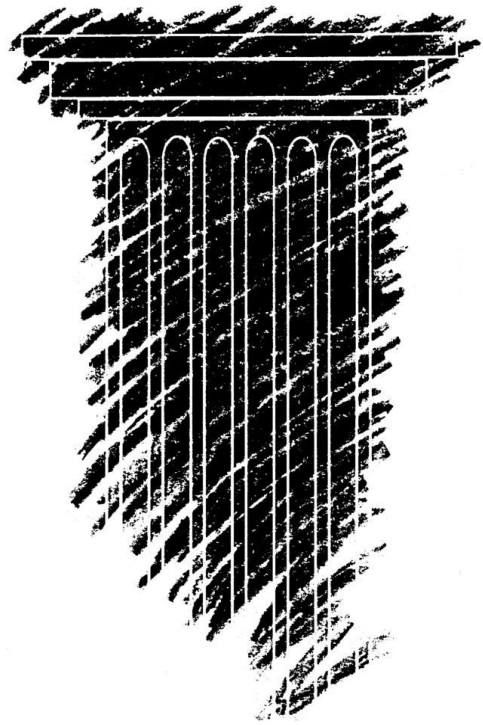


Figure 2. Column logo of Little Rock Historic District Commission.

assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund grant-in-aid program. To qualify as a certified rehabilitation project, the work must be determined by the Secretary of the Interior to be consistent with the historic character of the structure(s) and, where applicable, with the district in which it is located. Revised in 1990, these federal standards have been adopted by many local ordinance historic districts and planning commissions throughout the United States. (See Appendix E, Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.)

Applicants should familiarize themselves with the State Statute located at Appendix F and the City ordinance located at Appendix G.

Communities and neighborhoods develop design review guidelines primarily for economic and other reasons. By adhering to accepted design and rehabilitation standards, an historic neighborhood can maintain its unique character and enhance its individual property values. Neighborhoods across the country, which have adopted design review guidelines have generally experienced stabilization or increases in property and resale values. Therefore, by protecting the unique characteristics that define a neighborhood, adherence to design review guidelines also protects and encourages investment in historic areas.

With the principal goal of protecting the unique and valued qualities, or character-defining elements, of an historic district, emphasis must be placed on preservation of urban design, architectural character, and historic materials used in buildings and landscapes. Important words to remember are REPAIR, RETAIN, MAINTAIN, and PROTECT. It is preferable to:

- **REPAIR** original materials rather than to replace them;
- **RETAIN** original landscape features such as stone retaining walls;
- **MAINTAIN** original wood siding due to its integral part in displaying historic character; and
- **PROTECT** the original setting of the building to preserve its integrity.

The design guidelines included in this manual apply to the exteriors of residential and commercial structures within the MacArthur Park Historic District, including buildings, signs, walls, fences and other landscape features. Although interior space is not insignificant, only the part of the built environment that is easily visible to the public is subject to these guidelines. The primary facades of a

building are the areas with the greatest amount of detail and decoration visible from the public right-of-way. These areas largely define the architectural character of a property and are emphasized by the Little Rock Historic District Commission for purposes of project review and determinations of appropriateness.



Figure 3. Historic postcard of Fire Station #2 at 1201 Commerce Street.

Little Rock Historic District Commission members use these guidelines as an objective standard upon which to make their decisions concerning the appropriateness of a project in relation to the significant architectural and historic character of the District. Issues concerning appropriate use of the property are not addressed by the Historic District Commission but are referred to the Little Rock Planning Commission staff for proper guidance.

Historic Preservation is inherently “green”—environmentally friendly.

II. HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN LITTLE ROCK

Across the nation, thousands of communities promote historic preservation because doing so contributes to neighborhood livability and quality of life, minimizes negative impacts on the environment, and yields economic rewards. Little Rock is a part of this movement.

Little Rock is an important southern riverfront city with a unique history. Because it is rich in historic resources and offers an outstanding quality of life, Little Rock continues to attract development that challenges the community to seek creative ways of protecting its character. Preserving historic resources is a part of an overall strategy of maintaining community identity and livability. As Little Rock continues to redevelop, one major goal is to maintain its ties to the past through the preservation of its architectural heritage. Heritage tourism should be an important part of the community's economic development strategy. The underlying objectives of heritage tourism are consistent with Little Rock's development goals: preserving and enjoying the historic resources of a southern riverfront city in a natural, cohesive, and consistent way. Preservation of the built environment provides a fundamental link to the past because historic architecture brings the past to life. Many of Little Rock's buildings and tree-lined streets tell the story of its historical development. Preserving these resources creates a sense of place for residents and provides visitors a view of the city's past.

Little Rock has twenty-one National Register Historic Districts (see Appendix B). These designations help define the extent of our historic resources and the possibilities for preservation. Three areas are protected by local ordinance: the MacArthur Park Historic District, regulated by the Little Rock Historic District Commission; and the areas around the Arkansas Capitol and the Governor's Mansion, regulated by the Capitol Zoning District Commission. (For descriptions of National Register Historic Districts, see Appendix C.)

A. HISTORY OF LITTLE ROCK AND THE MACARTHUR PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Arkansas River was a major factor determining the founding and development of Little Rock. By the early seventeenth century, Quapaw Indians from the Ohio River Valley had migrated to the "point of rocks," finding high ground, fertile soil, abundant water, good hunting and fishing, and easily accessible stone and timber. White trappers and settlers found these same qualities desirable. By treaty in 1818, the Quapaws ceded claims to land in Territorial Arkansas, west of a line from the 'little rock' to the Saline River, making the land available for settlement. The remaining Quapaw area, east of the Line, was ceded to the United States in 1824. (A monument to the Quapaw Line may be found at the southeast corner of Ninth and Commerce.) By



Figure 4. An 1871 aerial map of Little Rock. Note Arsenal Building (15) on map.

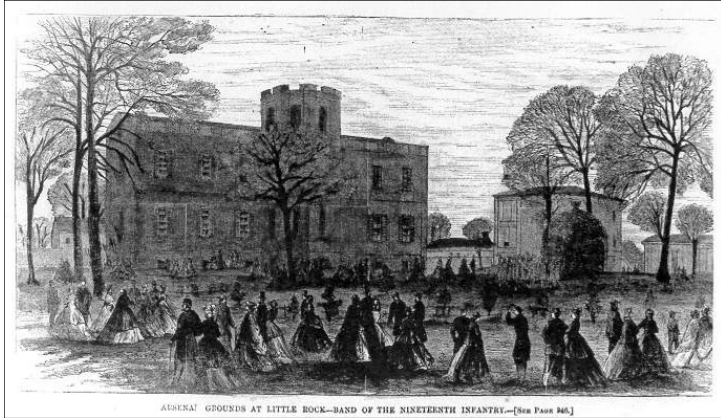


Figure 5. An illustration from *Harper's Bazaar*

1819, fourteen people were permanent residents. They probably lived in log cabins, the larger ones having two rooms separated by a “dog trot” open porch. Bricks became available as building materials in 1826.

In 1821, the town was designated the Arkansas territorial capital and was incorporated ten years later. The frontier village of Little Rock became the capital of the State of Arkansas in 1836. Buildings located on the grounds of the Historic Arkansas Museum (200 E. Third) date from the territorial period. Arkansas’s first

capitol building, now called the Old State House, was being constructed when Arkansas achieved statehood.

Early settlement in Little Rock took place along the Arkansas River, giving the town an east-west orientation. By 1840, Little Rock had grown to 1,531 residents and was expanding south from the river into the area included within the boundaries of the current MacArthur Park Historic District. In 1836, the federal government bought 36 acres of land for a United States military post, showing a commitment to protect the frontier community. The first building of the U. S. Arsenal at Little Rock (503 E. Ninth), built of red brick in the Federal style, was ready to store munitions by 1840, with other structures following. (This sole remaining building of the Arsenal is now called either the Arsenal Building or the Tower Building.) The buildings served the Confederacy for several years during the Civil War.

Several Greek Revival homes (“mansions” at the time) were constructed in the area in the 1840’s and still remain. The Absalom Fowler House (503 E. Sixth) was built by a successful lawyer and land speculator. The Pike-Fletcher-Terry House (411 E. Seventh), constructed in 1840, has housed two of Arkansas’s most distinguished persons: Albert Pike, lawyer, poet and Masonic philosopher; and later,

John Gould Fletcher, the only Arkansan who has won a Pulitzer Prize for literature. This house also has links with African-American history. Slaves probably constructed it. In the late 1950’s, Adolphine Fletcher Terry and the Women’s Emergency Committee met in the house to develop ways to counter the closure of Little Rock’s public schools following integration crisis at Central High School. Curran Hall (615 E. Capitol Avenue) and Trapnall Hall (423 E. Capitol Avenue) were both built about 1843. Four smaller Greek Revival homes were built before the war. Each of these was an urban farmstead, with the house accompanied by a variety of

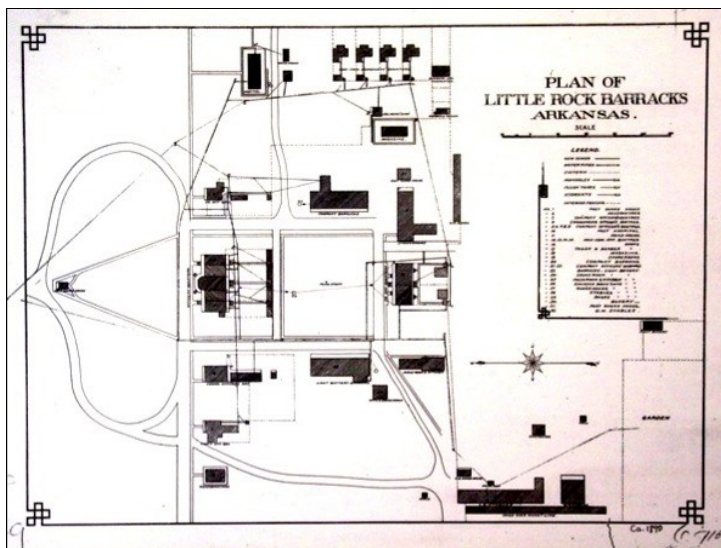


Figure 6. Barracks Plan of Little Rock Arsenal, ca. 1890

outbuildings and landscape features, both ornamental and utilitarian. The MacArthur Park Historic District has one of the largest concentrations of pre-Civil War buildings remaining in the state. Also created in 1843 was Mount Holly Cemetery (1200 Broadway), which has an impressive variety of monuments at the gravesites of many notable Arkansans.

The growth of Little Rock before 1860 was hampered by three economic drawbacks: lack of an efficient transportation network; a primitive city financial system; and the surrounding wilderness, which did little to foster retail business and export trade. Although people traveled through Little Rock on the river, the Southwest Trail, and the east-west military road, fewer than 4,000 people actually lived in the capital city by 1860. The antebellum houses of MacArthur Park reflect these economic conditions; almost all were homes of lawyers and people who could thrive on the political life of the town.



Figure 7. Arsenal after conversion to living quarters, c.1900

Little Rock grew dramatically in the wake of the Civil War. Black freedmen and many Union soldiers decided to make Little Rock home. German immigrants constituted a sizeable portion of the new residents, building many homes and founding two churches, First Lutheran (314 E. Eighth) and Saint Edward's Catholic (815 Sherman). Easy credit, northern capital, and the arrival of the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad in 1869 created a building boom. The 1873 Baring Cross Bridge helped transform the city from a small river port into an urban land-based distribution center.

The grand Italianate homes of MacArthur Park were the first of many brick houses built from 1870-1890. The brick Lincoln House (310 E. Seventh), built in 1877 for wholesale druggist Charles Lincoln, perfectly retains its decorative exterior ornament, making it a local showplace. The Garland-Mitchell House (1404 Scott), built in 1873, an excellent wood example of Italianate style, was the home of two governors of Arkansas, Augustus Garland and Charles Brough. A simpler cottage, the Cook House (605 East Sixth), was inhabited by the town's first full-time undertaker, reflecting the growing needs of Little Rock as it evolved into a city. At least nineteen fine examples of Italianate architecture remain in the districts, recalling the post-war boom.

An economic upsurge brought even greater growth and prosperity in the 1880's and 1890's. The city became the hub of a rail network connecting the entire state. The Arkansas frontier had been pushed back by the rapid expansion of agricultural, timber, and mining industries. Rural areas began to see Little Rock as their wholesale and distribution center. While never really suited as a major cotton center, Little Rock did become the nation's fourth largest inland cotton market between 1880 and 1900. The retail and wholesale business formed the backbone of the city's economy. The state's legal, political, and financial focus in Little Rock was equally important. Modern developments included a municipal water company, telephone and electrical service, and streetcars (first mule-drawn, later electrical.)

By the early 1880's, the entire area of the MacArthur Park Historic District was covered with a formal grid of streets, along which were clustered closely-packed Victorian homes. One of the remaining houses dating from this time is the unique Villa Marre' (1321 Scott), built in 1881 in the Second Empire



Figure 8. An early mule-drawn streetcar

style with a mansard roof by Angelo Marre', an active member of one of Little Rock's most promising professions—saloon keeping. The Butler House (609 Rock) is a small Victorian cottage built by printer Robert Butler in 1888. A year later, a magnificent Queen Anne mansion with a Japanese "moongate" porch was built by cotton planter and gin owner Frederick Hanger (1010 Scott). Small rental houses with modest Victorian detail, accommodating different classes, were interspersed throughout the neighborhood.

The MacArthur Park area experienced its maximum period of development as a residential district around 1900. As grocery stores and other retail outlets flourished, the need for home gardens, livestock, and attendant outbuildings diminished. Urban farmsteads were subdivided to accommodate other homes. Public schools and churches were built to provide services. Kramer Elementary School (715 Sherman), built in 1895 with elements of the Romanesque Revival and Queen Anne styles, was followed in 1900 by Little Rock High School (1401 Scott), which became East Side Junior High School, built with classical details. Churches include St. Edward's Catholic Church at 815 Sherman (designed by noted Arkansas architect Charles Thompson in 1905), First Presbyterian Church (800 Scott), built in 1922, and First Lutheran Church (314 E. 8th), built in 1888.

Little Rock annexed the land north of the Arkansas River, which had become an important railroad hub known as Argenta, as the town's eighth ward. In 1890, the United States government traded the Little Rock Arsenal for land on top of Big Rock, on the north side of the river, naming it Fort Logan Roots for a Northerner who stayed in Arkansas and prospered after the war. (In 1904, the north-shore community asserted itself and became North Little Rock.) As the former Arsenal land became the town's first public City Park, all of the military buildings were removed except for the Arsenal (or Tower) Building. Used as the city's first public library and a school, it also became home to the Aesthetic Club, one of the oldest women's organizations west of the Mississippi River; the Club helped save the building from demolition. In 1942 the Arsenal



Figure 9. Women's City Club, 4th and Scott, showing variety of horse drawn transportation, ca. 1912.

Building housed the Museum of Natural History and Antiquities, later named the Arkansas Museum of Science and History. Because General Douglas MacArthur was born at the Arsenal, the park's name was changed in 1942 to honor him: MacArthur Park. Designated a National Historic Landmark, the Arsenal Building now houses the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History.

Elsewhere in the Park, #2 Fire Station (1201 Commerce) was built in 1917 to

protect the expanding urban area, introducing the Craftsman style to the area. The H. H. Foster Bandshell housed musical entertainments. Across McAlmont Street east of MacArthur Park, the University of Arkansas, aided by Public Works Administration funds, constructed the College of Medicine in 1935 (now 1201 McMath). The design of the building, buff brick with limestone trim, reflected the popular “WPA Moderne” style. Later it became home to the U of A Graduate Institute of Technology; in 1992, it was extensively remodeled for the University of Arkansas at Little Rock



Figure 10. Pulaski Heights Line, 1947

School of Law. Just southwest of the Arsenal Building, in 1937, the Works Progress Administration funds constructed the Museum of Fine Arts (501 E. Ninth); the impressive Art Moderne façade is now an interior wall of the expanded Arkansas Arts Center. Extensive improvements have been made to the landscape to make it more desirable as a city park, including the Knapp Memorial cenotaph and drinking fountain. Also historic artifacts have been included, such as columns from a demolished building used for a gazebo. MacArthur Park serves as the nucleus of the historic district bearing its name.

While the function of the Arsenal changed from securing the frontier to providing the city with arts, science, and leisure activities, Little Rock was rapidly expanding to the south and west. The city began to emerge as a modern municipality after 1900, with the development of paved streets and railroad viaducts, water and sewer lines, and adequate fire protection, street lights, and garbage collection. A new state capitol building was begun in 1900, finally completed in 1914. Neighborhood developments to the south and west of the original town have been designated as National Register Historic Districts. The Governor’s Mansion Historic District includes impressive houses and churches built between the 1870’s and the 1920’s in the “south end.” The westward development of Little Rock after 1900 may be seen in Hillcrest, Central High, Capitol View/Stiff Station, and Railroad Call Districts. Small apartment buildings and homes were built in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Architectural styles include Folk Victorian, American Foursquare, Colonial Revival, Craftsman and bungalows, Spanish and Tudor Revival, Art Deco and Art Moderne.

Throughout the evolution of architectural styles and divisions of large lots, the streetscape in the MacArthur Park area remained intact. The paved streets had curbs, planting strips, and sidewalks, with trees arching overhead. Yards were defined by iron fences and walls of stone or brick. Set back from the street, houses had front porches, side and back yards, with garages in the rear accessed by alleys. Landscaping included heirloom roses, crepe myrtles, camellias, a variety of evergreens, and hardy perennials. Today, the human scale invites personal involvement. Despite the intrusions of several high-rise apartment buildings and of Interstate 630, the aesthetic ideals and social patterns of Nineteenth Century Little Rock come vividly to life in the MacArthur Park Historic District.

B. HISTORIC PRESERVATION MOVING INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

As the area encompassed by the MacArthur Park Historic District approached the end of the Twentieth Century, many changes took place. Families realized that the large Victorian houses had spacious

rooms, unique details, and were quite affordable. Some houses, which had been divided into apartments, were returned to single-family residences and restored to their earlier elegance. Others were converted into offices but retain their residential appearance from the street. Kramer and East Side Schools were converted into loft apartments. Neighborhood stores and even a fire station became residences.

The McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, opened in 1971, has not only stabilized the river and the surrounding area for economic development, but it has also encouraged scenic development of parks and recreational areas along the banks.

In 1961 the “Technical Advisory Committee on Significant Structures” was formed to assist the city in developing urban renewal projects. The committee identified the structures to be preserved instead of demolished. The Quapaw Quarter is a name devised in the early 1960’s by the committee in an attempt to identify the oldest portion of Little Rock and to acknowledge the earliest settlers of the area. The Quapaw Quarter Association was created in 1968 to advocate the merits of the downtown historic areas and to aid people interested in restoring historic properties. The popular Q.Q.A. Spring Tour acquainted many Arkansans, as well as other visitors, with the beauty and livability of the historic areas. Little Rock nominated districts to the National Register of Historic Places (MacArthur Park, Governor’s Mansion, Marshall Square, Hillcrest, Boyle Park, South Main Street Apartments, Central High, Railroad Call, East Markham Street, Philander Smith, South Scott Street, Capitol View, Tuf-Nut, Stifft Station, Hanger Hill, South Main Commercial, South Main Residential, West Seventh Street, Main Street, Capitol-main, and Dunbar) and, in 1981, the City established a Historic District Commission, with authority over Local Ordinance Historic Districts. When pressures of urban life in the capital city necessitated changes (I-630, the Main Post Office, the River Cities Travel Center), historic preservationists helped to soften the intrusions.

The history embodied in MacArthur Park Historic District’s structures, the rich variety and distinctiveness of its architecture, the lush green open spaces, the tree-lined streets, the human scale and the visual continuity combine to make the historic district truly remarkable and worthy of preservation-- a good place in which to live and work and a place in which history can be experienced firsthand.

Historic preservation is the management of change, by engaging the past, in conversation with the present, over a concern for the future.

Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation