

This landmark house has a history as colorful as its design. James H. Hornibrook moved from Toronto and established a profitable business as a saloonkeeper. Shunned from the proper Scott Street society because of his occupation, Hornibrook waited until Angelo Marré (his competitor saloonkeeper) completed his home, the Villa Marré, and proceeded to build the most extravagant dwelling in the state. Legend has it that he kept a card game going in the tower room where he could watch for raids on his establishment. The historic areas of Little Rock have many outstanding examples of Queen Anne architecture. Typical among them are the Dibrell House on Spring Street and the Turner-Ledbetter House on Louisiana Street.

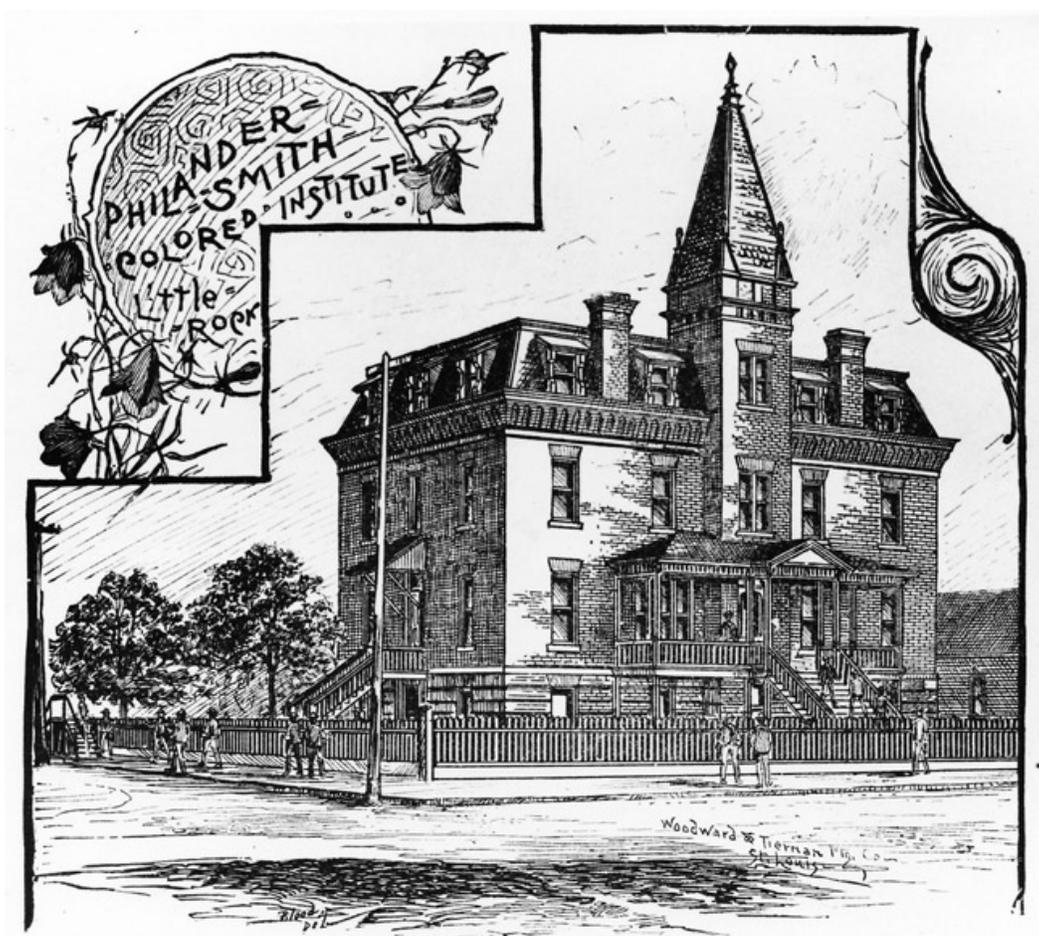
During the 1880 and 1890s, the area that is now the Governor's Mansion Historic District became an enclave of the city's upper-middle class. The Turner-Ledbetter House built in 1891 was typical of their homes. In 1891, electric streetcars replaced those drawn by mules, allowing for expansion into areas farther from downtown. A group of Michigan investors purchased 800 acres west of town for a residential development known as Pulaski Heights. As the name suggests, the area was attractive for its 300-foot elevation, allowing residents to escape summer insects and disease.



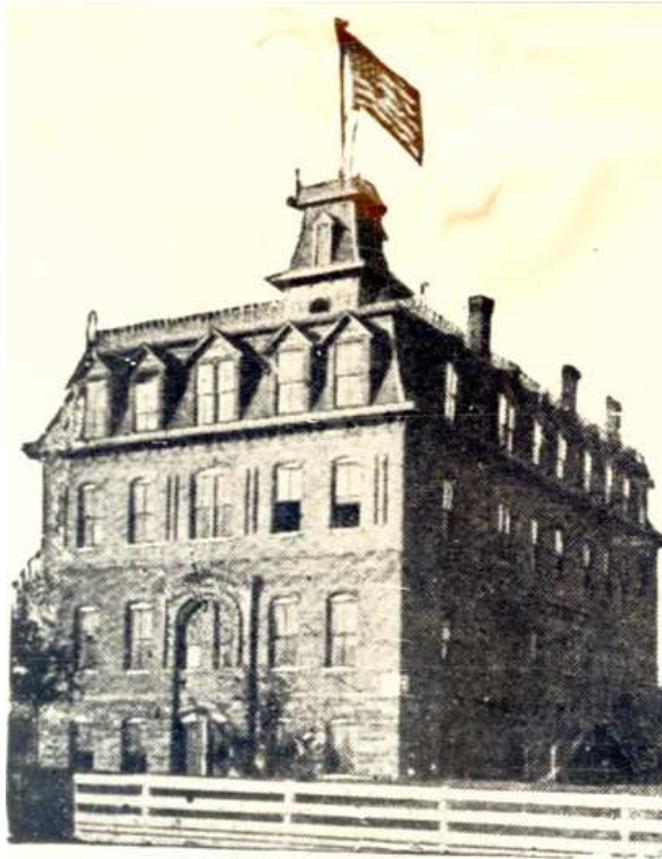
An early promotional brochure for Pulaski Heights advertising “sweet air” and “delightful summer breezes.”

The development of this exclusive area west of downtown geographically accentuated the historic disparity between white and black citizens of Little Rock. During the last quarter of the 19th century, Little Rock attracted a large population of black citizens. Since the end of the Civil War, African-Americans had settled in the marshy bottom lands on the city's east side. Additional African American people settled west of Mount Holly Cemetery between 9th and 12th Streets. In time, this population extended, forming the nucleus for the city's black neighborhoods in the 20th century. A four-block section along West 9th Street between Broadway and Chester was the center of the black business district. Boundaries between the white and black communities were clear. Those boundaries became more evident in 1903 when Arkansas passed the Gantt Bill (or Jim Crow Law). This bill provided for the separation of races on public transit systems.

By 1890, Little Rock's growing African-American community was served by two institutions of higher learning: Philander Smith College, founded in 1877, and Arkansas Baptist College, founded in 1884. Established as a seminary to educate black ministers, Philander Smith College was located at 10th and Center Streets. By 1887, the college enrolled nearly 200 students. From 1887 to 1891, money contributed by Little Rock residents and the Slater Fund for Negro Education made possible a building for instruction in printing and carpentry, but vocational classes were not the school's only offerings. Resisting the national trend of educating African Americans only in manual skills subjects, Philander Smith also offered courses in journalism and advertising. Philander Smith conferred its first bachelor's degree in 1888. By then, the college offered classical and scientific degrees with courses in Greek, Latin, algebra, and natural philosophy. The presence of Philander Smith bolstered the number of educated, professional African-Americans in the city, and fostered pride and cohesion within the black community. As one of the early attempts to make education available to African Americans west of the Mississippi River, and for its presence as a center of educational opportunity for black students, Philander Smith College was nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.



This rendering of the Philander Smith Colored Institute, now Philander Smith College, was completed circa 1880.



ARKANSAS BAPTIST COLLEGE.

Completed in 1893, The Old Main Building on the Arkansas Baptist College housed a 500-seat chapel, offices and recitation rooms.

The Methodist denomination fostered Philander Smith, and a second college for African-Americans was supported by Baptists. Founded in 1884 by the Colored Baptists of the State of Arkansas, Arkansas Baptist College was committed to academic and cultural excellence in educating future African-American ministers. The school also sought to make higher education available to young black men and women. In 1885 the school moved to 16th and High Street (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive), where the campus remains today.

Early 20th Century

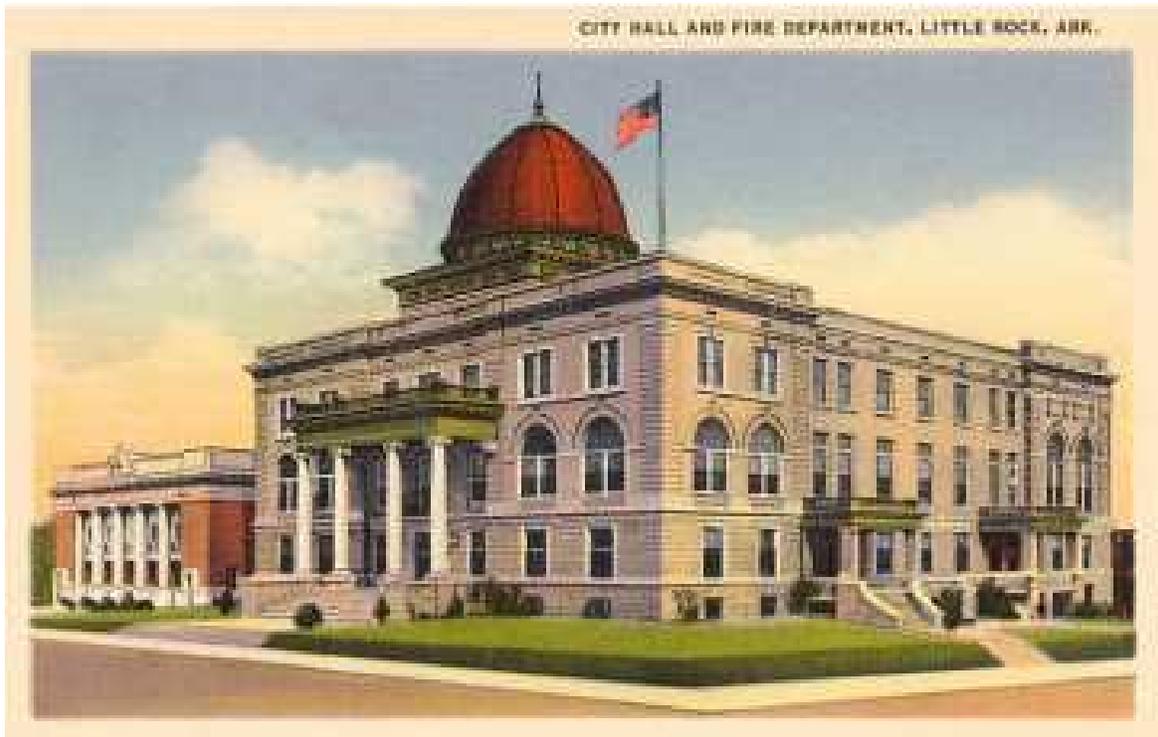
As the new century began, Little Rock experienced rapid growth. Large churches were built, and civic pride was evident in many local government projects such as new city parks, a new waste water system and a police effort that shut down the city's red light district which previously had operated openly.

Growth was evident in the skyline, too. Little Rock's most prominent addition was the new State Capitol building just west of downtown. Its cornerstone was laid in late 1900, and the building was finished in 1914. The construction of the monumental Neoclassical structure was marked by poor management, shoddy construction and political controversy. The building was still incomplete when the state legislature went into session there in 1911. To the people of Arkansas, however, the capitol was a symbol of a new, progressive era in the state, and the building has been popular with Little Rock citizens for nearly a century.



The Arkansas State Capitol near completion in 1914. Today, the Arkansas State Capitol looks much as it did a century ago. Typical of governmental buildings of its time, the building used Neoclassical architecture.

While the state was building a new capitol, Little Rock built a new city hall. Completed in 1908, City Hall still stands today, minus its distinctive red dome, at the corner of Markham and Broadway.



This historic postcard shows Little Rock's City Hall, completed in 1908, alongside the city's Central Fire Station, built in 1912.



City Hall underwent restoration in 1988 and is on the National Register of Historic Places.

While these new public buildings were under construction, Little Rock's business community was building turn-of-the-century retail skyscrapers. One of the best extant examples of these is the eleven-story State Bank Building built in 1909 on the corner of Fifth and Main. Like early-20th Century skyscrapers across the country, the State Bank Building exhibits a Sullivanesque style, characterized by elaborate terra cotta or plaster ornamentation. Sullivanesque buildings are often topped by deeply projecting eaves and flat roofs.



Though the first floor façade has been altered, the State Bank Building (known today as the Boyle Building) at Fifth and Main still looks much as it did when it was completed in 1909.

Another significant commercial building of this period is the seven-story Gus Blass Department Store Building on Main Street. Built in 1912, it became the city's fifth skyscraper. Gus Blass Department Store remained in the building for 60 years. A well-known Little Rock landmark, the Gazette Building on West Third Street, is also a distinctive example of Sullivanesque architecture. The three-story building is embellished with terra-cotta floral and fruit festoons, terra-cotta lion heads and both Doric and Ionic capital columns.



Built in 1908 to house the oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi, the Gazette Building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.



Built in 1911, the headquarters of the Mosaic Templars of America was one of the most significant buildings in Little Rock's African American community during the early-20th century. Founded in 1883, the fraternal organization provided insurance and other services to African Americans in 26 states. (Photo is from 1924.)

While downtown grew taller, residential areas continued to expand west. In 1903, a streetcar line was constructed from downtown to Pulaski Heights. That same year, the country club of Little Rock opened a clubhouse, golf links and tennis courts in Pulaski Heights. The following year, Forest Park was developed there, offering a bandstand, dancing pavilion, picnic area and skating rink. By 1905, the upscale suburb had 400 residents.

Expansion on the Heights was augmented by the appearance of automobiles on Little Rock streets. By 1912, city residents owned more than 300 cars. Many of the city's most affluent citizens used those cars to commute up to Pulaski Heights where they built homes in a wide array of newly popular architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, American Foursquare, Tudor, and Spanish Revival. Colonial Revival architecture was a return to designs based on the house forms of colonial America. Plans were rectangular and balanced. They featured classical columns and detailing.

In Pulaski Heights, Colonial American houses stood next door to Foursquares and Dutch Colonial Revival homes, popular in Pulaski Heights between 1900 and 1920. Foursquares are two-story houses with hipped roofs, large porches and Colonial Revival detailing.

Pulaski Heights also contains many Bungalow and Craftsman houses, popular throughout Little Rock and across the country after 1910. Of frame or brick construction, Bungalows are often one story, have low-pitched roofs, big porches, brackets and wide eaves. The "cottage" of the early-20th century, Bungalows are set near to the ground. They nestle into and become part of their environment. Living space is often extended to the outside in spacious porches. These livable homes are numerous today in the Hillcrest Historic District.

Not everybody moved uphill to Little Rock's new suburbs, of course, and those who remained downtown continued to update older homes and build new ones in the city's historic areas. Today, American Foursquares, Tudor and Prairie style homes are numerous in the Governor's Mansion District.



The French-England House on Broadway was built in 1905 when the American Foursquare plan was at the height of its popularity.



Prominent half-timbered gables indicate that the Cornish House, built in 1916 on Arch Street, uses Tudor architecture.



The Keith House built in 1912 on Broadway is one of the city's best examples of Craftsman architecture. Its low-pitched roof with exposed rafter ends, decorative braces under the eaves and broad porch roof supported by square columns are all Craftsman characteristics.

World War I and the 1920s

During the decade before World War I, city revenues declined. There was no legal provision allowing city government to tax its citizens, and prohibition ended the flow of liquor taxes into city coffers. Finally, the city closed many of the brothels that, for years, had operated openly and paid periodic fines to the city. Without these sources of income, Little Rock lacked sufficient funds to support city services. By the time the war began, the city was more than \$1 million in debt. Paying interest on the debt strained city finances. However, that issue had to wait for almost two years as the war focused attention on national and world events.

In order to support the war effort and to boost the regional economy, a group of Little Rock businessmen raised \$500,000, bought 13,000 acres northwest of the city and donated it to the U.S. government for a military training camp commissioned as Camp Pike. The new military base became the training ground for more than 50,000 recruits, most of which came through Little Rock and used city services while on leave. This infused the local economy with new vitality.

In 1918, Spanish Flu struck 10,000 Little Rock citizens—a large percentage in a city of only 58,000. The flu outbreak occurred at the end of the war, and once city officials had dealt with that crisis, they turned their attention back to Little Rock’s financial straits. Despite wartime prosperity, Little Rock had not been able to keep pace with providing services for military personnel and covering interest payments on its loans. The situation came to a head in 1919 when a group of businessmen forced voters to reconsider an “occupation tax” that had earlier failed. This time the bill passed. For the first time in nearly two decades, the city had cash flow sufficient to meet its monthly obligations.

With the war over and a new source of income available, Little Rock entered the 1920s with a burst of civic enthusiasm. This energy was reflected in the number of new buildings constructed during the “roaring” 1920s.



Built in 1921 at the corner of Markham and Victory Streets, Union Station provided the city with an outstanding example of Prairie architecture. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Mopac Station.

A new Union Station depot was built when the old one burned in 1921, and, in 1926, the city’s tallest structure was completed, the 14-story Donaghey Building at the corner of 7th and Main. It dominated the skyline until the 1960s.



Little Rock's Union Station from a 1920s souvenir brochure.

As buildings of ten or more stories rose downtown, the use of downtown commercial space began to change. During the late 1800s, downtown building had focused on public and retail space, and design often included decorative detailing. In contrast, the bona fide skyscrapers of the 1920s looked simple and functional with an emphasis on efficiency. Instead of retail spaces, they provided thousands of square feet for offices. During the 1920s, the Art Deco style of architecture became popular across the country, and Little Rock buildings reflected this new influence. An opulent style, Art Deco's eclecticism and lavish detail developed in reaction to the forced austerity imposed by World War I.

In the 1920s, Little Rock's population grew by more than 25% (from 65,000 to 82,000). A number of apartments and rowhouses were built throughout the city to house this surge of people new to the area. Typically two or three stories in height, these multi-unit dwellings are found in a variety of neighborhoods. Like single-family homes of the era, they were often built in Colonial Revival or Craftsman styles.

As noted previously, the downtown area west of 9th Street functioned as an African-American city within a city, with black businesses, churches, banks and social halls located along the street. The segregation in the business community was echoed in the city's educational system, with African-American and Anglo students attending separate institutions. Among Little Rock's many civic projects during the prosperous 1920s were two new high schools. The first was Little Rock High, built to house more than 2,000 students and widely recognized as one of the most beautiful schools in the country. Nine blocks to the east, a second school, Dunbar High, with an emphasis on industrial subjects, served African-American students. These schools were to play a significant role in Little Rock history.



A combination of Collegiate Gothic and Art Deco architecture, Central High spanned two city blocks upon completion in 1927. The main entry is particularly striking, featuring a terrace supported by Corinthian columns.



Completed in 1929 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980, Dunbar High was designed by the same architects who designed Central High. With decorative brick and stone and conspicuous towers, the design showcased the Art Deco style of the period.

The Great Depression and World War II

The arrival of hard times was signaled in Little Rock in April 1927 when rains soaked the state and caused the Arkansas River to flood. Water was so high that the 1927 flood remains the index for measuring high water on the Arkansas River today. As the floodwaters reached Little Rock, the Missouri Pacific Railroad Company placed coal cars on the old Baring Cross Bridge for ballast, but to no avail. A significant portion of the bridge washed away.

The Missouri Pacific rebuilt the bridge and it opened to a huge community celebration in 1929. But by then the weather had done its work. Drought followed flood and Arkansas farmers were unable to produce and pay back their loans. Many businesses could not survive without the farm trade. In 1930, Arkansas's largest financial institution, the American Exchange Trust Company, collapsed. By 1932 one in every three of the city's residents was out of work and dependent on charity for food and clothing.

Fortunately, by the mid 1930s federally funded capital projects did provide some relief. New construction included the Little Rock Zoo, a new city auditorium, a terminal at the Little Rock airport and landscaping, pavilions and trails in Boyle Park. Even more significant was funding for an impoundment dam and filtration plant on the Saline River 35 miles west of the city. The new lake provided Little Rock with a new source of fresh water.



The stone and log construction of CCC pavilions at Boyle Park is typical of the federal park projects of the era.



The James Taylor Robinson Municipal Auditorium, known today as Robinson Center, has been a center for Little Rock arts and culture since it was built with federal dollars as part of the New Deal of the 1930s. Its Greek Revival columns echo those found on the Old State House.

By the late 1930s, another world war was taking shape in Europe, and Camp Pike, renamed Camp Joseph T. Robinson, was activated. The Army leased more land and expanded the base to more than 70,000 acres. War games began there in 1940. World War II created jobs in construction and other war-related efforts, and prosperity returned to Little Rock.

During the war, Camp Robinson drew more than 25,000 new citizens to Little Rock, and thousands of soldiers with weekend passes visited the city regularly. This increase in population caused a housing shortage, and the military contracted with the city to build three new housing projects for personnel involved in the war effort. Sunset Terrace and Highland Park in southern and western sections of the city were constructed for Anglo personnel, and Tuxedo Courts on the city's east side housed African- American personnel.

World War II meant employment for nearly the entire community. There were new jobs for whites, African Americans and women. Philander Smith College opened a program in flight instruction and maintenance for the war effort. The school added business and science classes and offered night classes for returning veterans. Meanwhile, women made up as much as 75% of the employees in the area's ordnance plants.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt emphasized the importance of Camp Robinson to the war effort when he visited Little Rock in April, 1943.



World War II brought jobs to Little Rock. These women worked at the ordnance plant in Jacksonville in 1943.

Post-War Little Rock and the School Segregation Crisis

Like the rest of the country, Little Rock experienced a post-war “baby boom.” By 1950, the population of the city exceeded 100,000. Population growth was reflected in business sector growth. The chamber of commerce launched a recruitment campaign with the slogan “Arkansas: The Land of Opportunity.” Between 1954 and 1956, recruiters persuaded 34 firms to relocate to the Little Rock area. These included major employers such as the Reynolds Metal Company and the Aluminum Company of America. But of even more importance to the growth of Little Rock was the Little Rock Air Base, built by the Strategic Air command just outside Jacksonville.

The Little Rock site was chosen in 1952 after citizens of Arkansas raised money for the purchase of 6,000 acres. In December of 1953, the Army Corps of Engineers broke ground, and Little Rock Air Force Base (LRAFB) was activated in October of 1955. By then 100 officers and more than 1,000 airmen were already stationed at LBAFB. Approximately 85,000 people attended an open house held for the public.



The occasion for this photo was the official opening of the Little Rock Air Force Base in 1955. The Little Rock business community had raised money and lobbied hard to get the base located nearby. Their work paid off in substantial employment and additional industry for the region.

During the 1950s, middle-class residential areas continued to develop steadily west and south of downtown. This migration was accelerated when developers built Broadmoor Subdivision across the street from the new campus of Little Rock Junior College on the southwest edge of the city. Broadmoor was followed by a new retail concept, the shopping center. Two large centers, Town and Country and University, opened in 1957. As more people of means abandoned the gritty and increasingly gridlocked urban core, Little Rock became a city of three dominant regions. The east side was predominately African American, the southwest was blue-collar white, and the northwest was essentially upper-middle-class white. City government, public services and the school system were all organized to reflect this arrangement and its attendant tensions.

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public education was a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Little Rock received news of the decision at a time when the baby boom was adding 1000 new students to city schools every year. A system already under pressure was soon to be strained to its limits.

District officials decided to begin token desegregation in the fall of 1957 at Central High School. Meanwhile, across the South, white resistance to desegregation grew. Nineteen U.S. senators and eighty-one congressmen, including all eight members from Arkansas, signed the “Southern Manifesto” denouncing the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision and urging Southern states to resist it. In fall of 1957 the conflict reached crisis proportions, and Arkansas’s governor called out units of the Arkansas National Guard.



This iconic photo of 15-year-old Elizabeth Eckford jeered at by an angry mob caught the attention of the nation during the school segregation crisis in Little Rock.

On September 4, 1957, nine African American students attempted to enter Central High School. Several of them made their way to one corner of the campus where the National Guard turned them away. One of them, Elizabeth Eckford, arrived at the north end of the campus. She walked south surrounded by a growing crowd of protesters who taunted her cruelly. The next morning, people around the country opened their newspapers to images of the Little Rock teenager besieged by angry students and adults.

As the conflict became more violent, the city asked the federal government for assistance and army troops were sent in, and the African-American students went to class under guard of federal troops. By then, the Central High Crisis had come to symbolize massive resistance to social change and the federal government's commitment to enforcing African-American civil rights.



Downtown Little Rock, looking west along Capitol Avenue in 1958

This notable example of racial tension served Little Rock poorly. Historically limited to a mostly agricultural economy, the state had begun to enjoy industrial expansion during the 1950s when Little Rock aggressively pursued industrial development. The incident at Central High tarnished the image of the city and many manufacturers avoided doing business there during the 1960s.

Little Rock became somewhat more attractive to development when Interstate 40 and Interstate 30 were completed, enhancing the city's position as a regional distribution center. During the Sunbelt Boom of the late 1970s and early 1980s, Little Rock's good climate and abundance of water and energy made the city attractive to developers. Meanwhile, social attitudes within the city shifted toward more tolerance, encouraging more employment and industrial growth in the city.

Urban Renewal and Little Rock's Historic Preservation Movement

Though Little Rock schools were desegregated, businesses and public transport remained segregated. During the early 1960s, students from Philander Smith College staged sit-ins in Little Rock stores. In 1963, they negotiated an agreement with downtown merchants to desegregate public transportation and facilities. For the most part, Little Rock businesses desegregated in a relatively peaceful fashion. This success with integration allowed the city's developers to return to their plans for expanding the city's western boundaries with added suburbs and shopping centers.

As the suburbs to the west expanded during the 1960s, urban renewal programs did away with many of Little Rock's older downtown commercial structures. They were replaced with parking lots and high-rise buildings. The character and appearance of downtown Little Rock changed rapidly and dramatically. Buildings of 20 and 30 stories transformed the downtown area into an area dominated by financial services and office space. Downtown became a commuter center where workers 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 an effort to save the old homes on east side of town. Throughout the 1960s, the group sponsored home tours and raised the visibility of important historic resources. At that point, the "Quapaw Quarter" was defined as a 16-square-block area roughly approximating Little Rock boundaries in the year 1900. The Quapaw Quarter is most closely associated with the neighborhoods surrounding MacArthur Park, the Arkansas Governor's Mansion, and Central High School. Commercial structures businesses on Main Street and Broadway south of Interstate 630 are among this group as well. For the past 40 years, Little Rock's historic preservation efforts have been concentrated in these areas. However, the mission of the association has expanded to encompass all of Central Arkansas.