

**Sandwiching in History**  
**Edward H. Colgan House**  
**2318 S. Summit St., Little Rock**  
**November 1, 2013**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



*Colgan House, before rehabilitation*



*Colgan House, present*

## **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Edward Colgan House! I’d like to thank Justin Laffoon for allowing us to tour his beautiful home, and I’d like to recognize Donna Thomas and Jennifer Carman for their wonderful work on this house and others in the 2300 block. More on that later...

This tour is worth 1 hour of AIA continuing education credit for architects.

The Edward H. Colgan House was built in 1913 and is located in the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1996 for its association with the westward expansion of Little Rock, the 1957 Central High School desegregation crisis, and its eclectic blend of architectural styles.

## Central High Neighborhood

The oldest building remaining in the historic district was constructed about 1870 by Milton L. Rice, a carpetbagger lawyer, state senator, and president of the Cairo & Fulton Railroad. Rice built an imposing Gothic Revival-style house, known as Oak Grove, on a 12-acre estate about one mile west of the Little Rock city limits at that time (today at 2015 Battery Street but altered from original appearance). Near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the West End, as it was known, consisted of open fields and forest and was very sparsely developed. In fact, the 1890 Guide to Little Rock described the area west of the city limits as “a capital place for a picnic and big enough for half the families of town to go at once without disturbing each other.”

It wasn't until the mid-1890s that significant construction began in the neighborhood, mostly as a result of the streetcar line. In 1885 the Little Rock Traction and Electric Company extended its streetcar line to the west along 14th Street (Daisy Bates Dr.) from High (MLK) to Park Street, where it ended at West End Park. The park served as a popular attraction at the end of the streetcar line and encouraged people to visit the West End. West End Park was densely wooded and boasted a lake for boating, as well as a pavilion for dancing, a bicycling track, a roller coaster, and a baseball field. The first amateur baseball games were played in the park in 1893 and by the century's end, baseball had become the principal attraction at the park, as it was home to the Little Rock Baseball Association. After the Little Rock Street Railway Company opened Forest Park in Pulaski Heights in 1904, it sold West End Park to the city. The use of the park tapered off becoming “largely inactive” by 1912. Little Rock High School (or Central High) was completed in 1927 on the old West End Park site.

Orin F. Sheldon's dairy farm was located on acreage near 21<sup>st</sup> Street between Summit and Schiller. Sheldon maintained a residence on the same property. The 1900 Census showed Orin Sheldon, his wife, Adelake, and their daughter, Ollie, living in the 2100 block of Schiller and operating a dairy. Their neighbors, Sandy and Jane Lee, both worked as laborers at the dairy. O. F. Sheldon's Addition,

which encompassed the area between 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> and Summit west to Park, was platted on October 9, 1892. However, the 1913 Sanborn map reveals that the addition remained largely undeveloped years after its original plat was drawn up. Interestingly, Sanborn maps and city directories confirm that the Sheldon farmstead was still standing in 1913 and was occupied by Mrs. Adelake J. Sheldon.

### **2300 Block of South Summit**

The houses on the west side of the 2300 block of S. Summit are located in Sheldon's Addition, while the houses on the east side of the block are in the Oak Terrace Addition (P. K. Roots Subdivision of the Oak Terrace Addition). The 1911 City Directory shows no homes built on the 2300 block of S. Summit, but there were homes on both the 2200 and 2400 blocks of Summit at that time. The 2300 block was developed in 1912 and 1913 as part of a tract development supervised by the Holman Real Estate Company. Lloyd C. Holman, previously a real estate salesman for the Southern Trust Company (prominent banking, real estate & insurance company in LR), started his own real estate business in 1911. Holman Real Estate started out slowly, but soon widely advertised its expertise in real estate, insurance, farm lands, and rentals. The company's development along Summit St. consisted of two-story American Foursquares with slight variations of the same plan. The American Foursquare is characterized by simple, square or rectangular, two-story plans (4 rooms over 4 rooms) with low-pitched, hipped roofs and one-story, full-width front porches. Typically, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, or Prairie-style decorative details are seen on these houses.

Buyers chose their foundation, porch, chimney, and wall materials; style of dormers (hipped, gabled, or shed); window placement and pane arrangement; and decorative details (dentils, false half-timbering, boxed or open eaves, quoins, brackets, etc.); and interior floor plan and finishes. And then the house was built to those specifications. The Vine-Couch House at 2315 Summit sold for \$6,000 in 1914, but the Colgan House has some unique features not found in other homes on the block, such as oak floors downstairs and upstairs (whereas other homes have oak downstairs and pine upstairs); oak trim (other houses have stained

yellow pine trim); a different floor plan and different placement of the fireplace; and a more of a Craftsman sensibility inside, so it was probably a more expensive home.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Central High neighborhood was largely home to white, middle-class residents. However, it was technically an integrated neighborhood with pockets of African-American residents, many of whom worked for nearby white families. The 1914 City Directory had listings for 11 of the 12 homes that were on the 2300 block (it didn't include 2312 for some reason), and everyone was white and middle to upper-middle class.

#### 1914—2300 block

2300-Lem Kirkpatrick; travel agent

2301-LaVerne C. Dome; dept. manager, Plunkett-Jarrell Grocer Co.

2304-Arthur B. Hill; principal, Little Rock High School (East Side School)

2305-William Webb; president, Webb Furniture Co., 600-610 W. 7<sup>th</sup>

2308-Henry B. Kane; lawyer, Southern Trust Building

2309-Herbert J. Steidley; manager, Fairbanks Morse & Co.

Ralph J. Selby; travel agent

2315-John L. Vine; manager, Philip Carey Co. (pipe & boiler coverings, asbestos materials, rubber roofing, and bridge & metal paints)

2317-Martha M. Cline; Little Rock Conservatory of Music

2318-Edward H. Colgan; proprietor, Little Rock Boiler & Ironworks

2321-Daniel R. Fones; Owens & Fones (real estate brokers, farm lands & insurance) at 215 ½ W. 2<sup>nd</sup> (upstairs from the Holman Company that developed the block)

2324-Albert L. Moore; conductor, Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad

#### **2318 S. Summit**

This house was occupied by Edward H. Colgan from the time it was built in 1913 until Mr. Colgan's death in 1931 (about 18 years). Edward Colgan was born in 1866 in Illinois to Irish parents and was living in Little Rock by 1890, when he

married Irene Johnson. Edward and Irene had one daughter, Alma. Just after the turn of the 20th century, Edward Colgan worked as a blacksmith for the Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf Railroad (later bought by the Rock Island) and lived at 621 Cypress in North Little Rock. By 1908 he was secretary for the Little Rock Boiler & Ironworks at Markham and Spring streets, where he built boilers and tanks, and he lived at 2606 Battery. By 1911 he had been promoted to secretary and treasurer of the company and briefly lived at 415 Arch. In 1912 Colgan is listed as the proprietor of the Little Rock Boiler & Ironworks and lived at 1110 W. Capitol, where he remained until the house at 2318 Summit was completed. Interestingly, Colgan installed iron boilers in every room of the Summit Street house in order to showcase his handiwork. [None of the boilers remain in the house, but you may see the pipe holes in the floor in different places.]

Colgan's daughter, Alma, was a talented pianist who taught music lessons out of her parents' home, and by 1922 she operated the Alma Colgan School of Music in downtown Little Rock. Her advertisement in the 1922 city directory named two assistants who helped Alma teach piano, pipe organ, and musical theory. Alma continued to live with her parents until their deaths. Irene Colgan died on January 22, 1930, and Edward Colgan died on August 5, 1931. I couldn't find Alma Colgan in Little Rock City Directories after the death of her parents, and I think she may have relocated to a larger city.

After Edward and Irene Colgan died, the house was occupied by Harold R. Parker and his wife, Roberta. Parker was manager at the Mutual Benefit Health & Accident Association. The home was vacant in 1940, but by 1942 it was occupied by Henry E. Ross and his wife, Lelah. Mr. Ross was a switchman for the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. The Ross family stayed here until about 1950. The Ewing S. Chappell family lived here in the 1950s. Chappell was a physician. It is interesting to note that his son, Charles "Chuck" Chappell, went on to become a much-loved English professor at Hendrix College from 1969 until his retirement in 2010 (he spent his teenage years in this house). From 1961 until about 1990, E. O. Huddleston and his wife, Ruby, lived here. Mr. Huddleston was a clerk at the post office.

By 1995 the house was listed as “not verified” in city directories, meaning that no one was living here full-time. The home deteriorated and was left vulnerable to vandals and vagrants.

## **Rehabilitation**

The Central High neighborhood is really in transition right now, but as you can see, these houses are coming back one at a time. Look at the difference that’s been made in this block alone—some of you may remember the “Sandwiching” tour of Jennifer Carman’s house across the street in 2009. At that time, the houses on this side of the street were vacant and in need of some major TLC.

- A crew led by Donna Thomas rehabilitated 4 of the 11 houses on this block. None of these projects would have been possible without the state historic rehabilitation tax credit, which is administered by the AHPP. Jennifer Carman worked as a design consultant and facilitated the state tax credit process.
- The state tax credit is a major incentive for historic preservation. 25% of the approved rehabilitation expenses on a historic building may be claimed as a tax credit. This credit is available to anyone who pays state income tax in Arkansas.
- Requirements: Property must be listed on, or eligible for, the National Register of Historic Places. Work must follow preservation guidelines, so property owners should contact our office before they lift a hammer.

Once this house was rehabbed, Justin Laffoon purchased it and has lived here since July 2012.

## **Details**

House originally had 4 bedrooms and 1 bathroom (upstairs bath is original and has original claw foot tub and pedestal sink); now it has 4 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms.

The half-enclosed porch is likely original. If not, it has been that way since at least 1939 (based on Sanborn maps).

Pocket doors

Mentioned it earlier, but oak trim and floors (except for new pine floors in the downstairs bath, kitchen, and mud room).

Stone fireplace (now painted)

Built-in cabinet by fireplace

Front door is original and has a transom and sidelights. Probably the original screen door as well—has a cool metal swirl motif with a bird.

Reproduction light fixtures (custom-made by a company in California)

Downstairs bathroom was likely a food prep area with a pocket door to the dining room.

Mud room was originally a small, open back porch. If you open the cabinets, you will see a window with an enclosed opening below it. The opening provided access to the built-in icebox in the small butler's pantry so that milk and cream could be delivered without entering the house (milk drop).

Separate servants' staircase allowed the help to move throughout the house without being seen by the homeowners or guests.

Point out place where boilers/radiators were in the sitting room

Old sleeping porch upstairs—originally went all the way across the back of the house, but they used part of it to create a closet and more space in another bedroom. The windows in the sleeping porch are unique—double-hung windows;

when you open the window, you can flip the sill forward revealing a recessed track in the wall below. Both the bottom and top sashes can then be pushed down into the wall to create one large opening. If this was done to all the windows, it would be like sitting on a screened porch.

New wainscoting in mud room and kitchen

New subway tile in bathroom—all houses on this block originally had faux subway tile created by snapping a line and drawing vertical lines with a trowel.

Exterior blue color is based on the lowest paint layer found on the original wood siding.

Was a small garage in the back yard originally; can still see the foundation.

\*\*See slideshow of before and after pics on my laptop.

Questions before we look around the house?

Thank you!

Extra:

Milton Rice left Little Rock in 1880 and his property was later purchased by real estate developer H. A. Bowman, who in 1897 platted the Oak Terrace Addition on the blocks to the east and north of us (in fact, the east side of this block is in the Oak Terrace Addition). Oak Terrace was originally intended to cater to a wealthier clientele in the otherwise working-class neighborhood. One of the original features of the addition was a central “flower garden” or lawn (this exists today as the median/boulevard section in the 2000 block of Battery Street).