

Sandwiching in History
Emmett W. Jenkins House
(Currently home to the Ivy Foundation)
923 W. 24th Street, Little Rock
August 2, 2013
By: Rachel Silva

Intro

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Emmett W. Jenkins House, which is now home to the Ivy Foundation of Little Rock! I’d like to thank a few people for their help with the tour—

Wilhelmina Lewellen, past president of the Ivy Foundation;

Mary Louise Williams, current president of the Ivy Foundation;

Edna Ricks, vice president of the Ivy Foundation;

And last but not least, DeEtta Buckelew, the granddaughter of Emmett Jenkins (who built this house).

This tour is worth 1 hour of continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. See me afterwards if you’re interested.

And now I’d like to ask Ivy Foundation President Mary Louise Williams to say a few words.

Governor’s Mansion Historic District

The Jenkins House was built about 1920 by contractor Emmett Wilson Jenkins and is located in the Governor’s Mansion Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The district is roughly bounded by 13th St. on the north, Louisiana on the east, Roosevelt Rd. on the south, and Chester on the west. The Governor’s Mansion HD is the 2nd oldest surviving residential neighborhood in LR, with the oldest being the MacArthur Park HD.

The Governor's Mansion HD straddles the southern boundary of the Original City of Little Rock, which was Wright Avenue. [The Original City plat was filed in 1822; bounded by AR River, Quapaw Line (or Commerce St.), Wright Ave., and Pulaski St.]

For the most part, the Governor's Mansion neighborhood catered to middle and upper-middle class white families after the completion of the Memphis & LR Railroad in 1871. The Arkansas Governor's Mansion, located at 1800 Center Street, is the focal point of the district. Even though the Governor's Mansion was not completed until 1950, the land on which it stands figured prominently in the history of Little Rock.

The Quapaw Tribe ceded the 6 ½-acre plot to the U.S. Government in 1818, and it was then given to the State of Arkansas in 1836. In 1838 the land was deeded to Senator Chester Ashley and later became part of the estates of Roswell Beebe and James M. Curran. The land remained undeveloped until about 1840, when Arkansas's last Territorial Governor, William Savin Fulton, built his retirement home, "Rosewood," on the site. Sadly, Fulton died in 1844 while sleeping in the asphyxiating fumes of a freshly painted room at "Rosewood." Fulton's widow sold part of the property in 1869 to the state for the establishment of the Arkansas School for the Blind. "Rosewood" was eventually torn down and replaced by buildings for the Blind Institute, which, in turn, were demolished in 1948 to make way for the new Arkansas Governor's Mansion. The Arkansas State Legislature created a Governor's Mansion Commission in 1947 to secure a site for the official home of the state's governor. The commission chose the site at 1800 Center, and the mansion was completed in 1950. Sid McMath was the first governor to live there.

Craftsman-style Architecture

The Craftsman style of architecture was inspired by the 19th century British Arts & Crafts movement and our nation's desire to create a uniquely American art form. The Arts & Crafts movement represented a backlash against the Industrial

Revolution and the mass-produced, machine-made building materials and furnishings it created. Proponents of the Craftsman movement also believed that assembly line manufacturing devalued workers and human craftsmanship by separating skill sets, so that no single worker completed a project from start to finish. The basic philosophy of the Craftsman movement advocated honest, functional design and craftsmanship, as well as the use of natural materials.

In the early 20th century, the Craftsman style was popularized in Gustav Stickley's publication, *The Craftsman* (1901-1916), and others like *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, and *Architectural Record*. Craftsman-style architecture often demonstrated honest design through the use of exposed structural elements like beams and rafter tails and the use of natural materials like stone, stucco, and wood. Outdoor living space was maximized (porches and windows), and a comprehensive approach was taken to include built-in furniture like window seats and bookcases as well as landscaping.

The Jenkins House is a good example of the Craftsman style and features exposed rafter tails; triangular knee braces and decorative brackets in the front gable ends; false half-timbering; a front porch supported by square, brick columns; and a mixture of exterior wall materials, including brick, wood, and stucco. There is also a built-in window seat in the living room (the house may have contained more built-in furniture, but it has been removed).

Builder & Later Occupants

The plat for Wright's Addition to the city of LR was filed in 1870 and encompassed the land from Wright Avenue to 25th Street (Roosevelt) and from Arch to Pulaski. As Little Rock expanded to the south near the turn of the 20th century, the southwestern portion of Wright's Addition was subdivided as Wat Worthen's Addition. The southeast corner of 24th and Chester was vacant until about 1920, when the Jenkins House was constructed on Lot 1, Block 12 in Wat Worthen's Addition (the Jenkins House first appears in the 1922 LR City Directory).

The house was built by local contractor Emmett Jenkins, who lived here from at least 1922 until October 1929.

Emmett Wilson Jenkins was born in 1868 at Byhalia, Mississippi, to Henry Clay Jenkins and his wife, Mary Alice "Mollie" Parker Jenkins. In January 1892 Emmett Jenkins married Sallie Jo Munn at Holly Springs, MS. Emmett and Sallie Jenkins had five children, four of whom survived to adulthood—Lala, Munn, Carey, and George (Clementine was born in September 1897 and died in December of that year). Emmett Jenkins worked as a building contractor. He and his family moved to Arkansas after the turn of the 20th century. His youngest child, George Brown Jenkins, was born in 1905 at Conway. In addition to this house and several others in Little Rock, including at least one house for each of his 4 children, Jenkins and his crew built the Logan County Courthouse (Eastern District) at Paris, Arkansas, and a public school at Hamburg, Ashley County, Arkansas (his office was located at 215 W. 2nd Street in Little Rock; building just east of the Pyramid Building). In fact, I believe that Jenkins built the buff brick house at 2323 S. Chester as well as the house that once stood next door to the east at 913 W. 24th. He was a member of the Winfield Memorial Methodist Church and the Masonic Lodge of Mabelvale. Jenkins's wife, Sallie Jo, died in January 1927 at the age of 50 as a result of heart disease and kidney failure.

In June 1929 Jenkins married a Canadian woman named Mae. In October of that year, Emmett and Mae Jenkins traded property with a W. E. Cox and moved to the Westwood Addition located off Colonel Glenn Road (southwest of the Asher & University intersection). When the 1940 Census was taken, Jenkins was about 70 years old, and he still reported working 50 hours a week as a contractor. Emmett Jenkins died on January 13, 1943, at the age of 74. He and his first wife, Sallie Jo, are buried at Oakland-Fraternal Cemetery in LR. Jenkins's second wife, Mae, died on November 23, 1959, at the age of 75. I'm not sure where she is buried.

After Emmett and Mae Jenkins moved out of this house in 1929, it had several occupants.

1929—Marvin M. Craven and wife, Eunice. Mr. Craven was an agent for Fireman's Insurance Company.

1930-1935—Charles F. Noell and wife, Vivian. Mr. Noell was the manager at Smith Davis Cigar Company.

1935-1939—Mrs. Maxine E. Clemons, widow of William T. Clemons. She worked for a Christian Science group at 112 E. Capitol.

1940-1943—Frank E. Wait and wife, Anne. Mr. Wait worked as an agent and was later manager of Sheperd and Company.

1944-1962—Ben D. Rowland, Sr., and wife, Johnnie. He was an attorney with his office in the Rector Building at 405 W. 3rd (3rd & Spring).

1963-1967—Ben Rowland, Jr. In the 1960s, he served as Junior Attorney for the state revenue service and later as director of the state income tax division.

1968-1973—Johnnie Rowland, widow of Ben, Sr.

1974-1978—Vacant

1979-1995—James R. Douglas, a mechanic at Ketcher & Company.

1996-1997—Vacant

1998-1999—Analyn D. Thomas

**On January 21, 1999, a tornado caused extensive damage to downtown Little Rock, and the Governor's Mansion neighborhood was hit especially hard. The storm took out several large trees near this house, broke windows, and literally blew the top of the chimney through the west side of the roof, creating a huge hole. After the 1999 tornado, people bought the house with the intention of rehabbing it, but no one lived here. It was not rehabbed/occupied again until 2009.

2000—No Listing

2001-2006—Tommy Brown/Shawna Carr

2007-2008—Kenneth McArthur

2009—No Current Listing

2010-present—Ivy Foundation (W. E. Lewellen listed)

Ivy Foundation of Little Rock

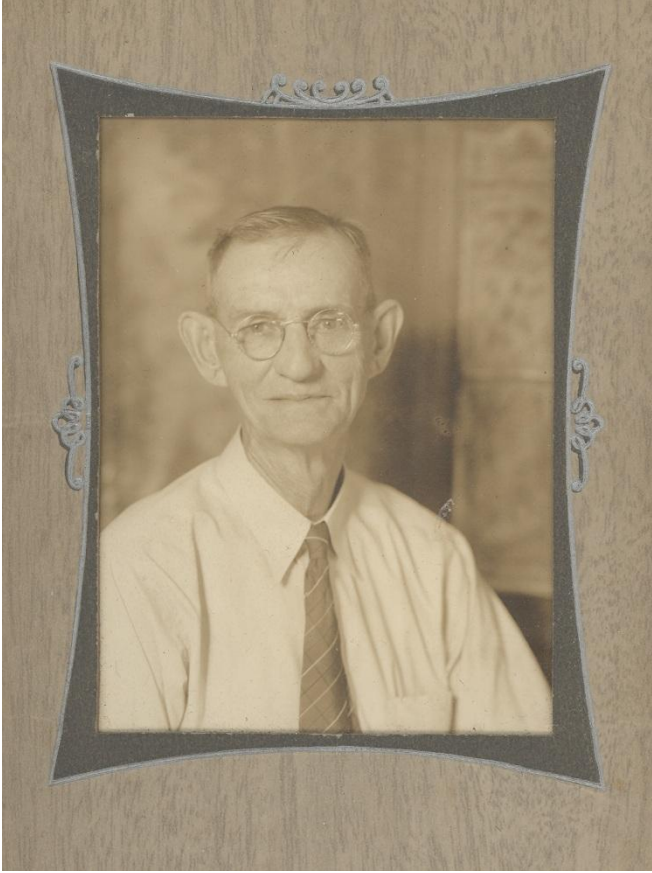
The Ivy Foundation of Little Rock is the fundraising arm of the Beta Pi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. In Fall 2009 the Ivy Foundation purchased the property from Webb Construction Company, which had just rehabilitated the house. The Ivy Foundation meets 10 months a year and usually has at least 100 people present for each meeting. Alpha Kappa Alpha was established in 1908 at Howard University in Washington, DC, and is the oldest sorority for college-educated, African-American women. Alpha Kappa Alpha teaches leadership skills to girls and women of all ages and focuses on problems related to social justice, human rights, health, poverty, economic security, environmental sustainability, and maintaining a viable sisterhood.

Interior Details

- Brick mantel and built-in window seat are original to house. Still some original crown molding. Original wood treads, newel post, and balustrade on staircase but wood laminate on the landing.
- Front porch was screened prior to 1999 tornado but was glassed-in during 2009 rehab
- Windows replaced during 2009 rehab
- New laminate flooring
- Removed a downstairs wall between living and dining areas to make one large meeting room
- Parking lot to east (site of house; I think it was demolished after extensive damage from tornado??)
- Added a door opening into kitchen
- The upstairs bedrooms are now offices and meeting rooms.

Introduce Edna Ricks to tell us a little bit more about how the Ivy Foundation acquired this house.

Thank you! Next tour is September 6 at Pulaski Heights Baptist Church at 2200 Kavanaugh.



Emmett Wilson Jenkins



Sallie Jo Munn Jenkins



Jenkins House, 1987



Jenkins House after 1999 tornado



Jenkins House, July 2013