

Sandwiching in History
J. Rogers Young House
2021 S. Arch Street, LR
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By: Rachel Silva



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 J. Rogers Young House! I'd like to thank Karen and Miriam Ford for allowing us to tour the house today.

Governor's Mansion Historic District

The Young House was built in 1913 and is a contributing resource in the Governor's Mansion Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978 (and has been amended several times). Boundaries are roughly 13th Street, Louisiana, Roosevelt, and Chester. The Governor's Mansion HD is the 2nd oldest surviving residential neighborhood in LR, with the oldest being the MacArthur Park HD.

Little Rock experienced rapid population growth in the 1880s—the city's population nearly doubled between 1880 and 1890 (went from 13,138 to 25,874). Little Rock expanded immediately to the south, east, and west of the original city plat to take advantage of the available flat land. William Savin Fulton, Arkansas's

last territorial governor and later a U.S. Senator from Arkansas, owned 240 acres in what is now the Governor's Mansion Historic District. About 1840 Fulton built his retirement home, "Rosewood," on the current site of the Governor's Mansion. According to family lore, Fulton died unexpectedly in 1844 while sleeping in a freshly painted room at Rosewood—the story goes that he inhaled the paint fumes and died from asphyxiation.

Fulton's widow sold part of the property in 1869 to the State of Arkansas for the establishment of the Arkansas School for the Blind. In 1872 a large portion of the Fulton Estate was subdivided as Fulton's Addition, which was bounded by Wright Avenue, Arch Street, 23rd Street, and half-way between Center and Louisiana. The Young House occupies the southern half of Lot 5 and all of Lot 6 in Block 9 of Fulton's Addition. The remainder of the Estate going south was divided up into 10-acre tracts and given to his heirs.

["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.]

Historically, the Governor's Mansion neighborhood catered mostly to middle and upper-middle class white families. For example, in 1915, two years after this house was completed, the 2000 block of S. Arch was home to a tailor, travel agent, attorney, state bank commissioner, circuit court judge (Hon. Guy Fulk at 2001 S. Arch), and a hotel proprietor (J. Rogers Young). [And the house across the street at 2020 S. Arch was built between 1921 and 1923 for John Francis Boyle, president of Boyle Realty Company and Boyle-Farrell Land Company (also had the Boyle Building at the SW corner of Main & Capitol...formerly the State Bank Building).]

The Prairie Style

The Young House is one of the few Prairie-style houses in the Governor's Mansion Historic District. The Prairie style of architecture, which was most popular from 1900 to 1920, represented a rejection of historical precedent in decoration and design. The style originated in Chicago under the leadership of Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright's designs emphasized integration with the surrounding landscape. Ornamentation was not eliminated entirely, but was modernized to remove traces of its origins. The result was an elegantly simplified building. The style came to be known as "Prairie" because horizontal lines were thought to relate to the native prairie landscape of the Midwest. The Young House features Prairie-style characteristics in its low-pitched roof with widely overhanging eaves, massive square porch supports, a lack of exterior ornamentation, and the emphasis of horizontal lines created by the contrasting color at the cornice and under the eaves (as well as the contrasting caps on the porch railing).

James Rogers Young

James Rogers Young, who rarely used his full first name (went by J. Rogers, Rogers, or simply J. R.), was born on September 28, 1882, in North Carolina to William N. Young and his wife, Harriett Alexander Young. J. Rogers Young came to Little Rock about 1905 and married Harriett "Hattie" Troy of Little Rock shortly after his arrival. In 1906 the couple's daughter, Helen Troy Young, was born.

By 1907 J. Rogers Young managed the Metropolitan Hotel, which was located at the northwest corner of Main and Markham streets (current location of the Statehouse Convention Center). A 1907 advertisement for the hotel read, "Rooms 50 cents, 75 cents, and \$1.00 per day. All Street Cars Pass the Door. Right in the Business Center of the City. Try it and you will be satisfied."

Metropolitan Hotel

The site of the Metropolitan Hotel has an interesting history. The “first” Metropolitan Hotel opened at the northwest corner of Main & Markham in the spring of 1870. The 3-story brick building was also known as the Bowman Block because it was owned by Col. John B. Bowman of Lexington, Kentucky. At about 9:00 p.m. on December 14, 1876, Little Rock’s only “first-class” hotel—the Metropolitan—was destroyed by fire. The following day, an article appeared in the *Arkansas Gazette* giving details about the extent of the damage in the 100 block of W. Markham and scolding the city council for its “penny-wise” policies. The article reads in part,

“Like all lessons of the kind, this one comes too late, and the city council can now contemplate how much they saved to the city in failing to have Main Street graded so the river could be reached, from which a sufficiency of water could have been procured to have probably saved a portion of the buildings. The Pulaski Engine was also badly out of order, which crippled her usefulness; of this fact the council had received ample notice, but failed to act. The hose was also inefficient in every respect, both as to quantity and quality. Little Rock has a good and willing fire department and if the council had only dealt with them liberally in the way of good machinery and material to work with and given ample facilities for the procuring of water, we would have another tale to tell this morning. The city is now without a good hotel and the Metropolitan, which has since its establishment been one of the most popular resorts the city has ever had, is now numbered among the things that were.”

On October 3, 1877, Mr. L. D. Gleason opened the New Metropolitan Hotel on the same site. The New Metropolitan was a 3-story, brick, Italianate-style building with hood molding above the windows and elaborate detailing at the roofline.

In 1909 the Metropolitan Hotel was temporarily closed for renovations, which included the installation of 20 bathrooms, sinks in each guest room, an electric

elevator, and steam heating. When the hotel reopened in 1910, the name was changed to the Hotel Main. An advertisement from 1910 listed the room rates at anywhere between 75 cents and \$2.00.

The Hotel Main operated at the northwest corner of Main & Markham until the late 1920s. Then in 1929 construction began on a new hotel at that site, but progress came to a halt after the Stock Market Crash. In 1930 Little Rock contractor Ben McGehee bought the structure and finished it. The 15-story, Art Deco-style building opened in 1930 as the Hotel Ben McGehee. In 1933 the hotel was purchased by the Southwest Hotel chain (also operated the Albert Pike Hotel, Lafayette Hotel, and the Marion Hotel). In 1947 the hotel was renamed for the late H. Grady Manning, founder of Southwest Hotels. The Grady Manning Hotel closed on July 31, 1978, and was imploded on February 17, 1980.

Back to Mr. Young...

J. Rogers Young owned and managed the Metropolitan Hotel, later the Hotel Main, from at least 1907 until 1928 or 1929, when the Hotel Main closed to make way for the Hotel Ben McGehee or the Grady Manning. Mr. Young and his family lived at 1817 and 2207 Broadway before 1913, when they moved to this house at 2021 S. Arch. The 1920 Census shows J. Rogers Young living here with his wife, Hattie; daughter, Helen; maid (white), Ida Fisher; and cook (black), Nannie Mathews.

By the spring of 1928, the Young family was trying to sell their house. W. E. Cox Realty Company ran an advertisement on the house in the March 15, 1928, issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*, reading: "2021 Arch Street. An attractive and comfortable home. Nine rooms, sleeping porch, sun parlor, attic, basement, heating plant, double garage, servant's quarters. Lot 75' x 140'. Reasonable price—terms. Will consider smaller property in trade."

The company's advertising obviously worked because just two months later, on May 27, 1928, the *Gazette* ran a photo and description of the home reading in

part, “Here is one of Arch Street’s most beautiful homes. Just bought by George B. Pugh...The Pugh Home is in one of the most select residential sections of the city. Located on a beautifully terraced site which covers one and a half plots, the slate-roofed brick veneer looms up as one of the attractions of the vicinity. Vine-covered trelliswork, tall spiraled evergreens posing as sentinels by the entrance walk, and well-arranged decorative shrubbery lend to the place a proper air of distinction and refined beauty.”

After selling the house at 2021 S. Arch, J. Rogers Young and his wife, Hattie, briefly remained in Little Rock before relocating to Knoxville, Tennessee, where Mr. Young assumed management of the Arnold Hotel. Sadly, Mr. Young succumbed to pneumonia on June 8, 1932, in Knoxville, about 3 ½ months shy of his 50th birthday.

[By 1940, Hattie Young; her daughter, Helen Young Atkins; and her grandson, James Young Atkins; lived in Los Angeles, CA. Helen was divorced by that time.]

Later Occupants of 2021 S. Arch

The house has had several owners over the years, including George B. Pugh and his wife, Elizabeth, who bought it from the Young family in 1928. Pugh was an attorney at the firm of Buzbee, Pugh & Harrison, which at that time, represented the Rock Island & Pacific Railroad. The 1930 Census shows that the Pugh family had no children living in the house—just two adult servants. By 1935 Norton England, a freight and passenger agent for the Mo-Pac Railroad, lived here.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, the house was occupied by Gus B. Walton, who was employed at an investment firm called Walton-Sullivan & Co. Gus Walton and his wife, Caroline, had three daughters—Sue, Cynthia, and Caroline. Because all three girls were under the age of 8 in 1940, they also had a live-in nurse named Fay Maupin. This information is important because it is likely that the Walton family enclosed the top story of the rear sleeping porch during the time they lived here to create more space for a larger nursery/nurse’s quarters. They are probably also

responsible for removing the servant's staircase and taking part of the kitchen to create a master bedroom suite on the first floor.

In the 1950s, the house was purchased by Mr. Jewell Archer and his wife, Hannah. I believe that Mr. Archer converted the house from a single-family home into a rooming house. The Archer family probably lived here full-time as well. [It's not clear from city directories when it became a rooming house. I just know from other sources that it was a rooming house from at least the 1950s until the early 1980s.]

In Senator David Pryor's autobiography, he mentioned staying at 2021 S. Arch Street in 1954 when he was working for Governor Cherry. At that time, this was a boarding house, and he rented a room for \$13 a week. He remembered the bathroom being down the hall from his room (which would have been accurate at that time).

And in September 1980, the Capitol Zoning District Commission ruffled feathers by granting a conditional-use permit to then-owner John Lewis, allowing him to put two apartments in the main house and one apartment above the carriage house.

Karen Ford purchased the house in 2004, and she and her mother, Miriam Ford, have operated it as a bed and breakfast since February 14, 2008.

House Details

- 5,000 square feet, not including attic or partial basement
- According to Sanborn maps, the 2nd floor sleeping porch (on the south side of the house) was open to the air and probably had roll-down canvas flaps (which show up in a 1928 newspaper photo). It was later glassed-in.
- In addition, a full 2-story porch on the east side (or rear) of the house was enclosed in the 1940s.

- The 2-story carriage house (or garage; it was labeled “Auto House” on the 1913 Sanborn map) is original.
- House has its original windows (12-over-1 and 9-over-1)
- The house had a coal-burning furnace and still has a coal chute
- 1950s addition to rear of house (now covered in vinyl siding)
- When Karen Ford purchased the house, she had to replace/upgrade the HVAC systems, rewire, replumb, and replace the decking and roof.

Interior

- Original oak floors
- Beautiful marble mantles
- Built-in bookshelves in living room
- Radiators behind screens in living room
- Pocket doors set in a segmental arch opening lead to the dining room
- Dining room ceiling features exposed wood beams
- Sunroom (off dining room) has original tile floor & bead-board ceiling overlaid with Craftsman-style pattern (done in wood strips), French doors, casement windows
- The doors to the lavatory and sink under the main staircase have the original hardware (square knobs; kind of Deco/Prairie style)
- House has lots of closets and built-in storage space, which can be attributed to the fact that Mr. Young was in the hotel business and knew about the usefulness of closets (ahead of his time)
- No original light fixtures
- The house currently operates as the Robinwood Bed & Breakfast and offers 5 guest rooms, which are named after historic hotels in LR (Sam Peck, Lafayette, Albert Pike, Grady Manning, and Marion)

Questions?

Next tour is October 5 at the Fred & Lucy Alexander Schaer House at 13219 Hwy. 70 in Galloway.