

Sandwiching in History
Edgar B. Moseley House
415 Willow, NLR
November 4, 2011
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 Edgar B. Moseley House! I'd like to thank Cary and Monty Bradburn for allowing us to tour their beautiful home. And today you're in for an extra special treat because the neighbors, Connie McBride at 400 W. 5th and Steve Mitchell at 404 W. 5th, have agreed to let us come in as well. Mr. Moseley built all three houses, and the house at 404 W. 5th is almost identical to 415 Willow. And I'd like to thank Bere Church and his wife, Ann, as well as Mickey Church and his wife, Anne, for being here today. Bere (short for Bereford) and Mickey (Marion) are the sons of Dr. B. L. Church and Vivian Moseley Church and the grandsons of Edgar and Bettie Moseley. Bere and Mickey grew up at 415 Willow.

The Moseley Houses are excellent examples of the Craftsman style in the Argenta Historic District (NR-listed in 1993; amended several times, but final boundary expansion done in 2007). It is roughly bounded by Melrose Circle and 9th Street on the north, N. Broadway on the west, W. 4th Street and Broadway on the south, and the railroad tracks on the east side of Main Street form the eastern boundary.

Argenta History

The City of North Little Rock was called Argenta in its early days of settlement (the town of Argenta was surveyed & platted in 1866). The area was called Argenta because of the silver that was found at the nearby Kellogg mine (argentum is the Latin word for silver). The City of Argenta developed around the railroad. The Memphis and Little Rock Railway was the first operating railroad in Arkansas, and it ran east-west from Memphis to Argenta. The Memphis and Little Rock Railway crossed the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railway in the middle of Argenta, and the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad ran along the edge of town. Because the railroads brought travelers to Argenta, the most common businesses catered to people from out-of-town. There were hotels, boarding houses, saloons, gambling houses, brothels, and restaurants downtown. Argenta was a rough town—it had no government in the early days, so it was virtually lawless. There were no paved streets, and the sidewalks were made out of wooden planks. This side of the Arkansas River flooded often, and some of the streets stayed under water for weeks because there was no city-wide drainage system.

In 1890, the citizens of Argenta filed a petition to incorporate as a city of the first class. However, seeing this, the City of Little Rock annexed the town of Argenta despite the protests of Argenta residents. Referencing a law that excluded voters in the targeted annexation area, the City of Little Rock laid a territorial claim on Argenta in order to increase its tax base. However, Little Rock did not provide Argenta (8th Ward of LR) with many city services in return for its taxes, so a plot was hatched to regain Argenta's independence. William Faucette (prominent businessman and 1st mayor of NLR) worked with three state legislators to get the Hoxie-Walnut Ridge bill signed in 1903, allowing cities within a mile of one another to consolidate if the residents of both cities approved it at the polls. The bill was supposedly written to allow the NE Arkansas towns of Hoxie and Walnut Ridge to consolidate, which they later did. However, the bill would also allow the town of North Little Rock (which had been incorporated just to the north of LR's 8th Ward—AKA Argenta—in 1901) to annex the 8th Ward of Little Rock (formerly Argenta) in 1904. This is how Argenta regained her independence from Little Rock.

In 1906, NLR changed its name back to Argenta. It remained so until 1917, when it was changed back to NLR.

Edgar B. Moseley

Edgar B. Moseley was born in 1876 in Kentucky and married fellow Kentucky native Bettie Doriot in 1899. Soon after their marriage, the couple moved to Argenta. Edgar Moseley was a druggist (or pharmacist) and initially worked at Robins & Company Drug Store at 306 W. 3rd Street, NLR. Meanwhile, in February 1903 Charles J. Humphreys retired from the drug store business, selling his company at 324 Main St. to J. T. Hall, one of his former employees. The business became Hall Drug Company, the local Rexall Drug store. Another of Humphreys' former employees, Charles G. Butler stayed on at Hall Drug Co. as well. In 1914 C. G. Butler and E. B. Moseley went into business together to run Hall Drug Store. Hall Drug Company remained at 324 Main Street until 1916, when it moved to 222 Main Street (in the Matthews Bldg. at SE corner of Main & Broadway—no longer extant). In 1917 Argenta Drug Store moved into 324 Main and remains there today. Hall Drug Store operated at 222 Main Street until March 1947 when it was sold to Economy Drug Co., which ran several chain drug stores in LR and NLR. Moseley retired in 1949.

Prior to 1915 the section of Argenta NW of 4th and Willow over to the Iron Mountain RR tracks was largely undeveloped. There was a reason for this--

The Memphis & Little Rock Railroad came into Argenta from the east along 4th Street and then the tracks curved slightly to the northwest as they continued toward the Iron Mountain Railroad and the Baring Cross Bridge over the AR River. So the Memphis & LR tracks used to run diagonally through the 400 blocks of Main, Maple, and Orange streets and came right through the intersection of 5th & Willow before continuing NW (did not cut through 400 block of Willow). The Rock Island RR Bridge was built in 1899, making it unnecessary for the M & LR line to cut through the neighborhood to the Baring Cross Bridge, so the line was abandoned. In 1905 the tracks were still here and abandoned railcars were offered to people for firewood. After the railroad tracks were removed (and presumably, the RR sold the property), houses were built.

James P. "Jim" Faucette, mayor of NLR from 1911 to 1917, and real estate developer Justin Matthews partnered in 1915 to build a few homes on W. 4th and W. 5th streets (J. P. Faucette built the Colonial Revival-style house at 316 W. 4th Street about 1912). Edgar Moseley was a good friend of Faucette and Matthews, and the three houses that Moseley built on the SW corner of 5th & Willow were some of the first ones constructed in the Faucette Addition. In a letter to his sister, Margaret, Faucette wrote in September 1915 that E. B. Moseley was building a

residence and was building a house to rent on W. 5th Street. Between 1915 and 1917 Moseley built the houses at 400 and 404 W. 5th as well as 415 Willow.

Edgar and Bettie Moseley lived in the large Craftsman house at 400 W. 5th Street from 1916 until 1926, when they built a new house at 410 W. 5th. The house at 404 W. 5th was Moseley's rental property and had many different tenants. Moseley initially rented the house at 415 Willow as well.

415 Willow

The house at 415 Willow first appears in the 1917 city directory as the home of Roderick J. Rice, then a cashier at Twin City Bank who would eventually work his way up to bank leadership. By 1926 Buford Harris, a railroad engineer, lived here, and then in 1928, Samuel Garrett was listed at this address. About 1928 Beresford L. Church married Vivian Moseley, the daughter of E. B. and Bettie Moseley. Edgar Moseley may have given the house at 415 Willow to them as a wedding present. Regardless, B. L. and Vivian Church lived here in 1929. With the exception of a 4-year period in the mid-1930s (~ 1934-1937) when Dr. Church lived in California to do his residency and briefly practiced medicine, the Churches lived at 415 Willow until 1948, when they built a new Ranch-style home at 510 Crestview Dr. in Park Hill (total time there was roughly 1929 to 1948). After the Churches moved to Park Hill, this house had a series of owners that changed every 5 years or so UNTIL 1988 when James Lawson bought the house. The Lawson family lived here until the summer of 2009, when Cary Bradburn purchased it. So the Churches and Lawsons have been the long-term occupants of the house. I'm going to tell you more about the Churches...

Dr. Beresford Lee Church and Vivian Moseley Church

Beresford Lee Church was born in 1902 and graduated from NLR High School in 1919. He went to work as the manager of the Gazette Branch office and later became an agent for the Times Printing Company at 217 Main, NLR. In 1934 he graduated from the University of Arkansas Medical School. He completed his residency at California General Hospital in Los Angeles, where he received training in obstetrics, gynecology, medicine, and surgery. After another internship in Houston, TX, Dr. Church practiced medicine at the Children's Hospital in Los Angeles for about one year. In 1937 he returned to North Little Rock and partnered with Dr. Shelby Atkinson in an office at 104-108 E. 3rd Street. This partnership only lasted about one year, and in 1938 Dr. Church had an office at 224 Main Street (Matthews Bldg.).

Dr. Church was nicknamed Bully Church after a friend of his father's. Dr. Church's father, Robert Church, was an engineer for the Rock Island Railroad, and one of his work buddies was named Bully. So they started calling Dr. Church "little Bully"—the nickname was not based on his characteristics or behavior.

In 1947 Dr. Church built a new medical clinic at the SW corner of 4th & Maple (321 Maple—still there). This was the first medical clinic constructed in NLR or LR after World War II. Clinic staff performed minor surgeries and offered emergency treatment, and in 1951 Dr. Church added a delivery room, providing the first hospital-type service in NLR. The clinic also included a dentist office, headed by Dr. Mitchell Smith.

As I said earlier, about 1928 Bully Church married Vivian Moseley, so E. B. and Bettie Moseley were his in-laws. Vivian Moseley Church was born in 1903 and graduated from NLR High School in 1920. Even as a small child, Vivian liked to give readings. In high school, she studied dramatics, speech, and piano and had the lead role in her senior play. Vivian attended college at Henderson-Brown in Arkadelphia (now Henderson State University) and spent her senior year at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where she graduated with a degree in oratory. She moved back to NLR and taught expression (or a combination of speech and drama) to NLR schools. She was like a contract teacher who traveled between schools—she might be at a different school each day of the week. She also directed the class plays at NLR High School. According to articles in the *NLR Times*, Mrs. Church was very talented and well-liked. She was also credited with starting the bob hairstyle in NLR (first in her class of 1920 to cut her hair in a bob).

Dr. and Mrs. Church had two sons, Bere (born 2/25/1930) and Marion (born 12/10/1931).

Shortly after Dr. Church built his new medical clinic in 1947, the Church family built a new house on Crestview Dr. in Park Hill and lived there by 1949. Bully and Vivian Church also built a smaller house next to theirs in Park Hill for Vivian's parents, E. B. and Bettie Moseley. I told you earlier that the Moseleys moved to 410 W. 5th in 1926, and they lived there until about 1950, when they moved up to Park Hill. The Churches and Moseleys were longtime members of the First Presbyterian Church in NLR (at NW corner of 4th & Maple). But in 1947 part of the congregation split off to form Park Hill Presbyterian Church, and Dr. and Mrs. Church were in this group. So this probably had something to do with them building a new house in Park Hill.

Dr. Church still made house calls up until the 1960s (and maybe later), and he practiced medicine until the early 1980s, when he was about 80 years old. Vivian Church died in January 1985. Dr. B. L. Church died on August 7, 1990.

Craftsman Architecture

Craftsman-style architecture is intended to evoke the sense of human craftsmanship. Craftsman houses are designed to blend in with the surrounding environment using combinations of earth tones and featuring multiple windows and porches. Porches are an important living space in a Craftsman house. Characteristics of the style include porches with massive, square columns that extend below the porch floor, tapered columns on square bases (like we see here), exposed rafter tails, triangular knee braces in the gable ends, dormer windows, etc. This evidence of craftsmanship is continued on the interior of the house as well, and you will especially see this in 415 Willow and 404 W. 5th. When you go through the houses, notice these things:

- Coffered ceilings
- Built-in china cabinet with leaded glass doors
- Other built-in features like bookshelves, drawers, pull-down desk, cabinets
- Interior columns
- Custom wainscoting (looks like half-timbering)
- Fireplace—original fireplace in 404 & 400 W. 5th.
- Windows with a variety of pane arrangements—this house has 10-over-1, 9-over-1, 1-over-1, and 6-over-1.
- Solid paneled wood doors on interior
- New custom-made mahogany Craftsman-style front door
- Kitchen cabinets
- Pull-out cutting board in kitchen
- Medicine cabinet & casement stained glass windows in the bathroom

Additional details about 415 Willow:

The house originally ended at the small utility room/sunroom off the kitchen, but an addition was built onto the rear.

In the mid-1940s Dr. Church had an attic fan installed in the house, and it was the wonder of the neighborhood. Everyone wanted to see the new attic fan. Keep in

mind that the nearest air conditioning at that time was in the Rialto Theater in the 200 block of Main (no longer extant).

Stories about the neighborhood from Bere Church

Bere once hit a baseball through Mrs. Edmonds' window at 400 W. 5th, but his father fixed it. In the 1930s and 40s, Frank G. Edmonds and his wife, Katie, lived at 400 W. 5th. Mr. Edmonds was not home very often because he was an engineer and later a conductor on the Mo-Pac Railroad.

Because his grandparents lived down the street at 410 W. 5th and also owned rent houses on the block, Bere remembered this block as a little enclave. No one had a fence, and everybody shared a ½ block backyard. There was a small chicken yard or coop in the backyard, though. A man would come down the alley and sell live chickens to homeowners. The chickens were temporarily held in the coop until it got close to Sunday, and then they were killed and dressed for Sunday dinner.

Bere remembered the families who rented the house at 404 W. 5th Street. All of them had daughters that were about the same age as Bere and Marion, so of course he remembered. ☺

In the late 1930s Stephen A. Hanserd, a manager at the Public Service Oil Co., lived at 404 W. 5th. Then Edwin H. DuVal, draftsman. By the mid-1940s it was Lawrence O. Campbell, an employee at the AR Ordnance Plant. By the late 1940s it was Lawrence W. Martin, manager of the Scott 5 & 10-cent store at 314 Main, NLR.

And Edgar Moseley may have also built the house at 406 W. 5th Street—if he did, he likely sold it to Dan and Addie Rewis. Rewis lived there from at least 1917 to 1947. Mr. Rewis was a barber and co-owner of Rewis and Long, barbers and billiards, 216 Main (in the now razed Matthews building). Regardless, Mr. and Mrs. Rewis were close friends of Edgar and Bettie Moseley.

Interestingly (not Bere's story), the Happy Hour Club used to meet at the home of E. B. and Bettie Moseley at 400 W. 5th in 1919.

Instructions—

You may come through the house now, but please keep the flow going toward the back door, which is through the kitchen so people don't get bottled up trying to get

back out of the front door. We have some photos laid out on the table for you to see as well. Please exit through the back door, and you may go over to Steve Mitchell's house at 404 W. 5th. Remember to keep the flow going one way over there as well. And then you may walk into the foyer of Connie McBride's house at 400 W. 5th to see her original fireplace and the process of finding the original floorplan after the house was chopped up into apartments.

If you have questions or want more information about a particular house, please ask me.

--Steve removed asbestos siding, installed Craftsman door, and added screened porch in 2006.