

**Sandwiching in History
Matthews-Storey House
8115 Ascension Road, Little Rock, Arkansas
Friday, May 3, 2019
By Callie Williams**



Good afternoon, my name is Callie Williams, and I am the Education and Outreach Coordinator at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Matthews-Storey House. I would like to give a big Thank You to Matt and Brandon and their family for allowing us to tour their house today! This tour is worth one hour of continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. Please see me after the tour if you are interested in this credit.

The Matthews-Storey House is a wonderful example of a Craftsman Style Airplane Bungalow. The house was completed by December of 1925 by the Justin Matthews Company, known for developing the Park Hill area of North Little Rock. This house was one of the earliest houses constructed in this area, known as the Westwood Development, which was planned by Matthews as a new development of country estates. Unfortunately this development didn’t grow as quickly as Matthews hoped and building stalled in the area until after WWII.

Development of the Westwood Addition

In the first decade of the 20th century, development of the city continued to the west with the opening of the 3rd Street viaduct over the rail lines to the west of the city limits in 1903. This led to the annexation of the town of Pulaski Heights, a residential development to the west, into the city limits in 1916.¹ Pulaski Heights was a suburban development created by Michigan

¹ Guy Lancaster, “Pulaski Heights (Pulaski County),” *Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=6575>.

industrialist Henry Franklin “H. F.” Auten in 1891.² The extension of the Little Rock street car service into the Heights area in 1903 allowed the growing suburban district to become an important driver of westward development along what would become Markham Street. With the successful growth of this upscale real estate development, based mostly on street car transportation, local businessman Justin Matthews saw an opportunity to create new suburban developments farther from the downtown center of Little Rock, but still convenient by automobile travel.³

The new national focus on the automobile as a primary means of transportation for the middle class allowed Justin Matthews and his real estate development companies, the Justin Matthews Company and the Metropolitan Trust Company, to search for un-developed suburban land that had previously been seen as only fit for farm or timber land. In the late 1910s and early 1920s, Matthews purchased land all over Pulaski County, with the intention of developing new areas for residential neighborhoods.⁴ The most well-known of his early developments was Park Hill, an area that was originally well to the north of early North Little Rock. Matthews went on to create other suburban developments in north Pulaski County including Edgemont, Lakewood, and Sylvan Hills. The only development that Matthews attempted to develop south of the Arkansas River would become the Westwood Addition to the city of Little Rock.

At the end of the 19th century, the area that would become Westwood was in the middle of Brodie Township, a rural landscape of scattered farmsteads, named after the nearby Brodie Creek.⁵ In the first decade of the 20th century, local landowner E. O. Bagley started to sell off sections of this land to various individuals and investors including Justin Matthews and his Metropolitan Trust Company.⁶ By 1923, the area was subdivided into individual lots and new curvilinear streets were laid out to provide access. In 1923, Westwood was named in platting documents filed in the Pulaski County deeds office. The site of Westwood, just north of Brodie Creek and northwest of Fourche Creek consisted of heavily wooded hills and valleys. The wooded lots and western location combined to give the area the appropriate name of “Westwood”.

The division of lots and introduction of access streets cleared the way for the sale of individual lots for new residences. Beginning in late 1923, Justin Matthews began an aggressive advertisement campaign to promote the newly available land in his Westwood subdivision. Relatively large ads, photographs of newly completed homes as well as land and home sale notices appeared nearly weekly in the real estate section of the *Arkansas Democrat* newspaper. The advertisements for Westwood would continue throughout the mid-1920s. Many of the advertisements, including a large spread in the May 3, 1925, edition of the *Arkansas Democrat*, focused on Westwood’s location along the newly paved 19th Street Pike, the street now known as Highway 5 and Colonel Glenn Road. The 19th Street Pike was the main road to the southwest

² *Ibid.*

³ Sandra Taylor Smith, *The Park Hill Historic District, North Little Rock*, Little Rock: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Merrick, George A., *Merrick’s Section Map of Pulaski County, Arkansas* [map], New York: Bears & Co., Map Printers, 1898.

⁶ Pulaski County Land Records, Pulaski Circuit/County Clerk Office, Westwood Addition 1923-1930.

part of Arkansas, starting in Little Rock it traveled through southwestern Pulaski County, through Benton and Malvern and then on to Hot Springs.

Unlike developments to the north, Westwood was designed by Matthews to feature winding paved streets, following the contours of the landscape. The paving of Westwood was a major component for preparing new projects for sale. An advertisement from 1925 noted that “Winding roads of paving carry you through this remarkable addition.”⁷ Matthews’s efforts to pave large swaths of urban and rural Pulaski County would eventually lead to trouble due to his role as both a developer and the head of local paving districts that mostly benefited his developments.⁸

Advertisement of 1925

“Own a Home in Westwood

In all large cities, for several years, there has been a steady tendency to get out where you can have more air, more light, more room, less dust and less noise.

The lots in Westwood are miniature country estates, each lot has about a half block front on a paved street and runs back from one to three blocks deep.

This gives ample room to set your home back from the pavement and have a winding road leading up to same; and live in quite (sic) seclusion as compared to our average congested sections.

Each of the miniature Westwood estates affords ample room for a garden, orchard, vineyard and small pasture for a cow or for a pony for your children...”⁹

Justin Matthews used the same development techniques at Westwood that he pioneered to promote the contemporary Park Hill project.¹⁰ The Justin Matthews Company worked to build a limited number of homes on lots across the Westwood development in order to promote the new neighborhood. The new houses not only prompted traffic from potential home-owners but also served to increase the surrounding property value of the undeveloped lots. This allowed Matthews to charge more for his remaining un-developed land.¹¹ The Matthews-Storey House is a rare intact survivor of Matthews building campaign in Westwood. Although this development was touted as made up of “miniature country estates at the price of a city lot” with all “city conveniences” with plans to install “paved streets, water, lights, phones and sewers”

⁷ “Drive Out 19th St. Pike Today,” *Arkansas Democrat*, May 3, 1925, p.10.

⁸ “E. O. Bagley, Westwood land owner, testified before the commission the property was turned over the Matthews for development. Bagley said Matthews “plotted the acreage, sold the bonds for a paving district to a friend in south Arkansas, and had a construction firm in which he was interested do the paving.”” “Matthews Acts Again Draw Eye of Audit Body,” *Blytheville Courier*, May 6, 1932. Smith, *The Park Hill Historic District, North Little Rock*, 2000.

⁹ “Twenty-Five Lots Sold In Westwood In Last Thirty Days...,” *Arkansas Democrat*, June 7, 1925, classifieds, Real Estate for Sale.

¹⁰ Sandra Taylor Smith, *The Park Hill Historic District, North Little Rock*, Little Rock: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2000.

¹¹ Justin Matthews, “If You Are Interesting in a Home Now...,” *Arkansas Democrat*, May 3, 1925, Real Estate section.

only paved streets were realized, city sewer service and street lights were never installed.¹² Due to the economic hardships of the Great Depression, the eventual full development of the area was only accomplished after World War II, as Matthews's large lots were divided into smaller lots, more in line with common urban lot sizes. The change in development can clearly be seen along the streetscape, with older homes such as the Matthews-Storey House located farther back on the lot than the more recent residences along the same street.

In November of 1925, Justin Matthews advertised a "Wonderful" new home for sale:

"Wonderful, new stone home for sale, built of weathered stone on lot 55x214 feet: wonderful view, best surroundings, faces paved street, large living room, dining room, breakfast room (not a breakfast nook), kitchen with pantry, concrete front and rear porches, four bedrooms (two bedrooms with bath downstairs and two bedrooms with lavatory upstairs), eight large closets, three closets are cedar lined, mirrored closet doors, tile bath, built in pedestal lavatory, hardwood floors throughout; a show place. \$8500 on easy terms. JUSTIN MATTHEWS Co."¹³

Although the address was not listed, the description of the house fits perfectly with the original floorplan layout and surviving features of the Matthews-Storey house.

The Westwood development, despite Justin Matthews's best attempts to promote the area as a great investment, saw only limited residential construction during the 1920s. Westwood remained relatively under-developed through the 1930s and 1940s due in part to the economic turmoil of the Great Depression as well as its lack of complete city services. Although the area had electric and limited telephone service, it lacked sewer service and street lights due to its position outside the city limits through the 1940s. The Matthews-Storey House also seems to have languished as a rental property for several years. The Matthews-Storey House finally sold to Mr. and Mrs. Robson Storey in September of 1934.¹⁴ Robson Storey was born in the United Kingdom in May of 1874.¹⁵ After arriving in the United States in 1897, he eventually found his way to Carl Junction, Missouri. Here he married 20 year old Emily Vetura Bray in May of 1899.¹⁶ In 1905, Emily Storey died, leaving Robson with two very young children.¹⁷ In 1907,

¹² "WESTWOOD" (advertisement), *Arkansas Democrat*, May 4, 1924, Real Estate section.

¹³ "WONDERFUL new stone home..."(classified listing), *Arkansas Democrat*, November 29, 1925, Real Estate section.

¹⁴ Warranty Deed, Metropolitan Trust Co. to Robson Storey & Wife, September 21, 1934.

¹⁵ US Census Rolls, 1900.

¹⁶ Carl Junction, Jasper County, Missouri, Marriage License for Robson Storey and Emily Vetura Bray, May 21, 1899. Ancestry.com

¹⁷ Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA.

Robson remarried to a Ms. Dollie M. Hart in Jasper, Missouri.¹⁸ Over the next twenty years, the couple moved several times across the mid-west and south; with Robson Storey working as a zinc miner and in some capacity in the furniture industry in Missouri, Oklahoma and Mississippi.¹⁹ Robson and Dollie Storey, now with seven children in tow, moved to Little Rock in 1931.²⁰ Mr. Robson was listed in local city directories as a “Christian Science Practitioner” with his wife as his assistant. In 1934, Robson purchased Justin Matthews’s house on Ascension Road from the Metropolitan Trust Company, Matthews’s real estate holding firm.²¹

Tragically, Mr. Storey died on January 4, 1936.²² Mrs. Dollie Storey continued to live in the house until she sold the home to Adnie B. Trimble in July of 1938.²³ Trimble then sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Edward Saunders in May of 1943.²⁴ The Saunders lived in the home through the late 1960s. It is likely the Saunders family added the small rental property to the rear of the house and the garage and workshop building. By 1965, Leslie and Jean Blackwood, the vice president of the Auto Club Insurance Agency was living at the “rear” of 8115 Ascension Road according to local city directories.

The Westwood development was annexed into the city of Little Rock boundaries on November 3, 1959, after a general election approved ordinance number 10987. This ordinance had been passed by the city council on September 22, 1959, on condition that it passed by a majority vote during the next general election. The ordinance called for the annexation of large areas to the North, South and West of the city limits into the official city of Little Rock. This annexation added over twenty-two square miles to the city and created the Westwood addition.²⁵ After several other various owners from the 1970s through the 1990, the house was updated and the interior was renovated sometime after 2000. The current owners purchased the property in 2014.

Matthews-Storey House

As noted before, the Matthews-Storey house is a rare example of a Craftsman style Airplane Bungalow. The Craftsman style originally grew out of the British Arts and Crafts movement of the late 1800s. The American Craftsman Style was also a cultural reaction to the elaborate ornamentation of earlier Victorian era house styles, including the Queen-Anne. Architects like Greene & Greene in California created a new American style that celebrated the arts and crafts movement as well as the family dynamic of the emerging American middle-class. Frank Lloyd Wright would also echo characteristics of the Craftsman style and develop his influential Prairie style. The popularity of this new design and the publication of early examples in magazines such as Gustav Stickley’s *Craftsman* which ran from 1901 to 1916, as well as *Good Housekeeping*,

¹⁸ Jasper, Missouri, Marriage License for Robson Storey and Dollie M. Hart, June 12, 1907. Ancestry.com

¹⁹ US Census Rolls, 1900, 1920, 1930.

²⁰ Little Rock City Directory, 1931.

²¹ Warranty Deed, Metropolitan Trust Co. to Robson Storey & Wife, September 21, 1934.

²² Ancestry.com. *U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA.

²³ Warranty Deed, Dollie M Storey to Adnie B Trimble, July 16, 1938.

²⁴ Warranty Deed, Adnie B Trimble to Edward R and Ann Saunders, May 20, 1943.

²⁵ Little Rock City Ordinance #10987. A later court case eventually reduced the total annexed property under this ordinance to 17.8 square miles. The 1961 court case found that certain areas had been inappropriately included within the ordinance’s list of properties to be added to the city.

House Beautiful, and *Architectural Record*, allowed the style to spread quickly throughout the United States.²⁶ In Arkansas, several good examples of Craftsman architecture survive across the state and in contemporary residential developments such as Park Hill and Pulaski Heights. The Matthews-Storey House, however, is an excellent example of the much less common Airplane Bungalow type.

The Airplane Bungalow form originated in the early 1920s. This unique form drew its name from the front façade's unusual massing, consisting of a narrow second story that resembled the cockpit and windshield of an early airplane and a wide, often cross gabled first story that resembled an airplane's outstretched wings. The national mania for air travel during its rapid development in the early 20th century led to a burst of airplane related or themed items in popular culture across the United States. The development and use of airplanes during World War I and their subsequent use for airmail delivery throughout the United States led to the airplane becoming an important icon in popular culture. The Airplane Bungalow form appeared in building magazines during the early 1920s just as the popular interest in the adventure of flying was starting. Advertisements for "Airplane Bungalow" type architectural plans capitalized on this intense interest in the new world of flight.

Magazines that published early Airplane Bungalow plans included *The Builder's Journal*, the *American Builder*, and the *Farm Journal*.²⁷ This unique bungalow type was a subset of the larger Craftsman style of architecture commonly seen in residential structures from the turn of the century until the 1940s. The Matthews-Storey House exhibits the characteristics of the Craftsman style including low pitched gable roofs, deeply overhanging eaves, visible rafter tails, and the extensive use of natural materials such as field stone.²⁸ The square field stone columns on the porch and the porte-cochere are also typical of the Craftsman style. The landscape features that surround the Matthews-Storey House also conform to the characteristics of the Craftsman style in their use of natural material and obvious execution by a master craftsman, especially the field stone bridge.

The home is clad in field stone at the first floor and stucco at the second floor with wooden accents including exposed rafter tails, roof beam ends, and six-over-one double-hung wooden windows. The house includes all of its original wooden windows which are now protected by exterior storm windows. The exterior of the first floor is clad with field stone. The second story is clad in stucco. All of the gables are also in-filled with stucco. The house includes two porches, one at the front and one at the rear. The home sits on a concrete foundation and also includes a partial basement storage space.

The roof of the house is composed of multiple gables with short sections of shed-form roofs along the east and west facades. Extended rafter tails are visible on all facades. The gable ends

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ "Airplane Bungalow," *American Builder*, vol. 29, no. 4, July 1920, p 72. "Airplane Bungalow," *American Builder*, vol. 3, p 97. "Airplane Bungalow," *Farm Journal*, vol. 47, issue 11, 1923. "Airplane Bungalow," *The Builder's Journal*, vol. 1, May 1920.

²⁸ Virginia McAlester and A. Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 153-454.

of the structure also include decorative, extended roof beam ends and wooden roof vents. A set of original, ornamental metal ridge caps top each section of the multiple gable roofs.

The main residence sits deep within the lot and is approached by a long, straight, paved driveway. The bridge over the deep ditch on the house approach is contemporary with the construction of the house and is constructed of field stone. The tops of both sides of the bridge are ornamented with randomly laid field stones. The main residence sits at the highest point of the lot, with the land gradually sloping down toward the north and south, away from the front of the house. A wood-framed garage sits to the southeast of the main residence. The garage building is most likely later than the original house, added to the property before 1950. A small, wood framed residential building was added to the property in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Today, this house is used as an AirBnB space and is open for visitors to tour today.

To the east of the main residence, a small decorative rock-lined pond was surrounded by decorative planting beds. Some of these decorative beds have been obscured by overgrowth. Between the pond and the eastern façade of the main residence is the remnants of a gravel drive that curved around the front of the house to the garage door of the garage building.

Many significant features still remain intact on the interior of the Matthews-Storey House. The layout of the original spaces is still evident. Original hardwood floors exist throughout the house. Also, original picture rail moldings, near the ceiling, are still intact in many of the rooms. Closets throughout the house also retain their original cedar linings. Windows and doorways also retain their wide, simple wooden ornamental surrounds, typical of the Craftsman style. A small built-in closet, located directly west of the rear exterior door, originally contained a built-in ironing board and is now used as a small pantry. Many of the interior doors are also original and retain their original hardware. The only major exterior alteration is the enlargement of the basement space and the addition of a basement access stairway on the interior and the enclosure of the rear porch with wood frame walls and metal windows.

The house was Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2015 for its significance as a Craftsman style Airplane Bungalow built by the Justin Matthews Company in the Westwood development west of the city of Little Rock.

Thank you again for coming, and please join us for our next Sandwiching in History Tour at the Irv Daniel House at 1622 Waterside Drive in North Little Rock on Friday, June 7th. Also, please join us on Saturday, May 18th at 11:00 a.m. for our Walks Through History Tour in Downtown Harrison, starting at the Hotel Seville on Main Street. Thank you again for coming and have a great weekend.

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