

Sandwiching in History Tour

Irv Daniel House

1622 Waterside Drive, North Little Rock

June 7th, 2019

By Mason Toms



Happy Friday everyone, my name is Mason Toms and I work at the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program which is a division of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Thank you for coming and welcome to the Irv Daniel House. Today's tour is worth one hour of AIA continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. Please see me after the tour if you are interested.

Completed in 1968, the Irv Daniel House is a unique example of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic architecture by architect Frank Doughty.

North Little Rock/Park Hill

The town of Argenta was platted in 1866 on the north shore of the Arkansas River by Thomas Newton, Sr., across the river from the town of Little Rock. The name Argenta was derived from the Latin for silver, *argentum*, which was a reference to the Kellogg Lead and Silver Mines that were located about 10 miles north of the town. In the 1880s Argenta was closer to a frontier settlement than a twin city to the state's capital. The intersection of several major rail lines, and the mills and factories that accompanied them, brought many workers to the area, but they were of a rough sort. Numerous saloons and houses of ill repute were common in the town, and there was no official governance, which led to a reputation of lawlessness and immorality. It is during this time that some say the term "dogtown" was created as a reference to this working-class population and their poor behavior. Others say that the term was created when the town of North Little Rock was officially created. It was part of an elaborate scheme by William Faucette to gain control of Argenta from Little Rock, which had annexed Argenta as its 8th ward in 1890 without giving the residents of Argenta a voice in the matter. Step one in his plan was completed in 1901 when the town of North Little Rock was created just north of Argenta. Step two came in 1903 when Faucette crafted the Walnut Ridge-Hoxie Bill and introduced it into the state legislature, which allowed any two towns within a mile of each other to merge, if agreed upon by both towns through popular vote. The problem was that Little Rock supporters were not aware of the statewide implication of the bill. After the bill was passed Argenta was annexed into North Little Rock, and the

new city was simply called North Little Rock. In 1906 the new city decided to change its name to Argenta, but that name was changed back to North Little Rock in 1917. As the story goes, Little Rock was none too pleased with this legislative sleight of hand, so in retaliation Little Rock citizens would commonly release their stray dogs into the area just across the river, hence "Dogtown". However, there is not any concrete evidence to confirm either of these origins, but they do make for a good story.

What is known is that the city continued its growth through the early twentieth century. The city tended to primarily expand to the north because it was bounded on the west by a large hill, commonly known as "Big Rock" and a swampy, marshy area to the east, commonly called "Dark Hollow." In 1921, Justin Matthews platted the Park Hill development on a high area just north of the city. Park Hill was North Little Rock's first suburban development and the sale of properties began as early as 1922. The paving of the Ark-Mo Highway, now called J.F.K. Boulevard, in 1927 allowed for greater access to Park Hill from downtown Little Rock, which allowed the development to take-off. By the early 1930s, Park Hill boasted 245 built structures, but the Great Depression pretty much brought this growth to an end.

Around 1940, when the area had recovered from the Great Depression, construction in Park Hill began again. As before, the development of the area proceeded from south to north. From 1940 to 1950, roughly 236 structures were built in Park Hill. Though Park Hill is mainly known for its Craftsman and Spanish Eclectic Style homes, later-built sections of the development embraced a wide variety of architectural styles, including Colonial Revival, minimal traditional, and ranch houses. The homes along Waterside and its feeder streets were among the last houses to be built in Park

Hill, which explains why they look so different from the earlier homes in the neighborhood. Because so many of these homes share architectural elements and designs with the nearby Lakewood development, and they were built at the same time, many people mistake this area as part of Lakewood. However, it is technically Park Hill.

This area has several great examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture in addition to the Daniel House. In fact, there are two homes nearby that were actually designed to be the personal residences of architects. This points to the fact that Park Hill continued to be the most fashionable area of the city into the 1960s. However, it was the scenic beauty of the area, and not the prestige, that drew many of the residents, including Irvin & Elizabeth Daniel.

Irv Daniel

Irvin S. Daniel was born in 1932 to parents Starling Edgar Daniel and Annie May Irvin Daniel. The Daniels came to Arkansas from Texas in the early 1920s. According to the family, the couple chose Arkansas because his family was in Texas and her family was in Tennessee, so they just picked the halfway point. Initially, the Daniels moved to Heber Springs, Arkansas, where Starling tried his hand at being a farmer. However, this did not pan out well for him. As he later said, “all you can grow in Heber Springs is rocks.” This led him to enter into the printing business around 1930. In 1934, when Irvin was two, the family moved to North Little Rock. They lived in a house on Lincoln Avenue and they owned a little commercial building across the street, where Starling ran his printing business.

Irvin attended North Little Rock schools, where he graduated in 1949. He went on to attend college at the Little Rock Junior College, now UALR, after high school, but the Korean War interrupted his education. He served in the United State Army for two years, but, according to him, he did not see much action due to his posting in Europe. Irvin achieved the rank of corporal before his enlistment was complete, and later he began to attend classes at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, where he studied business. It was during his time at the University that he met the future architect of his house, Frank Doughty. Irvin graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1955, and decided to return to central Arkansas afterwards.

Irvin's first job after college was at the former Esso Service Station at the foot of Cantrell Hill in Little Rock. However, while Irvin was under the impression that he was part of a three-month management-training project, in the eyes of the company he was really there just to pump gas. This led him to seek employment elsewhere when their scheme was exposed. Soon after, Irvin went to work as a salesman for the International Harvester Company, who had their regional offices on East 2nd Street in Little Rock. However, this position was also not to last. In early 1957, Irvin's father asked him to come help out at the family printing company, which Irvin, of course, agreed to.

Daniel Label Printing Company had always been a family operation from its creation in 1930. However, it was also always a rather small operation. This all changed after Irvin began working there. Irvin had heard about a new printing process that was created in St. Louis, Missouri, called "flexography." This "new" type of printing allowed the user to continuously print designs onto spooled rolls of material, which was far faster than the standard offset printing at the time. The machines at that time were relatively

small in comparison to the modern versions. So much so, that in 1957 Irvin was able to drive up to St. Louis, purchase one, and bring it back in the truck of his Plymouth. The purchase of the new printer allowed the company to take on bigger clients, and more of them. One of their first “big” clients was the Meyer’s Bakery in Little Rock, made famous by their “brown-n-serve” rolls. The company continued to grow over the next several years to become one of the biggest names in the industry.

A year after Irvin trekked up to St. Louis to retrieve the flexographic printer, Irvin married the love of his life, Elizabeth Angelina Ferrell. The couple would soon start a family. This family grew to include two boys and two girls, all of which lived in a little two bedroom house on Lincoln Avenue near Irvin’s parents. Before too long it became painfully obvious that a new house was needed. Irvin and Elizabeth found the perfect piece of property on the northern edge of the Park Hill development in North Little Rock. The couple fell in love with the beautiful setting, but Irvin refused to pay more than \$1,200 for the lot. Elizabeth relayed this to the realtor and the seller agreed to the price. All that was left was for them to do was come up with a design, one that would satisfy their needs while accenting the natural beauty of the site. As Irvin said, he knew that he could never live in a regular house. Though Irvin had grown up with several talented architects, including Herman Lee and Kip Moore, there was only one person he could envision creating his dream home, Frank Doughty.

The house took a year to build and cost about \$30,000 initially. In 1968, upon the fervent request from his family, Irvin had air-conditioning installed in the house and built a carport, also designed by Doughty. After these projects, along with a few other things, the grand total for the house was \$50,000.

The Daniels raised their four children in the house, and now welcome grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren into it. Irvin said that he could not imagine living anywhere else.

Frank Doughty

Frank Lorenzo Doughty was born on June 21, 1930, in Memphis, Tennessee. Though his family owned a large plantation outside of Tunica, Mississippi, Frank said they were by no means wealthy. It was during his childhood in Tunica that he first took an interest in architecture. Though Frank often enjoyed building model trains and planes, it was not until 1942, when he watched the erection of the Tunica Methodist Church as a teenager that he became interested in how buildings came to be. A few years later, his family moved, briefly, to Robinson, Illinois, but eventually settled in Stuttgart, Arkansas, where he spent his senior year of high school and eventually graduated. His move to Stuttgart was a very fortuitous one though. For it was there that he met his future wife, Suzanne Buerkle.

After Frank graduated from high school in 1948, an interest in art led him to enroll at the Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, Florida. However, his time at the art school was cut short by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Frank enlisted in the Air Force and was stationed at the Mountain Home Air Force Base in Mountain Home, Idaho, where he spent the entire war. During his time in Idaho, he was part of a psychological war unit that, unknown to him until later, was essentially a CIA Black Ops research program. Frank remarked that he thought that the exercises they were doing seemed very odd, but he was just doing what he was told. To make extra money on the

side, Frank worked with a more colorful group of people. One job that he fell into was painting icons on slot machine reels for a local business owner because the Idaho legislature banned the importation of new slot machine parts. His other side job was painting murals on the back-bars of local drinking establishments. He said that the mural painting did not pay much, but he did get free beer while he was working, so it was a win-win.

In mid-1953, Frank was offered \$300 to be discharged early from the Air Force, an offer he took and after which he moved back to Arkansas. Using the G.I. Bill, he started taking classes at Little Rock Junior College, but he had heard about the newly created architecture program at the University of Arkansas, so he called and made an appointment with the program's founder, John G. Williams. Williams impressed and inspired Frank so much that he immediately enrolled in the program to study under Williams. Frank was a quick study and proved to be more than adept at architectural design, finishing his architectural education at the top of his class.

Frank's design talent led Williams to send him to work in the offices of internationally renowned architect and Arkansas native, Edward Durell Stone, for two years after he completed his coursework in 1958, an honor that Williams reserved for only his brightest and best pupils. His reputation of creating beautiful and skillful rendered perspectives preceded him. Because of this, Frank mainly worked on renderings for high-profile projects, instead of working on the designs themselves. Some of the more significant projects that Frank worked on were a proposed design for the National Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC (1959), the World Trade Center in New Orleans (1959), and the National Cultural Center in Washington, DC, which

eventually became the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. While Frank admits that he learned a great deal about architecture and how it was practiced in the professional world in Stone's office, life in New York did not agree with Frank's laid-back character. The hectic hustle and bustle of the Big Apple made Frank long for the quiet calm of the rural countryside of his youth. In 1960, he decided to return to Arkansas, where he and Suzanne were finally married and where he eventually went to work for renowned Ozark Modernist, E. Fay Jones.

Jones knew Frank from his time in the architecture program at the university, where Jones taught since his return to Arkansas in 1953. When Frank inquired about a possible position, Jones leapt at the opportunity to have someone of Frank's talent in his office. Once there, Frank was given the opportunity to actually design a great deal more than he had in the Stone firm. According to a few sources, Frank was generally given a great deal of free-reign on the projects he was assigned. Over the following four years, Frank worked on some of the most influential designs to be produced by the Jones firm during that period.

Some of the more significant projects that Frank worked on were the Glenn and Alma Parsons House in Springdale (1961-65), the Shaheen-Goodfellow Weekend Cottage, better known as "Stoneflower" (1963), the Underwood Building in Fayetteville (1963-66), and the Orval and Alta Faubus House in Huntsville (1964-67). However, despite the opportunities to work on large-scale commissions in his home state, Frank decided it was time that he make a name for himself in the architectural community. In 1965, Frank left the Jones firm and moved to central Arkansas in order to sit for his

architectural licensing exams. Unfortunately, Frank got the date of the exam wrong and ended up having to stay in central Arkansas longer than he had planned.

Frank's extended stay in central Arkansas was actually his most productive time during his career in Arkansas. Between 1964 and 1967, Frank received commissions for six buildings, over half of his whole body of work in the state. Two of these commissions were in Carlisle, one in Brinkley, one in Goodwin, one in Little Rock, and a single house in North Little Rock. The designs Frank produced during this period exhibited a more solidified set of elements and architectural forms by an architect who was finally coming into his own. It was during this period that Frank created the design for the Daniel House.

Frank did eventually sit for architectural licensing exams, and not surprisingly, he passed. Around 1966-67, Frank and his wife moved to Boca Raton, Florida, where he opened a small practice of his own. Even though the practice was relatively successful and Frank won awards from many of the designs he produced at the time, it turned out that Frank's passion for architectural design did not extend to the tedious and mundane tasks of operating his own firm. He was wonderful at creating detailed drawings and breath-taking renderings, but was not so good at billing clients or following up to make sure the invoices were paid. Unfortunately, in 1971, Frank decided to close his practice and he and Suzanne returned to Fayetteville, where he took a position teaching in the School of Architecture at the University of Arkansas. He retired from teaching in 1993, after twenty-two years of instructing and inspiring young architects.

The Architecture

The steep slope of the site for the Daniel House required an architect that was imaginative as well as talented. Irvin knew that Frank Doughty would be up to the task. Designed in 1964 and completed in 1965, Frank's design for the Daniel House is an example of Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture. We can see this because the design embraces the landscape by sinking the house into the hillside, instead of carving out a flat area for the house to sit on. Additionally, by staining the exterior wood board and batten siding black and contrasting it with rusty colored brick, the house seems to blend into the hillside, as part of the landscape. Frank brought nature into the house by turning the plan of the house at an angle so that two full sides of the lower level were exposed, allowing for ample natural light and view from the lower spaces. The upper level was given a cantilevered balcony on two sides, which takes full advantage of the view, with the other two sides being roughly at ground level. In a move that echoed many of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie-style designs, Frank placed the entrance so that it faced the parking area and not the street, allowing visitors to discover it after meandering through the property for a bit.

The exterior architecture of the house seems to echo one of Frank Lloyd Wright's final projects, the 1957 Marshall Erdman Prefab House #2. Marshall Erdman & Associates, Inc., was a company based out of Wisconsin that began selling a line of prefabricated homes in 1953 called U-Form-It. In 1954, Wright approached them about designing some new homes for them, which would be better designed and only cost half as much to build. Eventually, Wright created three different house plans, which were aptly named Erdman Prefab Houses #1, #2, and #3. Only nine of the houses were ever

built from the series, with the #1 plan being the most popular. Seven of the #1 Plan were built and two of the #2 plans were built. Unfortunately, there were no examples of the #3 Plan built.

Like the Daniel House, the plan of the Erdman Prefab House #2 was essentially square in nature with a central fireplace and chimney. The plan also featured a living room that enjoyed two full walls of glass, like the Daniel House. While the floor plans of the Prefab House #2 and the Daniel House are very similar in many ways, it seems that Frank likely took more inspiration from Fay Jones's personal residence when creating the interior spatial arrangements. The Jones House in Fayetteville was built in 1953, when he returned to Arkansas from Oklahoma. Like the Daniel House, the main living spaces are on the upper level, with the master bedroom being separated from the public rooms by the fireplace and a low couch. Also in both houses, the children's rooms were placed on the lower level, which was meant to give them their own space away from the adults, but that did not always work out. Another place we see the influence from Jones was in the design of the balcony railings, which share a similar design to the ones on the Jones House. However, taken as a whole, the Daniel House is a unique example of Mid-Century Modern Organic architecture in Arkansas. Though it took elements and ideas from other designs, the resulting house was fully from the mind of Frank Doughty.

I hope you have enjoyed today's tour. Feel free to explore the house. The next Sandwiching in History will be on July 12th at War Memorial Stadium located at 1 Stadium Drive in Little Rock, and our next Walks through History Tour will be September 21st in the beautiful Lake Village Commercial Historic District in Lake Village, AR. Thank you for coming and have a great weekend.

Bibliography

Daniel, Irv. Interviewed by Mason Toms, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. 30 May 2019.

Daniel Label: Labels That Stick. "About Daniel Label Printing Inc."
<https://www.daniellabel.com/abouts-us>.

Doughty, Frank. Interviewed by Mason Toms, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. 12 December 2018.

Smith, Sandra Taylor. *The Park Hill Historic District, North Little Rock*. Little Rock: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2000. Available online at <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com>.