

2018 QQA Greater Little Rock Modern Tour

Development of the Area

The area of the city, now called Midtown, was originally well outside of the city limits of Little Rock. It wasn't until 1943 that this area was even near the city, but even then the city ended at Harrison Street which is about nine blocks away from here. By the mid-1940s, the city limit moved four blocks closer here and ended at Filmore Street. It would not be until the mid-1950s that this area would be included within the boundaries of the City of Little Rock. Back in those days University Avenue was called Hayes Street and was a gravel road. Much of this area was the private hunting grounds of the very influential Rebsamen family. Surrounding that were scattered farms and simple houses. Things began to change for the area when Little Rock Junior College, now UALR, moved to their present location in 1947, which was land donated by the Rebsamen family to the Little Rock School District for the purposes of creating a college. In 1957, Little Rock Junior College became Little Rock University so the city decided to rename Hayes Street to University Street in 1959. Shortly thereafter, the city embarked on a massive public improvement project on University Street. The road was widened to four lanes with a median and they added mercury lights down from Markham to Colonel Glenn. When this project was completed in 1961, the street was renamed University Avenue. However, the numerous bright lights down the street led people to nickname University Avenue as the "Great White Way," a common nickname for newly and overly lit streets in the 1940s and 50s.

Development of Broadmoor

Just to set this development in context, 1954 was also the year of the Brown vs. Board of Education ruling by the Supreme Court, which would lead to the dramatic events at Central High in 1957. It was also the year that Marilyn Monroe married Joe DeMaggio and the songs “Rock around the Clock” and “Shake, Rattle and Roll” by Bill Haley and the Comets hit the charts. Elvis had just started recording his first songs at Sun Studio in Memphis. The movies Seven Brides for Seven Brothers and White Christmas premiered. Also, I Love Lucy, The Jackie Gleason Show, and Dragnet are the most popular shows on TV. And while watching your TV in 1954 you could enjoy the newly introduced “TV Dinners”.

In late 1953, Hayes Street soon to be known as University Avenue, was still a gravel road that traveled through heavily wooded areas west and south of the city limits of Little Rock. The area had been in the sights of local developers as an area ripe for residential and commercial development for several years, especially since the move of the Little Rock Junior College (now known as the University of Arkansas at Little Rock or UALR, named changed in 1969 after merging with the University of Arkansas system) to a wooded area along Hayes Street in 1947. The land on which the new college building were built was donated by Raymond Rebsamen, a Little Rock businessman who also a huge area of land across Hayes Street from the new campus. Some Arkansas developers got their names in the paper on a regular basis, but none more often than Elbert Lion Fausett. He started out as a Ford dealer, was a car collector and racer, legislator, publisher-printer and used car salesman before becoming a nationally known builder. Fausett was the first realtor to utilize extensive advertising in

the form of print, radio, bus benches and billboards. Among the state's most prolific developers, by 1954 he had built 12 subdivisions and had branched into Faulkner and Saline counties.¹ Fausett's most ambitious residential development was Broadmoor in Little Rock.

Mr. and Mrs. Elbert Fausett of Fausett Realty purchased the property on Hayes Street that would become the Broadmoor development in 1953 from Raymond Rebsamen. The purchased acreage included a lake, trees, and the Rebsamen hunting lodge. Construction on the first house started on June 6, 1953.² The first homes in the development were built along Lakeshore Drive with prices for the new homes ranging from 11,500 to 21,600. According to neighborhood historians, the first four families to move into the neighborhood were the Bates family at 29, the Spilman Family at 34, the Speights family at 36, and the Tate family at 38, all on Lakeshore Drive. These families had moved into their homes by the end of 1953 and the area streets were still gravel. By September of 1954, one year after its opening advertisements, there were 100 families living in the area³

Broadmoor was publicized as the largest subdivision in the state from 1953 to 1955. Fausett's addition was also advertised as the only one with "year 'round air conditioned homes" and central heating. What made it unique and all the more relevant to mid-century home buyers was that Fausett offered 18 plans, later expanded to 24 to accommodate the terrain and all were built in the new Ranch style.⁴ Broadmoor was

¹ "Broadmoor Latest Step in 'Fabulous' Career," *Arkansas Democrat*, September 19, 1954.

² *Arkansas Democrat*, July 3, 1955

³ *Democrat*, September 19, 1954

⁴ "Broadmoor Displays Air-conditioned Home Plan to Public," *Arkansas Democrat*, September 20, 1953; "This is Fausett's Broadmoor," Information provided by Lanita Reynolds, Little Rock,

built utilizing on-site prefabrication methods in shops set up at the addition. Specialized workmen operated a metal shop and a cabinet shop where all woodwork was completed then applied in complete sections. A mill on Broadmoor Drive allowed workmen to pre-cut sections then take them to lots for construction.⁵ Broadmoor also had its own roofing supply and decking yard. Using this process crews could complete one house within one or two weeks, saving Fausett money. It was also noted in early newspaper accounts of the lots were designed to allow for trees to be retained during the building of the neighborhood.⁶

There were also several model homes built, including one at 2800 S. University Avenue that was known as the “X-Ray House” due to its use of cut away walls that allowed potential buyers views of the insulation, heating and cooling systems and general “inner workings” of the house.

The homes built in the area are examples of the then new and popular Ranch style, with features such as low, hipped roofs with deep roof overhangs, high windows, large picture windows and integral carports.⁷

The Fausetts also installed a swimming beach for the lake and a shopping center with a “buffer zone” for church construction and by 1955, a kindergarten was dedicated. Also, by mid-1955 five churches in the area were either planned or being built.⁸ The area was heavily advertised as being adjacent to a new planned junior high school as

7/25/2012; “Fausett Sees Completion of Broadmoor by 1956,” *Arkansas Democrat*, September 19, 1954.

⁵ *Arkansas Democrat*, September 20, 1953.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ “Fast-Growing Broadmoor to Be Completed Year Ahead of Schedule,” *Arkansas Democrat*, July 3, 1955.

⁸ *Arkansas Democrat*, July 3, 1955.

well as local churches and shopping areas. An elementary school was built south of Broadmoor and an associated junior high school opened in 1956 (Originally planned as a whites only school known as Southwest Junior High School, now known as Hamilton Learning Academy).⁹

By 1955, over 350 homes in Broadmoor were finished, which surpassed Fausett's expectations. Although initially projecting 700 homes total the final total was 553 homes constructed when the last home was built in 1957.¹⁰ Originally outside the city limits, Broadmoor was annexed into Little Rock in 1957. When Fausett was through with it, Broadmoor covered 190 acres, had seven miles of paved road and contained 553 homes. Hayes Street was then renamed University on June 15, 1959 by city resolution.¹¹ Also in 1959, the Broadmoor Shopping Center along University Avenue was opened and included a Piggly Wiggly, Ben Franklins, Toyland, Walgreens Drugs and a few others smaller shops. In later years, the commercial developments along University Avenue would be blamed in part for the decline in the downtown commercial areas.¹²

It is important to note that the Broadmoor neighborhood was for all intents and purposes a whites only neighborhood at its inception and for over 10 years after. Although there were early sections of Little Rock that were developed after the civil war and into the early 20th century as racially mixed, as the city grew to the west, most

⁹ "New Views and Home Plans Set in Broadmoor," *Arkansas Democrat*, September 11, 1955; The school was renamed after Mr. Willie "Bill" Hamilton an African American educator who also served in state government for many years.

¹⁰ "This is Fausett's Broadmoor," Information provided by Lanita Reynolds, Little Rock, 7/25/2012.

¹¹ Little Rock Resolution No. 2365, 15 June 1959.

¹² "Hayes Street: A New Town is Booming," *Arkansas Gazette*, September 14, 1958.

neighborhoods were either stated or understood to be for either black or white families only. Although the practice of racially specific property covenants had fallen from favor, developers and real estate agents used “red-lining” and “block busting” to ensure that properties in white neighborhoods were not sold to black families.

In 1966, it was evident and even noted in newspaper articles that the early mixed race neighborhoods of central Little Rock were quickly giving way to the concentration of races in certain areas of the city. “In such circumstances, racial segregation becomes more obvious and all-encompassing, especially when schools desegregated by law become largely segregated in fact simply because of prevailing residential patterns”¹³

In September of 1965, African-American lawyer John Walker moved into the Broadmoor development after purchasing a house at 105 Broadmoor. As noted in later articles, “a can of paint was hurled through his front window and his shrubbery was set on fire even before his family moved in.” Also, he was ostracized from the very active social community of the area. In 1968, after several meetings in his Broadmoor home with other interested African-American families, John Walker arranged to purchase 12 lots in the newly developed University Park neighborhood to the north of Broadmoor to promote racial diversity in the new development.¹⁴ This strategy worked and many of these original families still live in the University Park neighborhood. Today, the Broadmoor neighborhood is more diverse, with the population split roughly in half between black and white residents.¹⁵

¹³ (John Kirk article – Arkansas times)

¹⁴ Walker interview with Callie Williams, 26 September 2018.

¹⁵ <http://www.justicemap.org/>

Broadmoor Kindergarten

One of the other unique features of the Broadmoor Development that set it apart from many other developments of the time in the country was that it was designed to be a complete community within itself. When the area was originally planned spaces were set aside for parks, churches, schools, and a shopping center. Justin Matthews made similar allotments when he laid out the Lakewood area; however, it was the inclusion and development of an adjacent shopping center that made Broadmoor stand out. As we mentioned earlier, when this area was first created there was not much around it. It was therefore necessary for Faucette to provide all of the conveniences that homebuyers could find closer to the heart of the city in his new neighborhood just outside of it. However, there was one project by Mr. Faucette that was wholly unique to Broadmoor, the Broadmoor Kindergarten.

The Broadmoor Kindergarten Building was the first childcare facility built by a developer as part of a new residential subdivision in the country. Little Rock architect Richard Groh and W.F. Hibbard designed the one of a kind building. According to articles from the time, the kindergarten featured radiant heating in the floors and an air-conditioning system that changed the air every seven minutes. It was constructed of white Roman brick, steel, and concrete, which made the building virtually fire proof. The large wall of windows along the north façade allowed in ample natural light while avoiding glare and additional heat gain. It was large enough to accommodate 180 students and boasted 2,400 sqft of classroom space. The most interesting and odd inclusion in the design was the attached residence for the teacher on the south side of

the building, which has led to the common misunderstanding of the school being an addition onto a house. The building also featured boys and girls restrooms with miniature fixtures to better accommodate the tikes in attendance. Two of the classrooms in the building could be combined, by means of a folding wall, to create a community meeting space complete with a small stage. There was even an isolation room for the child or children that may develop an illness while at school. It was the cutting-edge of preschool design when it opened on November 6, 1955.

The Broadmoor Kindergarten was active and in use until 1959 when Bale Elementary was opened just down W. 32nd Street from the kindergarten. The school was named in honor of Bale Chevrolet founder and longtime Little Rock School Board of Directors member Hardin Bale. It was in that year that University Baptist Church bought the property to serve as their new home.

University Baptist Church was created when a schism occurred in the Broadmoor Baptist Church, at the property just north of the kindergarten. The divide was over racial segregation. The pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church at the time, Wesley Pruden, Sr., was an evangelical preacher and strong advocate of racial segregation in society. During the Central High Crisis, he was a very vocal supporter of the mob of protestors that demonstrated even placing newspaper ads in their defense and fundraising for bond money to get the ones arrested out of jail. However, there were many members in the Broadmoor Baptist congregation that did not agree with Pruden's views. When these members grew too vocal, Pruden had them removed from the church rolls. The exiled members founded University Baptist Church and initially met in the Army Reserve Building on the campus of Little Rock University on January 5, 1959, with a group of

108 people. By February 1959, the fledging congregation managed to purchase the Broadmoor Kindergarten Building. However, Broadmoor Baptist Church made it very difficult for the congregation to operate, both by general harassment and by attacking them in newspaper ads. Despite this, the congregation thrived and grew exponentially over the following years.

By late 1964, the Broadmoor Baptist Church and Pruden had run out of supporters for its racist agenda and the church was broke. The congregation disbanded and what little notoriety that Pruden had managed to create faded away completely. In January of 1965, University Baptist Church purchased the Broadmoor Baptist Church building where they had once been rejected. In 1968 the congregation constructed their current auditorium, the building just north of the Kindergarten, and in 1970, the church voted to change their name to Lakeshore Baptist Church. Lakeshore has since created a legacy of outreach to the needy and progressiveness. The church elects female deacons, does outreach and support to HIV/AIDS victims, and actively assists and supports numerous drug and alcohol rehabilitation programs. In recent years, Lakeshore Baptist began to lease out the former Broadmoor Kindergarten Building to the New Millennium Church. This church continues the progressive mission of inclusion and outreach started by University Baptist so many years ago.

St. Luke's United Methodist Church

The congregation known today was St. Luke's United Methodist was originally organized in 1831 when a group began to meet in a government building on Second Street. In 1845, the Methodist Episcopal Church nationally split over the issue of slavery and became known as Methodist Episcopal Church North and South. This congregation

sided with the South. After the Civil War, the congregation moved to a new location on Main Street and became known as the Main Street Methodist Episcopal Church. However, the congregation could not handle the cost of the structure and had to sell the property. In 1901, they built a second building at corner of Fourteenth and Scott streets in Little Rock. Though no longer on Main Street, the congregation kept the name Main Street Methodist Episcopal Church South. In 1939, the Methodist Episcopal Church reunited into a single fellowship and the Main Street Methodist Episcopal Church South changed their name to the Scott Street Methodist Church. The congregation remained here until 1954 when the Little Rock Methodist Conference decided that there needed to be a new church built on the western edge of the city. The members of Scott Street Methodist Church volunteered to move their congregation to the newly built Broadmoor addition of the city.

The congregation sold their building on Scott Street and met in the Army Reserve Building on the campus of Little Rock Junior College, now the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, while they constructed a church on W. 32nd Street, on the southern edge of the Broadmoor development. The new church was officially dedicated on March 4, 1956, under the new name of St. Luke's United Methodist Church. It was one of the first churches in the area and contained a multi-purpose space that acted as a sanctuary and fellowship hall and four classrooms. In 1961, the congregation added an additional six classrooms to the south end of the building. However, the ever-growing population of the congregation soon created a need for a new, larger sanctuary space. They wanted a space that fit with the wooded setting of the church grounds but also projected

the “modern” sensibilities of the congregation. In 1964, they hired the Little Rock firm of Cowling & Roark to design a new worship space for them.

Cowling & Roark was founded in 1962 when architectural engineer Price Roark left the notable Little Rock firm of Erhart Eichenbaum Rauch & Blass to join Dan Cowling in creating a new firm. Cowling too had recently left another partnership, one with Morris Smith, which had lasted from 1957 to 1961. It was Cowling’s connection to Morris Smith that allowed Cowling & Roark to receive the commission. Morris Smith had been the architect of the original building on W. 32nd for the congregation of St. Luke’s. The new partnership between Cowling and Roark was somewhat short lived and only existed from 1962 to 1966; however, in that short time they managed to create some wonderful buildings.

Cowling was a native of Rogers, AR. He originally started college at Arkansas Polytechnic College in Russellville, now Arkansas Tech., but transferred to the University of Arkansas after two years to study architecture. Cowling graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1952. In 1957, he joined Little Rock architect Morris Smith to open the firm of Smith & Cowling. This firm lasted until 1961 when Smith retired.

Roark was a Little Rock native. After serving in the European Theater during World War II, he returned to the University of Arkansas where he was a part of the first class of the newly created architecture program, alongside Fay Jones, Bob Laser, and Ernie Jacks. However, he transferred his last year to Washington University in St. Louis where he earned his Bachelors of Science in Architectural Engineering in 1949. After graduation, he moved back to Little Rock and went to work for the architectural firm of

Erhart and Eichenbaum, which later became Erhart Eichenbaum Rauch & Blass, where he stayed until 1961.

Though the church was the commission of Cowling & Roark, Fred Perkins was the project architect. Perkins was born on July 8, 1938, in Carlisle, AR. He originally attended college at Arkansas Polytechnic College in Russellville for two years, but transferred in 1958 to the University of Arkansas to study architecture under esteemed Arkansas architect, E. Fay Jones. Jones focused heavily on the works of Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright's Organic Architecture, which Jones saw as being the superior approach to design. This early influence from Jones likely explains the existence of so many Wrightian details and elements in the buildings that Perkins produced. Over summer breaks during college, Perkins would come back to Little Rock and work for Morris Smith and later Dan Cowling. It was because of the relationships that he formed during this time that he went to work for Cowling & Roark once he graduated in 1962. During his time with Cowling & Roark Perkins found a bit of a niche in church design, having designed at least three churches in the central Arkansas area by 1966. However, the sanctuary at St. Luke's United Methodist was his first ecclesiastical design.

When Cowling and Roark parted ways, Perkins decided to stay with Roark when he opened his new firm at 713 W. 2nd Street in Little Rock. Perkins would eventually become Roark's first named partner at the new firm. The firm continued to grow and still exists today in the same location, although the name has changed to Roark Perkins Perry Yelvington. Perkins still goes into the office almost every day and still plays an active role in the firm. Over the years, Perkins designed several other churches around

Arkansas. According to Perkins, he must have “designed around 200 churches in the state.” Some other designs that you might be familiar with are Markham Methodist Church, Jacksonville First Presbyterian Church, Henderson United Methodist Church, the eastern section of Central Church of Christ, Hunter United Methodist Church, and St. James United Methodist Church at 321 Pleasant Valley Drive.

The architecture of St. Luke’s United Methodist is the most formal of the churches we will visit today. Despite this being Perkins’ first church design he managed to seamlessly blend the elements and grandeur of traditional church design with the materials and stylings of Wright’s Organic Architecture. The organization, height, and light of the sanctuary seem to echo the architecture of Gothic cathedrals of Europe. However, these elements were softened by the material choices for the building, such as all of the wood in the sanctuary space, the rusticated stone retaining walls outside, and warm colors in the stained-glass windows. The abstract pattern of the three large stained-glass windows on the north wall is a simplified version of the design Wright used on his iconic Robie House in Chicago, IL, and served as the base design for much of the other architectural elements of the space, such as the reredos (raredos), narthex screen, kneeling wall, lectern, and pulpit. This pattern was carried outside in the design of the arcade leading up from the parking area and in the design for the tower, which was added at the same time as the sanctuary. The overall form of the sanctuary is also a nod to the idea that Christians are the fishers-of-men. The series of glue-lam arches and the shape they create look very similar to an upside down boat or ship. In fact, the term nave, which is the main seating space in a church sanctuary, derives from the Latin term *navis*, meaning “ship.” The embedded imagery of the ship became one of

the more common themes in Mid-Century church design and we will see two other versions of it later in the tour.

In 1968, Perkins designed a final Wrightian touch to St. Luke's United Methodist in the form of a small prayer room. This tiny space featured a few of Perkins' later signature elements, such as his inverted Y-shaped stained-glass windows and decorative wooden pendants, nod to a traditional Gothic architectural feature.

Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd

The Congregation for the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd was first established in 1956 when it was determined that the western edge of the city needed a more convenient location for the Episcopalian parishioners to worship. The group originally met in the Army Reserve building on the campus of Little Rock Junior College, just as the congregation of St. Luke's had before them and University Baptist did after them. They held their first service in a tent at this property on May 17, 1958, as they had yet to construct a building. By October of 1958, the small, single-story Modernist structure that is on the southwest corner of the site was completed and served as the first church building for the congregation.

The original church building was possibly designed by Little Rock architect Gene Withrow and featured a sanctuary, small kitchen, restrooms, and classroom spaces. It was designed on a modular grid system and was constructed out of off-the-shelf materials that were easily obtainable at the time. This made its construction very affordable for the fledgling congregation. The building was likely inspired by the *Arts &*

Architecture Magazine's Case Study House Program, which ran from 1945 until 1966. The aim of the program was to introduce innovative but cost efficient design solutions for Modern architectural designs in America. However, the design of the building combined the more European, High Modern aesthetic, seen in the Case Study Program, with touches of Frank Lloyd Wright's Organic architecture. The flat roof, visually evident grid, and exposed structural systems point to inspiration from architects like Craig Ellwood, a prominent California architect at the time. These rigid features were softened by wood moldings in an abstract dental pattern, horizontally raked brick courses, and by nestling the building into the site. The sloping site also allowed the sanctuary space to have a higher ceiling than the classroom areas without changing or breaking the roof plane. Despite the simplicity and functionality of the original building, the congregation soon outgrew it and by 1963, they were in desperate need for more space.

The congregation turned to fellow church member, Horace Piazza for the design of a new sanctuary building. Horace Angelo Piazza, born on March 8, 1929, was a native of Little Rock. Piazza's father, Carlos, was an Italian immigrant from Sicily that moved to Arkansas around 1910. His mother, Elfrieda, was from Paragould, AR. By 1930, the couple and their five children were in Little Rock, where Carlos was a cobbler. Unlike the other architects that we have and will discuss today, Piazza did not attend architecture school. He is one of four known architects in Arkansas that practiced architecture during this period without a formal education in it. To accomplish this a person needed to work under a licensed architect for a number of years before you could take the state licensing exam. In the case of Piazza, he worked at the firm of

Stowers and Weaver, followed by Weaver and Heigel. Interestingly, Weaver and Heigel were known for their church designs, which was the same thing Piazza would become known for. After working in the field for thirteen years, Piazza sat for his licensing exams in 1963, and passed on his first attempt. He immediately opened his own practice and this church was one of his first commissions. Other notable churches by Piazza are St. Luke's Episcopal Church in North Little Rock, the former Southwest Presbyterian Church in Little Rock, and the former Second Baptist Church in Conway.

The new building by Piazza would include a much larger, more open sanctuary space as well as offices for church staff and a small parlor space. The original building was converted into a fellowship hall but they continued using the classroom spaces for Sunday school classes. Piazza took inspiration for the new building from the 1951 Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills, WI, by Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright designed the Meeting House so that it reminiscent of a ship's prow emerging out of the landscape. Piazza designed the Good Shepherd Church to have a similar effect by sloping the ridge of the roof up as the ground sloped down. Other Wrightian inspired features are the saw-tooth eaves with Wrightian-inspired abstract dentil molding and the shallow planter dishes at south end of the building. The buff brick and light stains on the wood ceiling and beams combined with expansive windows create a light, airy, and very open feeling to the sanctuary space. These large windows also allowed the congregation to rarely use electric lights and enjoy the landscape around them. Additionally, the level of visual transparency in windows created a welcoming feeling to the building as well as a metaphorical sense of openness of the church.

In the late 1960s, the demographics of the church changed rather suddenly. Though the congregation had never been an exclusively white one, it saw a large influx of African-American congregants at that time. This was caused by the closure of the only all-African-American Episcopalian church in the city, St. Philip's. St. Philip's had seen a steady decline of its congregation throughout the 1960s. The final straw for the congregation came when the building was purchased by the state to make way for Interstate 630. The Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas decided that instead of building a new building for the all African-American congregation, they would encourage them to join other existing congregations to better integrate and diversify them. The primary church they recommended was the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. The addition of these new members helped to bolster the church's already healthy numbers. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the church saw its weekly attendance ranging between 100 and 155 people.

Despite the robust congregation the church enjoyed for much of its life, the establishment of St. Michael and St. Margaret's Episcopal churches in West Little Rock caused the congregation to dwindle during the mid to late 1980s. The member rolls dropped to such a point that the Diocese decided the church was no longer solvent, and on October 9, 1986, the last service of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd was held at Ware Street. The congregation then moved around a bit in the following years and were eventually merged with St. Francis House, the outreach branch of the Little Rock Episcopal Diocese, in 1991.

The church was sold in 1987 and the Little Rock Evangelical Free Church began to worship there in 1988. Later the Community Bible Church worshiped in the space

until 1994 when New Life Christian Covenant Church purchased it. New Life Christian Covenant has been at this location for twenty-four years. In that time, they have maintained and appreciated the building and its wonderful architecture.

Carmelite Monastery of St. Teresa's of Jesus

The Carmelite Monastery of St. Teresa's of Jesus was founded in Little Rock in 1950. It was created by the Carmel of Loretto, Pennsylvania, in response to an invitation from the Bishop Albert Fletcher of the Arkansas Catholic Diocese. The Prioress of the Loretto Carmelite nuns, Mother Mary Barrett, was seeking a Catholic Diocese in the country that did not have a contemplative convent. Bishop Fletcher wrote Mother Barrett that Arkansas was "in great need of the prayer and sacrifices of a contemplative order like the daughters of St. Teresa." Mother Barrett made an exploratory visit in February of 1950 and decided that Little Rock would be a suitable location for a new Carmelite community, and returned on June 17, 1950, with five other sisters to establish the monastery. The sisters initially moved into St. Joseph's Children's Home in North Little Rock, which was ran by Benedictine nuns from Fort Smith, while a more suitable building was prepared for them. The Monastery was formally established on September 12, 1950, in a house at 812 Louisiana in Little Rock, just north of the former St. Andrew's Parish Hall. As a side note, because the Carmelite Order is composed of both a male and female branch, the buildings that house any Carmelite chapter are called a monastery, opposed to convents.

The sisters remained in the house on Louisiana until 1959, when a bomb was detonated at the Little Rock Board of Education Building next door to the monastery. The house had already grown too small for the order and the commotion caused by the

explosion convinced the Prioress that a quieter location would be more conducive to spiritual contemplation, if not merely safer for the sisters. The church already owned close to sixteen acres at the western end of 32nd Street, adjacent to Boyle Park and the recently completed Broadmoor Development, so the Diocese decided to give the sisters two acres of it to build their new monastery. Ground was broken on the new building in October of 1960, and by early 1961, the sisters were able to move into their new home.

The new monastery was designed by the Little Rock firm of Swaim Allen & Wellborn, with Jim Wellborn as the lead architect on the project. Since the order of Carmelite Sisters of St. Teresa of Jesus are cloistered, the design for the monastery's plan was a square with a large courtyard in the middle. There are rooms for twenty-two sisters and four externs, which were the sisters that were allowed to interact with the outside world, such as buying supplies or greeting visitors. The monastery also had its own dentist office and infirmary, which was expanded in 1999. Additionally, the structure featured a recreation room, library, and commercial bakery, where the sisters baked communion bread for other churches in the area, Catholic and Protestant alike, to raise money for the monastery. The north, or front, wing of the monastery is the only part accessible to public, aside from the chapel. The north wing contained a waiting room for visitors, a dormitory for the extern sisters, the dentist office, and three "speaking rooms," where sisters could visit with relatives. Local landscape architect, Neil Hamill Park, designed the original courtyard of the monastery but the sisters later decided they wanted an area that was more relaxed and organic than the very formal and classically inspired design by Park. However, the chapel is the real highlight of the building.

The chapel of the complex is an example of an A-Frame church. Steep, sloping walls that almost reach the ground and exposed glue-lam beams characterized the A-Frame design. A-Frame churches became popular during the late 1950s and 1960s because of their affordability of construction since the structural members were prefabricated and shipped to the site, which allowed for quick construction. The first true Modernist A-frame church was the 1949 Lutheran Church of the Atonement in Florissant, MO, by Harris Armstrong; however, A-Frame construction had been around for centuries. Both eastern and western cultures produced A-Frame structures throughout the Middle Ages because they were simple to build and they were ideal for areas with high precipitation. Noted architect Rudolph Schindler reintroduced the architectural world to the form in 1934 with his highly publicized Bennati House in Lake Arrowhead, California. However, it would not be until the early 1950s that the form would take off in the residential market. It was famed architect Eero Saarinen's 1954 design for Kramer Chapel at Concordia College in Fort Wayne, Indiana, that popularized the A-Frame for church architecture. Architect Paul Thiry said in a 1955 interview "Isn't all this exactly what the church builder has been looking for all the ages past – greater span, height, lightness, openness, acoustical control, ease of construction." These qualities were the reason the A-Frame church became so commonplace in the mid-century suburban landscape. However, it was the eventual commonality of the form that also inspired the bulk of the criticism of the style. As the popularity of the A-Frame system increased, it also became less associated with church architecture and more associated with roadside tourist traps, leading the style to be nicknamed "gas station churches."

The inspiration for the architecture of the chapel was likely Saarinen's Kramer Chapel. Aside from the obvious A-Frame construction, the two chapels feature a rather unique ridgeline skylight that runs the length of the sanctuary space. Wellborn also created a similar, almost minimalistic feel to the interior of the chapel, which complimented the austere monastic lifestyle of the sisters. One of the few areas where Wellborn used any elaboration was in the metal grills that once hid the sisters from the view of any parishioners in attendance, but even these have an elegant simplicity to them. The metal grill that is only a half wall now once extended to the ceiling and concealed the sisters sitting for Mass. The two tall panels on the altar wall open into the choir area, which created a sense of unseen angelic voices whenever the sisters would sing. The architect and the sisters reserved almost all of the ornament for the fixtures of the chancel and altar, which feature beautiful pearlescent mosaic tile. However, it does make sense to bestow what little luxury there is in the space to the most important area.

A signature element of Wellborn's church design is seen in the thin row of clerestory windows that line the eaves on the north wall, also seen in his design for the First United Methodist Church of Brinkley from 1965. Terrazzo flooring was used throughout the chapel because it was highly durable and relatively inexpensive at the time. The sea-foam green and cream colors were evidently a favored palette of the Diocese at the time, as they appear in other churches from this period. An interesting and personal touch to the chapel is seen in the metal and wood holy water fonts and furniture in the chapel. The simple, geometric design of these pieces so perfectly fit into the overall design of the chapel, that many people often believe they part of the

architect's original plan; however, that is not the case. These pieces were designed and created by the sisters living here.

A few small notes before you look around a bit. First, the windows along the western wall of the chapel are not original. The original windows had an orange glass in them but had to be replaced because of extreme deterioration. Afterwards, the sisters thought the space lost something, so they painted the north wall in a color called "shrimp" to replace that lost punch of color. Secondly, the monastery is currently home to fourteen sisters, none of which are from Arkansas. Third and lastly, the front of the chapel on the outside was originally redwood, but it also deteriorated and had to be replaced with metal siding that mimicked the original front facade of the building.

Western Hills United Methodist Church

Western Hills United Methodist Church started its life as the Douglasville Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1915. The name of the church came from a community that the church was in at the time of its founding. Douglasville was once an independent town southwest of Little Rock along the old stagecoach route, now called Colonel Glenn/Asher, near the area where Western Hills intersects. As the city of Little Rock grew, the town was slowly engulfed until nothing remained of it except a few old institutions that bared its name, like Douglasville Methodist Episcopal South. In 1924, the congregation constructed their first building at what is now 7501 Colonel Glenn. The original building, which still stands today, was a simple, brick and stone two-story church with a seating capacity of about 200. The upper level housed the sanctuary space and the lower level served as a fellowship hall and education space. As the church grew, more space was needed so the church constructed a small, Modernist

education building to the west of the original structure in the mid-1950s. However within ten years, the congregation had outgrown their space again. Additionally they needed more property to accommodate the needs of the church. This led the congregation to decide it was time to look for a new location, one where they would have room to grow and expand as time went on.

The church found their ideal location in the former Concordia Country Club on Western Hills Avenue. The property was originally constructed as private country club for the Jewish residents of Little Rock, since they were not allowed to join the Little Rock Country Club at the time. The Rock Creek Golf Course that is to the north and east of the old country club were originally a part of the property. However, by the time the church was looking at the property it had been reduced to five and one half acres, and included just the land around the clubhouse and bounded by Western Hills on the west and Melba Street on the south. The property featured a parking lot, playground, tennis courts, and a swimming pool, all interesting and unexpected amenities for a church. The church purchased the property in mid-December of 1965 and the church took possession of the site on January 10, 1966. Much to the congregation's surprise, they found the old clubhouse to be very well suited for the use as a church. The former ballroom was converted into a sanctuary, the dining room became the fellowship hall, and the various other spaces became classrooms and offices. Thanks to the hard work of the congregation members, the church was able to make the few necessary alterations to the building for only a few hundred dollars. The church's new home had increased their service seating capacity from around 200 to 350, and the property had plenty of space to construct future structures for the continued growth of the church. With a new

building also came a new name for the church. They collected suggestions from church members, which eventually totaled 35 in all, but in the end, they decided to keep the name simple and direct. Therefore, in mid-1966 the church officially became Western Hills United Methodist.

Even when the property on Western Hills was purchased the congregation dreamed of constructing a new sanctuary building, however they could not do so until their former location had sold. It would take four years before they would find a buyer for their original building, but it finally happened in August of 1970. The sale of the former site gave the congregation enough capital to finally move forward with their dream of a new, modern sanctuary space. The church chose local architect Mack Ferguson to create the design for the new building.

Mack Ferguson was born in Dardanelle, Arkansas, on July 7, 1936. He attended architecture school at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma, and graduated in 1959 with a Bachelor's of Architecture. In 1963, Ferguson and two classmates from Oklahoma State, Perry Butcher and Paul Wilbur, founded their own firm. Butcher and Wilbur would operate a Northwest Arkansas office in Rogers, Arkansas, and Ferguson would staff a Little Rock office. It was during this period that Ferguson began to make a name for himself in the field of ecclesiastical architecture. His best-known work from his time with Wilbur Butcher & Ferguson was the New Canaan Missionary Baptist Church on Wright Avenue in Little Rock, commonly known as the "whale church." However, in 1969 Ferguson parted ways with his former classmates but retained the office building he had designed for them at 916 Garland in Little Rock, which continued to serve as his office.

In the early 1970s, Ferguson continued to make a name for himself with church designs, though many of them were more traditional than New Canaan or this building. Some of the notable examples from this time were South Side Baptist Church in Pine Bluff and Baring Cross Baptist Church in North Little Rock. However, there were the occasional Modernist designs, such that the Central Church of Christ Education Building in downtown Little Rock, and of course, the stunning building we are in today.

Though they sold their previous building in 1970, it was not until 1973 that the congregation was able to begin construction on their new sanctuary. The new building was officially dedicated on May 12, 1974, and cost an estimated \$225,000 to build. It featured a 550-seat auditorium and two-forty-foot tall stained-glass windows at the east and west ends of the building. The architecture of the new building is what has come to be known as the “Tent of Meeting” style. This term is taken from Exodus 33:7, which says:

“Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting.’ Anyone inquiring of the LORD would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp.”

The term was created for churches that either had swooping roofs or had multiple angles to their roofs, making them resemble a tent. This style differs from the A-Frame church in that the A-Frame church had a strict triangular form and roofline, where as the “Tent of Meeting” church was a bit more flamboyant. Also present in the architecture of this church is the “upside-down ship” idea that we saw in St. Luke’s. However, Ferguson took this idea further by angling the western end of the church to more resemble the bow of a ship, rather like the front of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. This

was accentuated by the natural stone walls or wings on the front. These walls also helped to visually anchor the church to the side and help it to appear like the church had always been here. Another commonality with St. Luke's is seen in the chancel screens, chancel furniture, and kneeling rail designs. The decorative motif seen on all of these things was taken from the large stained-glass windows, but was also echoed in the smaller stained-glass windows along the sides and on the doors, as well as in the shape and design of the pew ends.

Though a rear classroom building was part of Ferguson's 1974 design for the church, financial constraints did not allow it to be built until 1992. The addition of this space allowed the congregation to move their Sunday school classes and church offices from the former country club into the main church space.

A few notes before you look around. First, the four arched stained-glass windows at the western end of the sanctuary were brought over from the original church on Colonel Glenn and date to 1924. Secondly, there is some memorabilia from the church's past in the front lobby that you might want to see, as well as the restrooms. Third and lastly, there is a great but very fragile scrapbook on the history of the church in the rear lobby if you are interested in seeing more. One final, fun thing is see if you can find the backwards stained-glass windows in the sanctuary. There are two of them.