During its more than forty years of existence, the Quapaw Quarter Association (“QQA”) has been part of a nationwide historic preservation movement that has changed dramatically over the years. In the 1960s, preservation efforts still tended to focus on saving a few very important historic landmarks. Today preservation is a means of revitalizing entire neighborhoods, containing urban sprawl, returning life to small-town Main Streets and rural areas, sustainability, green building, and much, much more. As the QQA determines how best to operate in the 21st century, it is helpful to look back at how it has evolved since its incorporation in 1968.

The Quapaw Quarter Association is the second oldest organization dedicated to historic preservation in the state of Arkansas (the oldest is the Pioneer Washington Foundation, founded in 1958) and one of the oldest in the region. Since its incorporation, the QQA has been a leader in improving the image of the historic downtown area known as the Quapaw Quarter and making the area a more attractive place to live, work and play. In the past 40+ years, hundreds of 19th and early 20th century buildings and homes have been rehabilitated and returned to productive use as homes, apartments and offices, and new structures have been added to complement the old. People seeking to live downtown may now choose from un-restored structures, restored “grand dames” to cottages and bungalows, new residences designed to look old and those obviously new, as well as restored condos in former hotels and apartments and new loft and high-rise luxury residences. Tourists seeking to learn about the heritage of our city have wonderful areas to roam and study. The Quapaw Quarter has not only become a source of pride and enjoyment for the residents of Greater Little Rock, but has also earned a national reputation as a preservation success story.1

The QQA is a non-profit, membership-based corporation that evolved out of a working group established in 1961 at the behest of John Robinson, then associated with Little Rock’s Housing Authority.2 Robinson appointed five prominent citizens to a “Significant Structures Technical Advisory Committee” – David D. Terry, Mrs. George Rose Smith (Peg), Mrs. Walter Riddick Sr., Dr. John L. Ferguson, and James Hatcher – who determined that the area, in decline, needed a campaign to create a more positive image. After considering eleven names for the area, the group chose “Quapaw Quarter”3 based upon the Quapaw Treaty Line of 1818, which ran through the neighborhood. In 1962, the group adopted the name “Quapaw Quarter Committee” (the “Committee”) and expanded its membership. The Committee identified several structures in the neighborhood in need of protection and in 1963 held the first tour of homes to acquaint citizens with the area’s beautiful and historic architecture. In 1963, the Committee also began recognizing important preservation projects with Quapaw Quarter Historic Plaques: Trapnall Hall, then just restored by the Junior League of Little Rock, received the first plaque.

The Committee continued its work and, in 1968, members joined others to incorporate the Quapaw Quarter Association (“QQA”). “Quapaw Quarter” is actually a fictitious name for the area, not a legally or even historically defined place. Rather, it was first defined in the original articles of incorporation of the QQA (the “Articles”), as a 16-square block area (1/4 of a township) bounded by Capitol Avenue on the north, Scott Street on the west, High Street on the south, and Bond Street on the east. As the preservation movement expanded, the Quapaw Quarter itself grew through amendments to the Articles and now includes all the area from the Arkansas River on the north, Fourche Creek on the south, the old Rock Island Railroad tracks on the east and the Central High School neighborhood on the west. The fact that “Quapaw Quarter” refers to a fictitious entity has caused

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2 The City of Little Rock was embarking on a major urban renewal plan for the central business area and the surrounding neighborhoods, and Mr. Robinson felt it was important for the planners to have input from knowledgeable, concerned residents about the historic fabric of the older parts of the city and its structures.
3 Mr. Hatcher, an architect, is credited with the name: “Quapaw, for the tribe, and “Quarter” for the alliteration.
4 When the first European settlers arrived in the area, it was inhabited by the Quapaw Indians. The Quapaw Line was a boundary determined in an 1818 treaty between the U.S. government and the tribe and was, for a time, the eastern boundary of the city of Little Rock.
confusion through the years, so much so that it was one of the factors leading the QQA, for awhile in 1999 - 2000, to change its name to “Landmarks Trust of Greater Little Rock”.5

The area now commonly referred to as the Quapaw Quarter encompasses the oldest section of the city and contains nine square miles; it contains three large historic districts – MacArthur Park, Governor’s Mansion, and Central High – and eleven small ones6 and structures representing the first century of the city’s history, plus modern buildings that have since replaced many of the older ones. The oldest dwelling is the Hinderliter House, a log structure characteristic of the earliest dwellings in the Quapaw Quarter and a part of the Historic Arkansas Museum complex. The classical elegance of the 1830s, 40s and 50s is represented both in public buildings and private homes such as the Old State House, Curran Hall (now the Little Rock Visitor Information Center) and Trapnall Hall. The MacArthur Park area contains most of the oldest buildings. The Mansion area homes generally date from about 1880 to 1920, with the Queen Anne, Colonial Revival and Craftsman architectural styles predominating. The Central High area contains those styles as well as American Foursquare.

The focus of the QQA, originally established to protect only the MacArthur Park area, now extends to all of historic Little Rock.7 The Articles established the goals of the QQA: (1) “to encourage, promote and assist in the restoration and preservation of historically and architecturally significant sites and structures located within the QQ, (2) to encourage research and the study of the history of early Arkansas and its citizens significant to said area, and (3) to encourage the study of and to foster an appreciation of various styles of architecture, furniture, furnishings, and ornaments historically significant to early Little Rock”. In 1979, the QQA’s Board of Directors (the “Board”) adopted this mission statement: “The QQA is a voluntary organization that exists to encourage and support the preservation of the architectural and historical heritage of the Quapaw Quarter and the revitalization of its neighborhoods through direct community projects, research, planning and public education”. In 1984, the board altered the mission statement to provide for the QQA “to preserve, protect and enhance the historic buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of Greater Little Rock. Of special concern is the area known as the QQ, as defined in the QQA bylaws. This mission is accomplished through education, advocacy, support of preservation efforts and encouragement of public involvement. The QQA sponsors activities and programs designed to educate the public in the value and benefits of historic preservation; advocates preservation policies and actions, and encourages the development of safe, healthy, and attractive residential neighborhoods and commercial districts”. The QQA thus “officially recognized that the so-called Quapaw Quarter, or downtown Little Rock, really is not the only place in this area that has historic buildings, … in order to begin raising the level of awareness of the many early twentieth century neighborhoods in Greater Rock (including Hillcrest, the Heights and Park Hill).”8 In March 2009, the QQA Board again amended the mission statement, to simply state, “The Quapaw Quarter Association promotes the preservation of Little Rock’s architectural heritage through advocacy, marketing and education”.

The core beliefs of the QQA have been stated as, “A belief in the value of education about, advocacy for and support of historic preservation; a belief in the value of developing safe, attractive, economically healthy residential neighborhoods and commercial districts; and a belief in the value of older neighborhoods as good places to live, work and trade and that their stability is anchored by their historic structures and sites.9 Through the years, the group has used several methods of communicating its goals and beliefs and encouraging the recognition of the importance of our architectural heritage in historic Little Rock. Probably the most recognized activities have been the Spring Tour of Homes (the “Tour”) and its bi-monthly publication, “The Quapaw Quarter

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5 The discussion of a possible name change appears to have been discussed as far back as 1987, when Cheri Nichols, then Executive Director of the QQA, wrote in the Chronicle (Dec. 1986/Jan. 1987; Vol. 13, #6, p9), “While I am aware that there is no ‘quick fix’ for these problems … I think the remedy must include two major changes, both of which will probably seem heretical to long-time QQA supporters. First, the QQA needs a new name and, second, the pretense that ‘QQ’ is anything more than an alternative name for downtown Little Rock must come to an end”. Cheri advocated adopting a “community-wide name” such as “Greater Little Rock Preservation League” and deleting the definition of Quapaw Quarter boundaries from the QQA’s Articles of Incorporation so the name “QQ” could “sink or swim on its own merits.” Ultimately, the name change met with much resistance from the membership and the community and, in 2001, the QQA board voted to revert back to the organization’s original name.

8 East Markham Street, Hanger Hill, Marshall Square, Tuff Nut, Philander Smith, Railroad Call, South Main Commercial, South Main Residential, South Main Apartments, West Seventh Street and South Scott Street.

9 This was another factor cited in making the 1999 name change. Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, November 30, 1999.

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The Tour and the Historic Structure awards began in 1963 and continue today. Chronicle publication began in 1974, continuing, with a break in publication from 1998 – 2000 (during this time the tabloid-style newspaper was replaced with a newsletter printed “in-house”), until 2006 when publication was again suspended due to the increased cost of printing and distribution. (The Chronicle is scheduled to be reintroduced as an electronic newsletter in 2009.) The newspaper was recognized repeatedly with journalism awards for staff members and the paper itself during its publication. The QQA has added other annual awards and held other tours and events through the years- Christmas Potpourris, Christmas House Tours, Easter Eggs Hunts at the Villa Marre, - and implemented a Speakers Bureau with slide presentations. In addition, the QQA works closely with the Department of Arkansas Heritage and the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas. In 2001, the QQA was recognized as a “Local Partner” of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which has enabled it to bring their technical assistance, grants and other programs to Little Rock.

The annual Spring Tour of Historic Homes has evolved over the years, but all have had the same basic goal of introducing people to Little Rock’s historic resources and the need for their preservation. Peg Smith noted that, in the beginning, when the tour was sponsored by the Committee, most Little Rock residents “didn’t know the houses in that neighborhood existed.” The first tour included 6 houses; attendance was estimated to be around 1,000. By 1968 (the first Tour by the newly formed QQA), the number rose to 21 buildings and sites. Several landmarks appeared on the Tour year after year, including Trapnall Hall, the Pike-Fletcher-Terry House, Hanger House, the Old State House and the Villa Marre. Until 1975, Tours were concentrated in the MacArthur Park area and focused on landmark properties. The 1975 Tour showcased a second neighborhood- the Governor’s Mansion area- a neighborhood full of families and individuals. Tours since 1975 have usually showcased 5-7 structures and featured mostly single-family homes (with an occasional historic church and/or Mt. Holly Cemetery) and emphasized neighborhood preservation. In 1976, to honor the state’s bicentennial celebration, the tour expanded to cover nine days and 15 houses shown in three separate tours. George Worthen, then QQA board president, and Tom Wilkes, tour chairman, oversaw the training and costuming of 400 tour guides, who guided over 2500 registered visitors from 16 states and 4 foreign countries. Tours during the late-1970s through the 1990s routinely utilized the talents of over 300 volunteers and drew over 2,000 visitors; the QQA staff and board, with other dedicated volunteers and standing, well-organized committees, worked year-round to make the event a success. A fee for Tour entry was implemented as early as 1969, but the Tour was not viewed as a fundraiser for the QQA until the addition of a “Candlelight Tour” in 1977, which included champagne bars, dinner, and dancing. Often, the Tour included two days of open houses in addition to the Candlelight Tour, although the Candlelight event replaced the Sunday tour completely in 1978, 1979, and 1983. Until the early 2000s Tours, many guides dressed in costume and, during most years from 1970s through the 1990s, street entertainment was often provided: traditional country dancers, Maypoles, clowns, dancing bears, and choirs were among the items mentioned in reports in various Chronicles. In 1988, the Tour included homes outside of the Quapaw Quarter, including three in Hillcrest along with three in the Governor’s Mansion Area, for the first time. In 1988, the Tour also included a one-hour fashion show of “the Best of the Best fashions popular from 1860 to 1960, with costumes provided by Carter/Dunn Vintage Clothing and a brunch at one of the tour houses. For several years in the 1990s, an Antique Show and Sale was conducted during Tour weekend. Most Candlelight dinners were donated by local restaurants and caterers; all large Tours included lengthy lists of donors ranging from individuals to numerous corporations in the Greater Little Rock area. Various factors – lack of volunteers, increased privacy concerns of a newer generation of homeowners, etc - led to a brief hiatus of the Tour in 2005. Since 2008, the Tour has been a one-day event. The modern Tour has also showcased historically-compatible new infill construction in addition to restored historic structures.

In the earlier years, the QQA sponsored a number of bus tours in order to spark interest in preservation and educate its members. The first tour was a four day trip to Natchez (Mississippi) Pilgrimage in April, at a cost of $95 (which included a $10 contribution to the QQA.) In 1974, QQA members took a day trip by bus to Old Washington. In 1975, the QQA sponsored an overnight bus tour to Jefferson, Texas ($58 cost, including a contribution) and, in 1984, a longer tour to Charlestown, South Carolina, led by Mary Worthen.

Throughout most of its history, the QQA has been not only an advocate for but also, a reporter of, preservation efforts (and sometimes the lack thereof) in Little Rock. The bimonthly Chronicle started with a $5,000 grant from “50 for the Future, a group of businesses devoted to the economic growth of central Arkansas, to “preserve the colorful life and times of Downtown Little Rock.” The first edition put 9,000 copies into circulation. The paper was initially produced by volunteers - a six person editorial board, three person advertising and circulation staff - and a part-time staff research and archivist person who wrote much of the content and produced the paper, but quickly grew into a niche market that supported advertising for numerous business and required a full-time staff person to oversee sales and production. Its articles and ads contain a fascinating history of the changing face of Little Rock historic neighborhoods and business areas, and the people involved in promoting and/or hindering those changes, during its 30+ year publication. (Archival sets can be found at the Butler Center at the Institute for Arkansas Studies, the University of Arkansas Special Collections Library in Fayetteville, and the QQA office.) Originally dedicated to life in the downtown neighborhoods, in 1987 the Chronicle added a “Hillcrest Highlights” section. In 1988, the Downtown Partnership began including a section to serve the downtown business district. Both of these additional sections continued for several years.

The Committee and then the QQA, beginning in 1963, leased space for headquarters at the Villa Marre, an elegant Victorian Home at 1321 Scott. In 1979, Jimmy Strawn, the owner and restorer, donated the structure to the QQA, and the “carriage house”, an apartment building built by Strawn in 1969 next door to the Villa at 1315 Scott was subsequently also donated to the QQA. The QQA remained the owner and steward of the property until 2002, when the Board of Directors, decided to sell the Villa Marre as a private residence. The board cited operational costs, mounting deferred maintenance, and staffing requirements, saying that it would be better to sell the property rather than risk insolvency to the QQA itself caused by its continued subsidization of the property, and the subsequent loss of the QQA voice in the preservation community that would occur with insolvency. With the proceeds of the sale, the Board created a permanent endowment fund, the Preservation Little Rock Endowment Fund, at the Arkansas Community Foundation. The QQA retained the “carriage house”, and it remained QQA headquarters until its sale in 2004. In 2004, the QQA leased space at 1206 S. Main Street, next to the Community Bakery; in 2007, the Board voted to submit a proposal to the City of Little Rock for the QQA to...
manage historic Curran Hall at 615 E. Capitol Avenue as the City’s Visitor Information Center in order to avert the planned closing of the building. That proposal was accepted and, in May 2007, the group moved its offices to Curran Hall, where it remains today.  

As part of its educational program, the QQA began compiling a library in 1974 with 15 volumes. Donations and gifts of books, collections, and files grew the library; the “Preservation Resource Center,” as it was called, also contained over 1,000 “Street Files” on historic houses compiled during architectural surveys conducted by QQA staff and volunteers. With the creation of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies at the Central Arkansas Library in 1997, the QQA began considering the need to move much of its collection there, where valuable historic photographs, documents, and other materials could be properly conserved and catalogued for greater public access. With the move of the QQA offices to Curran Hall in 2007, the QQA donated much of its library and archives to the Butler Center, where the collection remains and is now housed in the newly constructed and restored Arkansas Studies Institute buildings.

The changing composition of the Board and its officers over time has reflected the changing interests and focus of the QQA. The first incorporators (the Articles set a board of directors at a maximum 18 people and a focus of the QQA. The first incorporators (the Articles set a board of directors at a maximum 18 people and a

21 In June 2006, the Little Rock Advertising and Promotion Commission, citing increased operational costs, decided to close Curran Hall at the end of 2006. Then Mayor Jim Dailey appointed a 14-member Curran Hall Task Force to decide the future of the building. Several local preservationists, including some QQA members, were appointed to the task force. The task force ultimately decided that Curran Hall’s use as a Visitor Information Center should be continued and that proposals be solicited from private organizations to operate the facility. The Quapaw Quarter Association and three other organizations submitted proposals; and ultimately, the QQA’s proposal was selected. The City of Little Rock and the Advertising and Promotion Commission negotiated a three-year management agreement with the QQA, and on March 1, 2007 the contract was signed.


23 It included such items as the Hampton Roy/Charles Witsell resource materials used in writing their book “How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City”; large number of books, magazines and pamphlets concerning research techniques and restoration techniques for old houses; a 1905 book published by the Kimball Piano Company with photographs showing over 70 Quapaw Quarter homes and buildings (over 75% of which were gone already when the book was donated in 1978; a list of the buildings is included in Chronicle, Oct. 1978, Vol. 5, #5); and, records of 275 buildings made in 1959-61 by Bill Meeks, Jr., owner of Block Meeks Realty, appraising the structures in anticipation of being affected by the proposed freeway and urban renewal plan.


25 Board Presidents have included: Mrs. David D. Terry, Sr. (Adolphine) (1963); Peg Smith (1964-65); John V. Robinson (1968-9); James W. Strawn, Jr. (1970-1); Mack Ferguson (1971); Betty Field (1972-3); Frances Ross (1974-5); George Worthen (1976); Sam Straus, Jr. (1977); Kay Powers (1978); Bob Ross (1979); Mark Stodola (1980); Don Evans (1981-82); Bill Rector (1983); Calvin Biggers (1984); Pat Cavinness (1985); Bill Kennedy (1986); Jimmy Moses (1987); Nancy Roy (1988); Eve Yancey (1989); Mark Abernathy (1990); Tom Wilkes; 1991: Robert Johnston (1992); Robin Loucks (1993); Renie Rule (1994); Judith Faust (1995); Scott Mosley (1996); Donna Gay (1997); Jim Metzger (1998); Tom Fennell (1999); Joe Volpe (2000); John Baker (2001); Mike Harris (2002-3); Pam Walker (2004); Albert Hurst, Jr. (2005-6); Cynthia Stone (2007-8); Dana Daniels Nixon (2009).
Beginning that year, the QQA took a much more active and visible place in the community. Membership stood at 125 at the beginning of 1974, 789 in 1975, and reached 1000 by 1977 (with membership fees $5 student, $15 family, $25 contributing). It then settled at about 500 memberships (representing probably about 800 individuals, where it remained through the 1980’s and 90’s. Membership today stands at around 325 households, with dues of $25 for individuals, $35 for families and $50 contributing.

The board hired the first paid staff in 1975 (Joan Baldridge and Starr Mitchell). Tours became larger and much more complex. In 1976, the board adopted plans to give structure to its management and added officers designated as Vice Presidents for Conservation and Preservation, for Community Affairs, and for Finance and Operations, in addition to the President, Treasurer and Secretary, “to organize responsibilities into identifiable and manageable areas, improving communications between related areas and establishing a management team that can better operate through result-oriented management techniques.” The board also converted the 2-person part-time staff into a 2 ½ person full-time staff. That staff composition continued until 1995, when a 3-year $99,000 grant from Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation funded 2 additional part-time positions: a development director and assistant. Paid staff has, since 2000, been a full-time director only.

Beginning in 1978, the annual membership meeting, at which the awards and plaques are presented, was combined with dinner and a speaker. (Most recently, awards are presented at a May fundraising event on the evening prior to the Tour; and the annual meeting has been moved to January.) Speakers through the years have included not only local dignitaries, but an array of nationally and internationally important preservationists.

The QQA has, from its start, recognized both the people important to preservation in historic Little Rock and the important structures themselves. Two major QQA awards are named for their first recipients, James W. Strawn, Jr., and Mrs. George Rose (Peg) Smith. The Jimmy Strawn Award recognizes persons “whose efforts on the behalf of the preservation of Little Rock’s heritage are an inspiration to the entire community.”

27 The huge increase in membership in the mid-1970’s is credited largely to the exposure permitted by the publication of the Chronicle. (Chronicle Aug./Sept. 2001; Vol. 27, #1.)
28 Message of the President, 1976.
30 Lee Adler, past president of Historic Savannah (Ga.) Foundation (1978); Brown Morton, internationally renown conservationist (1979); Michael Ainslie, Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (1980); Senator Dale Bumpers (1981); Peter Brink, Executive Director of Galveston Historical Foundation (1983); Patricia Gay, Executive Director of the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans (1984); Kay Kelley Arnold, Director of the Arkansas Department of Heritage (1985); Cy Sutherland, Professor of Architecture at the University of Arkansas (1988); Elizabeth Kent, Founding Director of Vermont National Bank’s Socially Responsible Banking Fund, J. Myrick Howard, Director of Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina (1989); Mayor George M. Israel III of Macon, Ga. (1995); Representative Vic Snyder (1996); North Little Rock Mayor Pat Hays (1998); Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey (2000); Daniel Carey, Southwest Office Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2002); John Gull (2003); Dr. C. Fred Williams, UALR Chronicle Aug./Sept. 2001; Vol. 27, #1.)
32 Lee Adler, past president of Historic Savannah (Ga.) Foundation (1978); Brown Morton, internationally renown conservationist (1979); Michael Ainslie, Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (1980); Senator Dale Bumpers (1981); Peter Brink, Executive Director of Galveston Historical Foundation (1983); Patricia Gay, Executive Director of the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans (1984); Kay Kelley Arnold, Director of the Arkansas Department of Heritage (1985); Cy Sutherland, Professor of Architecture at the University of Arkansas (1988); Elizabeth Kent, Founding Director of Vermont National Bank’s Socially Responsible Banking Fund, J. Myrick Howard, Director of Historic Preservation Foundation of North Carolina (1989); Mayor George M. Israel III of Macon, Ga. (1995); Representative Vic Snyder (1996); North Little Rock Mayor Pat Hays (1998); Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey (2000); Daniel Carey, Southwest Office Director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (2002); John Gull (2003); Dr. C. Fred Williams, UALR Chronicle Aug./Sept. 2001; Vol. 27, #1.)
Award is the “Volunteer Award,” for persons “whose volunteer work on QQA projects and programs has been particularly exemplary.”32 In 1985, a “Greater Little Rock Preservation Award” was added to specifically honor buildings, sites, projects and people not located in the Quarter, and the first award was given to Nancy Newell and Gary Woods, the then owners of the McHenry House (aka the Stagecoach House, on Stagecoach Road in southwest LR).33 In addition, special “Awards of Merit” are often given to specific individuals, groups, and projects that the QQA board feels deserve special recognition but do not necessarily fall within the purview of the other awards.34 In 2000, the Board established its newest award, in memory of Tom Wilkes, to honor a member of the board for outstanding service to the board of directors.35 Historic Structure Plaques, when given, are also presented at the same event.36

The QQA staff, board members and volunteers have routinely appeared to monitor hearings and offer testimony and opinions to, among others, the state legislature, the Little Rock City Board, the Board of Adjustment, the Planning Commission, the Historic District Commission, and the Capitol Zoning District Commission, and have assisted in many other ways. Several architectural surveys have been conducted by the QQA, two leading to designation of historic districts that set the stage for millions of dollars of private investment in rehabilitation of buildings.37 In the last 30 years, the QQA has assisted city government in several other endeavors; in 1984, with

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33 Other recipients have included: 1991: Engelberger (2105 N. Maple, North Little Rock), Justin Matthews, Jr. (257 Skyline, North Little Rock), Knoop (96 Ozark, Hillcrest), Buhler (1820 Fair Park) Houses; 1992: Kahn-Jennings (5300 Sherwood), Wright (3418 Hill Road) and Matthews (406 Goshen, North Little Rock) Houses, North Little Rock City Hall 1996: Noack House (Ozark Street in Hillcrest, 1929), Storz House (450 Midland in Hillcrest, 1927); 418 N. Willow in the Argenta District in NLR; 1997: Ole Main High School in NLR, St. Joseph’s Home in NLR, Kahn House (Hillcrest), Moore House (Armshead Road in the Heights); 1998: Rock Island Argenta Depot at 4th & Hazel.


35 Jim Metzger received the initial award in 2000. Mike Harris, a board member who helped guide the QQA through the sale of the Villa Marre, was honored in 2004; Albert Hurst, Jr. was given the award in 2008.

36 Prior to 1975, were presented to the First State Capitol (constructed in 1836), Federal Arsenal Building (1838), Absalom Fowler House (1839), Pike-Fletcher-Terry (1840), Garland-Mitchell (1872), Capital Hotel 1972), C.J. Lincoln (1872), Reichardt (1874), Ward-Hays (1880), Villa Marre (1882), Rozelle-Murphy (1887), Hanger (1889), Ferling (1892), “New” Hotze (1900), Walters-Curran (1842), Trapnall Hall (1843), Aahrur Jones (1860’s), “Old” Hotze (1869), Rieger Cottage (1903): Welch-Cherry (700 Rock, 1875); Later honorees have included: 1977: Ward-Heiskell (1000 W. 2nd), Ada Thompson Home (2021 Main Street); 1983: Cornish (1800 Arch), Cochran-Pugh (320 W. 18th), Vaughan (2201 S. Broadway), Hornbrook (2129 Louisiana) Houses and Mt. Holly Cemetery; 1985: Winsor, Bragg, O’Brien, Keith Houses and Bale Chevrolet; House; Bragg; 1986: Compton-Wood House (800 High Street, 1902); Mann Building aka Urquhart or Atkins Building (1906), 114 East Capitol, Central High School (the first structure in the Central High neighborhood, then recently added to the QC); 1987: Lafayette Hotel, Albert Pike Hotel, Plunkett House (1719 Arch); 1992: Little Rock Community Church, Taborian Hall, Women’s City Club, Altenberg House; 1996; Ragland House (1617 S. Center); First Methodist Church (1896-1900), Pollock House (914 Scott, 1874), Max Mayer (2016 Battery, 1922), Hardy House (1892); 1997: Turner-Fulk (1903), French-England (Broadway); 1998: Butler House (609 Rock).

37 In 1977, using grant funds from the Arkansas Humanities Program and the Little Rock Historic District Commission, the QQA conducted a survey of structures within the MacArthur Park neighborhood. In seeking the grants, the QQA noted that a survey could establish a comprehensive insight into just how rich is the heritage of our historically and architecturally significant 19th and early 20th century structures and also show how this heritage is translated into the practical living of today through restoration and preservation of the heart of Little Rock. (Chronicle, February 1977, Vol. 4, #4) Using funds from the Capitol Zoning Commission, surveying efforts surveying efforts continued in the 100 block area around the Governor’s Mansion, which contained about 650 structures. (Both surveys led to the creation of historic districts.) Additional architectural surveys were conducted in the 1980’s and 1990’s in Hillcrest, Central High, Capitol View/Stift Station neighborhoods in Little Rock and the Argenta and Park Hill areas of North Little Rock.
the Downtown Partnership, the QQA undertook a survey of historic buildings on and adjacent to the then existing Metrocentre Mall. In 1987, the QQA “Taskforce for Improvements to the QQ” (made up of QQA board members, city and utility representatives and community leaders) developed a “Streetscape Plan” to advocate improvements to the downtown neighborhoods: underground utilities, installation of brick sidewalks and historically compatible street lights and signs and placement of signs designating the historic districts within the QQ, all to be phased in over a 10-year period and paid for by a city bond issue; the QQA sponsored the issue on the ballot in the Little Rock election of that year. In 1998, the QQA received a $23,935 grant from the short-lived Little Rock Landmark Building Fund for repair work for the Villa Marre. The following year, the QQA received a grant from the City of Little Rock to salvage and store architectural elements following the January 1999 tornado that devastated much of the Governor’s Mansion and MacArthur Park Historic Districts. By 2002, most of the area’s damaged homes had been repaired, and the salvage program was discontinued.

At times, the QQA has formally intervened to attempt to guide various zoning decisions and preservation projects. In 1974, the QQA supported the City’s changing of the 1500 block of Broadway from heavy commercial to quiet business by filing an “amicus curiae brief in court. In 1975, the QQA helped pass one of the first pieces of legislation intended to directly assist preservation projects, sponsored by then QQA board member and state representative Robert Johnston; the legislation made enforceable preservation easements or restrictions on properties of historical or architectural significance, gave the Commemorative Commission a review capacity for the state, and affirmed the ability of charitable organizations and the state to acquire such easements. In 1991, the QQA filed a successful lawsuit to stop the demolition of West Side Junior High School and, at the same time, advocated for the saving of the Old Federal Building, then recently vacated by the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law. In the 1990’s, the QQA’s advocacy and publicity helped save the Kramer School, Curran Hall and the Donaghey Building from demolition and assisted the City with the Mayor’s Task Force on Preservation and with downtown planning efforts. (This resulted in $400,000 for 3 items being included in Little Rock’s 1997 operating budget: continuation of the Historic Building Façade Grant Program, a new Neighborhood Residential Incentive Program, and a Landmark Building Grant.)


Staff and volunteers compiled two slide shows, one covering the history of LR, beginning with excerpts from journals of earliest European travelers to “the Rock” and continuing through the early 20th century and one containing an overview of the Quapaw Quarter with emphasis on what was happening with preservation at that time (from 1975-78, over 90 presentations were given by 20 different people, reaching over 3500 people. Another significant project of the group has been its Historic House Marker program, attractive yard markers featuring the historic name of the particular house, date of construction, and the QQA logo. Over fifty of these markers have been placed throughout the Quapaw Quarter since the program’s inception in 1994, and a program to restore old markers and install new ones has recently been initiated by the QQA.

38 In 1974, the QQA, along with the Broadway Neighborhood Association and Little Rock UP, proposed a revolving loan fund for low and moderate income persons in the Quapaw Quarter through the Community Development Act. (Chronicle, March-April 1975, Vol. 2, #1.) 1974 also saw the Library Committee of the QQA presenting an “Old House” workshop designed to instruct and guide people in researching old houses and how to maintain the research results in an historical library. In 1978, QQA hosted the National Trust for Preservation for its Maintenance Workshop. QQA and the Arkansas Historic Preservation Alliance joined for a one day seminar in March 1986 on “Getting to Know Your Old House: A Workshop for Owners of Houses Built Between 1865 and 1930” and included sessions on “Restoring and Documenting the Historic House and Its Occupants,” “Architectural Styles,” “Fashion in Interior Design,” “Stewardship of the Historic House: Preserving Our Heritage”. That workshop was so successful that a second was presented in 1988. In 1997, The QQA sponsored Becky Witsell for her workshop on “Documenting and Recreating Historic Stencilling” and Tommy Jameson on “Historic Houses and Artificial Siding”.

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In 2001, the Quapaw Quarter Association became a “Local Partner” of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust formed the Statewide and Local Partners program in 1993, as a way to help established and emerging state and local non-profit preservation groups to become more effective.\(^{39}\) Through this partnership, the QQA has received organizational development assistance and grant support, as well as access to specialized workshops, training, and networking opportunities. Roger Williams, the current QQA executive director, has been actively involved in the National Trust’s Statewide and Local Partners program, having been a participant on several task forces and working groups as well as a presenter at the 2007 Statewide and Local Partners meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota.

With the sale of the Villa Marre, in 2002, the board of directors began exploring ways to revitalize the organization and increase its effectiveness as a preservation organization in the 21st Century. The board engaged the National Trust for Historic Preservation to help it develop a new strategic plan in 2003. From that process, and subsequent board retreats, the board realized the need for the organization to become actively involved in rescuing and preserving abandoned and neglected historic properties, especially those in areas of Little Rock not historically served by the QQA (such as the Hanger Hill, Dunbar, and Central High neighborhoods). After researching various models from across the nation, in 2007 the board voted to create the Quapaw Quarter Heritage Homes Program, modeled after successful programs in Knoxville, Tennessee (Knox Heritage) and Macon, Georgia (Historic Macon Foundation).\(^{40}\) The QQA recruited other partners in the project, including the Arkansas Development Finance Authority, the City of Little Rock, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which expressed interest in offering a line of credit to the QQA to help fund the program. Unfortunately, the national economic recession and banking crisis of 2008 has forced the QQA to postpone this program for the time being.

Jimmy Moses, leading the 1986 corporate membership drive, said corporations should join because “the QQA is the heart and soul of downtown. As goes our heart goes our community.”\(^{41}\) In 2009, the QQA remains a vital and important force in protecting our architectural heritage and in educating the public as to its importance, although demographic and social changes have led to some decline in membership and volunteer involvement.\(^{42}\) The establishment and growth of other worthwhile and energetic volunteer groups in recent years, including Southside Main Street (“SoMA”), the Downtown Dames, and The MORE (Marshalling Our Resources Effectively) Group, have increased the demand on the limited human and monetary resources available in the area, but the QQA has by far the broadest interest in historic preservation, and the vitality, diversity and spirit of the historic downtown neighborhoods would not be at nearly the levels they are today without its continued existence and activity.

Because of the work of QQA over the years, the historic neighborhoods of downtown Little Rock have gone from unknown and unappreciated to loved and vibrant. However, the fight to preserve Little Rock’s architectural heritage is far from over, and many still remain unaware of the great diversity of architecture and culture that awaits them in the historic areas of the city. The QQA continues to be the main organization making certain that Little Rock’s architectural heritage is preserved and that our residents learn, appreciate and experience its uniqueness. With its stewardship of the very important Curran Hall as the flagship Little Rock Visitor Center and by expanding its program of tours, workshops and publications, the QQA is introducing more and more people to the architectural and cultural significance of historic Little Rock and honoring its remarkable and irreplaceable structures.

For information and to become a member or volunteer, please visit the QQA at Curran Hall, 615 E. Capitol Avenue in Little Rock, call 501-371-0075, or visit the website at www.Quapaw.com.

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\(^{39}\) Partners Program Summary, National Trust for Historic Preservation website, www.preservationnation.org/about-us/partners/statewide-local-partners

\(^{40}\) Resolution of the Board, September 10, 2007.

\(^{41}\) Chronicle, Feb/March 1986; Vol. 12, #7, p10.

\(^{42}\) The decrease in membership and number of volunteers have been attributed to several factors. While the name change in 1999-2000 and the sale of the Villa Marre in 2002 no doubt accounted for some loss of membership, the majority of the decline has been attributed to other factors, such as: the death or retirement of some of the key founding members; the increase of women in the full-time workforce; a newer generation less inclined to volunteer than previous generations; and the devastating tornado of January 1999, which resulted in some long-time residents moving away from the area and many others absorbed in rebuilding of their own homes.