

**Sandwiching in History**  
**Cole-Rainwater House**  
**712 N. Ash St., LR**  
**May 11, 2012**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



### **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Before we get started, my colleague, Amanda Sobel Driver, is going to do a quick plug for the QQA Spring Tour of Homes this weekend.

Welcome to the Sandwiching in History tour of the Cole-Rainwater House! I'd like to thank Carol Young and Gus Bower for allowing us to tour their beautiful home! The Cole-Rainwater House is a contributing resource in the Hillcrest Historic District, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 with a 1992 amendment. The boundaries are roughly Markham on the south, Woodrow on the east, Lookout on the north, and Harrison on the west.

The Cole-Rainwater House was built in 1916 by local building contractor Kenneth E. N. Cole (appeared in print as K. E. N. Cole) on Lot 4, Block 20 in the Pulaski Heights Addition to the City of Little Rock.

### **Pulaski Heights**

Little Rock incorporated as a town in 1831 and as a city in 1835. The Original City of Little Rock was bounded on the north by the Arkansas River, on the east by the Quapaw Line (roughly modern-day Commerce Street), on the south by Wright

Avenue, and on the west by Pulaski Street. After the Civil War, Little Rock experienced rapid population growth and a significant building boom. Additions were platted immediately to the south, east, and west of the Original City. In 1871 the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad became the first operating railroad in the state. Just two years later, the Cairo & Fulton line was completed to Little Rock, bringing the first train from St. Louis. The railroads brought added prosperity, but the nationwide financial panic of 1873 slowed residential and economic development. Between 1874 and 1876, no additions were platted. Although Little Rock did not grow much in the 1870s, between 1880 and 1890 the city's population exhibited a 97 percent increase (from 13,138 to 25,874).

The city continued to grow at an impressive rate and eventually had to move further westward into the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. By the 1890s much of the flat delta land immediately surrounding the Original City was subdivided and developed. The city could not expand to the north because of the Arkansas River, could not go east because of the river's floodplain downstream, and could not go south because of Fourche Bayou. Thus, Little Rock's unique geographical situation, coupled with the extension of the streetcar line in the early twentieth century, created the opportunity for the city's first real suburb in the hilly region northwest of downtown.

In January 1890 Henry Franklin Auten and Edgar Eugene Moss, attorneys from St. Johns, Michigan, arrived in Little Rock. Auten and Moss opened a law office in Little Rock and investigated the potential for real estate development. After securing contributions from Michigan and Little Rock investors, in 1891 Auten and Moss incorporated the Pulaski Heights Land Company in order to purchase 800 acres west of downtown Little Rock. In November 1892 the first ten blocks of the Pulaski Heights Addition were platted, but the lack of a good transportation route plagued developers, and only eight families built homes there in the 1890s. In the fall of 1903, the Little Rock Traction and Electric Railway Company sent the first streetcars into Pulaski Heights. With easier access provided by the streetcar line, lots sold quickly and new additions were platted in the Heights.

By 1903 the Country Club of Little Rock purchased its current site at the far northeastern edge of Pulaski Heights and boasted 125 members as well as a \$12,000 clubhouse, golf course, and tennis courts. The following year, the Mountain Park Land Company leased a 160-acre tract bounded by Hays Street (now University), Prospect Avenue (now Kavanaugh), Taylor Street, and undeveloped forest to the streetcar company for the construction of a park at the western end of the streetcar line. Forest Park contained an auditorium, bandstand, carnival rides, dance hall, and gardens.

Pulaski Heights developers used the streetcar, country club, and park as advertising points to attract prospective buyers, and it worked. Lots sold quickly in the Heights, and in order to finance public improvements—namely the paving of streets and sidewalk construction—on August 1, 1905, the Town of Pulaski Heights was incorporated. About 1911 the Pulaski Heights Land Company published a pamphlet called “Beautiful Pulaski Heights,” which listed amenities like the streetcar, parks, country club, waterworks, sewer, proximity to three state institutions (the state capitol, state hospital, and deaf school), Pulaski Heights school, electricity, river views, healthy living, and pure air and water. The pamphlet made strong appeals to readers, asking them, “Why live in the slums of the city or in the miasma of the flats when you can own a home on the Heights for half the cost?” The promotional material concluded with a list of eighteen reasons to invest in Pulaski Heights. Number sixteen read, “Because you are not a chump.”

However, the success of Pulaski Heights contributed to its demise as a town. In 1916 the quickly expanding, and largely affluent, suburb was annexed by Little Rock. As promised before consolidation, Little Rock constructed a fire station in the Heights and also installed fire hydrants and street lights. Between 1920 and 1930, nine additions were platted in the Heights, securing its status as one of Little Rock’s premier neighborhoods.

[The first Pulaski Heights Addition encompassed the area on both sides of Prospect (now Kavanaugh) between Lee and Hillcrest. The eastern boundary was Oak Street, and the western boundary was Harrison Street.]

## **Craftsman-style Architecture (the most popular style in Hillcrest)**

The Craftsman style of architecture was inspired by the 19<sup>th</sup> century English Arts & Crafts movement and our nation's desire to create a uniquely American art form. [The English A & C movement rejected the ideas of the Industrial Revolution, which dehumanized workers by dividing up their skill sets (assembly line—anyone can be taught how to do this step) and taking away the joy of starting and completing an entire project by yourself. And when the United States was young, Americans looked to Europe for examples of art and culture, when all we had to do was hone our own unique skills.] The style is a celebration of human craftsmanship and planning. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Craftsman style was popularized in several magazines, including *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Architectural Record*, and of course, Gustav Stickley's publication, *Craftsman Magazine*. About 1903 brothers Charles and Henry Greene began designing small Craftsman houses in southern California, and they are given credit for the creation of the Craftsman Bungalow.

Bungalows are set low to the ground and blend in with their surroundings. They typically have multiple roof planes (hipped and gabled) with widely overhanging eaves, exposed rafter tails, triangular knee braces (or brackets), outdoor living areas (porches), and ribbons of windows to provide as much natural light as possible. The exterior of a bungalow features a mixture of natural materials (usually wood and stone), and earth tones (browns and greens) are used to further integrate the house with its environment. This house in particular features a unique type of clapboard siding with alternating wide and narrow pieces exposed—gives the house a Rustic look and resembles logs. And the house is classified as an “Airplane” bungalow because it has a single second-story room with a full view of the sky (almost, in this case, 3 sides are open to the sky).

### **Builder & Occupants**

Between 1915 and 1920, local resident Kenneth E. N. Cole started building spec houses in what is now the Hillcrest neighborhood. Cole made a living as a traveling salesman and built homes on the side. However, by the early 1920s, Cole devoted himself to building houses fulltime. This turned out to be a lucrative

career move for Mr. Cole, as Pulaski Heights experienced substantial growth in the 1920s. In his early years, Cole specialized in “California Bungalows,” and this house is one of his earliest examples (712 and 708 probably built at the same time). Cole built houses that were attractive on the exterior and “planned for convenience, coolness and general livability” on the interior. Cole went on to build homes in a variety of styles throughout Hillcrest, including houses at 706 Ash (no longer extant), 708 Ash, 710/712 Ash, 815 Beechwood, 4123 Lee, 4217 Lee, 4312 S. Lookout, 4316 S. Lookout, 501 N. Elm, 4701 Hillcrest, and 908 N. Palm. And like many homebuilders today, Cole and his family were often the first occupants of his newly constructed houses.

Around December 1916, Kenneth E. N. Cole and his wife, Margaret S. Cole, moved into this house with their two oldest children, Margaret M. and Kenneth, Jr. (they later had two more children, Jane and Polly).

By 1919, there were only 3 houses in the 700 block of N. Ash, and they were all built by Cole (706, 708, 710/712). The same year, Cole was living next door at 708 Ash, and likely rented 710/712 to J. W. Downs, a salesman.

In 1920 civil engineer William C. Hight and his wife, Eula, moved into the house and stayed for a couple years.

In 1922 the house was sold to Cloud Night (C. N.) Rainwater and his wife, Lula Burrow Rainwater, and they lived here with their daughters, Jeanne (“Jean”) and Marjorie. C. N. Rainwater was a cotton broker and served as vice president of C. C. Burrow & Company, which bought and shipped cotton. By 1926 Rainwater started his own business, C. N. Rainwater & Company, cotton buyers, which was located in the Little Rock Cotton Exchange Building at 202-210 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (NE corner Scott & 2<sup>nd</sup>—no longer extant). He also served as secretary-treasurer of the LR Cotton Exchange, which at that time was the fifth-largest inland cotton market in the South. About 1927 the Rainwater family moved to a bigger house at 4716 Crestwood.

A series of people occupied the house in the late 1920s and early 1930s, some of whom had difficulty paying the property taxes, probably as a result of the

Depression. Occupants included attorney Grover E. Garner and his wife, Mattie; Walter A. Welch, who was a salesman for the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co., and his wife, Myrtle; and Earl T. Chambers, who worked for the Sinclair Refining Co., and his wife, Marie.

In 1933 the house went into foreclosure for delinquent taxes and nonpayment of the mortgage, and Bankers Trust Company sold the house at public auction. It was transferred to another mortgage and loan company, which sold the house in 1935 to Pearl Rivers McCracken Rainwater.

Interesting twist—Pearl Rivers McCracken Rainwater was the widow of Dr. Homer Cloud Rainwater, who died on June 7, 1903, at Morrilton. Before Dr. Rainwater died, the couple had at least one child—Cloud Night Rainwater (born Sept. 26, 1893)—who had previously lived at 710/712 Ash. Pearl Rainwater was an artist and continued to live here until her death on October 23, 1946. According to Pearl's will, the house was given to her sister, May P. Carter. The house sat vacant for a few years, and then by the mid-1950s, Ms. Carter rented the house to two tenants. [Both tenants were widows. Olga C. Otey was a civil recorder for the Secretary of State's office, and Helen B. Pierce was an office secretary for the State Legislative Council.] However, Ms. Carter could not afford to maintain the house and pay the property taxes, so the extended family petitioned the court to sell the house and give the proceeds to Carter.

In 1957 the fair market value of the house was established at \$7,800. It could not be sold for less than that amount. In another interesting twist, on December 17, 1957, K. E. N. Cole and his wife, Margaret, purchased the house for \$8,000. Cole, who built the house and lived there for a few years after its construction, lived there again from 1957 until about 1960 (Mr. Cole died sometime before March 1962 & Mrs. Cole died in 1971).

In 1962 the house was purchased by Billy Jim Holloway and his wife, Hilda Golden Holloway. [In 1978, Hilda Holloway deeded the house to Billy Jim Holloway for \$10.] By 1980, Kurt (or Curt?) Busch, then a mechanic, owned the house. He and his wife, Marquita, raised their two sons here.

Carol Young bought the house in 2001 and began an extensive rehabilitation. Lots of rotten wood.

### **Interior Details**

- Carol installed traditional interior Craftsman features like exposed beams, an interior column, a built-in cabinet, custom wainscoting (looks like half-timbering), a custom-made Craftsman door for the rear entrance, and period appropriate reproduction fixtures (except for the fixture in the hallway, which came from the porch of 1610 Blair St., where Carol's grandparents lived).
- The fireplace was rebuilt around an antique fireplace insert (from one of John Jarrard's properties).
- The home retains its original windows, front door, interior door hardware, and most of the flooring (oak in public areas and pine in private rooms).
- Kitchen cabinets are new, counter tops are quartz, and kitchen floor is cork.
- Sun room floor is bamboo.
- Carol did some minor reconfiguring during the rehab—bumped the back wall of the bathroom out to make it larger and replaced an exterior door with a window (door was in a bedroom).
- As you walk up on the porch, you will notice that some of the cement is new. When Hurricane Gustav came through in 2008, the storm blew over some trees. One tree went through the porch roof, and the other landed by the south side of the house. So part of the porch was rebuilt.
- And when you walk out the back door, you will see the new detached garage. Historically, there was a carriage house/garage out back, but this is new construction—in keeping with the historic character of the neighborhood, of course.

### **Extras**

Beginning in 1958, the house number changes from its original 710 to 710 and 712 listed in the same year. Then it flip-flops in city directories between 710 and 712 until 1985, when it stays listed at 712 Ash.

706 Ash, also built by Cole, was demolished about 2010 to make way for a parking lot beside U.S. Pizza.

Prospect Avenue was renamed Kavanaugh Blvd. in 1936 in honor of William Marmaduke Kavanaugh, who served as managing editor of the *Arkansas Gazette*, Pulaski County Sheriff, Pulaski County Judge, briefly as U.S. Senator (after death of Jeff Davis), and was heavily involved in all civic, political, and social affairs. While serving as judge (ca. 1900), Kavanaugh surveyed and opened the road to Pulaski Heights, greatly aiding the area's development.

Instructions—go in through the front door and exit through the back door. You may walk around the south side of the house to get back to the front yard. We will not go to the upstairs room during the tour.

Thank you!

Next tour is Friday, June 1 at Old Main at Arkansas Baptist College.