

Sandwiching in History
Fulk Building
300 Main Street, Little Rock
May 6, 2016
By Rachel Silva



Fulk Building, late 1920s



Fulk Building, 2016

Intro

Good afternoon, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Fulk Building. I’d like to thank everyone at CJRW for allowing us to tour their new offices, and I’d especially like to recognize Brenda Worm, Bob Johnston, and Tommy Jameson for their help with today’s tour.

This tour is worth one hour of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. Please see me after the tour if you’re interested.

Constructed in 1900, the Fulk Building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 and is also part of the Main Street Commercial Historic District, which was National Register-listed in 2010. The building is a good example of early 20th century commercial-style architecture with Romanesque Revival details.

Erb Block, sw corner 3rd & Main

Before the present Fulk Building was constructed, the Erb Block (or Erb Building) occupied this site at the southwest corner of 3rd and Main. The two-story Erb Block was built about 1877 and housed the law offices of Erb, Summerfield & Erb (brothers Newman and Jacob Erb and Marcus Summerfield) as well as Maxwell & Edmonson Grocers. In the late 1880s, the building was remodeled with the addition of a third story. Shortly thereafter, the Joe P. Quinn Dry Goods Company moved into the building. The company's shoe department occupied a previous building at 304 Main (now the site of the 1900 C. M. Taylor Building). The officers of the company were brothers Isaac, Joseph, and George Wolf. Two devastating fires would soon change the face of the 300 block of Main Street.

At 4:30 a.m. on Friday, February 2, 1900, a fire started at the Arkansas Book and Paper Company, which was then housed on the second floor of the Rose Building at 307-311 Main. The book and paper company shared the second floor of the Rose Building with the Dickinson Arms Company. The fire broke through the partitions between businesses and spread into the munition company's store of dry powder. This resulted in a series of explosions that significantly damaged all of the buildings on the east side of the 300 block and shattered windows all the way down to the 700 block of Main.

Just four days later (February 6, 1900), the buildings at 300-302 and 304 Main were destroyed by fire. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* estimated that the Joe P. Quinn Dry Goods Company suffered a loss of \$240,000 (equal to almost \$6.9 million today). At the time of the fire, the building at 300-302 was owned by Judge Francis M. Fulk. Fulk immediately rebuilt on the same site, constructing the present three-story Fulk Building.

Fulk Building, 1900

Constructed in 1900, the Fulk Building is a good example of early 20th century commercial-style architecture with Romanesque Revival details, evident in the

use of arched window openings and rusticated brick arcades. The three-story building is divided into two bays separated by a vertical pattern of rusticated brick, which is also featured at the north and south corners as a quoin treatment. The building's cornice includes a band of rectangular attic vents topped by a projecting arcade of brick as well as simple brick corbelling and dentil work. A metal name plate reading "Fulk" is centered in the upper façade. The building features a mixture of rectangular and arched window openings with cast-concrete lintels, sills, and keystones. Ribbons of windows on the third floor are topped with arcades of rusticated brick.

According to the 1900-1901 Little Rock City Directory, the storefront at 300 Main was occupied by the Bank of Little Rock and the Little Rock Trust Company. The southernmost storefront at 302 Main, along with the upper floors, was occupied by the Wolf & Bros. Dry Goods Company, run by brothers Isaac, George, Joseph, and Herbert Wolf (some of the same men who had been officers in the Joe P. Quinn Dry Goods Company that was destroyed by fire).

Francis M. Fulk

Francis M. Fulk, the namesake of the Fulk Building, was one of Little Rock's wealthiest and best known residents. At the time of his death in 1910, Fulk was one of the largest property owners in the city. Francis Marion Fulk was born on January 9, 1852, at Lock, Ohio. When he was four years old, his family moved to Iowa. Fulk attended common schools and completed his education at Iowa Wesleyan University. Fulk taught school in Iowa and Missouri before 1870, when he moved to Monroe County, Arkansas. He continued to teach school and eventually moved to Wheatley in St. Francis County, where on August 3, 1873, he married Miss Florence Mary Parsons.

The couple moved to Little Rock later that year, and Mr. Fulk initially worked at the carpentry and masonry trades. He earned enough money to buy a small stand at a market on Fifth Street (Capitol) between Main and Louisiana. He was successful in this venture and later acquired a mercantile business at 9th and

Victory streets. Although Fulk was admitted to the bar in 1874, he did not actively practice law until 1881. About the same time, he began to invest in real estate. In 1885 he, along with John B. Jones and W. B. Worthen, started the Little Rock Real Estate Exchange. Beginning in 1897, Fulk practiced law with his sons, Francis Guy Fulk and Augustus “Gus” Marion Fulk in the firm of Fulk, Fulk & Fulk.

Francis M. Fulk enjoyed an active law practice, served as circuit judge, and by 1910 amassed a large amount of property worth \$1,000,000 (equal to \$25.6 million today). He owned the Jones House Furnishing Company Building in the 600 block of Main, the Fulk Building at the southwest corner of 3rd and Main, a building on the corner of 2nd and Main, a building on East Markham, and the Fulk Office Building at 305 West Markham. He also owned two 120-acre tracts of land west of downtown—one was west of Highland Park (out on W. 12th Street) and another was west of the State Hospital (W. Markham)—and 500 lots scattered all over the city, most of which were unimproved.

Judge Fulk’s death was attributed to heart trouble. He died at the family home at 220 Spring Street on March 24, 1910, at the age of 58. His body was interred in the Fulk Mausoleum at Oakland Cemetery. At the time of Fulk’s death, his friends spoke very highly of him. Judge Joseph W. House, Sr., said, “He was one of the best friends that a man could have and was a man of strict integrity. I have known him intimately for 21 years and have found him to be a man of remarkable ability, both as a business man and as an attorney. He was always upright in his dealings with his fellow-men, and I regret very much to hear the news of his death.” Fulk’s widow, Florence Parsons Fulk, managed the family’s real estate interests until her death on January 9, 1940, at the age of 84. [Florence Fulk (9/20/1855-1/9/1940)]

Francis M. and Florence Fulk’s two sons, Francis Guy Fulk and Augustus “Gus” Marion Fulk (Sr.), followed in their father’s footsteps to become prominent Little Rock attorneys and circuit court judges. F. Guy Fulk died in 1934 at the age of 58, and his younger brother, Gus, died in 1954 at age 76. [Francis Guy Fulk (2/17/1876-7/25/1934) and Augustus Marion Fulk, Sr. (1/15/1878-8/10/1954)]

Some of the Fulk descendants still live in central Arkansas. Gus Fulk, III, and his cousin, Virginia Fulk, who live in Little Rock, are the great-grandchildren of Francis Marion Fulk, who built the Fulk Building. In 1944 the Fulk Building was sold out of the family.

Occupants of the Fulk Building, 1900-present

I already told you that the first occupants of the Fulk Building in 1900 were the Bank of Little Rock and Little Rock Trust Company (300 Main) and Wolf & Bros. Dry Goods Company (302 Main). Those tenants remained here until the mid-1910s, when 300 Main became England Loan & Trust Company and England National Bank, run by Joseph E. England, Lloyd England, and J. E. England, Jr. 302 Main then housed the A. B. Poe Shoe Store. This bank and the shoe store were in the building through the mid-1920s.

In 1927 the Fulk Building was remodeled. The original two-over-two windows were replaced with multi-pane casement windows, and the storefronts were altered with deeply recessed front doors flanked by large, plate-glass display windows. Three small storefronts were also added in the building's northwest corner, facing 3rd Street (107-109-111 W. 3rd). Interestingly, in 1931, on the centennial anniversary of Little Rock's incorporation as a town, a commemorative plaque was placed on the north side of the Fulk Building marking this corner as the site of the first meeting of the Little Rock City Council.

300 Main

After housing financial institutions for about 30 years, 300 Main was occupied by clothing and shoe stores for many years. In the 1930s, it was J. B. Strauss & Company clothing store, followed in the 1940s by Stein Bros. clothing. By 1950, it was the J. B. Strauss Company's men's clothing store. From the mid-50s to the mid-60s, it was Bell Bros. shoes. And from the mid-60s to the early 1970s, it was Hardy Shoe Store.

302 Main

From the mid-1930s until the early 1970s, the storefront at 302 Main was home to Bauman's Men's Shop.

107-109-111 W. 3rd

During the 1930s and '40s, the two storefronts at 107 and 109 W. 3rd housed the Atlas Finance Company and Laster & Baskin Jewelers, respectively. 111 W. 3rd was home to a locksmith in the 1930s, followed in the 1940s by Charles H. Brown, acoustic apparatus (hearing aids). By the early 1950s, 111 was Edmond C. Harper's liquor store. Beginning in the mid-1950s, Bauman's leased the three storefronts on W. 3rd as well as the space at 302 Main.

Bennett's Military Supplies

Most people remember the Fulk Building as the location of Bennett's Military Supplies. Before Bennett's moved to the Fulk Building, the store was located on the west side of the 200 block of Main in a building that burned to the ground, forcing the business to move to 3rd and Main in the early '70s. Bennett's was located at 302 Main from 1973 to 2014, when the store relocated to 608 Main to make way for the rehabilitation of the Fulk Building.

Sheree Meyer is the owner of Bennett's. She inherited the business from her father, Joseph Kaufman, when he died in 2003. In 2014-2015 Terraforma, LLC, a real estate development firm run by Doug and Sheree Meyer and Dave Bruning, rehabilitated the Fulk Building to house the offices of CJRW, the state's largest marketing, advertising, and public relations firm.

Rehabilitation

Although Bennett's had been in the Fulk Building for more than 40 years, the second and third floors sat empty, and the building suffered from deferred

maintenance. The Fulk Building was rehabilitated with the help of federal and state tax credits for the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The project architect was Jameson Architects, and the contractor was Kinco Constructors. In order to accommodate the advertising agency, the building needed a variety of open and closed office spaces, conference rooms, and collaborative work spaces, along with improvements to meet building codes and modern office needs.

Project Highlights

- Significant interior features were preserved where possible, including:
 - Original iron columns
 - Original wood ceilings
 - Historic plaster walls with remnants of previous finishes preserved “as-is” with clear sealant
 - Historic fire doors
- Original corner entrance was recreated and a conference room put in the adjacent southern storefront
- One of the 3rd Street storefronts was redefined as a receiving area and staff entry
- New hydraulic elevator installed
- Two new fire stairs installed to meet code
- Structural improvements achieved by strengthening the connections of floors and roof to the exterior walls and iron columns
- New roof
- Masonry repairs
- The 1920s casement windows had been replaced in the recent past with fixed panes of Plexiglass, so they installed replicas of the original 1900 windows, which were 2-over-2 double-hung sash. The replicas have insulated glass and were installed in the original refurbished window frames. Original window trim was repaired and replaced where missing.
- Energy efficient lighting and high-performance HVAC added

Awards

CJRW moved in on July 9, 2015, and had an open house to show off its new space in September. Since then, the project has won two awards—an Award of Merit at the Quapaw Quarter Association’s Greater Little Rock Preservation Awards (Oct. 2015) and the award for Excellence in Preservation through Rehabilitation at the 2015 Arkansas Preservation Awards (Jan. 2016). In June Tommy Jameson will submit the project for yet another statewide award—the Arkansas Chapter AIA 2016 Design Awards Program.

Cranford Johnson Robinson Woods (CJRW)

Founded in 1961, CJRW serves clients inside and outside of Arkansas and is the largest advertising and marketing communications firm in the Mid-South. CJRW offers a full range of advertising, public relations, public policy, and promotions support including print, broadcast, and outdoor advertising, publication design and production, social media and digital capabilities, consumer and trade communications, media planning and buying, and consumer event coordination. In addition to its Little Rock office, CJRW also has an office in Springdale. The firm employs a total of 76 people.

We are going to try and go through the building together floor by floor.

Things you need to know:

- There are two stairwells—one off the lobby and one on the west end of the building.

- There is also an elevator near the lobby.

- Restrooms are located on the west end of each floor.

- You are not allowed to go in the basement.

Questions?

Next tour is Friday, June 3 at the Castle on Stagecoach, 6601 Stagecoach Road, Little Rock.

Details

- Total of 21,000 square feet (7,000 square feet per floor)
- Lobby:
 - Pine Bluff artist James Hayes made the glass chandelier
 - Bowl on the table is from Miller's Mud Pottery in Dumas
 - Many other examples of local art throughout the building
- Conference Room 1: Building remodel video
- First floor office area:
 - Digital media/creative
 - Northwestern portion of this floor was divided into three storefronts that faced 3rd Street. Now this is a receiving door and the mail/copy room.
 - Creative workroom: See old stairwell scar on the wall and a painted sign from Bauman's Men's Shop reading "Wholesale Department Upstairs."
 - See old handwriting on the wall, may have been near the telephone?
 - Largest glass board in the state (4' x 10'). Uses liquid chalk.
- Second floor:
 - Accounting/IT/Media/Travel & Tourism Sales
 - Bistro: all-staff gatherings and lunch room
 - CJRW client works video
 - Convection microwaves
 - Warming drawers
 - Dishwasher
 - Refrigerator
- Third floor:
 - Executive offices/PR
 - Conference Room 3: American Pharaoh Triple-Crown winner video (Oaklawn is a client)
 - Original skylight
 - Historic fire door

- State-of-the-art A/V equipment
- Beautiful conference table made by local furniture designer Tommy Farrell. It is 28' long, weighs over 1,000 pounds, and scissors open in the middle for better views during presentations. When open, the table is 6' 6" across at its widest point. [African etimoe and sapele wood]