

**Sandwiching in History**  
**Lynch Apartments**  
**523 Orange Street, North Little Rock**  
**April 3, 2015**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



### **Intro**

Good afternoon, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Lynch Apartments! I’d like to thank Lawrence Finn and Steve Gardner of Dakota Development and Gardner Custom Homes for allowing us to tour the building. And many thanks to property manager Scott Wilkins for opening the apartments today. I owe a huge thank you to the staff of the NLR History Commission—Sandra and Cary—for their help with research on the property.

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

The Lynch Apartments were built in 1926 by Sylvester James “Jimmy” Lynch and his wife, Theresa Korte (pronounced “Cour-tee”) Lynch, with the help of their extended families. The Craftsman-style building is located in the Argenta Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. The ten-unit apartment building was recently rehabilitated using federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits.

## Lynch and Korte Families

Sylvester James “Jimmy” Lynch and Theresa M. Korte were married on October 15, 1923, at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, then located at the corner of Seventh and Cypress in North Little Rock. S. J. “Jimmy” Lynch was born on February 25, 1899, at Spring Place, Murray County, Georgia, to John Riley Lynch and Anne Teresa Berrigan Lynch. [Spring Place is located in northwestern Georgia, not far from Chattanooga, TN.] Jimmy Lynch’s parents were Irish and Canadian immigrants (dad was Irish and mom was Canadian). He was the eighth of the couple’s ten children and their sixth son. About 1905 the Lynch family moved from Georgia to Little Rock. They settled in Little Rock’s West End neighborhood, near present-day Central High School, and lived in a house at the southwest corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Park streets (house is no longer extant). The 1906 Little Rock City Directory listed John R. Lynch as a planter. Directories in 1907 and 1908 listed his occupation as “laborer.”

I mentioned that the Lynch Apartments were built by Jimmy and Theresa Lynch and their extended families. The Lynch and Korte sides of the family contained people skilled in building trades. Two of Jimmy Lynch’s older brothers—Francis “Frank” and Alphonsas “Alf”—operated the Bungalow Furniture and Woodworking Company, which later became known as Lynch Brothers (2400 Wright Avenue, LR). According to the 1915 City Directory, most of the Lynch family was involved in the business. Brothers Frank and Alf ran the company, sisters Gertrude and Mary were clerks, and Jimmy and his father, John, were laborers for the company. By 1922, brothers Alf and Jimmy Lynch ran Lynch Brothers Furniture Company. At that time, their younger brothers, Augustus and George, worked for the company as painter and bookkeeper, respectively. So before his marriage to Theresa Korte in 1923, S. J. “Jimmy” Lynch was a cabinetmaker and painter by trade, and he lived in his parents’ home in the West End.

Theresa M. Korte was born on June 22, 1899, at North Little Rock to German immigrants Eduard (Edward) Korte and Rosa Barth Korte. Edward Korte came to

the United States in 1892 with his mother, Ottillia Schlueter Korte. Rosa Barth Korte arrived in the U.S. in 1880 with her parents, Adolf and Stephanie Barth. Interestingly, Adolf Barth, Theresa Korte's maternal grandfather, lived in the 1886 Barth-Hempfling House at 507 Main Street, the oldest surviving building in Argenta. The house now serves as offices for Clements & Associates Architects.

By 1900, Edward and Rosa Korte and their daughter, Theresa, lived at 212 Olive Street in Argenta. Edward Korte worked as a blacksmith and soon opened one of the many saloons in Argenta. From at least 1906 until 1916, when Prohibition in Arkansas outlawed the manufacture and sale of alcohol, Ed Korte operated a saloon at 315 Main Street in NLR. After 1916, he worked as a carpenter and later, as a blacksmith for the Missouri Pacific Railroad. Theresa Korte's uncle and cousin—Herman Korte and his son, Herman, Jr.—were brickmasons and lived nearby at the corner of Second and Willow streets. Furthermore, Theresa's younger brother, Edward Korte, Jr., was a painter.

Before her marriage to Jimmy Lynch in 1923, Theresa Korte worked as a clerk at Pfeifer Brothers Department Store in Little Rock. She was later a bookkeeper for the Travelers Building and Loan Association before entering the insurance business with her husband.

### **Lot 12, Block 4, Clendenin's Addition, Argenta**

The Lynch Apartment Building is located on lot 12, block 4 in Clendenin's Addition. The Clendenin Addition was platted in 1872 by Judge John J. Clendenin and his wife, Mary, and included 12 blocks bounded by 4<sup>th</sup>, Main, 8<sup>th</sup>, and Willow. Before the Lynch Apartments were built on this site, the southwest corner of Sixth and Orange was occupied by the First Baptist Church (Negro), or the black congregation. The congregation was organized about 1873 and had several locations in Argenta. The church occupied this corner from 1907 until 1915, when the building was destroyed by fire.

### *Lynch Apartments Constructed*

Immediately after their marriage in 1923, Jimmy and Theresa Lynch lived with Theresa's parents (Edward and Rosa Korte) at 212 Olive in North Little Rock. Jimmy was still working as a cabinetmaker. In 1926 Jimmy and Theresa Lynch, along with their relatives, who were brickmasons, carpenters, cabinetmakers, painters, and blacksmiths, constructed the Lynch Apartments at Sixth and Orange. The apartment building had ten units—six one-bedroom apartments and four two-bedroom apartments—just as it does today. The 1930 Census valued the Lynch Apartment Building at \$16,600, which equates to about \$235,000 today.

According to the 1928 City Directory, the following people lived at the Lynch Apartments.

1. S. J. "Jimmy" Lynch (Theresa K.); Jimmy, painter; Theresa, bookkeeper, Travelers Building & Loan Association
2. Clara Patterson; no occupation listed
3. J. Owen Reese (Lorene); electrician
4. Louis B. Goldberg (Dorothy); salesman, F. & I. Goldberg Men's and Boys' Clothing at 121 Main, NLR
5. Nathan Gershner (Rose); proprietor of Nathan Gershner Men's and Boys' Clothing at 120 E. Washington, NLR
6. Franklin P. Hill (Mary); Allen Drug Store at 723 Main, NLR
7. John Booth; collector, Frank's Cleaners and Dyers at 310 Main, NLR
8. Milton McPherson (Nellie); Milton, salesman, Green Chevrolet, LR; Nellie, stenographer, 555 Tire Service Company, LR
9. James Caskey (Mayme); general yard master, Mo Pac
10. Clarence Samon ("Samone"?) (Edith); Clarence, principal, NLR High School; Edith, society editor, Times Printing Company.

Jimmy and Theresa Lynch lived in apartment no. 1 from the time the building was constructed in 1926 until about 1948, when they divorced. In 1929 S. J. "Jimmy" Lynch opened the Lynch Insurance Agency and sold insurance out of the couple's apartment. Theresa began working as secretary for the insurance agency, in

addition to managing the apartment building. By the early 1940s, Jimmy Lynch moved his insurance office to a storefront at 113 Maple Street. He served as NLR alderman from 1939 to 1943 (elected to two two-year terms).

Theresa Lynch was well-respected in the community as an entrepreneur. An article published in the *North Little Rock Times* on October 21, 1938, praised her for “go[ing] into business for herself,” referring to her management of the Lynch Apartments. As a testament to the high quality of the apartment building, the article went on to say, “The Lynch apartments was one of the first really nice apartment houses built in our city.”

### **Jimmy and Theresa Split**

As I mentioned earlier, Jimmy and Theresa Lynch divorced about 1948. Jimmy moved to 113 Maple, the same location as his insurance office, while Theresa remained in their apartment. She immediately changed the name of the building from the Lynch Apartments to the Theresa Apartments.

On September 5, 1950, Theresa Korte (formerly Lynch) married Eugene Eldridge Raines, a Little Rock insurance executive who was almost 30 years her senior. The couple lived at 313 Skyline Drive in North Little Rock. Mr. Raines died in 1952, and Theresa continued to live on Skyline Drive. About 1958, Theresa married Craig Barnett, a retired liquor store owner, and they lived on Skyline until their deaths, his in 1976 and hers in 1979. While there is no evidence that Theresa Korte had children of her own, she did have a step-son while she was married to Craig Barnett.

Jimmy Lynch lived at 113 Maple until at least 1956 and later moved to Little Rock. He died on August 18, 1973. According to his obituary, he served as a Peace Corps volunteer for several years after retiring from the insurance business.

## **Lynch Apartments, Decline and Revitalization**

Originally known as the Lynch Apartments, this building was actually called the Theresa Apartments for most of its existence. After Theresa Korte Barnett's death in 1979, the apartment building was acquired by the Dupriest family. The majority of the building's units were occupied through the 1980s. But by 1995, only five of the building's ten units were occupied, and that number continued to decrease until only a couple people lived here.

One of those people was Polly Wilks. She was the building's longest resident, and she was quite a character. Polly was born in 1920 in Arkansas County and graduated from high school at DeValls Bluff. During World War II, she went to work for the Veterans Administration in Washington, D. C. and later, New York. After the war, she worked at military bases in Hawaii, California, and Morocco before taking a job at Little Rock Air Force Base, where she worked for almost twenty years before her retirement. Polly moved into apartment no. 1 in 1963 and lived there until her death in 2006. She was one of four neighborhood residents who in June 1991 organized the Boosters for a Better Downtown North Little Rock. The Boosters were instrumental in the revitalization of downtown NLR and continue to hold monthly meetings.

In the spring of 2014, the building was purchased from the Dupriest family by Dakota Development. Using federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, the developers were able to repair and update the building while maintaining most of its original details and finishes. With the exception of a few small changes, the units retain their original floorplans. The building again provides ten rental units in the heart of downtown North Little Rock.

Today the Lynch Apartment building is the oldest surviving multi-family building in Argenta. Other historic multi-family buildings in the neighborhood are the Olive Apartments (5<sup>th</sup> & Maple; 1927), Grange Apartments (800 block of Orange; 1929), and the Leonard Apartments (Willow & Melrose Circle; 1938).

## Details

- After the rehab, leasing began in November 2014. Half of the units are currently occupied (four 2-bedroom units and one 1-bedroom unit).
- Two-bedroom units rent for \$895/month
- One-bedroom units rent for \$795/month
- Original oak floors
- There are 82 windows in this building. They were all repaired and rebuilt with new ropes and weights. Storm windows added to exterior.
- Most bathrooms have the original penny tile
- Most original bathtubs and sinks (except downstairs middle apartment)
- Original light fixtures, metal with brass finish and painted details
- Original molding, trim
- Most of the original plaster
- A few original doors (had to replace apartment doors to hallway with solid-core wood doors to provide increased security)
- New plumbing, electrical, HVAC
- When the Lynch family built the apartment building, they also constructed a 10-car garage immediately to the south. The garage was saved and now provides covered parking for residents.
- There used to be a huge attic fan at the top of the stairs on the second floor. Each apartment unit had a louvered, metal door in front of the wood door to the hallway. During the summertime, people would cool their apartments by opening windows and their solid front door. The louvered door remained closed. The attic fan would then circulate air throughout the building.
- According to local legend, there was an illegal whiskey still hidden in a cellar under the pantry floor in apartment no. 1. If you recall, Theresa Korte Lynch's father, Edward Korte, was in the saloon business before Prohibition. And Theresa and Jimmy Lynch lived in apartment no. 1. They could have been dispensing a little moonshine along with their insurance coverage. 😊

Next tour is Friday, May 8 (second Friday in May) at the Dan Stowers Office Building, 1516 W. Third, Little Rock. Parking is available behind the building.