

Monroe County
Holly Grove
Abramson House

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Abramson House

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: 127 Crescent Heights

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Holly Grove

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Monroe code: AR 095 zip code: 72069

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Craftsman

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation Brick roof Ceramic tile
walls Brick other Brick chimneys

Describe present and historic physical appearance. ____ See continuation sheet.

Summary

The Abramson House, located at 127 Crescent Heights near the southeastern edge of the community of Holly Grove, is a two-and-one-half story, wood frame and brick veneer residence designed in an elaborate and high-style interpretation of the Craftsman style. The characteristic exterior details include the mixed media (ceramic tile, brick, stucco and half-timbering), the oriel window at the intersection of the L-shaped plan, and the exposed rafters.

Elaboration

The Abramson House is a two-and-one-half story, wood frame and brick veneer residence designed in an elaborate and high-style interpretation of the Craftsman aesthetic. The "L"-shaped plan is augmented by a projecting second story sleeping porch on the eastern elevation, another single-story room adjacent to the north, and the oriel bay placed at the southwest intersection of the two principle hipped roof sections. A total of three brick chimneys rise through the roof: one near the hip intersection at the southern end and two exterior side chimneys that are attached to the northern elevation. The green ceramic tile roof and red brick walls are supported upon a continuous brick foundation.

The front of the Abramson House -- the inside of its intersecting "L"-shaped plan -- is oriented toward the broad, spacious yard to the west of the house. The south wing is slightly longer than the intersecting west wing, as the former is effectively one bay longer than the latter. Both contain large arched openings at either end. The opening at the end of the south wing accesses a porch while that at the end of the west wing opens into an enclosed room that was also a screened porch originally. A group of three six-over-one windows lights the first-story room on the south wing and a single identical window lights the room near the intersection of the west wing. The second story of the west wing is fenestrated with a pair of six-over-one windows at its end while the second story of the south wing is punctuated with three symmetrically-placed windows, the northernmost of which is slightly smaller than the others. Symmetrically-placed to either side of the projecting wood and stucco oriel bay are two low, three-sided wood

dormers that light the upper half-story within. By far the most visually-dominant feature of this elevation is the wood oriel bay located at the intersection of the two main wings. Covered with a flat asphalt roof and sheathed with stucco and half-timbering, it is supported on two large wood brackets and centrally fenestrated with three identical ten-pane casement windows. With its stucco painted a pale yellow and its half-timbering painted white it contrasts dramatically with the rich red brick and green ceramic tile of which the building is primarily constructed.

The western end of the west wing is fenestrated with two large arched openings on the first story (now glazed, but which were originally open) and two symmetrically-placed wood windows in the second story. The southern end of the south wing features a recent arched window in the western rectangular opening on the second story and a set of four six-over-one windows in the opening to the east; below are two large screened arches.

The eastern elevation is composed of a wall section to the south, the projecting, hipped roof sitting room over the porte cochere at the center, and the single-story, flat roof room to the north. The southern wall section features the large arched porch opening on the first story, surmounted by a group of three wood windows in the second story. The bay to the north is identically-fenestrated on both stories, with each containing a group of three large six-over-one wood windows. The sitting room is fenestrated with three windows on each of its three sides, sheathed with stucco and half-timbering and supported upon two large brick columns connected by a solid, low brick wall. The first story wall behind the porte cochere contains a single-leaf entrance and small window. To the north, a single window lights the second story while a single-story, flat roofed room -- now enclosed, but originally an open porch -- finishes the elevation. Between the porte cochere and the projecting porch a narrow staircase provides access to the partial basement that runs beneath half of the house's northern section.

The northern elevation is separated into three distinct sections by the two large exterior chimneys that rise from the foundation to the roof. The wall to the east of the eastern chimney contains an entrance (now boarded over) and a three-part window on the first floor, and a pair of wood windows in the floor above. Between the chimneys the first story is fenestrated with a pair of windows and another single window while the second story contains a total of four single windows, the westernmost of which is slightly smaller than the others. The wall to the west of the western chimney is lit by a pair of wood windows on the second story and a single window next to the large arched opening on the first storey.

The interior retains most of its original detail. The first story room just to the north of the southern porch features a handsome Classically-inspired mantel atop a firebox with a glazed tile surround that includes several stylized pictorial nature scenes. Another mantelpiece upstairs is simpler, but it also reflects the Classical influence in its use of fluted pilasters with bases and capitals, and a tall entablature above. The elaborate staircase between the principle floors features a curving handrail set atop a balustrade formed by a series of delicate turned posts terminating in an equally-elegant fluted newel post. Most of the original wood window and door trim survives intact; particularly noteworthy is the Classical trim around the large arched entry from the west wing into the staircase hall and the main entrance, a Palladian configuration formed by a large sixteen pane door with full sidelights surmounted by an arched fanlight. Placed directly below the oriel bay above, it remains one of the dominant features of the building. Other noteworthy interior details include an arched phone niche finished with a pair of small wood doors ornamented with a decorative jig-sawn pattern, several original cabinets and some original bathroom fixtures.

The alterations to the house have been minimal. The original single-story porch on the eastern or rear elevation was enclosed c. 1950 and the arched openings at the western end of the west wing -- originally unglazed and screened for the porches within -- have been enclosed. Recent work on the house has resulted in the removal of some original wood windows, but most have been retained.

Also included in the nomination are the large yard -- which includes several uncounted benches, the site of a fountain, and other landscape features -- and the two-story, red brick garage building located just to the north of the house. The garage features two vehicular bays on the first floor and an apartment on the upper level. An original wing off the eastern elevation is covered by a sloping roof and encloses what was originally a laundry room.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1921-1922

Significant Dates: 1921-22

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Mann, Estes

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
___ See continuation sheet.

Summary Criterion C, local significance

Built 1921-22, the Abramson House is locally significant by virtue of its status as an unusually fine example of the Craftsman style. Designed by the Memphis architect Estes Mann for Rue and Venda C. Abramson, this residence is distinguished not only by its vivid use of mixed media and elaborate detail but also by its L-shaped floor plan, uncommon among houses of this era that were not explicitly oriented toward a corner intersection. It remains one of the finest examples of this style in Holly Grove and all of Monroe County.

Elaboration

The community of Holly Grove, like so many other antebellum communities in eastern Arkansas, began as a farming community set amidst one of the richest agricultural regions in the country. However, the arrival of the railroad was the major factor in the development of Holly Grove into the community as it largely appears today. The land incorporated in Holly Grove was originally included in a land grant of November 15, 1836 to Henry Augustus Fay; in that year, Holly Grove was a small community of plantation families. A more heavily populated community called Lawrenceville was located south of the railroad on Maddox Bay and was the governmental center of Monroe County until 1857 when Clarendon became the county seat. With the coming of the railroad in 1873 the population shifted from Lawrenceville and other surrounding communities to the areas served by the railroad, and on July 25, 1876, the town of Holly Grove was officially incorporated (the name of Holly Grove was taken from the many thickets of holly trees in the area).

Holly Grove grew into a prosperous and active transportation community thereafter. A small commercial district formed along the railroad tracks (now commonly-known as the Holly Grove Historic District; NR-listed 02/02/79) and became the nucleus of the community around which the residential areas grew. Within the commercial district at least four of the buildings were owned and/or occupied by the R. Abramson Company, the founder of which was Rue Abramson, the owner of the Abramson House.

Rue and Venda Abramson were natives of Holly Grove, as both of their parents were among the first to settle in this area after the Civil War and with the arrival of the railroad. The Abramsons were active in the commercial life of Holly Grove as merchants, ginners, and plantation owners and operators; by 1922 they also founded the First National Bank of Holly Grove. They were also active in civic affairs: they were leaders in such organizations as the Crowley's Ridge Council of the Boy Scouts of America, the Monroe County Fair Association, the Sahara Temple of Pine Bluff, the American Red Cross, B'nai B'brith, Temple Beth El of Helena and various other Jewish organizations.

By 1921 the Abramsons decided to construct a new residence at 127 Crescent Heights in a new residential section near the southern edge of the city of Holly Grove. They selected a Craftsman design by the Memphis, Tennessee architect Estes Mann of Mann & Gatling, architects. Mann was already a well-established architect in the mid-South region; he would design over 1,800 residences in the region and is perhaps best known in Arkansas for his Administration Building at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas.

In the Abramson House Mann designed an interesting, transitional interpretation of the Craftsman style, an aesthetic that was becoming increasingly-popular in Arkansas at the time, though at the beginning of the third decade of the twentieth century it was far from widespread. Mann's design seems to reflect a certain tentativeness in his handling of the Craftsman style as published in many books and journals of the period, particularly on the interior. The heavy use of arches throughout, though not in and of itself all that unusual for high-style Craftsman designs, reverts to the overtly Classical with the heavy use of columns, pilasters, dentil courses, decorative capitals, etc. within. Yet the exterior -- with its rich use of mixed media (green ceramic tile, stucco and half-timbering, red brick), exposed rafters, asymmetrical plan and elevations -- strongly reflects the primary and dominant influence of the pure Craftsman. Regardless of this tentativeness, ultimately Mann designed an impressive and successful Craftsman style residence for the Abramsons, one fitting their social standing in the Holly Grove community and their considerable financial

success. By virtue of its status as the finest high-style Craftsman residence extant in Holly Grove, the Abramson House is locally significant under Criterion C.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Diary of Mrs. Rue Abramson.

Family information in personal records of Raymond R. Abramson, owner.

Interview with Ralph Abramson, October, 1994.

___ See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ___ previously listed in the National Register
- ___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ___ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State historic preservation office
- ___ Other state agency
- ___ Federal agency
- ___ Local government
- ___ University
- ___ Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: 4.69

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>665270</u>	<u>3829020</u>	B	<u>15</u>	_____	_____
C	<u>15</u>	_____	_____	D	<u>15</u>	_____	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

A certain lot or parcel of land situated in the Southeast Quarter of the Southeast Quarter (SE 1/4 - SE 1/4) of Section 22, T1S-R2W, and more particularly described by metes and bounds as follows: Commencing 10 chains North of the corner of Sections 22, 23, 26 and 27 in T1S-R2W for a place of beginning; thence South 88 1/2 degrees West 5.46 chains; thence North 1/2 degree West 2.67 chains; thence North 1/2 degree West 2.67 chains; thence South 88 1/2 degrees West 5.86 1/2 chains; thence North 1/2 degree West 2.98 chains; thence North 88 1/2 degree East 11.32 chains; thence South 1/2 degree East 5.55 chains to place of beginning and containing 4.69 acres more or less. LESS AND EXCEPT a certain Lot or parcel of land situated in the Town of Holly Grove, Monroe County, Arkansas, in the Southeast Quarter of Section 22,

T1S-R2W, more particularly described by metes and bounds as follows: Commencing at a point 808 feet north of the corner of Section 22, 23, 26 and 27, T1S-R2W for a place of beginning. Thence North 240 feet along the Eastern Corporate line of the Town of Holly Grove to the eastern extremity of the east-west line separating the estate of Mrs. E. E. Trotter and Rue Abramson; thence South 88 1/2 degree West 502 feet along Trotter-Abramson property line to cross fence marking east line of property deeded to John S. Calloway (as described in Deed recorded in Deed Record of Monroe County, Arkansas, Book 52, Page 371) Thence South one-half degree East 240 feet along said cross fence to the South side of Washington Street; thence North 88 1/2 degrees East 502 feet to point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Ken Story, NR/Survey Coordinator
Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: August 2, 1995
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880
City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201

