

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NR listed 12/18/90

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Justin Matthews, Jr. House

other names/alternate number None

2. Location

street & number 257 Skyline Drive

not for publication n/a

city, town North Little Rock

vicinity n/a

state Arkansas

code 05

county Pulaski

code 119

zip code 72116

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private (checked)
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s) (checked)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, and Total.

Number of related multiple property listing: n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official: Catherine J. Boyd, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Date: 11-9-90

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Horizontal lines for signature and date of action.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

roof Terra Cotta

other Wood

Wrought Iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
1928

Significant Dates
1928

Cultural Affiliation
n/a

Significant Person
n/a

Architect/Builder
Max F. Mayer/Justin Matthews Company

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Percentage of property Less than one

UTM References

A

1	5	5	6	7	8	6	0	3	8	4	8	9	0	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 13, 14, 15, & 16 of Block 102, Park Hill Addition to the City of North Little Rock, Arkansas

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

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

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title Cheryl Griffith Nichols
organization History, Inc. date November 9, 1990
street & number 1721 S. Gaines Street telephone (501) 375-2686
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72206

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

Occupying an elevated site where Skyline Drive intersects with Link and Dooley Streets in North Little Rock's Park Hill neighborhood, the Justin Matthews, Jr. House is a large, architect-designed example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. As such, it is an especially important resource in the Greater Little Rock area, where few large-scale examples of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture are found. Designed about 1928 by Little Rock architect Max F. Mayer, the house exhibits all of the major characteristics associated with the Spanish Colonial Revival style: tile roof, stucco walls, wrought-iron grillework and arched doors and windows. More particularly, the house falls into what sometimes is termed the "Mediterranean" subcategory of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. Evidence of the "Mediterranean" influence includes the sophisticated use of arches, both inside and outside, as well as the presence of casement windows, cantilevered balconies, and an interior courtyard or atrium.

Elaboration

The setting of the Justin Matthews, Jr. House--a hill above the intersection of three streets--enhances the presence of a house that would be imposing under any circumstances. The large residence is sited at the rear of the four lots it occupies, creating an expansive front lawn (nearly 280 feet wide) which adds to the commanding appearance the house presents to the street. A driveway runs up the hill from Link Street, across the front of the house, and back down to Dooley Street.

The main (south) facade of the house is divided asymmetrically into three parts. Visually dominant is the projecting central section, which is rectangular in plan with a low-pitched, gabled roof. On the west side of this section is a square, two-story entry "tower" with hipped roof; to the east stands a two-story, gable-roofed wing. Here, as elsewhere, the exterior walls of the house are stucco (painted white) and the roof is red tile. Uncovered terraces, defined by low stucco walls, flank the main entrance, one running down the west side of the entry tower and the other wrapping around the central section of the main facade.

On the first floor of the central section is the main facade's strongest visual element: a series of three multi-paned, arched windows. These large windows span the south wall of the living room. East of the arched windows, a pair of wooden casement windows marks the interior location of the dining room. This pair of casements, as well as a single casement located around the corner in the east wall of the central section, are glazed with leaded glass arranged in a striking geometric pattern.

Above these arched windows are three windows that open into the master bedroom. Like the majority of windows in the house, these windows are double-hung, with six panes. Typical

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, the master bedroom windows--and all windows in the house--have deep reveals and are devoid of trim other than the wooden sill. East of the bedroom windows is a small bathroom window covered by a wrought-iron grille. Farther east, directly above the dining room casement windows, is a set of arched French doors that open from a bedroom onto a cantilevered balcony with a decorative wrought-iron railing.

A flight of broad, semi-circular, brick-covered steps leads from the driveway to the main entrance to the house, located in the entry tower on the west end of the main facade. The arched doorway, set deeply into the wall behind a graduated series of arched recesses, retains its original double-leaf, paneled door. This door opens into a tile-floored entry hall, above which is a room--comprising the second story of the entry tower--that originally served as a sleeping porch. Located adjacent to the master bedroom, this room is encircled by wooden casement windows. (The original multi-paned casements recently have been replaced by new wooden casements with undivided panes. Plans call for removable wooden muntins to be installed, thus replicating the windows' original multi-paned appearance.)

At the east end of the main facade, a two-story wing contains the kitchen and breakfast room on the first floor with two bedrooms above. A second-story balcony with wooden balustrade is the distinctive feature of this wing's south facade. Opening onto the balcony is a set of pointed arched French doors. A large exterior chimney is the focal point of the east facade of the wing. (Behind this wing is an unused swimming pool which was added to the property in the late 1960's and now is scheduled to be removed.)

Two ells project from the rear (north) facade of the house. At the west end of the house, behind the entry tower, a one-story ell originally contained a powder room and library. Damaged by a fallen tree branch and never repaired, the roof of this ell leaked badly for many years, irreparably damaging the library's original walnut paneling and causing the roof structure, wall studs, wooden floor, and floor joists to rot. During recent rehabilitation work, this room had to be completely rebuilt. The original exterior appearance was maintained, but the interior was converted to use as a small self-contained apartment comprised of bedroom, bath, living room, and galley kitchen.

A two-story, gable-roofed ell projects from the rear (north) facade of the house just east of the semi-circular stairwell, which is located immediately behind the dining room. This ell originally contained a garage on the first floor with servant's quarters above. Plans call for the garage eventually to become a recreation room, and the servant's quarters have been converted for use as a playroom. Originally, access to the second-story servant's quarters was provided only by an exterior stairway that leads to a cantilevered, wooden balcony on the west side of the ell. (During rehabilitation, minor modifications were made in the original floorplan to provide direct access from the main part of the house to what now is the playroom.)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 3

The balcony overlooks an enclosed courtyard created by the rear facade of the central section of the house, the two ells, and a stucco wall that runs along the rear of the property line between the ells. In addition to the stairway from the balcony, the courtyard can be entered both from the garage and from the main section of the house. Two arched openings, secured by decorative wrought-iron grillework, lead into the courtyard from the garage. A series of three multi-paned, arched openings (now two windows and a set of doors but originally three sets of doors) provide access from the house.

The three archways open into a groin-vaulted gallery that runs along the north side of the living room, which is "sunken" three steps below the level of the gallery (and the rest of the first floor of the house). The sophisticated use of arches, a hallmark of the "Mediterranean" subcategory of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, is particularly evident in this area of the house. The living room is divided from the gallery by three arched openings that echo the archways overlooking the courtyard on the north and the arched windows in the living room's south wall. Two arched openings spanned by wrought-iron grillework divide the living room from the adjacent dining room.

A large fireplace (one of three that are original to the house) is centered on the west wall of the living room, opposite the dining room. The fireplace is flanked by wall niches topped by scalloped "Moslem" arches. Dark beams span the living room's high ceiling. Walls in the living room--as well as in the entry hall, gallery, dining room, stairwell, and second-story hallway--have heavily textured plaster surfaces.

A final noteworthy interior feature is the semi-circular stairwell, where a cantilevered staircase with simple iron railings winds its way to the second floor. The stairwell's tall, narrow windows contain diamond-shaped panes of leaded glass.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 1**Summary**

Criterion C, local significance

Originally occupied by the son of the developer of North Little Rock's Park Hill neighborhood, the Justin Matthews, Jr. House was one of the first houses built in "Edgemont," a section of Park Hill planned by the developer to become an exclusive enclave of upper-middle class residences. Designed about 1928 by Max F. Mayer, an architect who was responsible for the homes of many affluent Little Rock residents, the house was intended to help set the pace for Edgemont's development. The architectural style of the house, Spanish Colonial Revival, is unusual for a residence of its size in the Greater Little Rock area, where the well-to-do usually chose to build new homes during the 1920's in the Colonial Revival, English Revival, or--occasionally--French Eclectic vein (and frequently chose Max Mayer to do the design work). The Justin Matthews, Jr. House is significant both as an excellent, and scarce, large-scale example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in the Greater Little Rock area and as a reminder of an important phase in the development of Park Hill.

Elaboration

Justin Matthews, Sr., a native of Monticello, Arkansas, who moved to Little Rock about 1911, began development of Park Hill with the platting of the first few blocks in 1921. The platting of Park Hill went on in piecemeal fashion for many years, as Matthews waited for one section of lots to begin filling up with houses before opening another. Destined eventually to encompass 1600 acres of land, Park Hill remains one of the largest subdivisions ever platted in North Little Rock or Little Rock.

Matthews had laid the groundwork for suburban residential development in North Little Rock by playing instrumental roles in the successful completion of two major capital improvement projects that made North Little Rock more easily accessible from Little Rock. He is credited with having masterminded construction of the Broadway Bridge, one of two bridges built over the Arkansas River between Little Rock and North Little Rock during the early twentieth century, and with having spearheaded a campaign to pave 152 blocks of streets in North Little Rock. Both of these projects were publicly funded through improvement districts--and both helped to ensure the success of Matthews' development of Park Hill.

Interestingly, Justin Matthews, Sr. did not move to Park Hill until almost two decades after he began development. From about 1911 to 1915, he lived in the area of Little Rock now encompassed by the Governor's Mansion Historic District (NR 5/19/88), and then he moved to Pulaski Heights, a suburban Little Rock neighborhood with which Park Hill competed for residents. While advertising that Park Hill had "many advantages over Pulaski Heights," Matthews himself did not leave Pulaski Heights for Park Hill until about 1940!

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

Matthews' eldest son, Justin Matthews, Jr., however, did move to Park Hill during the early years of the neighborhood's development. The younger Matthews and his family lived at 211 Plainview Circle in Park Hill before moving to 257 Skyline Drive in 1928. At the time he moved into his new residence, Justin Matthews, Jr. was vice-president of the Metropolitan Trust Company, a firm founded by his father to aid in the development of Park Hill.

Skyline Drive (initially called "Crest Road") is the major street in what originally was known as the "Edgemont" section of Park Hill, an area of curvilinear streets that was opened for development in 1927 by the Justin Matthews Company, another business organized by Justin Matthews, Sr. In a promotional brochure touting Edgemont, the company stated that the new area's "beautiful homesites afford an unbroken southern exposure, and wonderful views of the twin cities." Skyline Drive winds along the crest of a hill overlooking the Arkansas River and downtown Little Rock.

A drawing of the Justin Matthews, Jr. House was featured on the cover of the Edgemont brochure and it appeared again inside the brochure. A photograph of the site on which the house was to be built also was included in the brochure, and the same photograph appeared in the "Arkansas Gazette" on December 4, 1927, with a caption noting that "work will soon be commenced on a \$50,000 home which will be located on the beautiful rolling plot in the foreground of this scene." The developer's use of the house as an example of the type of development that would be taking place in Edgemont underscored two facts: Edgemont was intended to appeal to affluent homebuyers, and construction of the Justin Matthews, Jr. House was intended to illustrate the scale of the development appropriate for Edgemont.

The Edgemont brochure identifies Max F. Mayer as the architect of the Justin Matthews, Jr. House, another indication that the house was intended to be a trendsetter in Park Hill. In 1927, the Justin Matthews Company had hired Frank Carmean, a building contractor, to serve as "superintendent in charge of building operations." Soon, however, the company was calling Carmean an "architect." Although Carmean did design (or "plan") many of the houses built in Park Hill, including ones in Edgemont, a real architect was hired to design the Justin Matthews, Jr. House.

Born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1887, Max F. Mayer received a degree in architectural engineering from Texas A & M University. He came to Little Rock around 1920 to work as a draftsman for George R. Mann and Eugene John Stern, two of Arkansas' most prominent early-twentieth century architects. By 1923, however, Mayer had established his own practice, and he soon made a name for himself as the designer of the sorts of large period revival houses that were popular with well-to-do Little Rock residents. French Eclectic, Colonial Revival, and English Revival houses designed by Mayer are sprinkled through the affluent 1920's-vintage neighborhoods of Little Rock.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

In departing from local precedent to design a Spanish Colonial Revival-style house for Justin Matthews, Jr., Max Mayer simply may have been responding to the tastes of the developers of Park Hill, where smaller houses in the Spanish Colonial Revival style are fairly common (at least by comparison to neighborhoods of the same vintage elsewhere in the Greater Little Rock area). As a San Antonio native, Mayer had reason to be well-acquainted with Spanish-influenced buildings, and he is known to have taken part in the design of at least one other major example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Arkansas. While employed by Mann and Stern, he was chief designer of the Quapaw Bathhouse, an exuberant rendition of the Spanish Colonial Revival style located on Bathhouse Row in Hot Springs, Arkansas. For whatever reason, Mayer produced a Spanish Colonial Revival-style residence for Justin Matthews, Jr. that, in terms of size and quality of design, is virtually unrivaled in the Greater Little Rock area.

Despite Edgemont's auspicious start, neither the neighborhood nor Justin Matthews, Jr. was able to ride out the Depression unscathed. Construction largely came to a halt in Edgemont during the 1930's, and when it resumed after World War II, the scale of development was considerably more modest than the example set by the Justin Matthews, Jr. House in 1928. Unfortunately, the fortunes of the house paralleled those of the neighborhood: Justin Matthews, Jr lost the house in 1932, and it remained in foreclosure until 1942, when it finally was sold for \$12,500--much less than the original construction cost. From 1942 to the present, the house has had seven different owners, two of whom lost the house due to financial difficulties. For many years, the scale of the house seems to have made it a "white elephant" in Park Hill--it was an upper-income residence in a middle-income neighborhood. Now, however, Park Hill is being "rediscovered" by affluent young professionals, and the Justin Matthews, Jr. House is undergoing a long-overdue rehabilitation.

A striking example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style designed by a popular and skillful local architect, the Justin Matthews, Jr. House stands as a reminder of the period when "Edgemont in Park Hill" was poised to become one of the Greater Little Rock area's most exclusive neighborhoods.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Major Bibliographical References

"Arkansas Architects: Max F. Mayer," file in Preservation Resource Center, Quapaw Quarter Association, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Arkansas Gazette, articles on the following dates: April 22, 1923; April 29, 1923; May 13, 1923; July 8, 1923; June 26, 1927; July 3, 1927; November 20, 1927; December 4, 1927; March 25, 1928; March 22, 1955.

Edgemont in Park Hill. (Little Rock: Justin Matthews Company, about 1927).

Gowans, Alan. The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930 (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986).

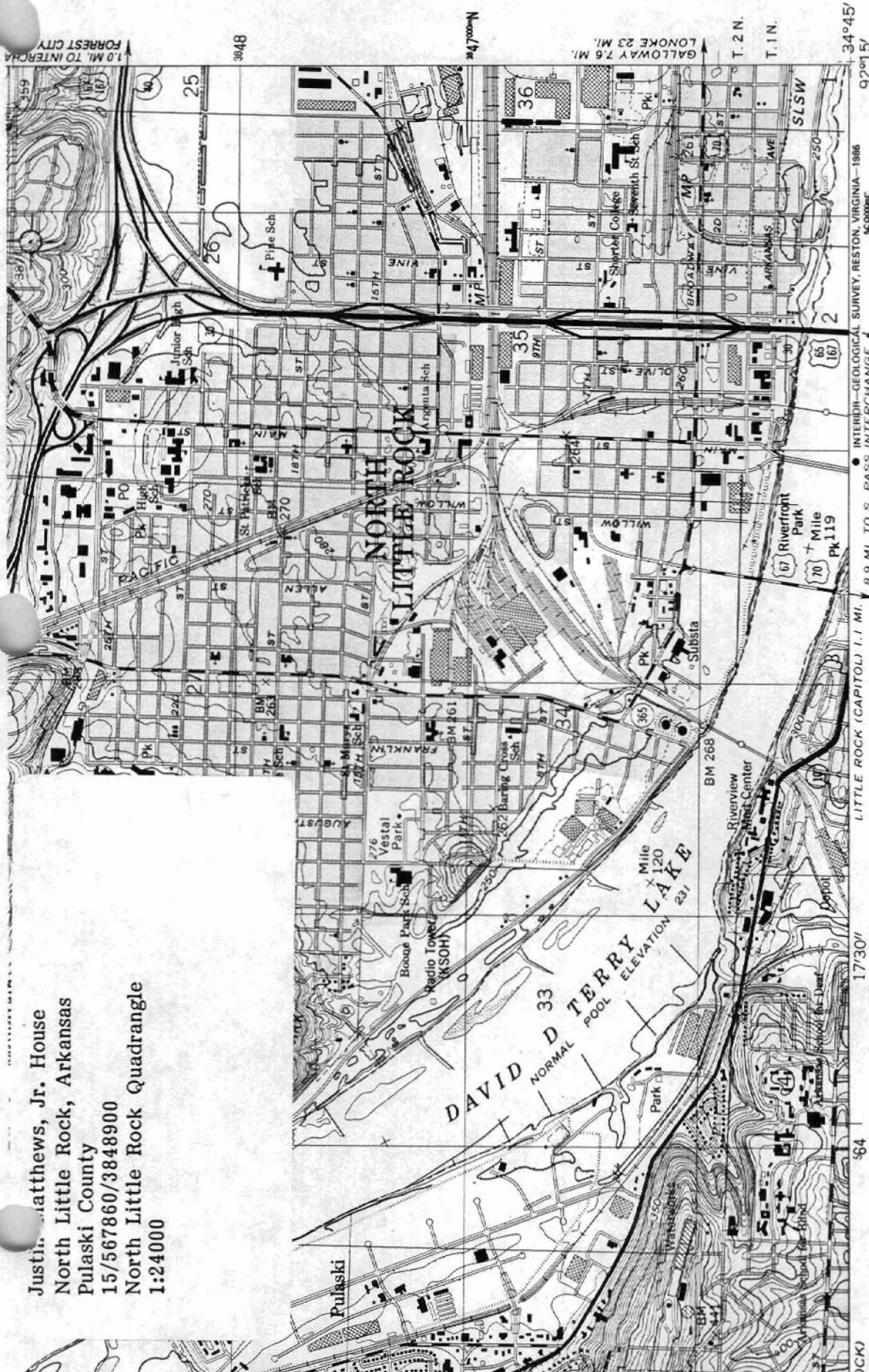
The Homemaker, February 1929, p. 11, and December 1929, p. 9.

Little Rock/North Little Rock City Directories, 1910-1975.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984).

Pulaski County, Circuit Clerk. Plat Books 2 and 3.

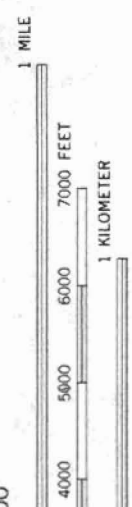
Justin Matthews, Jr. House
 North Little Rock, Arkansas
 Pulaski County
 15/567860/3848900
 North Little Rock Quadrangle
 1:24000



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty ————— Light-duty —————
- Medium-duty ————— Unimproved dirt —————
- Interstate Route ○ U.S. Route ○ State Route

INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA-1986
 68000E
 8.9 MI. TO S. PASS INTERCHANGE MALVERN 46 MI. (VIA U.S. 67)
 1.0 MI. TO INTERCH. FOREST CITY



VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 FEDERAL GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204



NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
 34092-G3-TF-024

