

Sandwiching in History
Shiloh Baptist Church
1200 Hanger Street, Little Rock
September 4, 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 Shiloh Baptist Church. I’d like to thank the congregation for allowing us to tour this beautiful building, and I especially want to thank Rev. Willie Buchanan, Rashad Atkinson, Neikisha Buchanan, and Sylvester Chandler for their help.

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.

Shiloh Baptist Church has a long history in the Hanger Hill neighborhood. The current church building was constructed in 1919 as a wood-frame structure and was remodeled in the mid-1940s with a brick veneer.

Hanger Hill Neighborhood

The Hanger Hill neighborhood takes its name from Peter Hanger. Hanger was born in 1807 at Boone County, Kentucky, and moved to Arkansas in the 1830s. By

1834 he lived at Gaines Landing in Chicot County, Arkansas, where he operated a mercantile business and sold cordwood to steamboats traveling the Mississippi River. After a brief stint in Van Buren, he arrived in 1848 at Little Rock. Hanger acquired U.S. Mail Contracts to transport the mail from Little Rock to Hot Springs and Fort Smith by stagecoach and steamboat. He invested in real estate and a variety of other businesses, including a sawmill, cotton gin, and the Anthony House hotel at the southwest corner of Markham and Scott streets.

In 1850 Hanger married Matilda Cunningham, daughter of Dr. Matthew Cunningham and Eliza Bertrand Cunningham, who were two of Little Rock's earliest white residents. Peter and Matilda Hanger had seven children, three of whom lived to adulthood (and one of those three—Eugene Hanger—died at age 20).

In 1859 Hanger purchased 160 acres and a two-story, Greek Revival-style house in the country east of downtown Little Rock from Dr. Robert A. Watkins. The two-story home, known as "Oakwood," was located on what is now the south side of the 1400 block of East 9th Street. On November 26, 1869, Hanger subdivided the land adjacent to his home, forming Hanger's Addition to the City of Little Rock. So that's where the Hanger name originates.

As far as the "Hill" goes, Oakwood was located on a hill, which came to be known as "Hanger's Hill." An *Arkansas Gazette* article from the early 20th century reported the final destruction of Hanger's Hill saying, "A little hill is rapidly sinking to the level of the railroad tracks and street car lines that cobweb that section of the city. The steam shovels are biting out chunks of earth and the heart's blood of the little hill is trickling down in bright red clay...another of Little Rock's landmarks is giving way to industry." So this is was in reference to the site of Oakwood, which appears on the 1913 Sanborn map but was later demolished to make way for the Magnolia Petroleum Company's bulk oil station just west of the Rock Island Railroad tracks. In 1935 the Churchill Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy placed a stone marker near the site of Peter Hanger's home,

acknowledging its use as General Sterling Price's headquarters before the Union occupation of Little Rock in 1863. The marker still remains on Ninth Street.

Shiloh Baptist Church

The congregation of Shiloh Baptist Church was organized in 1886 and initially met in a house at the corner of Eleventh and Hanger streets. Rev. O. H. Redicks served as the first pastor. According to Little Rock City Directories, by 1897, Shiloh Baptist Church had constructed a building at the southwest corner of 12th and Hanger, which was block 6, lot 20 in Hanger's Addition. The 1 1/2-story, wood-frame building had a bell tower in the center of the front façade. This structure served the congregation until 1919, when a new building was constructed on the same site.

The 1919 church was a 1-story, wood-frame building on a brick foundation and had two towers on the front façade. The tower at the northeast corner of the building was slightly taller and housed the church bell. Rows of pointed arch windows with frosted or lightly colored glass fenestrated the church.

In September 1927 Rev. C. D. Pettaway became pastor at Shiloh and served until his death on August 20, 1968, making him the longest-serving pastor in the history of Shiloh Baptist Church (41 years). Rev. Pettaway initiated many improvements at Shiloh Baptist Church and was a leader in Little Rock's African-American community.

Caleb Darnell "C. D." Pettaway was born on December 18, 1886, at Concordia Parish, Louisiana. [He is also listed as Charles and Claude in some city directories and in the 1930 Census. However, his WWI and WWII draft cards clearly say "Caleb," and he signed the cards as Caleb.] In 1918 he married Jennie E. Vagner of Independence County, Arkansas. C. D. and Jennie Pettaway moved to Little Rock and bought a house at 519 E. 21st Street. The Pettaway House on 21st Street is still standing and is located just east of Pettaway Park, which was named in honor of the family. The couple had two children, Paul Evans Pettaway (1919-1968) and

Louise Pettaway (1922-1960). Jennie Pettaway died in 1944. About 1958, C. D. Pettaway married Cleola Hampton.

In 1918 C. D. Pettaway founded the United Friends of America Fraternal Benefit Society, which provided medical care and burial insurance for African-Americans. In 1922 the United Friends of America purchased a house at 714 W. 10th Street in Little Rock (between State and Izard) for use as a 25-bed hospital. The hospital remained on 10th Street until 1965, when it moved to 11th and High (MLK) and occupied one of the former buildings used by St. Vincent Infirmary. After the deaths of C. D. Pettaway in August 1968 and his son, Paul E. Pettaway, in September 1968, C. D. Pettaway's second wife, Cleola Hampton Pettaway, assumed control of the fraternal benefit society, hospital, and funeral home. She was a licensed funeral director and was regarded as one of the area's most prominent black businesswomen. Cleola Pettaway died on September 30, 1975, and the United Friends Hospital closed in December of that year.

In addition to his work with United Friends, C. D. Pettaway served as president of the National Baptist Convention of America from 1957 to 1967. He was also president of the General Missionary Baptist State Convention of Arkansas.

Back to Rev. Pettaway's time at Shiloh Baptist Church...

In the mid-1940s, Shiloh's wood-frame building from 1919 was remodeled with a buff brick veneer. A small addition was constructed on the west side of the church as well. During the remodeling, buttresses and taller spires were added to the towers, a portico with arched openings was added to the front façade, and some window openings were changed to accommodate large stained glass windows. Before the 1940s remodeling, the pulpit was centered along the south wall of the church, and the pews faced south. During the remodeling, the orientation of the sanctuary was changed to its current arrangement with the pulpit on the west side of the room, and the floor was sloped toward the pulpit. The church's 1940s exterior features elements of the Gothic Revival style with buttressed towers and pointed arch window and door openings.

The stained glass windows were purchased by church members and fundraising clubs within the congregation. For example, the choir might have been Club No. 1; ushers, Club No. 2; Women's Sunday School Class, Club No. 3; and so on. The clubs competed to raise money for the church. So in addition to windows given in memory of church members by their families, you'll also see windows presented by the various clubs. The large window at the back of the sanctuary (east wall) was given in memory of Mrs. Jennie E. Pettaway and her children, Paul Evans and Louise Pettaway, by Rev. C. D. Pettaway.

In the late 1940s and early '50s, Shiloh Baptist Church had a weekly Sunday morning broadcast called "Rejoicing in the Lord" on radio station KLRA. In the late 1950s, the sanctuary was updated with new pews, carpet, light fixtures, and a central heating and air conditioning unit. A PA system was added soon thereafter.

In 1979 Rev. Jack R. Marshall became pastor at Shiloh and focused on Christian education and community outreach. Membership increased, and the church had active Sunday School and Bible Study programs. In the early 1980s, the pulpit, choir stand, and fellowship hall were remodeled. The old, unheated, concrete baptismal pool, still located under the current choir stand, was replaced with a new baptismal pool, which is located behind the blue curtain. The parking lot south of the church was purchased in 1983.

The Rev. Jack R. Marshall Education Building, which was built as an addition to the rear of the church, opened in February 1995. Rev. Marshall served as pastor until December 1997.

The current pastor, Rev. Willie Buchanan, started attending Shiloh Baptist Church in 1979 and has served as pastor since 2010. The church currently has a membership of between 150 and 200 people, and the average attendance on Sunday mornings is 80 to 100.

The old church bell, manufactured by The C. S. Bell Company of Hillsboro, Ohio, remains in the northeast tower. Based on the maker's mark, it could date to as early as 1894 and may be from the first wood-frame church on this site.

Next tour is Friday, October 2 at the White-Baucum House, 201 S. Izard, Little Rock.