



Gustave Kleinschmidt House

621 East 16th Street, Little Rock

Good afternoon, my name is Mark Christ, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the “Sandwiching in History” tour of the Gustave B. Kleinschmidt House. I’d like to thank Cecil and Denise Ennett for allowing us to tour their lovely house and for their help in preparing today’s tour. Their meticulously-documented National Register nomination, which was also researched by Amber Jones and Callie Williams for this building made my job easy. 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.

Before I get too far along, the next Sandwiching in History tour will visit the Pulaski County Courthouse in Little Rock on November 3.

GUSTAVE KLEINSCHMIDT HISTORY

Gustave Kleinschmidt was only 14 years old when he emigrated with his parents from Germany in 1880. According to family lore, they arrived in New York and a "slick Arkansas real estate man sold them land unseen, and when they moved to Morrilton, Arkansas, they found nothing but woods." The scenic woodlands of Conway County apparently held few charms for young Kleinschmidt and by 1884 the 18-year-old had moved to Little Rock, where he lived with his older brother Louis and younger brother Fritz. He soon found employment with barkeeper L. Hockbaum, and he would work within the hospitality industry for most of his life.

In 1890, Little Rock city directories show Gus working as a bookkeeper for Chalifour and Mahoney, a restaurant and bar. In 1892 he married Elizabeth Jungblut, also from Germany, and they would have six sons. They lived at 1212 Center Street with his brother Louis and Gus worked as a bartender in 1892 and 1893.

In 1895, Gus Kleinschmidt and John Riegler established a beer garden and saloon, appropriately called Kleinschmidt and Riegler, on Rock Street. The establishment, located across the street from Gus and Elizabeth's house at 917 Rock, featured four gazebos in the courtyard with a Beer Hall at the rear. The Kleinschmidts lived across the street at 922 Rock Street by 1902 and their beer hall and saloon was located next door at 924 Rock. Gus Jr. worked at the beer hall, washing bottles, while son Heinrich worked at John Riegler's sweets shop on the same block. Heinrich would later operate Kleinschmidt's Cake Shop in Fort Worth, which enjoyed a fifty-year run from 1938 to 1988. Gus Kleinschmidt would retire from the saloon business in 1911 to move into the house we are touring today to concentrate on his real estate development endeavors, which we will discuss in a moment.

Kleinschmidt's success allowed him to send his sons to school at the Subiaco Academy in Logan County, and he was a dedicated parishioner at St. Edward's Catholic Church, which served the predominantly German-American population of its neighborhood. A descendant said that Kleinschmidt was so angry at Germany for causing World War II that he refused to speak German for the duration of hostilities.

Gus Kleinschmidt died on November 29, 1946, and Elizabeth passed away on December 1, 1945. They are buried in Little Rock's Calvary Cemetery.

NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

It was during his partnership with John Riegler that Gus Kleinschmidt began acquiring property south of today's MacArthur Park Historic District, a sparsely developed area up until the mid-1920s. Kleinschmidt's investment, according to the National Register nomination, "served as a catalyst for growth and helped to establish the area as a diverse and thriving neighborhood in the early to mid-20th century."

Kleinschmidt bought lots from the Richard Bragg estate in 1906 and a year later had permits to construct houses at 615 and 619 East Sixteenth Street, valued at \$1,500 each, in addition to his own family home at 621 East Sixteenth, valued at \$3,000. Gus contracted with his brother-in-law Fred Gougeon to build his house, and Gougeon would build possibly hundreds of houses in Little Rock, including the Charles Thompson designed Baer House at 1010 Rock Street. Working together, it appears that Kleinschmidt and Gougeon developed whole city blocks to the north and east of Gus Kleinschmidt's house at 621 East Sixteenth.

Kleinschmidt received building permits to build five wood-frame cottages valued at \$2,000 each in 1909, and Gougeon was listed as the contractor, and more permits were issued in 1911. The team is known to have built houses at 610 and 618 East Sixteenth, and Kleinschmidt was responsible for the houses at 617 East Sixteenth, which survives, and 613, which does not.

In 1914 he purchased the National Register-listed Van Frank Cottages at 515, 517, & 519 E. 15th St. and 1510 Park Ln, which he and Gougeon more than likely built. In 1922, Kleinschmidt got \$24,000 in permits for seven five-room buildings that, according to the National Register

nomination, “filled a full city block bordered by 14th, 15th and Vance streets.”

To paraphrase the National Register nomination, the area around the Kleinschmidt House “was a mixture of owners and tenants, immigrants and African Americans. Kleinschmidt’s investment and building program had helped create a thriving neighborhood.

When he died, Kleinschmidt had constructed 32 houses, 23 of which he still owned as rental properties, in addition to his home. The construction of I-630 destroyed many, and the 1999 tornado, fires and city demolition destroyed most of them. The Kleinschmidt House remains the best and largest surviving example of his work.

For the modern history of the house, Melvyn and Darlene Bell purchased it in 1978, selling it in 1980 to James and Joellen Abbott who sold it in 1982 to Dennis and Beverly Jones, who raised their five children there, including Denise Jones Ennett, our host today. Cecil and Denise Ennett bought the house in 2011 and live there now with their three children, and we’re glad they did because we now get to tour their beautiful home.

KLEINSCHMIDT HOUSE ARCHITECTURE

While its asymmetrical layout of the wrap-around porch reflects the transition from the earlier Queen Anne style of architecture, the Gustave B. Kleinschmidt House is in many ways a classic example of the Colonial Revival style.

Built around 1907, it features such classical features as the low balustrade around the porch, the simple lines of the architrave and frieze, and the rounded columns with square capitals. Colonial Revival elements include the broken pediments on the north and east roof gables, the rounded fanlight with keystone inside the north gable, and the dentil course around the dormer on the central northern roofline.

There originally was a second door on the eastern side of the wrap-around porch, which was later infilled and is on the long-term restoration plans for the house.

As you enter the house, you will see some great features. There are heart pine hardwood floors throughout much of the building. There are some lovely heart pine pocket doors that will be refinished as the Ennetts continue

their project. There are original transoms and moldings, with bullseye molding around the doorframes.

The Ennetts did have some pleasant surprises as they worked on restoring the Kleinschmidt House, such as the original wood floors hiding beneath the overlaid tile and linoleum in the kitchen.

The rear of the building is a ca. 1920 addition that featured a sunroom – this was originally the outside back of the house. The Ennetts enclosed the rear porch area, originally shielded with lattice, and converted the sunroom into a family room, which still has its original bead boards; be sure to check out the under-hung windows, which open the opposite of most double-hung windows. Of the 15 windows, most are still functioning.

The attic was converted into a master bedroom suite, and the Ennetts plan to replace the stained glass in the dormer windows.

Denise has some before and after photos inside, which will show just how much work goes into restoring a historic building, so be sure and check them out.

Check out the rest of the Gustave B. Kleinschmidt House, and be sure to thank Cecil and Denise for inviting us into their home. And join us next month for the Sandwiching in History tour of the Pulaski County Courthouse.