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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

Legacies in Brick and Mortar: The Life and Works of Charles
Thompson

Written by

Tilly Carter

And submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

Thesis director

Second reader

Third reader

Honors program director

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OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

LEGACIES IN BRICK AND MORTAR:
THE LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLES THOMPSON

AN HONORS THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE CARL GOODSON HONORS COUNCIL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE COMPLETIONS OF THE
CARL GOODSON HONORS PROGRAM

BY

TILLY CARTER

ARKADELPHIA, ARKANSAS

APRIL 2002

“Therefore, when we build, let us think that we build forever. Let it not be for the present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time will come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substance of them, ‘See! this our fathers did for us.’”

-John Ruskin¹

Many masterpieces go unnoticed by the public. Men will design works of art which clearly prove their talent and craftsmanship, but the buildings are overlooked and left to wither away with age. Architecture reflects not only the talents of those who design and construct buildings; it also serves as a historical record. A building reflects the romantic notions of the period while looking to the future and revealing a promise of progress. Some structures become so significant to their surroundings because of their endurance, character and historical prominence, that they assume a notable respect within the community and state. This is clearly what has happened with many of Charles Thompson’s masterpieces, both in Arkadelphia and in other communities across the state of Arkansas. It must be a wonderful feeling for an artist to see his work so appreciated that it withstands the test of time. Unfortunately, Mr. Thompson did not live long enough to realize the full impact his work had on such a community as Arkadelphia. His work has been recognized by the town, county, and state for over a century as beautiful structures built with a grand purpose, a purpose which enveloped all that Mr. Thompson believed in- community spirit and growth.

The concept of community was the center of both of Mr. Thompson’s works in Arkadelphia, on which this paper will focus, although neither in the same respects. The

¹ Donaghey, George W. *Building A State Capitol*. Little Rock: Parke-Harper Company, 1937.

two landmarks have played an integral role in the progression of the community and they have defined Arkadelphia's role in the state. The Clark County Library and Courthouse are stately buildings designed by Charles Thompson in the late 1800s and early 1900's. Their architecture, history, and institutional purposes have been a progressive force in the livelihood of Arkadelphia for over a century. Even so, why would such a prominent architect choose to create something for this community, and how have Thompson's designs influenced the town?

Charles Thompson was said to be "one of the most prolific architects of his age and the dedication and consistency of his work, as well as his colleagues work, gave American architecture professional stability at the turn of the century."² In his fifty-two year career in Arkansas and surrounding states, he designed over two thousand commercial, institutional, and residential buildings in a variety of styles. Not only was his work always current but he was an extremely talented artist and had a knack for designing to his customers' pleasure.³

Charles Thompson

Charles Thompson was a man of great skill and precision, which showed in not only his daily life but also in his work as an architect. He was extremely organized and a man of habit. He dressed in a suit and tie and often ate the same food daily.⁴

² Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Interview with Trudy Levy, by phone, February 13, 2002. Trudy Levy is the granddaughter of Charles Thompson.

Born in November of 1868 in Danville, Illinois, Charles Thompson was third of seven children. Thompson received his first job at the age of nine, selling newspapers to help support his family. By the age of fourteen, both of his parents had died and Thompson had dropped out of school to work in a mill. He then secured a second job assisting an architect in an office above the mill. Thompson's talent and potential became apparent and his duties in the office were expanded to include drafting projects, and later overseeing a construction job, but his age was intimidating and frustrating to many of the workers who disliked taking orders from a child. The architects placed Thompson at the drafting table once again but Thompson could no longer be content with this position and began looking for jobs elsewhere.⁵

In 1886 Thompson placed an ad in the *National Lumber Journal*, a magazine produced in his hometown of Danville, Illinois. His ad in search of employment received three job offers: New York, New Orleans, and Little Rock. After visiting Little Rock, Thompson decided to accept a position with Benjamin J. Bartlett, an architect. Thompson chose Arkansas because it was "the farthest in the wilderness," and in dire need of more architects at the time. The firm he joined proved to be a "useful training ground for an aspiring architect," and two years later Thompson became Bartlett's partner and the name of the firm became Bartlett & Thompson, which today is the predecessor to one of the "largest [architectural firms] in the South and oldest in the U.S.," Cromwell, Truemper, Levy, Parker & Woodsmall.⁶

⁵ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Becoming a partner in an architectural firm was quite an achievement, especially for a young man with no formal education. Although Thompson had to quit school to work and help support his family, he never lost his zeal for learning. He “read incessantly” according to his grandson, Ted Bellingrath. Thompson read both fiction and nonfiction and took great interest in birds and knowing the names of all of the different species. His wisdom and knowledge of a wide variety of topics made him an excellent conversationalist and allowed him to meet a variety of people throughout Arkansas.⁷

When Charles Thompson moved to Little Rock the city was fairly young, being established in 1821. In the 1830s George Weigart supervised the construction of the Old State House, which was designed by an architect in Kentucky. After Weigart’s death in 1834, Little Rock did not have another architect until 1844. During this year a man named Larrimore began advertising in the Gazette as a “professionally qualified” person for making drawings and as a superintendent of the construction of buildings “done in the five orders of architecture.” Larrimore was the first resident architect but also a practicing undertaker and left just four years later, in 1848. By the 1880s Little Rock was experiencing tremendous growth and the demand for additional architects became apparent. The population of the city in 1870 was 12,375, but by 1890 it had soared to 25,000, making Little Rock one of America’s 100 largest municipalities. For a young architect, full of ideas, this was a wonderful time to enter Arkansas’ vast and empty landscape. Little Rock, by 1886 was experiencing major growth when Thompson arrived in the city, but building homes and businesses was much more difficult than today. “Few downtown streets had sewer service, and there was no electric power

⁷ Interview with Ted Bellingrath, by phone, February 13, 2002.

system. Mr. Thompson had been in Little Rock for several years before he designed the building for the first electric light plant.”⁸

Thompson became a member of the Arkansas Society of Engineers, Architects, and Surveyors (ASEAS), which was begun by Benjamin Bartlett. Through this society Thompson was able to meet many other men in the architecture trade as well as people from other businesses, which would help him in his professional career. Through these contacts his “organizational and leadership skills became evident.” At Thompson’s second meeting of ASEAS, he was elected “architect’s grade of membership” and was asked to serve on the Standing Committee on Architecture. This was only the beginning of his involvement with civic organizations and his placement in influential positions.⁹

Thompson married Lillian McGann in July of 1889 and together they had two daughters and a son. He was a committed father and businessman and often sent his son to inspect buildings he designed. As a devoted family man and architect, he made a decision different from most architects of his time; he chose to remain in Little Rock. Many architects of the day would move their families to new, bigger cities in hopes of being awarded larger projects. Architects often lived transient lifestyles and accrued financial obligations, but Thompson was able to remain in the capital because of his influential friends and his well-respected reputation. According to one historian, he “established an aura of permanence and strong community commitment. His sense of civic responsibility, combined with his business acumen, greatly contributed to his success.”¹⁰

⁸ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Most of Thompson's style and ideas came from reading magazines on architecture and products available during the period. He remained aware of the latest themes and designs from subscriptions to several trade journals and books. He also traveled often to see other architects' works. The Thompson style reflected the era. His early works were a taste of the late nineteenth century, or a mix of several building styles. During the 1890s work evolved into New Industrial Age designs, which became popular during that period. These years were also known as the "Gilded Age" and characterized by a "period of conspicuous consumption and reckless exploitation, with mechanized, industries, expanding population, railroad stations, factories, courthouses, hotels, and storefronts." This period was also stated as being the "country's rush to abandon its rural heritage and become an urban society." Products such as windows, doors, bricks, and molding were mass-produced, making building products less expensive and quick to assemble.¹¹

During the first decade of the twentieth century, three distinct movements in architectural style emerged. Thompson utilized all three in his subsequent designs. The changes, which began in the early 1900s, began with the craftsman style, which gained its name from, a popular architectural magazine that used natural building materials such as stucco and tile. The second movement, English cottage designs, was "avant-garde American and modernism and classicism," according to *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Frank Lloyd Wright was a prime promulgator of the English cottage style. The third movement was Classicism or the

¹¹ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

American Georgian, Federal, and Adamesque revival styles. Many of Thompson's clients preferred this fashion, including the Woman's Library Association of Arkadelphia, who chose this style for the Clark County Library.¹²

Throughout these changes in his approach of architecture and design, Thompson also experienced many changes in his personal life. His wife, Lillian, contracted tuberculosis and in attempts to treat the disease she traveled several times to Arizona hoping the climate would heal her. After her death in 1904, Charles Thompson's sister from Wisconsin came to Little Rock to care for Thompson's three children. In Thompson's attempt to heal from his wife's death, he became submerged in his work and the years between 1897 and 1916 became his most productive. He married again in 1908, which provided the stability needed in his home and family. Thompson married Mary Watkins, daughter of a prominent and long established family in Arkansas. The background and social life of his wife encouraged Thompson to become very involved in civic affairs.¹³

Changes continued to take place in not only Thompson's family but also his work. Following Bartlett's move to Mississippi, Thompson joined Fred J.H. Rickon, and together they ran the Rickon & Thompson, Architect and Civil Engineers, firm. Rickon & Thompson as a team, represented one of the earliest professional associations between an architect and an engineer. The two produced over fifty projects and even made a New Year's greeting book showcasing their designs in 1895. Although the two were partners for six years, their styles began to differ and Rickon left to attempt new projects.¹⁴

¹² Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

“Charles’ firm played a leading role in establishing the standards for courthouse architecture in Arkansas.” According to Dr. Hampton Roy, Thompson had many connections to politicians and strong businessmen in the community, which helped him receive many large jobs around the state. His connections as well as his skill were both equally strong factors in allowing him to receive the contract for fifteen courthouse buildings throughout the state. Clark County’s Courthouse is one example, as well as Washington County’s. The design of the Clark County Courthouse, in 1899, “greatly enhanced Thompson’s reputation and helped seal contracts to plan many private homes and buildings in Clark County and surrounding counties.”¹⁵

Ted Bellingrath, Thompson’s grandson, explained that his grandfather would travel periodically to visit work sites and see how his projects were progressing. Most of his work sites were outside of the capital city, so he would ride the train to reach his destinations, mostly by freight cars. From these train rides he acquired a large network of friends. Ted distinctly remembered that his grandfather always knew the best hunting fishing grounds because of his frequent train rides. From the train they could see miles of endless Arkansas wildlife and land, and the men working on the trains would discuss possible fishing lakes and the best fields and woods for hunting. Ted remembered fishing with his grandfather, and thinking it was disappointing that they would not catch fish on some days. Later Ted realized that his grandfather knew that the point of fishing was not to catch fish but rather to spend time with each other, which demonstrated his deep love for his family and the value he placed on spending time with them.¹⁶

¹⁵ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982..

¹⁶ Interview with Ted Bellingrath, by phone, February 13, 2002.

Thompson's granddaughter, Trudy Levy, recalled his personal qualities. Not only was he a sportsman but he also read a great deal and enjoyed every moment with his family. Levy said she spent Saturday nights with her grandparents and they would all play card games, such as rummy. Thompson was a kind and generous man but also very organized and lived by a schedule. Each week the family ate the same meals. Levy told of one family memory when Thompson came downstairs to find pancakes on the breakfast table, which he associated with Sunday mornings, and so he went back upstairs to change into his Sunday clothes. He returned to find that the menu had changed because of the return of a grandson to the home. This was only one example of many of the meticulous ways of Charles Thompson.¹⁷

These meticulous ways and organized habits of Mr. Thompson's made him an excellent businessman and architect. He was very careful to complete his work to the best of his ability and to the satisfaction of his clients. "Thompson's most significant role as a designer was his firm's development of a peculiar synthesis of styles for residences built after 1910." Although these homes were influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright and Gustav Stickley, Thompson's style was still uniquely his own. His "masterwork was the solid establishment of an 'architectural association.' This association's founding and consolidation became Thompson's final legacy." Although he was extremely engaged in his work and projects statewide, Thompson also became involved in civic organizations and responsibilities. He was a member of the Western Star Masonic Lodge No. 2, and became a Master Mason in 1889; elected master of his lodge in 1894, and member of the Knight's Templar. He was also an active member of the Episcopalian church and received such honors as Little Rock's "Most Useful Citizen" in 1927. He won this award

¹⁷ Interview with Trudy Levy, by phone, February 13, 2002.

for his work during the most devastating flood in Arkansas history, which left many homeless. Thompson worked to raise money for food and clothes and designed cabins to replace homes destroyed by the natural disaster.¹⁸

Following the stock market crash of 1929, Thompson worked diligently to help keep the American Exchange Bank from closing. He also led the Community Chest Fund of 1930 and participated in efforts to bolster the economy and help other businesses in financial trouble. According to Fred Heiskell, publisher of the Arkansas Gazette in 1931:

He was leading in an effort to reopen the closed American Exchange Bank, which was the largest in Arkansas. His Red Cross work was a brilliant success and while he says he has failed in the bank matter, if the bank is ultimately opened, it will be due to the foundation work Charlie did. Charlie has become one of the leading and most useful citizens of Little Rock and of Arkansas. He did splendid work during the war. The he served as head of the Chamber of Commerce and now he is called upon in any big emergency.¹⁹

Thompson's firm was influential in the creation of an Arkansas Board of Architects. In addition Thompson was appointed by Governor George Donaghey to head a commission overseeing the completion of the state capitol building. Donaghey said, "Mr. Thompson was known to be a man of high character, a good architect, and an excellent businessman." He was appointed by Governor Carl Bailey in April of 1938 to chair the State Planning Commission and became president of the Chamber of Commerce. Thompson also argued for the creation of the Lake Maumelle reservoir and led the campaign to secure the money necessary to build a city auditorium; he later

¹⁸ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

¹⁹ Ibid.

declined the honor of designing the auditorium because of his role in promoting the structure.²⁰

In January of 1938, Thompson announced his retirement. After fifty-two years of service in the architecture business, he had made significant contributions to the landscape of Arkansas, but this did not end his involvement in the community. At his retirement he was in his seventies and according to Ted Bellingrath, even in his eighties Thompson could still sketch well. “He just had a knack for it,” Bellingrath said. Even late in life Thompson was reading and expanding his mind. During this time of retirement is when Bellingrath lived with his grandfather and chauffeured him around. Thompson’s home was always a welcome place and meal times were the gathering time for the family.²¹ *

Bellingrath remembered a time during college when the movie “The Egyptian” was released in theatres. Ted took his grandfather to see the movie thinking he would like the architecture of the Egyptian structures, but the only comment Thompson made following the movie was the writers had left out two of the most important kings. Thompson continued by telling stories from the Bible, which he had read through once. Bellingrath explained that he did not actively read the Bible, but even at an old age Thompson had an excellent memory and was very sharp.²²

His accomplishments included serving as the chair of the commission to oversee the completion of the Arkansas State Capitol, of which he provided his services for free. He also designed the Little Rock City Hall, and fifteen county courthouses. Governor

²⁰ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

²¹ Interview with Ted Bellingrath, by phone, February 13, 2002.

²² Ibid.

George Donaghey said of Charles Thompson, “Mr. Thompson was known to be a man of high character, a good architect, and an excellent business man.”²³ The governor also mentioned that Thompson had had more experience in building state capitols than almost any of the architects living in the southern states. Thompson was known as an extremely intelligent man who revolutionized the profession of architecture with his excellent public relations, community involvement, and commitment to work and family. Not only did he understand the concept of networking to gain clients, he also placed great importance on involvement in and betterment of the community, and changed the traditional idea of moving the architect’s family to the job site. Mr. Thompson was one of the first architects in Arkansas to remain in Little Rock throughout his career, and not move his family to each community project. So how did this amazing architect’s work find its way to Arkadelphia, Arkansas, and why employ a man located seventy miles away? According to Arkadelphia’s rich history, the community was a prime location for such a highly esteemed architect, and his legacy in the community was long lasting.²⁴

He remained on the board of directors of several firms and private philanthropic organizations and was an active member of many other civic until his death on December 30, 1959, at the age of 91.²⁵

Charles Thompson’s life and work were his legacies, and each experience in his life was another brick in the foundation of his work. His values and principles were evident in his work ethic and dedication to his community and state. For this reason and more, Charles Thompson’s designs were chosen for the Clark County Courthouse in

²³ Donaghey, George W. *Building A State Capitol*. Little Rock: Parke-Harper Company, 1937.

²⁴ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Arkadelphia, Arkansas, as well as for the Clark County Library, which followed four years later. These buildings' legacies in the community are obvious. Thompson's designs were instrumental to the community because of their sheer purpose as community centers for politics and education, and they have served in those two capacities for over a century. The two structures were versatile and evident of the community's drive for both progress and beauty in the town at the turn of the twentieth century.

Adam Blakely settled Arkadelphia, formerly known as Blakelytown, in 1809. Blakely owned a blacksmith shop on the Ouachita River and was joined in 1811 by John Hemphill, the owner of the earliest manufacturing business in the area, a salt factory. A year later, Jacob Barkman moved to the area and began a trade route from Blakelytown to New Orleans on the Ouachita River. Barkman's plantation on the Caddo River was the first site of the courthouse for the area as well as the post office, a stagecoach stop, a race-track and an ill-fated textile mill. The county seat was moved quite a few times before coming to Blakelytown in 1842. In honor of becoming the county seat, the town's name was changed to Arkadelphia and two years later a courthouse was built.²⁶

According to one account, "By 1850, Arkadelphia was considered one of the most industrial towns in the state."²⁷ The economy was greatly enhanced by the construction of the Cairo & Fulton Railroad Company, which allowed another industry to make a large contribution to the area, lumber. Arkadelphia was growing quickly and by 1890 the population of the county had risen to 20,997, making it a prime location for a

²⁶ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

²⁷ Ibid.

bourgeoning, young architect to be contacted when building important government or educational structures became the topic of discussion.²⁸

The courthouse and library became structures of great pride for the county. Both buildings have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but their state recognition does not end there. Built in 1899, the Courthouse was rated as being one of Arkansas's most significant surviving county courthouses, and the library is recognized statewide as one of the state's oldest libraries in Arkansas, built in 1903.²⁹

Clark County Courthouse

Clark County was created by the Missouri Territory legislature on December 15, 1818. The county was named after Governor William Clark, of Louis and Clark, and encompassed the present Clark, Hot Spring, Garland, Pike and Dallas Counties. The county had five different locations for its county seat before Arkadelphia became the center of government. As stated before, first was at the home of Jacob Barkman on the Caddo River. The second seat was at the home of Adam Stroud, located near Hollywood, and the third seat in the town of Biscoeville. In 1830 the seat was moved to Greenville, which is currently Hollywood, where it remained for twelve years, before relocating to Arkadelphia in 1842.³⁰

Citizens felt a courthouse needed to be built immediately, and construction began in 1840. The building was completed in a short two years at a cost of \$4,000. The original building consisted of a square structure with offices on the first floor and a court

²⁸ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives.

room on the second floor, with the entrance stairs outside the building. J.H. O’Baugh, Arkadelphia’s first brick mason, built the building. During the lifetime of the structure, the town of Arkadelphia grew from a village of two hundred fifty to a town of three thousand and the Civil War brought many changes.³¹

According to a quote from the president of the temporary organization called Clark County Historic Preservation Society, “northerners who had the strongest political voice in Arkadelphia during the Carpetbagger era, built four huge columns across the front of the old courthouse at a cost of \$40,000 a piece. The county went broke. Eventually, when southerners regained their voting rights and took back control of the county, they dug themselves out of debt and built the courthouse that stands now.” Thus, Davis calls the current courthouse a “triumphant cry of freedom for residents in the 1800’s.”³²

In December of 1896 the *Southern Standard* justified the new courthouse, saying there was a “much and long needed construction of a new county building, in keeping with the dignity and importance of our great section, and commensurate with the imperative needs of its people and the public in general.” The following year, Mr. Brown, a grand juror in the county, continued these sentiments, explaining that Clark County was in need of a new courthouse and many others in the area had expressed the same concerns. The old courthouse was over fifty years old and did not meet the needs of the growing county, nor did it reflect the feeling of the people as they embarked on a new century.³³

³¹ *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 23 February 1961.

³² Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives.

³³ *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 25 December 1896; 17 September 1897.

The city agreed to build a new structure and after three years of planning and building, county officials moved their office equipment into the new courthouse building on November 30, 1899,. Not only did the new structure prove to be a masterful work of art but allowed the community to keep their “dignity and importance” as the county seat. The courthouse represents county residents’ triumphant cry of freedom in the late 1800s, and the carpentry inside is noted as some of the most skilled wood joinery and detailed carpentry in the state. The building became one of the most significant surviving courthouses in Arkansas, with a clock tower that is only one of four remaining in the state. Arkadelphia’s courthouse is also one of the oldest and most architecturally significant structures, designed in a Romanesque style by Charles L. Thompson; it remains one of the finest examples of that style in south Arkansas.³⁴

Judge Crawford presented a proposal to the county court asking for a new courthouse to be built. The appropriation was approved and secured and a Romanesque-style structure designed by Charles Thompson was accepted. Within eleven months the builder Robert S. O’Neal completed the courthouse structure for a cost of \$33,180 and officials formed a committee to decide whether the laying of the corner stone should be a grand celebration. Although no documents revealed the decision of the committee, a newspaper article reveals that the event had only a few members of the community present. A certificate placed inside the time capsule read, “This is to certify that we, the undersigned citizens of Clark County were present at the laying of the corner-stone of this building, on the 15th day of July, 1899, signed: Thomas M. Ewing (the new county judge), E.W. McCorkle, C.V. Murry, J.E. Calloway, Adam Clark, Thos. A. Sloan, Harold

³⁴ *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 30 November 1899; Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives; The Looking Glass Magazine Holiday Issue 1993.

Sloan, William Sloan, W.H. Abraham, Dwight Crawford, C.A. C'Neal, and J.H. Crawford.” The time capsule also included items such as a copy of the Ouachita catalogue; the A.M.C. catalog; a July 15th issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*; a July 14th issue of the *Arkansas Democrat*; one Secretary of the State Report from 1898; one Crawford’s Digest of Arkansas Reports, donated by the Banks Brothers; five copies of the *Southern Standard*, representing the past five years; three copies of the *Siftings Herald*, April, May and July; one picture of the old courthouse; and six small coins of various dates.³⁵

The building consisted of native granite, exhumed from the Caddo River, five miles North of Arkadelphia. The granite was set in cement for the foundation and a rock slate roof was placed on top of the brick, two-and-a-half story structure. There was a parapeted clock tower on the northwest corner containing a clock weighing 800 lbs, made by M.C. Shone Bell Foundry of Baltimore. The bell could be heard for three or four blocks. The courthouse included three entrances with Romanesque-arched porches and terra cotta tablets containing the name of the courthouse and its date of construction. The massive height and prominent features of the building continue to allow it to dominate the courthouse square. The original renderings for the courthouse planned for the building to be the center of town and a community focal point, but this plan was not carried out, and commercial buildings were built on the two streets north of the courthouse.³⁶

³⁵ *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 20 July 1899; Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives.

³⁶ Notes from Dorothy Hays, Judge Mathis’ secretary, 13 April, 1973; Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992; *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 1 February 1900; 23 June 1899.

The interior of the courthouse included two large staircases, a second floor courtroom, judge's chamber and jury room, as well as county offices. The building also included fireplaces, and the detail and craftsmanship of the carpentry on the staircases and woodwork ranks among the best in the state. On the lawn of the courthouse, a well extending forty-feet deep supplied the building and the people of Arkadelphia with what was regarded as "one of the best places for water in the county since 1866." The well was provided by so-called "carpetbaggers" during the period following the Civil War and was not covered until 1998, following the latest remodeling. The slab placed over the shaft was removable and the well can be cleaned out and used in times of emergency. The outside of the building also had an 800-foot iron fence, which was removed for aesthetic purposes, and a gazebo. A new gazebo, similar to the one pictured in early photos of the courthouse, was built in 1998, and has shingles that matched the roof of the courthouse. The gazebo is host to many concerts and public speakers just as the original one had been one hundred years earlier.³⁷

The courthouse has proved to be a structurally sound building, withstanding many hardships, including a tornado in March of 1997. Prior to the tornado, repairs to the tower were made after lightning struck on at least three different occasions, despite the attachment of a lightning rod. The V-shaped roof was exchanged for a flat styled roof, although the problem was believed to not be the shape of the roof but the large bell or gong of the clock attracting the lightning. The courthouse also received a new roof and

³⁷ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992; Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives.

mortar between the bricks for a clean up and for its one-hundredth anniversary, but the largest refurbishing was performed following the tornado.³⁸

Much controversy surrounded the building after the natural disaster of 1997. Throughout the building's one hundred year history there have been reports of citizens asking for a new courthouse to be built. The *Daily Siftings Herald* ran a full-page ad in support of building a new courthouse on December 11, 1958, but Clark County voted down the request 974 to 583. Despite the fact an engineer said the building was 98 percent structurally sound, after the 1997 tornado, Clark County Judge Grady Runyan asked the county to consider building a new courthouse because he felt the building was "unsafe" and would cost more to refurbish than build new. Damages from the tornado included the brickwork, the clock and tower, and tiles on the mantles-- which were eventually replaced with slate containing the same decoration as the originals. The community responded vehemently against constructing a new courthouse. Citizens indicated with subsequent votes that they would rather refurbish the beautiful piece of architecture than see it replaced. Finally, members of the Clark County Quorum Court gave the public the option of building an annex for more office space rather than replacing the existing building. Patrons accepted this idea and the courthouse remains today as a testament of the people.³⁹

Charles Thompson's firm played a significant role in the appearance of public buildings throughout the state, and he helped establish the standards for courthouse architecture in Arkansas. The firm designed fifteen courthouses, including: the Hot

³⁸ *Southern Standard*, Arkadelphia, 18 July 1931.

³⁹ *Daily Siftings Herald*, Arkadelphia, 11 and 17 December 1958; *Arkansas Democrat*, Little Rock, 2 April 1997; *Daily Siftings Herald*, Arkadelphia, 11 April 1995 and 14 October 1998.

Spring County Courthouse in 1936, in art deco style; the Washington County Courthouse, built in 1904 in a Richardsonian Romanesque style, with a comparable clock tower to that of Clark County's; the Boone County Courthouse, built in 1909 in a Georgian revival style; and the Monroe County Courthouse in Clarendon, built in 1911. The Woodruff County courthouse of 1900, also designed by Thompson, is similar to the Clark County Courthouse, with a comparable clock tower, robust massing of strong component elements and a sensitive use of materials.⁴⁰

Charles Thompson's design has been admired and utilized by the people, serving as the center of government of Clark County for over a century. The site is still a place where political agendas are set and historic memories are made, because all county offices are located in or around the building and a new jail facility is located next door. The courthouse square is also the site of the annual Festival of Two Rivers, bringing thousands of visitors to the area. The building was listed on the historic homes and buildings tour for Arkadelphia after being added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The courthouse was also rated as one of Arkansas's most significant surviving county courthouses, on a survey conducted by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program in 1975. Thompson provided the city with an enduring structure, which served a valued purpose in the community of Arkadelphia. His skill and attention to detail were evident in the Clark County Courthouse, as well as in the second structure he designed for Arkadelphia four years later-- the library.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982; Arkansas Courthouses brochure, Clark County Courthouse file, Ouachita Baptist University archives.

⁴¹ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

The Clark County Library

The Woman's Library Association has the distinction of being the oldest club in the southeastern district, making the association a distinguished part of Clark County's history.⁴² It is also one of the oldest affiliated with the Arkansas Federation of Woman's Clubs,⁴³ and the club's impact is substantial because the projects and goals completed for the community have left a lasting impression for over a century in the form of the public library.

The Woman's Library Association was not the first group of women to ponder the idea of a library in the region.

The first recorded move for a local reading facility for general public was made by a 35-year old spinster" named Mary Connelly. Connelly moved to the area from New York State at the end of the civil war. She taught at the Arkadelphia Institute, a private subscription school operated by a Reverend Samuel Stephenson. Ms. Connelly was dedicated to the promotion of education and after she had taught in the "South long enough to understand" the Southern ways, she gained the public's support and "they came to love and admire her."⁴⁴

Connelly directed "civic drives, led parades, and sponsored movements calculated to broaden educational opportunity." In 1871 she formed the Arkadelphia Literary and Musical Society which required a \$2.00 membership fee in order to pay entertainments fees and purchase books. Ms. Connelly also organized the Athena Reading Club, "called the collection of the Athena Library, and opened the facility to the public for a nominal

⁴² *Daily Siftings Herald* (Arkadelphia), 10 April 1939.

⁴³ Clark County Library File: (CCHA). Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

reading fee.” In 1874, Ms. Connelly accepted a position in Kentucky. After her departure, the directors of the library gave the books to the Arkadelphia public schools.⁴⁵

Following Ms. Connelly’s attempt to begin a library, the Arkadelphia Library Club was formed in 1891. The charter members included Adam Clark, as president; Hattie Rudisill, as Vice President; Nelly Lee, as treasurer; and J.M. Rudisill, as librarian. This Library Club became the foundation for the Woman’s Library Association. In 1897, interest was expressed in the state for the formation of a state federation of Women’s Clubs to be held in Little Rock and Arkadelphia sent a delegation. The Arkadelphia ladies were extremely impressed with the discussion by Mrs. J.B. Pillow concerning the new Helena library, and decided Arkadelphia should have a library as well. They returned determined to create a public library in Arkadelphia.⁴⁶

On November 11, 1897, thirty women met at the home of Mrs. J.W. Patterson to discuss the idea of a library in the community. At this meeting the women formed the Woman’s Library Association with the goal to establish a public library in Arkadelphia. Through determination, aggressive fundraising, and perseverance, their goal was achieved in six years.⁴⁷

The charter officers of Woman’s Library Association were: Mrs. N.G. Biscoe, president; Mrs. F.R. Fleming, vice president; Mrs. E.W. McCorkle, recording secretary; Mrs. J.R. Dale, corresponding secretary; Mrs. Frank Rudolph, treasurer; and Mrs. S.R. McNutt, as librarian. Their first order of business was to create a constitution and the first

⁴⁴ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March 1878.

⁴⁵ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March 1878.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Clark County Historical Journal*, 1995. Ed. Wendy Richter, p. 7-8.

clause read, "The purpose of this organization shall be the establishment of a public library."⁴⁸

Their efforts proved a success, as a library was created on the first attempt by the women of the association. They began with donations of books and money from members and local citizens. The books were kept in homes until, in 1899, the book collection became too large for the host homes and a rental space was required. A rental space was soon obtained for the growing library, "first on Sanders block on Maddox (now 6th Street), then at the store of W.E. Thomas and finally at McAdams and Stuarts, the present location of the Elk Horn Bank." The early fundraisers to obtain more books and to make the library more aesthetically pleasing included a sale of donated silver, china and linen at Pannell's store. They also held a turkey supper for a fundraiser. With the \$98.00 they earned, the women voted to buy a rug, bookcase, and unpainted table for \$10.00. Members of the association were very willing to donate in order to see their goal met, and "Mrs. McNutt gave a flannel tablecloth, while Mrs. Nelly Lee provided a stove, and various members gave chairs."⁴⁹

Until the funds to furnish the library could be gathered, Mrs. Greene, the second librarian, kept the books in her home, to save the association the \$5.00 monthly rental fee. The library would open on Mondays and Thursdays with hours according to the season. In a report in the *Southern Standard* newspaper, Greene, carried the books in a big cook apron, in the summertime, from her house to the building where McMillan law offices are now located. The library was on the second floor in that building.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Clark County Library File: (CCHA). Ouachita Baptist University Archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March 1978.

The Woman's Library Association met regularly to discuss issues of the library as well as to hold programs encouraging education and continued knowledge. The club motto was "the duty that lieth nearest thee" and the club emblem was the oak. The women heard speakers on all subjects and even devoted one meeting to the study of the state of Arkansas. In their program for that meeting was a list of twenty questions on Arkansas as well as two papers and book reviews which would be presented. The association was active and dedicated.⁵¹

Fees were created and membership eligibility was defined for the library, as well as Rules were established for the facility, but the rented room quickly became too small for the amount of books and patrons visiting. Women in the association began to talk about building proper quarters for their "growing establishment," and by 1899 the library building fund was started. They began to have fundraisers such as a masquerade party, a skating rink and merry-go-round at a county fair, a "World's fair," pay dinners, a colonial tea, a spelling bee, and a baby show. They also raised money through an oyster supper, bazaar and a fiddler's contest. The ladies also "brought William Jennings Bryan to Arkadelphia to deliver his famous 'Cross of Gold' speech" in 1905 and the association received donations from local citizens such as Dr. J.R. Dale. About \$1,000 was raised by these events.⁵²

The association began discussing constructing a library building and according to their minutes from March 30, 1901, the women decided on a one story club house style.⁵³ By June of 1901 they had already contacted Charles Thompson to discuss plans for their

⁵¹ Woman's Library Association handbook for 1984-85.

⁵² *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March 1978; *Clark County Historical Journal*, 1995. Ed. Wendy Richter, p. 7-8.

⁵³ Minutes of the Woman's Library Association, March 30, 1901.

structure. During the women's June 23rd meeting they read a letter from Mr. Thompson in which he sent some plans for a club house style library and explained that the total amount of the said plans would be \$165.00. The building committee of the association asked for a continuance in order to do some more research of the plans and was granted their request.⁵⁴ "In 1903 a loan was secured for construction of a library," and the ladies had building plans for the structure, given to them free of charge by Thompson, who changed his mind on the \$165.00 fee. It was unusual for a business man such as Mr. Thompson to distribute designs of this magnitude for free but there are several reasons he may have done so.⁵⁵ Charles Thompson was a great civic leader and extremely involved in the aid and development of Arkansas. According to his granddaughter, Trudy Levy, he was a kind and benevolent community leader, who was extremely generous. But, he was also influenced by one of his contemporaries, Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie, according to Dr. F. Hampton Roy, most likely had an impact on Thompson and he was trying to emulate him.⁵⁶ At this time, Carnegie was building libraries throughout the nation and placing a great importance on knowledge and reading. The steel magnate built over 2,800 libraries throughout the world. Carnegie believed that money should be spent on symptoms not problems, and education was a symptom, reasoning that anyone with the right desire could educate himself.⁵⁷

Also, the Clark County library was of a classical design and neo-classical architecture was coming back into style from 1900-1920. All of these reasons could be

⁵⁴ Minutes of the Woman's Library Association, June 23, 1901.

⁵⁵ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

⁵⁶ Dr. F. Hampton Roy, interviewed by author, by note taking, Dr. Hampton Roy Eye Center, February 19, 2002.

⁵⁷ Encarta 2000, key word Andrew Carnegie.

used to explain why Charles Thompson gave the plans for the library free of charge, but all that is documented is what the women wrote in their minutes about this kind act. "The building committee consulted Mr. Charles Thompson of Little Rock about plans, and he generously donated the entire cost. The building bears testimony to his skill and to the liberal response given by the town to the request for funds."⁵⁸

The building was completed in December of 1903. To commemorate its completion all businesses in town were closed and at ten o'clock a parade traveled through the streets of downtown Arkadelphia. The day consisted of speakers, music by Dwight Blake's band, a may-pole dance and a dinner.⁵⁹

The ladies then focused on paying off their debt incurred during the building process. Ten years of fundraisers such as varied entertainments and solicitations were rewarded in 1913, when the Association discovered they had only \$500 remaining on their debt. The ladies quickly began searching for the remaining monies and discovered that the citizens of Clark County were eager to help.⁶⁰ As soon as the debt was paid a celebration was invoked and the Woman's Library Association sponsored a Jubilee Parade.⁶¹

The beautiful building, which received so much preparation and hard work, and which was magnificently designed by Charles Thompson, was constructed by James Pullen. Before later additions, the building was an example of early twentieth century institutional architecture in Arkansas as well as a representation of early efforts to

⁵⁸ The Arkadelphia Index, from the Minutes of the Woman's Library Association Minutes from November 11, 1897

⁵⁹ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March 1978.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Clark County Library file, Ouachita Baptist University archives. Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

establish libraries in the state. The building consisted of an oversized portico with ionic columns on a one story, red brick structure. "The Classical features of the building suggest the emphasis placed on classical studies during the period when the library was designed and built and the interior and exterior appearance of the building are essentially original," except for the additions made in the middle of the century to accommodate the growing library.⁶² Today the style of building is recognized as neo-classical, according to Jerry Simmons, of Twin Rivers Architecture in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Sources often refer to the building in two styles but there is a difference in the original building and the later structure after additions.⁶³

According to a letter from the United States Department of the Interior, the Library was entered into the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and selected for the National Register of Historic Places in November 5, 1974. The description which follows is the depiction given in the Register for the Library:

Arched window openings with lights giving the appearance of a tracery window are used in the building and the Adamesque entry is an elliptical fanlight over double doors with sidelights. Semicircular brick arches with stone keystones are used over the window openings as well as stone window sills. Brick quoins are used at the corners of the building and the interior appearance of the building is essentially as it was originally. Ceilings are approximately fifteen feet in height. Heavy molded trim with corner blocks are used about all fenestration. New wood flooring is in evidence and of particular interest is a fireplace with oak over mantel brick facing has been covered over with tile. The beauty of the original mantel-piece compensates for it. Only one mantel-piece remains today, the other having been removed at some previous time. The entry doors with sidelight are paneled and contain glass beveled at the edges. Several additions have been made to the original structure. Small wings to either side of the original structure have been added, which differ

⁶² Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

⁶³ Interview of Jerry Simmons, Twin Rivers Architecture, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, by phone, April 1, 2002.

slightly from the original building in the entablature and the intersection of the ridge lines.⁶⁴

The letter continues the description with:

The Clark County library is a small brick building originally of square plan. Its most significant exterior feature is a heavy Ionic portico with four columns and heavy entablature. The proportions of the entablature have been distorted by the extended cornice to form a wide soffit about the main building. The roof is medium hipped with outside end chimneys. An unusual feature is the use of small dormers with pediment which straddle each chimney. A diamond-shaped asbestos shingle is used on the roof.⁶⁵

What the letters fail to mention is the beautifully decorated interior, which the Woman's Library Association designed. The library had a "homelike" atmosphere, with an entry door containing beveled-glass sidelights⁶⁶ and enhanced by the fireplace with a large clock built into the mantel. Two oval mirrors were on each side of the clock and the wall facing the entrance to the building supported an immense Chinese tapestry bearing the figures of two lions. Additions made in the middle of the century included a modern kitchen, an auditorium which could seat one hundred people, and a workshop room for young people.⁶⁷

Not only did the design of the building exude classic Greek styles and the idea of expanding the mind, but it was also brimming with possibilities and programs implemented by the WLA. The library has been used for recitals, by civic and church groups, and for public meetings. The Woman's Library Association also used it for their meeting place each month. During World War II it was used as a Red Cross Workshop filled with cutting tables and sewing machines.⁶⁸ The library continued its policy of

⁶⁴ Letter from the United States Department of the Interior, Clark County Library Files, Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock), 6 February 1975.

⁶⁷ Clark County Library Files, Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

⁶⁸ *Clark County Historical Journal*, 1995. Ed. Wendy Richter, p. 7-8.

providing services to Clark County. In 1948, the *Daily Siftings Herald* reported that the initiation of a bookmobile service in Clark County was to be implemented with enthusiasm from all of the communities in the county. The bookmobile made its first trip into the community in May of 1948 and visited towns including Amity, Okolona, and Gurdon. Unfortunately, it became too expensive to operate, so the library quickly began a new program to take its place. The new pilot program called "mail-a-book" was attempted in which the library mailed books to rural areas. Clark County Library was one of three libraries in the state where the system was attempted. The library also catered to the community with programs such as a Saturday Story Hour for children "who have become avid readers."⁶⁹

The library, in the 1980s, provided an impressive array of services. According to the Friends of the Library Brochure, members of the library were able to "take out over sixty thousand books, more than five hundred record albums, and framed prints of famous paintings which were available for loan, to your home or office. Browse through the Arkansas collection, which contains maps, publications, old books, and historical photographs of Arkansas." Members could also search through current and back issues of periodicals, magazines and newspapers. More than six hundred reference books and pamphlets and a copying machine were also available for patrons who needed copies of reference materials located.⁷⁰

The primary aim of the library was to acquire and make available to residents of the county books, periodicals, and materials that will satisfy their need to become well

⁶⁹ Clark County Library Files, Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

⁷⁰ Friends of the Library Brochure, Clark County Library Files, Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

informed citizens, to decide important questions, to discipline the emotions, to cultivate the imaginations, to refine tastes, and to enrich recreation through reading. The library wanted to encourage youth in their pursuit of knowledge and in finding rewarding experiences through books and to provide the adult readers with books and magazines to meet their needs for facts and authoritative opinions. Finally, the library served to help the community grow into adulthood and then sought to meet the needs of the maturity.⁷¹

Special programs geared toward children were implemented as well. The WLA believed it was important to encourage children to read and this aim was continued throughout the century. The library encouraged schools to use its facilities. In 1944, thirty-two schools in the county were using the library's holdings and the teachers of these rural schools came to the library for their books. Most of these instructors were exchanging books once a month in order to provide a great variety of stories and learning opportunities for their children.⁷² In 1996, reading among students was still an important issue to the Clark County Library. The library gave away bikes in a program called "Ride Your Dreams," a summer reading program for children.⁷³

Other programs offered by the Clark County Library to promote education were directed toward people of all ages. In the fall of 1974 the library offered a program which "encouraged informal self-education of all people through the provision of books and materials. The library was extended into communities through the bookmobile service and branch libraries to reach patrons who otherwise would not and could not come to the library."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Clark County Library Policies, 1975.

⁷² *Daily Siftings Herald* (Arkadelphia), 20 January 1944.

⁷³ *Daily Siftings Herald* (Arkadelphia), 26 August 1996.

⁷⁴ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 15 August 1974.

The Woman's Library Association also remained an active part of the community, long after the initial drive to construct the building. It sponsored activities such as a lawn and garden contest and continued promoting the library and gaining new funds and books for the facilities. The library also had many ways people could contribute. Memorial donations, in which patrons could pay for a book in honor of someone, helped provide many of the holdings in the library. Nameplates were placed inside the cover of the book and the library would send a card to the donor or family of the person being honored. Patrons could choose certain books to donate or allow the library to choose the books needed most.⁷⁵

The library also produced a brochure which asked citizens to become "Friends of the Library." The library brochure explained that competition for funds was growing and libraries needed more than "passive and quiet approval." The library needed active participants who would participate in work, funds and influence for the collection. The brochure claimed that active members can mean the difference between an average organization and a superior one. Friends of the Library included civic-minded men and women who realized the importance of the Clark County Library and wanted to work to help keep the Library a strong educational tool in the community. The brochure also mentioned that membership would help provide services badly needed.⁷⁶

In 1939, after forty-two years of library service to Arkadelphia, the Woman's Library Association donated the library building and its contents to the city. Five years later, in 1946, the building became both the city and the county library. The people voted

⁷⁵ *Daily Siftings Herald* (Arkadelphia), 10 April 1939.

⁷⁶ Friends of the Library brochure, Clark County Library Files, Ouachita Baptist University archives, Arkadelphia, Arkansas.

to support the facility by a one-mill county and half-mill city tax levy, then in 1974, “the deed was transferred to the Clark County Library Board, enabling the library to better serve the entire county.”⁷⁷

The library has experienced many hardships throughout the years. In 1976 the Clark County Library Board of Trustees invited a speaker for their dinner, which focused on the need for more state and local support for public libraries in Arkansas. The banquet, sponsored by the Ross Foundation, followed the announcement that federal L.S.C.A. funds would not be available for the following year. The library was forced to find new sources of income which would have to either come from the existing library services and construction act, an extension bill which would have to be passed by the U.S. Senate and signed by President Gerald Ford, or through more local support. The library was successful in securing the funding but this task never ends for a publicly supported facility.⁷⁸

Today, the library remains an active part of the community. The current librarian, Judy Golden, claimed the Clark County Library has continued to remain an important part of this county because “it is unique in that it provides service to two universities as well as two or three counties surrounding ours. Many people live outside the county but work at the universities or in the industries in Arkadelphia and use the Clark County library.” Mrs. Golden said the Woman’s Library Association continues to play an active role in the library’s operations. The association today has approximately forty members and their current president is Pat Laster. The group provides support for

⁷⁷ *Southern Standard* (Arkadelphia), 23 March, 1978; Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

⁷⁸ Letter to Dr. Bessie Moore, Chairperson Arkansas Library Commission; March 10, 1976.

the library by calling government and state officials to try to raise money for the programs as well as by raising funds in other ways. Mrs. Golden said the group of women in the association today are mostly new members, although some are related to charter members.⁷⁹

Over the past century the library has undergone many changes but it remains a symbol of both knowledge and progress for Arkadelphia, as well as a representation of the very small number of public libraries which existed in Arkansas during the first third of the twentieth century. According to an article in *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*, "Education and culture in any community depends very greatly on the number of books and the quality of the books available for general reading. The educational and intellectual rating of a state is based on library facilities as well as its public schools and colleges." Clark County's library greatly increases these standards in Arkansas and Arkadelphia; it remains the physical legacy that Charles Thompson and the Woman's Library Association left for Clark County and Arkadelphia.⁸⁰

Charles Thompson's impact in Arkadelphia

Thompson's architecture career took him to many sections of the state to build domestic and commercial buildings. Although he preferred designing public buildings, his résumé includes hundreds of homes, including at least seven in Arkadelphia. The earliest two homes were commissioned by Alice McNutt and J.H. Crawford in 1890. Charles Thompson was also said to have designed John Stark Cargile's home around the

⁷⁹ Interview with Judy Golden, Clark County Librarian, Clark County Library, by author, March 6, 2002.

⁸⁰ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

turn of the century. Cargile was a successful business man in Arkansas, creating a saw mill company in the town of Cargile, which was named for him, and becoming the third president of Elk Horn Bank, the oldest bank in the county. He used the same designer and builder from the Clark County Courthouse for his home, a Victorian-style residence with eleven rooms, which remains standing in Arkadelphia and contains the same tiles on the mantles as those used in the courthouse.⁸¹

Other residences in Arkadelphia designed by Thompson were commissioned by J.G. Clark, in 1907; J.H. McMillan, in 1900-1910; and E.L. Thomas. Adams and Nowlin bought a Thompson design for their store, located on 700-800 Clinton Street, in 1921, and Alice McNutt had Thompson make additions to her residence. Thompson's list of works in Arkadelphia also include such places as Merchants and Farmers commercial building in 1915, on Sixth and Main Street, and an Arkadelphia School on 11th at Pine and Haddock Street, in 1917. The school building is part of Central Primary School's campus and is currently used as a storage building but maintains its former nuances such as a door where ice blocks could be delivered.⁸²

The intelligence and progress of a race is perhaps more clearly reflected in its buildings than in any other form of group expression, and they provide an interesting picture of the industry, intelligence and artistic development of a commonwealth. When looked at in this light, every building, in a sense, becomes important but some are so imposing and so enduring as to assume the character of monuments. As such, they become significant historical records of the age in which they were built.⁸³

⁸¹ *Arkansas Gazette*, Little Rock, 19 January 1938; Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1982; and *John Stark Cargile (1856-1939)*. By Snookie Dixon, Ouachita Baptist University 1982.

⁸² Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1989.

⁸³ Donaghey, George W. *Building A State Capitol*. Little Rock: Parke-Harper Company, 1937.

The Clark County Courthouse and Library were two buildings built at the turn of the century which provided an interesting picture of the industry, intelligence and artistic development of Clark County. These two Charles Thompson designs were imposing and enduring pieces of architecture which became significant historical records. Not only was Thompson's work exquisite and powerful, but it was practical and valuable to the people in this community. Thompson's designs produced buildings in Arkadelphia which would become the focus of the town in not only their purpose as the center of politics and education, but also as landmarks in the state. Community spirit and growth were prominent features of these two buildings and reflected qualities Thompson felt were important.

Thompson's dedication and consistency in producing structures of the greatest quality helped Arkadelphia gain notoriety. Although the buildings' original purpose was as community centers for the county seat, they became much more. The courthouse remains the site for political rallies, community gatherings, festivals, and county business. The building is in excellent condition and continues to meet the needs of the county. Thompson designed a building which has proven to be structurally sound, as well as one of Arkansas' most significant surviving county courthouses.

Thompson's second Arkadelphia design, the library, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. Its neo-classical design was an example of the community's attempt to place importance on knowledge and progress in Arkadelphia. The library is an example of the very small number of public libraries which existed in Arkansas during the first third of the twentieth century and serves today as a resource of knowledge for the community. Thompson's willingness to donate the plans for the

structure makes the library yet another testament to the man and his most sincere beliefs.⁸⁴

Charles Thompson's legacies in architecture remain a steadfast monument in Clark County, and reflect the wonderful skill of this talented man and his attempt to bring beauty and structure to the state of Arkansas. Thompson was "one of the most prolific architects of his age and the dedication and consistency of Thompson and his colleagues gave American architecture professional stability at the turn of the century."⁸⁵ His accomplishments were far-reaching and enduring and his legacy continues in Clark County and in the state of Arkansas.

⁸⁴ Richter, Wendy, ed. *Clark County Arkansas: Past and Present*. Arkadelphia: Clark County Historical Association, 1992.

⁸⁵ Roy, F. Hampton. *Charles L. Thompson and Associates Arkansas Architects 1885-1939*. Little Rock: Quapaw Quarter Association and August House, 1989.

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