

Habicht-Cohn-Crow House one of the oldest in town



By Wendy Richter
For the Siftings

One of Arkadelphia's oldest homes sits at the corner of Eighth and Pine streets. Known as the Habicht-Cohn-Crow House, the structure once served as the residence of a number of Arkadelphians who played significant roles in Clark County and Arkansas history.

The building was constructed for Captain Anthony E. Habicht, who came to Arkadelphia during Reconstruction. Local legend says that he patterned the house after one he had seen in Natchez, Mississippi. A.E. Habicht was appointed Superintendent of the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—com-

monly known as the Freedmen's Bureau—for Clark County in October of 1866. He replaced W. A. Britton who had held the post since October of 1865, the Bureau's first year of operation. Habicht worked out of the Arkadelphia Field Office, which was located on Main Street between Third and Fourth streets. Arkadelphia was one of thirty-six locations in Arkansas served by the Bureau in the aftermath of the Civil War.

Habicht was employed by the Freedmen's Bureau for several years, but chose not to stay in Arkadelphia. He sold his home to Mark Mathias Cohn, an Arkadelphia merchant who in 1874 established the M.M. Cohn Company. Cohn later opened another store in Little Rock and moved there. The company evolved into a successful regional chain of department stores that at its zenith included twelve stores and continued operations for well over a century.

Cohn sold the home to

A.M. Crow in 1880. Crow was a Clark County native, born in 1833. During his career, became the first person in Arkadelphia to work exclusively in the real estate business, and had great success at it. Within twenty years, he controlled over 10,000 acres of land. He also served as agent for the Iron Mountain Railroad, which put him in charge of over 200,000 acres. Crow came to be recognized as one of the state's leading realtors. As a natural outgrowth of this activity, he established and ran an abstract company together with his son.

Unlike the home's first two owners, who kept the home for only a few years each, Austin Crow and his descendants maintained ownership of the house for more than a century. Fannie Crow, Austin's daughter, married William Gerig in 1890, and the couple became owners of the home in 1932. Gerig was an engineer best known for his work on the Panama Canal. The Gerigs even-



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Pictured is the Habicht-Cohn-Crow House.

ually transferred ownership to their daughter, Mildred Gerig Newberry, and her husband Jacob L. In 1971, Mrs. Newberry gave the house to her children. It remained in the family until 1983.

The Habicht-Cohn-Crow House was added

to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. The home has been repurposed for commercial use and continues its existence as one of Arkadelphia's oldest structures.

For additional information about Clark County history, visit or contact

the Clark County Historical Museum (www.clark-countyhistory.org or (870) 230-1360) or the Clark County Historical Association's Archives at the Ouachita Baptist University Library (www.obu.edu/archives or (870) 245-5332).