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Preserve Arkansas Announces
2023 List of Arkansas's Most Endangered Places

LITTLE ROCK—Preserve Arkansas announced its 2023 Most Endangered Places list today in front of the William Woodruff House at 1017 E. 8th Street in Little Rock. The 2023 list includes a National Historic Landmark at Helena-West Helena, an architecturally and historically significant neighborhood at Little Rock, and the oldest building standing at Osceola. Preserve Arkansas is also highlighting a prominent bank building in downtown Little Rock as “One to Continue Watching.”

“While all of the properties on this year’s list are significant, two of them have been included on past Most Endangered lists, but challenges persist. It is critical that we find cooperative solutions to save these important historic places before they are lost,” said Rachel Patton, executive director of Preserve Arkansas.

The Most Endangered Places Program began in 1999 to raise awareness of historically and architecturally significant properties facing threats such as demolition, deterioration, and insensitive development. Preserve Arkansas solicited nominations from individuals and organizations throughout the state, and a selection committee of preservation professionals, architects, historians, and Preserve Arkansas members chose properties based on their level of significance, severity of the threat, and level of local support. The list is updated each year to generate discussions and support for saving the places that matter to Arkansans.

Threatened Three: The 2023 List of Arkansas's Most Endangered Places -

Centennial Baptist Church, Helena-West Helena (Phillips County). Completed in 1905, Centennial Baptist Church was designed in the Gothic Revival style by African American architect Henry James Price. The church is one of only 17 National Historic Landmarks in Arkansas. It is exceptionally significant for its association with Dr. Elias Camp Morris, a nationally known figure in the Baptist denomination. On April 12, 2020, straight line winds severely damaged the church, pushing the front wall down and lifting the roof off of the sanctuary. Urgent action is needed to preserve what remains.

Central High School Neighborhood Historic District, Little Rock (Pulaski County). The Central High School Neighborhood Historic District is significant for its association with the westward

expansion of Little Rock, the 1957 desegregation crisis, and as a mixed-use neighborhood with buildings dating from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. The district's National Register designation is compromised due to the loss of historic structures to demolition, neglect, and insensitive alterations. A cooperative solution is needed to preserve historic resources, maintain affordability, and encourage investment.

Osceola Times Building, Osceola (Mississippi County). Located on the east side of Osceola's courthouse square, the National Register-listed Osceola Times Building was constructed in 1901 and was the longtime home of the oldest weekly newspaper in eastern Arkansas. It is now the oldest building standing at Osceola. The Osceola Times Building is vacant and deteriorating rapidly due to a partial roof collapse about a year ago. A successful save would see this significant property rehabilitated for a new use and encourage additional renovation efforts in downtown Osceola.

One to Continue Watching: Worthen Bank Building, Little Rock (Pulaski County). The Worthen Bank Building was constructed in 1928 at the southeast corner of 4th and Main streets in downtown Little Rock. Founded in 1877, the Worthen Bank Company was Little Rock's oldest, continuously-operated financial institution until it was acquired by Boatmen's Bank in 1994. From 1969 until January 2023, the building was occupied by KATV, the local ABC affiliate. It is now vacant. A successful save would be the rehabilitation of the facility into offices, housing, or even an urban grocery store.

Photos and additional information about 2023's Most Endangered Places are available at <https://preservearkansas.org/most-endangered-2023/>.

Preserve Arkansas is the statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to building stronger communities by reconnecting Arkansans to our heritage and empowering people to save and rehabilitate historic places. For more information about Preserve Arkansas, please contact Rachel Patton at 501-372-4757, rpattton@preservearkansas.org, or visit www.PreserveArkansas.org.

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2023 List of Arkansas's Most Endangered Places

Centennial Baptist Church, York and Columbia Streets, Helena-West Helena (Phillips County)

Built 1905



Completed in 1905, Centennial Baptist Church was designed in the Gothic Revival style by African American architect Henry James Price. The church is one of only 17 National Historic Landmarks in Arkansas. It is exceptionally significant for its association with Dr. Elias Camp Morris. Dr. Morris, who pastored at Centennial from 1879 until his death in 1922, was a nationally known figure in the Baptist denomination, serving as publisher of *The Baptist Vanguard* and president of the National Baptist Convention. Morris was also a founder of Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock. He served as a delegate to state and national Republican conventions and was appointed an ambassador to the Belgian Congo by President Theodore Roosevelt. When Dr. Morris died in 1922, the membership of Centennial Baptist Church numbered more than 1,000.

Regular services have not been held at Centennial Baptist Church for decades. Beginning in the early 1990s, work was done to stabilize the church, but a full restoration was never completed. In 2019, the building's ownership changed, renewing efforts to save it. Unfortunately, on April 12, 2020, straight line winds severely damaged the church, pushing the front wall down and lifting the roof off of the sanctuary. It remains in this precarious state today. A structural assessment was completed in spring 2021, outlining recommendations to safely stabilize the structure, but funding remains an issue. Centennial Baptist Church was actually included on Preserve Arkansas's 2006 and 2018 Most Endangered Places lists, and it is being included again to reemphasize the importance of the property and the urgent need for action to preserve what remains.

Central High School Neighborhood Historic District, roughly bound by 12th Street, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Roosevelt Road, and Thayer Street, Little Rock (Pulaski County)

Late 19th to Mid-20th Century



Named for the 1927 Little Rock Central High School, the Central High School Neighborhood Historic District is significant for its association with the westward expansion of Little Rock, the 1957 desegregation crisis, and as a mixed-use neighborhood with buildings dating from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries. The district was included on Preserve Arkansas's Most Endangered Places List in 2014 due to worries that the loss of historic structures from demolition, neglect, and insensitive alterations would put the district's National Register listing in jeopardy. Although the district has seen investment and rehabilitation since then, threats to its National Register eligibility persist.

In 2022, the City of Little Rock placed a moratorium on demolitions and exterior building permits within the district while Planning Department staff worked on a local ordinance that would regulate alterations, demolition, and new construction. This effort was unsuccessful in gaining neighborhood support and has been shelved indefinitely. There is grassroots support for protecting historic resources in the district, but there are different opinions on how that should be accomplished. The issue must be addressed in a way that keeps the neighborhood affordable for current residents but encourages investment in dilapidated and abandoned properties as well as infill construction that blends well with the neighborhood's historic character – all the while retaining the district's National Register status. This status allows property owners within the district, depending on ownership type, to take advantage of preservation grants or state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits, which are critically important tools for redevelopment.

Osceola Times Building, 112 N. Poplar Street, Osceola (Mississippi County)

Built 1901



Located on the east side of Osceola's courthouse square, the National Register-listed Osceola Times Building was constructed in 1901. It was one of the first substantial buildings completed in "New Town," which was near the railroad and west of the original town site. It is now the oldest building standing in Osceola. It was designed in the early 20th Century commercial style with Italianate influences. As was the custom during the early twentieth century, the newspaper business was located on the first floor, and the owner's apartment was on the second floor.

The *Osceola Times* was founded in 1870 by John O. Blackwood and Leon Roussan and is the oldest weekly newspaper in eastern Arkansas. Mr. Roussan and his family lived in the apartment upstairs. Roussan was mayor of Osceola in 1876 and was one of the first proponents of moving to "New Town." After Roussan's death in 1906, his wife, Adah, took over operation of the paper and became a well-known newspaperwoman. Through her editorials, she championed social betterment, the formation of drainage districts, and flood control.

The Osceola Times Building is vacant and deteriorating rapidly due to a partial roof collapse about a year ago. The current owner purchased it to prevent demolition and wants to see it rehabilitated to serve as commercial and residential space. A successful save would see this significant property rehabilitated for a new use and encourage additional renovation efforts in downtown Osceola.

One to Continue Watching: Worthen Bank Building, 401 Main Street, Little Rock (Pulaski County)

Built 1928



The Worthen Bank Building was constructed in 1928 at the southeast corner of 4th and Main streets in downtown Little Rock. Founded in 1877, the Worthen Bank Company was Little Rock's oldest, continuously-operated financial institution until it was acquired by Boatmen's Bank in 1994. This Neoclassical and Art Deco-style building was completed as the W. B. Worthen Company celebrated 50 years in the banking business. Reflective of the company's longevity and prominence, its owners chose one of Arkansas's most distinguished architects, George R. Mann, to design its new building. The Worthen Bank Building's steel frame was clad in limestone and featured pilasters with stylized capitals and panels with decorative medallions on its western and northern elevations.

Worthen Bank occupied the building until 1969, when it moved to a new tower on West Capitol Avenue. The building was then purchased by KATV, the local ABC affiliate, which adapted the space to serve as a television station. KATV moved out of the building in January 2023, and it is now vacant. The building is located at a prominent corner in the heart of a revitalizing area. A successful save would be the rehabilitation of the facility into offices, housing, or even an urban grocery store.

High-resolution photos of these properties are available [here](#).