**Preserve Arkansas Mid-Mod Tour**

**Patteson House**

**September 27, 2019**

European settlement in the area that is now Craighead County began c.1830 with the arrival of Daniel Martin who settled approximately five miles south of the current site of Jonesboro. Other early settlers in the area included Rufus Snoddy, Daniel O’Guinn, Yancey Broadway, Joshua Grider, and William Puryear. Puryear also opened the first store in the county, which was located near what is now Jonesboro, and brought supplies in from Memphis.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Settlement in the antebellum period was slow and virtually came to a standstill during the Civil War. After the Civil War, settlement in the area remained slow and did not really pick up speed until the arrival of the railroad in the later part of the nineteenth century. Although settlement in the area was slow prior to the Civil War, Craighead County was created on February 19, 1859. Interestingly, the county was named for Thomas B. Craighead, who was representing Mississippi and Crittenden counties at the time, and was actually opposed to the county’s creation. (The bill for the creation of the county was called up for a vote while Craighead was absent, and he found out about the bill’s passage and the naming of the county when he returned to his seat.) The county was divided into two judicial districts, the Jonesboro district and Lake City district, in 1883 after residents in the eastern part of the county petitioned for it.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Approximately two years after the creation of Craighead County, the site of Jonesboro was selected for the Craighead County seat of government. Jonesboro was named in honor of William A. Jones, the state senator at the time for St. Francis and Poinsett counties, and an ardent supporter of the creation of the county. By the beginning of the Civil War, Jonesboro had about 150 residents, and the town continued to grow slowly so that by 1880 there were three or four small stores and a population of about 200-300 people. However, the arrival of the railroads in Craighead County in 1882 and 1883 caused to town’s population to grow tremendously so that by the end of the 1880s, “the population numbers 2,240 – 1,954 white, and 286 colored. To this number should be added about 300 for those living just outside the corporation.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The growth of Jonesboro allowed for the incorporation of the city as a city of the second class on February 2, 1883. By the 1880s the city contained “two weekly newspapers, *The Jonesboro Times* and *The Craighead County Sun*, both well edited, and both devoted to the general interests of the county and its people.” In addition, “Jonesboro has a lodge and chapter of the Masonic fraternity, a lodge and encampment of Odd Fellows, a lodge each of the Knights of Honor, Knights and Ladies of Honor, Knights of Pythias, Knights of Labor, and other societies; also six physicians and one dentist.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

By the turn of the twentieth century, sawmills and woodworking plants were the main industry around Jonesboro. However, once the land was stripped of its lumber, the mills closed and moved away, and Jonesboro took on a new role as an agricultural trading center. As a result of Jonesboro’s new livelihood, a state board of trustees chose Jonesboro as the site for a district agricultural college in 1909.[[5]](#footnote-5) The establishment of the college has caused Jonesboro to continue to grow throughout the twentieth century, and it is now the largest city in northeast Arkansas.

This section of Harrisburg Road is also called Arkansas Highway 1, which was the first highway designated by the Arkansas General Assembly in 1926. However, the route had its beginnings as Arkansas State Road B-1, and ran from Wilmot, AR, up to Corning, creating a convenient path from Louisiana to Missouri. Upon the creation of the U.S. Route System in 1925, U.S. Route 67 and U.S. Route 165 replaced sections of the highway creating the modern Arkansas Highway 1. The modern AR-1 runs from McGehee through Piggott and into Missouri. Since the highway runs along the geological featured called Crowley’s Ridge, it provides uniquely scenic views of the eastern part of the state. As a result, the area along the highway features a rolling topography, which contrasted sharply with the flat alluvial delta land to the east and west, making the area particularly attractive for people to live. It was along this area, just to the south of the small city of Jonesboro that the Patteson family established a large farm when they moved to the area in the mid-1920s.

Alan Guy Patteson, Sr., was born in Memphis, Tennessee on August 18, 1901. He was one of six children had by James Sloane Patteson and Allie Bruce Starke Patteson.[[6]](#footnote-6) Patteson grew up in the Memphis area but left to attend college at the University of Virginia in the late 1910s. Unfortunately, he had to leave college a year early to return to Memphis to help with the family business. Around 1923, he moved to Jonesboro to work for the Roberts Cotton Oil Mill, owned by family friends from Memphis. He later got into the cotton gin business and farming. It was in Jonesboro that he met and wooed Katherine Carter, a Jonesboro native. The two were married on February 10, 1926. The couple would go on to have ­­­­five children, including Alan Guy Patteson, Jr. The couple would also establish a roughly 325-acre farm about a mile south of the Jonesboro city limit in the mid-1940s.[[7]](#footnote-7) Alan Patteson, Jr., the couple’s second child, was born in Jonesboro in November 1928. He attended college at the University of Missouri in Columbia, where he graduated in 1950. After college, he had a number of occupations, including farming, cotton ginning, as well as owning and operating AM/FM radio stations in Jonesboro. His wife, Carol, was originally from Long Island, New York, and she and her family moved to Memphis, Tennessee, when she was 16. She graduated from Hutchison Girls School in Memphis and went on to attend Stephens College in Columbia, where she and Alan met. They married in 1952,[[8]](#footnote-8) and would eventually have five children. The couple lived in a small house on the family farm south of Jonesboro, located across Harrisburg Road from here. However, having so many children put a strain on the family living such tight quarters, because there is only so many times you can add onto a house. This led the couple to decide to build a new house in the late 1950s. Patteson had long wanted to build a house on a particularly scenic wooded hilltop spot on the family land. It did not take much convincing to get Carol to agree on the location, so all that was left was to pick an architect, which end up being F. Eugene Withrow of Little Rock. The Pattesons knew Withrow because he had married Alan’s first cousin and was studying architecture at Washington University in St. Louis while Alan and Carol were in college in Columbia. As such, the Pattesons would often drive up to visit the Withrows in St. Louis doing their college years. When it came to selecting Withrow as the architect of their future home, Mr. Patteson said: “When we thought of an architect, we thought we would very much ‘gee and haw’ with Gene, and it seemed logical to contact him. It was a beautiful relationship.”[[9]](#footnote-9)

Withrow was born in Little Rock on January 19, 1925, and served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1943 and 1945 before studying architecture at Washington University. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1950. In 1954, Withrow organized his own firm, where he primarily specialized in residential designs.[[10]](#footnote-10) Some notable early designs of Withrow are the Pat Riley House at 2 Ranch Valley in Little Rock and the E.M. Anderson House at 606 Partee in Magnolia, both built in 1957. Additionally, he designed the original church building for the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd at 2920 Ware Street in Little Rock in 1958. However, his first high profile project was when he partnered with Dallas architect, Harold Berry, on the design of the Tower Building at 323 Center Street in downtown Little Rock in 1958. Withrow would later design a wide variety of buildings around the state including the Newton County Hospital in Jasper (1968), Woodruff County Hospital in McCrory (1969) [[11]](#footnote-11) and the Hindman Golf Course Clubhouse in Little Rock (1971). However, he continued to maintain a strong residential practice as well, designing the 1962 Ark-La Gas House at 7012 Shamrock in Little Rock and the 1965 Bransford House at 217 W. Academy Street in Lonoke.

Withrow often chose to use a Modernist approach when creating his architectural designs. As such, the use of a Mid-Century Modern style for the Patteson House was not an unusual choice for him or within the residential sector as a whole, since it was an approach that was gaining popularity for new construction after World War II. The AIA reported in the early 1960s that a shift was occurring where people were starting to embrace Modernist architecture, especially for business buildings, but still even to a certain degree for homes. The book *Mid-Century Architecture in America* states:

No sooner has America embraced the new architecture than it has blossomed out into richness and inventiveness that must, in retrospect, astound even its most daring prophets. It’s stark, bare, and square austerity, largely a gesture of protest against over-decorative eclecticism, has given way to a less self-conscious expression.

Taking up the fundamental tenets of the earlier “modern,” a new modified modern with three basic characteristics has developed. These characteristics are:

First, a totally new emphasis on the interior spaces of a building in terms of their usefulness, comfort, and beauty and their inter-relationship. In the past, rooms within a building were rigid compartments. Interior spaces are more flexible and sometimes can be divided at will. They open and flow into one another in a dynamic rather than static relationship.

Second, there is a new indoor-outdoor relationship. The use (some complain the overuse) of glass has made it possible to bring nature’s plants and greenery into the building, and extend the building out into nature. Planted plazas, interior courts, and terraces have brought nature even into our urban working environment.

Third, our buildings appear lighter, often buoyant. Skyscrapers soar effortlessly into the air. Other buildings rest lightly on the ground as though to disturb it as little as possible. Even where they hug the earth and adapt to its contours, they avoid being massive and ponderous.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Withrow’s eventual design for Patteson House reflected these general characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern architecture, especially the usefulness and inter-relationship of the interior spaces and the indoor-outdoor relationship, which is best manifested in the large expanses of windows and glass doors that span much of the south side of the house, allowing easy access to the yard and pool area. “If one word were to summarize the aspiration of American architecture at mid-century, that word would be ‘liveability.’”[[13]](#footnote-13)

When it came to the design of the Patteson House, Withrow drew specific inspiration from the work of architects like A. Quincy Jones in California, not to be confused with Quincy D. Jones, the musician. Jones is most famous for his designs that were built by developer Joseph Eichler in the late 1940s and early 1950s, commonly called “Eichler homes.” These houses were a form of mid-century post-and-beam architecture, also called Structural Modernism, which was very popular with Modernist architects of the time. Structural Modernism was a form that was introduced and popularized by the German architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, most famous for his German Pavilion at the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona, Spain, and his 1951 Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois. This form of Modernism focused on emphasizing the structural members of the building, and highlighting them in lieu of traditional decoration. In most early examples, this style of Mid-Century Modernism featured black steel structural members and flat roofs. However, the form that Jones popularized in his work with Eichler combined the Structural Modernist post-and-beam designs with the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. This resulted in replacing the steel columns and beams with wood and changing the flat roofs to gables. The combination proved very popular among the American public because it softened the high-style European Modernist inspired designs of architects like Pierre Koenig and Craig Ellwood, by creating a much more traditional silhouette while still maintaining a Modernist form. However, the new form was not as industrial in appearance because of the introduction of natural materials. Aside from the wood beams and columns, stone and natural colored brick were commonly used in the new manifestation of Structural Modernism. Mr. Patteson said that he and Withrow “often talked about [their] mutual love of ‘natural materials honestly treated.’”[[14]](#footnote-14) This love of natural materials combined with the desire for cost efficiency likely led Withrow to choose the Structural Modernist style for the house. However, Withrow also seemed very fond of designing within that style, as many of his known late 1950s work also employ it as well.

By the time that the house was completed in 1962, it had cost $67,000 to build and $16,000 to furnish.[[15]](#footnote-15) That would be roughly $563,000.00 to build today, and $134,000.00 to furnish. The following year, the house was the subject of an article in the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* on April 26, 1963. The article noted that the house was “Of contemporary design” and that “the wings of the house spread out in a shallow V, rather like that of a bird in flight. The house itself is reflected in a pool in front of the front door.” The article also discussed the house’s materials and how it fit into its site. It was reported that:

“Natural Materials have been used whenever possible. The exterior is of redwood and flintstone, which the Pattesons found on another hilltop in Batesville, Ark. Native Arkansas pine has been used for the interior ceilings, which have been given a finish that produces a slightly greyed tone of natural wood. The beams are all of pine but stained a dark brown.

Windows in the living room have a magnificent view of Crowley’s Ridge…Focal point of the interior is the handsome fireplace designed by Withrow with its copper hood and black pipe going thru the ceiling. Walls thruout the house are white plaster and ‘strip’ lighting has been used eliminating the need for lamps”[[16]](#footnote-16)

The article goes on to describe the “fashionable” interior finishes, such as the custom woven green carpet, custom designed living room sofa, scrubbed rosewood table top and buffet, Guatemalan rug, turquoise carpets and bedspreads, and gold and turquoise master bathroom, all of which was picked out by Mrs. Patteson and Memphis decorator Jack Connors. Additionally, it said that the kitchen had natural birch cabinets and stainless steel appliances originally, giving the room a pretty contemporary design even for today. It also noted that Mrs. Patteson had two specific requirements in the house’s design. The first was that the living spaces of the house be separate from the bedrooms, especially the children’s rooms. This resulted in all of their rooms opening off of their own private den/playroom on the eastern end of the house. The other requirement was that there be a pass-thru from the kitchen into the den, which allowed for the Patteson to easily entertain informally. Mr. Patteson also had a hand in the den. As you may remember, he owned the local radio station in Jonesboro, as such he made sure that the den had the best audio system possible for maximum entertainment.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The Patteson Family has retained ownership of the house from the time that it was constructed in 1961-1962 until the present day. However, the area around the house has changed substantially over the years. The Pattesons decided to redevelop much of the old family farm into neighborhoods and small business parks. The only exception to this was the roughly five acre plot immediately surrounding this house and similar sized plot of land just down the road to the north, which is owned by Mr. Patteson’s brother Carter.

Despite enjoying fifty-seven years living and raising his family in the house, Mr. Patteson has decided to downsize, as he no longer needs or wants this much square-footage to take care of. He recently placed the house on the market for $987,500. So if you are interested in owning a truly remarkable piece of Modernist architecture, you should make him an offer.

This concludes my talk on the house. One last thing before you explore the house. As you have a lot of free time tomorrow before the tour, we thought you might like a list of a few other pieces of fantastic architecture to check out in the area. We have some handouts with a list of some the more notable examples in Jonesboro. Feel free to explore the house. Be sure to check out the original stereo and intercom system in the den, and be on the lookout for the integrated vacuum system ports around the house.

1. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, pp. 311-312. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, p. 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, pp. 312 and 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas*. Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889, pp. 315-316. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. West, Elliott. *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987 reprint of 1941 publication, p. 166. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. U.S. Census Records, 1910. Found at <https://www.ancestry.com/family-tree/person/tree/90730142/person/300038318283/facts?_phsrc=Skw429&_phstart=successSource>. Access on 25 September 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Patteson, Alan, Jr. E-mail to the author. 25 September 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Patteson, Alan, Jr. E-mail to the author. 24 July 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Patteson, Alan, Jr. E-mail to the author. 24 July 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Gane, John F., AIA, ed. *American Architects Directory, 3rd Edition*. New York: R. R. Bowker, Company, 1970. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. pp. 21-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. p. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Patteson, Alan, Jr. E-mail to the author. 24 July 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Patteson, Alan, Jr. Interview with the author. 27 February 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Ward, Dorothy. “Beautiful Home, Like Bird in Flight.” *Memphis Press-Scimitar*. 26 April 1963, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-17)