



ARKANSAS'S MOST  
**ENDANGERED**  
PLACES

## Seven to Save:

The 2019 List of Arkansas's  
Most Endangered Places



## **SPECIAL THANKS**

Special thanks to 2019 Most Endangered Places Selection Committee Members: Chair Denise Ennett, Patrick Anders, Mark Christ, Dr. David Ware, and Callie Williams.

Thank you to Dr. Jodi Barnes, Amanda Roberts, and Hunter Windle for participating in the announcement, and thank you to the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center for hosting us. Finally, a huge thank you goes to Dr. David Ware and the Arkansas Secretary of State's office for assistance with display boards.

## **ABOUT PRESERVE ARKANSAS**

Founded in 1981, Preserve Arkansas is the only statewide nonprofit advocate for the preservation of Arkansas's historic places. Our organization works to build stronger communities by reconnecting Arkansans to our heritage and empowering people to save and rehabilitate historic places. Support our work year-round by becoming a member at [PreserveArkansas.org/get-involved/membership](https://www.PreserveArkansas.org/get-involved/membership).

## **ABOUT THE MOST ENDANGERED PLACES PROGRAM**

Preserve Arkansas began a Most Endangered Places program in 1999 to highlight Arkansas's significant historic and cultural sites that were at risk of being damaged or lost. Arkansas's Most Endangered Program is modeled after the America's 11 Most Endangered Places List announced annually by the National Trust for Historic Preservation since 1987. Arkansas's list is updated annually to raise awareness of endangered properties and to generate discussions and form strategies to save these places. Previous listings include the Johnny Cash Boyhood Home, Dyess; Rohwer Japanese-American Relocation Center, Desha County; Hantz and Durst Houses, Fayetteville; Downtown Hot Springs; William Woodruff House, Little Rock, and many others.

Properties are nominated by individuals, communities, and organizations interested in preserving these places for future Arkansans. Criteria for inclusion in the list include a property's listing or eligibility for the Arkansas or National Register of Historic Places; the degree of a property's local, state, or national significance; and the imminence and degree of the threat to the property. Once selected for the list, these properties become a priority for Preserve Arkansas's advocacy efforts.



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## **Preserve Arkansas Announces 2019 List of Arkansas's Most Endangered Places**

LITTLE ROCK—Preserve Arkansas's 2019 Most Endangered Places list includes a Rosenwald School, rural churches that are the linchpins of their respective communities, commercial buildings with ties to Arkansas's Jewish and Chinese merchants, one of the state's last motion picture palaces, and the home of a well-known African American attorney and civic leader.

The announcement took place on May 1 at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center in Little Rock. "2019 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Most Endangered Places list in Arkansas, and we look forward to assisting this year's properties and refocusing our advocacy efforts on past listings as well," said Rachel Patton, executive director of Preserve Arkansas. Arkansas's Most Endangered Places Program began in 1999 to raise awareness of historically and architecturally significant properties throughout the state that are facing threats such as deterioration, neglect, insufficient resources, and insensitive development. Preserve Arkansas solicited nominations from individuals and organizations throughout the state. The list is updated each year to generate discussion and support for saving the places that matter to Arkansas.

Properties named to the 2019 list are as follows:

Adler Building, Batesville (Independence County), an 1881 commercial building constructed by Jewish merchant Simon Adler. The back wall recently collapsed, making traditional financing options for rehabilitation difficult to secure.

Chu Building, Forrest City (St. Francis County), a ca. 1915 building that housed a Chinese grocery and an African American theater. Fundraising is needed to convert it into a

multicultural museum and archives facility.

Emmet United Methodist Church, Emmet (Nevada County), a 1917 Colonial Revival-style church that serves a small but devoted congregation. The church has applied for a grant to stabilize the building, but additional fundraising is necessary.

Scipio A. Jones House, Little Rock (Pulaski County), the 1928 home of Scipio Jones, prominent African American attorney and civic leader. The home is unsecured and in poor condition. It is currently for sale and eligible for historic tax credits.

Malvern Rosenwald School, Malvern (Hot Spring County), a 1929 school for African Americans built with assistance from the Julius Rosenwald Fund. The building is vacant, and deterioration has now reached a critical point.

Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church & Cemetery, Marvell (Phillips County), a 1957 church built to replace an earlier structure, with an adjacent cemetery containing historic burials. The Mt. Olive Church and Cemetery are dear to this rural farming community, but structural and safety issues need to be resolved to keep the location viable.

Saenger Theater, Pine Bluff (Jefferson County), a 1924 motion picture palace, one of the last of its kind in Arkansas. Groups have tried to restore the theater in the past, but it has been vacant for a decade. The restoration of the theater has the potential to play an integral role in the revitalization of downtown Pine Bluff.

Photos and additional information about 2019's Most Endangered Places are available at [www.PreserveArkansas.org](http://www.PreserveArkansas.org).

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, [rpatton@preservearkansas.org](mailto:rpatton@preservearkansas.org), or visit [www.PreserveArkansas.org](http://www.PreserveArkansas.org).

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Adler Building  
151 W. Main Street  
Batesville, Independence County



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# THE BATESVILLE DAILY Guard

WWW.GUARDONLINE.COM ESTABLISHED IN 1876

**BATESVILLE, ARKANSAS**

## Adler Building back wall collapses

When new owners took over the Adler Building in downtown Batesville, they had a goal to restore the structure to its former glory.

They brought in a structural engineer and were working with the local and state preservation organizations, and they were in the process of having done a separate structure work done in a craning hall at the back wall of the two-story red brick building collapsed.

They Markowski, representing the owners, Woodman Stone Street, LLC, said the collapse was "most likely due to the poor maintenance of the roof by the previous owners. The roof was so bad the water had been seeping into the bricks for years — causing it to lose some of its integrity. And it was solid brick — five layers."

"We're very fortunate nobody was there at the time."

Markowski said they are coordinating with fire department and other city officials to get heavy equipment behind the building to get debris pulled out, and they are "hopeful" they can restore the building.

He said they were planning to renovate the building and build a total of eight loft apartments, with a commercial space on the first floor.

PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]

Built in 1881 by Jewish merchant Simon Adler, Batesville's Adler Building is one of the largest commercial structures on Main Street. When the Adler Building opened, it housed two businesses on the ground floor, with offices and a large auditorium and dance floor upstairs. After Simon Adler's death in 1904, his son, Nathan, continued the Adler business in half of the downstairs space, with other Jewish merchants operating in the remainder of that level. The Federal Court operated in the second floor auditorium area until 1916, when Nathan Adler sold the building to Yeatman-Gray Grocery Co., a wholesaling company. In 1931, Yeatman-Gray declared bankruptcy, and the Barnett family bought the building and created Arkansas Dry Goods, another wholesaling concern. The Barnetts owned the building long after that business closed, but it has subsequently passed through several hands, with little or no maintenance. For some time, the building has exhibited signs of neglect, with serious leaks in the roof, missing window glass, and rotting window sashes and frames. On February 9, 2018, two-thirds of the back wall collapsed, leaving the interior open to the elements.

The building is now vacant and in poor condition. The owner's plans for rehabilitating the first floor commercial spaces and creating apartments on the second floor halted when the wall collapse stopped loan negotiations with a local bank, and to date no way of funding repairs, renovations, and redevelopment has been found. A successful "save" would see a pool of investors collaborating to repair the building. The potential to recoup an investment is there, if only investors can see "what could be" rather than "what is."

**Chu Building**  
**401 Front Street**  
*Forrest City, St. Francis County*



Constructed about 1915, the Chu Building is the oldest commercial building on Front Street in Forrest City. Furthermore, it is one of the few early 20<sup>th</sup> century structures remaining in downtown Forrest City. Others from that era have been lost to demolition, fire, and neglect. The Chu Building is significant for its association with Chinese immigration in the Mississippi River Delta and Arkansas's African American history. The building was owned by a Chinese family, the Chu family, and the Chu family leased the west side of the building to another Chinese family, the Howe family, who lived in a small upstairs space and operated a grocery store on the first floor. The Chu family also leased the east side of the building to the Harlem Theater, an African-American theater during the days of segregation.

The Harlem Theater closed in 1966, and the Howe Cash Grocery closed in 1972. A church organization later occupied a portion of the building, but it has been empty for many years. The building is in fair structural condition, but a new roof is needed as well as considerable interior repairs. The building retains most of its original pressed tin ceiling, which is salvageable. The Chu Building was recently deeded to the St. Francis County Historical Society with the stipulation that it be used for "philanthropic purposes for the betterment of culture and society in St. Francis County, Arkansas." To that end, the Society intends to restore the building to house the East Arkansas Delta Multicultural Museum and Archives as well as office and research space for the historical society. The success of this project would enhance heritage tourism and educate visitors about the rich cultural history of the region. It is an important part of current downtown revitalization efforts and enjoys local support, but increased awareness and fundraising are necessary to move this project forward.

**Emmet United Methodist Church**  
**209 S. Walnut Street**  
*Emmet, Nevada County*



Located half-way between Prescott and Hope, the small city of Emmet was incorporated in 1883 as a stop on the Cairo and Fulton Railroad. A Methodist Church was organized at Emmet in 1855, but the present building was constructed about 1917 to replace an earlier frame structure. The Emmet Methodist Church was designed in the Colonial Revival style by the Texarkana architectural firm of Witt, Seibert & Company. The church's layout adhered to the Akron Plan Sunday School form, which was popular among Protestant churches in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many churches, like this church at Emmet, modified the design with the addition of movable partitions between the sanctuary and the Sunday School rooms, allowing the Sunday school classes and the main body of the congregation to be separated or united for instruction. The Emmet United Methodist Church continues to serve the community and its small congregation as a church facility. It has a part-time minister, who preaches at two small churches each Sunday morning.

The building's exterior is in poor condition, which has escalated into a major threat to its survival. The church needs a new roof. Because downspouts and gutters have rusted or fallen off the building, water from the roof has been running down the face of the brickwork, causing extensive damage to the mortar. In the worst area, water has been running between the brick and the wall framing, causing rot all the way down to the floor joists. Rot and termite damage under the main entrance have compromised one of the main support columns. The congregation is dedicated to the preservation of this building and has applied for a grant to stabilize the church, but additional fundraising is needed to complete the restoration of this community landmark.

**Scipio A. Jones House**  
**1872 S. Cross Street**  
*Little Rock, Pulaski County*



Located at 1872 South Cross Street in Little Rock's Dunbar School Neighborhood, the Scipio Jones House is significant for its association with Jones, a prominent African American attorney, and for its Craftsman-style architecture. Scipio Africanus Jones was born in 1863 in Dallas County, Arkansas, and later moved to Little Rock, where he attended Walden Seminary (now Philander Smith College) and Bethel Institute (now Shorter College). He received a bachelor's degree in 1885 and taught public school while studying law. Jones passed the bar in 1889 and began practicing law at Little Rock. He was most well-known for his defense of the Elaine Twelve, who had been sentenced to death after the Elaine Massacre of 1919. The appeal went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ordered the cases be retried, leading to the release of all twelve men from prison. Jones was also a leader in the Republican Party of Arkansas and worked to ensure that African Americans had a voice within the Party.

His home on Cross Street was built about 1928 for Jones and his second wife, Lillie Jackson Jones. Its Craftsman-style design incorporated brick, stucco, granite, and tile with a clipped second-story gable and exposed rafter tails. Jones lived here until his death in 1943. The house has now been vacant for several years. The roof is in desperate need of repair, and the home must be secured to prevent further damage from vagrants accessing the property. It is currently for sale by owner and is eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits.

**Malvern Rosenwald School**  
**836 Acme Street**  
*Malvern, Hot Spring County*



Built in 1929, the Malvern Rosenwald School is significant for its association with African American education in Malvern and as the only remaining Rosenwald School in Hot Spring County. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Sears and Roebuck president Julius Rosenwald provided grants for the construction of African American schools throughout the southeastern United States through the Rosenwald Fund. Out of nearly 400 Rosenwald buildings in Arkansas, fewer than 20 remain standing today. In 2005, Preserve Arkansas included Rosenwald Schools Statewide on its Most Endangered Places list. Since then, there has been forward momentum at a few sites, but most of these schools remain endangered.

The Malvern Rosenwald School was constructed at a cost of \$18,450. The Rosenwald Fund contributed \$2,100 toward the school's construction, and the remainder came from public funds and contributions from the local black community. The school initially housed grades one through nine, but as high school grades were added to the school, additional space was required, leading to the construction of two additions. This school served all of Malvern's black students until 1952, when the A. A. Wilson High School was built. The Rosenwald School then became Tuggle Elementary School, named after beloved local teacher Sophronia Tuggle. After integration came to Malvern in the late 1960s, Tuggle Elementary housed a Head Start program, followed most recently by offices for the Central Arkansas Development Council. The building has been vacant for several years, and deferred maintenance has taken its toll. The Malvern Tuggle Restoration Organization, a nonprofit group formed to save the school, worked diligently in the early 2000s, but went dormant after several setbacks. The school's selection for the 2019 Most Endangered Places list has galvanized the group again, prompting it to take action before it is too late.

**Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church & Cemetery**  
**Corner of Phillips Co. Rd. 116 & 141**  
*Marvell, Phillips County*



Organized in 1870, the Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church and Cemetery are located south of Marvell at the junction of Phillips County Roads 116 and 141. Multiple church buildings have been constructed on the site over the years. The current church was constructed in 1957 to replace a 1917 structure. The present fellowship hall, built in 1954, originally served as the Mt. Olive School. Senior members of the congregation remember attending school in this building. The Mt. Olive Cemetery is located west of the church and contains many historic burials and grave markers. The church still holds services every Sunday, the fellowship hall is used for dinners and community gatherings, and the cemetery is an active burial ground.

The congregation has decreased in size over the years, and now, with deferred maintenance taking its toll, the church facilities are deteriorating. The foundation has settled, causing the walls to separate from the floor in places. The roof is leaking. Restroom facilities and mechanical systems need to be updated for convenience and the safety of church members. The cemetery has also experienced ground settling, resulting in uneven ground that presents a safety hazard for visitors. The church and cemetery hold a special place in the heart of this rural farming community, but limited financial resources have thus far stymied efforts to make needed repairs. The congregation is seeking support and assistance to overcome these challenges.

**Saenger Theater**  
**Southeast corner of 2nd Ave. & Pine St.**  
*Pine Bluff, Jefferson County*



Built in 1924, Pine Bluff's Saenger Theater was designed in the Classical Revival style by Emile Weil, the Saenger Amusement Company's staff architect. Located at the southeast corner of Second Avenue and Pine Street, the theater is one of the most architecturally significant buildings in downtown Pine Bluff. It is also one of the last remaining "motion picture palaces" in Arkansas. When it opened, the Saenger Theater was called "The Showplace of the South" and attracted patrons from all over southeast Arkansas. The theater, which featured Italian marble floors and ornate plaster work, had 1,500 seats and hosted famous acts like the Ziegfeld Follies, Harry Houdini, Roy Rogers and Trigger, and Will Rogers.

The Saenger Theater closed in 1975, as new theaters beckoned the younger generation. The Heckatoo Heritage Foundation acquired the Saenger in the 1980s and tried to save it. In the mid-1990s, it was transferred to Friends of the Saenger, now known as Old Town Theatres Centre, Inc. The Old Town group went to work on the theater, repairing its roof with the help of a grant from the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, and installing a new movie screen, curtains, lights, and new seating. The Pine Bluff Film Festival started in 1995 and was held in the Saenger and Community Theaters. The Saenger remained in use until about 2008, when fundraising efforts were no longer enough to keep the doors open. In 2012, Old Town donated the Saenger to the City of Pine Bluff, which contributed matching funds for another grant to repair the roof. Water damage and vandalism have taken their toll on the theater, but local community leaders want to see it saved and incorporated into a Theater Row streetscape project as part of the revitalization of downtown Pine Bluff.



## **ABOUT US**

Preserve Arkansas works to build stronger communities by reconnecting Arkansans to our heritage and empowering people to save and rehabilitate historic places.

## **CONNECT WITH US!**

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**May 23 - Preservation Crustaceans Crawfish Boil, 6 - 9 PM**

Clements & Associates/Architecture, Inc.

507 Main St., North Little Rock

Tickets at [PreserveArkansas.org](http://PreserveArkansas.org)

**July 27 - Block on Rock 6th Birthday Bash**

A portion of the proceeds benefits Preserve Arkansas.

Stone's Throw Brewing

402 E. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Little Rock