

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form



NATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Pre-Depression Houses and Outbuildings of "Edgemont in Park Hill"

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Development in Edgemont, 1927-1931

**C. Geographical Data**

Blocks 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, and 107 of the Park Hill Addition to North Little Rock, Arkansas

☐ See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Cathryn H. Byrd  
Signature of certifying official  
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4-2-92  
Date

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

Patrick Anders  
Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

6/1/92  
Date

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In 1927, six years after recording the first plat for lots in what now is the Park Hill Addition to North Little Rock, developer Justin Matthews turned his attention to an area he called "Edgemont." Comprising block 101 through 107 of Park Hill, Edgemont was intended to be different. Its main street, Skyline Drive, curved picturesquely along the crest of a hill, and its houses were to be larger and more expensive than those built elsewhere in Park Hill.

Edgemont appears to have been Justin Matthews' answer to several restricted additions (including one called "Edgehill") that opened during the mid-1920's in the section of Little Rock then known as Pulaski Heights. Pulaski Heights was the Little Rock/North Little Rock area's first full-fledged suburban development. The earliest section of Pulaski Heights was platted in 1892, the area was incorporated as a town in 1905, and it consolidated with Little Rock in 1916. (See Hillcrest Historic District, NR 12/18/90.)

In newspaper advertisements for Park Hill, Matthews openly acknowledged being in competition with Pulaski Heights. A 1923 Park Hill ad had this to say about Park Hill vis-a-vis Pulaski Heights:

Park Hill Addition is a second Pulaski Heights, but it has many advantages over Pulaski Heights, for it is much nearer to the heart of Little Rock. . . , has a greater elevation, is much more level, and the views from Park Hill Addition far surpass those from Pulaski Heights.

A variation on the same theme appeared in a 1927 ad for Park Hill:

The actual driving time to Park Hill is considerably less than to Pulaski Heights. Note also that [the three paved routes to Park Hill] are north and south drives--you don't face the sun in driving to and from the business section of the city [as presumably would have been the case with Pulaski Heights, located west of Little Rock's central business district].

Interestingly, Justin Matthews himself lived in Pulaski Heights from about 1916 until 1939, when he finally moved to a home in Park Hill. A grandson, still active in the real estate business in North Little Rock, explains Matthews' choice of residence this way: "It wasn't fashionable to live in your own development." Matthews' move to Park Hill apparently coincided with his second marriage in 1939 (his first wife had died unexpectedly, at their home in Pulaski Heights, in 1933).

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Born in 1876 near Monticello, Arkansas, Justin Matthews was trained as a pharmacist but, according to family tradition, made a fortune in the cotton seed oil business during the first decade of this century. After moving to Little Rock around 1911, Matthews began investing his cotton seed oil profits (reportedly close to \$1 million) in real estate. The real estate he purchased was located on the north side of the Arkansas River, about two miles north of Little Rock's central business district and just beyond the northern boundary of the City of North Little Rock.

As had been the case in the 1890's when the development of Pulaski Heights was initiated west of Little Rock, accessibility was a key element in Matthews' plan for developing the land he acquired north of Little Rock/North Little Rock. Unlike the developers of Pulaski Heights, who relied on the construction of a streetcar line to lure residents to their fledgling suburb, Justin Matthews worked toward making his land accessible by automobile. Hence, although Park Hill was the Little Rock/North Little Rock area's second major suburban development, it was the first to rely solely on automobile transportation.

Within just a year or two of arriving in Little Rock, Matthews was engaged in two controversial projects, one aimed at paving streets in North Little Rock and the other having to do with the construction of two new bridges across the Arkansas River linking Little Rock and North Little Rock. According to his obituary, Matthews "circulated petitions in 1913 for the formation of two improvement district to pave 152 blocks of North Little Rock streets, projects which had bitter opposition." Also according to his obituary, "when it was proposed in 1913 to build the present Main Street Bridge [across the Arkansas River], Mr. Matthews led a campaign to build the Broadway Bridge at the same time although many persons thought one bridge would be sufficient." Both of these projects -- financed publicly through improvement districts -- were crucial to Matthews' land development plans.

History, however, has been kind to Justin Matthews and his motives. At his death in 1955, an Arkansas Gazette editorial paid tribute to the man who, "on the high ground overlooking North Little Rock" had "transformed a wilderness into a great community with homes, stores, schools, churches and service establishments." Noting Matthews' roles in street-paving and bridge-building, the editorial concluded by saying, "his works will always remain to testify to his imagination and vision, his boldness, his dynamic energy and his driving force that prevailed against formidable obstacles."

The early years of development in Park Hill--as Matthews christened the new residential area--were characterized by the construction of modest houses, usually bungalows or two-story

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Craftsman-influenced residences. Aimed at first-time home buyers, houses in Park Hill were built as efficiently and inexpensively as possible by Matthews' own company, first called the Matthews Land Company and later the Justin Matthews Company. Comparing his method of building houses to an automobile assembly line, Matthews announced in 1923 that "we have launched into a home building campaign; we have built and equipped a complete wood work plant . . . [and] we are buying all materials in carload lots . . ." Although Matthews' plan called for Park Hill eventually to comprise 1600 acres, the area was platted bit by bit, as Matthews waited for several houses to be built in one section before opening another section for development.

After six years of cautiously opening sections of Park Hill to a modest scale of development, in 1927 Matthews apparently decided the time was ripe for something more--a grander scale of development that would compete for the upper-middle-class and upper-income residents then buying homes almost exclusively in several recently-opened restricted additions in Pulaski Heights. The plat of "Edgemont in Park Hill," officially blocks 101 through 107 of the Park Hill Addition, was recorded in 1927 with typical deed restrictions of the year, notably one pertaining to the size and cost of houses and to the race of property owners (who were required to be "wholly of the Caucasian Race"). Like the restricted additions of Pulaski Heights, and unlike earlier sections of Park Hill, Edgemont was laid out with curvilinear streets designed to take full advantage of dramatic views from the crest of a hill overlooking North Little Rock, the Arkansas River, and the downtown area of Little Rock. The attributes of Edgemont, as described in a promotion brochure published in 1928, were many:

Months were spent planning Edgemont and its beautiful plots. Its winding drives were laid out so as to give these spacious plots the best possible view, exposure and all around desirability as homesites. There is none of the monotonous arrangement found in the ordinary subdivision. . . .

Improvements in Edgemont include every community betterment -- water, lights, gas, sewer, telephone, paved streets and high class street lighting.

Based on the manner in which other sections of Park Hill were filling up with houses and residents, Justin Matthews seemingly had good reason to believe that Edgemont would be successful. In the late 1920's advertisements boasted that "hundreds of attractive modern homes" had been built in Park Hill, which was said to be "Greater Little Rock's fastest growing section."

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Unfortunately, Matthews' timing for the opening of Edgemont proved to be poor. Only sixteen houses were built before the Great Depression brought construction to a halt. Even before the effects of the Depression set in, Matthews had only limited success in his efforts to market Edgemont as an "upscale" neighborhood comparable to the restricted additions of Pulaski Heights. Houses were not built and occupied in Edgemont as rapidly as in Pulaski Heights. Further, although Edgemont's houses generally were more stylish than houses built elsewhere in Park Hill, several of them were not much larger. Matthews apparently was not able to convince the Little Rock/North Little Rock area's more affluent residents that moving northward was just as desirable as moving to the west.

The first house completed in Edgemont was a Spanish colonial Revival-style residence at 563 Skyline Drive, which was ready for occupancy either late in 1927 or early in 1928. This house and two others -- another Spanish Colonial Revival at 372 Skyline and an English revival-style residence at 701 Skyline--are pictured in the 1928 "Edgemont in Park Hill" promotional brochure. Under construction at the time the promotional brochure was published were the Spanish Colonial Revival-style Justin Matthews, Jr. House (NR 12/18/90) at 257 Skyline Drive and two English revival-style residences, one at 248 Skyline and the other at 313 Skyline.

Five houses were added to Edgemont during 1929; two Spanish Colonial Revival-style residences, 238 Skyline and 124 East "A" Avenue; a Craftsman-style bungalow, 436 Skyline; a French Eclectic cottage, 524 Skyline; and a Monterey-style residence at 637 Skyline.

The year 1930 saw the completion of four more houses in Edgemont; three English Revival-style homes located at 564 Skyline, 206 Dooley Road, and 320 Dooley; and a Georgian-inspired Colonial Revival-style residence at 217 Dooley. The final (i.e., sixteenth) home built in Edgemont was completed in 1931 at 415 Skyline Drive.

With the completion of the house at 415 Skyline Drive, development came to a halt in Edgemont until about 1945. During the spring of 1946, the Park Hill Addition, including the Edgemont area, officially was annexed to the City of North Little Rock.

When construction resumed with the close of World War II, the name "Edgemont" was discarded, as was the idea of creating an exclusive enclave of upper-middle-class homes. The sixty-odd houses built in the area during the post-war years generally were more modest, and far less distinctive in design, than the sixteen pre-Depression houses.

The post-war building boom, however, did bring renewed prosperity to the Justin Matthews

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Company and its companion firm, the Metropolitan Trust Company. (The Justin Matthews Company built houses; Metropolitan Trust company sold and financed them.) These companies went on not only to complete the development of Park Hill but also to open several more subdivisions -- most notably Lakewood -- on the north side of North Little Rock and in what is now the City of Sherwood. Both companies remain in operation, and, until recently, Metropolitan Trust Company had been headed continuously by a member of the Matthews family. In April of 1991, however, Hal Matthews, a grandson of Justin Matthews and the last member of the family still associated with Metropolitan, left the firm and was replaced by an "outsider."

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I. Name of Property Type: **Pre-Depression Edgemont Houses**

II. Description

All of the pre-Depression Edgemont houses were constructed between 1927 and 1931 on block 101 through 107 of what now is the Park Hill Addition to the City of North Little Rock. All of the houses were built by the Justin Matthews Company, and most of them were planned by Frank Carmean, a building contract who joined the company in 1927. Of the sixteen houses, thirteen can be classified as English Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival, or American Colonial Revival in style; each of the other three houses represents a different architectural style. Although they are scattered throughout the seven block that originally comprised "Edgemont in Park Hill," the houses are easy to distinguish from their newer neighbors because of their picturesque architectural styles and high-quality building materials.

Only one Edgemont house is known to have been designed by someone other than Frank Carmean, who went to work the Justin Matthews Company in 1927 as "superintendent in charge of building operations." The largest home in the area, built in 1928 for Justin Matthews Jr., was the work of Max F. Mayer, an architect responsible for many of the large period houses constructed during the 1920's by affluent Little Rock residents.

Although most of them were designed by the same person, the Edgemont houses are diverse in appearance. Period revival styles predominate, but each house is a distinct interpretation of its style. The English Revival style is most prevalent, with six houses falling into that category, but the Spanish Colonial Revival style is close behind with five houses. Two houses are American Colonial Revival in style, and two other period revival style, French Eclectic and Monterey, are represented by one house each. One house differs completely from the others by showing the lingering influence of the Craftsman style.

The Edgemont houses also are diverse in size. About half of the houses are relatively modest, comprising 1700 to 2000 square feet, while the others range upward to as much as 5,000 square feet.

Regardless of their architectural style or size, all of the Edgemont houses are brick, stone, and/or stucco veneer. In addition, all of them originally had garages and maid's quarters. Sometimes these features were incorporated into the design of the main house, but some houses have separate outbuildings. Virtually all of the houses also share one interior feature: the liberal use of arches.

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The sixteen original Edgemont houses are scattered seemingly at random throughout the seven blocks of the Park Hill Addition that originally were designated for development as "Edgemont in Park Hill." Although the Just Matthews Company's advertisements touted the "wonderful views" available from Edgemont, not all of the original houses were situated to take advantage of the views. Several of them--those on Dooley Road, "A" Avenue, and the northern end of Skyline Drive--originally simply overlooked undeveloped homesites.

**III. Significance**

The significance of the pre-Depression Edgemont houses derives largely from the fact that they represent a unique phase in the development of Park Hill, which itself is significant in the area of community planning and development as the Greater Little Rock area's second major residential suburb--and the first one that relied on the automobile for accessibility. During the Edgemont phase of Park Hill's development, which spanned the years of 1927-1931, developer Justin Matthews tried his hand at catering to a more affluent home buyer than previously had been the focus of his company's marketing efforts. Edgemont introduced to Park Hill the curvilinear street pattern that was the hallmark of affluent early-twentieth century suburban developments; the area's winding streets were designed to create a park-like residential environment, as well as to capitalize on dramatic views across the Arkansas River. Finally, the houses of Edgemont are architecturally significant both as good examples of several architectural styles that were popular during the 1920's and as a collection of the most stylish homes constructed in Park Hill before the Depression.

Park Hill was the Little Rock/North Little Rock area's second major suburban residential development, but it was different from Pulaski Heights--the first big suburb--in at least two ways. First, in developing Park Hill, Justin Matthews relied exclusively on automobile transportation to make the suburb accessible. Second, Matthews engaged in a style of development that was different from that practiced elsewhere in the Little Rock/North Little Rock area during the early twentieth century. Through various companies, Matthews attended to every detail: he bought and sold all the real estate in Park Hill, provided financing, furnished building materials and labor, and constructed all the houses. Further, the development of Park Hill was a "family affair." Included among the officers and employees of the Matthews' companies were a brother and two sons.

Edgemont illustrates the overall qualities that make Park Hill significant as well as representing a discrete time and place in Park Hill's development: the years 1927-1931, when Justin



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Matthews decided to compete with the restricted additions of Pulaski Heights for upper-middle-class and upper-income residents, and blocks 101 through 107, where curvilinear streets and dramatic views distinguish Edgemont from the rest of Park Hill.

Next to Matthews, the person who perhaps had the most visible impact on Edgemont's development was Frank Carmean, who came to work for the Justin Matthews Company in November of 1927, about two months after the final plat of Edgemont was recorded. Carmean is thought to have designed all but one of the Edgemont houses, although his background was in building construction rather than design. In 1929, Carmean, by then being billed as the Justin Matthews Company's "architect," was sent on a tour of several southwestern cities--Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, Los Angeles--"to obtain the very latest ideas in design and construction. . ." Thus, it is no accident that the Spanish Colonial design influence is more prevalent in Edgemont, and throughout Park Hill, than elsewhere in the Little Rock/North Little Rock area.

Edgemont's most distinguished example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, however, was not designed by Frank Carmean. The Justin Matthews, Jr. House, at 257 Skyline Drive, was designed by architect Max Mayer, who originally was from San Antonio and, thus, presumably was well-acquainted with Spanish-influenced architecture.

Although all of the houses in Edgemont were constructed by the Justin Matthews Company, ten apparently were built speculatively by the company while the other six were erected for specific buyers. The ownership histories of the sixteen houses make the effects of the Depression very clear: the first owners of eight of the houses lost their homes in foreclosure actions, and five of the "spec" houses went unsold until 1940 or later. (In the interim, these spec houses were leased to tenants who paid \$50 to \$85 per month, depending on the size of the house.)

Among the first buyers of Edgemont houses were scions of two prominent Little Rock families: Joseph E. England, Jr., who, before going into the insurance business, had been associated with a bank founded by his father; and Lewis W. Cherry, Jr., an investment banker who previously had worked in his father's ice and coal business. Joseph England, Jr.'s daughter was Mrs. Justin Matthews, Jr., which helps to explain why the Englands were willing to leave what was then a well-established, fashionable Little Rock neighborhood (see Governor's Mansion Historic District, NR 5/19/88) and move to an area just beginning to develop. Exactly why the Cherrys chose to leave Little Rock for Edgemont is not known.

Other than the Justin Matthews, Jr.'s, the Englands, and the Cherrys, however, the first

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residents of Edgemont were typical middle-class home buyers: a salesman, an employee of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, a construction company cashier, a state highway department clerk--respectable citizens, certainly, but not the bankers, lawyers, and company presidents who were buying homes in the restricted additions of Pulaski Heights. Hence, even with the sixteen houses completed in Edgemont before the Depression halted construction, Justin Matthews generally was unsuccessful in his attempt to attract the "elite" of the Greater Little Rock area.

Justin Matthews, as well as members of his family who remained in the real estate business after his death in 1955, eventually had much better luck catering to affluent home buyers, as evidenced particularly by North Little Rock's Lakewood Addition. The pre-Depression Edgemont houses, however, are reminders of Justin Matthews' first venture into the "upscale" market.

**IV. Registration Requirements**

Houses must meet three basic requirement to be included in this multiple property listing:

- 1) They must be located in blocks 101 through 107 of the Park Hill Addition to the City of North Little Rock.
- 2) They must have been built by the Justin Matthews Company during the years 1927-1931.
- 3) They must be recognizable as the residences built by the Justin Matthews Company. Subsequent alterations must not overwhelm the houses' original designs.

**I. Name of Property Type: Outbuildings.**

**II. Description**

Eight of the sixteen pre-Depression Edgemont houses originally had outbuildings. There were garages for automobiles only, and the other five were garages with maid's quarters. Two of the outbuildings were of frame construction while the other six utilized the same brick, stone, and/or stucco veneer as the houses they accompanied.

The outbuildings constructed in conjunction with pre-Depression Edgemont houses originally ranged from a utilitarian frame garage (now gone) behind the house at 637 Skyline Drive to nicely detailed two-story brick-veneered garages and maid's quarters adjacent to the houses at

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701 Skyline and 206 Dooley Road.

With two exceptions, the outbuildings were contracted to "match" the houses they served. Hence, brick-veneered houses at 313 Skyline, 701 Skyline, 206 Dooley, and 320 Dooley have outbuildings with the same brick veneer, a fieldstone-veneered house at 415 Skyline has a two-car, fieldstone-veneered garage; and a stuccoed house at 124 E. "A" Avenue has a stuccoed garage. The exceptions were two frame outbuildings erected in conjunction with brick-veneered houses at 563 Skyline and 637 Skyline.

Occasionally the outbuildings also duplicated other details of the main house's construction, such as roof pitch or roofing material. The steeply-pitched hipped roof of the garage and maid's quarters at 313 Skyline, for example, echoes the roofline of the main house.

All of the masonry-veneered outbuildings still exist and generally have survived without drastic modification, although those at 313 Skyline and 320 Dooley have been converted to use as workshops. However, the frame outbuilding originally located at 637 Skyline has been removed, and the other frame outbuilding, originally a one-story garage with maid's quarters behind the house at 563 Skyline, has been altered with the addition of a second floor.

### III. Significance

The fact that "Edgemont in Park Hill" was part of the Greater Little Rock area's first major automobile suburb is underscored by the presence of seven original outbuildings that were constructed to house automobiles (as well as, in some cases, maids). Because most of the outbuildings were designed to harmonize architecturally with the houses they served, the outbuildings also reinforce the significance of the pre-Depression Edgemont houses as good examples of architectural styles popular during the 1920's.

Justin Matthew's reliance on the automobile to make Park Hill accessible is reflected in the fact that all sixteen pre-Depression Edgemont houses were constructed with garages, eight of which were buildings separate from the main house. Seven of these outbuildings survive; six generally retain their original exterior appearances.

Of the eight original outbuildings, five incorporated maid's quarters as well as serving as garages. That rooms for maids were provided in all of the pre-Depression Edgemont houses (either in outbuildings or in the main houses) reinforces the idea that Edgemont was intended to cater to relatively affluent home buyers.

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All of the outbuildings are situated fairly unobtrusively behind the houses they serve, indicating that they were viewed primarily as utilitarian structures rather than "works of architecture." Nevertheless, the masonry-veneered outbuildings, in particular, obviously were constructed with care, utilizing many of the same materials found in the main houses. Because they harmonize well with the main houses, the outbuildings reinforce the houses' importance as stylish examples of 1920's-vintage architecture in Park Hill.

**IV. Registration Requirements**

To be considered eligible for inclusion in this multiple property nomination, outbuildings must:

- 1) Be part of the same property as one of the houses included in the nomination;
- 2) Date from the period 1927-1931 (in other words, be an "original" part of the property);
- 3) Retain enough of their original design to be recognizable as outbuildings constructed between 1927 and 1931.

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### G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

☒ See continuation sheet

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### H. Major Bibliographical References

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☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- ☐ State historic preservation office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency

- ☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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### I. Form Prepared By

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Portions of the Park Hill Addition to North Little Rock were surveyed in 1985 using forms provided by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. (The survey was funded and administered by Metroplan, a regional planning agency headquartered in Little Rock.) This survey focused exclusively on houses in Park Hill built before the Depression; to be included in the survey, a house had to be judged to have been built no later than approximately 1930.

In conjunction with the staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, the consultant responsible for preparing this nomination determined that the nomination would include only those houses built before the Depression in the area of Park Hill originally known as Edgemont. This decision was based on the knowledge, gained from a 1928 promotional brochure as well as newspaper research, that the development of Edgemont was advertised by Justin Matthews Company as a distinct and separate phase in the overall development of Park Hill.

Before preparation of this nomination began, additional research and field work were conducted by the consultant in order to determine whether the 1985 survey had located all of the pre-Depression houses in the Edgemont section of Park Hill. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, city directories, and assessment records all confirmed the presence of just sixteen houses in Edgemont until after the end of World War II.

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Arkansas Business, May 6, 1991, pp. 4 & 25.

Arkansas Democrat, March 21, 1955, pp. 1 & 2.

Arkansas Gazette, April 22, 1923, p. 26; July 8, 1923, Part II, p. 12; July 3, 1927, p. 20; October 30, 1927, Part II, p. 24; November 6, 1927, Part II, p. 24; November 20, 1927, Part II, p. 11; December 4, 1927, Part II, p. 17; July 22, 1928, p. 9; January 6, 1929, p. 22; January 20, 1929, Part II, p. 14; November 23, 1933, p. 10; April 3, 1946, p. 19; March 22, 1955, pp. 1A & 2A; March 23, 1955, p. 4A.

"Edgemont in Park Hill" Brochure, 1928.

The Homemaker, December 1929, p. 9.

Little Rock-North Little Rock city directories for the year 1912 through 1987.

Matthews, Jack. Grandson of Justin Matthews, North Little Rock, Arkansas. Interview, February 14, 1991.

Park Hill Files, Metropolitan Trust Company, North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Pulaski County Deed Records; Book 3, pp. 72 and 84; Book 192, pp. 97-98.

Pulaski County Real Estate Assessment Records, Blocks 101-107 of the Park Hill Addition, 1928 through 1931.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Little Rock and North Little Rock, 1939.