Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 8 1980
MAR 27 1980
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Chamberlin Observatory

AND/OR COMMON
Chamberlin Observatory

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
2930 East Warren Avenue: in that portion of Observatory Park, situated between Warren and Iliff Avenues, and between South Milwaukee and South Fillmore Streets —NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Denver —VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
1

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
Colorado	08	Denver	031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
—DISTRICT	—PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	—AGRICULTURE	—MUSEUM
—BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	—UNOCCUPIED	—COMMERCIAL	X PARK
X STRUCTURE	—BOTH	—WORK IN PROGRESS	X EDUCATIONAL	—PRIVATE RESIDENCE
—SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	—ENTERTAINMENT	—RELIGIOUS
—OBJECT	—IN PROCESS	—YES: RESTRICTED	—GOVERNMENT	X SCIENTIFIC
	—BEING CONSIDERED	X YES: UNRESTRICTED	—INDUSTRIAL	—TRANSPORTATION
		—NO	—MILITARY	—OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Property Officer, The University of Denver

STREET & NUMBER
University Park Campus

CITY, TOWN
Denver —VICINITY OF

STATE
Colorado

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Clerk and Recorder, The City and County of Denver

STREET & NUMBER
City and County Building

CITY, TOWN
Denver

STATE
Colorado 80204

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites (16/04/0057)

DATE
Ongoing —FEDERAL X STATE —COUNTY —LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Colorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway

CITY, TOWN
Denver

STATE
Colorado 80203

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
_EXCELLENT	_DETERIORATED	X_UNALTERED	X_ORIGINAL SITE
X_GOOD	_RUINS	_ALTERED	_MOVED DATE_____
_FAIR	_UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located in Observatory Park at 2930 East Warren Avenue in Denver, the Chamberlin Observatory is a single detached structure that resembles the classical apsidal shape--only the south end is a full circle with no indentations. There are two "timid lateral wings" along the east-west axis of the building with the east wing having a slit along the roof and wall for various observations and the west wing having a front slope chimney. The structure has two stories set over a partial basement. Both the top story and the dome are used for maneuvering the telescope. The top is covered by an iron dome which has corrugations at five-foot intervals, and there are large semicircular doors that stand out from the dome to provide a viewpoint for the telescope. The main or south facade of the observatory has three bays: the main entrance under the great arch and the windows grouped in sets of two. The exterior wall material is cut, coursed, rusticated, red sandstone used in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The heavy imagery--stone, weight-bearing walls, generously rounded arches, rusticated banding in the stone--all reflect the institutional grandeur of the style, but here also had an important use as the walls had to support the twelve-ton dome and rollers.

Beginning at the domeline, the wall design starts with a series of wooden rings one of which is corbelled. Then the sandstone begins with a two-foot course of rock laid so that there are one inch to one and one-half inch extensions every other rock.

The wings have high center gables on each side of the dome. The eaves have a cornice boxed and plain. The roof trim also has a cornice boxed and plain, but also made of sandstone. There is also a sandstone pediment on the wings similar to that of the main section.

The structural openings are in keeping with the overall architectural fabric. The windows on the main facade are recessed beneath a flat arch and over a lugsill. There is no significant sidetrim. The windows are one over one and double hung, and there are no special types in any facade although some windows in the wings are relatively narrow. Approaching the main entrance from the south is a set of sandstone stairs about eighteen feet across the bottom. They are flanked by a solid, curved balustrade about three feet in height. The actual entrance to the building occurs through double-leafed, panelled doors situated behind a great Richardsonian arch that highlights this main facade.

West of the main observatory is a smaller one that is complementary in building materials and architectural style, but which is much less elaborate. East of the main observatory is a set of tennis courts added in recent times.

ED. JEF 10/79

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
_PREHISTORIC	_ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	_COMMUNITY PLANNING	_LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	_RELIGION	
_1400-1499	_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	_CONSERVATION	_LAW	X_SCIENCE	
_1500-1599	_AGRICULTURE	_ECONOMICS	_LITERATURE	_SCULPTURE	
_1600-1699	X_ARCHITECTURE	X_EDUCATION	_MILITARY	_SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
_1700-1799	_ART	_ENGINEERING	_MUSIC	_THEATER	
X1800-1899	_COMMERCE	_EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	_PHILOSOPHY	_TRANSPORTATION	
X1900-	_COMMUNICATIONS	_INDUSTRY	_POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	_OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		_INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1891 - Present **BUILDER/ARCHITECT** Robert S. Roeschlaub

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chamberlin Observatory is significant for its role in education and in the advance of science, and for its fine architectural features which display the adaptation of the Richardsonian Romanesque style to an observatory. The building is also significant for the excellence of the craftsmanship that went into the telescope and for the association of the entire structure with Robert S. Roeschlaub, one of the leading architects of nineteenth century Colorado.

In discussing the proposed observatory in 1889, an unknown commentator writing in the Magazine of Western History claimed that Denver would soon have the largest telescope between Washington and San Francisco. This may or may not have been true, but such a statement reflected the local enthusiasm that greeted the construction of the observatory. Ground for the structure had been broken the year before in 1888. The cornerstone was set in place in 1890, and the building became fully operational when the telescope was installed in 1894. Of particular note, both then and now, was the telescope itself. The lenses were prepared by one of the master craftsmen of nineteenth-century lensmaking, Alvan G. Clark, the son of Alvan Clark. The firm of Alvan Clark & Sons was one of the prominent enterprises that built optics for scientific instruments in the last half of the century; future study of the telescope itself may well shed light on the history of nineteenth century technology.

(Herbert Alonzo)

The first director of the observatory was Dr./Howe of the University of Denver. As one of the designers of the structure, he required that the outer walls serve as supports for the revolving dome, but that the building itself had to be constructed separately from the deep piers that support the telescope so that building vibrations would not be transmitted to the instrumentation. He also desired thick walls to maintain a more constant average temperature so that varying conditions would not affect observation. He even demanded that all of the stones in the foundation of the telescope be of the same color to assure even heating and cooling. Despite this sophistication the actual scientific work done at the observatory is ill-recorded. It is known that Dr. Howe charted asteroids and comets, and that he discovered and mapped a significant number of nebulae. One complete edition of the Astronomical Journal was devoted to his work. Yet the advance of technology, particularly the development of large reflector telescopes, caused the Chamberlin Observatory, which used a refracting telescope, to drop out of the forefront of discovery. And the development of suburbs degraded the environment for observation as well.

Today the observatory has become an education and cultural resource. The University of Denver uses it as a teaching instrument in both credit and non-credit courses and the late Dr. Albert Recht, who succeeded Dr. Howe as director, has instituted a public-oriented program consisting of regular weeknights for visitors to view celestial

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brettell, Richard R., Historic Denver, The Architects and Their Architecture 1858-1893 (Denver, Co: Historic Denver, Inc., 1973).

King, H. C., The History of the Telescope (Cambridge, Mass. Sky Publishing, Inc., 1955)

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 7-1/2 ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

QUADRANGLE NAME Englewood, Colorado QUADRANGLE SCALE 7.5 Min Series

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	13	504080	4391550
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That portion of Observatory Park, situated between Warren and Iliff Avenues, and between South Milwaukee and South Fillmore Streets, University Park Amended Map, Book 7152, P. 57, Denver Clerk & Recorder.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dr. Edgar Everhart

ORGANIZATION — DATE

Denver University - Department of Physics — July 10, 1979

STREET & NUMBER — TELEPHONE

University Park Campus — 753-1964 and 753-7362

CITY OR TOWN — STATE

Denver — Colorado

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ✓ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Arthur C. Townsend — DATE Jan. 31. 1980

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

for W. Ray Luce — DATE 3/27/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: William H. Bradam — DATE 3.10.80

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

Form No. 10-300a
(Rev. 10-74)

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bodies. For the past thirty years the Denver Astronomical Society has also used the observatory as its headquarters.

The architect of the observatory was Robert S. Roeschlaub, one of Denver's foremost nineteenth century designers. Born in Munich, Germany in 1843, he later emigrated to Illinois and served in the Union Army during the Civil War. He began to practice architecture in Denver in 1875 and eventually became the city's primary institutional architect, designing University Hall at the University of Denver, Trinity Methodist Church, Dora Moore School, and many other institutional buildings. With Frank E. Edbrooke and William Lang he was primarily responsible for a good portion of the quality structures built in nineteenth century Denver. He was the first licensed architect in Colorado and in 1891 served as the president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.