

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received APR - 6 1983

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Peter (McCourt) House 5DV653

and/or common Peter McCourt House

2. Location

street & number 1471 High Street n/a not for publication

city, town Denver n/a vicinity of

state Colorado code 08 county Denver code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>n/a</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John and Mary Griffith

street & number 1471 High Street

city, town Denver n/a vicinity of state Colorado

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City & County Building

street & number 1445 Cleveland Place

city, town Denver state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Ongoing federal state county local

depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway

city, town Denver state Colorado

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The McCourt House is located on High Street, just south of East Colfax Avenue in the Capitol Hill residential neighborhood. The block consists largely of two-story residences dating to the turn of the century. The lots where the structure now stands were once the backyard of the Bohm Mansion on Colfax. These lots were sold in 1895 to the Colorado Realty and Construction Company who built the home and sold it in 1896 to Mr. and Mrs. Peter McCourt.

The house is two stories with an attic, and is of brick with a stone foundation and wooden trim. It is a Denver square in plan but with elaborate Colonial Revival ornamentation. The home has a hipped roof with a double dormer in front, a single dormer to the side and three chimneys. The deep eaves of the roof form a bracketed projecting cornice. Two-story Ionic columns support a porch at the attic level. There are also porches at the first and second floor with Ionic columns supporting the first floor and a bay window with French doors opening onto the second story porch. All three porches are balustraded.

The interior of the residence still retains many of its original features, particularly in the entry hall with its fireplace, carved woodwork and Victorian statue of Hermes perched on the curve of the bannister. The second floor bathroom still has its original onyx and silver fixtures and shower which were reputedly brought from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1896 **Builder/Architect** Colorado Realty & Construction Company

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Peter McCourt House is significant as an outstanding example of the adaptation of classical features to an otherwise typical Denver house. Also of interest is its association with one of Denver's colorful personalities, Peter McCourt.

Peter McCourt was the brother of Baby Doe Tabor,¹ wife of "Silver King" H.A.W. Tabor. Soon after Tabor's marriage to Baby Doe, Tabor brought his brother-in-law to Denver to be his private secretary. In 1883, after the acrimonious breakup of Tabor and his business partner, William Bush, which was dragged through the Denver courts and newspapers, Tabor made McCourt manager of the Tabor Grand Opera House, a position Bush had held since its opening in 1881. McCourt went on to become one of the best known and most successful theater managers in the country. He perfected a plan, originated by Bush, called the "Silver Theatrical Circuit" which made it profitable for entertainers from the east coast to travel to the isolated city of Denver. As manager of the "Silver Circuit," McCourt became the booking agent for theaters in Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Trinidad, and the mining district of Colorado, and towns in Utah.

McCourt also continued as Tabor's trusted lieutenant and was vice president of many of the enterprises in which Tabor invested. When the Silver Crash and Depression of 1893 began to rapidly diminish the Tabor fortune, McCourt remained at Tabor's side, even joining the older man's desperate prospecting expedition to the silver mines of Mexico from which they hoped to renew the dwindling funds. Tabor was then near ruin.

McCourt, however, still unmarried at thirty-eight, met an attractive widow, Mrs. Emma Fellows Keet. Mrs. Keet was a member of one of Springfield, Missouri's most prominent and wealthy families, her father owning the Springfield Wagon Company, one of the country's largest manufacturer's of farm wagons, among other enterprises. Emma and Peter were married in 1895 and moved a year later into a new home at 1471 High Street where Mrs. McCourt began immediately to entertain many of Denver's elite, something Baby Doe, unacceptable to Denver's Society, had never been able to do.

The Tabor's financial distress was worsening, and in that same summer of 1896, they were about to lose their beloved Tabor Grand Opera House. Baby Doe came to her brother for help, but he was unable or unwilling to raise the mortgage money. She never spoke to him again.² The quarrel could not have been helped by the fact that a week after title to the opera house was transferred to its new owner, and Peter McCourt lost his manager's position there, he went uptown to work as co-manager of the Grand's main competitor, the Broadway Theater with none other than William Bush, Horace Tabor's former partner.

The remainder of McCourt's career was spent primarily as a theater entrepreneur. By the end of 1897, he and Bush were again managing the Tabor Grand, then under ownership of an insurance company. In 1898, Bush died, and McCourt continued as manager of both theaters, the Broadway and Tabor, until just before his death in 1929. According to one newspaper account, he eventually owned the Tabor. There McCourt showed the first moving pictures to be seen in Denver. Ironically, it was the coming of the movies which signaled the end of the heyday of live stage performances and the grand theaters where they were performed. Both the Tabor and the Broadway eventually became movie theaters. (Both demolished.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Emma McCourt's Scrapbook, Colorado State Historical Society.
 Dawson Scrapbook, Colorado State Historical Society, Newspapers, Directories, pamphlets on the Tabors
 J. Fred Roberts Scrapbook, Colorado State Historical Society (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1
 Quadrangle name Englewood, Colorado Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 3	5 0 3 0 6 0	4 3 9 8 6 8 0	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 3 & 4, Block 33, Wyman's Addition to the City of Denver

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sharon Elfenbein Ed: GM
 organization Home Histories date March, 1982
 street & number 170 Lafayette Street telephone 772-8162
 city or town Denver state 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 Barbara Siddle
 title State Historic Preservation Officer (Acting) date March 23, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the National Register

for Sharon Elfenbein
 Keeper of the National Register

date 5/9/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Continuation sheet

Peter McCourt House

Item number 8

Page 2

Mrs. McCourt, an ambitious and dynamic woman in her own right, helped with management of the theaters and even traveled to New York to book acts. She and Mr. McCourt entertained many of the most famous performers of the day in their home at 1471 High Street. La Loie Fuller, Paderewski, the Barrymores and John Philip Sousa were introduced to turn-of-the-century Denver by the McCourts.

The McCourts lived at 1471 High Street until 1909 when they moved to a home at 555 East 8th Avenue (demolished).³

The home at 1471 High Street has had only two owners since the McCourts and still contains several pieces of furniture reputed to have been owned by Baby Doe. The second owners were the J. Fred Roberts family. Mr. Roberts was a road builder and helped build the cement highway between Denver and Colorado Springs, the last major project in the state using horses and mules. Horses were also his hobby and he raced teams with the Gentlemen's Riding and Driving Club at City Park. He took great pride in having a horse that had won the Kentucky Derby.

Roberts family members owned the home until 1971 when they sold it to next door neighbors, sister and brother John L. and Mary C. Griffith. The Griffith's were raised in the Chalet Apartments, originally the Bohm mansion which their parents converted to apartments in 1912. Mr. Griffith's wife Margaret has managed the apartments for many years. John and Mary Griffith are law partners. Mary Griffith lives in the second floor apartment of 1471 High. All three of the Griffiths have been very active in Denver civic and service organizations, particularly Shriners, the Shriners' Women's Auxiliary Daughters of the Nile, and the Altrusa Club.

The architectural merits of the house rest with the Colonial Revival elements that are added to what is essentially an American Four Square. A dramatic effect is achieved through the use of two-story fluted Ionic columns supporting a two-story projecting portico. Set behind the large columns is a two-story balustraded porch with smaller Ionic column supports.

Other Colonial Revival features include the use of quoins, swag motifs in the entablature of the first-story portico, and the bellcast roof. The unusual design and the successful combination of styles make it a significant architectural example in Denver.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Peter McCourt House

Item number 8

Page 3

1. Baby Doe as a young divorcee met and captivated Colorado's legendary "Silver King" Horace Austin Warner Tabor, a man twice her age. After a bitter divorce, unwillingly given by Augusta, his wife of 25 years, H.A.W. Tabor married Baby Doe in 1883. The "Tabor Triangle", a scandal which became property of the national media at the time because Tabor had just been named U.S. Senator from Colorado, has been the subject of numerous books and was transformed into the Douglas Stuart Moore opera, the Ballad of Baby Doe, in 1956. The opera had its premiere in the Central City Opera House within which the real life characters of the opera had sat many times to be entertained.

2. While Peter McCourt prospered during these years, Baby Doe lived an impoverished and eccentric life in a crude cabin outside the main shaft of the Matchless Mine in Leadville. According to the legend, H.A.W. Tabor, on his deathbed in 1899, had told her, "Hang on to the Matchless," which she faithfully did until she was found frozen to death in 1935. Baby Doe repeatedly refused help over the years, especially from her brother, Peter, whom she had never forgiven. Ironically, when Peter McCourt died in 1929, a bequest in his will helped Baby Doe save her Matchless Mine once more. The bequest consisted of shares in the Springfield Wagon Company, which he had inherited from his first wife, who was the partial cause, undoubtedly, of the rift between the brother and sister in the first place.

3. Emma died of pneumonia in 1912. A year later, Peter married another widow, Mrs. Jessie Stewart Brown, who had been married to the son of Henry C. Brown, another Denver legend, who not only built the Brown Palace Hotel, Denver's finest since 1893, but also donated the land for the Colorado Capitol. H.A.W. Tabor's son, Maxcy, and William Bush were managers of the Brown Palace for many years.

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Major Bibliographical References

Continuation sheet Peter McCourt House Item number 9

Page 2

Smith, Duane. Horace Tabor, His Life and Legend. Boulder, Colorado, Association University Press, 1973.

Winters, Earle W. History of the Denver Theater, 1901-1911. Unpublished Dissertation, 1957.