

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic Resources of Downtown Denver

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880 -1973

C. Form Prepared by

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city or town Denver state Colorado zip code 80211

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for 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 and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Sharonna Cortez State Historic Preservation Officer 11/2/04  
Signature and title of certifying official Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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.

Beth Bobard 12/16/04  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and the title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheet in *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (National Register Bulletin 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 120 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Historic Resources of Downtown Denver

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**Historic Contexts**

**Development of Downtown Denver, 1880 -1973**

***Introduction***

The City of Denver, Colorado's capital and largest city, is located on the South Platte River at its confluence with Cherry Creek, some twelve miles east of the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The search for gold brought the area's first permanent settlement in 1858: Auraria was established on the west side of Cherry Creek, Denver City was founded on the east, and the townsite of Highland was created on the bluffs to the north. The communities were united in April 1860, selecting the name that honored Kansas Territorial Governor James Denver. Formally incorporated in 1861, Denver became the county seat of Arapahoe County in the same year and capital of the territory in 1867. The city's link to a transcontinental railroad in 1870 ensured Denver's continued regional dominance and it became the state capital in 1876. The riches extracted from Colorado mines fueled a major period of growth, during which the city became an agricultural supply center and a focus of industrial, manufacturing, and financial activity for the Rocky Mountain region. A 1902 constitutional amendment established Denver as a city and county. During the twentieth century, Denver's economic base expanded with the growth of tourism, enlargement of the service sector, exploitation of energy resources, and the attraction of numerous federal agency offices. As a major regional center, a number of historically and architecturally significant buildings were erected in Downtown Denver.

This multiple property submission provides a historical context for evaluating the significance of historic resources associated with the commercial development of Denver's Central Business District (CBD) during the period 1880-1973. The oldest identified historic building in the area dates to 1880. The historic context extends from that year to 1973, when events impacting the local economy resulted in a new era of development, providing a logical ending date for the narrative.

***The Founding of Denver: 1858-1879***

Denver was founded as a result of prospectors rushing to the Pike's Peak region in search of gold in the late 1850s. In 1858 William Green Russell led a party of Georgians who followed the South Platte River to its intersection with Dry Creek, discovering a small amount of the precious metal and stimulating an influx of miners, merchants, and developers. Russell's party established a townsite on the west side of Cherry Creek, designated "Auraria" after the leader's hometown in Georgia. Businessman and town developer General William H. Larimer laid out rival Denver City on the east, naming the principal street after himself. Larimer also platted the townsite of Highland to the north overlooking the South Platte River. Denver City was set out on a grid, with streets running diagonal to true compass points and parallel to the South Platte and Cherry Creek. Contained within the boundaries of Denver City was the area which developed as Downtown Denver, the retail and financial heart of the city.

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**Orientation Map.** This map of Downtown Denver and the surrounding vicinity identifies areas discussed in the narrative. The dashed line is the boundary of the city's B-5 Zone District, an area where more intensive land uses and greater building heights are permitted.

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Denver City and Auraria quickly became major service and supply centers along congested routes to the mountain mining districts. The intersection of 15th and Larimer streets was the focus of development in Denver City, and Larimer Street evolved into the retail district for pioneer businesses. The settlement also secured the offices of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express Company, thereby cementing its place as the hub of commerce and finance. In April 1860 the rival communities were unified, with the new town named "Denver City" in honor of Kansas Territorial Governor James W. Denver. Denver became the territorial state capital in 1867, but its viability was uncertain due to a series of natural disasters, the decline of mining, and the Union Pacific's plans to lay its transcontinental railroad tracks to the north through Cheyenne. By 1870 the population of the settlement stood at 4,759, only ten above the total of a decade earlier.

Denver's connection to an intercontinental railroad during the summer of 1870 was a critical event in the city's history. Community leaders realized that the key to the town's future lay in ending its isolation, and they expended great effort in securing a rail linkage. Successfully connected to the Union Pacific at Cheyenne on the north via the Denver Pacific Railroad and on the east to Kansas City via the Kansas Pacific Railroad, a period of great growth began for Denver. The railroads brought new residents, building materials, and supplies, resulting in a real estate and development boom which continued for more than two decades.

Rich discoveries in mining areas such as Leadville beginning in the 1870s also stimulated population growth, made Colorado the country's leading precious metal producer, and fueled the prosperity of the Queen City. During this period, Denver's infrastructure was established, with the city's first water, gas, and street railroad companies created. In addition, the state's rail network spread, connecting Denver to markets across the territory. When Colorado became a state in 1876, Denver was selected as the capital.

***Downtown Development in the Youthful City, 1880-1899***

Denver's population surged to 35,629 by 1880, a 648.7 percent increase in only ten years. During the next decade, the city's population nearly tripled. With 106,713 residents in 1890, Denver was the second largest urban center in the West. Historian Gunther Barth termed Denver and San Francisco "instant cities," due to the "suddenness of their emergence and the speed with which they joined the ranks of cities that had taken centuries to evolve."<sup>1</sup>

As railroad access made the shipment of construction materials easier and less expensive, Denver buildings began to reflect the wide variety of products available. After the railroads arrived, businessmen added ornate cast iron fronts and elaborate metal cornices to their stores. A multitude of building materials, including molded or carved window surrounds, decorative cornices, elaborate panels with the owner's name and building date, highly detailed entrances

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<sup>1</sup>Gunther Barth, *Instant Cities: Urbanization and the Rise of San Francisco and Denver* (Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico, 1988), ix, 9.

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with paneled and glazed doors, and a wide variety of decorative glass could be selected to reflect the success of the owner. Large display windows added to the first story of a commercial building allowed shoppers to view the luxuries offered by merchants. Even modest retail buildings sported cornices of decorative brickwork. The economic expansion of the city and the diversity of building materials available encouraged more detailed architectural designs and attracted trained architects and experienced builders.

The development of street railways also facilitated the growth of Denver's commercial district. The Denver Horse Railroad Company (later the Denver City Railroad Company) built an initial horse-drawn line in 1871, extending from Auraria northeastward to Five Points. In 1874, tracks were installed down 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Broadway. The system was expanded in the 1880s with lines linking the city center with outlying residential areas. In response, the center of the city declined in status as a residential area and increasingly became a site for office and commercial uses. In 1880 the rival Denver City Cable Railway Company created what has been described as the largest single cable powerhouse in the world, the Denver City Cable Railway Building at 18<sup>th</sup> and Lawrence streets. The two-story Romanesque Revival style building was notable for its symphony of brickwork and included offices, car barns, repair shops, and a power plant. The company's Welton Street line was the longest car-cable in the world at that time, at 36,850' in length. By 1892 the enterprise included twenty-nine miles of cable line, ten miles of electric road, and a two-mile horse-car line. Advances in alternative technology, including the superiority of electrical railway systems, and the economic downturn of the 1890s resulted in bankruptcy of the firm and its later merger with another company.<sup>2</sup>

During the early years of the city's development, residential, educational, commercial, and other functions were intermingled. As the commercial core of the city expanded, raising the value of downtown lots, some types of buildings began to be segregated in areas outside the business district. The oldest surviving building in the downtown area, the Italianate style Brinker Collegiate Institute at 1725-27 Tremont Place, was erected in 1880. Professor Joseph Brinker founded the private school to teach "customary Christian virtues" to young ladies. The institute offered a wide variety of courses for pupils from primary to college age, and achieved a reputation for academic excellence. Following Brinker's death in 1886, the school closed. After extensive remodeling it reopened in 1889 as a casino and hotel operated by gamblers, known first as the Richelieu and later as the Navarre. After becoming the Navarre, the building achieved a different sort of reputation when the upper floors were rented to ladies of the evening.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Don Robertson, Morris Cafky, and E.J. Haley, *Denver's Street Railways* (Denver: Sundance Publications, 1999), 147; Jerome C. Smiley, *History of Denver* (Denver: Times-Sun Publishing Co., 1901; Reprint, Denver: Old Americana Publishing Co., 1978), 860-861; James E. Fell, Jr. "Tramway Cable Building National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form," 29 August 1979; Thomas J. Noel, *Denver's Landmarks & Historic Districts* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1996), 18-19.

<sup>3</sup>Some reports cite the Brinker Institute as the first coeducational school west of the Mississippi, while others state it was an institution for women. Gambling activities continued to flourish in the building until Mayor Robert Speer pressured the owners to convert it to a private club, the Navarre Café, which was followed by a variety of restaurants. In 1983 owner William Foxley sold transfer of development rights to raise funds to renovate the building for his

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During the 1880s, new millionaires created by the riches of mining came to Denver seeking projects in which to invest funds and influence the development of the city. After acquiring a fortune in Leadville, Horace Tabor pushed Denver architecture to new standards of quality by hiring Chicagoans Frank and Willoughby Edbrooke to design his buildings. The construction of the Tabor Opera House (demolished) at 16th and Curtis streets in 1881 influenced the growth of the city away from its earlier commercial center 16th Street, where Tabor owned property. Developers such as Tabor, fueled with profits from Colorado's booming economy, were responsible for the construction of substantial edifices which permanently changed the built environment of Downtown Denver. A period of great building activity began in 1887 and continued until the Silver Panic of 1893. Nearly all of Denver's important nineteenth century commercial buildings were erected during this era.<sup>4</sup>

The new development occurred along 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets and moved the commercial core toward Broadway. The CBD, which had been centered around Larimer and 16<sup>th</sup> streets in the 1880s, moved steadily southeastward and contracted during the 1900-1980 period. According to geographers Kenneth Erickson and Albert Smith, the "spatial shift and increasing verticality" in the Denver CBD

relate to architectural advances that quickly outmoded buildings of an earlier CBD. Breakthroughs in water pumping, forced-air heating and elevator transport were necessary precursors of the spectacular transformation of the CBD by ever taller buildings with ever greater total footage. The transformation has allowed the development of an areally more compact business district while at the same time accommodating a larger clientele.<sup>5</sup>

Seventeenth Street gained greater importance after the completion of Union Station at its northern terminus in 1881. One of the architectural gems which ornamented 17th Street was the 1889 Richardsonian Romanesque style Boston Building at 828 17th Street, designed by the Boston firm of Andrews, Jacques, and Rantoul and constructed of Colorado red sandstone. Early Denver historian Jerome Smiley called the edifice "the first of the strictly modern office buildings" in the city, and judged that it was one of the "finest and costliest" buildings in the state. In erecting such an important office block at 17th and Champa, the Boston Building Company directed growth of the business district southeastward up 17th Street. In the same year, the exclusive Denver Club built a palatial red sandstone clubhouse for its members on 17<sup>th</sup> Street (demolished).<sup>6</sup>

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Museum of Western Art. *Historic Denver News*, February 1986, 5; Mary Kardoos, "The Navarre National Register Nomination Form," 9 December 1976; *Denver Post*, 30 November 1984, 5F; *City Edition*, 30 November-7 December 1983, 1.

<sup>4</sup>Smiley, 483.

<sup>5</sup>Kenneth A. Erickson and Albert W. Smith, *Atlas of Colorado* (Boulder, Colorado: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 50-51.

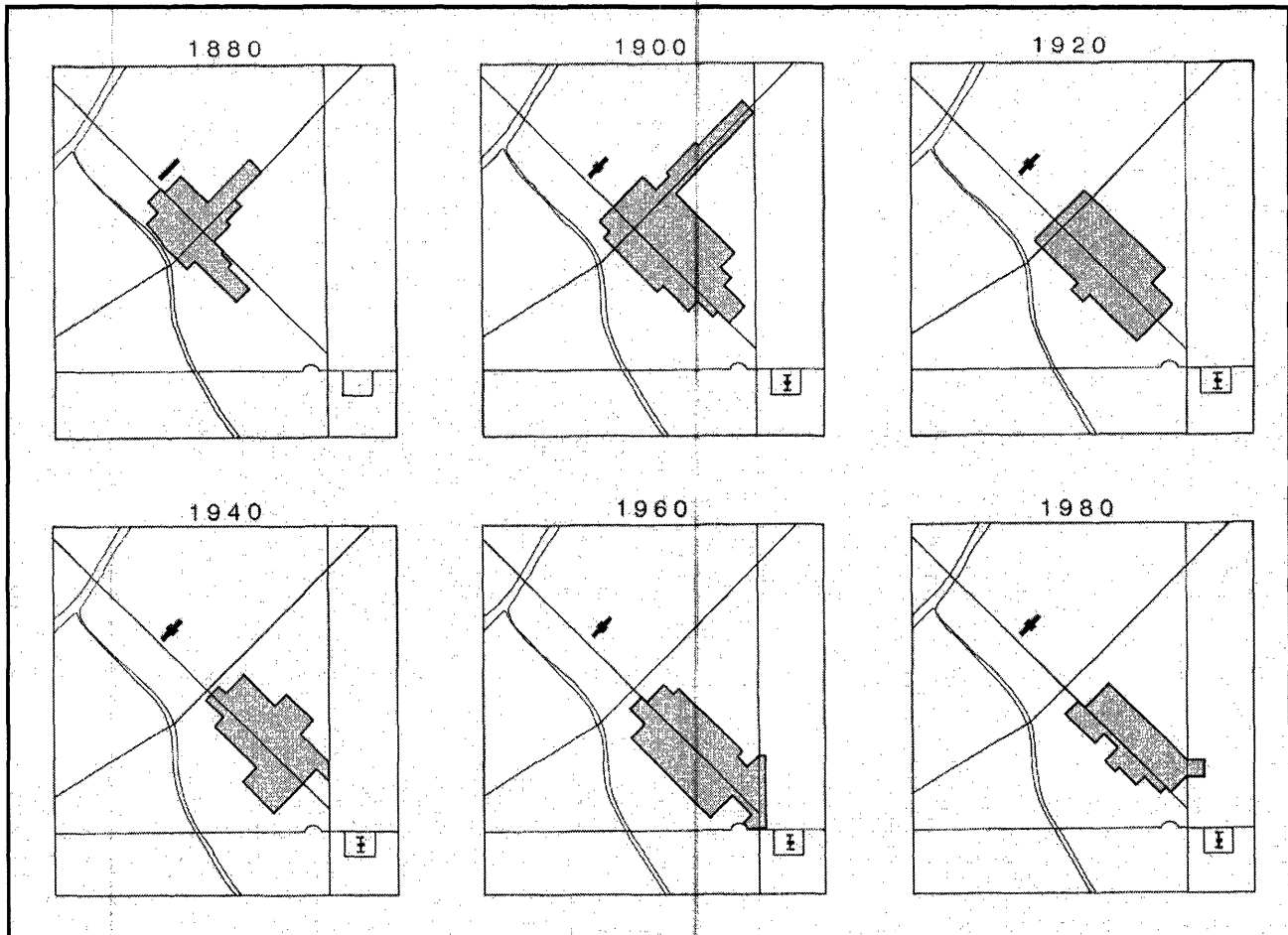
<sup>6</sup>Smiley, 959.

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Shifts in the Central Business District (CBD), 1880-1960. Geographers Kenneth A. Erickson and Albert W. Smith used city directory information to plot the extent and geographic shifts in the Denver CBD over time. The South Platte River is in the northwest corner of each map with Cherry Creek curving southward. Colfax Avenue is the horizontal line across the southern part of the map and Broadway the vertical line at the east side. The diagonal line from northwest to southeast is 16<sup>th</sup> Street, while the diagonal line from southwest to northeast is Larimer Street. The State Capitol site is in the southeast corner, while Union Station is the black outline northeast of 16<sup>th</sup> Street. SOURCE: Extract of Erickson and Smith, *Atlas of Colorado* (Boulder, Colo.: Colorado Associated University Press, 1985), 51.

Andrews, Jacques, and Rantoul also designed the Renaissance Revival style Equitable Building, which upon its completion in 1892 became the city's largest office building, at 730 17th Street. The nine-story Equitable Building was financed by the Equitable Insurance Company at a cost of \$1.5 million, an enormous sum for the era. In 1893-1894 the State Executive offices were housed in the building before being moved to the new state capitol. Like the Boston Building, the location of the Equitable attracted other businesses and financial institutions to 17th Street. In 1896, David Moffat relocated the First National Bank to the Equitable Building, and for many years the Rio Grande Railroad had its offices there. Several prominent attorneys opened offices



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in the Equitable, and it housed two law libraries. The building represented Eastern interests in Denver and lent sophistication to the young community.<sup>7</sup>

In 1892 Henry C. Brown, developer of Capitol Hill and donator of the site for the state capitol, built the foremost social landmark in Downtown Denver, the Brown Palace Hotel. The red granite and sandstone building's location on a triangular site bounded by Broadway, Tremont Place, and 17th Street helped bolster the significance of Capitol Hill and move the downtown commercial district eastward. The location of the Brown Palace represented an important trend away from the traditional practice of erecting hotels close to the railroad station for the convenience of travelers. Earlier first class accommodations, such as the 1880 Windsor (razed) and the 1891 Oxford hotels were situated within easy walking distance for railroad passengers. Henry Brown's hotel was built at the head of the business and financial district, nearer the site of the state capitol and the rapidly developing neighborhood adjacent. Other hotels which were part of this pattern included the 1885 Albany, the 1890 Metropole (which included the Broadway Theater), and later hostelrys such as the 1903 Shirley and the 1904 Savoy, both on 17<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>8</sup>

The Brown Palace was also significant as one of the first examples of fully fireproof construction in the country and was featured on the cover of *Scientific American* in May 1892. Horace Tabor's son Maxcy originally co-managed the hotel with William Bush, who had been associated with the first class Windsor Hotel. At the time of its completion, the \$2 million hotel was considered the height of 1890s luxury, with each of the original 410 rooms having a window on the street and a door on an interior atrium with onyx-clad walls illuminated by a stained glass skylight. Long considered the city's finest hostelry, the Brown attracted countless notables, including presidents and other government leaders, celebrities, and the well-to-do.<sup>9</sup>

Denver became the major commercial center for the Rocky Mountain region, and 16th Street became the heart of Denver's retail district during the late nineteenth century. When streetcars had started operation along 16th Street in the 1870s, merchants were eager to take advantage of the choice location.<sup>10</sup> In 1883 George G. Symes, an early Denver attorney and

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<sup>7</sup>Barbara Norgren, "Equitable Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 23 December 1976; Richard A. Ronzio, *Silver Images of Colorado: Denver Album and the 1866 Business Directory*, vol. 1 (Denver: Sundance Books, 1986), 120.

<sup>8</sup>None of these buildings stands today.

<sup>9</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower utilized the Brown Palace as his campaign headquarters in 1952, and the building was known as "the summer White House" during the president's summer visits to Colorado. Robert Fink, "Brown Palace Hotel National Register Nomination Form," n.d.; Brown Palace Hotel Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory Form, December 1967; *Scientific American*, 21 May 1892.

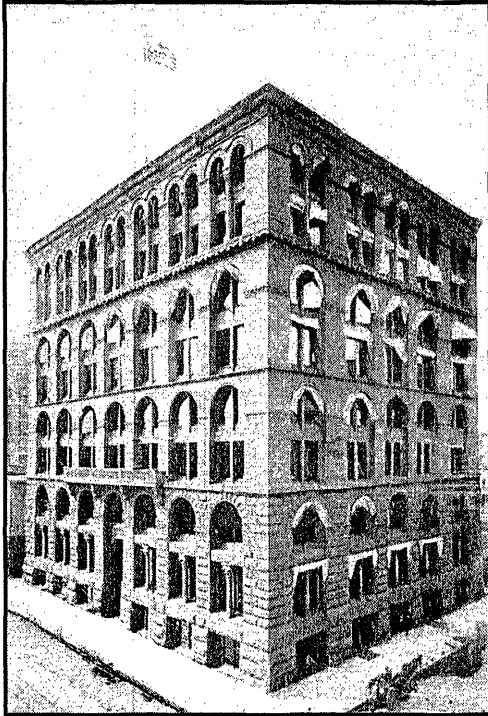
<sup>10</sup>Thomas J. Noel and Barbara Norgren, *Denver: The City Beautiful and Its Architects, 1893-1941* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987), 104.

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The Boston Building (1889), top left, the Equitable Building (1892), top right, and the Brown palace Hotel (1892), bottom, were important early buildings along 17<sup>th</sup> Street which served to draw the Central Business District southeastward. SOURCES: top two, historic postcard views; bottom, Joseph Collier photograph, image C-179, Denver Public Library.

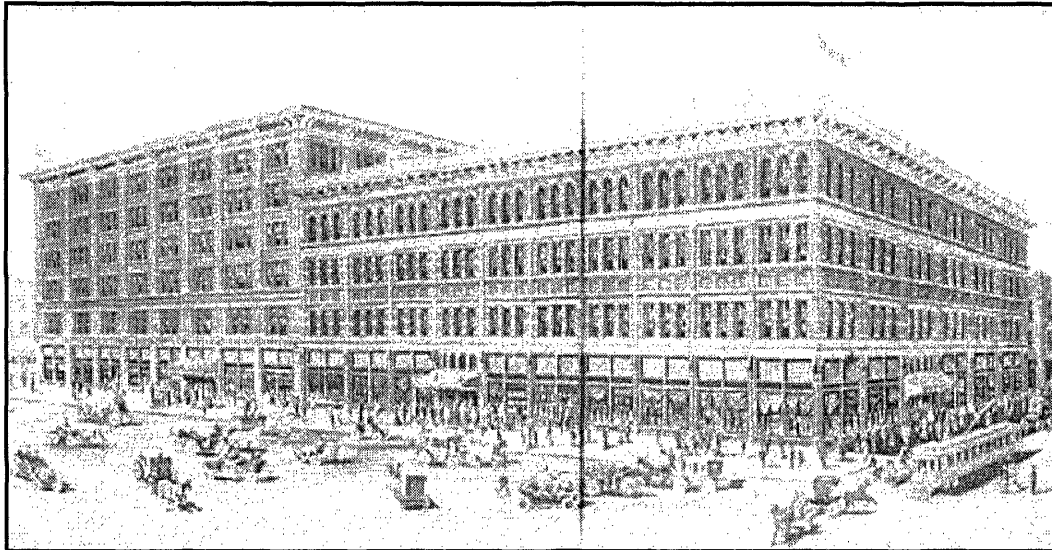
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congressman, built one of the largest office buildings on 16<sup>th</sup> Street, a three-story edifice described as "one of the most important and notable enterprises of its kind . . . a leader in the development of 16th Street as the central artery of the city's retail trade."<sup>11</sup>



The Denver Dry Goods store (1889, with later additions) at 16<sup>th</sup> and California streets was one of several flagship department stores along 16<sup>th</sup> Street. SOURCE: historic postcard view.

When the owners of the McNamara (Denver) Dry Goods department store decided to move from Larimer to 16th Street in 1889, other enterprises followed. M.J. McNamara, a director of the Colorado Mining Exchange and vice president of the Denver Chamber of Commerce, had founded the dry goods company in 1886. In 1889, the firm relocated to a new building attributed to Frank Edbrooke and erected by developer John J. Riethmann (700 16th Street). A reorganization after the Panic of 1893 resulted in the creation of the Denver Dry Goods Company, with Dennis Sheedy as president. The Denver, as the store was popularly known, grew along with the fortunes of the retail district, expanding three times, becoming one of the largest and most successful dry goods establishments in the city.<sup>12</sup>

Another important department store also arrived on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in 1889, when J. Jay Joslin relocated his establishment to the Tritch Building, designed two years earlier by Frank E. Edbrooke. Joslin, a Vermont businessman, had come to the city in 1872. The following year, he acquired the New York Store on Larimer Street, which later became the Joslin Dry Goods Company. By 1902, the department store occupied the entire Tritch Building at 934 16<sup>th</sup> Street. The merchant's philosophy was "to provide outstanding service and goods of high quality and

<sup>11</sup>This building was destroyed by fire and replaced by Symes with a second building in 1906.

<sup>12</sup>*Denver Republican*, 1 January 1909, 8; Kim Benson, "Denver Dry Goods Company Building National Register Nomination Form," 5 January 1977.

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real value." Joslin sold his interest in the store in 1915, but remained as the company president. When he died in 1926 at the age of ninety-six years, Joslin was described as the "dean of Denver businessmen" and the "merchant prince of Denver."<sup>13</sup>

Fraternal organizations, extremely popular during the late nineteenth century, were represented in Downtown Denver by the Odd Fellows Union Lodge No. 1, erected steps away from 16<sup>th</sup> Street in 1889 at 1543-1545 Champa Street. Emmett Anthony received the commission to design the building, which included a large arched stained glass window. The Odd Fellows, who traced the roots of their organization to eighteenth century England, followed objectives that included visiting the sick, relieving the distressed, burying the dead, and educating the orphan. The Denver group, founded in 1864, met in several buildings before erecting its own hall. In addition to serving the Odd Fellows, the building also housed the Old Dutch Mill in the twentieth century, a popular restaurant and nightclub frequented by jazz fanciers. At this club, "Melancholy Baby" was composed and first sung, and a number of notable jazz musicians entertained at the establishment.<sup>14</sup>

In 1890 another fraternal order, the Masons, erected a substantial granite and red sandstone temple designed by fellow member Frank Edbrooke at 1614 Welton Street. The Order of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons had been established in Denver in 1858 and included among its members many of Denver's founding fathers and most prominent citizens, such as William N. Byers, Samuel H. Elbert, Richard Sopris, Wolfe Londoner, and Henry M. Teller. The Masons were influential participants in the development of the city, as the group aided in cornerstone laying ceremonies for many of its most important public buildings. The organization's wealth and power were reflected in its erection of a new temple with entrances on Welton and on 16th Street, which had become the location of the most valuable real estate in Denver. The Masons spared no expense in the construction of their building, whose Richardsonian Romanesque exterior was meant to convey "safety and solidity."<sup>15</sup>

The 1891 Kittredge Building at 511 16th Street, designed by A. Morris Stuckert, was a seven-story granite and rhyolite Richardsonian Romanesque style office building which appealed to the retail trade with ground floor storefronts along 16th Street. Building owner C.M. Kittredge had been associated with several early Denver banking ventures and amassed a fortune through real estate transactions, including the development of the Park Hill and Montclair neighborhoods. The community of Kittredge in Jefferson County was named after the entrepreneur. The Kittredge Building's construction was tarnished by allegations concerning its structural integrity: accusations successfully rebutted by the owner and the architect. Physicians, architects,

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<sup>13</sup>Denver Times, 10 January 1902; Rocky Mountain News, 14 June 1965; Denver Post, 15 May 1993; Smiley, 967; James I. Day, *Our Architecture* (Denver: James I Day, 1906); William C. Jones and Kenton Forrest, *Denver: A Pictorial History*, (Boulder, Colorado: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973), 168.

<sup>14</sup>Oregon Odd Fellows and Rebekahs Web Page, 1998; Cambridge Development Group, Odd Fellows Hall brochure.

<sup>15</sup>William J. Handley, "Masonic Temple National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 12 January 1977.

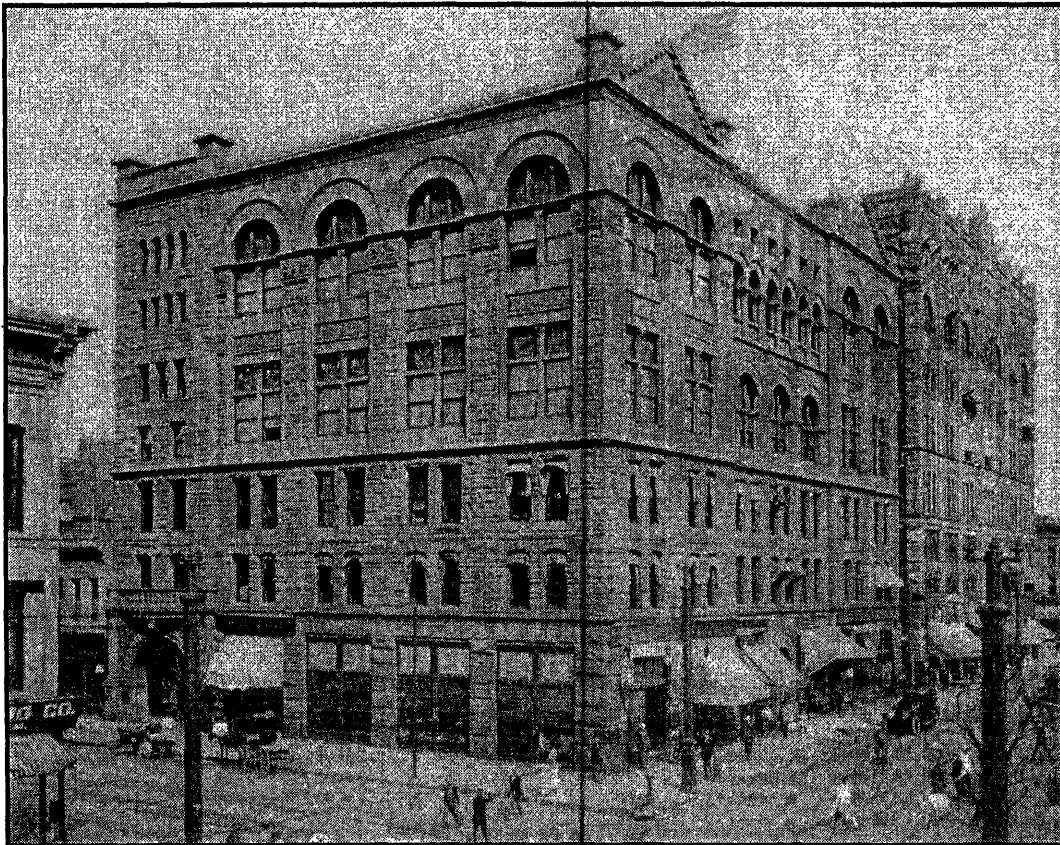
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insurance companies, and Kittredge himself occupied offices in the building. A notable amenity was the Casino Rooftop Garden, which offered fine dining and entertainment.<sup>16</sup>



The Masonic Temple (in foreground, 1890) held offices and retail space as well as the fraternal hall. The Kittredge Building (1891) is to the right. SOURCE: L.C. McClure photograph, image MCC-1934, Denver Public Library.

The prominence of the 16th Street shopping district attracted the attention of S.L. Holzman and W.S. Appel, who erected a four-story retail and office building designed by Robert Roeschlaub at 16th and Stout streets in 1891. The Renaissance Revival style building featured extensive use of terra cotta ornamentation in its design. A large portion of the building was claimed by A.Z. Salomon and Company, who operated a dry goods emporium known as Salomon's Bazaar. In 1896, A.T. Lewis & Son, a department store which specialized in American and imported fancy dress goods, occupied the building. The store differed from others in the city in that it was "a distinctively dry goods store, having no departments and carrying no articles of merchandise that do not belong legitimately to the miscellany of an exclusive dry goods establishment." The business, founded in 1890, expanded to include a nursery, as well as resting places throughout

<sup>16</sup>Smiley, 965; Kathleen O'Brien, "Kittredge Building National Register Nomination," 9 March 1977; Denver Foundation for Architecture, *Guide to Denver Architecture* (Englewood, Colo.: Westcliffe Publishers, 2001), 31.

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the store. Declining revenues during the 1930s led to the demise of the company.<sup>17</sup> Another dry goods building was erected in 1891 by the firm of Hayden, Dickinson & Feldhauser, who commissioned John W. Roberts for the design at 16<sup>th</sup> & California.<sup>18</sup>

Businesses crowded out of 16th Street made 15th and other intersecting streets important commercial thoroughfares of the quickly developing retail district. In 1891, the O.P. Baur Confectionery Company (founded in 1872) constructed a brick building at 1512 Curtis Street. The property served as the site of a bakery, confectionery, catering business, and restaurant. Robert A. Levy, son of a vice president of the company, recalled that the building was "ornate and eloquent. As one entered the front door, one saw rows of crystal chandeliers and a number of long, well lit candy counters all filled with hand dipped chocolates of the finest quality." Baur's was celebrated for its candy, almond toffee (produced today by Enstrom's Candy), and extra rich ice cream. The catering business served many parties for Denver's elite.<sup>19</sup>

A wide variety of business concerns were found in the Central Business District during the late nineteenth century. In 1891 the Rogers & Son Mortuary was completed in the 1500 block of Champa, in a building designed and constructed by J.A. Hamman. The Denver Fire Clay Building, built in 1892 at 1742 Champa Street, was designed by J.S. Brien for the Peabody Investment Company. Joab Otis Bosworth, who founded the Denver Fire Clay Company, had established a drug and chemical business on Larimer Street which carried mining equipment and supplies, including clay crucibles. The company built a factory at 31st and Blake streets, and much of its early production was of fire-resistant bricks for the construction of smelters. After Bosworth's death in 1890, his widow continued the business, and the company added its downtown retail store on Champa. Denver Fire Clay occupied the downtown building for forty-two years before it was acquired by Buerger Brothers as an annex.<sup>20</sup>

Prosperous times and the development boom came to an abrupt end in 1893, when the price of silver plunged precipitously. Colorado, whose prosperity was so intimately connected to the growth of silver mining, spiraled into a depression. The economic downturn resulted in a number business failures and widespread unemployment and was compounded nationwide by the collapse of major enterprises such as the Union Pacific Railroad. Agriculture, another key component of Colorado's economy, also floundered from the effects of drought, poor management of resources, and harsh winter weather. Half of Denver's banks failed, and

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<sup>17</sup>*Denver Post*, 26 November 1902; *Rocky Mountain Herald*, 11 July 1896, 8; *Denver Republican*, 1 January 1892 and 10 November 1901; *Denver Times*, 2 August 1902, 2; *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 November 1929, 6.

<sup>18</sup>In 1909 Frank Edbrooke added two additional stories to the building, which had been remodeled as offices. In 1935 J.J.B. Benedict designed Art Deco style terra cotta panels added to the exterior.

<sup>19</sup>Baur's later opened a second restaurant/candy store on 16th Street near the Paramount Theater for the shopping and after-theater crowds. Baur's flourished downtown until the 1950s. Robert A. Levy, Oak Harbor, Washington, Correspondence to Kathleen Brooker, 21 October 1999, copy in the files of Front Range Research Associates, Denver.

<sup>20</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 25 April 1927 and 9 May 1937; Denver Building Permits; Smiley, 892; Diane Wray, "Buerger Brothers Building and Annex National Register Nomination Form," 28 February 1998.



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building construction plummeted, driving many of the city's architects out of business. Horace Tabor, who had lavishly spent his wealth in developing Denver, became the most visible symbol of the hard times as his fortune vanished. Reflecting the impact of the 1893 crash, population growth in Denver was markedly slower in the 1890s than in the preceding two decades. The 1900 Census showed 133,859 inhabitants, an increase of 27,146 or 25.4 percent over the 1890 figure.

Following the 1893 crisis, Denver businessmen diversified their investments, becoming involved in a variety of enterprises which provided steady growth rather than speculative riches. Philip Feldhauser, an early carpet merchant, survived the economic crisis in fair shape, retaining enough capital to erect a brick commercial building with cast iron façade at 1623 California Street in about 1895.<sup>21</sup> Construction activity downtown began to pick up somewhat in late 1898 and the spring of 1899. For example, Wells-Fargo Express Co. established offices in a building at 1616 Stout Street about 1898, providing freighting service to parts of Colorado not reached by railroads. By that time, Denver was becoming an important distribution center for manufacturers, and warehouse construction for wholesalers had become a profitable investment. Mining recovered with a new emphasis on the extraction of gold, and makers of mining machinery headquartered in Denver. Also bringing the city new prosperity were revived agriculture and tourism sectors, which broadened the economic base of the region.<sup>22</sup>

***Downtown Denver and the City Beautiful, 1900-1919***

A state constitutional amendment in 1902 created the City and County of Denver. The measure consolidated adjacent small communities and unincorporated areas with Denver and created unitary city and county governmental structures. The action added several thousand residents to Denver's population, as well as increasing the area of its jurisdiction. The 1910 Census showed Denver with 213,381 people, reflecting growth resulting from rapid expansion plus the addition of annexed areas.

As Denver's economic health revived, city leaders began to plan for future growth and development. The 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago had led many Americans to the rediscovery of classical architecture and an appreciation for the City Beautiful philosophy developed by architect and planner Daniel H. Burnham. Under the administration of Mayor Robert Speer (1904-12, 1916-1918), the City Beautiful movement reached its zenith in Denver. The city was modernized and revitalized with projects such as street, landscape, and lighting improvements; the addition of cultural facilities; and expansion of the park system. One of

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<sup>21</sup>This may be the only surviving building with cast iron front in the downtown area. The building received two additional stories sometime between 1904 and 1935.

<sup>22</sup>*Denver Times*, 30 September 1903, 4; Ron Emrich and Barbara Norgren, "Architectural and Historical Survey of Denver's Central Business District, Lower Downtown, Platte Valley," January 1984, 18; Stephen J. Leonard and Thomas J. Noel, *Denver: Mining Camp to Metropolis* (Niwot, Colo.: University Press of Colorado, 1990), 34 and 116; *Colorado State Business Directory*, 1898.

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Speer's finest City Beautiful creations was a Civic Center south of downtown, an inspiring public park surrounded by cultural and governmental buildings. Beautification of the downtown area included burying telegraph and telephone lines and the addition of ornamental streetlights.<sup>23</sup>



A busy 16<sup>th</sup> Street (view northwest) is shown from California Street in this circa late 1910s view. SOURCE: historic postcard view.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, 16th Street was known as the "city promenade" and was compared to Chicago's State Street. Jerome Smiley asserted that "it is doubtful if there is in any city of corresponding size in this country a shopping thoroughfare more attractive, more animated, or thronged by greater numbers of people." The major retail stores along 16th Street were architecturally significant and designed by a variety of prominent local architects. Representative of this trend was the erection of a new Symes Building. Following the destruction of his earlier building by fire, George G. Symes financed new construction on the same site at 820 16th Street, hiring noted New York architects Joseph and Richard Hunt to prepare the design. The eight-story building, remarkably crowned with a bold projecting cornice with polychromatic terra cotta trim, was the tallest in the city when completed in 1906, encompassing 261 offices, as well as first story retail shops. The building was described as "a model of symmetry and strength and an admirable example of the most modern style of steel frame fireproof construction." Not only the first steel frame building in Denver, the Symes Building was also the first with a Chicago style design. Much competition arose among business

<sup>23</sup>Noel and Norgren, 1; *Denver Municipal Facts*, 20 February 1909; *Denver Republican*, 1 January 1907.



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and professional people to secure offices in the building, which filled immediately upon completion. Among the larger firms to lease space in the Symes Building were the American Smelting and Refining Company, which occupied an entire floor; the Travelers' Insurance Company; Vindicator Consolidated Gold Mining Company; and Central Colorado Power Company.<sup>24</sup>

Along the side streets near 16<sup>th</sup> Street a number of small hotels and rooming houses for visitors and downtown office workers were erected during the early years of the century. In 1901, Denver entrepreneur Water S. Cheesman hired architects Willis Marean and Albert Norton to design his Colonial Hotel at 1506 California Street. The Colonial offered "forty large, light, airy rooms" at moderate rates and was described as receiving "a liberal and high class patronage." Eight storefronts in the building housed businesses such as a saloon, a milliner, a jeweler, a violin store, and a hardware store. The St. Thomas Hotel, 1508 California, was a small rooming house with furnished rooms, erected about 1905. The circa 1907 Vincent Hotel, 1514 California Street, offered hotel rooms on the upper two floors, while the ground floor housed a succession of restaurants. The three-story Court Place Hotel, built in 1914 at 1635 Court Place, featured a Renaissance Revival design.<sup>25</sup>

Some hoped that 15th Street would rival 16<sup>th</sup> Street for the city's retail trade during the early twentieth century. Several commercial buildings were constructed, but the thoroughfare never achieved the prominence of 16th Street. Horace W. Bennett and Julius A. Myers, two influential real estate developers, were active in revitalizing and promoting 15th Street. In 1901, they erected the Temple Court Building (demolished) at 650 15th Street, originally a light gray brick building with terra cotta trim, which was later remodeled and expanded to become the offices and plant of the *Denver Post*. A variety of other smaller commercial establishments flourished along the street, including the offices of the Hibernia Bank, established at 822-30 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Locations near 15<sup>th</sup> also attracted a diversity of small businesses, such as Agnes Bradshaw's dry goods store and residence, which was housed in a three-story 1909 brick building at 1445 Stout Street, designed by Montana Fallis and John J. Stein.<sup>26</sup>

In the early twentieth century, 17th Street became increasingly important as a regional center for successful business and financial enterprises. The Dome Investment Company, whose members included F.G. Bonfils and Charles and Claude Boettcher, financed the construction of the Ideal Building at 821 17th Street in 1907. Architects Montana Fallis and John Stein designed the building using Colorado Portland Cement, the product of a Boettcher enterprise. The goal in erecting the Ideal Building was to promote construction with reinforced concrete, and the building has been touted as the "first reinforced concrete multistory building constructed west of the

<sup>24</sup>*Denver Republican*, 1 January 1907, 5 and 1 January 1909, 8; Noel and Norgren, 115; Denver City Directories.

<sup>25</sup>Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons, "Historical Research on Five Properties," 11 May 1998, in the files of Front Range Research Associates, Denver.

<sup>26</sup>Bill Hosokawa, *Thunder in the Rockies* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1976), 278-80; *Denver Times*, 16 October 1901 and 4 February 1913, 1; Denver Building Permit, 9 August 1909.

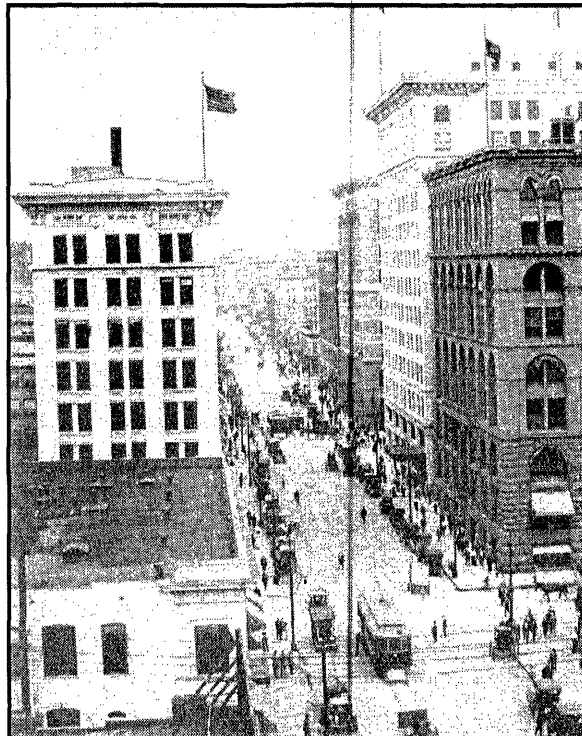
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Mississippi." The building's early tenants included the Colorado Portland Cement Company, Capital National Bank, and real estate, brokerage, and mining companies. Completion of the Ideal Building increased activity on and near 17th Street.<sup>27</sup>



The Ideal Building (1907), left, and the First National Bank Building (1911), the taller building on right, were two of the significant office buildings constructed along 17<sup>th</sup> Street in the early years of the twentieth century. SOURCE: L.C. McClure photograph, image 1449, Denver Public Library.

As office construction surged, Denver faced the question of whether building heights should be limited. The issue was especially controversial for a community which bragged about its superb mountain vistas and endless sunshine. In January 1902, the *Denver Times* predicted that the city would soon have skyscrapers because of the growing demand for office space. A general opinion was that building heights should be limited to eight or nine stories, because taller

<sup>27</sup>In 1924, Fisher and Fisher remodeled the Ideal Building when the Denver National Bank (founded in 1884) established its 17th Street headquarters there, remaining until 1959. Local artists, including Arnold Ronnebeck, John E. Thompson, Nena de Brennecke, and Clara S. Dieman, were employed to provide artistic decoration for the building. The remodeling also resulted in the construction of a penthouse for use as the Fishers' own offices. Ronald Page, "Ideal Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 13 January 1977; Denver National Bank, *For Greater Service to the West*, on file at Denver Public Library Western History Department; Denver Foundation for Architecture, 45.

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buildings would block light and views and increase pedestrian congestion on the sidewalk. A ragged appearing skyline resulting from uneven building heights also was considered undesirable. In 1908, a nine-story height ordinance, the city's first attempt to control building heights, sought to preserve the city's mountain views. The same year, a West Coast developer proposed to erect a fourteen-story building downtown for Denver's First National Bank. A bitter fight arose over the desirability of building structures of such heights. In December 1908, a compromise ordinance negotiated by Mayor Speer amended the building law to increase the limit to twelve stories.<sup>28</sup>

Among the first buildings to take advantage of the change in the city's height ordinance was the First National Bank (later American National Bank) building at 818 17th Street. In 1911, the First National Bank left the Equitable Building for its own headquarters designed by Harry W.J. Edbrooke. The First National had been one of only four national banks in Denver to survive the Panic of 1893, and many of Denver's most prominent businessmen were associated with it. Historian Leroy Hafen noted that "the ramification of the First National's banking connections through Colorado became quite complex," as the institution was involved in the financing of many significant business ventures. The bank occupied the first floor, mezzanine, and part of the basement of the new building, while the upper floors were finished for leased offices. The First National was the first bank to locate its headquarters on 17th Street and thus represented the vanguard of the development of the thoroughfare into the "Wall Street of the West." The *Denver Times* observed that the completion of the First National Bank "has caused real estate prices to soar on Seventeenth street, and now every property owner is asking and placing an increased value on his property since the completion of the new block."<sup>29</sup>

As in the previous century, the operation of Denver's streetcar system impacted the business district in the first half of the twentieth century. Denver architects William E. and Arthur Fisher designed the 1912 Denver City Tramway Company's corporate headquarters at 1100 14<sup>th</sup> Street. The Tramway Company, the major public transportation system of early twentieth century Denver, resulted from the consolidation of earlier street railway firms in 1899, and its route influenced the patterns of development of the city. The eight-story Renaissance Revival style red brick building with white terra cotta trim had an attached three-story streetcar barn.<sup>30</sup>

During the early twentieth century, Denver promoted itself as the "City of Lights" in its effort to attract new businesses, conventions, and tourists. Many buildings along 15th, 16th, and 17<sup>th</sup>

<sup>28</sup>Noel and Norgren, 9 and Emrich and Norgren, 20.

<sup>29</sup>In 1958 Denver architect James Sudler remodeled the building to include white concrete screens which covered up the original façade. The screens were removed and the original design was reproduced when the vacant building was converted to a hotel in 1994-95. *Rocky Mountain News*, 26 May 1993; *Denver Republican*, 4 January 1911; *Denver Municipal Facts*, 11 December 1909 and 8 October 1910; Smiley, 427, 480, 796; Leroy R. Hafen, *Colorado and Its People*, vol. 2 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1948), 292; *Denver Times*, 1 January 1911.

<sup>30</sup>The Tramway Building National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, 1977; Noel, *Denver's Landmarks*, 20, 21.

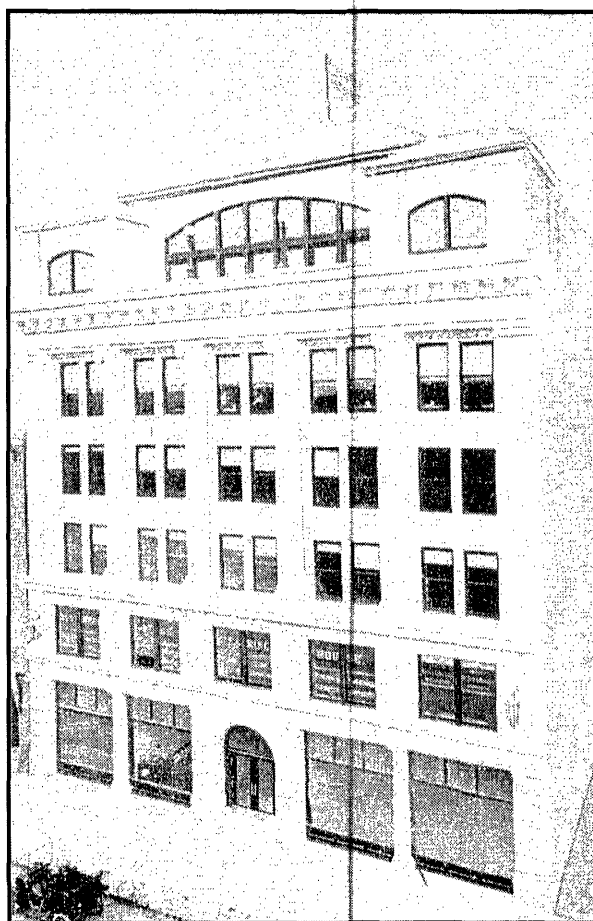
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streets were equipped to display exterior ornamental lighting, which illuminated the night and attracted large crowds. The Denver Gas and Electric Co. Building and the Chamber of Commerce were among the properties designed to include exterior lighting. The Gas and Electric Building alone featured thirteen thousand lights on its outside walls. The white terra cotta building at 910 15<sup>th</sup> Street, designed by Harry W.J. Edbrooke and completed in 1910, was one of the finest examples of the Sullivanesque style in the city.<sup>31</sup>



**The Chamber of Commerce Building, 1726 Champa Street, was one of several Downtown Denver buildings featuring exterior illumination. SOURCE: historic postcard view.**

Denver's "Temple of Commerce" was completed in 1910 and utilized by the Chamber of Commerce as its headquarters until 1950. The Board of Trade, predecessor of the Chamber, had been founded in Denver in 1867 by prominent local businessmen. The original purpose of the Board had been to secure a rail link for the city, an objective which it successfully completed

<sup>31</sup>The lights found less favor during the frugal 1930s and the blackouts of World War II. Noel and Norgren, 113.

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in 1870. The group created the Chamber of Commerce in 1884, an organization which included powerful, politically-connected citizens and was extremely influential in the development of the city. At the cornerstone laying ceremonies for the Neoclassical style brick and terra cotta Chamber of Commerce, Mayor Robert Speer spoke of the organization's significance to the city, and local newspapers judged the occasion "the most important day in Denver's great history." The Chamber also adopted Denver's "City of Lights" theme, incorporating hundreds of light bulbs on the exterior of the building. The new building provided offices for the Chamber, as well as space for other business organizations, such as the Denver Real Estate Exchange, the Colorado Manufacturers' Association, and the State Commercial Association.<sup>32</sup>

The three-story U-shaped McClintock Building at 1554 California Street added architectural diversity to the shopping district in 1910. Designed by Robert Willison and Montana Fallis for Washington McClintock, the building featured retail stores on the ground floor and offices for service firms and professionals on the upper floors. The lavishly ornamented building reflected the owner's opinion that the city needed more small but elegant storerooms.<sup>33</sup>

A new twelve-story skyscraper rose at the northwest corner of 16th and Champa streets in 1911, designated the A.C. Foster Building. William and Arthur Fisher designed the office and retail building for the firm of Sweet, Causey, and Foster. William Sweet, later governor of Colorado, James H. Causey, businessman and philanthropist, and Alexis C. Foster, banker and real estate developer, proposed a completely fireproof steel and concrete building. Described as "one of the handsomest structures in Denver," the edifice cost \$800,000. In 1921, James Causey donated the Foster Building to Denver University to provide income for operation of a Social Science Foundation whose purpose was to "create international, social, and industrial goodwill."<sup>34</sup>

The Daniels and Fisher Store, founded by William B. Daniels and William Garrett Fisher in 1872, moved into a new building with a soaring Renaissance Revival style tower designed by Frederick G. Sterner and George Williamson in the 1100 block of 16th Street in 1911. Daniels had started a small dry goods store at 15th and Larimer in 1864, moving to 16th and Lawrence in 1875. William Cooke Daniels, son of the original owner, built the landmark twentieth-century department store, whose design was inspired by his visits to Italy. The business within was compared with Marshall Field's in Chicago in the extent of its offerings for consumers.<sup>35</sup>

Not all buildings erected during the period competed in height; some were impressive in their

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<sup>32</sup>Denver Republican, 1 January 1909; *Municipal Facts*, 14 January 1911; Diane Wray, "Chamber of Commerce Building State Register of Historic Properties Nomination Form," 1 September 2000; R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, Denver Chamber of Commerce Colorado Historical Society Historic Building Inventory Form, 1993.

<sup>33</sup>Denver Times, 20 January 1902; Denver Republican, 10 November 1910; Smiley, 962.

<sup>34</sup>William J. Handley, "A.C. Foster Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 9 March 1977.

<sup>35</sup>In 1971, the main section of the department store was demolished, but the tower was saved.

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monumental proportions and application of classical details. In 1915, Fisher and Fisher designed a white marble temple-front Neoclassical style building for the Colorado National Bank at 900-18 17th Street. The bank had been established in Colorado in 1862, and in its new location quickly became known as "the bank that looks like a bank." One of the bank's major customers, the Colorado Yule Marble Company, provided the stone that faced the exterior. Two sides of the building featured colonnades of fluted marble columns rising to the third story marble architrave. The lobby and mezzanine of the new building were the original site of banking operations, while the upper floors held offices for other businesses.<sup>36</sup>

One of the most popular architectural innovations in downtown Denver during the early twentieth century was the use of large amounts of exterior terra cotta. Terra cotta had been employed in American buildings during the late nineteenth century, but became more widely utilized after technical improvements provided a wide range of colors and glazing. The popularity of the material continued into the 1920s and 1930s, when it was included on Art Deco style buildings. In Downtown Denver the 1909 Railway Exchange Addition at 1715 Champa featured upper stories faced with white terra cotta tiles and the 1910 Chamber of Commerce also employed the material extensively in its design. In 1912, the Denver Terra Cotta Company opened, becoming a regional producer of the material. Terra cotta was used to clad the facades of major downtown retail buildings, such as H.W.J. Edbrooke's 1916 Kistler Stationery at 1636 Champa ("the Business Man's Department Store").

Another innovation that impacted the business district during the early twentieth century was the growing use of the automobile. Downtown Denver contended with the twin problems of increased traffic congestion on downtown streets and a lack of on-street parking. Private parking garages were an answer to the problem. Robert Pierce designed a two-story tan brick garage with full basement at 1437 California Street for Clara Ell. The building, completed in 1917, featured a stepped parapet above the main entrance and walls with terra cotta ornamentation, as well as a steel truss roof and concrete floors. The parking garage originally provided space for one hundred cars.<sup>37</sup>

America's declaration of war on Germany in 1917 shifted the city's focus from local development to readying the homefront for the conflict. The Denver Chamber of Commerce helped secure a share of the money being spent on military expansion when it convinced the Army to establish General Hospital Number 21, later known as Fitzsimons Army Hospital, on the plains of Adams County in 1918. The war did not totally eliminate Speer's City Beautiful program, as street improvements continued, the Civic Center project progressed, and a mountain parks program

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<sup>36</sup>In 1926, an addition designed by Burnham and Merrill Hoyt doubled the size of the original building. Notable additions to the lobby at that time were murals by Allen True. In 1964 the bank was again enlarged with a modern marble-clad addition atop the original building. Thomas J. Noel, *Growing Through History: The Colorado National Banks* (Denver: Colorado National Banks and Colorado Studies Center, 1987); Judith Gamble, "Along Denver's Wall Street of the Rockies," *Colorado Magazine* 4(1986): 16; Noel and Norgren, 110.

<sup>37</sup>Denver Building Permit #2553, 28 November 1916; and Sanborn Maps.

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was initiated. These aspects of Robert Speer's legacy were cited when the mayor died on 14 May 1918.<sup>38</sup>

Some construction continued during the war, including the completion of the 1918 A.T. Lewis & Son Annex at 1531 Stout Street, which has been called the finest Denver example of the Sullivanesque style.<sup>39</sup> Acknowledging the international crisis, the store's art needlework department sponsored knitting parties to produce clothing for servicemen. With the erection of the new building, the *Rocky Mountain News* called the store "the equal of any in the country for both furnishings and accommodations for employees and customers." Lewis & Son lost the building during the Great Depression, and it sat vacant from 1933 until 1942, when the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad Company acquired it. Renamed the Rio Grande Building, the structure became the offices of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, the Denver & Salt Lake Railroad, and the Rio Grande Motorway.<sup>40</sup>

***Impact of Continued Development, the Great Depression, and  
World War II on Downtown Denver, 1920-1945***

Denver's population exceeded a quarter of a million persons in 1920, an increase of more than forty thousand over the previous decade. After the war, citizens were faced with high prices for food, fuel, and manufactured goods, while many received declining wages. Discontent was evidenced in bitter conflict between labor and management factions, exemplified by a strike of Denver Tramway Company workers in August 1920. After six people were killed and fifty-two injured during the demonstration, the governor announced a state of martial law enforced by federal troops. The protest ended in November when some strikers returned to work at lower wages and others left the city. Mining and smelting declined in the state as demand fell after the war. In the era which followed the post war adjustment, agriculture provided new financial growth, as did the city's continued role as a manufacturing, transportation, trade, and service center. Some buildings erected during the period displayed new stylistic influences, including Moderne and Art Deco.<sup>41</sup>

Downtown Denver benefited from new construction during the 1920s, including the addition of buildings which strengthened 17th Street's dominance as a financial center. In 1921, the U.S. National Bank (later Guaranty Bank) at 817 17th Street was completed. The \$500,000 brick and limestone building was erected by prominent Denver businessman John A. Ferguson and

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<sup>38</sup>Edgar C. MacMechen, ed., *Robert W. Speer: A City Builder* (Denver, Colorado: Robert W. Speer Memorial Association, 1919).

<sup>39</sup>Michael Paglia, Rodd L. Wheaton, and Diane Wray, *Denver: The Modern City* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1999), 16.

<sup>40</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 2 April 1918, 9; Barbara Norgren, "A.T. Lewis & Son New Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," March 1994; and Thomas H. and R. Laurie Simmons, "A.T. Lewis & Son Department Store National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form."

<sup>41</sup>Leonard and Noel, 176.

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designed by Fisher and Fisher. The U.S. National Bank occupied the first floor, and insurance companies had offices on the upper floors. The building was described as one of the largest erected in Denver during the years immediately following World War I.<sup>42</sup> In 1926, Midland Savings Building, designed by Fisher and Fisher, was completed at 444 17th Street. The building was headquarters of the Midland Savings and Loan Company, one of the city's most respected financial institutions of the early twentieth century. Founded in 1891, the organization became the largest savings and loan firm in Colorado and one of the largest in the nation by the 1920s.<sup>43</sup>

The 16th Street shopping district also thrived during the 1920s. In 1922 Steel's Corner, 1555 Welton Street, was erected, part of a nationwide chain of stores which sold everything from candy and bakery goods to clothing, home furnishings, and automotive supplies (all items under \$20.00). Merrill Hoyt designed the four-story corner building, which featured glazed terra cotta, a frieze with naturalistic designs, and an elaborate cornice. The store included a five-hundred-seat cafeteria called Persian Gardens, open daily from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m., with dancing and after-theater parties in the evening. Nearly 100,000 people attended the store's grand opening in December 1922, when sales totaled \$50,000 and departments ran out of stock. On the third floor, the establishment featured a six-room bungalow displaying home furnishings and accessories. The Mary Lincoln candy department boasted a soda fountain and bakery. The store's successful opening did not determine the course of its subsequent history. In 1923, a damage suit filed against the New York-based L.R. Steel Company caused the firm to go into receivership. Architect Merrill Hoyt was forced to sue for unpaid bills. The building was soon converted to a series of retail shops with offices on the upper floors.<sup>44</sup>

National chain stores achieved great success in Downtown Denver during the twentieth century. In addition to firms such as Steel's, Golden Eagle, Kress, and Sears, which erected their own buildings, a number of enterprises leased storefronts in existing structures. F.W. Woolworth, which opened in the Symes Building in 1921, reflected this trend. The largest of the company's chain of stores, the Downtown Denver Woolworth's provided a diversity of merchandise which earned it the nickname "browser's paradise." Smaller specialty chain stores also located in downtown buildings, including Walgreen's Drug Stores (three locations by 1939), Lerner's Ladies Apparel, and a number of shoe outlets (Florsheim, Nunn-Bush, and Thom McAn). Colorado companies with several outlets, such as Stover's Candies and Scholtz Drugs, also found downtown a profitable location. Chain stores offered affordable merchandise for downtown workers, families living in the downtown area, and outlying residents who took the streetcar into the city center.

<sup>42</sup>R. Mark Taylor, V. Rottman, and H. Wilson, "U.S. National Bank National Register Nomination Form," 3 September 1993; *Denver Post*, 30 January 1996, 1C; *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 January 1993, 34; United States National Bank Denver Inventory Form, 5DV843.16, 7 July 1983.

<sup>43</sup>*Denver Post*, 12 August 1926; Denver Building Permit #7169, 22 October 1925; Noel and Norgren, 122.

<sup>44</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 5 March 1922, 9; Noel and Norgren, 204-205; Denver Building Permit #651, 3 March 1922.

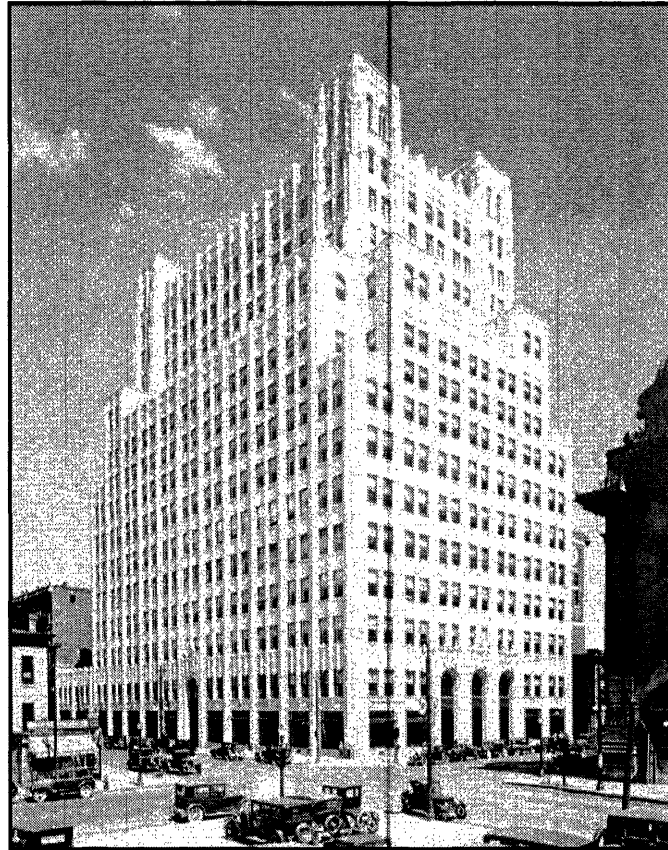


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The Telephone Building (1929) at 14<sup>th</sup> and Curtis streets was the tallest building in the downtown area until the 1950s. SOURCE: Authors' Collection.

With the completion of the fine new Neusteter Department Store on 16th Street, the thoroughfare was referred to as "the Fifth Avenue of Denver." Designed by Fisher and Fisher at 16<sup>th</sup> and Stout streets, the new gray granite and brick building was completed in 1924. Meyer and Max Neusteter had established their upscale women's clothing firm in 1911 in a building which was incorporated into the new five-story store. The firm continued to operate at the site until 1985.<sup>45</sup>

One of the longest-operating independent businesses in Downtown Denver, Davis and Shaw Furniture Company, moved to 1434 Champa Street in 1928. In 1899 Richard E. Pate, Sr., and his brother-in-law, Fred Davis, had founded the firm, which originally opened a store near 15th and Larimer. The Classical Moderne style new building, designed by Fisher and Fisher, featured a glazed terra cotta exterior and a suspended cast iron marquee.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup>William C. Jones and Kenton Forest, *Denver: A Pictorial History from Frontier Camp to Queen City of the Plains* (Boulder, Colo.: Pruett Publishing Co., 1973), 168; *Historic Denver News*, January 1988, 5.

<sup>46</sup>*Denver Post*, 16 February 1975; Denver Inventory Form, 5DV843.01, 1983 and 1993.

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The only major building erected north of Welton Street in the downtown area during the 1920s was the Art Deco setback (or terraced) style Mountain States Telephone headquarters designed by William N. Bowman at 931 14th Street. Other Bell System buildings in cities such as New York and St. Louis had previously been erected in the style, which was also known as "American Perpendicular." The fifteen-story Denver building was completed in 1929. Denver's zoning code allowed three-foot additions to a twelve-story height for each set back of one foot, thus influencing the design of the building, which became the tallest in Colorado upon completion and continued to hold that title until the 1950s. The Denver-produced white glazed terra cotta and brick walls sat on a granite base, and the façade featured a two-story arcaded entrance area with a coffered ceiling. Doors, lighting fixtures, and grilles were cast iron, and Allen True murals depicting the "History of Communications" decorated the lobby. The building opened nearly fifty years from the day that telephone service was first introduced in Denver, and it served as the telephone company's headquarters for fifty years.<sup>47</sup>

In 1929 Montana Fallis designed an Art Deco style headquarters for Buerger Brothers at 1732 Champa Street. The firm, a regional manufacturer and distributor of barber and beauty shop supplies, had been founded in Pueblo in 1885. The five-story building featured such Art Deco elements as geometric and floral ornament produced by the Denver Terra Cotta Company. The new headquarters displayed the products and equipment sold by the company, provided a meeting place for professionals in the barber and beauty business, and demonstrated new methods of "beauty culture." The completed construction was described as "a monument to forty-six years of hard work, confidence in the West, and a real desire to serve best in this particular business." Buerger Brothers remained in the building until 1972.<sup>48</sup>

By the 1920s, Downtown Denver faced a major problem resulting from the growing numbers of workers and shoppers who wished to drive private cars into the area. Parking sites on downtown streets became increasingly scarce, and buses parked at curbs downtown increased traffic congestion. A private, one-hundred-car garage with rear elevator was operating in the early part of the decade at 1645 Court Place. In 1929 the seven-story Art Deco style Bus Terminal Parking Garage at 1730 Glenarm Place addressed the problem. The building, a work of the engineering firm of Shankland and Ristine, featured a concrete exterior divided vertically by pilasters which extended above the roof and spandrels with geometric, floral, and fauna designs. This "Union Depot of the Highways" provided space for the arrival and departure of more than fifty inter-city buses daily, as well as parking spaces for more than five hundred cars. Several auto and bus touring companies also had offices in the building. In the same year, a multi-story parking garage completed at 1420 Stout Street became the Denver Motor Hotel. Designed by G. Meredith Musick, the six-story building had an Art Deco façade of gray brick with

<sup>47</sup> *Denver Post*, 13 April 1947, 1 August 1967, 22 December 1967; *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 December 1967; Noel and Norgren, 123, 133, 155; *Municipal Facts*, January-February 1929, 7.

<sup>48</sup> Diane Wray, "Buerger Brothers Building National Register Nomination Form," Noel and Norgren, 125; *Denver City Directories*, 1929-1973; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 24-25; Sally Everett, "Art Deco Days," *Colorado Heritage* (1989): 23; *Colorado Manufacturer and Consumer*, 16 (1931): 19..

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cream-colored terra cotta trim and a patented double spiral ramp system to facilitate auto parking.<sup>49</sup>

Downtown Denver was not only the region's premier financial and shopping district, but also offered various forms of entertainment. Motion picture theaters were abundantly erected in the area during the 1910s through 1930s. Curtis Street was "Theater Row," with so many brightly lit marquees that Thomas Edison called it "Denver's Great White Way." The erection of the Denver Theater on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in 1928 and the completion of the Paramount across the street two years later represented later construction of the golden age of motion picture palaces and reflected shifting patterns of development. Called "Colorado's best example of the Art Deco style," the Paramount Theater designed by Temple Buell featured the work of the Denver Terra Cotta Company. The theater opened in 1930 with the silent film "Let's Go Native," starring Jeannette MacDonald and Jack Oakie. Publix, Paramount Picture's operating company, sited the theater to compete with more than a dozen other movie theaters in the downtown area. The building was finished during a transitional time in the motion picture business when silent films were giving way to "talkies." Although the composition of the theater was altered to reflect this change, it was still equipped with luxuries such as a splendidly ornamented lobby, indirect lighting, and a neon marquee. The Paramount also housed a feature of silent movie days, a Publix One Wurlitzer organ equipped with twin consoles. Among the many outstanding ornaments of the Art Deco style interior were Vincent Mondo's tapestries, a vaulted sunburst ceiling, cut glass chandeliers, Egyptian lights, and Italian marble. The Paramount is the only remaining historic theater of the many that once drew audiences to Downtown Denver.<sup>50</sup>

A square block of downtown was converted to a popular park after construction of a new City and County Building, which has been called "the finest single monument of the City Beautiful period." The design of the monumental public building in Civic Center was the work of thirty-nine Denver architects who organized the Allied Architects Association of Denver to accomplish the project. The completion of the new City and County Building in 1932 rendered the old Arapahoe County Courthouse at 16<sup>th</sup> and Court Place obsolete. Many local citizens would protest the city's selling of the park as a site for commercial construction in the 1950s.<sup>51</sup>

Only a few significant buildings were added to Downtown Denver during the Great Depression. Architect J.J.B. Benedict updated the Colorado Building at 1609-15 16th Street in 1935 with an outstanding Art Deco terra cotta exterior. Originally known as the Hayden, Dickinson, and Feldhauser Building and built in 1891, the structure had first served as a department store. Claude Boettcher purchased the property in 1902 and converted it to offices with a diverse group

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<sup>49</sup>Denver Chamber of Commerce, *Denver*, 21(11 July 1929):1; Noel and Norgren, 137; *Denver Post*, 18 December 1953.

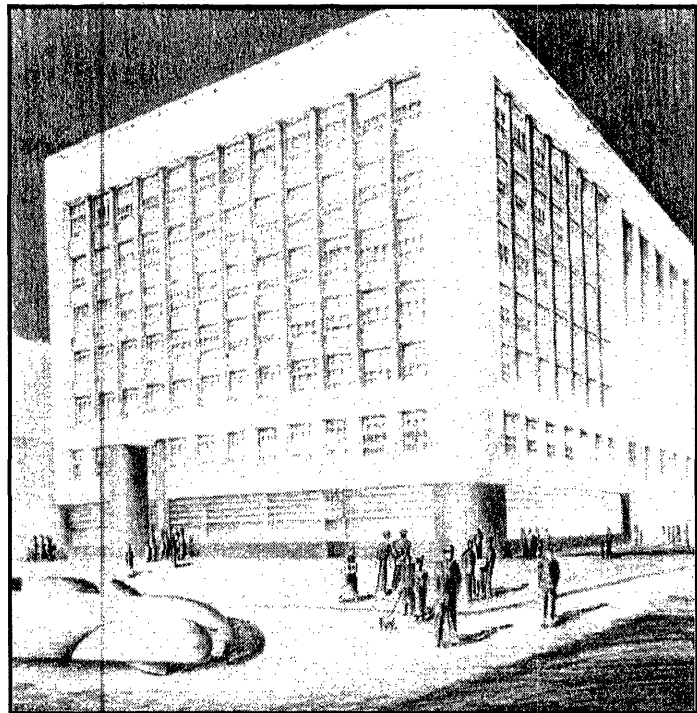
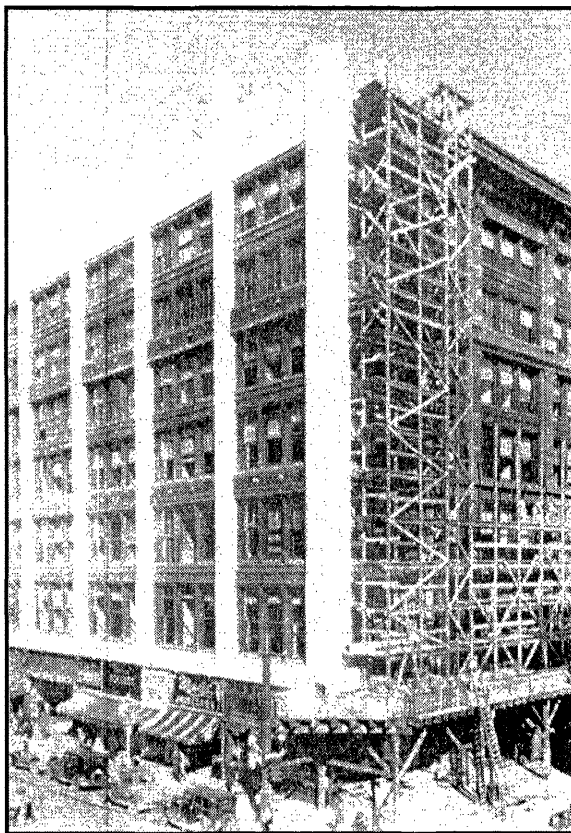
<sup>50</sup>Tamra S. Ohan, "Paramount Theater National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," 18 June 1980; Everett, 21; *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 April 1993, 7C; *Historic Denver News*, October 1985, 1; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 22-23.

<sup>51</sup>Noel and Norgren, 174-175.

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of tenants. In 1909, a Frank Edbrooke-designed addition had increased the building to seven stories. In announcing the expensive remodeling in the midst of the Great Depression, owner Claude K. Boettcher noted that business conditions had been assessed and that "to discuss whether the prospects for the future of Denver are bright is no longer necessary. The city's steady progress has not been and will not be interrupted." Following the remodeling, the building attracted real estate, insurance, law, accounting, and general offices, as well as retail shops on the first floor.<sup>52</sup>



J.J.B. Benedict's 1935 Art Deco terra cotta recladding of the Colorado Building at 16<sup>th</sup> and California streets (left) was one of the major construction projects of the Depression years. The 1938 streamlined Moderne style New Railway Exchange Building (designed by Fisher and Fisher), at 909 17th Street, was a highpoint of new construction for the period. SOURCES: Noel and Norgren, 125 and 133.

Another Depression-era project was the completion in 1938 of the streamlined Moderne style New Railway Exchange Building (Title Building), designed by Fisher and Fisher, at 909 17th Street. The black granite and white limestone building was constructed on the site of a nineteenth century Railway Exchange Building adjacent to the 1909 Railway Exchange Addition designed by the same firm. Financed by the estate of John Ferguson, the new building provided

<sup>52</sup> *Denver Post*, 26 July 1935, 15; *Rocky Mountain News*, 15 September 1935, 5.

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offices for a variety of railroad and communication workers. The street level housed ticket offices, while the upper floors contained the transmission offices of Western Union.<sup>53</sup>

Federal agencies in Denver expanded during the 1930s New Deal era, leading architect G. Meredith Musick, Sr., to pronounce Denver the "second capital" of the country. Employees of the federal government were scattered in offices around the downtown, including the Telephone Building. Federal agencies supervised public works projects which employed hundreds of citizens. As the country edged closer to war, substantial public works funding was allocated for expansion and updating of military installations.<sup>54</sup>

After Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, America began to examine all areas of military preparedness. The strategic desire for inland locations for military bases and defense plants with adequate transportation facilities, labor force, and other existing infrastructure made Denver a logical choice for wartime installations. Existing military posts, such as Lowry Field and Fitzsimons Army Hospital, received infusions of federal funds. As the conflict escalated, new federal facilities were created, including the Denver Ordnance Plant (now the Denver Federal Center) and Buckley Field. Companies such as Winter-Weiss and Gates Rubber retooled to produce items needed for the war effort. As the only population center of any size in the vicinity, Denver reaped the bulk of the benefits and problems of the military and defense build-up. The war emergency limited nonessential construction during the years of the conflict.

***Downtown Denver Growth After World War II, 1946-1973***

Following the war, many servicemen who had been stationed at local military posts returned to Denver to live, stimulating a sustained period of growth and prosperity. The population of the city rose in the postwar era, although more slowly than that of surrounding suburban counties, which overtook the core city by 1970. Writing in 1949, Charles Graham and Robert Perkin described Denver as the "reluctant capital" of the Rocky Mountain West: "Colorado's cowtown is the agricultural, mining, livestock, and manufacturing capital of a vast region. Even more dominantly, and certainly more self-consciously, it is the commerce capital of the region." Graham and Perkin stated that Denver was "contentedly disinterested in its own continuing growth, abhorrent of risk-taking, chary of progress." The attitude of the city's power elite toward postwar development appeared to be summed up by Denver's seventy-two-year-old Mayor Benjamin F. Stapleton, when he responded to questions about lack of housing: "Oh, well, if all these people would only go back where they came from, we wouldn't have a housing shortage." In 1947, Denver elected thirty-five-year-old Quigg Newton as mayor, instilling youth and new

<sup>53</sup>In the 1970s, the building was acquired by the Chicago Title Insurance Company and renamed the Title Building, and in 1998 it was renovated to become the Hotel Monaco. *Rocky Mountain News*, 24 January 1937; Noel and Norgren, 133 and 137; John M. Tess, "Railway Exchange Addition and New Building National Register Nomination Form," 30 December 1996; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 26-27.

<sup>54</sup>*Rocky Mountain News*, 4 May 1939, 1; *Denver Post*, 26 May 1940, 7.

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energy in the position.<sup>55</sup>

Population growth in new residential areas of Denver and its suburbs drew some commercial investment and shoppers away from downtown after the war, and business and property owners scrambled to find new ways to attract consumers. Some firms, such as the Cottrell Clothing Company, updated the appearance of historic buildings in hopes of competing with newer enterprises. In 1948-50 Cottrell's totally remodeled a 1915 building at 601 16<sup>th</sup> Street, producing an elegant design with an exterior clad with Virginia greenstone and Travertine marble. Governor Ed Johnson attended the ribbon cutting ceremonies for the store's grand opening.<sup>56</sup>

As the suburban areas adjacent to Denver gained population during the postwar years, the use of the automobile for commuting to work became increasingly important. While ground-level parking lots and parking garages existed in Downtown Denver, more capacity was needed, particularly after the trolley streetcar system was abandoned in 1950 in favor of buses. A 1952 bond issue funded construction of two multi-story parking garages in Downtown Denver on Stout and Champa streets. Downtown commercial projects of the late 1950s also provided parking as an integrated component of development.

Although local financiers were conservative in lending money for new construction, funding came from other financial centers, and outside developers planned major projects to revitalize Downtown Denver. New Yorker William Zeckendorf dramatically influenced the future of Denver's Central Business District with innovative redevelopment philosophies and the construction of award-winning modern buildings designed by noted architect I.M. Pei. Zeckendorf viewed downtown Denver as a site with much potential for new construction. He reasoned that although the suburbs were growing, the downtown area would continue to decay unless it could be revitalized. Zeckendorf noted that Denver needed additional office space to accommodate the growth of business. In 1952, he persuaded Mayor Quigg Newton and the city council to repeal Denver's twelve-story building height limit to clear the way for a twenty-three-story office tower.<sup>57</sup>

Zeckendorf intended the office project as part of his plan to redirect the development of the city and revitalize the southern end of the downtown area. Designed by I.M. Pei with Henry Cobb, Mile High Center, completed in 1955, was an innovative International style office tower with an aluminum and steel woven design and absence of ground level retail space, a landscaped plaza, and an arched exposition hall. Special amenities included year-round air conditioning (despite local objections that Denver "didn't need it"), music piped to the open spaces until midnight for

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<sup>55</sup>Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, "Denver: Reluctant Capital," in Ray B. West, Jr., editor, *Rocky Mountain Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1949), 281; and Leonard and Noel, 240.

<sup>56</sup>*Denver Post*, 6 August 1950, 26, 27 September 1950, and 9 July 1948; *Rocky Mountain News*, 21 June 1931, 17 October 1938, and 10 July 1948; and *Cervi's Journal*, 28 September 1950.

<sup>57</sup>Construction of the complex was delayed by the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-1953). William Zeckendorf, *The Autobiography of William Zeckendorf* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 117.

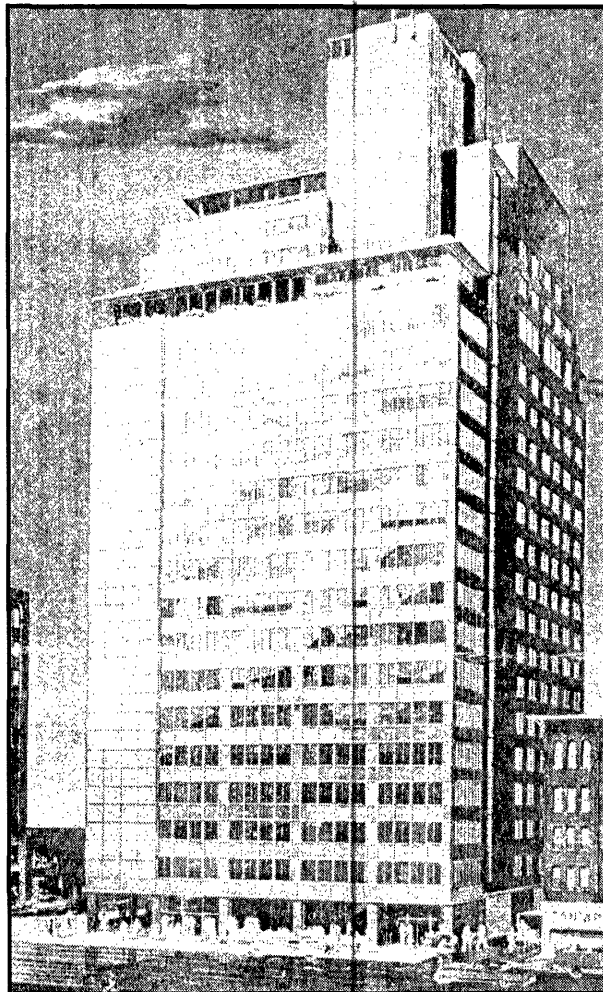
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the pleasure of those taking evening strolls, and a reflective pool stocked with live trout. Zeckendorf called the building "an office complex ahead of its time," and *Architectural Forum* opined that its builders "attacked the inertia of codes, costs and conservatism that holds back much of urban design." The building's prominent location, size, and design made it an instant visual landmark. The project also completely remodeled the 1929 Sears building to the north as part of the complex.<sup>58</sup>



The twenty-three story Denver Club Building at 17th and Glenarm streets was Downtown Denver's first modern high rise building of the postwar period. SOURCE: Denver Club pamphlet, Denver Public Library.

<sup>58</sup>The complex was dramatically altered in the early 1980s, losing several of its original elements and gaining an atrium addition to the tower designed by Philip Johnson. Zeckendorf, 117-118; "Denver's Mile High Center," *Architectural Forum*, 103(November 1955), 129.



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Also attracted by postwar Downtown Denver's development potential were two Texas brothers, Clint and John Murchison. The Murchisons convinced the Denver Club, which had been founded in 1880 as a social group for prominent Denver business and professional men, to sell its venerable headquarters on 17th Street as the site for a modern office tower with club facilities. As the building's appointment with the wrecking ball neared, one member is reported to have complained, "Everything of historical value typical of the early history and growth of Colorado and Denver must be blown up or torn down, with much fanfare, for the benefit of foreign or domestic private and profit-seeking interests."<sup>59</sup>

The new Denver Club Building's tenants reflected a surge in the local gas and oil industry, with five petroleum companies occupying their own floors in the building. The \$6.5 million high-rise was notable for being the first building in Colorado with dual ownership (accomplished through enactment of a special state law), with the Murchisons owning the lower floors and the Denver Club possessing the clubhouse floors. The building was reportedly 100 percent Denver designed and Denver built. Designed by Denver architects Raymond Harry Ervin and Robert Berne, the Denver Club was constructed in 1954 in a race with I.M. Pei's Mile High Center to become the first new skyscraper completed in the city after World War II. The Denver Club Building garnered the honor, as its steel frame was finished eleven days before its competitor. The twenty-three-story International style building had a base faced with polished green granite and a tower trimmed with panels of polished green manufactured stone divided horizontally by bands of green-tinted windows and satin aluminum spandrels. Architectural historian Rodd Wheaton has judged the building "Denver's answer to New York City's Lever House of 1952 by Skidmore Owings and Merrill."<sup>60</sup>

The Murchisons also commissioned Raymond Harry Ervin to design a twenty-eight story office tower (Murchison Tower/First National Bank Building) at Seventeenth and Welton, which became part of the First National Bank's facilities when completed in 1958. The construction was a result of the decision of the First National, the first chartered national banking firm in the city, and the International Trust Company, the city's oldest trust company, to consolidate and form one of the largest banks in the country. The institution initially occupied the lower level and first four stories of the cast stone, aluminum, and glass building, and had a two-story lobby with forty tellers' windows. A parking wing featured drive-in banking. The twenty-eight-story International style building was the tallest in the Rocky Mountain region when it opened and included the 26 Club on the twenty-sixth floor and a sky deck observatory on the roof that was open to the public from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. The dedication ceremonies for the building were televised on local stations, and the *Denver Post* asserted that it was "one of the most beautiful structures in the country."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Christine Whitacre, *The Denver Club, 1880-1995* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., and the Denver Club, 1998), 95.

<sup>60</sup> *Rocky Mountain News*, 21 April 1953, 12, 3 May 1953, 5 May 1953, 18, 21 December 1954, 5, 28 January 1954, 8; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 36-37.

<sup>61</sup> Eugene H. Adams, Lyle W. Dorsett, and Robert S. Pulcifer, *The Pioneer Western Bank—First of Denver:*



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A much smaller, Expressionist style bank building was erected for Colorado Federal Savings and Loan Association at 200 16<sup>th</sup> Street in 1958. An article in *Architectural Record* noted that William Muchow Associates of Denver designed the building to contrast with its merchant neighbors by including large expanses of masonry without windows. The building, which featured quartz terrazzo exterior panels, also integrated function and aesthetics with economic considerations. The concrete folded-plate roof provided a less costly way to span the interior without columns. The building later became the site of the first McDonald's restaurant in Downtown Denver.<sup>62</sup>

The oil industry, which had flourished in Colorado during the 1920s, was revived during the postwar period by new discoveries in northern Colorado as well as other regional production sites. Numerous exploration and production companies located in Denver, and the industry supported its own Petroleum Club for members of the industry, founded in 1948 by Bill and Maury Goodin. The 1957 Petroleum Club building was described as the only "Denver-owned, Denver-financed major building" of the period. Denver Architect Charles D. Strong designed the Formalist style office building and club headquarters at 110 16th Street, completed in 1957. It was believed that such a fine building would put Denver on a level with other oil centers in the country, such as Los Angeles and Houston.

The fourteen-story, five-sided building featured a ground floor of polished black granite and cantilevered upper stories divided into bays by panels of white porcelainized enamel and gray-blue spandrels. The building was composed of reinforced concrete and steel, with an "atomic core" leading to a bomb shelter in a subbasement. Columbia Savings & Loan Association was the principal commercial occupant of the building, occupying the basement and first floor, while oil and gas companies occupied other offices. The facilities of the financial institution included the only savings and loan drive-through service in the city at that time. Other special features included air conditioning, artesian water, a lunch room and coffee shop, high speed passenger elevators, and an auditorium with stage and film projection booth. In 1961 Columbia Savings installed a carillon identical to that at the Air Force Academy, which played tunes such as the Star Spangled Banner and the U.S. Air Force song. The fortunes of the club flourished in the 1950s, waned in the 1960s, and boomed from the early 1970s until the oil market collapsed during the 1980s.<sup>63</sup>

At the end of the decade, Claude K. Boettcher, owner of the Brown Palace, funded the erection of a \$7 million Brown Palace West (later Comfort Inn), which addressed what was considered a

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1860-1980 (Denver: First Interstate Bank of Denver, N.A., 1984); "New Home of the First National Bank," in the files of Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy, circa 1957; *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 March 1956, 37 and 7 August 1958, 21; *Architecture* (March 1988): 94.

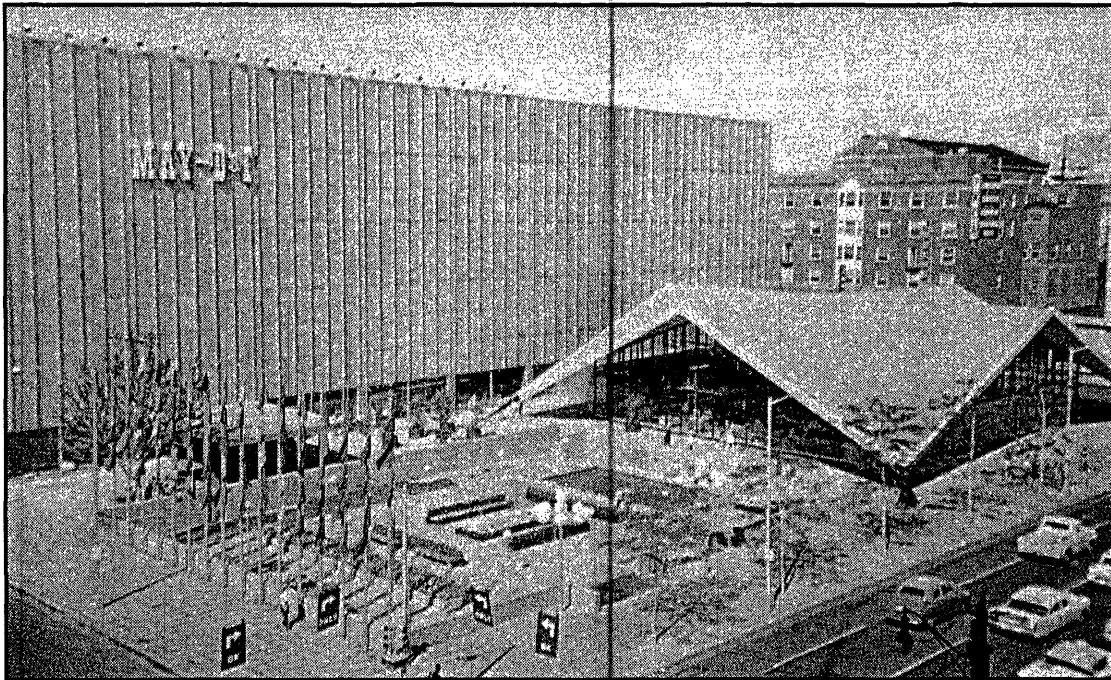
<sup>62</sup>*Architectural Record*, February 1959; *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 March 1962; *Denver Post*, 27 July 1958, 3; *Cervi's Journal*, 28 November 1957, 3.

<sup>63</sup>*Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 21 January 1954; *Denver Post*, 8 April 1948, 14 July 1954, 23 November 1956, 28 September 1957, 10 September 1961, 3D, 20 December 1992, 1H; *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 January 1954, 22 September 1957, 38, 5 March 1970, 61.

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critical lack of first class hotel accommodations in the city. Erected across Tremont Place from the original hotel and connected to it with an underground passageway and a second-story bridge, the building was one of the major postwar developments in Downtown Denver in the 1950s. Local newspapers speculated that the hotel might provide some competition for the Hilton Hotel. The new Brown Palace building almost doubled the capacity of the original hotel, adding three hundred new rooms and a ballroom and required special ordinances allowing the erection of the connecting structures and the closure of Tremont Place during their completion. The building was designed to attract business travelers, and had smaller rooms than the original hotel, with executive type furnishings which would not interfere with daytime use of the rooms for business conferences. The opening of the glamorous second-story ballroom in April 1959 attracted Hollywood celebrities and prominent Denverites who danced to the music of Frankie Masters.<sup>64</sup>



The 1958-60 Courthouse Square project included the May D&F Department Store with a hyperbolic paraboloid entrance, a high-rise Hilton Hotel (not pictured, to the left), and a plaza area that housed a skating rink in winter. SOURCE: historic postcard view.

William Zeckendorf purchased Courthouse Square, the downtown park formerly the site of the courthouse, and planned a hotel, retail, and parking complex for the site. Zeckendorf's "hope was to build a downtown retailing center so dazzling that it would bring the suburban shopping dollar back to the city." Architect I.M. Pei's concern for including landscaped open and

<sup>64</sup>Rocky Mountain News, 7 October 1956, 8, 12, 27 October 1956, 13, 26 April 1959, 5; Denver Post, 1 March 1957, 3, 15 May 1957, 21.

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recreational space as part of the commercial development set a much imitated precedent.<sup>65</sup> The complex included a precast concrete twenty-one-story hotel (1550 Court Place) with patterned curtain wall of native red granite aggregate, a shopping complex with paraboloid entrance pavilion and four-story department store, a landscaped plaza with skating rink, and an overpass and underground tunnel connecting the hotel and department store (all but the hotel have been greatly altered or demolished). This was the first significant project to integrate a department store, hotel, and parking in any downtown area in the nation. According to the Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute, the Hilton Hotel "represented the first large-scale use of architectural precast panels as cladding on a building. The project was a major factor in the development of the precast concrete curtainwall industry." The development became the prototype for revitalization of other aging downtowns and its concepts influenced other projects in Denver. The hotel, which opened in April 1960, has been called "one of the best mid-century buildings downtown." The building received an Award of Merit from the American Institute of Architects upon its completion.<sup>66</sup>

Several long-time Denver enterprises reinvested in the Central Business District during the 1960s by erecting new corporate facilities or expanding and updating old ones. In 1963, Colorado National Bank on 17<sup>th</sup> Street needed more space and was faced with the question of whether to remain downtown and enlarge its existing 1915 building or to move to an entirely new site. The original design had anticipated expansion at a future date, and the bank decided to stay. An award-winning \$4.5 million project designed by John B. Rogers and Jerome K. Nagel provided three stories of additional office space on top of the original building and used the same type of marble as the original construction. Bank President Melvin J. Roberts announced that "this is now one of the most functional and modern banking houses in the West. And it still looks like a bank." The addition, which took two years to complete, was the first phase of the bank's long-term plan to redevelop the entire block between 16th and 17th, Champa and Curtis streets. By keeping the original building despite its construction challenges, the bank helped continue the rebirth of Downtown Denver.<sup>67</sup>

Another bank which had survived the Panic of 1893 demonstrated its commitment to Downtown Denver through a major construction project completed in 1962.<sup>68</sup> Western Federal Savings, founded as Industrial Federal Savings in 1891, erected a twenty-four-story skyscraper as "evidence of our faith in this area's continuing expansion." Raymond Harry Ervin designed the Formalist style bank with a three-story base with polished granite and a pierced aggregate sunscreen. The twenty-one story tower had concrete panels at its base and alternating metal

<sup>65</sup>Pei designed the building in conjunction with Rogers-Butler and Araldo Cossutta.

<sup>66</sup>*Architectural Forum*, (August 1960); Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 34-35; *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 February 1961, 73; Zeckendorf, 135; "The Fifty Most Significant Precast Concrete Projects," *Ascent* (Winter 2004):11.

<sup>67</sup>*Denver Post*, 17 February 1963, 1D and 31 March 1965, 36; Noel, *Growing Through History*, 55-119; Noel and Norgren, 110.

<sup>68</sup>The building was erected on the former site of the Embassy Hotel and the California Building, whose demolition was one of the largest razing jobs of the postwar period.

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panels and tinted glass divided by vertical aggregate columns. Anthony T. Heinsbergen, Jr., of Los Angeles designed the lobby, which featured blue granite, walnut and teakwood, terrazzo floors, and murals depicting early Denver buildings.<sup>69</sup>

In the same year, Public Service Company completed a Formalist style office tower at 550 15<sup>th</sup> Street to consolidate its operations under one roof. The twelve-story steel frame building designed by Berne, Muchow, Baume and Polivnick of Denver was faced with "sunset red" granite with stainless steel trim and had "narrow slits" for windows to keep out heat from sunlight and increase effectiveness of interior lighting. As the headquarters of the utility, the building became a showcase for its products, and included "nearly every conceivable type of lighting fixture," as well as the first gas filled electric transformer ever produced. Melting equipment in the sidewalk surrounding the building eliminated the need for snow shovels. During the first decade of its use, the walls of the penthouse were illuminated with colored lights at night, making the building a visual landmark downtown.<sup>70</sup>

In the mid-1960s the successful preservation and redevelopment of Larimer Street, which had once been the heart of the city's business district, demonstrated that restoration of historic buildings was an economically viable alternative to demolition. During the same period, the Skyline Urban Renewal Project formulated plans to demolish a large section of historic commercial buildings in an area between Speer Boulevard, 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Curtis Street, and the alley between Larimer and Market streets.<sup>71</sup> Voter approval for the Skyline Project came in 1967, as did the Denver City Council's approval of a Historic Preservation Ordinance and creation of a Landmark Preservation Commission. Historic Denver, Inc., a private, non-profit organization advocating preservation, was founded three years later.<sup>72</sup>

Brooks Towers at 1020 15<sup>th</sup> Street, completed in 1968, was the first high-rise residential development in downtown Denver. The forty-two story apartment building, which also contained offices and street-level retail stores, was the tallest building in Denver until 1978. The Executive Tower, 1405 Curtis Street, a hotel and office development was added on the western end of the block in 1972.

In 1968, the Denver Branch of the Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank broke with established tradition and built its headquarters at 1020 16th Street instead of the city's financial center on 17th Street. The innovative building, referred to as "a bank that doesn't look like a bank,"

<sup>69</sup> *Denver Post*, 22 January 1961, 1E, 25 July 1962, 14 October 1962, 10; Thomas J. Noel, *Rocky Mountain Gold* (Tulsa, Ok.: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 245-246; *Rocky Mountain News*, 23 June 1961 and 20 May 1962, 54; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 50-51.

<sup>70</sup> *Denver Post*, 7 August 1960, 1E, 1 March 1962, 74, 15 March 1962, 88; *Rocky Mountain News*, 30 August 1959, 5; *Architectural Record*, August 1964.

<sup>71</sup> Demolitions began in 1969. Few historic buildings were preserved within the boundaries of the Skyline project.

<sup>72</sup> Denver Landmark Preservation Commission, *Annual Report, 1988* (Denver: Landmark Preservation Commission, 1988).

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incorporated walls of white pre-cast aggregate concrete that resembled limestone, solar screening, and a setback first story. The monumental Formalist style bank was designed by a partnership of William C. Muchow and Associates and Donald L. Preszler of Ken R. White Co. At the time of its completion, the bank was described as having "the most modern and tightest security system" of any financial institution in the country. Extensive landscaping included a sunken parking lot. Construction of the new building was necessitated by the tremendous expansion of operations of the branch during the 1960s, and the structure was designed for an addition of two stories at a later date. The award-winning building was described as "a good example of dignified federal architecture."<sup>73</sup>

Two major office buildings were added to Downtown Denver at the beginning of the 1970s. The 1971 Prudential Plaza complex, which covered an entire block southeast of 16th and Arapahoe, included a twenty-six-story office tower and a low, triangular building containing retail shops and restaurants. The Prudential development was the first major commercial project completed in the Skyline Urban Renewal District. The First National Bank North Tower, erected at California and Welton streets, was situated adjacent Raymond Harry Ervin's 1958 high-rise and setback from 17<sup>th</sup> Street to provide space for a landscaped plaza. The thirty-two-story office tower with concrete and glass curtain wall was designed by the New York architectural firm of Welton Becket and Associates and completed in 1973.<sup>74</sup>

While some of the blocks in the Skyline area were redeveloped by the early 1970s, others remained undeveloped or were used as parking lots for years. Park Central, completed in 1973 on the block bounded by Arapahoe and Lawrence streets between 15th and 16th, has been described as "one of the most complicated projects in downtown." The work of Denver's William Muchow & Associates, with George Hoover as chief designer, in the Late Modern style, the building was visually distinguished by its black anodized aluminum and solar bronze glass exterior and varying height levels, which included three unified office towers. The design was recognized with an American Institute of Architects National Honor Award and a Western Mountain Region Design Award. The building abutted Skyline Park, a linear park along three blocks of Arapahoe Street designed by Lawrence Halprin Associates.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>The Tabor Opera House and the city's first U.S. Customs House on this site were razed. *Rocky Mountain News*, 14 July 1968, 39; *Denver Post*, 14 July 1968, 1J; *Symposia* 4(December 1969)7: 18.

<sup>74</sup>*Architecture* (March 1988): 94; *Historic Denver News* (March 1989).

<sup>75</sup>The park was redesigned and rebuilt early in the twenty-first century. John Pastier, "Evaluation: Singular

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The Arab oil embargo of the United States in the wake of the Arab-Israeli War of 1973 stimulated greater domestic energy exploration and production. Denver was well-positioned to become a major regional headquarters and service center for energy exploration in the 1970s. During the oil boom, Denver became the nesting place of the construction crane, as several of the devices were simultaneously at work on downtown high-rise buildings. In addition to various projects in upper downtown, DURA's Skyline Urban Renewal Project was in full development during this period. Like the impact of the redevelopment of downtown after World War II, the energy boom resulted in widespread changes to the built environment of the Central Business District.<sup>76</sup>

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Structure in Denver," *AIA Journal* 69(February 1980), 37; *Denver Post*, 2 May 1995, 3C; Denver Foundation for Architecture, 39 and 43.

<sup>76</sup>Donna McEnroe, *Denver Renewed: A History of the Denver Urban Renewal Authority* (Denver, Colorado: The Denver Foundation, 1992), 489-90; Paglia, Wheaton and Wray, 7.

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Property Types<sup>77</sup>

1. **Name of Property Type:** Commercial Buildings Associated with the Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880-1973

*Description.* Commercial buildings, as befits the purpose of the Central Business District, are the most numerous type of resource present in the geographic area defined in Section G. Such buildings were erected throughout the 1880-1973 period, utilizing a variety of architectural styles and materials and varying in scale from one-story to thirty-three stories. Some commercial buildings of the area embrace a single retail use, exemplified by large department stores (such as Denver Dry Goods and A.T. Lewis & Son) and specialty stores (such as Davis and Shaw and Cottrell's). Other commercial buildings included offices on upper floors and retail stores or a financial institution at street level. There are also a few examples of commercial buildings housing fraternal, social, or other groups on an upper floor (or floors), such as the Masonic Temple, Odd Fellows Hall, the Denver Club Building, and the Petroleum Club Building, with offices on other floors and retail operations on the ground floor.

*Significance.* Commercial resources of Central Business District are significant under Criterion A for their association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the city's history and under Criterion C for their architecture. These resources may be significant principally in the fields of architecture, commerce, and community planning and development. A few members of the property type may also be eligible in other fields, such as communications or social history. The principal department stores and other retail businesses of the Denver metropolitan area were located in Downtown Denver from the nineteenth century through the 1950s. The radial streetcar system and lack of competing suburban shopping areas supported the continued success of 16th Street and adjacent thoroughfares as the regional shopping district. Historians Stephen Leonard and Thomas Noel judged that, prior to the 1950s, the commercial areas of suburban towns and the neighborhood centers within Denver were "pale compared to Sixteenth Street." Colorado's most successful and long-lived department stores opened flagship buildings on 16th Street within downtown, including Joslin's, A.T. Lewis & Son, the Denver Dry Goods Company, Daniels and Fisher, Neusteter's, and the May Company. A diversity of specialty stores, such as the Davis and Shaw Furniture Company, the carpet business of Philip Feldhauser, and Kistler Stationery also completed buildings in Downtown Denver, while many small businesses shared large buildings with other merchants. Commercial enterprises such as Buerger Brothers built headquarters buildings where they maintained

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<sup>77</sup>There are a few property types present in Downtown Denver which are not discussed below due to the small numbers of resources they represent. The National Register Bulletin on *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* notes that "property type analysis is not necessary on this form for unique or rare resources because the information can appear on the registration form within the multiple property submission." Examples of two such resources currently listed on the National Register are: Brinker Collegiate Institute (The Navarre), 1725--1727 Tremont Pl., 10/28/1977 (an educational resource) and Paramount Theater, 519 16th St., 11/21/1980 (an entertainment resource).



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company offices, displayed their products, and offered specialized training. Many office buildings included retail space on their ground floors. The area contains several buildings which have housed restaurants that played an important role in the city's social life, such as the Baur Building, a favorite stop for candy and ice cream from the 1890s through the 1950s.<sup>78</sup>

Seventeenth Street, "the Wall Street of the Rockies," attracted the premier financial institutions of the state, including the First National Bank of Denver, the American National Bank, the U.S. National Bank, Guaranty Bank, Colorado National Bank, Midland Savings, and numerous other banks, mortgage houses, insurance firms, and brokerage companies. Smaller firms, such as Capitol Federal Savings and Loan and the Hibernia Bank, occupied prominent locations on streets near 17<sup>th</sup>. Downtown Denver was also the home of significant office buildings which housed businesses which influenced the development of the city, including such firms as the Ideal Cement Company, Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, the Denver Gas & Electric Company, the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad, the Denver Fire Clay Company, Western Union Telegraph Company, the Colorado & Southern Railway, and the Security Life Insurance Company. The city's temple of business, the Chamber of Commerce building, was also erected in Downtown Denver. Some of the commercial buildings erected downtown were also significant for their association with fraternal orders or clubs. Odd Fellows, Masons, Denver Club, and Petroleum Club members were associated with significant office or retail buildings with lodge or club rooms from which the affairs of the city were observed and influenced.

Commercial buildings in Downtown Denver are significant for their association with the lives of persons influential in the city's past. Prominent persons who have a direct association with downtown historic resources through their construction of buildings and operation of businesses include such important Denver citizens as J. Jay Joslin, Michael J. McNamara, Max and Meyer Neusteter, C.M. Kittredge, Washington McClintock, Philip Feldhauser, Judge George Symes, A.C. Foster, John J. Reithmann, William H. Kistler, Walter S. Cheesman, and Charles and Claude Boettcher. Outside developers also played a significant role in the history of downtown by erecting important buildings, including William Zeckendorf of New York and Texas developers Clint and John Murchison.

Commercial buildings in Downtown Denver are significant for their architecture and include some of the most significant representatives of architectural styles and methods of construction of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the state. The region's most prominent developers and architects collaborated to produce buildings which represented the finest professional designs, highest quality craftsmanship, and the most superior construction materials available. Excellent and acclaimed representations of a variety of architectural styles are found in Downtown Denver, including Italianate, Renaissance Revival, Richardsonian Romanesque, Commercial/Chicago, Sullivanese, Neoclassical Revival, Art Deco, Moderne, International,

<sup>78</sup>Leonard and Noel, 411-413.



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Formalist, and Late Modern styles. Most of the designs were applauded by local critics and many also received regional and national recognition.

Commercial resources include many significant examples of the work of recognized architects and master builders. Most of Denver's most prominent architectural firms of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries are represented by buildings within the Central Business District. In most cases, the design of a downtown building was among the most significant accomplishments of a Denver architect's career. Among the Denver architects represented by buildings in Downtown Denver are: Emmett Anthony, John J. Huddart, Frank Edbrooke, A. Morris Stuckert, Frederick Sterner, Willis Marean and Albert Norton, William and Arthur Fisher, Montana Fallis, John J. Stein, Robert Willison, William Bowman, Harry W.J. Edbrooke, J.J.B. Benedict, Robert Roeschlaub, Merrill Hoyt, Charles D. Strong, Raymond Harry Ervin and Robert Berne, John B. Rogers and Jerome K. Nagel, and William C. Muchow. Notable eastern architects also were commissioned for buildings in the district, including Andrews, Jacques and Rantoul, Joseph R. and Richard H. Hunt, I.M. Pei, and Welton Becket and Associates.

Commercial buildings in the Central Business District include several buildings which represent rare or distinctive methods of construction. The Feldhauser Building is believed to be the only remaining building in the city retaining its full cast iron front, which was one of the most important innovations for the design of commercial architecture in the nineteenth century. One of the city's first all steel frame buildings, the Symes Building, is within the area. The region's first major reinforced concrete building, the Ideal Building, is also a component of the downtown. The Gas & Electric Building was nationally recognized for its exterior lighting system. The first skyscraper completed during the redevelopment of Downtown Denver after World War II, the Denver Club, is within the area. The Denver Club is also notable for being the first building in Downtown Denver to be erected atop reinforced concrete pilings with bell-shaped bases. Zeckendorf's hotel, retail, and parking complex set a precedent for inclusion of landscaped open and recreational space as part of a commercial development and was the first significant project to integrate the three functional components in the country. The three-story expansion of Colorado National Bank in the early 1960s represented a creative solution to the problem of expansion of a historic building within a developed downtown area. The Petroleum Club included an "atomic core" leading to a bomb shelter, which reflected concerns of the Cold War era.

*Registration Requirements.* To be eligible for listing under this property type a building or district must: a) be located within the geographic area defined in section G; b) have been originally used for a commercial purpose or converted to such a use during the historic period; c) have been built between 1880 and 1973 (inclusive); d) possess historical associations related to the development of Downtown Denver; and e) possess sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance. In addition, resources less than fifty years of age must meet National Register criteria consideration G and possess "exceptional significance" in order to be eligible.

Alterations to storefronts should not automatically render a resource ineligible for listing, as

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changes to entrances, store windows, clerestories, and finishes at street level are typical in successful downtown areas competing over the years for the attention of shoppers. A resource should be considered eligible if the alterations do not detract from the overall design, character, and proportions of the building. Such alterations may have a greater impact on the eligibility of a low-rise building than on a high-rise one, as thereby reflecting a modification to a greater proportion of the overall historic fabric of the building. In some cases storefront redesign by long term tenants may reflect a building's most significant historic appearance.

For a district to be nominated under this property type, its component resources must as a group have been associated with the development of Downtown Denver during the historic period and must possess sufficient historic integrity to convey a sense of the original urban fabric of the area. Other property types listed in this cover, rare property types not discussed, and noncontributing buildings may be included in such a district, so long as commercial buildings are the predominate type of resource therein.<sup>79</sup>

*Listed Properties.* The properties below are currently listed in the National Register and meet the registration requirements of this property type. The geographic area of the MPDF contains approximately sixty-three total examples of this property type that fall within the period covered by the context.

Boston Building, 828 17th St., 9/18/1978  
Buerger Brothers Building and Annex, 1732-1740 Champa St., 9/25/1998  
Chamber of Commerce Building, 1726 Champa St., 1/16/2001  
Daniels and Fisher Tower, 1101 16th St., 12/3/1969  
Denver Dry Goods Company Building, 16th and California Sts., 1/9/1978  
Equitable Building, 730 17th St., 1/9/1978  
First National Bank Building, 818 17th St., 2/23/1996  
Foster, A. C., Building, 912 16th St., 1/9/1978  
Ideal Building, 821 17th St., 6/9/1977  
Joslin Dry Goods Company Building, 934 16th St., 8/14/1997  
Kistler Stationery Company Building, 1636 Champa St., 4/14/1997  
Kittredge Building, 511 16th St., 12/2/1977  
Lewis, A. T., and Son Department Store, 800--816 16th St., 12/23/1994  
Lewis, A. T., New Building, 1531 Stout St., 8/19/1994  
Masonic Temple Building, 1614 Welton St., 11/22/1977  
Midland Savings Building, 444 17th St., 2/2/2001  
Neusteter Building, 720 16th St., 11/30/1987  
Public Service Building, 910 15th St., 7/20/1978  
Railway Exchange Addition and Railway Exchange New Building, 1715 Champa St. and 909 17th St., 10/17/1997  
US National Bank, 817 17th St., 3/25/1994

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<sup>79</sup>Given their relatively small numbers and spatial distribution, it is not believed possible to have an historic district(s) where domestic or transportation-related property types might predominate.

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**2. Name of Property Type:** Domestic Buildings Associated with the Commercial Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880-1973

*Description.* Domestic buildings, such as hotels, rooming houses, and apartment buildings were essential supporting buildings within the Central Business District, providing lodgings for visitors as well as affordable accommodations for downtown residents. Extant examples of this resource exhibit construction dates from 1892 through 1965, inclusive. Hotels range from the modest three-story brick St. Thomas and DeVon hotels to the elegant nine-story red sandstone Brown Palace (1892) to the twenty-story Brown Palace Annex (Comfort Inn) built in 1960. The Colonial Hotel, 1506 California Street, is an example of a 1901 rooming house. The area's only apartment building is the forty-two-story Brooks Tower (1965), which was the city's tallest building until 1978. Other significant high rise hotels in the area include the twenty-one-story Hilton Hotel (1960) and the twenty-story Executive Tower Inn (1972). Lodging buildings generally featured retail businesses on the first story, as well as an entrance lobby.

*Significance.* Domestic resources in Downtown Denver may be significant under Criterion A for their associations with events contributing to the broad patterns of the city's history and under Criterion C for their architecture. Domestic buildings may be significant in the fields of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, and social history. Domestic resources include one of the most famous hotels in the West, substantial hotels of the second half of the twentieth century associated with local entrepreneurs or nationwide hotel chains, the area's first high-rise apartment building, and a variety of small hotels which played an important role in providing convenient and economical housing. The Brown Palace Hotel welcomed world leaders and celebrities as the city's finest first class hostelry and served as the elite social center of Downtown Denver. The Hilton Hotel was associated with the redevelopment of Downtown Denver after World War II. Representative smaller hotels and rooming houses, once found throughout Downtown Denver and now increasingly rare, served travelers and downtown workers. Brooks Tower is associated with the densification of Downtown Denver through its role as the area's first high-rise apartment building.

Domestic resources are significant for their representation of a variety of architectural styles, which include Richardsonian Romanesque, International, and variations of Twentieth Century Commercial. Domestic resources represent the work of prominent architects such as Frank Edbrooke, C.W. Tabler, Willis Marean and Albert Norton, and I.M. Pei. Domestic resources such as the Brown Palace Hotel and the Hilton Hotel possess high artistic values reflected in the quality of their design and materials, including significant interior features.

*Registration Requirements.* To be eligible for listing under this property type a building must: a) be located within the geographic area defined in section G; b) have been originally constructed and used for a hotel, rooming house, or apartment purpose; c) have been constructed between 1880 and 1973 (inclusive); d) possess historical associations related to the development of

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Downtown Denver; and e) possess sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance. In addition, resources less than fifty years of age must meet National Register criteria consideration G and possess "exceptional significance" in order to be eligible.

Alterations to the ground floor level of such buildings should not automatically render a resource ineligible for listing, as changes to entrances, windows, and finishes at street level are typical in downtown areas. A resource should be considered eligible if the alterations do not detract from the overall design, character, and proportions of the building. Such alterations may have a greater impact on the eligibility of a low-rise building than on a high-rise one, as thereby reflecting a modification to a greater proportion of the overall historic fabric of the building. Resources which retain a sense of an original lobby/entrance and other public areas possess greater significance.

*Listed Properties.* The property below is currently listed in the National Register and meets the registration requirements of this property type. The geographic area of the MPDF contains nine examples of this property type falling within the period covered by the context.

Brown Palace Hotel, 17th St. and Tremont Pl., 4/28/1970

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**3. Name of Property Type:** Transportation-Related Buildings Associated with the Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880-1973

*Description.* As the Central Business District developed, transportation facilities were needed to provide offices, service, and storage for mass transit systems such as streetcars and buses and to maintain and accommodate private automobiles for workers, residents, and visitors. Extant transportation-related resources are from two to eight stories in height, ranging from the small Denver Garage at 1437 California Street, completed in 1917, to multi-level parking garages built to serve adjacent commercial buildings erected after World War II. Construction materials utilized include brick, decorative terra cotta, and concrete. The eight-story Denver Tramway building built in 1912 at 1100 14<sup>th</sup> Street is perhaps the most elaborate example of this property type. It housed the offices of the city's streetcar system and had a large attached car barn. The six-story Terminal Building, built in 1929 at 1730 Glenarm Place, is another large-scale example of this property type. It included a bus depot, office space for bus and touring companies, and vehicle parking on the upper stories. Buildings housing strictly office or headquarters functions of railroads or other transportation companies (such as the Railway Exchange Building and the Rio Grande Building) were categorized as commercial buildings rather than transportation buildings.

*Significance.* Transportation-related resources in Downtown Denver may be significant under Criterion A for their associations with events contributing to the broad patterns of the city's history and under Criterion C for their architecture. Transportation-related buildings may be significant in the fields of architecture, commerce, community planning and development, and transportation. Significant buildings associated with the impact of transportation technology on urban life were erected in Downtown Denver. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries buildings associated with street railway systems were built in the Central Business District. In the early decades of the twentieth century buildings associated with America's increasing reliance on the automobile were erected. As the regional center for shopping and office functions, the area was among the earliest in the state to acquire multi-story parking garages such as that erected in 1917 at 1437 California Street. Some of the most substantial and architecturally significant parking garages in the city were erected in the 1920s and later. The Bus Terminal Parking Garage on Glenarm Place was one of the finest examples of the era, including both a large car parking area and facilities for the arrival and departure of buses. Parking garage facilities became a major component of most commercial construction during the period after World War II, and stand alone garages were also erected. Drive-up facilities associated with developments of the post World War II era also reflected the impact of the automobile.

Transportation-related resources in Downtown Denver are significant for their architecture, representing distinctive characteristics of types, periods, and methods of construction. The Romanesque Revival style Denver City Cable Railway building exhibits the expertise of the city's

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brick masons. Among the most notable parking garages in the area were those designed in the Art Deco style in the 1920s. Some of the buildings were significant for their inclusion of special features, such as the Denver Motor Hotel's patented double spiral ramp system. Some transportation-related resources are significant for their design by important architects or engineers, such as the Bus Terminal Parking Garage of the firm of Shankland and Ristine, the Tramway Building of Fisher and Fisher, and G. Meredith Musick's Denver Motor Hotel.

*Registration Requirements.* To be eligible for listing under this property type a building must: a) be located within the geographic area defined in section G; b) have been originally constructed and used for a transportation-related purpose; c) have been constructed between 1880 and 1973 (inclusive); d) possess historical associations related to the development of Downtown Denver; and e) possess sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance. In addition, resources less than fifty years of age must meet National Register criteria consideration G and possess "exceptional significance" in order to be eligible.

Some alterations to such buildings should not automatically render a resource ineligible for listing, such as changes to entrances, windows, and finishes at street level. A resource should be considered eligible if the alterations do not detract from the overall design, character, and proportions of the building. To be eligible under this property type, the building's use as a transportation-related resource should be apparent from its exterior and not be obscured by subsequent alterations. Resources which still manifest transportation-related interior features (such as ramps to upper floors) or innovative parking technology possess greater significance.<sup>80</sup>

*Listed Properties.* There are two properties currently listed in the National Register which meet the registration requirements of this property type. The geographic area of the MPDF contains eleven additional examples of this property type falling within the historic period.

Denver City Cable Railway Building, 1215 18th St., 7/2/1979  
Denver Tramway Building, 1100 14<sup>th</sup> St., 1/5/1978

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<sup>80</sup>However, a transportation resource converted to a commercial use during the historic period might still be eligible if it meets the registration criteria for that type of resource.

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Geographical Data

Focus

The focus of this Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) is on Denver's commercial and retail core, the Central Business District. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing in the first half of the twentieth century, 16<sup>th</sup> Street (and to a lesser extent 15<sup>th</sup> Street and intersecting cross streets) emerged as the retail center of the Denver region, featuring flagship stores of the largest department stores in the area. To the east, 17<sup>th</sup> Street, the "Wall Street of the Rockies," developed as a financial center and office corridor, with taller buildings housing a variety of firms, but with an emphasis on banking and finance. Larimer Street to the north had initially served both needs for Denver residents. During the 1880s, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> streets rose in commercial prominence, and they supplanted Larimer Street following the Panic of 1893. Writing in 1981, historian Thomas J. Noel observed: "To this day, 16<sup>th</sup> is Denver's major retail shopping strip and 17<sup>th</sup> is the financial district."<sup>81</sup>

A study of changes in the Denver Central Business District (CBD) further supports the focus of this document. According to geographers Kenneth Erickson and Albert Smith, the CBD "is the focal point of commercial activity. . . characterized by retail stores and shops, business offices and institutions, a high volume of pedestrian traffic, and today, by high-rise buildings." Centered around Larimer and 16<sup>th</sup> streets in the 1880s, the CBD moved steadily southeastward and contracted during the 1900-1980 period, reflecting "spatial shift and increasing verticality." The area addressed by this MPDF is within the area defined by the Denver Planning Office as the CBD Core.<sup>82</sup>

Boundary

The geographic area covered by this MPDF is shown on the map at the end of this section and is described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of Curtis and 18<sup>th</sup> streets; thence southeast along 18<sup>th</sup> Street to Broadway; thence south on Broadway to the north property line of 1740 Broadway; thence east along the north property line to Lincoln street; thence south along Lincoln to E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue; thence west along E. 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Broadway; thence south along Broadway to the southeast property line of 110 16<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southwest and northwest along the property line to Cleveland Place; thence southwest along Cleveland Place to 15<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 15<sup>th</sup> Street to Tremont Place; thence northeast along Tremont Place to 16<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Welton Street; thence southwest along Welton Street to 15<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southeast along 15<sup>th</sup> Street to the south property line of 550 15<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southwest and northwest along the property line to Welton Street; thence

<sup>81</sup>Thomas J. Noel, *Denver's Larimer Street: Main Street, Skid Row and Urban Renaissance* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1981), 18.

<sup>82</sup>Erickson and Smith, 50-51; Denver Regional Council of Governments, "Central Business District Definitions" (Denver: Denver Regional Council of Governments, August 1991), 27-28.



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northeast along Welton Street to 15<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 15<sup>th</sup> Street to California Street; thence southwest along California Street to 14<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 14<sup>th</sup> Street to Arapahoe Street; thence southwest along Arapahoe Street to 13<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 13<sup>th</sup> Street to the northwest property line of 1100 14<sup>th</sup> Street (the Denver Tramway Building); thence northeast along the property line to 14<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southeast along 14<sup>th</sup> Street to Arapahoe Street; thence northeast along Arapahoe Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northwest along 16<sup>th</sup> Street to the north property line of 1101 16<sup>th</sup> Street; thence northeast and southeast along the property line to Arapahoe Street; thence southwest along Arapahoe Street to 16<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southeast along 16<sup>th</sup> Street to Curtis Street; thence northeast along Curtis Street to 18<sup>th</sup> Street (the point of beginning). The discontiguous parcel on which the Denver City Cable Railway Building (1215 18<sup>th</sup> Street) is located is also included: beginning at 18<sup>th</sup> and Lawrence streets, thence northwest on 18<sup>th</sup> Street to the alley in the middle of the block; thence northeast along the alley to the northeast property line of 1215 18<sup>th</sup> Street; thence southeast along the property line to Lawrence Street; thence southwest along Lawrence Street to the point of beginning.

### Boundary Discussion

The geographic boundary was defined to exclude areas of recent demolitions and newer construction, distinctly different land uses, and different construction eras. As drawn, the boundary contains eighty-six resources built between 1880 and 1973, and twenty-five resources constructed after that date.

*Recent Demolitions and New Construction.* Since the mid-1990s, demolitions for new construction in the southwest portion of downtown have removed historic fabric and created a logical boundary for the MPDF area. Such areas of new construction include: the two square blocks now occupied by the 1990s Pavilions development (15<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> streets from Welton Street to Tremont Place); the six square blocks occupied by the 1990s Colorado Convention Center (Speer Boulevard to 14<sup>th</sup> Street from Stout to Welton streets); the three square blocks taken for convention center expansion in 2003-04 (Speer Boulevard to 14<sup>th</sup> Street from Champa to Stout streets); and the square block formerly occupied by the Denver Post building and several other structures demolished for construction of a twenty-first century convention center hotel (California to Welton streets from 14<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> streets). The area to the southwest is further diminished by several large surface parking lots.

*Different Land Uses.* Areas of land uses distinctly different from the commercial focus of this MPDF were also not included. To the west Denver Performing Arts Complex (DPAC) is excluded, as it is a complex of performing arts and entertainment venues. The newer construction (part of the Skyline Urban Renewal Project) came after the context defined for this MPDF. To the northeast, the enclave of federal government buildings were excluded from the MPDF boundary. They form a distinct, cohesive area of land use not associated with the commercial focus of downtown.

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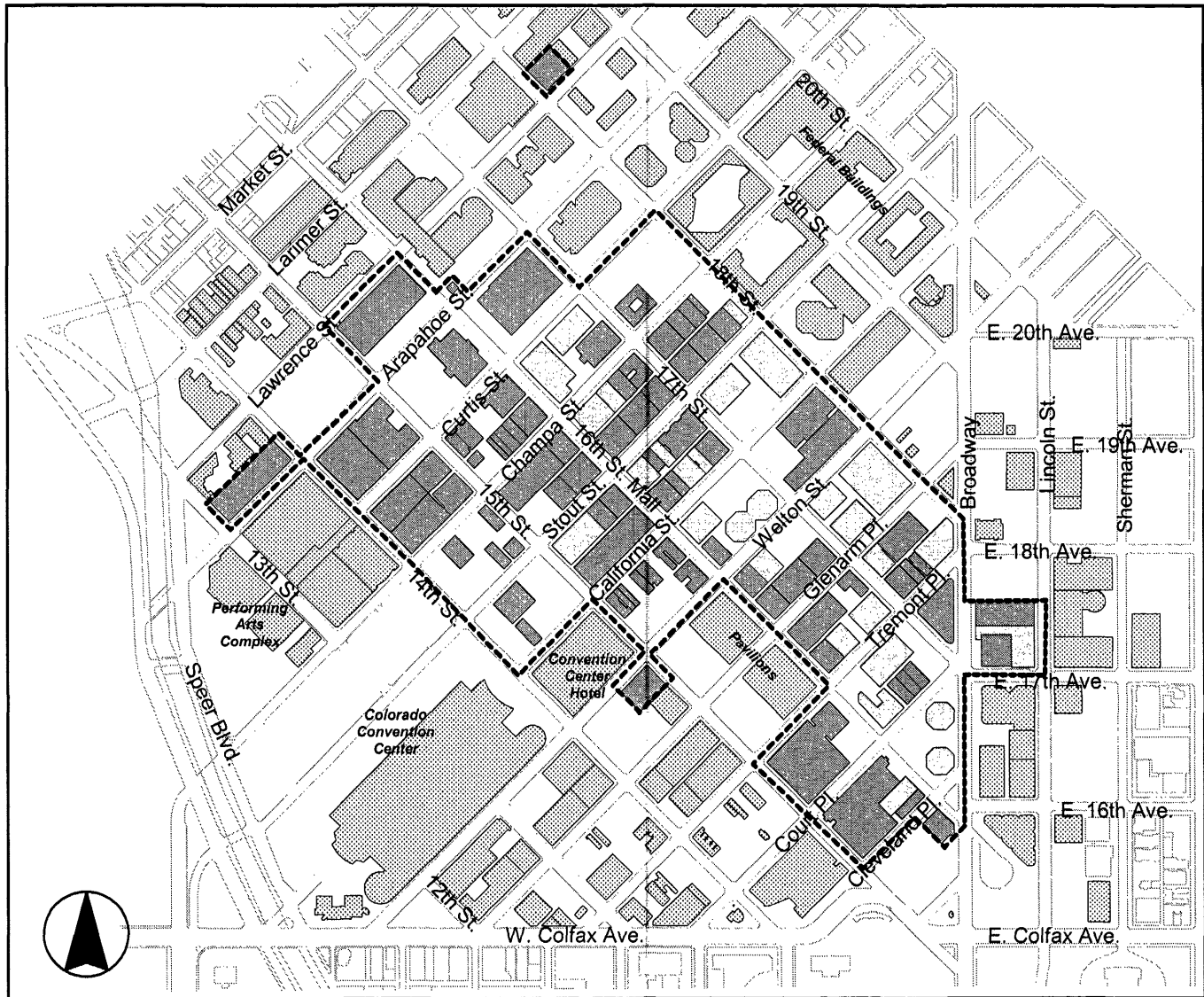
*Differing Construction Eras.* The area does not include most of the Skyline Urban Renewal District to the northwest. The Skyline project was approved by voters in 1967, and demolition of a thirty-block area began in mid-1969. Two of the earliest areas to be redeveloped (Park Central and Prudential Plaza) are included in the MPDF boundary. However, many of the blocks remained vacant or were used only as surface parking lots until the energy boom of the 1970s stimulated construction, thus falling outside the time period covered by this MPDF's historic context. For similar reasons, the area east of Broadway (with the exception of the early Mile High Center project) was not included as it represents a later construction era and includes large surface parking lots.

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**Geographic Area.** The dashed line shows the boundary of the area for which this MPDF was prepared. Within the boundary, buildings constructed 1973 and earlier are shaded darker than post-1973 buildings.

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**Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

Two major survey efforts have taken place in Denver's downtown area in the past twenty years. In 1983, Ron Emrich and Barbara Norgren undertook a comprehensive survey of the Denver Central Business District, Lower Downtown, and the Platte Valley. More than six hundred buildings were recorded, including 298 in the Central Business District. Survey forms were produced for the project, but information on historical background, landmark status, significance, and references was prepared only for resources constructed prior to 1943. At the time of the survey, twenty-one buildings were individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places and another forty-five were evaluated as eligible for listing. A potential National Register district was identified, comprised of an irregularly-shaped area along 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and Champa streets.<sup>83</sup>

This Multiple Property Submission is based on an intensive survey of historic resources in the B-5 zone district of Denver's Central Business District conducted for the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission and the Denver Office of Planning and Community Development in 1992-93 by R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons of Front Range Research Associates, Inc. That project stemmed from the findings of a 1992 Denver Historic Preservation Community Consensus Committee, which recommended a citywide survey of historic properties. The examination of the B-5 zone was conceived as the first step in the citywide survey. The 1992-93 project updated previously recorded information, reevaluated buildings not previously determined to be eligible to be listed in the National Register and/or as Denver Landmarks, surveyed post-1945 buildings determined by Denver's Modern Architecture Preservation League to be significant, created a revised and expanded Downtown Historic Context, identified potential historic districts, and ranked the significance of all buildings in the zone based on Denver Landmark criteria. The two local historic districts identified were focused along 16<sup>th</sup> Street (reflecting "the historic role of 16<sup>th</sup> Street as downtown Denver's principal retail area") and 17<sup>th</sup> Street (representing "a compact and contiguous portion of Denver's historic 17<sup>th</sup> Street financial district").<sup>84</sup>

Utilizing the context, survey forms, and other information produced during the 1992-93 study, a local Downtown Denver Historic District was designated by the City of Denver on 30 December 2000. The innovative discontinuous district included forty-three contributing buildings identified during the previous study. The present MPDF boundary embraces forty of

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<sup>83</sup>Emrich and Norgren, 23, 28, and 34.

<sup>84</sup>R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, "B-5 Zone Historic Buildings Survey, Denver, Colorado," prepared for the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission (Denver: Front Range Research Associates, Inc., August 1993).

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the forty-three buildings within the district. The three resources not included in the geographic area of this MPDF are individually listed in the National Register: Denver Municipal Auditorium; W.A. Hover & Co. Building; and Trinity United Methodist Church.

Of the 111 buildings within the geographic area of this MPDF, twenty-five are currently individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Historic Denver, Inc., secured a Colorado State Historical Fund Grant (number 04-M1-018) to fund preparation of this form. The goals were to link previously listed properties to the history of the commercial development of Denver's Downtown Central Business District and to facilitate additional individual National Register nominations.

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