

# VIRTUAL FRIELD TRIPS – DENVER’S HISTORIC CIVIC CENTER

## Colorado State Capitol Building

The Colorado State Capitol building is four stories high. The central dome is 272 feet from the ground to the top. It is famous for the gold leafing, which weighs several hundred pounds. Denver citizens donated the gold because so much of the city's wealth and prosperity was based on gold mining. On the step facing West (the west face of to building is shown in the photo) is a marker that indicates that that step is one mile above sea level. This is the reason Denver is known as the "Mile High City." The Capitol contains 160 rooms.



*Colorado State Capitol building*

*Photo: N/A*

### More About This Topic

In 1886, architect Elijah Myers won a competition for the best design of the Colorado State Capitol building. Myers had also designed capitol buildings in such states as Utah, Idaho, Texas, and Michigan. His plan reflected 19th-century classical designs. The primary elements of the classical style included balance and symmetry and stately columns. Each of the four sides of the building have similar symmetrical bays. Myers was dismissed in 1889 and Denver architect Frank Edbrooke completed the building, basically following Myers' design.

## Colorado State Museum Building

The State Museum building is located to the south of the Colorado State Capitol building (across 14<sup>th</sup> Street). In the sub-basement of this building, there is a tunnel of stone and concrete that runs between this building and the Capitol building. The tunnel is no longer used as a walkway. Even so, the tunnel continues to have other uses. The equipment for heating, lighting, and ventilating the Museum, the Capitol, and the State Office building (to the north of the Capitol) is located under the Museum building.



*Colorado State Museum building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The Colorado State Museum building is an important one in the group of public buildings surrounding the Capitol. It is similar in style and proportion to the State Office building on the opposite side of the Capitol building. In the photo above, you can see how similar and balance the two sides are. The base of the building is made of dressed granite. The rest of the building is made of dressed marble. The building materials came entirely from Colorado. Frank Edbrooke designed this building. Edbrooke designed a wide variety of buildings in Denver during his long career. For many years, the Colorado State Museum building was the home of the State Historical Society of Colorado. After the Museum and Historical Society moved to its new building at 1300 Broadway in 1977, this building once again housed offices for Colorado legislators and their staffs.

## Colorado State Capitol Annex Building

The State Capitol Annex building is located at the corner of East 14th Avenue and Sherman Street. It is directly across 14th Avenue from the State Capitol and across Sherman Street from the State Museum Building. Because of the need for more space for state government offices, this building was built in 1939.



*Colorado State Capitol Annex building*

*Photo: N/A*

### More About This Topic

Although the design of the State Capitol Annex building is modern, it is rectangular and largely symmetrical. The North front (shown in the photo) also has a column effect. As a result, it fits in fairly well with the designs of the older, classically-designed government buildings around the Civic Center. The architects for this building were the Associated Architects for Colorado State Office buildings.

## Colorado State Office Building

Construction of the State Office building began in 1919 and was completed in 1921. Legislators had decided that the space in the State Capitol building was not sufficient for the growing needs of the state government. The building is located on Sherman Street, and is just across East Colfax Avenue from the

State Capitol building. A number of state boards, commissions, and executives offices occupy the building.



*Colorado State Office building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The State Office building is an important element in the group of buildings surrounding the State Capitol. It is complemented by the State Museum building located on the opposite (South) side of the Capitol. The roof style of the State Office building is semi-hip roof. This building also has a number of classical design elements. These include symmetry and balance. Most of the building materials were native to Colorado. These include Cotopaxi granite and Yule marble. The architect of this building was William Bowman.

### **Colorado State Archives Building**

This house was built in 1889 by Benjamin Woodward. It is therefore also known as the Woodward House. In 1941, the State of Colorado bought the house for the Department of Fish and Game. The state remodeled the house to make it suitable for offices. In 1948, an addition was added to the building in the rear. In 1963, the Fish and Game Department moved to new quarters and the house became the home of the Division of State Archives. The house is located at 1530 Sherman Street, next door to the State Office building.



*Colorado State Archives building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The house was built of red sandstone. It was built in a style common to the Victorian era in Denver (i.e., late 19th-century). The house was originally a single-family residence. It is one of the few remaining examples of late Victorian architecture in this area of the city. In the late 19th- and early 20th-century, many of Denver's most prominent and wealthy citizens lived in the Capitol Hill area. Many of these residences are now gone, replaced by high rise office and apartment buildings. This house is a visual reminder of what the area once looked like.

### **Civic Center Sunken Gardens**

The Greek Theater is located on the South side of the Civic Center park. Designed by the architects Marean and Norton, the open air theater was completed in 1919. The style is Greek Revival (hence its name). It is used for public religious services, concerts, square dancing, and other public functions.



*Civic Center Sunken Gardens*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The Voorhies Memorial (pictured) and the Greek Theater are at opposite ends of the Civic Center's sunken gardens. The Voorhies Memorial is on the North side of the park. The two memorials give balance to one another in classical fashion. The arch (center) of the Voorhies Memorial forms a gateway between downtown Denver and the Civic Center. Mr. John Voorhies gave Denver \$125,000 to build the memorial. The building was finished in 1921 and the fountains and the pool in early 1922.

### **Civic Center Sculptures**

The Bronco Buster is a bronze sculpture of a rider on a bucking horse. Alex Phimister Proctor created the sculpture. In 1920 John Kernan Mullen and Stephen Knight presented The Bronco Buster to the City of Denver. The sculpture is across a walk way from its companion sculpture, On The War Trail. Both pieces grace the Civic Center's sunken gardens.



*Bronco Buster*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

On the War Trail is a bronze statue of an Indian on a horse. Alex Phimister Proctor created this sculpture. The statue cost \$15,000. Stephen Knight gave it to the City of Denver in 1922. As a sidelight, Jackson Sundown or "Big Beaver" was the Indian model. He rode a horse named "Satan."

### **Old Denver Library Building**

The old Denver Public (Carnegie) Library was completed in 1910. The building is three stories high and also has a basement. It is 178 feet wide and 94 feet deep. The entrance of the building faces West Colfax Avenue. When the library was in this building, it contained book stacks that were seven floors high. The

book stacks ran from the floor nearly to the ceiling. The stacks were almost independent of the building's floors. They were connected only on the third floor of the building.



*Denver's Old Library building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The building style of the Old Denver Public Library is Greek Revival. One of the elements of this style is the columns across the front of the building. They extend from the base to the cornice of the roof. The roof itself is a semi-hip roof. The three floors are made of reinforced concrete, covered in tiles in the hallways. The stairs are made of marble. When in 1956 the Denver Public Library moved to its new building on Broadway, the Denver Board of Water Commissioners took over the building. Some remodeling was necessary to make the building useful as offices.

### **Denver City And County Building**

The City and County building of Denver is located on the West side of the Civic Center. It faces (and balances) the State Capitol building. In between is a broad expanse of landscaped open space of the Civic Center and the Capitol grounds. This urban park contains the sunken gardens, the sculptures and memorials seen elsewhere in this virtual tour. The long, low design of the City and County building was planned to preserve the view of the mountains from the State Capitol (from which this photo was taken).



*Denver City and County building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The building style of the Denver City and County building is Greek Revival. It covers an entire city block (including the grounds) and is four stories high. The roof of the central part of the building is gabled, while the rest of the building has a semi-hip roof. In addition to the columns fronting the entry way, the curved face of the building has connected columns. A very wide flight of stairs leads to a massive central entrance. There are two very large bronze doors in the entry way. Rising above the roof in the center part is the Speer Memorial Tower Clock and Chimes.

### **Denver Permit Center**

This building originally housed the University of Denver School of Law. At that time, it housed the law school, a law library, and an auditorium. In the recent past, the Denver Permit Center has occupied the building. Construction of the building was completed in 1960. The building is located at 200 West 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue, just across that street (to the South) of the Denver City and County building.



*Denver Permit Center*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

From an architectural point of view, what was the Denver Law Center building is of only secondary important in the Civic Center District. Even so, at the time that the Civic Center area south Historic District designation, the law center was deemed to have a functional important because it was very close to the Denver City and County building and to the Denver District Court. The architecture of the building is clearly modern. Its architects were Perkins & Will and Buell & Company.

### **Denver Mint**

Builders completed construction of the Denver United States Mint building in 1904. As you can see from the photo, much of what became Denver's Civic Center had not yet been built. In fact, the first plan for the Civic Center area was adopted the same year this photo was taken. You can see the Colorado State Capitol building in the distant background. The Denver City and County building, which the mint is now behind, would not be built for another 30 years.



*Denver Mint building*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The Denver United States Mint is located at West Colfax Avenue and Cherokee Street. The Denver City and County building now is located just beyond the Mint building in the photo to the left. The Mint building has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a Denver City Historic Landmark. John Knox Taylor was the supervising architect in Washington, DC, but the New York City firm of Tracy, Swarthwout and Litchfield designed the Mint building. Recent additions have detracted from the visual appeal of the building.

### **Byers-Evans House**

The Byers-Evans house was built by William N. Byers in 1893. Byers was the founder and editor of the Rocky Mountain News. In 1889, William G. Evans, son of territorial governor John Evans, bought the house. The building has been restored as a museum. The museum focuses on Colorado history as well as the story and artifacts of the Byers and Evans families.



*Byers-Evans house*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The Byers-Evans house is located on the southwest corner of Bannock and 13<sup>th</sup> Street. The rest of this block is occupied by the Denver Art Museum. The contrast between the very contemporary design of the Art Museum and the Victorian design of the Byers-Evans house is almost shocking. This house is on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a Denver City Historic Landmark.

### **Denver Art Museum**

The Denver Art Museum building was finished in 1971. It replaced the older museum building that had been on the same site. This building is to the south of the Civic Center proper. Its modern design is in sharp contrast to the classical styles of most of the structures comprising the Civic Center. The museum is located at 100 West 14th Avenue Parkway.



*Denver Art Museum*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

The architects for the Denver Art Museum were Gio Ponti of Italy and James Sudler, an American. As you can see in the photo, the exterior of the building has many different angles and has very strong vertical lines. The structure reminds the viewer of a fortress of some sort with narrow and random window openings. The top of the building looks like the parapets of a castle. This particular photo was taken from the South, early on a summer morning.

### **Denver Public Library**

The photo below shows the main entrance to the new Denver Public Library building. The project was completed in 1956. The DPL building lies between west 14<sup>th</sup> and west 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The latter is the South boundary of the Civic Center Historical District.



*Denver Public Library*

*Photo: N/A*

### **More About This Topic**

Despite the modern design of the original (new) Denver Public Library building, it fit in nicely with the classical design of the Civic Center and most of its structures. The architect for the original building was Burnham Hoyt. The 1995 additions to the original building are not so complimentary to the classical style. The 1995 additions (see more for more photos of the additions) were undertaken by Michael Graves and Klipp C.J. DuBois.