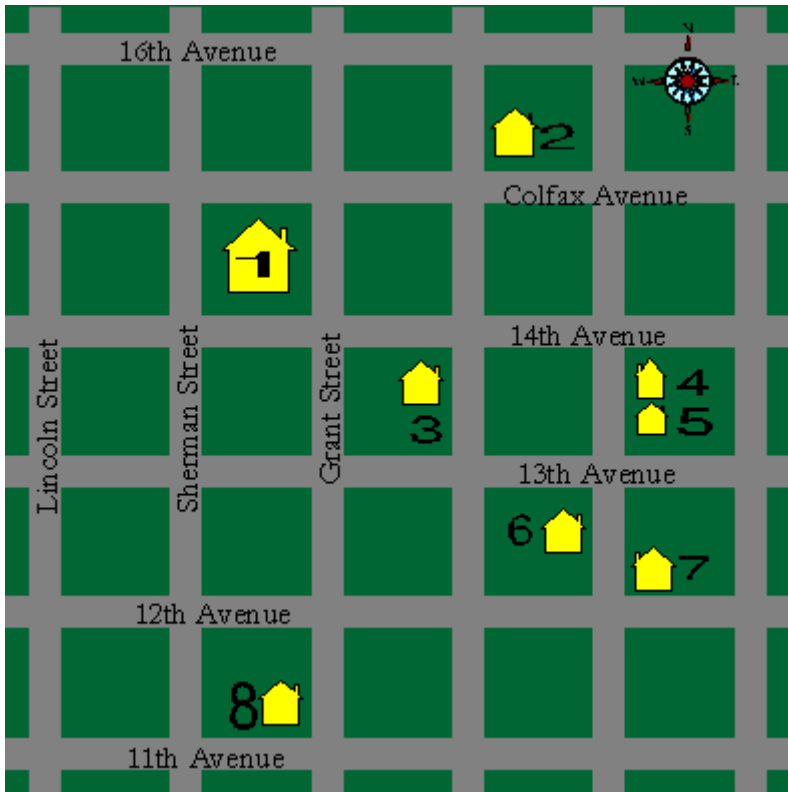


## Molly Brown's Unsinkable Neighborhood Virtual Walking Tour

Tour Molly Brown's Neighborhood, Denver's Historic Capitol Hill. Sponsored by the Colorado Digitization Program.

1. State Capitol Building
2. Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
3. Denver Woman's Press Club
4. St. Mary's Academy/Salvation Army
5. Molly Brown House Museum
6. Robinson House
7. Dunning-Benedict House
8. Sheedy Mansion



## **Capitol Hill's Humble Beginnings**

What we now know as Capitol Hill (specifically the area between present day 11<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Avenues and from the alley between Logan and Grant Streets to the half block west of Broadway) was once a dry-land farm owned and operated by H.C. Brown. Brown benefitted from the 1862 Homestead Act, which awarded up to 160 acres of land to anyone who would agree to live on and farm it for at least five years immediately following the claim. Brown lived in a cabin at Sherman and 12<sup>th</sup>. He hoped that "Brown's Bluff" would one day become a part of the city of Denver.

Brown's hopes came to fruition once water was brought into the area. In 1864, John W. Smith, who owned an adjacent homestead (that spread from present day 13<sup>th</sup> to Colfax and from Clarkson Street to the Grant/Logan alley), was hired to build a ditch to bring water to the area from the Platte River. This brought significant agricultural and residential growth. In 1867, Brown offered part of his land (the area from 14<sup>th</sup> to Colfax Avenues and from Grant to Lincoln Grant Streets) to build a territorial capital. By the 1870s, some of Denver's wealthiest residents, especially those who made their money in mining and railroads, began to build their homes on Capitol Hill, away from the vice and pollution of downtown.

The neighborhood changed considerably after the depression of 1893. Upper-middle-class homes began to creep into the neighborhood. In the 1920s apartment buildings began to appear. And in the 1930s, during the Great Depression, it was unusual to find an owner-occupied, single-family house. By the 1960s Capitol Hill began to experience urban renewal and some of the areas finest homes were demolished to make way for apartments and parking lots.

## 1. The Colorado State Capitol



Colfax and Lincoln  
Architecture: Corinthian with Greek Cross floor plan  
Architect: Elijah E. Myers  
Built: Begun 1886. Finished 1908.  
Cost: \$2.8 million

Henry C. Brown donated the land for Colorado's State Capitol building in 1867, fourteen years before citizens chose Denver for the state capital. Brown's land remained vacant for nearly twenty years. 500 architects from across the country were asked to submit plans in 1883. Unfortunately, the Board of Capitol Managers received only nine proposals. All were rejected. The Board requested plans again in 1885 and offered cash rewards to the top three. This time, they received twenty-one sets of plans. The Board selected Elijah E. Myers' "Corinthian" proposal. It took another twenty-three years to complete the building.

Colorado's Capitol Building was designed with all the modern conveniences: electricity, hot and cold running water, and steam heat. It even had its own artesian wells and an elevator. Tunnels beneath the building allowed water and coal to be moved from place to place without bothering people with dirt or workers.

While the "guts" of the building were modern, the exterior used ancient ideas. As Myers stated in 1886, "The great temples of the most advanced nations of antiquity - Egypt, Greece and Rome - all these were built in the classic style of architecture...of which Corinthian was the latest and most perfect and beautiful."

Myers' plans called for large corridors, tile floors, stained glass skylights, murals in the Rotunda and space for statues in the pediment. A person standing in the center of the Capitol basement can look straight up through the Rotunda to the dome hundreds of feet above.

The Board insisted that all building materials be from Colorado. South Beaver Creek Granite was used throughout the building. Lyons Sandstone was used in the foundation and walls. Colorado Onyx, extremely rare, was used for the wainscoting and pillar facings for the top three floors. When the supply of Colorado Onyx was gone, the basement was finished in white marble, possibly Yule Marble. Finally, the dome, rising 272 feet in the air, was covered with 200 ounces of pure Colorado gold.

Today, the Colorado State Archives hosts an excellent web-site for the Capitol Building at <http://www.archives.state.co.us>

## **2. The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception**

1530 Logan Street

Architecture: French Gothic Revival

Architect: Leon Coquard; Aaron Gove and Thomas F. Walsh

Built: 1902-1912

Cost: \$500,000

In 1880, eighteen years after Denver's first Catholic parish was established, the Immaculate Conception Cathedral Association was formed. The Association chose Detroit architect Leon Coquard, who began work on the plans in 1900. Denver architects Aaron Gove and Thomas F. Walsh completed the architectural work after Coquard became ill. Eight lots at the corner of Colfax and Logan were donated for the building by four leading Catholic businessmen -- J.J. Brown, John F. Campion, J.K. Mullen, and Dennis Sheedy. Margaret Brown raised money for the new church. Unfortunately, most of this money was lost when the Association made poor investments. The groundbreaking ceremony occurred in 1902, but the first cornerstone could not be laid until 1906. Construction of the Cathedral was completed in 1912.

Denver's high society attended the 11:00 am Sunday Mass. Margaret and J.J. Brown rented pew 6 for 25 cents per adult and 10 cents per child. Each Sunday morning, worshipers could see Margaret walk up the center aisle with her huge walking staff decorated with flowers and ribbons.

In 1979 Pope John Paul II named the cathedral a minor basilica -- only one of twenty-nine in this country. The term is used only for very important churches outside of Rome whose history, architecture, activities, and community service are central to the functioning of the Catholic Church. The cathedral was also honored when Pope John Paul II said Mass there in 1993.

This grand cathedral may be Denver's best example of French Gothic Revival architecture. It is made of Mississippian-age Indiana limestone, the same stone used in Saint John's Episcopal Cathedral less than one mile away. A total of seventy-five stained-glass windows light the interior of the church. Each unique window was made at the Royal Bavarian Art Institute of Germany. The interior stonework is very elaborate, particularly the carved altars of imported Italian Carrara marble. Colorado Yule marble makes up the vestibules, pillar bases, balustrades, baseboards, and confessionals.

### 3. Denver Woman's Press Club



1325 Logan Street

Architectural Style: English Cottage

Architect: Ernest Philip Varian and Lester Ernest Varian

Built: 1910

This small home was originally built in 1910 as a combination home and studio for artist George Elbert Burr and his wife. The home is a typical example of the English Cottage style. English Cottage architecture in America dates to the early 17th century when the first colonists arrived from England in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. 1325 Logan reflects the architectural elements described by Valerie Polino for these early colonists.

"The simplest form of English cottage architecture was a one-room house with a fireplace at one end, sometimes referred to as an end-Chimney structure. To gain more space the owner often built an attic or sleeping loft under the steeply pitched roof. Homes of indentured servants brought to the Massachusetts Bay Colony from England were similar to this one. Capped by a steeply pitched roof, the exterior encompassed only 500 square feet. One multi-purpose area served as the living room, dining room, kitchen workroom, and adult bedroom. A ladder ascended to a children's sleeping loft. The fireplace was the family's sole source of heat and primary source of evening light."

Burr's home is larger than Polino describes and, as seen in the historic photos, it was built with electrical light. Additionally, the large skylight gave Burr plenty of light while he painted or etched his famous landscapes. With these exceptions, however, 1325 Logan closely resembles the English cottages built by early American colonists.

The Denver Woman's Press Club, organized in 1898 by Minnie J. Reynolds, met in members' homes or hotel meeting rooms. By 1923 the Club had grown large enough that the members began looking for a permanent home to purchase. On September

16, 1924, the Denver Woman's Press Club purchased 1325 Logan from George Burr for \$9,000. Burr moved to Arizona to restore his health, but donated two of his paintings to the club.

Many of Denver's most notable women authors have belonged to the Club.

- Helen Black
- Libbie Block
- Helen Bonfils
- Margaret Tobin Brown
- Marian Johnson Castle
- Mary Coyle Chase
- Alice Polk Hill
- Mary Florence Lathrop
- Eleanor Lawney
- Mary Elitch Long
- Florence "Flossie" Cranell Means
- Leonel Ross Campbell O'Bryan (Polly Pry)
- Clyde Robertson
- Ruth Underhill
- Frances Belford "Pinky" Wayne
- Lenora Mattingly Weber

#### 4. Saint Mary's Academy/Salvation Army Building



1370 Pennsylvania Street  
Architecture: Neoclassical  
Architect: Unknown  
Built: 1911

The building at 1370 Pennsylvania Street has had many names: St. Mary's Academy, F.W. Woolworth Building, Parks School of Business, Salvation Army Building, and Pennsylvania Commons. The Sisters of Loretto established St. Mary's Academy on June 27, 1864. The school quickly became known as the finest girls' school in the West. Sister Pancratia purchased land at the corner of 14th and Pennsylvania to build a new home for her quickly growing school. The new building at 1370 Pennsylvania was completed in 1911. It was close to both the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, and the home of Margaret "Molly" Brown. In fact, Mrs. Brown donated money to the new school. According to the St. Mary's Academy history, "Denver's legendary Molly Brown was a neighbor and benefactor of the school. Among the many anecdotes of that era are tales of children running into Molly's backyard to retrieve balls accidentally kicked over the fence at recess."

The F.W. Woolworth Company bought the building in 1951 and turned it into offices when the academy moved to Cherry Hills. In 1968 it became the Parks School of Business. It was remodeled in the 1980s for offices. Today, it is known as Pennsylvania Commons and is used as the Salvation Army headquarters. 1370 Pennsylvania is built of red brick. This is unusual in a neoclassical building. Most buildings of this style are made of marble. More common to neoclassical architecture, however, are the linteled openings, colossal columns on either side of the main doors, and the flat roof.

## 5. Molly Brown House Museum



1340 Pennsylvania Street

Architectural Style: Queen Anne

Architect: William Lang

Built: 1889

Margaret "Molly" Tobin Brown was born in Hannibal, Missouri to working class Irish parents. Known as Margaret or Maggie, never Molly, she moved to Leadville, Colorado when she was 18. There she met and married James Joseph "J.J." Brown, also from a working class Irish family. In 1893, J.J. discovered the largest and purest vein of gold and copper ore known at that time. The Browns moved to Denver where they purchased the house at 1340 Pennsylvania in the fashionable Capitol Hill neighborhood for \$30,000 from Isaac and Mary Large. Margaret owned the home until her death in 1932. It was here that she returned after surviving the sinking of the Titanic and earning her nickname "Unsinkable".

Between 1932 and 1970, the house had five different owners. Each converted the original fourteen-room home into an apartment building or boarding house. Ceilings were lowered, rooms were subdivided and more kitchens and bathrooms were added. In 1970 the home was owned by Art Leisenring. Mr. Leisenring leased the building to the City and County of Denver for use as a "home for wayward girls". He noticed, however, that most of the single-family buildings on Capitol Hill were being demolished or converted into office buildings. Mr. Leisenring helped form Historic Denver, Inc. for the express purpose of saving the Molly Brown House from this fate in the future. The house was lovingly restored to its original floorplan and decorations of 1910. The Molly Brown House Museum opened its doors to the public in 1971 and sees more than 45,000 visitors each year. Today, Historic Denver is one of the country's largest, private preservation organizations. In addition to running the Molly Brown House Museum, Historic Denver is credited with successfully lobbying for historic landmark designations for numerous neighborhoods and buildings in the Denver area.

The Molly Brown House was built with both Manitou sandstone and rusticated Castle Rock rhyolite. It is one of the few buildings known to combine these two stones. The Queen Anne style is tempered by Romanesque Revival arches and rusticated stonework. Other common elements of the Queen Anne style are the four stained glass windows, wraparound porch and balconies.

## 6. Robinson House



1225 Pennsylvania Street

Architectural Style: Craftsman

Architect: Willis Adams Marean and Albert Julius Norton

Built: 1906

This beautiful home was built in the Craftsman style for Mary Byers Robinson. Robinson was the daughter of William Byers, owner of the Rocky Mountain News, and wife of W.F. Robinson, the founder of a printing company. The Craftsman style was simpler and encouraged handcrafted work and discouraged machine-made items.

The Robinson home displays a low-pitched, gabled roof, wide overhanging eaves, and exposed roof rafters. A mix of blond (light) brick, dark wood, and stucco highlight the design. A two-story bay window, hipped roof and wooden corbels can be seen from the street.

## 7. Dunning-Benedict House



1200 Pennsylvania Street

Architectural Style: Richardsonian Romanesque

Architect: William Lang

Built: 1889

William Lang designed this home in 1889 for Walter Dunning, a real estate developer. Mr. Dunning sold the home nine years later to Mitchell Benedict. The Benedicts owned the home until 1930, but rented it to others beginning in 1903. After the 1930 the house changed hands many times. It was used as a hotel, apartment building, office and a rest home. It currently houses law offices on the first floor and large apartments on the second and third floors and in the carriage house. The house is made of rusticated Castle Rock rhyolite. Notice both the rounded and angled towers and mixture of window styles. It is one of the best examples of Richardsonian Romanesque buildings in Denver.

## 8. Sheedy Mansion



1115 Grant Street

Architectural Style: Queen Anne

Architect: E.T. Carr and William Feth

Built: 1892

Cost: \$40,000

This amazing home was built on ten lots in 1892 for Dennis Sheedy, an important Denver businessman. Sheedy spared no expense in its construction. There are fifteen fireplaces, one for each room in the house. A master craftsman hand-carved expensive woodwork for the home. Each room was finished with a different color and decorated with matching furniture. Since the Sheedys liked to entertain, pocket doors were installed so that rooms on the first floor could be combined into one large open space. Windows, balconies and cupolas opened up rooms even more. Electric lights and indoor plumbing made 1115 Grant Street unusually modern. As reported in the *Western Architect and Building News*, May 1891, the Sheedy home will be 54x79 feet in size, two stories in height, with basement and exceptionally high attic. The building will be of pressed brick, with red sandstone trimmings. The basement will contain the laundry-rooms, storage-rooms and bathrooms for the servants. The first floor is very well arranged. There is a parlor, dining-room, library, sitting-room, breakfast-room and smoking-room, all accessible from one long corridor. In the rear is the kitchen and pantries. The second floor contains eight rooms, exclusive of bathrooms and halls. There are seven bedrooms, all of which are connected with an adjoining room. The sewing-room is also on this floor. The attic floor will contain a number of bedrooms and the servants' quarters.

The current owners, Havekost and Associates, have completed outstanding preservation work. They have saved the original architectural building plans, which document Peachblow sandstone in the stairs of the porte cochere, Pikes Peak Granite in the north entrance-door threshold, and Manitou sandstone as the main dimension stone in the foundation walls and ground-level support of the large porch.