

HISTORY OF THE DALTON APARTMENTS

1235 East 12th Avenue, Denver Colorado 80218

Early History

Joseph Inslee was responsible for surveying this area and adding the subdivision to the formal Denver map in 1871, but he was a few years ahead of his time. The current Cheesman Park was then just a dry, weed-infested cemetery, and few people lived so far from city center. But he knew this land had potential, because Denver had just completed a spur to the transcontinental railroad. The city's population, which had languished during the preceding decade, was about to boom.

His granddaughter, Ellen Inslee Smith, seized the opportunity. She had married Leonard Eicholtz, a military colonel and pioneering engineer who built much of the Colorado and Southern Railroad. A dozen years after the initial platting, Ellen and Leonard rearranged the streets and lots for more profitable sale, effecting a change in the area's proper legal reference as it's now known: "Inslee's Addition to the City of Denver, Resubdivision."

12th Avenue was then known as Pine Street, Lafayette Street was named for founder Inslee, and Marion Street was called Gorsline. But the confusion over so many different names led City Council to work towards standardization: after 1893, east-west roads would be "avenues," north-south roads would be "streets," and some order would be given to the names and numbers bestowed upon the city map. A building on the twelfth north street, twelve blocks east of Broadway would thus become 1235 East 12th Street.

Safley Built

Not much happened here until Emma Safley came along. She purchased six lots in 1893, just as the street names were changing and the city's financial fortunes were plummeting in the Panic of 1893. Amidst economic calamity, Emma bided her time. In 1901, she acquired some more space just to the north, with plans to build upon the site.

Emma wasn't new to the world of real estate investment. The daughter of a prosperous land owner and newlywed wife of a banker, Emma had both the role models and the capital to establish the foundation of what would become The Dalton.



On June 28, 1902, Emma applied to build a 2-story duplex on the northwest corner of 12th & Marion. When most homes cost less than \$3,000, her edifice would cost four times as much. The price tag was in part due to the architect, John J Huddart, one of Denver's finest.

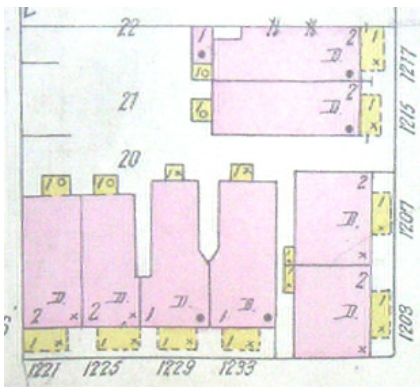
It's unknown who designed the other three buildings on the site, but Emma was most likely responsible for them all. At the very least, she signed the tap record which connected these buildings to the city water supply in 1900 and 1902. This site thus boasted four duplexes and eight individual address throughout the early part of the twentieth century.

A New Face

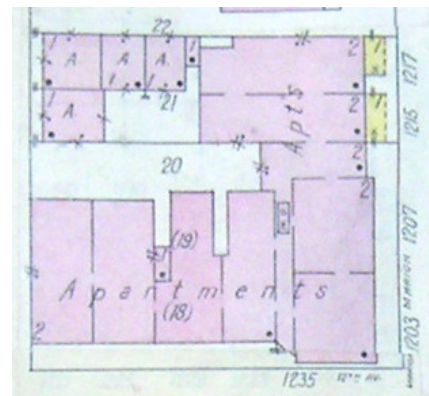
In October 1930, Sam Hansen acquired this property with a vision for renovation. Within a month of acquiring the property, Sam applied for a building permit to unite the buildings with brick veneer and interior hallways.

It was a massive undertaking, costing an estimated \$15,000 in the midst of the Great Depression. Yet when it was completed in May 1931, a unified set of buildings could now be found in place. Though the structure was then known as Marion Apartments, we know it today the Dalton.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1904



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1929



Evidence of the individual buildings that form the Dalton is also exhibited in its architecture: the southwest buildings display a hipped roof, while those on the southeast end present a gabled roof. The crenellated parapets on the Marion side probably remain from the façade of those early buildings. The uniquely angled entryway also exhibits a notched extension above roofline, apparently in an effort to coalesce the similar element from the side of the building.

If Sam Hansen's legacy to the Dalton was as its designer; his legacy to Denver was far more mundane. As manager of the Hog Growers Association, he offered to collect the city's garbage for free. But as it became clear that Denver's garbage was not fit for porcine consumption, Sam and his partner Edward Krogh decided instead to collect Denver's mounting waste for a profit. Krogh and Hensen thus became not only the management company behind The Dalton, but also the city's official garbage collectors.

The Heiress

Denver Post heiress Helen G Bonfils was the next owner, acquiring the property in October 1942. Historical reports describe her as a...

tall, slender, blonde with bright blue eyes and a husky voice, Helen was theatrical, energetic, and rich. Bejeweled and befurred, she toured the town in her Pierce Arrow with Colorado license plate #1. She would be accompanied by her chauffeur, favorite poodle, and spiritual adviser, the Reverend John Anderson, who shared her interest in philanthropy.

Among countless other causes, Helen donated generously to the arts in Colorado. She took charge of Elitch's Theatre in 1946, and several years later built the Bonfils Theatre on East Colfax (which is now the Tattered Cover). The Denver Center for the Performing Arts also owes its existence to Helen's patronage.

Less than a year before Helen's death, a secret trust agreement was executed, transferring most of her assets into the control of two *Denver Post* executives: board chairman Donald Seawell and secretary-treasurer Earl Moore. Trust assets included 18 parcels of Denver real estate, including The Dalton, with an estimated worth of more than two million dollars.

Preservation and Appreciation

The value of the property appreciated rapidly. In 1973, Brehmoor Inc purchased the parcel for \$100,000. Three years later, William and Marily Herr paid \$205,000 for the building. And by 1982, this remarkable property tripled in value to \$643,750.

Clearly, more than appreciation was involved. These modern owners were renovating and improving the building as they went along.

Those That Lived Here

More than a thousand people have lived in the Dalton over the years, with individual stories too numerous to tell. In the early years especially, most of them were well-off. Business owners lived here, including the proprietors of insurance agencies, realty companies, dry cleaners, and beauty salons..

Several lawyers were also residents of the Dalton. In 1940, DU Law School graduate Bernard Carraher was assistant district attorney and living with his wife Bernice in apartment 25. Fellow DU Law alumna Irena Ingham also lived at the Dalton. Appointed by the governor as Colorado's first female district judge in 1938, she also had a career as a *Denver Post* correspondent, editor of the *Durango Herald*, music instructor, and high school math and history teacher. After her stint as district judge, the widow Irena worked as an attorney and lived in apartment 10.

Many of the Dalton alumni would know Ruth Guerin, who served as apartment manager for more than twenty years. She occupied apartment 27 until 1966, then moved to apartment 11. She died in 1980.

Geneva Hoskins, resident of apartment 22 throughout the 1960s, was a waitress at the Otto P Baur's Confectionery. This historic Denver store on 15th and Curtis was famous for inventing the ice cream soda and is fondly remembered by many longtime Denver residents.

The occupations of other residents are somewhat mysterious. In 1961, resident Mary Hipp of apartment 4 was an artist for Denver Dry Goods. One can imagine that the faux painting in the halls of the Dalton was her creation, or perhaps the subject of her influence.

Modern Times

In more recent years, the property has seen a series of short-term management teams. From 1990 to 1999, six different deed holders laid claim to the property. Finally in 1999, Classic Properties of Denver purchased the building and has maintained its distinctive character ever since.

Specializing in the management of Denver's finest historic apartment buildings, Classic Properties has acquired and restored over 232 individual apartments in neighborhoods throughout the city. Though they pride themselves in providing sophisticated living in historical surroundings, they credit their success to exceptional residents who appreciate the splendor of the past.

In the end, the stories uncovered can impart but a fraction of the history in this building. It must be equally clear that the future will bring things equally exciting and intriguing, and that the past may only be prelude.