

HISTORY OF COUNTRY CLUB COURT

200-220 Washington Street and 707 East 2nd Avenue, Denver CO 80203

Early History

To imagine buying this entire parcel for just \$1000, you'd have to live more than a hundred years ago. That's the price paid for the land in 1903 by John Smith and Andrew McCallin. As Irish immigrants and plastering contractors, the pair knew both land and construction.

But this land wasn't ready for construction. In fact, it wasn't even ready to be subdivided. Even with Kettles' Addition fashioned to the south and west by 1893, and Cartwright's Addition formed to the north in 1908, this triangular piece of land would never formally be platted.

The reason was Cherry Creek. Though white settlers had scoffed when Native Americans described how the meandering trickle could swell into a giant flood, numerous episodes had since proved compelling. It was only after Mayor Speer began a project to contain the creek in 1906 that a boulevard could be planted and nearby construction could be considered.

A year after the stock market crash of 1929, Charles Brown and Chester Schrepferman purchased the property. Though each was in his mid-30s, they represented the eldest heirs to the firm of Brown and Schrepferman, a prominent partnership in commercial construction which began in 1889. Chester was president of the Denver General Contractors Association in 1934, and Charles followed him in that role four years later.

The company is still in operation today under the same name, yet they never developed this plot. Instead, the partners defaulted on their 1931 tax payments, and the city seized the property. Harold Kiley, a salesman for the General Outdoor Advertising Company (which produced some of the era's most stunning signage on New York's Broadway and elsewhere), became the newest owner.

Construction Era

The completion of the Kenwood Dam gave final reassurance that the flood control problems of yesteryear were solved. The land was sold in 1939 to a construction firm led by Herman C G Luyties. As a longtime resident of St Louis, Luyties was heir to a renowned homeopathic pharmaceutical business dating from 1859. After the death of Herman's father in 1921, druggist Gustaves Pfeiffer (now Pfizer) bought its dental products division, while a more direct descendent remains in operation as "1-800Homeopathy.com."

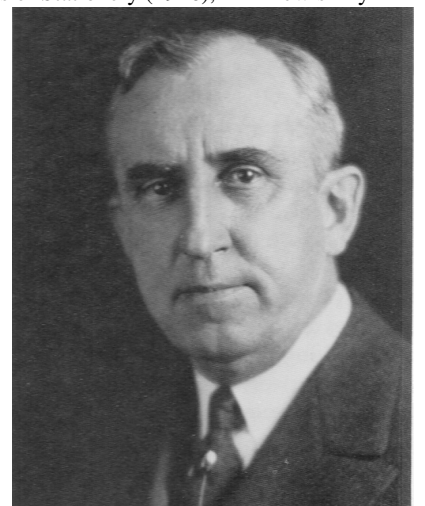
Construction can be traced to July 24, 1939, when the Luyties-Finn-Carlton Construction Company received a permit to build from "200-10-20 Washington to 707 E 2nd Ave." Plans called for



four two-story segments, each 47 feet long and 32 feet wide, plus two garages capable of housing six cars each.

The man behind the plans was architect Harry W J Edbrooke. His father, Willoughby, raised Harry in the craft, as he gained national renown for his foremost works: the Georgia State Capitol, the US Government building at the 1893 Columbian Exposition, Notre Dame University's Main Building, and the Tabor Grand Opera House in Denver. Harry's uncle, Frank, moved to Denver and became perhaps the city's most celebrated architect, designing the Brown Palace, Oxford Hotel, and innumerable others. Harry joined his uncle in 1908, and began his own illustrious contributions to Denver.

Among Edbrooke's creations were the Denver Gas & Electric Building (1910), W H Kisler Stationery (1916), A D Lewis Dry Goods (1917), Valverde Elementary School (1923), and Fifth Church of Christ Scientist (1929), all of which are registered Denver landmarks. He also devised Denver's first movie theatres, The Bluebird (1914) and The Ogden (1917), and co-founded the Architects' Small Home Service Bureau, Mountain Division. His style was eclectic, ranging from formal Classical Revival to more native Southwestern motifs.



The architect: Harry W J Edbrooke
[Denver: *The City Beautiful*, p196]

As for the construction itself, it would take 196 days to complete. By the middle of August 1939, the footings were completed, and the foundation was approved. Three weeks later, the water supply was completed, and framing had reached the second floor. By mid-September, the framing was complete, and plaster was on

the walls a month later. A setback came on October 25, when Gage Heating was cited for prematurely installing the steam heating system, but the problem was fixed within days. Luyties Finn Carlton spent November and December working on trim elements, completed painting by early January, and received final signoff for occupancy on February 5, 1940. The project had run them an estimated \$40,000.

If Walls Could Talk

The burden was too much. Luyties Finn Carlton defaulted on the loan, initiating foreclosure and placing the new apartments into the hands of Spiros & Peter Razatos at the end of 1940.

The children who lived in the Antonian Apartments (as they were named) would have been thrilled with the new owners. As proprietors of the Colorado Candy Company, the Razatos had cultivated a rather positive relationship with the area youth.

Less than a month after the purchase, Spiros died, but eldest son Peter co-managed the apartments with the Judd Company. Their initial renters represented upper middle class jobs including an accountant, lawyer, railway mail clerk, and department manager. Also among them was Harold Kiley, the outdoor advertising salesman and former property owner.

In 1942, The Anthonian Apartments welcomed its third owner: Hyman Vexland. Whereas the former owners hailed from Bremen and Greece, Vexland was born in Russia. He came to the US in 1918, and ran a shoe repair shop in downtown Denver.

Amidst the huge influx of war-related federal workers, Hyman decided that his new apartment building needed even more capacity. In August 1943, he added five apartments to the basement of 200-220 Washington. The minimal cost of \$5500 meant that he could recoup his expenses in about two years.

Tenants came and went, just as in other apartment buildings, but the character remained steady. 1950 renters at The Anthonian included a salesman, lawyer, engineer, claims examiner, mechanic, and bookkeeper. Telegraph operator Clement Edwards lived with his wife Mabel, who would remain in apartment #2 at 220 Washington until 1972, setting the current record for longevity at 22 years. Russian-born William and Gussie Steinberg lived next door in apartment #3, with their son Zellman around the corner in 707 East 2nd's apartment #3. With Zellman were distinguished public servants such as Earl Kouns in apartment #4, who served as director of the State Department of Public Welfare, and Ed Paul in apartment #5, who was on the State Board of Stock Inspection Commissioners.

By the time Fred Keller took over, the property was in need of considerable repair. Keller had made a name for himself developing real estate throughout Denver, which was further enhanced when he sold fifty acres of the former Lowry Field for an astounding one million dollars in 1970. The Field, which had welcomed Charles Lindbergh in 1927, served as a "summer White House" for President Eisenhower and provided an interim first home for the US Air Force Academy, had suspended all flights in 1966, giving new opportunities for creative entrepreneurs such as Keller.

Keller was somewhat less responsive, however, when it came to mechanical problems in his building. In 1973, a city building

inspector noticed a rash of problems, including several improper valves (gas safety valve, safety relief valve, and low water cutoff) plus a hazardous collection of storage materials in the boiler room, missing electrical covers, and improper maintenance by unlicensed contractors. Five years later, Keller had not fixed the problems, leaving the city to sue Keller for violations to regulation 112(a)7 "Maintaining an Unsafe Building." They went to court in November 1978 and two months later, the outstanding violation was finally closed.

Or so it would seem. In June 1980, new owner H Alan Dill was accused of this old problem surrounding proper maintenance. He delayed court action for a month, then received an extension of another two months to achieve compliance. By January 1981, inspectors' notes reveal that the residents of the recently-renamed El Condor Apartments finally had a safe place to live.

Dill was surely familiar with the machinations of the court, given his occupation as a lawyer. A former Assistant Attorney General, Dill formed the law office of Dill Carr Stonbraker & Hutchings in 1974, where he specializes in liquor licensing. His service to restaurateurs landed him in the 2005 class of the Colorado Food Service Hall of Fame alongside Mayor John Hickenlooper and other notable business owners.



H Alan Dill

[From <http://www.dillanddill.com>]

Contemporary History

We can never know enough about the past. We may want to know more about the articles submitted by Maxine Lowry, who lived in apartment #4 at 707 East 2nd while working as a reporter for the *Denver Post*. Others may marvel at Opal Buttell's employment as a musician at Luby's Cafeteria while living downstairs in apartment #1 of the same building. Even the experience of retired widow Doris Barr surely offers insight, as her 18-year tenure in apartment #3 of 200 Washington gave her a first-hand account of history.

That's the glory in old buildings, as per the current owner of Country Club Court. Specialists in managing the city's finest historic apartment buildings, Classic Properties of Denver has acquired and restored over 232 individual apartments since 1999. 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.

The history of the Country Club Court thus validates Classic Properties' philosophy. While the owners struggled to create a profitable investment out of a problematic site, the residents themselves put life in the building. It is their stories, their troubles, and their triumphs which provide the substance of each dwelling. Though the building itself is only three stories tall, there are thousands of stories here, most of which remain untold.