



Architect: Bowman, William N.
Birth/Death Dates: 1868-1944
Practice Dates: 1910-1943 (Denver)
Firms: Bowman and Berk (1910)
William N. Bowman, Architect
William N. Bowman Company

Biographical Information

William N. Bowman and his wife, Alice May Kniffin, a newspaperwoman from Grand Rapids, Michigan, settled in Denver in 1910. The couple built a large eclectic style home named *Yamecila* that Bowman designed in the Barnum neighborhood. The same year he opened his Denver architectural office.

Bowman was raised in Carthage, New York, where his father suffered a serious injury in a sawmill accident. The oldest of five children, William quit school at age eleven to support his family by working in a woolen mill. Three evenings a week a teacher tutored Bowman in mathematics and drawing in order to qualify him for employment in an architect's office in Jackson, Michigan. Elijah E. Myers, a prominent Detroit architect who designed the Colorado State Capitol, suggested Bowman become a carpenter's apprentice to learn the basics of building. After his successful apprenticeship, he worked for Mortimer L. Smith and Son in Detroit, and Thurtle and Fleming in Indianapolis, before becoming a member of the firm Rush, Bowman and Rush, a construction company. He also worked for a time in Cincinnati.



Bowman designed Telephone
Building in Denver

Bowman designed in a variety of revival styles popular in early twentieth century Colorado. Just his National Register (NR) and State Register (SR) listed buildings reveal the scope and quality of his designs:

- Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church, Denver (1910)—English Gothic Revival style (SR)
- Jackson County Courthouse, Walden (1913)—Neoclassical style (SR)
- Weld County Courthouse, Greeley (1917)—Beaux-Arts style (NR)
- State Office Building, Denver (1921)—Classical Revival style (NR district)
- Montrose County Courthouse, Montrose (1923)—Neoclassical style (NR)
- Norman Apartments, Denver (1924)—Spanish Colonial Revival style (NR)
- Greeley Masonic Temple, Greeley (1927)—Georgian Revival style (NR)
- President's House, UNC, Greeley (1928)—Tudor Revival style (SR district)

Bowman applied these revival styles in a manner that met the use requirements of his clients. Perhaps no building better represents this than his 1929 Telephone Building (NR) in Denver. The design incorporates many of the stylistic characteristics of Gothic Revival, while utilizing the



then new stepped-back high-rise form. The terra cotta skin hides a highly engineered structure meeting the particular load demands of the telephone switching equipment that occupied a significant portion of the building.

In 1927, Governor Alva Adams appointed Bowman to a four-year term on the State Board of Architectural Examiners. He previously served as president of the state's chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1917 to 1919. He contributed to the Mountain Division of the Architects' Small House Bureau. Bowman also participated as one of the thirty-nine architects who banded together as the Allied Architects Association to design the Denver City and County Building.

Bowman was a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the Masonic Lodge, the El Jebel Shrine, the Knights Templar, and the Motor Club of Colorado, whose clubhouse he designed. His status as a Mason and a Shriner may have figured heavily in his securing the design commissions for Masonic and El Jebel Shrine projects.

After the death of his wife, Bowman moved into the Norman Apartments. He died there on August 28, 1944, and was buried in Fairmount Cemetery.

Credited Buildings (partial list)

Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date*	Status
William Norman Bowman House; Yamecila	325 King St. Denver	5DV3364	1910	National Register
Montview Boulevard Presbyterian Church	1980 Dahila St. Denver	5DV9034	1910	Church; subsequent additions; National Register
I.O.O.F. Building	488 Main St. Walden	5JA870	1912	Commercial
Jackson County Courthouse	396 Lafeaver St. Walden	5JA888	1913	Courthouse; State Register
Weld County Courthouse	9 th Ave. and 9 th St. Greeley	5WL567	1917	Courthouse; National Register
Moffat County Courthouse	211 W. Victory Wy. Craig	5MF1273	1917	Courthouse
Colfax School	1526 Tennyson Denver		1920	Demolished
State Office Building	201 E. Colfax Ave. Denver	5DV5991	1921	State offices; National Register district
Byers Junior High School	150 S. Pearl St. Denver	5DV2099	1921	School; Denver Landmark
Fairplay Hotel	500 Main St. Fairplay	5PA57	1922	Hotel; National Register
Colfax School addition	1526 Tennyson Denver		1923	Demolished



Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date*	Status
Denver Public Schools Administration Building	414 14 th Street Denver	5DV1723	1923	Offices; Denver Landmark
Montrose County Courthouse	320 1 st St. Montrose	5MN1813	1923	Courthouse; National Register
Belmont Apartments	1050 Sherman St. Denver		1923	Apartments; Denver Landmark district
Buckingham Apartments	1080 Sherman St. Denver		1923	Apartments; Denver Landmark district
Norman Apartments	99 S. Downing St. Denver	5DV1707	1924	Apartments; National Register
Fort Collins High School	1400 S. Remington St., Fort Collins		1924	
Park Hill Methodist Church	5209 Montview Blvd., Denver	5DV9152	1924	
Richardson Hall Adams State College	Alamosa	5AL310	1924	College
Colorado Building	409 N. Main St. Pueblo	5PE559	1925	National Register
Cole Junior High School	324 Humboldt St. Denver	5DV2088	1925	School
Colburn Hotel	980 Grant Street	5DV3916	1925	Hotel and apartments
Chapel at St. Francis Sanatorium (part of former Bowman House)	325 King St., Denver	5DV3364	1927	National Register
Denver Theater Building	1527-49 Glenarm Pl., Denver	5DV503	1927	Demolished
Greeley Masonic Temple	829 10 th Ave. Greeley	5WL315	1927	Masonic temple; National Register
Gunter Hall, University of Northern Colorado	Greeley		1928	Gymnasium
President's House University of Northern Colorado	Greeley		1928	President's House; State Register historic district
Cosmopolitan Hotel	18 th and Broadway Denver		1929	Demolished
Telephone Building	931 14 th St. Denver	5DV522	1929	Telephone Co. offices; National Register
President's House/El Patio Apartments Adams State College	Alamosa	5AL299	1929	Apartments
Casa Del Sol Adams State College	Alamosa	5AL532	1929	



Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date*	Status
El Jebel Shrine and Clubhouse (with T. Robert Wieger)	4625 W. 50 th Ave. Denver		1929	El Jebel facility
Rex Gymnasium Adams State College	Alamosa	5AL531	1939	Gymnasium
Continental Oil Building	Denver			Demolished
Gates Rubber Company plant buildings	Broadway and Tennessee Ave. Denver	5DV48		Closed for redevelopment

*Completion date is stated if known. Plan, building permit, or assessor date is shown if completion date is unknown.

Information Sources

“Death of W.N. Bowman, Denver Architect, Reveals Marriage,” *Denver Post*, August 29, 1944, p1.

Frickel, Artha Pacha. “William Norman Bowman,” biography in Thomas J. Noel and Barbara S. Norgren. *Denver: the City Beautiful and its Architects, 1893-1941*. Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987.

Noel, Thomas J. *Buildings of Colorado*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Palmer, Joan and Ilene Bergsman, “Architects of Colorado: Database of State Business Directory Listings, 1875-1950.” Denver: Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2006.

Schaffer, Laureen Lafferty. “University of Northern Colorado Central Campus Historic District,” Colorado State Register of Historic Properties nomination form, September 3, 1998.

Simmons, R. Laurie and Thomas H. Simmons. “Fairplay Hotel,” National Register of Historic Places registration form, August 31, 2007.

_____. “Historical and Architectural Survey of Selected Denver Public Schools, 2003.” August 2003.

_____. “Telephone Building,” National Register of Historic Places registration form, October 2004.

Site Files Database, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

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