

**Architect:** Leo A. Desjardins  
**Birth/Death Dates:** 1885-1967  
**Practice Dates:** 1910-ca. 1955  
**Firms:** L.A. Desjardins & Co.  
Cooper & Desjardins

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## Biographical Information

Leo Andrew (L.A.) Desjardins (also spelled Des Jardins) was born in Fort Collins, Colorado, on May 12, 1885. His father, Bernard R. Desjardins, a Canadian native, came to Fort Collins in 1878 and moved to Denver in 1889. The older Desjardins was described as a "pioneer Denver architect," who "designed and built many of Denver's older office buildings and apartments." L.A. Desjardins spent his boyhood in Denver and studied architecture at Cornell University. He subsequently taught architecture at the Denver School of Technology, worked for architects in New York City and abroad, and opened a Denver "consulting service for local architects, assisting in enhancing the reputations of many local offices upon their most pretentious buildings."

In 1910, Desjardins became the first architect in Colorado to be licensed through examination. He scored the highest average after three days of testing and was awarded License Number One. Desjardins was a Fellow in the International Congress of Master Architects and was an organizer of the Independent Architects Association, Inc. (IAA). Architects formed the latter group in Denver in 1927 with the purpose of "protection of the public against wasteful planning, improper designing and mishandling of taxes applied to public structures," promoting the use of Colorado labor and materials, and insisting on opportunities for its members equal to architects of other organizations." Desjardins served as secretary-treasurer of the IAA.

Desjardins strongly promoted the value of architect involvement in the erection of buildings over contractor-designed or planbook structures:

However strange it may seem, the work of a real architect planning a building is more momentous than the actual building of the structure, and frequently more of a job.... The difference in value between a building having had no architect, even though carefully built, and one upon which ample time has been spent by an architect, though he may not be a genius, may amount to a per cent difficult of calculation. (*Trinidad Chronicle-News*, January 17, 1967)

Desjardins formed a short-lived partnership with Francis W. Cooper from 1922 to 1924 with offices in Denver and Pueblo. Desjardins left Denver in 1931 and practiced in Enid, Oklahoma, for several years. In 1935, he settled in Trinidad, Colorado, establishing a permanent home in 1938 where he spent the remainder of his life. Desjardins' promotional booklet included drawings for buildings in California, Washington, Texas, New Mexico, Oregon, and Arizona. It is unclear if any of these structures were actually built. Desjardins, who never married, died in Trinidad on January 13, 1967.

Other Colorado buildings designed by L.A. Desjardins include: the Woodruff Library, La Junta; the First National Bank, Florence; the Beth Ha Madrosh Hagadol Synagogue, Denver; the Buick Garage, Denver; the Swastika Apartments, Denver; the Elks Club, Denver; the National Register-listed Holy Cross Abbey, in Cañon City (with Joseph Dillon); and two National Register-listed buildings in Denver—the Oriental Theater and the Arno Apartments.

From Simmons, "Oriental Theater," National Register of Historic Places registration form, June 1, 1997, and additional materials from other sources.

**Credited Buildings (partial list)**

<b>Building Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Date*</b>	<b>Status</b>
Arno Apartments/ Cooper Apartments	325 18 <sup>th</sup> Ave., Denver	5DV2111	1910	National Register
Holy Rosary Church	4690 Pearl St. Denver	5DV3498	1920	State Register
Holy Cross Abbey (with Joseph Dillon).	2951 U.S. Hwy. 50, Cañon City	5FN.688	1925	National Register
Oriental Theater	4329-39 W. 44 <sup>th</sup> Ave., Denver	5DV5141	1927	National Register
James E. Mullen Mechanic Arts Building	Trinidad State Junior College		1945	
DiGregario Apartment Building	Trinidad		1946	
Skate-Land (Skateland)	424 Main St., Trinidad	5LA2179.117	1949	
Church of Christ	Trinidad		1951	
Mt. Carmel School	Trinidad		1951	
Parish building for Zion Lutheran Church	Trinidad		1951	
Woodruff Library	La Junta			
First National Bank	Florence			
Beth Ha Madrosh Hagadol Synagogue, Denver	Denver			
Buick Garage	Denver			
Swastika Apartments	Denver			

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

**Information Sources**

Fletcher, Ken. "Frontier Architects II," Trinidad, First National Bank, 2006.

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, "Architects of Colorado" Database of State Business Directory Listings, 1875-1950," October 2006.

Simmons, R. Laurie and Thomas H. "Oriental Theater," National Register of Historic Places registration form, June 1, 1997.

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