

Architect: Edbrooke, Harry W.J.
Birth/Death Dates: 1873-1946
Practice Dates: 1904-1946

Biographical Information

Harry Edbrooke (1873-1946) was born in Chicago, joining a family of well-known architects. His father, Willoughby, and uncles, Frank and George, were all architects. Among his numerous accomplishments, Willoughby went on to design prominent buildings at Notre Dame, the old Washington D.C. Post Office, and others. He designed the Tabor Block at 16th and Larimer in Denver and the Tabor Opera House at 16th and Curtis, the latter described as the finest building for theater purposes in the country. His uncle Frank E. Edbrooke came to Denver to supervise its construction and went on to become one of Denver's most highly acclaimed architects.

After attending the University of Illinois for two years, Harry continued his education at the Armour Institute of Technology where he mastered the rudiments of architecture, graduating in 1898. He worked as a draftsman for architects William K. Fellows and Howard Van Doren Shaw in Chicago before opening his own office in 1904. In 1908, his uncle Frank invited him to join in his Denver practice. Harry accepted and stayed until his uncle's retirement in 1913, at which time he established an independent practice. Withey and Withey, in their Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, have credited Harry as the designer of the First National Bank Building, at 820 17th Street and the Gas and Electric Building at 910 15th Street, but as Noel and Norgren have reported in Denver, The City Beautiful, these structures were built in 1910 and the building permit applications carry the name of Frank E. Edbrooke and Company. Therefore, if Harry had an association with these projects, it was under the aegis of his uncle's firm. Independently, Harry Edbrooke later designed several buildings in Denver. These include, in addition to the two Capitol Hill movie theaters, the W.H. Kistler Stationery Store at 1636 Champa, the A.T. Lewis Dry Goods Company building, later known as the Denver and Rio Grande Building, at 1531 Stout, a country home for John C. Shaffer, and an apartment building for Dr. J.H. Tilden. He also designed the Valverde School, the Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist building, and the Rexall Drug Store (Rainbow Grocery) at Colfax and York.

Edbrooke, who was a member of the Colorado Chapter of the Institute of American Architects, served for a year as advisory architect to the state of Colorado. Stone's History of Colorado describes Edbrooke as having "....attained eminence in his profession, actuated ever by a laudable ambition that has promoted close study and has led to most desirable results." The range of architectural styles used in Edbrooke's building designs is fairly eclectic and several examples of his expertise remain on the Denver landscape. Examples of the Mediterranean style used in the design of the Ogden Theater are also embodied in the Valverde School and Rexall Drug Store mentioned above. Nowhere, however, is affinity for this style more creatively expressed than in the Ogden Theatre, where the attention to detail and decor, both on the exterior and interior, is notable. Further, the building retains its integrity of setting and design, and recent alterations have done little to detract from its integrity of materials and workmanship.

Credited Buildings

Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date	Assessment
Denver Gas & Electric Building	910 15th St., Denver	5DV137	1910	National Register
First National Bank	818 17th St., Denver	5DV1727	1911	National Register
Bluebird Theater	3315-3317 E. Colfax Ave., Denver	5DV4519	1914	National Register
W.H. Kistler Stationary Building	1636 Champa St., Denver	5DV492	1916	National Register
Tilden School for Teaching Health/Patient Apartment Building	3279 Grove St., Denver	5DV2768	1916	National Register
A.T. Lewis Building (addition)	1531 Stout St., Denver	5DV495	1917	National Register
Ogden Theater	935 E. Colfax Ave., Denver	5DV2609	1917	National Register
Tilden School For Teaching Health Main Building	3249 W. Fairview Pl., Denver	5DV2768	1919	National Register
Valverde Elementary School	2030 W. Alameda Ave., Denver	5DV2074	1923	
Commercial Building (Rexall Drug Store)	2226-2260 E. Colfax Ave., Denver	5DV2618	1929	Wyman Local HD
Fifth Church of Christ Scientist	1477 Columbine St., Denver	5DV45.1	1929	
Undated Building				
John C. Schaffer House				

Information Sources

Ogden Theatre National Register nomination (5DV2609), Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

Noel, Thomas J. and Barbara S. Norgren. Denver: The City Beautiful and its Architects, 1893-1941. (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987).

Noel, Thomas J. Denver Landmarks & Historic Districts, A Pictorial Guide (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado) 1996.

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

Wilk, Diane. The Wyman Historic District. Denver: Historic Denver Inc., 1995.

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