

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: First Unitarian Society of Denver

Other names/site number: Plymouth Congregational Church / 5DV.16713

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1400 Lafayette Street

City or town: Denver State: CO County: Denver

Not For Publication: n/a Vicinity: n/a

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 x A B x C D

<p style="text-align: center;">Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Date</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>History Colorado Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	
<p>In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <p>Signature of commenting official: Date</p> <hr/> <p>Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION/religious facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The First Unitarian Society of Denver (FUSD) church building is a large, stone edifice of rough-cut rhyolite in the Richardsonian Romanesque style located at the northeast corner of Lafayette Street and 14th Avenue within the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Denver, Colorado. Begun in 1893 by the architects Balcomb & Rice and completed in 1899 following the design of the prominent Denver architectural firm of Varian & Sterner, the church was first home to the Plymouth Congregational Church. Since 1958, the building has been home to FUSD, and as such, was where the first religious ceremony for a same-sex wedding in Colorado was held in 1975.

Narrative Description

The First Unitarian church is a fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in Denver, built with rough-sawn, ashlar-cut rhyolite stone, a locally available and popular Colorado building material in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. The church has a

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rectangular footprint and features a cruciform layout by virtue of its hip on cross-gable at the intersection of the north-south long gable and the east-west short gable. The entire roof has brown asphalt shingle roofing, which is believed to have been installed in the last fifteen years. The church has two stories with a full basement, resulting in almost 24,000 square feet in total. The two-story sanctuary at the north within the hipped roof and east-west gable takes up approximately half of the second-floor volume. The building is constructed with rhyolite stone load-bearing walls and an interior floor and roof structure of combined wood and steel. The Richardsonian Romanesque detailing reflected throughout the exterior of the building includes complex rooflines, deeply-set windows and doors within semi-circular arches with stone voussiors, original arched wood doors, and ornamental stone posts and carved finials at gable corners. A devastating fire in December 1985 resulted in extensive remodeling on the interior and some replacement of original wood windows, as noted in the detailed description below.

Setting

At the corner of Lafayette Street and 14th Avenue, the building has two street façades, with main access from the west side facing Lafayette by a set of double stairs and a ramp. The building takes up most of its site, resulting in minimal site elements other than trees planted in the strip between the street and sidewalk, and some street furniture. A metal sign box with removable lettering stands at the far southwest corner of the lot and is used to announce sermon topics and events. In 2007, an elevator tower addition was added at the southeast corner of the lot along the alleyway to accommodate handicapped accessibility to all levels in the building.

West-facing Façade (Main Entrance on Lafayette Street)

The approximate north half of the west-facing façade features the large hipped roof (hip on gable) sanctuary with the gable end of the east-west cross gable projecting from it. This gable end features four tall windows divided into three groups, with the center two making up the middle bay. These windows consist of four vertically stacked single-light wood sashes, with the top and second-from-bottom being operable. Above these windows are three arched stained glass windows; the center one is larger and encompasses the width of the center two vertical windows below. Heavy stone sills project from below the arched and rectangular windows. Above the arched stained-glass windows, within the gable peak, is a pair of vertical arched blind openings. Stone rounded pillars topped by carved finials project from each side of the gable end.

To the north of the main gable end is a small gable-roof porch that abuts the northwest corner of the hip on gable. The porch is accessed by a run of stone steps with stone sidewalls that lead up to two vertical openings within the porch wall that are topped by semi-circular arches. Directly beyond these two openings are two sets of arched double-doors that match the porch openings in size and shape. These original doors are heavy stained wood composed of stiles accented by metal rivets.

To the south of the gable end, within the hipped roof volume, is a set of two arched windows with wood double-hung sashes composed of four-over-four lights topped by an arched transom. Dentil molding runs along the exposed edges of the hipped roof. To the south of the hipped roof along the western slope of the north-south gable is a truncated hipped-roof extension that juts out

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to the southwest, creating a plane that is slightly set back from the west gable end. Dentil molding along the edge of this roof is slightly rounded and at a larger scale than that found along the north hipped roof, which may be a result of the two different construction campaigns in 1893 and 1899. Extending above this plane immediately south of the large hipped roof is a truncated tower with a half-hipped roof extending from the extension's flat roof; low, slightly curved stone parapets are at the corners. A small stone gabled dormer extends from the hipped roof; within the dormer is a small single-light window. Below the dormer is a pair of small arched windows with four-over-four lights topped by a semi-circular transom. Within the tower at the main level are the main entrance doors, a set of double stained-wood rectangular doors with arch detailing and half-arched lights in the upper half. The door opening is defined by wide stone trim.

The main entrance doors open onto a wide landing accessed from street level by a set of double, slightly curved concrete stairs that run down to the north and south and are bordered at the west by a curved stone wall with metal railing along the top and a built-in bench at grade level. At the north side of the landing along the north set of stairs is a concrete and steel ramp with metal railings that extends northward along the face of the building before doubling back to the south to reach grade. The ramp is supported by a steel substructure that allows light into the basement windows below. Rhyolite stone sidewalls add further support halfway down the north run and at the point where the ramp doubles back to the south.

To the south of the tower, from the western slope of the hipped-roof extension, are two stone gabled dormers, which are similar to the tower dormer but larger. Each dormer features rounded stone pillars with carved stone finials at the top and at the dormer peak, and a single double-hung window with four-over-four lights; these windows appear to be replacements. The rounded pillars that frame each dormer visually rest upon two wide semicircular arched window openings at the main level, which were originally open to form a porch; each opening houses four bays of multi-light wood windows. South of these windows, the wall swoops out from the southwest corner of the hipped-roof extension to create a low wall. A modern steel fence with gate connects this wall to a similar wall that extends beyond the face of the south gable, thereby creating a small enclosure at the building's southwest corner. Within this enclosure, the south face of the hipped-roof extension features at the main level a former arched opening (an entry for the former porch) that was filled in the 1920s with matching stone, and its stairs removed. Below the former porch entry, where the porch stairs were previously, is a below-grade entrance accessed by a run of concrete stairs. The entrance features a set of double modern flush doors with a single vertical light in each leaf. Within the enclosure at the west wall of the main north-south gable is a double-hung window at basement level covered by security bars. Above, at the main level, are two double-hung vinyl windows with four-over-four lights. Between these windows at roof level is a historic wrought-iron sconce with a hanging lantern. Above the sconce rises another stone gabled dormer with similar detailing as the others but slightly larger in size. The dormer houses two narrow double-hung vinyl windows with four-over-four lights.

South-facing Side (14th Avenue)

The south-facing side of the church consists of the stone face of the north-south gable end. The gable is slightly asymmetrical in that the west end of the wall swoops outward from the building

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to create the small enclosure at the southwest corner. The gable features stone coping and a stone finial at its peak, below which, within the wall face, is a narrow arched opening with louvers. Below this, at the second level of the church, is a large stained-glass rose window, which was reconstructed in 1986 following the fire. At the base of the rose window is a small stone cornice with dentil detailing. At the main level are three bays of windows. The center bay, directly below the rose window, features four casement windows, each with two-over-six lights. A large stone lintel runs along the top of these windows, which in turn is capped by another small stone cornice with dentils. To either side of this center bay is another bay of three fixed windows with two-over-four lights. Above each window between rounded stone trim is a small transom window with two-over-two lights. Below each of the three bays at basement level are two double-hung windows with security grates.

At the building's southeast corner, set slightly back from the wall of the south gable, is the two-story flat-roof elevator addition constructed in 2007. The main shaft of blond brick accesses the historic building by a narrow two-story connector composed of glass with aluminum framing, which extends to an original dormer at the roof line. Access to the elevator is gained from street level at the south-facing side by a glazed door with metal framing, which is sheltered by a narrow permanent awning. Above the awning is a vertical run of seven, small square fixed aluminum windows with single lights set slightly into the brick face.

East-facing Side (Alley)

The east side of the 2007 elevator addition is the main shaft of blond brick, which is punctured at the south end by a two-story vertical fixed window composed of multiple rectangular lights set within aluminum framing. The narrow north side of this addition consists of the blank wall of the elevator shaft and the glass connector.

To the north of the elevator addition along the north-south gable roof are two stone gable-dormers that match the southernmost dormer on the west side, both in stone detailing and window configuration. At the main level below the two dormers are three double-hung vinyl windows with six-over-six lights. To the north of these is a narrow fixed window of one-over-six lights. Two double-hung windows with security grating are below at basement level. To the north side of the northernmost dormer is a small hipped-roof extension that houses a secondary entrance on its south side. The roof edge of this extension juts out below the northern dormer, and a large stone chimney rises from the gable roof to its north. The entrance is accessed by a run of concrete stairs with a stone sidewall, which leads to a three-panel wood door with stained-glass transom above. The east side of the extension has two narrow window openings; the one on the south is double-hung with six-over-six lights, and the north one is similar but has louvers in its lower half. Below, a narrow run of concrete stairs leads down to the basement level, featuring an entrance with a modern flush door and a fixed window with security grating. The entrance extension abuts the south wall of the large hipped roof volume of the building's north (sanctuary) half. A small patch of grey slate shingles can be seen where the entrance extension's hipped roof angles up and away from the south wall of the larger hipped roof of the sanctuary; these shingles may be evidence of the original roofing material.

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As with the west-facing side, the east-facing side features a large stone gable (the east face of the west-east cross gable) that projects out from the hip on gable, which takes up the north half of the building. To the south of the gable, within the lower wall of the hipped roof volume, is a pair of arched windows that match the west side's corresponding wall: double-hung windows with four-over four lights and arched transoms. A rounded stone pillar with finial defines the east gable's south edge. The windows of the east gable also correspond with the west (three bays topped by arches of stained glass), with the exception that the main windows are fixed with colored glass in a geometrical design (reflecting the worship space of the sanctuary within), a non-historic alteration that was the result of fire damage in 1985. Within the peak of the gable are the same double, arched blind openings as with the west gable. Below the sanctuary windows, another set of concrete stairs lead down to the basement level, with a non-historic metal flush door, a louvered window opening, and a double-hung window with security grating.

To the north of the east gable is a slightly projecting square volume that makes up the building's northeast corner. This volume is topped by a hipped roof with small metal finial at the peak. The lower roofline hits the bottom corner of the east gable and features the same dentil molding as on the rest of the north half of the building. The east face of this volume has a double-hung arched window with diagonal lights in yellow glass at the south and north corners. Two double-hung windows with security grating and stone lintels are below in the center of the wall. To the north is a smaller double-hung window, also with security grating and stone lintel.

North-facing Side

The north-facing side of the church consists of the north wall of the projecting northeast corner volume with windows corresponding to the east side of the same volume, the north gable with corresponding windows as the east gable, the lower wall of the hipped-roof volume that corresponds to the double-arched windows of the east and west, and the blank north wall of the northwest gable porch. The east edge of the north gable, where it meets the northeast corner volume, has a large stone chimney that extends beyond the gable peak; the west edge features the rounded stone pillar and finial as the west and east sides. Wrought-iron fencing that is believed to be historic demarcates the parcel boundary with the residence to the north.

Interior

The interior space was renovated after a devastating fire in 1985. The original worship space in the north hipped-roof volume was built with a raked floor depicting an Akron Plan design, which was changed to a flat floor following the fire.¹ While the interior renovation replaced traditional design with contemporary design, the interior retains and blends some of the old with the new, most notably the rose window in the south chapel, the still-active organ pipes in the northeast corner of the sanctuary, a few remaining original stained glass windows and other windows, remnants of original wood finishes, such as beadboard and stair newel posts, and a stained glass

¹ The term Akron plan refers to a variant of Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist church design popular between approximately 1880 and 1920, as inspired by the First Methodist Church in Akron, Ohio (ca. 1860s). The plan was usually characterized by an auditorium sanctuary with an adjacent Sunday School space, divided by a moveable partition for flexible use. Raked flooring and some type of concentric orientation would enable focus towards the pulpit.

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window, "Good Samaritan," originally installed in Unity Church at 19th and Broadway (First Unitarian's previous church building) and reinstalled on the interior of 1400 Lafayette Street in 1958. Except for these elements, the interior does not retain many of its historic features due to the fire. On the exterior of the building, the original doors donated by Gov. William E. Sweet and the majority of other original design elements remain.

Alterations

The first change to the building came in 1899 when the sanctuary (north half) was constructed utilizing the concept of an Akron Plan, a square worship space with a raked floor at the main aisle that proceeds down one diagonal towards the pulpit. The three major gable ends of the building thus reflected three of the four sides of the worship space, with the fourth side opening up into the former (1893) worship space which was at that time converted into classrooms and now is a community room (main level) and chapel (second floor).

Sometime in the 1920s (exact date unknown), the porch on the west side of the building, south of the entrance tower, was enclosed and its stairs removed, as seen in comparing historic photos (see Historic Photos 1-2). In 1986, a new entrance was developed into the basement, directly below this former side entry area. At an unknown date a stone chimney on the west roof slope was removed. The roof itself has been replaced at least once; it is possible that the original roofing material was slate shingles, based upon the remnant of slate shingles found on the east side.

The major modification to the interior came in 1986 after a major fire destroyed much of the interior. At that time the historic front entrance was modified with a large curved wall and stairs projecting in a north/south direction, in contrast to the original stairs, that projected straight west from the front entrance (see Historic Photo 3). In addition, a ramp was added to the building along the west side, directly below one of the gabled ends of the worship space, blocking a series of garden-level windows. Also, at the time when this work was done, original stairs that went down to the lower level at the southwest corner of the 1899 worship space addition were enclosed with masonry and are now blocked by the entry stair modifications and ramp. The original Akron Plan floor plan, raked floor, and barrel vault inside the worship space were modified as the seating area was reduced in size. The resulting additional space on the first floor along the south of the 1899 sanctuary was repurposed to include new toilets, a kitchen, and storage space; administrative offices were installed along the west side. The original windows of the three gable ends were replaced; the two in the remaining sanctuary space (north and east) with colored glass, and the other in the administrative offices area with operable sashes with clear glass.

The stained glass in the rose window was completely blown out during the fire of December 1985. As part of the 1986 renovation, Watkins Glass Studio (the same company that installed the original) restored the glass to replicate the original.

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In 1998, a renovation took place in the church basement to convert previously unused space into usable classroom space. The final major modification to the building came in 2007, when an elevator was added to the building at the southeast corner to accommodate disabled accessibility for the entire building.

Integrity

Overall, all seven aspects of integrity of the building is strong. It is in the same location and retains the setting of a church in a dense urban residential neighborhood. Although some entrances have been modified, most notably the main entrance at the west, the overall design, materials, and workmanship are readily apparent. A rear elevator was added in 2007; however, it was constructed of a brick that is compatible in color with the historic building and is clearly subservient to the historic building. The continued use as a worship space and similar setting to the period of significance helps retain a strong sense of feeling and association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1893-1899

1958-1979

Significant Dates

1899

1958

1975

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Varian, Ernest P. & Sterner, Frederick J.

Balcomb, Robert G. & Rice, Eugene R.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Designed by Balcomb & Rice and Varien & Sterner, the First Unitarian Society of Denver (FUSD) church is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a fine example of the Romanesque Revival dating to 1893 with a second phase of construction, including the sanctuary, in 1899. The church exhibits a minimally modified exterior and more significantly modified interior Akron plan sanctuary, subsequent to a 1985 fire in the building. The period of significance for Architecture is 1893-99.

First Unitarian Society of Denver is significant at the state level under Criterion A in the area of Social History as the location of the first religious ceremony for a same-sex wedding in Colorado, held in 1975. The church is further significant more broadly for its central role in civil rights issues pertaining to the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer (LGBTQ), African-American, immigrant, and numerous other communities, seeking to engage as a congregation since 1958 in causes related to social and racial justice. The period of significance for Social History is from 1958-1979, beginning with the year First Unitarian occupied the church and carried on its social justice programs from this location to the year the Metropolitan Community Church of the Rockies, a gay and lesbian congregation that was hosted by First Unitarian in the building, purchased its own dedicated building. First Unitarian Society of Denver became a Denver Landmark in August 2016.

First Unitarian Society of Denver meets the burden of Criteria Consideration A because its significance stems from its architectural merit and from a historical theme other than religion. The building also meets the burden of Criteria Consideration G due to its exceptional significance as the site of the first same-sex religious marriage ceremony in Colorado in 1975 and for its association with the Metropolitan Community Church of the Rockies, a gay and lesbian congregation that was hosted in the building until 1979.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A

Since its move to this building in 1958, First Unitarian Society of Denver has maintained a commitment to provide a harbor of free speech and acceptance for all types of people and groups, supporting in particular groups perceived as marginalized or politicized. One of the most seminal and significant single events that serves to illustrate this point is the church as the location for the first single-sex marriage religious ceremony in Colorado in 1975. Other examples stem from the church's involvement in more recent public issues such as social justice

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and immigration. A recent article published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation summarized:

And as far back as 1975, when a defiant Boulder county clerk briefly issued same-sex marriage licenses because nothing in the law specifically forbade it, First Unitarian was the site of Richard Adams and Tony Sullivan’s wedding.

“As a gay man it meant so much to me that one of the reasons that so many people voted yes for the [local historic landmark] designation, and with such excitement, was that long history of commitment to equal rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people,” [congregant Eddy] Carroll said. “It just meant the world to me. And to celebrate that and talk about it in such a public setting was personally so enriching and so joyful.”

But the church hasn’t stopped in its push for social justice causes. The congregation is still working on environmental and mental health issues, providing shelter for some of the local homeless population, and working with Denver’s Black Lives Matter chapter, among other efforts.

And just this week, Jeanette Vizguera, a mother of four in the country illegally and facing deportation, declared sanctuary in First Unitarian [see below]. “We have a set of principles that we promote. And the very first principle is that we promote the inherent dignity of each and every individual,” Carroll said. “So our faith calls us to reach out to the marginalized and to stand up for those who don’t have a voice.”²

Criterion C

The First Unitarian Society of Denver is one of a number of outstanding examples of Denver buildings that incorporate rhyolite stone construction crafted in the Romanesque Revival style developed by architect Henry Hobson Richardson and known as Richardsonian Romanesque. Richardson’s influence in developing a building with a strong presence through the use of medieval proportion, massing, and masonry is evident throughout the exterior architectural stone, roof, and window vocabulary at FUSD.

The building contains three important elements of architectural, craft, and materials merit. These elements are Varian and Sterner’s architectural talents, the Watkins Glass Studio’s historic craftsmanship, and locally-sourced rhyolite stone from Castle Rock, Colorado.

Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886) trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris, but evolved to focus on the Romanesque that preceded the Gothic as a style that expressed American ideals and identity. It was Richardson’s seminal Boston Trinity Church (1877) that codified use of the

² Jared Foretek, “Historic Denver Church Honored for LGBT Advocacy,” National Trust for Historic Preservation, <https://savingplaces.org/stories/historic-denver-church-honored-for-lgbt-advocacy#.WLW1stLyu00> (accessed Feb. 28, 2017).

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term Richardsonian Romanesque. The monumental style was nationally influential from about 1880-1900. Character-defining features include rock-faced structural masonry, prominent lintels and dentils, semicircular arches, blind arcades, parapeted gable ends, towers with pinnacles, cross gables, wall dormers, and deeply recessed window openings. The design expression was further refined in buildings such as Richardson's Ames Free (Memorial) Library (1879) in North Easton, Massachusetts and the Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail (1888) in Pittsburgh.

Historical Background

N.B.: The basic content for this nomination is drawn from Karen Derrick-Davis, "First Unitarian Society of Denver: Application for Denver Landmark Designation to the Denver Landmark Commission," (2016).³

Plymouth Congregational Church

Plymouth Congregational Church built the building at 1400 Lafayette Street in Denver between 1893 and 1899. The relatively long, seven-year period of construction is attributable to the Silver Crash of 1893, when President Grover Cleveland oversaw the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act, causing reductions in the price of silver. The Panic of 1893 severely impacted Colorado, as the economy was heavily reliant on mineral extraction and the silver industry. During this time, numerous banks in Denver collapsed and real estate values dropped. Original architects Balcomb & Rice were contracted Sept. 1, 1892.⁴ Due to the recession caused by the events of 1893, the congregants of Plymouth Congregational had to regroup and refinance, apparently abandoning plans to realize a large tower included within the original plans. Subsequent design and completion of the large auditorium/sanctuary on the north was completed by Varian & Sterner in 1899. Upon its completion, it was one of only two grand stone churches in east Denver between Ogden Street and Montclair.

Plymouth Congregational Church was originally known as Park Avenue Congregational Church. The congregation formed in 1884 and built its first church at the corner of 17th Avenue and Ogden St. In 1891, the congregation hired the Rev. Frank T. Bayley and soon thereafter renamed itself as Plymouth Congregational Church in honor of Rev. Bayley, who had previously preached at a "Plymouth" church.⁵ Rev. Bayley served as pastor of the Plymouth Church for 27 years until his death in 1917, was one of the best known clergymen in Colorado, and was considered the "savior" of the Plymouth Church, for when he moved from Maine in 1891 the situation was desperate for the small, struggling congregation. Within two years of his arrival, Plymouth Congregational Church grew and was able to build the "chapel" at 14th Avenue and Lafayette Street and several years later, the "auditorium" wing.

Plymouth was not the first Congregational Church in Colorado. In 1863, William Crawford arrived in Denver to establish a Congregational church, subsequently establishing First Congregational Church on October 9, 1864 with 12 charter members. Rev. Norman McLeod

³https://www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/646/documents/landmark/designations/Proposed_Designations/1400_Lafayette_St-First_Unitarian_Society_of_Denver_Application.pdf (accessed Feb. 28, 2017).

⁴ *Plymouth Notes*, 189; Zeller, 2016, personal interview

⁵ *First Plymouth Congregational Church, Our History*, 2016

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was the first pastor of this congregation, which built its first building in 1869 at the corner of 15th and Curtis Streets and its second building in 1881 in the 1600 block of Glenarm Place.

In 1929, both the Plymouth and First Congregational were struggling for members and the two churches merged to become First Plymouth Congregational Church in the building at 1400 Lafayette Street. Plymouth Congregational Church remained in the building until November 1958, at which point it moved to a new facility several miles away at the corner of Hampden Avenue and South Colorado Boulevard.

First Unitarian Society of Denver

First Unitarian Society of Denver purchased the 1400 Lafayette property in 1958 and has occupied the building ever since. While the Plymouth Congregational Church website notes concerns about parking availability as a reason for leaving central Denver, First Unitarian has maintained a commitment throughout the years to remain an “urban sanctuary” in the heart of Denver.

First Unitarian is the oldest Unitarian congregation in Colorado; it began in 1871 when Harvard Divinity School graduate Rev. L.E. Beckwith preached to a small group of Unitarians in a Denver District courtroom. The incorporation of the church was thirteen years after the City Of Denver was founded and five years before Colorado statehood.

In the fall of 1871, the congregation began to meet in a schoolroom at the Methodist Seminary (now the University of Denver) but after two Sundays they were asked to leave, given objections to their theology.⁶ This began a series of locations, including Pastor Beckwith’s parlor near 17th and California, in the 3rd story hall of Crow’s Block on Halladay St. (now Market), the Baptist “dug-out” on the corner of Curtis and G (now 16th) Streets, and the law offices of Belden and Powers (both of whom were members of the church). During its first two-and-a-half years, the congregation used seven different venues - largely because its views were perceived to be too controversial for many of its hosts.

The controversial views of the church related in large part to the social action work undertaken by its members. By 1893, the Unitarians had already made the news on multiple occasions for such bold moves as utilizing female ushers, teaching vocational skills to girls, and educating boys who worked during the day. In 1896 to 1910, the congregation advocated for prison reform against the imprisonment of children.

On February 23, 1873, the congregation took official action to look for a property and build for a sum not to exceed \$10,000. The Subscription Committee could not raise that much money and

⁶ Rev. Mike Morran, pastor for fifteen years as of 2016, described: “The theology of our congregation values the inherent self worth, dignity and self determination of every individual.” Joe Vaccarelli, “First Unitarian Society of Denver up for landmark status,” *Denver Post* (Aug. 10, 2016), <http://www.denverpost.com/2016/08/10/first-unitarian-society-of-denver-up-for-landmark-status/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

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settled for \$5,000 instead. Four lots at 17th and California were purchased for \$2,500 and a church seating 225 people was dedicated on December 28, 1873. However, success was short-lived and in the 1878-79 church year expenses exceeded income by \$1,000. The trustees then voted to turn the “social, religious, and especially financial matter into the hands of the ladies of the church, whose zeal, fidelity, faith, courage and executive ability had long since been fully proved.”⁷ They then advised the “ladies” to sell the property, pay the debts and “consider the effort to establish a Liberal Church in Denver a failure.”

The Ladies Aid Society, led by Augusta Tabor, then spearheaded a variety of fundraisers for the church, including an 1883 excursion via train to Colorado Springs, Manitou, Garden of the Gods and Glen Eyrie for \$5 per ticket. Tabor also hosted a Strawberry Social at her boarding house and then gave much of her fortune to the Unitarian Church: “Following the divorce, Augusta Tabor used her fortune to benefit many Denver institutions, including the Unitarian Church and the Pioneer Ladies’ Aid Society.”⁸ Tabor’s donation helped the congregation to build the Unity Church at the corner of 19th and Broadway in 1886 for \$42,358. This new building, designed by renowned architect Frank Edbrooke, seated 1,000 people and was home to the congregation until it submitted to development pressure, sold the downtown property, and purchased the building at 1400 Lafayette in 1958. The building at 19th and Broadway was subsequently demolished in 1959.⁹ At this time the church was alternately called First Unitarian and “The Unity Church.”

1985 – The Fire

On December 8, 1985, in the midst of a capital campaign to renovate the church, a fire extensively damaged much of the roof structure and the interior of the building. The congregation subsequently decided to continue with its renovation plans and stay in the current building. For two years, while repairs were underway, the congregation rented space at the former home of the B.M.H. Synagogue at 16th Avenue and Gaylord Street. On May 10, 1987, the first service was held in the renovated church and the formal dedication service was held on May 24, 1987. The choir presented a Dedication Cantata composed by Elizabeth Sellers, the music director.

Church Architects and Builders

Robert G. Balcomb & Eugene R. Rice

Balcomb (b. 1846 in Canada, sometimes spelled Balcombe) and Rice (b. ca. 1867) partnered between 1886 and 1897. Balcomb immigrated in 1867, arriving in Colorado via California and Arizona.¹⁰ The History Colorado Biographical Sketch for Balcomb outlines the following:

⁷ Rev. Betty Pingel, “An Occasional History of FUSD – Where We Have Worshipped.”
<http://www.fusden.org/CONTENT/AN-OCCASIONAL-HISTORY-OF-FUSD> (accessed March 13, 2017).

⁸ The Denver Post - Perspective Section, 1992

⁹ Simmons, 22.

¹⁰ “Balcomb & Rice Architects,” Social Networks and Archival Context [based on WorldCat],
<http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w6gj4nfw> (accessed Feb. 28, 2017).

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[Balcomb] first appeared in the 1885 Denver City Directory, identified only as a carpenter. By March 1886, Balcomb formed a partnership with Cornell University graduate, Eugene Remich Rice. The newly formed firm of Balcomb and Rice opened their first office in the now demolished Tabor Block at 16th and Larimer Streets. The firm went on to design some of Denver's most elaborate examples of the Queen Anne style that still stand today (...) The firm's prosperity extended beyond the residential market to include a wide variety of buildings and structures throughout the city. The Denver Building Permit records credit the firm with a church addition [FUSD], stores, terraces, barns, stables and grand stands. Regrettably, only the residential designs are currently identified (...) The partnership of Balcomb and Rice continued until 1897, when Rice went into business for himself.¹¹

Following dissolution of the partnership, Balcomb went to New Mexico. His date of death is not known. Rice was a charter member of the Colorado American Institute of Architects and President of the Denver Sketch Club from 1889-90. In 1898 he worked with F.E. Kidder to design the Chautauqua Auditorium in Boulder (5BL.362, National Register listed January 21, 1974, within Colorado Chautauqua National Historic Landmark February 10, 2006). Following his death in 1904 at age 37 from pneumonia, Rice was buried in Denver's Fairmount Cemetery (5DV.710).¹²

Ernest Varian and Frederick Sterner

Ernest Varian designed the Zion Baptist Church beginning in 1882, and then in 1885 formed a partnership with Frederick J. Sterner. As noted in the History Colorado biographical sketch, "the firm of Varian and Sterner went on to become one of Denver's most prominent architectural designers with many listings in the Denver Building Fees files."¹³ Notable buildings designed by the firm include the Denver Athletic Club at 1325 Glenarm (5DV.149, National Register listed Nov. 14, 1979), which features Romanesque arches, the First Church of Christ Scientist at 14th and Logan Streets (5DV.914, Denver Landmark), and a variety of homes throughout the Denver area. Prominent buildings designed by Frederick Sterner include the Daniels and Fisher Tower (5DV.118, National Register listed Dec. 3, 1969), the Pearce-McAllister Cottage (5DV.126, National Register listed June 6, 1972), and the Tears-McFarlane House (5DV.180, National Register listed Jan. 11, 1976; Denver Landmark).¹⁴

¹¹ History Colorado, "Robert G. Balcomb," Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, 2000. http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/Guides/Architects_balcomb.pdf (accessed Feb., 28, 2017)

¹² History Colorado, "Eugene R. Rice," Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, 2000. http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/Guides/Architects_rice.pdf (accessed March 6, 2017)

¹³ History Colorado, "Frederick J. Sterner," *Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch*, 2007. http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/Guides/Architects_sterner.pdf (accessed March 30, 2016).

¹⁴ History Colorado, "Ernest Phillip Varian," *Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch*, 2002. http://www.historycolorado.org/sites/default/files/files/OAHP/Guides/Architects_varian.pdf (accessed March 28, 2016).

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When both sections were completed in 1899, the Plymouth Church was described in a *Denver Daily Times* article as one of “one of Denver’s prettiest” and “most strikingly beautiful churches in Denver” with an “air of simple grandeur that can hardly be reproduced in an illustration but which readily impresses the beholder.”¹⁵

Watkins Stained Glass

The church also features a unique and historic example of the work of the Watkins Stained Glass Studio based in Englewood, Colorado. The striking rose window on the south façade was designed and fabricated by Clarence Watkins in 1893 and carefully restored by his great-grandson Phillip Watkins, Jr., after the 1985 fire.

The Watkins family legacy in stained glass began in 1761 in London and Liverpool.¹⁶ Clarence (aka Charles) Watkins travelled to America via ship “with his tool box in his hand and skills he had learned from his forefathers.” After working in stained glass studios in New York, Boston, and St. Louis, he arrived in Denver and his company was first listed as a business in the Denver Directory in 1881. The company now counts eight generations that have been involved in stained window craftsmanship, and all work is still done by hand with little change in tools except for the use of electricity. The work of the Watkins family is featured in many Denver homes, churches, and in the iconic Brown Palace Hotel (5DV.110, National Register listed April 28, 1970; Denver Landmark).

Supporting the Civil Rights and Social Justice Movements

During the 1960s, the First Unitarian Society of Denver church became the local home for the non-violent civil rights organization, Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Church members Ruth Steiner, Jane Wasson, and Helen Wolcott were founding members of the Denver Chapter of CORE. In 1962, the group conducted its first strike campaign at the Denver Dry Goods Store on 16th Street. The General Manager at the time reportedly said that he would “spend \$1 million before he hired a black sales person” but reversed course and began integrating the sales staff after the non-violent protest.¹⁷ CORE members subsequently picketed at Safeway and King Soopers grocery stores in 1963, resulting in an announcement in local newspaper a few days later that the stores were hiring.

In collaboration with the wife of Rev. Wendell T. Liggins of Zion Baptist Church, a historic African-American congregation, the group implemented “housing testing” and “employment testing” to uncover the practice of redlining, or refusing loans or insurance to minority people or communities, in Denver. White CORE members and Mrs. Liggins would separately seek to rent a property, for example, only to be met with different information on the availability of said property: “Mrs. Liggins was always elegantly dressed in a beautiful mink stole, and we would

¹⁵ *Denver Daily Times* (May 14, 1899), p.6 c.1

¹⁶ Watkins Stained Glass Studio, 2016

¹⁷ Raabe, 2016 Interview

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wear plain clothes.”¹⁸ The church raised funds and paid the fines of protestors involved in these activities.

Other activities of the church dedicated toward racial integration included the development of the Black Affairs Committee and the development of the Black Caucus. During the late 1960s, the congregation owned a property in the mountains near Allenspark called Point of Pines; it was handed over to the Black Caucus to create a commercial entity for the Black Caucus to manage.

In March 1965, members of the church traveled to march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama as part of the historic three-week Selma-to-Montgomery March for voting rights.¹⁹ Later that year church members held a rally on the steps of the Colorado State Capitol for James Reed, a Unitarian Universalist minister killed in Selma. March 7, 1965 saw “Bloody Sunday,” when some 600 marchers were attacked by state and local law enforcement, followed by a symbolic march to the bridge two days later, led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. First Unitarian members have been involved in the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission’s annual “Marade” (a combination of *parade* and *march*) in Denver since it began in 1986, following State Representative Wilma Web’s sponsorship of a bill declaring King’s birthday a state holiday. This parade is now considered to be one of the nation’s largest celebrations and marches in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Promoting Fair Housing

The 1960s also saw involvement of the church in the Fair Housing movement, with the initial Fair Housing office housed in the church building. In 1966, the Fair Housing Center was created at First Unitarian with volunteer staffing by the congregation.

After Congress passed Housing Bill 221H giving nonprofit organizations an opportunity to rehabilitate houses for low-income families at a low rate of interest, the congregation created the First Unitarian Re-Hab Housing Corporation. It worked closely with Metro Denver Fair Housing to oversee renovation of five homes and ensure the selection of families that qualified to assume the mortgages. Church members involved in this effort included Floyd Tanaka, Dorothea Spellman, Helen Wolcott, Gwen Thomas, and others. In the fall of 1969, after hundreds of hours of devoted volunteer work, five families were settled into their new homes.

Protesting the Vietnam War

In October 1971, Rev. Richard Henry of First Unitarian Society, his wife, and another congregant were among 40 arrested as they protested the Vietnam War with the group Vietnam Vets Against the War. They were arrested for attempting to march in the Veteran’s Day parade. The official charges were “two traffic misdemeanors: using the street when a sidewalk was

¹⁸ Raabe, 2016 Interview

¹⁹ National Park Service, “Selma-to-Montgomery March: National Historic Trail & All-American Road,” *We Shall Overcome: Historic Places of the Civil Rights Movement*, <https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/civilrights/al4.htm> (accessed Feb. 28, 2017).

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available and failure to obey a lawful order of the police.”²⁰ The minister called out other clergy for not risking jail or fines to protest the war. The protesting veterans “stood in the street singing America the Beautiful with their hands behind their heads, prisoner-of-war fashion” and “the police started making arrests.”

Supporting Gay Rights

The First Unitarian congregation first became involved in advocating against homophobia in the 1950s when it is believed to have become involved with the Mattachine Society, providing the group space to organize. Originally founded in 1950 as the Mattachine Foundation (as distinguished from the Mattachine Society after 1953), the Mattachines represented the modern gay movement, beginning in Los Angeles with organizer Harry Hay:

The name refers to the medieval Mattachines, troupes of men who traveled from village to village, taking up the cause of social justice in their ballads and dramas. By sharing and analyzing their personal experience as gay men, the Mattachine founders radically redefined the meaning of being gay and devised a comprehensive program for cultural and political liberation. In 1951, Mattachine began sponsoring discussion groups. Years before women's "consciousness-raising groups," Mattachine provided lesbians and gay men a similar opportunity to share openly, for the first time, their feelings and experiences.²¹

On September 4-7, 1959, the group held its annual convention in Denver at the Hotel Albany (demolished). The subsequent backlash begins to speak to the repressive atmosphere that Denver's gay population experienced.

After the local media cover the convention, police crack down on openly gay members of the society by raiding their homes and imprisoning them. The Denver police arrest Carl Harding, one of local Mattachine's founders, for the possession of obscene (nude, male) photography. The society's mailing lists are also confiscated. Some of the outed members are fired from their places of business; others stop attending Mattachine meetings and events, effectively dismantling the group. Gay activism in Denver has a sustained period of lights out.²²

Nevertheless, oral histories hold that the Mattachine Society eventually occupied one of the two houses (1424 and 1432 Lafayette Street) just to the north of the church building that were owned by the congregation at that time. The Mattachines were understandably quite secretive, and this

²⁰ *The Denver Post*, April 29, 1972, p. 8.

²¹ Will Roscoe, “Mattachine: Radical Roots of the Gay Movement: Historical Essay,” Shaping San Francisco's Digital Archive @ Found, http://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=Mattachine:_Radical_Roots_of_the_Gay_Movement (accessed Feb. 28, 2017).

²² Berlin Sylvestre, “Our Story: A Curious and Fascinating Timeline of LGBT Denver,” *OutFront*. Jun. 17, 2015, p. 37.

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association with FUSD has not been able to be substantiated to date and further research is needed.

Following the June 1969 Stonewall uprising in New York City, the 1970s in Colorado saw the rise of the gay community embracing activism and public engagement. According to Gerald A. Gerash, prior to the organizing of The Gay Coalition of Denver that same year, “[o]nly two gay groups existed [in Denver] in 1972, Rocky Mountaineers Motorcycle Club and the Metropolitan Community Church of the Rockies [MCCR].”²³ MCCR was a gay and lesbian congregation that, under the leadership of Rev. Charlie Arehart, shared office space with First Unitarian and worshiped in the chapel from September 1973 until it purchased its own building in 1979.²⁴

The year 1973 was a turning point in gay rights in Denver. That year, a City Council hearing took place regarding the alleged discrimination by Denver police of gay men. At that time, a large bus dubbed “The Johnny Cash Special” was used to entrap gay men in Denver’s Civic Center, a known gay “cruising area.” This resulted in the arrest of 24 men and the galvanizing of the Gay Coalition, first founded the previous year at a private apartment with five members, a group that First Unitarian shortly thereafter hosted and exists today as The Center, located within a block of the church on Colfax Avenue. As described on the Center’s website, a civil lawsuit, “Gay Coalition of Denver vs. Denver” gave the coalition access to police records, where they discovered that 98 percent of those arrested for “offer of lewd conduct” were gay men.²⁵ In October 1973, the Gay Coalition arrived en masse (about 300 people, with 36 testifying) at a City Council meeting, resulting in the repeal of two laws regarding loitering and cross-dressing. A 1974 court decision determined that police could not enforce city ordinances in a discriminatory manner against gays, to wit: Lewd Act, Loitering for Sexual Deviant Purposes, Renting a Room for Sexual Deviant Purposes, and the Anti-Drag law. The verdict declared that acts legal for heterosexual couples are also legal for homosexual couples.²⁶

In June 1974, the Gay Coalition organized Denver’s first “Pride” event (a “gay-in” at Cheesman Park) and in 1975 the first Gay Pride Parade.²⁷ First Unitarian members were involved in these events and continue to participate in Pride Fest on an annual basis. Capitol Hill further becomes known as a gay neighborhood, with Cheesman Park as “the gay park.”

The Gay Coalition of Denver and several other gay and lesbian groups, including MCCR, joined together in 1975 to form a larger group known as Unity for the purpose of establishing a community center by and for gay people; based on oral and written histories, it is believed this

²³ Gerald A. Gerash, “On the Shoulders of The Gay Coalition of Denver,” (p.3) in *United We Stand: The Story of Unity and the Creation of The Center*, Phil Nash, ed. June 3, 2016. http://gltcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Unity.Memoir.June3_.2016.FirstPrinting.pdf (accessed March 13, 2017).

²⁴ MCCR History, 2016, website

²⁵ History of The Center, 2013, website

²⁶ Sylvestre 37.

²⁷ Marcus, “Pridefest: A History of Denver’s Gay Pride Celebration” 2013.

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first meeting was likely held in the basement of FUSD.²⁸ Articles for Incorporation for the Gay Community Center of Colorado (GCCC) were filed in November 1976 with the Colorado Secretary of State. In August 1977 the GCCC rented space from FUSD at 1436 Lafayette and used the church building as “a meeting space for larger gatherings” until it officially opened its doors at an independent location later that month.²⁹

Same-Sex Marriage

The issue of gay marriage came increasingly to the forefront nationally in the 1970s:

In the early 1970s, in the midst of a burst of gay activism unleashed by the Stonewall rebellion, several same-sex couples sought marriage licenses and brought lawsuits when their requests were denied. Courts did not take their arguments very seriously, casually dismissing such claims. The gay rights movement made dramatic progress in the 1970s and 1980s on issues other than gay marriage, which itself was of little interest to most gay activists. Around 1990, partly because of the AIDS epidemic, the issue of legal recognition of same-sex relationships became more salient to the public and more important to gay activists.³⁰

It was in this historic context that on March 26, 1975, Clela Rorex issued some of the first same-sex marriage licenses in the United States, and the first in Colorado, in Boulder. According to actor, producer, and personality Tom Gregory, “her motivation was clear—open up society for all pledged couples because it was the right thing to do.”³¹

Subsequent to obtaining a civil marriage license earlier in the day in Boulder, Anthony Corbett Sullivan and Richard Frank Adams married in a religious ceremony on April 21, 1975 at the First Unitarian Church in Denver.³² Fr. Robert Sirico, a Pentecostal minister serving the L.A.-based Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) that Sullivan and Adams attended, performed the

²⁸ Phil Nash, “Unity: My Career Began Here,” (p.12) in *United We Stand: The Story of Unity and the Creation of The Center*, Phil Nash, ed. June 3, 2016. http://glbtcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Unity.Memoir.June3_.2016.FirstPrinting.pdf (accessed March 13, 2017).

²⁹ “A Timeline Leading to the Founding of The Center, 1972-1977,” (p. 24) in *United We Stand: The Story of Unity and the Creation of The Center*, Phil Nash, ed. June 3, 2016. http://glbtcolorado.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Unity.Memoir.June3_.2016.FirstPrinting.pdf (accessed March 13, 2017).

³⁰ Michael J. Klarman, *From the Closet to the Altar: Courts, Backlash, and the Struggle for Same-Sex Marriage* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) x.

³¹ Tom Gregory, “1975: Clela Rorex Issues America’s First Same-Sex Marriage License [video],” *The Huffington Post*, Oct. 17, 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-gregory/1975-clela-rorex-issues-a_b_765534.html (accessed 20 May 2014). See also Grace Lichtenstein, *The New York Times* as reproduced on p. 50 of this nomination.

³² Robert Barnes, “40 years later, story of a same-sex marriage in Colo. remains remarkable,” *The Washington Post*, Apr. 18, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/courts_law/40-years-later-a-same-sex-marriage-in-colorado-remains-remarkable/2015/04/18/e65852d0-e2d4-11e4-b510-962fcfab310_story.html?utm_term=.e3d5f2c0c887 (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

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ceremony at Denver's First Unitarian Church.³³ MCC clergyperson Rev. Freda Smith assisted, with Rev. Elder Charlie Arehart and Frank Zerilli as witnesses.³⁴

Sullivan and Adams had learned about Clela Rorex amidst problems regarding Sullivan's Australian citizenship and visa status:

They saw a story in the *Advocate* about a woman named Clela Rorex, a young feminist clerk in Boulder, Colo. One day not long after she took office, a gay couple asked whether they could marry. She checked the law and didn't see anything that said they couldn't (...) "I didn't even know anyone from the gay and lesbian community," Rorex said in a recent interview. "I had no exposure to homosexuals." But as someone sensitive to discrimination against women, she said she sensed the same unfairness.³⁵

Rorex's decision was not allowed to stand for long, but *The New York Times*' also reported a valuable account of Sullivan and Adams' wedding at First Unitarian Church:

J. D. MacFarlane, the Colorado Attorney General, said today that, in his opinion, the Boulder licenses were not valid because, in his interpretation of the state law, a legal marriage can only be that between a man and a woman. However, he is not planning a court challenge to the license already issued.

Meanwhile. Colorado has become a mini-Nevada for homosexual couples. Six couples—two women and four men—obtained licenses from Boulder's County Clerk, Clela Rorex, as of Tuesday.

Anthony Sullivan, a 33-year-old Australian, clasped the hand of his spouse, Richard F. Adams, 28, of Los Angeles, after their wedding at the First Unitarian Church of Denver last Monday and said that the psychological benefits of their union were "absolutely phenomenal."

He also said that he married Mr. Adams to test the immigration laws that permit a foreigner to remain in this country if he marries a citizen. Mr. Adams added that they "wanted to have the full benefits of other married couples—income tax returns, inheritance, wills and so on."

³³ Michael Sean Winters, "Fr. Robert Sirico on gay marriages he once performed," *National Catholic Reporter*, Oct. 18, 2010, <http://ncronline.org/blogs/distinctly-catholic/fr.robert-sirico-gay-marriage-he-once-performed> (accessed Nov. 27, 2012).

³⁴ James N. Birkitt, Jr., "MCC and Marriage Equality," Metropolitan Community Churches, 2013. <http://mccchurch.org/overview/history-of-mcc/mcc-and-marriage-equality/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

³⁵ Barnes. Note that Denver David Robinson, "How the Marriage Equality Movement Forgot Its Pioneers," *Advocate* (Jan. 15, 2015), <http://www.advocate.com/politics/marriage-equality/2015/06/15/how-marriage-equality-movement-forgot-its-pioneers> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017) states that Sullivan and Adams learned of Rorex from The Tonight Show.

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Their ceremony was a simple one derived from the Book of Common Prayer, performed in a chapel almost empty except for television crews and handful of well-wishers. The Rev. Robert Sirico of the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, part of a national organization of predominantly homosexual churches, officiated with the help of a woman minister, Freda Smith. They changed the words "husbands" and "wives" to "spouses," with Mr. Sirico inserting the phrase "as long as there is love" before "till death do us part."

Afterward, the two men smiled, kissed, held hands and spoke to reporters. They were dressed nearly identically in dungarees and white shirts decorated with a sprig of flowers.

The minister, a native of Brooklyn, called the licenses and the marriage "a breakthrough," remarking with a grin, "I feel like I imagine Moses felt when he split the Red Sea."

Mr. Sirico and other same sex spokesmen note that thousands of homosexual couples have been united in religious ceremonies in recent years without benefit of a government document. Others have received licenses by having one partner pose as a member of the opposite sex.

Boulder was not the first county to issue a license to couple of the same sex. In January, two men in Phoenix were granted a license, but the Maricopa County Attorney charged one man with filing false documents, since he had filled out the woman's section. Last month, a local court voided the marriage.

According to Henry H. Foster, professor of law at New York University and a vice president of the family law section of the American Bar Association, most states do not specifically prohibit marriages between persons of the same sex because the language of the law is so clear in referring to male-female couples.

Test cases have all gone against couples of the same sex.

The most important occurred in Minnesota in 1971, when two men attempting to get a marriage license were turned down by the state's highest court. The United States Supreme Court then refused to review their case. The two men are still trying to file a joint income tax return.

In New York, spokesmen for both the City Corporation Counsel and the Manhattan City Clerk said they interpreted the state law's definition of marriage as a union of a man and a woman, making marriages between persons of the same sex illegal.

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Clela Rorex, the Boulder County Clerk, took the opposite position March 26 when she issued the first same-sex license in Colorado after getting a favorable opinion from William C. Wise, the county's assistant district attorney.

“I don't profess to be knowledgeable about homosexuality or even understand it,” she said. “But it's not my business why people get married. No minority should be discriminated against.”³⁶

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 determined homosexuals “excludable at entry.” Sullivan and Adams simply chose to fly to Boulder to obtain a marriage license.

First Unitarian Rev. Dick Henry wrote a *Denver Post* editorial defending the first gay wedding held in the church. In the editorial, he noted First Unitarian's long-standing relationship with the Metropolitan Community Church of the Rockies (MCCR). As Rev. Henry stated in his editorial, “...an expression of our respect for this persecuted minority's way of life and our conviction that a person's sexual orientation is a private matter which should be of no concern to another.”³⁷

Sullivan subsequently faced deportation, thus beginning a lengthy legal battle. a resident of Los Angeles, Adams requested an extension to his husband's visa, receiving the following response from the U.S. Department of Justice Immigration and Naturalization Service: “You have failed to establish that a bona fide marital relationship can exist between two faggots.”³⁸ In terms of the legal trajectory,

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit ruled that, even assuming Sullivan and Adams were lawfully married in Colorado, Congress had control over immigration matters and had shown no intention of expanding the term spouse beyond its usual definition of a marriage of a man and a woman. The Supreme Court declined to review the ruling.

The couple tried again, this time with Sullivan as the plaintiff. He challenged a finding of the Board of Immigration Appeals that his pending deportation qualified for an exemption as an extreme hardship.

[Later Supreme Court Justice Anthony] Kennedy was on a panel of three 9th Circuit judges hearing the case. He noted that Sullivan's arguments that ending his relationship with Adams would “cause him personal anguish and hurt” and that his deportation to Australia would be an undue hardship “because homosexuals are not accepted in that society and because the members of his own family who live in Australia have turned against him.”

³⁶ Lichtenstein, Grace. “Homosexual Weddings Stir Controversy in Colorado,” *The New York Times*. Apr. 27, 1975. <http://www.nytimes.com/1975/04/27/archives/homosexual-weddings-stir-controversy-in-colorado.html> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

³⁷ Rev. William (Dick) Henry, Letter to the Editor, *The Denver Post*, May 6, 1975.

³⁸ Quoted in Barnes. Original document, dated Nov. 24, 1975, is available online at The DOMA Project.

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But Kennedy concluded, “Even if all of Sullivan’s arguments are accepted at face value, they do not necessarily constitute a showing of extreme hardship as the term is defined in the immigration laws.” He added, “Deportation rarely occurs without personal distress and emotional hurt.”

A dissenting judge said that this case was different: “Most deported aliens can return to their native lands with their closest companions. But Sullivan would be precluded from doing so because Adams allegedly would not be permitted to emigrate to Australia.”³⁹

Thus, in 1985, the couple left the country for a time, returning to the U.S. only in 1986, despite persistent fears of Sullivan’s deportation. Meanwhile, there were factions within the gay rights movement that viewed Sullivan and Adams’ fight as “rogue” activism that detracted from other critical issues while not having a strong chance for success.⁴⁰

Having first met in 1971, the couple remained happily married until Adams’ death in 2012. The State of Colorado never invalidated the six same-sex marriage licenses authorized by Rorex.⁴¹ USCIS [U.S. Customs and Immigration Service] finally approved Sullivan’s green card on the 41st anniversary of the wedding, April 21, 2016.⁴² In 2014, Sullivan had written to President Barack Obama to request an apology for the offensive letter from USCIS. An article in *The Pride* further quoted Sullivan and Adams’ attorney, Lavi Soloway:

“The unique and historic nature of this case cannot be understated. The U.S. government not only apologized directly to Anthony Sullivan, but, for the first time since the Supreme Court established the right of same-sex couples to marry as a protected, fundamental liberty—the Immigration Service has shown its willingness to correctly apply recent Court rulings and to recognize as valid this same-sex marriage that took place in 1975. Undaunted by setbacks in the 1970s and 1980s Richard and Anthony never wavered in their belief that their marriage was valid and should be treated with dignity and respect. Eventually the Supreme Court and the Immigration Service caught up with them,” said Soloway.

³⁹ Barnes.

⁴⁰ Troy Masters, “United States Government says L.A. Gay Couple’s 1975 Marriage is Valid,” *The Pride: The Los Angeles LGBT Newspaper* (Jun. 7, 2016, <https://thepridelife.com/2016/06/united-states-government-says-gay-couples-1975-marriage-is-valid/>) (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

⁴¹ Sveta Apodaca, “In a Landmark Case Spanning Four Decades, USCIS Recognizes Same-sex Marriage from 1975 and Approves Gay Couple’s Immigrant Visa Petition that it had denied 41 years ago, after Board of Immigration appeals reopens the case,” The DOMA Project, <http://www.domaproject.org/2016/06/victory.html> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

⁴² Sveta Apodaca, “UCIS Approval of Anthony Sullivan’s Green Card Application on the 41st Anniversary of his Marriage to Richard Adams, April 21, 2016,” The DOMA Project, <http://www.domaproject.org/2016/06/victory.html/image05> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

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“After the Supreme Court ruling on Marriage Equality, USCIS acted on our request to apply, constitutionally valid principles to the 1975 green card petition. As a result, on December 1, 2015 the Board of Immigration Appeals ordered the petition be reopened and the original denial reconsidered,” he said.⁴³

Produced by Thomas Miller and Kirk Marcolina, a 2014 documentary, entitled *Limited Partnership*, tells Sullivan and Adams’ story.⁴⁴ In 2015, Justice Kennedy, writing for the majority in the case of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, stated in favor of same-sex marriages: “Their hope is not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization’s oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.”

An Incubator for Social Justice

In the 1970s, First Unitarian created a “shared space” in its basement and in the two houses it then owned to the north of the church. A variety of the organizations First Unitarian hosted were those that could not find space elsewhere due to politically controversial views. Per church records, some of the agencies using the space included:⁴⁵

- Abortion referral and Counseling Service
- American Youth Hostel
- CoPIRG (Colorado Public Interest Research Group)
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- National Organization of Women (NOW)
- American Friends Service Committee
- Social Service agencies including: Intensive Community Treatment Center (Youth Services Division of Division of Corrections) and Denver Department of Social Services / Child Welfare
- Gray Panthers (local advocacy branch confronting ageism and other social justice issues)
- A variety of educational organizations, including: Rocky Mountain Applied Scholastic School, Denver Free University, Colorado University Denver Center, Rocky Mountain Law School, Munoz-Mott Language School, East High School Summer Seminar, and Community College of Denver.
- A variety of substance abuse groups including: Midtown AA Group and Ft. Logan Mental Health Center Outpatient Alcohol Treatment
- Creathons Community Theatre
- National Lawyers’ Guild
- Learning for Living

⁴³ Craig Phillips, “United States Officially Recognizes Tony Sullivan and Richard Adams’s Marriage,” *PBS Independent Lens* (Jun. 8, 2016), <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/united-states-officially-recognizes-tony-sullivan-richard-adamss-marriage/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017). Original article: Masters.

⁴⁴ <http://www.limitedpartnershipmovie.com/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

⁴⁵ This list of organizations is found in the records of FUSD’s Shared Space Committee; exact dates of organizational use have not yet been ascribed.

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- Common Cause
- American Issues Forum
- Rocky Mountain Center on Environment
- Colorado Contemporary Chorale

Free Pulpit

First Unitarian has long maintained a tradition of a free pulpit and a policy of providing a forum for unconventional views and has on multiple occasions become a target of vandalism and community outrage as a result of this. The church was vandalized with red paint in 1965 in response to a Free Cuba discussion, and again in 2015 shortly after hanging a Black Lives Matter banner on the side of the building. A 1973 editorial by Rev. Dick Henry responded to a public outcry about an event hosted at the church. In defense of being accused of anti-semitism for leasing its facilities to a group that was interpreted publicly as being “Pro-Arab” and/or “Anti-Israeli,” he noted that: “Especially when urgent issues divide us, it is the responsibility of free institutions to see that thought and its public expression remain free.”⁴⁶

Examples of controversial speakers that have been hosted at First Unitarian include the following:

- **Harry Nier** - In 1965, Nier, a local, life-long socialist and secular Jew with a particular love and knowledge of Fidel Castro’s Cuba, spoke at First Unitarian at a forum entitled “Fair Play for Cuba.” After the building was vandalized with red paint the church’s insurance company cancelled its policy, claiming that the Unitarian Church was too controversial and thus a high risk.⁴⁷
- **Alaska Senator Mike Gravel** - In 1972, Alaska Senator Mike Gravel who read into the public record of the U.S. Senate the Pentagon Papers of the Vietnam War, spoke at First Unitarian. The event was co-sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

The free pulpit concept relates to the intellectual and spiritual spirit of exploration represented at the church through other programs, including that of the Directorship of Religious Exploration.

Conclusion

Most recently, First Unitarian Society of Denver has been in the news as Mexican immigrant Jeanette Vizguerra has taken refuge in the church in the face of a denied request to stay her deportation order. She has entered the United States twice since 1997 and three of her children are American citizens.⁴⁸ In 2011, a federal judge ordered her removal. Vizguerra’s story and the role of the church has received national press. Ironically, she herself helped set up the church

⁴⁶ Rev. William (Dick) Henry, Letter to the Editor, *Denver Post*, 1973.

⁴⁷ *Rocky Mountain News*, Dec. 12, 1965, p.5.

⁴⁸ Julie Turkewitz, “Immigrant Mother in Denver Takes Refuge as Risk of Deportation Looms,” *The New York Times* (Feb. 15, 2017); Jeanette Vizguerra, “Why I Will Not Leave,” *The New York Times* (Feb. 24, 2017).

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basement room to welcome immigrants several years ago. The church previously hosted Arturo Hernandez Garcia as a sanctuary for nine months in 2014.⁴⁹ The current role of the church as sanctuary in this immigrant family's story is an example of First Unitarian Society of Denver's self-identified role as champion for debate and awareness of topics of social justice.

⁴⁹ "After 9 months in sanctuary, Arturo Hernandez Garcia is going home," American Friends Service Committee, Jul. 21, 2015. <https://www.afsc.org/story/after-9-months-sanctuary-arturo-hernandez-garcia-going-home> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017).

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

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- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: History Colorado, First Unitarian Society of Denver
Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 5DV.16713

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: _____ Longitude: _____

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: 13 Easting: 502543 Northing: 4398762

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The legal description from the Denver County Assessor's office is as follows: L 10 & S 13.41 FT OF L 9 BLK 3 GLENCOES ADD & L 15 TO 20 INC BLK 7 HORRS ADD

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary reflects the land historically associated with the church and which remains in First Unitarian Society of Denver ownership.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Karen Derrick-Davis and Susan Robertson, with E. Warzel and A. Liverman (for property owner)
organization: First Unitarian Society of Denver
street & number: 1400 Lafayette St.
city or town: Denver state: CO zip code: 80218
e-mail karenderrickdavis@gmail.com
telephone: (303) 831-7113
date: March 13, 2017

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: First Unitarian Society of Denver
City or Vicinity: Denver
County: Denver State: Colorado
Photographer: Erika Warzel
Date Photographed: January 12, 2017

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 14. West side and southwest corner of church property. Camera facing east-northeast.
- 2 of 14. Northwest corner of building with small porch. Camera facing southeast.
- 3 of 14. South half of west side. Camera facing east.
- 4 of 14. Southwest corner and south side. Camera facing northeast.
- 5 of 14. South side with rose window. Camera facing north.
- 6 of 14. Southeast corner of property, with elevator addition. Camera facing northwest.
- 7 of 14. East side north of elevator addition showing rear entrance. Camera facing west.
- 8 of 14. East side of sanctuary showing new stained glass installed after 1985 fire. Camera facing northwest.
- 9 of 14. Northeast corner of property. Camera facing southwest.
- 10 of 14. Detail of entrance stairs at west side. Camera facing north.
- 11 of 14. Detail of entrance stairs and ramp. Camera facing south.
- 12 of 14. Interior of remodeled sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.
- 13 of 14. Detail of pipe organ in sanctuary. Camera facing northeast.
- 14 of 14. Interior detail of rose window in chapel. Camera facing south.

Historic Photo Log

H1: West side of church in ca. 1895-1900, as seen from the corner of 14th and Lafayette; note southwest porch remains open. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.

H2: Church from same perspective as Historic Photo 1, ca. 1925-30; note southwest porch now has windows installed in the west arched openings and the south opening is blocked in with stone. Photo by Oscar E. Lindevall. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.

H3: Original stair to main entrance configuration, as seen in 1910 following wedding of Hazel Rhoads and Charles C. Gates. Photo by Harry Mellon Rhoads. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.

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H4. Rev. Daniel W. Nicely delivers Sunday sermon, September 1958, at First Plymouth Congregational Church in Denver, just prior to the congregation's relocation. This photo depicts the church interior prior to the fire. Source: Getty Images.

H5. Members of the Colorado Council to Abolish Capital Punishment meet at First Unitarian church February 1966 Source: Getty Images, Photo credit: Bill Peters (*Denver Post*)

H6. Vietnam Veterans Against the War members sing with the congregation at First Unitarian Church, October 1971 Source: Getty Images.

H7. Warren Witte (program director of the American Friends Service, at left) and Michael Walzer (professor of government at Harvard University, member of Vietnam Summer committee) conduct a press conference at First Unitarian Church, May 1967. Source: Getty Images (Photo credit: Cloyd Teter, *Denver Post*)

H8. Supporters listen to Rev. Paul Muad conduct memorial services "for innocent victims of Middle East war" at First Unitarian church, October 1973 Source: Getty Images (Photo credit: Ernie Leyba, *Denver Post*)

H9. Video still of a 1975 *Denver Post* article, religious wedding ceremony of Richard F. Adams and Anthony C. Sullivan, April 21, 1975, First Unitarian Church Source: Robert Barnes, "40 years later, story of a same-sex marriage in Colo. remains remarkable," *The Washington Post* (Apr. 18, 2015)

H10. Coverage of the Sullivan-Adams ceremony at First Unitarian Church Source: Grace Lichtenstein, *The New York Times* (Apr. 25, 1975), reproduced in Parker Molloy, *Upworthy* (Sep. 2, 2015) (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

H11. Phil Watkins repairs and cleans stained glass panels, March 1987. Source: Getty Images, Photo credit: Karl Gehring, *Denver Post*)

H12. Diversity is celebrated (caption). Source: First Unitarian Society of Denver, <http://www.fusden.org/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

H13. Vandalism at First Unitarian Church to Black Lives Matter banner, November 2015 Source: Rev. Jamil Scott, "How the Children Feel when their Church is wounded," Unitarian Universalist Association (May 3, 2016), <http://www.uua.org/pressroom/stories/how-children-feel-when-their-church-wounded> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

H14: Jeanette Vizguerra addresses marchers at the First Unitarian Church, where she has taken sanctuary with her children. Source: Ashley Dean, "Hundreds march from Civic Center Park to First Unitarian Church to support Jeanette Vizguerra," *Denverite* (Feb. 18, 2017), <https://www.denverite.com/hundreds-march-civic-center-park-first-unitarian-church-support->

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jeanette-vizguerra-29920/ (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

H15. Jeanette Vizguerra inside the chapel. Source: Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “This undocumented immigrant just announced that she is seeking sanctuary at a church. Now she waits,” *The Washington Post* (Feb. 15, 2017). Photo credit Alice Li.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Google Earth



First Unitarian Society of Denver
1400 Lafayette Street, Denver
UTM Reference (NAD 1983)
13; 502543 mE; 4398762 mN
Elevation: 5,311'

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Site plan of First Unitarian Church, from the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission application (2015).

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H1: West side of church in ca. 1895-1900, as seen from the corner of 14th and Lafayette; note southwest porch remains open. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.



H2: Church from same perspective as Historic Photo 1, ca. 1925-30; note southwest porch now has windows installed in the west arched openings and the south opening is blocked in with stone. Photo by Oscar E. Lindevall. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.

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H3: Original stair to main entrance configuration, as seen in 1910 following wedding of Hazel Rhoads and Charles C. Gates. Photo by Harry Mellon Rhoads. Source: Denver Public Library, Western History.



H4. Rev. Daniel W. Nicely delivers Sunday sermon, September 1958, at First Plymouth Congregational Church in Denver, just prior to the congregation's relocation. This photo depicts the church interior prior to the fire. Source: Getty Images.

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H5. Members of the Colorado Council to Abolish Capital Punishment meet at First Unitarian church February 1966
Source: Getty Images, Photo credit: Bill Peters (*Denver Post*)

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H6. Vietnam Veterans Against the War members sing with the congregation at First Unitarian Church, October 1971 Source: Getty Images.

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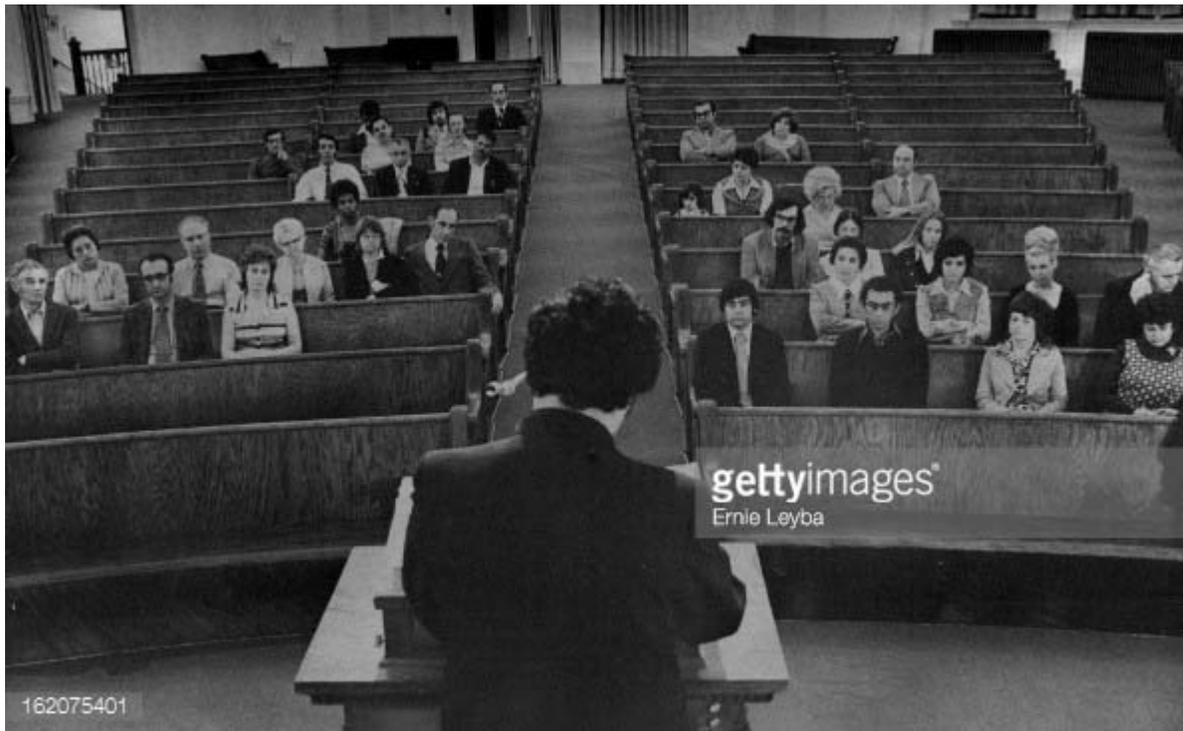
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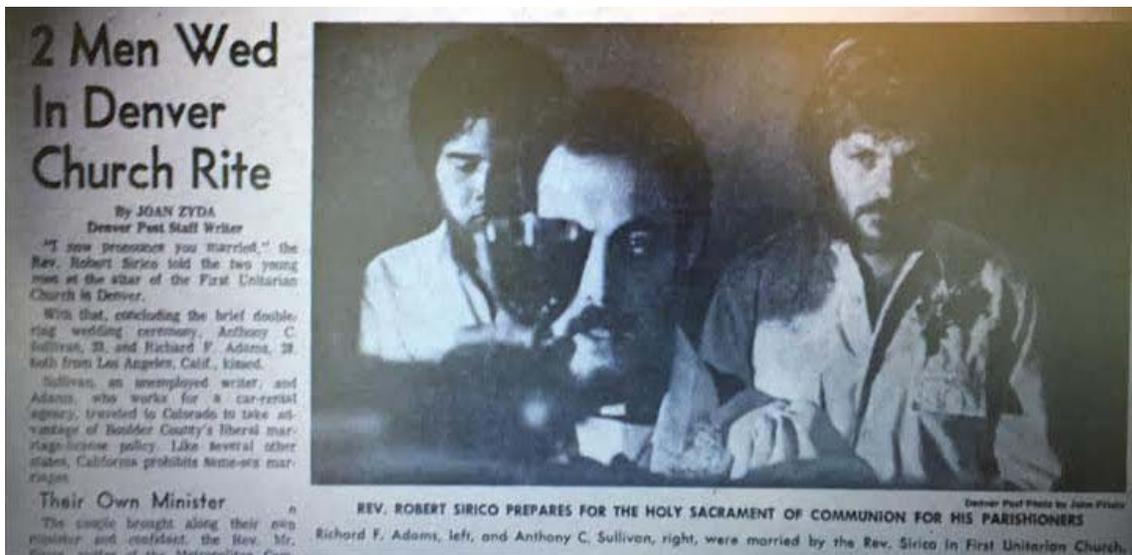
H7. Warren Witte (program director of the American Friends Service, at left) and Michael Walzer (professor of government at Harvard University, member of Vietnam Summer committee) conduct a press conference at First Unitarian Church, May 1967. Source: Getty Images (Photo credit: Cloyd Teter, *Denver Post*)

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H8. Supporters listen to Rev. Paul Muad conduct memorial services “for innocent victims of Middle East war” at First Unitarian church, October 1973 Source: Getty Images (Photo credit: Ernie Leyba, *Denver Post*)



H9. Video still of a 1975 *Denver Post* article, religious wedding ceremony of Richard F. Adams and Anthony C. Sullivan, April 21, 1975, First Unitarian Church Source: Robert Barnes, “40 years later, story of a same-sex marriage in Colo. remains remarkable,” *The Washington Post* (Apr. 18, 2015)

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Homosexual Weddings Stir Controversy in Colorado

By GRACE LICHTENSTEIN
Special to The New York Times

BOULDER, Colo., April 25— A few weeks ago, two persons from Colorado Springs obtained, without fanfare, a marriage license at the County Clerk's office here. Then they were married. The wedding would have passed unnoticed, except that the partners were homosexual men.

Their action has touched off a string of successful applications by couples of the same sex for marriage licenses, a well-publicized homosexual marriage in a Denver church, a series of obscene telephone calls to the Boulder County Clerk and a legal brouhaha that could extend far beyond the courts of this somewhat liberal university town—perhaps, eventually, as far as the United States Supreme Court.

Moreover, the move toward legally sanctioned marriages between persons of the same sex is considered by homosexual rights groups to be an important part of their national drive to overcome what they regard as discriminatory laws.

Legal Precedents

Those familiar with the situation say this appears to be the first time a series of couples of the same sex have obtained marriage licenses in the United States without being immediately challenged. However, most of the legal precedents in other states are against such licenses.

One expert in family law says higher courts would probably strike down the Boulder licenses. But a homosexual rights legal counsel argues that such licenses are defensible under the 14th Amendment which guarantees equal protection under the law.

J. D. MacFarlane, the Colorado Attorney General, said today that, in his opinion, the Boulder licenses were not valid because, in his interpretation of the state law, a legal marriage can only be that between a man and a woman. However he is not planning a court challenge to the license already issued.

'Phenomenal' Benefits

Meanwhile, Colorado has become a mini-Nevada for homosexual couples. Six couples—two women and four men—obtained licenses from Boulder County Clerk, Clea Rorex, a of Tuesday.

Anthony Sullivan, a 33-year old Australian, clasped the hand of his spouse, Richard F. Adams, 28, of Los Angeles after their wedding at the First Unitarian Church of Denver last Monday and said that th

psychological benefits of their union were "absolutely phenomenal."

He also said that he married Mr. Adams to test the immigration laws that permit a foreigner to remain in this country if he marries a citizen. Mr. Adams added that they wanted to have the full benefits of other married couples—income tax returns, inheritance, wills and so on."

'A Breakthrough'

Their ceremony was a simple one derived from the Book of Common Prayer, performed in a chapel almost empty except for television crews and a handful of well-wishers. The Rev. Robert Sirico of the Metropolitan Community Church of Los Angeles, part of a national organization of predominantly homosexual churches, officiated with the help of a woman minister, Freda Smith. They changed the words "husbands" and "wives" to "spouses," with Mr. Sirico inserting the phrase "as long as there is love" before "till death do us part."

Afterward, the two men smiled, kissed, held hands and spoke to reporters. They were dressed nearly identically in dungarees and white shirts decorated with a sprig of flowers.

The minister, a native of Brooklyn, called the licenses and the marriage "a breakthrough," remarking with a grin, "I feel like I imagine Moses felt when he split the Red Sea."

Mr. Sirico and other same-sex spokesmen note that thousands of homosexual couples have been united in religious ceremonies in recent years without benefit of a government document. Others have received licenses by having one partner pose as a member of the opposite sex.

Rejected by Courts

Boulder was not the first county to issue a license to a couple of the same sex. In January, two men in Phoenix were granted a license, but the Maricopa County Attorney charged one man with filing false documents, since he had filled out the woman's section. Last month, a local court voided the marriage.

According to Henry H. Foster, professor of law at New York University and a vice president of the family law section of the American Bar Association, most states do not specifically prohibit marriage between persons of the same sex because the language of the law is so clear in referring to male-female couples.

Test cases have all gone against couples of the same sex

The most important occurred in Minnesota in 1971, when two men attempting to get a marriage license were turned down by the state's highest court. The United States Supreme Court then refused to review their case. The two men are still trying to file a joint income tax return.

In New York, spokesmen for both the City Corporation Counsel and the Manhattan City Clerk said they interpreted the state law's definition of marriage as a union of a man and a woman, making marriages between persons of the same sex illegal.

Clea Rorex, the Boulder County Clerk, took the opposite position March 26 when she issued the first same-sex license in Colorado after getting a favorable opinion from William C. Wise, the county's assistant district attorney.

"I don't profess to be knowledgeable about homosexuality or even understand it," she said. "But it's not my business why people get married. No minority should be discriminated against."

Obscene Phone Calls

By last Tuesday, she had issued marriage licenses to six homosexual couples. She had also received nearly 100 phone calls, many of them obscene. "Most of the nasty calls center around renditions from the Bible," she said, adding that others have told her, "I hope you suffer because God doesn't like this."

Callers have telephoned Mr. Wise in the middle of the night with "proposals of marriage and proposals of something else," he said.

Although Boulder has a reputation as a liberal bastion, there is already talk of taking a vote to recall Miss Rorex from office. Last year, the city recalled a councilman and nearly recalled its mayor over their advocacy of an equal rights law for homosexuals.

To demonstrate his disgust of the situation, one local cowboy marched to the County Clerk's office last week with a request to marry his favorite horse. The request was denied on the ground that the horse, an 8-year-old mare, was underage.

Subject to Harassment

The homosexual couples themselves have been subject to harassment and ridicule. A homosexual man from Wyoming who received a license from Boulder to marry was dismissed from his job. And Mr. Sullivan, the Australian homosexual who was married last Monday,

has been disowned and denounced by his mother.

The legal issue, according to Professor Foster, boils down to the classic definition of marriage, written in the eighteenth century by Lord Penzance of Britain: "A voluntary union for life of one man to one woman to the exclusion of all others."

Miss Rorex, like members of homosexual rights groups, thinks that could be resolved by eliminating the gender words. For same-sex couples, she has crossed off "male" and "female" on the Boulder applications, substituting "person." "Who is it going to hurt?" asked Mr. Wise.

Coverage of the Sullivan-Adams ceremony at First Unitarian Church by Grace Lichtenstein, The New York Times (Apr. 27, 1975).

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H11. Phil Watkins repairs and cleans stained glass panels, March 1987. Source: Getty Images, Photo credit: Karl Gehring, *Denver Post*)



H12. Diversity is celebrated (caption). Source: First Unitarian Society of Denver, <http://www.fusden.org/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

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H13. Vandalism at First Unitarian Church to Black Lives Matter banner, November 2015 Source: Rev. Jamil Scott, "How the Children Feel when their Church is wounded," Unitarian Universalist Association (May 3, 2016), <http://www.uua.org/pressroom/stories/how-children-feel-when-their-church-wounded> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

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H14: Jeanette Vizguerra addresses marchers at the First Unitarian Church, where she has taken sanctuary with her children. Source: Ashley Dean, "Hundreds march from Civic Center Park to First Unitarian Church to support Jeanette Vizguerra," *Denverite* (Feb. 18, 2017), <https://www.denverite.com/hundreds-march-civic-center-park-first-unitarian-church-support-jeanette-vizguerra-29920/> (accessed Mar. 1, 2017)

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H15. Jeanette Vizguerra inside the chapel. Source: Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “This undocumented immigrant just announced that she is seeking sanctuary at a church. Now she waits,” *The Washington Post* (Feb. 15, 2017). Photo credit Alice Li.