

Architect: Sternberg, Eugene D.
Birth/Death Dates: 1915-
Practice Dates: 1944- (Colorado 1947-)

Biographical Information

Eugene Sternberg was born in 1915 in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. He earned an architectural engineering degree in Prague, Czechoslovakia, and was pursuing his graduate degree in architecture at Cambridge University in England when World War II broke out. He remained in London through the war teaching part-time at Cambridge, then joined the firm of Sir Patrick Abercrombie, where he was involved in the rebuilding of housing destroyed by the German bombing of London.

In 1945, like many European architects displaced by the war, Sternberg emigrated to the United States. He had accepted a teaching invitation at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, but quickly became dissatisfied with Cornell's restrictions on combining an architectural practice with teaching. At the urging of his friend, Lewis Mumford, Sternberg accepted a teaching offer from Carl Feiss, Director of the School of Architecture and Planning at the University of Denver. Sternberg was the first faculty member to be hired for the University of Denver's new School of Architecture. He and his English-born wife Barbara settled into a faculty housing complex of prefabricated, military-surplus quonset huts and buildings on the University Park Campus

In 1949, developer Edward Hawkins convinced Sternberg to participate in the development of Arapahoe Acres in Englewood. Hawkins' ideas appealed to the architect's interest in the creation of socially conscious modern housing combining quality architectural design and economical construction.

Sternberg's site planning was founded on his training with the firm of Sir Patrick Abercrombie, a key architect of the London's 1944 Green Belt plan. It was unconventional, standing in stark contrast to the surrounding neighborhoods. Instead of regrading and leveling the lots, common residential development practice, the natural grade, a forty foot slope from east to west, was retained. Some houses were sited on flat lots atop high points or low expanses below. Some stepped up or down to the front, rear or side of their sites. Houses were oriented on their lots for privacy, and to take the best advantage of southern and western exposures for solar heating and mountain views. Sternberg partially abandoned the surrounding street grid, substituting a pattern of curving streets. His plan reduced traffic speed and discouraged through traffic, resulting in a safer, quieter neighborhood.

The homes were set at twenty-three to forty-five degree angles to the street behind a twenty-five foot building line. Walks and driveways were situated to create broad lawns and provide areas for landscaping in a variety of proportions and dimensions. Sternberg's original concept had included a private neighborhood park to be situated between Cornell Place (originally named Arapahoe Place) and Cornell Circle, but it was eliminated in the interests of economy by Hawkins.

Most residential development projects narrowly define lot size, floor space and home price. As a result, most are composed of a very homogeneous socio-economic group. For Arapahoe Acres, a more diverse community was envisioned for families of varying size and financial resources. Homes were grouped in price ranges from \$10,000 to over \$20,000. Lot sizes varied from 66 x 100 feet up to 80 x 150 feet. Each home is of individual design. Instead of regrading and

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The initial nine homes designed by Sternberg were a single basic plan varied by individual location on the lot and by the position and character of the carport and main entrance. Each home had a paved terrace to the rear. The primary exterior materials were red or yellow brick, plywood panels and glass.

The homes were designed on a four-foot module with flowing living and work areas set off from the bedrooms for privacy. Sliding interior wall panels were based on the Japanese Shoji screen. A variety of options were offered on the roof type, the fireplaces which were included in every house and the color and finish of exterior and interior walls. Interior walls were often paneled in natural hardwood plywood. State-of-the-art kitchens offered new appliances and efficient workspaces. Floors were asphalt tile. Due to the sponsorship of Revere Copper and Brass, the model home featured copper in the mechanical construction and interior finishes.

The homes were characterized by many construction innovations which Sternberg had brought with him from his work in London. They included insulated cavity brick walls and the area's first warm-air heating system combining radiant floor heat with forced air heat distributed under concrete slabs to floor registers along walls. Acoustical ceilings provided noise control.

Stylistically, Sternberg's work was related to the International Style as seen in the work of Marcel Breuer. Breuer was a first generation student who later taught at the Bauhaus in Germany, the pioneering school of modern design. He emigrated to the United States in 1937 where he taught and practiced architecture with Walter Gropius, the Bauhaus founder who had been appointed Director of the Architecture Department at Harvard.

During the initial success of Arapahoe Acres, it became evident that Hawkins did not share Sternberg's interest in low-cost, affordable homes. Much to Sternberg's dismay, Hawkins sold the model home for more than the \$11,500 which had originally been agreed upon. It created a rift between the two men and in 1950, Edward Hawkins and Eugene Sternberg ended their collaborative relationship. Approximately twenty homes were built on Sternberg's plans, almost all on the Marion Street frontage. *Better Homes and Gardens* offered a complete set of Arapahoe Acres house plans for \$25.00, for which Sternberg received a commission for each set sold.

Immediately following his involvement with Arapahoe Acres, Sternberg designed a similar neighborhood, the former Mile High Cooperative. Like Arapahoe Acres, it combines a cohesive site plan with modern architectural design. However, the individual homes do not display the variety and stylistic distinction of Arapahoe Acres and it has suffered from insensitive landscaping and architectural changes. Another later Sternberg development, Orchard Hills, displays remarkable site planning but the few modern homes date to Sternberg's brief association with the project.

Sternberg laid out Littleton's Mountain Rangeview subdivision for owner Ralph C. Mayo, Jr. The subdivision was located west of Windermere about three-quarters of a mile south of Ridge Road. The large, irregular shaped lots were accessed by a loop road with a single entrance off Windermere, a deliberate design choice by Sternberg to eliminate through traffic. Sternberg also designed the Mayo house within the subdivision.

Credited Buildings

Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date	Assessment
Arapahoe Acres Site Plan	Arapahoe Acres, Englewood	5AH1434	1949	National Register
Littleton Clinic	1950 Littleton Blvd., Littleton		1950-51	
Rickard House	2900 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Hawkins/Merry House	2910 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Loveless House	2920 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Link House	2930 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
James House	2940 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Fisher House	2950 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Fisher House	2960 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Swets House	2970 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Ehret House	2980 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Mass House	3000 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Wood House	3010 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Lloyd House	3020 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Wilson House	3030 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Dunbar House	3040 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District

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Flemming House	3050 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Anderson House	3060 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Dickey House	3070 S. Marion St., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1951	NR District
Woodshop/Baylinson House	2901 S. Lafayette Dr., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1950	NR District
Wall House	2908 S. Lafayette Dr., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1951	NR District
Martin House	2910 S. Lafayette Dr., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1951	NR District
Meter House	2916 S. Lafayette Dr., (Arapahoe Acres) Englewood		1951	NR District
Mountain Rangeview Subdivision site plan	Littleton		c. 1955	
Ralph C. Mayo, Jr. House	Littleton		c. 1955	
Mile High Cooperative			c. 1955	
Orchard Hills	Greenwood Village		c. 1955	
Courthouse Building	Littleton		1959	
Geneva Village	Littleton		1963	
Bemis Public Library	Littleton		1965	
Arapahoe Community College	Littleton		c. 1966	
Heritage High School	1401 W. Geddes Ave., Littleton		1969-70	
Denver General Hospital	Denver			
Administration Building, Englewood Schools	Englewood			
Sheridan High School	Sheridan			
Longmont Community Hospital	Longmont			
Wardenberg Student Health Center	University of Colorado, Boulder			
B.C. Central Union Headquarters Master Plan	Vancouver, Canada			

Information Sources

AIA Denver. *Profile, 1992*. Denver: AIA Denver, 1992.

Simmons, R. Laurie and Thomas H. Simmons. *Historic Buildings Survey, Littleton, Colorado, 2000-2001*. October 17, 2001. Collection of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society.

Wray, Diane. "Arapahoe Acres," National Register of Historic Places nomination, February 28, 1998. Collection of the Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society.

Revised: October 31, 2001