



Architect: Francis, Edwin A.
Birth/Death Dates: 1905-1966
Practice Dates: 1932-1966
Firms: Edwin A. Francis, Architect

Biographical Information

A high point in Edwin Francis' architectural career, both literally and figuratively, came with his design for the Mount Evans Crest House, a lodge and observation point constructed in 1940-41 at an altitude of 14,260 feet. He incorporated engineering techniques enabling the building to withstand the extreme high altitude weather conditions. Francis utilized natural materials from the site and reflected elements of the futuristic and Art Moderne to create a modern interpretation of the Rustic style. Unfortunately, a 1979 explosion and fire partially destroyed the building and it remains unreconstructed.



*The Crest House on Mount Evans shortly after its completion.
Source: Western History/Genealogy Department,
Denver Public Library.*

Born in La Junta, Colorado, in 1905, Edwin Francis came to Denver with his family in 1908. He graduated from Denver's South High School and received his architectural training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Francis worked first with Denver architects J.J.B. Benedict and later with Harry James Manning. While employed by Manning, Francis specialized in the design of ornamental details. After leaving Manning's employment he opened his own firm in 1932.

Francis established his office as a traditional architectural designer. By the mid-1930s, he became an early proponent of the International Style in Denver, and in partnership with William Cabot, Francis designed an early local example of the style, the 1936 residence at 300 East Exposition Avenue. Working alone, Francis drew the plans for the 1937 International Style residence at 660 Fairfax Street. He also designed one of the finest pre-war Modernist buildings in the city, the 1938 terra cotta International Style residence at 940 Bonnie Brae Boulevard.

World War II interrupted his practice. Stationed in England, Francis put his training to good use in the Army Corps of Engineers. Returning to Denver after the war, he reestablished a solo practice and designed the fine Modernist style 1951 Van Hummell Insurance Company Building at 444 Sherman Street. In 1958, he created the plans for the expressionistic Johnson-McFarland Residence Halls, with their distinctive folded-plate roofs, for the campus of the University of Denver.



In partnership with Carlisle Guy during the 1950s and 1960s, Francis designed the 1961 Broadmoor International Center, the 1962 Broadmoor South and other projects at the world-famous hotel and resort south of Colorado Springs. Francis and Guy functioned essentially as resident architects. The Broadmoor South and the 1963 Capitol Life Tower, at 225 E. 16th Avenue in Denver, are the only high-rise designs by Francis. He continued his architectural practice until his death in 1966.

Credited Buildings (partial list)

Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date*	Status
Residence (with William Cabot)	300 E. Exposition Ave., Denver		1936	
Residence	660 Fairfax St. Denver		1937	
Buddies Bar	2101 Champa St. Denver	5DV.3302	1937	Extant
Residence	940 Bonnie Brae Blvd., Denver		1938	
Greenhaven Farm (Colorado A&M President's House; Colorado State University Alumni Center)	645 Shields St. Fort Collins	5LR.10492	1939	Extant
Harbor Hotel	703 Lincoln Ave. Steamboat Springs	5RT.1021	1939	Demolished in 2006
Crest House	Summit of Mount Evans	5CC.200	1941	Ruins
Van Hummell Insurance Company Building (later First Trust and now the Red Cross Building)at	444 Sherman St. Denver		1951	Office building
Edwin A. Francis House (Nicholas Petry House)	3200 Quincy Ave. Cherry Hills Village	5AH.2906	1952	Extant
Johnson-McFarland Residence Halls, University of Denver	1901 East Iliff Ave. Denver		1958	Extant
Broadmoor International Center (with Carlisle Guy)	Colorado Springs		1961	Extant though modified
Broadmoor South (with Carlisle Guy)	Colorado Springs		1962	Hotel
Capitol Life Tower (later Capitol Center)	225 E. 16 th Ave, Denver		1963	Office Building
Great Ape House, Cheyenne Mountain Zoo	Colorado Springs		Unknown	



J.K. Mullen High School	2601 S. Lowell Blvd., Denver		Unknown	
Willows Building	4 th Ave. and Grant St., Denver		Unknown	

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

Information Sources

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

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

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Originally published in 1970. Detroit: Omnigraphics, 1996.

Wray, Diane. "Capitol Life Insurance Building," National Register of Historic Places registration form, November 29, 1996.

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Postcard view of Harbor Hotel in Steamboat Springs

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