

HISTORIC LITTLETON INC.

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Renewal Dinner to Celebrate Modernism

Historic Littleton Inc. and the Englewood Historical Society are joining forces to present the Sixth Renewal Dinner on Wednesday, May 19, at the Inn at Hudson Gardens at 6 p.m.

In 1997 Historic Littleton began the tradition of hosting Renewal Dinners during Historic Preservation Month to renew and promote interest in preservation. This year's event will focus on Modernism, an architectural style that was popular from the 1950's to the 1970's.

Architect Eugene Sternberg will be honored at the dinner with a lifetime achievement award. Sternberg, age 89, designed many of Littleton's modernist buildings during the post-World War II years, including the Arapahoe County office building pictured at right (Sternberg's former office), Arapahoe Community College, Heritage High School, Bemis Library, Carl Sandburg Elementary School and Geneva Village. Sternberg was also the principal architect for the Arapahoe Acres subdivision in Englewood.

The Renewal Dinner begins with wine and appetizers and a chance to view Hudson Gardens at 6 p.m. A buffet dinner follows at 7 p.m., with entertainment provided by Max Smith and friends, featuring songs of the 50's.

Diane Wray, an Englewood historic preservation consultant, will present a slide show of Sternberg's work. Sternberg will also be presented with an award designed by Ray Tomasso, a glass artist and Englewood City Councilman.

Tickets for the dinner are \$35 per person and are available by calling Barb Eaton, 303-977-4054 or Rebecca Kast, 303-730-2639.



What is Modernism?

After World War II, architects were inspired to create a new world, free from the political and architectural forms of the past. The Modern Movement was influenced by three prominent architects, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier.

Van der Rohe of Germany coined the phrases, "Less is more" and "God is in the detail." He was a master of glass and steel architecture. His buildings were pared down to be as refined as possible and crafted to the highest possible standard.

Frank Lloyd Wright revolutionized American domestic architecture with his Prairie and Usonian Styles, which emphasized horizontal lines and natural materials that blended in with the landscape. (continued on back page)

An Interview with Eugene Sternberg

In February, three members of the Historic Littleton Inc. board, Sonya Ellingboe, Doris Hulse, and Rebecca Kast, joined Diane Wray of the Englewood Historical Society to travel to Evergreen to meet and interview architect Eugene Sternberg. Sternberg is a modernist architect who designed many schools, residences and office buildings in Englewood and Littleton. The following is an excerpt of that interview:

"Littleton has been very good to me. I enjoyed having an office in Littleton. I have many good friends in Littleton...."

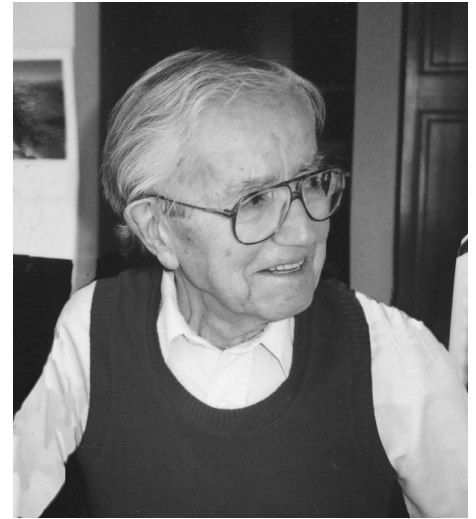
"The first building I ever designed in Colorado was for Littleton. I was invited to be a professor at the school of architecture at Denver University. There was a two-line note in the Denver Post announcing my coming. A day or two after I arrived I had a phone call one morning. A man said, 'My name is Dr. Ralph Mackenzie. I read the note about you in the paper. I would like to be your first client. I need a small clinic for four doctors in Littleton.'"

Sternberg accepted the commission and designed the Littleton Clinic, at 1950 W. Littleton Blvd. (now the Littleton Community Center). It was written up nationally in architectural magazines and led to Sternberg designing two dozen medical clinics during his career. Sternberg said, "I always wanted to practice architecture as a

social responsibility. I was interested in designing schools, churches, hospitals, clinics and community centers. Anything that can make life better for people."

As his career progressed, Sternberg designed a building with a folded plate roof at 2009 W. Littleton Boulevard for his own office. He recalls the day Arapahoe County Commissioner John Christensen, Pete Smythe and Sheriff Ed Scott came to see him. "All three came to my office. 'Gene, we need to talk to you,' they said. 'The county is growing. The District Attorney's office is growing. We need your building.' I almost started crying. All these people were good friends of mine. They put me on the spot." Arapahoe County purchased his building to use for office space.

Sternberg planned Heritage High School as a three-story walk-out to utilize the slope of the site and reserve more land for a park-like setting. The school was described as a contemporary sculpture of concrete and brick.



At Arapahoe Community College, Sternberg designed one large, concrete instructional building rather than separate buildings for each discipline. "Why separate students?" he said. "Aren't we richer if we have an opportunity to be part of an exciting community?"

Sternberg liked to use concrete in his building designs because, "Concrete can be played with. I used it like sculpture."

Modernism, continued

Wright felt that a building should "grow" from its site.

Le Corbusier (Charles Jeanneret-Gris) of France was probably the greatest architect to work in the International Style. Buildings in this style feature geometric shapes, white walls, and a flat roof. Most were constructed of concrete, with little ornamentation and large windows. Le Corbusier liked concrete because it was an inexpensive material, it was rugged, and required little or no maintenance. Modernist architects used materials to express a style or point of view as much as for their inherent qualities.