



1. Name of Property

**Historic Name:** Essex Apartments

**Current Name:** Essex Apartments

2. Location

**Address:** 630-38 East 16th Avenue, Denver, CO

**Legal Description:** CLEMENTS ADD B336 L37 & 38

3. Owner Information

**Name:** Ben Gearhart, Wamserville West, LLC

**Address:** 2828 N. Speer Blvd., Suite 220, Denver, CO 80206

**Phone:** (303) 910-7015

**Email:** [bengearhart@realtor.com](mailto:bengearhart@realtor.com)

4. Applicant/Contact Person (If other than owner)

Same as owner

5. General Data

**Date of construction and major additions/alterations:** Construction - 1908;

Additions/Alterations - 1949, 1985/86, 1988, 2017-2018

**Source of Information:** Denver Building Permit Index: 1906-1914, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1903-1951; City and County of Denver Building Permit Records

**Number, type, and date of construction of outbuildings:** Not applicable

**Approximate lot size and acreage:** 0.14 acre

**Source of Information:** Denver Property Taxation and Assessment System

(<https://www.denvergov.org/Property/realproperty/summary/160968285>); Google Earth Pro

**Architect:** William E. Fisher

**Source of Information:** Denver Building Permit Index: 1906-1914; Fisher and Fisher Architectural Records, 1892-1997, Denver Public Library

**Builder:** Earnest Lund

**Source of Information:** Denver Building Permit Index: 1906-1914

**Original Use:** Domestic: Multiple Dwelling

**Source of Information:** Fisher and Fisher Architectural Records, 1892-1997, Denver Public Library; Denver City Directories

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Source of Information:** Property site visits by Miniello Consulting

**Previous field documentation (date and surveyor):** July 1987 by Herbst/Rottman, determined "Not Eligible - Field" (5DV.2605)

**National Register Status and date (listed, eligible, study list):** A "Preliminary Property Evaluation Form" (OAHP 1419f) was submitted to OAHP in May 2017, and that office determined the property to be eligible. The "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 - Evaluation of Significance" form was submitted to the NPS July 31, 2017. On August 1, 2017, that office made a preliminary determination that the property appears to meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and will likely be listed in the National Register of Historic Places if nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer according to the procedures set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

## 6. Statement of Significance

**Category 1: History, Criteria a. Have direct association with the historical development of the city, state, or nation**

The Essex Apartments property is directly associated with the historical development of the City of Denver. The building is located in Clements' Addition of North Capitol Hill at the corner of 16th Avenue and Washington Street. The addition was formed in 1870 and named for Alfred H. Clements, who built a small frame house in June 1864<sup>1</sup> in the neighborhood now known as North Capitol Hill. The following summer, his father, Caleb B. Clements, also built a small brick structure on the same block.<sup>2</sup>

Clements' Addition was one of three principal historic subdivisions of the neighborhood. At the time, the property seemed far removed from the commercial and residential core of Denver. By 1879, it was still part of what was referred to as "East Denver," with the city extending only as far as 23rd Street, marking its northern boundary.<sup>3</sup>

Upon Colorado achieving statehood in 1876, several wealthy individuals offered their land in Denver for the site of the state capitol building, but the selection committee was particular. Henry Brown offered his land, commonly referred to as "Brown's Bluff." Many felt it was located too far from the town's primary operations and thought the site a foolish one for the center of state government. Despite these opinions, Brown's land was eventually selected

---

<sup>1</sup> Smiley, Jerome, ed., History of Denver, With Outlines of the Earlier History of the Rocky Mountain Country (Denver: The Denver Times, 1901), 374.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 427.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 465.

and construction on the Capitol began in 1886, a year that coincided with Denver's expansion.

The eastward movement among Denver's citizens was somewhat based on the choice of the wealthy to build residences near the Capitol Building. Originally located in Lower Downtown, the residents of Millionaire's Row were feeling crowded out by the increasing number of businesses and commercial buildings. Two notable men, Charles Kountze, a wealthy banker, and David Moffat, a railroad financier, sold their homes in Lower Downtown and built new mansions in the neighborhood known as Capitol Hill. Their well-to-do neighbors followed.<sup>4</sup>

As was the trend among the nation's larger cities, it quickly became fashionable for Denver's more affluent residents to live farther than walking distance from downtown. Along with the advent and popularity of the personal automobile, Denver had a notable streetcar network that enabled these individuals to live away from the dirt and grime of the city's center and manufacturing operations. Capitol Hill was an ideal location for those with money, and immense homes boasting exquisite architectural features showcasing their wealth were built throughout the area.

The middle class was quick to follow, as they aspired to live near the wealthy in nicer areas of the city. An affordable means of attaining that status was through apartment living, and the demand for such buildings increased. Architects were commissioned to design the properties, many of which were high style and billed as a desirable alternative to boarding houses, offering numerous amenities to prospective tenants. In addition to the Essex, other large apartment buildings constructed in North Capitol Hill in 1908 included the Kentom Apartments (1540 Grant), El Tovar Apartments (1515 Grant), Chelwood Court (1534 Logan, demolished), and Topaz Apartments (1934 Grant).<sup>5</sup>

***Category 2: Architecture, Criteria b. Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder***

The Essex Apartments building is significant as an early 20th century apartment building designed by William E. Fisher, one of Denver's most well-known architects. At the time, Fisher was in the initial stages of forming a professional union with his younger brother, Arthur Addison Fisher. He had designed few single-family homes and was not yet sought after by wealthy individuals in the Country Club area. The Essex stands out as a comparatively subdued residential design when one considers the future commissions of opulent homes for which he would come to be known.

The building was designed by Fisher in the Colonial Revival style<sup>6</sup> with Mission style elements subtly incorporated.<sup>7</sup> This is not surprising, as popular single-family residential works by Fisher around the same time period were designed in the Dutch Colonial style. The Essex exhibits a symmetrically balanced facade with paired multi-paned windows and main entrances accentuated by decorative pediments. Components associated with the Mission style include the open, overhanging eaves and the distinctively shaped roof parapet

---

<sup>4</sup> Denver Public Library Digital Collections, "Capitol Hill Neighborhood History" (available from <https://history.denverlibrary.org/capitol-hill-neighborhood-history>), accessed 2 May 2017.

<sup>5</sup> Front Range Research Associates, Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: North Capitol Hill Neighborhood (Denver, CO: Front Range Research Associates, 1995), 30

<sup>6</sup> McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 321.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 409.

that is echoed in the understated brick arches over the third story and attic openings on the north facade.

A copy of the original blueprints shows that Fisher designed the Essex with six, one-bedroom units on each floor, for a total of 18 units. The two units in the central portion of the building on each floor, facing 16th Avenue, were mirror images consisting of a living room, dining room, kitchen, "chamber" (bedroom), closet, and a bathroom. There were two units in each of the wings on all floors, and they also had a living room, kitchen, chamber, closet, and bathroom but lacked a dining room. The bathrooms consisted of a corner sink, toilet, and bathtub. One residential unit was also built in the northwest corner of the basement, likely for the custodian/caretaker. Several store rooms, a laundry room, drying room, boiler room, and coal room were also located in the basement. The ground underneath the east wing was not excavated.<sup>8</sup>

## 7. Architectural Description

- a. This three-story Colonial Revival/Mission style brick building is located at the southwest corner of 16th Avenue and Washington Street on Lots 37 and 38 of Block 336 of Clements' Addition to the North Capitol Hill neighborhood in the City and County of Denver, Colorado. The urban site is level, with a sidewalk along its north and east boundary. A paved alley runs along its west boundary, and an asphalt parking lot is located immediately adjacent to its south boundary. The building's rectangular plan consists of three distinct parts: a central segment flanked on its east and west ends by wings that each extend approximately ten feet from the central segment toward 16th Avenue and approximately fifteen feet toward the rear of the property. The overall footprint measures approximately 110 feet by 48 feet.
- b. The property has a concrete foundation and is constructed of red brick. The roof on the central segment is flat, while the wings have steeply-pitched, side-gabled roofs with overhanging eaves. The entire building has a symmetrical appearance.

### North Facade, Central Segment

The north façade faces 16th Avenue and has a pair of centrally located entrances on its first story that originally opened onto a wood porch. Each opening consists of a single, 15-light door paired with a six-over-one window with a simple wood panel underneath. A second, smaller opening is found to the side of each of the entrances, consisting of a pair of six-over-one windows. Brick lintels, with the bricks set vertically, are found along the top of each window. The appearance of the second and third stories is nearly identical to that of the first with regard to window location, size, and shape; however, the openings on the third story are slightly arched. Each window has a stone sill. A Mission style parapet distinguishes the central roof line of the building, and a stone entablature that reads, "ESSEX APARTMENTS," is located between it and the central third story windows.

### North Facade: Wings

A main entrance with an unbroken, triangular, wood pediment is found on the central segment-facing side of each wing. The pediments are supported by a pair of scrolled wood brackets. Above the entrances, on both the second and third stories, is a rectangular, six-over-six window with a brick arch that mimics those on the central section of the north façade.

---

<sup>8</sup> "Fisher and Fisher Architectural Records, 1892-1997" (Denver: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department).

The first story of the wings facing 16th Avenue consists of a centrally-located rectangular opening with three adjacent pairs of windows. The opening above it on the second story consists of a door in the center, flanked by tall, six-over-one windows with wood panels beneath them. The door opens onto a balcony with a metal railing. Above that, on the third story, is a nearly identical configuration. In keeping with the rest of the third story, the brick forms an arch at the top of the opening, but in this instance a keystone is set into the center of the arch. A small, centrally located arched window is found above the third story opening. Both gables have a simple parapet lined along the top with stone, no rake, and an open eave. The apex and lower ends of the parapets are distinguished by a stone ball on a stone base.

#### East Elevation

The east elevation faces Washington Street. On the first story, two tall, vertical openings are located near the center of the elevation. The outermost openings were originally doors that opened from the units onto a porch, with windows in the interior openings. Today, each consists of a pair of adjacent windows with wood panels beneath them. A smaller opening with a pair of windows is found evenly spaced to the north and to the south of the central two openings. The smaller openings have brick lintels and stone sills in keeping with those on the north façade. The openings on the second and third stories are identical to those of the first in size, spacing, and materials. The third story openings are sheltered by the overhang of the roof and lack the arches that appear on their north façade counterparts.

#### West Elevation

The west elevation faces an alley and parking lot. Four small, rectangular windows are spaced along the foundation, and they align with the arrangement of the other openings on the elevation. On the first story, two square openings are located near the center, each consisting of a ten-over-one window. A pair of windows are found evenly spaced to the north and to the south of the central openings. All of the windows have brick lintels and stone sills like those on the north façade. The openings on the second and third stories are identical to those of the first in size, spacing, and materials. The third story openings are sheltered by the overhang of the roof and lack the arches that appear on their north façade counterparts. A shed dormer with a pair of windows is located on the northernmost portion of the roof.

#### South Elevation: Central Segment

The south elevation faces a small parking lot and the side of an apartment building on an adjacent property. The east and west portions of the central segment are nearly mirror images of one another, and each of the three stories are identical. Two small, square, one-over-one windows with stone sills and arched brick lintels are located near the center of the elevation. To the east and west is a door with a sidelight along its east side. The opening of the doorway is arched. A wide, square opening with a pair of windows is located on the other side of the door opening. Another door with an arched opening is located in the corner next to the wing. Each opening is evenly spaced across the central segment's façade, in keeping with the balanced design of the property.

#### South Elevation: Wings

On the east wing, a window opening is found near the easternmost corner of the building on each of the three stories. The openings have stone sills and vertical brick lintels. A small, centrally located dormer with an arched opening is found in the gable. The gable

has a simple parapet lined with stone, no rake, and an open eave. The eastern slope of the parapet is broken by a wide brick stack that is even with the height of the top of the parapet. The apex and east end of the parapet are distinguished by a stone ball on a stone base.

On the west wing, a window opening with a pair of windows is found near the westernmost corner of the building on each of the three stories. The openings have stone sills but lack the vertical brick lintels that are prevalent throughout the rest of the building's exterior. A small, vertical, rectangular window opening is found near the easternmost corner of the west wing on each of the three stories. The openings have stone sills and arched lintels. A pair of square window openings are located in the gable, and each has a stone lintel. The gable has a simple parapet lined with stone, no rake, and an open eave. A square, brick chimney is found at the east corner of the west wing, and its height is approximately even with the top of the parapet.

- c. Character defining features of the property include the Mission style parapet on the north facade; steeply-pitched, side-gabled roofs with overhanging eaves on the wings; unbroken, triangular wood pediments supported by a pair of scrolled wood brackets over each of the main entrances; and the stone window sills and arched brick lintels.
- d. Although several buildings from 1908, the period of significance, remain nearby, the neighborhood and streetscape have been somewhat altered with the demolition of surrounding properties that were converted to parking lots, slightly compromising the setting. With the exception of the Huddart Terrace/Hoover Apartments across the street (Denver Historic Landmark, 625 East 16th Avenue) and the properties previously mentioned, the Essex is in the minority with regard to extant apartment buildings from the same time period in the North Capitol Hill and Capitol Hill neighborhoods. Temple Emanuel (1595 Pearl Street), built a decade prior to the Essex, is located one block to the west and is visible from the property.
- e. In 1934, a fire ladder connecting the upper apartment to the fire escape was installed and approved by the city.<sup>9</sup> One of the most significant alterations to the building's exterior was the removal of the three-story porches located on the center of the north facade and the east elevation (see attached historic photograph). The owner applied for a permit to demolish the north porch on October 4, 1949.<sup>10</sup> There is no record of a permit for demolition of the east porch. From December 1985 to January 1986 the City ordered the property owner to "repair the most front chimney, which is - leaning outward more than 1/3 of it's thickness and poised to fall over main exit door at 630 address. If not in use remove and cap [off]."<sup>11</sup> Finally, in 1988 the fire escape was installed on the south elevation of the building.<sup>12</sup>

As part of the application for Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Incentives, the owner is currently rebuilding the three-story porch on the north facade. Original drawings and images housed at the Denver Public Library serve as guidance for an accurate recreation. Solar panels would also be placed on the flat portion of the central segment's

---

<sup>9</sup> City and County of Denver Building Permits 1915-1955 (Denver: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department), text-fiche, roll #104.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> City and County of Denver Permits (Denver: Building Permit Records Office, Community Planning & Development), text-fiche, 1960-1987, #26.

<sup>12</sup> City and County of Denver Permits (Denver: Building Permit Records Office, Community Planning & Development), text-fiche, 1980-1989, #26.

roof, hidden from view of E. 16th Ave. and Washington St. by the parapet and roofline of the east wing.

- f. The Essex Apartments retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Although the setting has been somewhat compromised over the years, several buildings from the property's period of significance remain throughout the overall area. Original drawings, blueprints, and historic photographs of the property are housed in the Western History/Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library, aiding in the determination that window and door openings have not been altered and confirming the authenticity of its design. It is undoubtedly recognizable as the 1908 work of William E. Fisher.

## 8. History of the Structure and Its Associations

- a. The Essex Apartments, designed by prominent Denver architect William E. Fisher, were built in 1908 in Clements' Addition at the corner of 16th Avenue and Washington Street after the country emerged from an economic recession.<sup>13</sup> At the time, a number of apartment buildings were being constructed in the area. The Essex was erected for a sum of \$20,000 by Earnest Lund, who built several properties during the same period and worked with the Fishers on numerous occasions. Interestingly, Fisher's client was a man by the name of William S. Fisher (likely no relation). William S. was a real estate developer when he and his mother, Mary F. Fisher, commissioned William E. to design the building. At the time, William S. was in his early twenties, while his mother was in her late fifties. William S. owned it for seven years before selling it to Harry W. Newcomb in 1915, who sold it a few months later to C.R. Welch.<sup>14</sup>

Although Capitol Hill was known for its affluence, many of the property's residents appeared to be middle class with management, sales, and municipal jobs.<sup>15</sup> A review of householder and city directories reveals that the tenants were a mix of single men, single women, and married couples. The building was sold several times between the years following its construction and 1949, yet it retained the same name.<sup>16</sup> When the property was purchased by Claude and Jeannette Davis in 1949, they changed its name to the Jeannette Hotel Apartments/Jeannette Apartments.<sup>17</sup> By 1986, it was once more known as the Essex Apartments.<sup>18</sup> Sometime in the late 1980s to early 1990s the property became the Denver International Hostel. It operated in that capacity until it closed in 2015. The building is currently vacant.<sup>19</sup>

- b. The Essex Apartments are directly associated with the architect, William Ellsworth Fisher. Original drawings, blueprints, and historic photographs of the property are housed in the Western History/Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library, aiding in the determination that it is the 1908 work of William E. Fisher. Originally from Canada, Fisher's family moved to Denver in 1885, around the time he was 14 years of age. He began his career in architecture as a draftsman with Balcomb & Rice, a local firm. After studying with a different architect in New York for a brief period, Fisher

---

<sup>13</sup> Front Range Research Associates, 30.

<sup>14</sup> City and County of Denver Assessors Lot Indexes 1860-1917, Clements Addition (Denver Public Library, Genealogy, African American & Western History Resources), text-fiche.

<sup>15</sup> Denver Household's Directories, 1926-1954 (Denver: Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado); Denver City Directories, 1905-1986 (Denver: Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Danowsky, Shelly, "Essex Apts" (Email exchange with Kristi Miniello), 5 May 2017.

returned to Denver and opened his first firm. During the period the Essex was designed, Fisher formed a new professional union with his younger brother, Arthur. "By 1920 the firm had established itself as one of the largest and most influential architectural firms in the Rocky Mountain region." They worked together as Fisher & Fisher until the elder Fisher's death in 1937. In Denver alone, nearly a dozen buildings designed by them are listed on the National Register, either individually or as contributing to a district.

- c. During their nearly six-decade tenure, the Fishers designed numerous notable buildings and structures in the Rocky Mountain region. The wide net their resume casts includes residential, commercial, educational, and medical properties. They are credited with the design of several properties listed in the National Register including: the Frank Smith House, A.C. Foster Building, McPhee and McGinnity Building, Midland Savings Building, Neusteter Building, U.S. National Bank (Guaranty Bank) Building, and the company town of Parco (Sinclair), Wyoming. Fisher was heavily involved in the development of Denver's Country Club neighborhood, which has been a National Register Historic District since 1978. He is credited with creating the parkways, elaborate entrance gates, and establishing the setbacks for homes, as well as designing the following 19 contributing properties,<sup>20</sup> which are all still extant:

Name	Address	Year Built
West House	100 Franklin Street	1906
Uriah Hollister House	103 Franklin St.	1906
Bethuel Webster House	370 Humboldt St.	1907
Liva Kountze Brown House	135 Humboldt St.	1908
Parker House	120 Franklin St.	1909
Arthur Fisher House	128 Gilpin St.	1909
William E. Fisher House	110 Franklin St.	1910
Wright House	345 Gilpin St.	1911
Blount House	314 Lafayette St.	1912
Bethuel Webster House	140 Humboldt St.	1912
Lafayette Hughes-William V. Hodges House	300 High St.	1913
Colonel William E. Hughes-Gerald Hughes House	320 High St.	1914
Abbott House	160 Downing St.	1915
McCartney House	350 Gilpin St.	1916
H.C. Van Schaack House	323 High St.	1916
Holloway-McKenzie House	180 Lafayette St.	1920
Green House	149 Gilpin St.	1921
Kuykendall House	380 High St.	1924
Taussig House	1625 E. 3rd Ave.	1926

Fisher & Fisher also designed the Voorhies Memorial Gateway and Sea Lion Pool in Denver Civic Center, a National Historic Landmark District. The Essex was constructed early in Fisher's career, when he focused primarily on single-family residences. The style is comparatively simple to his firm's later commissions. The property was determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register. The future owners intend to pursue the listing once rehabilitation work is completed and approved, adding another Fisher-designed property to the already impressive list.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form: Country Club Historic District" (available from <https://www.nps.gov/nr/research/>), accessed 20 February 2018.

9. Owner Consent to Designation

I, the undersigned, acting as owner of, the property described in this application for landmark designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as a Structure for Preservation.

I understand that this designation transfers with the title of the property should the property be sold, or if legal or beneficial title is otherwise transferred.

Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## 10. Resources

Baist, G. Wm. *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Denver, Colorado* (Philadelphia: G. Wm. Bait, 1905), Plate 4.

*City and County of Denver Building Permits 1915-1955*. Denver Public Library, Genealogy, African American & Western History Resources, Denver. Text-fiche.

City and County of Denver. *Building Permit Records, 1970-1999*. Community Planning and Development, Denver. Text-fiche.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Denver Maps," available from <http://www.denvergov.org/maps>; accessed 2 May 2017.

*City and County of Denver Assessors Lot Indexes 1860-1917, Clements Addition*. Denver Public Library, Genealogy, African American & Western History Resources, Denver. Text-fiche.

Danowsky, Shelly. "Essex Apts," Email exchange with Kristi Miniello, 5 May 2017.

*Denver City Directory* (Volumes from 1905 - 1986). Various publishers. Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado.

*Denver Householders' Directory* (Volumes from 1926 - 1954). Various publishers. Stephen H. Hart Library and Research Center, History Colorado.

Denver Public Library Digital Collections. "Denver Building Permit Index: 1906-1914," available from <http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16079coll8/id/634>; accessed 2 May 2017.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Capitol Hill Neighborhood History," available from <https://history.denverlibrary.org/capitol-hill-neighborhood-history>; accessed 2 May 2017.

"Fisher and Fisher Architectural Records, 1892-1997." Denver: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department.

Front Range Research Associates, Inc. *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94; Capitol Hill Neighborhood*. Denver, CO: Front Range Research Associates, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-94: North Capitol Hill Neighborhood*. Denver, CO: Front Range Research Associates, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Denver Civic Center National Historic Landmark Nomination." Available from <https://npgallery.nps.gov/nrhp>; accessed 16 May 2017.

History Colorado. "Architects of Colorado - Biographical Series." Available from <http://www.historycolorado.org/oaahp/architects-colorado-biographical-series>; accessed 5 May 2017.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Compass*. Available from <http://gis.co.gov/compass/>; accessed 2 May 2017.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.

Noel, Thomas J., and Barbara Norgren. *Denver: The City Beautiful*. Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1993.

Sanborn-Perris Map Co., "Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Denver, Colorado, 1903 - 1951." Obtained from the Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department, Denver, Colorado.

Smiley, Jerome C., ed. *History of Denver*. Denver, CO: The Times-Sun Publishing Company, 1901.

United States Census Records, 1910. Available from [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com), accessed 20 February 2018.

Witthus, Rutherford W., "The Fisher Architectural Records Collection, 1897-1978." Denver: Denver Public Library, Western History and Genealogy Department.

# 12. SITE MAP

