

## BYERS-EVANS HOUSE: ITALIANATE STYLE HOME TO PROMINENT DENVER FAMILIES

**Have you ever wanted to step through the front door of a house and back through time?**

At the Byers-Evans house, you can do just that! The house, located in the heart of the Golden Triangle neighborhood, was home to two of early Denver's most prominent families. The neighborhood is one of the city's oldest, and its proximity to Denver's Civic Center made it a very desirable place to live. The house was built for William Byers (1831-1903) and Elizabeth Sumner Byers (1834-1920) in 1883, and sold to William Gray Evans (1855-1924) and Cornelia Lunt Gray Evans (1863-1955) six years later. It now serves as the Byers-Evans House Museum, and the interior of the building hosts a collection of period furniture that is original to the Evans' tenure in the house. There are only three items in the house that belonged to the Byers, which were donated by their descendants.

### History

William Byers was the first owner/editor of *The Rocky Mountain News*, and Elizabeth Sumner Byers launched several of Denver's earliest charities. William Gray Evans was the son of John Evans (1814-1897), 2nd Territorial Governor of Colorado, and Margaret Gray Evans (1830-1906), and was the president of the Denver Tramway Company. He was influential in expanding the railroads and organizing the Denver Gas and Electric Light Company. William was also influential in the completion of the Moffat Tunnel. His father, John Evans, established the University of Denver. William's sister, Anne, was a prominent leader in Denver cultural affairs, having co-founded the Denver Art Museum and the Central City Opera House. Anne collected Southwestern Art, and her collection became the foundation for the Denver Art Museum. Daughter Margaret (1889-1980) studied piano in Paris, and influenced the remodeling of the front parlor as a salon. Her sister Josephine (1887-1969) studied art in Paris at the same time. Daughter Katherine (1894-1977) never married and lived her entire life in the house and was the house manager (Tremmel Goldstein, 2002). Son John Evans (1884-1974) was employed by the Denver Tramway Company and eventually found a career in banking.

### Structure

The house is Italianate in design and made of common plum-colored brick. The details on the exterior include arched stonework over the windows, ornate chimneys and decorative brickwork in geometric designs on different sections of the house. The original structure encompassed 3,500 square feet and now spans over 10,000 square feet of space. There is an ornamental cast iron widow's walk that encircles all but the north side of the house. The house also features leaded glass, segmental and Tudor arches above the second story bay window and a Mansard porch roof (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form).

In 1912, the front parlor was remodeled to become a salon for their daughter Margaret to give musical performances. Between the family parlor and the library is an archway of Lincrusta-Walton. The house has nine fireplaces in addition to central heating (Voelz Chandler, 2013). Over the years, several other alterations were made to the house. In 1900, the front porch was altered, in 1902 a bathroom and pantry were added to the north side of the house and in 1905 a bedroom, bathroom and closet were added to the apartment wing. Following those additions, the servants' dining room and laundry were added in 1909, and in 1911 the front stairway was moved. Keeping up with the times, an elevator was

installed in 1954 behind the front stairs. In 1972 a burglar alarm was installed, and finally, new dining room wallpaper from England was installed in 1979 (Pearson, 2007).

### **Architect**

The architect of the original house is unknown. The work of Gary Long and Kathy Hoeft, the architects responsible for restoring the house, encompasses the modern era of historic preservation in Colorado and beyond. One of their first projects receiving national recognition was the revitalization of the Victorian homes in Denver's Curtis Park neighborhood in the late 1970s. They guided many projects in the Georgetown-Silver Plume National Historic Landmark District and boasted significant commissions for the Stanley Hotel, Molly Brown House, Four Mile Historic Park, Creede Repertory Theater and many others (Byers-Evans House Chronology). The house was restored in 1989, returning it to its 1912-1924-peak period. The historical interpretation of the house and the family continues to focus on this time period.

### **References**

Tremmel Goldstein, M. (2002). *Women in Their Places—A Guide to Women's History Sites*. Denver: Historic Denver, Inc.

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Voelz Chandler, M. (2013). *Guide to Denver Architecture*. Denver: Fulcrum Publishing.

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Long-Hoeft Architects. *Byers-Evans House Chronology*.