

ARCHITECTURE GEMS

Journey through time on a statewide tour
of the buildings that define Colorado

PART II

by CORINNE JOY BROWN



AL

1967

NCAR 1967, LA JUNTA

Crowning a 28-acre mesa near Boulder is the National Center for Atmospheric Research Mesa Laboratory. Completed in 1967 by renowned modernist architect I.M. Pei, its design symbolizes man's relationship to his surroundings while maintaining a deep respect for the past. With research laboratories built around a central core of shared facilities, the 214,500-square-foot complex, capable of serving some 500 scientists, oversees a large public preserve and open space.

Pei tackled this rural challenge with a fresh vision, which suggests a series of three five-story towers arranged in a village-like setting. Enhancing the organic feel of the project, the sandstone-colored concrete finish used throughout anchors the complex to its environment. Pei made a statement that wouldn't compete with the majestic Flatirons, the red sandstone mountains that rise dramatically in the background. Instead, it complements them.

NCAR is open to visitors year-round. A trip to the laboratory is educational and entertaining, with state-of-the-art resources including supercomputers, research aircraft and sophisticated computer models, all reflecting the need to understand our place in the cosmos. Despite the center's high-tech equipment and futuristic appearance however, Pei's overall design was actually inspired by the Ancestral Puebloan cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde in southwest Colorado, linking the very modern NCAR project to one of Colorado's earliest civilizations.

DENVER ART MUSEUM MARTIN BUILDING 1971, DENVER

International praise heralded the 1971 opening of the Denver Art Museum, designed by Italian modernist architect Gio Ponti and Denver's James Sudler Associates. Known as the Martin Building, its fortress-like structure and pierced roofline soared seven stories high, with two towers and a series of geometric windows reflecting 20th century modernism influenced by a minimalist aesthetic. A bold departure from the classical Greek structures of the adjacent Denver Civic Center,

the design was a sweeping, monumental statement, proof of Denver's growing sophistication and cultural priorities. The only building in the United States completed by Ponti, its spacious galleries allowed room for the extensive collection of Native American, African, Oceanic, Spanish colonial, textile and other art collections to be on display all at once – a wealth of treasures never shown together before.

A thin exterior wall with 28 vertical surfaces of varying planes and changing dimensions wraps the entire building. More than 1 million reflective, warm gray, pyramid-shaped glass tiles, developed especially for this building by

Corning Glass Works, create a distinctive surface texture. Ponti and Sudler both determined that glass tiles could withstand Denver's extreme temperatures and weather far better than ceramics. The tiles create constantly shifting patterns of light and shadow depending on the time of day. When asked why he chose this surface and design, Ponti said, "Art is a treasure, and these thin but jealous walls defend it." Under restoration for the past several years, the Martin building is scheduled to reopen at the end of 2021, newly connected to the more recent Hamilton building next door, integrating a world-class art collection.

On the opening page, architect I.M. Pei's design anchors Boulder's National Center for Atmospheric Research laboratory to the natural environment. More than 1 million pyramid-shaped glass tiles cover the Denver Art Museum's Martin Building.

James Florio



WELLS FARGO CENTER 1983, DENVER

In the massive growth that has shaped Denver's downtown over the last 40 years, perhaps no building has drawn so much attention and made such a dramatic difference as the iconic Wells Fargo Center. Commonly referred to as the "Cash Register Building" thanks to its unusual profile, the skyscraper has practically functioned as the city's logo ever since it opened in 1983. Amidst canyons of steel and glass, where rectangular buildings are the norm, Wells Fargo Center's exceptional curved glass roof changed the Denver skyline forever.

Standing 52 floors and 698 feet high, this mammoth construction of russet-colored granite and gray glass is the third-tallest building in Denver. It was the vision of American architectural legend Philip Johnson under a master plan by I.M.Pei, who had created the adjacent Mile High Center. Johnson, driven by the idea of monumentality with a definitive postmodern aesthetic, added Denver to the elite list of cities where his work can be found.

Most of Wells Fargo Center's 1.27 million square feet are privately leased office spaces, although the newly added, glass-enclosed, 100-foot-high street-level atrium and varied art installations within are worth a trip inside. Originally designed for a downtown area in Texas, adaptations to Colorado's weather had to be applied to the over-all construction, such as a heated roof to prevent snow from accumulating and sliding off the curved glass crown. (Problem solved. Pedestrians need not worry.) Owned by the Brookfield Co., numerous international clients make the Wells Fargo Center their home.

The unusual curved profile of the 698-foot-tall Wells Fargo Center – better known as the "Cash Register Building" – is one of the most instantly recognizable icons of the Denver skyline.

Joshua Hardin



Photo credits



**DENVER ART MUSEUM
FREDERICK C. HAMILTON
BUILDING**
2006, DENVER

The Frederick C. Hamilton Building of the Denver Art Museum is one of the city's most distinctive structures. Covered with 9,000 titanium panels, the building dazzles and provokes, questioning our expectations. Depending on one's point of view, its imploding roofline could be a metaphor for the times, an echo of the crystals found in Colorado's mineral wealth, or an abstraction of our Rocky Mountain landscape, its soaring peaks a reflection of the Front Range.

Whatever the intention, architect Daniel Libeskind's bold interpretation, in co-operation with Denver's Davis Partnership, has enhanced the city with bravado. This exciting addition to the original museum complex gained a total of 146,000 square feet, nearly doubling the institution's former size, allowing for blockbuster traveling exhibits and more visitors. Since its opening in 2006, successful exhibitions like the retrospectives of Yves St. Laurent and Christian Dior, and the works of Edouard Manet, Frida Kahlo and others have drawn enthusiastic crowds. Together, the two museums house a collection of 70,000 works of art.

Frederick C. Hamilton, a veteran oilman, an avid art collector and the building's namesake, served two decades as the museum's chairman of the board before stepping down in 2013. He led the first endowment campaign to finance the museum's ambitious plans to build the \$110 million expansion. Prior to his death, he left a priceless legacy gift of brilliant works by French masters, as well as a painting by Vincent Van Gogh, for all to enjoy.



ASPEN ART MUSEUM 2014, ASPEN

Japanese architect Shigeru Ban, known internationally as an award-winning architectural designer specializing in the use of environmentally responsible materials, has created a bold center for the arts. Thanks to a woven wooden screen on the exterior, Ban has enabled the visitor to fully connect with the exterior via glass walls – a bonus in a place like Aspen, where views in every direction are majestic.

Founded in 1979, the museum opened its new home in 2014, a deceptively simple 33,000-square-foot building in the heart of town. Its contemporary design

crowns the evolution of the town's many influences, from its Victorian, silver mining-era roots and "gingerbread" architecture, to its growth as a world-class ski resort featuring Austrian/Bavarian-style construction, to its cutting-edge, Bauhaus influences developed by the world's leading modernists.

It might not be immediately apparent, but Shiguru was first intrigued by photographs of old frontier Western towns with buildings that opened flat to the street with no setbacks – perhaps another reason why the simple geometry of this intriguing museum works so well. It reminds us of another time. The museum is committed to the showing of interna-

tional contemporary art, and is always admission free. With no permanent collection, it organizes temporary exhibitions by innovative contemporary artists, plus workshops and educational programs for children and adults, as well as events and film screenings.

2014

The soaring peaks of Denver Art Museum's titanium-skinned Frederick C. Hamilton Building echo the shape of the Rocky Mountains. The Aspen Art Museum has glass walls surrounded by a woven wooden screen. On the next page, completed in 2018, the high-rise known as 1144 Fifteenth is the first Denver office skyscraper to join the city skyline in more than 30 years.

Mike Moran



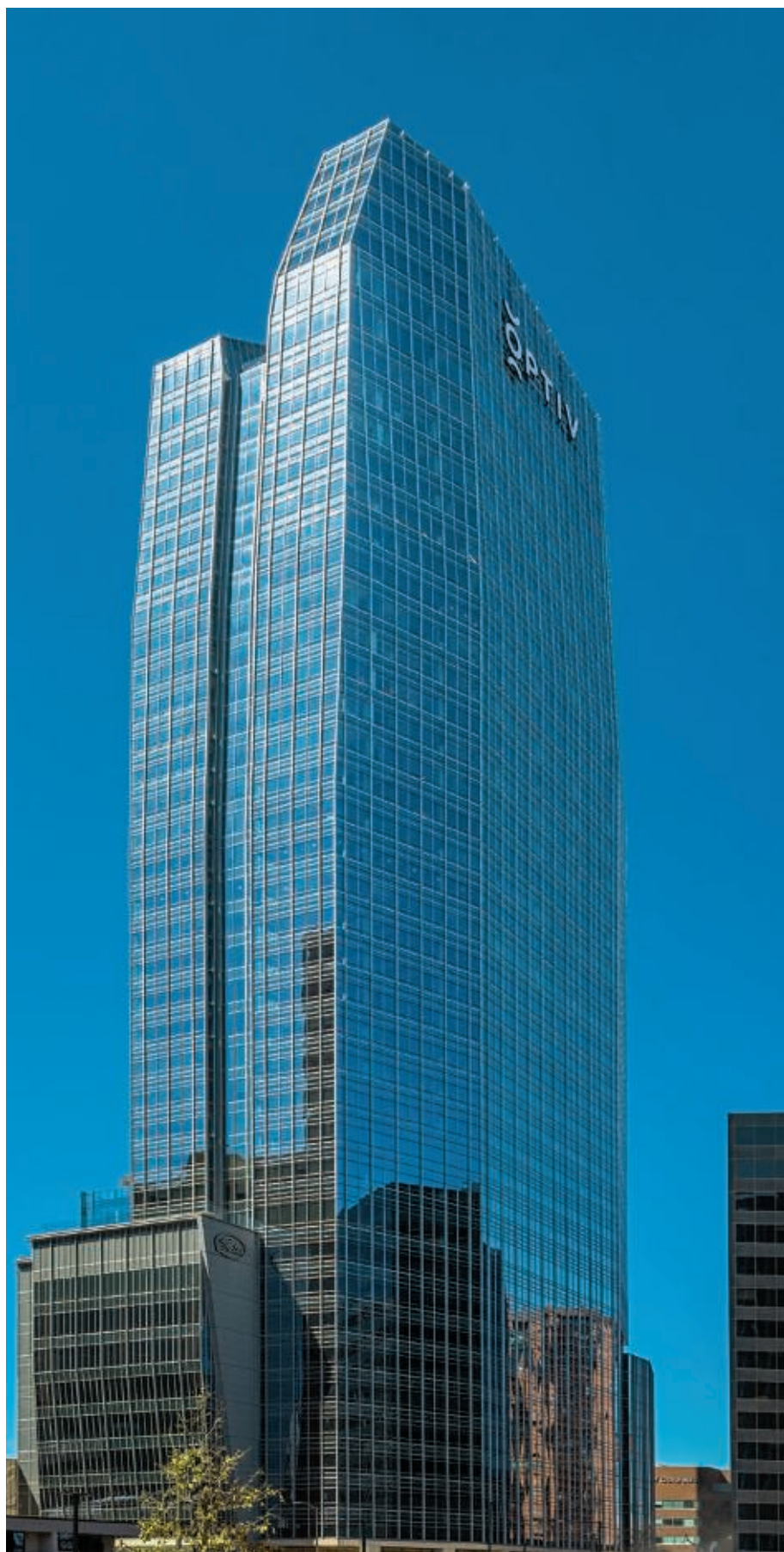
1144 FIFTEENTH 2018, DENVER

A shimmering sculpture of steel and concrete sheathed in glass and aluminum, the iconic building known as 1144 Fifteenth is Denver's first office skyscraper to be built in more than 30 years. Located on the same block as the luxury Four Seasons, and walking distance from Larimer Square, this 603-foot-tall, 42-story wonder boasts 673,000 square feet of office space on 27 floors atop a 13-story podium with parking, retail and restaurants. Floor-to-ceiling windows 10 feet high or more offer unparalleled views and natural light.

International real estate developer Hines believed the time was right for a project that was fresh and new, reflecting Denver's exciting growth. "Build it and they will come" was their philosophy. Begun in 2015 and completed in 2018, the \$300 million building is currently 98 percent leased and 80 percent occupied – an affirmation of the dream. Amenities include a 5,500-square-foot gym with windows overlooking the Front Range, a "living room" collaboration area, outdoor terraces on some floors, indoor parking with 840 spaces and a welcoming lobby clad in natural materials and warm colors.

Designed by Pickard Chilton Architecture of and Kendall/Heaton Associates, the challenge "was to make a classic skyscraper in a new and interesting way," Chilton principal architect Anthony Markese said. "By shearing a rectangle and splitting it down the middle, adding faceted surfaces and a crowned top – a nod to the Rocky Mountains – different perspectives occur from multiple vantage points." The skyscraper is impressive to look at – and to smell. An aromatherapist was consulted to create signature scent for the building: positive and energizing, a unique but subtle, fragrant reception to all who enter, creating a total sensory experience. 🌿

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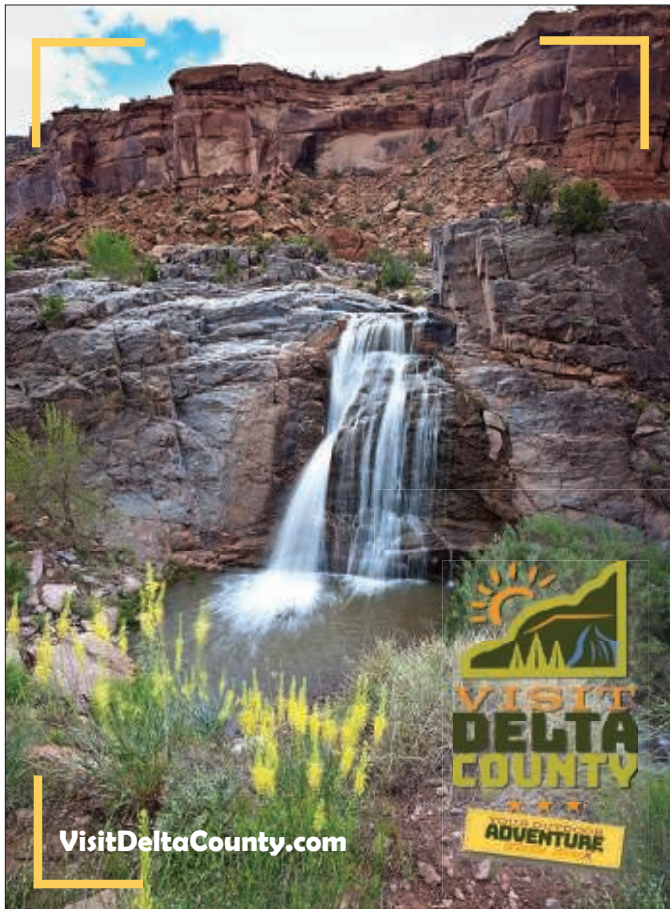
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