

August 2, 2010 – Alles Acres & Rammed Earth Architecture

7 p.m.

Starting location: Parking Lot of Bethel Baptist Church, 2307 17th Avenue

DISTANCE: 1.5 MILES

Please contact the Greeley Historic Preservation Office at 970.350.9222 for questions, more information or if you would like to duplicate or use these tour notes.

Good evening and welcome to the Alles Acres walking tour. We will hear about the history of the area and see several unique houses from the outside. Before we leave the parking lot, I'd like to introduce Lydia Ruyle

- Lydia Lee (Miller) Ruyle is a prominent Weld County leader whose activities have spanned the globe.
 - At the University of Colorado, she received a Boettcher Foundation Scholarship in 1953 and used it to accomplish her undergraduate degree in Political Science in three and half years, leaving a half-year to work on her master's in Public Administration.
 - In 1969, she stood for the Vice-Chairmanship of the Weld County Democrats.
 - In 1977, she was elected to the state Arts and Humanities Council.
 - Currently works as a professor at UNC teaching "Herstory of the Goddess", a class concerned with the study and reproduction of goddess-oriented themes in art.
 - She has also shown numerous exhibits on both her own art and goddess-oriented artwork throughout the world, boasts an impressive resume, and has published artwork or articles in at least fourteen publications.

(IN CASE IT COMES UP AS A QUESTION)

The differences between adobe and rammed earth are based around materials, sizing, and creation of the building material.

- Adobe
 - is made of clay, mud, sand, and water with a binding material of straw or sticks. The composition of Adobe generally consists of half sand, a third clay, and the remainder of straw or sticks.
 - is formed into equally-sized bricks and allowed to dry, then placed on the wall using the clay/sand mixture as mortar. These thick blocks are then coated on the outside with whitewash, stucco, or another sealing material.
 - typically sees use as thick bricks of material.
- Rammed Earth
 - is (ideally) composed of 50-70% sandy soil, with an additional 15-25% of both silt and clay. This soil should have moisture content no more than about 10%.
 - is layered into wooden forms at the site of the walls, then compressed with posts or other tools into a layer that is half the height of the uncompressed earth. This

wall is vulnerable to moisture and deterioration, but it otherwise like soft concrete in form and hardness.

- is also protected from rainfall and moisture until fully complete, as these can weaken the structure of the wall.
- typically is created in layers of material, composing a unique layered exterior.
- Adobe and Rammed Earth share some significant traits, however.
 - Both are vulnerable to gradual erosion by hydrodynamic forces (motion/power of water/liquids in motion), and therefore are best used in dry, hot climates.
 - Both require thick walls to support the weight of the building materials, hence the usual 12-14 (or more!) inch thick exterior walls.
 - Both require a roof composed of different (lighter, water resistant) materials; usually this takes the form of wood or tile roofing.
 - Both have low insulation, but high thermal mass. This means that the materials are slow to absorb heat and cold, but also slowly release it as well. Therefore, these materials tend to stay cool in summer and warm in winter, but are not (inch for inch) as insulating as modern materials.
 - Both materials are labor intensive, cheap in materials, and are suitable for developing countries.
 - Both have been used for thousands of years in various climates around the world.

Rammed Earth process

1. Design for solar orientation: allow winter sun to come through south windows to warm the earth walls and concrete floor, let the roof project so the summer sun cannot shine into the windows, restrict north windows to those necessary for summer ventilation
2. find location with subsoil that is ideally 7 parts sand to 3 parts clay and gravel
3. remove valuable topsoil
4. pour concrete foundation wall – from below frost level to a ft above ground, twice as thick as earth wall will be
5. build wood forms for walls
6. mix the earth and screen it to remove rocks over one inch in size.
7. add water until earth will lump in the hand but will split apart when dropped. Proper moisture content is about 8%, dryer than adobe
8. scoop a layer of the earth mix 4 inches deep into the form, and tamp with a compressed air hammer filled with a ball head – repeat until the wall is the desired height.

*costs less to build and saves energy for house heating

*less energy is used in the manufacture of the construction material

*when properly handled is free of cracks, becomes stronger with age, will endure for centuries and is earthquake resistant

*insulates against noise

1. 1722 Reservoir Rd. (or 4 Alles Dr.)

- Built in 1946. Estell E. and Betty Mohr were likely the original owners. E.E. Mohr was faculty at CSCE.
 - E.E. Mohr also spoke at the 64th CSCE commencement ceremony in 1954.
- Estell Elgar Mohr was born in October 1904, died in Feb. 1992

- Received his master's from Columbia and his PhD. from Stanford.
- Taught music education at UNC for 44 consecutive years from 1926 to 1979.
- Started the Humanistic Sciences Program in 1930 to incorporate a year each of history, music, and language into the undergraduate curriculum.
- Department Head from 1948 to 1965, when he stepped down to do research.
- Advisor of about 70 doctoral students.
- In 1956, Mohr was honored with a reception for his long authority, experience, and teaching.
- Met his Betty Canfield at Bowling Green University and married her on 6/6/1927.
- Betty Mohr (Canfield) was born 7/1/1905, died 1/14/2002
 - A homemaker
 - member of the Congregational Church of Greeley since 1927 and of the Philanthropic Educational Organization
- The current owners purchased it from the Mohrs in 1991.
- Several renovations to the rammed-earth house:
 - several bedroom addition in 1991
 - extending to a bedroom addition in 2002,
 - concluding with a new garage construction in 2003 with conversion of the existing carport into a library/study.
 - These additions used modern materials and methods, such as wooden walls with stucco exteriors interspersed with contemporary windows.
- These additions will make it harder to perceive the existing rammed earth building materials, as they exist on both the east and west side of the property, and the property itself sets back from Alles Drive.

2. 29 Alles Drive

- Built in 1952 – C. Howard Murphy and his wife Eunice lived and owned here by 1956. He worked as partner of the Glen Fair Construction Company and was a partner in Murphy-Wheeler and was president of Turnpike Builders Inc.
- Dwight E. and Clara A. Nofziger (who also owned 1814 Reservoir Road) in 1976.
- Claude J. and Rachel S. Johns – lived here from 1976-1991
- Dr. Claude Johns, Jr. died on May 6th, 2003 after a long life within the military and academic communities.
 - Enlisted in the US Air Force for 17 years, his degrees from Denver University and the University of North Carolina allowed him to obtain a position at the Air Force Academy as director of academy libraries and chairman of political science.
 - Because of his enlistment in the USAF, Johns volunteered for service in both Vietnam and Iran.
 - In Vietnam, he served with Air Force Intelligence in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand in 1966 (before involvement in Cambodia was admitted by the US government).

- In Iran, he consulted with the Shah in 1975 to encourage the construction of an academy like AFA in Iran.
- Upon his retirement from the Air Force as a Lieutenant Colonel, Johns worked at UNC as Dean of Library Sciences (modernizing Michener Library) and as Vice President for University Relations. In 1977, he was elected vice president for the Colorado Library Association and assumed the full presidency in 1978.

3. 2105 17th Avenue

- Modern house designed in 1949 by David Runnells, who studied under world famous Finnish-American architect Saarinen. Built by Hensel Phelps, who was more traditional in architecture.
- It was owned by Robert and Mary E. Runnells, his brother and sister-in-law.
- Robert was a chiropractor in partnership with his brother Richard. They began their practice in the 1940s, but their parents started the Runnells chiropractic presence in Greeley in the early 1900s
- Bob graduated from Greeley High School and attended Lincoln Chiropractic College in Indianapolis, IN
- Bob played the piano and was a member of the Masonic lodge, Methodist Church and the Lions Club
- He attended the University of Illinois and the University of Denver
- Served in the Army Medical Corps
- David Runnells designed this house; born in January 1913, died in November 1973; he was educated at the University of Illinois under the Phlym Scholarship, which allowed him to travel and study in Europe.
 - A recipient of the Legion of Honor, he also received a Fulbright Grant to travel to the University of Vienna in Austria to lecture in 1958.
 - Was described in the Greeley Tribune as “one of the most outstanding modern architects in this country.” (GT8/5/58, p. 10)
 - Designed two homes in Greeley on his principles of urban renewal and industrial design, plus apartments at 1008 8th Street and an office at 1012 8th Street.
- Runnells had several other notable projects according to interviews with his brother, daughter, and partner.
 - Among his designs was a fraternity at Kansas University (where he also taught classes), a new city plan for Barnesworth, England, and the Kansas City Art Institute.

4. 1814 Reservoir Road (or 6 Alles Drive)

- Built in 1946
- By 1956 Charles F. Gardner and his wife Bertha Ann owned and lived here. Charles owned Motor Mart.
- Ownership by Dwight Nofziger in 1967-1970?, Steve Girault in 1973, Bob and Suzanne Schulze in 1981.
- Dwight Nofziger was born 3/11/1918, died 4/4/1980 and his obituary was published 4/7/1980.

- Dwight Nofziger served as director of the choir at the First Congregational Church in Greeley in addition to working as instructor of music at UNC.
- A former captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps, he flew B-25s in the China-Burma-India theater of World War II before being recalled to Harvard to learn Chinese. He was then sent to Thunderbird Field in Arizona to train Chinese pilots during the war.
- Received his education from Bowling Green University, Columbia, and UNC in music education.
- Taught music education at UNC until 1979, where he retired to North Carolina, started his own inn, and stated that he was looking forward to “running his own register.” He died four months after retirement.
- Steve Girault graduated from Greeley High in 1958.
 - Steve Girault: 10/31/1979, p. A-12 of the *Tribune*
 - Educated at University of Denver, he became a theater arts professor at UNC
 - Received a Service Award for his major contributions to the fields of speech and drama, along with his long service to Denver Public Schools, Sterling High School, and 10 years at Greeley Central High School.
- Dr. Robert O. Schulze died on 11/25/1999, with an obituary published two days later.
 - Served in the Pacific during World War II at the 6th Army Headquarters through the Battle of Leyte Gulf and the retaking of the Philippines. He was discharged from the Army as a warrant officer.
 - Robert then went on to acquire his Master’s at Columbia, and his doctorate at the University of Michigan, where he was the dean of the sociology department from 1964-1969.
 - After this break from teaching, he designed and directed the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship at IBM.
 - He then went on to teach at UNC for several years and was Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences from 1972 to his retirement in 1987.
 - Married Suzanne Schulze, who worked with Dr. Claude Johns, Jr. at UNC’s library.
- The house was built to include a concrete patio slab in 1963, a basketball slab in 1973, and an added greenhouse in 1981.

5. 2319 21st Avenue

- Lydia and David J. Miller owned this property from at least 1951-1981, while Mary Ann Reinert owns it to the current day.
- David J. Miller died on May 4, 1993.
 - worked as a lawyer in Greeley from 1938-1987.
 - In October of 1944, Miller stood for the candidacy for the Democratic nomination to Congress for Colorado’s 2nd District.
 - In 1948, he joined General Lucius Clay’s legal staff in Germany to help out with the Nuremburg prosecutions. He was granted leave from his legal firm for two years at this time and chose to sell his house in Greeley and

rebuild upon his return (hence the rammed earth construction).
(3/20/1948)

- After returning from Europe, they “determined to demonstrate that returning servicemen could have quality homes at less cost than those made by conventional methods.:
- Hired J. Palmer Boggs to design Alles Acres, one of the first postwar subdivisions in Greeley
- On land owned by Lydia Miller’s father, Adam Peter Alles
- In 1954, he ran for Lieutenant Governor with popular support, including that of his daughters Lydia and Mary.
- In 1968, he was elected Chairman of the Weld County Chapter of the ACLU.
- Served as president of Colorado Rural Legal Services
- Lydia A. Miller
 - Married David J. Miller on 8/19/1933.
 - Was highly involved in the community
 - Graduate of Colorado State College of Education (CSCE)
 - In 1946, she was the Democratic candidate for Weld County for state representative.
 - In 1959, she became an instructor in foreign languages at UNC (then Colorado State College)
- They founded the American Historical Society of Germans from Russia

6. Talk about Lydia Ruyle’s house, 2101 24th Street

- Built in 1963. Owned by Robert and Lydia Ruyle for the entirety of its existence.
- One of the best examples of rammed-earth construction in Greeley.
- Robert Ruyle is the husband of Lydia Lee (Miller) Ruyle. He became a lawyer in Greeley at the Practice of Miller and Ruyle.
 - Received his L.L. B. from CU-Boulder in 1959 and worked as an attorney in Greeley for ten years.
 - Robert was notable for his call to remove Greeley’s liquor ban in 1969
 - Vice president of administration and finance with Hensel Phelps Construction Company.
 - Participated in other organizations, such as the Longs Peak Council to the First Congregational Church and the Greeley Rotary Club
 - In 1961, he was a candidate for the Greeley School Board. He was also chairman of the Weld County Boy Scout Finance Committee.

7. 51 Levis Dr.

- Victorian style house built in 1905.
 - The 1.5 story house is T-shaped plan and features a red brick chimney on the south side.
 - Alles Family Farmhouse
 - 1956-57 at least – Mrs. Grace Wood, widow of Samuel, lived here.
 - David J. Miller and Lydia Alles married here in August 1933
- Greg Button

- He was head of the Art Department at UNC in 1976, and showed off his sculpture “Anti-Gravity Pyramid” at West Lake Park on August 12.
- He, as an art professor at UNC, had an art display in the James A. Michener Library alongside Joe Moody on March 30, 1979.