



Architect: Sterner, Frederick J.
Birth/Death Dates: 1862-1931
Practice Dates: 1884-1908 (Denver)
1905-1924 (New York)
Firms: Varian and Sterner 1884-1900
Sterner and Williamson 1905-1913 (State Business Directory dates)

Biographical Information

Frederick Sterner made a significant contribution to the architectural scene in Denver, Colorado Springs and Pueblo during his two decades of practice in Colorado. Usually working in professional partnerships, his designs ranged from Richardsonian Romanesque, to Colonial and Dutch Colonial Revival, Mission Revival, Italian Renaissance and Shingle style. Catering to the residential needs of a largely upper class clientele, he also received numerous commissions from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, including its Minnequa Steel Works Office Building in Pueblo.

Frederick Janius Sterner came to the United States at the age of sixteen from his birthplace in England. By 1882 he worked as a draftsman in the Denver office of Frank E. Edbrooke & Co. and left two years later to establish a partnership with Phillip Varian. The combination lasted until about 1901. Sterner then practiced alone but with the increasing assistance of his draftsman, George H. Williamson. Williamson gradually took on greater responsibility and became a formal partner in 1905 as Sterner reduced his Denver practice and concentrated on New York City. By 1909 Sterner lived full-time in New York and ceased to be involved in Denver architecture, though he is credited along with Williamson in the design of the Daniels and Fisher Department Store completed in 1911.

During the 1880s, medieval and Romanesque elements dominated the output of Varian and Sterner, often used in the manner of Henry Hobson Richardson. The firm's early work is characterized by various mediievally inspired decorative elements used with heavy stonework, steep rooflines, towers, and massive arched entries. They favored stone for larger houses, while their more modest residences are of brick, wood, and shingles with steep front gable roofs.

Varian and Sterner's most important early surviving building is the Romanesque Revival style Denver Athletic Club (1889) Another important survivor, Charlene Place, was originally a group of four, large, connected houses. Its styling combines



The Denver Club, at 17th Street and Glenarm Place in Denver, shows Richardsonian Romanesque design influences in its large arched doorway, arcade windows, contrasting rusticated stone trim, and dormers. In this ca. 1890 view, the First Congregational Church stands behind the club building on Glenarm Place. Source: William Henry Jackson Collection of the Colorado Historical Society.



Romanesque elements with Queen Anne massing and ornamentation. Also from the early period are three less grand houses at 930 Logan (1890) and 1630 (1892) and 1638 Ogden (1890).

A number of the firm's major early works no longer exist. The Richardsonian Romanesque Denver Club, completed in 1889 at 17th and Glenarm, was built of stone with a steep roof punctuated by numerous dormers and a recessed entry in a massive semicircular arch. The stone Gothic Revival Grace Methodist Episcopal Church once stood at 13th and Bannock and is the earliest known commission for Varian and Sterner.

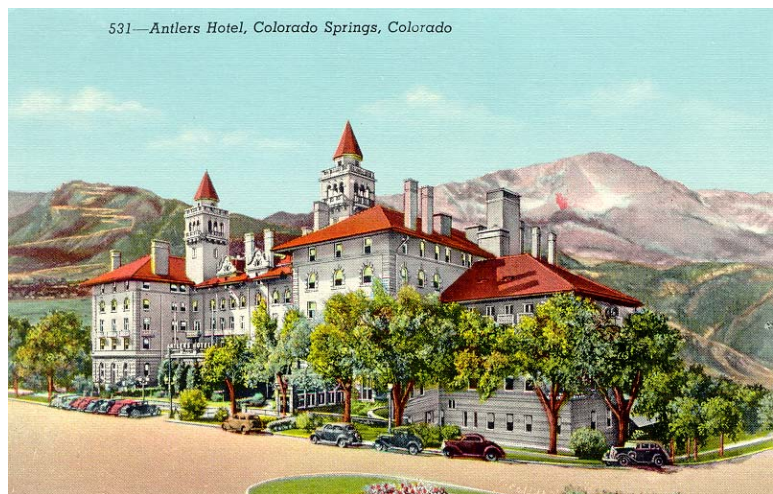
In the early 1890s, the firm shifted from Victorian styles to Neoclassicism, Colonial Revival and Italian Renaissance Revival. Two of the best-preserved houses of this period attribute solely to Sterner are the Georgian style Tears-McFarlane House (1898) and the Dutch Colonial Revival style Pearce-McAllister Cottage (1899). Other Sterner houses surviving in Denver from this period include 940 and 950 Logan, built in 1891 and 1893 respectively, and the residence at 1437 High (1894).

At the dissolution of his partnership with Varian, Sterner began accepting commissions outside Denver. In Colorado Springs, he counted among his clients Dr. William A. Bell and William Jackson Palmer, community founders, along with Ralph J. Preston, Dr. S.G. Solby, Sherwood Aldrich, F.H. Morley and B.C. Allen. Sterner made major contributions to the design consolidation of Palmer's rambling estate, Glen Eyrie. The second Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs (1901) was another major work by Sterner. The hotel framed the view of Pikes Peak from downtown Colorado Springs and was a local icon until its demolition in 1964.

In Pueblo, Sterner received a number of commissions from the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. He designed the Mission Revival style Minnequa Steel Works Office Building (1901), the associated dispensary (1902), and the large company store for the subsidiary Colorado Supply Company (demolished). Surviving plans also show his involvement with other buildings for the company's far flung mining towns, including plans for a two-story school building.



The Grace Methodist Episcopal Church at 13th and Bannock in Denver was attributed to Varian and Sterner. Ca. 1890 photograph. Source: Colorado Historical Society.



Sterner's 1901 Antlers Hotel, subject of this early postcard, became the major architectural icon of Colorado Springs.



Sterner's connections to CF&I extended to its upper management. He designed a summer home for John L. Jerome. "La Hacienda" was constructed in 1902 on a high hill overlooking the confluence of the Platte River and Buffalo Creek in Jefferson County. The large Shingle style two-story dwelling includes multiple bay windows and many William Morris designed interior furnishings and appointments. Along with John C. Osgood, Jerome brought about the formation of Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, one of Colorado's first major industrial corporations.

Sterner gradually shifted his architectural interests from Denver to New York City, leaving the firm to the direction of his new partner and long-time draftsman George Williamson. He moved permanently to New York City in 1908. Never married, he shared a home with his sister, Maude Sterner (later Lindell). She practiced interior design and the two established a joint practice.

In New York, Sterner built his reputation by remodeling old brownstone houses into buildings with greater charm and individuality. He lived in a series of brownstones that he remodeled to suit his tastes. At his first residence at 139 East 19th, he removed the stoop, covered the dark brownstone with a coat of light cream-colored stucco and redid the interior. Such treatments soon became common, but nothing like it had been done in New York before. Still, he recognized that not every New York brownstone needed a facelift. In 1919, he told the *New York Times* that not every old house needed alterations of the type he made popular. Referring to Greek Revival style houses on Charlton Street in Greenwich Village, he said that "when you go back 100 or 150 years, you get a good house."

Major new construction continued to be part of Sterner's practice. His residential clients included descendants of the Astor family and one of the Singer Sewing Machine heirs. He is also credited with the main building at the Greenbrier Hotel in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

He retired from active practice in 1924 and retired to London with his sister, who married in 1926. She was with Sterner when he died in Rome in 1931.

Credited Buildings (partial list)

Building Name	Location	Site No.	Date*	Status
Grace Methodist Church	13 th and Bannock Denver		Ca. 1885	Demolished
Denver Club	17 th and Glenarm Denver		1889	Demolished
Charlene Place	1421-1441 Pennsylvania St., Denver	5DV.2727	1890	Extant condominiums
Waldron-Bonfils-Burn House	1003 Corona St. Denver	5DV.347	1890	Extant
James R. Hicks House	1638 Ogden St. Denver	5DV.2740	1890	Swallow Hill NR District
Residence	930 Logan St. Denver		1890	Extant as of 1987
Holzman House	1772 Grant St. Denver		Ca. 1890	Demolished
Campbell House (Clark House)	940 Logan St. Denver		1891	Local Landmark
Solomon B. Hardy House	1630 Ogden St. Denver	5DV.2738	1892	Swallow Hill NR District



Campbell House	950 Logan St. Denver		1893	Local Landmark
Residence	1437 High St. Denver		1894	Extant as of 1987
University Club	1673 Sherman St. Denver	5DV.1873	1895	Extant, greatly expanded
Oakes Home			Ca. 1895	Demolished
Brenton Hall	1131 N. Cascade Colorado Springs	5EP.1513	1896	Extant
Sykes-Nicholson-Moore House	1410 High St. Denver	5DV.752	1897	Local Landmark
Tears-McFarland House	1290 Williams St. Denver	5DV.180	1898	National Register
Pearce-McAllister House	1880 Gaylord St. Denver	5DV.126	1898	National Register
Denver Athletic Club	1325 Glenarm Denver	5DV.149	1899	National Register
Lennox House	1001 N. Nevada Ave. Colorado Springs	5EP.3359	1900	National Register
Residence	1439 Franklin St. Denver		Ca. 1900	Extant as of 1987
Antlers Hotel (second, first destroyed by fire)	Colorado Springs		1901	Demolished in 1964
Cuthbert-Dines House	1350 Logan St. Denver	5DV.743	1901	
Glen Eyrie	3820 N. 30 th Colorado Springs	5EP.189	1901	National Register
Minnequa Steel Works Office Building and Dispensory	215 & 225 Canal St. Pueblo	5PE.4179	1901 & 1902	National Register
La Hacienda Jerome Summer Estate	On State Rd., off US Hwy. 285 Buffalo Creek	5JF.190	1902	National Register
11 th Avenue Hotel	1112 Broadway Denver	5DV.3286	1902	Extant - hotel
Oakes Home Chapel (St. Elizabeth's Retreat)	2825 W. 32 nd Ave. Denver	5DV.129	1903	National Register
Bridaham House	350 Humboldt St. Denver	5DV.167.9	1905	Country Club NR District
Quereau House	379 Marion St. Denver	5DV.167.28	1905	Country Club NR District
First Church of Christ Scientist	1401-1415 Logan St. Denver	5DV.914	1906	Local Landmark
Augustus Fisher House	301 Humboldt St. Denver	5DV.167.53	1908	Country Club NR District
Sterner House (renovation of existing building)	139 East 19th St. New York		1908	Extant as of 2003
Woods – Bishop Johnson House	165 Gilpin St. Denver	5DV.167.77	1910	Country Club NR District
Daniels and Fisher Department Store (only the corner tower survives)	16 th and Arapahoe Denver	5DV.118	1911	National Register
Quereau House	141 Gilpin St. Denver	5DV.167.75	1912	Country Club NR District



Greenbrier Hotel	White Sulphur Springs, WV		Ca. 1913	Extant, but expanded and altered
Sterner House (renovation of existing building)	154 East 63rd St. New York		1915	Extant as of 2003
Sterner House (renovation of existing building)	150 East 62nd St. New York		1918	Extant as of 2003
"Parge House" Sterner House (renovation of existing building)	65 th and Lexington New York		1922	Extant as of 2003

*Completion date is stated if known. Plan, building permit, or assessor date is shown if completion date is unknown.

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