

OAHP1403

Rev. 9/98

COLORADO CULTURAL RESOURCE SURVEY

Architectural Inventory Form

Official eligibility determination
(OAHP use only)

Date _____ Initials _____

- _____ Determined Eligible- NR
- _____ Determined Not Eligible- NR
- _____ Determined Eligible- SR
- _____ Determined Not Eligible- SR
- _____ Need Data
- _____ Contributes to eligible NR District
- _____ Noncontributing to eligible NR District

INTENSIVE LEVEL SURVEY FORM

Parcel #/s

2077-16-3-10-011

Neighborhood

3566.00 Off Broadway (South)

I. IDENTIFICATION

- 1. **Resource number:** 5AH.1980
- 2. **Temporary resource #:** N/A
- 3. **County:** Arapahoe
- 4. **City:** Littleton
- 5. **Historic building name:** Mr. Steak
- 6. **Current building name:** Express Employment Professionals
- 7. **Building address:** 1709 W Littleton Blvd
- 8. **Owner name, address:** Dynasty Ventures Llc
8942 S Silver Ct
Littleton, CO 80126-5031



National Register:	Eligible for Individual Listing (local level)	Ineligible for District Listing
State Register:	Eligible for Individual Listing (local level)	Ineligible for District Listing
Littleton Landmark	Eligible for Individual Listing	Eligible for District Listing

II. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

9. **PLSS information:** PM6 T5S R68W, NE 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 16
 10. **UTM reference:** NAD 83 ZONE 13S
 11. **USGS quad name:** Littleton
Year: 2016
Map scale: 1:24000
 12. **Lot(s)** 25-28
Block: 5
Addition: Littleton Hts
Year of Addition: 1890
 13. **Boundary Description and Justification:**
 Lots 25-28 Blk 5 Littleton Hts
 The boundary of the property is the legally defined parcel, encompassing .2870 acres.

III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

14. **Building plan (footprint, shape):** Rectangular
 15. **Dimensions in feet:** 66' x 38'
 16. **Number of stories:** One
 17. **Primary external wall material(s):** Brick, Wood Siding
 18. **Roof configuration:** Flat
 19. **Primary external roof material:** Asphalt Roof/Composition Roof or Synthetic Roof
 20. **Special features:** N/A
 21. **General architectural description:**

The former Mr. Steak Restaurant is sited along the west property line of a rectangular lot at the northwest corner of W Littleton Blvd and S Louthan St. The facade faces east, adjacent to the building's surface parking lot.

The one-story building has a rectangular footprint. Four widely spaced pairs of hyperbolic paraboloid forms, carried by central columns, support a flat roof with narrow fascia. The materials are pre-fabricated concrete with stucco finish, running-bond variegated brick and board-and-batten wood siding. Windows and doors are framed in metal and wood.

The south building wall displays a pair of the sculptural roof forms along W Littleton Blvd. The two columns that carry the lowest points of the forms have angled heads and full-height vertical battens centered on their shafts. Between the columns, a bay of vertical windows with a triangular transom appears above a wall of brick masonry with an angled rowlock sill. A horizontal muntin runs the width of the bay just below the column heads. Above, mullions define individual transom panels above the two central windows and single triangular transoms over the flanking window pairs. Below the sill, on the face of the masonry wall, vertical wood trim aligns with the vertical mullions above, increasing the visual verticality of the bay. A half bay of the same design appears to the west, with a plain square wood column at the corner.

Along the east side of the building, the sculptural roof forms display deep overhanging eaves with angled stucco soffits and narrow fascia. Windows with triangular transoms flank the central supporting columns, with walls of brick masonry and angled rowlock sills below. Between the projecting sculptural roof forms, below comparatively shallow eaves, are full-height bays of vertical board and batten siding. The main entry to the building is through a metal and glass door with sidelight and transoms in the central bay. Horizontal wood panels with simple light fixtures flank the door at the height of transom bar.

The roofline along the west, alley side of the building has a narrow, largely flush fascia. A series of bays run the length of the wall, displaying an asymmetrical composition of multiple elements including pairs of vertical windows with glass or blind transoms above and spandrel panels below; pairs of blind panels with a single blind transom above; single full height blind panels; a pair of blind panels with a single glass transom above, and a single bay with a service door with blind sidelight and transom. Shallow, flat porticos extend beyond the narrow bays that fall between the pairs of sculptural roof forms.

The north side of the building appears to be detailed in a manner that combines the design of the south wall with the materials of the west wall. It is largely obscured behind a wood fence and

two large freestanding storage sheds.

22. Architectural style: Modern Movement / Expressionist Style
Building type: Commercial

23. Landscaping or special setting features:

A surface parking lot is located to the east, between the building and W Louthan St. A driveway appears between this east lot and the alley to the west. Landscape beds with mature trees appear between the drive and the public sidewalk, and between the sidewalk and the street. Landscape beds also appear at the base of the south and east sides of the buildings. Mature trees arise between two projecting sculptural roof forms to the east.

24. Associated buildings, features, or objects:

A low illuminated sign with the name of the current occupant, "Express Employment Professionals," appears at the sidewalk near the southeast corner of the building.

IV. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

25. Date of Construction: 1964-1969
Estimated or Actual: Actual-Estimated
Source of information: Arapahoe County Assessor Records.

26. Architect: Colin Stewart
Source of information: *Denver Post*, 11-3-1963, p2.

27. Builder/Contractor: Wotkyns Steel, Griswold Construction Co.
Source of information: *Denver Post*, Ibid.

28. Original owner: Unknown
Source of information: N/A

29. Construction history (description, dates of major additions, alterations, demolitions):

Original bays of floor-to-ceiling glass and blind panels on the east and south sides of the building were replaced by full height panels of board-and-batten siding and partial height walls of used or distressed brick masonry. The survey team believes that since the materials used for the alterations are identical to those used on the design ultimately used for Mr. Steak restaurants chainwide, the changes to the Littleton Mr. Steak were made at the same time as chain re-branding in the late 1960s (see 1709 WLB Historic 02.jpg, below, of a c1970 Mr. Steak in Fort Collins, CO). The original sign has been replaced.

30. Original Location: Yes
Date of move(s): N/A

V. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATIONS

31. Original use(s): Commerce/Trade/Restaurant

32. Intermediate use(s): Unknown

33. Current use(s): Commerce/Trade

34. Site Type(s): Commercial Building

35. Historical background:

The post-World War II period in Littleton was characterized by economic prosperity, rapid population growth, suburban housing expansion, road development and improvement, and increased auto ownership and use.

Though social trends of the period stressed domesticity, home-prepared food, and family mealtimes, prosperity brought an increase in the number of Littleton restaurants, featuring new kinds of food, atmosphere, and service. This trend increased as more women entered the workplace and public life.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, as activity on W Littleton Blvd increased, theme and specialty restaurants were opened that promoted a family-friendly casual dining experience. Only a few of these new restaurants were locally owned. Most were franchise chain restaurants, controlled by a single corporation. Franchise owners enjoyed the benefits of shared purchasing and advertising while following strict corporate guidelines for building design, signage, food preparation, and service. This established a strong brand identity for the restaurant wherever it appears across the country.

"Fast food" restaurants, including donut shops, were both individually owned and franchises.

They evolved from highway roadhouses of 1920s and 1930s, some with “curb service,” that allowed automobile travelers to be served their meals in their cars.

Theme, specialty and “fast food” restaurants often displayed Modernist or Fantasy Style buildings of striking design, intended to attract passing motorists.

James A. Mather founded Mr. Steak, a Colorado-based restaurant chain, in 1962. The Littleton Mr. Steak was built just two years later. Modernism appealed to restaurateurs like Mather because Modern buildings were often eye-catching, as in the case of the Mr. Steak restaurant, and would attract the attention of those driving by.

The 1960s was a time when formerly individually designed restaurants, even those for national chains, were replaced by buildings adhering to a single design produced throughout the country. The Littleton building by Stewart was meant to be a prototype for all future Mr. Steak restaurants, but no other examples of this design were constructed. Instead, the chain adopted a pseudo Wild West fantasy style for its buildings, just as fantasy architecture was beginning to supplant modernism in restaurant design. Though the distinctly modern character of the building remains intact, full height panels of board-and-batten siding and partial height walls of used or distressed brick masonry were added to better align the Littleton Mr. Steak with the new corporate-wide design. The 1972-73 Littleton Directory shows that Mr. Steak no long occupied the building, its name had been changed to “The Boulevard Building” and that it was occupied by the law offices of Smedley Tague Fitzgerald and Craig. (No Littleton directories exist for the period from 1965 to 1971.)

The building architect, Colin Stewart, earned a Masters in architecture degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1956. He maintained his offices in a building of his own design that formerly stood at southeast corner of Speer Boulevard and Washington Street in Denver.

36. Sources of information:

“Franchise Organization; Denver’s First ‘Mr. Steak’ Restaurant Opened,” *Denver Post*, Nov. 3, 1963, page 2.

Alan Golan Gass, FAIA, correspondence, 2/17/2018; 2/18/2018.

Arapahoe County Assessor Records

Littleton City Directories.

The Historic Context of Littleton Colorado 1949-1967 (2008) by Diane Wray Tomasso, prepared for the City of Littleton, Office of Community Development.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

- 37. **Local landmark designation:** No
- Date of designation:** N/A
- Designating authority:** N/A

38. Applicable National Register Criteria:

- √ A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad pattern of our history;
 - √ B. Associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
 - √ C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.
- Qualifies under Criteria Considerations A through G (see Manual)
Does not meet any of the above National Register criteria

38A Applicable Colorado State Register of Historic Properties Criteria:

- √ A. The association of the property with events that have made a significant contribution to history;
 - √ B. The connection of the property with persons significant in history;
 - √ C. The apparent distinctive characteristics of a type, period, method of construction, artisan;
 - D. The geographic importance of the property;
 - E. The possibility of important discoveries related to prehistory or history.
- Does not meet any of the above State Register criteria

38B. Applicable Littleton Landmark Standards:

- √ 1. Exemplifies specific elements of an architectural style or period;

- ✓ 2. Is an example of the work of an architect or builder recognized for expertise nationally, state-wide, regionally, or locally;
 - ✓ 3. Demonstrates superior craftsmanship or high artistic value;
 - 4. Represents an innovation in construction, materials or design;
 - 5. Represents a style particularly associated with the Littleton area;
 - ✓ 6. Represents a built environment of a group of people in an era of history;
 - 7. Represents a pattern or grouping of elements representing at least one of above criteria;
 - ✓ 8. Has undergone significant historic remodel;
 - 9. Is the site of historic event that had an effect upon society;
 - ✓ 10. Exemplifies cultural, political, economic or social heritage of the community;
 - 11. Represents an association with a notable person or the work of a notable person;
 - 12. Represents a typical example/association with a particular ethnic group;
 - 13. Represents a unique example of an event in Littleton's history;
 - 14. Enhances sense of identity of the community;
 - 15. Is an established and familiar natural setting or visual feature of the community?
- Does not meet any of the above City of Littleton Landmark standards.

39. **Area(s) of significance:** Architecture, Commerce

40. **Period of significance:** 1964-1969

41. **Level of significance:** Local

42. **Statement of significance:**

The former Mr. Steak Restaurant is evaluated as eligible for individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places and Colorado State Register of Historic Properties under Criteria A and C and is eligible for Littleton local landmark designation under Criteria 1, 2, 3, 6, 8 and 10.

NR Criterion A: The former Mr. Steak Restaurant exemplifies the cultural, social and historic heritage of the City of Littleton through its association with the development of the restaurant industry during the city's initial period of suburban growth and expansion in the post-World War II period.

NR Criterion C: The former Mr. Steak Restaurant portrays the environment of the post World War II era of Littleton history characterized by the Expressionist Style in architecture. It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Expressionist Style. It is the work of architect Colin Stewart. It is well-designed and displays a high standard of material quality and construction craft.

43. **Assessment of historic physical integrity related to significance:**

The former Mr. Steak Restaurant retains all seven aspects of integrity. The building retains its original location and setting. The design and materials of some walls were changed, but the alterations were well designed and executed c1969 by the chain itself in order to incorporate the Littleton building into the theme that was ultimately adopted for its chain-wide identity. The roof design and related clerestory windows, its most prominent feature, survives along with its material and workmanship. Its feeling and association are largely intact.

VII. ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT

- 44. **National Register eligibility assessment:** Individually eligible (local)
- State Register eligibility assessment:** Individually eligible (local)
- Local Landmark eligibility assessment:** Individually eligible, contributing to district
- 45. **Is there historic district potential?** Yes
- Discuss:** Eligible for proposed Littleton Overlay District.
- 46. **Building located in N.R. district?** No
- Contributing N/A
- Noncontributing N/A

VIII. RECORDING INFORMATION

- 47. **Photograph numbers:**
 1709 WLB 01.jpg through 1709 WLB 05.jpg
 1709 WLB Historic 01.jpg through 1709 WLB Historic 02.jpg
 All photographs by Diane Wray Tomasso except as noted.
 CD on file at the City of Littleton Historic Preservation Office.
- 48. **Report title:**

-
- Survey of Commercial Modernism in the West Littleton Boulevard Corridor 1950-1980.
49. **Date(s):** June 2018
50. **Recorder(s):** Diane Wray Tomasso and Michael Paglia
51. **Organization:**
Performed on behalf of the Office of Community Development, Littleton, CO, in association with the State Historical Fund, History Colorado.
52. **Address:** 3058 S Cornell Circle, Englewood, CO 80113
53. **Phone number(s):** 303 552-8254

Aerial Map



Source Data DRCOG Regional Data Catalog
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5AH1980

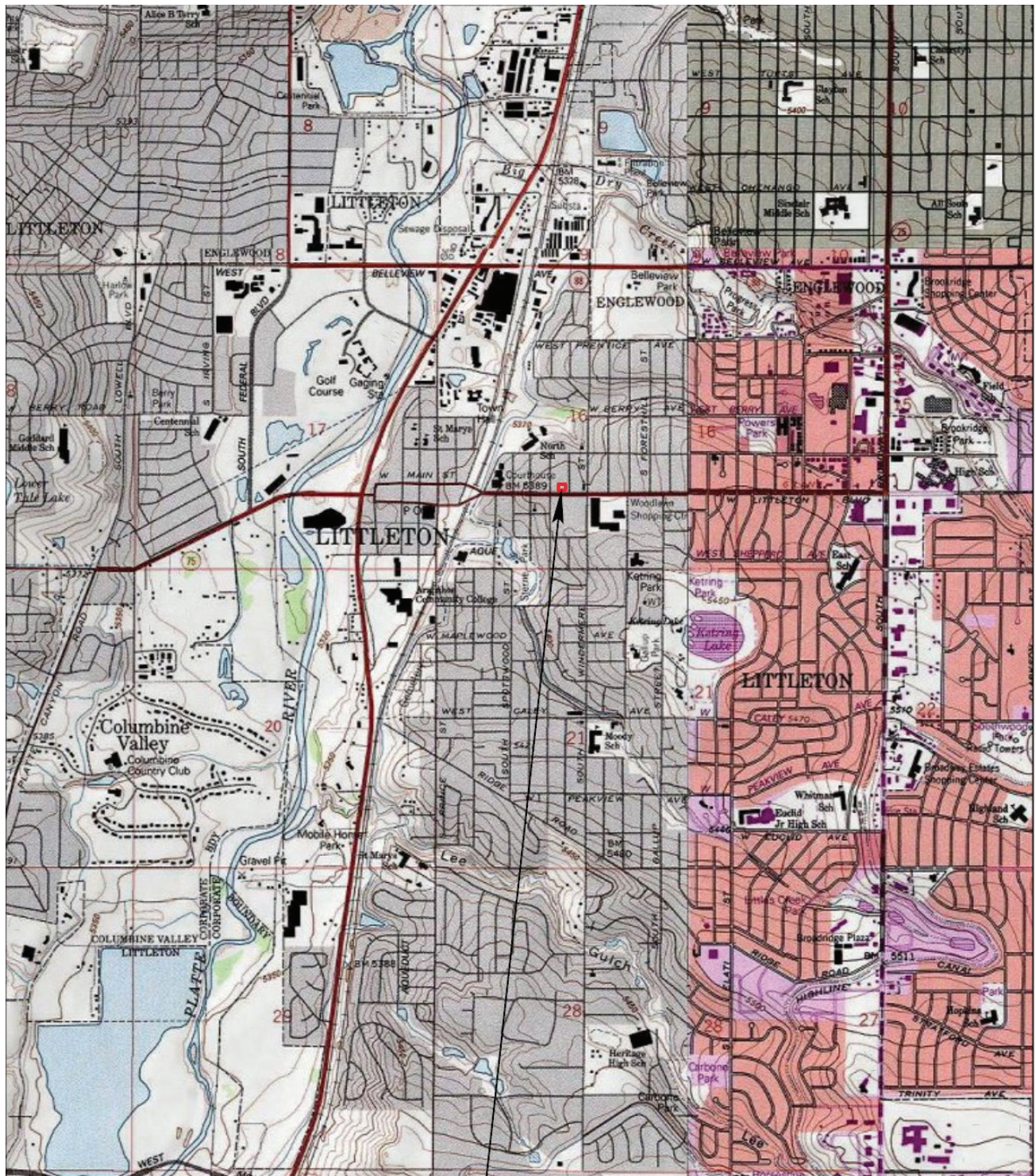
Sketch Map



Source Data DRCOG Regional Data Catalog
© City of Littleton

5AH1980

Location Map



5AH1980

Photo: 1709 WLB 01.jpg
East Wall, Facade (right); South Wall (left).



Photo: 1709 WLB 02.jpg
East Wall, Facade (right); South Wall (left).



Photo: 1709 WLB 03.jpg
East Wall, Facade (left); North Wall (right).



Photo: 1709 WLB 04.jpg
West Wall (left); South Wall (right).



Photo: 1709 WLB 05.jpg

East Wall, Facade (right); South Wall (left), detail of eaves.



Image: 1709 WLB Historic 01.jpg
East Wall, Facade (right); South Wall (left)

Source: "Franchise Organization; Denver's First 'Mr. Steak' Restaurant Opened,"
Denver Post, Nov. 3, 1963, page 2.



Image: 1709 WLB Historic 02.jpg

A c1970 Fort Collins example of the more conventional Mr. Steak building design that was ultimately selected for construction by the restaurant chain. The vertical board-and-batten siding and masonry of used/distressed brick mirrors the siding materials that replaced the original full-height blind and glass panels seen in the previous image of the former Littleton Mr. Steak building.

Source: Fort Collins Local History Archive: <https://fcmdsc.wordpress.com/tag/mr-steak/>



Expressionism

Expressionism is a rare style in post-war American architecture but it found ready acceptance in the Denver area. Expressionism is only vaguely related to the German Expressionist style of the early 20th century, which is why it may be inappropriate to call the American style Neo Expressionism, as some do. Expressionism's reliance on theatrical sculptural forms contrasted both the woodsy charm of the Usonian, on the one hand, and the crisp rationality of the International Style and Miesian on the other.

The Expressionists picked up the tradition of dramatic building forms that had earlier manifested itself in the United States in the Moderne, such as the many buildings constructed for the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair. Whereas Moderne buildings often evoked the speed of a locomotive, it was the jet age that many Expressionist buildings suggested. Eero Saarinen's 1962 Dulles International Airport in Chantilly, Virginia outside Washington, D. C. clearly makes the case with its smooth and continuous lines.

Expressionism in American architecture was broadly conceived and included the more clearly hard-edged and geometric approach taken by Walter Netsch for Skidmore Owings and Merrill in the design of the Air Force Academy Chapel of 1962 outside Colorado Springs, Colorado. The Expressionist style was never dominant in American architecture because the soaring forms it favored and the experimental materials it preferred were too costly. It was also this same fiscal issue that guaranteed that most Expressionist buildings, with notable exceptions such as Dulles and the Air Force Academy Chapel, were in the form of luxurious houses. The origin of the term is unknown.

Defining Characteristics of Expressionism

- sculptural forms
- irregularly-shaped windows
- non-traditional structural elements
- use of experimental materials
- use of cast-in-place concrete
- same materials used inside and out
- organic or geometric floor plans
- organic or geometric ornamental programs
- use of the cantilever
- dramatic site planning, use of topography as a design element
- butterfly or other unconventional roof designs
- roofs as continuations of the walls