



Architect: Rapp, Issac Hamilton
Birth/Death Dates: 1854 - 1933
Practice Dates: 1888 - 1921
Firms: Bulger and Rapp 1889-1892
I.H. and W.M. Rapp 1892-1921

Biographical Information

One of nine children, Issac Hamilton Rapp was born in 1854 in New York City. His family moved to Carbondale, Illinois, in 1856 where his father occasionally worked as an architect but made his reputation as a contractor and superintendent. Five of the seven sons would become architects. It is believed that Issac Hamilton learned his trade from his father, serving as an apprentice and assistant.

Issac Hamilton moved to Trinidad in 1888 and in 1889, he and C. W. Bulger set up an architectural firm specializing in public buildings. The firm did not last long, dissolving in 1892 and shortly thereafter his brother, William Mason Rapp, came out to join him. Together they established the firm of I. H. and W. M. Rapp in Trinidad. In 1904, Arthur C. Hendrickson joined the firm as a draftsman. He became a principal member of the firm in 1909. In the book *Creator of the Santa Fe Style: Issac Hamilton Rapp, Architect*, author Carl D. Sheppard theorized the roles of the three men in the firm with William Mason keeping the books, Hendrickson overseeing construction, and Isaac Hamilton as the designer and head of the firm.¹

Rapp became one of Trinidad's most prominent citizens and designed most of its important buildings. The first commission of record for Bulger and Rapp was the 1889 City Building/ Fire House, now the Children's Museum. This was followed by the Temple of Aaron (1889), exemplifying the eclecticism of the Victorian Age; Zion's German Lutheran Church (1890), with its Gothic and Queen Anne styling; the First Baptist Church (1891), described as "a medieval fantasy;" and the First National Bank of Trinidad (1892), in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Rapp and Rapp designed the West Theatre (1908), the East Street School (1919), the Pueblo Revival style Trinidad Country Club (1921), and several homes in Trinidad.

According to Sheppard, the firm was "up to date in its architectural vocabularies as any firm in the country. It was also acutely aware of its clientele and the degrees to which the clientele could be moved in acceptance of the modern."

Rapp maintained offices in Trinidad and Santa Fe and the firm was connected with many of the principal building operations in southern Colorado and New Mexico. In addition to his prolific work in Trinidad, Rapp was also responsible for other Colorado buildings, including the Huerfano County High School in Walsenburg. Rapp's remarkable career was not confined to Colorado. He also designed many buildings in Santa Fe and Las Vegas, New Mexico. Rapp was responsible for the County Courthouse and the La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe.

Sheppard cites Chris Wilson who places the firm of Rapp and Rapp in perspective. Chris Wilson described them as:

¹ Sheppard erroneously refers to William Mason Rapp as William *Morris* Rapp.



Northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado's leading architects between about 1895 and 1920.... Like other architects whose careers straddled the turn of the century, Rapp and Rapp moved freely along the range of eclectic styles, from Italianate and Richardsonian Romanesque through Neo-classical and Prairie to California Mission and Pueblo styles.

Despite the architectural firm's breadth of styles, Rapp is more often remembered for the New Mexico Building that he designed for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. Rapp created the standard for the Pueblo Revival style (or as Sheppard calls it the "Santa Fe style"). By the 1920s, the Pueblo Revival style was the prominent choice among Santa Fe's growing art colony for their residences and by the 1930s, it was a popular style for public buildings throughout New Mexico.

In June 1920, William Mason contracted pneumonia and died. In August of the following year, Hendrickson died. Sheppard concludes that the death of his two partners was very difficult for Rapp to absorb. At age 67, he withdrew from his active career and moved back to Trinidad from Santa Fe where he remained for the rest of his life. According to Sheppard, the firm did not dissolve, but for all practical purposes it did no new work. When Issac Hamilton Rapp died in March 1933, the local paper referred to him as "one of the most prominent of the pioneer residents of Trinidad" who was "linked with many of the important construction operations in this city and throughout New Mexico."

Credited Buildings (partial list)

| Building Name | Location | Site No. | Date* | Status |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------|-------|------------------------|
| Bulger and Rapp | | | | |
| City Building/ Fire House | 314 N. Commercial St., Trinidad | 5LA.2179.25 | 1889 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Temple Aaron | 407 Maple St., Trinidad | 5LA2179.12 | 1889 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Zion's German Lutheran Church | 510 Pine St. Trinidad | 5LA.10968 | 1890 | National Register |
| First Baptist Church | 809 San Pedro St. Trinidad | 5LA8697 | 1891 | National Register |
| Prowers County Courthouse | Lamar | | 1891 | Demolished |
| Donely County Courthouse | Clarendon, Texas | | 1891 | National Register |
| First National Bank | 100 E. Main St. Trinidad | 5LA2179.41 | 1895 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Rapp and Rapp | | | | |
| Rapp/ Riverside Building (also additions of 1899) | 451 N. Commercial, Trinidad | 5LA2179.24 | 1894 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Nichols House | 212 E. 2 nd St. Trinidad | 5LA.2179.11 | 1905 | National Register |
| West/Fox Theater | 432 West Main St. Trinidad | 5LA2179.94 | 1908 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |



| Building Name | Location | Site No. | Date* | Status |
|--|--------------------------------|------------|-------|---------------------------|
| Colorado Supply Company | Morley | | 1908 | Demolished |
| Moses Malouff Building/ Monte Cristo Bar | 124 Santa Fe Trail Trinidad | 5LA2179.89 | 1910 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Hamerslough House (later Rapp Residence) [†] | 301 E. 2nd St. Trinidad | | 1910 | |
| Trinidad Masonic Temple | 132 E. Main St. Trinidad | 5LA2179.38 | 1911 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| Sanders/Cordova House [†] | 315 Spruce St. Trinidad | | 1912 | |
| Las Animas County Courthouse (with A.C. Hendrickson) | 200 E. First St. Trinidad | 5LA2179.75 | 1916 | Corazon de Trinidad HD |
| East Street School | 206 East St. Trinidad | 5LA.11123 | 1919 | National Register |
| Huerfano County High School | 415 Wason Ave. Walsenburg | 5HF.2183 | 1920 | National Register |
| Country Club | Trinidad | | 1921 | |
| First Christian Church | 200 S. Walnut Trinidad | 5LA6551 | 1923 | National Register |
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*Completion date is stated if known. Plan, building permit, or assessor date is shown if completion date is unknown.

[†]Some sources credit these buildings to Rapp and Rapp, but definitive proof has never been established.

Information Sources

Fletcher, Ken. Correspondence 2006 and May 23, 2008.

Noel, Thomas J. *Buildings of Colorado*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Palmer, Joan and Ilene Bergsman, "Architects of Colorado: Database of State Business Directory Listings, 1875-1950." Denver: Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, 2006.

Sheppard, Carl D. *Creator of the Santa Fe Style: Issac Hamilton Rapp, Architect* (Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

Site Files Database, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

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