

**Architect:** Fallis, Montana S.

**Birth/Death Dates:** 1864 - 1938

**Practice Dates:** 1886 - 1938

**Firms:**

Fallis and Stein (1905-1909)

Willison and Fallis (1910-1914)

Fallis and Myrlin Fallis (1915-1938)

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## Biographical Information

Montana Fallis was an important Denver architect who routinely received high status commissions during the first three decades of the 20th century. He was born in 1864 in Gray's Summit, Illinois, and studied architecture at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois. He graduated with honors in 1886, moved to Denver, and entered the architectural firm of Frank Edbrooke, one of the foremost Denver architects of the late 19th century. Fallis worked as a construction engineer for Edbrooke's larger building projects.

In 1898, Fallis left Edbrooke to become the Chief Construction Engineer for the American Smelting Company. During this time he invented a safety device for measuring drafts in smelting flues called the "Fallis Manometer".

In 1905, Fallis joined with John Stein to form the Denver architectural firm of Fallis and Stein. One of the most notable works of the partnership was the original Ideal Building. This structure was billed as the first "fireproof high rise building" in the West. Owner Charles Boettcher had the building set on fire in the presence of the City Building Inspector, Robert Willison, to demonstrate its fireproof qualities. The Chicago Commercial Style high-rise building still stands, though Fisher and Fisher thoroughly stripped the building of its original architectural details both inside and out a 1927 enlargement.

Many of the buildings designed by Fallis and Stein have been lost to demolition including one of their most important commissions, the 1908 Neo-Classical Style German-American Trust Company that formerly stood at 17th and Lawrence Streets.

In 1910 Fallis left Stein and formed the firm of Willison and Fallis with former City Building Inspector, Robert Willison. One of the best known building by the firm of Willison and Fallis is the Oxford Hotel Annex of 1912, a white glazed terra cotta-clad Chicago Commercial Style building with a Neo-Classical ornamental vocabulary. The firm also designed the Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church in Denver, and the Vail Hotel and Sacred Heart Church, both in Pueblo.

Fallis formed his own architectural firm in 1914. In the 1920s, he designed the two buildings on which his fame today is substantially based, the Buerger Brothers Building and the Mayan Theater, both begun in 1929 and both completed in 1930. Many consider the Mayan Theater to be an Art Deco masterpiece. The Buerger Brothers Building is closely associated with the Mayan Theater in terms of its style, and in the lavish and extensive use of glazed terra cotta. The Denver North West Terra Cotta Company supplied the terra cotta for both buildings.

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Another Modernist building by Fallis was the Denver Merchandise Mart of 1931 at 1863 Wazee Street. This multi-colored brick building with terra cotta details is austere and differs greatly from the exuberant style of the Buerger Brothers Building and the Mayan Theater. Montana Fallis died after a long illness in 1938.

**Credited Buildings**

<b>Building Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Site No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
Broadway Baptist Church (original architect with only Sunday school classrooms built by 1892. New architect, Jackson, hired to complete project in 1893 due to lost original plans)	225 Lincoln St., Denver	5DV5302	1891-92	
Garden Place Elementary School	4425 Lincoln St., Denver	5DV1690.3	1904	
First Avenue Presbyterian Church (Fallis and Stein)	120 W. 1st Ave., Denver	5DV51	1906	Baker HD
Ideal Building (Fallis and Stein)	821 17th St., Denver	5DV125	1907	National Register
German-American Trust Company Building (Fallis and Stein)	17th & Lawrence St., Denver		1908	Demolished
Bradshaw Building (Fallis and Stein)	1445 Stout St., Denver	5DV1772	1909	Demolished
Vail Hotel (Fallis & Willison with Jacob Giles)	217 S. Grand Ave., Pueblo	5PE501	1910	National Register
McClintock Building (Fallis and Willison)	1554 California St., Denver	5DV499	1910	Downtown Denver Local HD
Capitol Heights Presbyterian Church (Fallis and Willison)	1100 Fillmore St. Denver	5DV8077	1911	
West Court Hotel (Fallis and Willison)	1415 Glenarm Pl., Denver		1911	Demolished
J.P. Dunn Shoe and Leather Company (Fallis and Willison)	1825 Lawrence St., Denver	5DV1749	1912	
Joslin Dry Goods Company Building (alterations) (Fallis and Willison)	934 16th St., Denver	5DV1913	1912	National Register
Oxford Hotel Annex (Fallis and Willison)	1624 17th St., Denver	5DV47.9	1912	National Register
Reed-Curran House (addition)	1040 Humboldt St., Denver	5DV166.7	1912	Humboldt St. HD
Sacred Heart Church (Fallis & Willison with Jacob Giles)	1025 N. Grand Ave., Pueblo	5PE1125	1913	National Register
Thompson Motor Co.	1917 Broadway, Denver	5DV1857	1916	Demolished
Birney House	375 Gilpin St., Denver	5DV167	1919	Country Club HD

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Globeville Community Youth Center	4496 Grant St., Denver	5DV1690.3	1920	
Ady House (Tremont Apartments) (addition)	1332-1338 Tremont Pl., Denver	5DV1841	1927	
Egyptian Theater	452 Main St., Delta	5DT431	1928	National Register
Buerger Brothers Building	1732-1740 Champa St., Denver	5DV528	1929	National Register
Fox Mayan Theater	110 Broadway, Denver	5DV52	1930	Denver Local Landmark
Merchandise Mart	1863 Wazee St., Denver	5DV47.54	1931	Lower Downtown Certified HD
<b>Undated Buildings</b>				
Myrlin Fallis House	622 Ogden, Denver			E. 7th Ave. Local HD
Montana Fallis House	624 Ogden, Denver			E. 7th Ave. Local HD

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**Information Sources**

Noel, Thomas J. and Barbara S. Norgren. *Denver: The City Beautiful and its Architects, 1893-1941*. Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987.

Noel, Thomas J. *Denver Landmarks & Historic Districts, A Pictorial Guide*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1996.

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

Wray, Diane. "Buerger Brothers Building and Annex," State Register Nomination. Unpublished document, 1997. Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Colorado Historical Society, Denver.

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