



COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MEMO REPORT OF FINDINGS FOR DEMOLITION

March 6, 2019

Address: 123 Santa Fe Drive- Concrete silos only

Legal Description: PT SE/4 NE/4 9-4-68 BEG INTERSE LI KALAMATH ST & S LI W 3RD AV TH S ALG E LI KALAMATH ST TO D&RGRR ROW TH SELY ALG ROW TO S LI RES STRIP S OF

Current Building Name: Rio Grande Co.

Construction Date: c.1915-1925

Source of Information: Denver Assessor's Office; Sanborn Insurance Maps from 1904 (corrected to 1925); Denver City Directories; Federal Census Records 1910, 1920, 1940; Denver householder's Directory and Street Avenue Guide 1924-1950.

Architectural

Architectural Style: n/a
Architect/Builder: unknown
Source of Information:

Historical

Original owner: Elmer H. Peterson/ Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co.
Original use(s): Coal storage
Current use(s): unknown
Historical background:

Elmer J. Peterson established the Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. in 1908. Born in 1888, Elmer Peterson was just twenty years old. He was reestablishing a company originally founded by his father, Erick G. Peterson. The first Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. was established in 1892 and dissolved in 1906. Born in 1857, Erick G. Peterson was a Swedish immigrant who immigrated to the United States in 1882.

A business directory from 1910 lists the Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. as located at 901 Santa Fe Drive (originally Jason Street). The company was advertised as selling coal, wood, hay, grain, and cement; Elmer Peterson was listed as the manager. In 1915, Elmer Peterson purchased a section of land between the tracks of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad and Santa Fe Drive, between 1st and 2nd Avenues. The land was presumably chosen for its close proximity to the railroad. Several similar businesses were located nearby along the tracks including the Crystal Coal Co., the Globe Lumber Co., Grenault-Scott Lumber Co., and Western Excelsior Co. Elmer Peterson expanded company operations by building an office and cement warehouse along with six concrete coal silos on the site. The exact construction dates are not known but the *Denver Post* reported in April 1916 that the Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. had taken out a permit to construct a one-story brick warehouse on the site. Sanborn maps show the silos were in place by 1925. The business also continued to operate from the original location with directories listing two addresses for the company: 123 Santa Fe and 901 Santa Fe.

- b. Be a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;
 - c. Contain elements of architectural design, engineering, materials, craftsmanship, or artistic merit which represent a significant or influential innovation; or
 - d. Portray the environment of a group of people or physical development of an area in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.
- Does not meet any of the above **Architectural** criteria

3. Geography. To have geographical significance, the structure or district shall:

- a. Have a prominent location or be an established, familiar, orienting visual feature of the contemporary city;
 - b. Promote understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity; or
 - c. Make a special contributing to Denver's distinctive character.
- Does not meet any of the above **Geographic** criteria

Has potential for designation **Does not have potential for designation**

(Additional Information)

The concrete coal silos at 123 Santa Fe Drive are potentially significant for History under criterion 1A for their association with the coal business in Denver and with a family-run company which has been in business for more than a century. From the mid-19th century, coal was the primary fuel source for both domestic and industrial uses. This made coal dealers an important commercial enterprise in Denver. In the 1910 Ballenger & Richards Denver directory, the listing for coal dealers extends across seven pages. By the end of World War II, coal was becoming obsolete, replaced by natural gas. From its establishment in 1908 to the 1940s, the Rio Grande Fuel Co. grew to become a top distributor of coal in Denver, serving tens of thousands of customers and selling more than 150,000 tons of coal per year. While other coal dealers disappeared during this transition, the Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. survived, remaking itself as the Rio Grande Co. and focusing on construction materials.

The concrete silos at 123 Santa Fe Drive are also potentially significant for Architecture under criterion 2c for their engineering. The development of concrete silos was a technological innovation that revolutionized the way agricultural and industrial products were handled in the early decades of the 20th century. The Rio Grande Fuel & Feed Co. appears to have been an early adopter of the use of concrete silos for coal storage. While similar coal silos were likely once common in Denver, with the decline of the coal industry and redevelopment along many of Denver's rail corridors, few historic commercial silos of this era (c.1915-1925) remain in Denver.

Finally, the concrete silos at 123 Santa Fe Drive are potentially significant for Geography under criterion 3A for their visual prominence. Due to their height and uniqueness, the silos have become a visually orienting feature within the Baker neighborhood.