



Old North End Neighborhood Historic Ironwork Tour continued

Colorado Springs, home of the Hassell Iron Works, has an especially handsome collection of decorative iron fences dating from the late 1800s. The fences represent a happy union of taste and technology, combining intricate design with durable materials at a price which made them attractive alternatives to wood, wire and hedging. Ornamental iron fences required a high initial investment, but since they were almost maintenance-free (and usually outlasted their owners), they offered a long-term economy. Foundry-cast ornamental ironwork cashed in on the prestige and status traditionally accorded hand-crafted wrought iron, but at a fraction of the cost.

The designs were irresistible: Roman arches over fluted spearheads, surrounded by Gothic tracery and Classic scrolls, all fitted together in a graceful and repetitious expanse. Foundries standardized sizes to cut production costs; typical iron pickets and line posts stood about three feet high, gate posts a bit higher. Occasional shortened versions were set into sandstone pedestals.

Not all patterns were elaborate. We fault the Victorians for their fussy tastes, but they had a more discerning eye than we give them credit for. One of Hassell's most popular iron fences repeated a simple pattern of overlapping arches with no embellishments whatever. He achieved a similar effect of spare elegance from stylized floral castings set atop plain iron pickets. Hassell used traditional forms as well, and offered his clients a seemingly infinite variety of designs.



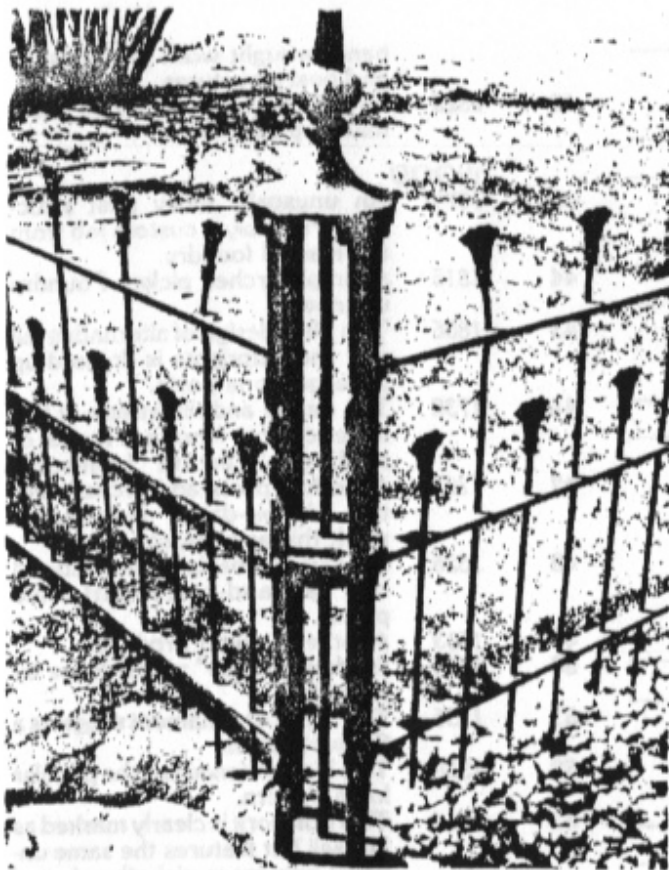


Photo: Elaine Freed

The recent inventory of ornamental iron fences was made possible by a grant from the Springs Area Beautiful Association and the Pikes Peak or Bust Bicentennial Committee.

Students participating in the inventory:

NORTH JUNIOR:

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THE COLORADO SPRINGS SCHOOL:

Deborah Donner, Ann Brossman, Ann Rieger. Faculty coordinator: Al Adams.

Elaine Freed, Project Director, wrote an article on the Old North End Iron Fence Inventory for the May, 1976, issue of *Americana Magazine*. Please direct inquiries to Ms. Freed at 2111 North Tejon, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80907, (303) 636-2251.

COLORADO SPRINGS' HISTORIC IRONWORK



The Old North End



Ornamental ironwork was one of the great loves of Americans in the late nineteenth century. Victorian homeowners bought up iron castings—fountains, urns, crestings, benches, statues, railings, bridge posts and boot scrapers—as quickly as foundries could turn them out. During that decorative era a house was not a home—certainly not a fashionable home—unless it had an ornate finial atop the highest tower, a heavily scrolled iron gate on the front walk, and a cast iron settee in the latest "rustic" style under a favorite shade tree.

Of all the tons of iron that remain from those by-gone days, none pleases the eye more than the delicate cast iron fences that border the front lawns of old residential areas in Colorado and neighboring states. Actually, the affinity for iron fencing was nationwide during that period, promoted by a burgeoning iron and steel industry. Foundries and iron works, concentrated in the East but scattered throughout the Western states as well, sold their ornamental fences through catalogs and then shipped them by rail to retail agents or directly to buyers.

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Penrose Public Library
The Hassell Iron Works in 1898

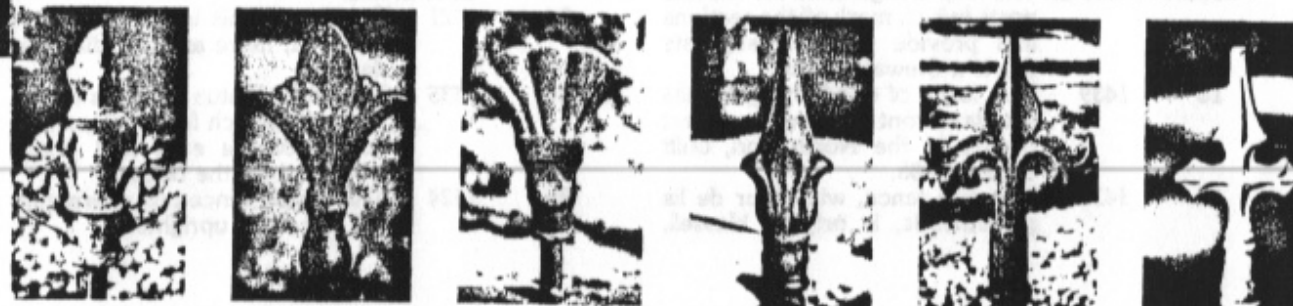


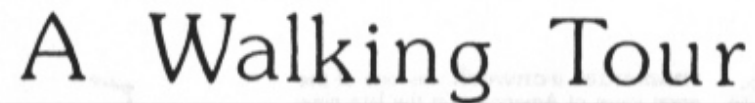
William Hassell came to Colorado from New York in 1885 seeking a cure for his tuberculosis. After homesteading in the late '80s he set himself up in the fence business, then built a foundry which combined ornamental ironwork with the manufacture of mining equipment. The iron business of that era was fiercely competitive and foundries shamelessly copied each other's wares. Other firms which sold iron fences in Colorado Springs included the Denver Iron and Wire Works, Barbee of Chicago, Barnum of Detroit, and Cincinnati's Stewart Iron Works; the latter company did a vigorous business all over the country.

Despite competition, the Hassell foundry dominated ornamental ironwork sales in the Pikes Peak region. Because they reflected a common origin and shared tastes, the Hassell fences offered a homogenous ingredient amid the diversity of Victorian architecture. Varied in design but identical in size, the fences provided a harmonious image when, combined together, they linked a half-dozen homesites along a city street.

Hassell's decorative ironwork can be found in all the early residential areas of Colorado Springs and its neighbor, Manitou, as well as many other Colorado communities including Cripple Creek, Aspen, Denver, Salida, and Buena Vista.

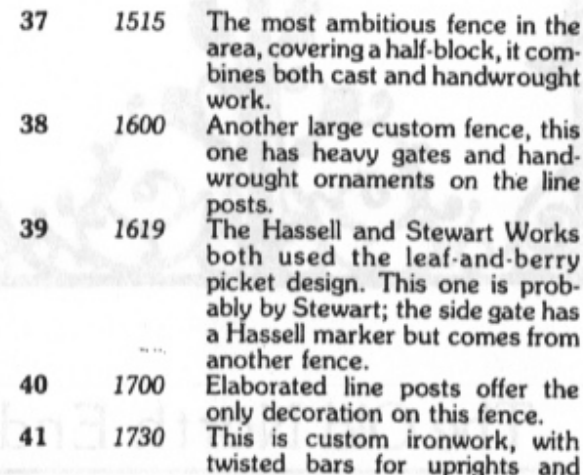
Photos by Catherine Taylor





14	1705	E.T. Barnum Iron and Wire Works of Detroit made this handsome "high Victorian" fence.
15	1708	An old fence, but only recently installed here. Notice the hand-wrought gate ornament.
16,17	1519-23	The tulip design used for the line posts (which mark off the sections and provide support) suggests this is a Steward fence.
18	1439	This fence of overlapping arches stands in front of one of the oldest houses in the North End, built around 1885.
19	1432	The side fence, with fleur de lis picketheads, is original Hassell.

CASCADE		
34	1421	Sections of this fence have been replaced; there are two different designs.
35	1435	The arched lotus design is an appropriate match for the Japanese quality of the eave and porch treatment on the house.
36	1524	This simple fence has alternating tall and short uprights.



43	1829	An unusually fancy post structure. Probably a custom job from the Hassell foundry.
44	1815	A simple arched picket. Foundry unknown.
45	1806	This plain design of alternating tall and short uprights is dressed up by large stone posts.
46	1738	The design and dimension of this large, custom fence are typical of traditional estate ironwork.
47	1724	Acanthus posts and arches over the "double-daisy" picketheads mark this as a Hassell fence.
48	1626	Stewart probably manufactured this leaf-and-berry patterned picket.
49	1613	Another Stewart product.
50	1614	A "double-daisy" picket fence by Hassell.
51	1536	The line post ornament suggests a Stewart origin.
52	1528	This Hassell fence has the popular lotus pattern.
53	1514	This ironwork is clearly marked as Hassell but features the same unusual iron cross pickethead used on the Barnum fence on Tejon Street.
54	1428	A Hassell fleur de lis decorates these plain pickets.
55	1424	William Hassell lived here with his family. He chose the "double-daisy" pattern for his picket fence and another daisy design for the posts.
56	1414	This large fence of overlapping arches has some custom features and was probably made by Hassell. The two existing French country-style houses replaced an earlier Victorian house.
57	1320	The front fence is of recent origin but the side ironwork is Hassell's "double-daisy."
58,59	1329-21	Very simple uprights; there is no identification.
60	1228	This chain and post fence has beautiful wrought iron gates. The ironwork for this elegant house may have come from Europe.