

From Arts & Architecture: Helen Millett Arndt (1913-1985)



At the south end of All Souls' Walk stands a small bronze statue of a woman under a canopy of gothic arches. She looks upward and appears to be striding forward. The statue, sculpted by Colorado artist William Joseph, was created in memory of Helen Millette Arndt, a longtime member of St. John's Cathedral and a recognized civic leader in Denver.

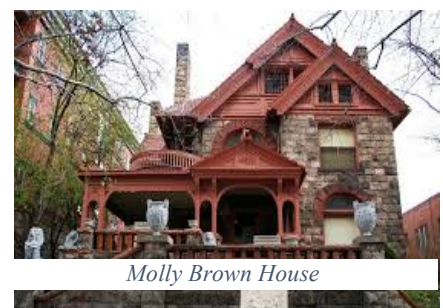


Helen was born in Maricopa, Arizona, but grew up in Denver. Her family were members of the cathedral and her father Daniel served on the Vestry in the 1920's. It was at the cathedral that Helen met young Dr. Karl Arndt, and they were married there in a beautiful society wedding in 1933. A video of the family and friends gathering before the service is still available and shows Helen leaving their home, with her top-hatted father helping her with her white satin train. A Denver native, Dr. Arndt earned his medical degree at the University of Colorado, and served in the army from 1941-1945 in the South Pacific. A dedicated member of the cathedral, and an advocate for the ordination of women and for social justice, he served as a member and Senior Warden of the vestry. In 1965 he joined a group from St. John's who went to Montgomery to participate in the March on Selma.



Helen developed an early interest in the preservation of Denver's history, and she became the first female member of the Denver Planning board in 1959. When the city-chartered Denver Landmarks Commission was formed in 1967, she became the chair. The Commission was formed to "designate, preserve, enhance and perpetuate structures or districts that have architectural, historic, geographic, or cultural significance in the city of Denver." Helen and the commission immediately began to develop an inventory of Denver landmarks. Over 92 buildings and parks were soon designated as historic landmarks, and there are now over 348.

Helen's continuing interest in the preservation of Denver's history led her to become one of the founders of Historic Denver in 1970, and within a few years such structures as the Molly Brown House and the Richthofen Castle were saved



from demolition, and several historical buildings on the Auraria campus became the 19th Street Historic Park.



Historic Denver also works with the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and in 1975, due to Helen's efforts, St. John's Cathedral was designated as a Denver Landmark, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Her activity in the work of preservation in the city of Denver was equaled only by Helen's devotion to her beloved cathedral. Stewardship of the historic cathedral became a major passion for Helen. From 1963 until her death in 1985, she led the Arts and Architecture Commission through years of preservation, protection, restoration and enrichment of the cathedral's historic art and architecture. She was known for her courageous and far-sighted plans for change, and also for her fearless responses to proposals for changes she did not deem appropriate. Responding to a bid for a certain kind of lighting in Saint Martin's chapel, Helen commented, "it would be ignorant as well as destructive to authorize the infusion of metal saucers into the chapel." Objecting to parts of the original plan for the construction of a Diocesan Center on the cathedral grounds in 1975, she urged planning that was "inclusive, communicative, and co-operative." The following year the Center was completed and dedicated. A co-worker once remarked, "She didn't lie down in front of a bulldozer—she would just say 'You can't do this'." Instrumental in an extensive renovation of the cathedral library in the early 1980's, her photograph hangs there in appreciation of her service.



To the Glory of God
This library was refurbished
through the generosity of
HELEN MILLETT ARNDT
Dedicated to her
1986
"She hath wrought a good work"
Mark 14:6



In addition to the memorials for Helen at the cathedral, a recognition of her active participation in the preservation of Denver's history can be seen in the city's grand marble structure in Civic Center, the Colonnade of Civic Benefactors.

The name **Helen**

Millett Arndt is one of a series of names of Denver leaders carved above the Ionic columns.

Helen died at the age of 72 on December 23, 1985. Her ashes are interred in All Souls' Walk, near the small statue given in memory of her years of devoted service to Saint John's cathedral.

