

George Washington Olinger

Businessman, Developer, Community Leader

The name of Olinger and the landmark residence and grounds on the northeast corner of West 29th Avenue and Wadsworth Boulevard will forever be entwined. To some Wheat Ridge residents it was the beautiful roses climbing up the stately row of white columns that formed an arbor along Wadsworth. To others it was the charm of the small white frame farmhouse built in 1892 with its two-story matching barn behind. Still others admired the red-tiled Italianate-style home surrounded by fruit trees, ornate sculptures, flowering shrubs, and sunken garden.

Born in Santa Fe, NM in 1882 to John and Emma, George Washington Olinger got his name by sharing his Feb. 22 birthday with the nation's first president. His father was an undertaker who moved his family to Denver in 1890 and opened an undertaking parlor at 15th and Platte Streets in the Highland area. George was working in the family business by age 15. When his father died in 1901, George became his mother's partner. Over time, he increasingly took the reins of the Olinger Undertaking Parlors. In 1905 George married Margaret Flagg. They became the parents of Gwendolyn "Boots" in 1908 and George Junior in 1912.

Olinger was active in owning and managing a variety of business enterprises in Wheat Ridge and Denver from the early 1900s until his death in 1954. In 1907, Olinger purchased more than 200 acres from Henry Lee between



George Washington Olinger was inducted into the Jefferson County Historical Commission Hall of Fame on October 17, 2013.

West 26th and West 32nd avenues, west of Wadsworth Boulevard. This became Crown Hill Memorial Park. Olinger was involved in many civic, philanthropic, cultural, and religious organizations throughout his lifetime. He was instrumental in establishing the Wheat Ridge Improvement Association in 1913, the city's first Chamber of Commerce. He established Highlander Boys, Temple of Youth, and Geneva Glen Camp for Young People. Olinger employed and financially supported vocal and keyboard musicians including the Olinger Quartet, which performed at public, cultural, and religious events as well as on radio.

Prior to World War I, Olinger and other business associates created Associated Industries as an umbrella business organization. Their variety of enterprises included four residential subdivisions: Olinger Gardens, Bonnie Brae, Indian Hills, and Wellshire. In each, diverse housing ranged from very modest homes to homes of executives. George Olinger's contribution to the development and success of Wheat Ridge during the period 1907 to 1954 should not be forgotten. The romantic vision of lantern-hung garden parties on the grounds of his stately home remains to this day in the recollections of older folks. 🍷