

## OLLI at DU Syllabus – Spring 2024

*The Geology and History behind Denver's Iconic Stone Buildings: Quarries and Stories*

Tuesday Mornings Online; 4 weeks

Facilitator: Rob Diedrich

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS OR MATERIALS:** None

### **WEEKLY TOPICS**

**Week 1:** The Castle Rock Rhyolite and the Lyons Sandstone.

The Castle Rock Rhyolite and the Lyons Sandstone are the two most prominent building stones used in Denver construction during the late 1800's to the early 1900's. We will look at the history behind the Front Range quarry operations for these rock formations. Then we will showcase some of the amazing buildings and homes constructed with these rocks which still stand today including the Molly Brown House and the Central Presbyterian Church.

**Week 2:** The Yule Marble and the Pikes Peak Granite.

The Yule Marble is one of Colorado's most famous geologic formations and was designated the 'State Rock' by the legislature in 2004. Quarry operations near the town of Marble began in the late 1800's and continue today. We will compare early quarrying methods with modern day extraction techniques and view some of the stunning buildings constructed with this brilliant white marble including the Byron White Courthouse in Denver and the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. Additionally, we will examine the beautiful light pink granite of the Pikes Peak Formation, used in the foundations of many of Denver's historic downtown buildings including the Brown Palace.

**Week 3:** Building Stones of Capitol Hill.

In this session we will delve into building stones used to construct the historic buildings on Denver's Capitol Hill, including the Colorado State Capitol. The Colorado Beulah Marble, a colorful red, pink, and white banded stone seen inside the Capitol and the Indiana Salem Limestone, a fossiliferous tan limestone used in the construction of the Immaculate Conception and St. John's Episcopal Cathedrals, are some of the featured formations.

**Week 4: Building Stones of Downtown Denver.**

For our final week we will take a virtual tour of unique building stones in Civic Center Plaza and in Downtown Denver, including a virtual stroll along 18th Street, designated the “Wall Street of the West.” In structures such as the Equitable Building and the Brown Palace, we will see exotic building stones imported from the East Coast and abroad. Colorful stories behind some of the inhabitants of these buildings will be shared, as well.

**Optional Field Trip:**

For those interested, I will lead a walking tour of historic stone buildings in Denver’s Capitol Hill district. The tour will take 2-3 hours with approximately 2 miles of walking and will showcase building stones discussed in the class. The best time for this would be a weekday afternoon and will include a visit inside the State Capitol Building to view the colorful banded stone panels of the Beulah Marble. Participants will need to provide their own transportation to and from the beginning and end of the field trip.