

The Legacy Continues | By Thomas J. Noel

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Story

Acknowledgments

Gary P. Steuer, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation president and CEO, initially proposed this project and has been most helpful as a guide and editor. Dorothy Horrell, the previous president and CEO and now chancellor at the University of Colorado Denver, provided an interview and images. Monique Loseke made us at home in the D & F Tower and provided assistance, advice, and editing as well as access to the foundation's archives.

Caitlin "Katy" Lewis, museum curator at the Lakewood Heritage Center, could not have been more welcoming and helpful. She gave us a grand tour of the many remnants of the Belmar Mansion and farms while providing images, stories, and good ideas. Graduate student Evan West served as a research assistant. Special thanks to Kristen Autobee and Kathleen Barlow. Steve Grinstead did a crackerjack job of editing the manuscript.

PROLOGUE

Race and Privilege

he legacy of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, like most foundations in America, was created from wealth amassed by its benefactors. And, sadly, history has shown us time and time again, this wealth was acquired at the expense of Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC).

Frederick Bonfils, May Bonfils and Ed Stanton were, of course, all white and travelled in circles that were (as far as we know) uniformly white and privileged. Viewed through our lens of today, the stories of May placing a priceless diamond necklace around the neck of her dog as it ran through Belmar, or wearing that same necklace and draped in furs, paying a visit to the neighborhood drug store for a milkshake among "the common people," reek as offensive, tasteless flaunting of her wealth and privilege. In her era, it was seen as quaint eccentricity.

And, of course, the early grantmaking and priorities of the Foundation reflected their background. The Foundation did not have a non-white board member until 2015 and hired its first BIPOC staff member in 2020. Grantmaking went largely to white-led organizations, and within the arts primarily to the larger Euro-centric organizations.

Since 2014, the Foundation has been working to dismantle this traditional approach to our work which was simply not equitable. As of 2021, our Board is about 1/3 BIPOC, we developed an Equity Values Statement and have a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee of the Board. The share of our grantmaking going to organizations led by and serving BIPOC or other historically excluded communities has increased 500%. We have introduced a new grant program that directs resources to community-based organizations which we had not previously

funded. We have prioritized providing multi-year general operating support and reduced red-tape and reporting requirements. We are continually adapting our processes for the Livingston Fellowship Program to dramatically increase the percentage of BIPOC, and those leading smaller organizations and considering how best to support this expanding network of impactful nonprofit and community leaders. This has included providing additional funding to support their organizations while participating in fellowship activities.

That said, we acknowledge we still have much work to do, and we are committed to continuing this evolution. It was important for us to capture the history of the Foundation and our founders in this document, and to honor the fact that they put their fortune in service to the betterment of our community. Stanton also had the foresight to give future Trustees the flexibility to evolve the Foundation as needed to best serve the community. This has allowed us to first narrow our focus to arts and culture where the Trustees felt we could have the most impact, and then to center equity and anti-racism in our work.

May Bonfils and Charles Edwin Stanton were people of their time, and we now have the gift and the responsibility to steward those resources effectively – and more equitably – for our time, for all of our community, and future generations.

Gary Steuer, President & CEO Bonfils-Stanton Foundation February 2021

May 2021 - A statement from the Foundation:

History Colorado recently released a scan of a membership ledger for Denver's Ku Klux Klan chapter from 1924-1926. Bonfils-Stanton Foundation's leadership and staff were horrified to see that Robert E. Stanton, the brother of the Foundation founder, Charles Edwin Stanton, and former chairman from 1987 until his death in 2000, appears on the roster. Robert and Charles' father, Walter, is also listed.

For the past several years, the Foundation has been on a journey to advance equity and anti-racism in all our work. With this sobering realization, we are even more resolved to not only continue to acknowledge our history rooted in White privilege and White supremacy, but to take the necessary steps to directly confront our harmful legacy of racism and exclusion and take intentional steps to address it. Action is required and we are committed to that work now and into the future. This new revelation motivates us to continue to interrogate the racist origins of our systems and institutions and consider its lasting impacts on the community Bonfils-Stanton Foundation exists to serve.

BONFILS STANTON FOUNDATION

Contents

Timeline

6

CHAPTER 1 **The Bonfils Story**

10

CHAPTER 2
Mary "May" Madeline Bonfils

16

CHAPTER 3
Life at Belmar

22

CHAPTER 4
Charles Edwin "Ed" Stanton

32

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation

42

Timeline | 1880 to present

1883

Mary "May" Madeline born in Troy, New York, as the eldest daughter of Frederick Gilmer Bonfils and Belle Barton Bonfils



1904

May elopes to marry Clyde V. Berryman in a civil ceremony

1880 1890 1900 1910





1895

Frederick G. Bonfils and Harry H. Tammen buy the newspaper that becomes The Denver Post



Charles Edwin
"Ed" Stanton
born in Denver





1933

Frederick G. Bonfils dies

1936

May buys land for Belmar Mansion on South Wadsworth Boulevard in Lakewood



1930

1935

1940

1945

1935

Belle Bonfils dies



1943

May divorces Clyde Berryman





Timeline | 1880 to present



1956

May marries Charles Edwin "Ed" Stanton

1971

Belmar Mansion demolished



The only surviving structure on the Belmar Mansion grounds is this boathouse.

1950

1960

1970

1980

1981

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation awards its first grant

1962

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation created

> May Bonfils Stanton dies



1984

Bonfils-Stanton Annual Awards established to honor extraordinary Coloradans

1987

Ed Stanton dies; his brother Robert F. Stanton takes foundation's helm

1983-2001

Eileen Greenawalt serves as executive secretary



2005

Inauguration of the Livingston Fellowship Program

2012

Foundation refines grantmaking focus to support Arts and Culture in Denver



2005-2017

J. Landis Martin serves as board chair

1990 2000 2010 2020

2000

Robert Stanton dies



2001-2013

Dorothy Horrell serves as president and CEO



2013-present Gary P. Steuer serves as president



and CEO

CHAPTER 1

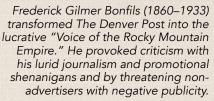
The Bonfils Story

he Bonfils name—both famous and infamous—conjures not only Colorado's most successful, sensational, and feared newspaper tycoon but also his two feuding daughters and their foundations, striving to improve and culturally enrich the lives of Coloradans.

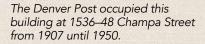
Denver would never be the same after Frederick Gilmer Bonfils and his partner, Harry Heye Tammen, bought the struggling three-year-old *Evening Post* in 1895. They renamed it *The Denver Post* and transformed it into a three-ring circus. *The Denver Post* captivated and enthralled readers with big headlines, red ink, photographs, and sensational stories—such as "Does It Hurt to Be Born?" Bonfils focused on local news, declaring: "A dogfight on Champa Street is a better story than a war in Timbuktu."

Denver's oldest newspaper, the respectable *Rocky Mountain News*, had weathered word wars with its competitors ever since 1859, when it was founded in newly established Denver. Suddenly, the *News* was in a no-holds-barred circulation war with the upstart *Denver Post*, which first surpassed the *News*' circulation in 1901.

In the course of his lifetime, Fred Bonfils acquired the wealth that his daughters would inherit and then use for philanthropic purposes all over the state of Colorado—cementing their legacy as a famed Denver family. That historic legacy continues through the ongoing philanthropic work of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as a leading supporter of arts organizations and nonprofit leaders.



Herndon Davis watercolor courtesy of History Colorado



Herndon Davis painting courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection



Fred Bonfils

Was Frederick Gilmer Bonfils a crook, coyote, devil's paramour, or felon, as his enemies portrayed him? Or was he, as *The Denver Post* eulogized him upon his death, "Colorado's greatest citizen"?

Gene Fowler, who worked for Bonfils, sensationalized and occasionally fictionalized his boss in *Timber Line: A Story of Bonfils and Tammen*. Longtime *Post* columnist and editor Bill Hosokawa provided a far more accurate account in *Thunder in the Rockies: The Incredible Denver Post*. Both authors tell of a man driven by ambition and greed, a man with a Pikes Peak ego who, with copublisher Harry H. Tammen, transformed the *Post* from a sickly sheet into the Rocky Mountain West's most influential publication. Ever a booster and showman, Bonfils made the *Post* both widely read and widely hated.

Bonfils' grandfather, a Corsican who had fought with Napoleon's army, immigrated to the United States after Napoleon's defeat and changed his name from Buonfiglio to Bonfils. He moved to Lexington, Kentucky, where he taught at Transylvania University. One of his sons, Eugene Napoleon Bonfils, graduated from Transylvania and began a law practice in Troy, Missouri. In 1872 he married Henrietta Lewis, a Virginia-born descendent of Meriwether Lewis, co-leader of the Lewis and Clark Expedition exploring the Louisiana Purchase. Their fourth child was Frederick Gilmer Bonfils. Fred won an assignment to West Point but was discharged "because of a deficiency in mathematics." His three years at West Point shaped him for life. To the end, he walked erectly with a military bearing and wore a well-trimmed moustache with neatly waxed ends.

In 1882, Fred married Belle Barton in her hometown of Peekskill, New York. The couple moved to Troy, New York, where Fred worked on the *Troy News*. Dashingly handsome and theatrical, Fred formed and presided over the Troy Amateur Minstrel Club, where he played leading roles. Fred and Belle's first child, Mary "May" Madeline, was born in Troy in 1883. Three years after May's birth, Fred moved his family to Kansas City, Missouri—where he pulled off a notable scam.

Shady Business

Anticipating the much-ballyhooed 1889 homestead rush into Oklahoma Indian Territory, just opened to settlers, Bonfils bought a square-mile section of land and platted it as Oklahoma City with two- to twenty-five-dollar lots for sale. Buyers rushed in—thinking it was Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Few bothered to read the tiny lettering after "Oklahoma City": "Tex." Unlucky buyers found the Bonfils

townsite a barren waste of sagebrush seven miles from the nearest water and thirty-five from the nearest town. No railroad, not even a wagon trail, reached this paper town. Bonfils pocketed \$15,000 before the scam was exposed. He skipped town, taking his family back to Belle's family home in Peekskill, New York, where his second daughter, Helen, was born on November 15, 1889.

A few years later, the family returned to Kansas City, Kansas, and Fred plunged into a phony lottery business. The *Kansas City Star* in 1894 exposed this cheating of investors by operators who never awarded the promised prizes, except for awards to a few insiders whose winnings were much publicized. The *Star* identified Bonfils as one of the guilty parties, describing him as "formerly a Kansas City real estate swindler." Bonfils was arrested but released upon payment of a fine. That same year he moved his family to 939 Corona Street in Denver.

The Birth of The Denver Post

Apparently, it was in Chicago that Fred Bonfils met Harry Heye Tammen, a roly-poly, good-natured operator of a curio shop in Denver's Windsor Hotel at

Eighteenth and Larimer Streets. After coming to Denver in 1880, Tammen had worked at the Windsor as a bartender. There, he liked to joke, he threw to the ceiling every silver dollar he took in. If it stuck, it belonged to management.

Bonfils had met his match.

The two rascals hit it off, and Tammen talked Bonfils into putting up the \$12,500 price of the failing Evening Post.

Bonfils, who had been found guilty of fake lottery operations in Kansas City just a few years earlier, launched a *Post* crusade against the sale of lottery tickets in Denver, a scam he knew all too well. The duo also dabbled in other enterprises, ranging from selling insurance to peddling



Harry Heye Tammen co-founded The Denver Post with Fred Bonfils in 1895.

Herndon Davis painting courtesy of History Colorado

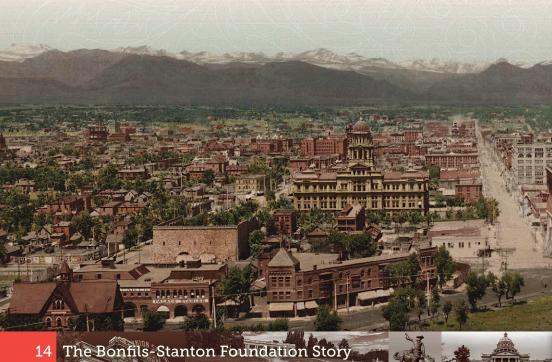
coal. Tammen even persuaded Bonfils to back a circus, the Sells-Floto, which grew from a dog-and-pony show when the *Post* bought it in 1903 into one of the nation's major big tops by 1920, when Tammen's declining health forced him to sell it. The circus traveled, but it was especially dear to Denverites because it wintered in the Mile High City. There, Tammen saved money by feeding the tigers the carcasses of dead dogs and mules.

Fred Bonfils took an early interest in the neighboring town of Lakewood, where his daughter May would one day build her Belmar Mansion. When the elite Denver Country Club denied him membership, Bonfils joined the Colorado Country Club in Lakewood in 1907. It has since evolved into the Lakewood Country Club.

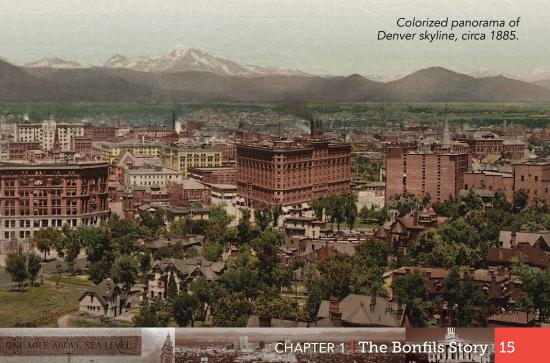
After Harry Tammen died in 1924, his wife, Agnes, constructed the Agnes Reid Tammen wing of Children's Hospital in Denver. She would later give ever more generous endowments to the hospital, which she wanted to be the finest children's hospital in the world. Supposedly, she even sold her string of pearls to benefit the sick children. The Tammens' generosity would become a model for both Helen and May Bonfils.

Constant promotions, ranging from this baby elephant (right) endorsing (or eating) the paper to Harry Houdini scaling the Denver Post Building's façade, attracted crowds and led the Police Department to station an officer out front to try to keep the sidewalk clear.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection







CHAPTER 2

Mary "May" Madeline Bonfils

orn in 1883 in Troy, New York, May grew up in the Bonfils family's Denver mansion at 1500 East Tenth Avenue at the southeast corner of

Humboldt Street. The huge, threestory neoclassical edifice fronted by imposing two-story lonic columns sat imperially in one of the Mile High City's swankiest neighborhoods. May learned to ignore the gossip that her father had blackmailed the home's builder and original occupant, Leopold Guldman, to acquire the mansion.

Young May Bonfils grew wary of this grand but gloomy palace where her father ruled with an iron hand. He sent her to St. Mary's Academy, the oldest and most prestigious Catholic school in Colorado to this day. There May earned a gold medal for her piano playing in 1899, encouraging her lifelong interest. Later she attended the elite Wolcott School for Girls in a building still standing at East Fourteenth Avenue and Marion Street. The school's motto, "Noblesse Oblige," was one



With golden hair, a heart-shaped face, bright blue eyes, and a porcelain complexion, May Bonfils was as pretty as any of her many dolls.

> Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection



The now-gone Bonfils mansion, complete with a basement bowling alley, mini-theater, and swimming pool, stood on the west side of Cheesman Park.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

May would take to heart. That French phrase stated that the nobility, the wellheeled, had an obligation to care for the less fortunate. Her father then sent her to the Brownell School for Girls in New York. As a graduation present her father took her to Europe, where May studied French and piano. She ultimately became an accomplished pianist and composed several original works for the piano.

After returning to Denver, May begged her father to let her go to a dance. She argued that the dance would be a fitting way to celebrate her twenty-first birthday. Her father was well aware that May was five feet, two inches tall and a lovely, blue-eyed blond who had no trouble attracting men. So, he told her to celebrate at home with her family, commenting that if she truly loved him, she would not want to go. However, May did not give up asserting she was now a twenty-one-year-old woman capable of her own decisions.

Her father finally agreed, as Bill Hosokawa reports in Thunder in the Rockies, on the condition that he go along as her escort. This humiliating experience inspired May to start looking for a husband. (In that day and age, self-respecting girls lived with their parents until marrying.) May hastily settled on twenty-threeyear-old Clyde V. Berryman, a sheet music and piano salesman with Wells Music. The couple eloped to Golden, where they married in a civil ceremony in 1904.

Fred Bonfils exploded. May had wedded against his wishes, choosing somebody he perceived as a poor nobody and marrying outside the Church. May had been his favorite daughter but, after her marriage to Clyde, it was Helen who became "Papa's Girl." Helen later admitted that she, too, secretly dated against her father's wishes but always had her dates pick her up at May's house. Fleeing her father's wrath, May and Clyde made their home in Omaha, Kansas City, Wichita, Los Angeles, and finally

Oakland, with Clyde trying to find work in music stores. While her father kept his distance, May's mother, Belle, visited her as often as possible and regularly sent money. The Berrymans did not return to Denver until 1916, when they moved into a house Fred bought for them at 1129 Lafayette Street.

The Family Fortune

When he wasn't fretting about fortune seekers seducing his daughters, Fred Bonfils focused on expanding *The Denver Post* into "The Voice of the Rocky Mountain Empire." He provoked competitors with his questionable journalism and promotional shenanigans while also threatening non-advertisers with negative publicity. The *Post* seemed to be everywhere and always entertaining. Human flies climbed the Post Building, which boasted the city's first electric outdoor scoreboard to cover the World Series and other big events. The paper offered prizes for the best lawn, the best Christmas lighting, the largest trout caught in Colorado waters, the oldest married couple, the best-shaped foot, and the best horseshoe pitcher. Something was always going on at, and in, the *Post*.

With its contests, prizes, and surprises galore, the *Post* sold throughout the state and the region, becoming one of America's most-read newspapers—and one of the most profitable. The big, bulky paper with its screaming red headlines made its owners millionaires. When Frederick Bonfils died in 1933, he left the largest estate said to be probated in Colorado up to that time: \$14,300,326 (about \$269 million in 2018 figures).

Upon the reading of his will, May found herself largely written out, leaving her a measly \$12,000 a year. The will did stipulate, however, that if she divorced Berryman her annuity would increase to \$25,000 a year. May went to court, where her lawyer argued that Bonfils' will encouraged divorce and discouraged good morals. The court agreed, awarding May the same \$25,000 annuity that Helen received.

Frederick's widow, Belle, died two years after her husband. Her \$10.5 million estate went primarily to Helen, again shortchanging May. Making matters worse, May's small share was set up as a trust fund to pay her the income. Even more insulting, Helen was to administer the trust.

May had her lawyer, Edgar McComb, contest the will. He charged that Belle had been unsound in mind and body after Frederick's death and had been under Helen's influence. In a court appearance that saw the two sisters angrily shout at each other, the court upheld May's right to share evenly in her mother's estate. Helen, however, retained control of *The Denver Post*, where she insisted her sister was never to be mentioned.

The Younger Sister, Helen Bonfils

After her parents died, Helen lived in their mansion at East Tenth Avenue and Humboldt Street where she and May had grown up. Helen had inherited the house upon her father's death and lived in it until 1948. (Developer and banker Balmore F. Swan would later buy and demolish the Bonfils mansion and have contractor Gerald Phipps build a fifteen-story condominium complex, Cheesman Gardens, on the site.)

Helen retained control of the Frederick G. Bonfils Foundation, which her father had created in 1927 to benefit society—and to duck estate taxes. Helen also set up the Helen G. Bonfils Foundation, which helped worthwhile causes from the arts to education to healthcare. She built Holy Ghost Catholic Church, established the Belle Bonfils Blood Bank, and donated to the Denver Zoo and the Denver Dumb Friends League. (In 1982, Helen's foundation consolidated with her father's to support today's Denver Center for the Performing Arts.) Helen and May, by their good works, made the Bonfils name synonymous with benevolence.

The sisters, however, were less charitable to each other. While May's name never appeared in the Post, Helen made society and theater news. Helen became the principal supporter, as well as an actress, at Denver's Elitch Theatre. She then headed to New York, where she acted in several plays, including The Greatest Show on Earth and Topaze, under the stage name of Gertrude Barton.

In the 1950s and '60s, Helen became a notable Broadway producer alongside attorney and fellow theater lover Donald Ray Seawell. They produced such hits and revivals as A Thurber Carnival, Sail Away, Showboat, The Iceman Cometh, and Our Town. Helen won a Tony Award for producing Sleuth and helped her old Denver acquaintance Mary Coyle Chase stage Harvey, which had won the 1945 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. Of her sister's theatrical career, May snipped: "Theater is for show-offs."

Warfare between the two heiresses escalated in 1960. May sold her 15 percent of The Denver Post stock to media mogul Samuel I. Newhouse, who was attempting a hostile takeover of Helen Bonfils' paper. He wanted the Post as the "crowning jewel" in his chain of fifteen



This 1973 posthumous painting of Helen G. Bonfils by Joseph Wallace King hangs in the Denver Center for the Performing Arts next to a portrait of her father.

Courtesy of Denver Center for the Performing Arts

newspapers, five televisions stations, five radio stations, and a controlling interest in Conde Nast Publications. May made \$3,533,765 on the deal and got revenge on her sister. Newhouse also tried to buy up the Tammen shares of the *Post* but Helen and her attorney, Donald Seawell, fought off the takeover. However, the money spent battling the court case depleted the newspaper's reserves. In 1980, eight years after Helen's death, *The Denver Post* was sold to the Times Mirror Company.

An Heiress and Her Fortune



May Bonfils Stanton in her senior years, when she shunned photographers and refused to talk about her age.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

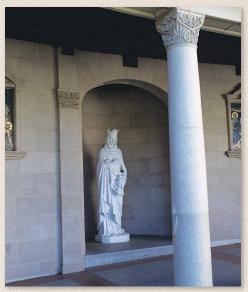


Charles Edwin "Ed" Stanton met May Bonfils in Central City and soon became her righthand man, then her husband. Courtesy of Denver Public Library,

Western History Collection

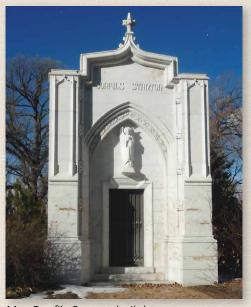
May's marriage to Clyde Berryman had ended in 1943 when she obtained a Reno, Nevada, divorce after a ten-year separation. She returned to her maiden name of Bonfils and ultimately found a happier relationship. In 1956, at age seventy-three, May married forty-six-year-old bachelor and interior designer Charles Edwin "Ed" Stanton in her Belmar Mansion. Together, May and Ed took frequent trips to Europe, where they collected jewelry, fine art, and antiques.

May began her philanthropic work while at Belmar Mansion. She funded the Bonfils Library-Auditorium at Loretto Heights College. a Catholic college for women in southwest Denver. Coincidentally, May's distant cousin, Mother Pancratia Bonfils, had chosen the site and supervised construction of Loretto Heights in 1888. May also set up the May Bonfils Clinic of Ophthalmology at the University of Colorado Medical Center. She provided the mosaic murals, Stations of the Cross, statues, and reredos decorating the Catholic chapel of the United States Air Force Academy Cadet Chapel in Colorado Springs. She funded the Bonfils-Stanton Wing in the Denver Museum of Natural History (today's Denver Museum of Nature & Science). She paid for an elegant 1934 monastery and prayer garden with a bronze statue of St. Francis of Assisi for the Franciscan Fathers who staffed St. Flizabeth's



May Bonfils donated the monastery and the prayer garden with Stations of the Cross at St. Elizabeth's Church at Tenth and Arapahoe streets, now on the Auraria Higher Education Center campus.

Photo by Tom Noel



May Bonfils Stanton built her own mausoleum at Fairmount Cemetery rather than share the family crypt with her parents and detested sister Helen.

Photo by Carl Sandberg

Church in the Auraria neighborhood. Her instructions that the Franciscans give to "the sick and needy" led to a free lunch line at the rear of St. Elizabeth's Church—a program that operates to this day.

May had millions to give away as well as to spend. Her 15-percent share in The Denver Post paid her an annual income of more than \$200,000 between 1949 and 1958. Her multi-car garage made headlines in Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal on January 21, 1959, when a \$20,000 Rolls Royce Silver Cloud was delivered to her door. May's newest car had taken six months to custom build in England with its air conditioning, inlaid polished walnut interior, built-in picnic trays, and other luxuries. She spent lavishly but also invested shrewdly in blue-chip stocks and land.

Neighbors rarely saw May except for her frequent visits to the now-gone Lewis Drug Store at 8490 West Colfax Avenue, where she, her chauffeur, and her poodle would arrive in her Rolls Royce. She always ordered a cherry limeade for herself and an ice cream cone for her dog. For these excursions, May dressed to the hilt in clothing designed exclusively for her by the famous Sorelle Fontana fashion house in Rome. Her befurred and bejeweled wardrobe also included an astonishing array of hats.

CHAPTER 3

Life at Belmar

oday, most Jefferson County residents know Belmar as a vibrant shopping, dining, governmental, and residential development that opened in the heart of Lakewood in 2004. What shoppers, residents, and visitors may *not* know is that the name "Belmar" comes from the extraordinary estate built there by May Bonfils. May bought the core parcel in 1936 and kept adding more land until her property amounted to 750 acres along

Wadsworth Boulevard, south of West Alameda Avenue. She gave the name "Belmar" to her mansion by combining the first three letters of her mother's first name (Belle) and of her own given name (Mary). Using a \$10 million inheritance and substantial income from her shares of *Denver Post* stock, May built one of Colorado's finest mansions.

The site included Kountze Lake, named for Charles Brewer Kountze, the president of Colorado National Bank. The Kountzes used water from Bear and Clear Creeks to build the lake as a family watering, boating, and fishing hole in the early 1920s. Originally known as Union Reservoir No. 1 when Charles Kountze built it in 1888, the lake has since shrunk considerably in size. May tried to rename it "Bonfils Lake" but the moniker did not stick.



Architect Jacques Benedict drew inspiration from the Petit Trianon at Versailles for Belmar, the grandest of his many mansions.

Photo by Berkley-Lainson, courtesy of Tom Noel Collection



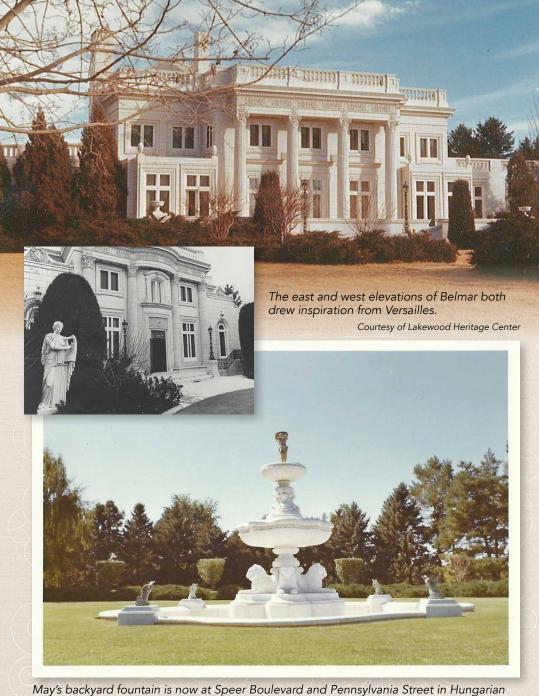
Stout, elegant Belmar entry gates guarded the privacy of reclusive May Bonfils.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center

Nonetheless, she decided to build her mansion overlooking the lake, which, at the time, was surrounded by open fields.

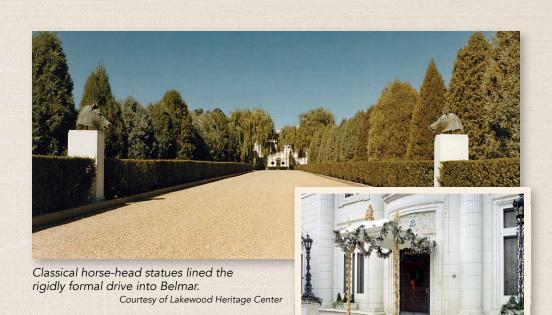
May asked Jules Jacques Benois Benedict, Colorado's most flamboyant architect, to design her dream house. Contrary to widespread opinion and print stories, Belmar was neither a replica of the Petit Trianon at Versailles nor made of marble. Although Benedict claimed its neoclassicism was inspired by the Petit Trianon, the Bonfils structure was smaller and had two stories, not three. Both structures had flat balustrade roofs. The mansion's gate posts, boathouse, and eight-foot wall surrounding the property were sheathed in glazed white terra cotta that is often described as marble and is easily mistaken for it. Traces of this terra cotta can be found in the surviving grand entry gates and the boathouse remnants and pump house on Kountze Lake.

Of Benedict's many magnificent private homes, Belmar was the grandest. A 1939



May's backyard fountain is now at Speer Boulevard and Pennsylvania Street in Hungarian Freedom Park.

Courtesv of Lakewood Heritage Centers of Courtesv of Lakewood Heritage Centers of Courtesv of Lakewood Heritage Centers Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center



by illuminating her outdoor statuary and adding a welcome wreath at her front door.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center

May Bonfils chased away December darkness



MAY BONFILS BERRYMAN



Statue of Pan atop the entry gates into Belmar.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center



Girl Scouts allowed to tour the grounds may have giggled or blushed at some of Belmar's statuary.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center

issue of Architectural Record magazine called it one of the ten finest buildings in the Denver area. Construction began in 1936 and was completed in 1937.

At the end of a long, tree-lined drive, the residence reigned, guarded by a twenty-foot-high, elaborate wrought-iron entry gate and fence. Metal shields on either side of the gate flaunted the word *Belmar*. The gate posts were topped by statues of Pan playing his pipe. Inside the gates, visitors were greeted at the entry by a statue of Venus by the famed Italian sculptor Antonio Canova. The letter *B*, reminiscent of the *B* Napoleon Bonaparte used to rebrand Versailles as his own, highlighted a scroll over the main mansion door.

The grounds were patrolled by armed guards, who evicted (among others) Clyde Berryman—the former husband whose attempts to visit were not appreciated by May. Neighborhood youngsters also found the mansion irresistible. Katy Lewis, curator of the Lakewood Heritage Center, collects Belmar stories, including a confession from one old-timer that he and his friends used to break into the gardens to steal watermelons. Although armed security guards patrolled the grounds, none of his group ever got caught, except for the time they brought a dog with them and he made too much noise. Still, they remained unreformed. They did not bring the dog again, but they did keep going and always escaped unscathed—and with the watermelons.

Inside Belmar

Belmar boasted twenty rooms including a walnut-paneled dining room, an art salon, and a small chapel off the foyer. There May had Franciscan priests from St. Elizabeth's Church in Denver say mass. The library contained not only books and art but also replicas of famous statues May had seen in her European travels. Belmar had statues galore—atop the entry gates, in the mansion, and sprinkled around the grounds. The library harbored a giant table and cabinet said to be originals from Versailles. A Hans Holbein portrait of Queen Elizabeth I and works by Corot, Correggio, Dufy, Holbein, Modigliani, van Dyck, and other art celebrities adorned the walls.

On the west elevation a solarium overlooked a grand, three-tiered fountain with three crouching lions at its base. In 1953, May contracted with V. W. Gasparri of

Like so many of Colorado's architectural treasures, Belmar Mansion exists no more.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center















A grand tour of the Belmar interior.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center

New York to purchase the \$18,895 fountain of Italian *biancho chiaro* marble. (After Belmar was demolished, the fountain wound up in Hungarian Freedom Park along Speer Boulevard. Installed there around 1966, the fountain is the highlight of the park, which commemorates the Hungarians' struggle to free themselves from the Soviet Union.)

Beyond the fountain, Belmar overlooked Kountze Lake and a then undeveloped natural landscape with a Rocky Mountain backdrop. An identical fountain, also procured by architect Jacques Benedict, now graces Benedict Park at East Twentieth Avenue and Pennsylvania Street in central Denver.

Once asked why Belmar had so little twentieth-century art, May declared, "the twentieth century does not exist." She slept in a bed once owned by Marie Antoinette, sat in a crested chair that had supported Queen Victoria, and tickled the ivories of a piano played by Frédéric Chopin.

The rooms of Belmar overflowed with European antiques, Aubusson carpets, tapestries, and marble statuary, as well as the fine paintings. To house all her growing collection, May in 1941 hired Colorado's leading architect, Burnham Hoyt, to design a \$36,000 art gallery addition to Belmar. She also asked Hoyt to install ornamental ironwork throughout the estate, including a weathervane atop the guardhouse.

Honoring her great grandfather's service in the armies of Napoleon, May prided herself on a Chippendale case containing the original silk gauntlet that Napoleon had worn when he was crowned emperor of France. May's fascination with all things Napoleonic inspired her to favor the *N* crest on her furniture, vases, and jewelry. Classical marble statues including Cupid and Psyche, Venus, and Diana the huntress adorned the grounds at Belmar.

May also ordered a replica of the life-size nude discus thrower whose sleek marble torso she had admired at the Louvre. Despite such immodest statues, May opened her beautifully landscaped grounds and gardens every summer to Brownie Girl Scouts, for whom she provided a ten-acre day camp site on the east side of Wadsworth Boulevard. She allowed the Brownies to tour her grounds and marvel at the fountains and statuary. As the little girls frolicked around the yard they sometimes saw a shadowy figure wave to them from her upstairs bedroom.

According to the 1940 U.S. Manuscript Census, May listed her occupation as "Operator of a Country Estate" and lived there with servants Ira and Ethel Hopkins as well as Joseph Heit, who was listed as both a "foster son" and a "caretaker."

To protect wildlife on Kountze Lake and the rest of her property, May had Colorado officials approve it as "State Licensed Preserve No. 557," posted as



May Bonfils raised cattle on what she liked to call Belmar Farms.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center





Ariel image of Villa Italia Mall in the early 1970s.

"private property" where "hunting, fishing or trespassing for any purpose are strictly forbidden." She was protecting a herd of thirty mule deer and preening, squawking peacocks. May also bought swans to patrol Kountze Lake, along with wild



ducks. After acquiring a permit for the purchase of migratory waterfowl on May 5, 1949, she brought down from Canada some handsome black and white geese that flew in marvelous formations—thus introducing to the Denver area a species that would become far less rare and exotic in the coming years.

In 1944, May built the boat dock that still stands on Kountze Lake. Belmar's vast grounds also housed the Belmar Farm, where May raised prizewinning Suffolk sheep as well as black Angus cattle, milk cows, and chickens. She kept meticulous records of how many eggs, chickens, and sheep were sold. On outlying fields, she raised oats and barley. May entered some of her finest livestock in the Colorado State Fair. Her sheep won prizes but never earned mention in *The Denver Post*—the result of her longstanding feud with her sister, Helen.

CHAPTER 4

Charles Edwin "Ed" Stanton

d Stanton stood six feet. two inches tall, with jet black hair, bushy eyebrows, and an easy smile. A thirdgeneration Denverite born in 1909. he was named for an ancestor who had been President Abraham Lincoln's Secretary of War. After graduating from Denver's West High School, he went to the Parsons School of Design and Columbia University, both in New York City. Ed worked with the internationally noted interior designer Dorothy Draper on Hilton Hotels. He then joined the prominent industrial design firm of Raymond Loewy and Associates, which planned hotels in New York City, San Francisco, Lake Tahoe, and Brazil. Among Stanton's many prestigious customers were the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver and the Broadmoor resort in Colorado Springs. Ed also worked as an interior



Ed Stanton, seated here in one of the antique French chairs he helped collect for Belmar, became May Bonfils' designer—and second husband.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection designer with many prominent clients in Denver and throughout the country.

After beginning his career in New York City, Stanton headed home to Denver to oversee the home furnishings department of the Daniels and Fisher Stores Company, the city's most fashionable department store. Its signature tower at 1601 Arapahoe Street long reigned as Denver's tallest and best-known building. It still stands as downtown's signature landmark and has been the location of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation offices since 1991.

The Daniels and Fisher Tower crowned the Daniels and Fisher department store where Ed Stanton began his Denver career. Fittingly, downtown's signature landmark became the home of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation.

Courtesy of Tom Noel Collection

A Central City Friendship

Ed took on work for the Central City Opera House Association and its many Central City properties, including the Teller House hotel and the opera house. At the Teller House, he oversaw a major 1950s refurbishing—using the original red patterned wallpaper and gilded details to revive its Victorian air. He continued his involvement with the opera house as a board member.

Ed also helped with the many cottages that the opera association offers to summer performers. While working in Central City, he met one of the opera's major financial donors, May Bonfils. Among other gifts, she donated the terrace, fountain, and garden between the opera house and the Teller House.

Ed impressed May Bonfils, who took a liking to the handsome, polite, and most helpful young man. "He was charming, very friendly, a ruggedly handsome John Wayne type," according to his barber Jerry Middleton, who added, "Mr. Stanton has a perfect head of hair." May asked him to help with projects at her Belmar estate, where he became a frequent visitor. May, according to Marilyn

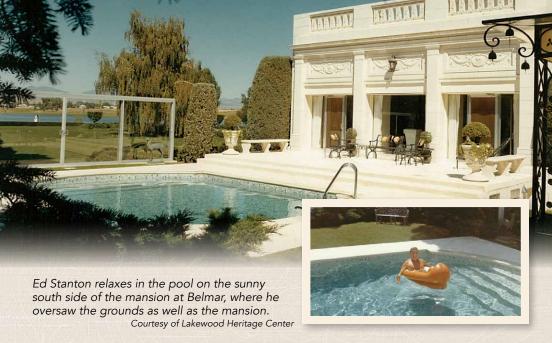
OPERA HOUSE

One of Ed Stanton's first Colorado designs involved him with the restoration of the Central City Opera House. Courtesy of Central City Opera House Association

Griggs Riley's profile in her book High Altitude Attitudes, came to rely more and more on Stanton. One day she proposed: "If you marry me and enable me to live at Belmar, I'll give you a million dollars. I want you to take care of

This Central City Opera House garden plaque honors May Bonfils Stanton as a major donor, just as the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has been to this day. Photo by Evan West





me for the rest of my life. But you can't just live with me; we have to be married."

In Bill Hosokawa's version, Stanton reported that May one day offered him "a lifetime job taking care of my things." As she had no children or major heirs, she wanted Stanton to handle her estate and see that it went to a worthy cause after she was gone. Stanton recalled later that May told him, "You know I have had problems with Helen for years. If anything happens to me you wouldn't last overnight as manager of my properties. So you will have to marry me." They planned a wedding at Presentation of Our Lady Catholic Church in southwest Denver, but Catholic Church officials discovered that Clyde Berryman, May's first husband, was still alive and revoked the Church's approval. So, May, age 73, married Ed, age 46, at Belmar Mansion quietly on April 28, 1956, with District Judge Robert H. McWilliams officiating. Only May's nurse and Ed's brother, Robert, attended. On the day of their marriage, Ed received a love note from his bride. Preserved in the Bonfils-Stanton Manuscript Collection in the Western History & Genealogy Department of the Denver Public Library, it reads: "To my husband on his wedding day . . . may all happiness that can come to one come to you, always and forever with all my love. May."

Although Catholic officials in Denver disallowed May and Ed's marriage, the couple traveled to Rome for approval after Berryman died in 1959. They renewed their marriage vows at St. Peter's Basilica and arranged a blessing by Pope John Paul XXIII.

May's Passing

In 1956, May had commissioned a \$75,000 mausoleum of Carrera marble in the "Tudor-Gothic" style at Denver's Fairmount Cemetery, while her parents and sister would reside in their chapel-like family memorial crypt in the Community Mausoleum. The Bonfils were mausoleum-minded, hoping for fame beyond the grave. Fred had even arranged for a grand mausoleum for his father posthumously.

May Bonfils Stanton died at her Belmar home on March 12, 1962. At the time of her death, her mausoleum was still under construction. Fairmount records show that Helen, who had not gone to her sister's funeral, allowed May to be "temporarily" placed with her parents in their memorial crypt. After the Bonfils Stanton private mausoleum had been finished but May's remains had not yet been moved there, Helen got in touch with May's executors (likely Ed Stanton) and, according to Fairmount historian Tom Morton, said something along the lines of, "Get that stiff out of our room!"

Despite the Bonfils Stanton name carved on the front, only May resides in the mausoleum where she had her home chapel altar at Belmar moved as well. When Ed Stanton died in 1988 he was placed in Fairmount's Community Mausoleum, where his brother, Robert, would later join him.

May's feud with sister Helen lasted to the end. In her last will and testament, May directed that none of her shares of *The Denver Post* be sold until after Helen had also died. She gave almost half of her estate, estimated in total at \$30 million, to her husband, Ed Stanton, who also received the mansion and all its furnishings as well as its fifteen-acre site. Specific items went to various close friends. She left \$2,500 each to her nurse, watchman, and ranch foreman and \$2,000 each to her cook and secretary as well as \$1,000 for the care of her dog and cat.

Treasured Gifts

May's giving continued after her death. In her will, she donated "all dolls that I may own at the time of my death to the Children's Department of the Denver Art Museum." May had collected dolls since childhood and kept her favorite, a large rag doll, in her bedroom. She asked that her dolls be displayed at the museum with the credit: "Given by May Bonfils to every little girl who ever loved a doll."

In 2001, May's beloved Steinway piano was donated to the State of Colorado to be used in the Governor's Residence. After fifteen years of service at the mansion the piano's historic soundboard cracked. Thanks to a grant from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, the Governor's Residence Preservation Fund restored the soundboard and made additional repairs, which were completed in 2017.

While the piano went to the State of Colorado, May's mansion went to the Archdiocese of Denver. May had suggested it as a residence for the Archbishop, but the Church found it to be a "white elephant"—expensive to maintain and of no practical use. After opening it briefly for the public to tour, the Church sold it to the developer of the Irongate Business Park, which retained the huge wroughtiron gate on the site but demolished the mansion. This action by the Archdiocese infuriated Ed, who later instructed the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation that no grant funds ever be used for religious purposes.

May's Jewelry and Belmar Art

May's jewelry collection shone with one of the world's most famous precious stones: the Idol's Eye. This 70.20-carat blue diamond, later surrounded by 35 carats of smaller diamonds in a dazzling necklace, was supposedly discovered around A.D. 1600 in the famous Golconda mines of India.



May bought the Idol's Eye in 1947 from Harry Winston, the celebrated New York City jeweler. Winston made trips to Belmar to see May and advise her, knowing that she'd been intrigued by jewelry since girlhood and began collecting seriously in 1940. Winston helped her collect other world-famous diamonds, such as the Liberator—a 39.80-carat Venezuelan

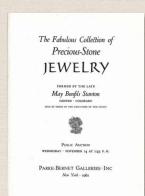
diamond named in honor of Simón Bolívar, who spearheaded South America's liberation from Spain. From the Maharaja of Indore, May bought a celebrated diamond and emerald

necklace. She collected a strand of ninety-five of the world's largest and most perfect pearls.

On special occasions May had an armored car bring her most prized jewelry from a downtown bank vault. As dinner guests watched with awe, she draped the Idol's Eye over her poodle. As the diamond-bedecked dog scampered among the guests, May instructed the servants, "Don't let the dog out!"

May Bonfils Stanton loved to showcase her glamorous jewelry and attire. Auctioned after her death, May's jewelry collection brought a total of \$1.2 million.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.



May's world-class jewelry collection was auctioned off at the Parke-Bernet Galleries of New York City with a glossy, full-color catalog announcing the sale, on November 14, 1962, of "The Fabulous Collection of Precious Stone Jewelry formed by the late May Bonfils Stanton sold by orders of the Executors of her Estate." The Idol's Eye diamond sold for \$375,000 to Harry Levinson, a Chicago jeweler.

In 1971, Vance Kirkland, a leading Colorado artist himself and the namesake of today's Kirkland Museum of Fine & Decorative Art in Denver, appraised the Bonfils-

Stanton art collection with its four Picassos, a piece by Amedeo Modigliani, and paintings by Chagall, Dufy, van Dyck, Holbein, and Corot. According to her *Rocky Mountain News* obituary, the "secluded" May's home was "a veritable museum of art." She "ventured forth from her mansion and grounds infrequently. When she did emerge, it was often to journey to Europe to shop the galleries of the world for additions to her fabulous collection."

In total, some 2,000 Belmar items were auctioned off. Proceeds from all items as well as the jewelry, art, and other estate sales and some \$6.5 million in cash went to May's devoted second husband, Ed Stanton. He used the bulk of the funds to contribute to the endowment of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation.

The Estate

Prior to their marriage, May had secretly arranged to fund Stanton after her death, anticipating that the younger Stanton would outlive her. May left Ed \$50,000 a year, with the stipulation that it would be terminated if he were to marry or move from Belmar. As she grew more secure in their relationship, she changed her will. Upon her death in 1962, Ed received \$5.5 million, almost half of her wealth, and the entire Belmar estate. (The other half went toward establishing a trust for the Order of Friars Minor of the Franciscan Friars Holy Name Province—the order that had staffed the private chapel in May's Belmar home.)

May supposedly insisted that Belmar was never to be the mansion of another woman and that it never become a museum. Ed honored her wishes as he began disposing of the square mile of land. He donated land for the Lakewood City Center and the Belmar Public Library, and land and farm buildings for the Belmar History Museum, later renamed the Lakewood Heritage Center. Stanton gave the mansion and ten acres of surrounding grounds to the Archdiocese of Denver to be used



Ed Stanton and the alleged Murat cabin, which May relocated to Belmar.

Courtesy of Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

Ed poses at Belmar's front gate in 1959 with a champion black Angus steer and May's new Rolls Royce Silver Cloud.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center



for "religious purposes." But the Archdiocese found both the mansion and the land a challenge to maintain. Martin H. Work, a spokesman for the Archdiocese, complained that "the mansion's normal maintenance was \$1,000 a month and that a year's effort to find appropriate use of the estate had been unsuccessful."

Stanton, too, rejected the idea of a museum, saying a home should be for the living and a museum was for the dead. The Archdiocese sold the property for \$350,000 to the Craddock Development Company of Colorado Springs. On June 3, 1971, the City of Lakewood issued Craddock a demolition permit for a two-story, 8,661-square-foot private residence with a two-car garage and a basement. The demolition made way for a \$3 million office park named "Irongate Executive Plaza" for Belmar's surviving grand entry gate. What had once been one of Colorado's most palatial estates became a generic office park.

In 1971, after resolving most of May's estate, Ed Stanton moved into one of Denver's swankiest new high-rise apartments, One Cheesman Place at 1201 Williams Street. He lived here until his death on April 22, 1987.

Villa Italia

In 1959, May Bonfils Stanton and Ed Stanton had formed the Belmar Development Company, which, under Ed's leadership after May's passing, began planning the future Villa Italia Shopping Center. Developer Gerri Von Frellick leased 65 acres of the 105-acre site from Stanton to build



Borrowing the grandiose neoclassicism of Belmar, the Villa Italia Shopping Center had a classical theme of arches and arcades. Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center

the shopping center, which opened in 1966—claiming to be one of the state's largest. In a tribute to the Belmar estate of which it was once a part, its blonde brick skin suggested marble white neoclassicism with its arcaded façade fronting Wadsworth Boulevard.

Villa Italia in 2001 gave way to a much larger mixed-use residential and retail complex. This rapidly growing development has spread far beyond the original Villa Italia and the old Belmar estate boundaries, but proudly celebrates the name "Belmar."

By donating land for Lakewood's government center, a public library, and the Lakewood Heritage Center, Ed played a key role in reshaping Belmar into the governmental and retail center of Lakewood. By leasing and later selling much of the land, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation significantly increased its assets.

Stanton's Philanthropy

Like his wife May, Ed Stanton emerged as a major Colorado giver, both personally and later through the foundation. He supported the outpatient wing of the 1965 Colorado General Hospital in memory of his wife. He gave generously to the Denver Symphony Orchestra and was a charter member of its Conductor's Club. He contributed \$250,000 to the Denver Art Museum for the Bonfils-Stanton Gallery, \$250,000 to the University of Denver to help build Ben Cherrington Hall, and funding for a rose garden at the Denver Botanic Gardens. Stanton served on the boards of the Central City Opera House Association, the Denver

Symphony, and the Salvation Army. Unlike his reclusive wife, he was a socialite with memberships in the exclusive Denver Club and Denver Country Club. When Stanton passed away, his own considerable assets went to the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation that he established and guided through its early years.

Ed Stanton had arranged that upon his death his brother, Robert E. Stanton, should take the foundation's helm. Robert, who was six years younger than Ed and had been best man at Ed and May's wedding, worked as a chemical engineer at the Stearns-Roger Manufacturing Company. Robert devoted himself to continuing the good work of May and Ed until his passing in 2000.

Among Ed's legacies, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation's annual awards have been likened to Colorado's version of the Nobel Prizes. They epitomize Ed Stanton's passion for celebrating notable contributions made by worthy Coloradans. Ed's friend Leon Drozd provided insight in his reflections on Stanton and his motivation:

We sometimes had discussions about the tendency of newspapers and media to focus on bad and unpleasant news and to overlook the endeavors of people who are making positive, remarkable and important contributions in their field and to the quality of life. Ed would occasionally comment about his father-in-law, Frederick G. Bonfils, who was in the Denver newspaper business and some of the controversy that surrounded the paper's journalistic style in the early days. Ed believed there was a different story to be told and a higher road to take. He noted a quote attributed to Mr. Bonfils that appeared on the masthead of The Denver Post and which was inscribed above the door at the newspaper's office: "There is no hope for the satisfied man." Ed was certainly not a satisfied man in that he valued excellence and continually sought to improve the things he touched and bring beauty to the world around him. His sense of aesthetics was impeccable. While Ed was an immensely private person, he was not reserved in encouraging others and bringing out their best.

Ed commented from time to time that his wife May, who was more "low key" than her sister Helen, had made many contributions during her lifetime to the community. She did not always receive recognition for which she was deserving. While May did not seek publicity for her philanthropic and community efforts, Ed showed a compassion for people such as May who were not seeking the limelight, yet their contributions were significant and important. He remarked that May would have been pleased with the Awards Program and the recognition it brings to people.

CHAPTER 5

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation

hen Ed Stanton inherited half of May Bonfils' multimilliondollar estate, he was immediately besieged by innumerable requests. Speaking to a newspaper reporter, he mused that "everyone has some type of good cause, but I just never knew there were so many."

To better manage both requests and donations, Ed established the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. But he continued to do his giving personally or in May's name, rather than through the foundation, until 1981. Thus, although it was incorporated in 1962, the foundation did not award its first grant until September 1981. The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation's trustees began meeting quarterly to award grants intended for "general charitable and philanthropic activities within the State." Grants were awarded in the categories of arts and culture, community service, education, science, and healthcare.

Many of the grants were "naming" gifts, and one may still see the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation name at sites from the University of Colorado's Anschutz Medical Campus to the Denver Botanic Gardens, from the Denver Art Museum to the Central City Opera House.

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation logos through the years:









1987 to 2004

2004 to 2008

2008 to 2015

2015 to present

Leadership



Robert E. Stanton

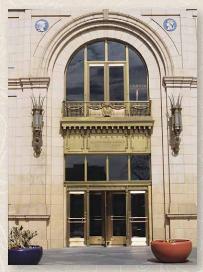
Ed Stanton's careful disposition of the Belmar estate and his own estate created the fourteenth-largest Colorado foundation, with assets after his 1987 passing of \$6.5 million. After his death, the foundation honored his request and named his brother, Robert E. Stanton, foundation president. Robert Stanton had

graduated from the University

of Denver and became a chemical engineer in the oil industry. He was married to Ann Dillon Stanton. Robert reported in a 1998 interview that the foundation would pursue "the wide range of philanthropic activities of May Bonfils and her husband and my brother, Charles."

"Mr. Robert," as he was called, continued his brother's work devotedly. In 1991, Robert moved the foundation to its current home in the Daniels and Fisher department store company's tower, a replica of St. Mark's Campanile in Venice. Fittingly, the D&F Company had long employed Ed Stanton as its head designer.

Robert cherished the landmark where his brother had worked. "When I first visited it, the tower was the tallest thing



Bonfils-Stanton Foundation's offices have been in the Daniels and Fisher Tower since 1991.

Courtesy of Tom Noel Collection

in town," he told this author in a 1997 interview. "Mayor Speer in those days thought Denver should look better than it did. He was kindly disposed towards everyone who lived here and wanted to improve their community and their lives." The same might be said of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, which under Robert Stanton focused on improving the arts, human services, healthcare, parks, and cultural opportunities for all Coloradans.

Robert Stanton presided over the foundation until his death on July 21, 2000.



Johnston R. Livingston

Robert Stanton was followed as chairman of the board by Johnston R. Livingston.

Livingston was born in China and spent his childhood there. He graduated with honors from Yale University, Class of 1945, with a B.S. degree, and earned an M.B.A. from the Harvard

Business School in 1949. His career included management positions at Whirlpool Corporation and Honeywell Corporation, where he was a vice president. Subsequently, as an entrepreneur he developed two manufacturing companies. His area of expertise was new product and business development, and he held patents for a manufactured housing system as well as other products. He was active in community service and participated as a volunteer and board member for several nonprofits.

Livingston skillfully handled the Belmar properties, selling them to bolster the foundation's assets rather than keeping the foundation in the property management business. Livingston envisioned the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as focusing on the arts, culture, and leadership. He was appointed to the board in 1979 and served as chairman from 2000 to 2005.



Eileen Greenawalt

Robert Stanton had come to rely heavily on his secretary, Eileen Greenawalt, to manage the foundation's affairs. A Kansas native, Greenawalt had served as assistant to the chancellor at the University of Kansas, as secretary and assistant to Kansas U.S. Senator James B. Pearson, and as regional representative for Kansas U.S. Senator Nancy Kassebaum. She moved

to Colorado in 1983 to become corporate secretary for the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation and in 1994 was elected to its Board of Directors. After Robert's death in 2000, she oversaw the foundation's daily operations. Eileen retired in 2001 but served on the board until 2008, when she returned to Kansas.



J. Landis Martin

J. Landis "Lanny" Martin, chairman and managing director of Platte River Equity and one of Denver's notable philanthropic leaders and art collectors, joined the foundation board in 2001. Martin founded Platte River in 2006 after serving more than 20 years in senior management positions with publicly held industrial, chemical and metal companies including Titanium

Metals Corp which supplied the titanium to Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao. He holds a J.D. degree, cum laude, from Northwestern University School of Law and a B.S. in Business Administration from Northwestern University.

During his leadership as chairman of the board from 2005 to 2017, the Foundation distributed over \$35 million in grants, made a shift to focus its giving on arts and culture, and made transformative gifts to several of Denver's arts and cultural organizations including, Clyfford Still Museum, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Denver Art Museum, Children's Museum of Denver, Curious Theatre, Museum of Contemporary Art Denver and Su Teatro.



Dorothy Horrell

Dorothy A. Horrell, Ph.D., assumed leadership of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation in 2001. With a degree in home economics education from Colorado State University, she started teaching high school and then moved into state-level administration. She went on to become president of Red Rocks Community College from 1989 to 1998, during which time she earned her Ph.D. in

higher education from Colorado State University. In 1998, Horrell began a stint as president of the Colorado Community College System; she retired in 2000.

Never one to be idle, Horrell then served as president and CEO of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation from 2001 until 2013, and she is currently chancellor of the University of Colorado Denver. "Being at Bonfils-Stanton," she recalls, "was an extraordinary privilege, helping to build on the legacies of May Bonfils and Ed Stanton. As a state we are so fortunate to have iconic families such as the Bonfils whose foresight and generosity continue to enrich the quality of life we enjoy in Colorado." Horrell fostered the Livingston Fellowship Program and began a transition of the foundation's grant making to focus on the arts. "We saw other foundations pulling out of the arts and decided that should be our niche," she says, "and the arts are what both May and Ed loved most." Under Horrell's tenure, the foundation received the Colorado Nonprofit Association's 2007 award as Outstanding Colorado Foundation of the Year.



Gary Steuer

Gary Steuer joined the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation as president and CEO in October 2013, but his career started as a dramatic literature and political science major at New York University, where he also did graduate work in the M.A. Program in Arts Administration and Business. He worked as a Broadway producer and managing director of the Vineyard Theatre Off-

Broadway. Next, he joined the New York State Council on the Arts as manager of its Capital Funding Initiative. In 1991, Steuer directed the launch of the National Actors Theatre in New York City. He then served twelve years as director of programs and then as president and CEO of the Arts & Business Council, Inc., of New York City, followed by three years at Americans for the Arts after it merged with the Arts & Business Council. From 2008 to 2013, he served as chief cultural officer and director of the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy in Philadelphia. He has taught and lectured widely on arts management, cultural policy, audience development, cultural philanthropy, and creative place making.

"Steuer is especially well-suited to lead the foundation's focus on the arts," says his predecessor, Dorothy Horrell. "He is taking the foundation to an even higher level of impact and significance." Steuer has overseen Bonfils-Stanton's emergence as Colorado's largest foundation dedicated exclusively to funding the arts, with an endowment of more than \$82 million. During his tenure, Steuer has evolved the foundation to encompass diversity, equity, and inclusion practices in its grantmaking, fellowship program, and internal operations.

First Grants

In 1981, the foundation made its very first grant—a donation of \$100 to the Park People, a nonprofit group dedicated to maintaining and improving Denver's



often underfunded public parks. This preliminary grant was followed by \$5,000 to help the Park People restore the Washington Park Boathouse, a beloved amenity that had fallen into disrepair.

In 1982 the Bonfils-Stanton
Foundation made its first major
gift: \$125,000 to the Denver
Botanic Gardens to establish the
May Bonfils Stanton Memorial Rose
Garden. A follow-up grant funded
a lecture series at the botanic
gardens, which continues today.
Another early beneficiary of the
foundation was the Central City



In its early years, the Bonfils-Stanton
Foundation often supported the University of
Colorado Health Sciences Center, located on a
Colorado Boulevard at East Ninth Avenue site
donated by May's father, Frederick Bonfils.
The Belle Bonfils Blood Center honoring
May's mother also lay on that campus.

Courtesy of University of Colorado

Opera, where May Bonfils and Ed Stanton had met.

The University of Colorado Hospital emerged as another major recipient of Bonfils-Stanton Foundation grants. May's father, Frederick Bonfils, had given the large land parcel for the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center at East Ninth Avenue and Colorado Boulevard. In May's memory the foundation supported the building, and then enlarging, of the May Bonfils Stanton Orthopedic Clinic at the CU Health Sciences Center. When the center moved to the Fitzsimons site in Aurora in the early 2000s, the foundation donated its reversionary interest in the land and paid to relocate the May Bonfils Stanton clinics to the Fitzsimons site, newly renamed the Anschutz Medical Campus.

The foundation has never forgotten its Lakewood roots, and it funded construction of the outdoor Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Amphitheater at the Lakewood Heritage Center as well as the center's *Spirit of Lakewood* exhibit. Another generous gift went to convert Lakewood's Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Library into the Learning Source, an adult basic education provider.

The foundation's \$4.56 million Catalyst Grant Program (2003–2010) transformed Big Brothers Big Sisters of Colorado, Central City Opera, the Colorado Children's Chorale, the Colorado Symphony, Curious Theatre Company, the Denver Young Artists Orchestra, the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, Urban Peak, Warren Village, and Women's Bean Project. This innovative, multi-year, capacity-building initiative was designed to invest in nonprofit organizations committed to making systemic changes to improve organizational effectiveness and develop "best practices" that could serve as models for replication.

Celebrating the Arts

Gary Steuer's selection to head the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation ushered in a significant change of direction that began in 2012. The foundation had previously awarded grants to a wide variety of Colorado nonprofit organizations—from homeless shelters to healthcare—but in 2012 the trustees voted to allocate all its philanthropy toward Denver's arts and cultural organizations.

The foundation was no stranger to the world of Colorado arts and culture. By 2012, about half of the foundation's grant making was directed that way. The reason for the shift was a desire to make more of an impact by focusing on a key need at a time when many other local funders had reduced their support for the arts. Meanwhile the cultural sector was growing more essential to the vibrancy of the Denver community.

Significant Arts and Culture Grants

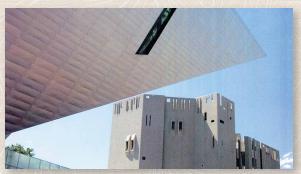
The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has perpetuated May and Ed Stanton's love of art with generous funding to Denver arts organizations and programs.

The foundation's \$3.5 million grant played a major role in establishing the Clyfford Still Museum, which opened in 2011. That museum's striking design by architect Brad Cloepfil lies within the Civic Center Cultural Complex, whose rejuvenation happened with the help of a master plan funded by the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. A grant to the Denver Art Museum, an anchor of the Civic Center Cultural Complex, awarded \$3.5 million for its modern



The Clyfford Still Museum in Denver's Civic Center received strong support from the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation.

Raul Garcia photo courtesy of Clyfford Still Museum

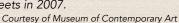


The Denver Art Museum's Hamilton Building in the foreground frames the museum's North Building, designed by Italian architect Gio Ponti and the Denver-based James Sudler Associates.

Courtesy of Fentress Architects where the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation made a major contribution.



Denver's Museum of Contemporary Art opened in Lower Downtown at Fifteenth and Delgany streets in 2007.





The Bonfils-Stanton Visitor Center welcomes plant lovers to the Denver Botanic Gardens.

Courtesy of Tryba Architects

and contemporary art galleries, both named for Bonfils-Stanton. Another \$4 million gift enabled the Denver Art Museum to strategically plan a remake of its campus, including a renovation of the postmodern North Building designed by Gio Ponti and James Sudler. This major project, scheduled for completion in 2020, is designed by a 2016 Bonfils-Stanton Award winner, Denver architect Curtis W. Fentress. Reworking the original Bonfils-Stanton Gallery located in the Ponti Building is a keystone of the project, along with a new visitor center.

Bonfils-Stanton grants totaling \$1.5 million helped the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver move from a former fish market in Sakura Square into its own impressive building designed by celebrity Ghanaian British architect Sir David Adjaye.

Other signature grants of over \$1 million have gone to organizations such as the Central City Opera, for endowing the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Artist



The outdoor Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Amphitheater at the Lakewood Heritage Center hosts a variety of performances on the old Belmar estate grounds.

Courtesy of Lakewood Heritage Center



John Moriarty, Central City Opera's Artistic Director Emeritus and Founder/Administrator of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Artists Training Program, coaches apprentice artist Leslie Shull.

Copyright Mark Kiryluk

Training Program. The school attracts top talent from New York City's Met and other renowned programs. This highly competitive program educates young talent in movement, diction, acting, and stage combat. Over time, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation has awarded more than \$5.0 million to the Central City Opera, making it one of the foundation's legacy grantees and certainly one that would make May and Ed proud.

The foundation has invested \$3.4 million in the Denver Botanic Gardens for the new Bonfils-Stanton Visitor Center, the Bonfils-Stanton Gallery in the new Center for Science, Art and Education, the May Bonfils-Stanton Memorial Rose Garden, and the annual Bonfils-Stanton Lecture Series.

Today the foundation supports a wide array of Denver cultural organizations and programs, including organizations of all sizes and disciplines, awarding a total of about fifty grants and \$3 million a year. Since its founding and through 2018, Bonfils-Stanton has distributed more than \$70 million in charitable contributions. Its grants, awards, and fellowships focus on the arts and their power to enrich Denver's cultural life and cityscape.

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation **Annual Awards**

In 1984 the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation began honoring Colorado citizens for accomplishments in arts, science and medicine, and community service. Every year since then, the trustees have honored outstanding Coloradans with the dual goals of bringing acclaim to their efforts and motivating others to greater accomplishments on behalf of Colorado



and its citizens. This recognition has been characterized as "Colorado's version of the Nobel Prize" by *Rocky Mountain News* society columnist Dawn Denzer and is accompanied by cash awards of \$35,000.

In 2015 the foundation refined the focus of the awards to align them with its new overarching goal of supporting arts and culture in the city of Denver. Today, the arts are a primary focus in the three awards categories of: Artist, Community Service in the Arts, and Arts and Society. To see a list of all past honorees, visit the foundation's website at **bonfils-stantonfoundation.org**.

Livingston Fellowship Program

The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation's fellowship program, established in 2005, is named in honor of Johnston R. Livingston, longtime trustee, chairman, and later chairman emeritus of the foundation. The fellowships perpetuate Livingston's passion for innovation, entrepreneurism, and creativity and advance nonprofit organizations through



support of its greatest asset—its leaders. The foundation selects five nonprofit executives each year, giving them the opportunity to develop their full potential as leaders, change agents, and problem solvers within a network of peer learners.

There are three primary criteria for selection of Livingston Fellows: exceptional leadership ability; promise for significant and unique contributions to the nonprofit sector; and potential for the fellowship experience to help an individual move from "success to significance" as a leader of people, organizations, and Colorado's nonprofit community. For a current list of Livingston Fellows, visit the foundation's website at **bonfils-stantonfoundation.org**.

The Legacy Continues

From the late 1890s to today, the Bonfils family has made an indelible mark on Denver's philanthropic landscape. Through May Bonfils and Ed Stanton's love of Denver and the arts, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation endeavors to carry forward their long-lasting legacy—always striving to make the city a place where high-quality and innovative arts are accessible to all and where nonprofit leaders become catalysts and change agents in their communities.

Sources

Manuscripts

Bonfils-Stanton Family Papers, 1899–1999, Western History and Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library.

Bonfils-Stanton Foundation files, clippings, etc., Bonfils-Stanton Foundation offices, 1601 Arapahoe Street, Denver.

Articles

Donovan, Dorothy J., "Beautiful Belmar," *Historically Jeffco*. Golden: Jefferson County Historical Society, Summer 1994, 2–9.

Murphy, Mary Ellen and Mark, "Papa's Girl," The Saturday Evening Post, December 23, 1944.

Books

Fowler, Gene. Timber Line: A Story of Bonfils and Tammen. Garden City, New York: Garden City Books, 1951. reprint

Hornby, William H. *Voice of Empire: A Centennial Sketch of* The Denver Post. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1992. 92 p. index. photos.

Hosokawa, Bill. Thunder in the Rockies: The Incredible Denver Post. N.Y.: Morrow, 1976. 447 p. index. illus.

Lasting Impressions: The Recipients of the Bonfils-Stanton Award in Their Own Words. Denver: Bonfils-Stanton Foundation, 2010. xii + 147 p.

Leonard, Stephen J., and Thomas J. Noel. *A Short History of Denver.* Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2016. xviii + 211 p. index. bibliography. photos.

Noel, Thomas J., and Amy Zimmer. Showtime: Denver's Performing Arts, Convention Centers & Theatre District. Denver: Denver's Division of Theatres and Arenas, 2008. 144 p. photos. index. sources.

Noel, Thomas J., Stephen J. Leonard, and Kevin E. Rucker. *Colorado Givers: A History of Philanthropic Heroes*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 1998. xiii + 129 p. index. bibliography. appendices. photos.

Riley, Marilyn Griggs. Foreword by Thomas J. Noel. *High Altitude Attitudes: Six Savvy Colorado Women*. Boulder: Johnson Books, 2006. xix + 170 ps. index. endnotes. suggested reading. photos.

Watt, Eva Hodges. *Papa's Girl: The Fascinating World of Helen Bonfils*. Lake City, Colo.: Western Reflections Publishing Company, 2007. 216 p. sources. photos.

Wilcox, Patricia K., editor. *Lakewood-Colorado: An Illustrated Biography*. Lakewood: Lakewood 25th Birthday Commission, 1994. 316 p. index. endnotes. photos.

Wilcox, Patricia K., editor. 76 Centennial Stories of Lakewood. Lakewood: The Lakewood Bicentennial Commission, 1976. 34 p.

Interviews

Ferrari, Gina, director of Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Grants Program. November 17, 2017.

Horrell, Dorothy Ortner, former Bonfils-Stanton Foundation president and CEO. February 10, 2017.

Lewis, Caitlin "Katy," curator, Lakewood Heritage Center. January 17, 2017.

Loseke, Monique Vojta, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation executive assistant. March 1, 2017.

Middleton, Jerry, Ed Stanton's barber. March 1, 2017.

Stanton, Robert. October 21, 1997.

Steuer, Gary, Bonfils-Stanton Foundation president and CEO. September 12, 2017.

About the Author



Thomas Jacob Noel is a professor of history and director of Public History, Preservation & Colorado Studies at the University of Colorado Denver. Tom is the author or co-author of fifty-three books and many articles. He was a longtime Sunday columnist for *The Denver Post* and the *Rocky Mountain News* and appears regularly as "Dr. Colorado" on 9News's "Colorado & Company." Tom completed his B.A. at the University of Denver and his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of

Colorado Boulder, where his mother and grandmother also did their graduate work. In 2018, Tom was appointed Colorado's state historian.

Check his website, **dr-colorado.com**, for a full resume and updated list of his books, classes, tours, and talks.



Bonfils-Stanton Foundation

Daniels and Fisher Tower 1601 Arapahoe Street, Suite 500 Denver, Colorado 80202



ONE MILE ABOVE SEA LEVEL