

EXPLORE HISTORY

Fort Collins is full of rich history just waiting to be explored. Put on your best walking shoes or grab your bike, scooter, or skateboard and check out the places that have made Fort Collins what it is today. Be mindful that some of these locations are private residences – enjoy from the street but please respect private property.



Hattie McDaniel, a nationally-acclaimed radio and film star during the early-1900s. Her family lived in a home on Cherry Street for several years when she was a child before moving to Denver. Courtesy of the Library of Congress. New York World-Telegram & Sun Newspaper Photo Collection.

BLACK HISTORY IN COLORADO

Black history has deep roots in the American West, from the story of enslaved explorer York who accompanied William Clark on the Lewis & Clark expedition, to civic leaders and activists such as Denver resident Dr. Joseph Westbrook. While western states like Colorado often provided the prospect of opportunity for Black families, the racism that plagued most of the nation remained a persistent barrier. The legacy of this discrimination remains alongside the stories of individual and community success.

“Vote for the right, approve that which is good, and help those who will protect us and those who will not deprive us of the privileges we enjoy.”

- Charles Birdwhistle, 1899

QUESTIONS?

HISTORIC PRESERVATION SERVICES

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Cover image: Charles & Mamie Birdwhistle at dinner at their home at 1005 W. Oak Street, c.1920. M00350, Courtesy of the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.



**BLACK/AFRICAN
AMERICAN
HISTORY IN
FORT COLLINS**

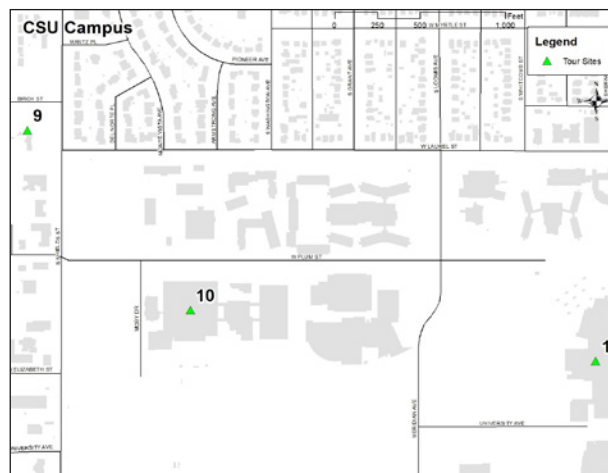
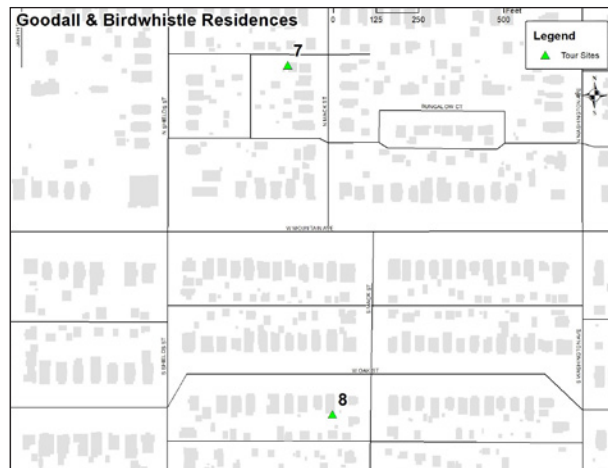
City of
Fort Collins
Historic
Preservation



Charles Clay in Fort Collins, c.1899. The Clays were a long-standing Black family in early Fort Collins. H00046. Courtesy of the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery.

BLACK HISTORY IN FORT COLLINS

Like many smaller western communities, Fort Collins was home to a small but vibrant Black community from its early days. The Clay family was among the most prominent, long-standing Black families in early city history, joined later by the Hicks, Lyles, Birdwhistles, and others. Although her family only stayed here for a short time, Hattie McDaniel, the nationally-acclaimed film and radio star, spent several years of her childhood in Fort Collins as well. These early residents mostly lived around the intersection of North Meldrum Street with Maple and Cherry Streets, a predominantly working class neighborhood. The University also remained a key part of the community, attracting Black students to the city since Grafton St. Clair Norman in 1892. Black residents from the 1880s to the 1970s worked in critical jobs throughout the city like the sugar industry, rose to prominence in community service and sports, and fought against persistent discrimination in Fort Collins into the 1970s.



Check out these important locations associated with Black history in Fort Collins between 1880-1970. For more information about each site, visit our website at fcgov.com/historicpreservation/blackfortcollins.

1. Avery Block, 105-115 Linden St. & 100-124 N. College Avenue. Workplace of William Clay
2. State Theater, 153 N. College Ave. (now 151 N College), Mattie Lyle Discrimination Lawsuit.
3. Thomas Residence (early), 308 Cherry St.
4. McDaniel Residence, 317 Cherry St.
5. Hicks/Lyle Residences, 310 & 312 N. Meldrum St.
6. Clay Residences & the Mission, 317 & 321 Maple St (demolished)
7. Andrew & Edith Goodall Residence, 131 N. Mack St.
8. Charles & Mamie Birdwhistle Residence, 1005 W. Oak St.
9. President William Morgan Residence, 645 S. Shields St.
10. Moby Arena, 951 W. Plum St.
11. Lory Student Center, Colorado State University, 1101 Center Avenue Mall