



THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

A SERIES OF HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDIES

1. Introduction
2. Racial Discrimination in Housing (1866–1983)
3. Racial Desegregation in Public Education (1867–1975)
4. Voting Rights in Fort Collins (1867–1982)
5. Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations (1867–1992)
6. Criminal Injustice (1873–1974)
7. Equal Employment (1882–1992)
8. Indigenous Rights and the American Indian Movement (1968–1978)



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Cover photo: Protest against a basketball game with Brigham Young University, at Colorado State University's Moby Arena, February 5, 1970. BYU is affiliated with the (Mormon) Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Although the LDS Church welcomed African American members, until 1978 the Church refused to ordain African American men as priests or to allow Black men or women to participate in certain ceremonies, such as temple blessings. (Brigham Young University (BYU) protest, Unidentified photographer, 1970, CSU Historic Photograph Collection, archives. mountainscholar.org.)

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INTRODUCTION

Since its founding, the population of Fort Collins has been predominantly white/Anglo, due to the exclusion, marginalization, or forced removal of other peoples from the State of Colorado. Students at Colorado State University, whether during their school years or having settled in Fort Collins after graduation, have played an important role in diversifying the community. Non-White/Anglo and LGBTQIA+ people and religious minorities and women who have lived and do live in Fort Collins have had to fight for their rights and have often done so successfully. This series of reports intentionally focus primarily on their activism, resilience, and agency, and secondarily on the forms of discrimination that they experienced.

Civil rights have figured strongly in the history of Colorado since its establishment as a U.S. Territory in 1861. Originally occupied by Indigenous people (including the Arapahoe, Ute, Cheyenne, Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, Lakota, Shoshone, and Pawnee), the area that would become Colorado was colonized by France, the United States, Spain, and subsequently, Mexico, after its successful war for independence. Eventually, through a series of acquisitions, treaties, and annexations in the first half of the nineteenth century, the United States gained control of the western half of its current continental holdings. Following the discovery of gold near Denver and the surrounding area in 1858, mostly White/Anglo people from elsewhere in the United States streamed into Colorado. This growing population of immigrants became numerous enough to warrant consideration of Colorado as first a U.S. Territory, then a State.

Federal legislation, including the Colorado Organic Act and the Treaty of Fort Wise, both signed in 1861, made further colonization of Indigenous territory by White/Anglo people possible. The Colorado Organic Act both created the territory and tacitly enabled slavery there. The Treaty of Fort Wise reversed the land rights guaranteed to the Arapaho and Cheyenne people in the 1851 Treaty of Fort Laramie. After several unsuccessful attempts (including two vetoes by U.S. President Andrew Johnson), the Colorado Territory was finally approved for statehood on August 1, 1876.¹

The City of Fort Collins history begins in July 1862, when a military post was established at the current site of the unincorporated town of Laporte, Colorado. Camp Collins was named after Lt. Col. William O. Collins, commander of Ohio Calvary troops in the area, who was headquartered at Fort Laramie. At that time, military forces were stationed in the area to protect White travelers on the Cherokee Trail and the Overland Stage Line from Native attacks. Camp Collins was forced to relocate after a catastrophic flood in June 1864, and the new outpost was named Fort Collins. Soldiers were stationed there by October 1864, but the military presence was relatively brief, with the last soldiers departing in September 1866. Civilians remained, however, and a town was platted in 1867. The only building remaining from the original fort is the Elizabeth Stone cabin in Library Park.²

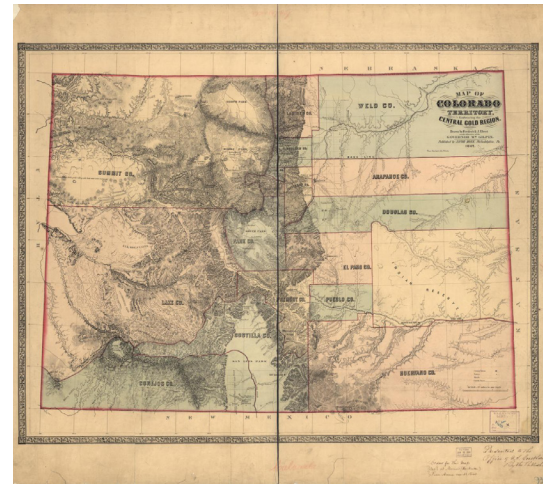


Figure 1. Ebert, Frederick J, William Gilpin, Jacob Monk, and T. Sinclair'S Lith. Map of Colorado Territory embracing the Central Gold Region. Philadelphia: Jacob Monk, 1862. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003630493/>.

Colorado enacted very few state laws related to race or color, compared to other states,³ and the lack of diversity within Fort Collins for much of its history (due to the forced removal or exclusion of Indigenous and Asian people and the segregation of many Hispanic people to neighborhoods outside the city limits) may have rendered the passage of discriminatory municipal ordinances unnecessary based on demographics. As a result, these historic context narratives are fairly limited in terms of the information available regarding civil rights within Fort Collins. The authors have included all research data collected to date, but these documents should be considered a basis for further research and should be updated with additional information shared by the community and research partners or discovered through later efforts. In addition, the authors recognize the importance of more recent civil rights activities that took place after the periods of significance included in these reports and hope that additional historic contexts will be developed to address those topics.

"The use of historic contexts in organizing major preservation activities ensures that those activities result in the preservation of the wide variety of properties that represent our history, rather than only a small, biased sample of properties."

ABOUT HISTORIC CONTEXT STUDIES

This project is the latest entry in a series of historic context documents developed by/for the City of Fort Collins, Colorado, Historic Preservation Services program. The National Park Service explains the purpose and use of historic contexts as follows:

Major decisions about identifying, evaluating, registering, and treating historic properties are most reliably made in the context of other related properties. A historic context is an organizational format that groups information about related historic properties, based on a theme, geographic limits, and chronological period. A single historic context describes one or more aspects of the historic development of an area, considering history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture and identifies the significant patterns that individual historic properties represent.

The historic context is the cornerstone of the planning process. The goal of preservation planning is to identify, evaluate, register, and treat the full range of properties representing each historic context, rather than only one or two types of properties. Identification activities are organized to ensure that research and survey activities include properties representing all aspects of the historic context. Evaluation uses the historic context as the framework within which to apply the criteria for evaluation to specific properties or property types. Decisions about treatment of properties are made with the goal of treating the range of properties in the context.

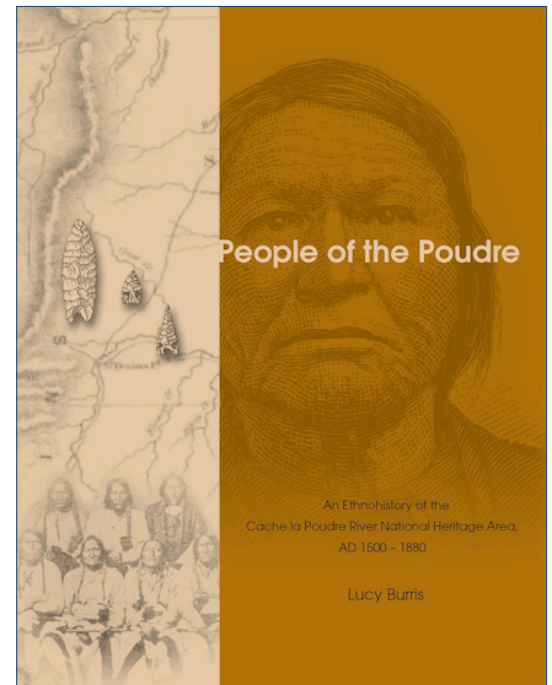
The use of historic contexts in organizing major preservation activities ensures that those activities result in the preservation of the wide variety of properties that represent our history, rather than only a small, biased sample of properties. Historic contexts, as theoretical constructs, are linked to actual historic properties through the concept of *property type*. Property types permit the development of plans for identification, evaluation, and treatment even in the absence of complete knowledge of individual properties. Like the historic context, property types are artificial constructs which may be revised as necessary.⁴

PREVIOUS HISTORIC CONTEXT PROJECTS

The first historic contexts for Fort Collins were prepared by Front Range Research Associates, Inc., of Denver, Colorado, in the early 1990s. These focused on the themes of “Residential Architecture: 1867–1940” and “Central Business District Development: 1862–1940.” Since then, the City’s Local History Projects have developed historic context narratives for the following themes:

- Latinx/Hispanic People in Fort Collins
- Asian Americans in Fort Collins
- Black/African American Fort Collins
- Pride: LGBTQIA+ People in Fort Collins
- Work Renders Life Sweet: Germans from Russia in Fort Collins
- In the Hallowed Halls of Learning: PSD R-1
- Women’s Suffrage Movement: 1880–1920
- Agriculture in the Fort Collins Urban Growth Area, 1862–1994
- Silver Wedge: The Sugar Beet Industry in Fort Collins
- Irrigation and Water Supply: Ditches & Canals in Colorado
- The Farm at Lee Martinez Park
- Coy-Hoffman Farmstead Historic Report
- Old Fort Site, 1864–2002
- Loomis Addition
- The Sugar Factory Neighborhoods: Buckingham, Andersonville, and Alta Vista
- Fort Collins E-X-P-A-N-D-S: Post-War Development, 1945-1969
- Apparitions of the Past: The Ghost Signs of Fort Collins
- Soldiers of the Sword, Soldiers of the Ploughshare: Quonset Huts

The Cache La Poudre National Heritage Area also developed an Indigenous historic context narrative: “People of the Poudre: An Ethnography (Native Americans, prehistory–1870).”



ABOUT THIS PROJECT

In 2021, the City of Fort Collins Historic Preservation Services Division requested informal proposals for the development of a series of historic contexts focused on the Civil Rights Movement in the city. Historic preservation consultants McDoux Preservation LLC were selected, and the project began in June 2022. The project consisted of historical and archival research, interviews with community stakeholders, and community meetings. Research partners and a Steering Committee of community members provided feedback on early drafts. The project concluded in 2023 with the publication of the historic context narratives to the City's website. Themes included in this project are:

- Indigenous Rights and the American Indian Movement (1968–1978)
- Criminal Injustice (1873–1974)
- Racial Desegregation in Public Education (1867–1975)
- Equal Employment (1882–1992)
- Racial Discrimination in Housing (1866–1983)
- Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations (1867–1992)
- Voting Rights in Fort Collins (1867–1982)

This document was designed to be published and disseminated either in its entirety or in standalone sections, by theme. As a result, each of the following historic context narratives repeats some information in its own introductory paragraphs.

Note

This is a living digital document. As additional information or examples of discrimination and activism come to light, they should be added to these historic context narratives and list of associated properties.



Civil Rights Historic Context

The City of Fort Collins and McDoux Preservation are currently working on a civil rights historic context project. This project seeks to document how and where Fort Collins community members have sought greater civil rights and recognition of human rights over the last two centuries. This project is grant funded from the State Historical Fund.

DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP DEFINITIONS

The initial research for this project focused on seven demographic groups, at the request of City staff: Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(a), Indigenous/Native American, Asian American Pacific Islander, women, LGBTQIA+, and religious minorities. When the authors found information about disability rights, that was also included in the dataset. The population of Fort Collins in 2020, according to the U.S. Census, was:

- White alone (86.3%)
- Black or African American alone (1.5%)
- American Indian and Alaska Native alone (0.90%)
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone (0.10%)
- Asian alone (3.4%)
- Hispanic or Latino(a) (12.30%)
- Two or more races (6.1%)
- White alone, not Hispanic or Latino(a) (79.0%)

Because the U.S. Census considers Hispanic ethnicity separately from race, respondents can identify with both race and ethnicity, such as White and Hispanic. The above percentages for all categories except “White alone, not Hispanic” total 110.6%, indicating the overlap between the “White alone (86.3%)” and other portions of the population. This project therefore used the “White alone, not Hispanic or Latino(a)” percentage (79.0%) to represent white/Anglo residents.

Official demographic terminology for race, ethnicity and origin has been relatively fluid over the past century, as the U.S. Census revises its classifications nearly every time it counts the U.S. population. In 2020, the Census changed the way it codes write-in answers about both race and origin to more accurately capture the respondents’ answers and accurately count people who identify as multi-racial.⁵

The following definitions help to explain the demographic groups.

White

The notion of American whiteness is complex and has changed many times over the past 250 years. Historically, the United States government has excluded people of many different countries of origin from being classified as “white” for the purposes of immigration or voting. At various points in our nation’s history, Irish, Italian, and Jewish people were all considered “colored.” Mexican people in the United States, however, were formally designated as white by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, although colorism and caste determined how they were included in or excluded from white society.

Today, people from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and that region’s descendant diaspora are classified as white by the U.S. Census, and no MENA option is available on the Census. However, recent studies report that 88% of people of MENA descent do not identify as white and anecdotally report that they are not treated as white by other white Americans.⁶



In this project, the authors have not attempted to impose a definition of whiteness or identification as white on anyone, either to include or exclude them in/from that classification. Any references to white people in the historical record have been retained, regardless of how “white” was defined at that time.

Anglo

Typically used to differentiate white people of European descent from white people of Hispanic descent. “Anglo” in this context does not mean “of English origin” but rather “English-speaking.” white, English-speaking people of European descent have, until recently, been the majority of the U.S. population; the term “white/Anglo” is used here to describe them. The term “non-white/Anglo” is used to collectively describe everyone else.

Asian American/Pacific Islander

The 2000 U. S. Census defined Asian Americans as those with origins in the Far East, Southeast Asia, or Indian Subcontinent. The classification “Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander” includes Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Fijian, Tongan, or Marshallese peoples and encompasses the people within the United States’ jurisdictions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence (APIGBV) uses the term “Asians and Pacific Islanders” to include people of Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins and identities to the countries, states, or jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of Asia, Hawaii, and the Pacific Islands.

Religious Minorities

For this project, City staff focused on Jewish people, based on their existing, though limited, knowledge of the local history of that community. This project is, therefore, intended to serve as a model for future research and historic context development with members of other religious minorities.

The Jewish population in Fort Collins has not been formally enumerated, but several sources estimate the number of Jewish people in Colorado at between 88,000 and 100,000 and note that 56% of Jewish adults reside in the metropolitan areas of Denver, Boulder, and Fort Collins. Further detail has not been located at this time.⁷

A NOTE ON INTERSECTIONALITY

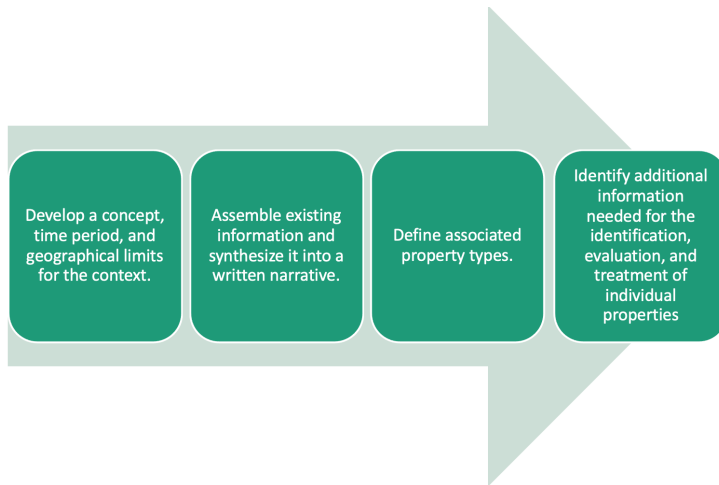
This study recognizes that individuals can be, or be perceived as, members of multiple nondominant and/or marginalized groups, which may compound their experiences of discrimination. For example, a heterosexual Christian man who is Hispanic may experience discrimination based on his ethnicity, but a woman who is Black, Jewish, and a lesbian is likely to face different and potentially greater adversity.

Intersectionality:
Individuals' membership in or perceived belonging to multiple nondominant and/or marginalized groups may compound their experiences of discrimination.

METHODOLOGY

This project follows the process for developing historic contexts as outlined by the National Park Service’s “Preservation Planning Guidelines”⁸:

1. Develop a concept, time period, and geographical limits for the context.
2. Assemble existing information and synthesize it into a written narrative.
3. Define associated property types.
4. Identify additional information needed for the identification, evaluation, and treatment of individual properties (understanding that individual properties may be associated with more than one historic context).



The focus for this project is “the Civil Rights Movement” within the geographical limit of “the City of Fort Collins, Colorado” as it exists today. Time periods vary for each historic context and are based on information gathered and discussions with City staff; see the introductory text in each historic context document for more details.

Individual historic contexts focus on the four major civil rights themes previously identified by the National Park Service, based on Federal legislation related to those topics:

- Discrimination in Education
- Housing
- Public Accommodation
- Voting Rights

As well as:

- The American Indian Movement
- Criminal Injustice
- Equal Employment

PREVIOUS NATIONAL HISTORIC CONTEXTS AND THEME STUDIES

In 1999, at the direction of the US Congress, the National Park Service (NPS) conducted a multi-state study of civil rights sites to determine their national significance. The resulting overview of civil rights history, produced in partnership with the Organization of American Historians, was *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* (2002, rev. 2008). That document “plac(ed) civil rights within the context of U.S. history for women, African Americans, American Indians, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and gays and lesbians.”⁹

The framework recommended that a series of National Historic Landmarks theme studies—based on provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968—be prepared to identify potentially nationally significant sites related to desegregation of schools, public accommodations, voting rights, housing, and equal employment. To date, only the historic context on employment discrimination has not yet been published. The other civil rights contexts, all of which were referenced during this project, include:

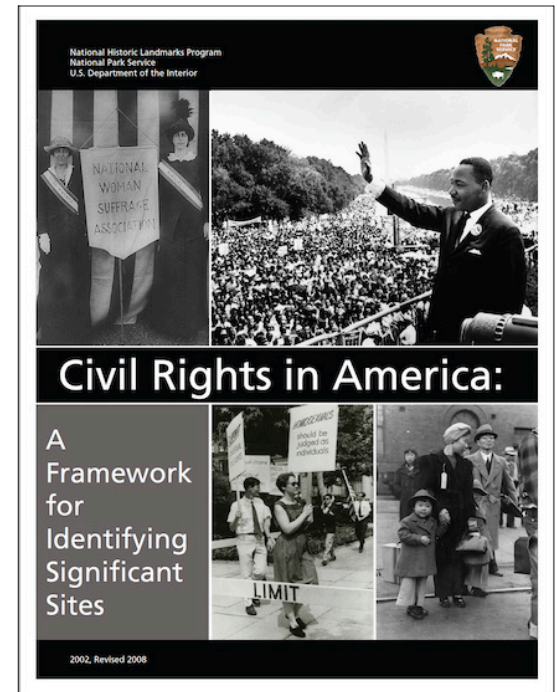
- Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States (2000)
- Desegregation of Public Accommodations (2000, updated and expanded 2004)
- *Racial Voting Rights* (2007, revised 2009)
- Racial Discrimination in Housing (2021)

Additional historic context narratives on civil rights include:

- *LGBTQ History in Colorado* (draft historic resource survey plan/historic context, History Colorado)

And from the NPS theme study *LGBTQ America* (2016), the following chapters:

- Introduction
- A Note About Intersectionality
- LGBTQ Civil Rights in America
- *From Parlors to Polling Places: Women’s Suffrage in Fort Collins* (Leslie Moore, 2020)



HISTORICAL AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

The City of Fort Collins provided an initial collection of 2,286 digital files for McDoux's review, in the areas of Asian American history, Black history, disability rights and justice, equity and inclusion in historic preservation generally, Hispanic history, historic resource surveys of Hispanic properties/neighborhoods Indigenous history, Jewish history, LGBTQIA+ community in Fort Collins, the Overland and Cherokee Trails, policing, reparations, segregation and fair housing, women's history, and a 1969 publication of Colorado State University called Transition. Of these files, 374 were related to civil rights.

McDoux consultants Steph McDougal and Jenn Beggs traveled to Fort Collins in August 2022 for meetings with City staff, the community, and the Historic Preservation Commission and to conduct additional archival research at Colorado State University, Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, and Denver Public Library. The museum archives provided the most useful source material.

Off-site, McDoux continued to conduct its own historical and archival research using digital newspaper archives, analog sources including books and articles, and information from other repositories.

In October 2022, McDoux provided City Staff with a summary of research conducted to date, organized chronologically and by theme, with a list of potential next steps, questions, and comments. Staff returned responses and provided additional information at that time.

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, one of the nation's acclaimed film and radio stars, spent several years of her childhood in Fort Collins as well. These early residents mostly lived around the intersection of North Main 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 Griffith St. Clark Normal in 1922. Black residents from the 1930s 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 fortcollins.historypreservation.org/blackhistoryinfortcollins.

- Avery Block, 105-115 Linden St. & 100-124 N. College Avenue. Workplace of Vietnam War.
- State Theater, 153 N. College Ave. (now 1514 College). Mattie Lyle Discrimination Litigation.
- Thomas Residence (early), 308 Cherry St.
- McDaniel Residence, 317 Cherry St.
- Hicks/Lyle Residence, 310 & 312 N. Midland St.
- Clay Residence & the Mission, 517 & 521 Maple St. (demolished).
- Lytle & Earl Goodall Residence, 131 N. Black St.
- Charles & Marie Birdwhistle Residence, 1005 W. Oak St.
- President William Morgan Residence, 645 S. Strawick St.
- Betty Anna, 901 W. Plum St.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

After holding a community kickoff meeting for the project in August 2022, McDoux developed a list of questions to ask Community Ambassadors and other stakeholders as part of the public engagement plan. City staff approved this list and provided us with a list of potential stakeholders to interview.

McDoux attempted to secure responses from every demographic and identity group involved in this study, with meaningful goals based on U. S. Census population estimates for Fort Collins, as shown in Table 1, below.

Table 1. Demographic Groups in Fort Collins	
<i>Race and Hispanic Origin (US Census, Fort Collins, 2021)</i>	<i>% Population</i>
White alone, percent	86.30%
Black or African American alone, percent	1.50%
American Indian and Alaska native alone, percent	0.90%
Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, percent	3.40%
Two or more races, percent	0.10%
Hispanic or Latino, percent	6.10%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	79.00%

A 2001 publication estimated the Jewish population for Fort Collins to be about 1,000 people, or approximately 0.6% of the total City population of approximately 160,000.¹⁰ Since no population estimates were available for the LGBTQIA+ population, McDoux combined this group with multiracial stakeholders as a single target number. Because the Census requires respondents to identify by race (or multiracial) and then separately calculates the Hispanic population as either white or “not white”, McDoux subtracted the “white alone, not Hispanic” number (79%) from the total “white Alone” number (86.3%) to total 7.3%, which was then added to the 6.1% of respondents who separately identified as Hispanic or Latino, for a total of 13.4%. The total estimated percentage of non-white/Anglo residents plus LGBTQIA+, Multiracial, and Jewish residents was 25.4%, as shown in the table below.

McDoux then determined how many of the 20 stakeholders should be in each group. First, they multiplied each of the population percentages by 4 to create an index of approximately 1.0, then multiplied each index number by 20 to achieve the 20 stakeholders as our goal. Each contact goal was rounded down to the nearest whole number, except for the Hispanic number (the largest group), which was rounded down by 1.72.



Table 2. Stakeholder Distribution across Demographic Groups in Fort Collins

<i>Demographic Group</i>	<i>% Population</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>Raw #s</i>	<i>Contact Goal</i>
White/Anglo	79.0%	--	--	--
Black/African American	1.5%	0.06	1.2	1
Indigenous/Native American	1.0%	0.04	0.8	1
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3.5%	0.14	2.8	3
Hispanic/Latino	13.4%	0.54	10.72	9
LGBTQIA+/Multiracial	6.0%	0.24	4.8	5
Jewish (Religious Minorities)	0.6%	0.02	0.48	1
Total non-White/Anglo PLUS LGBTQIA, Multiracial, and Jewish	25.4%	1.04	20.8	20

McDoux consultants and City staff contacted 23 potential interviewees and ultimately received responses from 19 people. In some cases, individuals agreed to an interview but never scheduled a call; some respondents suggested another stakeholder with more pertinent information. Two respondents decided, after consideration, not to participate in an interview. In all, McDoux successfully interviewed 13 stakeholders via telephone or video call, and eight other previously identified stakeholders responded to an email survey containing the same questions, for a total of 21 participants in that process.

Many stakeholders identify with more than one of the seven demographic groups, as shown below.

Table 3. Stakeholder Interview Goals vs. Actual Responses

<i>Demographic/Identity Group</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Responses</i>
Asian American/Pacific Islander	3	4
Black/African American	1	4
Hispanic/Chicano(a)/Latino(a)	9	9
Indigenous/Native American/American Indian	1	6
LGBTQIA+ or otherwise gender nonconforming	5	8
Women	10	10
Religious Minorities	1	3

DRAFT HISTORIC CONTEXT NARRATIVES

In November 2022, McDoux began to draft the seven historic context narratives and this front-matter document. The drafts were delivered to the City of Fort Collins for review and comment by City staff and Community Ambassadors in January 2023, with two rounds of revisions completed in May–June 2023.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES AND SIGNIFICANT SITES

A critical component of the historic context narrative is a list of associated property types, registration requirements for each property type, and specific individual sites that meet those criteria. This project utilizes the associated property types and registration requirements already defined by the National Park Service in its theme studies. A preliminary list of Significant Sites is included for each historic context narrative as well as in a separate Excel spreadsheet titled “Inventory of Sites Prioritized for Survey,” which includes properties identified in this project’s research.

Each property included in the inventory was classified as Priority 1, 2, or 3, based on its integrity and continuing existence.

Table 4. Significant Sites Priority Level Definitions	
Priority 1	Resource is extant and retains its integrity and the use associated with its significance.
Priority 2	Resource is extant but no longer retains its integrity and/or associated use.
Priority 3	Resource is no longer extant.

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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the Fort Collins *Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this historic context narrative focuses on the experiences and activism of seven marginalized groups: women, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, LGBTQIA+ people, and religious minorities. It covers the period from 1866, when the early Civil Rights Act guaranteeing all citizens the right to own property was enacted, through 1983, when many homes in the Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham neighborhoods were razed under the rationale of urban renewal. This historic context narrative examines federal and state legislative and judicial activity before turning its attention to discrimination and activism related to fair housing in Fort Collins.

Earlier documents that have informed this narrative include the NPS theme study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Discrimination in Housing*, which examines court cases and legislation related to fair housing rights for African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans, and Indigenous peoples. Books on this topic include *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* by Richard Rothstein and *Segregated by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities* by Jessica Trounstein.

This historic context narrative explores the abilities of all persons to secure equitable and livable housing within the boundaries that today enclose Fort Collins. Following a summary of federal and state legislation and judicial activity and civil rights activism, nationally and at the state level, this document explores discrimination and activism related to housing in Fort Collins. This historic context narrative further identifies associated property types and significant sites associated with racial, ethnic, and religious discrimination in housing within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Note: The non-White/Anglo population in Fort Collins was relatively small during the period of time covered in this historic context. Additional research and contributions by community members are requested to supplement the information gathered to date from archives and community stories.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the United States, people who were not wealthy, male, White/Anglo, Protestant, and heterosexual have been prevented from securing the housing of their choice wherever they may have wanted to live. The fundamental human needs for shelter and security have been limited by both public institutions (including federal, state, and local governments) and private interests. Although perhaps the best-known example of this is the residential segregation imposed upon African Americans, both housing discrimination and its long-term repercussions have impacted and continue to affect Black, Hispanic, Asian American, Indigenous, and other non-White/Anglo people, as well as women, unmarried people, single parents, Jewish people, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Americans of lower income levels also generally have been and are harmed by policies and regulations that limit their ability to secure safe housing for themselves and their families, whether by rent or purchase.

The role of the federal government, in creating the laws and institutional structures that both created and maintained these inequalities, has been thoroughly documented. In short, following a brief period after the Civil War, during Reconstruction, when the U.S. Congress passed Constitutional amendments and laws attempting to secure and protect the property rights of formerly enslaved people, most federal policies intentionally destroyed integrated neighborhoods and created segregated ones; developed a system of mortgage lending and residential property insurance that was effectively closed to minority Americans; and encouraged the rise of municipal zoning, which has perpetuated racial and class divides. During the 1950s and 1960s, after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the ability of property owners and developers to create White-only neighborhoods through deed restrictions, the U.S. government's interstate highway construction and urban renewal projects devastated African American and Hispanic communities across the country. Property owners were forced from their homes through the exercise of eminent domain and compensated little, if at all, for the loss of their property. Numerous other approaches to dismantling wealth accumulated by non-White/Anglo people through property ownership were also employed, and violence by White/Anglos against anyone who dared to challenge these norms was commonplace. This was not limited to the American South and has been documented throughout the United States, including in the North and West.

The NPS Theme Study *Racial Discrimination in Housing* notes that "access to decent housing" has been linked to "a range of crucial quality-of-life measures and indeed basic citizenship rights in the United States, including adequate health care, living-wage job markets, and most directly to equal educational opportunity and fair law enforcement. ... Residential segregation has anchored the forces of school segregation in American cities and suburbs, especially but not only during the period following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, when school districts across the nation adopted allegedly race-neutral 'neighborhood school' assignment plans that reproduced housing patterns. ... (And) housing segregation is directly linked to historical patterns of discriminatory law enforcement and to the well-documented racial and economic inequalities in the U.S. criminal justice system. In particular, recent scholarship has emphasized the selective policing and over-criminalization of poor communities of color as a major cause of mass incarceration and of the disproportionate arrest, prosecution, conviction, and imprisonment of African Americans and Latinos."¹

Both private residents and developers and city and state governments took steps to exclude people of color, Jewish people, and LGBTQ people from the housing market. This primarily took the forms of:

- **Forcible removal from specified areas.** Native Americans were forced to leave their homelands and relocate to reservations, in contravention of treaties signed by the U.S. and state governments. During the Great Depression, the federal government forcibly deported Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens who could not prove their legal status, in an effort to improve the job prospects for White/Anglo Americans. And, during World War II, Japanese immigrants lost or were forced to sell their homes and businesses well below market value after being removed to desolate conditions in faraway internment camps. When these groups relocated or returned to urban areas, they were met with restrictive covenants, zoning, and other private and municipal tools that effectively segregated them into ethnic ghettos or barrios.
- **Racially restrictive covenants** were employed in many cities nationwide to prevent non-White/Anglo people from purchasing homes in certain neighborhoods. These deed restrictions and other methods of segregation were encouraged by the Federal Housing Administration and federal Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC), as well as Catholic and Protestant churches, and enforced by mortgage lenders and insurance carriers who refused to make loans or write insurance policies for any home in a neighborhood where one or more non-White/Anglo people lived.
- **Urban renewal projects**, such as highway construction or “blight” programs, destroyed existing non-White/Anglo neighborhoods, often with little compensation for property owners who lost their homes. This prevented non-White/Anglo people from building wealth and passing it down to subsequent generations.

STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND JUDICIAL ACTIVITY

The United States Congress and judiciary has addressed property ownership through legislation, executive action, and court decisions since the nation was founded. The U.S. Constitution is based on the English *Magna Carta* of 1215, which established that the king could not seize property unlawfully or without compensation of the property owner, or levy taxes without the consent of the governed. Property rights and the links between land ownership, economic freedom, and democracy were repeatedly reinforced through U.S. laws and court decisions during the first 90 years of this nation.² This historic context narrative picks up with the first civil rights legislation related to real property ownership, in 1866.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND U. S. SUPREME COURT CASES

After the United States Civil War (1861–1865) ended, the Thirteenth Amendment (ratified in 1865), and subsequent Amendments and legislation extended American citizenship and the accompanying personal liberties to formerly enslaved people. Southern states responded by creating their own laws, known as “Black Codes,” which restricted the ability of African Americans to leave or find work away from the plantations where they had previously been enslaved. In response, the U.S. Congress passed (over President Andrew Johnson’s veto) the Civil Rights Act of 1866, which declared, “All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by White citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.” The Act also specified that all persons born in the United States, excluding “Indians not taxed” were citizens.³

This cycle of federal action to secure rights, followed by state or local governments ignoring or circumventing both federal laws and rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court, would continue unabated throughout the twentieth century. After the Civil Rights Act of 1866, challenges to the law sought to prove that it only applied to state action, not to private individuals. In response, the U.S. Congress passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, also in 1866 and ratified in 1868, which prevented states from depriving “any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.” It followed this in 1875 with another Civil Rights Act, which prevented private parties from discriminating on the basis of race in terms of equal access to public spaces, but the U.S. Supreme Court struck down that law in 1883. Following the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), state governments throughout the nation developed laws and other strategies to enforce residential segregation.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s 1917 decision in *Buchanan v. Warley* overturned a City of Louisville, Kentucky, racial zoning ordinance; the Court found that a person of color had the right “to acquire property without state legislation discriminating against him solely because of color.” That ruling effectively excluded property rights from the “separate but equal” doctrine enshrined in *Plessy*, and was largely ignored by Southern cities. Urban planning, a concept that gained great traction with municipal governments in the early twentieth century, relied heavily on exclusionary zoning that restricted land use within discrete areas in a city. Zoning laws separated many residential areas from commercial or industrial property, and within residential areas separated single-family homes from multi-family housing. The ultimate effect was

“All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by White citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.”

The Civil Rights Act of 1866

to separate affluent neighborhoods from working-class and low-income areas, and, since employment discrimination disproportionately limited Black American's income, effectively segregated cities without having to address race. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld such zoning laws in a 1926 case, *Village of Euclid v. Ambler Realty Co.*⁴

Those Supreme Court decisions also paved the way for racially restrictive covenants and deed restrictions, which barred non-White/Anglo people from purchasing or renting property in "restricted" neighborhoods; Jewish people were frequently excluded as well. Another Supreme Court decision, *Corrigan v. Buckley* (1926), held that the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments did not prevent "private individuals from entering into contracts respecting the control and disposition of their own property."⁵

In 1933 and 1934, the U.S. Congress created the Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) and passed the National Housing Act, intended to make mortgage loans affordable, secure homes from foreclosure, and to encourage single-family homeownership. The Act also established the Federal Housing Administration and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation.⁶ HOLC developed maps that indicated the locations of mostly White vs. mostly non-White neighborhoods, assigning grades (and colored shading) to the "undesirable" neighborhoods. HOLC, a lender itself, and other banks and insurance companies used these maps to decide where to make loans and issue insurance policies. As a result, mortgages and home insurance were predominantly available only to White/Anglo customers, making homeownership a difficult goal to achieve for everyone else.

The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps digitized and made available by the University of Richmond (Virginia) at *Mapping Inequality* (<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/>), include Denver and Pueblo. Further research indicates that Colorado Springs also was mapped by HOLC, but it does not appear that Fort Collins was included in that program. Perhaps Fort Collins did not have enough predominantly non-White/Anglo neighborhoods within the city limits at that time to warrant the HOLC's attention; the Alta Vista and Andersonville neighborhoods were outside the city boundaries until 1978.

Three years later, Congress passed the United States Housing Act of 1937, which funded the construction of public housing by local government entities but required the demolition of the same number of housing units as were being built.⁷ The Housing Act of 1949 also incentivized and paid for the clearance of "slums" for private or public redevelopment.⁸ The result was called "urban renewal," in which local governments seized and demolished privately owned property, displacing whole neighborhoods, in order to create new commercial and industrial areas. This practice affected lower-income people of all races, but disproportionately impacted non-White/Anglo people. Many of the areas targeted for urban renewal had been "redlined" during the 1930s.

Left unchecked, state and local governments and other institutions enacted discriminatory laws and regulations that prohibited neighborhood integration. Only in 1948, in *Shelley v. Kraemer*, did the U.S. Supreme Court finally strike down racially motivated deed restrictions and covenants in real estate, finding that they were a violation of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁹

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 included a section (Title VIII) now known as the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin in the sale or rental of housing.¹⁰ This was intended to address the inequities that the federal government had created in the 1930s. The Act was amended in 1988 to extend these protections against discrimination based on disability or family status (meaning, the presence of children in a home or a woman's pregnancy).

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS

In 1948, the Colorado Legislature banned racially restrictive covenants.¹¹

The Colorado Fair Housing Act (1959) was among the first state legislation in the U.S. to address discrimination in private housing. The law prohibits discrimination based on race, color, religion, or ancestry when selling, renting, or leasing a home. The concept of the state regulating private property proved controversial in 1959; the statute did not apply to owner-occupied housing with four or fewer boarders or lodgers.¹²

COLORADO SUPREME COURT CASES

Colorado cities began to adopt racially restrictive housing covenants in the 1920s; these covenants were initially upheld by the Colorado Supreme Court.¹³

A person who owns a tract of land and divides it into smaller tracts for the purpose of selling one or more may prefer to have as neighbors persons of the white, or Caucasian, race, and may believe that prospective purchasers of the several tracts would entertain a similar preference, and would pay a higher price if the ownership were restricted to persons of that race.
Colorado Supreme Court, 1930

DISCRIMINATION AND FAIR HOUSING ACTIVISM IN FORT COLLINS

Although the legal tools used to create and maintain segregated neighborhoods did not become formalized until after 1900, archival evidence indicates that Fort Collins' middle-class White/Anglo population supported separation between their homes and those of immigrants and people of color. For example, in 1903, Fort Collins contained an area known as the "Negro quarter," located west of the then-new sugar factory.¹⁴ This was common across the United States, and as the twentieth century progressed, city governments looked to urban planning as a means to systematically segregate their communities, usually through zoning: a method of dividing land by use. Prior to the 1920s, neighborhoods often contained both residential and commercial properties, and perhaps even some used for light industrial purposes; zoning separated single-family residential housing from multi-family housing, which was often designated for areas near commercial or industrial properties.

SEGREGATION, ZONING, AND OCCUPANCY LAWS

In 1929, Fort Collins passed its first zoning ordinance to restrict land use; it divided the city into three residential zones, two commercial zones, and one industrial zone. The goal was "establishing and maintaining property values by preventing undesirable developments in an area of established developments and ... establishing confidence in the permanence of (property) values." A map showing those zoning areas was published in 1938 (see next page).¹⁵

- Zone A was restricted to single-family homes, churches, schools, fraternity or sorority houses, farming or gardening districts, and "municipal recreation uses" (aka parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, etc.) In other words, the types of properties and amenities that middle-class White/Anglo people desired.
- Zone B could include any of the Zone A uses, as well as two-family dwellings, boarding or rooming houses, and private clubs.
- Zone C was also residential and could include all of the Zone A or Zone B uses, as well as multiple dwellings, "hotels and apartment hotels," educational, philanthropic, and eleemosynary (charitable) institutions. Each family in a multiple-family dwelling was required to have at least 600 square feet of space.
- Zone D included commercial areas outside downtown, and was intended for smaller retail businesses, such as groceries or filling stations.
- Zone E was the downtown commercial district and could include larger retail businesses, as long as they did not involve "manufacturing or occupations in which dust, odors, noise, or smoke result."
- Zone F was the industrial district and restricted to manufacturing uses. Those businesses that created dust, odors, noise, or smoke that would be hazardous to the surrounding neighborhoods were to be "located by permits approved by the board of adjustment."¹⁶

An examination of the 1929 zoning map shows that neighborhoods in northwest Fort Collins, which were more likely to contain Black and Hispanic residents, were zoned for more intensive uses.



Figure 1. Zoning map of Fort Collins (Fort Collins Coloradoan, July 21, 1938, page 6)

In 1938, the City began to enforce the one-family-per-property limit in Zone A; anyone with more than one family living in a house had 10 days to remove the second family. Building inspectors looked for extra stoves and kitchen sinks in Zone A homes, which indicated the presence of a second family, and any found had to be removed. While officials acknowledged that the action would likely create a housing shortage, the chair of the Fort Collins Zoning Board stated that enforcing the ordinance in “well-established areas of the city” would encourage new construction in previously undeveloped areas of the city.¹⁷

Indeed, Fort Collins did expand beyond its previous boundaries, and in 1951, the City began a period of increased annexation.¹⁸ However, the enforcement of single-family zoning appears to have been rather haphazard, and homeowners in Zone A were able to take in boarders with no penalty for many years. In 1954, the City — again bowing to pressure from community members who considered multiple housing detrimental to property values — limited boarders to four per rooming home. Specifically, a Mrs. Velma Williams had complained that her neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Cedrich Walrad, had six basement apartments in their Zone A house; the new rule required them to reduce those tenants to four. The City was concerned about how that might affect people who rented rooms to college students but stopped short of prohibiting boarders in Zone A altogether.¹⁹

In the 1960s, the City adopted the “U+2” ordinance limiting occupancy in any residential dwelling (single family, multi-family, or duplex) to one family plus one additional adult OR one adult and their dependents, a second adult and their dependents, and not more than one additional person. A “family” can include any number of people as long as they are related by blood, marriage, adoption, guardianship, or a “duly authorized custodial relationship;” the number of people living in the residential dwelling is not limited in any way. It is not clear whether or how this might affect the civil rights of people of different cultures, races, or socioeconomic classes, but the topic may merit additional exploration.

DISCRIMINATION IN OFF-CAMPUS STUDENT HOUSING

John Mosley, a star football player who attended CSU from 1939–1943, lived at 421 Smith Street in 1940;²⁰ like other African American students, he was not permitted to live on campus. By at least 1942, Mosley and five other Black students lived together at 238 N Meldrum Street.²¹ Mosley called his group of Black roommates and friends the “lonesome boys.” He was familiar with housing discrimination, hailing from Denver where segregation and racial covenants limited Black people to living in the northeast section of the city. Mosley spoke, later in life, about his time at CSU and being angry — not at his White friends, but at the system.²²

Hispanic students may have also experienced this type of discrimination, but no information has been located at this time.

Stakeholders who attended CSU during the 1960s reported that off-campus rental rates quoted to minority students were frequently unaffordable.²³ At a public meeting in 1966, citizens reported incidents of Fort Collins realtors discriminating against minorities, and the CSU Committee on Human Relations reported the results of a four-year survey, which showed that 20% “of all foreign students ran into racial problems and housing, and CSU students were forced to live four to an apartment in order to pay high rental fees.”²⁴

In 1968, the CSU Human Relations Committee (CSUHRC), in cooperation with the Fort Collins Human Relations Committee (FCHRC), released a seven-point plan to combat discrimination toward students related to off-campus housing. CSU already required landlords to sign an anti-discrimination pledge if they used the university housing office to find tenants. Beginning in 1968, students looking for roommates were also required to sign the pledge. The plan established a system to inform students and faculty of the new policy and to ensure that all landlords renting housing to students signed the pledge.

CSU’s student body president stated that the Associated Students of CSU (ASCSU) would support the program. It was estimated that 37% of unmarried CSU students lived off-campus at that time.²⁵



Figure 2. John Mosley and friends ca. 1940s. (Source)

RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

At least two neighborhoods in Fort Collins — the Circle Drive and Slade Acres subdivisions — were developed with racial covenants designed to limit home purchases and rentals to White/Anglo people. Both of these housing developments advertised their “restricted” status in the *Coloradoan*.²⁶ These covenants were typically applied to African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian, and (often but not always) Jewish people.²⁷

The protective covenant filed by the Northern Colorado Loan Association as owner of the land containing L. C. Moore’s third addition to the City of Fort Collins, the Circle Drive Subdivision, was recorded in December 1945. It stipulated that “No person of any race other than the Caucasian race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants of a different race domiciled with an owner or tenant.” The rules of the covenant were applied to the land through 1965, at which time they would automatically renew in successive periods of ten years unless voted down by a majority of property owners in the subdivision.²⁸

In 1948, just two days before the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that racial covenants were unlawful (in *Shelby v. Kraemer*), A. A. Slade filed a plat map for the Slade Acres subdivision that included a schedule of restrictions, including one stating that “none of the lots in this subdivision shall ever be owned or occupied by any persons other than members of the Caucasian or White race; except the servants or guests of persons properly in ownership or occupancy hereunder.”²⁹ This area of land was annexed by the City in mid-1952.³⁰

Although people of Mexican descent had been legally considered “White” since the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo, in 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Hernandez v. Texas* established that Hispanic people were indeed a minority group that could be discriminated against.³¹

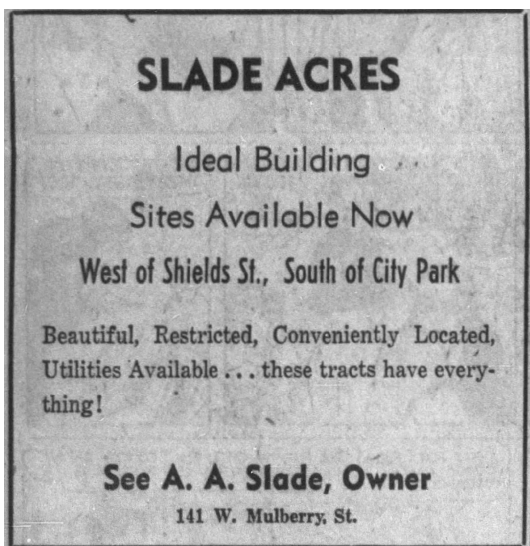


Figure 3. Advertisement for Slade Acres, marketed as being “Restricted” (*Fort Collins Coloradoan*, May 11, 1948, page 10)

ANNEXATION OF ALTA VISTA, BUCKINGHAM, AND ANDERSONVILLE

In 1966, the Fort Collins Human Relations Commission (FCHRC) and CSU Committee on Human Relations sponsored a meeting at City Hall to discuss minority group housing; it was attended by 70 people. Warren Alexander, a housing specialist for the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, spoke at the meeting on the subject of affordable housing as a problem that most affects minority groups. Pat Bing, a representative of the CSU committee, asserted that Fort Collins had a problem establishing housing for low-income groups, citing the Buckingham neighborhood as having unpaved streets, no streetlights, and no indoor plumbing.³²

In May 1975, a three-article series on Mexican Americans in the community discussed the history of

Hispanic settlement and the state of housing in the Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham neighborhoods. By the 1960s, the three neighborhoods were almost exclusively Hispanic (mostly Mexican American). The story also discussed the movement of upwardly mobile Hispanic people from those eastside neighborhoods to the northside west of College Avenue, between Mountain Avenue and the river; today, this neighborhood is informally known as Holy Family.

A related article noted “recent cases of discrimination in housing, for which no legal redress was sought, and ... a racial undertone in some of the controversy that surrounded the location of the city’s new library.”³³

The annexation of Andersonville and Alta Vista was approved by the City Council in June 1974.³⁴ In October 1975, the city broke ground on a sewer system for the Andersonville and Alta Vista neighborhoods.³⁵ Also in 1975, the Northeast Area Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) was formed with a nine-member commission made up of six residents (two residents representing each of the three neighborhoods) and representatives from the Fort Collins Housing Authority, the Human Relations Commission, and a Housing Committee Taskforce called “Designing Tomorrow Today.”³⁶ The NIA advised City Council and the City administration on the implementation of a housing rehabilitation program in the three neighborhoods utilizing a \$200,000 Community Development grant. At that time, an estimated 90 homes in Andersonville and Alta Vista lacked sewer hookups; grant funds were also expected to be used for indoor plumbing, and NIA members were tasked with approving homeowners’ application for grant funds. The NIA and housing program staff used 120 First Street, the Larimer County Human Development Office, as an office and meeting place.³⁷

Streets remained unpaved in Alta Vista until 1980.³⁸

URBAN RENEWAL

In 1981, a HUD-financed survey of the Holy Family neighborhood showed that properties were becoming increasingly occupied by Anglo residents and lower-income residents.

A 2004 Sugar Factory Neighborhoods survey report describes the impacts of urban renewal and references a 1983 survey report, *Architecture and History of Buckingham, Alta Vista, and Andersonville* by the Community Services Collaborative, on behalf of the Fort Collins Planning and Development Department, which conducted an inventory of every property in the three neighborhoods.³⁹ Two important phases of urban renewal in these neighborhoods included one in the early 1960s, when Neighbor to Neighbor, the Community Development Block Program, and the Fort Collins Housing Authority all contributed to what that report called a radical altering of the built environment. The 1983 survey “came at a time when urban renewal projects were profoundly altering the face of Buckingham, Andersonville, and Alta Vista. In some cases, the photographs and inventory forms from the 1983 survey are the only evidence remaining of the many structures razed during this period.”⁴⁰

Residents of the Alta Vista and Andersonville neighborhoods successfully protested against a widening project that would have divided the neighborhoods in the early 1980s.⁴¹ Community activism in 1999, outside the scope of this project, led to a referendum passing that kept truck routes out of sections of the city, including Vine Drive, which bisects Alta Vista and Andersonville. This referendum was repealed in 2006.⁴² The eventual overpass project was routed around those neighborhoods.

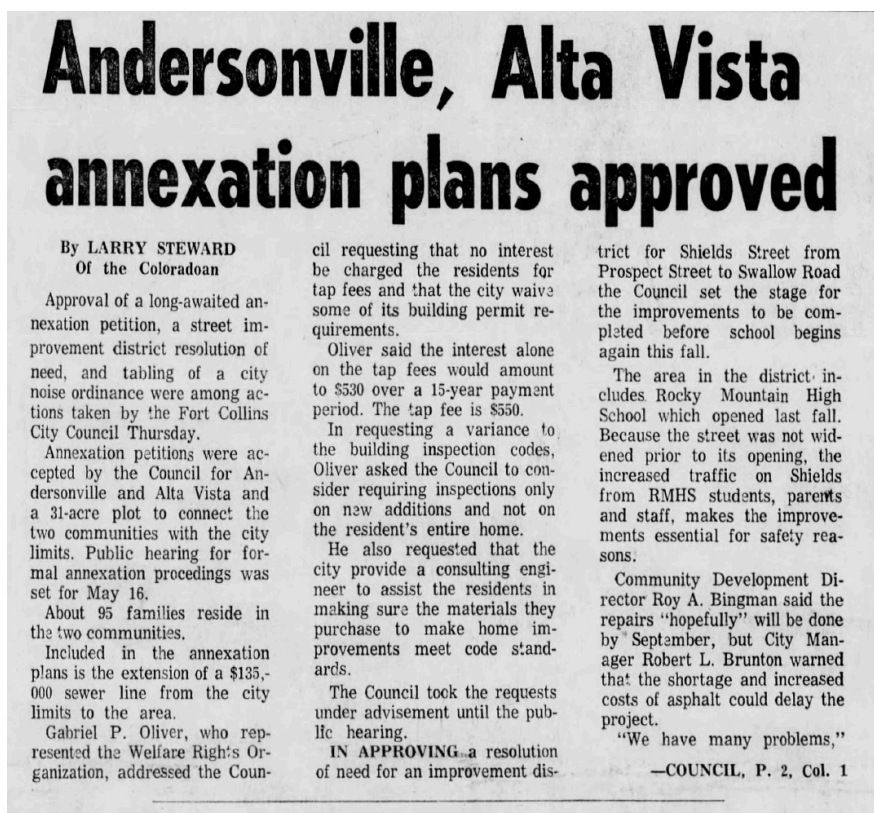


Figure 4. Coverage of the Andersonville and Alta Vista annexation (Fort Collins Coloradoan, April 5, 1974, page 1)

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. The NPS theme study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Discrimination in Housing* identifies resources that could be nominated to the National Historic Landmarks Program, while this historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

Property types identified in the theme study include those that:

- Interpret the constitutionality of racial zoning or restrictive covenants that profoundly affected the development of residential segregation in the nation. In other words, if the property was associated with one of the court cases that helped to strike down racial zoning or restrictive covenants, it could be eligible for listing.
- Interpret the constitutionality of racial zoning that profoundly affected the right of Asian Americans to own real property. If the property was associated with one of the court cases that helped to strike down laws that specifically targeted Asian people, it could be eligible for listing.
- Outstandingly illustrate the major role the federal government played in developing segregated metropolitan regions across the nation. This includes the destruction of integrated neighborhoods or the physical separation of White/Anglo areas from neighborhoods occupied by non-White/Anglo people, as part of New Deal programs, urban renewal projects, or interstate highway construction.
- Interpret the constitutionality of restrictive covenants that dealt a major blow to de jure segregation in housing.
- Initiating a fair housing movement that directly stimulated legislation pivotal to national reform efforts. Sites of protests, meetings, marches, and other advocacy activities in Fort Collins related to fair housing in the 1960s would qualify.

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for fair housing are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community.

Note: This project did not include a historic resources survey. Prior to further considering any of these resources for inclusion in a potential NRHP nomination, these properties should be appropriately surveyed and documented.

PROPERTY TYPE: HISTORIC DISTRICT

The fact that Slade Acres was platted with racial covenants just a few days before the practice was declared unconstitutional in *Shelby v. Kraemer* could be considered historically significant at the local level, since it illustrates an attempt at segregating that subdivision that was never implemented due to the U. S. Supreme Court's decision. The timing of the neighborhood plat relative to the Court's ruling sets Slade Acres apart from the Circle Drive subdivision, which was also deed restricted for White/Anglo people.

The Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham neighborhoods might qualify as historic districts under Criterion A: Community Development at the local level because they help to interpret the role that the federal and local governments (both Larimer County and the City of Fort Collins) played in creating and maintaining segregated areas within the city.

PROPERTY TYPE: SINGLE DWELLING

The house at 238 N Meldrum Street, where many Black boarders including John Mosley and other university students lived in the late 1940s and early 1950s, is no longer extant. However, the house at 421 Smith Street still stands, and other homes where community members rented rooms to non-White/Anglo students, during the period when those students could not live on campus, might be potentially eligible for the NRHP.

PROPERTY TYPE: OFFICE

The Northeast Area Neighborhood Improvement Association (NIA) used a house occupied by the Larimer County Human Development Office (120 First Street) as an office and meeting place. That building is extant and could be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A for its association with the fair housing movement in Fort Collins.

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

421 Smith Street – college residence of John Mosley



120 First Street - Larimer County Human Development Office



Alta Vista, Andersonville, and Buckingham neighborhoods (re-survey)

Holy Family neighborhood

Slade Acres neighborhood

Circle Drive neighborhood

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**THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**

**Racial Desegregation
in Public Education in
Fort Collins
(1867–1975)**



MCDONALD
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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the Fort Collins *Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this historic context narrative focuses on the experiences and activism of seven marginalized groups: women, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, LGBTQIA+ people, and religious minorities. It covers the period from 1861, when Colorado became a territory, through 1975, the first full school year after the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Milliken v. Bradley* prevented school districts from redrawing enrollment zones for individual schools for the purpose of combating segregation, unless the segregation had been caused by that school district's discriminatory actions.

In Fort Collins, civil rights activism related to equal education is associated with the K-12 public school system attended by children living in Fort Collins in what would become Poudre School District R-1, as well as admissions to and student experiences at Colorado State University.

This historic context narrative examines federal and state judicial activity before turning its attention to equal education in Fort Collins. Unlike other historic context topics in this series, the federal government did not enact legislation that affected segregation or desegregation in public schools, and 1875 state legislation that required desegregation of public schools in Colorado was largely ignored by local communities. Only judicial activity had an effect on the segregation or desegregation of schools.

This document further identifies associated property types and significant sites associated with equal education within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Earlier documents that have informed this narrative include the NPS theme study, *Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States*, and *In the Hallowed Halls of Learning: The History and Architecture of Poudre School District R-1*, a historical context prepared for the City of Fort Collins in 2004.

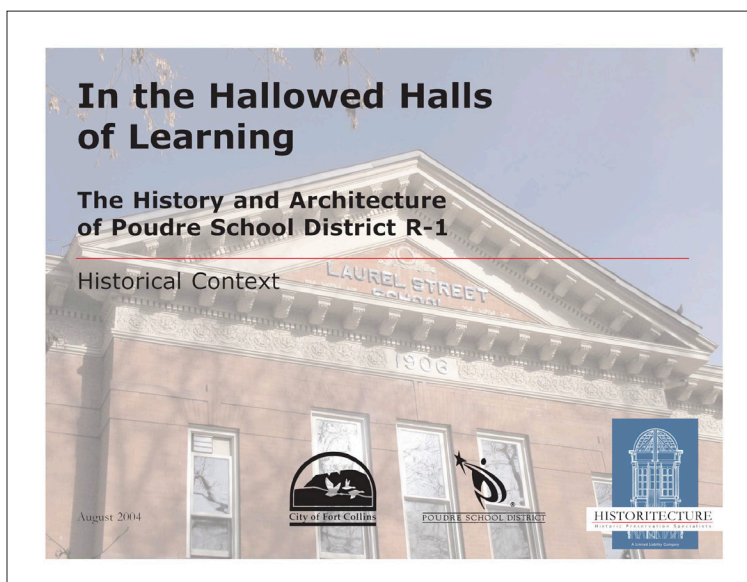


Figure 1. Cover, “In the Hallowed Halls of Learning” historic context.

INTRODUCTION

The following information is derived, unless otherwise noted, from the NPS theme study *Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States*.

Prior to the Civil War, states and communities in the Eastern United States (both north and south) resisted educating African Americans, whether free or enslaved. Southerners opposed teaching Black people to read and write, both because those White people who supported slavery held two contradictory beliefs: that Black people were so intellectually inferior that they could not be taught and that educated African Americans would rise up against their enslavers. Nevertheless, free and enslaved Black people did learn to read and write, in homes and in schools. Where schools were made available to African Americans, they were underfunded and poorly resourced; in both Philadelphia and Boston in the middle of the nineteenth century, Black parents responded to those disparities through legal means or withholding taxes to force schools to integrate. While the lawsuit reached the Massachusetts Supreme Court before being dismissed, that state's legislature subsequently prohibited school segregation in 1855. African Americans also attended the few colleges and universities that would enroll them, primarily (but not entirely) in the northern U.S.

Following the Civil War, the Freedmen's Bureau and many church-based organizations took up the establishment of schools to teach formerly enslaved adults and children. African American communities also raised money to erect their own schools and hire teachers. Colleges were established by northern missionary societies as well as by the 1862 Morrill Act, which enabled states to create separate land-grant colleges for Black students. Most Southern White/Anglo people opposed providing any education for African Americans, unless it was strictly vocational or industrial in nature – training Black people “to perform manual labor, to serve the needs of Whites.”

During the late 1800s, many state governments across the U.S. — including Colorado — officially prohibited segregation during Reconstruction. The 1876 State Constitution of Colorado declared that public schools could not impose religious requirements on students or teachers as a condition of admission, “nor shall any distinction or classification of pupils be made on account of race or color.”¹ However, local communities did not universally comply.

Neither was segregation limited to African Americans. In the American West, Chinese children were also prevented from attending schools with White children and many Mexican children attended Catholic schools rather than public schools, where they were not welcomed. During this time, the U.S. government created boarding schools for Native American children, in some cases enrolling those children against the wishes of their parents, where the students were often mistreated and employed as an unpaid workforce.

Following the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which ruled that separate public facilities were constitutional as long as they were “separate but equal,” racial segregation in public education was effectively established by law throughout the United States.

The segregation of Asian students was complicated by the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, which ended Japanese immigration to the U.S. but ensured that Japanese children already in residence would attend integrated schools. It is important to note

that, then as now, “Asian” people were not a homogenous group. For example, news articles of the time indicate that White/Anglo Coloradoans viewed Japanese people as far superior to their Chinese counterparts.² During World War II, when Japanese people on the West Coast of the U.S. were forced to leave their homes and businesses and imprisoned in internment camps, about 2,000 children were schooled in the Amache camp in Colorado, which had its own school district.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, a huge wave of Mexican people migrated north into the American West, seeking work. Mexican children were routinely prohibited from speaking Spanish in school, in an attempt to “Americanize” them, or they were segregated from White students on the basis of language. Hispanic students’ education was often vocational or industrial in nature, reflecting the expectations of the dominant White/Anglo society.

During the mid-1900s, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) focused much of their efforts on school desegregation and the equitable funding and resourcing of schools for Hispanic children. In 1914, the *Maestas v. Shone* case in Alamosa, Colorado, resulted in a district court ruling that school officials could not segregate Mexican children on the basis of language.³ The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals subsequently found, in *Mendez et al v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al* (1946), that schools could not segregate Mexican American students on the basis of their Mexican ancestry, skin color, and/or use of the Spanish language. This case became a critical precedent for applying the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment to racial segregation in public schools.⁴ In 1954, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* struck down the longstanding practice of providing “separate but equal” schools for African Americans. However, because Mexican children were considered “White by law” per the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hildalgo, school districts realized that they could separate White/Anglo students from Black and Hispanic students and technically meet the law. Another tactic was to provide “neighborhood schools” that effectively segregated non-White/Anglo children by race, since racial discrimination in housing prevented their families from living in integrated neighborhoods.

Although not directly related to education, the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Hernandez v. State of Texas* established that people of Mexican descent, although “legally White”, were a “special class” of people that could be discriminated against.⁵ Supreme Court cases in the late 1960s and early 1970s finally resulted in the protections of *Brown v. Board* being applied to Hispanic students.

In 1971, the Indian Education Act provided more parental control and community participation in developing culturally appropriate educational curricula. Also in the 1970s, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public schools were required to provide instruction in English for non-native English speakers. During the 1960s and 1970s, more non-White/Anglo students enrolled in colleges and universities, and changes such as the social history movement resulted in an increasing focus in academia in cultural studies of non-White/Anglo communities.

College students in the 1960s and 1970s became more active in social and political movements, advocating for civil rights as well as peace and other social justice causes through protests, marches, sit-ins, and other activities.

Mexican children were routinely prohibited from speaking Spanish in school, in an attempt to “Americanize” them, or they were segregated from White students on the basis of language.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN LARIMER COUNTY AND FORT COLLINS

Public and private schools were established in Colorado as early as 1859, before the Territory was officially organized in 1861 and well before it became a state in 1876. The first school in Larimer County was a short-lived private institution opened in 1864 by Albina L. Washburn, a civic leader in her own right whose husband was a judge. A few public schools opened in the next two years. Three school districts were organized on October 1, 1868; although the districts were huge, containing hundreds of square miles, the total student population was 95. By 1870, the county had added three additional districts and increased the number of students to 203. Fort Collins, by then the county seat (although not yet incorporated), contained the most populated school district and employed its own school superintendent.⁶ The County continued to add districts for the next 90 years, and in 1960, Poudre School District was established by consolidating 38 smaller districts. Schools in Fort Collins, which had been part of Larimer County School District 5, became part of Poudre School District R-1.⁷

Public Schools in Fort Collins

The first school in Fort Collins was established informally during the summer of 1866. Elizabeth Keays (a widow) began by teaching her own child and another student in the home of her aunt and uncle Lewis and Elizabeth Stone, where she was living at the time; soon she had enough students to move to an abandoned building at the Fort. Keays was hired that fall to be the first teacher in the settlement's initial school district. Fort Collins formalized its school district (District 5) on December 28, 1870, and citizens raised money for a schoolhouse (115 Riverside Drive); in September 1871, it opened for classes.

As the population of Fort Collins grew, the locations of its schools changed as needed to accommodate increasing enrollment. The City's former public schools include:⁸

- 1870s: A storefront was rented at 201 Pine Street, on the corner of Jefferson and Pine, for an additional classroom; this remained in use even after the Remington School opened.
- 1879: Remington School (318 Remington Street); the building was demolished in 1969.⁹
- January 1, 1880: First kindergarten in Fort Collins (location unknown).¹⁰ This was the first kindergarten west of St. Louis, Missouri, home of the nation's first kindergarten, which had opened in 1873.
- October 1881: The kindergarten occupied the second floor of the Grange Hall until that building burned down on January 27, 1882. Shortly thereafter, the primary grades moved into the basement of the schoolhouse. As the student population continued to grow, the kindergarten was relocated several times. In September 1882, the kindergarten moved into the Episcopal Church building on Oak Street due to overcrowding. By 1886, the school district rented rooms on Jefferson Street, also due to overcrowding in the previous location(s). The specific location of the rented rooms is unknown.¹¹

- 1887: The Benjamin Franklin School (corner of Howes Street and Mountain Avenue) initially housed third through eighth grades. In 1889, it became the district's first high school. It was demolished in 1959 to make way for Steele's Supermarket.
- 1903: Fort Collins High School (417 South Meldrum), the first purpose-built high school, became Lincoln Junior High in 1925, after a new high school was completed. Most of the original building was demolished in 1977 to create the Lincoln Center events complex.
- 1906–1907: Laurel Street School (1906), 1000 Locust Street, and the LaPorte Avenue School (1907), 714 Laporte Avenue,¹² both elementary schools, were constructed from identical plans. The Laurel School is now known as Centennial High School. Many of the school district's Hispanic students attended LaPorte Avenue School, which was demolished in 1975 and replaced by Juan Fullana Elementary school that same year.¹³
- 1905: Children of German–Russian beet workers attended the Anderson Place School, housed in the original Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church building in the Andersonville neighborhood.¹⁴
- 1908: The four-room Rockwood Place or Rockwood School was built near Andersonville to replace Anderson Place.¹⁵ Rockwood School became the Sue Barton School in 1935¹⁶ before closing in 1944.¹⁷ In 1945, the former school building and grounds were purchased by the Dreher Pickle company.¹⁸
- 1919: Another set of identical elementary schools, the George Washington School and the Abraham Lincoln School, were constructed. Both schools are still in use; Lincoln Elementary became the Harris School, named after its first principal, Mame Harris.
- 1925: The second Fort Collins High School was built. CSU purchased this school building in 1996 and built a large addition for its performing arts program.
- 1949: Dunn Elementary (501 S. Washington Avenue), still in use.
- 1955–1956: The Putnam, Barton, and Moore elementary schools (400 Maple Street, 703 E. Prospect Road, and 1905 Orchard Place, respectively). These identical-plan buildings were the last schools constructed before Fort Collins' District 5 merged and became part of PSD R–1. PSD still operates all these buildings.¹⁹
- 1975: Lincoln Junior High (1600 West Lancer Drive) Lincoln Middle School.
- 1975: Juan Fullana Elementary School (220 N. Grant Avenue); now the Fullana Early Learning Center.

Catholic Schools

St. Joseph's Catholic Church traces its roots in Fort Collins back to 1879, when the parish bought the old wood-frame school building at 115 Riverside and turned it into their church. By 1901, the parish bought property on the corner of Mountain Avenue and Howes Street, and in August of that year dedicated a new \$12,000 church made of rusticated stone. St. Joseph's School (constructed 1925–1926) was built for \$66,000 and opened with 117 students. The school grew and, by 1966, provided classes through eighth grade to 300 students. St. Joseph's underwent extensive renovation in 1999–2000 at a cost of \$3.8 million, and, for a few years, taught nine grades. Today, the school once again teaches kindergarten through eighth grade students.²⁰

As Fort Collins' Hispanic population grew, the St. Joseph's Parish requested a priest to serve the Spanish-speaking community. A Presbyterian church on the corner of Whitcomb and Cherry Streets was purchased by the parish and consecrated in 1924. In Spring 1929, construction began on a new brick church building at a cost of \$12,000.²¹ Holy Family School opened in 1928, in the home of Margaret Murray, located at 315 N. Whitcomb Street.²² After the new church building was completed the following year, the school moved into the church's previous wood-frame building. Teachers included Jovita Vallecillo, the first Hispanic graduate of CSU. By 1934, Holy Family served 85 students through eighth grade. In 1948, the school building reportedly was condemned by the city, and classes moved into a new parish hall adjacent to the rectory. The school struggled financially;²³ a four-alarm fire damaged the church in March 1969.²⁴ The following month, the Denver Diocese announced it was consolidating Catholic school programs in Fort Collins; Holy Family would only provide classes for kindergarten, and grades 1–6 would be transferred to St. Joseph's School.²⁵ In 1975, Holy Family's kindergarten classes became bilingual.²⁶

In 1971, the PSD launched a pilot bilingual program in the Dunn, Harris, LaPorte Avenue, and Washington elementary schools.²⁷ In 1975, a bilingual class was held at Laurel Elementary School, supported by federal migrant education funding. Although 15 children were enrolled in the bilingual class at Laurel in 1975, it was scheduled to be discontinued for the following year. Federal funding for the Laurel class also provided for health and social services; the school district planned to provide those services at other neighborhood schools in 1976.²⁸



Figure 2. Holy Family parish hall, 324 N. Whitcomb Street

HISPANIC STUDENTS IN FORT COLLINS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The education of Mexican American children in public schools was contentious in the American Southwest. While Western farmers wanted Mexican American laborers to remain uneducated, in order to maintain a steady supply of cheap labor, that attitude was directly at odds with the philosophy of “Americanizing” or assimilating immigrant children.

Hispanic children in Fort Collins are known to have worked in the sugar beet fields. While first person accounts are not included in this research, the agricultural system utilized by Great Western and other sugar beet companies included production-based contracts that a male head of household simply could not complete on his own. Growers like Great Western knew that this system, which offered substandard wages, required entire families to work in the fields. Children of beet workers often missed school in order to thin and harvest beets;²⁹ for example, the Rockwood School in Andersonville closed during the late summer and early fall harvest.³⁰ A 1923 U.S. Labor Department report found that, in Larimer and Weld counties, the children of beet field contract laborers missed a quarter of the school year; Larimer County school district records noted that the children of beet workers missed school almost five times as often as school children from other families.³¹

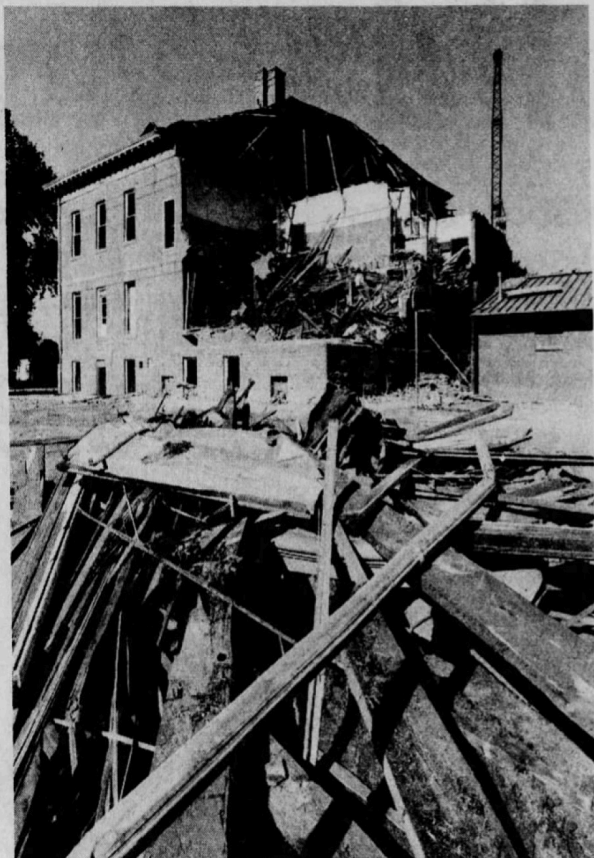
Children of beet workers
missed school almost
five times as often as
children from other families.
Larimer County School District

The desire to Americanize immigrant children can be clearly seen in local coverage of the Rockwood School, built to educate the children of beet workers. Rockwood was a primary school located east of the sugar factory, “designed for lower grade pupils who live north of the river.”³² A 1914 retrospective of the Fort Collins school system states that the “avowed purpose of this school was to afford to the large number of Germans, Russians and other foreigners brought to the community by the beet industry an opportunity to secure our common school education. It has proven to be literally a factory for converting the ignorant, illiterate foreign children into fine Americanized boys and girls, who are annually going from its stores with prospects of becoming most desirable citizens.”³³ By the 1920s, the school’s student population had become mostly Hispanic, along with the Buckingham and Andersonville neighborhoods.³⁴ Hispanic children from another nearby neighborhood, Alta Vista (a “Spanish Colony” created by Great Western Sugar, first announced in 1923) also attended Rockwood School (later known as the Sue M. Barton Elementary School).³⁵ When the school property was purchased by the Dreher Pickle Company in 1945, it was described as a building with four classrooms on the first floor and two rooms in a half-story basement; in the period immediately after the school closed, the building was used as an “emergency farm labor dormitory.” The pickle company reportedly planned to continue the former school building during crop season for this purpose.³⁶

Once Barton Elementary School³⁷ closed in 1944, Hispanic children from Andersonville, Alta Vista, and Buckingham would have had a long trip to school. Children from Holy Family and the other Hispanic neighborhoods went to Laporte Elementary and Lincoln Junior High Schools. Laporte Elementary, in the Holy family neighborhood was 1.6 miles from Alta Vista; Lincoln is nearly 2.5 miles from Alta Vista. A 1951 study on migrant labor in Colorado confirmed that the distance to schools affected truancy rates for migrant children, while at the same time acknowledging that anti-migrant sentiment led to lax truancy policy enforcement. In the same report, Hispanic parents expressed frustration at sending children to schools where other children treated them poorly and teachers ignored them.³⁸

During the community-based research for this project, Hispanic stakeholders reported being treated as “others” in the Fort Collins public schools; they report being subjected to racial epithets from other students and being placed in special education classes they did not require, simply to get them out of the way. Community-based activities provided an extracurricular supplement to fill the gap for Hispanic students. For example, in 1973 local Chicano activist James Martinez founded “Ballet Zapatista,” a Chicano youth dance group funded by The Point and several Chicano professors at CSU, and inspired and assisted by cultural dance company associated with Denver-based Crusade for Justice. The community organization held their rehearsals at Laporte Avenue Elementary, 714 Laporte Avenue, where the participants had the opportunity to learn about history and cultural pride through traditional dance.³⁹ Multiple stakeholders who participated in this project confirmed that, in the 1970s, the dropout rate for Hispanic children in Fort Collins’ elementary and secondary schools was a pressing issue. As many as 40–50% of Hispanic children did not graduate from high school. The Parents’ Concilio for Quality Education was active at this time; LULAC and the Colorado Migrants Council were also active in Fort Collins and focused on the education of Hispanic students, including the children of transient migrant workers.⁴⁰ In 1980, one in four Hispanics students dropped out of the Poudre School District, double the number of White/Anglo students and higher than the average dropout rate for the state of Colorado and the United States as a whole.⁴¹

Another issue related to an equal education is adequate facilities. After Holy Family stopped teaching elementary school, Hispanic children went to LaPorte elementary, which was in poor condition. The school district wanted to build another school, but a 1968 bond issue for new construction failed. Hispanic leaders mobilized the community, canvassing door-to-door in support of funding; a new bond issue passed in 1969.⁴² One of the community members leading this effort was Isabel Gavaldon.⁴³ Also in 1969, LaPorte was declared structurally inadequate; additionally, 385 students had registered in Fall 1969 to attend the school, and LaPorte’s capacity was 270.⁴⁴ In 1973, delays in progress toward a new school led the Chicano Education Advisory Committee, led by James Martinez, to call a meeting at Laporte and question what was taking so long. School board members expressed concern that there could be charges of “de facto segregation” if the new school were built in the Mexican American neighborhood.⁴⁵ When the district decided to build the new elementary school outside the Holy Family neighborhood, the Hispanic community took action. It sought help from the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF); with assistance from students at the University of Colorado Law School, MALDEF established a pattern of discrimination on the north side of Fort Collins. The board changed course and approved a new school on the LaPorte site, letting the Hispanic community name the school.⁴⁶ In 1975, the Juan Fullana Elementary School was built to replace the LaPorte school; students were in class at Fullana by the last week of the Spring 1975 term. The old LaPorte school was demolished in June 1975, and Fullana Elementary was officially dedicated in December 1975.⁴⁷



Coloradoan photos by Joe Novotny

School falls to wreckers

The old Laporte Avenue School is falling to the wrecking crews, but chunks of the 68-year-old structure are destined to be recycled for decorative use. The Greeley demolition contractor,

who originally had planned to use all the rubble for "fill," is allowing an area builder to salvage the bricks. Helping salvage is Ann Baker (above) of 1730 West Mulberry Street. The replacement

school, Juan Fullana Elementary, was occupied by students the last week of this school year. It stands just northwest of the old building.

Figure 3. Photos from the Fort Collins Coloradoan, June 19, 1975, page 1.

OTHER MINORITY STUDENTS

AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS

While a small number of African Americans resided in Fort Collins during the period included in this historic context, no evidence of a segregated school for African Americans in the city has been located. It appears that African American students attended integrated public schools in Fort Collins. Hattie McDaniel appears to have attended the Franklin School at Mountain Avenue and Howes Street in the early 1900s; Virgil Thomas, FCHS' first Black graduate in 1940, was integrated with White students by the mid-1930s.

GERMAN-RUSSIAN STUDENTS

The Rockwood school was built specifically for children of beet field workers; these children are described as "foreigners" in local coverage in the early twentieth century.⁴⁸

ASIAN STUDENTS

Japanese workers were recruited to Fort Collins in the early 1900s to work in the agriculture and extractive industries; while no information about Japanese children attending public schools during that time period has been located, Japanese American students attended CAC (now CSU) by the 1900s.⁴⁹

NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENTS

Native Americans were officially collectively forced out of Colorado by 1880, but that does not mean that all tribal peoples left the area; some may have found ways to avoid relocating to reservations. Current research has not located any mention of Native American children attending school in Fort Collins during the early late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Stakeholders who attended school in the city during the mid-1900s report being singled out for their ethnicity.

In 2022, the Colorado Legislature created the Federal Indian Boarding School Research Program Act, with research now underway under the auspices of History Colorado; a final report for this project is scheduled for June 30, 2023.⁵⁰ The City of Denver is also currently developing an American Indian/Indigenous Peoples historic context study.⁵¹ Any expansion of an educational context related to Native Americans in the Fort Collins should consider this research.

COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE /COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Fort Collins is home to Colorado State University, the only land-grant university in the state. In 1862, the federal Morrill Act established public colleges (now universities) dedicated to making a post-secondary education accessible to working-class Americans, not just wealthy people. Their curricula focused on agricultural and mechanical courses and military science; some of these colleges retain “agricultural and mechanical” in their names. The colleges were initially funded through *grants of land* (seized from Native Americans) that the institutions could then sell to raise money; this led to the descriptive term “land-grant college.”⁵²

The initial land-grant college in Colorado was authorized in 1870, six years before the Territory became a state. Originally known as Colorado Agricultural College, it was renamed multiple times, becoming the Colorado State College of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts (CSC) in 1935; Colorado Agricultural and Mechanical College (Colorado A&M) in 1944; finally, in May 1957, Colorado State University (CSU).⁵³

While students from marginalized groups were enrolled at CSU in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of the information located during this project is related to a few notable students and rarely discusses discrimination that they may have experienced. This is likely due to the racialized attitudes of the majority White/Anglo population at that time; only exceptional students belonging to marginalized groups would have been considered newsworthy, and information about those groups would not have been documented, saved, or archived.⁵⁴

The few minority students during the early years of CAC/CSU for which this project located information include:

- Grafton St. Clair Norman, the first African American student at Colorado Agricultural College, who first enrolled in Spring 1892. The only African American student at CAC during that time, he graduated in 1896.⁵⁵
- A Mr. J. Mamamoto, a CAC student, who spoke at a Baptist Church study class on the “Religions of Japan” in 1906.⁵⁶
- Chet Maeda, of Japanese descent, who transferred from a junior college in California in 1940 to CSU, where he majored in veterinary medicine and enjoyed a successful football career.⁵⁷

Black athletes at CAC/CSU experienced discrimination, as illustrated by several representative incidents highlighted below.

- In 1905, the Denver University football team protested playing against Alfred Johnson, a Black CAC player, until it was agreed that Johnson could only play in a “practice game.” That was followed by a dispute over any agreements that teams had made as to whether Black athletes could play in the Intercollegiate Athletic Association, which comprised most colleges and universities in Colorado. CAC stated that, despite a unanimous agreement that Black athletes should not be encouraged to play, as a state and national institution the college could not prohibit anyone from a class or club, should they wish to be a member.⁵⁸
- In 1922, the national African American fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha established chapters at several Colorado colleges and universities, including CAC.⁵⁹
- In 1927, a newspaper article reported that three CAC Black athletes, then living with the Charles and Mamie Birdwhistle family, were “somewhat of a novelty for the Aggies who have not had any colored students for several years.”⁶⁰ Black students were not permitted to live on the CAC campus at this time.

- John Mosley began his career at the university in 1939, when Black students were prohibited from living on campus; Mosley and five other students, who he dubbed “the lonesome boys,” lived together at 228 Meldrum Street (no longer extant); nine Black students were attending CSU at that time. Mosley excelled at football and wrestling; when he was traveling with the football team in Salt Lake City, the entire team walked out of a movie theater, rather than stay after Mosley was told to sit in the balcony.⁶¹ When CSU played in Salt Lake City again, in 1947, Black players were prohibited from staying in the same hotel as their White teammates.⁶²

In one case, an incident of discrimination attributed to CSU appears to have taken place elsewhere. Adeline Kano grew up in Nebraska and Wisconsin, graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1948. She began a career at CSU as a research assistant in 1949. Her father, Hiram Hisanori Kano, emigrated from Japan and completed

his master’s degree in Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska in 1918. Mr. Kano farmed in Litchfield, Nebraska, and worked with the Japanese Americanization Society, teaching English and acting as a translator for immigrants. In 1921, Mr. Kano and an Episcopalian bishop in Nebraska helped defeat a bill in the Nebraska Legislature intended to bar Japanese residents from owning property and serving as legal guardians of their children. Mr. Kano subsequently became active in the Episcopalian church and was ordained as a priest in 1936. On December 7, 1941, shortly after conducting services at his church, Mr. Kano was arrested and interrogated by the FBI. Because of his family’s position in Japan and his position as a leader of Japanese immigrants in Nebraska, Kano was deemed a threat to national security and sent to an internment camp. While being held at five different camps, Mr. Kano spent his time teaching English. After being released in 1944, Hiram and the Kano family moved to Wisconsin. After

Adeline began her work at CSU, Hiram Kano and his wife moved to a small farm in Fort Collins, where Mr. Kano died in 1988.⁶³ A friend of Adeline’s anecdotally reported that CSU asked Adeline to give up a scholarship, because of her father’s previous imprisonment, and she refused to do so. While that story has yet to be corroborated, in 1944, 16-year-old Adeline was the valedictorian of her high school class in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. She was asked by the school to decline that honor, in writing, due to her father’s arrest and internment during WWII; she refused, stating her father was a victim of war and had not committed any crime.⁶⁴ It is likely that the informant conflated Adeline’s experience in high school with her career at CSU.

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of heightened student activism on the CSU campus, especially focused on the ability of minority students to attend the university, as well as minority representation within the faculty and staff teaching classes that embraced diversity. The Black Student Alliance (BSA) formed in 1968; the Mexican American Committee for Equality (MACE), which would become a chapter of the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), a nationwide group with independent chapters all over the country, formed the same year.⁶⁵ El Centro (Chicano Student Services) was established in 1979. Today, seven different diversity offices serve minority students on the CSU campus.

Transition, a student newspaper of the Associated Students of CSU (ASCSU) (archived copies available for April 3–December 4, 1969) provides a view of student life and activism at that time. The newspaper was focused on student rights and also provided information about student services.

"Law officials didn't ask if it was dangerous for a man to write his family, or, since he spoke and wrote English, to serve as a scribe for immigrants who needed to send official documents back to Japan."

Article about Hiram Kano, 1989

The first issue of *Transition* announced a pre-organizational meeting for “Free University,” a CSU program offering diverse courses as part of “a participatory education in new lifestyles.”⁶⁶ “Free U” offered classes including “The Functioning of the University,” “Education and the Significance Of Life,” “Women’s Liberation,” “Institutional White Racism,” and “Legal Rights.”⁶⁷ An organizational meeting of a student chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was also held at the Free University building.⁶⁸ Free University classes were held off campus, at “the Old Hort(iculture) house at Laurel and Mason” (possibly 191 W. Laurel Street). Although off-campus, that building apparently had been part of the CSU Horticulture Department. It is no longer extant.

Like their counterparts at other universities in the 1960s, CSU students were actively involved in efforts to improve diversity and end discrimination on campus.

- On Monday, April, 7, 1969, BSA presented the CSU administration with a 20-page document, containing 10 demands designed to address racial inequality on campus, and requested an answer by noon on April 9. MACE joined BSA in their efforts, and the leadership of both organizations walked out of a contentious meeting on Tuesday, April 8, with the State Agricultural Board (SAB) board, which then governed the university. On April 9, approximately 150 CSU students staged a sit-in at the university’s administration building, protesting CSU’s minority recruiting efforts. BSA spokesperson Paul Chambers spoke about that the university’s minority recruitment program, Project GO, stating that it was insufficient. The protestors agreed to the university’s proposition to form a task committee, which would prepare a presentation for an emergency meeting of the SAB later that month. The students then marched to the home of CSU President William E. Morgan and held a peaceful “camp-in,” calling for the recruitment of 400 Black, 400 Chicano, and 200 Native American students for the coming Fall semester.⁶⁹ The April 25 issue of *Transition* interviewed both Chambers and MACE leader Manual Ramos to discuss the ongoing negotiations and meetings with the university; in October, the paper reported that CSU had failed to meet the April demands of BSA and MACE.⁷⁰
- In October, *Transition* announced a BSA rally at Hughes Stadium in support of 14 Black University of Wyoming athletes who were cut from their team and lost their scholarships after they wore black armbands to peacefully protest the discriminatory policies of Brigham Young University (BYU), which they were scheduled to play. BSA met with CSU President A. R. Chamberlain and two deans, asking for a guarantee that CSU athletes would be allowed to protest peacefully without suffering the loss of their scholarships. BSA reportedly found Chamberlain’s response to be bureaucratic and left the meeting dissatisfied.⁷¹
- In February, 1970, BSA was involved in a protest at a CSU-BYU basketball game held at the Moby Gym. Before game day, Paul Chambers and ASCSU President Jim Starr had negotiated a halftime protest of BYU and the practices of the Church of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), as well as CSU’s refusal to condemn BYU and LDS policies. On the morning of the game, students were told that the halftime protest would not be allowed, but they could voice their opinions prior to the game. A short demonstration subsequently took place before the game started; then, during halftime, about 50 Black, White, and Latino people walked out onto the gym floor in protest. Starr described the halftime action as peaceful until the Fort Collins police arrived, wearing riot gear. Once the police entered the gym, chaos ensued; an incendiary device of some type was thrown to the floor in front of the police officers but did not explode. A newspaper photographer was injured and seven people were arrested.⁷² The incident became known as the Moby Riot.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. The NPS theme study Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States identifies resources that could be nominated to the National Historic Landmarks Program, while this historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation for more information.

Property types identified in the theme study include:

- Schools associated with challenges to educational desegregation. This includes schools that illustrate school segregation conditions as well as desegregation litigation or other advocacy activities.
- Properties associated with individuals who were prominent in the fight for school desegregation. These properties must be associated with the individual's productive life, such as a home or workplace.
- Properties associated with community groups that initiated or planned challenges to school segregation. These properties are likely to include homes, churches, or meeting halls where these activities took place.
- Properties associated with conflict or confrontation, such as schools where segregation was enforced or protest sites.

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for fair housing are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community.

Note: This project did not include a historic resources survey. Prior to further considering any of these resources for inclusion in a potential NRHP nomination, these properties should be appropriately surveyed and documented.

PROPERTY TYPE: SCHOOL

The school building most obviously associated with the civil rights movement and fight for equal opportunity in education in Fort Collins is the Juan Fullana Elementary School (now known as Fullana Learning Center, 220 N. Grant Avenue).

The Dunn, Harris, LaPorte Avenue, and Washington elementary schools held a pilot program in bilingual education prior to being required to do so by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Each of these is significant as a “school associated with challenges to educational desegregation.”

PROPERTY TYPE: COLLEGE

The Moby Gymnasium and the President’s House on CSU’s campus are both significant as “properties associated with conflict or confrontation.”

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

220 N. Grant Avenue – Juan Fullana Elementary School



234 N. Grant Avenue (primary theme: Voting Rights) – 2nd Presbyterian Church; Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church; LULAC Hall; satellite office for the Colorado Migrant Council



501 E. Elizabeth Street – Abraham Lincoln School; Harris Elementary School



330 E. Laurel Street – Laurel Elementary School



233 S. Shields Street – George Washington School



645 S. Shields Street – Morgan residence (CSU President residence)

501 S. Washington Avenue – Dunn Elementary School

951 W. Plum Street (primary theme: Criminal Injustice) – Moby Gymnasium

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**THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**

**Voting Rights in Fort
Collins (1867–1982)**

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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the Fort Collins *Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this multi-part historic context study focuses on the experiences and activism of seven marginalized groups: women, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, LGBTQIA+ people, and religious minorities.

Voting Rights in Fort Collins, Colorado covers the period from 1867, when the Territorial Suffrage Act was enacted, through the 1982 extension of the seminal Voting Rights Act of 1965. This historic context narrative examines federal and state legislative and judicial activity before turning its attention to voting rights in Fort Collins.

Earlier documents that have informed this narrative include the NPS theme study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights*, which examines court cases and legislation related to voting rights for multiple demographic groups. The “Voting Rights for Women” section of this context draws extensively from another NPS document, *The Nineteenth Amendment and Women’s Access to the Vote Across America*¹ and a previous historic context narrative by Leslie Moore, *From Parlors to Polling Places: Women’s Suffrage in Fort Collins*, which details the activities of local leaders in the suffrage movement from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s.

The struggle to secure “the franchise” is described herein for each of the subject groups in turn, with a summary of federal legislation and judicial activity, state legislation and judicial activity, and finally, civil rights activism nationally, at the state level, and in Fort Collins. The history of federal activity is largely based on the aforementioned previous NPS theme studies. The history of state activity is based on the Moore document, as well as Pauli Murray’s 1951 compendium, *States’ Laws on Race and Color*. Finally, this historic context narrative contains a discussion of the 1965 Voting Rights Act and amendments to this legislation through 1982, as the act is the preeminent legislation regarding suffrage on the federal level, and as such, effects all the groups examined in this study.

This document concludes with the associated property type definitions listed in the NPS theme study and significant sites associated with voting rights within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Note: The non-White/Anglo population in Fort Collins was relatively small during the period of time covered in this historic context. As a result, the history of local activism predominantly focuses on organizations of White women (such as the League of Women Voters) and Hispanic people (particularly local chapters of the League of United Latin American Citizens, or LULAC, and the Partido Nacional de La Raza Unida). Additional research and contributions by community members are requested to supplement the information gathered to date from archives and community stories.

VOTING RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

During the early years of European settlement in what would become the United States, married women — even if free — had no personal rights. Once a woman married, her husband possessed all legal authority over her, including the legal right to all monies she earned or inherited. Married women could not own property, sign contracts, obtain a divorce, or exercise parental rights over their children. Single women in the country had almost the same economic rights as men, following the tenets of English common law on which initial United States laws were based. A single woman could own property, sign a will or contract, and have rights over her (illegitimate) children. However, single women were not given access to the same social, political, and educational privileges as men.² Moreover, the cultural ideals presented to women in the early nineteenth century encouraged a single woman to prepare for marriage, in which she would maintain a home for her husband and children and serve as a moral leader for her household.³

State legislation, beginning in 1839, began to provide married women with limited rights to own property, write a will to distribute their property after death, enter into contracts, and (in some cases) sue for divorce. These laws were intended to protect women and children and allow wives to prevent their husbands from selling property that she brought into the marriage or upon which women and children depended during the marriage. Around 1844, more states began to adopt Married Women's Property Acts, although these varied widely from state to state, and several states did not recognize that women were entitled to a separate legal status until the late 1800s.

The ability of women to change their situation was a linchpin of the suffrage movement, but attaining the right to vote did not immediately solve this problem. As late as 1981, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that Louisiana's community-property system giving a husband full control over marital property was unconstitutional under the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁴

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Voting in the United States was originally limited to White men who owned property.⁵ The path to suffrage for all groups except White/Anglo men was long, and voting would not become a universal right in the United States until well into the twentieth century. Suffrage rights varied from state to state and, in some cases, from city to city, a result of the United States Constitution (as ratified in 1787) not providing the federal government with clear authority over voting in the new nation.⁶

Great shifts in property requirements for voting took place well into the nineteenth century, and some states established taxpaying requirements in place of property ownership. Some of these requirements repressed voting, however, and by the middle of the nineteenth century, most of the economic barriers to voting at the state level had been removed for White/Anglo men.⁷ Also during that time, municipal governments adopted local voting regulations that mirrored the suffrage laws of their state. Since suffrage laws varied greatly from state to state, so did municipal voting requirements.⁸ Nevertheless, women had the right to vote in some state elections as early as 1838 and in municipal elections as early as 1887, and numerous states and territories granted women full suffrage prior to the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁹



Figure 1. Woman suffrage protestor, ca. 1915 (Library of Congress)

The Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, introduced in the U.S. Congress in 1878 and finally adopted on June 4, 1919, was the result of decades of organizing and protesting by women all over the country. It states that “the right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.” The amendment was not fully ratified until August 18, 1920, when Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify it, creating the required three-fourths majority approval at the state level.¹⁰ Colorado ratified the Nineteenth Amendment on December 15, 1919.¹¹

U. S. SUPREME COURT AND FEDERAL CASES

During the 1800s, women sued for their right to vote at the state level, with no success, in states such as California, Pennsylvania and Illinois. Two early cases, in New York and Missouri, brought the fight for women’s suffrage to the federal level.¹²

- In 1873, U. S. Circuit Court for the Northern District of New York considered *United States v. Susan B. Anthony*. Anthony and 14 other women were arrested after voting in a federal election in Rochester, New York, and charged with violating Section 19 of the Enforcement Act of 1870: voting without a legal right to do so. When requesting the case be moved from the district court to the circuit court, U. S. Attorney Richard Crowley announced that charges against Anthony would be a test case; eventually, he announced that the other women arrested would not be prosecuted. Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Ward Hunt presided over the case in circuit court. Anthony lost after Hunt ruled that none of her defense’s arguments were correct, and women did not have the right to vote at the federal level. Anthony was not allowed to appeal a conviction in a federal criminal case at that time, so her arguments did not reach the U.S. Supreme Court.¹³
- In 1874, the case of *Minor v. Happersett* was brought by Virginia Minor, a White U.S. citizen and resident of Missouri over the age of 21. Minor sued Reese Happersett, the Registrar of Voters who denied her attempt to vote in a federal election, arguing that because the Fourteenth Amendment said that “All persons born or naturalized in the United States” are citizens of the United States and that states could not infringe on a citizen’s “life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction, the equal protection of laws,” she, as a citizen, was entitled to vote. The state constitution of Missouri at that time declared that only male citizens of the state were entitled to vote, and the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the judgment of a lower court that the Missouri Constitution was not void, and therefore the Fourteenth Amendment did not give women the right to vote.¹⁴

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS

In 1861, the Colorado territorial legislature expanded property and earnings rights for married women. Full suffrage for women was considered at Colorado's 1876 constitutional convention, when it was admitted to the United States as a state, but the topic was tabled in order to avoid discord and left to be dealt with by the incoming General Assembly, although a compromise gave Colorado women the right to hold elected school positions and to vote in school elections.¹⁵

Finally, in 1893, following the passage of a referendum in the state legislature, the people of Colorado voted in favor of granting women's suffrage statewide, joining other Western states that had previously empowered women to vote. Three women were elected to the state House of Representatives the following year. More than 50 years later, in 1944, women's right to serve on a jury passed by popular vote.

Current research has yet to locate Colorado Supreme Court cases pertinent to women's suffrage for the period of significance, probably because women were fully enfranchised in Colorado by 1893, so no legal challenges were necessary.

Full suffrage for women was considered, but not enacted, when Colorado became a state in 1876. Women in Colorado achieved the right to vote in 1893.

THE NATIONAL WOMAN SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT

In July 1848, a women's rights convention took place in Seneca Falls, New York. Organizers included Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who drafted a "Declaration of Sentiments," modeled after the Declaration of Independence. This early meeting of activists for women's rights is considered by many to be the beginning of the women's suffrage movement.¹⁶ The path to voting rights for women was long and winding and encompassed the work of women, and men, from all over the country.

Within the United States, the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements were intertwined, as evidenced by the early activism of Mott, Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone. Anthony was a Quaker and a staunch abolitionist; along with Stanton and Stone, she formed the Women's Loyal National League in 1863 to work for a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery. These women also created the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) to secure voting rights for everyone. When activists led by Anthony's longtime friend Frederick Douglass prioritized voting rights for Black men in championing the Fifteenth Amendment, some women strongly disagreed with sacrificing the enfranchisement of women. Anthony, Stanton, and others subsequently left AERA and formed the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) in 1869.¹⁷ Another organization, the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA) was formed the same year by Lucy Stone and others. The two organizations had different strategies: while NWSA advocated for a federal amendment that would secure women's right to vote, AWSA fought for suffrage on a state-by-state basis.¹⁸ Several states granted women the right to vote before the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment, including Wyoming in 1869 and Colorado in 1893.

NWSA and AWSA merged in 1890, becoming the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA). Alice Stone Blackwell, daughter of Lucy Stone, was in charge of the merger and Stanton and Anthony served as co-presidents. NAWSA, along with local and state groups around the nation, advocated for suffrage by means of federal legislation.¹⁹ In 1912, Alice Paul and Lucy Burns were appointed to the NAWSA Congressional Committee. Paul and Burns wanted to campaign for a federal suffrage amendment and employ more militant tactics than NAWSA was comfortable with. Their NAWSA colleagues disagreed with that approach, leading Paul and Burns to form the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage (CU) in early 1913, although they continued to serve on the NAWSA Congressional Committee until that December. In March 1913, CU organized a march in Washington, D.C., the day before the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson. The event, with approximately 8,000 participants, was met with staunch opposition; some women were physically assaulted, while police refused to intervene.

Subsequent national attention to the march and its fallout led NAWSA to sever its relationship with CU by early 1914. However, CU gained the support of the Woman's Party of Western Voters, and by 1916, the two organizations merged to form the National Woman's Party (NWP). The platform of NWP was "to remain nonpartisan with the ultimate goal of a constitutional amendment ensuring suffrage for all women." NWP led picket lines outside the White House, with activists arrested and given progressively lengthening jail sentences. In January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson endorsed the women's suffrage amendment; however, the bill failed to pass in the Senate by two votes. NWP returned to the picket lines until the Nineteenth Amendment was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives in May 1919 and the U.S. Senate on June 4, 1919.²⁰

THE WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN COLORADO

The Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association (NPESA) was the most influential organization in the state in the campaign for women's suffrage. NPESA could trace its roots back to January 10, 1876, when women holding a convention at Unity Church in Denver established the Territorial Woman Suffrage Society (TWSS); this meeting coincided with the state's constitutional convention. TWSS would become the Women's Suffrage Association of Colorado in 1877, when the State of Colorado put women's suffrage to a popular vote; the association disbanded after the measure was soundly defeated at the polls. In 1890, the organization was revived as the Colorado Equal Suffrage Association (CESA); it was thought that replacing the word *woman* with the word *equal* would more widely appeal to voters. CESA organized women to vote and elect the first female school board member in Denver, suffragist Ione Hanna. With a referendum in 1893 for women's suffrage once again on the Colorado ballot, CESA reorganized and changed its name to the Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association (NPESA), again to broaden its appeal to include all groups who supported the right of women to vote.²¹

NPESA reached out to NAWSA leaders for assistance with the 1893 campaign. Carrie Chapman Catt traveled throughout Colorado, organizing local suffrage groups, and visited Fort Collins, speaking at the Opera House located at 123 North College Avenue. On November 8, 1893, the referendum granting Colorado women the right to vote passed, with 54.8% in favor and 45.2% opposed.²²

THE SUFFRAGE MOVEMENT IN FORT COLLINS

In 1876, Albina Louisa Washburn,²³ a homesteader and school teacher of the Big Thompson Valley in the Loveland area, introduced a resolution at the National Grange Convention in Chicago declaring that women must be given the right to vote. Washburn forced a vote by state delegations, with 24 “No” votes, and 9 representatives (including those from the then-new state of Colorado) voting “Yes.”²⁴ In Fall 1876, Washburn attended a convention of the AWSA in search of financial support for suffrage efforts in Colorado.²⁵ Women organized and focused on an 1877 state referendum granting them full suffrage; however, the measure was defeated handily, 14,053 votes to 6,612.²⁶

Washburn moved to Fort Collins after her husband died and started a local cooperative exchange in 1897 on the corner of Matthews and Myrtle Streets.²⁷ In 1898, she rented rooms in the Jefferson block (which she called Jefferson Hall) to establish a store, the “Cooperative Exchange No. 1 of Fort Collins,” along with a dining room and reading room.²⁸ The 1900 U.S. Census lists her occupation as “radical reformer.”²⁹

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Washburn, Albina Radical Reformer". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Washburn was also active in the Socialist Party and attended that group’s January 1902 state convention in Denver as a delegate. By July 1903, she had moved to San Diego, California, and was publishing a paper, the *Cooperative Exchange*.³⁰ In December 1910, she moved back to Fort Collins to live with her daughter, Winona Washburn Taylor.³¹

Carol Nichols Churchill, who published the *Queen Bee* in Denver and advocated for women’s equal rights, traveled to Fort Collins in March 1881. Churchill advertised an initial meeting to organize a women’s suffrage group, held at Fort Collins Grange No. 7,³² which led to the establishment of the Fort Collins Equal Suffrage Association (FCESA). Elizabeth Stone was one of the first Fort Collins women to host a meeting of the FCESA, at her home at 327 Jefferson Street.³³ Middle- and upper-class women often formed clubs and held meetings in their homes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was not considered proper at that time for women to meet in public places.³⁴

At that time, many women across the United States were concerned about alcohol consumption, a problem that they had no power to address through the ballot box. In 1879, Frances Willard, the national president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), declared that women’s suffrage was integral to the fight for prohibition. A local chapter of WCTU was started in Fort Collins by 1880.³⁵ Founding members of WCTU included Alice E. Edwards and Lucy Richards McIntyre, who was also a leader of the local suffrage movement. McIntyre served as the president and secretary of WCTU; wrote opinion pieces and letters to the editor of the *Fort Collins Courier*; and held meetings at her house at 137 Mathews Street. One letter to the editor pointed out that educated women had no voice in making the laws they had to live under, while men of any class were free to vote. Another Fort Collins woman, Sarah Jane Leffingwell Corbin, was also active in both movements and hosted many group meetings at her house at 402 Remington Street.³⁶ The Fort Collins branch of WCTU held a victory party in January 1921, at the Second Presbyterian Church (corner of Cherry and Whitcomb Streets, no longer extant), which included a discussion of the relationship between the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments.³⁷ WCTU continued to be active in Fort Collins, and to meet at the Presbyterian Church (which later moved to the corner of Grant Avenue and Maple Street) into the 1960s.³⁸



Figure 2. Lucy McIntyre, ca. 1911
(Fort Collins Museum of Discovery)

The original FCESA disbanded at some point (date unknown), and a new Fort Collins Equal Suffrage Association formed in September 1893. Men, who were included in the membership, began making speeches in Larimer County in support of women's suffrage, including at the Fossil Creek Schoolhouse, the Leonard School House, and schoolhouses in Districts 10 and 101.³⁹ One of these orators was Harlan Thomas, architect of buildings at Colorado Agricultural College (CAC), which became Colorado State University (CSU); Thomas' designs include the current CSU Industrial Arts building.⁴⁰

After the statewide referendum granting women the right to vote passed in November 1893, the new FCESA held a celebration at the Opera House on College Avenue. Later, FCESA sponsored a four-week course where local women could become better acquainted with politics, in partnership with the First Christian Church, where Sarah Corbin was a congregant; at that time, the church did not yet have a building and held its meetings in a tent.⁴¹ Each of Fort Collins' four wards had a polling location in April 1894, when women cast their first votes in Fort Collins. First Ward residents voted at the Commercial or Northern Hotel (166–180 College); Second Ward voted at the Opera House (123 North College Avenue); and Third Ward voting took place at an office at what is now 120 South College Avenue. Fourth Ward's polling place was located at the Remington School, on the southeast corner of Remington and Olive streets.⁴² The Remington School was condemned in 1968 and demolished; at that time, the building's address was 318 Remington Street.⁴³

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters (LWV) was first proposed by Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), at the 1919 NAWSA convention. Formed as an organization within NAWSA, the National League of Women Voters was formally organized in Chicago on February 14, 1920, with Maud Wood Park as its first president.⁴⁴ LWV is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that focuses on voter registration, voting rights, and providing information to voters about candidates and issues. The Colorado League of Women Voters (CLWV) was organized in 1928 to strive for "a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the confidence to participate."⁴⁵

Today, the national LWV organization acknowledges that Carrie Chapman Catt was "a complicated character, a political operative, and by modern standards, yes, racist." (Catt claimed — while campaigning for women's suffrage — that it would strengthen White supremacy.) LWV also recognizes that it was late to support civil rights for all Americans, not developing a discrimination policy until 1966.⁴⁶ The organization now acknowledges the impactful work of Black suffragists, including Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell, and the effect that Jim Crow laws had on preventing Black women from voting, even after passage of the Nineteenth Amendment.⁴⁷

On May 7, 1951, a local chapter of the LWV was formed in Fort Collins when 30 local women and four Colorado LWV leaders gathered at the Colonnades Restaurant's tearoom at 415 Remington Street and elected Dorothy Heynau the group's first president. The Fort Collins League of Women Voters (FCLWV) was open to all women citizens of voting age "who subscribe[d] to its principals (sic)." The organization was established on a provisional basis for its first year, while it planned to conduct studies of government on the federal, state and local level.⁴⁸ FCLWV held its orientation

meeting at the office of Eugenia Symms in Ammons Hall (NHRP 1978⁴⁹) on the CSU campus.⁵⁰ The local League was following its motto: “jumping to conclusions is not nearly as good as digging for facts.” It undertook a “Know your Town” study and also decided on in-depth examination of three topics in its first year: the federal budget and fiscal measures favoring a stable and expanding federal economy; the Colorado Constitution, considering revisions that may be needed; and the problems of local government.

To accomplish its proposed work, FCLWV organized into four units, each tasked with studying a certain topic and meeting twice a month.⁵¹ Current newspaper research shows that in the 1950s and 1960s the FCLWV continued employing units for study, and these groups met most often at members’ homes. In the coming decades, the local League would continue to examine issues as they affected Fort Collins and the nation, sponsor candidate’s events for the public, and take positions on issues in a nonpartisan manner.⁵² At its 1970 annual meeting, FCLVW listed its topics for study, including housing, welfare, poverty, environmental planning, education, and taxation.⁵³ At some point before 1994, FCLWV became the Larimer County LWV (LCLWV). Today, LCLWV’s agenda includes researching and supporting gun violence prevention, in partnership with the state League. LCLWV also has a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team and a stated goal of cultivating membership and encouraging civic engagement across the diverse populations of Larimer County communities.⁵⁴

The Colonnades Restaurant (415 Remington Street)⁵⁵ appears in Fort Collins newspaper research from 1950 through at least 1971; a cursory look at events from this time period shows the location to have hosted numerous women’s clubs for meetings, speaking engagements, and luncheons, with activity peaking in the mid-1950s. This building has been demolished.

AFRICAN AMERICAN VOTING RIGHTS

Free Black men had been able to vote in some states at the founding of the United States, but by 1855, only five states allowed African Americans to vote. Two years later, a Supreme Court case denied African Americans the vote on the federal level.⁵⁶

In 1857, the U. S. Supreme Court declared in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* that African Americans were not citizens and therefore were not protected under the U.S. Constitution, whether or not they were legally free. The decision declared the Missouri Compromise, which had abolished slavery in the Upper Louisiana Territory, unconstitutional, stating that the agreement violated the property rights of the owners of enslaved persons. Before that ruling, enslaved people had had the right to sue for their freedom in Missouri, where the case originated.⁵⁷

Prior to the Civil War, enslaved African Americans had no rights or control over their lives; they were considered property, and as such, could be bought and sold at any time. By 1860, enslaved populations were largely held in Southern states below North Carolina, as well as in Texas and Arkansas, reflecting the importance of cotton and sugar as agricultural crops. Smaller numbers of enslaved people were present in the Upper South, along what would become the border between the North and South during the Civil War.⁵⁸ Many free Black people living in the South were impelled to move north by the imposition of increasing restrictions, including being required to pay higher taxes, and the loss of suffrage.⁵⁹ Some states in the South had previously embraced universal White male suffrage, with no property ownership or tax requirements, but Black men were still excluded from the vote.⁶⁰

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Following the Civil War, at the beginning of Reconstruction, a flurry of legislative activity addressed equal suffrage on the federal level. The Fourteenth Amendment, passed by Congress in 1866 and ratified by the required number of states in 1868, provided equal protection to all citizens of the United States and established that all people born or naturalized in the country were citizens, including formerly enslaved people, negating the decision issued in the *Dred Scott* case.⁶¹

The Territorial Suffrage Act, ratified in January 1867 over President Andrew Johnson veto, prohibited U.S. territories from denying suffrage based on race or the previous condition of servitude.⁶² As seen later in this document, the activism of Black men in Denver, Colorado, helped shape awareness of equal suffrage in the territories at the federal level.

The Reconstruction Act of March 1867, ratified despite another Johnson veto, required Southern states to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment in order to rejoin the Union, as well as include suffrage for Black men in their state constitution.⁶³

The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870 gave African American men the right to vote and superseded any state laws related to Black voting.⁶⁴ Even with a Constitutional amendment, however, the voting power of Black men and other marginalized groups was suppressed by state governments through the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, and other means.⁶⁵ Poll taxes required a voter to pay a fee at a county assessor's office before an election. A potential voter in the mid- and late-nineteenth century could also be subjected to a literacy test, requiring a demonstrated ability to read in order to vote.⁶⁶ Poll taxes became illegal on the federal level with the passage of the 24th Amendment in 1964;⁶⁷ other suppressive tactics, including literacy tests, were addressed in the 1965 Voting Rights Act and its subsequent amendments.⁶⁸ White primaries, another form of voter suppression in which Black people were shut out of the Democratic Party primary process in the South, were ultimately declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1944. White primaries, another form of voter suppression in which Black people were shut out of the Democratic Party primary process in the South, were ultimately declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1944.⁶⁹

The Enforcement Act, first passed by Congress in 1870, required that elections be conducted without regard to race. Other Enforcement Acts followed in 1871, including those specifically targeting the Ku Klux Klan, which — along with other violent White supremacist groups — was active at this time, particularly in the South. Despite these federal actions, however, states and territories created their own laws, and the enfranchisement of Black people continued to be suppressed in most of the United States.⁷⁰

Between 1870 and the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, progress toward voting rights for all citizens on the federal level was sporadic. Rulings on amendments to the U.S. Constitution and state actions on voting rights were litigated through cases tried at the federal level and before the Supreme Court. In 1890, Congress attempted to strengthen federal powers over suffrage with the Federal Elections Bill, also called the Lodge Force Bill. The bill passed the House but died in the Senate in 1891.⁷¹

In 1957, President Dwight D. Eisenhower initiated the first Civil Rights Act since Reconstruction. Its passage established the Civil Rights Section of the Department of Justice, as well as a federal Civil Rights Commission.⁷² The 1960 Civil Rights Act, which penalized attempts to disenfranchise voter registration, was enacted to address loopholes in the 1957 legislation. This was followed in 1964 by the landmark Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in public places and in employment; it also called for the integration of schools. The Twenty-Fourth Amendment, ratified in 1964, finally enshrined a federal ban on poll taxes.⁷³

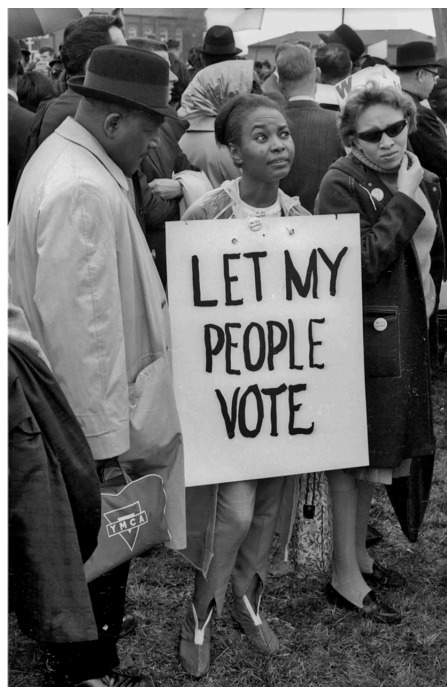


Figure 3. Day 5 of the march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., in March 1965 (Dan Budnik/Contact Press Images)

U. S. SUPREME COURT CASES

What follows is a brief overview of cases that shaped the path of equal suffrage for African Americans, prior to the passage of the Voting Act of 1965. Cases following the Civil War demonstrate the variation in state laws and civil rights among states of the Union.

During the nineteenth century, the U.S. Supreme Court largely upheld the rights of states and local governments to prevent African Americans from voting.

- 1876: *United States v. Reese*, 92 U.S. 214, Kentucky. First case after the Enforcement Act and the ratification of the 15th Amendment. Court found that the 15th Amendment did not confer the right to vote; The ruling gave states the ability to use tests to exclude African Americans from voting.
- 1876: *U.S. v Cruikshank*. A case based on the atrocities of the Colfax Massacre, which involved the murder of scores of African Americans outside the Colfax, Louisiana courthouse. Justices ruled that protections of the Fourteenth Amendment did not apply in this case, as it protected individuals from actions of the state only, not other individuals.⁷⁴
- 1884: *Ex parte Yarbrough*. The U.S. Supreme Court found that the federal government could charge citizens (in this case, Ku Klux Klan members) who interfered with a federal election.
- 1898: *Williams v. Mississippi*, 170 U. S. 213, Mississippi. The Court validated Mississippi's literacy test, finding it lawful under the Fifteenth Amendment. The court ruled that the literacy test did not discriminate on the basis of race, meaning the tests served as legitimate means of discerning voter eligibility.

Around 1940, the Court's decisions began to swing the other way, finding many state voting laws unconstitutional.

- Oklahoma was the last state to have an amendment to its constitution granting the right to vote only those whose grandfathers had voted before 1866, making Black persons ineligible. (This is called "the grandfather clause.") The Supreme Court struck down this amendment in 1915 with its decision in *Guinn v. United States* (238 U. S. 347, Oklahoma).
- 1939: *Lane v. Wilson*. The Court declared a 1916 Oklahoma statute, enacted to disenfranchise those who had not voted in the 1914 election, unconstitutional. This form of voter suppression was legal in Oklahoma for more than 20 years.⁷⁵
- 1944: *Smith v. Allwright*, 321 U.S. 649, Texas. Supreme Court finds White primaries in Texas unconstitutional, after a previous decision (*Grovey v. Townsend*) claiming the opposite; this was the final of three decisions involving Texas White primaries.⁷⁶
- 1949: *Schnell v. Davis*, 336 U.S. 933, Alabama. The U.S. Supreme Court sustains a federal decision (*Davis v. Schnell*, 81 F. Supp. 872, Southern District, Alabama) restricting voter registrars from using a literacy test to arbitrarily discriminate against Black voters.
- 1960: *United States v. Raines*, 362 U.S. 17, Georgia: the Supreme "Court upheld the constitutionality of the Civil Rights Act of 1957 that authorized the attorney general to seek a federal court injunction against persons who deprived others of the right to vote because of their race."⁷⁷

- 1960: *Gomillion v. Lightfoot* 364 U.S. 339, Alabama : the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the gerrymandering by the state legislature of the city of Tuskegee, Alabama violated the Fifteenth Amendment, denying African Americans equal representation. The state redrew the boundaries of Tuskegee to include almost no Black citizens, assigning the great majority of Black voters to counties surrounding the city.⁷⁸

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS

The Organic Act of 1861, which created the Colorado Territory, limited voting to “every free White male citizen of the United States above the age of twenty-one;” previous laws in the Jefferson Territory, a precursor to the Colorado Territory, had done the same.⁷⁹ The Jefferson Territory was established in the Pikes Peak region after voters rejected statehood in favor of territorial status. The territory had incorporated the city of Denver and established a judicial system and laws by January 1860, but it was never recognized by the U.S. Congress.⁸⁰

Black residents in the Colorado Territory played an important role in regard to wider suffrage for Black men at that time. Their activism began due to an amendment to Colorado’s voting law of 1861, passed in 1864 by the Colorado territorial legislature, stating that voting in the territory was open to all “male inhabitants, over the age of twenty-one years, not being negroes or mulattoes” and who had resided in the territory thirty days or more.⁸¹ A group of African American men from Denver, including orator William Jefferson Hardin, worked to bring federal attention to suffrage for Black men in the territory, intertwining the issue with Colorado statehood. In 1865, the Governor of the territory, Alexander Cummings, forwarded to Secretary of State William Seward a petition to the U.S. Congress containing the signatures of 137 Black people, opposing voting restrictions for Black men.⁸² A second petition, presented in 1866, also sought to allow Black children to attend public schools.⁸³

COLORADO SUPREME COURT CASES

Current research has not located any statutes or laws that affected African American voting rights on the state level during the period of significance.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN COLORADO

White suffragists were not the only activists concerned with the structure of the Fifteenth Amendment. Sojourner Truth had concerns about the fate of Black women should only Black men be granted the right to vote. Specifically, she was concerned that gender discrimination in Black communities would parallel discrimination in White communities if the Amendment granted only Black men the right to vote.⁸⁴

Just as White women had organized for women's suffrage, African American women also formed their own organizations, including the National Association of Colored Women (1896)⁸⁵ and the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs.⁸⁶

Elizabeth Piper Ensley was an African American suffragist who moved to Denver in 1892 and worked on the women's suffrage campaign that succeeded in 1893. Ensley founded the Colored Women's Republican Club and the Association of Colored Women's Clubs;⁸⁷ she was the only African American woman in the initial Colorado Equal Suffrage Association (later known as the NPESA).⁸⁸ She later served as the second vice president in the Colorado State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs.⁸⁹

African American women were disenfranchised on the bases of both their sex and their race; even after the Nineteenth Amendment was enacted in 1920, Black women in Colorado were subject to poll taxes and other means of voter suppression, just like Black men.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN FORT COLLINS

Currently, very little is known about the activism of African American women in Fort Collins during the period before 1920. The Black population at that time was very small. While initial research has uncovered at least one local Black woman, Edith Jennie Goodall, who was active in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the National Association of Colored Women, and the National Negro Educational Congress, there is no specific available evidence linking her to the suffrage movement in particular. Further research and assistance from the public may provide additional information on Goodall and other early twentieth century Black women in Fort Collins.

INDIGENOUS VOTING RIGHTS

The history of Indigenous voting rights is situated within the context of the federal government's attempts to force Native Americans to assimilate, which included requiring tribal peoples to become U. S. citizens in order to vote.⁹⁰ Just as many other civil rights issues were intertwined with one another, voting rights for Indigenous people were predicated on their ability and agreement to attain U.S. citizenship and their right and requirement to own property. In short, Indigenous people were forced to adopt or submit to European methods of governance and ideas about property ownership in order to have a voice at the polls, although doing so did not guarantee their ability to vote, due to other forms of discrimination.

The United States government forced tribal peoples in the eastern U.S. to territories west of the Mississippi River through the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which allowed the federal government to exchange land in eastern tribal territories for lands west of the Mississippi. However, the U.S. Congress went on to displace Native Americans already in the West through multiple pieces of legislation that redistributed their land to private interests and land-grant universities. State and federal laws also forced Indigenous people onto reservations throughout the West. In 1851, the Treaty of Fort Laramie committed to preserving land for the Cheyenne and Arapaho.⁹¹ However, just ten years later, the Treaty of Fort Wise reduced the lands granted to tribes in the previous treaty.⁹² In 1867, a treaty with the Cheyenne and Arapaho forced those people out of Colorado and into Indian Territory (now Oklahoma). The following year, a treaty with the Ute people established a tribal reservation in the western third of Colorado,⁹³ but in 1879, the federal government claimed a large portion of that land, forcing the Utes to relocate to Utah or possibly a smaller area in Colorado.⁹⁴

Enacted by the U.S. Congress on June 2, 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act granted citizenship to all Native Americans born in the U.S., although the law did not govern the right to vote, which was left up to the states. Some states did not grant Native Americans the right to vote in U.S. elections until 1957.



Figure 4. Native Americans register to vote on September 27, 1948, in New Mexico, (Bettmann/CORBIS)

STATE STRATEGIES FOR RESTRICTING INDIGENOUS VOTING

During the nineteenth century, violent clashes were common between Indigenous people and the European Americans making incursions into their lands, and the territorial or state governments representing those settlers were disinclined to extend the franchise to tribal members whom they considered to be their enemies. States employed five basic strategies to prevent Indigenous people from voting:

- Voting was restricted to only those Native people who had assimilated into the dominant society, abandoning their culture, language, and ways of life. In some cases, this extended to exclude “maintaining tribal relations,” although at least one state argued that people could not sever their tribal ties without federal approval.
- The inclusion of the words “Indians not taxed” in the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enabled states to argue that if Native Americans were exempt from paying taxes — for example, if a state government did not have the power to tax reservation land — they could not vote. This was enforced by multiple states even though they allowed nontaxed White people to vote.
- States described Native American tribes as being “under guardianship” to the federal government, based on the 1831 U.S. Supreme Court case, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*. Chief Justice John Marshall ruled that tribes were entities subject to the decisions of the federal government; Marshall called tribes “domestic dependent nations.” The decision did not define the legal status of Native Americans not associated with a tribe.⁹⁵ States subsequently conflated the federal obligation to tribes with the common-law guardianship used to exercise public powers to protect incapacitated individuals. Lower courts gradually clarified the definition of “guardianship,” state-by-state, through the middle of the twentieth century.
- State residency requirements were often used to disqualify Natives people from voting if they lived on reservations, where the state exercised no authority.
- Finally, states argued that tribal sovereignty — the ability of tribes to maintain their own systems of government and provide services to their members — should be taken to mean that Native Americans had no desire or right to participate in state or county government (including voting).

These arguments were addressed and dismissed by the U.S. Congress in Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the 1975 and 1982 amendments to that Act.⁹⁶

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS AND SUPREME COURT CASES

Colorado joined other western states including Nebraska, South Dakota, and Wyoming in denying Native Americans the right to vote by requiring all voters to be U. S. citizens.⁹⁷ No other relevant Colorado state laws were identified.

FORT COLLINS ACTIVITY

Most civil rights activity for Native Americans in Fort Collins appears to be associated with the American Indian Movement (AIM), an organization concerned with the civil rights of tribal peoples throughout the United States. In 1971, AIM was part of the Third World Coalition, along with CSU’s Black Student Alliance (BSA) and United Mexican-American Students (UMAS), which demanded changes to what it viewed as discriminatory policies on campus.⁹⁸ In 1975, Chick Ramirez, a former director of the Denver chapter of AIM spoke at CSU on “The Native American Today.”⁹⁹ None of AIM’s activities at CSU, however, appear to be related to voting.

HISPANIC/LATINO(A) VOTING RIGHTS

When the United States government took possession of Mexico's northern provinces following the Mexican American War of 1846–1848, few Mexican people lived as far north as present-day Fort Collins. That area had been home primarily to Indigenous tribes, who effectively prevented Mexican colonization before European settlers arrived. The U.S. government's removal of Indigenous people and seizure of their lands opened the American Southwest to settlement by others. Before 1900, most of the Mexican population of the United States was limited to those states which had previously been part of Mexico: Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, southern Colorado, and California. After the turn of the century, people of Mexican descent were increasingly drawn north into Colorado to work on the railroads and in mines, factories processing ore and other extracted minerals into cement and metal, and agriculture.¹⁰⁰ Immigrants from Mexico to the United States were attracted by security and employment opportunities, particularly as the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) motivated Mexican citizens to flee violent armed conflicts between the upper-class, Spanish-descent *criollos* and the part-Indigenous mestizos. Even after the Mexican Revolution had ended, immigration from Mexico to the United States was bolstered during the 1920s, when the U.S. government began to restrict immigration from Europe. Throughout the twentieth century, employers' demands for a low-cost workforce and government policies such as the guest-worker Bracero Program, which brought 400,000 Mexicans to the U.S. between 1943–1950, began cycles of immigration, illegal immigration, and deportation that have continued to the present day.¹⁰¹

Although Hispanic people did face harassment and other obstacles, they were not systematically excluded from the polls or from participating in the political process in the same ways that African American and Indigenous people were.¹⁰² In Colorado, the State Constitution required state laws to be printed in English, as well as Spanish and German, from 1876 until 1900.¹⁰³

HISPANIC VOTING ACTIVITY IN FORT COLLINS

The national organization of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was formed in 1929 in Corpus Christi, Texas, and led the Hispanic civil rights movement throughout the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁴ The National Council of La Raza (now UnidosUS) was born out of the Chicano movement in the 1970s and worked to elect Hispanic people to political office.¹⁰⁵ NCLR was and is separate from the Partido Nacional de La Raza Unida (National United Peoples Party) political party, also organized in Texas in 1970, which focused on getting out the vote as well as electing Hispanic officials. Note that both the organization and the political party are often referred to with the shorthand name "La Raza." In Fort Collins, only La Raza Unida was active.

Both LULAC and the La Raza Unida party played an important role in the civil rights movement in Fort Collins. In 1969, a chapter of LULAC was active in Fort Collins.¹⁰⁶ The following year, La Raza Unida announced 12 members running for state, county, and local offices, including two citizens of Fort Collins: Andres Gavaldon for district attorney in the Eighth Judicial District and Fred Tabias Gallegos for Larimer County Clerk. The Third State Assembly of the La Raza Unida Party took place at the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) Hall at the corner of Grant and Maple streets.¹⁰⁷ That building had, until relatively recently, been a church, the Second Presbyterian Church (234 N. Grant Ave.), which was constructed in 1922 as the second location of

this congregation (the first being at Cherry and Whitcomb Streets). In 1941, the church changed its name to Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church; its 45-member congregation merged with the 22-member Spanish Presbyterian Church in 1950 but retained the Grant Avenue name.¹⁰⁸ The aging, shrinking congregation disbanded in 1969,¹⁰⁹ and it appears that LULAC occupied the building, then known as “LULAC Hall,” in 1970.¹¹⁰ Both LULAC and La Raza Unida held meetings in that building in 1970, prior to the 1975 Amendment to the Voting Rights Act that provided additional protections for Hispanic persons. (The former church building has since been converted to condominiums.)

The La Raza Unida Party was active in Fort Collins by at least 1970, holding meetings in Fort Collins to select and announce candidates and to discuss the party’s platform.¹¹¹ La Raza candidates last ran in local elections, according to records located to date, in 1974.¹¹²

Based on stakeholder information and current research, LULAC was mainly concerned with education and policing issues in Fort Collins, as well as providing scholarships and opportunities for Hispanic children. Further LULAC activities in Fort Collins are discussed in other context reports in this study.

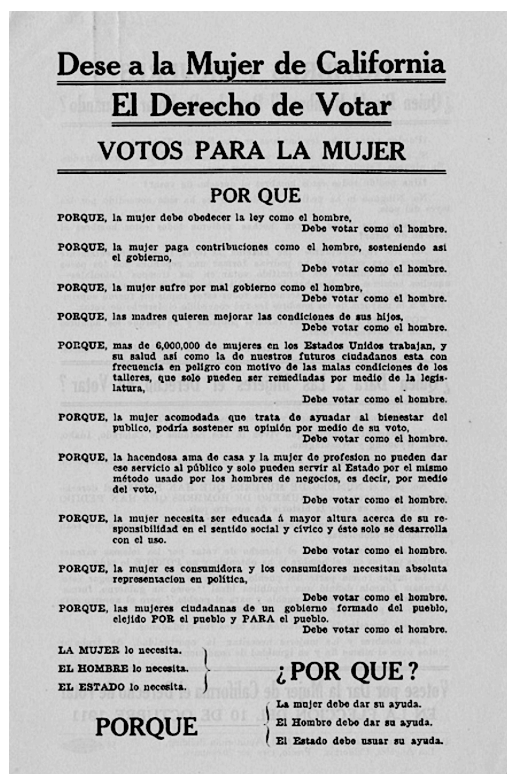


Figure 5. Los Angeles Political Equality League, “Pamphlet of the Los Angeles Political Equality League by Maria Lopez,” Claremont, California, 1911 (Women’s Museum of California)

ASIAN AMERICAN VOTING RIGHTS

As with Native Americans, the voting rights of Asian people were limited by discriminatory laws barring them from citizenship and property ownership. Additionally, like Hispanic people, they were subjected to volatile swings in immigration laws that both encouraged their migration to the United States to provide low-cost labor and then restricted from immigrating or becoming citizens. The lack of citizenship was used to prevent Asian immigrants from owning property.

Chinese people were prevented from becoming citizens, despite petitions to the courts to allow this. The U.S. Congress in 1870 specifically excluded Chinese people from eligibility for citizenship. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act created a ten-year ban on Chinese laborers immigrating to the United States and required non-laborers to produce documents from the Chinese government confirming their qualifications to immigrate. Chinese immigrants already in the U. S. had to secure documents for re-entry; state and federal courts were prohibited from granting citizenship to Chinese resident aliens but could deport them. The act was extended in 1892 as the Geary Act; which also required Chinese residents to obtain a certificate of residence, without which they could be deported. The Geary Act was made permanent in 1902.¹¹³ Japanese people were limited in their ability to immigrate to the U.S. in 1907. The laws preventing naturalized citizenship for Asian peoples were lifted, one group at a time, between 1943–1952.¹¹⁴ After the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act abolished the racist quota system established in 1924 that gave preference to Western/Northern Europeans, the U.S. experienced an upswing in immigration from Asia.¹¹⁵

Asian Americans were not especially concerned with voting rights, however; their primary focus for civil rights activism was on equal protection in employment, education, and housing. Only when those issues were addressed did Asian organizations turn their attention to voter registration.¹¹⁶

FORT COLLINS ACTIVITY

Current research has not located specific activity related to voting rights and the Fort Collins AAPI community.



Figure 6. Komako Kimura, a prominent Japanese suffragist, marches in New York on October 23, 1917. (Wikimedia Commons)

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT OF 1965 AND AMENDMENTS TO THE ACT

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 can be seen as a culmination of the struggle for voting rights that began before the Civil War. Designed to achieve universal voting equality in the United States, the Act returned oversight of discriminatory voting practices to the federal government and contained immediate remedies for any ongoing discrimination.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act stated that, in order to “assure that the right of citizens of the United States to vote is not denied or abridged on account of race or color, no citizen shall be denied the right to vote in any Federal, State, or local election because of his failure to comply with any test or device.” It also gave the U.S. Attorney General — utilizing voter eligibility information through November 1, 1964 — the power to initiate action against any state or locality that utilized testing or other devices designed to hinder voting. States and localities in which fewer than 50% of qualified adults voted in 1964 would have any eligibility tests or devices suspended for five years. Importantly, the Act stipulated that any state or locality under investigation could not institute any new voting regulations or laws without permission of the U.S. Attorney General or the U.S. District Court of the District of Columbia. Jurisdictions could no longer institute new discriminatory practices to replace previous tactics. The Act also requested that the Attorney General pursue the constitutionality of poll taxes in state and local elections.¹¹⁷ The Supreme Court would determine poll taxes unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment just one year later, in its 1966 decision on *Harper v. Virginia State Board of Elections*, 383 U.S. 663 (1966).¹¹⁸

Certain crucial provisions of the Voting Rights Act were set to expire in five years; these provisions were renewed after congressional hearings in 1970 and again by Congress in 1975, 1982, and 2006.¹¹⁹

Because the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was specifically intended to address discrimination against African Americans in the Southern United States, the places where “fewer than 50% of qualified adults voted in 1964” were limited. As a result, the Act did not apply to areas where non-White/Anglo people made up a smaller proportion of the population. In 1975, it was expanded to include 375 additional jurisdictions outside the South.¹²⁰ Also in 1975, the Voting Act was amended to include bilingual ballots for language minority groups, defined as “persons who are American Indian, Asian American, Alaskan Natives, or of Spanish Heritage.”¹²¹

In 1980, the City of Mobile, Alabama’s use of at-large elections, in place since 1911, was challenged in *City of Mobile v. Bolden*. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the electoral system did not violate the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments as it lacked proof of purposeful discrimination. Although in 1973 the Court had struck down at-large elections in Texas as discriminatory (*White v. Regester*), in *Mobile*, the court’s majority opinion set a high bar to prove discrimination, which it saw as required by the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act, and allowed the at-large election system in Mobile to continue.¹²² In 1982, Congress addressed the decision of *Mobile v. Bolden* by amending the Voting Rights Act to explicitly state that discrimination could be claimed without establishing a purposeful intent to discriminate¹²³ and renewed the 1965 Act, as amended, for 25 years.

PROPERTY TYPES ASSOCIATED WITH VOTING RIGHTS IN FORT COLLINS

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. The NPS theme study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights* identifies resources that could be nominated to the National Historic Landmarks Program, while this historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

- Property types identified in the theme study include those associated with:
- Interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, passage of federal legislation, or intervention by the Executive BranchThe federal government’s ability to prosecute private
- individuals for civil rights infractions
- The use of discriminatory tests and practices, the grandfather clause, poll taxes, etc. to prevent or discourage people from voting
- The use of White-only primary elections
- State laws that restricted or blocked Native people from voting if they were not taxed, maintained tribal affiliations, or lived on reservations.
- Nonviolent strategies by grassroots organizations to gain voting rights
- Violence committed against individuals and groups advocating for or otherwise working to achieve voting rights, including the federal government’s investigation of segregationist violence against civil rights worker
- Directly influencing the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965

This includes properties associated with individuals who led efforts to overturn legal obstacles to voting rights, worked to increase voter education and registration, or led groups which had a voting rights agenda. Most of the Associated Property Types found in Fort Collins to date would be categorized with “Nonviolent strategies by grassroots organizations to gain voting rights.”

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. For example, the substantial interior and exterior changes made to the Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church/LULAC Hall, in order to convert it to condominiums, have erased its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It only retains integrity of location, setting, and association, and the building is no longer identifiable as a church. It would not, therefore, be eligible for nomination to the NRHP.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for voting rights are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community. Property types associated with voting rights generally fall into one of the following four categories: meeting places, polling places, homes of significant individuals related to voting rights in Fort Collins, and protest sites/march routes.

- During the women's suffrage movement, community members met to share information, organize, and advocate for change. Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965, organizations such as LULAC and the La Raza Unida political party met with members of the community to educate and register voters and put forward Hispanic candidates for office. In both cases, these meetings took place in a variety of venues, including schools, churches, and restaurants.
- Polling places in Fort Collins were set up in publicly accessible spaces such as schools, churches, office spaces, hotels, and the opera house.
- Although no protest sites or march routes have been identified for the time period included in this historic context, that property type is listed here in the event that a community member might have information to share about that activity in the past.

Note: This project did not include a historic resources survey. Prior to further considering any of these resources for inclusion in a potential NRHP nomination, these properties should be appropriately surveyed and documented.

PROPERTY TYPE: RELIGIOUS FACILITY

Churches and synagogues are religious buildings used by congregations to meet for worship services, but they also were often used as meeting places for secular community organizations. During the period included in this historic context, many churches were extant in Fort Collins. The first Jewish synagogue building, for Congregation Har Shalom, was dedicated in 1982.

In order to be listed on the NRHP, a religious building must meet one of the four primary Criteria for the Evaluation of Significance (event, person, design/construction, or information potential) as well as Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties. A church where community organizers worked to secure voting rights — for example, by educating and helping to register Hispanic voters prior to 1975 — would meet Criterion A: "Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history." Criteria Consideration A states that a religious property's significance must be judged on purely secular terms; for example, a historic church building where an important non-religious event took place.

PROPERTY TYPE: SCHOOL

School buildings often include auditoriums or gymnasiums that can be used for community gatherings and for events such as speeches. In Fort Collins, particularly during the women's suffrage movement, speeches were given in support of voting rights for women at various schools. Schools also served as some of the first polling places for elections open to women or non-White/Anglo voters in Fort Collins.

The school building must still be recognizable as a school, whether it is still used for that function or not, and must retain its characteristic architecture, in order to have sufficient integrity to be considered for listing on the NRHP. The portion of the school that was used for speeches or polling stations (probably the gymnasium) must be extant; more research may be needed to determine the location of those events within the school building.

PROPERTY TYPE: RESTAURANT

In Fort Collins, the tearoom in the Colonnades Restaurant (415 Remington Street, no longer extant) was frequently the site of meetings for women during the suffrage movement. Restaurants were often located in the first-floor spaces of multi-story downtown buildings. Those spaces undoubtedly have been occupied by multiple tenants over the intervening years following the historic events described in this context narrative. In order to be eligible for the NRHP, the building should retain the historical configuration of spaces on the floor where the tearoom was located. Past alterations that removed significant interior details or finishes may affect the evaluation of integrity.

PROPERTY TYPE: HOTEL

The Commercial Hotel (now Northern Hotel Apartments, 172 N. College Ave.) served as a polling place when women cast their first votes in Fort Collins in 1894. The three-story building still functions as a Domestic resource, although the subcategory used by the NRHP today would be “multiple dwelling” instead of “hotel.” Because important architectural elements of this building have been retained, including the interior atrium, dome, staircase, and glass doors, alterations to other parts of the building may be minor enough to render the building as a whole eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A and possibly also Criterion C.

PROPERTY TYPE: SINGLE DWELLING

The homes of significant individuals associated with voting rights in Fort Collins may be eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A. The home of Albina Washburn in 1876 is still to be identified. Addresses during the women’s suffrage movement are known for the homes of Elizabeth Stone (327 Jefferson Street, no longer extant), Lucy Richards McIntyre (137 Mathews Street), and Sarah Jane Leffingwell Corbin (402 Remington Street, no longer extant), all local leaders of the women’s suffrage movement.

PROPERTY TYPE: MUSIC FACILITY

Carrie Chapman Catt traveled throughout Colorado in 1893, organizing local suffrage groups, and visited Fort Collins, speaking at the Opera House (123 North College Avenue). Opera houses were typically located on upper floors of multi-story downtown buildings. That space may have been occupied by tenants over the intervening years following the historic events described in this context narrative. In order to be eligible for the National Register under Criterion A, the building should retain the historical configuration of spaces on the floor where the opera house was located. Past alterations that removed significant interior details or finishes may affect the evaluation of integrity.

SITES PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

120 S. College Avenue – Mossman Building



123 N. College Avenue – Opera House



172 N. College Avenue – Northern Hotel



234 N. Grant Avenue – 2nd Presbyterian Church; Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church; LULAC Hall



235 Linden Street – Grange Hall No. 7



137 Mathews Street – Lucy McIntyre residence



3039 W. Vine Drive – District 10 Schoolhouse



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**THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**

**Racial Desegregation
of Public
Accommodations in
Fort Collins
(1867–1992)**

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Cover: "We Cater to White Trade Only" sign in restaurant window, Lancaster, Ohio, August 1938 (Library of Congress: Photographs of Signs Enforcing Racial Discrimination: Documentation by Farm Security Administration-Office of War Information Photographers; Location: F-9063; Reproduction Number: LC-USF33-6392-M4)

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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the *Fort Collins Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this historic context narrative focuses on the experiences and activism of seven marginalized groups: women, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, LGBTQIA+ people, and religious minorities. It covers the period from 1867, when the Territorial Suffrage Act was enacted, through 1992, when the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act went into effect. This historic context narrative examines federal and state legislative and judicial activity before turning its attention to segregation and public accommodations in Fort Collins.

Earlier documents that have informed this narrative include the NPS theme study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*, which examines court cases and legislation related to segregation for multiple demographic groups. However, this theme study acknowledged that it did not include information about events, people, or places associated with Native American access to public accommodations and instead recommended a further civil rights study specific to them.

This document describes de jure and de facto segregation¹ in public spaces, with a summary of federal legislation and judicial activity, state legislation and judicial activity, and finally, civil rights activism nationally, at the state level, and in Fort Collins. This historic context narrative further identifies associated property types and significant sites associated with civil rights and public accommodations within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Information about racial desegregation in public education is included in a separate historic context within this series, and therefore is not repeated here.

Note: The non-White/Anglo population in Fort Collins was relatively small during the period of time covered in this historic context. Additional research and contributions by community members are requested to supplement the information gathered to date from archives and community stories.

INTRODUCTION

During much of the history of the United States, White/Anglo people created rules and social practices that reserved much of the public sphere for themselves and prohibited access by other people. The term *public accommodation* refers to facilities that are used by the public at large, whether publicly or privately owned; *discrimination in public accommodations* describes the physical separation of people in those places based on race, skin color, religion, or national origin.

Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of those characteristics, and specifically identified the types of public places to which the law applied. (Private clubs were not included.) Prior to that legislation, it was common for people considered “non-White” to be excluded from accessing public spaces, although the definition of “non-White” was not fixed or common across different parts of the country or even from city to city. The history of segregation as applied to African American people is perhaps best known, but people of Hispanic and Asian descent, as well as Native Americans, were also subjected to that type of discrimination.

People with disabilities were not included in Title II, but their access to public accommodations was codified in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, which became effective in 1992.

Title II also does not apply to LGBTQIA+ people. In more recent years, 21 states and the District of Columbia have extended protections for access to public accommodations to include sexual orientation and 17 states prohibit discrimination on the basis of gender identity.² Where no such protections exist, LGBTQIA+ people can be refused entry or service.



Figure 1. A man climbs the stairs to a segregated movie theater entrance, 1939 (Library of Congress)

STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND JUDICIAL ACTIVITY

The following information is largely derived from the NPS theme study, *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*, except where noted.

The United States government did not address segregation in public accommodations prior to the Civil War, instead deferring those decisions to state and local governments. Throughout the nation, including in northern states where Black people lived freely, they were prevented from mixing with White people in public transportation, theaters, churches, restaurants, schools, hospitals, and cemeteries. Segregation could take two forms: either African Americans were banned altogether or they were only allowed to occupy clearly defined areas.

Black people were unsatisfied with those conditions, however, and in Massachusetts they took action to end segregation through protests, boycotts, legislation and legal action as early as 1838; they succeeded in those efforts by 1843. Similar advocacy and legal strategies were employed throughout the rest of the northern states, with the result that, by 1865, transportation had largely been desegregated.

While the U.S. Congress attempted, following the Civil War, to address this form of discrimination, the U.S. Supreme Court both struck down attempts to mandate desegregation and upheld the rights of public and private property owners to enforce segregation. The first major setback for desegregation took place in 1857, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against an enslaved man named Dred Scott who had been taken by his owners to the free territories of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Minnesota; he then sued his owner, claiming that since the 1820 Missouri Compromise prohibited slavery in those territories, he should be freed. The Court found that he could not be a citizen of Missouri and, more importantly, that the U.S. Congress “had no authority to forbid slavery in the territories.”

Andrew Johnson, who became U.S. president after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, enabled southern states to re-enter the Union relatively easily. Those states quickly created Black Codes — laws that severely limited most civil rights, including freedom of movement, for African Americans and codified segregation as an alternative to outright exclusion. An attempt by Congress in 1866 to pass a Civil Rights Act, which would ensure that “all persons born in the United States (except Indians) were citizens regardless of race, color or previous condition of slavery or involuntary servitude,” was vetoed by Johnson as a violation of states’ rights. Congress then passed the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which makes all persons born in the United States citizens of the nation and of the state where they reside; the Amendment also prohibits states from making or enforcing any laws that deny “full rights and privileges” to these citizens.

African Americans continued to protest, boycott, and advocate for their right to occupy public spaces. They successfully integrated public transportation in cities throughout the northern and southern U.S. in the early 1870s. In 1873, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that people of color could not be forced to ride in separate railroad cars from White people, even if the cars were equal.

FEDERAL LAWS AND JUDICIAL ACTIVITY

In the Civil Rights Act of 1875, Congress enacted an unambiguous ban on private acts of racial discrimination in the area of equal access to public accommodations, but the US Supreme Court invalidated the legislation in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, saying that it was not authorized by either the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendments — meaning that individual civil rights were protected from the actions of the federal and state governments but not from the actions of private individuals. In the void created by the Court's action, the states took action to either prohibit discrimination in public accommodations or (in southern states especially) to codify segregation.

The landmark *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896 sanctioned the concept of “separate but equal” accommodations and led to further state laws and municipal ordinances excluding Black people from a wide variety of public spaces. Southern states passed laws to segregate public transportation, including buses, streetcars, steamboats, ferries, and railroad waiting rooms, sleeping compartments, and dining cars.³

Throughout the majority of the twentieth century, many African Americans worked to influence government officials, exercise their right to boycott segregated facilities, protest through sit-ins and other nonviolent activities, and otherwise engage in activism to secure their right to public accommodations. However, it was not until the 1960s that they were successful.

On December 31, 1963, United States assistant attorney general Nicholas deB. Katzenbach sent a telegram to United States Attorneys around the country, asking them to provide the text of any municipal ordinances codifying segregation. Responses sent to Katzenbach during 1964 are collected in the files of the Records of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.⁴ Forty-eight separate types of public spaces were identified in municipal segregation ordinances. The most segregated places in this study included, in order:

1. Public transportation vehicles (buses, streetcars, or trolleys)
2. Housing
3. Taxicabs or jitneys
4. Cemeteries or sections thereof
5. Public transportation waiting rooms
6. Food establishments, such as restaurants, cafes, or coffeeshops
7. Schools
8. Restrooms in public transportation terminals or stations

While the NAACP study focused on southern states, racial discrimination in public accommodations was similarly practiced in the American West, notably against Hispanic, Asian, and Native American people. “White Trade Only” signs were common; the *Plessy* decision gave states the power to discriminate against anyone of color.

Mexican Americans throughout the western U.S. began to organize against such segregation in the early 1900s, forming mutual aid societies and political organizations to advance their cause. In Colorado, Mexican residents organized their own American Legion hall (in Greeley) as well as mutual aid societies in some of the mining towns around Denver. In the 1930s, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) formed in Corpus Christi, Texas, to fight for the desegregation of public facilities. That organization spread across the Southwest, including Colorado.

Violence against Asian Americans led many Asian communities to retreat to ethnic enclaves: self-contained areas where they could live, shop, conduct business, worship, and enjoy their own entertainments without harassment. So-called Chinatowns or Japanese districts were established in many U.S. cities. During World War II, Chinese Americans and Korean Americans often found it necessary to make it clear that they were not Japanese. Following the release of Japanese citizens from internment camps following the end of World War II, “No Japs Allowed” or “No Japs Welcome” signs were common in some places, although little research has been done nationally to document segregation in public accommodations as it was applied to Asian Americans and immigrants.

Finally, in 1964, Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal to discriminate on the basis of race, skin color, religion or national origin.

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS

The Colorado Legislature passed the 1895 Civil Rights Act, outlawing discrimination in places of public accommodation. However, that was not enforced, leaving cities and towns to enact their own regulations, whether through formal governmental action or common practice.

Colorado followed many other states in establishing ‘Blue Laws’ on Sundays, prohibiting many types of commerce and alcohol sales on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, as well as other Christian holidays. First enacted in England and brought to Colonial America, these laws have been challenged for, among other reasons, discrimination toward businesses closed on Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. While challenged as violating the First Amendment, the Supreme Court in *McGowan v. Maryland* upheld Blue Laws as creating a uniform day of rest. Blue Laws have been repealed in the majority cases, with laws still in place varying from state to state. Currently, the only Blue Law in Colorado prohibits automobile sales on Sundays.⁵

In 1965, Colorado Senate Bill 47 mandated access to public buildings for disabled persons.⁶

PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS DISCRIMINATION AND ACTIVISM IN FORT COLLINS

Many public spaces in Fort Collins were segregated and either excluded non-White/Anglo people altogether or limited their access to prevent them from mixing with White patrons.

“WHITE TRADE ONLY” SIGNS AND ADVERTISEMENTS

It is not clear when businesses in Fort Collins began to display “White Trade Only” signs in shop windows and advertisements. Current research has located evidence of “White Trade Only” signs on Front Range as early as 1926, when a church in Longmont led a protest of the signs. Print advertising in Fort Collins for services practicing this form of racial exclusion appears by at least 1938; in October of that year, the announcement for the opening of the Help Yourself Laundry (248 Linden Street) stated “We Solicit White Trade Only.” In 1943 the Rainbow Café (150 N. College Avenue) advertised, “We Cater To White Trade Only.”⁷

Stakeholders who contributed to this research reported that other versions of these signs included “No Mexicans,” “No Indians/No Dogs,” and so forth.

In May 1944, after “Spanish-American” soldiers in uniform expressed anger at the signs and subsequent refusal of service that they experienced in Fort Collins, the City Council was advised by a city attorney that it had no jurisdiction over the matter. Nine months later, Army veteran John S. Chavez wrote a letter to the editor of the Coloradoan noting that his ancestors were from Spain and, during his time in the Army, he had encountered no other place where people of Spanish descent were discriminated against in that way.⁸ In September 1945, the City Council condemned the signs after once again hearing stories of active servicemen being denied service in “White Trade Only” establishments. Although the Council discussed possible action, no city ordinance was applicable to the situation, and remedies afforded by state legislation involved civil actions taken by those suffering discrimination.⁹ The City could not sue on behalf of individuals.

The Fort Collins Council of Churches’ Spanish Activities Committee also supported the removal of the signs; in January 1945, that group adopted a resolution protesting racial discrimination in the community and the signs in downtown businesses in particular. In March 1945, 80 people gathered at the city library auditorium for a community forum entitled, “Shall Fort Collins Continue Racial Discrimination and White Trade Only Signs?” Sponsored by the Friends of the Library, speakers included Dr. Gerald Hudson of CSU, a city attorney, and Mrs. G.E. Whiteford, chair of the Spanish Activities committee. Also present at the forum was “a representative of the Spanish colony.” The forum sought “remedies for the conditions which result in the posting of such signs and in other phases of racial discrimination” in the Fort Collins community.¹⁰ In October 1945, the Council of Churches, at a meeting at the First Presbyterian Church attended by 100 people, adopted a further resolution urging people “to patronize those businesses which do not practice racial discrimination.” The passing of this resolution followed reporting that there had been little change in the use of White Trade signs since the passing of the January resolution.¹¹

In early December 1945, the CSU Pan-American Students Association, which included students who were military veterans, arranged a dinner with city officials, restaurant owners, and church leaders to discuss abolishing the signs. Students visiting from other countries reportedly expressed their shock at seeing the social conditions experienced by minority students and residents in Fort Collins, in comparison to their countries of origin. For example, an Ecuadorian government official, Cesar Herrera, studying soil conservation at CSU in 1945, said, "All over the country [United States] I have been in towns and cities, and only in Fort Collins have I seen the signs, 'White Trade Only'. Why do your people do this? Did not the Mexicans come to this state to help you on your farms? This I cannot understand."¹² Paul Rothenberg, a blind veteran, spoke at the meeting; his writing about the issue had been published in both the *Rocky Mountain Collegian* and *Coloradoan* newspapers. Rothenberg hoped to have the signs down by Christmas and personally spoke with all the restaurants that still had signs posted on Christmas Eve. By the end of the month, students surveyed business owners and managers, and reported that only six signs were still hanging in windows.¹³

The most recent mention about these signs took place in April 1952, when signs were seen on the outer doors of a downtown beer hall. CSU students were considering a boycott of the establishment as a way to eliminate this practice.¹⁴

The discussion of these signs, their meaning, and their effect on minority communities in Fort Collins is an ongoing dialogue. Stakeholders who participated in this study reported that after "White Trade Only" signs came down discrimination continued in other ways. For example, signs which said "we reserve the right not to serve any customer" took the place of White Trade signs; some stakeholders reported that as a minority in Fort Collins they were simply ignored when seeking service in certain public locations, such as restaurants and retail stores. In some cases, stakeholders report that, even in recent years, they have been discriminated against based on their race when shopping or trying to buy a car.

RESTAURANTS

While attending CAC/CSU in Fort Collins, African American football star John Mosley and his friends were unable find restaurants that would serve them or Mexicans. In an interview, later in life, Mosley said, "About the only place we could eat at in town was the Poudre Valley Creamery for an ice cream cone."¹⁵ When Mosley was living in Fort Collins, the creamery was located at 145 W. Oak Avenue; by at least 1960, that business had moved to 222 Laporte Avenue. A small 1964 building that was a part of the creamery is still extant and now stands at 212 Laporte Avenue, after being moved to make way for a City Administration Building.

Civic leader Jerry Gavaldon notes that, as a child, he was able to enter "White" restaurants to sell poppies during a campaign to raise money for military veterans; this memory reinforces that even after the "White Trade Only" signs came down, non-White/Anglo people were still effectively excluded from some public accommodations. Gavaldon might have been able to enter briefly but likely would not have been welcomed as a customer.

HOTELS

Early African American history related to segregated public accommodations mainly focuses on the Charles and Mamie Birdwhistle family, who were active in the Fort Collins community beginning in 1922, holding church services at their home at 1005 Oak Street. The family accommodated many Black visitors in their home between 1928–1944 because African Americans were excluded from hotels in Fort Collins.

ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION

Beet field workers organized an informal baseball teams in the 1920s that played on Sunday afternoons, the workers' only day off; the Fort Collins Team was organized by Fred Olivas. Games were held at schools, parks, and in the neighborhoods created by the Great Western Sugar Company; while some teams were made up of only Hispanics, other teams "were made up of Spaniards, Mexicans and some Russians."¹⁶ Before World War II, a rivalry existed between the Mexican-majority Fort Collins Team and a westside White/Anglo team, the Dirty Dozen; the manager of the Dozen, Cliff Dolan, controlled the field the teams played on, and would end games at will, often before the ninth inning when the Fort Collins Team was winning. After World War II, the Fort Collins Team became the Legionnaires, so named after Alonzo Martínez American Legion Post 187.¹⁷ Stakeholders interviewed for this study stated that "Mexican League" baseball teams, such as the Legionnaires, were created because Hispanic men were not initially allowed to play on White/Anglo teams. Later, the Mexican League let anyone join their teams, regardless of race. Many in the Fort Collins community credit the gradual desegregation of these teams as an important step in race relations in the city.¹⁸ While these later Hispanic and White/Anglo teams utilized the same field, further research is needed to determine what type of accommodations issues, if any, players and game attendees were subjected to during the time that teams were segregated.

In 1939, Mattie Lyle, an African American resident of Fort Collins, sued the owner of the State Theater for refusing to "render full and equal enjoyment ... to the plaintiff" and discrimination "against the plaintiff for no other reason than she was a colored citizen, against the form of the statutes." Lyle was living at 312 Meldrum Street at the time of this action. Mrs. Lyle's case was successful, and theater owner L. C. Snyder paid her damages.¹⁹

In 1950, the Latin American Council, based in Denver, filed a racial discrimination complaint with Colorado Attorney General John W. Metzger against Fort Collins "taverns and amusement places". The Council requested an investigation into complaints that people of Latin American descent had been denied admission to various public places, and that White Trade Only signs were being displayed in violation of state law.²⁰

At a 1965 teach-in event on human relations, Bernard Valdez, director of the Denver Department of Welfare, shared memories of his youth in Fort Collins, noting that "as a member of a migrant farm-working family and of Spanish-American ancestry, I spent the most miserable time of my life in Fort Collins. Everywhere I went there were signs or customs I had to watch. Signs in the restaurants, one barber shop where they would cut my hair, and it was always the balcony where I had to sit at the theater."²¹ Stakeholders assisting in this study also reported that the Lyric Theater used to segregate Hispanic children, making them sit in a balcony while White children were seated on the main level. Another stakeholder reported that the Elks Club used to be segregated, but they were not sure when that changed.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SERVICES AND ACCESSIBILITY

Residents of Fort Collins first experienced local public transportation in the form of electric streetcars operated by the Denver & Interurban Railroad, a subsidiary of the Colorado and Southern Railway, in 1908. After the company went out of business in 1918, the City of Fort Collins purchased the streetcar line and folded it into a municipal railway system, which provided service from 1919-1952. A private company began offering bus service in the late 1940s.²² Transfort, a City public transit agency, was established in 1974 to provide bus service in Fort Collins. Elderly and disabled residents were additionally served by the City's Care-A-Van service, also started in 1974.²³ In 1964, the Larimer County Community Center Board (LCCCB) was established, by state mandate, to handle services for the developmentally disabled in the county. Board members included residents of Loveland and Fort Collins, and the group was headquartered in the Rocky Mountain Bank building at 211 Canyon Avenue (extant), constructed ca. 1966 on the site of the former James Andrews home.²⁴ In March 1973, a Fort Collins group called Foothills-Gateways Projects tried to raise \$12,000 to buy a 48-passenger bus for the Foothills-Gateway Rehabilitation Center. The group's efforts were supported by Care-A-Van, an organization that provided transportation services to 150 disabled, elderly, and deprived persons each day in the Fort Collins-Loveland area. Approximately 50 Fort Collins residents used the transportation service to get to the new Foothills Center, which provided speech and occupational therapy, instruction for ungraded and preschool children, and workshops. The LCCCB provided grant funding for this project.²⁵

DISABILITY RIGHTS AND PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

CSU's first quadriplegic graduate in 1974, Ron Halsey, had transferred to CSU to complete his sociology degree "because it was the only campus in the state that could begin to facilitate" the disabled at that time. Halsey noted that the campus was improving, although it still contained areas that were completely inaccessible to disabled people. He was an active member of the CSU Handicap Committee, which worked to improve conditions for disabled students on campus.²⁶ In 1977, CSU held an architectural barriers symposium, and the following year, CSU's Office of Resources for Disabled Students (ORDS) sponsored Handicap Awareness Week, focused on helping "people would challenge some myths and misconceptions regarding" disabled persons.²⁷

In 1976, residents of Fort Collins organized the Poudre Valley Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind to urge the city to adopt an electronic system that could help sight-impaired people cross streets safely. Other goals included installing Braille or raised street signs, bright contrasting stripes in public places to aid partially sighted people, and Braille identifiers for public restrooms.²⁸

The Fort Collins Conference on the Handicapped took place in August 1976; it was an open forum for disabled people to discuss their needs and issues. Approximately 70 people attended the weekend of workshops, held at the Holiday Inn at 3836 E. Mulberry Street. A petition drafted at the conference asked county commissioners to help finance transportation for disabled people to regional and state conferences on the disabled. Conference participants discussed architectural barriers, employment issues, voting issues, a lack of general understanding by the public, and connecting with other people who are disabled, as well as Larimer County's lack of a group home for disabled persons at that time.²⁹

In 1977, the Civitan Club, “Fort Collins’ newest service club,” was organized in the city. The group, which included disabled members, was organized to advocate for and provide assistance to the city’s developmentally and physically disabled persons. One of the group’s first projects was to hold a summer camp for the disabled in Larimer County. The club was also involved in an effort to maintain Care-A-Van transportation services,³⁰ which operated through at least 1995.

In 1978, Lincoln Center’s main concert hall was built to accommodate patrons in wheelchairs.³¹

In 1994, an ADA-compliant public meeting was held by the City of Fort Collins to discuss a Transit and Paratransit Plan. Wheelchair transportation was provided for the meeting, as well as a sign language interpreter.³²

In 1994, Shirley Reichenbach, a Fort Collins advocate for the disabled and member of the city’s Commission on Disability, contacted the office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) because a housing development in Fort Collins was not ADA accessible. Reichenbach wanted to live in the development, but as a person who uses a wheelchair, was not able to do so. HUD forced the owners of the development to create an escrow account that could pay to upgrade units in the development at no charge to tenants. Reichenbach also worked with city officials to ensure that building designs considered the disabled. Some fights with developers resulted in her receiving death threats.³³

In 1995, Rose Creston, the director of resources for disabled students at CSU, spoke about changes and improvements for disabled people since the 1990 passage of the ADA. She reported that, while disabled residents of Fort Collins thought the city had done a good job in making sidewalks and public places accessible, employment and housing were still an overriding concern, particularly being discriminated against in hiring, due to a fear of and stereotyping against the disabled.³⁴

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. The NPS theme study *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations* identifies resources that could be nominated to the National Historic Landmarks Program, while this historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

Property types identified in the theme study include those that:

- Interpret the constitutionality of the right of individuals and states to racially segregate public transportation and accommodations. In other words, these properties were associated with laws or court cases that enshrined segregation.
- Interpret a constitutional right to desegregated transportation. These properties were associated with laws or court cases that mandated desegregation in public transportation.
- Initiated the grassroots nonviolent direct-action phase of the modern civil rights movement and served as a model for other campaigns. At the local level, this can include organizations that led protests, demonstrations, and sit-ins.
- Established nonviolence training and philosophy that produced prominent student leaders or were training centers for the civil rights movement (again, at the local or state level).
- Enforced desegregation of transportation under the Interstate Commerce Act of 1961, which required the desegregation of interstate buses and bus terminals.
- Interpret the constitutionality of Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In other words, these properties either were associated with advocacy and other activities that directly led to the Civil Rights Act or they were associated with changes in segregation status following that Act.
- Are associated with individuals who can be documented as preeminent leaders in desegregating public accommodations.

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for fair housing are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community.

Note: This project did not include a historic resources survey. Prior to further considering any of these resources for inclusion in a potential NRHP nomination, these properties should be appropriately surveyed and documented.

PROPERTY TYPE: THEATER

The State Theater (now addressed at 151 N. College Avenue) is significant as a property that can “interpret the constitutionality of the right of individuals and states to racially segregate public transportation and accommodations.”

The Lyric Theatre (131 E. Mountain Avenue, demolished) reportedly segregated Mexican Americans to the balcony. It is significant as a property that can “interpret the constitutionality of the right of individuals and states to racially segregate public transportation and accommodations.”

PROPERTY TYPE: SINGLE DWELLING

The Birdwhistle family home (1005 Oak Street) is significant as a property that can “interpret the constitutionality of the right of individuals and states to racially segregate public transportation and accommodations.” When African Americans were not allowed to stay in hotels, private homes like the Birdwhistles’ were often their only option.

The home of Mattie Lyle (312 N. Meldrum Street) is significant due to its association with an “individual who can be documented as a preeminent leader in desegregating public accommodations” in Fort Collins.

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

151 N. College Avenue – State Theater



312 N. Meldrum Street – Mattie Lyle residence



1005 W. Oak Street – Charles and Mamie Birdwhistle residence



200 Mathews Street – Carnegie Library Auditorium

211 Canyon Avenue – Rocky Mountain Bank Building; office of the Larimer County Community Center Board

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- 1 *De jure* means “officially sanctioned by law” while *de facto* means something that is not officially sanctioned but happens anyway in practice. The difference between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation may not be especially important, since the resulting injury to those discriminated against was the same.
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**THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**

**Equal Employment in
Fort Collins
(1882–1992)**



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Cover photo: Marjory Collins, photographer. Stockton vicinity, California. Mexican agricultural laborer topping sugar beets, May 1943. Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017853212/>.

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This project was made possible in part by a grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund.

STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the *Fort Collins Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this historic context narrative focuses on the experiences and activism of seven marginalized groups: women, Indigenous peoples, African Americans, Hispanic people, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, LGBTQIA+ people, and religious minorities. It covers the period from 1882, when Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, which greatly altered employment possibilities for Chinese immigrants, through 1992, when the Americans with Disabilities Act went into effect. This historic context narrative examines federal and state legislative and judicial activity before turning its attention to equal employment in Fort Collins.

Unlike other major themes in the civil rights movement, this area has not yet been explored in an NPS theme study, although NPS recently published *Labor History in the United States* (2022), which touches on some of these topics. This document, therefore, relies heavily on local informants and their reported experiences.

Following a summary of federal and state legislation and judicial activity, this document examines civil rights activism nationally, at the state level, and in Fort Collins. This historic context narrative further identifies associated property types and significant sites associated with voting rights within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Note: The non-White/Anglo population in Fort Collins was relatively small during the period of time covered in this historic context. Additional research and contributions by community members are requested to supplement the information gathered to date from archives and community stories.

INTRODUCTION

For most of this nation's history, employers were able to discriminate against job candidates or employees based on their race or ethnicity, skin color, religion, nation of origin, sex, sexual orientation, or any other subjective aspect. Discrimination in employment can take the form of discrimination in hiring or refusing to consider people for promotions. In addition to race-based hiring practices, women frequently were passed over for jobs and promotions because employers rationalized that men, as the traditional heads of households, more keenly needed those opportunities.

Discrimination in the workplace includes being subjected to harassing behavior or inappropriate language (such as racial slurs or sexual innuendo) and, for many years, it also included women losing their jobs as soon as they married or became pregnant.

Discrimination can also take the form of paying people unequally for doing the same or similar jobs. For example, women historically have been paid less than men, who are/were often expected to be the primary wage-earners in the family.

Discrimination may be direct (such as only hiring White men) or indirect, such as creating a set of hiring criteria that are not explicitly discriminatory but that, in practice, only White men can achieve. Indirect discrimination can also take the form of hiring requirements that are not related to the specific job; for example, if candidates are formally required to have a certain level of education that is not warranted by the duties of the position. At a time when higher education was not widely available to women or African Americans, for example, such a requirement could prevent those candidates from applying for any sort of job.

STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION AND JUDICIAL ACTIVITY

Prior to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, employment laws that governed the employment of women and non-White/Anglo men were entirely the province of state legislatures. This historic context does not address labor issues, such as safety in the workplace or child labor, except to note that some state laws created to protect women and children, which required them to be treated differently than men, gave courts the grounds for issuing decisions that maintained inequities and inequalities for women workers.¹ Beyond acknowledging that here, this historic context narrative is concerned entirely with the equal opportunity of adults to secure employment under fair and equitable conditions.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

Anti-immigrant sentiment in the country resulted in the federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.

The first federal laws to protect workers who believed that they had been discriminated against by their employers were enacted in the 1960s and 1970s.²

- 1963: The Equal Pay Act was passed, protecting “men and women who perform substantially equal work in the same establishment” from sex-based wage discrimination.
- 1964: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act prohibited employment discrimination based on race, sex, color, religion and national origin. It also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to enforce Title VII and eliminate unlawful employment discrimination. This law originally only applied to private employers, employment agencies, and labor unions.
- 1967: The Age Discrimination in Employment Act was passed to protect individuals between the ages of 40–65.
- 1972: Congress amended Title VII of the Civil Rights Act to give the EEOC authority to file lawsuits against private employers and extended the protections of the Act to federal employees and state and local governments that employ at least 15 people.
- 1973: Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act prohibits the federal government from discriminating against “qualified individuals with disabilities.”
- 1978: Congress again amended Title VII of the Civil Rights Act with the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, which defines discrimination based on pregnancy as a form of unlawful sex discrimination.
- 1992: The Americans with Disabilities Act, passed in 1990, becomes effective; this law prohibits private employers, state and local governments, unions, and employment agencies from discriminating against people with disabilities in employment.

U. S. SUPREME COURT CASES

Only after federal legislation outlawed employment discrimination could individuals sue their employers in court. Some of the landmark U.S. Supreme Court Cases during the time period included in this historic context include:³

- *Griggs v. Duke Power Co.* (1971). The company used educational requirements and intelligence tests (unrelated to job performance) as a screening tool during the hiring process. The Court found that those requirements continued the company's previous practice of intentionally excluding African Americans from applying for jobs or transfers within the company and, therefore, were a form of unlawful discrimination.
- *Cleveland Board of Education v. LaFleur* (1974). The Cleveland school board required pregnant teachers to go on unpaid maternity leave five months before their due date and prohibited them from returning to work before the beginning for the first regular semester after their child was three months old. The teacher also had to have a certificate of physical fitness from their physician. The Court found those rules to be arbitrary and, therefore, an unconstitutional violation of the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process Clause.
- *Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson* (1986). The Court found that sexual harassment can create a hostile work environment and that an employer is liable for sexual harassment by supervisory personnel, whether the employer was aware of the harassment or not.
- *Johnson v. Transportation Agency* (1987). The Santa Clara County (California) Transportation Agency took into account the sex of an applicant, as part of an Affirmative Action Plan designed to promote more diversity in a traditionally White male job classification, "Skilled Crafts." The Court held that the Plan was legal because it sought to remedy underrepresentation by race or sex due to previous discrimination.
- *Price Waterhouse v. Hopkins* (1989). A woman manager at Price Waterhouse was denied partnership because, despite her professional success, her personality and interpersonal skills were considered too brusque and aggressive. The partner who told her that her partnership nomination had not been approved suggested, in detail, that she should present herself in a more feminine way. The Court found that the partner's comments constituted sex stereotyping and that the firm failed to justify its decision on the basis of reasons other than gender.

COLORADO STATE STATUTES AND LAWS

In March 1951, the Colorado State Legislature passed a Fair Employment Practices Act, requiring employment standards in both public and private work not discriminate on the basis of race, creed or color. The law, enforced through the State Industrial Commission, only permitted legal redress against public employers. The Act also established a state commission on human relations. In 1957, the Colorado Legislature extended the act to include private industry.⁴

FAIR EMPLOYMENT IN FORT COLLINS

The African American population of Fort Collins remained very small during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From 1880 through 1940, no more than 24 Black citizens lived in the city at any one time.⁵ They found work as domestic servants, day laborers, wagon drivers, cooks, laundrymen, porters, grooms, barbers, shoeshine men, janitors, scavengers, and car washers.⁶ Although this project has not discovered specific information about racial discrimination in employment for African Americans in the city, the prevalence of those practices nationwide almost certainly would have extended to Fort Collins.

Chinese and Japanese people were prevented from immigrating to the United States after 1882 (Chinese Exclusion Act) and 1907 (the informal Gentleman's Agreement between the U.S. and Japan), respectively. However, many people from those nations had immigrated to the United States and to Colorado before those federal actions took place.

Immigrants to the United States and Colorado were more likely to be identified as working for unequal pay. News articles in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries frequently complained about the low wages for which Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican immigrants were willing to work, indicating that employers exploited those people by paying them less than a White/Anglo person would have been paid. Immigrants worked in agriculture, mining and extractive industries, railroad, and construction. For example, in September 1909, the Japanese Labor Contracting Company (JLCC) formed in Denver, with a goal of bringing Japanese pay to parity with that of White laborers. At that time, Japanese farm laborers worked for \$0.75–1.50 per day, while White workers could expect to be paid \$2.00–4.00 per day. The JLCC's goal of higher wages would set a precedent that could ultimately benefit an estimated 30,000 Japanese workers throughout the Rocky Mountain region. The Japanese Association of Denver was also working to improve conditions for laborers at that time.⁷ However, no organizations of this type have been identified that were operating in Fort Collins.

While no specific incidents of employment discrimination against Catholics or religious minorities have been identified in Fort Collins in the early twentieth century, given the prevalence of the Ku Klux Klan in the city and state in the 1920s, it is logical that the discrimination espoused by the KKK affected employment opportunities for many groups during this time.

Because discrimination in employment was so commonplace throughout the United States before 1965, it likely was unremarked upon in the historical archival record. Community members may have additional information to share about their ancestors' and families' experiences with this type of discrimination and/or their activism against it during that time period.

In more recent years, stakeholders reported discrimination in the workplace, primarily in the form of harassing behavior and racist/inappropriate language. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a group of Hispanic officers and the single Black officer within the Fort Collins police department reportedly met with the police chief to complain about disparaging remarks from their colleagues and unequal treatment in shift assignments, compared to their White/Anglo co-workers. Stakeholders also reported that a Hispanic officer was denied a promotion explicitly due to his ethnicity; both that officer and the African American officer left Fort Collins to work somewhere else.⁸

Stakeholders also described employment discrimination in other departments within the City of Fort Collins, including having their complaints minimized or dismissed by the City Human Rights Commission.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. This historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

Property types that might be eligible for NRHP based on their association with this topic include those that:

- Interpret the constitutionality of racial or other discrimination in employment. In other words, if the property was associated with a legal action against an employer that did not comply with federal law, or if it were associated with situation that led to a City ordinance, it could be eligible for listing. This might include the building where a plaintiff worked or the headquarters of the business where they were employed.
- Initiating a local equal employment movement that directly helped to strike down employment discrimination within the City. This could include meeting places such as meeting halls, churches, or homes where organizing activities took place.

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for fair housing are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community.

Note: This project did not include a historic resources survey. Prior to further considering any of these resources for inclusion in a potential NRHP nomination, these properties should be appropriately surveyed and documented.

PROPERTY TYPE: COMMERCE/TRADE

A business that was known to practice employment discrimination of any kind would qualify if it were involved in a legal complaint by an employee or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

PROPERTY TYPE: GOVERNMENT

The Fort Collins Police Services offices would qualify since that department was involved in a legal complaint by an employee or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Property Type: EDUCATION

A school where female teachers were required to quit their jobs due to pregnancy or take mandatory maternity leave would qualify.

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. Only one historic property has been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A: Fort Collins Police Services building (then located at 300 LaPorte Avenue)



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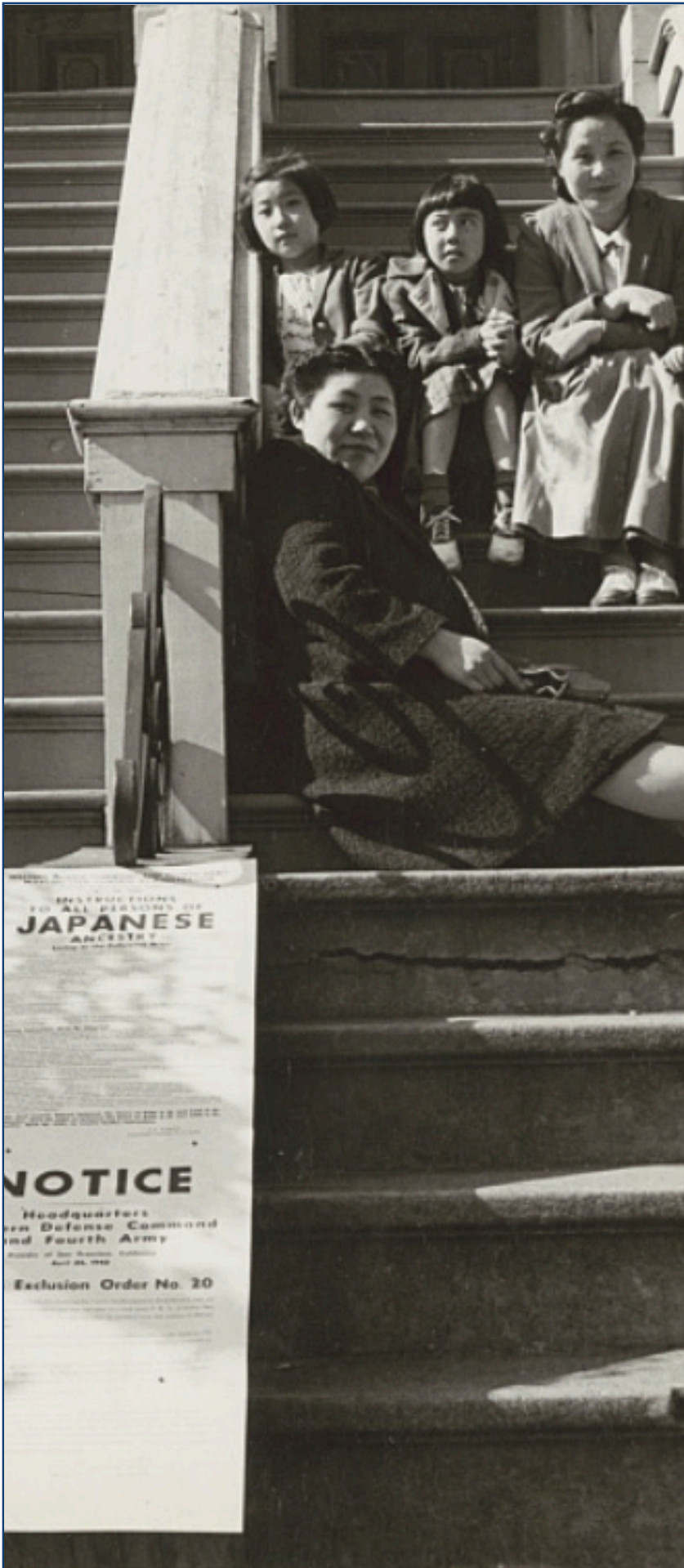
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- 5 "City Directory and Census Research through 1950, Black Residents," (working paper, City of Fort Collins Preservation Services, no date).
- 6 "Occupations and Job Sites, Black Residents 1880–1943," (working paper, City of Fort Collins Preservation Services, no date).
- 7 "Will Push Up Wages of Japs in West," *Fort Collins Express and Fort Collins Review*, September 1, 1909, 10, newspapers.com.
- 8 In 2017, the City settled a lawsuit alleging discriminatory practices, including inequitable disciplinary actions and unfair promotion decisions, by Fort Collins Police Services against minority officers. The City denied all wrongdoing. Two years later, the City was sued again, this time for age and gender discrimination by supervisors in the police department.



THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

Criminal Injustice in Fort Collins (1863–1974)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Cover: Dorothea Lange, photographer. San Francisco, Calif. Apr. 1942. "Wives and children of two men being held as dangerous enemy aliens. They will be evacuated with other persons of Japanese ancestry and will spend the duration of the war in War Relocation Authority centers." Title transcribed from item. No. A-567. Photographer and date from similar negative (A566) in the National Archives. Photograph from U.S. War Relocation Authority. Farm Security Administration and Office of War Information Collection (Library of Congress)

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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

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Unlike other major themes in the civil rights movement, this area has not yet been explored individually in an NPS theme study, although NPS published *Confinement and Ethnicity: An Overview of World War II Japanese American Relocation Sites* (1999), which touches on one of the topics related to criminal injustice. A brief review of local and state historic context studies on African American history and civil rights appear to be primarily focused on criminal injustice in terms of violence against African Americans.

Citizen violence against non-White/Anglo people included physical violence, harassment, arson, vandalism, and threatening behavior. Other institutional types of criminal injustice examined in this document include underpolicing (the lack of law enforcement in non-White/Anglo communities, failing to pursue justice, and failing to protect non-White/Anglo people while in custody) as well as overpolicing (harassment, police brutality, false arrest, and discriminatory sentencing).

More recently, criminal injustice has come to include the racial/ethnic disparity in disciplinary proceedings in schools and the criminalization of minor infractions of school rules, although no records of the criminalization of students were discovered during this project. Community members recalled that they experienced racism during high school in Fort Collins but did not report anything that rose to the level of criminal injustice. Others may have more information to share.

Following a summary of legislative and judicial activity, this document examines civil rights activism related to this topic in Fort Collins, and finally identifies associated property types and significant sites associated with criminal injustice within the city limits of Fort Collins as they exist in 2023.

Note: The non-White/Anglo population in Fort Collins was relatively small during the period of time covered in this historic context. Additional research and contributions by community members are requested to supplement the information gathered to date from archives and community stories.

INTRODUCTION

Violence against non-White/Anglo people and LGBTQ+ people was and is common in the American West. These violent acts are a form of performative White supremacy/nationalism intended to demonstrate the dominance of White people over everyone else. All types of physical assault, the use of deadly force, bombings, arson, rape, and harassment were and are inflicted by White people, especially White men. Because White supremacy extends into law enforcement, the judicial system, and governments, that type of criminal behavior frequently has gone unpunished.

Lynchings — public killings of individuals without due process — are most often associated with African Americans in the South but were also prevalent in the West and inflicted on non-White/Anglo people of many races. In 1922 alone, at least 22 people were lynched in Colorado.¹ Lynchings often involved an accusation of wrongdoing against a person of color, perhaps followed by that person's arrest; if they were jailed, law enforcement officers frequently failed to protect the accused person from a mob of vigilantes who would storm the jail, remove the accused person, and then kill that person and display the body in public. Lynchings also occurred in situations where law enforcement was not involved. While lynching is often associated with hanging someone to death, the murderers often hung the dead bodies of their victims, regardless of how they were killed, as a demonstration of their ability to operate outside the law. Lynchings combined overpolicing, underpolicing, and citizen violence.

Some of that violence was organized by groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), a domestic terrorist organization whose members espouse White supremacy/nationalism. The KKK was most active across the United States in the 1920s, with its presence particularly strong in Colorado; Clarence J. Morley, a Klan member, was elected governor of Colorado along with a slew of other Klan-supported candidates in the winter of 1925.² The group presented itself as a Christian organization and was hostile toward Catholic and Jewish people, as well as non-White/Anglo people. The KKK was known for burning crosses, sometimes on the lawns of people's homes, as a means of harassment. They committed many kinds of violence against persons and property, as well as other types of criminal behavior, often while wearing White robes and hoods to disguise their identities. Examples of citizen violence against property can include slashed tires, bricks thrown through windows, arson, and similar criminal acts.

Overpolicing and underpolicing can also be more nuanced than the obvious examples provided by the United States' history of lynchings. Overpolicing can include security guards or other retail personnel who treat customers of color as if they are likely to commit a crime, such as by following them around the store and watching them shop; police officers who follow people of color for no clear reason may rise to the level of harassment. Underpolicing can include failing to follow up on reports of criminal activity or threatening behavior or otherwise creating an environment where a demographic community does not believe that they will receive police protection.

In the United States, criminal violence targeting minority communities continues to the present day, as do overpolicing, underpolicing, and the criminalization of student behavior. Several advocates for civil rights in Fort Collins have reported receiving death threats due to their work in the recent past.



Figure 1. Anti-Chinese riots, Denver, Colorado, October 31, 1880 (History Colorado Online Collection, 89.451.1767)

CRIMINAL INJUSTICE IN FORT COLLINS

This project uncovered very little information about criminal injustice during the century covered by this report. While plenty of evidence is available about generally racist behavior in Fort Collins, only a few examples rise to the definition of criminal injustice presented above.

CITIZEN VIOLENCE

Anti-Asian sentiments were rampant around the end of the nineteenth century. In 1882, the *Coloradoan* discussed the Chinese Exclusion Act then being considered (and later passed) by the U.S. Congress. The Act banned new Chinese laborers from entering the U.S. for 10 years, limited immigration from China by non-laborers, and created new requirements for Chinese people already in the U.S. A Fort Collins newspaper at the time referred to the Chinese as “heathens” (a term often used to describe people who do not adhere to one of the primary Abrahamic religions) and claimed that “No one would object to the Chinaman who would cast aside his idols, become a naturalized American, buy a hoe and be like one of us ... but he won’t do it.”³ The refusal of Chinese immigrants to give up their religious beliefs and traditional cultural customs continued to be lamented in Fort Collins newspapers for several decades.⁴ Such ongoing repetition of these attitudes likely led to citizen violence against Chinese people in Fort Collins. For example, in 1901, a 3:30 a.m. fire destroyed the laundry owned by Wang Sing (possibly a misspelling of Hong Sing), a Chinese resident of Fort Collins, on Linden Street. The fire was believed to be caused by an incendiary device, meaning that it was a deliberate act of arson. The brick building was saved by the fire department, but the business was a total loss.⁵ However, Hong Sing was able to rebuild and continued operating a laundry at that location until 1920.⁶

Japanese people faced similar attitudes as their numbers in Colorado and Fort Collins increased in the early 1900s. Apparently, Japanese people were considered by some White/Anglo residents to be less objectionable than Chinese people, but the hard work, thrift, and entrepreneurial ambitions of many Japanese immigrants were both lauded and described as a cause for concern, as it meant that they were “in competition with the White man.”⁷ The Ku Klux Klan in Colorado became particularly focused on Japanese people during that organization’s heyday in the 1920s. Colorado governor Clarence Morley signed several anti-Japanese laws during his single two-year term (1925–1927).

The KKK established a chapter in Fort Collins by 1922. They marched in a Klan-themed CSU carnival parade in 1922 and held an outdoor rally and cross-burning in Fort Collins on April 9, 1924, at the City Park.⁸ The KKK held public events at the Empress Theatre (163 N. College Avenue, extant but modified) in 1924 and, for several years, held twice-monthly meetings at Colonial Hall (113 Remington Street, demolished). Although it appears that no instances of violence in Fort Collins have been attributed to that group, their presence in Fort Collins created the potential for violence that likely had a similar effect on non-White/Anglo people, as well as Catholic and Jewish people, in the city.

Another Christian paramilitary organization, the Sky Pilots of America, was headquartered at 1802 LaPorte in Fort Collins from 1956–1959; the organization’s founder, Elmer Sachs, lived at 406 S. Grant Avenue.⁹

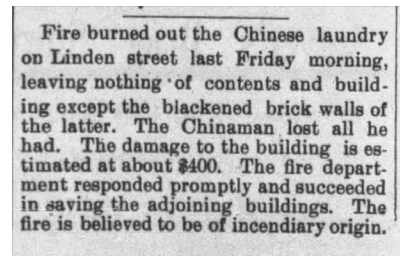


Figure 2. Article, *Larimer County Independent*, October 10, 1901.

Several stakeholders reported having to step off the sidewalk or, if they refused, being pushed off sidewalks and into the street by White/Anglo citizens in Fort Collins.

Stakeholders reported that organizing members of the LGBTQIA+ community experienced many types of harassment, including feeling pressured to move to a new address after public postings of their home addresses and ensuing death threats, as a result of their activism and visibility.

OVERPOLICING

Overpolicing can include false arrests, typically when law enforcement officers blame people of color for crimes by default. For example, a September 16, 1903, newspaper article describes police officers investigating the shooting of a White man in the “Negro” quarters just west of the new sugar factory. A Black man employed by the sugar factory was falsely arrested and then released.¹⁰

In a more recent example, several stakeholders were CSU staff or students in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During a protest prior to a CSU-Brigham Young University basketball game at the Moby Gymnasium, police that had assembled outside entered the gym to “clear the floor.” Chaos and panic ensued after something – either a Molotov cocktail or a cherry bomb – was thrown onto the floor in front of the police. (Stakeholders recalled the item differently.) People in the arena identified a White man as having thrown the item, but a Black man was accused and arrested for the crime. The event was described as “the Moby Riot.”

Police harassment is another form of overpolicing. In 1970, a march was held to protest Fort Collins police sergeant Terry Rains, accused of harassing the Mexican American community. Organizations including CSU, the University of Colorado, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Mexican American Progressive Action, and United Mexican American Students were involved in the march. News reports stated that 150 people attended an organizational meeting the night before the march and 300 people were expected to participate. The march started at the former Presbyterian Church on Grant Avenue, then known as LULAC Hall, and progressed to City Hall where a complaint was lodged with City Council. LULAC spokesperson Ernest Andrade stated that protesters would remain at the police station in a peaceful manner until Rains was suspended.¹¹

In April 1974, about 30 protesters, mostly young Mexican Americans, picketed City Hall over abuses of juvenile legal rights by Fort Collins police officer James Miller. The protest resulted from the arrest of three juveniles, including two of Mexican descent, for possession of narcotics, after police seized about an ounce of marijuana and a small pipe. Following their arrest, the young people were released to their parents. The hour-long demonstration took place in front of the municipal building. Chicano leader James “Chico” Martinez “claimed that the official channels for complaints are too slow and not “responsive.””¹²

Interviewees also reported being followed by police as students when driving to rehearsals and performances, and cars being pulled over simply because they contained Latino teenagers.

Overpolicing can be performed by other people in positions of authority, not just police officers. For example, stakeholders have reported being harassed while shopping: being followed by store personnel or having their receipts checked at the store exit while White/Anglo customers were permitted to leave without being similarly detained.

UNDERPOLICING

Underpolicing enables citizens to conduct and get away with criminal activity, usually in marginalized neighborhoods, due to a lack of police presence or indifference by law enforcement. The gay and lesbian community in Fort Collins did not publicize the locations of their meetings or social events, a practice which indicates their inability to rely on police protection from harassment and violence. Anecdotal evidence about the protection provided by a single police officer, Jim Kelly, implies that his behavior was the exception rather than the norm.

For example, in 1911, it was reported that some young White boys had been harassing a Black woman, Josie Hicks, and that she had chased them with an unloaded shotgun. The Weekly Courier reported the incident humorously, stating that the boys let a dog loose on Mrs. Hicks in her garden, and the dog chased her onto her porch. The sheriff was called to deal with Mrs. Hicks, described at the time as “crazy” and “excited,” needing to be calmed down by her husband. While Mrs. Hicks stated that the boys had been “tormenting her continually,” it did not detail any action the sheriff took, nor did it indicate that the boys’ actions were taken seriously.¹³

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. This historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

Property types identified in the theme study include those that:

- Interpret the potential for citizen violence associated with White supremacist/nationalist organizations.
- Illustrate specific events associated with the overpolicing or underpolicing of marginalized communities.
- Interpret the activism of citizens protesting criminal injustice.

PROPERTY TYPE: THEATER

The Empress Theater (in the Briggs Building, 163 N. College, now the Comedy Fort) is the only building still extant where several meetings of the Ku Klux Klan, featuring speakers from that organization, were held in the early 1920s.¹⁴ Were a building such as this one to be nominated to the NRHP, its connection to the KKK should not be celebrated but should not be ignored.

PROPERTY TYPE: MARCH ROUTE

The route of the 1970 march to protest the overpolicing/harassing behavior of Sgt. Terry Rains is likely not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, because it does not meet the definition of a historic resource. However, the route could be interpreted locally.

PROPERTY TYPE: CITY HALL

Fort Collins City Hall (1957, 300 LaPorte Avenue) was the location of protests (in the case of this historic context), as well as local governmental actions that likely affected whether citizens of color could go about their daily lives without fear of harassment or violence. However, a City Hall building is significant for many other reasons and would not be nominated to the NRHP specifically for its association with civil rights protests. That would be part of a larger story.

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

951 W. Plum Street – Moby Gymnasium (secondary theme : Public Education)



The City has already undertaken a survey for the Empress Theater and the 1957 City Hall/Police Department building.

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- 5 "Early Morning Blaze," *Fort Collins Express and Fort Collins Review*, October 9, 1901, 5, newspapers.com.
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**THE HISTORY OF THE CIVIL
RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**

**Native American
Rights and the
American Indian
Movement in Fort
Collins**

(1968–1978)



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Cover: National Indian Youth Council demonstrations, Bureau of Indian Affairs office,
Denver, Colorado, 1970 (Denver Public Library)

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STATEMENT OF CONTEXT

This document is part of the *Fort Collins Civil Rights Movement Historic Context Study*. Based on the National Park Service (NPS) thematic framework *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites* and associated theme studies, this historic context narrative focuses on the experiences and activism of Native peoples in Fort Collins. It covers the period from 1968, when the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded, to 1978, when the Longest Walk march successfully influenced federal legislation regarding Native rights. This historic context narrative examines the American Indian Movement in Colorado and Fort Collins.

Both NPS and the City of Fort Collins have focused theme studies about Native people primarily on pre-European contact and early colonial history in the Eastern part of the U.S. NPS theme studies are limited to *The Earliest Americans Theme Study for the Eastern United States*, which covers Paleoindian life in the Northeast, Southeast, and Midwest United States, and *Historic Contact: Early Relations between Indian Peoples and Colonists in Northeastern North America 1524–1783*. The City of Fort Collins has, to date, published one historic context narrative, *People of the Poudre: An Ethnohistory of the Cache de Poudre River National Heritage Area (1500–1880)*.

This historic context is limited to the civil rights activism of AIM during its period of greatest activity. Although the archival record indicates that people from Fort Collins who may have participated in AIM meetings and activities likely would have traveled to Denver to do so, future information shared by community members may reveal instances of local activism.

THE AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT

The following information is derived from the following sources:

- “American Indian Movement,” Civil Rights Digital History Project, University of Georgia, online at <https://digilab.libs.uga.edu/exhibits/exhibits/show/civil-rights-digital-history-p/american-indian-movement>.
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The American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded in Minneapolis, Minnesota, following a meeting in Summer 1968 called by a group of Native American community activists to discuss issues affecting Native peoples in the United States. The U.S. government had spent more than a century reneging on treaties, seizing Native lands, and forcibly removing Native Americans from their historical territories; inflicting violence against Native peoples, including massacres of unarmed women and children at places like Sand Creek and Wounded Knee; kidnapping and imprisoning Native children in boarding schools; attempting to force Native Americans to give up their culture, language, and traditions in exchange for citizenship; and generally discriminating against and denying voting and other civil rights to Native peoples. Federal policy, state and federal legislation, and judicial actions solidified the second-class status of Native people in the United States and contributed to high levels of unemployment, substandard housing, and poor health outcomes for Native Americans living on reservations and in urban areas. Locally, Native people were frequently subjected to police harassment and brutality.

At the meeting in Minneapolis, several hundred people gathered to hear young Native activists George Mitchell, Dennis Banks, and Clyde Bellecourt (all Ojibwe) speak on these issues, as well as local problems such as police harassment. The three men and others subsequently formed the American Indian Movement organization, with the goals of forcing the U.S. government to recognize and uphold its treaties and Native Americans’ sovereignty, as well as take steps to protect the civil liberties of Native peoples.

Significant events in AIM’s history include:

- Participating in the occupation of significant sites, including Alcatraz Island (1969), the replica ship *Mayflower* in Boston (1970), and Mount Rushmore (1971).
- Conducting a successful 1972 publicity campaign to advocate for justice following the murder of a Sioux man named Yellow Thunder by a group of White men on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.
- Holding the 1972 “Trail of Broken Treaties” protest march on Washington, D.C., following which AIM members occupied offices of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) in protest of its policies and with demands for its reform. AIM representatives presented a 20-point manifesto to federal lawmakers, seeking sovereignty for Native American nations, the resumption of treaty-making, and the abolishing of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, among other demands.¹



Figure 1. AIM activists occupy Alcatraz Island (AP, 1969)

- Occupying the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, from February 27–May 8, 1973, an action led by AIM leader Russell Means in protest of the conservative (and allegedly corrupt) leadership of the Pine Ridge Reservation. During the occupation, the FBI attempted to remove the protestors, resulting in a standoff that left two dead, 12 wounded, and 1200 people arrested. The federal government then brought a case against Russell Means and Dennis Banks, but the AIM leaders were acquitted of wrongdoing; the chief judge in the case dismissed the charges on the grounds of insufficient evidence and government misconduct by the FBI.
- On March 10, 1973, a protest that began near AIM's Denver headquarters in support of events at Wounded Knee resulted in 14 arrests. The march began near East Colfax Avenue and was moving toward the state capitol building when arrests were made. The march was intended to celebrate the removal of federal roadblocks at Wounded Knee; AIM spokesperson Vince Harrier stated that the group did not officially support the march.²

Like other non-White/Anglo civil rights and political organizations and associated individuals, AIM was targeted by the FBI as part of its secret Counter Intelligence Program (aka COINTELPRO, 1956–1971). COINTELPRO was originally created to focus on the American Communist Party but quickly expanded its scope to include any group it considered “subversive.” Its tactics included everything from spreading disinformation to assassinating perceived “enemies”.

AIM was focused on bringing attention to Native rights issues, but it also invested in providing educational opportunities and advocating for Native education. Based on AIM advocacy, the Minnesota legislature passed the Native American Language and Culture Education Act in 1977; this established educational programming to reinforce a positive representation of Native Americans in school curricula and to support the preservation and continuation of their language and culture.³

In 1978, AIM carried a sacred pipe more than 3,200 miles on the “Longest Walk,” a protest that succeeded in preventing the passage of federal legislation that would have severely restricted Native Americans’ hunting and fishing rights, limit Native schools and hospitals, and reduce the legal rights of Native tribes.

AIM continued to be active in Colorado. In October 2000, 147 people, including Russell Means, were arrested in Denver while peacefully protesting and temporarily stopping the city’s Columbus Day parade. Means vowed to protest the following year, and local AIM leaders stated that they would pursue legislation to abolish Columbus Day in the state.⁴ In 2020, the Colorado Legislature replaced Columbus Day with Frances Xavier Cabrini Day as a legal state holiday on the first Monday in October.⁵ AIM Colorado began campaigning to remove Columbus Day in the state in 1989.⁶



Figure 2. Native American women protest in support of Wounded Knee, February, 1974 (National Guardian Photographs; PHOTOS 213; box 9; folder 26; Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University)

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Regional offices of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) were located in Denver, Colorado, which became the main location of Native American activism in the state during the 1960s and 1970s.

In November 1967, the Tribal Indian Land Rights Association (TILRA) announced that it would picket the BLM Denver office, in protest of federal policies related to Native American claims on land managed by the Bureau.⁷ TILRA, headquartered in Denver at that time, protested on behalf of Native American land issues nationally; in 1970, the group responded to a report released by a federal agency, the Public Land Law Review Commission, stating that the report's contents ignored the land rights of every Native American alive and calling the report "White racism in action."⁸

In January 1971, 10 members of the Concerned American Indians of Denver presented a list of demands to the director of the BIA Denver office, including protecting fishing rights for Native Americans in Washington state; requesting that all top officials in the Department of Education pertaining to tribal peoples be Native American; and demanding that AIM "be immediately installed as subcontractors of the Field Employment Assistance Office of the BIA." The group planned to occupy the office until its demands were met.⁹



Figure 3. 1970 protest at the Bureau of Indian Affairs office in Denver, Colorado (Denver Post)

NATIVE ACTIVISM IN FORT COLLINS

Native American civil rights activities in Fort Collins are associated with Colorado State University (CSU) from 1971 through at least 1975.

By April 1971, AIM, along with CSU's Black Student Alliance (BSA) and the United Mexican American Students (UMAS), formed the Third World Coalition, demanding changes in what it viewed as discriminatory policies on campus. The group presented the university with a list of 16 demands focused on what it saw as the "racist policy" of CSU's administration.¹⁰ CSU President A. R. Chamberlain responded with a paper answering the specific demands of the coalition, stating that faculty and staff shared many of the group's concerns.¹¹

At the beginning of the fall semester that year, in September 1971, members of CSU's Anthropology Department removed human bones from the Roberts Ranch in Livermore. Members of the AIM chapter in Denver, including Vernon Bellecourt,¹² believed the bones to be those of their ancestors; after being allowed to view the bones, AIM members removed some of the bones and other materials from their storage location in the Department.¹³ AIM representatives met with CSU faculty shortly after the incident, returning some materials and presenting a list of requests. Ten members of AIM, led by Denver chapter director Vernon Bellecourt, walked out of the meeting after CSU Anthropology professor Daniel Ogden refused to retract his statement calling AIM's removal of the bones a "cheap publicity stunt" and also questioned AIM's motives. Among its demands, AIM requested that CSU give them all of the Native American bones in the university's possession, stop current archaeological excavations at Native sites, and allow the group to act as a "watchdog" over future excavations.¹⁴ AIM also tried to serve CSU faculty with "citizen's arrest" forms but were unsuccessful. Anthropology Department chair Robert Theodoratus stated that the bones taken by AIM included "a cow skull, the skulls of a Chinese and a Negro, plus assorted bones of Whites — a lot of them from India, which were purchased for teaching material."¹⁵

This type of activism eventually led to the adoption of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, which created a process by which federal agencies and museums that receive federal funds are to return human remains and artifacts to Native tribes and lineal descendants.¹⁶ Today, Colorado State University has reported being in possession of the remains of 79 Native individuals and has made all of those available for repatriation. Seventeen of those sets of remains are from Larimer County.¹⁷



Figure 4. AIM members remove bones from the CSU Anthropology lab in 1971 (Fort Collins Coloradoan)

In March 1973, a local group called “People for Wounded Knee” sponsored a rally on the West lawn of the CSU Student Center, collecting food and money for the Native Americans involved in the occupation.¹⁸ The Denver regional director of AIM, Jess Large, a Shoshone-Arapahoe from the Wind River Reservation, speaking to 200 attendees, predicted that federal marshals would move into Wounded Knee within days. Large charged the crowd with getting “the truth across to the people on this campus and in this town” about Native Americans and called for sovereign nations on all reservations.¹⁹ Nine people from Fort Collins transported the collected food to South Dakota, moving it across the mountains on horseback because roads were blocked by the federal government. They made it as far as Porcupine, South Dakota, seven miles from Wounded Knee, before voluntarily leaving the state after a marshal told them he had orders from the Attorney General to clear the area.²⁰

CSU brought several Native speakers to campus during the 1970s. For instance, in Summer 1974, CSU’s Anthropology Department offered a course entitled “Native Americans Today: Native American Viewpoints,” taught by Calvin Dupree, a Sioux who grew up on the Cheyenne Indian Reservation in South Dakota.²¹ In 1975, Chick Ramirez, a Yaqui who previously had been involved in TILRA and served as the director of the Denver chapter of AIM, spoke at CSU on “The Native American Today.” In 1969, Ramirez had been selected by TILRA to represent them on a presidential advisory board on Indian affairs.²²

The City of Fort Collins officially began to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day instead of Columbus Day in 2022.²³

ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

“Associated property type” is a technical term used by NPS to describe historic resources that are related to the theme, geographic location, and time period for a particular theme study or historic context. This historic context identifies resources that could be nominated to the NRHP at the state or local level. Please refer to *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* for more information.

All historic sites associated with this context, if nominated to the NRHP, would be proposed under Criterion A: “Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history” at the local level of significance.

A building must also retain its historical and architectural integrity; in other words, it “must physically represent the time period for which it is significant.” Integrity is evaluated on the basis of seven aspects: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. For example, the substantial interior and exterior changes made to the Grant Avenue Presbyterian Church/LULAC Hall, in order to convert it to condominiums, have erased its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling. It only retains integrity of location, setting, and association, and the building is no longer identifiable as a church. It would not, therefore, be eligible for nomination to the NRHP.

Although eligibility for listing in the NRHP is generally limited to those resources whose period of significance ends more than 50 years ago, as all resources associated with the ongoing struggle for voting rights are identified, their data should be collected so that they can be nominated as they become eligible.

The resource types listed here and individually significant sites identified elsewhere were located through archival and historical research and/or information provided by individuals in the community. Property types identified in this historic context include those associated with:

- Interpreting AIM’s organizational activities in Fort Collins.
- Individuals living in Fort Collins who held leadership positions in the American Indian Movement at the national or state level.

PROPERTY TYPE: SITE

The west lawn of the CSU Student Center is associated with AIM’s 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee and the support that AIM received during that event.

PROPERTY TYPE: COLLEGE

The Anthropology Department at CSU was the site of AIM activity in 1971, when the group attempted to remove bones, believed to be those of Native Americans, which had been excavated from a nearby ranch.

SITES TO BE PRIORITIZED FOR SURVEY

All historic resources identified during this project have been compiled in a single inventory spreadsheet, whether extant or not. The following historic properties have been confirmed to be extant and potentially significant at the local level under Criterion A.

1101 Center Avenue Mall – West Lawn CSU Student Services Center



301 University Avenue – Social Sciences Building



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