



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)



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

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

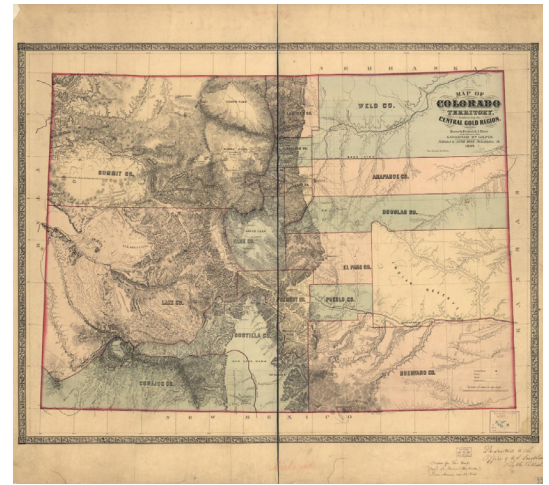


Figure 1. Ebert, Frederick J, William Gilpin, Jacob Monk, and T. Sinclair'S Lith. Map of Colorado Territory embracing the Central Gold Region. Philadelphia: Jacob Monk, 1862. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2003630493/>.

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.

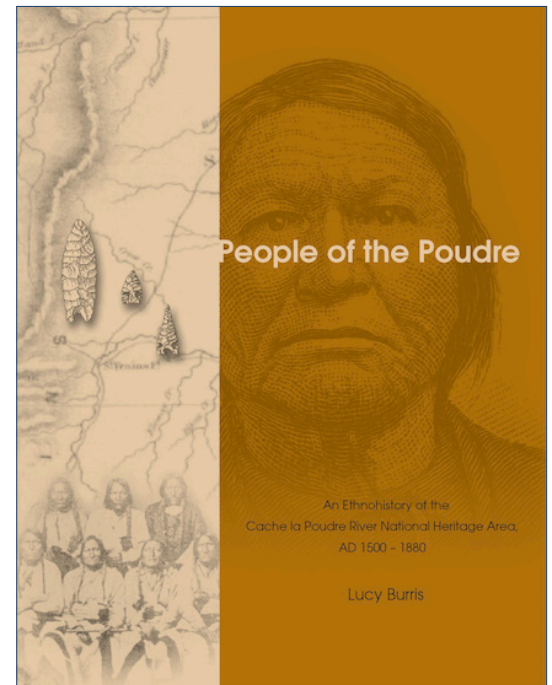
The use of historic contexts in organizing major preservation activities ensures that those activities result in the preservation of the wide variety of properties that represent our history, rather than only a small, biased sample of properties. Historic contexts, as theoretical constructs, are linked 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 Ethnohistory (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

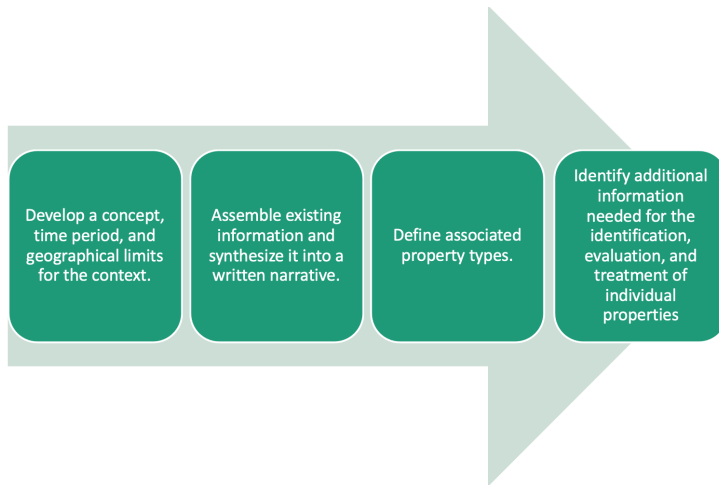
This study recognizes that individuals can be, or be perceived as, members of multiple nondominant and/or marginalized groups, which may compound their experiences of discrimination. For example, a heterosexual Christian man who is Hispanic may experience discrimination based on his ethnicity, but a 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:

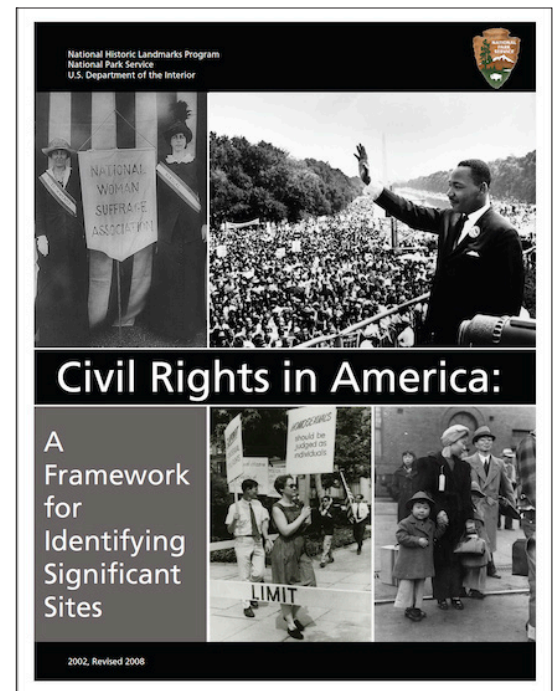
- Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States (2000)
- Desegregation of Public Accommodations (2000, updated and expanded 2004)
- *Racial Voting Rights* (2007, revised 2009)
- Racial Discrimination in Housing (2021)

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)



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.

<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.

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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