



# The Farm

AT LEE MARTINEZ  
PARK





## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	2
PART I: ENVIRONMENT .....	3
PART II: PEOPLE .....	6
PART III: BUILDINGS AND OTHER FEATURES .....	19
Past Structures .....	20
Existing Structures .....	21
SUMMARY.....	28
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	30

## Maps and Figures

Map 1	“Map of the Town of Fort Collins, Larimer County, Colorado.” By F. C. Avery, Surveyor, 1873. Base map from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, edited by Reyana Jones, 2018.	2
Map 2	Street map showing The Farm created using ArcGIS software from Esri, 2018.	2
Figure 1	The Nelson farmhouse. Photo by author.	2
Figure 2	Cow on The Farm. Photo by author.	3
Figure 3	Flooded bottomland farm, 1904. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	4
Figure 4	“Walking Bank Rolls.” Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	5
Figure 5	Marcella (Sally) Nelson, c. 1933. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	6
Figure 6	Certificate of land sale, Samuel Ganow. Photo from the BLM Patent Image Search.	7
Figure 7	Ben Whedbee and family at his 611 Peterson house. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	10
Figure 8	George and Rose Wilcox. Photo from Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., George Hunnington Wilcox Family Tree.	11
Figure 9	Early twentieth-century gravel pit. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	12
Figure 10	Sally Nelson and friend Alice in front of silo. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	14
Figure 11	John and Jennie Nelson in front of frame farmhouse. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	15
Figure 12	Lee and Eva Martinez. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	17
Figure 13	Swamp, Hickory Street Trail, 2000. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	18
Figure 14	Outdoor Museum at The Farm. Photo by author.	19
Figure 15	Planting trees at the 1975 Arbor Day celebration at Lee Martinez Park. Photo from the <i>Coloradoan</i> , April 23, 1975.	19
Figure 16	Chicken coop. Photo by author.	21
Figure 17	Barn. Photo by author.	22
Figure 18	Barn interior. Photo by author.	23
Figure 19	Art’s Tool Shed. Photo by author.	25
Figure 20	James Ross House and Proving-Up House. Photo from the Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery.	26
Figure 21	Moving the Ross Proving-Up House. Photo by author.	27
Figure 22	The Farm Heritage Museum. Photo by author.	28
Figure 23	Adults and children enjoying The Farm on a summer day. Photo by author.	28
Figure 24	Administrative Building. Photo by author.	30
Figure 25	Duck. Photo by author.	32
Figure 26	The Farm sign. Photo by author.	32
Table 1	Historic Buildings and Other Features.	29
Table 2	Ownership of The Farm.	29
On the Cover	Silo and barn at The Farm. Photo by author.	

*Prepared for the City of Fort Collins  
Recreation Department by Reyana  
Jones, City of Fort Collins Historic  
Preservation Intern (2018)*



Figure 1.



The Nelson Farmhouse

## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 1926, Sally Nelson, teenaged daughter of dairy farmers John and Jennie Nelson, stood in the doorway of her house, brows furrowed at the storm brewing before her. Her mom was recovering in the hospital from surgery, so the countless chores of keeping house fell to Sally. The seemingly simple task of preparing dinner for herself, her four brothers, and her father turned perilous after the first bolt of lightning struck. She could see the ice box on the far end of the porch, its metal door slick with rain. Her mother always told her not to touch metal during a lightning storm. But with steely resolve, she decided to throw caution to the wind; she had a job to do. Taking a deep breath, Sally rushed to the ice box. As she opened its door, her vision filled with a blinding flash, and her ears rang with the following clap of thunder. Dazed, but unharmed, she dashed back to the front door. Inside, she saw the window shades tattered and the window frames burned. The lightning must have come into the house through the radio aerial opening. Her father and brothers poured through the front door. Their wild eyes softened with relief upon seeing Sally safe and sound. These farmers were no

strangers to both the blessings and burdens of Colorado's weather.<sup>1</sup>

Although The Farm at Lee Martinez Park sits on a full square block (Block 66) of Fort Collins at present, the property was even larger under Sally's family's ownership, and larger still under the landowners who preceded them. Characteristics of the land and climate made the region of Fort Collins north-west of Old Town more suitable for cattle-rearing than agriculture, necessitating vast swathes of land. Managing such a large area in Colorado's often-volatile environment was complicated, especially for those trying to make a name for themselves in a fledgling town in a similarly young state during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Farm's environment, its owners, and its associated structures intertwined inseparably throughout its past and contributed to its character today.



### Maps 1 and 2.

The location of The Farm is shown in red on the historic map (top) and modern map (bottom). Block 66 was once bordered by Vine Street to the north, Elm Street to the south, Whitcomb Street to the west, and Sherwood Street to the east. These thoroughfares now stop before reaching The Farm.

<sup>1</sup> Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "When Lightning Struck!" Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.

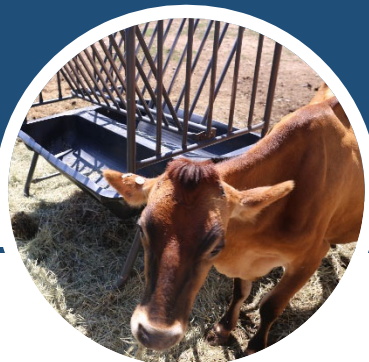


Figure 2.

Cow on The Farm

## PART I: ENVIRONMENT

It was a typical Spring day on the Nelson Farm until the rain started. Young Sally worried her skirt as she bore a hole through the kitchen's window with her eyes, willing the deluge to stop. Orville, her older brother, left the safety of indoors what seemed like eons ago. Her family's farm hugged the belly of the Cache la Poudre River. An unusually wet season in the mountains and in town caused the river to swell. The family knew it was only a matter of time until this day came.

The northern part of the farm was under water. Pasture and corn fields suffocated in a watery grave. Most of the cattle had lumbered to safety by the time the water reached their fields. Others were not so lucky. Although she did not escape the floodwaters, one fortunate cow paced in small circles, stranded on a newly formed island. She lowed desperately as turbid water swirled around her. The Nelsons could not wait for the river to recede to rescue this animal because she was a dairy cow. If they waited too long to milk her, she would fall ill, suffering from inflammation and infection in her udder.

Orville took his horse, Trixie, into the torrent. They fought against the current, avoiding debris racing by as well

as they could. Despite their efforts, a wicked strand of barbed wire hidden in the murk gashed Trixie's chest as it sailed by. A thirteen-inch wound bubbled from her breast into the water, but Orville and Trixie pressed on. They made it to the stranded cow and managed to lead her through the high water to her milking stall outside the flooded lowland area. Orville and his family relieved the cow of her burden and patched up his valiant steed knowing this would not be the last time their land would flood.<sup>2</sup>

Fort Collins residents experienced the risks of living in lowland areas around the Poudre long before the Nelsons arrived in Colorado. In 1864, a military outpost, Camp Collins, sat southwest of Laporte along the river to protect stage line travelers and goods. That summer, heavy rains in the Cache la Poudre Valley caused the river to invade Camp Collins. Water carried away goods and equipment and soiled soldiers' quarters. Lieutenant James Hanna of the sodden company sought a new location safe from dangerous flooding for the troops.

In his search, Hanna happened upon an imposing man with jet black hair. A dark beard covered the leathery

<sup>2</sup> Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, No Title, Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.



skin of his face, and his large, clear eyes shone against his tawny complexion. This was pioneer settler, Joseph Mason. Mason was a homesteader and had already staked his claim in Township Seven North, Range Sixty-nine West; he therefore also had a stake in the future location of Camp Collins. He used his powers of persuasion, and, according to local legend, the contents of a black bottle, to convince Lieutenant Hanna and his superiors to relocate near his claim. Because this upland area seldom flooded and had access to resources like lumber and water, the men settled on the site suggested by Mason, the location of Old Town Fort Collins today. Later, Mason's claims would extend to include the land of The Farm.<sup>3</sup>

When the Nelsons purchased their farm in 1920, even nine-year-old Sally could have predicted their land would flood someday. Although their house, barn, and other farm buildings sat on a slight rise, the rest of the Nelsons' seventy acres sloped steadily downward until it met the Poudre River on its north side. Low-lying regions around rivers are called "bottomlands." These areas were prone to flooding but were also prized by farmers.

Bottomlands typically possessed optimal conditions for agricultural endeavors. The sandy alluvial soil was rich in nutrients and moist enough to support a wide variety of crops despite Colorado's general aridity. Plants, like lespedeza (Japanese Clover), a legume ideal as forage for pastured livestock

and as a means of improving soil, that could not survive in other parts of Colorado flourished in bottomlands. Additionally, the fertile soil of the bottomlands often produced superior crop yields, making it a sought-after commodity among agriculturalists.<sup>4</sup>

However, farming bottomlands came with costs, which compounded over time. Floods like the one experienced by Sally and her family were common to river-abutting lowlands. Flooding of these low-lying areas was such a problem for farmers in Larimer County that community leaders like William N. Byers, founder of the *Rocky Mountain News*, brainstormed sometimes-fanciful ideas to prevent flooding. Byers conjectured that if water could be forced from the mountains during the winter and held by dams, dense glaciers would form as a means of water storage and would melt gradually in the Spring for use by irrigation



**Figure 3.**  
The aftermath of a 1904 flood at a Fort Collins bottomland farm.

<sup>3</sup> Erin Udell, "Joseph Mason Is the Father of Fort Collins," *Coloradoan*, June 19, 2015; Fort Collins History Connection, "Fort Collins History and Architecture: The Colorado Gold Rush, Early Settlement, and the Creation of Fort Collins, 1844-1866," Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://history.fcgov.com/contexts/colorado>.

<sup>4</sup> No Title, *Fort Collins Courier*, November 13, 1920, Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19201113.2.64&srpos=4&e=-----en-20-1-txt-txIN-bottom+lands+soil-----O-Larimer>; R. Q. Tenney, "Beet Sugar," *Fort Collins Courier*, January 8, 1891, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18910108.2.73&srpos=19&e=-----en-20-1-txt-txIN-%22bottom+land%22+soil-----O-Larimer#>.



ditches.<sup>5</sup> Despite creative solutions to the flooding problem, as the city of Fort Collins grew, so did the issues of farming the bottomlands.

In Fort Collins's early years, the aridity of the region caused many residents to believe cultivation outside of bottomland areas impossible, but as populations increased and the network of irrigation canals and ditches expanded, attitudes inverted. As ditches moved water from the river to upland farms, unintended seepage rendered lowland farms unsuitable for many crops that formerly thrived on the same land. Furthermore, the constant presence of water in bottomland farms washed away alkaline soils impregnated with naturally occurring Glauber's salts. These salts acted as a laxative for grazing livestock, making woody foliage and weeds easily digestible. Cattle on bottomland farms began experiencing digestive illness and fecal impaction more frequently as result of changes in soil composition. Human development altered the environment of the bottomlands, and those shifts in nature altered the ways people could use that same land.<sup>6</sup>

Experiment and research redeemed lowland farms. Although excessive moisture prevented the cultivation of much produce, farmers found conditions ideal for raising root crops and grasses for hay. Certain grasses could not handle the moisture of



**Figure 4.** "Walking Bank Rolls," as the caption refers to Fort Collins beef and dairy cows.

lowland soil, but others that were hardy against wet conditions, like timothy or redtop, could still tap into the nutrient-dense, alluvial soil and flourish; some said that timothy would grow on bottomland soil even without plowing. One journalist lauded bottomland properties as "model stock farms" because of these aptitudes. Root crops were useful in fattening livestock, as was millet, another suitable plant for bottomlands. "The lowlands," the same journalist noted, "must, from necessity, soon be converted into beef and dairy farms." Many of the owners of the Nelson Farm adhered to this sage advice dictated by their environment.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> No Title. *Fort Collins Courier*, October 17, 1889, Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18891017.2.44&srpos=7&e=-----en-20-1-txt-txIN-bottom+lands-----O-Larimer#>.

<sup>6</sup> "Andrew Armstrong," *Fort Collins Courier*, January 1, 1894, Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCE18940101.2.18&srpos=1&e=-----en-20-1-txt-txIN-bottomlands-----O-Larimer#>; "Home, Farmland, and Garden," *Fort Collins Courier*, June 4, 1885, Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18850604.2.24&srpos=18&e=-1868-1894-en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22bottom+lands%22-----2-Larimer#>; "Livestock Department," *Fort Collins Courier*, July 17, 1884, Accessed July 20, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18840717.2.54&srpos=12&e=-----en-20-1-txt-txIN-bottom+lands-----O-Larimer#>.

<sup>7</sup> "Livestock Department," *Fort Collins Courier*; "Home, Farmland, and Garden," *Fort Collins Courier*.





Figure 5.

Sally Nelson, c. 1933

## PART II: PEOPLE

The sun might not be up, but Sally Nelson and her brothers were. The Nelson children woke up every day at four in the morning because dairy cows needed milking at least twice a day. With between sixteen and twenty-four cows on their farm at any time, the ordeal of milking took time. After milking their cows, the Nelsons had to pasteurize the milk by heating it and rapidly cooling it to kill any bacteria. Then, they bottled the final product. If the children finished early, they scampered off to the library to catch up on their studies (and to avoid purchasing textbooks). All this happened before school every day.<sup>8</sup>

A farm is more than its plants and animals. Based on its environmental conditions, it is unsurprising that the Nelsons, and almost all the other people who owned this property, were farmers, and almost all those farmers raised cattle. Many owners of this property seldom appeared in historical

newspapers articles or advertisements except in relation to their cattle. Despite these similarities, each owner of The Farm brought their own background and history with them, enriching the landscape as much as the landscape enriched their lives.

By 1872, Fort Collins was only eight years old, but its residents were nonetheless ambitious. The incorporation of the town of Fort Collins gleamed like gold in the eyes of a group of civilians known as the Larimer County Land Improvement Company. This enterprising group of individuals sought to create an “Agricultural Colony” adjacent to the Old Town area that formed atop the original military site. Unlike other colony movements, which settled homogenous communities together, this “colony” was more of a land development or management scheme. The company doled out the rights to land in lotteries, the first

<sup>8</sup> Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, “Dairy Farming Is Not Easy!,” Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO

By the 1920s, most dairies used high-temperature short-time pasteurization processes, in which milk is heated to a high temperature, then passed through tubes along heating plates to hold its temperature for fifteen to twenty seconds, long enough to destroy harmful bacteria. Then, the heated milk runs back through another set of tubes flush against others holding incoming cold milk, cooling the pasteurized milk and warming the unpasteurized milk before it enters the heating area to begin the process again. Older pasteurization processes required holding milk at high temperatures in a large basin for half an hour, making the new processes quicker, but more space and equipment intensive.



occurring in December 1872.

Ostensibly, the Larimer County Land Improvement Company selected only individuals “of good moral character” to purchase lots. Samuel Ganow was one of these individuals.<sup>9</sup>

Sam Ganow and his wife, Kitty, did not move to Larimer County randomly. Sam, living in Wyoming in the 1860s, had a contact in the area: Joseph Mason. Foreseeably, Mason, who had persuaded Lt. Hanna and his superiors to move Camp Collins near his own property, had his fingers in every pie in this developing town. In the mid-nineteenth century, Wells Fargo had a monopoly on transportation between Colorado and Wyoming. Seeing an opening, Mason and Ganow established a stagecoach line running between Denver and Cheyenne to compete with Wells Fargo’s services.

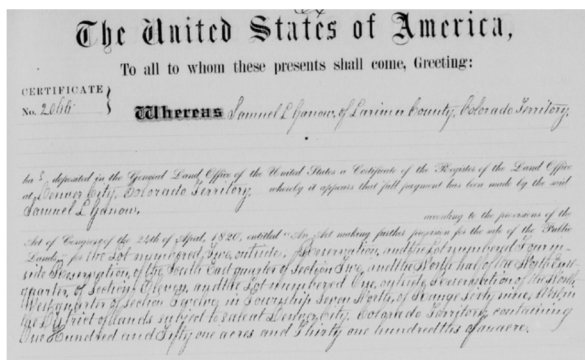
A price war ensued throughout 1868. Wells Fargo’s passenger fare was fifteen dollars before the establishment of the Mason & Ganow line, but the competition resulted in several price slashes. In November 1868, Mason & Ganow reduced its fare to Cheyenne to a pittance: \$2.50. *Denver Rocky Mountain News* joked, “It is cheaper to go to Cheyenne than to stay home.” Wells Fargo reduced their rate to three

dollars, but after some deliberations, the two firms agreed to set the fare at ten dollars. Mere months later, Wells Fargo released their double daily line, leaving each morning and evening, prompting Mason & Ganow to retire their stage line.<sup>10</sup>

In 1872, three years after his dabble in the stagecoach business, Sam and Kitty Ganow won the right to their land, a total of 160 acres including the area of The Farm, from the Larimer County Land Improvement Company. Ganow subsequently purchased the land from the US Government, as granted by the Land Act of 1820, which lowered the price of land per acre, but stipulated that public land was no longer available for purchase using an installment or credit system. Ganow likely borrowed money to fund this venture from Lucy Crandall, a wealthy Denverite, given the establishment of an “indenture”

**Figure 6.**

Text reads:  
“Whereas Samuel L. Ganow of Larimer County, Colorado Territory, has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of Register of the Land Office at Denver City, Colorado Territory, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Samuel L. Ganow, according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24<sup>th</sup> of April, 1820, entitled ‘An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands’ for... the North half of the North East quarter of Section Eleven... containing One Hundred and fifty one acres and thirty one hundredths of an acre.”



<sup>9</sup> Fort Collins History Connection, “Fort Collins History and Architecture: Establishing the City: Old Town and New Town, 1866-1877,” Accessed July 23, 2018, <https://history.fcgov.com/contexts/establishcity/>.

Camp Collins was a military outpost established in 1862 to help and protect pioneer settlers making their way west on the Overland Trail.

For more information on historic colony enterprises and Greeley’s Union Colony, read the “Colony Movement” section here: <https://history.fcgov.com/contexts/establishcity>

<sup>10</sup> South Pass City, Sweetwater County, Wyoming Territory, 1870 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), Images reproduced by FamilySearch, Accessed July 23, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7163/4268868\\_00293?pid=6105942&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7163%26h%3D6105942%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_phsrc%3DEeM452%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=EeM452&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7163/4268868_00293?pid=6105942&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7163%26h%3D6105942%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3DEeM452%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=EeM452&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true); *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, November 21, 1868, quoted in Jackson W. Turrentine, *Wells Fargo in Colorado Territory* (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1982), 44-45, 66.

Consequently, after their only competition, Mason & Ganow, left the business, the Wells Fargo Denver to Cheyenne fare rose again to fifteen dollars.





between the two parties for five hundred dollars around the time of the title recording. Unlike Joseph Mason, who acquired his land through the Homestead Act of 1862, Sam Ganow was not legally required to live on and improve his land, allowing him and his wife to reside closer to downtown.<sup>11</sup>

Although he and Kitty did not live on the 160 acres they won from the Larimer County Land Improvement Company, Samuel Ganow still worked as a farmer and rancher. Sam and Kitty instead lived on College Avenue near the Mason and Hottel millrace, building the second brick house ever constructed in Fort Collins. Ganow raised cattle for sale; there is no evidence that he or his associates raised dairy cattle. In fact, in 1874, a scandal erupted surrounding some cattle Ganow sold to a man named J. D. Warner. Mr. Warner purchased cattle from Ganow under the false impression that they were Texan stock, a hardy, drought-resistant breed.<sup>12</sup>

Nastiness ensued for months in and out of court. Lawyers slung “falsehood” against witnesses. In Larimer County, the Warner v. Ganow trial resulted in a hung jury, so the case moved to a Weld County court for a retrial. There, the jury ruled in favor of Ganow, but newspapers reported on rumor that the case might be appealed to a higher court; however, there is no evidence to suggest this happened. Ganow may have won his court case, but the disrepute created by the messy proceedings may have contributed to his and Kitty’s departure from Fort Collins. Halfway through this ordeal, Kitty placed a newspaper advertisement to sell their household of goods. The Ganows then dropped out of Colorado newspaper records following the trial. Census records place the Ganows in Bishops Creek, California by 1880, living with Harvey Whitlock, Kitty’s aged father.<sup>13</sup>

Reputation tarnished, and presumably absconded to California,

<sup>11</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book E:177-8, December 5, 1872, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Samuel Ganow (Larimer County, CO), Sale- Cash Entry no. 2066, November 15, 1873, Land Patent Search, Digital Images, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records, Accessed August 7, 2018, [https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=C00230\\_.337&docClass=STA&sid=vqsJ0lay.g2o#patentDetailsTabIndex=1](https://glorerecords.blm.gov/details/patent/default.aspx?accession=C00230_.337&docClass=STA&sid=vqsJ0lay.g2o#patentDetailsTabIndex=1); Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book F:82-3, November 25, 1872, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO.

An indenture is like a Deed of Trust, essentially a loan given with land offered as collateral.

<sup>12</sup> Ansel Watrous, *History of Larimer County, Colorado* (Fort Collins: The Courier Printing & Publishing Company, 1911), 292; Thomas Burrus, “A Card,” *Fort Collins Courier*, April 22, 1874, Accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCS18740422.2.28&srpos=35&e=-1862---1879-en-20-21-txt-txIN-ganow---0-#>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; “Local Notes,” *Fort Collins Courier*, May 13, 1874, Accessed July 24, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6742/4239978-00357?pid=20394198&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6742%26h%3D20394198%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_phsrc%3DEe](https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCS18740513.2.21&srpos=10&e=-1862---1879-en-20-1-txt-txIN-warner---0-Larimer; 'Local Notes,' Fort Collins Courier, June 10, 1874, Accessed July 24, 2018, https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCS18740610.2.18&srpos=9&e=-1862---1879-en-20-1-txt-txIN-warner---0-Larimer; 'Auction Sale,' Fort Collins Courier, May 6, 1874, Accessed July 24, 2018, https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCS18740610.2.18&srpos=9&e=-1862---1879-en-20-1-txt-txIN-warner---0-Larimer; Bishops Creek, Inyo County, California, 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010), 1880 U.S. Census Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Accessed July 24, 2018, <a href=)



Ganow sold his ranch property to his friend, Joseph Mason, in 1874. Mason's homestead consisted of the land flanking Ganow's former property to the west. If Mason made use of his friend's land at all, he likely raised horses, given that he ran a coach line and operated a stable off Jefferson Street. When Mason acquired Ganow's land, he was serving as sheriff of Fort Collins. Many regarded him as "one of the best sheriffs Larimer county ever had or may ever expect to have." With his plate full, and already owning vast swathes of land all over Fort Collins, Mason sold the Ganow land to his future city marshal, James L. Allen.<sup>14</sup>

Like Mason, Allen pursued a variety of ventures including hauling freight, ranching, operating a general store, and buying and selling real estate. Allen's Missouri relatives even sent him a pair of peacocks, which he endeavored to breed and sell, but this operation seemingly fell through. Although his mercantile business brought him local acclaim, he sold his business in 1874 to businessman Theodore Kutcher and called in any outstanding balances to be settled, presumably to pay off debts and pursue wealth in real estate. In 1880, the *Fort Collins Courier* claims that Allen

was "probably the most extensive dealer in real estate." With his real estate ventures kicking off, Allen sold The Farm property to his uncle, retired mayor Benjamin T. Whedbee, in 1875.<sup>15</sup>

But Allen's tale of success twisted into one of tragedy soon after. Severe bouts of rheumatism plagued Allen beginning in the 1880s, sometimes confining him to his home for weeks. Allen stood in as acting City Marshal starting sometime in 1884, and was voted into the position April 1885, but he resigned from the position after only a week, possibly because of his declining health. Allen's wife, Cora, adopted daughter of his uncle, divorced James in 1893, and died in May 1896. It can be assumed that Allen was emotionally overwhelmed given his subsequent actions. Allen moved away from Fort Collins, to the mountain town of Victor, Colorado, where he worked for a short time as a night watchman. His body was found on Battle Mountain May 8, 1897. A journalist reported that he had told a friend that he intended to kill himself earlier that same day, but the friend did not heed his warning. Allen overdosed on morphine. He left behind four daughters.<sup>16</sup>

M454%26\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\_phsrc=EeM454&\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true.

<sup>14</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book E:458, April 8, 1874, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "The County Election," *Fort Collins Courier*, September 16, 1873, Accessed July 24, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCS18740916.2.10&srpos=1&e=-----en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22or+may+ever+expect+to+have%22-----2-Larimer>.

<sup>15</sup> "Local Notes," *Fort Collins Courier*, March 25, 1874, Accessed July 25, 2018,

<sup>16</sup> "Personal Mention," *Fort Collins Courier*, March 29, 1883, Accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18830329.2.20&srpos=8&e=-----1898--en-20-1-txt-txIN-%22j+I+allen%22----->



Allen likely sold The Farm to Benjamin Whedbee in 1875 because of familial ties. Cora was Ben's adopted daughter, and James was the son of Ben's sister, Martha Whedbee Allen, and George Nelson Allen. Whedbee was an early pioneer in Northern Colorado, settling as a rancher in Pleasant Valley, which he named, in 1863. Relocating to Fort Collins, Whedbee operated the first drug store north of Boulder beginning in 1871 and moved it in 1872 to the corner of Mountain and College Avenues. He and his wife Susan built their house next door. Whedbee served as Fort Collins mayor (or held a position with mayoral functions before the title existed) from 1873-1879. Locals endearingly called him and his wife "Uncle Ben" and "Aunt Susan" because of their positive role in the community.<sup>17</sup>

Although there are no extant sources specific to Whedbee's use of The Farm property, Uncle Ben owned the land for longer than any individual in its history, and available records inform plausible conclusions. Susan and Ben, though they had no children of their own,



had a considerable extended family including Bessie Allen Brown, daughter of James and Cora Allen, and other notable Fort Collins names like the Trimbles, Loomises, and Bosworths. Ben and Susan likely either rented the property or permitted a relative to use it, given that they had their own residence on Mountain Avenue, and later on Peterson Street. Most likely, Susan's young nephew, William Travis, operated the farm with his wife, Elizabeth. Newspaper articles indicate that Travis

**Figure 7.**

Uncle Ben sitting on the porch of his house at 611 Peterson with his niece, Elizabeth, and grandnieces, Grace and Marian, who he lived with for more than a decade.

--2-Larimer#; "Adjourned Meeting of City Council," *Fort Collins Courier*, April 30, 1885, Accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18850430.2.9&srpos=4&e=---1898--en-20--1--txt-txIN-allen+%22city+marshal%22---O-Larimer#>; Cora B. Allen and James L. Allen, March 18, 1893, Denver, Colorado, Divorce Index, 1851-1985 [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015), Accessed July 25, 2018, [https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60927&h=579317&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=Gil130&\\_phstart=succesSource](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60927&h=579317&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Gil130&_phstart=succesSource); "Cora Isabell Allen," Find a Grave Index, Accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/51823041>; "Death of James L. Allen," *Fort Collins Courier*, May 13, 1897, James Allen, Biographical File, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>17</sup> Biographical Files, Whedbee, Benjamin T., Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book G:286, March 11, 1875, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "Aged Sufferer Welcomes Call to Heavenly Home," *Fort Collins Courier*, May 6, 1908, Accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19080506.2.124&srpos=4&e=--1872--1913--en-20--1--txt-txIN-martha+allen+whedbee---O-Larimer#>; Missouri City, Clay, Missouri, 1860 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009), Images reproduced by FamilySearch, Accessed July 25, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7667/4233963\\_00338?pid=40092162&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7667%26h%3D40092162%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D60965495%26pid%3D40440163392%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=60965495&personid=40440163392&hitid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7667/4233963_00338?pid=40092162&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7667%26h%3D40092162%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D60965495%26pid%3D40440163392%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=60965495&personid=40440163392&hitid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true); Watrous, 273-274.





and Whedbee were in the cattle business together. At one point, Travis purchased dairy equipment and cattle from dairyman W. F. Scribner, which may have been for Whedbee's property. Travis succumbed to consumption and died in 1897. Ben Whedbee invited Travis's widow, only thirty-five years old, and her children, Grace and Marian, seven and one years old, respectively, to move in with him at his home on Peterson Street, suggesting a close relationship. Grace and Marian cared for Uncle Ben until his death.<sup>18</sup>

Benjamin Whedbee lived to be ninety-eight years old. Although he had no direct heirs, he had a network of close familial ties with his nieces and nephews, aged themselves, and his grandnieces and grandnephews. He left his estate to these individuals. Already grown, this third generation of Whedbees had scattered to the four winds. They had their own lives, and as much as they loved their Uncle Ben, had no desire to move back to Fort Collins to become a farmer. Dairyman George H. Wilcox saw his opening.<sup>19</sup>

George Wilcox was an ambitious man; when he saw what he wanted, he would not relent until it belonged to him. In March 1910, Wilcox attempted to purchase land north of the city from the



**Figure 8.**

George and Rose Wilcox moved to Fort Collins around 1910. They rented a farm off Linden Street before purchasing the land including The Farm.

Fort Collins Terminal Land and Improvement Company and believed his investment squared away. However, the deal fell through. The company expected him to use a fifty-foot strip of land as a road outlet for the Colorado & Southern Railroad to have right of way across Elm Street at this location. Wilcox refused to comply, and the company refused to deed over this section of land for other purposes. The entire deal collapsed to the frustration of all involved.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> "Uncle Ben: He Never Lived on the Street Named for Him," *Triangle Review*, December 1, 1973, Biographical Files, Whedbee, Benjamin T., Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO; No Title, *Fort Collins Courier*, November 15, 1894, Accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18941115.2.4&srpos=1&e=-----en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22william+travis%22-----2-Larimer#>; Fort Collins, Larimer County, Colorado, 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006), Accessed July 25, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7884/31111\\_4327324-00807?pid=187279412&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7884%26h%3D187279412%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26\\_phsrc%3DGil193%26\\_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=Gil193&\\_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/7884/31111_4327324-00807?pid=187279412&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D7884%26h%3D187279412%26tid%3D%26pid%3D%26usePUB%3Dtrue%26_phsrc%3DGil193%26_phstart%3DsuccessSource&treeid=&personid=&hintid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=Gil193&_phstart=successSource&usePUBJs=true).

<sup>19</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 268:258, January 4, 1912, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>20</sup> "Union Pacific Now a Possible Purchaser," *Fort Collins Courier*, March 17, 1910, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19100317.2.99&srpos=2&e=-----1920-en-20-1-txt-txIN-dairyman+george---0-Larimer#>.



Wilcox, however, was not deterred. In 1910, Benjamin Whedbee passed away and willed away his estate, including land in the area that had eluded Wilcox in his failed deal earlier that same year. Mr. Wilcox set to work. Over two years, he approached each stakeholder in the land he had his eyes on and managed to consolidate seventy acres under his ownership. Wilcox even filed a suit to have his land unincorporated from city limits to avoid municipal taxes. The City attorney denied his case.<sup>21</sup>

Wilcox drove a milk wagon in Fort Collins for eighteen years but retired from delivery shortly after purchasing his seventy-acre farm; however, he continued dairy production. He sold his milk wholesale to Johnston Creamery, which also took over his delivery routes. Wilcox also bought and sold cattle, including stock from the agricultural college and thoroughbred Holstein bulls. Locals were impressed by one cow he bought for \$75, which garnered him \$1250 in profit after just seven years. The cow produced seven gallons of milk per day, equaling \$146 per year on milk alone. Her calves were considered



**Figure 9.** An example of a gravel pit in early twentieth-century Fort Collins. A body of water, likely the Poudre river, is visible in the foreground. Such moving water erodes rocks and creates a sandy mixture useful for paving roads.

valuable by other farmers because of her milk productivity and the fact that Wilcox bred her with his thoroughbred stock.<sup>22</sup>

The farm's situation south of the Poudre River allowed further opportunity for profit by Wilcox. The bottomland soil was not only ideal for growing cattle-fattening grasses, but its sandy composition was perfect for gravel road material. As populations burgeoned in Fort Collins and automobiles became more common, citizens demanded paved roads. Wilcox opened a gravel pit on his farm for contractors to use for the

<sup>21</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 180:207, July 6, 1903, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 180:207, July 6, 1903, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 309:36, January 12, 1912, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 285:429-31, January 24, 1912, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 358:3, May 21, 1917, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "New Auto Ordinance Passed," *Fort Collins Courier*, August 29, 1913, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19130905.2.114&srpos=10&e=---1920-en-20-1-txt-txIN-wilcox+railroad---0-Larimer#>; "Jefferson Street to Be Paved," *Fort Collins Courier*, September 5, 1913, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19130905.2.114&srpos=10&e=---1920-en-20-1-txt-txIN-wilcox+railroad---0-Larimer#>.

<sup>22</sup> "Quits Milk Route After Eighteen Years," *Fort Collins Courier*, May 2, 1913, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19130502.2.75&srpos=1&e=---1920-en-20-1-txt-txIN-wilcox+milk---0-Larimer#>; "College Bred Bull for Sale," *Fort Collins Courier*, May 3, 1912, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19120503.2.136&srpos=3&e=---1920-en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-wilcox+sherwood---0-Larimer#>; "Profitable Returns Are Made on Cow," *Loveland Daily Herald*, August 21, 1915, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=LVD19150821-01.2.8&srpos=1&e=---1920-en-20-1-txt-txIN-wilcox+cow---0-Larimer#>.



purposes of paving roads. Wilcox's ambition seemed to pay off.<sup>23</sup>

People in positions of power can sometimes abuse that power— such was the case with George Wilcox. Cora Mosman was a young woman in her twenties, living with her parents on their farm. Cora was disabled. Wilcox assaulted and raped Ms. Mosman in the summer of 1906. Mr. and Mrs. James Mosman and their daughter took Wilcox to court over the attack. After hearing from the defendant and other witnesses, the court ruled in favor of Ms. Mosman. The judge ordered Wilcox to pay the defendant five hundred dollars, which may have dented his pocketbook, but apparently not his business, given the success of his dairy years later.<sup>24</sup>

Wilcox and his wife, Rose, decided to leave Fort Collins and move to California in 1919. They sold their dairy to farmer Fred Quiller. Quiller then quickly sold the property to dairyman John Albert Nelson and his wife, Jennie, the next year. The deed lists this property as selling for “one dollar and

other valuable considerations,” and those considerations were valuable indeed. The *Fort Collins Courier* lists the sale price of the farm, its buildings, crop, and dairy cows, at twenty-five thousand dollars. The National Agricultural Statistics Service estimates 1920 agricultural land value at an average of sixty-nine dollars per acre, making the average price of a 160-acre farm just over eleven thousand dollars. Even considering the inclusion of livestock and equipment, the price of The Farm to the Nelsons was well above this figure. The sale price of this property to the Nelsons reflects farmers' expectations of high profits at the time. Inflationary agricultural policies carried over from World War I resulted in high crop prices and greater profits for farmers. The Nelsons could not have known that average farm price would sink to less than half its 1920 level by the 1930s, but the hard work of all members of the Nelson family ensured the success of their dairy farm.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> “Jefferson Street to Be Paved,” *Fort Collins Courier*; “Sand and Gravel Pit Being Opened for New Pavement,” *Fort Collins Courier*, August 10, 1917, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19170810.2.36&srpos=12&e=-1910-1920-en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-wilcox+farm-----O-Larimer#>.

<sup>24</sup> “Bound Over to District Court on Serious Charge,” *Fort Collins Courier*, June 6, 1906, Accessed July 7, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TWC19060606.2.105&srpos=1&e=-----en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22G.+H.+Wilcox%22-----2-Larimer>.

<sup>25</sup> “G. H. Wilcox: Former Resident Visits Fort Collins,” *Fort Collins Courier*, September 27, 1922, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19220927.2.86.1&srpos=56&e=-----en-20-41-byDA-txt-txIN-wilcox+california-----O-Larimer#>; “Public Sale of Household Goods,” *Fort Collins Courier*, October 2, 1920, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19201002.2.92.3&srpos=52&e=-----en-20-41-byDA-txt-txIN-wilcox+california-----O-Larimer#>; San Diego, San Diego County, California, 1920 United States Federal Census [database on-line], (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010), Images reproduced by FamilySearch, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6061/4293836-00541?pid=3035089&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6061%26h%3D3035089%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D35332264%26pid%3D20157313215%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=35332264&personid=20157313215&hntid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true>; California, Death Index, 1905-1939 [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013), Accessed July 27, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/5187/41547\\_B138956-00612?pid=1927100&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D5187%26h%3D1927100%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D35332264%26](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/5187/41547_B138956-00612?pid=1927100&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D5187%26h%3D1927100%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D35332264%26)





John and Jennie Nelson moved to Fort Collins from Nebraska to pursue their dairy business with their children, Lee, Chester, Forrest, Orville, and Marcella (Sally). They worked together to operate the Nelson Dairy. The Nelsons' purchase included the farm's dairy cows, equipment, and crop, so they started with a foundation for success. However, the Nelsons had to overcome the previous owner's renown so the "Wilcox Dairy" could become the "Nelson Dairy" in the eyes of locals. Over time, the Nelsons' success and dedication to their business made them more prominent in the community than George Wilcox ever was. The close family all lived together, even for some time after the children entered college.<sup>26</sup>

John and Jennie chose to settle down in Fort Collins because they wanted all their children to have the opportunity to go to college. While in college, the family dairy remained a significant part of the Nelson children's lives. When Sally's brother, Orville, attended Colorado Agricultural College (now Colorado State University), he studied animal husbandry and education, and he belonged to the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity. The Aggies used to hold a rodeo each year and kicked it off with a parade. Businesses and college organizations decorated the floats. Orville and his fraternity brothers

made their float from a hayrack and carried a cow on it with bales of hay, furnished by the Nelson Dairy. As the crowd cheered, they milked the cow on the float and sold bottles of fresh milk to spectators. They won the prize for "Most Original Float," and the starring cow



**Figure 10.** Sally Nelson (right) and her friend, Alice (left), at the Nelson Dairy. The Farm's concrete silo can be seen behind them.

pid%3D18868253702%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=35332264&personid=18868253702&hntid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true.; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 395:400, September 10, 1919, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 412:27, October 16, 1920, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "Around the Courthouse," *Fort Collins Courier*, August 26, 1920, Accessed July 27, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19200826.2.83&srpos=22&e=-1919--1920-en-20-21-txt-txIN-nelson---O-Larimer#>; "Trends in US Agriculture- Land Values," NASS-USDA, May 4, 2018, Accessed September 28, 2018, [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Trends\\_in\\_U.S.\\_Agriculture/Land\\_Values/index.php](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/Trends_in_U.S._Agriculture/Land_Values/index.php).

<sup>26</sup> Fairview, Frontier County, Nebraska, 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line] (Lehi, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2006), Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Accessed July 27, 2018, [https://mediasvc.ancestry.com/v2/thumbnail/namespaces/7884/media/31111\\_4330833-01494.jpg?Client=SearchUI&MaxSide=175&suppressNotFound=true](https://mediasvc.ancestry.com/v2/thumbnail/namespaces/7884/media/31111_4330833-01494.jpg?Client=SearchUI&MaxSide=175&suppressNotFound=true); "Around the Courthouse," *Fort Collins Courier*; Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "How We Loved Our Dairy Farm," Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.



**Figure 11.**  
John and Jennie Nelson in front of their remodeled farmhouse. The southern face of the building is visible behind them. John holds baby Joanna, the daughter of a family friend.

garnered positive publicity for the Nelson Dairy.<sup>27</sup>

The Nelsons kept their dairy until 1945. John and Jennie worked hard to pay for a college education for each of their four children. Sally remembered how she and her mom would cook for her dad and brothers, then for the college students who lived and worked with them after her brothers left home. Sally and her brothers were grateful for their parents' sacrifice. As John and Jennie grew old, they could not manage the farm as well as they once had. Their son, Forrest, returned from Chicago, where he worked as a mechanical engineer, to run the Nelson Dairy until his father's death in 1945.<sup>28</sup>

The Nelsons sold the farm to Oliver and Janet Nichols that same year. Oliver, like the Nelson children, attended Colorado Agricultural College. Oliver and

Janet's time at the university overlapped with some of the Nelsons' attendance, so they may have known each other from school given the common majors of Janet, Orville, and Sally (Education) and Oliver's focus in farming/ranching. In 1940, about ten years after graduating from college, Oliver was drafted into World War II. After the war ended in 1945, the Nichols returned to farming and purchased the Nelson property. They cared for sixty dairy cattle and used the silo in their operations. The Nichols worked as dairy farmers like the Nelsons even after selling the farm.<sup>29</sup>

The farm then passed to two other families of farmers. In 1948, the Nichols sold their property to Clarence and Helen Penrod. The Penrods stayed on the property for five years, until they sold their farm to Jacob and Lydia Smith. Jacob immigrated from Russia in 1908

<sup>27</sup> Wiley, No Title; Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "Our Float Won First Prize!" Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>28</sup> Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "A Red Lace Gown," Historical Files, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park, Fort Collins, CO; Wiley, No Title; "John Albert Nelson," Find a Grave Index, Accessed July 30, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/47635865>.

<sup>29</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 787:288, April 16, 1945, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Wiley, No Title; "Janet Jamieson Nichols," Find a Grave Index, Accessed July 30, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54521884>; "Oliver Nichols," Find a Grave Index, Accessed July 30, 2018, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/54521889>; "Site History," Historical Files, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park, Fort Collins, CO.



as a child and worked as a farmer in northern Colorado. Jacob was most likely a Volga Russian (German from Russia), given that he listed his languages spoken as German on the 1930 census rather than Russian. Jacob and Lydia purchased The Farm in 1953 and, like many of the owners who preceded them, raised dairy cattle. The couple operated their farm for twenty years.<sup>30</sup>

By that time, citizens and the local government alike agreed that need existed for a northside park, recognizing the dearth of recreational land in the north part of town. The Smiths' land flanked the City's tree dump to the west, which the City hoped to incorporate into such a park. In 1972, the City offered the Smiths \$40,137 for their land, almost the exact sum of money budgeted for the project plus funds from a federal recreation grant. The Smiths refused, insisting that the appraisal was unfair, and that they could get more money on the open market. However, bottomland properties have greater potential flood risk than any other land, which often decreases their value.<sup>31</sup>

Seeing no other option, City Manager Thomas Coffey reluctantly

allowed condemnation proceedings to ensue. Traditionally, any land use for the good of the public, including development of parks and roads, is justifiable impetus for condemnation but often translates to poor public relations. People wrote in to the *Coloradoan* to voice their concern over this action. Some felt uncomfortable with the use of condemnation protocols to seize land for a park instead of for a health or safety concern. The Smiths acted shortly afterward.<sup>32</sup>

In the summer of 1972, Jake and Lydia sold most of their acreage to Poudre Valley Industrial Complex, Inc., a Boulder-based company headed by developers John Shattuck, William Reynolds, and James Thorvilson, for more than one hundred thousand dollars. Shattuck and company wanted to develop an industrial area and gravel pit on the site. The City offered Mr. Shattuck the same forty thousand dollar offer, and he promptly declined, citing his purchase price as a rebuttal of the initial appraisal. State law, however, indicates that transactions made during condemnation proceedings should not affect adjudicated value of a property.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 858:57, June 30, 1948, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 955:482, August 26, 1953, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; Pierce, Weld County, Colorado, 1930 *United States Federal Census* [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002), Images Reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed July 30, 2018, [https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4531857\\_00432?pid=102177689&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6224%26h%3D102177689%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D118569189%26pid%3D130201495045%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=118569189&personid=130201495045&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true](https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6224/4531857_00432?pid=102177689&backurl=https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv%3D1%26dbid%3D6224%26h%3D102177689%26ssrc%3Dpt%26tid%3D118569189%26pid%3D130201495045%26usePUB%3Dtrue&ssrc=pt&treeid=118569189&personid=130201495045&hintid=&usePUB=true&usePUBJs=true); "Site History."

<sup>31</sup> "Council to Receive Request for Park Land Condemnation," *Coloradoan*, February 23, 1972, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225557063>; "Lopez Casts Dissenting Vote on Fire Station," *Coloradoan*, February 25, 1972, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225560223>;

<sup>32</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Lis Pendens Book 1496:0449, March 20, 1972, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "Council to Receive Request for Park Land Condemnation;" "Three-man Commission Named to Hear Condemnation Case," *Coloradoan*, July 24, 1972, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225561182>.

<sup>33</sup> Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 1546:0086, June 9, 1972, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "City Continuing with Condemnation for North-side Park," *Coloradoan*, July





As the squabbling over this property continued, the City Planning Commission greenlighted a different request from Reynolds, Shattuck, and Thorvilson. Commissioners approved one of their rezone petitions for an industrial project, then additionally rezoned the area around the 1906 historic Plummer School, which the three businessmen wanted to turn into a Victorian-style office building, given provisions that Reynolds, Shattuck, and Thorvilson would maintain the historic character of the building. About two weeks later, the former Poudre Valley Industrial Complex, Inc. sold their controversial property adjacent to the City's tree dump to the City for \$122,202.<sup>34</sup>

This land became Lee Martinez Park, named in honor of respected northside community leader Lee Martinez, but The Farm, Block 66, remained under the ownership of Jake and Lydia Smith. In 1974, the Smiths opted to sell their property, including their house and farm buildings, for about thirty thousand dollars, the amount budgeted by the City for this purpose



**Figure 12.**

Librado "Lee" Martinez and his new wife, Eva, on their wedding day, November 15, 1924. Lee was a respected member of the community because of his work with the Human Relations Commission, the Spanish Activities Committee, and the Holy Family Church, among other undertakings.

after the larger purchase from Poudre Valley Industrial. Jake and Lydia auctioned off all their farm equipment soon after selling their property and moved into a house at 1317 Yount Street. Jake Smith passed away just one year after giving up The Farm.<sup>35</sup>

14, 1972, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225549818>; "Three-man Commission Named to Hear Condemnation Case."

<sup>34</sup> "Commissioners Deny Zone Request in 'Strip City,'" *Coloradoan*, December 22, 1972, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225566328>; "Commissioners OK Three Silos Plan," *Coloradoan*, April 26, 1972, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225569770/?terms=shattuck%2Bthree%2Bsilos>; "Commissioners Hear Debate on Zoning Issue," *Coloradoan*, June 22, 1973, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225562455>; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 1562:0307, July 10, 1973, County Clerk, Fort Collins, CO; "City Moves Ahead on Phase 1 Plans for Improvements," *Coloradoan*, July 20, 1973, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225561757>.

<sup>35</sup> "City Plans \$931,821 for Parks in 1974," *Coloradoan*, September 19, 1973, Accessed August 1, 2018, [https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226824896/?terms=%22lee%2Bmartinez%22%2Bhouse](https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226824896/?terms=%22lee%2Bmartinez%22%2Bhouse;); "Tree Dump," *Coloradoan*, April 4, 1974, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226882089/?terms=%22lee%2Bmartinez%22>; Larimer County, Colorado, Deed Book 1588:0566, February 7, 1974, County Clerk and Recorder, Fort Collins, CO; "Farm Machinery Auction," *Coloradoan*, February 25, 1974, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/225563426>; "Obituaries: Jake Smith," *Coloradoan*, June 27, 1975, Accessed August 1, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226844798/?terms=%22jake%2Bsmith%22>; "Jake Smith," U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014 [database on-line] (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2014), Images Reproduced by FamilySearch. Accessed July 30, 2018, <https://search.ancestry.com/cgi->



After the City acquired the land for Lee Martinez Park from Poudre Valley Industrial Complex and the Smiths, they held a number public forms to receive input on how to design the park. One of the most enthusiastically received ideas was to have a “farm zoo” on the premises. The Junior Women’s Club even used the proceeds from their annual fashion show in part to fund this project. The idea of a petting zoo/farm probably stemmed from the region’s historic use as farm and rangeland. In fact, the City fought the overgrowth of grasses on the land by selling grazing rights to ranchers, who allowed their cattle, acting as natural lawn mowers, to roam the sixty-acre region.<sup>36</sup>

One Colorado State University student, Paul Gertler, wrote a piece for the local paper denouncing the use of cattle to maintain land, stating that cattle destroy the understory of vegetation. An irate citizen, Lyn Parker, called him out in a response article, criticizing the student for his failure to understand the land’s long history as cattle rangeland, noting that the unseemliness of the overgrowth was a product of the land’s unusual one-year hiatus from grazing and that such foliage density was neither normal nor useful. Furthermore, she continued, grazing on frozen earth during winter affects understory growth less than on moist, thawed earth. Parks and Recreation Director H. R. Phillips agreed, noting that the development of usable park trails would be impossible with “weeds and



grass as high as your neck anyway.” For these grazing rights, the owners of the cattle exchanged equivalent value in fill dirt to help shape the new park’s terrain, making the decision appealing economically as well as environmentally. Just as environmental conditions complemented cattle ranching on the property in the past, cattle grazing seemed to complement the transition to recreational activities in the new park. However, the controversy caused Phillips to declare that the cattle “will not return”—but any visitor to The Farm knows that statement was not entirely true.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 13.**

This photo of a swampy area in Lee Martinez Park shows the kind of overgrowth the City had to overcome after they purchased the land. The moist soil of bottomlands allowed grasses to thrive. Photographed in 2000, the dense foliage shown here was likely cut back by the City; when recreation director H. R. Phillips said the weeds were as high as your neck in 1975 after a year without tending, he probably was not exaggerating.

bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=3693&h=58145362&ssrc=pt&tid=118569189&pid=130201495045&usePUB=true.

<sup>36</sup> “Martinez Park Plans Could Cost \$1.4 Million,” *Coloradoan*, August 29, 1974, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226968038/>; “Area Designers Show Their Fashions,” *Coloradoan*, October 23, 1974, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227216976/?terms=zoo%2B%22lee%2Bmartinez%2Bpark%22>; “Grazing in Martinez Park Draws Criticism by CSU Wildlife Biologist,” *Coloradoan*, April 6, 1975, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227179338/>.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Gertler, “Cow pies or Butterflies?” *Coloradoan*, April 6, 1975, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227179350/>; Lyn Parker, “Fact or Fit?” *Coloradoan*, April 16, 1975, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227180183/?terms=gertler>; “Grazing in Martinez Park.”



Figure 14.

Outdoor Museum at The Farm

## PART III: BUILDINGS AND OTHER FEATURES

It was a chilly April, but bonnets, long skirts, and woolen britches protected those working in the fields from cold; the year was 1975. One thousand students dressed in 1870s garb, hundreds of adults (some similarly adorned), and several journalists flooded into Lee Martinez Park on April 22, 1975 for Arbor Day. The City planned to turn the east section of the park into an arboretum, and the community came together through volunteering and fundraising to make it happen. Period clad children and adults dug holes and planted a wide variety of trees including flowering crab trees and blue spruces. Eva Martinez, wife of the late Lee Martinez, planted an Imperial Honey Locust tree during the ceremony. A sixth grader, Kim Flanigan, read an essay she wrote about people's "responsibility to replace what we have taken or destroyed," which planting trees on Arbor Day represented to her. Layers of history hung in the air.<sup>38</sup>

According to the City, the purpose of the arboretum was to showcase different types of trees that could grow in



**Figure 15.**  
A group of women planting a tree at the 1975 Arbor Day celebration at Lee Martinez Park, several women wearing 1880s garb.

Colorado. The City planned to plant at least twenty-five species of trees. The natural features of Lee Martinez Park allowed for this range of variation and manipulation of the landscape. In the park's uplands, hardy, drought-resistant trees that require little water thrived, whereas in the bottomlands, trees that enjoyed moist conditions grew well,

<sup>38</sup> "Arboretum Dedication to Be 'Gala Event,'" *Coloradoan*, April 13, 1975, Accessed August 2, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227179881>; "Planting a Tree," *Coloradoan*, April 23, 1975, Accessed August 2, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227180902>; "What Arbor Day Means to Me," *Coloradoan*, April 23, 1975, Accessed August 2, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227180919>.





making a display of arboreal diversity possible in a small area. The environment also shaped how past owners used the land and what structures they built, and that history influenced choices made in land use under the City's ownership.<sup>39</sup>

### Past Structures

Because of The Farm's situation on the outskirts of what was once Fort Collins proper, mystery shrouds much of the history of its built environment. Testimony from Sally Nelson, however, indicates that several buildings existed on the property when her family purchased it in 1920 that have not survived to the present. Known demolished structures include the original farmhouse and a milk house, but there are no records indicating the dates of their construction.

Based on photographs and Sally Nelson's oral history, the old farmhouse had an I-house plan and was made of brick. Sally described the house as a very old, two-story building. The first floor had two rooms: a parlor and her parents' bedroom. The kitchen was also downstairs at the rear of the house, connected to the two main rooms with separate doors. The kitchen had many additional doors leading to a bathroom, pantry, small closet, a side exit, a back porch, and the stairs. Upstairs, above the parlor and "master" bedroom, this old house had two additional bedrooms within its brick walls. Bricks were a popular choice for construction in Fort Collins for many years because the native materials were durable, fire-resistant, easy to procure, and did not require elaborate equipment to process.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> "DTT Group Seeks Trees for Arboretum," *Coloradoan*, February 21, 1975, Accessed August 2, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227234129/>.

<sup>40</sup> Scans of Photo album, Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO; Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, Transcription of Handwritten Notes, Historical Files, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park, Fort Collins, CO; Fort Collins History Connection, "Establishing the City."

Sally identified the original farmhouse as one of the earliest brick residences in Fort Collins, but there is no evidence to corroborate this statement. Samuel Ganow did build the second brick house ever constructed in the city off College Avenue by the millrace; however, this was not the same building because his house was razed by the Union Pacific Railroad. James Allen was active in the real estate business, and there are multiple newspaper articles describing structures built for him (e.g. *Fort Collins Courier*: September 28, 1878, December 22, 1881); however, none of these articles locate the houses, so it is impossible to know whether the old farmhouse was among Allen's projects. From what is visible in historic photographs, the most prominent architectural feature that might help date the house is the double square columns on the porch, but given the arts and crafts style, these were probably added by the Nelsons in the twenties or thirties. The sandstone foundation and porch stair seen in historic photographs does not help date the house either because of the prevalence of that native material in construction throughout many decades (Scans of Photo album; Watrous, 230; "The First Brick-Making," *Fort Collins Courier*, July 2, 1914, Accessed August 6, 2018,

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=TW19140702.2.79&srpos=1&e=---en-20--1--txt-txIN-gano+union+pacific+---O-Larimer#>; "Building Notes," *Fort Collins Courier*, September 28, 1878, Accessed August 3, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC18780928.2.87&srpos=28&e=---1898--en-20-21--txt-txIN-james+allen+---O-Larimer#>).

Sally Nelson's description of the interior of the house does provide other clues. For example, she noted that the house had an interior bathroom. Sewage infrastructure was not developed in Fort Collins until after 1888, indicating that this was likely not one of the earliest houses in the area, residents more often using pit toilets before this time, although this bathroom could have been added after construction of the main house. Furthermore, Sally's description of the I-house orientation is somewhat telling. Most I-houses in Colorado were constructed between 1875 and 1910, according to History Colorado. These



Sally's family made a couple alterations to the original farmhouse before eventually rebuilding it entirely. The Nelsons decided to tear down the west wall of the kitchen in 1924 to attach a dining room and another bedroom in a frame addition. Sally moved into this new bedroom, previously sleeping in the master bedroom, her brothers sharing the two rooms upstairs. The Nelsons dually used the dining room as a family room, putting a roll-top desk in the corner where they could work on the dairy's accounts. In 1926, the Nelsons built a tennis court to the west of their house, which was later removed. In 1936, their children all in college or beyond, John and Jennie decided to demolish the remainder of the two-story brick house and build the existing one-story frame house.<sup>41</sup>

The milk house that Sally mentioned in her oral history also has no associated building or newspaper records. Milk houses were used by dairies to store milk before its sale, so it is probable that dairyman George Wilcox constructed the building sometime between 1912 and 1919 when he sold the property. The Nelsons tore down this milk house in the thirties. Unfortunately, with particularities of The Farm's demolished buildings lost to time, it is impossible to know the full history of these ghost structures.<sup>42</sup>

### Existing Structures

The City has maintained several historic buildings original to The Farm property in addition to installing a variety of useful new structures. Historic resources include the brooder house (the eastern half of the museum building), the chicken coop, the barn, the garage (presently the shop), the frame farmhouse, and the silo. Although there are building records for the Nelsons' work on the farmhouse and more modern alterations to the silo and brooder house, there are no historical documents indicating the construction of the other structures.<sup>43</sup>

**Figure 16.**

Chicken coop at The Farm. The many windows provide light for the chickens, which is necessary for healthy development.



factors indicate that a relative of Benjamin Whedbee probably built the old farmhouse, but this conclusion depends upon some conjecture. ("History," Utilities, City of Fort Collins, <https://www.fcgov.com/utilities/what-we-do/history>; "History of Plumbing in America," *P & M Magazine*, July (1987), Accessed August 3, 2018, <https://www.plumbingsupply.com/pmamerica.html>; Fort Collins History Connection, "1880: Detailed Timeline," Accessed August 3, 2018, <https://history.fcgov.com/timeline/1880>; "I-House," History Colorado, Accessed August 3, 2018, <https://www.historycolorado.org/i-house>).

<sup>41</sup> Wiley, Transcription of Handwritten Notes.

<sup>42</sup> Colorado Historic Newspapers Archive, Accessed August 3, 2018, <http://coloradohistoricnewspapers.com>; Wiley, Transcription of Handwritten Notes.

<sup>43</sup> However, the form of these structures provides a glimpse into their history. The barn, chicken coop, and brooder house have some common features, which may indicate a common construction time. They maintain similar design elements, such as the exposed rafter tails. The barn and brooder house also have similar paired windows. Likewise, the chicken coop and the brooder house have small square windows, although the chicken coop's windows have mullions. The roofs are all made of sheet metal, and inside the buildings, the exposed roof constructions are alike. These commonalities could indicate a common construction date.



**Figure 17.**

The barn at The Farm. The extended, pointed part of the roof is a hay hood, which allowed for the use of a pulley system called a hay trolley to move hay into the loft. Below the hay hood, you can see a hinged opening through which hay would pass.

Bridget Brownell, City of Fort Collins Recreation Supervisor of The Farm at Lee Martinez Park, heard the older, eastern half of the museum building used to be a brooder house. Although there are no sources to confirm this because early building records rarely mentioned farm buildings, the size of the structure, its location, and stylistic similarities with the chicken coop suggest this may be correct. Farmers used brooder houses to keep hatchlings safe and warm. These structures were usually small because they needed to stay warm at all times. Brooder houses also needed to be close to the farmhouse because the chicks needed frequent tending. The similarities in window and roof design between this building and the chicken coop additionally indicate a related purpose.<sup>44</sup>

The barn itself offers some hints of its construction date. It is mostly of stone construction with timber for the roof structure and red-painted portions in the gables. Sheet metal covers the low-pitched gable roof. A cupola sits in the middle of the ridgeline and a hay hood on its south end. The few windows are small and often paired. Although there are some examples of Dutch barns in Colorado, because it does not have the characteristic ports in its gables for martins nor a hood over its door, this barn is not a Dutch barn, one of the oldest styles of barn in the United States. However, it does have side doors and a central walk with stalls on the sides typical of this early style.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Bridget Brownell, interviewed by Reyana Jones, July 6, 2018, the Farm at Lee Martinez Park, Fort Collins, CO; "Poultry Housing," Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, August 26, 2015, Accessed August 6, 2018, <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/agriculture/field-guide/poultry-housing.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Michael J. Auer, "Brief 20: The Preservation of Historic Barns," National Park Service, October 1989, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/20-barns.htm>.





**Figure 18.**

This photo was taken from the open area in the center of the barn. Stalls surround the central path. At the middle top of the image, the small cupola opening is visible; this vent would help dry hay in the second story loft.

These features carried over into a style called the western barn. Early versions of this style had a low-pitched gable roof, with some of the features common to Dutch barns like the placement of doors and stalls, as seen in the barn on The Farm. Western barns typically housed stock like cattle because their large size allowed for more hay to be stored/dried, and their limited windows kept heat trapped for hunkered down stock during the winter. Cupolas were also popular in this style because they allowed proper ventilation to dry hay and circulate potentially foul air in the winter when cattle remained inside for warmth. This style aligns with the barn's historic use of raising cattle.<sup>46</sup>

The key feature that separates a western barn from a Dutch barn is the

hay hood, which accommodates a hay trolley. Although it is presently shut, the hinged hay trolley door is still visible on the barn's south face. The low-pitched, gabled roof of this western barn also indicates construction in the late nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century, farmers started to prefer gambrel roofs to gabled roofs because the vaulted shape accommodated greater volumes of hay storage. Based on this contextual information, it is probable that the barn was constructed sometime in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Because of the scarcity of building records for farm buildings, however, it is difficult to say when structures like the barn, brooder house, and chicken coop were constructed with certainty.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.; Paul F. Long and Gary Van Hoozer, "Barn Styles in American History," *Farm Collector*, June 1999, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.farmcollector.com/farm-life/proud-survivors/>.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; Millicent Ferris, "Hay Carrier Invention Sparks Hardware Line," *Farm Collector*, November 2014, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.farmcollector.com/equipment/hay-carrier-zm0z14novzkel/>; Auer.

The hay trolley was not invented until 1883, and even then, was not available widely.



The garage sheltered no cars when the Nelsons first moved into the farmhouse. John Nelson sold his brand new 1920 Ford Roadster less than two months after purchasing The Farm property from George Wilcox. With three sons going to college, another son and daughter soon to follow, and having just started up his dairy business, the Roadster's sale was a necessary sacrifice. But the garage was not empty long; a 1933 photograph shows Sally Nelson posing with a dog in front of what appears to be a 1930 Roadster (fig. 5).<sup>48</sup>

The small size of the garage and evident lack of previous sliding or swinging barn door hardware suggest that this building has always been a garage rather than a more aged carriage house conversion. This indicates that George Wilcox built the garage. Given that Wilcox never lived in the farmhouse, he probably used the structure to store a tractor or other farm machinery. The Farm at present uses the garage for that purpose, housing a mid-fifties tractor and other equipment inside.<sup>49</sup>

The Farm's silo is a "monolithic concrete silo." From the exterior, structural bands are visible, but are obscured by a layer of smooth cement that covers the concrete structure. Monolithic concrete silos were first built in America at the end of the nineteenth century but became more widespread in the early twentieth century. This kind of silo stored silage, or grasses stored and fermented to create feed for livestock.

Like the barn with its few openings to weather, monolithic silos keep out moisture better than other variations, making its design useful against the moisture inherent to bottomlands.<sup>50</sup>

Sally's memories of the silo were somewhat shadowed. She recalled that when the silo was nearly empty, there was always liquid left behind by the corn stalks, which fermented over the year. This liquid attracted rats. Drunk, the rats acted erratically. Sally was always scared of the rats; she remembered how her brothers had to kill the rats with shovels as they ran at the boys, teeth gnashing. Sally also recollected that when the silo was empty one year, her dad lost part of his finger trying to fill it. John was using an ensilage cutter to chop dry corn stalks for the silo. Distracted, he placed one corn stalk a little too close to the revolving blades. The machine flung the tip of his finger into the silo with the corn husk. Jennie had to patch up her husband's bleeding hand.<sup>51</sup>

Under city ownership, renovation efforts transformed the silo from shadowed to sunny. In 1983, City Council approved funds to hire a design company, Gefroh Associates, to create plans for rehabilitation of the silo and barn. Among the changes was the construction of a staircase to the top of the silo that connected to the barn's hayloft via a second-story bridge. By April 1988, Parks and Recreation had converted the silo into a gift shop for The

<sup>48</sup> "For Sale," *Fort Collins Courier*, October 6, 1920, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=d&d=FCC19201006.2.63&srpos=1&e=-1919-1921-en-20-1-byDA-txt-txIN-%22526+elm%22-----2-Larimer#>; "Marcella Nelson," Photo, ID#H12709, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>49</sup> Brownell, interview.

<sup>50</sup> "History of the Silo," International Silo Organization, Accessed August 6, 2018, <http://silo.org/wp-content/uploads/HISTORY-OF-THE-SILO.doc>.

<sup>51</sup> Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "Rats in the Silo," Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO; Marcella (Nelson) Wiley, "When Dad Cut Off Tip of His Finger!" Biographical Files, Nelson, J. A. and Jennie, Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery, Fort Collins, CO.



Farm called the “Silo Store.” The Farm sold mementos like country crafts, wooden animals, and wheat weavings. The most unique offering was “Moo Doo,” packaged dried cow patties sold for novelty. The City moved this gift shop in 2005 and replaced it with an educational exhibit on farm tools called “Art’s Tool Shed,” named in honor of Art Wilcox, mastermind and driving force behind The Farm’s Heritage Museum.<sup>52</sup>

In 1985, Art Wilcox saw a gap in Colorado’s educational museum offerings. Art believed that children needed a way to learn about Colorado’s agricultural history in a hands-on manner. He and other Rotary Club members worked with The Farm’s staff to develop such a museum in the former brooding house. He volunteered thousands of hours over the course of twenty years to put the museum together. Art gathered historic farm equipment and built displays, like the interactive exhibit that demonstrates the mechanical advantage of pulleys by allowing visitors to lift a bale of hay. Art hand-wrote many of the interpretive signs still in the museum today. In 1987, the City built an addition onto the small museum building, expanding it to more than double its original size. In 2000, the City and the Rotary Club dedicated the Heritage Museum to Art with a plaque, and in 2006, the transformed silo, “Art’s Tool Shed.”<sup>53</sup>

Before the devoted efforts of Art Wilcox and the Rotary Club, The Farm



**Figure 19.**

Art’s Tool Shed and the second-story bridge connecting the silo to the barn’s hay loft. Inside, Art’s Tool Shed features exhibits of agriculture and farm equipment, including a visualization of how much milk a cow produces in a day.

<sup>52</sup> Fort Collins City Council, “Resolution 83-162,” November 15, 1983, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park File, City Clerk’s Office, City Hall, Fort Collins, CO; “Something for Everyone at Farm Silo Store,” City of Fort Collins Parks and Recreation Department, July 13, 1988, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park Files, City Clerk’s Office, City Hall, Fort Collins, CO; “Addition and or Alteration,” Building Permit, No. B0507051, Community Planning and Environmental Services Building Inspection Division, Fort Collins, CO, December 28, 2005, Accessed August 6, 2018, <http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=2&docid=878151&dt=PERMITS>.

<sup>53</sup> “Rotary Farm Heritage Museum,” Rotary International, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://www.rotarycluboffortcollins.org/page/rotary-farm-heritage-museum/>; Building Permit, No. 27179, Building Inspection Division, Fort Collins, CO, July 21, 1987, Accessed August 6, 2018, <http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=2&docid=376429&dt=PERMITS>; Sara Reed, “Rotary Club Honors Local Ag Enthusiast,” *Coloradoan*, May 11, 2006, Accessed August 6, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/227203135>.





**Figure 20.**

Pre-1950s photograph of the James Ross House at 1600 W Horsetooth. On the right side of the image, the Ross Proving-Up House is visible behind the larger brick residence the family built in 1898.

received some initial improvements. In July 1975, the City took out a permit to construct a building, later called the administrative building, containing restrooms, storage, and a concessions counter. With these improvements, visitors could more comfortably enjoy The Farm. By 1977, the City allocated \$20,000 to renovate the barn at The Farm, and another \$15,000 to work on the first phase of improvements to other farm facilities. In 1980, citizens passed a Community Parks Bond Issue that set aside \$325,000 for renovation of The Farm, specifying that the money ought to be used for development or rehabilitation rather than operation costs.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to using funds to install infrastructure for safety and usability, developers of The Farm sought to provide educational opportunities for visitors. The City tried to maintain a rural setting for The Farm's predominantly

urban visitors, which meant creating a working farm with all its animals, equipment, and feeling. They did not want The Farm to be a mere petting zoo. With its collection of antique farming equipment and historic structures, developers hoped that the farm would serve as living history for its guests.<sup>55</sup>

Addressing this purpose, the newest addition to The Farm, The Ross Proving-Up House, was not new at all. Born in Scotland, James Ross emigrated to America in 1887. He worked for several years hauling stones from the Stout Quarry to town for projects such as laying sidewalks. Ross married Jane Wilson Nichol in 1889, and together, they filed a homestead claim in southwest Fort Collins. To "prove up" (improve) a 160-acre homestead according the 1862 Homestead Act, claimants had to build a residence and tend the land consistently for five years. To comply with these requirements, the

<sup>54</sup> Building Permit, No. 23837, Building Inspection Division, August 5, 1975, Accessed August 7, 2018, <http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=2&docid=258280&dt=PERMITS>; "Barn to Be Park of Children's Park," *Coloradoan*, September 27, 1977, Accessed August 7, 2018, <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/image/226679476>; Chuck Solano and H. R. Phillips, "Agenda Item Summary," Report to City Council, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park Files, City Clerk's Office, City Hall, Fort Collins, CO.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 21.**

A group of summer camp children watch in eager anticipation as Phil Lapp of Rocky Mountain Storage Barns moves the Ross Proving-Up House to its current location in The Farm's Outdoor Museum.

Rosses built a one-room house for their family along the Pleasant Valley and Lake Canal Ditch.<sup>56</sup>

Their eight years living in this small home frame structure saw the birth of two children, Ethel and Nellie, as well as some tragedy. Two-year old Ethel drowned in the ditch behind the house, prompting James to move the building south-west to distance his family from the dangerous waters. In 1898, the Rosses built a larger brick house in front of the Proving-Up House to accommodate their growing children. By the 1950s, the Rosses updated the old one-room building to serve as a bunkhouse, installing modern amenities like electricity and removing an exterior chimney. The Rosses raised cattle on their farm in southwest Fort Collins throughout their lives there like many of

the ranchers who operated The Farm throughout its history.<sup>57</sup>

Sam Ganow purchased his land in accordance with the Land Act of 1820, but this was not the only way to acquire western lands in the nineteenth century. Although not original to The Farm, the Ross Proving-Up House demonstrates another path to land ownership: homesteading. The City moved this building from a temporary location to The Farm in 2018, settling it in the outdoor museum. Here, the house will be rehabilitated and filled with period furnishings. Visitors will be able to enter the Proving-Up House and experience what a homestead house was like. This kind of experiential learning will surround Farm guests with the spirit of the homesteaders who lived in this house and the people who tended the land where it now sits.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Cassandra Bumgarner, "Fort Collins Landmark Designation: James Ross Proving-Up House," Historic Preservation Division, City of Fort Collins, February 21, 2017, [http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=72&docid=2954223&dt=AGENDA+ITEM&doc\\_download\\_date=JUN-06-2017&ITEM\\_NUMBER=12](http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=72&docid=2954223&dt=AGENDA+ITEM&doc_download_date=JUN-06-2017&ITEM_NUMBER=12).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Reyana Jones, Observation, The Farm at Lee Martinez Park, July 31, 2018; Kevin Duggan, "Opinion: Pioneering Tiny House Made History 127 Years Ago," *Coloradoan*, June 17, 2018, <https://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/2018/06/17/opinion-fort-collins-settler-dreamed-big-but-built-small/698268002/>.





Figure 22.

The Farm Heritage Museum

## SUMMARY

After graduating college, Sally Nelson left her family's dairy farm and moved to Loveland where she taught home economics at Loveland High School from 1936 to 1940. Even as Northern Colorado urbanized, agriculture remained a large part of community identity, rooting residents to the land and environment. Ms. Nelson passed the skills she learned growing up on her family farm to her students, teaching them how to balance accounts, as she and her parents did in the family room of their farmhouse, or how to can fresh produce, like the cherries Loveland was famous for. Ms. Nelson's personal history living on a farm connected her to

her students, some of whom worked in the sugar beet fields, or possibly on dairy farms themselves.<sup>59</sup>

The Farm at Lee Martinez Park exists to forge similar connections between its visitors, its environment, and its history. Children experience farm life first-hand through summer camps that immerse them in a way of life steeped in history and bound to nature. Visitors of all ages recognize the arresting contrast between The Farm and the downtown area just a short walk away. Nestled in the heart of Fort Collins, The Farm reminds visitors of the agrarian roots and natural environment that allowed their urban landscape to flourish and that remains a part of them still.



Figure 23.

<sup>59</sup> Wiley, No Title; "Domestic Science Department," Photos, *The Pine Cone*: 1920, Loveland High School Yearbook Collection, Media Center, Bill Reed Middle School, Loveland, CO; *The Chieftain*: 1942, Loveland High School Yearbook Collection, Media Center, Bill Reed Middle School, Loveland, CO.





TABLE 1: HISTORIC BUILDINGS AND OTHER FEATURES

<b>PAST HISTORIC BUILDINGS/FEATURES</b>
Brick Farmhouse
Nelson Tennis Court
Milk House
<b>EXISTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS/FEATURES</b>
Frame Farmhouse
Garage/Shop
Barn
Silo/Art's Tool Shed
Brooder House/Museum Building
Chicken Coop
Ross Proving-Up House

TABLE 2: OWNERSHIP OF THE FARM

<b>OWNER</b>	<b>YEAR OF PURCHASE OR INHERITANCE</b>
Samuel Ganow	1872
Joseph Mason	1874
James Allen	1874
Benjamin Whedbee	1875
Whedbee Estate	1912
George Wilcox	1912
Fred Quiller	1919
John and Jennie Nelson	1920
Oliver and Janet Nichols	1945
Clarence and Helen Penrod	1948
Jake and Lydia Smith	1953
Poudre Valley Industrial Complex	1973
City of Fort Collins	1973



Figure 24.

Administrative Building

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Auer, Michael J. "Brief 20: The Preservation of Historic Barns." National Park Service, October 1989. Accessed August 9, 2018. <https://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/20-barns.htm>.

Biographical Files. Nelson, J. A. and Jennie. Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery. Fort Collins, CO.

———. Whedbee, Benjamin T. Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery. Fort Collins, CO.

Bumgarner, Cassandra. "Fort Collins Landmark Designation: James Ross Proving-Up House." Fort Collins Historic Preservation Division. Last modified February 21, 2017.  
[http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=72&docid=2954223&dt=AGE NDA+ITEM&doc\\_download\\_date=JUN-06-2017&ITEM\\_NUMBER=12](http://citydocs.fcgov.com/?cmd=convert&vid=72&docid=2954223&dt=AGE NDA+ITEM&doc_download_date=JUN-06-2017&ITEM_NUMBER=12).

Brownell, Bridget. Interviewed by Reyana Jones. July 6, 2018. The Farm at Lee Martinez Park. Fort Collins, CO.

Building Permit Records. Citydocs Online Database. City of Fort Collins Public Records. <http://citydocs.fcgov.com/>.

Burial Information Collection. Find A Grave Index. <https://www.findagrave.com/>.

Death, Burial, Cemetery & Obituaries Collection. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.  
<https://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=125/>.

Deed Book Index Collection. Larimer County Clerk and Recorder Archives. Fort Collins, CO.

Digitized Newspaper Archive. *Coloradoan*. <https://coloradoan.newspapers.com/>.

Farm at Lee Martinez Park Files. City Clerk's Office Records. Fort Collins, CO.



Ferris, Millicent. "Hay Carrier Invention Sparks Hardware Line." Farm Collection. Last modified November 2014. <https://www.farmcollector.com/equipment/hay-carrier-zm0z14novzkel/>.

Fort Collins History Connection. "The Colorado Gold Rush, Early Settlement, and the Creation of Fort Collins: 1844-1866." Accessed August 9, 2018. <https://history.fcgov.com/contexts/colorado/>.

———. "Establishing the City: Old Town and New Town: 1866-1877." Accessed August 9, 2018. <https://history.fcgov.com/contexts/establishcity/>.

Historical Files Collection. Administrative Building. The Farm at Lee Martinez Park. Fort Collins, CO.

"History of the Silo." International Silo Organization. Accessed August 9, 2018. <http://silo.org/wp-content/uploads/HISTORY-OF-THE-SILO.doc>.

Image Search Digital Collection. Larimer County Clerk and Recorder. Fort Collins, CO. Lettered (not numbered) deed books are only accessible on the Larimer County Clerk and Recorder Office computers; they are not part of Larimer County Official Records Search database.

Land Patent Search Digital Images Collection. Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records. <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx#searchTabIndex=0&searchByTypeIndex=0/>.

Larimer County Newspaper Collection. *Fort Collins Courier*. Colorado Historic Newspapers Digital Archive. <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=cl&cl=CL1&e=-----en-20-FCC-1-txt-txIN-----O-Larimer&sp=FCC/>.

———. *Loveland Daily Herald*. Colorado Historic Newspapers Digital Archive. <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org/cgi-bin/colorado?a=cl&cl=CL1&e=-----en-20-FCC-1-txt-txIN-----O-Larimer&sp=LVD./>

Larimer County Official Records Search Collection. Larimer County Clerk and Recorder. <https://records.larimer.org/LandmarkWeb/Home/Index/>.

Long, Paul F. and Gary Van Hoozer. "Barn Styles in American History." Farm Collector, Last modified June 1999. <https://www.farmcollector.com/farm-life/proud-survivors/>.

Loveland High School Yearbook Collection. Media Center. Bill Reed Middle School. Loveland, CO.

Photograph Collection. Local History Archive at the Museum of Discovery. Fort Collins, CO.





“Poultry Housing.” Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Last modified August 26, 2015.

<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/portal/communities/agriculture/field-guide/poultry-housing.html/>.

“Rotary Farm Heritage Museum.” Rotary International. Accessed August 9, 2018.

<https://www.rotarycluboffortcollins.org/page/rotary-farm-heritage-museum>

Turrentine, Jackson W. *Wells Fargo in Colorado Territory*. Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1982.

U. S. Federal Census Collection. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Images Reproduced by FamilySearch. <https://search.ancestry.com/search/group/usfedcen/>.

———. Ancestry.com Operations, Inc. Index provided by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. <https://search.ancestry.com/search/group/usfedcen/>.

Watrous, Ansel. *History of Larimer County, Colorado*. Fort Collins: The Courier Printing & Publishing Company, 1911.



Figure 26.



Figure 25.

