

# HISTORIC DENVER NEWS

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Protesters march in January 1969 near the former Denver Public Schools administration building at 414 14<sup>th</sup> St. to encourage the district and school board to relieve segregation. Resolutions adopted that year were later rescinded in June 1969, leading to the *Keyes v. School District No. 1* case, which went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-28750

## 50 YEARS AFTER KEYES, A ONCE-SEGREGATED DENVER SCHOOL FIGHTS TO STAY INTEGRATED

by Melanie Asmar, Guest Contributor, Chalkbeat

Stedman Elementary is one of Denver’s most integrated schools. About a third of its students are Black, a third are Hispanic, and a third are white. “That happened by accident,” Principal Michael Atkins said, “but we are keeping it by design.”

In the 1960s, Stedman wasn’t integrated at all — and it was no accident. In 1968, 92% of Stedman students were Black and the school was overcrowded. Rather than reassign some Stedman students to mostly white schools nearby, the district brought in trailers. The segregation at Stedman and at other Denver schools spurred a group of families, led by Wilfred Keyes, a Black father and chiropractor, to sue Denver Public Schools in 1969.

The Keyes case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, the first desegregation case in a major city outside of the South to do so. This year marks 50 years since the high court ordered Denver to desegregate its public schools “root and branch.”

The 1973 ruling made history, even outside Denver. Keyes was what the Supreme Court called a “tri-ethnic case” and was the first to give Hispanic students the same rights to desegregated schools that the *Brown v. Board of Education* case extended to Black students 19 years earlier.

Keyes also set precedent with regard to intent. The Supreme Court found that the Denver school board’s actions to segregate the schools in the Park Hill neighborhood, including Stedman, showed that the entire Denver district was de facto segregated.

The case also led to a federal consent decree requiring Denver to improve education for Spanish-speaking students, which led to the development of bilingual programming.

The aftermath of the case shaped generations of Denver schoolchildren who were bused in the 1970s, ’80s, and ’90s. They included Atkins, who grew up in Park Hill and played basketball on the Stedman playground on Wednesday nights. But for school, the

district bused him to schools located in whiter and wealthier neighborhoods. Atkins said his educational experience was one of assimilation, tension, and hidden segregation. Even though his middle school was integrated in numbers, the white students were in honors classes and the Black and brown students weren’t.

“The way I lead today has a lot to do with my experiences from the outcomes of the Keyes case,” Atkins said. “I personally learn best in situations where not everyone speaks the same language as me, not everyone looks just like me — different backgrounds. That’s something I want to give my students and families in safe, facilitated ways.”

Park Hill was the epicenter of Denver’s school desegregation battle. Beginning in the 1950s and ’60s, Black families were moving east from Five Points to Park Hill, crossing Colorado Boulevard in search of bigger homes on tree-lined streets.

Housing integration could have led to school integration, but the Denver school board took steps to prevent that. It manipulated school boundaries and added temporary classroom trailers to predominantly Black schools. It studied educational equality, passed policies calling for its adoption, and then did nothing to put those policies in place.

In 1960, the district built Barrett Elementary School, just west of Colorado Boulevard from Park Hill Elementary. Denver funneled Black students into the new school, thus ensuring that Park Hill, which had been racially integrated, went back to serving mostly white students.

Rachel Noel’s daughter was reassigned from Park Hill Elementary to Barrett, which opened with an almost all-Black student body. Noel later testified in court that Barrett’s resources and academics were inferior. Her daughter, she said, was learning the same thing at Barrett in fifth grade that she’d learned at Park Hill in fourth grade.

In 1965, Noel became the first Black member elected to the Denver school board. Frustrated by the board’s inaction on integration and reeling from the assassination of

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WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Historic Denver is pleased to welcome two new members to our Board of Trustees, Barb Pahl and Joe Halpern, both of whom joined the board this fall. Board members are nominated on an annual basis and serve as volunteers, overseeing the organization’s operations, staff, and mission — including the operation of our flagship property, the Molly Brown House Museum.

Before retiring, Barb Pahl was the Vice President for Western Field Services of the Mountains/Plains Office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Pahl had been with the National Trust in various capacities since 1984. Currently, Pahl is teaching at the University of Colorado – Denver in the College of Architecture and Planning with coursework including the Politics of Preservation. Pahl lives in the University Park neighborhood and is assisting in efforts to create a thematic historic district.

Joe Halpern is a semi-retired partner of the law firm Holland & Hart. Halpern served on the History Colorado Board of Directors for twenty-four years, including twenty as vice chair. He advocated for the Stephen H. Hart Research Center and helped create the Hart Library Acquisition Fund, Hart being a co-founder of Holland & Hart. Halpern is passionate about historic preservation. A few years after arriving in Colorado from New York, Joe took on preservation of the Seventeen Mile House in Arapahoe County, securing a preservation easement that still protects the property today. Halpern was also a leader in securing designation of the Alamo Placita Historic District in Denver, and then served as pro bono legal counsel in successfully defending that designation when a commercial property owner challenged it in court. Halpern has also served on the Colorado Historical Foundation Board for 38 years.

The Board of Trustees strives to represent a variety of community interests and provide the organization with the diverse skill sets necessary for any successful non-profit organization, as well as guidance on important preservation matters.

**Historic Denver seeks new board members each year during the summer months.** To express interest, please contact Andrea Malcomb at (303) 832-4092 x.15. ☎



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Unless otherwise noted, all photographs were taken by Jay Homstad.



Culture for all.



50 YEARS AFTER KEYES, A ONCE-SEGREGATED DENVER SCHOOL FIGHTS TO STAY INTEGRATED

Martin Luther King Jr., Noel introduced a resolution in 1968 — now known as the Noel Resolution — that called for “a comprehensive plan for the integration of the Denver Public Schools.”

In response to community activism and a new sense of urgency around racial equality, the school board adopted the Noel Resolution 5-2 in May 1968. The board passed three more resolutions in the winter and spring of 1969 that, according to court documents, would have redrawn boundaries to relieve segregation at Barrett, Stedman, and other schools in Park Hill, and established voluntary busing to integrate some schools.

The resolutions sparked a fierce and swift backlash that led to the election of new school board members opposed to integration in May 1969. They promptly voted to repeal the resolutions.

In June, eight families — five Black, one Hispanic, and two white — sued Denver Public Schools. The case became known as *Keyes v. School District No. 1*.

Racist retaliation soon followed. Opponents bombed the houses of lead plaintiff Wilfred Keyes, whose family was home but not injured, and of federal Judge William Doyle. About a third of the buses at the district bus depot were destroyed by dynamite.

After the Supreme Court ruled for the families in 1973, Denver created a complex, cross-city system of busing aimed at ensuring each school’s population looked racially similar to the district as a whole. Many white families reacted by leaving for the suburbs and private schools. According to a 1976 report, the number of white students dropped 22% in two years.

But busing did increase integration. Despite the turmoil, some children now say they benefited.

“It enriched my life because I became friends with many people from different cultures and socioeconomic statuses,” Jayne’ Lewis, who is Black and was bused from northeast Denver to Ellis Elementary and other schools in the southeast part of the city, told Chalkbeat in 2019.

“I am still friends with many of these people today.”

The Denver school district repeatedly asked the court to end the desegregation order, and in 1995, a federal judge agreed. Busing stopped in 1996, and not long after, many Denver schools resegregated. Students returned to schools in their neighborhoods, which had remained divided by race and income. Many Denver schools are still segregated today.

School choice, which Denver began promoting in 2012 as part of a strategy to improve the city’s schools and draw families back, allows students to apply to attend any school in the district. Choice could theoretically be used to integrate schools, but it can also be used to prevent it. As the city gentrifies, white families sometimes opt out of nearby schools where most students are Black and Latino, in order to attend whiter schools across town.

That’s what was happening at Stedman Elementary when it came time for Andrew Lefkowits to enroll his oldest daughter in kindergarten. Lefkowits grew up in Park Hill and had gone to Stedman in the 1980s, one of only a handful of white children to do so.

Now the father of two kids, Lefkowits and his wife lived in the boundary for the predominantly white Park Hill Elementary, a school bursting at the seams with nearly 700 students and where the PTA raises hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

In 2016, nearby Stedman had fewer than 250 students. But Lefkowits treasured his experience there and wanted his daughter to have the same. So the family sent her into Stedman, where she was the only white kid in her kindergarten class.

Seven years later, the school has grown to about 425 students and the demographics have changed. Stedman is whiter and its families are wealthier. Though it can’t match Park Hill, Stedman’s PTA is fundraising for a rock climbing wall. And yet Lefkowits said he’s conflicted about how Stedman got there — and how the white population is burgeoning.

“We hit that tipping point,” Lefkowits said, referring to the proportion of white students. “And now as a school, we’ve been trying desperately to slow down the wave as best we can.”

Stedman began integrating after adding a Spanish language immersion program that attracted white families who want their children to become bilingual.

Janeel Williams remembers the shift. Ten years ago, she chose to enroll her son Jakhi in kindergarten at Stedman because she wanted him to have Black teachers. More than

half of Stedman students were Black and the staff was diverse. Jakhi, now a freshman in high school, had a Black teacher his first year at Stedman.

Part way through Jakhi’s time at Stedman, several teachers of color left and some

families of color followed suit. Williams stuck it out, but she had mixed feelings when a former principal introduced the Spanish immersion program.

“A lot of Black families were like, ‘Who is she trying to appeal to? Who is she trying to attract?’” Williams said. “Our families don’t speak two languages.”

White families, on the other hand, “came in droves,” Williams said. While she and other Black parents worried they wouldn’t be able to help their children with their schoolwork if it was in Spanish, Williams said white parents pledged to pay for their own private lessons.

“A lot of the Black families kind of felt abandoned at that point,” she said. “It just seemed like you were bringing in this wonderful program for families who could take advantage of it.”

Lefkowits’ younger daughter started in

the Spanish immersion program in preschool, and several years later, he said she can easily converse with native speakers. But he has complicated feelings about the program. Without it boosting Stedman’s enrollment, he worries the school could have been closed, a blow to Black families who’ve attended for generations.

But he also worries that white, privileged families have benefitted from the program the most.

“I think there’s ways in which it becomes an opportunity to hoard [resources] for people with privilege, and it’s another thing to get for our kids to boost their resume,”

Lefkowits said.

“There’s promise and peril in dual language.”

When Atkins arrived as principal four years ago, he said he saw at Stedman what he’d seen at his own middle school during busing: The school was diverse, but the students were separated. Most white students attended the Spanish immersion program, while most Black and Latino students stuck with the traditional classes.

Atkins set out to change that by going to Black churches on Sundays, visiting Mexican cultural arts centers, and talking to Stedman families “about the power of language and how this opportunity is built for them as well.” That push, he said, helped desegregate Stedman’s programming so that more Black and brown families are now choosing Spanish immersion.

Stedman also is trying other ways to keep its diversity.

Colorado’s Constitution prohibits assigning students to schools “for the purpose of achieving racial balance.” (Denver’s busing was an exception due to the federal court order.) So schools use other measures. Stedman prioritizes students who qualify for subsidized school meals, an indicator of poverty, or who live in a neighborhood where 75% to 100% of children do.

Atkins also tries to make the school a welcoming and affirming place. All Stedman teachers are pushed to examine their biases, and they do training in equity every Friday.

“I personally believe the work that I do is to push the Keyes case forward in a way that is building the capacity of our educators and creating safe spaces for students,” Atkins said.

Parents like Williams help too. Even though her son is now in high school, she continues to recruit for Stedman, where she said Jakhi got an excellent education, despite some of the bumps along the way. She meets with Atkins every year to hash out a game plan for talking to parents at recreation centers, libraries, and the Boys & Girls Club.

Most parents of color are concerned about gentrification, she said, and rising rents have forced many out of Park Hill. But they continue to bring their kids to the neighborhood rec centers, and Williams encourages them to do the same with Stedman. She has confidence it will pay off.

“I see Stedman going up,” she said. “All the way up.” ❁

*Our guest contributor for this story is Melanie Asmar, a senior reporter with Chalkbeat Colorado. Chalkbeat is a nonprofit news organization committed to covering the effort to improve schools for all children. They are partnering with Historic Denver to examine the legacy of Keyes v. School District No. 1 to assess where Denver is 50 years after this landmark case, and how our built environment can tell the stories of past and present.*



Denver Public Schools board members pictured c. 1966. Rachel Noel is seated second from the right. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH1990



Stedman Elementary School in 1924 shortly after it was constructed. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH1990



Park Hill Elementary School looks much the same now as it did in this image from 1976. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH1990

# MOLLY BROWN HOUSE MUSEUM

## TITANIC MEMORIES IMMERSIVE THEATER EXPERIENCE RETURNS IN 2023

by Mike Erickson,  
Volunteer & Event Coordinator

We tend to know the famous names among the Titanic passengers — Margaret “Molly” Brown, John Jacob Astor, Benjamin Guggenheim — but what about the not so famous? Who else was traveling on Titanic and what happened to those who survived?

In 2022, the Molly Brown House Museum added another theatrical event to our slate of immersive experiences. Through Titanic Memories, actors portray lesser known Titanic survivors to share their tales of hope and loss.

If you have never attended, it can be hard to envision what “immersive theatre” or “environmental theater” is, especially within the setting of a historic house. For Victorian Horrors, celebrating its 30th year in October, the museum engages a troupe of local actors to portray Mary Shelley to read Frankenstein, or HG Wells with The Invisible Man. Can you imagine being able to see Edgar Allan Poe read The Raven? With an annually rotating set of authors and stories stationed throughout the house, Victorian Horrors is an annual fan favorite.

Just as the ever-popular Victorian Horrors has actors portray authors of Gothic literature to bring their tales of terror to life, Titanic Memories similarly uses the home as a theatrical backdrop. Now entering its second year, Titanic Memories leads small groups of guests through the house and has the audience stop in certain rooms to witness actors portraying a Titanic survivor and telling their story.

Visitors can expect to come face to face with someone like Annie McGowan, a young Irish girl traveling with her aunt Catherine. Catherine had lived in the U.S. for many years, doing well for herself, and returned home to escort Annie from her County Mayo village, Addergoole. Channeled through our actress, you’d learn that 14 of the approximately 115 Irish aboard Titanic were people whom Catherine had recruited to join them on the voyage to a new life in America. Well-established pipelines like Catherine’s lured people from a poverty-stricken Ireland. Families and communities pooled their meager resources and even took out loans to send a loved one to the U.S. for work. Of the 14 from Addergoole, only three, including McGowan survived. One, Delia McDermott, jumped 15 feet down into one of the last lifeboats.

In an interview with a Chicago newspaper, fellow survivor Annie Kate Kelly recounted,



Survivors from the Titanic shipwreck shown aboard Lifeboat #14 on April 15, 1912. Photo: National Archives

“As the ship was sinking, women and children were evacuated first. They formed a line. A young bride refused to leave the ship without her husband. I was given the bride’s place. As I was lowered into the lifeboat I looked up and saw my cousin Pat watching, holding in his hand his rosary, which he raised to bless me.” Her cousin Pat Canavan did not survive.

Like Margaret Brown’s differing accounts in the days, months, and years afterward, the story told by Irish passenger Ellen Shine O’Callaghan makes it hard to determine events during the sinking. In some articles she is quoted by reporters as saying, “I saw one of the lifeboats and made for it... In it, there were already four men from the steerage who refused to obey an officer who ordered them out. They were, however, finally turned out.”

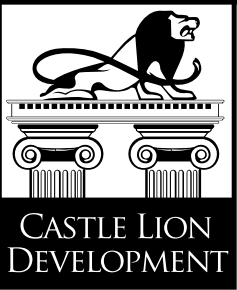
But other news services had this quote instead: “... in it were four men from the steerage. They were ordered out by an officer and refused to leave. And then one of the officers jumped into the boat, and, drawing a revolver, shot the four men dead. Their bodies were picked out from the bottom of the boat and thrown into the ocean.”

Expect to hear stories like these brought to life at Titanic Memories on Saturday, April 15, 2023. Performances are every 15 minutes beginning at 6 pm. An accessible performance is offered at 5 pm. \$20/Member, \$25/Non-member. Find tickets at [mollybrown.org](https://mollybrown.org). 🌐



The Titanic Memorial, located in Washington, D.C., was unveiled in 1931. The 13-foot-tall statue honors the men who died in the disaster with an inscription reading: THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES THAT WOMEN AND CHILDREN MIGHT BE SAVED.

Photo: APK for Wikimedia Commons



Historic preservation and sustainability are natural partners. The preservation and reuse of existing buildings and retrofitting them to be “green” reaches for new heights of fiscal and environmental responsibility.

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DISCOVER DENVER  
2022 WORK SHOWCASES DENVER GROWTH  
ACROSS THE DECADES

by Beth Glandon, Director of Research and Engagement



Surprising discoveries are made in every area of the city surveyed by Discover Denver. Project volunteers worked their way across two neighborhoods in 2022, South City Park and Westwood. Work is expected to wrap up in Westwood during the early part of 2023. These neighborhoods have very different buildings and histories, but both have proven to be interesting in illustrating the diversity found across the city.

Today, South City Park is considered central Denver, though that was not always the case. Prior to 1889, the area was just outside Denver’s eastern city limits. Construction of the Colfax Avenue Railway in 1887 spurred residential development in South City Park, soon followed by the construction of commercial buildings along East Colfax Avenue.

The development of the neighborhood, from west to east, is easy to see in the changing architectural styles. Stately Queen Anne residences give way to Denver squares, and then further east, to Craftsman bungalows. The Detroit Flats building, constructed in 1903 and located at the northeast corner of Detroit Street and Colfax Avenue, is a good example of an early South City Park apartment building. The ornate apartment buildings facing City Park along East 17th Avenue were constructed later, in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s.

In comparison, the Westwood neighborhood was largely agricultural until its annexation by Denver in 1948. Without zoning codes and the need for building permits, modest homes of a multitude of shapes and sizes were constructed across Westwood. A large number of “basement houses,” homes built into the earth with just a half story rising above the ground, were documented by Discover Denver volunteers. After annexation, small-time developers built clusters of Minimal Traditional and Transitional Ranch homes.

Today, parts of the neighborhood retain an agricultural feel, with remaining farmhouses and barns tucked in between modest homes on some streets. Morrison Road, which cuts diagonally through the neighborhood, is lined with one-story commercial buildings holding everything from restaurants and tire shops to cultural organizations and ice cream parlors. Longtime Westwood residents have been generous in sharing their knowledge of the history of the neighborhood, along with historic photos of the area or of their own homes.

In 2023, Discover Denver will move to northeast Denver, documenting the buildings of the Five Points, Skyland, Clayton, and Whittier neighborhoods. The project team is excited to learn about another area of the city with a completely different story to tell.

A partnership between Historic Denver and the City and County of Denver, Discover Denver is a citywide building survey focused on identifying the buildings and areas of the city that are historically, architecturally or culturally significant. Community volunteers are key to the success of the project — visit [discoverdenver.co](https://discoverdenver.co) for more information and to find out how you can get involved! 🌱

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1903

The 1903 Detroit Flats building is an example of the early apartment buildings constructed in Denver as the city began growing eastward. Photo: Discover Denver



1909

Construction of Foursquare residences were so popular that they earned the moniker “Denver Square.” This 1909 example features brick quoins and an elaborate dormer with return eaves. Photo: Discover Denver



1940s

These unique homes date to the 1940s and are known as “basement houses,” with the bulk of the home located underground and only the top half story visible. Discover Denver encountered very few basement houses until surveying Westwood. Photo: Discover Denver



1956

Transitional ranch homes like this one from 1956 are a common residential building type in the Westwood neighborhood. Photo: Discover Denver





This undated portrait of Irving P. Andrews shows how he looked during his prolific career as an attorney. Photo: Courtesy Andrews family

50 ACTIONS FOR 50 PLACES

In 2021, Denverites nominated dozens of sites for Historic Denver’s 50 Actions for 50 Places. The campaign is designed to identify the places our communities cannot imagine Denver without, especially those that have been under-recognized in the past and those that reflect the full depth and diversity in our city’s story. After the submission period, the list was narrowed to 50 sites for which we have been actively working with community members and property owners to develop preservation actions of all kinds, from research projects, to interpretive plans, to publicity efforts, to local and National Register designation applications. As actions get underway or are completed, we will report the news in these pages and on our social media accounts.

LANDMARK PROCESS UNDERWAY FOR IRVING P. ANDREWS HOUSE

by Leah Charney, Historic Denver News Managing Editor and Michael Flowers, Director of Preservation Action



The Foursquare house, located at 2241 York St., was already split into a duplex when Andrews purchased it in 1972, which allowed him to use it as a live/work space.

After the home of Irving Piper Andrews was nominated to 50 Actions for 50 Place by Liz Andrews to honor her father’s legacy, Historic Denver provided the financial support and technical assistance to prepare a local landmark designation for the house. Initial drafts of the designation application have been submitted to Landmark Preservation staff at the department of Community Planning and Development and are in the commenting and review stage.

After the staff completes their review, the application will next go to the Landmark Preservation Commission (LPC), who will determine if the Andrews house meets the criteria for landmark status. Following this step, the application is then sent onto City Council where it is scheduled into a future meeting for review and approval. As the Andrews family is fully behind the designation and is the current owner of the property, we expect that support for the designation request will continue moving forward toward a successful outcome.

Irving P. Andrews was a prolific lawyer with a remarkable career linked to the fight for social justice and civil rights. Though Andrews received the highest mark on the Colorado Bar Exam in 1951, as an African American, he struggled to secure employment due to discrimination. Andrews worked as a janitor at the YMCA’s Glenarm Branch as he built his own practice but was also a champion of the people. It was not unusual for

his firm to take on cases for defendants who could not afford a lawyer. He established the first integrated law office in Colorado and earned a spot on the legal team for the plaintiffs in the landmark 1954 Brown v Board of Education case. The resulting win ruled that separate but equal educational facilities for racial minorities was inherently unequal and began the process of school desegregation.

Andrews moved into this eclectic/craftsman style duplex on York St. in 1972. The downstairs served as his primary residence and the upstairs as his law offices until his death in 1998. We anticipate the house will receive local landmark designation in spring or early summer. Along with the Andrews family, we look forward to seeing Irving P. Andrews’ legacy as a champion for social justice and his impact on northeast Denver recognized in this much-deserved manner.

NEW DETAILS UNCOVERED ABOUT BARNEY FORD HOUSE

by Alison Salutz, Director of Community Programs

One of our 50 Actions for 50 Places sites is the Barney Ford house at 1569 High St. Barney Ford was a successful African American businessman in early Denver. Ford was born into slavery in 1822 and freed himself from bondage, ultimately arriving in Chicago, where he met his eventual bride, Julia.

The Fords arrived in Denver in 1860, after facing prejudice in attempts at mining in Central City and Breckenridge. Ford opened a barber shop on Blake Street, the success of which enabled him to purchase the building. He was one of the many victims of the April 1863 Denver fire but the insurance money he received from the loss allowed him to build 1514 Blake St. in its place, which still stands. The two-story building held several of Ford’s businesses, including the glamorous People’s Restaurant, a bar, and a new location of the barber shop. By the 1870s, he was well known as a prominent businessman and was nominated to the Colorado Territorial Legislature, where he served one term.

The home at 1569 High St. has been associated with Ford for years, but there were few details on the exact dates during which he owned and lived at the home. Research



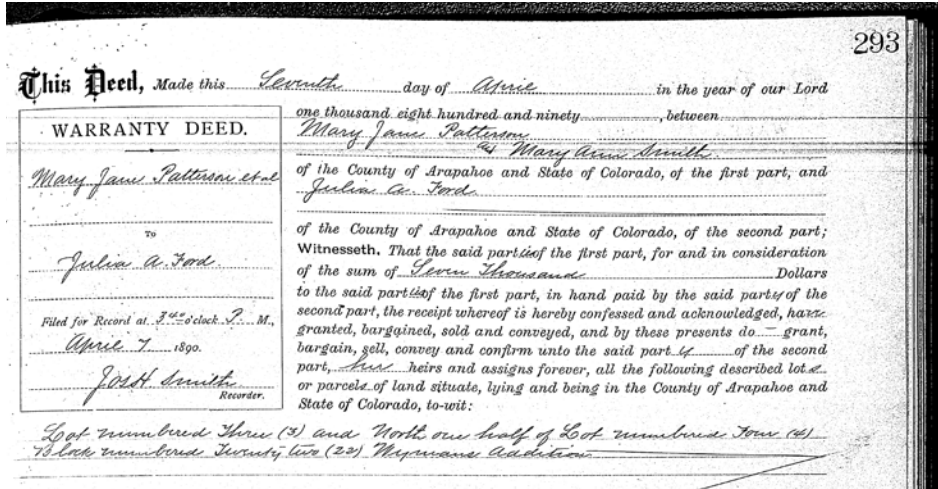
Barney Ford built what is now 1514 Blake St. following the Great Fire of 1863 that decimated nearly all of downtown.



undertaken as part of our action on this site revealed several pieces of information. We were able to track down the deed for the property, which shows that the home was purchased in 1890. Ford's wife, Julia A. Ford, is the owner according to the deed. It is quite common in Denver to find women's names on housing records, as there were tax advantages to having a woman own the property.

Ford lived at the home until 1900, at which point ads in local papers helped us recognize that he still owned the property, but was using a real estate agent to rent it out. We can tell there were renters in the home because Denver City Directories from the era list several different families during the next few years. The next time the property changed hands was in January of 1902, when it was sold to Sarah E. Wormeley for \$2,000. Searching Denver marriage records we were able to confirm that Sarah Wormeley's maiden name was Ford, and that she is Barney and Julia's daughter.


Barney Ford died in December 1902 and is buried at another 50 Actions for 50 Places site: Riverside Cemetery. His legacy is part of our city's earliest history, and he is one of a select few with a stained glass window in the Colorado State Capitol building. ❄️



The deed to 1569 High St. shows Julia A. Ford, Barney Ford's wife, as the purchaser of the home. Photo: Denver County Clerk and Recorder



The Queen Anne style Barney Ford House features decorative bargeboard and ornate details surrounding the brick facade. Photo: Alison Salutz



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# PRESERVATION BRIEFS

## RESTORATION GRANT PROJECT UPDATES

by Shannon Stage, former Manager of Grants and Preservation Services

We continue to support several projects restoring and rehabilitating key landmarks in our city. In addition to this work, Historic Denver recently secured an additional grant on behalf of a partner organization. These efforts are funded in large part by the Colorado State Historical Fund (SHF) and managed by Historic Denver.

### ROOF REHABILITATION: PEOPLES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 2780 YORK ST.



Members of the congregation, pictured in September 2022. Photo: Courtesy Peoples Presbyterian Church

The roof rehabilitation project at Peoples Presbyterian Church is wrapping up after a little more than a year. Founded in 1906, the church is Denver’s oldest continuously active Black Presbyterian congregation. This church, located in the Skyland/North City Park Neighborhood, has a small but mighty congregation who are determined to maintain their historic building and sustain the longtime African American community,

even as demographics in the surrounding neighborhoods continue to shift.

The congregation listed their 1920s Mission-style building on the National and State Registers of Historic Places in 2016, completing a Historic Structure Assessment (HSA) later that same year, which was also funded in part by SHF. With the assistance of the SHF grant, the church has sealed their roof to protect the building from deterioration and water damage. This roof rehabilitation is the largest restoration project they have undertaken yet, and they are looking to undertake additional restoration projects identified by the HSA soon.



The new SHF grant will support phase two work on the Bennett Field House historic portico with Neoclassical columns. Photo: Shannon Schaefer Stage

### PORTICO RESTORATION AND STABILIZATION: BENNETT FIELD HOUSE, 740 N CLARKSON ST.

The purpose of this project is to complete phase two of the historic portico restoration and stabilization at the Bennett-Field House and address critical masonry deterioration in select locations at the chimneys and parapets.

The Neoclassical Revival style home, designed in 1905 by William E. Fisher, is a contributing structure in the local East Seventh Avenue Historic District and is also listed on the National Register. This SHF grant will ensure the continued use of the home for the LightHouse program, a transformational housing program designed to assist men in recovery operated by Open Door Ministries. Residents find safe housing in a sober living facility and are able to access support with employment and vocational training.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9



## IN MEMORIAM: JOE SOKOLOWSKI



by Leah M. Charney, Historic Denver News Managing Editor and Tour Guide

Anyone who had the pleasure of knowing Joe Sokolowski or was lucky enough to take one of his walking tours might rattle off the following adjectives: smart, loyal, warm, generous, funny.

That last one served him well during the 2019 National Trust for Historic Preservation conference when he entertained a busload of 55 who were temporarily trapped on a bridge over I-25. The day before, the mercury had maxed out at 83 degrees. By Thursday morning it was 19 and snowy — the largest October temperature swing on record.

While I quietly panicked, Joe and I tried out our best “history comedy” routine to entertain our passengers while the driver dropped the chains and cleared the ice behind the tires. He pretended we were on a game show and asked me if I could guess — Price is Right rules of course — what he paid for his first house in the Highlands. As someone born around the same time as the purchase, I got it wrong by tens of thousands of dollars. Once we were finally up the hill and fully into the Northside, I looked at Joe and said, “What did I even write a script for?” He laughed and in the next beat started dazzling the attendees with his knowledge of the historic Town of Highland.

Denver got lucky when the United States Air Force moved Joe to Lowry Air Force Base. After he was honorably discharged in 1977, he spent 40 years in the car business, working at local institutions like Ralph Schomp Automotive and Rickenbaugh Cadillac before he retired in 2019.

In 2007, after his youngest child finished high school, Joe realized he had 109 credit



hours and only needed 125 to graduate. He emerged years later, in December 2010, with a bachelor’s in history from University of Colorado at Denver. As a UCD student, he presented on working-class housing at the 2010 Saving Places conference and returned in 2016 with LODO & Its Adaptive Reuse, where Joe explained the history, redevelopment, and reuse of Denver’s Lower Downtown Historic District.

By then he had already begun volunteering with Historic Denver. In March of 2013, he joined the first class of docents to launch the LoDo walking tours, where he began the research that would lead to that 2016 talk.

As the walking tour program grew, so too did Joe’s knowledge, support, and willingness to give back. He helped develop the Larimer Square tour and was certified to give all of the Historic Denver core walking tours. In 2014, Joe began writing a Sunday night email sent to fellow docents that included additional research he uncovered about people or places related to the walking tours. This morphed into the Denver History Blog, which you can still read at [denverhistory.blog](https://denverhistory.blog).

Joe generously attended the training of, presented to, and befriended each new class of tour guides, which is how I became lucky enough to be mentored by Joe when I joined up in 2018. He and his wife, Rita, also frequently donated to causes he loved and would happily take-on additional projects, like filming virtual tours during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In addition to his volunteer work with Historic Denver, he joined the Denver Posse of Westerners in 2012; they honored him with the Fred A. Rosenstock Award for Lifetime Achievement in Western History in December 2021. Joe also brought his camera nearly everywhere he went, taking walks specifically to see Denver’s past and the new construction of its future. As a result, he amassed a photo collection that could have landed him on the TV show Hoarders. Instead, the acquisitions team at Denver Public Library’s Western History and Genealogy Department is interested in reviewing it and seeing which images might find a forever home in their collection.

In the months before the Sokolowski family became intimately familiar with the words “glioblastoma” and “brain tumor,” he set up a bird cam, which typically functioned more like a squirrel cam. Though the squirrels never cared much for history, like the rest of us, they miss him terribly. 🌿





At the Crowther House, even the garages were designed intentionally to act as both noise and thermal buffers. Photo: Kathleen Roach, reprinted from our 2006 Historic Denver Guide: *The MidCentury Modern House in Denver*

PRESERVATION BRIEFS

# CROWTHER HOUSE, A PIONEER IN CLIMATE-FRIENDLY CONSTRUCTION, ISSUED CERTIFICATE OF DEMOLITION ELIGIBILITY

by Michael Flowers, Director of Preservation Action

Denver may soon lose a one-of-a-kind house with significant history. On December 12, The Richard Crowther House at 401 N. Madison was issued a Certificate of Demolition Eligibility after City Council voted against an owner-opposed landmark designation.

The house, constructed in 1979, was architect Richard Crowther’s personal residence and laboratory. Crowther was a pioneer in passive solar and sustainable design and this house was used to test some of these theories as well as the latest sustainable technology at the time. It has sat vacant since Crowther’s death in 2006. Under private ownership, it was neglected and deferred maintenance led to a number of condition issues. Those issues factored in the council decision not to landmark it, despite many council members agreeing it met the criteria. Additional factors like economics and condition issues are within the council’s purview when deciding on owner-opposed designations.

Local developer MAG Builders bought the structure in May 2022 for nearly \$4 million. After they applied for a Certificate of Demolition Eligibility (CDE), it was flagged under Denver’s demolition review, which enables three citizens to sign a notice of intent to designate. Once the notice was received, it began a mandated mediation process. The mediation process is designed to provide time to find solutions, which happens more often than not, but in this case neither side was able to find a compromise. MAG Builders was unwilling to rehab the house or explore this option, though they were willing to sell to a preservation-minded buyer should one agree to purchase it for what they paid. No one stepped forward to purchase the property.

Despite the cruel reality of economics in Denver’s housing market, it remains that Denver stands to lose this unique and historically significant property — a property no other city in the country can claim to have, Richard Crowther’s personal experiment.

Richard Crowther was born in 1910 in Newark, New Jersey. He relocated to San Diego when he was 21. He began his career in design working with neon lights, something that would often be emphasized in his early career. Crowther received some formal training, but learned much about design while on the job. His interest in sustainable design began in 1943 when he built his first passive home near San Diego’s Balboa Park.

Crowther made his way to Denver in 1948. His first prominent project involved designing a number of signs, ticket booths, and ride entrances during a partial remodel of Lakeside Amusement Park in the late 1940s. Lakeside was just the start of a long and influential career in Denver. He designed buildings for well-known businesses such as Joslin’s and Fashion Bar department stores and King Soopers grocery stores. A few of

his iconic restaurant designs were the Holiday Drive-Inn, Golden Lantern, and at least one White Spot. He was known for his theater designs too, such as the Esquire and the Cooper Cinerama theaters. Many of these early Crowther designs have already been lost to demolition. In 2021, his former office building at the southwest corner of 3rd and Steele streets was issued a CDE, further indicating that Crowther’s legacy here in Denver may be in jeopardy.

As Crowther’s career continued, he implemented

Richard Crowther designed both the entrance and the sign for the Cyclone Roller Coaster at Lakeside Amusement Park.

Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH1504-2016-124



The White Spot Drive-Inn (nonextant) opened in the early 1950s at Sheridan Boulevard and Alameda Avenue. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, WH1504-2016-141

passive solar energy systems and holistic designs into his architecture. He became sought after in Colorado and across the Southwest for this work. Crowther wrote papers, articles and books on the topic. He authored the textbook *Sun/Earth: Sustainable Design*, which is considered a benchmark in holistic architecture design. The textbook contains arguments outlining economic and environmental benefits for passive design. Crowther lectured at conferences, universities and the Smithsonian Institution. Seen as an expert on the topic, Crowther laid the groundwork for the green building field, which did not come together formally until the 1990s.

Crowther was at the forefront of sustainable design in our built environment. He correctly believed that buildings were going to play a prominent role in the environmental movement. Today we have programs such as LEED and a massive movement for passive house design, including technology like solar power and heat pumps, but it’s hard to imagine these innovations without pioneers like Crowther.

In the midst of this innovation and pioneering work, Crowther called Denver home, establishing a unique legacy that only we can claim. There are other Crowther homes still in existence, though none at the level of innovation and significance as the one at 401 N. Madison, which reflects his brilliance and is the culmination of his career.

The house was truly innovative. Everything was connected to serve the passive and active solar designs in the house, from the orientation of the windows to the paint color and the indoor pool which was heated through solar gains with south-facing windows. The heat from the pool was then transferred elsewhere throughout the house. This is just one example of the interconnected system that all worked in harmony to harness solar energy. When Crowther lived there, the house also contained greenhouses, cold storage tanks, and additional technology all with climate in mind.

This will not be the first significant design by a prominent architect to be threatened in Denver. Zeckendorf Plaza and the Hyperbolic Paraboloid by I.M. Pei come to mind as significant Modernist losses. The 16th Street Mall, also designed by I.M. Pei, is currently being re-designed, further diminishing the international icon’s Denver legacy. Losing the Crowther House is another consequential loss, but, as Historic Denver moves forward in protecting the cultural landmarks and historic places of Denver, we continue to emphasize Modernist buildings. This includes an effort to protect the Alan Golin Gass House, another one of Denver’s prominent Modern architects, as well as the successful 2018 landmark designation of the John Henderson House. Henderson was both a Denver Modernist and the first licensed African American architect in Colorado.


The Certificate of Demolition Eligibility for the Crowther House does not mean immediate demolition, but is typically the first step in a scrape and rebuild project, and is the expected outcome considering MAG Builders has already indicated they want to build two duplexes on the site. Even if the home does not remain, we will continue to share and remember the innovations and legacy of Richard Crowther.

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The exterior Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church building near 38th Avenue and Franklin Street has changed very little since it was originally constructed. Photos: Nathan Beal and Denver Public Library Special Collections, X-25702

LANDMARK STATUS EXPECTED FOR SWEDISH EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN NEAR NORTHEAST DENVER

by Michael Flowers, Director of Preservation Action

A small church building at the corner of 38th Avenue and Franklin Street in the Cole neighborhood is on its way to becoming a Denver Landmark. This chapel was constructed in 1888 by the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church to serve Swedish immigrants in the neighborhood at that time. Early residents of the neighborhood were Northern European immigrants, and many of the Swedish immigrants in Cole would have come from communities where walking to the local church was customary.

Working class housing and neighborhoods often were designed to be utilitarian. The buildings were functional, though they carry their own charm, and this building embodies that reality. While it does not have the same features as churches of the high style, the church reflects an appreciation of both neighborhood development and the congregants it served with its simple architecture. Considered “vernacular Gothic,” there is little in the way of ornamentation save for cosmetic buttresses, arched windows, and a prominent vestibule. Often vernacular buildings are altered because they are not seen as significant but a photo from 1928 shows that this church has undergone only minor changes since then!

The former church at 1618 E 38th St. was the second Swedish Evangelical Lutheran Church in Denver; the first was located at 19th and Welton. Property records show that Gustav A. Brandelle, the pastor of the congregation and future president of the Augustana Synod — one of the churches that merged into what is now the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) — purchased the land before it was turned over to the congregation, a common practice back then.

The chapel was sold to the Scandinavian Seventh Day Adventist congregation in 1916. Records show that Swedish immigrants still attended service here. Though it remained working class, the neighborhood saw shifts in its demographics and would see a sizable Latino and African American population move into the area. The congregations that served the neighborhood shifted with these trends and so did those who operated the churches located at 1618 E 38th St. In 1954 it was owned by the Spanish Seventh Day Adventist Church, and then later would be the first permanent home of the Rising Star Baptist Church, which served a largely Black congregation and is still an active congregation today.

It was sold in 1980 and turned into a private residence, which likely saved this little church and helped it survive with few exterior alterations. As a residence, the church ultimately came to be the home of local photographer John Schoenwalter in 2001 and remained his home until his death in 2019. Though outside the period of significance as a church, Schoenwalter was a well-known photographer for publications such as Colorado Statesman and Westword.

The Landmarking Designation of 1618 E. 38th Ave. is part of a rezoning project where the new owner plans to construct townhomes on a vacant lot to the west of the property. The church sits on a spacious lot, and, while currently a planned unit development (PUD), there is always threat to properties like this when they reside on a larger lot. In exchange for support of the rezoning, which will see both preservation of the church and new housing units constructed, the owner initiated the landmark process and Historic Denver drafted the designation. The landmark designation, along with the rezoning proposal, will find its way to city council in 2023 for final approval.

LIVESTOCK EXCHANGE BUILDING NOW A DESIGNATED LANDMARK

by Alison Salutz, Director of Community Programs

The Livestock Exchange Building has its roots in Denver’s earliest history. Built in 1898, with additions in 1916 and 1919, the building is the oldest and most striking on the National Western Center campus.

Strategically located near rail lines, and in the early years surrounded by livestock pens, the building served as the heart of Denver’s livestock center. The building housed the offices of the Denver Union Stock Show Company, the first force behind the National Western Stock Show. The building also housed the Denver Daily Record-Stockman newspaper, a restaurant, a cigar store, the Stockyards National Bank, the Colorado State Farm Bureau, and the local office of the U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The elaborate details of the building, which remind us that there was big money to be made in livestock commodities at the turn of the century, are largely intact, like the terrazzo flooring and a large chalkboard where livestock prices were listed.

In 2011, the National Western Stock Show began to consider moving the annual show to a location with updated facilities. We were one of many organizations who did not want to see that happen. Today’s Stock Show builds upon a rich history, and there are several significant structures and features on the site. Historic Denver participated



The Livestock Exchange building was home to the Denver Union Stock Yard Company. Note the proximity to rail to easily move animals in and out. Photo: Denver Public Library Special Collections, MCC-1644

in the conversations surrounding creation of the Master Plan for the site. We helped identify sites of historical significance, including the Livestock Exchange Building. We also participated in the National Western Center Citizens Advisory Council, to ensure that the plan included community voices.

In 2020 the building was sold to a partnership that includes the Stock Show owners, the National Western Center Authority. The new owners submitted a nomination for landmark designation, following what was outlined in their plan for the site. That nomination was approved by Denver’s City Council on November 22, 2022. This designation provides protection from demolition, creates an approval system for all exterior changes, and officially recognizes the building’s historical importance to Denver. 🌿



This photo was taken in the stockyards surrounding the Livestock Exchange building to mark the millionth head of cattle to arrive at the Denver Union Stockyards. Photo: Donated to the Denver Public Library by the Rocky Mountain News

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Patricia Bernard	Reynold Kalstrom	Robert Renfro
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Lyn Berry-Helmlinger	Reynold Kalstrom	Kimberly Roark Loveland
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Ginger Bihm	Andrea Kirchhoff	Gayle Rodgers
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ONE OF OUR MANY MEMBER BENEFITS

Our Contractor Resource List

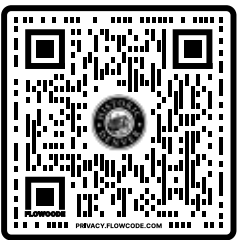


THE 2023 CONTRACTOR RESOURCE LIST IS COMING.

Want to nominate someone who’s worked on your historic property?  
Send nominations to [jay@historicdenver.org](mailto:jay@historicdenver.org).

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

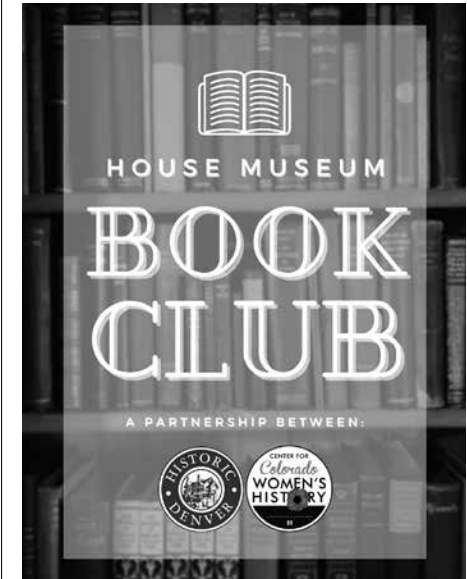
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[historicdenver.org/event](http://historicdenver.org/event)  
Make sure your membership is up to date to get member pricing.



**EMPOWERED BY PLACE:**  
**KEYES V. SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 1**  
Wednesday, February 1 • 7-8:30pm • Virtual • Free, Donations appreciated  
Fifty years ago the U.S. Supreme Court made a landmark decision regarding segregation in Denver Public Schools. Keyes v. School District No. 1 led to district-wide busing to integrate schools. We’re partnering with the nonprofit education news organization Chalkbeat to explore the case topics and their relationship to neighborhood schools today in our first Empowered By Place of 2023.



**ART ON PENN: A CLOSER VIEW - INK PAINTING**  
Thursday, February 2 • 7-8pm • Virtual • \$20 Member, \$25 Non-member  
The ancient art of Japanese ink painting, sumi-e captures, in a pure and simple way, the timeless beauty of the natural world. Margaret and J.J. Brown traveled to Japan several times and brought back artifacts, some of which are still in the house today. We will be taking a closer look at the Sumi-e art form and virtually travel with Margaret to view the art of Japan through her eyes. We will be joined by some exciting guest speakers who will help us create our own beautiful bamboo scroll paintings.



**COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB:**  
**SENSATIONAL: THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF AMERICA’S “GIRL STUNT REPORTERS”**  
Sunday, February 5 • 12:30-2pm • Virtual or in person at the Center for Colorado Women’s History • Free  
Join the Molly Brown House Museum (MBHM) and the Center for Colorado Women’s History (CCWH), as we read and discuss books related to women’s history, Colorado history, and books by women authors from Colorado! Book titles, dates, and locations can be found on the Adult Programs section of our website, [mollybrown.org](http://mollybrown.org). Meetings are held in person and online via Zoom. Let’s read!

**VICTORIAN VALENTINES**  
**HOMESCHOOL DAY**  
Tuesday, February 7 • 9:30-11:30am or 11:30am-1:30pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$14 Student, \$5 Adult (limit 2 adults per family group)  
Join us as we take a look back at the origins and history of Valentine’s Day in the United States. Like many of our modern holiday traditions, the popularity of giving and receiving valentines started with the Victorians. Join us to explore the beginnings of this holiday, learn secret codes, and even make your own valentine to take home!  
Homeschool Days offer non-traditional students the same opportunities to come visit the museum as our more traditional school visitors. Homeschool Day programs include a specialized tour and hands-on activities.



**CHOCOLATE, COCKTAILS, AND CORSETS**  
Thursday, February 9 • 6:30-8:30pm  
Molly Brown House Museum • \$22 Member, \$25 Non-member  
Melt in your mouth chocolate, fizzy and refreshing beverages, and an outfit to make you feel oh so good about yourself. Let’s celebrate celebrating yourself this February by diving into decadence at our Chocolate, Cocktails, and Corsets event. Join us for cocktails or mocktails and some chocolate in various forms as we playfully explore the history of these decadent treats. Bring a friend or come solo!

**GIRL SCOUT CREAM TEA**  
Saturday, February 25 • Entry at 9:40am, 11:40am, or 1:20pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$20 per Scout or chaperone  
Join us for a Girl Scout Cream Tea! Enjoy a special self-guided tour of the house followed by light tea. Bring your whole Troop or it also makes a great parent/Scout event!

**WHERE IN THE WORLD IS MARGARET BROWN? HOMESCHOOL DAY**  
Tuesday, March 7 • 9:30-11:30am or 11:30am-1:30pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$14 student, \$5 adult (limit 2 adults per family group)  
How did Margaret Brown travel? How long did it take her to get there? This interactive program takes you across the world as we try to figure out where and how Margaret traveled, how those technologies, and the world she lived in, changed over time, and what the societal motivations were for anyone traveling during this time.

**COMMUNITY BOOK CLUB: SPOILT QUILTS**  
Sunday, April 2 • 12:30-2pm • Virtual or in person at the Center for Colorado Women’s History • Free  
Join the Molly Brown House Museum (MBHM) and the Center for Colorado Women’s History (CCWH), as we read and discuss books related to women’s history, Colorado history, and books by women authors from Colorado! Book titles, dates, and locations can be found on the Adult Programs section of our website, [mollybrown.org](http://mollybrown.org). Meetings are held in person and online via Zoom. Let’s read!



**1340 PENN AFTER HOURS: ESCAPE THE TITANIC**  
Thursday, March 16 • 6-9pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$16 Member, \$20 Non-member  
It’s 1:20am, April 15, 1912. You are locked in the bowels of the ship with your fellow 3rd class passengers as the Titanic begins its descent into the ocean. Can you solve the puzzles to travel from deck to deck and get on a lifeboat before the ship becomes fully submerged? Entry times every 15 minutes beginning at 6pm; last entry at 8pm.

**SINKING OF THE TITANIC HOMESCHOOL DAYS**  
**Mon, April 3** 9:30-11:30am or 11:30am-1:30pm  
**Tues., April 4** 9:30-11:30am, 11:30am-1:30pm, or 2:30-4:30pm  
**Weds., April 5** 9:30-11:30am or 11:30am-1:30pm  
Molly Brown House Museum, \$14 student, \$5 adult (limit 2 adults/family group)  
Travel along with the Titanic, from inception to iceberg. Learn the history of the ship and that fateful night through the people aboard the Titanic. What can the objects and documents they left behind tell us about their worlds?  
Homeschool Days offer non-traditional students the same opportunities to come visit the museum as our more traditional school visitors. Homeschool Day programs include a specialized tour and hands-on activities.

**DEEPER DIVE: THE TITANIC EXPERIENCE**  
Thursday, April 13 • 6:30-8pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$19.12  
Whether you had a first class, second class, or third class ticket to the RMS Titanic, White Star Lines promised fine accommodations on Titanic’s maiden voyage to New York City. From spacious dining saloons specific to class, to the Turkish baths and promenade decks, the Titanic was meant for much more than travel. Join us in the historic home of Margaret “Molly” Brown as we explore what the Titanic experience was like before it tragically sank on April 14, 1912.

**TITANIC MEMORIES**  
Saturday, April 15 • 6-8 pm, 5 pm Accessible Performance • Molly Brown House Museum \$20 Member, \$25 Non-member  
The tragic story of the Titanic resonates with people all around the world. Accounts of survivors garnered intrigue in 1912 and continue to do so today. You may know of the Titanic’s famous passengers and their stories, but what about the not-so-famous passengers? Experience these heart-wrenching survivor stories in this one-of-a-kind theater experience within the historic walls that once belonged to Denver’s Titanic survivor, Margaret “Molly” Brown. Performances are every 15 minutes beginning at 6 pm.

**ART ON PENN: TITANIC AT NIGHT**  
Saturday, April 22 • 5-7pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$20 Member/\$25 Non-member  
Participants will learn the history of the Titanic within the context of Margaret Brown and then create an engaging acrylic painting of the Titanic at night. A little nervous? Don’t worry! Instructor Amy will guide every student step by step to have fun creating and learning! Amy Marsh, [instagram.com/amymarshart](https://www.instagram.com/amymarshart), has taught art for 19 years to all levels of students. She is now painting and teaching as a member of Arts Student League of Denver and working at the Molly Brown House Museum.

**DEEPER DIVE: REACHING NEW YORK CITY**  
Thursday, April 27 • 6:30-8pm • Molly Brown House Museum • \$19.12  
Much of Titanic’s tragic history focuses on the moment the Titanic sank into the Atlantic Ocean. While that topic understandably garners the most attention, the hours after the sinking, up to the Carpathia’s arrival to New York City offer us a glimpse into the survivor stories of strength and compassion, the immense public intrigue after the disaster, and how the Titanic tragedy shaped how we sail the seas today. Let’s explore the experiences after the Titanic sank in the historic home of Margaret “Molly” Brown.