

HISTORICAL INSIGHTS NEWSLETTER

Discover history in your own Denver home

Volume 1, Issue 1

This newsletter offers articles regarding local history, historic preservation, and related interests for Realtors, homeowners, and historians. Feel free to forward to others who might enjoy its contents.

Rediscovering Denver's Neighborhoods: The History of Capitol Hill

Capitol Hill was founded amidst a lot of bluster and hope. Early pioneer Richard Whitsitt believed that he had rightful ownership of the area in the early 1860s, but lost it. Henry Cordes Brown (who later would build the sumptuous [Brown Palace](#)) took advantage of Whitsitt's undocumented claim by erecting a cabin at 12th and Sherman, claiming 160 acres through the Homestead Act. Although Whitsitt threatened a duel, Brown unsheathed his carpenter's hatchet in return. No blows were ever struck, and the land called "Brown's Bluff" was established.

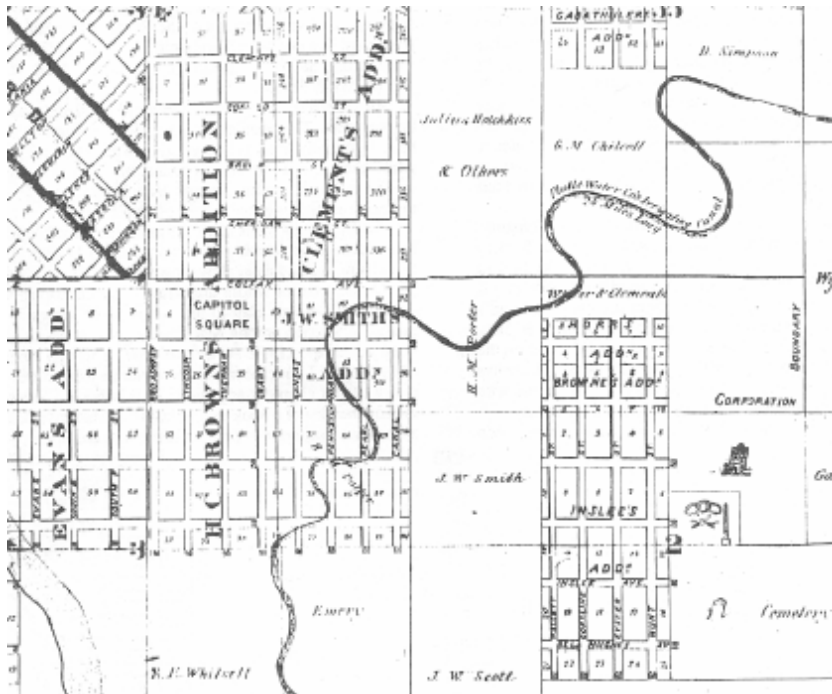
This founding had a significant effect on the Denver landscape. The streets in Brown's Capitol Hill neighborhood were oriented directly north-south rather than the diagonal layout upon which Denver had been founded. City planners didn't like it, but Brown went over their heads to gain formal approval for his plat from the territorial legislature. They approved, and the mold was thus broken: most of Denver thereafter adopted Brown's north-south, east-west orientation.

Brown's Bluff was named for the capitol well before the Capitol building itself had been planned. In fact, Denver wasn't even the capital city of Denver when Brown deeded the legislature his parcel of land. He hoped they might establish the governmental seat in this area, but so did nearly a dozen other developers in the state. All hoped to raise the value of adjacent properties by having the Capitol built in their midst, but the territorial government dithered on making a decision, and by 1879 the gift struck Brown as unnecessary. However, when Brown sought to reclaim the donated parcel, the state successfully lobbied the US Supreme Court to block the effort. Brown's initial objective was finally achieved: the state broke ground on the new [Capitol building](#), and Capitol Hill's prominence was secured.

Although an early center of the elite, Capitol Hill has always been a place of diversity. Even in the era of millionaire mansions, service workers lived in the area nearby their affluent employers. Squatters took up residence on the nearby park lands and small farmers drew from the precious water in the City Ditch. And when the financial Panic of 1893 ruined fortunes, the middle class moved into the homes of the once-gloriously rich.

If Walls Could Talk: 1007 Downing

10th and Downing is in the heart of Denver eastern residential neighborhoods . However, when the area was platted in 1871, it was just a hopeful island on the outskirts of town: just east of the city ditch and just west of the cemetery.



Though the home came more than 30 years later, it has not lacked in owners. Indeed, 1007 Downing Street has changed hands more than two dozen times, including more than thirteen ownership changes from 1909 to 1920. Did you think rapid turnover in the real estate market was a recent innovation?

Roscoe C Hill was the home's most renowned owner. Born in Indiana, he was a teacher for more than 27 years before becoming the principal of East High School in August 1920. That same month he and wife Edith L Hill moved into their home on Downing Street. Edith died in 1930, and Roscoe retired in 1944. But by that point, this long-time educator had touched the lives of nearly 15,000 graduates. School-wide parties and several laudatory newspaper articles celebrated his impact. But his greatest legacy came years later, with the honorary naming of a Denver public school. So today as you pass 451 Clermont Street, look over to [Roscoe C Hill Middle School](#) and remember this beloved East High principal and former resident of 1007 Downing.

Did You Know...?

...that [Hattie McDaniel](#) attended Denver's East High School? As "Mammy" in *Gone With the Wind*, she was the first African-American to win an Oscar. Born on 10 June 1895, Hattie's

acting career began at East when she did a reading in front of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Although terrified, she received a standing ovation. Her nearly 100 film credits included roles with Will Rogers in *Judge Priest*, Paule Robeson in *Show Boat*, and Shirley Temple in *The Little Corporal* among her many movies. Her life was filled with many firsts, including the first African-American woman to sing on radio (in 1915, with George Morrison's Denver-based Negro Orchestra), the first African-American buried in Los Angeles' Rosedale Cemetery, and the first African-American to attend the Academy Awards as a guest instead of a servant. McDaniel died in 1952 of cancer.

In Our Next Issue

Planes that fall from the sky and crash into Denver homes. Yes, it's happened.

Business News

Look in the January issue of [Denver Realtor News](#) for an article on Historical Insights. The [West Washington Park Neighborhood Association](#) has also published a recent Historical Insights article regarding the need for local history.

Historical Insights boasts a new [product offer sheet](#) and pricing model for 2005, with targeted studies now available in addition to the more general home histories.

Thank you to active Historical Insights clients: heritage-minded Nostalgic Homes realtor [Mark White](#) and the refreshingly insightful mortgage brokers at [Redwood Financial](#).

Do you have a question or topic you would like to see covered in the newsletter? Send ideas to dave@historicalinsights.com.

Historical Insights is the only historical research agency in the country specializing in realty and homeowners. Call on us to help add value to your home, business, life, or community.

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