

a historic walk

Legend has it that in the early 1800s, French-Canadian fur traders were caught by a tremendous snowstorm. To lighten their load, they buried large amounts of gunpowder (“poudre” in French) in a hiding place (“cache”) along the banks of a river — the Cache la Poudre River, which runs through modern-day Fort Collins.

In 1862, Camp Collins was built by the 9th Kansas Volunteer Cavalry to protect travelers and settlers along the Colorado branch of the Overland Trail. A flood in June 1864 sent the soldiers to higher ground near present-day downtown. Less than three years later, the fort was abandoned.

By 1872, the former fort site had a small hotel, general store and post office, a mill, school and brick yard. The Colorado Central Railroad arrived in 1877, and Fort Collins became a thriving agricultural center.

Colorado Agricultural & Mining College constructed its first classroom building, later called Old Main, in 1879, further establishing Fort Collins as the economic and cultural center of the region. The school was renamed Colorado State University in 1957.

Thanks to the efforts of local citizens and the City’s historic preservation program, modern-day visitors to Fort Collins can stroll back through time to the town’s earliest days in and around Old Town. The district was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978; the majority of the buildings on this walking tour are part of both national and locally designated historic districts, and Fort Collins was named a Preserve America city by the White House in 2005.

This walking tour can be completed in about an hour.



The following walking tour is adapted from “Historic Walking Tour — Old Town,” by Wayne C. Sundberg, *Sunday Research Associates*. Note: “Block” refers to one building that housed multiple businesses, not a modern city block.

1. THE FORT COLLINS MUSEUM (200 Mathews St.) a 1903 Carnegie Library building, is the perfect place to start your Old Town exploration. Constructed of native sandstone, the building served as the Fort Collins Public Library until 1976. Today, the Fort Collins Museum features regional cultural and local history exhibits in three galleries. The beautiful Heritage Courtyard features a plaza, seating areas, xeriscape landscaping and four historic cabins illustrating Fort Collins history: the 1859 Antoine Janis cabin, the 1864 Elizabeth “Auntie” Stone cabin, the 1882 Franz-Smith cabin, and the 1905 Boxelder Schoolhouse.

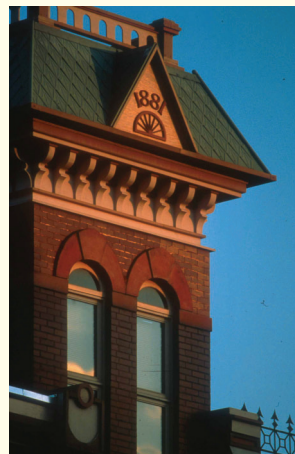
2. MCHUGH HOUSE AND HOSPITAL (202 Remington St.) — currently home to St. Peter’s Fly Shop. Referred to as the “House of the Mayors,” this castellated sandstone structure was begun in 1885 by Lars Kemoe, a sandstone mason, but wasn’t completed until 1888. The second owner, C.B. Andrews, added the carriage house. Two other owners,

Jessie Harris and Peter J. McHugh, were mayors of Fort Collins. McHugh, a doctor, converted the carriage house into a hospital.

3. ARMSTRONG HOTEL (259 S. College Ave., formerly the Mountain Empire Hotel). In 1923, architect Arthur Pringle designed this lovely three-story brick structure for Charles Mantz, who named it for his wife’s father, Andrew Armstrong. The hotel’s 41 guest rooms and two large dining rooms catered to the newly popular “long-distance automobile tourism.” This landmark was restored to its former Art Deco elegance in 2004, welcoming guests and housing an array of restaurants at street level.

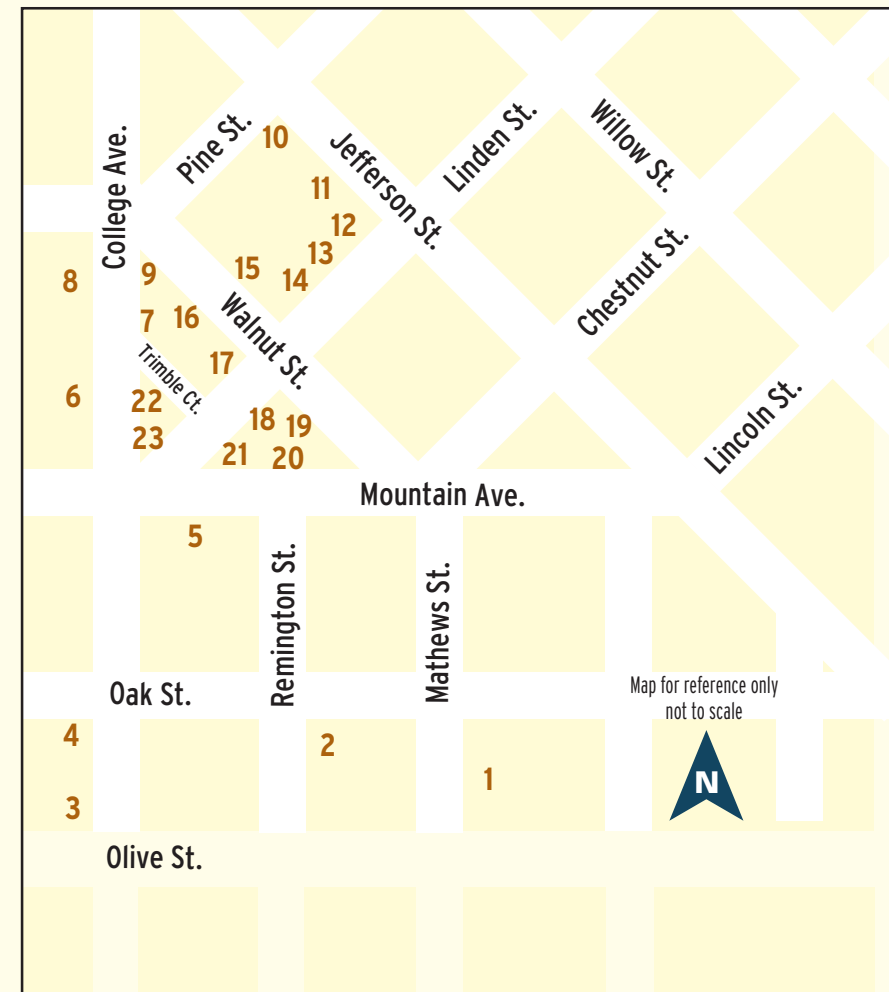
4. OLD POST OFFICE (College Avenue at Oak Street) — currently home to the Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art. This was the first structure to be built as a post office in the town. Constructed in 1912 in the Italian Renaissance style, it occupied the site of the original military cemetery. The post office moved to the new Federal Building in 1972.

5. KISSOCK BLOCK (117 E. Mountain Ave.). Local architect Montezuma Fuller designed and built the original for A.C. Kissock in 1889. Edwards, Kissock and Abbot, abstractors, were the structure’s first occupant. After a fire severely damaged the building in 1895, it was rebuilt.



Fire House in Old Town

6. OPERA HOUSE BLOCK (119 N. College Ave.). Built in 1880-81, this building is part of a business block that originally housed the Welch Dry Goods Store, Franklin Avery’s Larimer County Bank and the Windsor Hotel. The structure hosted traveling performers and served as a social center, courtroom, the scene of political rallies and a venue for high school graduations. In 1917, the building underwent extensive remodeling and the name was changed to “Central Hall.”



7. COMMERCIAL BANK AND TRUST (146 N. College Ave.) Designed by architect Arthur W. Garbutt, this Classical Revival-style building was completed in 1907. It was one of the first financial institutions to be controlled by owners from outside the community. It was the location of Home Federal Savings and Loan for many years.

8. OLD MILLER BOTTLING WORKS (173 N. College Ave.). Constructed in 1881, this was where Robert Miller bottled “Golden Lager Beer.”

9. NORTHERN HOTEL (172 N. College Ave.) Hotels have occupied this site since the early day. First the wooden Agricultural Hotel, then the ornate brick Commercial Hotel stood here. In 1905, a major renovation completely altered the Commercial Hotel. A stained glass dome was installed in the dining room and the name changed to the Northern. The fourth floor was added in 1924, and the

Art Deco façade was an alteration of the 1930s original. The latest renovation of the Northern began in the 1990s, and in 2001 it reopened as affordable senior housing, with retail establishments on the street level.

10. JEFFERSON STREET BLOCK AND VANDEWARK BUILDING (200 block of Jefferson Street). This group of brick buildings was built between 1879 and 1881. Denver architect William Quayle designed this block as well as several other structures. These buildings were part of the business center of Fort Collins in the 1880s, when Jefferson and Linden streets were the main commercial intersection.

11. ORIGINAL STOVER CITY DRUG BUILDING (261 Linden St.) In 1882, Frank Stover tore down “Old Grout,” the original sutlers store from the Fort Collins military post, to make way for his new drug store. Just as his new store was being completed, it burned to the ground. It took him five years to rebuild a sin-

gle story building. He added a second story in 1905, giving us the present structure, which was renovated in 1983.

12. ORIGINAL POUDE VALLEY BANK BUILDING (235 Linden St.) William Stover and Charles Sheldon built the first story of this structure in 1879. Their banking business, Poudre Valley Bank, moved to the corner of Linden and Walnut streets four years later. The second story was added by 1904.

13. REED-DAUTH BLOCK (223 Linden St.) This ornate structure was designed by Denver architect William Quayle in 1881. It had the first plate-glass front in Fort Collins. E.W. Reed, a jeweler, and Louis Dauth, a baker, were the original owners and occupants.

14. LINDEN HOTEL (250 Walnut St.) Abner Loomis and Charles Andrews had this imposing structure built in 1882-83, to house the banking firm of Stover, Sheldon & Co. (Poudre Valley Bank). The Mason occupied the upper two floors for the first few years. Between 1917 and 1983, the Linden Hotel shared the building with many other businesses. It was a keystone structure to the renovation of the Old Town area.

15. FIRE HOUSE (232 Walnut St.) As the town grew in its early days, the need for a city hall and fire station increased. This building met both those needs when completed in 1882. City offices remained here until 1958, while the fire station stayed until 1973. The bell tower was rebuilt and the facade restored in an extensive renovation project between 1979 and 1982.

16. WHITTON BLOCK (15 Old Town Square). In 1905, Irishman John Whitton built this building for his J. Whitton & Co. Clothing, Furnishings, Boots and Shoes. For many years various hotels occupied the second floor. One of the most interesting businesses to occupy the first floor was the Anti-Trust Fruit Store, named for the many anti-trust suits brought against major corporations in the early 1900s.

17. MCPHERSON BLOCK (19 Old Town Square). John McPhearson, a Scottish immigrant, erected this block in 1884. It featured windows bordered with stained glass and an ornate pressed metal cornice. Woetz Bros. Clothing Co., an early occupant, featured top-of-the-line merchandise displayed in solid oak wall cases and clothing tables.

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