

History Matters

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Do you know the significance of your home or neighborhood? Do you understand how the character of West Washington Park was shaped, know the residents who played prominent roles in Denver history, or how strange events here have repeated themselves over the last 100 years?

No one could blame you if you didn't. History in West Washington Park has been a remarkably muted affair. And it's a shame, because we have a rather colorful past to celebrate.

Since 1968, the Denver Landmarks Commission has identified 1412 historic properties of historical, architectural, or geographical importance to the City and County of Denver. The Baker neighborhood claims nearly three hundred such landmarks. Country Club, Highland, and Capitol Hill each boast over a hundred.

West Washington Park has eight.

It seems incomprehensible. The first chartered town (Montana City, not Denver or Auraria as you may think) was founded just a mile away in 1858. The 1882 National Mining and Industrial Exposition drew tens of thousands here to see a \$55,000 gold brick and other curiosities. The Denver Bears professional baseball team had an 8,000 seat stadium on South Broadway from 1922 to 1946. One of the world's most honored female orchestra conductors, Antonia Brico, lived here until her death in 1989.

There's history here to be discussed and celebrated. It simply needs to be drawn out from our private homes, businesses, and memories. Residents of Baker and other Denver neighborhoods have done so successfully, and so can we.

Are you a long term resident or business owner? Have you researched the history of your home? Do you know something about Denver history? Perhaps you are simply interested in learning more.

WWPNA is willing to support this interest through newsletter articles, the annual home tour, educational sessions, the website (www.wwpna.org), and discussion groups. As both a Washington Park resident and a historian focused on old Denver homes, I have a special interest in leading these efforts. But we need to hear from you.

Email me at dave@historicalinsights.com. Washington Park deserves a better history.