

# History Tours

SUMMER 2022



## Legacy of Church Ranch in Westminster

*August 1, 2022, 10 a.m.–1 p.m.*

Learn about the Legacy of Church Ranch in Westminster, the Cherokee-Overland Trail, Westminster University, historic homes along Lowell Boulevard, and the Westminster History Center. The tour coincides with the Around the World Street Fair being held on 73rd Avenue from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. This festival will showcase the diverse cultures in our community. You will also be able to attend the dedication ceremony for the Fred Valente Humanitarian Park and the Vicky Bunsen Sculpture Garden and the opening ceremony for the city's Sculpture on Loan Program.

### HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE TOUR

- Pleasant and Sarah DeSpain, along with their eight adult children, homesteaded the Lowell Boulevard area after their wagon wheel broke on their way to California.
- George and Sarah Church were on their honeymoon when they fell in love with the area that would become Church Ranch and a major influence on Westminster development.
- Westminster University was built as the "Princeton of the West" in 1910.

**IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:**  
the Westminster  
Historical Society





## Lowell Boulevard

Lowell Boulevard was originally a pathway used by Native Americans to travel from Hidden Lake to the top of Gregory Hill. Named for the poet James Russell Lowell, Lowell Boulevard has had 18 different names. Lowell used to be much steeper from 80th northward and was used as a ski slope of sorts and a sledding hill. Mayor Francis Day led efforts to create an underpass for Lowell Boulevard when the Boulder Turnpike was built, ensuring that Westminster wouldn't be cut in half.

### HISTORIC PROPERTIES ON THE EASTSIDE OF LOWELL BOULEVARD

#### **7300 Lowell** *Westminster High School, 1949.*

Replaced Union High School as the area grew. In 1979, it became the Career Enrichment Park, providing education related to trades. The City's Historic Landmark Board is working on obtaining City landmark designation.

**7596 Lowell** *Torii Square Park.* Originally the site of Pleasant DeSpain's mother-in-law, Torii Square Park is named for Yuko Nakamura Kishimoto. Yuko found her way to Westminster from Japan via the City's Rotary Club Exchange Student program. She attended Westminster High School from 1967-1968, having a profound impact during her short time here. Sadly, in 1974, Yuko and her unborn child passed away after the 25-year-old suffered a stroke. A plaque in the park honors her life reading "Yuko came to America with dedicated gifts of love, intelligence and courage creating a bond for international understanding. Her untimely death is memorialized to remind us that sharing, as life itself, goes on forever."

**3585 W 76th Ave.** *NE Corner, Homesite of Pleasant and Sarah DeSpain.* The DeSpains and their 8 children settled what is now Lowell Boulevard because their wagon wheel broke on their way out to California in 1870. This site is the original homesite of the DeSpains who were the first permanent settlers in Harris which later became Westminster. This site is now the Westminster United Methodist Church.

**7500 Lowell** *Miller House, 1929, Purple Door.* In 1923, Roy Miller opened the first automotive garage in Westminster.

**7660 Lowell** *Mary Hoover Clack House, 1951, White with Gray Trim.* Built by the Westminster community via fundraisers for Mary Hoover Clack who was the first person in Westminster to contract polio. She graduated from Westminster High School in 1951 and was welcomed into her new home that Christmas Eve.

**7700 Lowell** *Blickensterfer House, 1901, White.* Blickensterfer built this home and also invented a typewriter that was not successful.

**7740 Lowell** *1882, Richard DeSpain House, White with Blue Trim.* Richard DeSpain assisted his brother Pleasant with the orchards. He and his brothers also protected the DeSpain Ditch & Water Company which brought water to town via Coal Creek. His wife Jennie died when the cellar door came down on her head.

**7786-7790 Lowell** *1906, Plandel Houses.* These three houses were part of the DeSpain Orchard and may have originally been chicken coops. Many times, chicken coops were converted to houses because the flooring of the coop was off the ground and the coops were weathertight.

### HISTORIC PROPERTIES ON THE WESTSIDE OF LOWELL BOULEVARD

**2010** **7759 Lowell** *Buswell House, 1900s, Gray House.* H. T. Buswell who was the first Town Marshall and served on the District #9 School Board from 1921-1925. Mrs. Buswell signed the petition to incorporate but her husband did not sign.

**7651 Lowell** *Mulford House, Late 1800's, White House.* L. D. Mulford operated the second General Store in Westminster. He was appointed as one of 5 commissioners to conduct the election for the incorporation of Westminster held in 1911. He then served on the first Board of Trustees for the town.

**7341 Lowell** *Telephone Building, 1951.* Telephones first came to Westminster in 1914.

**2009**  **7269-7265 Lowell** *Penguin Building, 1951.* Built by Raymond & Mary Lou Nielsen. Raymond was a holistic pharmacist using medicinal herbs from his back yard. The name of the pharmacy came about because Mary Lou kept turning penguin-shaped men's cologne bottles backwards on the shelf. Over the years, the Penguin Building has housed many different tenants including a post office, ballet studio, ceramics studio, pool hall, Mexican restaurant, and a martial arts studio. Raymond's granddaughter, Marnie, continues her grandfather's tradition of healing here.

## Cherokee-Overland Trail

Before there was a Cherokee-Overland Trail, this would have been a path for dinosaurs that roamed the edge of the Great Inland Sea. The name Cherokee comes from the indigenous Native American tribe that frequently served as scouts that guided settlers to the Oregon Trail. Overland was the name of the stagecoach company that traveled in these parts. There are still remnants left of the Trail today.

**Pierce St. & 88th Ave.** This portion of Trail connected with the Oregon Trail in Wyoming. In this area, the Trail came through the southeast area of the golf course crossing to Pierce Street.



**Pierce St. & 89th Ave.** The Trail crossed through the Semper Water Treatment Plant. The curved portions of Pierce St. roughly follow the original route.

## Church Ranch

Established by George and Sarah Church in 1874. They came to Colorado for their honeymoon and fell in love with the possibilities this rough land held. They were the first ones to successfully raise Hereford cattle and winter wheat on this site. From 1874–2020, Church Ranch was the only Centennial Farm in Westminster.

**10050 Wadsworth Church Ranch, 1864**

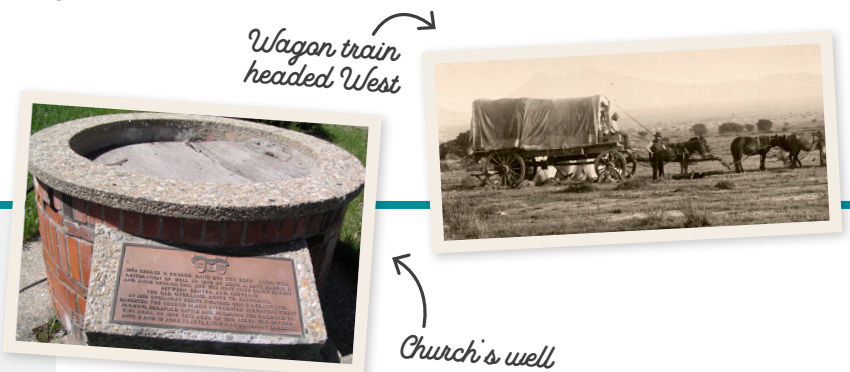
**10290 Wadsworth Mandalay Schoolhouse, 1925.**

  **10385 Wadsworth Church's Stagecoach Stop and Well, 1864.** This stop provided services for stagecoaches from Denver. Prior to his election, President Ulysses S. Grant and his daughter stayed at Church Ranch in 1868. The well is still operational.





**9215 Pierce Semper Farmhouse.** The Trail had a stop at the Semper Farmhouse which served as both a grocery store and mail drop for the Semper Township.

**96th Ave. & Teller St.** The Trail crossed northwest to Wadsworth Boulevard and continued north on Wadsworth.



**10400 Wadsworth Train Trestle.** This train trestle passes over winding portions of the Cherokee-Overland Trail.

 **10804 Wadsworth Lower Church Ranch Lake, Barn and Silo, Site of Tucker Farm.** Lower Church Ranch Lake was hand-dug in 1878; Mrs. Tucker was an adopted daughter of George and Sarah Church.

 **2018 110th Ave. & Wadsworth Green Knolls Development, West Side.** Built in 1850 by W.H. Conklin, this home is the oldest house in Westminster. Originally located on the Cherokee-Overland Trail, it was moved to 10919 Yukon Court. Vicky Bunsen, a City staff member who led historic preservation efforts for the City, was responsible for preserving this house as part of the Green Knolls subdivision.

**112th Ave. & Railroad Tracks** The Cherokee Overland Trail crossed the railroad tracks here, continued northeast towards 120th Avenue, then north along U.S. Route 287 to LaPorte, ultimately connecting with the Oregon Trail.

**90th Ave. & Lowell Shaw Heights.** This area served as a winter camp for the Arapahoe and has a number of artesian springs. Buffalo also grazed here.



Westminster Historical Society  
Annual Historic Preservation  
Award recipient



City of  
Westminster  
Historic Landmark



Jefferson  
County  
Historical Site

# Westminster University

The City of Westminster is named for this University even though the University has never been within the city limits. Westminster police officers proudly wear badges that depict this historic castle.

Westminster University was a Presbyterian school originally envisioned as the "Princeton of the West." Built in 1892, it languished as a result of the Silver Crash of 1893, finally opening to students in 1908 only to close in 1917 due to male students leaving the area for World War I. In 1920, it was acquired by the Pillar of Fire Methodist Church which has continuously operated a Christian school in the building. Pillar of Fire had to change the name of the school to Belleview (which means 'beautiful view') as the name Westminster University is owned by the Presbyterians.

The building, referred to as the Castle, was built in the Richardson-Romanesque style featuring heavy, rock-faced stone; round masonry arches; contrasting colors; transom windows arranged in ribbon-like patterns; square tower; and sparse fenestration.



**8260 Irving St.** *Kirkwood Hall, 1910.* Originally used as a dorm for Westminster University, it is now the boys' dorm for Belleview Christian Schools.

**8300 Irving St.** *Pattison House, 1908.* This Bungalow Style home became a place of quarantine for nine students during a smallpox outbreak. During the quarantine period, one of the students also contracted diphtheria.

**8352-8354 Grove St.** *Twin Cottages, 1920.* These cottages were built for twins Beulah and Bethel.

**8398 King St.** *Belleview Cemetery, 1931.*

**Power Plant Building E, 1892.** Two 70 horsepower boilers supplied the steam heat via underground tunnels for the buildings of the Westminster University.



**3450 W. 83rd Ave.** *Westminster University, 1892.*

**Historic Barn 1927.** Built of clay tile which is rare in this area.

**8275 King St.** *Radio House, 1928.* Originally the boys dorm, now functions as the girls dorm for the Belleview Christian School.

**8201 King St.** *President's House, 1920.* Built in a Prairie Colonial Style for J.L. Weaver who was the first President of Westminster University.

Gregory House



**1995** **8140 Lowell** *Gregory*

*House, 1910.* Rev. William Gregory was a Presbyterian minister who came to Westminster to teach Hebrew and theological

courses at the college. Matilda Campbell,

Gregory's granddaughter, and her family later occupied the house. Matilda was a tireless volunteer in the formation and growth of the Westminster Historical Society. The area is known as Gregory Hill in Professor Gregory's honor.

**2014 8198 King St.** *Carl Jacobson House, 1910.*

This home was built for the first dean of the Westminster University from a Harris Kit House. The Jacobson's have owned the house since 1923.

**2008** **8198 Irving St.** *O'Gorman House, 1910.*

This house served as a dormitory for students of the Westminster University and was built from a Sears House Kit.

**3455 W. 83rd Ave.** *Carnation Cottage/Rose Hill, 1914.* This Bungalow Style home and area was once a thriving center for the commercial growing and selling of carnations.

## Westminster History Center

Built in 1892 from property purchased from Benjamin DeSpain, this building operated as the Harris Park School and was later known as the Pleasant DeSpain Building.

**2009** **7200 Lowell** *Harris Park School/Westminster History Center*

**3455 West 72nd Ave.** *Union High School.* City of COW Historic Landmark Board is working towards local landmark designation.

### HISTORIC RECOGNITIONS

**AWARD YEAR**

Westminster Historical Society Annual Historic Preservation Award recipient



National Register of Historic Places



Colorado State Register of Historic Places



City of Westminster Historic Landmark



Jefferson County Historical Site