

**BRIGHTON SUBDIVISION HISTORIC PROPERTIES SURVEY  
PHASE I**

**CLG Grant CO-17-013**

**Cultural Resource Survey Report**

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## Introduction

In 2017, the City of Brighton received a History Colorado Certified Local Government Grant to fund the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey: Phase I. Platted by Daniel F. Carmichael in 1881, the Brighton Subdivision was the first residential district established in the new community of Brighton. Since the late nineteenth century, the Brighton Subdivision has provided a neighborhood for the working class and been the center of Brighton's transportation, religious, and social history.

In October 2017, the City of Brighton contracted with Autabee & Autabee, LLC to oversee the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey and perform field surveys, interview residents about their memories of the Brighton Subdivision, present the aims of the survey project, create databases, develop a Historic Preservation Month community presentation in May 2018, and write a report on the residential history of this section of Brighton.

The Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey identifies and catalogues the architectural resources of Brighton's oldest neighborhood. In July 2012, the City of Brighton issued its Historic Resources Survey Plan [The Plan] (SHF Grant No. CO-11-013). The Plan was designed to guide the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission (BHPC) through the documentation of the community's historic resources. The Plan allows the BHPC to "work proactively during the planning process for new developments." Like other Front Range communities, 21<sup>st</sup> century Brighton is experiencing growth and expansion.<sup>1</sup> Brighton is to be commended for including historic resources in the plans for new developments.

The Plan's Executive Summary of Findings included a list of recommended undertakings to complete in the five years following the enactment of the Plan. Under Item C, the Plan laid the ground work for a survey of the Brighton Subdivision:

"Document original Brighton subdivision (platted 1881) with a comprehensive survey that combines the Identification level (short survey form) for 75% of the properties with Intensive level (1403 survey form) for 25% of the properties. General boundaries of this triangular-shaped area are: Bridge Street (north), properties facing South Main Street/South Second Avenue (west), Union Pacific Railroad Tracks (east). Railroad tracks have previously been surveyed and do not need to be included. This area has not been surveyed previously and is threatened due to general property conditions. Evaluate this subdivision for potential as a historic district. Many of the historic resources are commercial properties."<sup>2</sup>

A Certified Local Government grant (CO-17-013) funded the first phase of the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey. Phase I reviews 16 primarily residential properties within the survey area. The second phase of this project will research and document commercial and industrial buildings and a section of the Fulton Ditch Lateral. The work on the second phase is scheduled to begin in May 2018.

The Brighton Subdivision is an enigma in the city's development and history. Platted by Daniel F. Carmichael, one of Brighton's "founding fathers," the Subdivision has been economically and physically isolated from the agricultural economy to the west, the business district to the north, and the traditionally better off neighborhoods on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Street to the east.

A decade ago, the Brighton Pavilions shopping center was constructed a few hundred feet to the west of the Survey area.<sup>3</sup> The Pavilions brought a new movie theater, small restaurants, and shops to the area and economic diversity to Brighton's older neighborhoods to the east.

Ten years after the Pavilions arrival, the homes and businesses of the Brighton Subdivision remain. These buildings survive not so much because their owners are stubborn, but because this neighborhood has been largely ignored as Brighton, and all of metropolitan Denver, experience unparalleled economic growth. Brighton Subdivision has always been working class. Very few of its residents made significant marks that shaped the course of city development, yet without them there would be no city. Brighton Subdivision comes to us in the twenty-first century as a neighborhood where people lived, worked, and tried to achieve the American dream of homeownership.

## **Project Area**

The General Land Office (GLO) created the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) to divide and describe land within the public domain. Typically, land was divided into townships that measured thirty-six square miles or 23,040 acres. The PLSS represents over 30 individual surveys. Each survey designated a Principal Meridian (P.M.) and a base line perpendicular to the P.M. In 1855, the 40<sup>th</sup> Parallel was designated the base line for the 6<sup>th</sup> P. M. which divided Kansas from Nebraska. In Brighton, East 168th Avenue is approximately aligned on this baseline, which if followed west to Boulder, becomes Baseline Road. North of this baseline, Townships are numbered starting with 1 North (T1N), and south of the baseline they start with 1 South (T1S).

Townships are further divided into thirty-six, one-square-mile sections. Sections contain 640 acres and are further divided using the compass points to describe the location of a parcel of land relative to the center of the section. In fact, a section can be halved seven times and still have a whole number of acres. Sections are numbered starting in the upper right hand corner of the township, although surveyors actually worked from southeast to northwest. Sections on the north and west sides of a township do not always contain exactly 640 acres. The surveyors used the north half of sections 1-6 and the west half of sections 6, 7, 18, 19, 30, and 31 to compensate for the curvature of the earth. These irregular areas of the township are divided into lots that are as close to 80 acres as possible.

GLO surveyors, Brighton's pioneers and modern land owners still describe their property in Brighton as west of a point near Rulo, Nebraska, and as being either North or South of the east-west running base line. The current survey is located in Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 69 West of the 6th Prime Meridian. Section 7 comprises a total of 643.32 acres.

The survey boundaries correspond to the original boundaries of the Brighton Subdivision as platted in 1881. The survey boundaries are the triangular area defined by Bridge Street (north), South First Avenue (west), and the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks (east). Please refer to Figure 1 for an illustration of the boundaries of the Survey area.

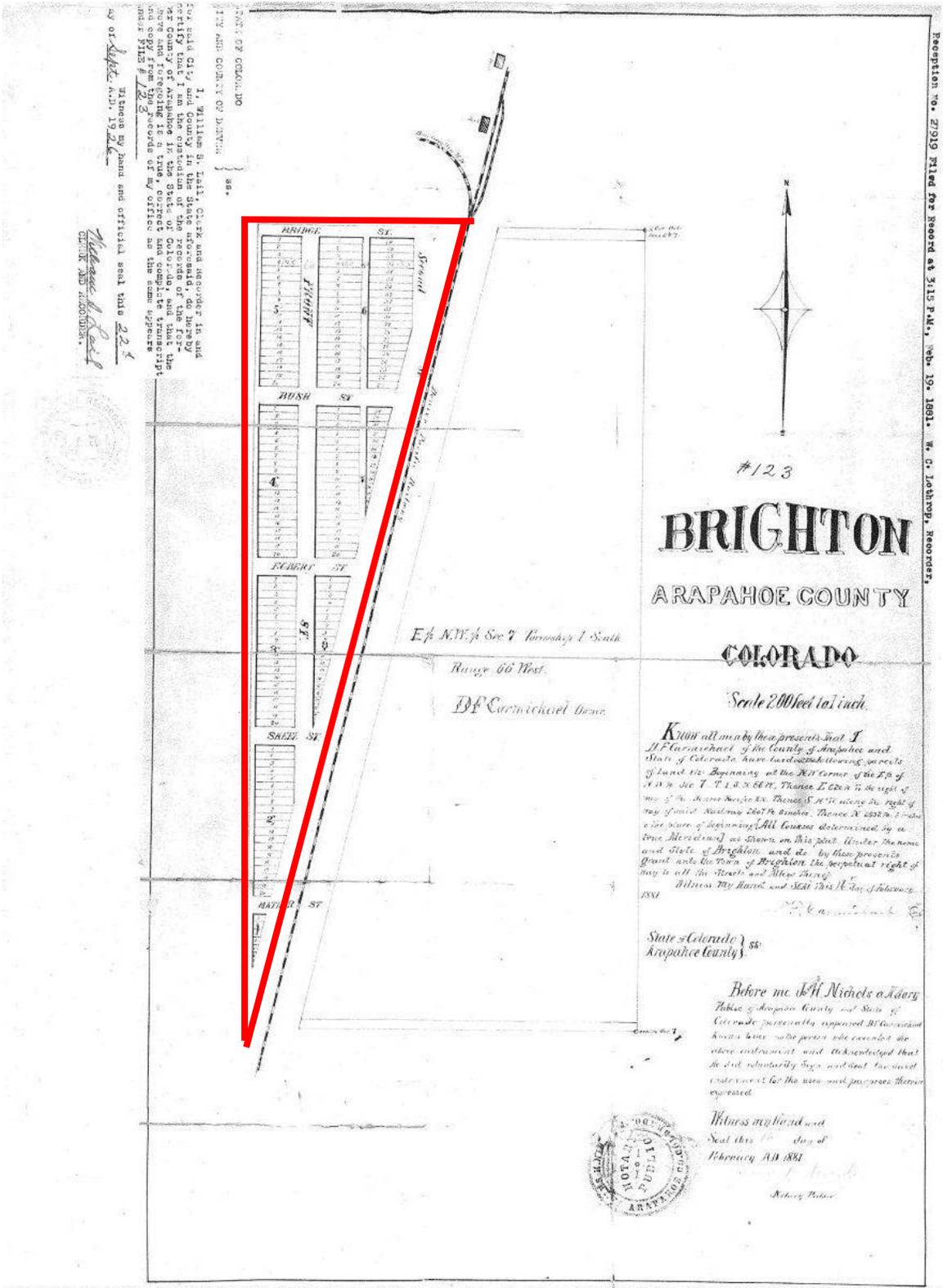


Figure 1 – Survey boundaries of Brighton Subdivision. Taken from Brighton Plat Map, 1881. Located at Adams County Clerk and Recorder’s Office.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

One of the guiding principles of the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission and the City of Brighton is to promote projects that recognize the historic significance of the community since its establishment in the 1880s. The Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey contributes to that goal.

The Survey has several other purposes beyond recognizing and promoting the historic significance of the Brighton Subdivision: to document the built environment in advance of possible redevelopment of the businesses and residences within the Brighton Subdivision; to facilitate and incorporate preservation into future developments, and to demonstrate the value of twentieth-century working class cultural resources to local preservationists and historians.

During a two-decade period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, fire, highway projects, and demolition removed many historically significant buildings from the Brighton Subdivision. Since the 1960s, the Subdivision has become a neighborhood of survivors, in many cases of benign neglect. In 2012, the City of Brighton's Historic Resources Plan (the Plan) identified the Brighton Subdivision as threatened. The Plan expressed the concern that development would result in the loss of the remaining potentially historic buildings within the Subdivision.

In addition to documenting and raising awareness of the Subdivision's historic resources, the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey will assist the City of Brighton in its implementation of its 2012 historic preservation ordinance. The survey aims to provide assistance to the City of Brighton as it endeavors to make informed decisions that will affect the heritage of the Brighton Subdivision.

This Survey is a snapshot. It will ensure the history of the Subdivision is recorded, and hopefully in most cases, preserved while still allowing for appropriate reinvestment.

Those involved in this Survey and the writing and production of this report suggest an additional purpose for this document. Historic preservation shouldn't only be concerned with high style, or wealthy decision makers. Brighton's working class citizens owned and rented houses in the Brighton Subdivision, and made it their home. The Brighton Subdivision may not have grand architecture or buildings associated with nationally important events or people. Its significance may not even be state-wide although understanding the subdivision's development may contribute to a greater understanding of 19th century urban development. However, historic preservationists have a duty to document the locally important stories as well. This Survey is an opportunity to recognize hardworking families and their architecture at the local level as examples of the majority who often have no other public record to tell their story.

In 2017, representatives of Brighton's Office of Historic Preservation conducted a preliminary survey of the Subdivision. The 16 buildings selected for the Phase I survey (CO-17-013) and the 21 buildings chosen for the Phase II survey (2018-M1-004) are the result of that preliminary work and represent resources thought to have the greatest potential for historical and architectural significance. Table 1 lists the 16 buildings comprising the Phase I survey.

**Table 1 – Sixteen Buildings  
Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey: Phase I**

<b>Address</b>	<b>OAHP Site No.</b>	<b>Date Built</b>	<b>Previously Surveyed</b>
51 South First Avenue	5AM.3815	1912	No
76 South Main Street	5AM.3816	1937	No
115 South First Avenue	5AM.3817	1916	No
123 South First Avenue	5AM.3818	1902	No
129 South First Avenue	5AM.3819	1914	No
135 South First Avenue	5AM.3820	1908	No
150 South Main Street	5AM.3821	1916	No
161 South Main Street	5AM.3822	1908	No
165 South Main Street	5AM.3823	1923	No
175 South Main Street	5AM.3824	1913	No
201 South Main Street	5AM.3825	1907	No
209 South Main Street	5AM.3826	1914	No
217 South Main Street	5AM.3827	1914	No
233 South Main Street	5AM.3828	1914	No
257 South Main Street	5AM.3829	1917	No
319 South First Avenue	5AM.3830	1912	No

The Phase I survey began in October 2017 and concluded in June 2018. Autobee & Autobee, LLC conducted a file search of existing OAHP survey files followed by fieldwork and archival research, producing 16 OAHP Architectural Inventory Forms and this survey report, which includes a historic context for the Brighton Subdivision.

According to the OAHP's Compass database, none of the 16 properties in the residential survey have been evaluated for National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligibility. Research found that many significant buildings in the history of the Brighton Subdivision have been demolished to make way for a realigned highway, were consumed by fire, or were removed and replaced to make way for a newer commercial property.

The project historians employed census records, tax and other Adams County records, grantor/grantee books, fire department records and other sources to recognize a neighborhood of “nameless, voiceless” people who lived more than a century ago. The historians photographed all of the buildings first. Then, local newspapers and other archival materials were reviewed. The search was expanded to include newspapers in Denver, Greeley, and Loveland. Brighton City staff located extant building permits. Adams County tax cards, and grantor/grantee books were used to trace owners of the properties. When it was realized that many of the buildings were not owner-occupied for much of their history, historians also used telephone books and city directories to determine who lived in the houses. This was hampered by the lack of building addresses in the Brighton Subdivision until after 1940. The Brighton’s fire department could not

locate any records that would help with ownership or occupants. The federal census were used to find occupants however this was limited by the lack of building addresses. Sanborn Insurance Maps were helpful documenting when some of the properties were built. All of the owners were notified of the survey and only two responded with information about their property. An open house was held in May 2018 at the Brighton Museum and attendees were able to help the historians connect the Wire Building fire in 1955 with the commercial addition to 129 South First Avenue.

Phase I of the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey, funded in part by a Certified Local Government grant, is documented in this report. Phase II, funded in part by State Historical Fund grant 2018-M1-004, will be documented in a separate report. The preparation of two separate survey reports is necessary due to the different project timelines and funding sources. This approach was confirmed at a meeting that included members of the City of Brighton, Autobee & Autobee, LLC, and the History Colorado State Historical Fund. As this is a somewhat artificial division in topics, the two survey reports should be read as two volumes of a single report.

Phase II will address 21 buildings with a long-time commercial association within the Brighton Subdivision and will continue through the fall of 2018. In Phase II, Autobee & Autobee, LLC will produce and deliver 21 OAHP Architectural Inventory Forms, forms recording a segment of the Fulton Ditch Lateral and a survey report with an updated and expanded historic context.

## **Who's There? Some Notes on Source Materials**

From the 1880s to 1904, the clerk and recorder office of Arapahoe County, and subsequently, Adams County, kept the deeds and transactions of a new community building homes and outbuildings. More than a century later, a ragged and confused set of Grantor and Grantee books indicate the names of Brighton's early town folk and small investors who purchased lots within the Brighton Subdivision from Daniel Carmichael during the 1880s and 1890s.

The Grantor and Grantee records are the only primary property records from the 19<sup>th</sup> century found for Brighton. These records document sales of land, but generally do not indicate if there are houses or barns, do not indicate if the property is owner occupied, and generally rely on the legal description to describe the property as opposed to the address. There are eight Sanborn Insurance Maps available for Brighton. Two are from the 19th century and were completed in 1893 and 1899. Neither year records the Brighton Subdivision south of Bush Street suggesting that there was little worth insuring in the area. Blocks 5 and 6 (between Bridge and Bush Streets) have no buildings that remain from the 19th century.

The 1880 Federal Census is too early to be useful and the 1890 Federal Census was destroyed in a 1921 fire. The men and women living and working south of North Main Street during the first half of the twentieth century left few memories and even fewer records behind. A review of the Adams County Tax and Treasury Records indicate that only a handful of families owned houses in the 100 to 300 blocks of South Main Street and along South First Avenue in the Brighton Subdivision from the first decade of the new century to the end of World War II.

## **Funding**

Since the publication of its 2020 Preservation Plan, History Colorado has stressed the importance of Colorado's communities researching, documenting, and celebrating the state's historic neighborhoods and business districts. The project applicant, the City of Brighton, funded this project in part with grants from History Colorado. The City of Brighton's Historic Preservation Commission and other Brighton and Adams County organizations expressed their support of this project in writing. Phase I was paid for in part through a Certified Local Government grant (CO-17-013) administered by History Colorado.

## **Literature Search and Coordination**

A number of sources were consulted to develop the historic context and complete the survey forms. This included a review of site files and databases, as well as coordination with institutions interested in historic resources.

The effort coordinated with:

- OAHP/ State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Brighton Historic Preservation Commission
- Brighton Historic Preservation Office
- Adams County Historical Society
- Adams County Assessor and Offices of Clerk and Recorder
- Denver Public Library

In addition, a number of other source documents were reviewed:

2012: Len and Kathy Lingo, *Historic Resources Survey Plan-City of Brighton, Colorado* (CLG CO-11-013) for City of Brighton. (Avenue L Architects: July 16, 2012).

2014: Deon Wolfenbarger, *Brighton, Colorado Historic Resource Survey: Phase I, 2013-2014* (CLG CO-13-012) for City of Brighton Historic Preservation Commission. (Three Gables Preservation: 2014).

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps held at the Western History Collection of the Library of Congress, the Western History Department of the Denver Public Library, and the City of Brighton Historic Preservation Office also provided key documentation of the commercial and residential properties in Brighton from 1893 to 1948.

The story of the residential development of the Brighton Subdivision contains many gaps. Daniel F. Carmichael apparently left behind no diaries or correspondence that would verify intent or purpose in actions. Subsequently, the first and second generation of homeowners left nearly no documentation about their lives beyond census records and listings in city directories. The following context is an initial examination of Brighton's first neighborhood that can be updated and expanded as new information comes to light.

## **Context**

### **Before the Brighton Subdivision, 1865-1881**

The Land Ordinance of 1785 determined some of Brighton's linear dimensions long before most colonial North Americans considered what was beyond the Ohio River Valley. Legislators in the recently independent United States drafted the Land Ordinance to manage land in the trans-Appalachian West. The Ordinance led to the creation of the General Land Office (GLO), which was subsequently renamed the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

As the new nation grew and expanded west beyond the Appalachian Mountains and Mississippi River, it was natural that the lines dividing townships and sections were soon used by many communities as main roads. Not because they were straight lines, but rather because they were property boundaries. Using township and section lines as roads kept farms intact and created fewer disruptions to individual property owners. On the north side of the survey area, Bridge Street follows the section line dividing Sections 6 and 7 of Township 1 South.

### **Military Warrants vs. Homesteads vs. Railroad Grants**

Even though the GLO land surveys emphasized square divisions of land, the Brighton Subdivision is a triangle. The Federal Government released land from the public domain using several laws enacted throughout the 19th century. Section 7, where the current survey is located, left public domain by Military Warrants, Homesteads, and Railroad Grants between 1867 and 1897.

Military Bounty Lands or Military Warrants are lands that were given to eligible noncommissioned officers and soldiers or their heirs. Simply put, certain officers and soldiers were entitled to three month's pay and 160 acres of public land in compensation for their military service in the War of 1812. Legislation was passed in 1842 opening up additional public lands further west, such as Colorado. Many war veterans never actually claimed their land, and many heirs who did acquire land sold their inheritance to speculators without ever seeing it. The 80 acres west of the Brighton Subdivision was a Military Warrant.

In contrast to military warrant land, the 1862 Homestead Act encouraged western migration by giving 160 acres of public land to settlers. Homesteaders paid a small filing fee and after five years of continuous residency received title to the land. Homesteaders could purchase the land for \$1.25 per acre after six months of residency. The Homestead Act led to the distribution of 80 million acres of public land by 1900.

The triangular shape of the Brighton Subdivision was created by the railroad. The Federal Government encouraged the building of railroads by making grants of public land to railroad companies. Railroad companies then sold the land to finance the building of their roads. By 1868 many western railroads had profitable land departments. Not only did the railroad companies finance construction with land sales, but the land sales generated future use of the railroads by helping to create farming communities and towns, like Brighton. The Brighton Subdivision was part of a federal land grant awarded to the Union Pacific Railway Company.

Daniel F. Carmichael purchased the land from the railroad, subdivided it, and then sold the lots to other speculators and early Brighton house builders.

The arrival of railroad is the touchstone for land ownership in the Brighton Township. The following lists the original owners of land within Section 7, Township 1 South, Range 66 West:

**1. Lot 1 or East Half of the NW Quarter Section 7, T1S, R66W**

Union Pacific Railway Company

Authority - Act of July 1, 1862: Grant-RR Union and Central (12 Stat. 489)

COCOAA 039961 serial Patent 5/10/1883 includes 78,014.01 total acres.

**2. Lot 2 or West Half of the NW Quarter Section 7, T1S, R66W**

Military warrant #71027 in favor of Hannah Dean, Widow of Samuel Dean, Private

Revolutionary War assigned to Honore Constalet 12/10/1867 authority Act of March 17, 1842:

Scrip or Nature of Scrip (5 Stat. 607).

**3. NE1/4 Section 7 T1S, R66W**

Union Pacific Railway Company.

Authority - Act of July 1, 1862: Grant-RR Union and Central (12 Stat. 489)

COCOAA 040038 Serial Patent - 11/12/1897

**4. SE ¼ Section 7, T1S, R66W, and Lots 1 & 2, SW ¼ Section 7, T1S, R66W**

Union Pacific Railway Company.

Authority - Act of July 1, 1862: Grant-RR Union and Central (12 Stat. 489)

COCOAA 040132 total acres 43,760.50 - 3/7/1892

Brighton's connection to railroads began before there was a State of Colorado and before there was a town of Brighton. In 1870, the railroad made its way to Colorado Territory. A quickly constructed railroad depot sat at the junction of the Denver Pacific Railroad (Union Pacific) and the Denver and Boulder Valley Railroads. The rail station was named after the president of the Denver Pacific, General Bella M. Hughes. Maps indicate the station was known as either Hughes, Hughes Station, or Hughes Junction. During the 1870s, the rail outpost included a wood frame depot, water tower, windmill, a section house, a corral, a stable, and cabins where section crews stayed. Some sources credit the Bush family for building Hughes's first house at what would become 35 South First Avenue at some point between 1870 and 1875. In 2018, the Brighton branch of Wells Fargo Bank is addressed to 35 South First Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

The story of the Brighton Subdivision's growth as a residential neighborhood slowly unfolded for many decades after the area was first platted in 1881. There were few takers, but that did not stop the subdivision's developer from building Brighton's first significant buildings on the south side of Bridge Street.

## What's in a Name?

For most of the late nineteenth century, Daniel F. Carmichael was Brighton and Brighton was Daniel F. Carmichael. Born on April 17, 1844, near Niagara Falls, Canada, Carmichael fought with the Union Army at Gettysburg and ended the Civil War with the rank of Major. After the war, Carmichael began a career as a general agent for the Union Pacific and Kansas Pacific Railroads. According to federal census records, he married Alice Evans in 1869. Many histories of Brighton say they married in Omaha, however no official record of this has been located. Most authors written histories repeat the story that Brighton was named after Anne Evans' birthplace. But this raises the question as to whether Alice Evans was born in Brighton Beach, New York, or to Brighton, Massachusetts.

Settling this question required some genealogical work. Alice Evans was born April 11, 1848, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, to Orthodox Quaker parents, Joshua D. and Rebecca Gaskill Evans. Quaker meeting records show that the family moved several times during Alice's childhood. Except for a short time on Staten Island the Evans family did not stray too far from Philadelphia. Joshua and Rebecca Evans had roots in suburban Philadelphia. Although it is quite romantic to say the town was named for her birthplace, it does not appear from the historical records available that she had a strong personal connection to either Brighton Beach, New York, or to Brighton, Massachusetts.

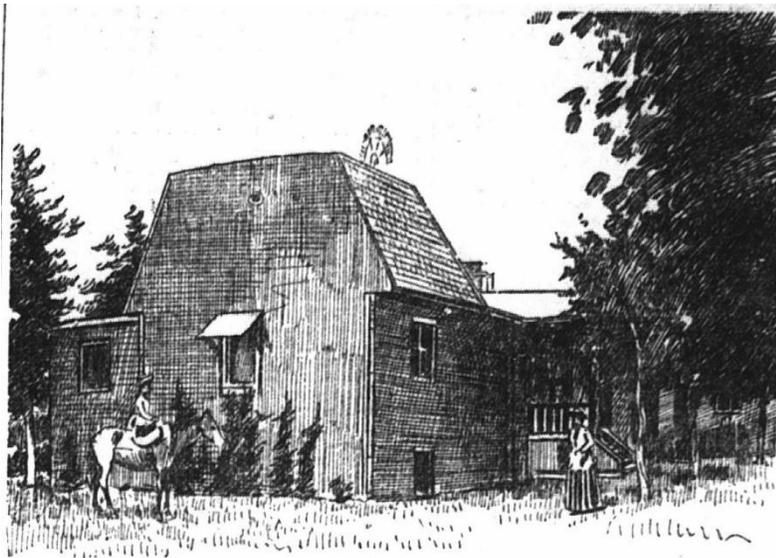
Daniel Carmichael has slightly stronger family connections to both of these east coast Brightons. Daniel's mother, Eliza Otis was born in Pelham, Massachusetts, about 85 miles west of Brighton, Massachusetts. Eliza Otis died in Manhattan, New York. But of utmost importance is the fact that Carmichael was a resident of King County, New York, at the time of his enlistment into the Union Army. The Borough of Brooklyn is synonymous with King County.

Real estate agents and landowners of Seagate, West Brighton, Brighton Beach, and Manhattan Beach, which are the coastal communities of Coney Island (Brooklyn – King County), developed specialties as early as the 1870s. West Brighton catered to the working class. Brighton Beach in the early 1870s began to make a name for itself among the upper class with hotels and restaurants worthy of a trip out of the city.

Like other real estate agents and developers, Carmichael had good reasons to associate his new subdivision with a popular entertainment and resort area in New York. The strongest motivation being the sale of lots. It should be noted that the Carmichael's owned a house and farmland in Brighton, but their main residence was in Denver. It is likely that Carmichael wanted that to be known.

Nor was he the first person in Colorado to re-use or appropriate a New York name to suggest a high class connection with east coast comforts. When the Carmichaels arrived in Denver, Fred Charpiot's restaurant, Delmonico of the West, had been serving oysters, fine pastries, and imported French wines for five years. Vacationers still look for names they recognize, and early Colorado tourists like the Vanderbilt and Gould families knew *the* Delmonico's in Manhattan.

Daniel Carmichael had big dreams for his subdivision. The Opera House, one of the first



D. F. CARMICHAEL'S RESIDENCE.

D. F. Carmichael's Brighton home. *Denver Times*, April 6, 1890, 20

buildings in town, was far too big for the community. The large building reflected Carmichael's ambitions and his intent to connect the well-known New York entertainment center with the railway stop next to his land. He was also clearly informing newcomers and potential land buyers of the advantages to life in Brighton. A Denver newspaper reported in 1902 "that men doing business in Denver can live in the delightful suburban town and go to and from their business with as little inconvenience as those living in the additions surrounding

Denver, and without losing much more time."<sup>5</sup> The article goes on to describe the sixteen trains that pass through Brighton daily, and how men could escape the turmoil of the city (Denver) and enjoy pure air "uncontaminated by smoke and dust" and the other "health-giving advantages Brighton can offer." Unfortunately, Carmichael and his partners were competing with every other subdivision within a twelve mile radius of Denver.

### **Land Deals Waiting to Happen**

In 1876, the Carmichaels left Omaha for Denver, where Daniel changed careers and became a real estate developer. He purchased 240 acres of land in 1879 from the Union Pacific Railroad, including where the Brighton subdivision is located. In 1881, Carmichael recorded his plat, named Brighton, at the Arapahoe County offices. Denver remained Carmichael's business base during his life, but in 1884 he built a house in Brighton. Denver city directories, and federal census records, show the Carmichaels living in Denver 1876-1884, in Brighton 1885-1892, and again in Denver 1893-1909.

In addition to the house, Carmichael built the community's first commercial block in 1884. Home to the Bank of Brighton owned by Carmichael's business partner, W. G. Lovelace, the eponymous building rose on the south side of Bridge Street. The one-story brick building held various businesses over the years.

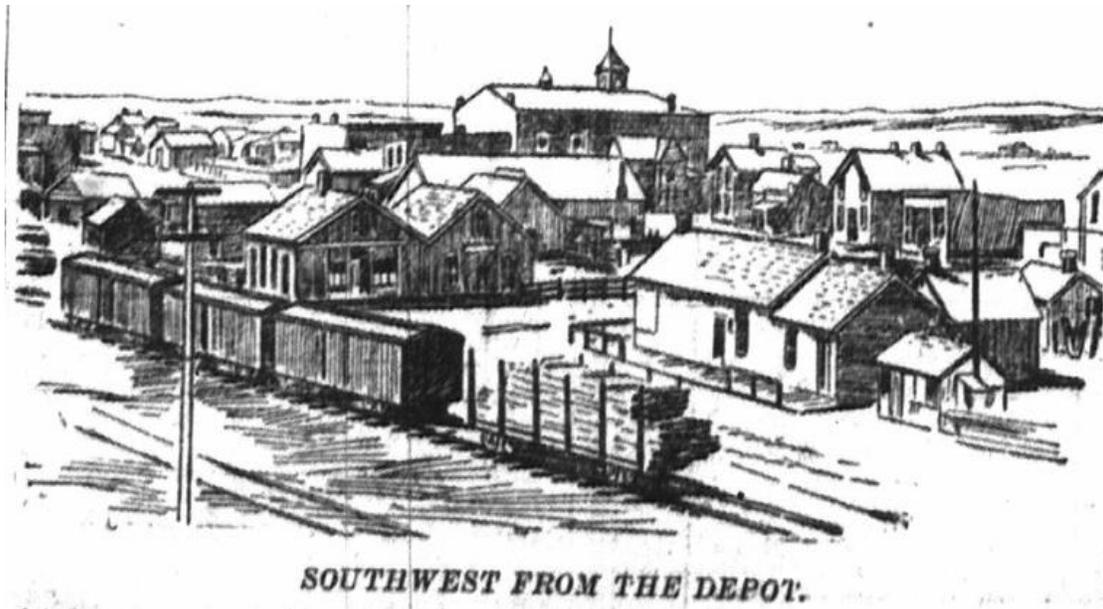
One man stood in the way of Carmichael's complete dominance of the new town. Nearly a year after Carmichael platted Brighton, a Fort Lupton dairy farmer, Dewey Strong, began to build and develop an area north of what is now Bridge Street. Strong named his addition North Brighton. Strong's plat consisted of four blocks, Cabbage Avenue on the east, North First Avenue on the west, Bridge Street on the South and the Boulder Valley Railroad to the north. In 1882, Strong opened a mercantile store on Division Street (today's North Main). As time passed, it was

apparent that Strong and Carmichael had developed a rivalry as North Brighton and the Brighton Subdivision added a house here and a small business there on either side of Bridge Street.

Contemporary accounts state that Strong and Carmichael got into a loud argument over the location of Brighton's Main Street. Carmichael favored Front Street (today's South First Avenue) and Strong pushed for Division Street (today's North Main). In 1884, Carmichael constructed a two-story building fronting on Bridge Street and extending across the location where Main Street should have been cut through to the south. Carmichael's monument to pique had decades-long consequences for Brighton's citizens and growth. In the years before the arrival of South Main Street in the late 1930s, if you were traveling from north of Bridge Street, residents and visitors had to drive south down Division Street towards Bridge and then take a right and proceed to Front Street which became First Avenue. This disagreement between two of Brighton's city fathers would take a half-a-century to resolve.<sup>6</sup>

Strong's establishment of North Brighton did not deter Carmichael from imposing his presence on the town's commercial, political, and social growth. Carmichael's accomplishments continued with his election as Brighton's mayor in 1888. Like other contemporary capitalists, the financial Panic of 1893 forced Carmichael to sell his Brighton properties. In Carmichael's case it meant selling to his brother-in-law. That setback was only temporary as Carmichael was re-elected as Brighton's Mayor in 1898 and his other investments in Brighton and Denver brought his fortune eventually back to the level he enjoyed before the 1893 Panic.<sup>7</sup> On his death in 1911, the *Brighton Blade* newspaper recalled that Carmichael: "took a fancy to the place and determined there should be a town here that would be a credit to the splendid valley of the Platte."<sup>8</sup>

Dewey Strong's commercial vision won out as the city's commercial district grew north of Bridge Street by the end of the 1880s. Strong's victory in his struggle with Carmichael remains visible in the older homes and associated business district along North Main Street.<sup>9</sup> Strong's creation did not happen overnight. In the 1930s, one of the city's oldest residents, J.L. Carl, recalled the prevalence of "board walks and mud holes" when his memories turned to late nineteenth century Brighton.<sup>10</sup> Fortunately, newcomers settled on both sides of Bridge Street and worked to make Brighton a true community.



This sketch maybe the earliest known image of the Brighton Subdivision. The accompanying article extolled the virtues of life in the “new town” of Brighton. (*Denver Times*, April 6, 1890, 20).

In the middle of the project area stands the 1886 First Presbyterian Church (5AM.65), at 147 South Main Street. The Presbyterians were the first organized religious body and the first denomination to erect a church building in Brighton. This is perhaps not surprising as both Carmichael and Strong were Presbyterians.

The Higgins Saloon held the congregation’s first meeting in August of 1884. The proprietor, Mr. Higgins, formed pews out of planks placed on top of beer kegs. Later, they were held in the homes of the members until the church was completed. They may have been the middle of a feud, but Carmichael and Strong both served as elders of the church. Strong hosted meetings in his home, and D.F. Carmichael deeded land to the Presbyterian Trustees of the church for a dollar.<sup>11</sup>

The Gothic Revival style church is a one-story red brick building with a rectangular plan measuring 29 x 40 feet. The east façade faces South Main Street, and the entry is on the north. A square, roof top bell tower, added in 1890, dominates the northeast corner of the building. In 1999, the church was surveyed for its historic significance and determined eligible to the State Register of Historic Places.<sup>12</sup>

In 1887, the Platte Valley House (later the Brighton Hotel, demolished 1972) was completed near the corner of what is today Bush and Cabbage Streets. The *Brighton Register* newspaper of October 10, 1891, noted the hotel had been recently remodeled and opened for business. West of the hotel lobby was a dining room holding 75 guests. The *Register’s* correspondent complained that the narrow set of stairs leading to the second floor were the cause of many accidents, especially if a patron had enjoyed a late night at one of Brighton’s saloons.

As demonstrated by the goodwill exhibited toward establishment of the church, other examples of propriety were on the minds of many of Brighton's pioneers. In 1889, the community agreed to close the town's three saloons on Sundays. The *Denver Times* found "Saloons were shut up there has been a total absence of the disturbances that used to mark the day." The *Times'* correspondent added:

*Talk about placidity and peace, Brighton is the place to get that article nowadays. They very seldom have anything for the marshal and his two constables to do and when a stray drunk does turn up the citizens wrathfully declare that he is another of these wicked Lupton or Platteville men seeking to bring scorn upon their fair town.*<sup>13</sup>

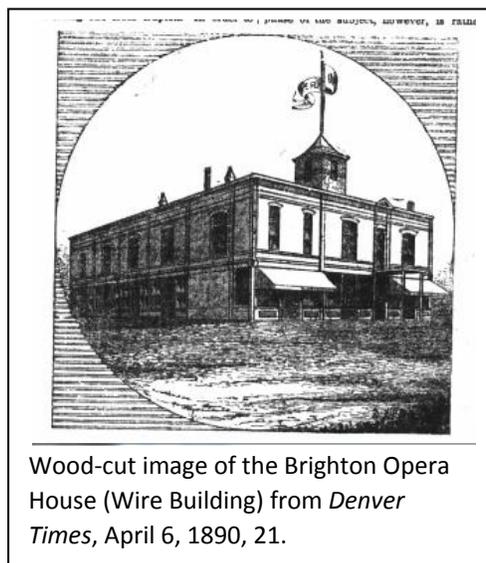
During the late 1880s, the community dug large ditches on both sides of the South Platte River to provide water and irrigate the first generation of lawns for Brighton's first homes. The City of Brighton was incorporated as city on September 1, 1887. By 1890, locals had formed a volunteer fire department and land sold for \$27 to \$100 an acre.<sup>14</sup> Churches and ditches set Brighton's foundation as a town, but Carmichael's most lavish construction venture, the Brighton Opera House, put the small prairie outpost on the map. By July 1906, the city was home to 600 people most living and working north of today's Bridge Street.<sup>15</sup>

### **Brighton's Landmark: The Wire Building**

During the last week of July 1955, an entire community mourned the passing of a local landmark, the Brighton Opera House. The Brighton Blade ran an obituary on July 28, 1855 that read: "Turn-of-the-century waltzers . . . flapper-age sheiks in bell-bottom trousers. A place where "home-town theatricals were performed." The Opera House, better known as the Wire Building, was the place where Brighton did business during the day and enjoyed itself with a few hours of amusement at night. In a community whose history has been punctuated with major fires, the blaze that destroyed the Wire Building was a traumatic moment for every resident of Brighton.

Daniel Carmichael financed and oversaw the construction of the Opera House in 1888. The Opera House was a two-story brick building located on the southwest corner of today's South Main and Bridge Streets. An empty JC Penney's/Woolworth's building constructed at this approximate location in the late 1950s gives no indication of the vibrancy that the 1,100 seat Opera House provided Brighton with for nearly 70 years.

After its completion in 1888, J.A. Wire based his livery and feed stable featuring "excellent rigs" along Bridge Street at the impressive new building. Wire's renown as a Brighton business leader soon had most folks in town referring to the Opera House as the "Wire Building."



Wood-cut image of the Brighton Opera House (Wire Building) from *Denver Times*, April 6, 1890, 21.

Feeding your horse was not the only reason to visit the Opera House. The ground level of this 19th century commercial building held law offices, the only post office, beauty parlors, a theater, a dress shop, the McAtee Drug store and numerous doctors, lawyers, and other professionals.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the memories associated with the Wire Building started on the building's second floor. By 1906, the Opera House was commended as "one of the finest outside of Denver."<sup>17</sup> In July 1904, the evening's bill featured "Salando-The Fire King," "The Pearse Bros.- The World's Greatest Ethiopian Jugglers," and Bert Wilson, "the flying trapeze performer, in Baton (sic) twirling, and trapeze performing."<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the businesses and cultural events over the years, the Wire building launched a number of Brighton's churches and the first classes of its high school and the city's first movie theater. In December 1891, Carmichael installed the community's first telephone. It may have been Brighton's first phone, but only Carmichael got to use it, as the connection linked his house at 34 South Fifth Avenue to the Wire Building.

### **The Modern Era Begins**

Well into the twentieth century, the Wire Building remained as the city's social and business center and closest thing Brighton ever had to an architectural landmark. The only significant change came in January 1946 when Wire's wife Lilian sold the Opera House to Frederick Erlenborn. Erlenborn constructed a series of apartments along the building's north side (parallel to Bridge Street). These apartments opened to what was left of the dance floor. Some residents remember as children that each apartment's door was framed with a facade to look like cottages.<sup>19</sup>

Monday, July 25, 1955, was the last day for the Opera House/Wire Building. As people were having breakfast and leaving for work that morning, Mrs. Raymond Gremel discovered fire coming from a neighbor's apartment. Firemen from Brighton, Fort Lupton, and elsewhere in Adams County were soon on the scene, but within a few hours the building's north wall gave way and crumbled down into Bridge Street. The *Brighton Blade* recorded fourteen residents and two guests ranging from six months to 87 years old survived the blaze. The fire's caprice played a role in saving various residents' treasured items ranging from a marriage license to a hope chest of silver.<sup>20</sup>

Within the year, the city tore down the remaining exterior walls and filled in the building's foundation with dirt. In 1959, JC Penney and Woolworths joined together to build a department store at 5- 9 South Main Street. With the loss of the Wire Building, the physical evidence of Strong and Carmichael's city building rivalry was erased.

### **Brighton Subdivision: One of Many City Foundations**

The good intentions, moral city laws, and public buildings did not help Carmichael sell all of the lots in his subdivision. Neither his initial offering nor the sale of his lands in the aftermath of the

1893 economic panic triggered housing construction booms. The 1899 Willits farm map is packed with subdivisions both within the borders of municipalities and just outside of them that like Carmichael's Brighton Subdivision grew slowly or not at all. Most Denver area land owners in the late 19th century who subdivided their holdings into city lots weren't in the right place at the right time.

Late 19th century attitudes toward city living were divided and complex. The city was dirty, noisy, and immoral. The country was healthy and nostalgic. Anti-immigrant campaigns framed arguments around the idea that a real American owned his own home—even if it was on a tiny lot—at the end of a street car line. Mechanization, and factory jobs that paid better than farming, tempted young men to leave agricultural work and move into towns. Colorado's drought cycle and economic downturns led many farmers and ranchers near towns and cities to plat their land and hope to cash in on these trends. Especially those within commuting distance of Denver.

Although Denver was growing quickly, infrastructure, personal wealth, and banking laws weren't able to keep up. Bank-backed mortgages were not generally available to the middle-class home seeker until after the stock market crash of 1929. Only a few very successful men found a way to live in the country with a city salary. A few middle-class men realized the American Dream of owning their own home through a small number of Building and Loan Associations. There was simply too much land available surrounding Denver and not enough personal credit.

Block 5 for the Brighton Subdivision demonstrates another problem many land owners failed to solve. That being appropriate lot sizes. Block 5 is actually half a block and contains 20 lots. For the landowner the decision was simple. More lots sold equaled more profit. But small lot sizes can discourage sales if the buyer knows there are larger lots available. Lots west of Denver in modern day Lakewood ranged from long narrow city lots to 2.5-acre garden lots, 5-acre truck farm lots and 10-acre dairy lots. In Lakewood, garden truck lots were popular starting in the 1880s with men who wanted country advantages for their families but didn't want to farm or ranch full time and city lots sold poorly until after WWII. Five acres meant a good sized garden—perhaps a pony for the children—and for the foresighted, enough land to subdivide and sell as the population continued to grow.

Carmichael's lot spacing was for city living not middle class suburban or gracious country homes. As a Denver resident in 1870s and 1880s, he was likely familiar with David Rubridge's attractive 750-1000-square-foot brick homes in the Clay Neighborhood. The Rubridge homes were financed through the Provident Building and Loan Association, tightly packed, within a couple of minutes of the street cars to downtown, and owner occupied.

But Brighton didn't grow that fast. Or at least the Brighton Subdivision didn't. Of the sixteen residences in the Brighton Subdivision survey area, the majority



Rubridge homes in the 3800 Block of Gilpin Street, Denver, illustrate spacing on narrow city lots. (Photo by Robert Autobe)

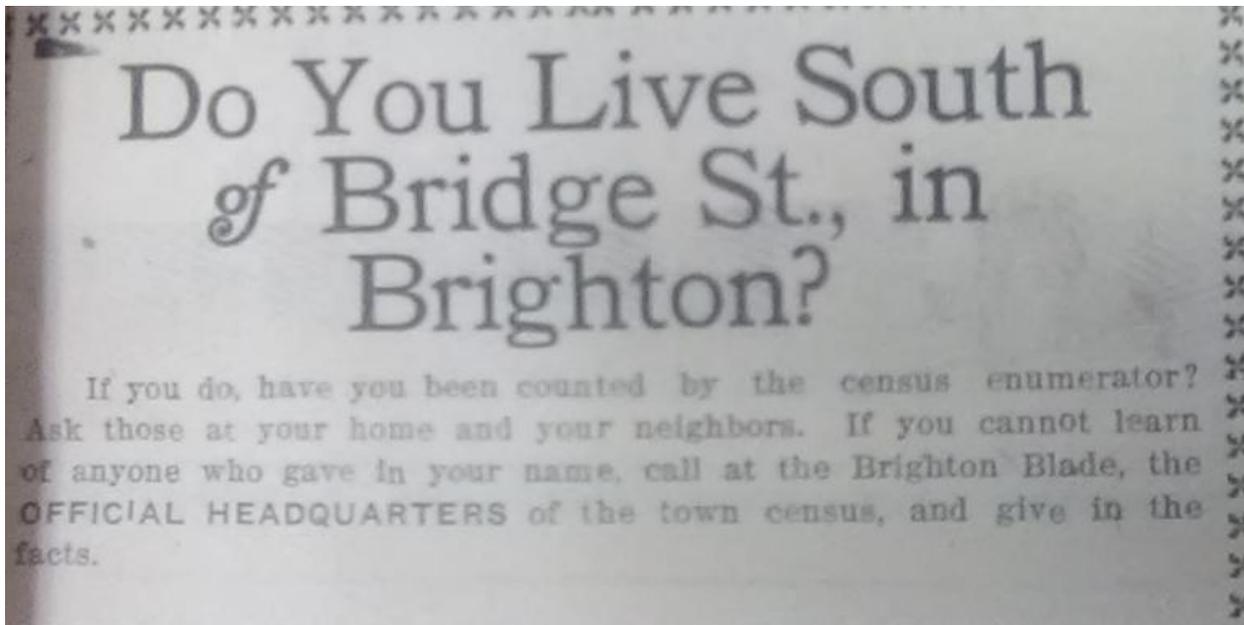
were built in 1907-1908 with five houses built in 1914.

Figure 2 shows Block 5 of the Brighton plat and subsequent Sanborn Maps. Without rear alley access, one lot barely accommodated one house. Building on two or three lots became common practice in the subdivision.

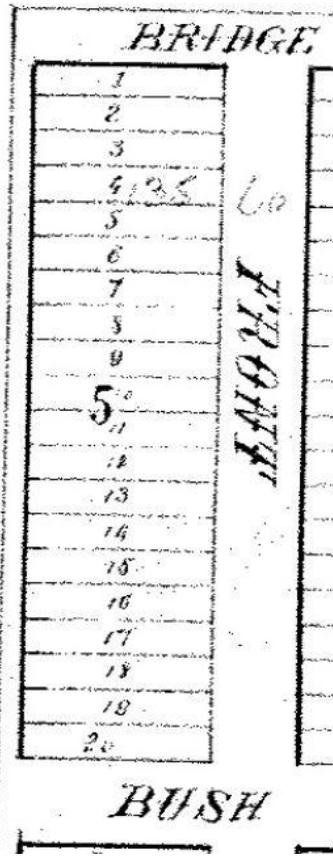
### **Early Residents**

Families like the Millers, the Michaels, and the Bayers were the first generation of homeowners in what would eventually become the 100 and 200 blocks of South Main Street. In the decades before South Main Street was cut through the neighborhood and into the 1970s, Adams County tax records are organized by Block and Lot numbers. These tax rolls demonstrate ownership of the land, but do not include addresses such as rural routes or house numbers and the federal census takers did not consistently record house numbers until the 1930 enumeration.

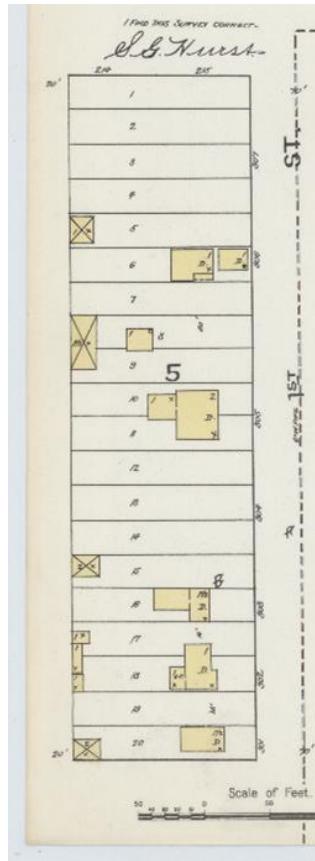
According to the United States Census rolls from 1910 to 1940, some properties were owner occupied, others were rentals, and many homeowners had a boarder living under their roof. For example, Ira and Mary Michael lived at 217 South Main Street from when the house was first constructed in 1914 until they sold the property in 1957. The federal census indicates Mr. Michael was a carpenter while Mary Michael was a housewife. Sometime in the late 1910s, the couple added a basement apartment accessed at the rear (west) of their house. Over the next three decades, the census taker noted at least two borders living downstairs. In 2018, long-time resident Theresa Case recalled her family moving from Iowa and briefly renting a room from Mrs. Michael during the mid-1940s.



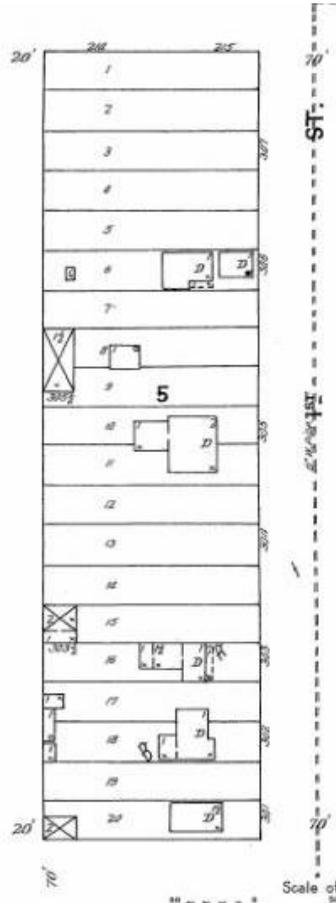
As the 1920 U.S. Federal Census made its once-a-decade visit, *The Brighton Blade* newspaper directed a reminder to those living in the Brighton Subdivision and other neighborhoods south of Bridge Street to answer the door when the enumerator called and stand up and be counted (*Brighton Blade*, February 3, 1920, 1).



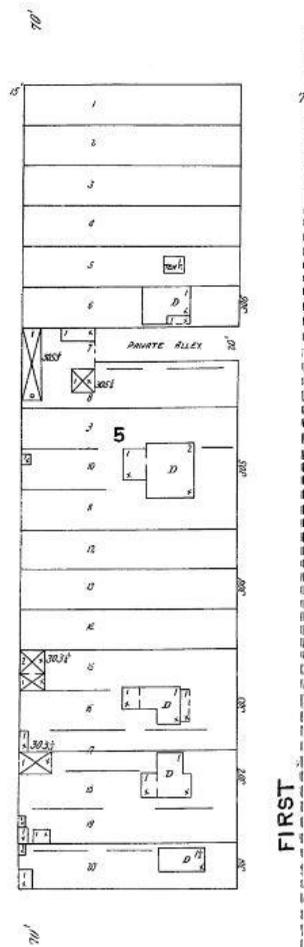
Plat  
February 16, 1881



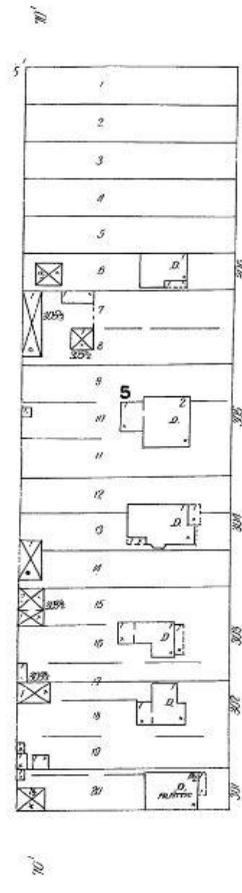
1893



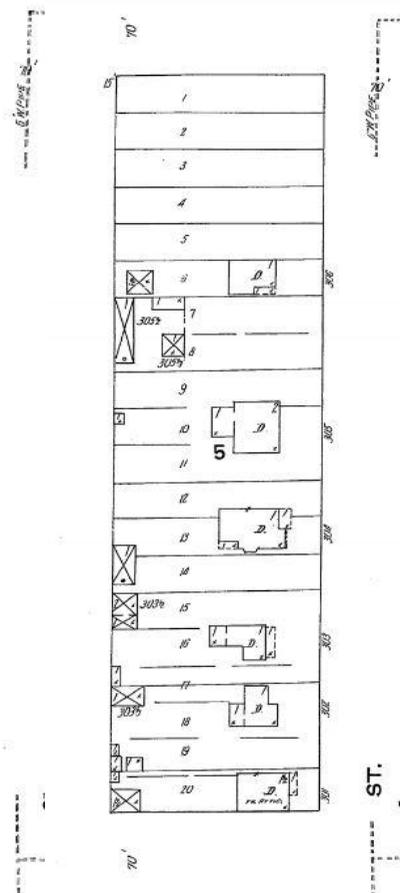
1899



1904

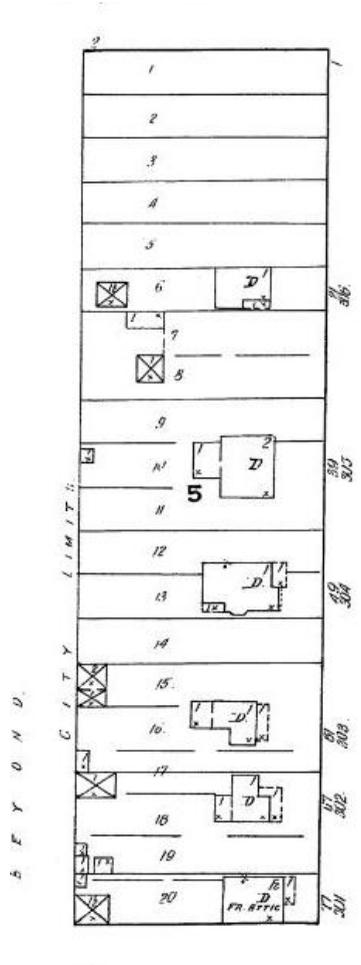


1908

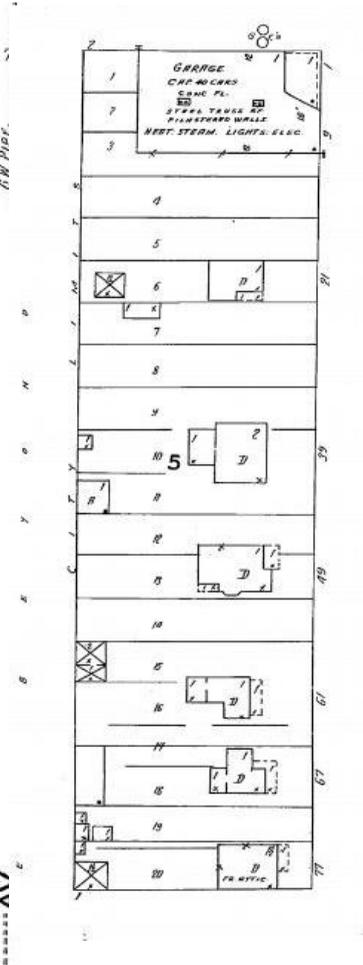


1913

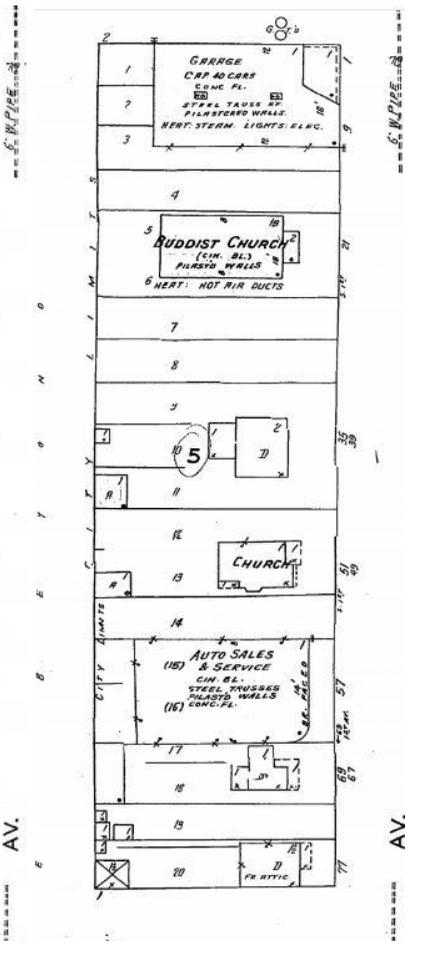
Table 2. Block 5 Changes. These illustrations are taken from the 1881 Plat, Sanborn Insurance Maps, and Google Earth. Seven homes and outbuildings were built between 1881 and 1908 and only one building from this early period remains. The first dwelling was removed before 1904. The oldest remaining building, the Nix House at 51 S. First Avenue (5AM.3815), is the home of Strong Insurance Company. It should also be noted that Front Street was renamed First Street before 1893, and that north-south streets were renamed Avenues between 1913 and 1920.



1920



1928



1928-1948



Google Earth, 2017

## **The Way You Look: Brighton’s Continual Clean-Up Campaign**

Reminders of Brighton’s small-town character and isolation remained into the 1920s and 1930s. Governmental services such as home mail delivery came slowly to the residents of the Brighton Subdivision and other homeowners across town. In 1920, the federal government told Brighton it would have to grow to at least 3,000 people to receive home delivery, but the town fell 200 to 300 people short of the required number. *The Brighton Blade* noted that some newcomers were from larger towns and used to home delivery. Others were from smaller towns and recalled they only had a short walk to a centrally located post office. The Blade added: “The women are complaining more loudly than the men.” Although this comment may sound sexist, it is a glimpse into daily life when few women worked outside of the home and were most likely the ones walking to the post office to pick up the household mail.<sup>21</sup>

Nineteen-thirty-seven was an important year in the history of Brighton. The city was “on parade” as the Colorado Department of Highways planned to replace the existing highway running south of Main and Bridge Streets with a new U.S. Highway 85. At this moment, Brighton’s top politicians took an interest in the city’s face to the rest of the world. In May 1937, Mayor J.W. Wells stated: “With Brighton’s new curb and gutter, our oiled streets, and the hope that soon more of our streets will be surfaced, Brighton residents have an added incentive to clean-up, paint-up, and light-up our homes this year.” From the top, Wells urged citizens to alter, repair and clean up their properties with the encouragement: “Let’s make Brighton one of the prettiest little towns in Colorado.”<sup>22</sup> In a few months Wells got his wish with the help of a bond issue and state agency responsible for road construction.

## **The Parting of the Way: South Main Street Arrives**

By the mid-1930s, the dispute between Strong and Carmichael over the location of Brighton’s downtown was a distant memory. Except for those moments when you had to zig-zag through the center of town to get from one end to another.

The Colorado Department of Highways realized that access on U.S. Highway 85 through Brighton was a concern. Buildings blocking access was anathema to Brighton growing any bigger and the state agency responsible for transportation saw this as a problem in need of resolution. The increasing automobile traffic between Northern Colorado’s farms and towns and Denver required a big change right in the middle of Brighton.

The Department of Highways and Brighton’s city government were in complete agreement on construction of a new “streamlined” route from North Main Street to U.S. Highway 85. The proposed realignment of U.S. Highway 85 required the removal of the Carmichael Building to widen the alley between South First Avenue and South Second Avenue (now Cabbage Avenue) to allow Main Street to continue south of Bridge Street. It quickly became apparent that the realignment would require the city and state to take a number of homes, businesses, and lots for the road to become a reality.<sup>23</sup>

In the spring of 1937, the Brighton City Council appointed Dr. George H. Carr, Herman Schloo, and Herbert Honan, all of Brighton, to review and make the decision on who would keep or who would lose their properties as a result of the U.S. Highway 85 realignment. A District Judge,

Stephen Johnson, subsequently approved the selected appraisers. During May and June, the trio debated and worked on property settlements with nearly twenty building owners before sending the results of their decisions to City Council. The schedule was tight as the Colorado Department of Highways and the City had set October 1<sup>st</sup> as the point when the right-of-way should be cleared for road construction to begin.<sup>24</sup> Table 2 indicates the 15 commercial and residential buildings cleared for the South Main Street right-of-way, the owner, and the amount of compensation for the loss of each individual's property. Of these 15 buildings, eight were private residences and are identified here with an asterisk.

**Table 2 – Properties removed by the introduction of US Highway 85**

<b>Address/Building Name</b>	<b>Business/Home Owner</b>	<b>Amount of payment from the City of Brighton to the owner</b>
Carmichael Building	Paul Barth	Purchased by the City of Brighton for \$12,000
Portion of Hill Building	J.A. Wire	Purchased by City from John Hill for \$6,500. Hill sold to Wire before the U.S. Highway 85 realignment.
Hood Hotel	Higgins Estate, International Trust Co. Trustee	City paid \$4,500 for the building and \$1,200 for the right-of-way. Hood Hotel remodeled and moved to the east side of South First Avenue during the fall of 1937.
Fahrenbrink Estate/ Lot next to the Lohmann Used Car Lot located in the US Highway 85 right-of-way	Fahrenbrink Estate	City paid \$900 to Fahrenbrink Estate.
*Described by the Brighton Blade as a “brown shingled house.” Rented by Colorado Motor Way.	Carrie Harding	Mrs. Harding received \$1,600 for damages to the house and right-of-way.
Described as the Nielsen Property	Andrew Nielsen	City paid \$1,750. Nielsen cleared his property.
*68 South First Avenue	Elizabeth Lovelace	City paid \$1,000 to Lovelace to dismantle the property.
*124 South First Avenue	E.G. Jones	City paid \$1,000 to Jones for salvage.
*110 South First Avenue	Maria Bromley Allen	City paid \$1,100, but Allen was allowed to keep her home.
*Barth House, Corner of Bush and First Avenue	Paul Barth	Barth settled with the City for \$1,250. Harry Linstrom moved the house
*54 South First	Oregon Lumber	City paid Oregon Lumber Co. \$800. Oregon Lumber

Avenue	Co. The company sold to Mrs. Willard Nelson, who cleared the right-of-way.	sold to Mrs. Willard Nelson for an undisclosed price.
Jones Mortuary	Jones Mortuary	Right-of-way through mortuary property was deeded to the city. No price given.
Masonic Lodge	Masonic Lodge	Right-of-way through lodge property was deeded to the city. No price given.
*150 South First Avenue	Nina Miller	The City offered Mrs. Miller \$445 in 1937. 150 South First Avenue eventually demolished.
*136 South First Avenue	Guy B. Kinsey	City paid Kinsey \$2,000.

(Source: *Brighton Blade*)

By the third week of July, old houses and businesses were “being torn down in the alleyway, thru (sic) which the new route will go” according to the *Brighton Blade*. Based on the individual agreements with each property owner, buildings were disposed of as either the owner and city saw fit.<sup>25</sup>

The promise of a new segment of Main Street carried a wave of nostalgia during the hot mid-summer of 1937. Stories of the Strong-Carmichael disagreement were trotted out again for the first time in years. One of the community’s oldest residents, J.L. Carl, gave an interview that “exploded the myth” that one of the city’s landmarks was built across Main Street “out of spite.” As a laborer, Carl laid the foundation for the Carmichael building during the 1880s. Further, Carmichael's subdivision was bounded by a very active railroad and from his perspective a second "main" road would diminish the number of lots he could sell.

Brighton’s Main Street originally followed the railroad alignment. But increased passenger vehicle traffic probably made that route less appealing as time wore on. So, it appears that vehicle traffic began moving into the subdivision. This was not the Carmichael plan.

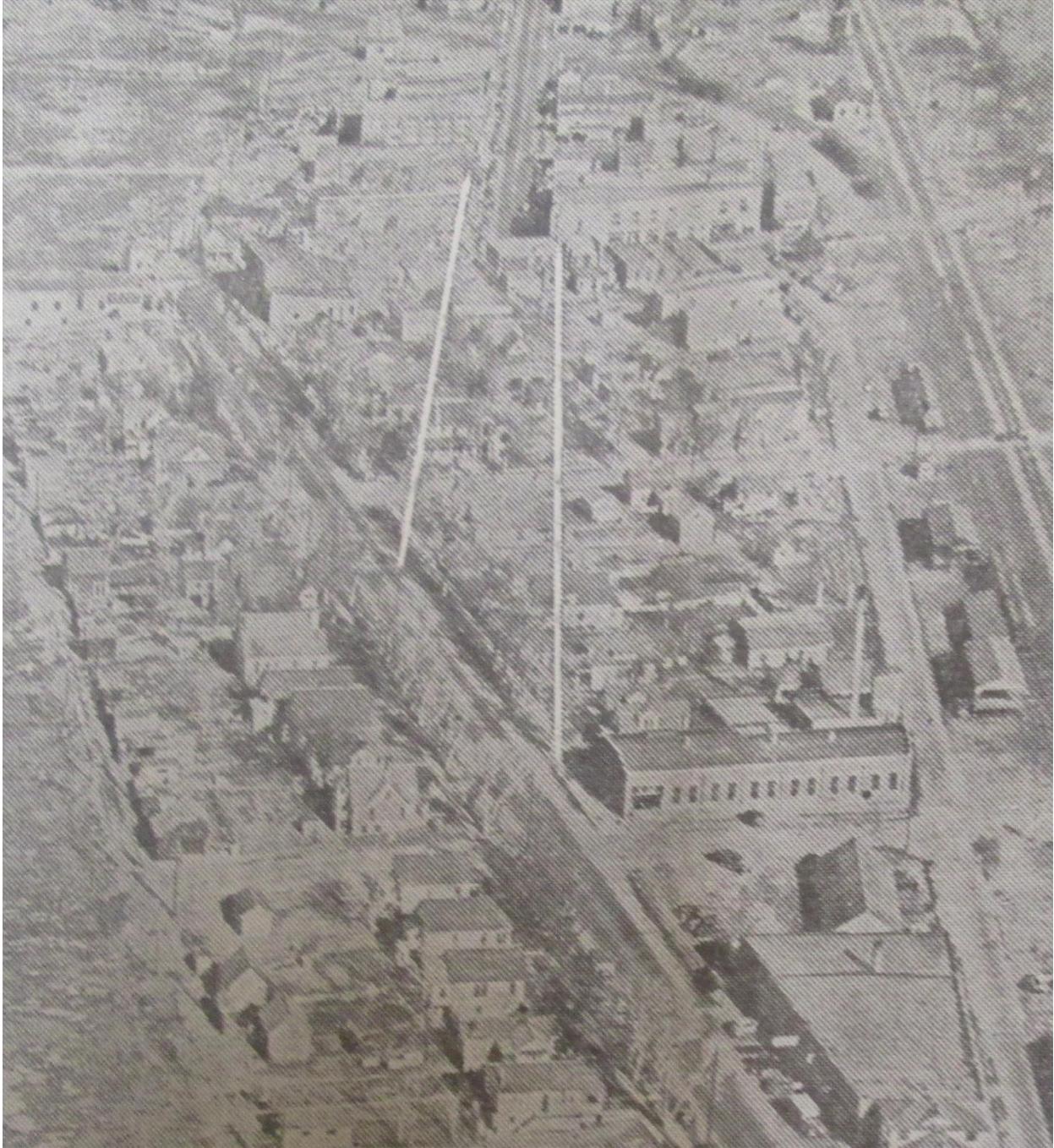
When Arapahoe County Commissioner James Twombly circulated a petition to change the road’s alignment to a diagonal route that ran parallel to but away from the railroad tracks, it made so much sense that the only explanation for the zigzag route was “spite.” Regardless of how and why Main Street had retained a crooked alignment, Brighton residents were ready to follow the straight and narrow just in time for the 1937 harvest season. The new alignment even inspired a photographer from Denver’s *Rocky Mountain News* to go up in a plane and take an aerial image (see page 27) of the Brighton Subdivision in advance of demolition of the buildings standing in the way of the new road.<sup>26</sup>

Bids for construction were opened on October 13, 1936. The winner, M.L Carlson Construction Company of Denver, won the contract with a bid of \$25,340. The contract scheduled a hundred

days for Carlson Construction to pour 500 square yards of concrete pavement, excavate 2,400 cubic yards of earth and build a sewer, sidewalks, curb, and gutter. Skilled laborers were paid \$1.25 an hour while unskilled workers earned 55 cents an hour.<sup>27</sup>

Beginning at 6 a.m. most days that autumn, approximately 50 men were divided into two daily shifts. A gravel pit and cement plant for construction sat just west of the first block on First Avenue. A safety aisle for pedestrians led from First Avenue and South Main to Bush Street. The contract called for the construction of a pavement driveway 60 feet wide along with curb and nine-and-a-half feet wide sidewalks. The work went quickly and the job was completed in approximately half the time – 50 days. South Main Street was opened to traffic on Tuesday, December 7 at 2:30 p.m. Carlson's employees removed the temporary wooden fences they had installed, which had prevented the public walking on the concrete surface as it dried. Parking on the new street was original diagonally pointed to the curb.<sup>28</sup>

The new road brought some immediate changes. The realigned road encouraged Sinclair Oil to build a new service station at the intersection of South Main Street, First Avenue and Bush Street. The City Council approved installation of twenty 26-foot-high mercury vapor street lights that voters approved as part of the \$50,000 bond issue. The City Council also agreed to the construction of a "Stop and Go" signal at the corner of Bridge and Main Streets.<sup>29</sup>



The construction of the South Main Street during the late summer and fall of 1937 inspired the *Rocky Mountain News* to hire a plane and have one of its photographers take pictures of the new road. (Image courtesy of the City of Brighton Historic Preservation Commission.)

Residents could finally cross Brighton in a more-or-less straight line from one end of town to another. In its first year of existence the new South Main presented itself as a new appendage to the existing business district north of Bridge Street. The subsequent, and lasting, significance of

South Main Street is that the business heart of Brighton finally had a through street after nearly three-quarters of a century.

The commercial life of South Main, and all of the Brighton Subdivision, will be discussed in the survey report for Phase II of the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey.

BLADE BRIGHTON, COLORADO, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1938.

Dec. 8  
School

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## Arriving Saturday DEC. 17

— at —  
Junior Chamber of  
Commerce

# Park on South Main St.

FREE GIFTS to children accompanied by an adult.

---

## Adults Urged to Visit Stores

Presents at various stores for adults—call at these stores  
for particulars:

Dad Bassinger	Friedman's	Wall Clothing
Ferrel Bros.	Brighton Pharmacy	Wellworth Store
Benedict Furniture	Hunter Hardware Co.	Schloo-Bender
Bill's Place	Ben Franklin Store	Jordinelli Cafe
Public Service Co.	Sharp Jewelry Store	Leffingwell Merc.
Gamble's Store	Bobenhouse Red & White	Sam Schwartz Gro.
Dolbey Drug Store	Andrew's Battery Station	Royal Service
Ladies' Toggery	Northern Colorado Dairy	Fix-It Shop
Counter Lumber	Werden Radio & Service Station	Ingram's Cafe
Howell Drug	Bechtold's Cottage Store	Marie's Dress Shop
Falkner Jewelry	Forman Cleaners and Clothiers	Austin's Dry Goods
Paul Barth	Burrous Appliance Store	Horn Chevrolet Co.
Lehrman Merc.	Platte Valley Motor Co.	Grand Cafe
	J. C. Penney Co.	

South Main had officially been a part of Brighton's streetscape for a year by Christmas 1938, but the commercial district remained firmly in place on North Main above Bridge Street. At least, South Main added a few additional places to park (*Brighton Blade*, December 16, 1938, 4. Located at Brighton Historic Preservation Commission).

## **Who are your neighbors?: Life and Ethnicity in the Brighton Subdivision**

The humble cabbage connects two cultures that came to northern Colorado to farm – the German Russians of Eastern Europe and the first-generation Japanese immigrants known as Issei. The cabbage is not only a staple in both group’s diets, but it flourished when farmers of both cultures planted cabbage seed in the soil along the South Platte River northeast of Denver.

Groups like the Japanese, Japanese-Americans, Mexican nationals, Mexican-Americans, and to a certain extent, German-Russians made their living from either the land or canning factories during the last century. Federal census records, Adams County tax cards and grantor/grantee books, and city directories confirm that very few of each group owned or occupied homes in the Brighton Subdivision. The Russian-Germans tended to live in North Brighton, and many farm laborers of Japanese and Mexican decent lived on the farms during the growing season, and in Denver boarding houses for the winter. The 1920 federal census for Brighton, District 6, has a note on the last page, “Several hundred men left Brighton and environs between Dec. 20 and Jan. 15, when factories closed, most of them before Jan. 1. There were two or three dozen here after January 1 in rooming houses where no names were recorded and no enumeration could be made.”<sup>30</sup>

Census records and city directories from the early and mid-twentieth century find very few surnames identifiable as Japanese. An examination of city directories of the Brighton Subdivision from 1923 to 1969 could not place one Japanese family living within the survey area. Japanese-surnamed families owned a vegetable and seed business on the north side of the Triangle Motor Company at today’s 280 South Main Street and the Asahi Garage on Cabbage Street. Phase II of the Brighton Subdivision Historic Properties Survey focuses on the business development of the Brighton Subdivision and will include a deeper examine of businesses owned by these groups and their descendants.

Of the immigrants who came to America and made their living off the land, the Japanese had the most prominent social and commercial base in the Brighton Subdivision during the mid-twentieth century. The story of the Issei began with the Adams County truck farms in 1908. Labor gangs populated with Japanese immigrants harvested the county’s cabbage, cucumbers, and tomatoes. Headed by a gang boss who spoke English, the boss arranged work with each farmer and landowner and distributed the pay.

O.E. Frink broke the labor gang system by leasing land to Japanese families to grow produce after he opened his Silver State Canning and Produce in 1905. Frink further assisted the newcomers coming to Brighton and Fort Lupton by providing seed and farm machinery. The Issei quickly established themselves in Adams County. In 1908, the Japanese Farm Association of Brighton, Fort Lupton, and Platteville formed to address the concern of the cost of rent on farmland. The following year, the Japanese Farmers Association of Colorado met in the Brighton Town Hall “to promote the welfare, prevent mutual conflict amongst themselves and protect the rights of Japanese farmers in the region.” The support and interdependency of the Adams County Japanese farmers would reach its apex with their participation in the Colorado Cabbage Exchange during the 1920s.

As the prospect conflict between Japan and the United States became increasingly likely in the late 1930s, the clouds of war did not prevent the Japanese-American community of Adams County from establishing a presence in the Brighton Subdivision. In 1938, leaders of this community proposed building a Buddhist Temple despite the opposition of some members who saw war with Japan as imminent. The idea to make the temple a reality took hold during the weekends and free time as the temple grew at 31 South First Street. The building rose and the building's Dedication Service opened the building in February 1940.

The most important meeting in the history of the Buddhist Temple occurred the Saturday after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Approximately 300 Japanese-Americans met to listen to Col. Paul P. Newton of the Colorado Council of Defense explain the importance of citizen participation against possible invasion. Brighton Mayor J.W. Wells also addressed the group.<sup>31</sup>

As a boy, Eiji Horiuchi remembered when a group of young Japanese-Americans, some still in high school, agreed to take a bus from Brighton to go to Denver and enlist. The group met across the street from Mayor Wells' office. Horiuchi recalled that Wells did not leave his office to wish the young men well.<sup>32</sup>

At the end of the war, photographs of those Japanese-Americans who died during the conflict made the front page of the *Blade*. Local Japanese-Americans, notably Robert Sakata, increased their role and involvement in local and state agriculture.

By 1950, the closest thing Brighton Subdivision had to a Japanese enclave was on South First Avenue, which included Charles Kishiyama's residence at 8 South First Avenue, the Brighton Grocery and Market were located at 12 South First, and the Brighton Buddhist Temple was at 31 South First. During the 1950s, the market advertised in the *Blade* that "Japanese Foods Our Specialty!"

The Japanese-Americans of Adams County still hold one of the largest cultural/social events every March with the Shrimp and Chow Mein dinner. The presence of Japanese-Americans is still very much associated with agriculture. However, in Brighton, the grocery is gone and the Buddhist Temple became a brewery for most of the 2016. Eiji Horiuchi said a diminished Japanese cultural presence in Brighton reflects how the group assimilated into American culture.<sup>33</sup>

### **Casualties of Progress: 1948 to the Early Twenty-First Century**

Theresa Case's family lived and worked in the Brighton Subdivision during the mid-twentieth century. Her memories of 1940s and 1950s Brighton are of a place built on familiarity: "You never needed a watch," Case recalled in February 2018. "The whole town could hear the steam whistle on "The City of Denver" train come through town everyday right at five o'clock. Brighton was the kind of town where as a four-year-old I could cross Main and Bridge to go to the bank to make a deposit for my mother and father. There would be people watching out for me from the windows and doorways of their businesses."<sup>34</sup>

That sense of community continued as Case reached her teenage years. Brighton High School was a mixture of Euro-Americans, second generation Japanese-Americans, Mexican nationals

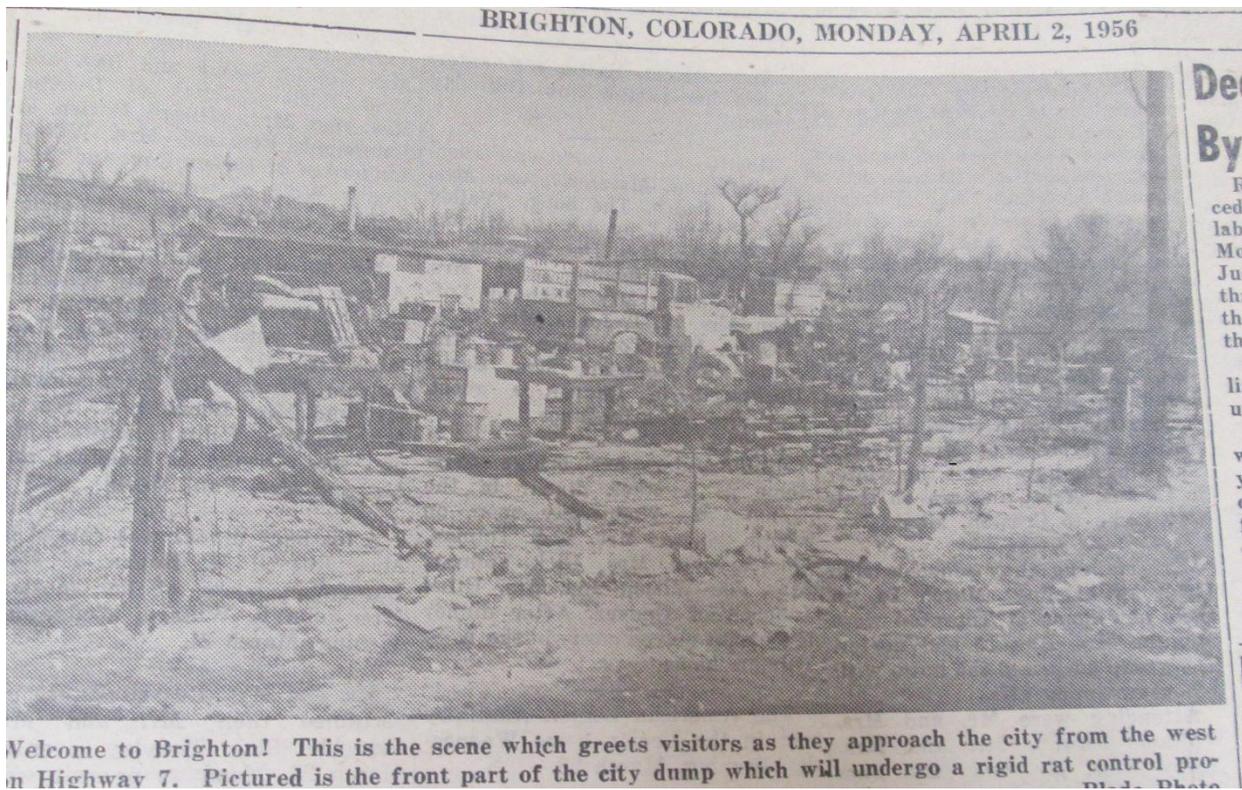
and Mexican-Americans, Russian Germans (also known as “Volga Deutsch”) “all worked together.” Students from all backgrounds played on the football and wrestling teams, worked after school jobs, and did the kinds of things teenagers have always done, and without a lot of ethnic animosity, according to Case.

No matter how old you were, a job was also a necessary element of Brighton’s life during the 1940s. Case stated that “3/4ths of the kids” in town worked as part of the summer campaigns at either Kuner’s or Great Western Sugar Plant north of town. The local bounty from surrounding fields of Adams and Weld Counties brought in cucumbers for pickles, cabbages for sauerkraut, green beans, cherry peppers, and relishes. Case observed that after most of her classmates graduated their job options were split. Most became commuters and “half went to work for Samsonite and the other half went to work for Gates (Rubber and Tire Co.)” in Denver.<sup>35</sup>

By the mid-1950s, Brighton and the Brighton Subdivision was going through a period of self-examination and finding they were not completely comfortable with the perception of the community as an isolated farm town. Many in local government and business said publically and privately that it was time for Brighton to grow.

As late as 1956, many of Brighton’s homes and businesses faced the world without a visible address. Brighton’s provincialism was on display even if the house and business numbers were not. An editorial in the *Brighton Blade* complained:

*Brighton residents, probably don’t realize the situation where all the stores are located and the numbering system for the town . . . We believe that most of streets are marked, but we are woefully weak in placing the numbers on the fronts of our stores. Just take a walk up and down Main Street, or any of the other streets, and see how many numbers you can find. Only a few places are adequately marked.*<sup>36</sup>



You could not miss the city dump if you traveling on State Highway 7 during the 1950s. City government realized the dump's visibility was bad for Brighton's reputation as metropolitan Denver grew after World War II. (*The Brighton Blade*, April 2, 1956, 1. Located at Brighton Historic Preservation Office.)

The *Blade* was the city's most vocal supporter. During the 1950s under the editorship of W. Carl Dorr, the newspaper's editorials often campaigned against the city dump located directly to the west of the Brighton Subdivision and how "trashy" it made the city look to motorists entering Brighton from State Highway 7. Dorr's other concerns included cleaning up the city's rat problem, preventing childhood polio, and building a city swimming pool. In 1958, Dorr lamented the changes he saw in the community he covered:

*Brighton is growing. In fact, is growing so rapidly now that is losing its small town characteristics and assuming city-like ones. Individuals no long stand in the town's undertakings. Instead organized groups are becoming the town's best boosters*<sup>37</sup>

The loss of the Wire Building was the Subdivision's most dramatic tragedy of the post-war era. The bad luck continued as the 1950s progressed. A hail storm in spring 1958 caused 1,500 homeowners out of Brighton's 2,000 property owners to file damage claims. Days after the storm, insurance adjusters set up an office at the Bear Frame and Axle building at 5 South First Street.<sup>38</sup>

The City's troubles shifted from acts of nature to people's avarice during the first half of the 1960s and included a corrupt sheriff, a bank scandal requiring a Congressional hearing, and the

toxic waters of Barr Lake. In December 1964, Adams County released a report that more than 14 percent of Brighton’s residents lived below the poverty level of \$3,000 annually.<sup>39</sup>

As Brighton moved into the 1970s, the Subdivision lost two of its oldest buildings. Neglect eventually caught up with the Brighton Hotel at Bush and Cabbage. The son of the longtime owner did not want to maintain the Hotel and the building was demolished in 1972.

December 1975 saw the removal of 153 South First Avenue constructed in the 1880s. The building was the community’s first school and was built across four lots along Front Street. The school was possible through a donation of land by Daniel Carmichael. As of 2018, the site is the parking lot for the State Farm Insurance agent at 151 South First Avenue.

### **Brighton Subdivision’s New Neighbor**

A new century, and expanding metropolitan Denver, had Brighton’s political leaders and business developers scrambling for how to capture a piece of the economic growth. According to the *Denver Post*, “Nearly everyone agrees downtown Brighton needed renovation. Achieving that objective was difficult with a slow economy and absentee landlords. The city planned to build a “new, but old-feeling shopping and entertainment center next door to its old downtown, hoping the vitality of one will carry over to the other.”

Visible from the backyards looking to the west, a site along South Main’s escarpment was selected in 2003 for the first new commercial development in decades in the community, the Brighton Pavilions. In November of that year, the *Denver Post* was less than flattering about the Pavilions’ prospects based on its proximity to South Main Street’s businesses and humble homes: “The Brighton Pavilions would go in between Brighton’s less-cohesive South Main Street downtown area and U.S. 85. Most of Brighton’s downtown sits on North Main Street, a baseball’s throw away.”<sup>40</sup>

During the past decade, metropolitan Denver has basked in a period of economic success unlike anything since the Gold Rush of the late 1850s. As a city, Brighton has expanded to the east along the Interstate 76 corridor.

Stephen Johnson’s family has had a long association with Brighton. In December 2017, he reflected that the Brighton Subdivision “was never a classy neighborhood, but was always solid, stable and respectable.”<sup>41</sup> The residential history of the Brighton Subdivision followed the same pattern from the 1900s to the 1940s. According to the United States Census rolls from 1900 to 1940, some properties were owner occupied while others were rentals, and many homeowners had a boarder living under their roof. From the 1950s to the present, two new trends emerged. First, a new generation of owners purchased properties from the established families, or their estates, and began to turn homes into businesses like insurance and real estate offices. Second, by the late twentieth century, many houses in the survey area become strictly rentals and are now often owned by an LLC (Limited Liability Company).

## Recommendations

**Brighton Local Landmark Designation:** The Phase I survey did not identify any properties that are potentially eligible for listing in the National Register, and only three properties that are potentially eligible in the State Register; however fourteen of the sixteen properties surveyed in Phase 1 are eligible for local landmark designation. The Brighton program for local designation acknowledges the local architectural or historic significance of properties that may otherwise not be eligible for listing in the National or State registers. In Colorado, local designation also provides some financial benefits similar to a state designation, such as the state tax credits or eligibility for State Historical Fund grants.

Some of the eligible properties are either currently owned by the city, or may be owned by the city in the future. The City of Brighton is encouraged to take the lead in applying for local designation of these properties.

Local designation has the benefit of a comparatively easier and quicker designation process. More importantly, local designation provides a level of protection for historic buildings that is not available with the National or State registers. Any building permits for a local landmark building must first be reviewed by the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission. This will hopefully prevent the demolition of Brighton's most significant historic resources.

To encourage local designation, the city should consider a historic plaque program. Other cities have developed financial incentives for local designation; these are worthy of investigation by the commission.

**Additional Survey and Research:** This survey documented only a small percentage of Brighton's historic resources. *The Historic Resources Survey Plan: City of Brighton, Colorado* recommended several additional phases of survey to be completed. The city should continue its program of survey following the recommendations in the survey plan. Certified Local Government and State Historical Fund grants are available to help fund these projects. The next phase of survey recommended in the Survey Plan is another selective survey, focusing on agricultural properties. As these are threatened by future development around Brighton, this is a logical phase. However, it is recommended that the next phase of survey also include all remaining agricultural food processing property types. These resources not only have historic associations with the outlying farms, they were also extremely significant to Brighton's and northeastern Colorado's economy in the twentieth century. After completion of this next phase of survey, a thorough agricultural context can be developed.

Additional survey and research is particularly critical in order to develop historic contexts that more accurately describe the historic themes that influenced Brighton's development. Furthermore, additional survey would reveal the extent, number and condition of several important property types, such as the *agricultural: food processing property type*. As noted in the Survey Plan, this property type represents an extremely significant phase of Brighton's historic development, yet only a few of these remain. Each processing center historically

included a complex of buildings and structures, yet surviving resources generally represent only a small portion of the original complex. An understanding of how much remains of Brighton's food processing history will aid the evaluation of the remaining features.

**Brighton Historic Preservation Commission:** Brighton Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is also fortunate to have dedicated office space located in the former Adams County Courthouse, now a city-owned building. Furthermore, several commission members frequently publish books or articles on Brighton history and its historic resources. It is recommended that the HPC develop a system of storing, indexing and developing its collection of historic materials and research.

**Educational Activities:** The owners of properties included in this survey should be given a copy of the survey form for their property. At the same time, an information sheet describing the benefits of federal, state and/or local historic designation can be provided. A display of the surveyed buildings could be prepared for the Historic Preservation Commission offices. The information could also be compiled for an online or printed informational booklet. Finally, copies of the survey forms and report should be placed in repositories such as the local library, and potentially posted online.

**Planning Activities:** The survey forms that resulted from this project should be incorporated into the city GIS system, tagging properties with a note that a historic survey has been completed. This will enable planners or permit technicians to notify owners or future developers that there is potential for historic resources on these properties.

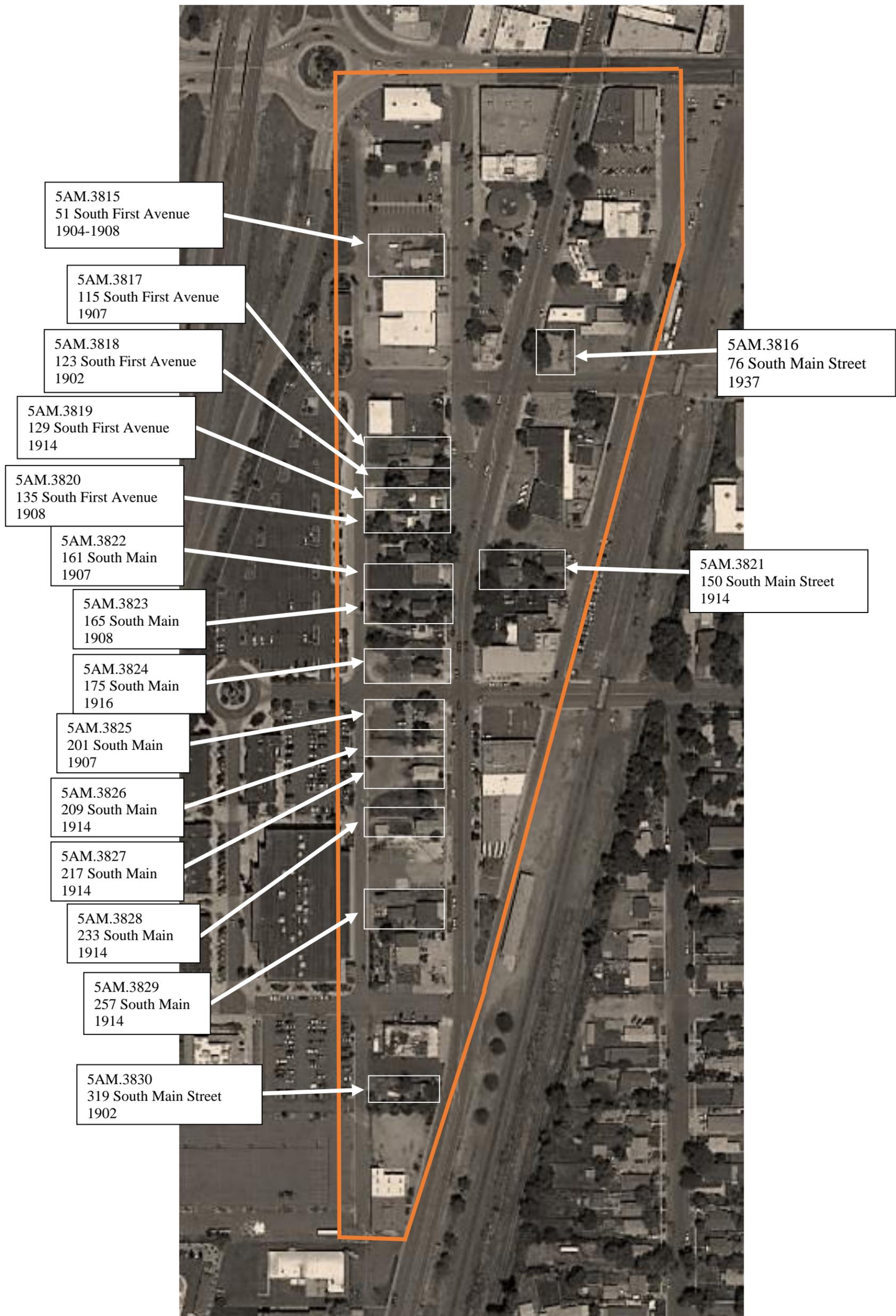
## Survey Log

Table 3 below contains all the properties surveyed in Phase I, listed by the state identification number. The three columns on the right indicate the properties eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the Colorado Register of Historic Properties (State), or the Brighton local landmark (Local). Figure 3 identifies the properties on an aerial photograph taken from Google Maps in 2018.

**Table 3 –Eligibility Recommendations**

<b>Address</b>	<b>OAHP Site No.</b>	<b>NRHP</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Local</b>
51 South First Avenue	5AM.3815	No	Yes	Yes
76 South Main Street	5AM.3816	No	No	No
115 South First Avenue	5AM.3817	No	No	Yes
123 South First Avenue	5AM.3818	No	No	Yes
129 South First Avenue	5AM.3819	No	No	No
135 South First Avenue	5AM.3820	No	No	Yes
150 South Main Street	5AM.3821	No	Yes	Yes
161 South Main Street	5AM.3822	No	No	Yes
165 South Main Street	5AM.3823	No	No	Yes
175 South Main Street	5AM.3824	No	No	Yes
201 South Main Street	5AM.3825	No	No	Yes
209 South Main Street	5AM.3826	No	No	Yes
217 South Main Street	5AM.3827	No	Yes	Yes
233 South Main Street	5AM.3828	No	No	Yes
257 South Main Street	5AM.3829	No	No	Yes
319 South First Avenue	5AM.3830	No	No	Yes

Figure 3. Brighton Subdivision Survey Area Map with Surveyed Properties Outlined



General boundaries Brighton Subdivision survey area are outlined in orange. The surveyed properties are outlined in white. The addresses and dates of construction are in smaller boxes. Bridge Street is the northern boundary and Union Pacific Railroad Tracks (east). (Note: Railroad tracks have previously been surveyed and are not included.)

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<sup>1</sup> Avenue L Architects, "Historic Resources Survey Plan: City of Brighton, CO. Project Number CO-11-013," (July 16, 2012), 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> "Historic Resources Survey Plan: City of Brighton, CO. Project Number CO-11-013." 1-5.

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- <sup>3</sup> Many established Brighton residents recalled that the area Pavilions occupied was known locally as “the pasture” or “where the airplanes landed.”
- <sup>4</sup> Dorr, W. Carl. “Brighton Once Stopover on Stage Coach Run Between Fort Laramie, Wyoming and Denver.” *The Brighton Blade*. March 10, 1958, 1.
- <sup>5</sup> “Many Companies Settled Early in Brighton,” *Denver Times*?, October 1902, reprinted in *Colorado Prospector*, Vol 15, No. 10. October 1984.
- <sup>6</sup> City of Brighton Historic Preservation Commission. File: “Historic Buildings Lost to the City.” File accessed February 21, 2018.
- <sup>7</sup> Portrait and Biographical Record of the State of Colorado; Containing Portraits and Biographies of Many Well-known Citizens of the Past and Present, (Chicago, Chapman Publishing Co., 1899): 820-21 and The History of Brighton and the Surrounding Area, 346.
- <sup>8</sup> The Brighton Genealogy Society. The History of Brighton and the Surrounding Area. (Brighton, CO: Brighton Historic Preservation Commission, 1987 [reprint 2006]), 345.
- <sup>9</sup> Avenue L Architects, “Historic Resources Survey Plan: City of Brighton, CO. Project Number CO-11-013,” 3-6 to 3-8.
- <sup>10</sup> “Dismantlement of Carmichael Building Revives Early History.” *The Brighton Blade*. September 17, 1937, 1.
- <sup>11</sup> City of Brighton Historic Preservation Commission, “City of Brighton Historic Landmarks.” <http://www.brightonco.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3470>. Accessed March 10, 2018.
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- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid* and interview with Teresa Case. Conducted by Robert Autobee on February 8, 2018 in Brighton, CO.
- <sup>18</sup> “Entertainment Tonight.” *Colorado Prospector*. 1984, 4.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>20</sup> “Wire Apartment Residents Recovering From Horror of Fire.” *The Brighton Blade*. July 28, 1955, 3.
- <sup>21</sup> “Mail Carrier Service for Town Delayed Again.” *The Brighton Blade*, April 13, 1920, 1.
- <sup>22</sup> “Mayor’s Proclamation.” *The Brighton Blade*. May 4, 1937, 2.
- <sup>23</sup> The Brighton Genealogy Society. The History of Brighton and the Surrounding Area. (Brighton, CO: Brighton Historic Preservation Commission, 1987 [reprint 2006]), 345.
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- <sup>25</sup> “Dismantlement of Buildings Begins Already.” *The Brighton Blade*. July 20, 1937, 1.
- <sup>26</sup> “Dismantlement of Carmichael Building Revives Early History.” *The Brighton Blade*. September 17, 1937, 1.
- <sup>27</sup> “Bids Advertised for Building of South Main Street.” *The Brighton Blade*. September 28, 1937, 1 and “M.E. Carlson to Build New Road for \$25,340.” *The Brighton Blade*. October 15, 1937, 1.
- <sup>28</sup> “So. Main Street to Finish Next Week.” *The Brighton Blade*, November 26, 1937, 1, and “New Lights to Be Installed on Main Street.” *The Brighton Blade*. October 22, 1937, 1.
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- <sup>30</sup> 1920 U.S. Federal Census, Brighton District 0006, page 55. <https://www.ancestry.com/interactive/6061/4294425-00067?backurl=https%3a%2f%2fsearch.ancestry.com%2fsearch%2fdb.aspx%3fdbid%3d6061%26path%3d%26ssrc=&backlabel=ReturnBrowsing#?imageId=4294425-00146>. Accessed June 18, 2018.
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- <sup>34</sup> Interview with Teresa Case. Conducted by Robert Autobee on February 8, 2018 in Brighton, CO.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Teresa Case. Conducted by Robert Autobee on February 8, 2018 in Brighton, CO.
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