

Welton Street Cultural District WALKING TOUR



To learn more:

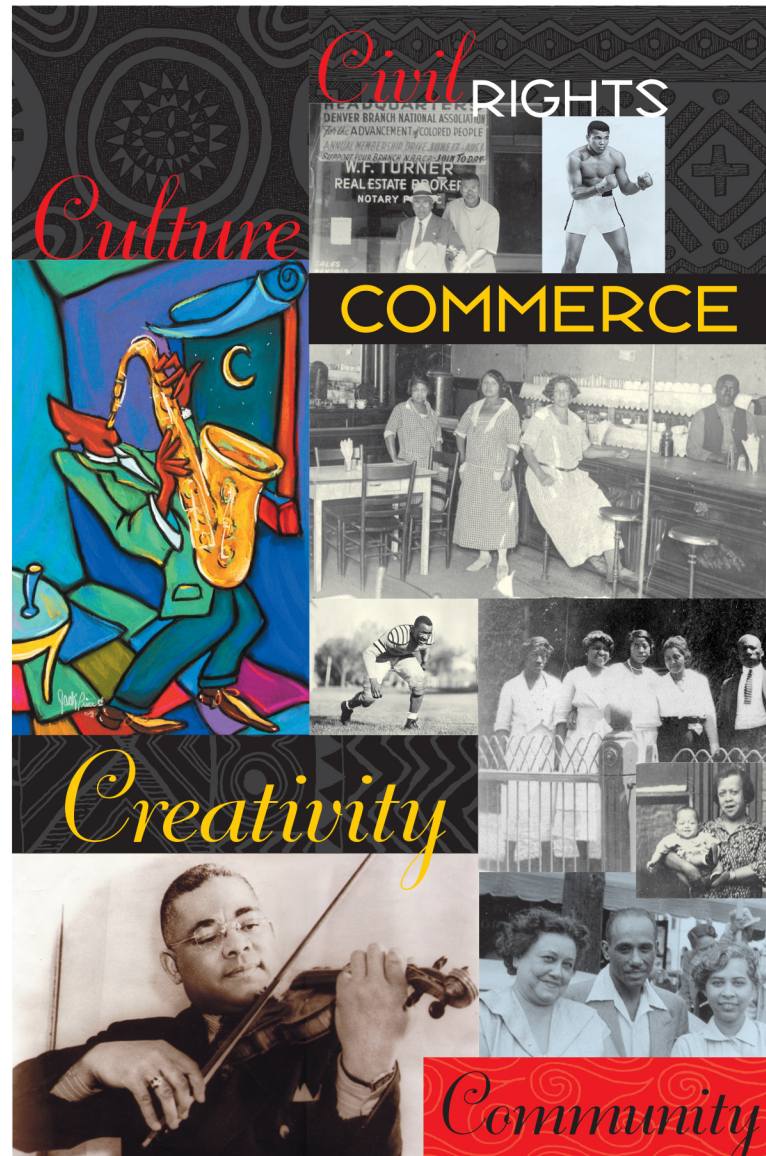
Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library
2401 Welton Street Denver, CO 80205 720-865-2401
www.aarl.denverlibrary.org

Five Points Business Association
2713 Welton Street Denver, CO 80205 303-832-3770

The Black American West Museum
3091 California Street Denver, CO 80205 303-292-2566
email: bwestmuseum@aol.com

Five Points Neighborhood of Denver
by Laura M. Mauck

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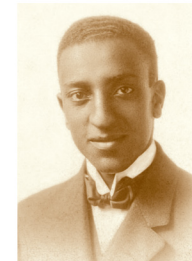


The Historic Heart of Denver's African-American Community.



WELTON STREET

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Jump back to the 1920s through the 1950s. That's when Welton Street was the heart of African-American culture, commerce and civil rights activism in the Rocky Mountain West.

For more than a century after President Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, our nation remained racially segregated. The Welton Street Cultural District honors the people of Denver who created this unique urban corridor as a positive response to the negative forces of racism.



Discover the Power of Community

What began in the early 1920s with a few shops, offices and nightclubs on Welton Street quickly became the thriving hub of Denver's African-American community. Soon these few city blocks formed the nerve center of a vibrant, self-sustained "city within a city." The Welton



Street commercial corridor blossomed into one of the nation's most creative, prosperous and politically active African-American urban centers in the era of segregation.



Spirit of Pride

Visionary leaders emerged from Welton Street storefronts with new opportunities for business, employment, housing, cultural enrichment and social change. Some worked



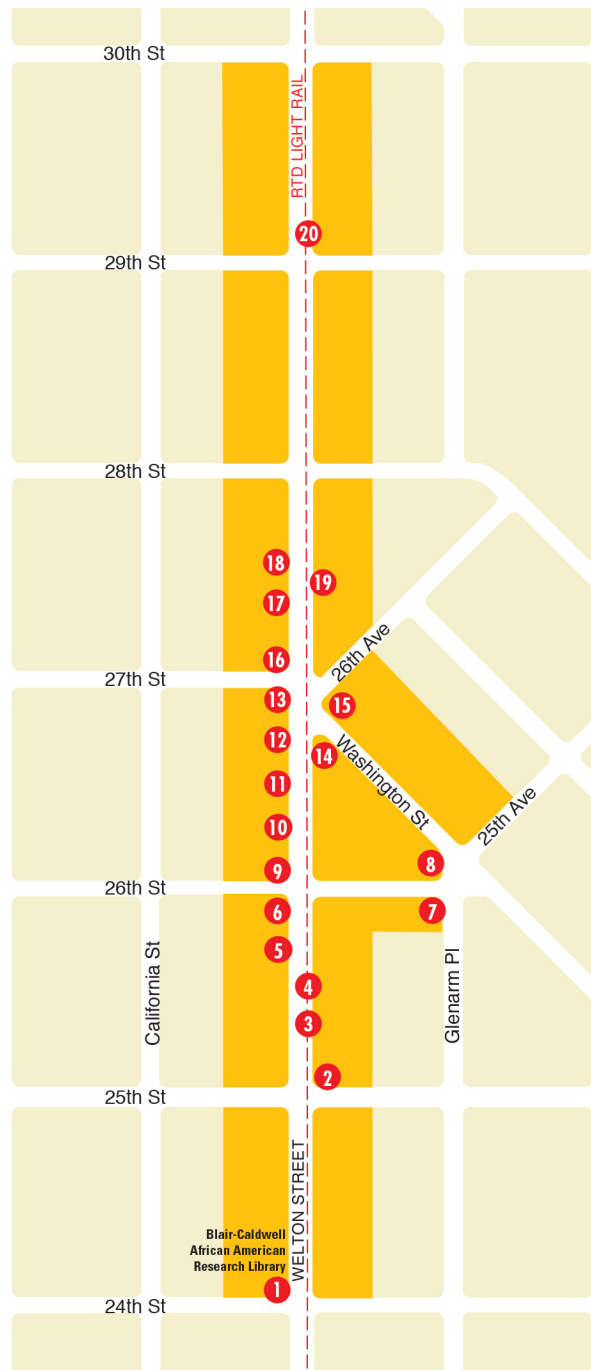
behind the scenes, creating jobs or extending credit to neighbors during hard times. Others became highly visible and effective civil rights activists and elected public officials. A gifted few reached the heights of musical artistry and other forms of cultural expression. Their examples created a spirit of pride and hope throughout the community.

Take the Tour

Follow the footsteps of the people who brought the power of Denver's African-American community to life. This self-guided walking tour leads you to a series of historic markers within the Welton Street Cultural District. The illustrated signs tell stories about the people, places and ideas that helped shape African-American culture and history in Denver.



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1 For The Reason Of Race

Integrated at first, Denver soon fell to the forces of racism. By the 1920s, segregated African-Americans needed a sense of community. They created one on Welton Street.

2 Building Community

Pullman porter Charles L. Cousins pioneered affordable housing for Denver African-Americans. The self-taught builder embodied the resourceful and generous spirit of the Five Points community.

3 “Humanity Above Race, Color Or Creed”

Welton Street dentist Dr. Clarence F. Holmes, Jr. was a tireless civil rights leader who opened doors to racial equality in Denver for more than 50 years.

4 “Lifting As We Climb”

Meet a few of the extraordinary African-American women who rose to the dual challenges of racial and gender prejudice in segregated Denver.

5 Show Time At The Roxy

In the gloom of the Great Depression, the new Roxy Theater lit up the lives of Denver African-Americans. The city’s only African-American movie house kept locals coming back for more.

6 Shelter From The Storm

African-American savings & loan, real estate, construction and insurance leaders joined forces on Welton Street. They made the dream of home ownership possible for Five Points residents.

7 Above And Beyond

“Old” Fire Station No. 3 housed Denver’s first all-African-American firefighting company. Their story is one of honor, bravery and tragic loss while battling racism, as well as fires.

8 Pride of the Neighborhood

African-American firefighters at “New” Fire Station No. 3 provided added security, protection and pride to Five Points. They, too, faced tragedy in the line of duty.

9 Power Signals

From his headquarters at Radio Pharmacy, “Sonny” Lawson transformed Denver’s disenfranchised African-American community into a surging political force.

10 Rockin’ With Leroy Smith

Cultural trendsetter Leroy Smith was a popular disc jockey, storekeeper, nightclub owner and celebrity promoter. This Welton Street entrepreneur changed the rhythm of life in Five Points.

11 Opportunity On Wheels

In 1938 the Protective Order of Dining-Car Waiters and Porters, Local 465, opened a union hall on the second floor of this building. Members are still welcome.

12 Casino Nights

Large and luxurious, the Casino Ballroom featured a hardwood dance floor, a 40-foot bar and the best African-American musicians of their day, including Denver’s own George Morrison.

13 Deep Down Welton

Founded in 1896, Deep Rock Water Bottling Company digs deeply into the history of Welton Street. Deep Rock bottles pure artesian water from a well drilled in the heart of Five Points.

14 Jazz Hot Spot of the Rocky Mountain West

Swing back to the times when Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington and other jazz giants played and stayed at the Rossonian. Welton Street’s premier nightclub featured the world’s hottest headliners.

15 Destination Five Points

From horse-drawn streetcars to Light Rail, transportation has always driven the story of Welton Street. All aboard for a streamlined journey through the history of greater Five Points.

16 Strong Medicine

Atlas Drugs was Denver’s only white-owned drug store where African-Americans could sit at the soda fountain. Atlas came to symbolize the growing strength of Denver’s civil rights movement.

17 If Walls Could Talk

Built in 1886, Fern Hall has been a ballroom, bootleg bar, bakery and boxing gym. Today the brick building with a checkered past is home to the Five Points Business Association.

18 Serious Undertaking

These walls have seen both lively pool hall activity and the grave matters of the Douglass Undertaking Company. The building’s historical significance may surprise you.

19 We Had It All

It started with a grocery store. Pretty soon there were barbershops, tailors, restaurants, saloons, pool halls, doctors, lawyers and funeral homes. Everything you needed was on Welton Street.

20 Street Life

Long the site of Denver’s Juneteenth Celebration, wide, sunny Welton Street featured Shriners’ Parades, beauty contests and everybody in Five Points showing off their Sunday best.



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