



DENVER LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE LANDMARK DESIGNATION APPLICATION

07.30.2024

This form is for use in nominating individual structures and districts in the City and County of Denver. To qualify as a Landmark, a property must be at least 30 years old, retain its historic integrity and meet at least three significance criteria. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." When filling out this application, please refer to the Customer Guide for Individual Landmark Applications, available at www.denvergov.org/landmark. Questions about the application or designation process can be directed to Denver Landmark Preservation staff at landmark@denvergov.org or (303) 865-2709.

Property Address: 3535 E. 26th Ave. Pkwy.

The following are required for the application to be considered complete:

- ☒ Property Information
- ☒ Applicant Information and Signatures
- ☒ Criteria for Significance
- ☒ Statement of Significance
- ☒ Period of Significance
- ☒ Property Description
- ☒ Statement of Integrity
- ☒ Historic Context
- ☒ Bibliography
- ☒ Boundary Map
- ☒ Photographs
- ☒ Application Fee

1. Property Information

Name of Property

Historic Name: Harris-Cousins House

Proposed Name: Not Applicable

Location

Address: 3535 E. 26th Ave. Pkwy.

Legal Description:

Lots 15-21, inclusive, except the westerly 7.5' to City, Block 12, Walnut Hill Addition, and Lot 2, Block 12, State Addition, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Resources

Primary Structures

# Contributing	1
# Non-contributing	N/A

Accessory Structures

# Contributing	1
# Non-contributing	N/A

Contributing and Non-contributing Resources

The contributing resources are limited to the two buildings that were developed in the late 1950s and remain standing there today. These include the house and detached garage.

General Property Data

Date of Construction:	1958
Architect (if known):	William J. Boorman (architect) Frank Harris (landscape architect)
Builder (if known):	Newton L. Koser
Original Use:	Single-Family Home
Current Use:	Single-Family Home



2. Owner/Applicant Information

An application for designation may be submitted by:

- ☒ Owner(s) of the property or properties, or
- ☐ Member(s) of City Council, or
- ☐ Manager of Community Planning and Development, or
- ☐ Three residents of Denver, if they are not owners of the property or properties

Owner Information

Name: Dr. Renee Cousins King
Address: 751 S. Oneida St., Denver, CO 80224
Phone: 720/270-7840
Email: kitchendoctor257@aol.com

Primary Applicant (if not owner)

Name: Not Applicable
Address:
Phone:
Email:

Prepared by

Name: Ron Sladek, Tatanka Historical Associates Inc. (on behalf of the applicant)
Address: P.O. Box 1909, Fort Collins, CO 80522
Phone: 970/689-4855
Email: tatanka@verinet.com



Owner Applicant:

I / We, the undersigned, acting as owner(s) of the property described in this application for landmark designation do, hereby, give my consent to the designation of this structure as a structure for preservation.

I understand that this designation transfers with the title of the property should the property be sold, or if legal or beneficial title is otherwise transferred.

Owner(s): Dr. Renee Cousins King

Date:

Owner(s) Signature: _____

For individual designations, if the owner does not support the designation, the applicants must conduct outreach to the owner. Describe below the efforts to contact the owner to discuss designation and other possible preservation alternatives. Please provide dates and details of any communications or meetings with the property owner, or the property owner's representatives below.

3. Significance

Criteria for Significance

To qualify as a Landmark, a property must be at least 30 years old, retain its historic integrity and meet at least three significance criteria. Check the applicable criteria from the following list.

- ☐ A. It has a direct association with a significant historic event or with the historical development of the city, state, or nation;
- ☒ **B. It has direct and substantial association with a recognized person or group of persons who had influence on society;**
- ☒ **C. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type;**
- ☒ **D. It is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder;**
- ☐ E. It contains elements of design, engineering, materials, craftsmanship, or artistic merit which represent a significant innovation or technical achievement;
- ☐ F. It represents an established and familiar feature of the neighborhood, community or contemporary city, due to its prominent location or physical characteristics;
- ☐ G. It promotes understanding and appreciation of the urban environment by means of distinctive physical characteristics or rarity;
- ☐ H. It represents an era of culture or heritage that allows an understanding of how the site was used by past generations;
- ☐ I. It is a physical attribute of a neighborhood, community, or the city that is a source of pride or cultural understanding;
- ☒ **J. It is associated with social movements, institutions, or patterns of growth or change that contributed significantly to the culture of the neighborhood, community, city, state, or nation.**

Statement of Significance

Criterion B – This property has direct and substantial association with recognized persons who had influence on society

Under Criterion B, the property at 3535 E. 26th Ave. is directly and substantially associated with two prominent African American families in Denver who during their lives were noted for their business acumen, professional careers, philanthropy and civic involvement. By the time of this nomination many years later, one had been largely forgotten while the other continues to be remembered. Both are worthy of credit for their accomplishments.

Frank Harris, the original owner of the nominated residence, is notable as Denver's first recognized African American horticulturalist and landscape designer and contractor. His career spanned a period of about forty years, from the mid-1920s to the mid-1960s, and newspaper articles indicate that he was in high demand throughout that time serving a diverse client base. Frank's wife, Nora, was employed as a claims department manager in the offices of the American Woodmen Association. Founded in Denver in 1901 and national in scope by the 1920s, the fraternal and mutual aid organization provided African Americans with access to life insurance and home mortgages at a time when many had substantial trouble securing those products from the nation's major insurers and lenders. In the mid-1950s, Nora joined the board of directors of the Denver NAACP chapter.

Prior to developing and moving into the house facing City Park in 1958, Frank and Nora lived at 2256 N. Franklin St. (5DV.32519). Still standing today, the stuccoed Mediterranean Revival house was hailed in the press as an architectural masterpiece and a source of pride not only for the Harrises but also for Denver's Black community. Built in 1938, it was a remarkable achievement considering the financial hardships that many families endured during the depths of the Great Depression. The irrigated grounds around the house, including extensive plantings and perennial garden beds, were also designed and installed by Frank Harris. By the late 1950s, Frank Harris' career was established and his landscaping firm had achieved commercial success. He was highly regarded in Denver's Black community as an example of achievement. During the post-World War II years, he began investing in real estate and went into property development.

Feeling financially secure and desiring to leave the Whittier neighborhood, Frank and Nora decided to build a new house for themselves on several vacant lots in the City Park North neighborhood overlooking the City Park Municipal Golf Course. They were among the first African American families to move into the previously restricted neighborhood, where the lots along the north side of E. 26th Ave. became occupied by members of the community's business and professional elite. To achieve their goal, the Harrises engaged a successful Denver architect known for designing fine Ranch Style houses, along with a building contractor with a reputation for high-quality construction. The Harrises lived in the house from 1958 to 1966, after which they both passed away. This nomination is the first time they are being recognized as significant in the history of Denver.



Charles R. Cousins, the second owner of the property together with his wife Dorothy, has long been recognized as a prominent and respected member of Denver's African American community due to his business success and involvement in civic affairs. His long and notable career extended from the 1930s until his death in 2009, spurred by a sense of entrepreneurship, hard work, and service to the community. Because he was involved in varied activities, lived into the early 2000s, and still has close family and friends in the city, the details of Charles' life are more extensively documented than those of Frank Harris.

The Cousins family arrived in Denver in 1909, when Charles L. Cousins (the father of Charles R. Cousins) secured a job as a Pullman porter. Based at Union Station, he worked for the Pullman Company into the 1940s. Determined to build a stable future for his family, Charles L. took his earnings and in 1917 purchased a two-story house in the Whittier neighborhood. He also invested in properties in Five Points and over the years assembled a real estate portfolio that consisted of some buildings that he purchased and others that he developed. During the 1940s and 1950s, Charles L. Cousins also co-owned and operated a tavern and grill known as the Arcade Lounge at 725 E. 26th Ave. in the predominantly African-American neighborhood of Five Points.

Charles R. Cousins, the son of Charles L., was born in the family home in Denver in 1918, attended by the city's renowned female African-American physician, Dr. Justina Ford. He graduated from Manual High School in 1936 and started a business placing jukeboxes and vending machines in commercial establishments throughout the city. The business was successful and continued for many years. Rather than being drafted and sent overseas during World War II, Cousins served as a firefighter with the Denver Fire Department's Station 3 at 2500 N. Washington St. The all-Black crew, the only one of its kind in the city, was highly regarded by residents of the Five Points neighborhood.

In 1946, Charles and partner Elvin R. Caldwell opened a tavern and grill known as the 715 Club.¹ Located at 715 E. 26th Ave. on the corner of Welton Street, the 715 Club provided dining and cocktails to guests, most of them residents of the city's Black community. Charles managed the business into the late 1990s. By the early 1950s, he had launched another business in the Five Points commercial district. That was the Cue and Cushion Billiard Parlor, which he operated from around 1951 to 1961. Initially located at 718 E. 26th Ave., by 1957 it was moved to 2628 Welton St.

In the early 1950s, Charles and Dorothy and their daughter Renee settled into an English-Norman Cottage at 2525 York St. facing the City Park Golf Course. With his businesses, combined with real estate investments in Five Points and other areas of the city, providing

¹ Caldwell had just finished working as chief statistician and assistant superintendent for production at the Remington Arms Plant in Denver during World War II. In 1950, he rose to prominence in the political arena when he was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives. That was followed by seven terms on Denver's City Council from 1955 to 1982 (the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library is named in his honor).



a secure financial foundation for his family, Charles began to involve himself in efforts to better the community. In 1955, he joined the founding board of the Equity Savings and Loan Association and later served as the institution's treasurer and vice president. Established that year at 2559 Welton St., it was the state's only Black-owned and operated financial institution. By that time, he had also chaired a membership drive for the Urban League of Denver.

Following the death of his father in 1962, Charles became the managing partner of the family's real estate holdings in addition to operating his own businesses and properties. Dorothy was his assistant or partner in many of those endeavors and according to their daughter Renee, "much of the success he attained in business would not have been possible without Dorothy's conscientious assistance." In 1966, Charles and Dorothy purchased the large Ranch house at 3535 E. 26th Ave. from Frank and Nora Harris. After they moved in, Charles placed his office there and he continued to manage his business enterprises from that location the rest of his life. Much of his daily work occurred at the kitchen table.

Philanthropy and community involvement remained a fundamental characteristic of the Cousins family. For many years, they were involved with the Owl Club of Denver (5DV.55428, listed in the NRHP). Founded in 1941, the social and philanthropic organization moved into a new building in 1963 at 2815 Madison Street, two blocks north of the Cousins house. Known to family and friends as "Brother Cousins," Charles had become a leading figure in the city's African American community. Generous and with a kind personality, he provided low-cost, sometimes no-cost, rental housing to people who were unable to pay market rates. He also became known as the "Godfather of Jazz" in Five Points, providing connections and opportunities to musicians whenever possible.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Charles honored student-athletes at Manual High School, who were presented with the annual Charles R. Cousins Award for outstanding achievement. He hosted events celebrating the school's state championship basketball teams in 1966 and 1972. Charles was also instrumental in the development of an alternative education program at Cole Junior High School for students who needed a non-traditional approach to classroom learning. For many years, he quietly supported the Black American West Museum and Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library.

In 1970, Mayor William McNichols appointed Charles to the board of directors of the Denver Organizing Committee for the 1976 Winter Olympic Games. Although Colorado voters rejected the opportunity and the Olympics did not take place in the state, his placement on the board occurred due to his excellent reputation as one of the city's most respected civic and business leaders. Dorothy was also involved in volunteer activities in the Denver area, being actively engaged with the American Red Cross, Friends of the Denver Public Library, and the Church of the Holy Redeemer. In 1979, Charles was appointed to Denver's Zoning Board of Adjustment, a position he held into the early 2000s.

Dorothy Cousins passed away in 2000, followed by Charles in 2009. Through his will, Charles donated the Simpson Hotel at 2805 Welton St. to the Five Points Historical Association. The Equity Savings Building at 2553-2563 Welton St. remained in the family and is now known as the Cousins Building (5DV.55497, recently listed in the NRHP). In 2003, the family was honored when the Charles and Dorothy Cousins Gallery, featuring local artists, was dedicated in the Blair-Caldwell African American Research Library. Charles R. Cousins Plaza was also established outside the building. Continuing her family's commitment to philanthropy and honoring their roots in the Five Points neighborhood, in 2019 Dr. Renee Cousins King donated \$100,000 to the Black American West Museum. The purpose of the gift was to assist with restoration of the former home of Dr. Justina Ford. That same year, Charles L. Cousins and Charles R. Cousins were posthumously inducted into the Colorado Business Hall of Fame.

Criterion C – This property embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style or type

Under Criterion C, the property at 3535 E. 26th Ave. is significant in Denver for embodying the distinctive characteristics of the Ranch Style of architecture as they were applied to this custom-designed house.

The Harris-Cousins House is an excellent example of a high-quality, custom-designed 1950s Ranch Style residence. Defining characteristics of the style include its one-story height, low horizontal profile, brick construction, low-pitched roof with wide overhanging eaves, elongated asymmetrical façade with a minimal front porch, attached two-car garage and large picture windows. On the interior, the house's Ranch Style includes the placement of its living room, dining room and kitchen so they flow from one to the other. Its basement recreation room is another amenity common to the style. The main-level spaces connect the family and guests directly to an expansive open porch and landscaped backyard designed for recreation and entertaining. These features form the defining characteristics of the Harris-Cousins House.

The modern Ranch Style originated in California by 1940 and then spread across the country during the post-World War II building boom. By the 1950s, Ranch Style houses were being built across the City of Denver. Suited to rapid population growth and urban expansion, the style also accommodated a desire for increased living space in homes. Between the late 1940s and 1970s, the Ranch House came to dominate Denver's residential landscape among its emerging neighborhoods. These houses were built with their broad faces oriented toward the street, fronted by lawns, ornamental plantings and driveways. This protected the rear of the lot from the street view, allowing for private backyard family activities including entertaining. According to architectural historian Alan Hess, "the Ranch House represented...new possibilities, rugged individualism, self determination, ease and convenience, [and] informality."²

² Alan Hess, *The Ranch House*, p. 11-17

Today thousands of Ranches of varying sizes and quality are found throughout Denver's postwar neighborhoods. Examples range from smaller, mass-produced tract homes that were marketed to middle-class buyers at affordable prices, to larger and more expensive architect-designed houses that were showpieces of the style. While developers built many of these houses in planned subdivisions based upon the design of a few models offered to buyers, the custom-designed houses that began to emerge by the mid to late-1950s required that an architect be engaged. The Harris-Cousins House represents this higher level of the Ranch Style, where an architect prepared a design that made the house unique for its owners while employing the recognizable, essential elements of the style.

Criterion D – This property is a significant example of the work of a recognized architect or master builder

Under Criterion D, the property at 3535 E. 26th Ave. is significant in Denver as a good example of the work of three design and construction professionals who were active in the city throughout much of the 20th century and participated in the development of this property and many others.

By the mid-1930s, Frank Harris was recognized as one of Denver's most accomplished horticulturists and landscape designers and his services were in demand. Self-taught, he was motivated by his love for plants along with the design and installation of beautiful landscapes. By comparison, another noted Denver landscape designer of the era, Saco R. DeBoer, came from a privileged home and was college educated in Europe in the fields of engineering, horticulture and urban planning before he immigrated to the United States. Harris essentially raised himself up from a childhood of rural poverty in Oklahoma to a life of commercial and professional success in Denver through hard work and creativity.

Notable as Denver's first recognized African American landscape designer, Harris was active from the 1920s to the 1960s. He not only had the house at 3535 E. 26th Ave. constructed for himself and his wife, but also designed and installed the landscaping on the property. That includes the lawns, trees, shrubs and rock gardens, all of which remain there today. While future research might locate other examples that have not been substantially altered, the property at 3535 E. 26th Ave. is currently the only one known to display the work of Frank Harris.³

Architect William J. Boorman, whose career spanned the period from the 1930s to the 1980s, became known in Denver as a designer of high-quality Ranch Style houses during the post-World War II era. Raised and educated in Los Angeles, he moved to Denver in the mid-1930s and launched his career. By the early 1950s, he was designing large custom Ranch houses for individual clients along with smaller Ranches for developers.

³ The Harrises' previous house, completed in 1937 at 2256 N. Franklin St. (5DV.32519), might also be eligible for landmark designation for its architecture, but the integrity of its historic landscaping is unknown.



Many of these were built in east Denver's emerging neighborhoods, including along the Monaco Street corridor where his own house and office were located.

The Harris-Cousins House is an excellent example of the quality of Boorman's work, featuring character-defining elements of the Ranch Style that include its expansive horizontal and asymmetrical massing, blonde stacked brickwork, large picture windows that overlook the City Park Municipal Golf Course, oversized two-car garage, and low-pitched roof with deep overhanging eaves. The interior was designed with large rooms that accommodated the family and provided ample space for entertaining. Oversized doors and windows offered views and access to the backyard. Finally, Boorman created a deep open L-shaped porch to the rear that included a built-in barbeque, cabinets and countertop. This provided the family with an outdoor venue for hosting guests and connected the kitchen, dining room and living room to one another. A private open porch was also built off the master bedroom.

William Boorman remained in high demand over several decades and many examples of his houses continue to stand today (these are presented below in the historic context). This is the first to be nominated for landmark status and the quality of its design merits designation by the City of Denver. Based on available building records, Boorman had previously worked on custom designs in more exclusive White neighborhoods such as Wellshire and Belcaro. The Harris-Cousins house is likely one of the first examples of his custom work in the recently desegregated Skyline neighborhoods. And, as such, it is a significant example of his work.

Criterion J – This property is associated with patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the culture of the City of Denver.

Under Criterion J, the Harris-Cousins house is directly associated with patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the culture of Denver during the post-World War II era, particularly in the area of Civil Rights advances and racial integration.

This property's story is emblematic of the integration of Denver's neighborhoods starting in the 1950s and continuing through the 1960s and 1970s. Throughout that period, many middle-class Black families left the crowded and declining Five Points and Whittier neighborhoods in favor of better housing and an improved quality of life in areas such as North City Park and Park Hill. Among them were the Harris and Cousins families, who had already achieved success as business owners and professionals.

From the late 1800s through the first half of the 20th century, Denver's African American community concentrated in the Five Points and Whittier neighborhoods. This was partly due to cultural affinity and cohesion, but mainly to the effects of institutionalized racism. Over many years, barriers took the form of real estate, mortgage lending and zoning practices that restricted residency to those areas of the city, preventing Black families

from moving into neighborhoods occupied by Euro-American families. These restrictive segregation practices in housing were not unique to Denver, but reflected conditions in cities across the country from the end of the Civil War through the mid-20th century.⁴

Historical records indicate that the North City Park neighborhood, also known today as Skyland, was predominantly occupied by Euro-American families from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s. They were drawn to the area by its easy access to downtown by horsedrawn vehicles and automobiles, and via streetcars that could be boarded near York Street. The neighborhood that emerged provided clean air, good views, and nearness to one of the city's emerging crown jewels, City Park. Marketing of residential lots for sale promoted these attributes to potential buyers. However, until the 1950s those same lots were off-limits to the city's African American families.

Denver adopted its first zoning code ordinance in 1925, in the middle of a decade dominated by Ku Klux Klan influence upon local and statewide politics. The ordinance's stated purpose was to promote the community's "health, safety, morals or general welfare," all generally agreeable goals. However, the code served as a mechanism for "redlining," a nationwide practice that in Denver prevented African Americans from moving out of Five Points and Whittier into the emerging neighborhoods north and east of City Park. This allowed realtors to direct African American buyers away from predominantly Euro-American neighborhoods. Mortgage lenders participated by turning away potential borrowers, often by charging discouragingly high fees and interest rates. Insurers refused to approve policies and restrictive covenants were written into neighborhood bylaws and property transfer deeds. These practices, supported by the zoning code, constrained Denver's Black community to the increasingly crowded and aging housing stock in the Five Points and Whittier neighborhoods.

An informative guide to understanding the practice of redlining in Denver just prior to World War II is found in an interactive website titled *Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America*. This presents analysis based upon the 1938 "Guide Map of Denver and its Suburbs." Subtitled a "Residential Security Map," the document was intended to do more than simply guide residents and visitors around the city. Instead, the map and accompanying analysis highlighted thirteen so-called "hazardous" neighborhoods that were predominantly occupied by Black families and those of Latino heritage. Other areas were denigrated due to a preponderance of Jews. This information, which served as the basis for redlining practices, was produced by the appraisal department of the federal

⁴ See Richard Rothstein's 2017 book, *The Color of Law*, for a scholarly discussion of the details of restrictive housing practices across the United States. In his 2012 and 2014 books, *Curtis Park, Five Points, and Beyond* and *Park Hill Promise*, Denver author Phil Goodstein provides an in-depth discussion (along with annotated sources) about the history of the African American community in Five Points and the flight from there to other neighborhoods that began in the 1950s. Another useful publication on this topic is Thomas and Laurie Simmons' 1995 study, *Denver Neighborhood History Project, 1993-1994: Overview History of Denver Neighborhood Development*. Finally, an excellent source of information about restrictive housing practices in Denver is Adison Quin Petti's online *Mapping Prejudice in Denver*, prepared for the Denver Public Library in 2023.



Home Owners Loan Corporation, a New Deal agency, in collaboration with local realtors who knew the city in detail.⁵

During and after World War II, employment opportunities improved for much of Denver's population, including its African American residents. Hard work, reliable paychecks and a burgeoning economy allowed many Black families to rise into the middle class, although the level of discrimination around them had not changed. The Civil Rights movement gained momentum in the 1950s, leading to the passage of federal legislation addressing voting rights and segregation in schools and transportation. However, the new laws did not address housing. In Colorado, the General Assembly passed the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act in 1959 to strike at the problem of fairness in housing. That occurred nine years before Congress passed similar legislation designed to deal with the problem on a national level.

North City Park's racial character started to evolve in the 1950s and 1960s due to the emergence of the Civil Rights movement, legal cases that struck down the enforcement of restrictive covenants, and the passage of state anti-discrimination legislation aimed at housing access, urban renewal, and school desegregation. These developments allowed African Americans to move east beyond York Street into the neighborhoods north and east of City Park. Growth in those areas was also spurred by an increase in the city's Black population in the postwar years. Federal census records show that Denver had around 15,000 Black residents in 1950, a number that doubled to around 30,000 by 1960 and continued to rise. This was due to the baby boom along with an influx of military veterans, active military and civilian workers employed at Lowry Air Force Base, Fitzsimons Army Hospital, and the Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

By the mid-1950s, when Frank and Nora Harris arranged for the house at 3535 E. 26th Ave. to be built, the North City Park neighborhood had finally opened to an influx of Black residents. The Harris family were among the first to move there, acquiring lots and constructing a large Ranch Style house on the property. Over the following years, the area became increasingly occupied by Black families and institutions, reflecting the community's evolution as it spread across the city into new areas.⁶

Period of Significance

Period of Significance: 1958-1996

The period of significance for this property relates to construction of the house in 1958 and its continued occupation by the Harris family followed by the Cousins family through the thirty-year mark (1996) even though they remained there into the early 2000s.

⁵ See <https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/map/CO/Denver/context#loc=13/39.7342/-104.9487>

⁶ Phil Goodstein, *Curtis Park, Five Points and Beyond: The Heart of Historic East Denver*, p. 198-200; Phil Goodstein, *Park Hill Promise: The Quest for an Idyllic Denver Neighborhood*, p. 28-30

4. Property Description

The North City Park (Skyland) Neighborhood - The Harris-Cousins House is at 3535 E. 26th Ave. Pkwy. in the Walnut Hill Addition to the City of Denver. This addition consists of sixteen platted blocks that occupy a large portion of the southeast quadrant of the Skyland Neighborhood, historically known as North City Park. Located directly north of the City Park Municipal Golf Course, the neighborhood is bordered by Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard on the north, East 26th Avenue on the south, Colorado Boulevard on the east, and York Street on the west. Within that area, the Walnut Hill Addition extends from East 26th Avenue to East 29th Avenue, and from Jackson Street to Steele Street.

The neighborhood is higher in elevation than the park and golf course, providing homes along East 26th Avenue with expansive views to the south and southwest. It is predominantly filled with single-family residences that date from the late 1800s through the mid-1900s, along with apartment buildings of various ages, sizes and configurations. A small number of commercial buildings are also present along East 28th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard.

Educational facilities in the neighborhood include the Robert F. Smith Steam Academy, Prep Academy and Columbine Elementary School. Scott United Methodist Church, Shorter Community AME Church, Peoples Presbyterian Church and the Jordan AME Church are scattered across the neighborhood. A large building near Colorado Boulevard and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard houses a nonprofit organization known as CrossPurpose. This faith-based ministry focuses upon helping individuals and families in their effort to escape from poverty and build more secure lives.

Most of the neighborhood's educational and non-profit institutions are rooted in Denver's African American community, reflecting an evolution of the area's racial composition that started in the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to the churches, a good example of this is the Owl Club of Denver, located at 2815 Madison St. For decades, this organization has worked for the betterment of the city's Black community and it remains active today.

Description of the Harris-Cousins House – The nominated house stands on the northwest corner of East 26th Avenue and North Monroe Street, on a large rectangular residential property consisting of Lots 15-21 in Block 12, Walnut Hill Addition, and Lot 2 in Block 12, State Addition. Centered on the property and built askew from the cardinal compass points, the building faces south-southwest with a view across East 26th Avenue and the City Park Municipal Golf Course. The irregular plan building is one story in height and occupies a footprint of approximately 80' x 92'. This includes an attached double-wide garage in the north wing.

Resting upon a concrete foundation, the masonry house's exterior walls are constructed of pressed blonde Roman bricks that are assembled in evenly stacked coursing. Three courses of dark red bricks laid in running bond coursing form a visual base for the walls.

The building's roof is flat with deeply cantilevered boxed eaves around the entire perimeter. While the upper lip of the eaves is clad in red metal flashing, the soffits slope downward toward the walls. Close to the walls, the soffits are punctuated by a pattern of open holes that provide ventilation.

South Façade: The recessed front entrance is centered on the south wall but located at an L in the façade. It is reached by way of the front sidewalk along with a small concrete apron that is sheltered by the deep eaves above. Metal security doors have been installed at the outer edge of the recess, flush with the front wall. These are constructed with metal framing and slender vertical bars, and they are ornamented with sheet metal trees and a horizontal fretwork band along the top. Installed by the Cousins, the age of the doors is uncertain but they have been there for decades. The main entrance holds a pair of wide veneered wood slab doors with handles that are set unusually far from the latches. On the exterior, these handles are surrounded by square decorative metal escutcheon plates bordered with wood trim. A combined metal peephole and door knocker is also present.

East of the main entrance, the façade's brick wall features a long, oversized horizontal window band that lets sunlight into the living room and provides a view across the front yard and City Park Golf Course. This consists of a large central fixed light flanked by two narrower fixed lights, with two more outer lights that are operable as sliding windows. Directly below this window band is a deep rectangular window well that is lined with concrete and capped with steel grates and dark red bricks. This allows sunlight to filter into two rectangular horizontal basement windows that are set high in the wall along the recreation room. The front wall west of the main entrance holds two horizontal bedroom windows, each of which consists of a large central light flanked by operable narrower lights. All of the windows are tucked just below the eaves and include angled dark red brick rowlock sills and galvanized steel framing.

West Side: This L-shaped side of the building has walls that face both north and west onto the side yard. Two entrances are present there. One is located at the master bedroom and provides access to an open porch and the side yard. The entry holds an oversized sliding door with a large adjacent fixed light. It is reached by two concrete steps up from the porch. Farther to the north along the wall is another entrance that provides access from the kitchen and utility room to the side yard and detached garage. A low concrete stoop is present outside the entry. The entrance contains a wood door with five lights, along with a metal security door with narrow vertical bars and ornamental fretwork. A dairy products delivery box is built into the adjacent wall.

Three windows are located along this side of the house. A two-light sliding window faces north and provides light for the master bedroom. This is tucked just below the eave. The other two windows face west onto the open porch and are located at restrooms. These hold opaque glass with ripples and vertical striations. All of the windows include dark red brick rowlock sills and galvanized steel framing. Below each of the main-floor windows are basement windows set in deep rectangular window wells (the one below the north-

facing bedroom window is L-shaped). The wells are lined with concrete, with brickwork and steel grates at the top.

A deep extension of the roof and eaves along the southwest length of the house forms a roof over an open porch outside the master bedroom. The rectangular porch has a diamond pattern stamped into the concrete floor. The roof above is supported by beams along with three slender metal pipe posts. South of the concrete, the ground is covered with crushed rock, still with the roof extension above. The southwest corner of the extended roof is supported by a detached rectangular wall segment that is clad in the same brickwork used on the house's main walls.

North Side: The house's north wall forms the side of the east-facing attached garage. The only feature at that location is a horizontal window with three fixed lights. The central light is larger than the two flanking ones, and all three hold opaque glass with ripples and vertical striations. The window is tucked beneath the eave and includes a dark red brick rowlock sill and galvanized steel framing.

East Side: This L-shaped side of the building has walls that face both north and east onto the side yard and driveway. The main area of the house, holding the living room, dining room and kitchen, is dominated by a deep L-shaped porch with a concrete floor stamped with a diamond pattern. It is sheltered by an extension of the roof and eaves, supported by beams and five slender metal pipe posts. Three entrances into the house are found along the length of the porch. All of them hold unusually wide doors and side lights that are framed with galvanized steel. The entry into the living room consists of two central sliding doors flanked by two fixed windows. The entries into the dining room and kitchen each hold a sliding door with a single adjacent fixed window. Decorative painted wood plaques with no evident symbolism have been applied to the narrow wall bands above the entrances.

Two windows are present along this side of the house, both providing light into the kitchen. One of these is a two-light sliding window and the other is a single-light fixed window. Both are tucked below the eaves and set in galvanized steel frames. The single-light window includes a brick rowlock sill.

Other features on the porch include a built-in barbeque along with a long counter with cabinets. These features are situated just outside the kitchen. The counter is constructed with blonde bricks that are identical to those used on the main walls of the house. It is capped by a thick slab of concrete and contains three cabinets with pairs of wood doors. The barbeque was manufactured by the Burr Southern Company of Pasadena, California, about which nothing was found. Its back wall is formed by an arc of blonde fire bricks that extend up to a chimney, which is formed by blonde Roman bricks. These are supported above the barbeque by a band of flagstone supported by a metal plate. The plate is tied into the adjacent walls and supported at its outer corner by a slender metal pipe post that rests in the concrete countertop.

The attached two-car garage at the house's north end is reached by way of an asphalt-paved driveway that enters the property along Monroe Street. Just outside the garage door, the drive is paved with a concrete apron. A 25-panel, double-wide overhead garage door is in the oversized entry. A wide rectangular exterior wall chimney, clad in blonde Roman bricks, projects from the building's southeast wall. This handles the fireplaces that are in the main-floor living room and basement recreation room.

Interior Features: Although some updating of the house's interior has taken place in recent months, the spacious building exhibits many features that date from its original construction in the late 1950s. These include the following:

The main entry vestibule retains its shale floor, assembled in a puzzle pattern, along with a coat closet, projecting metal can lights on the ceiling, and a wood paneled wall containing three large sheets of glass that are ornamented with multiple rondels. This wall separates the vestibule from the dining room.

The expansive living room on the main floor has large windows and doors along its north and south walls. The east wall is almost entirely clad in narrow horizontal slabs of sandstone of various sizes that are laid in random coursing. Vertical and diagonal joints separate the slabs from one another horizontally. A rectangular fireplace projects from the center of the wall. This includes a stone bench, and a circular piece of sandstone is centered on the wall above. The upper wall above the stonework is paneled with wood and holds two built-in rectangular speakers for the house's stereo system.

The house has four bedrooms, three bathrooms, and twenty-seven closets. Original features in the bathrooms include the bathtubs, showers and sinks, which also retain their original fixtures from the 1950s. The ceramics are taupe and yellow. Lengthy custom-built wood counters remain in place in the main-floor bathrooms, complete with their angled faces, sliding cabinet doors and glazed tile tops. The walls above the counters are clad in large mirrors and recessed cabinets and toothbrush holders are also present. Some of the wallpaper might date from the house's early years. The kitchen has recently been remodeled. Baseboard heat registers run throughout the house.

A closet adjacent to the main entry vestibule is occupied by a built-in sound system. This includes an Altec AM-FM receiver, two Altec amplifiers with controls for the main floor and basement, and a Viking Full Fidelity Model 75 reel-to-reel tape deck. The electronics are built into a wood cabinet within the closet. Altec emerged in the 1920s and developed sound for movies. While continuing to innovate systems for theaters, the firm expanded into products for recording studios and homes. Viking started producing reel-to-reel tape players in the late 1950s.

An original custom-fabricated wrought iron balustrade and rail remains on the stairway to the basement and along the hallway above. Its design employs a geometric pattern. The basement has undergone remodeling but retains its layout of rooms and includes storage

spaces and a cedar closet. The large recreation room features a full-length curved sandstone wall at the east end, along with a long sandstone bench and centered fireplace. Two circular speakers are built into the wall above the sandstone. With some variations, these features mimic those found in the main-floor living room above.

The final area of the interior is the expanded double-wide garage at the north end of the house. This has a concrete floor and the walls are clad in mint-colored glazed tiles with black grout lines.

Description of the Detached Garage - This building occupies the northwest corner of the property, across the yard northwest of the house and adjacent to the alley. It is reached by way of a short asphalt-paved driveway with a narrow concrete apron close to the building. Facing toward the south, the rectangular one-story garage has a footprint of approximately 22' x 34'. Its exterior walls are constructed of blonde Roman bricks like those found on the house. The roof is flat with boxed eaves of an average depth (unlike the house's much deeper eaves) and a band of red metal flashing along the upper lip.

The south façade holds three single-wide overhead doors, each with fifteen panels. No features other than the brick wall are on the west side of the building. The north wall is built very close to the property line and a privacy fence. A pedestrian door there (this appears to be a wood veneered slab door) is unusable and at least one window appears to be present on the adjacent wall. The building's east wall holds another pedestrian entry with a wood slab door. In general, the garage was designed to match the appearance of the house.

Description of the Grounds - The landscaped grounds around the house were designed to provide it with privacy and a buffer of beauty, and to insulate it somewhat from traffic along East 26th Avenue. In part, this was accomplished by setting the house away from the street toward the middle of the property. The large front yard is bisected by a private asphalt-paved driveway that runs on an east-west axis through the lower grounds south of the house and north of the street. This connects to Monroe Street on the east and the alley on the west, with a grassed area to the south closer to the street.

The driveway's north edge is landscaped with large irregular pieces of granite and a variety of shrubs. At the west end, the rocks are more stacked and turn to the north to extend along the east side of the alley. Close to the detached garage, this changes to a dry-stacked sandstone wall that curves along the east edge of the driveway. These features provide the property with natural ornament and support the perimeter of the higher front yard close to the house. A slightly curved, terraced concrete sidewalk extends up the slope from the southern driveway to the house's front entrance. On either side of the sidewalk, the yard is planted with grass. Shrubs and flowering plants fill the beds along the house's front wall. Mature deciduous and evergreen trees, one of them immense in size, border the yard on the west. A 100-year-old oak tree is also present.

The east edge of the property slopes downward toward the sidewalk along Monroe Street. In that location, the yard is planted with grass and holds several mature deciduous and evergreen trees, including a blue spruce and oak trees. A wood picket fence encloses the yard and toward the street it rests upon a low brick wall. This is predominantly composed of blonde bricks laid in running bond coursing, with three courses of dark red stretchers at the base and a cap of dark red rowlocks. A break in the wall and fence is present where the driveway enters the property.

The area north of the house is a continuation of the grassed yards to the east and west, with a variety of trees and shrubs. A wood privacy fence runs along the north property line. A flagstone walk extends from the driveway through the grass around the north end of the house. This extends to the entrance off the kitchen and utility room on the house's west side. Chain link fencing encloses the west yard, running from the house's southwest corner to the detached garage's southeast corner.

Alterations to the Property – No substantial non-historic alterations have impacted the house or detached garage, whose exteriors are intact from the period of significance. Both buildings retain and express the late 1950s design work of architect William J. Boorman and construction skill of builder Newton L. Koser. Few changes have taken place among the landscaping that was installed by landscape designer and original homeowner Frank N. Harris. The rockwork and plantings that remain on the property today are original to his design. Other than maturing of the vegetation, two features have changed over the years. First, there used to be a rose garden north of the driveway in the northeast area of the property. As the surrounding trees grew large and threw the rose bushes into shade, they died and were removed. The other change involved the removal of two large evergreen shrubs that flanked the front walkway.

5. Integrity

Location - The historic buildings and related features on this property have not been moved and the aspect of location is excellent.

Setting - This property was developed in the Skyland neighborhood north of East 26th Avenue and the City Park Golf Course. It was situated to take advantage of its expansive view to the south. The house was placed in the center of the site, above the lower streets to the east and south, and with a buffer of yard areas in all directions. Also notable on the site is its mature landscaping. These features date back to the property's initial development and remain intact today. In general, the aspect of setting is excellent.

Design – The house and detached garage were constructed in 1958 according to plans prepared by a noted architect. Similarly, the grounds were developed based upon plans prepared by an accomplished landscape architect. Few alterations have taken place on

the outside of the buildings or on the grounds. The property is largely intact from its period of development and exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of design.

Materials – Materials used to construct the buildings on this site primarily included concrete, brick, glass and metal. On the interior, the use of wood, stone and drywall was more prevalent. These materials remain visible and apparent, and the property exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of materials.

Workmanship - The masonry and carpentry skills that it took to construct the house and detached garage remain visible and apparent, reflecting the designer's and original owner's determination to erect a stylish, spacious, high quality single-family home on the property. The property continues to exhibit an excellent level of integrity in the area of workmanship.

Feeling - The property continues to read as a historic residence dating from the late 1950s. It conveys a clear sense of feeling in relation to its origins and use, and exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of feeling.

Association - The property possesses unique architectural characteristics, tied to a history of development and use that is directly associated with the lives of its historic designers and owners from the period of significance. It continues to be directly associated with these characteristics today and exhibits an excellent level of integrity in the area of association.

6. Historic Context / Historical Narrative

The Walnut Hill Addition and North City Park Neighborhood - The Walnut Hill Addition to the City of Denver dates to the late 1880s and was associated with businessman George A. Bushnell. Born in 1851 in Bushnellsville, New York (a town named for his ancestors), by 1870 his parents had moved the family to Bloomington, Illinois, where he took a job as a warehouse clerk. Bushnell arrived in Denver in 1876 and initially worked as a bookkeeper before managing several enterprises and opening a business of his own.

Bushnell was one of the original incorporators of the George Tritch Hardware Company in 1884 and served for years as its manager. Around twenty years later, he became an executive of the McPhee & McGinnity Company, one of the region's leading suppliers of building materials. He served as that firm's vice-president into the early 1930s. His only child, Theodore, was killed in action in France during World War I. George Bushnell died in 1931 and was buried in Riverside Cemetery.⁷

⁷ US Federal Census Records, George A. Bushnell, Bloomington, IL, 1870 / Denver, CO, 1880-1900; Denver City Directories, Listings for George A. Bushnell, 1880-1910; "Papers Filed," *Rocky Mountain News*,

In early 1887, amid his other business activities, Bushnell opened his own real estate, loan and brokerage firm with offices near 16th Street and Curtis Street in downtown Denver. Through this business, he assisted others with their purchases and sales. He also amassed a real estate empire of his own, acquiring properties across the city that he managed for many years. The business was so successful that Bushnell moved to larger quarters at 17th Street and Arapahoe Street.⁸

Bushnell acquired the 40-acre William Platt tract north of City Park and east of Ashley's Addition in the spring of 1887. Both had been established around five years prior. He reportedly paid \$600 per acre. Bushnell had the land platted as the Walnut Hill Addition to Denver, and it was surveyed and divided into 16 blocks containing multiple residential lots. The addition was bordered by East 26th Avenue on the south, East 29th Avenue on the north, Jackson Street on the east, and Steele Street on the west. Lots were placed on the market at the beginning of June 1887 for \$150 to \$200 each. Bushnell's real estate agency handled the sales and published frequent advertisements and notices in the *Rocky Mountain News*, encouraging potential buyers to visit the site.⁹

Walnut Hill's open ground was higher in elevation than its surroundings, and the view from that location to the south and west was promoted as one of its most enticing characteristics. Notices published daily in the *Rocky Mountain News* throughout the summer of 1887 presented the following sales pitches to potential buyers:

"The trees in the City park are leaved out in full and present a fine appearance from Walnut hill. The view presented from the streets of this new addition is one of the finest that can be obtained near the city. If you have not been on the ground, call upon the agent at once and drive out."

"Why pay \$150 for lots five miles from town when you can get lots in Walnut Hill addition at same price only two miles from court house? It is the highest ground near Denver without crossing a bridge or railroad track and overlooks the city and park."

In February 1888, the *Rocky Mountain News* wrote that more than 125 lots had been sold by Bushnell and starting March 1 the price would increase. His initial investment of \$600 per acre had reportedly increased to a value of between \$1,200 and \$2,000 per acre.

21 February 1884, p. 4; "George A. Bushnell Dies Following Short Illness," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 April 1931, p. 8

⁸ Denver City Directories, Listings for George A. Bushnell, 1890-1910; "Mr. George A. Bushnell, formerly connected with the German National Bank...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 1 February 1887, p. 3; "Successful Business," *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 April 1887, p. 4

⁹ "The William Platt tract of forty acres...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 14 May 1887, p. 10; "Mr. George A. Bushnell has platted Walnut Hill...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 May 1887, p. 5; "Real Estate Transfers," *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 May 1887, p. 5; "Walnut Hill Subdivision," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 June 1887, p. 7; "North of the City Park," *Rocky Mountain News*, 11 February 1888, p. 5

Despite these sales, development was scattered across the addition.¹⁰

Around the time that Walnut Hill's lots were first offered for sale in the summer of 1887, the City of Denver received a petition to extend East 26th Avenue east of York Street. Several years passed before any action was taken because the land was owned by the State of Colorado. In the spring of 1893, the Colorado State Assembly approved a bill conveying an 80' right-of-way to the City of Denver for the extension of East 26th Avenue from York Street to Colorado Boulevard, the eastern city limit. City Council requested that the State Land Board enlarge the transfer by adding a strip ten feet wide on either side of East 26th Avenue so the road could be enlarged to 100' and designated a boulevard. However, no action was taken and the street remained 80' wide. In 1898, Mayor Thomas McMurray signed a bill opening East 26th Avenue from York Street to Colorado Boulevard although the street was already in place. This made the land transfer formal and the thoroughfare subject to city maintenance and improvements.¹¹

Today's Skyland Neighborhood was known for decades as North City Park, and it extended from East 26th Avenue to East 34th Avenue between York Street and Colorado Boulevard. Its most intensive periods of development occurred between approximately 1905 and 1930, and then again during the post-World War II decades. In the early 1890s, Denver citizens unsuccessfully tried to have a streetcar line extended along East 26th Avenue to Colorado Boulevard. A group of residents in the vicinity of City Park tried again in 1916, organizing the Walnut Hill Improvement Association with the goal of securing the streetcar line. Despite their efforts, it was never approved or built although the streetcars did continue to operate as far east as York Street on the west edge of City Park.¹²

The lots that formed Block 12 in the Walnut Hill Addition were first sold in the 1880s and 1890s. Lots 15 to 21, where the Harris-Cousins House stands today, were purchased in 1894 by Adaline L. Davis. In 1915, she sold them to John W. Fishback, who had already acquired the two adjacent lots to the north. The following year, Lots 15 to 21 were acquired by the Cement, Stone, Brick and Sand Company (the firm might have been operating the clay pit and brickyard nearby). In 1925, they were sold to the Denver Land Company. They were then transferred in 1937 to Henry W. Toll, a Harvard-educated

¹⁰ "North of the City Park," *Rocky Mountain News*, 11 February 1888, p. 5; "The following will be read with interest...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 12 February 1888, p. 3; "The trees in the City park...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 June 1887, p. 8; "Strangers in the city...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 June 1887, p. 6; "The county commissioners...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 June 1887, p. 8; "The beautiful weather makes driving pleasant...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 June 1887, p. 8; "Why pay \$150 for lots five miles from town...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 July 1887, p. 7;

¹¹ Note: While newspaper articles from the late 1800s and early 1900s referred to the rectangular mile-long strip of land south of East 26th Avenue from York Street to Colorado Boulevard as part of City Park, it was in fact state school land with City Park abutting it to the south. This area is now occupied by the City Park Municipal Golf Course.; "Fourteen Tanks," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 February 1892, p. 4; "Queer Resolutions," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 January 1893, p. 4; "Boulevard Extensions," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 October 1893, p. 5; "Bills Signed by the Mayor," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 July 1898, p. 5

¹² "New Electric Line," *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 March 1893, p. 5; "Walnut Hill Association to Urge Car Line Addition," *Rocky Mountain News*, 24 February 1916, p. 4

attorney, World War I veteran, and Colorado state senator known for his opposition to the Ku Klux Klan. Twenty years later, the still-vacant lots would be purchased and developed by Frank and Nora Harris.¹³

Despite early promotion and sales of lots in the Walnut Hill Addition, Baist's 1905 Real Estate Map of Denver showed that many of the lots remained undeveloped. No houses were standing along East 26th Avenue. That same year, the City of Denver launched negotiations with the State Land Board for acquisition of the remaining state school land between City Park and East 26th Avenue. Amounting to 154 acres, this included a long narrow strip along the north side of East 26th Avenue that had not been previously conveyed to the City of Denver. Negotiations continued into 1906 before the transfer was complete. The strip of land was then platted to add two lots to the south end of every block that fronted onto East 26th Avenue.¹⁴

In the early 1900s, Denver's development began to progress into the additions north and east of City Park, including North City Park and the emerging Park Hill neighborhood east of Colorado Boulevard. This followed several years of downturn in the real estate market. For those looking to move into the area north of the park, the City of Denver's acquisition of the state land south of East 26th Avenue proved to be an added draw. In 1913, the land was developed into a nine-hole municipal golf course and in 1916 it was expanded to eighteen holes. From that time on, residents of the neighborhood north of the park enjoyed a view across a landscaped golf course rather than an area of undeveloped ground that held a handful of small houses and a clay pit associated with a brickyard.¹⁵

Frank N. and Nora L. Harris – Frank Neal Harris was born in 1895 in a log cabin in the vicinity of Whitefield, a small town in eastern Oklahoma's Choctaw Nation territory about fifty miles from the Arkansas state line. Cotton growing had been prevalent in the area for many years and because the Harris family was African-American, it is likely that they were employed as sharecroppers. By the mid-1910s, Frank Harris had moved to Wichita, Kansas and found work as a laborer for the construction firm of C. C. Jamison. When he registered for the draft in June 1917 during World War I, he reported that he was single and living in Wichita with his mother and younger sister. The registrar also noted that he was missing two fingers on his left hand. The cause of the injury is unknown, and it appears that he was not drafted because of it. In December 1917, Harris married Myrtle Beason of

¹³ Block 12, Walnut Hill Addition, Property Transfer Records, City of Denver, Department of Finance, Assessment Division Index

¹⁴ "State Places Flat Price on its Land," *Rocky Mountain News*, 19 October 1905, p. 14; "Terms are Cash and On the Spot," *Rocky Mountain News*, 3 November 1905, p. 7; "Park Board Ready to Conclude Deal for Transfer of Park Land," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 December 1905, p. 18; "Denver Has 1,000 Acres in Parks," *Rocky Mountain News*, 1 January 1906, p. 22

¹⁵ "South and East Sides Growing," *Rocky Mountain News*, 11 March 1906, p. 39; "Says Suburban Boom is Coming," *Rocky Mountain News*, 25 March 1906, p. 31; "Company Dug Too Deep Into Strip," *Rocky Mountain News*, 29 June 1906, p. 14; "City Golf Links Ready Saturday," *Rocky Mountain News*, 31 August 1913, p. 6; "City's Golf Course Will be Enlarged," *Rocky Mountain News*, 14 September 1914, p. 10

Kinta, Oklahoma, a small town just south of Whitefield.¹⁶

By 1924, Frank and Myrtle had moved west and settled in Denver's Five Points-Whittier neighborhood. By that time, the area had become the heart of the city's Black community. Over the following decade, the couple lived in a modest two-story brick house they purchased at 2516 N. Ogden St. (the house remains standing today). They had no children. Harris worked as a gardener and by 1927 was listed in the city directory as a landscape contractor. One of his early projects involved development of the grounds for the newly-built National Home for Jewish Children at West 19th Street and Julian Street. When the work was complete and the facility opened in August 1928, Harris joined the other project contractors by taking out an advertisement in the *Intermountain Jewish News* that stated: "These Grounds Were Leveled and Lawned by Frank Harris, Expert in Ground Planning."¹⁷

Over the following years, Harris continued to design and install landscapes. In the summer of 1930, he arranged to have his business incorporated as the Harris Landscape Company with an initial capitalization of \$10,000. The incorporators were listed with the State of Colorado as Frank Harris, Myrtle Harris, and prominent Denver attorney Omar E. Garwood. Frank and Myrtle divorced in December 1935 and she remained in the house on Ogden Street, working for years as a maid and taking in boarders.¹⁸

The day after his divorce was finalized, Frank married Lunora "Nora" L. Cole. Born in 1896, she grew up on her family's farm near Jefferson City in northeast Texas. Nora's father died in the first decade of the 20th century, leaving her widowed mother Georgia to raise their seven children. By 1920, the family had moved to Colorado Springs, where Nora's oldest brother, Thomas, had secured a job as a railroad porter. She moved to Denver around 1928 and became a claims department manager in the offices of the American Woodmen Association at 2130 Downing St. Founded in Denver in 1901 and national in scope by the 1920s, the fraternal and mutual aid organization provided African-Americans with access to life insurance and home mortgages at a time when many had substantial trouble securing these products from the nation's major insurers and lenders.¹⁹

Nora's mother and several siblings joined her in Denver and she continued to work at the

¹⁶ Draft Registration Cards, Frank Harris, Wichita, KS, 1917; Marriage Record, Frank Harris and Myrtle Beason, Sebastian County, AR, 24 December 1917

¹⁷ Laura Mauck, *Images of America: Five Points Neighborhood of Denver*, p. 7-8; Five Points-Whittier Neighborhood History, Retrieved from Denver Public Library, Special Collections and Archives at <https://history.denverlibrary.org/neighborhood-history-guide/five-points-whittier-neighborhood-history>; Phil Goodstein, *Curtis Park, Five Points and Beyond: The Heart of Historic East Denver*, p. 146-150; Denver City Directories, Listings for Frank and Myrtle Harris, 1924-1932; "Responsible for Utility, Beauty of New Buildings," *Intermountain Jewish News*, 23 August 1928, p. 6

¹⁸ US Federal Census Records, Frank and Myrtle Harris, Denver, CO, 1930-1950; "Incorporations," *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 July 1930, p. 16; "Omar Garwood and Wife Killed in Car Crash," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 June 1957, p. 5; "Divorces Granted," *Rocky Mountain News*, 28 December 1935, p. 11

¹⁹ Marriage Record, Frank Harris and Nora L. Cole, State of Colorado, Division of Vital Statistics, 28 December 1935; US Federal Census Records, Nora L. Cole, Jefferson City, TX, 1900-1910, Colorado Springs, CO, 1920, Denver, CO, 1930

American Woodmen Association into the 1930s. She met Frank Harris when she stopped to admire the landscaping he had just installed around the American Woodmen Association building. On 1 February 1936, the *Colorado Statesman* reported the following about them:

“On last Saturday afternoon just before the offices of the American Woodmen closed Miss Nora Cole, one of the efficient clerks of long standing and very well beloved by her co-workers announced to the staff that she had been Mrs. Frank Harris since December 28, 1935. The news was a complete surprise to her many friends. The couple accompanied by the relatives of the bride motored to Littleton where the ceremony was performed. Congratulations to the couple from the Statesman and friends.”

The newlywed couple settled into a house at 2037 N. Franklin St. (no longer extant) in the City Park West neighborhood. In 1936, they began work on a new residence they planned to construct on a corner property composed of 5½ lots, just a few blocks north at 2256 N. Franklin St. (5DV.32519). Still standing today, when the house was completed in 1937 it was hailed as an architectural masterpiece and a source of pride not only for the Harrises but also for Denver’s Black community. It was also a remarkable achievement considering the financial hardships that many families were enduring in the depths of the Great Depression.²⁰

In May 1937, the *Colorado Statesman* and *Denver Star* newspapers published glowing articles about the prominent couple and their new “Spanish-designed bungalow” residence. They held an open house attended by a throng of “hundreds of Denver celebrities.” Among them were Nora’s co-workers from the American Woodmen Association, who guided visitors through the property. The Harrises prepared the plans for the one-story stuccoed Mediterranean Revival house and acted as the general building contractor. Every feature seemed to spare no expense and was handcrafted and customized for the owners. They included Spanish-style fixtures, hand-painted murals, and a large fireplace that Frank constructed with moss rocks he collected from the mountains. He also designed and installed the manicured landscaping and four large lots behind the house were laid out for his perennial gardens. These were watered by an underground sprinkler system with water sourced from a 525’-deep well. In its article titled “Denver’s Most Beautiful Modernistic Residence,” the *Denver Star* wrote that “regardless of race this beautiful home is destined to be one of the show places of Denver.”²¹

In September 1938, the *Colorado Statesman* published an article about Harris, providing a short list of some of his professional accomplishments. They included the following properties:

- American Woodmen Building, 2130 Downing St.

²⁰ “On last Saturday afternoon...,” *Colorado Statesman*, 1 February 1936, p. 3; Denver City Directories, Listings for Frank and Nora Harris, 1936

²¹ “Denver’s Most Beautiful Modernistic Residence,” *Denver Star*, 8 May 1937, p. 1; “Mr. and Mrs. Frank Harris Formally Opened Their Fashionable New Home to the Public Last Sunday,” *Colorado Statesman*, 8 May 1937, p. 1

- National Jewish Hospital, 3800 E. Colfax Ave.
- Colorado Women's College, 1901 E. Asbury Ave.
- Park Hill Golf Club, 46th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard
- Clayton College, 29th Avenue and Colorado Boulevard
- Sportland Beach Club, 32nd Avenue and Colorado Boulevard
- May Bonfils Estate (Belmar), 729 S. Wadsworth Blvd.

The article went on to state that hundreds of residences throughout the Denver area “reflect the handiwork of this lover of lovely flowers, and it is said by many that his work is easily discernible by its excellency and the taste shown in his plans.”²²

Harris continued to work in the field of landscape design and installation into the 1960s. When he registered for the draft in 1942, the registrar again noted that he had two fingers missing from his left hand. During the war years, the Harris house served as the venue for monthly meetings of the Cosmopolitan Club of Denver, an educational fellowship that promoted world citizenship and the brotherhood of people from all backgrounds. Founded in Denver around 1931, its motto was “Humanity Above Race, Nationality or Creed.” Harris was lauded in Denver's African-American press for quietly having built a successful business that was in demand across the city, with a client base that was predominantly Euro-American. In the early 1950s, he completed work on the landscaping for a new Olinger's Mortuary facility at 6601 E. Colfax Ave. The Harris' house was also included on garden tours in Denver. In the mid-1950s, Nora joined the board of directors of the Denver chapter of the NAACP. They reached a point in their lives where they had become part of the city's Black business and professional elite.²³

In 1957, Frank and Nora Harris decided to build a new house for themselves (they had no children). It would be located on a sizable vacant property formed of eight adjoining lots they had recently acquired in the North City Park neighborhood at 3535 E. 26th Ave. overlooking the City Park Municipal Golf Course. Frank secured a building permit in November, indicating that the Ranch Style house would include an attached two-car garage along with a three-car detached garage near the alley. Architect William J. Boorman was engaged to design the buildings and provide architectural plans. Construction would be handled by building contractor Newton L. Koser. Frank Harris would complete the

²² “Mr. Frank Harris Lays a Solid Foundation,” *Colorado Statesman*, 2 September 1938, p. 7; US Federal Census Records, Frank and Myrtle Harris, Denver, CO, 1940-1950; Draft Registration Cards, Frank Harris, Denver, CO, 1942

²³ “Cosmopolitan Club,” *Colorado Times*, 22 July 1944, p. 8; “So They Say,” *Colorado Statesman*, 17 March 1946, p. 4; Denver City Directories, Listings for Frank and Nora Harris, 1946-1960; US Federal Census Records, Frank and Myrtle Harris, Denver, CO, 1940-1950; “Frank Harris, Landscape Gardener,” *East Denver Journal*, 13 September 1951, p. 5; “You Must See Our Gardens,” *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 July 1953, p. 16; “So They Say,” *Colorado Statesman*, 12 September 1953, p. 1; “NAACP Installs New Officers,” *Denver Inquirer*, 8 January 1954, p. 1; “Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Entertains,” *Denver Inquirer*, 12 February 1954, p. 2

landscaping of the grounds.²⁴

With work underway in early 1958, the Harrises placed their residence at 2256 N. Franklin St. on the market for \$29,000. Mention of the new house project in *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal* in February informed readers that construction would be completed by April for a cost of \$55,000. Frank and Nora Harris moved into their expansive new house and lived there for several years.²⁵

By the spring of 1965, Frank Harris found himself mired in debt. According to a March 1965 article in *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, his business was under water with more than \$296,000 in debt and just over \$18,000 in assets. Harris was forced into bankruptcy. Over the following months, Capitol Federal Savings and Loan acquired several properties that he owned through foreclosures and public trustee's auctions. They included three duplexes in the 2300 and 2400 blocks of E. 26th Ave., two more at 2248 and 2250 N. Franklin St., and a single-family residence at 2625 N. Monroe St. directly north of the Harris House. Each was built in the early 1960s. Frank had gone into the property development business and for reasons that are no longer known, his fortunes took a turn for the worse. Around the middle of 1966, the Harrises sold their home at 3535 E. 26th Ave. Frank died in April 1968 and was buried at Fairmount Cemetery. He was joined there the following year when Nora passed away.²⁶

William J. Boorman and Newton L. Koser – William John Boorman was born in 1912 and grew up in Los Angeles, where his father was employed as a carpenter. He attended the city's Metropolitan Polytechnic High School and likely the University of California in Los Angeles. In 1934 Boorman married Doris Reynolds of Denver. Since she was a child, she frequently appeared in the society pages of the *Rocky Mountain News*. Doris also attended the University of California in Los Angeles in the early 1930s and appears to have met William Boorman there. Following their wedding, they settled in Denver and initially lived in a house at 756 Colorado Blvd.²⁷

Boorman started designing residences shortly after he arrived in Denver. Among the first

²⁴ "Denver Building Permits," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 21 November 1957, p. 29; Applications for Construction Permits, House and Detached Garage, 3535 E. 26th Ave., 15 November 1957

²⁵ "Building News and Notes," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 5 February 1958, p. 6; "For Sale: Good 8 rm. brick house...", *Colorado Times*, 27 January 1958, p. 4; "Building News and Notes," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 5 February 1958, p. 6

²⁶ "Business Troubles," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 24 March 1965, p. 31; "Denver Real Estate News," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 28 July 1965, p. 26; "Real Estate Transfers," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 22 June 1966, p. 29; Burial Record, Frank Neal Harris, Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, CO. Date of Death: April 1968; Burial Record, Nora Louise Harris, Fairmount Cemetery, Denver, CO. Date of Death: 1969

²⁷ US Federal Census Records, William J. Boorman, Los Angeles, CA, 1920-1930; "Miss Doris Reynolds," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 September 1931, p. 18; "Baby Week Draws Sturdy Youngsters to Club," *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 May 1917, p. 7; "Mr. and Mrs. G. A. Reynolds announce...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 August 1934, p. 5; Denver City Directories, Listing for William and Doris Boorman, 1936

was an elegant brick English-Norman style house at 917 S. Josephine St. in the Bonnie Brae neighborhood. The house was designed for Harry and Flora Maclear (he was vice-president of the Maclear Manufacturing and Supply Company, a foundry and machine works). Around that time, Boorman was working as a draftsman in the office of architect Henry Koch, who designed the Jefferson County courthouse along with numerous schools and high-style revival residences. He registered for the draft in 1940 and enlisted in the US Navy on 7 December 1941, presumably in response to news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Boorman spent the war years serving in a construction battalion that was stationed in several locations in the United States, primarily along the West Coast.²⁸

Following the war, Boorman returned to his solo architectural practice in Denver. For several years he lived and worked out of a house at 820 Adams St. Then from around 1950 to 1980, Boorman's design office was in his home at 250 Monaco St. Pkwy. While a full accounting of the buildings he worked on over the decades is not available, some details about his career have emerged. By the early 1950s, he was designing expansive brick Ranch style houses for his clients. In 1951, he completed work on a dozen Ranches that would be built by developer Alexander Marranzino along Locust Street (on the west side of Monaco Street Parkway) in the Crestmoor Park neighborhood between 1st Avenue and 4th Avenue. Around that same time, he designed another large Ranch residence a block to the east at 6520 E. 4th Ave. Sales notices in the *Rocky Mountain News* described it as a "new Boorman designed ranch house." By naming him in this way, advertisements projected a message to potential buyers that the design was of exceptional quality. Boorman had gained a reputation as a designer of high-quality Ranch houses.²⁹

In 1952, Boorman secured a permit for the construction of four small single-family residences between 401 and 427 Albion St. across the street from Steck Elementary School. It appears that three are still standing today, all solid but rather simple Ranch houses that were designed to be affordable. Two years later, Boorman joined three other Denver architects in a lawsuit, claiming that the State Board of Architect Examiners had refused to grant them licenses and was interfering in the practice of their profession. They won their case in 1955, at the same time putting the legal status of architect licensing in question until the issue was resolved by the Colorado Supreme Court. Boorman ended up being licensed for the first time the following year.³⁰

²⁸ Denver City Directories, Listings for William J. Boorman, 1936-1979; "Maclear Home Started," *Rocky Mountain News*, 22 August 1935, p. 4; US Department of Veterans Affairs, BIRLS Death File, William J. Boorman, Enlistment on 7 December 1941; US Federal Census Records, William J. Boorman, Denver, CO, 1940-1950; William J. Boorman, Muster Roll, US Naval Advance Base Depot, Construction Battalion Center, Port Hueneme, CA, 1943

²⁹ Denver City Directories, Listings for William J. Boorman, 1945-1979; "You Are Invited to the Opening," *Rocky Mountain News*, 18 November 1949, p. 16; "Housing Project Started," *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 April 1951, p. 29; "Open From 2 to 5," *Rocky Mountain News*, 5 April 1952, p. 46

³⁰ "Zoning Board Okays Private Parking Lot," *Rocky Mountain News*, 30 July 1952, p. 14; "Zoning Board OKs Office-Warehouse," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 August 1952, p. 52; "Architects Ask Voiding of Law," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 November 1954, p. 31; "4 Architects Win Fight with Examiner Board," *Rocky*

In 1955, Boorman was engaged by developer Gordon N. King of the King Building Corporation to design eleven options for single-family, three-bedroom brick houses with attached carports. Early the following year, the firm started to advertise its new project, the King Krest subdivision in the vicinity of West 66th Avenue and Wadsworth Boulevard in Arvada. Many of the houses built there remain standing, particularly in the 6600 blocks of Upham Street and Teller Street. In 1957, Boorman designed a Ranch style residence for home builder John C. DeWitt at 2805 E. Dartmouth Ave. in the Wellshire neighborhood. The other project he completed that year was the Ranch style residence at 3535 E. 26th Ave. Pkwy. for Frank and Nora Harris, constructed by Newton L. Koser.³¹

Newton Leo Koser was born in Denver in 1918. His father, also named Newton, had been a successful sheep grower in northeastern Colorado starting in the 1880s and then became a banker in the town of Akron. By the time the younger Newton was born, his father was in his late fifties with a wife thirty years his junior. After growing up in Denver, Koser attended the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, followed by studies at the University of Detroit in Michigan. In 1942, he married Lucille Mikelson and the couple returned to Denver by 1945, where he initially worked as a tool designer and mechanical engineer. By 1950, he had become a building contractor. In 1954, the Koser family moved into a modest Ranch house at 1121 Tucson St. in Aurora's Hoffman Heights. That was followed a few years later by a larger Ranch at 2360 S. Garfield St. in the University Park neighborhood, where he continued to live for many years.³²

In 1957, Koser was under contract to build a house at 3500 S. Dartmouth Ave. for Judge Charles Rosenbaum. The Ranch house, approached by a circular drive, is still standing and features a very low-pitched roof with deep eaves along with extensive use of flagstone wall cladding. Over the following two years, in 1958 and 1959, Newton Koser and his business, Koser Homes, were among the city's most prominent Denver builders highlighted in the Parade of Homes. According to an article about the event that appeared in the *Rocky Mountain News* in October 1958, "Newton L. Koser...since 1953 has built the luxury type custom homes as found in the Cherry Hills, Southwest and East Denver areas." His featured house in 1959 was located at 1910 Zinnia St. in the Applewood Grove neighborhood on the west side of the city. The Ranch house, designed by architect Richard L. Crowther, featured a low profile, brick walls, a low-pitched roof with deep eaves and

Mountain News, 11 February 1955, p. 56; Architectural License Records, William J. Boorman, Denver, CO, License #200116, Colorado Architectural Licensing Board, 1956-1993

³¹ "Now...All This...And Room to Spare," *Rocky Mountain News*, 19 February 1956, p. 90; "If a Home of Your Own is Your Goal," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 October 1956, p. 88; "King Krest Homes Present Luxury at Moderate Price," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 October 1956, p. 91; "Building News and Notes," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 16 January 1958, p. 20

³² US Federal Census Records, Newton L. Koser, Denver, CO, 1920-1950; "Mines School Frats Pledge 18 Denver Men," *Rocky Mountain News*, 24 September 1936, p. 6; Draft Registration Cards, Newton Leo Koser, Detroit, MI, 1940; Marriage Record, Newton Koser and Lucille Mikelson, State of Ohio, Marriage Records for Lucas County, 31 October 1942; Denver City Directories, Listings for Newton L. Koser, 1945-1977; "Bits 'Bout Hoffman Heights," 25 March 1954, p. 10

exposed laminated beams, floor to ceiling windows, and a full-length ridgeline ventilator.³³

While the Harris House was under construction in 1958, William Boorman and Newton Koser were busy collaborating on several other projects. One involved a large Ranch house at 6400 Plateau Dr. Located in the upscale Charlou neighborhood in the Denver suburb of Cherry Hills Village, it was built for the Robert Oakes family. He was an executive of the Isbell-Kent-Oakes Dry Goods Company in downtown Denver. They were also planning and constructing a residential building that occupied an entire V-shaped block on the northwest corner of Hale Parkway and Glencoe Street, with four ground-floor apartments and a second-floor penthouse. That building, built for Roy C. Robinson of the Robinson Brokerage Company, remains standing today. Finally, that same year Boorman prepared plans for an enlargement and remodel of the Pizza Oven Restaurant at 600 Sherman St., a building that has since been demolished.³⁴

During the years following the development of the Harris House, Boorman continued with his career as an architect and city directories show that he was active through the 1970s. He also volunteered his time, assisting with municipal and organizational efforts. During the early to mid-1960s, he served on the Denver Urban Renewal Authority board and was involved with several of its projects. One was the Avondale redevelopment at West Colfax Avenue and Federal Boulevard. Another was the Skyline urban renewal project in lower downtown. Boorman also served as vice-president and then president of the Denver chapter of the Society of Registered American Architects.³⁵

The only residential projects he designed in the 1960s that are currently known involved the Alpha Gamma Delta House at 855 Broadway in Boulder (built in 1960, the building remains standing but has been extensively remodeled) and a strikingly contemporary Ranch house at 3199 E. Floyd Dr. in the Wellshire neighborhood. Built for insurance and oil and gas executive Doyle Baird and his wife Miriam, the house is one of Boorman's most notable projects. William Boorman died in 1992, and his place of burial is unknown.³⁶

³³ "Building News and Notes," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 28 November 1957, p. 20; "Prominent Buildings in Exposition," *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 October 1958, p. 2A; "Parade of Homes," *Rocky Mountain News*, 11 September 1959, p. 67; "Modern Living in Koser Feature," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 September 1959, p. 11B; "Newton L. Koser presents...", *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 September 1959, p. 122; Database of the Annual Denver Area Parade of Homes, 1953-1963, Listings for William Boorman and Newton Koser, Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Center for Historic Preservation Research, 2006;

³⁴ "Building News and Notes," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 5 February 1958, p. 6; "'V' Apartments with Penthouse," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 2 April 1958, p. 7; "Pizza Oven Relined," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 16 April 1958, p. 13

³⁵ "Avondale, Denver's First Urban Renewal Project Comes to the Hatching Stage," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 24 October 1962, p. 22; "Who's Who in Commerce and Industry," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 22 January 1964, p. 34; "Fort Collins Architect Chapter Vice President," *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, 25 January 1965, p. 5

³⁶ Photograph of the Alpha Gamma Delta House, 855 Broadway, Boulder, CO, Collection of the Carnegie Library for Local History, Image #BHS-207-3-2; Discover Denver Survey, Baird House, 3199 E. Floyd Dr., Posted on Facebook, 19 April 2023

Newton Koser also continued with his career as a home builder following completion of the Harris House. By 1959, he had joined the board of directors of the Home Builders Association of Metropolitan Denver. Two years later, on behalf of the Builders Association, he supervised construction of a new lodge at the Colorado Society for Crippled Children and Adults camp in the mountains near Georgetown. In the 1960s, Koser was installed as secretary of the Denver Home Builders Association and then became the organization's treasurer. He also served as chair of the Easter Seals Handicamp project in Denver in the mid-1960s. Boorman and Koser collaborated on at least one more project in 1963, when they worked on a Ranch house at 3977 Jasmine St. in Southmoor Park. It was featured in the 1963 Parade of Homes. While the residence remains standing, it appears to have experienced exterior alterations in recent years. Newton Koser died in 2000 and was buried next to his wife in Mount Olivet Cemetery in Wheat Ridge.³⁷

Charles L. and Alta Cousins – The new owners of the Harris House in 1966 were Charles R. and Dorothy E. Cousins. However, their story originated decades earlier, when the Cousins family migrated to Denver. Prior to their arrival in Colorado, the African-American family lived from the 1870s into the 1890s in the Appalachian coal country of western Virginia. One of the children of Robert and Sarah Cousins was a son, Charles Lilburn Cousins, who was born in Virginia in 1881. In the 1890s the family moved to Atchison, Kansas, where Charles entered his teenage years and initially worked as a farm laborer before finding employment in a foundry. He met Alta Craig in Atchison while they were teens, and they were married around 1902. Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1903 and two more daughters arrived over the following years.³⁸

In 1909, Charles and Alta moved their family to Denver in search of a stable future for themselves and their descendants. They were encouraged to make the move by Charles' brother George, who already lived in Denver and was employed as a Pullman porter. Charles managed to get hired by the Pullman Company, the nation's originator and operator of luxurious railroad sleeping carriages. Upon their arrival in the city, he and Alta settled into a house at 4229 N. Broadway near the railyards in north Denver's industrial Globeville neighborhood.³⁹

³⁷ Database of the Annual Denver Area Parade of Homes, 1953-1963, Listings for William Boorman and Newton Koser, Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Center for Historic Preservation Research, 2006; "Home Builders Group Installs New Officers," *Rocky Mountain News*, 7 January 1959, p. 36; "Builders Aid Handicapped," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 September 1961, p. 94; "Home Builders Pick Men of Year for '61," *Rocky Mountain News*, 19 November 1961, p. 8; "Parade of Homes," *Rocky Mountain News*, 18 September 1963, p. 33; "New Officers of Home Builders," *Rocky Mountain News*, 29 November 1964, p. 70; "Truck for Handicamp," *Rocky Mountain News*, 27 June 1966, p. 46

³⁸ US Federal Census Records, Robert and Sarah Cousins, Russell County, VA, 1870-1880 / Atchison, KS, 1900; Kansas State Census, Listings for Robert and Sarah Cousins, Atchison, KS, 1895; US Federal Census Records, Charles L. and Alta Cousins, Atchison, KS, 1900 and Denver, CO, 1910; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

³⁹ Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025; US Federal Census Records, Charles L. and Alta Cousins, Atchison, KS, 1900 / Denver, CO, 1910

After spending three years in the 1860s selling supplies to miners in the Colorado gold camps, entrepreneur George Pullman returned to Chicago with cash to spend and decided to launch a business producing luxury sleeper carriages for rail travel. Interest in his Pullman Palace Cars surged during the economic boom and national expansion that followed the Civil War. Pullman monopolized the sleeping car business by acquiring competitors or driving them under. He also heavily promoted the use of his cars in newspapers across the country, increasing customer demand and putting pressure on the railroad companies to work with his firm. Pullman devised the concept of leasing the cars and their crews to the nation's rail lines. Demand was there, as moneyed customers were eager to pay for a more comfortable option for travel. The railroads rushed to sign leases with the Pullman Company.⁴⁰

Pullman needed to secure a reliable source of crews for his cars, specifically porters who would quietly and expertly tend to the needs of travelers. He settled on hiring Black men, assessing that recently-freed slaves and their descendants would be eager to get away from the South and its stifling system of sharecropping and restrictive Jim Crow laws. In his 2004 book *Rising From The Rails*, author Larry Tye wrote of the allure of railroad work to former slaves, referring to the symbolic association of trains with freedom: "Slaves had gazed at them and dreamed of escape, escaped slaves took the underground railroad north, and the Pullman porter continued the tradition by riding his sleeper car to a better life." Prior to George Pullman, African Americans generally did not work for the railroad companies in any capacity as they were restricted due to racist company policies.⁴¹

The porter's job was to serve affluent Euro-American travelers by greeting them and hauling their baggage, providing food and drinks, and maintaining sleeping berths. While the work involved long hours and often demeaning treatment, the task of being a porter also offered an opportunity to travel the country and enjoy relatively good working conditions. It was far preferable to sharecropping or working in a factory, and certainly more financially rewarding. Porters approached the work with great dignity. They were rewarded in part by being admired by their families and friends, and by gaining respect in the Black community nationwide. Many of the men took advantage of the opportunity, and the reliable paychecks it provided, to raise their families into the middle class.⁴²

In 1917, when the United States entered World War I, Charles L. Cousins registered for the draft. At that time, he reported that he was employed as a Pullman porter working for the Pullman Company and based in Denver's Union Station. He and Alta had recently moved their family away from Globeville and into a fine brick two-story Foursquare house at 2448 Lafayette St. (5DV.7003) in the Whittier neighborhood. The Cousins family continued to

⁴⁰ Larry Tye, *Rising From the Rails: Pullman Porters and the Making of the Black Middle Class*, p. 6-12

⁴¹ Tye, *Rising From the Rails*, p. 17-25 and 225

⁴² Tye, *Rising From the Rails*, p. 17-25

live there for many years.⁴³

In addition to securing a house in a good neighborhood for his family, Charles used his earnings from working as a porter to purchase real estate in the Five Points neighborhood, the heart of Denver's Black community and the center of its economic and cultural life. In some cases, he acquired existing buildings that he remodeled and rehabilitated himself, utilizing skills that he learned by observing construction workers and asking questions. In others, he developed his own projects from vacant land. Because of discriminatory policies in banking, financing for his projects was often secured through the help of a Euro-American friend who fronted for Cousins when applying for loans.⁴⁴

One of his earliest projects involved the construction of a duplex in the 2600 block of Vine Street (this seems to have been demolished). On the southwest corner of the intersection of 25th Ave. and Downing St., he built a handsome four-unit bungalow that remains standing. In the 1920s, Cousins purchased a residential terrace on the corner of 25th Street and Welton Street and named it for his wife. Still standing today, the elegant Alta Cousins Terrace holds eight walk-up, two-story townhomes. Another building, constructed in the late 1800s and acquired by Cousins around 1928, was The Arcade at 725 E. 26th Ave. He set to work remodeling the building, in part using tiles that were salvaged from the old East High School. The Arcade held several businesses where customers could find various products and services under one roof. They included a barber shop, shoeshine stand, beauty shop, and what Charles claimed was the finest soda fountain in Colorado. Hotel rooms were available for rent on the second floor.⁴⁵

Charles continued to work as a Pullman porter into the 1940s and over the years expanded his real estate empire to include numerous properties. During the 1940s and 1950s, he also co-owned and operated a popular Five Points tavern and grill known as the Arcade Lounge at 725 E. 26th Ave. Charles' drive to succeed provided his family with an example of a work ethic that brought them pride and launched a real estate business that he passed on to his descendants and remains intact into the 21st century.⁴⁶

Charles R. and Dorothy E. Cousins – On 2 January 1918, Charles and Alta's growing family welcomed a new child, a son named Charles Robert. As a child, he was known by the family as "Brother." That nickname extended beyond the family and underscored his sociable personality. Born in the family home on Lafayette St., his birth was attended by Denver's renowned female African-American physician, Dr. Justina Ford.

⁴³ Draft Registration Cards, Charles L. Cousins, Denver, CO, 1917; US Federal Census Records, Charles L. and Alta Cousins, Denver, CO, 1920-1950; Architectural Inventory Records, Charles L. Cousins House (5DV.7003), 2448 Lafayette St., Denver, CO, Recorded by Barbara Norgren, 1983

⁴⁴ Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁴⁵ Phil Goodstein, *Curtis Park, Five Points and Beyond: The Heart of Historic East Denver*, p. 216; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁴⁶ "Denver's Social Whirl," *Colorado Statesman*, 18 December 1942, p. 5; Denver City Directories, Listings for Charles L. Cousins, 1940s-1950s



Around 1930, Charles was living in the house with his parents, three siblings, and his uncle George. After graduating from Manual High School in 1936, he attended the Colorado Agricultural College in Fort Collins for one year but left due to discrimination he encountered on campus. Charles moved back to his parents' house in Denver.⁴⁷

When Charles registered for the draft in October 1940, the registrar indicated that he was employed by the Union Pacific Railroad in its commissary department. By that time, he had been working for the railroad for about four years. Rather than being drafted and sent overseas during World War II, he served as a firefighter with the Denver Fire Department's Station 3 at 2500 N. Washington St. The all-Black crew, the only one of its kind in the city, was highly regarded by residents of the Five Points neighborhood.⁴⁸

In 1936, Charles secured a business license from the City of Denver and started placing jukeboxes and vending machines in commercial establishments around the city. The business continued for many years as he simultaneously pursued other interests in the Five Points commercial district. In 1946, Charles partnered with Elvin R. Caldwell to open a tavern and grill known as the 715 Club. Caldwell had just finished working as chief statistician and assistant superintendent for production at the Remington Arms Plant in Denver during World War II. In 1950, he rose to prominence in the political arena when he was elected to the Colorado House of Representatives. That was followed by seven terms on Denver's City Council from 1955 to 1982. Located at 715 E. 26th Ave., the 715 Club provided dining and cocktails to guests, most of whom were members of the city's Black community. Advertisements in the *Colorado Statesman* newspaper declared the establishment to be a place "Where Every Guest is a Celebrity." Charles Cousins managed the business into the late 1990s.⁴⁹

In September 1947, Charles married Dorothy Elizabeth Caldwell and they settled into a townhome at 1601 E. 25th Ave. in the Whittier neighborhood. Born in Joliet, Illinois in 1918, Dorothy grew up in Cripple Creek, where her mother Willa was employed as a domestic servant in the family home of prominent mining attorney Hildreth Frost. She also worked as the head cook at St. Nicholas Catholic Hospital. Dorothy and her mother relocated to Denver in 1930 and rented an apartment in Five Points in a house at 2433 Emerson St. Willa took a job as a hotel maid and by 1940 was employed as a cook in the home of prominent Denver builder and banking executive, Frank Kirchhof. Charles and Dorothy attended Manual High School at the same time, although she graduated in 1935, a year

⁴⁷ US Federal Census Records, Charles R. Cousins, Denver, CO, 1930-1940; Manual High School Yearbook, Listing for Charles R. Cousins, 1936; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁴⁸ Draft Registration Cards, Charles R. Cousins, Denver, CO, 1940; Denver City Directories, Listing for Charles R. Cousins, 1945; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁴⁹ "One of East Denver's Newest and Smartest Food and Drink Places," *Colorado Statesman*, 19 October 1946, p. 5; "The '715'," *Colorado Statesman*, 27 August 1949, p. 4

before him. Following that, she worked as a clerk in the Atlas Drug Store in Five Points.⁵⁰

Five years after they were married, Dorothy gave birth to a daughter, Renee Annette, who would develop a prominent career of her own in Denver. She graduated from East High School in 1970, where she served as president of the pre-med club. That summer, Renee became a debutante at the renowned Owl Club in the North City Park neighborhood. Awarded a Boettcher Scholarship, she attended Colorado College followed by medical school at the Mayo Clinic. She then completed a two-year residency at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore before returning to Denver, where she finished her third year of residency. Dr. Cousins went on to serve the community for several decades as a pediatrician and medical educator. She was appointed by Governor Roy Romer to two terms on the Colorado State Board of Medical Examiners. In 2008, she married Vernon C. King in 2008 and became Dr. Renee Cousins King. Dr. Cousins King was honored by Historic Denver in 2022 as the recipient of the Ann Love Award for her commitment to the preservation of the history, culture and architecture of Denver.⁵¹

In the early 1950s, the Cousins family relocated from the townhouse to a single-family English-Norman Cottage residence at 2525 York St. facing the City Park Golf Course. Charles began to decorate the house every year for Christmas and on 16 December 1953 it was featured on page one of the *Rocky Mountain News* because of the extravagant display. Taking delight in his decorations, which included a multitude of lights, he continued to produce dazzling holiday displays that delighted area residents for many years.⁵²

Charles opened another business in the Five Points commercial district by the early 1950s. That was the Cue and Cushion Billiard Parlor, which he operated from around 1951 to 1961. Initially located at 718 E. 26th Ave., by 1957 it was moved to 2628 Welton St. In addition to his many business pursuits, in 1955 Charles began to serve on the founding board of the Equity Savings and Loan Association. Established that year at 2559 Welton St., it was the state's only Black-owned and operated financial institution.⁵³

Following the 1962 death of his father, Charles R. Cousins became the managing partner

⁵⁰ Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025; US Federal Census Records, Willa and Dorothy E. Caldwell, Cripple Creek, CO, 1920 and Denver, CO, 1930-1950; Manual High School Yearbook, Listing for Dorothy Caldwell, 1935; Memorial Pamphlet, Funeral of Dorothy Elizabeth Cousins, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Denver, CO, 9 September 2000;

⁵¹ "Christening Ceremony," *Denver Inquirer*, 19 December 1952, p. 7; "17 Make Debuts at Owls Club Ball," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 June 1970, p. 55; "A Lifetime of Legacy for 2022 Award Winners," *Historic Denver News*, Ann Love Award Recipient: Dr. Renee Cousins King, Fall 2022

⁵² US Federal Census Records, Charles and Dorothy Cousins, Denver, CO, 1950; "500 Bulbs Used to Feature Christmas Themes," *Rocky Mountain News*, 16 December 1953, p. 1; "Christmas is a Gaudy Season," *Rocky Mountain News*, 17 December 1953, p. 53; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁵³ Denver City Directories, Listings for Charles R. Cousins, 1951-1961; Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025; "New Denver Trade Names," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 11 July 1957, p. 17; "New Savings Firm," *Rocky Mountain News*, 13 March 1955, p. 56

of the family's real estate holdings in addition to operating several successful businesses in the Five Points area. Dorothy was often his assistant or partner in these endeavors and according to their daughter Renee, "much of the success he attained in business would not have been possible without Dorothy's conscientious assistance." In 1966, Charles and Dorothy purchased the house at 3535 E. 26th Ave. from Frank and Nora Harris, paying \$41,000 for the property. The price reflected a steep drop from what it cost the Harrises to develop the house eight years earlier. Once they moved into the large Ranch house, Charles placed his office there and he continued to manage his business enterprises from that location the rest of his life. Other than when he was away at his properties or business locations, much of his daily work occurred at the kitchen table.⁵⁴

In 1966, Charles and Dorothy partnered with Ray and Elva Bach to incorporate a business they called Pony Inc. (the Bachs owned a restaurant supply house at 1421 Larimer St.). Their goal was to open a restaurant and cabaret at 1425 Larimer St., around the time that Dana Crawford was working to revitalize the block into Larimer Square. The effort to open the restaurant became embroiled in a dispute involving the City of Denver and Larimer Square Inc. Business owners expressed opposition to the issuance of a 3.2 beer license, stating their concern about unruly teenagers who would be lured to drink to excess in Larimer Square. Lawyers representing the project's partners countered by raising the question of whether racial discrimination among the Larimer Square business owners was playing a role in the discussion, specifically due to the involvement of Charles Cousins as the applicant. Denver's Manager of Safety ended up issuing the license, but the decision was challenged in district court after 496 people signed a petition in opposition. In 1967, the court denied the license and it appears that the restaurant never opened.⁵⁵

The failed effort in Larimer Square also failed to slow Charles Cousins in his ambitions to run successful businesses and grow his real estate holdings. In 1968, he purchased the Dale Apartments, a two-story, 17-unit brick building at 1675 Gilpin St. By 1970, he launched the Coin Car Wash at 2718 Welton St., another business that he operated for many years.⁵⁶

Philanthropy and community involvement were always a characteristic of the Cousins family. For many years, they were involved with the Owl Club of Denver. Founded in 1941, the organization moved into a new building in 1963 that was (and still is) located two blocks north of the Cousins house. The organization was launched by a group of African-American men who owned businesses, were military veterans, and worked as waiters, teachers and Pullman porters. Its purpose was twofold. First, it provided an environment

⁵⁴ Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025

⁵⁵ Interviews and Email Exchanges with Dr. Renee Cousins King, September 2024 to January 2025; "Business in the Making," *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 17 August 1966, p. 5; "Larimer Street Liquor License Hearing Ends," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 October 1966, p. 66; "Judge Rejects 3.2 Beer Permit," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 May 1967, p. 22

⁵⁶ "Charles R. Cousins purchased the Dale Apartments...", *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal*, 3 January 1968, p. 61; Denver City Directories, Listings for Charles R. Cousins, 1970-1979

for Black men to socialize, develop bonds, and work on behalf of the community. The other purpose was to recognize the academic excellence of young Black women in Denver, who were too often being overlooked. As high school seniors, they were celebrated at the organization's annual debutante ball. These highly publicized events elevated and encouraged the women, many of whom went on to college and developed leadership skills and remarkable careers. Among the more notable Owl Club debutantes were US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Denver City Council member and parks and recreation director Allegra Haynes, dancer and choreographer Cleo Parker Robinson, and pediatrician and medical educator Dr. Renee Cousins.⁵⁷

Around 1950, Charles Cousins launched into other civic activities when he chaired a membership drive for the Urban League of Denver. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, he regularly honored student-athletes at Manual High School, who were presented with the annual Charles R. Cousins Award for outstanding achievement. Charles also hosted events celebrating the school's state championship basketball team in 1966 and 1972. In 1970, Mayor William McNichols appointed him to the board of directors of the Denver Organizing Committee for the 1976 Winter Olympic Games. Although the committee failed in its effort to attract the games to Colorado, the experience placed Charles in contact with an elite group of civic, business and recreation leaders. Dorothy was also involved in volunteer activities in the Denver area. She was actively engaged with the American Red Cross, Friends of the Denver Public Library, and the Church of the Holy Redeemer.⁵⁸

Charles and Dorothy continued to live in their house at 3535 E. 26th Ave. for many years. She died in 2000 and was buried in Fairmount Cemetery. "Brother" Charles followed her there in 2009, when he died and was buried by his wife's side. Their legacy lives on in their daughter Renee, the memories of their family and friends, and the fine example of dignified living they provided to Denver's African-American community and the city's residents of all backgrounds.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ The Owl Club of Denver: Reaching New Heights, City and County of Denver, Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wevazLXD2Bc>

⁵⁸ "Urban League of Denver," *Colorado Statesman*, 22 April 1950, p. 1; "Manual's Top Athletes Honored," *Rocky Mountain News*, 20 May 1965, p. 116; "Manual to be Dined," *Rocky Mountain News*, 10 April 1966, p. 73; "16 Named to Olympic Games Board," *Rocky Mountain News*, 6 December 1970, p. 38; "Manual's State Cage Champions Feted at Dinner," *Rocky Mountain News*, 9 April 1972, p. 71; Memorial Pamphlet, Funeral of Dorothy Elizabeth Cousins, St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Denver, CO, 9 September 2000

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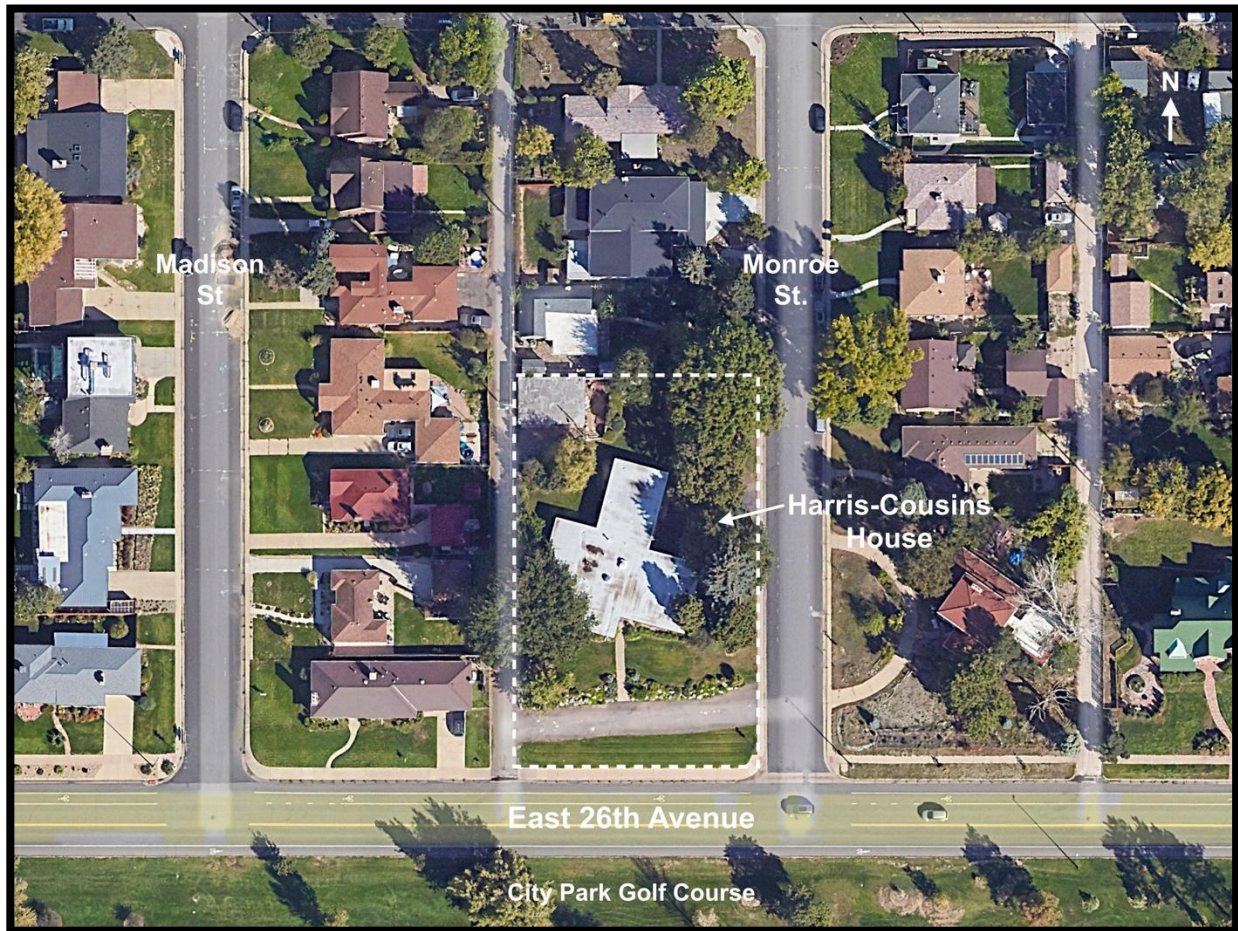
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Designation Boundary



Photographs



Front of the Harris-Cousins House, View to the Northwest



Front of the Harris-Cousins House, View to the North



Front of the Harris-Cousins House, View to the Northeast



Rear of the Harris-Cousins House, View to the Southwest



Driveway Entry from Monroe Street, View to the Southwest



The Northeast Porch, View to the West



West Side of the Harris-Cousins House, View to the Southeast



The West Porch, View to the Southeast



Detached Garage, View to the Northwest



Detached Garage, View to the Northeast