

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Margaret Tobin Brown House
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Name of Property
Denver, Colorado
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County and State
5DV.178
-----
NR Reference Number

**State Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  additional documentation  additional documentation: name change  
 move  removal  other  
meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic  
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this  additional documentation  additional documentation: name change  
 move  removal  other  
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Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

**National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 additional documentation accepted  
 other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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The Margaret Tobin Brown House in Denver, Colorado, (commonly referred to as the Molly Brown House or the House of Lions, 5DV.178), was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) on February 1, 1972, in recognition of its architectural significance. Constructed in the late 1880s, the stone Queen Anne-style house with strong Richardsonian Romanesque influences was designed by prominent Denver architect William A. Lang for Isaac and Mary Large.

In 1894, the Larges sold the house to James Joseph (or “J.J.”) and Margaret Tobin Brown, who had recently moved from the mining town of Leadville, Colorado, upon their wealth acquired through J.J.’s role as superintendent and stakeholder in the Ixex Mining Company. The Browns entered Denver society and became frequent subjects in local newspapers reporting on the activities of the wealthy. In the early 1900s, Margaret Brown became increasingly independent from J.J., involving herself in local philanthropic and social causes that touched upon national issues of the times.

The 1340 Pennsylvania Street House, also known as the Margaret Tobin Brown (or simply the Molly Brown House), is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the **national level** under **Criterion B, with Social History/Women’s History**, for its association with Margaret Tobin Brown, a significant philanthropist and social advocate in women’s and family history. Immortalized as “Unsinkable Molly Brown,” Margaret Tobin Brown is a significant figure in America’s westward expansion as a prominent socialite, activist, and philanthropist who used her national fame and wealth to propel causes important to her.

In 1912, she became a national figure as a survivor of the Titanic sinking and a supporter of fellow survivors left indigent or without family by the tragedy. Brown would eventually attract further attention from the national press as she made forays into the labor and women’s suffrage movements. Margaret Brown’s occupation of the house was effectively from 1894-1909, after which she spent most of her time in Newport, Rhode Island, and traveling.

An important philanthropist for women and children causes in Denver, Brown played a significant role at the local level. However, her national reputation was solidified by helping to establish the Titanic Survivor’s Committee. Her advocacy and vocal perspective of the events helped usher in the women survivor’s viewpoints of the April 1912 tragedy. Prior to the establishment of the survivor’s committee, the White Star, the owner of the Titanic, had the dominate narrative in the press and official records on the events leading to, during, and after the sinking. Brown’s leadership helped bring the survivor’s voices, mostly women, to the forefront and based on their experiences in the lifeboats. This was at a time when women were not part of these official records and Brown’s assertions, in both the committee and the press, aided in elevating this important perspective against the male dominated press and corporate interests.

In 1914, Brown gained further national attention when she considered running for the U.S. Senate in Colorado. Her ambitious were heavily covered in the media and brought substantial attention to not only the women’s suffrage movement, but also the role of women in national politics. It would be almost a decade later that Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia was appointed for a symbolic one day term in U.S.

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Senate. Another decade later, Hattie Caraway of Arkansas was appointed fill her husband's seat in 1931. She went on to win the first U.S. Senate election by a woman in 1932. Margaret Brown's highly publicized interest in a U.S. Senate run in 1914 brought the debate of female representation in Congress' upper chamber to the national forefront.

By 1909, Brown and J.J. would legally separate, though their shared Catholic faith kept them from divorcing. During the 1910s and '20s, while Brown traveled frequently and had extensive stays at her cottage in Newport, among the elite of New York City who vacationed there, the Denver house was rented to other families, and eventually became a boardinghouse run by Brown's housekeeper. After Brown's death in 1932, the house slowly fell into disrepair and was threatened with demolition by 1970. Meanwhile, the facts of Brown's life, her forthright opinions and willingness to publicly question gender roles, which sometimes caught the attention of the national press, and her association with the Titanic tragedy became distorted and mythologized through popular entertainment, first in books such as Gene Fowler's 1933 *Timberline*, and then most dramatically in 1964 with the movie *The Unsinkable Molly Brown*, based on the 1960 Broadway musical of the same name.

Margaret Tobin Brown's life intersected with many national events and themes, and she took no issue with questioning gender norms and garnering the attention of the press. In researching her activities associated with these events and examining their impact, none immediately appear to rise to the level of exceptional national significance. However, the study of women's philanthropy and its historical impact remains a nascent field of research, and as it develops, new information or ways in which to evaluate Brown's contributions may emerge. Furthermore, an NHL theme study on Women's History in the United States is still pending, and may also help to reframe the considerations through which to assess Brown's place in history. Her association with the nationally significant Titanic disaster is undisputed, but the way in which her actions during the sinking and as a well-known survivor characterize an exceptional contribution to American history remains unclear.

Titanic Survivors' Committee

After surviving the sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912, Margaret Brown became known in the national press for her account of rowing a lifeboat with others while waiting for rescue in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic, and for her subsequent efforts to raise relief funds for her fellow survivors who were less fortunate. She helped establish the *Titanic* Survivors' Committee while on board the *Carpathia*, the ship that rescued the survivors, as it headed towards New York. As chair of this committee (a position she held until her death twenty years later), Brown helped organize and fundraise for the relief of the survivors of the *Titanic* who lost their possessions and/or family at sea. Brown also represented the committee when she presented the captain and crew of the *Carpathia* with medals in honor of their rescue work at a ceremony in New York on May 29, 1912.

Brown continued to pay tribute to those lost in the tragedy for the rest of her life through retellings of the event and her own private commemorations. After years in storage, the statue for the *Titanic* memorial was finally erected at a chosen site along the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. in 1931; Brown was involved in efforts to secure a proper site, with completion of the memorial overseen by a

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committee of prominent women from Washington, headed by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney.<sup>1</sup>

Margaret Brown in the Press, Spring 1914

In April 1914, newspapers reported on a “War with Mexico,” a development related to the U.S. occupation of the port and city of Veracruz as a result of souring diplomatic relations stemming from the ongoing Mexican Revolution. In response to Mexican women declaring their readiness to engage in combat on behalf of their country, Margaret Brown asserted in the press that American women should do the same, reviving debate about the equality and roles of the sexes, a common source of controversy in the newspapers of the 1910s. A few days later, Brown telegraphed U.S. Senator John F. Shafroth of Colorado that she was willing to serve as a nurse for U.S. troops in the conflict and would donate \$1,000 a month to “organize and equip” a group of nurses.<sup>2</sup> Brown’s offer was commended in the suffragist paper *Woman’s Journal*: “Anti-suffragists often ask what women will do if they have the ballot as to bearing arms and helping the government in case of war? This action of Mrs. Brown is one of many answers. Women will bear their share of the burden of war at all times.”<sup>3</sup>

Soon after making these waves in the press, Brown was asked by labor movement groups to focus on events closer to home. On April 20, striking coal miners and their families in southern Colorado had been attacked at their tent colony established by the United Mine Workers of America by National Guard troops and Colorado Fuel & Iron company guards in what would become known as the Ludlow Massacre.<sup>4</sup> Abandoning her offer to help in Mexico, Brown then set about trying to provide relief to the miners’ families, responding to a request for help from Fanny Gately and Carrie Olsen, President and Secretary respectively, of the United Garment Workers’ Union of Denver.<sup>5</sup> Brown and union members held a theatrical benefit on May 9, 1914, “to aid the women and children of striking coal miners.”<sup>6</sup> The *United Labor Bulletin* reported that same day that the Painters’ Union No. 79 had unanimously voted at a meeting to donate one day’s pay from each of its 400 members to assist the United Mine Workers and their families; Margaret Brown spoke at this meeting and was “liberally applauded.”<sup>7</sup> Many others united behind the cause as well: national labor leaders such as Mother Jones spoke at a rally for the miners at the Colorado Capitol; the Denver Federation of Laborers adopted a resolution for consideration by the national organization that all two-million members be assessed five cents a month to help the strikers (equal in total to \$100,000 a month); and political leaders such as Judge Lindsey traveled to Washington, D.C., to induce President Woodrow Wilson to compel arbitration between the two sides.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Iversen, 225. The memorial was removed from its original location in 1966 and re-erected at a different site along the river in 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Iversen, 192.

<sup>3</sup> “From Colorado, a Suffrage state, came the first splendid offer...,” *Woman’s Journal*, May 2, 1914.

<sup>4</sup> The Ludlow Tent Colony Site, 5LA.1829, was designated an NHL on January 16, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> “Wilson to Send Federal Troops to Colorado,” *New York Times*, April 27, 1914, 20.

<sup>6</sup> “News of the Labor Unions,” *United Labor Bulletin*, May 9, 1914, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> “Wilson to Send Federal Troops to Colorado,” *New York Times*; and “Judge Lindsey Asks President to

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From her time in Leadville and her brother's employment as a miner, Brown was clearly familiar with the working conditions of mines and miners' tenuous clout in labor relations; she also knew of a mine company's position due to J.J.'s work as superintendent and mine owner. As such, Brown considered herself uniquely positioned to understand both sides and traveled to southern Colorado to see the situation for herself, as did State Senator Helen Ring Robinson. Afterward, both women spoke frequently of the labor conflict to the press and gave public lectures on the event.<sup>9</sup> Brown would frequently be referred to as the "Mine Angel" in the subsequent press accounts that followed her activities.

Margaret Tobin Brown for U.S. Senator, 1914

In her biography of Margaret Brown, Iversen indicated that Brown considered running for U.S. Senate in 1909 and then again in 1911. However, no primary sources have been found to substantiate this claim, and it appears unlikely to be accurate. As Andrea Malcomb, Director of the Molly Brown House Museum, notes, "knowing more about [Brown's] activities through other sources, the 1909-12 period is so complicated by marital strife and separation, her kids/niece getting married and having children, and spending more and more of her time either overseas or on the east coast," it seems highly unlikely that Brown would have considered running for office during those years.<sup>10</sup> However, Margaret Brown did very publicly consider running for U.S. Senator from Colorado over the summer of 1914, as documented through several newspapers. The origins of this idea, and who seriously entertained it other than Brown herself, are unclear: the impetus behind Brown's possible candidacy can only be determined by news accounts, as any correspondence between Brown and those who may have advised her has not been found to date.

After national press coverage of her involvement with the events in Mexico and the Colorado coal fields a month earlier, Colorado and national papers began to circulate snippets in May 1914 that Brown had been "asked" or "begged" to run for Colorado's senate seat up for election in November. The accounts of who encouraged Brown to consider a run for office varied, ranging from "Colorado suffragists" or "Colorado women" to "Eastern suffragists" or Brown's "friends."<sup>11</sup> In the following weeks, the reports became lengthier, introducing Brown through her recent news-making endeavors related to growing tensions with Mexico and the Ludlow mining strike and massacre. As the *Denver Weekly Post* reported:

Eastern suffragists, according to reports, are importuning Mrs. J.J. Brown to make the race for congress from Colorado. It is understood that though Mrs. Brown has no particular ambition for political honors, a call loud and insistent enough would not go unheeded. It is the belief of Eastern women that Mrs. Brown would be a power for the

Compel Arbitration Strike," *The Telluride Journal*, May 21, 1914, 1.

<sup>9</sup> Iversen, 199.

<sup>10</sup> Andrea Malcomb, email communication to Erika Warzel, October 14, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> For example, see "State News," *The Middle Park Times* [Grand County, Colorado], May 22, 1914, 2; and "Women Beg Mrs. Brown to Make Race for Congress," *Denver Weekly Post*, May 23, 1914, 3.

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“cause” as a member of congress. She would have the means to entertain lavishly and would not go to Washington unknown. Her Titanic adventure has made her familiar to newspaper readers in every city of the country. Her readiness to lead a regiment of women to the front to fight against Mexico and her pledging of her private fortune to the government for Red Cross work in the war have added to her fame.<sup>12</sup>

The papers treated Brown’s possible candidacy as one of curiosity, but with little to no emphasis on her political ideology. In late July, Brown granted a number of interviews with newspapers while staying at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City, in which she discussed her abilities such as boxing and swimming, and her experiences visiting the coal fields of southern Colorado during the Ludlow crisis. Although she appears not to have raised the subject herself, the news accounts also emphasized her fame as a “heroine” of the *Titanic* tragedy. As for her motives, the papers differed in their reporting, according to how seriously they apparently took her candidacy. For example, *The New York Tribune* reported that:

Mrs. Brown’s willingness to be a Senator is due partly, she says, to the fact that she has nothing else to do... ‘Here I am,’ Mrs. Brown said, ‘forty-one years old [in truth, she had just turned forty-seven]. My children are all grown up and married. I can’t play bridge and I’m sick of reading novels. What am I to do all the rest of my life? I don’t want to sit down and mildew. One of the politicians advised me to take some little children to bring up. I advised him to go look up my record. I have brought up half the children of Denver. I mothered Judge Lindsey’s boys, and I had three families of relatives as well as my own children to rear. I’m sick of bringing up children.’<sup>13</sup>

Whereas *The Evening World* quoted Brown as saying:

...there seems to be a general feeling that in all the States where women vote there should be a certain number of women officeholders. And because I’ve been fortunate enough to live a broad life and know many sorts and conditions of people, my friends tell me that I am well fitted to represent the State of Colorado at Washington...

Children have been my passion... My real lifework has consisted in my association with Judge Lindsey and his Children’s Court. I have been intensely interested for years in everything he is doing for his boys, and I have helped all I could...

If I do go to the Senate I shall naturally be specially interested in all matters relating to women and children. In general, I shall stand for the human side of every question.<sup>14</sup>

As to which party’s nomination she would accept, accounts stated she would campaign as a candidate of the Progressive and Democratic parties on a fusion ticket.

<sup>12</sup> “Women Beg Mrs. Brown to Make Race for Congress,” *Denver Weekly Post*.

<sup>13</sup> “‘Mrs. Brown for Senate? Treason!’ Cries Dr. Shaw,” *New York Tribune*, July 24, 1914, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Marguerite Mooers Marshall, “Possible Woman Senator Can Box, Swim, Row, Play Polo and Eat with Chop Sticks,” *The Evening World*, July 24, 1914, 8.

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Although the newspapers reported that Judge Lindsey and Senator Robinson were advising Brown on her possible candidacy, even traveling to Newport to do so, it appears doubtful there was any coordination with others who would have been her natural allies. For example, though an article stated that she was “the particular choice of the Congressional Union, the pet organization of Mrs. [Alva] O.H.P. Belmont [a friend of Brown’s in Newport],” correspondence between Congressional Union (CU) leaders contradicts that assertion.<sup>15</sup> In a letter following the article’s publication, CU national strategist Doris Stevens wrote to CU Vice-Chairman Lucy Burns,

I suppose you read with amazement and certainly not a little misunderstanding that the Congressional Union had endorsed Mrs. J.J. Brown’s candidacy. Of course this has no foundation of truth.... I have just had a conversation over the telephone with Mrs. Brown in which she stated that she did not say the Congressional Union had endorsed her. I dare say she gave that general impression.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, while Brown may have had the support of Lindsey and Robinson, she did not appear to have the support of other suffrage leaders in the state for which she sought office. In early August 1914, in response to a letter from Stevens apparently inquiring about Brown, one of Colorado’s leading suffragists and political strategist Ellis Meredith wrote,

It is interesting and amusing to state that neither of the Republican women chairmen, nor the Democratic, know Mrs. Brown’s politics. She has been prominent in the Woman’s Club sometime since, but never in political or semi-political organizations. She is a good sort, and there are always people who think a scheme of this kind is a good way to separate a woman, or more often a man, from a good roll of money... I hope she won’t fall for it.

Meredith concluded her letter by asking the CU not to campaign against Democratic Senator Charles Thomas in his reelection bid, pointing out that Thomas had always been a suffrage supporter.<sup>17</sup>

In the end, Brown never actually ran for office. On August 12, 1914, the *Rocky Mountain News* reported that Brown “will abandon her campaign for congress—this year at least. She wired State Senator Helen Ring Robinson yesterday that she would not attend the congressional primaries [in Colorado], having reached the conclusion [sic] that this was no time for Colorado to change congressmen.”<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Janet Barry, “Man’s Fight, No Pink Tea, if Woman Runs for Congress,” (unidentified 1914 newspaper collected in Helen Tobin scrapbook, in collection of Molly Brown House Museum).

<sup>16</sup> Doris Stevens, Letter to Lucy Burns, Vice-Chairman of Congressional Union of Woman Suffrage, [n.d., presumed late July or early August], 1914. In collection of Library of Congress, R11.1328

<sup>17</sup> Ellis Meredith, Letter to Doris Stevens of Congressional Union of Woman Suffrage, August 8, 1914. In collection of Library of Congress, R11.777.

<sup>18</sup> “Race for Toga is Abandoned by Mrs. Brown,” *Rocky Mountain News*, August 12, 1914.

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As the press ran stories of Margaret Brown considering campaigning for office throughout the summer of 1914, CU leaders began forming its National Advisory Council “to enlist support of nationally prominent and/or wealthy women” and organizing a conference to be held in Newport that August.<sup>19</sup> Although the main conference event was to be held at New York and Newport society maven Alva Belmont’s opulent mansion, Marble House, CU was in need of other locations for smaller gatherings. Brown’s own Newport cottage, Mon Etui, was one of several homes that hosted satellite functions for the convention, including talks by Lindsey and Robinson. Reports of Brown declining to run for office came in the middle of convention preparations.

Years later, in 1922, U.S. Senators Lawrence C. Phipps and Samuel D. Nicholson supported Brown holding a secretaryship with the American Embassy to the Court of St. James in the United Kingdom, stating that “Women should be recognized in government... Where should women find themselves more adaptable than in diplomacy?” Ultimately, Brown did not receive the appointment.<sup>20</sup>

The Lasting Legacy of Margaret Tobin Brown

During her lifetime, Margaret Brown encountered, and sometimes became involved in, many of the upheavals and social causes prevalent in America at the turn of the twentieth century, such as the final push of the women’s suffrage movement, the labor movement, and the juvenile court movement. In the last year of her life, she was awarded the French Legion of Honor (April 1932) for her work in France during World War I attending to wounded French and American soldiers, as well as her “overall good citizenship,” such as her help to organize the Alliance Française in the western United States, her relief work through the *Titanic* Survivors’ Committee, and her support of Lindsey’s Juvenile Court.<sup>21</sup>

Brown’s lasting legacy in the popular eye, however, is her connection to the *Titanic*, which is what she became known for nationally in the decades after the 1912 tragedy, a notoriety that eventually obscured the facts of her lived experience. The enduring myth of her life as a rough-and-tumble woman of the wild mining towns of the American West made into a monied but fiercely independent socialite emerged after her death in 1932, first with highly fictionalized biographical accounts by Gene Fowler and Caroline Bancroft, followed by a renewed interest in her and the *Titanic* story beginning in the 1950s.

In his book *Down with the Old Canoe: A Cultural History of the Titanic Disaster*, historian Steven Biel seeks to contextualize the *Titanic* sinking within contemporaneous events, as well as how the event became mythologized and interpreted in the decades after:

<sup>19</sup> Library of Congress, “Historical Timeline of the National Woman’s Party,” (<https://www.loc.gov/collections/women-of-protest/articles-and-essays/historical-timeline-of-the-national-womans-party/1912-to-1914/>, accessed November 8, 2021).

<sup>20</sup> Iversen, 224-225, quoting *Denver Post*, November 21, 1922.

<sup>21</sup> Iversen, 234. Brown was recommended for the honor by Captain Rostron of the *Carpathia*, who had received it in 1929.

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The disaster was neither catalyst nor cause, but it did expose and come to represent anxieties about modernity—about deeper changes that were occurring regardless of whether an ocean liner struck an iceberg and sank in the spring of 1912.... Americans understood the disaster according to concerns they already felt, hopes they already harbored, beliefs and ideas they already held and were struggling to preserve.<sup>22</sup>

One way in which the *Titanic* tragedy was interpreted in the immediate aftermath of the event was whether the “chivalric” practice at sea of saving women and children first was compatible with the idea of equality among the sexes, an already frequent topic in the national press. Anti-suffragists claimed hypocrisy on the part of women who continued to argue for the ballot after women’s lives had been saved by men who forfeited their seat in one of the few lifeboats available. Meanwhile, suffragists differed in their responses, with some stating “The women should have insisted that the boats be filled with an equal number of men,” while others relied on the maternal argument that if women had been in charge, there would have been enough lifeboats for all passengers.<sup>23</sup> Margaret Brown became a symbol of this tension; as Alice Stone Blackwell, daughter of early suffragists Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell wrote in *Woman’s Journal* just a few weeks after the sinking:

An effort is being made in some quarters to deduce from the wreck of the *Titanic* an argument against votes for women. Now we have chivalry, and if we have votes, we are told, chivalry would be destroyed. There never was clearer proof that the question who shall be saved first at sea has nothing to do with the ballot. Most of the *Titanic*’s crew had no votes. Some of the women were voters, like Mrs. J.J. Brown of Denver, who rowed one of the boats for seven hours, encouraging and cheering up the survivors, and showing chivalry herself to those less courageous than herself.<sup>24</sup>

As Biel notes, “An account of the heroism of the rags-to-riches Denver socialite Molly Brown [immediately following the tragedy] seemed to make women into actors rather than the passive recipients of male protection.”<sup>25</sup> This fit well with Brown’s established persona in the press from years earlier, when she demonstrated an eagerness to shun feminine conventions in activities such as prospecting for a suitable mine for JIA fundraising, as discussed above.

Biel argues that the *Titanic* disaster did not acquire its full cultural impact until the 1950s (decades after Brown’s death in 1932), when it was “rediscovered for new audiences... as a commercial phenomenon” based on new dramatizations of how the event unfolded.<sup>26</sup> After years of legal wrangling over movie scripts and distribution in the 1930s, followed by World War II, when a story of a sinking ship was not considered seemly popular entertainment, the *Titanic* was finally made into a movie released in 1953 starring Clifton Webb and Barbara Stanwyck. Soon after it was given its fullest retelling since 1912 in Walter Lord’s 1955 bestselling book, *A Night to Remember*, which in turn was made into an even more

<sup>22</sup> Steven Biel, *Down with the Old Canoe: A Cultural History of the Titanic Disaster*, New York, London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Johanna Neuman, *Gilded Suffragists: The New York Socialites Who Fought for the Right to Vote*, New York: New York University Press, 2017, 90-91.

<sup>24</sup> Alice Stone Blackwell, “Suffrage and Life-Saving,” *Woman’s Journal*, April 27, 1912.

<sup>25</sup> Biel, 53-54.

<sup>26</sup> Biel, 147-149.

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successful movie in 1958.<sup>27</sup> Both movies and the book had subtexts of American isolationism and a growing fear over nuclear war and its threat of mass death. In turn, the nostalgia for an earlier, simpler era they stirred centered around the same themes of chivalry and traditional gender roles as argued in the press of 1912, which resonated with the American public during the uncertain years of the Cold War and atomic age. At the same time, Brown was used in an advertisement for U.S. savings bonds, linking her unsinkable “pluck” with America’s own “smiling, hardy courage” and its national security.<sup>28</sup> The musical *The Unsinkable Molly Brown* utterly turned the events of Brown’s life on their head, providing a happy, romantic ending by having Molly Brown reject her earlier embrace of travel and Europe for a life in America, reunited with her husband. This rewriting of her life would cement the Brown myth as one suitable to the Cold War-era by combining the themes of rags-to-riches and a rejection of decadent Europe for steadfast America. Although Brown enjoyed national renown as a “heroine” of the *Titanic* tragedy during her lifetime, she did not actively promulgate that reputation, and her development as a heroic symbol of the disaster did not fully mature until the event was reinterpreted beginning in the 1950s.

**National Level Significance – Criterion B (Margaret Tobin Brown)**

Although she only lived there from 1894-1909, the Margaret Tobin Brown House at 1340 Pennsylvania Street in Denver appears to be the best extant site associated with Margaret Brown and her productive life. The Denver house at 1340 Pennsylvania Street is the site at which Brown lived the longest and from which she is presumed to have done much of her fundraising and event organizing (if not the events themselves) in the early-twentieth century.

The Margaret Tobin Brown House possesses an exceptional level of integrity dating to 1894-1932, the period of J.J. and Margaret Brown’s ownership. The house has stood in its original location since construction in 1889. The 1300 block of Pennsylvania Street evolved from purely residential in the late nineteenth century to a mix of multi-family, commercial, institutional, and residential buildings by the time of Brown’s death in 1932, due in part to its close proximity to downtown Denver and East Colfax Avenue, one of the city’s primary commercial corridors. Construction of the 1986 Colorado Public Employees’ Retirement Association headquarters and parking lot opposite the house has diminished the home’s integrity of setting; however, the setting on the east side of Pennsylvania Street, where the house stands, retains the character of a historic mixed-use urban neighborhood. The 2004 condominium building adjacent to the north was designed to be compatible with the historic character of the block as required by the City of Denver’s historic preservation ordinance. Within the property parcel, the home’s integrity of setting is significantly enhanced by the presence of the historic carriage house, now occupied by the Molly Brown House Museum gift shop and staff offices. Most importantly, the home’s integrity of design, materials, and workmanship is exceptionally strong due to the extensive rehabilitation and restoration efforts undertaken by Historic Denver since 1971 and the organization’s commitment to preservation best practices. The home’s exceptional exterior and interior integrity of design, materials, and workmanship combine to provide a strong sense of the period in which the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 168-169.

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Browns occupied the house and to clearly convey its historic association with Margaret Tobin Brown.

Brown's childhood home in Hannibal, Missouri, is still extant and has been converted into a house museum; however, its historic integrity is unconfirmed and it is not directly associated with her activities for which she later became known. The Browns' 1897 summer home outside of Denver, Avoca, is also extant and listed in the NRHP, as noted above. Although it was the site of at least a few of her fundraising events, Margaret Brown occupied it relatively briefly, from 1897, when it was built, to 1905, when the multi-acre property was sectioned off and leased, and then eventually sold. The house's original rural setting has been compromised by extensive suburban development. After Brown began renting out the Denver house on Pennsylvania Street in 1910, she usually stayed at the Brown Palace Hotel (5DV.110, NRHP listed April 28, 1970) when spending time in the city. Brown's Newport, Rhode Island, cottage, Mon Etui, from which she hosted satellite suffrage events in support of her friend Alva Belmont's Congressional Union conference in 1914, was demolished at an unknown date.

### **Comparative Properties**

#### Alma Belmont's Marble House, Newport, Rhode Island<sup>29</sup>

Alva Belmont was a prominent hostess in Newport, Rhode Island, where she and most of New York City society (and the country's wealthiest families) summered in the late-nineteenth century. Her summer mansion there, known as Marble House, was built when she was married to William K. Vanderbilt. Designed by nationally renowned architect Richard Morris Hunt and inspired by the Petit Trianon at Versailles, the Beaux-Arts mansion was completed in 1892 with opulent interiors and formal gardens and presented to Alva Vanderbilt as a birthday gift. After the Vanderbilts divorced in 1895, Alva married Oliver H.P. Belmont and summered at his Newport mansion, Belcourt. After Oliver's death in 1908, Alva Belmont reopened Marble House and began using it to host numerous events in support of the women's suffrage movement. The mansion is now operated as a museum by the Newport Preservation Society and retains excellent historic integrity. The house was designated a National Historic Landmark on February 17, 2006, in recognition of its outstanding architectural significance, a result of a collaboration between Hunt and his patron, Alva (Vanderbilt) Belmont, as well as Belmont's role in the last decade of the women's suffrage movement as a prominent financial supporter of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and later the Congressional Union, and the founder and President of the Political Equality Association.

Although Belmont and Margaret Brown were friends and shared similar proclivities for occasionally defying gender norms and attracting attention from the press, Belmont's impact on the national suffrage movement appears to have been truly exceptional. Belmont is credited in recent studies of the women's suffrage movement as having spurred a renewed interest in the cause due not only to her generous funding of national suffrage organizations, but her organized work to attract public attention to the movement, such as employing a press agent (the first time the movement had a salaried staff), and the

<sup>29</sup> This summary of Marble House's history and historic significance adapted from the National Historic Landmark nomination by John R. Tschirch, February 2006.

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fashionable sheen she imparted to it due to her unparalleled social standing on the national stage.<sup>30</sup> Marble House best represents Belmont's impact as the site from which she organized and hosted several suffrage conventions and meetings.

Jeanette Rankin Residence/Wellington D. Rankin Ranch, Avalanche Gulch, Montana<sup>31</sup>

As discussed above, Jeanette Rankin was the first woman elected to a national representative office, as a U.S. Representative from Montana in 1916. Although Rankin had numerous residences in Montana and elsewhere, this ranch, owned by her brother Wellington, was her home for the longest period of time and best represents her productive life. Prior to becoming a U.S. Representative, Rankin was an important leader in the women's suffrage movement with a "genius for political organization." She laid the groundwork for successful suffrage campaigns in California, Washington, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin, as well as her native state of Montana. In addition to her singular place in national politics as the first woman representative, Rankin was known for her steadfast pacifism and sponsorship of important social legislation. At the time of its NHL designation in 1976 the ranch retained a high degree of integrity.

Although Margaret Brown publicly considered running for national public office in 1914, she ultimately chose not to, and her activities in the movement appear to be on par with many others. Rankin's unique standing as the first woman elected to national representative office sprung from her many years strategizing and campaigning for the women's suffrage movement in several states. No other site has as long an association with Rankin during her productive life than her brother's ranch.

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**Historical Context/Additional Information**

Research indicates two main categories in which Margaret Tobin Brown's actions appear to be the most fruitful when considering potential national significance: her philanthropy and her involvement in the last decade of the women's suffrage movement; each are discussed in turn below.<sup>32</sup>

**Margaret Tobin Brown's Philanthropy**

Historian and Brown biographer Kristen Iversen documents Brown's life as one attuned to the plights of the less fortunate from childhood onward. Born in Hannibal, Missouri, in 1867, Margaret Tobin grew up in a tight-knit Irish immigrant family that valued education.<sup>33</sup> Although the family struggled at times in

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<sup>30</sup> Neuman, 26-27.

<sup>31</sup> This summary of the Rankin Ranch's history and historic significance adapted from the National Historic Landmark nomination by George R. Adams and Ralph Christian, May 1976.

<sup>32</sup> Brown was also involved in other causes not discussed in this LOI, as they do not appear to be unique or exceptional at the national level; such causes included the woman's club movement and historic preservation as demonstrated by her efforts to restore the Eugene Field house in Denver. Further research could be pursued to better understand her impact through these other activities.

<sup>33</sup> Kristen Iversen, *Molly Brown: Unraveling the Myth*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Denver: Johnson Books, 2018, 64.

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the years after the Civil War, they also helped others as they could. In 1886, Margaret moved with her brother Daniel to Leadville, Colorado, where she soon met and married J.J. Brown, a well-established miner with ambitions to learn the geology and mining techniques that enabled him to become an engineer and further his mining career.<sup>34</sup> The couple and their growing family enjoyed a stable middle-class standing as J.J.'s career took off, while also attending to the less fortunate; for example, in early 1893 when the silver financial panic affected miners' livelihoods, Brown organized soup kitchens.<sup>35</sup>

In 1888, J.J. was hired as a contractor for the Little Jonny Mine, and within a few years, it had the greatest yield of any mine in North America at the time.<sup>36</sup> He was subsequently granted shares in the mine's owner, the Ibex Mining Company, and a seat on its board, a large financial boon for the family that enabled them to move to Denver in 1894 to escape the harsh high-mountain winters. The Browns' wealth only grew as the mines J.J. oversaw continued in their prodigious output of ore. Margaret Brown began to make a name for herself in Denver as a generous supporter of social causes.

Although scholarship on women's philanthropy is limited, a few recent studies have sought to contextualize and consider the impact of the financial contributions of wealthy women to social causes. As historian Joan Marie Johnson notes in her book *Funding Feminism*, "Women have a long though underappreciated history of using large financial donations to make social change" and that "with little political power, philanthropy was perhaps the most potent tool that women had" to effect change.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, philanthropy and charitable works were often the only way in which society women in the Victorian era could participate in public life in a socially acceptable way. Given the long history of women giving to and fundraising for social causes, the impact of a particular woman's philanthropic work would need to be carefully considered in order to justify a level of national significance. One would expect that the specific cause or project would have national implications, and that her cumulative contributions to that cause (financial or otherwise) rose above others in comparison.

In addition to her social activities, such as co-founding the Denver Women's Club, Margaret Brown was known in Denver for her fundraising prowess, and the fundraising events she undertook simultaneously strengthened and made use of her connections within local high society. Among many causes that she championed, one in particular had connections with contemporaneous national events and trends: the creation of the Juvenile Court System in Colorado.

### **Brown, Colorado's Juvenile Court System, and Judge Ben B. Lindsey**

At the turn of the twentieth century, the appalling conditions and methods of the criminal justice system, and particularly in how it was applied to children, became one of the issues taken up by reformers during the Progressive era. Concerns over the fairness and effectiveness of treating children accused of

<sup>34</sup> The Leadville Historic District (5LK.40) was designated an NHL on July 4, 1961.

<sup>35</sup> Iversen, 99.

<sup>36</sup> Andrea Malcomb, email communication to Erika Warzel and Amy Unger, December 8, 2021.

<sup>37</sup> Joan Marie Johnson, *Funding Feminism: Monied Women, Philanthropy, and the Women's Movement, 1870-1967*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017, 1-2.

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crimes the same as adults, fear of the social causes that led to criminal activity among youth, and a faith in the ability of science to correct social ills coalesced into a push for a separate justice system for children that simultaneously sought to address the causes of child criminality. The first juvenile court was established in Chicago in 1899. As historians have noted, the newly established juvenile court system was in practice a social welfare agency, or “the central processing unit of the entire child welfare system. Children who had needs of any kind could be brought into the juvenile court, where their troubles would be diagnosed and the services they needed provided by court workers or obtained from other agencies.”<sup>38</sup>

In Denver, the juvenile court was almost single-handedly established by Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey in the early 1900s. Unlike in Chicago, where groups of reformers came together to create a new system of handling children caught in a punitive justice system for adults, Lindsey formed his juvenile court through an informal process supported by his liberal reading of Colorado’s School Law of 1899, through which children could be categorized as a ward of the state rather than a criminal to be punished.<sup>39</sup> In 1903, Lindsey successfully lobbied for several state laws addressing juvenile delinquency, the foremost being the Juvenile Delinquent Act, which formally and in detail addressed the circumstances in which children would be brought under the purview of the state and “as far as practicable... treated, not as a criminal, but as misdirected and misguided, and needing aid, encouragement, help and assistance.”<sup>40</sup> The 1903 round of legislation also provided for salaried probation officers (thereby doing away with an informal reliance on truant officers and sympathetic teachers to oversee children on probation); forbid the placement of children under the age of fourteen in jails and instead established detention homes; extended probation terms for children under the age of sixteen to those twenty-one and younger, at the discretion of the court; and allowed the punishment of any adult (not just parents and employers) who contributed to the delinquency of a minor.

In his 1972 biography of Lindsey, historian Charles Larsen explains that soon after these successful first steps in establishing a juvenile court system in Colorado, Lindsey recognized “that the campaign for children would have to involve the active participation of many segments of the community, [and he therefore] carefully cultivated private charitable and religious groups as well as public agencies and lawmaking bodies.”<sup>41</sup> Kristen Iversen notes that Margaret Brown first met Lindsey in 1903, around the time of his first forays into legislation for his nascent juvenile programs. Soon after, Lindsey organized the Juvenile Improvement Association (JIA) in 1905 along with C.B. James, C.H. Libby, O.S. Storrs, Lilburn Merrill, Ida L. Gregory, and Thomas L. Bonfils to “promote the social, moral and physical welfare of the children of Denver.”<sup>42</sup> By 1906, the JIA had several ambitious projects underway, including a Juvenile Fresh Air Fund dedicated to sending “orphans and slum children who had never

<sup>38</sup> Thomas J. Bernard and Megan C. Kurlychek, *The Cycle of Juvenile Justice*, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010, 71.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Larsen, *The Good Fight: The Life and Times of Ben B. Lindsey*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972, 29.

<sup>40</sup> Larsen, 34; quoting “An Act Concerning Delinquent Children.”

<sup>41</sup> Larsen, 29.

<sup>42</sup> *The Salida Record*, March 24, 1905, 4.

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been outside of downtown Denver to summer camps in the mountains.”<sup>43</sup> The JIA held these camps at Glenmoor (or Glenmore) Lakes in the Platte Canyon west of Denver, where it built a large dormitory to complement the use of tents.<sup>44</sup> Another JIA project was a “big recreation hall” where Denver’s youth could partake in “amusements provided for them with the proper environment” and to reduce the temptation of the city’s seedier haunts.<sup>45</sup>

Lindsey appears to have courted several benefactors during the planning of these projects, including John D. Rockefeller.<sup>46</sup> One of Lindsey’s frequent collaborators, and one who had a flair for attracting publicity, was Margaret Tobin Brown, who organized several fêtes to benefit the JIA and the Fresh Air Fund that were deemed “not miss” social events by Denver’s high society and which were regularly, and admirably, reported on by the local press. These events included: a theatrical benefit at Denver’s Broadway Theater in April 1904, with local society reporter Polly Pry and society elites such as Louise Sneed Hill and J.K. and Catherine Mullen in attendance; an outdoor benefit at the Browns’ country home, Avoca, in May 1904; and an art show at the Brown Palace Hotel in November 1904.<sup>47</sup>

A notable example of Brown’s talent for attracting press coverage was her unusual idea of leasing a gold mine in Cripple Creek, Colorado, the profits of which would be used to help offset Lindsey’s estimated need for \$5,000 annually to continue the JIA’s work.<sup>48</sup> Upon arriving in Cripple Creek in the summer of 1905, Brown spent four days visiting non-working mines to collect ore samples, with enthusiastic press reports on her “wearing miner’s pants, boots and a sombrero,” “descend[ing] in a large iron bucket hung from a rope windlass,” and “falling easily into the vernacular of the miners who surrounded her.” Brown even inspired a poem on the subject by Pry. After covering the costs of opening and operating the mine, Brown raised \$1,000 for the JIA within six weeks of starting operations; with her “mission accomplished,” Brown took off on a trip to California with friends.<sup>49</sup>

The national significance of Lindsey’s work in the juvenile court movement remains unclear. According to Larsen, Lindsey himself recognized that “some of the principles and practices of the juvenile court work were an outgrowth of a hundred years of beginnings and the contributions of a score of men and

<sup>43</sup> Larsen, 42.

<sup>44</sup> Iversen, 152; “School for Delinquents,” *Jefferson County Graphic*, May 11, 1906, 7. The exact location of Glenmoor Lakes and JIA’s camp there has not been verified to date.

<sup>45</sup> “A Good Idea,” *The Greeley Tribune*, May 31, 1906, 2. Whether the recreation hall was actually built and where its location was in Denver requires further research.

<sup>46</sup> “Rockefeller May Assist Judge Lindsey’s Cause,” *Leadville Herald Democrat*, March 11, 1903, 6; and *The Salida Record*, March 16, 1906, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Iversen, 140-141 and 145. Avoca remains extant (5DV.696) and was listed in the NRHP on January 26, 1990 at the local level of significance for its architecture and association with Denver’s wealthy social elite.

<sup>48</sup> The Cripple Creek Historic District (5TL.2) was designated an NHL on July 4, 1961.

<sup>49</sup> Iversen, 154-155; “Mine Dividends for Waifs,” *Colorado Republican*, June 15, 1905, 7. It is unknown how long Brown’s mine was in operation, nor how much in total it raised for the JIA; further research should attempt to verify.

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women;” he became a national figure “regarded so universally as the embodiment of the [juvenile court] movement” in part because of his “charismatic appeal as a speaker” and his frequent travels on the national lecture circuit.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, “A month seldom went by [in the early 1900s] in which some human interest angle involving Lindsey did not find its way into the Denver press, soon to be repeated as a filler or squib in some national magazine and in other newspapers throughout the country.”<sup>51</sup> Lindsey’s unique contribution to the movement nationally has been attributed to the role he played in drafting or encouraging the enactment of juvenile justice laws in Boston, Kansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Washington, as well as his Adult Delinquency Law, which, according to a 1912 study by the Russell Sage Foundation, was the most significant law in the prevention of delinquency in children.<sup>52</sup>

Margaret Tobin Brown’s role in the juvenile court movement appears to have been focused locally in Denver and Colorado, in that her fundraising helped sustain Lindsey’s multiple programs for offering alternative activities for children and youth who might otherwise be drawn in by the corrupting influences of adult entertainment. Though she had a talent for garnering press attention to her fundraising efforts, she appears to have been one of many local and national philanthropists to contribute to Lindsey’s programs, including the founders of the JIA, other local benefactors such as E.P. George and Josephine Roche, and Rockefeller, and it is unclear how influential Brown’s work in the movement was in comparison to these and others.<sup>53</sup>

### **Women’s Suffrage Movement**

Prior to Margaret Tobin’s move to Leadville in 1886, women’s suffrage was an important question during the formation of Colorado’s state constitution and the bid for statehood in 1876. When that effort failed, women’s voting rights could only be achieved by popular referendum. In early 1893, the ruling political party, the People’s Party (also known as the Populist Party), successfully passed a bill for consideration by the general electorate, and a campaign to sway voters’ minds on the issue was quickly undertaken by the Colorado Woman Suffrage Association (CWSA; soon after renamed the Non-Partisan Equal Suffrage Association (NPESA)). According to an 1898 account of the campaign, CWSA began the race with only twenty-eight members and \$25 in funds.<sup>54</sup> By election day on November 7, 1893, at least sixty different chapters of the state suffrage organization had been formed and 10,000 Colorado women and men were working for the cause.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the referendum passed with a solid majority of 35,698 in favor of women’s suffrage out of 65,159 votes cast, making Colorado the first state where

<sup>50</sup> Larsen, 83-84.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>53</sup> *The Colorado Transcript*, May 11, 1905, 2; and Larsen, 118.

<sup>54</sup> J.G. Brown, “The History of Equal Suffrage in Colorado, 1868-1898,” Denver: News Job Printing Co., 1898, 18.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen J. Leonard, “Bristling for Their Rights: Colorado’s Women and the Mandate of 1893,” *Colorado Heritage* (Colorado Historical Society, Spring 1993), 13.

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women won the right to vote by popular referendum.<sup>56</sup>

Brown biographer Kristen Iversen surmises that Margaret Tobin Brown likely attended suffrage meetings in Leadville during the 1893 campaign. Though this may be possible, Brown does not appear to have been much involved in the suffrage movement at the time: she is not listed in an exhaustive 1898 account of the campaign that took care to list dozens of women and men in cities and towns across the state who were leading the effort, nor does she appear in the rolls of CWSA or NPESA members in the collection of History Colorado.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Iversen indicates that Brown and her family were traveling across the country for much of 1893, attending the World's Fair in Chicago in May, as well as "touring the southern and eastern states to see the sights and visit family," ultimately returning to Leadville only toward the end of the year in time for Christmas, after the election in November.<sup>58</sup>

After winning the vote in 1893, Colorado's suffragists became advocates on the national stage, lending their support, acquired experience, and political and organizational expertise to the cause for all American women to have the vote. Notable suffrage leaders in Colorado who continued their political activism included NPESA Vice President and journalist Ellis Meredith, who would serve as delegate to the Denver City Charter convention, President of the City of Denver Election Commission, and a member of the Democratic Party State Central Committee, as well as frequent correspondent of national suffrage leaders and political figures. Another was NPESA Treasurer and educator Elizabeth Piper Ensley, founder of the Colorado Association of Colored Women's Clubs, which encouraged Black women "to be educated voters and to seek candidates who supported justice for Black people," including the election of Colorado's first Black legislator, Joseph Stuart.<sup>59</sup>

Colorado women ran for office directly after their 1893 suffrage victory, with three women elected to the State House of Representatives in 1894. A number of women would be elected as state representatives following this first class, but never to the degree hoped for by suffrage advocates; only a small handful of women were elected each subsequent election through 1898, after which the number tapered off until 1910, when four women were again elected. As a recent context for the suffrage movement in Colorado notes, women held other state offices, such as the Superintendent of Public Instruction, but none held office in the State Senate until Helen Ring Robinson, a former Colorado College instructor and a writer, became Colorado's first female state senator in 1912. After Robinson's tenure, only one other woman was elected to the State Senate (in 1916) until 1940.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Brown, 23.

<sup>57</sup> Shaun Boyd, *Insights: Women's Suffrage*, History Colorado; unpublished as of October 2021.

<sup>58</sup> Iversen, 104.

<sup>59</sup> Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press (1998), 98.

<sup>60</sup> Erika Warzel, "Women's Suffrage Sites in Colorado: A Survey Plan," prepared for the Colorado Historical Foundation, February 2021.

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**Women Running for National Representative Office**

Prior to the ratification of the Seventeenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1913, U.S. Senators were elected to office by their respective state legislatures. According to law professor Jay S. Bybee:

The Populist movement of the 1890s and the Progressive movement of the early 1900s brought powerful support for what would become the Seventeenth Amendment. . . . The stated justifications for the Seventeenth Amendment were corruption in state legislatures, deadlock in elections of U.S. senators, and renewed faith in the competence of people to make their own choices for senators.<sup>61</sup>

At the time of the amendment's ratification, only nine states had afforded women the vote, and all of them were west of the Mississippi River: Wyoming, 1890; Colorado, 1893; Utah and Idaho, 1896; Washington, 1910; California, 1911; Oregon, Arizona, and Kansas, all in 1912. Although it is possible that women in these states ran for U.S. Senator once it became available to them through a popular vote, none appear to have done so.<sup>62</sup>

Jeannette Rankin became the first woman to be elected to a national representative office in 1916, representing Montana in the House of Representatives. After a stint in social work earlier in her life, Rankin became involved in politics in Washington state, organizing campaigns for women's suffrage there and then in New York, California, Ohio, and Wisconsin. She returned to Montana, where she had attended college, in 1910, where she was instrumental in the suffrage campaign that won women the vote by popular referendum in the election of 1914.<sup>63</sup> A run for Senate in 1918 was unsuccessful, and she left the House at the end of her first term. However, when she ran again for a seat in the House in 1940, she won and served another term as U.S. Representative.

Hattie Caraway of Arkansas was the first elected woman to the U.S. Senate in 1932, after initial appointment to the vacancy left by her husband's death. Rebecca Felton of Georgia was the first woman

<sup>61</sup> Jay S. Bybee, "Ulysses at the Mast: Democracy, Federalism, and the Sirens' Song of the Seventeenth Amendment," *Northwestern University Law Review*, Vol. 91, No. 2, 1997, 538. (University of Nevada, Las Vegas Boyd Law School Scholarly Commons, <https://scholars.law.unlv.edu/facpub/350>, accessed October 16, 2021.)

<sup>62</sup> Further research would be needed to verify whether any women from these suffrage states ran for U.S. Senate. It should be noted that prior to winning the women's suffrage struggle through the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, suffragists had a long history of attempting to run for office they were not legally eligible for and without expectation of winning, but rather as a way to bring attention to their desire and demands for political agency. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton was the first woman to run for the U.S. House of Representatives in 1866 (Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers Eagleton Institute of Politics. "Milestones for Women in American Politics," n.d. (<https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/milestones-for-women>, accessed October 15, 2021).

<sup>63</sup> George R. Adams and Ralph Christian, "Jeannette Rankin Residence," National Historic Landmark nomination, NRIS.76001119, December 1975, 8.

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to ever serve as U.S. Senator, when she served for just twenty-four hours in November 1922.<sup>64</sup> Colorado would not have a woman representative in the U.S. Congress until 1973, when Patricia Schroeder was elected to the House; the state has yet to elect its first female U.S. Senator.

### **Boarding House**

Margaret Brown earned a living renting 1340 N. Pennsylvania St. after her husband died. In the Browns' time, there were not many options for women to make money, and even fewer for those who wanted to maintain a high social image, like Margaret. When J.J.'s death left the family struggling to make ends meet, Margaret got savvy and found a way to earn a living. She rented out 1340 Penn to a local banker, John Cosgriff, his wife Bessie, and their children. They called 1340 Penn home for almost ten years. As landlady, Margaret negotiated with Bessie on house fees and maintenance. For taxes she owed on the house, Margaret exchanged the home's furnishings with Bessie, most of which have now returned to the museum.

After Margaret's death in 1932, the house had many owners who ran it as a boarding house. This was common for Denver's once-grand Victorian mansions, especially in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. As Denver's wealthy families moved to new suburban areas, and as the women who once ran these estates had new job opportunities in offices, shops, and factories, the upkeep of large Capitol Hill homes became burdensome.

By the 1930s and 1940s, Capitol Hill had become one of Denver's densest residential neighborhoods. Ageing mansions were divided into rooming houses that offered affordable housing to a wide mix of people. The Brown House, like many of its neighbors, adapted to the needs of a city in transition.

### **Later Uses of the Home as a Residential Property**

The home's final residential owner was Art Leisenring. He purchased the home at 1340 N. Pennsylvania St. in 1958 and called it the "House of Lions." Art turned the first floor into an apartment for himself, while renting the rest of the home to boarders. Art was gay at a time when Denver's laws were still to discriminate against homosexuality. Denver's Capitol Hill was more welcoming since it had become known as a gay neighborhood by the 1950s. Art likely knew about Capitol Hill's reputation when he decided to purchase the House of Lions in 1958 and operate it, at least for a few years, as a Men's Only Boarding House.

In 1967, Art leased the property to the City of Denver for use in a Denver Juvenile Court program to house "delinquent" or "wayward" girls. The Jane Addams program was meant to "prevent further

<sup>64</sup> United States Senate, "Breaking New Ground – Women of the Senate," n.d.

([https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h\\_multi\\_sections\\_and\\_teasers/Photos\\_Women.htm](https://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/h_multi_sections_and_teasers/Photos_Women.htm), accessed October 15, 2021.) Felton was appointed by Georgia Governor Thomas Hardwick to fill a vacancy; after being sworn in as a senator, she was almost immediately required to step aside after the election determined the next senator from that state.

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delinquency” in teenaged girls caught for minor crimes. It used “intensive group counselling, remedial education and work experience.” Four girls lived here in the house by 1968, but many more attended the programs. The program was modelled after the settlement house project started by Jane Addams in Chicago in 1889. Addams’ Hull House provided much-needed services to the poor, laborers, and especially women. Addams also helped start the American Civil Liberties Union in 1920.

### **Historic Denver, Inc., and Current Use of the House**

Historic Denver, Inc., now a prominent non-profit advocating for historic preservation throughout the city, initially formed in 1971 around the singular cause of saving the Brown House and turning it into a house museum centered around its famous owner, “Molly” or Margaret Tobin Brown.

In the decades since its founding, the Molly Brown House Museum has become a rare success story for house museums, which have frequently lost audiences due to diminishing public interest in the lives and homes of the wealthy, the overwhelming subjects of house museums. While credit for the Museum’s recent success has been given to the 1997 blockbuster movie Titanic and the renewed interest in Brown it generated, the Molly Brown House Museum has also found compelling ways to interpret the national issues and movements of Margaret Brown’s lifetime through her own interests and connections. A 1999 biography of Brown by historian Kristen Iversen that sought to “unravel the myth” of her life inspired the Museum in 2006 to apply for a National Endowment for the Humanities grant through which national scholars reexamined Brown’s life and times and guided the creation of a new interpretive program for the house. Additional thematic exhibits and a documentary followed, providing context for the world and era in which Margaret Tobin Brown lived and connecting her with historic events and trends that still resonate with the public today.

Following these successful reinterpretations and engagements with the public, in 2013 the Museum sought to establish the national significance and National Historic Landmark (NHL) eligibility of the house through its association with Brown and the events of her life in a Briefing Statement to the National Park Service (NPS). NPS staff’s response indicated that although Brown was a nationally known figure, any potential historic significance likely did not rest with her activities, but with the national myth of an American West woman that she represented. In celebration of the Nineteenth Amendment’s centennial in 2020, the Museum applied for a Votes for Women Trail historical marker from the Pomeroy Foundation in recognition of Brown’s work in the suffrage movement and considered candidacy for U.S. Senate; the marker was installed at the house in July 2021. Also in 2021, the Museum received a small grant from the NPS legacy Intermountain Region to further explore Brown’s historic activities and associations and determine if national significance could be established through this NHL Letter of Inquiry.

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