

# James Baugh House: Jeffco's Oldest Log Structure

*National Register of Historic Places*

*By Bob Olson, with Claudia Worth*

**T**he James Baugh House is located at 11361 West 44<sup>th</sup> Ave. in Wheat Ridge. One of the oldest log structures still standing in Colorado, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2012 following an extensive restoration lasting more than 15 years. The General Land Office files have a document showing James Baugh settled on the 160 acre tract of land on Aug. 15, 1859, and by January 1860 had acquired water rights on Clear Creek. Long known by local historians as one of the oldest houses in the city, it was not until the 1980s when the details began to be documented. After a fire damaged the roof in 1991, work to preserve the building began.

Through a series of Colorado History Fund matching grants the house history was researched, restoration plans drawn, and interior, exterior, and foundation work done during more than a decade. Bill Bailey, an expert in the craft of log construction, accomplished most of the work. The documentation included land records and family histories of the many people who lived in the house for more than 130 years. Members of the families who

lived in the house between the 1940s and the 1990s provided detailed stories of what they found during remodeling. The building was deconstructed board-by-board to determine construction techniques and new and original building material used. Old nails, pottery shards, bottles, and a wide variety of artifacts and other information discovered in the various layers altered the reconstruction process while it was in progress.

The house as it appears today is actually two sections. There is the 1859-1860 log cabin. Just as the land office described, it is a one-and-one-half story log structure with two doors and three original windows. Immediately adjacent to this cabin is a two-story frame building with a gable roof. In fact the two structures share a common wall. Post 1900 additions have been demolished, but an adjacent garage has a frame building enclosed within it. The exact date for the frame building was not precisely documented but was approximately 1900. From 160 acres, the farm was reduced to 10 acres in 1889 then to three acres by the 1950s. That is the current size of the James Baugh Historic House Park.

James Baugh House  
*Rosemary Lewis*



The Baugh House and the nearby Wheat Ridge Historic Park (which features a sod house, 1860s log cabin, 1910s brick dwelling, and 1913 first post office building) work together to provide a place to learn about the built environment in what is today a modern suburban city of 30,000 people. The Baugh House opened to the public on Aug. 15, 2009, exactly 150 years after James Baugh settled on the land. Tours are available through the Wheat Ridge Historical Society, which assisted with the fundraising and grant applications along with the City of Wheat Ridge Parks and Recreation Department. ☞