COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT MEMO REPORT
OF FINDINGS FOR CERTIFICATE OF DEMOLITION ELIGIBILITY

September 14, 2020

**Address:** 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue

**Legal Description:** PT BLK 1 CHERRY CREEK GARDENS BEG NE COR TH S ALG ELY LI 180FT TH W PARA W N LI 137FT TH N 180FT TO N LI TH E 137FT TO POB

**Current Building Name:** 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue (historic name: Wodrich Farm)

**Construction Date:** circa 1890 (Arapahoe County Grantor-Grantee records)


**Architectural**
Architectural Style: National Folk house (early 20th century vernacular farmstead)
Architect/Builder: Charles Wodrich

**Historical**
Original owner: Charles (Carl) Wodrich
Original use(s): Farmstead
Current use(s): Vacant residence

Historical background:

Prior to the post-war development, the Virginia Village area was predominantly rural, agricultural land with few concentrations of housing and little commercial development. Farm settlement in the area dates to Denver’s earliest years, with the Booth Ranch (now the Four Mile House historic site) settled in 1864. While parts of the area were platted in 1880s, it was primarily a mix of larger farms and greenhouses, interspersed with smaller truck or garden farms. This is seen in the 1899 Willits Farm Map, which shows a few roads were present—or at least planned—but the majority of the acreage was farmland. The large farms focused on grains and dairying and the greenhouses supported the floriculture industry. Greenhouses were a common sight from the teens through the forties, when Denver was the locus of what historians have called the “Carnation Gold Rush” and was one of the most prolific producers of the popular flower in the world. Intermixed with the greenhouse and large farms, were smaller truck or garden farms that focused on more specialized cash crops such as asparagus and horseradish.

The farmhouse at 4740 East Mississippi Avenue, which was constructed c. 1890 by Charles (Carl) Wodrich, was one of the smaller truck or garden farms. Records show that Wodrich, a German immigrant, purchased the land from Job A. Cooper in 1890. At the time, Cooper was vice president of the German National Bank. Cooper was also the sixth governor of Colorado (1889-1891), and later the president of
the Bank of Commerce. Job Cooper’s connection to the property was likely business related, as the German National Bank platted and owned land in the area and Cooper’s main residence was within the Denver city limits.

Charles (Carl) Wodrich, his wife Pauline, and their family immigrated to the United States in 1884. Carl first appears in the 1888 Denver city directory as living at 1019 Larimer Street and working as a shoemaker. By 1890, the Denver city directory shows him working as a gardener (farmer) and living at the “northeast corner Cherry Creek Gardens.” The 1910 census indicates that Carl and Pauline continued to reside and work on their farm. By 1920, Carl was listed in the census as a truck farmer, and in 1930 he was listed as a retired shoemaker. Pauline Wodrich died in 1931, and Carl sold the property a year later to Lester and Jessie Siegfried. Carl Wodrich died a few years later in 1935.

Lester Siegfried (sometimes spelled Siegfreid in the census and city directories) was born in Missouri, and Jessie in Colorado. The pair married in 1902 in Gilpin County. While residing in the farmhouse, Lester worked as a machinist for the A.E. Johnson Machine Company and later as a mechanic for a Colorado animal by-products manufacturing company. Lester died in 1937 in a machine-related accident while working in Idaho Falls, Idaho, leaving Jessie as the sole owner the house until her death in 1979. It may have been during this time, that Jessie, who was not listed as having an occupation in census records, sold off some of the surrounding farmland for urban development. After Jessie’s death, the house passed to Zoe Evelyn Trudgeon, Lester and Jessie’s daughter.

Zoe Trudgeon was married to Francis B. Trudgeon, a Mountain Bell telephone engineer. According to their daughter Elizabeth (“Beth”) Trudgeon, Francis “made the first ‘gouged out lettering on a thick plank,’ landmark identification signage now used by the National Park Service” (Telecommunication History Group). Furthermore, Francis was an advocate for the preservation of Colorado history. According to a 1994 article from Colorado Central Magazine, Francis, a summer Pitkin County resident, was responsible for setting up signs to help direct auto-tourism to the nearby Alpine Tunnel in the 1960s. The Alpine Tunnel was constructed in the 1880s by the Colorado & Southern Railroad. Francis’ enthusiasm for preserving the tunnel jump started efforts by the U.S. Forest Service to restore the tunnel. The area is now known as the Alpine Tunnel Historic District, placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996. Zoe died in 1992, and Francis in 1997. Ownership passed to Beth Trudgeon, Zoe and Francis’ daughter. Beth Trudgeon was a well-known resident of the Virginia Village neighborhood, serving as a board member of the Virginia Village/Ellis Community Association as late as 2015. Beth Trudgeon passed in 2019, and the farmstead is owned by the Elizabeth Trudgeon Trust.

Source of Information:

- Beth Trudgeon, personal communication August 18, 2017;
- Denver Assessor’s Office website; Denver City Directories, accessed via Ancestry.com;
- Master Property Records, accessed via Denver Public Library Digital Collections;
- Colorado Marriages 1858-1939, accessed via Denver Public Library Digital Collections;
- Western History Subject Index, accessed via Denver Public Library Digital Collections;
- Arapahoe County Clerk & Recorder;
- Federal Census (1900-1940), accessed via Ancestry.com;
- Western States Marriage Index, 1809-2011, accessed via Ancestry.com;
- Web: South Dakota, Cemetery Index, 1831-2008, accessed via Ancestry.com;
- U.S. WWI Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918, accessed via Ancestry.com;
- Willits, W.C. “Willits Map of Denver” (1900), accessed via Denver Public Library Digital Collections;
- “Job A. Cooper Is Dead,” Denver Post (January 20, 1899), accessed via Genealogybank.com;
Designation Eligibility Assessment

Landmark Designation Criteria:
A structure or district may be designated for preservation if, due to its significance, it meets the criteria listed in subsections (1), (2), and (3) below
(1) The structure or district maintains its integrity;
(2) The structure or district is more than 30 years old, or is of exceptional importance; and
(3) The structure or district meets at least 3 of the following 10 criteria:
  ☒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.

Integrity: If a structure maintains its integrity, it may be designated for preservation.

☒ Has integrity
☐ Does not have integrity

Does the structure have potential for designation?

☒ Has potential for designation
☐ Does not have potential for designation
Significance Analysis

The property at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue was documented for Discover Denver in August of 2017, by Kathleen Corbett and Dianna Litvak, and an enhanced survey form (5DV.31943) was submitted to the SHPO by Historic Denver in December of 2019. It was found to be eligible for landmark designation at that time, although the current landmark designation criteria were not in place. The property has been reevaluated under the new criteria.

This historic farmstead in Virginia Village is unique in Denver, being one of the only (if not the only) extant collection of farm buildings on a single property within the city limits. It represents a time when this area of southeast Denver was a landscape of truck farms and greenhouses, an important period in Denver’s past and historic development.

The property is one of the few examples of a farmstead with intact outbuildings known to exist in Denver. The house is a good example of a front-gabled National Folk brick farmhouse with Craftsman style elements and the barn is a good example of a gable-roofed wood frame barn with distinctive original elements including a side hay door, Dutch doors, and original windows. Other outbuildings support the site history as well. All of the buildings on the site retain their historic integrity to a high degree.

Landmark staff has found that the property has potential to meet five of the ten criteria for designation, as follows:

A. 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue has a direct association with the historical development of the city as possibly the earliest farmstead in the immediate area of what is now the Virginia Village neighborhood. This suburban-style neighborhood was originally comprised of rural farmsteads dotted throughout the landscape. While the farm land for this property was sold off over time, the farmhouse, barn, and outbuildings remain intact, telling the story of this area’s agrarian use.

C. The farmhouse at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue is one of the very few examples in Denver of a housing type that has been termed “National Folk” by the late Virginia Savage McAlester, who was recognized as the foremost scholar of domestic housing types in the United States. Farm houses such as the one at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue were vernacular houses of a type that developed with the expansion of railroad systems across the United States in the late 19th century, and were commonly built into the 1930s. The house is shown on the 1899/1900 Willits Map, indicating it was constructed by that time, and likely around the time Charles (Carl) Wodrich and family took possession of the acreage in 1890. This house contains some muted Craftsman elements in the enclosed front porch, an alteration that likely took place in or around 1918 (ergo the 1918 effective construction date given on the Assessor records) and it has a rear porch addition that is clearly dates to the mid-20th century.

The barn at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue is a good example of a gable-roofed barn, with notable elements such as a side hay door, Dutch doors, and 4- and 6-light wood casement windows (historic photographs indicate the windows on the west side are an alteration). The roof is still shingled in wood, and historic beveled siding is in place, having replaced the vertical plank siding sometime after historic photos were taken in 1932.

A second residence was moved to the site at an unknown date during the Siegfried/Trudgeon period of ownership.

The privy, located behind the chicken coop, is consistent with the size, dimensions, and construction of privies constructed by the WPA in rural Colorado during the 1930s.

F. The property at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue is located on the busy intersection of East Mississippi Avenue and South Dahlia Street and represents an established and familiar feature in the Virginia Village neighborhood. It is unique and notable in a landscape of post-World War II tract housing.
**G.** The property at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue is distinctive for its physical characteristics and rarity in that it is identifiably a farmstead (i.e., a farm house with standing outbuildings). Few if any other such properties still exist in the City and County of Denver, although they were once common.

**H.** The buildings at 4740 E. Mississippi Avenue represents an era of agricultural heritage that has been almost entirely lost since the middle of the twentieth century. While several original farmhouses remain in various neighborhoods surrounding Denver’s urban core, very few retain their historic outbuildings and barns. This property allows Denver residents to better understand that the Virginia Village neighborhood was originally an agricultural area dotted with small farms before the land was developed for post-war housing.