

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

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received OCT 24 1984
date entered NOV 23 1984

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Justina Ford House
and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 3091 California Street n/a not for publication
city, town Denver n/a vicinity of
state Colorado code 08 county Denver code 031

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>NA</u> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>NA</u> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Historic Denver, Inc.
street & number Denver Union Station, 1701 Wynkoop - Suite 200
city, town Denver n/a vicinity of state Colorado

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Denver Clerk and Recorder's Office
street & number City and County Building - Room 200 1437 Bannock Street
city, town Denver state Colorado

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date ongoing federal state county local
depository for survey records Colorado Historical Society, 1300 Broadway
city, town Denver state Colorado

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date February, 1984
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Built in 1890, the Justina Ford House is a two-story, flat-roofed structure constructed of red brick set on a stone foundation. Simple in massing and detailing, it is essentially a rectangular box, topped by a pressed metal cornice. Although a single-family home, it is similar stylistically to Denver's terrace apartments. The building's most elaborate features are the dentils, end brackets and finials of the pressed metal cornice. Other decorative work on the structure includes brick string courses and sill courses. These are confined to the front facade of the building and consist of horizontal bands surrounding and accentuating the segmental arch over the front entry door, the semi-circular arch over the first story window, and the second story segmental arch windows and drip moldings. The only features remaining on the interior are the door and window moldings. Although removed from the house, the staircase balustrade is intact and will be reinstalled during rehabilitation.

The Justina Ford House stands at the southwest corner of 31st Street and California, a site to which it was moved in February, 1984.¹ The building was originally constructed, and stood for 94 years at 2335 Arapahoe, 13 blocks from its present location. Its relocation was necessitated when, in the summer of 1983, local residents discovered that the entire block on which the Ford house stood was being cleared by a private developer to make room for parking and possible future development. When community leaders learned that the Justina Ford House was soon to be demolished, a delay of the demolition was requested. The owners agreed not to demolish the building under the condition that it be moved off the site. The owners further agreed to donate the structure to a non-profit organization that could cover the costs of the move. By that time, the Ford House was the only building still standing on the block. A series of subsequent meetings with the property owner, community leaders and preservationists resulted in the decision that Historic Denver, Inc. would have the Ford House moved to a nearby site after which it would be rehabilitated to house the office and collections of the Black American West Museum.

The original site of the Justina Ford House, 2335 Arapahoe, is just outside the southwest boundary of the Curtis Park Historic District. The Ford House now stands one block east of the district in surroundings which are quite similar to those of its original location. Since the building is significant for its associations with Dr. Justina Ford, and remains within the same neighborhood in a context which is similar to its original setting, the move is not considered to have affected its National Register eligibility.

The Ford house was originally constructed with a simple and delicate wooden porch which was replaced in the late 1920's by a more massive bungalow style porch. Probably also added at that time was a small, one-story brick addition and wood frame porch on the rear of the original structure. These additions were quite simple and functional with little architectural interest. At the time the building was moved, it was decided that only the original 1890 structure was to be relocated to the new site. The original wood porch, which has been well documented by historic photographs, will be reconstructed as part of the overall rehabilitation.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Black History, medicine

Specific dates 1890; 1912–1952

Builder/Architect unknown

medicine

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Justina Ford House is significant as Dr. Justina Ford's home and office from 1912 until her death in 1952. Dr. Ford was an important and well-loved member of Denver's Black and ethnic community and was especially significant as the first Black woman doctor in both Denver and the State of Colorado. From the time she came to Denver in 1902, until her death 50 years later, she remained the only female Black physician in Denver. Although the Ford house has been moved from its original location at 2335 Arapahoe, the move is not considered to have affected the building's significance or its National Register eligibility. It remains within the same neighborhood and stands in a context quite similar to its original surroundings. The house also exhibits architectural interest, with its pressed metal cornice, townhouse massing and commercial character uncommon in Denver.

Despite Dr. Ford's prominent position in the history of both Blacks and professional women in Colorado, the details of her life remain somewhat sketchy. She was born Justina Warren on January 22, 1871. Sources conflict on whether her place of birth was Knoxville or Galesburg, Illinois. However, she grew up and attended high school in Galesburg. Her mother was a nurse, and apparently from early childhood, Justina had the ambition to practice medicine. In an interview with the Negro Digest near the end of her life, she said that as a child, "I wouldn't play with the others unless we played hospital, and I wouldn't play even that unless they let me be the doctor."

Justina was able to realize her childhood fantasy by attending Hering Medical College in Chicago. After graduating from Hering in 1899, she practiced briefly in Alabama before coming to Denver in 1902. Unfortunately, nothing is known of her work in Alabama, although one source indicates that she was the director of a hospital in Normal, Alabama.

Justina decided to come to Denver because she was searching for a place where Blacks could play a greater part in the community. She found, however, that when she applied for her license to practice medicine in Denver, the licensing examiner said, "Ma'am, I'd feel dishonest taking a fee from you. You've got two strikes against you to begin with. First off, you're a lady. Second, you're colored."

Though this story may be apocryphal, Dr. Ford seemed to like to tell it. It pointed out the double barrier against which she spent her entire life struggling. She was not only acutely aware of the prejudice she was facing, but, as she said in later years, "I fought like a tiger against those things."

Her accomplishments as a Black woman who was able to become a licensed physician at the turn of the century can only be understood when put in national perspective. The first

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Davis, David J. History of Medical Practice in Illinois, Volume II; 1850-1900,
Chicago: Illinois State Medical Society, 1955.

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .14 acre

Quadrangle name Commerce City

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	3	5	0	2	2	3	0	4	4	0	0	8	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 31 and 32, Block 66, Case and Eberts Addition. Boundary includes the two lots on which the building is situated.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county N/A code

state N/A code county N/A code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lane Ittelson, Preservation Specialist

organization Historic Denver, Inc.

date May 9, 1984

street & number 1701 Wynkoop St. - Suite 200

telephone (303) 534-1858

city or town Denver

state Colorado 80202

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Barbara Sudler

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date October 11, 1984

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Delores Byers
Keeper of the National Register

date 11/23/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The original floor plan of the house is intact, with the original wood trim, such as baseboards, door and window facings, also remaining.

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Black woman doctor in the United States, Rebecca Lee, received her medical degree from the New England Female Medical College in 1864. The second Black woman to receive a medical degree, Rebecca Cole, also attended a woman's medical college.

The first Black men to become doctors in the U.S. were all trained through apprenticeships or in medical colleges abroad. It was not until 1849 that the first Black received a medical degree from a U.S. college. However, it was really not until two Black medical schools were opened -- Howard in Washington, D.C., in 1867, and Meharry in Nashville, in 1876 -- that more than a handful of Blacks began to receive medical degrees. Between 1882 and 1903, another six Black medical schools were opened, although none managed to survive past the first decade of the 20th century. Today, only Howard and Meharry remain, but combined they have graduated almost 80 percent of the Black practicing physicians in the U.S.

Although Black women were admitted to Howard as early as 1872 and to Meharry a few years later, female graduates from Black schools were as rare as they were from other medical schools. By 1890, 14 women had been awarded their diplomas from Howard Medical School along with 238 men.

Young Justina Warren, however, chose to attend neither a women's school nor a Black school. Hering Medical College in Chicago was certainly a good choice for Justina. Not only was it located in her home state of Illinois, but, more importantly, from its founding, Hering admitted women on equal terms with men and also recognized women in the formation of its faculty. Hering was established in 1892 to teach homeopathy according to the philosophy of Samuel Hahnemann. In 1902, Hering absorbed Dunham Medical College, which was also devoted to the teaching of homeopathy. By 1913, after several years of financial difficulties, the college was forced to close.

Justina's struggle against racism and sexism was really only beginning when she received her medical degree in 1899. In spite of the warning from the licensing examiner in Denver, Justina received her Colorado Medical license on October 7, 1902. At that time, she was one of only a very small member of Black women doctors in the country. She was the first in Denver and the State of Colorado, and was certainly among the first anywhere west of the Mississippi.

She then began the difficult task of establishing a medical practice in Denver. Between 1902 and 1912, Justina lived at five different locations, although all were within a few blocks of her home and office for over 40 years at 2335 Arapahoe. By the time she purchased the building at 2335 Arapahoe, her practice was undoubtedly on a fairly firm footing. Although she changed her name from Warren to Ford when she married her first husband, the pastor of the Zion Baptist Church, she chose to keep her professional name of Dr. Ford when she married her second husband, Alfred Allen.

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The House at 2335 Arapahoe was purchased on May 29, 1911 by Justina Ford from Morris and Fanny Abromovitz. The house was built in 1890. Although neither the architect nor builder is known, the original owner was Isaac Kohn. Isaac Kohn arrived in Denver in 1889 with his 14-year-old son, Samuel E. Kohn. Samuel lived with his father in the house at 2335 Arapahoe from the time the house was built until the turn of the century. Although Isaac Kohn owned a small second-hand goods store on Larimer Street in the 1890's, and briefly went into partnership with his son, Samuel E. Kohn had greater aspirations. In 1898, Samuel began his own furniture store, American Furniture Company, in partnership with Henry J. Schwartz. By 1901, Schwartz had left the company, leaving Samuel E. Kohn as the president and sole proprietor of American Furniture Company. Samuel E. Kohn continued to run the company until his death in 1943. At that time, American Furniture Company was the largest retail outlet of its kind in the United States and though the name has been changed to American Furniture Warehouse, remains today one of the largest furniture stores in the country.

The fact that Samuel E. Kohn lived in the house at 2335 Arapahoe from age 15 until the time he became president of American Furniture Company is perhaps just an interesting sidelight on the history of the building that has come to be known as the Justina Ford House. By 1901, Samuel E. Kohn was living on his own and by 1902, Isaac Kohn had sold the building.

By the time Dr. Justina Ford was able to buy the house built by Isaac Kohn, her practice had become fairly well established. Although she always considered herself to be a family doctor and general practitioner, she, like many women doctors of her day, was able to build on her practice around obstetrics and gynecology. She later described how she found that, especially among certain ethnic minorities and recent immigrants, being a woman physician was in many ways an advantage in establishing a practice around obstetrics, since, as she said, the men in these cultural groups often felt that a woman physician rather than a man should be in attendance at childbirth. She also found that her strong belief in childbirth at home rather than in hospitals also helped to build up her practice since many of the members of Denver's ethnic communities distrusted or could simply not afford hospitals.

Dr. Ford was able not only to establish a practice but to fill a great need in the community. She generally drew her patients from among Blacks, Mexicans, Spanish, Greeks, Koreans and Japanese. She estimated that only about 15 percent of her patients were Black, but that most were poor. Dr. Ford served not only Denver, but many of the surrounding counties as well. She treated patients in areas ranging from the mountain towns along the Front Range to the sugar beet fields of the plains. Dr. Ford certainly had a great understanding of the needs of her patients. Although she never owned her own car, she probably saw more patients in their own homes than in her office. She never pressured her patients about paying their bills. She understood that people were grateful to her and that when they could pay, they would. She also was

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quite willing to accept payment in goods rather than cash.

Dr. Ford estimated that in the 50 years she practiced in Denver, she had delivered over 7,000 babies. She grew to be respected and a beloved member of the Denver community. Dr. Ford became a staff member at Denver General Hospital and eventually was able to join the AMA, an organization that was closed to her as a Black woman doctor for much of her career. In 1951, the year before her death, she was awarded the Human Rights Award from the Cosmopolitan Club of Denver.

Dr. Ford continued her practice and worked right up until two weeks before her death at age 81. When she died on October 15, 1952, much of Denver mourned her passing.

The Ford residence, with renovation planned for the near future, has been little altered on the exterior or the interior since the 1920s. The building is narrow, three bays in width, which lends a "townhouse" character to the structure. The unusual (for a residence) pressed metal cornice gives a commercial aspect, making it an unusual design for the Denver area.

¹Beams were placed underneath the house at foundation level, the structure jacked up and placed upon a platform with wheels, and hauled by truck to its present site.

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Davis, Marianne W., ed. Contributions of Black Women to America: Volume II.
Kenday Press, Inc., 1981.

Harris, Mark. "The Forty Years of Justina Ford." Negro Digest, March, 1950.

Hunter-Gault, Charlayne. "Black Women M.D.'s: Spirit and Endurance." The New York Times, November 16, 1977, p. C1.

Melrose, Frances. "Two Strikes Against Her Didn't Faze Black M.D." Rocky Mountain News, February 21, 1982, NOW, p. 10

Walker, Helen Edith. The Negro in the Medical Profession. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1949.