



Golden Landmarks Association  
*Preserving Our Past, Protecting Our Future*

## Living Landmark Award 2004

### 🎨 Larry McWilliams 🎨

Larry McWilliams was born in North Platte, Nebraska, then graduated from Regis College in Denver in 1952. He served in the US Army in Korea from 1952 to 1954 where he was a correspondent for the Stars and Stripes newspaper. He received his M.A. degree from UNC in Greeley, then later attended the University of Madrid from where he received a DEH degree and Columbia University on a John Hay Fellowship.

In 1956 he moved to Golden and began teaching Spanish at Wheat Ridge High School. He taught at Arvada West High School from 1963 to 1967, then he was appointed foreign language coordinator for Jefferson County Schools until he retired in 1983.

Larry often took evening walks around Golden and stopped occasionally to talk with Mrs. Marshall who operated the old stone rooming house at 12th and Arapahoe from 1956 to 1971. Mrs. Marshall had taken him through it and talked to him about the history of the old building. He also talked to Irene Goetze, the daughter in law of Ida Goetze, who had purchased the Astor House in 1892. Irene and Oscar Goetze operated the Astor House as a boarding house until 1950. When Larry McWilliams found out from Mrs. Marshall that the Astor House had been condemned by the city in 1971 he began thinking of ways to preserve the old building.

- He solicited support from several sympathetic groups (the Baptists were especially supportive because their old church had been demolished just a few years before).
- He was instrumental in the formation of the Golden Landmarks Association.
- He attended many city council meetings and spoke frequently, often waxing eloquently.
- Because of his efforts he persuaded two councilmen to help convince their compatriots.
- He wrote letters to the editor of the Golden Transcript.

Astor House was even on the front page of the Denver Post and the Rocky Mt. News. From October 1971 to June 1972 he never gave up the fight, in fact it energized him. In February 1972 his living room was the birthplace of Golden Landmarks Association when a standing room only crowd gathered to plot strategies. He stood up to the big three. GLA persuaded Council to let us renovate the living room at our expense as a trial. Then we invited the council to a dinner of Cornish pasties and apple pie. The Transcript Editor, Neil Paulson, came out against saving Astor House, but he did print all the letters to the editor that flooded in. There was so much controversy Council decided to have a referendum and volunteers went door to door. The margin for purchase won with 66% of the vote.

Astor House was the first building in Golden listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If it weren't for Larry McWilliams there would be no Astor House standing today. One person CAN make a difference. Larry McWilliams made a difference in Golden!