



Welcome to the Molly Brown House Museum!

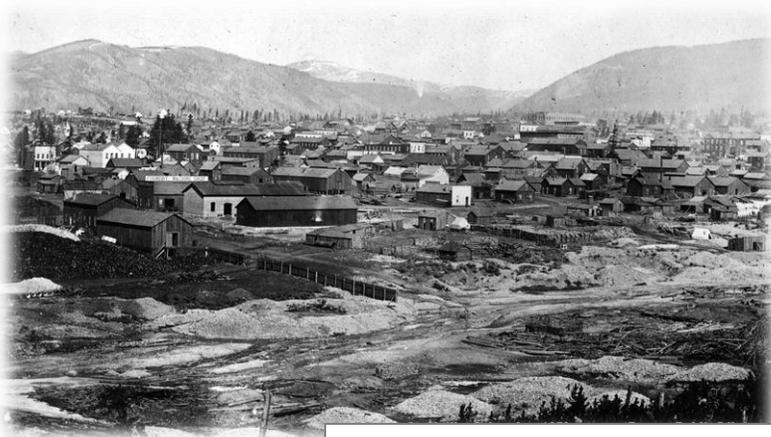
Together we will explore the inspirational life of a notable activist and humanitarian. You may know her as “Molly” Brown. We hope that you are inspired by Margaret Tobin Brown’s story and **lasting legacy**.



Margaret's childhood home

Margaret Tobin was born in 1867 in Hannibal, Missouri. She was a first-generation American born of hard working Irish immigrants. Her parents John and Johanna Tobin, had a strong devotion to educating their children.

Margaret was born just after the Civil War had ended. Her parents were abolitionists and therefore against slavery. They fostered in their children a belief in universal human rights. **Think about how your parents’ views shaped your beliefs.**



Leadville, CO c. 1879

At the age of 19, Margaret stepped off of the train in Leadville, Colorado to join her brother Daniel in a new adventure. Within a year of her move, she married a well-educated and charming mining superintendent named James Joseph or “J.J.” Brown.

By 1889 the Browns were parents to two children, Lawrence Palmer known as Larry, and Catherine Ellen known as Helen. Later in her life, Margaret said that their Leadville years were the happiest time of her life.

In the 1890s as the silver market was collapsing, J.J. invested wisely and lent his engineering skills to help find the largest gold strike in U.S. history at the Little Johnny mine in Leadville. The Browns, then 1/5 owners of the mine, quickly amassed a considerable fortune.

For the Browns, what did gold buy them? It allowed them to purchase this fashionable and modern home in an up and coming neighborhood. The house had all of the modern convenience including electricity, hot and cold running water, central heat and a telephone. This was a perfect house for a young family looking to make their mark on Denver.

Think about what the houses we live in today might say to future generations.



Leadville family photo

Entry Hall - Welcome inside the home of J.J. and Margaret Brown! Here is where the Brown's guests waited to be received by the Brown family in the Drawing Room. This was the first and possibly only room a guest would see so it was elaborately decorated and provided clues about the family's social status, education and interests.

The walls are made of an embossed paper called anaglypta and were painted gold to reflect the pride the Browns had in J.J.'s tremendous gold strike. You can also see the original oak staircase and stained glass windows from the Entry Hall.

The Brown's newfound love of travel is evidenced in the home's decor. The Brown's Entry suggests that they were wealthy, stylish, modern and well-traveled. You can see souvenirs from their travels in this room and throughout the house.

Drawing Room – The piano reflects Margaret's love of music. This room was only used for grand occasions and receiving visitors. Children were not allowed to be in these rooms unless invited to perform for company. **Growing up, did you have a room you were not allowed in?**

Look around and you will see several paintings including a painting of a Colorado scene above the fireplace. This painting was created by Helen Henderson Chain. Helen was a female artist painting in Colorado during the Brown's time. On the fireplace mantel is a tray from Japan. The Browns brought this tray back from their world tour.

When Mrs. Brown moved into this house in 1894 women in Colorado had achieved the right to vote. Colorado was the first state to pass women's suffrage by popular vote, following on the heels of the Wyoming and Utah territories. To gain women the right to vote nationally, Margaret joined the Congressional Union for Women's Suffrage and the Political Equality League. She helped lead and fund national efforts to secure votes for women.

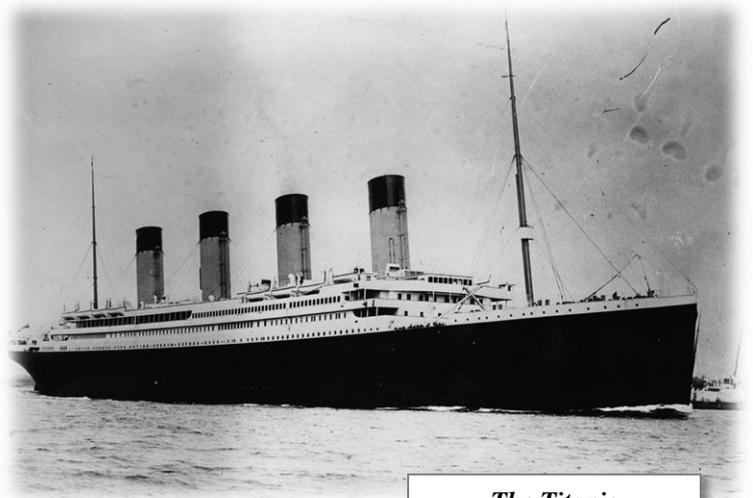


Margaret's campaign photo from a run for local public office

Margaret was urged by prominent leaders of the suffrage movement to run for U.S. Senate in 1914. Never before in history had a woman entered the United States Senate. Suffragists used color to advocate their cause. Yellow, purple and white were the official colors of the suffragist movement. These colors symbolized justice and purity of purpose and courage.

Library - The library was meant to showcase the Browns' education.

Margaret loved learning. While living in Leadville and Denver. She hired tutors to teach her art, music and languages. She spoke French, Italian, German and Russian as well as some Gaelic and Greek. Speaking to a reporter in 1922, Margaret said “Shouldn't a passion for knowledge count for something in one's own development?”



The Titanic

These language skills would come handy in the aftermath of the *Titanic* disaster. Margaret was in her room reading when the *Titanic* struck an iceberg. After dressing warmly and grabbing around \$500, Margaret headed up to the deck and began to help women and children into the lifeboats.

She was eventually placed in Lifeboat No. 6 as it was lowered into the cold ocean. She and 23 other people spent the night in a lifeboat meant for 65, rowing to keep warm. Early the next morning the only ship to respond to *Titanic's* distress calls was the *Carpathia*, which arrived around 5:00 am and rescued the 705 survivors out of the 2,200 total on board.



Lifeboat No. 6

Margaret helped others once on board the *Carpathia* by using her knowledge of languages to translate for the Second and Third Class passengers. She raised money for the women and children who had survived without their husbands and fathers by creating the *Titanic* Survivors Committee.

As Chair of the Survivor's Committee, in May of 1912 Margaret returned to New York City to present a trophy and award medals to the Captain and crew of the *Carpathia*. **Think about what you can do to help others in a troubling time.**



Presentation of the Loving Cup

J.J.'s Study - To run his extensive mining business, J.J. kept offices in Denver and Leadville and worked from home. On the desk you can see some copies of his mining papers, including his part ownership in the Little Johnny Mine.

Above the fireplace, you can see a hand-drawn plan of the first floor done by daughter Helen. She labelled this room "Father's Room." In a letter, she recalled her father and Grandfather, John Tobin, often sitting in this room discussing mining and politics.

Dining Room - Welcome to the Browns' Dining Room. All three daily meals were served here and were often formal affairs. Dinner, for example, could span three hours and include 5-12 courses.

One of the largest known parties Mrs. Brown hosted here at the home was a garden party in 1910. With over 800 guests in attendance, it was written about in great detail by the Denver newspapers.

Many of these affairs served as fundraisers for Margaret and J.J.'s favorite causes. Margaret was particularly interested in children's welfare. Through the Denver Club she helped build playgrounds and orphanages. She also supported the work of Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey. Judge Lindsey started Denver's Juvenile Court System.

Following the advice of several here in CO, including friend Senator Helen Ring Robinson, Margaret decided not to formally run for US Senate. With the onset of WWI however, Margaret went to off France where she spent the next several years helping to set up nursing stations, driving ambulances and then helping to rebuild Northern France after the war.

Sun Room - We have just come up the grand staircase and we are now in a small west-facing sitting room called the Sun Room.

According to family members, this space was Margaret's favorite in the house. Here she entertained close friends or family, wrote letters and planned events. The balcony, through the exterior door, was where newspapers reported a small orchestra played during the aforementioned 800 person garden party.

3rd Floor – We have now continued up to the 3rd floor of the Browns' home. Today this space is one large room used for Museum events. Based on recollections from the family and others who lived here, the third floor was originally divided into several rooms, only accessible by the back servant's stairs until 1908. In 1908 the Browns had the grand staircase extended to the third floor.

Accounts confirm that this large area was two rooms with the right half closest to the street used as a nursery for the Brown children. The left or back half of the space was living space for the nanny, other staff or extended family.

Servant's bedroom - This simple room tucked under the eaves belonged to one or two live-in female servants. Servants living up here would have likely used chamber pots and wash stands since the bathroom you can see down the hall was not installed until 1920.

Helen's room - This bedroom on the 2nd floor is decorated in pale blue silk damask. Daughter Helen was about to turn five when the family moved here in April of 1894.

Helen married a publisher named George Benziger and they settled in New York. They had two sons, James and George. Later in life Helen remarked that, "When Larry and I were young, we thought we had the best mother in Denver."

Margaret's room - We have decorated Margaret's room with Suffragist flags in honor of the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted most women the right to vote. In this private retreat, Margaret wrote letters, planned her political campaigns and read women's magazines that told her how to dress, raise her children and champion for the right to vote.

J.J.'s room - The fireplace in J.J.'s room would have made his bedroom very cozy during cold Colorado winters. J.J. and Margaret had separate bedrooms, a common arrangement for wealthier couples. This separation provided a private place for a woman to change her clothing with the assistance of her maid. Day beds, like the ones in front of the windows in both master bedrooms, were used during the day to rest. It was considered bad manners to sleep on a bed already made up by the maid.

By the late 1910s, J.J.'s health was suffering from his many years spent mining. He passed away in 1922 of a heart attack while staying with his daughter Helen in New York. When asked by a reporter, Margaret said, "I've never met a finer, bigger more worthwhile man than J.J. Brown...I salute his memory and claim him to have been without peer."



Johanna Tobin

Guest room - The lace maker on the dresser is a simple tool Margaret's mother might have utilized in this room. Her parents, John and Johanna Tobin, moved to Leadville



John Tobin

after Margaret did and then lived here in the house until their deaths. Johanna was in fragile health but stories tell of her making a miraculous recovery of health every Sunday morning when it was time for church.

Larry's room - This room with the distinctive wallpaper belonged to the Browns' son, Larry. Larry attended the Colorado School of Mines, following in his father's footsteps. As it became clear the U.S. would enter the war, a now married Larry enrolled in officer's school. As a captain, he was deployed to France in August 1918 as part of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Kitchen, Cook's Pantry, and Butler's Pantry - Here we are in the kitchen area of the home. Each of these spaces had to undergo complete restoration in the 1970's as they had served as multiple modern kitchens over time. This would have been a bustling hub of servant activity, preparing meals, managing the household and receiving deliveries.

After 1911, Margaret spent time traveling and rented a large home in Newport, Rhode Island to be close to her friends in the suffrage movement. She helped organize the 1914 Conference of Great Women with her close friend Alva Vanderbilt Belmont.

Women of all classes demanded the vote and pressure was placed on the federal government, rather than state governments, to include women as full citizens. In 1920, the 19th Amendment was ratified and passed, granting most women the right to vote. This victory was due to the tremendous efforts of Margaret Brown and thousands of women across the country.

Margaret also enrolled in acting school in Paris following the Sarah Bernhardt tradition. She played zither and guitar, and studied the art of yodeling in Switzerland. In 1929, Margaret received the French Palm of the Academy, the equivalent of an Oscar for her talents.

In 1932, Margaret received the French Legion of Honor for her work during WWI with the Red Cross. Margaret also helped rehabilitate blinded soldiers by creating a school for them to learn Braille. She had the works of fellow Missourian Mark Twain translated into Braille for the soldiers to read.

After WWI and J.J.'s death, Margaret found New York City to be a rejuvenating place to live. Margaret Tobin Brown died at the Barbizon Hotel in New York City in October of 1932 from a stroke caused by a brain tumor. Both Margaret and J.J. are buried in Holy Rood cemetery in Long Island, New York. This cemetery is near the former home of their daughter Helen.

Margaret and J.J. Brown left a lasting legacy for Colorado and the world. We hope that you are inspired by this story as it shows the powerful impact helping others can have on a community and how it is possible for one person to leave a lasting legacy.

Today I leave you with one last question... What legacy will you leave behind for your family and your community and how can you step up as a champion today for the cause that matters most to you?

Consider also making a donation or become a member of Historic Denver, the non-profit formed to save this house from demolition that still runs our museum today! Please visit HistoricDenver.org for more information.

