



## Aurora, Colorado Timeline

**1885** – William Smith founded on April 6, 1884 what later became Aurora Public Schools

**1891** – The town of Fletcher is incorporated on April 30, 1891. At the time, the city had 21 houses, 4 businesses, one hotel (The Cottonwood), and 36 voters. A vote for the town's incorporation occurred on April 21<sup>st</sup> and the new town's paperwork was filed on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

**1891** – Water bonds sold in summer of 1891 to create East Denver Water Company

**1893** – Colfax Ave. Electric Railway opened a trolley line in January of 1893 from the State Capitol to Dallas Street.

**1902** – Denver achieved "Home Rule" and becomes the City and County of Denver. Voters ratified Home rule in November 1902 and Governor Orman signed it into law on December 1, 1902. This legislation split what remained of Arapahoe County into Adams and Arapahoe counties with Colfax as the dividing line.

**1902** – By 1902, the city had several lawsuits filed against it by upset holders of water bonds.

**1907** – Town's name changed to Aurora on February 25, 1907.

**1918** – Gutheil Nursery is purchased by Denver Civic and Commercial Association and leased to the U.S. Department of the Army. Army General Hospital No. 21 begins construction in April 1918. The first group of buildings is dedicated on October 13, 1918, and began receiving patients that month though construction is not finished until 1919. The hospital treats WWI soldiers recuperating from chemical warfare and suffering from tuberculosis.

**1920** – Temporary Army General Hospital No. 21 became Fitzsimons Army Hospital on June 26, 1920.

**1926** – Colfax Avenue becomes Highway 40, part of the nation's first federal highway system. Spurs growth in the tourist industry; motels, gas stations, and eateries line the road.

**1929** – Aurora Public Library open on February 13<sup>th</sup> in Mrs. Sarah Wood's home at 1536 Dallas Street.

**1929** – Stapleton opens on October 17, 1929 as the Denver Municipal Airport. It was later renamed to Stapleton Airfield (and later Stapleton International Airport) after an expansion in 1944.

**1930** – Aurora reaches city status with a census population of 2,295

**1931** – In February of 1931, Public Service Company of Colorado installed gas lines and provided Aurora with gas for the first time.

**1932** – Denver Tramway Company trolleys make their last trip to Aurora on October 11, 1932.

**1937-1938** – Lowry Technical Training Center established using buildings that previously housed Phipps Sanatorium. Though the military did not officially assume command until February 7, 1938, individuals from the military arrived as early as September 1, 1937. The first troops arrived on February 12, 1938. The training center was renamed Lowry Air Force Base on July 26, 1946.

**1940** – Aurora's population reached 3,437.

**1942** – Army Air Corps constructs a flight training school in spring of 1942 and second airfield called Lowry II which became active in July 1942. On June 18, 1942 it was renamed Buckley Field.

**1943** – Council passed Aurora's first zoning codes in November 1943.

**1946** – In June of 1946, City Council established an Aurora Planning Commission to provide direction and guidelines for the post war boom.

**1946** – Aurora Fox Theater opens on October 30, 1946, on Colfax in war surplus Quonset-hut.

**1949** – City Council established the Water Department

**1950** – Aurora population is 11,421. Police force consists of nine men, including Chief Spencer Garrett.

**1953** – City hires its first City Manager, Earl Sandquist.

**1954** – Hoffman Heights is annexed on October 18, 1954, with 1,705 homes and 7,000 people.

**1953-55** – Lowry Air Force Base serves as the Summer White House for President Dwight. D. Eisenhower.

**1955** – Lowry Air Force Base becomes the temporary home of the U.S. Air Force Academy with the first class entering on July 11, 1955. The U.S. Air Force Academy moved to Colorado Springs on August 29, 1958.

**1959** – By spring of 1959, Aurora is Colorado's 4<sup>th</sup> largest city.

**1959** – Lowry Bombing Range becomes a Titan missile launching site. Construction on the site begins in September 1958 and is completed in June 1961. The Titan Missile Complex includes three closely positioned launch stations in separate reinforced concrete structures. Each structure included a underground missile silo equipment, underground guidance center, underground powerhouse, a chemical water clarifier, and five concrete sealed chambers. Stations were connected underground by tunnel.

**1960** – Aurora’s Population reaches 43,548.

**1961** – Aurora approves its home rule charter on June 27, 1961. This meant that Aurora had the power to choose its own form of government and certain aspects of it.

**1963** – Construction begins on Homestake Reservoir – jointly by Aurora and Colorado Springs.

**1963** – Aurora Police now employs 52 men in addition to Chief Spencer Garrett.

**1965-67** – Norma O. Walker, Mayor of Aurora, is the first woman in the U.S. to be mayor of a city of more than 60,000 inhabitants.

**1966** – Last flight leaves from Lowry Air Force Base and the runways close on June 30, 1969.

**1967** – First waters from Homestake Reservoir flowed to Aurora. The city finally severed its relationship with the Denver Water Board.

**1970** – Resolution establishing a Historical Commission signed by Paul Beck on November 9, 1970. This Historical Commission was set up to establish a museum.

**1970** – Aurora’s Population reaches 74,974 according to the U.S. Census.

**1970s** – I-225 and I-70 opened. Construction on I-225 began May of 1964 at I-70 and finished on May 21, 1976 after the completion of a section connecting Yosemite and I-25. Construction for I-70 began at the Kansas state line in 1967 and was completed in 1972.

**1971** – Buckingham Square Mall opens August 5, 1971, at the intersection of a two-lane paved road (Havana) and a two-lane dirt road (Mississippi).

**1972** – Aurora’s population reaches 100,000 with the birth of Brenda Lynn Johnson on June 6, 1972, at Fitzsimons. She receives 100,000 pennies from the newspaper.

**1973** – Quincy Reservoir completed.

**1975** – Aurora Mall opens August 14, 1975.

**1974-1975** – Aurora Community Hospital (later Humana) opens on November 20, 1974 and Aurora Presbyterian Hospital opens early the next year on January 5, 1975.

**1974-76** – Vickie Lovato, Pam Whitman, and Eileen Elhard apply to the Police Academy but are rejected after failing part of the physical test. A lawsuit was filed and a settlement reached in December 1975. Vickie Lovato, Pam Whitman, Kathy McGann, and Eileen Elhard enter the Police Academy in spring 1976. Eileen Elhard did not complete the Police Academy Training.

**1979** – Aurora History Center opens at 1633 Florence Street.

**1980** – Aurora population is at 158,588. Aurora becomes 3rd largest city in Colorado.

**1982** – Spinney Reservoir completed

**1981-1985** – Aurora Fox Theater suffers major damage during a fire. It was restored throughout 1983-1985 and reopened in March of 1985 as the Aurora Fox Performing Arts Center.

**1989-1990** – Construction on the Aurora Reservoir is completed. The reservoir is filled the next year.

**1990** – Aurora’s population hits 222,103.

**1991** – Aurora History Center moves to the former Court Building and is renamed Aurora History Museum.

**1994** – Military downsizing closes Lowry Air Force Base.

**1995** – Stapleton International Airport closes on February 27 and Denver International Airport opens on February 28.

**1997-99** – Military downsizing ends operations at Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in 1997 with some exceptions. Fitzsimons officially closes and is deactivated on June 30, 1999.

**2000** – Anschutz Centers for Advanced Medicine, the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center, and the University of Colorado Hospital campus begin construction at Fitzsimons site.

**2001** – Children’s Hospital announces plans to relocate to Fitzsimons site on October 18, 2001.

**2003** – The Aurora Municipal Center opens in the spring at the new City Center eight miles southeast of original 1906 town hall.

**2010** – Population at 325,078. Aurora is the 3rd largest city in Colorado and the 56th largest city in the U.S.

**2014** – Aurora’s population reaches an estimated 347,953 concentrated on 154.31 square miles. 133 different languages are spoken by local students.



**Aurora History Museum**

Tuesday – Friday: 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

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**Admission**  
is  
**Free!**