

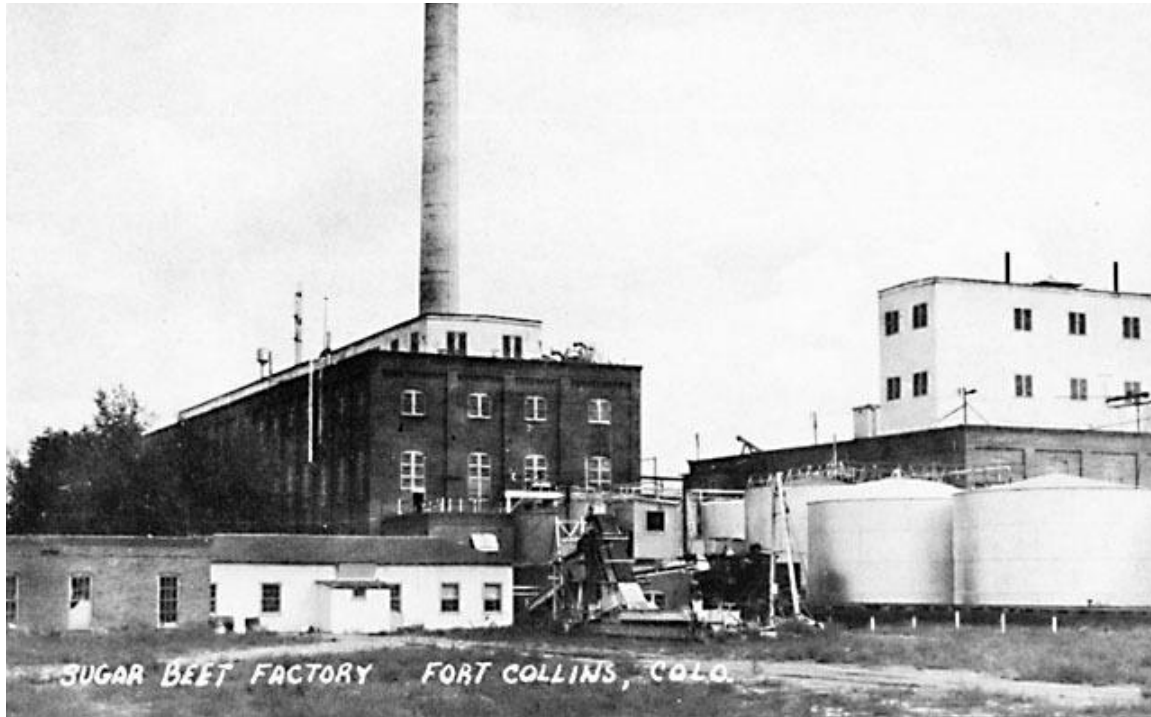
Cultivating a Domestic Sugar Supply: The Introduction of the Sugar Beet and its Impact on Northern Colorado

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Region: Larimer County (Fort Collins and Loveland), with possible travel to Fort Morgan and Sterling

Description and Objectives: As sugar became a household staple in the eighteenth century, states across Europe began to seek out alternative sources. Andreas Marggraf of the University of Berlin successfully extracted sucrose from beets in 1747. From then on, scientists sought to develop varieties of beets with a higher sugar content.

Early enthusiasts for the sugar beet included: Napoleon, who sought a way around the British embargo; abolitionists in New England, who sought an alternative to the cane sugar produced with slave labor in the Caribbean and the American South; and Mormons interested in cultivating beet sugar as they worked toward self-sufficiency in Utah.

Agricultural scientists at the Colorado Agricultural College (later CSU) and at the USDA's agricultural research station in Fort Collins played a crucial role in the introduction of sugar

beets to the United States in the early twentieth century, which today account incredibly for more than half of sugar production in the United States.

There were, however, real environmental costs to the processing of sugar beets. Sugar beet fields were also notorious for their child labor practices. What would a holistic assessment of the economic, social, cultural, dietary, and environmental impact of the sugar beet on northern Colorado look like? What lessons might we learn from this history?

The student intern would participate in an assessment of the sugar beet industry in Fort Collins and Loveland, but including potentially travel to Fort Morgan and Sterling, tracing especially its environmental and social impact.

Internship tasks could include:

1. Conducting oral history interviews with living beet farmers from the area or their descendants
2. Identifying archival resources (in German and English) for additional research
3. Identifying additional historic sites in Larimer County related to beet farming
4. Explore potential partnerships with the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery, the Poudre National Heritage Area, the Museo del las Tres Colonias, and the City of Fort Collins in documenting this history
5. A public presentation / community-facing event(s) towards the end of the internship, on the history of German-American beet farming in the area

Students will have the opportunity to build archival skills, make connections across the community, and practice presenting those research findings to the community in an engaging and creative way.



A playground structure shaped like a sugar beet in “Sugar Beet Park,” near the former site of the Fort Collins Sugar Factory on Vine Drive.