

# Elizabeth "Libbie" Coy

1865 - 1944

## Family and Fort Collins:

Elizabeth "Libbie" Coy was born and raised in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1865. Her parents, John and Emily Coy, were farmers that helped found Fort Collins as a settler community in the 1860s. Fort Collins was incorporated as a community in 1864 when the Fort, "Camp Collins", was created. A flood later in 1864 would wash away the Camp forcing soldiers and residents like John and Emily Coy into the raised area of what is today main street Fort Collins. Once Camp Collins was abandoned in 1867 the community started to become a town.

John Coy was instrumental in the foundations of Fort Collins and his daughter shared a similar attitude.

Libbie Coy attended public school in Fort Collins which started her educational journey. John Coy was an educated man who after successfully helping establish Fort Collins he became involved in the politics of the area. John Coy would go on to serve as city commissioner and run for governor in 1890.

Fort Collins was chosen for an Agricultural College after the Morrill Act of 1862. The Morrill act allowed public lands to be used for public colleges and universities. On September 1, 1879, the State Agricultural College, now Colorado State University was formed.

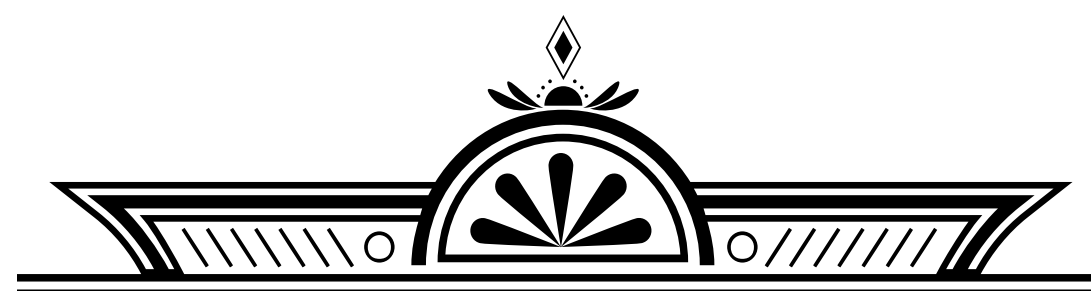


## Quick Facts:

- Libbie Coy was born and raised in Fort Collins
- She was the first female to graduate from the now Colorado State University at nineteen years old and the first woman to graduate from university in Colorado
- Libbie attended university at the age of fifteen
- Libbie earned a Bachelor of Science
- She was an instructor at Colorado State University
- She helped build and form the alumni association for Colorado State University
- Her wedding dress can be seen at Colorado History Museums and was on display in 2020 at the Avenir Museum of Design and Merchandising
- A campus street at Colorado State University is named after Libby for the college's 150th anniversary in honor of the work she conducted for the university over her lifetime

"May we remember that the ideal is not built in a day."

-Libbie Coy 1884



## A History of Education

1865

### Birth of Libbie

Elizabeth "Libbie" Coy was born in Fort Collins, CO.

1880

### Attends College

At 15 years old Libbie attends now Colorado State University

1884

### First Woman

Libbie is the first woman to graduate from University in Colorado

2019

### Honoring

Libbie is honored with a street name at Colorado State University for her service



# Libbie Coy's Journey

Libbie Coy was a first-generation college graduate and the first woman to graduate from university in Colorado. Libbie was known for being tenacious, educationally minded, and intelligent. With family support and self-motivation, Libbie graduated from high school at fifteen and started working towards a Bachelor of Science at the brand new State Agricultural College of Colorado, now Colorado State University in 1880. Libbie was tasked with courses in agriculture, the sciences, languages, and French.

Libbie's enthusiasm for education led her to the top of her institution amongst only men at the time of her attendance at Colorado State University. In her Junior year, she gave a commencement speech to the senior class where she shared her belief that the growth of science in the United States would change the way people perceived the world and how the world would work. Libbie believed that women were the key to a

new world where women might one day rule. Bold and different for her time, Libbie was an undisputed powerhouse to her generation and challenged many social norms of women in higher education.

The State of Colorado has historically had strong women who have pioneered fields mostly dominated by men. In the 1880s and early 1900s, Colorado would become known for the rebellious and intelligent women who would move west for the freedom to learn and express themselves. Libbie and her family demonstrate how investment in the education of women can shape a society.

Upon graduation, Libbie worked as an instructor at now Colorado State University. Libbie helped teach young women who often outnumbered men in attendance of the early years at the university. In her time as an instructor, Libbie Coy would help found the Alumni Association along with her cohorts Leonidas "Lon" Loomis and George H. Glover. Loomis and Glover would continue to work with Libbie throughout their lives and their family roots in Fort Collins can still be seen at the university today. Libbie would serve as secretary and then president of the alumni association for years.

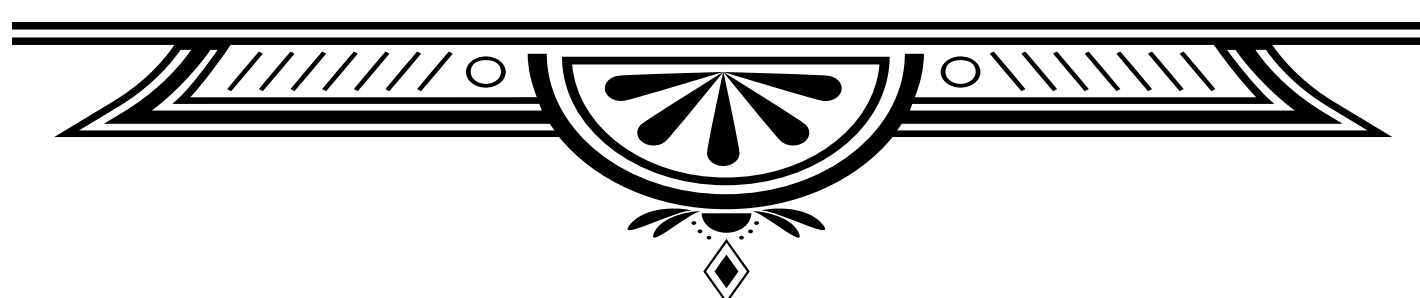
In 1890 Libbie married a professor at now Colorado State University, Professor James Lawrence. James and Libbie met when he was her instructor. Their relationship created a strong dynamic at the university as James would go on to act as the dean of faculty, a building superintendent, campus designer, and university president. Libbie would have one child with James, George Coy Lawrence.

As a mother Libbie slowed down her work at the university and spent more time working at local organizations including the Fort Collins Women's Club. Libbie was known for discussing educational topics to the Fort Collins Women's Club which evolved into an adult education program. Libbie's involvement in her community wouldn't slow and in her later years, she would donate many family heirlooms and her wedding dress to the local museum for preservation. Today, Libbie's donated goods are held by the Fort Collins Museum of Discovery. Libbie would pass away as a pillar in the community in 1944 leaving behind her son and a timeless legacy.



At Horsetooth Rock : Fort Collins Museum of Discovery

## More on Libbie Coy



### Fort Collins Museum of Discovery

408 Mason Ct, Fort Collins,  
CO 80524

### History Colorado

<https://historycolorado.org>

### Colorado State University: Magazine

<https://magazine.source.colostate.edu/first-lady/>

### Colorado State University: Magazine

<https://magazine.colostate.edu/the-enduring-legacy-of-libby-coy-lawrence/index.html>