

Mabel Preble

Her Legacy: First woman mayor of Fort Collins

Mabel Preble fit three careers into her life, two of them record-breaking: counselor, first woman mayor of Fort Collins, and first woman in Fort Collins to join the bench after going to law school at age 50. Mabel was born March 1, 1924 in Oak Park, IL, where she went through her early schooling and met her future husband, Parker Preble. Mabel earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Denver (1961), followed by the completion of her master's degree in Counseling Education from Colorado State University (1966).

During Mabel's work as a counselor at CSU, she became interested in Fort Collins civic activities and ran for City Council. She was elected to the Council and subsequently was elected Mayor of Ft. Collins in 1972. Mabel was the first woman Mayor of the city of Fort Collins. She championed the city with the "Designing Tomorrow for Today" initiative. She enjoyed bringing to fruition a new city library, the Lincoln Community Centre, Poudre River Parkway, Transfort, and Care-a-van transportation, and many other projects. She worked with the Colorado Municipal League Executive Board and was a Colorado Delegate to the National League of Cities Public Safety Commission. She was also a member of the Legislative Resolution and Nominating Board. "I was interested in [being mayor], knew I could do it, so I ran," she told Journey.

Mabel's mission was to improve the world around her—whenever she saw an opportunity to do something, she took it. During her term as mayor, Mabel was awarded the Larimer County Woman of the Year Award, Who's Who in Colorado Award, Who's Who in Government Award and Who's Who in American Woman Award, all in 1973.

Mabel wanted to contribute more to her community and decided to pursue a law degree at age 50. She graduated from University of Colorado Law School with a Jurist Doctorate and was admitted to the bar in 1978. She practiced law in her Ft. Collins private practice until 1986 and then became the Judge for the 8th Judicial District of Colorado. Mabel set another local milestone; she was the first woman in Ft. Collins to join the bench. Mabel Preble passed away at the age of 93 in 2017 of natural causes.

"Everybody was proud of Mabel," said Ann Azari, Fort Collins' most recent woman mayor. "She set the stage."

Written by Melissa Allbrandt, Archivist, Editor, and Writer