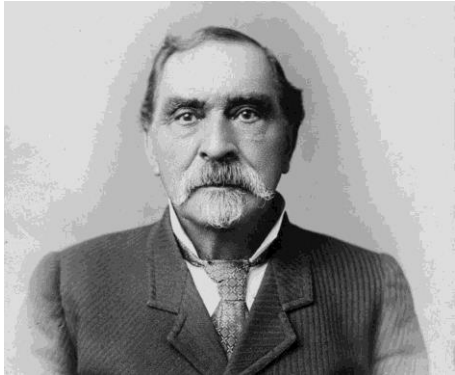


I AM Barney | Holly-Kai Hurd

Barney Ford, January 22, 1822 – December 22, 1902



Years ago I was curating an exhibit around the history of foods of the African diaspora. I found literary treasures on the subject buried in the archives of the Blair Caldwell African American Research Library. Thinking some of the info would be helpful for participating artists, it was me that was changed when I stumbled onto information about Barney Ford by way of a menu from his restaurant because he was one of the first to open an establishment focused on *fine* dining. I grew up in Montbello, right down the street from Barney Ford Elementary School and while I did not attend that particular school, never once had I heard anyone speak on the life of Barney Ford. I'm not sure who I thought Barney Ford was, but I certainly didn't think he had any affiliation with culinary arts but learned he had every affiliation with the art of innovation. From there I would learn about a spirit of resilience: Barney Ford, the early miner, astute businessman, Barber, Hotelier, Restraunteur. Civil Rights Champion, Philanthropist, Lobbyist, Education Advocate, Politician, Husband, Father, Son, millionaire and former slave.

As a young man, Barney Ford escaped slavery by taking advantage of being forced to work for 10 days or more in the free state of Quincy, Illinois. At the time the law stated that if a man brought his slaves to a free state for 10 days or more, they were free (1848). Barney would follow up his departure with a clear [letter to slave owner](#) Colonel N.G. Woods informing him of all the reasons he had no intentions of returning and begin the fashioning of himself, a free man.

I love research and the worlds it opens up for me. Rather than regurgitate the life of Barney Ford, my hope is that this flag encourages research and the sharing of a legacy. Barney Ford gets mentioned in Colorado history but his *story* isn't shared as much as it could be or should be. As an artist, the common denominator in most of my work is a thread to the past and/or an effort to remind us of things it would do us good to remember which is exactly what The Flagpole Project is about. We commemorate people and historical events using the medium of sculpture all the time. For me The Flagpole Project was opportunity to explore the flag as canvas: A piece that could be exhibited, using a medium that is in my opinion "declarative". All of the research describes Barney Ford's character and kindness to be as legendary as his achievements making him even more deserving of something that declares, "*I was here and left my footprint on these lands in a way that contributed to my community and the growth, success and history of Colorado*".

*The story of Barney Ford is also relevant in this time when we speak so much about "controlling the narrative" to ensure historical accuracy. We are living the effects of historical untruths. In 1963 Forbes Parkhill wrote **Mr. Barney Ford: A Portait in Bistre** which was discovered to be highly fictional but sadly continues to be the main story published, shared and/or referenced today even on sites like Wikipedia. Be sure to seek out [The True Story of Barney Ford](#).*