

1. German-Speaking Immigrants and the History of the Sugar Beet Industry in Weld County, Colorado

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Region: Sugar beets were (and still are) harvested across northern Colorado, including Larimer, Weld, Logan, and Morgan Counties. This internship will be specifically focused on Weld County.

Description and Objectives: The sugar beet played a crucial role in the development of northern Colorado. It served as a domestic source of sugar, one that could be grown in temperate climates. In northern Colorado, the crop is especially associated with German-speaking immigrants from Russia, who played a major role in harvesting the crop and building the economy of northern Colorado. As Colorado grows and develops, it is important to maintain a sense of connection with this agricultural history.

In Weld County, there is currently an effort underway to restore the “Great Western Trail,” a ten-and-a-half-mile railway line between Windsor and Severance that carried sugar beets to the factory, and to transform it into a multi-use biking and pedestrian trail.

The student intern will be involved in researching the history of sugar beet towns along the Great Western Trail, such as Severance, Eaton, and Windsor, with a special focus on the role of immigrants of various backgrounds in developing the industry.

Internship tasks could include:

1. Conducting oral history interviews with living German-Russian immigrant farmers from the area or their descendants

2. Identifying archival resources (in German and English) for additional research
3. Identifying historic sites in Weld County and along the Great Western Trail related to beet farming
4. A public presentation / community-facing event(s) towards the end of the internship, on the history of German-American beet farming in the area
5. Participating in “Severance Days,” a summer festival, and sharing this history with the community

Students will have an opportunity not only to build skills in working in archives, but in presenting the results of their research to a popular audience.

Potential Additional Contacts:

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