

# THE ART OF RANCHING: ROUTT COUNTY

## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Art of Ranching (AOR) is a collaborative project based on a partnership with the Colorado State University Office of Engagement and Extension (CSU OEE), County-based Extension 4-H programs, and the Department of History and Public Lands History Center. AOR seeks to collect, interpret, and elevate the stories of Colorado's farming and ranching landscape. The project prioritizes farms and ranches across the state that are:

- 1) recognized Colorado Centennial Farms and Ranches (CFR)s,
- 2) multi-generational family farms and ranches, and/or
- 3) former historic farms and ranches that have become subsumed by development in the 21st century.

The goal of AOR is to create a public-facing, locally-oriented, youth-informed historical interpretation for each participating Colorado county to increase the visibility of farming and ranching legacy to residents and visitors.

During the summer of 2022, the project began its second year in Routt County. 4-H youth were trained in oral history methods. Youth then conducted interviews with local ranches. Some of the youth chose their family ranches, highlighting the intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

## INTERNSHIP GOALS

- 1) Support and assist in the training of 4-H students in oral history interviewing
- 2) Engage in site visits to ranches and conduct follow-up interviews
- 3) Conduct additional archival research and work with local historians and preservation groups
- 4) Assist in finalizing the digital public-facing product
- 5) Construct the AOR 4-H curriculum to be deployed in other Colorado counties

## HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

- Developed technical and digital skills
- Honed historical research skills by using traditional archival sources in addition to non-traditional sources such as oral histories
- Expanded historical writing skills by crafting narratives of each ranch for Colorado Encyclopedia
- Strengthened youth engagement skills by working with 4-H youth to collect oral histories
- Strengthened communication skills by working with various members of the community

## WHAT YOU DID – COMMUNITY HISTORY

Community history requires collaboration between researchers and community members to collect and preserve the stories of local communities. Community history uses oral history techniques and shared authority models to collect historical information about individuals, families, important events, and everyday life.

Community history through the AOR Project:

- Field Work in Routt County
  - Took photographs
  - Met with community members, ranchers, 4-H youth, Main Street Steamboat members, Tread of Pioneers Museum staff, Hayden Heritage Center Staff, and Historian Paul Bonnifield
  - Worked with Routt County archives
  - Conducted oral history interviews
  - Collected spatial data
- Curriculum development
  - Built a workshop and curriculum in order to teach 4-Hers proper oral history methods and standardize the teaching process
  - Implemented curriculum
  - Created youth experiential opportunities to practice methods by encouraging 4-H youth to lead interviews
- Archival Research
  - Worked with local museums and libraries to examine and collect archival data to supplement the oral histories to create written narratives for each ranch
- Historical Interpretation
  - Wrote narratives for each interviewed ranch for Colorado Encyclopedia



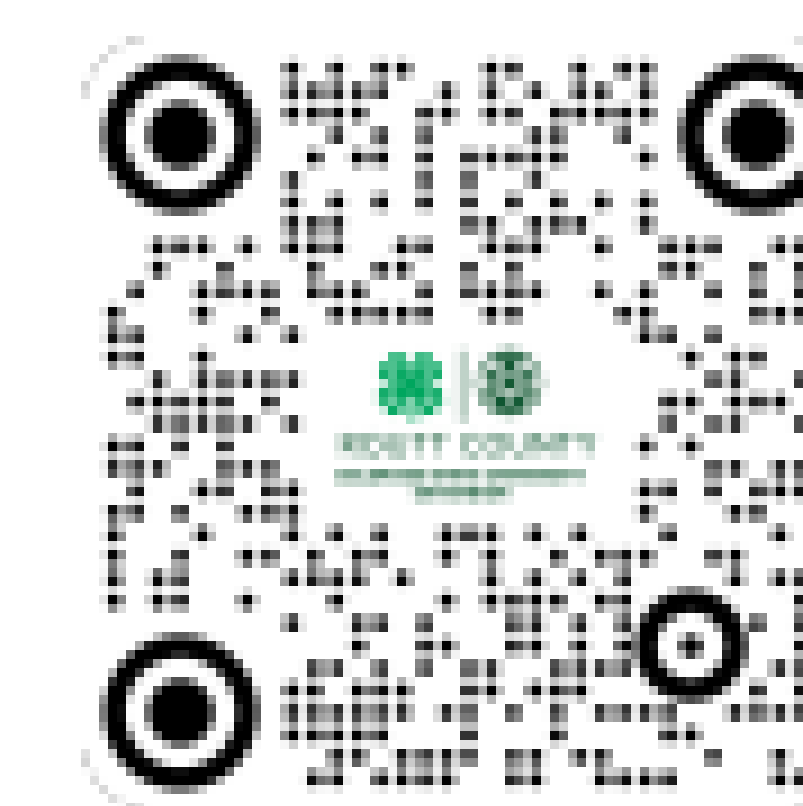
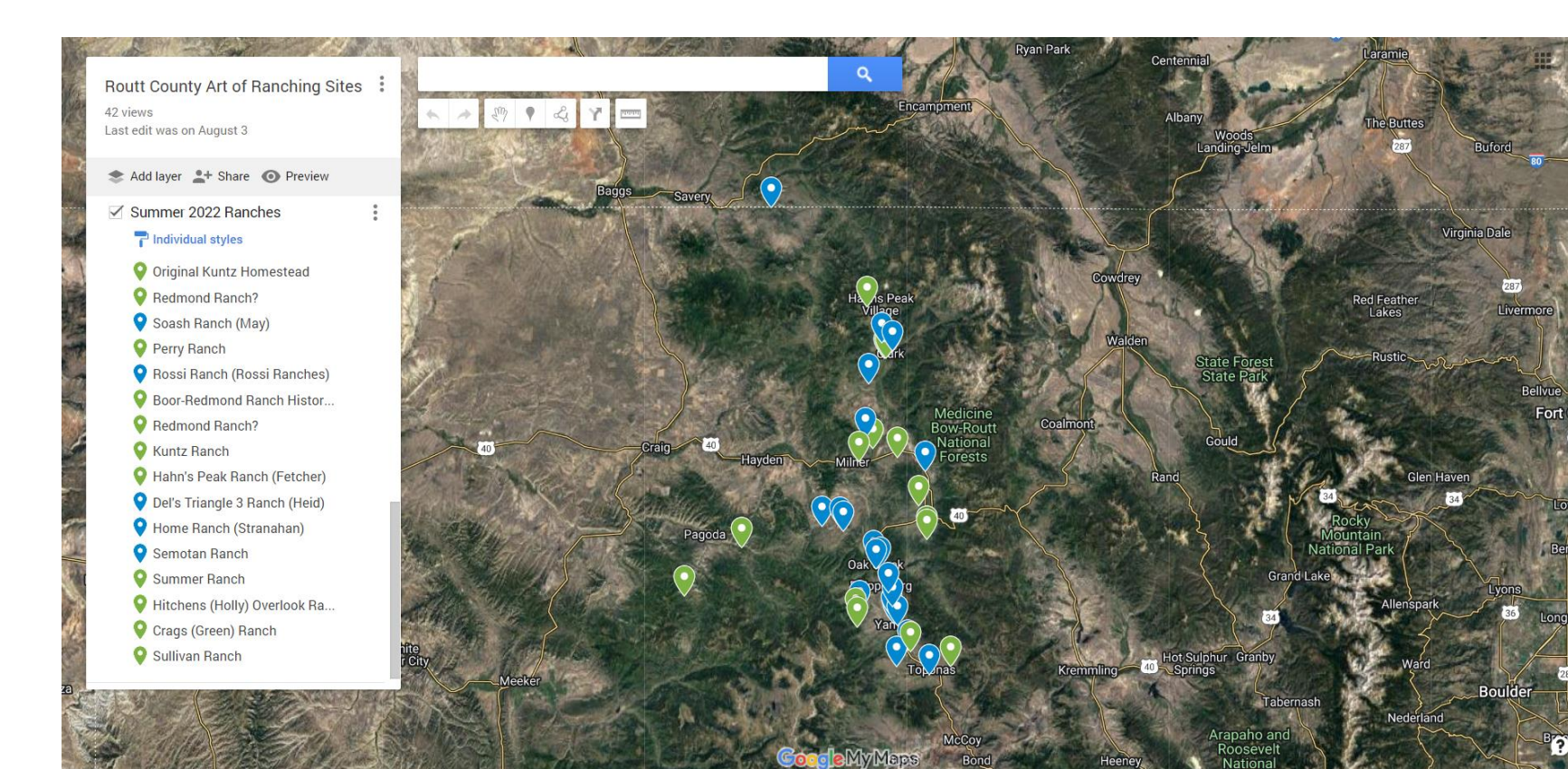
## WHAT YOU LEARNED

As a historian sources are what makes our field possible. At the beginning of our careers, we are trained to use traditional sources – archival and secondary. Most graduate history programs do not showcase non-traditional sources public historians use such as oral histories, digital mapping, and public interaction.

Through this internship, I learned how to utilize non-traditional sources including conducting oral histories, digital mapping, and community engagement. In doing so, we were able to demonstrate the importance of these ranches at the local, state, and national scale. Doing this type of community history, captures the experiences of locals and families making what is seemingly invisible, visible to other members of their community.

Working with CSU OEE expanded access to non-traditional resources. One resource that I found helpful was the experiential learning model that is exemplified by the 4-H program. Using this model, I was able to craft an oral history training model embodying the “learn by doing” model. I am confident in my ability to build additional history training modules for youth of all ages.

The combination of CSU OEE and the CSU History Department allowed me to locate historic structures in the field, map them, and begin to see the past in the current landscapes. This experience was expanded further through connections to local historians such as Paul Bonnifield and Jim Stanko. I was exposed to different methodologies and ways of thinking. It allowed me to expand my own thinking, helped the project grow exposing the community in a different light. The combination of these skills makes me a better historian, and each skillset that I learned will be carried with me as I continue in my field.



## NEXT STEPS

The second year of the AOR saw changes to the scope of the project. Next year the project will see to:

- Expand to other counties in Colorado, specifically Douglas and Grand counties
- Finalize project curriculum
- Work with families to edit and approve narratives and documentation
- Publish approved narratives to Colorado Encyclopedia
- Finalize digital mapping
- Expand digital component and build an online presence for the project