

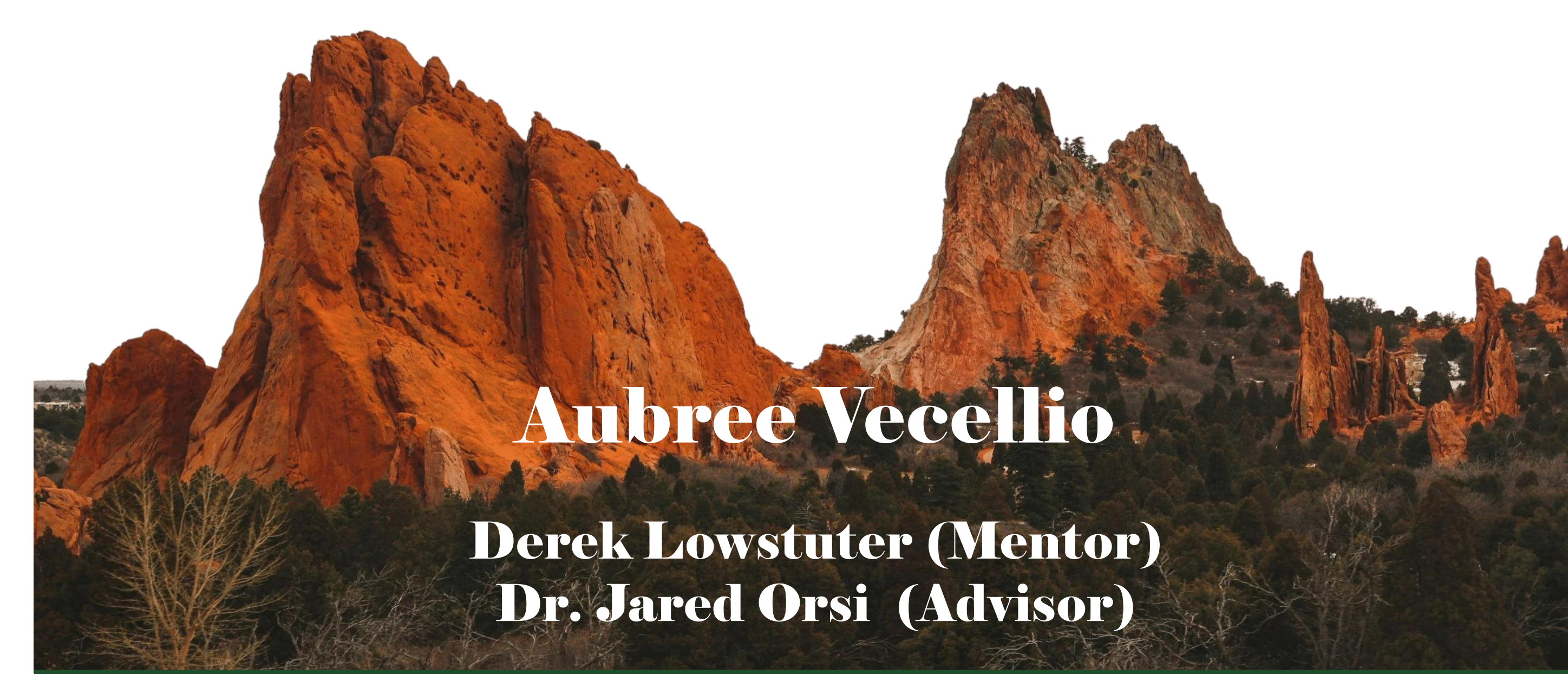


COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



REINTERPRETING ROCK LEDGE RANCH FOR YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

COLORADO SPRINGS



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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

This internship sought to facilitate revisions of historical interpretive programming at Rock Ledge Ranch Historic Site. RLR particularly seeks interpretive strategies to integrate traditional knowledge and skills related to both Indigenous and settler histories in its public-facing interpretive elements and its educational programming.

Rock Ledge Ranch (RLR) is a living history landscape near Garden of the Gods and Glen Eyrie Castle in western Colorado Springs. The Ranch actively demonstrates the importance of the property (and agriculture in general) in Colorado's history. Immersing visitors in diverse cultural experiences. Interpretive programs include discussions of the area by the Núuchi-u (Ute) and other American Indian Nations, the impact of the 1862 Homestead Act on what is now the western United States, and the eventual purchase of the Ranch in 1900 by Colorado Springs' founder, General William Palmer. However, the Ranch was most active during the period that the Chambers family lived on the property from 1874-1900. The Chambers settled there for the purported health benefits of the region's climate and to produce food for the growing communities near the base of Pikes Peak. They built a magnificent masonry home, the Rock Ledge House, and began establishing themselves as agricultural innovators.

INTERNSHIP GOALS

The goal of the internship was to create an interpretive strategy for Rock Ledge Ranch (RLR) through researching the history of the ranch and the surrounding area to revise RLR's public-facing interpretation and educational programming.

As well as doing inventory on existing historical resources at RLR, survey existing applicable and appropriate historical interpretive approaches, identify interpretive strategies to maximize the value of existing historical resources for visitors and the local community, and produce an interpretive plan for RLR.

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

As I go into my first year of grad school for Public History, this internship has set me up to get an understanding of how the public interacts with history. Working in the Archives and Special Collections at the Morgan Library and having this internship has challenged me to create an inventory and collections management proposal, solidifying my passion for public history as a career.



WHAT YOU DID

Rock Ledge Ranch managers, Melissa Keown and Anna Cross, asked that their Native American items be inventoried, organized, and then a collections management proposal be made for future uses at the ranch.

An initial inventory was made, describing items and separating them into two categories of art and tools. Once all items had been separated into those two groups, a more detailed inventory and careful storage planning were done. As the ranch does not have an archive and these items are recreations, they were placed in storage bins, smaller containers, and archival boxes.

Before and After inventory



Each box was clearly labeled, and every item had a photo taken of it. All data and information were placed into an Excel sheet. This is mainly for future Rock Ledge staff to be able to pull items without issue, being able to see what the item is and where. Much research had to be done to properly name items and understand how they were used in Ute and Native American culture.

After the Excel sheet was completed, the collections management proposal and policy were made. I thought it best to create a policy for future staff so they may understand how to best take care of the items for longevity.

WHAT YOU LEARNED

I learned much regarding the history of the Ute and Native American people in Colorado Springs but as well as Colorado Springs/Garden of the Gods History.

Aside from the work that I completed within this internship, I was also given amazing opportunities and got to meet many amazing people who supported Garden of the Gods Park.

I was able to attend and meet with members of the Núuchi-u tribe at the opening of "Until Forever Comes" a Ute exhibit created by the Núuchi-u tribe and Pioneer Museum staff in downtown Colorado Springs.



Tepee from RLR

Ute Exhibit at Pioneer Museum, Colo. Springs

The RLR staff also welcomed me into their experiences and traditions on the ranch. We chinked the homestead cabin on the property. Chinking is the process of filling the gaps of the log cabin with sheep wool and then sealing it with a mixture of straw, ash, salt, clay, and water to create a cement-like mixture. Similar to modern-day insulation.



NEXT STEPS

I would like to use the knowledge I have on Native Americans, as well as collection management, to further my career goals in American West and Colorado History.

As for the Rock Ledge Ranch, as of September 1st, I would have been given the honor to be the only female playing baseball in their annual Labor Day game, 1876 style!