

# THE ART OF RANCHING IN ROUTT COUNTY

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## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Art of Ranching Project is a multi-generational endeavor to preserve the history of centennial and family ranches and farms through youth collected oral histories. Agriculture is a cultural and economic cornerstone of Routt County and ranchers are important members of the community, though often overlooked in the continued development of the region. This project aims to elevate their work on the land and role in the community's history. Key lessons from the Routt County case study will be incorporated into future efforts to implement the project across the state.

During the summer of 2021, the project was piloted in Routt County in Northwest Colorado. Senior 4-H youth were trained in oral history collection by History Colorado staff. They identified and engaged local historians and family members of historic ranches that have remained in the same family for multiple generations. Some of the 4-H youth chose to collect histories from their own family operations. This process created space for intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

## INTERNSHIP GOALS

To provide opportunities for the intern to develop public history and public communication skills with specific emphasis on building a digital product to exhibit the Art of Ranching project. Specific responsibilities included researching and compiling historical background information on the families, completing follow-up interviews, and developing a public visualization of the history of agriculture in Routt County through its multi-generational farms and ranches.

Specific objectives of the internship included:

- (1) continued development of relationships between CSU Extension, CSU Public Lands History Center, History Colorado, and 4-H professionals,
- (2) analysis and interpretation of oral history and historical sources, and
- (3) production of a digital product for the project.

## HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

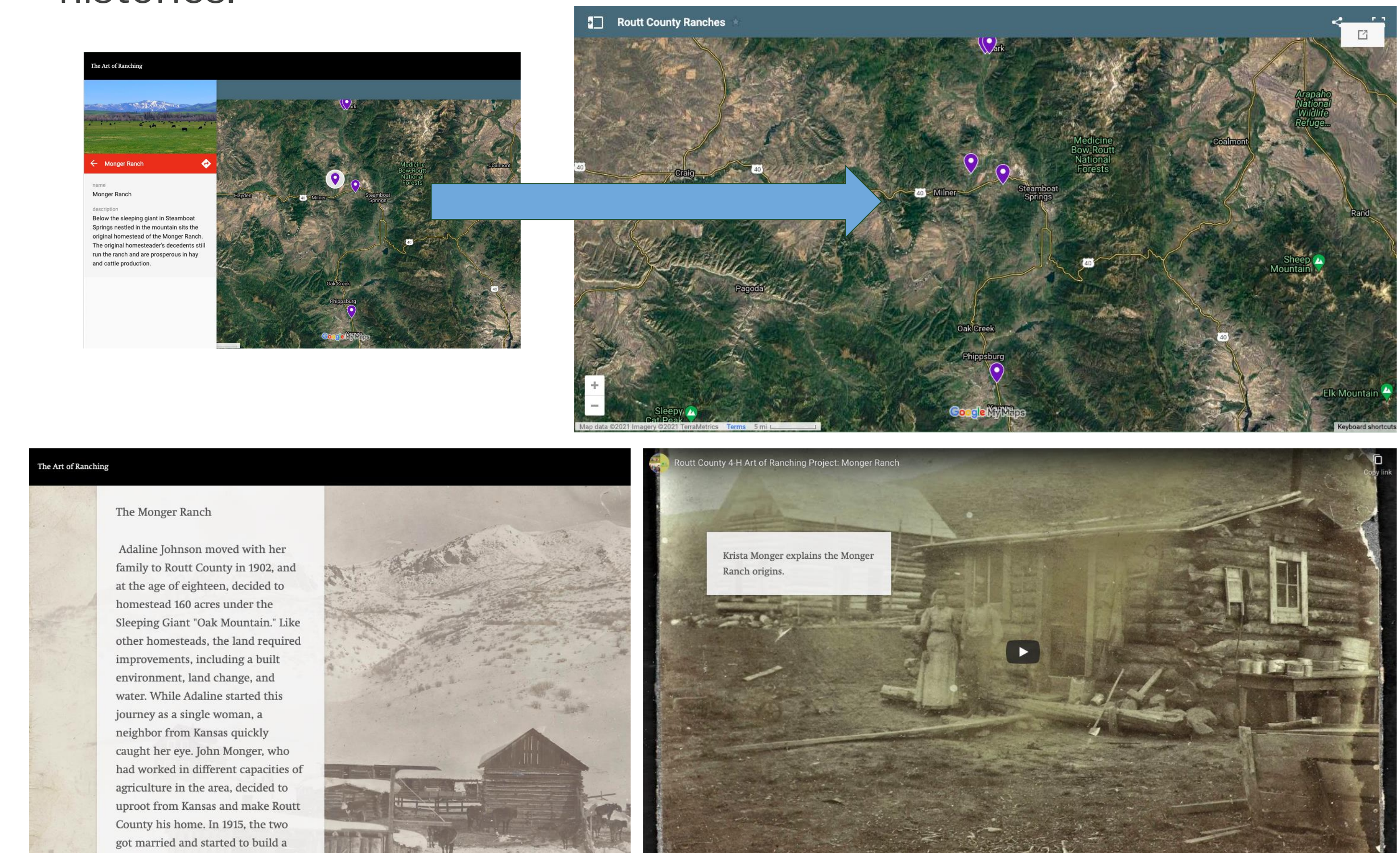
- Develop technical and digital skills that apply to my historical research inside and outside of the classroom.
- Honed historical research skills by using traditional archival sources and nontraditional local sources, such as oral history interviews and mapping historical structures on ranches.
- Strengthened communication skills through participating in oral histories and interviews, working with different stakeholders, and engaging with youth.

## WHAT YOU DID

- Worked with Routt County ranchers, 4-H youth, and local historians to collect oral histories and archival resources.
- Visited local libraries and museums to research and collect historical sources. Gathered spatial data and conducted historical analysis of that data.
- Met with and conducted follow-up interviews with participating Routt County ranchers, and collected family histories and images.
- Created an interpretive framework and StoryMap to showcase the oral histories and ranching past.
- Participated in the honoring of new centennial ranches and farms at the Colorado State Fair.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project was a collaboration of Routt County 4-H, the CSU Center for Public Lands, and History Colorado. In addition to the community engagement within Routt County, the project resulted in the creation of a StoryMap. The StoryMap was presented by Routt County 4-H youth at the Colorado State Fair. The interactive map allows the public to interact with this data. Each point includes a small narrative and photographs including historic photos and video clips.



## NEXT STEPS

The first iteration of the Art of Ranching project in Routt County produced a draft process and product that can be replicated in other counties throughout Colorado to engage 4-H youth with their community and local history. The project will continue in 2022 and the process and protocols revised. The resulting template will include:

- creation of a 4-H oral history curriculum,
- implementation of workshops for 4-H youth including training on how to properly conduct interviews with ranchers and their families,
- development of protocols for conducting historical research and creating historical interpretations, and
- creation of a digital framework for producing the digital public-facing interactive community engagement tools