

# ART OF RANCHING DOUGLAS COUNTY

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## PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Art of Ranching is a multigenerational history project that works with 4-H youth and historical ranches and families. The project began in 2020 in Routt County with the ambitious idea of bringing together 4-H youth, historians, college interns, extension agents, and individuals from historic ranches for the purpose of preserving the oral histories of our nation's agricultural roots. In the project's third year, it began a pilot in Douglas County on the Front Range. In 2024, the Douglas County expansion became ready to support a 4-H youth all the way through the completion of the oral history process. It is the project's goal to preserve the many stories of historic farms and ranches throughout Colorado, while promoting an interest in history with local youth, and establishing connections across generational lines. Finally, the Art of Ranching Project supports the CSU Extension mission by sharing knowledge and skill sets within the community. This then allows us to share these stories with the general public and academics to further education.



## INTERNSHIP GOALS

1. Support and assist in the training of 4-H youth in oral history interviewing
2. Create comprehensive historical packets containing historical summaries and primary sources on specific ranches to better enable insightful interviews
3. Engage in site visits to properties
4. Revise past narratives and prepare them for submission to the Colorado Encyclopedia

## HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

- I enhanced my research skills by using databases to gather and synthesize historical data
- I gained hands-on experience with oral history interviews, deepening my understanding of this key research method.
- I developed project management skills through assisting with archival audits
- I improved my editorial abilities by refining narratives and contributed to preparing materials for publication

## HISTORICAL RESEARCH, INTERPRETATION, AND WRITING

Building off the progress made last year during the project expansion into Douglas County, my primary focus was on assisting with the completion of the first full Art of Ranching project in the new county. This included working closely with a 4-H youth to conduct background research on their selected ranch, create questions for an interview, conduct an oral history interview, and then interpret the gathered information in the form of a written ranch narrative. Additionally, I learned how to organize and facilitate projects, and assisted in preparing past materials for publication.

- Assisted the 4-H youth with numerous aspects of their project, including the selection of a ranch location, background research, conducting oral history interviews, and interpreting the gathered information for presentation
- Used a variety of databases to conduct research into specific ranches of interest throughout the county in order to create an information packet for the 4-H youth
- Aided Routt County youth with editing their project narratives
- Learned how to manage a project, including archival audits
- Began revising past narratives to prepare them for submission, and subsequent publication, by the Colorado Encyclopedia



Jameson Lee (4-H Youth) and Judy Penley  
(Ranch Interviewee)

## WHAT YOU LEARNED

It is a common misconception that all history is, and all that it can be, is a story in the pages of a textbook, or a primary source read out of some journal or older history. The Art of Ranching project stands as the perfect example that the practice of history can be so much more: over the course of this internship, I refined my knowledge of how to use digital history resources, conduct oral history interviews with remarkable individuals, and most importantly, help foster connections between universities, ranches, and local youth.

I developed practical skills in archival management and narrative editing, which are crucial for ensuring that these stories are recorded accurately and meaningfully. By working closely with 4-H youth and local historians, I realized how historical projects could inspire and educate future generations while preserving the cultural heritage of communities.

In a slightly more traditional approach to history, I improved my ability to find relevant information in archival resources such as homestead patents and historic newspapers.

Finally, I was able to better refine my writing in order that the research packets could be accessible to readers of varying ages.



Green Family Craggs Ranch



Redmond Ranch

## NEXT STEPS

At the conclusion of the project's second year in Douglas County, the Art of Ranching team has the following goals:

1. Find additional ranches and spaces to further expand the scale of the project
2. Train the 4-H youth in methods to better interview individuals in a timely manner
3. Continue to prepare past narratives for publication
4. Increase the number of youth participants in the project