

ART OF RANCHING DOUGLAS COUNTY

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION

The Art of Ranching project is a multigenerational history project that works with 4-H youth and historical families and ranches. The project began in 2020 in Routt County with the ambitious idea of involving 4H youth, historians, college interns, extension agents, and individuals from historic ranches. In the project's third year, it expanded into Douglas County on the Front Range. Over the past 60 years, Douglas County has rapidly shifted from an exclusively rural area with an agricultural economy to one of the fastest growing counties in the entire nation. With such dramatic expansion, there have been serious concerns that the rich history of the region will be lost and that newcomers, even those seeking understanding of the past, won't be able to obtain insights into the vibrant land they are living in. 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. Assist in deploying the previously developed Art of Ranching 4-H curriculum in a new county
2. Conduct detailed research into the history of Douglas County
3. Establish friendly connections with knowledgeable members of the community, including local historical societies and their members
4. Create comprehensive historical packets containing historical summaries and primary sources on specific ranches to better enable insightful interviews in future years
5. Produce a historical narrative for use by the public at Hidden Mesa Open Space as proof of concept

HOW DOES THIS APPLY TO YOUR EDUCATION

- I learned how to better use online historical databases to supplement research that could otherwise not be found.
- Over the course of this internship, I dramatically strengthened my communication skills and increased my comfort connecting with local historians
- I built useful relationships with very knowledgeable individuals and learned how to establish connections with organizations that can later be valuable to the expansion of the project.
- Finally, I expanded my historical writing skills with the added challenge of needing to write for audiences of varying ages and skill.

WHAT YOU DID

The Art of Ranching project has seen great success and progress made over the past two years in its origin point of Routt County, so the project team deemed it time to begin expanding outwards into other parts of the state. This year was the first in Douglas County, and as such, a fair deal of the work that needed to be done was understanding the historical context of the region before we could move on to the specific ranches.

- Did in-depth research into the broader history of Douglas County in order to have the best possible understanding of events and conditions that might impact stories uncovered in later research.
 - Constructed comprehensive summaries of Douglas County history books that could be distributed to 4-H youth participating in the project.
- Contacted and met with several Douglas County historians from the various historical societies in the region to discuss the locations of ranches, the familial connections, and more specific questions concerning the historical ranching practices.
- Used a variety of databases to conduct research into specific ranches of interest throughout the county in order to create information packets for 4-H youth or the historical site.
- Supported additional oral history interviews conducted by another intern in Routt County.



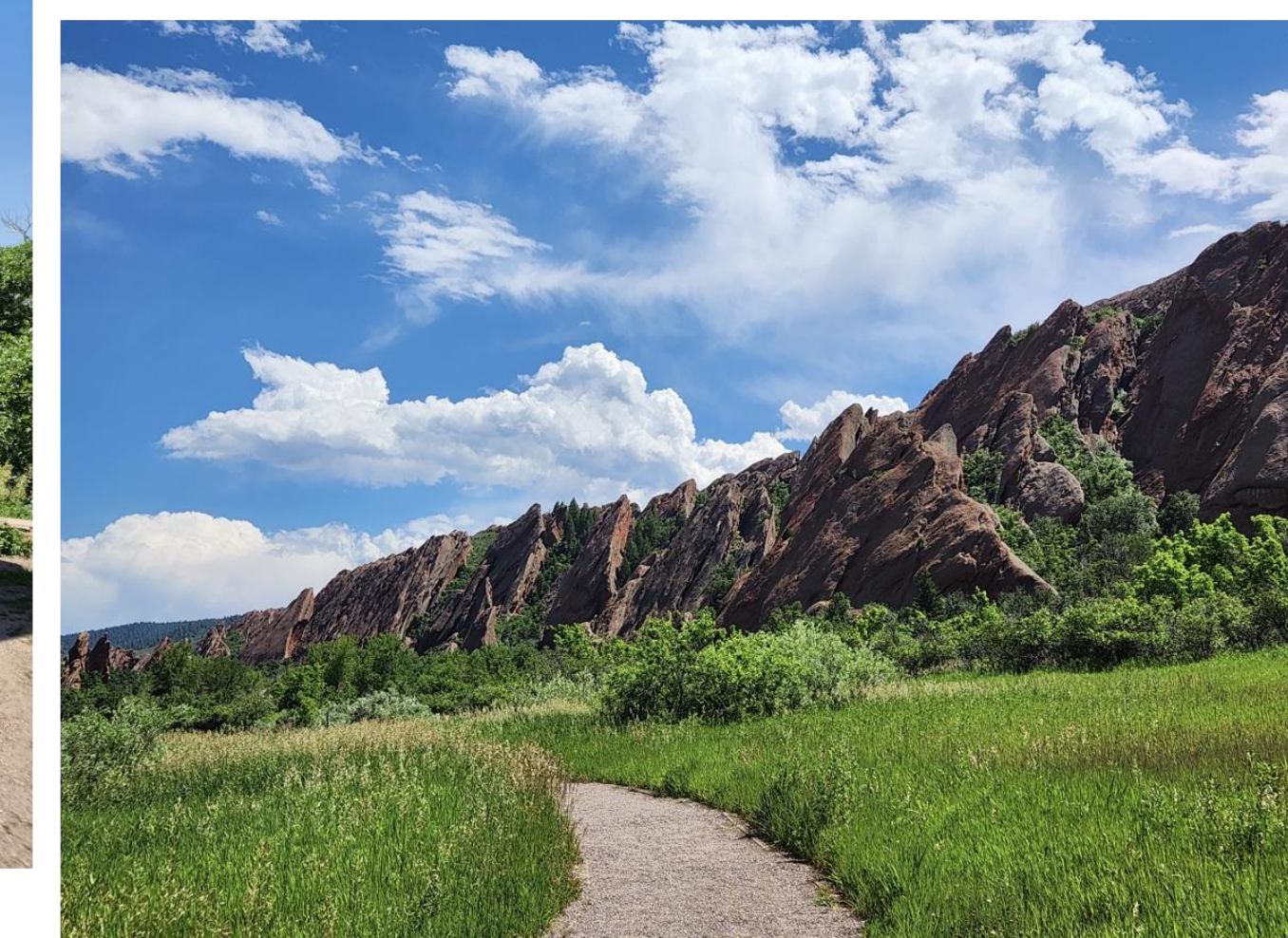
Converse Ranch Homestead



Converse Ranch Outbuilding



Persse Ranch Homestead



Roxborough State Park

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 learned a considerable deal about how to use digital history resources, interview knowledgeable individuals, and establish amiable connections with historical societies.

Furthermore, I was able to travel to the sites that were researched and investigated so I could personally understand what it would have been like to live and work in such an area, thus enhancing my ability to write a report with a vivid image of what the described environment looks like.

In a slightly more traditional approach to history, I learned how to locate and pinpoint a specific ranch or homestead using township and range, along with how to access original homestead patent information.

Finally, I practiced how to best modify my approach to research and writing in order that the reports constructed could be accessible to readers of varying ages.

NEXT STEPS

The first year of having the Art of Ranching expand into Douglas County has established the groundwork for future advancements in the region. It is the goal of the AOR project in Douglas County to:

1. Find additional ranches and spaces to further expand the scale of the project
2. Train the 4H youth in methods to better interview individuals in a timely manner
3. Continue to advance the interest of 4H youth in the project