

Park County Historical Society takes field trip to Deer Creek Valley ranches

Historical ranches abound by Pat Mauro, Coordinator

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Two Springs Ranch

The Park County Historical Society took a field trip up County Road 43, visiting various historic ranches. The original Lydia Ranch was in the approximate location of the current Two Spring Ranch. The new name of the ranch was due to the two springs located on the property. (Photo by Pat Mauro)

The Park County Historical Society made their first field trip of 2018, up Deer Creek Valley to tour ranches.

We met at the top of Crow Hill, where we noted the site of the first Deer Creek School from the 1870s. With the Deer Valley Park Association history book, we

also matched pictures of the same area, 70 or more years earlier.

We noted other ranches and their owners through the years, as we departed and headed up County Road 43 to the Two Spring Ranch. Upon our arrival, we were greeted by free-range chickens and friendly dogs.

Our gracious hosts, Jon and Bea Everest, greeted our group and explained to us the history of the 128-year-old ranch, and their history on the ranch also. In the DVPA book, there is a map from the book "Deer Creek: The Life of a Stream," written by Charles Cobb in 1961.

One of the ranches on the map is the Lydia Ranch, in the approximate location of the Two Spring Ranch. John said that their ranch was originally the Lydia Ranch, so another history mystery was solved.

John started our tour of the ranch, explaining that the new name of the ranch was due to the two springs located on the property.

He also explained how the water system on the ranch was fed to the two houses

on the property, using the springs for the supply. They eventually had to drill a new well, as the spring water had some issues. The smaller house on the property was built in the 1920s.

Bea showed us a book called "A Princeton Cowboy," written by Channing Sweet, son of Colorado Governor William Sweet, who lived on the ranch during his father's governorship, which was from 1923-1925.

Channing had taken a picture of the ranch house when he lived there. Bea told the story of how Channing rode his horse from the ranch all the way to Cheyenne Frontier Days.

John told us how they turned the ranch into a working ranch with cattle, horses and chickens, returning it to its original use as in the 1890s.

Bea took us into the hen house, to show the wood they used from crates sent to Edna McGraw, who built the Country Store in Bailey in 1878. The boxes were marked for shipment on the train, with her name as Mrs. William Morrow, the namesake for Morrow Mountain in Bailey.

Edna married William Morrow after Mr. McGraw died in 1888. We then entered on the north side of the barn, built in 1890. We noted how the building was built, using pin truss construction. John also explained the additions added to the barn throughout the years, and the effects those additions have on the initial structure built.

From the barn, we moved downhill to the ranch house. It also has additions through the years. But the interior of the house had some interesting design that is rarely seen. The two fireplaces are back to back, facing the living and dining

rooms. Each fireplace has its own chimney.

After we completed the tour at the ranch, we headed upstream to the KZ Ranch. The current ranch has been in existence since the 1960s, when Otto Kuhler purchased the ranch, changed the name to KZ, and created the adjacent subdivision.

Kuhler was a famed engineer, rancher and artist. He designed many of the streamlined steam locomotives from the 1930s. He retired on the ranch and started to paint there. His works are well known in railroad circles, as most of his subject matter was the Denver South Park and Pacific Railroad.

We were able to see the two original log cabins, also with additions, that were part of the original homestead made by Charlie Royal. Charlie lost that part of his ranch when he was caught with an illegal still in the area, and he built another home further north up Deer Creek.

Then we then drove up to the end of CR 43, and on the way we saw bighorn sheep, slightly uphill from the road. As we made our way south from there, we were delighted to see two moose in Deer Creek Valley, at the KZ Ranch area.

That ended another great Park County historical day. For more information about joining the society and helping keep history alive in Park County, visit our website at www.parkcountyhistory.com.