



Historical Society tours Santa Maria/EM Ranch near Hartsel

June 27, 2016

A wonderful renovation of an old South Park ranch, Pat Mauro, PCHS

On Saturday, June 18, the Park County Historical Society headed north of Hartsel to the Santa Maria/EM Ranch. We had about 20 attendees, and a day of perfect weather as our hosts, owners Merrill Wilson and George Watson greeted our arrival.



The main house

The main house at Santa Maria/EM Ranch was built onto many times. The original was a log cabin, the portion under the dormer window. (Photo by Pat Mauro)

We started out in a barn, one of the original structures on the property. Merrill and George gave us an overview of the incredible activities they've done to restore and preserve the ranch.

The ranch was started originally in the 1870s. It was named the Santa Maria

Ranch in the 1950s after a warm spring on the west side of the ranch. The original name was the EM ranch, but it hasn't yet been determined where the name came from.

After we reviewed old documents and pictures in the barn, and were treated to a history of the ranch by George and Merrill, we toured some of the outbuildings on the property. We then entered the beautifully restored main house. Merrill and George spearheaded the restoration, and had the caretaker Gary as the main contractor for the restoration.

What was done to restore the structure was nothing short of a miracle. The whole house was lifted so a new foundation could be built. With the house then on a solid structure, they were able to work on the restoration of the interior. Every piece of original wood or other structural material that could be reused, was. The interior is a perfect example of how a historic structure that was almost lost, not only was saved, but will now thrive. There have been modern additions added, but every essence of the original design, is now preserved with integrity.



Santa Maria Spring

The Santa Maria Ranch was named for the Santa Maria spring. The pool above the spring is about six feet in diameter. It is a warm spring that does not freeze in the winter. (Photo by Pat Mauro)

We enjoyed another hour on the porch of the cabin that Merrill and George stay in now, and enjoyed the beautiful view of Red Hill and the Middle Fork of the South Platte River.

This concluded the tour, and most trip attendees stayed in Hartsel to attend our first dinner and program there. It was a jam-packed history day in Hartsel that won't soon be forgotten.

Our next trip is planned for July 23 to the Lake George Thirtyninemile Mountain Volcanic area. Mark your calendar. Visit the Park County Historical Society online at www.parkcountyhistory.com or see our Facebook page.