Rock Creek Ranch - Barn Restoration

Proposal for Internship Opportunity to Boise State University History Department
January 27, 2018

Rock Creek Ranch Partnership: The Nature Conservancy, Idaho; Wood River Land Trust; University of Idaho, College of Natural Resources and Agricultural Life Sciences/Extension

Purpose of Property: A sustainable rangeland research and education facility near Bellevue, Idaho (Sun Valley area), established to increase wildlife, recreation, and habitat conservation value, with collaborative practices in landscape-scale conservation and ranching. This outdoor laboratory serves many purposes, including public outreach and education at the site near the barn during the summer season (Sagebrush Saturdays and other associated events). One future goal will be to host education activities and install permanent interpretive signage at the Rock Creek barn site, and to develop informational materials and outreach products for Rock Creek partnership efforts (print and digital).

Barn Restoration: The barn is an historic structure on property that was homesteaded in the late 1800s. Rock Creek Ranch has been continuously ranched since that period, making it a significant ranching, natural resource, and Native American cultural site in Idaho’s Wood River Valley for well over 100 years. The Rock Creek property and surrounding area in the Wood River Valley have been settled and re-settled several times throughout history, almost always dependent upon ranching livelihoods to sustain it. The barn is one historic feature that can help tell a story about ranching practices and European settlement in the west, relationships among settlers and Native American Indians, and environmental and conservation history in Idaho.

The Rock Creek partnership will restore the barn feature to its historic condition with the help of the Idaho Heritage Trust (IHT) and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (Idaho SHPO). The plan is to have a multi-phase approach to restoration, beginning with basic structural work, and completing with the development of the barn as a fully-operational, modernized, educational facility for public use. It will be the first such barn project in the State of Idaho to focus on ranching in the west.

Research Needs: There is a need for historical research to inform the Rock Creek barn restoration, and to gain information for public education about the ranch site, individuals associated with it (including families), and historic use of the site and surrounding area. Eventually, this critical historical research will be applied to informational materials and interpretive signs on-site, and to contribute to the body of historical knowledge in the Wood River Valley, and the State of Idaho.

Research Opportunities for Intern(s): The Rock Creek partnership wishes to extend a learning opportunity to a Boise State University history department student, students, or group cohort to perform historical research tasks in support of this project. Students with interest in western American history, environmental and/or conservation history, oral history, historic preservation of structures (homes, barns, etc.), and Native American history may find this project a great
learning experience. There is latitude in choice of research areas to accommodate student skill development that will enhance both academic and potential career experiences. This exciting learning opportunity would be perfect for either an MA (history) or MAHR (public history) grad student, or as a group project at either the undergrad or graduate level to gain and share skills in historical research.

Possible areas of historical research may include the following:

1. Research about the barn structure (historic building materials, methods, transportation of materials), and use
2. Research about barns on ranching properties in the Wood River Valley (and/or Idaho and the American West)
3. Research about the history of the immediate property, including land acquisition, deeds, transfers, and permitting history
4. Research about the history of Rock Creek settlement and/or surrounding ranches
5. Research about Wood River Valley historical events
6. Research about Rock Creek Ranch families, local residents, Native Americans, and ranchers associated with Rock Creek Ranch, Wood River Valley, and western Idaho

Possible skills that a history student may gain, as well as potential professional career exposure, include the following:

1. Historic research (on-site and digital): *Idaho State Archives*, Boise, Idaho, and other sources of historic documents
   - Photographs
   - City and State record searches (deeds, census data, occupational records)
   - Newspapers, books, and other printed materials
   - Oral histories

2. Historic research (on-site and digital): Community Library’s *Sun Valley Museum of History; Sun Valley Historical Society’s Heritage and Ski Museum; Blaine County Historical Museum*; and possible other local historical society/museums in or near Ketchum, Idaho

3. Record-searching and information-sharing with the Nature Conservancy (TNC Idaho) and Community Library’s partnership effort at the Ernest Hemingway home in Ketchum, Idaho

4. Oral history interviews with Rock Creek families, local residents, Native Americans, and ranchers associated with Rock Creek Ranch, Wood River Valley, and western Idaho families associated with the Rock Creek Ranch and greater Wood River Valley

5. On-site visits and work with professionals to learn more about possible careers in historic preservation, public history, history, landscape-scale conservation, biology and environment, ranching, engineering, and livestock husbandry
The research would mostly be conducted from Boise, with occasional trips as needed to the Rock Creek property to see the property and meet others involved, and possible trips to Ketchum area historical museums, societies, and libraries. The student would be trained in specific historic research methods and introduced to appropriate resources, individuals, and organizations, but will be expected to assume independent work, frequently communicating with respective mentors. Oral history interviews would be conducted in-person and by phone.

The University of Idaho is also extending similar internship opportunities for structural engineering students with interests in engineering, architecture, and historic preservation.

**Timeframe Option A:** Summer 2018 for a defined period of time (ie; 3 weeks, including attendance at specific events)

**Timeframe Option B:** Fall 2018 semester (14 weeks), with occasional visits to property and surrounding area (in good weather periods only)

**Timeframe Option C:** Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 semesters, with occasional visits to property and surrounding area (in good weather periods only)

**Internship Funding**
At this time, the partnership does not have earmarked funding for student internships. It is possible that the UI Extension under Dr. Hulet, may be able to apply some funds to student research, and that possibility is being explored. The Nature Conservancy will provide a few hundred travel dollars to cover trips to Sun Valley for research purposes.

**Local resource connections for information and research could include:** The Nature Conservancy (TNC Idaho) and Community Library (Ketchum, ID) partnership effort with the Ernest Hemingway’s home in Ketchum; the Community Library’s Sun Valley Museum of History; and Sun Valley Historical Society’s Heritage and Ski Museum; Blaine County Historical Museum; Idaho State Historical Society Archives; Idaho Rangeland Resource Commission, and other ranching organizations