



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
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THE ROWLEY HOMESTEAD

Snow Mountain Ranch YMCA OF THE ROCKIES

Fred and Martha Rowley and their three children came to Grand County from Denver in 1919. The Rowleys had “squatter’s rights” until 1926 when they were granted a homestead. In order to be granted a homestead, the land had to be surveyed, and the squatter had to “prove up” which required one to have a cabin, erect a certain amount of fencing and live on the property six months of each year for three consecutive years. An original homestead consisted of 160 acres however the homesteader could choose to add acres of land if they wished.



Unlike some areas of the east where neighbors gathered together for a “barn- or house-raising,” Fred built the cabin and all but one of the barns himself. The Rowleys chose a perfect spot to build their home and on most winter days the sun shone down on the entrance to their house and barn. They did have one small problem though. The Rowleys did not have water rights as the first settlers to the area had claimed them in the 1880’s. Fortunately for the Rowleys, Rudy and Clarabell Just had built a homestead nearby and had water rights to Pole Creek. The Justs generously allowed the Rowleys access to Pole Creek although it was still impossible to keep large numbers of livestock as all water had to be obtained from the creek and carried back. However, Fred did have a team of horses as well as a few cows, goats, chickens and hogs. With these animals, Fred was able to sell cream to supplement their income. Five gallons of cream often sold for three dollars or less.

Like many homesteaders, Fred Rowley could not make a living on his homestead alone so he worked part time at the railroad in Tabernash and also did some timbering.

Consequently, Fred was not able to spend winter on the homestead during the first few years but he was soon able to remain there year round. Martha and the children returned to Denver during the winter to escape the harsh weather and there she worked in a millinery, or hat making shop.



The Rowleys had a large garden, a rhubarb patch and a lovely bed of wild roses. Today the original rhubarb patch is still growing and wild roses can be found throughout the property. Fred also raised lettuce however, in 1923 it was completely destroyed by blight and even today lettuce does not grow well here. This area also has a short growing season so only certain vegetables could be grown such as potatoes, turnips, onions, carrots and spinach. The only

field crop that was raised in this area was hay. Although oats were also planted, the short growing season did not allow them to mature so they were cut and used as hay as well.

Sadly, during the Great Depression of the 1930's, Fred found it impossible to make a living and pay his taxes. He sold his homestead to the Justs in 1939 and they graciously allowed him to continue living on the homestead until he moved in with his daughter in 1954. Fred Rowley passed away in January 1957 and at his request, he was buried in a cemetery in Hot Sulphur Springs, Colorado. In order to develop Snow Mountain Ranch, the YMCA of the Rockies purchased the Just Ranch in 1967 which then included the Rowley Homestead.

In 1971, restoration of the homestead began and continues to this day. Ten years later, in the fall of 1981 Barbara S. King, Program Director of Snow Mountain Ranch, began developing the Rowley Homestead into a living museum and nature center. She enlisted a group of staff to research the background of the Rowley family and much of the information they obtained was provided by Rudy and Clarabell Just. Since the original project began in 1981, several of Fred Rowley's descendants have provided further information and the YMCA gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Rowley and Just families to help complete the life story of those who homesteaded this beautiful property.



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By the end of July 1982, the Rowley Homestead was opened as a living museum and nature center for the enjoyment of our guests.

As you enter the homestead grounds, the first cabin is an example of a logger's cabin. Remains of cabins such as this one can be found throughout the mountains. This particular cabin, constructed in 1940 by two loggers, was originally located on the nature trail just north of the homestead. In 1983, the YMCA decided to rebuild the cabin at its present site to allow it to be a part of the museum. It is the only building inside the fenced enclosure that is not original to the homestead.

The building that resembles a garage was the first barn that Fred built in 1919. In later years it was used as a shop and a garage. Located in this building is a 7.5 horsepower Witte horizontal stationary gas engine purchased by Della Just in 1929 for use as a power plant. This engine was completely inoperable when discovered on the property but one of Snow Mountain Ranch's full time staff members, Glenn Tilghman, completely restored the engine.



Attached to the back of the building is the original outhouse used by the Rowleys. We ask our guests to enjoy it as a part of the authenticity of the homestead but please do not use it as a restroom!

The cabin, with its unique front porch is the center of attention on the homestead. During the summer of 1919, Fred built only the southern half of the cabin to shelter his family. If you look closely, you can see where he left the logs extended so that later it could be enlarged. The northern half of the cabin was added later as well as the front porch. At one time there was also a lean-to on the back of the cabin where Fred cut and stored wood for use in the winter. The cabin is chinked with cement; an unusual chinking material as most buildings on homesteads were chinked with cow manure which would adhere well to the logs. The furniture in the cabin is not the original Rowley furniture. Any furniture that had been left by the Rowleys disappeared while the cabin remained empty between 1954 and 1971 when restoration of the Homestead began. All of the present furnishings

are from the early 1900's era and were donated by individuals interested in restoring this property.

The bottom part of the two-story section of the barn, which Fred used for his horses and hay storage, was built around 1920 by another homesteader named Johnny Childs. Originally, that part of the barn was Johnny Childs's homestead cabin. Tragically, Johnny was killed in an accident on Berthoud Pass soon after he had been granted a homestead. Fred Rowley bought Johnny's cabin, and during the next winter, he dismantled the cabin and hauled it piece by piece on a sled to his homestead where he rebuilt it for use as a barn. The upper level of the two-story barn was used as a hay loft. Fred pitched the hay through the opening in the ceiling into a manger below to feed his horses.

The first section of the single-story barn was used for storage of equipment and materials. The second section housed the goats. Near the rear of this room is a stanchion which held the head of a goat while it was milked. The last section was a milking shed for his cows and Fred could put feed into the manger through the south window.



To the north and west of the barns are several pieces of farm machinery used during the early 1900's. Most of this machinery was donated to the museum. In the pasture we also have a windmill designed to draw water from a well. The Rowleys never had a windmill, however it is part of the museum because of its importance to homesteaders. In the yard west of the house are a hayrack, a sled used in the winter for hauling and transportation,

miscellaneous wagon parts and a Mormon hay stacker. To operate the Mormon hay stacker, a team of horses was attached to one end of the swing arm by a length of rope and a hayfork was attached to the opposite end of the swing arm. Hay would be picked up by the fork then the horses would move the arm and the hay would be released from the fork by a trip rope onto the stack.

To preserve food, the Rowleys had a root cellar which was used to store various vegetables and canned fruit. The root cellar kept foods cool in the summer months and also kept them from freezing during the winter. The smoke house was also essential in

preserving food as smoking meat over a very low-burning fire for a period of time preserves it. Green aspen was commonly used in this process because pine has a resin that would ruin the flavor of the meat.

Grambril Greitzer was a miner who built a cabin south of the Rowley Homestead. He insisted that God had told him there was gold in this area but like so many others, he never found gold and worked for the railroad to pay for his supplies. The remains of his cabin can still be seen near the gold mine on the road to the falls. There were also local legends about Grambril's unique pet porcupine.

All preceding photos courtesy of Phil Frigon.





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HELP US PRESERVE HISTORY



Rowley Homestead SNOW MOUNTAIN RANCH

We hope that this packet will give you some insight into the life of the Rowley family who lived here on the Snow Mountain Ranch Property almost a hundred years ago. In order to help us preserve this beautiful and historic setting we kindly ask for your cooperation with the following requests:

- Leave all pets securely restrained outside the fence.
- Please no smoking.
- Motorcycles, bicycles, and all vehicles must remain outside the fence.
- Dispose of trash in the proper containers.
- Do not pick flowers.
- Please do not use the outhouse!
- Be careful when walking around the Homestead.
- Do not attempt to pet the marmots, chipmunks, or squirrels. They are WILD animals.

Thank you and enjoy your visit!