



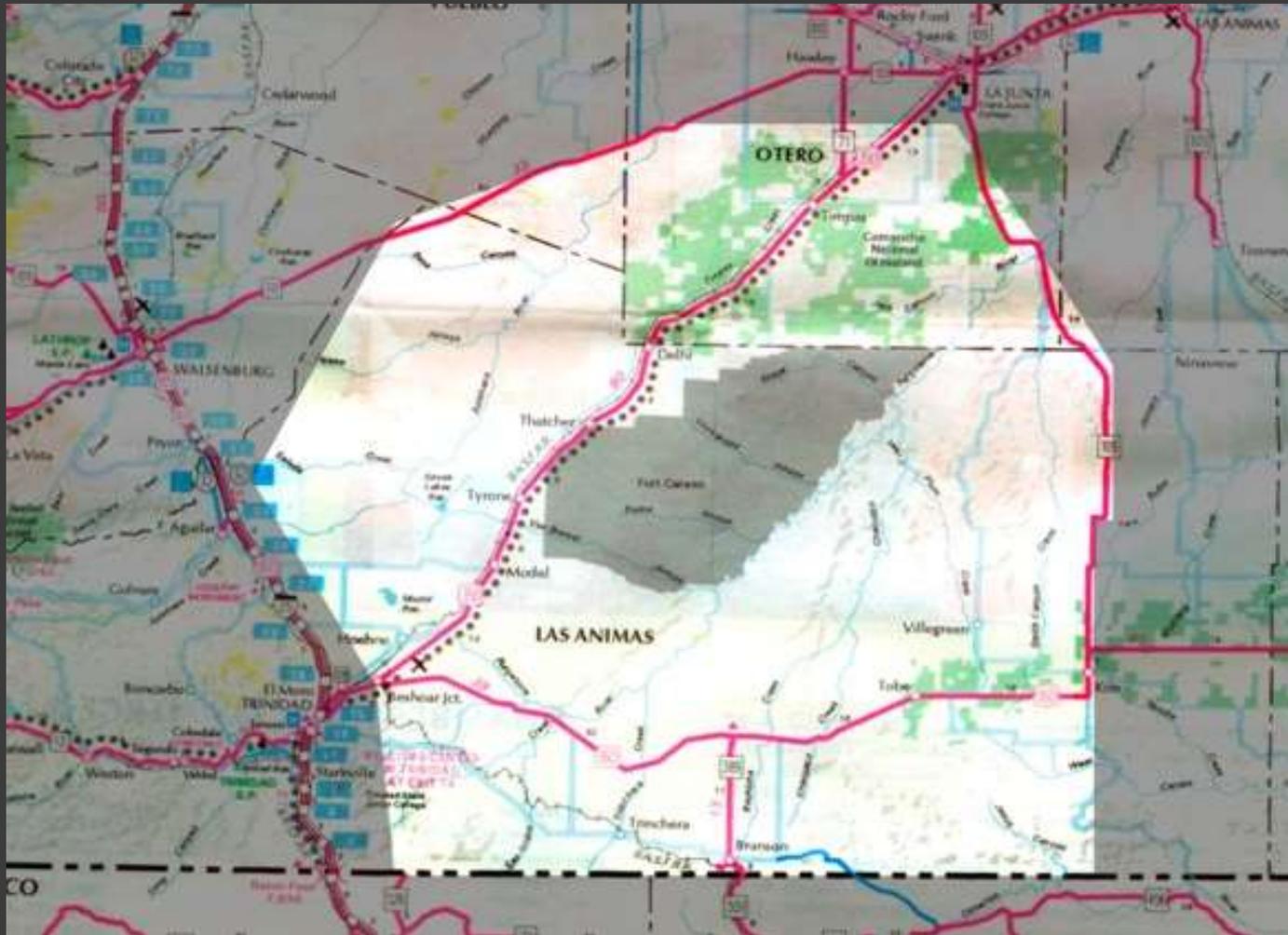
The Homesteading Landscape of Southeast
Colorado's Purgatoire River Region

Purgatoire River Region Survey

- Project initiated because of proposed expansion of the Army's Pinon Canon Maneuver Site
- Colorado Preservation, Inc. partnered with local grassroots organization opposed to the expansion
- Involvement of local ranching community in the anti-expansion cause created a new interest in historic preservation and provided new opportunity to survey private lands
- Goal to record previously undocumented resources and to raise public awareness of unique, but little known area of Colorado



Project Area



Phase 1: Survey

- More than 450 prehistoric and historic sites recorded at the reconnaissance level
- 58 sites recorded at the intensive level and 56 of these determined eligible for listing on the National Register
- Produced historic context study and survey report (available for download via CPI website)
- Documented more than 200 homesteads



Resource totals

Included:

- 207 Homesteads
- 35 Historic residential complexes
- 29 Dams and water diversion projects
- 24 Rock art sites
- 22 Commercial or industrial sites
- 20 Transportation related resources
- 19 Churches or Cemeteries
- 17 Schools
- 14 Sites featuring bedrock metates
- 10 Sites with Apishapa Phase structures
- 9 Sites with historic rock inscriptions
- 7 Tipi ring sites
- 6 Ranch headquarter complexes



Phase 2: Documentation & Interpretation

- Scope of Phase 2 narrowed to focus on homesteading and ranching history of the region
- MPDF
- 5 National Register Rural Historic Landscape nominations
- Oral histories with ranchers distributed via podcasts
- Driving tour of the region
- Interpretive signage
- Homesteading publication



The Rural Historic Landscape

- Initial project was focused on individual resources rather than on the larger landscape, but it quickly became evident that homestead complexes and other resources were intrinsically intertwined with the surrounding landscape.
- Developed landscape questions for homesteads:
 - How did homesteaders and ranchers shape their landscape?
 - How did they adapt their buildings and agricultural practices to accommodate the landscape?
 - What can the landscape tell us about their agricultural practices, way of life, and cultural heritage?



Survey Methodology

- Ranchers took survey team consisting of architectural historian and historical archaeologist to sites on their land
- Exchange of information key: ranchers share information about livestock operations and family histories and survey team shares information on homesteading history and material culture
- Completed reconnaissance-level survey forms with location, photos, and brief site description including , standing architecture, architectural ruins, architectural foundations, related associated features, and artifacts.



Combining Archaeology and Architectural History

Archaeology

- Material Culture/ Artifacts
- Foundations, depressions, other evidence of previous building locations and land uses
- Focused on identifying level of investment in facilities, subsistence/economic items, settlement patterns, and cultural affiliations
- Experienced with documenting ruins

Architectural History

- Building types
- Construction methods
- Focused on identifying building trends, unique vernacular adaptations, cultural influences on building techniques
- Most often deals with intact buildings rather than ruins
- More experience with documenting mid-20th century resources such as newer ranch complexes in the region

Survey findings



Wide range of factors have influenced the region's land uses

- the semi-arid climate
- native short-grass prairie
- the availability of water
- access to railroad shipping points
- the federal government's homesteading policies
- the Taylor Grazing Act and managed grazing on federal lands
- agricultural practices brought to the region by settlers from New Mexico
- topography of canyons, arroyos, and rock outcropping
- cycles of drought



20th century homesteading

- Though settlement in region began in the mid-19th century, much of the region was still an undeveloped frontier at the beginning of the 20th century
- Homestead boom came in the 1910s and 1920s. Settlers claimed land under expanded Homestead Acts of 1909 and 1916
- Region offered a last chance for those with a dream to own land but few financial resources, largely subsistence homesteading
- Many tried dryland farming, but region best suited to grazing
- Hard hit by drought and dust storms of the 1930s



Abandoned homesteads incorporated into large modern ranches



Minimally disturbed homestead sites



Baking powder can
c.1933



Remains of barrels used
for water storage



Baby bottle



Sheep shears



Cream can



Dish fragments

Distinctive regional architecture adapted to climate and landscape



New Mexican heritage evident in built environment and material culture



Stock raising landscape



Region with rich ranching heritage and active ranching community

- Area used for Open Range ranching (cattle and sheep) before homesteading boom
- Former homesteads combined into 10,000-100,000 acre cattle ranches
- Most multi-generation family ranches
- La Junta 2nd largest cattle market in United States
- Annual livestock sales in Otero and Las Animas Counties total more than a billion dollars



Challenges



Site Access

- Resources on private property in remote areas
- Owner involvement in survey essential
 - Owners were more comfortable participating in a survey project in which they could directly participate.
 - Due to the varied topography, juniper woodlands, and many canyons, sites could be difficult to find. Most sites accessible only by rough two-track trails or off road driving.



Limited Historical Records

- Few historical records beyond General Land Office homestead records
- Traditional or frontier architecture can be very difficult to date- regional architecture changed little from 1860s to 1920s
- Artifacts essential to determining period of occupation, cultural affiliations, agricultural practices of a homestead
- Artifacts can also help to indicate the function of buildings
- Material culture of a site may also indicate site uses not in official records



The Allen Mayes Homestead was patented in 1923, but the site includes late nineteenth century artifacts.

Combining Archaeology and Architecture in the final products

- Integrating architecture and archaeology in written documents- disciplines have specific technical writing styles
- Each discipline has its own survey form- awkward to combine

Determining nomination boundaries

- Does all the land within the nomination boundaries need to be surveyed?
- How many acres are required for a site to qualify as a rural historic landscape?
- Where to draw boundaries?

Factors to consider:

- Natural Boundaries
- Historic property lines
- Current property lines (and owner permission)
- Visibility limits



Layers of History

- Initially focused on homesteading history of the region. Planned MPDF for homesteading resources.
- Realized that needed to address broader ranching history as well and how it has intersected with homesteading history
- Expanded MPDF to include ranching and extended period of significance to 1964
- Look at the impact of changing land use policies
- Look at adaptation of the landscape and homesteads as part of their significance

