RURAL PEOPLE WITH CONNECTIONS:

FARM AND RANCH FAMILIES IN THE ROARING FORK VALLEY, COLORADO

by

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After Aspen's mining economy started to decline in 1893, farmers and ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley, Colorado who had been supporting the miners became economically prominent. Demographic changes accompanied this economic shift, and the Valley developed into a family-based community whose members represented a variety of regions within America and Europe. The mountain valley environment encouraged the growth of a small-scale mixed farm and ranch economy. Between 1900 and 1950, families grazed their cattle on U.S. Forest Service land during the summer, and used their farm land to produce hay, potatoes, grain, and vegetables.

A variety of economic connections tying Valley farm and ranch families to the world around them helped them prosper. Ranchers depended on the range to feed their cattle during the summer, and so struggled to develop a relationship among the environment, their cattle, and the Forest Service that would allow them to maximize livestock production and still conserve their range resource. Economic relationships within the family also helped Roaring Fork Valley farmers and ranchers prosper, since children provided necessary labor cheaply, and women sold their cream which provided the family with much-needed cash throughout the year. Valley farmers' potato crop forged essential economic ties to outside markets and federal price supports. Economic ties to outside markets, combined with strong family economies and connections to the land, allowed Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families to survive and prosper during the years between Aspen's height as a mining town and its height as a tourist town.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE LIFE, TIMES, AND PEOPLE OF THE ROARING FORK VALLEY

In 1887 Frank Marolt emigrated from Slovenia to the mining town of Leadville, Colorado. There he met Frances Rupert, also from Slovenia, and they married. By 1910 they were running a saloon on Cooper Street in Aspen and living above it with their eight children. Between 1887 and 1893 Aspen boomed as a silver-mining town and offered opportunities for people interested in mining and service jobs. After silver prices crashed in 1893, however, miners--and customers--were leaving Aspen. As their saloon became less profitable, the Marolts bought a farm outside of town to support themselves. In 1927 four of their sons bought and ran the neighboring Midland ranch, and in 1940 Steve, Ted, and Mike Marolt were raising cattle, hay, grain, and potatoes on their adjoining land. In the 1950s the brothers reduced their farming and ranching and sold parcels of land to local developers. Today a hospital, a golf course, the community gardens, and the Snowbunny and Meadow Wood subdivisions occupy the land where the Marolts used to farm and ranch. The Aspen Historical Society is in the process of building a mine and ranch museum in the Marolt granary, which was once a mine sampling works. Since its settlement, the center of Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley's economy has moved from mining to farming to tourism, and the Marolt family's story encapsulates this shift.

The Marolts and many other Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families experienced the valley's changes over the years. Farm and ranch families dominated the Roaring Fork Valley between Aspen's height as a mining town and its height as a tourist town. These families occupied a special niche in the Roaring Fork Valley

economy between 1900 and 1950, and their activities brought the Valley into contact with the rest of the country in a variety of ways. The railroad acted as a lifeline for these farm and ranch families and allowed them to sell their cattle, cream, and potatoes in Denver and even New York markets. Economic ties to outside markets, combined with strong family economies and connections to the land, allowed Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families to survive during what local residents call "the quiet years." During those years between 1900 and 1950, farming and ranching made up the backbone of Roaring Fork Valley economy. Studying families like the Marolts allows us to see the interactions between a small western community and its land, crops, animals, and markets. We can also use the Roaring Fork Valley to understand family economies and how the federal government has affected them. Knowing more about these interactions will help us respond to important questions about the American West in general, both in the past and today.

The large percentage of federal land in the American West, combined with its relatively recent white settlement, makes it a useful region for historians to examine human relationships with the environment. Historians Donald Worster and Richard White have explored the environmental impact of farming and logging in the West, and they concluded that farmers and loggers drastically altered the land and vegetation around them, reducing native tree populations and creating dust bowls.[1] Ranchers also changed the environment both by grazing their cattle on federal land and by growing hay with which to feed their cattle in the winter. James Young and Abbott Sparks explored the relationship between cattle ranching and the Great Basin, and concluded that cattle helped destroy the sagebrush ecosystem which in turn

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[1]Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) and Richard White, Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980).

contributed to the 1964 Elko County fire.[2] Understanding how people and livestock affected the land and vegetation around them can help us see the implications of our relationships with the land today.

Western communities moved through a variety of relationships with the land as different economies boomed and busted. Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley changed from a silver mining boom town to a farm and ranch community, and they currently survive on tourism. Walter Nugent and Robert Dykstra are two historians concerned with the development of western towns and communities. They argue that as extractive industries like mining or ranching reach their peak and then bust, western economies previously based on them either become more agricultural or die out.[3] Changing economies brought with them changing demographic characteristics, and examining western towns thus helps historians learn how communities grow and develop.

The American West forms a distinctive region not only because of its large amount of federal land and growing towns, but also because of its urban nature. While historians could hardly classify mountain valleys like the Roaring Fork as urban, western towns and rural areas often existed because of their ties to cities. William Cronon examined this relationship from the other direction, arguing that Chicago became a great city because of its market connections to outlying rural areas.[4] While market ties often seem abstract in their financial nature, crops and livestock connected rural and urban areas on a basic and concrete level. Western

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[2]James Young and Abbott Sparks, Cattle in the Cold Desert (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1985).

[3]Walter Nugent, "Frontiers and Empires in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Trails: Toward a New Western History, eds. Patricial Nelson Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles E. Rankin (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991) and Robert Dykstra, The Cattle Towns (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968).

[4]William Cronon, Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West (New York: Norton and Co., 1991).

historians need to explore these relationships more deeply in order to understand the success and failure of western cities and rural areas.

Western historians also need to explore relationships between rural women and their family economy more deeply. Joan Jensen argued that eighteenth-century rural women selling their butter in the mid-Atlantic played an essential role in their family economies. By producing and selling their butter, these women stretched traditional gender roles and helped support growing industrialization.[5] Western rural women and women in the Roaring Fork Valley similarly produced goods for sale which helped them stretch gender roles and provide for their families. Rural women's lives usually differed from the agrarian ideal of freedom and independence, however. Anthropologist Deborah Fink argued that rural women's identities as farm wives and mothers limited their choices and made them fundamentally unequal members of the family economy.[6] Rural farm families offer historians an opportunity to explore women's roles and their degree of autonomy within the family economy. Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families thus provide western historians insight into relationships among ranchers, their cattle, and the environment, among changing western economies, among rural and urban areas, and among women, market production, and their families.

The Roaring Fork River flows east-west through Pitkin, Eagle, and Garfield Counties, Colorado, beginning near Independence Pass and joining the Colorado River in Glenwood Springs. The valley's elevation in Pitkin County ranges from 6,000 feet in Basalt to 8,000 feet in Aspen, while side valleys lead up to 13,000 foot peaks. The Elk Mountains border the Roaring Fork Valley on the southwest, and to the

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[5]Joan Jensen, Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986). For essays concerning western women, see Joan Jensen, Promise to the Land: Essays on Rural Women (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1991).

[6]Deborah Fink, Agrarian Women: Wives and Mothers in Rural Nebraska, 1880-1940 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

southeast lies the Sawatch Range which includes fifteen fourteen-thousand foot peaks and the three highest peaks in the Southern Rockies.[7] The White River National Forest surrounds most of the Roaring Fork Valley, and the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area lies to the southwest. Other wilderness areas in Pitkin County include the Hunter-Frying Pan Wilderness Area to the east of Aspen, and the Holy Cross Wilderness Area to the northeast.

A variety of plant ecosystems exist along the Valley. They include mountain shrublands, piñon-juniper woodlands, Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, and Aspen forests, as well as mountain grasslands and meadows. Soil along the Roaring Fork River and its creeks consists of clay loam and sandy clay loam and makes for good crop land. Annual precipitation in Aspen is about 20 inches, and mountain creeks offer ample opportunities for irrigation. Farmers used ditch-irrigation in almost 100% of Roaring Fork Valley farmland. The average annual temperature ranges from 40 to 47°F and the frost-free period ranges from 75 to 100 days each year.[8] The Roaring Fork Valley thus represents a varied environment including mountains, forests, and cropland. While the Roaring Fork Valley exists as an ecological whole from Aspen to Glenwood Springs, few organizations document regions by ecological characteristics. Historians must often work around available sources, therefore, and learn about regions as political wholes. I will thus examine the Roaring Fork Valley only within Pitkin County, in order to simplify my research and to focus on Aspen rather than other valley towns like Basalt or Glenwood Springs. Widening the scope of this study past the northern Roaring Fork Valley would flesh out our knowledge of the ecological whole, but would also bring in more variables than necessary.

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[7]Mount Elbert (14,433 feet), Mount Massive (14,421 feet), and Mount Harvard (14,420 feet)

[8]Colorado State University Experiment Station in cooperation with the U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service, "Soils of Colorado," Bulletin No. 566S, (Fort Collins Experiment Station,1977), 26.

Before the Roaring Fork Valley depended on ranching and agriculture, it depended on mining. In 1879 the first white settlers came to the region to investigate the veracity of the earlier Hayden geologic surveys, which indicated that miners in Aspen could duplicate the silver strikes others had made in Leadville two years earlier. White settlers faced conflict, however, with earlier inhabitants. The Ute Indians traditionally hunted in the upper Roaring Fork Valley. News of the 1879 Meeker Massacre, combined with knowledge that 1868 Ute reservation boundary lay close to the Roaring Fork Valley, frightened off many early settlers in the new mining district. In 1881 the government put most fears of Indians to rest by pushing the Utes out of Colorado and into a smaller Utah reservation.

Aspen blossomed into a bustling city, especially after 1887 when the Colorado Midland and the Denver and Rio Grande railroads connected Aspen and its ore to the outside world. No longer would the town depend on mule trains to pack only its most valuable ore to the nearest smelter. Aspen overtook railroad-less Ashcroft in both size and mining significance, and has been the biggest population center in Pitkin County ever since. By 1890 census takers in Pitkin County counted almost 9,000 people, and a variety of Aspen businesspeople catered to mine workers and mine owners. By 1893 Aspen boasted two major banking houses, the third-largest opera house in the state, electric lights, waterworks, a streetcar system, a hospital, six newspapers, and the finest luxury hotel on the Western Slope.[9] In 1893 the national economic panic and the demonetization of silver brought Aspen's growth to an abrupt halt, and Pitkin County's population declined steadily until it reached 1,770 in 1930 (see Appendix, Table 1). While the end of Aspen's silver mining boom years encouraged most of its residents to leave, some Roaring Fork Valley settlers who had ties to the land remained.

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[9]Malcolm Rohrbough, Aspen: The History of a Silver Mining Town, 1879-1893 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 173-4.

Farmers and ranchers settled in the Valley as early as the miners did and sold a variety of crops in the Aspen market. Fresh meat, vegetables, and hay were in high demand in mining towns like Aspen because mountain towns were difficult to reach. Until 1887 the major means of transportation in and outside of the mines consisted of four-legged beasts who needed hay for fuel. Aspen newspapers encouraged settlers to farm and ranch in the valley because they could raise the quality of life and attract even more people to Aspen. As one paper said: "It needs only a sight of the fine vegetables and grain, and a taste of the excellent beef to satisfy one that we have a grand agricultural and grazing county in connection with our rich mines."[10] By 1883 settlers had taken up most of the good farming and ranch land in the Roaring Fork Valley and they had sold almost 200 tons of hay in Aspen the past season.[11] The cold climate did not seem to discourage farmers; fertile soil, water for irrigation, and available markets encouraged farmers and ranchers to adapt to the short growing season. During the early years of white settlement farmers experimented to discover which crops grew best, and they found a ready demand for their produce in local markets. When the railroads came to Aspen in 1887 farmers and ranchers concentrated more on raising potatoes and cattle to sell in larger markets such as those in Denver. Farmers still produced hay, grain, vegetables, and dairy products, but kept them more for family use. Farmers and ranchers helped support the Roaring Fork Valley and Aspen communities from the start, but they moved to the center of the economy after the panic and silver bust of 1893. The Pitkin County population reflected the decline in silver mining and the emergence of a more family-oriented economy based on farming and ranching.

The decline in population, starting between 1890 and 1900, resulted primarily from miners leaving for better opportunities elsewhere and the

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[10]Aspen Times, 25 February, 1882.
[11]Aspen Times, 7 April, 1883.

corresponding departure of people who made their living off the miners. Saloons, boarding houses, retail businesses, and other services could not prosper as they had without a large mining population. Businesses catering to the wealthy declined as well, once the Panic of 1893 broke the fortunes of many mining entrepreneurs. As financier and mine owner David Hyman wrote, "every business failed except those that were branches of large eastern concerns," which presumably had more stable economic bases.[12] The census shows a decline in the predominantly male mining population because the sex ratio in Pitkin County evens out after 1890 (see Appendix, Table 1). In 1885 72.4% of the people living in Pitkin County were male. In 1890 males made up 64.0% of the population, but by 1920 they were only 53%, and only 49.7% of the population under 21 years old was male. After small increases in the proportion of males in 1930 and 1940, by 1950 the percentage of males was back down to 52.5%. While fewer men and more women lived in Pitkin County after the decline of mining, more children also appeared in census figures. In 1885 people under the age of 21 made up 20.4% of the population, while in 1920 they made up 38.4%. Families were becoming more popular in Pitkin County.

While sex and age ratios reflected the economic shift from mining to farming and ranching, racial and ethnic balances changed less noticeably. The black population declined from very few to almost none (see Appendix, Table 1). The percentage of foreign-born people remained stable at about 22% from 1885 to 1930--except 1910 when it was 27.2%. In 1940 it declined to 15%, and to 10% in 1950. Despite the economic shift away from mining, these figures show that immigrants moved to the Roaring Fork Valley at a rate consistent with local population change.

What did change about immigrants in the Roaring Fork Valley was their homeland. Immigrants in the Valley reflected the national change in immigration

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[12]David Hyman, Romance of a Mining Adventure (Denver, 1918), 80-81.

from northern and western Europe to southern and eastern Europe that occurred in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries (see Appendix, Table 2). In 1890 the foreign-born population in Pitkin County came mostly from Canada and Newfoundland(21%), Ireland(20%), England(17%), and Germany(12%). By 1930 foreign-born parents cited Yugoslavia(25%) and Italy(15%) as their place of birth. In 1950 Italians made up 35% of the foreign-born population and Yugoslavians 12%. This shift in country of origin no doubt reflected national changes in immigration, and it also reflected economic changes in the Roaring Fork Valley. Canadian, English, and Irish immigrants often had experience mining in their home countries and got jobs in Aspen as miners. Yugoslavian and Italian immigrants usually had more exposure to agriculture and many of them settled in the Roaring Fork Valley to farm and ranch. The shift in country of origin thus corresponded to the economic changes happening in the Valley.

Demographic and economic changes in the Roaring Fork Valley point to the decline of a mostly male mining community and the rise of a more family-oriented farming and ranching community. One historian noticed a similar state-wide trend in the 1890s, namely "the continued growth of Denver and its environs, the attraction of people to agriculture, and the decrease of people in mining."[13] Mining in Aspen did not die immediately after 1893; Aspen residents did their best to promote the industry through the Depression. Mining slowed drastically after 1900, however, when the price of silver continued to drop and many mines flooded with water. In 1910 the Smuggler mine could not pay its taxes; it finally closed in 1925. The Midnight Mine kept operating through the thirties, but it paid expenses from its zinc rather than silver. In 1945, it was the last Aspen mine to close. Aspen residents mourned the end of local silver mining because silver represented growth

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[13]Walter Nugent, "The People of the West Since 1890," in Gerald Nash and Richard Etulain eds., The Twentieth Century West (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 45.

and prosperity more dramatically than farming. While mining around Aspen steadily declined, farming and ranching increased (see Appendix, Table 3). Between 1890 and 1910 the number of farms in Pitkin County grew from 116 to 191, and average farm size grew from 182 to 237 acres. Cattle grew in number from 1,724 in 1890 to 5,633 ten years later, and potato production leapt from 23,816 bushels to 40,185 in 1900, and then to 225,934 in 1910 (see Appendix, Table 5). Agricultural census data thus confirm the economic changes to which Pitkin County's demographic statistics point.

Aspen as a mining town and the Roaring Fork Valley as a farming and ranching community had different economic and demographic characteristics. Walter Nugent discussed these characteristics and distinguished them in terms of frontier types.[14] Type II frontiers depended on mining, large-scale ranching, or other extractive industries. They consisted of mostly male individuals who were between 20 and 40 years old, and who moved around often. Type I frontiers contained farming families who had children and a balanced sex ratio. Their communities were more permanent than type II frontiers because farmers owned their land. The miners and cowboys were the "colorful few" who make up the myths and symbols of the frontier west; "farm frontier people were too busy trying to raise families and eke out a living to become legendary."[15] Historians and their readers tend to think of Aspen as a mining boom town, and not of the Roaring Fork Valley as an important farm and ranch community. In some ways the farm community ranks higher in historical significance than mining Aspen; the farmers and the ranchers kept Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley on the map during what Aspenites call "the quiet years." The quiet years were roughly from 1900 to 1950, after mining declined and before the

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[14]Nugent, "Frontiers and Empires in the Late Nineteenth Century," in Trails, 161-181.
[15]Nugent, 171.

ski industry and the art world rejuvenated the town of Aspen. Without the family farming community, Aspen might well have become another Colorado ghost town.

Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley illustrate how one region can represent both of Nugent's frontiers during different time periods. When extractive entrepreneurial activity based on Aspen's mines died out, the Roaring Fork Valley changed from a type II to a type I frontier both demographically and economically. Robert Dykstra documented similar changes in Kansas when he showed that cattle town boosters embraced their farming population only after the more dynamic and profitable extractive industry (cattle, or in Aspen's case, mining) fell through.[16] Until the demise of their primary industry, town residents and boosters often fought local farmers in order to promote their economic interests. Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley fit Dykstra's model. In Aspen conflict between ranchers and miners came to a head in 1900 when Valley ranchmen brought suit against Aspen mill owners for polluting the Roaring Fork River.[17] Once local residents and boosters recognized the decline of mine profits and the increasing economic potential of farming and ranching, however, conflict between miners and ranchers faded away.

A few individuals crossed the boundary between mining and farming. While practically all professional miners left Aspen after the Panic of 1893, some who worked in the mines and wanted to stay in the area took up farming. Hugh Chisolm's father worked as a miner in Cripple Creek, Leadville, and Aspen. He wanted to ranch but had no money, so he went to the Klondike for two years where he earned enough to buy a ranch in Snowmass. He lived on that ranch for 50 years.[18] Carl Hoaglund came from Stockholm, Sweden, and worked in Aspen mines until 1910 when he took over his brother's farm on Brush Creek (Carl's brother and sister-in-law had gone

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[16]Dykstra, The Cattle Towns.

[17]Aspen Times, 14 February 1900.

[18]Hugh Chisolm, interview, tape recording C-12, Aspen Historical Society (AHS), Aspen, Colorado.

to farm in Kansas). Some men had been working in Leadville's mines and moved to the Roaring Fork Valley in order to farm or ranch. Sam Stapleton's grandfather homesteaded in 1881, where the Aspen airport is now, because he tried mining in Leadville and did not like it. Severin Trentaz came from Aosta, Italy and worked in mines all over the West including Leadville from 1907 to 1909. He married in Italy and returned to Aspen in 1910. He decided he did not want his sons Arthur and Nino to work in the mines, so he bought Starwood ranch in 1927.[19]

Some people came to the Roaring Fork Valley with the intention of farming. Fred Light came to the Valley with the intention of ranching. He filed a pre-emption claim on Sopris Creek in 1881 and became a prominent and politically active cattle rancher. Jeremy and Stephanie Vagneur came to the Roaring Fork Valley to farm and ranch in the early 1890s. Jeremy hired himself out to raise money for the ranch he purchased and partly homesteaded on Woody Creek. Victor Natal also came from Aosta, Italy. He bought a ranch on Woody Creek in 1900.[20]

Settlers also came to the Roaring Fork Valley because of ethnic or family connections. The Aosta Valley in northern Italy resembles the Roaring Fork Valley in landscape, and settlers from Italy wrote home and told their friends about it. Second generation Italians who married immigrant women also encouraged chain migration, and a significant population of Italians from that particular valley settled in near the Roaring Fork. Jens Christiansen ended up in the Valley because of his family ties. His Aunt Kate--known locally as the Cattle Queen--came to the U.S. from Denmark in 1888 and ran a ranch in Snowmass. When Jen's mother's health was failing she decided to join her sister; Jens and his parents moved to Snowmass from Denmark in

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[19]Art and Amelia Trentaz, interviewed by the author, 26 March 1992, Aspen, Colorado.

[20]Aspen Times, 5 May 1955.

1914. Jens continued ranching and bought Jack Benton's ranch in 1925, after working for Benton for six years earning $1 a day.[21]

Roaring Fork Valley residents came from all over Europe for a variety of reasons, and they responded to their environment by creating a special economic niche for themselves. The Roaring Fork Valley landscape precludes both large-scale farming and large-scale ranching. Cultivated crops need irrigation to grow, and ditch irrigation was too labor-intensive to create large-scale farms. The average farm size in Pitkin County thus stayed small, growing from 182 acres in 1890 to 542 acres in 1950. Even those with 1,000 acre ranches did not plant more than 400 acres or employ more than two hired men; family economies sustained farming in the Roaring Fork Valley. Farm size leapt to 1,441 in 1954 as new farm machinery and agricultural technology enabled those who could afford it to farm more acreage. During the 1950s and 1960s most farm and ranch families in the Roaring Fork Valley sold their land because profits could not keep up with family farm expenses. Increasing demands for expensive machinery combined with rising taxes and children's desire to take jobs off the farm caused farmers to sell off their land. The Roaring Fork Valley could not support systematic large-scale agriculture.

Few people practiced large-scale ranching in the Roaring Fork Valley either. The hard winter of 1889-90 convinced ranchers that they could not afford to let their stock graze free on the range year round. There were too many cattle for too little range and thousands of western Colorado cattle died that winter for lack of food.[22] Ranchers thus took to raising hay to feed their cattle in the winter, and in the early 1900s U.S. Forest Service grazing policies limited the number of cattle

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[21]Mary Eshbough Hayes, "History Handed Down - Jens Christiansen Shares His Life with Another Generation," Aspen Times, 12 May, 1988.

[22]Lysa Wegman-French, "The History of the Holden-Marolt Site in Aspen, Colorado: The Holden Lixiviation Works, Farming and Ranching, and the Marolt Ranch, 1879-1986," (1990) p. 75,AHS, Aspen, Colorado.

that could graze on public land. Roaring Fork Valley ranchers thus concentrated on raising fewer and better-quality cattle.

What made Roaring Fork Valley residents distinctive was their simultaneous involvement in both farming and ranching. After the railroads opened access to larger markets and mining declined in Aspen, Pitkin County's economic focus shifted from the town of Aspen to the Roaring Fork Valley as a whole. Valley residents produced primarily cattle and potatoes for sale, and most people raised both.[23] The average Roaring Fork Valley family after 1900 raised potatoes for market, vegetables, poultry, pigs, and dairy cows for their own use, cattle for sale in Denver, and hay and grain for their own cattle and horses. Sometimes farmers sold hay and grain if they could not use it themselves, and most families sold their extra cream on a regular basis. Families shipped cattle, potatoes, and cream on railroad cars from Woody Creek or Snowmass to Glenwood Springs or Denver where their products would enter markets in and even beyond Colorado. Because Roaring Fork Valley families raised both cattle and potatoes for market they could be called either ranchers or farmers.

What to call them creates a dilemma involving definitions of farming and ranching as well as the self-identities of these families. Donald Worster defined a ranch as an extensive farm specializing in raising cows, sheep, goats, or horses.[24] Jerry Jurick McLaren, whose father was a local tenant farmer and homesteader, inadvertently agreed with Worster. She defined ranchers as having a lot of acreage and raising hay and cattle; by contrast, farmers work with the earth and raise potatoes and "the basics."[25] While it is unclear what she meant by "the basics,"

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[23]Some people raised sheep rather than cattle or in addition to cattle, but they were a minority.

[24]Donald Worster, "Cowboy Ecology," in Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 37.

[25]Agnes Jurick McLaren, interviewed by the author, 25 March 1992, Snowmass, Colorado.

Mrs. McLaren understood farmers as having less land and more crops than ranchers. She saw the Stapletons on Owl Creek as farmers. Sam Stapleton, however, defined himself as a rancher. He raised both sheep and cattle until twenty-four years ago, and cattle up until two years ago. He said that although he grew potatoes, they only paid part of the grocery bill. Livestock, he said, produced more of a profit.[26] His argument elevates the issue of income over that of acreage. Bernice Vagneur Morrison did the same when she called her family ranchers. Nobody raised just cattle, she said, but cattle were more important and more profitable than potatoes so her family considered themselves ranchers. Confusion remains, however. Art and Amelia Trentaz ran to the dictionary when asked to define themselves.[27] Art decided that farmers could also be ranchers and ranchers could also be farmers. The difficulty in labeling these families brings their special nature to the surface; their hybrid economy was particular to mountain river valleys like the Roaring Fork. While the fertile soil encouraged farming, the mountainous terrain limited the amount of farm land available, as did the labor demands of ditch-irrigation. The mountains were useful as range for livestock, however, and raising cattle helped balance the risk of farming in a region with such a short growing season. Roaring Fork Valley families' identity thus moved back and forth, or stayed somewhere in between, farmers and ranchers.

Because they grew a variety of crops as well as livestock, farmers and ranchers near the Roaring Fork River entered into a complex relationship with the surrounding land. Their livelihood depended upon this relationship. Valley farmers irrigated fields to grow hay, grain, and potatoes, and they grazed their livestock in the mountains on Forest Service land during the summers. Those farmers who came from the Aosta Valley and other mountainous agrarian communities adapted easily to

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[26]Sam Stapleton, interviewed by the author, 24 March 1992, Aspen, Colorado.
[27](Trentaz 1992)

the Roaring Fork Valley. Donald Worster explained that herders in mountainous European environments traditionally spent part of the year grazing animals in nearby alpine meadows. At summer's end they trailed the stock to their village and fed them through the winter on hay. "Thus, they lived much of the year like other farmers."[28] Farm and ranch families in the Roaring Fork Valley grazed their cattle with minimal supervision, and so spent their summers growing crops. European immigrants to the Roaring Fork Valley were therefore able to transfer part of their traditional economy to America and link the Roaring Fork Valley to European ethnic communities.

While farmers and ranchers came to Pitkin County from all over America and Europe, once they had settled in the valley their ethnic backgrounds faded from view. Culinary traditions formed the strongest links between farm and ranch family life and their European homelands. People from Slovenia made sauerkraut, sausage, and wine, while Italians from the Aosta Valley made cheese, a different kind of sausage, grappa, and whiskey. Ethnic food production reminded families of their roots, and enabled families with similar backgrounds to gather socially. Other ethnic distinctions were similarly significant socially, but did not affect farming or ranching practices. Settlement patterns reflected in the 1910 federal manuscript census show that most Italian farmers and ranchers lived near Woody Creek, while Scandinavian, Slovenian, and people from other European countries lived throughout Pitkin County. First-generation immigrant women might have worked in the fields more than their American counterparts, but most women in the Roaring Fork Valley worked outside. Differences in ethnic backgrounds neither affected farming or ranching methods nor determined the structure of the family economy. Connections between the Roaring Fork Valley and Europe were therefore more important socially than they were economically. Economic connections within farm and ranch families

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[28]Worster, "Cowboy Ecology," 39.

and among the Valley, outside markets, and the federal government determined Valley farm and ranch practices to a large degree.

Farmers and ranchers linked the Roaring Fork Valley to larger places and institutions primarily through their economy. The soil provided crops and forage which farmers both used themselves and sold to middlemen. Regional markets affected production and prices, as did federal grazing policies and agricultural subsidies. The Roaring Fork Valley thus provides historians with a microcosm in which we can study the relationships among land, plants, animals, people, and larger institutions. By examining farming and ranching through this perspective, historians can respond to the larger questions of current western historians.

Farm and ranch families living in the Roaring Fork Valley between 1900 and 1950 also raise more specific questions. How and why did they stay there during what Aspen residents call "the quiet years?" How did they make farming and ranching economically feasible for themselves? Responding to these questions raises others. Farm and ranch families depended on the land for their livelihoods. What was the impact of farming and ranching on the environment, and how did the federal government intervene to manage the range? Local families also depended on themselves, since families made up an economic unit and were often miles away from their nearest neighbor. How, then, did the family create its own economy, and how did the family economy help local farmers and ranchers succeed? Farmers and ranchers geared their lives towards selling crops and livestock, and Valley farmers and ranchers could ship their goods to market on the railroad. How did their crops act as a commercial tie linking the Roaring Fork Valley to urban centers like Denver and New York? How did the federal government regulate agricultural markets and so affect local farmers? Answering these questions will help historians understand how western rural communities continue to exist, as well as how they relate to the land and larger institutions.

A NOTE ON SOURCES

The primary sources used in this paper are census data, newspaper articles, and oral histories. Each source has its own strengths and weaknesses. I used census data from the U. S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census, Census of the U. S. for 1890 and 1920-1950 to look at population changes in Pitkin County. For 1885 I looked at the Census of Colorado. For all the agricultural statistics I used the 1930 U. S. Census section on Agriculture volumes I and II for the western states, the U.S. Census of Agriculture for 1925, 1945 and 1954, and statistics compiled by the Colorado Co-Operative Crop Reporting Service. I also used the manuscript census for Pitkin County from 1910 for information on individuals, their residences, and their ethnicity. Census information does an excellent job of showing demographic changes and general trends in farm size or potato production, for example. Depending on it for specific facts and accurate details gets riskier. Census takers notoriously miscounted, got names wrong, neglected to ask important questions, and ignored those in the population who either did not seem legitimate to them or who did not send in the appropriate forms. Historians need to remember these limitations. Consequently I have tried to use census data to demonstrate general trends or to verify information coming from another source.

Newspapers present their own problems and opportunities. They demonstrate what editors see as important to the community and only what editors see as important to the community. Editorial perspective is valuable in answering questions about how the community responds to local, national, and world events. Newspapers also reveal what really matters to any given community. The Aspen Times concentrated on mining issues well into the twentieth century, after most

miners had left town. That shows that many of the people who stayed were hoping that mining would make Aspen great again. Newspapers generally neglect minority interests because mainstream white males usually write or edit newspapers. Advertisers cannot afford to ignore the more silent groups like women, however, so sometimes readers can get a more realistic picture of the community through the ads.

Newspapers also contain some useful information about market prices for cattle and potatoes. Finally, newspaper editors usually have a political perspective or goal in mind when they produce a paper that causes them to shape reality in convenient ways. Most editors are interested in promoting their town, and boosterism runs rampant in The Aspen Times. Articles in its pages tried to drum up support for mining, farming, ranching, and any other pursuit that might bring people or cash into the area. Historians need to understand the editors' perspectives and goals before they take newspaper information as evidence. I have tried to use newspapers to show what mattered to Aspen during different times, and to see how the local community interpreted federal policies on grazing and agriculture.

To understand the more personal side of the Roaring Fork Valley and its people one must turn to oral history. Interviewing people allows historians to see what public documents do not show. Work roles on the farm, daily experiences, personal adaptations to larger events or policies, and individual attitudes towards life in the Roaring Fork Valley do not usually get published. Talking to people is a great way to get stories, too, and see the personal and sometimes amusing side of history. I have depended largely on interviews to understand how farmers and ranchers interpreted their economic situation and their relationship to the environment, their crops, their cattle, their families, the Forest Service, and their government. Historians all too often make statements about people without understanding how those people viewed themselves and their situation. Oral history can provide that understanding. Of course oral history has its pitfalls. Memories

fail and change. People respond to questions in different ways depending on who asks the questions, what kind of questions they are, and why the interviewer is asking them. People often glorify the past and see their younger years as rosier than they really were. Historians need to understand the human nature of their subjects and treat their responses accordingly. Oral histories shed light on daily experiences and personal interpretations of the surrounding world, and that is why historians should use them.

In order to focus my research I have left much information out of my analysis. While the Roaring Fork Valley makes up an ecological whole and should ideally be examined as such, I have limited myself to that part of the valley that lies within Pitkin County. Political boundaries rarely correspond to geographical ones, but Pitkin County people and data reflect most clearly the economic changes I see as significant. I have also limited my time frame to the years between 1900 and 1950. These years represent "the quiet years" and the economic phase between mining and tourism. So while farmers and ranchers arrived in the Roaring Fork Valley as early as 1879 and exist there even today, the period from 1900 to 1950 represents their heyday, especially as a family economy.

Finally, I have limited my research by interviewing only a narrow cross-section of local farmers and ranchers. Those people I spoke with or whose interviews I heard represent the most successful farmers and ranchers in the area. Most of them owned ranches of about 1,000 acres. The Aspen Historical Society either had already interviewed these farmers and ranchers, or had recommended them for me to interview. Name recognition, therefore, determined my oral history sources. In addition, I personally interviewed only people who still live in the Roaring Fork Valley. Less successful farmers and ranchers, and those who did not adapt to the tourist economy, would have left. Having spoken with only one person whose father was a tenant farmer, most of my oral history data came from farm and

ranch owners or their children. My conclusions are generally still valid, however, because most Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families owned their land. In 1930, for example, only 11% of Pitkin County farmers rented their land.[29] While census data and these oral histories cannot account for Pitkin County's transient population, they do allow us to examine those farm and ranch families who stayed in the Valley. Historians must usually depend on less-than-perfect sources; waiting to find complete and unquestionable evidence would keep most historians from writing. Our goal should be to work with the data we can get, as sensitively as possible.

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[29]Colorado Co-Operative Crop Reporting Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Statistics: Crops and Livestock of the State of Colorado (Bulletin No. 88, 1930), 15.

CHAPTER TWO

CONNECTIONS TO THE LAND: CATTLE RANCHING AND THE FOREST SERVICE

Farm and ranch families in the Roaring Fork Valley earned their livelihoods and their identities from the land. The relationship among Valley families, their animals, and the land, allowed families to produce crops and livestock for sale. Raising and selling cattle in particular provided many Roaring Fork Valley families with their largest source of income from about 1900 through the 1950s. Their relationship to the land depended on the cattle market and federal policy as much as on the land and cattle themselves, yet without a healthy interaction between land and cattle these other variables would become meaningless. Ranchers and the U.S. Forest Service sought to achieve a balance between maximum livestock production and protection of the range. Understanding the connections between a small yet successful ranching community in Colorado and the environment will help historians understand questions of world-wide significance, such as "the question of how we are to get a living from a fragile, vulnerable earth without destroying it."[1]

Ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley entered the cattle industry after the mid-1880s, when other Colorado ranchers had experienced their peak. The first white settlers did not arrive in the valley until 1879. While ranchers raised cattle for local consumption almost immediately thereafter, they began to sell cattle to outside markets only after the railroads came up the valley in 1887. Like ranchers on the Plains, Western Slope and Roaring Fork Valley ranchers originally allowed their cattle to graze on the open range all year long. Increased farming and bigger

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[1]Donald Worster, "Cowboy Ecology," 36.

herds of cattle pushed more animals onto less land, and the hard winter of 1889-90 brought the consequences of overgrazing to the fore--thousands of cattle died in Western Colorado that spring.[2] Ranchers who survived that spring in the Roaring Fork Valley adjusted their ranching strategies in 1890 by reducing their herds and growing hay for winter feed.

The Roaring Fork Valley economy increasingly focused on ranching after the repeal of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and the financial panic in 1893. Silver mining in Aspen became less and less economically viable from that year on, and Aspen's population plummeted. The farmers and ranchers who stayed in the valley took advantage of an important mining legacy: the railroad. While both the Midland and the Denver and Rio Grande railroads hoped for silver mining's revival and a corresponding revival of profits, they welcomed any business they could get. Local ranchers thus gained increasing access to outside markets. Ranchers responded accordingly and the number of cattle in Pitkin County grew from 1,724 in 1890 to 5,633 in 1900 (see Appendix, Table 5). A typical rancher in the Roaring Fork Valley between 1900 and 1950 raised hay in irrigated fields to feed his Herefords (the locally preferred breed) during the winter and grazed his cattle in the mountains during the summer.[3] While the average farm and ranch size in Pitkin County ranged from 200 to 550 acres(see Appendix, Table 3), the larger ranchers in the valley owned 1,000 to 1,200 acre ranches. These ranchers owned between 100 and 350 head of cattle, and also planted about 350 acres in hay, about 50 acres in grain, and about 20 acres in potatoes.[4] The cattle grazed on the fields after the

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[2]Wegman-French, 75.

[3]Most ranchers also grew potatoes and some grain, but this chapter will concentrate on cattle and ranching activities. There were few woman ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley but they did exist--and ranch wives participated thoroughly in the family economy. They usually identified with jobs other than cattle ranching though, hence the pronoun "his."

[4]Bernice Vagneur Morrison, interviewed by the author, 23 March 1992, Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Bob and Elizabeth Sinclair, interviewed by the author, 9 July 1991, tape recording, AHS.; (Stapleton 1992); and (Trentaz 1992)

fall harvest when they came down from summer grazing, but people with larger ranches kept separate pastures for cattle to use in the late spring and fall. Most people fenced off their fields to protect their crops from hungry cattle roaming down from summer range early.

The seasonal cycle of ranching chores began in the spring with calving season. Ranchers watched over their cows and sometimes even brought cows inside to calve. Calving was a tricky business for ranchers high up in the valley like Sam Stapleton at Starwood, because the deep mud got all over his cows' udders and calves and caused infections and sickness. After calving, ranchers had to brand, dehorn, and castrate the cattle before running them up to the summer range. Driving them up to the mountains usually took less than a day; some ranchers' land actually abutted their summer mountain range. Once the cattle were up there they needed little attention, and most ranchers teamed up to get someone to ride the range they shared with each other. Members of the Woody Creek Cattlemen's Association, for instance, teamed up to hire a cowpuncher. These riders spent their summers checking fence lines, water, salt, and the general safety of the cattle, moving the herds to better grazing areas if necessary. The ranchers themselves were busy being farmers--putting up hay and cultivating potatoes throughout the summer.

In the fall--usually after the harvest--ranchers brought their cattle down from the range. If range condition was poor, sometimes the cattle came down on their own to graze on the ranch's healthier grass. Ranchers sorted out their cattle by brand and sent strays to the appropriate ranch. Their next job was to select cattle ready for sale--usually one year old steers plus any cows too old for breeding. Ranchers then drove these cattle to the loading chutes at either Aspen, Woody Creek, or Snowmass and loaded them onto railroad cars headed for Denver. Usually commission merchants had already purchased the cattle from the local ranchers by this point, but some ranchers liked to ride in the caboose of the cattle train to Denver

to check on their cattle's safety, to socialize, and to visit the city. Commission men gave ranchers a free return train ticket for their ride home.

During the winter Roaring Fork Valley cattle stayed at home and ate the hay that ranchers had put up in the summer. Feeding cattle in winter was a difficult job--one necessary every day no matter what the weather. Ranchers had to hook up a team of horses to a hay sled, load it with hay from the stacks in the fields, drive it to the cattle, and unload it. This rather tedious labor drew to a close after calving when cattle could return to their summer range. Mechanization helped farmers and ranchers primarily by allowing them to replace teams of horses with tractors. Most Roaring Fork Valley ranchers replaced their horses with tractors during the 1940s (see Appendix, Table 6). While tractors changed the means by which farmers and ranchers worked the land, mechanization did not change their dependence on the land.

While the amount of available range and irrigated hay fields in the Roaring Fork Valley limited the scale of local ranching, ranchers said cattle were bigger money-makers than agricultural crops. A majority of people along the valley farmed, and many ranched as well.[5] For cattle ranchers the key to success were fat steers and good prices, and one of the integral relationships affecting success was that among the rancher, his cattle, and the land. In 1988 ranchers used approximately two-thirds of Colorado's mountain and western slope area for grazing--an area equal to about 28,000,000 acres.[6] Roaring Fork Valley ranchers made correspondingly full use of their rangelands.

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[5](Trentaz 1992),(Stapleton 1992), (Morrison 1992) From 1930-1950 at least, there were more people farming and involved in agriculture in Pitkin county than any other occupation--and many ranchers were also farmers. Suzanne Schulze, A Century of the Colorado Census (Greeley, CO: University of Northern Colorado, 1977), 322,741,749,753.

[6]Colorado State University Cooperative Extension and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Native Grasses, Bulletin 450-A (Fort Collins: Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, 1988),2.

The Roaring Fork Valley in Pitkin County contains a variety of plant ecosystems due to its range in elevation from 6,000 to over 10,000 feet. These ecosystems include sagebrush shrublands, mountain shrublands, Ponderosa Pine forests, and Aspen forests. Common grasses found in these areas include cheatgrass, fescue, grama grass, sedge(carex), wheatgrass, bluegrass, fleabane, loco weed, vetch, yarrow, larkspur, oatgrass, junegrass, and timothy.[7] Local rangeland consisted of mountainsides primarily, so Pitkin County cattle grazed in all of these environments throughout the summer, dining primarily on bluegrass, wheatgrass, carex or sedge, and some kinds of fescue.[8] Grama grass and vetch are also very palatable for cattle, but if these preferred plants are unavailable, cattle will graze on other less-palatable plants like larkspur and young pine trees.

Overgrazing range grasses changes the composition of the range by decreasing palatable grasses like fescue that are less hardy, and thereby allowing more weeds and wild flowers to grow. Cattle cannot eat many of these weeds and wildflowers, nor can they eat plants like yarrow and fleabane which also replace palatable grasses after overgrazing. In the process of grazing, therefore, cattle can disrupt and change the range plant community. The most visible damage occurs around riparian environments where plant life and the soil on which it grows are fragile. Trampled soil and concentrated cattle populations near water led to erosion. Cattle can also damage Ponderosa pine forests by eating seedlings, but cattle only eat trees if they are thirsty or if palatable grasses are unavailable. Overgrazing causes less damage to mountain rangelands than it does to range in the lower-altitude arid West, but it still causes trouble.

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[7]Audrey DeLella Benedict, A Sierra Club Naturalist's Guide: The Southern Rockies (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), 228, 241, 281, 360, 410.
[8]Diane Spencer, Range Conservationist for Sopris and Aspen districts, U. S. Forest Service, telephone interview by author, 23 July 1992.

While cattle damage the environment by overgrazing, overgrazing can also damage cattle. Researchers in Colorado reported that "Overgrazing is either a direct or contributing cause of stock poisoning." "Under conditions of over-grazing the grasses and other more tasteful plants," they explained, "are cropped to destruction . . . and the poisonous plants, where present, over-run the range." To further caution ranchers, they wrote that "The relation between the scarcity of food and [livestock] losses from eating poisonous plants cannot be too forcibly emphasized."[9] Under these terms the relationship that Roaring Fork Valley ranchers set up between their cattle and the land seemed more a struggle than a partnership.

Cattle generally avoid larkspur, but they will eat it if they have already depleted other grasses. One author blamed larkspur for more cattle deaths in mountain areas than all other poisonous plants combined except loco weed.[10] The Roaring Fork Valley struggled with larkspur poisoning as well, from the 1890s through the 1950s. The Aspen Times reported "considerable cattle dying from larkspur poisoning on the range" in 1905, and in 1942 it reported usual annual losses as high as 50 head.[11] Larkspur is most dangerous from mid-March to early July, and not poisonous after it freezes. The ranchers' problem was that they could not get cattle who ate larkspur medicine soon enough to cure them, so the cattle generally died. Larkspur did not over-run all of the rangeland in the Roaring Fork Valley, but it was difficult to eradicate. Some ranchers fenced off patches of larkspur on their summer range allotment. Others tried mixing their salt with lime and soda to prevent poisoning. During the 1930s the Civilian Conservation Corps tried to pull most of it up. No method achieved significant results.

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[9]Colorado Agricultural College Experiment Station, Poisonous Plants of Colorado, by L.W. Durrell and George H. Grover, Bulletin 316 (Fort Collins: Colorado Agricultural College Experiment Station, 1927), 4.

[10]Ora Brooks Peake, The Colorado Range Cattle Industry (Glendale CA: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1937),228.

[11] Aspen Daily Times, 25 July 1905; and Aspen Times, 5 March 1942. Also see (Trentaz 1992)

This relationship between cattle and the range proved troublesome for ranchers. Ranchers wanted to produce as many healthy cattle as possible for sale, yet if they ran too many cattle on the range, nutritious grasses would die out and larkspur poisoning would increase. Ranchers had to look beyond potential short-term profits and realize that in order to graze cattle productively in the future, they must try to prevent overgrazing in the present. In order to produce healthy livestock and preserve their range resource, therefore, ranchers needed to achieve a balanced relationship with the land. They were reluctant, however, to take the economic risk of decreasing their herds and cutting into their profits.

Had range management been purely up to the ranchers themselves, market appeals of short-term profits may have determined their grazing policies more than concern for long-term range protection. In the Roaring Fork Valley, however, as in much of the West, range management was not left to private ranchers. Instead, the federal government stepped in to regulate grazing by way of the Forest Service. In Pitkin County, as in most of the West, the U. S. Government owns much of the land. The National Forest Aspen Ranger District alone accounts for almost half of Pitkin County.[12] Roaring Fork Valley ranchers grazed their cattle entirely on National Forest land every summer and were thus subject to U.S. Forest Service grazing policy. The Roaring Fork Valley in Pitkin County serves as a useful case study of the complicated relationship among plants, cattle, ranchers, and the federal government because of its large percentage of federal land.

The American West's large percentage of federal land differentiates it from the North, East, and South. Legislation allowing the government to protect federal lands passed in 1891 as the General Land Law Revision Act. It authorized the president to set aside forest reserves from unreserved public domain. In the 1890s

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[12]Pitkin County is 524,000 acres, and the Aspen Ranger District takes up 256,255 acres. The Sopris Ranger District also occupies part of Pitkin County.

President Harrison created fifteen forest reserves that took up over 16 million acres, and President Cleveland added over 21 million acres more. The Forest Management Act of 1897 gave the Secretary of the Interior power to regulate those reserves, but in 1905 the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Forestry under Gifford Pinchot took the reserves over and became the U. S. Forest Service.[13] As of 1901, 41 reserves took up 46,410,209 acres. By 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt and Forester Pinchot had reorganized and added to them, creating 159 National Forests consisting of 150,832,665 acres.[14] Most of this land is in the West; in 1933 there were 14 National Forests in Colorado, taking up 13,389,122 acres. One fifth of Colorado was National Forest in 1933.[15] The Holy Cross National Forest, which became part of the White River National Forest in the 1940s, similarly dominates the Roaring Fork Valley and Pitkin County [16]

In 1905 the Forest Service under Gifford Pinchot began to regulate private use of the National Forests. Pinchot's goal was not to preserve the forests and prohibit all private use, but to conserve the forests--to let people use forest resources in such a way to ensure their long-term health. His policies changed life in the Roaring Fork Valley because Valley ranchers grazed their cattle on public land. Theodore Roosevelt established the Holy Cross National Forest that contained land in Pitkin County in 1905, and it became part of the White River National Forest in 1945.

Since the Holy Cross and later the White River National Forest were literally in their back yards, Roaring Fork Valley ranchers had to deal with the U. S. Forest Service. Gifford Pinchot was not opposed to grazing cattle on forest land but he

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[13]White, 407.

[14]Richard White, It's Your Misfortune and None of My Own: A New History of the American West (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 407.

[15]Peake, 85,95.

[16]Since Roaring Fork Valley ranchers grazed their cattle on National Forest land, I will limit my discussion of federal lands to national forests.

wanted grazing regulated in order to protect the forests. In 1906 Pinchot issued permits and instituted grazing fees, charging a nominal fee for each head of cattle allowed on the range. While ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley struggled to maintain a balance between livestock production and maintenance of their range resource, they also worked to reconcile their interests with those of the Forest Service. Forest rangers and federal grazing policies complicated the already delicate balance between ranchers' cattle and the land.

Forest Service grazing policy regulated the number of cattle allowed on National Forests and how much ranchers had to pay for their grazing rights. Most cattlemen agreed that protecting the range as a resource was a good idea, but they disliked most of the regulations, which limited their personal freedom or their ability to make a profit. Ben Vagneur ranched along Woody Creek on his father's ranch through the 1950s and stayed on good terms with the local forest ranger. Despite Vagneur's respect for the ranger, he felt entitled to hunt deer off-season. The deer came down and ate his hay during the winter; venison was free, while butchering a cow would cut into his profits for next year. The rangers knew cattlemen hunted off-season, but generally chose not to take any action against them. This truce between ranchers and rangers represents the compromises necessary for them to coexist. Rangers had to moderate between federal policy and the local communities in which they lived. Local ranchers tried to follow the rules, at least superficially, in turn. For Ben Vagneur maintaining this relationship occasionally called for unusual action.

Since they were on good terms, sometimes when Vagneur ran into the ranger, Vagneur would invite his friend over for dinner. Whenever the ranger accepted a dinner invitation in the winter, however, Ben had to send one of his children back to the house to warn his wife. She would put the fresh venison steaks away and get out canned beef for dinner so as not to flaunt their illegal hunting in front of the

ranger.[17] The children sent home to warn their mother thought the whole situation was funny, but it also demonstrates the complex and fragile relationship between ranchers and the Forest Service. Government policy usually went against the ranchers' immediate goal of raising as many cattle as possible, and forest rangers had trouble enforcing unpopular policy when they lived near and socialized with the local ranchers. Although Gifford Pinchot meant Forest Service policy to help ranchers by conserving the range, few ranchers embraced it. Ranchers and the Forest Service had different ideas about what was best for the ranchers.

Some cattlemen saw the need for government grazing regulation and the long term benefits it would bring to them. J.W. Truesdale, a rancher from Gunnison, said "government supervision of the public domain is vital to the cattlemen's interests."[18] Some stockmen saw establishing reliable range regulation as beneficial, as they also saw the help of forest rangers in settling disputes between cattlemen.[19] Some ranchers argued that Forest Service range regulation and supervision would stabilize their grazing privileges, reduce overstocking, help control forest fires, provide free vaccines for blackleg, keep cattle from straying and being stolen, and control predatory animals.[20] According to these proponents, the Forest Service and its regulations could help ranchers in tangible, practical ways.

Despite these arguments supporting forest regulation, most ranchers saw it as more harmful than useful. Opponents argued that the Forest Service put cumbersome, annoying, and illegal burdens on the users. They saw the federal government as a tyrannical landlord using police power to threaten the interests of

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[17](Morrison 1992)
[18]Peake, 85.
[19]William D. Rowley, U.S. Forest Service Grazing and Rangelands: A History (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1985),91.
[20]Peake, 89.

small ranchers trying to make a living.[21] One Pitkin County resident took his objections all the way to the Supreme Court. Fred Light started ranching in the Capitol Creek area in 1882 and grazed his cattle where he wanted, for free. He had a large ranch (the Box L--about 1,000 acres), grew many crops, and depended on public lands for grazing his large herd. He and other local ranchers thought that accepting the Forest Service's power to charge fees implied that the service had the power ultimately to destroy every rancher's livelihood and home.[22] Fred Light refused to apply for permits or pay the grazing fee, and when he led his cattle onto the Holy Cross National Forest in 1906 he was arrested for trespassing.[23]

The Colorado Cattle and Horse Growers Association and the American National Livestock Association helped Light defend himself. Other Pitkin County ranchers cooperated with the Forest Service, but voiced their support for Light during a 1908 meeting between the Forest Service officials and local users.[24] The federal circuit court in Colorado ruled in favor of the government, and when Light appealed to the Supreme Court, they too ruled that the National Forest system and regulated grazing were constitutional. This ruling in 1911 reinforced U.S. Forest Service policies more thoroughly than ever, but it did not satisfy the cattlemen who still believed the Forest Service policies violated their rights. These ranchers believed they should be able to control their own cattle and their own business, and had not yet grasped the dangers of overgrazing. Fred Light's opposition began a long history of struggle and compromise between the Forest Service and the ranchers.

The Forest Service and cattlemen had to cope with their differences over policy on a legal level but also on a local and personal level. It was at this level that rangers and ranchers came closest to reaching a truce. Willing to suffer canned beef

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[21]Peake, 87.
[22]Rowley, 65.
[23]Wegman-French, 103.
[24]Aspen Daily Times, 15 March 1908.

in the interest of relations with the Forest Service, Ben Vagneur provided a microcosm of that truce. Rangers could not ignore the impact of their judgements, since cattlemen and their families were also friends and neighbors. Sam Stapleton remembered a friendly and reciprocal relationship between the Forest Service and Roaring Fork Valley ranchers. He said the ranchers moved their cattle throughout the summer to lessen grazing impact on any given area of range. In return the Forest Service built fences and dug water sources on the range.[25] Arthur Trentaz remembered that overgrazing was a problem along Hunter Creek because the cattle stayed by the water; the Forest Service tried to distribute salt to decrease the problem.[26] Occasionally ranchers held meetings with rangers to discuss grazing issues, and present Forest Service policy includes annual meetings with permittees in order to discuss problems and explain goals before the cattle go to their summer range.

While the Forest Service struggled to conserve the range, it also worked to fulfill the other part of its original goal: to support the cattle industry. The Forest Service tried to help cattlemen by "improving" the range in order to conserve the land, but even when it acted with the best of intentions, the Forest Service could not erase the impact of grazing. It's efforts to conserve the range led the Forest Service to fight with stockmen to reduce grazing pressure, but also to actively manage the land and its animal populations.

The Forest Service tried to support the cattle industry in part by improving the land itself and by reducing predators and rodents. In addition to providing dipping vats for diseased cattle and vaccines for blackleg, the Forest Service also tried to rid the forests of poisonous vegetation. It fenced off and grubbed out scrub oak and larkspur--by 1933 the Forest Service had treated 16,312 acres of

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[25](Stapleton 1992)
[26]Trentaz, 1992.

poisonous plants in Colorado.[27] During the New Deal Civilian Conservation Corps workers helped the Forest Service by building range fences, places to water stock, and they helped revegetate the range. New Deal workers also built stock trails and grubbed out poisonous plants.[28] During 1935 CCC workers in the Holy Cross Forest grubbed out 1,900 acres of larkspur and 700 acres of hemlock, cut and treated 5,000 fence posts, rebuilt one and a half miles of range fence, and repaired or rebuilt campgrounds, phone lines, bridges, roads, trails, and fish retaining ponds.[29] In the 1950s the Forest Service was busy doing the same jobs, plus building stock driveways, corrals, and loading areas to increase the grazing capacity of the range and support its users.[30] These range "improvements" helped the stockmen but increased human impact on the range. Revegetation and distribution of salt licks could and did reduce the problems of overgrazing, but these actions addressed only the symptoms and not the causes of range damage. Efforts to grub out poisonous plants seem ironic knowing that overgrazing caused not only their spread but also their ingestion.

The Forest Service also worked to eradicate predatory animals--wolves, coyotes, bears, and mountain lions--which preyed on livestock. A law passed in 1899 reinstated a previous bounty for these animals. Between 1909 and 1915 the following numbers of animals had been killed in Colorado National Forests: 97 bears, 21 lions, 45 wolves, 68 wolf pups, 3,783 coyotes, 377 bobcats, and 28 lynxes.[31] Hunters and rangers created a new problem by killing predators; huge rodent populations took the opportunity thus created. In 1903 a law passed allowing people to poison prairie dogs. In 1908 cattlemen and the Forest Service rid 75,000 acres

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[27]Peake, 93.
[28]Rowley, 162.
[29]Aspen Times, 2 January 1936.
[30]Rowley, 223.
[31]Peake, 94.

of the Leadville and Pike National Forests of the pesky animal.[32] In 1931 over 300,000 pounds of poisoned bait were used to kill prairie dogs, ground squirrels, rats, pocket gophers, and jack rabbits in Colorado.[33] Stockmen and the Forest Service justified this action by pointing out that these rodents ate forage needed for cattle (256 prairie dogs eat as much grass as one cow), and they dug holes that broke cattle and horses' legs, sending one unwary rider twenty-seven feet off his mount.[34]

Killing bears and mountain lions and poisoning prairie dogs made room for more cattle on the range at the expense of a balanced wildlife population. The Forest Service--or any other institution, for that matter--could not support the cattle industry without changing range environments and ecosystems. Nor could it win every struggle with stockmen over use of the land, and compromises usually led to overgrazing. Given the political strength of stock associations and the local power of individual ranchers, the Forest Service did a remarkably good job of supporting its goals. Cattlemen and rangers generally compromised and so each side both lost and gained a little on every issue.

The struggle to conserve National Forest range is far from over. Although grazing pressure around the Roaring Fork Valley has dropped off substantially, areas of national forest are still in trouble. Capitol Creek and Owl Creek in Pitkin County, for instance, are still damaged from overgrazing, and the Forest Service is working to restore them by planting willows and moving salt licks away from fragile riparian environments. Areas where ranchers use detailed management plans, like the Red Canyon Forest Service grazing allotment above Woody Creek, are in better shape. Ranchers Braun and Underwood ascribed their success to rotating their cattle herds, prescribed burning to improve plant life, controlling noxious weeds, planting willows by the creek, building fences and a trail, and riding the range to oversee

[32]Peake, 233, 94.
[33]Peake, 94.
[34]Peake, 240.

cattle distribution.[35] Other people want to recreate herd movement similar to that caused by predator threats in order to distribute grazing pressure. Some outsiders and those less concerned with ranchers' well-being say the only way for the range to truly regenerate is to remove cattle completely and permanently.[36]

The relationship between cattle and the range supported Roaring Fork Valley ranchers from the 1890s through 1950, and during those years Aspen townspeople supported ranchers' interests. Today, however, recreational users want to be able to hunt and fish and camp without the inconvenience of stepping in cow pies. A 1991 issue of The Aspen Times illustrates the present variety of perspectives through its article titles: "Cattle: An 'ecological fiasco,' but better than subdivisions," "The holistic approach to grazing," "Audubon: No cows on this range," and "Git along now, little pampers," a tale of diapered cattle as the result of environmentalists' rise to power.[37] These articles illustrate how dramatically public response to ranchers' relationship with the land, their cattle, and the government changed with time. Before ranching in the Roaring Fork Valley declined during the 1950s and 1960s, connections between ranchers and Forest Service land allowed ranchers to raise livestock and support their families. The relationships among a rancher, the land, his cattle, and the Forest Service supported him as a web supports a spider. Those relationships alone, however, were not enough to keep ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley. Families provided support that the land and the Forest Service could not.

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[35]Aspen Times, 19 September 1991, 8-A

[36]Aspen Times, 19 September 1991, 4-A, 9-A.

[37]Aspen Times, 19 September 1991.

CHAPTER THREE

CONNECTIONS WITHIN: WOMEN AND FAMILY IN THE FARM ECONOMY

Families in the Roaring Fork Valley entwined their ranching activities with farming, and they did so as a family unit. In order to provide for themselves and diversify their interests, ranchers and their families spent time and energy growing crops like hay, potatoes, and oats in addition to raising livestock. The 1910 federal census listed locally well-known ranchers like Fred Light, Stanley Natal, Kate Lindvig, and the Vagneurs as farmers despite their cattle. In fact, no resident of Pitkin County is listed as a rancher.

The 1930 census of agriculture classified farms in Pitkin County as mostly crop-specialty farms, or farms earning at least 40% of their income from crops other than grains. Pitkin County also contained animal-specialty and stock-ranch farms, which earned at least 40% of their income from selling livestock. Each type of farm sold produce as well as cattle and thus combined ranching with farming, although in varying proportions.[1] The Roaring Fork Valley landscape, short growing season, and low annual precipitation limited large-scale ranching and agriculture, and encouraged settlers to develop a hybrid economy. Isolation from major population centers, the mountain landscape, and irrigation labor demands also kept Roaring Fork Valley farms smaller and less profit-oriented than midwestern farms.[2] Farming in the Roaring Fork Valley could not make anyone rich, so most people grew a variety of crops and concentrated on supporting their families.

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[1] Fifteenth Census of the United States, vol. III, part 3, p. 213.
[2] Gilbert Fite, The Farmers' Frontier, 1865-1900 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), 191.

Severin Trentaz, for example, started ranching and farming not to earn big profits, but to keep his sons out of the mines and improve the quality of their lives.[3]

Farming grew more important in the Roaring Fork Valley after Grover Cleveland repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act in 1893 and silver mining declined in the Aspen area. From 1890 to 1900 the number of farms in Pitkin County increased by 46% from 116 to 170. The amount of acres in farms rose from 21,066 to 35,363 during those years and kept increasing through the 1950s (see Appendix, Tables 3 and 4). More significantly, in both 1930 and 1940, 44% of those men employed in Pitkin County were employed in agriculture. No other occupation came close.[4] In 1950 the number of employed men involved in agriculture declined to 32%, but farming was still the most widespread occupation in Pitkin County by far.

Some farmers chose not to raise livestock; some farmed as tenants; and other people worked as farm laborers. Most Roaring Fork Valley farmers lived with family no matter what their situation, even if they were not married themselves. The family thus made up the basic economic unit in the Roaring Fork Valley. In 1930 Pitkin County had 175 farm families out of the 696 people counted as the rural farm population.[5] In 1910 the Pitkin County census taker noted five women farmers as household heads. They were a small minority, however, and often lived with family even if they were not married.[6] Most Roaring Fork Valley women,

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[3](Trentaz 1992) The other farmers and ranchers I spoke with stressed quality of life as being more important to them than financial gain. They also stressed that large profits were a rarity in the local farming and ranching business.

[4]In 1930 there were 635 men employed in Pitkin County. 281 of those worked on farms in some capacity. The next most popular job was mining minerals besides coal(138 men), and after that was wholesale and retail trade (55 men). This pattern of agricultural dominance continues in 1940 and 1950. U. S. Federal Census.

[5]Fifteenth Census of the United States, Colorado, p. 212.

[6]1910 U. S. Census, Pitkin County. The woman farmers were Lorinda Helms, Louise Gilbert, Ellen Stapleton, Kate Lindvig, and Margaret Kenney.

therefore, contributed to the family economy through their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers. Valley women exercised a significant degree of autonomy within these roles.

A typical Roaring Fork Valley farm family consisted of husband and wife, three or four children, and sometimes a hired man, who might have a family of his own. They came from all over America and Europe, but they seemed to agree on appropriate gender roles despite their different cultural backgrounds. Each household member performed designated jobs and contributed to the family economically. Male household heads and farm laborers took responsibility for most of the outside farm work. That included irrigating and fencing fields, mowing, baling, and stacking hay, cutting and threshing grain, as well as planting, cultivating, and digging potatoes. Additional jobs, like repairing buildings and machinery and taking care of cattle herds during the winter, also fell to the men.

Children provided a steady source of labor for farm families, and worked at different jobs depending on their ages and whether or not school was in session. Historian Elliott West argued that rural children's labor in the American West contributed significantly to their family's economy, and children worked outside more often in the West than children from other regions.[7] Evidence from the Roaring Fork Valley supports his argument. Cleaning barns, clearing land, and caring for their horses commonly occupied children's time, and when they got older they helped with more ambitious outside work. They led the horse, for instance, that pulled the hay stacker. Bernice Vagnuer Morrison helped her brother drive the cattle to their summer range when she was ten, and later took responsibility for raking hay on McLain Flats.[8] Children of all ages picked potatoes in October;

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[7]Elliott West, Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).
[8]Bernice Vagneur Morrison, interviewed by author, 17 July 1991, tape recording, AHS.

farmers considered them such a necessary source of labor that school let out for a week every fall for the occasion.[9] Farm children also helped inside the house, doing chores like bringing in firewood, hauling water, and washing dishes. While historians rarely consider them laborers, farm children contributed to the family economy in significant ways.

Women in the Roaring Fork Valley rounded out the picture of a family farm and ranch economy dependent on each member. Women usually performed separate roles from men, but they also took on roles characterized as male when possible or necessary. Farm wives took responsibility for childrearing, housekeeping, and food preparation, for instance, but sometimes need or desire drove them outside. Sam Stapleton's mother farmed for over twenty years after her husband died, depending on her sons and daughters to feed livestock, herd sheep, and cultivate hay.[10] During World War Two, "All the females got in the fields for sure--year round," even if they had to juggle farm work with school.[11] Women who homesteaded on their own or with other women worked outside more often than women who worked in conjunction with a husband or brother.[12] Some children and girls like Bernice Vagneur enjoyed typically male work and their parents often allowed them to stray outside traditional gender roles. Rural girls often had more opportunity to work

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[9]Arthur and Amelia Trentaz, interviewed by George Madsen and Judith Gertler, 10 July 1991, tape recording, AHS; (Morrison 1991); Sam Stapleton, interviewed by George Madsen, 27 May 1991, tape recording, AHS.

[10](Stapleton 1992)

[11](Morrison 1992)

[12]Women seemed to work inside according to traditional gender roles if there was no other woman to do so, and if there was enough male labor to accomplish necessary farm tasks. Women homesteaders, especially single ones, worked outside more than usual. Katherine Harris argued that homesteading caused women to enlarge the scope of their activities and increase their responsibility and power within the family and community. See Katherine Harris, "Women and Families on Northeastern Colorado Homesteads, 1873-1920" (Ph.D. diss., University of Colorado, 1983), and Teresa Jordan, Cowgirls: Women of the American West, an Oral History 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).

outside than girls growing up in towns, where girls might be expected to follow traditional gender roles more strictly.

Women expanded gender roles until the crisis period ended or the family needed them inside. Bernice Vagneur took charge of the housework and cooking, for instance, when she and her father were alone on the ranch. In times of stress women worked where their family needed them, whether that meant raking hay during war time or washing clothes for a widowed father. Women's roles on Roaring Fork Valley farms thus proved to be flexible.

Despite their ability to perform a variety of jobs when necessary, farm women's significance usually lay in and near the home. Women in the Roaring Fork Valley were no exception. Their jobs were far from trivial, however; farm wives enabled their families to grow. Childrearing, housekeeping, and food preparation occupied most women's days on Roaring Fork Valley farms, and often kept them up at night, too. Farms in the Roaring Fork Valley did not get electricity until the 1940s, and few had indoor plumbing before then. Chores like washing clothes, bathing children, and storing food took longer and had an entirely different meaning to Valley women before 1940 than they do to us today.

Women spent most of their days growing, raising, storing, and cooking food. Valley women usually took charge of dairying, cared for large gardens during the summer months, and often raised baby chicks for summer meals. Lucille Jurick raised turkeys as well, and some women raised geese and ducks.[13] Others had fruit trees or bushes, and George Vagneur's grandmother kept a beehive for honey.[14] Farm women processed all this food themselves; they killed and fried chickens in the summer, made their own butter, cheese, and jam, baked bread, and canned fruit, vegetables, and meat for winter meals. Technological improvements like running

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[13](McLaren 1992) and McLean, interview, 1975, tape recording, AHS.
[14]Mary Eshbaugh Hayes, "George Vagneur talks about Ranching," Aspen Times, 12 May 1977, 5-A.

water, washing machines, and refrigeration made women's work much less time-consuming, but came late and could not take away from its significance. Without women, Roaring Fork Valley farm families would have been hard-pressed to survive.

Aspen's boosters recognized farm women's significance in the home. When the state agricultural college sponsored a "Short Course" for farmers at Aspen in 1908, the Aspen Daily Times took care to advertise the accompanying Domestic Science Course for women. The domestic science program limited its curriculum to topics that fell clearly within the bounds of traditional women's roles. It offered workshops on housekeeping, cooking, making clothes, doing laundry, applying first aid, and entertaining.[15] Roaring Fork Valley farm women responded to this agenda by enrolling in numbers twice that of the men who signed up for the farmers' course. Women signed up, however, probably more to get off the farm and into town than to endorse traditional women's roles. Kate Lindvig the "Cattle Queen," for example, signed up for both courses. Aspen boosters commented only by saying, "She knows a good thing when she sees it. That is the reason she has been so successful both as a housekeeper and on the ranch."[16] Course boosters may have been aiming to get rural women in town to spend their money, but the paper stressed the importance of farm women in the process. Farm wives and mothers had important jobs to accomplish in the home: jobs that merited instruction but also a sense of humor. On the final day of the Domestic Science Course the Aspen Daily Times noted that all the women were "splendid cooks" now, and that they had "Been Practicing on Husbands, But No Fatalities Reported So Far."[17]

While domestic science courses like this one in 1908 alluded to farm women's indispensability and the value of good housekeeping, they ignored farm women's larger economic significance. Women on Roaring Fork Valley farms

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[15]Aspen Daily Times, 12 February 1908.
[16]Aspen Daily Times, 18 February 1908.
[17]Aspen Daily Times, 21 February 1908.

generally bartered with local store owners to get necessities they could not make themselves. Farm women's trading made them important cogs in the local farm economy as well as within their own family. Richard Cowling's mother regularly brought eggs to trade at the Woody Creek store, as did Lucille Jurick at the Snowmass store and Opal Marolt in Aspen.[18] While eggs seemed the most common item of barter, Agnes Jurick McLaren's mother also traded chickens and produce at the Snowmass store, and she paid off her doctor's bills with turkeys. Traditionally accepted gender roles allocated food production and preparation to women. Roaring Fork Valley farm wives accepted their domestic role, but that role also took them outside their home. While trading might have started as a way to make use of extra produce, it ended up drawing farm women into the local economy. Farm women thus managed to feed their families as well as provide them with goods they could not produce at home.

Nor did Roaring Fork Valley women stop there. They became economic players in markets that stretched beyond the Woody Creek, Snowmass, or Aspen store; their markets included Glenwood Springs and even Denver. These larger markets operated on a cash basis rather than barter, so farm women's produce could also bring them a steady trickle of cash. Hildur Anderson's mother Marie Hoaglund sold butter and eggs to regular customers in Aspen, bringing between 40 and 50 pounds of butter to town from Brush Creek every Saturday. Her customers paid in cash either weekly or by the month, 35¢ to 70¢ per pound.[19] Mrs. Hoaglund operated her business--with the help of her children--in addition to her regular housekeeping jobs on the farm. The scale and cash basis of her enterprise made Mrs. Hoaglund different from other local farm wives. While she entered the Aspen cash

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[18]Richard Cowling, interview by author, 19 March 1992, Boulder, CO;(McLaren 1992); and Vicki Marolt Buchanan, interview by Lysa Wegman-French, 17 July 1991, tape recording, AHS.

[19]Hildur Anderson, interview, 19 October1973, tape recording, AHS; and Hildur Anderson, tape recording,1979, AHS.

economy by making butter, however, most other farm wives in the Roaring Fork Valley kept the butter they made and sold their cream to businesses in Glenwood Springs and beyond. In 1925 Pitkin County women produced 45,564 pounds of cream and butterfat for sale; their dairy production peaked in 1930, selling 69,649 pounds (see Appendix, Table 5).

Most Roaring Fork Valley farms included a few cows to provide milk for the family. Even tenant farmers like the Juricks kept milk cows. Their cows usually produced more than families could consume, so after separating the milk either by hand or more commonly by machine, farm wives saved their extra cream. During the summer peak Grace Vagneur could save two five-gallon cans of cream a week, but production tapered off in the winter to one can every two weeks or even less.[20] After attaching a mailing tag to each, women took their cream cans to either Woody Creek or Snowmass and put them on the train headed down valley. They sold to creameries in Glenwood Springs, New Castle, Grand Junction, and Denver.[21] In three or four days their can came back clean on a return train. Creameries paid Roaring Fork Valley women by check through the mail, and prices ranged from $2.50 per can during the Depression to a height of $20 later, averaging about $11.[22] Prices usually dropped in the Spring when cream production grew. Valley farm wives, by following accepted gender roles and producing food for their family, entered a cash market economy extending beyond the Roaring Fork Valley. The market for women's cream was smaller-scale and less complicated than that for cattle, but it was a market economy nonetheless.

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[20](Morrison 1992)

[21] I am not sure how women came to sell to specific creameries, or if they changed buyers often. Opal Peterson Marolt, interviewed by Lysa Wegman-French, 13 July 1990, tape recording, AHS; (McLaren 1991); (Morrison 1992); (Trentaz 1992); and (Stapleton 1992)

[22](Trentaz 1992); (Morrison 1992); (McLaren, 1992)

In discussing Mid-Atlantic farm women, Joan Jensen wrote "Women's flexibility and ingenuity in producing marketable products [butter] allowed these farms successfully to survive tremendous market pressures and to reproduce the family farm as well as the farm family."[23] Farm wives in the Roaring Fork Valley similarly contributed their profits to their families. Farm wives helped their families not only by bearing and feeding children, but also by providing a small but regular flow of cash.

Historically American farmers have always been short of cash. While Roaring Fork Valley farms produced much of their own food, they were not totally self-sufficient. Valley farmers ran up debts at their local stores throughout the year and paid them off after they sold their cattle and potatoes. Women's cream money made up the only cash available throughout the year, so although their profits were small, those profits were important (see Appendix, Table 5). Women spent their cream money, as they did most of their time, on their families. Some women used their money to buy baby chickens to grow for summer frying, thus perpetuating their family economy and food production. Most used their cream money for necessities like shoes and clothes, treats like oranges and candy, and allowances for children going to school in Aspen.[24]

Besides providing the only source of cash throughout the year, most Roaring Fork Valley farm wives also controlled its allocation. Producing for a market economy gave them the right, they felt, to spend the money as they pleased. After Grace Vagneur died her daughters did her chores, sold their extra cream, and took control of the profits. Despite "razzing" from her father and brother, Eileen Vagneur distributed the cream money in accordance with her role as the oldest

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[23]Joan M. Jensen, "Butter Making and Economic Development in Mid-Atlantic America from 1750-1850," Signs 13 (Summer 1988): 814.

[24]Farm families sent their children to local country schools until they reached high school age, at which point children boarded in Aspen during the week and attended high school there.

daughter.[25] By earning and spending their own money, Valley farm women stretched traditional gender roles to include financial management. Men tended to put profits from livestock and crops back into the farm after paying off any outstanding debts; women put their profits into their family's day-to-day functioning and well-being. Since these women used their money on their family, gender roles stretched, but by no means to the breaking point. Valley women, like other western rural women, exercised autonomy primarily within the accepted gender roles of wife and mother.[26]

With the occasional addition of a hired man, the family made up the basic economic unit in the Roaring Fork Valley. Children pitched in, doing chores and helping their fathers outside as they got older, and husbands took charge of crops and cattle. Wives and mothers raised children, kept house, and took charge of food production. Farm women's food production helped their families directly by keeping their bellies full, but it also allowed women to trade their produce at local stores and even to sell it for cash. Though small, their cash income made a difference to the family. Farm wives in the Roaring Fork Valley were more than homemakers; their work helped reproduce the family farm as well as the farm family.

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[25](Morrison 1992)
[26]See Fink, Agrarian Women.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONNECTIONS TO MARKETS AND THE GOVERNMENT: POTATOES

On March 19, 1908 a special train pulled into the Aspen station--a "Potato Special" pulled in, to be exact. State agricultural workers promoting potato growing demonstrated the latest and best machinery to plant, cultivate, and dig potatoes; they even brought a model cellar in which to store the appealing tubers. Speakers and music completed their act, and the Aspen Daily Times saw "no good reason why potatoes cannot become a great money maker in this section this very year. Plant ten acres or more for a starter," they said, "and see how your account stands this time next year."[1] Valley residents took this advice to heart, and by the 1930s the Roaring Fork Valley had an established potato culture. Valley residents celebrated "Potato Day" in Carbondale, down the Roaring Fork River Valley in Eagle County, on October 29, 1938. During World War Two the Aspen Times proclaimed: "Patriotic Farmer Goes In for Victory Spuds," and explained: "At least one farmer has taken this food-for-victory business seriously. He has gone so far as to grow his spuds in the shape of Vs which makes about the most patriotic looking tubers you ever saw."[2] Neno Trentaz found his victory potatoes while he was sorting, and put them on display in the Times window. (Last year the same window featured Neno's famous duck-shaped potatoes.)

According to one farmer in the Roaring Fork Valley, during the 1930s and 1940s "everybody raised potatoes."[3] He was not far from wrong: even in 1922

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[1] Aspen Daily Times, 19 March 1908.
[2] Aspen Times, 7 May 1942.
[3] (Stapleton 1991)

more farmers in Pitkin County grew potatoes than any other crop.[4] The only crop more valuable in Pitkin County between 1930 and 1950 was hay; oats and wheat came in a distant third and fourth (see Appendix, Table 7). Moreover, most farmers kept their hay for feeding cattle in the winter, making potatoes their primary commercial crop. Early settlers in the valley had experimented with crops of potatoes and found success, but commercial production began in earnest during the late 1890s.[5] As production soared in the first decade of the 1900s and again in the 1920s, Valley farmers learned to increase their production by rotating their potato crops with alfalfa and to growing types of potatoes resistant to virus and disease. By the 1930s most farmers grew Russet Burbanks and Red McClures.[6]

Farmers in the Roaring Fork Valley grew potatoes because potatoes flourished in the local sandy loam soil. Russet Burbanks grew best between 6,000 and 8,000 feet,and the cold weather reduced the chance of disease.[7] While the growing season is short in the Roaring Fork Valley (from 75 to 100 days), the soil protects potatoes from freezing even after the vines freeze. Soon after farmers began commercial production, the district, including the Roaring Fork, Crystal, Eagle, and Frying Pan River Valleys with Carbondale at its center, became the principle potato raising district on the Western Slope.[8] Pitkin County's average yield per acre of potatoes was consistently higher than that of Colorado from at least 1920 through 1950.[9] Potatoes thus represented an important part of the Roaring Fork Valley mixed

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[4]State Board of Immigration, Agricultural Statistics of the State of Colorado, 1922 (Denver: Eames Bros. Printers, 1923), 30.

[5]Colorado Agricultural College, Agricultrual Experiment Station, The Colorado Potato Industry, by E.R. Bennett, Bulletin 117 (Fort Collins: Agricultural Experiment Station, 1907), 4.

[6]Wegman-French, 91, (Trentaz 1991).

[7]Colorado, The Colorado Potato Industry, 5.

[8]Colorado, The Colorado Potato Industry, 1.

[9]see Colorado Cooperative Crop Reporting Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Colorado State Planning Division, Agricultural Statistics of the State of Colorado, 1922-1959.

economy. Valley farm families grew hay, grain, vegetables, and produced dairy products for their own use and they sold the leftovers, but cattle and potatoes made them more money than any other crop (see Appendix, Table 7).

While potatoes ranked high among commercial crops, families dominated the Roaring Fork Valley economy through the 1950s. Growing potatoes, like raising cattle and producing cream, was a family enterprise in Pitkin County. According to one Roaring Fork Valley farmer, profits from selling potatoes only paid part of the grocery bill; raising livestock paid better.[10] Growing potatoes created no wealthy planters, but allowed farm families to diversify their income and succeed as an economic unit without armies of hired laborers. Potatoes required, however, more labor than most other crops. Ditch irrigation demanded regular attention, and Pitkin County farmers irrigated almost all their potato fields. Farmers reported non-irrigated potato fields in only five of the years between 1925 and 1937; farmers probably planted a few acres without irrigation in the hopes of a rainy year.[11] Harvesting also called for hours of back-breaking labor, but during picking time farmers relied on temporary help rather than broadening their enterprise beyond the family on a permanent basis.

Roaring Fork Valley farmers accordingly limited the number of acres they planted in potatoes. The largest farmers, owning farms or ranches of about 1,000 acres, planted a maximum of twenty-five acres in potatoes. These farmers usually included a full-time hired man in their household to help with extra work. The average number of acres Pitkin County farm families planted in potatoes was dwarfed in comparison, equalling about 7.5 acres in 1920 and falling to about four acres by

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[10](Stapleton 1992) He and other large ranchers ran about 300 head of cattle; other smaller farmers and ranchers in the Roaring Fork Valley may have earned a higher percentage of their profits from potatoes.

[11]Colorado Agricultural Statistics, 1937, 61. Yield per acre on non-irrigated fields was prohibitively low, usually between 25% and 60% of irrigated fields' yield. As a result, farmers grew few if any non-irrigated acres of potatoes.

1950. To keep their yield high, farmers rotated their crops and planted potatoes for two years, then grain for two years, then they plowed and reseeded with alfalfa for about six years.

No matter how many acres they planted, families had to devote much of their time to their potato crop. Each spring farmers sorted out the appropriate potatoes, cut them up for seed, and plowed their fields in preparation for planting. Children and sometimes wives helped in planting potatoes, which required burying the seed potatoes under the soil. Before the advent of farm machinery, planting consisted of following a horse and plow and dropping seeds behind them; the plow covered the seeds on its next pass. Later on farmers used a planting machine pulled by horses, and later still, a tractor (see Appendix, Table 6). Planting machines deposited and covered seed potatoes, but still required close supervision. Someone--often a child--sat behind the machine to make sure it planted one seed at a time. After planting, the potatoes needed to be cultivated, which farmers accomplished with a single horse and plow before machines called cultivators came into wide use. Cultivating and weeding took time throughout the summer, but the real work began after the vines froze and the potatoes ripened in the fall.

Farm families tried to stack their hay and thresh all their grain before October first so that they could concentrate on harvesting potatoes, a process that took about three weeks.[12] Most farmers used a potato digger to harvest, either pulled by horses or later a tractor. The digger brought dirt and potatoes to the surface and passed them over a screen so the potatoes fell on top of the soil. The difficult part was getting those potatoes from the ground to the cellar. People followed behind the potato digger picking potatoes off the ground and loading them into baskets, which they then dumped into sacks. Two baskets filled a sack, and workers

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[12]Aspen Times, 10 September 1936, and Agnes McLaren, interviewed by Judith Gertler, 25 July 1991, tape recording, AHS.

got paid according to how many sacks they filled. Each hundred-pound sack had to be lifted onto the accompanying hay wagon in order to get to the cellar. For this back-breaking labor workers got paid between 5¢ and 8¢ per sack. High school workers could earn about $1.50 a day, which they considered good money, especially during the Depression.

Since picking potatoes was so labor-intensive, farmers usually called on extra help outside that of their family members. Farmers hired only temporary workers, however, who often enhanced the family nature of the enterprise rather than detracting from it. Teenagers made up the largest temporary labor force, and the high school in Aspen traditionally cancelled classes for at least a week every fall so students could pick potatoes on the local farms. Rural grade schools closed as well. These students brought a festive attitude to their endeavor, and usually received room and board in addition to their pay. One farm daughter fondly recalled the potato harvest as one long slumber party.[13] While most farm families temporarily adopted teenagers to help them pick potatoes, at least one other family welcomed older folks into their home,too. During World War Two and the accompanying farm labor shortage, farmer Arthur Trentaz would go to the "hobo junction" in Carbondale and recruit hungry hobos. They worked in exchange for food and shelter, and usually stayed until "their bellies were full," at which point Trentaz would find some new recruits.[14] While farmers needed and used extra labor during the potato harvest, hired labor was temporary and families remained the basic economic unit in the Roaring Fork Valley.

Once farmers loaded the sacks of potatoes into the potato cellar, labor demands usually declined. Families usually sorted their potatoes by size and culled out the bad ones during the winter when they had time. After sorting the potatoes by size and

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[13](Morrison 1991)
[14](Trentaz 1992)

resacking them, farmers hauled them by wagon to the nearest railroad spur--either Woody Creek or Snowmass--for shipment to market.

Roaring Fork Valley farmers sold their potatoes on a variety of markets. Their market ties to the region, the nation, and the government helped them and their families to function economically and stay on their land. During the earliest years of production before the railroads came to the Valley in 1887, local farmers sold their crops to miners in Aspen. Commercial production began in earnest during the 1890s as silver profits drastically declined and farmers took advantage of the railroads. Early twentieth-century markets for Roaring Fork Valley potatoes connected local farmers with other Colorado mountain towns and such businesses as the New York Central Lines and the Pullman Railroad Car Company, as well as the Brown Palace Hotel.[15]

While Valley potatoes traveled on railroad cars to their ultimate markets and destinations, local farmers usually stayed in the Valley. Most twentieth-century farmers sold their crops to buyers or "commission men," who would sell a farmer's potatoes on the market that the buyer thought most profitable. These commission men would contact local farmers, inspect their potatoes and decide if they were No. 1 or No. 2 quality, agree on a price, and then arrange for a railroad car to pick up the lot. Many buyers came from Carbondale in Eagle County since it was the center of the local potato-raising district and had its own storage facility. Other buyers came from Glenwood Springs, even further down the Valley. Once the railroad cars filled with potatoes pulled out from Woody Creek or Snowmass, local farmers lost sight of their crop. Commission men usually sold their potatoes in Denver to the highest bidder.

Besides selling to a commission man, Roaring Fork Valley farmers had the option of selling their crop to the Potato Growers' Association in Carbondale. This

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[15]Colorado, The Colorado Potato Industry, 5, 15, and Wegman-French, 90.

farmers' coop bought local potatoes and sold them as either a wholesaler or a retailer.[16] A larger cooperative--the Colorado Potato Growers' Exchange--formed in 1923 from local cooperatives, including one in the Roaring Fork Valley. This organization acted as the sales agency for 2,000 members in 20 local associations, including one in Carbondale-Basalt.[17] These co-ops helped farmers sell their produce by acting as middle-men and so helped Roaring Fork Valley farmers succeed, despite any charges they may have imposed.

Roaring Fork Valley farmers grew potatoes to help support their families and thus connected themselves to markets and organizations outside the valley. Buyers usually mediated in the financial ties between Valley farmers and outside markets, so financial ties and the potatoes themselves connected farmers to outside markets. Occasionally farmers made more direct connections to distant regions. One year, for instance, Hildur Hoaglund Anderson's father responded to high potato prices by planting more the next year, at which time prices dropped drastically. He paid to ship his potatoes to the East, planning to sell them on consignment and get a better price than he could in Denver. Mr. Hoaglund took a huge loss that year because his gamble did not pay off, but in the process of marketing his potatoes Hoaglund linked the Roaring Fork Valley directly with markets across the country.[18] Farmers realized the significance of outside markets to their own livelihoods and listened to the radio to keep track of potato prices. While growing potatoes helped local farm families earn money and stay on their land, it did not guarantee them success.

Potato prices fluctuated according to a number of variables. One Roaring Fork Valley farmer recalled that trying to get money from crops was "kind of like a

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[16]The Carbondale Potato Growers Cooperative Association existed as one of thirteen local coops in Colorado in 1941. See Trentaz, 1992, and Colorado, Division of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1941.

[17]Wegman-French, 92.

[18]Hildur Anderson, "reminiscences," February 1979, tape recording, AHS.

poker game."[19] Potatoes, unlike cattle, rotted when kept too long before sale. As a result, farmers who waited to sell their potatoes in the spring when prices rose had a poorer quality crop to sell and wasted more of it than farmers who sold in the fall.

Prices varied year to year as well as month to month, according to weather, other farmers' misfortunes, available technology, regional and national demand, and government policy. The Aspen Times reported in 1936 that "Potato Prices May Soar" due to frosts and spring drought in eastern sections of the country.[20] Colorado potato prices between 1910 and 1941 reached their climax during the winter and spring of 1920, drastically declining and rising to less than half their highest in 1927.[21] Pitkin County farmers responded by increasing their acreage and production of potatoes in 1920 and especially in 1925 (see Appendix, Table 8). Potato prices fell to their lowest during the Depression between 1932 and 1933, and by 1934 fewer Pitkin County farmers were growing potatoes and production dropped[22] (see Appendix, Table 8). Changes in potato acreage illustrate in part farmers' optimism--or lack thereof--in the market. While changing crop values reflect changes in demand--the high potato crop value in 1943 corresponds with World War Two, for instance--changing average yield shows how weather and technology affected production. The year 1950's all time high average yield in Pitkin County reflects the increased farm mechanization and agricultural technology of that year (see Appendix, Table 6).

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[19]Trentaz, 1992.

[20]Aspen Times, 11 June 1936.

[21]Colorado Agricultural Statistics, 1940, 99. Peak prices occurred in either June or July of the years 1917(257¢ per bushel), 1920(450¢), 1927(200¢), and also 1930(150¢), and 1937(150¢).

[22]Average yield dropped significantly in 1934, and different reports list either 585 acres in potatoes or 878 acres. That means that Pitkin County farmers may not have decreased their acreage significantly in response to lower prices earlier, and that weather may have had more to do with decreased production than anything else.

Farmers in the Roaring Fork Valley felt the effects of changing markets and prices from year to year which reminded them of their precarious economic position. Prices could change drastically and quickly. In 1934, for instance, the Aspen Times declared on its front page: "Potato Mart Zooms; Many Cars to Ship," and "Local spud prices increase rapidly during last six weeks; storage heavy." Prices had jumped up by one third to $1.50 per hundred pounds; the year before a hundred pounds sold for 35¢.[23] One tenant farmer's daughter remembered a year when potatoes sold for $1 per hundred pounds, and another year when the same amount sold for $5.[24] Another farmer recalled one year when the price of potatoes did not even cover the price he had to pay for their sacks.[25] Growing potatoes in the Roaring Fork Valley made for risky business, and the farmers knew it.

In order to reduce their risk of falling victim to the potato market, Valley farmers combined their commercial crop-growing with cattle ranching and a strong family economy. In addition, local farmers established ties with an institution concerned with evening out market fluctuations--the United States government. During the 1930s the Roosevelt administration passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) to help farmers survive the Depression.

Federal farm legislation affected Pitkin County farmers less in its drive to reduce crop acreage than in its support of crop prices. In 1935 the federal government passed a Potato Control Law as part of the AAA that established national and state quotas for potato production. Farmers had to get a licence to grow their potatoes and had to pay a large tax if they tried to sell more than their quota.[26] The

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[23]Aspen Times, 8 February 1934.

[24](McLaren 1992) Her estimate of $5 per hundred was probably a little high, though in June of 1920 Colorado potatoes sold for $4.50. Potatoes from the Roaring Fork Valley may well have earned higher prices, however, than other Colorado potatoes.

[25](Trentaz 1992)

[26]Aspen Times, 26 September 1935.

government even considered a bill that would jail farmers who grew too many potatoes.[27] Despite these federal efforts to reduce production, Pitkin County potato production only dropped 30% between 1935 and 1938, and rose again 25% by 1940. More importantly, the acreage of potatoes in Pitkin County actually increased between the years of 1934 and 1937.[28] One farmer noted that AAA legislation had less impact upon Roaring Fork Valley potato growers than other larger-scale farming regions because few farmers planted enough acreage to reduce production effectively.[29]

The federal government also supported crop prices in order to reduce crop acreage and production. The government wanted to lessen the impact of a fluctuating and depressed market. Legislation geared towards this end affected Roaring Fork Valley farmers directly and linked them economically to the federal government. In 1938 the Aspen Times announced that Pitkin County ranchers would be allowed to divert 300,000 to 750,000 pounds of potatoes from the market and use them to feed their livestock. Ranchers had only to apply to the County Agricultural Conservation Committee, sack their potatoes unsorted, and keep enough to feed 35 lbs per head of cattle per day. The federal government would reimburse each rancher according to the quality of potatoes.[30] The next month the paper advertised that "All farmers who have fed spuds to livestock can qualify for diversion payments," even if they had not previously applied.[31] The government paid 25¢ per hundred pounds of potatoes diverted, and in March of 1938 Pitkin County farmers received $2,700 for their crops.[32] Local ranchers during the Depression remembered keeping their potatoes from market to feed to their cattle, and seemed glad the government paid them for

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[27]Aspen Times, 17 October 1935.
[28]Colorado Agricultural Statistics, 1939, 43.
[29](Trentaz 1992)
[30]Aspen Times, 6 January 1938.
[31]Aspen Times, 10 February 1938.
[32]Aspen Times, 17 February 1938.

it.[33] Roaring Fork Valley farmers and ranchers thus tied themselves to the federal government.

The links between the Valley and Washington D.C. remained strong even after the height of the Depression, as federal price support and regulation of agriculture became the norm. The federal government continued to buy diverted potatoes and also continued to limit the sale of lower quality (No. 2) potatoes out of state through 1938 and 1938. Instead of helping lessen the effects of the Depression, the government hoped these policies would control the quality of produce on the market and adjust crop supply to meet demand. The government wanted to create a dependable supply of standardized, quality product.[34] As a result, Pitkin County farmers could only ship potatoes that fit national grade and size regulations, but they could still sell their low-quality potatoes to the government as livestock feed--even through the 1940s. In 1944 the Aspen Times encouraged local farmers to "Sell Your Old Spuds to the CCC [Commodity Credit Corporation]."[35]

While government support helped Roaring Fork Valley farmers provide for their families, it caused trouble for the government. The great "potato scandal" of the 1947-48 season stemmed from government policies. In 1946 the CCC bought 108 million bushels of excess potatoes to support prices, and disposed of them through school lunch programs and as livestock feed. American farmers in 1947 and 1948 produced bumper crops of potatoes despite reduced acreage, and the government bought 139 million bushels of potatoes in 1948. These they dyed, burned, used for fertilizer, and disposed of in any way possible. During the "potato scandal" the federal government had spent $350 million on potatoes just to destroy and dispose of them.

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[33](Trentaz 1992); (Morrison 1992); (Stapleton 1992); (McLaren 1992)
[34]Colorado, Division of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1951, 82.
[35]Aspen Times, 11 May 1944, and 29 June 1944.

The potato scandal raised eyebrows, but seemed to have little effect on policy. In 1950 the government allotted Pitkin County 444 acres for growing potatoes, and while decreasing federal price supports 9¢ from the year before, pledged to keep prices between $1.35 and $1.80 per hundred pounds. By complying with government regulations, paying a service fee, and staying within their acreage allotment, all local farmers could be eligible for federal support.[36] Government support of local agriculture was thus permanently established.

Starting in the Depression, increasing federal regulation and support linked Roaring Fork Valley farmers with Washington D.C. and helped lessen the dangers of a fluctuating potato market. While possibly encouraging gambling and uncertainty, these links, combined with local connections to regional and national markets offered by commission men and co-ops and enacted by the railroad, usually strengthened local farmers' economic viability. Perhaps the two biggest reasons why Pitkin County potato farmers succeeded between 1900 and 1950 are that they had rich soil in which to grow their crops, and that they did not bank everything they had solely on potatoes. Moreover, Roaring Fork Valley farmers kept their enterprises and goals at a small scale; families remained their basic unit of production and survival. Their mixed economy that combined commercial cattle-raising with potato-growing, plus the strength of their family economies, helped valley farmers succeed economically and stay on the land.

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[36]Aspen Times, 2 March 1950.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: CONNECTIONS TO TODAY

Families living in the Roaring Fork Valley between 1900 and 1950 established a mixed economy. Raising cattle and growing potatoes provided families with access to outside markets and enough money to pay their bills and stay on the land. Through the process of raising crops, livestock, and families, Roaring Fork Valley residents established close ties to the federal government and to the environment around them. Government policy dictating range use and supporting potato prices helped determine ranchers' and farmers' income from year to year. More importantly, local soil, streams, vegetation, and ecosystems provided the basic ingredients for farm and ranch families' failure or success.

Growing hay, grain, and vegetables, raising poultry, and producing dairy products allowed farm families to feed their livestock and themselves almost self-sufficiently. Women and children played key roles in the family economy even though men usually took charge of raising livestock and crops for sale. Farm families depended on women because women controlled both food production and family reproduction. Women also sold their cream to outside markets and thus created a steady trickle of cash that families valued highly. Women and children also provided necessary farm labor, taking care of daily farm and household chores as well as helping with crops and livestock during seasonal busy times. In addition to their ties to the land, the government, and outside markets, the strength of Roaring Fork Valley families allowed them to live and stay in the valley.

Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families illustrate the changing economies characteristic of small town and rural American West. White people

flocked to Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley originally to make money off the mines, and they turned the area from a seasonal Indian hunting ground into a booming mine town. After Grover Cleveland repealed the Sherman Silver Purchase Act and the national economy took a turn for the worse in 1893, Aspen's prosperity as a mining town disappeared. Farmers and ranchers in the valley came to dominate Pitkin County's economy because the railroad--built to facilitate mining--gave them access to the outside markets necessary for their economic survival. Permanent families attached to the land thus changed the demographics of a region once filled with single, transient, young males. Studying the nature of the Roaring Fork Valley can help historians understand how and why western mining towns become agricultural communities, tourist areas, or ghost towns.

Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families also act as a window through which historians can view other significant relationships. Historians are becoming more concerned with the role of families in the economic development of western communities, for instance, and rightly so. Success in a small-scale mixed economy like that of the Roaring Fork Valley depended on available labor, and women and children performed a variety of jobs for little cost. Local farmers and ranchers did not have enough cash to replace them with hired laborers.

Valley residents also demonstrate the strong ties binding rural and urban areas together. The Roaring Fork Valley seemed isolated socially, since travel to town took substantial time and effort and most farm families had little contact with each other. What interaction they had existed primarily between neighbors. Their crops and livestock, however, linked valley families economically to Denver and sometimes even New York. Some ranchers even connected the valley to Denver personally when they accompanied their cattle to market. Western historians need to follow William Cronon's lead and acknowledge and examine links between rural and urban areas more fully, rather than classify any given community as either rural or

urban. Usually, the two have depended on each other despite their differing demographic characteristics.

Western communities have also often depended upon the federal government to help them survive. In the Roaring Fork Valley the government helped potato farmers directly through price supports and it helped ranchers--whether they liked it or not--through range management. Studying the Roaring Fork Valley community sheds light on the federal government's role and concerns as a land manager, and on its role in supporting agriculture. Often national events such as the Great Depression and world wars affected communities economically through changes in federal policy. While understanding the policy itself merits effort, so does understanding the local impact of federal policy. In that endeavor the Roaring Fork Valley serves historians well. It also raises policy questions concerning what federal roles in agriculture and land management ought to be. The government probably did a better job managing Forest Service range than anyone else could, and local farmers appreciated the potato price supports. Federal policies were not perfect, however, and historians need to keep evaluating their success in balancing increasing demands of different interest groups upon western resources.

Families in the Roaring Fork Valley existed within a complicated web of relationships. They depended on the land for the prosperity of their crops, their livestock, and themselves; and they altered their fields and range in the process. Historians have concentrated on mine and timber industries when they discuss environmental history, but agricultural communities can teach us how more permanent occupants reacted to their environment and how they changed it. The Roaring Fork Valley also serves as a useful case study for examining the variety of relationships that historian Donald Worster believes humans have a duty to understand. We must examine how people relate to the land, plants, and animals around them, and how those same people interact with themselves and outside

institutions such as economic markets and the government. Roaring Fork Valley residents between 1900 and 1950 show how each of these relationships depends upon the success of the others. Farm and ranch families spent their lives trying to maintain a workable balance between their land, production, family, and profits. Many of them farmed and ranched because that life was all they knew. When they could no longer keep their family together and produce crops and livestock, these farm and ranch families left the Roaring Fork Valley.

Despite their ties to commercial markets, Valley farmers and ranchers had little hope of earning either large profits or long vacations. What seemed more important to them was the type of life they could experience on the land. When asked why she kept farming, one woman from North Park Ranch in Colorado replied "What keeps me going? Probably the challenge of it all, really. Certainly not the money; it couldn't be the money (laughs)."[1] Roaring Fork Valley farmers and ranchers seemed to share this attitude; they were not earning much money, either.

In 1900 the Aspen Times printed an editorial exposing the reality behind the myth of the prosperous farmer. While prices have improved in the past few years, it said, import taxes on machines and other necessities, combined with prices that change according to the behavior of speculators and the world market, put farmers in a most vulnerable position.[2] Farmers and ranchers had to cope with the risky cycle of borrowing money towards next season's crop in order to finance their endeavors. One Roaring Fork Valley farm daughter remembered hard times when her family--who owned one of the largest ranches in the valley--lived from one fall to the next on credit, trying to clear up old bills after shipping cattle to market.[3] In 1929 American farmers' per capita income of $273 paled in comparison to the national

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[1]Jordan,151.
[2]Aspen Times, 13 June 1900.
[3](Morrison 1991)

average of $750.[4] During World War Two crop and livestock prices rose along with farmers' income. While American farm families earned an average of $655 in 1945 compared to $245 in 1940, their income was still only 57% of the average non-farm family income.[5]

Despite the fact that they would never get rich, Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families found some fulfillment in their lives. They would agree with twentieth-century farmer Sherry Thomas when she wrote:

> Like almost every other farmer in America today, I'm in debt and hoping for a good season. . . . No matter how prepared I am, there is always that vulnerability--to the weather, other animals, disease--that seems to strike when things are finally going smoothly. But inside me there also is this incredible joy. This life is real and good, and it has made me real and good too.[6]

Valley farmers and ranchers recalled their working years with fondness as well as realism. More than one rancher described life as good--especially for raising children--but they also stressed that they could not make money ranching and farming in the valley. Local families struggled to pay their bills, went without "luxuries" like fresh fruit, and continued to "rob Peter to pay Paul."[7] Thankless jobs like feeding cattle throughout the winter and digging potatoes for weeks on end made it difficult for Roaring Fork Valley families to romanticize their lives. One nineteenth-century valley rancher summed up his experience by explaining, "I stuck to the ranch for the next two years, fishing and hauling hay, having a good time and a hard time and a hell of a time all the time."[8]

While local ranchers and farmers reminisced fondly of their lives in the Valley, they also remembered the hard reality. To city folk, agrarian farm families

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[4]Fite, American Farmers, 29.
[5]Fite, 87.
[6]Sherry Thomas from Country Women (1976), in Jordan, 99.
[7](Sinclair 1991, Gerbaz 1969, and McLaren 1991)
[8]Henry Staats, "In the Early Days," in Frank Wentworth, Aspen on the Roaring Fork, 3rd ed. (Silverton, CO: Sundance Publishers Ltd., 1976), 49.

seem wholesome and healthy and ideal, but social isolation, hard work, and limited opportunities for education more accurately characterized reality. Anthropologist Deborah Fink noted that Nebraska farm mothers reinforced the agrarian ideal when they reminisced about their lives, but they also admitted that they would not want to return to farming and would not want their children to live as they had.[9] Roaring Fork Valley women confirmed Fink's conclusions in their own words. One ranch wife discouraged her son from staying in the land because it would have been "just a lot of hard work for not much in return."[10] Another woman said that her years farming were fun, but they were also hard work. Once she moved off the farm she did not want to go back.[11] Her mother was happy to move to town and off the farm because it meant she could finally have a house with an indoor bathroom.[12]

During the 1950s and 1960s farming and ranching in the Roaring Fork Valley became less and less attractive to its practitioners. Despite their supposedly healthy and wholesome outdoor life, farmers and ranchers in the valley reached a point at which their income could not justify their decision to stay on their land. In Pitkin County the number of farms declined sharply after 1945 and continued to decline through the 1950s (see Appendix, Table 3). Many Roaring Fork Valley farmers and ranchers--even those on ranches of over 1,000 acres--sold their land between 1950 and 1970. John Jurick sold his land in the early 1950s, Rene Duroux sold in the late 1950s, and the Trentazes, Copleys, and Ben Vagnuer's family sold their land in the early 1960s.[13] Sam Stapleton waited until 1968 to sell his land, but unlike most of his neighbors, he leased most of it back immediately and ran 60 head of cattle on his old land until 1989.[14]

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[9]Fink, 192.
[10](Trentaz 1992)
[11](McLaren 1991)
[12](McLaren 1992)
[13](Trentaz 1992) and (Morrison 1992)
[14](Stapleton 1992)

These people sold their land for a variety of reasons. In general, Valley farmers and ranchers sold when their income could no longer justify their life on the land. George Vagneur said that he enjoyed ranching and the ranching life, but he quit when he could not make enough money and foresaw no changes for the better in the future.[15] A short growing season, combined with the rising costs of land, labor, machinery, fuel, fertilizer, and taxes, caused many farmers and ranchers to retire. Borrowing money in the spring and paying debts in the fall became more and more risky, especially when livestock prices could not compensate for more and more expensive machinery. Rising land prices also made selling attractive, although large-scale developers did not arrive in the valley until the late 1960s.[16] One of the reasons Art Trentaz sold in 1962 was that he received an attractive offer from developers for his land.[17]

Farmers and ranchers also sold their land because no family member was interested in running it and hired labor was prohibitively expensive. Children lost interest in running the farm because their parents encouraged them to take advantage of the growing opportunities outside of the Roaring Fork Valley. More young people attended college in the 1950s and 1960s than ever before, and students from rural areas like the Valley realized they could earn more money off than on the farm. Other children married and moved away from the Valley. Meanwhile their parents were getting older and less able to keep up with the tremendous labor demands necessary to run a farm or ranch.

While their reasons for staying on local farms and ranches declined, other factors encouraged farm and ranch families to leave. The rise of the ski industry and tourism in Aspen eventually increased land values and taxes enough to push out rural folk. Skiing, hiking, and camping created new ties between people and the land and

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[15]Hayes, "George Vagneur Talks About Ranching," 5-A.
[16](Cowling 1992)
[17](Trentaz 1992)

new economic relationships that took precedence over raising cattle, hay, and potatoes. This process began in the 1930s but did not grow enough to affect Valley farmers and ranchers until the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1936 Aspenites Thomas Flynn and Frank Willoughby and ski enthusiast Bill Fiske formed a syndicate to develop Highland Basin up Castle Creek near Aspen. The Highland-Bavarian Lodge opened in December of 1936; Aspen held its first ski race in 1937; and by 1938 the Aspen Ski Club had built a ski tow and the Roch run on Aspen Mountain. In 1941 Aspen hosted the National Ski Association Championships. While the advent of World War Two slowed Aspen's development, it also brought the army's Tenth Mountain Division to train in Colorado. Tenth Mountain Division member Friedl Pfeifer visited Aspen during his training in Colorado; he decided to create a skiing community there after the war. With the help of Chicago industrial giant Walter Paepcke and others, Roch developed Aspen into a growing ski community. In 1950 Aspen hosted the FIS World Skiing Championships, and the new decade brought more development of Aspen Mountain's trails as well as the creation of two new ski areas: Buttermilk and Aspen Highlands. By 1967 the Aspen Ski Corporation had purchased about 30,000 acres in Brush Creek and had built five lifts to service its new Snowmass resort. The ski industry thus bought out farm and ranch land to build ski slopes and condominiums and pushed out local residents.

In addition to its skiing, Aspen also became known as a center for the arts. Walter and Elizabeth Paepcke visited Aspen in 1945 for a ski vacation and enjoyed the town so much that they decided to use it as a base for cultural events they wanted to foster. In 1949 Walter Paepcke organized a celebration of Goethe's Bicentennial that drew Dr. Albert Sweitzer, philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, pianist Arthur Rubinstein, and the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. By 1950 Paepcke had established the Aspen Institute and the annual Design Conference as permanent

fixtures in Aspen. He also helped finance the Aspen Ski Corporation so he could control Aspen's new development and keep the Aspen from becoming overrun with uncultured ski enthusiasts. Walter Paepcke not only brought more and more people to the Roaring Fork Valley, he also increased land values by quietly buying town lots and selling them after his plans for development had taken hold. Between the winter ski season and the summer cultural season, Aspen had become a boom town once again.

In addition to boosting land values and taxes, skiers and tourists flocking to the Roaring Fork Valley reduced the relative importance of farming and ranching to Pitkin County's economy. Ranchers who remained in the area had to cope with new philosophies concerning Forest Service land use. The 1960 Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act recognized recreation as a major use of Forest Service land and sought to reconcile increasingly diverse interest groups. People interested in recreation, fish and wildlife habitat preservation, lumber, and livestock grazing theoretically all had equal right to use National Forests. Roaring Fork Valley ranchers had to lower their dependence on government lands for summer grazing, because permits shrank in number and grew in cost. Recreationists and preservationists made their increasing political power known through the 1964 Wilderness Act. This act protected 9.1 million acres of land designated as Wilderness Areas from all motorized access and commercial use. In Pitkin County the government created three Wilderness Areas within the White River National Forest: the Maroon Bells-Snowmass area in 1964, the Hunter-Frying Pan area in 1978, and the Holy Cross area in 1980. Government policy thus encouraged cattle ranching to give way to hiking and camping.

By 1992 farming and ranching in Pitkin County have almost become extinct. A few people in the valley sell hay and fewer than six people hold active grazing permits. Most farms and ranches are now the sites of housing developments. Arthur

and Amelia Trentaz sold their Starwood ranch in 1962. Now "Starwood" is an elite residential district and the home of John Denver and Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia. According to Art Trentaz, Prince Bandar turned over 50 acres of good farm land into a lake.[18] Beginning in the 1940s and accelerating thereafter, Aspen's development as a resort marked the decline of Roaring Fork Valley farm and ranch families. New economic ties connecting the Roaring Fork Valley and Aspen to tourists all over the world have created abundant opportunities. Author Ted Conover noticed in the 1980s that "Real estate agents were ubiquitous--trying to scare up business on the gondola as you went up Aspen Mountain, at the table next to you at dinner (if they thought you were new), in the bookstore and the grocery checkout line."[19] Developers and salespeople, store owners, restauranteurs, and a variety of service industry employees have replaced the farm and ranch families that once gave the Roaring Fork Valley life.

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[18](Trentaz 1992)

[19]Ted Conover, Whiteout: Lost in Aspen (New York: Random House, 1991), 218.

EPILOGUE

Today most farm and ranch families have left Pitkin County and the Roaring Fork Valley. Rising prices in Aspen forced them to move farther down the Valley to Glenwood Springs; others moved to Denver or even out of the state. The Roaring Fork Valley can no longer be identified with cattle, cream, and potatoes. Rather, people identify it with Aspen's tourism, celebrities, and life in the fast lane. Innumerable famous people have chosen Aspen and the valley as their home--at least for part of the year--and they often reside on what used to be farm and ranch land. Hunter Thompson lives near Woody Creek as do Don Johnson and Melanie Griffith; John Denver and Prince Bandar live in Starwood above McLain flats; and various other celebrities like Jack Nicholson, Martina Navratilova, and Michael Douglas have scattered themselves throughout Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley. Today established rich residents face a new threat: the arrival of the super-rich. Gifts to the Paepcke-inspired Music Festival of $45,000 pale in comparison to offers of $1 million, and new houses continue to grow in size and grandeur.[1] The average Aspen home sells for about $1 million today, and realtors advertised a 1988 custom Starwood home for $4.3 million.[2]

The farmers and ranchers who succeeded in keeping their land buy groceries 40 miles down the valley in Glenwood Springs. They know that if they sold their land they could no longer afford to live in Pitkin County. The few who remain stayed on their land by adapting to economic change and making their peace with the ski

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[1]Conover, 109.
[2]Conover, 217.

industry. Like the few mine workers who stayed in the valley after silver's fall, these farmers and ranchers combined inertia with economic flexibility to keep their homes. While Sam Stapleton prefers ranching above any other job and continues to grow hay, he has worked for the Ski Company selling lift tickets at Snowmass for the last 34 years.[3] Sam's wife Elizabeth also adapted to the rising importance of the ski industry and runs a bed and breakfast out of their home near Owl Creek. After selling his Starwood ranch, Art Trentaz lives in the town of Aspen and earns money by working as a lift operator at Buttermilk ski area. He has operated ski lifts four months out of the year for fourteen years now.

In the past one hundred years, Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley moved from a mining boom economy to a family-based farm and ranch economy. Today their residents make a living from tourism. Historian Walter Nugent would characterize Aspen's mining years as a type II frontier, based on extractive industry and a transient, single, male work force. He would characterize the following farm and ranch period as a type I frontier, based on a more permanent and family-oriented agricultural economy. Nugent might be puzzled, however, in any effort to describe the local economy today.

Perhaps Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley now represent a type III frontier, centered on tourism and recreational land use. The local population must cope with large temporary populations during the winter and summer with economic lags in between. Some residents rarely visited their houses in Aspen. In 1989 absentee ownership actually caused a population decline in some parts of Aspen, despite its booming real estate market.[4] One Aspen resident remarked that house sitting during off-seasons constituted a career-track job unique to Aspen. Part time residents have boosted land values and tax rates which force permanent residents out of the valley.

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[3](Stapleton 1992)
[4]Conover, 218.

Labor problems arise as well, because employees of Aspen's huge service industry cannot afford to live near their jobs. Tourism also increases human impact on the physical environment. Historians have yet to evaluate the long-term impact of tourism on the surrounding environment, but the federal government is increasingly concerned with regulating recreational use of its Wilderness Areas. Aspen has found it necessary to prohibit passenger cars from going to the Maroon Bells during the summer in an effort to reduce pollution and environmental damage. Post-1950 Aspen and the Roaring Fork Valley represent a new and different set of relationships among its residents, the environment, and the economy.

Despite its changes, the present-day Roaring Fork Valley bears some ironic resemblances to its past farming and ranching days. Just as ties to outside cattle, cream, and potato markets helped valley families to prosper, so now do international ties to real estate buyers and tourists provide the valley with its life's blood--at the expense of the farm and ranch families who used to live there.

Transportation provided an essential link for farmers and ranchers to outside markets and cities. The Denver and Rio Grande railroad entered the Roaring Fork Valley in 1887. Until the 1950s it was the only way farmers and ranchers could get their goods to market. Without the railroad the valley economy would have become more subsistence-oriented. Farmers and ranchers began to truck their produce to market in the 1950s. The type of transportation that changed Aspen and the Valley most dramatically was the airplane. In 1956 Pitkin County took over Aspen's airport, and paved it the next year. Today a fleet of at least six Lear jets daily rest on the tarmac that covers the land Sam Stapleton's grandfather homesteaded in 1881.[5] The railroad connected farm and ranch families to markets that helped them prosper, and airplanes brought in tourists and outside money that encouraged their

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[5]W. Clark Whitehorn, interview by author, 3 November 1992. Boulder, Colorado.

decline. Transportation and urban ties facilitatied the rise of two very different economies in the Roaring Fork Valley; one can only wonder what might come next.

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TABLE 2

PITKIN COUNTY IMMIGRANTS' COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, 1890-1950

country of origin	1890	% of total	1930 parent	% total	1930	% total	1940	% total	1950	% total
Canada and Newfoundlan	428	21	49*	7	23	6	11	4	9	5
Ireland	404	20	79	12	17	4	10	4	3	2
England	351	17	61	9	32	8	19	7	6	4
Germany	236	12	71	11	31	8	20	7	7	4
Sweden	179	9	43	6	57	15	28	10	9	5
Scotland	89	4	22	3	7	2	4	1	1	1
Austria	80^	4	8	1	5	1	6	2	10	6
Italy	17	1	101	15	108	28	102	37	58	35
Yugoslavia	-	-	167	25	70	18	47	17	20	12
France†	46	2	11	2	5	1	3	1	9	5
total foreign-bor	2,209		662		391		274		165	

*1930 census takers counted who had foreign-born parents and from where those parents came. This column describes those foreign-born parents counted in 1930 and thus an older generation than those people counted in the following column.
^This figure includes immigrants from Yugoslavia, since Yugoslavia was part of the Austria-Hungary empire and only became its own country in 1918.
†Some immigrants from the Aosta valley in Italy identified themselves as French and so may be counted here. The Aosta valley borders Switzerland and France in northern Italy and people from there spoke a French rather than an Italian dialect.

Sources:

Shulze, A Century of the Colorado Census: 1890 CO Census, 614; 1930 U.S. Census, 317, 318; 1940 U.S. Census, 744; 1950 U.S. Census, 6-73.

APPENDIX

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF PITKIN COUNTY, COLORADO BY SEX, AGE, FOREIGN-BORN STATUS, AND RACE, 1885-1950

year	total pop. (% change)	male (% pop.)	female	under 21 years (%)	foreign-born (%)	people of color
1885	4484	3246 (72.4)	1188	916 (20.4)	993 (22.1)	48 Black
1890	8929 (+99.1)	5711 (64)	3218	1314 male (23)	2029 (22.7)	77 Black
1900	7020 (-21.4)					
1910	4566 (-35)				1243 (27.2)	15 Black 1 Japanese
1920	2702 (-40.7)	1434 (54)	1273	1040 (38.4)	507 (22.1)	2 Black 3 Japanese
1930	1770 (-34.6)	979 (55.3)	791	629 (35.5)	391 (22.1)	3 Black 1 Japanese 1 Indian
1940	1836 (+3.7)	1000 (54.5)	836	315 male (31.5)	274 (14.9)	5 Black
1950	1646 (-10.3)	864 (52.5)	782	524 (31.8)	165 (10.0)	3 Black

Sources:

Suzanne Schulze, A Century of the Colorado Census, revised by Robert Markham (Greeley: University of Northern Colorado, 1977): 1885 Census of Colorado, Eleventh Census of the United States, 1890, 478, 492, 757; Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920, 12, 35; Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930, 304, 309, 313; Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940, 161, 720; Seventeenth Census of the United States, 1950, 6-65, 6-70.

TABLE 3

PITKIN COUNTY FARMS AND FARM SIZE, 1890-1954

year	number of farms	acres in farms	average farm size(acres)
1890	116	21,066	182
1900	170	35,363	208
1910	191	45,286	237
1920	179	49,389	276
1925	166	51,468	310
1930	180	59,888	333
1940	169	70,018	414
1945	177	90,813	513
1950	97	52,588	542
1954	82	118,189	1,441

Sources:

Lysa Wegman-French, "The History of the Holden-Marolt Site in Aspen, Colorado: The Holden Lixiviation Works, Farming and Ranching, and the Marolt Ranch, 1879-1986," 1990, Aspen Historical Society, Aspen, Colorado, 130; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1925, part III, 212, 255; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, vol. II part 3, 251; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, vol. I part 29, 89; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1954, vol. I part 29, 162, 171.

TABLE 4

PITKIN COUNTY FARMS BY SIZE, 1920-1954

acres	1920	1925	1930	1940	1945	1950	1954
3 to 9	2	1	4	3	3	1	1
10-19	1	1	4	2 *	5 *	-	-
20-49	7	7	8	3†	5†	3†	-
50-99	22	13	15	15	20	8	5
100-174	(56)	(47)	(44)	38††	35††	18	10
175-259	25	26	23	24^	18^	9	7
260-499	44	40	37	(41)	(38)	(24)	17
500-999	19	28	33	26	26	19	15
1,000-4,999	3	3	8	17	24	15	(25)
total # farms	179	166	180	169	177	97	82

( )= most common farm size for each year
*refers to # farms between 10 and 29 acres
†refers to # farms between 30 and 49 acres
††refers to # farms between 100 and 179 acres
^refers to # farms between 180 and 259 acres

Sources:

U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1925, part III, 212; Fifteenth Census of the U.S., vol II part 3, 257; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, vol I part 29, 172; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1954, vol I part 29, 177.

TABLE 5

PRODUCTION AND VALUE OF PITKIN COUNTY CATTLE, POTATOES, AND CREAM, 1890-1954

year	cattle	dairy cows	$ value of cattle	acres of potatoes	bushels potatoes	pounds cream butterfat	$ value of cream butterfat
1890	1,724	532			23,816		
1900	5,633	1,107			40,185		
1910	5,670	878			225,934		
1920	6,611	636		921	205,478		
1925	(7,495)	(532)	201,255	1,217	188,466	45,564	
1930	6,552	754		960	196,872	69,649	29,949
1940	6,857	570	340,011	769	123,915	46,059	16,730
1945	7,882*		553,490	751	155,589	40,910	30,140
1950	(5,441)	(368)		376	52,243^	26,368	17,265
1954	(6,293)	(209)		102	20,123^	27,050	15,103

( ) These figures are Colorado Agricultural Statistics and disagree with federal census data. The Colorado Crop Reporting Service counted from 1,000 to 2,000 fewer cattle than the census takers because unlike the census takers, the crop reporting service counted cattle on January 1 of each year, after ranchers sold their cattle in the fall.
* This figure includes both cattle and dairy cows
^ Census figures for 1950 and 1954 list potato production by 100 pound bags rather than by bushels.

Sources:
Wegman-French, 130; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1925, part III, 230, 238; Fifteenth Census of the U.S.: 1930, vol II part 3, 295; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, vol I part 29, 127, 153, 160; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1954, vol I part 29, 198, 204.

TABLE 6

MECHANIZATION OF PITKIN COUNTY FARMS, 1930-1954

year	number of farms	horses	automobiles*	motor trucks*	tractors*
1930	180	1,245	120 (115=64%)	21 (21=12%)	14 (13=7%)
1940	169	1,036	150 (111=66%)	44 (43=25%)	25 (25=15%)
1945	177	973	112 (99=56%)	78 (68=38%)	50 (49=28%)
1950	97	911	85 (55=57%)	75 (60=77%)	80 (50=82%)
1954	82	451	181 (75=91%)	116 (76=93%)	148 (74=90%)

*(#farms reporting=% of farms owning at least one)

Sources:

Fifteenth Census of the U.S.: 1930, vol II part 3, 266, 305; U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, vol I part 29, 101; U.S. Census of Agriculture:1954, vol I part 29, 186.

TABLE 7

PITKIN COUNTY POTATO, HAY, OAT, AND WHEAT PRODUCTION: NUMBER OF FARMS REPORTING PRINCIPLE CROPS AND CROP VALUE, 1930-1950

	POTATOES		HAY		OATS		WHEAT	
year	#farms	$ value	#farms	$ value	#farms	$ value	#farms	$value
1925	124		161		105		61	
1930	103	78,000	76	146,300	108	31,090	65	9,440
1935		118,800		119,034		10,445		19,017
1940	78	88,416	99	119,180	79	15,167	48	13,809
1950	48	122,031	60	394,712	62	44,190	40	21,622

Sources:

U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1925, part III, 250; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Colorado Co-Operative Crop Reporting Service, and the Colorado State Board of Immigration, Agricultural Statistics: Crops and Livestock of the State of Colorado: 1930, Bulletin 88 (Denver: Bradford-Robinson Co., 1931), 11, 18; U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Colorado State Planning Commission, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1935 (Denver, n.d.), 9, 10, 16; U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Colorado State Planning Commission, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1940 (Denver, n.d.),14, 24; U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Colorado State Planning Commission, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1950 (Denver, n.d.),24, 30-32, 34, 39.

TABLE 8

PITKIN COUNTY POTATO PRODUCTION, 1900-1950

year	#farms	#farms reporting potato prod	acres potatoes	avg. yield irrigated bu./acre	production bushels	$ value of crop
1900	170				40,185	
1910	191				225,934	
1920	147†		1,118†	184	205,478	
1925	166		1,555†	210	326,040†	
1930	135†	103	650†	200	130,000	78,000†
1934		132†	585†	115	67,275	39,020
1935	206		900	220	198,000	118,800
1938	92		940	150	139,200	69,600
1940	169	78	840†	230	184,200†	88,416†
1943			930	200	184,500	245,385
1950	97	48	390†	298	116,220	122,031

†These figures disagree with those from the U.S. Census--I am not sure why.

Sources:

Wegman-French, 130; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Colorado Co-Operative Crop Reporting Service, and the Colorado State Board of Immigration, Agricultural Statistics: Crops and Livestock of the State of Colorado: 1925, Bulletin 75 (Denver: Bradford-Robinson Co., 1926), 18; USDA, Agricultural Statistics: 1930, 11, 18, 20, 23; USDA, Agricultural Statistics: 1934,15, 21, 30, 38; USDA, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1935, 18; USDA, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1938, 19, 26; USDA, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1940, 14, 24, 36, 37; USDA, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1943, 23; USDA, Colorado Agricultural Statistics: 1950, 34.