



## Routt County's Historic Mount Harris – CONSERVED



*Views of Mt. Harris then and now*

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS, Colo (September 13, 2021) – The Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust (CCALT) is excited to announce the successful conservation of the site of the former town of Mount Harris. The project was made possible through a partnership between Karen and Richard Whitney, CCALT, the Upper Yampa Habitat Partnership Program (HPP), Keep it Colorado (KIC), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).

The town of Mount Harris was once the most populous community in Routt County, with as many as 1,295 residents along the Yampa River in the canyon between Hayden and Steamboat Springs. The town was founded in 1914, when the Colorado-Utah Coal Company acquired the land for a coal mining venture and George and Byron Harris developed the town. Miners and their families from the United States, Mexico, Italy, Greece, Eastern Europe, and England worked in the three mines in the area and resided in Mount Harris. Although segregation existed, school children of every race and ethnicity attended the Mount Harris school together.

Mount Harris was the largest coal company town in Routt County. According to the *Historical Guide to Routt County*, most homes were painted white with gray trim and had spacious yards. Barns along the river were provided for families who kept milk cows, chicken, and geese. Most of the business district was comprised of a large sandstone building, which contained the mining office, a general store, drug store, pool hall, barber shop, and post office. The town boasted three churches, three boarding houses, a community center for dances and movies, and a two-story bandstand.

As the mines began to close, the town started to diminish. On May 20, 1958, the entire town of Mount Harris was dismantled and auctioned off; houses and mining equipment were sold and

moved across the region. What remained was demolished, and Mount Harris became only a memory for those who had lived there.

Today, the former town site of Mount Harris has important agricultural, wildlife, and scenic values that will be protected in perpetuity by this conservation easement. The property's 88.29 acres include open meadows, sagebrush rangeland, and a forested riparian and wetland corridor along approximately 1.3 miles of the Yampa River. The property is bordered by and highly visible from US Highway 40. The property supports modest summer grazing and beekeeping operations, as well as provides excellent big game habitat for mule deer, elk, and moose. The property is great bird habitat, sustaining critical species such as bald eagle, golden eagle, sandhill crane and Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. This section of the Yampa River is home to river otter and three species of trout -- rainbow trout, brown trout, and cutthroat trout – and is a popular float fishing corridor.

The property is adjacent to more than 17,000 acres of land conserved by CCALT and TNC and is within five miles of 56,000 acres of State and Federal land holdings. This project fits within CCALT's broader conservation goals in Routt County, where CCALT has protected nearly 70,000 acres.

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**About the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust** - [Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust](#) (CCALT) is a nonprofit land conservation organization whose mission is to "...conserve Colorado's western heritage and working landscapes for the benefit of future generations."

**About The Nature Conservancy** – TNC is a global environmental nonprofit working to create a world where people and nature can thrive. Founded at its grassroots in the United States in 1951, TNC has grown to become one of the most effective and wide-reaching environmental organizations in the world. Thanks to more than a million members and the dedicated efforts of our diverse staff and more than 400 scientists, we impact conservation in 79 countries and territories across six continents.

**About the Upper Yampa River Habitat Partnership Program** - The Upper Yampa River Habitat Partnership Program (CPW) seeks opportunities to involve landowners and various land management agencies in developing and implementing projects to help resolve game demand conflicts and promote habitat improvement.

**About Keep It Colorado** – [KIC](#) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to uniting, elevating and empowering Colorado's conservation community to protect the lands and waters that define our state.