

Gunnison County Historical Preservation Commission:

The Gunnison Country has a rich agricultural heritage. Starting with the establishment of a cow camp in the early 1870's to provide beef for the Ute Indian Agency, raising cattle and hay have been part of the foundation of the Gunnison County community from the outset. Short horned cattle brought in from New Mexico and Texas were the first stock raised in the upper Gunnison River Valley. Demand for both beef and grass hay was strong in light of the hundreds of miners populating the valley. The arrival of the railroad in 1880 opened new markets for Gunnison County's agricultural sector, which survived and thrived even after the decline of silver mining in the late 1890's.

There were early attempts to raise a variety of crops and many of the early settlers came to establish themselves as farmers. Vegetable farming had its day in our local history, as evidenced by the horse drawn plows, potato diggers, and seed planters that can be found at many local properties. Agricultural enterprises in the county ultimately turned almost exclusively to cattle and hay production.

Gunnison County cattle producers dominated the industry statewide for a number of years, firmly establishing Hereford cattle as a highly successful high-altitude breed. Sheep and horses have also been successfully ranched throughout the County. The ingenuity, toughness, and perseverance of the Gunnison County ranching community continues to this day.

The Gunnison County Historical Preservation Commission would like to honor our rich agricultural heritage with an annual award of recognition of Gunnison County's historical ranching heritage. This award will recognize our country's historic ranches, ranching families and individuals, and/or significant contributions to the ranching industry.

Please send us your nomination. Candidates could be a property that has been engaged in agricultural operations for over 100 years, even with ownership changes; a ranch that has maintained their historic structures such as barns, loafing sheds, cabins, corrals, etc.; or a person or company from the county that has developed a significant agricultural practice or piece of equipment.

We will announce the 2021 nominees and begin the review process in May as part of Archaeology and Historic Preservation Month in Colorado. Honorees will be celebrated with acknowledgement of their historic contributions in our local newspapers and a special plaque presented in July. If you would like to submit a potential nominee please email or mail your candidate information with a description and brief history to Gunnison Historic Preservation Commission HPC@gunnisoncounty.org.