

# Living History At MacGregor Ranch

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Story 1 in a 4 part series

MacGregor Ranch is a historic 2,000 acre working cattle ranch nestled on the edge of Rocky Mountain National Park. Held in a charitable trust, the Ranch welcomes kids each summer to experience the past, at the Heritage Camp.

The last MacGregor to physically work the Ranch, Muriel, passed away in 1970, but left two missions for the Ranch when she died: to educate children "of all ages" and to continue to operate as a cattle ranch. Her first mission is carried out in part at the Heritage Camp, where kids learn how to live like some of the first Estes Park settlers.

The ranch dates back to 1873, when Alexander and Clara MacGregor homesteaded the well-watered meadowlands at the mouth of the heavily forested Black Canyon, below Lumpy Ridge. Copies of the original homestead documents, signed by Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes, hang in the museum, which is open for tours

*One of the girls news story.*

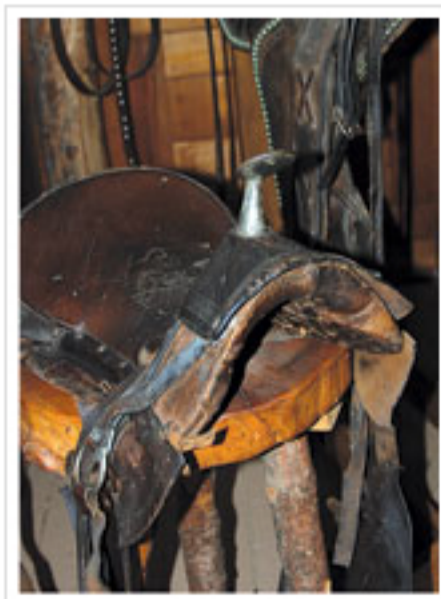
during the summer.

Alexander and Clara built and settled into the homestead cabin, now part of the A.Q. House, where some of the activities of the Heritage Camp take place. Life was challenging in the late 1800s, and kids at the camp learn how to pump water using an old fashioned hand pump, wash clothing, and pick vegetables from the garden, just like Clara had to do.

Three generations of women played a big roll in what the Ranch is today. Alexander died in 1896 of a lightning strike, and Clara continued to run the ranch, but even before he passed away, she considered the cattle to be hers. The cattle carry the "XIX" brand (pronounced "x, i, x," not 19 as many believe). While at the camp, kids make a leather "poke" pouch, and then brand it with the XIX brand.

Only one of their three children, Donald, stayed on at the Ranch. He married Maude and they moved permanently to the Ranch in 1910, enlarging it and making it prosper. Maude was an excellent seamstress and cook, and her skills are a big inspiration for Heritage Camp. Kids learn to cook a meal on a wood burning stove, bake a pie from scratch, churn butter and make homemade ice cream.

Donald and Maude's daughter, Muriel, never married, and the Ranch was an integral part of Muriel's life. She was highly educated, with three college degrees, including a law degree from the University of Denver. One of the first women to earn a law degree (1936), her specialty was water rights, which was an issue over the years at the Ranch.



As a single woman, she continued to operate the Ranch and did everything in her power to make sure it carried on. When her cows got into the neighbors properties, she would get them herself, often putting calves into the backseat of her car and leading the herd back to the Ranch.

During Heritage Camp, kids take a wagon ride, learn to lasso, make jerky, gather eggs, make homemade jam, and milk a "cow." Just like Muriel used to do.

Muriel wanted the place shared, but preserved, and the camp is a living legacy to the MacGregors. Four Heritage Camp sessions are available for kids who just completed 3rd or 4th grade. Call MacGregor Ranch at 586-3749, or visit [www.macgregorranch.com](http://www.macgregorranch.com) to sign up for Heritage Camp.

*Muriel's saddle.*

For more MacGregor history, pick up James Pickerings, "The MacGregors of Black Canyon: An American Story" or "Facing the Frontier: The Story of MacGregor Ranch" by Betty Freudenberg. Both are available at MacGregor Ranch.