

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: PUT THAT BARN TO WORK!
CAN THE HERITAGE BARNES OF ROUTT COUNTY
EMBRACE CHANGE?

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This thesis focuses on the heritage barns of Routt County, in northwestern Colorado. How do changes in agricultural operations, local economy, land use, and demographics influence Routt County's heritage barns?" Can the heritage barns of Routt County embrace change? My goal is to put that barn to work.

I suggest barns act as an indicator species that reflects the vitality of the area's agricultural operations. A description of the county's geography, agricultural history, and typology of its heritage barns launches the research. I then discuss and evaluate quantitative and qualitative factors that influence barn preservation in Routt County in detail. Quantitative factors include the local economy, land use, and demographics. Qualitative factors are evident in community visioning and planning efforts. Routt

County residents and visitors in 2010 value barns for reasons hardly imagined by the people who built them decades ago. A review of community plans and surveys from 1984 through 2009 validates this finding.

Interviews with owners and operators of nineteen barns throughout Routt County reveal how heritage barns function in 2010. My investigation of online information and reference publications results in a selection of national, state, and local programs applicable to Routt County barns. An analysis of how to evaluate two contrasting Routt County barns in need of preservation illustrates my findings.

My thesis research concludes that when key factors are in place, heritage barns can embrace change. It prompts readers to build upon this body of knowledge and to launch their own efforts to "put that barn to work!"