



# The Aspen Archives: Shepherd Testimonies from the Colorado High Country (1925-present)

University of Denver

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Image: RJ Sangosti

## Project Background / Objective

Tree carvings, known as **arborglyphs** created by Quechuan and Peruvian shepherders can be found dispersed among the aspen groves of North Routt County, Colorado. A citizen scientist, Mark Chapman, formerly of Steamboat Springs donated his documentation and photos of some approximate locations of glyphs. Dr. Alison Krögel, an Associate Professor at DU, has extensive knowledge of Quechua and Peruvian shepherd labor in the U.S., and was interested in adding a spatial component to her research about the history of this industry in the western US.

This project will supplement anthropological research about the shepherders in this area as well as provide spatial data for locating and marking these trees for historical and cultural preservation.

## Geographic Information Science Component

In order to complete the GIS portion of the project, I designed a geodatabase where information about each glyph would be stored. Part of the spatial data for this project exists as a **point layer**, which was derived from coordinate information on digital photos taken by Dr. Krögel.

The other dataset exists as a **polygon layer** that represents approximate areas where Mark Chapman had found glyphs in Routt County. He submitted physical USGS topographic maps which he annotated, seen in the image to the left.

Both datasets store information about category, artist, date, place of origin, and message.

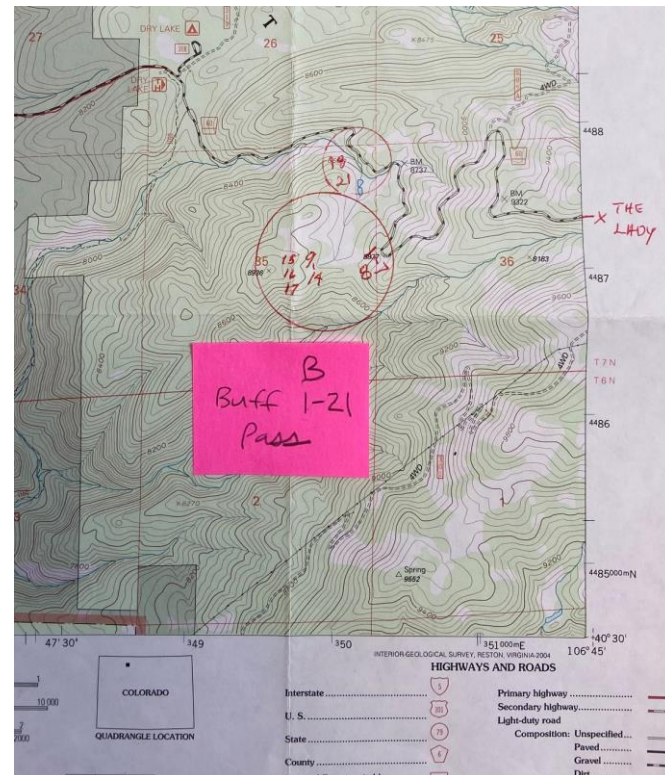


Image: Mark Chapman

## Deliverables

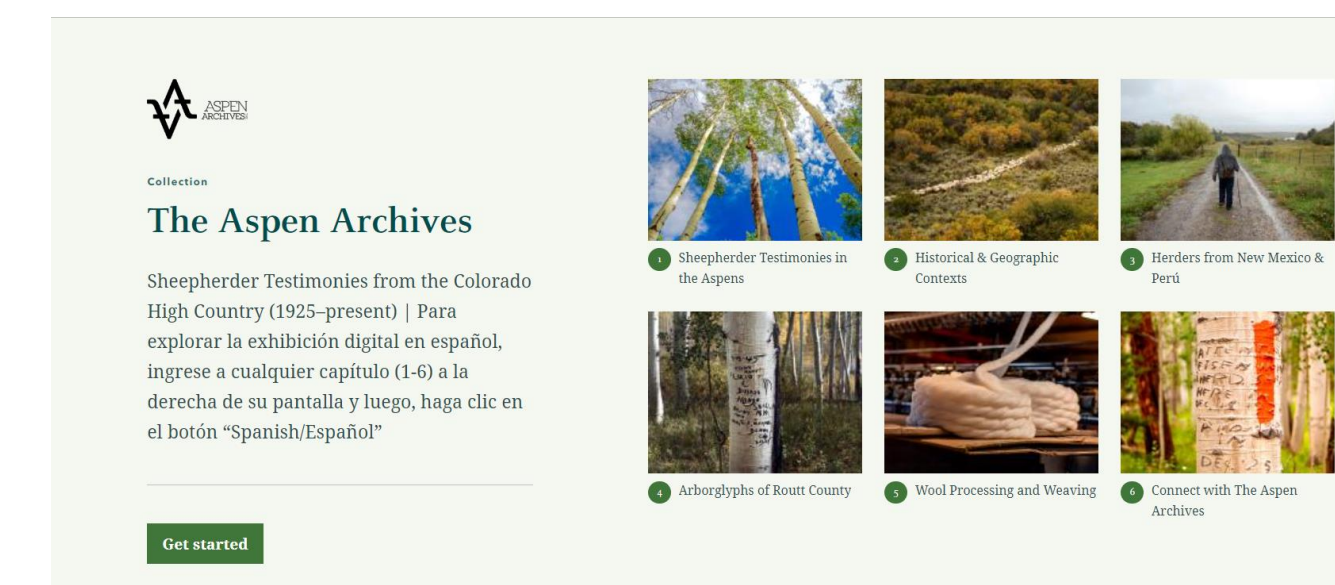
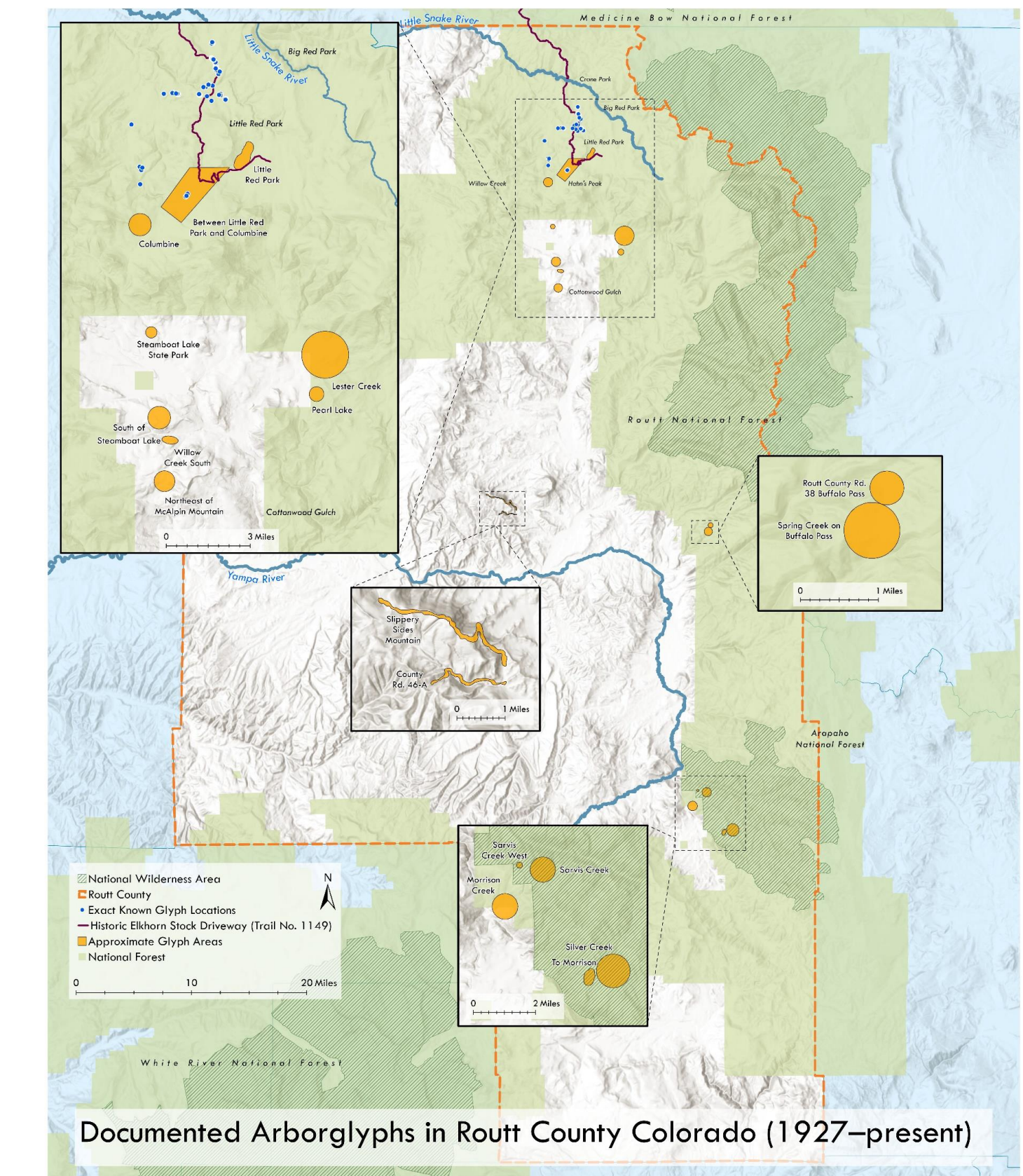
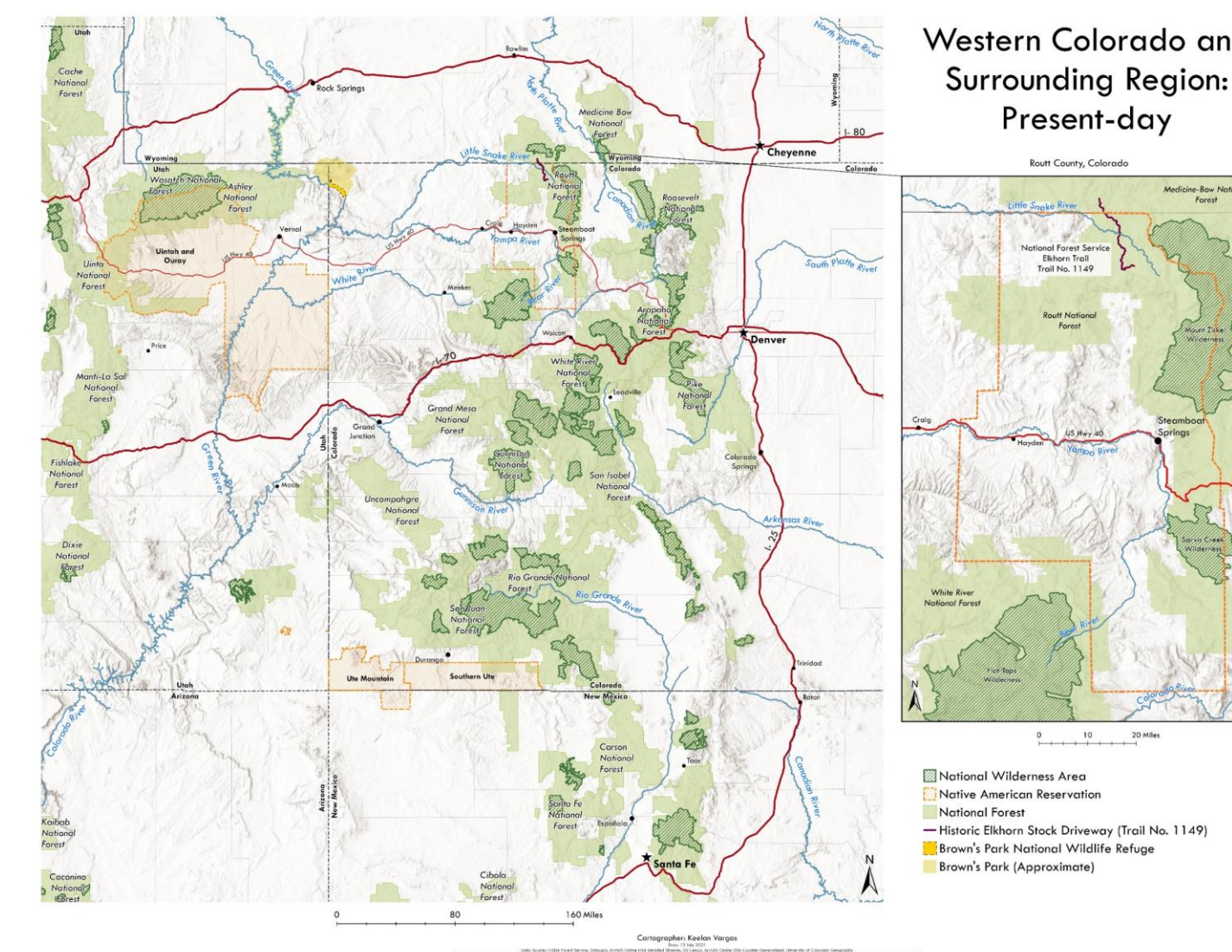
- Printed maps for future exhibits (examples to the right)
- Web app for exploring arborglyph locations (*QR code, bottom left*) that can be used for artifact preservation with options to filter by artist, country of origin, category, and other attributes
- Esri Story Map Collection - The Aspen Archives (Bilingual - English/Spanish)  
Includes six Story Maps exploring the historical, geographic, and cultural contexts of sheepherding in Colorado (*QR code, bottom right*)

## Future

Future work on this project includes a possible field collection app for citizen scientists to help document arborglyph locations throughout northwest Colorado.

## Future Exhibits

- The Davis Gallery, The University of Denver, Shwayder Art Building, September 26-October 20, 2022
- Tread of Pioneers Museum, Steamboat Springs, Colorado, December 2, 2022-TBD 2023
- Huancayo Perú, Community Cultural Center, dates TBD 2023



*"Deep in the Colorado high country, upon ephemeral canvases, lies a rich archive of personal, local, regional, and international histories engraved upon the delicate bark of thousands of aspen trees."*

*These stories have been left behind by generations of workers whose lives and labor mostly go unnoticed, as they are employed in an industry which today, many in the US don't even know still exists, and in remote regions of western states which are inaccessible to many.*

*Beginning in the late nineteenth century, sheepherders began to mark their passage through the Colorado landscape by inscribing words and images upon the trunks of high country aspens—arborglyph chronicles of loneliness and longing, but also poignant affirmations of friendship and celebrations of personal, regional, and national pride."*



Image: Mark Chapman



Image: RJ Sangosti



Image: Mark Chapman



Image: Mark Chapman



Web Application to view arborglyph locations in Routt County

I would like to thank my research advisor Dr. Alison Krögel for the opportunity to not only build on technical GIS skills, but be a part of a truly impactful and interdisciplinary project that is set in that area I grew up. She has been an incredible mentor and person to work with. In addition, I'd like to thank Mark Chapman for donating beautiful photographs of arborglyphs as well as RJ Sangosti for letting us include photos from his 'Moving Wool' portfolio.

## Acknowledgments

Digital Exhibit (Story Map Collection)

