



**A, & C. MAD CREEK BARN, Mad Creek Ranger Station
Routt National Forest; trailhead off County Road 129,
North of Steamboat Springs**

The Mad Creek Barn is a two-story, pioneer-style, side-gabled log and frame construction with hog trough corners, built circa 1905 by James (Harry) Ratliff, who purchased the property in 1904 and began homesteading it. He cut the logs from land adjacent to his property, which, in 1905 became part of the Routt National Forest. When Ratliff was told that he needed to obtain a permit to harvest trees from public land, he protested vehemently. Several influential area ranchers were also skeptical about the newly-established National Forest Service and the federal government's intentions for previously open range so recommended that Harry be appointed Forest Guard since he had opposed the permit requirement and presumably would support the ranchers' interests. Harry was appointed in 1906. After he had studied the purpose of the Forest Service, he supported the conservation of federal lands and made significant changes in the regulations: he limited the number of cattle that could be grazed on federal lands; he ended the cattle-sheep feuds to allow sheep to come into Colorado from Wyoming (1909), and he regulated the amount of timber that could be cut. He was also instrumental in the construction of the Hahn's Peak Fire Lookout (See above.)

Although he gained the trust and cooperation of many ranchers, throughout his tenure with the Forest Service, Harry had several legal confrontations with staunch dissenters and eventually lost his homestead and livestock to pay legal expenses. He left the Forest Service in 1914 and moved to Utah. The Ratliff property was privately owned until 1979, when the Forest Service purchased the in-holding. A significant federal, State, and community restoration of the barn occurred in 2000.