Rourke Ranch, Colorado

April 26 - May 1, 2016

**Project Partner:** Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands

**Scope of Work:**

Under the supervision and leadership of HistoriCorps’ field staff, volunteers learned new skills by completing tasks including:

- Repaired blown off roofing on the storage building
- Plastered the interior of the barn
- Addressed erosion at the base of the barn
- Improved drainage on the north side of the barn including:
  - Modified the gutter system
  - Regraded to facilitate drainage

**History:**

The 1870s saw much settlement in Picketwire Canyon, Colorado. In 1871, Eugene and Mary Rourke homesteaded 40 acres on the banks of the Purgatory River; so began Rourke Ranch. The cattle and horse ranch grew through three generations of Rourkes to over 50,000 acres before being sold out of the family 100 years later in 1971. In its day, Rourke Ranch was one of the most successful ranches in Colorado. The quality workmanship and architecture of its adobe buildings can still be seen and has earned Rourke Ranch a place on the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Rourke Ranch is preserved by the Comanche National Grassland as a testament to the hardy pioneers that helped settle the west and is well worth the time to visit.

A first time visitor to the Comanche National Grassland is usually surprised to find such a varied landscape from rolling short grass prairies to rugged canyons rimmed by pinion-juniper forests. It encompasses a fascinating landscape that reveals the history of the region in its exposed rock layers of prehistoric sea beds and ancient lakeshores riddled with dinosaur tracks. Cultural sites in the grasslands represent a diverse history spanning thousands of years. These vast expanses and hidden canyons were once the home to Native Americans who left their messages in the form of petroglyphs and pictographs on the cliff faces and rock overhangs throughout the region. Early traders passed through the area on the Santa Fe Trail, the canyons protect the rock walls of old stage stops from the days before the railroad, and ruins of early homesteads and ranches remain to remind us of life in another era.

**Project Location:**

Located within Comanche National Grassland in Colorado.
Click here to view a map and directions.

**Nearest Town:**
La Junta, Colorado

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