Sylvan Lake Schoolhouse, CO
October 9-21, 2018

PROJECT SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY:

Eagle County, Colorado is rich in history and scenery. Nestled in White River National Forest, Sylvan Lake State Park is home to a historic one-room schoolhouse that served its rural community from 1915 to 1941. Our project partner shares,

“The schoolhouse gave homesteaders a sense of identity and permanence in a place of untamed wilderness. It also conveys the importance of universal education. Today, many of us in the U.S. take education for granted. However, hundred years ago, education was a privilege that many rural communities could not afford. The historic structure itself shows the community’s dedication to each other and their children’s education.”

Formally called Upper Brush Creek School, this building has earned its place on both the National and Colorado Register of Historic Places. The school features a lovely gabled roof with overhanging eaves, as well as a covered porch. The school has stood the test of time and climate in this high-altitude mountain environment.

History buffs can read an in-depth background in the School House Summary.

The area around Sylvan Lake State Park is presently more often associated with world-class skiing, fishing, and hiking opportunities. But in the early and mid-1900s, families here managed not ski resorts and backcountry tour operations, but ranches and gardens. Books and interviews with people who grew up in the area during this era share their memories in books and other transcripts, as reported in the Aspen Times and Vail Daily. Hildur Hoaglund Anderson, who attended a similar school in the 1920s, recounted,

“School started at 9 a.m. If it were real cold outdoors, we could come into the school to stay by the fire and warm up before school started. We would play games and even use the blackboards. In winter, we used the hill for sliding, and the yard Fence for ‘fence walking.’ … Often times we fell off the fence, or were pushed off, but no one ever got hurt because of the depth of the snow.” (Aspen Times)
History lovers can also read an e-book about the history of Eagle here.

From Colorado Parks & Wildlife:

“Sylvan means a peaceful, wooded place and that’s what visitors will find at this beautiful park surrounded by the White River National Forest. Stunning mountain scenery, abundant recreation, wildlife to watch and top-notch fishing and hiking provide year-round diversion. Anglers can try for rainbow, cutthroat, brook and brown trout in the lake and creeks. Hikers will find more than seven miles of state park trails and easy access to the national forest. Picnickers can stake their claim to a spot along the shoreline. Canoeists, kayakers, paddle and electric motor boaters enjoy the 42 acre lake.”

Volunteers helped HistoriCorps restore a special part of this stunning area’s history this fall, and explored the grandiose landscapes that most can only dream of experiencing in their lifetimes.

SCOPE OF WORK: Volunteers developed their preservation skills by working with expert field staff to preserve the historic schoolhouse. For this project we focused our efforts on repairing the deteriorated roof. Volunteers learned to:

1) Jack and stabilize the front entryway 10%
2) Remove and replace deteriorated roof decking 40%
3) Remove and replace deteriorated cedar shingles 50%

WHERE: Volunteers camped and worked at Sylvan Lake State Park, between the famous Colorado mountain towns of Vail and Aspen.

LOCAL AND AREA TOURISM: This region has everything one looks for: active small mountain towns, art, dining, outdoor recreation, peaceful evenings under star-filled skies, and lakeside lounging. Visit SylvanLake State Park’s website, as well as VisitVailValley.com for after-work activities.