

KNAPP K RANCH

Living Beneath the Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch

Fact Sheet

Property: Knapp Ranch is located in the Vail Valley of Eagle County, near Edwards, Colorado. The property is situated

at approximately 9,000 feet above sea level in the Sawatch Range of the Colorado Rocky Mountains.

Owners: Betsy and Bud Knapp, the former publishers of *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit* magazines

Author: Sarah Chase Shaw, Landscape Architect; Aspen, Colorado

Photographer: Todd Winslow Pierce; Vail, Colorado

Forward: Kim Langmaid, Walking Mountains Science Center; Avon, Colorado

Landscape Architect: Rick Lamb, ASLA; Cambridge, Massachusetts

Architect: Gordon Pierce, AIA; Alamo, California

Builder: George Shaeffer, Shaeffer Hyde Construction; Avon, Colorado

Master Craftsman: Rudi Neumayr, Aren Design; Vail, Colorado

Interior Designer: Kari Foster, Associates III Interior Design; Denver, Colorado

Details of note:

- The property that is now Knapp Ranch was once designated to be the site of an Olympic Village, but Colorado declined to host the 1970 Olympics and the project fell through.
- The property is the habitat of a diverse animal population that includes mountain lion, mule deer, elk (wapiti), moose, bear, beaver, fox, coyote and a host of birds, including grouse, owls and eagles.
- The area where the lake now sits was once a grassy, moist meadow. At 3.5 surface acres, the lake's size was determined by the Knapp's water right allotment. Except for irrigation and fire protection, most of the lake's water is returned to Lake Creek.
- As part of stream restoration, invasive plant species were removed and replaced with indigenous plants. The lake is also now a productive fishery that includes four species of trout.
- There are five structures on Knapp Ranch, four cabins—Silver Sal, Anglers, MacPherson and Marmot Guest Lodge—as well as the Main Lodge. The structures are influenced by a style of architecture known as Parkitecture, developed in the early and mid-20th century by the National Park Service.
- Master craftsmen designed and built everything from ironwork hinges and lighting to cabinets and masonry. The cabins were constructed in a staging area, disassembled and then reassembled on site to preserve the natural surroundings. All the cabins have sod roofs, a practical and eco-friendly roofing material.
- Crops grown at the Farm at Knapp Ranch include: microgreens, many varieties of lettuce, squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, garlic, beets, onions, carrots, parsnips, turnips, leeks and potatoes. Additionally, the ranch produces native

wildflower honey which it sells, along with the produce, at local farmers' markets and to restaurants. Knapp Ranch is an example of world-class production in small-scale agriculture at 9,000 feet.

- Land stewardship is a priority and practices include organic farming practices, water conservation, climate change data collection and water quality monitoring in collaboration with the US Forest Service and the Wellesley College Botanic Gardens SEED program.
- The Knapps worked with forest management experts to create a plan to reclaim the Douglas Fir forest decimated by pine beetle. Craftspeople use the on-site sawmill to create furniture and other products from the dead wood.
- Knapp Ranch embraces old-world methods and 21st century technology. Operations and research focus on land management technologies related to organic food practices, high altitude ecosystems and water conservation, long-term climate change, best land use practices, environmental education and architectural history and design.

Book details:

Living Beneath the Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch is an 11 x 13-inch hardback book with 288 pages and 200 photographs, drawings, maps, historical pictures and index. Retail price \$70. ISBN 978-1-4236-5096-6. It is published by The Knapp Press and distributed by Gibbs Smith, Publisher. Available for sale beginning Sept. 11, online at [Gibbs Smith](#), www.KnappRanch.com, [Amazon](#) and at independent bookstores and at other quality retail outlets at independent bookstores and other quality retail outlets.

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Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch

Stock Copy

50 words

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks, The Story of Knapp Ranch details the journey of Betsy and Bud Knapp—the powerhouse publishing couple behind *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit* magazines—and their process of caring for the environment through land management, architectural design, scientific contributions and place-based learning in the Colorado Rockies.

100 words

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks, The Story of Knapp Ranch details the true story of Betsy and Bud Knapp—the powerhouse publishing couple behind *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appetit* magazines—as they fell in love with a parcel of open land located at 9,000 feet in the Colorado Rocky Mountains. The book chronicles the extraordinary process the Knapps undertook to methodically study their land. Guided by concepts of simplicity, quality and responsible use they built not only a home, but a sustainable working ranch, a model for land management and conservation practices, a research hub for horticulture and climate science and a center for educational studies.

300 words

Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch details the journey of one couple's pursuit of a dream to live in a remote valley in the Rocky Mountains. It's the story of discovery, observation, fulfillment and self-sufficiency, and the many lessons learned throughout the process. In the 1990s, Betsy and Bud Knapp, the original owners of *Architectural Digest* and *Bon Appétit* magazines, left the competitive, fast-paced world of publishing to pursue a lifelong dream. Settling in a valley near Vail, Colorado, the Knapps began the process of designing and crafting a casual mountain retreat to share with family, friends and ultimately to be used as an educational center for multi-disciplinary groups.

Readers will learn how the Knapps methodically studied their land, and learned from architects and designers, local builders and craftsmen, landscape architects, ecologists and water managers about how to best live in a remote mountain valley at 9,000 feet. Delving into the geologic and cultural history of the region and its influence on the architecture and interior design of the magnificent complex of buildings, the book covers a range of subjects that will be helpful to readers. Twenty-five years in the making, Knapp Ranch is now a thriving working farm using sustainable practices; it is an exemplar for land management and water conservation, an inspiration for architectural design and traditional craftsmanship, a contributor to climate science studies, a lab for horticultural experimentation, a US Forest Service partner, an educational center for environmental studies of all kinds and it continues to evolve. Encouraged by friends and professionals to document their story and share both their journey and knowledge with others, the result is *Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch*.

Writer Sarah Chase Shaw, a landscape architect, lives in the Roaring Fork Valley; Todd Pierce Winslow, a professional landscape photographer, is based in Vail, Colorado.

Feature Story Ideas for *Living Beneath the Peaks: The Story of Knapp Ranch*

Angle: The farm-to-table trend

The farm-to-table movement is all about eating fresh, locally-grown food that supports local economies while limiting the carbon footprint of a meal. It promotes healthy eating and a sense of community. More and more Americans are recognizing the health risks of the Standard American Diet (SAD) and are looking for opportunities to make meaningful changes. In order to grow better-tasting food, the Farm at Knapp Ranch starts with organic seeds and employs organic food production practices, judicious water management and high-altitude experimentation. Not long ago, the Knapps invited chefs from around the Vail area to visit the farm and taste the produce for themselves—and they were impressed! The Ranch currently supplies 40-plus restaurants in the Vail Valley with a variety of vegetables. The most popular are salad greens and microgreen varieties.

Angle: Successful farming at high altitudes

As if farming wasn't hard enough! Growing at high altitude is a challenge that faces anyone living over 5,000 feet and that includes many locations throughout Colorado and the Western U.S. A colder climate, shorter growing season, unpredictable weather and resident wildlife are just a few problems high-altitude growers must overcome. Knapp Ranch is situated at 9,000 feet above sea level, high in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, and its owners learned through patience and experimentation what will grow and what won't. The Knapps share their challenges, successes and tips for growing at elevation.

Angle: Beekeeping

Beekeeping is a huge trend and hobby; with worldwide honeybee populations falling, it's an important one too. The decline of the honeybee is well known—contributing factors include habitat loss, climate change and pesticides. With its organic farming practices, an orchard setting for the hives and an abundance of native and kitchen garden plants, the Knapp Ranch honeybees have ample opportunity to thrive in an unlikely setting. Learn why beekeeper Carmen Weiland, selected special honeybees that are hardy at high elevation, and how to feed, overwinter and protect the hard-working insects, and how Knapp Ranch harvests and packages the high-quality raw wildflower honey for gifts and for sale.

Angle: The land: making it better through sustainable practices

Purchasing a glorious piece of land is a privilege—whether that's one with expansive acreage like the Knapp Ranch, a lot with view you want to maximize or a property with a water feature like a lake or stream that needs attention. How do you develop your site responsibly and in good faith with Mother Nature? The Knapps answered that question simply: “don't mess it up.” This down-to-earth motto became a guiding principle for them. It informed every decision, from building site selection, restoring water use rights, stream restoration and riparian habitat rehabilitation, to forest conservation and more. The Knapps show readers that careful attention to detail can create not only a beautiful home for family and friends, but it can also qualitatively improve the natural habitat for plants and animals, as well as leave a lasting legacy for future generations.

Angle: Why craftsmanship matters

Craftsmanship is experience shaped by skilled hands. William Morris, founder of the Art & Crafts Movement, believed people should be surrounded by well-made beautiful things; he urged the use of nature as an inspiration and valued simplicity, utility and beauty. Knapp Ranch architect Gordon Pierce said, “The Knapp residence will always represent for me the idea that nature is—and should be—the primary consideration in any project.” The level of craftsmanship and commitment to authenticity is evident anywhere the eye lands at Knapp Ranch. You see it in the built environment from stacked stone foundations to lush sod roofs; in the lavish woodworking and ironwork details; interiors decorated simply, yet beautifully. No detail is overlooked or too small—repurposed door handles and handmade wooden hinges are just two examples. *Living Beneath the Colorado Peaks* revisits and revives the human craving for things made well and made by hand.

Angle: Leaving a legacy for the future through stewardship, sustainability and education

The benefits of caring for the land will outlast our individual lifetimes. “Understanding how our actions as humans impact the world is one of the central obligations of responsible land management,” Bud Knapp, ranch owner, said. Learn how he and his wife Betsy discovered tangible methods of making the world a better place from their backyard by building climate monitoring stations, using sustainable methods of food production, collaborating with experts in academia to further biodiversity research and by creating a center for multi-disciplinary environmental education to pass along their knowledge. As the world becomes more populated and urban, the importance of caring for open spaces is more important than ever.