



**WOMEN IN RANCHING Compiled by Christie Kienast with information from Anne Gilbert's report and from "A History of Capitol and Snowmass Creeks" by Charles Hart, longtime Capitol Creek rancher. (1993) (From <http://www.heritageaspen.org/womrnch.html>)**

Katherine Jensen Lindvig, or Kate Lindvig, also known as the Cattle Queen of Snowmass, was the most famous woman rancher in The Roaring Fork Valley. Born in 1865, in Jutland, Denmark, she came to America in 1889 when she was 25 years old. She came to marry a farmer in Nebraska, but when she saw the farmer and life on the plains, she decided to journey on to Colorado. She arrived in Aspen in 1891 and was hired as a cook in one of the better homes in town. After saving some money, she opened her own boardinghouse on East Hopkins, where she made up to 400 bag lunches a day for the miners. In 1896, she received a homestead in the upper Snowmass Creek valley in payment for a board bill and from then on she was in business. Her ranch was called the Snowmass Falls Ranch. She also acquired the neighboring J.M. Tandy place in 1898 and the CM. Pennell ranch in 1915. The three parcels made up a total of 640 acres.

She had three old men who helped her out on the ranch. They were given room and board in return for their work. Lindvig had a forest service permit to graze 80 head of Hereford cattle, but rather than shipping them to market, she had two head butchered each week and sold the meat in town. She also sold butter and eggs in town, taking her goods in on a sled or wagon. In 1925, she expanded her business to include guest cabins, which she rented to fishermen and she offered horses to ride as well as meals. Kate Lindvig remained single despite marriage proposals.

In the 1920's, she leased her place to her niece, Mette Watt, and went to live with her nephew, Jens Christiansen, her sister, Sophia's son. Sophia and her husband, Mads Christiansen had arrived from Denmark in May of 1914. In 1943, Kate sold her ranch to D.R.C. Brown. She moved to San Diego in 1946 and died there in 1957, at the age of 92.

Women on ranches did a lot of work. They saw themselves as partaking in a joint venture with their husbands, and they contributed a significant amount of labor both inside the house and out. Gender roles were relatively flexible in that women worked outside them when necessary, but men rarely ventured into the female realm of chores. Ranch women took charge of the house. They cooked and cleaned and cared for children, which made for a lot of work when modern conveniences had yet to appear. Being in charge of food also meant tending a garden and making butter. Agnes Jurich McLaren described the daily life of her mother as getting up early and baking bread, washing clothes, gardening, cooking, and caring for the kids Bernice Vagneur Morrison described her mother as doing all those jobs, plus cooking for the hired men, making cheese, sewing everyone's clothes, canning meat, fruit, and vegetables, raising chickens for eggs and to fry in the summer, and even lending a hand on the ranch if necessary.

Hildur Anderson's mother used all her extra cream for butter, which she sold in Aspen. Making butter was not an easy task. After milking the cows, ranch women separated the cream from the milk with a separator. Mrs. Hoaglund churned her cream to butter on Thursdays and Fridays, making 40 pounds of butter at a time. Then she separated the butter from the buttermilk, and worked and washed the butter over and over again until all of the buttermilk was out. She put some salt in for flavor, pounded it into forms, and finally wrapped each form in paper. The family delivered the butter and eggs to Aspen on Saturdays. That took two to three hours, and then the Hoaglunds bought their groceries and drove the hour and a half it took to get home. This trip was difficult under the best circumstances, and especially tough in the winter. These ranch women joined the ranks of businesswomen when they sold their dairy products and produce, and they contributed to the family economy on a regular basis.

Washing clothes was a complicated and labor-intensive chore for ranch women before there were washing machines. Hildur Anderson's mother washed on Mondays, and it was a many-step process. First she carried in wood and got a fire going in the cook stove, then she carried water in to fill the boiler on the stove, and set up tubs for washing. She washed all the clothes on a washboard and then rinsed them, and she boiled the white clothes on the stove. After all that, the clothes went on the line. In the winter they froze instantly and had to be left for a couple of days before bringing them into the house—the sun and wind did dry them a little. When the clothes were dry, women ironed them all, because wash-and-wear fabrics had yet to appear. This meant heating up the stove again, because the only way to heat up the iron was to put it on the stove. Mrs. Hoaglund used from three to five irons so one would always be ready and hot. Washing clothes was, understandably, a chore to which few women looked forward. Because ranch women had to haul water farther, washing clothes was a little more difficult on a ranch than in town.

Ranch women also had jobs outside the house. These jobs usually related to food in some way. Arthur Trentaz's mother milked the cows, tended a big garden, and raised chickens. Ranch women almost always tended a big garden to feed their family, and they canned whatever was left for the winter. Women also usually raised chickens, both for their eggs and for frying in the summer. Some even raised geese, ducks, or turkeys. Even if the women did not milk the cows, they were always in charge of making butter from the cream.

These different food sources provided ranch families with fresh produce, dairy products, and eggs. Women also coped with the surplus. Some women like Mrs. Hoaglund sold eggs in town to rid themselves of extra and to make a little money, but those living farther from town seemed to keep their eggs for family use. The most common products ranch women sold were cream and butter. Agnes Jurich McLaren's mother sold cream to the local creamery for her "chicken money." Chicken money paid for baby chickens that ranch women annually raised over the summer and used for fryers. Many ranch women sold their cream. They would put their cream in five or ten gallon jars and then put the jars on the train headed down valley. The return train brought their empty jars and a check for each woman.

These jobs take on added significance when one realizes that cooking meant considerably more than it means today—it meant gardening, butchering, using a wood stove, and doing dishes by hand three times a day. Making cheese was also hard work. Grandmother Vagneur taught Bernice's mother how to make hard cheese the way they did in Italy. It involved adding a rennet tablet to warm milk which became curd, and then straining it and pressing it and then storing the cheese in a cool place. Ranch women also had to can all the fruit, vegetables, and meat they wanted to store, since they had no access to refrigeration. Amelia Trentaz learned how to can beef and chicken from her mother. Some families cured their own ham and beef as well.

Ranch women also contributed to the family economy by working on the ranch itself. Sam Stapleton's mother lived at their sheep camp—where the divide parking lot is—and cooked for the help at the ranch from June to September. Hildur Anderson usually helped drive the cattle farther up the summer range. Burnt Mountain and Sam's Knob were as familiar to her then as they are to skiers now. Elizabeth Oblock Sinclair irrigated part of their ranch in addition to working at the house and selling her cream, and she also drove a tractor. She raked hay so the men could bale it, and she also drove the tractor when they baled so they could stack the bales on her sled. Elizabeth Sinclair did all this despite the fact that she hated tractors and haying.

While ranch women primarily worked in and around the house, their job of feeding the family led them to the garden, the hen house, and even to Aspen, where women sold their surplus. Women also worked in the fields—sometimes regularly. Ranch women worked outside Victorian gender roles because they accomplished such a variety of tasks. They did not break away from traditional roles completely however, because men still labored primarily in the fields, and women's labor still centered on domestic tasks like feeding and caring for their family.