

Crail Ranch joins ‘Art on the Streets’ project

By Anne Marie Mistretta
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Frank Crail stands in the doorway of his homestead ranch cabin, frozen in time in a photograph, circa 1910. But this door does not open to his parlor, as it has for a century; he is 150 yards away, on the side of a utility box on Little Coyote Road.

“What is a utility box?” he might ask, given that ranchers here depended on generators until the late 1940s, when the Rural Electrification Administration brought commercial electricity through the Gallatin Canyon.

The large utility box outside of the Big Sky Chapel was wrapped with Crail Family photos on Sept. 16. It’s the most recent wrap in the Big Sky area, where a group has been covering utility boxes and bear proof trashcans since 2015.

The “Art on the Streets” effort is the brainchild of Lone Peak High School senior and artist Dasha Bough. She initiated this community service project after meeting Chance Remien of Bozeman’s The Wrap Agency three years ago, while working on a visual art exhibit at the Warren Miller Performing Arts Center.



Lone Peak High School senior Dasha Bough poses with one of the Big Sky utility boxes wrapped with artwork as part of the “Art on the Streets” effort she spearheaded. PHOTO BY JILL BOUGH

“I realized that when I graduate [high school], I will be leaving this wonderful community,” Bough said. “I wanted to leave something behind that is positive ... to celebrate local artists and instill community pride in the quality of art, not to mention rich history, that we have here.”

By 2015, Bough connected with a number of people and organizations who could help her make this happen, including the Arts Council of Big Sky’s Brian Hurbut; Ryan Hamilton with Big Sky Town Center; Jessie Wiese, the former executive director of Big Sky Community Organization; and Kitty Clemens, the former executive director of the Big Sky Chamber of Commerce. I was involved representing the Historic Crail Ranch Homestead Museum.



After calls for artwork and vintage photos, judged by the group, materials were selected for the utility boxes and bear proof cans around Big Sky. “At some point in the process, the unsightly green boxes became just a new supply of canvases to cover,” Bough said.

Bough and the committee successfully convinced a number of local organizations to fund the project: Rotary Club of Big Sky, the Simkins family/Town Center, the Yellowstone Club Community Foundation, and the Big Sky Resort Area District tax, through an arts council application.

The latest wrap covers the utility box outside of the chapel, showing members of the Crail family standing proudly on land once included in their 960-acre ranch. Another vintage photo collage featuring ranching landscapes is on the drawing board for the utility box near the tennis courts on Little Coyote Road.

Look for other wraps to materialize in Big Sky while the good weather lasts.

Anne Marie Mistretta is the chair of the Historic Crail Ranch Conservators who operate the Crail Ranch Homestead Museum on Spotted Elk Road in Big Sky.