

## Staunton State Park Timeline

Years	Category	Sections	Comments
1.7 billion years ago	<b>Geological History (1)</b>	<b><i>Oceans and volcanoes</i></b>	+Giant crustal plates were moving. A deep ocean basin formed between continental plates in Western Colorado and Wyoming. The abyss was filled with sediments and volcanic rock. The volcanic rocks were later buried and heated to intense temperatures forming gneiss and schist.
1.0-1.4 billion years ago		<b><i>Igneous intrusion / uplift</i></b>	+Regional igneous activity occurred in west central Colorado. Several episodes occurred resulting in the Pikes Peak granite emplacement miles under the surface of Staunton State Park.
780 million years ago		<b><i>Intense global warming</i></b>	+A period of intense global warming and abrupt worldwide melting of glaciers. The mountains of Staunton State Park slowly eroded into a broad highland. The highland, during a rise in sea level, was covered by ancient oceans periodically, and marine sediment was deposited over the Staunton State Park area.
300 million years ago		<b><i>Ancestral Rockies (uplift and erosion)</i></b>	+The ancestral Front Range and Rocky Mountains raised high during east-west compression, then immediately began eroding and shedding sediments to the east into the Denver Basin area. Over the next million years, the land at Staunton park was once more leveled to a broad gentle highland.
50-70 million years ago		<b><i>Laramie orogeny-Armageddon</i></b>	+Renewed east-west compression. The Rocky Mountains, including the Front Range and Staunton State Park rock formations were formed. Widespread igneous activity and volcanoes spread vast quantities of ash into the atmosphere causing the temperature to drop, resulting in the extinction of dinosaurs. <i>("Some scientists theorize that the extinction of the non-avian dinosaurs was caused by one or more asteroid impacts. Several impact craters have been located and age-dated to be in the 66 million time range. This catastrophic event may have knocked the earth slightly off its rotation, resulting in cracking and movement of crustal plates and increased volcanic activity worldwide. The volcanic eruptions filled the air with smoke and ash and blocked the sun from warming the surface. A period of global cooling resulted and the cold-blooded dinosaurs were doomed to extinction.")</i> (1a)
25 million years ago		<b><i>Block Faulting</i></b>	+Due to the relaxation of crustal forces, the gently rolling surface of Staunton underwent another session of mountain building involving trending block faults along older fault zones. Valleys and ridges resulted, raising the Rocky Mountains high into the sky. The 1.0-1.7 billion year old metamorphic rocks and granites were pushed close to the surface and exposed to renewed erosion.
5 million years to present		<b><i>Creation of the Elk Creek Valley (Staunton State Park area)</i></b>	+Regional uplift over all of Colorado resulted in accelerated erosion and sculpting of the Staunton area. Rivers and creeks ran through canyons cutting them deeper and smoothing them out. Ridges were molded and sculpted due to weathering and erosion, resulting in a masterpiece of nature. Although the Elk Creek Valley at Staunton is relatively small, it is as beautifully impressive as other Colorado formations of the same era,



	<b>Homesteaders, Ranchers, etc. (continued)</b>	<i>... the Davis Ranch</i>	1999 from the Elk Falls Ranch Development Association + <u>Davis Ranch</u> : H. Richards homesteaded 160 acres in 1889; after his death, J.W. Green purchased the land in 1898. Rollo and Lila Shaffer acquired it in 1919. (Rollo was a son of Samuel and Sarah Shaffer, for whom Shaffers Crossing was named.) George Holdren (320 acres in 1877 and 1879.) A. Lesser homesteaded 160 acres in 1896. W. Dougherty homesteaded 160 acres (half of which is now in the park.) Charles Hurlbutt homesteaded 80 acres in 1921; Hurlbutt moved his family to the Elk Creek Valley in 1918, after purchasing a ranch that was made up of the aforementioned homesteads. This land had been owned by Francis M. Davis, a state senator in the early 1900s. It was made up of the Dougherty and Holdren homesteads as well as the G. Grout 160 acres (not part of the park.) Hurlbutt also acquired the Shaffer's land, as well as the Lesser homestead, owning around 1,000 acres. In 1932, the ranch was lost, likely to financial hardship during the Great Depression. R.T. and Luci Davis acquired the thousand acre ranch in 1934. This ranch remained in the Davis family until 1999, when nearly 900 acres were sold to the state to expand the size of Staunton State Park. Around 100 acres remained in the Davis family. This acreage included three homes, two barns, and outbuildings. Keith and Judi Davis are the current owners. Keith is a grandson of R.T. and Luci Davis.
		<i>... the Chase Property</i>	+Chase Property: H. Groth homesteaded 160 acres in 1891. In 1971, Robert L. and Mary Coyle Chase purchased 80 acres, which remained in the Chase family until 2006. Mary Coyle Chase was the first Pulitzer Prize winner from Colorado in 1945 for her play, "Harvey."
<b>1911 - 1918</b>	<b>Staunton family in the Elk Creek Valley</b>	<i>A summer retreat!</i>	+Dr. Rachael Staunton and daughter Frances stayed at Glen Elk cabin and visited Elk Falls. The Staunton Family started renting summer cabins at \$1 a night from John Jensen at Elk Falls Ranch.
<b>1918</b>	<b>Dr. Archibald Staunton builds the Staunton Ranch</b>	<i>Beginning a ranch</i>	+Dr. Archibald Staunton purchased 80 acres with a cabin from Stephen Blaine. Archibald began applying for homestead patents of surrounding acreage. Rachael lived at the ranch from April through November, raising crops, livestock, and treating local patients. They also built cabins and other buildings between 1919-1930.
<b>1919 - 1923</b>		<i>Acquiring additional land</i>	+160 acres from J.E. Ray acquired by Archibald +80 acres from J. Cruse acquired by Archibald +520 acres from J. Denver inherited by Rachael +40 acres from Pearl Jensen McCoy given to Rachael
<b>1924 - 1930</b>			+160 acres from Hoffmann acquired by Archibald
<b>1922</b>	<b>Homesteads</b>	<i>Homestead patents "proved"</i>	+Archibald proves patents on 680 acres.
<b>1918-32</b>	<b>Hurlbutt (Davis) Ranch</b>	<i>Hurlbutt expands ranch</i>	+Charles and Armelia Hurlbutt developed the 1,000 acre Hurlbutt Ranch in the Elk Creek Valley and raised three children there. Daughter Catherine "Birdie" Hurlbutt became a close friend of Frances Staunton, even though Frances was thirteen years older. Birdie was known for her work rescuing sick and injured birds. In the early 1930s, R. T. Davis and Luci acquired the ranch.

1920s-30s 1930s-1950s	Activities on the Staunton Ranch	<b><i>TB Sanatorium at Ranch</i></b>  <b><i>Summer camps for children; tourist cabins rental</i></b>	+Tuberculosis patients were likely treated at ranch during the warmer months +The Girl Scouts Flying G Ranch, the Lazy V Ranch for Boys, the Lazy V Ranch for Girls, and the Mount Marian Camp for Catholic Girls operated out of the Staunton Ranch, which was also known as the Lazy V Ranch. Cabins were rented to tourists when camps were not in operation.
1940s	Highway 285	<b><i>Widening; paving of highway</i></b>	+Highway 285 paved; road moved a bit south at Shaffer's Crossing.
1948-1960		<b><i>Roundup Riders of the Rockies at Elk Falls and Staunton Ranches</i></b>	+This secret men's riding club held "trail rides" each year at the Elk Falls Ranch, which were hosted by Elmer Berg, the ranch's owner. The trail rides included Staunton Ranch trails.
1946	Family Events	<b><i>Dr. Rachael Staunton dies at age 71.</i></b>	+Following seven years as an invalid, Dr. Rachael died on August 5, 1946. During this time, her daughter, Frances took care of her, most likely at their home in Denver.
1958		<b><i>Dr. Archibald Staunton dies at age 90.</i></b>	+Archibald died on November 20, 1958. The remains of the Staunton Family are at Fairmount Cemetery in Denver.
1961		<b><i>Frances Staunton's will written</i></b>	+After her father's death, Frances wrote her will declaring that her family's ranch would be donated to the state.
1980		<b><i>Interview</i></b>	+Frances was interviewed by Terri Schorzman as part of a series of state-directed interviews of individuals donating to the state.
1986		<b><i>Ranch is donated to state</i></b>	+Arrangements were finalized for transfer of ranch to the State of Colorado.
1989		<b><i>Frances H. Staunton dies at 89.</i></b>	+After several years in a nursing home, Frances Staunton died on June 7, 1989. The ranch had already transferred to the state. Her home in Denver and most of the family's belongings were bequeathed to the Colorado Historical Society.
1986	Staunton State Park Land Acquisitions	<b><i>Donation of Staunton Ranch to State of Colorado</i></b>	+Frances Hornbrook Staunton willed her family's 1,720 acre ranch to the state of Colorado to be developed into a state park so that all of the citizens could enjoy the beautiful land.
1999		<b><i>Acquisition of Elk Falls Ranch acreage</i></b>	
1999		<b><i>Acquisition of Davis Ranch acreage</i></b>	
2006		<b><i>Acquisition of Chase Property</i></b> <b><i>Future Acquisitions</i></b>	
2010	Staunton State Park Development	<b><i>Preplanning</i></b> <b><i>SSP Master Plan adopted</i></b> <b><i>Phase I</i></b> <b><i>Phase II</i></b> <b><i>Phase III</i></b> <b><i>Phase IV</i></b> <b><i>Phase V</i></b>	
2011	Intersection of Hwy 285 and S. Elk Creek Road (Shaffers Crossing) Historic designation	<b><i>Bridge completed</i></b>  <b><i>Historic designation of Staunton Ranch buildings</i></b>	+A bridge at Shaffers Crossing was completed by CDOT as a necessary requirement prior of the opening of Staunton State Park.  +Elizabeth Ottmar Held and Bonnie Scudder selected as "Volunteer Historian-Archivists" to research local history of Staunton Ranch and prepare application for "national historic

2012		<b><i>Volunteerism in SSP</i></b>	landmark” designation of Staunton Ranch buildings. Much of the information about the Stauntons and their ranch was found in eighteen boxes at the History Colorado Center’s Stephen H. Hart Library. Hank Alderfer and Jen Anderson assisted Held and Scudder in reviewing manuscripts and photographs in the Staunton Collection. +First group of SSP volunteers was recruited and trained. Trails were built, fences repaired, etc.....
2013		<b><i>National historic landmark designation granted 12/04/2012 Staunton State Park opens</i></b>	+On 12/4/2012, the Staunton Ranch Historic District was placed on the national list of historic designations.  +On 5/18/2013, Phase I of Staunton State Park opened to the public.
2014			Open houses held for recruitment of second round of volunteers

*Compiled by Bonnie E. Scudder, March 4, 2014.*

#### References / Resources

- (1) The Geology of Staunton State Park: 1.7 billion years old... Are you kidding me!! Scott Knight, Division of Wildlife and Parks naturalist, with contribution from Ron Claussen, Division of Wildlife and Parks master interpreter / naturalist. December 2012.
- (1a) The Sculpting of Staunton State Park. Scott Knight
- (2) The Secrets of Elk Creek: Shaffers Crossing, Staunton State Park, and Beyond... A Local History. Bonnie Scudder. Elk Creek Publishing, LLC. May 2013.
- (3) Staunton State Park Master Plan. 2010.

## History of Staunton State Park

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The first 1,720-acre parcel of Staunton State Park was donated to Colorado State Parks in 1986 by Frances Hornbrook Staunton. Subsequent parcels, including a portion of the **Davis Ranch** and **Elk Falls Sportsman's Club** property, were acquired in the late 1990s. In 2006, a small key parcel, called the **Chase** property, was added to the Park to reach its current land base of approximately 3,800 acres.

The properties that make up the Park are rich in human history, having supported a variety of uses, including:

- Homesteading and a family retreat in the middle of the site
- Ranching on the southern portions of the site
- Logging with a turn-of-the-20th century saw mill in the northern part of the site
- A sportsman's club on the western side of the site
- Boys and girls camps on the Staunton and Elk Falls Ranches

### Staunton Ranch

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In 1903, Dr. Archibald Staunton came to Colorado on his way to California from West Virginia. He liked the Denver area so much that he returned home and brought his wife Rachel out to see what she thought about making Denver their new home. In 1906, Drs. Archibald and Rachel Staunton moved to Denver. The Stauntons purchased 80 acres in the Shaffer's crossing area and obtained homestead patents on 160 acres in 1918. A few years later they acquired an additional 680 acres. Rachel lived on the land raising crops and livestock seven months each year fulfilling the homesteading requirements. As a physician, Dr. Rachel Staunton provided medical care to the people who lived in the area. Some of her patients were Native American families who bartered beadwork, pottery, jewelry, and rugs to pay for her services and show their appreciation.

The Staunton Ranch grew to 1,720 acres over the years. Frances H. Staunton, the only child of Archibald and Rachael, preserved and protected the Staunton Ranch throughout her life and gifted the land to the state in 1986 with the understanding that the ranch would someday be developed into a state park. The vision for Staunton State Park, expressed by Frances Staunton's will, is limited development to protect the landscapes that her family loved for future generations.

“...given to the State of Colorado for use as a State Park to be known as Staunton State Park and to be preserved essentially as a wilderness area...and that this property be preserved in perpetuity, for public benefit, as a natural wilderness-type park.”

#### Buildings on Staunton Ranch

According to the National Register, the Staunton cabin was built in 1918. The Blaine cabin, a structure that was already on the land purchased by the Stauntons, was probably built after 1906. The Richardson cabin was likely built around 1922. Sometime between 1922 and 1936, the Stauntons built a shower house, bunk house, and two cabins known as the Brola cabin and the Policeman's cabin.

In 1928 the stock brand “Lazy V” was issued to Archibald Staunton. During the 1930s and through the 1960s The Lazy V Ranch operated as camps for boys and girls. An old brochure lists \$150 for a girl to attend an eight-week mountain ranch riding camp session. These sessions could accommodate 40 girls, aged 7-18 years old. The Girls Scouts of Denver also rented the camp over the years, and Mount Marian Camp for Catholic Girls rented it in 1954. Records show the cabins and ranch being rented as recently as the 1980s. An information sheet described two-day horseback riding trips to many points of historic interest and claimed that “Ute Indians camped in this neighborhood and Buffalo Bill met Chief Colorow in conferences within 25 miles of the camp.”

## **Elk Falls Ranch**

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The Elk Falls Ranch, on the west side of the Park, was purchased in 1999 for preservation. This acquisition added Lion’s Head, Chimney Rock, and Elk Falls to the Park. State Parks bought the 510-acre northern parcel of Elk Falls Ranch with Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) Legacy Grant funds. The 540-acre southern parcel of the Elk Falls Ranch was purchased by the State Land Board and managed by Colorado Parks & Wildlife.

From 1892 to 1930, many 160-acre parcels were homesteaded and land patents awarded to individuals that made up much of the Elk Falls Ranch in the Elk Creek Valley. According to early accounts, the infamous Reynolds gang stashed their loot there (including cash and gold dust) that the bandits allegedly robbed from the Fairplay-Denver stagecoach in 1864. This brought many treasure hunters to the area over the years.

Recreational use of the land has a long-standing tradition in the area now known as Staunton State Park. From 1936 to 1962, the Elk Falls Resort Ranch was owned and operated by Elmer and Alice Berg which evolved into a private, members-only club with fishing, hunting, camping, horseback riding. A 1943 Elk Falls Park Brochures exclaim, “A thrill a minute.” This summer camp for boys and girls boasted that the camp “affords all the outdoor life that parents so eagerly seek for their children—a natural playground in the heart of the Rocky Mountains.” According to the history recorded by Bonnie Scudder in her book *The Secrets of Elk Creek: Shaffer’s Crossing, Staunton State Park and Beyond*, from 1948 through the 1950s, the Elk Falls Guest Ranch and Club hosted the “Roundup Riders of the Rockies,” an organization dedicated to preserving the western tradition of the American cowboy and his horse. Roundup events drew visitors from across the country who would bring their horses for rides across the mountain ranges, fishing, hunting and picnicking while staying in cabins or camping along Elk Creek.

## **Davis Ranch**

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In 1999, with a grant from Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), the State Parks bought portions of the 1,000-acre Davis Ranch, located on the east side of Staunton State Park. F.M. Davis, a state senator who was no relation to the current Davis family, owned a portion of this land in the early 1906. In 1918, Charles and Armelia Hurlbutt purchased this land and homesteaded eighty acres. They built their ranch of 1,000 acres during the next fourteen years, only to lose the ranch during

the Depression in 1932. R.T. and Lucy Davis acquired the 1,000-acre ranch in the early 1930s. Keith and Judi Davis, the current owners of the remaining 100 acres, is a grandson of R.T. and Lucy Davis. The remains of an old stone house are on a portion sold by the Davis Family to the State Park where some believed there was a stage stop or possibly an old saw mill operation.

### **Chase Property**

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In 2006, State Parks, in conjunction with the State Land Board, purchased the 80-acre Chase parcel. This parcel was once owned by Mary Coyle Chase, a Denver native, journalist, and playwright best known for her play "Harvey" (Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1945). These acres will play a key role in developing important trail connections and future park roads.