

History in the Making: James Adams Perley Descendants Donate Family Heirlooms

By Allison Hefner, Editor



Caption: From left, Brittany Gallagher, daughter of Karen and Bruce VanGundy (pictured), recently donated a framed photo of the Perley Ranch to the Ken-Caryl Ranch Historical Society. Karen VanGundy is a direct descendant of James Adam Perley.

Members of the Ken-Caryl Ranch Historical Society were recently witnesses of (Ken-Caryl) history in the making! Karen VanGundy, who believes that she is the oldest living great-grandchild of Ken-Caryl Rancher James Adams Perley, along with her husband Bruce and daughter Brittany Gallagher, recently donated several items of historical and personal value to the society, honoring its dedication to preserving Ken-Caryl's history and early foundations.

James Adams Perley, born in 1835 in Vermont, emigrated west and became a miner in Blackhawk, Colorado. There he met his future wife, Charlotte Virden, who he married in 1864. Perley purchased the Bradford Ranch in 1895, where they raised steers for slaughter and milk cows. Some of their six children, Warren, Emma, Eliza, Martha, Lydia, and James Henry also lived with them at various times.

VanGundy, who is the great-granddaughter of Perley's daughter Emma, donated a framed photo of the Perley property during its heyday as a working Ranch at the Historical Society's meeting on July 13.

VanGundy believes it is one of only six copies in existence. Prior to donating the photo, she remarked that the photo had resided with the Perley family for generations prior to its recent donation to the Historical Society.

“This photo was passed down from my grandparents, then to my parents, and when they passed away to me, as the oldest grandchild,” said VanGundy when addressing the Historical Society. “It hung in my home until this morning for you all to have it to hang in a special place.”

In addition, VanGundy and her family also donated a framed copy of the land grant that was awarded to James Adams Perley when he purchased the property in the late 1800s.

“I feel very strongly that [these items] should be entrusted to your care and we are confident that they will be well cared for,” remarked VanGundy. “It makes me happy to see these pieces with you all as [I believe] they need to be kept in historical context.”

According to VanGundy, James Adams Perley received the land grant prior to Colorado becoming a state, when the area purchased (located in now what is Gilpin County, Colorado) was part of Kansas territory. She believes the land grant was signed by then President James Buchanan’s secretary. The land grant was presented to the Historical Society in a museum-quality frame for its safe keeping.

“I believe we share a keen interest in the Bradford-Perley property,” said VanGundy. “I truly appreciate all you have done to preserve this beautiful property.”

Historical Society Co-Chair Jim Antes graciously accepted the items on behalf of the society with a promise to preserve them for all residents to enjoy.

“We know that [the photo and land deed] are family treasures and we will treat them as such,” said Jim.