



ROCK CREEK STAGE STOP
Gore Pass, Routt National Forest, south of Toponas

Sir Robert Gore first traveled the Indian trail over the pass that today bears his name on a hunting expedition in 1855. For many years thereafter, Gore Pass was the only route west from Kremmling into the isolated Egeria Park, Yampa, Oak Creek, Steamboat Springs, and Hayden area. By the late 1860s, the Gore Pass Trail was a firmly established, well-traveled wagon route that served as the major route into the region until the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad reached Wolcott in 1887, after which a Steamboat-Wolcott stage and freighting service was established. In 1861, Captain Berthoud, intent on building a road from the Colorado-Kansas border into the Colorado Territory for overland stages, surveyed the mountainous terrain. The Rock Creek Stage Stop, built circa 1880 by the Gates brothers, James and Clark, and James' son Bert, is one of the oldest surviving historical landmarks in Routt County. In 1878, it was a halfway station for the first mail route from Georgetown to Hot Sulphur Springs to Steamboat Springs. Due to isolation and transportation difficulties, the station contributed significantly to the onset of settlement in the Yampa Valley. James built the structure in two phases: the ground floor served as home; the upper portion was added when he was granted a stage contract. For many years,

James and his family lived and operated a hotel, post office, stage stop, and staging site for many hunting expeditions in the building. The Rock Creek Stage Stop is an unusually large, three-bay, two-story, rectangular, hand-hewn log-chinked structure with a wide front door, narrow windows, and a moderately-pitched gable roof. The logs, squared on the sides and rounded on the tops and bottoms. Logs extend into the gable peaks. The building contains a large barn door on one wall and evidence that a balcony or deck originally projected from the second story. Partitions on the dirt ground floor suggest that it functioned as a stable; people were housed on the second floor and in the loft. Animals and people sharing the same structure was an unusual practice in Colorado. No evidence of an interior or exterior stairway to the upper floors exists. An extension on the back of the building, partially dug into the hillside, housed the kitchen and perhaps the dining room. The establishment was ultimately vacated in the 1940s. Restoration of the site is in progress by a consortium of sponsors including local contributors, the Colorado Division of Wildlife, the National Forest Service, Historic Routt County!, and the Tread of Pioneers Museum. NRHP: 10-21-82.