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To whom it may concern:

I am writing to indicate my support for the Tread of Pioneers Museum's project to preserve, arrange, describe, and digitize the Steamboat Pilot photo archive. Since 2017, I have consulted with and assisted the Museum's staff on matters related to archiving, digitizing, and making accessible the Museum's photograph collections, including the Steamboat Pilot archive. I am currently Head of Archives at the University of Colorado Boulder Libraries and have been in the archival profession since 2002, previously working as a photo archivist and curator at organizations such as the Massachusetts Historical Society, Oregon Historical Society, and History Colorado. My family have also been in the Steamboat area since 1982. I feel very deep ties to Routt County's history, as well as a personal responsibility to provide professional assistance to the county's heritage organizations to help them preserve their history in situ.

Candice Bannister, executive director of the Museum, first asked me to consult on the acquisition of the Pilot collection in April 2017. From that point onwards, I have been impressed by the Museum's understanding of the need to consult with archival professionals regarding planning and implementation of proper preservation, re-housing, arrangement, and description for and access to this significant collection. The Pilot archive is the most substantial known collection of images documenting Routt County history from the mid- to late twentieth century; in essence, it functions as the visual memory vault for the people, places, and events of contemporary Steamboat and the surrounding area. Both Candice and Museum curator Katie Adams have demonstrated a nuanced understanding of how important the Museum's role is and will be in preserving that visual memory in perpetuity, especially in light of their current staffing and financial resources.

Both the size of the collection (currently estimated at over 10,000 images but likely much higher) and its original condition (approximately 60 linear feet of mostly unorganized loose prints, contact sheets, and negatives) pose great challenges to the Tread of Pioneers Museum. To resolve those challenges, I worked with curator Katie Adams in 2018 to develop a phased plan that maximizes access to the collection and also addresses the pressing physical concerns. The goals of this plan were to: (1) preserve, re-house, organize, and make accessible the physical collection and stabilize it against further deterioration; (2) create a finding aid to provide broad accessibility to the entire collection; (3) select representative images from the collection for an initial digitization project to provide a visible web presence for the collection; and (4) identify future processing and digitization priorities for the collection, including potential collaborations with other community partners and external digital projects. The Museum started this work in fall of 2018, but, due to the size of the Steamboat Pilot archive and the Museum's small staff, it is an ongoing project that requires additional support.

I am confident that the Tread of Pioneers Museum will do right by the Steamboat Pilot archive, both in making the collection broadly accessible to the public, following professional archival best practices, and preserving it in perpetuity. I continue to consult with the Museum in whatever capacity they require in order to help them achieve these goals. As an archivist and fellow cultural heritage professional, I give my full support to the Tread of Pioneers Museum's project to preserve this important piece of Routt County history.

Respectfully,

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