

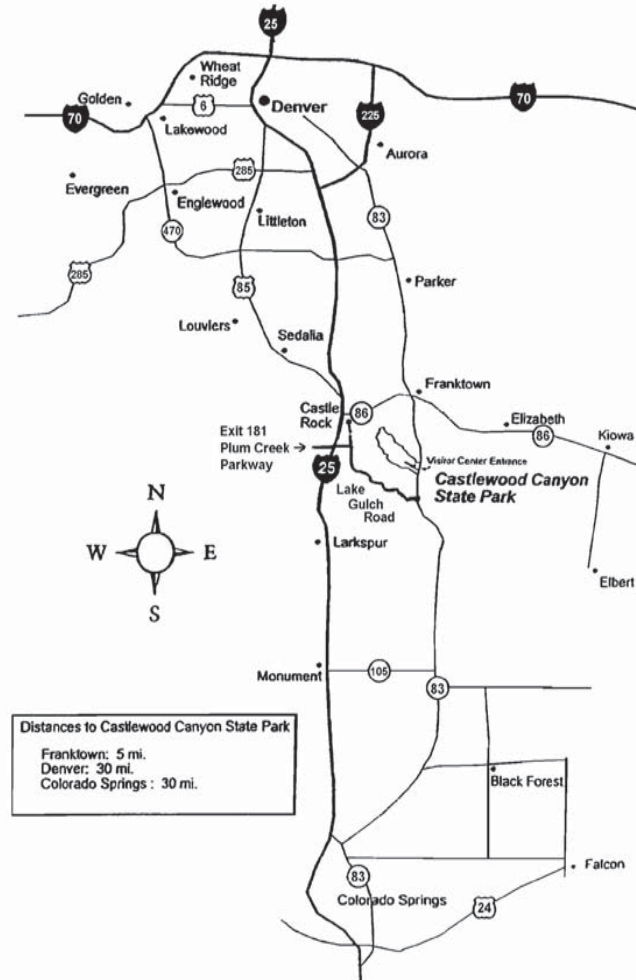
The Original Homestead

The Lucases began homesteading 160 acres of land in 1894. The small black square just under the “s” in Lucas is the center of the homestead and where the Lucases built their home and other buildings. The original wood house apparently has survived and sits downhill from the Franktown concrete plant.

How did the Lucases use their acreage west of the county road? It’s too steep to drive cattle up to the plateau for grazing or to drive machinery up there to till the land. Perhaps they relied on the land’s trees to harvest timber for fences and other structures.

The Lucas Homestead is located on the west side of Castlewood Canyon State Park. From Franktown, go 1/4 mile west on Highway 86, turn south at Castlewood Canyon Road and travel two miles to the Homestead parking lot.

To Get There



Colorado State Parks

Castlewood Canyon State Park

2989 S. State Highway 83

Franktown, CO 80116

303-688-5242

Email: castlewood.canyon@state.co.us

www.parks.state.co.us

Castlewood Canyon State Park

Lucas Homestead

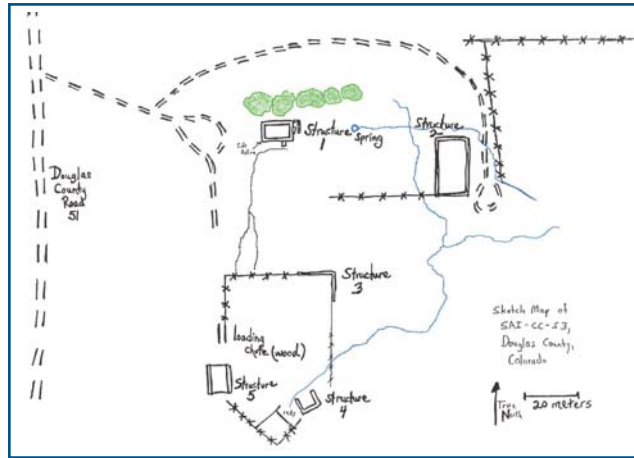


Meet Patrick and Margaret Lucas

A strange concrete ruin sits just off County Road 51 as it enters the west side of Castlewood Canyon State Park. If you stop for a closer look you'll see that this ruin was once a house – with the covered entrance to a full basement on the south side, and two upper floors. It was built by Patrick J. and Margaret McCardle Lucas, who were among the area's first homesteaders.

Patrick and Margaret were Irish immigrants who met in Arizona during the Indian Wars in the 1880s. Married on May 17, 1889, they moved to Colorado in 1893, perhaps lured by the promise of irrigation water from the newly constructed Castlewood Dam. Patrick filed homestead papers on this site September 17, 1894 and began work on their first house, built entirely of wood. The Lucases moved into the wood frame house in April of 1895. According to early census and Lucas information, the family had grown to include eight children by 1910, so it's no wonder they built a larger home. That home would be constructed of concrete. Why concrete? There is speculation that Patrick got the idea for this type of house when he was in Illinois. Concrete homes were more common there. The original parcel of homesteaded land cost the Lucases nothing but their hard work. Patrick bought another parcel of land northwest of the concrete house.

An old photo suggests that the Lucases had around 20 acres under cultivation, perhaps raising hay for their milk cows and horses. In the mid 1920s, the enterprising Patrick set up a toll gate charging people a quarter to cross his land on their way to see the canyon, dam and reservoir. Patrick died at the age of 84 in 1936. Margaret moved to Denver sometime between 1936 and 1940, and died in 1945 at age 86. When she left the concrete house was abandoned to the seasons.



Life on the Homestead

What was life like for the Lucases? Walk around the property and look for clues in fence material and the shape of the foundations. Can you find anything that makes you think they had livestock on their land?

- Structure 1 is the Lucases' concrete house
- Structure 2 is a mystery – what do you think?
- Structure 3 appears to be a cattle shelter
- Structure 4 is a spring house
- Structure 5 is a milk house. Imagine walking from the house to fetch fresh milk on a cold winter morning. BRRRRRR!

Park rangers and historians are still looking for signs of the location of the Lucases' well and outhouse. Do you see any signs?

The Night the Dam Broke

The Castlewood Dam, completed in 1890, was a 600-foot long, 70-foot tall rock-filled structure built across the canyon. Almost from the beginning, the dam had leaks and cracks that concerned engineers and made downstream residents nervous. We don't know how the Lucases felt about living so close to the dam, but we do know that Patrick, Margaret and three of their children were in their concrete home the night of August 2, 1933.

Rain had poured on the eastern plains for what some people say was nearly a week. On August 2, the rain got heavier after the sun went down. Thunder boomed and lightning flashed across the dark sky. Sometime early in the morning of August 3, the dam broke, and a 50-foot high wall of water rushed furiously down the canyon.

From the Homestead parking lot, look southeast and down the canyon. See where the canyon makes a slight turn? That turn aimed the flood waters directly at the Lucas home. The Lucases certainly couldn't see the water, but they must surely have heard that mighty onrush of water splashing and scouring out the canyon. Fortunately, the water began to spread out as it exited the canyon and the Lucas homestead was spared.

