

PROTECTING THE MEDILL FARM

The Medills don't have to look far to be reminded of their family history. After all, Larry and his wife Melissa still live in the original home that Larry's great-grandfather built when he homesteaded near Rye in the late 1800s. Although the Medill family now uses the property for irrigated hay production and beef cattle grazing, the early 1900s era barn and stone buildings that remain on the property pay homage to the property's history as a dairy farm.



Larry's grandfather, Ralph, began the dairy operation and Larry's father and three brothers helped build the unique tin-sided barn. In 1960, Larry's father bought the farm from his brother and they moved

into the homestead house. Larry and Melissa raised their children, Larissa and Cody, in this house and are certain that the two will return to run the farm.

In response to growing residential development around Rye, and with advice from a neighbor, the Medills contacted [Colorado Open Lands](#) about their desire to protect the farm with a conservation easement. Larry believes preserving the farm, keeping it intact and in agriculture, is exactly what his late father would have wanted.

Larry, too, is proud of the uniqueness of the farm. *"We're one of the last places in this valley that's still in the original homesteading family."* In October 2008, the Medills donated a conservation easement on their 156 acre farm.

The easement now ensures the protection of hayfields, cattle pasture, a rich riparian area, and a wooded hill where Melissa's garden lies, which is regularly assailed by mule deer and the occasional black bear. Melissa and the family welcome the wildlife intrusions - each year Melissa creates a photo calendar that she gives to family and friends, highlighting the fantastic animals she sees on the farm throughout the seasons.

The Medill Farm used to be further from Rye, but increasingly, new houses are cropping up on old neighboring farms. As Larry puts it, *"We're sitting on the edge. The area north of us has been subdivided and this is a good place to stop it."* He hopes that by protecting his land, he will inspire others to do the same. *"As soon as you do it, your neighbors hear and they're excited about it, because they're country folks, and they want it to stay that way."*