Dude, it’s legendary

The topic: Dude ranches. The place: The picturesque slopes of the Tetons. The takeaway: A bat’s bite is so tiny it can’t be felt by a sleeping person.

The owners, guests and workers of the historic Triangle X Ranch in Teton National Park welcomed folklore students in July and shared their traditions of this unique slice of Americana. The 2017 Field School for Cultural Documentation, sponsored by USU’s Folklore Department, the Library of Congress and the University of Wyoming, exposed novice folklorists to “immersive, hands-on work” in such basic ethnographic fieldwork skills as participant observation, interviewing, writing field notes, ethics and archiving best practices, said Jeannie Thomas, folklorist and head of the English Department.

As an aside, the nearly dozen students were present at the birth of what will undoubtedly become a folk tale in the English Department. All were required to have rabies shots after sleeping in a ranch bunkhouse that, unknown to them, had shadowy rafters populated by bats.

The students’ research is now archived in the Fife Folklore Archives in USU’s Special Collections and Archives in the Merrill-Cazier Library.