



*Honoring Wyoming's 100-year-old farms and ranches*

## **2006 WYOMING CENTENNIAL FARM AND RANCH HONOREES**

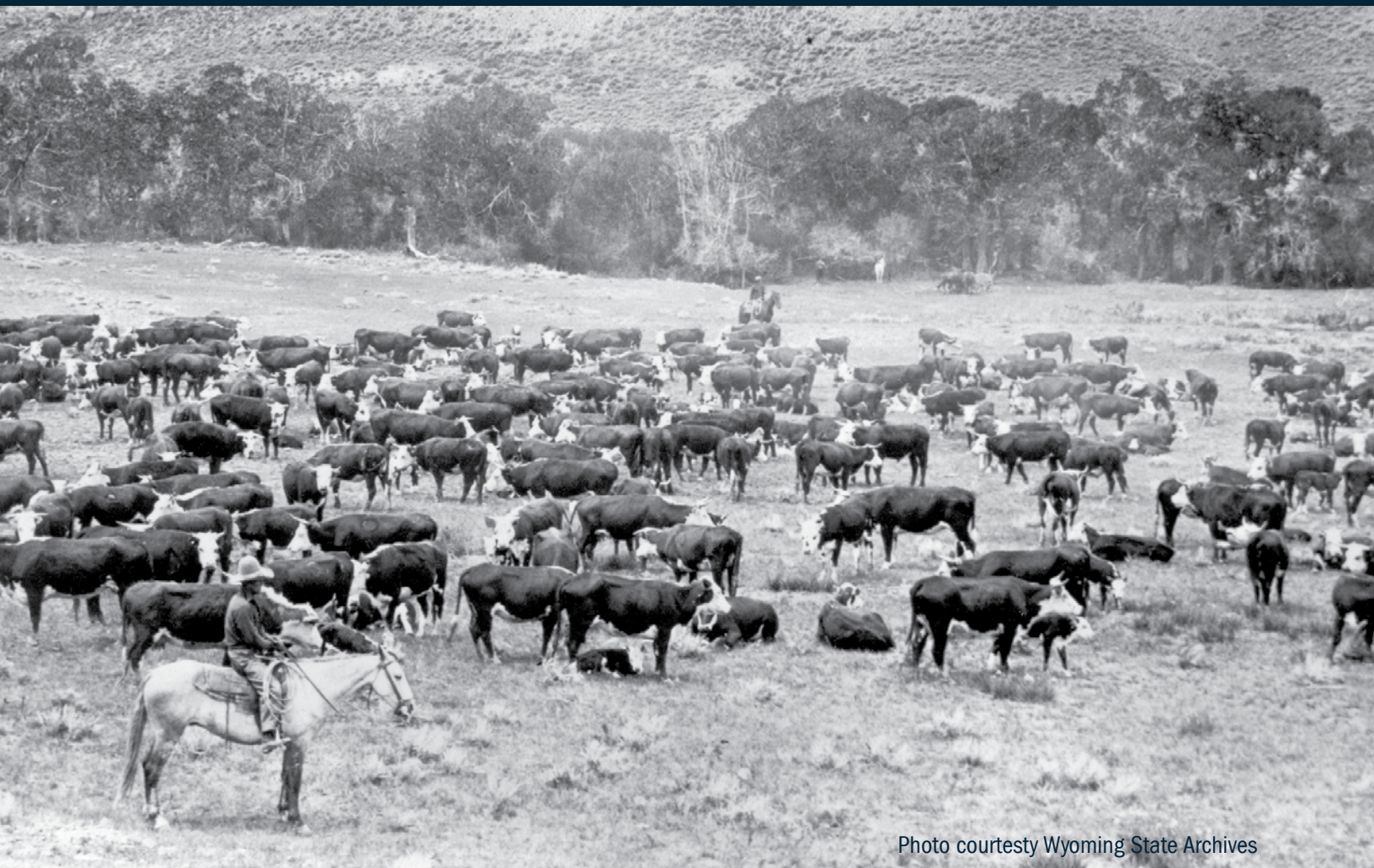


Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives

# **ARTS. PARKS. HISTORY.**

Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources

# Table of Contents

Letter from Governor Dave Freudenthal .....	3
Barlow Ranch .....	4
Sam Bennion Ranch .....	7
John Earl Christensen Family Ranch .....	8
Circle Bar Ranch/Claytor Ranch .....	10
HKC Ranch, Cool/Tysdal Ranch .....	12
7L Livestock Company, Cooper Family .....	16
Dixon Ranch .....	18
PR5 Ranch, Hanna Family .....	20
Hansen Ranch, Jack Hansen.....	22
Harper Ranch, Robert J. Harper.....	23
Herbst Lazy TY Cattle Company .....	24
John Hines Ranch .....	25
Lawrence Land Company/Clear Creek Ranch .....	26
Lucas Ranches .....	27
Banner Ranch, McCleary Family.....	29
Meike Ranch, Inc.....	35
Mercer Family.....	39
Mill Ranch, Reed Family .....	40
Nielsen Ranch .....	43
Nolan Ranch.....	44
John Novak Family Ranch.....	45
Pzinski Ranch .....	48
Rabou Ranch.....	49
Paddy Renner Ranch .....	54
Tavegia Ranch.....	56
Webster Ranch, Inc. ....	57





## Office of the Governor

Dear Centennial Ranch Award recipient,

Congratulations on the recognition of your family's century-long commitment to the State of Wyoming and our western way of life. In a world where change is often considered progress, your family's long-term dedication to the state's historic agricultural industry is a remarkable distinction.

Wyoming's ranch and farm lands are critically important elements of our landscape. They preserve open space and provide habitat for wildlife and livestock, and also contribute to the state's economy and support family businesses.

Operating a farm or ranch in Wyoming is not an easy lifestyle. You and your relatives have endured harsh conditions including droughts, manmade and natural disasters and the growing pressure to sell your land for development.

There are very few of us in this great state who do not feel a special and significant attachment to the land where we live. You and your family members are fortunate in that you remain so connected to the land and can appreciate more than any of us the significance of our ranching heritage.

We appreciate that your family continues to find value in maintaining your historic property – it is an admirable achievement to have been able to hang onto a ranch as you have for generations.

Again, congratulations on an honor well-deserved and thank you for your long and historic commitment to Wyoming.

Best regards,  
Dave Freudenthal



Governor

DF: ce

# Barlow Ranch

## Campbell County



The Barlow family

From the time he was a child in Dawson, Nebraska, L.H. Barlow wanted to be a cowboy. In 1885, at the young age of seventeen, he sold some hogs and bought a train ticket to the west coast. His final destination, however, would be the rugged country of the Salmon and Clearwater rivers of northern Idaho. For the next thirteen years, from 1885 to 1898, L.H. broke horses and cowboied. During that time he married Ruth McManegel, from Genesee, Idaho. They raised four children: Mamie, Fred, Glenn, and Lewis C. In early 1898, the family

moved to Gillette where for the next twenty years he ran cattle and over three hundred horses on the open range. He settled on a homestead at the Pfister Dam on Deadhorse Creek, which expanded under the direction of his son, Glenn. L. H. Barlow died in 1961 at the age of ninety-three.

L. H.'s great-grandson, Glenn J. Barlow, runs the ranch today. The Barlow Ranch was awarded the Wyoming's Stock Grower's Environmental Stewardship and Leopold Conservation awards in 2006.



L.H., Glenn, Hank, Tom, Grandpa Glenn



Ruth Barlow, Glenn's great-grandmother with Chub in front of the original house





Glenn and Tom feeding cows in the meadow



Joy Barlow working cows



The original house has grown over the years



Environmental Stewardship Tour, June 2006



Barlow cows



Glenn Barlow, his mother and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



# Sam Bennion Ranch

## Cokeville, Lincoln County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Bennion family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

**R**oland Bennion was born in 1882 in Taylorville, Utah. As a young man he worked on the railroad in Echo Canyon which is located west of Evanston, Wyoming. He was aware of land that was available for homesteading in Cokeville. At that time, Lincoln County was part of Uinta County.

Roland and his brother, Parley, decided to come to Cokeville in 1904. They had two ranches. Roland and Parley had a younger brother, Orson, who was a partner with Roland on his ranch four years later.

Roland found a wife, Ida Stock, who was from Fish Haven, Idaho. Ida taught school before they were married. Roland and Ida raised six sons and one daughter. Their livelihood was sheep. They ran them with Roland's brother, Orson. They wintered

the sheep in the Rock Springs area and lambled near Cokeville. In the summer months they took the sheep to Greys River, east of Star Valley, Wyoming.

Roland died in May of 1930, leaving young children and his wife. Orson continued to run the sheep which helped support Ida and her family until 1946. At that time they (Orson and Ida) sold the sheep to Roland's son, Samuel, and his wife, Verlene.

Sam and Verlene continued to run sheep until Sam had a stroke in 1972 that required them to sell their sheep. Sam's son, Samuel, and his wife, Pat, bought the ranch in 1978 from Verlene and they continue to run cattle and put up hay. Sometime it will belong to their son, Sam, and his wife, Jocelyn Bennion.



# John Earl Christensen Family Ranch

## Weston County



Ty, Walt, Earl and Wayne Christensen

**P**eter Christensen left Denmark in 1882, at age 18, and settled in St. Paul, Nebraska before heading further west. He joined an emigrant party in 1886 and landed in Alliance, Nebraska, where he was offered work with the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (CB & Q Railroad). Peter worked hard for the CB & Q and was transferred to Newcastle, Wyoming in 1889 to help build the new Cambria Line. Over the next ten years, Peter and his growing family, including his wife, Anna Sorensen (also from Denmark), and their young son, John, and daughter, Marie, settled into life in Weston County.

In 1898, Peter purchased a homestead north of town, which was patented on October 4, 1900. Peter lived to the ripe old age of 88 years and passed away in 1952. From the original 160-acre homestead, the ranch has grown to over 35, 000 acres. Peter's grandson, Earl Christensen, and Earl's sons, Wayne and Walt, and grandson, Ty, run the ranch today, which has been in the Christensen name for five generations. Major crops are the same as they were in Peter's time: cattle, small grains, and hay.





U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Christensen family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



The Christensen family



# Circle Bar Ranch/ Claytor Ranch

## Alcova, Natrona County

As told by Charles Sylvester

**M**artha Elizabeth (Mattie) Collins was born March 23, 1842 in Missouri, the sixth of thirteen children born to Albert G. Collins and Permelia N. (Foster) Collins. Her family moved to Dallas, Texas in 1845. There Mattie married Howard Chenault in 1859. Mattie and Howard had two children, Howard, Jr., who died in 1862 at less than two year of age, and Anna Laneza, who died in 1870 just three days before her seventh birthday.

After the death of her first husband (date unknown), Mattie married Jacob E. (Jake) Ervay who was born February 26, 1846 near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Jake later moved to Texas, where he met and married Mattie at her father's home in Dallas on September 18, 1872.

After their marriage, Jake and Mattie eventually moved to Stevens County, Texas. In 1881, they drove from Denton County, Texas to Wyoming Territory traveling in two covered wagons, Jake drove one and Mattie the other. They brought their two daughters, Josie Permelia Ervay, born on November 24, 1873 and Emma Foster Ervay, born August 11, 1876. Their only son, Albert, not yet two years old, died shortly before they left Texas for Wyoming. The journey to Wyoming took about three months.

Jake went to work for Bony and Mattie Earnest on the Pick Ranch, located along the North Platte River at the mouth of Canyon Creek (the ranch is now located completely under the backwaters of Pathfinder Dam). Bony Earnest, a retired army scout, was famous in his day. Jake worked there until 1882, when his and Mattie's third daughter, Mattie Bony Ervay, was born.

The Ervay's next moved to the Granger Ranch on Sand Creek, then to the FL Ranch near the south end of the Rattlesnake Mountains. In 1885, the family moved to the west end of the Rattlesnake Mountains where Jake claimed a homestead that developed into the JE Ranch. They lived in a tent for some time until the first small house was built.

The two oldest Ervay girls attended school at the JE Ranch, then were sent to St. Mary's on the Wasatch, Salt Lake City, for a high school education. Josie later attended business college in Denver. Young Mattie did her high school years in Casper.

Jake soon became involved in community political activities. In 1888, he was appointed one of three County Commissioners for the purpose of organizing Natrona County when the county cut off from Carlson County. When the Ervay Post Office was established in 1891, he was named postmaster, and also served as the recorder for the local mining district for several years.

The Ervay's operated the JE Ranch until selling it in 1905. Jake and Mattie then moved to National City, California but eventually returned to Wyoming and lived their remaining years with their daughter, Emma, at the Circle Bar Ranch. Mattie died on September 23, 1922 and Jake died on April 25, 1929.

In 1893 Josie Ervay married Harry Beggs, a cowboy who was working at the JE Ranch. After their marriage, they lived at the Little Cross L Ranch on Deer Creek, about eight miles west of the JE Ranch. Their young son, James, choked on a piece of candy and died. In 1898, Josie was struck with rheumatism. The Beggs' went by buggy to Thermopolis hoping that bathing in the hot mineral waters might ease her pain. While there, they attempted to cross the Big Horn River at high water stage in a small boat. The boat capsized and Harry,



The Claytor Ranch

Josie, and their infant daughter, Emma Jo, drowned. Only Emma Jo's body was ever recovered.

W. Edward (Ed) Claytor helped drive a herd of cattle from Texas to Wyoming, we believe for the M Bar Ranch. Ed Claytor and Emma Ervay married in mid-1890. In 1894, Ed Claytor filed a homestead claim on Dry Creek, on the south side of the Rattlesnake Mountains. Emma and Ed founded the Circle Bar Ranch/Claytor Ranch and lived there for a few years, then they separated and Ed returned to Texas. They had no children. Emma continued to operate the ranch, which she did well until her death in 1955.

This, the Circle Bar Ranch/Claytor Ranch, descended through the years and is still owned and operated by Claytor heirs.

Leonidas Marion "Lon" Claytor, younger brother of Ed, followed Ed to Wyoming from Texas. He worked for the M Bar Ranch until 1897 when he and Ed contracted to run a herd on shares at the Quarter Circle M Ranch near the JE Ranch. Within five years, the Claytor brothers had amassed a herd numbering 1200 head.



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Claytor family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

Lon Claytor and Mattie Ervay married in 1898. They lived for several years on the Little Cross L Ranch on Deer Creek, on what been the Beggs Ranch. In 1910, they bought the Cross L Ranch on the Sweetwater River. They became the parents of eight children. All except Jane, the youngest, continued the family ranching tradition for much of their lives. Mattie died in 1947 and Lon in 1961.

All the children of Lon and Mattie loved and enjoyed their Aunt Emma. Emma and her niece, Eva Lois Claytor, were especially close. Eva married Joseph T. France in 1938, and they had a daughter, Kay Lousie France, in 1939. Eva and Kay France inherited the Circle Bar Ranch/Claytor Ranch upon Emma Claytor's death. In 1959, Kay France married Charles W. Sylvester and they had two children, Lois I. and Duane C. Sylvester.

In 1985, Joe and Eva retired from the ranch and moved to Belgrade, Montana, transferring their share of the ranch to their grandchildren, Lois and Duane Sylvester. Eva still resides near Belgrade. Joe passed away in 2004. Currently, Lois Sylvester Blasberg and Charles Sylvester own and operate the Circle Bar Ranch/Claytor Ranch.



# HKC Ranch

## Cool/Tysdal Ranch

### Four Corners, Weston County



Four generations of Cools in 1940: Harold Cool, Floyd Cool, Jonathon Cool & Wiley Cool. Taken at Wiley Cool's home at Four Corners, Wyoming

As told by Bobbie Jo Tysdal

**I**n 1891, John William Cool and his wife, Elizabeth (Robertson) Cool decided to move "West". They joined their son, Wiley, and his family and their son, Charles. They all loaded up covered wagons and left Kansas for Wyoming. They settled on

the Canyon Springs Prairie north of Newcastle where they all took up homesteads. Other family members soon followed them. Little did John and Elizabeth know that one hundred and sixteen years later their great-great-great-great grandsons, David, Daniel and Jay Tysdal would still be working the homestead lands.

Wiley Cool's family included his wife, Dicey Jane (Yoder) and their six children, LeRoy, Jonathon, Lee, Lulu, Edna and Charles. Charles died as an infant, and Edna died at age eighteen. Wiley opened a general store connected to his house and sold groceries and dry goods. In 1916, he moved his store to a different site and operated the Four Corners Post Office out of it. It was called Four Corners because it was located where two county roads intersected making four corners. Today those roads are State Highway 585 and Pzinski County Road. The general vicinity became known as Four Corners and still is today.

Wiley's son, Jonathan, continued to farm and ranch in the area. He married Ethel Mae Allen, the daughter of former Kansas friends and Canyon Springs Prairie homesteaders, William Winfield and Eve Mae (Fairbanks) Allen. John and Mae Cool raised six children, Harold; Leslie; Reta; Doris; Virginia and Ruth. All but Ruth were born on the "Prairie". Ruth was born in Newcastle.

John and Ruth lived and raised their family at Four Corners on the Prairie. John became the area barber and he even had a real barber chair for his clients. John and Mae were both very musically inclined. John played the fiddle and Mae played the piano. Many evenings the furniture was pushed back and the Prairie community people would gather at the John Cool's for a night of dancing and socializing.



John and Mae Cool home at Four Corners, Wyoming

Eventually, John's son, Harold Kenneth Cool, took over this family's Four Corners area farm and ranch lands. A young schoolteacher, Rhoda Jo Curtis, came to the Prairie from Basin, Wyoming to teach school. She and Harold Cool were married in 1929. They continued farming and ranching on the Prairie. Their first home was in Harold's great-grandfather's (John W. Cool) homestead. In 1934, they moved to Wiley Cool's (Harold's grandfather) location. They lived there until 1965, when they built a new home in Newcastle and moved to town.

Harold and Maude's oldest son, Floyd, was born in 1929 in his grandparent's (John and Mae Cool) house at Four Corners. Their son, Dale, was born in 1931 on John William Cool's homestead where they were then living. The Harold Cool family



Four generations of Cools in 2001: Floyd Cool, Bobbie Jo Cool Tysdal, Davin Tysdal & David Tysdal at Bobbie Jo Cool Tysdal's home at Four Corners, Wyoming



was living at their permanent home, Wiley Cool's homestead, when daughter Colleen was born in 1936. Rhoda, however, was staying in Newcastle with relatives when Colleen came into the world.

Harold and Rhoda and their sons, Floyd and Dale, formed the HKC Ranch Corporation. HKC was Harold's brand and was used as the corporation brand. In 1965, Floyd and Dale took over the ranch operations, which now included the original Cool homesteads, some Allen homesteads, and additional properties purchased over the years. Floyd lived on the ranch and ran the daily operations. Dale lived in Newcastle where he owned and operated a barbershop.

Floyd married Josephine Flossie Prell in 1951. They had one daughter, Bobbie Jo, born in 1952. They were divorced. Bobbie Jo joined her father on the Cool family ranch as a teenager. In 1972, she married a neighbor rancher, Martin Tysdal.

Martin and Bobbie Jo lived on the Tysdal Ranch adjoining the Cool Ranch. They worked with Martin's father, Lloyd, and Bobbie Jo's father,

Floyd. They raised their three sons, David, born in 1973; Daniel, born in 1977; and Jay, born in 1980, at Four Corners on their ranch. All three of their sons were born in Newcastle.

Bobbie Jo's father, Floyd, died on April 20, 2004, and her husband, Martin, died on May 26, 2004. They were both serving as Weston County Commissioners when they died. Bobbie Jo's sons now operate both the Cool and Tysdal Ranches of their grandfather and father under the corporation, Triple T Enterprises. David has one son, Davin, who is the eighth generation of the Four Corners, Wyoming Cool family. Davin was born in 2001 in Newcastle and he already shows promising interest in continuing the family legacy of farming and ranching on the Canyon Springs Prairie, Four Corners, Wyoming

On August 19, 2006, David Tysdal's thirty-third birthday, Bobbie Jo and David and his family traveled to the Wyoming State Fair in Douglas for the first Wyoming Centennial Farm and Ranch recognition ceremony.

## **Eight generations of Four Corners, Wyoming Cools**



John William Cool  
Aug. 1, 1837 - Jan. 1, 1927



Wiley Wilson Cool  
Aug. 4, 1860- April 15, 1944



Jonathon William Cool  
March 14, 1886 - April 17, 1941



Harold Kenneth Cool  
Jan. 29, 1909 - Aug. 9, 1976



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Tysdal family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



Floyd Curtis Cool  
Nov. 16, 1929 - April 20, 2004



Bobbie Jo Cool Tysdal  
Feb. 19, 1952 -



David Elliott Tysdal  
Aug. 19, 1973 -



Davin Elliott Tysdal  
March 30, 2001 -



# 7L Livestock Company

## Cooper Family

### Natrona County



Alexander and Mary Cooper, with their sons, Adam and Thomas in Scotland 1872

As told by Doug Cooper

Alexander Cooper and his wife and two children left Scotland and arrived in Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1874 to join his mother who had come to Wyoming in 1867. After working in the coal mines at Rock Springs for several years, Alexander and his brother, Adam, purchased cattle and horses in 1876 at Green River which they turned loose on the Red Desert. The venture turned out to be very unproductive due to the fact that their small herd of cattle was not easily separated from the large open range cattle outfits and most of the offspring probably ended up branded by the big outfits. The horses became the foundation of some of the wild horse herds of that area. Adam Cooper stayed in the Rock Springs area, going into a partnership as the Cooper-Brooks Ranch.

The miners who were working at Rock Springs during the Chinese Massacre were blackballed by the coal companies and had to find work elsewhere.

In July of 1887, Alexander moved his family to the Glenrock area where he had found work opening the coal mines at Glenrock and Inez. He filed on a one hundred-and-sixty acre homestead on the North Platte River, across the river from the site of the present day Dave Johnston Power Plant. In 1889, the operator of the coal mine went broke and was unable to pay Alexander his wages and instead gave him cattle. The cattle were turned loose on the range north of the river and run for several years until Alexander's death in 1896. Alexander's son, Thomas Cooper, then assumed the responsibility for supporting his mother and sisters. By 1899, Tom and his brother, Adam, were able to go into partnership with Percy Shallenberger and purchase a herd of sheep trailed to Wyoming from Oregon. Tom's mother, Mary, now being the head of a household, could take a homestead of her own, which she did on Salt Creek. Alexander's homestead was then sold in 1901. Tom and Percy Shallenberger each took homesteads.

In a short time, Tom's brother, Adam, became disillusioned with the enterprise and was bought out by the other partners. Shallenberger then took a job managing at Lost Cabin, Wyoming for J.B. Okie while Tom attended to running the sheep. After several difficult years, the partners were able to acquire more land and a few state leases. In 1908 the partnership was dissolved for the unusual reason that Percy Shallenberger wished to give a library to his home town in Illinois. The ranch was then operated as a sole proprietorship until Tom's son, Percy, entered into partnership with his father in 1931 after graduating from the University of Wyoming. Percy had taken a six hundred-and-forty acre homestead and had purchased another six hundred-and-forty acres with money he had saved.

The ranch then continued to grow with additional purchases of land as homesteaders began giving



Percy M. Cooper with a pen of rams, circa 1965



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Cooper family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

up. Much of the land was purchased during the Depression for between one and two dollars an acre. After passage of the Taylor Grazing Act in 1934, the ranch obtained several thousand acres of state land leases, through Section 8 of the TGA, that provided land for land exchanges between the federal government and the state of Wyoming. The cost of these exchanges were paid for entirely by the ranch. The Taylor Grazing Act also provided the means to lease federal lands and the first leases were issued around 1937. The first federal grazing leases were only for the term of one year and were issued in a very haphazard manner. By the early 1940s, the major problems with the leases were resolved and the lease term was increased to ten years. This allowed the boundaries of the ranch to be established and the enormous effort to fence the ranch began. Over seventy miles of fence would eventually be constructed. Black angus cattle were also purchased and the sheep operation was reduced.

In 1960, the ranch partnership became a corporation. Thomas Cooper died in 1963. Percy Cooper and his wife, Trula, continued to operate the ranch and expand and improve the operation along with their youngest son, Doug

Cooper. During the 1990s, an additional ranch company was created to consolidate land purchased from Dr. H. E. Stuckenhoff with other land not owned by the corporation. The new company, Pioneer Agricultural Enterprises, was formed to complement the original ranch and operates in the same area.

As the 7L Ranch approached its one-hundredth year in the sheep business most of the neighboring ranches had sold their sheep and were only raising cattle. This encouraged the coyotes to concentrate on the remaining sheep operations in the area. Wool was nearly worthless, barely covering the cost of shearing the sheep. Extremely dry conditions in 2002 became the final straw for the sheep, as range conditions dictated selling the coyote-plagued sheep in favor of keeping more cattle. Sadly, the sheep were sold at Glenrock to a South Dakota livestock dealer who never even asked about the quality of the wool or the long history of the flock.

Percy Cooper died in 2003 at the age of ninety-two. The addition in 2006 of Doug Cooper's son, Stuart, as a stockholder adds the fifth generation of the Cooper family to the ranch. Trula Cooper, at age ninety, is still active in the ranch management.

# Dixon Ranch

## Weston County



One-room schoolhouse and old ranch house

As told by Joy Dixon

**T**he first member of the family to reside in Wyoming was Snowden Robert Dixon. Snowden and his parents emigrated from England when he was fourteen years old and they lived in Missouri until 1886, when they then moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Snowden moved to Wyoming in 1897 where he homesteaded the ranch.

Snowden was born in Shifnel, Shropshire County, England on December 10, 1870. He passed away on April 5, 1963.

Snowden came to Wyoming independently to pursue the opportunity to homestead and begin his own ranch. Prior to this move, he worked for his parents on their ranch in the Custer, South Dakota area and also worked as a ranch hand for various ranchers in that area. During the period that Snowden was homesteading in Wyoming, he also

supplemented his income by working for the AU7 and 4W ranches.

In 1897, Snowden married the love of his life, Augusta Elizabeth Schmidt, in Custer, South Dakota. She was a Custer native who was also the first white child born in that town. From the union of these two individuals, Arthur, Gerald, and Robert were born. All three children were raised on the ranch, and it was soon apparent that the love of ranching would be passed on to future generations.

On September 8, 1930, Arthur married Clara Wantz whose family owned a ranch and dairy farm on Salt Creek, north of Newcastle. From this marriage, one son, Max Robert Dixon, was born on April 13, 1933. Due to an illness, Clara passed away at the young age of 26, leaving behind a husband and her infant son. Following her death, Max was raised by his grandfather, Snowden, and his grandmother, Augusta, on the family ranch. Augusta passed away





Joy, Danny and Debbie Dixon

in 1944, leaving Snowden to be Max's primary caregiver. Max spent all of his time on the ranch except for while he was attending high school in Douglas. Max married the love of his life, Joy Bray, on April 15, 1955 in Rapid City.

Upon Snowden's death in 1963, the family ranch was left to his grandson, Max, whom he had raised since infancy. By this time, Max and Joy had four children of their own, Susie, Danny, Stanley, and Debbie. In 1964, their last child, Randy, was born. The family spent many happy years on the ranch in the original house that Snowden built from logs transported from the Cheyenne River. In 1974, Max built a new house on the ranch for his family, but the original house is still standing.

Max passed away on September 19, 2005 on the family ranch after a lengthy illness. Joy is currently operating the ranch with the help of her children.



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Danny Dixon, Joy Dixon and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

# PR5 Ranch

## Hanna Family

### Wheatland, Platte County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Hanna family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

As told by Myra Hanna

**T**he PR5 Ranch on North Sybille Creek, Albany County, was homesteaded in 1890 by Martin and Louis Peterson Roved from Denmark. They used the brand PR5, r. Rib, cattle recorded October 1909, hence the ranch name. Earl Flaharty came to Wyoming from Pennsylvania in 1909, at the age of 19, to the John L. Jordan Ranch at Iron Mountain. He met and married a schoolteacher, Myrtle A. Rosentreter, on November 4, 1924. They leased the PR5 Ranch in May, 1926, bought the Hereford cattle and brand in 1927 and ranch in 1931. They added the Sommers Ranch in 1937, several homesteads, and land on the Laramie Plains in 1947 from the Two Bar or Swan Company. They had two children, Clifford L. Flaharty, who made his career as a Sr. Engineer for Martin-Marietta Aerospace, Littleton, Colorado, and passed away

June 2002; and Myra Jean Flaharty Hanna. Both were graduates of the University of Wyoming. Earl Flaharty passed away August, 1974, age 85; and Myrtle Flaharty, June, 1993, age. 94.

Gustav W. Rosentreter came to the U.S. from Germany in 1890 and homesteaded on South Sybille Creek, 30 miles southwest of Wheatland, in Platte and Albany Counties, running Hereford cattle with the ORO brand. He married a schoolteacher, Julia L. White, in Rock River in 1897. They had one child, Myrtle, born October 23, 1898, who took out a homestead in 1919, adding it to the ORO. Julia died October 4, 1902 and Gus later married Iva Ankeny in 1904, and they had two sons; Floyd, 1905; and Laurence, 1908. In 1962, six years before Gus died in 1968, he received a certificate as Wyoming's oldest homesteader still residing on his original homestead, age 88.





Myra Hanna with PR5 Ranch sign at ranch entrance on hill, July 4, 2002



Elwood on "Sage" mare and Myra on "Brandy" mare on PR5 Ranch, December 1, 1997

Myra J. Flaharty married Max Elwood Hanna from Nebraska, June 8, 1952. They moved to the PR5 Ranch in 1958, bought the PR5 Hereford cattle and brand in 1960, and the PR5 home ranch later from her parents and brother. They had one daughter, Susan L. Hanna, also a University of Wyoming graduate, who married Martin L. Weaklim from Pennsylvania, a U.W. graduate. She is a Systems Programmer at the Division of Information Technology, University of Wyoming, and they live in Laramie. They have two children, Julia R. Weaklim and Ian A. Weaklim, both students at the University of Wyoming.

In November 1970, Elwood and Myra Hanna bought the northern half of the Rosentreter ORO Ranch, including the original homestead, meadows, and rangeland from her Uncle Floyd and Helen Rosentreter. It joined the PR5 Ranch a mile away, divided by Highway 34, and is operated as a unit, comprising the PR5 Ranch today.

Elwood Hanna passed away June 17, 2002, after a lifetime devoted to ranching. Myra J. Hanna continues to carry on the family tradition, and runs the ranch as a Hereford and Angus-Cross cow-calf operation today, still living on the ranch. It's been in the family, the PR5 Ranch, over 100 years; 111 years since 1895 in 2006, and 113 years in 2008!



# Hansen Ranch

## Jack Hansen

### Weston County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Hansen family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

**L**ike many before him, Hans Hansen came to Wyoming by wagon and train, along with his wife and three children, in 1896. Natives of Denmark, Hans and Frederikki (Tobiasen) Hansen had married and started a family in the old country before immigrating to Buffalo Gap, South Dakota where they homesteaded near Hans's half-brother. After relocating to Wyoming, they homesteaded on Canyon Springs Prairie, eight miles north of Four Corners. Carl, born in 1903, rounded out the family of five children. The enterprising Hans and Carl supplied fresh meat from the ranch to the miners at

Cambria. Carl Hansen married Ella Toth in 1925 following a courtship that took place at country-dances. Carl and Ella raised eight children and lived on the ranch, and also in Newcastle, during the Depression. To support his large family, Carl worked at Toomey's Mills for a number of years while continuing to run the ranch with the help of Ella and the children. In 1938, Carl purchased the ranch from Hans, who passed away in 1941. Carl and Ella's son, Jack, owns the ranch today and also runs Hansen Equipment in Newcastle. The old house is still standing. The ranch produces wheat, oats, and hay.

# Harper Ranch

## Robert J. Harper

### Weston County



The Robert Harper Ranch house built in 1904

**I**rishman Robert Alexander Harper, born in Canada in 1857, decided to try his luck on new lands opening up in Wyoming. He made it to Cheyenne in 1880 and ran the open range operation for Sturgis & Goodell, a large cattle outfit with holdings in northeastern Wyoming. He next worked as a foreman for the nearby LAK Ranch. Robert then managed the Fawcett Ranch for eleven years, where he raised horses. In 1897, he was finally able to purchase his own ranch, right next to the Fawcett Ranch on Stockade Beaver Creek, in Weston

County. Known as a good roper who never missed when heeling cattle, Robert continued to work the ranch until his death in 1944. His marriage to a local gal, Elsie Fawcett Crawford, occurred in 1913, and produced a son, Robert J., born in 1919. Elsie turned the ranch over to her son in 1963, and four years later he married Clara Mae Wells in Kansas. Robert J. still owns the ranch today. He lived in the original house (built in 1904) for eighty-six years. In 2005, he leased the ranch and moved to Newcastle. The ranch is a cow/calf operation.



# Herbst Lazy TY Cattle Company

## Shoshoni, Fremont County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Lois Herbst and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

As told by Lois Herbst

**F**rank Herbst came to this country from Austria-Hungary in the early 1900s and worked in mining. He was working at the copper mine on Copper Mountain when the announcement was made that homesteads would be available on the Wind River Indian Reservation. Frank entered the lottery and was successful in locating a homestead in 1906. His first crops were oats and hay.

Frank married a young woman from his native country who was working in New York at the time. Maria Melz Herbst was an excellent choice in so far as she raised a big garden, canned, cooked for many men, sold chickens, eggs and butter in Shoshoni, and raised three children.

Condemnation proceedings on the ranch started in 1948 in order to construct a dam and reservoir known as Boysen Lake. Frank died in 1948 from Rocky Mountain spotted fever though Maria said he died of a broken heart. Their son, William F.

Herbst, started buying and managing the ranch from his mother and two sisters. William married Lois Brown from Ohio in 1958. They purchased more farm lands to replace the land condemned. Lois has a lease to graze cattle on the original homestead lands that had been condemned. We had been using Indian Bureau leases, and also had acquired mountain properties for cattle prior to Frank's death.

After William's death in 1990, Lois operated the ranch with her son, Frank, until his death in 2000. Lois now manages the ranch and has acquired additional properties prior to Frank's death that hopefully will be used by her grandchildren in the future.

We moved buildings from the ranch before the bulldozers arrived. One of them is constructed from boards retrieved from the first bridge across the Wind River between Shoshoni and Riverton. Another is made of cottonwood logs. Our best building, which housed horse harnesses, was destroyed by vagrants who started a fire in it a few years ago.

# John Hines Ranch

## Campbell County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, John Hines and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

**P**ennsylvania-native, twenty-five year old John Hines, made his way to Wyoming in 1900. He worked hard, building railroad grades in southern Wyoming when the Union Pacific revamped its main line, and also sheared sheep with hand-held blades. In December 1900, he homesteaded near Oriva, a railroad section ten miles west of Gillette. Shortly after he filed on his Wyoming land, John headed back east to marry Tiggie Eagle in St. Louis, Missouri. They had one child, son Dwight, born in 1903. John continued to shear sheep and haul freight with horses until he bought a truck in 1929. In a tragic accident one year later, John died when

his truck with its load of railroad ties rolled over on him. Following his father's untimely death, Dwight ran the ranch for his mother, who died in 1948. Dwight married neighbor Annie Mary McKenzie in 1933 and they raised three children. When Dwight passed away in 1952, Annie ran the ranch until son John got out of the army and took over in 1960. John bought the ranch from his mother, which he still operates. The ranch is a cattle and sheep operation. John Hines says the ranch has gone through "drought, hard winters, depression, and good times"!



# Lawrence Land Company/Clear Creek Ranch

## Johnson County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Lawrence family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

As told by John Lawrence

**E**d Lawrence came to Buffalo in 1877 driving a bull team from Rock River, Wyoming to Fort McKinley. After arriving, he rode down Clear Creek and took a job haying for Cullen Watt. Later he worked for the Murphy Cattle Company and worked up to be manager at the headquarters on Clear Creek. As the country became more populated with homesteaders, large cattle companies were looking for cheaper grass and they offered to sell the ranch to Ed Lawrence.

Ed Lawrence and his son, Charles C. Lawrence, were riding to Buffalo, nine miles from the ranch buildings when they met the Murphy Brothers attorney, a man by the name of Clark. He was driving his buggy and they met about two miles out of town. In their conversation the attorney told Ed Lawrence that Murphy Brothers would accept his offer with the agreed upon conditions. There was

one stipulation: Murphy Brothers would not be able to finance it and demanded cash payment. Upon that request, Ed Lawrence reached into his pocket and pulled out a large roll of money and offered to pay right then according to Charles C. Lawrence, who was surprised his dad was carrying that much money.

The attorney exclaimed that he couldn't take that much money right there because he might be held up on his way back to town. So they returned to Buffalo together and stopped at the Van Dykes clothing store where the attorney gave Ed Lawrence a receipt for the full payment. The family has the original receipt of that transaction.

The original part of the Lawrence ranch house was built in 1891. The cottonwood trees surrounding the house were planted in 1891 and still provide shade in the summer. The largest of these trees is over 120 feet high and 20 feet around.

# Lucas Ranches

## Teton County



The Lucas Box L Ranch

As told by Jennifer Lucas Flanagan

### **U Lazy U Ranch:**

**O**ur grandfather, James G. Imeson, came to Jackson Hole in 1902 and worked for his brother-in-law, George Wilson, for Stephen Leek, (early Jackson Hole photographer) and for the Forest Service to earn the down payment on the first piece of his ranch. He grubbed sagebrush and dug irrigation ditches to make the rock ground productive. He raised beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep and hogs to try to keep afloat. The roof on the old red barn was recently replaced and cost three times as much as it cost to build the entire barn in 1910-1913!

### **N Cross Ranch**

**O**ur great-grandparents, Ervin and Mary Jane Wilson, came into Jackson Hole over Teton Pass in the fall of 1889. They homesteaded what is now the N Cross Ranch. Ervin soon died, and Mary Jane and her children kept on removing sagebrush and tending the cattle they brought in from Idaho. A daughter of Mary Jane's second marriage, Adeline Neilson, and her husband acquired the ranch from Mary Jane. Adeline's niece, Joyce I. Lucas, and her husband acquired the ranch after Adeline's death.

The remains of the first schoolhouse in Jackson Hole sit on the property. Our great-grandmother, Mary Jane, allowed the school to be built on her property. Our grandmother (Adeline's older sister) went to school in it.





U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Jennifer Lucas Flanagan and husband, and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

## Lucas Box L Ranch

**O**ur grandfather filed a homestead on this ranch in 1897. We have two homestead certificates issued to Lee L. Lucas under President Theodore Roosevelt, one dated 1902 and the other 1903. Clearing the land of sagebrush and getting irrigation water to it took many years. He had beef cattle and raised hay.

Our grandfather's homestead cabin, the red barn and the house that he built are still here. He surveyed the barn (circa 1910-1915) by the North Star because he wanted it perfectly aligned north and south. It worked – at noon, the shadows on the east and west sides of the barn are the same width the entire length of the barn. The house was completed 1920-1925. Jennifer Lucas Flanagan and her husband live in it now.

# Banner Ranch McCleary Family Natrona County

As told by Shelley McCleary Trumbull

**B**ryant Brooks (B.B.) Brooks was born in Bernardston, Massachusetts on February 5, 1861. He moved to Chicago around 1871, then worked his way to Wyoming after graduating in 1878. He worked on a relative's Nebraska farm before finally arriving in Cheyenne in April, 1880. Brooks wanted to come to Wyoming because he had heard tales of the thrilling life of a cowboy. He had a love for freedom and the great outdoors and disliked the restraint and routine of the city.

In Cheyenne, he first hired on with N.R. Davis as a cowboy. In the spring of 1881, he took a job with Major Wolcott, on Deer Creek near present day Glenrock, as a cowboy. Then in the winter of 1881-1882, he tried trapping in the Deer Creek Park area. On February 5, 1882, he traded six #4 traps and a sack of flour to Pat the Trapper for Pat's cabin on Muddy Creek, which became the headquarters of the Brooks ranch, the V-V. In July 1883, B.B., his father Silas and his brother John started the B.B. Brooks Ranch southeast of Casper.

In his memoirs, Brooks is listed as a cowboy, trapper, lumberman, stockman, oilman, and banker. He even dabbled in shipbuilding in Bath, Maine. He was also active in city, county and state government. He helped organize Natrona County and served as Wyoming's governor from 1905 until 1911.

Brooks married Mary Naomi Willard on March 11, 1886. She was from Alexandria, Nebraska and was born on June 10, 1864 in Ohio and died February 6, 1948 in Casper. They had five children, a son, Silas, and four girls, Jean (Lathrop), Abby (Nichols), Lena McCleary and Melissa Spurklock. B.B. and Mary bought the Banner Ranch in July 1905 from



Bryant B. Brooks around the late 1890s



Marion "Mike" McCleary branding in the 1920s



Mary Brooks (Lena's mother) and Marion "Mike" McCleary checking the wool in 1931





Bryant "Cactus" McCleary sitting beside his first plane with Lena, his mom, with her horse in the late 1940s



Marion "Mike" McCleary



Bryant "Cactus" McCleary's second plane, which he used it on the ranch



Lena (Brooks) McCleary with her hounds around the late 1920s or 1930s



Marion "Mike" and Lena (Brooks) McCleary's three children, Bryant, Marian and Lenora, in the 1920s



Lena (Brooks) McCleary used her hounds to hunt coyotes



Banner Ranch Headquarters in the 1930s



Lena Brooks and an unknown cowboy



Marion "Mike" McCleary doing some early farming



Feeding the Banner Ranch cattle in the early 1930s



Banner Ranch sheep around 1930



Lena (Brooks) McCleary with her children moving cattle on the Banner Ranch in the early 1920s



Banner Ranch wool around 1930





Marion "Mike" McCleary day herding yearlings in September 2005



Marion "Mike" branding and Bryant "Cactus" McCleary on the horse in the early 1950s



Banner Ranch Headquarters in the late 1940s or early 1950s



Shelly McCleary Trumbull day herding the yearlings in September 2005



The original Banner home. The main part was built in 1895. Marion "Mike" and Lena Brooks lived here during their lifetime. Monty and Shelly McCleary Trumbull live here now.



Banner Ranch saddles hang on a fence after working cattle in October 2005

Howard Banner. They referred to this ranch as the Banner Headquarters for the V-V Ranch.

Daughter Lena married Marion Wilson McCleary (known as Mike) on September 21, 1919 after eloping to Grand Junction, Colorado. Mike work as a cowboy for Brooks. Lena nursed him back to health after a team ran away from him and the disc severely damaged his leg. They returned to Casper in 1920 to manage the Banner Ranch for Lena's father. In 1921, the ranch was incorporated. They later bought it from Brooks. Mike and Lena had three children, daughters Marian and Lenora and son, Bryant. Bryant is better known as "Cactus" and he still lives and works on the ranch today at age 86. He married Karen Hale and had a daughter, Lynn. He later married Barbara Carr. They had three children, son Marion known as Mike, and daughters Wendy and Shelly.

Mike's and Shelly's families remain on the ranch today. Barbara passed away in October 2003. Mike married Laura Kirkland and they have two daughters, Shanna who is sixteen, and Kacie, fourteen years old. Shelly married Monty Trumbull and they have two sons, Con, eighteen; Thayne, eleven years old; and daughter Kristen; thirteen years of age.

Other family members hold shares in the ranch including Cactus' nephew Frank Henderson and his wife, Terry; granddaughter Starla Rutz, and daughter Wendy Podio.

Over the years the ranch has gone from mainly a sheep business to strictly cattle in 1947. Hereford cattle have been our main breed. Today we operate a cow/calf operation, holding our market calves to sell as yearlings. We have added and sold land over the years to fit our operation.

B. B. Brooks owned over one-hundred thousand acres. It included his B.B. Brooks (V-V) Ranch; the Stroud Ranch; the Banner Ranch and the Buzzard Ranch. The Banner Ranch is the last remaining in the family.



Bryant "Cactus" McCleary shipping the yearlings in September 2005



Bryant "Cactus" McCleary farming in the spring of 2002



Banner Ranch shipping the yearlings in September 2005. Riders are members of the McCleary and Trumbull families along with one neighbor.





U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, McCleary family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



Marion "Mike" McCleary waiting for the branding fire to heat up in May 2006



Banner Ranch cow herd at summer camp corrals in October 2006



Bryant "Cactus" McCleary's grandchildren, who live on the Banner Ranch, preparing to dayherd the yearlings in September 2003. Shanna McCleary, Con, Thayne & Kristen Trumbull, & Kacie McCleary in front of the homeranch barn built in 1921.



Cattle pots leaving the Banner Ranch hauling the yearling herd in September 2005



Bryant "Cactus" McCleary with the grandchildren that live on the Banner Ranch in the fall of 2006

# Meike Ranch, Inc.

## Sussex, Johnson County



The Meike family ranch

As told by Don Meike

**T**he Meike Ranch is a family corporation consisting of the offspring of Peter and Naomi Meike. Peter Meike came to the Sussex, Wyoming area as a baby with his family. Emil Meike, Sr. was born in Germany and he came to Iowa with his parents in 1867. They later moved further west to Chadron, Nebraska where he met and married Emma Kruse. Peter (Pete), their second child, was born in Colorado in 1901. Drought conditions there sent Emil searching for a better place to start over in the cattle business. He toured central Wyoming on horseback and met an established Sussex rancher, H. W. Davis, who was also looking for a way to beat the drought. Together they envisioned an irrigated valley on the Powder River and set out

to form a company to build and run a twenty-mile long canal. The work was done with team and slips with some thirty other homesteaders joining in. The project was too much for the ranchers to complete and an outside company from Denver came to their rescue with a steam shovel. Water first flowed from the dam and head gate on Powder River, some four miles east of Kaycee, to Sussex in 1910. Three major flumes, one crossing the Powder River, and several more smaller structures, all made of wood, crossed the many draws to keep the canal on a grade sufficient to irrigate the land above the river.

Naomi Meike's family, David and Anna Streeter, lived just above the start of the canal and had been in the area since before the turn of the century. So the children of Pete and Naomi Meike are descendants of two pioneer families.



Emil Meike died in 1933 and his four sons continued to run the ranch which expanded considerably in those three decades. Grandma Meike died in 1947 and the ranch was divided among the six children. At that time Pete and Naomi had five children, Don born in 1929; Barbara in 1931; Peter (Peto) in 1934; Emma Lee in 1937; and Helen in 1946. Pete and sons Don and Peto formed a partnership in 1949 and started to enlarge their holdings until in a few years it consisted of much of the earlier Meike land.

Pete Meike was a sheepman. He perhaps followed in his grandfather's footsteps as his occupation listed on his German passport was "The Shepherd". The family has continued to raise sheep as well as cattle. The early vision of Grandpa Meike for a protection against droughts with irrigated land for winter feed has worked well for the Meike Ranch. The ranch today runs on about forty thousand acres of deeded and leased land and twelve hundred acres of irrigated land. Normal stocking has been about one thousand mother cows and three or four thousand ewes. Very little supplemental feed has to be purchased.

Barbara married Neil Wolcott and they have three daughters. Emma Lee married Ken Koch and they have three sons; and Helen married Jerry Keeler and they have a son and two daughters. All of these are stockholders in Meike Ranch, Inc., along with four key employees. Don and Peto have remained unmarried.

The Meike Ranch and the Meike family has been very active in community activities. All have been active 4-H club members participating in local, state, national and international events. There is hardly an agricultural or educational board in the state that has not seen a Meike footprint. Pete served as an organizing member of the local soil conservation service and continued for many years as that organization grew to serve the people of the area and state. He worked tirelessly to help implement a state equalization plan for education that did not leave the rural pupils out. Peto has followed up with forty years as a director of the



Emma Meike with her six children outside homestead circa 1912



Don with President Reagan in 1981



Don, Peto, and Folks



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Pete and Don Meike family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



Peto with dogs at trial

Conservation District with many plaques and awards. His current claim to fame is as a stock dog handler and Border Collie fan. Don has dedicated a lot of time serving the sheep industry at the local, state, national and international level. He served as president of the National Wool Growers from 1981 to 1983. Both men have been active in the Stock Growers. Don has been an active Republican, serving on local and state committees.

A long time goal for the irrigators of the Sussex community is the building of a storage reservoir on the Middle Fork of Powder River. Several times the dream was nearly real but something (environmental concerns or financing) seemed to develop that would put the project on hold.

There have been a goodly number of magazine and newspaper articles about the Meike Ranch or some of the family including a public television Heartland of America program about the two Wyoming bachelor ranchers. All members of the ranch take pride in our motto: "Being a good neighbor is our first priority."

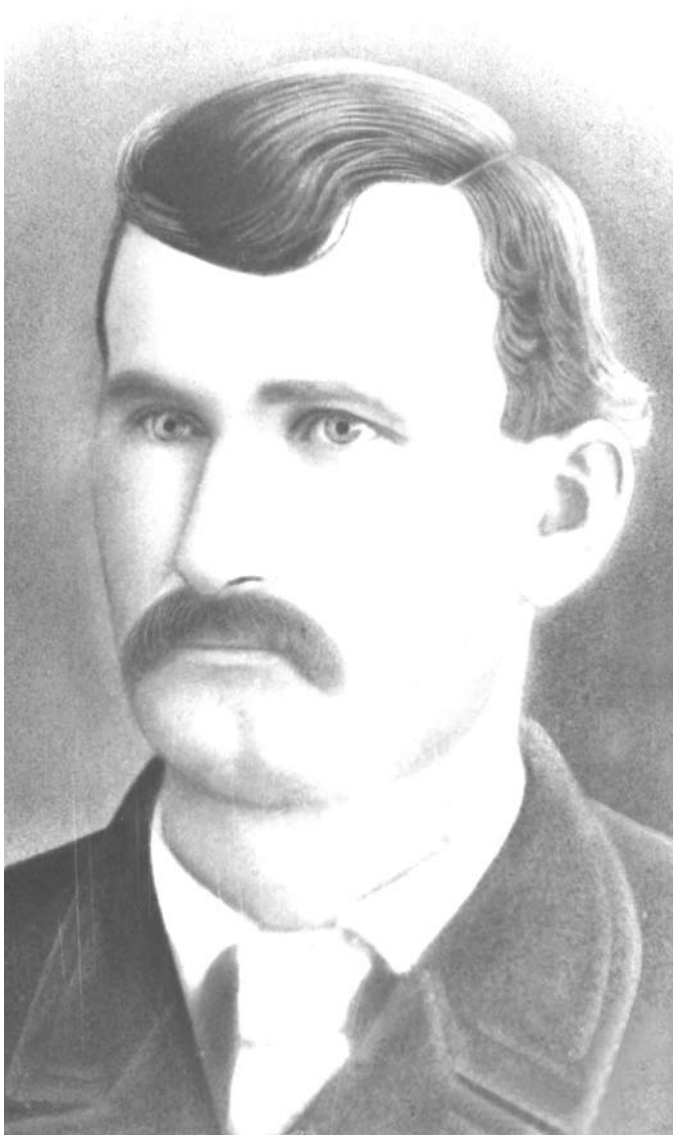


Don & Peto



Meike Family as adults





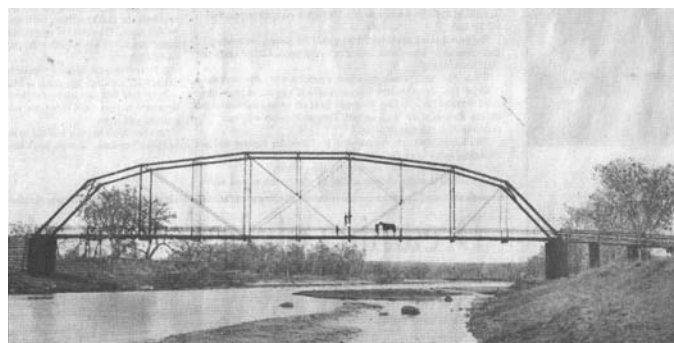
Grandfather Emil Meike



Grandmother Emma Meike



Wooden irrigation ditch flume circa 1910



Powder River bridge at Sussex in 1915

# Mercer Family

## Hyattville, Big Horn County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Mercer family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

**A**sa Shinn Mercer, author of the book, The Banditti of the Plains, about the Johnson County War, settled in the area in 1895 and began raising cattle in 1896. Times got hard when Asa's son, Ralph, took over and they sold the cattle and grew beans. They were able to make enough money to start raising registered Black

Angus. The ranch has three original sod-roofed buildings – a bunkhouse; the blacksmith's shop; and the draft horse barn. A house built in 1905 was recently remodeled and is the home of the Martin Mercer family. The Mercer's raise Seedstock Bulls Registered Black and Red Angus, corn silage, oats and alfalfa hay.



# Mill Ranch

## Reed Family

### Niobrara County



Mill Ranch House built 1902

Jacob “Jake” Mill was born in Baden, Germany in 1853. At age 21, he left Germany for America to escape the draft. Mill first settled in Des Moines, Iowa then moved on to Denver where he herded cattle. He also trailed sheep from Oregon to Wyoming and became a freighter between Cheyenne and Deadwood during the Black Hills gold rush. By 1883, Jake decided he wanted to settle down so he married twenty-year old Philaphena Kappleman of Des Moines and they homesteaded in Fairburn, South Dakota for the next eight years until all the free range was taken. By 1891, Jake was on the move again and next purchased land in Wyoming on Sage Creek near Hat Creek. He had spotted this piece of land during his freighting days when he often camped beside the creek, and decided he could build up a profitable ranch there. This first ranch, known as the Mill Ranch, became the center of an operation that

eventually included two other ranches, the U-L and Taylorville. Jake ran about forty thousand sheep and two thousand cows. As he reached retirement age, Jake divested himself of all but the original Mill ranch. He and Philaphena had five children. George Mill, one of their sons, moved home to run the ranch when Jake’s health failed. Jake died in 1938.

The Mill Ranch was split into two corporations in 1978: the Mill Ranch, Inc. and the Hansen Ranch, Inc. Jeff and Jake Reed, sons of Carla Mill Reed, own the Mill Ranch and Wanda Mill Hansen and Peter Hansen own the Hansen Ranch. Wanda and Pete use the original Mill Ranch brands – the 38, 55 and a half moon.

The original 1923 barn and a storehouse are still in use on the Mill Ranch. The two-story house, built



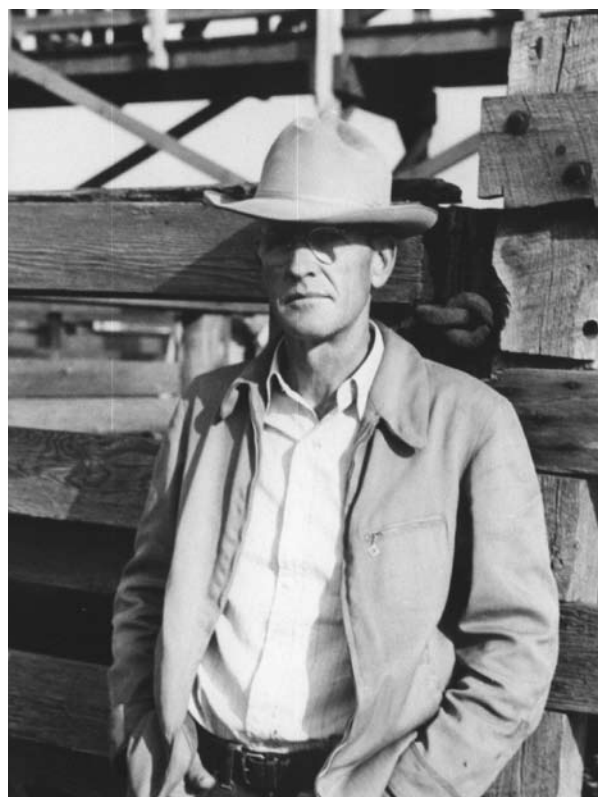
Jacob Mill wedding picture

in 1903, was converted to a one-story ranch house in 1948. The children who live on the ranch today are the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of the Mill family. In honor of ranch founders Jake and Philaphena Mill, one of the Mill women wrote:

“The ranch and its buildings stand as a fitting monument to the two founders who built and worked here, thru good times and bad, for the accomplishment of their purpose. The buildings still stand by the creek, the cattle still graze on the meadow, and may the memories of those who labored here, live forever.”



Inice and George Mill



George Mill in Omaha in 1950s





U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Stacy Reed of the Mill Ranch and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



Jake Reed family



Ron Lund family



# Nielsen Ranch

## Crook County



George and Lulu Nielsen family



Eldon Nielsen, 1918-1999

**G**eorge Nielsen was born in Denmark in 1861 and came to the United States in 1882. He lived in Nebraska for a year, then moved to South Dakota, and came to Wyoming on a cattle drive. He ended up with a ranch along the Belle Fourche River near Alva. In 1901, George married Lulu French, who was born in Wisconsin in 1877. Lulu and her family had migrated to Wyoming in 1883 and settled near Hulett. She taught school for five years around the Hulett and Aladdin area.

George and Lulu had six children. George died in 1928 and Lulu took over the ranch. She managed to hold onto it during the Depression when many around her were going under. Two of her sons, Ray and Eldon, remained on the home ranch. When Ray moved to Buffalo, Eldon took over the ranch. Eldon married Betty Sherrard and they had four children. Eldon died in 1999. Betty and her son, Marvin, remain on the ranch today. They raise cattle and grain.



Drawing by Marvin Nielsen of the George Nielsen homestead shack



# Nolan Ranch

## Upton, Weston County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Nolan family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

John Nolan was born in Ireland in 1855 and his family immigrated to America a few years later. They first settled in Pennsylvania and later moved to Minnesota. In 1885, he came to Fort Robinson, Nebraska to work, and stayed until 1888. The following twelve years, John worked for the railroad as a section foreman near Glenrock and then in Merino (now called Upton). He homesteaded near Soda Butte, six miles southwest of Upton, in 1900. He first raised sheep, then cattle and horses. John married Mary Ann Moran, of Minnesota, in 1879 and they had fourteen children but only five lived to adulthood. John served as a Representative from Weston County to the Wyoming State Legislature

and as a Weston County Commissioner. He died in 1920.

John and Mary's son, David, born in 1887, homesteaded next to his father's place near Soda Butte. He married Elisabeth Jost, from Presho, South Dakota, who had come to the area to claim her own homestead. David and Elisabeth's daughter, Mary Ann, born in 1916, accepted the Centennial Farm and Ranch award in 2006. The ranch site was chosen because of several natural springs on the property as well as good grassland. The original log house is still standing with the homestead house of Elisabeth Jost Nolan attached as the kitchen.

# John Novak Family Ranch

## Newcastle, Weston County



The Novak Ranch

As told by John and Veronica Novak

The first Novak on the Novak ranch was Albert, who homesteaded his section beginning in 1903. Albert Novak and his wife, Ludwiga, arrived in Cambria, Wyoming in 1898 after residing in Greensburg, Pennsylvania for five years. Albert and Ludwiga emigrated from Poland and were married in Pennsylvania in 1893. Albert was born in Poland in 1860; Ludwiga was born in Austria in 1871. They had three children while living in Pennsylvania and five children while living in Wyoming. Two children died in infancy.

Albert worked in the coalmines in Pennsylvania and Cambria. While residing in Cambria, he was able to homestead on Canyon Springs Prairie, with the land becoming his own on December 30, 1905. Albert then farmed full-time with his five sons. He raised crops of wheat, oats, barley, and hay; and pigs, chickens, and cattle. He used the timber on his land to build the house, barn and other buildings. Despite the successes of farming and raising a family, Albert also endured several losses. His daughter, Anna, died at the age of sixteen in 1910, his wife Luwiga died on July 22, 1911, and sons Joe and Albert Jr. died on August 7, 1914 by drowning in the Miller pond.

Sons Frank, John and Mike continued to reside on the Novak ranch and worked with their father on the ranch. Albert signed over the ranch to his three sons, with Frank later moving to his own ranch and Mike moving to California. Albert died on September 22, 1928, after turning over the ranch operations to his son John. Albert was known as a very hard-working, thrifty and charitable man.

John Novak married Margaret Dorhman in 1926. They had four children: Joan, born March 9, 1927; John Jr. born August 5, 1928; Joy, born June 25,



1930; and Albert C., born January 20, 1938. John and Margaret raised crops as Albert had, and John also had a sawmill operation. He later ran a trucking business which involved hauling timber and gravel for road construction. He also leased and ran the old Buckhorn Bar during the summer months where the Old Settler's picnics and dances were held.

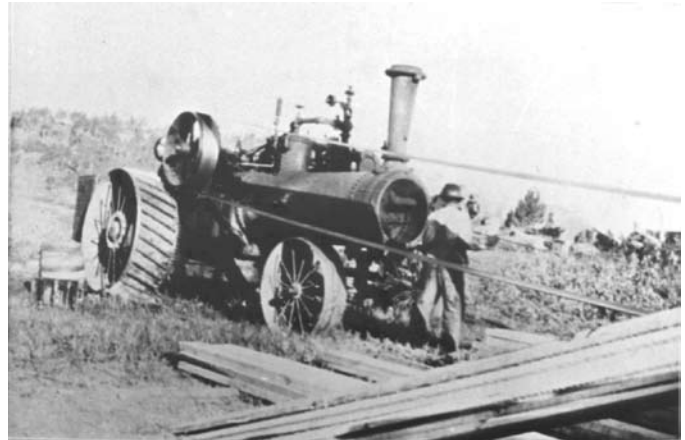
John expanded the Novak cattle operation by leasing public land with a partner near Moskee, Wyoming in the 1930s and 1940s. John was killed in a logging accident on August 3, 1944. His wife, Margaret, and his son, John, were able to keep the ranch operating with the help of family and friends. They supplemented their ranch income by driving the area school bus and by finishing the timber contract by the end of 1948.

Margaret married Ed Miller in 1946. He was a neighboring rancher, and they combined their ranch operations. Ed helped Margaret and John, Jr. run the Novak ranch and leased the Miller ranch from his mother. They ran Hereford cattle and had crops of wheat, oats, barley, and alfalfa hay. John, Jr. helped Ed with the sawmill and ranch operation from 1946 to 1948. John, Jr. then went to work in the oil fields in 1948, and 1949 in the Newcastle area. Margaret and Ed lived and worked on the Novak ranch until 1975. They retired, sold the cattle and farm equipment, and moved into town during the winter months. They leased the land to a neighbor for several years. Margaret died on October 14, 1988 and Ed died on January 15, 1991.

John Novak, Jr. married Veronica Dolan, a city girl from Brooklyn, New York, on April 12, 1953. He dropped the junior from his name at this time. To this union were born six children: Julia (Julie); Lise; John G.; Margaret (Peggy); William (Willie); and Eileen. John worked for many companies over



Margaret Novak



Novak brothers and others bringing a new threshing machine up Water Tank Hill to the Prairie, 1928



Margaret and Joan Novak

the years, mainly the post office, the refinery and trucking firms. He retired in 1986. During all of those years, John remained involved with the Novak ranch operations.

In 1986, John and Veronica Novak and John's sister, Joan Huston, began leasing the Novak ranch. They also sub-leased to a neighbor. John and Veronica also began purchasing sections of the ranch in 1986. They were eventually able to buy the property of the remaining family members. They completed some remodeling of the original Novak ranch house in 1992 and were able to move into the ranch house in 1993, in time to celebrate their forty years of marriage. All of the buildings, including the ranch house, were built of logs cut from the Novak land. The ranch house retains sections of the original log walls, even though additions were built over the year.

John and Veronica Novak continued to live at the ranch and leased out the farmland and pasture to neighbors. In the fall of 2004, they moved into Newcastle for the winter, and succeeding winters, and spent summer months at the ranch. Some of the Novak children are interested in continuing the ranch tradition.



Allis Chalmers tractor and Red River Special Threshing machine



# Pzinski Ranch

## Weston County



The Stanley Pzinski Ranch

As told by Judy Pzinski

**S**tanislaw Przybylski was born in Poland in 1863. He came to America with his new wife, Jadwiga, in 1888. They settled in Pennsylvania where Stanley worked as a miner. Sometime after moving to Pennsylvania, Stanley changed his last name to Pzinski since Przybylski was difficult to spell and pronounce. He decided to move west seeking work and a better life for his growing family. Stanislaw preceded the family to Cambria, and they arrived from Pennsylvania in 1902. He worked in the mines while acquiring a homestead in the Canyon Springs area, known as the Prairie, north of Newcastle. On weekends, Stanislaw walked the seventeen miles to the homestead to clear the land. The family continued to live in Cambria for four and one-half years. Stanislaw passed away in 1951.

Stanislaw's son, Stanley, born in 1898, helped his father with the farming and ranching along with his brothers. He inherited the ranch in 1938 and continued to purchase more land to enlarge the original home place. Stanley's son, Stanley Edward, now owns the ranch, a cow/calf operation, and produces hay, oats and wheat. He and his family live

in the house which was started in 1910. The two-story home features beautiful woodwork throughout, including a banister staircase and colonnades. Each main piece of wood is stamped on the back with 'Stanley Pzinski, August 12, 1910, Cambria.' The woodworking package was shipped via railcar from Montgomery Ward, located back east. The large barn, constructed in 1917, was built with fifty kegs of nails and features the Prairie/Western styling with the peaked roof and extended sides.



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Stanley Pzinski family and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

# Rabou Ranch

## Albin, Laramie County



George Rabou in wooly chaps in 1913

As told by Billard Dixie Rabou

**A**ugust Rabou, a tall, handsome French-Canadian (born 1843-died 1901) and Margaret Sheedy Rabou, a spunky Irish lass (born 1853 – died 1932), moved to Cheyenne from Kearney, Nebraska with their six children in 1881. The children were: M. Frank (born 1869-died 1928); Josephine (born 1872-died 1955); Addie, (born 1874-died 1949); Mary Ellen, (born 1877-died 1965); George, (born 1878- died 1961); and Elizabeth, (born 1880-died 1944). Two sons died in infancy. August worked as a master stonemason in Cheyenne, helping to construct the Capitol building, the Union Pacific Depot, and many homes in the area until his death in 1901.

It was August's last wish that his wife, Margaret, and their youngest son, George, follow their dream of starting a cattle and horse ranch. In 1901, they did! They purchased land west of Cheyenne in the Crystal Lake and Granite Canyon area and began their operation. However, due to extreme pressure from the city of Cheyenne, who wanted their property for the town's water supply, they sold out in 1905. In that same year, they found good ranching country four miles northwest of Albin to purchase and homestead. That first winter, Margaret and George lived in a tent on Bushnell Creek. It proved to be a bad winter, and they lost some of their livestock due to the difficult conditions.





Bob, Bill and Ed as small boys by the house

In the early 1900s, George bought the Lazy DT and the Bar Cross Slash brands for cattle and horses. Now they are a couple of Wyoming's oldest brands

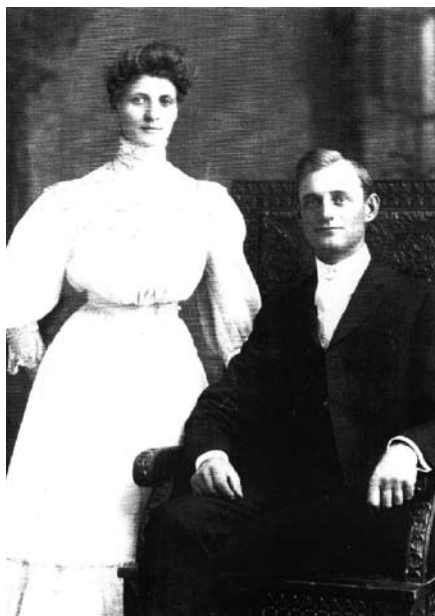
and are still used today. In 1906, George married Mable Piper of Cheyenne where she had been working at the Steam Laundry. George brought his bride to his homestead near Albin. They lived several years in a rock house, then moved into the two-story house at the main ranch headquarters, which is still occupied by Rabou descendents. Their first child, a son, died in infancy but their second son, Raymond Roy, was born in 1909 and died in 1969. In 1910, a daughter, Erma Josephine, was born. December of 1913 saw George riding all day in the hills checking cattle. When he got home that evening he got word that Mable, who was in Cheyenne expecting their next child, had gone into labor. So he quickly grained his dapple gray horse that he'd ridden all day, ate a sandwich, and started out the fifty miles to Cheyenne. He rode into Cheyenne just as the 6 a.m. whistle was blowing and found he had another son, Frank, born 1913- died 2002.

In 1938, Raymond married Lavon Mathews, born 1919-died 2005, and they had sons, Bob, born in 1939, and Bill, born in 1942, with a daughter, Margaret Josephine, born in 1946. Raymond was quite well known for his roping skills. In fact, Bob says "I never saw him miss!"

Erma was an army nurse for fourteen years and then was an RN at the hospital in Kimball, Nebraska for twenty-five years. She loved the ranch, was an



August Rabou 1800s



Wedding picture of Mable and George, 1906



Raymond as a boy



Bob and Bill by tool house with Lazy DT brand in 1990

excellent horsewoman, and was a big help on her days off, and into her retirement. She died in 1996.

Frank married Dorothy Anderson. They had a son, Ed, born in 1941- died 1999; and a daughter, Joan, born in 1945. Ed married Evy Nash in 1968 and they had a daughter, Wendy, born in 1969, and a son, Ronald, born in 1972. Joan married Fred Sipe and they currently live in Billings, Montana. Their son, Dustin, and his wife, Missy, have one daughter and they live in the Buffalo, Wyoming area.

George and his sons, Raymond and Frank, with diligence, and lots of hard work, through the Depression and many other trials, made the ranch grow and become a success.



Bob and Norma Rabou in 1986



Lee, Ramona, Zane and Cordett Willert in 2006



Rabou Centennial Ranch sign

In 1958, Bob married Norma Cowan. They have four children, Ramona, born in 1959, married Lee Willert and they have five children: Aimee, John, Travis, Zane, and Cordell. Carolee, born in 1960, married Lyle Smith of Dumas, Texas. Rex was born in 1975, and Roxanne in 1977. Roxanne has a son, Ray, and a daughter, Naomi.





Frank and Dorothy in 1983



Ed and Evy in early 1990s



Raymond on sorrel horse, Snip, at branding in the early 1960s

Bill married Sharon Sandridge and had a daughter, Stacy, born in 1972, who married local rancher, Andy Malm. The Malm's have recently purchased the Jelmer Johnson Ranch south of LaGrange, and Andy and Stacy are running it. They have three children: Katelin, Karissa, and Kaden. Bill was remarried in 1985, to Dixie Chesnut of Laramie, and they have lived and worked on the ranch ever since. Dixie keeps the ranch's records and books.

Margaret married Bob Hale of Malvern, Arkansas in 1968, and they have two sons: Roy, born in 1969, and Billy, born in 1972. Roy married Lori Burrow in 1990, and they have two sons, Preston and Logan.

For years the ranch raised quality Herefords in a cow/calf/yearling operation, but over the last several years have changed to the Angus breed, and a cow/calf program. The Quarter Horse-Thoroughbred cross horses raised through the 1950s were in great demand. Some of the colts were even shipped to England to be used as polo ponies because of their agility and stamina. They also made wonderful rope, arena, pleasure and ranch horses.

All through the generations, the Rabou men and women have made successes of their lives by being honest, intelligent, hardworking, and innovative in whatever they set out to do. The Rabous have continued their legacy by improving, incorporating new ideas of the times, and keeping the good work ethics of their parents and grandparents.



Raymond, Mable, Frank and Erma in 1969

Although we've chiefly mentioned the men, the Rabou women were certainly a contributing factor in the prosperity achieved. They have been everything from stock buyers, tractor drivers, horsewomen, gardeners, parts chasers, and truck drivers along with raising the children, making homes a safe haven, and mostly by backing their men through thick and thin.

Through the grace of God, His blessings, and watching over us daily, the ranch is continuing to thrive, and we are eternally grateful. Bob and Norma, Bill and Dixie, and Lee and Ramona Willert, who came to help the ranch in 2000, with their two sons, Zane and Cordell, are currently operating the Rabou Ranch LLC and carrying out their grandfather George's wishes to "Keep it together" as best as they can.



Raymond on Snip heeling calf at early 1960s branding



Bill and Dixie in 1985 under the "Rabou Ranch" sign made with arrowheads



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Bill and Bob Rabou and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



# Paddy Renner Ranch

## Meeteetse, Park County



The Paddy Renner Ranch

As told by Rori Renner

**H**enrich “Henry” Renner was born in Greenville, Green County, Tennessee on September 8, 1832. The family moved to Texas in 1855. Henry Renner married Ramen Fullingim in 1859 and she died in 1864 in Texas. He later married Mariam Barnes and they had nine children including: Thomas Addison “T.A.”, born 1866; Martha, born 1869; Carsie, born 1872; George Henry Harrison “George”, born 1876; and Emma, born 1881. Henry Renner served in the Confederate Army in Shoemaker’s Company D, 1<sup>st</sup> Frontier District in Texas. The family moved to Bentonville, Arkansas in 1868 and remained there farming until 1882. At that time, they set out for Pendleton, Oregon, traveling on the Oregon Trail and eventually homesteaded near Condon, Oregon where they stayed until 1898 or 1899.

In 1896, T. A. Renner came to northwest Wyoming in search of open land where he could run livestock. On April 20, 1897, George Renner and his cousins set out for Wyoming’s Big Horn Basin with 6,000 head of sheep. They trailed the sheep to the Snake River on the Oregon side where they loaded them on the train and took them to Montpelier, Idaho. From there, they trailed the sheep to Lost Cabin, Wyoming. They reached the Big Horn Basin about the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, settling on Gooseberry Creek near Meeteetse. The Renner family was the first to bring sheep to the Big Horn Basin from Oregon. T.A., Henry, Mariam, Martha and her husband, Dee Henry, Carsie and her husband, John Henry Doores, and Emma came to Wyoming later. Many of the family homesteaded and purchased property on Gooseberry Creek.

Henry Renner contracted an infection and died in 1903 and is buried at the Meeteetse Cemetery. T. A. Renner bought land near Burlington, Wyoming in 1904. T. A. married Catherine McMahon Wood in 1905 and they died in a flash flood in 1906. They are both buried in Meeteetse.

George Renner married Karene Kristensa Nielsen in 1900 and they had thirteen children including, Baby Girl; Clifton; Mariam; Daisy; Etta; Bill; Georgie; Marion; Carsie; Hoover; Everett; Kewpie; and Thomas "Tuff". George Renner moved to the Burlington place to assume management while his sisters- and brothers-in law maintained the Gooseberry homestead.

The family continued operating the ranch for many years until Clifton Renner, George's eldest son and

his wife, Grayce Feyhl, took over in 1935. Clifton and Grayce Renner had five children including: Clifton Addison, Jr., Patricia Beard, Lillian Keller, Paddy and Chris. Clifton Renner added to the family's holdings by purchasing land near the Gooseberry homestead. Clifton continued in the sheep business until the late 1940s when he sold his sheep and purchased cattle. Clifton began having health problems in the 1950s so turned day-to-day operations of the ranch over to Paddy Renner and Chris Renner. Paddy Renner and his children, Patrick, Rori, and Albert and his wife Rainy and their son, J.T. (sixth generation), along with Paddy's sister, Lillian, own and operate the original ranch on Gooseberry Creek today.



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Renner family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony



# Tavegia Ranch

## Osage, Weston County



U.S. Senator Craig Thomas, Tavegia family members and Governor Dave Freudenthal at the 2006 Centennial Ranch Ceremony

**I**talian-born Harry Tavegia wanted to come to America because he believed that a person had a better chance to get ahead here. In 1890, the seventeen year old immigrated to the United States and first worked in Detroit, pushing a wheelbarrow. He returned to Italy to serve in the army for a year but then came back to America because he liked it better than his native land. He ended up in Cambria, Wyoming, working in the coal mines.

Harry sent back to Italy for Mary Purcelli, whom he married in 1900 in Newcastle. He purchased his original parcel of land in 1905 and moved Mary and his two young daughters to the homestead on Soldier Creek. Harry also went into a ranch partnership on Skull Creek with his brother, Tony, and the family relocated to a log cabin that is still standing. Harry was a progressive man. He had

the house wired for electricity when the first thirty-two volt light plant came on the market. The Tavegias also had one of the first motor driven washing machines.

The Tavegia family grew to include nine children, one of whom, Merle, continued the Tavegia ranching tradition when he returned from service in World War II. Merle married a schoolteacher, Winifred Butcher, from Warrensburg, Missouri. They continued to add to the ranch as Harry had also done. Merle and Winifred had two children, Patricia and Harry. Today, Harry and his wife, Dana Mann-Tavegia, run the ranch, which produces beef cattle, hay and small grains. They live in the house that was built in 1912 to replace the old log cabin. The original barn is also still in use.

# Webster Ranch, Inc.

## Meeteetse, Park County

Charles Arthur Webster was born in Montpelier, Idaho on November 19, 1875, one of six children. His father, “Web” Webster, first ventured west when he traveled to California in 1859 in search of gold and had even spent some time in Wyoming Territory in 1868.

Charles spent his youth in Idaho and attended college in Utah. In 1900, Charles decided to relocate to a place where he could get ahead. His father suggested the Big Horn Basin of Wyoming, which he remembered from his travels in 1868 and thought it had excellent grazing potential. Charles bought a one hundred and sixty acre property on the lower Greybull River near Meeteetse. He then returned to Idaho and trailed fifteen hundred head of cattle and his horses back to Wyoming. Over the years he continued to purchase more land and enlarged his ranch.

Charles married Agnes Mae Bennion in 1902 and they had five children: Clyde; Owen; Gertrude; Margaret; and Bud. All of them worked on the ranch during their youth. Chores included milking cows; chopping wood; filling the coal bucket for the cook stove; gathering and trailing cattle; and tending the sheep camps in the summer.

Charles and his father, Web, who moved to the area in 1903, both became prominent citizens of the county. Web became president of the Burlington State Bank and built up his own ranch near Otto. Charles became president of the same bank in 1931 and also served a number of terms as County Commissioner.

Two of Charles’ sons, Owen and Clyde, purchased the ranch from their father in 1935, and Clyde eventually became the sole owner. Clyde’s three sons, Charlie, Dan and Gene, were raised on the ranch which eventually became a family

corporation in 1963. Dan and Charlie, along with their wives, ran the ranch until the early 1980s when Steve Webster, Charlie’s son, became ranch manager. Brian Webster became ranch manager in 1994 and continued in that role until the ranch was sold in 2007.

One of the highlights of the ranch’s history was the 100<sup>th</sup> year celebration held in 2000; over one thousand people attended! The party was held on the original site that Charles Webster purchased in 1900.

The decision to sell the Webster Ranch was not an easy one. In a situation familiar to many Wyoming ranch families, the large ranch was too valuable for the younger generation to be able to buy, and ownership in the ranch corporation expanded as new generations of Webster offspring were born. Like any Centennial Ranch, it was heartbreaking to see the ranch that generations have struggled for over the past one hundred years, go out of family ownership.



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Photo courtesy Wyoming State Archives