



Longhorns are prized for their tip-to-tip horn distances (follow the curve). These horns measure more than 80 inches (see steer at left).

Conrad Warren's Herefords graze in a knee-deep pasture, 1950 (above). PHOTOS: NPS

Cowboys and Cattlemen

Wide open spaces, the hard-working cowboy, his spirited cow pony, and vast herds of cattle are among the strongest symbols of the American West. In 1972 Congress set aside Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site as a working cattle ranch that preserves these symbols and commemorates the role of cattlemen in American history.

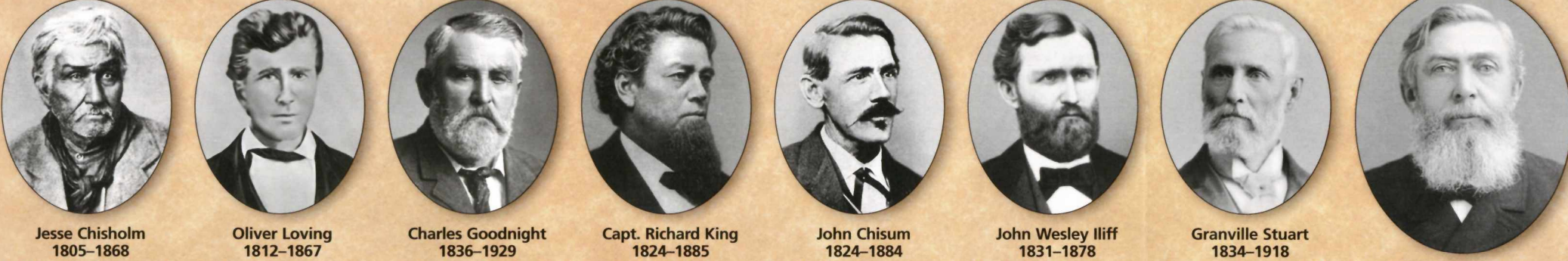
Cattle were introduced to the American Southwest by the Spanish in the early 1500s. British colonists brought cattle to North America's East Coast in the 1600s. Water and land made the difference between farming methods in the East and the open range methods of the West. In the East abundant rainfall created pastures that could support large herds of cattle. Some western lands received fewer than 10 inches of rainfall a year and required more than 100 acres to sustain each cow.

Before barbed wire, stockmen couldn't fence enough acreage to support their livestock. Instead, a system of open range grazing evolved. Cattle were turned out on public land and left to graze wherever they found grass. Limited in their roaming only by rivers, rough country, or waterless stretches, the cattle might spread over a million acres. Cattle from many owners mingled, leading to the establishment of roundup associations and grazing districts. As the open range system expanded north from its roots in the Southwest, American cowboys learned herding, roping, and other skills from the Spanish *vaquero*, even adapting that word to buckaroo.

Cattle Barons—a New Breed of Entrepreneur

In the mid-1800s news of mining, timber, land, and business opportunities brought a flood of immigrants and fortune seekers west. Completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 helped expand growing industries. Burgeoning towns in the West and East needed food, and a new style of businessman took hold—the western cattle baron. In 1859 Johnny Grant drove 400 head of cattle from Deer Lodge Valley to Sacramento, Calif. By the 1880s Conrad Kohrs was shipping 10,000 head of cattle annually by rail to the stockyards in Chicago. But the rapid expansion of the cattle industry had its problems. Harsh weather, disease, rustling, economic fluctuations, homesteaders, and fencing all took their toll on what had begun as a get-rich-quick scheme.

True cattlemen adapted. Each state had its stockgrowers association, and a national cattlemen's association looked after their interests in Washington, D.C. Research determined the causes of devastating cattle diseases, and new vaccines decreased losses from blackleg, Texas fever, and other diseases. State and national legislation and programs came to regulate the cattle industry. Land management changed, too, and grazing on public land, which had been free in the boom years, became subject to grazing fees. As the West became settled, fenced, and farmed, many open range cattle outfits faded away. Yet, even today, cattle graze on hundreds of thousands of acres of public and private land in the West—and the American cowboy still rides.



Jesse Chisholm
1805-1868
Scot-Cherokee, renowned Indian interpreter, trader. Chisholm traveled to his trading posts on the trail that became his namesake. This trail carried nearly half of all cattle driven from Texas to Kansas.

Oliver Loving
1812-1867
Trader, pioneer of cattle drives. Loving sent first herd of Texas longhorns to a Northern market in 1858. This venture a financial success, he traded for more cattle, building large herds for market.

Charles Goodnight
1836-1929
Cowboy turned cattle baron, founder of JA Ranch in Texas. In 1866 Goodnight and Loving, 18 cowboys, and 2,000 longhorns blazed a new trail from Texas to Denver.

Capt. Richard King
1824-1885
Livestock capitalist, founder of King Ranch in Texas. During the Civil War he supplied beef and provisions to the Confederates. Flush with war profits King amassed nearly one million acres of range land.

John Chisum
1824-1884
Cattleman. His empire extended 150 miles along the Pecos River in New Mexico. By 1875 more than 80,000 cattle bore his famous Jinglebob earmark—a notch that split the ear, causing a portion to dangle.

John Wesley Iliff
1831-1878
Merchant, cattleman, banker. In the 1870s his business sold beef to railroad crews, miners, and Indian agencies. At the peak of his empire he could ride all week (one way) without leaving his ranch lands.

Granville Stuart
1834-1918
Owner with partners of DHS Ranch. In 1883 Kohrs and Bielenberg bought a major part of DHS Ranch, the largest cattle deal to date in Montana. Stuart's journals included drawings of Montana life.

Conrad Kohrs
1835-1920
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA



Theodore Roosevelt
1858-1919
Roosevelt was 25 when he visited North Dakota in 1883 on a hunting trip. While there he was captivated by the open-range cattle business and invested in the Maltese Cross Ranch. He returned in 1884 and bought his own spread, Elkhorn Ranch.

Dream back beyond the cramping lanes to glories that have been—the camp smoke on the sunset plains, the riders loping in: Loose rein and rowelled heel to spare, the wind our only guide, for youth was in the saddle there with half a world to ride.

From *The Passing of the Trail* by Badger Clark, poet of the American West and Poet Laureate, South Dakota, 1937-1957

Life of the Cowboy

Often small and wiry, usually in his teens or early twenties, the open range cowboy craved the adventure of trailing cattle hundreds of miles and the challenge of rounding up half-wild stock on the unfenced range. (See portrait of cowboy at right.) Although the work was hard, a long day in the saddle and two hours of night herd was balanced by the companionship of his friends, hearty meals at the chuckwagon, and, at the end of a long drive a trip to town to enjoy the \$30 to \$40 per month his hard work had brought him.

From his high-crowned hat and silk bandana to his leather chaps and jingling spurs, his outfit proclaimed him part of an elite and independent breed. The horses he rode may have been his employer's, but his saddle was his own—an item of such pride that to say he had "sold his saddle" meant his cowboy and trail days were over.

At a roundup or on a 1,500-mile, five-month trail drive the chuck wagon (right) was the most important piece of equipment in the cattle industry—and the cook was the most important person. A good cook ensured that the men were well-fed and productive workers.

Charles M. Russell had two loves—riding the range and drawing. In 1882 this cowboy artist began riding night herd for Granville Stuart's DHS outfit, earning about \$40 a month. It was a lonely job, but it gave Russell time by day to observe and paint Indians, horses, and cowboys at work.



Bronc to Breakfast, watercolor by Charles M. Russell. Russell often included his self-portrait as a way to show that he actually experienced the cowboy life depicted in his paintings. He is at far right wearing a red bandana.

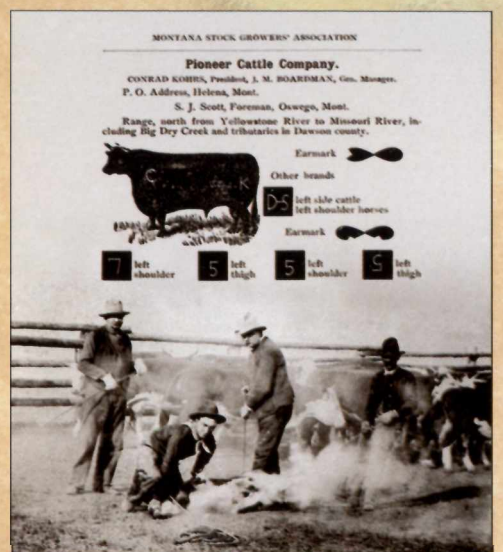
PAINTING (ABOVE) MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, MACKAY COLLECTION; COWBOY PORTRAIT (RIGHT) DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY, WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTION



Written in Fire—Brands and Ownership

A rancher's brand was his reputation, his cowboys' pride, and his cows' return address. More than 50,000 brands were registered in Montana at the beginning of this century. When cattle from different owners mix together there must be a way of identifying them, and a registered brand is as individual as a license plate.

During open range days, tens of thousands of animals from hundreds of owners mingled on common ranges. Each spring ranchers worked together to gather all the cattle in a roundup district. Cowboys heated the rancher's branding irons in a fire. When an unbranded calf was separated from the bunch, its mother naturally came to protect it. Her brand was called out and that iron taken from the fire and applied to the calf. The calf was also earmarked, a specific notch cut into its ear for extra identification. Today 98 percent of Montana cattle are still branded, but earmarking is no longer practiced.



John Bielenberg brands C and K onto a calf (above). Other brands used at the CK Ranch are shown below. Conrad Kohrs, age 80, examines a ranch jackleg fence. (below left).

A Kingdom of Cattle

Conrad Kohrs was the Cattle King of Montana, but it was a kingdom without borders and his subjects were the cattle that ranged freely across millions of acres of public land. Born in Germany in 1835, Kohrs left home at 15 and sailed the world as a cabin boy. The quest for gold led him to California, Canada, and, in 1862, that part of the Idaho Territory that would become southwest Montana. There he made his fortune—not by panning for gold—but by raising cattle.

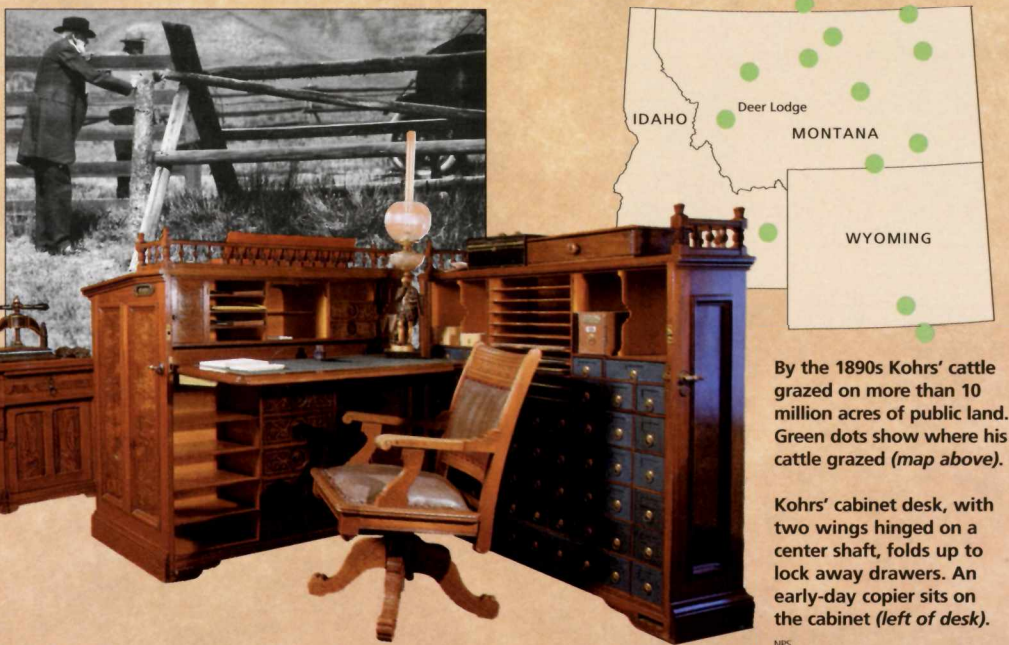
Other cattlemen preceded Kohrs onto the open range, and many others would follow. Johnny Grant and a handful of other early settlers had been wintering cattle in Montana's western valleys since the 1850s.

Conrad Kohrs arrived in the territory with only the clothes on his back and what he could carry in his bedroll—and he needed money. He had learned the rudiments of the butchering trade from relatives in the business in New York and Iowa, and he quickly found work as a butcher's assistant. Kohrs soon owned his own shops in many gold camps. Johnny Grant sold him cattle to supply the shops, and, in 1866, Grant sold his ranch to Kohrs. Grant moved to Carmen, Manitoba, in his native Canada, but he left behind a legacy of stock-raising in the sheltered, grassy valleys of southwest Montana.

Conrad Kohrs began building his empire in Deer Lodge Valley. In time he acquired 30,000 acres at the home ranch, where he raised fine breeding stock, both cattle and horses. When the near-extinction of bison on the northern plains opened a sea of grass to cattlemen, Kohrs ranged cattle from Colorado to Canada, sharing these scattered ranges with other stockmen. The shared nature of the range required close cooperation among all cattlemen and led Kohrs and other ranchers to found the Montana Stockgrowers Association in 1884.

For the next quarter of a century Kohrs and his half-brother, John Bielenberg, were influential in the evolution of the cattle industry and the politics of Montana. Kohrs was a delegate to Montana's constitutional convention of 1889 and helped draft the constitution that led to statehood.

As the open range system declined, Kohrs adapted to a mix of farming and open range grazing. In 1909, long after the boom years, Kohrs' cattle sales topped \$500,000. In later years he sold off most of his holdings, having achieved his version of the American dream. Conrad Kohrs died in 1920, and John Bielenberg in 1922. For a time the ranch was run by a family trust. In 1932 Kohrs' grandson, Conrad Warren, began a new era as manager and then, in 1940, as owner of the ranch.



By the 1890s Kohrs' cattle grazed on more than 10 million acres of public land. Green dots show where his cattle grazed (map above).

Kohrs' cabinet desk, with two wings hinged on a center shaft, folds up to lock away drawers. An early-day copier sits on the cabinet (left of desk).

Settling the Valley

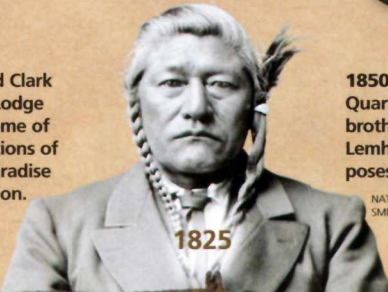
The mountain valley Johnny Grant settled in 1859 was a land caught between eras and cultures. Considered Flathead (Salish and Kootenai) territory by the Federal Government, the valley had long been used by many tribes as a route to hunting and trading areas. Early pioneers that settled in Deer Lodge Valley were Mexican and Métis, a cultural blend of French-Canadian and tribal people, attracted by fur trading. As the fur trade faded into memory, gold mining and livestock industries attracted new settlers.



Johnny Grant
1831-1907
John F. Grant was 35 years old when this photo was taken in 1866. His marriage to women of several Indian tribes helped make possible his peaceful settlement in the valley.

1850s Johnny Grant and Quarra marry. Quarra's brother, Chief Tendo, a Lemhi Shoshone Indian, poses for a portrait (left).

1804-06 Lewis and Clark pass close to Deer Lodge Valley; take back some of the earliest descriptions of this fur trapper's paradise to the growing nation.



1861-1865 American Civil War depletes cattle supplies in the Mississippi valley, creating a need in eastern markets. Growing cattle industry responds.

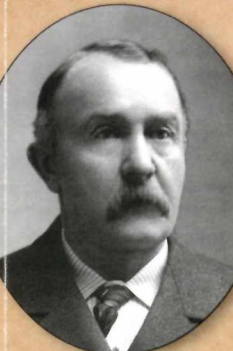
1800

1825

1850

Powerful Partnerships

John Bielenberg was Conrad Kohrs' younger half-brother and a full partner in their diverse business interests. Much of Kohrs' time was taken up with mining, water rights, banking, and the public life of an entrepreneur. Bielenberg concentrated on the daily management of their cattle empire. He sought to improve the breeding of horses and cattle. Crossing Thoroughbred studs with native mares, he bred cow ponies famed for their stamina on roundups. His 1900 observation about cattle, "Herefords are the coming breed for Montana," was prophetic.



1862 Johnny Grant builds "first good house" in Deer Lodge Valley. Four years later Conrad Kohrs buys the home and ranch for \$19,200.

1860-1870s Homestead Act passes, new settlers want cheap, durable fencing; first U.S. patent for barbed wire; open-range grazing continues.

1875

1886-1887 Hard winter kills hundreds of thousands of cattle. Some ranchers lose 95 percent of their herds. Kohrs loses 60 percent of his valley herd.

1900

1880-1900 Increasing use of barbed wire to enclose farms signals end of open-range grazing; ranchers develop ways of producing and harvesting quality hay.

1925

Furthering a Legacy

Conrad Kohrs Warren was born into one of the most famous ranch families of the 19th century, but the days of open range and cattle drives were over. When he was hired to manage the Kohrs ranch in 1932, only 1,000 acres and a few hundred head of cattle remained. A cattleman at heart he honored his family's ranching legacy while running the ranch with the new methods of the 20th century. In 1952 he was elected president of the Montana Stockgrowers Association that his grandfather helped found 66 years earlier.



Conrad K. Warren
1907-1993
Warren was renowned for his love of animals, commitment to the livestock industry, and resolve to preserve the ranch, artifacts, records, and lore of his grandfather and great-uncle.

1940 Conrad Warren's stock-raising operation is nationally acclaimed for its Hereford cattle and purebred Belgian horses. Warren buys ranch.

1950

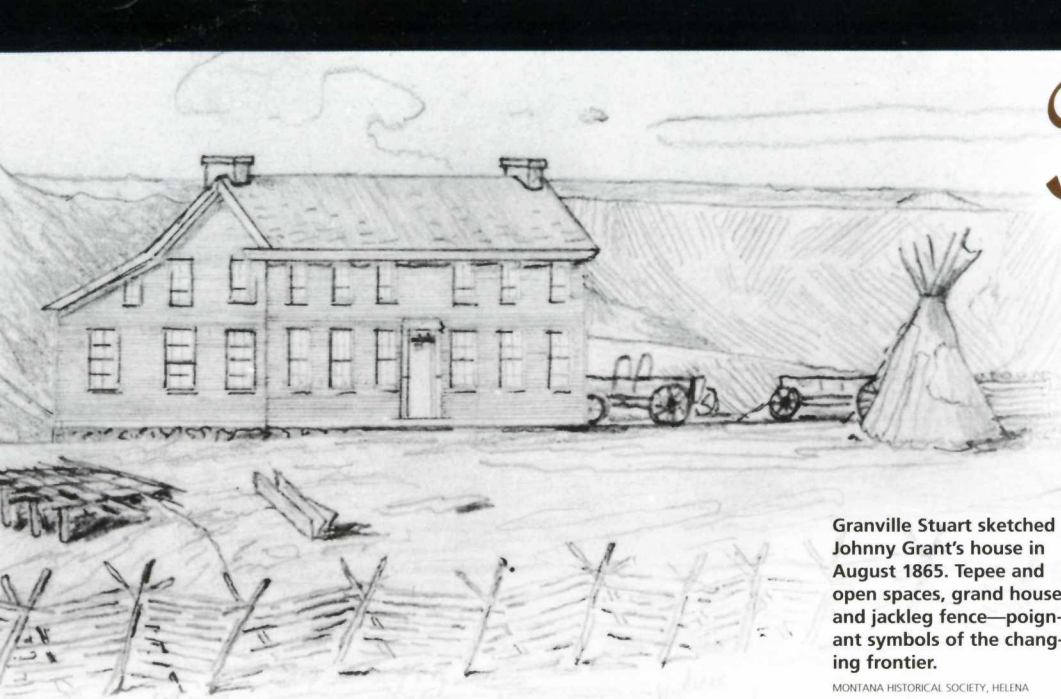
1977 Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site opens to the public; members of Kohrs, Bielenberg, and Warren families attend festivities.

1993 Conrad Warren dies at age 85; casket taken by horse-drawn wagon to Hillcrest Cemetery, Deer Lodge. (Wagon is on display at ranch.)

1975

2000s Stewardship. The NPS, community, and volunteers work to protect the ranch's natural and cultural resources for future generations.

2000



Granville Stuart sketched Johnny Grant's tepee in August 1865. Tepee and open spaces, grand house and jackleg fence—poignant symbols of the changing frontier.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA

Old World Meets New

A girlhood in Hamburg, Germany, did little to prepare Augusta Kruse Kohrs for her experience as a pioneer bride that included milking cows, making soap and candles, cooking, and keeping house for hired hands and her husband. Yet, even during the hard work of the early years in her new home, she preserved much of the heritage of her former homeland. As the family prospered she acquired fine belongings, supervised a staff, and valued both the New and the Old World, balancing the opportunities of America with the music, art, and culture of Europe.



Augusta Kohrs 1849–1945

Proud, tall, and beautiful, 25-year-old Augusta poses for a portrait. Briefly childhood acquaintances in Germany, Augusta and Conrad dated for about three weeks before they married in Iowa on February 23, 1868.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY, HELENA



Wilhelmine Schuchardt (in 1890 above). Wilhelmine, family cook and housekeeper, lived upstairs in the ranch house. Just 4 feet 10 inches tall she used a folding step-ladder chair, now called "Wilhelmine's Chair," to reach high cupboards in the kitchen.

Augusta Kohrs loved sewing. As a young homemaker she made beautiful clothes for her children and later specialized in intricate handwork. Augusta's needlework footstool won First Premium at the 1870 Montana Territorial Fair (above).

Augusta embroidered this wool saddle pad (above) for her brother-in-law John Bielenberg. The 1893 Kohrs and Bielenberg Stock Farm Catalog listed 31 Thoroughbred horses, highlighting the importance of horse breeding to the ranch.

Johny Bielenberg's prize-winning horses were in demand throughout Montana and beyond. His Thoroughbreds competed in races as far East as the Belmont racetrack in New York state.

A Frontier Family

The upbringing of the Kohrs children differed from that of many ranch children. They had a governess, learned German, and traveled abroad. Chores common to many children—chopping wood, pumping water, feeding livestock—were not part of their routine. Anna and Katharine learned needlepoint at which their mother excelled; William showed a talent for art. Anna kept close ties with ranching by marrying John Boardman, a rancher associated with Kohrs in livestock enterprises. In the end it was Katharine's son, Conrad Warren, who saved the ranch and was most at home on the range.



William Kruse (age seven above left). Upon the birth of their son in 1879 Kohrs noted, "We had great joy over our boy." William traveled extensively with his family. William went to New York to attend college and died there of appendicitis at age 21.

Katharine Christine (age 16 above middle). Katharine married Dr. Otey Warren in 1901; their son Conrad Warren was born in 1907.

Anna Catherine (age 18 above right). Anna's husband John Boardman and Dr. Warren served in the Montana state senate.

Conrad Warren (age 6 top) and **Conrad Kohrs** (age 79). Conrad Warren was just seven months old when his father died. Conrad and his grandfather Conrad Kohrs developed a friendship that set the stage for young Con's love and preservation of the ranch.

Preserving a Way of Life

Sometimes it takes someone from outside the story to see the importance of a family's history. It was Nell, Conrad Warren's wife, who began recording the family history she had learned from Augusta. Nell cared for their extraordinary collection of antiques and documents, while her husband concentrated on ranching in difficult times that included the Great Depression and World War II. And it was Nell who urged her husband to contact the National Park Service as they sought to preserve the historic Grant-Kohrs ranch beyond their lifetimes.



Nell Warren 1911–1979

Nell studied the extensive records of Kohrs and Bielenberg, protected their possessions, and compiled a history of their business operations. Because of her efforts there is a rare, intact record of the cattle industry that spans nearly 150 years. (Nell age 23)



Tom Hooban (age about 30 above right). Hooban, one of Kohrs' most trusted foremen, led cattle drives and oversaw ranch hands. A close friend (Kohrs said he was "witty and full of fun") Hooban joined the family in Philadelphia for the nation's 1876 Centennial celebration.

Foreman Hooban kept a journal, a common practice in the 1800s (left). Some pages describe trail drives: bad weather, lack of water, lost cattle. These pages dated December 1880 and January 1881 note day-to-day expenses: food, tobacco, clothes, and salaries.

Kohrs and Bielenberg kept detailed records and copied documents with this letterpress (above right). They wrote letters with a special ink, placed them into the press along with a damp sheet of translucent paper and squeezed the sheets, transferring ink to the second sheet.

Correspondence and business records were bound in letterpress journals (note sheer pages above). Here on October 9, 1914, Bielenberg tells a potential buyer, "We have a nice lot of year old Bulls & Shorthorns, which we are holding at \$125 per head."



Moseying Around: The Ranch Today

Exploring the Grounds You are invited to tour the ranch on your own. This illustrated map identifies the main buildings.

Take time to notice little things—feel fresh air on your face, listen for birds, count colors in the sky and fields, observe textures of wood and leather, smell the sweet aroma of horses and hay.

Beyond the Clark Fork River (named for William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame) is the Flint Creek Range, with Mount Powell the highest at 10,200 feet. In winter these mountains catch much of the eastbound storms, leaving the valley relatively free of snow. This is one reason why Johnny Grant and Conrad Kohrs settled here—their cattle and horses could graze all winter in "this luxuriant grassy valley."

- Ranch House** 1862 / 1890 Johnny Grant built the white portion of the house in 1862. It was a trading post downstairs and a residence upstairs. In 1890 Conrad Kohrs built the brick wing, adding a formal dining room, large kitchen, a second bathroom, and bedrooms. Augusta Kohrs acquired the elegant furnishings over several decades. Coal to heat the house was stored in the shed behind the back door of the brick addition.
- Bunkhouse Row** 1862 / 1907 These buildings were central to the ranch. Cowboys and ranch hands ate and slept here and whiled away evening hours swapping stories, mending gear, and playing cards.
- Ice House / Tack Room** 1880s / 1930s Before the 1930s, ice cut from ponds in winter was stored here for summer use. When refrigeration made the ice house obsolete in 1935, it became a tack room for horse gear. The added room was the summer home of Ham Sam, the Chinese cook.
- Garage / Blacksmith Shop** 1935 Conrad Warren stored gas-powered vehicles here. It also served as a repair shop and a place to shoe horses.
- Thoroughbred Barn** 1935 Kohrs built this barn as a stable for Thoroughbreds. Conrad Warren used it for his show cattle. Today it houses the park's collection of antique wagons.
- Leeds Lion Barn** 1885 There are several stallion barns on the ranch, each with its own hay loft and corral. To prevent fighting each barn stabled only one stallion. This barn was named for a famous English Shire draft horse owned by Kohrs.
- Feed Lot and Sheds** 1930s Con Warren added this part of the ranch when he began raising Hereford cattle.
- Chicken Coop** 1930s Chickens provided meat and eggs. Hens laid eggs in nesting boxes, perched on roosting bars at night.
- Buggy Shed** 1883 This shed once adjoined the east end of bunkhouse row. It was moved in 1907 to make way for the railroad tracks.
- Draft Horse Barn** 1870 Kohrs and Bielenberg raised several breeds of draft horses—Shires, Percheron-Normans, and Clydesdales—to do the heavy chores.
- Dairy** 1932 Dairy cows were milked here. In the 1930s Conrad Warren sold milk to the Deer Lodge Creamery.
- Oxen Barn** 1870 After draft horses replaced oxen, this barn sheltered other livestock but kept its original name.
- Bielenberg Barn** 1880 Young cows having their first calves were often kept here so that ranch hands could make sure the calving (birthing) went well.
- Warren House** 1934 Conrad and Nell Warren's house was a wedding gift from Conrad's grandmother, Augusta Kohrs. Today it holds park administrative offices.
- Warren Barn** 1930s The barn housed grains and Con Warren's prize Herefords. (Closed.)

Beaver Slide Hay Stacker Hay stored in huge stacks sheds water naturally. Haystacks can contain 50 tons or more, and getting hay into these massive piles is a challenge. You can see this horse-run stacker in operation in the harvesting season in August. Ask for details.

Railroad Tracks 1879 / 1907 Utah Northern Railroad built a line through Deer Lodge in 1879. The Milwaukee Railroad arrived in 1907.

Fences Did you notice the styles of fences? Pickets enclose the ranch house. Boards and barbed wire mark pastures. Jacklegs (pines resting on crossed posts) were the main style on early Montana ranches.

About Your Visit

Visitor Center Start here for information and to sign up for a tour of the ranch house. The visitor center and ranch are open daily, except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

Guided Tours of the House The only way to see the ranch house is with a guided tour. Tour size is limited, and you may have to wait. You may visit the grounds until your tour begins.

Activities This is a working ranch (not a dude ranch or petting farm) with year-round chores directed by the seasons. The ranch can bustle with activities (branding, haying, and more) or seem quiet. Programs and ranger-led activities are offered seasonally. Visit our website to find out about special events. www.nps.gov/grko

Accessibility The first floor of the main house, restrooms, and some paths are accessible for visitors with disabilities. Special parking is available. Contact the park for details.

Safety and Regulations Please help us preserve this park. • Smoking and pets are allowed only in the parking lot. • Do not touch historic objects. • Stay in designated areas and watch where you walk. • Livestock can be unpredictable. Do not approach livestock. • Do not climb on fences or enter corrals or pastures. • Close gates behind you. • Be careful on the railroad tracks; the east track is active. • All historic and natural features are protected by federal law. • Emergencies: call 911.



Beyond the Ranch

Grant-Kohrs-related sites in Deer Lodge, Mont. • The 1910 home of Nicholas Bielenberg, 801 Milwaukee Avenue. Half-brother of Conrad Kohrs. • William K. Kohrs Library, 501 Missouri Avenue. William, Conrad Kohrs' only son, died in 1901. • Hillcrest Cemetery, W. Milwaukee Road. Burial sites for Augusta, Conrad, son William Kohrs, John Bielenberg, and grandson Conrad Warren. • Old Prison Museum, 1106 Main Street. Site of the Montana Territorial Prison. Kohrs served on the board of prison commissioners in the mid-1870s. **Kohrs-related sites in Helena, Mont.** • Home of Conrad and Augusta Kohrs, 804 Dearborn Avenue. Kohrs bought the home in 1900. • Montana Historical Society Museum, 225 N. Roberts St. Collection of oils, watercolors, bronzes, and illustrated letters by artist Charles M. Russell.

Visiting Other National Parks While in the West you may wish to visit these parks (see map at left). • Glacier National Park. • Big Hole National Battlefield. • Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks. • Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve. • Ask at the visitor center about other western heritage sites.



For More Information Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site 266 Warren Lane Deer Lodge, MT 59722 406-846-2070 email: GRKO_Information@nps.gov www.nps.gov/grko

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site is one of more than 380 parks in the National Park System. The National Park Service cares for these special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage. To learn more about national parks visit www.nps.gov.

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