

History of the Plattoga Ranch

The land had not been surveyed when John "Jack" Kurtz homesteaded the Plattoga Ranch. John was referred to as a squatter, because without the land being surveyed he was forced to guess where his 160 acres were. He had a pretty good idea where his land laid and so he settled there with his family. The land was finally surveyed in 1879, and he soon knew exactly what he owned.

John Kurtz was a very driven man. He not only ranched, but he also worked as a blacksmith. John was also very interested in a mine that he had found in 1880. He was sure that someday it would become a mine with a lot of money involved, so he worked for seventeen years trying to make something out of it. He became so involved with the mine that he had to mortgage his ranch. Despite the loss of his ranch, John was still determined to find a partner for his mine. Finally in the late months of 1897, John found a partner and the copper and gold mine opened as the Kurtz and Chatterton Mine.

The ranch however, was now in the hands of Benjamin Ridding. His father owned the ranches near Plattoga and Benjamin was his only living son. Benjamin's father influenced him to purchase the ranch. Benjamin ran the ranch for many years, and then passed it to his daughter Ruth who married Russell Baldwin. They eventually sold the ranch to Wilcox and Choate. They sold in the 1950's to Fred Glenn. Glenn ran the ranch for quite some time and then sold to Gary Jenny. Jenny sold the ranch to John Andrikopoulos. John Andrikopoulos eventually sold the ranch to Bob Magness of TCI. In 1999, Bob Magness sold the Plattoga Ranch to John Malone, and it became part of the Silver Spur Land and Cattle, LLC.

Trowbridge

Elton and Irene Trowbridge bought the YL Ranch in 1936. The ranch at one time was a stagecoach stop. In 1936, the building used as the cookhouse for the stagecoach passengers, was changed into the bunkhouse. The roof of the new bunkhouse was sod and on it grew cactus that bloomed profusely each spring. The family built a log four-room home, which had no electricity or running water, but had a hand pump out in the front yard.

The ranch consisted of 750 acres of which 250 acres are irrigated. The ranch had wonderful irrigation rights. It even had too much water in spots, so Elton used dynamite to create a ditch. The ditch that Elton created drained water into Cow Creek. The fields were soon lush and green with alfalfa and small grains. It produced 300-400 tons of alfalfa per year.

The ranch started out raising Commercial Herefords, but they didn't provide necessary income. In 1939, the Trowbridges bought a herd of about 35 Holstein cows. The ranch became a dairy farm. Milk was placed in ten-gallon cans, and was hauled to the Carbon County Creamery or Adam Dairy in Rawlins, Wyoming. When the dairy operation was sold in 1957, the enlarged herd was producing over 150 gallons of milk daily.

In 1956, the Trowbridges purchased the Lloyd Bashore Ranch five miles south west of Encampment. This ranch furnished pasture to compliment the productive Trowbridge Ranch on Cow Creek. The dairy farm, which the family had operated since 1939, was dispersed at an auction in 1957. Marketing had become a problem for the valley milk producers, and with the purchase of the additional land, it was an opportune time to change from Holstein cattle to Herefords for the Trowbridge family. Tom Trowbridge, Elton's son, ran the ranch until 1972. He sold it to Allen and Jill Holbert in 1971. Holbert's split the ranch with John Crowes, whom eventually sold to John Malone, and it became the property of the Silver Spur Land and Cattle, LLC.

History of the Elk Horn

In 1883, Charles Wilcox traveled alone to the Encampment valley. He decided to leave his wife in Iowa until he got settled on "71" of the L7 Ranch. The Swan Land and Cattle Company owned the L7 Ranch, and Charles was hired as a ranch hand. He worked for a year, and in 1884, he decided that he was settled enough for his wife to join him. Mary Wilcox, Charles' wife, and John Wilcox, Charles' brother, moved to the L7 Ranch. John and Charles Wilcox worked for the Swan Land and Cattle Company until it moved to Little Snake River, Wyoming.

After Swan's moved, Charles and John Wilcox both homesteaded different ranches in the Encampment area. John Wilcox homesteaded a ranch, which is now known as the Hanging Bull Unit of the Silver Spur Land and Cattle, LLC. From the time that John had been working on the L7 Ranch, he frequently discussed his bewilderment that the ranchers in the area did not use fences. He hesitantly allowed his own cattle on the homestead to move about without fences, and was amazed that they would go long distances and always return. The homestead alone was not producing enough income for John, so he did a number of other things for extra earnings. One of the most significant things John did was build a stable in Saratoga. John Wilcox married Emma Baggott. Emma was an only child, and her parents owned the Baggott Ranch. Emma's parents wanted the Baggott Ranch, now known as the Flying Diamond, to remain in the family. In order for John and Emma to manage the Baggott Ranch, they had to sell John's homestead and move. They sold John's homestead to Loski D. Peck, and moved to the Baggott Ranch. L. D. Peck was from Minnesota, and like John, in order to support himself, he had to do construction work as well as ranch. L. D. Peck was a very social man, and the Peck family had many Sunday Rodeos for the neighbors to attend. L. D. Peck also held dances and in the fall, and he would hold book trades at his home on the John Wilcox homestead. Roy, L. D. Peck's son, soon took over the ranch with his wife Ella. They built a white house that is currently the nucleus to the Hanging Bull Lodge of the Spur Outfitters. Roy and Ella Peck sold the ranch and their house to Laurence Needham around 1945.

Charles Wilcox homesteaded what is now known as the Elk Horn Ranch. The ranch didn't bring Charles quite enough income to support his family, so Charles also drove the Stagecoach from Walcott to Encampment. The Stagecoach was known as the Scribner Stage. Charles sold the ranch in 1926 to William J. Horn. William ran the ranch, as well as a dairy, on the land. He ran 25 to 30 head of dairy cows. William had a love for ranching, and he wanted to ranch as long as possible. However, in 1945, he had a heart attack and passed away. The ranch was passed to William's daughter and son-in-law, Leona and Huston Evans. Leona and Huston purchased John Wilcox's homestead, because Laurence Needham was selling it, and at that time it adjoined the Elk Horn Ranch. Leona and Huston Evans ran the two homesteads from 1945 to 1971. They then sold to Alan and Jill Holbert. After divorcing, the ranch carried over to Jill who remarried John Crowe. Jill and John Crowe eventually sold the ranch to Bob Magness of TCI. Then, it was sold to John Malone and it became part of the Silver Spur Land and Cattle, LLC.