



Ranch Roundup

Winter 2011

What's New and What's for You

The ranch is open daily from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Admission is free (Hours extended in Summer)

Seasonal Hiring - If you are interested in summer work with the Park Service, get online with www.usajobs.opm.gov. Don't wait. The hiring period for most summer jobs is late winter to early spring.

Winter Months - If your group is looking for a speaker, our ranch staff can talk on many subjects from history to maintenance to agriculture. We offer curriculum-based programs for schools. Call the park at (406) 846-2070

April 23, 10-2:00 - Junior Ranger Day
Family outdoor fun. A good day to shake off the last of winter. We'll be launching two new activities: An "Honorary Rancher" booklet for older children and adults, and a "Little Rancher" booklet for children not quite ready for the regular Junior Rancher Program.

Trivia: The difference between Montana's highest recorded temperature and the state's lowest recorded temperature is:

187 degrees!

-70° (1954)

117° (1937)



WINTER WORK: One calf approaches the shed with caution and one leaves it at speed. It's nothing dangerous, just our 1952 scale house. Careful records of birth and weaning weights provide information we need to evaluate feeding and breeding programs and decide which cows and calves to keep and which to sell.



From Our Museum & Archives



These days, products come in neat packages with weights printed on the labels. This was not always the case.

Our museum collection includes several types of scales.

Anything a man could pick up could be weighed on the platform scales in our 1935 granary. Before platform scales were patented (in 1832), anything that needed to be weighed had to be suspended.

On the wall in the blacksmith shop is what looks like a three foot long steel check mark. Three iron bell-shaped weights hang beside it. This is an old “steelyard scale.”

The object to be weighed was hooked onto the “check” end, the scale was suspended from the midpoint of the yard-long steel bar and the weights adjusted along the bar like the weights on a balance beam on a doctor’s scale.

The gold scale pictured above was crucial to Kohrs’ mining ventures. The “cleanup” from the Kohrs & Bielenberg mining properties at Pioneer and Gold Creek could be weighed within one pennyweight.

Augusta Kohrs handwritten cookbook often lists ingredients by weight. Her small kitchen scale is displayed in the ranch house, and we use a modern version when we convert her old recipes to modern measurements.

It often takes a bit of experimenting to get the proportions right, and - of course - we have to sample the delicious results.

If we want to be able to weigh ourselves on anything smaller than our livestock scales, we may have to scale back our culinary experiments.

Weigh to Go!



We can put a calf on a scale and get an accurate weight, and our baled hay is easily weighed, but we also put hay up in loose stacks, and that’s a trickier proposition. A ton of loose hay can occupy anything from 350 to 500 cubic feet. It varies depending on the height of the stack, moisture content, type of hay and how long it has had to settle. In 2010, we put up 400 tons of hay using both modern and horse-drawn machinery.

These days, there are ways to calculate moisture content in hay using a microwave oven. A rough total for stack weight can be figured in several agricultural computer programs.

Modern technology may have changed the way such things are calculated, but it would be interesting - and possibly a little humbling - to pit the new techniques against the judgement of an experienced rancher.

Whatever way we calculate it, the cattle figure loose hay is tastier than baled hay - or perhaps they just enjoy watching the way it makes us work harder to feed them.

FIRM FRIENDS IN HARD TIMES

We often speak of Johnny Grant, Conrad Kohrs and Kohrs’ grandson, Conrad Warren, but they represent only three of tens of thousands of ranchers, all of whom had stories to tell. Here’s one which made a lasting impression on us:

The hard economic years of the Great Depression were made worse in Montana by years-long drought. Late one winter, Deer Lodge Valley rancher Cliff Benson was nearly out of hay and the spring greenup hadn’t started. He approached Soren Beck, who had one large stack left. “Have you got any hay to sell?” he asked.

“No!” growled Beck. Then he and his son hitched up two teams of horses. Running a long strand of barbed wire from one team up over the top of the loose stack to the second team, they drove their teams forward and back until the wire had cut the stack in two.

“That’s your half!” he told his neighbor.

Enough said.





What's Up, Smokey?

There's something for every age on Smokey Bear's website.

A real-time fire map of the country keeps you up-to-date on every active fire in the nation's forests.

Kids can join Smokey's Club and learn how to prevent forest fires, and lots of interesting facts about the forest.

There's plenty of history on the site as well, and a list of resources for teachers.

Log on to www.smokeybear.com



The Forest Service maintains an office within the Grant-Kohrs Ranch Visitor Center.

For information about programs, permits, maps and more, drop by or phone Shawn at the Deer Lodge Work Center, (406) 846-1770, Monday through Friday, 8-4:30 (with a little time out for lunch).

Missed "Photo Op"

There should be several great photos here, showing the entire Maintenance crew beating the onset of winter weather to solve a water pipe problem.

Galvanic corrosion occurs when one metal (or alloy) is electrically coupled to another. Ranch water pipe which was set into a wet, mineral-rich loose fill fifty years ago had developed pinhole leaks.

We recognized and understood the problem, but two factors made it difficult to solve.

First, the pipe was set well below the frost line in sandy muck and attempts to dig through it were subject to collapse.

Stabilizing the excavation was made nearly impossible because a thick concrete slab covered the area.

Technology improves, however, and since the problem was first assessed, concrete saws have been improved and made more accessible.

The Maintenance Division laid their

plans, materials and equipment were readied and in one concerted action, they cut through the old concrete, bypassed the leaking pipe, brought in PVC pipe, replaced the oozing fill and laid the new concrete slab.

Unfortunately, with mud-encrusted hands, none of the workers had time to take a picture, and they'd finished the job before anyone else happened by with a camera.

Lacking a photo of them working underground, here's one of them a couple of stories up, repairing our beaverslide haystacker.

Never a dull moment.



The Best Laid Plans

The "Ranch Roundup" has a few rules. For example, things we are *going* to do are not usually mentioned until they are actually *done*. Many factors, from weather to budget to unexpected needs can put our best-laid plans on hold.

We do, however, have projects in the works, and to give you an idea of their diversity, here are a few:

- Superfund cleanup of toxins along the river corridor.
- Cooperative project with Montana State Parks to market a Grant-Kohrs brand of beef jerky.
- Repave our undulating trail from Visitor Center to Ranch. (Over three decades of winter

"frost heaves" have given it a roller-coaster quality.)

- Produce technical bulletins on ranch and history-related topics for staff training.
- Upgrade and expand fire and security system.
- Record oral histories.
- Implement Invasive Plant Management Plan (Cheat grass is one of our most irritating invasives, but we are always dealing with knapweed, whitetop and spurge as well.)



National Park Service
U. S. Department of the Interior

The United States Congress created Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site in 1972 to commemorate the open range cattle era of the American West. Covering 1,600 acres and preserving 88 historic structures and many thousands of artifacts and records, the site tells the story of the cattle industry from the 1850s through most of the 20th century.

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The Ranch Roundup is published by Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site. Our aim is to establish links to the community, other parks, museums and others whose interests and concerns are similar to ours. We hope this will not be a one-way communication, and welcome comments, suggestions and information from our readers.

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Winter will soon be on the wane, and as the 1877 Deer Lodge newspaper put it:

“The sweet, timid grass is coming up through the gray landscape, and with the baby fingers of spring, is feeling for cow’s teeth.”

Mailing Label



Winter of 1863-64

Conrad Kohrs wrote, “My next trip was made in mid-winter. . . . the night I camped on the Divide it was bitterly cold and there was quite a lot of snow on the ground. I scraped away the snow, used my bowie knife to get some pine boughs and spread them on the ground for my bed...I...carried no provisions except crackers, beef cut up in small strips and a cup for water. The meat, of course, was frozen hard. After it was thawed out it was put on a stick and broiled before a fire.”

From [Conrad Kohrs - an Autobiography](#)

