

Grant-Kohrs Ranch

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

Grant-Kohrs Ranch
National Historic Site



Affiliated Tribes

Grant-Kohrs Ranch lies in the Clark Fork River Valley in Southwestern Montana, and celebrates the open range, ranching heritage of our nation. Because of its role in westward expansion and colonial settlement, a history fraught with injustices to Native peoples, the park has been cautious engaging American Indians at the whole tribe level. We have requested an Ethnography Study to validate potential links with Shoshone-Bannock, Eastern Shoshone, Crow, Blackfeet, Nez Perce, Gros Ventre, Northern Arapaho, Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Northern Cheyenne, Kiowa, and Lakota Sioux. Without a clear history of the role contemporary American Indians had in this valley, prior to their relocation to reservations, we are only guessing at appropriate tribal relationships to this site.

From historical research carried out in 1992:

Within the biographies of the site's two namesakes, Johnny Grant and Conrad Kohrs, historical interactions with the Nez Perce, Shoshone-Bannock, and Northern Cheyenne are recorded. Since Grant was one of the first 'whites' to settle in the valley, his experiences are more instructive as to how the tribes lived here in the 1840's, than Kohrs', who settled later. In Grant's case, deep personal history, particularly with the Ft. Hall Shoshone-Bannock tribe along with five other tribes, was secured through marriages that guaranteed trading privileges, from 1848-1870. The main house/trading post was built with the assistance of a Shoshone-Bannock relative of Grant's wife, Quarra and visited by many of his relatives the 8 years he lived here, evidenced by sketches of the house with numerous teepees around it.

Johnny Grant was Metis, his father Scottish, his mother Cree. This 'mixed blood' heritage from the voyageur and fur trade era has risen in awareness in Montana and Canada with new research and recent publications. *Strange Empire*, written by John Kinsey Howard in 1958, documents the struggle of this culture to establish its own country from 1865-1885, which resulted in Manitoba. This struggle is powerful background to Johnny Grant's life in Montana. Not surprising, this culture, caught between two races, and two countries, has been all but lost to mainstream history. The culture is a fascinating one, and Grant's role in its turning point struggles, remains a mystery, despite his proximity to crucial leaders.

According to ranch records, Kohrs did not hire anyone with an obvious American Indian surname during his 60 year tenure at the home ranch or at his seven other ranch locations. We know one of his business associates, Granville Stuart, married a Northern Cheyenne woman, who was welcomed in his home. He assisted the 7th cavalry effort at Big Hole battlefield dispatching his wagon/ambulance to bring wounded soldiers, injured in the Nez Perce war, to Deer Lodge in 1877. He was a worldly European, an intelligent territorial statesman and close friend to Teddy Roosevelt. He was a German immigrant who suffered at the hands of national prejudice, despite American citizenship. It is suspected he possessed an ambivalent view, at best, of the history that marginalized Montana's tribes.

As early as 1983, the park established conversations with the Confederated Salish-Kootenai to organize support for the Superfund action affecting this valley and the ranch. Since 2000, the Tribal Chief and the Superintendent serve on a Governor appointed board for the distribution of settlement funds, post cleanup. That role is amicable and supportive, though mostly ceremonial. The Chief and tribal historian



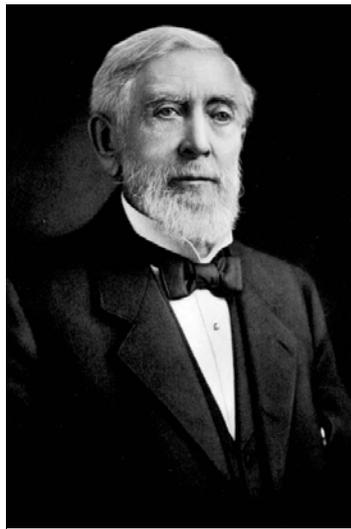
*Image of
Blackfeet
woman, found in
park archives*

recently attended a landmark celebration at the ranch marking the protection of 3600 acres of land as newly protected viewshed.

We face challenges similar to many parks: finding appropriate means to engage with contemporary tribes over resource issues, seeking authentic ways to bring their stories into the interpretive themes, and one that is unique, perhaps to us: working with a scattered, non-centralized culture in two countries, that seeks new connection to this site. We continue to look for ways to help us interpret a broader truth about the ranch and its legacy, affording the Metis heirs the dignity they deserve, as well as appropriately honoring affiliated tribes.



John Francis Grant



Conrad Kohrs



Grant, near Deer Lodge City, M.T. August 6, 1865. Looking Northwest.

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Granville Stuart sketch of Grant/Kohrs home, C. 1865