

Nevada Centennial Ranches & Farms Awards

Family Histories

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Ferraro Cattle Company, Paradise Valley (Humboldt Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

Stefano Ferraro immigrated from Italy to Nevada in 1887. By 1902, he had purchased over 1,000 acres of prime land in Paradise Valley. In 1905, it was reported that the ranch had 4,000 sheep and over 100 heads of cattle, and horses. Today, Stephen and Mildred Ferraro have several historic structures on their ranch, including the original ranch house, granary, stone storage cellar, and a barn. They raise beef cattle and alfalfa.

Bunker Farm, Bunkerville (Clark Co.)

Purchased in 1901 by Roger Bunker's great-grandfather-in-law, Samuel Whittwer, this 80-acre farm provided a living for a family of ten in the southern Nevada desert. Whittwer purchased the land from the State of Nevada according to the 1885 Land Sale Act, and passed it down to son-in-law Hector Bunker who passed it to his son Merrill. Roger Bunker currently owns the farm, producing milk, alfalfa, and bull calves.

Blue Eagle Ranch, Tonopah (Nye Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

Prior to purchase of the Blue Eagle Ranch by the Sharp family, this property was known as the "Haystacks" due to the spring and meadows found there. In the 1860s, Euro-American emigrants stopped at the site along the old Hamilton-Pahranagat road to obtain water and graze their animals. Several owners later, George Sharp purchased the 160-acre homestead in 1895 for \$350 in gold. Sharp is responsible for registering one of the oldest cattle brands in the state, "21," representing his age when he registered the brand in 1881. It is still being used by the Sharps, including Carl and Carole Sharp Hanks. The family has several historic structures on their ranch, including the ranch house, a blacksmith shop, windmills, a bunkhouse, cabin, ditches, hay derrick and even a producing apricot tree that was planted in 1910!

Green Springs Ranch, Duckwater (White Pine Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

Current owner Edna Forsgren's grandfather Joe Rosevear and his three brothers purchased the Green Springs Ranch in approximately 1899. It originally functioned as a miners' "resort," with racetrack, saloon, and brothel on-site, during the boom days in Hamilton, 14 miles away. Shortly after purchasing the ranch, the brothers sold their interest to Joe, who died in 1900, leaving the ranch to his widow Bessie. She worked hard to support her family, growing potatoes to sell in Hamilton and Duckwater, and raising hay and cattle to provide income. The "Lazy SJ" cattle brand was registered to the family in 1897 and has been in use ever since. Today, Edna Forsgren and husband Alan raise cattle and sheep, and have too many historic structures on their ranch to list here. A family cemetery plot has been in use since Joe Rosevear passed away in 1900.

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Heise Family Ranch, Gardnerville (Douglas Co.)

Frederick Heise was born in Wittlohe, Germany and immigrated to the United States in 1876 at the age of 18. After fleeing an outbreak of yellow fever in his new home of Illinois, Frederick (“Fritz”) Heise ended up in Carson Valley in 1878. From that time until he purchased the ranch in 1902 currently run by the Heise family, Fritz ranched in Carson Valley, selling services provided by his “Petaluma Hay Press” to neighboring ranchers. He established the Douglas County Creamery in 1893 with one of the Centennial Ranch families honored last year, the Hennigsens, along with other dairy producers. In 1980, a lightning strike burned the Heise barn, built in the 1870s, an exact replica of the barn still standing on the Dangberg Ranch.

Krenka Ranch, Ruby Valley (Elko Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

John Krenka came from Posen, Germany to Nevada sometime between 1865 and 1870. He homesteaded about 80 acres in Ruby Valley, still part of the current ranch. He and his wife Gustava, also from Germany and not an English speaker, raised ten children. They produced grain, potatoes, milk, hogs and chickens. Some of the older children actually walked to Fort Halleck to sell milk and eggs. The Krenkas have several historic buildings on their ranch, including a horse barn, cow barn and the ranch house. Rory Krenka, the current owner, still feeds his cattle in the winter on a horse-drawn sleigh.

Laura Springs Ranch, Gardnerville (Douglas CO., HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

An immigrant from Oslo, Norway, ancestor Nils Arnt Morrison arrived in Carson Valley via covered wagon with his Norwegian wife and two children in 1863. Morrison purchased the ranch that year, and had seven more children. The Morrisons grew wheat, barley, oats and alfalfa. His wife Carolyn died in 1880, leaving him responsible for raising his children. Eventually he returned to Norway to propose to his first wife’s sister, bringing her back to Carson Valley to marry him. There are several historic structures on the Laura Springs Ranch, including the main house, barn, granary, and wash house. Laura Allerman Hickey and Daniel Hickey currently produce hay and cattle on the ranch. Interestingly, home of the first female medical doctor in Carson Valley, Dr. Eliza Cook, is also on the ranch, moved from its original location half a mile away.

Riordan Ranch, Jiggs (Elko Co., HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

James Riordan immigrated with his parents from Ireland to the U.S. in 1848. By 1853, he was in California trying his hand at mining. He then mined in British Columbia and eventually in Idaho City, where he made enough money to marry Margaret, an Irish native, in San Francisco and set up ranch operations in Elko County by 1869. In 1900, James bought 2700 deeded acres in Jiggs, west of the Ruby Mountains. His youngest son Dan took over when James died in 1912 but Dan Riordan died at a young age, forcing his younger brother. Joe to quit school at 15 years of age to help his mother run the ranch. Today, the historic structures on the property include the main house, barn, root cellar, wash house and meat house. The Riordans, headed by Michael and Claudia, currently raise beef cattle and wild hay on their ranch.

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Snyder Livestock Company, Yerington (Lyon Co.)

Ed Snyder's great grandfather Charles moved to Nevada from Pennsylvania, arriving in Mason Valley in 1862. Charles Snyder had four ranches in Mason Valley at one time, in addition to holdings in Harney County, Oregon, next to Henry Miller Lux. This ranch along the Walker River, purchased by Snyder in 1887, now produces alfalfa, small grain, onions and garlic. Historic structures on the ranch include the main house built in 1918, a circa-1900 barn that served as Yerington's livery, and a stone building.

Wilkinson Little Meadow Ranch, McDermitt (Humboldt Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

Straddling the Oregon-Nevada border, the Wilkinson ranch was originally homesteaded by Alfred Wilkinson in 1900. Like many other family ranches in Nevada, the ranch holdings have been added to over the decades. Alfred registered his cattle brand "H2" prior to owning the Little Meadow Ranch, sometime before 1885. The Wilkinsons are considered to be some of McDermitt's earliest residents. Several members of the family are known for their love of horses. Several historic features remain at the ranch, including a circular underground root cellar, willow corrals, a four-station milking barn and a horse barn. Currently, George Wilkinson and his son Kim operate the ranch, raising hay and cattle.

Stodieck Farm, Minden (Douglas Co. HISTORIC STRUCTURES)

Currently owned by Fred and Betty Stodieck, this prime real estate on the Carson River was first purchased by F. W. Stodieck in 1868 with \$2900 in gold coin. Born in Prussia (which later became Germany), he arrived in the Carson Valley in 1864. The ranch produced "general produce" and cattle. Built in 1874, the main house with some of its gingerbread detailing, still remains along with a brick pump house, the original log cabin the Stodiecks first occupied, a hog barn and bunk house, among other structures. The Stodieck's currently produce Angus cattle, hay and alfalfa.

The Centennial Ranches and Farms program was initiated last year by the State Historic Preservation Office in cooperation with the Nevada Department of Agriculture, Nevada Farm Bureau, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nevada Cattleman's Association, and the Ag Council to recognize families who have kept a Nevada ranch or farm in the family for at least 100 years.

The State Historic Preservation Office is an agency of the Nevada Department of Cultural Affairs. The Department serves Nevada's citizens and visitors through cultural and information management, presentation and promotion of cultural resources, and education. The Department also includes the Division of Museums and History, Nevada State Library and Archives, Nevada Arts Council, Comstock Historic District Commission, Literacy Coalition, and Commission for Cultural Affairs. For more information, visit the department's website at NevadaCulture.org.