



Con Warren and some of his Herefords — Mid-1930's

up their 160-acre claims, they strung miles and miles of barbed wire fences.

By about 1890, fencing and overgrazing resulted in need for careful range management. Supplementary feeding became necessary. In addition to his traditional cattle herding, the cowboy spent more and more time raising feed and repairing fences. River bottom pastures became more valuable for grazing and hay production. Water rights and irrigation greatly increased land values. Wells were dug and windmills erected to pump water into stock tanks. Planted pastures replaced wild buffalo grass and gama grass.

In addition to the home ranch, Kohrs and Bielenburg secured grazing land by controlling water rights for over a million acres east of the Continental Divide in Montana. They also controlled various mining enterprises.

With the shift to supplementary feeding, quality of livestock rather than quantity gradually became more important. Selective breeding resulted in fatter cattle which had more beef per animal and better withstood rigorous winters.

The home ranch here remained the base of operation and became a major supplier of registered cattle for herd improvement for the Kohrs-Bielenberg far-flung ranches and those of other cattlemen. By the turn of the century, the home ranch had grown to 25,000 acres. Over a 25-year period ending in 1913, between 8,000 and 10,000 cattle were shipped yearly, mostly to Chicago markets. One fall, the Kohrs-Bielenberg operation shipped 365 carloads!

Following the deaths of both Conrad Kohrs and John Bielenberg in the early 1920's, the ranch was reduced in size and managed by various foremen until the 1930's when grandson Conrad Kohrs Warren took over operation of the ranch. He followed the style of his grandfather, and made the ranch a leader in livestock development by using the best available scientific and business methods. Belgian horses and registered Hereford cattle from the ranch were known nationwide.

Conrad Warren's grandmother, Augusta Kruse Kohrs, lived until she was 96, and because of her love of the old home ranch, she kept the furnishings in place and spent part of every summer here. After her death, Conrad Warren and his wife, Nell, took over the ranch and preserved intact the documents, the old house and its furnishings, and the out-buildings. Now we may all share this part of western history.

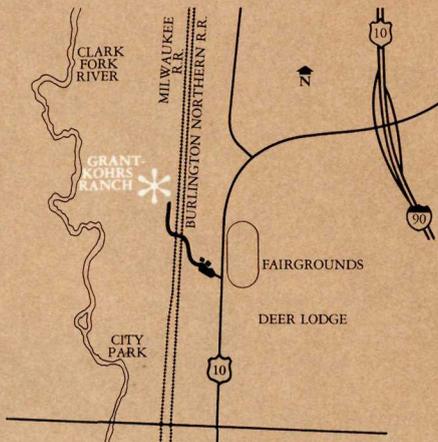
About Your Visit

This site is preserved to help others learn about this unique way of life, one of the most colorful in American history. To protect this bit of Americana, your assistance is requested in preventing fires by not smoking on the ranch site. Ranch animals can be dangerous if approached too closely, so please keep a safe distance. We hope you enjoy your visit and would appreciate your comments.



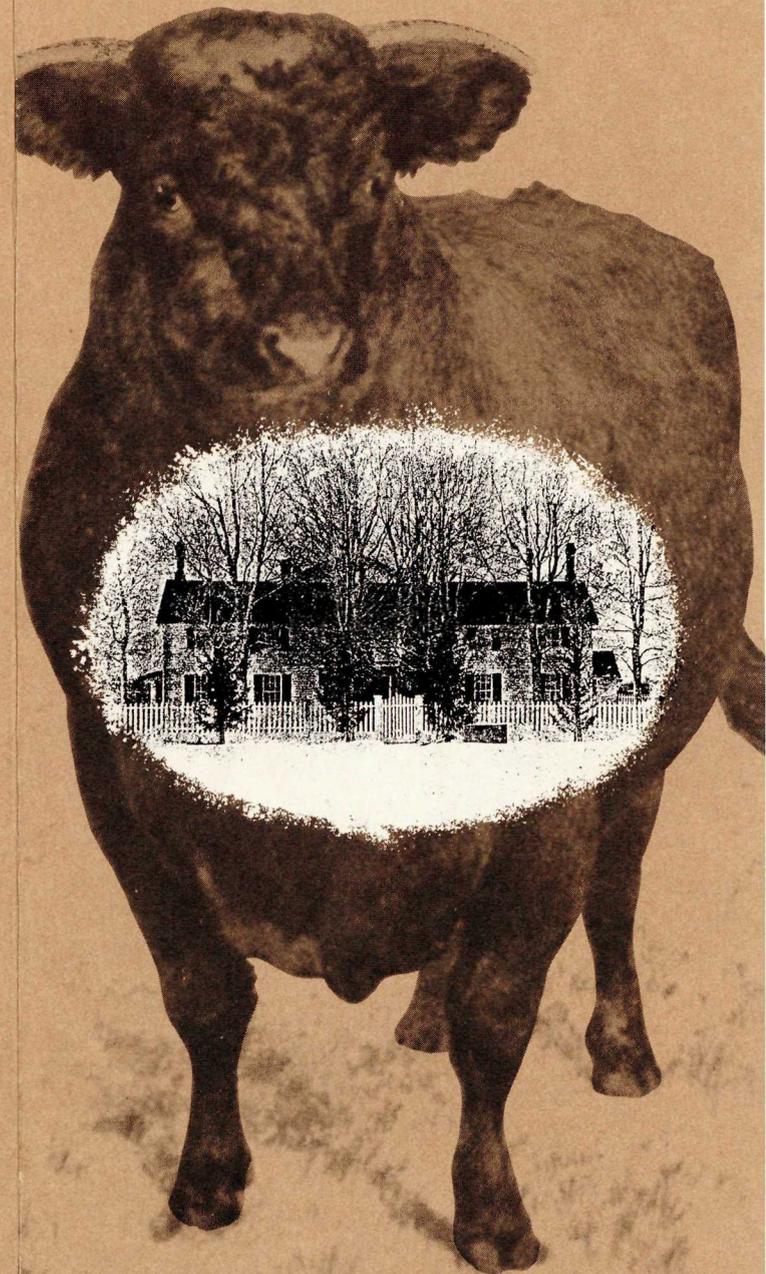
Grant Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior.

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GRANT ♦ KOHRS RANCH

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



Cattlemen began the open-range cattle industry of the Northern Rockies here in the fertile Deer Lodge Valley. Johnny Grant, and later Conrad Kohrs, and their workers, most of them cowboys, worked on this ranch and others raising beef for early miners in Montana Territory. Under Kohrs, this ranch became headquarters or home ranch for one of the largest and best-known of this country's 19th Century ranching operations. Eventually it controlled over a million acres in Montana, Colorado Wyoming, Idaho and in Canada.

The cowboy's life has been glamorized by western novels and movies, and his most exciting adventures have been captured by the famous Western painters Frederic Remington and Charlie Russell and others. However, a cowboy's daily life was not that dramatic.

Ranches were planned for cattle, not men, so cowboys made-do with bare essentials of a rough and lonely life. Complaining was considered unprofessional. The monotony of tending cattle was seldom relieved except by spring and fall roundups, or a few days in a railroad town after a cattle drive.

In the 1850's, Johnny Grant, a Canadian trapper, hunter and mountaineer, settled in Deer Lodge Valley and became an early rancher. With his Bannock Indian wife, Quarra, and their large family, he prospered, and in less than a decade was running 2,000 cattle. His large herd marked the beginning of range cattle business in Montana Territory.

Here the largest home in Montana Territory was built by Grant in 1862 on the Clark Fork of the Columbia River. This two-story house of hewn logs, white clapboards and green shutters, must have been spectacular a century ago on the frontier.

Four years later Grant sold his ranch for \$19,200:

"... consisting of farmhouses with household furniture, stables, corrals, ricks of hay, all my farming implements, wagons, yokes and chains . . . , also all my cattle, sheep, goats and grain."

Conrad Kohrs, a butcher and Danish immigrant, became new owner of the ranch, which remained in his possession until his death in 1920. Having arrived on foot in the Deer Lodge Valley at age 27, Kohrs soon discovered he



could "mine gold" more profitably by providing meat for booming new gold camps. He became a butcher and inherited the business when his boss was involved in a gunfight. Soon Kohrs showed his skill as an entrepreneur by trading cattle on credit and providing meat for butchers in Deer Lodge, Bannack, Blackfoot City, Silver Bow, Virginia City and Last Chance Gulch.

A lifelong partnership was formed with his half-brother, John Bielenberg. While Kohrs mastered the intricacies of marketing, banking, and how to obtain credit, Bielenberg operated the ranch itself. John, a bachelor, was known for his dry sense of humor, his frugal ways, and his honesty. "Anything you can't do on a horse," he would say, "isn't worth doing."

In 1868, Conrad Kohrs married Augusta Kruse and brought his young bride to his ranch at Deer Lodge by steamboat up the Missouri River.

The 60's and early 70's were the days of free grass, of unrestrained open-range grazing on public domain with ample acreage for every cow. Indians had been placed on reservations and the number of buffalo had been drastically reduced. There were no fences, and cattlemen just drove their herds to greener pastures when the land became overgrazed.

At first these were mostly travel-worn cattle of European breeds from the Oregon Trail, but after the Civil War, longhorns, driven north from Texas, were added to Montana herds. Conrad Kohrs built his cattle business on solid experience. He gradually replaced his early cattle with Montana's first Herefords, and persuaded his neighbors to improve their herds with Shorthorns and other breeds he was raising. At first, large herds of Kohrs cattle were driven to railheads at Corinne, Utah, and at

Ogallala, Nebraska. Then in 1883, the Northern Pacific Railroad reached central Montana offering cattle shipment east.

After the Civil War, markets changed in the Northern Rockies; beef was being sold to feed soldiers at frontier military posts as well as to the miners.

The opening of the west by railroads, and use of new refrigerator cars, enabled meat to be economically shipped to distant cities. Meanwhile, Americans had begun to prefer beef which was becoming more readily available, rather than poultry or pork as their main meat, and one cow was



A Kohrs-Bielenberg stock certificate

more easily marketed than a whole flock of chickens. The population was growing at a tremendous rate, due in large part to immigration of about half a million people a year from Europe. By 1885 raising beef cattle became by far the biggest business in the west. Foreign investors, mostly from England and Scotland, rushed to take advantage of the lucrative livestock industry which paid profits as high as 25 percent.

Weather was a vital factor for the cattle industry.

During the disastrous winter of 1886-87 many cattlemen lost from one third to one half of their stock, and most of them never recovered.

In the rush to fill needs of expanding markets in the '80's and '90's, many cattlemen heedlessly overgrazed huge areas. The yearly arrival of hundreds of thousands of Texas longhorns, plus the natural increase in herds, put more animals on less land. As "nesters" (homesteaders) took



Residence of John Grant, near Deer Lodge City, M.T. August 6, 1862. Looking Northwest.

1. RANCH HOUSE 1862 & 1890

Johnny Grant hired carpenters Alexander Pambrun and "McLeod the hewer" to cut, haul and hew the logs for this house. It was described in 1865 in *THE MONTANA POST*:

The dwelling house, which is large and two storied, is by long odds the finest in Montana. It appears as if it had been lifted by the chimneys from the bank of the St. Lawrence, and dropped down in Deer Lodge Valley.

The French Canadian hewn log construction is covered with clapboarding.

Many a high time was had by the folks in the valley when Johnny Grant entertained. At one dance a blizzard struck, so the guests remained several days. Johnny traded, farmed, ranched and dispensed friendship here until 1866 when he sold the ranch to Conrad Kohrs, who brought his bride Augusta Kruse, here two years later.

Upon arrival as a bride of nineteen, Augusta Kohrs "brought a German pride in taking care of her own household," according to Conrad Kohrs in his autobiography. Putting everything in place, including furniture purchased in St. Louis, Augusta soon had the house in order. The three Kohrs children, Anna, Katherine and William, were raised in this house, which was completed in its present form in 1890 with a wing built of bricks made by convicts from the Montana State Prison at Deer Lodge.

The carefully preserved interiors of the ranch house includes original furnishings from several decades, reflecting selections by Augusta Kohrs of the best and most stylish furniture available for

the period, much of it ordered from Chicago. The furnishings for this house are amazingly complete, giving a true picture of the residence. In 1871 *The New Northwest* described it as "having seven finely furnished rooms on the first floor, besides a magnificently furnished parlor and a spacious dining room."

At the turn of the century, Kohrs purchased a second home in Helena as a surprise wedding anniversary gift for his wife. After that the family spent only summers and occasional brief periods at the ranch house. John Bielenberg remained at the house while the ranch continued as headquarters of the Kohrs-Bielenberg operation. Until her death in 1945, Augusta Kohrs continued the tradition of summer visits to Deer Lodge.

After the deaths of Kohrs and Bielenberg, a series of managers ran the ranch. Then Conrad Warren, Kohrs' grandson, became manager, and lived in the house briefly, purchasing the ranch in 1940. The ranch house was finally closed soon after the death of Augusta and remained so until it was reopened by the National Park Service.

2. BUGGY SHED 1875

Forerunner of the modern-day garage, this shed which held several buggies, was conveniently located near the house and the horse stables. In 1907 a second set of railroad tracks cut through the home ranch necessitating the move of half of the buggy shed to the lower ranch yard.

3. HORSE STABLE 1880

Here, handy to the buggy shed, were stabled the buggy teams. These horses were smaller and faster than most of the stronger heavier work horses used for other ranch work. Note the horse hair stuffed into the cracks of the back wall. When the horses were groomed, hair was saved and later used for furniture stuffing, or caulking, or as a binder in interior plaster.

4. BUNKHOUSE ROW 1860's - 1890's

Built about 1862, this log cabin was where Johnny Grant and his family probably lived while the big house was being constructed. The once open "dogtrot" (breezeway) between the two rooms was closed in during the 1870's and other rooms were added to expand the bunkhouse. It had a dining room, kitchen, washroom, bunkroom and woodshed. Additional remodeling was done in the 1930's.

Although it was just outside the picket fence and only about 50 feet from the main house, the bunkhouse was a world apart. Here was the only home for many of these young (average age 24) cowboys and farm hands. Chinese cooks provided sourdough bread and beef and beans as the mainstays, but also vegetables, bacon and eggs, pies and cakes, and sweet fried biscuits called "bannocks."

The bunkhouse was a lively place with cowboys gathered round the stove and its crackling smoky fire, chips from constant whittling on the floor, playing cards on the table, and bunkhouse smells of sweaty men, tracked-in manure, chewing tobacco and snuff, smoke from pipes and hand-rolled cigarettes and sooty coal oil lamps.

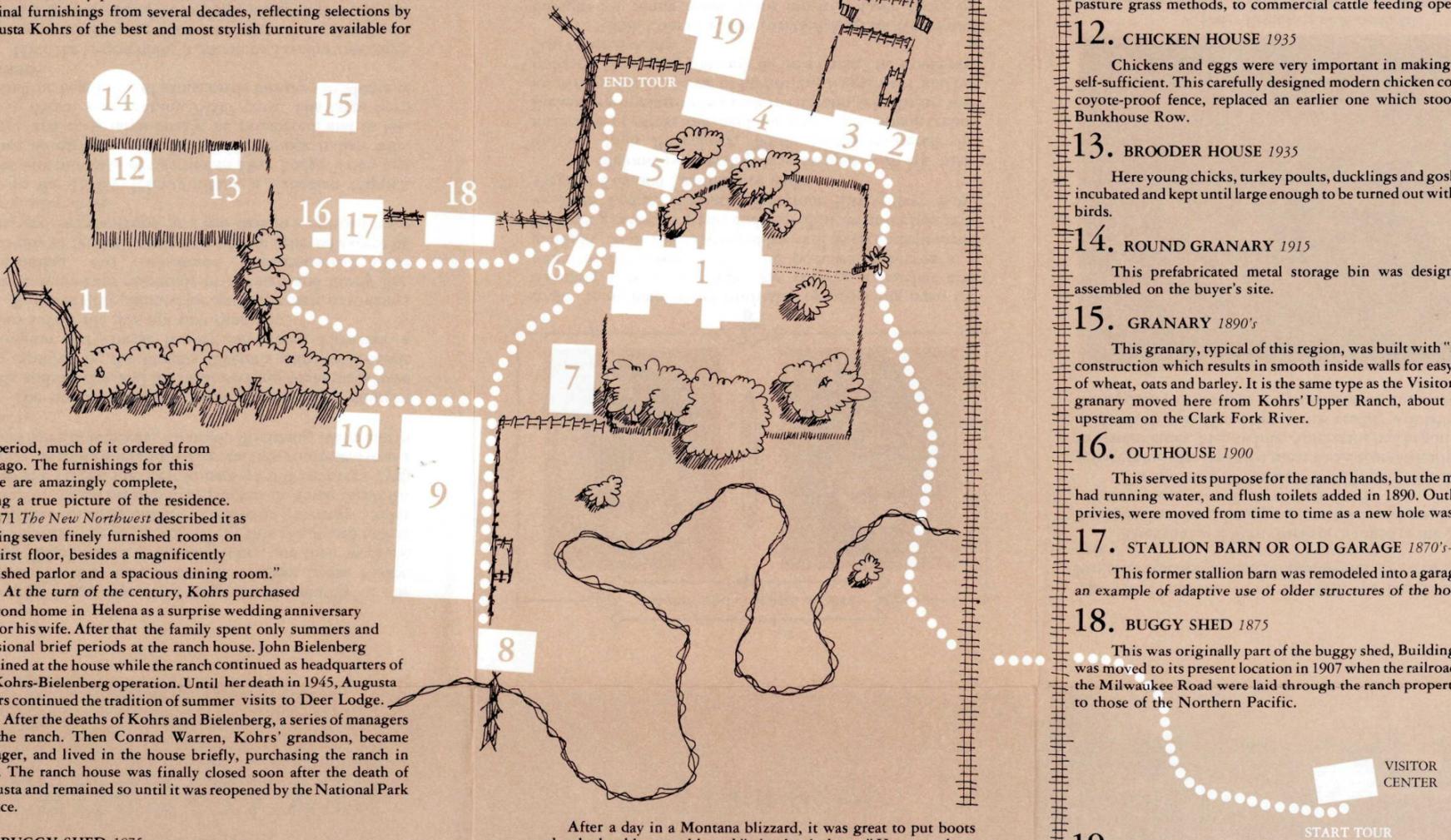
GRANT-KOHR'S RANCH

Self-Guided Ranch Tour

The ranch house, constructed as an impressive and permanent structure, shows the prosperity of this ranching and business operation. Throughout the years it has reflected the personality and care of the owners.

The ranch buildings were built of local materials, and most were constructed to meet immediate needs. However, some were later converted to other uses. The National Park Service plans to preserve all of the out-buildings as representative of the development of ranching operations from 1862 through the 1940's. Restoration will be done on individual structures which are significant to the story of the open range cattle industry and the Kohrs and Bielenberg home ranch.

A ranger will conduct you through the ranch house. You may guide yourself with this map through the rest of the ranch site.



After a day in a Montana blizzard, it was great to put boots under the bunkhouse table and "take the slack out." Hats were kept on, even at meals (also at dances) as a cowboy's hat was his prize possession, some costing over \$50 - as much as two months' wages. Other ranch hands from the far-flung Kohrs cattle empire were always welcome as a source of news. Each man had his own bedroll to lay out on bunk or floor. At night, they gathered about the friendly stove to swap lies, tell tall tales and chew tobacco.

5. ICE HOUSE 1880's - 1915

Ice was a real treat during the short hot summers. Cut into blocks in winter, it was stacked and covered with insulating sawdust. Cabbages, potatoes, carrots and other vegetables grown on this almost self-sufficient ranch were stored in a dugout.

The small lean-to on the south side was the summer bedroom for the succession of Chinese cooks. The last of these, Tom Wing, kept his lottery records in rows of Chinese characters on the wall. Skillful as a gambler, he returned to China with a sizeable fortune.

6. COAL SHED 1915

With the installation of a coal furnace for the brick wing, a coal shed was built to hold a winter's supply of 20 tons. This coal supply replaced most of the stacks of cordwood which had covered much of the backyard.

7. BLACKSMITH SHOP AND GARAGE 1935

The blacksmith shop and garage was built by Conrad Warren for the repair and storage of gasoline powered vehicles. Tractors, trucks and automobiles had replaced the horse-drawn equipment by the 1930's.

8. STALLION BARN 1870's

Stallions, if not kept separate, will fight and injure each other. Therefore, several small stallion barns were built (see buildings 10 and 17), each containing a feed room, hayloft and stall opening into a separate corral, usually enclosing a bend of the creek. Stallions raised here played an important role in upgrading the quality of Montana-bred horses.

9. BARN 1880's and 1941

This barn was an integral part of the raising and sale of Thoroughbred (a specific breed) horses on the ranch. In 1941 it was converted by Conrad Warren into a cattle show barn.

This barn now shelters almost every type of horse-drawn vehicle ever used on the ranch. Here are sleds, sleighs, wagons, buggies and farm machinery including the road grader purchased in 1887.

The Daugherty wagon or ambulance was a type of wagon widely used to carry Civil War wounded. This one arrived at Fort Benton on one of the first Missouri River steamboats. Johnny Grant had purchased it, then sold it with the ranch. In 1868 a Kohrs Ranch foreman, Tom Hooban, drove the Daugherty to bring Conrad Kohrs and his bride, Augusta, from the steamboat at Fort Benton to the ranch. It was used as an ambulance in 1877 to bring the wounded to Deer Lodge from the Big Hole Battlefield. Later, in 1883, it was used by the Kohrs family for a 6-week trip to Yellowstone National Park. The women and children rode in the Daugherty, but the men went on horseback.

10. LEEDS LION BARN 1870's

This log barn was named after an imported English Shire stallion. Each of the stallion barns was whitewashed inside and out for sanitary reasons. Stud service from these stallions was a major source of income.

11. FEEDLOTS, CATTLE SHEDS, GRANARIES 1930's

These were added when Conrad Warren began raising purebred Herefords, and shifted from the former open range and pasture grass methods, to commercial cattle feeding operations.

12. CHICKEN HOUSE 1935

Chickens and eggs were very important in making the ranch self-sufficient. This carefully designed modern chicken coop, with a coyote-proof fence, replaced an earlier one which stood next to Bunkhouse Row.

13. BROODER HOUSE 1935

Here young chicks, turkey poults, ducklings and goslings were incubated and kept until large enough to be turned out with the adult birds.

14. ROUND GRANARY 1915

This prefabricated metal storage bin was designed to be assembled on the buyer's site.

15. GRANARY 1890's

This granary, typical of this region, was built with "studs out" construction which results in smooth inside walls for easy handling of wheat, oats and barley. It is the same type as the Visitor Center, a granary moved here from Kohrs' Upper Ranch, about five miles upstream on the Clark Fork River.

16. OUTHOUSE 1900

This served its purpose for the ranch hands, but the main house had running water, and flush toilets added in 1890. Outhouses, or privies, were moved from time to time as a new hole was needed.

17. STALLION BARN OR OLD GARAGE 1870's-1920

This former stallion barn was remodeled into a garage in 1920, an example of adaptive use of older structures of the home ranch.

18. BUGGY SHED 1875

This was originally part of the buggy shed, Building No. 2. It was moved to its present location in 1907 when the railroad tracks of the Milwaukee Road were laid through the ranch property, parallel to those of the Northern Pacific.

19. GRANARY 1935

A major innovation when it was built, this granary is complete with four bins and a feed grinder. The grain was scientifically mixed, and the recipe can still be found, handwritten on the wall, a far cry from open-range days when cattle foraged for themselves or starved.

20. DRAFT HORSE BARN 1870's

Still remarkably sound with its double row of stalls opening onto a central aisle, this barn is used today for Belgian horses, much as it was in the days that Kohrs and Bielenberg raised Shires, Belgians, Percheron-Normans, Clydesdales and Coach Horses.

21. OXEN BARN 1870's

Even though the use of oxen on the ranch was discontinued at a relatively early date, this barn retained the original name. Built of salvage logs, it was used for various animals over the long years since the last team of oxen was yoked here.

22. DAIRY 1932

The small dairy herd of Conrad Warren was milked here. It represents the frame construction and concrete foundation typical of the 1930's. It is now being used by the National Park Service as a carpenter shop.

23. HORSE BARN 1880

This structure stabled ranch race horses. This use is reflected in the racetrack shedrow appearance.

The staff of Grant-Kohrs Ranch hopes that you have found much of interest here about our country's cattle-ranching past. Please stop at the Visitor Center if you have any further questions.

