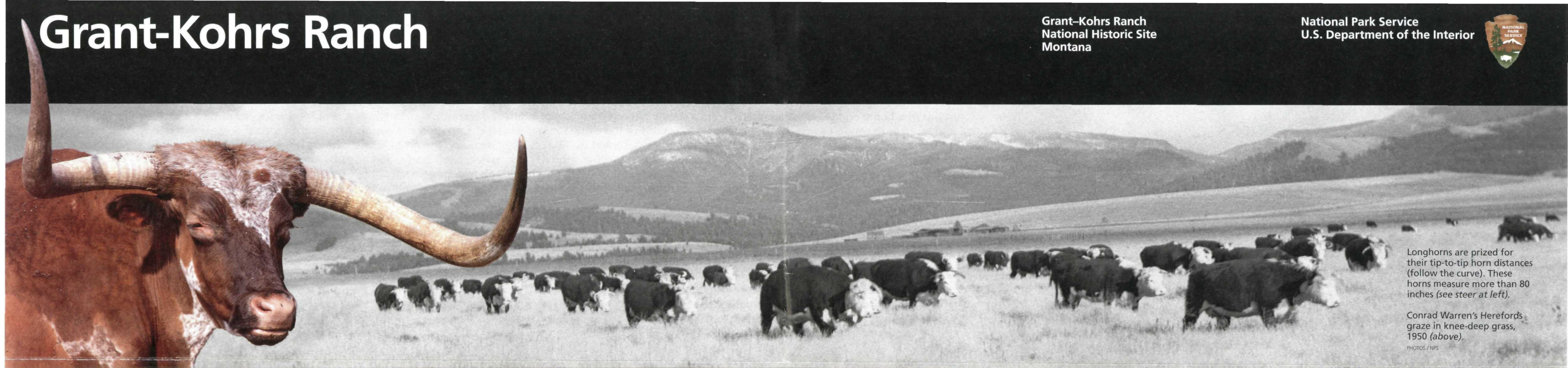


Grant-Kohrs Ranch

Grant-Kohrs Ranch
National Historic Site
Montana

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Longhorns are prized for their tip-to-tip horn distances (follow the curve). These horns measure more than 80 inches (see steer at left).

Conrad Warren's Herefords graze in knee-deep grass, 1950 (above).

PHOTOS / NPS

Cowboys and Cattlemen

Wide open spaces, the hard-working cowboy, his spirited cow pony, and vast herds of cattle are strong symbols of the American West. In 1972 Congress set aside Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site as a working cattle ranch that preserves these symbols and commemorates the role of cattlemen in American history.

Cattle were introduced to the American Southwest by the Spanish in the early 1500s. British colonists brought cattle to North America's East Coast in the 1600s. Water and land made the difference between farming methods in the East and the open-range methods of the West. In the East abundant rainfall created pastures that could support large herds of cattle. Some western lands received fewer than 10 inches of rainfall a year and required over 100 acres to sustain each cow.

Before barbed wire, stockmen couldn't fence enough acreage to support livestock. Instead, a system of open-range grazing evolved. Cattle were turned out on public land and left to graze wherever they found grass. Limited in their roaming only by rivers, rough country, or waterless stretches, the cattle might spread over a million acres. Cattle from many owners mingled, leading to the establishment of roundup associations and grazing districts. As the open-range system expanded north from its roots in the Southwest, American cowboys learned herding, roping, and other skills from the Spanish *vaquero*, even adapting that word to buckaroo.



Jesse Chisholm
1805-68

Scot-Cherokee, famous interpreter, trader. He traveled to his trading posts on a trail that became his namesake. This trail carried nearly half of all cattle driven from Texas to Kansas.

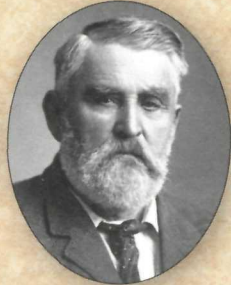
WICHITA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



Oliver Loving
1812-67

Trader, pioneer of cattle drives. He sent first herd of Texas longhorns to a northern market in 1858. This venture was successful, so he traded for more cattle, building large herds for market.

PANHANDLE PLAINS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, TEXAS



Charles Goodnight
1836-1929

Cowboy, cattle baron, founder of JA Ranch in Texas, inventor of chuck wagon. In 1866 he and Loving, 18 cowboys, and 2,000 longhorns blazed a new trail from Texas to Denver.

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Capt. Richard King
1824-85

Livestock capitalist, founder of King Ranch in Texas. He supplied beef and provisions to Confederates during Civil War and used his war profits to amass nearly one million acres.

KING RANCH, INC.



John Chisum
1824-84

Cattleman. His empire bordered 150 miles of the Pecos River in New Mexico. By 1875 over 80,000 cattle bore his Jinglebob earmark—an ear notch that caused a portion to dangle.

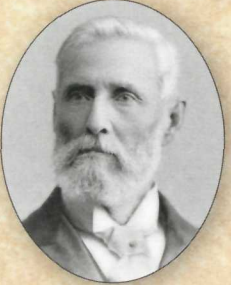
BENEFICE RARE BOOK AND MANUSCRIPT LIBRARY



John Wesley Iliff
1831-78

Merchant, cattleman, banker. In 1870s his business sold beef to railroad crews, miners, and Indian agencies. He could ride all week (one way) without leaving his ranch lands in Colorado.

COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Granville Stuart
1834-1918

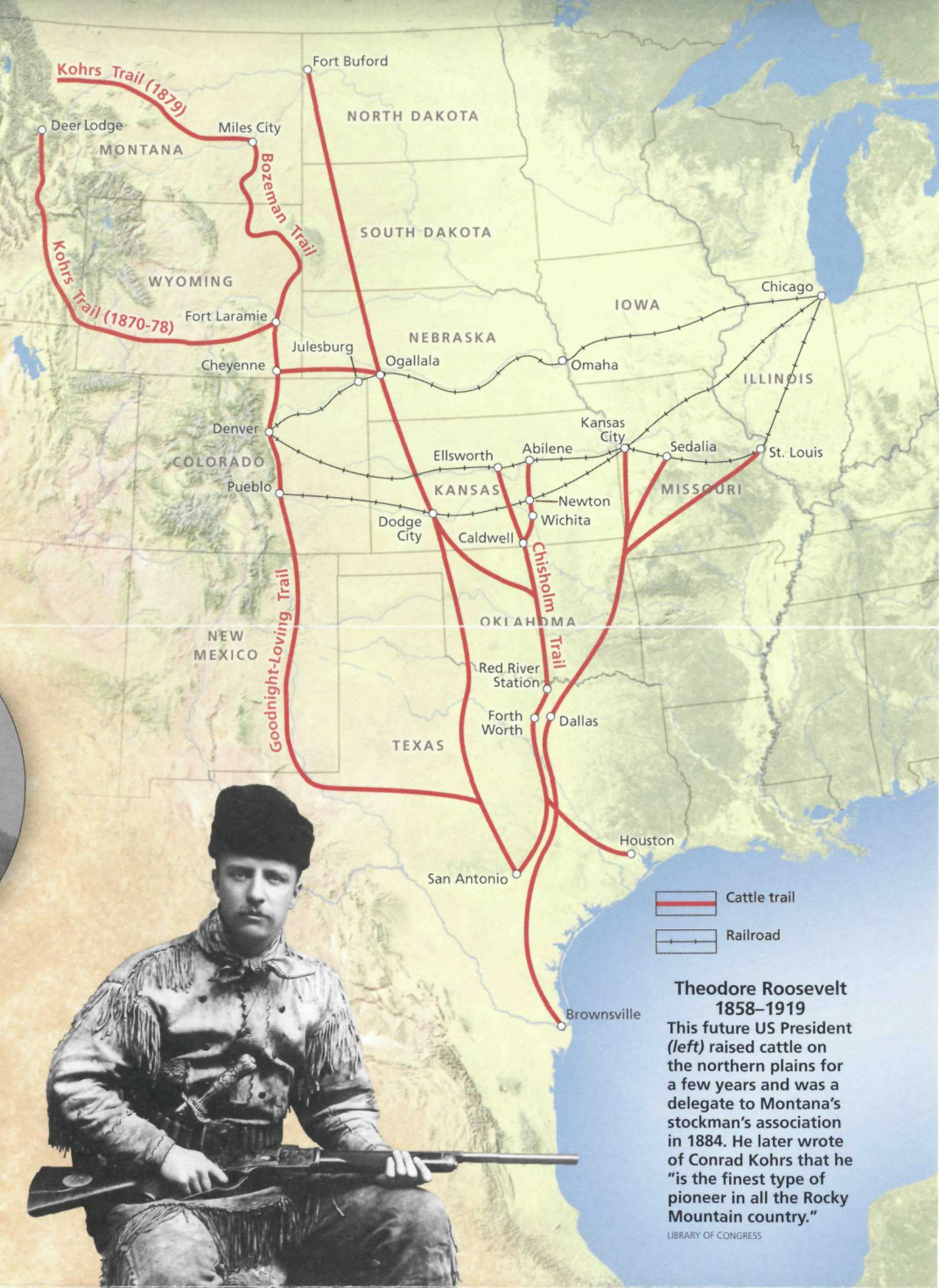
Co-owner of DHS Ranch. In 1883 Bielenberg and Kohrs bought a major part of the ranch, the largest cattle deal to date in Montana. His journals include drawings of Montana life.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Conrad Kohrs
1835-1920

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Theodore Roosevelt
1858-1919

This future US President (left) raised cattle on the northern plains for a few years and was a delegate to Montana's stockman's association in 1884. He later wrote of Conrad Kohrs that he "is the finest type of pioneer in all the Rocky Mountain country."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Dream back beyond the cramping lanes to glories that have been—the camp smoke on the sunset plains, the riders loping in: Loose rein and rowelled heel to spare, the wind our only guide, for youth was in the saddle there with half a world to ride.

From *The Passing of the Trail* by Badger Clark, poet of the American West and Poet Laureate, South Dakota, 1937-57

Life of the Cowboy

Often small and wiry, usually in his teens or early twenties, the open-range cowboy craved the adventure of trailing cattle hundreds of miles and the challenge of rounding up half-wild stock on the unfenced range. (See portrait of cowboy at right.) The work was hard—a long day in the saddle and watching the herd at night, with no days off. But it was balanced by companionship, hearty meals at the chuck-wagon, and the promise of \$30 or \$40 at the end of a long cattle drive—plenty for a trip to town.

From his high-crowned hat and silk bandana to his leather chaps and jingling spurs, a cowboy's outfit proclaimed him part of an independent breed. The horses he rode may have belonged to his employer, but his saddle was his own—an item of such pride that to say he had "sold his saddle" meant his cowboy and trail days were over.

At a roundup or on a 1,500-mile, five-month trail drive the chuck wagon (right) was the most important piece of equipment in the cattle industry—and the cook was the most important person. A good cook ensured workers were well-fed and productive.

Charles M. Russell had two loves—riding the range and drawing. In 1882 he began riding with the herd at night for Granville Stuart's DHS outfit. It was a lonely job, but it gave Russell time by day to observe and paint Indians, horses, and cowboys at work.



Bronc to Breakfast, by Charles M. Russell. He often included himself to show he experienced the cowboy life depicted in his paintings. In this painting, he sits at far right wearing a red bandana.

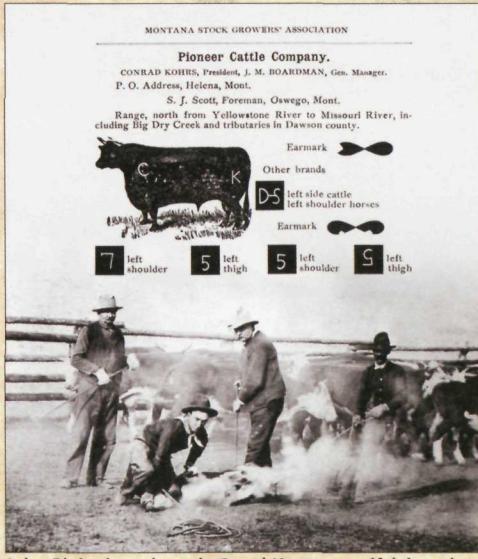
PAINTING (ABOVE)—MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY; MACKEY COLLECTION; COWBOY PORTRAIT (RIGHT)—DENVER PUBLIC LIBRARY; WESTERN HISTORY COLLECTION



Written in Fire—Brands and Ownership

A rancher's brand was his reputation, his cowboys' pride, and his cows' return address. More than 50,000 brands were registered in Montana by 1900. When cattle from different owners mix together there must be a way of identifying them, and a registered brand is as individual as a license plate.

During open-range days, tens of thousands of animals from hundreds of owners mingled on common ranges. Each spring ranchers worked together to gather all the cattle in a roundup district. Cowboys heated the rancher's branding irons in a fire. When an unbranded calf was separated from the bunch, its mother naturally came to protect it. Her brand was called out and that iron taken from the fire and applied to the calf. The calf was also earmarked, a specific notch cut into its ear for extra identification. Today 98 percent of Montana cattle are still branded, but earmarking is rarely practiced.



John Bielenberg brands C and K onto a calf (above). Other brands used at the CK Ranch are shown below. Conrad Kohrs, age 80, speaks to someone at the gate of a ranch jackleg fence (below left).

PHOTOS / NPS

Kingdom of Cattle

Conrad Kohrs was the Cattle King of Montana, but it was a kingdom without borders and his subjects were the cattle that ranged freely across millions of acres of public land. Born in Germany in 1835, Kohrs left home at 15 and sailed the world as a cabin boy. The quest for gold led him to California, Canada, and, in 1862, that part of the Idaho Territory that would become southwest Montana. There he made his fortune—not by panning for gold but by raising cattle.

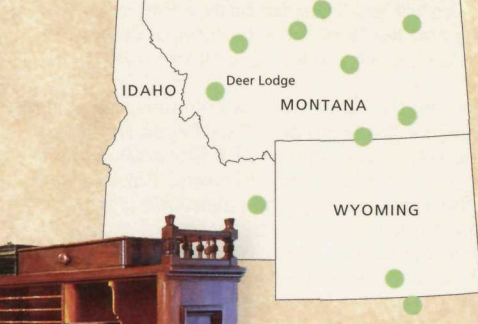
Other cattlemen preceded Kohrs onto the open range, and many others would follow. Johnny Grant and a handful of other early settlers had been wintering cattle in Montana's western valleys since the 1850s. Grant crossed paths with Kohrs soon after the younger man arrived in the area.

Conrad Kohrs came into the territory with only the clothes on his back and what he could carry in his bedroll—and he needed money. He had learned the rudiments of the butchering trade from relatives in New York and Iowa, and he quickly found work as a butcher's assistant. Kohrs soon owned butcher shops in many gold camps. Johnny Grant supplied cattle to his shops, and, in 1866, sold his ranch to Kohrs. Grant moved back to his native Canada, leaving a legacy of stock-raising in the sheltered, grassy valleys of southwest Montana that Kohrs carried on.

Conrad Kohrs began building his empire in Deer Lodge Valley. In time he acquired 30,000 acres at the home ranch, where he raised fine breeding stock, both cattle and horses. When the near-extinction of bison on the northern plains opened a sea of grass to cattlemen, Kohrs ranged cattle from Colorado to Canada, sharing these scattered ranges with other stockmen. The shared nature of the range required close cooperation among all cattlemen and led Kohrs and other ranchers to found the Montana Stockgrowers Association in 1884.

For the next quarter of a century Kohrs and his half brother, John Bielenberg, were influential in the evolution of the cattle industry and the politics of Montana. Kohrs was a delegate to Montana's constitutional convention of 1889 and helped draft the constitution that led to statehood.

As the open-range system declined, Kohrs adapted his business to a mix of farming and open-range grazing. In 1909, long after the boom years, Kohrs' cattle sales topped \$500,000. In later years he sold off most of his holdings, having achieved his version of the American dream. Conrad Kohrs died in 1920, and John Bielenberg in 1922. For a time the ranch was run by a family trust. In 1932 Kohrs' grandson, Conrad Warren, began a new era as manager and then, in 1940, as owner of the ranch.



By the 1890s Kohrs' cattle grazed on more than 10 million acres of public land. Green dots show where his cattle grazed (above). Kohrs' cabinet desk is hinged in the center and folds up to lock away drawers. An early-day copier sits left of the desk.

PHOTOS / NPS

Settling the Valley

The mountain valley Johnny Grant settled in 1859 was a land caught between eras and cultures. Considered Flathead (Salish and Kootenai) territory by the federal government, the valley had long been used by many tribes as a route to hunting and trading areas. Early pioneers that settled in Deer Lodge Valley were Mexican and Métis, a cultural blend of French-Canadian and tribal people, attracted by fur trading. As the fur trade faded into memory, gold mining and livestock industries attracted new settlers.

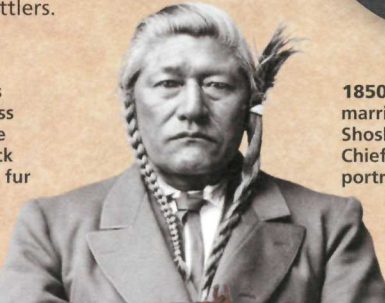


Johnny Grant
1831-1907

John F. Grant is 35 years old in this 1866 photo. His marriage to women of several tribes helped ensure his peaceful settlement in the valley.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1804-06 Explorers Lewis and Clark pass close to Deer Lodge Valley and take back descriptions of this fur trapper's paradise.



1850s Johnny Grant marries Quarra (Lemhi Shoshone). Her brother, Chief Tendo, poses for a portrait (left).

NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES, AMERICAN INSTITUTION

1861-65 Civil War depletes cattle supplies in the Mississippi valley, creating shortages in eastern markets. Cattle industry responds.

1862 Johnny Grant builds "first good house" in Deer Lodge Valley. In 1866 Conrad Kohrs buys the house and ranch for \$19,200.

1860-70s Homestead Act passes, new settlers want cheap, durable fencing; first US patent for barbed wire; open-range grazing continues.



John Bielenberg
1846-1922

John Bielenberg was Kohrs' half brother and business partner, and an expert cattleman. He lived in the ranch house for half a century, but he often preferred the informality of the bunkhouse.

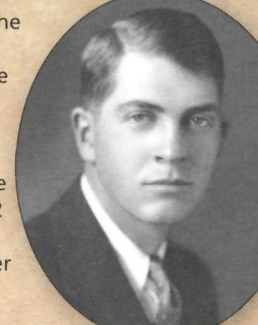
NPS

1886-87 During hard winter some ranchers lose 95 percent of their herds. Kohrs loses 60 percent of his valley herd.

1880-1900 Barbed wire enclosing farms signals end of the open range; ranchers develop ways of producing and harvesting quality hay.

Furthering a Legacy

Conrad Kohrs Warren was born into one of the most famous ranch families of the 1800s, but the days of open range and cattle drives were over. When he began managing the Kohrs ranch in 1932, only 1,000 acres and a few hundred head of cattle remained. He ran the ranch with methods of the new century while honoring his family's ranching legacy. In 1952 he was elected president of the Montana Stockgrowers Association that his grandfather helped found 66 years earlier.



Conrad K. Warren
1907-1993

Warren was renowned for his love of animals, commitment to the live-stock industry, and resolve to preserve the ranch, artifacts, records, and lore of his grandfather and great uncle.

NPS

1940 Conrad Warren's stock-raising operation is nationally acclaimed for its Hereford cattle and purebred Belgian horses. He buys ranch.

1977 Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site opens to the public; members of Kohrs, Bielenberg, and Warren families attend festivities.

1993 At age 85, Conrad Warren dies; horse-drawn wagon carries his casket to Hillcrest Cemetery. (Wagon displayed at ranch.)

Ongoing The National Park Service, Deer Lodge community, and volunteers protect the Grant-Kohrs Ranch for future generations.

1800

1850

1875

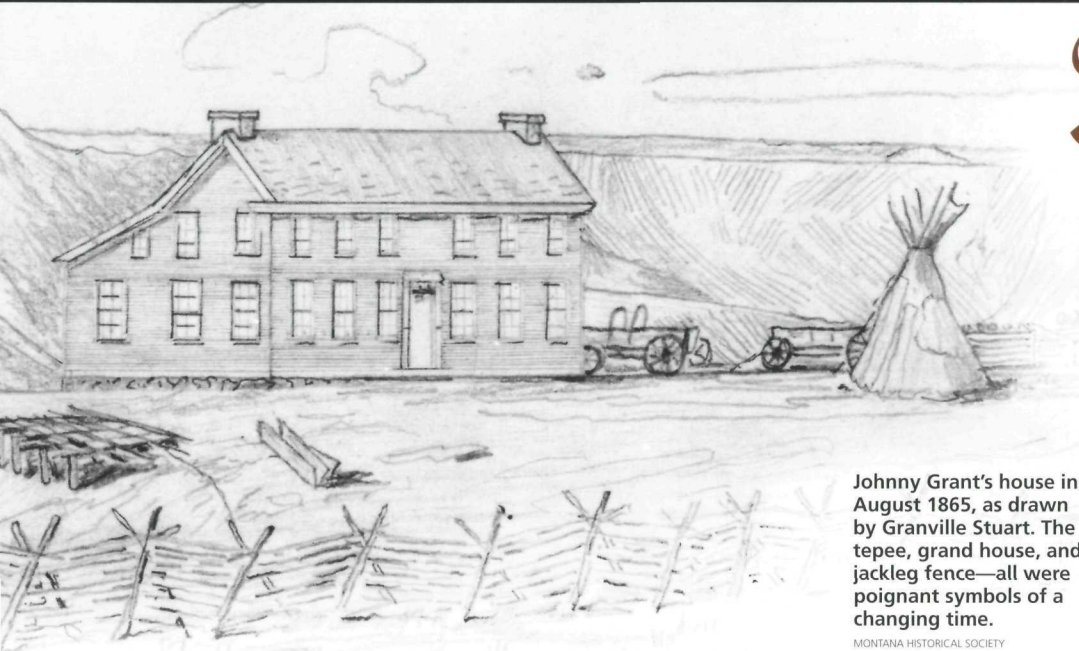
1900

1925

1950

1975

2000



Johnny Grant's house in August 1865, as drawn by Granville Stuart. The teepee, grand house, and jackleg fence—all were poignant symbols of a changing time.

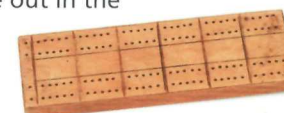
MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Home on the Range

There was not just one home on the range but many, from a simple dugout gouged out of a hillside and faced with rough-hewn logs to the elegant mansions of the cattle kings. Johnny Grant described his first home in the valley as a leather lodge (a teepee) that he got from an Indian in exchange for a horse. Conrad Kohrs called his first butcher shop a brush shanty. Each must have felt pride in his new home, from the original 4,000-square-foot house that Grant built in 1862 to the 5,000-square-foot brick addition Kohrs built in 1890.

Augusta Kohrs came to a finer home than many pioneer brides. Still, when she arrived in 1868, the interior of the house was a far cry from its later Victorian elegance. The bride discovered a house with bare floors, spittoons, and an old bed strung with rawhide in place of springs, and a straw-filled sack for a mattress infested with bedbugs. She began "a war of extermination" using boiling water and kerosene until the bugs disappeared except for "an occasional one left by a chance traveler." Over time she acquired fine furniture, a piano, china, silver, gilt-framed pictures, and Persian rugs. The 1890 addition of her conservatory filled her heart with joy.

Shelter, warmth, companionship, and food were essentials for frontier life. If the Kohrs served champagne and oysters to guests on special occasions, it is likely that a hungry cowboy riding the grubline ate with no less enjoyment when invited into the bunkhouse for coffee, beef, beans, and biscuits. Amusements were similar too. Kohrs played cards with his friends on a special felt-covered poker table, while out in the bunkhouse cowboys played cribbage and cards over a scarred worktable, and on the open range cowboys dealt cards across a blanket on the ground.



For ranchers less prosperous than the Kohrs the line between family and hired hand wasn't always so obvious. They spent much time together. Work filled their days; songs, stories, and conversations filled idle hours. Chores were necessary for comfort, even survival. One element missing from both bunkhouse and open range was family. For many cowboys, some little older than children themselves, roundups and trail drives were often their first time away from home. Theirs could be a lonely life.



Old World Meets New

Her childhood in Hamburg, Germany, did little to prepare Augusta Kruse Kohrs for her life as a pioneer bride. She milked cows, made soap and candles, cooked, and kept house for hired hands and her husband. Yet she preserved much of the heritage of her former homeland. As the family prospered she acquired fine belongings, supervised a staff, and valued both the New and the Old World, balancing the opportunities of America with the music, art, and culture of Europe.



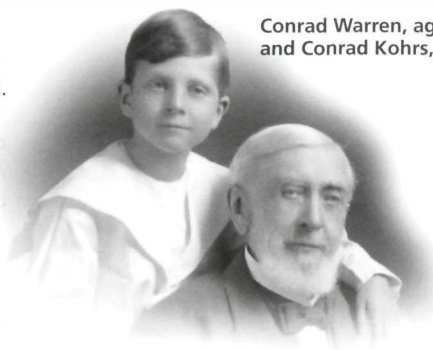
Augusta Kohrs 1849–1945

Proud, tall, and beautiful, 25-year-old Augusta poses for a portrait. She and Conrad met when children in Germany. They married in Iowa on February 23, 1868, after dating for about three weeks.

MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A Frontier Family

The upbringing of the Kohrs children differed from that of many ranch children. They had a governess, learned German, and traveled abroad. Chores common to many children—chopping wood, pumping water, feeding livestock—were not part of their routine. Anna and Katharine learned needlepoint; William showed a talent for art. Anna kept close ties with ranching by marrying John Boardman, a rancher associated with Kohrs in livestock enterprises. In the end it was Katharine's son, Conrad Warren, who saved the ranch and was most at home on the range.



Conrad Warren, age 6, and Conrad Kohrs, age 79

Preserving a Way of Life

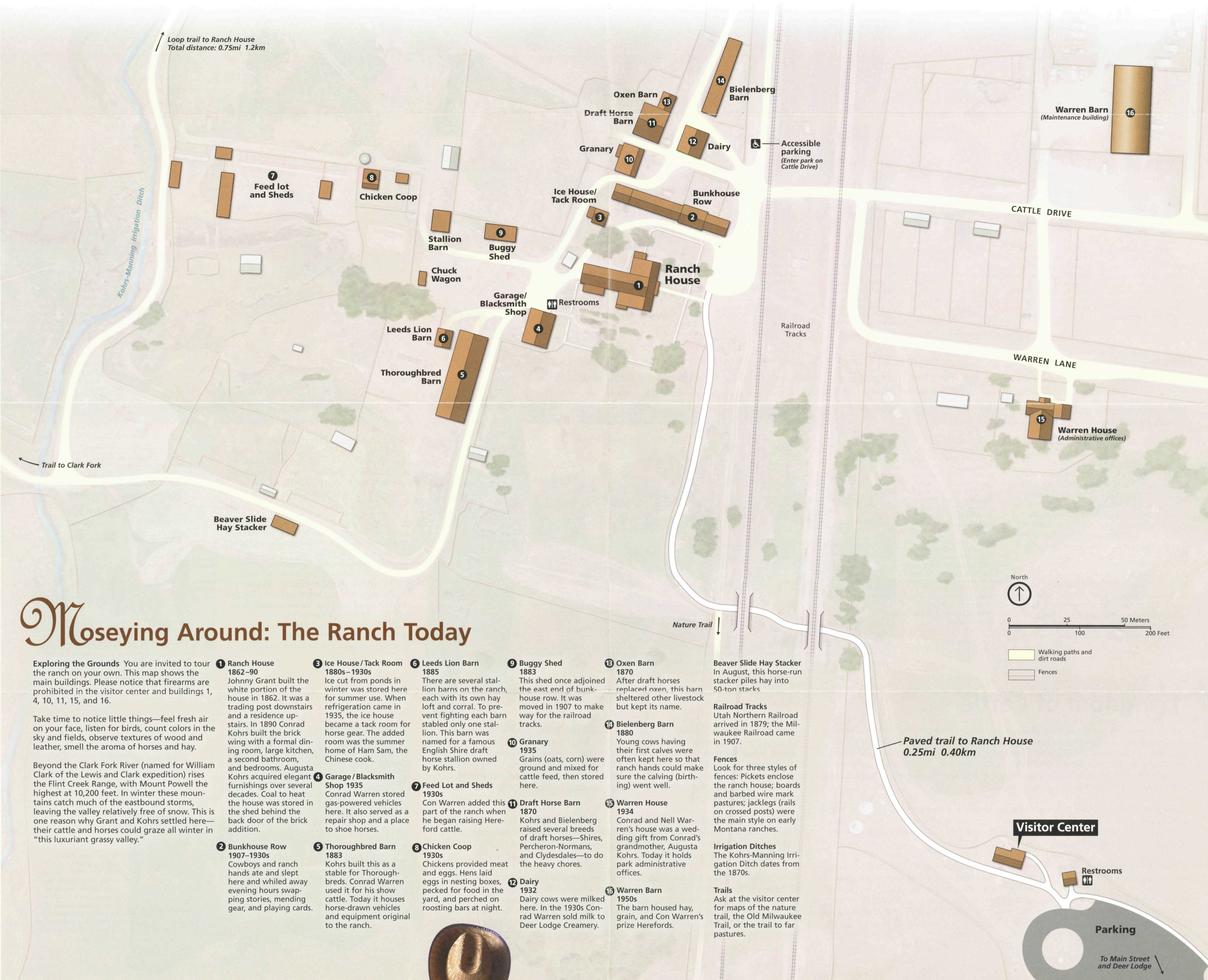
Sometimes it takes someone from outside the story to see the importance of a family's history. It was Nell, Conrad Warren's wife, who began recording the family history she had learned from Augusta. Nell cared for their extraordinary collection of antiques and documents, while her husband concentrated on ranching in difficult times that included the Great Depression and World War II. She also urged her husband to contact the National Park Service as they sought to preserve the historic Grant-Kohrs ranch beyond their lifetimes.



Nell Warren 1911–79

Nell protected the possessions of Kohrs and Bielenberg, and compiled a history of their businesses. Her efforts preserved a rare, intact record of the cattle industry that spans nearly 150 years. (Nell age, 23)

ALL PHOTOS: THIS PAGE NPS UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED



Moseying Around: The Ranch Today

Exploring the Grounds You are invited to tour the ranch on your own. This map shows the main buildings. Please notice that firearms are prohibited in the visitor center and buildings 1, 4, 10, 11, 15, and 16.

Take time to notice little things—feel fresh air on your face, listen for birds, count colors in the sky and fields, observe textures of wood and leather, smell the aroma of horses and hay.

Beyond the Clark Fork River (named for William Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition) rises the Flint Creek Range, with Mount Powell the highest at 10,200 feet. In winter these mountains catch much of the eastbound storms, leaving the valley relatively free of snow. This is one reason why Grant and Kohrs settled here—their cattle and horses could graze all winter in "this luxuriant grassy valley."

1 Ranch House 1862–90 Johnny Grant built the white portion of the house in 1862. It was a trading post downstairs and a residence upstairs. In 1890 Conrad Kohrs built the brick wing with a formal dining room, large kitchen, a second bathroom, and bedrooms. Augusta Kohrs acquired elegant furnishings over several decades. Coal to heat the house was stored in the shed behind the back door of the brick addition.

2 Bunkhouse Row 1907–1930s Cowboys and ranch hands ate and slept here and whiled away evening hours swapping stories, mending gear, and playing cards.

3 Ice House/Tack Room 1880s–1930s Ice cut from ponds in winter was stored here for summer use. When refrigeration came in 1935, the ice house became a tack room for horse gear. The added room was the summer home of Ham Sam, the Chinese cook.

4 Garage/Blacksmith Shop 1935 Conrad Warren stored gas-powered vehicles here. It also served as a repair shop and a place to shoe horses.

5 Thoroughbred Barn 1883 Kohrs built this as a stable for Thoroughbreds. Conrad Warren used it for his show cattle. Today it houses horse-drawn vehicles and equipment original to the ranch.

6 Leeds Lion Barn 1885 There are several stallion barns on the ranch, each with its own hay loft and corral. To prevent fighting each barn stabled only one stallion. This barn was named for a famous English Shire draft horse stallion owned by Kohrs.

7 Feed Lot and Sheds 1930s Con Warren added this part of the ranch when he began raising Hereford cattle.

8 Chicken Coop 1930s Chickens provided meat and eggs. Hens laid eggs in nesting boxes, pecked for food in the yard, and perched on roosting bars at night.

9 Buggy Shed 1883 This shed once adjoined the east end of bunkhouse row. It was moved in 1907 to make way for the railroad tracks.

10 Granary 1935 Grains (oats, corn) were ground and mixed for cattle feed, then stored here.

11 Draft Horse Barn 1870 Kohrs and Bielenberg raised several breeds of draft horses—Shires, Percheron-Normans, and Clydesdales—to do the heavy chores.

12 Dairy 1932 Dairy cows were milked here. In the 1930s Conrad Warren sold milk to Deer Lodge Creamery.

13 Oxen Barn 1870 After draft horses replaced oxen, this barn sheltered other livestock but kept its name.

14 Bielenberg Barn 1880 Young cows having their first calves were often kept here so that ranch hands could make sure the calving (birth) went well.

15 Warren House 1934 Conrad and Nell Warren's house was a wedding gift from Conrad's grandmother, Augusta Kohrs. Today it holds park administrative offices.

16 Warren Barn 1950s The barn housed hay, grain, and Con Warren's prize Herefords.

Beaver Slide Hay Stacker 1870 In August, this horse-run stacker piles hay into 50-ton stacks.

Railroad Tracks Utah Northern Railroad arrived in 1879; the Milwaukee Railroad came in 1907.

Fences Look for three styles of fences: Pickets enclose the ranch house; boards and barbed wire mark pastures; jacklegs (rails on crossed posts) were the main style on early Montana ranches.

Irrigation Ditches The Kohrs-Manning Irrigation Ditch dates from the 1870s.

Trails Ask at the visitor center for maps of the nature trail, the Old Milwaukee Trail, or the trail to far pastures.

Paved trail to Ranch House 0.25mi 0.40km



0 25 50 Meters
0 100 200 Feet

Walking paths and dirt roads
Fences

Visitor Center

Restrooms

Parking

To Main Street and Deer Lodge

About Your Visit

Visitor Center Start here for information and to sign up for a tour of the ranch house. The visitor center and ranch are open daily, except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1.

Guided Tours of the House The only way to see the ranch house is with a guided tour. Tour size is limited, and you may have to wait. You may visit the grounds until your tour begins.

Activities This is a working ranch (not a dude ranch or petting farm) with year-round chores directed by the seasons. The ranch can bustle with activities (branding, haying, and more) or seem quiet. Programs and ranger-led activities are offered seasonally. Visit our website to find out about special events.

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

Safety and Regulations Please help us preserve this park • Smoking and pets are allowed only in the parking lot. • Do not touch historic objects. • Stay in designated areas and watch where you walk. • Livestock can be unpredictable; do not approach livestock. • Do not climb on fences or enter corrals or pastures. • Close gates behind you. • Be careful on the railroad tracks; the east track is active. • All historic and natural features are protected by federal law. • For general firearms regulations, check the park website. See also specifics on the map.



COURTESY OF DAVID KATZENTEN / CORBIS

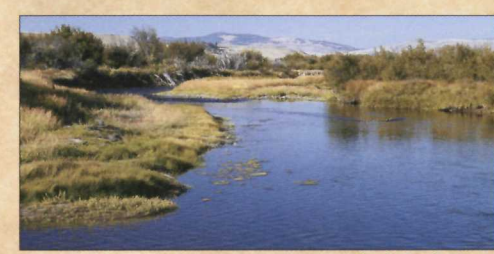
Beyond the Ranch

Grant-Kohrs-related sites in Deer Lodge, MT: • The 1910 home of Nicholas Bielenberg (brother of John and half brother of Conrad Kohrs), 801 Milwaukee Ave. • William K. Kohrs Library, 501 Missouri Ave. William, Conrad Kohrs' only son, died in 1901. • Hillcrest Cemetery, W. Milwaukee Rd. Burial sites for Augusta, Conrad, son William Kohrs, John Bielenberg, and grandson Conrad Warren. • Old Prison Museum, 1106 Main St. Site of the Montana Territorial Prison. Kohrs served on the board of prison commissioners in the 1870s.

Kohrs-related sites in Helena, MT: • Home of Conrad and Augusta Kohrs, 804 Dearborn Ave., purchased in 1900. • Montana Historical Society Museum,

225 N. Roberts St. Collection of oils, watercolors, bronzes, and illustrated letters by artist Charles M. Russell.

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site is within a day's drive of several other national parks (map at left).



Clark Fork River

More Information Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site 266 Warren Lane Deer Lodge, MT 59722 406-846-2070 www.nps.gov/grko

Emergencies call 911

Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks, visit www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation. Join the park community. www.nationalparks.org

©GPO 2015—388-417/0915 Last updated 2015 Printed on recycled paper