

50. WE TAKE OVER THE KOCH PLACE

Recently, I've devoted a lot of ink to the North Poudre Irrigation Company because the Company's story is central to the history of Livermore, generally, and the history of Haligan is specifically central to the story of Phantom Canyon. We're going to leave NPIC for a while and catch up with the rest of the story.

On May 12, 1982 we formed the North Fork Land & Cattle Co. Limited Partnership (Chapter 38). That provided the capital needed to close on the Koch Place (Chapter 22) five days later – nails bitten to the quick.

The transaction included 2,050 deeded acres and two private leases totaling 1,280 acres, the adjacent Parker Section (Chapter 45) and 640 acres on Sheep Creek, and the two National Forest Permits that Clarence had used, the Swan and Bennett Creek Permits (opposite). In addition, we bought the machinery and cows.

Clarence had asked that we keep our agreement to buy his place strictly on the QT for the past year, so our purchase was a surprise to the members of the community – none more so than Al Zuege and Dale Jewitt, Clarence's ranch hands (Chapter 22, footnote 3).¹

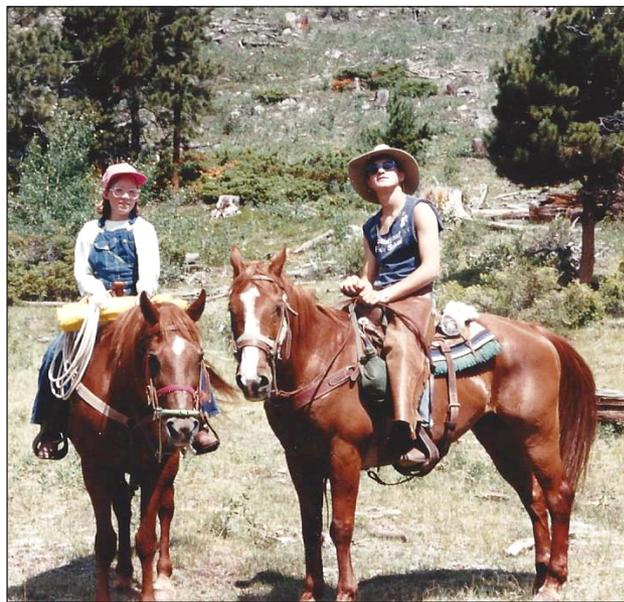
Clarence urged that we should continue to employ Al and Dale. He would break the news to them, smooth out the wrinkles and make sure they went along. Clarence was persuasive and we didn't want to rock the boat, so we agreed – with some misgivings, prescient as it turned out. In any event, 1982 was going to be a big year. We could have done worse than Clarence's 'turn-key' deal in the middle of all we had going on.

The summer and fall of 1982, the Koch Place pretty much ran as if Clarence still owned it. When it was time to move cows and calves on to the Bennett Creek Permit, I went along to help and get

an introduction to the permit, a ~48 square mile area between Pingree Park on the south and Rustic and the Poudre River on the north.

We had the cattle trucked down US 287 to Ted's Place and then up the Poudre to holding corrals at the bottom of the Dadd Gulch Stock Trail, east of Indian Meadows.² From there we drove the cattle up the gulch trail to Salt Cabin Park, west on the Crown Point Road and back north to Mineral Springs, where we left the 160 pairs of cows and calves. We rode on down to Rustic from Mineral Springs and back to the Dadd Gulch corrals – a twelve-mile loop in six hours of freezing drizzle. Clarence, at 78 on his big white horse, was fresh as a daisy.³

Another trail drive involved getting 50 pairs to and from the Swan Permit. There were two options: Via the Red Feather Lakes Road to the top of McNey Hill and southeast to the Swan homestead or, overland



Nina (12) on Sabra and Arthur (16) on Hole-in-Nose at Bennett Creek – 1990.

from the south end of Weymouth Lane to Gordon Creek. The latter trail crossed some of the extensive Ice Age boulder deposits on the slopes south of the Red Feather Lakes Road (Chapter 41, # 7 on that map).

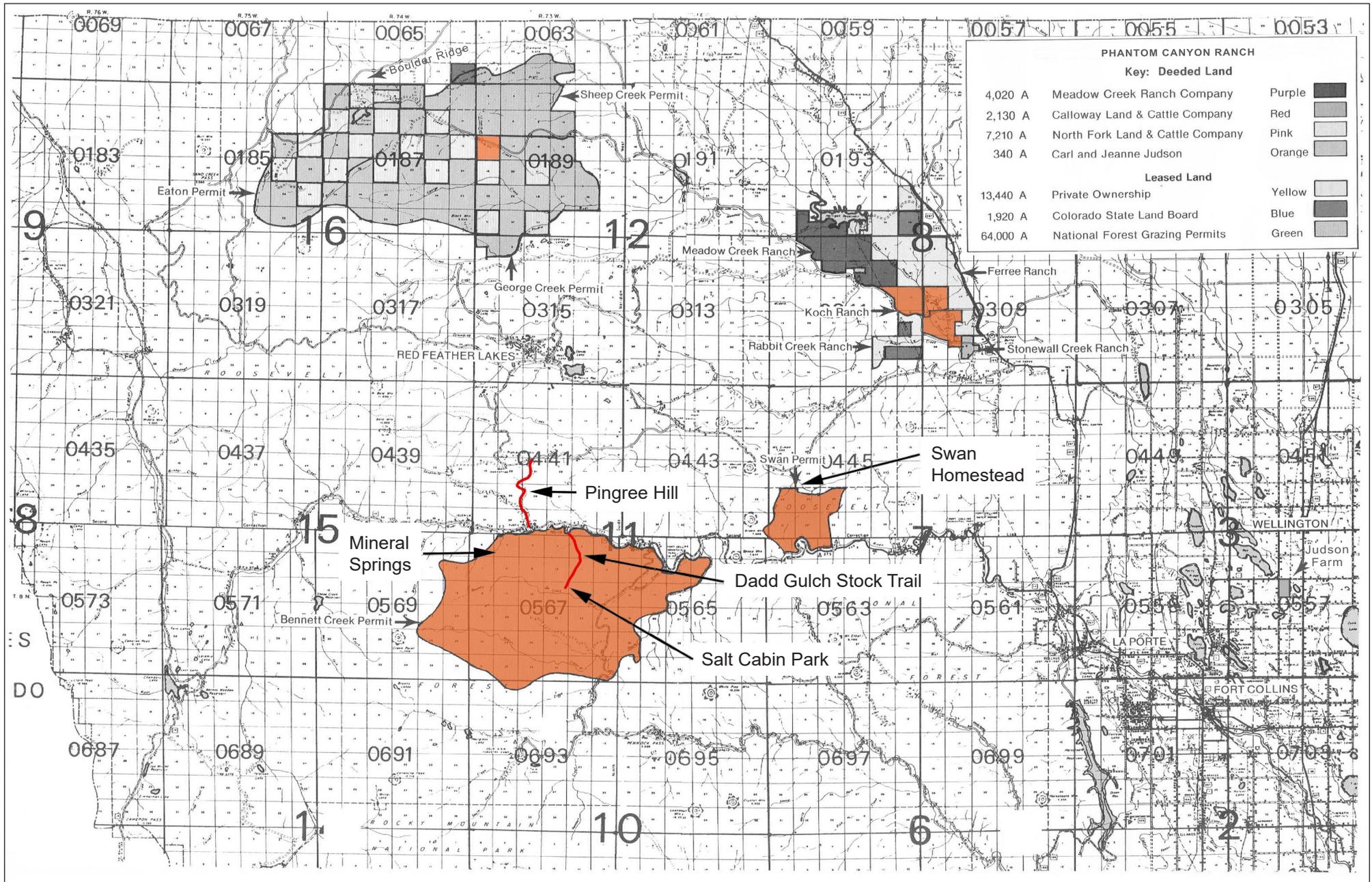
Shorthanded in 1990, our son, Arthur (16), and our youngest daughter, Nina (12), managed the cows on the Bennett Creek Permit. They would drive over to Bennett Creek, pulling a stock trailer with their horses, to camp in order to round up the cattle and move them to fresh pasture every couple of weeks.

Thanks to Zach Thode for his help with this chapter.

¹ Our employment terms for Al and Dale were somewhat more generous than Clarence's had been – by way of example, we stopped charging them for electricity and got rid of the medieval electric meter that Clarence had installed on Dale's trailer.

² Clarence told me that when he first got the Bennett Creek Permit, he and the trucking company made the mistake of going up the Red Feather Lakes Road, by the Boy Scout Ranch and down Pingree Hill toward Rustic... only they didn't make it. The lead truck got its trailer (called a cattle pot) hung up on one of the hairpin turns so the cattle had to unloaded with considerable difficulty (the tractor and cattle pot were dealt with later using profanity and heavy machinery). The other trucks, behind, managed to get backed up and turned around to go all the way back down to the Forks and Ted's Place and then up the Poudre to meet Clarence and the boys who had driven the first load the rest of the way down Pingree Hill and across the Poudre.

³ After George and Sarah Seidel took over the Bennett Creek Forest Permit, Richard Borgmann (1949-2018) and Zach Thode worked out a way to trail the cattle over through Glacier View Meadows. Requiring 4-5 hands and three days, Zach is not sure it was a paying proposition.



The Koch Place, Including Leases and Permits