

Bear Creek heifers carrying the service of Premier Valedictorian, Cobble Pond New Yorker, Ken Caryl Overdrive, Brost Power Drive, Harrison, Scarecrow (a full brother to HAR Bang), ROR Royalty, Cheers, and Line Drive. Bear Creek Ranch is located on the outskirts of Cameron, Mt., population: unlisted.



Truly miles from nowhere, this "phone on the range" came about through an extra cable strung to a wealthy summer home adjoining the Sitz range. Handy, yes; at times, a godsend.



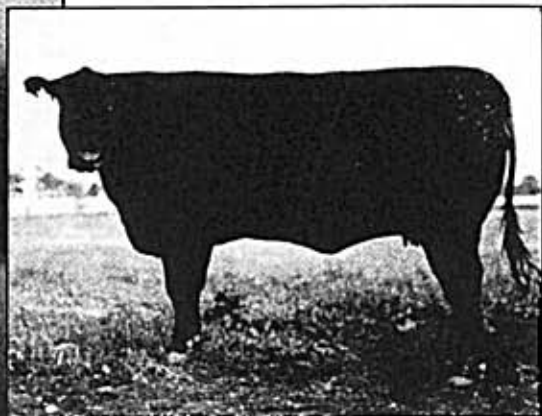
An abandoned homestead forms the backdrop and inspires both reverence and curiosity from those who pass by.



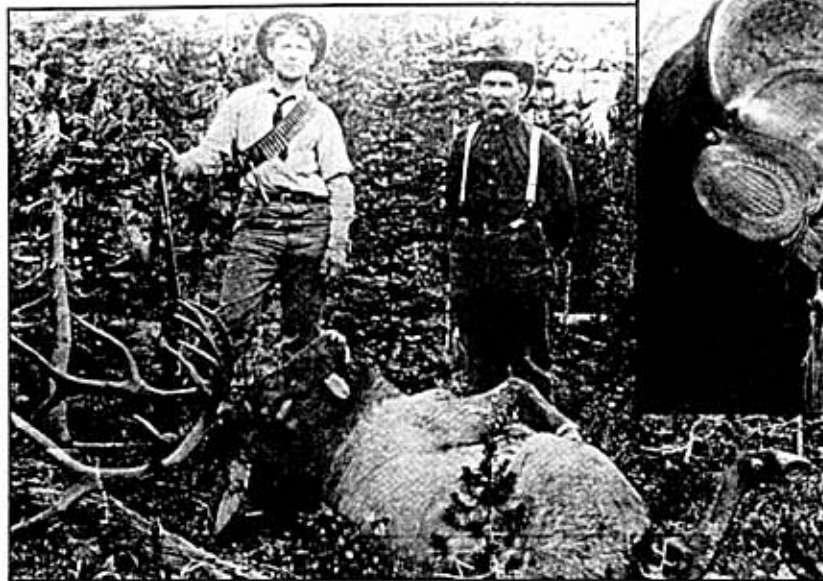
Jeff Bricker, Bear Creek Ranch, Cameron, Mt.: "We have 12 wheel lines on the place, two center pivots, and three guns. The more water we put on, the better our hay production. One of the pivots is gravity flow, all but four of the wheel lines."



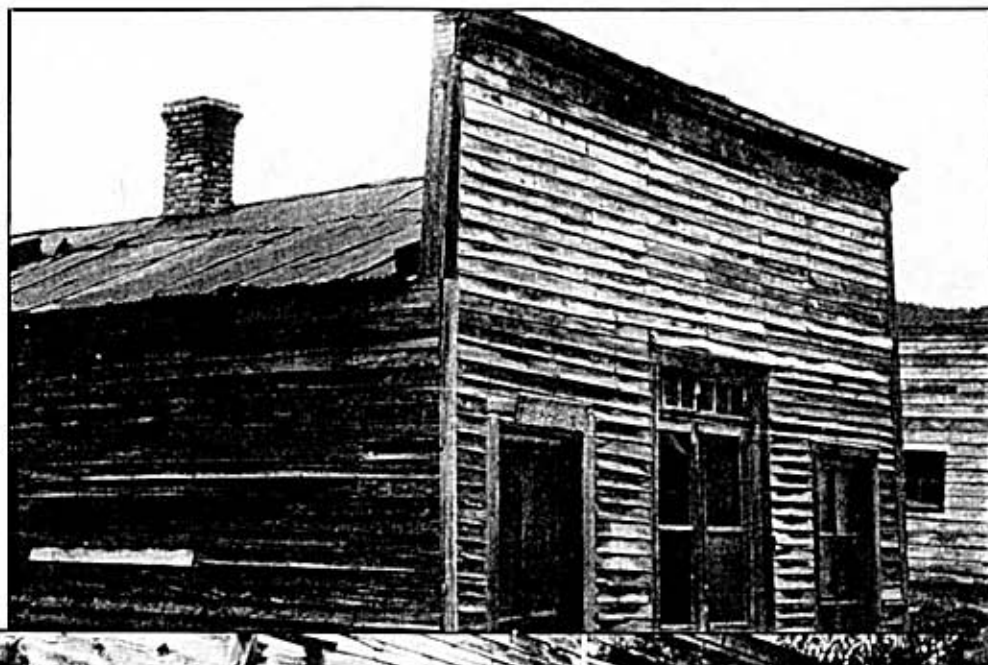
Jonathan Bricker is 14 months old, a native Montanan.



Coco was a reserve grand at Houston and produced the top-selling bull, heifer calf, and flush in Bear Creek's fall sale, 1985. "She's a High Voltage daughter we bought from Eldon Krebs. There's an Ankonian Dynamo 2 daughter on the dam side."



From the Virginia City museum



Vigilantes dispensed frontier vengeance inside this building where several road agents were hanged. The notorious Sheriff Henry Plummer was not among them; he met an identical verdict four days earlier in the mining town of Bannack where he dangled from a gallows of his own construction, a quirk of poetic justice, January 10, 1864.



Resembling the sluice boxes left over from abandoned mines in the surrounding hills, these downspouts surely contributed to Main Street's occasional quagmire. It's paved now.



Virginia City, Montana



Virginia City is a preservation, not a restoration. The Historic Landmark Society, spearheaded by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bovey, rose to the challenge of preserving anything and everything of Montana's past that could be found. The Boveys assembled artifacts and patched, refurbished, and saved the buildings so they'd retain their original appearance. The work was begun in the 1940s.



From the rough-hewn to the quietly Victorian, Virginia City homes have run the gamut.



The trial of the father-son Montana mountain men was staged here in 1985 when national attention was played on Madison County Sheriff Johnny France, their captor, who walked up on the kidnapers posing as a coyote hunter. An imposing structure when built in 1876, it ironically represented a bastion of civilization the same year Custer and the Seventh Cavalry were annihilated eastward at the Little Big Horn.



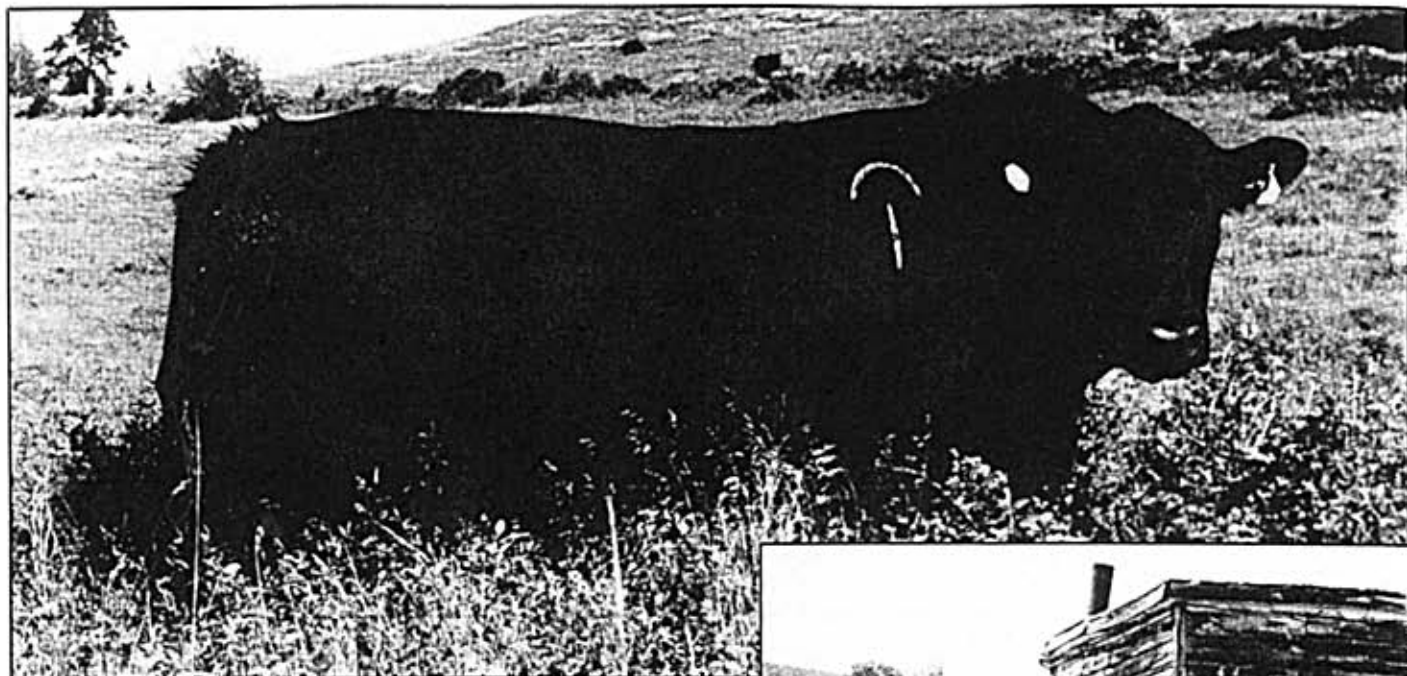
Black cows doing what's come to be expected of them, these matrons from the Goggins Angus Ranch, Billings, Mt.

"Heifers are duck soup. They've got nothing else to do but breed, if they're in proper condition, as there's no calf sucking. We bred between 1,100 to 1,200 head A.I. this year." Those with their first calf don't get bred A.I. for these, in the Sitz program, warrant special attention and get a year of grace during this most difficult period of growth, maintenance, reproduction, and nursing. He prefers natural detection to heat synchronization, finding extra trips through the chute "don't do the cattle any good. Work with Mother Nature instead of against her."

And, what's also been experienced here after tens of years and thousands of cattle is that Angus cattle work with Mother Nature. Scientific advancements notwithstanding, this is still a proving ground where mettle is tested under the vagaries of weather, altitude, poisonous plants, and ability to travel to water, salt, better grass. Angus have paid their dues and won the respect of commercial producer Bob Rice when he says, "Angus cattle have adapted well to our ranges and weather, and I believe



"Pat (Goggins) brought some cattle in here, and we've put 350 pounds on with summer grass. It'll probably do better than that this year." — Bob Endicott, range rider



Quarter circle one is his brand, Baldrige Oscar his heritage. This bull was found in the company of some Vermillion cows up the "coulee" which is Montana-ese for gulch, arroyo, draw, hollow, or ravine.

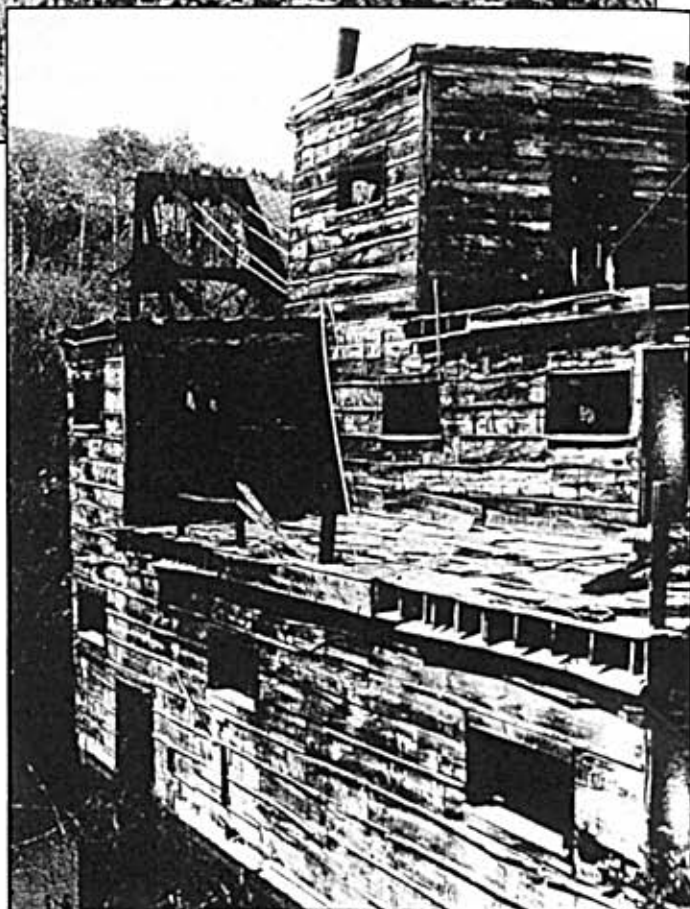
they do better than other breeds." Russ Schulz is even more specific concerning the black cow's merits:

"As far as longevity, she might not give you 15 years of her life because she might wear out in 12 or 14. Now, the Hereford cow might be 15 years old before she's used up her usefulness, but by the same token, she doesn't bring you the product that the black cow does. She's going to take that calf with her, and they'll come back in doing the job for you."

Russ runs both a commercial herd under "Schulz Brothers" and the Lazy T-Crazy T brand, and a registered segment under the Cross Over Bar, reputed to be the second or third oldest brand registered in Montana. Grandfather Otto A. Schulz put the ranch together in the early 1900s which was handed down to his sons Lester and Leonard. Leonard Schulz is a practicing attorney in Dillon and a partner in the commercial end of things.

Bob Sitz has been coming to these ranges for nearly 26 years. He's not a native of the Madison Valley as are many of its residents but entered as a disciple of new ideas and change. Jeff Bricker's aspirations centered on a career in modern dairying in Michigan. He began coming west to help with the haying at the new ranch and made the move to beef and the Madison River country in the early 1980s.

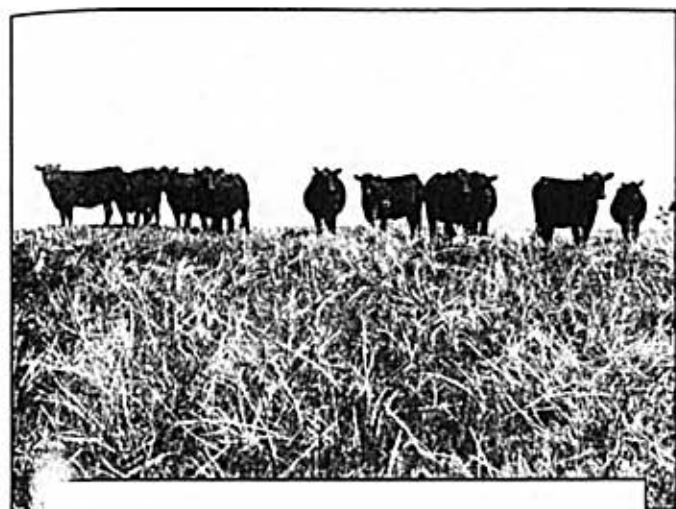
Different operations all, some quite similar. Some traditional, others steeped in E.T. and A.I. technology. They function, though, together in the shadow of a land great with drama and contrast, this Beaverhead, this Madison, this Virginia City. Its moods can be as predictable and gentle as the inviting Bear Creek or as vicious as a mountain



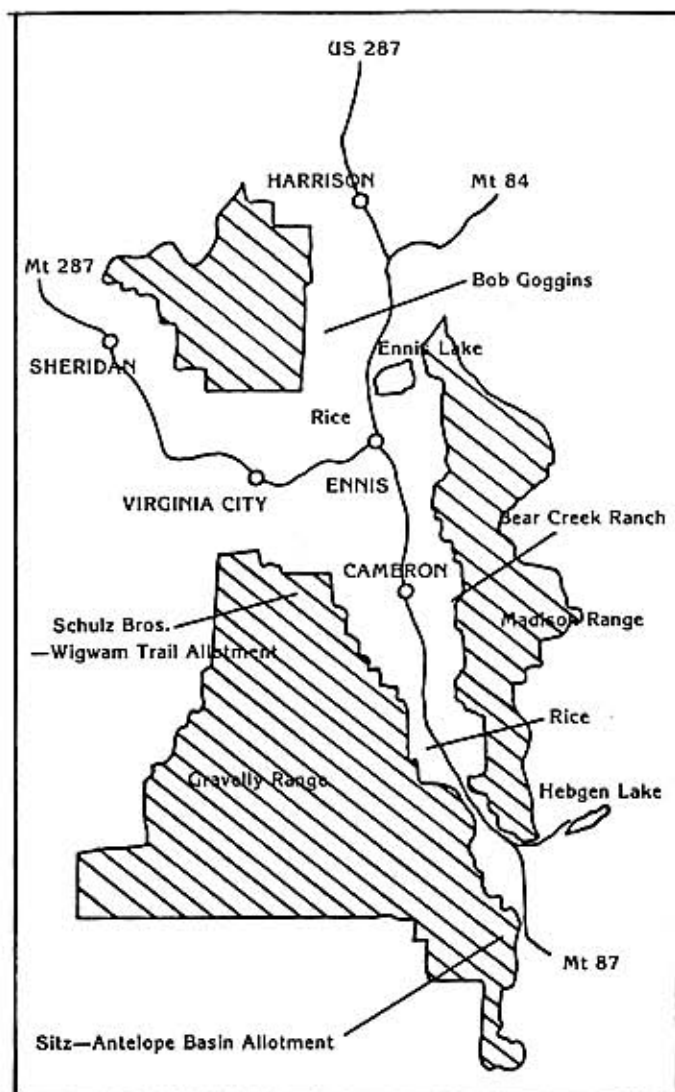
Men went deaf working on these things, the gold dredges that worked many a creek of the Madison River drainage until the 1940s and early '50s when this one was abandoned. It rests silent now on Washington Creek, disturbed only by the night breezes and barn swallows.

storm boiling down a rocky canyon. Yet for all its majesty, this land fosters a closeness for those who live within it. There's an endearing quality despite the grandeur, for it's a comfortable land that inspires derring—do and humor.

It's said one can ride horseback clear to the summit of the brooding, formidable Sphinx, 10,876



For Bob and Bonnie Rice, Rice Ranches of Harrison, Mt., summer runs from May 15 to October 15. Most of their cattle, 700 pair typically, range over 20,000 private acres. There is no full-time rider, though cowboys from the home place do cover the area periodically, and the oldest son flies the range several times during the summer. (Photographs by Bob Rice.)



feet. Or, if he's a patient sort, he can devote himself to his high-prowed Mackenzie River boat and relieve the Madison of one of its eight-pound trout to grace the wall of the Blue Moon Saloon in Cameron. Cameron, incidentally, is one of those places where if you own the bar and cafe (The Blue Bull), you likely own the whole town. And if you're a faithful customer, The Blue Bull might let you cut your own wedge of pie. And try the Grizzly Bar for steak. No "lite" beef served, you can bet.

Vergil Lindsay, the forest man, stuck with it. "I got my 30-year pin from the Secretary of Agriculture last Thursday. I've had a lot of laughs, I enjoy my work. I guess that's why I'm still here. I like working with ranchers and always have. I grew up on a ranch and just didn't think I was ever going to be able to stay with that, so I thought the next best thing was to be able to work with them."

Could it be the land, ever the land had some effect on Vergil's dedication?

The herd's breaking up, "mothered" or not. One

matron approaches the nooning spot and Trail Boss Russ Schulz as if to register a complaint. No, she remembers the salt lick close by and ignores the kids and the chuck wagon to get at it. "Should we push these old ribs back?" someone asks.

"No," Russ tells them. "Let 'em go, boys—what the heck. It's *all* Montana." **AJ**

