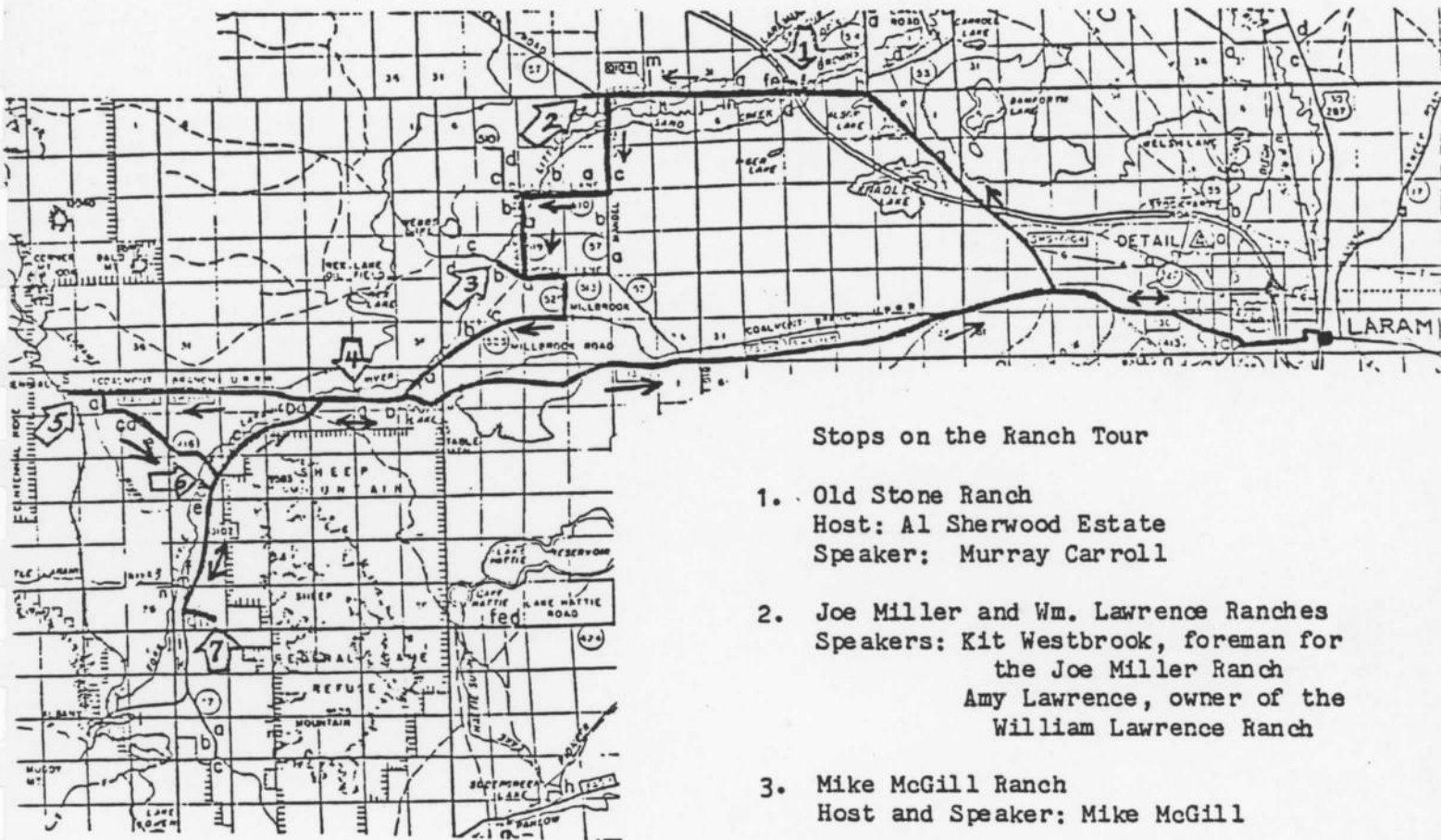


# 34<sup>th</sup> Old Time Ranch Tour



## Stops on the Ranch Tour

1. Old Stone Ranch  
Host: Al Sherwood Estate  
Speaker: Murray Carroll
2. Joe Miller and Wm. Lawrence Ranches  
Speakers: Kit Westbrook, foreman for  
the Joe Miller Ranch  
Amy Lawrence, owner of the  
William Lawrence Ranch
3. Mike McGill Ranch  
Host and Speaker: Mike McGill
4. Vee Bar Ranch  
Host and Speaker: George Crouse
5. Nici Self Museum, Centennial  
Lunch Stop  
Speakers: Jane Houston  
Murray Carroll
6. Olson-Clay Ranch  
Hosts and Speakers: Wana Clay Olson  
Perry Clay
7. Sundby-Wilson Ranch  
Hosts and Speakers: Roxanne Squires  
Susanne Squires

## Sponsors:

Laramie Kiwanis Club  
Albany County Historical Society  
Laramie Westerners

Saturday, July 20, 1985

THIRTY-FOURTH OLD TIME RANCH TOUR  
Saturday, July 20, 1985

The series of Old Time Ranch Tours was conceived and promoted by Dr. Robert Burns. The first tour was held in 1951. The series has continued annually except for 1982. Portions of the historical accounts printed here are taken without attribution and updated from the writings of Professor Burns, Wana Clay Olson, and anonymous authors of the tour booklets for previous ranch tours.

The tour is now sponsored jointly by the Laramie Kiwanis Club, the Albany County Historical Society, and the Laramie Westerners. Fred Dudley is the master of ceremonies.

The 1985 Ranch Tour Chairman: Maurice Wear

Committee Members: Henry Bauer            Fred Dudley            Bill Reidl  
                         Murray Carroll        Ken Faulkner        Paul Stratton

The map of the tour is on the cover of this brochure; the projected log of the tour is on the back cover.

Restroom facilities are available in the County Courthouse prior to departure and at each stop at the trailer carrying the portable outhouses.

The fifth stop combines lunch with a visit to the Nici Self Museum. A limited supply of free soft drinks and ice cream will be provided during lunch.

Safety is a primary concern. Tour marshalls and traffic controllers will coordinate the caravan. Please follow the directions of the traffic controllers. Please keep children with you at all times. Neither the committee, individually or collectively, nor any of the sponsoring organizations accept any responsibility for accidents. A trailing car will inform the lead vehicle of any delays.

Your cooperation will also be appreciated at the parking sites for each stop. Whenever possible, parking will be accomplished so that cars need not use reverse gear for entering or leaving a site. Please allow the numbered cars to leave a site first. (Gates must be opened and traffic controllers must be ready to park cars at the next location.)

Keep a safe distance between cars. Turn lights on in town. The speed on the paved highways is limited to 55 miles per hour outside the towns and should be about 35 miles per hour on dirt roads. Drive carefully. Respect the other fellow. Enjoy the scenery and have a good trip.

Many persons have helped to organize and to promote this year's tour. In particular, we thank the Coca Cola and Pepsi Bottling Companies and the Valley Gold Dairy for providing the refreshments at lunch. We greatly appreciate the publicity given to the tour by the Laramie Daily Boomerang, the Branding Iron, the Laramie radio stations KOWB, KJO, KCGY, and KUWR. We also thank the Wyoming Recreation Commission as well as Steve and Roger Sheaffer of Sheaffer Signs for lending the equipment for the restroom facilities. Finally, we thank the officers of the law who escorted us in various places along the route and the members of the Laramie Kiwanis Club who assisted in traffic control.

Stop 1. The Stone Ranch or Bath Ranch.

The Old Stone house or Bath ranch house was built by Henry Bath in 1875. It is an outstanding example of native stone construction utilizing semi-cut stone which was common in the Laramie area in the late 1800's. These are the only known rural structures of this type remaining in the state. The house and barn were nominated recently for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination has been accepted by the Wyoming Consulting Committee to the National Register and forwarded to Washington for final approval.

Henry Bath was born in Germany and came to Laramie with his family by ox wagon in 1868. With his four oxen he hauled lumber from Cheyenne and built a hotel, the first frame building in Laramie. Charlie Hutton and Philip Mandel had made it a practice to trade fresh oxen for worn out oxen with immigrants and freighters passing their stage stations. At a 2 for 1 or 3 for 2 ratio, they were able to build their herds and turn a comfortable profit. This practice caught the attention of others moving into the valley, including Bath. In the spring of 1869, he established a ranch on this site. He built a pole corral, a log barn, and a log cabin with no floors and a dirt roof. He tried to raise small grain, but the soil was too wet. He imported a small herd of dairy cattle from Iowa and brought about three hundred head of beef cattle from a Texas trail herd. Although he had cut some hay, there was not enough to feed all of the stock. The Texas cattle were in bad shape when he bought them, and without fences to hold them and not enough hay, nearly all of them were lost in the first blizzards of the winter. Some drifted with the storms as far as Sidney, Nebraska.

At the time the stone house was built, Indian troubles were common. This was the year before Crook's defeat on the Rosebud and the Custer Massacre. While the ranch was somewhat removed from the Indian frontier, raids were not uncommon. So Bath built his house with the idea of providing protection. The walls are over two feet thick, and at convenient intervals there are portholes where rifles could be fired at attackers. In 1876, the year after the house was built, the Sioux stole 96 horses from Bath. The horses were located on the Red Cloud Indian Agency but could not be recovered. Twenty years later, the government paid Bath \$3,000 for them although they were worth \$100 a head at the time they were stolen.

Ranching on the Laramie Plains was a discouraging business in those early days. Fences were built from poles cut and brought in from the mountains 20 miles away. Irrigation dams and ditches had to be built by hand. Comforts were few, and hardships were many. Despite the difficulties, the ranch was also the center of many social activities. Barn dances, religious services and amateur rodeos brought in neighbors from miles around.

The ranch remained in the Bath family until 1943, when Al Sherwood bought it from the heirs of Fred Bath. Mr. Sherwood operated it as a traditional cattle ranch although he did experiment with Beefalo, a cross between buffalo and either Hereford or Angus cattle. It has been a number of years since the house was used as a dwelling, and it and the other buildings are deteriorating rapidly.

## Stop 2. The Joe Miller Ranch and the William Lawrence Ranch.

These two ranches had a common origin. According to the records, Phil Mandel was the first person to settle on the Laramie Plains. Records indicate that he settled on part of this land in 1859 and that he made one of the first homestead entries for the Dakota Territory in 1864. The Overland Trail crossed the Little Laramie River less than a quarter mile southeast of the building on the Lawrence Ranch. The big stone house located on the Joe Miller Ranch housed many a weary traveler in the early days of the Overland Trail.

Phil Mandel was the manager of the stage station at the river crossing. In addition, he developed a lucrative business in trading fresh stock to the travelers for their worn out stock which, after some rest and good feed, was in good shape again and ready to be traded to the next immigrant. He also cut hay and sold it to the government at Fort Saunders. His brother, George Mandel, became associated with him and located on the place just south of the station. Between them they owned much of the land in this immediate area.

The William Lawrence Ranch was sold to Abrams by Mandel and then to Folsters and then to Vallie Bath, who sold it to William Lawrence. Mr. Lawrence sold all but twenty acres of the ranch and the buildings to the Whitneys. Mrs. Rena Lawrence, William's wife, lived alone on the ranch until her death in 1980. Their daughter, Amy, now lives there.

While the Lawrence Ranch has become smaller, as suited to the owners' needs and desires, the Miller Ranch has expanded to the extent that it is one of the largest in the country. Part of the home ranch was transferred from Mandel to William Rathje, who sold it to John Ernest, who sold it to William H. Lawrence, Sr., and Brifogle. They in turn transferred it to Swift and Company, which had acquired other ranches in the area. Swift sold all their holdings to the Miller Brothers, and the ranch later became known as the Joe Miller Ranch. Some of the earlier ranches which are now incorporated into the ranch are: (1) The Sprague Ranch which had been owned by Whitehouse, Ross, Chappel Brothers, Swift and Company; (2) The Basin Ranch which had been owned by Eyken, Carbon Timber Company, Quealey Land and Livestock Company; (3) The Stillson Ranch owned by Woolfe, and Swift and Company; (4) The Cavender Ranch which was sold directly to Miller; and (5) The Northrup Ranch which included the Judson and Sutphin Sheep Camp and was sold directly to Miller.

From its beginning this has been a most interesting location, and we are privileged to be here.

## Stop 3. The Mike McGill Ranch.

The McGill Ranch was first settled by John McCreary, who was employed by his brother-in-law, Ed Creighton, who was constructing the overland telegraph line in the late 1860's and early 70's. McCreary owned a farm in Iowa and saw the possibilities of raising cattle in Wyoming and fattening them on his farm in Iowa. He bought the adjoining ranches belonging to Maxwell, Clugston and McDonald to build a rather large operation. In 1889 he employed Mike Coghlin as foreman and in 1896 Coughlin bought him out.

Coughlin in turn sold the ranch to William Rathje. In 1924, the ranch was sold to the estate of John McGill, Sr., who owned the Kite Ranch on the Laramie River, not far from the Wheatland Reservoir. John McGill bought out his sister, Francis, and he and his wife, Thelma, operated the ranch for many years. Many improvements were made in the operation of the ranch as well as the quality of the livestock. The McGills have two children, Mike and Jo Ann (Mrs. Warren Benson). John McGill died in 1975, and Thelma McGill died in 1978. Mike now owns and operates the ranch.

#### Stop 4. The Vee Bar Ranch.

The Vee Bar Ranch lies 22 miles west of Laramie on Highway 130. It has been operated as a cattle-guest ranch for many years. The names of various owners have attached themselves to this ranch so it may, even now, occasionally be referred to as the Filmore, the Wright, the Hein or the Schindler Ranch. Since George and Roberta Crouse purchased the ranch in 1965, they have called it by its original name, The Vee Bar Ranch.

Early land entries on the Vee Bar Ranch date back to 1886 when Theodore Bruback erected the first cabin and barn and filed on water rights. He was unable to keep the ranch, and in 1890 a Lionel C. G. Sartoris purchased the Vee Bar. He is remembered primarily as the Englishman who who built the lower floor of the Filmore Stage Stop or Lodge. This building was completely remodeled in 1975 by the Crouses and is presently occupied by guests of the Vee Bar Guest Ranch.

Sartoris also erected the large barn that is in use at this time. Stagecoach horses and freighting teams were stabled in this barn during the early 1900's.

The corporation of Douglas-Willan-Sartoris went broke in 1892, and the ranch soon passed into the ownership of Luther and Susan Filmore. The Filmores left their name on the following: Filmore Ranch; Filmore Stage Stop (or Lodge); Filmore Post Office; and Filmore Ditch.

The next enduring owner was the Gordon Wright family. Mr. Wright ran a stagecoach and passenger line to the Holmes Mine and also hauled heavy freight to the Holmes, Keystone and Rambler Mines. His Concord Stage Coach, or "mud wagon," had once been used in the Ben Holladay line through Bridger's Pass. It is on permanent display at the Wyoming Pioneer Museum in Douglas. The six hour stage ride brought all manner of people across the "windswept plains on a two-rut dirt road with no house, no tree, not a foot of fencing, no telephone pole, no railway line."

The stage stopped for the noon meal at the ranch. Mrs. Wright became famous for her 35 cent meals cooked on the kitchen wood range. Mrs. Wright also kept the Filmore Post Office for 25 years at her rolltop desk in the ranch dining room to serve the miners and residents of the valley. Vee Barr was Gordon Wright's cattle brand, and he raised cattle, horses and sheep during his years at the ranch. The Wrights owned the ranch for 27 years and reared four daughters on the Vee Bar--Agnes, Lucile, Rachel and Alice. Agnes, now know as Agnes Wright Spring, went on to become a well-known western history writer and was state historian for both Wyoming and Colorado. Rachel was also a writer and authored the book, The Running Iron.

The Wrights sold the ranch to a Mr. Trumbell in 1934, who sold to Leonard and Lillian Hein in 1938. The Hein couple operated the same type of friendly, "down home" guest ranch, in addition to running cattle, for 19 years at which time they sold it to Charles and Ina Schindler. The guest business was continued along with a cattle and sheep operation.

In 1965, the Schindlers sold the ranch to the George Crouses, who are the present owners. George and Roberta Crouse operated the ranch as a bison/cattle ranch for eight years. The bison herd was liquidated in 1973.

During extensive remodeling of the lodge in 1975, the Crouses added a second dining room, a completely new kitchen; two large bedrooms upstairs with private baths; electric heat throughout; a stone fireplace; new water and sewer lines; and eight bathrooms for the upstairs bedrooms.

An active guest business is still continuing, and it is to be hoped that this historic building will stand for another 100 years to house people seeking peace and relaxation in a charming setting on the Little Laramie River.

Stop 5. Nici Self Museum, Centennial. (The lunch stop)

Warren McConnell, minister of the First United Methodist Church of Laramie, will lead a prayer. Jane Houston has opened the museum for our viewing. Please do not crowd the building. We shall be here for over an hour so you should have sufficient time to look over the exhibits in a leisurely manner.

Centennial was named for the Centennial mine found by Col. Stephen Downey in 1876. The gold vein supposedly was one of the richest ever struck in the United States. Samples of the ore were exhibited at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. The first buildings in the town of Centennial consisted of a large general store, mine superintendent's residence, and mine office building erected by the Centennial Mining Company, and a hotel erected by Little and Colbroth. Unfortunately for him, Col. Downey turned down several large offers for his mining company. Before ore could be extracted in any paying quantity, the vein pinched out. Centennial ridge and the surrounding hills are pockmarked by the efforts of Col. Downey and successor prospectors to relocate the vein. On the face of the ridge, the faint trace of the Michigan trail can be seen. This trail led to the Michigan Mine on the back side of the ridge.

Despite the failure of the mining company, Centennial has survived first as a center for the ranching and timber industry of the valley and surrounding mountains and now as the gateway to the recreational facilities of the Medicine Bow National Forest and the Snowy Range.

One of the more interesting plans for Centennial was that of the Boston banker and entrepreneur, Isaac Van Horn. Van Horn was the power behind the construction of the Laramie Hahns Peak and Pacific Railroad. In 1905, he organized the Rocky Mountain Country Club which was to be located at Centennial. It was to be a membership club limited to 250 active and 250 life members. Planned facilities included cottages, a lodge, a

carriage house, stables, a race track, a steeplechase track, tennis courts, a polo field, a golf course, and a bowling alley. In addition to the activities provided by these facilities, there were to be hunts to the hounds, carriage rides in the mountains and through the valley, formal balls, badminton and croquet on the lawns, and leisurely strolls around the verandas and through the gardens. Guests would entrain on their Pullmans in Boston or New York and get off at the station in Centennial. Unfortunately, Mr. Van Horn's dream remained just that.

Another dream involving Centennial was that of Platinum City. Located approximately two miles south of Centennial, Platinum City was laid out in 1928 by A. J. Hull. A mill, a refinery, a power plant, and a treating plant were all constructed of brick. Hull visualized a planned community, all of brick and stone construction, to house the workers and support activities. The platinum ore was to be gotten from a shaft that was sunk vertically from the top of Centennial Ridge and another run horizontally into the mountain to meet the first. The bubble burst in 1938 when the government sold the property, once valued at \$100,000, for \$7,000 to meet a \$7,232 tax lien.

#### Stop 6. The Olson-Clay Ranch.

In October, 1900, John and Hulda Olson with their small daughter, Emma, and three month old son, Harry, moved to the ranch which they purchased from George and Elizabeth Ann Hutton. It was not a long move for them from what was known as the Pingre Ranch north of the present Highway 130, not too far east of the North Fork bridge.

Mr. and Mrs. Olson were originally from Sweden. John received his citizenship papers in 1894. Before his marriage he had worked for the Union Pacific Railroad and on the Phil Bath Ranch in the Little Laramie community.

A short distance from the buildings on the new ranch, the South Fork and North Fork join to form the Little Laramie River. The original purchase was so small that the Olsons soon began buying land nearby. The lower and upper meadows to the south were bought from Sarah Bird in 1905 and 1909. Miss Bird had homesteaded this land, and the patent to the land was signed in 1892 by Benjamin Harrison, President of the United States.

Land was also available for homesteading east of the Olson Ranch, on the west side of Sheep Mountain, and at intervals John, Hulda and Charley Olson, John's brother, expanded the ranch. John soon purchased Charley's homestead. When John's son, Harry, was old enough, he also acquired a strip of land. Many years later, Harry also homesteaded on Bald Mountain, several miles northwest. During 1934 meadowland was purchased which had been a part of the well known and historic Walbol Ranch, but more recently known as the Dinwiddie Ranch.

The Olsons built an eleven room log home during 1913. Ole Anderson and Gust Westerlund, skilled workmen with logs, constructed the house which today is still a fine sturdy building. This home became a community center where for years annual Thanksgiving dinners were held. The local social club bought the turkeys; several women would each roast one and bring it

back with dressing and gravy to the dinners. Everyone else contributed their special holiday dishes. Such a gala day of visiting, laughter, and general good times was looked forward to each year.

The present barn was also built of logs in 1917 with many stalls for work horses, saddle horses and a large haymow. This building was used for community barn dances for several years. Special occasions included the twentieth and twenty-fifth wedding anniversaries which the Olsons celebrated July 14 with relatives, friends and neighbors coming from miles around to the big dances.

John Olson and son, Harry, were soon raising Hereford cattle for exhibit at the Denver Livestock Show held each year in January. The calves were carefully fed and cared for from time of weaning until the January show. They always placed well in the shows and usually brought top prices. This was a routine and profitable ranch activity for 23 years.

One load of calves went to California where they were fed for a year and shown at the Cow Palace in San Francisco. They took first place in the Hereford Show and were Grand Champions of the entire show. The University of Wyoming was successful in feeding, fitting and showing Olson calves at the Kansas City Royal and the Denver Livestock shows.

As time marches on, people become older and death takes its toll--Mrs. Hulda Olson passed away in 1951; John Olson passed away in 1955. A tractor accident took Harry Olson's life in 1964. The daughter, Emma Olson, became Mrs. Lloyd Wilson and lived on a ranch about four miles south of her childhood home.

The ranch has recently been incorporated including Wana Clay Olson, Harry Olson's widow, and the Perry W. Clay family. Perry has been managing the ranch for several years with excellent support from his wife and son, Jim. Income from the guest business, fishing, and Hereford cattle sustain the ranch today. It is commonly known now as the T-K Ranch, the John Olson brand, registered first in 1894.

#### Stop 7. The Sundby-Wilson Ranch.

In January, 1927, when Emma Olson Anderson and Gudmund Sundby were married, they came to live on a ranch located on Hecht Creek near Sheep Mountain in Centennial Valley. It was leased from Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hecht. Emma Olson was born in 1898 to John and Hulda Olson and raised on the Olson Ranch.

Part of the Sundby Ranch where the buildings are was homesteaded by Mr. and Mrs. William Hecht in 1906, who had purchased a large meadow from Mr. Hecht's father, Ryenold Hecht, who came with his family from Ohio and acquired a few sections of meadowland in 1887. The William Hechts had a two story log house built by Swedish Logs Men along with many barns and other necessary ranch buildings located along the creek and surrounded by large cottonwood and willow trees. With the addition of the Henry Hecht's original ranch made up of a large meadow purchased from the Dale Brothers, a homestead proved up on by Henry Hecht and a homestead purchased from Mrs. Snapp, Mrs. Henry Hecht's mother, it made a ranch of good meadows and



good water from a river and several creeks. A few years later the Sundbys purchased this ranch and added to it a half section of land south of the town of Centennial purchased from the Laramie Hahns Peak and Pacific Railroad originally owned by the McCune family before the turn of the century.

The ranch was greatly improved by Gudmund Sundby. He had several reservoirs built and made great improvements by clearing sagebrush and planting crested wheat grass in the pastures. Emma and Gudmund raised and sold quality commercial Hereford cattle and hay.

After Gudmund Sundby's fatal automobile accident in 1952, Emma Sundby continued to live on the ranch and manage it with the help of a hired foreman. She married Lloyd Wilson in 1961. She and Lloyd lived on the ranch until 1976 when Emma's health forced them to move to Laramie where Emma died in 1978. Lloyd Wilson moved to Brackettville, Texas, where he died in 1981.

Roxanne and Susanne Squires, the granddaughters of Emma Sundby Wilson, resigned teaching positions and moved to the ranch in 1977 to take over the ranch management due to the failing health of Emma. Upon Emma's death these granddaughters became sole owners of the Sundby-Olson Ranch.

Susanne and Roxanne now manage and operate the ranch alone and hire part time contract labor for specific jobs in the summer.

The ranch raises and sells commercial crossbred cows and calves. Surplus hay is also sold. Roxanne and Susanne show and sell steer calves to 4-H and FFA members. An artificial insemination program enables the ranch to breed and raise quality calves needed for today's demands.

NOTE: The caravan will disband after leaving the Sundby-Wilson Ranch. Turn right and remain on the paved highway (County Road 11) until you come to Wyoming 130. Again turn right onto Wyoming 130 to return to Laramie.

## Ranch Tour Log

PLACES, LOCATIONS AND STOPS.	TIME	MILEAGES	
		LOCAL	TRIP
Leave Courthouse Square	8:00	0.0	0.0
Turn right on Wyoming 130 at "Y" in West Laramie	8:09	2.4	2.4
Pass Airport	8:14	2.6	5.0
Turn right at Herrick Lane	8:16	2.1	7.1
Pass radio beacon	8:17	0.8	7.9
Pass Alsop Lake on left	8:22	5.2	13.1
Stop 1. Stone Ranch	8:24-8:50	2.1	15.2
Pass Harry Bath Ranch on left	8:54	1.8	17.0
Pass Whitney Ranch on right	8:55	0.7	17.7
Turn left on Mandel Lane	8:58	1.3	19.0
Turn right on Joe Miller Ranch (gate)	8:59	0.1	19.1
Stop 2. Overlook at Joe Miller Ranch	9:01-9:36	0.4	19.5
Return to gate, turn right on Mandel Lane	9:39	0.4	19.9
Note old Mandel Homestead on right	9:42	1.2	21.1
Turn right on County Road 510	9:44	0.8	21.9
Pass Dalles Ranch on right	9:48	1.7	23.6
Turn left on County Road 519	9:50	0.3	23.9
Note Forbes Ranch on left	9:51	0.5	24.4
Turn right on County Road 513	9:54	1.4	25.8
Stop 3. McGill Ranch House	9:58-10:30	0.6	26.4
Turn right on County Road 525	10:35	1.6	28.0
Note remains of old Millbrook Ranch on left	10:37	0.7	28.7
Cross railroad tracks	10:38	0.3	29.0
Turn right on Wyoming 130	10:45	4.2	33.2
Turn right into Vee Bar Ranch	10:46	0.6	33.8
Stop 4. Vee Bar Ranch	10:48-11:28	0.3	34.1
Leave Vee Bar Ranch and turn right on Wyoming 130	11:30	0.3	34.4
Stop 5. Nici Self Museum and lunch stop	11:40-12:40	6.4	40.8
Assemble for speakers	12:40		
Leave museum area and turn right on Wyoming 130	1:10		40.8
Turn right on County Road 416	1:16	0.8	41.6
Turn left at cross road	1:18	0.5	42.1
Cross Hall's Bridge	1:23	2.3	44.4
Pass Centennial Ranch on right	1:25	0.3	44.7
Turn right on County Road 11	1:27	0.2	44.9
Turn right into Olson Ranch	1:29	1.0	45.9
Stop 6. Olson Ranch	1:32-2:10	0.7	46.6
Leave Olson Ranch; turn right on County Road 11	2:12	0.8	47.4
Turn left at Squires-Squires Ranch sign	2:15	2.0	49.4
Stop 7. Sundby-Wilson Ranch	2:17-3:00	0.8	50.2
Leave ranch; turn right on County Road 11	3:03	0.8	51.0
Turn right on Wyoming 130	3:10	6.1	57.1
Arrive in Laramie	3:40	23.6	80.7