



# History of the Ranch

## PREHISTORY

The area that the Belvoir Ranch sits on was known and used by Paleo-Indians from approximately 11,000 years before present (ybp) up until about 7,000 ybp. The world-famous Lindenmeier prehistoric site lies just a few miles to the south of the Ranch in Colorado. There are other known prehistoric sites to the west of the Ranch near the Railroad Station referred to as Harriman, just west and south, and again in CO.

After the last Ice Age, Native Americans, including the Utes, Shoshoni, Northern Arapaho, Northern Cheyenne, and Lokota tribes, once again came to the area, crossing the land; maintaining both summer and winter camps; conducting year-round hunting, and using the land for important spiritual sites.

No specific burials are known to still exist on the Ranch, with the exception of several cairns on file with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Ranchers west of the ranch have noted that when their ancestors homesteaded the area there were above-ground Native American burials in the hills around the area.

### Cairns

A cairn is a man-made pile of stones, often in a conical form, found in uplands, on mountaintops or near waterways. They are built for a variety of purposes, such as to mark a burial site, mark the summit of a mountain, indicate a path of travel, mark buffalo jumps, or commemorate events.



*Example of Belvoir Ranch cairn found on canyon rim*

## MODERN HISTORY

The area currently referred to as the Belvoir Ranch is a collection of lands evolving over the past 140 years from several smaller homesteads (primarily in the western portion of the Ranch), land once owned by the Union Pacific Railroad (part of their original Patent Grants received when building the Transcontinental Railroad), land leased from the State of Wyoming (just a little over three and a half Sections), and part of the vast holdings of the former Warren Livestock Company. A sampling of modern historical events that helped to shape the rich cultural heritage of Belvoir Ranch include:

### Warren Livestock Company

Although much of the former Warren Livestock Company is now part of many surrounding Ranches in Wyoming and northern Colorado, the main Ranch Headquarters was roughly located where the existing Belvoir Headquarters now sits. The main building burned in the 1980s and only one of the early 1900s barns (sheds) remains to this day.



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Founded in 1874, the Warren Livestock Company was one of many holdings of Francis. E. Warren, who was a Territorial Governor, brief First State Governor, and a U.S. Senator until his death in 1929.

Captain John (Blackjack) Pershing married one of Warren's daughters while he was stationed at Fort D.A Russell, and Warren is said to have given his "cabin on the Ranch" to his daughter and new son-in-law. This was later to become the Belvoir Ranch House. The area came equipped with fine stables, a horse race track, tennis courts, and the like.

The Belvoir Ranch (with cattle and horse brands being Ⓚ4) has been sold several times over the years, but has remained in private control since the early patent grants dating from 1867-1890s.



Warren Cabin - "Cabin on the Ranch"

The Ranch lies within approximately 46 Sections in 3 Ranges in 2 Townships. Its land lies roughly south of Otto Road, the former Lincoln Highway (US. 30), and the two mainlines of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR). In the early 1950s, the UPRR created a low grade heavy train east to west third rail (track) which forms much of the southern boundary of the main ranch piece (with the exception of the area referred to as the "Big Hole"). All that remains of the Warren Livestock Company is currently owned by John Etchepare, Laramie, WY. Some of the records of the ranch are maintained in files of the Wyoming State Archives, Cheyenne and the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie.

## Homesteading

The Homestead Act of 1862 was passed by the U.S. Congress to provide for the transfer of a quarter-section (160 acres) of free public land to homesteaders. The land belonged to the homesteader at the end of five years if they lived there, built a house, dug a well, plowed ground, fenced the land, etc.

In addition to the Warren family, several other land owners who originally homesteaded Ranch properties include the following: Alex Duffey (1885), William Williams (1885), Thomas McGee (1890s), Ora Haley (1910; Haley was the previous owner of approximately 8 Sections), the Neilson Brothers, A.H. Willadsen, Gilcrest, John Bickhold, Hans Wright, James Hunt, etc. Many of these families still hold land near the ranch.

Early homesteaders arrived by wagon, with the Twin Mountain Wagon Road running the entire length of Belvoir Ranch from east to west.



Part of a home site ruin on Belvoir Ranch



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## The Transcontinental Railroad

Passage of The Railroad Act in 1862 signified government support for a transcontinental railroad and helped create the Union Pacific Railroad. The route was built in the 1860s to link the railway network of the Eastern United States with California. It was completed on May 10, 1869, and the famous “golden spike” event officially joined the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at Promontory Summit, Utah. The Transcontinental Railroad created a modern, nation-wide transportation network that revolutionized the population and economy of the American West, making the wagon trains of previous decades obsolete.

As the Union Pacific Railroad crossed the Wyoming Territory, surveyors moved ahead of the line, dividing prospective towns into lots, which in turn were sold to emigrants carried west by the railroad. On July 4, 1867, the railroad’s chief engineer, General Grenville M. Dodge, selected a location that would become a division point for the Union Pacific and named it Cheyenne.

By year’s end, the new city housed thousands of people, and Native American attacks on the new railroad were prevalent. To solve the problem, the Military established forts to protect the railroad and its workers. Wyoming became home to Ft. Russell, Ft. Sanders, Ft. Fred Steele, Ft. Rawlins and Ft. Bridger. Of those forts, only D. A. Russell outside of Cheyenne became permanent, and today is known as Warren Air Force Base.

Development of the west was greatly influenced by the railroad. Towns such as Cheyenne were needed to provide hotels and eating houses for railroad workers and passengers, military forts were needed to offer protection, and a variety of infrastructure, including roundhouses, windmills and water tanks were required for the steam-powered locomotives. At the northern edge of the Belvoir Ranch, several stations were built on the Main Line to provide the infrastructure needed for the 2,200-foot vertical climb from Cheyenne to the summit at Sherman. These included:

Stations	Elevation above Sea Level	Distance from Cheyenne Station
Cheyenne	6,041 feet	
Corlett	6,295 feet	5.39 miles
Borie	6,562 feet	9.50 miles
Otto	6,958 feet	14.52 miles
Granite Canon	7,315 feet	19.06 miles
Ozone	7,557 feet	22.32 miles
Buford	7,862 feet	27.03 miles
Sherman	8,242 feet	32.20 miles

Leaving the high point of Sherman, the line descended over Dale Creek Trestle and a curved grade that brought it into the Laramie Valley south of Laramie at a point near the then town of Tie Siding. Fort Sanders, located just a few miles south of Laramie, provided protection to the line through the valley and out toward Fort Steele, which guarded the trestle over the North Platte River east of Rawlins. Two sites on The Ranch – Camp Carlin and the Twin Mountain Wagon Road – provided supplies to these military posts while the Railroad was being built.





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## The Lincoln Highway

For many years, wagon roads and railroads provided the only access to the West; however, the landscape began to change with the introduction of the automobile in the early 1900's.

In 1916, the Lincoln Highway was conceived as America's first transcontinental highway for automobile travel. The route extended from San Francisco to New York, connecting Cheyenne, Corlett Station, Borie Station, Otto Station and Granite Canyon as it crossed the Belvoir Ranch properties. The route was not a nationally-funded highway, but instead, was a collection of locally funded and maintained roads put together as a single route marked as the Lincoln Highway. The Lincoln Highway later became U.S. 30, and today represents much of the route of Interstate 80.

In 1926, U.S. 30 extended between Granger, WY and Philadelphia, PA and followed the historic Lincoln Highway for its entire route through Wyoming. Between 1926 and 1972, U.S. 30 had a split route in southwestern Wyoming allowing U.S. 30 to serve northern Utah and southern Idaho.

U.S. 30 N followed modern-day Interstate 86 east from Rupert to American Falls and Pocatello. Interstate 30 decreased in importance with emerging plans for Interstate 80 and the passage of the Interstate Highway System Act in 1956.

Construction of the Wyoming segment of I-80 along the Lincoln Highway route began in November of 1962 and the connection with I-30 was completed in the spring of 1977.



*Original Lincoln Highway Route; Source: California Institute of Technology*

## The Cold War

The cold war was the period of conflict and tension between the United States, the Soviet Union, and their respective allies, between the mid 1940's and the early 1990's. The period was characterized by military build-up, an arms race, ideological battles, and many proxy wars. Several crises, such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, threatened to escalate into world wars, but never did.

In 1958, the U.S. Air Force began building Atlas missile sites around Warren Air Force Base. The Atlas was the United States' first successful Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 10,000 miles. The Warren sites were fully operational by September 1960, but short-lived as the Air Force began in 1963 to change from Atlas to Minuteman missiles.

Missile site no. 4 is located on Belvoir Ranch, where Atlas E missiles were stored horizontally in underground hardened shelters, then needed to be raised to a vertical position and fueled prior to launch. Since the missile was often covered with a thin layer of earth while in storage, the shelters were nicknamed "coffins" and the Atlas E was nicknamed the "coffin bird."



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The Atlas missile was soon replaced with the Minuteman, which could be housed vertically in protected underground silos. However, the Atlas proved to be a reliable and versatile launch vehicle, and became the primary booster for future Atlas space launches.

Today, the former military use of The Ranch is evident from the Atlas coffins and buildings, and the remaining presence of Trichloroethylene (TCE). The Air Force used liquid TCE to clean rocket fuel tanks and reduce the danger of combustible liquid oxygen fuel. City officials have found TCE in many of the city's water wells over the years but the chemical is removed before it becomes part of the public water supply. Soil and sewage tests at the site have revealed no other contaminants.



*Missile site building on Belvoir Ranch*

## Resource Preservation and Potential Revenues

The Belvoir Ranch property reached new significance in 2003 when the City of Cheyenne acquired more than 17,000 acres of deeded land and 3,400 acres of state lease land for \$5.9 million. The property was purchased for the purposes of landfill and ground water development for eventual city use.

A similar transaction occurred in 2005, when 1,000 acres of upland pasture and 800 acres of The Big Hole basin rim were acquired for \$525,000. These 1,800 deeded acres are to be preserved by one of the first conservation easements under Wyoming enabling legislation of 2005. The Big Hole was purchased by The Nature Conservancy, then purchased by City of Cheyenne. The property is to remain natural, allowing recreational opportunities while protecting fragile ecosystems – no development, except public access for passive recreation, will be permitted.

These transactions are significant because they hold the land in reserve for the future residents of the Cheyenne community – whether for recreational and educational opportunities, national trail connection potential, growth and lifestyle amenities, or potential revenue generation and economic development.