

YO Ranch in Texas 100 Years Old

Charles Schreiner IV

The hundred-year history of the YO Ranch and its four - now five - generations of Schreiners, is a story that spans some of the most important and trying years in the nation's growth. It is a story of success and failure . . . The Great Depression . . . a terrible drought . . . and two World Wars.

My great grandfather, Charles Schreiner, was born in 1838 in Alsace-Lorraine, the border zone between France and Germany. He came to the United States of America with his parents, brothers and sister in 1852 and settled near San Antonio, Texas. His father died that same year and his mother passed away four years later when young Charles, my great grandfather, was 18 years old.

Charles' oldest brother got the "gold fever" and left for California; two other brothers found employment in San Antonio while his sister married Caspar Real, who was to become a pioneer Hill Country ranchman.

Charles, still in his 'teens, had a strong spirit and adventure in his heart. He cowboied for a while, joined the Texas Rangers when only sixteen years old and eventually became Captain in the Kerr Mounted Rifles, the name he went by from then on. While Ranger he rode over good range land and cattle country and got the urge to become a rancher. In 1857 he and his brother-in-law, Caspar Real, located on Turtle Creek near present-day Kerrville. Here, they built a log cabin and with a small bunch of cattle settled down to ranching.

About this time he witnessed an interesting experiment being carried out by the United States Army, the use of camels to haul supplies from Texas through the desert to California. This experiment failed for a number of reasons: the rocky terrain was too rough on the camels' soft feet and cowboys and others accustomed to handling horses would have nothing to do with the camels.

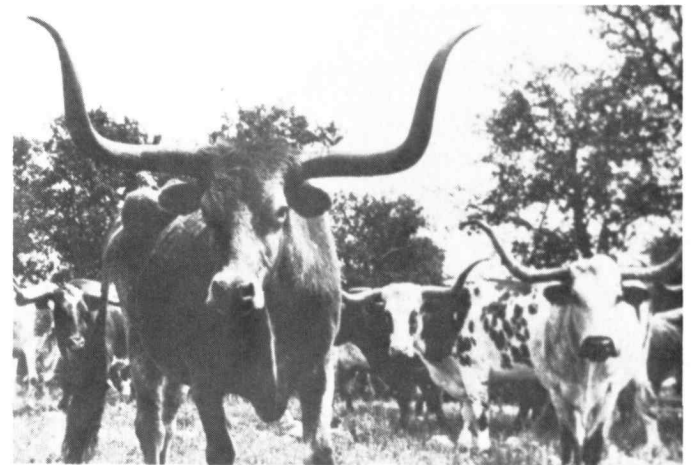
During the Civil War, Charles joined the Confederate Army and fought for his beloved South. After the War he came back to the ranch and became interested in commerce, business, and trade. Where reckless nature had once impelled him eagerly into the Texas Rangers and along Indian trails beyond the frontier, that same venturesome spirit now carried him eagerly into this frontier world of business.

At this time there was a shingle-makers' camp in Kerrville where men cut the giant cypress trees at the water's edge, made them into shingles, and then freighted them in bundles by ox teams over 60 miles of rocky road to San Antonio. Great grandfather decided that Kerrville needed a good general store and he was the man to start one. Schreiner was a Texas cowboy, not a merchant. But this did not stop him. He found someone, August Faltin, to stake him with ten thousand dollars, and opened the store on Christmas Eve, 1869. Cash business was slow but not the kind on credit. In

one week's time he had 41 customers and after 75 years, sons and grandsons of 27 of those first 41 customers were still customers. This speaks well of the Charles Schreiner Company, which is still going strong today.

Schreiner soon paid off the loan he had obtained from Faltin and was able to continue in the store business while at the same time he held onto the ranch.

In the early years the cattle were mostly Texas Longhorns. Herefords came in in about 1880 and were dominant until



The YO Ranch boasts one of the finest Longhorn herds in the world.

1945. Gradually from 1945 to 1950 Brahman and Angus were added. Then from 1950 to 1965 Charolais were added and Longhorns were brought back. Today, all of the cattle are Texas Longhorns. In 1960 the YO Ranch began bringing in various exotic grazing animals for experimental purposes and to increase income of the ranch.

Presently, the YO Ranch covers about 50,000 acres spread over an area of 80 square miles. Over the years the general pattern of grazing has been moderate, yearlong and continuous with three classes of livestock-cattle, sheep, and goats. Sheep are for wool and goats for mohair. Range management practices have included clearing cedar mechanically and with prescribed burning.

The YO Ranch is many things to many people. But most importantly, the YO is a lifestyle, a state of mind. It represents over 100 years of history, struggle, determination, and family pride. Here one can step back in time to cowboys, campfires, and covered wagons. Some call it Texas at its best.

The YO ranch - and brand Y ® remains as part of 5500, acres acquired in 1880 by Captain Charles Schreiner who

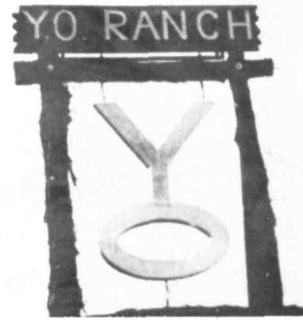


Photo by Hal Swiggett

began his fortune as a half-orphaned boy of 14 years. In his heyday, Captain Schreiner (Texas Ranger, rancher, merchant, banker, Confederate soldier) drove more than 300,000 head of Longhorn cattle along the Western Trail to Dodge City, Kans., amassing his fortune. Today, the Schreiner family, including Charles Schreiner III and his four sons—Charles IV, Walter, Gus and Louis—still proudly own and work the 80-square mile ranch. Mary Helen, wife of ranch manager Charles IV, and daughters Tiffany and Tessa add the woman's touch to this vast, sprawling ranch.

Largest Herd of Longhorns

When Charles III, my father, began his relentless pursuit of Longhorns in the late 1950's, these legendary cattle were virtually extinct, living only on government refuges. In 1964, with the help of some interested breeders, he founded the Texas Longhorn Breeders Association which now boasts more than 1,000 members and over 23,000 head of registered Longhorn cattle.

Longhorns are a favorite on the YO Ranch. Charles III says, "Without this rangy breed, there wouldn't be a YO Ranch today." Every spring in celebration of YO's heritage, the ranch hosts a weekend Longhorn Trail Drive, complete with Longhorn cattle, real cowboys, covered wagons, camping under the stars, and about 200 "trailblazers" on horseback and in wagons.

Longhorns on the YO Ranch, more than 700 in all, comprise the largest quality registered Longhorn herd in the world. People from all around the world come to the ranch's annual spring Longhorn and Quarter Horse Sale and fall production sale.

"Today, aside from their legendary link with the West, Longhorns are desirable to commercial cattlemen for their hardiness, resistance to disease, calving ease, and better conversion of marginal rangeland to beef," explains Walter Schreiner, livestock manager. A large portion of YO's herd can be traced back to their foundation bull, YO Sam Houston, the first registered Texas Longhorn bull, and to Carmela,



YO Sam Houston, the first registered Texas Longhorn bull.

the first registered Texas Longhorn cow.

In addition to Longhorns, other breeds of cattle, sheep,

and goats add to the varied ranching activities. Unlike many other famous Texas ranches, the YO is a working ranch in the truest sense, with the ranch deriving about half its income from ranching activities. Cattle herding, calf roping, and sheep shearing are familiar sights on the YO.

Quarter Horses are important on the ranch too. Registered Quarter Horses are becoming an increasingly important aspect of ranching operations all over. At least this is true in Texas. Our planned program produces performance horses that can and do perform in all types of events such as cutting, reining, roping, and pleasure as well as being popular with cowboys on the range and on the rodeo circuit. A herd of 125 registered Quarter Horses, including 60 brood mares, make



Photo by Grace Evans

"Flit's Flashy", a grand champion quarter horse mare.

up this program. Boon Bar, son of Doc Bar and out of the great mare Teresa Tivio stands at stud at the Ranch.

Slice of Africa in Texas

The ranch's rocky, brushy terrain and abundant exotic wildlife bear a strong resemblance to Africa. An African Chieftain visiting the ranch once made a comparison himself, commenting, "If you blindfolded me, spun me around three times, I would come out looking for my house because this looks so much like my native land." Photographers, hikers, outdoor lovers, and tourists come to the ranch to see what the Chief saw: free-ranging antelope, zebra, giraffe, ostrich, emu, aoudad, and Texas native wildlife.

After the devastating drought of the 1950's when the YO had had no rain for seven years, the Schreiners determined that a second source of income was necessary for the ranch's survival. Today, the ranch is world renowned for its hunting program and is, in fact, larger than some of the famous hunting preserves in India and Africa.

For more than two decades the ranch has been stocked with game animals from all parts of the world. As early as 1953, the Indian blackbuck antelope, now protected in its native land, was established and is now running free on the YO. There are also large established herds of axis and sika

deer, aoudad, mouflon and Corsican sheep, fallow deer, American elk, and the ever abundant native whitetail deer and wild turkey. Three new varieties were developed at the ranch, the black and snow white Corsican rams and the YO ibex. They are available for limited hunting. With this abundance of both native and exotic game, the YO offers year-around hunting.

In addition to domestic animals and just as important to the ranch is its wildlife program. We are proud of this program. Although there is no running water on the vast YO, there are 52 windmills drawing water from the ground. The ranch is the home for more than 10,000 animals; the big majority are free-ranging and living in a natural environment. There are experimental herds of many rare and endangered species including ibex, sable, oryx, barasingha, gemsbok,

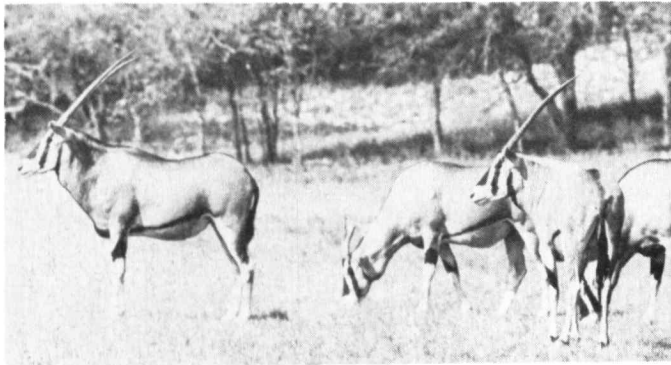


Photo by Perry Shankle, Jr.

Beisa Oryx have wicked, rapier-like horns—and know how to use them.

and addax. Zebra, ostrich, bison, eland, giraffe, zebu, and rhea also inhabit the ranch—to be looked at and photographed only. Many are raised for sale to zoos and to other game ranches. The total acreage of all zoos in the world could easily fit within the YO Ranch boundaries. In the future, many species may depend on places like the YO, because of the enormous area required to support enough members of a species to make it genetically viable.

For range management purposes and to control the exotic animals, the boundary of the ranch, plus about 10,000 acres within the ranch, is fenced with high, game-proof fences of from 7 and a half to 8 feet in height.

Unique Program

We have the only program of its type in the country: the ranch's Outdoor Awareness Program (OAP). This program teaches children and adults to appreciate nature—and how close we have come to losing a big lot of it. For children, the OAP actually becomes a part of their school curriculum, as an alternative to learning about the outdoors within the confines of a classroom. Through this unique program, children participate in wildlife conservation, wilderness and horse trails, campouts, rock climbing, rappelling, river crossing¹, Indian lore, and various leadership programs—all amidst a 1,000-acre base camp. A summer camp consisting basically of the same activities, but more relaxed because of the time

¹River crossing is taught on the Guadalupe River about 20 miles from the Ranch.

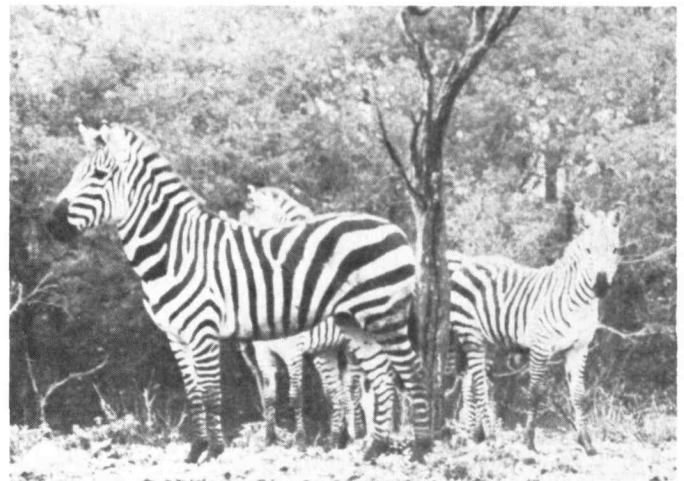
period, is also available for children with a keen interest in a real life learning experience. Due to the OAP's success, an adult version was recently begun.

Texas Hospitality

The YO Ranch is located in the heart of the Texas Hill Country and offers a pleasing combination of activity—a swimming pool and racketball courts—and of serenity—a game-viewing over-look and wildlife trails. Several films and TV advertisements have been made on the picturesque YO.

Many things keep visitors coming back—not the least of which is the ranch's friendly hospitality. Here, manners are cordial, handshakes warm, and friendships often lasting. Another treat for guests is first-class lodging in century-old cabins which were reconstructed piece by piece, renovated, and decorated with Old West memorabilia. Together, with a lodge, the ranch can sleep 50 guests at one time. There is only one central telephone, no room phones, and no television—peace and quiet abound.

Meals are served in a chuck wagon-type dining room with checkered tablecloths where regular ranch cowboys are often present in dusty boots adding to the ranching atmosphere.



Cowhands say the African Zebra makes Western broncs seem almost tame.

There are several ways a person can enjoy the YO Ranch. Whichever way one chooses, a memorable experience awaits that individual—where else in the world can one see authentic American Old West, a true working ranch, and a slice of Africa all in one day? And where else can one experience a lifestyle that most people think exists only in history or story books?

Vistors are always welcome but they should call or write first in advance for reservations because the ranch wants to be ready to give everyone a royal welcome. ●