

The Pitchfork Ranch

The Civil War left as many as 750,000 Americans dead and an estimated 70,000 survivors who were missing one or more limbs. The battles between Confederate and Union were so brutal that medical care was often limited to simply sawing off an arm or leg. Because two-thirds of the soldiers died of disease, amputation was the wounded soldier's best chance for survival. Amputee survivors dotted the landscape as veterans of both North and South moved west at the war's end.

One of those one-armed veterans was George Hornbrook whose fondness for the first McDonald child led to the naming of the Pitchfork Ranch that also came to be known as the McDonald Ranch or the McDonald Brothers' Ranch.

In 1903, Jeremiah (Grandpa Jerry) McDonald paid \$17.80 for the tax title to 160 acres of patented land nearby today's Pitchfork Ranch headquarters. The ranch has been in cattle production ever since. That was the same year Deming farmer E.D. Osborn sent the Smithsonian Institution some of the first Mimbrenño pottery studied or examined by scholars from the nearby Mimbres River region discussed in Chapter 3 and more than a decade before Poncho Villa crossed the international border and killed more than a dozen Americans in Columbus, New Mexico.

Jeremiah McDonald's grandson, also named Jerry, is in his 70s and still runs a cow-calf operation on the McDonald Ranch northeast of the Pitchfork. Jerry McDonald wed his new bride, Linda Nielson McDonald, at the Pitchfork Ranch headquarters in 1964, just as his father had done with his bride two decades before. That same year, the McDonald brothers bought the Thorn Ranch south of today's Pitchfork, bringing the size of the ranch to more than 50,000 acres. ,

Grandson Jerry lived at the Pitchfork Ranch headquarters for the first 37 years of his life. His name and footprints, cast in his toddlerhood, can still be seen on concrete walkways around the headquarters. This account of the McDonald family and their ranch is typical of the story of most historic ranches throughout the Southwest.

Recounting the tale of a place like the Pitchfork Ranch is a lengthy, convoluted, and multi-disciplinary task. The ranch is steeped in western lore, archaeology, geology, and a unique hydrology that includes rare water known as a *ciénaga*. It contains all manner of wildlife, plant life and rich, high desert beauty. For the purpose of prologue, the place I'll begin the story of the Pitchfork Ranch is with the people of the ranch's Anglo history.

In the late 1870s, at about 13 years of age, Jeremiah McDonald ran away from his Illinois home and went to Kansas where he and his partner Joe Taylor are said to have lost some 400 head of cattle in a freeze. The two boys then worked their way west as wagon train guards, arriving in Texas where they worked a short while before joining up with a migrant team and started out for Silver City, New Mexico. Soldiers met their wagon train at Fort Bayard, then escorting the settlers to Silver City. No longer needed as guards, Jeremiah and Joe went to Deming where they were hired on to work in Cloverdale, New Mexico near the Mexican border, 70 miles south of today's Pitchfork Ranch.

The teenagers wrangled horses for Tom Ketchum, who later became known as "Black Jack" Ketchum and would die some 20 years later with the reputation as a notorious train-robbing outlaw: tried, convicted and hung at Clayton, New Mexico in 1901.

The McDonalds — growing grass and raising cows, still today — tell this story about Grandpa Jerry: “He didn’t know who he was working for, but he saw a big herd of cattle come in, and then there became a big gunfight going on, and he and the cook and Joe Taylor got on top of this Spanish-style roof, and they had that protection, the ways those Spanish-style houses were built. “Men were shooting their guns and everything and the cook turned to Jeremiah and he says, ‘Do you know who you're working for?’ And Jeremiah says, ‘No, I don’t.’ And the Cook says: ‘You’re working for Black Jack Ketchum! If you’d just take my advice, you’d get out of here!’ So he did. He slid down the roof and he got him a horse and he got away.”

Jeremiah landed near Cherry Creek in the Big Burro Mountains that drains into the 58-square-mile watershed where the Pitchfork Ranch lies. He drove a stagecoach before beginning a 13-year stint with Lyons and Campbell Cattle Company. By the time he was 18, Jeremiah was running the L. C. wagon for Lyons and Campbell — co-owned by Tom Lyons and Angus Campbell — and worked there until 1896.

Two decades later, Tom Lyons was murdered. Typical of the bloodstains in western history, to this day questions remain as to who killed Lyons and why, but the official version holds that cattle rustlers wanted him out of the way and had Lyons murdered in El Paso in a 1917 contract killing. There are others who believe he was killed because of shady business dealings gone sour. Whatever the truth, Grant County, New Mexico and environs was rough country. And as you’ll see, the deaths around the Pitchfork Ranch bear this out.

Jeremiah’s future wife, Mitchell Ann Gordon, and her family left South Carolina for Red Rock, New Mexico in the early 1890s and settled 38 miles west of the Pitchfork

Ranch. Four years later, she married Jeremiah. Jeremiah worked and lived with his new wife on the J O Bar Ranch near Lordsburg, New Mexico, 45 miles south of the soon-to-be McDonald Ranch. The one-armed Civil War veteran George Hornbrook also worked at the J O Bar.

Jeremiah and Mitchell Ann's first child, Bartley McDonald, was born in 1899 and four siblings followed: Taylor, Katie, Jan and Jonnie. It was during this time that their parents began assembling the failed homesteads that eventually made up the McDonald or Pitchfork Ranch, three times the size of the Pitchfork Ranch today.

Despite his disability, Civil War amputee Hornbrook could still cowboy and that's how he made his living. He took a liking to Jeremiah's eldest son and gave little Bartley a heifer and registered the three-pronged Pitchfork brand in the boy's name. The name and brand stuck and are now part of the history of the region and in service yet today. We made use of the Pitchfork branding iron on a new bull just this April 2016.

The operative term in this narrative concerning formation of the ranch and most of the early history of ranching in the Southwest is "assembled." Second generation ranches in the arid West were commonly cobbled together when earlier settlers were "starved out." The homestead laws, enacted by people whose livelihoods were made on land blessed with plentiful rainfall east of the hundredth meridian, failed to thoughtfully legislate settlement laws that would allow pioneers to acquire enough land to support a family in arid country with so little and unpredictable rain. Settlers couldn't make a living on a 160-acre quarter section of land and were eventually forced to sell their homesteads to neighboring ranchers lucky enough to have water or simply abandon their

spreads rather than starve or pay the property taxes. Jeremiah launched the McDonald Ranch on such a loss for less than \$18.

In the early 1890s, another one-armed Civil War veteran and Director of the U.S Geological Survey, John Wesley Powell, proposed to end “free-for-all settlement,” hoping to prevent water monopolies and put an end to the rash of individual settlement failures of “the tradition-bound, hopeful, ignorant, and doomed homesteaders.” Instead, Powell proposed government supervision of land use, guiding development that would serve of the common good rather than the convenience of the individual or profit of the speculators and railroads.

Powell proposed a policy designed to benefit the “...greatest good for the greatest number of people for the longest time.” He urged a shift from free land to legislation as a way to oversee and put the brakes on railroads and trusts monopolizing ownership of the new lands. Powell’s goal was clear: he wanted “‘...to guide the development of agriculture in the greatest practical area’ and prevent the hardship resulting from ill-considered settlement and the failure of homesteaders on family-sized farms.” Powell argued: “‘...it would be almost a criminal act to go on as we are doing now, and allow thousands and hundreds of thousands of people to establish homes where they cannot maintain themselves.” But within a year of the temporary suspension of western settlement intended to allow surveying and planning, western politicians successfully attacked Powell, mislabeling his surveys as a “scheme of geology” and “socialism,” resuming the plunder of the West and assuring the continued mass failure of homesteads.

Powell had been urging change in the patterns of western settlement for over a decade. In 1878, he published “one of the most important books ever written about the

West,” *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States*, which “...was a complete revolution in the system of land surveys, land policy, land tenure, and farming methods in the West, and a denial of almost every cherished fantasy and myth associated with the Westward migration...”

Knowing that families in the semi-arid West could not make a living on only 160 acres, he recommended 80 acres as the appropriate size homestead for irrigated farms and 2,560 acres for pasture farms, or 16 times the normal quarter section. His reasoning was clear: “...the lands beyond the 100th meridian received less than twenty inches of annual rainfall, and twenty inches was the minimum for unaided agriculture...the inflexible fact of aridity lay like a fence along the 100th meridian.” Wallace Stegner points out that there is more to aridity than the all-important shortage of rainfall:

Aridity, more than anything else, gives the western landscape its character. It is aridity that gives the air its special dry clarity; aridity that puts brilliance in the light and polishes and enlarges the stars; aridity that leads the grasses to evolve as bunches rather than as turf; aridity that exposes the pigmentation of the raw earth and limits, almost eliminates, the color of chlorophyll; aridity that erodes the earth in cliffs and badlands rather than the softened and vegetated slopes that has shaped the characteristically swift and mobile animals of the dry grasslands and the characteristically nocturnal life of the deserts.

Until recently, the Pitchfork Ranch typically received at least 12 inches of annual rainfall, but that has changed with periods of what many describe as extended drought. Yet, in light of climate change, there is no credible scientific support of hope for a return of greater rainfall. The Pitchfork Ranch received less than nine inches of rain in each of the four years from 2011 through 2014. In 2012, nearly three inches of rain fell within 48 hours and as a consequence, much of that rain drained off the ranch, leaving as little as

six inches of rain for the year. Less rain is the work-a-day world of climate change, dealt with in Part II of this book.

There is another aspect to the 160-acre history that is often overlooked. The cowboy was forced to look elsewhere for work when the open range was fenced in the late 1880s and the cattle business became less labor dependent. Many cowhands hoped to establish their own cattle ranches. But they encountered the corporate cattle companies who did to them the same thing that unregulated capitalism does to its competition today – through a myriad of tactics, schemes and ill thought out government policies, they squeezed until the small operations were crushed and run out of business. The details are beyond the scope here, but the behavior was typically violent and successful. There was no way the small, independent homesteading ranchers could compete and increase their holdings to a profitable size for raising cattle. Despite five successive laws enacted to encourage the way west, it was commonly impossible for family ranchers or cowboys to maintain their own place:

...the government gave or sold the public domain to speculators and companies, not to grangers and nesters: of the more than 200 million acres given by 1923 to so-called settlers, a large portion went to dummy agents of speculators, and several times as many million acres of public domain went to non-settlers, that is, rich corporations and individuals with the means in Washington to steal and bribe and chisel their ways to even greater fortune...95 percent of the titles to land under the (Desert Land Act of 1877) ‘were acquired fraudulently by or for corporations’”

Speculators were busy “gobbling the Public Domain by fraud, grab, appropriation, barbed wire, guns, and the election of political yes-men.” Fortunes were amassed. A century earlier, French writer and playwright Honore de Balzac captured this marvel of ill-gotten goods when he penned his famous: “Behind every great fortune lies a great crime.”

At this juncture in the Pitchfork Ranch history, we'll see the first of several important lessons about how the current climate change crisis has been allowed to persist unabated, despite its clear and present danger. The "Great Forgetting" is a cyclical phenomenon that accounts for important lessons learned by those of earlier generations to be lost four generations later, typically at the end of approximately eighty years. After four generations, the great grandchildren of their great grandparents don't have their ancestor's personal history of the losses, the lessons learned and experiences earned with the price of hardship and toil. Whether they are called "robber barons" or "rich corporatists," after a depression or other crisis, those with money and power eventually ease their way back into control of policy, the economy, and those elected officials that are chosen to represent not just the so-called upper class, but also everyone.

Then as now, science-based concerns voiced by Powell about the imprudent western settlement policies were challenged, demeaned, and dismissed by the moneyed class and their on-call elected officials. Today's calamity of climate change far exceeds the implications of quarter-section homesteading of arid land of this earlier period, and this difference in degree of severity makes it all the more difficult to understand the persistence of the forgetting currently underway. Consistently, about every four generations money again trumps science and sound public policy. We'll return to this persistent and troubling phenomenon of forgetting in Part II, Chapter 13 dealing with the roadblocks to addressing the climate crisis, but as you'll see, the cycle is historically predictable.

In the years of 1881-1884, Powell took his case to Capitol Hill, made known to Congress the material from his 1878 report "...and consistently, unflappably, stubbornly,

but *reasonably* placed the scientific fact before a body of politicians who practically wallowed in irrationality, self-interest, and superstition.” (Emphasis in original) Powell was spurned at the 1893 Los Angeles Irrigation Congress where he was unmercifully booed. He forewarned those in attendance that the government was “laying up a heritage of litigation” with its plans to settle the West with water projects. Although his ideas were at the time radical, today his work is considered on the mark, prescient and among the most important scientific studies of the American Southwest. The Powell legacy, and his ignored forewarnings, should serve as a cautionary tale for Americans turning a deaf ear to the risks of climate change so indisputably forecast by established climatological scientists.

In retrospect, nothing sounds sillier than the straight-faced developer’s promotion of westward expansion with claims that “settlement improved climate” and, “the rain follows the plow.” Yet now, generations later, out-of-season snow in Chicago is said by sitting members of Congress to belie the science of climate change, replicating similar short sighted, money-driven recklessness of the past.

Powell became the premier organizer and champion of the first phase of government-sponsored science, considered father of the United States Geological Survey and founder of the Bureau of American Ethnology. Yet, during his lifetime, Powell’s well-reasoned, research-based ideas failed to gain traction. For many years his thinking remained woefully out of favor with prevailing views of both those profiting from settling the West and settlers themselves. Half a century after Powell’s death, Wallace Stegner’s biography lifted him from obscurity, causing history to reconsider his career, view him differently and recognize his ideas as prophetic.

Stegner tells the rediscovered story of Powell in his 1954 *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West*, a book failing by one vote to win the Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction. It is arguably the most important book ever written about the American West. This classic exposé chronicles the exploits of Powell's Colorado River expeditions and the logic of his more restrained views for settling the West. Despite arduous efforts, Powell failed to persuade Congress and the public of the difference between land favored with the abundant moisture east of the 100th meridian and the aridity of the West and the reasons why the original settlers of these ranchlands were doomed to a life of struggle and ultimate failure. Considered Stegner's opus, the book has garnered a good deal of acclaim, but former Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt's praise best captures Stegner's insight and importance to our understanding of the West:

When I first read *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian*, shortly after it was published in 1954, it was as though someone had thrown a rock through the window. Stegner showed us the limitations of aridity and the need for human institutions to respond in a cooperative way. He provided me in that moment with a way of thinking about the American West, the importance of finding true partnership between human beings and the land.

The unassailable fact that cattle were overstocked in the Southwest is now, despite ardent denial of some old timers, well settled. Because bovine bear the brunt of blame for landscape damage to the Southwest, the story of this or any ranch invariably must address the question of cattle. And while cattle overgrazing deserves much of the blame for this habitat's damage and loss, little attention is given to other factors such as the presence of enormous herds of sheep, trapping-out of beaver, agricultural re-contouring, drought, fire suppression and now climate change. It is difficult to definitively tie a specific number of sheep and goats to this ranch, but flocks of both were

so ubiquitous throughout southwest New Mexico that their presence here is a near certainty. Each of these factors contributed to the Pitchfork's damaged habitat and will be discussed in more detail in Part II, Chapter 10 when we discuss the causes of *ciénaga* habitat loss and the desertification of the Southwest.

The Spanish search for the Seven Cities of Gold failed miserably, but Spain's search for wealth persisted as sheep became the dominant domestic animal in its northern frontier on the continent. Sheep accompanied early Spanish explorers and arrived in greater numbers with Juan de Oñate and his party of colonists in 1598. The Pueblo Indians retained sheep after they revolted and drove Spaniards south in 1680, sheep herding persisted after the 1692 *Reconquista* and by the late 1700s were a major regional industry.

By the early 1800s, New Mexicans had developed the "partial system" whereby a sheep owner lent a flock of sheep to another herder and was typically paid a 20 percent rental return in flock numbers, with the flock given back in three to five years. During this time, the renter would build his own flock, and by the time he returned the borrowed sheep he could survive on his own. While there is uncertainty about these numbers, by the 1820s as many as two million sheep covered New Mexico and were the most important asset of nearly all well-off New Mexicans.

When the Mormon Battalion signed up for the Mexican-American War and came west in 1846, they relied on plentiful *churro* mutton. Unlike most livestock introduced in New Mexico, small *churros* tolerated the harsh, arid environment. But with the war over and the Southwest now in the hands of Americans, the Spanish herders took their sheep south of the new international border and the transition from grazing sheep to cattle

began.

Early evidence for livestock numbers are suspect, but in 1756 sheep outnumbered cattle by 7 to 1 (112,182 sheep, 16,157 cows). By 1865, the ratio ballooned to 37 to 1 (4,600,000 sheep, 125,000 cows). But by 1890, cattle numbers spiked and the ratio narrowed near 2 to 1 (3,492,800 sheep, 1,809,400 cows). Then sheep numbers declined precipitously, plummeting to 500,000 by 1978. The ratio of sheep to cattle flipped to 3 to 1 favoring cattle and by 2011, the ratio widened to 15 to 1. In little over a century, the sheep business went from New Mexico's leading industry to one of minor importance. Today, 98 percent of all livestock sales are from cattle. (S&N)

Spanish and Anglo herders likely grazed sheep and goats on lands that were to become the Pitchfork Ranch. William Charles Silsby inherited the Grant County Silsby Ranch when his father passed away in 1905. Angora goats had been a mainstay in the Burro Mountains since the 1880s and the operation was at least 900 goats strong when the elder Silsby died. Family records of William and his wife, Mary Francis Williams Silsby, disclose they sheared 1,597 goats in 1913, 2,712 the following year and leased 9000 acres from the U.S. Forest Service in 1918 that authorized the grazing of 1,507 goats. The New Mexico Mohair Association, organized in Silver City with the help of the Grant County Farm Bureau, was going strong in the early 1900s and was still in operation in 1921. The Angora Goat Breeders met in Silver City in September of 1909 so it is clear that sheep and goats played a meaningful part in the Grant County economy and likely the lands that became the Pitchfork Ranch.

Cattle were grazed here for certain in the 1880s, as the area was part of the enormous Gray Ranch headquartered in the New Mexico Bootheel that at one time

stretched from south of the border into Mexico and almost as far north as Socorro, New Mexico. The Gray Ranch covered thousands of miles. The Pitchfork grasslands have been in cattle production for more than 130 years and after the property was homesteaded, soon the various original owners were starved out and abandoned their 160-acre quarter sections, parcels that were then picked up for taxes, purchased or otherwise added to the McDonald/Pitchfork Ranch.

Roland Speed — expelled in 1884 from the Southwest Stockman’s Association for conduct unbecoming to a member and labeled in the local press as little more than a common thief — grazed some of the first homestead cattle on this land. He put 400 head of Texas stock cattle on the range near Soldier’s Farewell Hill in the south Burro Mountain foothills. Listed below are the twelve acquisitions of failed homesteads that make up today’s Pitchfork Ranch, not the entire three-times larger historic McDonald Ranch.

Roland Speed	1892, 150 acres
Sadie Patterson	1894, 160 acres – widow of John, murdered at Gold Gulch
Earl Schwidle	1898, 160 acres
Pierce Rice	1912, 160 acres – convicted killer of Ernest (Bart) Irwin
George Snyder	1919, 160 acres
Frank Dunde	1920, 160 acres
James Weaver	1924, 320 acres
Ernest Irwin	1929, 640 acres – killed by Pierce Rice
Claude Irwin	1930, 640 acres – son of Ernest Irwin
Al O'Brian	1930, 160 acres – helped Rice turn himself in
Ray Gunn	1938, 640 acres – namesake of Gunn Canyon on the ranch
Irene Rice	1946, 634 acres – wife of Irwin’s killer, Pierce Rice

This 54-year sequence of settler’s start-ups and failures illustrates the hardship Powell sought to avoid. Like the first quarter section purchased by Jeremiah for taxes, many of these 160-acre settlers could not make a living on such a small partial of arid land, providing the opportunity for the McDonalds to assemble enough land to profitably grow

grass and raise cattle.

The base of an adobe chimney, footings and corral rock fall of the Earl Schwidle homestead still rests on an overlook near the ciénaga where surface water has flowed for eons. McDonald family lore holds that Grandpa Jerry spent the night in Schwidle's abandoned house — essentially gone now, but still standing as the new century began — when he first arrived in the Burros. In addition to the archaeology, other materials identified from the Schwidle homestead include a metal shirt button with the inscription “Pretchard & Co. 155 Frenchchurch St.” traced to a manufacturing district in London England, a Winchester cartridge headstamped 1882 for the Winchester Model 1876 rifle, Colt .46 cartridges, various other cartridges, brass shoe rivet, brass toe tip for an adult shoe and similar leavings from the era of the earliest Anglo settlers.

About a mile south of the Schwidle place, walls and interior fixtures (wood boxes for cupboards, hinges and hooks) of Ray Gunn's stone and tree trunk dugout home still remain along Gunn Canyon, one of three major canyons that drain onto the Pitchfork Ranch and contribute to the ranch's most important feature, its nine-mile reach of the 48-mile-long Burro Ciénaga.

Gunn was apparently a difficult man. Connie McCauley — she and her husband John at one time leased the Pitchfork and ran cattle here — told me she was appraised by Enrique Casares, their Spanish speaking foreman, that after working a day with Gunn: “Yo trabajo con los pistol, no mas.” (I won't work with the pistol any more.)



Ray Gunn's dugout home. (Photograph, Lucinda Cole)

Ernest (Bart) Irwin, Claude Irwin's father, began "proving up" his homestead around 1923, in 1924 began building the home that served as the McDonald Ranch headquarters and is today's residence for the Pitchfork Ranch where we live. In 1925, Bart Irwin was shot and killed by then County Commissioner Pierce Rice near the Rice homestead, land that is now part of this ranch and two miles south of the headquarters. After his father's death, Claude completed construction and eventually went into law enforcement in New Mexico.

The Irwin killing says a good about the bloodlettings so common in the era and the way of life that tested the metal of Southwest pioneers and their children. Bart Irwin had been living on today's Thorn Ranch six miles south of the Pitchfork headquarters. He regularly traveled past the Rice place to and from the construction of his future ranch

headquarters. Both Rice and Irwin had children about the same age; Rice a daughter, Irwin a son. The girl was said to be slow, possibly due to a fever as an infant. They began a relationship that led to a pregnancy. Claude wanted to marry the would-be mother and give the child a name. Presumably not wanting his son to marry a disabled girl, Claude's father would not grant permission to marry. Imprudently, Irwin persisted in traveling past the Rice place, despite warnings that he was risking a confrontation and it would be safer to use another nearby route. One is tempted to speculate that Rice felt Irwin was "rubbing his nose in it" or otherwise treating the girl and her family disparagingly. Whatever Rice's thinking, Irwin's route was imprudent.

After shooting Irwin, Rice rode to Al O'Brian's headquarters — between the Rice place and today's Pitchfork headquarters — and told O'Brian he had shot and killed Irwin. They returned to the scene of the shooting, loaded Irwin in O'Brian's pickup and drove to Silver City where Rice turned himself in. Rice, who also worked as a foreman for the Diamond A Ranch, pleaded self-defense, yet he was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to the state penitentiary. This was a far different time and local lore maintains that in an effort to preserve his daughter's honor, Rice never told anyone or mentioned at trial that she was with child by the decedent's son.

Three years later, neighboring ranchers got together, approached Governor Richard C. Dillon in Santa Fe and told him the missing part of the story about Rice, Irwin and their children. The governor agreed to pardon Rice if he left New Mexico. He was released and the Rice family moved to the state of Washington where the Diamond A Ranch owners had another cattle operation. Nothing is known of the daughter or her child. Little was mentioned about the young girl and even today era seniors are sketchy

about the circumstances leading up to the shooting. Although little is said to suggest Rice was right to have killed Irwin, the sense locally is that Pierce Rice demonstrated the quality of character that defined the Old West.



Photograph provided by Bartley McDonald's daughter, Patsy Adams. This is the home Bart Irwin was building when he was killed. With the addition of a bunkhouse, tool room and storage area, the house was enlarged by the McDonalds and, with only minor additions of a studio and study. It still serves as the Pitchfork Ranch headquarters. The hills behind the headquarters have only a few One-seed juniper trees and mesquite shrubs; local but severely encroaching plants that later flourished and evidence a misused and altered landscape where woody plants now outcompete grass. (Photographer unknown)

There were more killings of these ranchland's initial owners. John and Sadie Patterson were co-owners with Idus L. Fiedler of the Western Belle Gold Mine located at Gold Hill, 15 miles northwest of their homestead and later abandoned or sold and now part of the Pitchfork Ranch.

In 1892, 59-year-old Patterson's Silver City partner was visiting when the two men walked past the local saloon and were approached by one of Patterson's employee miners, demanding whiskey. Patterson went into the bar, purchased a bottle of whiskey and gave it to the miner, only to be met with his insistence that Patterson buy him a second bottle. He refused and the two men walked on to Patterson's home, unaware they were followed. During dinner, they heard a noise coming from the barn and became concerned for Fiedler's horse. Patterson, a long-time resident and said to be a quiet and peaceful man, didn't own a gun but Fiedler insisted John take his Colt .45.

Patterson went to inspect the barn and was shot. He fired back and instantly killed his assailant, but he too died the following day. In the Old West, a .45 cartridge for a six-gun cost 12 cents, the same as a glass of whiskey. When a cowboy was short of funds, he could always barter with the bartender with a cartridge in exchange for a "shot" of whiskey. The interplay with the Colt 45, the whiskey, and the "shot," while witty, it surely would have been lost on Sadie Patterson. Like water, whiskey often mattered more than life in the Old West.

The appearance of the six-shooter in 1873 merged with soldiers hardened by a Civil War to produce an aggressive and dangerous breed. Young men unable to break their habit of killing brought about a 1880 New Mexico Territory murder rate 47 times higher than the national average. Despite the western myth of independence and respectable values, there is much to suggest that life in the Old West mattered not so much and was worth less than the idealized fable suggests.

In line with this manly aggression and lack of value for life is the scarcity of documented land ownership by women. As with so many local histories of western

expansion, until recently, there was little known of the women who partnered with their husbands in the settling of these new lands in Southwest New Mexico. Sadie Patterson, widow of John, is the only woman whose name appears on any of the 12 deeds to land making up today's Pitchfork Ranch, likely due to his death before ownership was "proved up." After her husband's murder, Sadie persevered, completing the requirements for homesteading their 160-acre parcel, then building two rooming houses across from the Silver City courthouse before leaving Grant County for good and making her way back to Texas.

Suggestive of the gender standards of the period, there are few accounts of women pioneers, but possibly the story with the most significant environmental repercussions in this region is that of a fiercely independent Margaret Reid Armer, whose business had a measurable impact on the Grant County economy and habitat and likely the land making up this ranch. At one time there were as many as 70,000 Angora goats in the nearby Mimbres Mountains, some 50,000 sheep in the Gila Mountains and untold numbers of sheep earlier grazed in the Burro Mountains by Mexican herders who fled south at the end of the Mexican-American War.

Margaret Armer (1863–1933) became known the world over as "The Angora Queen." Born in California and married at 15, she and her husband moved to Saw Pit Creek in 1884, two miles south of Kingston, New Mexico 80-miles northeast of the Pitchfork. She began raising a small flock of Mexican goats to provide milk and meat for the table. By 1887, Armer became interested in Angora goats and bought her first registered buck. When her husband died two years later, leaving her with six children from six months to 12 years of age, her only means of support was her small herd of

Angora goats. That same year, the Southwest suffered one of the worst droughts ever recorded. Range cattle died by the thousands but the Angora Queen's goats thrived, allowing her to support the family by selling goat meat to the miners of Kingston.

Armer worked tirelessly in developing a heavy, dense Angora fleece and goats with better mutton. With the help of her family, she made her Angora goat venture profitable. Her herd was said to be the best in all of America. She won prizes and accolades the world over for the finest Angora wool anywhere. During its heyday, goats from Armer's herd were sold to the USSR, Canada and Mexico and won awards too numerous to detail. When she became ill in 1916 — Margaret died in 1933 — her son took over and managed the business until his health forced its sale in 1960.

There are two other people who had what might be called a “pass-through,” yet historically significant connection with the ranch worth a re-telling; John Russell Bartlett and Inez Gonzales, the former is the most historically noteworthy, the later, one of the more peculiar accounts of anyone connected to the Pitchfork.

“John Russell Bartlett (1805-1886) had a colorful and multi-faceted career that included periods as a merchant, a bank cashier, a book dealer, and author and publisher, a United States Boundary Commissioner, the Rhode Island Secretary of State, and a librarian.” The portion of Bartlett's career of interest here is his truncated stint as Boundary Commissioner from 1850-1853, realized as a political patronage appointment. The boundary that is now the 2,000-mile long border between Mexico and the United States was redrawn as a result of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. When peace was restored, the first task was to survey the new boundary, an assignment given the U.S.-Mexico Boundary Survey. Bartlett from the United States and Pedro Garcia Condé

of Mexico led this international commission. Coming to light during the survey, deficiencies in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the war and errors in J. Disturnell's 1847 map led to a major flare-up that threatened resumption of armed conflict.

At issue was an approximate 6,000-mile arid strip of land that included property making up today's Pitchfork Ranch and territory that Bartlett believed could never be inhabited.

The Treaty...had provided a verbal description of the new boundary. It was to follow the course of the Rio Grande to its intersection with the southern boundary of New Mexico; continue west along that line to its termination, then north to the nearest branch of the river Gila; down the Gila to its mouth on the Rio Colorado; and finally west to the Pacific Coast. The official version of the treaty also included a copy of the J. Disturnell's 1847 commercial map of the United States and Mexico that showed the southern boundary of New Mexico running a few miles north of Paso del Norte [now El Paso, TX.]. Once on the ground the Commissioner's astronomers found that Disturnell's map located Paso del Norte 34 miles north and 130 miles east of its actual geographical coordinates. The question was, should the Commissioners run New Mexico's southern boundary slightly north of the actual location of Paso del Norte, or follow the incorrect coordinates of the map?

Condé and Bartlett had gotten along quite well — both had been encouraged by their respective governments to maintain conciliatory dealings with one another — and Condé accepted a compromise proposed by Bartlett that split the difference over the disputed land. The treaty empowered the commissioners to enter binding agreements on matters such as this, and as long as the commissioners and head surveyors of both countries signed off, ratification by their respective governments was not required.

Andrew Belcher Gray, the official American surveyor, refused to sign the agreement, believing the compromise was too far north, depriving the United States of “the great gateway to the Pacific.” Political skirmishes ensued. Bartlett continued his

work, but when Congress officially refused to honor his agreement, his good name was tarnished and he had no choice but to resign. After he stood down, the dispute was resolved by moving the line south with the United States paying Mexico \$10 million under the terms of the Gadsden Purchase.

Bartlett still headed the Commission at the time of the rescue of Inez Gonzales and they soon thereafter passed through the land that is now the Pitchfork Ranch. Although the account of Gonzales has little to say about the story of the Pitchfork Ranch, her liberation from captivity occurred near here, Bartlett renamed a spring in the ranch Ojo de Inez or Inez Spring and it's a tale that warrants retelling. I first learned about the fifteen-year-old girl when looking into John Bartlett's short stay here in 1851, recounted in his *Personal Narrative*. He thought his experience with her was memorable and looked back on it with affection:

On 27th June (1851) an incident occurred, which will long be remembered by every one connected with the Boundary Commission. It was such as to awaken the finest sympathies of our nature; and by its happy result afforded a full recompense for the trials and hardships attending our sojourn in this inhospitable wilderness.

Inez Gonzales was a Mexican girl, "quite young, artless, and interesting in appearance, prepossessing in manners, and by her deportment gave evidence that she had been carefully brought up." She had been abducted by Piñal Indians, and in turn sold to a group of traders led by a white man named Peter Blacklaws of Santa Fe. They "were taking the girl to some part of New Mexico, to sell or make such disposition of her as would realize the most money," likely to be sold into slavery or prostitution.

Turning to his authority under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo prohibiting trade in stolen houses, mules or humans, Bartlett directed Lieutenant Colonel

Craig, commander of the escort, to demand her surrender. Craig directed her captors to free the young woman and ordered them to appear the following day to be examined about their right to the captive girl and livestock they had purchased from the Indians. Despite protests from the men that they were “surprised that I should question their rights on the strength of the treaty” and claiming to know nothing of it, the treaty was explicit that purchases of the kind at issue were prohibited “*under any pretext whatsoever*” (emphasis in original). Bartlett wrote in his *Narrative* that he “...therefore deemed it to be my duty—and a pleasant one it certainly was, to extend over her the protection of the laws of the United States, and to see that, until delivered in safety to her parents, she should be ‘treated with the utmost hospitality’ that our position would allow.”

In John C. Cremony’s *Life Among the Apaches*, he recalls their “fair captive” — “a young and handsome girl” — had been rescued in what he called “a tattered chemise,” yet under the care of the Commission, Bartlett wrote:

(s)he was well clad with such materials as the subtler of the escort and the commissary of the Commission could furnish; and besides the more substantial of clothing provided for her, she received many presents from the gentlemen of the Commission, all of whom manifest a deep interest in her welfare, and seemed desirous to make her comfortable and happy. But with all the attentions extended to her, her situation was far from enviable in a camp of over a hundred men, without a single female with whom she could hold intercourse.

Inez had departed her home in Santa Cruz, Sonora with her uncle and others of her family, protected by a military escort of ten soldiers under the command of a commissioned officer. They were ambushed and her uncle and eight soldiers were killed, while others escaped. But Inez, two other females and a boy were captured. In the hands of the Indians, Inez suffered hard labor for seven months. Her friends were sold to different New Mexico traders, and Inez was eventually sold to Blacklaw’s band where

she remained until rescued by Bartlett's party. She traveled with her rescuers for three months, during which time she was well treated and romanticized as a proper Victorian lady. In the sketch below, she is shown mounted sidesaddle on a mule, wearing a mantilla on her head and an ankle-length dress. This scene occurred along the Sonoita Creek about two miles southwest of Patagonia, Arizona and was probably drawn two months after her rescue and shortly after departing these lands, as the Commission made its way west to California.



John Russell Bartlett, *Fording a Stream, Packmules Sink in Quicksand*, September 13, 1851, 10" x 12 ¾", Pencil and Sepia wash, The John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

Bartlett's gesture of good will toward the young Mexican girl was publically recognized when the expedition reached San Diego. One of the party's artists painted a

portrait of Inez in oil on canvas and, lionized by the local press, his work was reviewed in the San Diego Herald:

Mr. H. C. Pratt, the Artist of the Boundary Commission has succeeded in taking the likeness of several Indian chiefs to be placed in the Indian Gallery of the Patent Office at Washington City. We have seen a beautiful portrait, executed by him, of Inez Gonzales, a handsome Mexican captive girl. It is designed, we believe, to grace the same national collection.

In the catalogue from a 1996 exhibition of paintings and drawings from Bartlett's Commission at The Albuquerque Museum, Guest Curator Gary Sweeney editorialized how "some of Bartlett's attitudes about the region's inhabitants, both Native American and Hispanic, would be problematic today (and that no event...exemplifies these ethnic issues more than the rescue of Inez Gonzales."

The entire incident revealed how Bartlett, the proper, respectful Victorian gentleman scholar constructed himself as a chivalrous champion of a helpless lower class Mexican woman. The outcome of the incident must have suggested the futility of outsiders attempting to change misunderstood social customs or impose their own values.

The art in this exhibit is informative and important for the period it documents and also quite good artistically, adding both insight and beauty to the Commission's efforts. Undeniably, the quality of art and scholarship in the catalogue is accomplished. Although the self-portrayal of chivalry is embellished to modern sensibilities, it strikes me as an overstated misuse of the essential but often-maligned idea of political correctness. For Sweeney to characterize the ultimate "outcome" of rescuing Inez and his portrayal of her as a lady of Bartlett's genre as either "misunderstood social customs" or the insensitive imposition of foreign values that misapplied contemporary efforts, thereby avoiding offense or disadvantages to a particular group of people, strikes me as incorrect. His criticism serves as an example of critic's complaint about political correctness gone

mad.

As detailed in Bartlett's *Personal Narrative* and Cremony's *Life Among the Apaches*, a similar incident occurred the day after the Gonzalez rescue that helps belie Sweeney's erroneous 20th Century thinking about Bartlett's conduct of 150 years past.

Cremony was a young newspaperman and former officer in the Mexican War who was persuaded to leave the *Boston Herald* and serve the Commission as an interpreter. He was resting on a cot in his tent, pitched several hundred yards from the rest of the Commission, when suddenly two Mexican boys darted into his tent and hid themselves, proclaiming they were "captives among the Apaches, and we have hidden here to escape them. For God's sake, do not deliver us again among them." It was later learned that the two boys, ages 13 and about 11, had been held captive for six months and six years respectively.

As was then the custom, the friendly Apaches, men, women and children had been around the camp throughout the day and on this occasion had unwittingly brought the captive boys with them. As soon as he understood the boy's plight, Cremony knew this changed everything, and as events unfolded, we see an incident ensnared in the juxtaposition of intersecting cultures, a conundrum Bartlett and others like him faced on the new frontier. This event also bears witness to the measured way Bartlett resolved what could well have been a catastrophic turn of events.

Apache Chief Mangas Coloradas and his tribe of some 300 members were camped four miles away while Chief Delgadito's similar-sized tribe was camped eighteen miles distant along the Mimbres River. Four hundred Navajos occupied the banks of the Gila River, 28 miles from the Commission's camp. By any measure, Bartlett's

Commission was considerably outnumbered and in no position to cause trouble.

Cremony slipped two six-shooters in his belt, took two more in his hands, told his nearby colleague to sling a carbine over his shoulder and carried the double-barreled gun in his hands in order to take the captive boys to Bartlett for disposition. The four of them were soon confronted and immediately surrounded by thirty or forty Apaches demanding the return of their property. Back-to-back, guns cocked, circling around to face all parts of the ring, ready to shoot at the first sign of active hostility, and warning the Indians to keep their distance, they made their way toward the main encampment where the two men were eventually able to deliver the boys safely to the Commissioner without any violence. The next night, Bartlett secreted the boys safely to a corresponding surveying group for the Mexican government who returned the boys to their families.

Herein lies a textbook conflict of values between three cultures: Americans, Mexicans from Sonora and the Apaches who had understandably believed they “earned” their captives at great risk and with the blood of their own families. The Americans had treaty obligations with Mexico to return captives to their homes. The Apaches, who hated Mexiocans, knew nothing of these obligations, were not a party to them, and obviously not subject to the treaties.

The Apaches came to discuss the return of their captives. A two-to-three person deep crowd of Indians formed a semicircle facing the room where the meeting was to take place. A dozen armed members of the Commission were present and another 150 armed members of the Commission stood nearby at the ready. Through Cremony as interpreter, Mangas and the other Apaches saw the issue this way:

You came to our country. You were well received. Your lives, your property, your animals were safe....Our wives, our women and children came here and visited your houses. We were friends – we were brothers! Believing this, we came among you and brought our captives, relying on it that we were brothers and that you would feel as we feel. We concealed nothing...you took our captives without beforehand cautioning us. They were made prisoners in lawful warfare...They are our property...the owner of these captives is poor...cannot lose his prisoners, who were obtained at the risk of his life, and purchased by the blood of his relatives...He has had one of these captives for six years...His heart-strings are bound around him...Money cannot buy affection...He loves the boy and cannot sell him.

Space does not permit detailing the specifics of how Bartlett negotiated a resolution, but he firmly, yet respectfully, accounted for the diverse values and fit them into a palatable whole that saved the boys as well as the good will enjoyed between the Commission and the Apaches. He compensated the Apache owner, honored treaty obligations and avoided violence, thereby saving lives and allowing the Commission to pursue its work. Bartlett's display of deferential skills is at odds with Sweeney's suggestion that he either misunderstood local customs or pretentiously sought to impose his Victorian values on uncivilized, ignorant locals.

On August 27th of that year, Bartlett and the Commission departed their camps at Santa Rita copper mines where the events of the two captive rescues occurred and headed westward for the San Pedro River in what is now Arizona. After camping for the night of the 28th at *Ojo de Vaca* (Cow Springs, now located at the AT Cross Ranch to the east of the Pitchfork Ranch), "we struck across the plain due west, to pass a spur of the Burro Mountains." It's at this juncture that Bartlett reaches the land that was later to become the Pitchfork Ranch and where he named one of the *ciénaga* springs in honor of Inez.

Twelve miles brought us to this mountain, when the Mexican lancer said that by turning up a cañon or defile to the northward, we should find an excellent spring of water, and that none would be met again for about forty miles...In a short time we entered a narrow and

picturesque defile thickly wooded with scrub oaks. This we followed for about five miles, when it opened upon a beautiful grassy meadow about three hundred yards wide, in which there were many springs. Here we camped...

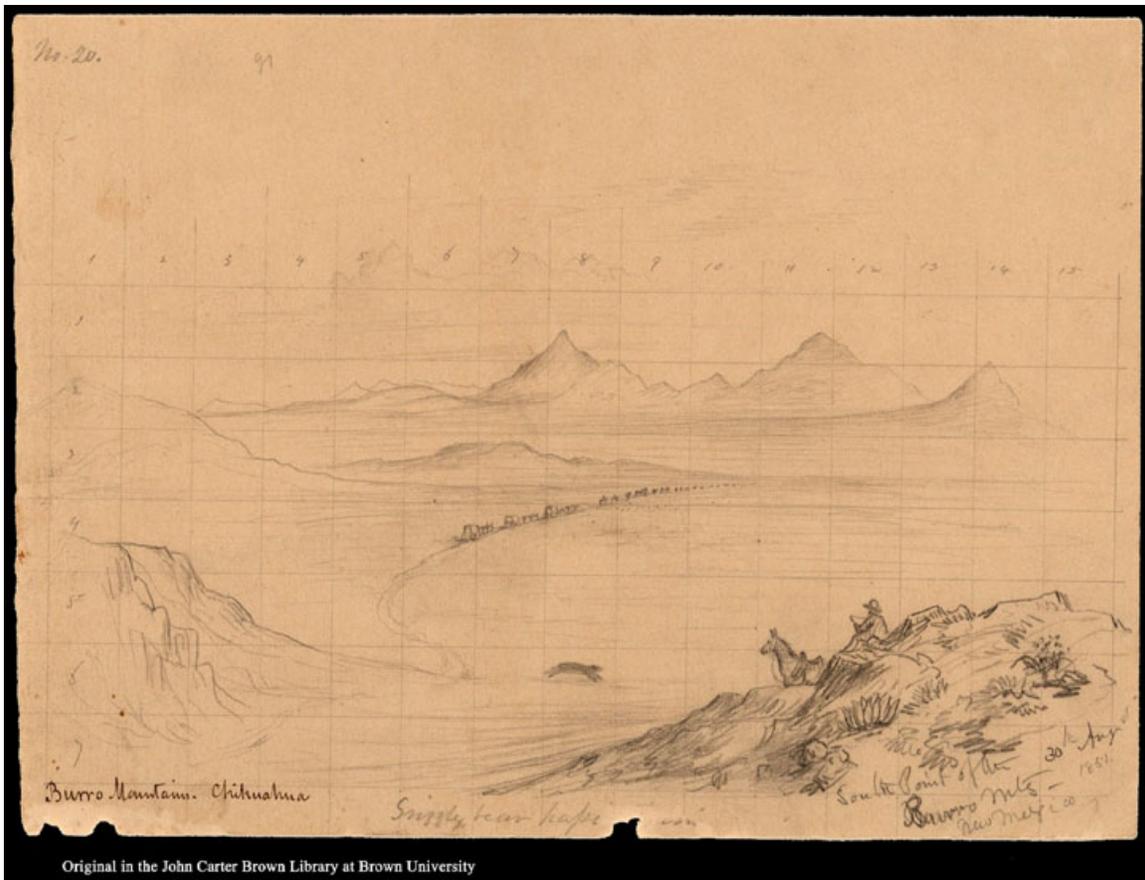
In the five-mile sojourn up this canyon, they passed the location of what has for over 90 years has been the ranch headquarters where we now live and the location of the windmill shown on this book's dust jacket.

The weather to-day was extremely warm, so that our captive girl has suffered much from the exposure to the sun. Named this spring *Ojo de Inez*, or Inez's Spring, after her. I believe it is known to the Mexicans as *Ojo de Gavilan* or Hawk Spring. (sic)

This spring is now known as Ciénega Spring, located on the northwest edge of the ranch. From here, Bartlett backed-tracked about half a mile south of the camp and continued his way west when he and two colleagues rode up to the top of a hill...

...in order to obtain a better view of the country. While seated on a rock enjoying the prospect before us, we were startled by the appearance of a huge grizzly bear, about fifteen rods distant, advancing in our direction. He discovered us at the same moment we did him, and seemed quite as much alarmed, for he suddenly sheered and made his escape at full speed along the base of the hill...

Below is the scene Bartlett sketched the following day. The Commission wagon train is headed toward Arizona with the bear scurrying off. In the lower left corner Bartlett wrote: "Burro Mountains, Chihuahua" as the land was not yet officially a part of the United States. In the background, the skyline shows mountains just as they look today and is likely the first depiction of what later became known as the Langford Mountains in the background.



John Russell Bartlett, Burro Mountains, Chihuahua, 6.2" x 8.5", pencil sketch, August 31, 1851, "Grizzly bear passing behind train," The John Carter Brown Library, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island.

Bartlett sketched himself, sitting with his horse drawing the scene. Located less than a mile from the ranch headquarters, I have been to this location with Jerry Mueller, editor of Bartlett's autobiography and geologist who has spent much of his retirement retracing Bartlett's steps and photographing the scenes Bartlett and his colleagues etched, sketched and painted. From the vantage point located by Mueller, it appears the Commission made its way south toward what is now the town of Separ on a path that today is the Grant County maintained Separ Road, intersecting the ranch east to west and but 600 yards from the headquarters. Our suspicion also, based on the description given

by Bartlett — “(t)he color of this animal was a silvery gray, with a darker or a black stripe down its back” — is that the animal may well have been a now extinct Silverback bear.



Photograph of July 5, 2006 of Jerry Mueller posing as Bartlett at the same location Bartlett sketched a century and a half earlier. (Photograph, A. Thomas Cole)

In late September, Bartlett, Cremony and others traveled to Santa Cruz, Sonora and returned Inez to “the longing arms of her mother, who after repeated embraces, and amidst alternate tears, prayers, thanksgiving and joyous cries...” Cremony wrote that her family welcomed her home in “one of the most affecting scenes conceivable...” “The joy of all parties on again beholding the fate of whom they supposed was forever lost to them was unbounded,” Bartlett entered in his journal, “and it was long after they had embraced her, before they could utter a word. Tears of joy burst from all and the members of the Commission could not behold the scene without participating.”

But the story of Inez does not end there. Several months after the Commission departed, Cremony writes that she “attracted and secured the admiration” of a Captain Gomez in command of the frontier town of Tubac where “(t)he relaxed state of morals among the Mexicans seemed to warrant the poor girl in becoming his mistress for a time.” Inez eventually bore him two boys that he subsequently legitimized by marrying her. Well before any marriage, Bartlett, to “infinite astonishment and regret,” also happened on Inez in Tubac living with the captain of the garrison. Although it is not clear whether Cremony and Bartlett knew of each other’s encounter with Inez, in reading their contrasting accounts it seems they had not, because their perspectives are in conflict in one critical way. Differing from Cremony’s appraisal — in today’s vernacular, his racial slur — of Inez’s or Mexican’s lack of virtue, it is likely that Bartlett’s distress was accurate, that she was “under some restraint” and that her future husband was “her new captor,” not in keeping with Cremony’s judgment that she was ensconced under circumstances suggesting “relaxed morals.” Although Bartlett and Cremony both refer to her sympathetically as “the poor girl,” their assessment of her plight differs significantly.

Gomez misled Bartlett. Though he was familiar with Inez’s earlier rescue, upon Bartlett’s arrival Gomez made no mention of her presence. Once Bartlett learned Inez was there, Gomez was hesitant to allow Bartlett to meet with her, claiming she was quite ill. Yet when Bartlett met with Inez, she was not the least bit unwell. Gomez’s assurance that Inez was about to return with her mother to Santa Cruz was obviously false because she remained in Tubac, bore him two sons and married him.

When Bartlett went to the captain’s apartment to speak with Señorita Gonzalez, the captain remained in the room during the questioning. Not only was Inez not ill, but

“(t)he poor girl seemed very glad to see us...very sad and unhappy; and when asked if she would accompany us to the States, as we had before invited her, she knew not what to say, and, fearing to give offense to her new captor, looked to him for a reply.” Bartlett was not convinced of her wellbeing and found the interview “very unsatisfactory.” Bartlett and his colleagues “were all quite reluctant to leave her in such a position.” In frustration, he wrote the Governor of Sonora “requesting intervention to save the girl.”

Not only is it apparent that Bartlett’s assessment was correct and Cremony’s in error, but Bartlett’s concern and second offer to secure Inez’s safety by taking her to the United States suggests that art critic Sweeney’s appraisal of Bartlett as a “chivalrous outsider” attempting to change misunderstood cultural customs is further suspect.

Despite the unsettling “Gomez episode,” the story of Inez Gonzales appears to have ended well. A decade later in the fall of 1862, Cremony was in Tucson and learned that Inez’s first husband had died and she was remarried to the Alealde of Santa Cruz. Then, in 1864, Cremony was in Santa Cruz and took the opportunity to visit Inez where he found her “to be the respected wife of the chief and most influential man in that little community. She has an affectionate husband, who is by no means cramped for the world’s goods; is surrounded by a fine and promising family of three boys and a girl, and is universally esteemed for her many excellent qualities.”

Returning to the Pitchfork Ranch proper, although speculation, the Sonoran earthquake of 1887 must have affected the Pitchfork’s *ciénaga* and subsurface water. Roland Speed, the first owner of land now a part of the ranch, was quoted as saying when he stepped out of his ranch house a few minutes after 3 p.m., May 3, 1887, “...a large nearby circular stone building began to shake so violently the plaster fell off.” Speed's

homestead was shaken mightily as the devastating M 7.5 Sonoran earthquake — its epicenter near Fronteras, Sonora — killed hundreds and reached as far north as Santa Fe and was felt as far south as Mexico City. The earthquake’s intensity was gauged a “10” at Fronteras, a “1” at Santa Fe and Mexico City, and may have been near 7 at today’s Pitchfork lands. A mammoth spring at nearby Bowie, Ariz. disappeared, streams near San Simon dried up and the ground opened six inches wide as far north as the San Pedro near Benson, Ariz. It was the largest historical known earthquake of the southern Basin and Range.

Tucson photographer Camillus Sidney Fly — who took the legendary photographs at Cañón de Las Embudos where Geronimo and the Chiricahua Apaches surrendered — “...took the earliest photographs of an earthquake surface-rupture worldwide. It was likely among the earliest landscape photographs taken in northeastern Sonora.” The fissure or surface-rupture was 35 miles long. There are no particulars that Ciénaga Spring on this ranch was damaged but there are numerous anecdotal accounts that water on other ranches in the region simply disappeared, not unlike those in Bowie and San Simon.

In 1893, a young scholar named Fredrick Jackson made his soon-to-be-famous lecture at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Jackson hypothesized that in the process of conquering and gradually moving back the western frontier, early settlers created the American character.

...both democratic institutions and the American character have been largely shaped by the experiences of successive frontiers, with their repeated dream of betterment, their repeated acceptance of primitive hardships, their repeated hope and strenuousness and buoyancy, and their repeated fulfillment as smiling and productive commonwealths of agrarian democrats.

Turner's "frontier thesis" and his idea concerning the "closing of the frontier" coincided with the 1890 Census Bureau declaration that the land was fully settled. As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, many historians argue that Turner's thesis omitted critical aspects of the story of the American Southwest, yet Turner's ideas dominated scholarship long past Turner's death in 1932.

Turner's thesis stated that understanding America required one to understand the history of the West and the character of those who settled it. The core idea that helped fashion the defining American myth of the cowboy was the pioneering experience of those migrant Americans answering the clarion call of Manifest Destiny. Although newspaperman John O'Sullivan would not coin the now famous term until 1845, de Tocqueville sensed the summons when he visited America in 1831: "In this gradual and continuous advance of the European race toward the Rocky Mountains, there is something providential; it's like a flood of men ceaselessly swelling, drawn on each day by the hand of God." American's encounter with the frontier has long-served as the hallmark of individual achievement and triumph in a land of unlimited opportunity.

The story of the West most Americans grew up with is the saga of the lone cowboy and the heroic pioneer busting open a frontier filled with heathens, struggling to claim a wild place for his own. This was the frontier portrayed in the books of Louis L'Amour and black and white movies of the 1950s,

The myth of the independent, free and self-reliant cowboy has no equal in American iconography. Some have suggested the frontier is America's creation myth, much the same as the Tohono O'odham's E'toy, who brought their tribe out of the underworld in southern Arizona's Baboquivari Mountains. In these wide-open spaces, a

new, freer breed of man was born, unbridled by pretense, caution or tradition. The cowboy was hardworking, independent and fearless. He was the tireless, self-reliant and optimistic “Everyman” in the new land with its promise of prosperity. It has been repeated often; there are no lies as powerful as myths, no truths more fragile than those no one wants to hear. The myth of the cowboy is one America’s most dominant falsehoods. It would be mid-century before anyone would question this myth and only a people were ready to listen.

Although there had been rumblings, the nostalgic mythology of the cowboy began to crumble around the mid-1950’s when Wallace Stegner wrote that the cowboy, seen as the national icon of freedom,

was and is an overworked, underpaid hireling, almost as homeless and dispossessed as a modern crop worker, and his fabled independence was and is chiefly the privilege of quitting a job in order to go looking for another just as bad.

Although Stegner’s voice gave this truth currency, he clearly was not the first to notice. Edward Aveling, the son-in-law of Karl Marx, visited the United States in 1886 and found:

(C)owboys are a race exploUed by ranch-owners as mercilessly as ever laborer was by capitalist...the cowboy’s life is not an ideal nor an idyllic one...In a word, out in the fabled West the life of the “free” cowboy is as much that of a slave as is the life of his Eastern brother, the Massachusetts mill-hand. (Sic)

What actually happened — contrary to the timeworn myth of the cowboy — in the West was far different than the story that it was founded on rugged individualism, but rather, the West came into being by way of social enterprise. The straws that stirred the drink were corporate interests, developers and the federal government luring hopeful newcomers to arid lands west of the hundredth meridian. These new arrivals were

enticed with cheap land by speculators, politicians and railroad marketers, soon followed by mass federal irrigation projects in the early 1900s and evolving to include subsidized leases of public lands, crop subsidies and today's drought assistance.

There was a time, before barbwire fencing closed the open range, when the cowboy-as-rancher could make a living as a cowman, but there is currently only one ranch surrounding today's Pitchfork Ranch that survives without a second income. Jerry and Linda McDonald's ranch is the only cattle operation where one of the owners doesn't drive a school bus, deliver mail or otherwise supplement the outfit. Ranching remains a way of life worth saving by those living it, clung to by 4th, 5th and 6th generation ranchers and rancher wannabes, but unless there is a timely pivot toward earlier, true capitalism-based, non-corporate models, ranching as a way of life will eventually slip away. Finding ourselves in these climactically challenged times — fires and fracking, drought and drilling, rigged economics and species extinctions, warming and water shortage, storms and sea rise — if the entire globe doesn't quickly transition off fossil fuels and on to zero carbon renewables the ongoing desertification of the Southwest will further deplete the grasslands and the cattle that graze them, not to mention the wildlife.

After Fredrick Turner's death, Stegner and those scholars who came to be known as the New West Historians challenged his thesis that the West was a model for the American character and further posited that the process of pushing back the frontier had not been as orderly as Turner claimed. It is now understood that his frontier thesis is far more applicable to the Middle West and has little relevancy to the Southwest. While the American character thesis of Turner's "closing frontier" has now been largely been debunked, it is true that by 1890, no large areas of unsettled country remained available

for the adventurous and land-hungry who continued coming west. Much of the violence of the Old West lingered. Even though virtually all Indian raids disappeared after the surrender of Geronimo in 1886, cattle rustling, boundary disputes and other problems kept violence close at hand. Henry Woodrow, an early forest ranger, remarked: "...the Indians had quit killing people off, but these later settlers when they got tired of one another, the best man with a gun killed his neighbor and got him out of the way." Even when the Apache wars were over, this was still a threatening, rough country.

George Snyder arrived in White Signal in 1885, married Kate Card in 1887 and formally homesteaded much of the land that became part of the McDonald ranch in 1919. Snyder had one of the largest individual ranches in the Southwest, eventually owned the "Snyder block" in downtown Silver City, co-owned a mine at Gold Hill and well as holdings in San Diego. By the time of his death, the Snyder Ranch had grown to about 12,000 acres, 6,000 of which were patented land. Today's Pitchfork Ranch is the same size with a similar deeded/public land ratio. When Snyder died, Bartley, Taylor, Jonnie McDonald and cousin J. L. McCauley purchased the Snyder Ranch and established "The McDonald Brothers" ranch that eventually incorporated their father's place when he died.

Piecing this ranch together was often a lonesome, painstaking process. Jonnie remembers early ranch life as a period dominated by long stretches of isolation. Jeremiah started with almost nothing, worked the roundups on other ranches and was often gone for months at a time. Jonnie's mother would not see her husband or anyone but her own kids for "as high as three months at a time...so she was kind of a rugged character also." Back then, there were few visitors: "...they wasn't anyone to visit, no one to see. All us kids was scared to death of wimin'. There wasn't even ever a woman showed up. Why

if ever one did, we would run. We wasn't ever afraid of men 'cause they was quite a few men came around, line rider and so forth. But, we didn't ever see many wimin'."

Jonnie McDonald and his brothers periodically acquired more pieces of the puzzle and purchased the final two 440-acre parcels in 1961, completing what by then was the much larger McDonald Ranch that has since been divided into three adjacent cattle operations: the McDonald, Pitchfork and Thorn ranches

In 1830, Congress enacted the first of five laws designed to encourage western expansion, as land developers, expansionists and politicians enticed thousands of pioneers to the West as the infamous "quarter section" acquired mythic but naive significance in American thought:

- Preemption Law (1830): settlers could own 160 acres for \$1.25 per acre after 6 six months residency.
- Donation Act (1854): white males could secure ownership of land after four years residency.
- Homestead Act (1862): settlers could acquire surveyed land for \$1.25 per acre.
- Desert Land Act (1877): 160 acres being inadequate, settlers could acquire up to 640 acres for \$1 per acre.
- Taylor Grazing Act (1934): BLM lease allotments were tied to homesteads, with the goals of facilitating viable ranching while closing the public domain to further homestead settlement.

When enacting these laws, Congress not only foolishly doomed settlers to failure with inadequately sized settlement offerings — because a family could not survive on 160-acre or 640-acre parcels of arid land west of the hundredth meridian — but made a huge blunder by neglecting to provide for the return of publicly owned land to the government should homesteaders fail. Instead, banks, large corporate cattle operations and land speculators snatched up much of the unsuccessful settler's leavings for a song. The earlier listing of the failed homesteads that make up today's Pitchfork Ranch is not

meant to only identify those who settled here, but rather to detail how most of them who settled the land could not make a life for themselves because of the government's futile 160-acre and later homestead policies. The highly touted "quarter-section" ideal assured failure and was the fatal flaw in the government's hungry effort to expand the nation westward. As mentioned, the homesteads making up today's Pitchfork Ranch failed, pointing out the grave and far-reaching fault in the Congressional policy in ignoring John Wesley Powell's settlement proposal. Most ranches today are made up of early abandoned homesteads later acquired in "fire sales" or for delinquent taxes and assembled into more workable-sized ranches. The lesson here informs us of the risk in prioritizing profit over policy, ignoring scholarship and science over ideology. It's a forewarning in the face of the climate change crisis.

Today's Pitchfork Ranch headquarters is the same home Bart Irwin started building and his son Claude finished in 1925. The only changes are the kitchen, bathroom and bunkhouse added as the McDonald family grew and they had extra funds from a good calf crop coinciding with a strong market. We have added a study and studio. Ninety-year-old plumbing necessitated an outhouse. Plumbing under the bunkhouse had long ago been repaired; a leak spliced using a garden hose, confirming the quip that ranchers (a complaint they often levy at themselves) are little more than glorified plumbers. But in keeping and preserving the integrity of this historic period, recent repair and construction has been completed with similar materials and design as the original.

As a youngster, Jerry McDonald's first born, Bartley, began working on John Turner's ranch between Silver City and Deming as a way to earn money and help stock

cattle on his parent's place. Most cow-calf operations like the McDonald's consist of a given number of bulls to breed eight to 12 heifers or mother cows, with the male offspring castrated and all calves branded, inoculated and sold when they reach 600-800 pounds. Some of the heifers are held back to expand the herd or replace older cows, with the rest being sold along with the steers.

Although ranchers commonly helped one another at roundup when the branding, castration and inoculating took place, employment off premise for funds to help the ranch was not the norm back then. But as noted earlier, supplementing ranches with outside income has become a necessity. A quote from a Montana farmer puts today's ranching business in perspective: "Fifty years ago, a farmer who wanted to buy a new truck paid for it by selling two cows. Nowadays, a new truck costs around \$15,000, but a cow still sells for only \$600, so the farmer would have to sell 25 cows to pay for the truck." This is a pre-2005 quote and with today's price of a pickup, a cow selling even as high as \$1000 means ranchers need to sell more than 35 cows when they need a new truck.

Bartley's employer, John Turner, was also Grant County Sheriff. Bartley initially helped Turner as jailor, next became involved in Silver City law enforcement and was eventually elected Grant County Sheriff. He served only one term as sheriff and after loosing office in a labor dispute that rocked Silver City and the entire Southwest, Bartley continued work as Silver City Police Chief, Grant County Treasurer, Assessor, and served 12 years as a county probation officer.

Like many legends of western lore, the book on Bartley McDonald is mixed. A local author from that period had this to say about him:

Bartley is a WHEEL HORSE...In the old freight outfits, two of the best and most dependable of horses available were hitched directly to the wagon and were called wheelers. They were the indispensable ones, the ones that could be depended on to put every ounce of strength as well as every bit of intelligence of which they were capable into the task at hand, and to do it every time they were called upon; hence when we in this part of our Southwest refer to a person as a wheel horse we are speaking in the most complimentary terms of which we are capable. The term fits Bartley McDonald to a "T."

When he was a young man, our elderly neighbor's father-in-law saw Bartley muscle and jail two strapping roughnecks causing trouble in Silver City's Buffalo Bar. He grabbed both men by the nape of the neck, almost lifting them off the ground as he hauled them to jail up Bullard Street. In keeping with the "wheel horse" remark, his elderly daughter remembers him as "...a presence to be reckoned with. He believed in disciplining yourself, and the youth that he dealt with that were protesting life in the 60s, came back years later and thanked him. When a troubled kid left his office, the never left without any money."

On the other hand, recently deceased Bobby Sellers, a long-time Silver City electrician who helped us restore the headquarters, understood his legacy differently. Bobby grew up in the same neighborhood where Bartley lived and there was never any question that: "He was the law! All the kids were terrified of him, not that he was mean — he wasn't — but because he was big and tough and he was the sheriff." Bartley McDonald was both feared and respected.

Bobby told us that long-ago lore claims Bartley killed two blameless "wetbacks" that worked for him and claimed to be owed \$37. As the story goes, they confronted Bartley in the small town of White Signal, 16 miles up the road from the Pitchfork, and they both ended up dead. Only Bartley had a gun, and based on the many police

shootings in today's news, it's hard not to draw parallels. There have never been reliable records kept about how often a White officer kills a Black or Hispanic suspect. There is no comprehensive database of killings by police, much less by race, and no reliable record of how often those deaths were justifiable. But in late 2014-15, Americans got a belly full of video recordings of police killings as high-profile cases erupted one after another, with a slew of killings where quick-trigger White officers shot unarmed Black males.

In the case of the Bartley McDonald killings, press accounts from the time report that a criminal complaint was filed against him, but the charges were dismissed before the preliminary hearing on the grounds of self-defense. A ranching neighbor who has lived in Grant County his entire life never heard the story. Neither had his daughter, Patsy Adams. Legend or lie, the truth will probably never be known.

Another neighbor once told me: "There was a time when Mexicans knew their place around here." Historians caution us against using today's values to judge the past. Thomas Jefferson — author of our constitutional guarantees of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" — owned 11-year-old slave boys who were flogged for not working hard enough in his highly profitable nail factory. Inexplicably, Jefferson's nail business flourished and subsidized his beloved Monticello plantation long after he penned the nation's founding document. Some of Bartley's values brought him respect, yet in retrospect, some of his values corresponding with the period appear to have been less than laudable. Times change; societies evolve. These historical judgments are best left to the gods.

Bartley was 27 years old when he met his future wife May Beth, only 15 years old. Granddaughter of a polygamous Mormon family from the enclave near Casas Grandes, as a little girl she was forced out of Mexico when Pancho Villa ordered all White settlers to leave within the hour. When Bartley asked May Beth's father for her hand, he replied: "Well enough, but you'll be waitin' 'til she's 17." And he did.

Like so many ranches in the Southwest, the McDonald Ranch expanded and contracted in keeping with the cattle market, family size and configuration. The McDonald brothers — Bartley, Taylor and Jonnie — purchased the Thorn Ranch south of the McDonald Ranch, but when Taylor McDonald died it was sold to cash out his surviving widow. By the age of 76, Bartley's daughter said: "Dad felt he was running out of time." When Bartley retired a second time, the ranch was split again and he left public life for the last time.

The account of the final split of the ranch into today's Pitchfork and McDonald ranches has been kept under wraps as survivors are disinclined to maintain long-ago ill feelings. In 1976, Jonnie and his family moved north, closer to White Signal schools for Jerry and Linda's children. Jonnie took the "McDonald Ranch" name, still in use today; by his son, Jerry. Bartley retained the "Pitchfork" brand currently used by us and given to him as a young boy by the one-armed Civil War veteran.

But within a year after retirement, Bartley was dead. No one knows for sure exactly how he died; stories vary. He had gone to the Soldier's Pasture to retrieve his grandson's horse, Park's Pacer. There are those who believe a stallion charged Bartley's mare, throwing him off, causing fatal head injuries; others speculate that his favorite horse, Paymaster, afraid of snakes and jackrabbits, spooked.

Despite differing accounts of Bartley's death and by whom he was found, they all end the same. Daughter Patsy recalls, on June 3, 1977 her mother, May Beth, went to town to buy provisions for the next-day's roundup. She arrived late and Bartley was still not home. She knew Bartley had gone to Soldier's Farewell Hill to retrieve a horse, so she and other family drove down to Farewell to check on him. Bartley's truck and trailer were in the cow lot, but there was no sign of Bartley. May Beth knew something was terribly wrong. They searched, but it was late and they couldn't find him, so they collected firewood and built a huge fire so Bartley could see in the dark. His son, Pete, arrived late at the ranch and searched all night, also to no avail. "At daylight, they found him. His glasses were still on his face and his rope was in his hand." Linda McDonald recalls, "He evidently was alive when he hit the ground because he was laying the way he always used to take a nap when they were working the fence lines. He was lying with his legs crossed at the ankles, and he had a rock under his head for a pillow. That was just something he did. But he was dead." Patsy remembers that as well: "Yes, his head was rested on a rock."

"Mom had Dad's Chevron credit card and continued paying on what she understood was some kind of 'travel policy.' When we told her to notify the insurance carrier of his death and stop making payments, she called the agent and he asked her how Dad died. She told him and the agent surprised her and said it didn't matter that Dad died in a horse fall because the policy was not a travel policy, it was an accidental death policy. Mom received \$50,000," recalls Patsy. Land poor, the policy saved her, "she'd a been a pauper had it not been for the insurance."

At the time Bartley was killed, locals were not much affected by changes in the outside world, but there was an effort afoot to reshape the region. The mythical quarter-section carrot, arrival of the railroads and persistence of aridity led to the government's adoption of dam building to help settling the West. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the Boulder Dam in 1936 (Re-named Hoover Dam in 1947) and by this time the Bureau of Reclamation's war against aridity was in full swing. Under the banner of "Put the Landless Man on the Manless Land" — and with unbridled support from both parties in Congress gladly taking credit for providing jobs, electrical power and irrigation — the Bureau enjoyed a sixty-year heyday in which "...the agency would build 476 dams and 348 reservoirs, 58 hydropower facilities, and 56,000 miles of conveyance systems and irrigate 10 million acres of land."

Understood by only the voiceless few, the era of the dam, diversion, irrigation and concrete projects devastated the West's riverine landscapes. There was a cultural and institutional bias against non-diversion or nonstructural projects. While preliminary "water wars" were heating up around the country, these quarrels received little notice in this part of the Southwest.

By this time the Burro Ciénaga was badly incised and heading toward a de-watered condition, although there remained abundant subsurface water keeping the ranch's four windmills and two solar wells pumping water full time. The steel rims and drinkers were full and the cattle had water. The erratic and often weak cattle market and drought that led to poor grass feed kept the rancher's hopes and dreams at bay, but water, at least along the ciénaga, was of no concern.

With the 1960s, a new era dawned on many features of American life, including new thinking about the hydrology of the American West. By the time Jimmy Carter took office, the shift from dams to fish and other wildlife had entered the political conversation. The environmental devastation laid bare by big water projects was at issue, made clear by any number of devastating dams, but for our purposes by this one example.

The Snake River begins in Yellowstone Country before entering Idaho and Washington where it joins the Columbia Basin. There was a time when salmon and steelhead runs were estimated to be between 10 and 16 million, and even as high as 50 million, but by the 1970s the Grand Coulee Dam — along with eight others that the fish were forced to negotiate to reach their spawning grounds 1,000 miles upstream — caused the runs to plummet and fish populations dwindled to some 2.5 million.

Carter offered up what came to be known as “the hit list,” a directive to cut nineteen projects from the fiscal year 1978 budget, eleven of which were Core of Engineers’ projects. Instant blowback forced him to cut the number to twelve, but Carter never achieved much in the way of savings. Most projects were retained. But to his credit, he did help instigate an eventual ideological shift that changed the thinking of both the Core of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation.

Although water issues were likely of little concern at the Pitchfork Ranch and surrounds, in the nearby Gila River the Old West of dams and diversions ran headlong into the locals of the New West who admired the beauty, wildlife and economic benefits of a free-flowing river. Residents of Grant County blocked the Hooker Dam in the 1970s, stopped the Conner Dam in the 1980s, and turned back the so-called Mangus Diversion in the early 1990s. But developers and their boosters have persisted.

Throughout the last decade the New Mexico Interstate Stream Commission has welcomed yet another river draining project that has many Silver City and Grant County residents up in arms again and, as of this writing, on track for yet another cement multi million dollar boondoggle.

Although seemingly alive and well in Grant County, the “concrete” era of water developments has passed and a new era of conservation and management is now central to the majority of residents, yet still not accepted by the aging power structure. The high risk, enormous capital costs, and harsh market reality has made concrete projects indefensible. The ethos of conquer, subdue, capture, control, overcome, re-channel, re-route, and dominate has worn out the land and much of the public’s patience. Yet with extreme and crippling drought and accelerating global warming, the water wars are destined to intensify.

For the first time in memory, in 2012, agricultural water consumers in southeast New Mexico threatened to issue a “priority call” that challenges nonagricultural urban water users in Albuquerque, Roswell and other industrial consumers to cut back their water usage in order to accommodate Carlsbad, New Mexico and other rural, downstream farm users with priority water rights. The priority call is an exceedingly rare maneuver, considered the nuclear option in the world of water.

Political power rests with the big cities, industries like oil and gas and dairy, not the small rural farmer. Farming in the West uses almost 80 percent of the water (34 percent nation wide), yet contributes but one percent to the economy. Utah agriculture consumed 85 percent of the state’s water, yet produced less than one-third of one percent of personal income and Arizona agriculture uses 70 percent of its water, producing one

percent of the economy. In New Mexico, the Constitution is explicit that the state follows the “Colorado doctrine” of prior appropriation: first come, first served, first in time, first in right, meaning those later up stream users are out of luck during times of water scarcity. Earlier users have priority over those later in time. This all-or-nothing legal doctrine of prior appropriation has a long and well-established history. Farmers in the current New Mexico shortage have precedence over later municipal and industrial users when it comes to water use, but it’s hard to picture either corporate industry loosing out to the rural farmer or the later caving to the former.

The Bureau of Reclamation produced a report in 2003 called *Water 2005: Preventing Crisis and Conflict in the West*. The report details areas of high conflict where there exists insufficient water to meet demand, but the report solved little. Parts of the Pecos Riverbed were dry for 77 days in 2012. The local water board announced in early 2013 that its farmers would get only one tenth of their annual water allotment. Few water users contemplated the state would ever be so dry for so long. Climate change experts predict the flow of the Colorado River will be reduced by as much as 35 percent. A priority call will pit the “haves” of water users (agriculture) versus the powerful “have-nots” (the larger city residential and industrial users). Like most states in the West, the importance of agriculture in New Mexico has declined. The state is shackled with old Bureau of Reclamation projects that over-diverted water, antiquated western water laws, strong growth and new economic interests. The outcome of these ever-worsening water shortages is hard to predict, but it seems likely that traditional water-users will find themselves scrambling to maintain their allotments.

Despite the state wide water worries in New Mexico, until recently, the Pitchfork Ranch and surrounds appeared “water secure,” but the inevitability of climate change implications is surfacing with less frequent flood flows in the Burro Ciénaga and wells drying up. A well on both the Thorn and Pitchfork ranches dried up in 2015 and a new well needed to be drilled on the McDonald Ranch. In the face of water concerns, the importance of watersheds and bioregions are increasingly prioritized, these rangelands are important to the health of both and the restoration taking place on the Pitchfork and neighboring ranches is slowing water runoff that in turn promotes wicking that helps replenish the water table.

After Bartley’s death, his widow May Beth, their son Pete and other family members continued ranching the Pitchfork, but when Pete, only 45 years old, suffered an aneurism, May Beth was forced to let the ranch go, selling it to a neighboring rancher who owned it for 12 years. The owners of the A.T. Cross Ranch then re-sold it to an Arizona farmer in 1998, which in turn sold it to us in 2003.

By the time we purchased the Pitchfork, the ranching and farming population nationwide had plummeted from 40 percent to two percent, so low that the U.S. Census Bureau stopped counting the “agriculture” category, calling it “irrelevant.” For the first time in the country’s history, by 1996 more people lived in suburbs than both rural and urban areas. This ever-increasing sprawl far beyond the suburbs now threatens rangeland and not only ranching and its cherished way of life, but all manner of wildlife that depend on wilderness, corridors and critical habitats that are suffering the fracturing onslaught that accompanies the intrusion of rangeland development.

In the recent past, 30 million grassland acres have been lost, half to subdivisions and 15 million acres to farm crops. Of the remaining grasslands, nearly half are depleted so badly they are deemed beyond restoration. In 2005, 16 percent of New Mexico ranchland sales were attributed to cattle and crop production, 84 percent to development, recreation and other so-called amenity values. Fifty percent of ranches with federal permits are merely “hobby ranches,” as working ranch landscapes nationwide continue to disappear.

The 64-year reign of the Bureau of Reclamation’s dismal failure to help settle the West left its riverine landscapes devastated.

...when municipal and industrial demands for water have greatly increased, 80 to 90 percent of the water used in the West is used, often wastefully, on fields, to produce crops generally in surplus everywhere. After all the billions spent by the Bureau of Reclamation, the total area irrigated by its projects is the size of Ohio, and the water impounded and distributed by the Bureau is about 15 percent of all the water utilized in the West today.

Despite the public investment of billions upon billions of dollars, as Powell repeatedly warned, aridity continues to rule in the Southwest. Stegner said so repeatedly: “Aridity still calls the tune...the West is defined...by inadequate rainfall, which means a general deficiency of water...Aridity, and aridity alone, makes the various West one...the primary unity of the West is the shortage of water.” Climate change only worsens the already parched nature of the West. Powell understood the vulnerability of the western habitat, land often hostile to those who hoped to settle it and policies he opposed he knew would leave a legacy of conflict and hardship. He “understood and accepted both the fact of aridity and the adaptation that men, institutions, and laws would have to go through if we were ever to settle the West instead of simply raiding and ruining it.” We understand

now what Powell knew then, arid land is vulnerable, “(a)nd like dry skin, it cracks easily and heals slowly.”

Recent years have repeatedly been the driest in the last 15 centuries on the North American continent and that has certainly been the case on the Pitchfork. Global average temperature has been the warmest recorded since scientists began tracking this data in the late 1880s. The current spike coincides with greenhouse gas buildup and dire predictions of global climate disruption from all reliable scientific organizations and credible scientists. A 2005 report, drawn from 50 scientific studies and 125 other government and scientific sources, paints a bleak picture for the future of the American Southwest: “When compared to the 20th Century average, the West has experienced an increase in average temperature during the last five years that is 70% greater than the world as a whole.” These increases from human-produced emissions of heat-trapping gasses are causing more frequent and severe heat waves, more intense and longer droughts and increasingly severe storms that result in business losses in the millions. New Mexico suffered a \$279 million income loss in livestock production attributed to the 2002 drought.

The first decade of this century offered-up a series of eye-opening shocks: the 9/11 attack, bank bailouts, the real estate implosion and massive mortgage foreclosures, the stock market crash, bankrupt governments worldwide, some of the first bankrupt cities and counties, a spike in oil prices, and worst of all, extreme climate change and weather disruption. Global warming has brought us “mega-disasters.” Increasing evidence makes it clear that “natural disasters” have been worsened due to climate change. To mention but a few, there have been a number of heat waves, the earthquakes

in Chile and Haiti, the earthquake and tsunami in Japan killing more than 10,000 people, 17,000 missing and about a half-million homeless. There were massive floods in China, Pakistan, and New Orleans. Tornadoes have wreaked havoc from Alabama to Massachusetts. Joplin, Missouri suffered the deadliest U. S. tornado in six decades, killing more than 100 people. Everyone recalls epic hurricane Sandy. A 2016 study led by Markus Donat at the University of New South Wales in Australia found that since 1950, daily weather extremes have risen one to two percent a decade with severe rainfall increasing throughout the world's wettest and driest regions, a trend that is expected to intensify at least to this century's end. On top of these unnatural disasters, the nation has endured more than a decade of two seemingly unending wars. Afghanistan is the longest and least talked about war in U.S. history and ISIS has seemingly come out of nowhere. We are not winning.

Almost 42 million people, roughly the size of Argentina's entire population, were forced to flee their homes because of natural disasters around the world in 2010, more than twice the number during the previous year. "The intensity and frequency of extreme weather events is increasing, and this trend is only set to continue. With all probability, the number of those affected and displaced will rise as human-induced climate change comes into full force."

In late 2015, Professor of History Timothy Snyder of Yale University published *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* where he compares an erroneously projected German food shortages — Snyder's thesis is that the war for resources was the underpinning for the Holocaust — as an omen for what awaits us if we allow ourselves to enter an era of environmental stresses that could again give rise to scapegoats and

imagined enemies. Snyder maintains that Hitler's writing makes clear that he dismissed established science by refusing to accept the projected gains to be made from irrigation, hybrids and fertilizers. When Hitler came to power, science had certified that hunger was not an immediate concern, but he insisted that hunger would outstrip crop improvements and that scientific methods of land management had already failed. Of course, he was wrong. Six million Jews and millions of Polish and others perished because of Hitler's shallow understanding of science. Unless we are talking about stormy weather, dialogue surrounding climate change seldom mentions violence, but absent immediate and significant change, "people-violence" is on the near horizon.

As the recent refugee crisis has unfolded in Europe and terrified men, women and children poured out of war torn Syria and surrounds, it requires little imagination to foresee the frightening and abhorrent conduct that unbearable heat and lack of water and food will invariably trigger. Humankind is capable of dangerous and surprisingly horrible behavior when frightened and famished and those who are neither scared nor starving, but pressed by those who are panicked and unfed, can commit heinous wrongs to preserve their security. Science scholars have been addressing climate issues for decades and as this crisis deepens, not only historians like Snyder are weighing in on the climate disruption question, but also those in other disciplines are joining the discussion as they see previously unrecognized implications surfacing in their own fields of study.

Although rural and farm population decreased dramatically in America after World War II, the country enjoyed an explosive economy which produced an astounding variety of consumer goods, opening the door to rampant consumerism and lead to a nation bloated with mega-consumers. Suburbs and malls and the consumptive way we

are living our lives is erasing that vaunted “sense of Place” and transforming much of our world into places not worth caring about. The quality and character of American civil life has sprawled, thinned out and in many ways evaporated since rural living disappeared and suburban sprawl overwhelmed the nation, while rural residents flocked to the cities for work, and urban dwellers fled to the suburbs, fearing of city living.

This recent, re-configured American lifestyle — the over consumptive suburban boom — is considered by an increasing number of Americans as a colossal tragedy. J.H. Kunstler concludes, “Suburbia is the greatest misallocation of resources in the history of the world...Not long from now the cheap energy party will end and we will need to grow food, live and work locally, manufacture locally, create strong communities and nurture living and breathing civic environments for citizens, not consumers.” Growing food on family farms and growing grass and raising cattle on family ranches like the Pitchfork ranch will play an important part in this transition to a sustainable, poison-free, clean energy economy, as well as counter global warming.

Simply put, people are not living well unless they breathe clean air, drink clean water and eat healthy food. Humankind has never lived in a climate with temperatures as hot as those projected if global warming is not arrested. Switching to sustainable energy and production practices in communities where more food is produced locally will go a long way in reversing this warming trajectory. It turns out that grass-fed and grass finished beef are nutritionally similar to plant-fed fish before the oceans were polluted, is becoming part of this hope for a safer and healthier world.



Pitchfork Ranch cattle and some of the ranches healthiest grasslands. Although beef production is secondary to restoration, carbon sequestration, providing habitat for endangered species and wildlife, science and education, providing us and other locals grass fed and grass finished range beef is part of the ranch mission. (Photograph, Lucinda Cole)

Corporate capitalism is premised on unlimited growth and evolved in what was seemingly a continent of unlimited resources. Yet now that we have entered an era of resource depletion, we can see that Edward Abby got it right when he said: “Growth for the sake of growth is the ideology of the cancer cell.” Bernard DeVoto wrote about this short sightedness in terms of “an economy of liquidation.” Whether this current system of mass consumption and avariciousness is expressed in terms of liquidation, depletion, resource scarcity or death, any system of finite resources is unsustainable without supporting it with some method or methods of renewal.

The ranch we purchased in 2003, although not exhausted beyond the ever-feared tipping point where restoration is futile, had long-been on a down hill trajectory. The land had degraded significantly since European arrival and was even different from the habitat Jeremiah McDonald began ranching over a century ago. Scientific predictions make clear the we are facing a future of further decline due to an ever-worsening lack of adequate rainfall, arriving less frequently, yet with greater severity.

The landscape of the Pitchfork looks the same to the eye of a single lifetime, but from the perspective of several generations, the ranchland has undergone dramatic change, all for the worse. The water table has dropped and the Burro Ciénaga is now severely incised. The flows are less frequent and run for a shorter time and for a lesser distance down channel. Black walnut trees are nearly stripped of life. Grass swales and arroyos are incised and there is now less grass and a far greater number of invasive one-seed juniper trees and mesquite bushes as, absent fire, woody plants increasingly out-compete grasses.

The range carries fewer cattle, a lesser number of birds and fewer wildlife species. These losses serve as a microcosm of the grim list of the planet's human-caused insults that continue to mount, with species disappearing at a rate that scientists and writers see as the sixth mass extinction in the Earth's history. Currently, species extinction is occurring at a rate greater than at any other mass extinction not caused by volcanoes or impacts from meteors.

As mentioned earlier, native grasslands are now among the world's most endangered ecosystems and "(b)ig sacaton,...once an important native forage plant favoring bottomlands and riparian areas, now occupies less than 5 percent of its original

range.” Spring ecosystems like ciénagas are among the most threatened ecosystems on earth. The Pitchfork Ranch has both sacaton grass and a ciénaga. Archaic, Mimbres, Athapaskans, Puebloans, Apache, Spanish and finally Anglo settlers lived along the Burro Ciénaga, an endangered desert wetland and the ranch’s most important feature.

Although sharply scaled back, we continue to run cattle but the overarching goal is habitat repair, using “flood-n-flow” based restoration practices that capture suspended sediment and raise the ciénaga bed and generally “shallow” the habitat. The nature of the ranch has undergone a transition from a historic cattle ranch to habitat with a focus on restoration, wildlife and “at-risk” species and more recently, the ciénaga has been thought of as a “sweet spot” for carbon sequestration as a means to combat climate change.

The core goal of the ranch-wide restoration has us slowing the floodwaters to increase the deposition of sediment in an effort to return the ciénaga and surrounding land in the direction of its pre-settlement condition. Installation of a variety of grade control structures is helping the ciénaga reclaim itself and reconnect surface and groundwater. A long-time rancher who has worked for more than 50 years restoring his ranch near Carrizozo New Mexico told us early on: “You want to keep every drop of water that lands on your ranch to stay on the ranch.” A farmer nearby Wendell Berry’s place thinks the same: “I want the water to *walk* off my land, not run.” We recently recognized that the restoration work intended to restore the ciénaga also serves to sequester carbon, one of the primary greenhouse gasses contributing to climate change.

This area is rich in natural, cultural, and historical bounty, layered with religious and cultural significance and environmental sensitivity. A wildlife biologist who re-introduced the Gila topminnow once told us: “The ranch is a microcosm. Its compact

size allows one to get their hands and mind around the place with its amazing diversity, as well as a unique opportunity for science, research, and restoration."

It is uncomfortable writing admiringly about the ranch we own, but it's not about the right of proprietorship, title or legacy, rather the conversation is about stewardship of Place. After her second visit, this is what one friend had to say about the Pitchfork:

While the ranch doesn't attract world travelers and has somehow escaped the notice of writers who make a living describing unforgettable locals, it riveted my attention the first time I saw it. It's a place I return to time and time again in memory; a spot on this earth made beautiful by its testimony to a wild, harsh history and a tenacious refusal to give way to the elements – standing against decades of beatings delivered by the poor stewardship of those who settled upon it, and the varying climate changes of New Mexico's high desert.