

Introducing 2012 Montana Cowboy Hall of Fame Inductee...

RANGE RIDERS, INC. (MUSEUM)

The Range Riders organization was formed in 1939 by a group of cowboys and stockmen. These men did not want society to forget their lifestyle. What they were, what they did and how they did it was important to them. Their existence was a significant part of eastern Montana's heritage. In 1940 these men held their first reunion. They named the organization "Range Riders". Membership was open to anyone who had ridden the open range before 1910. The log headquarters was built in 1942. A rancher from western Montana donated the logs and the Northern Pacific Railroad hauled them to the building site free of charge. Financing was obtained by selling spaces on the interior walls; for \$25.00 a rancher could have his hot iron brand burned into the wall and be permanently on display. Over 500 brands may be seen in the log building today.

The Museum complex has grown to include twelve buildings. Thousands of artifacts and displays are housed in these areas. Each structure has been built by private subscription. No government money at any level has been used in these accomplishments. Every item in the Museum has been donated. The funds needed to finance the Museum's daily operations come from admission, membership (no longer restricted), memorials, donations and some private grants. Funds are also raised through the activities of the Range Riders Reps, the ladies' auxiliary.

Miles City and the surrounding area have an exciting and diversified history. The military at Fort Keogh, the Indians, the livestock industry and cattle drives, the wagon trains, homesteaders, riverboats and railroads are all represented throughout the Museum. The works of 4 early photographers – R. C. Morrison, L. A. Huffman, Evelyn Cameron and Christian Barthelme – are featured here. A diorama with 11 different shops represents the Main Street of old Milestown. Indian artifacts from the Sioux, Cheyenne and Crow tribes are on display. The Museum also contains the Charles Russell Gallery, a ladies fashion alley and 4 more dioramas -- early day Fort Keogh, Lame Deer Battle, LO Ranch and the Milwaukee Railroad. The Bert Clark Gun Room features over 400 firearms from one man's collection. The Fort Keogh Officers' Quarters, Coach House, Heritage Center, Charley's Place, Homestead House, One Room Schoolhouse and the Steeple are all filled with donated historical treasures. The spacious Wagon Barn houses the Museum's rolling stock of buggies, wagons, stage coaches, fire engines, delivery

and pleasure rigs, and sheep, cattle and freight outfits. Combined, the exhibits depict frontier living with its hardships and rewards.

The Range Riders organization places a special value on the individual lives of the early settlers. Over 500 photographs of these people hang in the Pioneer Memorial Hall. Each person's biography is recorded and stored in a metal tube below the photograph. The pioneers will be forever honored and remembered in this Museum. Lives depended on each man helping another. Range Riders Museum is committed to caring for, protecting and preserving the historical objects that depict these lives. Some of this material was gathered from the unpublished writing of the former curator, Bob Barthelme. The balance of the material has come from my experience as the present curator.