

A HISTORY OF THE TWIN PINE RANCH
by Peggy Hagemeister Gerke
(with excerpts from various local history books of the Wheatland library)

The Twin Pine Ranch history dates back to some of the earliest and certainly some of the most fascinating of the early cattle ranches in Wyoming.

Its earliest known history as a cattle ranch shows that in 1878 the Duck Bar outfit was operated and owned by Bill (or Will) and Howard Warner on Cottonwood Creek where the Twin Pine Ranch now is. The brothers had about 3,000 head of cattle and had previously lived on Duck Creek in Colorado. Coming to Wyoming, they brought the Duck Bar brand with them, an outline of a simple duck with bar underscore, a brand that was to become one of the most historic in the state.

In 1878 the Warner brothers commissioned Tom Shaw, a 20 year old Texan, to pick up cattle from Oregon, that had already been brought as far as Green River, Wyoming, for their ranch. Tom started with the trail herd and reached the Cottonwood Creek area of Wyoming on October 11, 1878. The cattle were branded with the Duck Bar brand at the Cottonwood ranch. Tom spent that winter on the ranch in a 10' x 12' cabin with a dirt floor and roof. He acted as cook and cowboy and spent quite a lot of time hunting to supply the other hands with meat.

The next step for the cattle ranch on the Cottonwood came from dynamic characters in a romantic era. Hubert Teschemacher was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1856, the son of H.F. Teschemacher, an Englishman of Swiss-Huguenot extraction. The elder Teschemacher had gone to California in 1846, where he came to prominence as one of San Francisco's early day mayors and, apparently, also made a fortune. Both of his sons, Hubert, who was the oldest, and Arthur, attended Harvard, where the former was a close friend and classmate of Teddy Roosevelt.

Following Hubert's graduation from Harvard, his father sent him on a trip around the world. When the tour ended, he joined his family who were then living in Paris. There he chanced to read an article describing life in the mountains of western America. His imagination caught fire and he could hardly wait to return to the United States. In 1879, Hubert, accompanied by his Harvard classmate, Frederic DeBillier from France, came to Wyoming. They spent weeks on the plains and in the mountains, riding in the clear air and temporarily living the wild, free life of the cowboy on roundups and hunting trips. Then, in 1880, Hubert and Arthur Teschemacher and DeBillier formed the Teschemacher and DeBillier Cattle Company.

Their first venture was to purchase the Duck Bar outfit on Cottonwood from the Warner brothers. Starting with 600 cattle, a few horses and around \$40,000 in cash, the company grew rapidly. Teschemacher spent the winter of 1881-'82 in the East canvassing friends and acquaintances in Boston and New York financial circles, where he succeeded in raising \$250,000 in additional capital. The company bought up more ranches in the Cottonwood area, building to five ranches and somewhere around 18,000 to 25,000 head of cattle (accounts differ as to numbers) with a valuation of around \$480,000. Teschemacher was evidently an apt salesman, spreading enthusiasm to many businessmen back East and creating a desire to become "partners" in the western cattle business. As an example of the genre, in October of 1882, a letter and check came to Teschemacher from Teddy Roosevelt, for a \$10,000 investment in stock in their cattle company.

Teschemacher served in both houses of the Wyoming Territorial Legislature and was a member of the first and only Constitutional Convention, and thus helped to frame the Constitution of the State of Wyoming. Much later it was realized that Teschemacher and several other rich, influential, and essentially foreign cattle barons formed Wyoming's legislative beginnings to

heavily benefit the huge cattle owners they represented. Teschemacher and DeBillier were members and prime movers of the Cheyenne Club, then world-famous as "The" area social club.

Also according to record, Richard Trimble, late treasurer of the U.S. Steel Corporation, was at one time a member of the Teschemacher and DeBillier cattle company. Trimble visited the Cottonwood ranch (Twin Pine) the winter of 1882. The log hut, a huge fireplace, the optimism of youth, plenty of grub and an endless amount of wood helped them survive one of the coldest winters on record, the story goes, when the thermometer registered 59 degrees below zero (Fahrenheit) in Bordeaux, just south of Wheatland.

Back in 1879, Tom Shaw's brother, Jim Shaw (1852-1943), arrived from Texas and was made foreman of the Duck Bar outfit the summer of 1880. Jim was outgoing and became well liked and well known for his entertaining stories of the times and area. DeBillier became a close friend of Jim Shaw and even after returning to France in later years, he corresponded with Jim until his death around 1931.

Tom Shaw continued to work for the Duck Bar on and off until the company finally went out of business. Jim mostly acted as the company's representative with other roundup outfits and helped with the huge cattle roundups. Roundups in those days were held that covered great areas, going as far east as North Platte, NE, north to Fort Fetterman, south into Kansas and Colorado, and west to Laramie. Once the thousands of cattle were rounded up each spring, it was the job of the ranch representatives, with the help of ranch cowboys, to sort out their ranch's herd and trail them to the home ranch for the winter.

In late 1884, cattle prices declined drastically and the range was overstocked with cattle. The summer of 1886 was very dry with little grass and the cattle were in poor condition. Then the horrible winter of 1886-87 hit. In November heavy snow fell and covered the range for two months. On January 28, 1887, a blizzard struck and raged four days and three nights. When the sun finally came out and the wind died down, cattle were dead in piles all over the range. Half-starved remnants of herds were all that remained of the millions of cattle that had been here. Many of the huge cattle companies, financed at high interest rates, were ruined.

The Teschemacher and DeBillier Cattle Company came through the calamitous winter in far better condition than many others, estimating that they had lost about 10% of their herd. But Teschemacher was in truth a very poor businessman. In spite of poor management, dwindling values and decreasing herds, Teschemacher continued to create the illusion of prosperity by continuing to pay dividends to stockholders, even borrowing money for that purpose.

Teschemacher and DeBillier were both involved in the infamous Johnson County Invasion. Teschemacher became involved because he was one of the executive committee members of the Wyoming Stock Growers and Live Stock Commissioners who planned the action against the Johnson County "rustlers." The terrible blizzard of '86-87 had left many cowboys out of work. Rather than leave, the cowboys took up homesteads and gathered small herds. The herds usually were started with "mavericks," the unbranded calves of larger herds. Then the big ranch owners who were left passed a law that said all mavericks were the property of the Wyoming Stock Growers until sold at auction after the spring roundup. The homesteaders had no way to protect their small herds in the big roundups and the big owners thought their stock was being "rustled" by the homesteaders. This led to the organization of a group of some 45 men, some of them hired guns, who went to Johnson County intent on killing the "rustlers" and reclaiming their stock. After a confrontation where eventually the invaders were surrounded by some 400 men, the invaders had to be rescued by the U.S. Sixth Cavalry and returned to Cheyenne, where they were held a short time, then went through a mostly superficial trial, and were released. Fred DeBillier left Cheyenne, citing poor health. Hubert Teschemacher was called to France because of the death of his brother there, and never returned, thus escaping the farce of the trial. This event

ultimately led to ruin for numerous cattlemen who were involved and was one of the reasons for the downfall of the Teschemacher-DeBillier company.

DeBillier had long been less than enthusiastic about life in the West and after recovering from the nervous collapse brought on by his participation in the Johnson County War, joined the diplomatic corps and spent the rest of his life in Foreign Service posts in Peru, Greece, Italy, Iran, and Bolivia from 1908 to 1924.

Finally, the Teschemacher DeBillier Cattle Company liquidated in 1892. Records from that year show an unexplained loss of 20 horses and 3,045 "mixed" cattle, the sale of some 4,113 cattle, and an estimated 1,815 cattle that were to be gathered and sold by the Milwaukee & Wyoming Investment Company to pay all remaining expenses and taxes.

The Shaw brothers, who were virtually acquired along with the Duck Bar holdings, worked off and on with Teschemacher and DeBillier until the liquidation. Then, in 1892, Tom obtained the ranch on the Cottonwood (Twin Pine); Jim, the ranch headquarters on the North Platte. Other Teschemacher employees also were given (or bought) holdings: Harry Ralston, the ranch at Uva; Jim Whitney, the property now known as the von Forell ranch on the Laramie River; and the Swan Land and Cattle Company took over the LD ranch at Bordeaux, all former Teschemacher-DeBillier holdings.

Tom Shaw was married in 1889 to Miss Harriet Westwick and they settled on the ranch on the Cottonwood. Differing accounts state both that he was given the ranch in 1892 by the Teschemacher DeBillier Company, and that he bought it from them in 1886. Regardless, Tom renamed the ranch the LU Bar Ranch (now the Twin Pine). The LU Bar brand is carved into the wood inside the old barn, along with more recent carvings made by cowboys who worked here down through the years.

Tom first built a two story, dirt floor, sod roofed log home for his bride, then in 1898 hauled lumber from a lumber mill on Preacher Creek (also shown on early maps as "Mill Creek") to build the original part of the present Twin Pine ranch house. A year later, in 1899, he and neighbors built the big barn that still is in use. The barn was built with wooden pegs instead of nails.

Tom's son, Jim, was born in 1894 and continued to live for 42 years at the LU Bar Ranch after Tom's death. In about 1935, Jim and his help built at least one cabin to be used to house Michigan summer visitors ... something of a dude ranch effort. The other cabins were supposedly to house summer hay hands. In 1936, with the cattle business seemingly going downhill, young Jim decided to sell the ranch and move to a ranch near Dubois, Wyoming, to run a hunting business in the Teton mountains. He was unable to sell the ranch outright, so for almost two years he leased it to a large sheep outfit run by a Mr. Lemplin and Wylie Brown. 2,500 sheep grazed the ranch lands, a complete change from the cattle ranch it had been.

In 1938 Claude Lewis, who owned a ranch near Savery, Wyoming near the Colorado border, purchased the Cottonwood Duck Bar/LU Bar from Jim Shaw. He sold his southern Wyoming ranch, let the current LU cowboys go and brought his cowboys up from the other ranch and stocked the ranch with cattle. He supposedly had wanted to buy this ranch for 25 years.

Yet in 1945, only seven years later, Lee and Alice Hagemeister purchased the original ranch from Claude Lewis. Lee and Alice continued to own and manage the ranch, renamed the Twin Pine Ranch, until Lee's death in 1983 at age 79. During the intervening years, they continued to make purchases of surrounding areas until the Twin Pine reached a size of approximately ten miles north and south by eight miles east and west. They also purchased a ranch to the south, separated from the Twin Pine by only five miles, that was called "The Flying Lazy Lee Ranch," named after Lee, who loved to pilot his own plane and was never lazy! The Flying Lazy Lee Ranch was sold by the family in 1993 to True Ranches.

Lee and Alice lived in Potter, Nebraska, during their early married life, where Alice was a school teacher for several years and Lee owned and managed a grain elevator and wheat farms. In 1957 Lee semi-retired, sold the grain elevator, and he and Alice moved to Estes Park, Colorado. Lee and Alice continued to value their trips to Wyoming to check on their cattle business and Lee enjoyed hunting and fishing for many years. A favorite memory of the family is of Lee standing by Cottonwood Creek, with a big grin on his face, holding a large trout he had just caught on a fly line. After Lee's death, Alice continued to live in Estes Park until her death in 1992 at age 86. She was always very interested and involved in the family ranch business.

Lee and Alice raised three daughters in Potter: Jeane, Patsy and Peggy. Vacations and holidays were spent at the Twin Pine and the girls all grew to love the ranch. Jeane's first husband, Jack Ferguson, was made foreman of the Twin Pine and they lived on the ranch for several years. Jeane lived in Lee and Alice's old home in Estes Park for several years, then moved to Arizona. The second daughter, Patsy Nichols, lives in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, where she worked for many years with Community Services. Peggy, the youngest daughter, as estate administrator, took over the management of both the Flying Lazy Lee and the Twin Pine ranches after Lee's death in 1983. In 1986 a family ranch corporation was formed with Alice, Jeane, and Patsy as board members and Peggy as managing officer. Peggy and the ranches' general foreman, Larry Gerke, were married after Peggy moved to the Twin Pine from Nebraska in 1988. Larry has been ranch foreman since February of 1981. In 1993, after Alice's death, the sisters dissolved the original corporation, sold the Flying Lazy Lee, and Peggy retained ownership of the Twin Pine.

The Twin Pine has many historical spots, besides being the site of the original Duck Bar Ranch. Sioux, Cheyenne, Arapahoe and Crow Indians roamed the area in past years. A large, four room cave on the Twin Pine held (and may still hold more) human bones carbon-dated back over a thousand years. The cave was supposedly used as an Indian burial cave.

There are many, many Indian teepee rings, rings of middle-sized stones used by the Indians to hold the edges of their hide teepees down around the edges. It is surmised that the Indians used this area extensively as summer hunting country, for the rings are mostly in open areas or on ridges, indicating a desire for fresh breezes and good lookout points rather than shelter from winter winds.

On one hill on the ranch can still be found a lot of jasper chips, accumulated when Indians made jasper stone into arrow points and other tools. Occasionally some lucky person still finds full or partial tools.

Irrigation ditches that date back to the 1850's and built by Mormon pioneers, according to some accounts, were built on one of the early Duck Bar ranches near the Laramie River. They were some of the first permanent irrigation ditches in Wyoming. Other ditches, most likely built by early homesteaders to meet homestead requirements in an attempt to provide terracing to stop rain water and snow melt, rather than actual irrigation, criss-cross some of the present Twin Pine Ranch.

The "Binford," now a meadow up the Cottonwood Creek from the present Twin Pine house area, was a mail stop and an account written by the Hudson family who lived on Fish Creek "just east of Laramie Peak and 30 miles northwest of Wheatland" relates that the Hudson daughters rode 30 miles horseback several times a month in all weather to deliver mail to "Binford, Wyoming" and a few other rural mail stops. The present Twin Pine bunkhouse, now a guest cabin, was originally the Binford "post office" and stage stop which was at one time run by Mrs. Tom Shaw. The bunkhouse was removed to its present location, log by log, in later years, with each log numbered so that it could be replaced in exactly the right location.

The ranch is the site of the death of Lt. Levi Robinson, for whom Ft. Robinson in Nebraska is named. In 1874, Lt. Robinson and two other soldiers were hunting game to supply meat for a

group of soldiers who were cutting wood for Ft. Laramie when they were surprised by Lakota Sioux Indians. One theory says that the early Warner brothers caught and trained wild horses to be used as stage horses, and that the Sioux Indians were attempting to steal some of those horses when they came across Robinson and his companions. (However, another source says the Warner's didn't purchase the land until 1878.) Chased by the Indians into the "Little Point of Rocks," Robinson and his corporal were killed, while a private escaped by turning his horse loose, then hiding in the rocks. As the Indians chased his horse, the private ran back to the other soldiers to warn them. The story goes that the departure of the soldiers was so hasty that guns and equipment bounced out of the wagons as they fled toward Ft. Laramie. The soldiers frequently came to the Laramie Peak area (then known as "the Black Hills") to cut wood on government wood preserves and there were many sawmill sites on and around the Twin Pine. Several old stone ovens for baking bread for the men during bivouac were on the Twin Pine and one is still partially standing.

The "gentleman train robber," Bill Carlisle, was well known in this area and often took refuge with ranchers in Cottonwood Park after his train robbing sprees. Bill was very personable and was well liked by the ranchers. The ranchers didn't like the railroads because of the high fees charged to ship cattle and they didn't want to betray Bill to the railroad detectives. Bill had a reputation as a gentleman because he was a gentle-spoken and quiet man and didn't rob the ladies. He treated the people he robbed on area trains with respect and courtesy and never hurt or killed anyone, even when it meant his capture. He was captured, was in prison for a little more than three years during which he worked in the prison shirt factory, and then escaped, mailing himself out of the prison in a large shirt box. He again robbed a train and this time was wounded in the hand. Always traveling on foot and now with his arm swollen badly, with a high fever, and unable to travel very fast, he was recaptured south of Esterbrook in a miner's cabin that was likely on what was Twin Pine land in the "Three Cripples Creek" area. Knowing he was surrounded, he met the sheriff with his one good hand up, but was unable to raise the wounded one. The sheriff believed Bill was reaching for a gun, so he claimed later, and shot him in the chest. Bill's story claims he was treated badly, not given immediate care, and his wounds caused him to be gravely ill for several months. This time, he spent about 16 years in prison, then when released, married the lady who was superintendent of the local hospital. He "went straight" and tried his hand at various small business ventures. Lee, Alice and Peggy Hagemester met and talked to Mr. Carlisle in his later years.

There is an abundance of wild game in the area. In 1938 turkeys were first released in the Laramie Peak area on the Twin Pine. Since that time, and after a subsequent release of more turkeys, there are still Merriam turkeys in the area. Predators, hard winters and cold springs keep the population suppressed. There are mountain lions, bobcats, mule deer, whitetail deer, elk, pronghorns and black bears on the ranch. The Twin Pine prides itself on being a "game preserve" where game of all kinds, including coyotes and prairie dogs, are protected all year except for a very limited number of game animals allowed to be harvested by hunters in order to keep population better in control. A hunting program was promoted for years in the spring and fall when deer, elk, turkey and pronghorn hunters came to be fed, housed and guided on hunts by the Gerke's and their employees. The Gerke's very popular guided-hunt program was discontinued after the 1999 fall season, after 13 years, and the ranch is presently leased to an outfitter for deer, elk, and pronghorn hunts.

Lee Hagemester used Hereford cattle to stock his ranch back in 1945, later using Angus bulls to produce the black-baldy cross. After his death, Gelbvieh cattle were introduced for a 3-way cross. From 1878 until 1999 the ranch was a cow-calf cattle operation, in later years with ownership of steer calves retained through the feedlots, while heifers were kept as herd replacements as well as sold as bred or fed heifers. The ranch raised most of its own feed for the cattle on its mountain meadows, is a well-watered ranch, and still is, as in Teschemacher and DeBillier's day, a good place to raise livestock. In 1999, Peggy and Larry sold the last of the Twin Pine cattle and in April of that year, introduced bison, the first to be back on the ranch for at least 150 years. The bison seem most content on the Twin Pine, almost as if they have come home.

In order to further diversify their business, the Twin Pine opened to guests for "working vacations" for five years from 1995 through 1999. Old cabins, first built as "dude" or cowboy cabins in the 1930's were renovated. Many guests from around the world enjoyed taking part in riding to move cattle, working them, and learning about the fascinating western cowboy-and-Indian heritage of the country. With the coming of the bison, the Gerkes decided to discontinue the guest program, because bison cannot be herded and moved by cowboys on horses, and partly to semi-retire. A buffalo "hunting" program was started in 2003, with hunters from all over the United States coming to shoot buffalo for their excellent meat, beautiful head mounts and soft robes.

The Twin Pine Ranch remains a family ranch, with Peggy's and Larry's children and grandchildren learning to love it as Lee and Alice, the Shaws, Teschemacher and DeBillier once did. The family treasures it, as a historic and beautiful spot in the Laramie Mountains of Wyoming.