

Historical Homesteads... Ranching Heritage Center houses 200 years of Americana

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The idea for the National Ranching Heritage Center in Lubbock started with a trip to Norway and a group who were prepared to make it happen.

With more than 30 buildings, the National Ranching Heritage Center has them placed in a historically correct timeline in order to tell the story of ranching.

The idea for the National Ranching Heritage Center (NRHC) began when Grover Murray, who was president of Texas Tech University in the mid 1960s, came back from Norway where he saw a living history museum.

Jim Campbell, the executive director at the Ranching Heritage Center, said, “He (Murray) got together with a lot of the ranching community, and they put together a committee. Originally, the idea was that they would just build a ranch headquarters and it would have a couple of different examples of ranch houses, some pens, and a couple of barns. But they quickly realized it was much bigger than that.” Campbell went on to explain that once the word got out, people started contacting the committee with stories

predominantly west of the Mississippi in North America.

“So when you go through our historical park,” Campbell said, “all the structures are set there in the historical timeline.”

Most structures at the NRHC are donated, along with the money that is needed for the structure to be relocated and rebuilt. Campbell said that the time it takes to move the structure from tear down to build up just depends on the structure itself.

“The most famous move that we ever did was the Barton House,” he recalled. “The Barton House moved in the early to mid ‘70s, and it took three days... That was just getting it on trailers and trailering it into Lubbock.”

The NRHC moved the Barton House mostly whole, so they had to coordinate with the electric and telephone companies to lift wires along the route because the Victorian mansion is three stories tall. Another project from the

here, then rebuilt it,” said Campbell.

He explained it took so long because he only has five men who handle historical preservation,

Erickson wrote his books based off his own ranch, dog, and life, which Erickson and his wife still manage outside of Perryton, Texas.

a fundraising campaign later this year with hopes of breaking ground sometime during 2020.

“It really will be the only place in the world

itors come to Lubbock to mainly go through the museum and historical park to see the history of ranching in this area, according to Campbell.

The National Ranching Heritage Center has 50 structures including 30 that are between 100 and 200 years old. The NRHC features a self-guided walk through the museum and historical park, which can take anywhere from 60 to 90 minutes, depending on the age and the interest of the visitor(s).

However, the NRHC does offer a 30-minute trolley tour, when the weather is nice, of their historical park every Thursday at 10:30 a.m. for \$5 per person.

The NRHC also provides a living history of ranching, from May through October, with the help of 150 volunteers. The volunteers are dressed in the correct clothing for that time period and will tell the story of ranching to the guests who visit.

“That’s when it really comes alive,” Campbell said.

The volunteers will also dress up and come out to help the NHRC for special events during year, such as 49th Annual Ranch day on April 13, the Sixth Annual Summer Stampede Western



along with other things such as fixing the heating and air conditioning when it breaks in the building.

The NRHC is currently looking into adding a church.

“That one actually has been in service, so we wouldn’t have to do a whole lot to the inside of it,” Campbell said, adding that

“He (Erickson) got to talk to Julie Hodges, who’s our education director, and said ‘I have these three books I don’t know what do with them,’” Campbell said. “They tell all about ranching through the voice of Hank... would you be interested in them?” Julie immediately said absolutely.”

Campbell added that some local residents do

where you’ll be able to actually go and physically see Hank,” said Campbell.

“I think the amazing thing about this facility is we’re able to tell the story of ranching in so many different ways,” Campbell said.

The story is told with a historical timeline, which moves from the Spanish land grants to the Republic of Texas, through the German immigration and then the expansion.

on dug outs, houses, etcetera. It evolved from there, opening as The Ranching Heritage Center in 1976.

“To preserve and interpret the history of ranching in North America and address contemporary ranching issues” is the NRHC’s mission statement. Campbell said they tell the story of how the ranching industry,

‘70s was the Joel House from Palo Pinto County, which is near Mineral Wells. This house has 2,000 tons of rock, which had to be numbered before being dismantled.

Campbell says that the last structure moved was a barn which was located in Snyder.

“That took us almost

he guesses it would take about six months if they were to bring it to NRHC. He mentioned that the only structures that the NRHC is really looking to add at the moment are a church and a saloon.

Campbell also mentioned a partnership they

nated money to help publish the books. The first one is about ranching, the second is on cowboys and horses, and the third is about the wild-life on ranches.

“Julie actually worked to develop a school curriculum so that they match up to the Texas requirements for TEEX (Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service),” said

Campbell. “There’s probably more than 100 schools that are using the curriculum”

The NRHC’s next big project is going to be building a ranch life center at the NRHC that brings those three books to life.

“It will be a center dedicated to telling all about the story of ranching through Hank’s voice,” Campbell explained.

The NRHC is working on the design now and will eventually start



traditions, and culture developed and started more than 200 years ago,

a year by the time we went down there, dismantled it, hauled it back up

have with John Erickson, the author of “Hank the Cowdog.” He says that



“We also tell it in those individual stories, brands, and names...” said Campbell. “We’re able to tell it from a generic sense, or from an architectural sense, because we have a structure where people came out and they dug it.”

Campbell added that they strive on a daily basis to tell the story of the real West and about the stories of real, everyday men and women who ventured out to build new lives.

“This is not Hollywood,” he said.

“There has been no other facility, or museum, like this anywhere in the world,” Campbell said proudly. “We have international visitors.”

Some international vis-

Art and Gear Show and Sale on June 1, Summer Youth Classes from June 10 – June 15, 42nd Annual National Golden Spur Award on September 21, and Candlelight at the Ranch, Dec. 14 and 15.

NRHC is open daily, unless posted otherwise. The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and the historical park is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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