

History of Elk Falls

The following narrative is a portion of an article by Mary Helen Crain which appeared in the Canyon Courier on July 8, 1971.

" ... The ranch was founded in the late 1880's. It started with approximately 320 acres, homesteaded by a family named Brown. It was from the Browns that John C. Jensen, founder of McCoy & Jensen, nurserymen of Morrison Road, bought it.

"Over a period of time, Jensen purchased adjoining property -- homestead land and other small ranches, bringing his holding to ... 2200 acres. [Editor's note: The 40 acres containing Lion's Head and Elk Falls was originally purchased by Lulu H. Corbin from the Federal Government under "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands" passed by congress on April 24, 1820. The certificate was signed by Theodore Roosevelt on June 11, 1908. This land was sold by Lulu Corbin to John Jensen on April 29, 1922 for \$1100. rwp] It was here on Elk Falls Ranch that Sally Jensen, who later married Elmer Berg of Denver, was born. We talked with Mrs. Berg about the history of the ranch.

"As quite a young girl Mrs. Berg was asked to take a teaching position at Pine Junction, several miles up the highway toward Conifer. She said that she was fearful that she would not qualify. 'But I took the examination,' she said, 'passed it, and took over the job.' She rode horseback each day to the schoolhouse at Pine Junction. When? Mrs. Berg merely said, 'Oh, that was many years ago.'

"'What about a gold mine that we have heard about?' we asked. 'He's, my father had a gold mine on the ranch,' she said. 'But he ran into water. It would have taken quite a bit of money to overcome this so the gold mine didn't pan out for him. It's all covered over now . . . You know the Reynolds gang is said to have stashed some of their gold up there somewhere too.' [Editor's note: see Bob Lee's article in the Rocky Mountain News, published September 18, 1949. rwp] We were not surprised to hear this, for there are numerous legends concerning that famous gang of outlaws. People from all over the country have attempted to locate Reynolds gold at various points from Turkey Creek to as far away as Fairplay, but to no avail.

"Over the years Elk Falls Ranch has been operated as a dude ranch; as a recreation area for large groups; it has been the Denver Athletic Club's camp for

boys and girls. There was a lodge which unfortunately succumbed to fire in 1956. There were large picnic areas and shelters, spoken for every day during the summer season, Mrs. Berg said. She remembers well, for the Bergs handled these activities.

"Andy Beye has been the ranch manager for the past 22 years. He and his wife Bessie live in a comfortable ranch house across the road from the clubhouse.

"The clubhouse was established about 1950 when Elk Falls Ranch became a private club. At present it is not in operation, but its pleasant atmosphere was always a warm and friendly spot for members and their friends. A panoramic view from every window adds interest and pleasure

"Nine years ago, Mr. Berg passed away. Mrs. Berg maintains their home on the ranch and has retained some of the land. The remainder she sold to a group of professional and business men from Denver. On a restricted basis and with building requirements to protect the mountain atmosphere, a part of Elk Falls Ranch is gradually being subdivided. ... "