

# 2011 King Ranch "Ranch Hand Breakfast"

## History of the legendary King Ranch

The King Ranch, located just outside the city limits of Kingsville, is one of the world's largest ranches and the largest in the United States. The 825,000 acre (1,289 sq mi) ranch, founded in 1853 by Captain Richard King and Gideon K. Lewis, includes portions of six Texas counties, including most of Kleberg County and much of Kenedy County.

The Ranch does not consist of one single contiguous plot of land, but rather four large sections called *divisions*. The divisions are the Santa Gertrudis, the Laureles, the Encino and the Norias. Only two of the four divisions border each other, and that border is relatively short. The ranch was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1961.

Richard King first saw the land that would become part of the enormous King Ranch in April 1852 as he traveled north from Brownsville to attend the *Lone Star Fair* in Corpus Christi, a four day trip by horseback. After a grueling ride, King caught sight of the Santa Gertrudis Creek, 124 miles from the Rio Grande.

It was the first stream he had seen on the Wild Horse Desert. The land, which was shaded by large mesquite trees, so impressed him that when he arrived at the fair, he and a friend, Texas Ranger Captain Gideon K. "Legs" Lewis, agreed then and there to make it into a ranch. The King Ranch LK brand, still in use today, stands for partners Lewis and King.

King and Lewis established a cow camp on Santa Gertrudis Creek. During this time, Richard King purchased the *Rincón de Santa Gertrudis* grant, a 15,500 acres holding that encompassed present-day Kingsville, Texas. It was purchased from the heirs of Juan Mendiola of Camargo on July 25, 1853, for \$300.

King sold Lewis an undivided half-interest in the land for \$2,000. At the same time, Lewis sold King undivided half interest in the ranches of Manuel Barrera and of Juan Villareal for the same sum, on November 14, 1853.

(Continued)





### KING RANCH

In 1854, King and Lewis bought the *de la Garza Santa Gertrudis grant* from Praxides Uribe of Matamoros for \$1,800, on the condition of a perfected title on May 20, 1854 to 53,000 acres. As the years passed, more land was added, growing to 1.2 million acres at its largest extent, until reaching its current total.

Records show that a Mexican range cow cost \$6 in 1854; a mustang cost \$6; a stud horse cost \$200-300. In sum, in 1854 King paid \$12,275.79. Lea estimates that 1855 expenses were smaller. The first brand was the *Ere Flecha* (an R with arrow through it).

In 1859, the Ranch recorded its first official brands (HK and LK). In 1869 the ranch registered its "Running W" brand, which remains the King Ranch's official mark today. At the time, the ranch grazed cattle, horses, sheep and goats. However, by the mid-1870s the ranch's hallmark stock had become the Texas Longhorn. The ranch also boasted several Brahman bulls, as well as Beef Shorthorns and Herefords.

The Brahmans - which were bred specially to thrive in South Texas' hot climate - were crossed with the ranch's Beef Shorthorns to produce the ranch's own trademark stock - the Santa Gertrudis breed, which were recognized as a breed in 1940. The Santa Gertrudis was the first American breed of beef cattle.

In addition to cattle, King Ranch raises quarter horses, cutting horses and thoroughbreds and produced the 1946 U.S. Triple Crown winner *Assault* and 1950 Kentucky Derby winner, *Middleground*. They also owned a share of *La Troienne*, the greatest broodmare of the twentieth century.

The King Ranch had the honor of raising the first quarter horse registered with the American Quarter Horse Association. The stallion's name was *Wimpy P-1* and he was given registration number one. In addition, the King Ranch company operates a local museum, maintains other property concerns and works with Texas A&M University-Kingsville to perform agricultural research and development.

The corporation has extensive holdings in other states including Florida with agricultural interests including turf grass farming and citrus. The annual Ranch Hand Breakfast, now in its 21st year, celebrates the rich history of the Ranch and its ties to South Texas and the Wild Horse Desert. Proceeds from the event help sponsor the annual La Posada de Kingsville holiday festival and Parade of Lights in December.



*Ranch Hand Breakfast coordinator Bob Kinnan, left, meets with volunteers before the sun rises to go over duties and responsibilities.*



*NAS Kingsville executive officer CDR Scott Wilmot, left, and VT-21 skipper CDR Quino Alonzo, center, begin breaking out plates and other supplies prior to the opening of the 21st annual Ranch Hand Breakfast. Right, cowboys set up static displays and enjoy a morning cup of 'Joe.'*



*Let's get busy ... plates on the tables ... beans in tins ... sausage in the fire ... eggs on the grill*



*With more than 4,000 visitors expected for the Ranch Hand Breakfast, traffic control and parking was one of the primary jobs for NAS Kingsville volunteers. Thanks to a host of student aviators from VT-21, traffic control supervisor Petty Officer Bernardino Martinez, and members of the King Ranch staff, there were no parking or traffic delays during the event.*





*While volunteers get the grills going and trays are placed in the warmers, CDR Wilmot conducts quality control checks ...*



*TW-2 Commander Capt. Joe Evans, left, gets some “serving advice” from one-year Ranch Hand Breakfast veteran Ken Mahaffey. “Commodore, life is hell at the bean table ...” Below, volunteers move trays of cooked sausage to the food warmers.*





*Anna Carvajal claims her traditional spot at the egg station.*



*PWD's Steve Moore, right, tells AC2 Shauna Johnson that the breakfast menu lacks one important South Texas ingredient .... Rattlesnake.*



*Volunteers take a quick break before the serving lines open ... (below)*





*From the time the food lines opened at 7 a.m., servers were busy taking care of the guests serving eggs, biscuits and gravy, bacon, sausage and re-fried beans.*







*Things to See ...  
at the 2011  
"Ranch Hand  
Breakfast"*







*Thank you to all our volunteers for helping make the 21st annual  
“Ranch Hand Breakfast” a success and that “Team NAS  
Kingsville” really cares about our community.*

*See y’all next year ... ya hear?*

*Photos by Fifi Kiesnick and IC1 (AW/SW) Jesse Booth, NAS Kingsville Public Affairs*