



Summary Information

Title: Joe Silvers' Rayville Ranch Photographs

Collection Number: 2002:091

Creator: Joe Silvers, as collector

Collection Dates: c. 1919 – 1928

Extent: .25 cubic feet (1 box, approx. 55 photographs)

Language: English

Collection Abstract:

Rayville Ranch existed in Trinity and Houston counties from 1913 to 1933, for the purpose of protecting and encouraging second growth timber on cutover Southern Pine Lumber Company lands, and to protect land titles in newly established industrial forests. This collection consists of photographs documenting the ranch, members of the Silvers family, ranch pasture riders and workers, and ranch life.

Repository:

The History Center
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Diboll, TX 75941
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Author/Processing Information: Processed by Matt Gorzalski in March 2012.

Biographical/Historical Note:

Rayville Ranch was established in 1913 and was located in northeastern Trinity County and southeastern Houston County, Texas. It began when L. D. Gilbert of the Southern Pine Lumber Company hired north Texas rancher John J. Ray to manage the 35,000 acre area of cutover timberland. In the early 20th century, grazing cattle on cutover timberland was believed to reduce fire fuel and aid in the protection and encouragement of second growth forests. It also served the legal purpose of protecting and defending land titles in newly established industrial forests. Southern Pine fenced the area, imported Brahman cattle, and hired armed patrolmen to protect the property. Rayville became a station on the Texas South-Eastern Railroad near the site of Southern Pine's logging Camp 1, which was located 12 miles northwest of Diboll. The operation averaged about 5,000 heads of cattle, 3,000 heads of goat, and many hogs.

Rayville was named for rancher John J. Ray (1868-1941). Cattle and livestock raised at Rayville were usually shipped to Fort Worth, but they also provided meat for Southern Pine's commissary in Diboll and company logging camps. Ray's pasture riders included Walter Robinson, John Silvers, Frank Rushing, Charles Rushing, Herman Midkiff, Emery Midkiff, Hugh Gibson, Steve Oliver, Alton and Frank Minton, Calvin Tiner, and Dewey Tarwaters. Pasture riders mended fences and rounded up cattle. Many Mexicans worked at the ranch as well, especially during the first decade of operations.

John J. Ray left the ranch in 1933 and the Southern Pine Lumber Company closed it soon afterwards. Timber had regenerated and the Great Depression left little reason to continue supporting the ranch, which was showing little to no profit. Another reason for the closure was continued trouble with trespassers, which had been an issue during the ranch's entire history, especially given the region's open range mentality and few laws against trespassing. Arthur Temple, Sr. tried to sell the lands to the federal government from 1933 to 1935 to be a part of a national forest in Texas but no agreement was reached. Southern Pine Lumber Company Land & Timber Department manager Dave Kenley (1886-1975) leased the pasture from 1936 into the 1950s as part of his own cattle operations. John J. Ray briefly relocated to another Southern Pine Lumber Company property known as Renfro Pasture in Angelina County, before moving to Glenrose near Fort Worth where he continued ranching until his death in 1941.

Collection Scope and Content:

The Joe Silvers' Rayville Ranch Photographs is a collection of vintage photographs documenting Rayville Ranch in Trinity and Houston counties. The photographs show Silvers family members including his grandfather and pasture rider John Silvers, Sr., his father John "Buster" Silvers, Jr., his mother Clara Silvers, and her sister Vera Crim. The photographs depict them living on the ranch, at the cattle pens, or on horseback. Other photographs include cowboys, or pasture riders, Frank Rushing, Herman Midkiff, Emery Midkiff, Hugh Gibson, Walter Robinson, and ranch operator John J. Ray. Others depicted are Judge R. E. Minton, Viola Harber Robinson, the Rayville Ranch house, and several hunting photographs.

Arrangement: Arranged and described at the collection level.

Subject Terms

Topics

- American Brahman cattle -- Texas, East
- Cowboys -- Texas, East
- Ranching -- Texas, East
- Ranch life -- Texas, East

Personal Names

- Ray, John J., 1868-1941

Family Names

- Silver family

Genres

- Photographs

Locations

- Houston County (Tex.)
- Texas, East

- Trinity County (Tex.)

Access and Use

Access Restrictions: There are no restrictions on this collection.

Acquisition Information: Accession 2002:091 was donated by Joe Silvers on December 13, 2002.

Custodial History: Donor Joe Silvers is the grandson of Rayville Ranch cowboy John Silvers, Sr. He kept these photographs until donating them to The History Center in December 2002.

Citation: Joe Silvers Rayville Ranch Photographs, c. 1919 - 1928, 2002:091, The History Center, Diboll, TX

Related Material:

Additional photographs of Rayville Ranch can be found in Arthur Temple Jr.'s family collection, accession 1996:007.

Additional information on Rayville Ranch can be found in Joe Silvers oral history interview 174a; Charlie Harber's oral history interviews, especially interviews 157a and 157c; and Edd Kenley's oral history interview 158a.

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Bibliography:

- Gerland, Jonathan. "The Lonesomest Place in the World: A Photographic History of the Rayville Ranch, 1913-1933." In *The Pine Bough* (2008) vol. 13: 2-21.

Collection Inventory

Box 1

Folder 1	J. J. Ray and Cattle Pen, c. 1928
Folder 2	Rayville Ranch House with J. J. Ray, Frank Rushing, Josie Rushing, and Clara Rushing, c. 1919
Folder 3	Men Hunting including Jack Sanders and Benny Smith of Lufkin, c. 1920s
Folder 4	Rayville Ranch Cattle Pens, c. 1920
Folder 5	Railroad Bridge near Highway 94, From Lufkin to Groveton, c. 1920s
Folder 6	Mexican Goat Herder, c. 1920s
Folder 7	Frank Rushing, c. 1919
Folder 8	Charlie Rushing, Franking Rushing, J. J. Ray, and John Joiner on Horseback, c. 1920s
Folder 9	Rayville Cattle Pens, c. 1920s
Folder 10	Herman Midkiff, Emery Midkiff, Hugh Gibson, Walter Robinson, J. J. Ray, and John Silvers on Horseback, c. 1920s
Folder 11	Rayville Ranch, Silvers Family, J. J. Ray, approx. 45 photographs, c. 1920s