



## HISTORY OF COW CREEK RANCH

Cow Creek Ranch, formerly Martin's Cow Creek Ranch, was originally part of a much larger cattle ranch in the area owned by the Dockweiler family of Tesuque, New Mexico. The ranch was split up in the early 1900s, and Louise Dockweiler Martin and her husband, Bob Martin, settled in Cow Creek valley. All buildings on the property were built by Bob Martin with pine and aspen milled onsite. The old mill site was located where the fish fry takes place today. Parts of the old equipment and wagons can still be seen in that area.

Prior to the Dockweilers' and Martin's ownership and involvement with the ranch, it was home to an old boarding school for "second sons," young English boys who were sent over to America to learn ranching. Accounts of this school can be read in history books. The school existed in the late 1800s at the top of the 120, where a few remains of one of the outbuildings can still be seen. The school was completely self-sufficient with natural springs flowing right beside the cabin, large gardens, livestock, and even a grass tennis court.

The Martins raised four girls- Dodo, Tootie, Babe, and Peggy on the property. The Ranch was historically a cattle and horse operation. The Martins had a substantial garden on the ranch which consisted in large part of root vegetables and lettuce. The garden was located across the stream from Lake #2. They also raised milking cows and pigs, which they kept in the milk pen up the valley. Remains of the old milk pen can still be seen at the site of the sporting clays course.

The original Martin home, built in the early 1920s, consisted of what is now the dining room, card room, and office. A photograph of the original house can be found hanging above the chest of drawers in the lodge. As the family grew, the Martins added on the living room area and the upstairs section of the main lodge. The kitchen was originally a portico, and the pantry was an earthen-floored root cellar. Drawn in by the charm of Martin's Cow Creek Ranch, friends of the family began to visit and extend their stays to longer and longer periods of time. From the late 1920s to the early 1930s, the Martins began to add rooms in order to accommodate their guests. The first room to be added was room 1. Then, a bit later, rooms 2 through 6 were added. The last addition was the north wing, consisting of rooms 7 through 10. Electricity was produced by wind power from the old windmill (no longer standing) and a Delco generator until the mid-1970s. The small stone building on the front lawn was the old generator house. As the story goes, the girls would tell everyone "lights out" before turning the generator off for the evening.

On the advice of some of their friends from Red River, the Martins began charging people to come and stay in the mid-1930s, and their ranch became one of the first operating dude ranches in the area. Clients would pay to experience ranch life in its true form. Guests would take part in activities such as cattle drives, rodeos, cattle branding, harvesting hay, and big square dances. While some work with the cattle and horses would be expected of them, they would also enjoy what has historically been some of the best fishing in Northern New Mexico. They would mingle with guests from the other dude ranches in the area, such as Mountain View Ranch and Balsley Ranch (now the Bar X Bar Ranch). Historically the ranches would gather for rodeos at Martin's Ranch and for big square dances at Balsley Ranch and Mountain View Ranch. Quite often the guests would ride on horseback between the ranches. Many of the trails in use today were the original trails used by the Martin girls and their guests. Many descendants of these original guests of Martin's Ranch still come to visit and share their summer vacations with us at Cow Creek.

Frequently, guests would spend the whole day Friday fishing, saving up their catches for the evening's fish fry, which would take place in the old Aspen grove at the top of the 120. As the years went on, the fish fry was moved closer to the lodge, to the site of the "Red Rooster," located across from today's fish fry, on the banks of Soldier's Creek. Based

on accounts from former guests, it was customary for the Martins to roast one of their pigs in a pit at this site several times during the summer. It would roast all day and then be enjoyed by the guests that evening.

The lives of the Martin girls were filled with plenty of hard work, while experiencing the joy of sharing their way of life with the guests. They each had their own roles at the ranch. Tootie used to make daily trips to town in her station wagon to get supplies. She and Dodo were in charge of the office and business functions. Today's current office was always referred to as Tootie's office, where she kept a day bed because of the long hours she would work. She also acted as a deputy Game Warden for the area. Babe was responsible for all of the ranch operations and guest services. You would often find her leading guests on trail rides and supervising other activities with the help of her husband, Frank Emerson. Peggy Martin, the youngest of the girls, had very little involvement with the ranch after her marriage to Henry Gallegos, one of the first game wardens in the area, because they spent the majority of their time patrolling on horseback and living in a small cabin near Grass Mountain.

The Ranch was run as a fully operational dude ranch by the Martin girls up until the mid-1980s, at which point it was closed since three of the four sisters had passed away. For the next fifteen years, Peggy allowed friends and long time trusted clients to continue visiting the ranch with their families on a self-service basis. In the year 2001, the ranch was purchased by the Mead family of Dallas, Texas, who were long-time clients of the ranch.

Sky Mead, of the Dallas Times Herald, began visiting Mountain View Ranch, located over the ridge from Martin's and up the Pecos Canyon, in the mid 1920s. In the 1940s, his son, Bob Mead, Sr. ventured to Martin's Cow Creek Ranch, and began bringing his son, Bob Mead, Jr., at the age of five. This was the beginning of a longstanding family tradition of a two week summer vacation spent on the banks of Cow Creek. In 2001, Lanier Watson, the daughter of Bob and Judy Mead, moved to New Mexico, renovated the property and reopened the ranch to guests.

Shortly before the Mead family purchased the ranch, the Viveash Fire, roared through the Cow Creek Valley, taking with it 29,000 acres, twenty thousand of which burned on the first day. Three cabins on the property and many livestock and wildlife were lost to the fire, and it had a devastating immediate impact on the fish habitat. With the assistance of aquatic rehab specialists from Boulder, Colorado, and under the direction of the Corps of Engineers, Bob and Judy Mead and their daughter facilitated the recovery process of the land and the stream over the course of the next one and one-half years. Although the fire had a devastating effect on the land and the fishery, the positive impact of the fire will be long lasting. Since the fire, the entire ecosystem, from vegetation and bug life to the larger wildlife species in the area, has exploded. Cow Creek now has one of the healthiest fisheries in Northern New Mexico, due to the flourishing bug life. The deer and elk herds are much larger than before, due to the fertile grasslands and scrub oak, which had previously been overcome by the evergreens. Although fire can be a hard adjustment for the eye, it is a vital part of the life of an ecosystem. The once overpopulated and diseased evergreen forests have now given way to healthier hillsides filled with aspens and scrub oak. As you look through the valley, you will notice that many of the trees and most of the buildings were spared from the fire. This can be attributed in large part to well-grazed land, proper thinning, and metal roofs.

Extensive renovations were done to the buildings, and great measures were taken not only to restore, but also to preserve the original elements of the structures on the ranch. Phone lines were finally brought to the ranch in 2004. The Mead family has made it a priority to continue many of the longstanding traditions of Martin's Cow Creek Ranch, such as the Friday Fish Fry, horseshoes, cowboy music around the campfire, and ringing the old ranch bell to call in the fishermen for meals and to ring out the guests on their departure. "When guests and their families returned to the ranch after it had been closed for 16 years, we wanted them to feel as though they were coming home" – Lanier Mead Watson.

For generations, Martin's Cow Creek Ranch has served as a relaxing escape for families and friends. Annual summer vacations have become a tradition. We hope that you, too, will come to think of this ranch as your home away from home and a place of warm and happy memories.