

Benjamin and Sarah Davenport Ranch (Kow Kamp Ranch)

By Richard Engeman

The Benjamin and Sarah Davenport Ranch is in the Waldo Hills southeast of Salem, a rolling landscape of fertile soil with a network of creeks tributary to the Pudding River. The homeland of the Santiam and Ahantchuyuk Kalapuya people, the hills were a destination for mid-nineteenth century EuroAmerican immigrants seeking subsistence farmlands. The Donation Land Act of 1850 enabled Dr. Benjamin Davenport (1799–1857), his wife Sarah (1802–1879), and their children to settle on 320 acres in the Waldo Hills in 1851.

Benjamin Davenport was a physician who practiced medicine among his neighbors. He and Sarah had five children. Their eldest, Timothy, married neighbor Florinda Geer and was an Indian Agent during the 1860s and the father of editorial cartoonist Homer Davenport (1867–1912). During their first few years on the farm, the family raised cattle, sheep, horses, hogs, and poultry as well as grain and hay. They also planted an orchard.

Following Benjamin Davenport's death in 1857, the property came to his son Benjamin (1839–1913), who continued working the farm with the help of his brothers. He transformed it "into one of the most attractive farms in Marion County," where he raised cattle, Shropshire sheep, horses, pigs, and poultry and continued to grow grain and hay. He and his wife Lucretia moved into Silverton in 1902, leaving the farm in the hands of their children.

The death of Benjamin Davenport Jr. in 1913 resulted in the division of the original 320-acre Donation Land Claim. The youngest son, John H. Davenport (1874–1954), received 63 acres, where he raised grain and pastured livestock. When John and Mollie Davenport died, their only son, Henry, inherited the farm. He and his wife Eloise began to specialize in pasturing and raising Border Cheviot sheep, which they showed for many years at the Oregon State Fair. They also grew grain and hay and eventually planted grass seed.

The Benjamin and Sarah Davenport property was designated a Century Ranch in 1958, the first year of the Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program. In 2008, the property was named a Sesquicentennial Ranch, marking 150 years that the property was in agricultural use by members of the same family. Ann Davenport Visconi and her brother John H. Davenport III raised Border Cheviot sheep, grew grass seed, and pastured Wagyu cattle. Now named Kow Kamp Ranch, the property is still in the Davenport family and in agricultural use.

Sources

Kow Kamp Ranch. Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Application. Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Program, Oregon State University. "SFR0013" Oregon Digital.

The Oregon Encyclopedia

<https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/kow-kamp-ranch-benjamin-and-sarah-davenport/>