

Way We Were

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Title: The Bitner Ranch

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The Bitner Ranch is located on the north side of Interstate 80 in Summit County. It lies between Silver Creek Junction and Kimball's Junction. The Bitner family has operated the property since 1908 when Milton Bitner and his brother Hoffman purchased the Rock House and the property to raise sheep and to house their families. There have been good times and bad, richer and poorer, wetter and drier.

The house and log barn were built 150 years ago in 1862 by William Kimball, son of Heber C Kimball, and was used as a hotel for those traveling to Salt Lake City. The Rock House has since been a landmark for those traveling east through Summit County. The building was one of the original stations of the Overland Stages, the Holladay Stage Line and later became part of Wells-Fargo Express Company.

William Kimball sold the property to Brigham Sellers in 1902 who, just six years later, resold it to Milton O. and Hoffman Bitner. Over time Milton and Hoffman acquired 20,000 acres for a sheep ranch which was later split from north to south between the two brothers. It is said that the hotel was in need of many repairs when it was purchased by the brothers. Some changes were then made to the house to add modern comforts, relocate the stairs, and remove certain partitions. Extensive fences were built, and some of the original posts are still being used.

Milton's wife Edith was responsible for overseeing the house's remodeling and acting as hostess for many visitors, including General Authorities of the LDS Church. She also prepared meals for the ranch hands that were hired to help with the sheep business. At least three of the six Bitner children were born in the rock house: Blaine, M. Vaughn, and Willis. The three other children Keith, Joyce, and Leland were born in Salt Lake City.

Through the years the ranch has had many sheep, horses, cattle, chickens, pigs, goats, turkeys, cats, dogs, and a dairy. Hay and other grains have been raised with the help of many workers, some even from Park City after the mines shut down. Milton built a water line from a natural spring on the hill with plows and shovels. This spring provided much needed water for the ranch and is still the main water supply to it.

Like previous generations, the Bitners have been actively repairing and refurbishing the ranch property hoping to keep it in the family and the Summit County community for many years to come.



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*Caption: Patrons pose in front of the Kimball Hotel in 1872*