

More on the history on the Schweiger Ranch

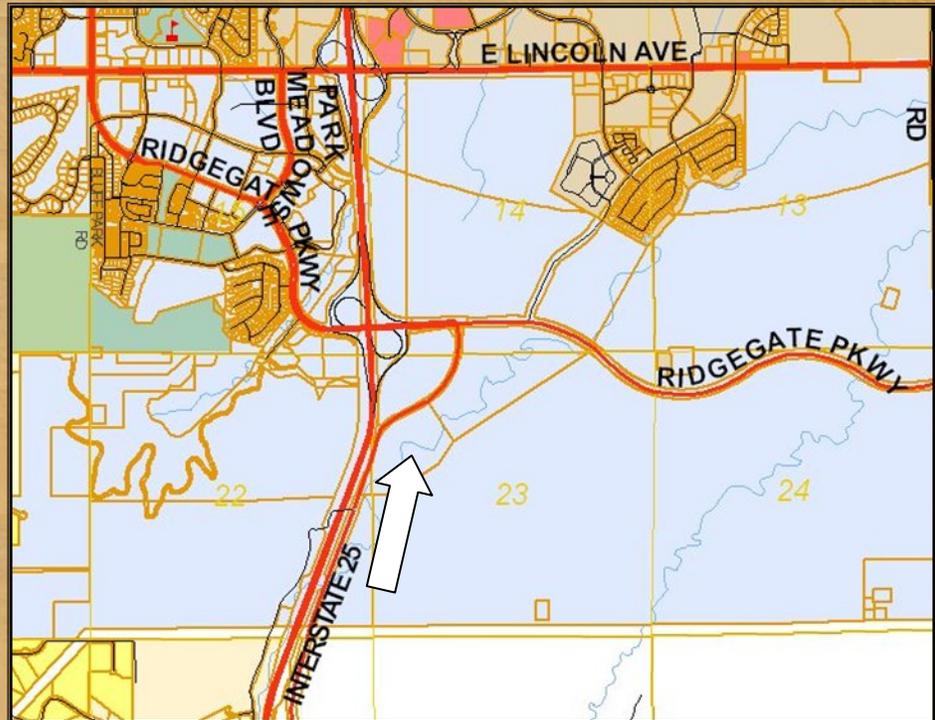
Narrative modified from the Landmark application made to Douglas County in 2004.

John Schweiger came to America around 1866 according to the Record Journal of Douglas County, dated October 1925. He worked in the mines and smelters in Tennessee and Georgia until 1869. John next moved to Denver and then left for Leadville where he worked in Horace Tabor's mines. His brothers Joseph and Jacob soon followed. While working in the mines, the brothers were able to save up money for land of their own near the bluffs south of Denver.

The land patent records show that the Schweigers were in the area as early as 1872 and 1873. Jacob, John, Joseph, and their father, Jacob Schweiger (Sr.) homesteaded the S ½, SW ¼ of Section 14, just north of the current ranch buildings. In the homestead papers – Testimony of Claimant, Mr. Schweiger states that Mrs. Schweiger “died approximately December 3, 1879” after they began homesteading the property. He also states that they were on the property in 1872.

John Schweiger purchased the initial landholding where the house and out-structures are today from William Eli Ashley in 1874. In the 1880's United States Census, the boys' father is listed as head of household with the three boys (Jacob, John, and Joseph) and a housekeeper named Victoria. Later in John Schweiger's last will and testament, he names Victoria as his daughter.

According to another set of homestead papers, John Schweiger left his father's house in 1880 and homesteaded the NE1/4 of Section 22, (property due west of the current ranch buildings - approximately where I-25 is currently located). It is in those homestead papers that witnesses and John Schweiger state that he built a frame house, stable, chicken coop, milk cellar and corral in 1883 and moved there with his new wife. The testimony was given in 1889.



According to lore, after their mother died, the boys decided that they needed a female to help out around the ranch and cook and take care of the house. The boys drew straws, and John drew the short straw and had to find a wife. He found her in the household of George Engl, near Lake Gulch (adjoining the present day Castlewood Canyon State Park). George Engl had helped his niece, Anna Scheider, to emigrate from Germany to America. John Schweiger was drawn to Anna after several visits to the ranch. After a short courtship, John and Anna married on January 1, 1885.

John and Anna's first child followed nine months after they were married. Her name was Rose. Children followed approximately every two years (they had a total of seven children).

It is believed that Anna and John Schweiger lived on the NE1/4 of Section 22 until after 1889. His original house on Section 22 was "14' x 18' with two windows and a board floor and had two rooms that were papered inside with building paper" – according to the Testimony of Claimant – John Schweiger in his Homestead Papers. As his family grew, he needed a larger house and moved his family to Section 23, where he built the current house and out buildings.

The house built in Section 23 is much larger (more able to accommodate a growing family) and it is believed that the current farmhouse, barn, stable and loafing shed were all built around the same time frame. The exact date is unknown, but there is evidence that the buildings were built after cut nails were no longer used. Very few cut nails can be found in the house or outbuildings. Additionally, the earliest photos that we have seen show a fairly new house. Based on the clothing and the date of the car, we believe the house was built between 1894 and 1910. This time frame also is the time period when John, Max, George and Joseph Schweiger were born – all sons of John Schweiger. Additionally, the subfloor in the kitchen has “Pine Bluff, Arkansas - City Lumber” stamped on the wood. After contacting the library in Pine Bluff, we discovered that the City Lumber did not begin operations until 1894.



Through the years, the ranch prospered and land was added to the original ranch property. When Joseph, John's brother, died from miner's consumption in 1888, he left his property to his brother John. According to the Record Journal of Douglas County of October 1925, John Schweiger had a stroke in 1917 and was unable to maintain the ranch. He moved to Castle Rock and sold most of the ranch to James C. Higgins in 1918. John sold another smaller portion of the ranch to Higgins in 1921. But in 1923, the ranch was returned to John for failure to make the payments. Since their father was no longer able to maintain the ranch, John's sons, John J. and Max, took the property and began farming the land together.

When John Schweiger (Sr.) died in 1925, he left the ranch property to his seven children and his wife Anna. The family then gave their inheritance to the brothers (John J. and Max) to continue the ranching operation. John J. and Max continued adding land to the ranch and successfully ranched the property until 1966 when they began selling the ranch to the Arapahoe Building Company who then platted it into lots. A provision in the sale of the property allowed Max and John J. to live in the house and use the surrounding land for ten years. John J. Schweiger passed away in 1970. Max Schweiger lived on the property until 1977 when he moved to Silver State Nursing Home in Castle Rock and later moved to Boulder Manor Nursing Home where he passed away on October 14, 1980.

Once Arapahoe Building Company purchased the land, the property changed hands numerous times. The property was subsequently sold to Colony Investments, who have leased out the property to various caretakers over the years.

Today the ranch is located within RidgeGate, a master planned community within the City of Lone Tree. A non-profit foundation, the Schweiger Ranch Foundation was deeded ownership of 38-acres around the ranch complex, and now manages the property.

Timeline

- 1843 September 15; John Schweiger born in Zellam Ziller, Tyrol, Austria.
- 1860 May; Anna Scheider is born.
- 1866 John Schweiger immigrated to the United States – Record Journal of Douglas County October 1925.
- 1869 John Schweiger left mines and smelters of Georgia and Tennessee and went to Colorado. Worked for H. W. Tabor in Leadville mines. Record Journal of Douglas County October 1925
- 1873 John quits working at the mines and came to Douglas County with his brothers – Joseph and Jacob. Record Journal of Douglas County October 1925
- 1872 Evidence that Jacob Schweiger (Sr.) is in Douglas County – Homestead papers – Sec. 14. – testimony of John Welte. States his wife died 2 to 3 years ago.

- 1874 October 26; John and Joseph Schweiger purchase land where house and out buildings stand from William Eli Ashley.
- 1877 Jacob Schweiger (Sr.) homesteads property to the north of the house.
- 1880 March - Jacob Schweiger (Jr.) begins living on land in Section 28.
- 1880 John Schweiger begins living on the NE1/4 of Section 22 (the Section to the west of the house), and files preemption papers on the land (according to the Homestead papers dated 10/24/1890).
- 1884 John Schweiger switches from preemption to homesteading the NE1/4 of Section 22, according to John Schweiger's Testimony of Claimant, dated June 14, 1889, in which he states, "I have been living on the property since 1880 and laid a foundation for a house in April 1880." He also states, "I married in 1885 and my family have lived there with me ever since and live there now." The buildings on the property consist of a frame house, stable, milk cellar, chicken coop, and corral.
- 1885 January 1; John Schweiger marries Anna Scheider (niece of George Engl) - marriage records
- 1885 September 27; Rose Margaret Schweiger born - cemetery records. Called Rosa in school census records.
- 1888 January 8 - Jacob (brother of John) Schweiger dies and John takes over homestead of section 28.
- 1888 Joseph Schweiger purchases NW1/4, NW1/4; S1/2, NW1/4; NW1/4, SW1/4; 14-T6S, R67W
- 1889 July 1; John Joseph Schweiger (son of John Schweiger) born - cemetery records
- 1891 August 27; Max Schweiger born (son of John Schweiger) - cemetery records
- 1896 Joseph Schweiger purchases a portion of Section 22 to the east of the property.
- 1898 Joseph Schweiger homesteads a portion of Section 22.
- 1903 Joseph Schweiger dies - Rose Tuggle - "John Schweiger of the Happy Canyon Ranch"
- 1916 January 27; born Virginia Rose, daughter of Rose and Lester Tuggle; cemetery records
- 1917 John Schweiger has a stroke and sells the ranch and moves to Castle Rock. Record Journal of Douglas County October 1925. Purchaser can't make payments and property returns to Schweigers - taken over by John J. and Max.
- 1918 James C. Higgins purchases the Schweiger Ranch for \$17,000 - Abstract Records - Book 6, Page 216.
- 1920 Margaret Johns (54) living at Schweiger ranch - listed as sister-in-law. Joseph listed as a real estate agent.
- 1921 James C. Higgins purchases the SW ¼ of Section 28. Mortgage is released February 28, 1923 - Abstract Records - Book 13, Page 500.
- 1923 James Higgins returns property back to John Schweiger for \$100. Book 60, Page 406. Abstract Records.
- 1925 October 7; John Schweiger (Sr.) dies and is buried in Riverside Cemetery - Denver.
- 1928 March 20; Anna Schweiger dies. Her daughter is the executor of her will - 83/329
- 1930's Ranch was electrified. (Rose Tuggle transcripts)
- 1956 May 5; Max and John J. sell Section 15 to Arapahoe Building Company.
- 1966 December 23; Max and John J. sell most of the property to Arapahoe Building Company.
- 1970 July 1; John J. Schweiger dies buried in Castle Rock. Cemetery records
- 1980 Max Schweiger dies - buried in Castle Rock. Cemetery records
- 1988 Rose M. (Schweiger) Tuggle dies. Buried in Castle Rock. Cemetery records