



A Timeline History of the Historic Crail Ranch¹

The story of the Historic Crail Ranch in Big Sky, Montana really begins back in Indiana and Missouri in the middle of the 19th Century.

November 18, 1842 Augustus Franklin Crail born in Decatur County, Indiana, to Samuel Spencer Crail II and Catherine Weaver.

1862 Homestead Act signed into law by President Lincoln, basically giving people who move into western territories the right to 160 acres of land for free. Prospective homesteader must be head of household or 21 years old, pay a small filing fee (approximately \$10), live on the land, "put down a house" (no size requirement), and improve the land (e.g., plant a crop). After 5 years, having met these requirements, the homesteader must take two witnesses to the state capital and "prove up," giving him or her title to the land.

1863 Gold rush in Montana

January 20, 1864 Sallie L. Creek (later Sallie Creek Crail) is born in Platte County, Missouri.

May 26, 1864 Montana becomes an incorporated territory of the United States

1865 Augustus Franklin Crail leaves Tipton County, Indiana and comes to Montana via wagon train from St Joseph, Missouri. He first works in a quartz mine near Helena. Within a few years, he establishes a homestead in the current Springhill section of Bozeman. Later he leases his land and works as a freighter between Miles City and Fort Benton, Montana.

1868 Homesteading begins in earnest in the Montana Territory

1869 The Union Pacific rail line reaches Corrine, Utah. Augustus Franklin Crail is involved in transporting freight to, from and within Montana. After 3 years of freighting, he returns to his ranch, working a portion of it and leasing the remainder.

1880 Utah & Northern Railroad enters Montana and comes to Bozeman three years later. Other forms of transportation in those days include stage lines (Wells Fargo), overland mail and express, ferries, steamers on the Missouri River (Fort Benton), wagons and horses.

1886 Augustus Franklin Crail marries Sallie L. Creek

August 4, 1887 Eugene Crail, oldest child of Augustus Franklin and Sallie Crail, is born in Bozeman, Montana Territory

August 26, 1888 Emmett Crail, second son of Augustus Franklin and Sallie Crail, is born at "Springhill" in Bozeman, Montana Territory.

November 8, 1889 Montana becomes the 41st state

1896 - 1900 Augustus Franklin Crail serves as Clerk of the 9th District Court in Bozeman

January 7, 1896 Lilian Crail, daughter of Augustus Franklin and Sallie Crail is born in Bozeman.

1898 First homesteaders move into Gallatin Canyon near what is now Big Sky, Montana.

December 1901 Augustus Franklin Crail purchases 160 acre homestead in what is now Big Sky meadow areas from Daniel Inabnit for about \$1 per acre. Land includes a small cabin.

1902 - 1914 In spring of 1902, Augustus Franklin Crail with his wife Sallie, sons Eugene (age 14) and Emmett (age 13), and daughter Lilian (age 6) move to the homestead in what is now the meadow section of Big Sky, Montana. They initially occupy the small cabin on the homestead but soon build a larger cabin and eventually expand the cabins and add a workshop, forge, hay barn, and a spring house over the creek for cold storage. The Crails raise wheat, cattle, horses, and sheep. Hay is stacked and stored by means of a "beaver slide" frame (which is still found in the Hamilton area of Montana). Sallie Crail works on quilts now in possession of Historic Crail Ranch. The family maintained their home on West Main Street in Bozeman and had several lodgers.

September 7, 1914 Sallie Creek Crail dies in Bozeman at age 50. She is interred in the Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman.

1914 - 1924

- Son Eugene Crail becomes a carpenter and also studies architecture through the International Correspondence School of Scranton, Pennsylvania. He is drafted into the Army in 1918 and serves as a hospital surveyor in England during WWI. Upon return, he practices carpentry trade in Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley. In 1929 he builds the first permanent schoolhouse for the Ophir district. He also built the first four buildings of the B-K.
- Son Emmett Crail remains on the ranch with his father
- Daughter Lilian Crail completes nursing school in Chicago and resides there

September 4, 1924 Augustus Franklin Crail dies of heart failure at the Crail Ranch at the age of 82. He is buried in the Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman. Crail Ranch passes to his sons, daughter Lilian having received her share several years earlier in the form of tuition to nursing school.

1924 - 1949

- Eugene moves to Bozeman and is a successful carpenter building the first Ophir School, structures at the B-K Ranch (later Lone Mountain Ranch), Presbyterian Camp, and other structures in Bozeman and Gallatin County. He marries Mary Alice Fowler Phillips, a widow with two boys. At 48 years of age, Eugene fathers a son, Francis William Crail, the only biological grandchild of Frank Crail. During WWII Eugene moves to Port Angeles, Washington.
- Emmett remains on the Crail Ranch continuing wheat farming, raising milk cows, and other operations. He serves on the school board.
- Lilian lives and works for a time in Chicago and then moves to Long Beach, California where she marries Lockheed engineer Hal DeWaide.

June 1949 Emmett, age 60, marries longtime friend, schoolteacher Annie Breneman, age 63, a college graduate who had taught high school mathematics in both Bozeman and then Anaconda. They live at the Crail Ranch for a short time and then move to Bozeman Hot Springs.

1950 Emmett sells Crail Ranch to Jack and Elaine Hume, who owned the ranch along with Tom and Florence Boa. The Ranch had grown to 960 acres. Humes add indoor plumbing and move the small cabin from its original location west of the main cabin to its present position. They also acquire the B-K Ranch and call the entire ranch the Lone Mountain Ranch, operating it as a dude ranch. The Humes lived in the Old Crail Ranch home.

1962 Sam Smeding acquires the Crail Ranch from the Humes and uses it as a base to run cattle in what is now the Big Sky golf course. The ranch has grown to more than 1,800 acres.

1970 Retired TV newscaster Chet Huntley and his consortium (Chrysler Realty, Continental Oil, Northwest Airlines, Burlington Northern, Montana Power) purchase the Crail Ranch property from Sam Smeding for what will become Big Sky Resort.

Summer 1970 Frank Crail, grandson of the original homesteaders, visits the Crail Ranch with his father Eugene, Uncle Emmett, and Aunt Lilian. It is believed to be the last time that the children of the original homesteaders see the Crail Ranch.

1970 - 1980 Crail Ranch buildings are used as temporary lodging for resort workers.

June 4, 1975 Emmett Crail dies at Deaconess Hospital in Billings, Montana at age 86. He is interred in the Breneman plot in the Sunset Hills Cemetery in Bozeman, near the grave of his wife Annie Breneman Crail (who died in 1958)

March 26, 1981 Lilian Crail DeWaide dies in Salem, Oregon at age 85. Her remains are interred in the DeWaide family mausoleum in Long Beach, California

August 12, 1981 The Gallatin Canyon Historical Society holds its first meeting at the Crail Ranch. The group forms a constitution, sponsors many history seminars, and applies for Crail Ranch inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. This group works with the Crail Ranch for 7 or 8 years.

April 15, 1982 Historic Crail Ranch is listed on the National Register of Historic Places through efforts of a group of the Gallatin Canyon Historical Society.

February 26, 1985 Eugene Crail dies in Oregon at age 97 and is interred at Belcrest Memorial Park, Salem, Oregon. At the time of his death he has been a member of the Carpenter's Union for 80 years.

1990s Boyne and the Big Sky Resort formally cede the Historic Crail Ranch to the Big Sky Owner's Association. The BSOA and the Historic Crail Ranch Restoration Committee of the Gallatin Canyon Women's Club restore the Crail Ranch. In the late 1990s, the groups jointly apply for Big Sky Resort Tax Board funding to underwrite the restoration.

July 2001 Historic Crail Ranch is opened for public tours in the summer months.

September 2002 Ranch gates and fencing are erected.

July 2004 Frank Crail, son of Eugene Crail and grandson of the original homesteaders, visits the Historic Crail Ranch and entrusts to the Big Sky Owner's Association a number of artifacts, photographs, and documents from the Crail family. He also meets for the first time with members of the Crail family from Indiana.

2006 Historic Crail Ranch Conservators are chartered as a committee of the Big Sky Community Corporation with the mission to preserve and maintain the Historic Crail ranch as an educational resource and center for community activities.

¹ Historic Crail Ranch is operated and administered by the Big Sky Community Corporation, a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization which exists to promote, acquire, preserve, and maintain land, parks, trails, and easements for the use of the people of the Big Sky Community and general public. Material in this publication was prepared from sources that include research conducted by Anne Marie Mistretta, PhD, Barbara Hoberecht, and Al Lockwood of the Historic Crail Ranch Conservators. More Information is on our website www.crailranch.org.