

Featured Grant Story: Ranching Heritage Association

(Original link: bit.ly/2ruw43h)



The National Ranching Heritage Center (NRHC) is an outdoor museum established to preserve the history of ranching, pioneer life and the development of the livestock industry in North America. More than 35 authentic furnished ranch buildings and structures have been relocated to the NRHC and show the evolution of ranch life from the late 1780s through the 1930s.

The Ranching Heritage Association (RHA) is the nonprofit corporation organized in 1969 to assist in development efforts for the NRHC. The RHA secures funds for the acquisition and care of NRHC historic structures and enhancement of ranch-related and educational programs for all ages.

The Barton House was moved to the NRHC in 1983 from Bartonsite in southern Hale County. The wood railings, posts and banisters were rotted on the widow's walk and second floor balcony of the Barton House. Funds were provided to perform the necessary repairs and to restore the structure to its beautiful 1909 appearance.

History of the Barton House

Joseph James and Mary Barton moved their family to west Texas in 1890 to take advantage of low land prices. The Barton family purchased 50 sections of land and started with the TL Ranch, 33 miles north of Lubbock. In 1906, news came that a railroad line to connect the Santa Fe at Hereford with the Texas and Pacific line at Colorado City would pass through the TL Ranch. By 1907, land values in the area skyrocketed, with acreage selling for ten times what the Bartons paid 15 years earlier.



The land boom gave Joseph Barton the idea to develop a town and build a beautiful personal home as its centerpiece. In 1909, the town of Bartonsite had attracted 250 people and was supported a hotel, lumberyard, church and school. Barton purchased plans for the showpiece home for \$45 (roughly \$1,250 in 2018) from Modern Dwellings magazine. The Queen Anne style house had five rooms on the ground floor, five rooms on the second floor, plus two indoor bathrooms, a

mansard style roof, and a widow's walk. Building materials were acquired from various mail order companies, shipped to Amarillo, and then hauled to the ranch.



During the time of Bartonsite growth, the region suffered a long drought, then a harsh blizzard. Many ranchers left to find grassland for cattle in a less severe climate. To make matters worse, the railroad changed its course and went through nearby Abernathy instead of Bartonsite. The many misfortunes devastated the town. The businesses eventually closed, residents moved elsewhere, and Joseph Barton accepted that his dream would not come true.

In the 1930s, Jack Barton, a son of Joseph and Mary Barton, along with his wife Josephine, bought the Barton homestead. Jack cultivated the land, growing cotton, grain and wheat. Jack passed away in 1967. After her husband's death, Josephine bequeathed the Barton House to the NRHC after learning of the NRHC and appreciating their dedication to historic preservation. She later passed away in 1974.



The Barton House was moved to the NRHC in one piece, except for one porch being removed. The 40-mile trip took three days. The Barton House now sits in the 27-acre historical park and is one of the most popular structures. The NRHC is the guardian of stories of pioneers such as Mr. Barton and Bartonsite, and those stories are told through structures. The house is visible from the Marsha Sharp Freeway, and images of the Barton House are immediately recognizable as part of the NRHC.

To learn more about the Ranching Heritage Association, please visit them at www.ranchingheritage.org, or on [Facebook](#).