by Guy Rocha, former Nevada State Archivist

If you can't claim a first then claim the oldest -- in this case the oldest continuously-operating family-owned ranch in Nevada. The Nevada Centennial Ranch & Farm Program honors working, long-time family-owned ranches or farms more than 100 years old. The ranch has to be at least 160 acres in size, or if less than 160 acres must have a gross yield of at least $1,000. The program, sponsored by the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office, Nevada Farm Bureau, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nevada Cattleman's Association, and the Nevada Department of Agriculture, is now in its third year.

There were many family-owned ranches and farms at the base of the Carson Range in the 1850s when the area was still known as western Utah Territory. A number continued to operate for more than 100 years. These pioneer properties, however, including the John Quincy and Rufus Adams Ranch (1853) and the Henry Fred Dangberg Ranch (1856) in Carson Valley, are gone now, the price of development in a booming urban corridor. Fortunately, the Dangberg Home Ranch in Minden is now Nevada's 26th state park.

The oldest continuously-operating, family-owned ranch honored by the Nevada Centennial Ranch & Farm Program is the Cushman-Corkill Ranch in Churchill County. Josiah Cushman purchased the 1,700 acre ranch on the Carson Sink in 1861 where Fallon is today. "Cushman was known for his high-quality cattle and a 'fine-bearing orchard'," according to the 2004 award narrative, "and eventually served as County Clerk, 1872-1874." Following the completion of the Newlands Reclamation Project in the first decade of the twentieth-century, the family raised

alfalfa, corn, potatoes, Sudan grass, and small grains.

The Centennial award-winning ranches and farms dating back to the 1860s include the Snyder Livestock Company in Mason Valley (1862), the Laura Springs Ranch in Carson Valley (1863), Stewart's Ninety-Six Ranch in Humboldt County's Paradise Valley (1864), and the Stodieck Farm in Carson Valley (1868). Recognized ranches and farms dating back to the 1870s include the Capurro Brothers in the Truckee Meadows (now Sparks), Hussman Family Ranch in Carson Valley, Overland Land and Livestock in Ruby Valley, the Pinson Ranch near Golconda, and the Henningsen Ranch in Carson Valley. There are many other award-winning ranches and farms dating back to the 1880s, '90s, and the first decade of the 20th century.

Other long-time, continuously operating family ranches and farms dating back to the nineteenth-century have not yet applied for Centennial status. Among them is the Stone Cabin Ranch in Nye County. The ranch east of Tonopah dates back to the 1860s. It had many owners until Ed Clifford purchased the property from Mary E. Reveal in June 1883 according to the Nye County deed books. Based on the 1880 U.S. census enumerations and his obituary in 1916, Clifford—who had immigrated from Scotland in 1870--arrived to the silver mining town of Tybo in Nye County around 1876 with his wife, Ester, and two sons, Edward and James, after working in the coal mines of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Colorado, and Wyoming. The Clifford family has operated the Stone Cabin Ranch for over 120 years. With the recent sale of the Irwin Ranch near Duckwater dating back to 1867, the Clifford's Stone Cabin Ranch may be the oldest, continuously operating family-owned ranch in Nye County.

As Nevada grows increasingly more urban, and the demands for water in the sprawling metropolitan areas lead to the further decline of farms and ranches, the Centennial Ranch & Farm Program is a wonderful means to recognize the long-time family-owned businesses dedicated to agriculture in our nation's most arid state.

Photo credit: Clarence Johnson Ranch, Mason Valley, 1956. Courtesy of the Nevada State Archives.

The Historical Myths of the Month are published in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, and the *Sierra Sage*
,
Carson City/Carson Valley.