

History

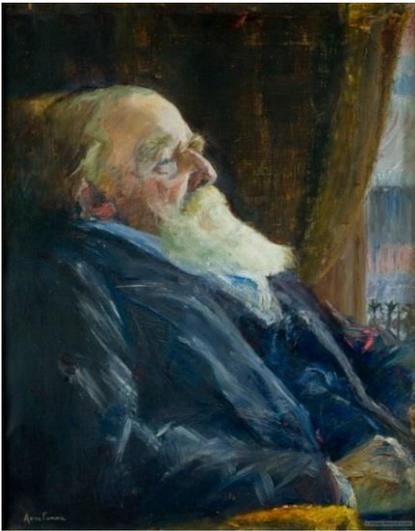


Figure 1- John Evans c 1890-
Painting by Anne Evans

In 1868, John Evans, the second territorial governor of Colorado, appointed by President Lincoln in 1862, took a camping trip into the mountains. Sam Elbert, who later became Colorado's sixth territorial governor as well as the son-in-law of John Evans, was in the party. Evans and Elbert were impressed by the lush grass, thick timber, beautiful vistas and abundant game and fish in the Upper Bear Creek area. They decided to acquire some 340 acres from a homesteader. In 1870 John Evans and Sam Elbert built a large family house and continued to buy adjacent land. In all, the Evans-Elbert Ranch grew to over 5,000 acres and covered three mountain valleys. It was a great summer retreat. It allowed two politicians and their families to escape the heat of Denver and the heat of the politics of the time!

The original family summer structure burned to the ground in 1909. The families and relatives and descendants of Evans and Elbert no longer had a summer retreat. Louise Elbert, Governor Sam Elbert's niece, and her entrepreneurial husband Leonard Everett, built a family house near the center of the Evans-Elbert Ranch. This house was called Wind-in-Woven, and is now the Elbert-Austin Ranch house. Other Evans family members and descendants soon built other family retreats on the larger Ranch. Each had a unique western style.

Wind-in-Woven was built in the "western rustic" Craftsman style. Jock Spence was the builder and the Hiwan Homestead Museum in Evergreen pays tribute to his many buildings in the Evergreen area. The Elbert-Austin Ranch is now on the National Historic Register because of the history of two territorial governors and the fine western rustic example of the Craftsman style.

The original common land of the Evans Ranch (the Elbert name was dropped after Sam Elbert died and left his land to his mother-in-law Margaret Evans) was owned in trust by almost 30 descendants of territorial Governor John Evans. A number of private homes have been built by Evans descendants on land given by or bought from the trust.

In 1982 the Evans Ranch common land was sold to Colorado Open Lands, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to preserving historic parcels of land. Five 500-acre parcels are now individually owned and five large year-round houses have been constructed. The group of new owners has formed the Evans Ranch Preservation Association for the preservation of the look and feel of the original Evans-Elbert Ranch.

Ethelind Elbert Austin died at the age of 99 in 2009. She was the niece of Louise Elbert who built Wind-in-Woven. Her brother Sam Elbert (named after the territorial Governor) was an ardent supporter of the Elbert-Austin Ranch with Ethelind until his death in 1997. Sam's partner, Michel Kaiser, and Sue Austin Ricketts (Ethelind Elbert Austin's daughter) and her husband Larry Ricketts continue the family traditions of entertaining, horseback riding, and lying in the hammock on the front porch. The next generation, Will and Dana Ricketts and their two girls, Macy and Emma, joins in, along with Katie Ricketts Siefertmann and her husband Valentine.



Figure 2- Evans Ranch Vista