

# THE ASPEN TIMES

## Historic Perry family ranch sold to 'conservation buyers'

Deal will prevent development of 1,180-acre spread

By **Scott Condon**  
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Bob and Ruth "Ditty" Perry's historic cattle ranch on the outskirts of Carbondale was sold Monday to buyers who plan to keep it out of the hands of developers.

The Perry family sold their 1,180-acre Mt. Sopris Hereford Ranch to three buyers who will continue the agricultural operations, according to Will Shafroth, executive director of Colorado Conservation Trust, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving open space in the state. Shafroth helped bring buyers Sue Rodgers and Tom Bailey together with the Perry family.

Rodgers bought the bulk of the ranch. She will fold the 850 acres of grazing land that she purchased into her adjacent Crystal River Ranch, according to Shafroth.

Bailey bought 302 acres that's most visible from Highway 133. His purchase includes the ranch houses as well as a regal old barn, several sheds and irrigated pastures.

"I have applauded them both for their willingness to step in," said Shafroth. "Neither of them were in the market to buy more land."

The remaining 28 acres of the Perry family ranch was sold to Marjorie Perry, a member of the family, and her husband Bill Fales. They own the adjacent Cold Mountain Ranch.

Bob Perry, a ranching icon in the valley, died Aug. 20, only two days after his family signed a contract to sell the ranch to Rodgers and Bailey.

"I believe that (negotiating with) Bob and Sue as the buyers of the ranch was of great comfort to Bob," said Shafroth.

Shafroth said all parties involved in the transaction designated him as a spokesman. He said Colorado Conservation Trust started talking to the Perry family about conserving the ranch 2 1/2 years ago. He approached them while working with Bailey on a program designed to raise funds to buy conservation easement on ranches and assist families that want to remain in the tough business.

When nothing could be arranged quickly enough on the Perry Ranch, Bailey and Rodgers "gasped" at the prospect of the land being sold and emerged as buyers, he said.

The Perry family received other offers from prospective buyers, but selected Rodgers and Bailey, according to Shafroth. The sales amount wasn't released at the family's request and it hadn't been recorded Tuesday with the Garfield County Clerk's office.

The development potential of the ranch is huge. It is located about one mile south of Carbondale. Most of it is in

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Crystal River Valley ranchers Bob Perry, left, and Bill Fales wrestle with a 2,000-pound bull to feed him medication. The Perrys sold their ranch Monday to buyers who plan to conserve it. (Paul Conrad/Aspen Times file)



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Garfield County with some in Pitkin County. The ranch abuts River Valley Ranch, a golf course and residential community developed in the 1990s by Gerald Hines.

"You can just imagine River Valley Ranch continuing to move that direction," said Shafroth.

The operation was part of a larger ranch that was in Ruth Brown Perry's family since 1924. Her father D.R.C. Brown was an early merchant in Aspen who amassed a fortune in silver mines.

Ruth and Bob moved to the ranch in 1941 and raised their seven children there. The family helped determine who to sell the land to, according to Shafroth.

A statement released by the family through Shafroth read, in part: "The Perry family appreciates the efforts of the Colorado Conservation Trust in making this happen so the ranching tradition can continue in the Crystal River Valley."

Rodgers was a longtime neighbor of the Perry family. Her family has ranched in the area since the 1940s.

"I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to join two historic ranches on the West Mesa.," Rodgers said in a prepared statement. "The Perrys have always been such good neighbors."

Bailey owns the Iron Rose Ranch east of Carbondale. "I intend to keep this land in agriculture and manage it for hay, cows and horses," said Bailey in the statement. "It's one of the most beautiful ranches in Colorado and a great honor for me to succeed the Perrys in stewarding this land."

Both Bailey and Rodgers credited the Colorado Conservation Trust for helping facilitate the deal.

Now that the sale is completed, Shafroth said he is looking forward to working with the two primary buyers on conservation plans in 2007. Conservation easements remove tax burdens from agriculture land owners while also removing the development potential. It also allows the owners stay on the land and continue agricultural operations.

"I'm confident, knowing Tom and Sue and what they care about, that this ranch will be preserved for agriculture," Shafroth said.

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[BACK](#) 