Fabulous Ranch Rebuilt Into Sportsmen's Haven

By DAVE RODWELL
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RATON, N. Mex., Oct. 14 (AP).—"Men don't get rich enough any more to build places like that," says one awed visitor to Vermejo Ranch.

The fabulous 600,000-acre northern New Mexico ranch, which sprawls into two States and four king-size counties, is being built into perhaps the most extensive, exclusive hunting and fishing heaven in the nation.

Fort Worth Oilman W. J. Gourley bought the ranch in 1952 for a reported $1,250,000. It was created by W. H. Bartlett, a wealthy Chicago grain dealer in 1902.

It cost Mr. Bartlett $4.2 million to buy and build the ranch.

At its heart are three stone mansions built by Mr. Bartlett—including a 62-room mansion for himself and two adjoining, and slightly smaller, mansions for his sons.

Bought Large Areas

When doctors gave Mr. Bartlett only a few months to live in 1902, he came to the vast highness of New Mexico and, Mr. Gourley says, "bought as far as he could see, and a sight more."

Keeping busy installing nickel bathroom fixtures, imported marble pillars and indirect lighting in his native stone mansions, Mr. Bartlett fooled the doctors and lived on for 16 years.

Near the mansions there were guest houses, a hospital, power, light and pumping plants, stables, stores, a school, green houses and fish hatcheries.

When Mr. Gourley bought the property, it had deteriorated. He put $750,000 into renovation. He figures it's worth it.

Hunters pursuing the bountiful elk (estimated to number 5,000) deer (estimated at 20,000) and innumerable wild turkeys pay a ranch permit of $300 for the 10-day season which Mr. Gourley sets up. This fee is in addition to regular State hunting licenses.

Equipment Included

The ranch fee includes use of hunting lodges equipped with cots, mattresses, cook stoves and firewood, suitable for 8 to 12 in a party.

Or, if the hunter prefers, he can get meals and a room on the American plan at the headquarters guest house.

The fisherman pays $15 a day for his choice of 50 miles of open streams or 23 lakes stocked with rainbow, cutthroat and Eastern brook trout.

If the cost isn't enough to make Vermejo Ranch exclusive, the security measures are. The gate to the ranch is padlocked. Visitors are given the combinations or met at the gates.

Mr. Gourley isn't just running a guest ranch for wealthy sportsmen, however. The ranch has 16,000 head of Herefords, some 600 purebred Hereford cows, 5,000 acres under irrigation and a coal mine. There are 60 employes.

Extend 60 Miles

The Texan's vast holdings extend eastward 60 miles from the slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. Leases and land owned outright lie in Taos and Colfax Counties in New Mexico and extend into two Colorado counties.

When Mr. Bartlett bought the land, he stocked streams with bass and trout and set up his own game and fish laws.

After his death, trustees handled the property until 1927. Then a group of wealthy Los Angeles men bought the ranch for a private club.

The original 75 members were headed by Harry Chandler, president of a Los Angeles newspaper corporation, and included such men as Will Rogers, Cecil B. DeMille, Douglas Fairbanks, Max C. Fleischman, Will Hays and Andrew Mellon.

When Mr. Gourley took over the ranch, he says, things had been allowed to run down. Turkeys were hard to find, and other game was scarce.

"This year," Mr. Gourley says, "we're going to have a special doe deer season, we've got so many of them. We've got turkeys all over the place."

Mr. Gourley has his own game management program using a farsighted business approach. Guests are permitted one deer, elk or bear for their $300 ranch permit.

Under Mr. Gourley's management, the ranch is extensively used by private parties, including those of major oil companies and other prosperous firms. When Raton civic leaders want to impress visiting officials or businessmen, a trip to Vermejo Ranch is a must.

D. C. INCOME TAX PAYMENT FOR '54 IS DUE SATURDAY

If you haven't paid the second half of your District income tax for 1954, you have until Saturday to do so.

This was announced today by Finance Officer James L. Martin, who said the tax may be paid in person at either the District Building (Room 120) or at the Municipal Center Building (first floor, C street entrance).

Payments made by mail, he said, will not be charged any penalty if they are postmarked before midnight Saturday.

He said the tax yields a revenue to the District of between $12.5 million and $13 million.

Scottish Rite Council To Hold Convention

The 69th annual convention of the United Supreme Council, Scottish Rite Masonry, will be held Sunday through Tuesday in the Scottish Rite Cathedral, 1633 Eleventh street N.W.

Willard W. Allen of Baltimore, grand knight, will be honored at a banquet Monday evening in Baldwin Hall, Howard University. Clarence L. Simpson, Ambassador to the United States from Liberia, will present him with an award. Honorary degrees will be conferred on Charles P. C. King, grand master, and C. A. Cassell, past grand master.