

# History Deeper Than A Thousand Walnut Roots

## The Family Ranch Once Called Fountain

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Two Rivers Tribune

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The Campbell Ranch. The Fountain Ranch. The Ammon Ranch.

It's known as all three, and there's a bit of history.

Nicolé Ammon stood on a newly restored deck overlooking the Trinity River and began to tell the story of her grandparents, great-grandparents and everybody in between.

"This place has a rich history," Ammon, who bought the property along with her husband Erick in 2009, said.

Ammon will open the restored ranch house doors to the public on Memorial Day weekend to share her family's rich history and celebrate the work that has made the ranch a success then and now.

The Ranch has been in Nicolé's

family since it was first developed by William Campbell in the late 1800s. In 1911 Campbell sold the 240-acre home and property to Dr. Matthew Fountain, a popular dentist who maintained a practice in Arcata and a home in Blue Lake.

He also frequented the Indian School in Hupa and was well-liked according to historical accounts found in the Susie Baker Fountain Papers at Humboldt State University.

Nicolé said it became too difficult for Fountain to transport goods and supplies over the old single-file mule bridge so he decided to build a bridge that could support motorized vehicles.

Nicolé and Erick's daughter, Sarah Gruetzmacher wrote, "Dr. Fountain pioneered the north side of the Trinity River in Salyer by funding and building the first wooden suspended bridge."

He also planted 1,000 English walnut trees on the ranch, of which six remain today casting shade over the grassy knolls where Erick and Nicolé's horses and Buffalo graze. Seasoned entrepreneurs, the couple is contemplating farming alfalfa for

livestock feed and marketing their bison.

Their business ideas are no less ambitious than their grandparents'.

Here's another excerpt from the Susie Baker-Fountain Papers:

April 1911: Dr. M.F. Fountain of Blue Lake has purchased the Campbell Ranch from Wm. and James Campbell, containing 240 acres. The ranch is situated on the north bank of the Trinity River in Trinity County about eight miles from China Flat. It is an ideal place for fruit raising and the doctor intends to plant most of the tract in English walnuts, having found that walnuts will do well there and large crops can be produced and sold for good prices."

Later, Susie Baker—the first graduate of Humboldt State University in 1914—would become a member of the Fountain Family after she married Dr. Matthew Fountain's son, Eugene (who also became a dentist).

Erick's family was also rooted in the walnut orchards of the Fountain Ranch.

Although Nicolé's family owned the ranch, her husband Erick's grandparents Chan Ammon and Ruth Tay-



Delphine 'Del' Fountain's photo sits atop an end table in her home that was recently restored by her granddaughter, Nicole Ammon. The family will hold an open house at the Fountain Ranch in Salyer on Friday and Saturday, May 23-24 from 8am-8pm. The community is invited to visit. / Photo by Allie Hostler, Two Rivers Tribune

lor met there while working through the haying season. One of their favorite and most ironic family stories mentions how Erick's grandparents were "sparkin' on the back porch" during the haying season. They later married and had seven sons.

After Dr. Matthew Fountain passed away, Everette Fountain bought out his siblings, uprooted most of the walnut trees and began a successful cattle and sheep ranch.

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with his wife, Delphine.

Everette and Delphine had two children, William and Colleen.

Everette and Delphine also operated a boy's home at the ranch. They brought several disadvantaged boys from the bay area to be rehabilitated with ranch work, fishing and hunting.

"He was really a disciplinarian," Colleen Fountain-McCullough, said as she sat on the porch of the old ranch house. "They gathered cattle down over the bank, saddle horses, shoed horses, branded cows, went

swimming. It was a wonderful place for them to stay."

She pointed out a bullet hole in one of the support beams holding up the porch.

"These were truly troubled young men," Nicolé said. "One of them actually shot at grandpa."

Nicolé recently completed a four-year endeavor to restore the ranch house, outbuildings and cottage.

The house underwent a complete rebuild, but she managed to keep much of the house's original features—even the bullet hole in a porch beam—wherever possible



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while maintaining its architectural uniqueness like a soft dip in the eaves and shake siding.

Each room has signature personal touches, family photographs, a design scheme unrivaled by Better Homes and Gardens showrooms and the functionality and feel of a genuine ranch house. Dr. Fountain's 100-year-old piano was also restored and sits next to her Grandpa Everette's favorite seat in the house.

Outside, custom maple leaf stamped concrete walkways lead visitors through the original landscaping and garden of Nicolé's grandma, Del.

A terrace was prepared as a wedding spot and a lighted deck and infinity pool were installed to complement the mini mansion.

Nicolé, who has a son reliant on a wheel chair, was also sure to make the entire property handicap accessible, including the bathrooms, swimming pool and entry ways.

They hope to eventually hold weddings and events there, but first they will host an open house on Memorial Day weekend. The community is invited to visit the ranch house on Friday and Saturday, May 23-24 from 8am to 8pm. ■