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The Rocker b Ranch: Funding the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

By ADAM B. OLIVIER 32°
Editor-in-Chief



Photo by Cody Webb 32°. Photo of Cody Webb “processing” a newborn registered Hereford calf which includes: weighing the calf (pictured), ear tagging, tattoo, vaccines, and DNA punch.

The Rocker b Ranch is a 180,000 acre contiguous ranch that is located in Barnhart, Texas. The ranch is owned by the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children and is a significant source of funding for the hospital.

The history of the ranch goes back to 1894 when it was first formed as the “Bar S Ranch”. It was purchased by U.S. Senator William Blakely (a Scottish Rite Mason) in 1954. He changed the name to “Rocker b” and added it to his growing empire. In 1964, Brother Blakely donated the ranch to the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

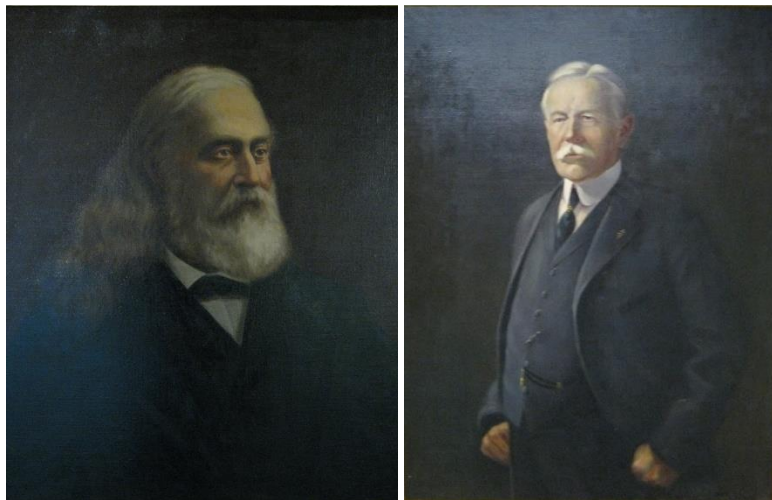
Right Worshipful Cody Webb is the District Deputy Grand Master of Masonic District #55, the Worshipful Master at Big Lake Lodge #1203, a three-time past master of Concho Lodge #1260 in San Angelo, and he is a 32° Scottish Rite Mason of the Waco Valley.

RW Webb is also the Director of Ranch Operations for Rocker b Ranch. He started from the bottom as a cowboy when he was 22 years old and has worked his way to the top.

“I have the best job in the world. I get to support the mission of the hospital and do what I enjoy at the same time. Even if we’re having a bad day, I remember that there might be kids having a worse day and that we get to directly help them and the hospital,” RW Webb said.

“We are a fully functioning cattle ranch. We have a registered, purebred, Hereford heard of cattle. We also allow hunting on-property, both guided and unguided. We have white-tailed deer, Rio Grande turkey, quail, and even pronghorn antelope.”

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**Albert Pike (c. 1911) by Brother Boris Bernhard Gordon (Left)
Samuel Poyntz Cochran (1925 or earlier) Artist Unknown (Right)**

The Oldest Artwork Owned by the Houston Valley

By GERRY GAMAN 33° Ins. Gen. Hon
Contributor

The portrait of Albert Pike, which hangs in the museum area on the second floor of the Houston Valley’s building, is the oldest piece of art currently owned by the Houston Scottish Rite Bodies. The artist was Boris Bernhard Gordon, who was a member of the Houston Bodies at the time the portrait was painted in 1911. According to the minutes of the San Jacinto Lodge of Perfection, a photograph of Brother Pike was requested from the Supreme Council, from which Brother Gordon planned to create the portrait. If the oil on canvas painting is indeed based on a photograph obtained from the Supreme Council, it is curious that it was of Pike in regular clothing and not in his regalia as Sovereign Grand Commander.

Brother Gordon, who was born in Russia in May 1880, studied at the Royal Academy in London and the Academy of Art in Munich before immigrating to the United States in 1906. He served as a private in the United States Marines during World War I. He received his Blue Lodge Degrees in April and May of 1906 in Hugo Lodge No. 217, Hugo, Oklahoma Territory. He joined the Lodge of Perfection and Chapter of Knights Rose Croix of the Houston Scottish Rite Bodies in early 1907, and received the remaining degrees from the Galveston Bodies in August of the same year.

His works included the U. S. Capitol, several state capitols, landscapes, and portraits, with studios in both Houston and Washington, D.C. His subjects included Presidents Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower, as well as Will Rogers, Shirley Temple, and the first five justices of the Oklahoma Supreme Court. Examples of his work are owned by the Museum of Fine Arts Houston and the Houston Heritage Society.

Boris Bernhard Gordon died in Houston on March 27, 1976, and is buried at the Houston National Cemetery.

The portrait of Samuel Poyntz Cochran, which was acquired in 1925 and recently relocated to the museum area on the second floor, is the second oldest piece of art owned by the Houston Scottish Rite Bodies. It is interesting that neither the minutes of the San Jacinto Lodge of Perfection nor those of the Houston Chapter of Knights Rose Croix contain any mention of this portrait of the Sovereign Grand Inspector General. What we know of its provenance comes from Sovereign Grand Commander John Henry Cowles with his column “Journeyings” that he wrote for *The New Age* magazine.

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Continued from the front.



Photo by Cody Webb 32°. Photo of horses on the Rocker B. Ranch.

RW Webb further explained that the ranch also has a “rapidly growing” horse program. The horse breeding program is overseen by his wife, Sarah, who is also the office manager.

On top of the various ranch and recreational-related activities on the property, Rocker B. also has natural reserves of oil and gas that are actively being explored. Together these different operations make a strong and diversified revenue stream for the ranch, and thus for the Scottish Rite Hospital for Children.

Rocker B. has seven families who live on site and keep the facility working. RW Webb repeatedly stated that he enjoyed his job and that part of what made working there so fulfilling for everyone was that the hospital was their primary beneficiary. Students from Angelo State and Texas A&M University also sometimes visit the ranch.

RW Webb will visit the Houston Valley for the June 2022 stated meeting and will give a presentation on the Rocker B. Ranch.

Announcements

Donations to the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital for Children

Anyone can make a direct donation to the Scottish Rite Hospital. This can be done by visiting the hospital’s website at ScottishRiteForChildren.org and clicking on the “Donate” button at the top left of the home page.

Per Capita Program

Endowed life members and dues exempt members are encouraged to donate \$30 or more per year to offset the per capita membership assessment placed on the Houston Valley by the Orient of Texas. Donations can be made through the Valley’s website at www.HoustonScottishRite.org. Click on the “Membership” tab and then click “Dues Donations and Meal Fees” in the drop down menu.

Open Parts for The 13th Degree Team

The 13th degree “Royal Arch of Solomon” is now led by Brother Michael Charlton 32° of Bryan. Any brother interested in joining the 13th degree team can contact Brother Charlton at:

Charltonm98@gmail.com

“Journey Passport” Program

The Houston Valley is now participating in the “Journey Passport” program which includes 33 challenges that allow participants to earn six unique Scottish Rite challenge coins. The passport program is designed to take brothers throughout the Valley of Houston and the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite. To learn more and get a passport contact Brother Jason Rees 32° KCCH at:

acompass@yahoo.com

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The following was excerpted from the July 1925 issue:

Arrived at 11 a. m., Monday, April 27, in Houston, Tex., the rival of Dallas, but a friendly rivalry. Dallas has long boasted of a skyscraper of twenty-eight stories, so Houston is erecting one of twenty-nine stories. If the rivalry were not friendly and brotherly, of course the new structure at Houston would run up thirty or thirty-five stories. Inspector General Cochran and a large number of brethren were at the station. Went to the Rice Hotel for a few minutes and then to the new Scottish Rite Temple, reaching there in time to witness the conclusion of the Sixth Degree.

There were sixty-eight candidates in the class. The reunion closed Friday, May 1, with seventy-one. The new building and grounds are valued at \$425,000. The auditorium seats 1,268 and the banquet room about 400. There seems to be an increasing sentiment towards eliminating lunches, dinners and banquets, especially free ones, not only here but in other places in the general jurisdiction. The degrees are all conferred in full usually, but one or two were communicated at this reunion owing to getting behind on schedule caused by delay in handling the new scenery and equipment. The degrees were well conferred; impressiveness, dignity and earnestness being emphasized by the paraphernalia, which was appropriate and pleasing. An incident gratifying indeed was the presentation to the Bodies on behalf of an unknown donor of an oil portrait of Inspector General Cochran, and to him it was a complete surprise as well.

The New Age, July 1925 issue, p. 429-430

Not only has the name of the donor of the portrait remained anonymous, but so has that of the artist. No name appears on the front or back of the artwork to suggest who might have painted it.

Photos From Last Meeting

