

# FOR SALE

## Historic Ranches Seek Caring Buyers.

*Soaring land values leave only the superrich in the game. Words & photos © Robb Kendrick.*



Over the past 10 years ranch property values have skyrocketed, according to Charles Gilliland, a research economist at Texas A&M. Historic ranches of epic size are especially attractive to deep-pocketed buyers who do not need to have them pencil out in terms of normal ranching activities. In recent years the historic Texas Waggoner Ranch, 510,527 acres under one fence, and 6666 Ranch, 266,983 acres, have sold, giving pause to many locals wondering what the fallout might be.

Fortunately, at least in these two examples, so far the changes have been minimal. They have not been broken up into smaller parcels or used to produce wind or solar power. Cattle operations appear to be continuing. Of course, there are some changes, as with any new owner/manager, but those I spoke to didn't express anything major in terms of traditional ranching operations.

The name behind the 6666 Ranch pur-

*Ashley Daniel rides her horse on the 6666 Ranch near Guthrie, Texas.*



*Cowboys at the Pitchfork Ranch starting a young colt.*

chase is a native Texan from the Fort Worth area who I believe respects the history and importance that this historic ranch represents, so I'm hopeful the change of ownership will be good for the 6666. Though many would like things to remain the same, family dynamics and lineage are always evolving and passing on these legacy ranches can be complex because of competing interests within the family. Those who want to continue on in many cases do not have the resources to buy out others who want to

move on and leave ranching.

There are of course examples of ranch sales that have resulted in the breaking up for development into small ranchettes or for wind and solar production, which to most cattle ranchers is an abomination. These ranches have been bought to monetize to the max with little regard to the ranching heritage they represent. The ultrawealthy are the only ones who can afford to buy large historic ranches because their outrageous price tags do not make them profitable as tradi-



*Buster McLaury helps another cowboy up during spring branding at the 6666 Ranch.*



*Separating calves during spring roundup at the JA Ranch.*



tional ranching operations. They are out of reach for traditional ranchers.

Let's hope that those with deep pockets who do buy seriously consider preserving the ranch heritage and American history that these operations represent, and not merely see them as assets to break up and monetize like some Wall Street equity firm.

Let's all keep our fingers crossed. ■

*Robb Kendrick loves to cook, bike and be outside. For more of his brilliant work, go to [www.robkendrick.com](http://www.robkendrick.com). He says: "The photos presented on these pages are from past visits to the Pitchfork, JA and 6666 ranches. They are timeless and represent the current way the ranches are continuing to do business, which, when it comes to on-the-ground cattle operations, could very well be from half a century ago."*

*A cowpuncher starts a young colt at the Pitchfork Ranch.*

