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Kahua Ranch Ltd., Monty & John Richards

The Kahua Ranch is located on the north end of the Big Island of Hawaii, past Kawaihae harbour and south of the old town of Hawi. The ranch has been in the Richards family for some time.

Monty Richards divulged something about himself and the Kahua Ranch. "I was born in September of 1929 on this ranch, the year after it was purchased by the Richards and Van Holts families in 1928. I lived here until my parents moved to Honolulu when I was two years old. I came back and started working for the ranch after college in 1953. I am still working here!"

In 1980 we split the ranch in half, the north was Paholo. In 1928 there were hardly any fences up until W.W.2, but since then we have got into intensive grazing. There are 4,900 deeded acres, but we ranch on 9 to 10,000 acres. We have another ranch at south point owned by the National Park and National Trust. The Kahua Ranch is held in trust and is operated by a board of directors and a single trustee, and you try to keep that person happy. The trustee is me!"

Monty Richard's son, John, went on to explain a little more about the ranch.

"The Kahua Ranch comes from the old Hawaiian ahupua, the land division system that ran from the top of the mountain to the ocean. A group of people would live in that area run by a konahiki. Down on the flat areas, near the harbour is where Kamehameha 1 trained his personal guard during the formation of his military kahua, meaning the beginning.

The ranch runs about 4,000 mother cows on the 8,500 acres, which is divided into two sections. The top of the ranch, called Pohopelli, is 4,400 feet and receives 120 inches of rain a year, the bottom down near the ocean gets about 9 inches of rain a year. This is one of the few places in the world where one can walk from a desert to a jungle in a little over an hour. It is a very diverse climate and as you move up and down the mountain there can also be a 35 degree temperature variant.



Map of North Hawaii, home to the Kahua Ranch.



Monty Richards and his son John on a balcony overlooking the Kahua Ranch Ltd. in north-western Hawaii. Doug Cox photo.



Monty Richards is the single trustee of the Kahua Ranch Limited, which was founded in 1928 by Atherton Richards, Monty's father, and Ronald Von Holt. Richards remained in Honolulu while Ronald Von Holt moved to Kahua as the ranch manager. Doug Cox photo.



Cattle on the Kipu ranch are used to being handled and trailered. The placid nature of the Hereford breed also helps. Doug Cox photo.



Peacocks were introduced to the ranch and have become part of the menagerie. Doug Cox photo.



Stock chutes and small pens on the Kipu ranch make moving cattle efficient. Here Duane and a helper load mother cows for a trip to another pasture. Doug Cox photo.



I never did ask Duane the age of this longhorn Hereford steer, however, judging from the length of his horns I would guess four years old or better. Doug Cox photo.



Every ranch should have horses, however, these horses are mostly used in rough terrain as the ranch relies on ATVs and pickup trucks. Doug Cox photo.



Charles Vidinha is a Kipu ranch hand. He has the back of his truck filled with the traditional ranching gear, wire posts, staples and some steel posts. Doug Cox photo.