



Reinheimer Family donates 110-acre ranch to the Foundation, creating open space gateway to Ketchum



The Reinheimer Ranch greets visitors as they drive into Ketchum/Sun Valley. (photo courtesy Idaho Mountain Express)

This is the fifth in a series of 12 articles about the 50-year history of the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands.

By Steve Stuebner

It's hard to imagine a gift of land that might be more meaningful and significant in Ketchum/Sun Valley, Idaho.

The iconic Reinheimer Ranch, with more than 110

acres of open space and pasture lands, greets visitors as they approach Ketchum/Sun Valley on both sides of Idaho State Highway 75. The pastures are often occupied by Sun Valley draft horses and wildlife - foxes, coyotes and elk in particular.

The late Eleanor Reinheimer gifted the property to the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands in 1977. Eleanor and her husband, Howard, who hailed from New York, began visiting Ketchum/Sun Valley in the late 1930s, when Union Pacific Railroad and its Chairman Averell Harriman were just beginning to

promote the area to Hollywood celebrities and New Yorkers.

The Reinheimers purchased the ranch in 1941; they often spent the entire summers in the quiet haven, especially after World War II, says Doug Bradshaw, the trustee designated by the Reinheimer Family to oversee the original 6-acre ranch house and barn property.

“They loved the Western culture,” Bradshaw says. “It became a unique and wonderful experience for them.”

When Eleanor Reinheimer donated the property to the Foundation following her death in 1976, she specified in her will that she wanted the 110-acre property to be maintained in the same “natural state” that her family had enjoyed. The Foundation made sure that her wishes were fulfilled.

The scenic, pastoral property lies adjacent to the Big Wood River and the Wood River Trail, a paved bike path. The open space area owned by the Sun Valley Company on the River Run side of Bald Mountain adds to the natural setting as people drive into town.

“The Reinheimer Ranch is a beloved open space and the perfect gateway into the City of Ketchum,” says Ketchum Mayor Neil Bradshaw. “The old ranch buildings, the horses, the adjacent river and the mountain vistas represent all that we value as a community. The ranch provides a warm welcome to all

who come here and celebrates our authentic small mountain town.”

“The nicest aspect of it is the separation it creates, and a strong sense of entry when you come into Ketchum,” adds Tim Silva, former general manager and a strategic advisor to Sun Valley Company. “It just gives you a nice feeling when you pass by, there’s so much open land.”

“The whole community just loves it. And the community supports everything to keep it in its natural state,” Doug Bradshaw says.

The pastoral setting pays tribute to the ranching pioneer history and heritage that surrounded the Ketchum/Sun Valley area back in the day. Ranchers



*Eleanor Reinheimer
(courtesy Cathy Reinheimer).*



Winter scene at Reinheimer Ranch. (Courtesy Eye on Sun Valley)

mainly raised sheep in the area, as well as some cattle. In the early 1900s, more sheep were shipped by rail to market from Ketchum than anywhere else in the United States.

guy who made it all work,” Bradshaw says.

Getting in on the ground floor of the business, they invited Reinheimer to be an angel investor as well. All of that led to big success.



When Harriman and Union Pacific began promoting Sun Valley as a national destination in the mid-1930s, the Reinheimers heard about it through New York high society parties and were intrigued. They took the train all the way from New York. It took several days to get there. Once in Shoshone, Idaho, a Union Pacific spur line beelined north to Ketchum/Sun Valley.

How Sun Valley got discovered

During the winter of 1935–36, Averell Harriman enlisted the services of an Austrian Sportsman, Count Felix von Schaffgotsch, to travel across the western U.S. to find an ideal site for a winter resort, according to Wikipedia.

Schaffgotsch was impressed by the combination of Bald Mountain

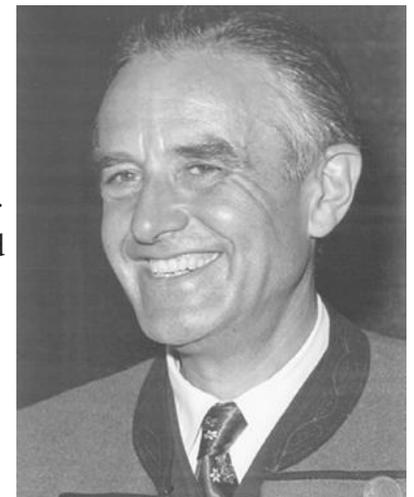
and its surrounding mountains, snowfall, abundant sunshine, moderate elevation, and absence of wind.

He also learned from a UP employee that the rail spur to Ketchum cost the company more money for snow removal than any other branch line he explored while looking for the ideal ski area.

A lifelong skier, Harriman visited Sun Valley soon thereafter and agreed on the location. He purchased a 3,888-acre ranch for \$4 per acre

and construction began immediately on Sun Valley Lodge. It took seven months and \$1.5 million to build, according to Wikipedia.

Union Pacific publicist Steve Hannagan named the



Averell Harriman
(Courtesy Alf Engen Ski Museum)

Howard Reinheimer was close friends with Rodgers and Hammerstein.
(Courtesy Cape Symphony blogpost)

The Trailing of the Sheep Festival, held each year in the fall in downtown Ketchum, provides a week-long series of programs and events that pay tribute to the region’s ranching heritage, culminating in 1,000 sheep walking down Main Street.

Reinheimer family history

Howard E. Reinheimer and his wife, Eleanor, grew up in the New York City area. Howard went to Columbia University in New York, where he got a bachelor’s degree, a master’s and a law degree.

While at Columbia, he met Oscar Hammerstein, who would become a world-famous musical composer with partner Richard Rodgers. Rodgers wrote the music and Hammerstein penned the lyrics for many Broadway musicals that also became hit movies, such as Oklahoma!, Carousel, South Pacific, The King and I, and The Sound of Music.

Reinheimer was good friends with both men and became their legal counsel. As Rodgers and Hammerstein created the musicals, Reinheimer drew up legal papers to protect their intellectual property and provide copyright protection. “He was the legal

resort “Sun Valley” and developed the tag line: “Winter sports under a summer sun.” Sun Valley Lodge opened on December 21, 1936; the ski area opened the same winter.

The Reinheimers visited Sun Valley in 1937 and 1938. Both Rodgers and Hammerstein visited during the same time period. In the early 1940s, the Reinheimers bought the ranch on the southern outskirts of Ketchum. Tourist travel waned during World War II, but after the war, the Reinheimers returned to Sun Valley for nearly every summer, Bradshaw says.

Eleanor and Howard had two sons, Howard Jr. and Kurt. They also had two beautiful Irish setters that traveled with them to Sun Valley.

Bradshaw applies for scholarship to Princeton

Doug Bradshaw, the trustee, grew up in Wendell, a farm town located above the Snake River canyon. His family ran a honey business. Bradshaw’s family often took vacations in the Ketchum/Sun Valley area in the summer. They rented an inexpensive cabin in Ketchum to enjoy the magnificent setting.

“My parents loved the Wood River Valley and brought my brother and I up there frequently,” he said. “We always looked forward to our family trips to Sun Valley.”



Myrle Bowcutt worked as the care-taker of the Reinheimer Ranch for almost 40 years.



Cattle used to graze on the Reinheimer Ranch, but now it’s just Sun Valley draft horses and pack horses. (Courtesy IFPL)

As a high school student in Wendell, Bradshaw read in the newspaper that the Reinheimer family had just lost their son, Kurt, to a car accident in the Warm Springs Creek area. They were interested in awarding

a scholarship to a local high school student who might qualify to get into Princeton University.

Bradshaw read the article and decided to apply.

He went up to Ketchum, met Eleanor Reinheimer in person and filled out an application. The Reinheimers thought he looked like a promising lad, and awarded the first Kurt Reinheimer Scholarship to Bradshaw. Following college, Bradshaw returned to Idaho to join his father in their honey business, R.D. Bradshaw & Sons.

He stayed in touch with the Reinheimer family during college and afterwards. “I got to the know the family very well,” he said.

Myrle Bowcutt, ranch care-taker

The Reinheimers maintained a small cattle herd on their ranch for many years. In 1961, local resident Myrle Bowcutt, who had been working summers for the U.S. Forest Service and winters as a Sun Valley ski bus driver, took over as ranch caretaker.

“He loved the work on the ranch and the cattle that he had,” according to an obituary for Merle Bowcutt. “Myrle loved the outdoors. He loved fishing, hunting,

camping and any occasional outing as long as he was able to bring home a load of wood for the winter.”

Howard Reinheimer died in 1970 at the age of 71. He was a leading expert on theater and copyright law. According to an obituary in *The New York Times*, his client list included Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Sigmund Romberg, Alan Jay Lerner, Gilbert Miller, Mary Martin, Ina Claire Beatrice Lillie, Maxwell Anderson, Robert Sherwood, Moss Hart, Sidney Kingsley, George S. Kaufman and Marc Connelly.

When Eleanor Reinheimer died in 1976, her will specified that she wanted to donate the Reinheimer Ranch to the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands. She split the property into a 110-acre ranch and 6-acre parcel that contained the family house and the barn. She made Doug Bradshaw one of three trustees to oversee the management of the house and barn property.

Eleanor Reinheimer had known about the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands assisting with the state of Idaho receiving the donation of Harriman Park in Eastern Idaho, Bradshaw said. “Largely because of the Harriman Ranch deal, she thought, I’ll do the same thing,” he said.

A key difference was, however, that the Reinheimers did not want to turn their property into a park. They just wanted it preserved in a “natural state” as a working ranch.

Cathy Reinheimer moves to Ketchum

Howard and Eleanor Reinheimer’s son, Peter, and his first wife, Jeanne, had four daughters: Karen, Cathy, Anne and Gigi, as well as grand-daughter, Parker, who are the future beneficiaries of the Reinheimer Trust’s 6 acres of land, where the ranch house and barn are located.

Cathy Reinheimer first visited Sun Valley in 1977 when she was 20 years old. “Back in those days, Sun Valley was pretty low-key,” she remembers. “It was a destination for the rich and famous, but it was still pretty quiet and hadn’t really been discovered yet.”

Cathy studied theater at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. She became an accomplished actress, appearing in off-Broadway productions, regional theatre and daytime-drama. In the fall of 1996, she decided to move into the Reinheimer family home on the ranch, just south of Ketchum. She’s lived there for



*Top, Cathy Reinheimer. Below, Cathy’s father, Peter Reinheimer with his brother, Kurt.
(Courtesy Cathy Reinheimer)*

26 years.

“Not a day goes by when friends or others will recognize that I’m living in the family house, and they pour their hearts out to me and say how grateful they are that the family hasn’t developed this property,” Cathy Reinheimer says. “And I must agree!”

Reinheimer teaches theater part-time at Wood River High School and has a TV script-development company.

She really enjoys looking out her window and seeing the horses and wildlife on the property.

“In the winter, we get herds of elk out here in the snow,” she says. “I’ll see coyotes running around doing their jumping thing. Deer. Foxes. They’re all there.”

Walkers, runners and bicyclists get a fetching view of the Reinheimer Ranch

when they pass by the property on the Wood River Trail. Constructed over the top of the abandoned Union Pacific railroad line, the 32-mile Wood River Trail System connects the communities of Ketchum, Sun Valley, Hailey and Bellevue.

The Foundation played a key role in providing a way for the WRT to pass through the Reinheimer property. “To highlight the legacy of the Harriman family and the Union Pacific Railroad, Don Weilmunster, representing the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands, negotiated the purchase of the railroad right-of-way and 100-feet of preserved trackage adjacent to the Reinheimer Ranch, known as the River Run section. In 1988, the Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands gave a public easement to the Blaine County Recreation District for a paved pathway over a portion of the right-of-way next to the Reinheimer Ranch.”

Myrle Bowcutt stopped working at the ranch in 2000 and retired. The Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands took over the operation of the pastures at that time and worked with a number of renters and partners to manage cattle and then horses on the ranch. For



Reinheimer Ranch (courtesy Sun Valley)

a number of years, the ranch remained empty. Then, around 2006, the Idaho Foundation, the Reinheimer Trust and Sun Valley Corporation formed an agreement to allow Sun Valley to maintain the ranch and pasture their working draft horses and pack horses on the land. The horses you see grazing on the ranch property today belong to Sun Valley as they help to keep the pioneer ranch working.

By all accounts, the value of the open space at the Reinheimer Ranch has increased over time, as the Big Wood

River Valley has filled with homes and condominiums over the decades since the ranch property donation in 1977.

“What’s important is that the whole town feels this is their ranch in the most wonderful way,” Cathy Reinheimer says.

“What foresight she had,” adds Bradshaw, referring to Eleanor Reinheimer’s wisdom. “No one could have realized how valuable it would become over time just as a natural area and open space.”

Steve Stuebner is a well-known Idaho outdoor conservation writer.

Idaho Foundation for Parks and Lands

5657 Warm Springs Ave.

Boise, Idaho 83716

Phone: (208) 344-7141

Email: jan@idaholands.org