

# American Cowboy

## Land Man

You've heard of the most famous Texas Ranches for sale. Now meet the man who brokers the deals.

[Bob Welch](#) Updated: Feb 13, 2017

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Charles Middleton came to Lubbock, Texas, from Louisiana in 1898 and became the West Texas town's first police chief. Before long, though, he found a niche brokering cattle deals in the region's burgeoning beef business. Informally, he helped ranches trade hands, too. By 1920, sale barns had begun to take away the cattle trading business, so Charles formed Charles S. Middleton & Son as a ranch real estate company.



Credit: CHAS S MIDDLETON AND SON

Today, his grandson, Sam, runs a family business that's survived the Dust Bowl, Great Depression, droughts, and oil booms and busts. The company has handled the sales of some of the Southwest's biggest ranches, including portions of the 6666 Ranch in Guthrie, Texas, the UU Bar in Cimarron, N.M., and T. Boone Pickens interests in Oklahoma.

Now, he's co-listing (with Bernie Uechtritz of Briggs Freeman Sotheby's International Realty in Dallas) the biggest ranch under one fence in Texas: the historic Waggoner Ranch in Vernon. At 510,000 acres, it's priced at \$725 million.

Of course, most of Middleton's listings are not so grandiose and the business is quite diversified. With a four-man staff—including the fourth-generation Middleton in the business, Charlie—the company handles farm sales around Lubbock, recreational (read: hunting) ranches throughout West Texas, a sizeable appraisal business, as well as the large-scale ranches in West Texas, eastern New Mexico, southeastern Colorado, and sometimes Kansas and Oklahoma.

"To me, the history of the company is a huge part of what success I've had," Middleton says. "I fell into a lot of good contacts when I inherited the company from my dad. I hope clients would say that we've done a fair and honest job representing their best interests in the sale of their property."

A testament to that business philosophy is that Middleton has sold the 71,000-acre Canadian River Ranch, northwest of Amarillo, three times.

"You've got to get the ranch listed at a reasonable price," he says. "Then you learn how to show the ranch. You get out there and you spend whatever time you need to spend on the ranch."

Lately, Middleton's been spending his weekdays in Vernon, getting to know the Waggoner. Despite having the ranch's helicopter at his disposal, he still figures it will take a prospective buyer three days to see it in detail, but can give an interested party a one-day tour to get a good feel for the property.

"We're getting some pretty high-profile calls from people interested in the ranch," he says.

At the moment, Middleton believes the ranch real estate market is as strong as it's ever been. And it's a good time to be listing the Waggoner.

"There are so many positives right now," he explains. "The oil economy is unbelievable. With the cattle market, the low interest rates, the moisture, and people sitting on huge amounts of money, land is very attractive. And there's not much for sale right now."