

Last division of Swenson Family Ranches near Stamford on the market for \$49.2M



The final chapter of the legendary Swenson Family Ranches west of Stamford is about to be written.

Flat Top Ranch - the last major division of the ranch established by Svante Magnus Swenson in 1853 – is on the market for \$49.2 million. Seven generations have ties to the ranch, which encompasses 41,000-plus acres and includes seven miles of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos River.

“That’s a good stretch of live water. It’s got some big ponds and man-made lakes and seasonal creeks on it. It’s a nice ranch,” said Sam Middleton, owner/broker of Chas. S. Middleton and Son company, which is handling the sale. “It’s very well watered. It’s blocked up very good. It’s productive country, and I think it will interest a lot of folks,”

The listing price is about \$1,200 an acre.

Peaceful transition

Putting the ranch up for sale is a peaceful transition, said Chris Swenson, who is a fifth-generation decedent of Svante Swenson. He lives in Elgin, near Austin.

“No one is suing anybody. No one is screaming and yelling,” Swenson told the Reporter-News on Thursday, when news of the pending sale was announced.

The ranch’s board members are siblings and first cousins, some who live in Florida, Colorado and Connecticut, Swenson said.

“Most of the major shareholders are now in their mid to late 60s, even 70s. And, their kids may not be as close to it,” Swenson said.

Family members began exploring the process of selling the ranch about a year ago.

“It really wasn’t, ‘Let’s sell Flat Top.’ It was more, ‘How do we get increased liquidity for those that want it? How do you get some people out who want all the way out?’” Swenson said. “It’s some anguish for some of us, but we are holding on to some land as well.”

That land is about 15,000 acres in Throckmorton County to the east of Stamford.

Seven years after launching his ranch, Swedish immigrant Svante Swenson’s Texas land holdings surpassed 680,000 acres. He donated some acreage to start the town of Stamford, where the ranch headquarters are located today, and for the town’s Texas Cowboy Reunion, which is the world’s largest amateur rodeo started in 1930.

“Historically, this was one of the first operating ranches in the state of Texas,” Middleton said. “He started selling off some of that off.”

In 1978, the ranch was divided into four family divisions. Three of the divisions have since sold, and Flat Top Ranch is the last division in family hands, Middleton said.

He also facilitated the sale of the 535,000-acre Waggoner Ranch near Wichita Falls in February 2016.

“Both ranches were put together about the same time,” Middleton said.



Flat Top is a working cattle ranch that also has extensive farming operations, hunting opportunities, potential wind farm development and the possibility of a portion of future mineral income, Middleton said.

Though he lives several hours from the ranch, Chris Swenson has more than a familial interest in the ranch. He operates with his son Svante's Ranch Direct, which buys cattle from Flat Top Ranch that are then grass fed until slaughter. The beef is sold at Austin-area farmers market, online and on the son's food truck with the same name. Its hamburgers have won several local awards.

His favorite part of the ranch?

"I love the view from Flat Top itself. The little mesa there. On a clear day, you can see, I don't know, 80 miles or so," Chris Swenson said.

Future usage

Potential buyers could have a variety of interests in the ranch because of its multi-faceted operations, Middleton said.

"There's good hunting on the ranch, so there could be recreational buyers. There is going to be some minerals offered with the ranch, and there is some existing production and potential

production,” Middleton said. “I hate to see this happen, but it could even be somebody that would come in there and block it up and cut it up into five or six different tracks and sell it out in smaller recreational tracks.”

Also available for sale is the ranch office in Stamford. The family is talking with two museums about the possibility of donating the treasure trove of historical documents, maps and other ranch records, Chris Swenson said.

For personal reasons, he hopes the ranch’s new owner will be a good steward of the land and its history.

“I kind of hope it stays intact because it keeps the history, it keeps the heritage better if you do that. I think history is worth something,” Swenson said. “It’s not a distress sale. We don’t have to sell. We’re trying to sell it – not to keep peace in the family – but to be fair to everyone in the family.”

