

COVEY RISE[®]



BELONGING TO THE LAND

From British nobility to the mountains of Wyoming, Paul Wallop cultivates his wingshooting roots at Canyon Ranch.

STORY BY RACHAEL McCLENDON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN GROSSENBACHER



PASSION FOR THE MOUNTAINS

Paul Wallop's great grandfather left his homeland in England at age 22 with an innate desire to traverse prairies below towering mountains in Wyoming.





As I walked up the mountain and looked over the apron of the canyon covered in snow, I noticed the view was different than I remembered from a few summers ago, when I was catching brookies in Little Goose Creek with my children running amuck. Winter had already paid a visit, evidenced by the sprinkling of snow along the mountain peaks, and I was deeply regretting having lost my down jacket at dinner the previous evening.

Once upon a time, men would journal at the rare sighting of a white-tailed deer in this area, however today, their numbers were great along the ridge where I watched them in the quiet of the morning before we set out for our harvest. I was anxious to see Paul Wallop again, the great-grandson of Oliver Henry Wallop, 8th Earl of Portsmouth, and the current owner of Canyon Ranch in Wyoming, to experience wingshooting with a Western flare.

Walking along the gravel drive from the guest house to the barn, I was greeted by Rosie, a blue roan English cocker with brown ticking. I stared at this outlier, wondering how she could carry a gamebird that was equal to her small stature. Within hours, she would prove me wrong.

Rosie scurried around the truck and into the barn to antagonize Lilly, the old Labrador that was also to join our search of pheasant, grouse, and Huns hidden among the

hawthorns and sage. Even though she may be past her prime, Lilly still had a desire to please her master by retrieving fallen birds. We will all grow old and are gradually limited by our aging bodies, but the essence of the pursuit that lies within us is immortal.

It was that same innate desire that propelled an Oxford-educated boy of nobility to board a ship at 22 years of age and travel “across the pond” to seek his fortune as a cowboy in America. Like so many new lives started in America for so many immigrants, Oliver Henry Wallop came with his mind full of promise and founded his hopes and dreams on a strong relationship from which would be born the next generation of Wallops.

Oliver’s merit may not exist in his talents or intellect, but rather in his birth order. During the late 1800s, sons of the British aristocracy had their fates decided before they could even open their eyes.

The eldest of his brothers would inherit the title of “Earl” and the estate, while the other brothers would join the military, enter politics, or become clergymen, respectively. This hierarchal structure left Oliver with a precarious future and the unofficial title of “remittance son.”

The “prairie fever” of the late 19th Century brought



many remittance sons to the West to carve out their places in the world. The sums of money given by the family to subsidize their travel and stories of the new beginnings varied, but the idea of them not returning was a common caveat. Locals were amused at the arrival of the Brits into Miles City, Montana as they helped unload their trunks from the train at their journeys' end. Luggage stuffed with tennis rackets, tea sets, tweed suits, and polo mallets would appear to be impractical on the plains, however some of these personal belongings would prove to be quite useful to Oliver once he made his way to the spine of the Bighorns near Sheridan, Wyoming.

At that time, Wyoming had become an epicenter for cattlemen and foreign investors who hoped to become wealthy on free grass and the high prices of cattle. The land in Goose Creek Valley offered abundant water and forage, which made it idyllic for opportunities to raise horses and polo ponies. Oliver joined his wife's cousins, Scottish brothers Malcolm

and William Moncrieffe, to procure horses for the British Army. With his English ties, they were able to secure military contracts during the Boer War in South Africa, where they ultimately sold 20,000 horses. Their success would span 30 years and include a major role in the Remount Program of the US military during World War I.

Oliver gained the financial security and the distinguished reputation that he had longed for—similar to the reputation that was so freely attributed to his family back in England. He would continue to further his individual potential after becoming a US citizen in 1891 and by serving in the Wyoming State Legislature, helping to lay the groundwork for conservation laws in the newly founded state.

With the passing of his father and brothers, and with no direct male heirs, this remittance son was called home. After 35 years as a rancher, and with tales of shootouts with Buffalo Bill on the fields of his beloved Canyon Ranch, Oliver would renounce his US citizenship, return to England, and take the title of the 8th Earl of Portsmouth to serve in the House of Lords.

FOCUS ON FELLOWSHIP

With this being the author's first upland hunt, Paul Wallop made the experience about the dogs and fellowship rather than limits of birds.

Paul Wallop was reaching down to placate Rosie by rubbing behind her ears, when he opened a narrow green canvas case, marked with a "P," that housed a 1920s

We will all grow
old and are gradually
limited by our aging
bodies, but the essence
of the pursuit that lies
within us is immortal.



Cogswell & Harrison with beautifully detailed scroll.

The worn postage stamp on the case marked that the gun was ordered from the Piccadilly shop in England, making its way to Sheridan to his great-grandfather, Oliver, around 1926. This gun had been afield with four generations of Wallop men, except for a slight 25-year detour when it was given by Paul's grandfather, as an 18th birthday present, to Bob Brownwell, the son of Lenard Brownwell of northern Wyoming—one of the best gunsmiths in the United States. Lenard was a close friend of the family, as he lent his craftsmanship to Paul's grandfather, when he turned his pair of Holland & Holland firearms to crossover shotguns due to nerve damage he suffered in his dominant eye.

On Christmas Eve in 2004, Paul received a phone call from Bob Brownwell that this family heirloom would be coming home. Cradling this same gun over his arm as we walked up the draw, Paul said, "I may miss a few more birds using this gun, but I'd rather miss than shoot with anything else."

He was quiet and humble in his demeanor, but he had the

enthusiasm. We covered many miles and managed to bag a respectable number of birds, followed by a late lunch and bourbon by the fire back at the Canyon Ranch house, listening to gun club stories that sounded more like an upland fraternity than a successful business.

Being sent away to be near his father, Senator Malcolm Wallop, for a proper education on the East Coast, was particularly hard for Paul, a shy kid, whose hometown was less populated than his freshmen class. He, however, appeased his father for a few years and eventually bargained with him to remain in boarding school if the zip code was in the Western United States. He attended the University of Wyoming, graduating with a biology degree that would prove useful in managing the land and wildlife on the property. With his understated brilliance in land management and wildlife, Paul saw opportunities to build on the achievements of the generations before him. He felt that his land, if properly managed, with its rich game populations and

He had returned to Canyon Ranch many years before, not for a title or wealth, but because the tug of home was tenacious for him. The Lord of this castle fixed the fences and maintained all the homes and barns, with contentment being his greatest wealth.

elusive quality of a commanding presence. Weathered hands, from tending to every detail on the ranch, finished off the ends of his button-down flannel shirt, and his boyish grin surfaced as he pointed up at different ridges. So many had been named due to a specific hunting encounter that he had experienced. There wasn't a patch of grass that wasn't meaningful to Paul.

This was my first upland hunt, and Paul's attitude made the experience pleasant, with a focus on the dogs and fellowship, rather than the limits. Visibility became limited with the falling snow, and I clung to my Elos cradled in my arms as I made my way up the draw. I found much contentment watching Rosie bound through the snow with inexhaustible

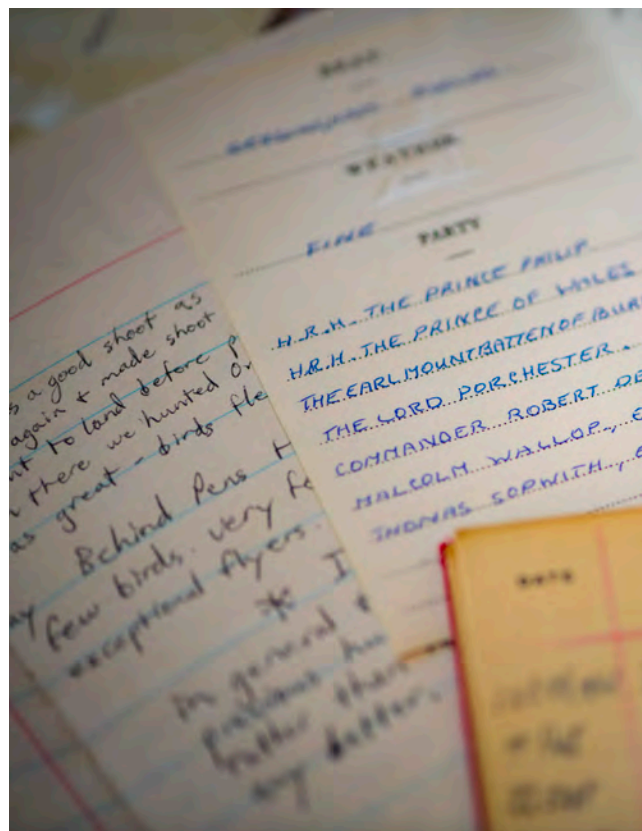
streams, could accommodate a prominent hunting and fishing lodge and outfitter.

Paul's noble roots run deep on this prairie. His aunt Jeanie Wallop, the Countess of Carnarvon, was born and raised in Big Horn, Wyoming but married an Englishman, Lord Porchester, the 7th Earl of Carnarvon. While raising her family in England at their family estate, Highclere Castle, which has received much attention for being the primary filming location for the television series *Downton Abbey*, they hosted many shoots. Her husband, "Porchie," was the Queen's racing manager and closest confidant.

Paul sought the wisdom of Eddie Hughes, a well-known birdkeeper employed by the estate. Taking what he had learned from this apprenticeship and applying it to the terrain of Wyoming, he was able to cultivate a gun club that enticed politicians, several of his father's Yale classmates, and well-to-do businessmen from the East Coast to visit from 1986 through 2011. But, with the downward spiraling economy of 2008, emails about travel dates to the club were being left marked as "unread," and there was a noticeable absence

A LEGACY REVEALED

A review of historical notebooks and papers revealed the bird counts and weather conditions enjoyed by the noble parties that have graced Canyon Ranch, providing proof of the family's legacy over the land.







of private planes landing at the Sheridan County Airport.

In 2011, with the loss of his father and the closing of the gun club and Orvis fly shop, Paul was left with the sobering realization that he could lose the ranch. Sandy, Paul's wife, did not let his grief and fragile state let him lose sight of the legacy this family had built.

Paul came to the guest house for a breakfast the morning I was leaving, stomping snow off his boots and carrying papers and notebooks to show me. I tried to make an impression with my Southern biscuits and peppered bacon, as most of his guests had stately titles or status. In years past, Southern women have been encouraged to lean on food in celebration, crisis, or in a pinch.

Small invitation-size cards from hunts his father attended, denoting the birds killed and weather conditions, were among the old papers we sorted through as we ate. It was quite evident that he had returned to Canyon Ranch many years before, not for a title or wealth, but because the tug of home was tenacious for him. The Lord of this castle fixed the fences and maintained all the homes and barns, with contentment being his greatest wealth.

Like his great-grandfather, he too was a remittance son who had come home to take over the duties of his family

property. His loyalty is not to a title or a fortune—he has had to sell off some parcels to maintain the current estate. He has a genuine labor of love carried by a sense of pride in his family and the man who came over 120 years ago to experience the American West.

Knowing the long days and hard work that were required to maintain the property, I asked Paul why he never left. He said with a laugh: “I guess I was the only one stubborn enough to see what I could do.” As I continued to clear the plates, I again asked if there was one single thing that kept him and he replied, “No. It’s just where I belong.”

On my way home, I stared out the window of the plane with melancholy thoughts that I was leaving a little more of my heart in Wyoming. Paul and Sandy had welcomed me into their home, allowing me to become a part of their special story. Canyon Ranch has a way of making one’s heart feel the pull of home, as it did for Paul, making it a personal Camelot for many of those lucky to visit. 🌻

STUBBORN TO STAY

With weathered hands, Paul Wallop has poured his heart and soul into maintaining his family’s legacy on this Canyon Ranch ground.