

The Cowboy Mafia

In the 1970s, a group of marijuana smugglers known as the "Cowboy Mafia" operated throughout the United States. The group's modus operandi was to travel from Columbia to Texas before storing their product at a variety of ranches across the state.

When the group was finally dismantled, government authorities fingered Texas millionaire Rex Cauble as the financial backer of the operation. Cauble was well known throughout the state as an oilman, honorary Texas Ranger, founder of Cutter Bill's Western Wear, and owner of the legendary race horse Cutter Bill.

In the trial that followed, Cauble was convicted and sentenced to prison. In addition, the government seized the majority of his financial assets. Until his death in 2003, Cauble denied any wrongdoing.

Though there is nothing to indicate that Coppel held any connection to the drug smuggling, it does have a connection to Cauble. Wagon Wheel Park, known at the time as Wagon Wheel Ranch, was owned by Rex Cauble.

Though a small town for most of its history, this was not Coppel's first brush with notoriety, nor would it be the last.

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