



EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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www.empireranchfoundation.org

Thank You Members!

The Foundation coffers were low, the needs are great, and your broad and generous response to our membership drive to date has smoothed somewhat our furrowed brows! To date, 75 new members have joined up for the coming year, and 225 past members have renewed, totalling nearly \$26,000 in memberships funds.

This is a great response—but the needs and opportunities to move forward with programs at the Empire abound. We've high hopes that past members still outside the corral will respond and renew, to make great strides possible this coming year.

If you've not renewed, a remittance envelope is enclosed with this newsletter. Please use it, or the reply form on page 4, and respond today!

We need you!

One Beautiful Day May 10

Just as promised by Steve Boice, a man raised on the Empire and volunteer head wrangler for the Annual Spring Trail Ride, May 10 was one beautiful day in the hearts of 70 foundation members who saddled up to see first hand, from the back of a horse, the vast magic of the ranch.

You could not have had a greater mix of folks. Riders ranged from 10 years old to 90. Experienced riders helped first timers. Cowboys rode with CPAs. One couple celebrated their love, having met on last year's ride and since married.

The early bird group headed out from base camp at the ranch headquarters at 8:30 AM for a westerly loop of the ranch in the shadow of the Santa Rita Mountains and
(continued on page 3)

Chuckwagons Roll to Empire Ranch Roundup 2003

Get ready for a great day of family fun and education on September 20. Head over to the historic Empire Ranch Headquarters for an unforgettable Roundup Open House and Art Sale. This year's feature theme is "Cowboys, Cattle, and Chuckwagons" — and you'll quickly see why.

Don't miss the sights, smells and samples of cowboy coffee, biscuits, chili and beans as prepared by chuckwagon cooks for the real roundups of bygone days! There will be many other food choices too!

Come early and plan to stay (we'll start at 10:00 AM and close at 5:30 PM). There will be lots that's new, as well as many past favorites among the activities, demonstrations and events. By popular demand, wagon rides from the parking lot will transport you to where the action is.



1907 cowboy and chuckwagon, Santa Cruz County, Arizona (photo: from collection of Arizona Historical Society, AHS52682)

Horsemanship ranging from cavalry demonstrations to trick roping and reata roping will dazzle spectators at the "round pen" arena. Wander to expanded livestock exhibits. Or, master craftsmen will chat while they show you traditional cowboy/vaquero crafts and skills such as rope and reata making, saddle making, blacksmithing and horse shoeing.

Western and Mariachi music will vibrate through the ranch house grounds, while the Western Art Show & Sale enlivens the walls within the Victorian Addition (see page 3 for more on the art sale). The Kids' Crafts Corral and roping area will enable youngsters to try their hands at Old West skills with advice and supervision. Magnificent hawks will soar at the bidding of their human partners. Exhibits and tours will highlight Empire Ranch history and restoration, and explore important Sonoita Valley conservation issues.

Bring the family for a day of old fashioned entertainment and learning. Admission is free; your donations are accepted. (See page 3 inset for driving directions.)



Victoria Means helps serve chuckwagon fare Anna Schorr Coleman and family cooked up for May 10 trail riders (photo: B. Lehmann)

Published by the Empire Ranch Foundation, a not-for-profit organization, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management. The purpose of the Foundation is to protect, restore, and sustain the Empire Ranch historical buildings and landscape as an outstanding western heritage site and educational center. Donations to the Foundation may be sent to: P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637-0842.

Departed Friends



Laura "Dusty" Vail Ingram, the last surviving Vail to have lived on the Empire Ranch, and longtime friend of the Foundation, passed away peacefully on April 17, at her home in Rockville MD, at age 88.

Dusty's father, Banning Vail, a son of Walter Vail, managed the Empire Ranch for Vail Cattle Co., and she relished a tomboy girlhood on the ranch, with her father, mother, and two brothers, until 1928 when the Ranch was sold.

The Empire Ranch remained dear and vivid in Dusty's memory during her life as a Navy wife and mother of six. Sixty years after leaving, she was delighted to learn the Empire had come under BLM management, and happily provided personal accounts and many photographs to preserve the story of the Empire during her years and the Vail period overall.

She warmly supported establishment of the Empire Ranch Foundation, and was an active Honorary Member of the Board. Dusty's family and the Foundation are grateful for the many donations that have been sent to the Foundation in her memory.

Preservation Projects

Preservation of the Empire Ranch House and other buildings is a primary mission of the Foundation. Projects recently completed, underway, or scheduled are noted below. Projects we have previously shown as complete are not repeated here.

To see a list of preservation projects completed to date, visit our website at: www.empireranchfoundation.org.

- Execute emergency repairs to Adobe Haybarn (*Phase 1 complete; Phase 2 is top priority for fundraising*)
- Create plan and stabilize Adobe Haybarn for the long term (*priority item once funds are raised*)
- Stabilize lintel over south entry of Zagan/Breezeway for the long term

Historic House Museum Plan In Draft

We've reached a new milestone in planning for the conversion of the Empire Ranch House into a historic house museum. This project will take years to complete and will be implemented in phases—starting with a "historic house shell" phase that will allow the ranch to be used for tours, temporary exhibits, and events without the more extensive museum exhibits and restorations that will be developed later.

On July 31, a draft plan proposing staged priorities for this project was delivered to the Foundation, just days before this issue went to press. Prepared by our preservation specialist contractor, Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI), the draft plan draws upon many resources, including a 2002 preliminary master plan prepared by the Foundation and Bureau of Land Management (BLM); collected historical information, oral histories, and photos; and concepts put forward during a very creative all-day "charrette" meeting of over 40 experts, ERF members, and interested citizens onsite at the ranch last April 26.

We look forward to reviewing the draft plan in detail, and working together with BLM, SRI, and the interested public toward finishing a final blueprint for the future.

Funding for SRI's work on the plan was provided through a grant from BLM. Other participants in our planning and charrette activities have volunteered their efforts, for which we are very grateful.

(plan complete; funding redirected in deference to emergency repair needs)

- Execute emergency repairs to Ranch Hand's House (*Phase 1 complete; Phase 2 is a priority for funding*)
- Straighten & stabilize leaning concrete garden wall (*volunteer project; to be scheduled once plan completed & approved*)
- Create plan for repair of Children's Addition floor framing and walls (*September 2003*)
- Repair Children's Addition floor framing and walls (*a priority item once repair plan approved and funds are raised*)
- Create plan for adaptive reuse of ranch buildings (*ongoing through 2003; see related article above*)

Key Outbuilding Repairs Completed

With a lot of hard work, our preservation contractors, aided by stalwart Foundation volunteers, finished Phase 1 emergency repairs to the Adobe Haybarn and Ranch Hand's House to stabilize and restore failing foundations, walls, roofs, and drainage systems prior to the summer rains.

Over \$110,000 in Foundation and BLM grant funds were dedicated to doing the job, a commitment we were grateful to be able to make before irreparable damage occurred. Phase 2's remaining repairs are very important but judged less critical to the buildings' survival. We will undertake them as soon as sufficient funds are raised.

Our thanks to our contractor Statistical Research, Inc., and its subcontractor Means Design and Building Corp., for their usual fine work. And most hearty thanks to our invaluable volunteers whose contributions made a critical difference.



Means Design specialist makes adobe repairs to adobe haybarn SE corner.



Volunteer Fred Roberts, great-grandson of Empire homesteader Edward N. Fish, takes a rest from digging downspout drainage ditches for the Ranch Hand's House. (photos: L. Schupp)

Empire Ranch Makes the Big Times

The travel section of the *New York Times*, June 1, 2003, reports "the legendary Empire Ranch...remains saturated with the atmosphere of the Old West." We are proud and agree.

Feasting— Not by Bread Alone!

Tantalizing though the chuck wagon fare may be, it will not be the only source for feasting at the fall Roundup. Visitors can partake of an exciting non-caloric feast of color and variety at the Roundup Western Art Show and Sale in the Empire House.

Forty-four Arizona artists have cooked up a delightful smorgasbord that will please all appetites. Imagine a menu of garden fresh watercolors by Susan Minnick and Donna Soest, delicious side dishes by the plein aire painters Joan LaRue, Nancy Prevo and Ken Stockton, and hearty beefy sculptures by Bruce Andre, Mark Rossi, Miguel Rivera and Joe Staheli.

Desserts can be expected from Roger Alderman, Charles Thomas, Greg Clyne, Juanita Bostick and Regina Medley. Thirty of the artists exhibited in the show last year. Fourteen others are new and promise to add lots of zest to the offerings.

You may well find your favorite “chef” on the list of artists featured this year.

Roger Alderman, Bruce Andre, Tom Arndt, Juanita Bostick, Muffin Burgess, Palmer Butler, Bonnie Casey, Greg Clyne, Bill Cook, Dana Cude, Linda Davidson, Mick Davidson, Samuel Donaldson, Kathryn Drummond, Robert England, Katie Hazen, Keri Jelks, Rukin Jelks, Joan M. LaRue, Mary Jo Lee, Richard Marcher, Regina Medley, Paul Miller, Sue Minnick, Bill Moomey, Wanda O’Dell, Faith Posey, Nancy Prevo, Murph Ranspot, Hank Richter, Miguel Rivera, Mark Rossi, Sylvia Saenz, Jean Schwafel, Donna Soest, Joe Staheli, Chris Stange, Charles Stockton, Ken Stockton, Laurel Thornburg, Paul Thornburg, John Vaughn, Peter Whitney, Sally Whitney

The show will open with the Roundup at 10:00 A.M., and remain on display until 5:30 P.M. Reservations are not necessary, but you’ll want to come early if you want a full menu from which to choose.

Last year’s Roundup Art Sale attendance was close to 1,000 people. We expect more this year, and this is one feast where you can have as much as you want and not gain an ounce! Visit our website to see some artwork previews.

The Empire Ranch Foundation sponsors two art shows annually: the September Roundup Show at the Empire Ranch featuring Arizona artists, and the Winter Show at the Northern Trust Bank in Tucson fea-



Art show offerings include “Longhorn” by Tom Arndt and “Time to Saddle Up: Empire Ranch” by Joan LaRue.

Driving Directions to the Roundup:

From Tucson: east on I-10, exit ramp 281; south on Rt 83 scenic hwy approx. 18 miles; left at the BLM Las Cienegas NCA entrance (between mileposts 40 & 39); follow dirt road 3 miles to Ranch.

The Volunteer Connection

From the earliest days of the Empire Ranch, the spirit of volunteer services has been reflected in neighbors helping neighbors to overcome obstacles. Ranch folk shared the responsibility for the health of the cattle industry and for each other. The community grew through compassion, tolerance, and a sense of duty to respond when people were in need.

The Empire Ranch still depends on volunteers! The past few years’ Trail Rides and Roundup Open Houses have been where you’d find Tom and Sandy Weston helping out. They own quarterhorses that they trail in the deserts around Tucson. Although they live in Vail, Arizona, the connection between the Empire Ranch and the Weston family didn’t come to fruition until they signed up for one of the annual Trail Rides. They fell in love with the grasslands and the history, and became friends with Steve Boice whose family at one time, also owned the Empire. That friendship led

May Trail Ride (cont’d from p.1)

the giant Mt. Wrightston, towering over 9000 feet. The weather was flawless, perfect picture taking time. The scenery could not have been more spectacular. The afternoon group took off in the exact opposite direction, taking in Cienegas Creek and the most awesome stand of cottonwood trees in Pima County.

Between rides, at noon, Anna Coleman and family graciously catered a traditional western chuckwagon meal of fresh homemade chili, beans, and the real McCoy hot tortillas, with absolutely no skimping on the fat. Thank you Anna for making the day a genuine treat. And thanks to Victoria Means, Barbara Snyder, Jane Woods, Billie Donaldson and Lea Ward for helping with all the set up preparations, serving and hosting.

When Herbert Hislop said in the summer of 1876, “everyone says it is the best ranch in the territory,” he was very right about the Empire. Everyone on the ride caught the magic.

The list grows each day for the ride next May. For information, contact Bruce Lehmann at the Foundation’s address, or email Lehmann4@mindspring.com.



to Empire Ranch Foundation membership and volunteering. Tom and Sandy have flipped burgers, and served coleslaw and beans at several events at the Ranch. “It was a lot of work but we will do it again,” Sandy said. Neighbors were in need and they responded!

The National Volunteer theme for 2003 is “Celebrate Volunteers.” We thank Tom and Sandy and all our volunteers for all their time and efforts, and celebrate the compassion and commitment for neighbors and community they have shared with us.

Management Plan for Las Cienegas Approved

Culminating a two-year review process, the Record of Decision for the Las Cienegas Approved Resource Management Plan was signed by the BLM Arizona State Director on July 25, 2003. The plan’s guidelines envision adaptive reuse of the Empire Ranch Headquarters. Their formal approval is very welcome news.

Reata Making



Reata—
Rancho Trinehera,
Sonora, Mexico
(photo: R. Schorr)

In prior items in this series on reata lore I discussed a little about the history and use of the reata (rawhide lariat). This final column briefly describes how reatas have been made in the Southwest and in northern Mexico as taught by many vaqueros.

Hides are usually taken in the fall when butchering is done due to lack of refrigeration in warmer months. The hides are traditionally staked out on the ground, hair side down, for several days to stretch and partially dry them. I generally stretch the hide on a 10' by 10' wooden stretch frame. After a day when the hide is partially dry, the defleshing process is done using a sharp knife.

The hide then can be turned over and the hair can be scraped off roughly after an ash slurry is poured over the hair side. The scraping is done by using a sharpened spade to just remove some of the hair.

The hide area that is used for reatas is ideally the central back part which means that approximately one half of the hide is not used for reata making, but is saved for making reins, bosals, hobbles, and Hondas (the loop end of the reata).

The central area is cut out in two large oblong pieces (a right and left piece). A sharp knife is used to cut a string about 3/8" wide. Brands or other scars in the hide must be avoided. The string from each piece may be 100 to 200 feet long, very roughly cut. The string then is stretched out in a warm area to dry and stretch straight. The following day I will scrape the string to remove any remaining hair plus scrape the flesh side to remove any extraneous tissue. The cleaned rough string is then coiled to save for the final string processing.

When I have rough-cut enough rawhide string for a reata, I soak the dried coils for about one hour depending upon the thickness. I place the wet string coils into a wet gunnysack and allow the string to "condition". The following day, anchoring a knife into a piece of mesquite wood, the rough-cut rawhide string is re-cut to 5/16" wide.

The re-cut string is now split to a uniform thickness by a sharp knife, then each edge is beveled on the bottom or top side to prevent sharp, curled edges from occurring in the drying process. The finished string is uniform in width and thickness and beveled. It's then figure-eighted onto sticks for a four-strand reata. These are called molotes (bundles). The molote will hold about 100 feet of finished string. Four of such molotes are needed for an 80-foot reata.

The molotes are now made. A sheep tallow saddle soap mixture is applied onto the dampened rawhide string as the braiding commences. It takes about one hour to braid 4 to 5 feet of a reata. The total

time from start to finish of the reata making is about 40 to 60 hours.

The Honda is now braided and applied to the reata body. The cascabel (tail) is tied on the tail end allowing four long strands to hang loose from the end. These tail strings are used to secure the Honda onto the tail end if the reata should break.

A beeswax-sheep tallow paste is applied to the newly finished stretched reata. The reata is finished now although a bit stiff.

This reata is special to the vaquero. He must handle it skillfully to prevent it from breaking. The vaquero's horse, saddle, and reata are the lifeblood for his work.

[Note: this article is last in a series by Dick Schorr, who will be demonstrating reata making at the Roundup September 20.]

Working Calendar

August

16 Board of Directors Meeting

September

20 Empire Ranch Roundup Open House and Western Art Show & Sale

November

15 Board of Directors Meeting and Election of Officers & Directors

tbd Foundation general membership get-together (plans to be announced)

January-February

Tucson "Empire 100" Art Show & Sale (date details to be announced)

2003/2004 Membership Reply

Yes, I want to help save the Empire Ranch for future generations!

Name: _____

Street/P.O. Address: _____

City, State, ZIP : _____

Phone: _(____)_____ FAX: _(____)_____

This membership donation is also in memory of _____

This is a gift membership from: _____

Please Mail To: Empire Ranch Foundation, P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637

The Empire Ranch Foundation has an IRS 501(c)(3) non-profit classification; donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION



- \$25 Homesteader
- \$50 Total Wreck Miner
- \$100 Wrangler
- \$250 Vaquero
- \$500 Jefe
- \$1,000 Patron
- \$5,000 Cattle Baron
- \$10,000 Territorial Governor

\$ _____ Other