



# EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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[www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org)

## Join the Drive!

Yes, it's already that time of year when we try to round up our supporters and head them into the membership corral. Your generosity has been great and the old adobes are grateful. The problem is there is so much to do and without you, our members, nothing will happen.

The year past saw the completion of the Stone Corral restoration and vital emergency shoring in several areas. Critical stabilization of the adobe hay barn is ongoing. However, once the experts completed their assessments, they found even more threats to the existence of the adobe haybarn and the nearby adobe ranch hand's house. The cost of this emergency stabilization headed through the roof.

The Foundation decided that the situation was so serious that we should focus all possible resources on this crisis. In addition to donations you sent in response to the November appeal, we took all we prudently could from our operating funds, and

all uncommitted BLM planning or restoration funds and redirected them to emergency stabilization repairs—a total of approximately \$100,000.

These expenditures will cover the most urgent emergency repairs but, as described elsewhere in the newsletter, we have a long “to do” list on our road to restoration of the ranch house. Concurrently, we are moving to create more opportunities for educational and outdoor activities at the ranch headquarters.

Member participation and generous membership support is critical to success, either by directly funding activities or in strengthening our “case” when applying for grants from BLM or from private and public agencies. Our progress so far testifies to the fact that we can succeed.

We're counting on you to reenlist for another year and be part of saving the Empire Ranch for future generations. Your contribution at whatever level will be appreciated and well used. See last page for Membership Reply form.



*Bruce Lehmann, ERF adobe volunteer, and Francisco Montano, Means Design adobe specialist, take a break after a day of adobe brick making. (photo: B. Lehmann)*

## Brick by Brick Repair

On February 10, three weeks after receiving our contractor's cost estimate and plan, the Foundation gave notice to proceed on Phase 1 of major emergency repairs to two of the ranch's historic outbuildings.

The Adobe Haybarn, located south of the ranch house, is a huge structure made entirely out of century-old adobe bricks. When you stand inside, you can tell that  
*(continued on page 2)*

## Interior Secretary Norton Visits the Empire Ranch



*Board members and BLM staff share the Stone Corral story with Secretary Norton. (Photo: BLM)*

The Empire Ranch House was front and center February 5, when Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton visited the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area to meet with members of BLM partner groups, including the ERF and the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership.

Secretary Norton toured the Empire Ranch Headquarters before mingling with partners and sharing refreshments in the ranch house zaguan/breezeway. She also announced the Bush Administration's pro-

posal to boost Las Cienegas' budget in FY04, and commended the collaborative community planning that resulted in development of the Resource Management Plan for the area.

The plan, which should be officially signed later this spring, states policies for overall management of Las Cienegas NCA, and envisions preservation and adaptive reuse of the Empire Ranch Headquarters consistent with the ERF's mission and program goals.

## Empire Ranch House Museum: Moving from Vision to Plans

While repairs continue on headquarters outbuildings, we are now busy planning next steps for the main Empire Ranch House. In historic preservation, this is called “adaptive reuse” planning, defined as “repairing or remodeling a historic structure so that it can be used for purposes other than those for which it was originally built.”

The Empire Ranch has seen a lot of use throughout its history, as a dwelling and working headquarters for the Vails, Boices and now the Donaldsons. Its new use will eventually be as a Historic House Museum, with educational exhibits and furnishings explaining the history of the ranch house over time and showcasing various themes such as ranching, grasslands, cowboying, legends and Hollywood cowboys, architecture, railroads and silver mining.

To reach the final vision, we need to decide on our goals for restoration and interpretation, and make plans for phased implementation. We have formed an ERF/BLM working group for this purpose and have contracted for technical and administrative support from Statistical Research, Inc. (SRI), and its subcontractors.

The first step will be to gather and make accessible historical records, oral interviews, and photographs that pertain to the ranch’s history. Much of this involves organizing and collating existing oral history interview transcripts, photographs, and other historic resources.

New interviews are also being done to fill in gaps in documentation. SRI historians Scott O’Mack and Matthew Sterner



Former Empire cowboy Gerald Korte describes how it was in the 1940s to SRI historian Scott O’Mack. (photo: L.Schupp)

are underway with collecting historical materials, and have already conducted an extensive oral interview with ERF board member Gerald Korte, who came to the ranch in 1947 as a young cowboy.

Once we have a clear and organized record of what the ranch looked like and witnessed during its long history, we can then better choose the themes the museum will interpret and how the ranch house areas should be restored. An example would be the room on the NE corner of the building. Do we restore it the way we think it looked when it was built in the 1870s? Do we want it to look like the cowboy’s bunkhouse that Gerald occupied in 1947, complete with three beds and blue paint on the walls? Or do we show both periods?

We will be seeking broad input and review of our adaptive reuse plan. Two meetings are currently planned, and more may be announced. The first, to be held on April 26, will be a “charrette” or invited focus group and will seek the advice and recommendations of individuals with expertise in ranching, history and historical preservation, museum exhibits and planning, archaeology, architecture, education, and landscape design, as well as members of the community and the Empire’s ranching families.

The second will be an open public meeting held in conjunction with the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership on Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup>. All interested people are invited to attend.

## Repairs (cont’d from p. 1)



A Means Design crew member ties down the adobe haybarn roof to a straightened south wall. (photo: B. Lehmann)

the walls are beginning to lean. From the outside, cracks and gaps appear in the walls and foundation, where rats and age have eaten away at the bottom rows of adobes.

The Ranch Hand’s House, located northeast of the ranch house, also has cracks in its walls and in some places, no bottom adobes at all where the walls appear to be held up by friction and luck.

Means Design and Building Corp., subcontractors for Statistical Research, Inc., are specialists in preserving such structures and immediately got to work.

First, they had to hand manufacture new adobes to replace the damaged ones  
*(continued in next column)*

*Dear Members, Volunteers and Foundation Supporters,*

*Even as headquarters repairs and preservation work continues and adaptive reuse plans are laid, we are working this year to move up to a next exciting phase, pursuing the long term vision for the Empire with new initiatives for broadened, engaging educational events and outreach.*

*For example, we will have several “brown bag” lunch and field trip sessions led by experts. The topics will be ranch history of the area, folklore, ecology of modern ranching practices on the Empire Ranch, archaeology of the Las Cienegas area, or any number of relevant topics. We are seeking advice and help from an expanded Advisory Board to develop such activities, and would welcome your suggestions and active participation.*

*Please join us as we move into this new phase. We need your participation to make this happen. I look forward to meeting you at one of these activities.*

*Richard Schorr, President  
Empire Ranch Foundation*



## Repairs (cont'd from p. 2)



BLM Archaeologist Max Witkind (r) monitors excavation work for shorings on ranch hand's house west wall.



Completed shorings. (photos: L. Schupp)

in both buildings. ERF volunteers helped the crew with this job, and discovered firsthand how hard people worked to make the Empire Ranch in the old days!

To date, adobe haybarn repairs have straightened the leaning south wall, restored its eroded foundations with new made adobes, and tied down the roof. Deteriorated east wall foundations and brick buttresses are now being corrected.

At the Ranch Hand's House, the first step was to increase shoring of the walls, both to preserve them and to assure worker safety. Digging for shoring installation was closely monitored for discoveries of historic or prehistoric artifacts. Foundations were then strengthened with thermosealed brick to withstand moisture, and topped with new made adobes.

Phase 1 repairs should be completed in May, to include permanent repairs to the south and east walls and foundations of the Adobe Haybarn, and correction of key walls and of drainage erosion around the Ranch Hand's House.

Phase 2 repairs will stabilize the west wall and foundations of the Adobe Haybarn and seal major cracks in the south and west walls. Phase 2 for the Ranch Hand's House will consolidate and moisture proof the lower walls, and do other foundation and roof repairs.

## "Empire 100" Draws Big

Art and fellowship held sway February 6 as over 350 guests joined an elegant reception for artists in a delightful high point for the hugely successful "Empire 100" Western Art Show and Sale.

Thousands more had enjoyed the vibrant works during the previous five weeks as they were on display in the offices of Northern Trust Bank, which also generously sponsored the reception.

Artist Joan LaRue in action, capturing in oil on canvas the bank's dramatic "hired gun," was a special treat.

Perhaps the extra "security" made sense, given the temptations hung on every wall and displayed on tables throughout. The quality and spirit in the offerings evoked many longing looks. The final sales of 20 pieces paid tribute to the outstanding efforts and talents of the artists and to the generous well wishes of ERF supporters.

Artists' donations from the sale contributed over \$8,000 to ERF resources, including a most generous donation of the painting *The Tack Room* by Gwen Dean. We are enormously grateful.

We would like to recognize and thank our sponsors Northern Trust Bank and Arizona Historical Society, and in particular to thank the art show's volunteer organizers Marion Hyland and Aline Goodman, without whose enthusiastic work this creative event would not have occurred.



"Quick Draw" artist Joan LaRue stopped work briefly to chat with ERF President Dick Schorr. (Photo: S. Hughes)



"The Tack Room" was donated to ERF by artist Gwen Dean..

## 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](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org).

- Plan emergency repairs to Adobe Haybarn (*complete*)
- Execute emergency repairs to Adobe Haybarn (*Phase 1 work funded & ongoing, to be complete May 2003. Phase 2 work is top priority once funds are secured*)
- Create plan and stabilize Adobe Haybarn for the long term (*priority item once funds are raised*)
- Stabilize lintel over south entry of Zaguan/Breezeway for the long term (*plan complete; funding redirected in deference to emergency repair needs*)
- Plan emergency repairs to Ranch Hand's House (*complete*)
- Execute emergency repairs to Ranch Hand's House (*Phase 1 work funded & ongoing; to complete May 2003. Phase 2 work is top priority once funds are secured*)
- 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 (*Spring 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, p. 2*)

**Empire Ranch  
Roundup Is Coming!  
September 20, 2003  
Save the Day  
It will be the best ever!**

## More Reata Lore



Reatas (lariats) differ in their appearances and functions. Reatas from the Northwest are thicker and heavier and are preferred by the buckaroos of the Great Sage Brush Basin. The reatas that are seen mostly in the Southwest are thinner and nearly as heavy. These seem to be favored by the Hispanic vaqueros, and are finely braided and very tight. The strand is usually 1/4 inch wide and not very thick.

A typical reata is braided with four to six strands of rawhide. The reatas made in Mexico are exceptionally tightly braided. In Tecate, Mexico, southeast of San Diego, one old vaquero mentioned to me that women are doing a lot of this type of braiding nowadays.

The difference in the weight and thickness of a reata has to do with its function. In our area here and in Sonora, vaqueros pride themselves in throwing "non-rodeo" loops when roping with a reata. This style of roping requires that the reata can "drape" itself onto the body of the animal when the hind-feet are "captured." A stiffer reata or a modern lariat cannot conform as well often times.

This style of roping, using a small-diameter reata, has its own built-in problems. Breaks occur easily unless the cowboy is very clever in handling the 60-foot (or longer) pencil thin reata. By comparison, the modern day nylon or polyester ropes used by rodeo cowboys are usually 32-35 feet long, strong, and difficult to break.)

One must stop and think at this moment. The vaquero had no choice in what he had to use. The cow in those olden days was smaller and not nearly as muscular. The hides were thinner and the weight of the reata was determined by the hide used. There was no store close by to buy a rope like we know today. Besides, the cowboy had very little money to spend on anything!

Many saddles seen in Mexico today will have a saddle horn the size of a tennis ball, often made of melted plastic that is

formed onto the metal saddle horn by using only one's hands and a wet gunnysack. The resultant saddle horn holds the dallies (turns around the saddle horn) better. If you discover a red, green, blue and white multi-colored saddle horn, you'll know that its owner is a "reata man." The "reata man" usually does not jerk the cattle, because the reata will break. It is traditional thinking among the vaqueros that if a reata breaks it is not the fault of the reata!

In the next newsletter I will describe in more detail the reata braiding itself.

*[Note: This article is second in a series by Dick Schorr, who be demonstrating reata making at the Empire Ranch Roundup Open House, on September 20, 2003. We plan to have a reata-roping (ranch roping) event as well.]*

## Working Calendar

### May

**10** Spring Trail Ride (for signup information, call (520) 881-1510)

### June

**7** Public Meeting on plans for Adaptive Reuse of Empire Ranch House

### July

**4** Patagonia Parade

### August

**16** Board Meeting

### September

**20** Empire Ranch Roundup Open House and Western Art Show

## Last chance notice!

Empire Ranch Spring Trail Ride

**May 10, 2003**

For Reservations

Call Bruce Lehmann

(520) 881-1510 or visit

[www.empireranchfoundation.org](http://www.empireranchfoundation.org)

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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

**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.*