

# EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

P.O. Box 842 \* Sonoita, Arizona 85637-0842 \* (888) 364-2829

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

## President's Message

Dear Friends of the Empire Ranch,

I am so excited that the Ranch House stabilization is complete!! Mark your calendar for a special milestone celebration on March 9, 2019. It will be a chance to tour the newly preserved structure, see the improved and updated exhibits your donations have made possible, and commemorate this major accomplishment (see photos below and article on p. 3).

We also are planning another great event you won't want to miss!! Our annual fall event, formerly the Roundup & Open House, is now called the **Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival**. Please join us on Nov. 3, 2018 for quality family entertainment, fabulous music, food, silent auction, presentations and live Western skill demonstrations.

As you may know, government funding to preserve historic structures, make repairs, provide maintenance, enhance interpretation, and improve accessibility has significantly decreased over the last decade. More and more of the cost of caring for the historic Empire Ranch Headquarters and presenting its story is being placed on the shoulders of the Empire Ranch Foundation.

Now more than ever, we need your support. Please renew your membership, become a sponsor of the Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival, or make a donation to support our preservation and education efforts. We can't do it without you.

With gratitude,  
Faith Boice

*Ranch House restored west front exterior (left) and Childrens Addition interior (right)(photos:S. Reichardt, C. Rogos)*

## The Outlaw Josey Wales



*Harry Alexander introduces panel members Blake and DeFrance, who provided colorful backstories prior to the film (photo: T. Perreault)*

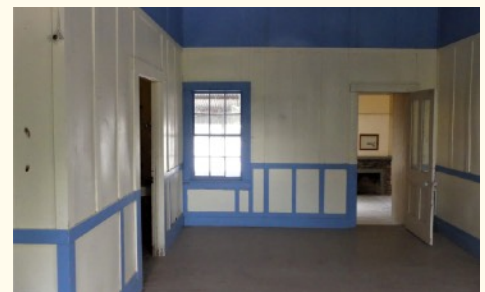
Every summer the Empire Ranch Foundation presents a classic western movie at the Loft Cinema in Tucson. The choice for 2018 was a great Clint East-

wood film, "Outlaw Josey Wales," which featured an all-star cast and tons of action. Nearly 200 people attended the fundraising event on August 8th in the newly renovated main theater.

Prior to the movie, guests enjoyed a panel discussion with Michael F. Blake, retired Hollywood make-up artist and the author of *Cowboy President*, a book about the cowboy days of Theodore Roosevelt. He was joined on the panel by retired Hollywood stuntman Bunker DeFrance. Colleagues of Blake and DeFrance's close friend Neil Summers worked on the film, portions of which were shot on the Empire Ranch. Blake and DeFrance told numerous entertaining stories about the cast and movie.

The Foundation greatly appreciates the support of our movie sponsors—the Green Valley Pecan Company, Hacienda del Sol Guest Ranch Resort, and The Loft Cinema. Special thanks go out to our guest speakers and the volunteers who organized and facilitated this enjoyable evening to benefit ERF programs.

Plan to join us Thursday, September 20 at the Empire Ranch at 7 pm for a free showing of 3:10 to Yuma, also filmed at the Empire Ranch (more information on p. 4).



*Published by the Empire Ranch Foundation, a non-profit 501c3 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 and education center. Donations to the Foundation may be sent to: P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637-0842.*



## A Taste of Western Heritage

On May 2nd sixty-nine students from Patagonia and Elgin middle schools enjoyed a day at the historic Empire Ranch, experiencing a taste of the western heritage of southeastern Arizona.

The students learned about roping from Joel Eliot; reata braiding from Dick Schorr, Cindy La Bah-Feagins and Randy Feagins; horses and horse care from Steve Boice, and range management from the University of Arizona Rangeland Management program staff. Chris Schragger described the preservation needs of headquarters buildings and led the students on a tour to illustrate work completed or underway.



(photos: C. Rogos)

Lunch in the Adobe Haybarn included traditional brisket, beans, tortillas, and cookies. Western singer Janice Deardorff serenaded the students during lunch and successfully enticed them into a competitive sing-along. We are very grateful for Legacy Day donations from Elizabeth Yerxa Layton, Fritz & Carla Neuhauser, Greg & Carol Shinsky, and Holly Masek Stahl, and for the efforts of the presenters, volunteers, and organizers Dick Schorr and Anna Schorr Coleman.

## YES! 2018

Thirteen southern Arizona youth, ages 16-18, participated in the Youth Engaged Stewardship Program (YES!) to learn about the diversity and management of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area (LCNCA) landscape and watershed. Funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the program aims to instill leadership skills and foster stewardship for our public lands. Program partners include Empire High School, Cienega Watershed Partnership, and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

After learning about the history of LCNCA and area inhabitants, the students spent several days working at the Hummel Ranch, located a few miles south of Empire Ranch Headquarters. They measured, photographed and documented the ranch structures, removed vegetation from the ranch house, and cleared brush to make the area surrounding the structures "fire safe." Their passion for the site was evident, and they hope in future to aid with educational signage and other improvements.

They visited the Sacaton flats at Gardner Canyon to learn of past work by YES! groups and identified a need to record quantitative data to document the success of erosion mitigation efforts. They designed a soil testing protocol and photo data points for implementation by environmental science students from Empire High School.

Using last summer's protocol, youth surveyed one LCNCA prairie dog colony and contributed data to a formal report with retired Arizona Game and Fish Biologist, Robert Fink. At "Bill's Pond" Dennis Caldwell worked with the students to transplant native aquatic plants, improve habitat along the edges of the pond, and create a water flow structure to help aerate the pond. They also built overwintering structures for the endangered Chiricahua leopard frog (photo below) consisting of concrete blocks dug into the pond bank and camouflaged with native plants and rocks. The YES! students' positive impact on LCNCA is measurable, sustaining and long term.



## Can You Help at the Cowboy Festival?

More than 100 volunteers are needed during the Cowboy Festival, for a minimum four-hour shift. We need volunteers to help to set-up for the Festival on Thursday & Friday, November 1st and 2nd, on Festival Day, Saturday, November 3rd, and Festival clean-up day on Sunday, November 4th. To sign up, visit the ERF website: <https://www.empireranchfoundation.org/ranch-events/cowboy-festival/cowboy-festival-volunteer-form/> or contact Marti Conroy by email: [Wrangler4504@gmail.com](mailto:Wrangler4504@gmail.com) or phone: (520) 247-6097. Hope you can join us!



YES! participants discussing fire damage (above), monitoring Sacaton erosion (below), working at Bill's Pond (lower left) (photos: T. Peters, S. McFarlin)

## Dedicated Gifts

The Empire Ranch Foundation gratefully acknowledges gifts recently received  
*In Memory of:*

Bronco Billy Anderson,  
Hope Fillman, Gene Harline,  
John D. Hedgcock,  
Gene & Alvessa Hummel, Ed Kay,  
David Allen Ladd, Kent MacCrea,  
George A Masek Sr., Linda Tuck,  
Lyn M Withey

*In Honor of:*

The American Cowboy & Cowgirl,  
Lahsha Brown, Gerald Korte



# Empire Ranch, Walter L. Vail, and Arizona Cowboy Heritage Day

The celebration for *National Day of the Cowboy* started at the Pima County Board of Supervisor's July 3rd meeting when Supervisor Steve Christy presented the Empire Ranch Foundation with a proclamation honoring Walter Vail's induction into the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and declaring July 28th as "*Empire Ranch, Walter L. Vail, and Arizona Cowboy Heritage Day.*"



ERF board members and Supervisor Steve Christy (2d from right) with Pima County proclamation (photo R. Metcalf)

On July 28, over 300 enthusiastic visitors to the Empire Ranch enjoyed programs in the Adobe Haybarn including Van Fower's re-enactment of the "Story of Walter Vail;" a presentation on "Multi-generational Ranching" by Ian and Addie Tomlinson; and the opportunity to view some western pilot movies. The western skills demonstrations of leather making, mule-packing, horse handling, saddle making, blacksmithing, reata braiding, and roping were popular, and everyone enjoyed shopping at the Elgin/Sonoita Cowbelle's booth and the ERF gift shop. And, the docent-led tours provided everyone with a special opportunity to re-enter the main Ranch House after its closure for a major stabilization project.

Many thanks to all the volunteers, demonstrators, and presenters who made the day special and honored the cowboy way of life.



Ian Tomlinson teaches roping to a youngster (photo: C. Rogos)



## A Brand New Life for a Grand Old Building

On Tuesday July 24 the fence surrounding the historic Empire Ranch House was removed signaling the completion of major stabilization of the venerable structure. The BLM invested almost \$1,000,000 in deferred maintenance funds and thousands of hours by agency staff in Tucson, Phoenix, and Denver.

During a tour of the finished work Empire Ranch Foundation docents and Board members marveled at the most evident improvements -- the removal of all shoring and supports from the interior rooms and exterior walls. But many of the most important structural components will be hidden from view:

- The soil below the masonry foundations was excavated and stabilized material compacted into the voids. Damaged adobe blocks were either removed and rebuilt, or loose mortar was removed and the masonry joints re-tuckpointed.
- Approximately 80% of the exterior wall cement stucco was removed. Where erosion of the underlying adobe had occurred, bricks were replaced with new ones made from dirt quarried from the original source. Pieces of nylon rope were set into undamaged bricks, and the rope ends frayed, to provide an anchor for several layers of mud plaster and a final coat of lime plaster that was applied to the walls.
- A plywood diaphragm, metal framework, and replacement adobes were installed above the ceilings to secure the walls and roofs together.

Restored roofs viewed from west (top), south (l. left), & northeast (l. right) top off nearly \$1 million in repairs to foundations and interior & exterior walls and windows (photos: A. Bunting & S. Reichardt)

- Areas of the floor of the Children's Additions, the only wood-frame section of the Ranch House, were removed in order to place concrete block stem walls to support the floor; the flooring was then replaced. The wood siding on the east and south exterior walls was repaired or replaced and painted.
- The composition roof of the original Ranch House and Rear Addition was covered with an improved type of rolled composition roofing. The roofs of the Children's Addition and the Victorian Addition were replaced by new galvalume corrugated roofing and the chimneys on the Victorian Addition were repaired.
- The largest structural cracks on interior walls were repaired and plastered. Some repairs were painted; others left visible for future interpretation.
- All doors and windows were examined and repaired to insure operability.
- Yard areas to the west and south of the Ranch House were re-contoured to provide positive drainage away foundations.

Now there is much more usable space inside the Ranch House and an opportunity to update and expand the educational and interpretive materials exhibited. The process will take time, both for design and implementation. If you'd like to join us let us know. And plan to visit soon to see all the improvements!

## Working Calendar

*Location: Meet at Visitor Contact Station, Empire Ranch Headquarters, unless otherwise noted. To volunteer, or for more information, call (888) 364-2829 or email [admin@empireranchfoundation.org](mailto:admin@empireranchfoundation.org).*

### September 2018

- 8&22** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch*, 11am-12pm, free, open to all, no reservations required.
- 15** *ERF Board Meeting*, 9 am-1pm.
- 20** *Solar Cinema*—1957 western classic **3:10 to Yuma**. Free, 7pm, for all ages.
- 22** *National Public Lands Day*, volunteer bonanza, join us to spruce up newly stabilized Empire Ranch House. Lunch, snacks, t-shirts & fun.

### October 2018

- 13&27** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch*, 11am-12pm, free, open to all, no reservations required.
- 27** *Volunteer Work Day*, 8am-2pm. This is the start of set-up for the Cowboy Festival!

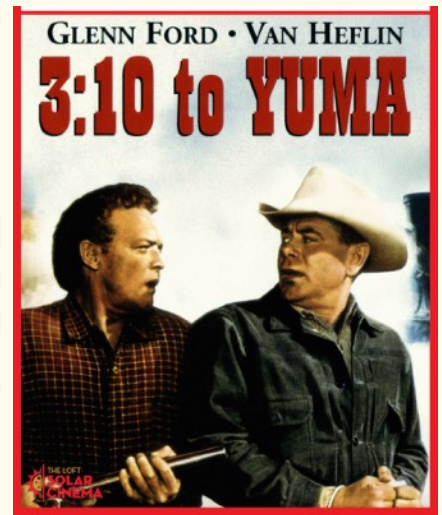
## Coming September 20!

### Outdoor Screening at 7:00pm of **3:10 to Yuma**

at Empire Ranch Headquarters  
off Highway 83, Sonoita, AZ  
A FREE Family Event of Solar Cinema  
in special partnership with The Loft  
Cinema's *Shot on Location* series.

Spend an evening under the stars.  
Bring your own seating, food & flash-  
lights. Don't miss it!

Questions? Call 888-364-2829



### November 2018

- 1&2** *Cowboy Festival Set up*, 8am-4pm, volunteers needed!
- 3** *18th Annual Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival*, 10am-4pm, free, open to all!
- 4** *Cowboy Festival tear down*, 8am-4pm, volunteers needed!
- 10&24** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch*, 11am-12pm, free, no reservations required.
- 15** *ERF Board Meeting*, 9 am-1pm.

### December 2018.

- 8&22** *Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch*, 11am-12pm, free, open to all, no reservations required.
- 8** *Christmas at the Ranch*, 12-3pm, free, western holiday fun. All welcome!

