

EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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President's Message

The past six months have allowed us to experience first-hand the isolation and uncertainty that Empire Ranch families and staff must have felt at times. Apache raiding in the early Vail years, roads made impassable by seasonal rains, or just days of non-stop work to keep the grasslands and cattle healthy.

The COVID-19 pandemic required us to cancel in-person activities and events starting with the Spring Trail Ride. In August we made the difficult decision to cancel the Cowboy Festival, slated for November 7-8. In these uncertain times planning and hosting such a large and complex gathering would not be wise, and we are conscious that many volunteers and guests who make the event possible are in the high-risk age group.

In 2019 43% of ERF's income was generated by our events. Thus far we can maintain the general business of the Foundation with volunteer effort, but your financial support is more important now than ever. Would you please consider a special donation at this time? You can use the envelope enclosed or visit the ERF website to make a secure donation.

We are optimistic that it will be possible to reinstate a few lower risk activities soon, such as opening our Gift Shop and providing docent-led tours, when it is safe to do so. We will keep everyone posted via our website, Facebook, and our electronic newsletter. And we'll continue to share Empire Ranch history stories like those of Empire Ranch cowboys featured in this issue.

Faith Boice
ERF President

Cowboys of the Empire Ranch

From the 1870s to the present, cowboys have cared for cattle on the Empire Ranch. When the Vails owned and operated the Empire Ranch, from 1876 to 1928, vaqueros (cowboys of Mexican descent) worked with cattle that grazed on rangeland from the Rincon Mountains to south of Sonoita. They moved the stock, branded, doctored, and castrated the calves, doing all the jobs involved in ranching.

From 1928 to 1974, when the Boice family owned or leased the Empire Ranch, most of the full-time cowboys were from Arizona or other southwestern states. Their work changed somewhat as time passed; the Boice cowboys provided additional types of medical care for the cattle. But like earlier cowboys, they were involved in roundups, training horses, and working cattle.

In this issue of the Foundation's newsletter we'd like to tell about a few of the vaqueros and cowboys who worked for the Vail and Boice families.

Tomás López

Tomás López was born in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico in 1827. He emigrated to Los Angeles in 1850. In 1873, he, his wife, Sacramento, and seven children including son Blas López, began a trip



Vail vaqueros gathering prior to cattle drive to California in 1890 (above); Boice family branding cattle, in 1950s (below)

from Los Angeles to Hermosillo via Arizona. While traveling south of Tucson their wagon was attacked by Chiricahua Apaches and they lost everything, forcing them to stay in Arizona. Tomás later homesteaded in the Cienega Valley, near the Empire Ranch. He is listed in the 1880 U.S. Census as a herder working at the Empire Ranch.

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Tomás and his son Blas planted “cottonwood switches” along the Empire Gulch north of Empire Ranch headquarters, creating the wonderful cottonwood grove we see today.



Blas López with his family, 1900 (photo: courtesy E. Gardner)

José Blas López

José Blas López (Blas), the son of Tomás, was born in Los Angeles in 1868 and was five years old when his family was forced to settle in Arizona. Blas married Maria Pallanes López and together they had three daughters, Rita, Elena, and Rosario. Blas began to work at the Empire Ranch in the early 1900's, first as a cowboy and ultimately as foreman.

Blas' grandson, Edward Gardner, grew up hearing stories of Blas' participation in the 1890 cattle drive from the Empire Ranch to California led by Edward Vail and Tom Turner (photo, p. 1).



Ned Hilliard, 6'2" tall, is likely the third Empire Ranch cowboy from the right (bending over), ca. 1900 (photo: courtesy of Special Collections, UofA Library, Empire Ranch Collection)

Edward “Ned” Hilliard

Edward “Ned” Hilliard was born in Texas in 1866, the son of freed slaves. Ned began working as a cowboy at age 14 for Henry Coffield, a well-known Texas rancher. He spent about 12 years in Sonora, Mexico, on a Coffield ranch, and returned to the U.S. about 1890. Ned worked for the Vail family, starting about 1895.

Ned was known for “his great ability with a rope in rough country as well as his all-around ability as a cowhand.” At some point the Vail family asked Ned to work on their ranch on Santa Rosa Island in California. Ned did that for a short time but grew homesick for Arizona and returned.

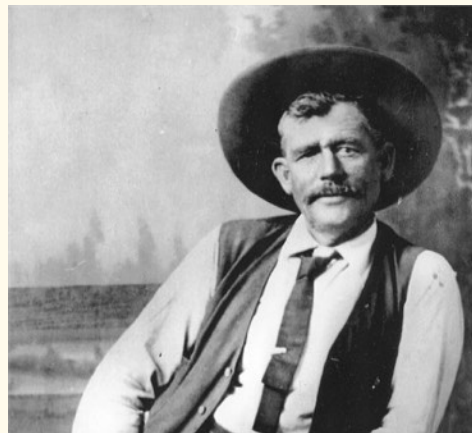


Mike Dojaquez on horseback. Henry Dojaquez far left, Reagen Gardner middle, 1939 (photo: H. Dojaquez)

Miguel and Henry Dojaquez

Miguel “Mike” Dojaquez was born in Santa Cruz, Mexico in 1886. He came to work at the Empire Ranch in 1907 under the direction of Empire Ranch foreman Tom Turner. Mike had worked for Tom Turner when he was the foreman of the Greene Cattle Company, and followed him to the Empire Ranch.

Mike's son Henry Dojaquez was born in Arizona in 1917. In 1936 he worked the Roundup and helped build a dam designed by Frank S. Boice on the Cienega Creek; the dam was washed out in a flood in 1938.

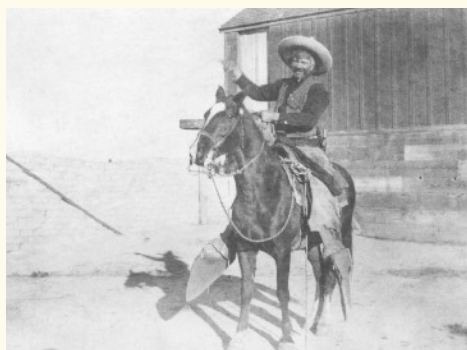


Tom Turner, 1890s (photo: Gary Turner)

Thomas J. Turner

Tom Turner was born in 1861 in Texas, where he worked as a cowboy until he moved to Arizona and settled on a ranch near Benson. He first worked for the Empire in the late 1880s. He was foreman from 1890 to 1895 and helped lead the 1890 cattle drive from the Empire Ranch to California. He returned as superinten-

dent of the ranch from 1909-1911 after operating his own ranch, serving as Santa Cruz County Sheriff, and working for the Greene Cattle Company. His wife Mary and four children, Earl, Jewel, Stella, and Verna, lived with Tom on the Empire Ranch during this latter period.



Hadden McFadden on horseback in Empire Ranch corral, 1900 (photo: G. McFadden)

Hadden McFadden

Hadden McFadden was born in 1859 in California. He became the foreman of the Empire Ranch in 1896 when the Vail family moved to California. He held this position until about 1909. His wife Martha and two of his children, Perry and Esther joined him at the Empire Ranch. He returned to California after leaving the Empire Ranch.



Harry Heffner on horseback in Empire Ranch corral, 1896 (photo: C. Shirley, L. V. Ingram)

Harry Heffner

Harry Heffner was born in 1874 in Ohio. He moved to California and in 1893 approached Walter Vail for a job after the bank he was working in failed. Vail assigned him to help move cattle from Catalina Island and soon after he came to work at the Empire Ranch under the direction of Tom Turner. He became ranch manager in 1900 a position he held until 1905. He helped to organize the Arizona Cattle Grower's Association and served as its first secretary in 1904. He returned to California and managed several California ranches until his retirement.

Gerald Korte



Gerald Korte telling tales to middle school students in Empire Ranch Stone Corral, 2010 (photo: C. Rogos)

Gerald Korte was born in Tucson in 1929. He went to work for the Boice family at age seventeen and was a staff cowboy from 1947-1949. He next worked on the Cienega Ranch, once part of Empire Ranch holdings, from 1950-1969. In 1998 Gerald was instrumental in the founding of the Empire Ranch Foundation. He was the Foundation's first president and has served continuously on the ERF Board and/or Advisory Committee since that time.

Fred Barnett



Fred Barnett, ca. 1931 (photo: M. Boice)

Fred Barnett was born in Crittenden, Arizona in 1894. Fred first worked for the Boice family at the Rail X Ranch, south of Sonoita, and in 1930 began to manage the Eureka Ranch near Willcox. He became foreman of the Empire Ranch in 1938, a position he held until about 1950 when he began managing the Cienega Ranch for Jack Greenway. Fred and his wife Ruby (seen in next photo) lived in the Grove House and she cooked for the cowboys.

Verne Steen



Verne Steen and Ruby Barnett in front of Grove House, 1940s. (photo: V. Steen)

Verne Steen was born in 1928 in Wyoming. He was Fred Barnett's nephew and worked as an Empire Ranch cowboy from 1941-1945. He lived with the Barnetts in the Grove House, west of the Empire Ranch House.

Ricardo "Dick" Jimenez



Mercy, Dick, and Eva Jimenez, ca. 1943 (photo: M. J. Sumner)

Dick Jimenez was born in Harshaw, AZ in 1913. Dick worked as a cowboy on the Empire Ranch from 1933 until 1945 when he moved to the Crown C Ranch in Sonoita. His wife Eva Ferra was raised by her grandparents, Mariano and Juana Ferra, on the Empire Ranch, and as a teenager helped Mary Boice with caring for Pancho and Bob and with household chores. Dick and Eva's daughter Mercy spent her early years at the Empire Ranch.

Jack and Gordon Cooper



Jack Cooper, 1990. (photo: L. Harrison for BLM)

Jack Cooper and his cousin Gordon Cooper were born in Oklahoma in 1915 and 1912, respectively. The cousins first worked a roundup at the Eureka Ranch under Fred Barnett in 1935. They came to break horses at the Empire Ranch in 1936.

Bob Haverty



Bob Haverty, ca. 1931. (photo: M. Boice)

Bob Haverty was born in Arizona in 1907. The 1930 U.S. Census records him living and working at the Empire Ranch as a "rider." He was an expert roper and competed in local rodeos. His involvement with the Empire Ranch continued into the 1950s.



The stories and photos of Empire Ranch cowboys are made possible by donations from family members and research. If you have information about individuals who may have worked or lived at the Empire Ranch please contact us:

admin@empireranchfoundation.org

Modern Communications

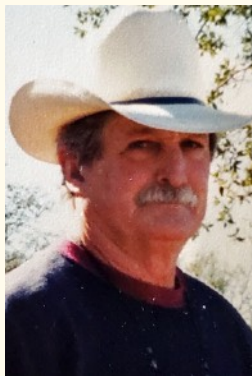


The Empire Ranch had one of the first telephones in the area when a line was installed in the 1890s between the ranch and the Pantano railroad town 45 miles north. Talented volunteer, John Weiss, refurbished and mounted a 1908 Kellogg candlestick telephone and Stromberg-Carlson Magneto Ringer (ca. 1894) in the Office (Room 11). This equipment, which was probably used at the Los Encinos Guest Ranch in Sonoma, was donated by Frank Hedgcock, ERF Advisory Committee member.

Departed Friend— Walter Kolbe

Walter Reed Kolbe died on Feb. 6, 2020. In 1946, at age 10, he moved from Illinois with his family to the Rail X Cattle Ranch and Casa Rosada Guest Resort. He worked on the ranch as a young man and returned to manage it in 1960 after graduating from college and serving in the U.S. Navy.

During his time at the Rail X Ranch he interacted and worked with the Boice family at the Empire Ranch. Walter served on the ERF Board of Directors (2003-2006), held the office of Secretary (2005-2006), and served on the ERF Advisory Committee from 2006 until his death.



Dedicated Gifts

The Empire Ranch Foundation gratefully acknowledges gifts recently received

In Memory of:

Bob & Miriam Boice,
Caeser & Heidi, Ben Cooper,
Edward F. Gardner
Edward F. Gardner (DNA Match)
Carey Ingram, Dusty Vail Ingram,
Travis Cody Kerekes-Martin
David Allen Ladd,
Ferne Kemp Lewis,
George & Nina Masek,
Joel McCrea, Christine Shirley,
Them Ornerly Mitchum Boys

In Honor of:

Alison Bunting,
Horse'n Around Rescue Ranch &
Foundation,
Susan Hughes, Doug & Sally Pyne
Jack & Joann White

