

EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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

www.empireranchfoundation.org

Thanks!

The response to our year-end appeal to help the Foundation renovate the New Ranch House was fantastic! Over \$8,000 has been added to the renovation fund. We also received our first four-year pledge. Please consider making a pledge for this exciting project. Email admin@empireranchfoundation.org or call 888-364-2829.

COVID19 still limits our ability to host events, volunteer workdays, and docent tours. The Ranch House remains open to visitors. When circumstances permit, we hope to institute a greeter program. Trained volunteers would be stationed outdoors on weekends to answer visitor questions and sell gift shop items.

We can also give presentations to groups virtually. *"Arizona's Empire Ranch--a Prominent Past and Promising Future"* is a narrated slide show summarizing the history of the Empire Ranch, preservation of the Empire Ranch buildings, and the Empire Ranch Foundation's history and activities. *"The Empire Ranch House Virtual Tour"* provides a brief introduction to Empire Ranch history and a virtual tour through all the rooms of the Ranch House.

As this issue of the newsletter goes to press, we do not know if we will be able to host the Spring Trail Ride, usually held the first Saturday in April. If it is safe to do so we will get out the word via Facebook and our E-News.

Thanks so very much for your support during these difficult times. Hope to see you in person later in 2021!

Faith Boice, President

Edward Vail Stories



Edward "Ned" Vail, beside his car on the Empire Ranch, ca 1920 (photo: M. V. Woolley)

Edward "Ned" L. Vail was born September 19, 1849 in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Canada, the eldest son of Mahlon and Elizabeth Boyle Vail. He grew up in New Jersey with his six siblings. His younger brother, Walter L. Vail, persuaded Edward to come to Arizona in 1879 to join him in his ranching and mining ventures. Walter and two partners had established the Empire

Ranch in 1876 and had begun the development of the Total Wreck silver mine.

Upon his arrival in Arizona Ned became the assayer of the Total Wreck Mine and later purchased and managed the Rosemont Ranch on the east slope of the Santa Rita Mountains. He participated actively in Vail family ranching operations in Arizona and California throughout his life. A lifelong bachelor, he was fondly known by his nieces and nephews as "Tio." He died at the age of 87 on October 14, 1936 in Tucson.

In the 1920s Ned began to write reminiscences of his experiences in early Arizona, many of which were published in local newspapers. The best known story is the lengthy "Diary of a Desert Trail," the story of the 1890 cattle drive from the Empire Ranch to California. In this newsletter issue we present another two of his stories.

A Mexican Baile

Ranch life in early days was not entirely without amusement. All young men must play occasionally. About seven miles west of the Empire Ranch in the Santa Rita Mountains there is a little placer gold mining camp called Greaterville. This was



Greaterville, ca 1898, the town of the baile (photo: D. V. Ingram).

Mexican Baile (cont'd).

the nearest settlement to the ranch, and in the late seventies and early eighties, the mines produced a good deal of gold dust. The population of Greaterville was principally Mexican, with some American miners from California, Colorado and other places.

The Mexicans are very fond of dancing, and there are always some musicians among them. With a violin, guitar, bass-viol or harp, they make very good dance music. Occasionally, the Mexican miners and their families would give a "baile" (dance), and the cowboys from the ranch would ride up there to attend. On one such occasion, when the Empire crowd arrived, the baile was in full swing, but the Mexican miners decided they would not let the cowboys have their girls or partners, so they locked the door and would not let them in.

One of the Empire crowd had an idea which proved very successful. The weather was cold and there was a fire in the fireplace in the little adobe building where the dance was being held. With a little assistance from the others, he climbed up on the roof and dropped a handful of six-shooter cartridges down the chimney into the fire. In a few minutes when the cartridges commenced to go off the Mexicans came out with a rush through the doors and windows which they did not stop to open.

The Empire crowd chose their partners for the next waltz and the dance went on. One of the Mexican dons, whose girl had been captured by a ranch man, was following his new rival around the room with a dangerous looking knife, and a Texas cowboy was close behind the Mexican with his Colt 45 ready for action in case the jealous lover made a break.

Fortunately, there was no blood shed and after the dance was over, the owners of the ranch extended a cordial invitation to all those who were present and to their families to come to the ranch as their guests at an early date.

On this occasion several friends from Tucson were also present. There was plenty to eat, and as usual in those days, sufficient to drink, and all had a good time. Many of the Mexican ladies brought their babies, which were parked in the boss's bedroom.



Dan Murphy's Ranch on the San Pedro River

In 1878 or 1879, Dan Murphy drove a small herd of cattle from his ranch on the Coast of California to his ranch on the lower San Pedro Valley in Arizona. This ranch was about five miles below the present town of Mammoth. These cattle were mostly Durham and Devon blood. John Rhodes was his foreman and one of the best cattlemen I ever knew. Note: John Rhodes afterward got mixed up in the so-called Tonto Basin War.

My brother, Walter L. Vail was always anxious to improve the grade of his cattle by buying the best bulls he could. At that time, the S.P.R.R.[Southern Pacific Railroad] had not reached Tucson from Yuma and the Santa Fe was working its way south in New Mexico. My brother Walter knew Mr. Murphy and made an arrangement with him to buy some of the bulls. Murphy said "You can select any bull you like from my herd but one, an exceptionally fine one which he considered top of his herd. Murphy's price was \$100.00 each for the bull we took delivered on his Ranch, which was then considered quite a high price to pay for cattle in Arizona, especially as we were to receive them on the San Pedro Ranch and had to drive them nearly 100 miles to the Empire Ranch.



Empire Ranch horse drawn wagons around 1900 provided a rough ride (photos: Harry Heffner albums, courtesy Special Collections, UofA Library, Empire Ranch Collection)

The Empire Ranch was then owned by Walter L. Vail and John Harvey. We started from the Empire Ranch with a light spring wagon to carry our bedding and chuck. John T. Dillon, "Jerry" was foreman. As soon as we cut out the bulls we liked we started up the river on our way home to the Empire Ranch. About noon Jerry decided the cattle needed water so he rode ahead towards the river to find a good watering place. There was a heavy growth of mesquite along the river and also danger of quicksand in some places. In working his way through, the mesquite caught the hammer of his Colt 45 six shooter and a ball went through his right leg. It passed through the calf and came out above the ankle. No bones were broken but it was a bad flesh wound. However, I was selected to take him back to the home ranch, while the rest came more slowly with the cattle. We put our blankets and quilts in the wagon, some were furnished by the other men and Jerry laid down on them. On our way up the road we met a Mexican cattleman, named Apadaca who Jerry knew and he told us to go to his ranch a few miles up the road and camp for the night. He would be back soon. There were no men around the ranch to help me get Jerry out of the wagon and I was afraid to leave the team which consisted of a gentle horse and a bronco mule.

So I drove the team up close to the adobe house, unhitched and tied up the mule and then managed to get Jerry into the house. We had to make our beds on the floor as there were no cots or beds to be had. The next day we resumed our journey to the

(continued on p. 3)

ERF Officers & Board Members, 2021

The Foundation officers for 2020-2021 are: **Faith Boice**, President; **Ray Patrone**, Vice President; **Marti Conroy**, Secretary, and **Christine Haaksma**, Treasurer.

Three new board members were elected at the December 18, 2020, annual meeting:

Bill Dobias, of Hereford, grew up on the East coast and served in the U.S. Navy from 1977-1979. After attending Lebanon Valley College, Bill began to work with individuals with developmental disabilities in 1980. He and his wife Eileen moved to Arizona in 1986. For over 30 years Bill has worked for the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Division of Developmental Disabilities (DES/DD). Bill, Eileen and their daughters Rosie and Nicole have been active participants in ERF volunteer workdays and at ERF events.

Jean Olmsted, of Whetstone, grew up in Colorado. She was the Chief Executive Financial Officer of the Cripple Creek-Victor School District from 1983-2014. Jean and her husband, Nick, worked as Empire Ranch site hosts from

2017-2019 and during that time developed a deep passion for the Empire Ranch and its history. Jean is an ERF docent and an active participant in ERF volunteer workdays.

Nick Olmsted, of Whetstone, was born in Nebraska. He received a criminal justice degree from Trinidad College in Colorado and worked in law enforcement until his retirement in 2012. Nick is a gifted carpenter and during his tenure as an Empire Ranch site host worked closely with BLM's historical archaeologist and the Foundation on repairs and enhancements to the Empire Ranch historic structures. Nick is an ERF docent.

Board members elected to additional terms are **Steve Boice**, **Marti Conroy**, **Ray Patrone**, **Kimberly Patterson**, **Kristin Tomlinson**, and **Tim Vail**. Continuing Board members are **Faith Boice**, **Don Butler**, **Christine Haaksma**, **Dave McNamara**, **Bill Schock**, **Joanne Triplett**, and **Jeff Van Riper**.

We are most grateful for the contributions of four departing board members.

David Daiss (2018-2020) is well-

known as the main arena announcer at the Cowboy Festival. Dave served on the Events and Outreach & Education committees.

Kathie Maynard (2015-2020) coordinated several Cowboy Festival activities during her tenure including the Silent Auction and the Western Authors. As a member of the Preservation & Interpretation committee she helped to stage Empire Ranch House rooms with vintage furniture and accessories.

Sally Pyne (2017-2020) served as Secretary (2018-2020). She chaired the Preservation & Interpretation committee and led the effort to stage Empire Ranch House rooms with vintage furniture and accessories. Sally chaired the ad hoc Bylaws Committee and served on the Executive, Events, and Outreach & Education committees.

Cheryl Rogos (2017-2020) served on the Events and Outreach & Education committees. An avid and talented photographer Cheryl photographed all ERF events and Empire Ranch structures.

Cheryl, Kathie, and Sally all plan to remain active as members of the Advisory Committee.

Murphy Ranch (cont'd).

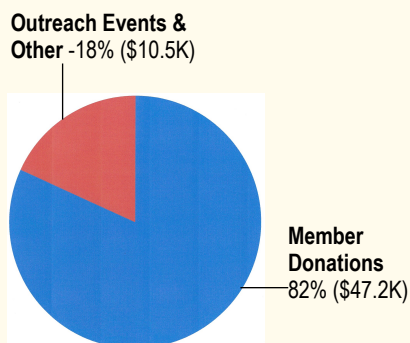
Empire Ranch crossing the San Pedro River at Tres Alamos and reached home before dark, about 60 miles I think, and it was no boulevard.

I wanted to take Jerry to the Sisters Hospital in Tucson, but he said Tucson was too hot and he would rather stay at the ranch. He laid on his cot and I acted as nurse. I washed his leg clean, then wrapped it with clean cotton sheeting and put a bucket of water on a chair near him and gave him a long-handed dipper and kept the bandage wet with cold water. The wound healed up fine and, in a few weeks, he was riding again.

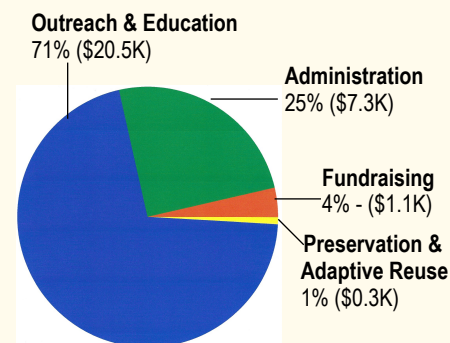
Jerry told me what to do, he had been on the frontier most of his life and was quite familiar with how gunshot wounds were treated there. The Murphy bulls were very satisfactory and calves from them, from our Texas cows, were generally reds or roans and were not all legs and horns. Afterwards we imported Angus from Kansas, but finally decided the Hereford cattle the best suited for range conditions in Arizona.

Empire Ranch Foundation Financial Summary: January through December 2020

Income by Source of Funds: \$57,650



Expenditures, by Use of Funds: \$29,111



The COVID19 pandemic, which resulted in the cancellation of all ERF events in 2020, greatly affected the Foundation's finances. Income during FY20 totaled \$57,650-- 82% from member donations and 18% from outreach events and other sources. Expenditures during FY20 totaled \$29,111—71% for outreach and education programs; 25% for general administration; 4% for fundraising; and 1% for preservation and adaptive reuse projects. Not reflected in these figures is the more than 3,350 hours of labor contributed by ERF volunteers, valued by BLM at \$91,920 for grant matching purposes.

End-of-year assets totaled \$143.7K, comprising \$33.5K in BLM grant funds (fully obligated); \$25K in the Vail endowment and \$14.3K in other ERF restricted funds; \$24.8K in ERF unrestricted funds obligated for preservation, education, and interpretation; and \$46.1K in ERF unrestricted unobligated funds.

Working Calendar

The only activities on the ERF schedule for now are Board Meetings held via Zoom. To participate call (888) 364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org.

February 2021

19 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-11am.

All welcome!

April 2021

16 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-11am. All welcome!



Barn Roof Repairs

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Tucson Field Office has contracted with Pat Lioy/Lioy Custom Builders to perform roof repairs on the Adobe Hay Barn and South Barn. Loose sections of the metal roofs will be re-attached or replaced as needed.

