



EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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www.empireranchfoundation.org

BLM Director Visits Us



On February 2 BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning visited Las Cienegas National Conservation Area and the Empire Ranch Headquarters. BLM staff briefed Stone-Manning on LCNCA's biodiversity and the programs underway to manage and protect the landscape.

ERF President Faith Boice-McCabe reviewed the Foundation's partnership efforts to protect and preserve the historic buildings and educate the public. A tour of the Heritage Discovery Trail and the Empire Ranch House followed the briefings.

Earlier in the week Boice-McCabe and Vice President Marti Conroy attended a meeting at the BLM State Office which included many partner organizations. Everyone shared their experiences and challenges helping to protect BLM-managed lands in Arizona.



Lots of smiling faces at the 2023 Spring Trail Ride. (photos: F. Boice-McCabe, A. Nyiri)

Beauty Everywhere!

A bright sunny day greeted the riders and volunteers for the 2023 Empire Ranch Spring Trail Ride on April 1st. Faith Boice-McCabe led one morning and one afternoon 1.5-hour rides through Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. When asked what they enjoyed most, several riders mentioned the beautiful landscape, the quiet, and the vistas.

Everyone enjoyed the delicious pulled pork or chicken chuckwagon lunch dished up by EZ Cattle Company Cow Camp Cafe Chuck Wagon Catering. The ERF gift shop was busy all day with riders and other visitors stopping by to check out the new items available for purchase.

We so appreciate the outstanding efforts of our volunteers who assisted with parking, registration, and all set-up and take-down activities.



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 and education center. Donations to the Foundation may be sent to: P.O. Box 842, Sonoita, AZ 85637-0842.

Expansion of the Empire Ranch House

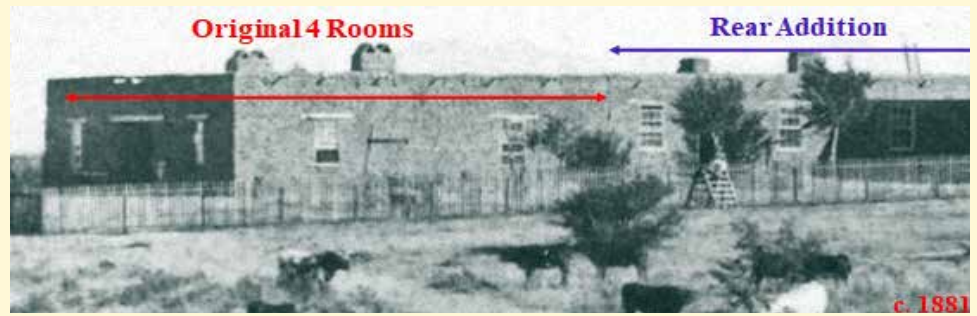
By 1879 the Empire Ranch was supporting 1,500 head of cattle and the four-room house was no longer adequate to meet the needs of the growing operations (see original ranch house article in the March 2023 issue). A building expansion was essential. Yet without the sale of cattle, the partners were short of cash. Walter Vail and John Harvey had intended to build their addition from adobes already constructed on site, but heavy rains in August 1878 ruined those first bricks. In late 1878 or early 1879, they tried again.

The threat of Apache attack was still very real and Vail and Harvey chose to build the Rear Addition inside the protective adobe walls of the corral (see image below). This four-room, 50+ foot-long, adobe addition incorporated the west wall of the corral.



Today, the Rear Addition has two external doors on its west side; those doors were not part of the 1879 construction (see image at top of columns on right). In a later, less hazardous era, the Vails enlarged the original windows as doors (see upper image at right). The Rear Addition contained a kitchen, living spaces for a bookkeeper and cook, and an office for ranch business. A fifth room, the family kitchen, was added at its south end after 1881.

Walter Vail used the office (see bottom image at right) while



View of the original 4-room Ranch House and the Rear Addition, c. 1881.

conducting his business and political affairs. He locked his whiskey in the office safe when he was away from the ranch, but not money. He wasn't worried about any of the cowboys or staff taking money but did not want them to drink while he was not around.

The Boice family also used this room as an office, and the safe was used to store the company's books and records for, at one time, four different ranches, as Frank Boice kept records for all operations. The combination for the safe was written on the door so anyone could open it.

Our thanks to ERF Advisory Committee member Robin Pinto for allowing us to share the results of her work on photographic archaeology of the Empire Ranch.



Board of Directors Update

At the February 16, 2023 Board of Directors meeting Christine Haaksma was elected Secretary; she also will continue to hold the office of Treasurer.

We are grateful for the contributions of Nick and Jean Olmsted who served on the Board of Directors from 2020 to 2022. Jean served as ERF Secretary (2020-2021) and coordinated the Cowboy Festival music stage performances.

Nick coordinated the vendor, non-profit, and cowboy skills activities at the Cowboy Festival and organized and supervised many of the volunteer workday preservation projects. Nick and Jean have been ERF docents since 2020 and plan to continue participating in the docent program.

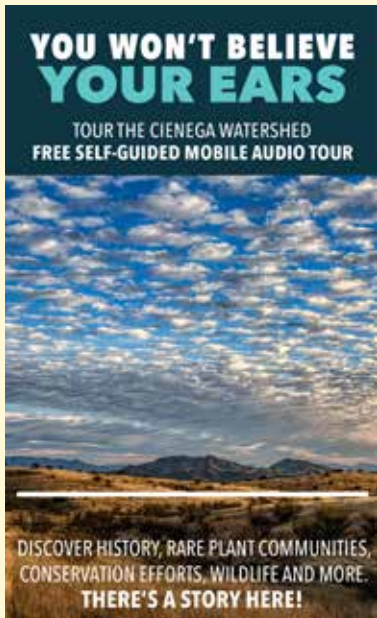


Save the Date for the Empire Ranch Cowboy Festival!

**Saturday-Sunday
November 4-5, 2023**

10am to 4pm

Empire Ranch Headquarters



Tour LCNCA and the Cienega Watershed

The Empire Ranch Foundation participated in a Cienega Watershed Partnership (CWP) project to create a free audio driving tour of the Cienega Watershed. The tour provides interesting and important information about the social and cultural history, ecology, wildlife management, and conservation efforts in the watershed.

To take the tour the first step is to download the *TravelStorys.Com* app to your phone or other device. The app is available directly from TravelStorys (<https://travelstorys.com>), or the Apple store, or Google Play. Open TravelStory and select “Tour the Cienega Watershed” to save the tour on your phone. Once you've downloaded the app and the tour, no Internet access is needed.

The tour includes 21 podcast-style stories that will automatically play at the appropriate location using your phone's GPS. Be sure to set your location settings for the TravelStory app to “Always” to take advantage of the GPS feature. The route loop includes the Gabe Zimmerman Trailhead in Vail, Las Cienegas

National Conservation Area (prairie dog colony, camping areas, cottonwood pond), the Empire Ranch Headquarters, wildlife viewing and many other features along Hwy. 83 ending (or beginning) in Sonoita.

And you don't even have to drive through the watershed to enjoy the tour! You can download the tour to your computer or tablet, listen to each of the site descriptions, and view photos of the sites wherever you are.

Departed Friend: Don Butler



On March 20, 2023 Don Butler passed away at the age of 97. Don served on the ERF Board of Directors from 2018 to 2021, and the

ERF Advisory Committee from 2021-2023. He was a passionate supporter of ERF's efforts to protect and preserve the Empire Ranch historic buildings and its western heritage education initiatives.

Don was an enthusiastic advocate for agriculture, especially the cattle industry. He graduated from the University of Arizona with a bachelor's degree in animal husbandry and pursued a career in agriculture finance and cattle feeding. Don served ten years as the Director of Agriculture for the State of Arizona. He was president of the Arizona Cattle Feeders Association, and the National Cattlemen's Association.

Don's family has requested that he be remembered by memorial donations to the Empire Ranch Foundation. Secure online donations can be made at the ERF website: www.empireranchfoundation.org.



Don't miss a *Movie Under the Stars*' free showing of *Night of the Lepus*, Saturday, September 23rd at 7 pm at the Historic Empire Ranch. Bring your own seating, food & flashlights. Snacks and water will be available for purchase.

Filmed in 1972, this science fiction classic stars Stuart Whitman, Janet Leigh, and Rory Calhoun. Giant mutant rabbits, escapees from a university laboratory, terrorize the southwest. Though not a Western film, *Night of the Lepus* features several of the Empire Ranch headquarters buildings and ERF's own Bunker De France plays the role of “husband in car.” Watch the rabbits race from the South Barn to the Empire Ranch House to threaten the residents hiding in the storm cellar.

Dedicated Gifts

The Empire Ranch Foundation gratefully acknowledges gifts:

In Memory of

Lu Belle & Anne Boice

Don Butler

Eldon Corkill

Emil Franzi

Snuff Garrett

Jim Kolbe

In Honor of

Efforts of Faith Boice & the Foundation Membership & Board.

Working Calendar

Please check our website to confirm event details (empireranchfoundation.org). Location: Meet at Visitor Contact Station, Empire Ranch Headquarters, unless otherwise noted. To volunteer, RSVP, or for more information, call (888) 364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org.

June 2023

3 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-12pm.

10 & 24 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, reservations required.

16 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-11am. All Welcome! Call 888-364-2829 to RSVP.

July 2023

8 Volunteer Work Day, 8am to 12pm.

8 & 22 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, reservations required.

22 National Day of the Cowboy Celebration, 8am-1pm.

August 2023

5 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-12pm.

12 & 26 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, reservations required.

18 ERF Board Meeting, 9am-11am. All Welcome! Call 888-364-2829 to RSVP.

September 2023

9 Volunteer Work Day, 8am-12pm.

9 & 23 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, reservations required.

23 Movie Under the Stars showing of Night of the Lepus, 8pm. Free, bring your own seating, flashlight, and food. Snacks will be available for purchase.

Celebrate National Day of the Cowboy at the Historic Empire Ranch

**Saturday, July 22, 2023
8am-1pm**

FREE Family Event
Demonstrations, Trail Rides,
Vendors, Ranch Tours
Lunch will be available for
purchase

Empire Ranch Headquarters
Las Cienegas National
Conservation Area
off Scenic Highway 83
East Empire Ranch Road
www.empireranchfoundation.org