



EMPIRE RANCH FOUNDATION NEWS

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www.empireranchfoundation.org

Pride and Gratitude

As 2023 draws to a close I look back on the Foundation's activities and accomplishment with great pride and gratitude. I am proud of our significant preservation and interpretation accomplishments, our events and outreach activities, and our collaborative relationship with the Bureau of Land Management. I am grateful for the outstanding support of our members, volunteers, and supporters.

A highlight of this year's activities was our increased interactions with youth. We offered educational sessions to 369 students from Desert Willow Elementary School in Vail; Elgin and Patagonia schools; and the Colearn Academy in Tucson. Empire Ranch headquarters benefited from two Eagle Scout projects, and 20 youth volunteers contributed over 266 volunteer hours. Capturing the interest and support of young people and their families is essential to the future of the Empire Ranch Foundation and the preservation of the Empire Ranch.

Enclosed in this newsletter issue is our year-end appeal letter. Please contribute as generously as you can. If you are not a member, please join and take advantage of our reduced basic membership fee (\$35). You can send a check in the enclosed envelope, or you can donate securely on our website (www.empireranchfoundation.org).

I look forward to increasing the awareness of this special and historic place, and to growing our membership and support.

Faith Boice McCabe
ERF President

Western Heritage Celebration



The 22nd annual Cowboy Festival at the Empire Ranch on November 4-5, 2023, was an outstanding success. Over 2,000 participants enjoyed the lovely Fall weather and the many activities available on both days. One visitor noted: "I love the beauty out here and the animals. I'm happy to support this special place."

Each day started with Sonora Schmitt's stirring rendition of the National Anthem and the presentation of colors by B Troop 4th U.S. Cavalry Regiment (Memorial). At the Saturday opening session Tucson Audubon Society announced the designation of Las Ciencas National Conservation Area as a Globally Important Birding Area. The presence of the Chestnut-collared Longspur at LCNCA led to the designation.

Arena events included Regi Richter (horsemanship) and Joel Eliot & George Masek (cattle handling). Mounted shooting demonstrations by the Tombstone Ghost Riders and B Troop 4th U.S. Cavalry were especially popular.

At the music stage the Mountain Saddle Band played western favorites and original cowboy way songs. Carol Markstrom performed her award-winning western/country tunes, and the bluegrass offerings from Permafrost Road delighted all.

The talented experts demonstrating skills and techniques used by cowboys and ranchers included Ron Applegate (blacksmithing & chuckwagon cooking); Charlie Bub (power tools from the past); Drew Bevan-Church (saddle making);

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Cowboy Festival (cont'd)



Ken Kurts (blacksmithing); Bill Schock (branding); Dick Schorr (reata braiding); and Lydia Stinchfield (leatherworking). Jesse Forbes roamed the Festival grounds delighting all with his trick roping performances. Joe Mortimer's telegraph operation display in the Ranch House office (photo top right) was always crowded.

Many new Cowboy Conversation speakers captivated their audience with historical and ranching accounts including Sunshine Arrington, (teenager's perspective on ranching); Rick Collins (death and danger in the Santa Cruz Valley); Dawn Hawkins (history of the Mescal movie set); Mark Santiago (life in a Spanish Presidio); Dawn Moore Santiago (Estevan Ochoa); and Jay Van Orden (Apaches). Returning speakers included Bunker DeFrance, Marty Freese, Gene Freese (Western movies); Doug Hocking (mining and prospecting); and Faith Boice McCabe (Boice family legacy).

Authors John Buzzard, Gail Corkill, Doug Hocking, Lewis Kirts, and John McLaughlin were busy all day as were the 16 non-profit organizations and 20 vendors. Steve Shaw's mini-ox delivered water to thirsty visitors and the food trucks provided a variety of savory eats for lunch.

The sold-out Saturday evening steak fry served up by Lucky 7 Chuckwagon featured 10 oz. T-Bone Steak with all the fixins and apple cobbler for dessert. Permafrost Road provided the musical entertainment for the evening.

We are so grateful to the over 200 presenters, demonstrators, and volunteers who participated in the 2023 Cowboy Festival. Please join us in thanking the sponsors and silent auction donors (listed on right) for their generous support.

(Photos: M. Blair, J. Mortimer, A. Nyiri)



Cowboy Festival Sponsors

Cash Sponsors

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Friends of the Empire Ranch (\$100-\$249): Jimmy & Ginny Cosbey • The Maverick

In Kind Donations: All Around Trail Horses • Steve Boice • DJ GATOR • Chris Durnan, Visual Design Services • Horse'n Around Rescue • Intents Structures • Santa Cruz County Fair & Rodeo Association • Southwest Solutions • Stamback Services • Sunstate Equipment Co. • Vera Earl Premium Beef

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National Public Lands Day Education Program

On October 26, 2023, 150 4th graders from Desert Willow Elementary School in Vail spent the day at Empire Ranch Headquarters learning about National Public Lands Day and Las Cienegas National Conservation Area. June Lowery, Public Affairs Specialist for the BLM Gila District, developed curriculum resources which the Desert Willow teachers taught prior to the site visit.



Students rotated through five stations staffed by BLM and Foundation experts to learn about Empire Ranch history; BLM Law Enforcement and Fire; Cultural Resources and Grazing; Wildlife and Recreation; and Aquatics and Plants. The Empire Ranch history station was located at the Tack Room where the students learned about branding and other ranching equipment.

The day concluded with the distribution of "goodie bags" filled with printed information and follow-up activities. The many smiling faces evident at day's end proved how much fun everyone had. One parent chaperone noted: "You were amazing and engaging with our children."

(Photos: A. Nyiri)

Outreach and Interpretation



During 2023 we attended 12 local community events, and our outreach volunteers talked to over 1,500 visitors. We were busiest at the Sonoita Rodeo and the Sky Island Artisan Market in Patagonia. New venues included the Cochise Corral of Westerners' Book Fair and St. Rita in the Desert's Fall Festival. It's always rewarding to introduce newcomers and even old-timers to the Empire Ranch treasure in their backyards.

Several new interpretive exhibits and displays were added to Empire Ranch Headquarters during 2023.

An exhibit case in the Middle Room of the Victorian Addition now displays items owned by Pancho and Sherry Boice, including Pancho's Stetson hat and Sherry's favorite boots (see photo below).

A photographic exhibit "They Breathe Fire" illustrates women's central participation in and contributions to society and history, and features Margaret Vail and Mary Boice's contributions to the Empire Ranch.

In the Cowboy Cook's Quarters "Lost and Found in Translation," an exhibit about O'dham and Spanish language influences on the Empire Ranch. For example, la reata (rope) used by cowboys became lariat in English.



(Photos: M. Conroy (top) and A. Bunting (below))



ERF Website Redesign

Early in 2024 the Empire Ranch Foundation will release its redesigned website (see opening page display, above). Its URL (address) will remain the same, www.empireranchfoundation.org, but with an updated look and design responsive for viewing with hand-held devices.

The website was designed by Hirsch Fishman, owner of Addicott Web (<http://www.addicottweb.com>). The site continues to use WordPress software that allows easy updating and maintenance by ERF staff and volunteers. Let us know what you think!



"Night of the Lepus"

Over 200 film buffs enjoyed the showing of Night of the Lepus, on Saturday, September 23rd at the Historic Empire Ranch. One fan noted: "It was fun watching the movie with other people around. The crowd was really into it."

Prior to the showing Bunker De France, who played the role of "husband in a car," introduced the cast and provided a few behind-the-scenes tidbits for each actor before answering questions from the audience. He also talked about the different filming locations besides Empire Ranch, which included Old Tucson Studios, U of A, Colossal Cave, Ajo, and the old Miracle Mile Drive-In in Tucson.

Special thanks to the Loft Solar Cinema program for making this free event possible.

(Photo: A. Arrington)



Departed Friend Judith Williams

Judith Williams, former ERF Board of Directors member, died on August 14, 2023. Judith owned

and operated The JW Organization, one of the first Tucson public relations firms, specializing in marketing-management consulting for artists, and appraisals for insurance and estate purposes. She owned and operated Rosequist Galleries from 1978 through 2001.

Judith served two terms on the ERF Board, from 2009 to 2015. She chaired the Landscape Committee for two years and served on the Development & Finance, Empire 100, and History, Archives, and Publications committees.

Dedicated Gifts

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

Mary Vail Boland, Don Butler,
Richard W. Lane,
Edward Newhall Vail,
Mary Brownie Vail

Working Calendar

Note: 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

December 2023

- 2 Volunteer Work Day**, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org
- 9 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House**, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, reservations required by 5pm of the day prior to the tour.
- 9 Christmas at the Ranch**, 10am-2pm. Empire Ranch House. Free, open to all.
- 15 ERF Board Meeting, 9-11am.** All welcome! Call 888-364-2829 for location.

January 2024

- 6 Volunteer Work Day**, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org

13&27 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, reservations required by 5pm of the day prior to the tour.

February 2023

- 3 Volunteer Work Day**, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org

10&24 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, reservations required by 5pm of the day prior to the tour.

- 16 ERF Board Meeting**, 9am-11am. Call 888-364-2829 for location.

March 2023

- 2 Volunteer Work Day**, 8am-12pm. To volunteer call 888-364-2829 or email admin@empireranchfoundation.org

9&23 Docent-Led Tour of the Empire Ranch House, 11am-12pm. Free, open to all, reservations required by 5pm of the day prior to the tour.

Save the Date!

**Spring Trail Ride
April 6, 2024**



Christmas at the Empire Ranch

Hope you will join us for our Christmas at the Empire Ranch event on Saturday, December 9th, from 10am to 2pm. The Empire Ranch House will be decorated for Christmas, and it's a great opportunity to purchase unique and special gifts from local vendors and the ERF gift shop.

Santa will pay a visit and we have lots of fun activities planned. See the enclosed flyer for more information and the ERF website for the most recent program updates
[www.empireranchfoundation.org].