

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historical name Empirita Ranch Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location Between Vail and Benson, AZ, south of Interstate 10

street & number _____ not for publication _____
city or town _____ vicinity _____
state Arizona code AZ county Pima code 019 zip code 85641

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _____ nationally _____ statewide X locally. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

James W. Gannini, AZSHPD 25 NOVEMBER 2008
Signature of certifying official Date

ARIZONA STATE PARKS
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (_____ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat. Domestic
Agriculture/Subsistence
Agriculture/Subsistence
Agriculture/Subsistence
Agriculture/Subsistence

Sub: Dwelling-single
Agricultural field
Irrigation facility
Animal facility
Agricultural outbuilding

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Other: Contemporary, no style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof metal, asphalt tiles
walls adobe (unfired and fired)

other wood, metal

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) *see continuation sheet*

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8. Statement of Significance
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Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B. removed from its original location.
- C. a birthplace or a grave.
- D. a cemetery.
- E. a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F. a commemorative property.
- G. less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Agriculture: ranching

Period of Significance 1941 - 1968

Significant Dates 1941 (subdivision of Empirita Ranch from Empire Ranch)
1968 (sale of Empirita Ranch by Siemund family)

Significant Person (Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)
NA

Cultural Affiliation NA

Architect/Builder Gordon Luepke

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
see continuation sheet

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government (Pima County Cultural Resources Office)
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Private Archives

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property 366

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	_____	_____	_____	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title Janet Parkhurst, R.A., James Ayres, Chester W. Shaw Jr., Shannon Twilling (with editing by Kathryn Leonard and William Collins, Arizona SHPO)
organization Harris Environmental Group date 8 February 2007

street & number 58 E. 5th Street telephone (520) 628-7648

city or town Tucson state AZ zip code 85705

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state zip code _____

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Section 7 Page 1

Empirita Ranch Historic District
Pima County, Arizona
Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950
Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970

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SECTION 7: DESCRIPTION

Summary

The Empirita Ranch Historic District is located in Pima County, approximately 25 miles southeast of Tucson. It is located in the low desert grassland valley of Cienega Creek. The 366-acre parcel that is included in this nomination contains the major concentrations of built resources representing different phases of the ranch’s history. There are two primary concentrations of buildings and structures as well as remnants of irrigated agricultural fields. The district contains 28 built features that are associated with its function as a cattle ranch. Of these, 14 are contributing buildings and structures and one is a contributing agricultural field site. These resources date to the district’s period of significance and retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance.

Environmental Setting and District Property

The Empirita Ranch Historic District is set in the Basin and Range Physiographic Province of southeastern Arizona (Fenneman 1931), which is part of a contiguous geographic region of the western United States, extending from eastern California through parts of Nevada, Utah, southeastern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and west Texas. It encompasses four deserts—Sonoran, Chihuahuan, Mohave, and Great Basin. The Basin and Range province in southeastern Arizona represents a geographic and environmental blend of Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts, as it is characterized by isolated, generally north to south trending mountain ranges rising above broad, continuous alluvial basins. The basins and mountains in this area exhibit unique combinations of Sonoran and Chihuahuan vegetation (Brown 1994). The basin fauna are semidesert grasslands (Shreve 1917) and mixed subtropical grass and plant communities (Brown 1994). The mountains of southeastern Arizona have been characterized as “desert islands” (Wilson 1995) with seasonally moisture-rich uplands supporting woodlands with evergreen oaks, juniper, Mexican Pine, Arizona cypress, and various species of pine (e.g., Apache pine, Chihuahuan pine, and Arizona pine). Highest elevations in these ranges exhibit montane conifer forests with ponderosa pine in addition to Douglas fir, Mexican white pine, white fir, quaking aspen, Engelmann spruce, and corkbark fir.

The Empirita Ranch is located in an alluvial basin along Cienega Creek, on the western side of the Whetstone Mountains, approximately thirty miles southeast of Tucson, Arizona and fourteen miles west of Benson, Arizona (Map 1). The property averages approximately 3,850 feet (1,173 m) in elevation and includes a segment of Cienega Creek floodplain, a series of low alluvial ridges on the creek’s eastern side, and steep ridges and bluffs on the creek’s western side. Much of the floodplain within the property limits encompasses planted fields. These fields are devoid of vegetation except for grasses established for livestock. Undeveloped portions of the floodplain contain dense thickets of naturally-occurring mesquite and acacia. The upper terraces and hillsides are covered in ocotillo, agave, barrel cactus, prickly pear cactus, and native grasses.

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From Interstate 10, the Empirita Ranch is accessible via a dirt road connected to the Empirita Road turnoff at the Amole Interchange. The entry is announced by a metal sign reading “Empirita Ranch Cattle Division – Private” which is mounted to a pole. The sign lies immediately outside the portion of the Empirita Ranch property owned by Pima County. The terrain at the entry is a level scrub grass covered zone at an elevation of 3,800 ft. The road crosses a metal cattle guard installed in the 1950s, and soon descends onto the property. The district is set in a mountain and basin environment with drainage into Cienega Creek (presently a dry channel for much of the year) which divides the property diagonally and flows from southeast to northwest. The creek floodplain is formed by a chain of low-lying hills which frame the landscape on the west.

Pima County owns a 366-acre portion of what once was the 25,000-acre Empirita Ranch (Additional Item 5). This 366-acre area encompasses the Empirita Ranch Historic District, which is within Section 17, T17S, R18E (Map 2).

District Delineation – Contributing Resources

The district’s built environment (which includes all of the ranch’s contributing features) occurs in two residential/operational complexes on land currently owned by Pima County (Map 3). Referred to as the "Upper" and "Lower" Complexes, each complex was developed and modified at different times in the ranch’s history. The Upper Complex is the first to be reached from the current ranch access road. While it possesses an early dated structure (1945), as well as a large contemporary ranch house, most of the buildings and structures here were not constructed until the 1950s, or later. The Upper Complex is centrally located at the edge of a rise in the north third of the subject property. This residential site affords a dramatic view of surrounding valleys and mountain ranges. The view towards the north, from the 1970s-built pool and patio, overlooks a large field below, with Interstate 10 and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks beyond. Downslope, in a level area to the west, at approximately 3,700 ft in elevation, is a grouping of livestock-related structures including a well, a water holding tank and a reservoir. Butler-type building barns, storage sheds, a horse stable and corrals are also present. Cattle and horses managed by the current resident manager can be found in these enclosures. A few weed-eating cattle are allowed to forage unconfined. The view from this zone looks out onto the Whetstone Mountains to the southeast.

From the Upper Complex, the dirt road descends into the Cienega Creek valley below, crosses the drainage then approaches the Lower Complex of ranch-related buildings and structures. This Lower Complex, also known as the “Old Headquarters.” is currently occupied by the resident manager and his wife. It includes one building, the “Cowboy's House,” likely initially constructed in the late 1880s or 1890s, another building and structure built around 1945 or earlier, and one house built in 1955. This last house was enlarged in the contemporary era (early 1970s). Utility structures associated with the complex are Butler-type buildings installed in the late 1960s or early 1970s. The Lower Complex lies in the southwest corner of the district, nestled in a level area at the base of shrub-clad hilly uplands which rise to approximately 3,900 feet. It was

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common to place buildings next to hills for shelter, which also left adjacent, more level, open land free for livestock grazing. The Lower Complex, containing two residences, a hay barn, corrals and other ranch-related built features, forms the apex of a large, somewhat fan-shaped, flat area formerly irrigated by two large central-pivot sprinklers.

District Delineation – Natural Landscape and Designed Landscape Features

While not viewed as contributing features to the Empirita Ranch Historic District, distinctive environmental features of the local landscape have provided the backdrop for both of the ranch’s residential/operational complexes. These complexes were sited as much to take advantage of the landscape’s aesthetic beauty as to maintain access to human and ranching necessities, such as water, grazing lands, roads, and the railroad. These significantly designed landscape elements, such as agricultural fields and property fencing, took advantage of natural features of the local environment, thus giving the appearance of blending into the landscape rather than being imposed upon it.

Natural Landscape Features

Cienega Creek

Both complexes at Empirita Ranch are situated immediately adjacent to Cienega Creek. The impact of Cienega Creek in the development of regional ranches, like the huge Empire Ranch upstream (Additional Item 5), cannot be overemphasized. In the early years, this creek provided a permanent water supply and ample livestock forage. Cienega Creek influenced the development of the initial homestead settlement and the location of built features. In the early years, its water allowed for irrigation. In recent years, it has been mostly dry and its flood and dry cycles have allowed or restricted movement from one side to the next. Cienega Creek is the lowest lying feature on the property and it cuts a large diagonal path from southeast to northwest. Where observed near the road crossing, it appears to have formed an obvious stone and sand creek bed of around 28 ft in width between eroded earth banks of varying heights. Flat overflow zones occur on either side of this bed except where banks are 5 ft or higher. Along the banks, scrub vegetation predominates.

Anderson Canyon and Wakefield Canyon Washes

A major wash flows through Anderson Canyon just outside the eastern district boundary (Map 2). This drainage connects with Cienega Creek within the district boundaries. To the southeast of the boundary, a branch of the Wakefield Canyon wash flows into Cienega Creek. Washes like these are commonly found in the basin and range environment that characterizes the region.

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Creek Bank Hills

Along much of the district's western boundary and sheltering the Lower Complex is a zone of rounded and flat-topped hilly uplands that rise to approximately 3,900 ft in elevation. These character-defining uplands form near Cienega Creek and extend for miles to the south. Due to current drought conditions, these hills on the Empirita Ranch are relatively devoid of vegetation. Their altitude makes a suitable location for the water storage tanks that serve the Lower Complex.

Desert Grazing Range

At one time, the Southeastern Basin and Range Province of Arizona was noteworthy for its rich desert grasslands. Overgrazing, coupled with periodic drought and arroyo-cutting, suppression of natural range fires, and vegetation succession (from grasses to scrub brush) resulted in diminution of once abundant native grasses. As a result, the land is currently incapable of supporting the kinds of cattle herds it once did. Today the grazing vegetation on the Empirita Ranch includes native grasses like black gramma and love grass as well as scrub plants and cactus like creosote, burro weed, mesquite, yucca, century plant, prickly pear, ocotillo, barrel and pineapple cactus. A distinguishing feature of an arid climate cattle ranch like this is the fencing off of large areas of land for grazing range. The current ranch manager's cattle graze in these confined areas over most of the terrain within the property boundaries and beyond.

Mesquite Bosques

The mesquite bosques at Empirita ranch are densely vegetated with scrub mesquite trees and related vegetation. One shady bosque is located at the base of the low creek bank hills west of the Lower Complex and extends along the western and southern edge of the retired irrigated field (outside the current property boundaries, but once part of the ranch). A second bosque can be found at the northern base of the ridge for the Upper Complex. The bosques occur in areas where site drainage fosters such dense growth. These are remnants of a much larger bosque located here before settlement.

Riparian Vegetation

Vegetation that once grew along the banks and in the overflow zones of a wetter Cienega Creek has probably changed over time. Where observed, the predominant species today is desert broom. This plant can be found in portions of the creek bed and lining the banks. There is also some evidence of reed-like plants in places. Wash depressions are also typically more heavily vegetated.

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Designed Landscape Features

Fences

There are miles of barbed-wire fencing in the district used to define large desert forage grazing areas and limit the movement of cattle and horses from one area to the next. Some of the grazing areas extend beyond the confines of the County-owned property boundaries. Fencing surrounds and divides the retired irrigated fields as well. The fencing tends to be either wood post or steel T-section posts with barbed-wire and mesquite branch or twisted wire spacers. The property line boundaries are not fenced. It is not known which of the fences seen today follow historic boundaries or whether they date to later times. These fences reflect a continuous historic practice that is always part of the landscape on southern Arizona cattle ranches. The historic resources map shows sample areas of fencing only where observed (Map 3).

Boundary Vegetation

In places, mesquite trees grow along fence lines, further emphasizing ranch boundaries. This is especially the case along the edges of the retired irrigated fields.

Railroad

The Union Pacific Railroad (formerly Southern Pacific) tracks dip into the ranch's northern boundary (Map 2, Map 3, Additional Item 4). The alignment dates back to 1888 and the presence of the rail is a reminder of the historic connection between the cattle industry in southern Arizona and the transcontinental railroad. As a result of a cultural resources survey of the Empirita Ranch property (Parkhurst *et al.* 2002), it was noted that the rails and ties associated with this segment of the railroad appear to be of recent age.

Unimproved Roads

During the late 1800s and the homestead era, the earliest access road to the Lower Complex probably followed the creekbed from the townsite of Pantano along the Southern Pacific Railroad. Segments may remain heading south from the Lower Complex corrals. Possibly in the 1920s, when the Upper Complex appeared, the road that serves today as the principal dirt access road was developed. This access road leads from the entry gate past the Upper Complex, descends into the Cienega Creek valley below then passes through the Lower Complex. It then heads in a southerly direction for a few miles deep into what was formerly Empirita Ranch land. The road is single lane, 15 ft or less in width, lacking drainage features and is otherwise unimproved except for occasional grading. It is sometimes used for cattle and horse movement, and is the most important circulation feature on site. A second "ranch road" branches off the principal access road near the upper livestock complex and heads in a southeasterly direction towards Wakefield Canyon. A third ranch road branches off the main access road just west of the upper livestock complex and

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follows Cienega Creek in a northwesterly direction. These ranch roads allow access to different grazing areas, wells, windmills, corrals and water tanks in the former, much larger Empirita Ranch land.

All over the property are cattle and horse trails that do not show on aerial photographs. One sample trail passes through the center of the south irrigated field and extends due east.

Contributing Elements of the District

A total of twenty-eight built features comprise the Empirita Ranch Historic District (Map 3, Table 1, Table 2). These man-made elements, while significant in their impact, cover a relatively small percentage of Empirita’s open landscape; they are also separated to some extent by their division into two separate ranch complexes (the Upper Complex and the Lower Complexes). Structures in both the Upper and Lower Complexes that served as residences are considered contributing to the Empirita Ranch Historic District. In addition, certain structures and features that represent a continuation of historic agricultural, circulation or boundary definition in both complexes are considered contributing. Buildings and structures that date at least to the 1950s in both complexes, and exhibit sufficient integrity, are considered contributors. Non-contributing buildings and structures are those that were constructed after the 1950s, or built prior to 1950 but later modified to such an extent that integrity has been compromised.

Most of the information about the built environment for Empirita Ranch was obtained from assessor’s archival building record cards, title research, and historic maps (Pima County 1866-1953). In addition, information was obtained as a result of interviews with Charlie Ohrel, a prior owner’s son, and George Masek, the ranch’s current resident manager. Information is principally excerpted from Parkhurst (2002).

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Table 1. Upper Complex – Structures, Buildings, and Features

Number of Elements	Description (reference in text)	Map 3 Figure Designation	Date of Construction/ Alterations	Current Use	District Nomination Status
1	Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House	R-2	1955/1970	Abandoned	Contributing Building
1	Maid's Quarters	R-3	1945/1970	Abandoned	Contributing Building
1	Water Tower (converted to storage building)	Water Tank Tower	1945	Abandoned	Contributing Structure
1	Garage	B-6	1955	Abandoned	Contributing Building
1	Show Barn/Bull Pen	B-1	1970	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Non-contributing Structure
1	Horse Stables	B-2	1972	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Non-contributing Structure
1	Barn/Storage Building	B-3	1970	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Non-contributing Building
2	Fenced Corrals	C-2, C-3	1970s	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Non-contributing Structures
2	Paddocks	Paddocks	1970s	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Non-contributing Structures
3	Well, Tank, and Concrete Reservoir	B-4	1970s	Abandoned	Non-contributing Structures
1	Irrigated Field	Irrigated Field (Retired)	1976	Abandoned	Non-contributing Feature

Table 2. Lower Complex (“Old Headquarters”) – Structures, Buildings, and Features.

Number of Elements	Description (reference in text)	Map 3 Figure Designation	Date of Construction / Alterations	Current Use	District Nomination Status
1	Cowboy's House	R-5	ca. 1890/1912-1923/1950s	Abandoned	Contributing Building
1	Foreman's House	R-4	1957/1970s	In Use - Occupied by current ranch manager's family	Contributing Building
1	Tack Room	Tack Room	1957	In-use by current ranch foreman	Contributing Building
1	Hay Barn	B-5	1957	Abandoned	Contributing Building
1	Retaque Corrals/Squeeze Chutes/Shelters	C-4	1957/1970	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Contributing Structure
1	Concrete Water Tower Base	Tower Base	Ca. 1900s/1970	Abandoned	Non-Contributing Structure
2	Paddocks	Paddocks	Ca. 1957	Occasional use by current ranch foreman	Contributing Structures
1	Water and Fuel Tanks	Water Tanks	Ca. 1957	Abandoned	Contributing Structure
1	Well, Pump, and Holding Tank	Well	1920s/1957	Abandoned	Contributing Structure
1	Adobe Barn Foundation/Concrete slab	Foundation	1923/pre-1970	Abandoned	Contributing Structure
1	Reservoir, Well, and Platform	Reservoir (Retired)	1976	Abandoned	Non-Contributing Structure
1	Irrigated Field	Irrigated Field (Retired)	1903/1976	Abandoned	Contributing Site

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Upper Complex

Upper Complex Built Resources

Construction episodes in this residential zone occurred at different times. At least two earlier buildings were demolished to make room for later ones. Although little is known about the era between 1943 and 1954, building record cards and Charlie Ohrel's observations indicate structures dating back to 1945 (or earlier) apparently once stood here. According to the record card, the old wood frame water tank tower east of the building complex was built in 1945. Charlie Ohrel calls the contributing building adjacent to and east of the principal residence the "Maid's Quarters" (R-3; Additional Item 3), which he believes also predates the Siemund era (see Section 8). This structure's original wing dates to 1945. In 1955, the Siemunds built the original portion of the existing contributing residence, the Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House (R-2; Additional Item 2). Mr. Ohrel says that an earlier wood dwelling near this location was demolished at the time of new construction. Adjacent to and west of the house was a bunk house that had a covered porch with a flagstone floor and six 4 inch by 6 inch posts. The Ohrel family demolished the bunk house when they enlarged the Ranch House residence around 1970.

Downslope from the residential complex were the barns, stables, storage buildings, corrals and stock tanks relating to the cattle and horses owned by the Ohrel family. There was once a 130 ft long pole hay barn for hay which has since been removed.

Contributing Buildings and Structures

Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House (R-2): 1955 (with 1970s addition) – Additional Item 2

The original house wing was constructed in 1955 by the Siemund family. This is a compound-plan house with 8 inch mortar-washed burnt adobe walls, following the Contemporary Style (McAlister and McAlister 1989). The building exhibits low-pitched hipped roofs with generous overhangs and exposed rafters, large picture windows, and the connection of the main building wing to a gable-roofed north room by a glass-enclosed breezeway. In 1970 the house was expanded and remodeled. Matching burnt adobe walls and hipped roofs, a sun room on posts, and an outdoor pool were added to the west side of the original house. Today, the roof is covered with composition shingles, the windows are boarded, the grounds are neglected, and the pool has been filled in with soil. Although this house was considerably enlarged to the west in the 1970s, the original 1955 wing is distinctive and considered a contributing building to the NRHP District.

Maid's Quarters (R-3) 1945 – Additional Item 3

This is a partially stuccoed masonry-walled structure, located adjacent to and east of the Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House. Charlie Ohrel believes the building predates the Siemund era (ca. 1945). Parkhurst (2002:102) dates the original wing of this building to the mid-1940s. This building was also remodeled in 1970 when the adjacent Ranch house was modified. The roof is hipped and clad in metal panels. Along the rear of the building is a nearly full-width, covered porch on masonry piers. Today, windows are boarded and

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the building is in a deteriorated condition. Like the Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House, contemporary remodeling does not diminish its earlier distinctive architectural style and features. It is thus considered a contributing building to the NRHP District.

Water Tank Tower (1945)

This structure is located north of the Maid's Quarters. Its building record card indicates the walls were built from 6 inch by 6 inch posts covered with patent siding 15 feet high to the metal tank. The plan measures 61 ft-square. The floor is concrete and the roof supporting the tank is built of 2 inch by 8 inch joists. Given this structure's construction date, its integrity, and absence of evidence for modification over time, it is considered a contributing structure to the NRHP District.

Garage (B-6) 1955

The garage was built by the Siemund family and consists of a metal-siding-clad four bay structure, located adjacent to the Maid's Quarters. The building record card indicates it was built using 6 inch by 6 inch and 3 inch by 5 inch posts. The metal-clad side-gabled roof is supported on wooden trusses and the floor is dirt. Given this structure's date of construction, its integrity, and absence of evidence for modification over time, it is considered a contributing structure to the NRHP District.

Non-Contributing Buildings, Structures, and Features

There are at least eleven structures and features in the Upper Complex that are commonly encountered in Arizona ranch settings, but are not considered contributing to the NRHP District (Table 1). These include an irrigated field; water features such as a well, tank, concrete reservoir; and animal facilities such as stables, corrals, paddocks, and a show barn. Architectural characteristics, building records, and local interviews indicate these structures and features were not in-place until some time in the 1970s. In spite of the later dates for these elements, their presence in the Upper Complex is not intrusive in the ranching district, reflecting a continuity in industry and lifestyle indicated by earlier dated buildings and structures.

Upper Complex Landscape Features

Irrigated Field

This non-contributing north field was cleared by the Ohrels (1970s) and irrigated to provide alfalfa for stock fodder. Irrigation water originated from a large well northwest of the Upper Complex.

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Summary of Upper Complex District Buildings, Structures, and Features

The Upper Complex consists of 3 Contributing Buildings, 1 Contributing Structure, 1 Noncontributing Building, 10 Noncontributing Structures, and 1 Noncontributing Site.

Contributing Buildings:

1. Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House 1955 (R-2)
2. Maid's Quarters 1945 (R-3)
3. Garage 1955 (B-6)

Contributing Structures:

4. Water Tower (structure) 1945

Noncontributing Buildings:

5. Barn/Storage Building 1970 (B-3)

Noncontributing Structures:

6. Show Barn/Bull Pen (1) 1970 (B-1)
7. Horse Stables 1972 (1) 1970 (B-2)
8. Fenced Corrals (2) 1970s (C-2, C-3)
9. Paddocks (2) 1970s
10. Well, Tank, and Concrete Reservoir (3) 1970s (B-4)

Noncontributing Site:

11. Irrigated Field 1976

Lower Complex (Old Headquarters)

Lower Complex Built Resources

The Lower Complex was developed in two known phases, although development may well have occurred in between. By 1912, as shown on the General Land Office (GLO) map (see Additional Item 4) the homestead site included a dwelling (no longer existing) just west of an irrigated field which extended to Cienega Creek. This field was located in the zone of the current contributing retired field. An irrigation ditch from the south ran along the eastern edge of this field. Although not within the district boundary, a depression of the former ditch is still visible today. At some early date (possibly between 1912 and 1923, as noted on the building record card) the "Cowboys' House" (Additional Item 1) was built by the Villa family who homesteaded here and a 96- ft square barn was added 94 ft north of this house. The barn is not depicted on the 1912 GLO map. This barn had 12 inch adobe walls, a 6 inch high concrete stem wall foundation, and a gabled roof with 2 inch by 4 inch rafters crossed by 2 inch by 3 inch stringers. The floor was dirt and there were two large tongue and groove frame doors on a trolley. There was once a windmill and a water tower with a 144 ft-square concrete reservoir (still standing). Charlie Ohrel remembers the barn (which had a concrete floor by then) and windmill. Both structures have since been demolished, although the barn foundations remain.

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The Siemund family owned the ranch between 1954 and 1968; they built the burnt adobe Foreman's House (R-5). Around this time they also installed the pre-fabricated steel frame Hay Barn (B-5). According to Charlie Ohrel, the corral fences were also built at this time.

Contributing Buildings, Structures, and Sites

Cowboy's House (R-5) – Additional Item 1

Parkhurst (2002:48) considered the possibility that this may be the earliest building in the District, dating back to the late 1800s. This may have been the original dwelling of the first family to take up residence along this portion of Cienega Creek in the 1880s (the Kane family – Section 8). It definitely appears to be the house shown on the 1912 GLO map where the first homestead was established (granted in 1912). This is a stucco-covered, four room dwelling currently surrounded by a chain-link fence. The building is a side-gabled-massed plan cottage, with a full-width front porch that was later screened. A shed bathroom addition is located at the southwest corner of the building but, according to Charlie Ohrel, this addition was not made until the 1950s. According to the building record card, the currently stuccoed adobe walls were unfinished in 1939. In addition, the current steel casement windows were also originally wood frame. Due to abandonment and neglect, the building is currently in a deteriorated condition. Although this house was periodically remodeled after 1912 and again in the 1950s, sufficient features of the original cottage remain to consider it contributing to the proposed NRHP District.

Foreman's House (R-4) – In Use

This 1,066-ft square dwelling was built by the Siemunds in 1957 and is the current residence of the Empirita Ranch foreman and his wife. The structure consists of a burnt adobe walled building with a low-pitch side-gabled roof with generous overhangs, which were originally clad with gravel above laid composition roofing. The windows are metal casement and a partial-width screened porch projects from the southeast corner of the building. A large fireplace chimney protrudes from the south wall of the building and a flat-roofed carport on wood posts was added to the south end of the dwelling in the 1970s. This 1950s era house was somewhat modified in the 1970s when the metal casement windows were replaced by wooden frames and the back porch was screened). However, sufficient features of the original building remain to consider it contributing to the NRHP District.

Tack Room

This is a metal-clad, gabled frame structure which was built in 1957 according to Charlie Ohrel. It has remained virtually unaltered since construction, and is thus considered a contributing structure to the NRHP District.

Hay Barn (B-5)

This structure consists of a 2,464-ft square prefabricated hay barn installed in 1957 (Parkhurst 2002:49). It is an open sided, steel framed "Butler-type" structure supported on six tapered, fixed column/rafter (bent-

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frame) units attached at the crown. The columns are sixteen feet high with three-inch intermediary pipe posts. The slightly pitched gabled roof is clad with corrugated metal and a cantilevered canopy is present at the south end. Only superficial modifications and periodic repairs have been made to this structure since its installation in the 1950s. It retains sufficient integrity to be considered a contributing structure to the NRHP District.

Retaque Corrals/Squeeze Chutes/Shelters (C-4) and Paddocks

A series of corrals, with squeeze chutes, and paddocks are located east and south of the hay barn. Evidence indicates that these features were associated with the dwellings and other structures found in the Lower Complex by 1957 (Parkhurst 2002:49); they are constructed of horizontally laid mesquite branches placed between evenly spaced upright posts about which loops of wire have been secured. This is time-honored technique in fence-building on ranches throughout southeastern Arizona. According to Charlie Ohrel, individual stacked retaque mesquite corrals and chutes are found all over the Empirita Ranch, each one adjacent to a stock watering tank. Given the 1950s construction date for these features, these are considered contributing elements to the NRHP District.

Water and Fuel Tanks

Two large cylindrical water holding tanks, one abandoned and one functioning, are installed on a hill behind and above the residences associated with the Lower Complex. The tanks are situated to allow for gravity flow of water for domestic use in the Lower Complex. Near the residences, there is an abandoned rusty fuel tank on a stand with piping to the ground. According to Charlie Ohrel, these tanks were set in place during the 1950s era use of the Lower Complex by the Siemund family. As a result, they are considered contributing features to the NRHP District.

Well, Pump, and Holding Tank

West of the water reservoir in the Lower Complex is a functioning well and pump. Water is pumped to a holding tank located approximately 200 feet west of the well. According to local informant George Masek, these features are in the exact location of an early windmill on the property. The well and pump site are thought to have been developed in this location during the Siemund's use of the property in the late 1950s. As a result, these features are considered contributing to the NRHP District.

Concrete Foundation Ruin, Adobe Barn

Segments of the concrete slab and foundation of an early adobe barn, originally built in 1923 and modified some time before it was razed in the modern era, can still be seen northeast of the Cowboy's House in the Lower Complex. The slab was a later addition over the barn's original dirt floor (Parkhurst 2002:50). Given the age of this feature, and its association with earliest ranch developments in this setting, it is considered a contributing feature to the NRHP District.

Non-Contributing Buildings, Structures, and Features

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Only one structure found in the Lower Complex of the Empirita Ranch District is considered non-contributing to the overall eligibility of the NRHP District. This is a concrete water tower base. Due west of the hay barn is a stucco-clad, battered structure built of rough concrete walls. According to Charlie Ohrel, in earlier years this was part of the storage reservoir for household water pumped by an adjacent windmill. Today, this structure represents a gabled, corrugated metal-clad frame roof structure with chicken wire vents. The water tower base and windmill site were modified by Charlie Ohrel in 1970. As a result, this structure is not considered a contributing element to the NRHP District.

Lower Complex Landscape Features

Irrigated Field

In the 1970s, the Ohrels cleared a field near each complex. In the Lower Complex they again put into active use a field created in 1903 by the de Villa family who were the original homesteaders; as shown on the 1912 GLO map (Additional Item 4). This fan-shaped field east of the Lower Complex has two center pivots for irrigation which are no longer in service. Fodder for stock, such as alfalfa, was raised in this zone. Irrigation water originated from a large well northwest of the Upper Complex, flowed down through pipes into an irrigation reservoir constructed between the two building complexes, and down to the Lower Complex. The cultivation of and work on the field was highly mechanized. Fenced into pastures, the field is carpeted in dried Bermuda grass, as observed in the winter, and is used for stock holding and browsing. The field is a contributing feature to the NRHP District given evidence for reuse of an earlier field that was irrigated by a ditch during the J. de Villa era (early 1900s).

Irrigation Reservoir, Well, and Platform

As part of their plan to irrigate much of the area around the two headquarters complexes, the Ohrels built a one-acre irrigation reservoir in 1976. Fed from a large submersible pump and well, water from this non-contributing reservoir was used to irrigate the cleared field to the south, among other areas. The platform was used for inspection of the mechanical workings and possibly for diving. According to one local informant, the irrigation system was still in use until the late 1970s, when the ranch was sold from one private family-owner to another. The practice of building retention features on the ranch is historic and known to have taken place during the earliest years of occupancy in the 1950s. However, given the known, late date for construction of these associated features, they are not considered contributing to the NRHP District. However, their presence in the Lower Complex reinforces the landscape reflected here, attesting to the continuity in ranching industry and lifestyle indicated by earlier dated buildings, structures, and features.

Summary of Lower Complex District Features

The Lower Complex consists of 4 Contributing Buildings, 6 Contributing Structures, 1 Contributing Site, and 2 Noncontributing Structures

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Contributing Buildings:

1. Cowboy's House 1923 (R-5)
2. Foreman's House 1957 (R-4)
3. Tack Room 1957
4. Hay Barn 1957 (B-5)

Contributing Structures:

5. Retaque Corrals/Squeeze chutes/Shelter (1) 1957 (C-4)
6. Paddocks (2) 1957
7. Water and Fuel Tanks (1) 1957
8. Well and Pump 1920
9. Adobe Barn Foundation/Concrete Slab (1) 1900s

Contributing Site:

10. Irrigated Field 1904

Noncontributing Structures:

11. Concrete Water Tower Base 1900s
12. Reservoir, Well, and Platform 1976

Integrity and Condition of Resources

The overall integrity of built resources within the Empirita Ranch Headquarters district is very good. In addition, most of the buildings and structures in the Lower Complex meet the fifty year age criterion. Features in the Lower Complex are relatively unaltered and the Cowboy's House (R-5; Additional Item 1) alterations probably occurred no later than 1957 or are easily reversible. Butler-type buildings in the upper livestock complex, installed in 1970, do not meet the age criterion, although they are unaltered. In the upper residential zone, the 1920s Maid's Quarters (R-3; Additional Item 3) was altered but maintains a sufficient percentage of its original structure to be considered eligible. The 1945 water tank tower is unaltered. The Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House (R-2, Additional Item 2), built in the 1950s and enlarged around 1970 (with a pool and patio area added at this time), is considered eligible as it reflects Empirita Ranch's long continuity in rural occupation and use, as well as the distinguishable quality of its architect-designed wing.

The landscape, boundary and circulation features on site are not considered eligible contributors to this rural historic landscape. Some, like the unimproved main access road, have undoubtedly remained relatively unchanged. However, others have been modified by cattle grazing practices and necessary replacement. They still reflect, nonetheless, a continuously maintained rural lifestyle and associated practices. The cleared fields are indicative of a continuous agricultural practice known to have been on site since 1903.

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Archaeology

Archaeological research has been conducted within the Empirita Ranch Historic District. All 366 acres of the Pima County-owned part of the Empirita Ranch were included in a pedestrian cultural resources survey (Parkhurst et al. 2002). Three historic archaeological sites were located and recorded during that survey. While all three of these sites were recommended eligible for listing on the NRHP (Parkhurst et al. 2002:31-32), none were subject to NRHP eligibility testing. As a result, while their status as contributing features to the proposed NRHP District following Criterion D cannot be recommended, their visible presence is thought to contribute to the proposed Empirita Ranch Historic District following Criterion A as these reflect elements of “Cattle Ranching in Southern Arizona”.

During the course of archaeological survey, historic archaeological sites were designated AZ Z:2:40(ASM), AZ EE:2:498(ASM) and AZ EE:2:499(ASM). AZ Z:2:40(ASM) represents the 1880s segment of the Southern Pacific Railroad, an associated trash scatter, and remnants of the original telegraph line that paralleled the railroad when first constructed. These historic features are located at the northern edge of the Empirita Ranch Historic District boundary, AZ EE:2:498(ASM) is within the Lower Complex, and AZ EE:2:499(ASM) includes residential buildings and structures associated with the Upper Complex.

The artifact scatter associated with the segment of the Southern Pacific Railroad alignment occurring on Empirita Ranch property (AZ Z:2:40[ASM]), along with telegraph insulators found here, date the site from the early to mid 20th century (1903 to 1930s) (Parkhurst et al. 2002:26). The site covers approximately 800 m² immediately south of the railroad.

AZ EE:2:498(ASM) is bounded by an area approximately 525 ft east-west and 1,000 ft north-south. This site boundary includes the entire Lower Complex. The archaeological site boundary excludes the area of the historic field. Few artifacts are mentioned in the report (Kaldahl 2002), but the surface artifacts include sanitary cans (1903 to present), evaporated milk cans (post-1931 type), and sun-colored amethyst (SCA) glass (1880 to 1919).

AZ EE:2:499(ASM) is bounded by an area approximately 210 ft north-south and 395 ft east-west. It includes only the area of residential buildings and the water tank on the ridge top within the Upper Complex. The barns, corrals and other buildings at the foot of the ridge are excluded. No pre-1950s artifacts were located in this area.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Summary

The Empirita Ranch Historic District is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with historic cattle ranching in Arizona. The historic context has been developed in two documents. The *Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950* Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) was approved by the Keeper of the National Register on 11 March 2002. This document describes a number of important themes associated with beef cattle raising, property types commonly related to ranching, and guidelines for evaluating their eligibility to the National Register. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office has also prepared and is submitting with this nomination an amendment to that MPDF entitled *Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970*. This new MPDF expands on the original by examining historic themes and property types associated with cattle ranching as it developed towards its modern form.

The Empirita Ranch is a rural historic landscape whose period of significance, 1941 to 1968, relates to themes found in both Multiple Property Documentation Forms. The properties found on the Empirita Ranch illustrate the important themes of change and modernization that have been prevalent in twentieth century cattle ranching. The major themes identified in the MPDFs that are associated with the development of cattle raising at the Empirita Ranch are “The Foundation of the Modern Cattle Industry, 1891-1950,” “Postwar Adjustments in Arizona’s Ranch Economy, 1945-1952,” “Years of Challenge, 1953-1958,” and “Rationalizing the Ranch, 1958-1970.” The beginning of the period of significance represents the date when the Empirita Ranch was created out of the older Empire Ranch. It was from that time that several construction episodes created the ranch infrastructure that largely exists today. The end date represents when the property was sold by the Siemund family, who were primarily responsible for the modernization and construction that gave the property its identifying character. Although this end date is less than 50 years old, the property does not need to meet Criterion Consideration G since a large majority of the district’s contributing features are over 50 years old.

Narrative

The historic Empirita Ranch has operated since 1941. Its 25,000 acres had previously been part of the larger Empire Ranch, which had been pieced together by pioneer stockman Walter L. Vail and his successors between 1876 and 1926. The 366-acre parcel surrounding the Upper and Lower Complexes, as described in Section 7, was acquired by Pima County in 1990-91 to preserve an important remnant of historic ranching in a region undergoing profound change.

The Empirita Ranch Historic District is located in the broad valley of Cienega Creek which separates the Whetstone Mountains to the east from the Empire and Santa Rita Mountains to the west. Cienega Creek flows

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north towards the Rincon Mountains where it joins with other creeks to become Pantano Wash. This stream in turn flows northeast to a junction with Rillito Creek north of Tucson, and then continues east to the Santa Cruz River.

Cienega Creek, located between Sonoita and Tucson, was first settled by Euro-Americans during the 1870s. A family by the name of Kane established the first settlement in the area that would later be the Empirita Ranch's "lower residential/operational complex" (see Section 7) in 1888. The oldest property in the district, the Cowboy's House (R-5, Map 3) may have been originally constructed by the Kanes, although this residence underwent extensive remodeling by later occupants (Parkhurst *et al.* 2002:95, see Section 7). The families that settled along Cienega Creek at this time represented what historian Thomas Sheridan (1995:131) has characterized as "small operators with a homestead, a few hundred cattle, and little more."

Although this area was characterized by small-scale ranching, large-scale ranches were also being established along Cienega Creek during the 1870s and 1880s. The Vail family began acquiring land in the 1870s around upper Cienega Creek, south of the Empirita Ranch Historic District. It eventually extended south to the international border and north towards the southern Tucson Basin. The Vails consolidated control of close to one million acres by taking over numerous homesteads and ranches. This extensive land, which the Vails appropriately named Empire Ranch, was not entirely under their ownership. As explained in the two MPDFs, ranchers tended to seek direct ownership of land only if there was a supply of water. In an arid climate, this gave them effective control over large grazing areas under public ownership which they used either freely or under lease.

Because they did not own or even lease much of the range within their domain, extensive ranches like the Empire often lost land upon which homestead claims were filed by late-comers. Following further federal survey of the public domain in the early twentieth century, José and Josefa Villa filed for a homestead patent on land surrounding the Lower Complex first built by the Kane family. The Villa family dismantled or remodeled earlier structures in this area, added new houses and outbuildings, and initiated a second episode of ranching and farming on land that would later become part of Empirita Ranch. Sometime before 1930, however, Josefa Villa sold her land patent to the Vail's Empire Ranch. The Vails themselves sold out their holdings in 1928 to the Chiricahua Ranching Company, owned by the Boice family of Arizona and Colorado. Shortly thereafter, economic circumstances forced the Boices to divide the Empire Ranch into individual family holdings. They split the Empire in 1941 into northern and southern holdings and sold the northern holding to an international truck dealer by the name of D.W. Ingram. This northern holding is what became known as Empirita Ranch (see Additional Item 5).

Ingram held the property for only two years, selling it in January 1943 to Wallace and Merry Fleming. Fleming purchased an additional 240 acres surrounding the Lower Complex. The Fleming family probably created the upper residential/operational complex. The Flemings sold the land to Roy W. Siemund and his

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wife, Crystal, in 1954. The 1954 agreement makes the first mention of the entity “commonly known” as the “Empirita Ranch.” The sale encompassed patented land, livestock, equipment and personal property. It also included all water rights, buildings, structures, water pumping equipment and other equipment associated with the ranch, as well as State Land Department Grazing Lease No. 437 (issued April 1, 1950 and April 1, 1952). In total, the Empirita Ranch encompassed a total of 44.5 sections of land (Selonke 1956:16).

The Siemunds were largely responsible for the modern development that took place on the Empirita Ranch. In 1955, they built the first wing of today’s main ranch house in the Upper Complex. This Contemporary style dwelling was designed by well-known Tucson architect Gordon Luepke. The family expanded the Lower Complex around 1957 by adding buildings and structures, including the Foreman’s House and a hay barn.

Roy Siemund was a progressive rancher of the type described extensively in the *Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970* MPDF. To improve the grazing capacity of his ranch, in 1956 he developed a ranch management plan that included a system for carrying water by pipes from wells, storage tanks, and from behind newly-constructed dams at springs to dry parts of the Empirita's range (Selonke 1956). The ranch had several water sources, including five stock wells of from 200 to 300 feet in depth, and five springs, but they were not evenly distributed across the range. The new system of pipes carried water a mile or more from each source. Siemund also built concrete dams at the springs to catch water for pumping to lower elevation holding tanks. These could supply water to cattle in range that only received seasonal rainwater. Also he placed windmills on existing wells to pump water into watering holes and/or storage tanks that supplied a sprinkler system to water grass on range that otherwise received only inadequate rainwater. Finally, he drilled at least five new wells on the tops of ridges so that gravity would transport water to lower elevation storage tanks equipped with watering troughs, as well as to newly-constructed watering basins. By spreading the available water, cattle could scatter across a broader area, taking advantage of more grass while avoiding soil deterioration caused by too intensive grazing.

The Siemund family owned the Empirita Ranch until the accidental death of Crystal Siemund in 1968. Colorado ranchers Maurice and Ann Ohrel purchased the ranch and an adjacent property, the J-Six Ranch in Cochise County, in November 1968. The combined ranches covered about 200,000 acres, which included State of Arizona and U. S. Forest Service grazing leases. At this time, the Empirita Ranch extended north of the Southern Pacific Railroad line and encompassed the site of the former railroad community of Pantano. The range was divided by fences into pastures and size was determined by carrying capacity. Pastures were previously fenced, but this was the first time it was done in a systematic and thorough manner. The Ohrels also had farm land in Willcox and Tres Alamos, Arizona where they raised hay to feed their cattle and to fatten steers shipped to Willcox or Colorado.

The Ohrels developed large-scale mechanized farming at their Willcox farm and elsewhere. In 1976, they developed a similar system at the Empirita Ranch using a well-fed irrigation system. The largest well pumped

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12,000 gallons per minute into the irrigation reservoir. The large circular fields and other fields are visible from the two headquarters complexes. The Ohrels owned purebred registered cattle, whose conformity they maintained through the modern practice of artificial insemination. They also bred their own mixed breeds. Ann B. Ohrel was a well-known dressage expert who raised fine horses. She first had Tennessee Walking horses, then Andalusians. The Ohrels also created a crossbreed from Andalusians and Quarter horses, known as Aztecas, which make excellent horses for working with cattle. In December 1983, the Ohrels transferred the ranch to their Empirita Ranch Limited Partnership, and in 1986, the partnership added the southeast quarter of Section 17 to its holdings.

Since 1990 and 1991, what is commonly referred to as the “Empirita Ranch Headquarters” (both the Upper and Lower Complexes) has been owned by Pima County. The county continues to lease the ranch for cattle grazing purposes, but only about 80 head now graze in the area.

A hallmark of the modern ranching industry in Arizona has been the attention paid to natural variations in the Arizona environment, and the productive limits these can impose (as described in the MPDFs). The close attention the Siemund family paid to the even distribution of water across the Empirita landscape, as well as the close attention paid by the Ohrel family to carrying capacity limits, both point to serious concerns Arizona ranchers had stemming from the near disastrous environmental conditions of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; conditions that nearly eliminated large-scale Arizona ranching.

Many have noted the deleterious effects drought and arroyo-cutting had on southern Arizona ranching at the turn of the nineteenth century (coincident cycles of drought and arroyo-cutting began about 1865 here and recurred periodically until the mid-1910s) (see Waters and Haynes 2001; Cook et al. 2004:1018; Eddy and Cooley 1983:40-41; Wagoner 1952:53). One theory promulgated to explain the economic turmoil caused by these natural events was attributed to livestock overgrazing. As a result, early in the twentieth century modern Arizona ranchers began segregating and fencing lands so that livestock could be moved away from favored pastures before overgrazing occurred. Likewise, technological innovations have regularly been applied to move water from springs and other natural sources to stock tanks and arid pastures not only to insure sufficient water for livestock but to make drier pastures “greener”, thereby lessening pressure on more naturally productive grazing lands.

The Spatial Organization of the Southern Arizona Ranch Landscape

In considering the cultural landscape, it is important to look for the overall pattern of spatial organization as reflected in features such as road systems, field patterns, distance between farmsteads, proximity to water sources and the orientation of structures to sun and wind (Melnick 1987:25). A major element of the spatial organization of the Western ranch is its vast extent when compared with its eastern cattle raising “farm” counterpart. As a human accommodation to a more arid environment with less forage for stock, Western

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ranches are hundreds or even thousands of times larger in acreage than their eastern counterparts. This difference was more pronounced prior to the introduction of well drilling, pumping and industrialized irrigation methods. Western ranch landscapes, particularly those in the Sonoran desert, have vast areas of range land with clusters of residential and agricultural buildings near water sources. As such, these landscapes are distinctive examples of rural historic landscapes, which are distinguished by their continuity of rural use and a greater proportion of “open land” to buildings relative to a typical urban historical district.

Architecture at Empirita Ranch

While the Empirita Ranch Historic District is nominated to the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the historic development of ranching in Arizona, a brief description of the architecture found at the ranch is provided here for completeness.

Much of what is built at the Empirita Ranch headquarters represents vernacular or “commonplace architecture.” Arizona’s vernacular architecture reflects the collective ideals of the groups that settled the region. The major cultural traditions, both indigenous and immigrant, responsible for the content of Arizona’s historic built environment include Native American, Hispanic and Euroamerican. The tradition which pertains to the buildings and structures at the Empirita Ranch’s headquarters is primarily Euroamerican, though there is some Hispanic influence in the use of adobe as a building material. Spaniards brought adobe technology to the New World during the colonial era and Euroamericans adopted it, at first from necessity, to construct their own vernacular types which were characterized by certain plan configurations and pitched roofs. Initially they employed the basic, 18 inch thick, typical Hispanic mud adobe wall system, and generally used continuous stone foundations. Commonly, adobe walls were lime-plastered.

The Euroamerican influence at the Empirita Ranch is evident in the early use of imported, non-regional forms of adobe architecture. The Cowboy’s House is a vernacular type of Eastern origin known as the “side-gabled-massed-plan cottage.” Massed-plan folk houses were common in pre-railroad America in parts of the Northeast where roof framing techniques allowed for spanning two-room depths. A two-room-deep (double-pile), side-gabled type of structure, with two rooms on either side of a central hallway and frequently, paired chimneys, often placed in an interior position, is also thought to have appeared at an early date along the Carolina-Georgia coast. This type was built in New England as well as in the South. After the railroad and with the adoption of industrialized vernacular building technology (i.e. the balloon frame), the side-gabled double-pile cottage, as well as other massed plan types, could be constructed easily. This early vernacular type, commonly featuring four rooms—with or without a central hall—was popular in Arizona from 1876 to 1925. The Cowboy’s House was constructed with 12-inch adobe walls on a concrete foundation, and has an unusual stepped section that corresponds to the changes in elevation.

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The Cowboy's House is a classical side-gabled-massed-plan cottage, being more than one room-sized unit deep and wide, and having a shed extension porch. The original adobe portion of the Maids' Quarters is also a variant of the side-gabled massed plan type with a hipped roof. Likewise, the Foreman's House is a late example with a low-pitched gable roof.

The Contemporary style pertained to the Euroamerican tradition. It was one of the popular modern styles that proliferated in the United States after World War II. In southern Arizona as elsewhere in the United States, most domestic building ceased during the war years from 1941 to 1945. When construction resumed in 1946, there was a strong tendency to abandon styles based upon historic precedent, such as Spanish Colonial Revival, and to favor variations of the modern styles, namely the Ranch and the Contemporary styles. Popular from approximately 1940 to 1980, this style lacked ornamental detailing and was influenced strongly by the earlier International style common in Europe after 1925. Contemporary style residences are known for their overhanging roofs, use of natural materials such as stone, wood and brick, and generous use of plate glass. On the Empirita Ranch, the Siemund Wing of the Siemund/Ohrel House is an excellent, architect-designed example of the Contemporary style. It was built in two phases: 1955 and the early 1970s.

Gordon Luepke designed the 1955 wing of the Siemund/Ohrel Ranch House in the Upper Complex at Empirita. Luepke first moved to Arizona from Wisconsin in 1920. He earned a degree in fine arts at the University of Arizona in 1939 and worked closely with noted architect Josias T. Joesler during the 1940s until he opened his own firm. He was active on the Pima County Planning and Zoning Commission, where he worked to develop early zoning and floodplain regulations. He also served on the County Air Pollution Advisory Council. Mr. Luepke urged the adoption of master planning for dealing with growth in Tucson and Pima County and advocated low-density development for outlying suburban and floodplain areas. He valued the natural beauty of the desert in Pima County. Mr. Luepke was also a member of the Arizona Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and of the Board of Technical Registration from 1949 to 1956. He was awarded the Arizona Architects Medal in 1975.

Gordon Luepke designed numerous buildings in Tucson and southern Arizona. Among them were Palo Verde High School, Vail Junior High School, Casas Adobes Shopping Center and the Pima County Superior Courts building. He also designed the University of Arizona's College of Education, Modern Languages Building and Computer Center.

The Rural Historic Landscape of Empirita Ranch

Empirita Ranch Historic District exemplifies a rapidly disappearing type of Arizona property, an open range associated with adjacent grazing lands and natural water sources which was able to sustain small family ranchers; it also served as part of one of the largest land-holding ranches ever established in southern Arizona. The 366-acre, Pima County portion of the Empirita Ranch, as part of the original 44.5-section ranch

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Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950

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established in 1941, reflects cattle- and horse-raising and alfalfa growing. Cattle and horse culture continue at the ranch today. Although once incorporated into a large-scale ranch operation, the property's primary significance is as a representative of diversified modern family ranching in the mid-20th century, an important phase in the long story of ranching history.

Forage agriculture was often a part of ranching in Southern Arizona because natural forage could be insufficient, especially during drought years or the late spring/early winter season (Hadley and Sheridan 1995:195). Because of this need to grow additional forage for the cattle, ranches benefited from locations along watercourses, where fields planted with forage could be irrigated relatively easily. The Empirita Ranch was established along Cienega Creek to take advantage of the perennial flow of the riparian environment; fed in both winters and summers by rainfall runoff derived from the numerous secondary drainages that originated in the mountain foothills lying both west and east of Cienega Creek. Cienega Creek's natural springs, which flow year-round, are the result of a relatively high water table. This high water table also facilitated well development to provide supplemental stock water. These water sources also provided additional locations regularly associated with grazing forage, although by the 1950s the objective was to use these water sources to divert water to drier portions of the Empirita Ranch range to encourage plant growth in areas where seasonal growth was not naturally abundant.

Water features are among the most critical parts of this landscape. Over time, channeling and water storage was accomplished through the use of canals, reservoirs, water towers, and tanks. Irrigated fields adjacent to the Upper and Lower Complexes today show the field patterns of pivot sprinklers, but prior to mechanized irrigation, we know that the Lower Complex's field was irrigated by a canal (shown on the 1912 GLO map).

The Lower Complex is associated with a water tower, established some time in the 1900s, within easy walking distance from the foreman's and cowboys' houses and the barn, paddocks, and corrals that together make up the compound. Tanks for storing water are located farther to the west of the compound, on its uphill side, but still within walking distance of the compound. The water tower and tanks would have provided water for cattle in the corrals of the compound and those in the drier forage areas away from the creek. These water storage structures would also have been the source of water for the cowboys and foreman bunking at this compound. At the Upper Complex, there is a similar organization of water features relative to housing and agricultural buildings. Another water tower, dating to 1945, is located within easy walking distance of the owner's and maid's houses and a longer walk (about 1,000 feet) to the corrals and paddocks to the east.

The buildings of the Upper and Lower Complexes, constructed to house the people living and working the ranch and to sometimes shelter the stock, are arranged in a similar configuration in relation to the agricultural structures. This similarity in spatial organization is interesting given that the agricultural structures of the Upper Complex were built after 1957. Both of the residential/operational complexes are located on slightly elevated land away from Cienega Creek where prime forage land would not be used for residential purposes.

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Empirita Ranch Historic District

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The layout of the agricultural structures (paddocks, corrals, barns) is such that they form a semi-enclosed rectangular space serviced by ranch roads and trails. This semi-enclosed layout provided some measure of protection from the wind, while the elevated location allowed for a slight vantage point of the surrounding territory.

In addition to a horse trail, the Lower Complex is also bounded to the east by a stand of mesquite trees. This landscape feature provided a partial barrier to wind and sun. It would also have been useful as a source of wood for building the retaque corrals, a traditional Southwestern vernacular fence type composed of stacked poles. The beans of the mesquite trees also served as a supplemental source of forage for cattle. The traditional retaque fencing of the corrals is functionally significant because the more solid vertical space would have served as partial barrier to wind and sun for the cattle, as well as for the cowboys working them.

The layout of the buildings in the complexes also tells us about the relations between the owner, manager and laborers at Empirita Ranch. The location of these building clusters and of the residential areas within them reflects both the social and economic hierarchy and the distinctions among jobs on the ranch. For example, the ranch foreman's house (R-4) is separate from the cowboys' (or ranch hands') house (R-5), with the ranch foreman enjoying more privacy and space than the cowboys. The 1955 Siemund/Ohrel (owner's) ranch house (R-2) located in the Upper Complex, emphasizes even more this spatial separation from the ranch laborers. The maid's quarters (R-3, built 1945) is within short walking distance, but decidedly separate from, the owner's house. While the extant owner's house was built after the maid's house, it is likely that a prior owner's structure stood in the same vicinity. Hierarchy and function is also reflected in distance from work, with the maid living closest to her work site (the owner's house), the cowboys and foreman living the next closest (to two of their work sites - the barn and corrals), and the owner housed the farthest from livestock holding areas (and their associated odors and sounds).

Other buildings on site that relate to the operation of the ranch are typical vernacular features commonly found on southern Arizona ranches and elsewhere in the West. Of particular interest are the stacked mesquite corral fences, also known as retaque fences. The technique of stacking site-cleared wood branches between upright posts was a common historic practice in the West, especially suitable in rural areas where planed wood was not readily available.

A critical circulation or transportation feature on the ranch is the Union Pacific (historically the Southern Pacific) Railroad, which loops down towards the Upper Complex and would have been the transportation connection to the broader region for the shipping in and out of cattle, acquisition of supplies, and for long distance travel. Artifacts scattered nearby the track date to between 1903 and 1932, and attest to the use of the line during this period by railroad employees and/or travelers (Parkhurst et al. 2002:26). As explained in the *Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950* MPDF, the transcontinental railroad connection to California and the eastern states which opened in 1881 spurred the growth of cattle ranching in southern Arizona.

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Ranch roads link the Upper and Lower Complexes, extending across Cienega Creek and out into grazing ranges. To the north, the surviving ranch road, accessible to automotive vehicles, parallels Cienega Creek before branching off to the northeast and southwest. The road links the two complexes, connects with smaller horse trails, and extends out into the grazing lands.

Eligibility Criteria

The Empirita Ranch's history reflects important aspects in the evolution of modern Arizona ranching. These broader patterns of ranching history have been described in two associated multiple property documentation forms, *Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950* (2002) and *Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970* (pending). The district's buildings and structures reflect its association with the modernization of cattle ranching during the twentieth century.

Each MPDF provides guidance for the evaluation of cattle ranch-related properties for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. The second MPDF, *Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970*, provides guidance most applicable to the property types found at the Empirita Ranch Historic District (see Section F, pp. 88-89). In that document, a ranch district is generally limited to the area immediately surrounding the primary focus of ranch activities. This area would include "the main house, auxiliary buildings and structures, some fences and cattle guards, watering facilities and windmills, and other agricultural fields and features" (p. 88). A ranch district is defined in such a way as not to include large expanses of range. This is distinct from a ranching landscape that would include grazing land and which might encompass many thousands of acres. The ranch district is a smaller entity, which nonetheless still conveys a full sense of ranch activities.

The Empirita Ranch Historic District meets the registration requirements specified in the MPDF. A majority of its constituent features retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a mid-20th century cattle ranching operation. The spread of features over the course of the district's period of significance, 1941-1968, provides visitors with an understanding of the changes seen on cattle ranches during an important period when the business of cattle raising modernized to take advantage of new technologies, new techniques in cattle raising, and changing relations between ranchers and the larger agricultural marketplace.

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Empirita Ranch Historic District

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Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950

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Empirita Ranch Historic District
Pima County, Arizona
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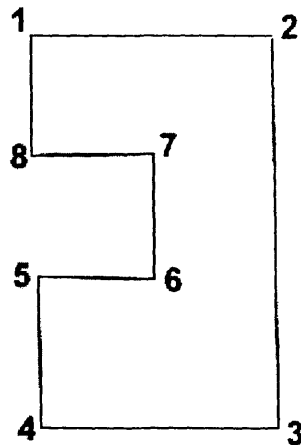
Empirita Ranch Historic District

Pima County, Arizona

Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950

Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970

Geographical Data



	Zone	UTM Datum	Easting	Northing
1	12	NAD 27	543922	3536173
2	12	NAD 27	545074	3536182
3	12	NAD 27	545065	3534586
4	12	NAD 27	543935	3534572
5	12	NAD 27	543936	3534996
6	12	NAD 27	544327	3534998
7	12	NAD 27	544330	3535781
8	12	NAD 27	543922	3535783

Verbal Boundary Description

The property currently comprises Pima County owned parcels with tax parcel numbers 306-18-006E and 306-18-006F in Section 17, Township 17 South, Range 18 East, Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian (G&SRB&M) (see map, Additional items).

Boundary Justification

The district boundaries include residential and operational headquarters and an area of surrounding land sufficient to represent a southern Arizona family ranch. The property includes only that portion of the historic Empirita Ranch that is under the ownership of Pima County.

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Section Photographs

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Empirita Cattle Ranch Rural Historic Landscape

Pima County, Arizona

Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950

Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970

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PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs are labeled with an archival pen.

The following information is the same for all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Photographer: Janet H. Parkhurst

Negative: Janet H. Parkhurst

Date: February 14, 2002

Photographs and negatives are in possession of Janet H. Strittmatter, Inc.

1) Empirita Ranch sign at entry

Camera Direction: NW

2) View from entry into ranch along main access road

Camera Direction: W

3) Cattle guard at entry gate

Camera Direction: SE

4) View of upper residential complex

Camera Direction: N

5) Horses in fenced pasture near upper livestock complex

Camera Direction: SW

6) View from upper livestock complex with the Whetstone Mountains in the background

Camera Direction: SE

7) Cienega Creek bed at the road crossing with barbed wire fence

Camera Direction: NW

8) Approach to old (lower) headquarters along main access road showing creek bank

Camera Direction: SW

9) View from managers' garden

Camera Direction: E

10) Cowboys' house (R-5)

Camera Direction: SW

11) Foreman's house (R-4)

Camera Direction: NW

12) Siemund/Ohrel ranch house (R-2) showing principal façade

Camera Direction: N

13) Siemund/Ohrel ranch house (R-2) north patio (rear) showing Ohrel Wing (right) and Seimund wing (left)

Date: September 26, 2003

Camera Direction: SE

14) Siemund/Ohrel ranch house (R-2), north patio showing Siemund bedroom and glazed breezeway

Camera Direction: E

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Section Photographs

Page PHOTO

Empirita Cattle Ranch Rural Historic Landscape
Pima County, Arizona

Cattle Ranching in Arizona, 1540-1950

Arizona Cattle Ranching in the Modern Era, 1945-1970

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15) Maids' Quarters (R-3), south façade

Date: September 26, 2003

Camera Direction: NE

16) Old water tank tower, upper complex

Camera Direction: NE

17) Hay barn (B-5), old headquarters

Camera Direction: E

18) Concrete reservoir, old headquarters

Camera Direction: NE

19) Retaque and post and rail corrals, old headquarters

Camera Direction: NW

20) Retaque corral fence detail, old headquarters

Camera Direction: NW

21) Post and rail fence paddock southeast of the Cowboy's house (R-5)

Camera Direction: SE

22) Old tack room, old headquarters

Camera Direction: NE

23) Rusty metal fuel tank, old headquarters

Camera Direction: NW

24) View from cleared field looking northwest, old headquarters

Date: September 26, 2003

Camera Direction: NW

25) Riparian vegetation, dense shrub variety along Cienega Creek bank

Date: September 26, 2003

Camera Direction: NW

26) Desert grazing range with grasses and native plant species, near upper complex

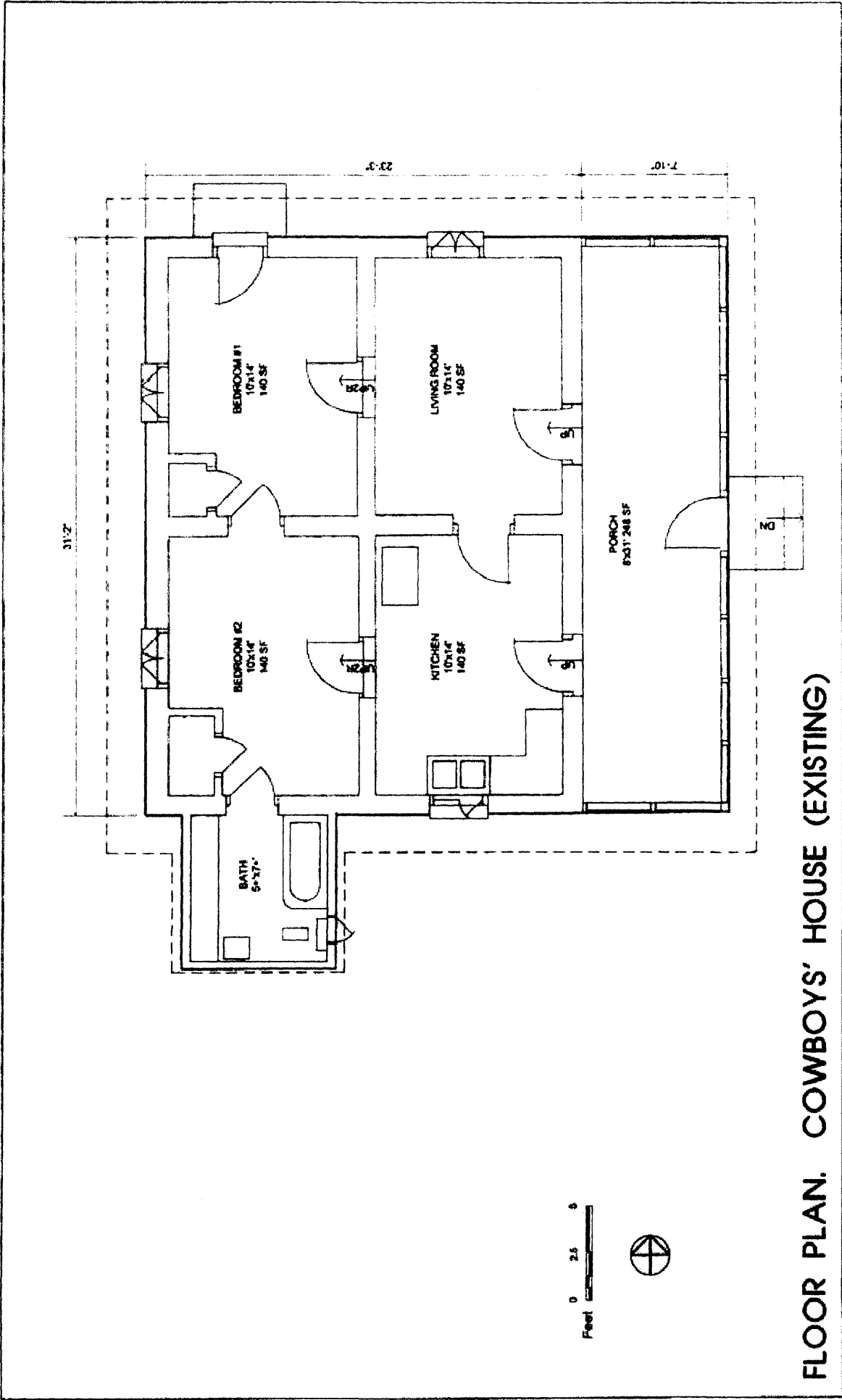
Date: September 6, 2003

Camera Direction: SE

27) View along fence by cleared field showing mesquites and access road

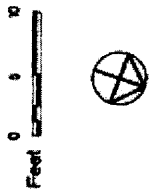
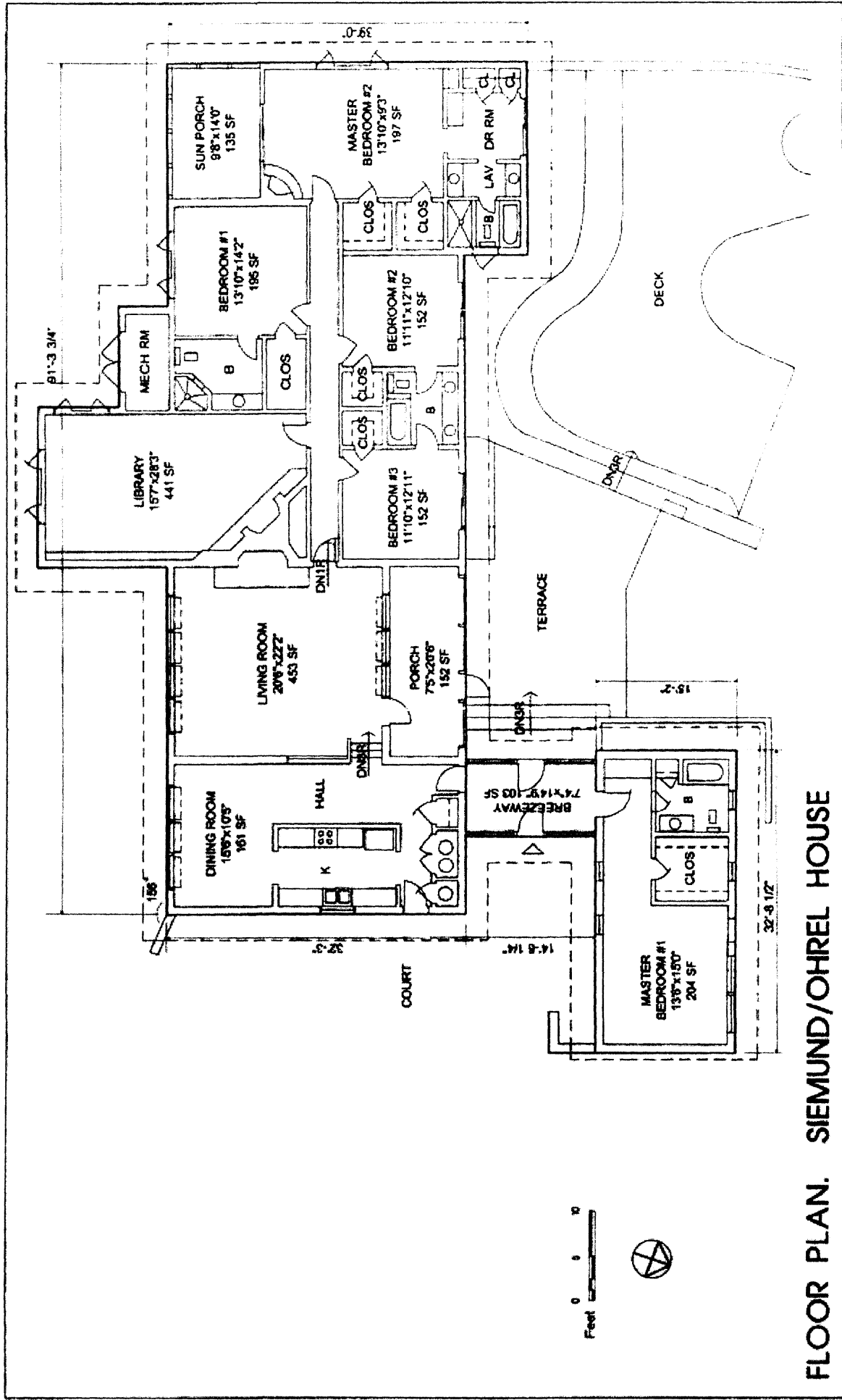
Date: September 26, 2003

Camera Direction: NW



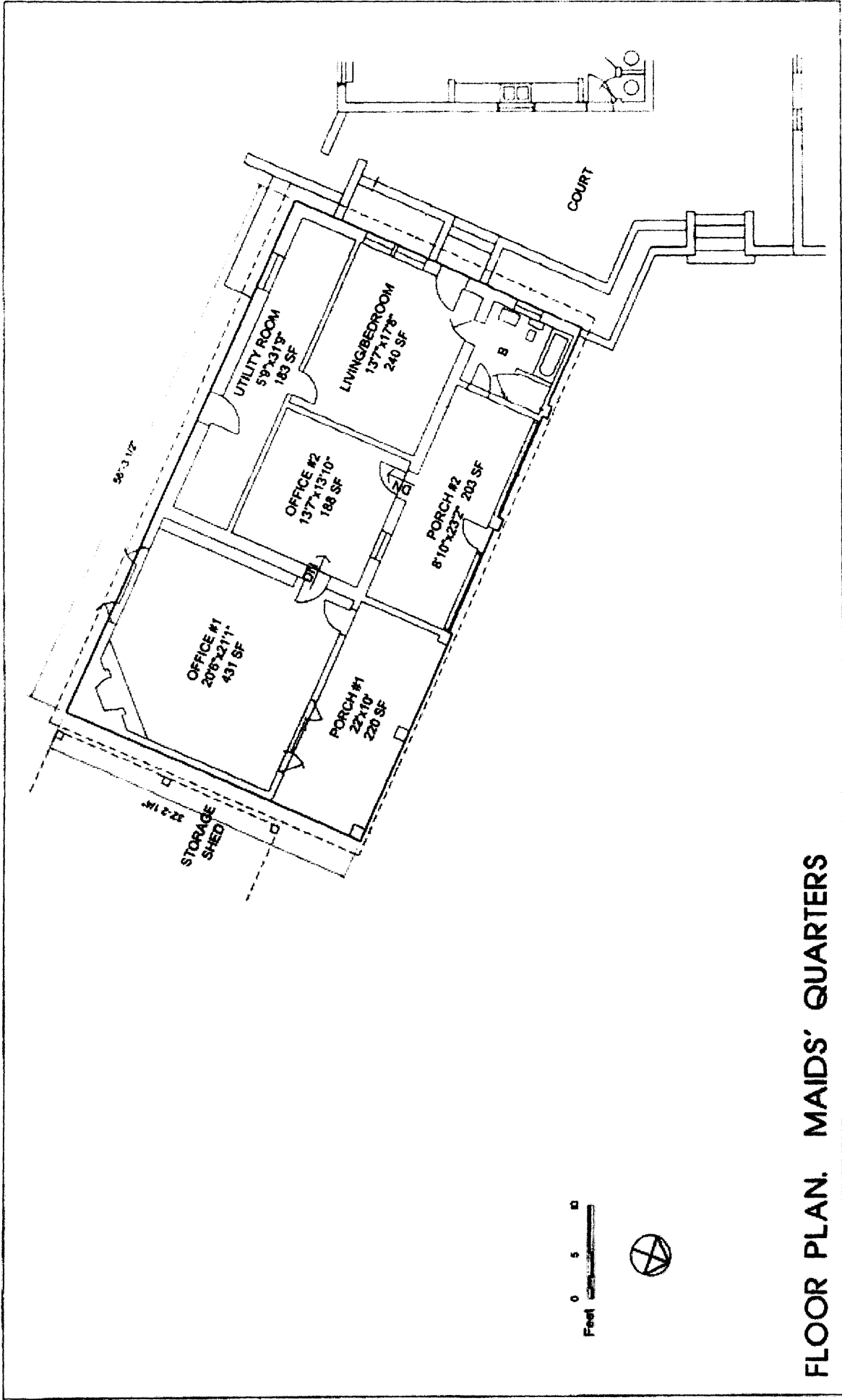
FLOOR PLAN. COWBOYS' HOUSE (EXISTING)

Additional Item 1. Cowboys' House at Empirita Ranch. Courtesy of Janet H. Strittmatter, Inc. and SWCA, 2003.



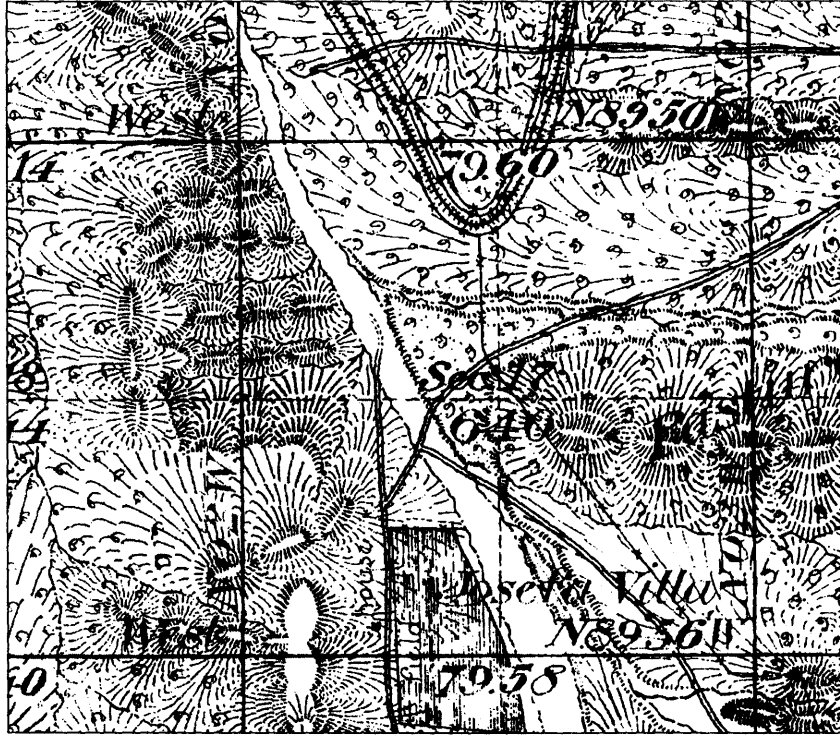
FLOOR PLAN. SIEMUND/OHREL HOUSE

Additional Item 2. Siemund/Ohrel House at Empirita Ranch. Courtesy of Janet H. Strittmatter, Inc. and SWCA, 2003.

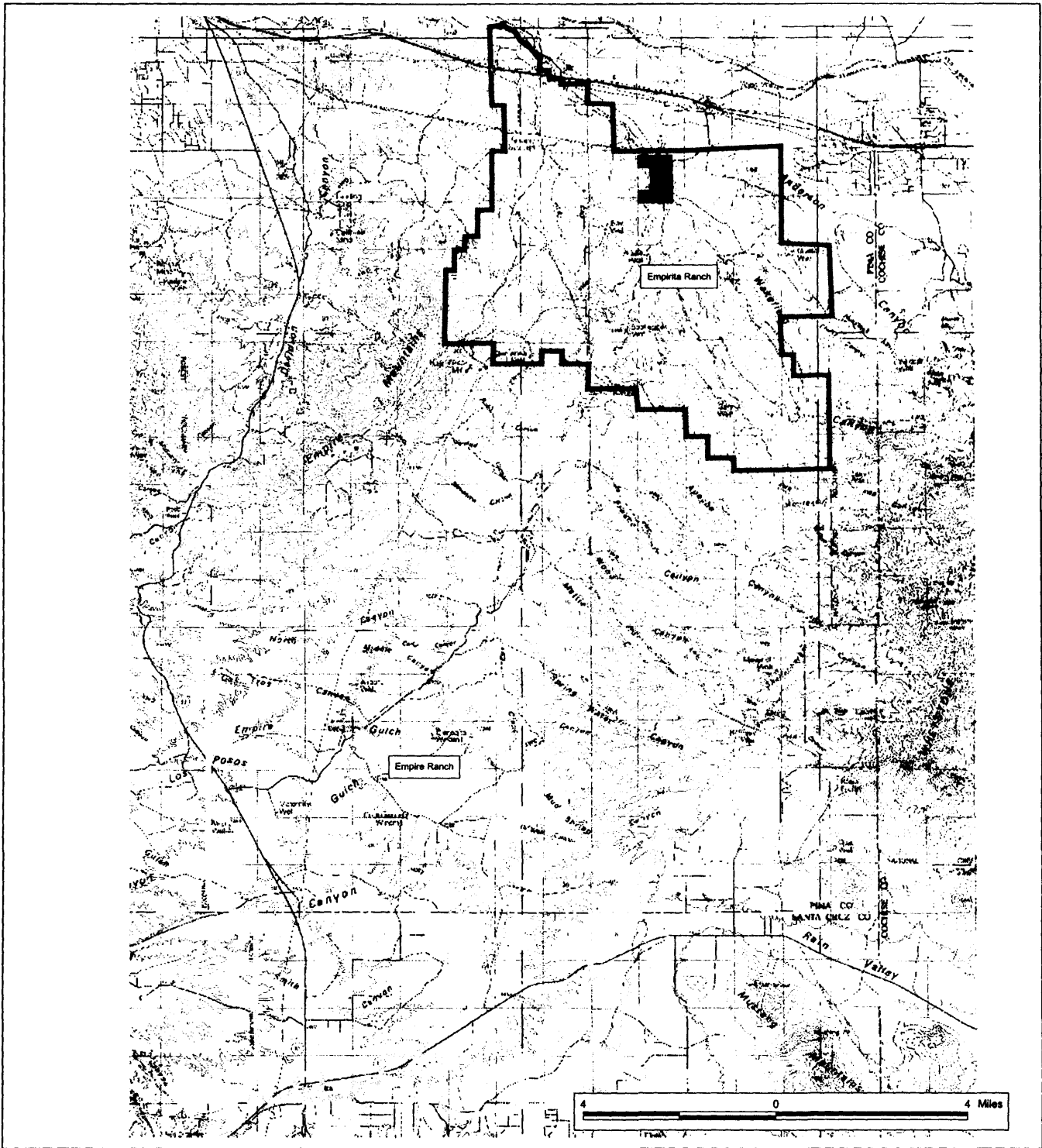


FLOOR PLAN. MAIDS' QUARTERS




Additional Item 3. Maids' Quarters at Empirita Ranch. Courtesy of Janet H. Strittmatter, Inc. and SWCA, 2003.



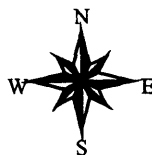
Additional Item 4. Portion of 1912 GLO Map showing de Villa Homestead, Field, and Ditch.



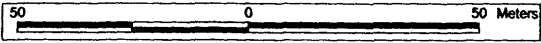
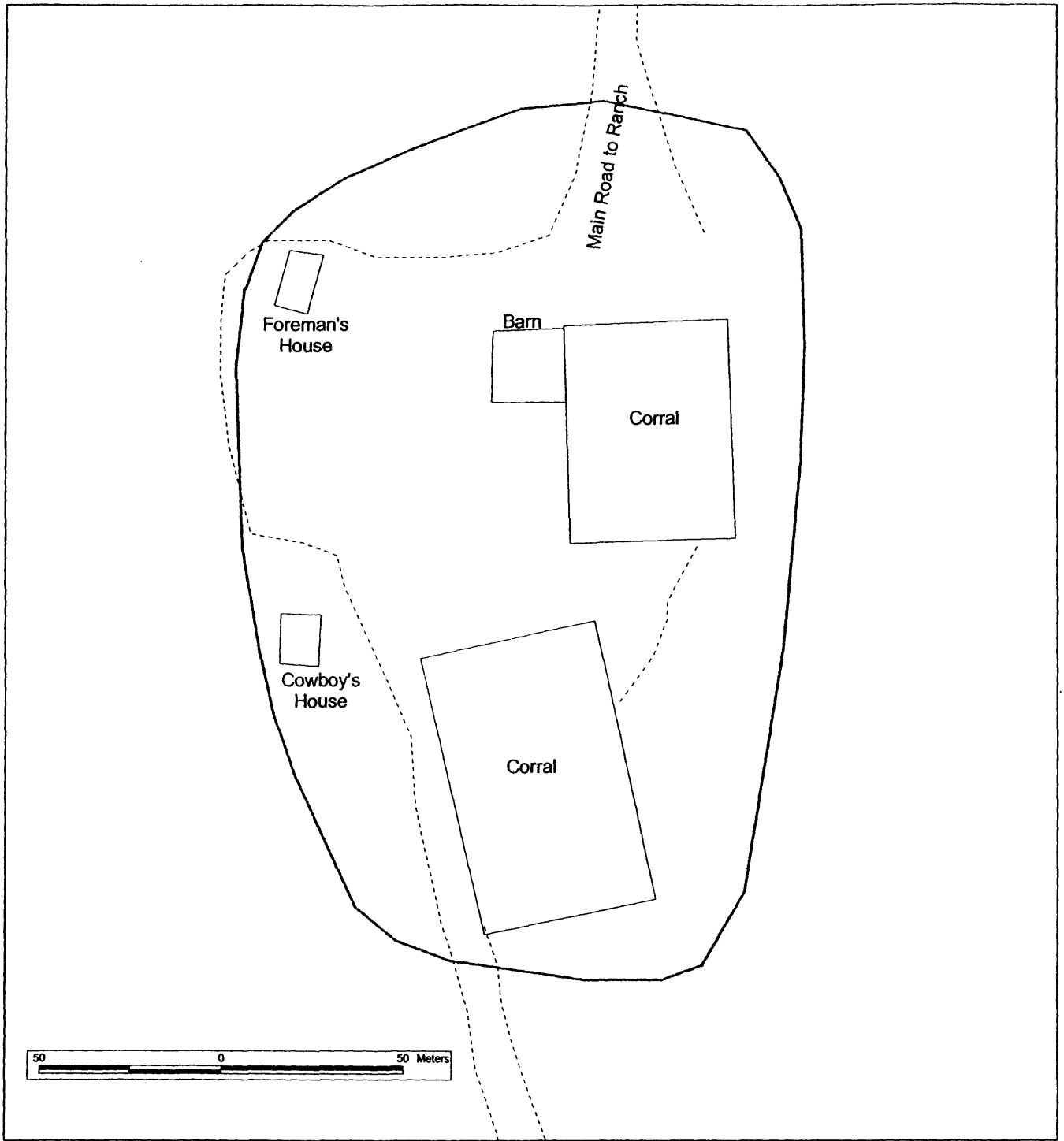
**Empirita Ranch
Rural Historic Landscape
Project Area**

-  Current Empirita Boundary
-  Empirita Ranch boundary at height of operation
-  Empire Ranch boundary at height of operation

USGS 1:100,000 Quadrangle:
Fort Huachuca
Township 17 South
Range 18 East
Section 17
Pima County, Arizona



Additional Item 5. Location of Empirita Ranch and Empire Ranch.

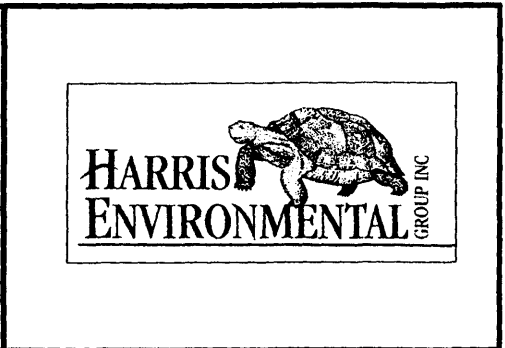


Empirita Ranch
 Rural Historic Landscape
 Map of AZ EE:2:498(ASM)
 Historical Empirita Ranch features
 (from Parkhurst et al. 2002)
 HEG Project No. 03-32

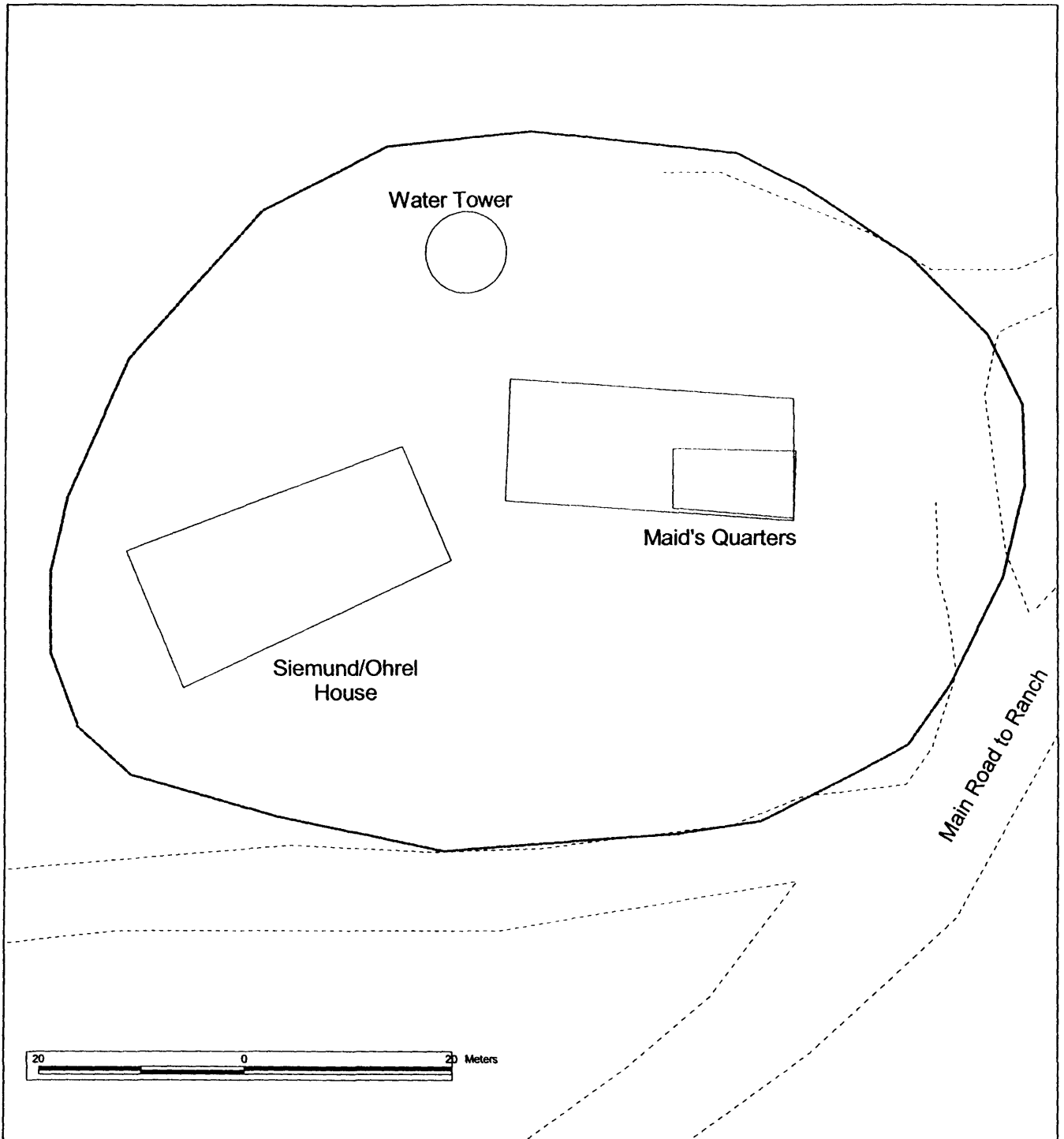
Legend

- Site Boundary
- Historic Structure
- Road

Township 17 South
 Range 18 East
 Section 17
 Pima County, Arizona




Additional Item 6. Site Map of AZ EE:2:498 (ASM). Based on map from Parkhurst et al. 2002.



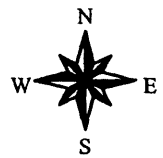
Empirita Ranch
Rural Historic Landscape

Map of AZ EE:2:499 (ASM)
Historical ranch building,
water tank, and 1950s building
(from Parkhurst et al. 2002)

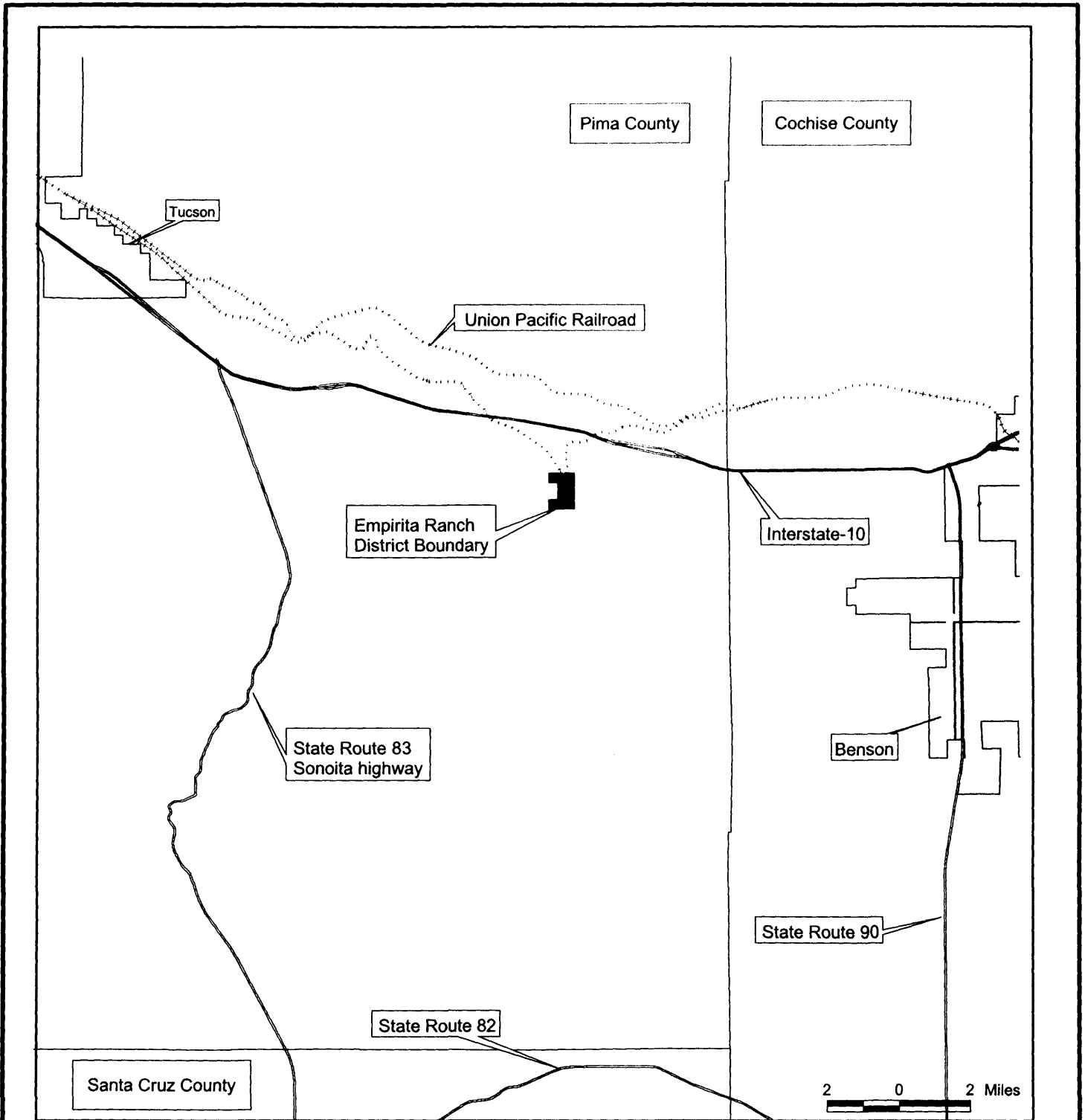
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-  Site Boundary
-  Historic Structure
-  Road

Township 17 South
Range 18 East
Section 17
Pima County, Arizona

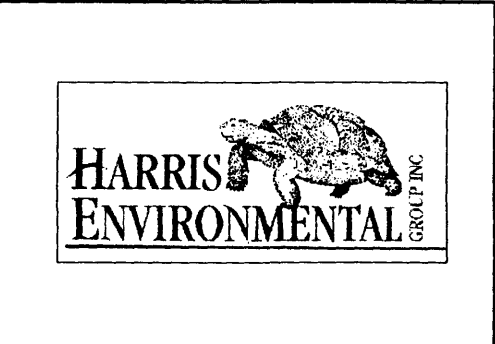


Additional Item 7. Site Map of AZ EE:2:499 (ASM). Based on map from Parkhurst et al. 2002.

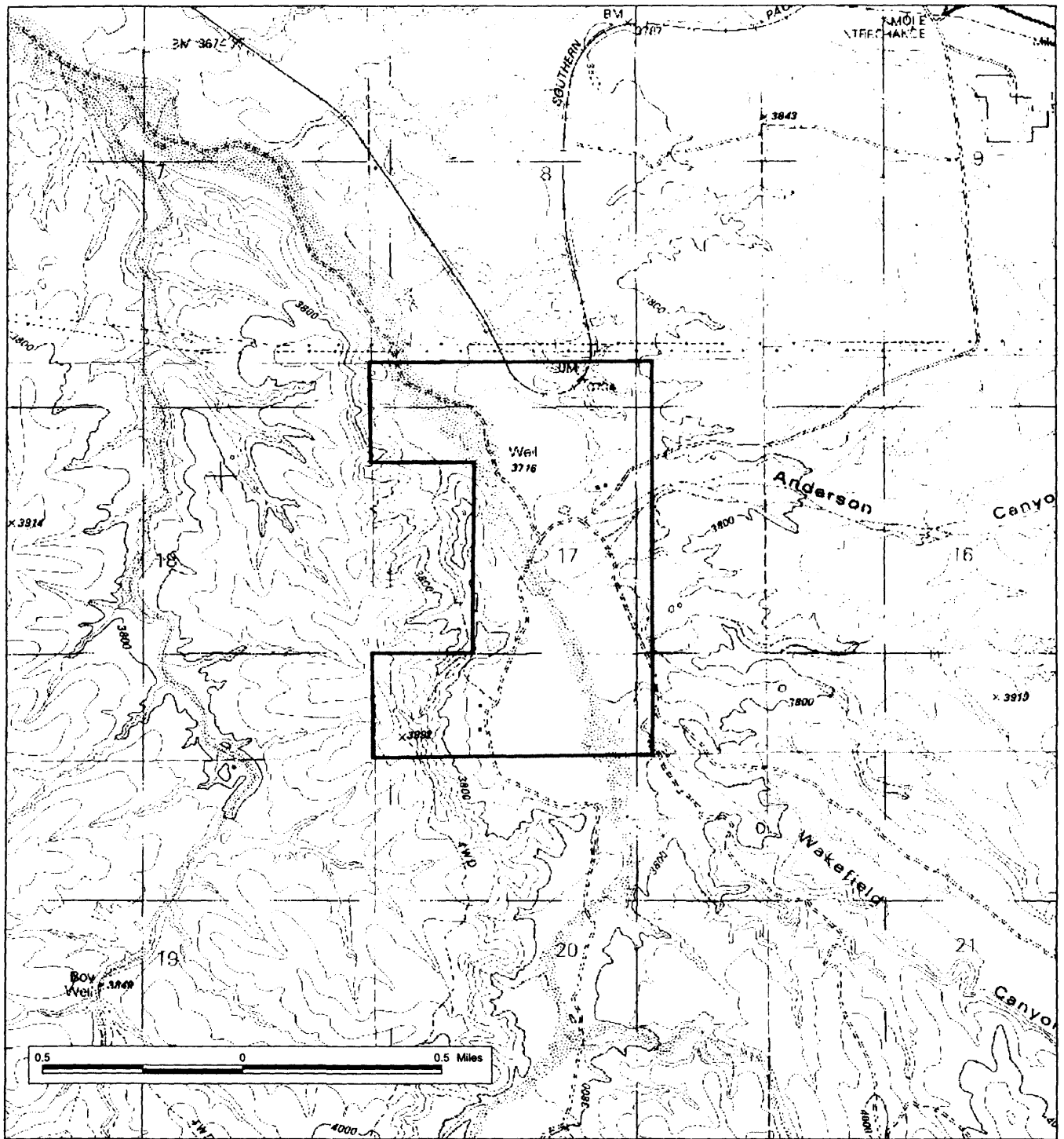


Empirita Ranch
Rural Historic Landscape
Historic Resources Map

Township 17 South
Range 18 East
Section 17
Pima County, Arizona



Map 1. Empirita Ranch District Boundary.

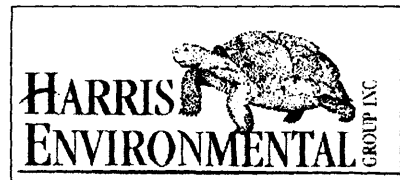


**Empirita Ranch
Rural Historic Landscape**

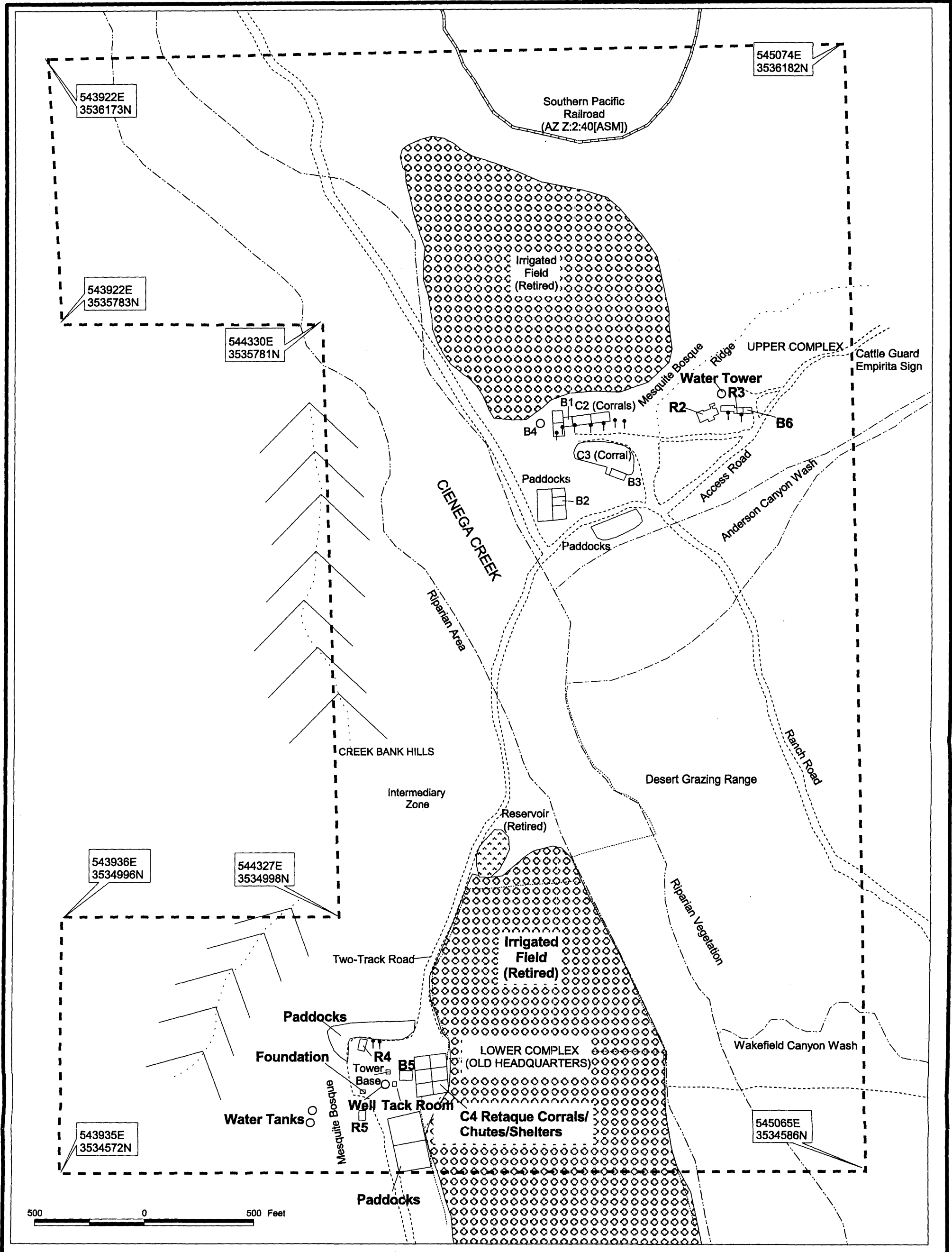
Legend

 District Boundary

USGS 7.5' Quadrangle:
The Narrows (1981)
Township 17 South
Range 18 East
Section 17
Pima County, Arizona

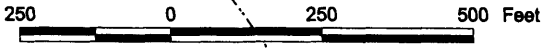
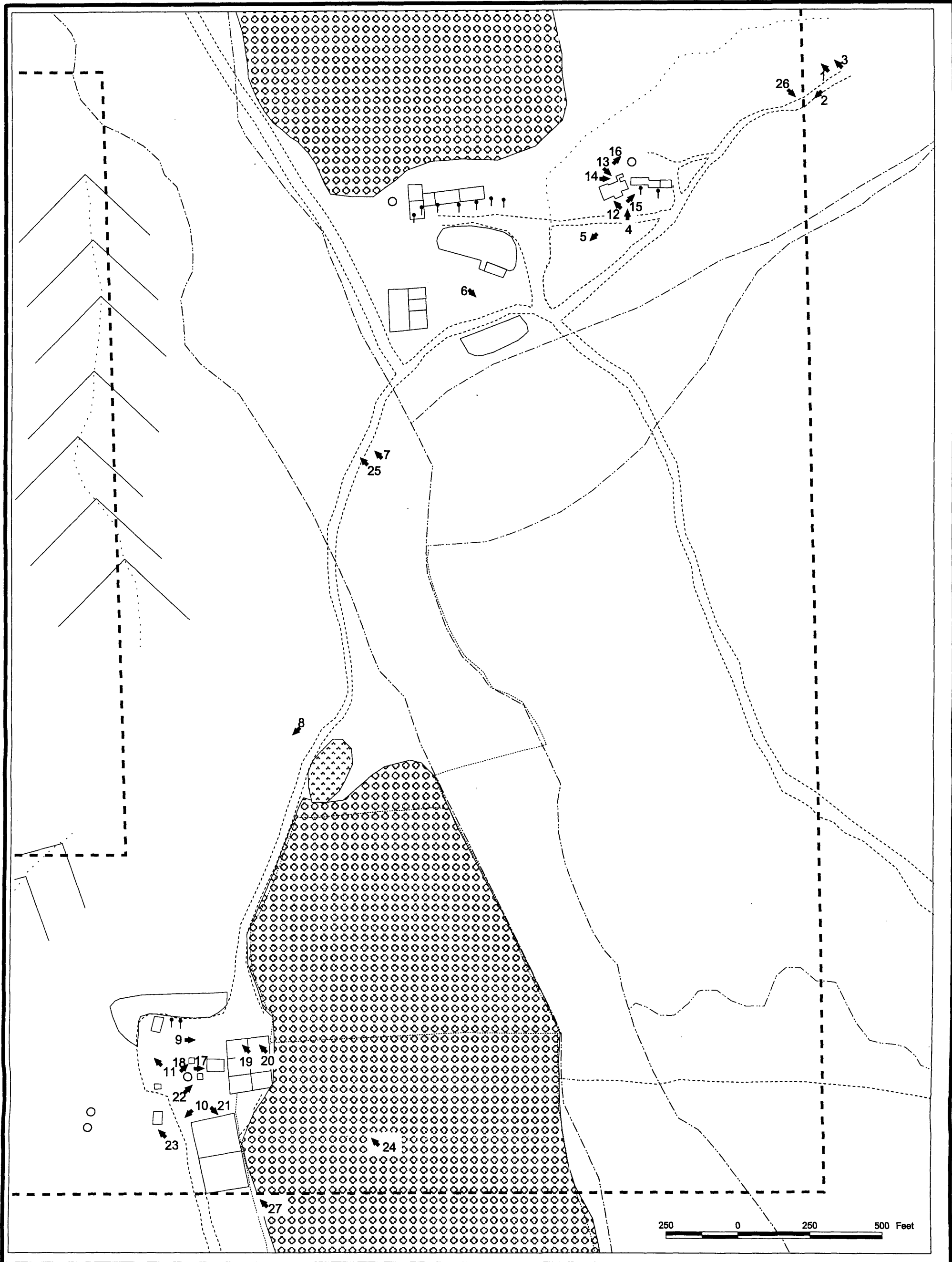


Map 2. District boundary.



<p>Empirita Ranch Rural Historic Landscape Historic Resources Map</p>	<p> District Boundary</p> <p> Building</p> <p> Irrigated Field</p> <p> Corral/Paddock</p> <p> Well, Water Tower, Water Tank</p> <p> Railroad Tracks</p>	<p> Planted Tree</p> <p> Dirt Road, Trail</p> <p> Fenceline</p> <p> Ridgeline</p> <p> Drainage</p> <p> Reservoir</p>	<p>Township 17 South Range 18 East Section 17 Pima County, Arizona</p> <p></p> <p>HARRIS ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP, INC.</p>
	<p>Labels: Contributing Feature / Non-Contributing Feature</p>		

Map 3. Historic Resources.



**Empirita Ranch
Rural Historic Landscape
Historic Resources Map**

- District Boundary
- Building
- Irrigated Field
- Corral/Paddock
- Well, Water Tower, Water Tank
- Railroad Tracks
- Photograph Number, Location, and Direction
- Planted Tree
- Dirt Road, Trail
- Fenceline
- Ridgeline
- Drainage
- Reservoir

Township 17 South
Range 18 East
Section 17
Pima County, Arizona



Map 4. Points and directions from which photographs were taken.