

GARWOOD RANCH

BACKGROUND

Nelson Garwood was a Navy veteran of the Spanish American War, fought in the Boxer Rebellion in China, stoked ships on the Great Lakes, was a fireman on the railroad, built racecars and had a Ford Agency in Ohio. He moved to Tucson in the 1930s and was involved mostly in real estate (buying, fixing up and selling houses). During WW II he worked at Davis-Monthan Air Base. He died in 1970.



Nelson Garwood

Courtesy of Saguaro National Park East

RANCH LAND

The land that was to become the Bar G Ranch was originally homesteaded in the 1920s. Nelson Garwood bought the deed on 2 July 1945 from two sisters who were the original homesteaders. The purchase was for approximately 480 acres with no physical improvements. The land was bounded by Saguaro National Monument on three sides and by private land on the fourth. Nelson bought the property to build a residence and he had no intention off ever operating a cattle ranch. He never owned any cattle and one of his first tasks was to repair the perimeter fencing to keep other rancher's cattle off of his property. Soon after he purchased the land, he sold about 70 to 75 acres on the South side of the property, just South of the dam, to the government for incorporation into the Monument. The Western boundary was about where the Kennedy Trail is today and the northern boundary was just past what is now called the Wentworth Trail

PROPERTY ACCESS

Speedway Road was only a little dirt road and there were no bridges across Pantano Wash. When it rained, it became impassable. The only all-weather road out to the East was to take the Tanque Verde Road to Redington Road and then a dirt road leading south to the Tanque Verde Ranch. For access onto the Bar G Ranch, Nelson Garwood built a dirt road, which is now called the Garwood Trail. Most of the road was scraped by tying remnants of a Palo Verde to a Jeep and dragging it behind or using a scraper he made of railroad ties. He would scrape the road on a regular basis to keep it clear of weeds and debris. Near where the dam is, the road was built right out of the side of the hill. He used a jackhammer and dynamite charges to build that portion of the road.

DAM CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the dam started in 1948 along with the construction of the first phase of the house in order to provide an assured water supply. Nelson built the first part of the dam with stone masonry. He used a little cement mixer to mix the loads of cement. The dam was built in different segments. First it was poured concrete. Then he put in two steel masonry walls and filled the middle with poured concrete. In the later stages, he

built concrete forms using plywood and metal. Concrete for most of the dam was brought in by concrete mix trucks. The road to the dam was so narrow that the trucks had difficulty backing down the road after delivering their load. An 8-inch pipe was installed in the sandy area behind the dam and the pipe had filters at the end of the pipe so the water was actually filtered through tons of sand and then the pipe filter. The water was stored in two 20,000-gallon storage tanks, one just below the dam and the other near where the generator was. The whole water system was gravity fed.



Dam & 20,000 Gallon Tank
Courtesy of Saguaro National Park



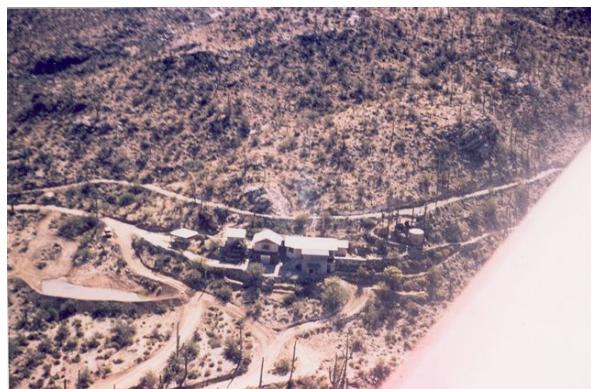
Reservoir Formed by Dam
Courtesy of Saguaro National Park

HOUSE CONSTRUCTION

The house was built in two phases. The original building consisted of only one room with a half bath and was built about 1948. It was of stone masonry construction from materials taken primarily from the wash. The main part of the house was built in the early 1950s. The reason the house was built in two phases was that the Garwood family moved back to Ohio in 1948 and didn't return to Tucson until 1950. Most of the work was done by Nelson Garwood and a few hired people for the stone masonry, fireplace and block work. The house was constructed of burnt adobe blocks, which weighed about 70 pounds each, much larger than current adobe blocks. There was an open beam ceiling in the living room and the house had a rigid Mansville asbestos roof. The house was heated by the fireplace and some rooms had electric heaters. A one-cylinder diesel generator provided electricity. The concrete pad where the



Garwood Ranch House
Courtesy of Saguaro National Park



Aerial View of Ranch House
Courtesy of Saguaro National Park

generator was located can still be found beside the road leading to the dam. The water supply for the house came from the dam.

AIRSTRIP

During World War II, Nelson Garwood was employed at Davis-Monthan Air Base where he worked on adjustable propellers on aircraft. He decided if he was going to work on airplanes, he would learn to fly them too so he got his pilot's license and bought an airplane. He was a good surveyor so he laid out the landing strip and surveyed it himself. He got some people with earthmoving equipment to come in and grade it. He maintained the airstrip by dragging railroad ties and heavy steel beams, which he attached with chains to his jeep. He also built a hanger for his airplane next to the strip.



Garwood's Piper Aircraft & Hanger
Courtesy of Saguaro National Park East

SALE OF PROPERTY

Nelson Garwood was involved in real estate for many years and developed the philosophy that just about everything was for sale because "you cannot eat land and all you're doing is paying taxes". Of the 480 acres he originally bought in 1945, he sold about 70 to 75 acres almost immediately to the National Monument. In 1955, he sold about 100 acres where the airstrip was located to someone named Griffiths but retained use of the strip for life as a condition of the sale. He sold another 10 or 20 acres to someone named Sharp and then in 1959, sold the remainder of the place, house and everything, to a man named Genemattis. Genemattis had some caretakers take care of the house for a while but eventually it became vacant. The house was let go and in 1965, vandals broke all the windows, smashed the toilets and generally created havoc. In the early 1970s, vandals built a bonfire in the living room and burned the whole place down. After that, the Park Service took over the property by right of Eminent Domain and the property became a part of the National Monument.

Additional pictures of the Garwood Ranch may be found on the following page

Summarized August 2003 by T. N. Johnson from information provided by the National Park Service. Updated in March 2011 to add pictures of the ranch. All pictures are courtesy of Saguaro National Park East.

Additional Material: GVHC Library File 54

GARWOOD RANCH PICTURES

All pictures courtesy of Saguaro National Park East



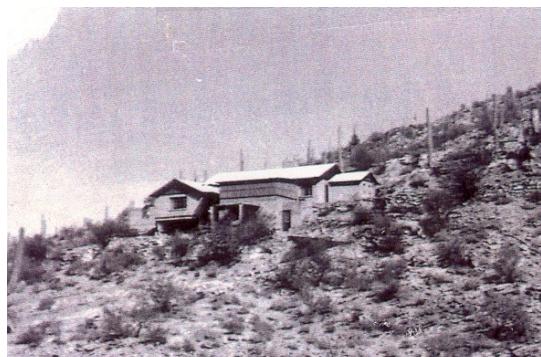
View of Runway
from the Air



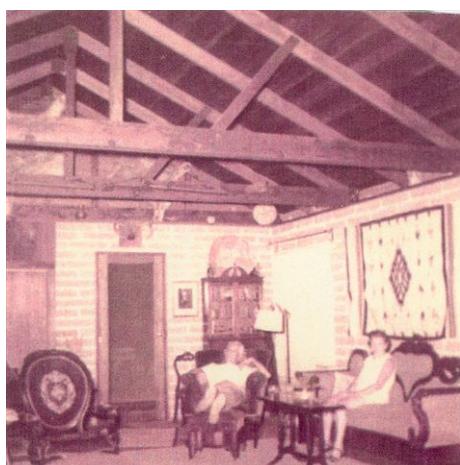
One Cylinder Diesel Generator



Nelson Garwood by Dam



Garwood Ranch House



Garwood Family in Living
Room



Ranch Living Room