

THE HISTORY OF CANOA RANCH

From prehistoric times to the present, Canoa Ranch occupies a noteworthy historic site in Pima County along the middle Santa Cruz Valley.

PREHISTORIC PERIOD: The Paleoindian Period (10,000 B.C. to 8,000 B.C.) is probably the earliest that Native Americans occupied the area of present day Southern Arizona. The Paleoindians lived in small, dispersed highly mobile family groups that subsisted primarily by hunting “big game” species such as mammoth and bison. With the disappearance of the “big game” animals by around 8000 B.C., the remaining natives had to shift their food procurement strategies and become hunters of small game and started early farming practices. This period is referred to as the Archaic Period (8000 B.C. to 200 A.D.) and the people were classified as Hunter-Gatherers and Early Farmers. They lived in rudimentary pit houses and were still highly mobile and relocated whenever they depleted the food resources in the area. The area was sparsely populated from about 6500 to 3500 B.C. because of changing environmental conditions. During the Early Ceramic and Pre-Classic Periods (200 A.D. to 1150 A.D.) the area was settled primarily by Sonoran Desert farmers referred to as the Hohokam in the latter part of the period. They lived in more substantial pit houses and developed ceramic pottery vessels. They became expert farmers and developed extensive irrigation systems along the rivers. The latter part of the Prehistoric period is referred to as the Classic Period (1150 to 1450 A.D.). The native villages became more compact and the pit houses were replaced by aboveground adobe structures. Trade networks were established. Farming provided the major food source with small animal hunting and wild food gathering supplementing their diet. Then, around 1450, the Hohokam suddenly disappeared. Whatever the reason, for their disappearance, most archeologists believe that the Hohokam eventually adapted to the changes in the environment of the area and that their descendants became the Sobaipuri (river people) and Tohono O’odham (desert people) that were in the area with the arrival of the Spanish in the 17th century. Around the 15th or 16th centuries, another band of Native Americans, the Apaches also made their appearance in what is now southern Arizona.

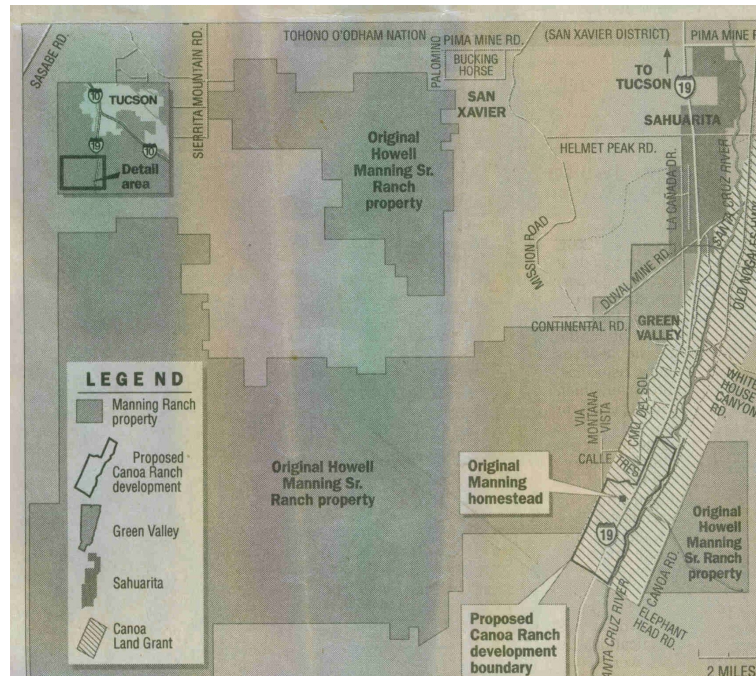
HISTORIC PERIOD: The Historic Period begins with the arrival of the early Spanish expeditions (Fray Marcos de Niza in 1539 and Francisco Vasquez de Coronado in 1540). Spanish influence commenced in earnest in 1691 when Father Eusebio Kino began establishing churches in the native villages along the Santa Cruz River and converting the natives to Catholicism. Spanish influence among the natives continued to increase and then suddenly deteriorated resulting in the Pima Revolt of 1751. In order to protect the Spanish migrants, presidios were built, the first in Tubac in 1751. The first historic mention of the area that was to become the Canoa Ranch occurred in 1775 when the Spanish explorer Captain Juan Bautista de Anza camped at the Piman rancheria, which was on the Camino Real historic route between New Spain and Tucson. Anza and his contingent of 239 people were on their way to establishing a presidio at San Francisco. Friar Francisco Garces gave the land the name *La Canoa*, derived from the canoe like water troughs that the Pimas hollowed out of large cottonwood trees.

La Canoa functioned as a working cattle ranch from 1820 to the 1970s. Tomas and Ignacio Ortiz paid \$250 for the 17,000-acre San Ignacio de la Canoa Spanish land grant in 1820.

Rancher Thomas Driscoll and cattleman Frederick Maish purchased it from Ortiz in 1876 and held it until 1912, the year of Arizona statehood. That year Levi Manning, former Tucson mayor and surveyor general for the Arizona Territory, bought the ranch. Before the 1940s Levi and his son Howell expanded the original land grant to 100,000 acres and then proceeded to combine private, state, and federal lands until the ranch encompassed a 500,000 acre spread, stretching from Elephant Head on the east to the Baboquivari Mountains on the west.

Canoa Ranch became known as the social and economic center of the Middle Santa Cruz Valley. The ranch compound extended from the original Manning homestead, a Sonoran adobe structure, to the Manning ranch headquarters, built in the 1930s, at the north end of the land grant property. The complex included homes for 40 cowboys and their families, workshops, stables, several service buildings, a blacksmith shop, corrals, and a school.

Howell Manning's son, Howell Jr. joined his father in running the ranch and lived there with his wife, Deezy, and two sons from the late 1940s to 1951. On December 22, 1951, a tragic accident took his life. He and two ranch employees were killed instantly in a collision with a drunken truck driver on Old Nogales Highway 12 miles south of Tucson. Howell Sr.'s zeal for running the ranch ended with the sudden death of his son and by 1953 he began selling off parcels of land. This sell off ended in 1994 with Fairfield Homes buying 6,400 acres, the remaining southern half of the Canoa original land grant.

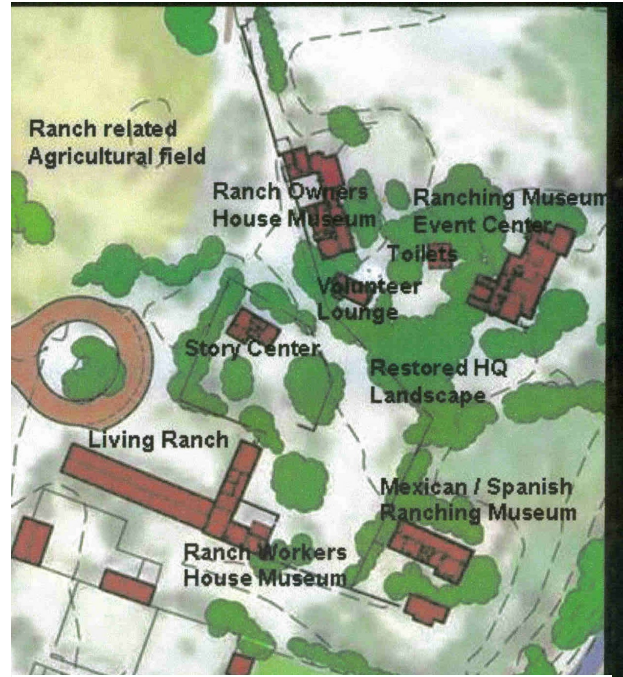


Scope of the Manning Ranch

Fairfield Homes failed to receive zoning changes that would allow the extensive development plans they desired for the property. In 2001 the Arizona Open Land Trust, working with Pima County, conserved approximately 4,800 acres as permanent open space and wildlife habitat. Rationale for conserving this property was based on the following:

- Recognition of its beauty, historic structures and colorful past.
- The significant wildlife movement corridors through several washes that cross the property.
- The historic De Anza Trail that runs through the property along the Santa Cruz River.
- The Madera Wash link to the Nogales Ranger District of the Colorado National Forest.
- The Demetrie and Esperanza Washes link to the Sierrita Mountains.

The Pima County 2004 Historic Preservation Bond Program was approved by the voters. The Canoa Ranch Building Rehabilitation and Adaptive Use is one of the projects included in this bond issue. The end result was the development of the Raul M. Grijalva Canoa Ranch Conservation Park Master Plan in 2007. It identified the way to “protect, interpret and enhance the cultural and natural resources of the 4800 acre historic Canoa Ranch”. The focus of the Master Plan is two-fold: preservation of the natural and cultural landscape and heritage education to promote public understanding of the peoples and cultures that shaped this historic site. Restoration of the buildings in what will become the Developed Heritage Area has commenced and several of the buildings have been completed. The photographs below portray some of the buildings in this area. Some have been restored and others are under restoration.



Developed Heritage Area of the Canoa Ranch Conservation Park

Figure 1 depicts what the Howell Manning Jr. ranch house looked like in 2012. The Ranch Owners House Museum is located in this building. Figure 2 depicts the structure located next to the Howell Manning Jr. is planned to serve as a lounge for the volunteers (docents) providing support for the Heritage Park. Figure 3 is a picture of the garage that was taken in 2012 before the commencement of restoration efforts. Figure 4 depicts what the garage looked like in 2016 after it was restored and repurposed as a restroom.



Figure 1. Howell Manning Jr. Ranch House



Figure 2. Volunteer (Docent) Lounge



Figure 3. Garage – (in 2012)



Figure 4. Garage/Restroom Conversion

Figure 5 shows what the Howell Manning Sr. house looked like in 2016 before the home had been opened to the public. Figure 6 is the Guest House whose rehabilitation was completed in 2007. The Guest House photo was taken in 2016



Figure 5. Howell Manning Sr. House



Figure 6. Guest House

The Canoa Ranch complex during the Manning era included a small, man-made 5 acre lake that had been constructed in the 1920s as part of an extensive irrigation system supporting ranch operations. It also provided a place where ranch residents could swim, fish or boat. Pump powered wells drew water from the aquifer to keep the lake filled. After Howell Manning Jr.'s death in 1951 and the subsequent disintegration of the ranch, the lake was allowed to go dry. Since the lake was such a significant feature of the Manning Ranch era and provided a critical habitat area for wildlife, it was decided that the restoration of Canoa Ranch should include the restoration of the lake. Lake restoration commenced in earnest in October of 2017 and was virtually complete when this author visited the lake in May 2019. The size of the restored lake is 2.5 acres. The lake bed was lined during the restoration by mixing a polymer into the soil to reduce seepage back into the aquifer.. A one mile pathway encircles the lake and ramadas have been constructed as places to relax while walking around the lake. Trees and other vegetation

have also been planted around the perimeter. Figure 7 was taken in 2012 and shows the area of the ranch that had been cleared of vegetation prior to the commencement of lake rehabilitation. Figure 8 was taken in May 2019 and shows what the lake looks like after the completion of the lake rehab project



Figure 7. Ranch Lake Area - 2012



Figure 8 .Canoa Ranch Lake - 2019

Summary prepared by B. Bosma in the Spring of 2005 from articles in the Arizona Daily Star (Dec. 31, 2000) the Green Valley News & Sun (July 2002, November 1, 2002) and the Tucson Weekly (Dec. 11, 2003). Western Preservation News; Vol 2, No. 5. July/August 2004. Pima County Leisure Times, Aug – Dec. 2001. Open Land Trust website 2004. Updated in September 2012 and May 2019 by T. Johnson. Photographs by T. Johnson

Additional Materiel: GVHC Library File 5