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**INTERPRETING THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF A
PIONEER CATTLE RANCH IN THE ARID SOUTHWEST**

by

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SCHOOL OF RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my third grade teacher,
Mr. Bach, who taught me the pleasures
of reading.

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ABSTRACT

This ideas for this thesis were conceived as a result of the author's work on a cooperative agreement between the National Park Service and the Landscape Architecture Program in the School of Renewable Natural Resources, wherein the changes that have occurred on the cultural landscapes of four prehistoric or historic sites were documented.

Historic cultural landscapes, especially those associated with vernacular sites have been largely overlooked in interpretive efforts. Readings revealed that vernacular cultural landscapes may serve as a form of historic documentation. These landscapes may provide additional clues regarding the history of our country to visitors of historic sites if the information is interpreted in an interesting, sensitive, and factual manner.

The Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, an early 20th century cattle ranch located within the boundaries of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, is a vernacular historic site with remnants of the associated landscape intact. This landscape may hold valuable information regarding a major westward migration of American cattle ranchers during the mid to latter 19th century that had a profound effect on the ecology and culture of the Sonoran desert in southern Arizona.

As a result of readings, visits to historic sites, and interviews with professionals in the field of interpretation, recommendations are made to present the story of the vernacular landscape of this pioneer cattle ranch to visitors of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“... very rarely is there a glimpse of the history of the landscape itself, how it was formed, how it has changed, and who it was who changed it, and even more rarely does landscape research produce any speculation about the *nature* of the American landscape” (Jackson, 1984: xi).

Identifying the Problem

In January of 1996 three graduate students in landscape architecture, including myself, were appointed to research assistantships to work on cultural landscape inventories through a cooperative agreement between the University of Arizona and the National Park Service. That project, which addressed inventorying the cultural landscapes of four National Monuments in Arizona and New Mexico was part of a nation wide program initiated in 1992 by the National Park Service. One of the cultural landscapes inventoried was the Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in southern Arizona.

While working on the Cultural Landscape Inventory of Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, it became apparent that the cultural landscape might possibly hold valuable information with regard to Arizona history, the history of cattle ranching in the southwest, and the impact of cattle ranching on an arid, desert environment. Furthermore,

little effort had been made to interpret this site to visitors of Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. While it was recognized that it could be challenging to do so, Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch was seen as a suitable subject for this thesis. The ranch presented an opportunity to explore the topic of cultural landscape studies and how information generated from such a study might be presented to the public. Importantly, for a landscape architect, Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch also provides a large land base that could be integrated into an outdoor, interpretive program, incorporating vistas, trails, and existing structures.

A variety of human activities have taken place on the land which is now Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The O'odham people have inhabited the area for hundreds of years, mining was initiated in the 19th century, general stores have been built and have subsequently fallen apart, some areas of the monument were used as hideouts by Mexicans and U.S. citizens, and other ranchers grazed cattle on the land. While recognizing the importance of these different activities to the story of the cultural history of the monument, because of familiarity with the site, Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch was selected as the focus of this thesis.

Goal of the Study

This thesis focusses primarily on interpreting the cultural landscape of a pioneer cattle ranch in the arid southwest. The goal of the thesis is to present Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch as a case study wherein the underlying concepts of cultural landscape

studies and interpretation are integrated, resulting in recommendations for the interpretation of the ranch utilizing, in large part, elements of the cultural landscape.

Organization of the Study

To meet this goal it was necessary to pursue three areas of study: one, the concepts and procedures involved in cultural landscape studies; two, the underlying principles of and methods of interpretation; and three, a history of Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch and of cattle ranching in southern Arizona.

The thesis opens with a description of the methods used to gather information for its preparation. An overview of the topic of cultural landscape studies is then presented followed by a discussion of interpretation in public settings, which includes a brief history of the profession of interpretation along with accepted underlying principles and interpretive methods. The information regarding the history and principles of interpretation is of a more general nature while the methods discussion is specific to cultural landscape interpretation.

Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch is then introduced. Photographs of the ranch and associated features are included as well as maps to orient the reader. A brief history of cattle ranching in southern Arizona is presented which provides an historical context for Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch which is important for understanding and addressing issues and opportunities associated with the interpretation of its cultural landscape.

CHAPTER TWO

OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

In order to meet the goal of applying the principles of cultural landscape studies and interpretation to the cultural landscape of Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, a qualitative research approach utilizing multiple methods was used. Building upon a literature review, interviews were conducted with professionals in the field of interpretation, and site visits were made to various interpretive centers and public spaces dedicated to interpreting natural or cultural histories. Selections of sites to visit and professionals to interview were based on accessibility and a desire to gather samples from both the private and public sectors.

Literature Review

Readings pertaining to landscape studies came mainly from the field of cultural geography and, to a lesser extent, from the writings of historians. The readings covered works of individuals considered to be leading thinkers in the field of cultural landscape studies, with an emphasis on vernacular, or common landscapes. The completed readings provided a solid understanding of the main issues, thoughts, and questions that are pursued in the study.

While completing the literature review it became apparent that within this country the National Park Service has taken the lead in the formal investigation of

interpretation of historic sites. Therefore, many of the readings for the interpretation section of the thesis are from people associated with that agency. Also, much of the work associated with cultural landscapes has been done, and continues to be done by the National Park Service. Study objectives were to gain understanding of what is meant by the term “interpretation”, to become familiar with the history of the profession in the United States, to discover a formal set of principles upon which interpretive program design is based, and to investigate methods of interpretation and their applications.

As the case study is the site of an early 20th century Sonoran desert cattle ranch, readings dealing with the history of ranching in the area that now comprises southern Arizona were completed. The time period covered was primarily from 1700 to the early 1900s with a focus on the 19th century. An understanding was sought of the forces that drew ranchers to the southwest desert and of what impact this migration of ranchers from other parts of the country had on the natural desert landscape.

Readings specific to Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, were in large part from publications used during the author’s previous work on the cultural landscape inventory of the site for the National Park Service. Many of the readings were furnished or suggested by the staff at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with five professionals in the field of interpretation and with one landscape architect. Professionals from both public sector and private

sector agencies were interviewed in order to compare how interpretation is handled by a variety of agencies. Interviews were open-ended and lasted between one and two and a half hours. In every case, except in the interview with the landscape architect, the interviewees were asked to talk about what is important to them in an interpretive process, who makes up the visitorship at the site, if interpretive training was part of their background, what goals they had for their interpretive efforts, and, if appropriate, the cultural landscape was included.

Professional interpreters from the following sites were interviewed: Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum; Cooper Environmental Science Campus; Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument; Saguaro National Park; and Tubac Presidio State Historic Park. One very informative interview occurred spontaneously with a guide at the historic General Vallejo Home in Sonoma, California.

The landscape architect interviewed is currently working on a hardscape design for a public plaza in Tubac, Arizona that will be incorporated as part of the interpretation of the Juan Bautista de Anza Expedition. She was asked to discuss her role in the project, her understanding of interpretation and how her design met any interpretive goals that had been set by the state agency overseeing the project. She also identified specific design features she was intending to use in the plaza.

Common themes emerged in the interviews. All those interviewed talked about the interpretive methods that were currently used at their site and why the particular site is important. At all sites an informal approach is taken in docent or ranger led

discussions. Four of the interviewees suggested that ideally interpretation is thought provoking and will lead to adoption of an attitude of stewardship toward the site. Three people, including the landscape architect, mentioned problems with funding and with vandalism; both directly affect the methods and approaches used for interpreting the site. Vandalism is a problem at Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch and its related sites because the sites are spread throughout the monument and are some distance from the monument headquarters.

As might be expected, the landscape architect was most concerned with the physical design and how her design helped explain an historical event to visitors. However another person discussed circulation problems within their site and how that adversely affected interpretation.

At the majority of sites the interpretive focus is on natural history or architecture. Although three of those interviewed said they would like to enlarge the program to include more information about human/land relationships, which they considered to have great relevance to the story of the site.

Site Visits

Eight sites were visited. Once again, an attempt was made to collect information from sites managed by a variety of agencies. In order to approach and analyze the different sites in a systematic and consistent manner, an observation form was developed that was used at each interpretive center and outdoor public space visited (see Figure 1).

Of particular interest were interpretive methods used, and if the cultural landscape was included in the overall interpretive effort.

As a means of noting the variety of methods used at each site exhibits were viewed, videos watched, plaques read, announcement boards checked for special programs, and any available interpretive literature was collected (see Figure 1 and Tables 1 through 4).

At three of the sites the chief interpreter was also interviewed and at the General Vallejo Home in Sonoma, California an impromptu discussion with the chief interpreter occurred (see Table 2). Talking with the interpreters at the site provided a fuller appreciation of the interpretive efforts and a greater understanding of why particular methods were used and where staff saw shortcomings.

FIGURE 1**OBSERVATION FORM FOR INTERPRETIVE CENTERS**

1. Name of site
2. Date
3. What is being interpreted?
 - Church/mission
 - Historic site
 - Natural history
 - Vernacular design
 - Other:
4. Who administers the site?
 - City/county
 - State
 - Federal
 - Private
 - Other:
5. When was the site opened to the public?
6. Where does interpretation take place?
 - Indoors
 - Outdoors
 - Both

7. What methods are used for interpretation and where are they used?

- audio/visual
- exhibits
- signage
 - in which languages?
- special programs
- trails
- other:

8. Is the interpretation self-guided?

- Are there docents?
- Are there rangers?
- Other:

9. Are unifying design elements visible throughout the interpretive process? (These include consistent design in signage and other markers, color themes, paving features, site furniture, etc.)

10. Is the interpretation geared toward a particular age group?

- Adults
- Children
- Teenagers
- Do the interpretative methods make special efforts to accommodate disabilities?

11. Is the site well maintained?

- Is litter present?

- Do areas show wear or are in disrepair?

12. Is the cultural landscape included in any interpretive efforts?

13. If the cultural landscape is not included, is there an opportunity to do so?

TABLES 1 THROUGH 4

Information Collected at the Interpretive Centers:

Table 1				
Name & location of site	Date visited	Category	Agency administering the Site?	When was the site opened to the public?
Cooper Environmental Science Center - Tucson, Az.	3-17-97	Natural History	Tucson Unified School District	1970s
General Vallejo Home - Sonoma, Ca.	11-25-96	Historic Site	State of California	1960s
Mission San Francisco Solano & El Cuartel de Sonoma - Sonoma, Ca.	11-25-96	Church/Mission & Historic Site	State of California	early 1970s
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument - Ajo, Az.	3-31-97	Natural History	Federal - National Park Service	1930s
Pt. Reyes National Seashore - Pt. Reyes, Ca.	11-26-96	Natural History	Federal - National Park Service	1962
Sunset Park & the Space Between City Hall & the County Buildings - Tucson, Az.	4-6-97	Historic Sites	Cooperative between the City of Tucson, Pima County, & the State of Arizona	unknown
Tubac Presidio State Historic Park - Tubac, Az.	3-18-97	Historic Site	State of Arizona	unknown, but possibly 1970s
Tucson Children's Museum - Tucson, Az.	3-12-97	Other: Career opportunities for children	Private	1991

Table 2				
	Was an interview conducted at the site?	Where does the interpretation take place?	Methods used for interpretation	Signage in which language(s)?
Cooper Environmental Science Center - Tucson, Az.	Yes	Outdoors	A/V, signage, special programs, trails, & other	English
General Vallejo Home - Sonoma, Ca.	Yes (impromptu)	Indoors & outdoors	Exhibits, signage, & special programs	English
Mission San Francisco Solano & El Cuartel de Sonoma - Sonoma, Ca.	No	Indoors & outdoors	A/V, exhibits, signage, & special programs	English
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument - Ajo, Az.	Yes	Indoors & outdoors	A/V, exhibits, signage, special programs, trails, & other	English & Spanish
Pt. Reyes National Seashore - Pt. Reyes, Ca.	No	Indoors & outdoors	A/V, exhibits, signage, special programs, & trails	English
Sunset Park & the Space Between City Hall & the County Buildings - Tucson, Az.	No	Outdoors	Signage & other	English & Spanish
Tubac Presidio State Historic Park - Tubac, Az.	Yes	Indoors & outdoors	A/V, exhibits, signage, special programs, trails, & other	English
Tucson Children's Museum - Tucson, Az.	No	Indoors (mainly, but some outdoors)	A/V, exhibits, signage, special programs, & other	English & Spanish

Table 3				
	Is the interpretation self-guided?	Are there docents, rangers, or other?	Are unifying design elements visible throughout the interpretive process?	Is the interpretation geared toward a particular age group?
Cooper Environmental Science Center - Tucson, Az.	No	Other (teachers & parents)	No	Children & teenagers
General Vallejo Home - Sonoma, Ca.	Yes	Rangers	Not sure	Adults
Mission San Francisco Solano & El Cuartel de Sonoma - Sonoma, Ca.	Yes	Rangers	Yes	Adults & children
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument - Ajo, Az.	Yes	Rangers & docents	Yes	Adults & children
Pt. Reyes National Seashore - Pt. Reyes, Ca.	Yes	Rangers & docents	Yes	Adults, teenagers, & children
Sunset Park & the Space Between City Hall & the County Buildings - Tucson, Az.	Yes	None	Yes	Adults
Tubac Presidio State Historic Park - Tubac, Az.	Yes	Rangers & other (teachers & volunteers)	No	Adults, teenagers, & children
Tucson Children's Museum - Tucson, Az.	Yes	Other (teachers & parents)	No	Children & teenagers

	Does the interpretive process make special efforts to accommodate disabilities?	Is the site well maintained?	Is the cultural landscape included in the interpretive process?	If the cultural landscape is not included is there an opportunity to do so?
Cooper Environmental Science Center - Tucson, Az.	Not sure	Yes	Minimally	Yes
General Vallejo Home - Sonoma, Ca.	Not sure	Yes	Minimally	Yes
Mission San Francisco Solano & El Cuartel de Sonoma - Sonoma, Ca.	Yes	Yes	Minimally	Yes
Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument - Ajo, Az.	Yes	Yes, but some litter is present in the monument & some areas show wear	Minimally	Yes
Pt. Reyes National Seashore - Pt. Reyes, Ca.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not applicable
Sunset Park & the Space Between City Hall & the County Buildings - Tucson, Az.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not applicable
Tubac Presidio State Historic Park - Tubac, Az.	Yes	Yes, but some areas show wear or are in need of repair	Yes	Not applicable
Tucson Children's Museum - Tucson, Az.	Yes	Yes, but some areas show wear	No	Not sure

CHAPTER THREE

LANDSCAPE STUDIES

Definitions

The word “landscape” is well-known and widely used in common speech, however one may ask what it is that we are really referring to when we use the term. Some scholars use “landscape” in a generic sense; that is, landscape refers to everything out-of-doors and includes both the natural and the built environments. Other scholars consider landscape only that which is human influenced. The latter is sometimes distinguished by the term “cultural landscape”.

Jackson (1979) considered the concept of landscape evasive and Stilgoe followed Jackson by opening his book on landscapes of America with the statement “Landscape is a slippery word...” (1982: 3). Still, scholars have strived to reasonably define the term, albeit liberally and loosely. In later years Jackson (1984) offered a definition of landscape as being a particular space on earth, shared by a group of people, and having a distinct character. Meinig (1979c) understands landscape as all features physical, biological, and cultural interacting in a unified way. He continues with the idea that landscape is much more than what we see, but also possesses symbolic meanings and is an expression of our cultural values. Lamme defined landscape as “an integration of related parts, that it has to be a mental image to be important, and that the object of this integrative image is space along the earth’s surface” (1989: 12). From these definitions it

may be concluded that landscape is the outdoor, human influenced physical environment and it embodies rich symbolic, cultural, and social values.

This study concentrates on the cultural landscape, and more specifically, the vernacular, or common cultural landscape. Lewis (1979) defines the cultural landscape as the landscape created by human beings. It is "...nearly everything that we can see when we go outdoors" (Lewis, 1979: 12). The vernacular landscape is that human built landscape that is common, belonging to the people; it is not designed by a professional (Stilgoe, 1982). It was originally a landscape built by pioneers and craftpersons, following traditional styles and utilizing local materials (Jackson, 1984). In recent years improvements in transportation have led to massive importation of materials and techniques to even remote areas. Because of this Jackson (1984) believed the definition of vernacular has necessarily enlarged to include even planned communities. However, this may broaden the definition to the point of confusion. The key elements of the definition are that it is a common sense landscape (Stilgoe, 1982), built by and for wage earners, craftpersons, and farmers (Jackson, 1984).

Perceptions of the Landscape

There are many ways of perceiving the landscape, all having value, but all quite different. Meinig (1979a) discusses the essence of several commonly held, but differing perceptions. It is important to recognize these, as we cannot help but place our own interpretation and biases on any scene we view.

The historical point of view is that taken in this study. This relies on the belief that what has happened in the past holds significance for us today and that the landscape presents "...a complex cumulative record of the work of nature and man" (Meinig, 1979a: 43) in a particular place. This cumulative record is seen as layers of history, either distinct or interwoven.

Closely related is the geographer's view, which comprehends landscape as environments, locations, and compositions. Ideology and history are interpreted within a larger geographical context. This view holds that we are so affected by the particular places in which we live, that it is not possible for an individual to be the same person in a different locality (Meinig, 1979a).

Some perceive landscapes in pragmatic terms, as means to increase personal wealth, or as sets of problems that need solving through design or science to increase efficiency, or as something to be conquered and manipulated for purely utilitarian purposes. Others view nature or the natural landscape as absolutely pristine and good, seeing humans as the despoiler of this perfection, while another will see human beings as caretakers of the earth, altering the land in productive and harmonious ways. Artists may see landscape in terms of line, texture, form, color, and balance, while scientists may think of landscape in terms of systems and energy exchanges.

Although Meinig realizes that our perceptions of landscape cannot be rigidly categorized, it is extremely helpful, even essential for the purposes of interpretation, to recognize how differently people can perceive the same scene.

The Value of Vernacular Landscape Studies for Historical Documentation

Many designed gardens throughout the world have received international attention, having been studied in great detail as to layout and plant selections, and the designers' philosophies. Important battlefields in the United States are preserved or commemorated (Lamme, 1989), but common landscapes associated with such places as a pioneer family ranch or an inner city barrio are rarely recognized as having much historical or scholarly value. Why is this? Stilgoe (1982) believes this is due to familiarity, which has made many components of vernacular landscapes invisible. Lewis (1979) states that a problem of snobbery exists when it comes to the study of vernacular landscapes. They are seen as trivial, and their study not to be pursued by serious scholars. Furthermore, the exploration of vernacular landscapes will not always yield tangible returns in the form of, for instance, valuable artifacts, and may not attract research money (Lister and Lister, 1990).

Meinig (1979c) states that vernacular landscapes are evocative and can convey certain widely shared feelings among members of a society. He uses the examples of a New England village, Main Street, and California Suburbia as distinct community types; vernacular cultural landscapes, that provide national models, are understood by the majority of U.S. citizens, and that are diffused throughout our country. These landscapes symbolize idealized versions of the "typical" American community, or as with California Suburbia, the "good life", abundance and leisure (Meinig, 1979c). If a group of Sonoran

desert dwellers is presented with an image of a mission sitting beside a perennial water source it is likely that this scene will evoke a similar understanding among the group. It might be said the vernacular cultural landscape binds us by providing a basis of commonality.

Many citizens of the United States are considered to have a limited understanding of the history of our country (Lamme, 1989). However, vernacular landscapes provide many cultural clues (Lewis, 1979) and a great deal of history can be learned by studying them. Because they are familiar they can provide people with personal associations with their historical significance (Lamme, 1989) and with the creators of the landscapes (Samuels, 1979). Through reflection on these landscapes we may gain insight to thoughts and ideas held in other times; what life may have been like in terms of work, technology, social structure, travel, and fashion. Major changes in the landscape are often wrought by events such as war and depression, or by inventions that significantly changed our economic base and lifestyle. The influx of a new people into a region brings new and different styles to the landscape; consider Chinatown in San Francisco, Germantown in Illinois, and the influence that east coast and mid-western Americans had on Hispanic Tucson with the arrival of the railroad. What impacts can a newly arrived culture have on the built landscape and on our society? For instance, did the Gray family of Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch adopt technologies traditional to the O'odhams and the Sonoran Mexicans, the two dominant cultural groups in the area? And vice-versa? What does it mean when idiosyncratic cultural styles begin to merge? Delving into

questions such as these and using the cultural landscape as a basis of investigation may reveal much regarding our history.

Typically, in the presentation of historic sites the focus is on the architecture of the buildings. However, to achieve a deeper understanding of the site and its importance within the context of local, regional, or national history we might also include information on how the space surrounding the building(s) was organized, explain where boundaries and roads existed, or point out any symbols of civic awareness that may exist, or have existed, such as ceremonial plantings and sculptures. Jackson (1984) believed spaces, boundaries, and objects in the landscape reflect particular social and religious attitudes held and Lewis (1979) contends that virtually all objects in the landscape reflect culture. He states that to understand the objects we must understand the people who made them, and that must be done by observation within a broad context (Lewis, 1979).

Reading a Landscape

Much like books, landscapes may be read. To do that does not require an academic background in some related field, but rather a sensitive and discerning eye. Meinig considers reading the landscape to be “a humane art, unrestricted to any profession, unbounded by any field, unlimited in its challenges and pleasures” (Meinig, 1979b: 236).

The study of a particular landscape may involve library research, but walking the land and viewing it closely is essential in order to note those objects, structures, and

patterns that reveal its story (Meinig, 1979b). Reading the landscape is an art which “must be done with imagination, using the mind and the emotions; it must lead to an integrated image” (Tuan, 1979).

Reading the vernacular landscape of Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch offers historical documentation of an important event in the history of the settlement of southern Arizona in the 19th and early 20th centuries. By noting, for example, the materials used for construction, the location of ranch houses in relation to water sources or well used roads, or the names given to various locations within the ranch lands we gain some insight as to how a family lived on the land and perhaps what motivations led people to settle in a place that many consider to be one of the most inhospitable regions in our country.

Landscape Preservation

In order for a landscape to be read and to convey a story it must be preserved to some degree. If the preservation of an historic site is handled by simply preserving a building while the context of the site is overlooked or even possibly destroyed, we are then forced to mentally fill in the space surrounding the building. However, we are rarely given little in the way of information or clues to accomplish this (Lamme, 1989). Lamme immediately states his bias that “... good landscape preservation is essential for our national well-being and advantageous for all our citizens” (1989: 8). He puts forth the idea that our historic landscapes symbolize national stability and provide us with national

confirmation, of belonging. Certainly this idea is easily understood when visiting the White House and touring the Rose Garden, but it may also hold true when visiting the site of a pioneer homesteading ranch. In order to evoke some meaning behind a site such as Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, we need to imagine the life led, the roads leading to the ranch, and the dreams held by the people who occupied it. We cannot do this by simply passing through a preserved structure, such as a house and viewing a table set with plastic foods, meticulously created to look as real as possible.

Our historic vernacular landscapes provide opportunities to explore our formative past, leading to a possible understanding of a national identity, and with the potential of creating better citizens (Lamme, 1989). We may see “*from the landscape to the values and pathos of a folk*” (Tuan, 1979: 93).

There are various methods of preserving landscapes. The method selected is generally based on the integrity of a site and the available resources for the project. This thesis does not deal with these issues, but rather the topic of interpreting a site once it has been preserved.

Preservation and interpretation go hand-in-hand. An interpretive process is a means of assisting visitors to read the landscape and to discover what meaning it may hold for them.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERPRETING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

Defining Interpretation

Interpretation is an “elective education” (Tilden, 1957: 3) that is based on solid research, but it goes beyond doling out factual information. It is the “work of revealing ... something of the beauty and wonder, the inspiration and spiritual meaning that lie behind what the visitor can with his senses perceive” (ibid., p. 4). It is accomplished “through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media...” (ibid., p. 8); a process which aims to provide visitors with the tools to explore and understand that which is being interpreted (O’Donnel, 1994). Interpreters attempt to reveal “the soul of things” (Tilden, 1957: 5).

An Overview of the History of Interpretation of Natural and Cultural Sites Within the United States

Following Tilden’s definition of interpretation we may understand that interpretation is part of how we communicate as humans. We have always been involved in interpreting events to one another. Song and dance are examples of globally used interpretive methods by which information has been passed from generation to generation.

Viewing interpretation in this way makes it difficult to write a brief history,

however it is possible to trace the modern profession of interpretation of the natural and cultural sites in the United States within a few pages. This profession began in the early 1900s with Enos A. Mills and his nature guiding on the trails of Long's Peak in what is now the Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado (Danton, 1995; 1997). Recounting his experiences in an autobiographical book Mills stated, "while a guide on Long's Peak I developed what may be called the poetic interpretation of the facts of nature" (Mills, 1932: 158). He was the first person to organize interpreters into a profession (Danton, 1997) and by 1915 had established standards for what he called "nature guiding" (Danton, 1995).

Mills was a crusader for wilderness. He tried to instill his love of nature into those people with whom he came into contact on Long's Peak through nature guiding and the establishment of his Trail School for children. With a strong belief that hands on, experiential learning was the superior method to educate adults and children about the natural world he encouraged those he led along the trails to follow their own interests. A "spirit of exploration" (Mills, 1932: 165) was encouraged. By using the senses of sight, smell, taste, and sound, along with reflection, imagination, and reasoning, Trail School participants explored the natural world and issues of cause and effect. Mills stated that he answered questions "with words, stories, demonstrations, excursions, and even books" (ibid., p. 185). Keeping in mind that people were there, above all else, for recreation he attempted to give information that would stir the imagination, rather than to fill them with dry facts.

Enos Mills was instrumental in establishing interpretation as a recognized profession (Danton, 1995). He had analyzed techniques of interpretation, established principles, and trained others in the art. By means of his influence the first official interpreter in the National Park Service was located at Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.

Qualities that Mills considered essential in a good nature guide (interpreter) were: versatility, a good knowledge of the outdoors, an eye for what is interesting, an understanding of human nature, a knowledge of science and the arts, a person who can deal with big principles, an inspirational nature, and the ability to be a “master of the art of suggestion” (Mills, 1932: 248). Thus, unofficial standards were established.

Enos Mills died in 1922 at the age of 52. At that time the National Park Service had become the “foremost organization using and promoting nature guides” (Danton, 1995: 2). The Park Service took the lead in investigating methods of combining recreation and education for the general public (Bryant and Atwood, 1932). The “general public” would necessarily include children, adults, and people with varied backgrounds, experience, and education.

National parks were seen as public places that might possibly provide excellent educational opportunities in the field of natural history, wherein the public could learn about the natural environment and the “laws of life” (Bryant and Atwood, 1932: 4). Stimulated by John Muir of the Sierra Club and Enos Mills’ Trail School, National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather began making plans for educational programs in the

parks as early as 1917 (Bryant and Atwood, 1932). A National Park Educational Committee, led by Dr. Charles D. Walcott of the Smithsonian Institution, was organized in 1918. The committee was made up of seventy-five members, which included university presidents and representatives of conservation organizations. This educational committee was merged into the National Parks Association in 1919.

By 1921 nature guiding, lectures, campfire talks, lantern slides, motion pictures, a library, museum exhibits, and flower shows were offered in Yosemite. The program was expanded to include other parks the following year. In 1924 Mather appointed Dr. Frank R. Oastler to investigate educational work in the parks and to establish general policies to guide the programs. The American Association of Museums also did a study of educational opportunities in the national parks with a plan of establishing natural history museums in the parks. In 1925 the Yosemite School of Field Natural History was founded to provide training for naturalists (Bryant and Atwood, 1932). The school included the Yosemite Junior Nature School which offered a six week outdoor program for children.

As a means to further stimulate the growth of educational activities in national parks the Secretary of the Interior appointed another committee in 1928 to do a thorough study of educational possibilities in the parks (Bryant and Atwood, 1932; Tilden, 1957). This committee was funded privately through the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Fund (Tilden, 1957). Field investigations in 1929 and 1930 resulted in a final report to the secretary that pointed out responsibilities and educational opportunities in history,

earth sciences, and life sciences. Following this, the branch of Research and Education was established in 1930 to coordinate educational work in the various parks.

It was hoped by those involved that new methods of adult education would be discovered in the implementation of the programs. Policies to be followed in the educational programs were: to provide simple and understandable interpretation of the major features in the parks using a combination of field trips, lectures, exhibits, and literature; that visitors would be encouraged to study things first hand; that interpreters be highly trained; and that the research program provide park personnel with up-to-date information. An emphasis was placed on providing an “inspirational method of teaching” (Bryant and Atwood, 1932: 10).

During the 1930s private money also helped to fund construction of museums in national parks. The Yavapai project at Grand Canyon, Arizona was initiated during this period. Scientists were invited by the Carnegie Institution of Washington to spend time at the site and to study how to interpret it to the public. The Yavapai Station, designed to provide views and to house exhibits with photographs and specimens was built. The emphasis in the design was “upon leading the visitor to see and interpret the thing itself from the best viewpoint rather than lead him away from it to see fragments or artificial explanations” (Bryant and Atwood, 1932: 29).

In spite of the emphasis placed on inspirational teaching and allowing people to interpret things for themselves, the educational programs offered in the parks were apparently rigidly structured. College style lectures were presented through the 1940s

with an emphasis on plants and animals of the particular parks (Danton, 1997). There still was not a formalized set of principles upon which to design programs and train interpreters. In the late 1940s Freeman Tilden, author and playwright, was hired by the National Park Service to study interpretation as it was progressing in the parks and whether interpreters were practicing with similar guiding philosophies (Tilden, 1957). From this study came the book Interpreting Our Heritage within which Tilden set down six principles to follow in any interpretive effort, be it “written or oral or projected by means of mechanical devices” (Tilden, 1957: 9). Tilden’s six principles were: 1) interpretation must relate to something within the visitor; 2) interpretation must include information, but it is more than information, it is a means of revealing something; 3) interpretation is an art and can be taught; 4) the aim of interpretation is to provoke thought and curiosity; 5) a goal of interpretation is to present a “whole” and must address the whole visitor; and 6) interpretation for children is different from that for adults and must be handled in a separate manner (Tilden, 1957). Tilden’s six principles, although not enunciated as such by Mills, seem to reflect Mills’ guiding philosophy as he took adults and children along the trails of Long’s Peak.

Tilden also emphasized the idea that people came to the parks to enjoy themselves, not to be educated. Yet some of the goals of interpretation are to produce in visitors curiosity, an understanding of the value of a particular site, and ultimately a desire to protect and preserve the site (Danton, 1997; Frank, 1997; Krug, 1997). It was, and is still felt that to accomplish these goals, visitors to important natural history or

cultural history sites must be allowed to explore the significance of the site on their own, discovering what is important to them as individuals, and what is important about the site to society as a whole. To reach these goals a variety of interpretive methods are used in an attempt to gain the interest of such a diverse group of visitors as “the general public”. The methods used by many in the field are based on ideas and principles set down by Mills and Tilden. Today, forty years after the first edition of Tilden’s book was published, it is still used in training interpreters and docents (Cochran, 1997; Danton, 1997). For landscape architects working at natural and cultural historical sites, an understanding of the principles and goals of interpretation could help foster better communication when working as a member of a team designing an interpretive program.

The Value of Landscape Interpretation

At many historic sites in the United States it has been the tradition to interpret mainly buildings and their contents, without placing the buildings in the physical setting of the period of significance (Friedman, 1994; Lewis, 1979). Such things as how the associated land was shaped and used are often ignored. The cultural landscape is as important to the whole as are the preserved pieces of furniture, photographs of the persons involved with the site, and the innumerable knick knacks so often found within a preserved building (Friedman, 1994). By including the landscape in the interpretation of a site, the meaning of the site is enlarged (Howett, 1994).

Samuels (1979) believes that the environment, individuals, subjects, objects,

context, and authors cannot be separated without damage to the whole. “Landscapes without contexts would be like books without pages and language. They might exist in the unbound imagination of some author, but they could not be read by anyone, including the author himself. Similarly, landscapes without authors would be like books without writers. They too might exist, but only as bindings filled with empty pages” (Samuels, 1979: 64-65). The same could be said of structures existing without their environmental context. Historians are interested in much more than simply the explanation of what happened; they explore why and look for patterns and connections, with a goal of attempting to gain an understanding of a people (Friedman, 1994). To begin to understand this we need to look at the whole, or as much of the whole as possible.

In some cases, there are no buildings associated with a site and it is the landscape that provides a focus for reflection upon events and people that make the site significant. Civil war battlefields are one example that would come to many minds. Howett (1994) discusses a Birmingham park that was the site of a brutal and significant interracial conflict during the 1960s. The park has been rehabilitated and designed in a way that commemorates the event and those people injured or killed, but also celebrates a spirit of reconciliation that followed the conflict. The fact that the interpretation of this event is outdoors in a community park where the conflict took place, rather than restricted to archives or indoor exhibits, makes the interpretive efforts accessible to all who visit the park.

Another example of landscape being that which is of critical importance to our

heritage is that of the New Mexico landscape painted by American artist Georgia O’Keeffe. In this case what is sought to be interpreted is the intangible; a relationship between artist and land (Cowley, 1994). Surely, to gain any insight into this relationship we must look at, think about, and experience, in some way, the land, as well as learn about the life of the artist.

Interpretation of cultural landscapes can be a complex and not necessarily well-defined task (Lamme, 1989; Luxenberg, 1994), however the opportunities for enrichment of our understanding of a site by including landscapes in the interpretive effort are great. Taylor talks about the “interpretive value” of the landscape, its ability to help us understand our social history, to promote a sense of place, and provide links with the past: “It enhances the feeling of participation --- we could have been involved in the making of a particular place” (1994: 17).

Methods of Interpreting Cultural Landscapes

Experimentation with different methods with which to interpret cultural landscapes is gaining attention. Once again, the National Park Service appears to be taking the lead, at least in the United States. A number of themes can be covered in landscape interpretation, for example settlement, exploration and pioneering, rural technology, transportation, communication, mining, spiritual and emotional relationships with the land, and continued occupancy over a period of generations. One of the major challenges to designers is to decipher the specific site’s meaning and significance using

physical forms and materials (Turner, 1983).

Generally speaking, methods typically used involve signage, markers, trails, guides, and restoration of sites to their form during the designated period of significance (Birnbaum, 1994; Lowenthal, 1979; Turner, 1983; see Appendix, Table 2). In the 1960s “living history” was a popular technique, and although some sites still exist where this takes place, there has been a move away from such literal presentations (Birnbaum and Page, 1994; Danton, 1997). In 1994 the National Park Service published an issue of Cultural Resources Management (CRM) that was devoted to the exploration of cultural landscape interpretation and ideas for methods that would give visitors accurate information, but at the same time allow them to experience sites in their own way, gleaning what they will, and coming to their own conclusions about events that took place on the site. There is strong support for the idea that less is more, with a goal of interpretation being to inspire the imagination (Birnbaum and Page, 1994).

The methods used in the interpretation of a particular site are necessarily dependent on the integrity of the site and its ability to convey its significant character (Birnbaum and Page, 1994). At the Kelly Ingram Park in Birmingham that was mentioned earlier, where a significant racial conflict took place in the 1960s, hardscape features and sculptures are used to interpret the event to park users (Howett, 1994). The hardscape features include a fountain with four divisions, a walk with African textile designs inlaid into the path, and the use of limestone blocks as a building material, which is traditionally used in Birmingham. These features symbolize spirituality, ethnicity, and

place. Sculptures that commemorate the physical violence, the resistance, and the spiritual strength of leaders in the movement for equality line the paths.

In this case it was decided the park should be completely renovated in order to meet several objectives: one, it was desired to maintain the grounds as a community park and to make it attractive to users; at the same time it was important to give physical expression to the events that took place in the park and to the fact that reconciliation occurred.

Ebey's Landing in the Pacific northwest is a rural vernacular landscape with a high level of integrity. It has been designated a National Historic Reserve even though people continue to live on and farm the land. Ebey's landing is valued, in part, for its rich visual resources that provide visitors to the site examples of architecture and land use patterns typical of early Anglo-american settlement in the Pacific northwest. Because the reserve is home to a community of people it was necessary to use interpretive methods that would be unobtrusive (Luxenberg, 1994). The selected methods include self-guided automobile tours and hiking trails. Informational kiosks, signage, and scenic overlooks that are provided along the trails.

Canyon de Chelly in northeastern Arizona is another rural landscape that is at the same time home to members of the Navajo Nation and managed by the National Park Service. The land has been inhabited by Native Americans for centuries and has a rich cultural history. Once again, sensitivity to the people who live in the canyon must be maintained while allowing visitors to the site. The Park Service initiated a program that

uses Navajo interpretive guides. This personal contact between visitors and the present inhabitants of the site, who also share a strong tie to the ancient inhabitants of the site, provides an intimate glimpse into the site and supports “a view of the canyon as a vibrant, dynamic, cultural system” (Travis, 1994: 22).

Turner (1983) discusses a method of interpretation that does not rely on the site having a high level of physical integrity and that is economical. She suggests that using quotes from individuals personally associated with a site is one method to communicate the emotional or spiritual significance of the site. She proposes that words combined with an image allows for “mental time travel” (Turner, 1983: 14). An example of this technique given by Turner is at the National Park Service site, Franklin Court, in Philadelphia. Since little is physically left of the site, the park service constructed an outline or frame of the main structure. In the kitchen portion the following quote from a letter written by Deborah Franklin to her husband is inscribed in the pavement: “Yesterday good Mr. Rhodes, his son Thomas Franklin and wife drank tea with us. We had the best buckwheat cakes that I ever made” (Turner, 1983: 14). Another example given by Turner is that of a quotation from a letter regarding a 1796 orchard in New Orleans. The letter was written by the owner of the orchard to his wife: “I walked all about it (the orchard) and everywhere I found something which brought back your presence, or something that I had created ... I found all my fruit trees in good shape, all the grafts which I had made are bearing, vines covered with grapes; it has more fruit than leaves. I am persuaded that one could count more than six thousand bunches of grapes on

it” (Turner, 1983: 15). Turner suggests the use of quotes invites the use of imagination, one of the goals of interpretation.

Interpretation of a site is just that — interpretation. The success of an interpretive program depends in large part on the skill of the people who are designing it. The concept of cultural landscapes is still new and elusive to many professionals and it can be intimidating to attempt to present complex and long standing relationships between humans and the land in an understandable form (Luxenberg, 1994). It is useful to consider some of the positive and negative consequences associated with interpreting historic landscapes.

Problems Associated with Interpreting Historic Landscapes

Contrivance, bad history, interruption of natural processes, and the imposition of the interpreter’s values are recognized problems associated with interpretation (Birnbaum and Page, 1994; Lowenthal, 1979). Probably the greatest problem lies in the potential for falsifying or destroying the real past (Lowenthal, 1979). Historic conditions cannot be exactly duplicated. We have predilections for celebrating what is noble and may play down what is not, with the possibility of creating sanitized versions of the past, or “bad history”; that is, presenting as fact something that never existed (Friedman, 1994).

When dealing with sites having layers of information, spanning centuries, it can be difficult to decide which layers to preserve and interpret and which to sacrifice. There

is a common assumption that the oldest layer has the greatest value, which is not necessarily the case (Lowenthal, 1979). Historic truth may be difficult to ferret out, being complex and a bit “fuzzy”. “The exercise of imagination is often the only hope of interpreting the complexity of a multiple overlay landscape to visitors” (Jacques, 1994: 9).

The accouterments of interpretation and the need to provide restrooms and parking lots for visitors can be distracting and negatively impact the physical site or the feeling associated with it (Lucy and Pepper, 1993). In the case of the development of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt home and library, a private residence became a public facility which required a change in the spatial organization to accommodate large numbers of visitors (Lucy and Pepper, 1993). This is thought to have changed the overall feeling of the site and weakened the impact of the grand entrance.

Rabinowitz complains that plaques and “wayside graphic panels” have “defaced American historical sites”(Rabinowitz, 1994: 10), aside from being what he considers boring. It is almost universally accepted by those professionals in the interpretive field that signs and plaques are not read to the degree that one would hope. However, this idea was contested by McManus (1989) who studied how museum visitors interacted with presented text in the British Museum of Natural History. Using visual observation plus auditory recordings she studied 1,571 individuals in 641 groups at five exhibits. She discovered that a high number of people did read the text. In many cases it was read aloud by one person to the group. Often the text was discussed. McManus pointed out

that these discoveries could not have been made by a simple visual observation. More studies of this nature could help determine whether signage is an acceptable method to use.

Advantages to Interpreting Cultural Landscapes

Awareness of the difficulties and problems involved with interpreting cultural landscapes is necessary in order to continue striving for improvement. It is equally necessary to be knowledgeable of the many advantages that this type of interpretation carries.

First and foremost, it is a means of educating ourselves about our own heritage (Birnbaum and Page, 1994; Lamme, 1989). Through preservation and interpretation of our cultural landscapes, both vernacular and designed, we may instill a sense of pride in our heritage and a sense of stewardship toward these landscapes. In the case of landscapes that symbolize painful events such as slavery, civil rights clashes, or imprisonment of innocent people, as with the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the landscape could give us a physical and understandable focus upon which to reflect, and perhaps we can avoid similar mistakes in the future (Howett, 1994).

There is obvious economic gain for communities with significant historic landscapes in the form of tourism (Lamme, 1989). This creates a strong incentive for preservation.

It has been discussed how historical landscape interpretation can destroy the real

past and create bad history. However, the potential also exists to clarify issues and free us from misconceptions (Lowenthal, 1979).

Summary

Many scholars and professionals involved with interpreting historic sites maintain that cultural landscapes in general, but especially vernacular cultural landscapes have been woefully ignored. However, it is believed that including the cultural landscape in the interpretive efforts has great potential for enriching the visitors' experiences of the sites.

Over the seventy-five or so years the National Park Service has been studying and applying interpretive methods to sites under their stewardship much information has been generated regarding associated problems and opportunities. Through trial and error methods have been refined, while new methods are continually sought and experimented with.

The quality of an interpretive program is not necessarily dependent on a well-funded budget or on the site maintaining a high degree of physical integrity. What is essential is that the program be developed from solid, scholarly research and that principles set down by Mills and Tilden be followed in the presentation of the information.

If, during the design stages the idea that less is more is kept in mind, it may be easier to avoid some of the recognized pitfalls of historical interpretation, such as

contrivance or imposition of the interpreters' values. At the same time, visitors may be encouraged to use their imagination, apply their knowledge, and come to their own conclusions regarding a site -- as there is never only one interpretation or one truth.

In the chapters that follow the case study will be introduced and a history of cattle ranching in southern Arizona presented. Finally, synthesizing the information gained from readings, site visits, and interviews, recommendations for interpreting the cultural landscape of Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch are offered.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CASE STUDY: BLANKENSHIP/DOS LOMITAS RANCH

Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch and the Surrounding Area

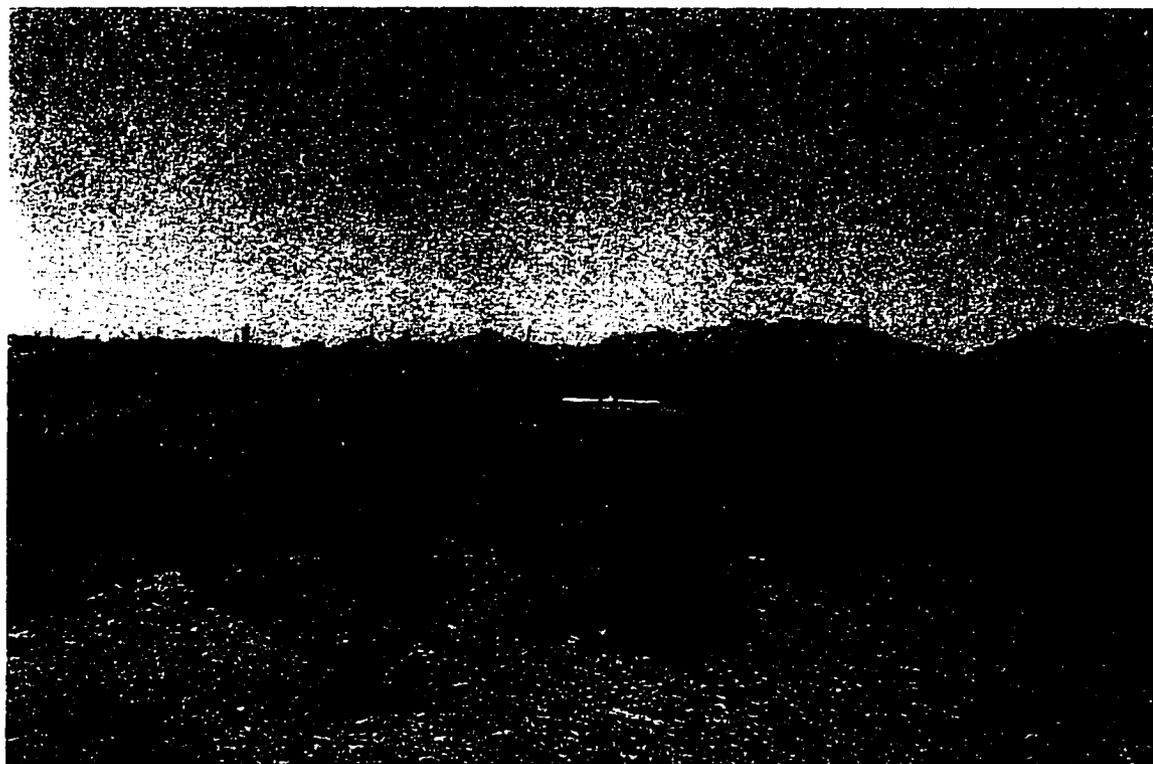
Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch was established around 1912 by Donald Blankenship who had dug some wells, built a house, and brought several hundred head of cattle to the area (Greene, 1977). In this manner he laid claim to the water rights which he subsequently sold, along with his cattle and house, to Robert and Sallie Gray in 1919 (see Figure 2). Both Robert and Sallie Gray had worked in the cattle business in Texas and had also ranched near San Simon, Arizona (Schaus, 1964).

By 1942 Robert Gray and his sons were running cattle over five hundred sections (five hundred square miles) of desert land that included ranch houses, line camps, and wells throughout (Greene, 1977; see Figure 3). Most of the Gray enterprise was contained within what is now national monument land. Gray died in 1962 but his sons continued ranching until 1976 when the last Gray son died.

For those familiar with the landscape it appears to be an unlikely place to establish a cattle ranching business. The weather is inhospitable, with summer temperatures commonly going above 100 degrees F. and rainfall is both scant and unreliable. Natural water sources are scarce and widely scattered. Many of the water sources that do exist are ephemeral, that is, they exist on a seasonal basis. Cattle ranching

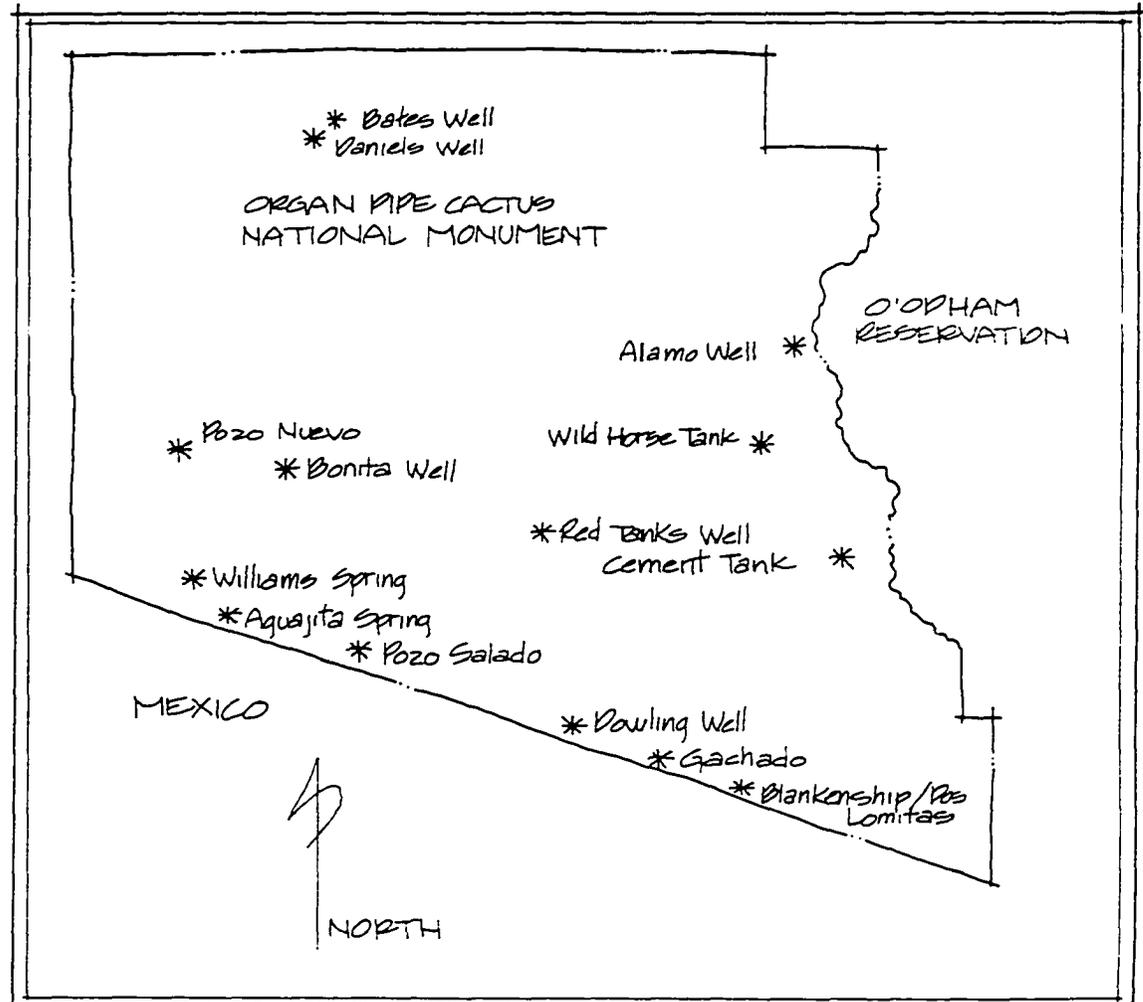
on this land required a large land base to run a profitable business. According to one study done in the 1940s the land contained within Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument could support three head of cattle per section (square mile), although another report stated the land could support only two head per section (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1976).

FIGURE 2
PHOTOGRAPH OF THE BLANKENSHIP/DOS LOMITAS RANCH
IN ITS SETTING OF THE SONORAN DESERT



Singer, 1996

FIGURE 3
LOCATION OF SITES CLAIMED BY THE GRAY FAMILY



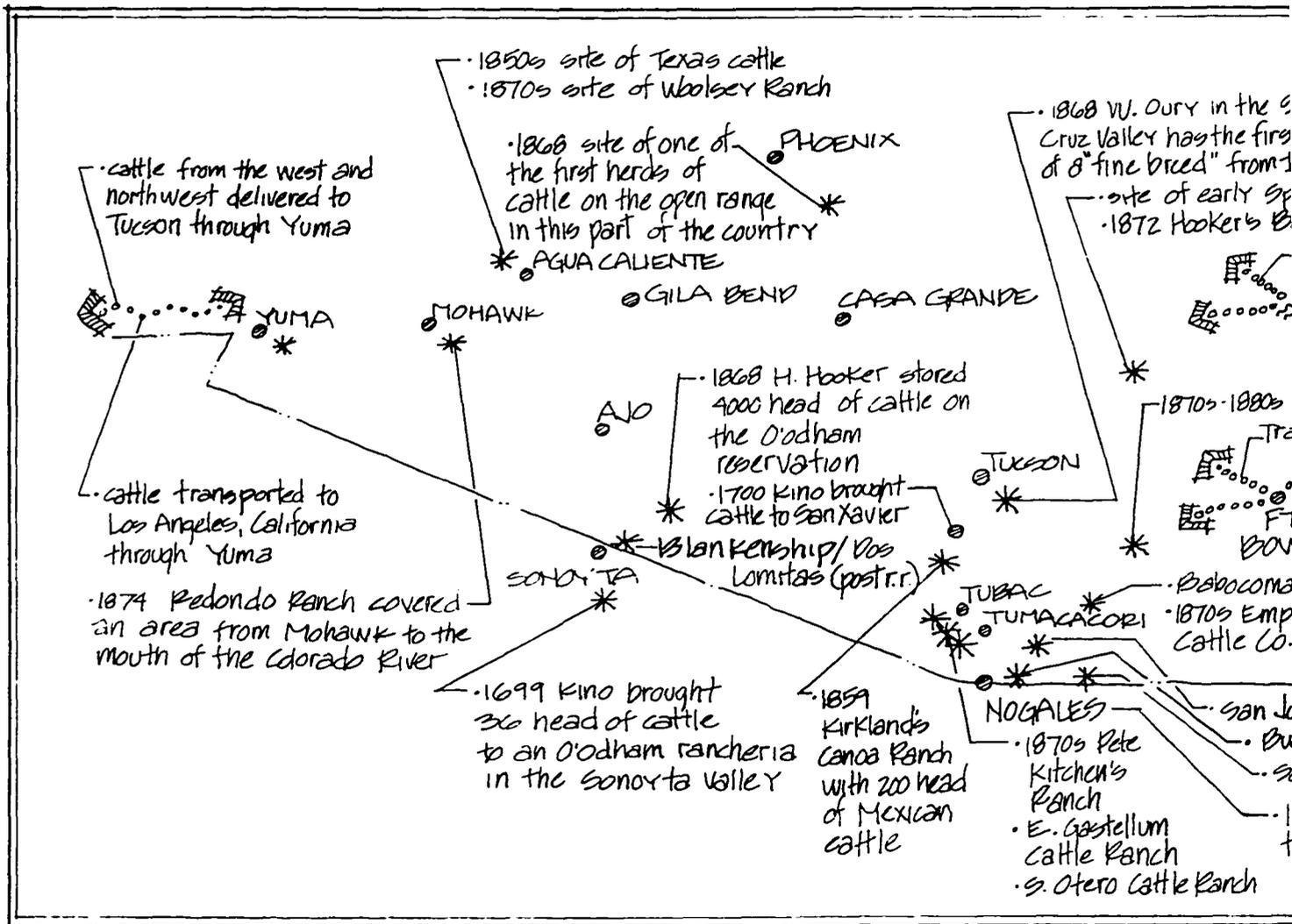
Adapted from Singer and Tincup, 1997

Ranching on a small level had been occurring in the region for two centuries by the time the Grays arrived (Lumholtz, 1912; see Figure 4). Padre Eusebio Kino had brought a small number of cattle to the Sonoyta area in 1698. Carl Lumholtz (1912) who spent time in the Altar District in western Sonora and southern Arizona where the Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch lies (see Figures 5 and 6), spoke with an O'odham woman who claimed to have cattle and horses that were descendants of the stock held by Spanish monks of Padre Kino's time.

Although water was scarce it was available. The water of the Sonoyta River was known to be sweet and sparkling (Lumholtz, 1912) and the area had various springs, including the now well-known Quitobaquito Spring, as well as tinajas, which are natural depressions formed in rock that collect and hold rain water. The tinajas are ephemeral sources of water and the Sonoyta River itself is shallow and runs for approximately eleven miles before disappearing beneath the ground. For the early 20th century inhabitants of the area who were raising cattle this did not appear to present a problem as the animals were said to exist primarily on cholla pelon (*Opuntia mamillata*), a succulent and thornless cactus that was said to provide food and water. Lumholtz (1912: 153) stated that "all who live in the desert region assert that there are cattle which do not drink unless it rains".

FIGURE 4

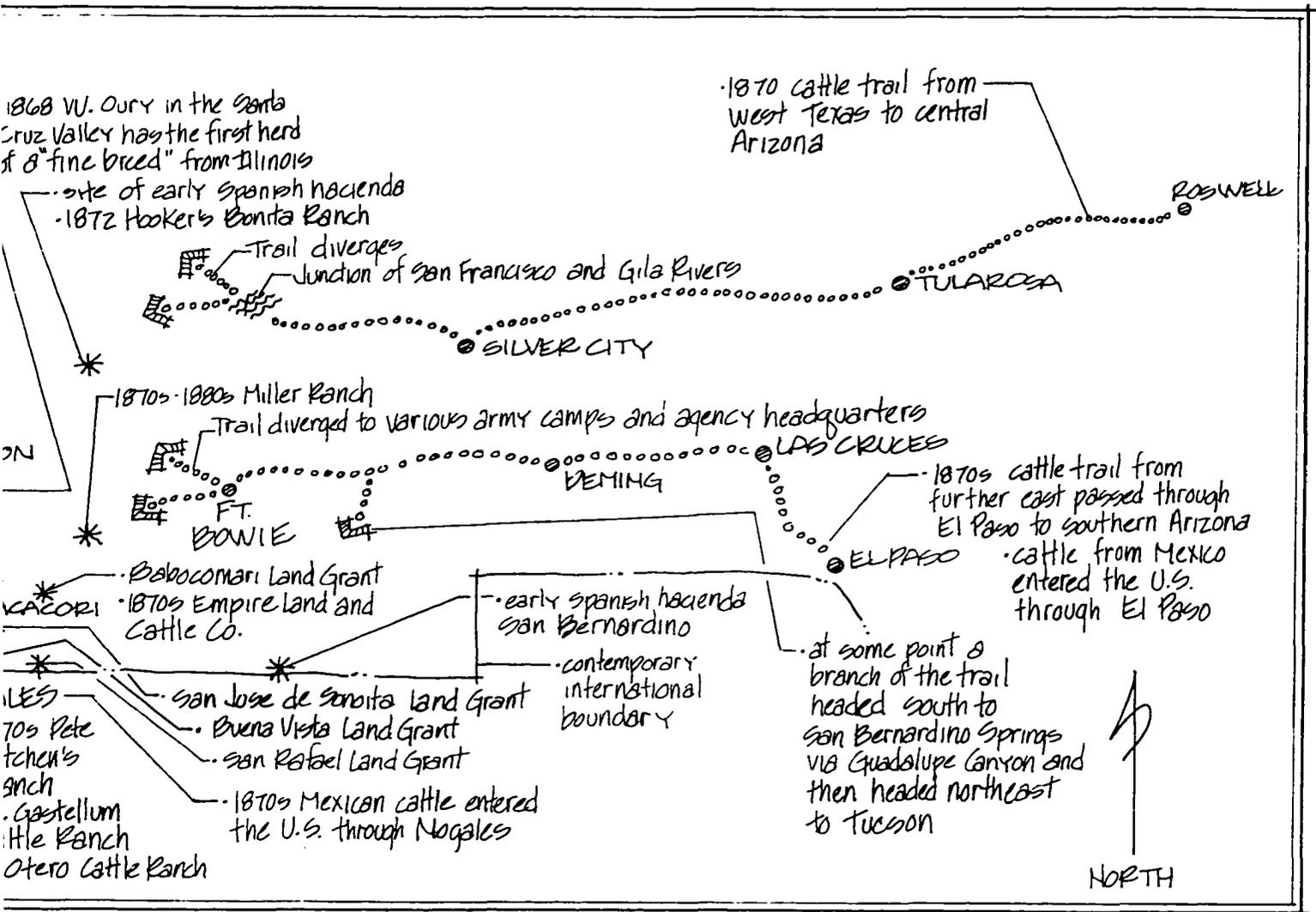
DIAGRAM INDICATING MANY PRE-RAI
IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA WITH MAJOR



Sources consulted for the preparation of this diagram
Hoy, 1990; Map of Mexican Land Grants of Eastern S

FIGURE 4

MAP OF MANY PRE-RAILROAD CATTLE RANCHES
AND MAJOR CATTLE ROUTES NOTED



variation of this diagram: De Long, 1905; Haskett, 1935; and Grants of Eastern Santa Cruz County; Roskrige, 1883.

FIGURE 5

CONTEMPORARY REGIONAL

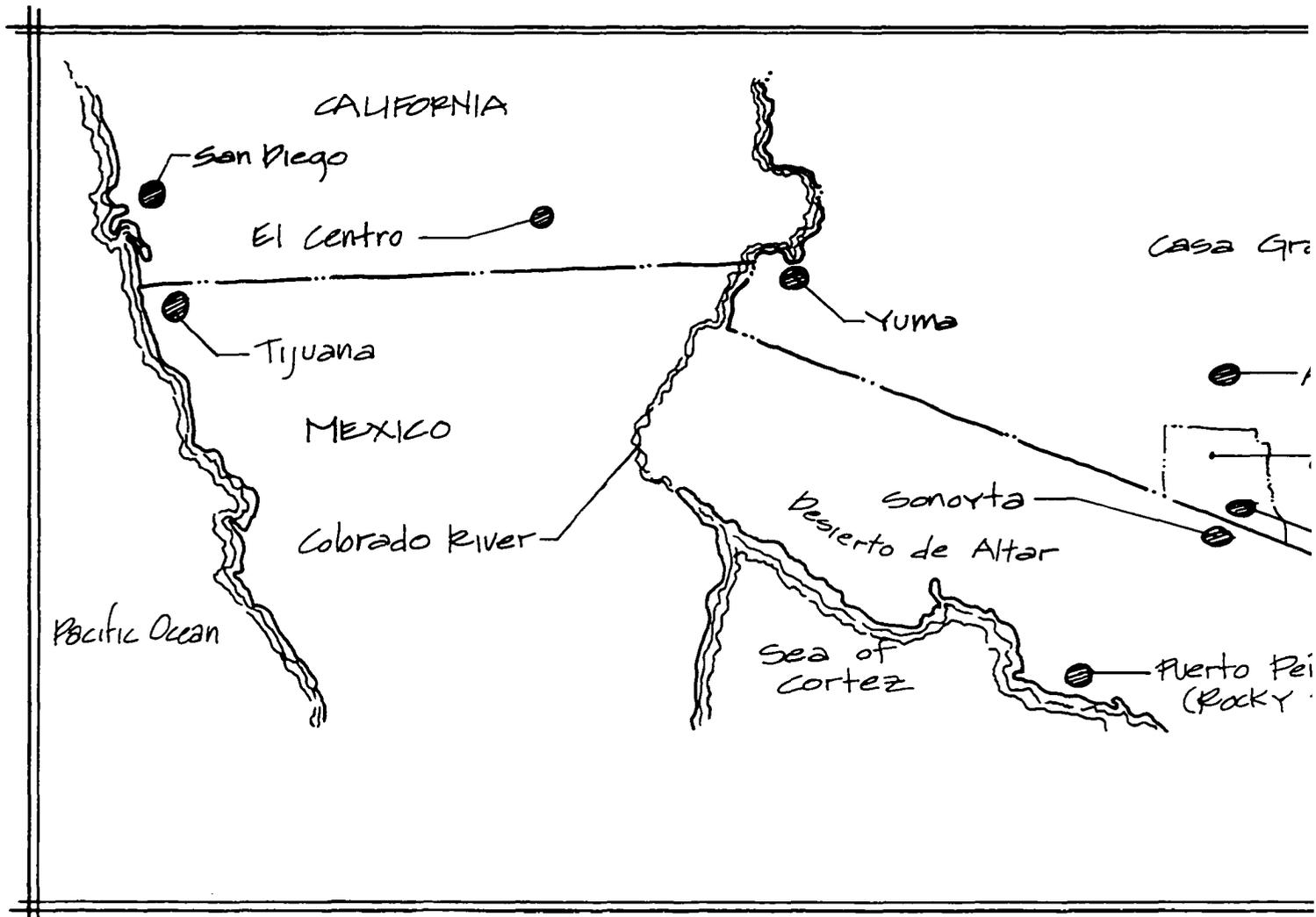


FIGURE 5

PORARY REGIONAL MAP

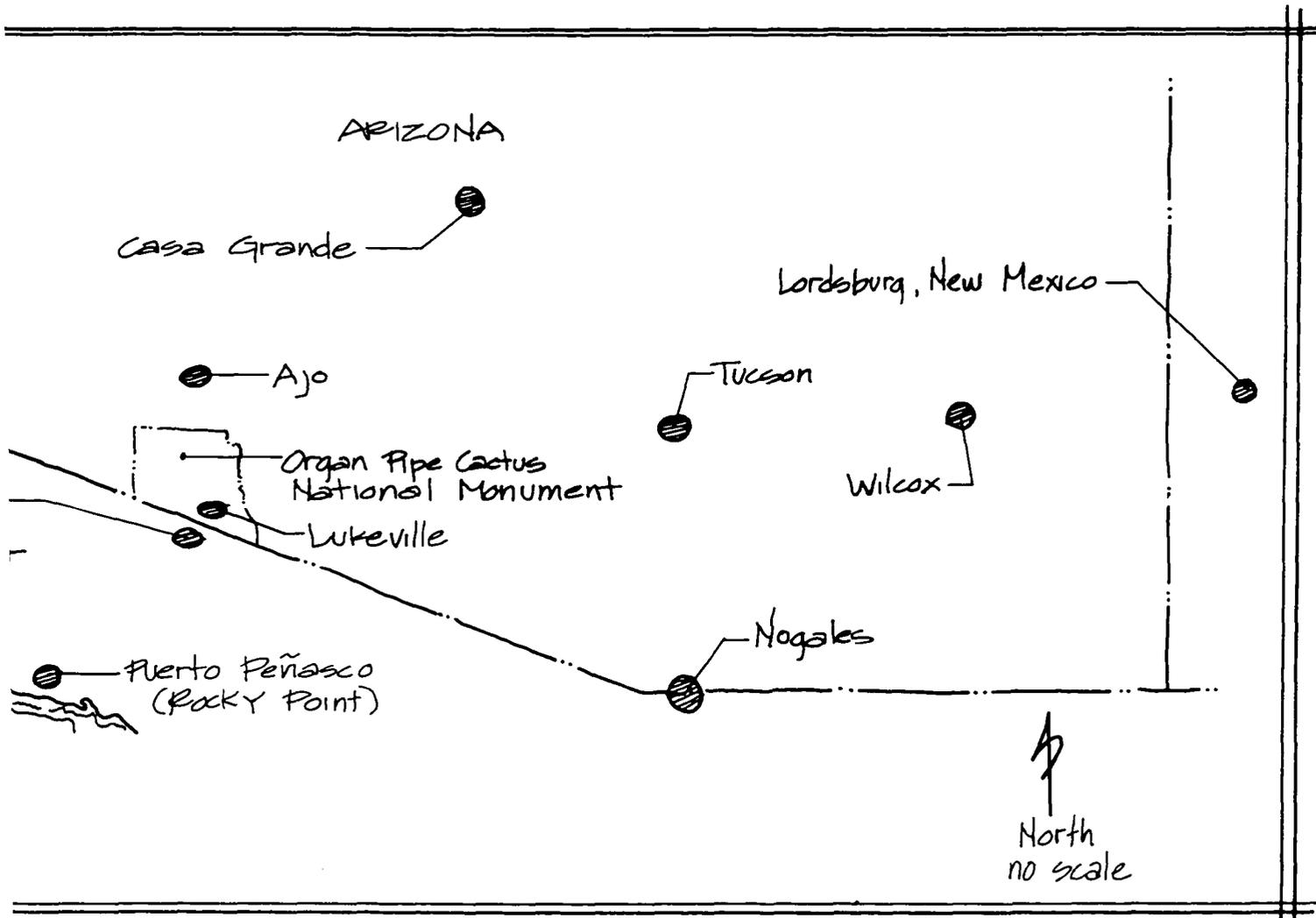
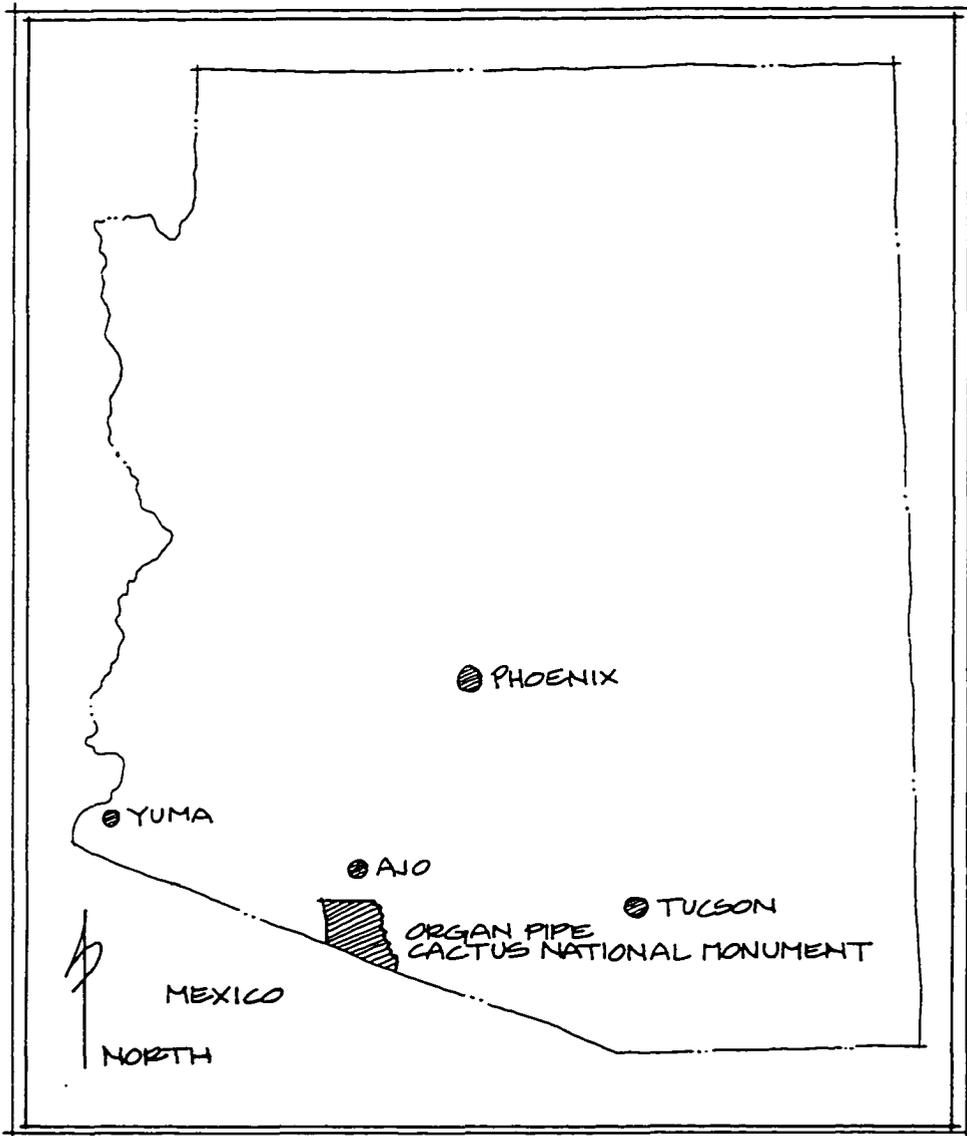


FIGURE 6
LOCATION OF ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NATIONAL MONUMENT
IN ARIZONA



The general area was probably most attractive to Spaniards and other foreign settlers because of its mineral deposits and placer gold. Minas de Plata de Ajo (Silver Mines of Ajo) appeared on Spanish maps as early as 1750 (Gaetjens, 1991). The Arizona Mining and Trading Company was formed in 1854 in the town of Ajo where copper was mined. The mine lost money due to a shipping disaster and had to close, but large scale mining has continued in Ajo since the 1890s (Gaetjens, 1991). The Ajo area also provided native Americans with red copper oxide which was used for body paint.

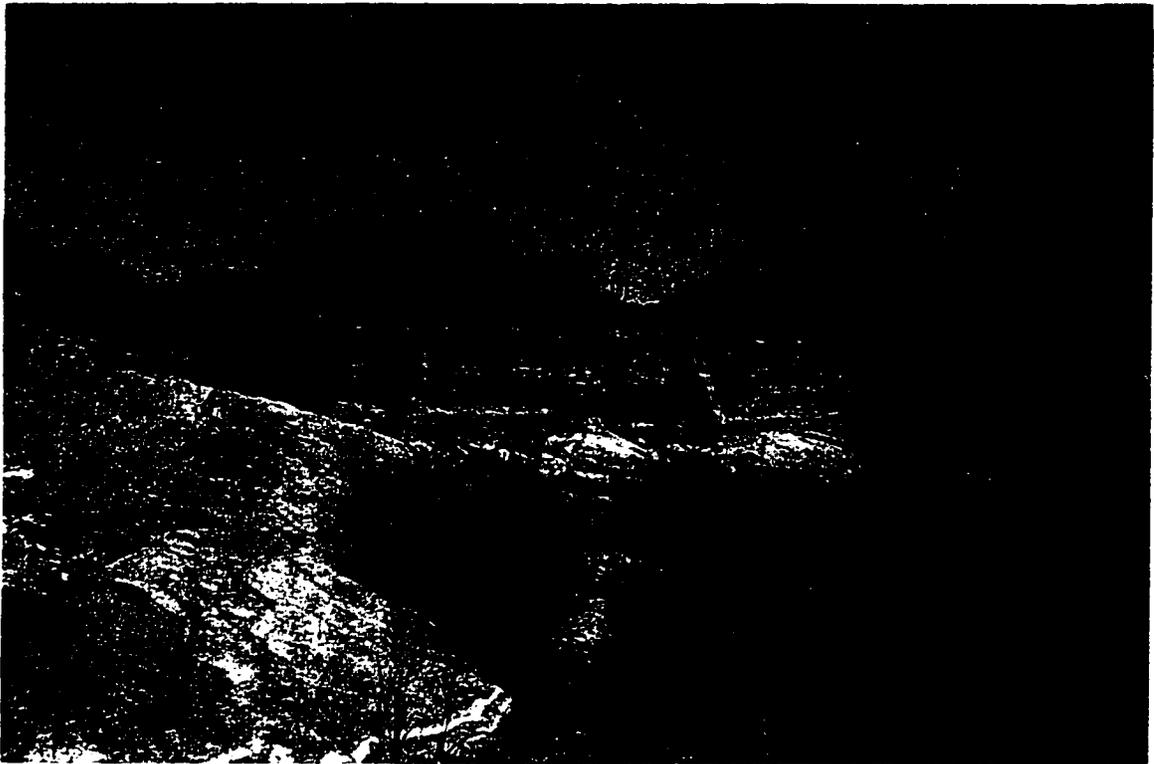
Although Donald Blankenship's and Robert's and Sallie Gray's motivations for selecting this particular site for a cattle ranch are unknown by this author, the area may have appeared to offer opportunities for grazing on land that was virtually free and to have had a relatively close market in the town of Ajo. By the time the Grays arrived the Cornelia Copper Company had been formed in Ajo. The town was serviced by a rail spur that ran from Gila Bend, and had a school, hospital, bank, water, and sewage (Gaetjens, 1991).

The Gray Style of Ranching

Robert Gray and his sons eventually ran over one thousand head of cattle on the land (U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1976). The cattle roamed freely, having no fenced boundaries; a style known as open range ranching. Water was provided for cattle in the natural tinajas, the natural springs, constructed wells, and in other constructed water preserving structures such as repesos (earthen reservoirs) and Donald Blankenship's

ingenious cement tank, built ca. 1915 (see Figure 7). The native desert vegetation provided food for the cattle (Duncklee, 1994; Rutman, 1996; Warren and Anderson, 1987).

FIGURE 7
PHOTOGRAPH OF "CEMENT TANK"



Singer, 1996

The natural terrain of the area is extremely rugged, and the freely roaming cattle were widespread. As an adaptation to these conditions, rather than using the traditional system of roundups during branding season or when animals were collected for sale, Gray developed a trap system at the corrals. In search of water the cattle would enter a corral where a water trough was located. Trigger gates, operated by cowboys, were used that allowed cattle to enter the corral, but not exit. The process of trapping the animals was described in a 1964 issue of Arizona Cattlelog in an article commemorating Robert Gray: "From a sort of sentry box with an observation port in the door, and each box some distance away from the corral, when the cattle came in to drink at night, a cowboy would pull a rope and the gate would close. The next morning the calves would be branded, and if any of the older cows or steers were to be sold, they would be roped too. Then the cattle would be released and probably not be seen again for months. This type of operation went on the year round" (Schaus, 1964: 50).

As mentioned earlier cattle fed on the natural vegetation. Lumholtz (1912) reported seeing cows eating the leaves of ironwood trees (*Olneya tesota*) in the Altar District and an early 20th century miner in Ajo thought jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*), common in the area, had potential for cattle feed. Cholla (*Opuntia sp.*) was abundant and provided food, although Duncklee (1994) pointed out that in his ranching experience the spines could cause considerable internal damage to the animals. A number of perennial and annual shrubs and grasses are native to the land and were especially abundant in the riparian areas (Rutman, 1996; Warren and Anderson, 1987).

Desert lands have a limited carrying capacity, that is, the acres required to support one cow is relatively high. The Grays managed to ranch successfully by spreading their operation, which included the many developed water sources, corrals, and line camps, over a large land base (see Figure 3). Their trap system of rounding up cattle, rather than the traditional method of herding cattle on horseback, helped to keep the overhead costs to a minimum.

Local materials and local building technologies were used to construct corrals and living quarters. The native trees, mesquite (*Prosopis sp.*) and palo verde (*Cercidium sp.*) provided wood for building corrals. The corrals, which are still standing, have a very rustic appearance (see Figure 8). The same type of corral construction can be seen, as of this writing, on O'odham lands from Highway 86 between Tucson and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Around 1920 Robert and Sallie Gray built the first of the Gray ranch houses out of adobe brick and mesquite trunks and branches which were used for framing the roof and porch (see Figure 9). This was and still is a technology widely used in northern Mexico. The bricks are thick and act as good insulation against heat and cold and could often be manufactured on site. Considering the location of the ranch, it seems probable that sharing of information with regard to potential uses of local materials and styles of construction occurred between the nearby O'odham people, the Mexican agriculturists in Sonoyta, and Anglo-american settlers.

FIGURE 8
PHOTOGRAPH OF THE CORRAL AND WINDMILL AT
BLANKENSHIP/DOS LOMITAS RANCH



Singer, 1996

FIGURE 9
PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ADOBE HOUSE AND RAMADA AT
BLANKENSHIP/DOS LOMITAS RANCH



Singer, 1996

CHAPTER SIX
A SHORT HISTORY OF EARLY CATTLE RANCHING
IN SOUTHERN ARIZONA

1540 - 1850s

As the case study is a pioneer cattle ranch located in the southwest portion of Arizona an inquiry into the history of cattle ranching in the southwestern United States provides the context for understanding and addressing issues and opportunities associated with interpretation of the landscape of the site.

Haskett (1935) identified two main periods of cattle raising in Arizona: the Spanish-Mexican Period lasting from 1700 to the year of Mexican independence from Spain in 1822, and the American Period beginning in 1872 with Colonel Hooker's establishment of Sierra Bonita Ranch in Sulphur Springs Valley. The discontinuity arose because of what Haskett (1935: 3) called "Apache depredations".

Coronado brought the first cattle into what is now Arizona in 1540 in order to supply his expedition with beef, however none of the cattle remained once those Spaniards left. It was not until Padre Eusebio Kino began establishing missions in northern Mexico and (now) southern Arizona in the late 1600s and early 1700s that cattle became a permanent feature of the desert landscape (Haskett, 1935). The Spaniards that followed Kino established large haciendas in the desert grasslands of what was at the time northern Mexico (see Figure 4) and brought about profound changes in the cultural

and natural landscapes of the area with their domesticated livestock, European technologies and systems of land tenure, and Old World food crops (Bahre and Bradbury, 1978).

Mexico gained independence from Spanish rule in 1822. This however, left the area of what is now southern Arizona somewhat unprotected. Apache incursions into settlements were frequent and few people were successful in maintaining herds of cattle. Range cattle from the large Spanish haciendas were either killed or became feral.

During the mid 19th century cattle were brought into the area by the gold seeking 49ers en route to California. The trail was rigorous and some cattle were abandoned or sold along the way. In 1851 California experienced a severe drought which increased the need for imported beef in order to feed its growing population. Cattle were thus driven to California from Texas and New Mexico. One trail across southern Arizona passed through Tubac, continued on to Tucson, and from there to the Gila River, Fort Yuma, and on to California (Haskett, 1935; see Figure 4). Again, cattle were sold along the way. The route was sparsely populated with Mexicans, O'odhams, a few white settlers, and Apaches.

1850s - 1890s

The movement of Anglo-americans into southern Arizona began in earnest following the Gadsden Purchase of 1853-54. The newly acquired land was good for agriculture and grazing, and rich in mineral deposits. Haskett (1935: 17) described it as

“a cattleman’s paradise”, that promised year round open grazing on abundant grasslands. The presence of Apaches, however, made settlement difficult, if not impossible. Subsequently the War Department took up a campaign against them. Eventually fourteen army posts with six thousand men were located in Arizona. The market for beef was growing and the resources of Arizona were highly promoted by army personnel which drew more settlers into the region. The Apaches were subdued in the early 1870s which gave rise to something of a free-for-all with regard to resources in the territory of Arizona.

Many of the pioneers were ill-informed of the realities of the desert having perceptions of the landscape “based predominantly on expectations, perceptions, and experiences in temperate, forest landscapes of the eastern, northeastern, upper midwestern, and northwestern United States and in the Great Plains of mid-America” (Zube, 1982: 31). The grasslands were said to be “inexhaustible” and able to support 7 ½ million head of cattle (Wagoner, 1961). The native grasses were promoted as having fattening qualities and to produce juicy, tender meat. A romantic image of an easy life was presented and laws regarding land and water were lax. In his third edition of Resources of Arizona Patrick Hamilton (1884: 259) wrote that there was no need to stockpile hay or build barns or corrals “... the owner can sit under the shade of his comfortable hacienda and see his herds thrive and increase winter and summer”. He continued: “The prime consideration for the stockman here is the water supply. Once he has secured a right to a stream or spring he need give himself no trouble about the range.

The ownership to the first will give him entire control of the second, and he will virtually be monarch of all he surveys, and will escape all entangling alliances with other cattle-kings” (Hamilton, 1884: 262).

During the 1870s and 1880s the public domain land of Arizona was unregulated. It was “understood” that appropriation of water gave a person the rights over the surrounding range lands (Wagoner, 1961) and site selection for cattle ranching depended on the availability of water. This point has been emphasized in other writings as well. Haskett (1935: 26) stated, “At the time (1870s - 1880s) it was the unwritten law of the range that he who first watered his stock at a stream, spring, or water hole had the prior and exclusive right to its use thereafter together with such adjoining range lands as he could use”. This attracted many emigrant ranchers from Texas who were angered by new land laws in that state that required leasing public lands for a small fee.

The numbers of cattle in Arizona burgeoned in the 1870s through the 1880s. From the U.S. census the following numbers of cattle were reported (Haskett, 1935: 41):

1870 - 37,694 head

1880 - 35,827 head

1890 - 263, 248 head

1891 - 720, 941 head

These were the numbers on the tax rolls, however Wagoner (1961: 25) wrote that “it is the opinion of men who understood the methods of listing property in those days that there were at least twice that number on the grasslands”.

The grasslands were rich, but certainly not inexhaustible, and by 1885 the ranges were deteriorating due to a lack of management (Haskett, 1935). At approximately the same time this was occurring, railroads had been completed that opened up more of the southwestern territory to development and allowed ranchers to ship beef to more distant markets (Bahre and Bradbury, 1978; Haskett, 1935). Also, by the mid 1880s the best range lands in the southern part of Arizona were taken and the flow of cattle ranchers slowed (Haskett, 1935).

In 1891 a drought hit Arizona that lasted two years. Cattle losses were said to be from fifty percent to seventy-five percent (Haskett, 1935). This had a sobering effect on the ranchers and a change was made from less reliance on open range grazing to cattle management using wells, windmills, and barbed wire (Wagoner, 1961; Wyllys, 1950).

During the 1890s a conservation movement took hold in the United States. Federal regulations began to be created that affected ranchers using public lands (Wyllys, 1950). This angered cattle ranchers and an antagonistic relationship between ranchers and the federal government began that continues to some extent today (American Forestry, 1916; Schaus, 1964).

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Cultural landscapes are a form of historical documentation. Vernacular cultural landscapes can provide understandable and tangible foci for people to reflect upon when visiting sites that deal with American history. However, many of our interpreted historic sites do not present the accompanying landscape in a complete or intelligible way. At some sites the cultural landscape has been completely ignored.

Many topics can be explored in cultural landscape studies, but in order for the landscape to tell a story it must be interpreted. Various methods exist for interpretation in general and have also been applied to the interpretation of landscapes. New methods are also being investigated for cultural landscape interpretation. The National Park Service has been the leading organization in the United States that has studied and experimented with interpretation of natural and cultural histories. Interpreting cultural landscapes to a broad public audience is still a relatively new endeavor and is, in some ways, still in the experimental stage.

There are both advantages and disadvantages involved with interpreting historic cultural landscapes. Poorly planned interpretive programs can result in the creation of bad history, sanitized versions of what happened, or other misleading presentations. On the other hand, through well-planned interpretation based on scholarly research and

utilizing sensitive interpretive methods it is possible to clarify historical events and to achieve a deeper understanding of ourselves and of how our country was shaped.

Cattle ranching in the southwest had a profound affect on the natural and cultural landscapes of the region. A sizeable migration of Anglo-American ranchers into the desert grasslands occurred during the 19th century. This migration forever changed the landscape of the Sonoran desert in southern Arizona.

The establishment of the Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch and the Gray family ranching operation occurred approximately thirty years after the greatest movement of ranchers into the southwest. Nevertheless, the ranch remains as a later example of a pioneer ranching experience and symbolizes this historically important migration of cattle ranchers into Arizona.

Findings

Visits to the eight sites that included interpretive centers, museums, and public spaces provided a good sample of interpretive techniques used by a variety of agencies. Similar methods were found to be used at most sites. There is a heavy reliance on signage at all the sites visited. Interpretive methods employed for children were often designed to be hands-on or interactive.

At most of these sites the cultural landscape was interpreted to some degree, if appropriate, albeit minimally. However, a more inclusive approach to the cultural landscapes would have enhanced the interpretations and provided clues to visitors on

topics such as why people chose a particular spot to inhabit, how they lived in the land, what adaptations were required to adjust to life in a particular environment, if they had any emotional or spiritual feelings toward the land, and why these issues are important to us today.

While talking with the chief interpreter of one site it was discovered that the cultural landscape was a crucial part of the story. Unfortunately, it was not dealt with in even a minimal way. In typical fashion, visitors to this site are given a tour of a home and a few other architectural features on nicely maintained grounds.

In the interviews with professional interpreters an interest in cultural landscapes was demonstrated. Several of these professionals would like to augment their interpretive efforts by including more information about human/land relationships, but felt that financial limitations and problems with vandalism were obstacles. It is possible however, that some of the interpretive methods discussed in this thesis could be effectively employed for very low costs.

Significance of the Cultural Landscape of the Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch

Cattle ranching in Arizona is a legacy of early 18th century Spaniards who inhabited the lands of northern Mexico. The presence of large herds of cattle brought about a radical change in the natural and cultural landscapes of what is today southern Arizona and has had a profound affect on Arizona's economy. When the Spaniards left the area in the early 1800s, Mexicans and Anglo-americans moved into the lands and

established ranches in the middle and latter years of the 19th century. Although established in the early 20th century Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch is a symbol and relic of the westward expansion of Anglo-american cattle ranchers into the arid southwest.

As has been demonstrated throughout the southwestern deserts, cattle ranching was and in some parts still is a viable means of making a living. The environmental costs have been great, however. The grasslands have been irrevocably damaged. Duncklee (1994: 158) states “Perhaps we must accept that the desert grassland is a vegetation transition zone of the past. No man or woman alive can remember the true desert grassland”. The destruction of the grasslands has been documented by means of photographic comparisons (Bahre and Bradbury, 1978; Warren and Anderson, 1987) and by comparing what exists today with written descriptions of the land by early pioneers and explorers.

The level and significance of the damage resulting from the presence of large herds of cattle on the lands that became Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument were heatedly debated at the time the monument was established and continued throughout the period during which the Grays maintained their animals (Frank, 1997; U.S. Dept. Of the Interior, 1976).

Some persons also believe the cattle competed with the native wildlife for scarce food and water resources (Frank, 1997). However, no studies have been completed within the monument that deal specifically with this issue. Droughts are relatively

common in the Sonoran desert which would intensify the competition between introduced cattle and native wildlife during those exceptionally dry periods.

Specific documented environmental effects of grazing on monument lands are: reduction of native grass cover creating an opening for the establishment of invasive weedy species; destruction of certain plant species due to selective grazing by cattle, and destruction of top soil by trampling which led to erosion and compaction (Rutman, 1996; Warren and Anderson, 1987). Studies such as these have provided valuable information regarding the effects of introduced species on the plant composition of specific ecosystems and opens the door to discussions regarding the importance of and feasibility of maintaining certain natural areas in or returning them to as pristine a state as possible. Utilizing this information and presenting it to the public could lead to better management practices in the future and further understanding between opposing factions.

At one time, the Gray family had the largest cattle holding in the Sonoyta Valley and is thus representative of an important enterprise in the Ajo/Sonoyta region. The history of the development of the ranch lands also contains much information as to how emigrants established their rights, legally or not, to land and water in Arizona. Although there may be individuals who would like the story of the Gray enterprise, along with its attendant legal issues to fade from memory as quickly as the adobe bricks will melt into the earth, we might consider this statement by geographer Pierce Lewis: "...to interpret cultural landscape, one cannot ignore the parts of it that offend one's aesthetic or moral sensibilities. It would be like a chemist deciding not to study the chemistry of sulphuric

compounds because they don't smell good" (1987:24).

Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch was established approximately twenty years after the severe drought of the 1890s. Features found on the ranch lands, such as windmills, wells, and the trigger gate illustrate adaptations that ranchers made in response to unreliable rain patterns in order to continue ranching. Prior to the drought cattle were generally free ranging and few if any accommodations were made on the part of ranchers to provide water.

Design Recommendations for Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch

The following design recommendations are based on findings provided by the literature search, visiting historic sites, conversations with professional interpreters and one landscape architect, a conversation specifically regarding Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch with the Chief of Resources Education at Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, and site visits to the ranch.

Potential Interpretive Themes

At least three interpretive themes could be covered utilizing the landscape of the Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch and its accompanying wells, corrals, and line camps: 1) settlement of the southwest desert by cattle ranchers; 2) cowboy lifestyles, that might include rural technology, and cross cultural sharing of information regarding building styles and cattle management; and 3) effects of grazing cattle on a desert environment.

The interpretation of any or all of these themes could be introduced inside the visitor center and further illustrated at specifically selected outdoor sites.

Examples of Methods to Use for Interpretation Inside the Visitor Center

Within the visitor center exhibits containing maps showing the migration west, including routes, dates, and groups of people, and points of settlement could help explain how Anglo-americans moved into the southwest territory of Arizona. A map showing the different cultural uses of the monument lands, for example siting the Blankenship/Dos Lomitas Ranch, O'odham sites, mining sites, and other ranches could clarify to visitors of the monument that the lands have been used for centuries by people and has a rich cultural history involving at least three distinct cultural groups, Anglo-americans, Mexicans, and O'odhams. Traditional paper maps could be used, but to illustrate the different land uses a three dimensional floor model would be more informative and more appealing to visitors, especially to children. Such a model would show clearly if relationships exist between settlement and topography.

Photographs of historic events and sites could also be presented inside the visitor center. Comparison photographs would be very useful to illustrate the environmental degradation that occurred with open range cattle ranching.

Exhibits such as these within the visitor center would give those people who are less inclined to hike the monument an idea of the history of southern Arizona, the history

of the monument lands, and an understanding of environmental issues that have been faced by monument caretakers.

Interpretation at the Sites

These recommendations are made in keeping with the thoughts that whenever possible original objects should be used and visitors should be given opportunities to experience things first hand.

Many opportunities for interpretation exist at the various sites utilized by the Gray family. Currently interpretation is limited to three simple signs containing very little information. These signs are located at the original Blankenship Ranch, Gachado Line Camp, and Bate's Well (see Figures 10 and 11). However, structures such as corrals, windmills, adobe buildings, and out buildings, with moderate integrity and that illustrate ranch layout and southwestern methods of construction using locally available building materials are found at Blankenship, Gachado, Bates, and Pozo Nuevo.

A simple trail system should be developed at the original Blankenship site to lead people from the existing parking area to the house and that continues through the wash to the corral and windmill (see Figure 12). This would invite visitors to view the entire site close-up and provide an enjoyable experience for anyone interested in the cowboy lifestyle. It would also provide a site with original building materials still intact for visitors to explore.

To personally associate the site with the family that inhabited it, an anecdote

about Robert and Sallie Gray, or, if available, a quote by either one that would express something of the experience of living and ranching in the desert could be presented near the corral or inside the ramada that is attached to the house. Shaded seating in a style that complements the existing structures should be provided as there is little natural shade at the site. This would also emphasize the importance placed on outdoor amenities such as the southwestern ramada.

FIGURE 10
PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING THE INTERPRETIVE SIGN
AT BATES WELL



Singer, 1996

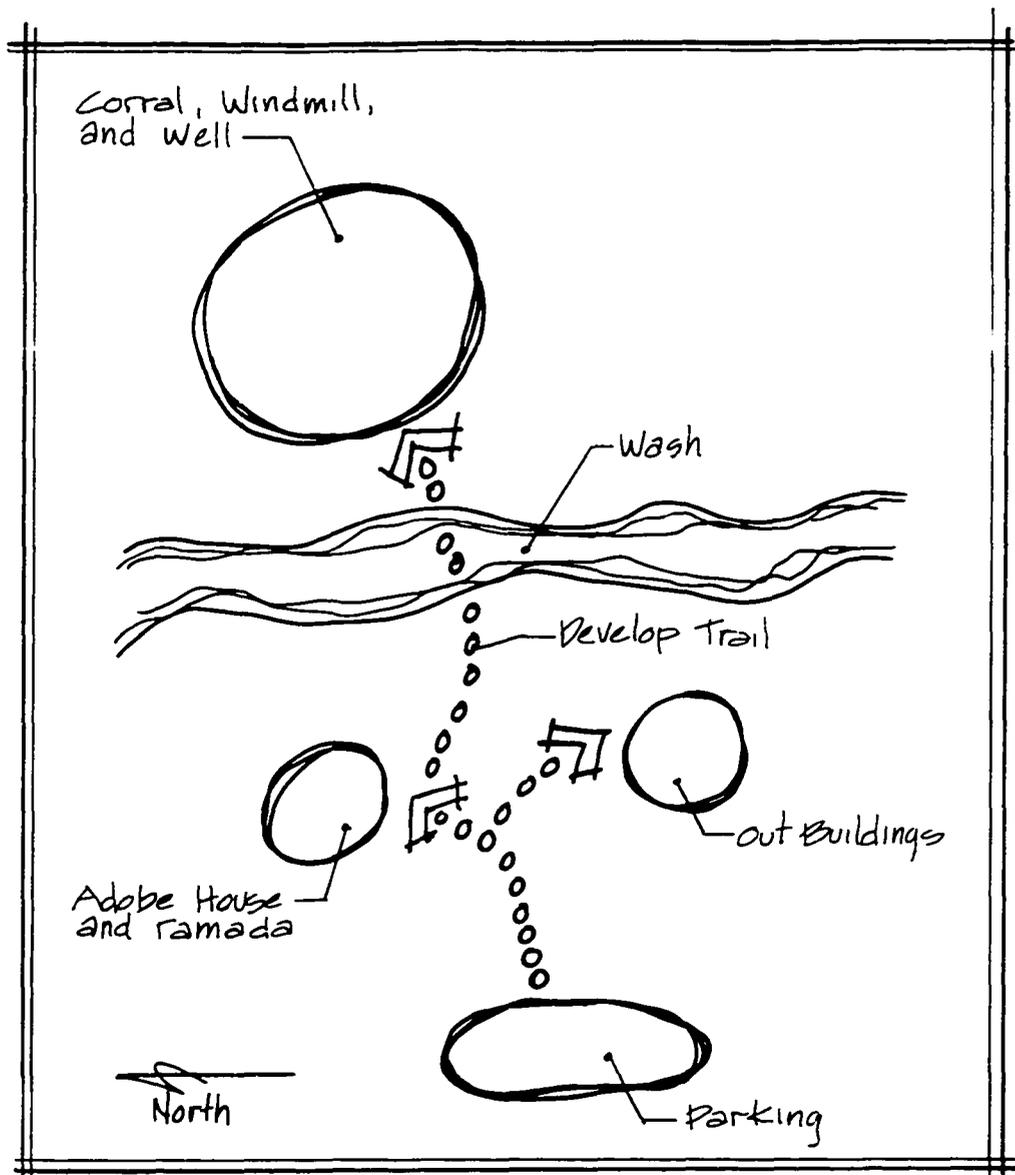
FIGURE 11
PHOTOGRAPH SHOWING INTERPRETIVE SIGNS AT
GACHADO LINE CAMP



One interpretive sign is in English and the other is in Spanish.

Singer, 1996

FIGURE 12
SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF A SUGGESTED
TRAIL SYSTEM AT THE ORIGINAL BLANKENSHIP/DOS LOMITAS SITE



The original Blankenship/Dos Lomas Ranch is relatively easily accessible by car and would not require hiking to view it. A problem that has been identified with the particular site is its remote location in relation to park headquarters and its proximity to the international border. Reports have been filed with park management of break-ins of parked cars. Other sites accessible by car could be utilized in a similar manner as the main ranch such as the Gachado Line Camp or Pozo Nuevo which are both somewhat closer to the headquarters.

The cement tank built by Donald Blankenship is an interesting example of rural technology (see Figure 7). This structure is located above a tinaja and was built to collect sand which in turn held water and kept the natural tinaja below full of water for longer periods of time than would be expected without the built structure. This site is currently not accessible, yet a trail could be developed that leads to it. Along the trail could be opportunities to interpret a rural technology, plant life in the monument, and the significance of tinajas to wildlife and humans who have occupied the land for centuries.

Environmental degradation due to the presence of cattle has been an issue at the monument since its establishment in 1937. This could be illustrated and explained with signage placed at the specific spot in Alamo Canyon where bermuda grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) is still quite prevalent (see Figure 13) and at Gachado Line Camp where extensive trampling and compaction of soil has occurred. As mentioned earlier, Gachado is accessible by car, but to reach Alamo Canyon requires some hiking.

FIGURE 13
PHOTOGRAPH OF BERMUDA GRASS
IN ALAMO CANYON



Singer, 1996

The suggestions offered require trail building and enhancement of existing conditions to present the interpretive themes. Winter evening talks led by docents and rangers are very popular and might also be a means to cover these topics as well as day-time tours of specific sites. The structures and surrounding plant life, washes, and mountains at the sites offer a good back drop upon which to base discussion. This method however requires a fuller staff or reliance on volunteers and is beyond the financial means of many organizations caretaking historic sites. Good design at the site would help the site to speak for itself and possibly encourage questions visitors could take back to the visitor center for one on one discussions with staff.

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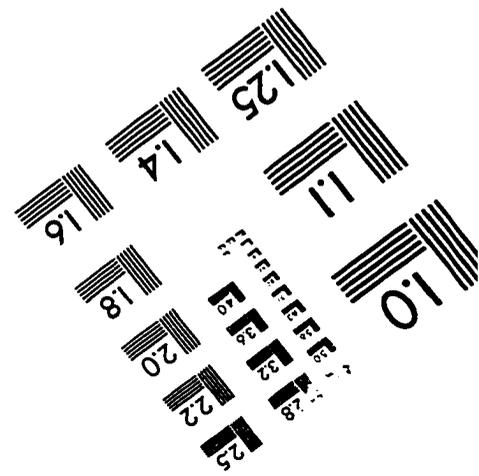
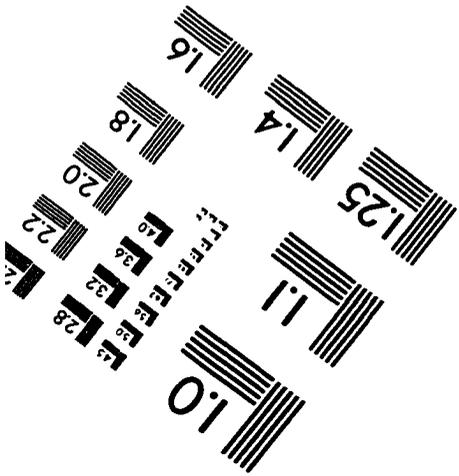
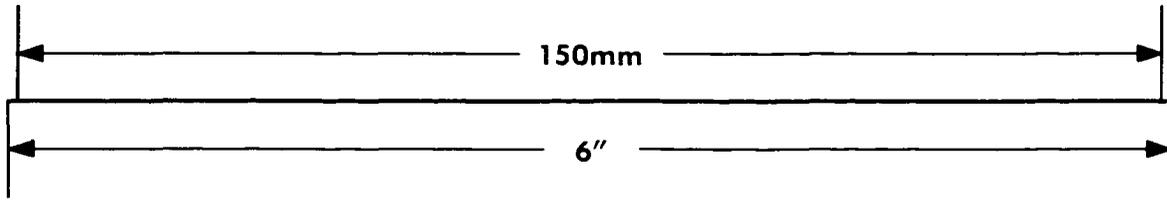
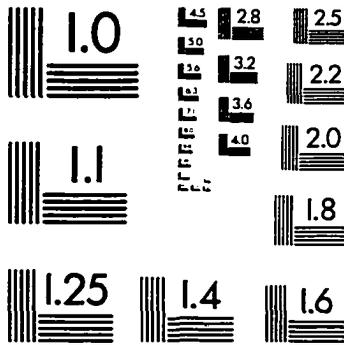
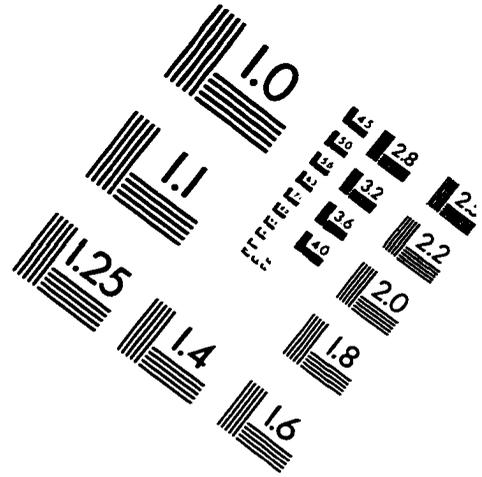
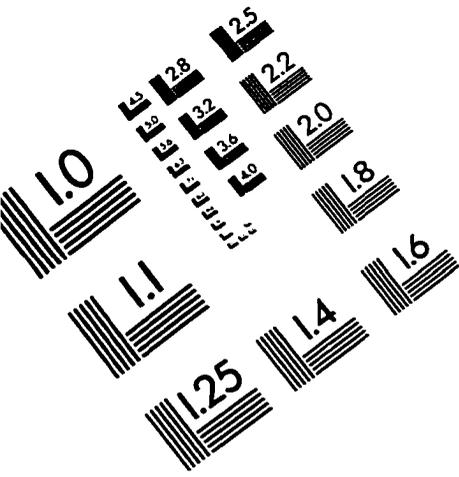
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IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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