

Prerecorded history of Trail End Ranch (TER) has been somewhat revealed through excavation of village sites. Prior to modern archaeological documenting, most of these long-abandoned village sites were heavily vandalized.

The recorded history of TER begins on April 18.1905 when President Theodore Roosevelt signed a homestead patent conveying the following 160 acres of land to **Jesus Chavez**.

S1/2 SW 1/4, Sec.1

S1/2 SE1/4, Sec. 2

Township 12 S, Range 13 W, New Mexico Meridian

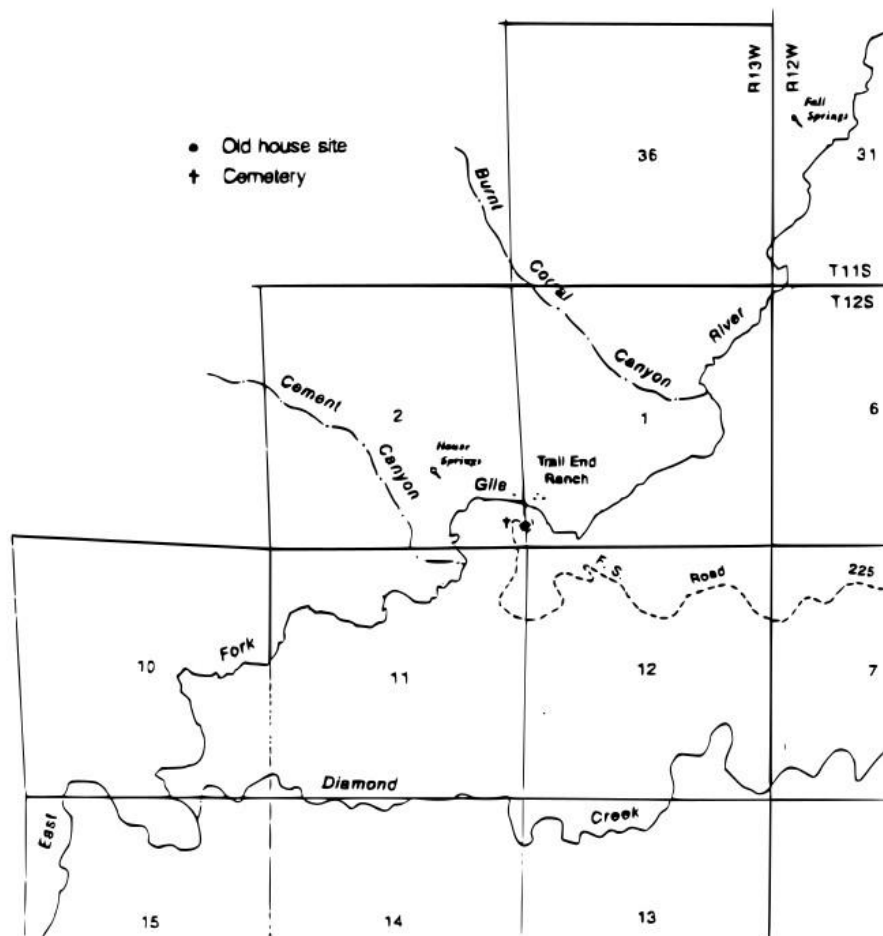


FIG 1

During that same year, **S. Montoya** probably received a homestead patent for lands downstream from Jesus Chavez and possibly other patents were issued.

The original Chavez homesite may have been on a small, elevated bench on the south side of the East Fork of the Gila where the current access ends at the river. The site, covering about 1000 square feet, contains abundant nails, broken chinaware and glass, and a variety of metal scraps. The site also contains Mimbres Indian artifacts (pottery shards and points) and graves indicating that the Chavez (?) home was built on a small ancient Indian site.

A small cemetery, on the broad table land at the top of the canyon may date from Chavez time. In 1974 locals relayed to Marion and Don Richter that there were at least 12 graves, but the area had been so heavily vandalized and trampled by cattle that they were only able to save 3 broken headstones. The headstones are mostly carved from relatively soft sandstone that is found locally.

On May 14th, 1906, **Jesus Javez** and wife **Petra Montoya de Chavez** sold the following 40 (Fig. 2) acres to **Anastacio Silva**.

A tract of land in the Canon of the Gila,
bounded as follows: On the North (sic) by
lands of Jesus Chavez, on the south by the land
Severo Montoya, both lands patented, on
the east(sic) and west by the hills on the
sides of the Canon, being Government land.

This parcel later (1922) defined as:

SW 1/4 SE1/4, Sec. 2

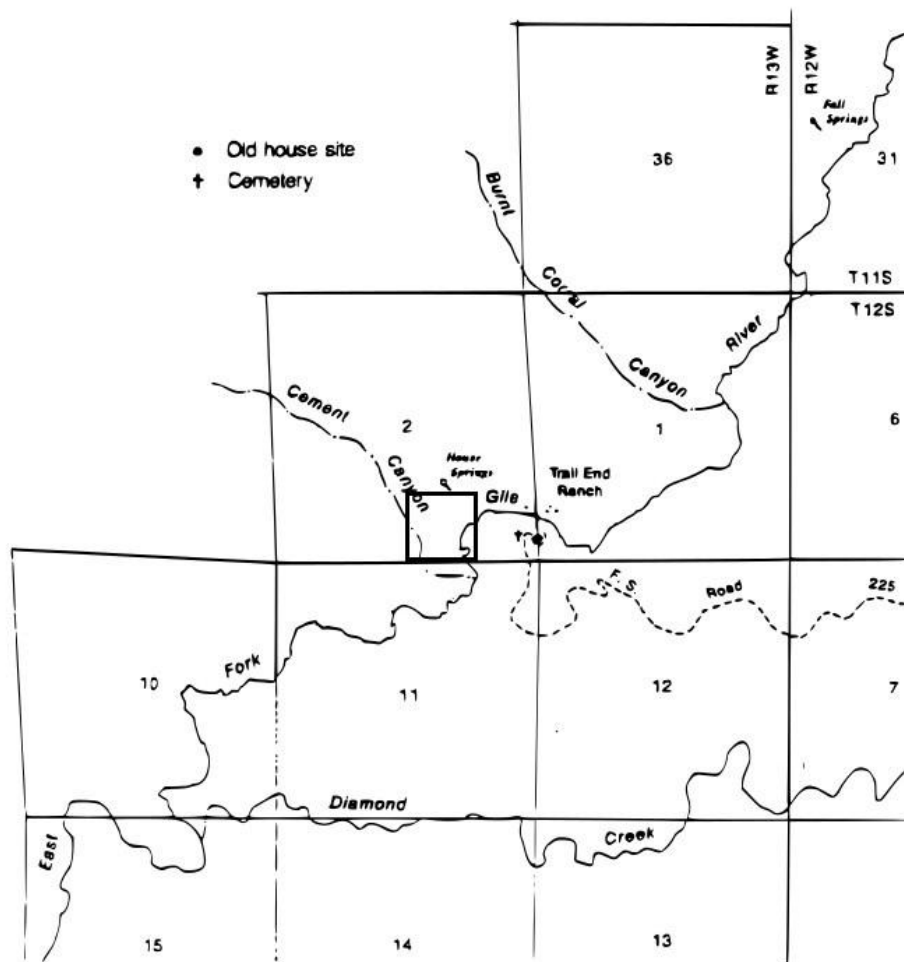


Figure 2

On February 5, 1919, **Petra Lucero de Sereseres**, widow of **Antonio Silva**, and her husband **Gabriel Sereseres**, sold the 40 acres to **Thomas I. Boles**. On August 23, 1922 **Thomas I. Boles** and his wife **Avis Boyles** sold the 40 acres to **F.M. Inman** and on August 28, 1926 **F.M. Inman** and wife **Katie L. Inman** sold to **A.L. Inman**.

During this time period, a number of families apparently lived in the river valley from the Chavez property downstream to the junction of Diamond Creek. Although man and the elements have destroyed all dwellings, evidence of their existence can be seen in crude foundations, lines of fruit trees, and scraps glass, China, and metal. Marion and Don Richter were told by Mattie Hulse, who visited the valley many times with her father in the 1920's that some of these families were squatters and that they were evicted by the Forest Service about the same time the Gila Wilderness was established in 1924. Mattie also told Marion and Don that the squared log cabin,

that is now called the girls bunkhouse, was a schoolhouse and that it was set closer to the river than it is today.

On July 6, 1922 **Jesus Chavez, Antonio Chavez, Silverio Chavez, Severo Chavez, Ysabel Chavez** (Monticello, NM), **Mrs. L.; SW 1/4C. Romero** (Chloride, NM), **Mrs. Domineca Romero** and **Mrs. Juana C. Solis** (Hot Springs, NM) and **Clemente Chavez** (Calif.), sold the following 120 acres of the original Chavez homestead (Fig. 3) to **Sim Smith**:

S1/2 SW 1/4, Sec.1

SE1/4 SE1/2, Sec.2

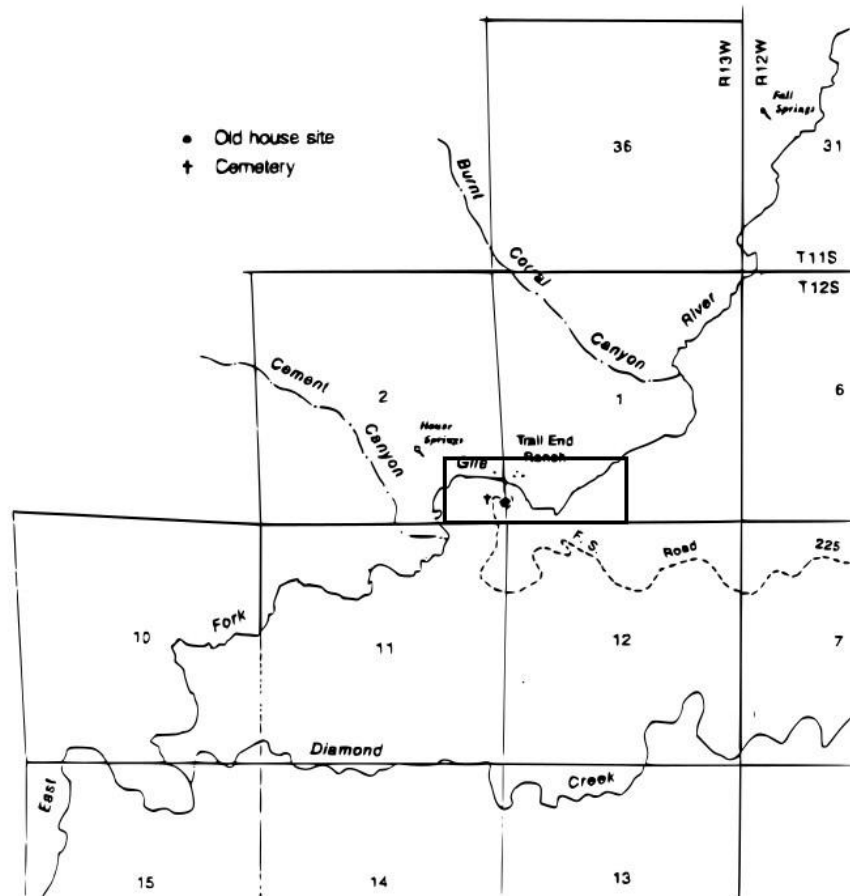


Figure 3

On September 16, 1922, **Sim Smith** and his wife **Ethel B. Smith** sold to **A.L. Inman**.

By the end of 1922 the ranch probably reached its full size and potential. Besides purchasing the original Sanchez homestead, the Inman brothers – Aaron L. and F. M. – also acquired the Montoya homestead and other private lands downstream. The ranch was known as the Inman Place, and it consisted of the following 440 acres (Fig. 4):

N1/2 SE1/4; SW1/4 NE1/4, Sec. 10
 NW1/4 NE1/4, Sec. 1
 S1/2 SW1/4, Sec. 1
 S1/2 SE1/4, Sec. 2
 NW1/4 NE1/4; NE1/4 NW1/4; S1/2 NW1/4, Sec.11

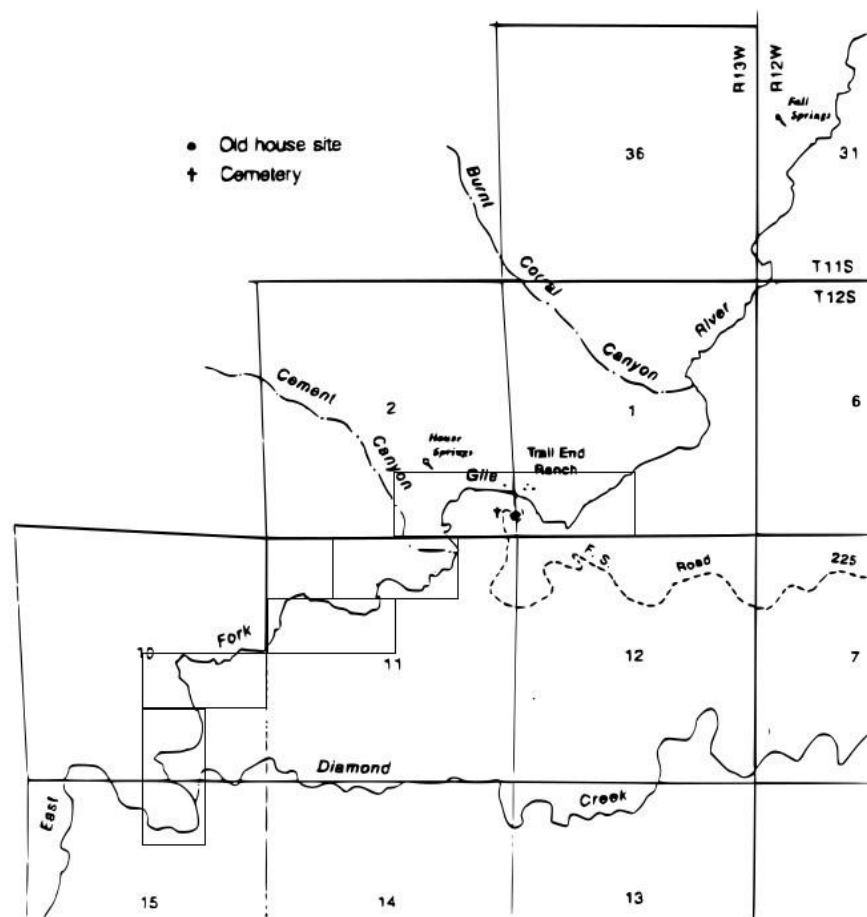


Figure 4

The Forest Service grazing lease that went with the ranch was known, at least in later years, as the Whiterocks Allotment. By 1926 the ranch was controlled by **A.L. Inman**. On April 26, 1938 **A.L. Inman** and his wife **Cora Inman** sold the ranch to **W.B. Sheff** and three years later on March 25, 1941, **Reba E. Hinze**, formerly **Reba E Sheff**, sold to **Lon H. Cron** and for more than 12 years

the ranch was known as the Cron Ranch. On May 13, 1953 **Lon Cron** and his wife, **Esther I. Cron**, sold the ranch to **E.L. McCoy** and his wife **Vera McCoy**. The McCoy's held the ranch for less than a year, selling it on March 13, 1954 to **Jack McKinley** and his wife **Ardath McKinley**, who shortly sold to **Hubert E. Cone** on June 30, 1955. On June 29, 1957 **Hubert E. Crone** and his wife, **Marie Crone** sold to **Thomas L Miller** and his wife, **Vera Miller**. On July 11, 1961, after ranching for 4 years, the Miller's sold to the **Pacific Western Land Co.**, who sold to **Robert Kartchner** and his wife, **Lucille Kartchner**, on December 29, 1961.

The Inmans owned and operated the ranch for more than 16 years, longer than any of the previous or later owners. The Richters as of 2026 have now owned the remaining private lands for more than 50 years but have never operated it as a cattle ranch.

The Inmans were probably forced to sell in 1938 following the shooting and killing of a neighbor rancher at Beaverhead by A.L. Inman. As related to the Richters, the neighbor, Marvin Ake, was both a practical joker and some sort of business associate of Inman, a combination of talents that were intolerable to the more conservative Inman. Inman was tried and convicted of murder in Las Cruces, NM, but was pardoned by the governor of New Mexico after serving only a few months of his sentence.

One of the interesting side endeavors of the Inmans was the operation of a still, in an old Mimbres Indian cave, a few hundred yards downstream from the ranch houses. During the early part of the Inman tenure, prohibition of alcohol in the U.S. was in effect (1920-1933), so the making and selling of spirits often a very lucrative business. The Inmans were apparently well known for their product throughout the area.

Very little is known about the ranch buildings during the time of the Inman occupancy. Jake Osborn, proprietor of the Mimbres Store, who worked as a young cowboy for the Inmans (he was also sweet on the two Inman daughters, Iris and Doris) told us that the Inmans lived in the present big house on the ranch. However, Marion and Don Richter were also told that the big house was built by Lon Cron, just prior to World War II. There may be some truth in both accounts as Cron may have added to a pre-existing Inman structure. The large pole barn was apparently built by the Inmans as Jake remembers it from his youth. Don and Marion Richter tried, unsuccessfully, to get information from Iris Brand, who was, in 1995, the surviving Inman daughter. Iris was very feeble and lived with her son in Wyoming; she told Marion and Don that her son would write, but no letter ever materialized.

The Crons built the smaller 2-bedroom house in 1946. They also constructed many of the stone walls around the houses and may have moved the schoolhouse out of the riverbed to where it is today.

After ranching about 10 years, **Robert Kartchner** and his wife, **Lucille H. Kartchner**, sold the following 45 acres (Fig.5) on February 22, 1971, to **Clayton Hust** and his wife, **Lennie M. Hust**, and **Malcom S. Major, Jr.** and his wife, **Helen M. Major**:

SW1/4 SW1/4, Sec. 1

E1/2 E1/2 E1/2 SE1/4SE1/4, Sec 2

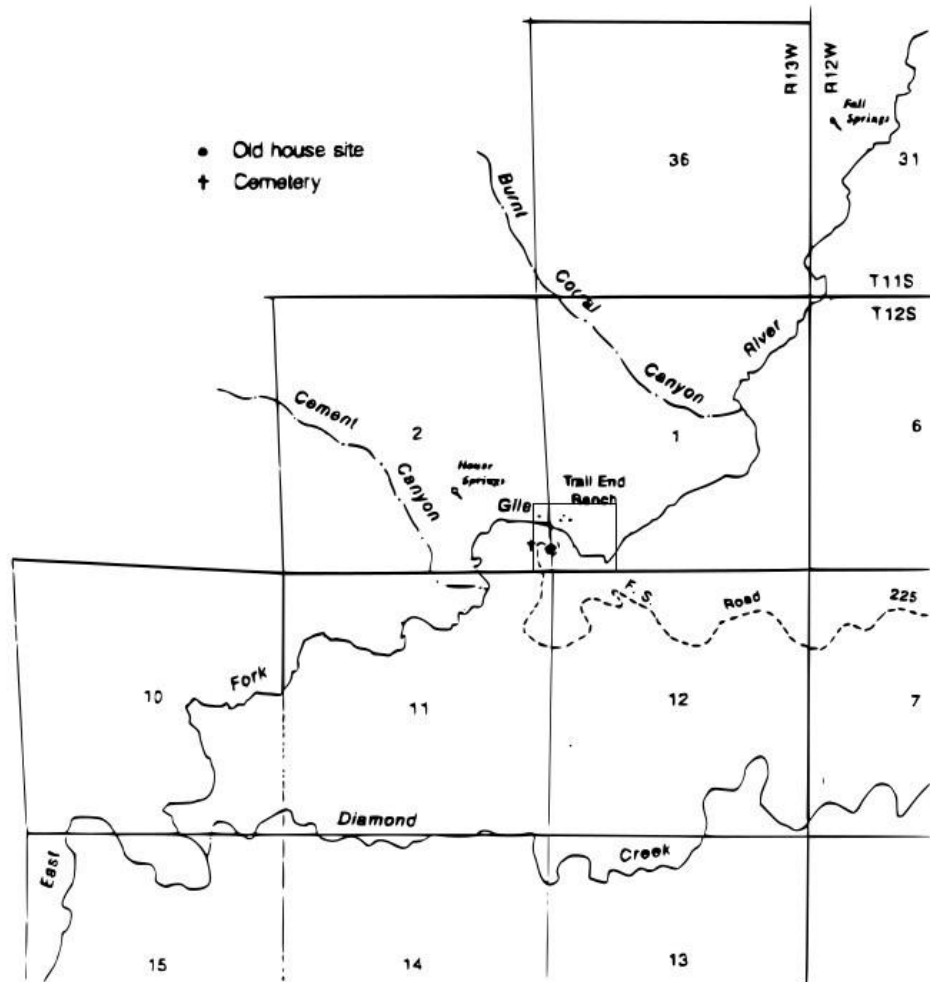


Figure 5

Also, by virtue of an option to purchase dated August 3, 1967, **A.V. Hayes** and his wife **Wilma Ann Hayes** and **John W. Hooker** and his wife, **Donna Jean Hooker**, were also involved in the sale.

Within 9 months, on November 1, 1971, the Majors and the Husts sold to **A.R. Mack** and his wife **Madeline Mack** (the sale also included the D-Bar Ranch three miles upstream on the Gila

from TER. On October 5, 1973, the Macks sold 45 acres to **Donald H. Richter** and his wife **Marion C. Richter**.

When the Richters purchased the ranch in 1973 the buildings had not been lived in for more than two years and vandalism, animals, and the elements had taken their toll. Fortunately, most of the buildings were sound, so that major structural repairs were not necessary. However, Marion and Don spent apart of summer 1974 and almost a year beginning in July 1975 just getting the buildings clean and habitable. The buildings at time of purchase from downstream to upstream were as follows (Fig. 6):

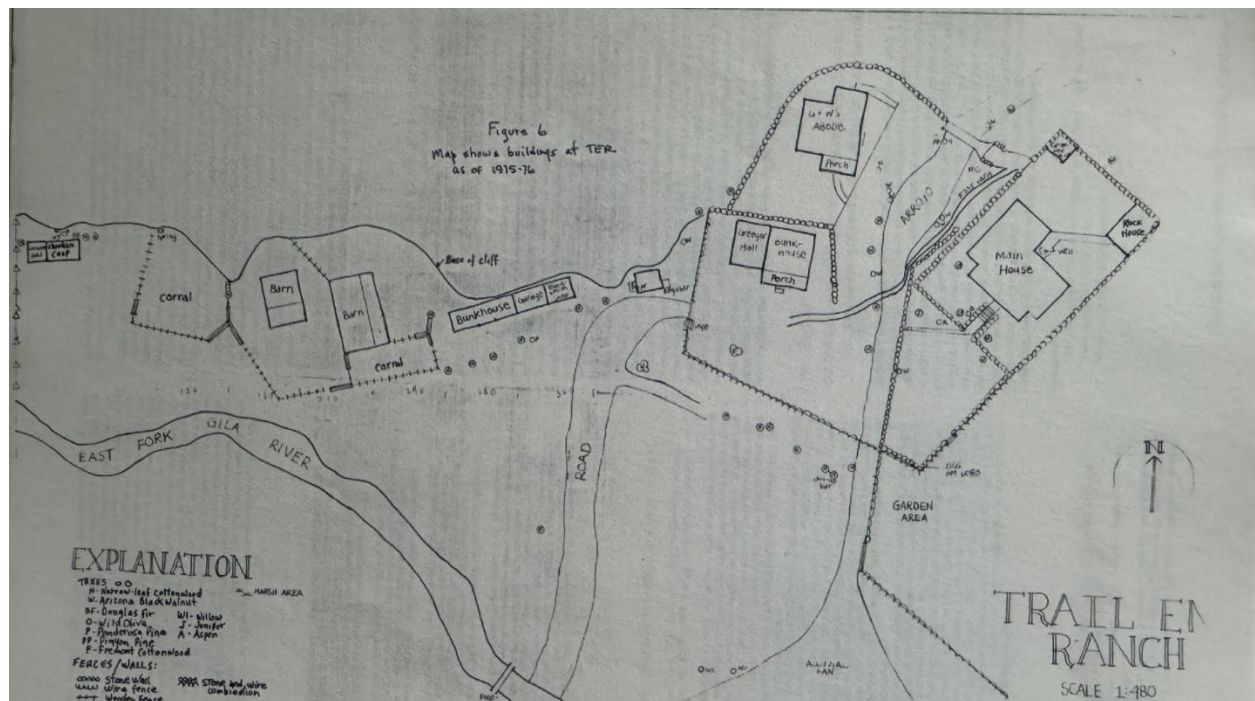


Figure 6

1. Chicken coop with attached shed.
2. Granary (the only mouse proof building on the place at the time).
3. Pole barn
4. Double log cabin separated by a dog trot. The downstream cabin was used as a generator building the upstream cabin a tack room. This building was used as a residence at some point in the ranch's past.
5. Storage shed.
6. Blacksmith shop.
7. Gasoline and oil shed.
8. Two car garage attached to –
9. Log bunkhouse and bath with covered porch (formerly the schoolhouse).

10. Two-bedroom cinder block/stucco house.
11. Main house of frame/stucco construction with 7 rooms, 2 baths, and extensive porches.
12. Stone generator building.
13. Stone pantry-cold room, lined with storage shelved and bins.

In 1976 the gasoline and oil shed (#7) was torn down, the 2-car garage (#8) was made into a classroom/laboratory room, and the double log cabins (#4) were transformed into bunk houses.

Two major projects in 1975 helped make life on the ranch much easier. Jim Burkholder, a friend from Alaska helped clean out the well and then dug a 2' deep trench 500' in the July sun to lay a 1-1/4" black pipe. After Jim returned to Alaska, the Mauldins from T or C came and helped install a new pump and a 1000-gallon steel tank on a hill upstream from the house.

The other project was the kitchen in the big house. It was filthy from smoke, grease, food, rats, and mice, part of a wall was torn out where someone repaired a water pipe, and a variety of worn, cracked, dirty linoleum covered the floor and countertop. A new sink, countertop and linoleum along with a bright new coat of paint made it livable. The purchase of a wood/gas stove Marion and Don purchased from rancher Ray Greer in Winston, added a final homey touch.

During the first 10 years of Richter ownership several outhouses were built because the unknown condition of the septic system had everyone worried.

When the Richters acquired the property in 1973, it was called by locals the Kartchner Ranch, from two owners back, yet on the USGS topographic map (Burnt Corral Canyon quadrangle) it was called Trail End Ranch. None of the neighbors knew it by that name, so evidently the Survey engineers took it upon themselves to name it – a practice that is frowned on today. The Richters liked the name and it was already on a published map, so it was adopted.

Dave Gregor a new PH.D.er (in 1974) in biology from the University of Arizona looked up the Richters during the summer of 1974 with the thought that the Richters might hire he and his wife Sonja as ranch sitters. Don guessed they thought the Richters were rich. However, a friendship developed, Dave looked for employment elsewhere, eventually landing a job as an assistant professor of biology at Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) in Lincoln, Nebraska. After a disappointing look around Nebraska to teach field biology, Dave conceived the idea that TER would make an ideal wilderness science camp.

In May 1976, through an agreement with NWU, Dave and wife Sonja, brought the first 12 students to TER for a 3-credit course entitled Natural History of the American Southwest. It was an instant success. The course mostly concerned field biology, but included a little geology, anthropology, and wilderness skills. A four-day backpack trip followed by a "regatta" that was the final activity. The regatta, held on the last day, was a team relay race that involved running

upriver and tubing down the river to a finish in front of Gregor Hall. More than 60 students passed through the gates of TER in the 6 years the course was offered.

In July 1987 **Donald H. Richter** and his wife **Marion C. Richter**, put a conservation easement on the 45 acres restricting development, grazing and hunting and gave 40 acres including most of the buildings to the **Nature Conservancy**. The land was to be used only for scientific, educational, or environmental purposes. The Richters retained the following 5 acres (Fig. 7):

W1/2 W1/2 NW1/4 SW1/4SW1/4, Sec. 1

E1/2 E1/2 NE1/4 SE1/4 SE1/4, Sec. 2

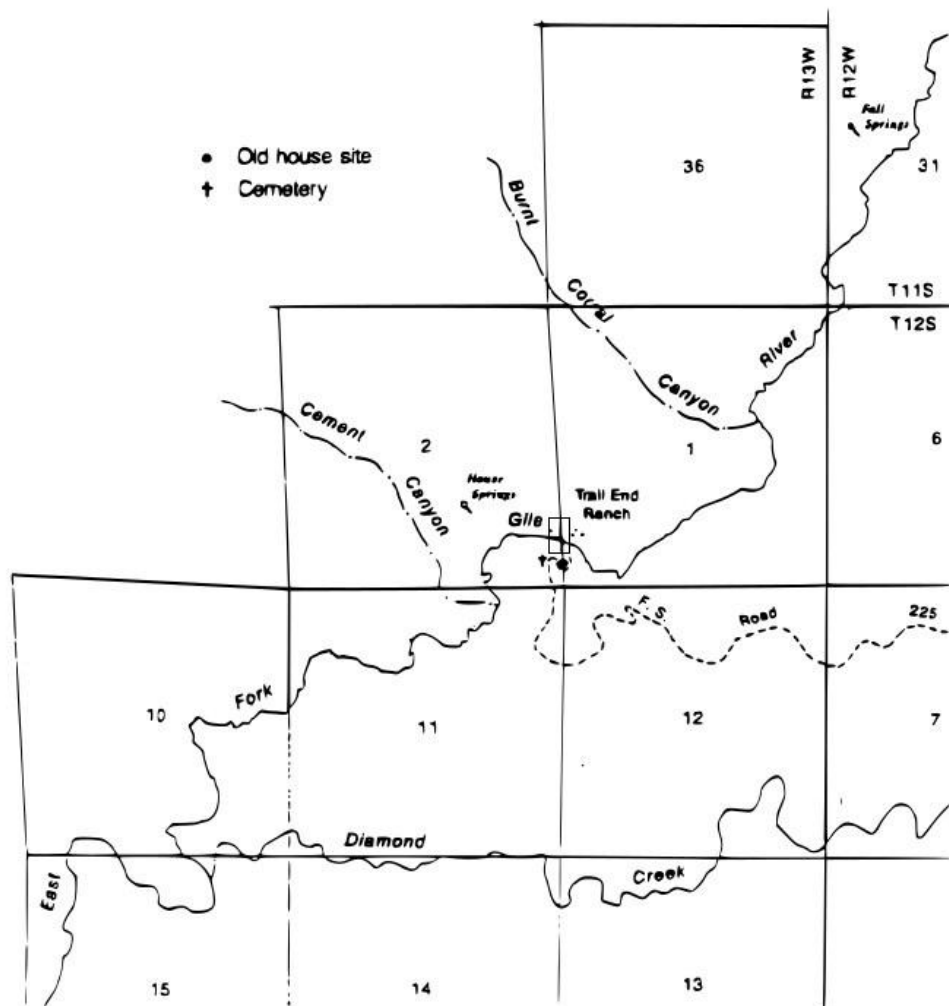


Figure 7

The **Nature Conservancy** deeded their 40 acres to the **New Mexico Museum of Natural History**. In late 1988 the property was returned to the Nature Conservancy, who in turn deeded it to the

Albuquerque Academy, a well-endowed and highly regarded private educational facility. The Albuquerque Academy continued its stewardship of the ranch and its educational program until economics forced them to return the ranch to the Nature Conservancy in 2015 when the 40 Acres was deeded to **Cimarron School District** in June. 2019 was the last year that Cimarron School District visited the ranch due to Covid 19 and then multiple staff changes.

Don Richter died of complications from a brain tumor in 2004, and from then until around 2020 Pamela Richter maintained the facilities for years after his passing right up until 2020 when she was diagnosed with Aphasia and became unable to communicate after 2024. Ronne Richter retired from Alaska employment in 2019 and took up the slack and soon had son Stewart Richter helping develop solar power for the Richter's five acres at TER.

As of 2026 Marion Richter is still alive at 99 years old and living in Hamilton Montana.

In 2022 a summer of rain caused the East Fork of the Gila to flood for months. The road coming in to TER was washed out and passage was impossible for a protracted period. Road 225 was never repaired at the destroyed Diamond Creek crossing so a new way was created a little further downstream. The heavy deposit of soft silty sand in the riverbed itself made fording the river impossible.

The following year a forest fire came down Burnt Corral Canyon and got to less than ½ a mile from TER and the buildings. The Forest Service came in and cleared brush from around the buildings and installed extensive sprinklers that reached every structure at TER. Their ease of movement across the soft sand showed us that UTV's could easily make it back and forth across the sandy riverbed.

In November 2024 beavers had moved into the riparian ecosystem at TER and had dammed up the East Fork in front of the barn on the Richter's five acres. This made the ford unpassable, so the dam was largely removed in a period of eight days. The beavers then moved the dam downstream about 200 feet and because this move does not cause the upstream ford to become a lake they have been left alone. Recently, contact has been made with Amigos Bravos out of Taos NM to install a pond leveling device that will eliminate any potential flooding from the beavers building their dam deeper.