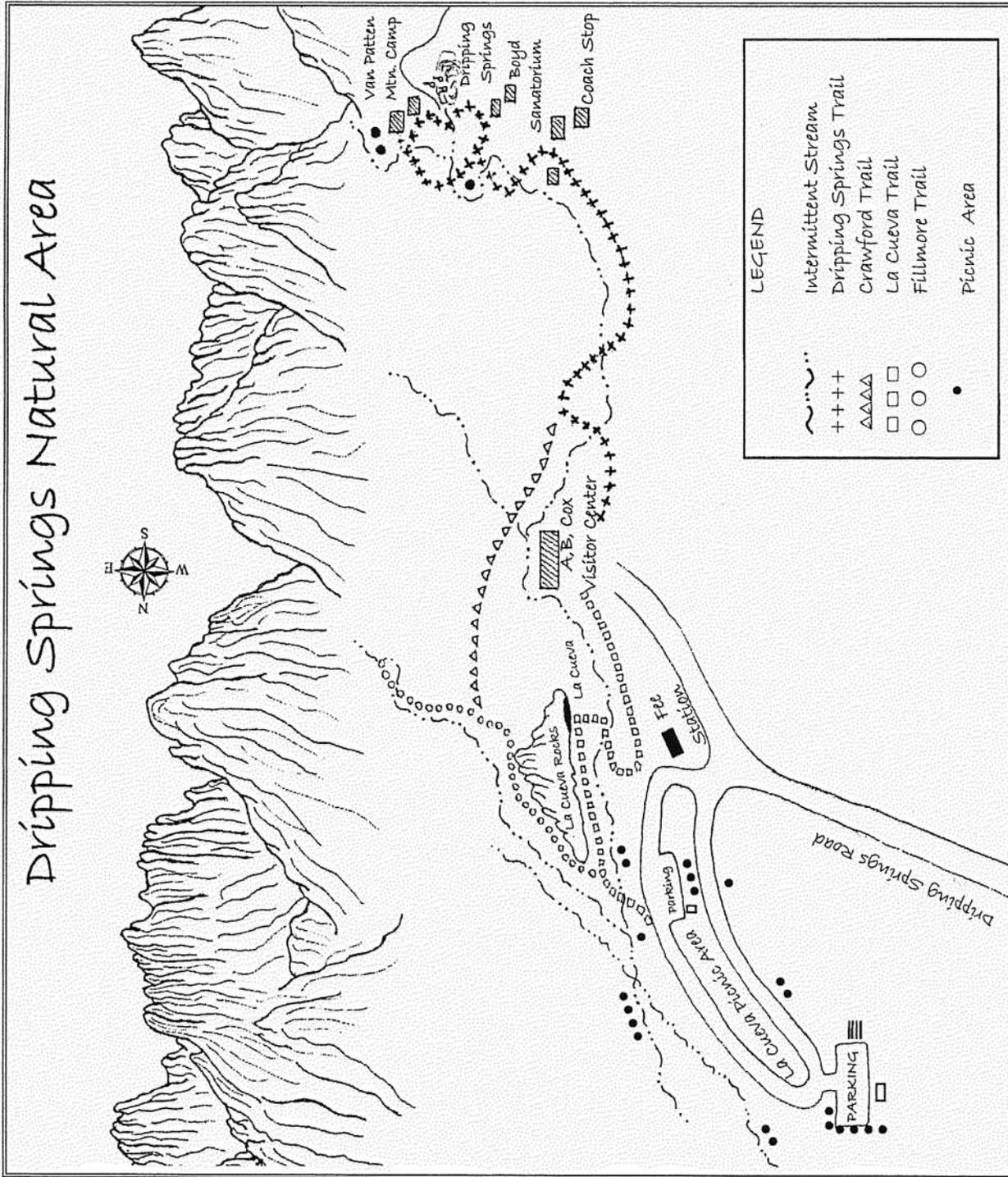


# Dripping Springs Natural Area



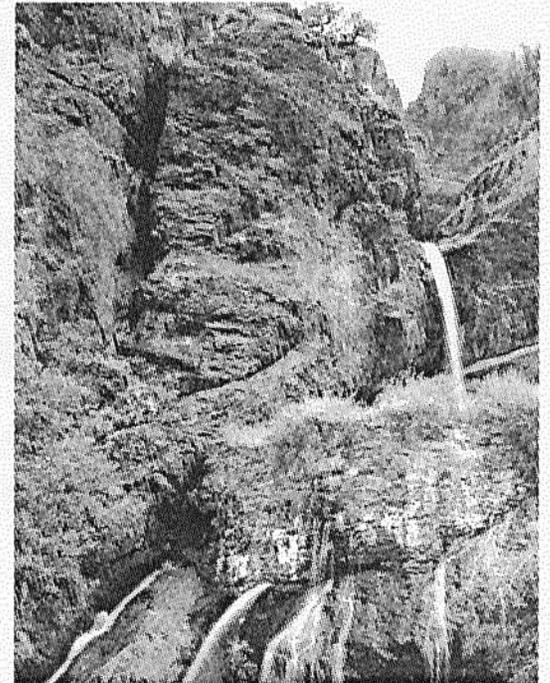
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Craig Severy, BLM Volunteer

LAS CRUCES FIELD OFFICE



**BLM**  
NEW MEXICO

## DRIPPING SPRINGS COX RANCH



### THE HISTORY...

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## DRIPPING SPRINGS

Dripping Springs Resort was originally built by Colonel Eugene Van Patten in the 1870's. A native of New York State, Van Patten came to Mesilla at the invitation of his uncle, John Butterfield, who operated the Butterfield Stage Line. Van Patten worked at the Picacho Stage Station and probably elsewhere after the stage line ceased operations in the Las Cruces area in 1861. During the Civil War, he joined the Confederacy and saw action in the Battle of Glorieta Pass near Santa Fe.



Dripping Springs Resort was originally called "Van Patten's Mountain Camp." It had approximately 16 rooms, a large dining room, and a concert hall. It was very popular around the turn of the century and many famous people, including Pat Garret and Pancho Villa, stayed there. Van Patten was married to a local Piro Indian woman, and a number of Indians lived and worked at the Resort. The Indians hand-carried water from the spring to the rooms in "ollas" attached to long wooden poles and, from time to time, held dances for the entertainment of the guests.

The resort had its share of exciting times. When Albert J. Fountain, a prominent figure in the Lincoln County War, was murdered on the east side of the Organ

Mountains in 1896, his daughter was notified of the murder at the resort. Van Patten led a large posse to investigate, but Fountain's body, and that of his 12-year old son Henry, were never found.

In 1917 Van Patten went bankrupt, and Drippings Springs was sold to Dr. Nathan Boyd, who homesteaded on a parcel of land adjacent to the Resort. Boyd was a physician in San Francisco who later married the daughter of a wealthy Australian engineer. Boyd joined his in-laws business and became involved in large engineering projects all over the world. He and his wife came to Las Cruces to promote, design and build a dam on the Rio Grande, whose floods often devastated the countryside. The dam was stopped by local farmers whose lands would have been inundated by the lake behind the dam. Ironically, a dam was eventually built farther north by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, creating the State's largest man-made lake, Elephant Butte Reservoir. By the time Boyd had acquired Van Patten's Resort, his wife had contracted tuberculosis. Deciding to remain in Las Cruces, Boyd converted Dripping Springs into a sanatorium. New structures were built in different parts of the canyon to provide housing and care for the patients.

The Boyd family eventually sold the property to Dr. Sexton, a Las Cruces physician, who continued to operate it as a sanatorium. As late as 1946, the Resort was still in relatively good shape, and a group of local citizens attempted to raise \$4,000 to purchase it for historic preservation. Unfortunately, their effort failed, and the Resort was scavenged for building materials by unknown persons.

Today, the ruins of Dripping Springs Resort lie scattered along the canyon, preserving the memory of Colonel Van Patten, the doctors Boyd and Sexton, and the many famous and not so famous who visited there!

## COX RANCH

Although the Boyd Family owned Dripping Springs Resort, what is now the Cox Ranch headquarters was

never owned by them. An Indian, Simon Bocan, homesteaded near La Cueva in the 1930's, but the ranch proper was bought by Franklin Hayner from a Mr. Ascartes in the late 1930's. The Hayners owned a lumber yard in Las Cruces and used the ranch mostly as a "weekend place." Most of the out buildings at the ranch headquarters were built by the Hayners, who also added the swimming pool and the landing strip.

Franklin Hayner died in 1946. In the early 1950's, the ranch was sold to the Cox family who also bought Dripping Springs Resort around this time. The Cox family has a long history on the east side of the Organ Mountains where they ranched since the late 1800's. When A. B. Cox bought the Hayner property, he developed it into a successful cattle ranch. A. B. Cox was a well-liked man and a fine host, and the ranch was the setting for many social gatherings over the years.

More than a cattle ranch, the Cox Ranch and Drippings Springs Resort were also places where unique biotic communities survived and a number of rare, threatened and endangered plants could still be found. Recognizing the ranch's value, The Nature Conservancy purchased the property from the Cox family, then transferred the title to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in exchange for other BLM-administered public land that could be sold to recover the cost of the purchase. Thanks to this cooperation between the Conservancy and the BLM, the Cox Ranch and Dripping Springs Resort will be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

