

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

PANCHO FAMILY FARM (Alexander Pancho Memorial Farm)

HALS NO. AZ-30

- Location: East of Indian Route 20, 13.5 miles southeast of Sells and .5 miles north of Cowlic. Vamori Valley, Tohono O’odham Nation, Indian Oasis-Baboquivari Unified District, Pima County, Arizona
- 31.815939, -111.986169 (Center of Alexander Pancho Memorial Farm, Google Earth, WGS84)
- Significance: Pancho Family Farm is a dry-land farm located in the Tohono O’odham Nation in southern Arizona. It is the only farm currently practicing traditional *Ak Chin* (mouth of the wash) dry-land farming. Focused on growing traditional crops such as the culturally significant tepary bean, melons, corn, and squash. These crops are adapted to the desert sun, heat, and alkaline soils. Traditional foods help with high rates of diabetes and other food-related illnesses among tribal members. The farm teaches and mentors O’odham tribal members in traditional farming techniques, food preparation and wild harvesting through practices such as the annual saguaro harvest which accompanies the rain ceremony which signifies the O’odham New Year.
- Description: Dry and arid land in the valley of the sacred mountain. A network of washes flow through the valley. The farm is on Fresnel Wash just below where it splits off of the Vemori Wash. The temperatures are hotter, there is less rain, and less water in river than there used to be. Even if it doesn’t rain in the immediate area, water comes down from the mountains and floods the fields. Traditional channels are used to divert water around to different plots within the farm. Now the farm has storage ponds that fill when there is an abundance of water and can be pumped for later use. The native vegetation is too diverse to fully list but some plants are as follows: saguaro (*carnegieia gigantea*), creosote bush (*larrea tridentata*), cholla (*opuntia versicolor*), prickly pear (*opuntia*), mesquite (*prosopis*), devels claw (*proboscidea parviflora*), beargrass (*nolina microcarpa*), yucca (*yucca elata*).
- History: This is the ancestral Tohono O’odham land and the Pancho family had farmed this plot continuously until around 1975-80, which was fulltime work to be self-sufficient. Commodities and processed food became available and farming on the Pancho Family Farm stopped. This change happened throughout the community and caused the health crisis today. In 1995 the farm was revived by the grandsons of Alexander and Katherine Pancho, Noland and Terrol Dew Johnson. They saw the importance of the traditional foodways and the dire need to return. Since then, the farm has been an open classroom and resource for the

community. Traditional foodways were lost and the most recent generations don't know that food can be found and grown in the desert.

Sources: "Topobuilder." topoBuilder. Accessed July 31, 2023.
<https://topobuilder.nationalmap.gov/>.

Historian: Terrol Dew Johnson and Aranda Lasch

7/31/2023

Entry - 2023 HALS Challenge Competition: Working Landscapes



Pancho Family, 1950s. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)



Pancho Family, 1950s. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)



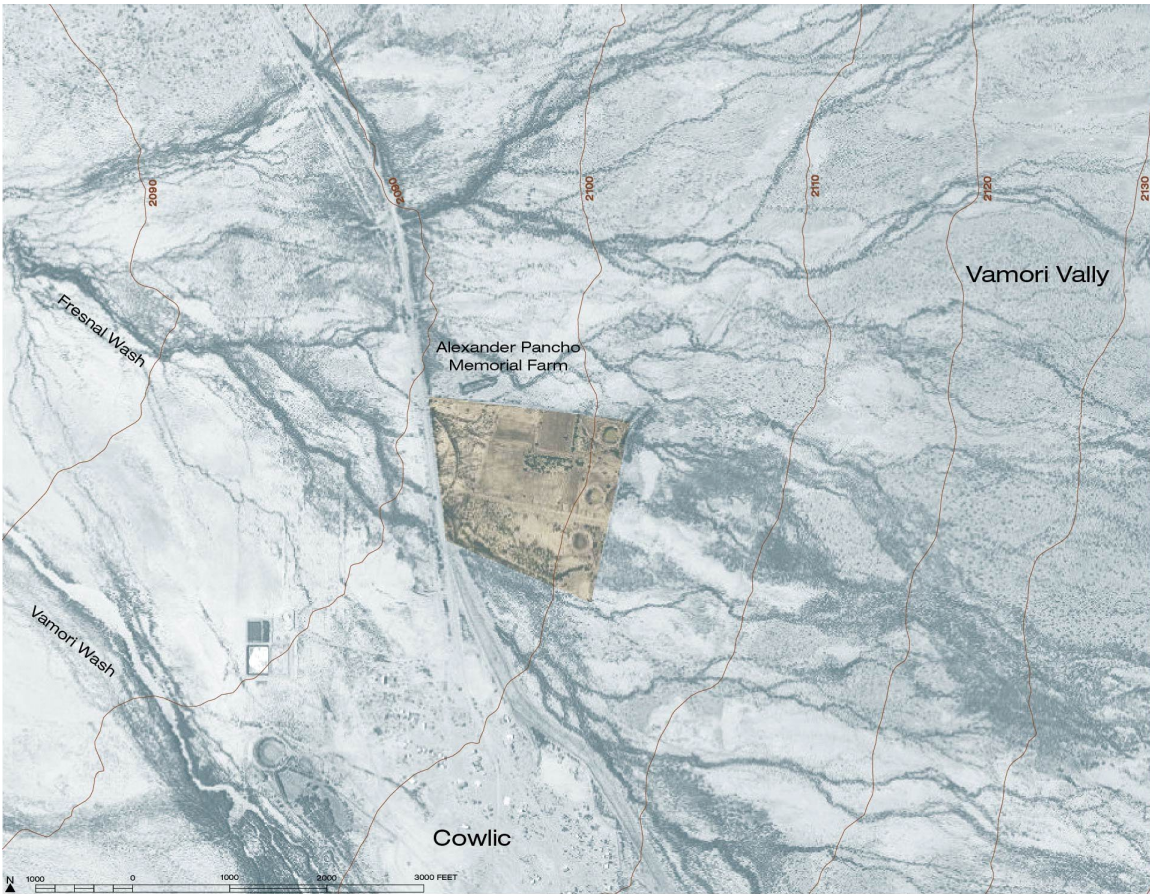
(Pancho Family, 1950s. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)



Pancho Family Farm, 2010s. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)



Pancho Family Farm, 2010s. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)



Map of the Pancho Family Farm. (Source: Terrol Dew Johnson)