

THE BROLLIAR PARK CABIN AND HOMESTEAD

The Flagstaff Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest is developing plans to preserve a log cabin in a meadow known as Broliar Park. The cabin is located in the NW¼ of Section 20, Township 17 North, Range 9 East, approximately five miles south of Mormon Lake Village in Coconino County, Arizona (Figure 1). Preliminary research by the District Archaeologist indicated that the cabin plus associated improvements and acreage comprised a Forest Homestead patented by Dave Broliar in 1920 (Haines 2018). The homestead remained in private ownership until 1975 when the USDA Forest Service acquired the property. Prior to starting its preservation work, the District sponsored this study to learn about Broliar, the homestead, and its subsequent history.¹

Primary data sources included: Coconino County deeds, homestead indices, records of livestock marks and brands, bills of sale, mortgages, and promiscuous records; Coconino National Forest cultural resource files, land records, and grazing records; General Land Office patent records; a National Archives & Records Administration/NARA land entry case file; contemporary newspapers (available at Chroniclingamerica.loc.gov and Newspaperarchive.com); vital statistics (usually accessed through Ancestry.com); unpublished manuscripts (archived at Northern Arizona University, the Camp Verde Historical Society, the Sharlot Hall Museum, and the Chanute Public Library); and historical maps and aerial photos (accessed through usgs.gov). Thanks are extended to the individuals who helped access these sources, namely Cindy Dent (Chanute Public Library), Jeremy Haines and Gary Hase (Coconino National Forest), Jan Klann (Camp Verde Historical Society), Octavia Ranger (NARA), and Tom Schmidt (Sharlot Hall Museum). Secondary sources included state and local history books and articles as cited in the following narrative.

The Broliar Era

The story of Dave Broliar and his Arizona homestead is a convoluted tale of kinship that begins in the Midwest. David Broliar was born in Dubuque County, Iowa, on June 24, 1867², to parents of Pennsylvania Dutch heritage. Emanuel Broliar was a farmer who raised crops in Iowa and Kansas. His wife, Harriet Eliza (née Husted) Broliar, was no less productive, giving birth to eight children in 22 years (1849-1871). David was her second-youngest (*Coconino Sun* 1938; Iowa State Census 1856; Kansas State Census 1875; United States Federal Census 1860 and 1880).

Turmoil uprooted the family and set the stage for David's move westward. Harriet died in the late 1870s. Emanuel, by then suffering from consumption (tuberculosis), moved with his teenaged sons, David and Emanuel Jr., to the household of his adult daughter, Julia Eller, in North Labette Township, Kansas. When Emanuel Sr. succumbed to his disease

¹ Prepared by Pat H. Stein, Arizona Preservation Consultants, Flagstaff, Arizona, 2018.

² Some historical documents (including voter registrations and census records) list David Broliar's birth year as 1865, 1869, or 1872. The last name is spelled inconsistently as Broliar, Brollier, Brallier, Broillier, and Branline. Broliar's tombstone, in the Flagstaff Citizens' Cemetery, misspells his name as Brollier.

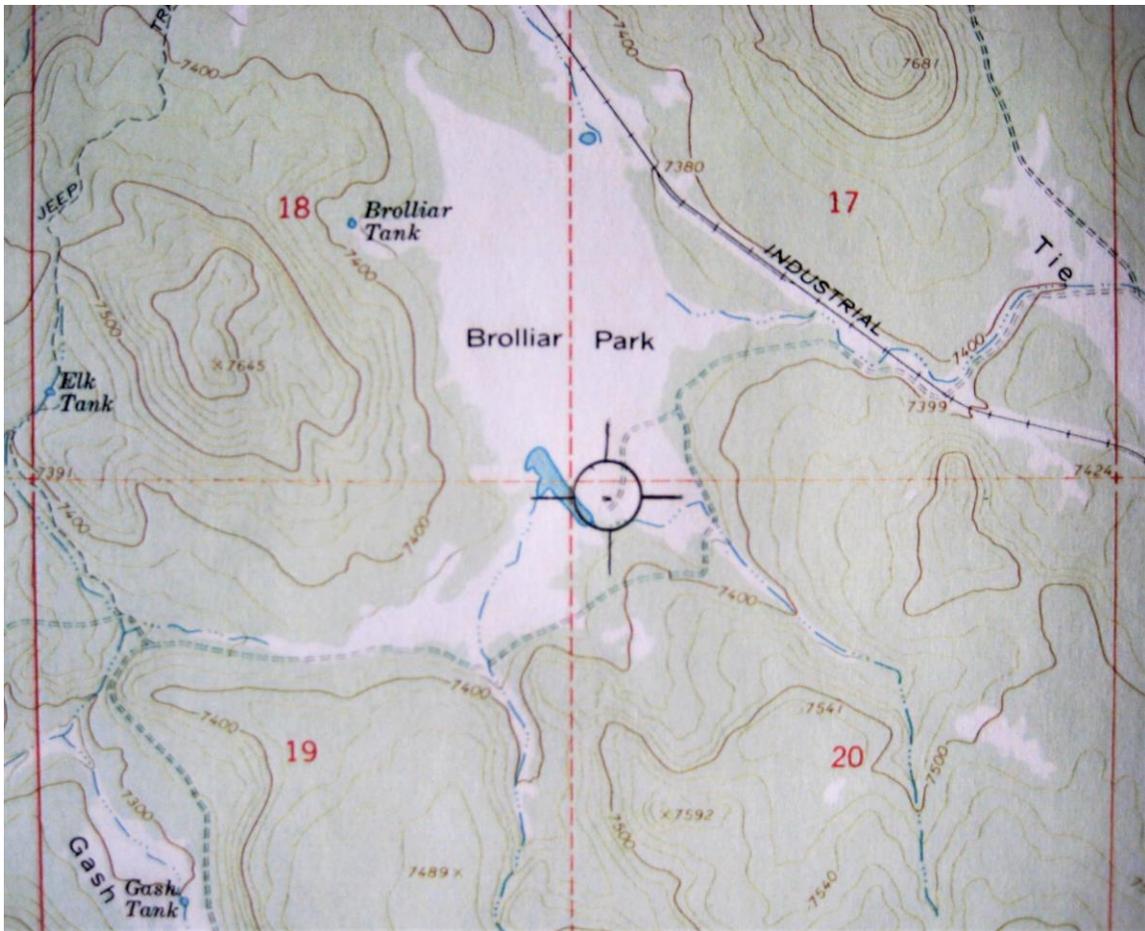


Figure 1. Location of the Broliar Park Cabin in Section 20, Township 17 North, Range 6 East (Base map: USGS Hutch Mtn., Ariz., 7.5' quadrangle, 1965).

in 1882, David and Emanuel Jr. went to live with another elder sister, Maria, in Arizona Territory/A.T. (Eaton/Broliar Family Tree nd; United States Federal Census 1880).

Maria had experienced tragedy of her own. She and her husband, Lee Neill, had settled at Stoneman Lake A.T. in 1876. Two years later Lee died, leaving Maria with a three-year-old daughter, Mary Deta Neill, and an infant son, Reuben Lee Neill. Despite her personal loss, the young widow assumed responsibility for David and Emanuel Jr., raising them as her own. She would remarry (to Lyman “Tom” Drumm) in 1883 (*Coconino Sun* 1927; Durham 1994).

The first public record of David Broliar in Arizona is a school document from October 9, 1882. By that date the teenager was enrolled in the Beaver Creek School south of Stoneman Lake. Maria Neill (misspelled as *Neal* in the school record) was listed as the parent. Except for five winters spent in Camp Verde so the children could attend school there, Maria and her young brood lived continuously at their Stoneman Lake home (Arizona School Census 1882; *Coconino Sun* 1927; Durham 1994).

The activities and movements of David Broliar between 1882 and 1890 are poorly documented. A family memoir recalls that he and his brother captured and tamed mustangs for the U.S. Army in Arizona during that period (Durham 1994). David honed skills as a horseman that would serve him well through life (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Bert (left) and David (right) Broliar circa 1890 (Credit: Durham 1994).

The brothers Broliar parted amicably around 1890. Emanuel Jr.—by then using his middle name of Bert—married a Kansan in 1894 and settled in his bride’s home state. From a day laborer position in Chanute, Kansas, Bert worked his way up to foreman of the water department of that city, where he would reside for the rest of his life (*Chanute Daily Tribune* 1938; *Chanute Times* 1912; Kansas County Marriage Records var.; United States Federal Census 1910).

Dave Broliar remained in Arizona. In Yavapai and Coconino counties he began to build a livestock outfit. His first known business associate was Benjamin F. Taylor, an experienced farmer and rancher who ranged his stock between Beaver Creek in the

winter and the Colorado Plateau in the summer. In February 1894 the two men jointly sold “a sufficient number of geldings...to amount to the sum of \$250” (Coconino County 1894a). Two months later Broliar sold to Taylor an unspecified number of cattle and horses for \$500 (Coconino County 1894b). A synergy between the two men is suggested by the fact that Broliar became a member of the Taylor household (United States Federal Census 1900). It is not unreasonable to speculate that the slightly older Taylor acted as a surrogate brother or mentor to Broliar, and that Taylor’s success in homesteading³ primed Broliar to one day claim a homestead of his own.

Ranchers faced new challenges in the early twentieth century as the Forest Service began to regulate grazing and issue livestock permits. With rangeland becoming a more valued commodity, a number of Beaver Creek stockmen in 1905 joined forces to profitably cull the number of low-value animals using the forests and grasslands. At that time approximately one-fourth of the horses on the local range were mavericks—wild, unbranded animals worth little money. On the same range there were also some low-value horses whose owners were happy to part with them. To derive profit from the overstock, ranchers rounded up approximately 380 branded and unbranded horses and trailed them to Garden City, Kansas, where they fetched \$9.00 a head. One of the stockmen participating in this effort, called “the last long trail drive,” was Dave Broliar (Dumas 1975:115).

Broliar’s horse trading continued. In 1908 he acquired an unspecified number of horses from his sister Maria and from an individual named F. L. Frederick (Coconino County 1908; *Williams News* 1908). In 1909 William D. Bruce paid \$400 to stock his homestead with Broliar horses (Bruce 1954; Coconino County 1909). The animals transferred through such sales bore a dizzying array of brands, leading to occasional run-ins with the law. In 1908 Broliar and an associate were arrested by Territorial Ranger S. C. Black for having in their possession a horse of disputed ownership. The case was heard by a judge and dismissed. Broliar and associate then brought charges against Ranger Black for assault with a deadly weapon. That case went before a jury, with ten members voting for dismissal and two for conviction (*Coconino Sun* 1908). Broliar’s eventual registration of a brand in his own name helped avoid future misunderstandings (*Coconino Sun* 1917a).

Forest Service grazing permits indicate that Broliar operated primarily out of the Beaver Creek-Camp Verde in the years preceding his homestead venture. The permits show that he owned as few as 12 horses and as many as 30 between February 1906 and April 1910. It appears that he did not own any cattle or other livestock during that period (Coconino National Forest 1906-1910).

As the federal government became increasingly active in land management during the early twentieth century, the nineteenth century notion of homesteading did not die. The Forest Homestead Act of 1906 opened agricultural lands within the Forest Reserves/National Forests to private patenting. The purpose of the law was to put tillable land in the hands

³ Benjamin F. Taylor settled along Beaver Creek in the 1890s. His first ranch there eventually became the V Bar V, but before obtaining title to that land he moved farther downstream and homesteaded near Dry Beaver Creek and Red Tank Draw (Accomazzo 1978; Lightbourn and Lyons 1989).

of farmers who would cultivate it and not use it merely as a ranch headquarters for running livestock. Federal regulations stated that a Forest Homestead claim would be allowed if it contained at least 40 acres of arable soil in the ponderosa pine zone or 80 acres of arable soil in the pinyon-juniper belt. Other stipulations required the land to be classified as suitable for farming, the claimant to submit proof of his improvements to the land, and the government to survey and inspect the claim for legal compliance. In 1912 Congress reduced from five to three years the time a claimant had to spend on the homestead, and allowed the claimant to be absent from the land for five months of each year (Collins 1996; Stein 1990).

These liberalized laws and regulations created a public land boom during the 1910s. Dave Broliar was among the crop of new applicants. In 1910, at the age of 43, he selected land for a future homestead in an alluvial parkland within Sections 17 through 20 in Township 17 North, Range 9 East. The spot was situated about midway between Mormon Lake and his sister's home at Stoneman Lake, some five linear miles from either point. A government land classification study indicated that Broliar would be one of only five homesteaders in that township (Burrall 1915; NARA var).

Broliar established residence on the property in the fall of 1910. He camped in a tent until building a house there in 1911. On December 9, 1911, he submitted a homestead application for a tract containing 134.12 acres. However, when a metes and bounds survey determined that his house fell just outside that tract, Broliar in 1913 filed for an additional 19.74 acres to include his house site as well as more of the meadow at the north end of his original claim. This additional claim and a subsequent one, for 6.14 acres including a barn site, resulted in confusion that would delay the patenting process, to Broliar's great frustration (NARA var) (Figure 3).

In the summer of 1914 the homesteader received visitors when Bert Broliar and his daughter, Della Lopeman, traveled from Chanute to Stoneman Lake. From their base at Maria's home, they ventured on day-trips and extended forays to local points of interest. Della waxed poetic about their Arizona adventures in a 1,000-word article published in the *Chanute Daily Tribune*. But of her uncle's homestead, she had only this to say; "The next ride [from Stoneman Lake] was to my uncle's ranch, seven miles through rocks and pines without seeing a house, except the ruins of a log cabin" (Lopeman 1914:1).

If the Broliar homestead was unimpressive in the summer of 1914, it soon showed unmistakable signs of progress. Dave brought 23 acres under cultivation by the close of that year, and successfully grew oats, potatoes, and barley. A Forest Homestead Entry Survey (HES #384) revealed many improvements to the property by November 1915: a dwelling, barn, well, tank, cultivated field, and fencing (Figure 4). The same survey established that the claim contained precisely 158.42 acres. Newspaper articles and grazing records meanwhile indicated that Broliar cultivated hay on his claim, and that he kept 98 cows, two bulls, and 15 horses there (Burrall 1915; *Coconino Sun* 1917b; Coconino National Forest 1911-1917; Johnson 1915; NARA var; *Williams News* 1915).

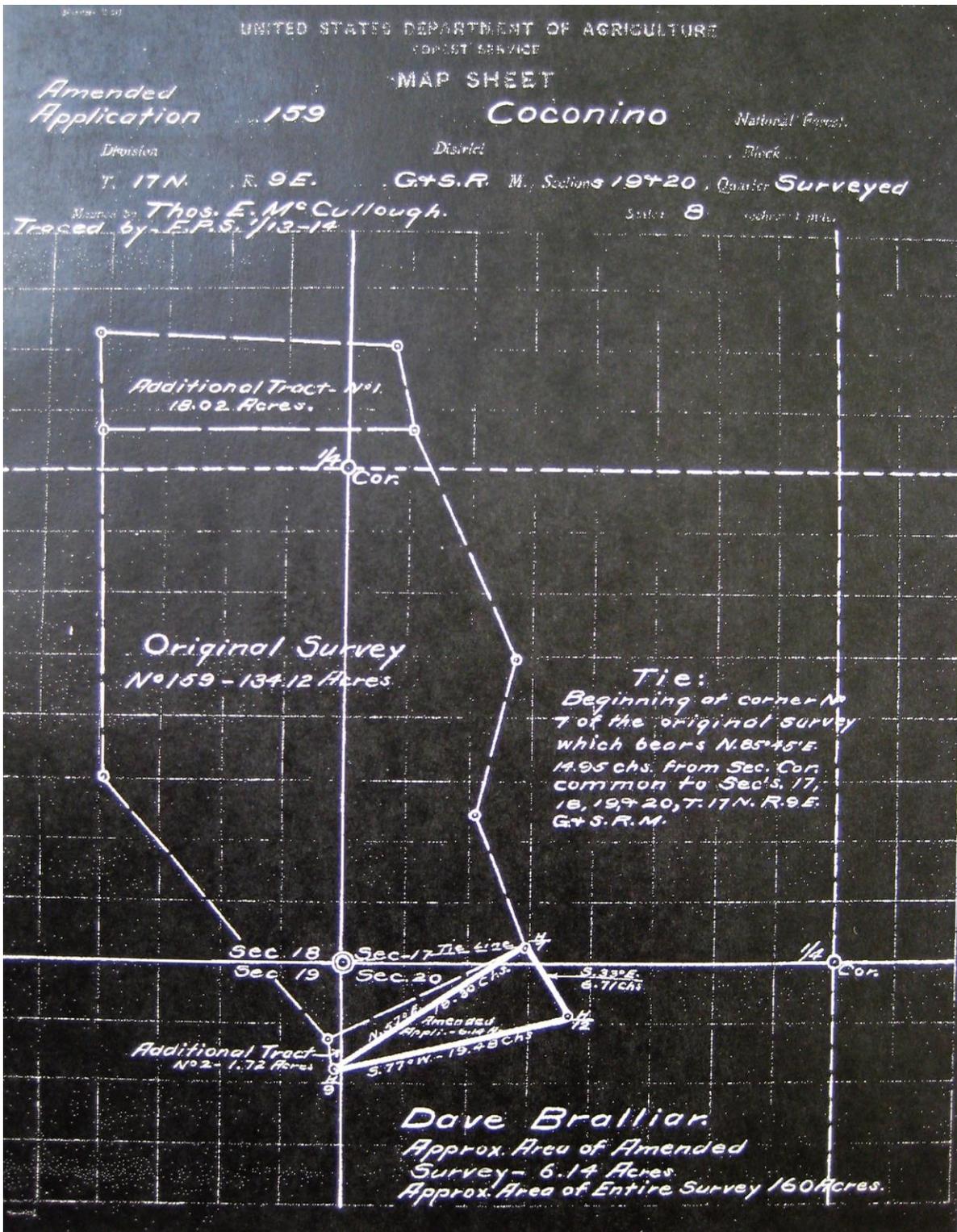


Figure 3. USDA Forest Service metes and bounds survey of 1914, showing original acreage claimed (134.12), additional tracts north and south of that tract, and a later, amended tract at the very southern end of the homestead (NARA var).

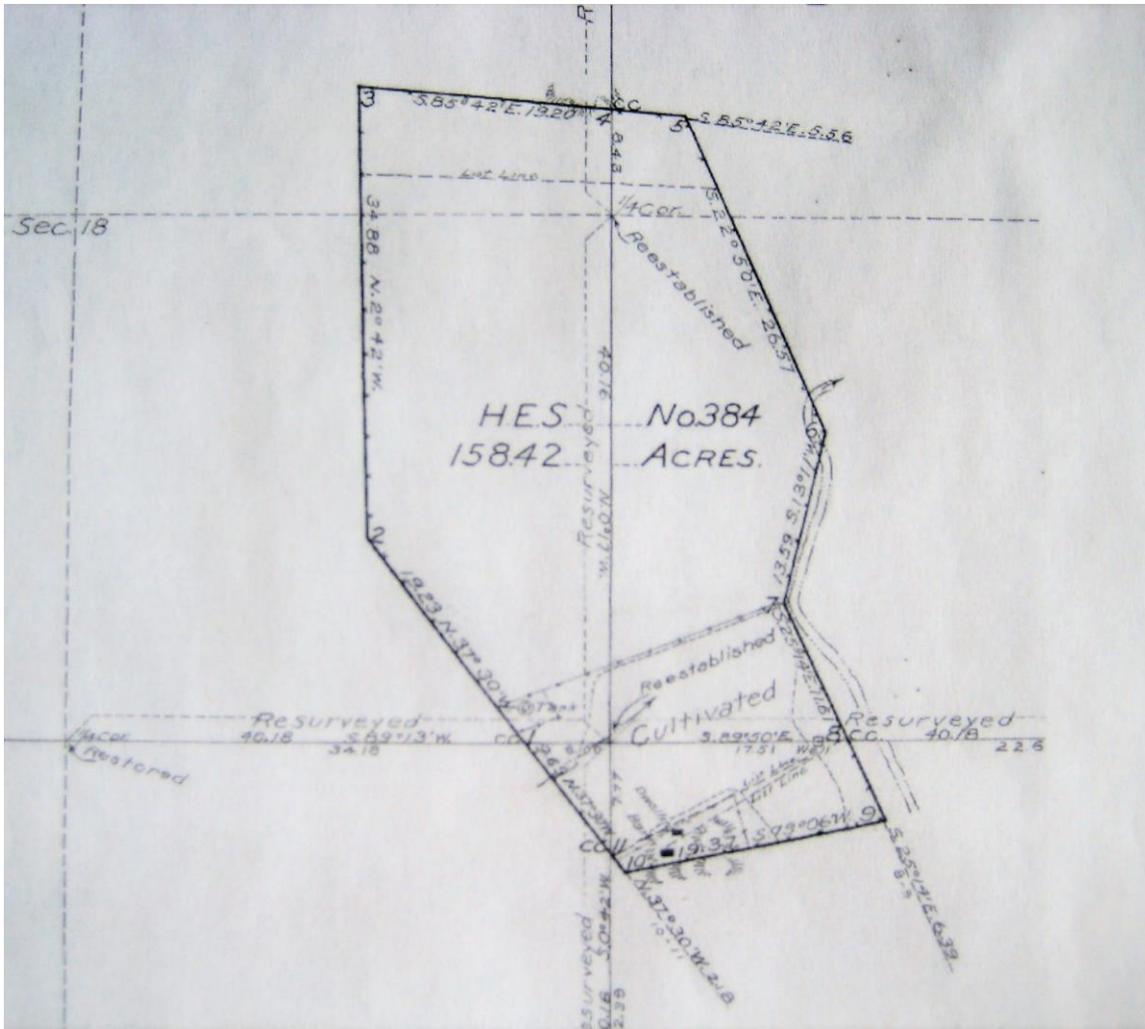


Figure 4. General Land Office Homestead Entry Survey #384 plat showing boundaries and improvements to the Broliar homestead. The map was generated in 1915 but not accepted and approved until 1919, delaying the “proving up” process (Johnson 1915; NARA var).

By 1917 Broliar’s herd increased to 138 cattle and his cultivated field expanded to 50 acres. He became anxious to see the fruits of his labor rewarded with a title to the land. Accordingly, he petitioned the government to let him file the “Final Proof” that would allow him to patent the property. The government cited three obstacles. Some officials believed Broliar had exceeded his rights under homestead law by filing the two additional claims that had enlarged his original one. Other officials thought Broliar had not submitted his Final Proof quickly enough to satisfy the timeline for a Three Year homestead entry. A third obstacle was that the November 1915 Homestead Entry Survey had not yet been accepted and approved by authorities (NARA var).

In May 1917 an exasperated and confused Broliar wrote a letter to land officials, stating:

Since y can not get any Results from the Land office at Pheonix y Will Rite you a Bout my homestead 384 y filed on it Dec 9 1911 as y halve complied With the Law y Would Like to halve a chance to Proove up on it if you can do any thing Please do so if not how Long are you going to keep me out of it y halve Been here Since 1910 so Please Let me no Where the trouble is. X Dave Broliar X [NARA var].

Eventually, and with assistance from a County judge, all obstacles to submitting the Final Proof were resolved in Broliar's favor. He was allowed to prove up in November 1919. His testimony stated that his 158.42-acre homestead included:

- a 14 x 16 ft log house
- an 18 x 24 ft three-room box house⁴
- a 20 x 40 ft barn with a horse shed on each side
- an 8 x 10 ft chicken house
- a well, 38 ft deep
- 50 acres under cultivation
- two dirt tanks
- corrals
- one mile of road from the main road to the homestead
- a four-wire fence all around the property; and
- two cross fences (NARA var).

Broliar further testified that he had lived full-time on the homestead from 1910 to 1919, with two exceptions. He was gone from November 1914 to April 1915 because of issues involving his cattle and was absent from December 1917 to April 1918 to escape the cold weather (NARA var).

Witnesses corroborated Broliar's testimony. A notice of intent to issue a patent to Broliar was published in the *Northern Arizona Leader* in late 1919. No one protested the proposed action. With no hurdles remaining, President Woodrow Wilson on September 29, 1920, signed Patent #775557 conveying ownership of the property to Dave Broliar (General Land Office 1920; NARA var).

Broliar was an industrious homesteader and an accomplished rancher, but what can be said of his personal life and interests? Census records indicate that he was a lifelong bachelor who usually lived alone in his cabin. Only around 1930, when he was in his 60s, did he reside with a boarder, who doubled as Broliar's ranch hand (United States Federal Census 1920 and 1930). The bachelor's rather solitary existence in the back of beyond may have sparked a puckish sense of humor and a fondness for tall tales, as suggested by an anecdote published in the Flagstaff newspaper:

⁴ "Box" or "box-and-strip" construction first appeared in the Great Plains in the late 1800s after milled lumber became available but was still expensive in some hard-to-reach areas. Requiring a minimum of wood, this building method involved nailing vertical boards to a bottom sill and top plate, then covering the cracks with thin wood strips to resemble board-and-batten siding. Box houses had plank construction without structural framing behind the boards (Carley 1994).

Dave Broliar, who had just caught up with his work on his ranch south of Mormon Lake and could thus spare time to come in for supplies, told Alf Dickinson at the Pine hotel on Friday: "Me and old man Hance [John Hance] is responsible for most of the scenery hereabouts. He dug the Grand Canyon and I wheeled the dirt out on a wheelbarrow and made the San Francisco peaks.

The newspaper's staff dryly commented, "After hearing this we looked again to see how Dave spells his last name," (*Coconino Sun* 1919:3), referring, no doubt, to the "liar" portion of "Broliar."

A later glimpse of the homestead during the Broliar era is provided by a Forest grazing record from April 1937. At that time the property consisted of four improvements (unspecified, but probably consisting of the log cabin, barn or "box" house, stock tank, and a corral), two miles of fencing, one water source (the well), and only 10 head of livestock. None of the stock was under Forest permit or within a Forest grazing allotment; the 10 animals grazed within the confines of the homestead and in a small, fenced pasture immediately west of the homestead.⁵ The property was valued at \$1,000, and netted the owner an annual income varying between \$100 and \$400 (*Coconino National Forest* 1937).

As Dave Broliar approached his seventieth birthday he transferred ownership of the property to his nephew and niece, Reuben Lee Neill and Mary Deta (née Neill) Durham. In the summer of 1938, illness forced him to move in with Reuben in Phoenix. By September the old homesteader had become so critically ill and bedridden that he could not be told of the very recent death of his brother Bert. Dave Broliar died on September 19, 1938, at the age of 71 (*Arizona Republic* 1938; *Coconino County* 1936; *Coconino Sun* 1938).

Ownership after Dave Broliar

The property remained in the hands of the extended Broliar family for six years after the homesteader's death in 1938. In 1939, Reuben Neill transferred his undivided half-interest in the property to his sister Mary Deta Durham and her husband, Walter W. Durham (*Coconino County* 1939). The lives of that Stoneman Lake couple are well chronicled in the biography titled *That Hashknife Kid* (Durham 1994). The present study searched for but found no evidence that they, or any tenants, lived on or used the Broliar homestead during the time they owned it. The Durhams did, apparently, value the land highly enough to pay property taxes on it, for the homestead was never threatened with a Sheriff's lien or seizure for failure to pay delinquent taxes.

⁵ It is unclear whether Broliar resided seasonally or year-round on his homestead after patenting it. Many stockmen of that era and locality grazed their animals at high elevations in the summer and at low elevations in the winter. The present study searched for but found no evidence that Broliar owned property in lower portions of Coconino or Yavapai counties, although it is possible that he leased winter rangeland in such areas.

The Durhams sold the Broliar homestead in October 1944. The purchase price was \$3500 for the 158.42-acre parcel “together with all improvements and machinery thereon” (Coconino County 1944:1). The buyers were Albert Oran Talbot and his wife, Cora Irene Talbot.

Albert Talbot was an auctioneer who had relocated from Montrose, Colorado, to Phoenix around 1920. In the latter city he established his business, Talbot’s Sales Yards, at 19th Avenue and Buckeye Road. Advertisements in local newspapers claimed that Talbot’s was “always a reliable place to sell your livestock” (*Arizona Republic* 1944:11), and it may have been through that line of work that he became acquainted with the Durhams as the elderly couple began to liquidate their holdings in the 1940s.

Working along with Albert in the auction business were his two sons, Carrol and Merlyn. Upon Albert’s death in 1948, ownership of the old Broliar homestead passed to them. Records are unclear as to how Carrol and Merlyn used the property, other than as collateral to secure a loan of \$4500 in 1952. The loan was paid off in two years, and the Talbot family again owned the homestead free and clear of debt (Arizona Death Records 1948; Coconino County 1952 and 1954; Parsons nd).

It was probably during the Talbot tenure that Broliar’s old stock tank(s) was enlarged. A wide berm was placed along the southwest end of the homestead, while a ditch was excavated along the southern end. Construction of both features likely required heavy machinery. While the function of the ditch is unclear—it may have contributed some borrow material for the berm—the berm served to impound water while preventing it from flooding the homestead. The person or agency responsible for building these earthworks is unclear. What *is* clear is that the berm was present and creating a wetland by 1961, according to a Forest Service map (Figure 5). The same map shows that a feature called “Broliar Tank” was also present by 1961, outside the northwest boundary of the homestead. According to Forest grazing records, that tank was built in 1948 (Coconino National Forest 1961 and nd1).

From 1972 to 1975 the federal government engaged in negotiations to transfer ownership of the homestead to the Forest Service. A real estate and investment company initiated the transaction by first contacting the Talbots, who showed a willingness to sell. The company proposed that the 158.42-acre homestead be offered to the government in exchange for a 40-acre Forest Service tract near the rapidly growing community of Oak Creek Village, south of Sedona, Arizona. Regional Forest staff noted that the offered land included four structures--a one-room log cabin, frame shed, outhouse, and loading chutes--“all old, run down, and without any economic value” (Maynard 1974).⁶ An independent appraiser reported favorably on the land itself, noting that the adjacent wetland regularly impounded five acres of water and that the homestead meadow supported a rich stand of annual and perennial forbs and grasses (Seiger 1973). The homestead was valued at \$975 per acre, for a total of \$154,600, while the 40-acre parcel was valued at \$3,600 per acre, for a total of \$144,000. The Forest Service viewed the

⁶ The report suggests that Broliar’s barn and box house no longer existed by 1974. Their dates of demolition are unknown.

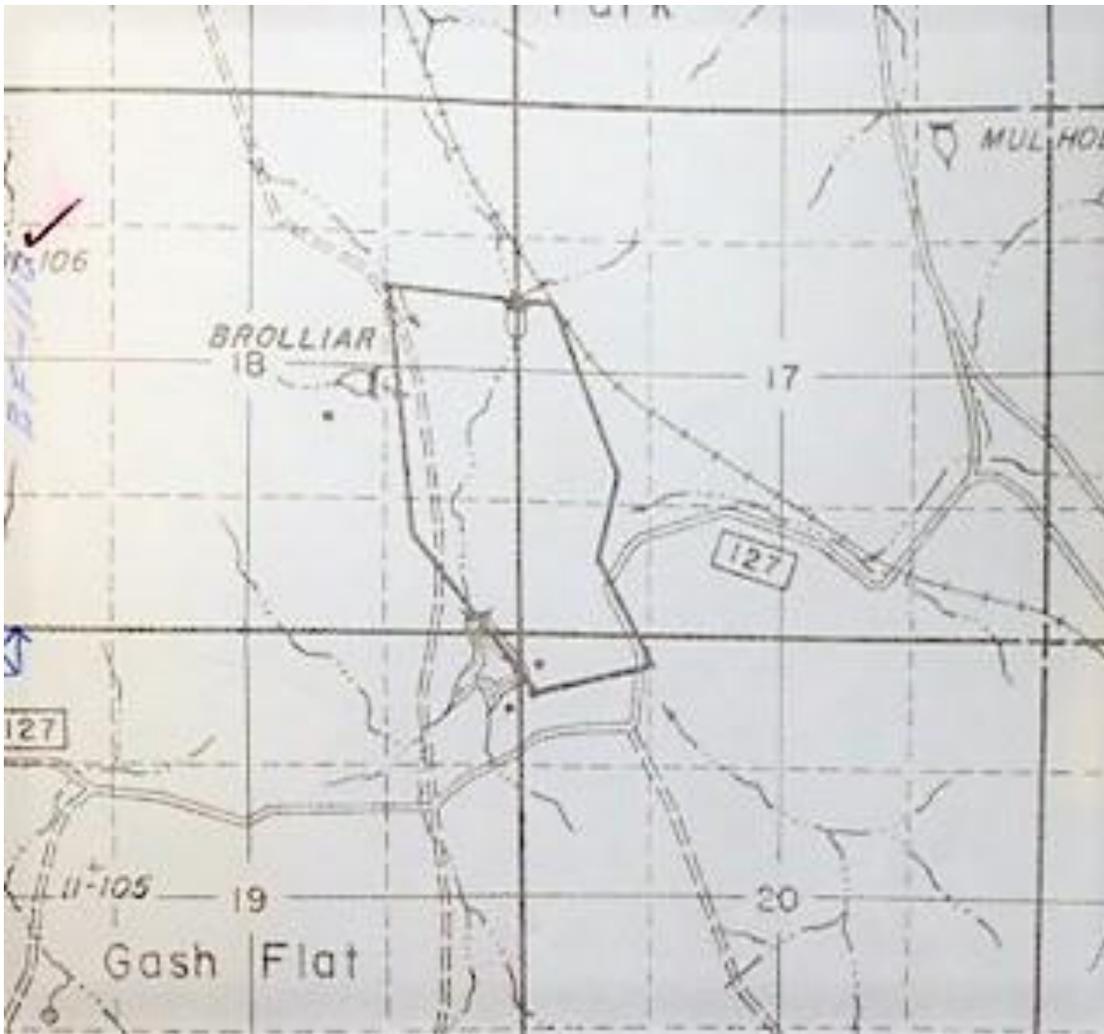


Figure 5. The Brolliar homestead as shown on a 1961 Coconino National Forest grazing map. By that time, the berm along the southwest side of the homestead had formed a wetland of about five acres. A new feature, named “Brolliar Tank” is seen outside the northwest boundary of the homestead; it was constructed in 1948 (Sources: Coconino National Forest 1961 and nd1).

transaction as beneficial because it would be monetarily favorable, would consolidate National Forest ownership, and would bring a critical wildlife area into federal ownership. The government agreed to the exchange, and the deal was struck. The homestead was deeded to the government on July 16, 1975, and the 40-acre parcel was patented to its new owners on November 12, 1975 (Coconino National Forest nd2).

The old Brolliar homestead remains part of the Coconino National Forest today. Its century-old log cabin has not been used for many decades except by casual day visitors and wildlife watchers. The building has a roof and four walls but is uninhabitable. Only rough openings remain where windows and a door once were (Figure 6). The barn is gone, the well is infilled, the shed and corral lie in ruins, and there is no trace of the box

house built by Broliar in the 1910s. The proposed preservation of the log cabin will begin to arrest further deterioration and may be a first step in returning the lonely cabin on the Coconino to more active use.



Figure 6. The Broliar Park Cabin in 2018. View toward the northeast.

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