

What is “Boot Ranch”?

Whether you're a history buff, or just want to know more about the history Boot Ranch...

1. Read more at: <http://patch.com/florida/palmharbor/al-boyd-made-east-lake-possible>

Al Boyd Made East Lake Possible

A man with many interests, Al Boyd is famous for his boot but he is credited with helping to establish the East Lake corridor through his land sales.

Ever drive by Boot Ranch Shoppes and wonder where that name came from? Well, it wasn't just because of a big boot that adorns the center! The big boot which looked differently decades ago was actually built by a man name Al Boyd as a monument representing the name of his ranch and its entryway. The entryway to Boot Ranch was about at the Tampa and East Lake Roads intersection. The boot was repainted.

Al Boyd was born in Florida in 1913. Safety Harbor to be exact. He was raised in his family's homestead on Curlew Road and was the oldest son. Al's father was a butcher who delivered meats to surrounding areas and acquired about 100 acres that he used for farmland. Keep in mind that there were different types of farming in the area at the time – vegetables, cattle, citrus.

Al's father began to purchase land around north Pinellas and in Pasco County, eventually amassing at the peak of ownership, 10,000 acres while Al owned 6,000 acres. It was around the late 1920s when the county government mandated a fencing ordinance that the ranchers in south Pinellas could no longer allow their cattle herds to roam unless they moved their herds to north Pinellas. This created a bit of a bind for southern ranchers but not for Al's father. Mr. Boyd was able to continue to purchase land while leasing his lands to southern ranchers.

In the 1930's and 1940's, the Boyds purchased large blocks of acreage. The Boyds owned an area of where State Road 584's boundary is (more people know it as Tampa Road) through to Pasco County where the Anclote River bordered on the North and West, down into Lake Tarpon and a northwest piece of Hillsborough County. Al had many heads of cattle grazing on the acreage.

Al started to sell off some of the land after his father died in 1950. He kept about 1,200 acres that he used for cattle breeding. Boot Ranch became known for prize winning cattle. Al had what the locals called a Party House on the ranch where people would visit – famous people such as Lana Turner and the president of Nicaragua. As the story goes, the Party House was also used by Commissioners for meetings with Al. Mr. Boyd was very generous to the county through acts such as granting right of ways on his property to deeding property for East Lake Road. A County Administrator once dubbed Al “The Father of the East Lake Tarpon”.

Al sold off the last of his 1,200 acres in 1972 where about 800 acres of that became East Lake Woodlands. He kept just nine acres. He sold those 1,200 acres for about \$2,000,000 to Metro Communities Corp. on just a handshake. Now, just one home could sell for that and more in East Lake! How times have changed! Al led an interesting life. He gave name to Boot Ranch, had great interest in ecology, bred Brahman cattle with local cattle, won prizes for his stock, and entertained many famous movie stars, foreign merchants and heads of state at his ranch. Next time you pass that boot, remember that it is a man's legacy.

Did you know that rumor has it that there was a room with a window built into the big boot because Al wanted to shoot back at the people who thought taking shots at the boot was fun? It's rumored that the toe of the big boot at Boot Ranch has remnants of that window!

2. Read more: <http://historyofeastlake.weebly.com/>

3. Visit: The Palm Harbor Museum at the northwest corner of Curlew and Belcher Roads. Read more: <http://www.museumsusa.org/museums/info/309>