E:	Westward	Expansion	1763-1	1898

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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NAME				
HISTORIC	Yuma Crossing			
AND/OR COMMON	Yuma Crossing			
LOCATION				
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			NOT FOR PUBLICATION	
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CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENTUSE
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CONDIT	ION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
EXCELLENT X_GOOD X_FAIR	DETERIORATED RUINS UNEXPOSED	X_UNALTERED X_ALTERED	X_ORIGINAL SITE MOVEØ DATE

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Yuma Crossing, where Jaeger operated the ferry, was located between two existing highway bridges, where two small islands stand in the middle of the Colorado River. The natural scene has been impaired by modern developments on both sides of the stream, and by power lines that cross it at this point. A new Interstate Highway bridge, supported on high piers, will arch directly over the crossing site, probably within a year or two. In terms of the basic physical integrity of the site, this bridge will not add to the historic scene. But in another respect, this modern structure and its companion highway and railroad bridges forcefully illustrate the continuing gateway function of the Yuma Crossing.

The fort is located on a hill overlooking the river at the north end of the railroad and old highway bridges. Possibly a dozen buildings survive from the military period. The old fort was until recently used by the Bureau of Indian Affairs as a school and agency for the Yuma Indians. It has now reverted to the tribe. Historic structures research performed in 1965 by Architect Charles S. Pope on eight of the old fort structures indicated that they retained most of their historic fabric and much original trim, exterior and interior. Work was recently carried out to return these buildings to their original appearance when possible. The major alteration has been the demolition of an old girls dormitory which replaced a company barracks during the period the fort was used as an Indian school. This has been replaced with a one story structure which does not follow the old fort design but also does not disrupt the general plan or conflict with the older construction.

The Indian School is of recent construction and took the site of the old hospital. The Officers Quarters still exist on the south side of the parade grounds with all of their interior features intact. The western most building was changed from the Commanding Officer's kitchen to a residence after 1904 and is now used a museum. The original Officer's Dining Room has been removed and the space taken by a road.

Several buildings that once served as units of the Quartersmaster Depot are located just downstream from the Yuma Crossing. Of adobe and plaster, part are unoccupied and owned by the City of Yuma, the rest in use as offices by the Bureau of Reclamation. The city-owned Commanding Officer's Quarters is sound structurally, though in need of clean-up and maintenance.

The prison is located at the south end of the old highway bridge, directly opposite Fort Yuma. Of adobe and stone, much of the complex is still standing, some in ruins. When the prison opened in 1876 there were two stone cells and an adobe building containing two prison rooms, a kitchen, a dining room, a hall room fro Guards, and Superintendent's quarters. The water reservoir had been completed with pump, boiler, and engine. At this time the prison was capable of holding safely 32 prisoners. The buildings

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AR	EAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	ECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	
PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	AGRICULTURE	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
<u>X</u> 1800-1899	COMMERCE	X_EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1876, 1852, 1864

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This complex of sites is located on the Arizona and California shores of the Colorado River at Yuma, Arizona. The prime significance of the Yuma Crossing lies in its role as a transportation and communication gateway, significant both as a crossing point between New Spain and Alta California during the Spanish colonial period and between the American Southwest and California during the period of the American westward movement.

Physically and historically associated with the Yuma Crossing are three groups of historic structures. On the California shore stand the surviving buildings of Fort Yuma, U.S. Army post that guarded the Crossing from 1850 to 1885, which now house the Yuma Indian Agency. Opposite the fort, in Arizona, are the buildings of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot, from which the frontier forts of Arizona were supplied from 1864 until the 1880s. Just east of the Depot are stone cell blocks and guard towers of the Arizona Territorial prison.

None of these sites is regarded individually as nationally significant and all have suffered various but not disqualifying impairment of integrity. Collectively the complex of sites possesses high historical significance.

HISTORY

The story of Yuma goes back to prehistory, when Indian trails converged at this natural corssing of the Colorado River. Recorded history begins with Alarcon and Diaz in 1540, then leaps to Father Kino in the 1690's, and Father Garces and Juan Bautista de Anaza in the 1770's. Garces established a Franciscan mission here in 1779, and a presidio and colony were added two years later, only to be destroyed by Yuma Indians on July 19, 1781. The fur trapper Ewing Young came down the Gila and crossed at Yuma in 1826. In 1846 General Stephen W. Kearny's Army of the West, hurrying to the aid of Fremont and Stockton in California, crossed at the mouth of the Gila, to be followed in January 1847 by the Mormon Battalion under Lt. Col. Philip St. George Cooke.

Thus, even before gold was discovered in California, Yuma had become the principal corssing of the Colorado River in the desert region. Pioneers

10GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____ C . 149 UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING	
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

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ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE

OWNER OF PROPERTY: Quechan Tribal Council P. O. Box 1169 Yuma, Arizona 85364

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

were enclosed by a wooden stockade which served until the great wall could be built.

Building continued. Cell blocks were added, and additional cells were blasted and chiseled out of the rocky hill. In time the top of Prison Hill became crowded inside as well as outside the walls. Stables, offices, and superintendent's residence were constructed outside of the front gate overlooking the Colorado River, in easy view of Fort Yuma on the California side.

Superintendent Ingalls in 1885 had constructed a building 120 feet by 40 feet to accommodate the engine room, blacksmith, carpenter, shoe, and tailor shops. This building was enlarged in later years, and in 1895, the bakery and bath house were moved to this building by order of Superintendent Nugent.

One of the early important buildings contained the kitchen, bakery and the bathing room. Shops, dining room, photo gallery, and guard stations were added, and commanding the entire area was the Main Gurad Station on top of the reservoir. The Main Guard Station and water reservoir under it have been preserved. Before it was torn down the wall at one point approached a point ten or fifteen feet from the Guard Tower. A catwalk connected the two, over which the rifle-carrying guards passed.

Only one gate was originally provided: the "Sallyport" or Main Gate. This huge archway, with its heavy strap-iron grilled door, remains. The wooden stockade that was first constructed to contain the prisoners and some of the prison buildings over a period of time was replaced by a high adobe wall.

These walls were remarkably engineered. The foundation was constructed with solid rock obtained from the Prison Quarry, it being estimated that 51,000 cubic feet of rock and 60,000 pounds of lime were used in the construction of the boundation alone. The average height of the wall was sixteen to eighteen feet.

These walls were constructed of adobe block plastered smooth for appearance and protection against rain. Averaging eight feet wide at the base, the walls narrowed to five feet at the top, which was paved as a walkway for the patrolling guards. The prison yard was thus enclosed by walls on the west, north, and east sides, and the rocky hill itself on the south.

A double gateway was built into the middle of the north wall, which for many years was the only access to the prison yard. In 1903 another double

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DATE ENTERED

PAGE

3

CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER 7

gateway was constructed at the southeastern corner of the New Yard. It had an inside measurement of fourteen by thirty-two feet. Constructed of adobe, iron grating laid in the walls to a height of eight feet above the ground prevented prisoners from boring through.

The front gate remains, still hung with heavy iron work and double iron grated gates. The New Yard gatweay had iron grating at the outer and inner entrances, as provided for the main gateway. In addition, the 1903 gateway supported a sixteen by thirty-two foot gurad stand, designed to command both the inner and the outer gates.

Not properly part of Prison Hill facility, but from time to time part of the prison operation, were the prison farm and wood camp. Closer to home, and on the eastern slope of the hill, were the swine yard, no longer identifiable, and the Cemetery. The latter is now fenced, and the wooden markers which were marked the last resting place of men who had enjoyed little rest during life have been lost and stolen except for two now in the Prison Museum.

The first and basic need of the prison was an adequate confinement area for the increasing numbers of prisoners. The program of adding cells never stopped until the prison was abandoned.

More cells were added to the first two until finally facilities were available, in a pinch, for over 400 inmates. Cells were hollowed out of the hill on the south side of the yard, first along the side facing the yard, and were used for shops, library, and solitary confinement. Then cells were hewn out of the rock mesa on the west side, for the Women's yard, facing a private yard 30 feet by 30 feet. Three of these cells can now be seen, driving up from the highway approaching Prison Hill. Women played a small but spectacular part in the history of the Arizona Territorial Prison, discussed more in another chapter.

When the Main Cell Block was constructed in 1895, designed to hold 150 prisoners, the Prison Commissioners undoubtedly (but mistakenly) thought they had finally licked their space problem. The ruins of these cells still remain standing south of the Museum.

The Main Cell Block consisted of two parallel blocks of cells, running north and south. The cell block on the west side contained fourteen parallel, airy, double cells: long rooms running across the building and partitioned in the middle by a heavy iron grate. Both buildings were 132 feet long, whereas the east cell block (with single cells) was 18 feet wide, and the west cell block (with double cells) was 24 feet wide. The two cell blocks were separated by a distance of about ten feet. The walls were all approximately three feet

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

thick, excepting the west wall of the west block, which was five feet thick. These widths obtained about three feet above ground level. The walls narrowed slightly as they increased in height.

The east, single-cell block held the long-term prisoners. These cells are much in the same condition they were in 1909 when abandoned. These had two metal barred doors, opened in unison, being held together by a cross bar. They provided an opening just large enough for a prisoner to go around one door and then the other.

The west block cells were for the short-term prisoners, and had only one door to a cell. Four double cells have been torn down now, and today this block is some 36 feet shorter than other.

During 1903 and 1904 the superintendent constructed five additional cells. Toolproof steel caging had been procured from the Champion Iron Company of Canton, Ohio. A plastered adobe building with galvanized roofing was built on the west side of the Main Cell House for the installation of these new cages. This building was 48 by 26 feet. The maximum security prisoners were kept here. This cell block is now gone.

In constant use as punishment cells and for the isolation of prisoners afflicted with contagious and infectious diseases, were the cells in that portion of the hill forming the south wall of the Main Yard, the west wall of the New Yard, and the east wall of the Women's Yard.

The last cells to be added were hewn out of the east side of the hill, on the side opposite from the Women's Yard, in the area described in the reports as the New Yard. These cells remain, and are notable for their particular barrenness and rawness, and for the fact that their floors are now several inches below the level of the outside yard. This phenomenon is perhaps the result not so much of blowing sand and dirt as the leveling of the adobe walls.

Originally the front of these cells was faced with adobe and plaster, and at that time no doubt presented a finished and acceptable appearance. Now the plaster is gone, the adobe is eroding, and the aspect is one of melancholy desolation.

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CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

The Main Cell Block, those two parallel concrete and granite structures, received a second story in 1901, which became a much needed and appreciated hospital. There the walls did not block whatever breezes might tend to make the hot summer nights more bearable, and the corridor thus covered permitted the accommodation of prisoners in this substantial area. CONTINUATION SHEET

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ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

travelling on the Kearny Trail and the Cooke Wagon Road--main routes across Arizona that drew together many trails across Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico--ferried the Colorado at Yuma. Immigrants and freighters continued to use the Yuma Crossing until the railroad bridged the river in 1877. From 1858 to 1861, coaches of the Butterfield Overland Mail Company ferried the river at Yuma (the station was at Jaeger's house on the California side), and in the post-Civil War decade other stage lines continued the practice.

Yuma Indians in the vicinity first conceived the idea of a ferry, and during 1848 developed a lucrative business swimming stock and carrying Californiabound immigrants across the river. Enterprising white men soon ejected the Indians and took over the business. In 1850 it was operated by a band of outlaws, led by the notorious John Glanton, who entrenched themselves in a rude fortification on the California side near the ruins of the Garces mission. The Yuma Indians later retaliated, catching the intruders unaware after a night of drinking. In the summer of 1850, George A. Johnson and Louis J. F. Jaeger established a ferry here that Jaeger operated for a quarter of a century, and in November the Army, recognizing the strategic importance of the crossing, sent Maj. Samuel Heintzelman to establish Fort Yuma. By 1852, the fort was permanently located on a bluff on the California side opposite the mouth of the Gila.

Fort Yuma continued as a military reservation until 1884, and it continued to exercise a restraining influence on the restless Apaches; because it was situated on the Mexican border it was involved in customs, immigration and other matters. In 1884 the post was turned over to the Department of the Interior for servation purposes. Colorado City, later Arizona City, and still later Yuma, grew up on the Arizona shore and became, besides a major waystation on the overland trails, terminal point of a busy steamboat traffic by which Fort Yuma was supplied. Boats from California ports rounded Lower California and sailed up the gulf to the mouth of the Colorado, whence flatbottomed river steamers shipped the cargoes upriver to Yuma. Jaeger's Ferry Landing, on the east bank, became also the steamship landing.

Yuma's importance as a logistical and communications link during the Civil War, particularly in relation to the operations of Gen. J. H. Carleton's California Column, led in 1864 to establishment of a large Quartermaster Depot at Jaeger's Landing. An important depot, comparable to New Mexico's Fort Union, it drew supplies from California by boat and distributed them by freight wagon to the frontier forts of Arizona. Destroyed by fire in 1867, the depot was immediately rebuilt and functioned until the late 1880's. Finally, in 1908, it became a custom house and served as an immigration checkpoint until 1954. Fort Yuma, on the California side, diminished in importance after the Civil War, and was abandoned by the Army in 1885.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

In 1876 Yuma became the site of Arizona Territorial Prison, erected on a bluff overlooking Colorado just north of Jaeger's Landing. Because of Yuma's intense heat, the stone cell blocks, guarded at two corners by towers mounting Gatling guns, achieved a reputation approaching that of Alcatraz. From 1876 to 1909, when the prison site was moved to Florence, the "Hell-Hole on the Bluff" housed notorious frontier criminals, among them Buckskin Frank Leslie, who killed 14 people in Tombstone, and Pearl Hart, "Arizona's Girl Bandit." In 1887 seven prisoners captured Warden Thomas Gates and, using him as a shield, attempted to escape. A marksman on one of the guard towers killed four of the prisoners, but one of the remaining three stabbed Gates in the neck before another prisoner intervened and quelled the mutiny. Gates never recovered and soon committed suicide. Later another escape attempt was foiled by the Gatling guns.

The prime significance of Yuma Crossing lies in its role as a transportation and communication gateway, significant both as a crossing point between New Spain and Alta California, and between the American Southwest and California. Geography here acted as a funnel of history, producing historccal associations with the following themes: Theme IV, "Spanish Exploration and Settlement," Theme XIV, "The Civil War," Theme XXI, "Policical and Military Affairs After 1865," and the following subthemes of Theme XV, "Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries": "Military and Indian Affairs," "The Texas Revolution and Mexican War," "The Fur Trade Era," "Overland Migrations of the Trans-Mississippi West," "Great Explorers of the West," and "Transportation and Communication."

Individually the other Yuma sites do not possess sufficient importance to merit classification in any one of the themes in which they figure. The Yuma complex should not, however, be relegated to the "Other Sites Considered" category. The intimate association in history of the five sites composing the Yuma complex, together with their close physical proximity, suggest that, for purposes of evaluation, they should be treated as a unit. And the important collective role they played in nine historical themes of the National Survey further suggests that Yuma deserves consideration as a special case apart from any single theme study, valuable under "Westward Expansion and Extension of the National Boundaries," not tying it directly to any one subtheme.

The Yuma Crossing itself is the focal point and the most significant site. But aside from the impairment of its integrity, it is merely a location. The relationship of the historic buildings to the Crossing, however, is sufficiently close to permit them to be recognized as illustrative of the Crossing and its role in the larger Yuma story.

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1

CONTINUATION SHEET

Form No. 10-300a

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE

The boundary for the Yuma Crossing and related sites has been drawn to include Fort Yuma, the U.S. Army Depot, and the Arizona Territorial Prison into a unified district. Any incidental features not associated directly with the crossing itself or the three groupings of buildings do not disrupt the integrity of the district but do not contribute to the national significance of the landmark, although some may be of state and local significance like the Yuma Siphon. Beginning at the border line of Imperial and Yuma Counties at UTM 11.723480.3624200 the boundary continues south along the lower ridge line continuing across the Colorado River following the lower ridge line below the prison to UTM 11.723820.3623210 then proceeding due west to Penitentiary Avenue, then north along the east edge of Penitentiary Avenue to Jones Street, then west along the south edge of Jones Street to a point where Jones Street deadends; then continuing in a straight line west below the south edge of the Siphon to an intersection with Route 80 (Fourth Avenue in Arizona); then north along the east edge of Route 80 to a point on the lower ridge line of the north bank of the Colorado River; then east along this line, curving north to join Route 10 (a continuation of Penitentiary Avenue), then northwest along Route 10 to a point in line with the Imperial County-Yuma County line, then east to the said county line, continuing east along said line to the point of beginning.

Only the following sites and buildings contribute to the significance of the landmark. All others do not.

A. The River Crossing

- B. Fort Yuma (See Map B)
 - 1. Commanding Officer's Quarters
 - 2. Company Quarters
 - 3. Storehouse
 - 4. Officers' Quarters
 - 5. Officers' Kitchen
 - 6. Sutler's Store
- C. Quartermaster Depot (See Map C)
 - 1. Officer's Quarters
 - 2. Officers' Kitchen
 - 3. Office
 - 4. Reservoir
 - 5. Storehouse
 - 6. Granary
- D. Yuma Territorial Prison (See Map D)
 - 1. Guard tower
 - 2. Sally port
 - 3. Museum
 - 4. East cell block
 - 5. West cell block