

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

MAR 11 1994

NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name El Vado de las Piedras and the Santa Fe Trail (Colfax County Trail Segments)
other names/site number Rock Crossing of the Canadian River/NPS Master Plan #134

2. Location

street & number 1.5 mi. s. of U.S. Hwy. 56, at the Canadian River [N/A] not for publication
city or town Springer [X] vicinity
state New Mexico code NM county Colfax code 007 zip code 87747

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [X] statewide [] locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

[Signature] SHPO 2-23-94
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Hunter Pursart Division State of New Mexico
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [X] entered in the National Register
See continuation sheet [].
- [] determined eligible for the
National Register
See continuation sheet [].
- [] determined not eligible for the
National Register.
- [] removed from the
National Register
- [] other, explain
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper Date
Beth Boland 4/21/94

El Vado de las Piedras...
Name of Property

Colfax/NM
County/State

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail
Multiple Property Submission

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
4	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
4	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/natural feature

LANDSCAPE/unoccupied land

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8.Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Transportation

Commerce

Periods of Significance

c. 1822 - c. 1870

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository:

National Park Service Regional Office--
Santa Fe, New Mexico

El Vado de las Piedras...
Name of Property

Colfax/NM
County/State

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 85 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A. Zone 13 546380 Easting 4017280 Northing

B. Zone 13 546020 Easting 4017220 Northing

C. Zone 13 545360 Easting 4017270 Northing

D. Zone 13 545370 Easting 4017600 Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title see continuation sheet

organization The URBANA Group date May 1993

street & number 202 South Broadway, Suite 206, P.O. Box 1028 telephone (217) 344-7526

city or town Urbana state IL zip code 61801-9028

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ date _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**El Vado de las Piedras and the Santa Fe Trail (Colfax County Trail Segments); Colfax County,
NM;**

Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880

Section number 7

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Narrative Description

This site contains four contributing resources: three rutted Trail segments and one river crossing known as "El Vado de las Piedras," meaning "the ford (stream crossing) of the stones" or "stone ford." El Vado de las Piedras and the Trail ruts in its vicinity are located two miles south of U. S. Highway 56 in Colfax County, New Mexico. This Santa Fe Trail site, near what is now known as the Rock Crossing of the Canadian River, composes part of the Cimarron Route. The Cimarron Route traversed 294 miles from its departure from the Mountain Route at Cimarron, Kansas to its reunification with the Mountain Route at La Junta (Watrous), New Mexico.¹ During the first twenty-five years of the Trail's existence, Cimarron Route proved more popular than the Mountain Route since it was nearly fifty miles shorter and presented level terrain allowing ease of wagon movement. The lack of water and the possibility of American Indian attack were the disadvantages faced by travelers along the Cimarron Route. The bulk of Trail traffic shifted from the Cimarron Route to the Mountain Route in 1846 with the widening of formerly narrow sections of the Mountain Route allowing greater ease of wagon movement and a drought in the southwest that same year reducing water supplies along the Cimarron Route even further.

The selection of this site as the crossing point of the Canadian River was largely determined by the nature of the surrounding terrain. To the north of El Vado de las Piedras, sand provided an unstable foundation for wagon movement while to the south, a deep rocky canyon existed.² The Rock Gorge of the Canadian River begins less than twenty yards south of the river crossing producing an impassable barrier to wagon movement.³ The effect of this gorge is represented by the course of the Trail followed from Round Mound to El Vado de las Piedras. Even though San Miguel is to the southwest, the Santa Fe Trail aims west-southwest to avoid the gorge.⁴ Immediately after the Trail crosses the Canadian River, it angles acutely south-southwest to make up for lost time.⁵ The river crossing was selected where a natural sandstone bottom was exposed. The sandstone formed part of the Dakota formation and was overlain in other areas by younger clays.⁶ The river channel at this crossing point was eight to ten inches deep, about eight to ten feet wide, and bare of shrubs.⁷

Because the physical characteristics of land, natural features, and vegetation play a dominant role in the assessment of the site's integrity, the seven qualities of integrity called for in the National Register criteria are applied to the site in a special way similar to their application to rural landscapes.⁸ A tributary forms the southern boundary of the site while a contour line was used in the identification of the western boundary. Contained within the site are a portion of the Canadian River and the river crossing of El Vado de las Piedras. Along the eastern bank of the Canadian River, sand accumulation in the form of sand bars has occurred. This becomes particularly evident from analysis of aerial photography. The gently sloping terrain contained within this site was favorable for wagon movement. The influence of man-made features at this site is most pronounced in the determination of the northern boundary which follows a fence line and

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the eastern boundary which parallels the western margin of a roadway. An area of cultivated land, clearly visible from the aerial photograph, exists to the west of the site.

Three sets of ruts are visible at this site and are oriented in southeast-northwest directions across the site. Two sets of ruts enter the site to the southeast. This northern Trail segment represents the main Trail artery which diverges into two rutted segments seventy-five meters after entering the site. Thereafter, the most northerly Trail segment continues northwest and west for 980 meters to cross El Vado de las Piedras and exit the site to the west. The Trail segment to the south also proceeds northwest and west for 840 meters but becomes faint fifty meters west of the river crossing. The southern Trail segment which enters the site to the east was adopted by Santa Fe Trail travelers and others who participated in the southern Rocky Mountains' fur trade. This Trail segment appears to parallel the tributary of the Canadian River immediately to its south for 500 meters before turning and continuing 420 meters northwest, intersecting the southern main Trail segment, and merging with the main Trail artery.

Endnotes

1. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 15.
2. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, Santa Fe Trail Site/Segment Survey: Rock Crossing of the Canadian River, April 20, 1988, n.p.
3. William E. Brown, The Santa Fe Trail (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1990), p. 136.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Hobart E. Stocking, The Road to Santa Fe (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1971), p. 212.
7. Ibid.

Although now bare of shrubs, historically, surveyor Joseph C. Brown of the Sibley Survey, 1825-1827, found "a few willow bushes."

Harry C. Myers to The URBANA Group, March 1993, National Park Service, Southwest Region, Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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8. United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), pp. 22-23.

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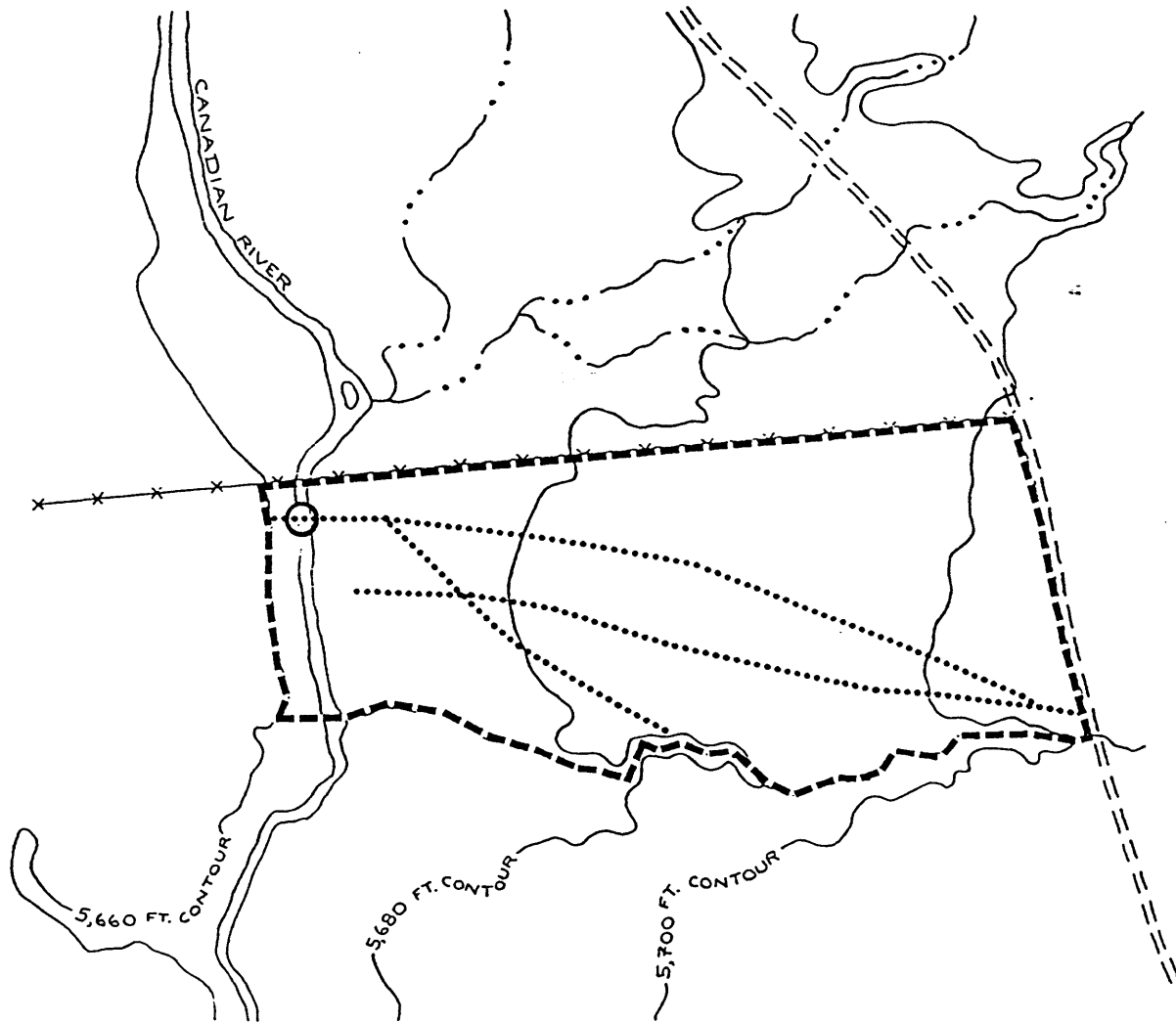
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Sketch Map



KEY

- SITE BOUNDARY
- TRAIL RUTS
- ~ RIVER
- .-.- TRIBUTARY
- == ROADWAY
- xxx FENCE
- SAND ACCUMULATION
- CROSSING

SCALE

0 100 200 METERS

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Narrative Statement of Significance

El Vado de las Piedras and the Trail ruts contained within this site are eligible to the National Register under Criterion A as a reflection of historically significant Trail activity. Both the river crossing and the Trail segments are significant in the areas of commerce and transportation and fall into the Ancillary Historic Properties/Natural Features and Historic Trails property types detailed in Section F of the Historic Resources of the Santa Fe Trail, 1821-1880 Multiple Property Documentation. The site's period of significance extends almost the entire period of Trail significance from the initiation of wagon use across the Trail in 1822 to shortly before the abandonment of the Trail as a means of overland trade, c. 1870. The river crossing and the Trail ruts materially reflect important historic events and serve as a physical reminder of historic associations with a variety of Trail travelers outlined in the historic contexts: International Trade on the Mexican Road, 1821-1846; The Mexican War and the Santa Fe Trail, 1846-48; Expanding National Trade on the Santa Fe Trail, 1848-1865; and The Santa Fe Trail and the Railroad, 1865-1880.

El Vado de las Piedras offered Santa Fe Trail travelers the picturesque view of the Raton Mountains to the north, the Canadian River valley to the south, the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to the west, and the tableland to the east.¹ The Canadian River and the crossing within this site were known by Spaniards and Mexicans as Rio Colorado and El Vado de las Piedras, while American traders knew it as the Red River and later as the Canadian River.

From El Vado de las Piedras, the main Trail artery led south to Wagon Mound. After the establishment of Fort Union in 1851, another Trail segment led southwest. A third Trail segment continued west in a "direct but rugged route"² across the Sangre de Cristo Mountains to Taos which was the center of the southern Rocky Mountains fur trade.³ This portion of the Trail was used by trappers and traders alike and also by "runners" from Santa Fe caravans who would leave the wagon train at El Vado de las Piedras, go to Taos, and reunite with the group in the vicinity of San Miguel, New Mexico.⁴ Having assessed the market conditions at Taos, they would decide whether or not to dispatch their wagons there. This practice emphasizes the close link that existed between the Santa Fe trade and the southern Rocky Mountains fur trade especially during the 1820s and 1830s.⁵ American Indians resided near, and traveled in the vicinity of portions of the Trail. In the summer of 1820, Pawnees camped upstream not far from El Vado de las Piedras.⁶ Apache Indians also operated in the vicinity of this site. In March 1848, William Gilpin left camp on the upper Arkansas River with two mounted companies and one infantry company and proceeded to the Canadian River, by way of Mora, New Mexico, in order to conduct a campaign against the Apache and Comanche Indians in their winter villages.⁷ After spending two and one-half months searching in vain for these settlements, they abandoned their search in May of 1848.⁸

Between the Arkansas and the Canadian Rivers, lay 250 miles of the Santa Fe Trail which was largely unprotected. Caravans traversing this portion of the Trail were encouraged to be large enough so that they

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could organize their own protection.⁹ Until 1846, the territory southwest of the river crossing was patrolled by Mexican soldiers. Sometimes, these soldiers escorted traders from the river crossing to Santa Fe, however, their main task was to hinder smuggling rather than guard the wagon train from attack.¹⁰ Indeed, a few miles beyond the river crossing, the wagon train abandoned its defensive organization and proceeded in the similar manner to that followed from the eastern terminus to Council Grove.¹¹

This river crossing and its Trail ruts were significant as a reliable crossing on the Canadian River, as a source of fresh drinking water to Trail travelers and draught animals, as a departure point for Trail travelers wishing to participate in the southern Rocky Mountains' fur trade, and as symbol that the possibility of American Indian confrontation was reduced. Several notable Trail-travelers crossed this site and made mention of the fact in written accounts of their travels across the Santa Fe Trail. Joseph C. Brown, surveyor for the Sibley Survey of the Trail in 1826 commented that "The ford [of the Canadian River] is rocky and shallow and is easy to find. If missed the traveler would not be able to cross below the ford in many miles."¹² Josiah Gregg noted in his two-volume account of the Santa Fe trade that the Canadian River at this site represented little more than a "rippling brook hardly a dozen paces in width, though eighty miles from its source in the mountains to the north."¹³ This natural stone crossing provided the most hospitable terrain for wagon movement while, for several miles upstream from this site, crossing the river did not pose difficulties for mounted travelers.¹⁴ Gregg also observed that the river banks were "very low and easy to ascend" during the period of Trail use.¹⁵ Susan Shelby Magoffin commented in her diary on Thursday, August 20, 1846 that the Canadian River contained drinking water that was ". . . fine, clear and cool, as mountain streams always are."¹⁶

Endnotes

1. William E. Brown, The Santa Fe Trail (St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1990), p. 136.
2. Gregg, Josiah, The Commerce of the Prairies, Edited by Milo Milton Quaife, Bison Book edition (Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1967), p. 97.
3. Brown, p. 135.
4. Ibid., p. 136.
5. Ibid.
6. Hobart E. Stocking, The Road to Santa Fe (New York: Hastings House Publishers), p. 213.
7. Leo E. Oliva, Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), p. 85.

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8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., p. 40.
10. Gregg, p. 98; Brown, p. 135.
11. Gregg, p. 98; Oliva, p. 18.
12. Brown, p. 136.
13. Gregg, p. 96.
14. Stocking, p. 213.
15. Gregg, p. 96.
16. Stella M. Drumm, ed., Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926 and 1962; reprint ed., Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 86.

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Bibliography

- Brown, William E. The Santa Fe Trail: National Park Service 1963 Historic Sites Survey. St. Louis: The Patrice Press, 1990.
- Drumm, Stella M., ed. Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico: The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin, 1846-1847. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926 and 1962; reprint ed., Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.
- Gregg, Josiah. The Commerce of the Prairies, Edited by Milo Milton Quaife, Bison Book edition. Lincoln, Nebraska and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1967.
- Oliva, Leo E. Soldiers on the Santa Fe Trail. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967.
- Sampson, F. A., ed. "The Santa Fe Trail: M. M. Marmaduke Journal." Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 7, 1911, pp. 1-10.
- Santa Fe, National Park Service, Southwest Region. Harry C. Myers to The URBANA Group, March 1993.
- Stocking, Hobart E. The Road to Santa Fe. New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1971.
- United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service. National Register Bulletin 30: Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Rural Historic Landscapes. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.
- United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service. Santa Fe National Historic Trail: Comprehensive Management and Use Plan. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990.
- United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service. Santa Fe Trail Site/Segment Survey: Rock Crossing of the Canadian River, April 20, 1988.

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UTM References

Point	Zone	Easting	Northing
E.	13	546300	4017680

Verbal Boundary Description

Starting at the southeast corner of the site, northwest of the intersection of the tributary of the Canadian River and the roadway shown on the accompanying Taylor Springs U.S.G.S. map, proceed west for 1,000 meters along the northern bank of the tributary until it enters the Canadian River and then due west to intersect the 5,660-foot contour on the west side of the river. Continue the boundary north for 300 meters along the 5,660-foot contour until the southern edge of the fence line is reached. Proceed eighty-four degrees east of north for 940 meters along the southern edge of the fence until the eastern edge of the roadway to the east of the site is reached. Continue south-southwest for 400 meters along the eastern edge of the roadway to the point of origin. The use of the road margin as a boundary, contained within this nomination, presupposes the exclusion of the road's current publicly-designated rights-of-way.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the extent of the historic resources extant at the site. Additionally, the site is limited to the east by a light-duty road. To the south, the site is limited by the northern bank of a tributary of the Canadian River.

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Form Prepared by:

For The URBANA Group:

Joseph Gallagher/Cultural Geographer
Writer

Archaeological Survey, University of Missouri-St. Louis
Colleen Hamilton and Brad Mueller/Historic Archaeologists
Field Work