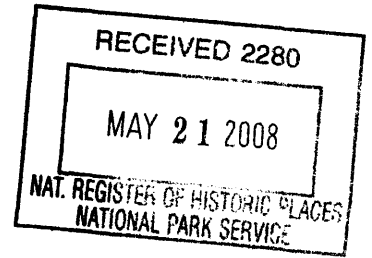


(Oct. 1990)

575



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 17th and Dunn streets, 1 mile north of intersection of 17th Street and U.S. 60

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Fort Sumner

VICINITY: N/A

STATE: New Mexico

CODE: NM

COUNTY: De Baca County 011

ZIP CODE: 88119

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 statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kathleen Stich
Signature of certifying official

15 May 2008
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- 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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action
7.2.08

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: structure

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	0	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	1	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: *Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico*

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Landscape: street furniture/object (wall)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: Landscape: street furniture/object (wall)

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Other: masonry wall and entry

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION: SANDSTONE; CONCRETE

WALLS: SANDSTONE; CONCRETE

ROOF: N/A

OTHER: N/A

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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 VALUE, 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Social History; Landscape Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1938-1939

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1938; 1939

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Works Progress Administration (WPA)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-9).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-10).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing
 1 13 570900 3815350

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is approximately 700' in length, north to south, and 20' wide, east to west, and is located along the western edge of the SW 1/4, SW 1/4, SW1/4, Section 16, Township 3N, Range 26E, as depicted on the accompanying *Fort Sumner East. N. Mex.* USGS quadrangle map.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the entire structure built by the Works Progress Administration and its immediate setting.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: David Kammer, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATION: Consulting historian

DATE: April, 2008

STREET & NUMBER: 521 Aliso Drive NE

TELEPHONE: (505) 266-0586

CITY OR TOWN: Albuquerque

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 87108

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see attached *Fort Sumner East. N. Mex.* USGS quadrangle map)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-11)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Village of Fort Sumner

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 180

TELEPHONE: (505) 355-2401

CITY OR TOWN: Fort Sumner

STATE: NM

ZIP CODE: 88119

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

Description

Constructed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project during 1938 and 1939, the masonry wall structure at the Fort Sumner Cemetery spans the entire front length of the property. The cemetery is located in a rural area within the town of Fort Sumner, approximately one mile northeast of the center of the community, and occupies a 40-acre parcel of land the community's cemetery association obtained from the State of New Mexico in 1915. The wall consists of local stone with a sandstone facing and extends approximately 700 feet. Periodically punctuated with piers, the wall is broken by an arched gateway consisting of a vehicular entry flanked by two narrower pedestrian entries. One of many masonry walls constructed by the WPA in New Mexico around cemeteries, parks, and school grounds, it exhibits few changes and retains its feeling as a New Deal public works landscaping project, especially with regard to its setting, materials, workmanship and association.

The masonry wall fronting the Fort Sumner Cemetery is located on a north-south axis and parallels 17th Street, a roadway extending north from U.S. 60. The road gives access to a site just north of the cemetery to the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp and, during World War II, an Army Air Corps training field. A shallow drainage ditch separates the road from the cemetery wall. Approximately a half-mile south of the cemetery, 17th Street crosses the tracks of the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad. Although most of the community of Fort Sumner is also located south of the railroad tracks, the town limits extend eastward north of the tracks to include the cemetery located on a plateau rising slightly above the downtown area. Surrounded by vacant lands, the cemetery is lined by evergreen windbreaks on its north and south sides.

The masonry wall with its decorative piers and graceful arched entryway comprises the most striking element of the cemetery's landscape (Photo 1). It is approximately 5' high and 18" wide, and extends about 700'. The uncoursed ashlar face of the wall consists of variegated local sandstone. A concrete coping 22' wide and 6" thick extends along the entire wall. Reflecting a common masonry practice in the communities of the Pecos Valley and on the nearby Caprock to the east, extruded concrete, the result of manual pressure applied while inserting the stone into cement and forcing some of it outward, articulates the face of the wall.

Punctuating the wall are six piers (Photo 2). In contrast to the uncoursed ashlar of the wall, the piers consist of random coursed ashlar. Two feet square and extending approximately 4" above the wall's coping, the piers have a stepped concrete cap and each is topped with a decorative twelve-inch egg-like concrete oval. Four of the piers are located along the longer wall section south of the entry arch, and two are to the north of the entry.

Flanking curved walls approximately 10' in length ascend from the top of the wall's coping to buttress and frame the arched entry. It is approximately 20' wide and symmetrical, composed of a wider center entry for vehicles and two flanking pedestrian entries (Photo 3). Each of the three arches employs a keystone. Both of the

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Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

pedestrian entries have a hinged gate consisting of welded iron bars truncated along the top to form a half circle that matches the stone arch above to create a clear circular opening (Photo 4). A remaining hinge at the middle entry suggests a former gate. Four piers punctuate the gate with the two piers framing the middle entry slightly taller than those flanking the outer side of the pedestrian entries. The entire gateway has a concrete coping similar to that along the wall, and similar decorative concrete ovals rest on each pier.

In the decades since the completion of the WPA project, the Fort Sumner Cemetery Association has installed an irrigation system and landscaped portions of the cemetery with trees. The wall remains the defining element marking the cemetery from both roads approaching the cemetery from the town. Unaltered and in good condition, the wall offers an excellent example of a structure that WPA workers constructed in many New Mexico communities.

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Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

Statement of Significance

The wall fronting and entry the Fort Sumner Cemetery was funded as a WPA project in 1938 and, following a series of town meetings, constructed during 1939. Designed to provide work relief and to enhance the landscape of the community cemetery, the structure is eligible under Criterion A for its association as a New Deal project, meeting the criteria defined in the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico* Multiple Property Documentation Form. In addition to providing jobs through public works for the unemployed, the project also improved the community's cemetery, providing a landscape amenity that not only enhanced its appearance but added dignity to the important role it serves in the community. A review of the more than 4,000 WPA projects undertaken in New Mexico indicates that efforts to beautify public landscapes in many communities, especially parks, school grounds, and cemeteries, were marked by more than six dozen wall construction projects. Local foremen familiar with local building materials generally supervised these projects, sometimes embellishing them with creatively devised decorative details. Such is the case with the Fort Sumner Cemetery wall where Fort Sumner Cemetery wall where a skilled local worker, Silas Gamble, fabricated a series of concrete ovals, which were then placed atop the arched gateway and at piers located periodically along the length of the wall. A notable example of local masonry practices as well as Gamble's design skills and aesthetic, the wall is also eligible under Criterion C.

As the construction across then Roosevelt County of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad line between Texas and Belen, New Mexico took place in 1905, two nearby communities developed. North of the tracks lay the railroad camp of Sunnyside. South of the tracks Fort Sumner (named after the former fort four miles to the south) developed soon thereafter. Following the tornado of 1908 that destroyed much of Sunnyside, the two communities combined, with Fort Sumner becoming the seat of De Baca County when it was created in 1917. Typical of new settlements, citizens soon turned their attention to acquiring land for a community cemetery. After considering a few sites following New Mexico statehood in 1912, a citizens' committee acquired state land on which a few residents had already been buried, designating it as a cemetery and creating the Fort Sumner Cemetery Association in June, 1915 (Fort Sumner Cemetery Association Record Book:15).

As was often the case in the settlement patterns of western towns, the cemetery site was well removed from the platted core of the town, located a mile to the east where the land began to rise above the Pecos River Valley floodplain. Its distance from town, however, left the cemetery vulnerable to the depredations of wandering livestock. Even as the cemetery site was platted and plots sold to local families, residents fretted, feeling that the town's burial place "should be as dignified as possible" and that barbed wire fencing failed to achieve the aesthetic they desired (Parsons).

Primarily ranching country, De Baca County reflected the early arrival of the Great Depression in New Mexico during much of the 1920s with its population falling from 3,196 to 2,893. Many of its remaining citizens found themselves unemployed in the early 1930s as livestock prices dropped and agricultural lands lost

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Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

their value. As the New Deal expanded in New Mexico, the Public Works Administration (PWA) undertook irrigation and water supply projects in and around Fort Sumner and the CCC undertook erosion control projects along the Pecos River. With the advent of the WPA under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in 1935, however, a series of work relief projects occurred in the town itself. These resulted in school additions, the laying of sidewalks, construction of a wall around school grounds, and the construction of a community building in cooperation with the Federation of Women's Clubs. Within this context, in the summer of 1938 the *Fort Sumner Leader* announced that a public meeting at the courthouse was scheduled to plan a project to improve the cemetery. To enable the municipal government to act as the sponsoring authority for a possible WPA project, the cemetery association turned the cemetery over to the town government (*Fort Sumner Leader* August 21, 1938:1).

A month later a second meeting was called to plan ways to "improve and beautify" the grounds (*Fort Sumner Leader* Sept. 16, 1938:1). With 18 laborers provided from the county work relief rolls designated to work a total of 14,040 hours, in late 1938 the project got underway with S.B. McLean as foreman (WPA Project 665-85-2-163:47394). Some of the work crew had worked on a previous WPA project that resulted in the construction of a wall around the school property. Most were familiar with the sandstone that area residents often used for construction in the absence of local wood on the high plains of eastern New Mexico.

Characteristic of WPA projects, while the federal government provided work relief funds to pay laborers, the local sponsor provided the site for the project as well as construction materials. To imbue the wall with its striking polychromatic character, workers turned to two sources, selecting the lighter sandstone from canyons northwest of Fort Sumner and the darker sandstone from the vicinity of Candy Mesa a few miles northeast of the town. The latter site is located close to the western escarpment of the Caprock, the most striking landform in eastern New Mexico. Visible for miles, especially when the sun illuminates its striking pink, red and maroon sandstone, the varied hues of the rock greatly enhanced the appearance of the wall.

Using a 1/2 ton pickup included in the project budget, workers hauled the rock blasted and cut by the project's two skilled workers, a mason and powder man, from quarries to the cemetery. According to local historian, Bob Parsons, the 18 laborers working at the site resembled an "antbed of workers" as they laid the foundation and then pressed the partially faced stone into the wet cement, forcing some it to extrude, creating the ribbed appearance of the wall (Parsons). To protect the wall laborers added a concrete coping. Seeking to embellish the completed wall, the resourceful Gamble made use of discarded automobile headlights, filling them with cement with a metal pipe in the middle. He then repeating the process to create an egg-like oval indented with the rounded edge of the headlight around its diameter. The crew then mounted them on the concrete caps of piers located periodically along the wall.

With the completion of the WPA's cemetery wall project, other WPA projects including construction of the community building and a school addition soon followed. While many of the crew, including Gamble, were involved in those projects, the nation's entry into World War II brought new jobs to De Baca County, including

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Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

the conversion of the former CCC camp into an air training field. During 1939, however, the cemetery wall project had enabled some of the unemployed to earn a living while making a lasting contribution to the community.

Seventy years later, the WPA-funded cemetery wall remains a striking landscape feature of the Fort Sumner Cemetery. The community and the Fort Sumner Cemetery Association recognize the significance of the wall, continue to regard it as enhancing the appearance of the cemetery, and support recognizing it as a legacy of the New Deal's efforts in Fort Sumner.

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Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

Bibliography

Fort Sumner Cemetery Association. Fort Sumner Cemetery Record Book. This ledger traces the early history of the present cemetery.

Fort Sumner Leader. Various issues, August-September, 1938.

Kammer, David. *The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico*. Multiple Property Documentation Form prepared for the Historic Preservation Division, 1994.

Parsons, Robert. Interview with David Kammer, January 18, 2008.

Works Progress Administration. Project Proposal 665-85-2-163.

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Section Photo Page 11

Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry
Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

Photo Log

The following information pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Fort Sumner Cemetery Wall and Entry

Fort Sumner, De Baca County, New Mexico

Photographer: David Kammer

January 22, 2008

Location of Negatives: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

Photo 1 of 4

West elevation

Facing east

Photo 2 of 4

End pier

Facing southeast

Photo 3 of 4

Entry

Facing east

Photo 4 of 4

Pedestrian gate

Facing east