

Fort Selden State Monument is a small portion of the original Fort Selden Military Reservation established in 1865. The entire monument is a multicomponent archaeological site.

One individual buried in a flexed position reportedly was unearthed on the parade ground by military soldiers during the fort's existence (R. H. McKay, quoted in Caperton 1975:74). Caperton speculates the burial is associated with a probable El Paso Phase Mogollon site, north of the corrals and east of the officers' quarters. Archaeologists excavated several rooms of this site in 1972 (Caperton 1975:74; Wilson and Caperton 1994:86). Other Mogollon sites in southern New Mexico have yielded multiple inhumations, suggesting the possibility of additional structures and burials on Fort Selden State Monument or nearby (see Woosley and McIntyre 1996; J. David Ing, personal communication 2000).

Prehistoric ceramics recovered from the monument property include Jornada Brown, Red ware, El Paso Brown ware, El Paso Bichrome, Chupadero Black-on-white, and Mogollon Red-on-brown (Wilson and Caperton 1994:86–87; Kirkpatrick 1988:10, 19–20, Table 7). Archaeologists also recovered 82 lithic artifacts in the adobe test wall area: 74 flakes of 6 materials, and 8 tools and cores of 6 and 4 materials, respectively. Archaeologists found 5 sandstone manos but no metates in the same area (Kirkpatrick 1988:18–19). The El Paso Bichrome and the Chupadero Black-on-white suggest to Kirkpatrick the presence of an El Paso phase and possible Doña Ana phase site or village in the fort area, with possible associated agricultural lands in the Rio Grande floodplain. The Mogollon Red ware probably dates to an earlier Mesilla phase occupation of the area (Kirkpatrick 1988:20).

The ceramic chronology for the southern variant of the Jornada Mogollon was defined first by Lehmer (1948). Lehmer describes the Mesilla phase as a time of pit house sites of both round and rectangular structures, with numerous extramural hearths and storage pits. Almost all

pottery is El Paso Brown, and imported ceramics are extremely rare (1948:75–78). Lehmer describes the Doña Ana phase as a time of transition. Multi-roomed, aboveground adobe structures were occupied along with pit houses. Ceramics made a transition from El Paso Brown, an unpainted brownware, to El Paso Polychrome, and trade ware ceramics increased in numbers and variety (1948:78–80). Lehmer's El Paso phase sites consist of adobe roomblocks arranged around a plaza or plazas or in long, east-west tiers. El Paso Polychrome is the dominant ceramic type, and assemblages contain large numbers and varieties of trade wares, with Chupadero Black-on-white among the most common types (1948:80–84).

El Paso Bichrome was made between A.D. 900 and 1100. Runyan and Hedrick note no evidence exists that it was used as a trade ware (1987:32). Chupadero Black-on-white ranges in date between A.D. 1150 and 1550 (Woosley and McIntyre 1996:203; see also Wiseman 1986). This popular trade item is found in archaeological sites throughout southern New Mexico (Hoyt 1994:89).

Archaeologists acknowledge the difficulty of identifying Apache sites. Sebastian (1989) recommends the best approach is probably that suggested by Wilson (1984): a "careful study of documentary sources to pinpoint locations of observed camps." For later Apache sites metal arrow points and worked glass implements may serve as diagnostics (Thompson 1980; Sebastian 1989:102).

At Fort Selden a hermit may have lived in two small rooms at the northeast corner of the company quarters perhaps in the 1940s and might have contributed to recent trash in Feature 115, a latrine (Wilson and Caperton 1994:42). Vandals and relic hunters looted the areas of the fort buildings, and by the time Harry H. Bailey acquired the ruins in 1944, vandals had pockmarked the ruins searching for treasure. Relic hunters also dug the fort site in later years. One 1940s account tells of treasure hunters digging a pit in a corner under a fireplace

(Trumbo 1946:20–21; Cohrs and Caperton 1983:28). Some Las Cruces residents also reportedly dug in the ruins about 1950. Wilson and Caperton (1994) speculate this was the time relic hunters “cleaned out Features 117 and 119,” latrines. Latrines features 114 and 115 also had been dug previously (1994:27–28). A popular pastime for some Mesilla Valley residents was surface collecting buttons, bullets, and other artifacts from the fort site after rainstorms (Michael R. Taylor, personal communication 2001).

The adobe remains of the trader’s post were razed in the 1960s to make way for a house trailer (Guzman et al. 1988). Presumably no archaeological investigations accompanied this inconceivable destruction of perhaps the post’s single most significant structure, since the trading post site was then and remains on private land.

Development and stabilization work in 1972 was funded by a National Park Service (NPS) preservation grant with matching funds from severance tax bonds, with the Cultural Properties Review Committee (CPRC) participating in the funding process (Keith M. Dotson and Brad L. Hays, State Planning Office, memorandum to James L. Dillard, Director of Parks and Recreation, August 5, 1971, Fort Selden deeds files, NMSM). After the CPRC refused to provide funding without a definite plan, Charlie Steen of New Mexico Parks and Recreation prepared a preservation plan for the ruins. The CPRC approved his plan on November 17, 1971 (David W. King to James L. Dillard, Director of State Parks and Recreation, November 19, 1971, Fort Selden deeds files, NMSM). Pacheco and Graham, Architects, Albuquerque, were hired to prepare working drawings and specifications for the work (Channell Graham, letter to James Dillard, December 28, 1971, Fort Selden deeds files, NMSM). On January 21 and 22, 1972, Albert Schroeder of the CPRC and others visited Fort Selden and three other sites being developed by the Historic Preservation Program (J. Robert Beauvais, memorandum to David W. King, January 25, 1972, Fort Selden correspondence file, HPD).

The 1972 preservation work was clouded with labor problems, poor administration, inappropriate techniques, and fiscal irregularities (Guzman et al. 1988). Fieldwork was directed by the Museum of New Mexico (MNM) (Caperton 1975:3). Excavations were conducted at the headquarters building, the west company quarters, the hospital, and portions of the corrals. Fill was removed from the west company quarters (Caperton 1975:20). Several features in the headquarters building were excavated and stabilized (Caperton 1975:43). Workers uncovered a small rectangular stone structure (8 ft 3 in x 11 ft inside dimensions) 3 feet 4 inches from the west wall of the quartermaster corral. This structure’s walls are about 2 feet thick (Caperton 1975:48). Trenches were dug along the interior and exterior of the length of the corrals’ north wall, the exterior of the east wall, and some unidentified rooms (Caperton 1975:50). Numbering of features began in 1972 and continued in later projects. Records and artifacts from the 1972 work are curated and housed by the Museum of New Mexico (Wilson and Caperton 1994:17); research of these records should be included in future archaeological and interpretive studies.

In 1973 the state legislature provided funds to construct a visitor center (Cohrs and Caperton 1983:29). Apparently no archaeological survey or testing was conducted in siting the building nor was construction monitored. Neither did the architect see a need for a registered land surveyor (Channell Graham, Pacheco and Graham, Architects, Albuquerque, letter to Donald J. Ortiz, Museum Accountant, MNM, May 2, 1973, Fort Selden outgoing 1973–1974 files, NMSM).

Caperton did visit the site for the visitor center on October 16, 1973, after foundation trenches were excavated, and reported to the state archaeologist that he noticed no “evidence of disturbance of archeological features in the foundation excavations.” He recommended an archaeological survey be conducted when locations were determined for the sewage system and utility lines. The architect reported the contractor had been potting a historic feature, which Caperton determined was the magazine. Caperton rationalized the feature had

been surface potted previously and the contractor had damaged no walls of the magazine. The contractor had dug a small hole down about five feet without reaching bottom and used a metal detector in the hole, with positive results (Thomas J. Caperton, memorandum to Stewart Peckham, State Archaeologist, October 30, 1973, Fort Selden outgoing 1974–1975 files, NMSM). A week later the state archaeologist visited Fort Selden to determine the utilities right-of-way. Because the proposed location of the sewage-leaching field would have disturbed a historic trash area, he moved its location 70 feet to the west (Stewart Peckham, State Archaeologist, memorandum to Thomas J. Caperton, Superintendent of Monuments, November 7, 1973, Fort Selden outgoing 1973–1974 files, NMSM).

In December 1973 Caperton complained to Stanley Bussey at New Mexico State University about the quality of Larry Wells's work. Caperton found large gaps in Wells's notes on the 1972 work, "like there are absolutely no notes on the excavation of the pit houses, plus the notes on other structures are scanty at best." He also found no notes on excavation of the commanding officer's quarters. Caperton appealed to Bussey for any notes he had on the project (Thomas J. Caperton, letter to Stanley Bussey, Department of Sociology and Anthropology New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, December 19, 1973, Fort Selden outgoing 1973–1974 files, NMSM).

The 1974–1975 field season ran from October 1974 to February 1975. A NPS Historic Preservation Grant-in-Aid, administered by the State Planning Office, provided funding and fieldwork was directed by Tom Caperton. Most of the work was accomplished by heavy equipment—road grader, backhoe, compactor, dump truck, and water truck—used to clear brush, remove upper fill from rooms, backfill, contour land, and construct berms and the interpretive trail. Caperton reported this equipment "did in no way disturb historic features of the fort," and the archaeological resources were protected "by a sufficient accumulation of fill since abandonment to afford protection. Those areas which were subject to

damage by mechanical excavation were worked by hand." Workers established drainage slopes to provide runoff away from existing wall remnants, and graded fill next to the walls and in the rooms by excavating and backfilling to provide drainage. Water was directed to the room exteriors, except in a few cases where this was not feasible, drainage was directed to the room centers. The parade ground and roadway were contoured to prevent water from accumulating next to the walls. Equal ground levels were established between room exteriors and interiors to eliminate differential erosion. Where possible, all ground surfaces were saturated with water and mechanically compacted (Caperton 1975:7; for reference to NPS approval of project, see David W. King, letter to Ralph E. Thomas, Grants Manager, USDI, NPS, Washington, D.C., copy in Fort Selden correspondence file, HPD). Tom Caperton conducted research into the construction and architecture of the post, which he included in the completion report. John P. Wilson prepared a detailed analysis of artifacts recovered from excavations (Guzman et al. 1988).

About 450 adobes to be used for stabilization work were made until freezing weather prevented further manufacture. Then adobes salvaged from a house being demolished in the neighborhood were used. The adobes were inserted into areas cut into wall areas with advanced deterioration. Layers of adobe plaster were used to repair moderately deteriorated areas. Small holes and eroded areas in wall faces and tops of walls were covered with adobe to smooth the appearance. Soil for the adobes was obtained from a source with suitable clay, located about 100 yards east of the visitor center. A large depression in the same area may represent the source for the original adobes used in the post construction. This depression contains considerable historic trash (Caperton 1975:7–8). The historic adobes original to the fort have produced prehistoric pottery, bits of cloth, historic glass, and metal fragments (Caperton 1975:12).

An interpretive trail was installed, which begins behind the visitor center, goes west to the roadway, then south along the east side of the

headquarters building to the sally port, with a spur to the quartermaster corral. From the sally port the trail continues along the north side of the company quarters to the post hospital, then north to the officers' quarters, then along the south side of the officers' quarters, and then connects with the beginning of the trail, forming a continuous clockwise loop. Workers used a grader to rip the surface to prepare the trail base. Crusher fines were laid down with a dump truck, and the fines were spread to a uniform 4-inch thickness and 5-foot width with a front-end loader. Then the whole trail was saturated with water and compacted with a compactor (Caperton 1975:8, 15–16).

Sixty-six cottonwood trees were planted in rows in locations similar to those in the 1860s. The trees were planted on 30-foot centers rather than the 15- to 25-foot centers of the originals and are watered by an underground system (Caperton 1975:8, 15). In addition, salt cedars were planted in clumps along the north boundary east of the roadway for a visual barrier and west of the hospital for a windbreak. In his report Caperton makes no mention of any archaeology associated with the tree-planting project, although he says it was funded under Senate Bill 449 (Caperton 1975:15).

Two latrines were excavated in January 1975—the enlisted men's and the one at the officers' quarters. Artifacts were cleaned and catalogued (Glen Stephens, Monthly Report, January 31, 1975, in Fort Selden Monthly Report 1974–1975 file, NMSM). In February the ruins stabilization work was completed. The irrigation system for the trees was completed on February 27; on February 28 the backhoe returned to clean up and fill the magazine and fill the officers' quarters latrine. In March plans were made to enlarge the holes around the trees. Artifacts were cleaned and catalogued (Glen Stephens, Monthly Narrative, February 28, 1975, in Fort Selden Monthly Report 1974–1975 file, NMSM).

Between 1974 and 1976 the ordnance supply magazine (Feature 109) and six latrines were excavated. Two other latrines (features 118 and 119) were tested in 1976. Three of the latrines are behind the enlisted men's barracks and

outside the fort's south wall. Two of these (features 114 and 115) had been looted clean previously, so that in 1976 little information was recovered other than details about the vaults. The third of these latrines (Feature 108) and a latrine associated with the hospital (Feature 116) were discovered undisturbed. The four remaining latrines (features 113, 117, 118, and 119) are behind the east officers' quarters (Wilson and Caperton 1994:17).

Wilson and Caperton (1994) characterize the cultural materials from the latrine vaults as being of limited variety. Most “objects were glass containers, footwear, and cartridges” (Wilson and Caperton 1994:55). Latrines produced the expected differences in bottle distributions, with the hospital latrine containing numerous medicinal bottles and the enlisted men's latrine containing a majority of beer bottles with fewer liquor and other bottle types (1994:84–85). Most of the footwear recovered was made for civilians, and much of it was children's shoes (1994:90). The majority of the bones recovered were sheep and goat (1994:129).

In September 1977, Albert H. Schroeder, Chairman of the CPRC, reported that he had reviewed parts I and II of the completion report for the Fort Selden development project, representing the stabilization and archaeological investigations at the fort. Schroeder's only comment is, “I am very impressed with the quality of the work and the thoroughness of the report” (Albert H. Schroeder, letter to Thomas J. Caperton, Director of State Historic Monuments, September 12, 1977, in Fort Selden correspondence file, HPD).

In 1984 the state legislature approved a bill sponsored by Rep. Lamar Gwaltney, Doña Ana County, to provide funding for remedial stabilization work at Fort Selden and a controlled experiment on adobe degradation. The scope of the stabilization work was similar to that done in 1974 and 1975. Adobe bricks were inserted into eroded wall bases, and walls were capped with adobe mud. Twelve test walls with different foundations were constructed near the visitor center to study the effects different foundations have on rising damp in walls. Two 65-foot-long walls were plastered with mud

containing various amendments. Another test wall was constructed with four different caps. Plans and specifications for the project were developed by NMSM in conjunction with preservationists from NPS and the private sector, and the experiment was intended to last 10 years. Paul G. McHenry of Corrales designed the walls, and Rio Abajo Archaeological Services of Polvadera performed work under a \$61,000 contract (Bill Diven, Albuquerque Journal, November 24, 1985:C1 and C3, in Fort Selden files, HPD; Guzman et al. 1988).

An August 1986 archaeological Site Inspection Form filled out by the CPRC reported the “ruins are in good condition, having been stabilized in 1985.” No vandalism was evident (Site Inspection Form, CPRC, received August 15, 1986, in Fort Selden compliance file, HPD). By 1987 an extensive cactus garden had been developed next to the visitor center (Guzman et al. 1988). Presumably no archaeology has accompanied this ground disturbance, perhaps because of the previous extensive disturbance from construction of the visitor center.

In 1986 the J. Paul Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), Marina del Rey, California, provided funds to construct additional test walls to evaluate chemical preservatives, construction of site shelters, installation of drainage systems, synthetic fiber reinforcing elements, and accelerated weathering (Guzman et al. 1988). In October 1987 David T. Kirkpatrick directed an archaeological crew from Human Systems Research, Inc., Las Cruces and Tularosa, in surveying, surface collecting, and conducting test excavations at the proposed location of the new test walls, under State of New Mexico Permit No. SP-52. Kirkpatrick divided the area, 150 feet north-south by 200 feet east-west, into 48 units (25 x 25 ft each). The archaeologists collected artifacts from 46 units plus an additional 5 ft wide by 300 ft long area proposed for a waterline right-of-way. In all, 3,143 prehistoric and historic artifacts were collected and analyzed from the total .7 acres. A latrine discovered during testing was avoided to preserve it. During vegetation removal, the archaeologists discovered and recorded a 1.5 by 2 ft historic trash scatter in the proposed test wall area. In addition, they found a 30 by 40 ft

artifact scatter of primarily glass from bottles and window panes, a 20 ft diameter scatter of bottle and window glass fragments, a 30 by 20 ft low-density scatter of artifacts and coal fragments and clinkers, and a shallow historic road with artifacts most numerous in the low berms along both sides. The wheel-compacted road ran 25 ft wide by 175 ft long through the adobe test wall area. A test unit in the coal scatter uncovered adobe deposits with mortar cracks and plaster pieces, indicating a probable adobe structure, identified by Kirkpatrick as a latrine based on the structure size. The archaeologists also recorded a pot drop of an El Paso Bichrome vessel in a backhoe excavation for the water line. Kirkpatrick reports the “very mixed” artifacts reflect prehistoric Jornada Mogollon, nineteenth-century U.S. army, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century use of the area. The NMSM intended to prepare the plot for the test walls by blading the area level before constructing the walls. The purpose of the water line was to provide water for spraying the walls to accelerate the weathering process. In spite of identifying 4 features, finding artifacts in 46 of the 48 units, and locating an historic fort road running 175 feet through the test wall area, plus the area’s proximity to the historic fort, Kirkpatrick recommended clearance with the exception that the latrine feature be “avoided and preserved.” He states that the location of the possible latrine “indicates that more features may occur around the fort than are indicated on the maps.” Detailed temporal and cultural analyses of the recovered artifacts were not attempted because they were intermixed in the Aeolian soil (Kirkpatrick 1988; quotation on p. 21).

On July 27, 1987, Caperton wrote to John Ware, Laboratory of Anthropology, complaining about the lack of care and loss of artifacts from Fort Selden that were entrusted to the laboratory’s care:

*A couple of years ago, when it was decided that the State Monuments would no longer be a collection holding unit of the museum, the bulk of the Fort Selden archaeological collections were transferred to Santa Fe.*

*The[y] were stored in the basement of the old St. Vincent's where the lab staff piled metates upon boxes marked "Fragile" and they were pillaged by maintenance and other workers at the building. I brought this to the attention of Liz King who did nothing about it [Tom Caperton, memorandum to John Ware, July 27, 1987, copy in Fort Selden permanent files, NMSM].*

Caperton requested the collections be inventoried by the laboratory staff and returned to Fort Selden, where they would "receive proper care" and be used in a new exhibit (Tom Caperton, memorandum to John Ware, July 27, 1987, copy in Fort Selden permanent files, NMSM).

Considering Fort Selden is primarily an archaeological site, errors of the past have caused tremendous losses not only to the archaeology existing when the small site was acquired but also to the artifacts recovered while a State property. Poor reporting has increased the loss of information pertaining to those artifacts and features remaining.

The entire fort site obviously is a multi-component archaeological site and should be treated as such. The burials, features, and other artifacts indicate much information still can be gained in spite of past losses.

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