CAMP NACO
(Camp Newell)
(Fort Naco)
West Newell Street
Bisbee
Cochise County
Arizona

HALS AZ-27
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

CAMP NACO
(Camp Newell, Fort Naco)

HALS NO. AZ-27

Location: West Newell Street, Bisbee, Cochise County, Arizona
Camp Naco Historic District

31.340447, -109.952133 (Flagpole Base/Parade Ground, Google Maps, WGS84)

Camp Naco is located in southeastern Arizona, just north of the border with Mexico and north and east of the junction of the former railroad lines that ran from Canonea, Sonora, to Benson, Arizona, and from Naco to Douglas, Arizona. Today it sits at the northeast corner of Wilson Road and Newell Street in Naco, Arizona. Neither road is historical. To the north is Greenbush Draw, which flows northwest to the San Pedro River. A level plain covered with desert vegetation runs north to the Mule Mountains. Three hundred yards to the south is the newly built border wall [Figure 1].

Significance: Camp Naco was built in 1919 by the US War Department's Mexican Border Defense Construction Project, a response to unsettled conditions along the US/Mexico border resulting from the Mexican revolution. Part of a 1,200-mile chain of thirty-five permanent military camps along the border from Brownsville, Texas, to Arivaca, Arizona, Camp Naco was one of only two constructed of adobe. When the camps were decommissioned in 1923, most were deconstructed so that materials could be used elsewhere, but Camp Naco, built of adobe, remained in place and passed into private hands. As a result, it remains the only camp to retain its historic integrity today.

Camp Naco was located at the point where the El Paso and Southwestern railroad line crossed the border to link the American-owned mines at Canonea, Sonora, to processing facilities in Arizona. To protect American interests, a tent camp manned by the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry of Buffalo Soldiers was first established at the site in 1910. It was intended to protect the railroad, prevent the smuggling of arms, cattle and other supplies across the border to rebel forces in Mexico, and restrain any lawlessness and banditry that might spill over the border into Arizona. In 1919 a permanent camp was constructed.

Camp Naco tells the story of a decade of border unrest as opposing Mexican forces battled for control of their country, as plans were hatched to reclaim the American Southwest for Mexico, and as Germany attempted to enroll Mexico as an ally in World War I.

Description: The camp is laid out in cardinal directions as is typical of military installations [Figure 2]. Four residences for commissioned officers – set in two paired units - lie at the southern end of the complex, facing inward towards the body of the camp to the north. Today they are separated from the rest of the property by Newell Street. The barracks, mess halls, hospital and officers' club form two quadrangles, each grouped around a common courtyard. Each barracks could house up to fifty soldiers. There is a small parade ground between the two quadrangles with a flagpole centered at the southern end. To the east of the quadrangles are six non-commissioned officers' residences, which face west towards the barracks.

The single-story buildings have medium pitched gable roofs. The roofs of the barracks and mess halls are connected by a long porch facing the interior courtyard and creating a covered walkway [Figure 5]. The hospital and officers' club are freestanding. Behind both mess halls are freestanding bath houses. Original window openings in these buildings have been boarded up for reasons of security.

The leveled courtyards and the parade ground were intended to be bare of vegetation. While one of the later owners of the camp planted trees in a number of locations, historic photos show no trees even by the officers' residences. Today invasive growths of *Ailanthus altissima* (Tree of Heaven) and other invasive vegetation require regular removal by volunteers [Figure 4].

A water tower is positioned at the southeast corner of the camp, south of the commissioned officers' quarters [Figure 9]. Today it is on the south side of Newell Street. The tower provided water to the camp for drinking and plumbing. When the camp was decommissioned in 1923, surveyors opted to leave the water tower in place because it was too difficult to take apart and transport to a different military facility.

To the northwest across Wilson Road are two accessory facilities, a bakery and a laundry, a complex privately owned today. It is unclear if the buildings were originally connected or if they were two separate structures because a modern dwelling caps the foundations. North of the bakery/laundry is the former location of the camp baseball diamond. Although today the outline of the leveled field is still visible on the ground, the area is covered by native desert vegetation. There is no evidence that this facility was used after the camp was decommissioned in 1923.

Condition

Of the original twenty-four adobe buildings, twelve are in ruins due to lack of maintenance and/or vandalism/arson. The remaining twelve buildings are in stable condition, but are in need of appropriate restoration, including the removal of Portland cement plaster facings. The western bath house building [Figure 6] was recently replastered with a lime-based plaster, but all the other buildings are in

need of the same treatment. All standing buildings have been remediated for asbestos and have sound roofs.

Ailanthus altissima (Tree of Heaven) and other invasive plants are threatening structures on the site [Figure 4], often springing up between the historic adobe and delaminating Portland cement plaster facings. Volunteers have helped to remove the intruding plants, but more extensive action is required.

The western pair of commissioned officers' residences are in stable condition, but the eastern residences have been vandalized by arsonists and are currently unsafe to enter [Figure 8].

The mess hall and the eastern barracks of the eastern quadrangle have collapsed [Figure 10], but the western barracks and the officers' club of this quadrangle remain sound. The foundations and some remaining walls of the ruined buildings mark the location of the missing structures. The officers' club is in good condition, with new windows facing the inner courtyard. It is divided into two sections, providing separate areas for black and white officers, or commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

Five out of six non-commissioned officers' residences have suffered arson damage. The five residences on the south have been gutted by fire, but most of the adobe walls still stand. The northern building is in poor condition but could be restored for habitation [Figure 7].

To the north of the barracks quadrangles are the stables and a later auto shop. These unplastered buildings were intentionally allowed to deteriorate after the camp was decommissioned. Well-weathered adobe walls remain, with vegetation springing up inside and around the ruins.

The water tower across Newell Road appears to be in stable condition [Figure 9].

Across Wilson Road the bakery/laundry foundations support a modern home.
The outline of the baseball field is evident on the ground to the north.

History: **Southeastern Arizona at the time of Camp Naco**

Since prehistoric times the San Pedro Valley in which Camp Naco is located functioned as the main north/south artery between Mexico and points north. During the Apache wars, it served as the pathway for raids on both sides of the border. Camp Naco's role was to help stabilize this border area in support of mining and ranching resources. Both industries depended on the surrounding railroad web for moving ore and cattle to processing centers.

The Apache Wars

Ongoing conflict and sporadic violence between Anglo and Mexican settlers and US troops and various groups of Apaches resident in southeastern Arizona during the nineteenth century impeded early efforts at ranching and mining. Only with the defeat of Geronimo in 1886 was the serious threat posed by intermittent conflict eliminated. Nevertheless, at the turn of the century there remained a significant US military presence at Fort Huachuca, home base of the Tenth Cavalry Regiment of Buffalo Soldiers.

Cattle

Cattle ranching in southeastern Arizona dates to the period of Spanish occupation, 1539-1822, when missionaries and the Spanish military introduced cattle to the area to support missions and presidios. During the subsequent Mexican period from 1822-1853, after which the border area was purchased by the United States, cattle ranching continued. Ranching was however a risky undertaking, with depredations from Apache raiders and from rustlers on both sides of the border, who ran off cattle and horses, and occasionally sheep. Many of the longhorn cattle introduced by the Spanish were either killed or left to run wild.

When southeastern Arizona was purchased from Mexico in 1853, the border remained unsettled and dangerous. Yet ranchers like Henry Clay Hooker saw the area as ideal and established a ranch in the region. Empire Ranch [Collins 1992, 19], one of the most profitable ranches in the area, began in 1876. Mexican families who had previously ranched in the area continued to do so despite the danger.

> It is important to note that the arrival of Anglo-American ranchers into Arizona did not end the importance of Mexican ranchers. With the decline of Indian warfare, the Otero, Pacheco, Elías, Ruelas, León, Ortiz, Ramírez, Amado, and other old families returned to ranching. Newcomers coming up from Mexico included the Carrillo, Aquirre, Robles, and Samaniego families. Many others earned livings working on ranches all across Arizona. Historian James Officer commented on another important contribution of Hispanics to cattle ranching: The cowboy lexicon includes many terms borrowed from the lingo (*lengua*) of the buckaroo (*vaquero*). Among the most common are ranch (*rancho*), bronco (*bronco*—rough or coarse), mustang (*mestaño*—stray or wild), lariat (*la reata*—rope for typing horses), lasso (*lazo*—loop), quirt (*cuerda*—cord or rope), stampede (*estampida*), cinch (*cincha*), and calaboose (*calabozo*—dungeon) [Collins 1992, 25].

When rail lines connected Southern Arizona to the rest of the country in 1881, the cattle market expanded from supplying armies and reservations with cattle who were bred for the harsh arid Southwest to raising cattle that would be more

marketable in the rest of the country. Despite a major die off during the severe drought from 1891-93, ranching continued to expand.

Rustling occurred on both sides of the border. Because of the isolation of US and Mexican jurisdictions, bandits could escape law enforcement simply by crossing the border. Soldiers, lawmen and rangers were forbidden to cross the border without permission from the other government. It could take hours to get approval to enter the other country, giving the bandits time to evade capture. Cattle rustlers took advantage of this by stealing cattle on one side of the border and selling it on the other, and such activity was common on both sides of the border [Guinn 2021]. Discouraging this practice was one of the assignments of troops at Camp Naco.

Mining

The Arizona mining industry developed later than ranching, given the unsettled conditions during the US/Apache conflict and the lack of transportation. Like ranching, mining was a dangerous business. In 1877 Jack Dunn discovered a small outcrop of lead-silver mineralization along Mule Gulch while on a scouting expedition from nearby Fort Bowie. By August of 1877 Dunn, A. Rucker and T.D. Byrne staked the district's first mining claim. A partner of theirs, George Warren, rounded up some friends from Tombstone to lay his own claim to several additional mining areas in southeastern Arizona, one of which later became the Bisbee Copper Queen Mine, which provided copper to support American forces in World War I [Briggs 2015, 1].

Across the border in Mexico were the rich American-owned mines of Nacozari and Cananea. From 1898 to 1899 a joint project between the US and Mexican governments supported the construction of the Arizona and Southeastern Railroad to bring ore north for processing in US smelters at Benson and Douglas [Erickson 2021]. The border crossing at Naco, Sonora, led to the development of a small sister town in Naco, Arizona.

The mining industry relied on cheap labor from Mexico and Eastern Europe. In 1917, organized by the Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) – commonly known as the Wobblies - workers at the Copper Queen Mine struck for better wages and working hours. To break the strike the owners of the Copper Queen Mine and Bisbee's local deputies deported the strikers to an isolated location in the desert of New Mexico. Deputies warned the strikers that if they ever tried to go back to Bisbee they would be killed. Ninety percent of the workers who were deported from Bisbee were Mexican or Eastern European immigrants. The ongoing potential for labor strikes contributed to the unsettled conditions at the border during the period of Camp Naco [Greene 2018].

Railroad

The Southern Pacific Railroad arrived in Tucson from the west in March 1880, connecting southern Arizona to the west coast. By September, the railroad

stretched east to the Arizona-New Mexico state line, further encouraging ranching and mining in the area. Between 1882 and 1884 the New Mexico-Arizona branch line linked Benson (a Southern Pacific junction) to Fairbank, and, fueled by the mining industry, in October 1882 construction of the New Mexico-Arizona Railroad began. Running south to Fairbank along the San Pedro River from Benson, a stop on the Southern Pacific Railroad, it continued west to Nogales, Arizona. The line was completed in October 1884 [Levstik 2012].

In May 1888 the Arizona and South Eastern Railroad Company was incorporated by the Copper Queen Consolidated Mining Company with the goal of linking Bisbee and Douglas to existing rail lines. By 1899 this line was extended by the El Paso and Southeastern Railroad south from Fairbank to American-owned mines in Cananea [Robertson 1986]. The twin cities of Naco, Arizona, and Naco, Sonora, served as ports of entry.

The Mexican Revolution

A number of rail lines extended into Mexico to connect American industries south of the border to their markets for ore and cattle in the north. The ten-year Mexican Revolution, beginning in 1910, threatened the economic interests of these groups, and they demanded protection from the US government. In 1911 a temporary post – a tent camp – was established at Naco to protect the border, and, more specifically, the rail line that linked the mines of Cananea to the processing facilities in Arizona. Camp Naco was for the most part manned by troops from the Tenth Cavalry Regiment – the Buffalo Soldiers – from Fort Huachuca [Levstik 2012].

One of the Mexican revolutionary leaders, Pancho Villa, was extremely popular among poor and working-class Mexicans because he fought for fair wages and paid pensions to his soldiers' families if they died in battle. He frequently rustled cattle on both sides of the border, distributing the meat to poor villages, and thereby making him a local folk hero. He gained fame and popularity in the United States as well when he permitted a film crew follow his troops to make a movie.

Ranchers, mine owners and other Southern Arizona entrepreneurs viewed Villa and the conflict in Mexico as a threat to their property and profits. There were also concerns that Mexicans resident in Arizona who sympathized with the revolutionaries were engaged in smuggling arms across the border. Anti-American feeling in Mexico was strong. Given these unsettled conditions, American citizens called on the government for protection.

The revolution came close to Naco, Arizona, when Mexican Federalists and revolutionaries faced off against each other in Naco, Sonora. Troops from the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments of Buffalo Soldiers who were posted at Camp Naco acted as crowd control for all the US citizens who came to watch the fighting. Even when the attack extended across the border they followed orders

and never returned fire. Their role was not without danger: by the end of the Battle of Naco eight soldiers of the Tenth Cavalry were wounded, and several members of the Ninth Cavalry had been killed. The Secretary of War subsequently recognized the two regiments for their "splendid conduct and efficient service" [Levstik 2012, 11].

Some Mexicans hoped to restore the lost territory of southeastern Arizona to Mexico. In 1915 Mexican raiders distributed a pamphlet describing the Plan de San Diego (Texas) to Mexicans on both sides of the border. The goal of the plan was to take back parts of the southwestern US and redistribute the land as restitution to Mexicans, Native Americans and former slaves. The San Diego Plan was never executed as it was originally intended, but its recommendation to kill all white men over the age of 16 was often followed in raids on US border towns [Guinn 2021].

It has been speculated that there was some German involvement in the development of the San Diego Plan, as German preparations for World War I developed [Leffler 1982, 117]. The German government saw the Mexican rebellion and the conflict between Villa and Carranza as a way to keep the US distracted from the European War by the conflict on their Southern Border. German representatives were in talks with all Mexican factions, as well as the Spanish government. Germany contemplated financing Spain's attempt to recapture Mexico. Germany also secretly supplied Villa with arms and ammunition in 1915 [Guinn 2021].

On March 9th, 1916, Villa and his troops crossed the border to attack Columbus, New Mexico, in hopes of stealing arms and ammunition from nearby Camp Furlong. Ten US civilians and eight US soldiers were killed in the raid. This raid in American territory triggered action from Washington, and US president Woodrow Wilson selected General John J. "Black Jack" Pershing to lead a Punitive Expedition into Mexico to capture Villa. Members of the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Regiments of Buffalo Soldiers were selected for the expedition. Everything went wrong. The Federal forces, facing strong anti-American sentiment on the part of the Mexican populace who did not sanction the intrusion, and Pershing was denied the use of rail lines in Mexico. Newly acquired US trucks broke down on rough Mexican roads. The eight planes of the US Air Squadron were not designed to fly more than fifty miles and could not manage to ascend over the Mexican mountains. Two planes crashed in the early stages of the expedition. In the end, Villa was not captured, and the expedition returned a failure in 1917 [Guinn 2021].

That same year the British Government intercepted an encrypted telegram sent from the German Foreign Minister to the German Ambassador to the US, detailing Germany's intention to enter into an alliance with Mexico [Leffler 1982, 144] in support of their position in World War I. If Germany were to win the war in

Europe, Mexico would regain the territory ceded to the US during the previous century. The hope was to prevent the US from entering the war by creating a distraction on the Mexican Border. The German threat did indeed confirm the need for a military presence.

With the end of World War I in November 1918, the US government found funds in May 1919 for the Mexican Border Defense Construction Project. This undertaking established thirty-four permanent defense posts in a line along the border from Brownsville, Texas, to Arivaca, Arizona. Although the Mexican Revolution was drawing to an end, a military presence was desirable not only prevent potential skirmishes but also to discourage ongoing cattle rustling [Levstik 2012].

The camps differed in size. Camp Furlong at Columbus, New Mexico, was the largest with 320 buildings. Camp Naco consisted of 35 buildings.

Captain Horatio Seymour, the Construction Quartermaster in charge of Camp Naco, met with the Cochise County Board of Supervisors on June 2, 1919, to request approval of the project. Once construction was approved, Seymour rented 20 acres of land from a Naco resident, John Towner, and from the El Paso Railroad Company to build the permanent camp. Construction of Camp Naco was underway by August 1919. The budget was not lavish, providing funds for labor but not for materials. This may have been the reason Camp Naco was the only encampment built out of adobe, which was available on site. In other ways, the camp was advanced: it was equipped with a water system, sewer system, and electrical lighting [Levstik 2012, 12].

Buffalo Soldiers

> During the Civil War, some 179,000 African American troops served in the Union army. Afterwards they were consolidated into the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments and 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments. The African American regiments served with distinction in the Indian wars of the Great Plains and Southwest, where they earned the soubriquet of "Buffalo Soldiers." Fort Huachuca (Arizona), established as a camp in 1877 during the Apache conflict, became the home base of the 10th Cavalry Regiment from 1913 to 1933 [Erickson, 2021].

Camp Naco was primarily manned by the Ninth and Tenth Cavalry, the Buffalo Soldiers. At times the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth all-black infantry regiments were also stationed at Camp Naco. Fort Huachuca was the primary base for all the regiments in the region, and troops rotated through the camps along the border, with tours at each camp usually lasting a month [Levstik 2012].

Border camps provided employment for veterans, and a significant number of Buffalo Soldiers had served in France during World War I. African American troops were not accepted as part of the American Expeditionary Forces, but rather fought under French leadership, who commended their excellence. Most Buffalo Soldiers came from the southern US and ranged in age from twenty to fifty-two years. A requirement for serving in the military was literacy, so a basic educational standard is assumed. It is likely that the military offered job opportunities unavailable to African Americans in society at large at that time.

The layout of Camp Naco embodies the military hierarchy of the day, demonstrating the distinction between enlisted troops and officers. In addition, while African Americans might rise through the ranks to become non-commissioned officers, commissioned officers at this time – with few notable exceptions - were white. Officers' housing at Camp Naco reflects this distinction [Erickson, 2021].

In their free time, soldiers entertained themselves by playing baseball in a cleared field north of the bakery/laundry. Baseball was enormously popular at the time, and the oldest continually used baseball field in the US was constructed in 1909 just northeast of Naco in Warren, Arizona.

Camp Naco under Private Ownership
Camp Naco was decommissioned and returned to private ownership in July 1923. Military officers visited Naco to appraise the buildings but found little of value in the site. Only three of the thirty-seven buildings were deconstructed for reuse: these were the only frame buildings in the camp. The rest of the adobe buildings and their infrastructure were left [Levstik 2012, 15]. Other border camps were eventually decommissioned and dismantled, leaving only foundations as evidence of their presence during an unsettled time along the border with Mexico.

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Entry 2021 HALS Challenge: Historic Black Landscapes

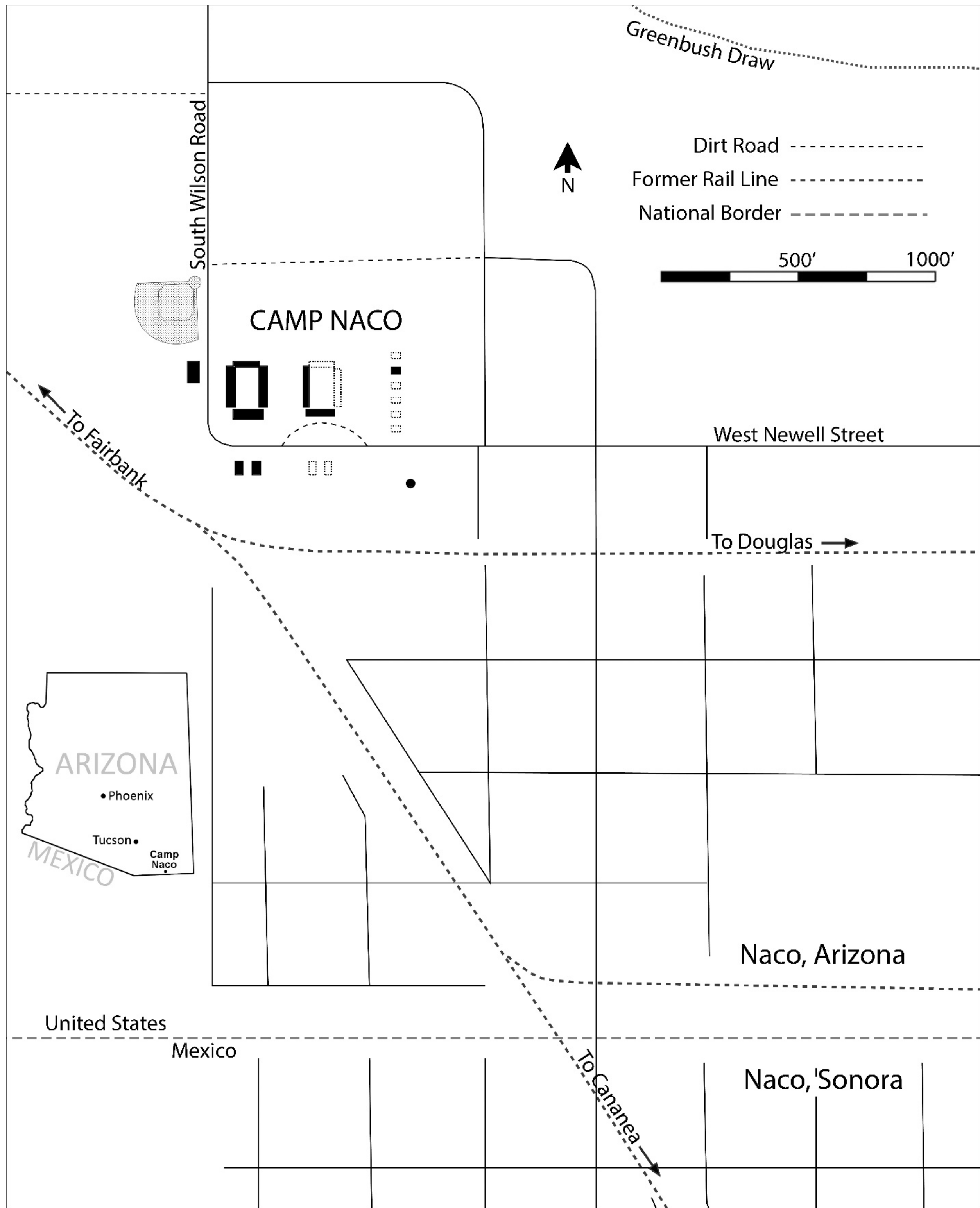

Figure 1: Measured map showing Camp Naco's location (Erickson, 2021).

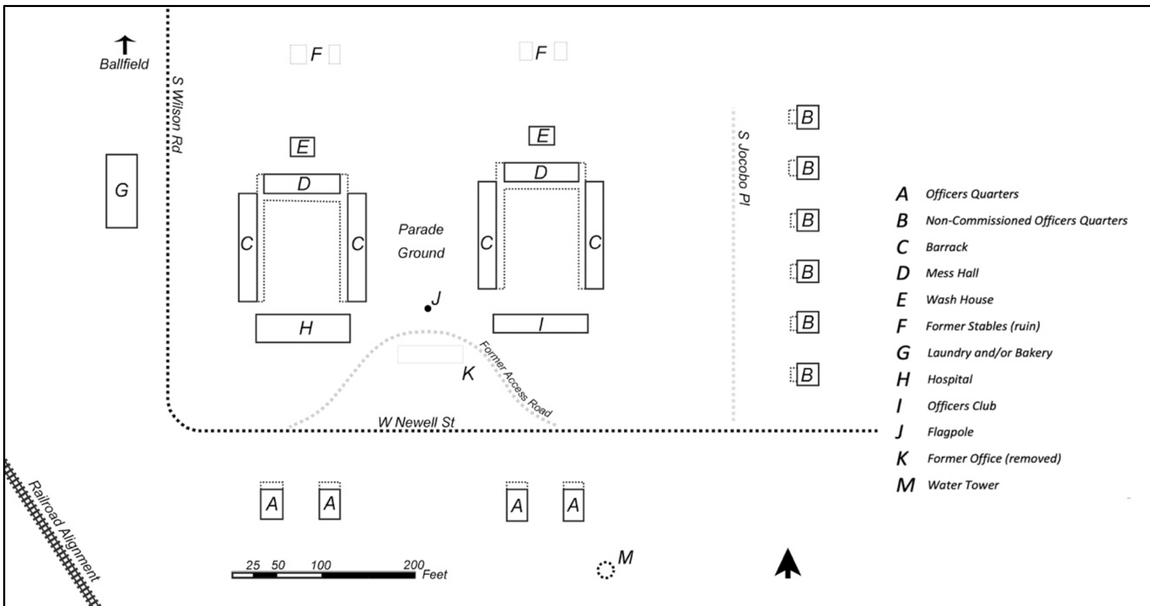

Figure 2: Measured map showing the layout of Camp Naco (Erickson, 2021).

Figure 3: Overview of Camp Naco (Erickson, 2021).

Figure 4: Barracks (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 5: Western quadrangle roof connection between barracks and mess hall (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 6: Bath house behind western quadrangle showing lime plaster (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 7: Non-commissioned officers' residence (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 8: Commissioned officers' residence (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 9: Water tower (McDowell, 2021).

Figure 10: Ruins of eastern mess hall (McDowell, 2021).