



News Release

State of New Mexico
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Pre-Statehood Era Sites New in State Register

Santa Fe — The first building every built in Ruidoso—a gristmill, and the oldest stone-masonry home in San Juan County have been designated for listing in the State Register of Cultural Properties, the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division announced today.

HPD said that several miles of the Santa Fe Trail in Mora County associated with the Piojo Ranch also were approved for the State Register by the Cultural Properties Review Committee earlier this month.

“All of these cultural sites are important examples of early settlement and commerce in New Mexico in the period prior to statehood,” said State Historic Preservation Officer and Director of HPD, Dr. Jeff Pappas.

Rules adopted in August require nominations approved by the CPRC be posted on the HPD website for a 30-day period of public comment before they can be officially listed in the State Register.

Old Dowlin Mill

Ruidoso’s Old Dowlin Mill was built in 1868 and today remains the only water-powered, operable gristmill in its original location in New Mexico. As the only mill for grinding grain in the area, the site quickly expanded and was important to commerce for several nearby settlements. The State Register nomination states that the first post office and the hub of “Dowlins Mills,” later known as Ruidoso, sprung up around the mill.

It also was a social center for soldiers stationed at Fort Stanton, and future generals Pershing and MacArthur frequented the mill. As Ruidoso transitioned into a tourist economy, area residents recognized its significance as one of the few historic buildings in town.

“The mill is truly Ruidoso’s birthplace,” said Delana Clements at the meeting.

She is the daughter of Carmon and Leona Phillips, who purchased the mill in 1950 and restored it after it had sat dormant for decades. They made the mill fully functional, and re-opened it as a tourist attraction through 2005. Although it now is closed to the general public, Ms. Clements keeps the property available for concerts, dances and other special events.

The Florence and John R. Pond House—La Plata

In a part of New Mexico known primarily for its archaeological sites, the Pond house is a standout, an excellent example of a two-story Georgian Revival-style home. CPRC member Matthew Bandy praised the nomination and the committee said at its October 12 meeting that the home’s architecture and association with historical events and transportation make it worthy of consideration for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

“This will be the first architectural listing in the State Register of Cultural Properties in the La Plata area of San Juan County, which has three significant archaeological sites listed in the State and National Register,” said HPD Register coordinator Terry Moody.

The 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ceded the lower La Plata valley to the U.S. Arriving in 1877, Florence and John R. Pond were among the earliest Euro-American settlers in the area. The stone house John Pond built for his family also was the area’s first post office and a stage stop that supported his primary occupation as a blacksmith and farrier. He also farmed 70 acres of land for approximately 25 years. La Plata quickly became one of the largest communities in San Juan County, although its importance declined by the time the Ponds left in 1902.

Built ca. 1890, today, the home’s appearance is largely unaltered, its distinctive and “beautifully executed” stone work survive intact and the acreage surrounding it is farmed by current owners Scott Andrae and Dabney Ford.

The nomination was prepared by Lilian Macada, an architectural historian in Gallup.

Santa Fe Trail: Piojo Ranch Segments District

Approximately five miles of three segments of the Santa Fe Trail in Mora County in northeastern New Mexico were recommended for the State and National registers. The segments form a triangle on the privately owned Piojo Ranch, which is traversed by the Mountain, and Cimarron routes of the trail.

The trail sections are significant for their association with the military, transportation and commerce. The concentration of swales and ruts is among the highest anywhere along the Santa Fe Trail. This is attributable to them being adjacent to Watrous, which in the mid-1800s was a busy trade center known as La Junta, an important stop for people traveling the trail. The proximity of Fort Union and Tiptonville made this a well-traveled area.

The nomination was prepared by cultural resources specialists at the Santa Fe office of the National Park Service. The NPS's Michael Elliott attended the meeting and spoke in support of the nomination.

The Santa Fe Trail ran from St. Louis, Missouri, through Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado and along two routes in New Mexico. The Mountain Route forked north in western Kansas into southern Colorado then hooked south into New Mexico joining the southerly Cimarron Route at Fort Union before heading into Santa Fe. Many of the ruts and swales are easily spotted today and allow visitors to share the experiences of thousands of people who used the trail as a primary trade and travel route from 1821-1880.

The three trail sections are recommended for the National Register in addition to 35 New Mexico segments previously listed, some of which are part of National Historic Landmarks related to the Santa Fe Trail.

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