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Preparing to Serve Again: Southern Arizona's Camp Naco Begins Second Century

Recent infusion of funding helps repair formerly derelict historical military installation and plan for 21st-century use

(Tucson, Ariz.) September 30, 2014—Eight years of fervent grassroots efforts to save Camp Naco—a 95-year-old adobe military installation that once housed Buffalo Soldiers and CCC workers a mere 700 yards from the U.S.-Mexico border—are finally achieving the objectives preservationists envisioned. A recent \$20,000 award from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historical Preservation, to be matched by \$10,000 in donations, supports continued stabilization of the camp's salvageable buildings, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places at the national level of significance. A \$5,000 award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, matched by \$5,000 in private donations, supports master-plan development aimed at securing the camp's future through adaptive reuse of its structures. Tucson-based Poster Frost Mirto and Boston-based ConsultEcon will lead the planning effort, which will ultimately guide preservation partners Archaeology Southwest, the Naco Heritage Alliance, and the Town of Huachuca City, which owns the property, toward realizing a sustainable long-term use for Camp Naco.

"To date, supporters of Camp Naco have raised over \$600,000 to preserve this important place," said William H. (Bill) Doelle, president and CEO of Archaeology Southwest, and a leader of the restoration and reuse efforts. "That shows real commitment, especially when you consider the many challenges we have faced at Camp Naco—squatters, asbestos, arson, monsoon rains... Let's just say that it was very satisfying when our collective long-term efforts were recognized by the Governor's Heritage Preservation Honor Award this past June."

Doelle noted that \$400,000 of that total was an Environmental Protection Agency Brownfields grant that funded removal of the original asbestos roof shingles, which were installed just as the dangers of the material were becoming known. Built in 1919, Camp Naco (also known as Camp Newell) was part of the Mexican Border Defense campaign following World War I. The 1920 census reported nearly 100 African-American men and two white officers stationed at the installation.

"The camp was one of a chain of installations established to create a 'human fence' along more than 1,000 miles of the international border," said Rebecca Orozco, who, with Debby Swartzwelder, leads the Naco Heritage Alliance. "Troops encamped at the facility included units of the renowned Buffalo Soldiers, and in the 1930s, the buildings served as a base camp for the Civilian Conservation Corps," Orozco continued.

The camp's construction helped absorb soldiers returning from World War I into the labor force. One of only two Mexican border posts to utilize adobe construction, the camp comprises twenty-one buildings that remain among the best-preserved examples of architecture from the Mexican Border Defense Construction Project in the United States. Tucson-based Oden Construction, a contractor specializing in historic preservation and

restoration, is responsible for most of the stabilization work at the camp, including that currently funded through the award from the Southwestern Foundation.

The National Trust received key letters of support for the preservation partners' proposal seeking funding for master-plan development. Cochise County Supervisor Ann English cited "the potential economic benefit" that a restored Camp Naco would bring to the community of Naco and Cochise County. James W. McPherson III, President of the Arizona Preservation Foundation, stated that Poster Frost Mirto and ConsultEcon have the necessary experience to "create a realistic plan that highlights the strengths of Camp Naco's architecture, attractive campus, and rich history." Arizona State Representative Demion Clinco wrote, "Preservation and adaptive reuse of Camp Naco presents an exceptional opportunity to meaningfully transform the property into a regional asset while deepening our collective understanding of the region's role in American history." Clinco also serves as Arizona Advisor to the National Trust and president of the Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation, in addition to serving on Archaeology Southwest's Board of Directors.

The National Trust echoed these sentiments in their support for the ongoing project. "Organizations like Archaeology Southwest and the Naco Heritage Alliance help to ensure that communities all across America retain their unique sense of place," said Stephanie Meeks, president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. "We are honored to provide this \$5,000 grant from the Daniel K. Thorne Intervention Fund to these organizations, which will use the funds to plan a new future for an important piece of our shared national heritage."

To learn more, visit www.archaeologysouthwest.org/naco. Master planning for Camp Naco is funded in part by a grant from the Daniel K. Thorne Intervention Fund of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

About Archaeology Southwest

Archaeology Southwest is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Tucson, Arizona, that explores and protects the places of our past across the American Southwest and Mexican Northwest. For three decades, Archaeology Southwest has practiced a holistic, conservation-based approach known as Preservation Archaeology. By exploring what makes a place special, sharing this knowledge in innovative ways, and enacting flexible site protection strategies, we foster meaningful connections to the past and respectfully safeguard its irreplaceable resources. Learn more at archaeologysouthwest.org.

About the Naco Heritage Alliance

The Naco Heritage Alliance was fully incorporated as a new Arizona nonprofit in July 2008. Its mission is to assist in the preservation and interpretation of Camp Naco and other important historical resources in the borderlands area.

About the National Trust for Historic Preservation

The National Trust for Historic Preservation is a privately funded nonprofit organization that works to save America's historic places to enrich our future. The National Trust for Historic Preservation is committed to





protecting America's rich cultural legacy and helping build vibrant, sustainable communities that reflect our nation's diversity. Follow us on Twitter @presnation.

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