



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Fort Union National Monument
P.O. Box 127
Watrous, NM 87553



IN REPLY REFER TO:

Received 8/14/2026
Log #128839

Michelle Ensey
New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer and Director
Department of Cultural Affairs
Bataan Memorial Building, Room 236
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Date: August 13, 2026

Reference: Emergency Deconstruction for Parade Grounds Flagpole, Determination of Eligibility, Fort Union National Monument.

Dear Mrs. Ensey,

Fort Union National Monument is providing notification to the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) about the emergency deconstruction of the flagpole located on the historic parade grounds. The flagpole is structurally compromised and showing signs of failure. It presents an immediate safety hazard to the public, park employees, and nearby historic structures. The park will hire contractor services to deconstruct the flagpole to a safe height while retaining the feature for interpretation.

This action will be conducted under the emergency provisions of the applicable Section 106 compliance within the 2008 Nationwide Programmatic Agreement (PA), and 36 CFR § 800.12 Emergency Situations, which provides the consideration of historic properties during actions taken in response to an immediate threat to life or property. This work will be limited to above-ground activities and will involve no excavation, ground disturbance, or impacts to archaeological resources. The work is also considered cyclic in-kind replacement since wood flagpoles do not last forever.

Along with this letter, we are submitting a new determination of eligibility (DOE) that focuses specifically on the flagpole. A new DOE is needed due to some confusion about the flagpole's eligibility within the parks NRHP related documents. The flagpole is listed as an historic structure within the archaeological site, LA4970. However, the 1978 NRHP nomination which encompasses the entirety of Fort Union National Monument, does not specifically mention the flagpole, nor does the park's Cultural Landscape Inventory.

Enclosed is the new DOE, which provides the historical context of the flagpole's construction, modifications, and significance. During the compliance process, new research and documentation established that the existing flagpole was constructed in 1959 as part of the Mission 66 development of the park. Our research shows that the flagpole is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A and C for its association with the Mission 66 period of development. Fort Union National Monument was the

first park to be wholly planned and developed during the Mission 66 program. The flagpole is a character-defining feature of the historic parade grounds. The flagpole is not eligible as a reconstruction, because it is designed one-half height and not the accurate depiction of the 120-foot historical flagpole.

The subsurface footprint beneath the flagpole is in the exact location of the Civil-War era flagpole. It is a contributing feature under Criterion D, with high potential for intact archaeological deposits of 19th-century fort construction, post-mold/cribbing, and military artifacts. The emergency actions will not disturb the subsurface resource.

The park will pursue an in-kind replacement in the near future with appropriate planning and compliance process. The construction of the in-kind replacement will adhere to the 1959 construction drawings, architectural specifications, and similar wood species.

This letter serves as notification of the emergency undertaking and park's implementation of the emergency provisions of the applicable Programmatic Agreement pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.12. The park will document the emergency action and retain the existing flagpole for interpretative purposes. We also ask that you review the enclosed DOE. Please feel free to call me at (505) 425-2709 or Park Archeologist, Mallory Hawk, (505) 429-1765, if you have any questions or comments about this report.

Sincerely,

**JOSE
VIGIL** Digitally signed
by JOSE VIGIL
Date:
2026.08.13
15:40:29 -06'00'

Lorenzo J. Vigil,
Superintendent, Fort Union National Monument

Enclosures: (1) DOE with figures.

I concur with the Determination of Eligibility for the Fort Union Flagpole:

Gretchen Brock Digitally signed by Gretchen
Brock
Date: 2026.08.21 15:16:29
-06'00'

for the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Determination of NRHP Eligibility for Flagpole on Parade Grounds

By Mallory Hawk (FOUN Archaeologist), Angela Sirna (NPS Historian), and Jeremy Moss (PECO)

Aug. 10, 2026

Site Number: LA4970

Structure ID Number: HS-10

CRIS Resource ID: 404192

National Register Documentation: Administratively listed on October 15, 1966; confirmed on December 1st, 1978.

NRHP Reference Number: 66000044

Description:

This flagpole is a half-scale representation of the 120-foot 1862 military flagstaff on the parade grounds in the third fort within Fort Union National Monument in Watrous, New Mexico. The flagpole is a prominent and character-defining feature of the historic parade grounds in third fort, where it serves as the visual and symbolic center of the military post (*Figure 1*). Surrounded by officer's quarters, barracks, and administrative buildings, it reflects the fort's 19th- century military organization and ceremonial function. Its height and traditional nautical-style construction restore an important historic landmark within the open prairie of northeastern New Mexico. An NPS historian researched the design based on period documentation and was then constructed by NPS personnel and erected by Kueffer Construction company in 1959 as part of the park's Mission 66 development.

This design borrows heavily from the construction of traditional ship masts, using spreaders, and standing rigging to stabilize very tall timber mast, which can be seen for miles. The current flagpole is measured to be 62-feet in height, 10-inches in width, with wooden mast consisting of two timber pole sections jointed together, rather than a single continuous pole. The lower mast measures about 40-feet in length and forms the primary structural support. Above this lower pole, is a 32-feet topmast, connected by a 4-feet in length joint pole that overlaps the two poles. There are white metal mast bands encircle this joint, securing the two poles together while also providing attachment points for the rigging. At the topmast, is a metal truck, the cap assembly carries the sheave (pulley) over which the halyard passes through. Attached to the truck is a pad eye or hoop that serves as a rigging attachment to lift or installing the mast. An external halyard runs from the wooden cleat near the base of the mast (facing northeast), upward along the external side of the pole, through the pulley in the truck, and back down to raise and lower the flag. This design intentionally leaves the rope exposed, reflecting 19th-century military and maritime practice. The flagpole has four horizontal spreaders (cross trees). Each spreader projects roughly 4-feet from the mast and forms a cross-shaped arrangement around the pole. These spreaders separate the guard wires from the mast, increasing their angle of support and improving lateral stability. The spreaders are connected to a network of guard wires (standing rigging) that extend both upward and downward between mast bands, spreader ends, and ground anchors. This forms a diamond-shaped web surrounding the mast. This rigging distributes the wind loads, limits bending of the tall wooden mast, and keeps the pole centered under extreme wind conditions. The reproduction flagpole has a weathered paint finish, with white paint peeling and exposed the dark wood underneath. It is simple functional construction with little ornamentation. This design emphasizes visibility over long distances rather than decorative appearance. Which evokes the appearance of Fort Union during its active military services. The flagstaff's commanding position in the center of parade grounds, emphasizes its role as the visual and ceremonial point of the fort.

Above the wooden cleat on the lower mast, the pole is stamped "Carney / (dash) - 59 / WLP / 4 / 4D". This type of stamping was used in the mid-twentieth century for commercial supplies. "Carney" indicates that it was manufactured by B.J. Carney & Company. "[19]59" is the year the timber was harvested, chemically treated, and branded. WLP is the botanical species code "Western Larch Pole," highly favored for heavy structural poles due to its incredible straightness and natural decay resistance. "4" refers to the ANSI Pole Class, its strength

rating. Class 4 is a standard, robust thickness used for load-bearing utility structures. “4D”- The specific plant or treatment batch code, mapping back to its facility, where the timber underwent its preservation process (*Figure 16*).

Most flagpoles have a 20-30 year lifespan, and this structure has significant deterioration. The lower pole contains an elongated split crack, estimated to be 12 feet in length, indicating structural compromise. Both poles display surfaces of weathered timber and evidence of internal wood rot, with paint peeling and flaking, which has spread onto the parade grounds. The flagpole features paired crosstrees and multiple guard wires, arranged symmetrically but are now very loose, which diminishes their ability to stabilize the mast. The gradual taper of the topmast is marked by a secondary elongated split crack near the junction of two joined poles and horizontal spreaders, suggesting the damage is extensive and affects the core structure. Because of these challenges, the flagpole has exceeded its lifespan. (*Figure 12-15*).

Historical Context:

Fort Union was established in 1851, to protect traders and travelers on the Santa Fe Trail, from attacks by Native American tribes (Comanche, Ute, Jicarilla Apache). The fort was built following after the events of the Mexican-American war (1846-1848), a conflict between the United States and Mexico over territorial boundaries, ending with the U.S. acquiring various western lands, including New Mexico. The fort played a critical role in defending the New Mexico Territory and supporting Union military operations in the Southwest. The fort served as a 19th-century military garrison post, supply depot, and transportation hub, for the U.S. Army during the civil war. Fort Union had three successive military posts. The first fort (1851-1861) was abandoned due to its poor defensive location, while the Second (Star) Fort (1861-1863) was constructed as a temporary earthen star fortification during a period of heightened military threats. The Third Fort, began in 1863, became the permanent adobe installation and represents the final construction phase, until its abandonment in 1891. The abandoned fort was formally established by the National Park Service, on April 5th, 1956. The park opened to the public for the first time, on June 8th, 1956. The park is a protected historic site, which preserves the largest earthen architecture stabilized ruins, in the American Southwest.

The U.S. Army built the original 120-ft flagpole on the Third Fort’s parade grounds as historical photographs and records show (*Figure 4-5*). It was erected circa June 1862 during the initial building phase of the third (and largest) fort. It was built tall like a ship’s mast using joined poles with supporting shroud lines and underground base structure, so it could be seen for miles along the Santa Fe Trail. Military flagpoles were built like ship masts to achieve extreme height, structural stability in high winds, and easier maintenance using traditional maritime joinery and rigging. The original pole remained at the fort until it was abandoned in the 1890s.

Fort Union National Monument was established on April 5, 1956, and was the first park to be wholly planned and developed by Mission 66, a 10th year capital improvement campaign to expand the National Park Service and improve park infrastructure in preparation for the bureau’s 50th anniversary in 1966. At Fort Union, the NPS designed and constructed an entrance road, housing, maintenance area, visitor center, and brought in modern utilities. While the Mission 66 plan for the park did not include reconstruction of the fort’s remains, it did allow for the reconstruction of the historic flagpole. NPS historian Donald Mawson spent a year researching the historic flagpole and the NPS produced construction drawings based on his findings. However, the design was for a 62-foot structure, about half-size of the original, probably due to the NPS recognizing the challenge of maintaining a 120-foot structure. With design drawings in hand, it was then constructed by the NPS personnel and erected in front of the commanding officer quarters, (*Figure 6*) in 1959, by the Kueffer Construction Company. (Zhu Liping 1992). Based on the April 1959 date on the construction drawings (*Figure 2-3*), it can be estimated that the replica flagpole was installed most likely in May 1959. There are photos and memorandum of the June 14, 1959, dedication, which shows the ground still being disturbed from the flagpole installation (*Figure 7*).

There is an U.S. Government Office Memorandum, dated June 15, 1959, from Robert Utley NPS park regional Historian, to Roy Appleman, Chief of the Branch of Park History Studies, Washington DC Office of National

Park Service. Robert Utley was describing the fine craftsmanship and integrity of the new replica flagpole. (*Figure 17-18*). “The ceremony was held yesterday and, despite some rain, went off smoothly. The replica flagpole was used for flag-raising ceremonies. It is a fine piece of work and, I think, adds greatly to the area. It is about 60 feet high as against 120 for the original. But its scale in relation to the ruins appears about the same as the original in relation to the fort before deterioration.” Utley’s comments further indicate that the height of the fort’s remaining adobe walls was also a factor in the NPS’s decision to construct a shorter flagpole.

Anecdotal evidence has presented conflicting information about whether the entire flagpole was replaced in the 1980s. In July 2026, one of the park employees, preservationist and masonry leader, Jaime Salazer, had a discussion with Ted Garcia, who worked for the park, for 37 years (mid-late 1970s, retired in 2013). When asked about the flagpole, Teddy said that Wilfred Valencia (deceased), former preservationist, donated the wood timber from Chacon, a small mountain village, in Mora County. They used this wood timber for a replacement project on the flagpole sometime in the 1980s. There is no documented evidence of this replacement within park records, including maintenance records, project reports, photographs, or correspondence. Furthermore, the lower portion of the flagpole still bears the 1959 maker’s mark. It may be possible that the upper portion of the flagpole was replaced, but this has not been verified.

Park records do indicate the reconstructed flagpole underwent repair projects in 1986, that involved scaffolding around the flagpole and park staff was maintaining upkeep in painting the flagpole, (*Figure 8-9*). There is maintenance record of project budget, *A01 Paint Historic Flagpole*, with estimated budget cost of \$4000. The proposed work statement included scraping off old paint, prime coat and repainting the existing “historic replica.” Work had to be accomplished from a scaffold or bucket truck to avoid causing further damage to the pole. (FOUN FY1985 maintenance record, *Paint Historic Flagpole*, August 5th, 1985). Another similar project was undertaken in 2001, in painting and repairing the reproduction flagpole in a Section 106 compliance letter, to Elizabeth Oster, New Mexico State Historic Preservation Officer. (FOUN, FY2001, H4217, compliance documentation).

Previous Documentation

Fort Union National Monument was administratively listed on the National Register of Historic Places on October 15, 1966. The Keeper accepted a National Register form on December 1, 1978. This nomination did not include a list of contributing or non-contributing resources; however, it did explicitly exclude the park’s maintenance, residence, and visitor center areas. The flagstaff is included in the park’s CRIS Inventory, as a historic structure (HS-10) within the archaeological site, LA4970, which encompasses the entirety of Fort Union National Monument. Of the park’s Mission 66 resources, only the visitor center has been evaluated when it was determined eligible in 2009.

National Register Significance Evaluation:

Criterion A: Eligible

The 1959 flagpole is significant for its association with Mission 66 park planning and development of Fort Union National Monument, the first park wholly planned and developed during Mission 66. The NPS saw the flagpole as a necessary recreation to interpret the fort’s history in the mid-twentieth century.

Criterion B: – Not Eligible

The 1959 flagpole is not associated with any significant person or community.

Criterion C:– Eligible

The flagpole is a mid-twentieth century construction based on 19th century maritime design built to withstand the high winds of the New Mexican prairie. It was also part of Fort Union National Monument’s Mission 66 design program.

Criterion D: (Important Potential to Yield) – Eligible / Contributing (Subsurface)

1. Above-Ground Surface: Ineligible, holds no significant scientific and architectural data.
2. Subsurface Footprint and Below Ground Surface: Eligible. Because it occupies the exact Civil War location,

the ground beneath has high potential to contain original post mold/cribbing, 1860s structural hardware, discarded military artifacts, and underground base structure.

3. The location has the potential to yield information about historic flagpole construction, military landscape features, and associated activities through subsurface remains such as post molds, foundations, cribbing, and artifacts.

Criterion Consideration E: (Reconstructed Properties) – Not Eligible

This criterion consideration applies to whether the reconstructed flagpole is individually eligible or ineligible.

Although the design of the reconstruction was based on research of period of documentation, it is 62-feet—half the size of the original 120-foot flagpole. Therefore, it does not meet the specific requirements regarding accurate depiction.

Integrity Evaluation:

The flagpole is recognizable as it was constructed in 1959, despite its structural issues. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, use, association, and feeling. The integrity of materials and workmanship is in question, due to anecdotal information around replacement—either partial or whole. Nevertheless, the flagpole retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

Findings:

The 1959 flagpole is eligible under Criterion A and C for its association with the Mission 66 period of development at Fort Union National Monument. Fort Union National Monument was the first park to be wholly planned and developed during the Mission 66 program. It retains the integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, use, and association. The reconstruction of this flagpole based on period documentation was part of this planned development, in recognition that the flagpole was a key character-defining feature of the historic parade grounds. However, it was designed to be half the size of the original, presumably due to the maintenance challenges of maintaining a 120-foot object. And, also, because of the diminished height of the fort's remnant adobe walls. Therefore, it is not eligible as a reconstruction because it is not an accurate representation of the original. The subsurface footprint beneath and surrounding the flagpole grounds, is contributing feature, under Criterion D, possessing high potential to yield unrecorded archaeological information regarding 19th-century fort construction, post-hole cribbing, and military artifacts.

Citations:

Harrison, Laura Soullière, and James E. Ivey. 1993. *Of a Temporary Character: An Historic Structure Report of First Fort, Second Fort, and the Arsenal and Historical Base Map, Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico*. Professional Papers No. 43. Santa Fe, N.M.: Division of History, National Park Service.

Melnick, Robert. *Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Union National Monument*. Eugene: University of Oregon, Department of Architecture, 2022. Prepared for the National Park Service, Intermountain Region.

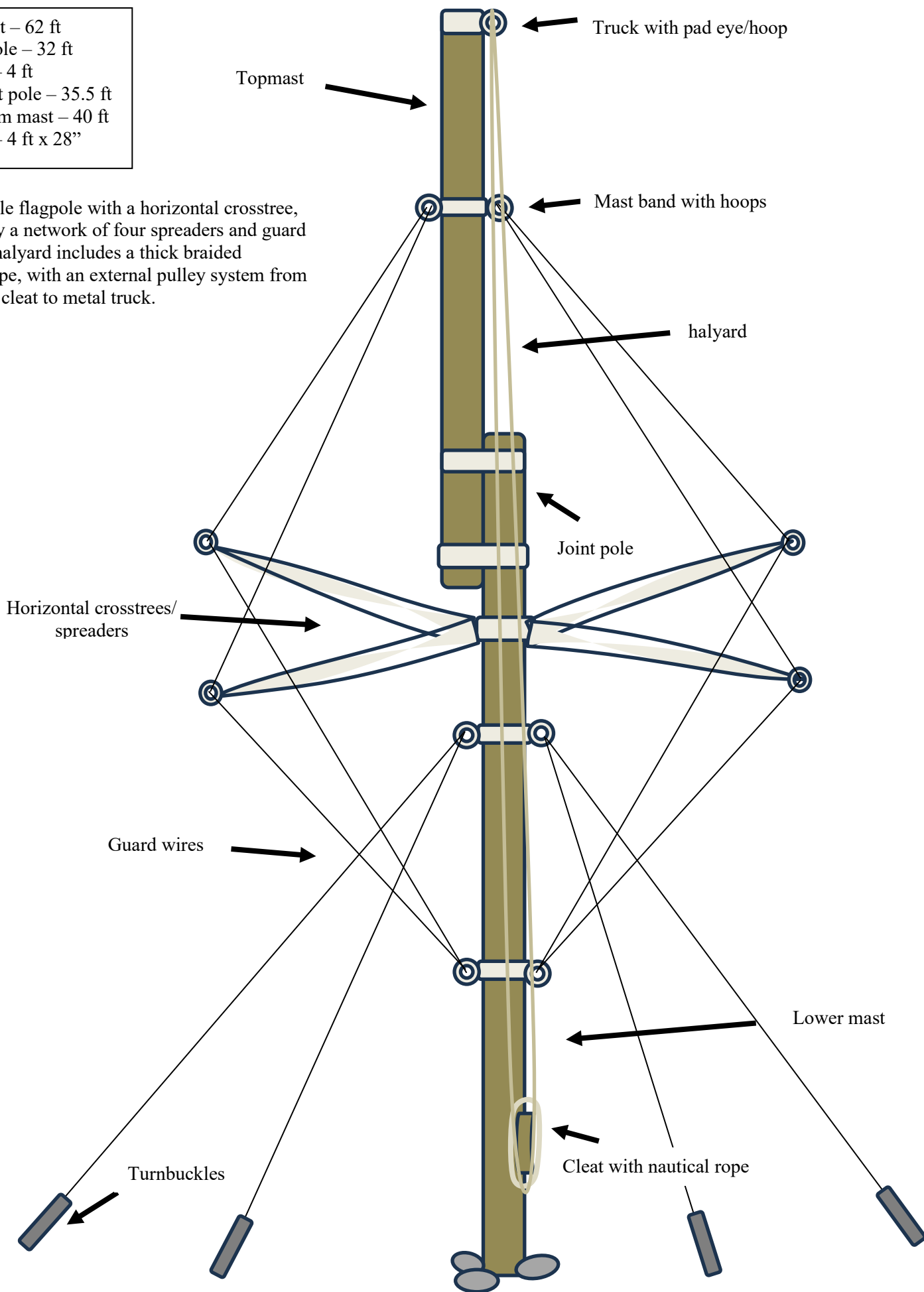
Utley, Robert M. *Fort Union National Monument, New Mexico*. National Park Service Historical Handbook Series no. 35. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962.

Zhu, Liping. *Fort Union National Monument: An Administrative History*. Southwest Cultural Resources Center Professional Papers, No. 42. Santa Fe, N.M.: Division of History, National Park Service, 1992.

U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resource Stewardship and Partnerships, Heritage Preservation Services, Historic Landscape Initiative. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*. Edited by Charles A. Birnbaum with Christine Capella Peters. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1996.

Total height – 62 ft
Topmast pole – 32 ft
Joint pole – 4 ft
Lower mast pole – 35.5 ft
Total bottom mast – 40 ft
Spreaders – 4 ft x 28"

Nautical style flagpole with a horizontal crosstree, stabilized by a network of four spreaders and guard wires. The halyard includes a thick braided polyester rope, with an external pulley system from the wooden cleat to metal truck.



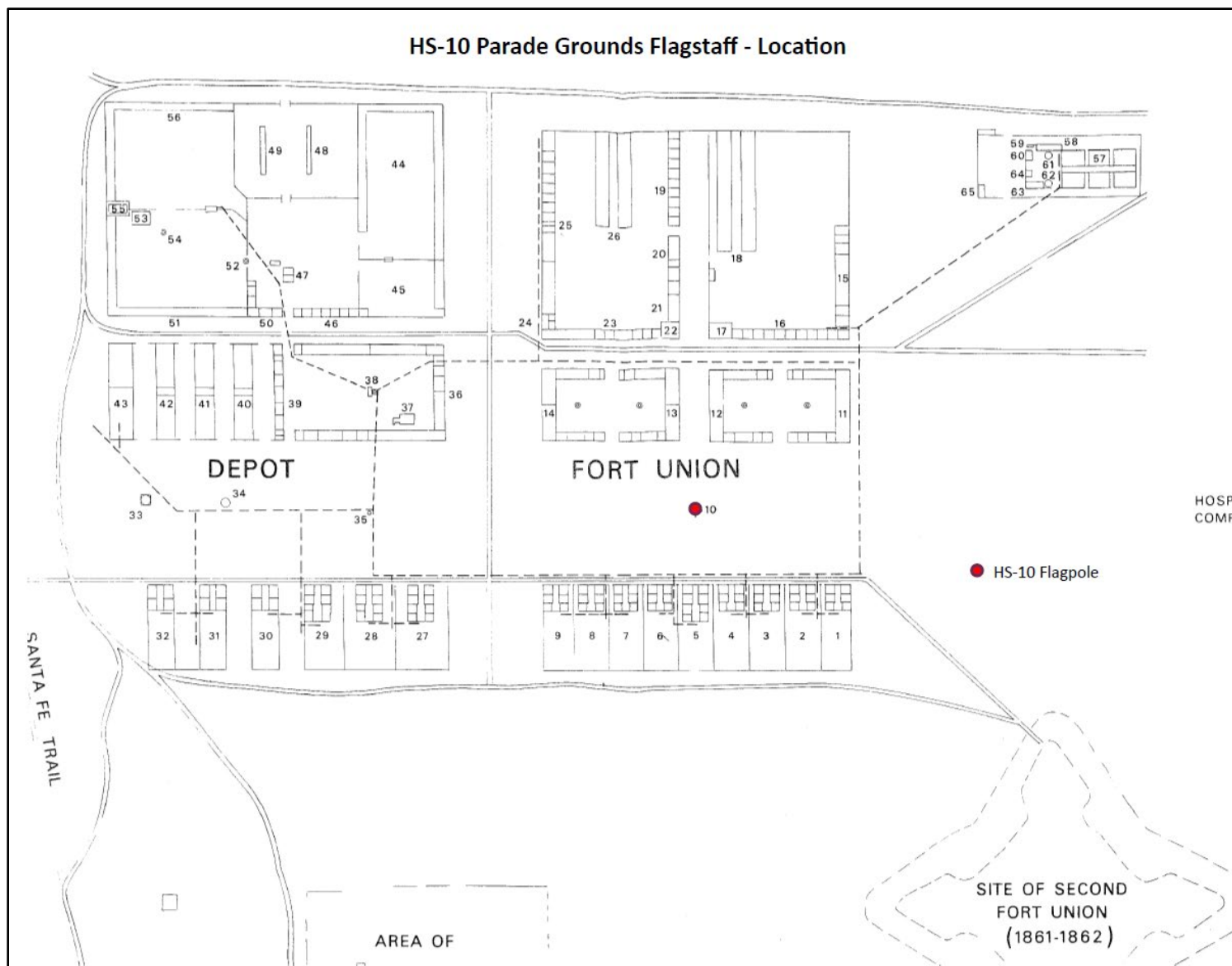


Figure 1 – Location of parade grounds flagstaff

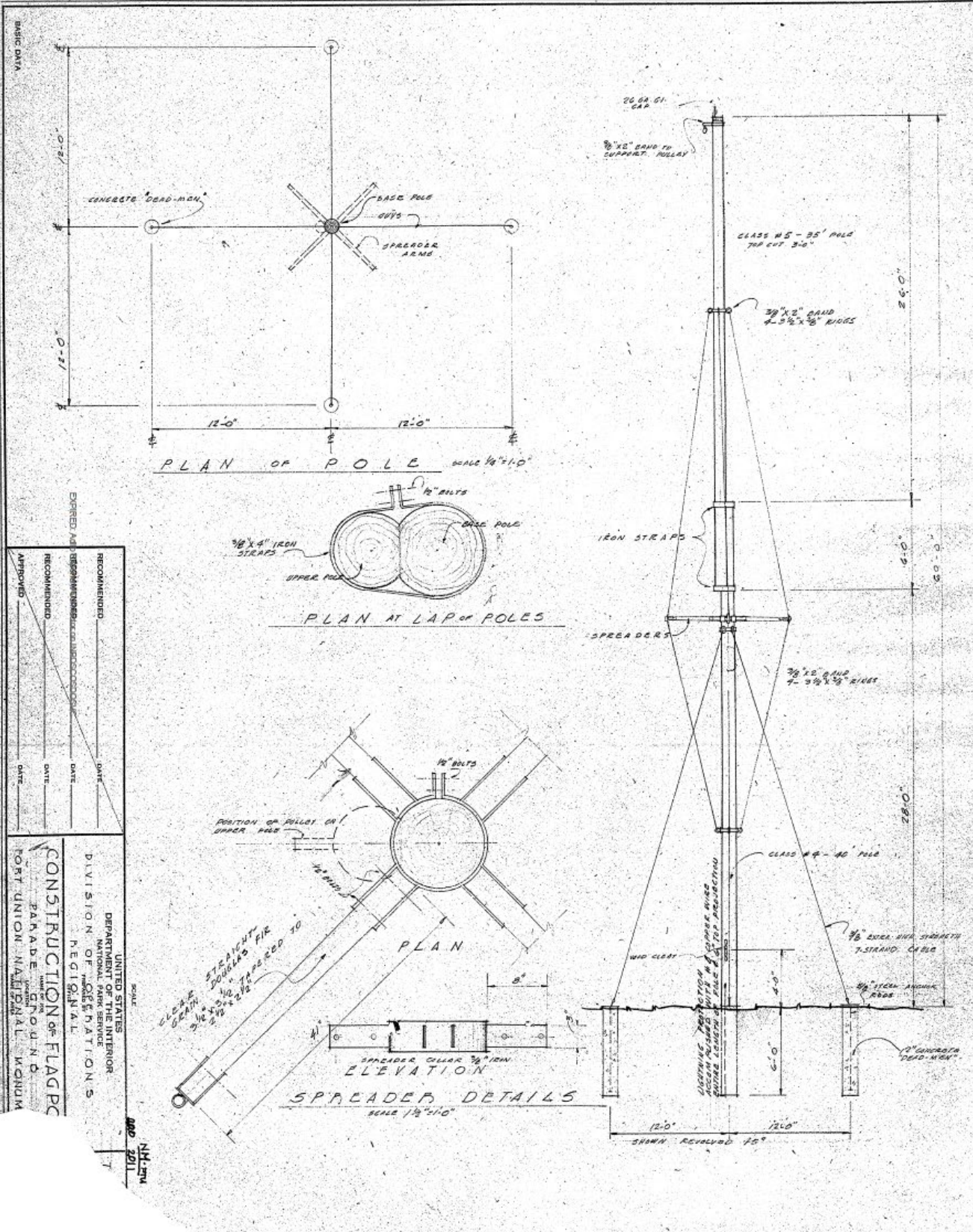


Figure 2 – Original construction of the flagpole, April 14, 1959

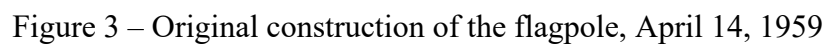


Figure 3 – Original construction of the flagpole, April 14, 1959

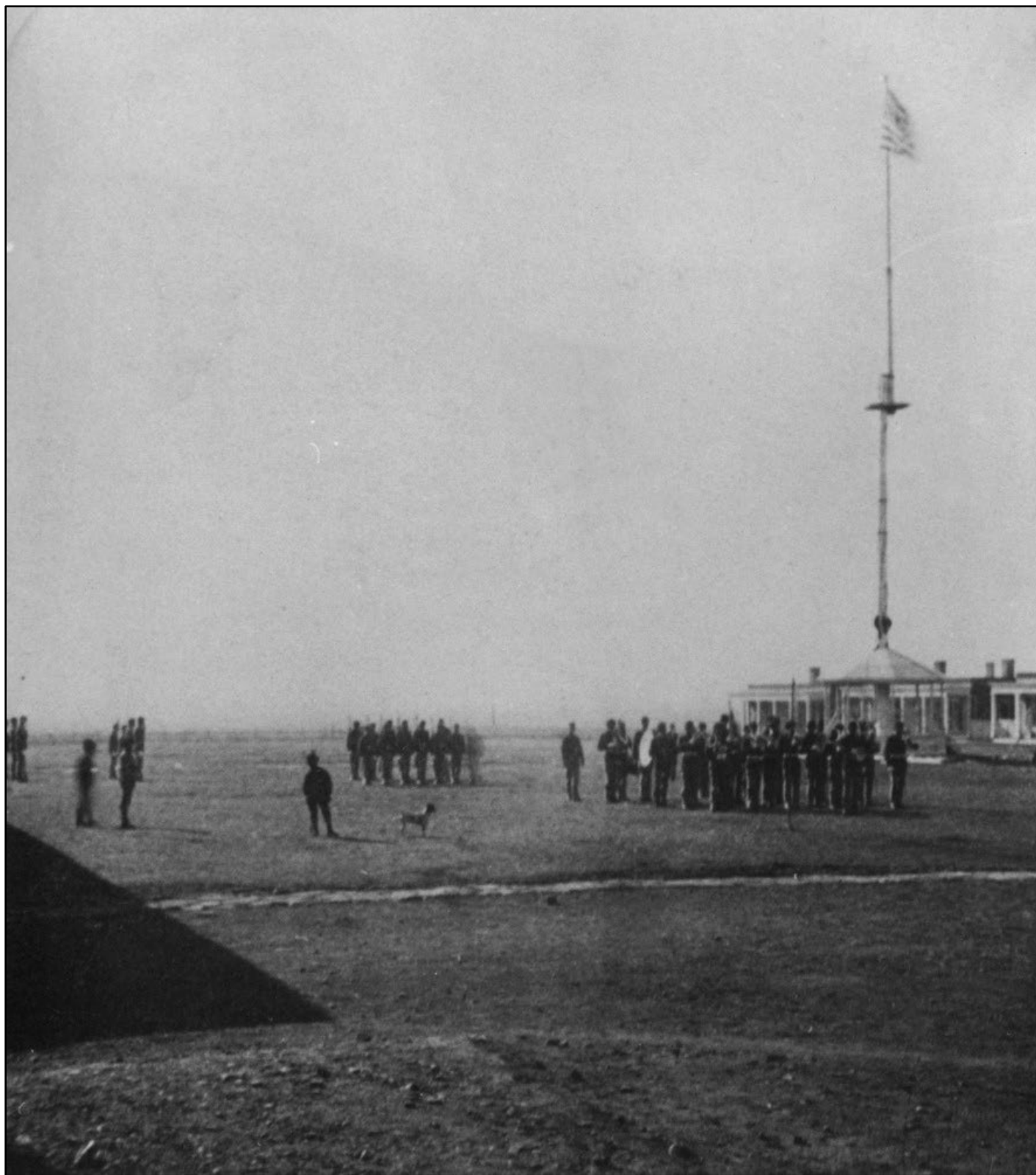


Figure 4 – Retreat Parade Company, 120-ft Historical Flagpole.



Figure 5 – Third Fort Union, Officers Row, 120-ft Historical Flagpole.



Figure 6 – Erection of replica 62-ft flagpole, 1959.



Figure 7 – Dedication ceremony, raising the flag, June 14, 1959.



Figure 8 – Flagpole repairs and paint, 1986.

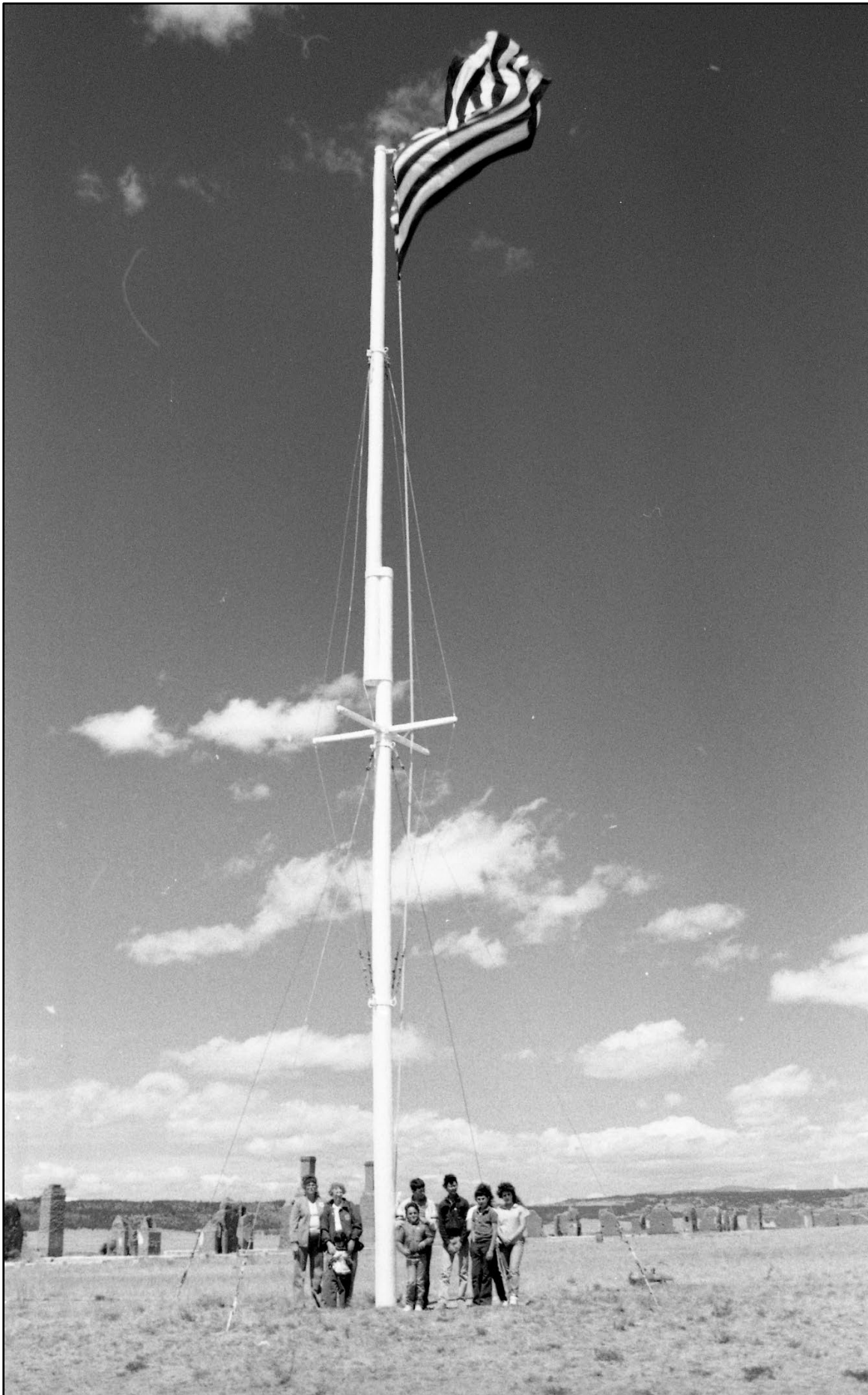


Figure 9 – Flagpole with school children and teachers in 1986 after painting.



Figure 10 – Garrison flagpole raising ceremony, 2014.



Figure 11 – Flagpole, Officers Row with snowy mountains, 2020.



Figure 12 – Flagpole, Solider Barracks, facing east. July 10, 2026.



Figure 13 – Flagpole, Officers Row, facing north-west. July 10, 2026.



Figure 14 – Flagpole, Large structural crack on lower mast, facing north-east. July 10, 2026.

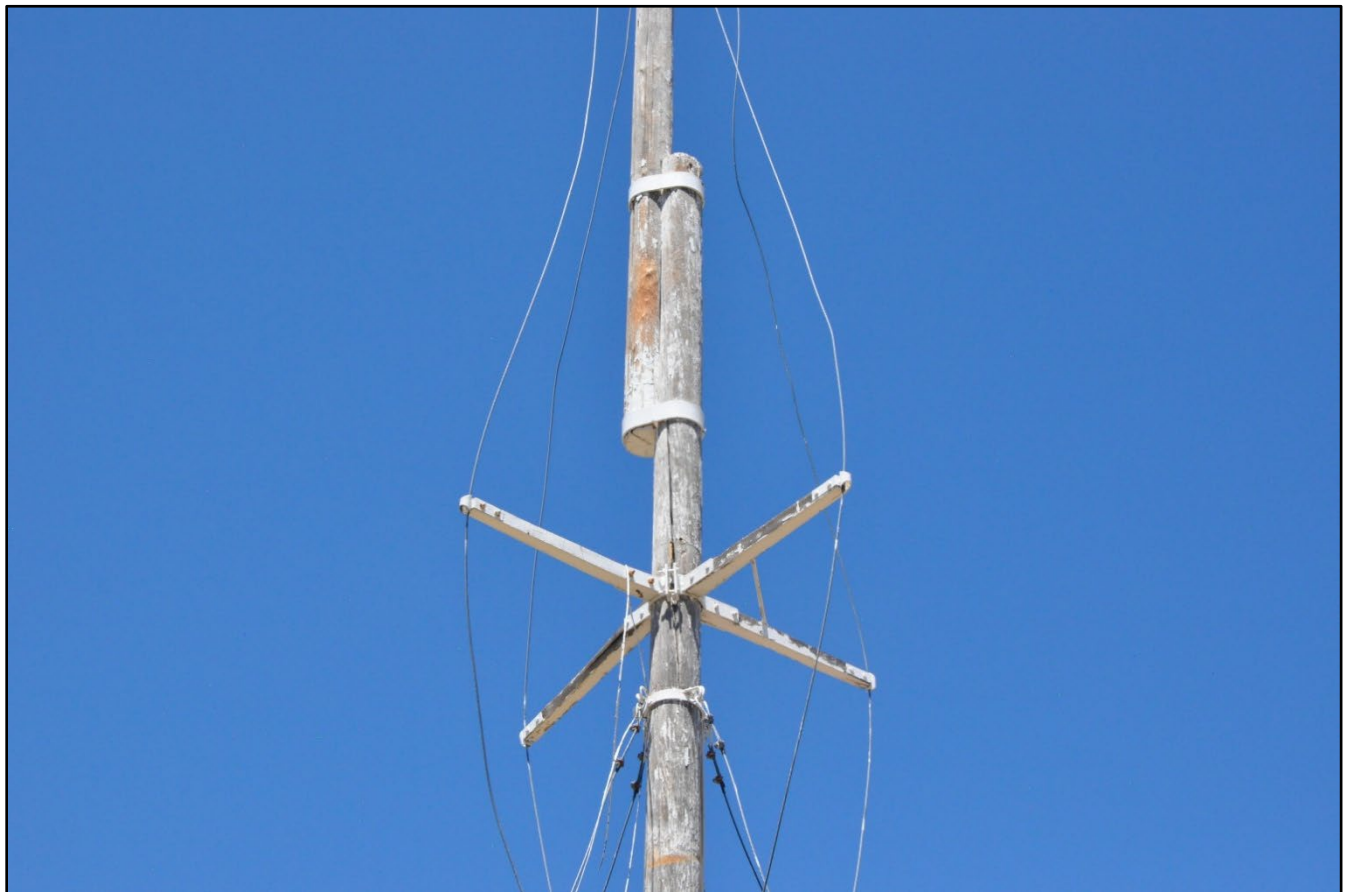


Figure 15 – Flagpole, Structural crack above horizontal spreaders, facing north-east. July 10, 2026.



Figure 16 – Above wooden cleat on lower mast, stamp, “Carney / (dash) – 59 / WLP / 4 / 4D”.

Q70
FLAGPOLE

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

TO : Roy Appleman

DATE: June 15, 1959

FROM : Bob Utley

SUBJECT: Fort Union

Here's a brief report on Fort Union festivities. The ceremony was held yesterday and, despite some rain, went off smoothly. The replica flagpole was used for flag-raising ceremonies. It is a fine piece of work and, I think, adds greatly to the area. It is about 60 feet high as against 120 for the original. But its scale in relation to the ruins appears about the same as the original in relation to the fort before deterioration. The picket fence is also attractive. Replica of the fence that once stood in front of officers row, it connects the visitors center with the hospital on the east and with the head of the arroyo on the west.

As self-appointed guardian of the ruts in the prairie, I went up last week and discovered, as I had anticipated, that Homer planned to park 500 cars on the ruts southwest of the hospital. I talked him into moving the parking area south, which he was reluctant to do because it meant having the State Police come out again to rearrange their plans. But he did it.

We are extremely happy with the museum, and it went over big with the public. My only objection is the art work, which is pretty amateurish. The death of Maxwell is especially poor. Also, Hakala had designed his large wall map of New Mexico Territory in 1859 on the basis of the Carleton map, without reading the fine print indication revision to show forts as of 1865. Discovery of this created consternation, as a permanent surface-spray had already been applied. They had also gotten Fort Breckinridge about 50 miles too far north. The solution was to cover Breckinridge with mountains and place the founding date of each fort beneath its name on the map. It look OK now, except for a dark spot where Breckinridge once stood.

Jim's presence was invaluable. They would never have gotten the uniforms and equipment together properly without his aid, and he saved them from some textual errors. Jim and I went up to Cimarron Tuesday and bought a Winchester 1873 from Mrs. Ward for \$32.50. He felt he couldn't stay through Sunday for the dedication, as his wife has not entirely recovered, and he returned Friday to Columbus.

Jim will undoubtedly write you of his desire to get a permanent position with the NPS in western museum work, but I might pass on to you the fact that he is perfectly sincere in the wish. He said that you had advised him against it some time ago, but what you perhaps did not know was that the Dodge agency is yielding him about the equivalent of a GS-9 income. Moreover, he does not want to sell cars but does want to do the type of work the Western Museum people were doing on Fort Union. His artistic ability, knowledge of uniforms and equipment, and experience in handling and restoring artifacts, combined with a zealous interest, should make him a valuable hand about a museum laboratory. I talked to John Jenkins about the matter, and he is prepared to support Jim if something can be worked out.

I took the aerial photos of the Fort Union vicinity up to Mawson in hopes that his knowledge of the country would enable him to put them together and make something of the ruts. I understand that he thinks he has the solution to the problem now, but I haven't talked to him about it. But according to the story I got, Mawson thinks the pre-fort mountain branch went right through the present residence area at the Monument. I'll get up in a week or so and talk with him about it. I may get some time this summer to delve into the matter more deeply, and I would like to get up in the air about evening and try to follow ruts towards Wagon Mound and towards Cimarron.

I note encouraging support developing for Fort Davis down Texas way. Do you think that, after Advisory Board approval of the Indian Wars study next October, a special report might be quickly authorized? Guess you better not mention to John that I said anything to you about the Survey, as a recent letter indicates he is still annoyed about the alleged "alliance" against him on the May excursion.

Regards,

Btb

P.S. Mattie took no pictures at Phil Kearny or Litterman and Wagon Box battlefields. Lay sent some pictures, several years old, of the five monuments. I'm including them in the study.

B