

REPORT OF THE ONATE CROSSING HART'S MILL COMMITTEE
January 21, 2020

The committee met at the International Boundary and Water Commission Field Office on Tuesday, January 21, 2020. The meeting began at 9 AM and was intended to last most of the day. The purpose of the meeting was to meet the members of the Paleo West contract team who would be carrying out the survey of the sites involved.

The Paleo West team members present were:

Steve Burns Chaves
Chris Baker
Victoria Jacobson

Members of the committee present were:

Brian Kanof
Woody Baer
Andrea Hutchins
Valerie Venecia
Mark Howe
David Romodorado
Bernie Sargent

Two other persons were present: Al Kinard, a stakeholder who lives in the neighborhood near the Hart's Mill buildings; and Ishia Rogers Santamaria, owner of the two remaining Fort Bliss officers' quarters that were part of the Hart's Mill army post.

Introductions were made all around. The Paleo West persons then covered what their operations would be and their methodology. The attendees then adjourned to visit the Hart's Mill locations including the old Hacienda Café. The officers' quarters were sealed due to safety issues, so the visitors could not see the interiors of the two buildings. The Hacienda Café could not be entered because Mr. Sargent did not get the correct key from the owner, Mr. Chip Johns. The remainder of the day was spent at lunch and at UTEP.

The attendees gathered again at 4PM. In addition to the morning attendees, members of the Onate Crossing Committee joined the discussion, including:

Robert Word
Gary Williams
Steve Santamaria
Nancy Gonzalez
Ken Gorski
Prince MacKenzie

The group discussed the site and the plan at some length. Chris Baker will serve as team leader and identify original documents, i.e. maps, plans and photos. Steve Chaves will serve as the historical memory for the project. Victoria Jacobson will serve as the historic architect. The project will endeavor

to complete a comprehensive analysis of the cultural landscape and its character-defining features. Ms. Jacobson remarked that this would include “what we can mess with and what we should not.” Considering that the Santamarias own the officers’s quarters properties, tax credits for preservation will be a consideration. Angelica from the National Park Service listened in via telephone and added her comments.

Mr. Santamaria confirmed that the officers’ quarters were in good condition inside. He was concerned about developing the buildings, possibly as a boutique hotel, where he would have to confront the local bureaucracy that would question or possibly reject what he planned to do. His concern was really with the El Paso City Landmark Commission, not with the EPCHC. Should the quarters and the Hacienda be a museum or conference center? This would have to be addressed at a future date. UTEP might have an interest in participating in the proceedings in terms of using the buildings as a conference center. As for the officers’ quarters, Mr. Santamaria envisions a boutique hotel with the original character of the quarters preserved outside, but with rooms inside that visitors would want to stay in while visiting. The archeologists present said that the archeology was very important to the site and still to be done, but surveys could be done with minimal impact to the surrounding areas.

The meeting adjourned with the understanding that the Paleo West team would work toward completing two reports consistent with the scope of their contract.