

## SANTA RITA MOUNTAINS – FOREST ADMINISTRATION

**BACKGROUND:** The National Forest lands in the Santa Rita Mountains are currently administered by the Nogales Ranger District of the Coronado National Forest. The Nogales RD and the Coronado National Forest, however, evolved over the years before becoming what they are today. The first segment of government land that was to eventually become part of the Nogales Ranger District was the Santa Rita Mountains. These mountains were established as the Santa Rita Forest Reserve by the General Land Office on 11 April 1902. In 1905, Forest Reserves administered by the General Land Office (Department of the Interior) were transferred to the US Forest Service (Department of Agriculture) and the Santa Rita Forest Reserve was renamed Santa Rita National Forest on 4 March 1907. The designation of Coronado National Forest first appeared on 2 July 1908 when the Santa Rita National Forest, the Santa Catalina National Forest and the Dragoon National Forest were combined.

The second segment of government land that was to become a part of the Nogales Ranger District was the Tumacacori Forest Reserve that was established on 7 November 1906. It became a National Forest on 4 March 1907 and encompassed over 200,000 acres of forestlands west of the Santa Cruz River. On 1 July 1908, the Tumacacori NF was combined with the Baboquivari NF and the Huachuca NF to become the Garces National Forest. The Garces NF was combined with the Coronado NF on 1 July 1911. Over the years the Coronado National Forest underwent several more expansions and reached its final configuration on 23 October 1953 when portions of the Crook National Forest were transferred into the Coronado National Forest.

**ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES:** A number of facilities were constructed over the years to support the efforts of the Forest Service in the Santa Rita Mountains. Until the 1970s, the administration of the Santa Rita Mountains was split between two districts, the Tucson district to the north and west of the mountain crest and the Rosemont/Patagonia District in the south and east of the crest.

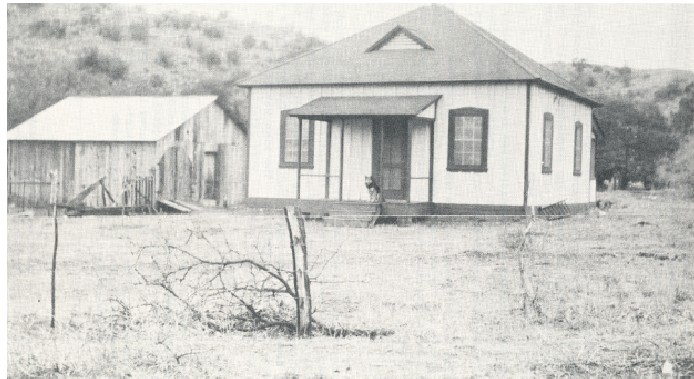
The northern portion of the Santa Rita Mountains was administered by the Tucson District using a field office located in the Madera Canyon area. In 1907, the Madera Administrative Site was established in an adobe building located in a canyon that parallels the White House Canyon Road just north of the current Proctor Road. This site existed until 1946 when its status as an administrative site was revoked although its use was limited after the 1930s. A second Madera Administrative Site was established in 1948 in the location of the old CCC Camp and it also served as the location of the Madera Guard Station. These buildings were



Rosemont Ranger Station – 1909  
Photo courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service

removed in the 1970s. Information on the Madera Administrative Sites is sparse and photos of the buildings are not available.

The administration of the southern portion of the Santa Rita Mountains was first established in Rosemont with the construction of a Ranger Station that was completed in January 1905. The first Ranger assigned there was Armour Scholefield who constructed the building from materials scavenged from a cabin located elsewhere in the Forest Preserve at the direction of Supervisor Meagher. Meagher got into a bit of trouble over this when the owners of the cabin filed a protest. The man on horseback in the photo of the first Ranger Station is Carl Scholefield, Armour's younger brother.



Rosemont Ranger station – 1912  
Photo courtesy of the US Forest Service

Around 1912, a new larger facility was built to replace the original Rosemont Ranger Station. The picture shown above portrays what the facility looked like when it was first built. Subsequently a porch was added to the front of the building. The Rosemont Ranger Station was used until about 1929 when the Ranger was moved to Patagonia. All that currently remains of the facility is the foundation depicted on the right.



Remains of the Rosemont Ranger Station  
Photo by T. Johnson

With the relocation of the Ranger to Patagonia, a new Ranger Station was constructed there and is depicted in the configuration



Patagonia Ranger Station – 1936  
Photo courtesy of the US Forest Service

that existed in 1936. The building shown on the left was constructed first and the two adobe buildings on the right were built later by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The Ranger Station was located on the east side of the Temporal Road (currently 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue) and north of current State Road 82. The buildings were used as the Ranger Station until about 1975 when the number of Ranger Districts administering the Coronado National Forest was reduced to a total of five. As a result of the consolidation, the administration of the Santa Rita Mountains was transferred to the Nogales Ranger District. The buildings of the Patagonia Ranger Station were then transferred to the Patagonia Union School District. The two adobe structures are still there and occupy the north portion of the Patagonia High School Sports Field.

Sometime around 1910, the Nogales Ranger Station was constructed on Grand Avenue to support the administration of the Tumacacori portion of the Garces National Forest and subsequently the Tumacacori portion of the Coronado National Forest after the integration of 1911. The Nogales Ranger Station as it appeared about 1910 is depicted below. The Ranger Station was expanded and rebuilt in the 1920s and 1930s and was used until the mid-1990s when a new facility was constructed at the intersection of South



Nogales Ranger Station – about 1910  
Photo Courtesy of the U.S. Forest Service



Nogales Ranger Station – 2011  
Photo by T. Johnson

River Road and the East Frontage Road (just south of Ruby road). The Nogales Ranger District currently administers the Santa Rita Mountains as well as the old Tumacacori District. A photo of the current Ranger Station is shown above.

There were also two Ranger cabins in the Santa Rita Mountains. One was located near Ranger Spring in Temporal Canyon near Patagonia and the other was located at Baldy Spring and was initially used by Rangers manning the Mt. Baldy (Wrightson) Fire Lookout Tower. The Baldy Spring Cabin was built in 1914 and burned down in the fall of 1973. Information on the Ranger Spring Cabin is very sparse.

Summary prepared by T. Johnson in March 2011 from information provided by William Gillespie, Archeologist for the US Forest Service and from various web sites including the US. Forest Service Web Site.

Additional Material: GVHC Library File 92

