



THE BUGLE CALL

Quarterly Newsletter of the Fort Bayard

Historic Preservation Society

October 2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

We hope that everyone receiving the second issue of our organization's newsletter will enjoy learning about our most recent activities. Those of us involved in the production of *The Bugle Call* would like to thank everyone who offered comments and ideas after looking over our first issue. We especially appreciate the members who have submitted items for inclusion in this edition.

As the year continues to speed along, I hope you will consider doing some of your holiday shopping at the FBHPS Gift Shop, located in the museum. Keep in mind that members receive a 10% discount on purchases. There are many unique items in our inventory, and your purchase of course furthers the mission of FBHPS. A perfect chance to visit the museum and the gift shop would be during the Tamal Festival on Saturday, November 16th, which will be held on the grounds of historic Fort Bayard. Whether it's then or another time, we look forward to seeing each of you soon!

Doug Dinwiddie, President, FBHPS



FORT BAYARD'S 158th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATED

On August 17th, the FBHPS held a birthday celebration for the fort, at the New Deal Theater. The keynote speaker was Dr. John Langellier. Over forty guests attended the event, and enjoyed birthday cake and other refreshments.



Dr. John Langellier of Tucson delivers his keynote birthday celebration lecture at the New Deal Theater

PUBLIC HISTORIANS TOUR FORT BAYARD

On October 11th, the FBHPS hosted a visit by over 20 historians who were in the area to attend "Camping Con", which is an annual gathering of members of the National Council on Public History. Based this year at beautiful Camp Thunderbird in the Gila National Forest, the meeting brought together public history professionals from numerous states and territories. Society President Doug Dinwiddie attended some of the sessions to hear presentations on the craft of public history, and how it relates to the outdoors. During the group's tour of Fort Bayard, they visited the museum and the theater, where they received guided tours from Doug, Ansel Walters, Bill Kupke, and Becky Dinwiddie. They were especially interested in learning how FBHPS connects with our visitors, and how we meet the challenges of our mission to keep Fort Bayard's stories alive.



YOUNG VISITOR DONATES ART WORK

One of the delights of welcoming visitors to our museum is when we see a youngster become fascinated with learning about the past. One such young man is R.J. Britton who, following a visit to the museum with his parents, Mr., and Mrs. Jessie Britton, was inspired to produce his own hand-drawn illustrated map of Fort Bayard as he envisions it today. He returned some days later, and presented the map as a gift to the museum. R.J. is seven years old, and is in second grade at Harrison Schmitt Elementary School in Silver City. He has

completed the required Junior Historian activities at the museum, and is now a full- fledged Fort Bayard Junior Historian!

Pictured above: Holding his hand-drawn map of Fort Bayard is R.J. Britton, with his father Jessie Britton, and Dr. John Bell of the Fort Bayard Historic Preservation Society

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Ansel Walters

Long-time FBHPS member Ansel Walters is the featured volunteer of this issue.

Ansel is the Society's number one handyman around the museum and other facilities, volunteering his ideas and work to continuously repair and upgrade the facility. He also has installed numerous exhibits on his own, and helped with the planning and installation of many more. He delights in giving tours of the museum, and loves to share his knowledge of local history with visitors. In addition to his many hours of volunteer work, Ansel and his wife



Shirley continue to be strong financial supporters of the Society, and he is a respected member of the FBHPS Board of Directors.

The Walters moved to Silver City from the Denver, Colorado area, where Ansel was a successful businessman. When not devoting his time to our group, Ansel is also active in the Lions Club and the Gem and Mineral Society.

Pictured at left: Ansel Walters accepting the 2022 Volunteer of the Year Award from President Doug Dinwiddie



FEATURED RECENT ACQUISITION

Infantry Dress Coat

Historian John Langellier recently donated an Infantry Dress Coat, 1884 pattern, to the FBHPS. Pictured here, it is of the type that was part of the required formal wear for an enlisted rank soldier in the last decades of the 19th century. Soldiers in the Infantry companies stationed at Fort Bayard during that period would have had coats such as this for formal occasions when they were expected to look their best.

THE FORT BAYARD STORY

Fort Bayard has a rich and varied history--starting in 1866 as a US Army post (most famous for the "Buffalo Soldiers" of the 9th Cavalry), a pioneering military TB hospital, a veteran's hospital, a state psychiatric hospital, and presently a modern medical facility and state veteran's home operated by the State of New Mexico. There is also a National Cemetery located on the grounds of Fort Bayard, with interments dating back to the year the fort was established in 1866.

Each edition of *The Bugle Call* will feature a story from Fort Bayard's fascinating past. We begin the series this month with an interview of a former employee of the state hospital, as she shares her memories of that era.

INTERVIEW WITH MARY LOU CHAVEZ

Employee at Fort Bayard State Hospital, 1966-1994

(as told to Dr. John Bell)



Mary Lou Chavez was born Mary Lou Castillo in 1940. Although born in Arizona, her father's family was from Fierro and they returned to Fierro when she was 2. All her siblings were born in Fierro, and her family has lived in the area ever since. She unsuccessfully applied to work at Fort Bayard in 1964 when it was a veteran's hospital. She never reapplied there. In the meantime, the veteran's hospital closed and reopened as a long-term

care state psychiatric hospital. She was surprised to be called to work there in 1966 after it became a state hospital.

On the third day of her employment, there was a lot of snow and she could not get to work from Fierro. She was strongly encouraged to move to the

housing at Fort Bayard. She lived in one of the small houses in front of the hospital for several years. Later she moved to one of the duplex houses on Officer's Row. Rent was \$40 monthly for the small house and \$100 monthly for the large duplex that had been an officer's home. This included utilities.

She already had 2 small children when she started to work at the hospital and later had another child while living at the fort.

Her primary memory of the New Deal Theater is attending movies there, and that was something her family always enjoyed. There were also plays and musicals, but the movies were the main entertainment.

Mary Lou initially worked as a dishwasher and then as a cook. One job she had for a lengthy period was assisting the butcher. Whole hogs and cows hung in the butcher room for processing into meat for the hospital.

She recalled that when she first started working at Fort Bayard it was just getting started as a state hospital, and there were "busloads" of psychiatric patients transferred to Fort Bayard from the state hospital in Las Vegas.

While working at the hospital, she played on a women's softball team, and they played the Fort Stanton women's team on several occasions. The men also had a softball team who played against the Fort Stanton team. When the Fort Stanton hospital closed, many more psychiatric patients arrived at Fort Bayard "by the busloads."



At a certain age, Mary Lou's children had motorbikes that they rode near the cemetery. Many patients who died at the hospital had no family or means for a burial. They were taken to the cemetery without embalming and buried very soon after death. Eventually, the local morticians objected to this practice as a public health issue, and required that they be embalmed. Of course, the morticians made some money out of it. For many people who died at Fort Bayard hospital in those days there was no record kept of who they were, and no

record of family. They were just buried there in unmarked graves, and these graves are still there.

She is grateful for her 29 years of work at Fort Bayard State Hospital. Mary Lou Chavez, we salute you for your long service providing excellent care to the patients at Fort Bayard. May your olden years truly be golden.

THE TREES OF FORT BAYARD

by LeMar Gearhart



On a late afternoon in early May, I walked around the Fort Bayard grounds with a dendrologist guide as we located and identified various introduced and Native/naturalized arboreal residents of the property. I will use their common names, and this is by no means a complete list, as our time was limited. Further excursions will ensue...

We met: Coulter pine, Deodar cedar, Italian cypress, blue spruce, Arizona Cypress, Scotch pine, two palm trees (!), Arizona walnut, weeping willow, Ponderosa pine, Pinion pine, Oriental arbor vitae, Honey locust, Alligator and one-seed junipers, grey oak, velvet ash, Catalpa soapberry, box elder, Siberian elm, Apricot, Apple, Cottonwood, willow, and sweet pea bushes growing near most of these!

Trees and plants played a major role at the fort, along with their human caretakers. A glorious history!

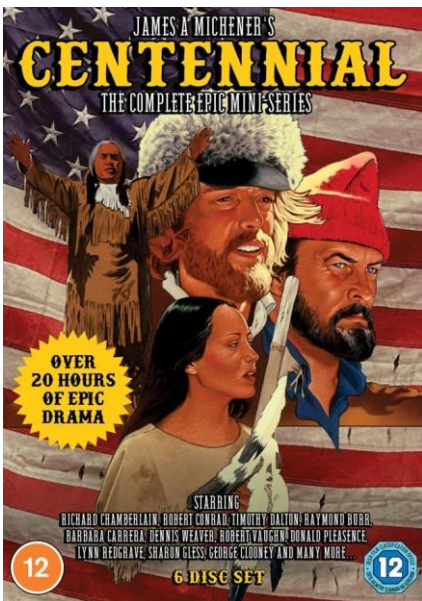
Thank you to Bill Norris and Russ Kleinman

Pictured above: Pinion pine

Editor's Note: Fort Bayard is not just about historic buildings and cemeteries. Back in the day, trees growing in the area provided the fort's occupants with firewood in winter and for cooking, shade in summer, food, and even

medicine. Unfortunately, many of the original trees have been lost due to drought and lack of maintenance. However, the trees that remain today have thrived.

We are attempting to locate a map that includes all the Fort Bayard grounds. Then we can add the locations of the trees that LeMar identified in his article to the map. The map will serve as a guide to visitors who wish to enjoy the natural beauty that exists at Fort Bayard.



FALL VIDEO MINI-SERIES EVENT CONTINUES: "CENTENNIAL"

Each Thursday evening through November 21st, FBHPS sponsors the showing of the epic mini-series "Centennial", at the Santa Clara Armory building. Admission is free. Doors open at 6:00 p.m. and the showings begin at 6:30 p.m. Popcorn, candy, and beverages are available for purchase.

SEEKING IDEAS FOR SPRING MOVIE SERIES

Do you have any ideas for a series of movies you would like to see starting in January? We are now in our ninth year of providing free movies on Thursday evenings at the Santa Clara Armory. We welcome ideas, and you can share your thoughts by calling Doug Dinwiddie at 575-388-4862, or emailing him at historyguy51b@gmail.com.

ARTIFACT OF THE ISSUE

Mountain Howitzer



The museum artifact spotlighted for this edition of *The Bugle Call* is a replica of a **Mountain Howitzer**, donated to the Society by Mr. William Kupke. For those not familiar with it, the mountain howitzer was a highly portable type of artillery piece that was used by the U.S. Army in parts of the West during the mid to late 1800s.

The weapon was designed to provide heavy firepower to support Army operations, mostly against hostile Native American forces. It could

be broken down into components that could be transported on mules and/or wagons, then quickly reassembled by its crew, and put into action. Because when fully assembled it was mounted on large wagon wheels, it caught the attention of one Apache veteran of a fight with the Army in 1862. When describing a battle in Arizona that had resulted in a failed ambush laid by his people, the former warrior stated, “We would not have done so badly that day, if the soldiers hadn’t fired their wagons at us.”

The howitzer is now on display in the New Deal Theater foyer, across the parade ground from the Fort Bayard Museum. Interested visitors to the museum can be escorted to the theater to see the howitzer and other exhibits during regular museum hours.



Above: The Mountain Howitzer in its new home at the New Deal Theater

Left: Members of the FBHPS teamed up to move the Mountain Howitzer from its former location at the Santa Clara Armory building to the New Deal Theater. Left to right are Doug Dinwiddie, John Baker, Ron Hildebrand, Ansel Walters, and Dale Giese.

FORT BAYARD MUSEUM ANNOUNCES WINTER HOURS

From October through March the museum will be open on Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm. Special tours can be arranged for groups outside of those hours by calling 575-388-4862, or 575-574-2573. Admission is free to all members of the public; however, donations are always welcome.

The museum is a great place to bring your family and out-of-town visitors. And remember—all gift shop items are available for purchase at a 10% discount when you present your FBHPS membership card.

MONTHLY MEETING AND CONTACT INFORMATION

The FBHPS meets the second Wednesday of every month from 10 am-12 pm at the Santa Clara Armory. Please join us! We welcome ideas from all members.

You can also actively engage in our operation by volunteering your time as a tour guide, collections curator, living history performer, building and grounds worker, or records keeper and researcher. Training will be provided as needed.

FBHPS Officers:

Dr. Doug Dinwiddie, President
Cecilia Bell, Vice President
Becky Dinwiddie, Treasurer
Denise Singleton, Secretary
Dr. John O. Bell, Village of Santa Clara Liaison

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