

(Introduction continued from front panel)

cannibalized the post, then let the locals take anything else. By the early 1900s, only some low adobe walls and rock formations remained. But a few years before the last of it disappeared in a 1937 flood, tourists in motor cars had already begun to arrive at the Kid's grave. Some were clutching Walter Noble Burns's best-selling book,

The Saga of Billy the Kid (1926). Some had also seen it adapted to a Hollywood talking film, Billy the Kid, a King Vidor-directed Western starring former University of Alabama football star Johnny Mack Brown (1930). Although Billy the outlaw was dead, Billy the Kid the national icon had just begun to cast his shadow.

Old Fort Sumner, 6½ miles (10.4 km) southeast of the village of Fort Sumner, the De Baca County seat, became a state monument in 1968.



Looking northwest across Old Fort Sumner's parade ground, circa 1885. The bedroom where Pat Garrett killed Billy the Kid is in the near corner (MNM Neg. No. 45559)

Annual Events

Second Weekend in June, **Old Fort Days**, featuring the Billy the Kid Tombstone Race, parade, and an arts & crafts fair, all in Ft. Sumner (575/355-7705).

Second or Third Weekend in July, the **Death, Funeral & Burial of Billy the Kid**, a reenactment of Billy's July, 1881, shooting death by Sheriff Pat Garrett near the site of the Maxwell House and his funeral and burial in the nearby post cemetery (575/355-7705).

Local Information

Bosque Redondo Memorial
at Fort Sumner State Monument
PO Box 356

Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-2573)
hweeldi@plateautel.net

Billy the Kid Museum
1435 East Sumner Ave.
Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-2380)

btkmuseum@plateautel.net

Billy the Kid Outlaw Gang
PO Box 1881
Capitan NM 88316
billythekid_outlawgang@yahoo.com

Fort Sumner-De Baca County
Chamber of Commerce
707 North 4th

Fort Sumner NM 88119
(575/355-7705)
ftsumnercoc@plateautel.net

Old Fort Sumner Museum
PO Box 566
Fort Sumner, NM 88119
(575/355-2942)

Statewide Information

New Mexico Tourism Department
491 Old Santa Fe Trail
Santa Fe NM 87504
(800/733-6396)
enchantment@newmexico.org

*Text & Lincoln County Map
by Michael E. Pitel, 2007*

Billy the Kid's Old Fort Summer



In the Fall of 1905, after taking longtime friend and author Emerson Hough to visit Billy the Kid's unmarked grave, Pat Garrett returned to his buckboard for his canteen, raised it in a toast, and intoned, "Well, here's to the boys, anyway. If there's any other life, I hope they'll make better use of it than they did of the one I put them out of." Courtesy of Michael E. Pitel

Long before Billy the Kid fled the village of Lincoln after his daring jailbreak in April, 1881, Old Fort Sumner had become a second home. He had plenty of friends there, plus no meddlesome lawmen lived within a day's ride. Locals spotting strangers would alert Billy, who could slip away into the countryside. There, among the campsites of Hispanic shepherders, he'd wait until an amigo told him it was safe to return.

Pat Garrett knew Old Fort Sumner, too. After his buffalo-hunting days in Texas, he arrived at the former post in Feb., 1878, and became a ranch hand for awhile. Garrett then tended bar there until April, 1880, the year after he married Apolinaria Gutierrez. He then moved to Roswell, and ran for Lincoln County Sheriff.

Lucien Bonaparte Maxwell of Cimarron had bought the old post in Oct., 1870, for \$5,000, and had moved there the following spring with his wife and four children, along with servants and ranch hands (25-40 families in all). His purchase was a steal; the flat roofed, adobe-and-timber post had originally cost \$300,000 to build.

In 1863-69, Fort Sumner's 600-700 men had guarded an eventual population of 8,600 Navajo and Mescalero Apache Indians during a disastrous U. S. government-backed attempt to convert them to farming. The 400 or so Mescaleros were there only a couple of years before they escaped back to their homeland. But for the displaced Navajos, the place where they were relocated, the Bosque Redondo, was the end of what became known as the Long Walk of the Navajos, a 350-mile-long trek from Fort Defiance, Ariz. Some 3,000 Navajos never returned home.

Charles Goodnight and Oliver Loving drove 2,200 head of Texas longhorn cattle west from Fort Belknap, Texas, to the Pecos River and north to Fort Sumner to feed the six-company garrison and their starving Indian captives. They arrived at the Bosque Redondo in July, 1866, then drove the remaining head north to Denver, pocketing \$24,000 after blazing what would become known as the Goodnight-Loving Trail.

As the U. S. government realized that the Navajo relocation effort was a failure, it allocated fewer funds to keep the old post repaired. The worst buildings were left to neglect. The best ones were adapted to new uses. By the time the Maxwells arrived, the old post, vacant for about 20 months, had deteriorated further.

By 1872, however, as Maxwell continued to spend \$10,000 to repair, renovate, and expand the salvageable homes and buildings, the place had already become home for 250 residents. He also had irrigation ditches dug, introduced Merino sheep, built up a herd of 9,000 cattle, and with Roswell cattle baron John S. Chisum started a weekly mail service. Maxwell still had the golden touch, and his operations flourished.

But after Maxwell died of kidney failure in July, 1875, his only son, Pete, took over his family's affairs. After ensuring his mother would live a carefree widowhood, he retired to an unremarkable life to spend the rest of his father's fortune. Pete lived at Old Fort Sumner until 1884, when he sold out to the New England Cattle Company and moved 1½ miles (2.4 km) south into a home near his mother's place.

In 1889 the adjacent Pecos River flooded, washing away the first of the buildings on the southwest corner of the former parade ground. The cattle company

(continued, back panel)

Billy the Kid Points of Interest

If Billy the Kid and Pat Garrett could return to the site of the Maxwell settlement at Old Fort Sumner today, they'd find the buildings lining the 300' by 400' parade ground, the outlying buildings, and nearly all the cottonwood trees along the Fort Sumner-to-Las Vegas and Fort Sumner-to-Texas Roads, gone.

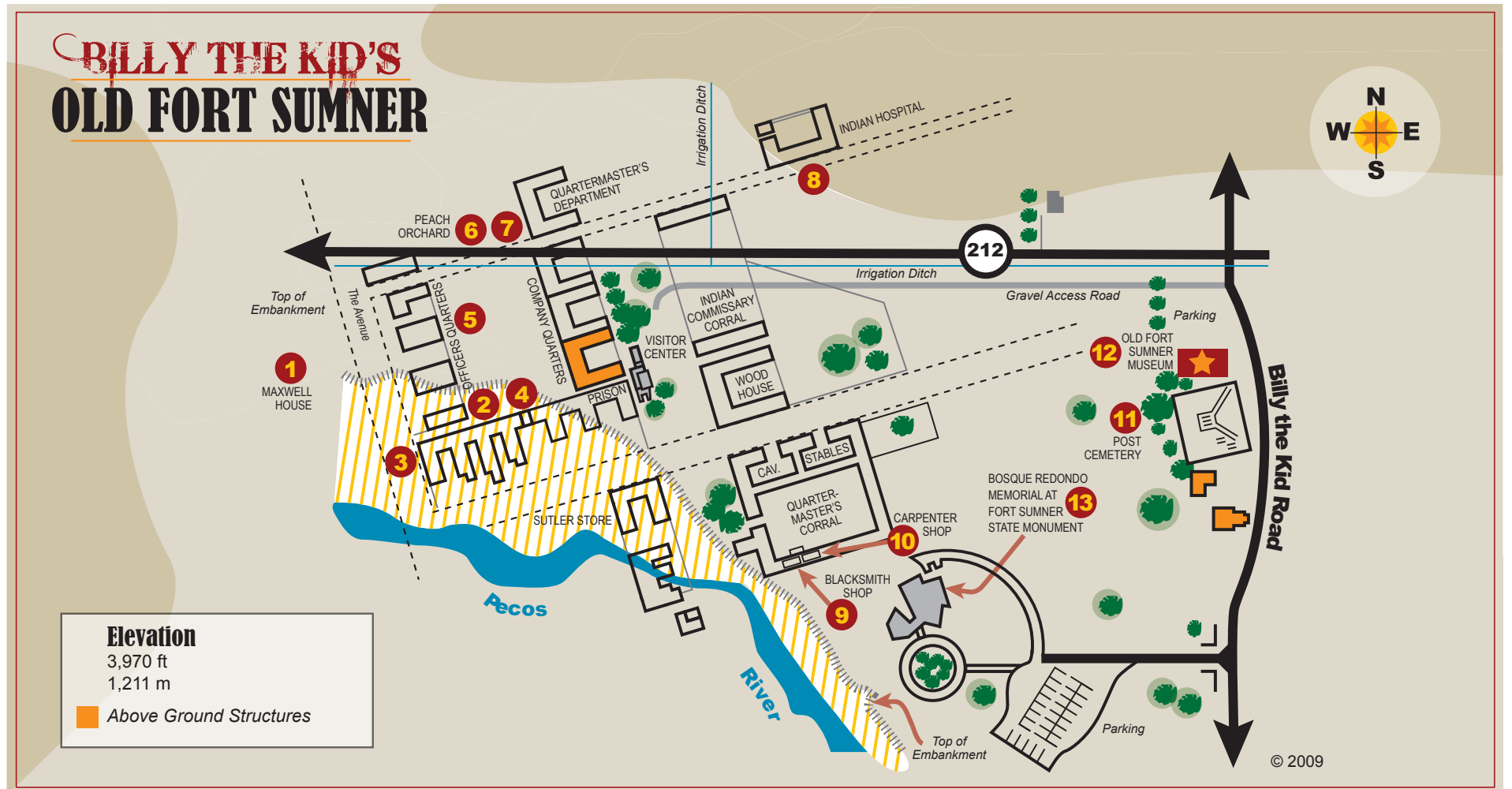
Behind the state monument's 1972 visitor center, west of the replicated cavalry barracks, is a stone tablet that marks the location of Pete Maxwell's bedroom (where Garrett shot and killed the Kid on the night of July 14, 1881) in the **Lucien Maxwell House (1)**. Lucien expanded the former 40' by 100' Officers' Quarters into a 20-room, two-story, pitched-roof home for himself and his family. There in late Dec., 1880, after his capture at Stinking Springs, a guarded, shackled Billy was allowed a final farewell with his querida (sweetheart), young Paulita Maxwell. The last of it vanished in a 1937 flood.

Immediately south of that home (where the Pecos River channel begins), stood the southernmost Officers' Quarters. That was the **Maxwells' Community Center (2)**, where the Kid often danced at the weekly bailes, and flirted with the señoritas. It bracketed the southwest corner of the parade ground.

Also in the southwest corner, in the old Ordnance Room at the west end of what was the first Quartermasters Depot (a building that spanned almost the width of the parade ground), stood **Beaver Smith's Saloon (3)**. Garrett tended bar there in 1879-80. Billy, in his horse stealing and cattle rustling days, often played poker and monte there. Outside it, the Kid posed for his famous 1879 tintype. In 1889 it was the first place lost to Pecos River flooding. The rest of the **depot (4)** became living quarters for Maxwell family members and guests. There lived Lucien's sheep foreman, Jesus Silva, and one of Billy's rumored girlfriends, the married Celsa Gutierrez (Garrett's sister in law). The Kid left Gutierrez's place that July 14 night to cut meat for supper from a side of beef hanging from the Maxwell House's north porch.

The building immediately north of the Maxwell House was the **Manuel Abreu House (5)**. Abreu, who managed Lucien's cattle operations, then Pete's sheep operations, had come from Cimarron with his wife, Maxwell's second eldest daughter, Emilia. After her 1884 death, he married the youngest Maxwell daughter, Odilia.

The line of the north side of the parade ground is



about in line with the irrigation ditch and adjacent State Road 212. The **Maxwell peach orchard (6)**, which extended north from there, was where Garrett and his Deputies hid until nightfall that July 14. Three sets of cavalry and infantry barracks once lined the east side of the parade ground. Just beyond the north end of these barracks (just across State Road 212) stood the second Quartermaster's Depot that housed **Bob Hargrove's Saloon (7)**, where the Kid shot and killed Joe Grant in Jan., 1880.

About 250 yards or so east of the depot stood the Indian Hospital. In early Dec., 1880, it became the home of Kid pal **Charlie Bowdre (8)**. There Bowdre'd moved his wife, Manuela, just days after telling Garrett he wanted to go straight. That's where Garrett's posse

ambushed Billy gang on Dec. 18, 1880, fatally wounding Kid pal Tom O'Folliard. Garrett and his posse shot and killed Bowdre five days later at Stinking Springs.

About 175 yards southeast of the replicated barracks stood the Quartermaster's Corral, which stabled the cavalry's horses. Inside it stood the **Blacksmith Shop (9)**, where Billy was put in irons after his capture at Stinking Springs; and the adjacent **Carpenter Shop (10)**, where the Kid's body was prepared for his candlelit valorio (wake) and burial.

One-third mile east is the one-acre former **Post Cemetery (11)**; free admission). In it, beneath a steel cage built in 1981, is Billy the Kid's Grave alongside O'Folliard's and Bowdre's. The larger tombstone was erected in 1931-32; the smaller, shackled one (1940)

was stolen in 1950 (and recovered in 1976) and stolen and recovered again in 1981. Nearby are Lucien & Luz Beaubien Maxwell's Graves, and Pete & Sadie Lutz Maxwell's Graves. Somewhere in the northeast corner of the cemetery, unmarked, is Joe Grant's Grave.

Adjacent to the cemetery is the **Old Fort Sumner Museum (12)**. Its archival photos, letters and memorabilia retrace the history of the place the Kid once called home. Originally a 1932 museum/curio shop, it's closed on major holidays; admission charged. Southwest of the cemetery is the access to the Bosque Redondo Memorial at **Fort Sumner State Monument (13)**. It's open daily, May-Sept. 30; closed Tues., Oct.-April 30; closed major holidays; admission charged.