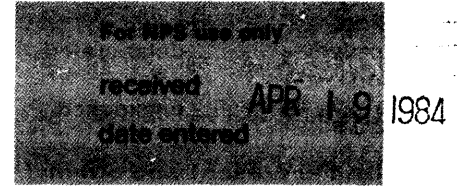


EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Pinos Altos Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

*Roughly bounded by Gold Ave, Cherry, Main, Church and Silver Sts.*

street & number irregularly-shaped district situated within the surveyed—not for publication  
townsite of Pinos Altos and adjoining patented properties  
city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district

state New Mexico code 35 county Grant code 017

3. Classification

| Category                                     | Ownership                                 | Status  | Present Use                                    |   |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied        | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)         | <input type="checkbox"/> private          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial | <input type="checkbox"/> park                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both  | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress           | <input type="checkbox"/> educational           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site                | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                 | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object              | <input type="checkbox"/> in process       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government            | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                   |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted          | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial            | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation               |
|  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A   | <input type="checkbox"/> no                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military              | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                       |

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership, more than 50 owners

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Grant County Clerk's Office

street & number Grant County Courthouse

city, town Silver City state New Mexico

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Grant County Historic Building Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1980  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Silver City Museum

city, town Silver City state New Mexico

## 7. Description

|  |                                       |   |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Condition</b>                           |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent         | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good              | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair              | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> varied |                                       |   |   |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The nineteenth-century gold camp of Pinos Altos, New Mexico, is situated on the Continental Divide, at an elevation of 7,067 feet above sea level, on the eastern slope of the Pinos Altos Mountains. The town of Pinos Altos lies in a northeasterly-southwesterly orientation with Whiskey Creek located just at its east and Bear Creek flowing through the center of town. The Gila National Forest boundary lies just north of Pinos Altos. Structures are modest in stature (only a few have one and a half storeys; most are a single storey), of adobe, board and batten, or log construction, with gabled metal roofs. Streets (with the exception of Main, Silver, and Church Streets, which constitute a portion of State Road 25) are unpaved, and have been in use since the 1870's or earlier. Buildings in Pinos Altos are situated on irregularly-shaped lots, on many of which stand apple orchards planted by early settlers. Horses, goats, and burros are a common sight within the town, which is unincorporated. Most buildings in Pinos Altos show some signs of deterioration, but the historical integrity of the town has been generally well-maintained, with alterations in most cases consisting of additions or enclosure of porches.

(Continued)

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National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
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| received         |
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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

From what little documentation exists on the first years of Pinos Altos, it appears that building sites were claimed by squatter's rights. Anson Mills, who was later to play a prominent role in the history of El Paso, Texas, was among the first wave of prospectors in Pinos Altos, but, becoming discouraged with his mining efforts, put to use the surveying equipment he had brought with him and "...laid out the town of Pinos Altos." James Tevis, in his memoirs, makes reference to a townsite being selected and town lots being sold, but apparently this survey was no longer recognized when the town was re-settled following the Civil War. The second wave of settlers re-established themselves in the existing structures as well as building new ones. An 1874 newspaper account stated, "Every cabin in town is occupied by industrious miners. The ancient cabins of '61, doorless and roofless, are being repaired for the reception of new arrivals." Although by this time a second townsite survey had been done (White's survey, 1867), it appears that vacant properties were simply taken up. Because of the lack of recorded property transactions for these early years, it is not possible to trace existing structures in Pinos Altos farther back, in most cases, than the 1880's or '90's, although it is quite likely that many of them were standing before that time.

Lots in Pinos Altos were irregular in shape and size; sizes of lots, when given at all in property transfers, were often approximate. The plat of White's survey, filed for record in 1868, is apparently no longer in existence. Judging from deed records for Pinos Altos, it disappeared early; by the end of the 1870's few deeds referred to the block and lot descriptions from White's survey. Street names referred to in deeds created further confusion: Main Street was sometimes referred to as Broadway; Silver Street was sometimes referred to as Main Street; what is now known as Spring Street was called Placer Street, a name which now belongs to the street immediately east of Spring Street. A further complication became apparent by October 1, 1881, when the New Southwest, a Silver City newspaper, reported, "There are indications of trouble in regard to the titles of property in Pinos Altos. We understand that portions of town have been included within certain mining locations." Several claims, which were later patented, do indeed overlap developed areas of town; the Good Enough Lode, the Pinos Altos Lode, the Mackinaw Lode, and the Bell Placer are examples of such claims.

In the fall of 1914, surveyor C. E. Johnson, as a result of a resolution made by the Townsite Committee of Pinos Altos, surveyed the town, with the boundaries of the lots apparently based on what was claimed by the owners at that point in time. On August 23, 1926, a U. S. Patent was issued to John W. Fleming, Probate Judge of Grant County, and his successors, "for use and benefit of the occupants of the townsite of Pinos Altos."

Log construction was, from what can be gleaned of the founding years of Pinos Altos, the primary building method of the settlers of the 1860's. Hank Smith, in his account, says, "We put in time building log cabins, there being plenty of young pine, cedar and juniper timber. We erected five cabins of pine logs and split cedar logs for roofing, besides working in the mines for gold."

EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
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| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

Arizona Scout James Tevis recalled, "The day after my arrival [in 1860] in Pinos Altos, I began building a rude house with a dirt roof. It was large enough to hold eight or ten men and was the first house to be erected in Pinos Altos." A footnote to his work states that this house, which stood about 50 yards from Bear Creek Gulch and about 200 yards above where Burch's Gulch emptied into Bear Creek, was still standing in 1929.

When milled lumber became available (from the nearby sawmills of O. L. Scott, J. W. Ripley, Jack Freaney, and others), board and batten construction became popular. Adobe was also commonly used. A few small structures were built of rock laid up in adobe mortar. Whatever the method of construction, almost all of the surviving examples of 19th-century Pinos Altos architecture have gable roofs, with either a simple rectangular or an L-shaped conformation. Historic photographs show some commercial structures with "false front" parapets of wood, brick, or stamped metal, but no examples survive. One good example of the hipped box style of architecture, the George F. Bisby house, built around 1915, stands in Pinos Altos. It is of adobe construction.

Two examples of log construction stand within the proposed district area - the Pinos Altos School building on Main Street and the John McDonald cabin on Spring Street. A construction date of 1866 is claimed by the owners of the school building (reportedly the first school in Pinos Altos), who operate a small museum in the structure. It is constructed of square hewn logs, as is the McDonald cabin, which in all probability also dates back to the 1860's, as McDonald was one of the very early residents of the camp.

Outstanding among the adobe residential buildings is the Frank C. Bell house on Church Street, a one-and-a-half-storey structure dating from around the late 1880's. The Bell house is unusual both for its scale and its amount of detailing. Pedimented lintels, typical of the Territorial style, are found on several Pinos Altos adobe buildings, including the two, numbered 27 and 28, which stand side-by-side on north Main Street, and on the A. Russell Davidson house, located in the wedge between Cherry and Norton Streets. The Davidson house is embellished further by decorative woodwork on its veranda. The Alexander S. McDonald saloon building, on the corner of Main and Silver Streets, is one of the few surviving commercial buildings of the community. It is a one-and-a-half-storey adobe building. Both of the church buildings which were constructed in Pinos Altos are adobe - the St. Alexis Catholic Church, dedicated in 1888, and the Gold Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, built 1898. The Catholic church, with its square bell tower, reflects the typical architectural style of churches in Mexico from its time. The Gold Avenue church, on the other hand, utilized the adobe medium in a more Americanized traditional style, with steep-pitched gable roof and Gothic-arched windows.

Several early frame structures survive in Pinos Altos. Largest of these is the Henry Young blacksmith shop, with attached dwelling, on Gold Avenue. Composed of two gabled sections, this board and batten structure dates from around 1900. The Richard R. Lee house, on Main Street, is also of board and batten construction, with a shiplap addition; it dates from around 1895 and is one of the larger residential buildings in Pinos Altos. Immediately northeast of the Lee house stands the Peter Wagner barbershop, a long rectangular gabled structure, also board and batten, dating from around 1900. Both the barbershop and the Lee house stand on the site of buildings burned in the big fire of 1892. Another frame dwelling, numbered 48, stands on Church Street in the north-eastern portion of Pinos Altos. Its walls are framed in vertical boards without battens, and it has a gable roof with shed additions.

EXP. 12/31/74

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
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| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

Settlement within various areas of Pinos Altos was loosely based along ethnic lines. A small community of "Cousin Jacks," Cornish miners, was established on the hill southwest of town, and consisted of seven or eight houses clustered around Noah Climo's boarding house. The last structures in "Cornishtown," as the area was known, were demolished in the 1970's. A small Italian settlement reportedly existed on the west edge of town, and a group of citizens of Mexican background settled along the ridge on the eastern edge of town.

Fires were a constant threat in Pinos Altos, with its limited water supply (to this day, water must be hauled in to many residences in Pinos Altos, not equipped with wells). Because the predominant building material was wood (a 1902 Sanborn map lists 49 of the 65 structures shown to be wood; the rest were adobe), fires, once started, easily swept away whole neighborhoods. The business district in Pinos Altos burned twice, in May, 1889 and December, 1891 (the latter destroying most of the surviving buildings from the '89 fire, as well as the replacements of its victims). Fires in more recent years have consumed buildings which undoubtedly would have had importance to this district, including the old Bell & Stephens store, which burned in the late 1950's.

Aside from the gaps created by fires, the historic integrity of Pinos Altos is relatively well-preserved. Most of the older buildings have had little remodeling, in some cases the result of preservation by neglect. A few structures have undergone total remodelings, including some which are important historically - the Henry Barton, Henry Stanley, and Peter Wagner residences (the latter two not included within the proposed district). Infill has been slight within the proposed district area, although there is an aspect of "created history" in two of the newer structures. The Pinos Altos Opera House was constructed in 1969 in the style of a Victorian frontier theater, and utilizing materials from old buildings. A sign, "Est. the late '60's" has confused more than one visitor - even the New Mexico Bureau of Mines, in a 1980 travel guide, included a photograph of the Opera House "built in the late 1860's". A newer structure, completed in 1981, is a scaled-down replica of a Spanish fort which stood in nearby Santa Rita, N. M., and is a triangular-shaped compound with three cylindrical towers.

The list that follows gives the buildings which are considered significant to the Pinos Altos Historic District. Because Pinos Altos has no street addresses, the buildings have been numbered to correspond with the map attached to this nomination:

- Photos  
↓
1. Gold Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, northwest side of Gold Avenue, built in 1898. William Laizure did at least a portion of the construction of the building, and in order to hasten the completion of the church, Reverend J. G. Ruoff laid the floor himself. The building is one-and-a-half storeys (though open to the roofline on the interior), adobe, with gabled roof. In the front gable-end, which is faced with cut wood shingles, is set a round-framed wood window with lights forming a five-pointed star. Front windows in the church are wood casement, with Gothic-arch transom lights above; side windows have pedimented lintels. Double-leaf doors have a Gothic-arch transom and paneled embrassure. This structure, the construction of which was largely funded by the Hearst family, was individually listed on the State Register of Cultural Properties in 1976 as Site #442.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
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| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page 4

2. Henry Young house, northwest side of Gold Avenue, built prior to 1902. This one-storey adobe structure has an L-shaped configuration with gable roofs. An attached shed porch has chamfered wood posts.

3. Henry Young blacksmith shop, northwest side of Gold Avenue, probably ca. 1900. This board and batten structure has two gabled sections; the southern end was used as a residence and the northern end, which is one-and-a-half storeys in height, served as Young's shop. The shop section has large cross-braced sliding wood doors.

4. A. Russell Davidson house, intersection of Cherry and Norton Streets, 1897 or earlier (purchased that date by Davidson). This Territorial-style adobe house has two gabled sections. Double-hung windows have pedimented lintels, as does the front door. An attached shed porch has chamfered posts and ornamental brackets. Davidson was one of a pair of brothers from Nova Scotia who made Pinos Altos their home for a number of years.

10. Policeti Carrasco house, northwest side of Main Street, standing in 1889. This is a small gabled adobe house with stuccoed front. Double-hung windows have plain wood surrounds. It is significant for its early, unaltered appearance.

14. Richard R. Lee house, northwest side of Main Street, ca. 1897. Composed of two gabled sections (the northern section added sometime after 1902), this frame dwelling is of board and batten and shiplap construction. Its double-hung windows have capped lintels; the front door on the older portion of the house has two long arch-topped lights. Lee, a native of Cornwall, England, came to Pinos Altos in 1891, and was engaged in mining until severely injured in a mine explosion. He later operated the Cave Saloon in Pinos Altos and had mercantile interests in Leopold, N. M. According to Lee family accounts, the house was the first in Pinos Altos to be equipped with a flush toilet, although this was located in a separate structure from the house, which also contained a laundry room and boilers.

15. Peter Wagner barbershop, northwest side of Main Street, built between 1892-1902. This board and batten gabled structure with a transom over its door was used for various commercial purposes, and is today a residence. Max Schutz was probably the owner when it was built. Peter Wagner, a French barber who also operated mines and a mill, occupied the building for a time.

16. Alexander S. McDonald saloon building, Main Street, corner of Silver Street, 1892. Built on the site of a frame building which burned, the McDonald saloon is a one-and-a-half storey adobe building with gabled roof. Double-leaf and single-leaf doors on the front of the building have transoms. There is a small single-leaf door in the end of the gable, at attic level, although historical photos do not show any outside stairway or other access.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 5

19. Pinos Altos School, northwest side of Main Street, 1866. Reportedly the first school in Pinos Altos, this small building is of hewn log construction. Its roof is gabled, with board and batten in the gable-ends. Although this building has two large additions (on the side and rear), it is included as a significant structure in the district because of its age and distinctive architecture; the original features of the building have not been obscured by the additions.

20. Main Street, northwest side. This small stuccoed adobe house has gabled roof and attached shed porch with chamfered wood posts.

22. Courthouse, extreme north end of Main Street, on Bear Creek. The original owner and construction date of this structure are not known, but this building was the site of the 1871 term of court described under the "Significance" section. It is an adobe structure of rectangular shape with gable roof, with a hipped porch on the south end. The building was located on a mining claim which was acquired by Bell & Stephens (at the time, it was known as the Miller house), who sold it to the Hearst interests.

23. George W. Norton store, southeast side of Main Street at Norton Street. Built on the site of a two-storey log structure known as the Occidental Hotel, the Norton Store was constructed around 1890. The upper level of its front wall is board and batten, while the main walls are adobe. An angled corner entrance has double-leaf doors; a three-sided porch surrounds the entrance. Known today as the Pinos Altos Mercantile.

27. Southeast side of Main Street. This Territorial-style adobe house is rectangular in shape, with gabled roof. Double-hung windows, four lights over four, have pedimented lintels.

28. Southeast side of Main Street - Similar in style to #27, which stands one door south of this house, this structure is also a rectangular Territorial-style adobe with gable roof and pedimented lintels over double-hung four over four windows. Although these two houses are reportedly quite old, no early property records could be located on them.

34. John McDonald house, southeast side of Spring Street, ca. 1860's. This small house of hewn log construction stands on a stone foundation. It has a gabled roof and double-hung two over two windows. This is the least-altered log cabin left in Pinos Altos, and is still in the ownership of the McDonald family. John McDonald was among the earliest residents of Pinos Altos. 1891 newspaper accounts state that he was in the area as early as 1851, as an Indian fighter, which would predate the founding of Pinos Altos by several years. McDonald spent a number of years developing the Arizona mine near Pinos Altos. Ben F. McDonald, grandson of John and present owner of the property, also claims a relationship to the Mastin brothers on his mother's side of the family.

40. George F. Bisby house, east side of Silver Street, ca. 1915. Of a somewhat later vintage than most of the residences in the district, this well-built house was constructed around the time of one of the last major mining strikes in Pinos Altos, when very high-grade ore was struck in the Pacific Mine. It is a hipped box adobe dwelling, stuccoed, with gabled front dormer window, inset front porch with concrete columns capped with square wood posts. George F. Bisby was a son of Julius Bisby, who settled in Pinos Altos in 1867, and for whom the town of Bisbee, Arizona was named.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 6

42. Pierre Fouillet house, southeast side of Placer Street, 1886 or earlier. An adobe and board and batten one-storey structure, this house has gable and shed roofs. A porch with chamfered wood columns is attached to the front of the house. The front entrance has a spindled screen door.

46. Frank C. Bell house, intersection of Church Street and Rock Street, ca. This one-and-a-half-storey stuccoed adobe house is one of the larger-scale and better-preserved residential buildings in Pinos Altos. Its main section has a gabled roof. Its double-hung windows have moulded, capped lintels, as does its front door, which has a transom. The house has an attached hipped front porch, with square wood posts over a lower enclosure covered with wood shingles. The front gable-end has a pierced wood ornament of inverted heart design. Frank C. Bell came to Pinos Altos in 1878 and was involved with mining there until his death in 1916. His obituary said of him, "A history of his life would be the history of the camp of Pinos Altos since 1880."

47. St. Alexis Catholic Church, southeast side of Church Street, ca. 1888. This stuccoed adobe building has gable roofs. A square two-storey tower at the front of the building has an upper louvered section with pyramidal roof. The church's windows are double-hung, six lights over six, with plain wood surrounds. The front door opening is arched, with double-leaf doors. A hipped porch stands over the entry. This church was built on land donated by Frank C. Bell, and was blessed on July 17, 1888. It has always been a mission of the St. Vincent De Paul church in Silver City. The Pinos Altos cemetery adjoins the church property to the north.

48. Northwest side of Church Street. This small house is one of the few unaltered frame buildings in Pinos Altos. It is constructed of vertical boards, without battens, and has a gabled roof with two shed additions.

CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:

The following are structures whose age, scale, and architecture contribute to the Pinos Altos Historic District, but which have undergone moderate amounts of remodeling:

- 5. West end of Main Street
- 6. Southeast side of Gold Avenue
- ✓ 7. Southeast side of Gold Avenue
- ✓ 8. Southeast side of Gold Avenue
- ✓ 11. Northwest side of Main Street
- ✓ 12. Northwest side of Main Street
- ✓ 13. Northwest side of Main Street
- 18. Northeast side of Norton Street
- ✓ 25. Southeast side of Main Street (known today as the Buckhorn Saloon)
- 26. Southeast side of Main Street
- 30. Intersection of Silver and Spring Streets (Francis Transue house)
- 31. West side of Silver Street (Santiago Brito house)
- 36. Southeast side of Spring Street (John Adair house)
- 38. West side of Silver Street
- 44. Southwest side of Rock Street
- 45. Rock Street, behind Bell house
- 49. Northwest side of Church Street (date 1878 in door)



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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 7

**NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES:**

The following are structures which, due to newer vintage or extreme remodeling, do not contribute to the Pinos Altos Historic District:

9. Northwest side of Main Street
17. Northwest side of Main Street (scaled-down replica of Santa Rita's Fort Webster)
21. Northwest side of Main Street
- ✓ 24. Southeast side of Main Street ("Pinos Altos Opera House", 1960's construction)
29. Southeast side of Main Street
32. Placer Street, intersection with Silver Street
35. Northwest side of Spring Street
37. Southeast side of Spring Street (Henry Barton house)
39. West side of Silver Street
41. North side of Placer Street
43. Intersection of Placer and Church Streets.

## 8. Significance

| Period  | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below    |  |   |  |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric          | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning                | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation                      | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> science         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> economics                         | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education                         | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> social/         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering                       | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy             | <input type="checkbox"/> theater         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry                          | <input type="checkbox"/> poliitics/government   | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation  |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention                         |   | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1860-1915

Builder/Architect Multiple - unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Pinos Altos, once the Eldorado of New Mexico, was one of the oldest Anglo settlements in Grant County, and was a mining camp which would rival some of the California gold diggings of the early 1850's. The settlement which sprang up after the discovery of gold in 1860, and which was re-developed after the Civil War, showed resourceful use of the native materials available to settlers. A mining camp not given to ostentation, Pinos Altos reflected, in its architecture, the sturdiness and simplicity of purpose of its early residents. While the productivity of the Pinos Altos mines declined after the turn of the century, the effects Pinos Altos had on the development of Grant County are still felt. Because of the need of the Pinos Altos miners for protection from Indians, Fort Bayard was established; the town of Central was established as a result of the fort's presence. It was a group of Pinos Altos residents who made the discovery of silver in the area and founded the town of Silver City, a town whose size and importance was soon to eclipse that of the little gold camp. As Fayette A. Jones, author of a 1904 book on New Mexico mines, said of Pinos Altos, "The early history of this district is similar in all respects to that of others in the west. Not only had the pioneer to overcome vast distances and endure intense suffering, due to thirst, heat, hunger and cold, in pushing his journey into an unknown region; but had to be constantly on the alert, since he was hunted in the day and haunted at night by the savage hordes [sic] which infested the land." The survival of the town of Pinos Altos today speaks well for the tenacity and hardiness of its founders.

(Continued)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Allen, R. S. "Pinos Altos, New Mexico," 1889, reprinted in New Mexico Historical Review, Vol. XXIII, October, 1948.
- Anderson, Hattie M. "Mining and Indian Fighting in Arizona and New Mexico, 1858-1861 - Memoirs of Hank Smith," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, Vol. I, 1928.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 72

Quadrangle name Fort Bayard Quad

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

|      |             |               |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1,2  | 7 6,0 3,2,0 | 3,6 4,0 3,4,0 |
| Zone | Easting     | Northing      |

B 

|      |             |               |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1,2  | 7 6,0 6,4,0 | 3,6 3,9 7,0,0 |
| Zone | Easting     | Northing      |

C 

|      |             |               |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1,2  | 7 5,9 9,8,0 | 3,6 3,9 1,0,0 |
| Zone | Easting     | Northing      |

D 

|      |             |               |
|------|-------------|---------------|
| 1,2  | 7 5,9 8,4,0 | 3,6 3,9 4,8,0 |
| Zone | Easting     | Northing      |

E 

|      |         |          |
|------|---------|----------|
|      |         |          |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

F 

|      |         |          |
|------|---------|----------|
|      |         |          |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

G 

|      |         |          |
|------|---------|----------|
|      |         |          |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

H 

|      |         |          |
|------|---------|----------|
|      |         |          |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Commencing at a point 95 feet northeast of house at north end of Main Street numbered 22 on map, proceeding thence in a southeasterly direction to a point on the southeast side of Church Street, approximately 450' northeast of Catholic church building;

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

(Continued)

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Susan Berry, Assistant Curator

organization Silver City Museum

date August, 1982

street & number 312 West Broadway

telephone (505) 538-5921

city or town Silver City

state New Mexico

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Thomas W. Melton*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4/13/84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Beth Giovenna*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 5/21/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

1

Although gold was reportedly discovered in the Pinos Altos mountains as early as 1837 by Gen. Pedro Alemendares, one of the commandants of the then Mexican outpost of Santa Rita del Cobre, the first tangible discovery of the precious metal was made, according to the most accepted version, in May of 1860, by Col. Jacob Sniveley, Henry Birch and James Hicks. The trio of prospectors had been camped in the Santa Rita del Cobre area looking for gold, and were pursuing a westerly course when, on their second day out, Birch discovered free gold in Bear Creek while in the act of drinking from the stream. The first pan of dirt, dug out and washed by Birch, yielded eight cents worth of color.

The three men returned to Santa Rita, ten miles distant, for supplies, and confided en route news of their find to the Mastin brothers, Thomas and Virgil, and Isaac Langston, who were then in the employ of Leonardo Siquieros, a lessee of the Santa Rita copper properties. Returning to the site of the discovery, the prospectors christened it "Birchville," a name which was to be used more or less until the end of the Civil War when the miners began returning. The traditional name of the place among the Mexicans and Indians was Pinos Altos, because of the tall pine trees which covered the nearby mountains. When most of the Americans departed in 1861, the name grew in usage so that by 1865 "Birchville" had almost been forgotten.

Heinrich C. Schmidt, a German immigrant who took the name of Henry C. (Hank) Smith in America, in memoirs published posthumously in 1928, places the founding of Pinos Altos in 1859, a year before Birch's reported discovery. Smith, with a group of others, had been prospecting in the area of the Rio Mimbres and the Pinos Altos Mountains, in search of an old Spanish placer. Smith wrote: "After prospecting as we went west for four or five days, just as we were going into camp for the night down in a deep gulch in the mountains, we espied a big grizzly bear feasting himself on juniper berries. Charles Carter, the best shot in the party, killed the bear and, while we were preparing to take care of the meat, others of the party had been prospecting in earnest, up and down the gulch, and to our great surprise we discovered a new placer. Gold was plentiful everywhere in the gulches but water was scarce. We were at the highest point of the Pinos Altos mountains on the divide of the Atlantic and Pacific slopes. After prospecting thoroughly for several days in order to find the best place to locate our claims we located right where we had killed the bear and Mr. Burgess, the captain of the party, called it Bear Creek Mining Camp."

A third early account, which tends to corroborate the the original Birch discovery story, is given by Capt. James Tevis, commissioned in 1860 by Governor Owings of the provisional government of Arizona to raise a company of rangers for the protection os settlers in the Rio Grande area. Tevis went to the Rio Mimbres to meet the western portion of his company, and while there, a man came in from the Pinos Altos mountains with a tin cup half-full of gold dust. The man, a member of Col. Snively's prospecting party, was on his way to Mesilla to buy supplies, and invited Tevis and his company to make their headquarters at the new placer camp. Tevis recalls Colonel Snively, John Saunders, Burch [Birch], Hicks, Holman, Sherman, and Dave Wisdom as being in the original group. Tevis claims that he built the first house in Pinos Altos. He also claims that Bear Creek was named for a large bear which was killed just in front of his cabin.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 2

In whatever manner the original discovery occurred, news of it spread fast, and by August, 1860, 820 names were listed on the census report, the population all more or less engaged in washing gold in the gulches and arroyos tributary to Bear Creek. In its first year of existence, the camp elected a mayor, a marshal, and a select and common council. A post office, named Pine Forest, was established in October, 1860, with Isaac Langston as postmaster.

The provisional government of Arizona, formed in April, 1860, extended protection to the growing mining camp. This government, formed under the leadership of Dr. L. S. Owings, was created to compel the general government to recognize the necessity of giving Arizona some form of government separate and distinct from New Mexico, to which it had been attached by the U. S. government, and which gave Arizona no protection of law or order. An article on the new camp published in the Mesilla Times stated that the American population of the camp was determined to have law and order established, if only provisionally, and had cut off all connection with the New Mexico Territory. In October of 1860, Governor and Mrs. Owings visited the Pinos Altos mining camp, and were given a gala reception.

Among the first citizens of Pinos Altos were merchants from El Paso, Texas: Peter Roman, Sam and Joe Schultz, and John and Henry Gillett, as well as Sam and Roy ("Law West of the Pecos") Bean from Dona Ana, who came in with a complete stock of merchandise. According to Hank Smith, "Joe and Sam Schultz set up a whiskey shop between two pine trees, using a plank for counter nailed up between the trees, charging fifty cents a drink, fifty cents for cigars, or fifty cents for anything they had." George Harrington built a log house 100 feet long and 20 feet wide, with dirt floor and roof, with a bar-room at one end and fifteen or twenty gaming tables at the other. Smith recalls that a Mexican brass band arrived from the Rio Grande along with "about twenty-five fast Mexican women." James Tevis wrote, "Additions were made to the population by the daily arrival of miners. We thought that we should lay off a town site, and this was selected about three claims above me, on Bear Creek, along the dividing flat on the ridge between Whiskey Gulch, Santa Domingo Gulch, and Burch's Gulch. Town lots were cheap, and houses did not cost much, for pine logs were easily procured."

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1861 brought a halt to the burgeoning growth of the camp. An election was held in Pinos Altos on April 10, to determine whether or not the camp would take the Confederate side, with a resulting tally of 339 votes for and none against. The citizenry hoped that the Confederacy might provide the support to the area that had not been forthcoming from the federal government. Southern sympathisers in Pinos Altos felt they had reason to celebrate when Confederate troops under Col. John R. Baylor rode into Mesilla on July 25, 1861, but the miners again found themselves without protection when the Confederates were driven out by the spring of 1862. In June of that year, General James H. Carleton's California Column had moved into the area. By October, the camp population had greatly decreased, with mostly Mexicans remaining; by January, 1862, the voting population had dwindled to 207.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

The camp was beset by Indian troubles in the early years of its existence, the first major battle taking place on September 22, 1861, when a large force of Apaches under Cochise attacked and made a bold but unsuccessful attempt to drive the settlers out of the country. Captain Thomas J. Mastin and two other settlers were killed, along with fifteen Indians. The following day many of the settlers left the camp to join the Civil War.

It was during the war that one of the most unusual organized mining and prospecting ventures began in Pinos Altos. General Carleton of the California Column had heard about the Pinos Altos mines from almost the first week of his arrival at the territory. Stopping at the Rio Mimbres, east of Pinos Altos, Carleton learned that between 90 and 100 men, women and children were hemmed in at the Pinos Altos mines by the Apaches and were slowly starving. Carleton sent two wagons loaded with provisions and escorted by soldiers to the relief of the miners.

On January 27, 1863, Carleton was in Santa Fe, having returned there from a trip to Pinos Altos and very much excited about the mineral wealth he had seen. He wrote in a letter that "the gold can be seen with the naked eye." He felt that the great mineral resources of the region could be developed if the Indian could be controlled. By February 1, 1863, he had sent four companies of soldiers to establish Fort West, near Pinos Altos, for the protection of the miners.

It was at this time that the army went into the mining business. Carleton inaugurated a furlough system which gave the soldiers an opportunity to work in the gold mines while fighting Indians. Carleton wrote, "...I have sent four companies of California Volunteers to garrison Fort West in the Pinos Altos region; one fourth of the command at a time will have one month's furlough to work in the gold mines on their own account. In this way the mines and the country will be developed, while the troops will become contented to remain in the service where temptation to leave it is very great." According to Carleton, in October, 1866, the population of Pinos Altos did not exceed sixty miners, but in June, 1867, there were between 800 and 1,000 inhabitants. For the protection of the inhabitants of Pinos Altos, Fort Bayard, a three company post, was established August 21, 1866, about eight miles southeast of the camp.

The second stampede for the gold diggings in the late 1860's included many former members of the California Column (in 1870, 44 California veterans were listed in the census for Grant County). In 1867 the first organized step was made to make Pinos Altos a town. A group of citizens, concerned about their rights to improvements made by them in the town, formed the Pinos Altos Town Company. They had the area surveyed and platted, with streets laid off, blocks and subdivisions staked, and four bridges built over Bear Creek. A statement, filed for record by the company in 1868, described the town as having 120 houses, three stamp mills, a number of arrastras working gold quartz, three furnaces for smelting silver, two hotels, one saw mill, and seven mercantile establishments. Among the latter was the business of Franz Huning, who did much toward the development of the city of Albuquerque in later years, and his brother Charles.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormFor NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

Pinos Altos was designated the county seat of Grant County on January 8, 1869, with office facilities provided in a log house. Attorney S. M. Ashenfelter, in 1902, recalled what he termed "Pinos Altos' gay and only term of court," held in 1871 in an adobe building north of town and included as a significant structure in the district: "The incumbent on the bench was D. B. Johnson, then recently appointed from the east, and it was his first and only term. Partly to distinguish him from Old Blue Johnson, who presided in the second district, and partly because of his character and the suggestive arrangement of his initials, the man was called 'Dead Beat Johnson.' Bill Reid and his Canuta were the moving spirits of that term—and a Mexican band furnished the music. With one exception, bar and court were highly hilarious throughout the entire sitting...By day it was loud, and by night it was louder; and the vision of the court shorn of its judicial ermine and robed out in the scantiest of night attire, dancing the can-can to the twanging of the festive guitar, the wild shrieking of an untuned violin and the discordant guttural of a bass viol, while about him circled in the dance a crew of half drunken, shouting attorneys, gamblers and midnight sportsmen—that vision is one which will never fade from memory."

By the end of the 1860's, the second wave of prosperity for Pinos Altos was over. An 1870 report by Rossiter W. Raymond, U. S. Commissioner of Mining Statistics, stated, "...Nothing but the remnants of better times are now to be seen at Pinos Altos...The town itself contains about 200 houses, one half of which are empty. It differs exceedingly from other American towns, and not to its advantage." It was in 1870 that a group of Pinos Altos miners made the discovery that relegated Pinos Altos to the last paragraphs of mining stories from Grant County for the next decade. Captain John Bullard and his brother James, Joe Yankie, Elijah Weeks, and others found silver ore near the marshy spot known as La Cienega de San Vicente. Within days, a camp sprang up, destined to become Silver City. Two years after Silver City's founding, the county seat was removed from Pinos Altos into the new metropolis, where it remains today.

Mining in the early years at Pinos Altos went from placer (surface) operations, where gold-bearing sand was rinsed in homemade sluice or "rocker" boxes, to the use of burro-driven arrastras, where ore was crushed between flat stones, to the more sophisticated stamp mills, first introduced into camp by Virgil Mastin in 1866. Outside capital was brought into Pinos Altos in 1883, when Troilous Stephens and Nathaniel Bell interested a group of California investors and with them formed the Pinos Altos Mining Co.

Nathaniel Bell, a native of Wisconsin, came to Pinos Altos in 1873 and formed a partnership with Troilous Stephens, originally from Illinois, a partnership which, according to an 1895 New Mexico history, "...continued between them with mutual pleasure and profit for twenty years, no disagreement ever arising between them." The Bell & Stephens company acquired many Pinos Altos mines, did development work and had them patented, meanwhile acquiring numerous town properties, including the old N. Y. Ancheta store, which they operated. A double house was built on the main street of Pinos Altos and occupied by the two families. A school at Pinos Altos was established through the efforts of Troilous Stephens and his wife, who donated land to the cause. The history cited above said of them, "The firm of Bell & Stephens has done more to make the Pinos Altos mining

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page

5

district the largest gold-producing district in New Mexico than all other causes combined." In May, 1896, Nathaniel Bell took the result of one mill run into Silver City and displayed eight gold bricks in a pyramid a foot high, valued at \$20,367.00. It was good advertising. On August 10, 1897, the papers were signed transferring most of the Pinos Altos mining district and property within town to Phoebe Apperson Hearst, widow of Senator George Hearst of California and mother of William Randolph Hearst. Thus was ushered in the third boom period for Pinos Altos.

The Hearst company concentrated on a small group of their mining holdings in Pinos Altos, hauling the ore to Silver City in mule-drawn wagons. A boarding house was constructed at the mines, and water was piped in from a ranch above Fort Bayard which the company had purchased. The Bell & Stephens store was taken over by the Hearst interests, but, as part of the sales agreement, was staffed with local people. Phoebe Hearst made a large contribution toward the construction of a Methodist church, with the condition that the structure contain a reading room for the miners. The Gold Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, dedicated on May 18, 1898, has been familiarly known as the "Hearst Church" ever since.

The boom was short-lived, however. By 1902 the Pinos Altos mines had ceased operations and the Silver City Reduction Works, in which the Hearsts owned a large interest, shut down. Among the reasons cited for the smelter shutdown was the difficulty in securing sulphides since the suspension of work in Pinos Altos. The following year the smelter burned down. Early in 1906 the Hearst interests in Pinos Altos were transferred to the Comanche Mining and Smelting Company of Duluth, Minnesota, which also purchased the remains of the Silver City Reduction Works. The Comanche officials formed a dummy company for the enactment of a project begun under the Hearst ownership - the construction of a narrow-gauge railroad linking the mines in Pinos Altos with the smelter (which was rebuilt) in Silver City. The Silver City, Pinos Altos & Mogollon Railroad Company was chartered in 1906, and construction of sixteen miles of track, including forty-eight trestles, some of them curved as sharply as it was thought possible to get a train around, was begun. The railroad, with five locomotives, was only in operation for a short time, and the proposed extension to Mogollon, some sixty miles away, never materialized. A fatal accident on one of the hairpin turns on the line claimed two lives early in 1907, and a few months later, depressed market conditions forced the closure of the smelter and railroad. In 1908 the Comanche Mining & Smelting Company declared bankruptcy. Its holdings were purchased by the Savanna Copper Company, which leased out most of the mining property. The railroad, unused since 1907, was taken up in 1913 and sold to a scrap dealer in St. Louis, Missouri.

A brief excitement occurred around 1914 when Ira Wright and James Bell leased the Pacific Mines and struck high grade ore, for 1800 pounds of which they received \$43,000; it was said to be the richest shipment per pound received at the mint in San Francisco up to that time. Newspaper accounts from around this time mention a good deal of construction work and activity around Pinos Altos. However, when the pocket of rich ore in the Pacific Mine played out, and no more was to be found, the lease was not renewed and yet another boom period ended.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Inventory—Nomination Form**

|                  |
|------------------|
| For NPS use only |
| received         |
| date entered     |

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 6

Pinos Altos' days as a self-supporting community were over, although it never became a full-fledged ghost town; it always maintained a small but stable population. Today a far cry from its bonanza years, Pinos Altos is a quiet rural community, but its nineteenth-century origins are still plainly in evidence.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Continuation sheet

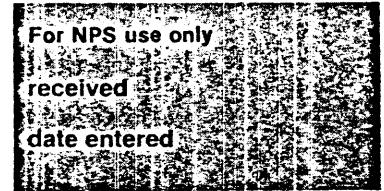
Item number 9

Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

thence southwesterly along Church Street to south cemetary boundary; thence southeasterly 95'; thence southwesterly to a point 50 feet from northeastern edge of Rock Street; thence southeasterly 325' thence southwesterly to a point 95' from the southwestern edge of Rock Street; thence northwesterly to Church Street; thence southwesterly along Church Street to a point oppósite the southeastern edge of Newsham Street; thence northwesterly to Placer Street; thence southwesterly to Silver Street; thence southerly to a point opposite the intersection of Silver Street with Ranger Street; thence easterly 95'; thence southerly 95'; thence westerly to a point 95' west of Silver Street; thence northerly and northwesterly along a line parallel with Silver Street, to a point on Main Street 95' southwesterly from Silver Street; thence southwesterly along Main Street to a point 135' southwesterly from the intersection of Main Street and an alley connecting Main Street to Gold Avenue; thence northwesterly to a point southwest of the Gold Avenue Church; thence northeasterly along a line parallel with Gold Avenue and 95' northwest of Gold Avenue, to Cherry Street; thence northerly on Cherry Street to the intersection of Cherry and Norton Streets; thence easterly to a point 95' northeast of Norton Street; thence southeasterly along a line parallel with Norton Street to a point 95' northwest of Main Street; thence northeasterly along a line parallel with Main Street to a point northwest of point of beginning; thence southeasterly to point of beginning. The district boundaries take in the core area of the original townsite of Pinos Altos where the minimal amount of remodeling and new construction has taken place.