

Apishapa Valley Historical Society



Apishapa Valley Heritage Center & Museum

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AVHS NEWSLETTER 2022



At the heart of the Apishapa River Valley in south central Colorado, Aguilar is known as “ The Gateway to the Spanish Peaks”. The business route, Exit 30 & 34, will deliver you to Aguilar’s Main Street which leads to CR 43.7 This road follows the Apishapa River up the scenic route that leads to the Mauricio and Trujillo Creek canyons west of town, then through Cordova Pass, beneath the East Peak (11,248 ft.) & eventually to the West Peak (13,623 ft.) This is one of the most beautiful drives, but the most rugged part of the Highway of Legends route. (Winter road conditions may close 46.0 road)

Aguilar’s Main Street reveals historic buildings built during its growth in the mining era. The Antonio Lo Presto building, home to the well known Ringo’s Market and the site of a notorious gangland shooting, still retains its presence as the most prominent reminder of the towns’ busiest era.

View of West peak from the Trujillo Creek County Road 50.9 and Mt. Carmel Church.

Photo courtesy of Billy Dias

Among the historic buildings is the First State Bank of Aguilar, which will be restored in the coming years and is on the State Register of Historic Properties. The AVHS presented a plaque to the new owners who will place it on the building when it is restored.



At this time there is no decision as to the use of the bank in the future but the original vault was saved & will be incorporated into the restoration.

Today the population is under 500 but the townspeople are enjoying a revival of businesses as new residents and investors work with them to revitalize the historic buildings on Main Street without destroying the historic value and character. It is our hope that the community or other private owners will be encouraged to continue restoring or maintaining our Main Street.

New businesses include the Aguilar Mercantile Store & gas station and coming soon, a hardware Store .



The town had been without a gas station for many years. At the height of its growth there were several full service “filling stations” as they were called. The Navajo Service Station still serves the community for automotive maintenance & repair but no longer sells fuel. It was first run by Ben Johnson and the building was actually owned by the Chevron Oil Co. until 1974.

The McDonald and Cavannah Filling Station was one of the earliest businesses. It was later owned and operated by the Baratono Family who eventually removed the pumps. The top photo (date unknown) was an early station run by George Raffca. Other well remembered stations were The Blahut Family Station, Joe Arnone's Service Station & Garage, the Abeyta Station, the White Family Station, which were all located on the old Highway 85-87. Semler Station and Valentines

(last run by the Pfaffenhauser Family) were on Main St.



COMPLIMENTS
CONOCO SERVICE
AGUILAR SALES
Pfaffenhauser's
Aguilar, Colorado

The Town of Aguilar did have the annual "Aguilar Festival" or "Aguilar Days" in 2021, with a parade, vendors, a car show and music for listening & dancing; We won first prize with our parade entry dedicated to the memory of one of our members,



June Valentine, who was our "go-to historian". She shared so many memories of the Town of Aguilar and the many businesses throughout the Apishapa Valley area. She was an invaluable member of this community as she was active in many organizations, especially those involving the local youth. The "arch" in our entry was a replica of Cordova Pass Arch that she had built by local artisan, Fred Dixon.

Photo: The unique bar and barstools remain in the “El Patio Cafe” building which is the home to our Heritage Center. They were made by Alfonso Cordova, who many remember as a

multi-talented blacksmith. The bar stools are great for reading all the material or browsing through the albums of photos we have taken of some of the old buildings that are no longer with us.



2022 Officers: President, Pat Romero; Vice President, Ken Acord; Secretary, Mike Sexton; and Treasurer, Karol Lyon. In 2021 we all had to make some changes to our lives and it has been difficult for all, but through the efforts of dedicated members (mostly new member Mike Sexton), we were able to keep the doors open for the 2021 summer at our Heritage Center & Museum following the Las Animas County Health Dept's restrictions. Our Heritage Center will be open the Thursday before Memorial Day weekend. Our schedule will be Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10:00 to 2:00 PM. We depend on volunteers, so if you would like to volunteer please let us know.

There's a lot of material to read and visitors to talk to - a chance to learn about the fascinating history of the Apishapa Valley Area and a chance to meet new people. There are newly restored pictures and we are expanding! Stop in or call for appointments for families or groups.

For more info (we've many stories to tell) contact the Apishapa Valley Historical Society at www.aguilarhistory.com or visit the Apishapa Heritage Center at 132 Main St., open in summer months, email to apishapahistorical@gmail.com or on FaceBook page Apishapa Valley Heritage Society.

