

**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Silver City Ghost Town Marks Anniversaries with Wild West Shows July 4th Weekend.

Twenty years ago this summer the J. Paul Corlew family purchased the historic Silver City Ghost Town in Bodfish from Dave and Arvilla Mills family. The Mills family purchased the site from "Wormie" Annie Sullivan and moved in most of the historic buildings in the late 1960's. Mills trucked in over 20 buildings to the site from throughout the Kern River Valley's mining camps and early settlements. Many of the buildings were saved just days before being scheduled to be torn down.

The composite town is made up of historic buildings from area towns and mining camps including Whiskey Flat, Keyesville, Isabella, Claraville, Hot Springs, South Fork & Miracle.

The Mills operated Silver City as an attraction for just a few years enjoying great traffic as the Old Kern Canyon road (which was the main entrance to the valley at that time) took visitors right by the entrance to the Ghost Town. When Highway 178 improvements were completed in 1974, the new four lane section of the highway bypassed the Ghost Town and traffic declined rapidly.

The Ghost Town was then closed to the public for 14 years. The Mills erected a high fence across the property and converted the historic structures to storage units.

The site was hidden from view and almost forgotten. The J. Paul Corlew family purchased the first half of the property in 1988 and the Ghost Town half in 1990. The tall fence was removed and the forgotten town was once again revealed. "No one else is going to save these historic structures and they are too important to be hidden away", Corlew told his late wife Cindy.

During the two years to follow there were several "Sneak Previews" held to give residents and visitors a look at the progress of the extensive restoration under way at that time on site. After an estimated 27,000 man hours of restoration work on the Ghost Town and the purchase and donation of thousands of area artifacts for the displays, the site was re-opened to the public Memorial Weekend 1992, 18 years ago this past Memorial Weekend. The Corlew's focus was not so much to make the property an attraction but instead as a unique museum dedicated to the amazing history, legends and characters of the Kern River Valley.

The grand re-opening in 1992 included a ribbon cutting ceremony with local dignitaries in attendance along with a variety of fun filled events, Wild West shows and celebrities. The Groat Brothers Wild West Show (who appeared at events for Disney and 20th Century Fox) performed. Also that weekend

marked an early appearance of local re-enactors The Ghost Town Gunfighters and Western Melodrama Troupe.

Celebrities that appeared and performed at the grand opening included (Ridgecrest resident) Paul “Kelo” Henderson, star of the hit 1950’s TV series “26 Men, The Story of the Arizona Rangers” who demonstrated his remarkable gun slinging abilities. Randy Boone also appeared and performed in person. He starred in “The Virginian” as Randy Benton the singing and strumming young cowboy on the popular western series.

Today the site is still operated by the Corlew family and has been open every year since the grand opening. Tens of thousands of people from all over the world have toured the site.

The Ghost Town is also now used for a variety of films, videos, & still shoots. Warner Chapel music used the location for a video shoot that became wildly popular by the fans of the music group “Bonanza”. A movie short titled simply “Ghost Town” was filmed at the site and was shown nationwide at a variety of film festivals. Another film shot on location in 2006 called “The Legend of Gods Gun” was picked up for national distribution. Several music videos have been filmed at Silver City including shorts for the rock groups “Dinosaur Horses”, “The Rocketz” and a popular Hollywood band called “Spindrifft” who also filmed a film on location. The Ghost Town was also featured in the local historical feature film “Wild West Country: The Lure of Gold” produced and directed by Chuck Barbee.

Many people believe that the ghost town is haunted by benevolent spirits and Silver City is listed in “Haunted Places: The National Directory”. It is also the subject of an upcoming Biography Channel show titled “My Ghost Story” which was filmed in October of last year (premier of the series is July 17th on Biography though the Silver City segments air date is yet to be announced). In addition, This Old House online has the famous Apalatea-Burlando house (in the heart of Silver City) listed as number six of the 15 *most haunted sites* in the U.S.!

Out front of the site several shops offer antiques, collectibles, gifts & curios for sale.

Today as you enter Silver City you’ll find over 20 of the valley’s most historic structures. Many feature museum displays in “a site that has captured the essence & serenity of the best of them in a non-commercial museum like setting” (ghosttowns.com). Thousands of area artifacts are on display throughout the property. Buildings have been lovingly preserved in a state of “arrested decay”. “It’s like stepping back in time”, say many visitors.

A historic monument honoring Silver City, the Corlew family, the Mills and others, was dedicated May 3rd. 2009 in front of Silver City. The monument was made possible by the fraternal organization **E. Clampus Vitus, Peter LeBeck Chapter #1866 of Kern County**, The Kern River Valley Historical Society, the Kernville Chamber of Commerce and The Southfork Women's Club.

The rustic site is open daily through October for self-guided tours (\$4.50 for adults and kids 6 to 12 are \$3.50 while kids 5 and under are free). Wild West shows featuring the Old West re-enactor group The Tombstone Law Dawgs are scheduled for July 3rd & 4th weekend (as well as Labor Day weekend). Shows are at 11 AM and 1 PM. No surcharge is being added to the regular admission for these special Wild West shows so it is a great opportunity to see the town and enjoy the shows at a bargain rate. All proceeds are utilized for the continued restoration and preservation projects underway on site. No tax dollars are used to operate Silver City.

To visit take Hwy. 178 one hour east (from Bakersfield) or one hour west (from Ridgecrest). Take the Bodfish exit to Isabella Blvd. Turn right 1 mile to 3829 Lake Isabella Blvd. Its open daily 10 AM to 4 PM (weather permitting) except November 1 to April 1 when it is open weekends only. For more information phone 760-379-5146. Visit Silver City on the web at <http://lakeisabella.net/silvercity/>



Silver City owner, J. Paul Corlew (far left) , with members of The Tombstone Law Dawgs who will appear at the Ghost Town July 3rd and 4th.

The historic Old Isabella Jail is a favorite with visitors to Silver City Ghost Town.

