



In Search of Eldorado

Day 45

Monday

February 18th

In and around
Sierra Vista

Weather
40's and Sunny



Hello to Family & Friends

Happy Birthdays George & Abe

Change of plans for today. The weather in the Coronado National Memorial is supposed to be snow, high of 35, winds of 15-25 MPH with gusts to 35 MPH, wind chill 22 degrees. Not the best weather for a mountain hike up to 6600 feet elevation. It will be even colder up there.

It looks like there's a visitor center in Sierra Vista, so I make my way there only to find it closed. The museum that shares the parking lot is also closed due to the holiday. I call the Benson VC and lo and behold, someone answers the phone and tells me they definitely are open today. Excellent!! Off I go to Benson.

The Benson VC is situated in a railroad depot. I could not find any info on the build date. Nice little building with a helpful young lady and a shortage of information.

Eldorado

By Edgar Allen Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'





Above - I even caught a moving train in the background. Below - Murals in the parking lot



APACHE POWDER CO. BENSON, ARIZONA

Apache Powder Company Made Dynamite from 1920 until 1983



Angel Buggies were used to transport the nitroglycerin to the dynamite mixing buildings. If you hit a bump, you became an angel immediately



Angel Buggies were carefully pushed down these wooden walkways to the buildings in the distance where the nitroglycerin was mixed with crushed pecan shells to make dynamite.

I can just imagine the supervisor, "Hey Phil, be an angel and push that buggy over here will ya?" KABOOM!!!!





There is a "G" scale train that runs 96 feet around the interior ceiling of the depot, and anyone can sit at this replica engineer's control stand and operate the train with the levers. I took a few laps and even blew the whistle.



I received this certificate when I was done. Notice who it's signed by?

Casey Jones





My question to the info lady was, "What IS open today?" Not much. Both museums in town are closed, but there is hiking in the conservation area. Back out in the parking lot I called the conservation area in Fairbank - Closed. Hiking might be open but I don't want to make another trip there to see the ghost town. She did say the Kartchner State Park Caverns are open today. The brochure says it's always 70 degrees in the cave. I wonder how many people, like me, are planning to go to a cave to keep warm today?

It turns out that a lot of people had the same idea.



There is a lot to see at the Fort, maybe can get the walking tour in today, and just do the museums tomorrow. That would save some time, and photographs and plaques. So off I go to the Fort. Below is the security guard entry of the Var Deman Gate. The little shack to the right is the visitor center where I received my badge.



I show my ID badge and advance quickly through the gate. Then I get lost, but eventually find the museum annex parking lot and eat lunch.



After bundling up and putting on my stocking cap I head out. At right is the Winans House.



Hmmmm...it appears Rambo is a Colonel now and in charge of Fort Huachuca. I sure hope he got his head together and is not just here on the Sly. (pun intended)



This is the Pershing House, traditionally the home of Fort Huachuca's commander. Built in 1884 of concrete and adobe for a cost of \$9,000. This house is opposite the flag pole on the parade field pictured below so he could 'survey the toil and ceremony of post life as well as the imposing Huachuca Mountains'. Overnight guests of the past include General John J. Pershing in 1922 and 1935; General George C. Marshall in 1942; and Senators Carl Hayden and Barry Goldwater.



The Pershing House is in the background, across the street and behind the tree



Maybe I should provide a little background. 'On March 3rd, 1877, Capt. Samuel M. Whitside led a column of the 6th US Cavalry from Tucson into the shelter of the Huachuca Mountains and selected the northernmost canyon to establish a temporary camp. It was an exceptional location and in 1882 General William T. Sherman recommended it become a permanent camp. When the Indian Wars ended Fort Huachuca was one of the few that survived due to its strategic location along the border and low sickness rate and it became a key Army post in the American West. In 1974 it was designated a National Historic Site and Landmark'. The old post area, where I am taking my walk today, is essentially the same as it was more than a century ago. The buildings you are seeing today, which surround the parade ground, built between 1880 and 1905, were used by the Soldiers of the Apache Wars.

Above is the Carleton House. This is the oldest building still existing on the post. It was built in 1880 at a cost of \$1,288.67, with adobe walls 21 ½ inches thick. It started as a hospital but has had many uses over the years. General Sherman stayed here during his visit in 1882.



This bandstand, built in 1957, is a replica of the original built in 1920 and originally located on the other end of the parade ground. Note the view out the back.



Brayton Hall is the 'most elegant building within the historic district. Its neo-classical portico and fanlight entry on the façade make it one of the most prominent buildings on the parade ground'. 'In the basement was what might be considered the first officer's club at Fort Huachuca. It contained a famous Chinese restaurant operated by Sam Kee where gourmet dinners of stuffed or pressed duck, venison, steak and Chinese delicacies were served'. If I took the sun out of the shot the door and columns were behind the bush. This was the best I could do. One of the buildings has been named Sam Kee Hall.



Building 2114 was built as a bowling alley in 1908 out of adobe at a cost of \$7,137.00. From 1916 to 1922, this building housed both the bowling alley and the post office, and for a time housed the post-mistress and her niece.



6th Cavalry Hall was built as a barracks in 1883. From 1877 until this building was complete, 'living conditions consisted of icy drafts blowing through the canvas-adobe seams in the winter and choking dust in the summer. Scorpions, tarantulas and rattlesnakes were frequent roommates'. This appears to be the largest of the original buildings. There are three more down this street that were built at the same time, but the others are smaller and housed 87 men each, so this building must have housed well over 100 men.

BUILDING 22330 - POWDER TO POLISH



Ordnance Warehouse, ca. 1920



Sepulveda's Shoe Repair Shop, ca. 1930

Building 22330, like most buildings in the Fort Huachuca Historic District, saw drastic functional changes over the years. Constructed as the first post ordnance warehouse in 1882, it became Salvador Sepulveda's shoe repair shop from 1924 to 1947, and then served various military purposes after 1950.

Salvador Sepulveda, who was born in Mexico in 1895 and provided information to Gen. John J. Pershing's U.S. troops during the punitive expedition against Pancho Villa, received approval from the Army to open a shoe shop on Fort Huachuca in 1919. He opened shop in 1920, moving into the ordnance warehouse in 1924, and remained in operation until the post closed in 1947. Known by his peers as "El Maestro," meaning "teacher" or "master of his trade," Sepulveda urged fellow Mexicans to seek opportunities on post and taught cobbling and his work ethic to his children and many apprentices.



In 1941, Sepulveda became an American citizen. He was known for his leadership and generosity, particularly toward his fellow Mexican-Americans. Salvador, Jr. said, "I remember visiting homes of Mexican wood cutters in the town of Fry with my father, and we would bring them unclaimed shoes and food for their tables." "Don Salvador" also sponsored a baseball team of Mexican-Americans, blacks and Apache Indians.

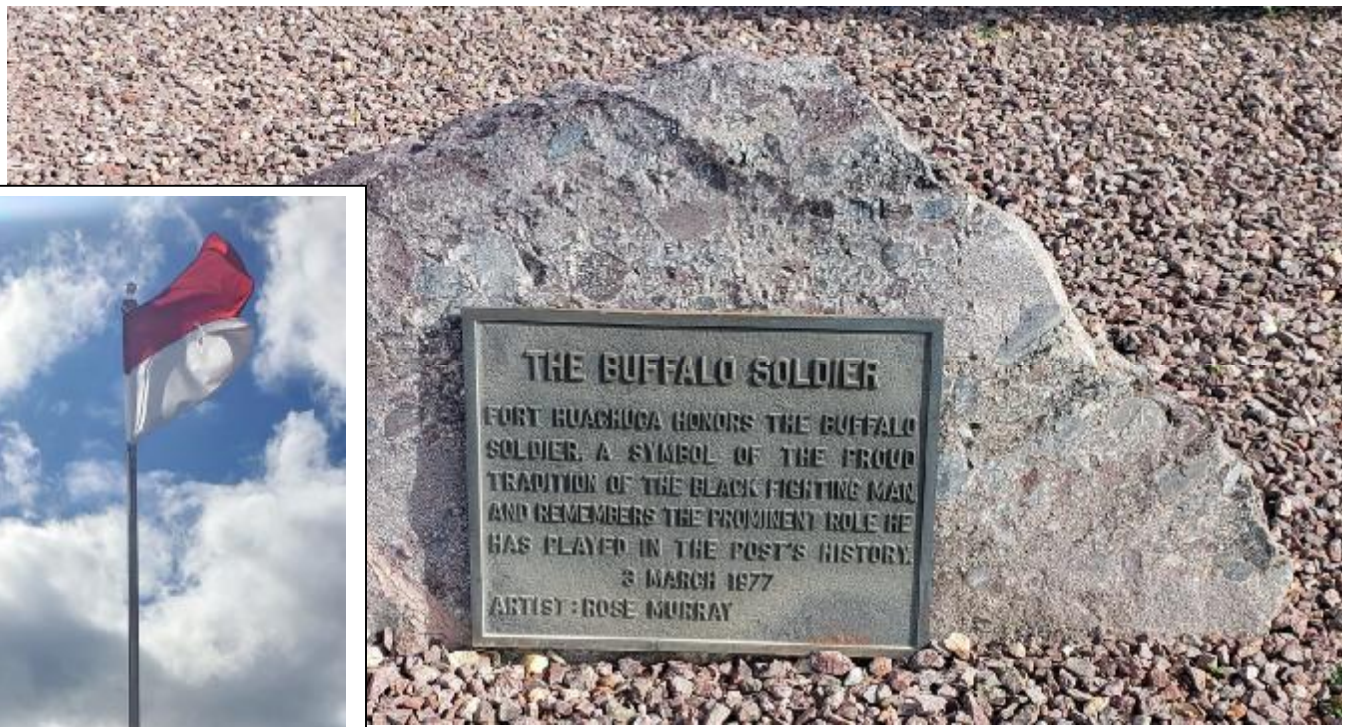
(Above left) Wedding photo of Rosa and Salvador Sepulveda. While watching a parade on Brown Field, Salvador noticed a pretty Mexican lady and told a friend, "I'm going to marry that woman," and he did in October 1921.



Skeleton Hall - 'Originally a one-chair dental office when it was completed in 1920'. I'm not sure I would want my teeth worked on in a place called Skeleton Hall. What does that mean? You enter as a full-fleshed human being and exit as a skeleton?



I know there will be a lot more in the museums tomorrow about the Buffalo Soldiers.



Why are these statues always facing the wrong way?



Hangman's Warehouse – 'A trap-door was located on the top floor and sprung by a lever in the basement. A partition was provided to shield the executioner from a view of the hanging'. I found a little more history on this one: This site was used as the post's hanging gallows from the late 1800's to the early 1900's. The warehouse acquired its name after two men were hung beneath its side windows in 1942 and 1943.

In 1942 Pvt. James Rowe was accused by a fellow soldier about stolen cigarettes. Rowe defended himself, even though he had the carton stashed away in his boot. The soldier was persistent. Rowe pulled out a knife and repeatedly stabbed the man in the neck.

In 1943 Staff Sgt. Jerry Sykes's ex-girlfriend and her husband, a 1st Sgt., were having a Christmas party off post. Sykes and the woman had been having an affair. The husband was out buying liquor for the party when Sykes picked her up and took her to a bar. Several drinks later they drove onto the post where they got into a heated argument. Sykes parked in a secluded clearing, pulled a knife out of the glove box and stabbed the woman repeatedly.

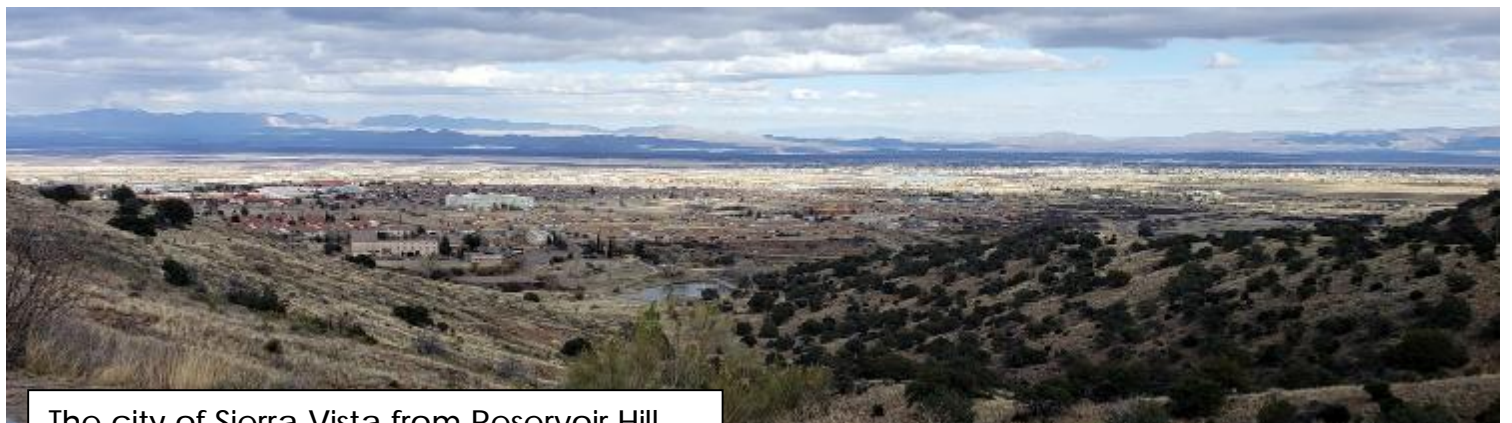
Graves for both men remain in the post cemetery far from the other grave sites because they mark the bodies of murderers.

That info is from *The Supernatural Legacy of Hangman's Warehouse and the EEO*. There goes on to be stories of ghosts and the supernatural if you want to look it up on the net.



So I drove to the cemetery, which was closed, but did see these turkeys enjoying a meal on the front lawn.

On my way to Reservoir Hill I spotted these deer. They are probably the same four I saw last night.



The city of Sierra Vista from Reservoir Hill



I followed a path past the pumping station for a clear view from the hill. The frame above and the two below are looking left, center and right from Reservoir Hill. I understand why it was such a strategic location for a Fort.



Above is the parade ground around which my walk took me. You can see the flagpole off to the right, and 6th Cavalry Hall upper left.



Guess what I found? Ricardo Montalban's Chapel. Just kidding. Unfortunately the doors were locked so I will give it a try tomorrow.

Speaking of tomorrow, the Fort Huachuca museums, the cemetery, Kino Chapel and whatever else I can find that won't get me thrown in the brig.

I am delaying the Coronado National Memorial until Wednesday. It will still be cold, 40 degrees, but the sun will be shining and the wind less than 8 MPH, so hopefully it will be ok to hike.

Speaking of cold, the electric heater needs help from the gas furnace in order to keep the temp in the RV at 68 degrees. That's just until bedtime, then I turn it down. 36 degrees right now feels like 28 with the wind chill. But I'm gonna tough it out!! (don't hate me please)

There is a lot to do in this neck of the woods, er, desert I mean, so I will hang out for awhile. I already examined Tombstone pretty closely last October but I never got around to any place nearby. I will try to do that now.

Until next time.....