

# Map Shows Roads to Sandoval's Past

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**B**ERNALILLO — Tucked away in arroyos and on mesas near here are sites that chronicle the area's 400-year-old history.

Bernalillo High School history teacher Sam McIlhaney spent 300 hours painting a a 4-by-8-foot map of better- and lesser-known attractions to share information that could otherwise be locked in the past. He sees the map as a way of

organizing the area's rich tri-cultural history.

"Until now no one would organize everything this area had to offer," McIlhaney said Monday. "The people around here know and cherish their history, but they've kept it to themselves."

"The Bernalillo area has as many things to offer as Santa Fe and Taos, but people just don't know about it." The teacher, who is also nationally recognized as a writer and historian, used the date of the Coronado exploration to anchor several little-known facts about Bernalillo.

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before, but he said he's never let inexperience stop him. He became a teacher and a writer 10 years ago after selling his interest in the dairy.

Pointing to sand dunes drawn below a yellow square that represents Zia pueblo west of here, McIlhaney said, "You won't find those sand dunes on a map anywhere."

The map also shows a recreational site off Tunnel Springs road off NM 165 and the Tunque Pueblo ruins just north of Placitas, near Las Huertas Creek.

It hangs in a newly restored governmental services room at El Zocalo. The Greater Bernalillo Chamber of Commerce plans to staff a pilot visitors

"The first gunpowder made in what is now the United States was manufactured here," McIlhaney said. "Up north it's too cold and down south it's too hot. That mother mountain protects us from all of it."

The historian said that Coronado directed a captain to bring back sulfur from Soda Dam in the Jemez Mountains to make the crude gunpowder. More than a dozen pueblos were scattered along the Rio Grande from Isleta to present-day Bernalillo when Coronado arrived in 1540, McIlhaney said.

"Why do you think all those Indians settled here?" he asked.

"It's because we have the best weather."

information center this summer in the old adobe high school.

Terry Lamm, who owns the building, said that while the room may change, the chamber will have a place for its pilot visitors' program.

Librarian Martha Liebert is arranging a Bernalillo orientation seminar for those who have volunteered to staff the center, she said.

Helping visitors understand what the area has to offer comes naturally to the McIlhaney, who is accustomed to trying to spark an interest in his students.

He said 95 percent of his students are local Pueblo Indians or Hispanics, who often seem indifferent to the history of their ancestors. "I tell them that I'm not from

somewhere else telling them how wonderful this all is. I'm talking to them from the viewpoint of a local person," he said. "I got my first driver's license in Bernalillo."

At the high school he has established a New Mexico Junior Historical Society and takes the students on field trips. He takes them to places as close as the Sandia Peak Tramway and as far away as Spain.

"I tell them their history is like an old dusty trunk that has been in their family for a long, long time," he said. "Inside are heirlooms that have been saved for them. Inside are things they may not recognize. I try to help identify those, so they can understand what they are all about."

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History teacher Sam McIlhaney and part of Sandoval County map he made to help stimulate tourism.



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