

Bent County, Colorado

Bent County (population 6,000) was formed in 1870, and Las Animas was platted in 1873, becoming the center of business and the county seat by 1875. Beginning in Boggsville in 1866, farming and ranching enterprises have been the largest sources of employment. Today half of the county population lives in Las Animas.

Bent County Commissioners adopted a historic preservation ordinance, granting the Las Animas Urban Renewal Authority power to designate historic properties within the downtown area. Together with the Pioneer Historical Society of Bent County, two proposed historic districts have been surveyed, including the downtown and courthouse areas of Las Animas.

With substantial support from the State Historical Fund, the society is also spearheading the rehabilitation of the 1898 Odd Fellows Lodge, a central landmark in the business district, to become the John W. Rawling Museum. When completed in 2009, it will house artifacts from the Kit Carson Museum, educate the public about local history, and serve as an art gallery and event venue.

Las Animas High School sponsors the annual Santa Fe Trail Day, the longest running student sponsored event in the state.

Bent County supports the historical society, which actively promotes restoration activities and educational programs at the Boggsville Historic Site, by providing designated funding generated by sales and use taxes. Since 1985, the Boggsville Historic Site has seen extensive archaeological investigations and restoration of the 1865 Boggs House and the 1866 Prowers House. Supervised field excavations and field schools take place each summer.

The year 2006 marked the 100th anniversary of Zebulon Pike's expedition to Colorado and was observed through several events. Using the anniversary as a marketing tool, Boggsville was able to win selection as a "site of the week" on the Denver NBC television affiliate as part of the "Explore Colorado" series. Increased interest in the heritage of Bent County is bringing new people from around the region and the country to enjoy a look into the past.