

Fort Sumner to celebrate "The Kid"

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Two dozen eggs, eight cake mixes and six pounds of powdered sugar will go into the cake Parilee Moore is baking. It is a cake to feed 200 people. It's not for a birthday or a wedding; it's to commemorate a death.

And people everywhere are invited to the party.

The words "Billy the Kid, wanted dead or alive," will stretch across the top above edible photos of the Kid, his tombstone, Pat Garrett and old vintage photos of Fort Sumner, she said.

Today and Saturday, Fort Sumner will commemorate the death of Billy the Kid, 125 years ago, according to Mayor Juan Chavez.

Not macabre, Chavez said the celebration is a commemoration of the mystique surrounding the Old West and the outlaw legend of young William H. Bonney aka Billy the Kid, believed shot to death by Sheriff Pat Garrett in Fort Sumner on July 14, 1881.

The town has pulled together in just over a month to host the celebration. They are hoping to draw quite a crowd, Chavez said.

"There's people all over the world interested in Billy the Kid — I hope this will bring them out of the woodwork," he said.

Chavez dismissed controversy over the death of Billy the Kid and speculation he might have died of old age somewhere else, citing the decision to withdraw an exhumation request as a conclusion to the debate.

He is confident Fort Sumner is the final resting place for the Kid.

An investigation spearheaded by a group of New Mexicans — namely, former Lincoln and De Baca county sheriffs Tom Sullivan and Gary Graves, and Capitan Mayor Steve Sederwall — sought to prove the Kid is buried in Fort Sumner.

Initially, Graves, Sullivan and Sederwall sought a court order allowing the exhumation of the Kid's mother buried in Silver City to compare DNA samples with the "impostor" bodies in graves in Arizona and Texas, Sparks said. The trio dropped the request in September after the state's Office of the Medical Investigator said the results may not be conclusive.

Moore agreed. She believes Billy the Kid is buried in Fort Sumner. Growing up around the legend, she worked at the local Billy the Kid Museum as a guide when she was 16, and believes the “living on the edge personality” of the Kid is what the legend is made of.

“They really say he wasn’t that bad at heart — just a kid at the wrong place at the wrong time. I think he was a wild kid,” she said.

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