

La Plata County  
Historic Preservation Review Commission



Historic Driving Tour  
Old Fort Lewis – Saturday May 14, 2016

La Plata County  
Register of Historic Places

- Fourteen structures have been designated to date
- Structures include the Old Ft. Lewis Campus, Florida Baptist Church and the Lower Spring Creek School House
- Designation is free, voluntary, and does not include regulatory restrictions
- All properties help celebrate the County’s rich history and receive a bronze plaque

**Site #1**  
**9:00 AM**—Meet at Old Fort Lewis Historic Library — 18683 HWY 140  
**9:30 AM**—Presentation by Beth LaShell — historic and present uses of the Old Fort  
**10:00 AM** — Begin Walking Tour (1/4 mile)

- ◇ Houses and Carriage Houses
- ◇ Horse and Livestock Barn
- ◇ Guard House and Dairy Barn
- ◇ Military Commissary and Grainery

**Site #2**  
**12:30 PM** — Meet at Breen Community Building — 15300 HWY 140  
(Driving directions below)


- ◇ Lunch Served by Breen Community Building Association  
**\$ 8 RSVP by Wednesday May 11th — 970-749-5338**  
Beef Barbecue, Potato Salad, Cole Slaw, Salad and Beverages
- ◇ Presentation by Mae Morley on the historic uses and preservation efforts

**Site #3**  
**2:00 PM** — Meet at the Aspaas Residence — 17238 HWY 140  
(Driving directions below)

- ◇ Presentation of history of Aspaas family 1900’s homestead
- ◇ View of exterior of the historic home and adjacent farm buildings
- ◇ Walking tour to observe one of the culturally peeled ponderosas
- ◇ Afternoon coffee/tea and refreshments


**4:00 PM** — End of tour

**Fort Lewis- 1880-1891**




Fort Lewis was initially established outside Pagosa Springs, Colorado in 1878 but was moved to the site on the La Plata River southwest of Animas City, Colorado July, 1880. "Fort Lewis is a remote new post, deemed absolutely necessary for the protection of southern and western Colorado" General of the Army William Tecumseh Sherman, 1882. The original military reservation was over 100,000 acres.

**The Breen Community Building**




Located 15 miles north of the state line, the building has served as a focal point for community gatherings since the mid 1930’s when it was built as a dance hall for Civilian Conservation Corp camps in the area. Following five decades of use by the local Grange, ownership of the building transferred to the Breen Community Building Association, who have updated and renovated the building for continued access and use.

**The Aspaas Ranch**



The Aspaas Ranch, homesteaded in the late 1800s by Annette Aspaas, a Norwegian immigrant, remains in the Aspaas family. In the 1890s, Annette moved one of the officers’ quarters from Fort Lewis to her ranch, and served as the Breen postmistress while the post office was located in her home.

**Federal Indian School- 1891-1910**



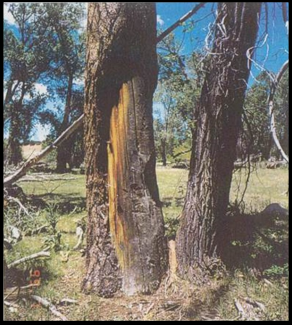
Fort Lewis was deactivated and turned over to the Secretary of the Interior for an Indian School. The school opened with 51 children enrolled representing Navajo, Ute, Sioux and Apache tribes along with a number of Anglo and Chicano students. The boarding school taught grades kindergarten through 6th grade.

**Reminders:**

- ◆ No dogs are allowed on any of the properties
- ◆ Please wear appropriate footwear and dress for spring/winter conditions
- ◆ Toilet facilities are only available at Old Fort Lewis and the Breen Community Building
- ◆ Car pooling between sites is encouraged
- ◆ For special accommodations call the Planning Department at 970-382-6263


Disclaimer: La Plata County, including its officials, employees and agents, does not warrant the condition or safety of the properties and sites on this tour. By participating in this tour, participants agree to assume all risk, responsibility and liability for all actions taken on the properties and sites subject to this tour.

**Culturally Modified Ponderosa Pine**



Seven culturally modified ponderosa pines dot the riparian landscape of the La Plata River as it flows through the Aspaas Ranch. These pines bear the cut-away marks left by Ute Indians as they harvested the inner bark for use as a dietary supplement. Axe marks are visible on many of the seven trees.

**Fort Lewis High School (1910-1934) and Fort Lewis A&M (1927-1956)**



The state of Colorado established an agricultural high school, called the School of Agricultural and Mechanical Arts and Household Arts. The school would be a secondary school for any boy or girl who had completed 8 grades and was at least 15 years old. A demonstration farm was set up to develop seeds that would grow at altitude. In 1954, legislature authorized a two year college, the school was referred to as Fort Lewis A&M. In 1956 Fort Lewis moved to Durango.

**Driving directions from Durango to Old Fort Lewis** — Drive west from Durango on Hwy 160 until you reach Hesperus. Turn south (left) onto Hwy 140 and drive for approximately 4 miles. Turn at the second entrance to Old Fort Lewis which is marked by a white and gold sign indicating “Old Fort Lewis”. Park near the library where the orientation will take place.

**Driving directions from Old Fort Lewis to the Breen Community Building** — Leaving Old Fort Lewis, turn south (right) onto Hwy. 140 and travel 3.3 miles. You will see the green highway sign denoting “Breen”. The Breen Community Building is on your left (east side of the highway) and has a large parking lot on its south side.

**Driving directions from the Breen Community Building to the Aspaas Ranch** — Leaving the Breen Community Building parking lot, turn right (north) onto Hwy. 140. Travel just under 2 miles on Hwy 140 and turn right (east) down the lane.



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