

## "Cerrillos, New Mexico"

by Michele Lea May



If you're hankering for a short jaunt and want to take an afternoon to explore a piece of the past, you can't beat the village of Cerrillos (Little Hills), 3 miles north of Madrid on hwy 14. Originally laid out by the Santa Fe Railroad in 1880. In its heyday, it was the largest comprehensive turquoise mining district in the country.

*Cerrillos boasted over 3,000 miners who frequented 21 saloons, 5 brothels and 4 hotels.*

Today home to ninety-eight families, the town offers you the opportunity to enjoy the tranquility of one of the last remaining traditional villages in New Mexico.

The area turquoise and lead deposits were critical to the jewelry and pottery making of the prehistoric Indians and these mines influenced Spanish settlement. The Cerrillos mining district is one of the oldest and most marked of the Old Spanish Mineral Developments in the Southwest. In fact, turquoise mined here found its way to the crown jewels of Spain. Cerrillos was full of hearty miners who extracted gold, silver, lead, zinc and turquoise from area mines at its peak in the 1880's.

*While it was once seriously considered as the capitol of New Mexico, today Cerrillos, with its dirt streets, is a picturesque reminder of the Old West.*

There are shops, a Turquoise mining museum, a petting zoo, overnight or extended stays in history rich casitas, hiking and biking trails. A walk through the streets will take you back in time. If you wander down Main Street you'll find The Clear Light Opera House, once the stage to Sarah Bernhardt and Lillian Langtree. Because of its unspoiled nature, the village has been the perfect setting for over thirteen movies, among them the original Young Guns.

Take a break from the hot city this summer and saunter into a cool breeze and the old west.

*Enjoy these local businesses while you're there:*

**Casa Grande Trading Post, Petting Zoo & Mining Museum:** Owners Todd & Patricia Brown sell Cerrillos Turquoise - gifts, rocks, bottles- and maintain an adorable petting zoo where the animals live for visitors. A must stop. 505-438-3008.

**The Diamond T Hacienda:** An 1886 double adobe building located on First Street in the middle of the village. The present living room was one of Cerrillos' dance hall - saloons. It had many other lives and was an undertaker's parlor, grocery

store and a movie theater. Tom and Jerri Morin have lovingly restored the once abandoned structure over the past ten years. They have added a Casita, potting



shed, artist studio and gardens to the hacienda. [diamondthacienda.com](http://diamondthacienda.com). (800) 484-9743.

**Cerrillos Hills Historic Park:** includes 1100 acres of tree covered hills with several miles of trails suitable for hiking, mountain biking and horse-back riding. For well over a thousand years the hills have been a focus for Indian, Spanish, Mexican, and Territorial mining, and within the Park a dozen of the pre-1900 mines are developed as educational and historical attractions. [cerrilloshills.org](http://cerrilloshills.org).

**What-Not Shop:** Chock-full of old and new items of every description and utility. Celebrating



over 50 years in business. Open Tuesday thru Saturday 9:30 am to 4:30 pm. (505) 471-2744.

**Scherer's Architectural Antique:** Look for the life size Painted Pony, hardware, doors, windows, furniture, lighting, yard art, terra cotta, and artwork by Lori Musil. (505) 474-5841.

**Saint Joseph's Church and Shrine:** - the only location for mass between San Antonito and Santa Fe. (505) 471-1562.

*Make the time and experience Los Cerrillos, it's as authentic as it gets.*

*Photos: Black & white, above left - Old Cerrillos in its heyday - above: casitas at Diamond T Hacienda and What Not Shop downtown Cerrillos, today, both photos courtesy of the [diamondthacienda.com](http://diamondthacienda.com) website. Left Todd Brown standing in front of some treasures at his museum.*







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