

SPRING/SUMMER 2023

# The Correspondent

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE KIT CARSON HOUSE NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK



Vintage post card, circa 1950s

*Photo by Bob Petley, Petley Studios Albuquerque, NM. In the early 1950s the Masons of Bent Lodge #42 opened the Kit Carson House to the public as a museum. Also during the 50s the lodge installed the flag pole to honor Kit Carson's service to America.*

## New Ownership for the Kit Carson House

**T**he Kit Carson House Inc. nonprofit corporation, which has been managing and operating the Kit Carson House for two years, is in the process of acquiring the Kit Carson House and property from Bent Lodge #42 of Taos, NM.

The House was built in 1825 and was purchased by Kit Carson in 1843 as a wedding gift for his beautiful bride, Josefa Jaramillo. The modest adobe building was their permanent home for the next 25 years. After the deaths of Carson and Josefa in 1868, the house was rented to provide income for their orphaned children, and then it gradually fell into disrepair and disuse. In 1910 the Bent Lodge Freemasons acquired the house and restored it as a memorial to Brother Kit Carson.

Over the years Bent Lodge rented the house to various businesses which always kept one room dedicated to Kit Carson. Because of increased interest among tourists, the Masons opened the house to the public as a museum in the early 1950s. In 1963 the Kit Carson House became a National Historic Landmark, one of the first structures to receive the prestigious designation.

The Bent Lodge Masons have owned and cared for the Kit Carson House for more than a century. We are indebted to their enduring dedication to the story of Kit Carson, Josefa Jaramillo Carson and their place in U S history.

Now, in the interest of protecting and preserving the house, the Lodge has decided to transfer ownership of the property to the nonprofit corporation, Kit Carson House Inc. The transfer has been approved by the Grand Lodge of Masons of New Mexico. This decision was made to enable the organization to seek alternative sources of funding through federal, state and private grants in order to begin the extensive preservation and rehabilitation required to save the site. We are working with a local attorney to formalize the transfer of the property.

Bent Lodge took on the responsibility for the house in 1910 with the stipulation that the house remain a tribute to Brother Kit Carson in perpetuity. The new ownership will continue that charge and expand on that responsibility to present a complete history of the times.

## President's Message

Greetings and welcome to our Spring/Summer newsletter. We have had a very productive period since our last newsletter, and we would like to share our progress with you.

After discussions with Bent Lodge of Taos and the New Mexico Freemasons it was decided that the best course of action for the Kit Carson House would be to transfer ownership of the physical property to the nonprofit corporation. The transfer of ownership is currently underway.

The nonprofit completed an extensive visioning process with the help of Taos Mainstreet and a volunteer panel of knowledgeable advisors. It was decided that upon restoration and rehabilitation of the site, museum exhibits will tell a more complete story of historical events and present different perspectives.

We continue to seek significant donations to preserve our beloved National Historic Landmark.



*Martin Jagers*

We have welcomed a new member to the Board of Directors, Justin Lenhart. He is the Curator at the Jim Thorpe Museum and Oklahoma Sports Hall of Fame. Justin brings enthusiasm and professional museum experience to the board.

We hope you will join us in ushering in an exciting new era for the Kit Carson House and hope to see you soon.

*-MJ Spring 2023*

## Kit Carson House Inc.

The Kit Carson House, Inc. is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization incorporated in the State of New Mexico and governed by a Board of Directors. The home of Kit and Josefa Carson has been owned by Bent Lodge #42 AF & AM since 1911.

**113 Kit Carson Road, Taos, NM, 87571**  
**575-758-4945**

**[museum@kitcarsonhouse.org](mailto:museum@kitcarsonhouse.org)**

### Board of Directors

Martin Jagers, President  
Harvey Yocum, Secretary  
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### Museum Manager

Dave Cordova

### Newsletter Editor

Barbara Schultz

#### *National Historic Landmark plaque*



## The Next 100 Years

In February Taos Mainstreet sponsored a visioning exercise for the site. Participants were an ad hoc group of community representatives from The Couse/Sharp Historical Site, The D.H. Lawrence Ranch, and The Kit Carson House, Inc. Participating via zoom were noted author of "Blood and Thunder," Hampton Sides and Horacio Trujillo, a native of Taos, currently global advisor on humanitarian initiatives. This exercise helped us focus on our goals for presenting the "new" Kit Carson House which is important for acquiring grants and sponsors in order to carry out our commitment to protect and preserve The Kit Carson House National Historic Landmark.

New Mexico is the ancestral home of myriad peoples and part of the last geographical region incorporated into the continental United States. As such, there is not one single history of the region, much less one modern culture. There are multiple histories of the peoples, of the land now known as New Mexico, and the encounters within and among them.

The Kit Carson House seeks to preserve and recount the complex history of this convergence of cultures.

Kit Carson and the events of the U.S. westward expansion are debated by historical scholars to this day. Presenting a more complete history is an effort that museums around the world are addressing right now. We strongly believe this approach will benefit our community.

Our vision is for the Kit Carson House and Museum to serve as a center for interpreting Kit Carson's life in the context of America's expansion in the West where visitors can look to the past for cues and experiences which serve as meaningful lessons for better understanding this tumultuous time in our history. The guiding principles for the Next 100 Years of Kit Carson House management shall include authenticity, inclusiveness, partnership, stewardship and educational impact.



## KCH/UNM Collaboration



From left, Dr. Loa Traxler, Director of Museum Studies at UNM with her graduate students Madisyn Rostro, Kaitlynn Stewart, Anna Kate Davidson, and Alexis Lucero

Our collaboration with the University of New Mexico began in November 2022 when Dr. Loa Traxler and her graduate students in Museum Studies arrived to perform an inventory of items in the Kit Carson House collection. They worked for two days and documented their work onto Excel Spreadsheet.

## Taos Councilmember Corilia Ortega Visits KCH

Taos Councilmember Corilia Ortega visited KCH in April to view first hand the condition of the structure. This visit was a follow-up on the Condition Assessment and Preservation Plan (CAPP) report which was funded by a CLG grant from the Town of Taos and the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division.



Taos Councilmember Corilia Ortega standing next to the National Historic Landmark plaque and holding KCH publication "Josefa"

## Intern Lucas McDaniel

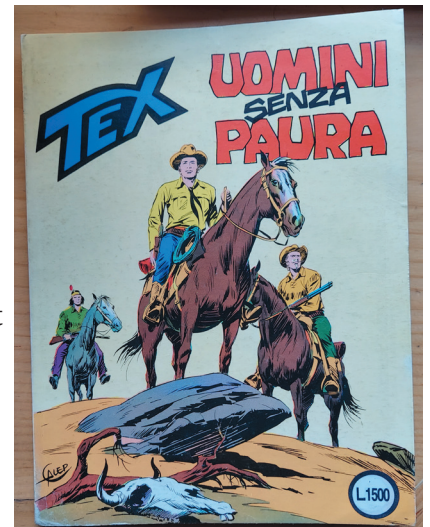
We would like to acknowledge the work of Lucas McDaniel, a graduate student of Museum Studies at UNM, in conducting a comprehensive inventory of the Kit Carson House collection. Lucas built upon the previous inventory conducted by UNM in the fall of last year, piecing together records from various sources to create an Excel spreadsheet of the objects present at the museum. This document will be instrumental in migrating the museum's catalogue records into an Online and centralized system that will be easily accessible to staff and researchers. Lucas' meticulous work provides a strong foundation for future collection management efforts at the site.



Lucas McDaniel with a tourist item from the 30s or 40s found in the Kit Carson House.

## The Kit Carson House Collection

The Kit Carson House collection, which Lucas and the other graduate students have documented, has many books about Kit Carson. These publications range from the scholarly to the creatively adventurous. The graphic novels, which are sometimes referred to as "Blood and Thunders," helped to spread Carson's reputation as a "Tough Hombre." Carson's fame was not just confined to the United States. He was also well known in Britain, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. KCH has several examples of foreign language publications about Kit Carson in French, Italian, German, Russian and even some in Mid-Eastern and Asian calligraphy. Museum Manager, Dave Cordova reports that visitors from other countries are always excited to see a book about Kit Carson in their own language.



A visitor from Italy was delighted to find this book written in his language in our collection.



**The Kit Carson House**  
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Taos, NM 87571  
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museum@kitcarsonhouse.org

## DONATIONS

Always Needed

Always Appreciated

Always Tax-deductible

Please mail your donation in the enclosed envelope, or if you wish to donate electronically, go to [kitcarsonhouse.org](http://kitcarsonhouse.org) and click on the “donate” button on the upper left.

Thank you for your support of Kit Carson House National Historic Landmark.

## Artist in the Courtyard



This summer artist Gary Roller will be working and displaying his art under the ramada in the Kit Carson House courtyard. Come meet him.

## Mission Statement

The mission of the corporation is to operate exclusively to protect, preserve and maintain the Kit Carson House, adjacent buildings and grounds as a designated National Historic Landmark; and to operate the museum therewith for public education and enjoyment.

The corporation will maintain and display the collection of historical artifacts to the public.

The focus of education is the life and times of Christopher “Kit” Carson, Scout, Mountain man, Union Army Officer, Freemason and Family man.