



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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“Holiday in the National Parks” Celebrated at the White House Ornament for Chamizal National Memorial Displayed on the Official White House Christmas Tree

El Paso, Texas – An ornament for Chamizal National Memorial is prominently displayed on this year’s official White House Christmas Tree. The tree is the centerpiece of elaborate decorations celebrating the theme of “Holiday in the National Parks.”

“It is an amazing honor for the National Park Service to be selected as the theme for the White House holiday decorations by the President and Mrs. Bush,” said National Park Service Director Mary A. Bomar. “Mrs. Bush is the best champion for our national parks, and the beautiful decorations in each state room showcase the natural and historical treasures found in parks throughout the country.”

The tree, located in the Blue Room, is adorned with handmade ornaments representing the country’s 391 National Park Service sites. “Each ornament on the magnificent 18-foot Fraser fir was designed by an artist selected by the park,” said Bomar. “The ornaments tell the stories of our parks, just as our parks tell the stories of our nation.”

The ornament for Chamizal National Memorial was designed by well known El Paso artist Hector Bernal. His design for the White House Christmas Tree, focused on the history behind the creation of Chamizal National Memorial, and included the U.S. and Mexican Presidents, along with citizens from both countries, coming together in peace and friendship to settle the long-standing Chamizal boundary dispute. With the words, “Discovering our commonality, celebrating our differences” Mr. Bernal’s ornament reflects today’s role of the Memorial as a cultural center commemorating the Chamizal settlement by bringing together people from all cultures to learn more about each other through interpretive programming, the visual and performing arts. Images of Mr. Bernal’s Christmas ornament can be viewed on the Memorial’s website at www.nps.gov/cham.

Mr. Bernal traveled from El Paso to Washington DC to attend a special reception hosted by First Lady Laura Bush on November 28th that honored the artists, their works, and their support of National Parks. Chamizal National Memorial superintendent Richard Harris stated, “The story behind Chamizal is important, and mutually shared by both El Paso and Ciudad Juarez. We were pleased to have an accomplished artist like Hector Bernal capture the spirit of that story through his art. The ornament, which will now be part of the permanent White House collection, represents not only the Memorial, but also our borderland community.”

The holiday displays incorporate the wide variety of natural, cultural, and recreational features preserved by the National Park Service. Models of icons such as the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and the Statue of Liberty share space with paintings of scenic vistas from Grand Canyon, Zion, and Rocky Mountain National Parks. Holiday garlands intertwined with park objects including seashells, pine cones, and gold aspen leaves add to each room's festive feel.

A highlight of the decorations is a scaled-down, but architecturally accurate, gingerbread reproduction of the south view of the White House, a unit of the National Park Service. The edible masterpiece includes Bush family pets Barney, Miss Beazley, and Willie frolicking on the lawn with moose, elk, raccoons, and other animals found in national parks.

“National Parks commemorate the people, places, and events that define the American experience,” said Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne. “I am so appreciative of President Bush's efforts to recognize the important role of national parks in American society. Our country will celebrate the 100th anniversary of the National Park Service in 2016 and the President has been instrumental in establishing the National Park Centennial Initiative to prepare the parks for the next century.”

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