

Ample Water Supply Led To Bent's Fort

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LAS ANIMAS, Nov. 5—When William Bent established his early frontier fort in the Arkansas Valley, one of his reasons for picking the site was a fine well.

It assured ample water for his trading post, and in case of an Indian siege it would provide adequate supplies for the defenders.

In later years after the fort was abandoned, the well fell into disuse and finally was forgotten. It has now been revived as part of the program of restoration of the historic outpost.

An archeological crew from Trinidad Junior College discovered the well several years ago while doing excavating work at the location of the fort. Now, it has been further developed by members of the National Park Service, which is restoring the area.

Workmen have found original rock walls which lined the well. Foy L. Young, superintendent of the National Park Service site, said the water source must have been dug by Bent and his workmen during a drouth period when the water table was low, for the rocks descend considerably below the present surface.

The flow is so substantial that it cannot be pumped dry, Young said.

Work on restoring Bent's Fort has been carried on for the past two years. When completed, the post is destined to become one of Southern Colorado's outstanding historic and tourist attractions.

Bent's Fort was one of the major trading posts in the Southwest U.S. during the pre-Civil War period. It served as one of the main stopping points on the route from eastern points to Santa Fe and beyond.



La Junta Tribune-Democrat, 8-6-71, p. 4,

Bent's Old Fort, eight miles east of La Junta on Colorado Highway 194 (it parallels Highway 50 on the north side of the Arkansas river) is rapidly becoming one of Southeast Colorado's major tourist attractions. Nearly a century and half ago Bent's Fort was an important fur trading post, and Indian rendezvous and a way-station on the famous Santa Fe trail. The fort was destroyed in 1849 (by fire) and for more than a century the ruins were of interest only to true lovers of western history. In 1963 the site of Bent's Old Fort was established as a unit of the National Park System. Since then almost the entire site has been painstakingly uncovered by archeological teams from the National Park Service. Today visitors (25,000 inspected the old fort last year) are welcomed daily, encouraged to take the self-guiding tour that covers all of the ruins. Eventually it is planned that the entire fort will be re-built exactly as it was in the 1830's.