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Bent's Old Fort

Colorado National Parks

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### 1833 Trading Post to Be Rebuilt of State Centennial

Rocky Mountain News

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Forts (by name)  
Bent's fort

# 1833 trading post to be rebuilt for state Centennial

Bent's Old Fort, an adobe trading post built in 1833 on the old Santa Fe Trail some eight miles east of La Junta, will be completely rebuilt for the 1976 Colorado Centennial celebration.

Legislation appropriating \$2.3 million was signed into law recently by President Ford.

Sen. Peter Dominick, R-Colo., and Rep. Frank Evans, D-Colo., sponsored the bill.

The remains of the fort, which was destroyed in 1849, are on a 178-acre tract managed by the National Park Service, which will oversee reconstruction.

Work is scheduled to begin next spring after the Park Service has located a contractor with experience in the adobe construction once widely used in the Southwest.

Many other obsolete building techniques will be resurrected, such as hand-hewing wooden beams and roof supports and fashioning wrought-iron hinges like those made by pioneers. The fort had only one glass window, using a pane imported by wagon train from the East. A similar one will be made for the restoration.

The one concession to modernity will be using adobe bricks stabilized with concrete for portions of the structure concealed from view.

The original fort was built by Charles and William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain on high ground on the north bank of the Arkansas River, near the point where the Santa Fe Trail crosses the stream en route to Mexico. The fort was a trading post for Indian trade and a landmark for wagon trains to and from Santa Fe.

Activity at the fort peaked in 1846, the year the United States invaded Mexico. Bent's Fort was used as a jumping-off point for the campaign against Mexican forces in Santa Fe and southern California.

But trade dropped sharply thereafter. William Bent, depressed over his brother's murder in an Indian uprising in Taos, N.M., and angered by the Army's refusal to buy the fort for military use, abandoned his mammoth mud castle on the Arkansas in 1849, blowing it up with gunpowder.

The ruins deteriorated rapidly, and a 1921 flood swept away most of what was left. The property was made a national historical site in 1960 and archeological studies of the foundations have been conducted since.