

University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Bent's Old Fort

Colorado National Parks

Operating Replica Bent's Fort Shop

N/A

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digscholarship.unco.edu/beol>

Operating replica Bent's Fort shop

An adobe replica of the blacksmith shop which once was the operating heart of Bent's Old Fort will be built as an added attraction at the fort for the summer season, according to John Patterson, superintendent.

Patterson, and the assistant superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Group of the National Park Service, disclosed the plans Thursday in La Junta. Wayne Cone said that these plans didn't mean that plans for a complete restoration of the fort had been junked. "It is just a case of lack of money," Cone said. "But money is available to build a replica of the blacksmith shop."

Patterson said that it was planned that the blacksmith shop be an operating shop. He said he had already located an old forge in Durango and an old anvil in Arizona which were almost true to the period. He has two former retired Santa Fe blacksmiths who he is trying to talk into working in the blacksmith shop.

"I figure that there would be a market for handmade ox shoes, wall hooks and some of the other iron gadgets that were once made in the blacksmith shop," said Patterson.

Patterson said he was also trying to get some oxen — or as a compromise, some Texas longhorns. He said the Park Service had such animals at other locations.

The plans also call for putting the forest rangers in costumes typical of the period. If buckskins are hard to come by, Patterson said he would settle for homespun. "At least we know that homespun was worn by the blacksmiths and the other help around the fort, even though the trappers wore buckskin."

Patterson said that the replica of the blacksmith shop would not be built on the original site, rather adjacent to it. The original shop was not large. Wagons being worked upon were likely parked in the corral which was at one end of the blacksmith shop.

Cone said that the extra activities at Bent's Old Fort would be local observance of the National Parks Centennial. This year is the 100th anniversary of the service. It was on March 1, 1972 that President U.S. Grant signed into law the bill creating Yellowstone National Park.