(V) Carson

FURNISHING A REVOLUTION DATA SECTION

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FURNISHINGS DATA

A. ABSENCE OF ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE REVEALING HISTORIC FURNISHINGS

The total destruction of Bent's Old Fort precludes the gathering of furnishings evidence from the structure itself.

Careful study of surviving original walls in Plates XIV, XVI, and XVII, Historical Data Section, predictably fails also to shed light on furnishings. The only evidence of possible interest to the historic interior of Bent's Fort in these photographs is the apparent seam in the adobe wall shown in Plate XVI. It is impossible, however, to evaluate this feature from a photograph. Careful first-hand examination and a knowledge of the location of the seam would be needed to determine its structural or decorative relevance.

It is a local tradition that structural members of Bent's Fort were carried off by nearby ranchers for use in their own buildings during the Cattle Period, 1861-1884. Such cannibalizing no doubt included wooden elements of the Fort such as door and window frames, as well as adobes. Theoretically, thus, it should be possible to locate such elements of the original structure for the purpose of study for furnishings evidence.

The fact that Bent's Fort was dismantled after its burning by Bent in 1849, when it is likely that many of its original wooden features were destroyed, and after its period of use as a stage station, when such replacement and repair took place, would make such a search for original

undertake a doubtful undertaking. If found, it would be difficult, lacking comparative evidence, to determine with certainty the period of origin for the feature. Evidence that might be present relevant to furnishings, such as marks indicating window coverings, would be similarly difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate.

In conclusion, the potential usefulness of such evidence does not promise to be sufficient to merit a strenuous effort to locate such possible surviving features.

B. STATEMENT OF ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE REVEALING HISTORIC FURNISHINGS

The findings of the extensive archeological project at Bent's Fort provide the only unchallengeable documentation for its historic furnishings and those structural elements of the building relevent to its interior detailing.

HEATING DEVICES: From the results of this excavation it may be concluded with certainty that Bent's Fort was heated by fireplaces. Five such features were located in the north row of rooms; three in the east section; six on the south; and, significantly, none on the west. The location of fireplaces is strong evidence in determining the various uses of the room.

Evidence of heating devices on the second story is, of course, not obtainable from archeological evidence save for the single instance in U5, where a thick wall at the ground level indicates support for a fireplace on the floor above in Room U#5. This is borne out by the Abert drawing (Plate VII) which shows a chimney at the south end of the upper west row of rooms. Speculating that any additional heating facilities in the upper rooms would have been located to take advantage of the flues and chimneys needed for the ground level fireplaces, it might be concluded that only U#1 also possessed the comfort of heating.

Refurnishing research and planning should not rule out the possible use of braziers or other portable heating devices in some otherwise apparently

unheated rooms, and should also endeavor to account in some way for the apparent chimney shown in the Abert drawing (Plate VII), located at the north end of the west second-story structure, as well as for the two chimney-like elements abutting what appears to be the billiard room in both the Hughes and Deas sketches (Plates V and VI).

LIGHTING DEVICES & WINDOW TREATMENT: The results of the excavation at Bent's Fort have not produced any evidence of lighting devices, or, as has been mentioned previously, decorative window treatment. The discovery of pieces of flat glass at the Bent level, in Rooms B5, B21A, and B2, may produce the conclusion that windows were glazed rather than having been covered with such frontier expedients as oiled paper or hung skins.

WALLS & FLOORS: Archaeological investigations have produced conclusive evidence of wall and floor treatment throughout the ground level structure. Floors were smoothed and tamped earth. In some cases, this floor was further refined by the application of plaster or whitewash. In one instance a floor of adobe brick was laid, although there is doubt that the space involved was a room.

The application of a finish coat of plaster to floors in some of the rooms should receive additional study in the course of refurnishing planning. This treatment would seem logically to have been reserved for rooms where the use, or occupant, merited such extra effort, convenience, and elegance. The presence of such floors

in rooms determined in the Historical Section to have been carpenter and blacksmith workshops seems not only incongruous, but also impractical.

No evidence of carpeting was found in the Aunt Period floors, but this alone does not preclude their use.

Walls appear to have been coated with plaster or whitewash almost throughout. Three colors predominated: white, yellow, and red.1/

The following table will summarize wall and floor treatment as defined by archeological evidence and coordinated with room use as determined in the Historical Data Section. Colors cited are given in their chronological order, with the earliest stated first.

Room	Historic Use	Floor	Walls	Color
M1	Quarters		Plaster	White
M2	Quarters		Plaster	White
M3	Quarters			
M4	Quarters			
M5	Trade Room		Plaster	White
M6	Trade Room		Plaster	White
M7	Trade Room			
M8	Cook's Room		Plaster	Yellow/red
M9	Dining Room			
M5	Parlor, Council Room	Plaster	Plaster	White

1/ The designation of plaster or whitewash used has followed the terms used in the Archeological Section. It seems likely that the substance referred to would be the same throughout the structure: an mineral lime coating, rather thicker than whitewash, but thinner than plaster, resembling most a plaster finish coat.

Room	Historic Use	Floor	Walls	Color
61A	Kitchen-Pantry		Whitewash	
61	Kitchen		Plaster	Red
62	Dant's Quarters	Plaster--same as wall colors	Plaster	Adobe/Red/Yellow/White
63	Dant's Quarters		Plaster	White
64	Blacksmith Shop	Plaster--same as wall colors	Plaster	White/Red
65	Blacksmith Shop		Plaster	White
66	Carpenter Shop		Plaster	White
67	Carpenter Shop	Whitewash		
W2	Storage		Plaster	White
W3	Storage			
W4	Storage (Pit/Basement)		Plaster	Grey adobe/White
W5	Storage			
W6	?	Adobe brick		

Rooms 62 and 67 both yielded fragments of "burlap or burlap impression in a white matrix." This evidence should be studied further in the course of refurnishing planning, as it may indicate walls to which burlap was applied, having a plaster finish worked over. This was a common practice in the 19th Century (and well into the 20th) to cover cracks and otherwise conceal wall blankets, although the fabric most often used was muslin, canvas, or even gauze. During any ally

have been the "best available" at Bent's Fort. It should be noted that, in elegant homes where impeccable wall finishes were wanted, canvas was also often applied over the plaster at the time of construction. The evidence is considered worth pursuing. The use of burlap in this manner would have imparted a distinctive and decorative texture to the walls involved.

No evidence has been recovered to point out the treatment of floors and walls on the second story. Using comparative testimony obtained from the relationship of floor and wall finishes with room use on the ground level, it might be concluded that the bastions and watch towers would have been unfinished in any way; and that Room UNL, a private quarters, might have had red or yellow plaster on its walls. The billiard room might also have sported brightly colored plaster walls, but the walls in the clerk's office and remaining quarters on the west side would doubtless have had no more than the standard white plastering.

Whether or not the grandest room on this level, UNL, had floor plastering is difficult to say. Probably used by partner St. Vrain (see Boggs, Plate II) during his visits, it may well have had the same floor refinement as the quarters of partner Bent on the ground floor. It is unlikely that any of the other second story floors would have been so treated. Traffic in the billiard room would have rendered

fragile plastered floors impractical. Magoffin's statement that she sprinkled her dirt floor in U41 "several times during the day" probably speaks for the floors in the entire west section.

OTHER ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF INTERIOR TREATMENT & FEATURES: Furnishing research will need to investigate further the "pie slice" burned section in Room 85 to determine its relationship to furnishings, as well as the pre-1849 glazed fireplace tile found in the basement section of W4. The presence of this latter specimen at Bent's Fort is indeed puzzling. It is not a likely item for the Santa Fe trade, since tiles were readily available at this period in both the United States and New Mexico. It hardly fits the "local" market, made up of Indians and mountain men. This leaves the military alternative that the tile was part of a shipment to embellish the proprietor's quarters, perhaps in Santa Fe, but more probably, since one was found in storage there, at Bent's Fort.

Other archeological evidence remains that provides considerable furnishing interest. These features need not, however, be relentlessly tracked down because they occur in areas not being considered for refurnishing. They are: (1) the counter-like foundation in W4, (2) the walls in 85 and 82, and (3) the slot-like floor depressions made by halved logs laid flatside up in W3 and W5.

CULTURAL CONTENT: The evidence of cultural materials here has been obtained from notes in the Archeological Section of this report, and

from the weekly reports submitted by the Archeologist to the Regional Office during the course of excavation. Additional information about such objects will no doubt be contained in the final report of the archeological project. The recovered specimens should also be studied carefully during research for the refurnishing report.

Archeological finds indicating cultural objects in use at Bent's Fort during its primary period, are charted below to provide reference to the refurnishing themes (see Interpretive Prospectus, p. 25) to which they would be relevant; the possible rooms which could interpret that theme; and the location of their discovery.

It should be noted that many specimens recovered during the course of archeological investigation would have been present in such quantity and so universally used in historic times that their presence today in any given location constitutes but little evidence of the use or furnishing of the room in which they were found. A heavy concentration of some items, however, in any one space, can logically be construed to bear upon historic room use and content. Trade beads are the most typical instance of this situation, as are iron fragments and bottles.

Substances which have been found, for example the rattan or willow found in B7, have not been tabulated. They could represent a wide variety of objects and study of the specimens will be necessary to reach a conclusion.

Archaeological Phase: [illegible]
Possible Installation: [illegible] Station, Watchtower

Object	Recovery Location
Watermelon	[illegible] Station
Brass telescope	[illegible]

Archaeological Phase: [illegible]
Possible Installation: Billiard Room

Object	Recovery Location
Trade beads (on specimen trophies	[illegible], [illegible], trash dump
Wine, whiskey bottles	[illegible]
Clay pipes	[illegible], trash dump
Paper (charred remnant)	[illegible]
Cork	[illegible]
Slate	[illegible]
Red slate marbles	[illegible]

Archaeological Phase: [illegible]
Possible Installation: Trade Room ([illegible], [illegible], [illegible]); Chief's Office (one)

Object	Recovery Location
Square pieces of iron	[illegible], [illegible]
Cross shot	[illegible]
Spherical lead	[illegible]
Hunting knife (blade found)	[illegible]
Shoulder arm (stock and hardware found)	[illegible], trash dump
Heart-shaped iron padlocks	[illegible]
Brass telescope	[illegible]
Cloth (charred piece found)	[illegible], [illegible]
Trade beads	[illegible], [illegible], [illegible], [illegible], trash dump

Pots and pans	E3
Barrels with wire handles/fittings	E3
Aluminum shavings chips	E3
Clay pipes	E3, trash dump
Paper (charred found)	E2
Rock	E2
Flint	E2
Coal flake scrips	E2,
Iron shovel	E2, A
Iron hardware	E2
Iron shell hub parts	E1
Horseshoes	E1
Iron wheels	E1
Spade	E1
Corkscrew case	E1
Fittings (harness brass strips)	E1
Barrels, wooden	E1
Black powder can (plug found)	Trash dump

Archaeological Theme: Accumulation
Possible Installation: Bear Quarters (E2, E3); Enlisted Quarters (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7, E8, E9, E10)

Object	Recovery Location
Spherical lead bullets	E5
Copper luster ware	E7
Black transfer printed earthenware	E7
Powder flask (brass found)	E2 Station
Shoulder arm (stock and hardware found)	E4, trash dump
Brass telescope	E4
Cloth (charred pieces found)	E4, E3
Trade beads (on approx)	E4, E3, E2, E6, trash dump
Wine, whiskey bottles	E3
Clay pipes	E3, trash dump
Carnelian of 1805-20	E3, E1

Paper (charred found)	[illegible]
Rock	[illegible]
Copper lustre white earthenware	[illegible]
Flintlocks (heritage trade rifles)	[illegible]
Black powder can (plug found)	Trash dump

Refurnishing Theme: [illegible]
Possible Installation: Kitchen ([illegible], [illegible]); Dining Room ([illegible])

Object	Recovery Location
Copper lustre ware	[illegible]
Black transfer printed earthenware	[illegible]
Cloth (charred piece found)	[illegible]
Pots and pans	[illegible]
Wine, whiskey bottles	[illegible]
Wooden churn, wooden dasher	[illegible]
4-gallon stoneware crock	[illegible]
Clay pipes	[illegible], trash dump
Ceramics of 1825-50	[illegible], [illegible]
Copper lustre white earthenware	[illegible]

Refurnishing Theme: [illegible]
Possible Installation: Blacksmith ([illegible]); Carpenter Shops, ([illegible])

Object	Recovery Location
Iron axe-head	[illegible]
Square pieces of iron/ iron	[illegible]
Iron hardware	[illegible]
Iron wheel hub parts	[illegible]
Screwdriver	[illegible]
Spade	[illegible]
Barrels	[illegible]

Corresponding Items: [illegible]
Possible Installation: The Plaza

Object	Recovery Location
Iron adze-head	[illegible]
Spade	[illegible]
Fur press	Plaza

C. DOCUMENTARY APPROACH TO HISTORIC FURNISHINGS

All documentary sources listed as primary in the Historical Data section that were available to this office have been consulted. Six have thus been searched, with research remaining to be executed in fourteen. Two secondary sources have also been searched. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to begin furnishings research in those primary materials not yet examined, and in eyewitness, with particular reference to fur trade objects and the cultural materials of Santa Fe in the period of historic concern.

Documentary references have been arranged, in narrative form, under the refurnishing theme headings planned for interpretation at Bent's Fort.

Utility: The bastions and watchtower at Bent's Fort were noted by many of its visitors, and several commented feelingly on the flag of the United States flying above the entrance gate. Ruxton mentioned the flag,[2] as did Cooke,[3] and Johnston.[4] Emory provided details of its size and pole. He wrote that he saw "... a huge United

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2/ George Frederick Ruxton, Life in the Far West, ed. LeRoy Hafen (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 103, (hereafter cited as Ruxton).

3/ Philip St. George Cooke, Scenes and Adventures in the Army (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1859), p. 417, (hereafter cited as Cooke).

4/ Abraham Robinson Johnston, Journal, in Ralph P. Bieber, ed., Marching with the Army of the West (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 92, (hereafter cited as Johnston).

States flag flowing to the breeze, and straining every fibre of an ash pole planted over the center of the gate."[5]

The Fort was armed, it is certain, with small artillery. Cooke noted that his approach to the post was "... saluted by three discharges from a swivel gun ....,"[6] while Garrard located "... a few cannon ...." in the bastions.[7] Garrard observed, also, a small brass cannon laying on the ground in the Plaza, which had been burst "... in saluting General Kearny."[8] This gun would have been in use prior to 1846.

Garrard is also the source of two interesting bits of information about the watchtower. He noted its "belfry," implying a bell located there, and the imprisonment in it of two bald eagles, two years old. One of these was killed during the period of his visit (1847).[9]

RECREATION: If we may judge by contemporary references, recreation at Bent's Fort during the period of its zenith revolved chiefly around the rather hardy pastimes: drinking and gambling. Gambling was so much in evidence that Owen Wagstaff is moved to philosophy.

5/ W. E. Emory, Notes of a Military Reconnaissance from Fort Leavenworth, in Missouri, to San Diego, in California, Senate Executive Document 41, 30th Congress, 1st Session (Washington: Wendell and Van Hartington, 1848), p. 15 (hereafter cited as Emory).
6/ Cooke, loc.cit.
7/ Lewis H. Garrard, Wah-To-Yah and the Taos Trail (Norman: University of Okla. Press, 1955), p. 42, (hereafter cited as Garrard).
8/ Ibid., p. 43
9/ Ibid.

wrote she, "There is no place on Earth I believe where man lives and gambling in some form or other is not carried on."[10] She then recounted its prevalence at the Fort, citing the billiard room, and race track, and concluding that she would not be at all surprised to learn of the existence of a cock pit.[11] Later she had cause to complain of her servants "... gambling off their clothing..." in some unnamed Plaza apart.[12]

Numerous references occur defining equipment for such games of chance. Garrard testified that the Billiard Room did indeed contain a billiard table.[13] That some gentleman customarily carried with him a backgammon board for amusement and/or risk.[14] Burton observed men in the corral (Plaza?) playing with "decks" of "euker" and "seven-up."[15] Horse racing must have been relatively impromptu, with individuals wagering on the prowess of their own mounts. However organized, it was no doubt an expensive and somewhat hazardous amusement, for horses were the primary means of individual transport. A man racing his own mount, risked not only the money he might wager, but also his means of getting from place to place. Replacements were expensive, at least in 1846, when Marcellus Ball Edwards observed that they sold at Bent's Fort for "... thribble their home (Missouri) value."[16]

10/ Stella M. Drumm, ed., Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico, The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1926), p. 61 (hereafter cited as Magoffin).
11/ Ibid.
12/ Ibid., p. 66.
13/ Garrard, p. 43.
14/ Ibid., p. 60
15/ Burton, loc. cit.
16/ Marcellus Ball Edwards, Journal, in Ralph P. Bieber, ed., Marching With the Army of the West (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1936), p. 141, (hereafter cited as Edwards).

The consumption of spirituous liquids in splendid quantities is, of course, classical in the history of the American fur trade. Burton observed that the trappers and mountain men at Bent's Fort indulged in furious orgies "... as long as the liquor lasted, and there was a good supply of alcohol as well as of Taos whiskey."[17] More ceremonious occasions for drinking were found, as well, as Susan Magoffin rather crisply observed in her diary when she noted that her numerous gentlemen callers all drank her health, although it was not good.[18] Entertainment or custom, drinking at Bent's Fort was expensive. Marcellus Bell Edwards, who owned a tender's ring, noted that it sold there for twenty-four dollars a gallon.[19]

Although most often mentioned, drinking and gambling were not the only forms of recreation available on the banks of the Arkansas. Cooke recorded with pleasure the presence of newspapers at the Fort,[20] and Carrard wrote of carrying several books with him, one of them on "heavenly bodies" from Harper's Series of the Family Library.[21] Carrard also documented the presence of at least one apparently respectable personal library at the Fort, which proved more entitling to its owner than an informal dance.[22]

The dance in question was undoubtedly but one of many which enlivened leisure time at the Fort. For this one, the Fort's personnel provided

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17/ Burton, p. 179.
18/ Magoffin, p. 65.
19/ Edwards, p. 140
20/ Cooke, loc. cit.
21/ Carrard, p. 66.
22/ Ibid., p. 74.

but two persons, an Indian woman, and Charlotte, the fort cook. These good ladies must have danced their shoes thin (if they had such) that night, to tunes "... from a screaking violin."[23]

Tobacco also provided relaxation at Bent's Fort, and was present in a wide variety of uses and forms. Clay pipes were much in evidence, being pulled out at every possible opportunity.[24] Kinnikinnik filled them, as well as regular tobacco.[25] Also on hand were Mexican shuck cigarillos and other cigars.[26]

TRADE: The business of Bent's Fort was selling goods and keeping records of such sales. Evidence of the trade would therefore appear in the refurnished Fort in the form of items of the trade itself, and in its supportive paperwork.

Surprisingly few documentary references to the goods of the trade have been encountered. Lewis Garrard has left the best list in his description of goods carried by a peddler-type expedition to the Indian villages. In his party's packs on that occasion were "... tobacco, blue blankets, black (deep blue) blankets, white blankets, knives, and beads."[27]

This list can only represent a portion of the goods of the trade that were available within the walls of Bent's Fort. Edwards'

23/ Ibid.
24/ Garrard, p. 75.
25/ Marmon, p. 160.
26/ Garrard, p. 73, p. 75.
27/ Ibid., p. 50

reference to the price of liquor confirms its availability there.[29] Further evidence can be derived from the assumption that every manufactured article mentioned in connection with the Indians or mountain men had been obtained from trade goods. This approach adds to Garrard's list small bells,[30] shirting,[31] butcher knives,[32] cigars, clay pipes,[33] woolen hats, leather belts, brass-bowled tools, rifles, and Green River knives.[34] Additional research should extend this list considerably.

For such goods, Indians and trappers exchanged buffalo robes and beaver pelts.[35] These two commodities must have been present in great quantities at the Fort much of the time, for, according to Matt Field, they were shipped to St. Louis but twice a year.[36] Burton's observation of Fort employees busy pressing packs of buffalo skins and heating robes in the Fall lends considerable light on the form of their packing as well, perhaps, as on the stage of their processing.[37]

That business records were kept is attested by their documentary survival, as well as by the presence of a "clerk's office" at the

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29/ Hampton, loc. cit.
31/ Parkman, loc. cit.
30/ Garrard, p. 60.
32/ Ibid., p. 72.
33/ Ibid., p. 75.
34/ Ibid., p. 121.
35/ John E. Sunder, ed., Matt Field on the Santa Fe Trail (Norman: University of Okla. Press, 1960), p. 144, (hereafter cited as Field).
36/ Ibid.
37/ Hampton, loc. cit.

fort. No source has been discovered yet, however, which mentions the keeping of account books, pens, pencils, or other logically associated materials. The only reference to the content of the clerk's office at Bent's Fort is Garrard's mention of the "first rate eyeglass" kept there.[37] This object may have been as relevant to the defense of the fort as to the trading operations.

Accommodations. Two classes of accommodations, public and private, were maintained at Bent's Fort. The two classes undoubtedly differed substantially in their equipment.

Susan Magoffin, who might reasonably have been expected to merit luxurious accommodations at the fort, and who certainly had private ones, might have left an account of them. She appears, however, to have been forced to accept a second class room due to a full house, or to have found the "best available" not good enough. In any event her husband saw fit to have her temporary room there divested of its usual furnishings, and fitted with their own. As a result, we know that the Magoffins took a bed, chairs, wash basin, and table furniture to Santa Fe with them, but have not even an indirect reference to the usual contents of her room, were they plain or grand.[38]

Clues of information relative to the content of some of the private rooms can be gleaned from diverse references. Matt Field recounted a story, told him by William Bent, of the death of a Spanish horse

37/ Garrard, p. 43.
38/ Magoffin, p. 61.

guard at the fort. The horse guard had been killed by three Comanche arrows during a raid on the fort's herd. Mr. Bent showed Field the three iron pointed arrows, still bearing bloodstains, and we may assume that such trophies were kept in the bent quarters.39/

Francis Parkman has left a fine description of a private quarters--but at Fort Laramie. Nevertheless, the year of his visit there was 1846, prior Bent time, and the Fort Laramie he visited was Fort John--a walled adobe fur trade post, bearing the operations of a private enterprise. His description is therefore extremely valuable comparative evidence.

The room in question was, Parkman said, the "... best in Fort Laramie ..." usually occupied by "... the highborn Mexicans Fayth, ..." absent at the time. It was "... a large room, rather more elaborately furnished than a barn. For furniture it had a rough bedstead, but no bed; two chairs, a chest of drawers, a tin pail to hold water, and a board to cut tobacco upon. A brass crucifix hung on the wall, and close at hand a recent scalp, with hair a full yard long, was suspended from a nail."40/

Parkman stayed in this room sleeping on buffalo robes spread on the floor.

39/ Field, p. 146.
40/ Francis Parkman, The Oregon Trail (New York: The Modern Library, 1949), p. 94 (hereafter cited as Parkman).

Only one other documentary source contains information which could have bearing on the furnishings of the porter's private quarters. Marcellus Edwards remarked in his journal on the practice of polygamy at the Fort, stating that its owners were also the "... owners of several cisternums each."[41] If true, this circumstance would have produced certain adjustments in their living arrangements.

Women were undoubtedly resident in many of the quarters at Fort's Fort. We may assume that William Fort's Indian wife lived there, and Susan Magoffin wrote of an Indian woman resident in the room below hers, as well as of the Mexican wife of "Mr. Lightenfelter."[42] It would seem likely that in any instance in which a man's wife (and children?) lived at the Fort with him, a private quarters of some kind would have been provided, no matter what his status. Francis Parkman attests this practice at Fort John, and indicates the character of the accommodations as well. He wrote, "Beneath us was the square area surrounded by little rooms, or rather cells, which opened upon it. These were devoted to various purposes, but served chiefly for the accommodation of the men employed at the Fort, or of the equally numerous squaws whom they were allowed to maintain in it."[43]

Such apartments must have been very small, and the rooms in them would have served multiple uses, as did Susan Magoffin's. When she left her temporary home high atop the Fort, she recorded that her

41/ Edwards, p. 139.
42/ Magoffin, I. 62, p. 68.
43/ Parkman, loc. cit.

"... chamber, dining-room, parlour, reception room, etc., etc., ..." was quite desolate.[54]

Any room, grand or mean, which housed a woman would have contained evidence of her presence therein. The only reference secured thus far to the equipment of a fur trade wife is derived from an experience of Susan Magoffin. While waiting for her quarters to be prepared on the evening of her arrival at the Fort, Mrs. Magoffin sat in the "parlor" in company with "other ladies," one of whom spent the time combing her hair, after which she liberally coated it with "... oil or grease of some kind...." contained in a crock. Two objects emerge from this account--equipment for a lady's toilette at Bent's Fort.[55]

The accommodations offered by the Fort to unaccompanied men, itinerants, employees, government teamsters, sick soldiers, miscellaneous trappers and mountain men, etc. consisted mostly of simple chamber. Garrard experienced such quarters. On his arrival at Bent's he was given "... a room, in company with several government teamsters, in which to sleep.[56] Francis Parkman's ludicrous friend, Tete Rouge, had been left at the Fort by the Army of the West because of illness. His sickroom was, according to Parkman, "... a little mud room, where he and a companion, attacked by the same disease, were laid together, with nothing but a buffalo-robe between them and the ground."[57]

54/ Magoffin, p. 70.
55/ Ibid., p. 62.
56/ Garrard, p. 42.
57/ Parkman, p. 298.

Tete Rouge was not the object of discrimination in being required to sleep on a buffalo robe spread on the floor in a Bent's Fort dormitory. Matt Field wrote a delightful verse in praise of Bent's Fort which confirms such sleeping arrangements for sick and well alike.

> "And a Buffalo skin neatly spread,
> In bolster, and blanket, and bedstead and bed.
> In summer time, or in the snow,
> Wrapped in a skin of Buffalo,
> In fair moonlight, or in the storm,
> The Desert Dwellers slumber warm."[48]

References to miscellaneous materials that would have appeared in quarters, public or private, are not numerous. Matt Field's poem contained one line of enormous aid,

> "Boats, coats, ropes, candles, all things flow
> Out of the useful Buffalo."[49]

Coats and ropes made from buffalo robes and skins might be expected to be found in the quarters at Bent's Fort, but the information that the post was lit by candles, made from buffalo tallow, is pure gold.

Garrard throws additional light on the clothing situation in a passage describing his return to the Fort on a winter day. He kept warm on that occasion wearing a "...blue blanket overcoat having a collar ...."[50] In the same sequence he mentioned his personal rifle, and we may be certain that both items reposed for a time in the quarters assigned him at the Fort.

48/ Field, p. 45.
49/ Ibid.
50/ Garrard, p. 71.

Dining facilities at Bent's Fort seem to have been provided in a single large room for all comers, were they expert or bumbs. Nevertheless, we should not rule out the possibility that meals were occasionally served, in certain circumstances, in private quarters. Susan Magoffin appears never to have participated in the Fort mess, but always to have taken her meals in her room.[21] Doubtless there were other times, particularly when the dining company involved an American woman, a visitor intent on conducting important or private business during dinner with a partner, or a man who found either the companionship or cooking of his wife preferable to the comparable offerings provided by the Fort, when tables were laid in private quarters.

In general, however, we should assume that most everybody at Bent's Fort ate in the common dining room. Cooke recounted that a number of officers from his command "... partook of a good dinner at the Fort," and the reference implies that an invitation was not necessary.[22] Actually, the Fort's dining facilities seem to have been open at all times, in the manner of a public restaurant, for Garrard wrote of repairing to "... the long, low dining room ...." to warm and feed himself directly on his arrival at the post after a long cold ride.[23] The fact that Charlotte, the Fort cook, was his company during this repast, indicates that she was at leisure to gossip with him, and not as busy as she surely must have been at regular mealtimes.[24]

21/ Magoffin, p. 70.
22/ Cooke, loc. cit.
23/ Garrard, p. 73.
24/ Ibid.

Equipment for this room may have varied in elegance with the status of the diners currently being seated, but it does not appear to have been primitive from any reference. Farnham ate there at "... a table laid with a white cloth, with castors in the middle and centre placed around it."[22] No sight has been considered a sufficiently special guest to merit a white tablecloth, but the reference to castors in the plural when it certainly be found in the canoe hull at a table of considerable size which was equipped for such elegancies. Gerrard, whose position was rather toward the lower end of the Fort Fort scale, also experienced refinements at this table. He ate there "... with knives, forks and plates."[23]

No documentation has appeared which describes the equipment of the kitchen, but we know much about the food that came out of it. Charlotte was famous for her "slap-jacks and pumpkin pies,"[24] and Gerrard's morning meal after his ride consisted of hot coffee, bread, and "buffalo."[25] Field's poetic praise of the Fort and its buffalo described the limitless variety in which it was prepared:

> "Buffalo tongue, buffalo brisket,
> Roasted, boiled, or stewed or fried,
> Buffalo served in every steak
> For poultry and pastry, for meat & for bread"[26]

Equipment to cook all of these edibles in all of the manners suggested must have been present in the kitchen.

22/ Farnham, p. 230.
23/ Gerrard, p. 42.
24/ Farnham, p. 103.
25/ Gerrard, p. 73.
26/ Field, p. 45.

Cass undoubtedly provided the meaning of the fort that. Burton identified the source of supply then he wrote that "hunters drop in with deer or buffalo meat to supply the fort."[60] Field's poem tells how it was presented at the kitchen, and describes a rather esoteric piece of equipment that might have been in evidence there as well:

> ". . . , all things flew
> Out of the useful buffalo.
> They pack his flesh in his own hide
> Then back to carry the hunters ride.
> They make a bowser of his head
> To knock his fatted hump-ribs off."[61]

Other subsistence supplies were obtained from trade in the field with Fox Mexicans. On Garrard's peddler expedition to the Indian villages, he recorded that his party traded robes and meat (obtained from the Indians) with the Fox Mexicans for dried corn, pumpkin, and beans.[62] This must have been a source of supply for the fort's bread and Charlotte's famous pumpkin pies.

Wildlife: Oddly enough, the only woman who has provided primary material about Historic Bent's Fort, is the only source also for the activity and equipment of its trapper's shops. Her observations about them, based upon their sounds, rather than upon her visits to them, are attributable to her sensitivity to their incessant operation during her illness while at the post.

60/ Burton, p. 100.
61/ Field, pp. 45-46.
62/ Garrard, p. 61.

In an upper room, undergoing a severe physical ordeal, Mrs. Hagerty was moved to write in her diary of the noise in the Plaza, and that attendant to the shoeing of horses, remarking that the "... clang of the blacksmith's hammer was constant."[63]

From this we know that a blacksmith's shop was located at Bent's Fort, and that horses were shod there. A hammer and horseshoes. We should be permitted the conclusion that the shop was fully equipped for its work in the manner of its time.

GENERAL: The Plaza. Most of the visitors or residents at Bent's Fort commented about its Plaza. Their comments, however, were more often descriptive of the quality of life to be found there than of the objects associated with life. As a result, most of the information is useful for furnishing only by inference.

Susan Magoffin did not see it often, and her impressions of it were confined to its noise: "There is the greatest possible noise in the patio. The ..., neighing and braying of mules, the crying of children, the scolding and fighting of men...."[64]

Francis Parkman saw it, that same year, in another mood. Arriving just after the Army of the West had departed, it seemed to him that "... the life and bustle (had) passed away, and the fort was a scene

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63/ Magoffin, p. 66, p. 69.
64/ Magoffin, p. 66.

of dull and lazy tranquility. A few invalid officers and soldiers ventured about the area, which was oppressively hot; for the glaring sun was reflected down upon it from the high white walls around.[65]

Bartou observed it in yet another guise. Although calling it "the corral," there can be no doubt but that he was describing the fiesta when he wrote of cowherders gambling there, of "... cowboys pressing packs of buffalo skins, beating robes ...," and of "... Indian squaws, wives of cowboys too, chattering about in all the pride of beads and feathers, jingling with bells and bugles, and happy as paint can make them." It was into this scene that Indian and the hunters rode ... "... with deer and buffalo meat to supply the fort, ..."[66]

Barnard alone was fit to mention objects. "In the center of the court is the 'robe group' and lying on the ground was a small brass cannon, burst in saluting General Kearney."[67]

65/ Kennedy, p. 201.
66/ Bartou, p. 100.
67/ Barnard, p. 43.

B. Material of Furniture Made and Used Relative to Furnishing

The architectural style of Bent's Fort reflected a melding of the medieval fortified castle with the native Pueblo architecture and Spanish influence of the Southwest. This mingling of the styles and tastes of Western Culture with those of the Spain and the American Indian was no doubt reflected strongly in its furnishings, but not for the sake of taste or aesthetic symmetry. Rather, a black walnut chair from St. Louis would have been found there, standing upon a buffalo robe, with a chest made by craftsmen in Santa Fe behind it, for reasons attributable to property, economics, and simple practicality.

The location and business of Bent's Fort made it inevitable that its equipment should come from both the United States and Santa Fe. The partners were chiefly St. Louisans, and would have thought of fashionable design styles in terms of those fashionable in the States. Whenever they wanted something truly nice or especially elegant, or something of sophisticated manufacture, they very great wagons no doubt brought it out from Missouri. On the other hand, the freight hauled from Missouri was the paying load, and as hard-headed business men they could have been loath to relinquish space for items producing goods to any but the most intensely wanted or needed things, or objects intended for some especially discerning person. An example of this is to be found in the Victorian couch

William Bent had brought from St. Louis for a daughter, [illegible] which is now owned by the State Historical Society of Colorado.

Wagons from Santa Fe, however, frequently rolled empty into Bent's Fort, where they picked up loads of robes and furs. Trade in furs is returned mostly silver to the partners. It would therefore seem likely that a great quality of the Fort's more utilitarian, or bulky equipment came from New Mexico, if it was available there, hauled back in wagons otherwise carrying very little.

Purely modern objects, equipment and dress for the average man at the post were probably made at the site by craftsmen using materials readily available from trade goods or the natural environment of the region. Doubtless, too, many needed objects or garments were obtained from the Indians or patterned after Indian forms.

Cooke observed that Spanish was the prevailing language at Bent's Fort, "... but with English, French, and Indian additions and combinations, there is no slight confusion of tongues."[1] There was, without question, no slight confusion of taste and style as well.

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[1] Cooke, loc. cit.

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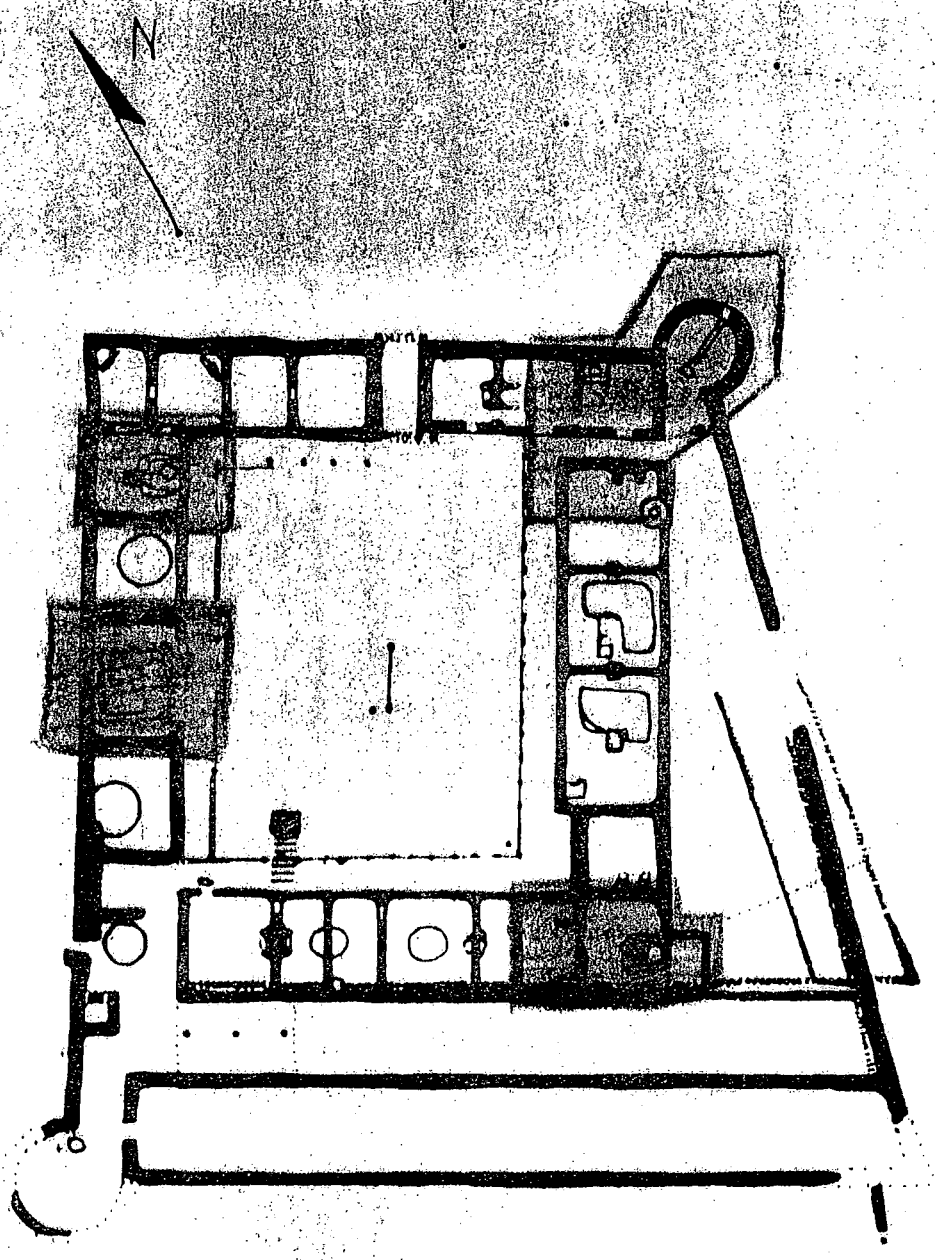
EXHIBITION DATA

E. EXCAVATION DATA

In reconstructing Bent's Old Fort, it has been planned to preserve for exhibition and interpretation, certain portions of the original fort foundations, now excavated. This plan is discussed in the Interpretive Prospectus (pp. 24-25).

The preservation and exhibition of foundation remains will, of course, preclude the use of the room in which they are located for refurnishing.

The plan on the following page indicates areas of the excavated foundations which are well preserved, and of sufficient interest, to merit consideration for exhibition and interpretation. These areas are currently protected by shelters.



Plan of Fort, Trash Dump, & Corral Areas

Scale: 1 inch equals 40 feet

PLATE I.

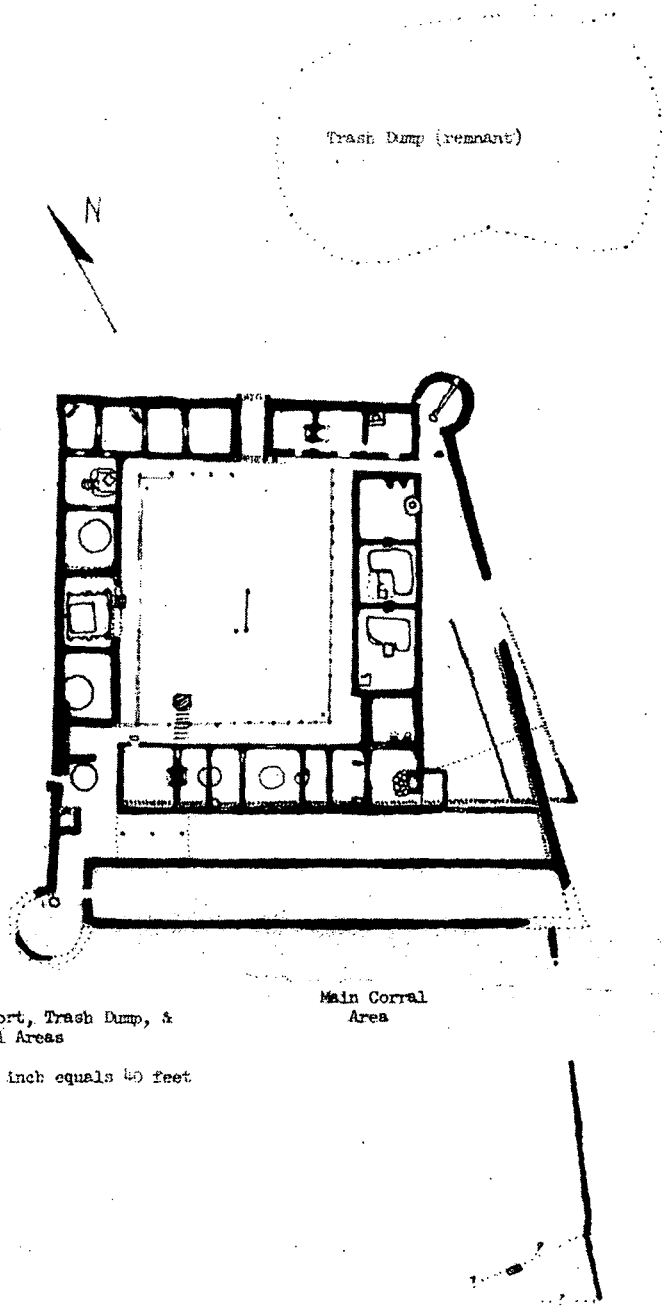
Locations of Foundation Ruins Being Considered for Exhibition and Interpretation Bent's Old Fort

January 3, 2008

Good Morning, Catherine,

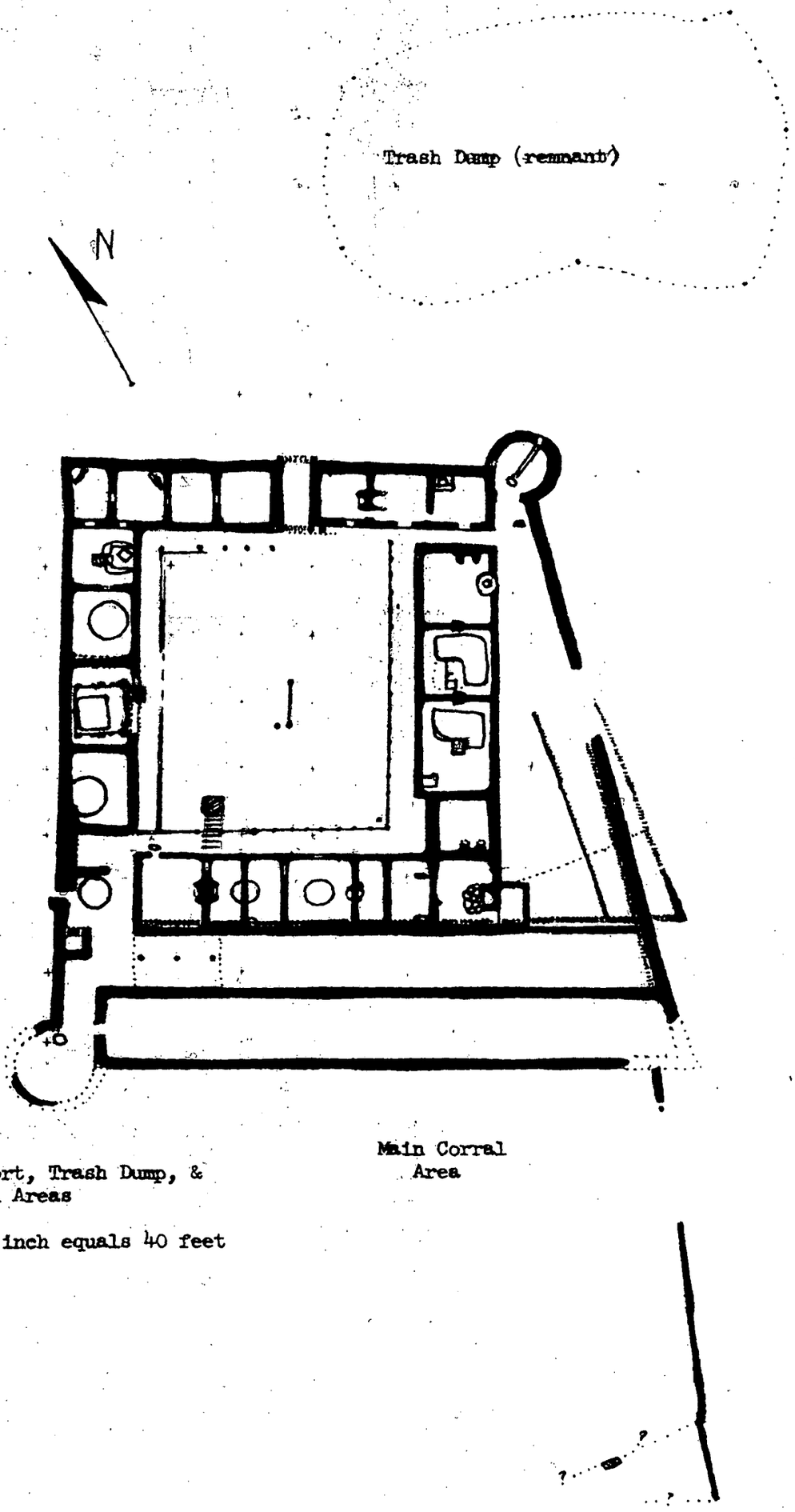
I think it important to bring to your attention that page 264 of the .pdf was originally printed on a legal-size 8 ½" X 14" sheet. Consequently, when it was resized to 8 ½" X 11", the caption "Scale: 1 inch equals 40 feet" becomes misinformation. I have enclosed a small page, as printed from the .pdf and a copy of the original size to illustrate this.

Sylvia Cox
MWAC Library
Lincoln, Nebraska



Plan of Fort, Trash Dump, & Corral Areas

Scale: 1 inch equals 50 feet



Plan of Fort, Trash Dump, &
Corral Areas

Scale: 1 inch equals 40 feet