FURNISHING A MEAL: DATA SECTION

by

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ATTENTION:

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A. 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 neighbors for use in their own buildings during the Cattle Period, 1851-1861. Such cannibalizing no doubt included wooden elements of the Fort such as door and window frames, as well as adobe. Theoretically, then, 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, could make such a search for original
undertake a difficult 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 relevant 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 rooms.

Evidence of heating devices on the second story is, of course, not obtainable from archeological evidence save for the single instance in W5, where a thick wall at the ground level indicates support for a fireplace on the floor above in Room U5. 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 U5 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 abort drawing (Plate VII), located at the north end of the west second-story structure, as well as for the two chimney-lip elements abutting what appears to be the billiard room in both the Hughes and Dunn 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 55, 92A, and 92, may produce the conclusion that windows were glazed rather than having been covered with such frontier expedients as oiled paper or hanging 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 seem not only incongruous, but also impractical.

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

Walls appear to have been coated with plaster or whitewash almost
throughout. Three colors predominated: white, yellow, and red.\footnote{The designation of plaster or whitewash used has followed the
term used in the Archaological Section. It seems likely that the
substance referred to would be the coat throughout the structures:
an unknown lime coating, rather thicker than whitewash, but thinner
than plaster, resembling most a plaster finish coat.}

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Historic Use</th>
<th>Floor</th>
<th>Walls</th>
<th>Color</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Trade Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>Trade Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Trade Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Cook's Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>Yellow/Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Dining Room</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Keeper, Council Room</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Room</td>
<td>Historic Use</td>
<td>Floor</td>
<td>Walls</td>
<td>Color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031A</td>
<td>Kitchen-Pantry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Whitewash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>031</td>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Servant's Quarters</td>
<td>Plaster—as</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Servant's Quarters</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Blacksmith Shop</td>
<td>Plaster—</td>
<td></td>
<td>White/Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Blacksmith Shop</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Carpenter Shop</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Carpenter Shop</td>
<td>Whitewash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td>Gray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Storage (Pit/Basement)</td>
<td>Plaster</td>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Storage</td>
<td></td>
<td>Gray</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adobe brick</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rooms 03 and 07 both yielded fragments of "burned or burned impressions in a white matrix." This evidence should be studied further in the course of refurnishing planning, as it may indicate walls to which burned wax applied, having a plaster finish washed over. This was a common practice in the 19th century (and well into the 20th) to cover cracks and otherwise conceal wall blanishes, although the fabric most often used was muslin, canvas, or even gauze. During any only
have been the "best available" at Bent's Fort. It should be noted that, in elegant homes where impeccable wall finishes were desired, 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 cooperative 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 501, 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, 501, had floor plastering is difficult to say. Probably used by partner St. Vrain (see Briggs, 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 1841 "several times during the day" probably speaks for the floors in the entire west section.

OTHER ARCHEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF INTERIOR TREATMENT & FEATURES: Furnishings 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-1859 glazed fireplace tile found in the basement section of WA. 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 solitary 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 provokes 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 SH, (2) the cells in W3 and W2, and (3) the slot-like floor depressions made by halved logs laid flatside up in W3 and W5.

CULTURAL OBJECTS: 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 Archaeologist 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 archaeological project. The recovered specimens should also be studied carefully during research for the furnishing report.

Archaeological finds indicating cultural objects in use at Bent's Fort during its primary period, are charted below to provide reference to the furnishing 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 archaeological 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 E7, have not been tabulated. They could represent a wide variety of objects and study of the specimen will be necessary to reach a conclusion.
### Reassembling These: 1st Boro
Possible Installation: Blended Base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test tubes</td>
<td>2h, 3g, trash can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic tubing</td>
<td>2h, 3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray plastic</td>
<td>2h, 3g, trash can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige (charred foam)</td>
<td>2h, 3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>2h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>2h</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red (charred foam)</td>
<td>2h, 3g, trash can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red (charred foam)</td>
<td>2h, 3g, trash can</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reassembling These: 2nd Boro
Possible Installation: Stacked Foam (31, 31, 31); Clerk’s Office (30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stack pieces of wood</td>
<td>31, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray shot</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spherical lead</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding knife (black foam)</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charcoal mix (black and light foam)</td>
<td>31, trash can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart-shaped foam</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart-shaped foam</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenfoam</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth (charred fiber)</td>
<td>31, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth (charred fiber)</td>
<td>31, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenfoam</td>
<td>31, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenfoam</td>
<td>31, 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beige</td>
<td>31, 33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refurbishing Time: 

Possible Installation: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spent lead bullets</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper bullet core</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black transfer printed earthcore</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primer flash (cable)</td>
<td>38 Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoulder core (stock and hardware Stock)</td>
<td>54, trash dump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Round nose cone</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth (shaped piece Stock)</td>
<td>54, 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brake bands (on approval)</td>
<td>54, 53, 52, 55, 56, trash dump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine, whiskey bottle</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay pipe</td>
<td>53, trash dump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics of 1985-90</td>
<td>53, 54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Refurnishing Theme: SUBURBAN
Possible Installation: Kitchen (85, 86A); Dining Room (63)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper inkless ware</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black transfer printed</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthenware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloth (chamfer piece faced)</td>
<td>85, 85A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pots and pans</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint, whiskey bottles</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern churn, wood lathe</td>
<td>85, 85A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch 1-gallon stoneware cistern</td>
<td>85A, 85A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay pipe</td>
<td>85, trash dump</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics of 1825-50</td>
<td>85, 85A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper inkless white</td>
<td>86A, 86A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthenware</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Refurnishing Theme: MAINEWARE
Possible Installation: Blacksmith (85, 85A); Carpenter Shop, (86, 87)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron anvil head</td>
<td>85A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Square pieces of iron/iron</td>
<td>85, 85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron hardware</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron wheel hub parts</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossbow</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spade</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrels</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Refurnishing Team: CHEMCO.
Possible Installation: The Floors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Recovery Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron sizo-head</td>
<td>GEA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spade</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fur press</td>
<td>Floors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. DOCUMENTARY REFERENCES TO SANTA FE PRODUCTS

All documentary sources listed as primary in the Historical Data Section that were available to this office have been consulted. Some have been verified, with research remaining to be executed in fourteen. Ten secondary sources have also been searched. Arrangements should be made as soon as possible to begin furnishing research in those primary materials not yet consulted, and in synopsis, 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 these headings planned for interpretation at Santa Fe Post.

NOTE: The bastions and watchtowers at Bent’s Fort were noted by many of the visitors, and several commented favorably on the flag of the United States flying above the entrance gate. Ruston mentioned the flag two or three times, and Johnston also provided details of its size and color. He wrote that he saw "... a huge United

States flag flapping to the breeze, and straining every fibre of an ash pole planted over the center of the gate.\(^2\)

The Fort was armed, it is certain, with small artillery. Cresson noted that his approach to the post was "... saluted by three discharges from a naval gun ..." while Carrard located "... a few cannon ..." in the bastions.\(^3\) Carrard observed, also, a small brass cannon lying on the ground in the Plaza, which had been burst "... in saluting General Kearny."\(^3\) This gun would have been in use prior to 1846.

Carrard 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 held enemy, ten years old. One of these was killed during the period of his visit (1847).\(^3\)

**RECREATION:** If we may judge by contemporary references, recreation at Bent's Fort during the period of its climb revolved chiefly around two rather sturdy pastimes: drinking and gambling. Gambling was so much in evidence that Susan Ray Dun was moved to philosophy.


\(^3\) Carrard, loc. cit.


\(^5\) Ibid., p. 43

\(^6\) 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." She then re-
counted its prevalence at the fort, citing the billiard room, and
race track, and concluding that she could not be at all surprised to
learn of the existence of a cock pit. Later she had cause to
complain of her servants "... gambling off their clothing..." in
some named Place apart. 

Numerous references occur defining equipment for such games of chance.
Garrard testified that the Billiard Room did indeed contain a billiard
table, that some gentlemen customarily carried with him a back-
gammon board for amusement and/or risk. Buton observed men in
the corral (Plaza?) playing with "dices" of "eiker" and "seven-up." Horse racing must have been relatively impromptu, with individuals
wagering on the process 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 Bell Edwards observed that they sold at
Bent's Fort for "... thirble their horses (Missouri) value."

10/ Stella M. Bruzzi, ed., Down the Santa Fe Trail and Into Mexico,
The Diary of Susan Shelby Magoffin (New Haven: Yale University Press,
11/ Ibid.
12/ Ibid., p. 65.
13/ Garrard, p. 57.
14/ Ibid., p. 60
15/ Buton, loc. cit.
16/ Marcellus Bell Edwards, Journal, in Ralph P. Biecher, ed., Sarting
With the Army of the West (Glendale: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1950),
The consumption of alcoholic liquids in splendid quantities is, of course, classical in the history of the American Fur Trade. Auntie observed that the trappers and 卐mains men at Bent's Fort indulged in various orgies "... as long as the liquor lasted, and there was a good supply of alcohol as well as of fine whiskey."17/ Some exceptions to this rule for drinking were found, as well, as Susan Magoffin rather grudgingly observed in her diary that she noted that her various gentles-
man callers all drank her health, although it was not good.18/ Entertain-
ment or leisure, drinking at Bent's Fort was expensive. Marcellus Boll Edwards, who owned a bachelor's mind, noted that it sold there for twenty-five 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 Garrott wrote of carrying several books with him, one of them an "heavenly bodies" from Harper's Garden of the Faculty Library.21/ Garrott also mentions the presence of at least one apparently respectable personal library at the Fort, which proved most enticing to the men other than an informal dance.22/

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

17/ Cooke, p. 179.
18/ Magoffin, p. 65.
19/ Diodati, p. 140.
20/ Cooke, loc. cit.
21/ Garrott, p. 63.
22/ Ibid., p. 74.
but too portentous, as Indian vases, and Charlotte, the Fort cash.
These good Indians must have danced their heads thin (if they had
such) that night, to have "... from a smoking visit," 29/

Tobacco also provided relaxation at Bent's Fort, and was present
in a wide variety of uses and forms. Clay pipes were such in
evidence, being pulled out at every possible opportunity. 30/ Khadi
- khalmi filled them, as well as regular tobacco. 31/ Also on hand were
Mexican smoke cigarettes and other sigars. 32/

TABLE: 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. Louis Giddings has left the best list in
his incursions 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." 33/

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

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29/ "Indian"
30/ Giddings, p. 75.
31/ Bent's, p. 100.
32/ Giddings, p. 73; p. 75.
33/ "Indian", p. 19
reference to the price of liquor confines its availability there. 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 Comstock’s list: small bell, liquor, whisky, butcher knives, cigars, clay pipes, wolves hats, beaver hats, brass-headed tacks, rifles, and cross river knives. Additional research should extend this list considerably.

For such goods, Indians and trappers exchanged buffalo robes and beaver pelts. These two commodities must have been present in great quantities at the fort each of the time, for according to David Field, they were shipped to St. Louis but twice a year. Barton’s observation of Fort employee buying dressing goods of buffalo skins and beaver robes in the form used considerable light on the form of their packing as well, perhaps, as on the stages of their processing.

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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References:

10/ Comstock, loc. cit.
11/ Barton, loc. cit.
12/ Comstock, p. 69.
13/ Field, p. 70.
14/ Ibid., p. 79.
15/ Field, p. 121.
17/ Ibid.
18/ Ibid., loc. cit.
Fort. No cause has been discovered yet, however, which mentions the keeping of account books, plans, patents, or other logically associated materials. The sole reference to the conduct of the clerk's office at Bent's Fort is Gannett's mention of the "First rate epigrams" kept there.37/ This object may have been as relevant to the defense of the Fort as to the trading operations.

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

Bent's Rogatino, who might reasonably have been expected to enjoy 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 was fit to have her temporary room there furnished with its usual furnishings, and fitted with their own. As a result, we know that the Rogatino 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, even they plain or grand.38/

Check of information relative to the content of some of the private rooms can be gleaned from chance references. Matt Field recounts a story, told him by Millen Bent, of the death of a Spanish horse

37/ Gannett, p. 45.
38/ Rogatino, p. 61.
guard at the Fort. The horse guard had been killed by three Comanche arrows during a raid of the Fort's land. Mr. Bent showed Field the three iron-pointed arrows, still bearing bloodstains, and so my assume that such trophies were kept in the Fort 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 for trade post, housing the operations of a private enterprise. His description is therefore extremely valuable comparitive evidence.

The room in question was, Parkman said, the "... best in Fort Laramie ..." usually occupied by "... the rightmost homesteader. ..." about at the time. It was "... a large room, rather more elaborate 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.
Only one other documentary source contains information which would have bearing on the furnishings of the partners' private quarters. Marceline Desbordes remarked in her [text], on the practice of polygamy at the Fort, stating that its owners were also the "... owners of several mistresses each." If true, this circumstance would have produced certain adjustments in their living arrangements.

Some were undoubtedly resident in any of the quarters at Fort's Fort. To my guess that William Beck's Indian wife lived there, and Susan Magoffin wrote of an Indian woman resident in the room below hers, as well as of the Indian wife of "Mr. Lightfoot." 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 that his status.

Francis Pardee attests this practice at Fort John, and indicates the character of the accommodations as well. He wrote, "Beck's was a one square room 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 women that they were allowed to maintain in it." Such apartments must have been very small, and the space in them would have served multiple uses, as did Susan Magoffin's. Then she left her temporary home high atop the Fort, she recorded that her

52/ Magoffin, p. 62, p. 68.
53/ Pardee, loc. cit.
"... shelter, dining-room, parlor, reception room, etc., etc.,
..." was quite adequate.  

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

The accommodations offered by the Fort to unaccompanied men, itinerants, employees, government traders, sick soldiers, miscellaneous trappers and mountain men, etc. consisted mostly of simple shelter. Coward experienced such quarters. On his arrival at Bent's he was given "... a mat, in company with several government traders, in which to sleep." Francis Parkman's intimate friend, John Hays, had been left at the Fort by the way of the West because of illness.

His illness was, according to Parkman, "... a little and rose, there he and a companion, attacked by the same disease, were laid together, with nothing but a buffalo robe between them and the ground."
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 were." 49/

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,

"Sacks, coats, ropes, candles, all things flow  
Out of the useful Buffalo." 50/

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.

49/ Field, p. 47.  
50/ Ibid.  
50/ Garrard, p. 71.
Dining facilities at Fort's Fort seem to have been provided in a single large room for all officers, even they expect or inside. Nevertheless, we should not rule out the possibility that meals were occasionally served in certain circumstances, in private quarters. Such Magnolia appears never to have participated in the Fort near, but always to have taken her meals in her room. Positions there were other times, particularly when the dining company involved an American agent, a visitor intent on conducting important or private business during dinner with a partner, or a man she found either the company or cooking of his wife preferable to the comparable offerings provided by the Fort, even tables were laid in private quarters.

In general, however, we should assume that most everybody at Fort'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 no invitation was not necessary. Actually, the Fort's dining facilities seem to have been open all times, in the manner of a public restaurant, for Gibbons wrote of repairing to "... the long, low dining room ...." to warn and feed himself directly on his arrival at the post after a long cold ride. The fact that Charlotte, the Fort cook, was his company during this report, indicates that she was at leisure to gossip with him, and not as busy as she surely must have been at regular mealtimes.
Equipment for the room may have varied in elegance with the status of the dines currently being seated, but it does not appear to have been primitive from any reference. Farrar ate there on "... a table laid with a white cloth, with covers in the middle and chairs placed around it." As might have been considered a sufficiently special guest to merit a white tablecloth, but the reference to covers in the plural makes it certain he dined in the common hall at a table of considerable size which was equipped for such elegance. Corrand, whose position was rather toward the inner end of the Great Fort walls, also experienced refinements at this table. He ate there "... with knives, forks and plates."

As 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 "slip-jacks and pumpkin pies," and Corrand's morning meal after his ride consisted of hot coffee, bread, and "butter." Field's pastoral praise of the fort and its buffalo described the limited variety in which it was prepared:

"Buffalo flesh, buffalo dried, roasted, boiled, or stewed or fried, buffalo served in every stew.
For poultry and pastry, for meat & for bread.""
One undoubtedly provided the naming of the Fort itself.  Robert
identified the source of supply when he wrote that "Hence drop
in with deer or buffalo meat to supply the Fort."  Field's
poem tells how it was prevented at the kitchen, and describes a
rather curious piece of equipment that might have been in evidence
there as well:

"... all things shine
Out of the smoke buffalo,
They eat his flesh in his own hide
Then what to say the untamed rite.
They saw a lens of his head
To knock his furred humpside off."  

Other subsistence supplies were obtained from trade in the field
with the Senecas.  On Cuvard's earlier expedition to the Indian
villages, he recorded that his party traded robes and meat (obtained
from the Senecas) with the Senecas for dried corn, potatoes,
and beans.  This must have been a source of supply for the Fort's
bake and Charlotte's famous pomegranate pie.

Oddly enough, the only source she has provided primary
material about historic Fort's Fort, in the only source also for the
activity and equipment of the artisans' shops.  Her observations
about them, based upon their samples; rather than upon her visits
to them, are attributable to her sensitivity to their incipient
creation during her illness while at the post.

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Field, p. 100.
Field, p. 12-16.
Cuvard, p. 64.
In an upper room, undergoing a severe physical ordeal, Mrs. Magoffin was moved to write in her diary of the noise in the plaza, and that attendant to the shoing of horses, remarking that the "... clang of the blacksmith's hammer was constant."  

From this we know that a blacksmith's shop was located near the 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 the 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 noises in the patio. The ..., neighing and braying of mules, the crying of children, the scolding and fighting of men...."  

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 there, the life and bustle (and) passed away, and the fort was a scene  

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[69] Magoffin, p. 66.
of dull and lazy tranquility. A few invalid officers and soldiers sauntered about the area, which was oppressively hot for the glaring sun was reflected down upon it from the high white walls.

Hunter observed it in yet another guise. Although calling it "the court," there can be no doubt that he was describing the times when he wrote of circumstances guiding there, of "... employees pressing packs of buffalo hides, beating them ..." and of "... Indian squaws, wives of captains and soldiers, dancing about in all the pride of beads and feathered, playing with buffalo and bugles, and happy as their plans can make them." It was into this scene that Hunter saw the hunters coming: "... with deer and buffalo meat to supply the fort. ..."

General alone was fit to mention objects. "In the center of the court is the 'cave green,' and lying on the ground was a small brass cannon, burst in saluting General Kearny."
D. ARCHITECTURAL TRENDS AND FACTORS INFLUENT TO FORTS

The architectural style of Bent’s Fort reflected a melding of the Mediterranean fortified castle with the native Arapahoe architecture and Spanish influence of the Southwest. This melding of the styles and tastes of Western culture with those of the Spaniards and the American Indians was so closely reflected strongly in its for- mulations, but not for the sake of taste or aesthetic opacity. Rather, a blend similar to that from St. Louis would have been found there, standing upon a buffalo robe, with a chest made by crafts- men in Santa Fe behind it, for reasons attributable to geography, economics, and simple pragmatism.

The location and business of Bent’s Fort made it inevitable that its equipment should come from both the United States and Santa Fe. His partners were chiefly St. Louisians, and would have thought of desirable design styles in terms of those familiar to them in the Indies. Whenever they needed something truly nice or especially elegant, or something of sophisticated manufacture, their great waren no doubt brought it out from Missouri. On the other hand, the design bought from Missouri was the paying lead, and an hard- headed business man they would have been loath to relinquish space for income producing goods to say but the most intensely needed or needed things, or objects intended for use specially classified person. An example of this is to be found in the Victorian coach.
William Beck had brought from St. Louis for a daughter, one which is now owned by the State Historical Society of Colorado.

Visions from Santa Fe, however, frequently called upon into Bent's Fort, where they picked up loads of robes and furs. Trade in Santa Fe consisted mostly silver in the past, but it would therefore seem likely that a great quantity of the Fort's commodities, or bulky equipment came from the Indies, if it was available there, loaded back in visions otherwise carrying very little.

Similarly similar objects, equipment and dresser 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. Pottery, too, may needed objects or garments were obtained from the Indies or patterned after Indian forms.

Cook 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." There was, without question, no slight confusion of taste and style as well.


In reconstructing Fort'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. 51-55).

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

The plan on the following page indicates areas of the excavated foundation 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 1/2" X 14" sheet. Consequently, when it was resized to 8 1/2" 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, Main Corral Area
Scale: 1 inch equals 20 feet
Plan of Fort, Trash Dump, & Corral Areas

Scale: 1 inch equals 40 feet