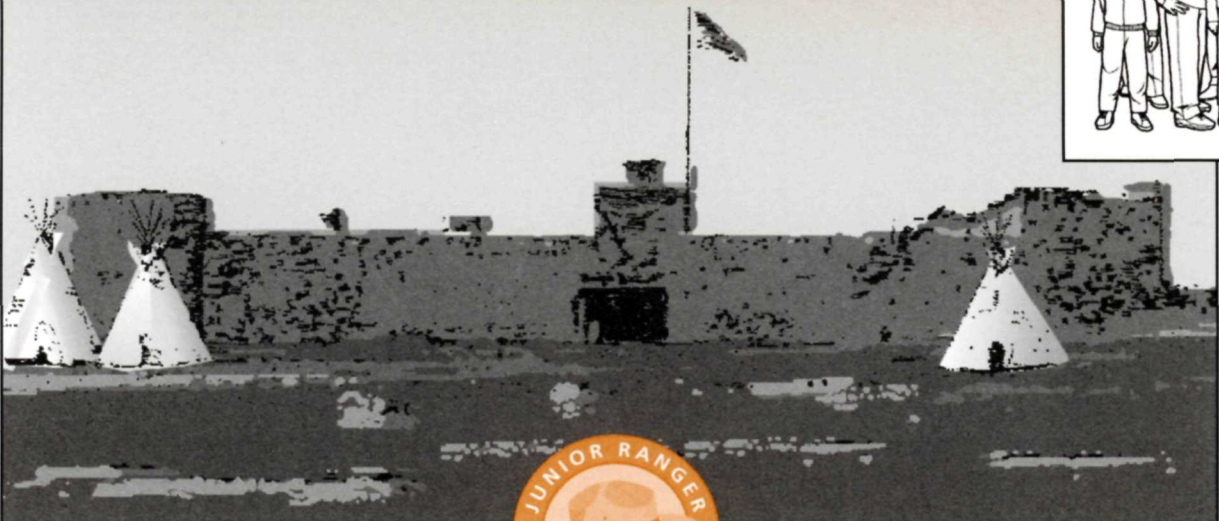
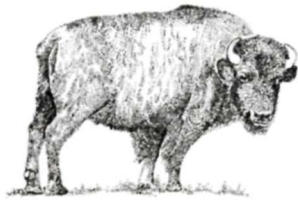


Bent's Old Fort

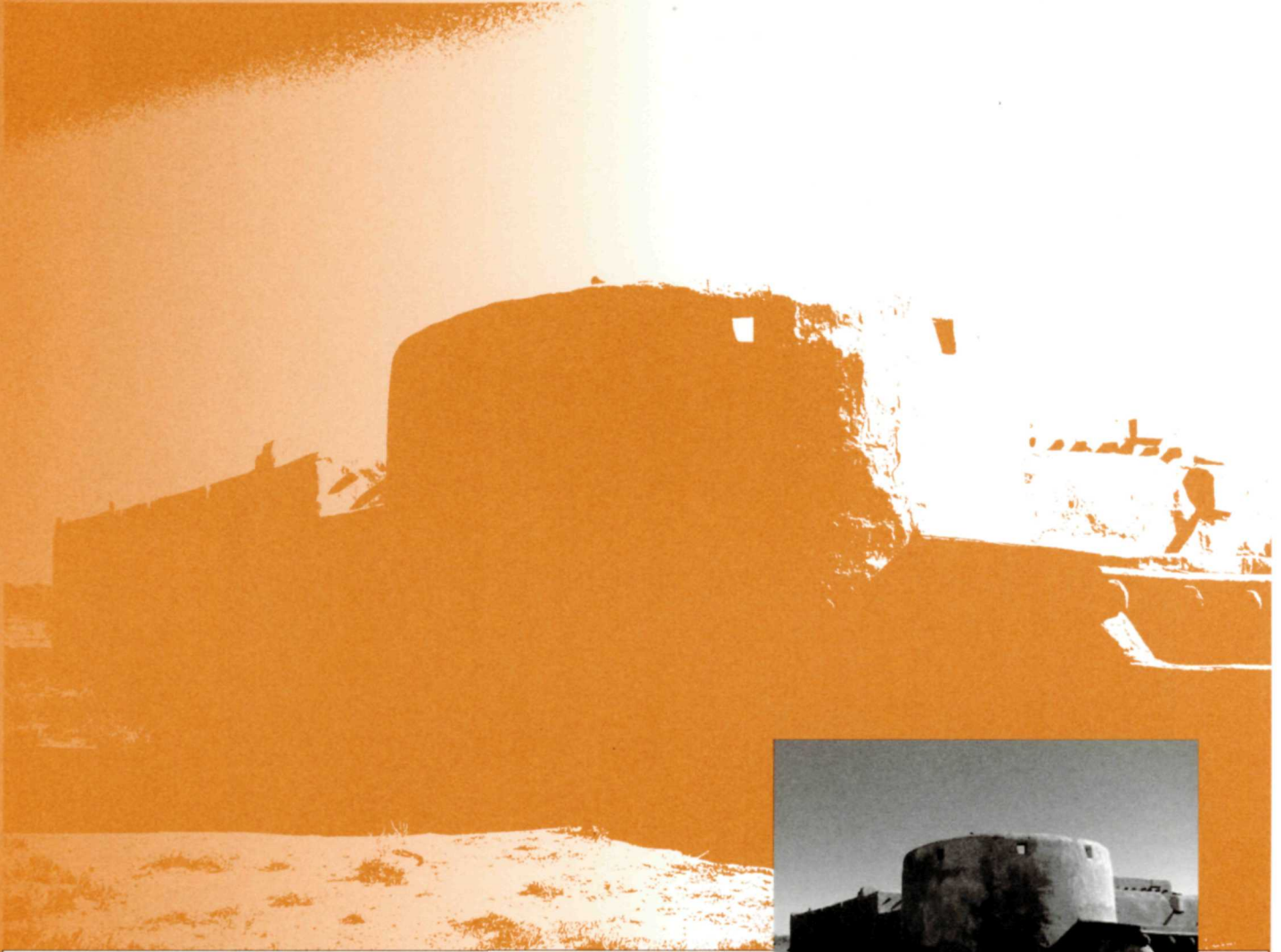
National Historic Site





You'll find our national parks all across the United States, from the cold coast of Alaska to the swampy tip of Florida. Many parks offer visitors the chance to become a Junior Ranger. With the program, you'll discover each park's wild beauty and colorful human history. You'll even receive a special badge or pin. The more parks you visit, the more Junior Ranger badges and pins you can collect.

So get out your walking shoes, your water bottle, and your sun hat... it's time to go exploring!



Did You Know?

DID YOU KNOW: A buffalo robe might be traded for 2 gallons of corn, 3 to 4 pounds of sugar, 2 pounds coffee, or one hank of beads.

DID YOU KNOW: At least seven different languages were spoken at Bent's Old Fort.

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

JUNIOR RANGER GUIDE

Discovering Bent's Old Fort



In the early 1800s, people living and traveling in the American West needed supplies from the East to help them survive. At the same time, people in the East were eager to acquire resources from the West. Three men saw this

situation as an opportunity. Brothers William and Charles Bent, and their friend Ceran St. Vrain, built a large trading post on the site where you stand now. Here people from many cultures came together to exchange goods.

Bent's Old Fort became a booming business for the Bents and St. Vrain. It also grew into a bustling regional center.

This guide contains many activities to help you learn about the people, animals, and activities that made Bent's Old Fort such a fascinating place. You can work alone or with other kids or adults. Just show or send your completed guide to a Park Ranger and they'll give you a Bent's Old Fort junior ranger badge.

If you are 7 years old or under, do five activities.
If you are 8 to 10 years old, do six activities.
If you are 11 or older, please do all the activities.

Did You Know?

The original Bent's Old Fort was abandoned and burned in 1849.

The site was little more than a mound of dirt until the fort was reconstructed in 1976.

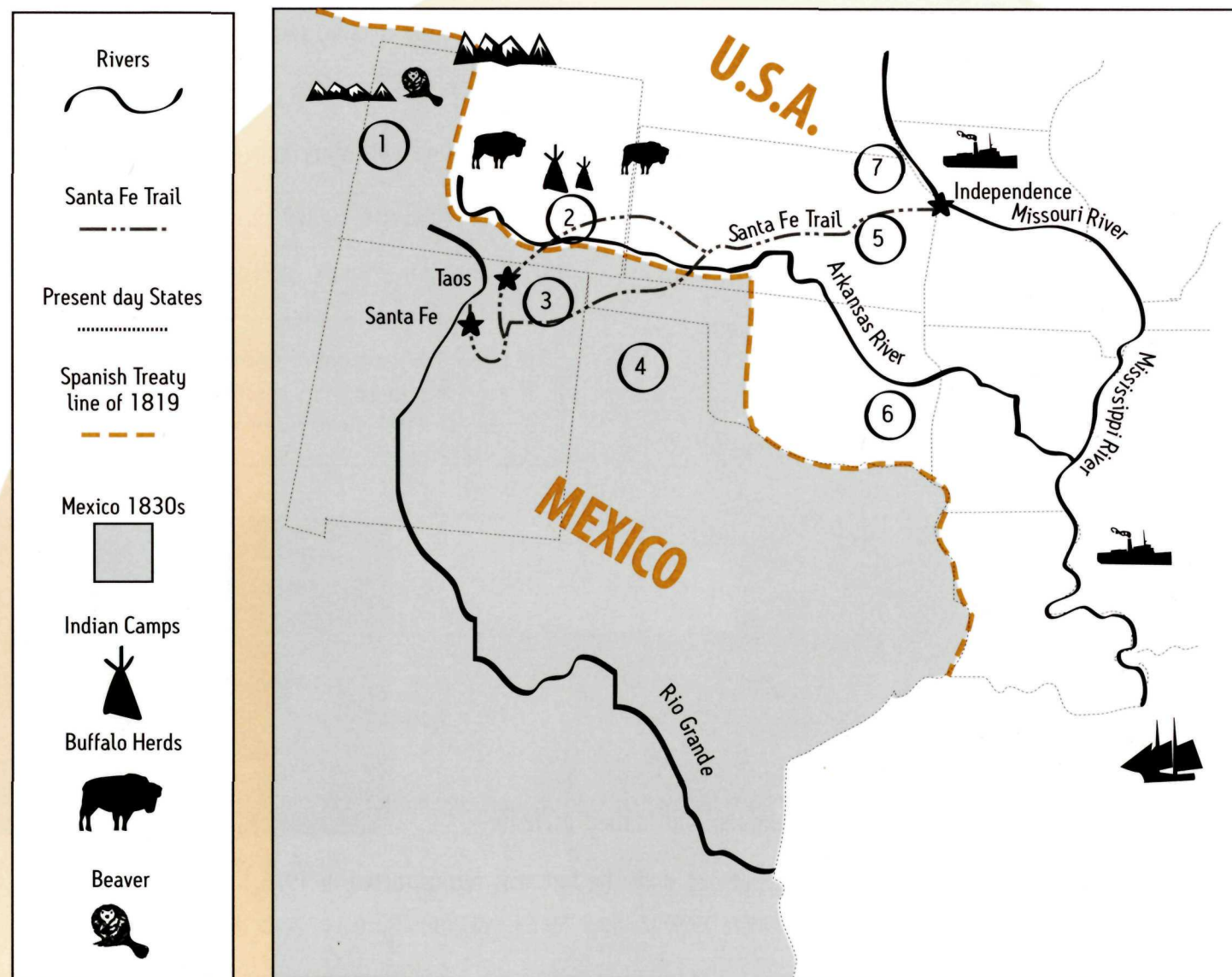


Where to Build?

1

Imagine you are a trader out West in 1833 with William and Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain. You want to build a new trading post. Where can you place it so you can attract the most trade?

How do you decide? Maybe you could look at a map and start drawing circles on it where you might want to build a trading post. See the numbered circles on the map here and think about the questions on the opposite page. Cross out six circles that won't show the best location. The one remaining is the best location for Bent's Old Fort.



Did You Know?

In trapper lingo, coffee was "black water," children were "pups," hair was a "top knot," and a stomach was your "meatbag."

1. Would you try to build it close to the buffalo herds and the people who hunted them? Why?

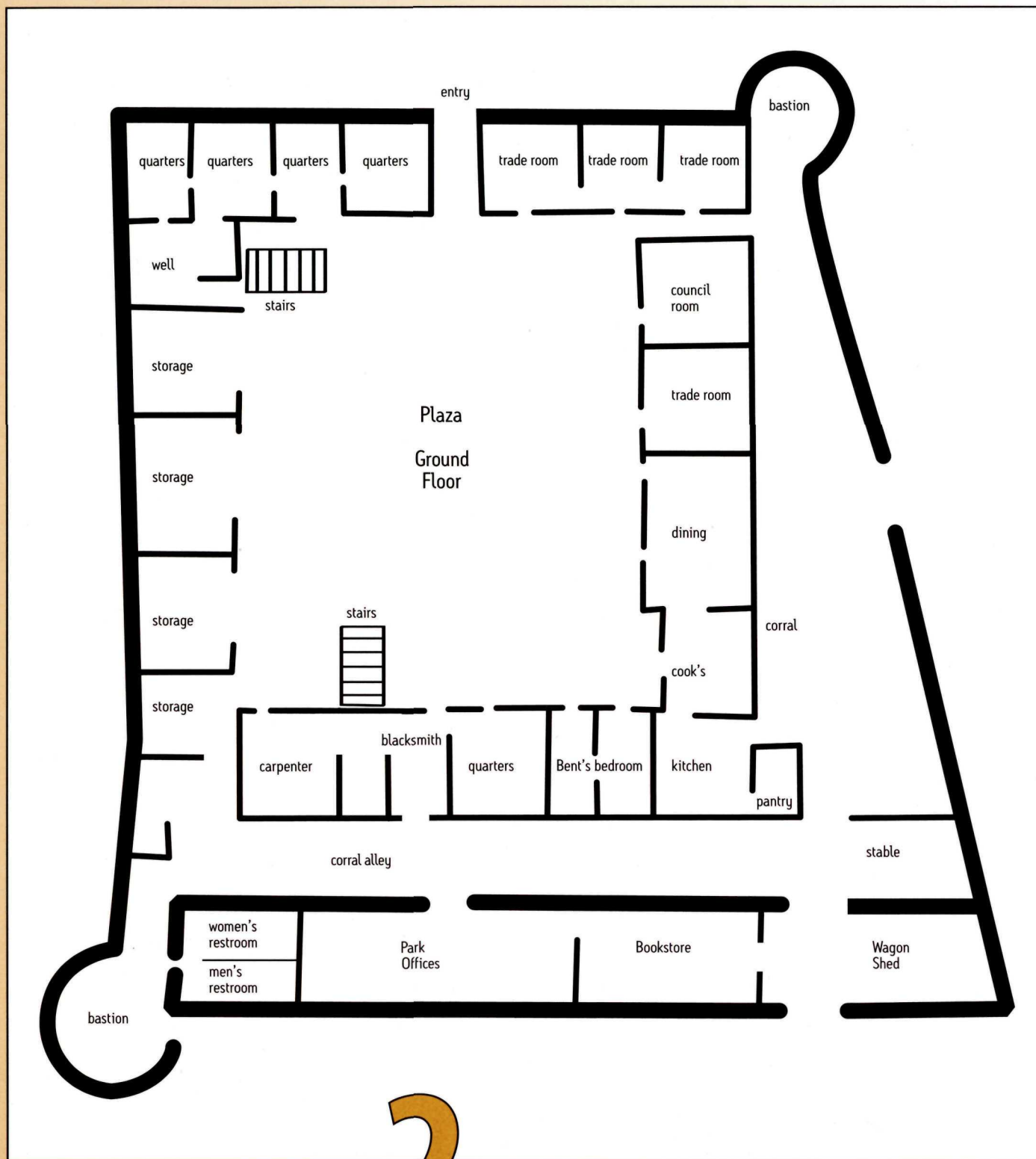
2. Would you try to build near the Santa Fe Trail, the main road to big towns back East? Why?

3. Would it be a good idea to place it in the Rocky Mountains? Why not?

4. How about placing it next to a river, like the Arkansas? What advantages would that have?

5. Could you build it in Mexico, which at the time was just across the Arkansas River? Why not?

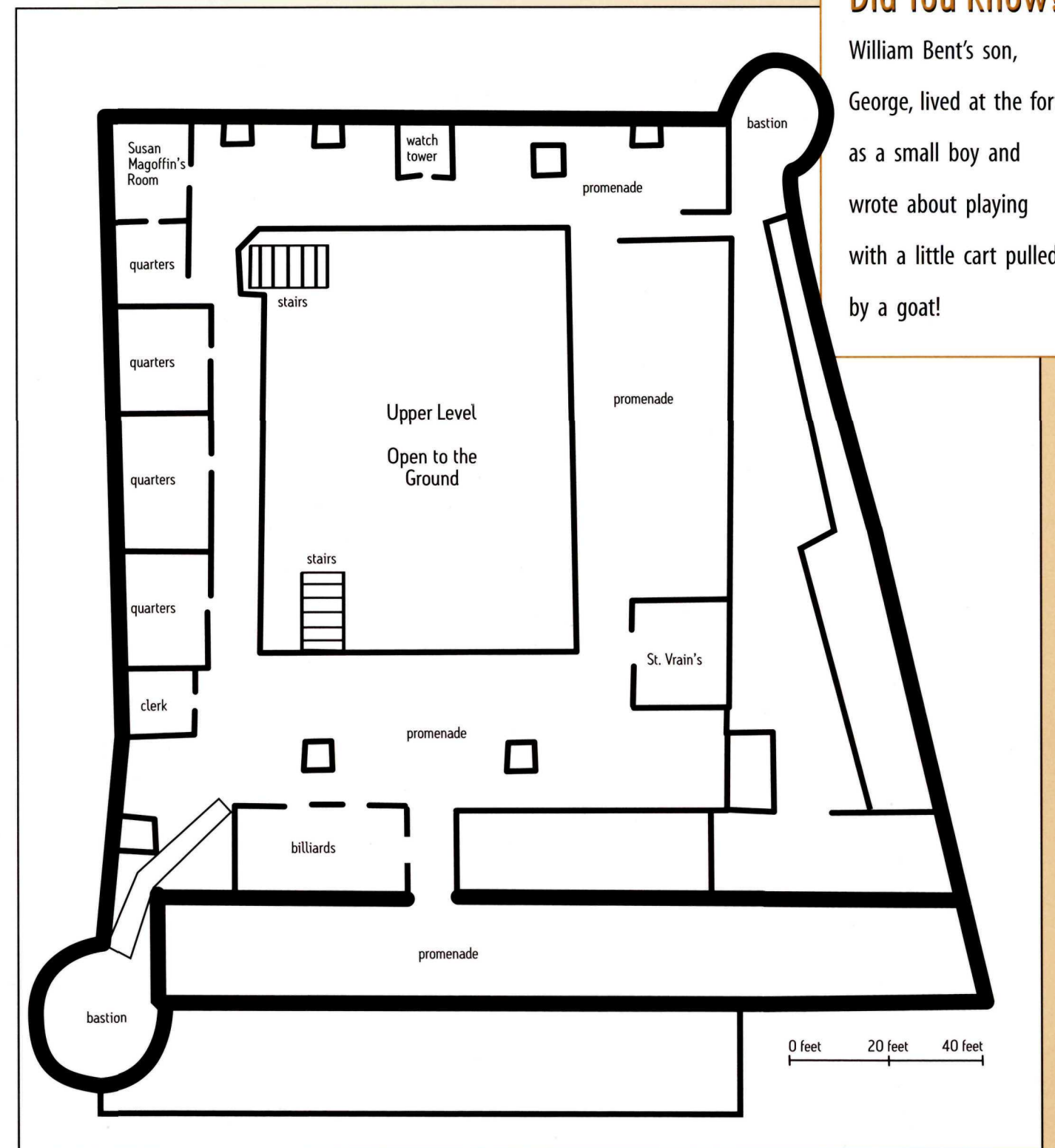
6. Which numbered circle is the actual location chosen for Bent's Old Fort? _____



2

Following Your Fort Steps

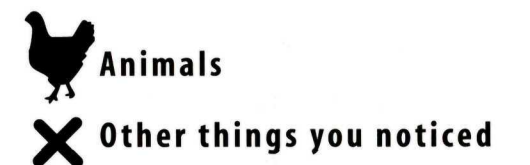
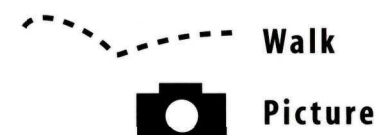
Make your own map of your visit to Bent's Old Fort. Draw a line showing where you walked. Draw pictures or symbols to represent what you saw or did along the way. For example, you might insert a picture of any animals you see. You might draw a camera symbol to represent places where you took a picture. Label any interesting features of the fort.



Did You Know?

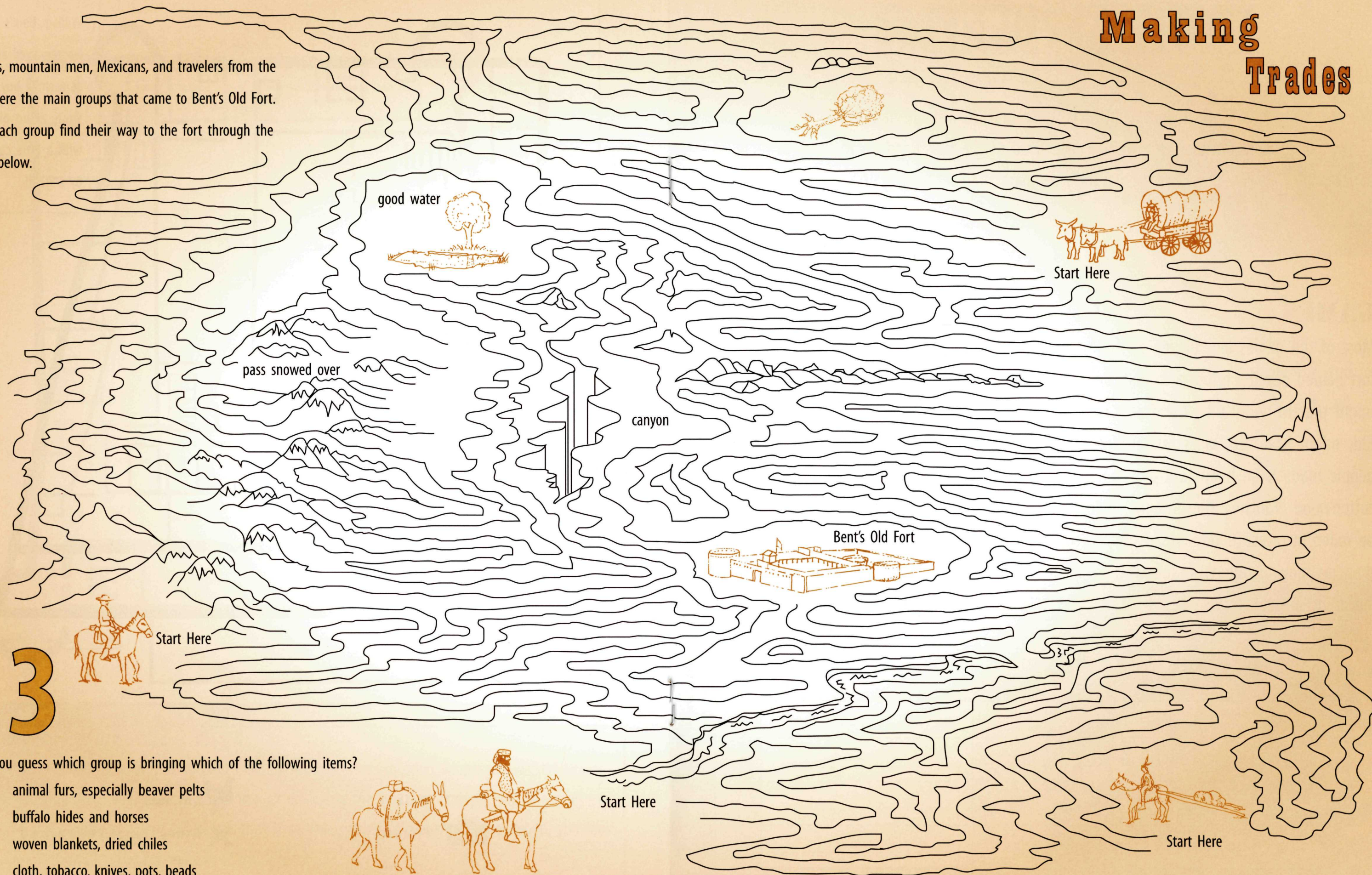
William Bent's son, George, lived at the fort as a small boy and wrote about playing with a little cart pulled by a goat!

Legend



Making Trades

Indians, mountain men, Mexicans, and travelers from the East were the main groups that came to Bent's Old Fort. Help each group find their way to the fort through the maze below.



3

Can you guess which group is bringing which of the following items?

- animal furs, especially beaver pelts
- buffalo hides and horses
- woven blankets, dried chiles
- cloth, tobacco, knives, pots, beads

FORT KIDS

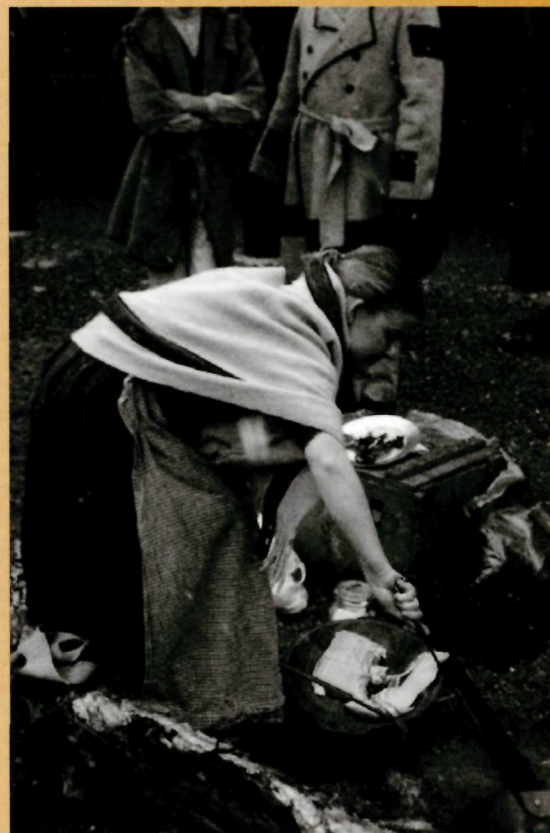
Not too many kids lived at Bent's Old Fort. Those that did usually had an Indian or Mexican mother. That's because no Anglo woman ever lived at the fort. Read on to find out more about what life was like for fort kids. Then compare their life with your own.

4

GAMES

Most of the games kids played at the fort helped develop important skills. Boys might practice with a bow and arrow. Kids might have foot races. Sometimes people made large hoops out of green cottonwood branches. These hoops could be rolled in races. Or boys could use them as moving targets as they threw lances or spears.

What kinds of games do you enjoy?



SCHOOL

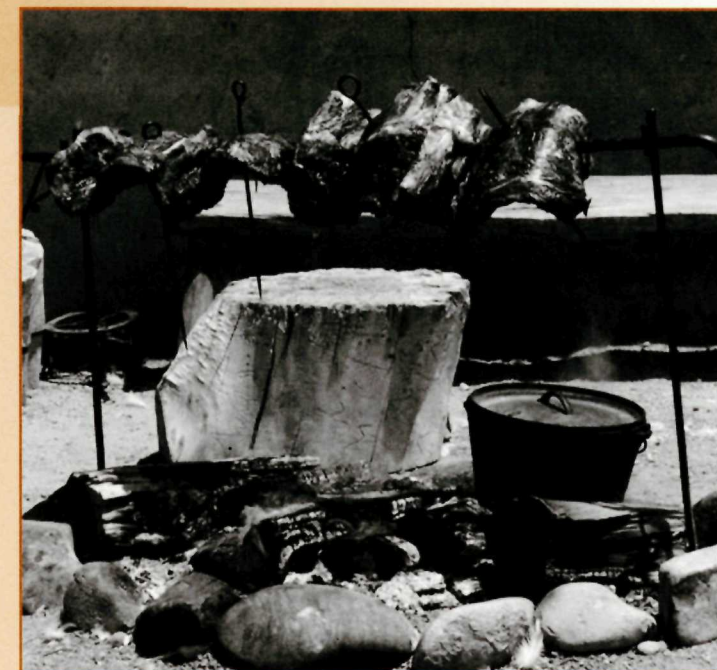
There wasn't any formal schooling at Bent's Old Fort but that doesn't mean that kids didn't learn valuable skills to help them survive as adults in the West. What skills do you think they learned? What skills are you learning?



CHORES

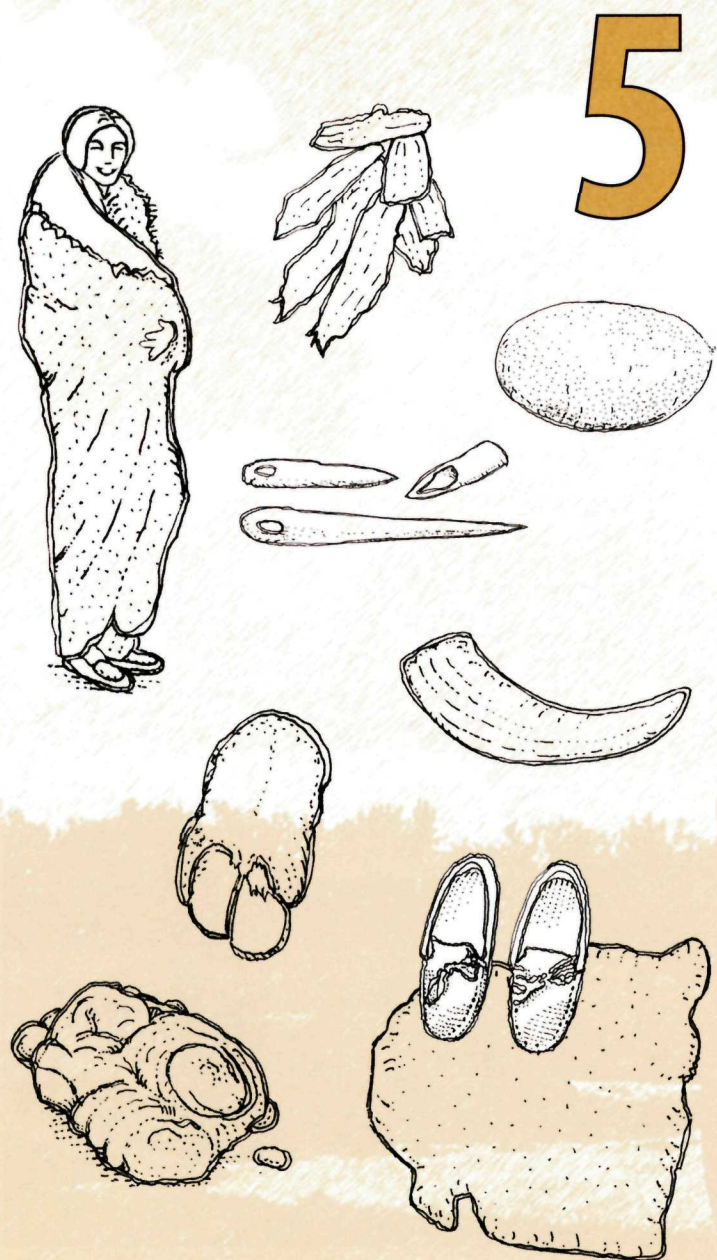
Kids at the fort stayed busy with many chores. Boys carried water, fed livestock, and learned to hunt. Girls helped cook, sew, and repair mud walls.

What kind of chores do you have?



The Way of the Buffalo

The people living in and around Bent's Old Fort hunted many kinds of animals, including elk, deer, antelope, and turkey. But none was as important as the buffalo. It provided food. It provided buffalo hides for trade with the East. And for Plains Indians, it was central to life and culture. Read on to find out how Plains Indians used different parts of the buffalo. You can color in the pictures with crayons or colored pencils. Draw a line from the description of how people used the part of the buffalo to the drawing of that object.



Buffalo meat was dried. Then it could be eaten safely for months.

Tanned buffalo robes made warm clothing and bedding.

Dried buffalo droppings, or chips, were burned in fires. (Wood was scarce on the plains.)

Buffalo horns were perfect for storing gunpowder.

Buffalo skins were made into moccasins, shields, and more.

Buffalo bladders were used to make waterproof bags.

Boiled buffalo hooves produced a thick glue.

Bits of buffalo bone made excellent needles.

The buffalo were nearly hunted to extinction. How do you think this affected the lives of Plains Indians?

Buffalo Ode

Matt Field, a visitor to Bent's Old Fort, wrote this poem to show just how much buffalo he'd had to eat and use.

Buffalo fresh, Buffalo dried,

Roasted, boiled, or stewed or fried,

Buffalo served in every stead

For poultry and pastry, for meat and for bread;

And a Buffalo skin neatly spread,

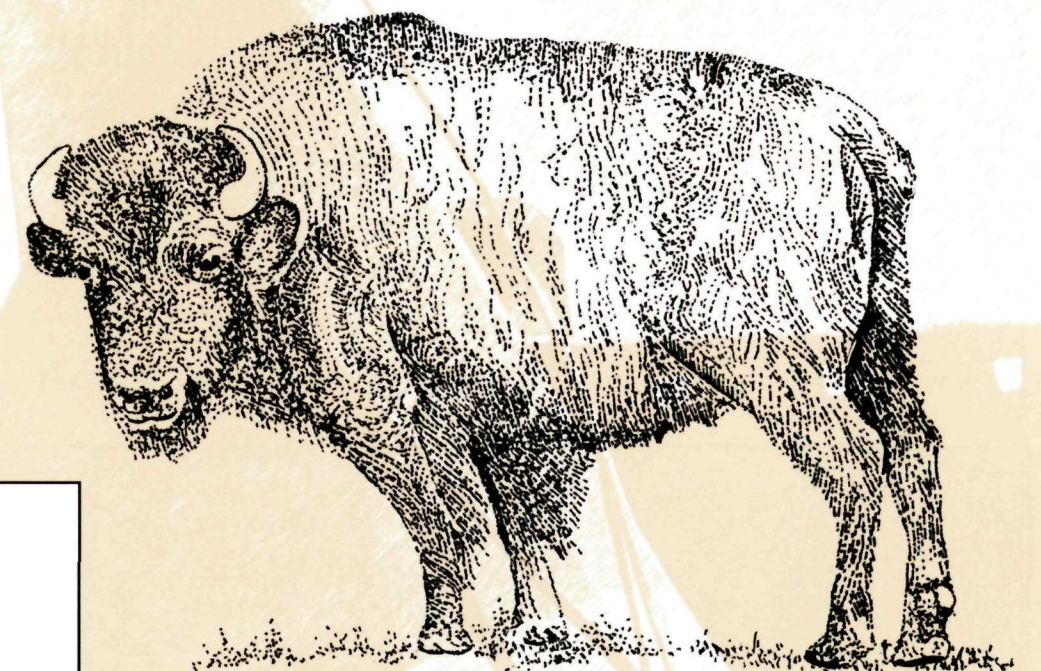
Is bolster, and blanket, and bedstead, and bed.

Did You Know?

The fort you're walking in today was built by the National Park Service in 1976. Bent's Old Fort was constructed of adobe—earth mixed with straw and water.

Did You Know?

In 1853, William Bent built a new fort on the Arkansas River, forty miles downstream from his old fort. It became known as Bent's New Fort.



Old Sounds

New Sounds

At its peak, Bent's Old Fort bustled with activity. Listed at left below are some of the sounds you could have heard on a typical day in the 1840s. Can you draw a line between each sound and its source (listed on the right)?

6

Sounds

clanging

bray

Spanish language

bleating

neigh

cackling

boom

strumming

sawing wood

Sources

mule

carpenter

cannon

horse

adobe mason

banjo player

blacksmith

goat

chickens



Now sit quietly for one minute and record all the sounds you can hear today:



7

Your Journal

The journals and diaries of people who visited Bent's Old Fort tell us many things about the plants, animals, people, and events of the past. Now make your own journal about your visit. You might write about the people you have seen, the natural surroundings, or some of the interesting artifacts you encountered.



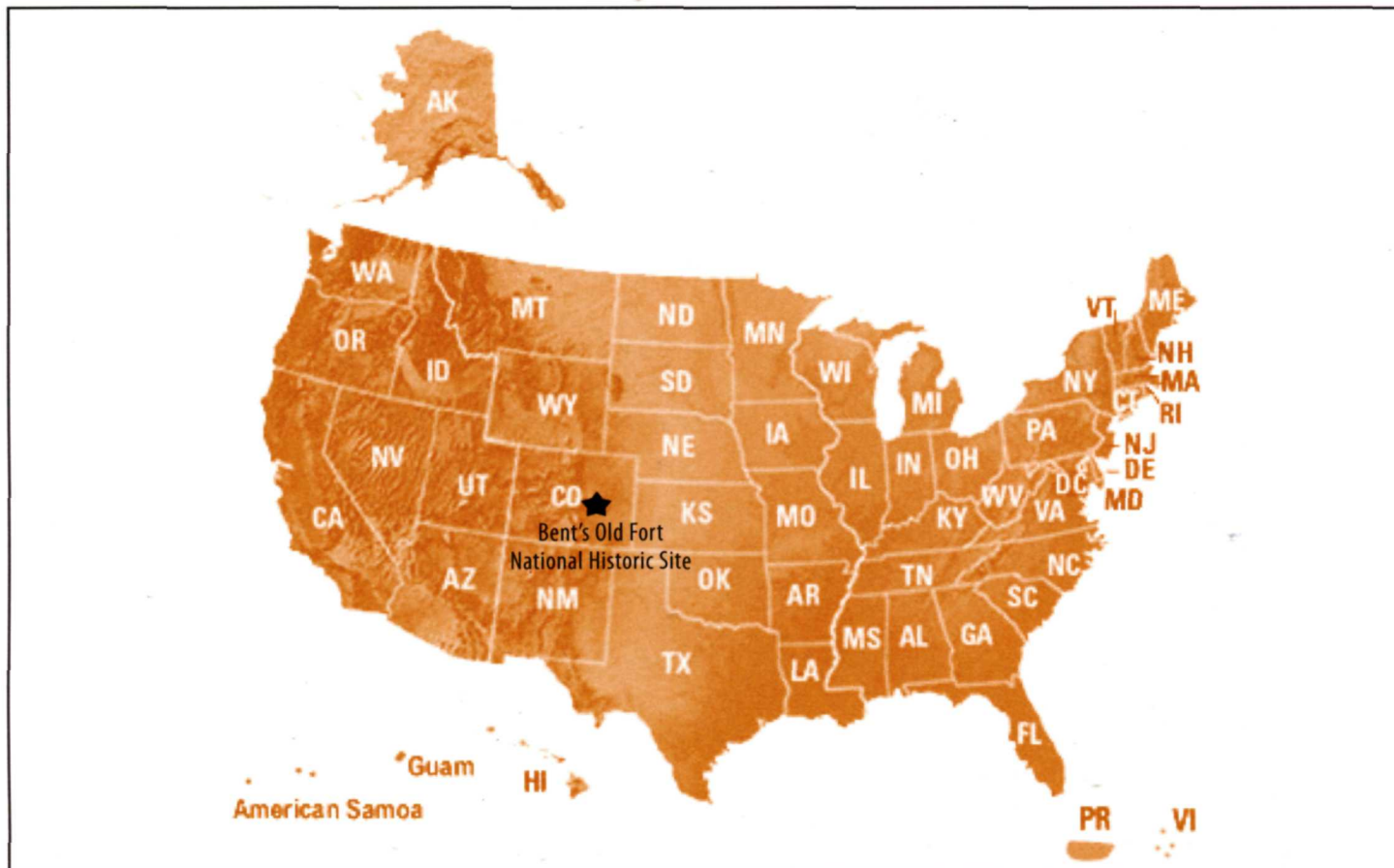
Name:

Date:

Weather:

Notes:

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site



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Edited by Derek Gallagher

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www.nps.gov/beol

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Become a WebRanger

As a WebRanger, you'll learn what Park Rangers do to help protect our natural resources and our cultural heritage.

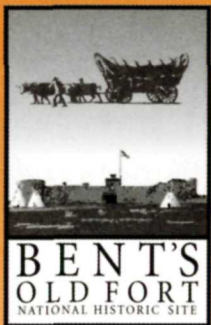
You'll also learn how Park Rangers observe and discover new things about our national parks—things to share with visitors like you.

<http://www.nps.gov/webangers/>

Junior Ranger Pledge

As a Junior Ranger I promise
to help take care of places
like Bent's Old Fort
National Historic Site.

WESTERN
NATIONAL PARKS
ASSOCIATION



JUNIOR RANGER CERTIFICATE



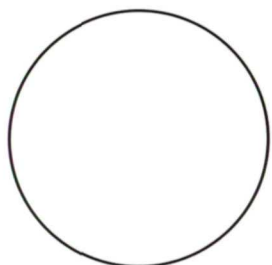
This is to certify that

Has successfully completed the requirements of the

Junior Ranger Program

at Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site

Congratulations on completing the requirements of the Junior Ranger Program. You are hereby
designated a Junior Ranger in good standing with the National Park Service.



Official Stamp
