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Society to Excavate Site of Bent's Fort

By TOM GAVIN

Rocky Mountain News Writer

The site of Bent's Fort—one of civilization's first outposts in Colorado—will be excavated this summer in the first step toward its reconstruction by the State Historical Society.

The huge adobe fort stood for 20 years as an island in a wilderness after being erected about 1832.

Not a single brick now remains above ground.

IT'S JOINT VENTURE

James T. Forrest, State Museum curator, Thursday announced the mammoth excavation job will begin Tuesday as a joint Historical Society-Trinidad Junior College venture.

Archaeology students at the college, under direction of Instructor Herbert W. Dick, will live on the site and handle actual excavation work.

The huge fort, of walls two to four feet thick, was established on the north bank of the Arkansas River by William and Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain, some six miles east of what is now La Junta.

During its 20 years as a trading point between whites and savage Indians the fort's compound felt the tread of Kit Carson, "Uncle

Dick" Wooten, Gen. S. W. Kearney and Col. Henry Dodge and many other men famed in the development of the West.

PIECEMEAL BASIS

Forrest said the Historical Society probably will not be able to start on reconstruction of the fort for at least two years—and then only on a piecemeal basis.

When completed it will be one of the most historic and important museums in Colorado, Forrest feels.

"Our immediate results will be the outlining of the old walls," he said. "We also will mark the spots where any relics are found, as points of interest until the fort is rebuilt."

The junior college will furnish labor and equipment valued at \$3150 while the society contributes \$569 in food, supplies and transportation.

The work is expected to take 42 days.