

University of Northern Colorado

Scholarship & Creative Works @ Digital UNC

Bent's Old Fort

Colorado National Parks

Bent's Old Fort

La Junta Tribune Democrat

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

BENTS OLD FORT*La Junta - Tribune - Democrat*

A series by William Featherstone, superintendent

AN RETROSPECT

Without being boastful, the staff at Bent's Old Fort National Historical Site can take considerable satisfaction from the year just ended. More people than ever before were given more opportunities than ever before to learn the story of Bent's Fort and to enjoy a walk along the river or through the cottonwoods in the river bend.

We can regret, of course, that another year has passed without the reconstruction of the fort getting underway, but an item of that magnitude involves the cooperative effort of the National Park Service design offices, programming officials and the Director, and in the final analysis, the congressional subcommittees who conduct our budget hearings. We can assure you that Bent's Old Fort is not forgotten and that its reconstruction is one of the items in the Service's five-year development schedule.

There are many things offered to today's visitor to Bent's Old Fort which were not available a year ago. For instance, a full size model and a small scale model of a fur press were constructed early this year. A typical portion of an adobe wall was built near the contact station. Three colorful panels explaining aspects of the fort's operations replaced a single, aging panel in mid-year. The trail to the river was paved. Openings were cut into the protective shelters and lights installed inside so visitors could see the features we hope to incorporate in the finished reconstruction. An exhibit room was opened in April to display some of the artifacts recovered from the 1963-66 archaeological "dig." La Junta's stagecoach was installed in its own "barn" for all to see and marvel at. A large parking area was paved for visitors to these last two attractions.

More pfitzer junipers and additional grass plots were planted this year to improve our appearance. Several new items (Bent's Fort note paper, books, postcards) were offered for sale through our cooperative association. Six evening programs on conservation and historical subjects were given last summer on the lawn at the front of the fort. We now have a replica of a percussion-cap rifle which is fired upon request for any visitor.

The maintenance building, authorized in 1965, finally was erected in the park's west end. New highway signs on U.S. 50 attracted more visitors to Bent's Old Fort, so that by Dec. 31, over 19,000 people had come to this national historic site. That's more than a 30 per cent gain over 1967, and an all-time record!

Don't you think we can be proud of 1968?