**INTRO:** At about fourteen years of age, Lewis H. Garrard, read John C. Fremont’s *Report of the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains*, an account published in U.S. newspapers in 1843. Fremont’s descriptive account enticed Lewis to venture West by himself only three years later. Garrard wrote his own book of experiences lasting from 1846-1847 titled *Wah-to-yah and the Taos Trail*. “Wah-to-yah” is a Comanche word meaning “double peaks,” which described the mountainous Spanish Peaks found in southeastern Huerfano County, Colorado. As Lewis set off, Ceran St. Vrain, the founding partner of the Bent, St. Vrain, & Company, guided his wagon from Independence, Missouri to the trading operation along the Arkansas River, known as Bent’s Fort, in September of 1846.

**TRADE GOODS AT BENT’S FORT:** During the fur trade era, unlike today, a purchase could be made without money. If you came to Bent’s Fort with a product that William Bent could sell (like a buffalo robe), then you could negotiate a trade for something else that you needed (like a new kettle). During the early 1830s, beaver furs were declining significantly because the animal itself was being overharvested. The hottest item on the market after the beaver trade ended was the buffalo robe. Like beaver fur, buffalo robes were transported from many western trading posts to be sold in cities across the country.

When Garrard visited, he overheard a trading conversation where “two plews a plug for bacca” meant trading two beaver skins for an amount of tobacco (209). Another exchange over a blanket considered the value of the traded items in currency. A trader remarked, “two blankets ain’t worth moren six plews at Fort William, which comes to dos pesos a pair” (212). Perhaps surprisingly, much of the trading occurred during the colder months. Garrard writes, “On the 29th of November, a party of Mexicans came near camp, with their *mulada*, freighted with corn, beans, etc., to trade for meat and robes” (70).

Lewis, as a casual observer, became aware of trends among the different types of traders. He writes, “The white man is always welcome with the Cheyenne, as he generally has *mok-ta-bo-mah-pe* – coffee” (49). Paying attention to preferences like these, William Bent would have made sure his fort was stocked with coffee and any other desired goods among his fellow traders. He would also be on the lookout for new items that might be a benefit to his customers.

Garrard noticed that “The New Mexican plows, for the most part, are of the primitive kind – the same as those used by the Egyptians thousands of years ago – being but the fork of a small tree, with only one handle. The point entering the ground is sometimes shod with iron. Last fall, Bent, St. Vrain & CO. brought out several American plows. It is to be hoped the *natives* will learn something from these models” (178). Garrard seems to indicate that Bent was preparing for various customers to change their traditional lifeways to a more modern one. Do you think Bent sold very many American plows? Why or why not?