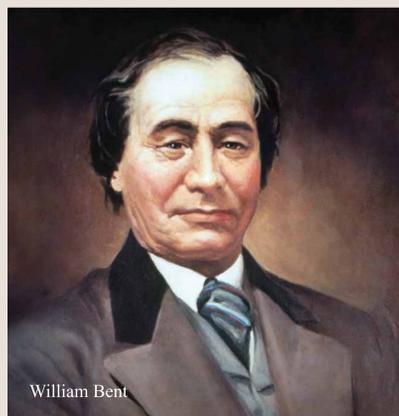


# Tragedy and Restoration



Bent's New Fort  
Santa Fe National Historic Trail

The Semmens Family  
Santa Fe Trail Association  
National Park Service



William Bent

Colorado Historical Society

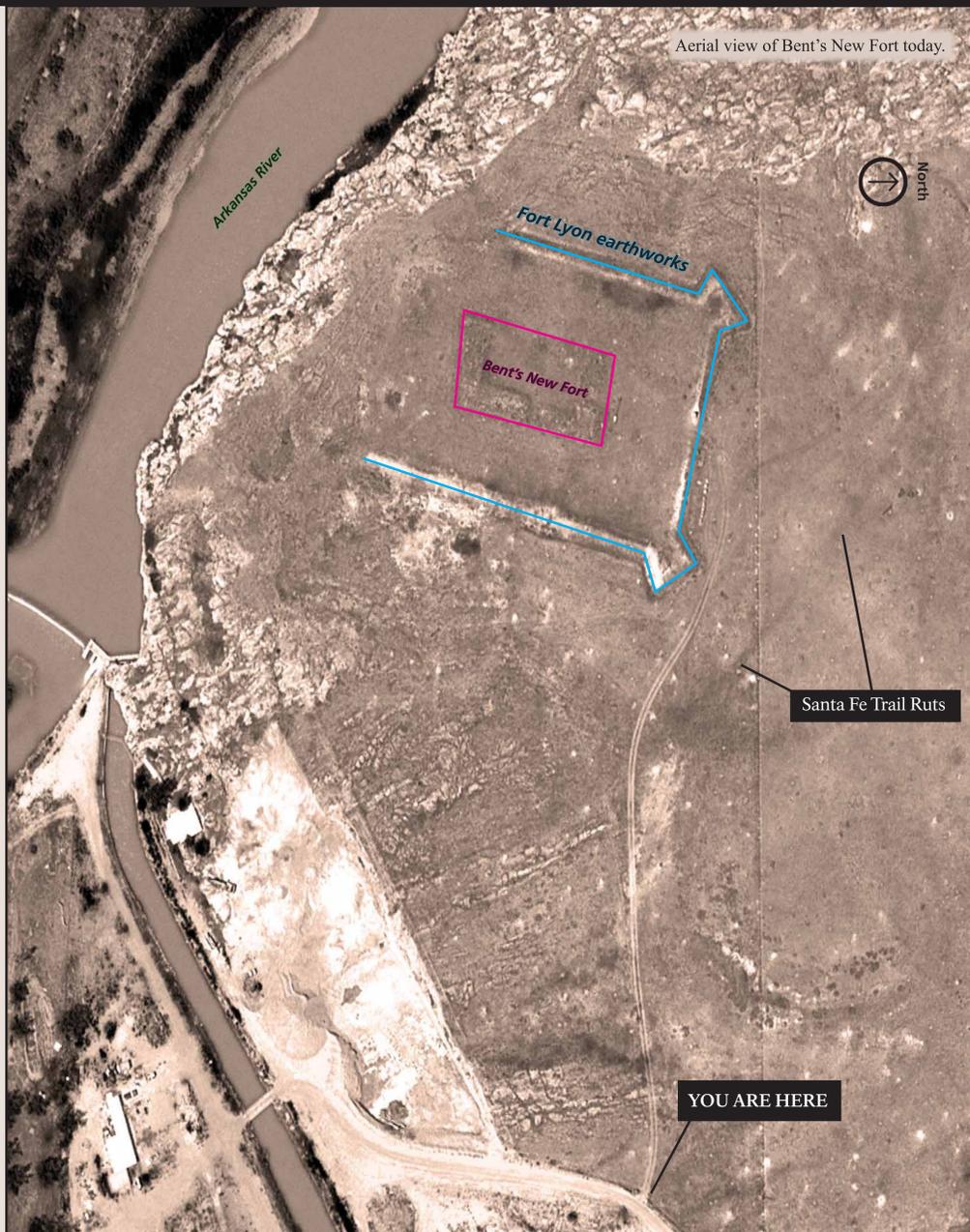
## Bent Family Beginnings

The entrepreneurial spirit of William and Charles Bent and Ceran St. Vrain brought them to the banks of the Arkansas River where they built Bent's Old Fort in 1833. Mutual respect, intermarriage, and economic interdependence among these businessmen and the Plains Tribes allowed them to trade and live peacefully together. They traded primarily with the Southern Cheyenne and Arapaho tribes

for buffalo robes. Bent's Old Fort became the seat of a trading empire that included forts to the north and south, along with company stores in Mexico at Taos and Santa Fe. During the war with Mexico in 1846, the fort became a staging area for the United States' "Army of the West." Disasters and disease caused the fort's abandonment in 1849.

## A New Fort for William Bent

William Bent had known and stayed in this area (Big Timbers) before. In the 1840s he built cabins and a corral on the flats west of the bluff here. In 1853 his new trading fort emerged on the cliffs above the Arkansas River. When the US Army set up here in 1860, the site became the commissary for a military fort that played a pivotal role in the declining relationship between Plains Tribes and the federal government. From here troops marched north in 1864 and committed the Sand Creek massacre. What started as a peaceful trading post became a place associated with the tragic deaths of about 200 Cheyenne and Arapaho people.



Aerial view of Bent's New Fort today.

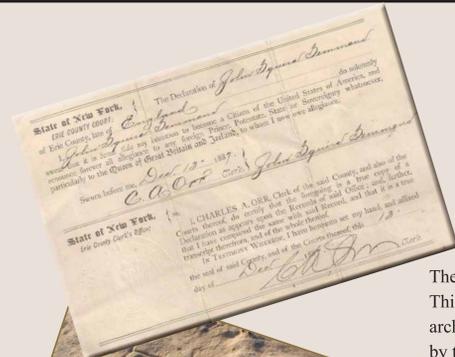


Santa Fe Trail Ruts

YOU ARE HERE

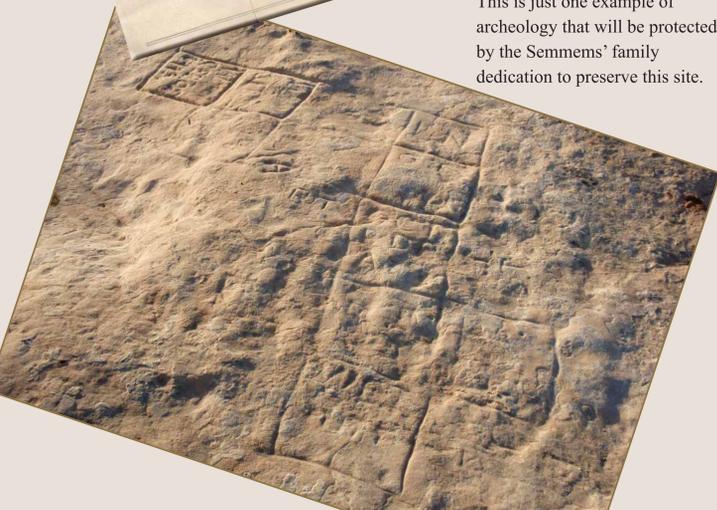
GeoEye

## The Semmens Family: Preserving Local History



John Squire Semmens' original citizenship papers dated December 13, 1887.

The fort etched in sandstone. This is just one example of archeology that will be protected by the Semmens' family dedication to preserve this site.



Born in Yorkshire, England in 1852, John Squire Semmens eventually moved to Kansas City, Missouri where he was a professional portrait artist. After Semmens gained American citizenship in 1887, he sent for his wife Alma and sons William, Archie, and Edgar. Once the Semmens boys received their education in Missouri, the family traveled west to Colorado to settle.

An entrepreneur like William Bent, Semmens looked for a place to raise bees and trade honey for local commodities. He purchased the Bent's New Fort parcel of 4.44 acres from Phillips Investment Company with a down payment of \$5.00 on July 3, 1905. His total investment of \$46.60 has become a legacy. Great-grandsons Brad Semmens and Gary McCall began the site's preservation when they purchased surrounding lands and decided to protect the site as an archeological preserve.

## John Squire Semmens



John Squire died in 1930. The land stayed in the family through sons William, Archie, and Edgar; then to Gid Semmens and Alma Bell McCall (Archie's children); then to current owners Gary McCall (Alma's son) and Brad Semmens (Gid's son).

## Regional Map



## Santa Fe National Historic Trail

The Bents world of wealth could not have happened without the forging of the Santa Fe Trail. From 1821 to 1880, this artery of commerce from Missouri to Mexico also allowed for westward expansion to California. Follow these road signs along the Santa Fe National Historic Trail and discover more sites.



Bent's Old Fort to Bent's New Fort - 40 miles  
Bent's New Fort to Sand Creek NHS - 40 miles

## Safety

- This archeological preserve is protected. Please do not climb on walls or take artifacts.
- During the heat of summer, wear a hat and sunscreen, and drink lots of water. Take your time.
- Watch your step. Rattlesnakes live here.
- Beware of approaching thunderstorms and return to lower ground.
- Take pictures and memories; leave everything else.

## For more information contact

Bent's Old Fort NHS  
[www.nps.gov/beol](http://www.nps.gov/beol)

Sand Creek Massacre NHS  
[www.nps.gov/sand](http://www.nps.gov/sand)

Santa Fe Trail Association  
[www.santafetrail.org](http://www.santafetrail.org)

Brad Semmens  
[rooms@lamarcountryacres.com](mailto:rooms@lamarcountryacres.com)

Santa Fe National Historic Trail  
[www.nps.gov/safe](http://www.nps.gov/safe)