

IV. B. 13. National Historic Sites

- a) Background. The National Historic Site System was established by the National Historic Sites Act of 1935 to recognize cultural properties within the United States possessing the highest level of historic interest to the nation. There is presently one designated National Historic Site within the State of Colorado, Bent’s Old Fort, and it is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.



Bent’s Old Fort
National Historic Site

Proposed Rural Development actions in or near this area merit special evaluation because of its national prominence. The historical evaluation procedures of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, as discussed in Section IV.B.3 of this Guide, apply with the additional requirement that formal consultation with the National Park Service must also be initiated.

- b) Governing Regulations.
- (1) National Historic Sites Act of 1935 (P.L. 74-292, 49 Stat. 666, 16 U.S.C. 461 et seq.)
 - (2) National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970 (84 Stat. 825), as amended.
 - (3) National Parks and Recreation Act of 1978 (92 Stat. 3518, 16 U.S.C. 1a-5).
 - (4) U.S. Executive Order 11514, Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality.
 - (5) National Environmental Policy Act, 42 U.S.C. 4321.
 - (6) Title 7, Part 1b and 1c, Code of Federal Regulations, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Environmental Policy Act.
 - (7) U.S. Executive Order 11593, Protection and Enhancement of the Cultural Environment, May 13, 1971.
 - (8) National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.
 - (9) U.S. Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974.



- (10) Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties, Title 36, Part 800, Code of Federal Regulations.

- c) Policy. Rural Development should not authorize, fund, or carry out any proposal or project which would adversely affect the unique values and benefits of designated or nominated National Historic Sites. Whenever a proposed action is determined to have the potential for impacting a National Historic Site, the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and the Colorado Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Officer, should be simultaneously consulted as early in the environmental impact analysis process as possible to evaluate the possible consequences and protection requirements concerning the action.

The Section 106 Process should be adhered to and finalized prior to the completion of the Rural Development environmental review for any pertinent Rural Development action. Following is a diagrammatic summary of the overall Section 106 Process:

- d) Classification.
 - (1) Designated.

- f) Agency Jurisdiction. Following are expert agency contacts:
 - (1) Federal. Following is the expert agency contact at the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Intermountain Regional Office:

U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Intermountain Region
P.O. 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

Contact: Hal Grovert, Superintendent, Colorado Plateau and Rocky Mountain Clusters, (303) 969-2800

http://www.nps.gov/pub_aff/imfa.htm



- (2) State. Confer with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO). The contacts for the SHPO are:

Colorado Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Officer
Intergovernmental Services
1300 Broadway
Denver, Colorado 80203

Dr. Susan M. Collins, Dep. St. Hist. Pres. Off.. (Archaeology):
(303) 866-2736
Kaaren Hardy, Intergovernmental Services Director:
(303) 866-3398
FAX: 303-866-2711

<http://coloradohistory-oahp.org/>

- g) Location of Resource. National Historic Sites are determined to represent the highest level of historically significance places in a national sense. One National Historic Site is presently designated within the State of Colorado:

Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site: 10 miles west of Las Animas. Authorized June 3, 1960. Approximately 800 acres. Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site is an authentically reconstructed trading post based on drawings, written journals and archaeological excavations; "today's" fort was built in 1975-1976. The original post was constructed in the early 1830's and quickly became a major trading site for the Plains Indian tribes and trappers. Owned by the partnership of Charles and William Bent and Ceran St. Vrain, the fort played a prominent role as a supply base for the expeditions of John Fremont and for American soldiers during the Mexican War. The fort was abandoned in 1849-1850 by William Bent during an epidemic of cholera. The murder of Charles Bent at his Taos home in 1847 and St. Vrain's unsuccessful attempts to sell the fort to the U.S. Army also in 1847 may have set the stage for William Bent's abandonment.

Bent's Old Fort was a privately owned trading post on the Historic Santa Fe Trail. In the 1830's and 40's the fort's population was a rough mix of American, French and Mexican frontiersmen. Plains Indians were frequent visitors, coming in for trade and to satisfy their curiosity. On several occasions these diverse people were joined by groups of U. S. soldiers. Bent's Fort quickly became a trading and cultural crossroads. This "Castle on the Plains" was a place where men and cultures met, often for the first time, and mostly in peace. Its history and colorful characters played a central role in the "opening" of the southern Plains.

Today the National Park Service has done an incredible job of reconstruction of the fort as it appeared in 1845-46. Costumed interpreters demonstrate ordinary day-to-day life at the Fort during the summer. You may find them blacksmithing, carpentering, cooking or any of the other tasks done in 1845-46.



h) Other References.

- (1) National Park Service
(Bent's Old Fort web-site)
<http://www.nps.gov/beol/>