

Meet Dick, Wm Bent's Slave



Real People! Real Stories!

Santa Fe Trail Hall of Fame

“Dick”

(Birth Date-Death Date Unknown)

- Slave
- Blacksmith
- Carpenter
- Butler
- Valued Employee and Hero

(Note: In spite of the fact that little is known about Dick, his mention in diaries, and actions, have earned him a spot in the Santa Fe Trail Hall of Fame.)

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Few facts are known of the life of Dick. He was a Negro slave of William Bent and worked at Bent's Old Fort. He was married to Charlotte and may have been the brother of Andrew, another Negro slave at the fort. However, what little we do know makes Dick a person worthy of being in the SFTA Hall of Fame.

Visitors to the fort always referred to Dick as the husband of Charlotte, the legendary cook and de facto hostess at special events. He was described as being Bent's "servant" and he may have worked in the blacksmith and carpenter shops. He and Andrew were also pressed into service as butlers as special dinners. David Lavender in *Bent's Fort* notes that when Col. Henry Dodge visited the fort in 1835 both Dick and Andrew served as butlers at the "lavish dinner" prepared by Charlotte for Dodge and his fellow officers.

When General Stephen Kearney and his troops seized Santa Fe in August 1846, he appointed Charles Bent as the American governor of the captured territory. Bent brought Dick to Santa Fe to serve as his personal servant. When Charles was killed in January 1847 by rebellious Taos Indians, Green was grief-stricken and asked permission to join in the fight to suppress the rebellion. He was given arms and fought valiantly during the battle at Taos Pueblo. Marc Simmons notes that Dick was the first to rush into a shelled and smoke-filled church where the last of the rebels were fighting. Others followed his lead and the rebels were defeated.

During the fight Dick was severely wounded and taken back to Bent's Fort. When William Bent learned Dick's heroic actions, he granted both Dick and Charlotte their freedoms. Simmons writes that newly-freed Dick and Charlotte were last seen bound for Missouri in a wagon train. From that point on, they disappear from written history. However, the records that survive establish that Dick was a valued employee of the Bent's and a hero in the fight to defeat the Taos rebels.