

Adventures on the American Frontier

Following the Frontier West

Part Three
James Hobbs's Long Journey



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In the years after the Santa Fe Trail opened, two brothers named Charles and William Bent used it often to take goods to trade in Santa Fe. In 1833, they built a fort along the trail in what is now Colorado so that they could have their own trading post. It was called Bent's Fort.



Bent's Fort became well-known. Many trappers and traders stopped there to trade, but others used it as a place to rest and get fresh supplies on their way to Santa Fe.

William Bent spent much of his time at the fort, but Charles made regular trips to bring wagon trains of trading goods back to it. On one trip, in 1835, Charles hired a boy named James Hobbs to help with the wagon train.

James was only sixteen years old,



and he was eager to rush into adventure.

One day when a few buffalo came near the wagon train, James was too eager to shoot one and got himself into trouble. A second boy, John Baptiste, followed wherever James led, so he, too, fell into trouble.

When the buffalo came near, James tried his hand at shooting a few. He was lucky and brought one down. But one of the animals became scared and ran toward the end of the wagon train as it moved along on the north bank of the Arkansas River.

“Get her, buffalo boy!” one of the men yelled to James.

The buffalo was charging toward the end of the wagon train. She cut across the Santa Fe Trail and crossed the Arkansas River. James, with John following him, charged after her.

Charles saw that the chase had gone too far, and he called to James, “Let her go!”

But James spurred his mule on and called over his shoulder, “I’ll get her and



then catch up with the train, Mr. Bent! Come on, John!"

A moment later, the two boys were riding through the river. It wasn't deep, and their mules were soon on the other side, but the buffalo was well ahead of them. James knew he should turn back, but he hated the thought of going back to the wagons without the buffalo's hide.

On went the chase until the boys were three miles away. At last they caught up to the buffalo and brought her down.