

# A PRESS RELEASE

FROM THE BENT'S FORT CHAPTER  
OF THE  
SANTA FE TRAIL ASSOCIATION

ANNOUNCING A NATIONAL GATHERING  
THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE FOUNDING OF THE  
SANTA FE TRAIL  
SEPTEMBER 22-26, 2021

6348 Co. Rd. KK  
Las Animas, Co. 81054  
Web page: 2021sfts.com

Facebook: Bent's Fort Chapter of the Santa Fe Trail



## A STRONG FORCE THE HUTTON'S by Ed Stafford

When the Santa Fe Trail Association's national symposium comes to Bent's Old Fort NHS and Otero County, CO, Sept. 22 - 26, LaDonna Hutton of Rocky Ford, CO, will have been a driving force in the preparations.

Hutton is an excellent choice for one of the Trail bosses this year, having been vice-president and then president of the national SFTA organization, presiding over the large and very important Three Trails national symposium that was held in Santa Fe in 2015. That gathering in the destination-city of the Santa Fe Trail brought together members of three national organizations, including the Santa Fe Trail Association, the Spanish Trail Association, and the El Camino Real Trail organization, representing important trails which converged on Santa Fe in the mid-1800s. The Trail is commemorating its bicentennial this year, 2021.

She also played a major role in her first symposium held at Trinidad in 2007, which was planned by the Bent's Fort Chapter, of which she and her husband Charlie have been members since 1996. "A symposium," she says, "is a large gathering of members of the SFTA, both nationally and internationally, who are interested in the history of the Santa Fe Trail," which ran from Franklin, MO, across Missouri, Kansas, southwestern Oklahoma, southeastern Colorado, and down into New Mexico beginning in 1821.

"The symposium keeps the Trail alive," she says, "stressing the importance of the Trail. It gives members a chance to explore sites along the Trail that goes through five states, hear historians speak about the Trail, and most importantly, gives members a chance for lots of camaraderie with people of like interest. The public is invited to attend," she says, "members and non-members; it is not exclusive."

This symposium is expected "to be a boost to our communities," Hutton continues. "It will bring area history to life, chiefly Bent's Old Fort National Historic Site" located just a dozen miles east of La Junta. "It will bring the Fort alive for all participants. Seventy-five living historians / reenactors are expected to attend to interpret the Fort. It will bring notice to us and the towns around us. People attending will buy gas, food, and lodging."

"We will get to show off a little bit."

"But I don't deserve all the credit," she says. "It's Charlie (her husband) and I." LaDonna Hutton has lived all her life in Rocky Ford, and Charlie came to live there in 1973. They were married

in 1986. Today they live in the house her father built following the floor plan her mother drew. "We have roots here on the Santa Fe Trail," she says. For 30 years she taught business at La Junta High School and oversaw vocational programs, sponsoring Future Business Leaders of America and directing FBLA district conferences. Following retirement, she found she could "smoothly transition into real estate sales" and went to work for Roscover Realty in Rocky Ford and then Norm Murphy and Associates Realty in La Junta.

After arriving in Rocky Ford in 1973, Charlie went to work for Farmland Industries and was employed there for 21 years as Animal Health Nutritionist, afterward taking a job with Van Dyk Insurance in Rocky Ford, remaining there for 27 years. "The Santa Fe Trail Association has been the major diversion in our lives," she says. Charlie has been a past-president of the Bent's Fort Chapter. His extremely important contribution has been marking the route of the old Trail "by putting up 50 - 60 signs marking the Santa Fe Trail in southeastern Colorado, erecting a number of SFT National Historic Trail markers on stone posts quarried at Kim and in Kansas and purchased by the Bent's Fort Chapter, in addition to raising signs along Colorado highways marking the Trail."

Asked about the likelihood of holding the long-anticipated symposium in the face of COVID-19, LaDonna says, "We are being extremely proactive, working with Otero County Health Department Director Rick Ritter so people won't be afraid to come. We will be following local, state, and national guidelines to make this a very safe event."

Reluctant to take credit for the smooth planning of this mammoth undertaking, LaDonna applauds the symposium planning committee that has been meeting for over four years under the able leadership of John Carson, recently retired interpreter at Bent's Old Fort, along with Kevin Lindahl of Rocky Ford, president of the Bent's Fort Chapter.

The theme of the symposium is "The Santa Fe Trail Lives On: 200 Years of Commerce and Cultural Connections." For information and registration, visit the website [2021sfts.com](http://2021sfts.com).

