

# Mystery fort revealed

## Jellystone Park Camp site of archeological find

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The mystery of a historic fort is beginning to unfold, with the discovery of an archeological treasure at Jellystone Park Camp Resort in Larkspur.

Archeologists believe they have tracked the location of a fort, believed to have been built in 1864, to the Jellystone property, owned by Ian Steyn.

Steyn launched the research that led to the discovery, with the help of the librarians at the Douglas County Library. He had heard rumors about the fort, with word that it was somewhere in the area, but was not certain about its exact location.

Steyn tracked historic survey notes and compared them to aerial maps, finding along the way that the fort was likely situated right in the middle of Jellystone Park.

"It was a very exciting process," Steyn said. "Lots of people were involved and very instrumental in making this discovery."

The Lincoln Fort was re-



Larry Glass, of Highlands Ranch, looks for artifacts from Fort Lincoln on April 2. Photo by Courtney Kuhlen \ [ckuhlen@ccnewspapers.com](mailto:ckuhlen@ccnewspapers.com)

portedly built in the wake of the Sand Creek Massacre, Steyn said. There were reports of possible attacks on Denver in response to the massacre. About 150 men descended on the site, situated next to the historic DC Oakes Saw Mill, to construct an 8,000-square-foot structure, 10 feet high, made of logs from the mill.

About 25 families took refuge at the fort during about a three-week period, said William Pierce, vice president of the Larkspur Historical Society. The fort

was reportedly de-constructed and archeologists expect to find little more than artifacts left from families who lived there.

Steyn hopes those artifacts can be permanently displayed on a re-creation of the structure.

"It is our intent to rebuild the fort in the manner it was originally built" he said. "We want all the artifacts we uncover to remain on display at the fort so people can see them in their original place."

The same archeologists who uncovered the Sand

Creek Massacre site descended on Jellystone Park Camp Resort on April 2, beginning their "dig" with metal detectors. The question of whether they find what they're looking for remains a mystery until the digging begins.

"I expect this to go on for a number of years," Steyn said. "It could be a fairly major project, and I think it's important for the community to be involved. Anybody with an interest, schools, libraries, can be part of this living recreation of a very important time in our history."

## A brief history of Fort Lincoln

In 1865, William Byers, Editor of the Rocky Mountain News, visited Douglas County and described the fort (which he said was built in 1864): "It is built of closely fitted pine logs, with zig-zag outlines, presenting twenty faces and loop-holed for fort, rifles. Its interior, except an open court in the centre, was roofed with earth, under which the people of Plum Creek were in the habit of seeking shelter and protection for some six months before the 'massacre' at Sand Creek."

The fort was mentioned in the *Surveyor's Reid Notes* of 1866. Also nearby were a road and sawmill.

The Colorado Historical Society investigated the site in 1930, interviewing Olive Oakes Bennett, the daughter of DC Oakes, who was a Colorado pioneer that lived in the area of the fort, which was called Huntsville. Olive took them to the site where the assistant curator found "a number of old irons" ... that seemed to support Mrs. Bennett's conclusion as to the exact location. She drew a sketch of the floor plan of the fort and described it as 10 logs high or about 10 feet high, with multiple sides, designed by D. H. Goodwin. She said that the fort was occupied from 1864-1868.

Courtesy of Shaun Boyd Archivist  
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